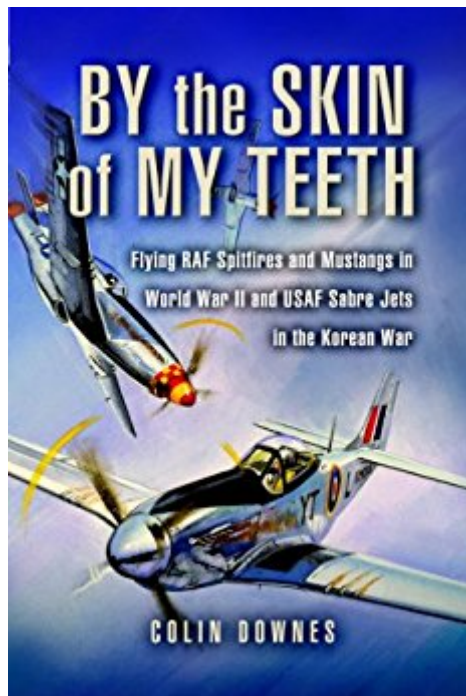


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By The Skin Of My Teeth: The Memoirs Of An RAF Mustang Pilot In World War II And Of Flying Sabres With USAF In Korea



Synopsis

This is a memoir of flying with the Royal Air Force in war and peace during a career in military and civil aviation covering a half century. The text is filled with personal experiences, reminiscences and impressions and is written in four parts. Part One covers the years leading to the author's graduation and the winning of his RAF Wings. This is followed by action-packed stories of flying propeller-driven fighters, Spitfires and Mustangs, during and just after the Second World War. The author then tells of his unique experiences of front-line fighter operations when he flew jets with the United States Air Force during the Korean War. The final chapter covers the remainder of his RAF Service flying until retirement.

Book Information

File Size: 3599 KB

Print Length: 224 pages

Publisher: Pen and Sword Aviation (January 19, 2006)

Publication Date: June 25, 2013

Sold by:Â Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00DN5TX8E

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #360,174 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #25

inÂ Books > History > Military > Korean War > Aviation #49 inÂ Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks >

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Customer Reviews

This book takes the reader from a young man's 15 year old school days thru his retirement. It covers Tiger Moths in training to supersonic fighter jets as the author progresses in his career. A good read for a the technical oriented as well as the author addresses many technical issues in a very readable manner that most folks do not think about. I loved it.

This book contains the best descriptions of what it was like to actually fly these historic aircraft that I have ever read. The comparison between spitfire and mustang is especially fascinating. It is a modest, self effacing account, the latter parts dealing with the RAF transition to jet aircraft being just as fascinating as the war time section. In addition, Colin Downes must have been an exceptional pilot to take instructor duties right after attaining his wings, however desperate the need for instructors at the time. I started reading this sort of memoir following the death of my uncle, a ww2 bomber pilot. I wanted to know more about what he had done and how he had lived than he was prepared to pass on in his lifetime. Colin Downes' book is the best of the many I have thus far read.

If you like autobiographies by warriors then this is a must 'read'. It's as good as it can get. Born at the right time to experience wood & fabric to supersonic. It's not so much a book about aerial daring-do as it is a book about, timing, skill, luck, and chance. I was fascinated by his comparison of British vs American fighter design and his addressing of post war British jet fighters. There is a lot to learn in this book. As an example, he explains why Sabre's were able to sneak up on a MiG 15's tail despite the fact that the MiG had a bubble canopy... stuff like that.

A very interesting tale by a (noticeably literary) British pilot who flew fighters of both American and British make in WW2 and Korea and then stayed on to experience the emerging breed of jet fighters with his colleagues from both nations. There are plenty of dangerous and exciting missions, including realistic visualisations of the NATO-inspired culture among combat aircrew of the Cold War. Author Colin Downes did well to include a very brief HOTAS description of all the most interesting world famous piston and jet fighters of the 1944-1966 that he flew (the Mustang, Spitfire, F-86, Hunter for example), in a language that avoids technicalities. What I found additionally valuable (because of his solid facts and insight) was the author's embedded sidebars on important major world crises that his generation experienced during the years that span this book: the strategic bombing campaign, the nuclear strikes on Japan, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Suez Crisis and the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Buy this book if you wish to have a very interesting and smoothly written RAF-USAF fighter-pilot-book on your shelf.

I did not think much of this, too much technical comparisons between aircraft and not enough personal experiences. A lot of the aircraft comparisons the average person would not understand and some of it just went on for pages at a time. A bit disappointing.

I like to read books where pilots describe their experiences. This one has not failed me, it's full of interesting war stories and captures the atmosphere of what it was like to be a fighter pilot. Well recommended!

Very insightful view of his career of flight and good descriptions of planes and their good and bad characteristics in which he flew. This man flew in many conflicts and did survive many times by the skin of his teeth, very good read.

Written in a very off the cuff style with hardly any direct interaction with another person, this very detailed account of an amazing flying career is very good reading. It is not one that you can't put down however it is very informative and unique in its depth of experiences.

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