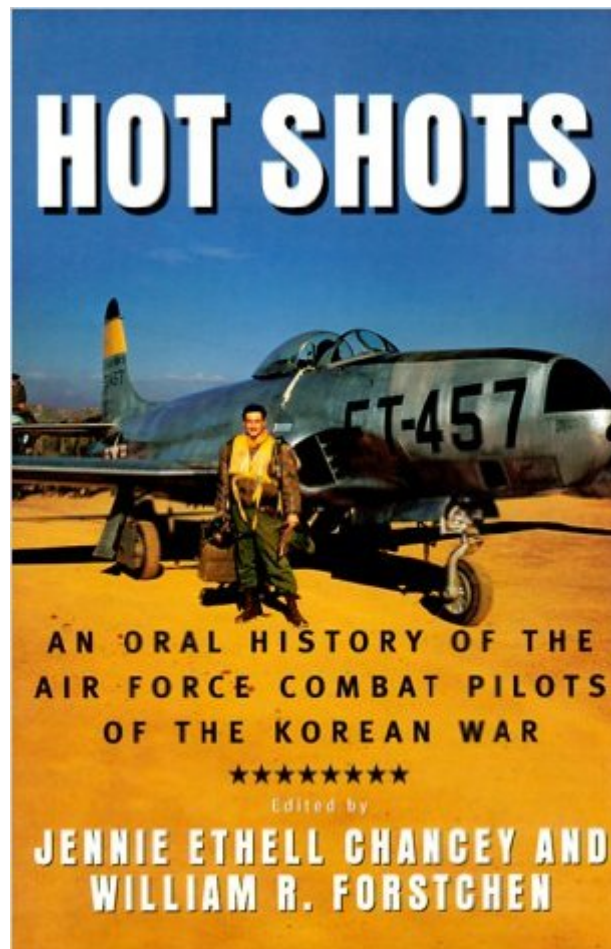


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Hot Shots: An Oral History Of The Air Force Combat Pilots Of The Korean War



Synopsis

Known as the "Forgotten War," the Korean War heralded a new era of warfare--one where countries from around the world struggled over the fate of a relatively small peninsula jutting into the Sea of Japan. Between 1950 and 1953, more than fifty thousand Americans gave their lives in pursuit of democracy for the Korean people. The Korean War was also the proving ground for post-World War II aviation, when the first generation of jet aircraft took to the skies to tangle in deadly combat. It was the battlefield of Sabres and MiGs, American Hot Shots and Communist Honchos. And more than ever before, control of the skies meant victory or failure in the ground war raging below. Now, fifty years after the war's outbreak, Hot Shots captures the voices of the original top guns, the pilots who flew Mustangs, Sabres, and Shooting Stars and confronted a superior number of enemy aircraft. Among the men who tell their stories are Lieutenant Colonel Duane E. "Bud" Biteman, one of the first fliers in the war; Lieutenant General Frederick "Boots" Blesse, double ace who led efforts to refine tactical training for the new jet pilots; Colonel Cecil Foster, who fought in one of the longest-running air-to-air jet encounters; and Colonel Harold Fischer, a double-ace flier who was captured behind enemy lines and held as a POW until 1955, two years after the official end of the war. Editors Chancey and Forstchen combine these compelling firsthand accounts with dozens of never-before-published photographs of air force pilots at work, as well as a history of the major events of the war. Hot Shots brings to vivid life the risk, dedication, and bravery of these forgotten heroes. May their sacrifice not be in vain.

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Customer Reviews

As a former Department of the Air Force historian, I know full well the values and dangers of oral history. The supreme value of oral history is that it comes straight from primary sources: those who actually witnessed historical events. The supreme danger is that these accounts sometimes can involve faulty recollections or a lack of understanding of broader events. Yet, actually having written accounts based from oral interviews, I know that with proper editing and a broad scope of interview subjects, you can come up with a fascinating account. Sadly, *Hot Shots* by Chancey and Forstchen falls short of the mark. This book is marketed as being "An Oral History of Air Force Combat Pilots of the Korean War." However, it is apparent from the accounts in the book that the editors interviewed a limited number and scope of pilots. The book is far too slanted towards the accounts of F-51 Mustang pilots for it to be considered a comprehensive oral history of ALL Air Force combat pilots. For instance, F-84 fighter-bombers were heavily engaged in Korea, but they get scant mention in this book. The editors do a good job of introducing individual points of the war with background information. Sadly, however, several background chapters do not include any interviews from those periods! In addition, the editors continue to make points over and over: the horrific UN withdrawal after the Chinese invasion; American POWs being left behind at war's end. These points are valid, but they need not be repeated after their first mention. Instead of an oral history, the book seemed to become the editors' take on the Korean War. The book itself is at its strongest when the actual pilots give their accounts.

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