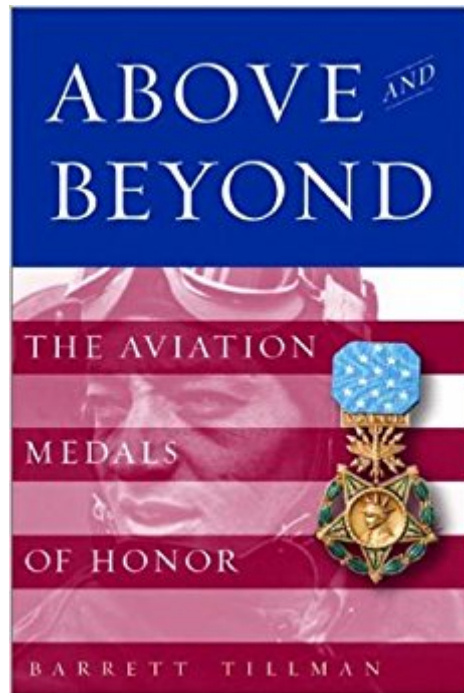




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ABOVE & BEYOND



Synopsis

From 1918 to 1972 over one hundred American aviators (pilots and crew) from all military services received the United States' highest military decoration for "distinguishing themselves by conspicuous gallantry and courage at risk of their own lives, above and beyond the call of duty." Through a combination of interviews with the surviving fliers and in-depth research, Barrett Tillman presents the incredibly valiant and inspiring stories behind the medals and in many cases sets the "official record" straight. These accounts, which redefine heroism, feature some of the most famous airmen in history-Frank Luke Jr., Jimmy Doolittle, Joe Foss, David McCampbell, Leo Thorsness, and Patrick Brady, to name a few-and lesser-known fliers who finally get the recognition they deserve. In World War I, Lieutenants Edwin Russell Bleckley and Harold Ernest Goettler flew in the first sustained aerial resupply operation in history. To accurately drop supplies to the 77th Infantry's "lost battalion," they flew so low that German troops perched on French cliffs were firing down on them. Second Lieutenant David Richard Kingsley, returning in a battered B-17F from a bombing run over Ploesti, Romania, in 1944, gave his parachute to a badly wounded man just before the plane went down. Over North Korea in 1951, helicopter pilot Lieutenant John Kelvin Koelsch, while rescuing a downed pilot, was shot down and captured. He refused to talk and provided only name, rank, and serial number, a procedure that would become the American code of conduct for future POWs. Major Patrick Henry Brady took such heavy fire during one day in Vietnam that he went through three Huey helicopters while evacuating fifty-two men from certain death. Half of the medal winners died earning it; most of the survivors consider themselves lucky just to be alive. Their selfless acts of true heroism deserve to be remembered.

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Customer Reviews

Great Purchase

PLEASE, America, before it is too late, read and learn about the massive sacrifices and bravery in our past that allowed us to live the lives we lead today. We must restore the honor of stories such as these which will hopefully lead to more young people willing to take risk for our freedoms

"Above and Beyond: the Aviation Medals of Honor" by Barrett Tillman is the definitive book for Medals of Honor awarded for in-flight acts. In a single volume, Tillman provides the details as to how each of these aviators earned America's highest honor for a warrior. There is no better book to catalog these great achievements -- and sometimes ultimate sacrifices. The book is logically organized. The first chapter focuses on the "Heritage of Valor", a very short history on how America recognizes gallant actions in battle. The next five chapters are chronologically organized around World War I; the interim years; World War II; the Korean War; and the Vietnam War. In the book's final chapter, Tillman provides an analytical summary of the awards. Tillman does an outstanding job of putting each medal into context going far beyond what was included in the citation that accompanies the medal. He is an accomplished author who brings the stories to life (which can be appreciated by anyone who has ever had to read a military award citation). Each aviator is given 2-3 pages to describe the events which earned the Medal of Honor, and each entry includes either a black & white photograph or lithograph of the honoree. Many Airmen will be disappointed with the treatment of William Pitsenbarger's Medal of Honor. Tillman considers his actions to be "aviation related" instead of "acts of aerial flight", so Pitsenbarger receives only a brief mention at the end of the Vietnam chapter. Also included in this group of "aviation related" Medals of Honor are the ones earned by Adm. James Stockdale, Colonel "Bud" Day, and Capt Lance P. Sijan. Maybe a subsequent edition of the book will add the contributions of these warriors too. As can be expected with all of Tillman's works, it was expertly researched, well-written and a delight to read. I highly recommend this book for all Airmen.

Now here is a perfect match of author and subject! Over the past 30 years Barrett Tillman has penned some of the finest non-fiction books and magazine articles on military aviation to see print. His trademarks - in-depth research coupled with a wonderful narrative style - come to the fore in this

volume, an unvarnished, incisive look at the Medals of Honor awarded to U.S. airmen for in-flight actions "above and beyond" during America's past wars. ABOVE AND BEYOND is a marvelous blend of aviation history and detective story. Rather than accepting the official version of events that resulted in the awarding of a MOH, Tillman researched each action, uncovering information that provides a much more definitive account of the aviation Medal of Honors. In some cases Tillman's research amplified the official accounts; in other instances, it corrected the historical record. Though the exploits of many of the airmen in this book are well-known to the public (Rickenbacker, Luke, Foss, Bong, Boyington, etc.) the feeling you get after finishing Tillman's book is one of finally having a true account of the actions of some very brave men. Tillman's book is also enjoyable for the background material he presents on the Medal of Honor winners, the aircraft they flew and the Medal itself - how it was created, criteria for awarding the Medal, myths and misinformation regarding some aviation MOHs not to mention the role politics and inter-service rivalries played in the awarding of a MOH. Until something better comes along, I would have to say this book is the definitive story on the subject!

Over 100 American airmen have received the Medal of Honor since World War I. Barrett Tillman's new book, written for the Smithsonian Institution, is a fresh look at these warriors and their exploits. The book is arranged by war and service, with each recipient being individually covered. What's novel about this effort that author Tillman doesn't rely on just the official (and frequently stilted) citations, but interviewed numerous experts and witnesses of the events along with as many of the surviving medal recipients as he could locate. What you get is what Paul Harvey would call "The rest of the story", and it includes inter service rivalries and a fair dose of politics as well as courage, heroism and sacrifice. Among the familiar names- Bong, Rickenbacker and Foss you'll find many whose valor have been lost to history. The author also covers aviation-related awards, such as men who received the medal while POWs as well as mentioning some who are commonly believed to have received the medal- Army's Colin Kelly, and some who probably should have- including Marine Marion Carl. Tillman takes time to compare other nations' counterpart medals and deals with the changing criteria for the award through the years. He also includes things you may not have thought of, such as that the B-17 Flying Fortress has been the mount of more CMOH winners (17) than any other aircraft, while the Grumman F4F Wildcat leads all fighter types, with eight. Highly recommended for those who enjoy reading military aviation titles.

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