

The Last Flight of Bomber 31: Harrowing Tales of American and Japanese Pilots Who Fought In World War II's Arctic Air Campaign

Ralph Wetterhahn

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Through meticulous research and unprecedented interviews with Japanese and American combatants, awardwinning author Ralph Wetterhahn provides a breathtaking account of the nose-to-tail air war between American and Japanese flyers above the Bering Sea. Dubbed riders of the "Empire Express," American pilots stationed in the Aleutians flew nine-hour missions, 1,500 miles round-trip in subzero temperatures, to bomb Japanese installations in the Kuril Islands. While on his ongoing quest to give a full account of MIAs and POWs, Wetterhahn investigated the crash sites of two Empire Express planes found in the Soviet Far East in 2000 and 2001, and here re-creates their crews' daunting exploits. With unrivaled mastery of aviation, warfare, and military forensic evidence, Wetterhahn rescues from obscurity the final moments of U.S. Navy pilot Walt S. Whitman, who made a forced landing with his crew on the Kamchatka Peninsula. He also details the missions flown by Japan's pilots and the fate of Japanese captured by the Soviets and interned in Siberia. This is a moving testament to the impulse to account for all servicemen left behind.



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