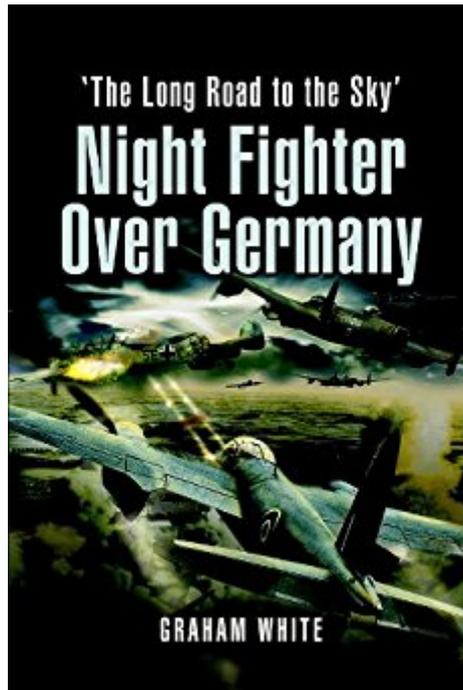


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Night Fighter Over Germany: Flying Beaufighters And Mosquitoes In World War 2



Synopsis

These are the highly evocative wartime memoirs of a young NCO pilot whose operational experience was with Beaufighters and Mosquitoes flying in the long-range night-fighter role. It is not a gung-ho account of daring-do, but a 'warts and all' story of what life was really like in that time of international crisis. No punches are pulled when the author experienced badly designed and dangerous aircraft, such as the Merlin-engined Beaufighter that was almost impossible to fly and killed many pilots during training, nor are the blinding errors made by those staff officers who conceived impossible tasks and operations which these young airmen were ordered to fly and survive. Threaded into a fascinating story of flying with the then leading-edge electronic technology, are the entirely human tales of nights out on the town, when stressed crews could relieve the stress of combat. Some hilarious accounts of wild nights on the ground blend comfortably with the dark skies over Europe and the endless search for the invisible Luftwaffe who were tasked with the destruction of Allied heavy bombers.

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Customer Reviews

Well told tales of life in the RAF, with a chuckle every few paragraphs. While the author has something like 34 night-combat operations over German-held territory during WWII, he takes us

along on only one, and mentions in passing bits of two or three others. There are some sad moments, but mostly this is a collection of amusing stories about happenings apart from combat against the official enemy. Engagements against, or in support of, con-artists, bicycle-chain thieves, husbands, fools, and such are the focus of the book, and they are charmingly related. The war and the military set the stage, but they are not main characters. Reminds me of gentle British sit-coms. Good book for a long flight or a warm beach.

Although I enjoyed the commentary on the life of the pilot and that of his friends, he only described one non action mission over Germany. The rest of the book was basically about the shenanigans of pilots and crew in England during the war. The Mosquitoes were such marvelous airplanes, and their contribution to the allies was superb, it would have been nice to hear about some real combat patrols.

"Night Fighter Over Germany" is a pleasant, witty first-hand account of an RAF pilot and his radar operator who flew night fighters against the Luftwaffe during World War II. Graham White, the pilot, devotes more of the book to the day-to-day trials and funny incidents in training, operations and routine life as part of a combat air crew. If one is looking for a full history of RAF night fighters, other sources are needed. Although there are a fair number of sobering stories about losses of fellow air crew members, humor is the order of the day for White and his radar operator, usually referred to as "Dagwood." The reader also gets an intimate tour of the technical aspects of operating Beaufighters and Mosquitoes (and their weapons systems which were prototypes for today's advanced all-weather fighters), not the least of which include the many dangers and discomforts faced by RAF air crews. While not even an attempt at a history of night fighter action, White's book is a pleasant surprise full of first-person insights to RAF training and combat.

The criticism of this book for not having accounts of aerial combat are correct. I have read some other memoirs by RAF fighter pilots who talk about what happened to others and very off duty adventures. However, I still found this an interesting and valuable read for the details concerning training and operations. Why "Chalky" did not describe his combat encounters is probably because he thought it distasteful or perhaps self-promoting. I did find him mentioned in "Confounding the Reich" and found this on a website about Bomber Command and Squadron 141 of 100 Group: "141 claimed 70 aircraft shot down, 4 probables, and 21 damaged for 11 Mosquitoes (0.09 percent) lost. 141 suffered performance problems with its Mosquitoes and their Serrate radar. Warrant Officer

Graham 'Chalky' White and Flying Officer Mike Allen were top scorers of 141 - 13 German aircraft at night."I would love to be able to read about the interception and tactics used by a night fighter pilot and especially a pilot who flew long range intruder missions. Nonetheless, this is an interesting read but it does not have much directly related to combat.

This is not an action book about combat flying in World War II but it's an interesting collection of personal anecdotes of training and off-duty episodes in a pilot's life during and after the war. White was a young man just out of school and working at a boring job as an apprentice draftsman at the start of World War II when he got the opportunity to enlist in the R.A.F. as a pilot trainee. He details his flight training and the characters he met and the off-duty episodes and adventures he had. In a way, it's a little reminiscent of the story in 'Top Gun' in the detail of his life-long friendship with his navigator nicknamed Dagwood - much like Tom Cruise's friendship with his radar officer, 'Goose' - but with no tragic ending. I thought the lack of combat and operational memories would make this a dull read but it really wasn't dull. Each chapter is a discrete story in itself about a particular (and usually amusing) episode because they really tell a lot about the private lives of the men White flew with. He does relate a little bit about operational flying over Germany as a night bomber escort or as free ranging intruder. Since he flew more than 30 night missions, it would have been more interesting had he related more about these than about pubs and pranks. The book goes on a just a tad too long because when he runs out of personal anecdotes he starts to tell additional stories about other pilots. I think about 3/4 of the way through the book there is a definitive ending to all the memories but then he seems to start all over again with more stories about his pals and they are certainly not as interesting. All in all, a nice read and it did give me a little more depth of understanding about the lives that some R.A.F. pilots lived on and off the base during and after the war.

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