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Hoffman, Richard A. *The Fighting Flying Boat: A History of the Martin PBM Mariner*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2004.

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When most of us think of World War II flying boats, we usually envision Catalinas or Sunderlands carrying out reconnaissance or anti-submarine patrols over vast expanses of blue sea and sky. Richard Hoffman adjusts this perception in his book about the PBM Mariner, an aircraft equipping more US flying boat squadrons than the venerable Catalina and accounting for ten German U-boats during the Battle of the Atlantic. Readers desiring a thorough, single-volume account of the Mariner's development, wartime employment, and even non-combat roles will be pleased with this book.

Hoffman, a retired US Navy Captain and former Mariner pilot, flew this aircraft during the Korean War as a member of Patrol Squadron 892/50. His book traces how the US Navy employed its 1,367 PBMs in both the Atlantic and Pacific theaters of World War II—roles that included search and rescue, logistic support, night attacks against surface ships and, of course, reconnaissance and anti-submarine warfare. Mariner squadrons made a valuable contribution to the Battle of the Atlantic, sinking more U-boats than “any other land-based type of aircraft” (p. 32) and participating in every Pacific campaign from January 1944 until the end of the war. During the Korean War, Mariners flew low-level night patrols and rescue missions, while dodging attacks from

Chinese MIGs. Hoffman even devotes chapters to foreign Mariner service, post-war commercial uses, and seaplane tenders. His appendix lists Mariner casualties from 1941 through 1959.

Although a former pilot of the PBM with many friends in the veteran community, Hoffman is not afraid to criticize the Navy for the Mariner's shortcomings. The 1944 PBM-5 version of the Mariner finally solved an engine power deficiency with the addition of the Pratt and Whitney R-2800 engine.

Hoffman bases most of this well-written book on personal correspondence with veterans and articles from the newsletter of the Mariner/Marlin Association. Throughout the book he mentions accessing official US Navy records from the Naval Historical Center and elsewhere, but no listing of archival sources appears in the bibliography and the publisher chose not to employ references in the text. Nevertheless, the anecdote-sprinkled narrative makes for a colorful story of an aircraft that accomplished more than we tend to remember. There are a handful of excellent photographs of the subject aircraft in the volume, but this is no coffee table book. Hoffman's attempt to tell the story of a single weapon system and the crews who employed it is largely successful and worthy of a place on every naval aviation enthusiast's bookshelf. The author certainly convinced this reviewer that the last surviving Mariner flying boat—on display at the Pima Air Museum in Tucson, Arizona—is worth a visit.



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