



Flying Tigers: Claire Chennault and His American Volunteers, 1941-1942

By Daniel Ford

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During World War II, in the skies over Rangoon, Burma, a handful of American pilots met and bloodied the "Imperial Wild Eagles" of Japan and in turn won immortality as the Flying Tigers. One of America's most famous combat forces, the Tigers were recruited to defend beleaguered China for \$600 a month and a bounty of \$500 for each Japanese plane they shot down—fantastic money in an era when a Manhattan hotel room cost three dollars a night.

To bring his prize-winning history of the American Volunteer Group up to date, Daniel Ford has completely rewritten his 1991 text, drawing on the most recent U.S., British, and Japanese scholarship. New material from AVG veterans—including Erik Shilling and Tex Hill—help fill out the story, along with newfound recollections from Japanese and New Zealand airmen. Ford also takes up the rumors that Royal Air Force pilots "sold" combat victories to the Flying Tigers in order to share in the bounties paid by the Chinese government.

"Admirable," wrote Chennault biographer Martha Byrd of Ford's original text. "A readable book based on sound sources. Expect some surprises." Even more could that be said of this new and more complete edition.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Many books, articles, films, and TV productions have appeared on the legendary exploits of the Flying Tigers, General Chennault's small band of U.S. Army and Navy pilots recruited to fly for China in 1941. This is not another laudatory work. The author tries to strip away many of the legends surrounding the Group. There were never more than 100 pilots (not 200). Some of them enlisted for adventure and some for patriotic reasons. The majority were attracted by the salary--\$500 per month plus a bonus for every enemy plane destroyed--much more than they could earn in the peacetime Army. Most served out their year's contract, collected that money, and went home. Contrary to popular opinion, they were not fighting the Japanese before America entered the war. They did not see action until December 7th. The Group destroyed 115 enemy planes and lost 22. Actually they had little influence on the outcome of World War II; but 50 years later the publicity rolls on. A worthwhile addition to aviation and World War II collections. P.S., John Wayne never served with the Flying Tigers. For a roundup of books on Pearl Harbor and the Pacific War, see "Day of Infamy in Print," LJ 9/1/91, p. 206-7.--Ed.
- Stanley Itkin, *Hillside P.L., New Hyde Park, N.Y.*
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Review

"Every page contains a new tidbit of information and rich, long-forgotten detail.... A riveting read." -- *World War II History, November 2007*

"A worthwhile addition to aviation and World War II collections." -- *Library Journal, September 1, 1991*

Having been a fan of the Flying Tigers since I saw the John Wayne movie as a kid, I picked up this updated version of their impressive combat history. One of the most interesting aspects of Ford's well-researched book is its in-depth coverage of 1st American Volunteer Group (AVG) personnel, an odd lot of rugged individualists. --Col. Gordon Keiser, United States Naval Institute 'Proceedings', February 2010

In this second edition of his 'revisionist' history masterpiece, Daniel Ford tightens up the tale ... and adds dramatic new details. -- *JDR on SeacoastNH, August 18, 2007*

"A first-rate history." --Boston Globe

"A major contribution to the history of the air war in the Pacific." --Don Lopez, US Army 23rd Fighter Group Flying Tigers

"Admirable--a readable book based on sound sources. Expect a few surprises." --Air Power Historian

"Meticulously researched, carefully documented." --Washington Times

"Totally engrossing--just like reliving those days fifty years ago." --Robert Neale, AVG 1st Squadron

"War history as it should be written." --The Hook

"Without question, the most readable and complete account of the AVG yet written." --Thomas Norton in *Air & Space / Smithsonian*

"In this vivid and fact-filled historical account of aerial combat, Daniel Ford completely updates and revises his 1991 work describing the extraordinary accomplishments of the pilots and support crews of the 1st American Volunteer Group (AVG) in the earliest days of World War II....

"The author's depictions of air combat are especially gripping, often describing individual pilots flying for both sides, while providing ample technical information on the types of aircraft in the engagements. Of course the primary characters are all here, from Chennault, a chain-smoking, tough, and innovative leader, to pilots Tex Hill, Eddie Rector, and Greg Boyington (later of VMF-214 "Black Sheep" fame). Ford's history is serious, but it is also rich with stories about this colorful and adventurous group, including the beautiful and mysterious Olga Greenlaw, wife of the AVG's executive officer.

"While correcting some errors and omissions, Ford stands his ground on the most controversial viewpoint expressed in his 1991 edition - that the Flying Tigers' claimed official record of 296 combat victories (including aircraft destroyed on the ground) was greater than what they actually achieved. Citing comprehensive research into the historical records of all involved, Ford makes a good case that because of the predictable stress, fear, and chaos involved in vicious aerial combat, the AVG's reported victories were inflated over a true figure likely closer to 115.

"Ford's book, then, is not a glorification of the Flying Tigers, but its meticulous examination of their genuine and courageous achievements pays them greater homage than the numbers would, however tallied. Ford closes his book with these words: "More than sixty years ago, in their incandescent youth, they were heroes to a nation that needed heroes. . . . All honor to them." Indeed, and acclaim to Daniel Ford for his thorough telling of an eventful war in the air, one that should be remembered."

--William Calhoun

From the Author

This early edition of Ford's prize-winning history of the Flying Tigers is out of print. Search the Amazon store for **0692734732** for the revised and updated third edition.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Gilbert Johnson:

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