The First Fighter Pilot: Roland Garros: The Life and Times of the Playboy Who Invented Air Combat. By Ed Cobleigh. Paso Robles, California: Check Six Books, 2019. Bibliography. Pp. 322. $19.95 paperback. ISBN: 978-1-62967156-7

A fighter pilot himself, Cobleigh builds a strong case to name Roland Garros "The First Fighter Pilot." He has prepared a standard biography then brought it to life by putting himself in Garros' mind and explaining to the reader what Garros thought and why he made the decisions that defined his career. Garros had an amazing career as a sportsman, athlete, adventurer, and aviator. His life as a fighter pilot was, unfortunately, truly short.

In 2021, Garros is known only for the French Open Tennis Championship venue. But in the early 20th Century, he was known throughout France and much of the world for his astonishing accomplishments. Garros played a major role in advancing the reputation of French aircraft designers and builders as well as his own.

He made numerous US tours as part of several travelling aviation circuses. At one Texas airshow in 1910, he was asked to perform the role of a reconnaissance scout to find "enemy" troops for National Guardsmen to engage. Little did he know that, in a few short years, he would be performing that mission in the skies over the Western Front.

Garros' air racing career and numerous attempts to fly his aircraft higher and further than his contemporaries are interesting. He set an altitude record and accomplished the first direct non-stop flight from Europe to Africa, crossing the Mediterranean Sea in the process. Other stories show he performed amazing feats of airmanship.

His military career is best remembered for mounting steel plates to his aircraft propeller to allow a fixed forward firing machine gun to be mounted in the nose of his aircraft, effectively creating a bird of prey. After shooting down his first German opponent, he visited the crash site and observed the gruesome result of his handiwork. He quickly shot down three additional aircraft before being shot down himself. German troops captured his modified aircraft before he could burn it. The German's turned it over to the brilliant, if ethically challenged, Anthony Fokker, who developed the synchronizing mechanism used to allow machine guns to fire through propellers. That breakthrough initiated a time known as the Fokker Scourge, where the life expectancy of an Allied pilot was measured in weeks if not days.

Garros spent three years as a prisoner of war before escaping and making his way back to France. He insisted on rejoining the fight, but prison had taken its toll. Aviation technology had advanced quickly, his physical condition had deteriorated, and he was shortly shot down in flames.

Cobleigh gives the reader an excellent story of a name that stands with Bleriot, Morane, Saulnier, and Moisant in the pantheon of French aviation. But his seamless blending of fact and fiction limits the book's use as a serious research tool. As for the text, Cobleigh's editorial team did him no favors. Edith Berg became Ester Berg; the Bayeux Tapestry became the Bayonne Tapestry. Paragraph breaks appear randomly throughout the text, in mid-word or mid-sentence. Spelling errors abound. Cobleigh adds to the problem by weaving in some not necessarily needed, titillating anecdotes. Still, the book is a very enjoyable read that gives one a newfound respect for Roland Garros, his life, and his accomplishments.

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Modern USMC Air Power Aircraft and Units of the Flying 'Leathernecks.' By Joe Copalman. Vienna, Austria: Harpia Publishing, 2020. Tables. Photographs. Notes. Sources. Appendices. Glossary. Pp. 253. $59.95 paperback. ISBN: 978-1-950394-02-9

This is an excellent and very comprehensive book. Copalman's coverage runs the gamut from an overview of USMC aviation units and the organizational structure of Marine aviation, to a history of aviation within the Corps, to a detailed overview of the aircraft flown during the 2000s (both manned and unmanned). His writing style is easy to follow. He intermixes technical jargon and details with personal experiences from Marines representing a number of disciplines.

The book follows a topical organization starting with an introduction to the overall subject, a section on Corps-aviation organization, twelve chapters on the different missions (e.g., attack, fighter, helicopters, test and evaluation), and then concludes with a very short chapter about the future of aviation in the Marine Corps.

What makes this book so valuable is its detailed coverage of all aspects of USMC air. Readers not overly familiar with Marine aviation will learn how the Corps operates from both land and sea bases. They will see how tests and evaluations of the many different platforms are accomplished and look at operations of both manned and unmanned aircraft. Everything about Marine aviation from helicopters to fighters to KC–130 tankers is tailored to support the ground component. As a ground-centric Marine officer long ago wrote, "The only excuse for aviation in any Service is its usefulness in assisting the troops on the ground to successfully carry out their operations." This is largely true for the Corps; therefore, how air assets communicate and cooperate with Marines on the ground is a huge part of the story. The mission of the forward air controller (in the Corps, JTAC—Joint Terminal Attack Controller) is critical. Copalman covers this well, including changes brought in by digitization and linked video feeds. He also exposes readers to developments of the less-often discussed world of electronic warfare, a discipline that

plays an important role on today's battlefield and has driven many changes over the last two decades.

Copalman guides the reader through twenty years (2000-2019) of USMC airpower in transition. The Corps operates a wide range of fixed-wing, rotary-wing, tiltrotor, and unmanned aircraft. There have been resultant changes in both organizations and hardware. Copalman tells the significance of each change. Some, such as conversion from the KC–130T to the KC–130J or from the AH-1W to the AH-1Z, were incremental, evolutionary steps. On the other hand, introduction of F–35 Lightning II revolutionized the way the USMC can fight. He looks at what each legacy aircraft did or could do and how the successor is leveraging the past to improve upon previous capabilities. In the end, the purpose is still to support Marine riflemen.

This book was written between the summers of 2019 and 2020. In that period the Corps published many new policies and acquisition plans. So this book is current and includes a discussion on implications of the current Commandant's, General Berger, visions for a new and leaner Corps.

This book is timely, well-written, and informative. For those interested in Marine aviation and its role in the US military, it is well worth the time to read.

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Gloster Gladiator: Mk I and II (And Sea Gladiator). By Adam Cotton and Marek Ryś. Lubin, Poland: Kagero Publishing, 2019. Illustrations. Photographs. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. x, 216. $39.95 paperback. ISBN 978-83-65437-86-0

Gloster's Gladiator is the last biplane fighter to enter service in the Royal Air Force (RAF) and Fleet Air Arm (FAA) and one aircraft that should have never seen action during the Second World War. Developed in an era of reduced defense budgets and emerging aircraft and engine technologies during the inter-war years of the 1920s and 30s, the Gladiator was a stop-gap fighter. It was obvious among British Empire defense planners that monoplanes such as the Spitfire and Hurricane were indeed the future, but full production of those aircraft was still a few years off. While the RAF was still soldiering on with obsolescent Hawker Fury and Bristol Bulldog fighters, the German, Italian, and Japanese militaries were forging ahead. Although equipped with such modern features as an enclosed cockpit, flaps, radios, and wing-mounted machine guns, the Gladiator's outward appearance seemed more fitting for dogfighting Fokker D.VIIs and Pfalz D.XIIs in First World War skies. But it was, in fact, a stepping stone to more modern Second World War aircraft. Several future aces (e.g., South African AF Squadron Leader "Pat" Prattle, who got 26 confirmed kills in Gladiators, and RAF Squadron Leader "Cherry" Vale, who accounted for another ten) cut their teeth flying Gloster's biplane.

The chapters bring to life an aircraft overshadowed by Spitfires, Hurricanes, and Mosquitos. From the Gladiator's early development by Gloster aircraft designer Henry Philip Folland in 1934, to the aircraft's 1938 combat debut with the Chinese Nationalist Air Force against Japanese A5M *Claudes,* to its final battles in 1942 against the German and Italian air forces over the skies of the Mediterranean, Cotton and Ry do an excellent job of blending operational facts with technical details of this aircraft.

Gloster Gladiator is both well written and cited, using a variety of secondary resources to take an objective assessment of this unique aircraft's capabilities and its pilots' performance during the war. Cotton and Ry cover not only the aircraft's remarkable operational history (including the fact that RAF Pilot Officer and ace Roald Dahl, later the author of children's books such as *Charlie and Chocolate Factory* and *Matilda*, flew Gladiators before transferring to more-modern Hurricanes), but also clearly outlines the Gladiator's journey to its production in the waning days of the biplane era. Second-line duties and service with foreign air forces (e.g., Finland, Greece, and Norway) are also briefly covered. The book includes pages of lavish artwork and 3-D exploded views of the Gladiator, vividly bringing details of the aircraft to life.

Kagero Publishing has a reputation for quality publications. The only thing that distracts from the book are some photographs of aircraft and pilots being out of sequence with the chapters. This minor criticism should not dissuade anyone from reading this excellent book on one of the lesser-known airpower components of the Second World War.

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A–4 Skyhawk vs North Vietnamese AAA: North Vietnam 1964-72. By Peter E. Davies. New York: Osprey Publishing, 2020. Maps. Tables. Diagrams. Illustrations. Photographs. Illustrations. Index. Pp. 80. $22. ISBN: 978-1-47284079-0

With more than 30 titles to his credit concerning Vietnam and Cold War aircraft, Davies once again has plumbed his information warehouse, churning out one of the more recent entries in Osprey Publishing's popular and slickly produced "duel" series. This effort is his seventh "duel" with a Vietnam theme. The others concerned aircraft pairings (e.g., F–4 vs. MiG–21) and aircraft vs. surface-to-air missiles (SAM) (e.g., F–105 vs. SA–2). In this volume, he emphasizes the capabilities of the Douglas A–4 Skyhawk light-attack aircraft and the U.S. Navy's efforts to suppress enemy air defenses, particularly anti-aircraft artillery

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