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VF-11/111 ‘Sundowners’ 1942–95 (Aviation Elite Units)



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Synopsis

Fighting Squadron 11 was established at San Diego in August 1943, beginning a half-century record that spanned aerial combat in three wars from the piston to the jet age. First deployed to Guadalcanal, the 'Sundowners' flew Grumman Wildcats and completed its tour as the Navy's third-ranking F4F squadron in terms of aerial victories. Upon returning home, the 'Sundowners' transitioned to Hellcats in preparation for a second combat deployment. In 1944-45 the squadron flew from USS Hornet (CV-12), participating in the fast carrier strikes against the Philippines, Formosa and the Asian mainland. It finished the war as the Navy's 11th ranking fighter squadron with 158 credited victories. Redesignated VF-111 in 1948, the 'Sundowners' converted to F9F Panthers and scored history's first jet-versus-jet victory over Korea in 1950. After the armistice, the squadron flew FJ-3 Furies and F11F Tigers, before receiving the world-class F8U Crusader in 1961. During the long Vietnam War, the 'Sundowners' logged six deployments, scoring MiG kills in both F-8s and F-4 Phantom IIs. From 1978 to disestablishment in 1995, the 'Sundowners' flew F-14 Tomcats from USS Kitty Hawk (CV-63) and Carl Vinson (CVN-70), completing a record of 37 deployments from 17 flattops in its 52-year career. From World War 2 until after the Cold War, the 'Sundowners' established an unsurpassed record 'at the tip of the spear' in naval aviation history.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“This latest effort packs a lot of information into a relatively small space... Although the squadron has seen its last sunset, its rich and glorious history is preserved in this fine book.”

Ãçâ –â çCDR Peter Mersky, The Hook (Summer 2010)

Barrett Tillman is a professional author and speaker (History Channel's Dogfights) and has received five awards for history and literature. He learned to fly at age 16 in 1965, and has logged more than 500 hours in historic and current naval aircraft. His longtime affiliation with VF-11/111 pilots led to his being designated an honorary 'Sundowner' - a status he enjoys with two other Navy squadrons. Among more than 40 books, Tillman has written 6 other titles for Osprey. The author lives in Mesa, Arizona.

Great research to include this important era of the Sundowners.

A nice look into one of the US Navy's most famous fighter squadrons. Few squadron if any squadrons in the American armed services can lay claim to serving in the three of America's most important wars. I like the detail put into VF-11/-111's missions, a few standing out more than others. The description of the new tactics and procedures used for jet aircraft on carriers was interesting to read. I recognize many of the names in this book: Charlie "Skull" Stimpson, Joseph "Roadrunner" Satrapa, Tooter Teague, to name a few. There is a very slight hiccup in the WWII incarnation's aerial losses and victories. It is mentioned that the Sundowners lost 12 Wildcats and 7 Hellcats to enemy fighters, but a page later the total lost is said to be 17. Maybe it was a mistake on the editors part, but it was something I caught. Again nothing too major. I have to admit it was kind of sad, seeing various squadrons with long distinguished histories get knocked off near the end including the SUndowners, but at least the legacy does live on in sense with VFC-111.

On page 99 of the book, I actually work with Bill Freckleton at Edwards Air Force Base. I had been shown this book by another person and when I saw the photo with Bill I had to get the book. I got him to autograph the book and we talked about his experiences with the Sundowner's and it was cool to see his eyes brighten reliving his time and the fact someone appreciated what he did and what he does now with flight test of the new fighters.

If you are an admirer of Naval Aviation, Sundowners is a must have and must read! Barrett Tillman, a great historian and terrific writer with co-author Henk vander Lugt bring alive this storied squadron from F4F to F14 and beyond; basically the history of Naval Aviation and Grumman from the Wildcat of 1942 to retirement of the Tomcat. The photos and plates are breathtaking in themselves and

bring alive a very colorful, descriptive text. Words and photos drive home the debt we owe to so many who sacrificed their lives, often without any trace, to give our wonderful country and the world the freedoms we enjoy today.

I loved the history of the squadron and memories of the men I knew during Vietnam.

Excellent history of VF111. I was loaned to VF111 as an AT3 during the first Korean war cruise. The book does a good job of describing how things were at that time.

Having spent 10 years in this squadron, I found the book a great read. It is very well written and as much as I already knew about the squadron I learned a lot. A must read for anyone who has an interest in naval aviation. A lot of nostalgia for me.

Great product and a great vendor

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