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The Big E: The Story Of The USS Enterprise (Bluejacket Books)



Synopsis

A lasting memorial to the USS Enterprise, this classic tale of the carrier that contributed more than any other single warship to the naval victory in the Pacific has remained a favorite World War II story for more than twenty-five years. The Big E participated in nearly every major engagement of the war against Japan and earned a total of twenty battle stars. The Halsey-Doolittle Raid; the Battles of Midway, Santa Cruz, Guadalcanal, the Philippine Sea, and Leyte Gulf; and the invasions of Iwo Jima and Okinawa are all faithfully recorded from the viewpoint of the men who served her so well. The author, a naval aviator, focuses on the exploits of the famous ship's air groups, capturing the reality of their encounters and provoking a range of emotions from readers. This superb study of a great ship, her crew, and the action they saw has been called one of the finest pieces of naval writing to emerge from the war. What it is like inside the cockpit of a Dauntless dive bomber as it bores in on its target or the effort required to unstick the ship's huge rudder when damaged by a bomb are just two of the nuggets Edward Stafford mined from the mountain of research and lengthy interviews he conducted to write the book. Literate and scholarly as well as highly dramatic, the book will appeal to historians and the general public alike.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

CDR. Edward Peary Stafford, USN (Ret.) (1918–2013) was a naval aviator. He wrote for Naval History and Proceedings, as well as for National Geographic. He is best known for The Big E and

four other books on naval history: Subchaser; Little Ship, Big War; The Saga of DE-343, and The Far and the Deep.

I love the subject and I love the book. In researching my own Enterprise history (Simon & Schuster, 2012) I was fortunate to exchange several emails with Ed Stafford, who could not have been more supportive. He would be delighted with the Naval Institute illustrated edition, made possible in part by Enterprise Rent A Car, which was founded by Jack Taylor who flew Hellcats from The Big E in 1944. For starters, it's a big, good-looking volume about 9x12 and 1 1/4 inch thick. The 560 pages are printed on high-quality paper that handles illustrations extremely well. Probably more than 300 photos are distributed throughout the text, including color charts depicting the climactic event of 14 May 45 when LtJG Tomiyasu (aka "Tomi Zai") performed a split-S into the forward elevator and knocked CV-6 out of the war. I still wonder what I should do with the 50-sen note taken from his pocket by an Enterprise sailor. In addition to Stafford's literate prose--which became a model for me and for others--the book's historiography enhances the larger story. Paul Stilwell's 1988 interview with Stafford and Naval Institute's description of the team that produced the new edition are valuable sources themselves. Flipping through those hundreds of pages and images, I cannot help recalling the Big E veterans who came to mean so much to me: Dick Best, Red Carmody, Bill Martin, Arne Olson, Jig Dog Ramage, Swede Vejtasa, and so many others. Theirs was a vital band of warriors who in Jig's words, "Made their hands and feet work" when it counted most. A big Bravo Zulu to Naval Institute for producing a marvelous tribute to the men, the ship, and the legend that became The Big E.

First published back in 1957, just as the pioneering aircraft carrier was sadly being broken up, this portrait of the ship and her crew (both sailing and flying) has now been reissued in a large-format and fully-illustrated version, including some period color photos. Stafford relates the whole story of CV-6 which took part in virtually every important battle of the 1941-45 Pacific War. The focus is on the men, and especially the pilots of the Dauntless, Devastator, Corsair, Wildcat and Hellcat fighter aircraft. It's hard to believe this carrier weighed in at only a fifth the weight of a modern nuclear carrier. The original book (Random House) included some photos and a few maps, while the new one--publication of which was underwritten by Enterprise rent-a-car--adds hundred more and additional maps. Only one drawback: it's a heavy sucker sitting in your lap! But it's worth it and this is the edition to own, read, and enjoy.

Wow! I've read the text edition, but this illustrated version is AMAZING. The text Mr. Stafford created those many years ago still reads true, but, now has some OUTSTANDING illustrations to go along with the prose. BUY IT...you will NOT be dissapointed

I received my copy of this book about four hours ago in the mail and simply cannot put it down. And I have no idea how they're going to get me to go into work tomorrow! What a beautiful book. I have read Commander Stafford's book four times in the past (I have the old Ballantine paperback edition) and I always thought it a pity that the maps were so few and unreadable. And no photographs! Virtually every fault I found in the old paperback has been remedied, along with a new introduction, new appendices and a new index. The USNI Press has done a wonderful job putting together the ultimate history of this magnificent ship and her wonderful crew. I have been a student of military history for nearly sixty years, and over those years I fell in love with this ship, and I have always wondered why She was never preserved. If any ship ever deserved it, it was the USS Enterprise. Here's to a gallant ship and an Unbeatable crew. I doubt we will see their likes again. Thank You USNI. This is the closest we'll see to the USS Enterprise preserved. If You love history, or just the Enterprise, do Yourself a huge favor and buy this book now. You won't regret it!

I bought this for my husband for a birthday present because he served on "The Big E" for 4 years in the 70's. He loved it, but after reading it he was a bit disappointed that it mostly contained info on the original Big E and didn't contain much on the newer "Big E" that he served on. But he said that it was a great read with many good stories of the experiences aboard the ship.

This is the definitive history of a Great ship of WW II. Now out in hard back, and illustrated as well this book is a treasure for any WW II buff. I highly recommend it, as sadly the ship itself is gone. Shame on us! The name however, lives on as CVN-80 is to be named for her famous predecessors

CDR Stafford's "The Big E" has to be one of the easiest books to review imaginable. It is simply the finest ship's history ever written about and American war vessel. The story of the USS Enterprise encompasses all but the last few months of World War II and is therefore also an outstanding look at all the major battles of the Pacific war. The book benefits (as so many "war books" don't) from an author with an excellent command of the English language who brings a tale of warfare to life as few others have. The Enterprise, the most destructive naval vessel in the history of the world, deserved a book like this. I have gone through several copies of this book, and am always buying it for friends

because it is just top quality first page to last.

Excellent book, great pictures, a must read for anyone looking for the history of this great ship...my only critique is it is more focused on the air crews and their action...but then again, the air wing was the striking arm of the ship...

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