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Clark G. Reynolds, *On the Warpath: Admiral Jocko Clark and the Fast Carriers*. Annapolis, Md. : United States Naval Institute Press, 2005. 560 pp. 47 photographs, maps, illustrations; includes a CD containing interviews with Admiral Clark. ISBN 1-59114-716-6

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Leadership in war is not a science. Some commanders have what it takes, some do not. Part Cherokee Oklahoma farm boy Joseph James 'Jocko' Clark had that vital quality, and he had it in spades. His hard driving, noisy, aggressive, in-your-face leadership made the second USS *Yorktown* a great ship in a matter of months. He was not content with getting the job done, he always wanted to be first, fastest, and do the most damage to the enemy. His success was built on individualism, initiative, instinct, and above all a refusal to be constrained by red tape and rules.

A most unlikely naval cadet Jocko was never entirely happy in the homogenising process of initial officer training. Instead he survived, despite being back termed for hazing, and quickly recovered any lost time when the United States joined the First World War. Always a practical man he learnt the business of leadership from his elders on a series of destroyer postings across the more disturbed areas of post war Europe. He chose fine officers to emulate, and decided to go flying. Having qualified as a pilot he proved to be both skilful and fortunate, with only one minor crash. As he rose in rank he revealed skills and competences that invariably surprised his more 'intellectual' superiors. Successive chiefs of BuAer William Moffett, and his one time captain Ernie King were quick to praise Clark. But there was always a nagging sense that he wasn't the type for senior posts. However, he survived the age of peacetime management, and was in the right place when America went to war.

He was under no illusions about what to expect. While serving as exec on the first *Yorktown* he visited the British carrier HMS *Illustrious*, then undergoing extensive repairs at Norfolk . The British flat top had survived six 1,000 pound bombs delivered by German Stukas. Jocko was astonished, and highly impressed by the damage control measures adopted. He tried to interest his fellow officers, ‘but they didn’t seem to get it.’ (p.140) He had a premonition that the *Yorktown* would be sunk. Promoted captain he left the ship to her fate, and delivered the new escort carrier *Suwannee* ahead of schedule, and made sure she took part in the North African Torch landings. Shortly after that he was posted to the new Essex class carrier USS *Yorktown* . By badgering and brow beating everyone from stores clerks to the CNO he got the ship to war on time, a very unusual feat, overtaking many of her sister ships in the race to see action. Finally the Navy realised why they had kept Jocko – he had the right stuff for war.

Hand picked staff, as often selected on a whim or first impression, helped him create a highly effective team, while a love of competition was instilled into the entire ship’s company, they had to be better than the rest, faster launches and landings, refuelling turn round, and first to find and strike the enemy. It is highly significant that Jocko was obsessive about cleanliness – his ship was the neatest and best organised, as well as the most effective. The linkage between a clean, well ordered ship, and outstanding performance in battle was well known in the age of sail, when British and American warships were maintained in spotless condition. War was no time to lower standards. However, he had his blind spots: ‘Jocko *hated* beards,’ (p.269.)

Jocko was not a peace time leader; he did not follow procedure and cared more about hurting the enemy than smooth relations with his superiors. He was very definitely not an intellectual - a class that had an alarmingly high failure rate as leaders in the Pacific, whatever their merits in peace and planning. It is revealing that he never attended the Naval War College – when the time came there was a war on, and he was too valuable to be shipped home to study theory. Jocko was the best practical carrier and carrier squadron commander the Navy had. When his more highly rated contemporaries fell by the wayside, unable to take hard decisions, or to think outside the box Jocko went from strength to strength. He and ‘Pete’ Mitscher made a winning team, and would have achieved far more without the hesitant leadership that allowed the Japanese to escape

annihilation at the Philippine Sea . Jocko worked on instinct –and he had very good instincts.

Clark cared about his people, pilots, staff, officers and crew. He rewarded those who showed initiative on the spot, and made sure everyone else knew why. He disdained regulations that hampered the war effort and any regulators who stood between him and the enemy. His ship was the best, and when he became an Admiral he went straight to carrier division command, and made sure his division was the best.

A nation at war needs men like Jocko. After the war he commanded a peace time squadron, but found his true vocation once again leading carriers off Korea . Dynamic, opinionated, self-important and occasionally verging on the ridiculous, Jocko infuriated class mate and CNO Forrest Sherman – but the navy needed both.

Like many great warriors Jocko was a lost soul once he took off his uniform. He married four times, the first marriage gave him two daughters, but the divorce settlement gave him ulcers, and kept him poor.

This book about a larger than life admiral was written by a larger than life historian. Clark Reynolds pioneered the study of American naval aviation back in the 1960s. After completing his Ph.D. which became *The Fast Carriers* he did duty as co-author of Jocko's memoirs! The connection was his uncle, who had been Jocko's Flag Lieutenant. Clark Reynolds brought a lifetime of learning to the task of giving this great officer his due, while gently deflating the bombastic pose that Jocko liked to strike. Sadly it was also Clark Reynold's last book - he died suddenly earlier this year. Clark left a rich legacy. In this book and its precursor *Admiral John H. Towers: The Struggle for Naval Air Supremacy* he examined the key themes of naval airpower from inception to the early 1950s linking the men with their role in the process. Towers was a pioneer and planner, Clark an organiser and a warrior. I opened this book hoping it would match the eloquence, insight, and expertise of its precursor. I need not have worried. Two very different men have received their due, and our understanding of how navies develop, think, organise and fight has been immeasurably enhanced. A great book, well worthy of its author, and its rumbustious subject.



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