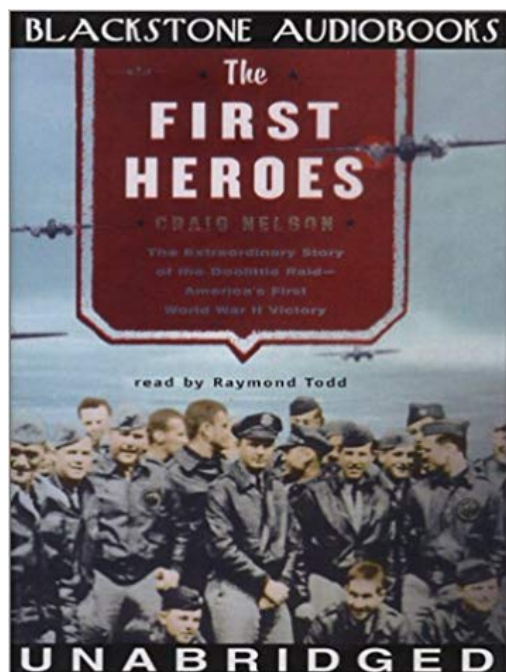


The First Heroes: Library Edition by Raymond Todd, Craig Nelson



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Immediately after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt sought to restore the honor of the United States with a dramatic act of vengeance: a retaliatory bombing raid on Tokyo itself. At his bidding, a squadron of scarcely trained army fliers, led by the famous daredevil Jimmy Doolittle, set forth on what everyone regarded as a suicide mission. Their extraordinary success led directly to what every historian now believes was the turning point in the war against Japan, and helped convince the nation and the world that the Allies might eventually triumph. A true account that almost defies belief, *The First Heroes* is a tremendous human drama of great personal courage and a powerful reminder that ordinary people, when faced with extraordinary circumstances, can rise to the challenge of history.



Reviews of the [The First Heroes: Library Edition](#) by Raymond Todd, Craig Nelson

BØØØØ BØØØØ

An excellent look into Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle and his flying Raiders who launched an astounding mission into the heart of Tokyo, with the first Army bombers ever to take off from an aircraft carrier, and doing so far ahead of schedule when a Japanese picket boat or two threatened to give away the location of the task force. Faced with gas shortages and unaware of whether they'd reach friendly territory or not, these men didn't put much of a dent on Tokyo with their 16 bombers, but made the Japanese realize for the first time that their winning streak would soon be over with this first raid over the Japanese homeland.

Doolittle was given a double-promotion to Brigadier General for this, and the Medal of Honor when Doolittle was worried at one point after his crash-landing about if he'd be court-martialed or not for the outcome.

One crew managed to land in Russian territory, where they were given a cool reception and practically treated as prisoners by a country that was supposedly our ally, but they managed to get their way out of Russia safely in the end.

Other crews were helped by the Chinese after they made it on the ground and spirited away from prying Japanese patrols, who introduced a new wave of slaughter into that part of China for the crime of helping the American fliers.

Others just weren't that lucky and were captured by the Japanese, some of them executed, the rest starved and tortured for the rest of the war, told by their captors that if Japan lost the war, those fliers would be executed anyway.

This is their story.

Xaluenk

In less than six months after the Day of Infamy at Pearl Harbour in December 1941, Doolittle lead 16 converted light bombers off the carrier Hornet to attack the main island of Japan. Forced to take off earlier than planned when an enemy fishing / watch boat was sighted, the raiders attacked their targets with such surprise that all 16 escaped - to a long flight at night to China where they had to bail out as their fuel ran dry. This book covers the selling of a really crazy plan, the preparation under great secrecy and the assistance of the Chinese people in rescuing many of the survivors. It is very detailed and offers a first hand account of every element of the mission, and is a very good read. For those who have never heard of this first strike back against Japan, it is well worth buying.

Lli

I learned things from this book that I was certainly NEVER taught in school. I was particularly unawares of how unprepared for war we were. It also shows a clearer picture of how war really unfolds and the multiple challenges related to it. Frankly, it has given me a new appreciation for celebrating Veteran's Day!

Gardagar

Love reading about the Doolittle Raid

Gogul

Great

Carrot

I originally bought this to go with Destination Tokyo: A Pictorial History of Doolittle's Tokyo Raid, April 18, 1942 by Stephen Cohen (which I highly recommend). Both are on the Doolittle Raider store website of book references, not for sale, but as a source to look at. I bought this because it had four references to a family relative, including a piece of information I had not read in newspaper articles. It also has extensive story information about another local Raider I never met, but heard about from family member as someone to speak with. He passed away unfortunately. I am grateful to both books to have good photos and story information about what the Raiders went through. I don't know much about technical military information. I appreciate reviewer comments about how book needed more review, and perhaps someone will take heart to have it reviewed and print a revised edition someday. That would be great! For the stories of the Raiders themselves, I think this is still a useful book. I appreciate the maps especially. I found it fascinating that our family relative and the other local Raider both landed in the same province. What a coincidence. One group were captured and one wasn't even though they landed just a few miles away from the enemy. It is funny how history twists. I am listening to the audio with the book. I do agree there may be an overuse of the term "billy", that I would not have noticed without one of the knowledgeable reviewers commenting on. This book still has a lot of worthwhile stuff in it for reference. A lot of the Raiders went onto other even more adventures. This was just the start of the war. This book provides what happened to them at the time it was published. It does need to be updated as last April of 2015 is when the last two Raiders drank a toast.

Andromakus

Evaluating this book is difficult. It has some very good strengths and some glaring weaknesses. On the one hand, it is an exceptionally well-written and comprehensive account of the Doolittle Raid. Nelson, using a number of interviews, develops fully the personalities of the various veterans on that mission. He is particularly good about doing so with Doolittle who died before he started this project.

On the other hand, there is nothing particularly new about this book. His thesis that the raiders "were the first American heroes of the war" is correct but fairly obvious. Nelson has looked at almost no original source material. His interviews were conducted 50 years after the fact and memories fade with time. The organization of the book leaves something to be desired. Nelson gets going with his narrative, then stops to provide background and then the process starts all over again. He often uses the wrong terms. Most glaringly, calling the U.S. Army Air Forces the "Air Corps," an old term that was dropped before Pearl Harbor. In short, if you have read a lot on the war, all of what Nelson has to say will be familiar to you. If not, this might be a good book to read.

This is the most thorough book on the Doolittle raid I have seen.

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