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Thomas Wildenberg, *All the Factors of Victory: Admiral Joseph Mason Reeves and the Origins of Carrier Warfare*. Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 2003. Pp. xiv, 235, Illustrations.

Reviewed by Edgar F. Raines, Jr.

U.S. Army Center of Military History

In *All the Factors of Victory*, Thomas Wildenberg, an experienced naval historian, has written the first biography of a fascinating but little-known pioneer in U.S. Naval aviation, Admiral Joseph Mason Reeves. Reeves was a brilliant, technically skilled sailor—a mesmerizing speaker but a clumsy writer. Perhaps for that reason little of his correspondence has survived, and that which has deals almost exclusively with his career and his professional concerns. The result is a bas-relief portrait of a key figure in the modernization of the interwar fleet.

Reeves demonstrated his technical interests early in his career. An 1894 Annapolis graduate, “Bull” Reeves was the assistant engineer on the U.S.S. *Oregon* in the War with Spain in 1898. He removed the oil wicks in the *Oregon*’s engines, allowing oil to flow continuously over the bearings and giving the battleship the margin of speed it needed to overhaul the *Cristobal Colón*, when Admiral Pascual Cervera attempted to sortie from Santiago de Cuba .

After the war he gained a service-wide reputation as one of the exponents of the naval gunfire revolution, culminating in his invention of the Navy's first automatic calculator of rate of change of range to the target. His first independent command was a new coaler, the U.S.S. *Jupiter*, the first American warship equipped with turbo-electric drive. In successfully taking the *Jupiter* through her sea trials he also validated what would become the standard propulsion system of the twentieth century Navy.

A 1923 posting as a student at the Naval War College allowed Reeves to first study the impact of the aerial weapon on naval warfare. Aviation in the early 1920s was important because it gave the guns of friendly battleships markedly superior accuracy. The key became control of the air over the battle area, because it allowed unhampered aerial observation. To achieve this condition meant knocking out the enemy's carriers. Because war gaming suggested their inherent vulnerability to air attack, this implied that which ever side launched the first large-scale attack would succeed. Following a year as the director of the Department of Tactics at the war college, he transferred to aviation, rated as an aerial observer.

Reeves came to the position of Commander of Aircraft Squadrons, Battle Fleet (1925–29, 1930–31) with a definite agenda: How to make the airplane relevant to the fleet. To solve that conundrum he had to answer a myriad of other, more mundane questions. He did not know the answers to those questions, as he once famously remarked (Reeves' 1001 Questions), but he did propose to discover them in practice. In the process he developed procedures about how to organize a carrier deck crew, how to spot aircraft on a carrier's deck, how to launch and assemble a strike force, and how to organize and operate a carrier task force. He accomplished this despite formidable opposition, not the least of which came from old-time Navy fliers who thought him altogether cavalier about the inherent dangers of flight. Reeves, however, was adamant that naval aviation was going to be more than

a peacetime flying club. The magnitude of his achievement is measured by the fact that when he took charge, the U.S.S. *Langley* (the converted *Jupiter*), the U.S. Navy's first carrier, had never launched more than six aircraft at a time (and never carried more than eight to sea). Under Reeves the number of aircraft the *Langley* could launch at one time climbed to thirty-six.

The Navy rewarded Reeves with command of the battleships, U.S. Fleet (1933–34) and ultimately commander-in-chief, U.S. Fleet (1934–36). Recalled to active duty during World War II, Reeves served as a member of the Roberts Commission examining the Pearl Harbor disaster and as the Navy Representative in the Office of Lend Lease Administration, service that Wildenberg dismisses in a single, not very informative, paragraph. Reeves died in 1948.

This volume reflects great credit on the author's research skill in making sense of isolated scraps of information and blending them into a coherent whole. Wildenberg writes lucidly and the volume has a wonderful narrative flow. One of the few murky areas concerns command relationships. When Reeves first took over as commander of aircraft squadrons and the *Langley* was the only carrier in the fleet, Wildenberg does not make clear whether Reeves was also captain of the *Langley* or, if he was not, who was. Recently Clark Reynolds has suggested that Reeves' relationship with Rear Admiral William A. Moffat was even less harmonious than Wildenberg suggests, with Reeves angling to displace Moffat as chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics in 1929. But in a biography assembled from scraps, it is almost inevitable that some pieces will elude even the most diligent of researchers. This is an important book of great interest to students of the U.S. Navy, the development of military aviation, and the transformation of large, complex, organizations.



The Editors
International Journal of Naval History
editors@ijnhonline.org

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