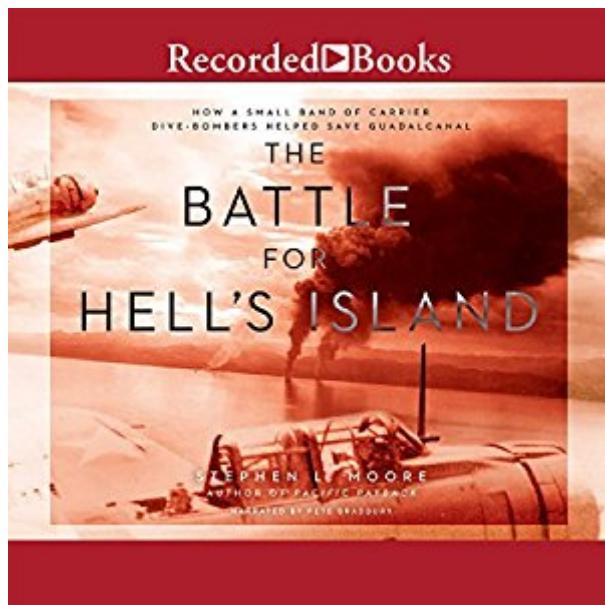


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# The Battle For Hell's Island: How A Small Band Of Carrier Dive Bombers Helped Save Guadalcanal



## Synopsis

From the author of *Pacific Payback* comes the gripping true story of the Cactus Air Force and how this rugged crew of dive bombers helped save Guadalcanal and won the war. November 1942: Japanese and American forces have been fighting for control of Guadalcanal, a small but pivotal island in Japan's expansion through the South Pacific. Both sides have endured months of grueling battle under the worst circumstances: hellish jungles, meager rations, and tropical diseases, which have taken a severe mental and physical toll on the combatants. The Japanese call Guadalcanal *Jigoku no Jima* - Hell's Island. Amid a seeming stalemate, a small group of US Navy dive bombers are called upon to help determine the island's fate. The men have until recently been serving in their respective squadrons aboard the USS Lexington and the USS Yorktown, fighting in the thick of the Pacific War's aerial battles. Their skills have been honed to a fine edge, even as injury and death inexorably have depleted their ranks. When their carriers are lost, many of the men end up on the USS Enterprise. Battle damage to that carrier then forces them from their home at sea to operating from Henderson Field, a small dirt-and-gravel airstrip on Guadalcanal. With some Marine and Army Air Force planes, they help form the Cactus Air Force, a motley assemblage of fliers tasked with holding the line while making dangerous flights from their jungle airfield. Pounded by daily Japanese air assaults, nightly warship bombardments, and sniper attacks from the jungle, pilots and gunners rarely last more than a few weeks before succumbing to tropical ailments, injury, exhaustion, and death. But when the Japanese launch a final offensive to take the island once and for all, these dive bomber jocks answer the call of duty - and try to perform miracles in turning back an enemy warship armada, a host of fighter planes, and a convoy of troop transports. A remarkable story of grit, guts, and heroism, *The Battle for Hell's Island* reveals how command of the South Pacific, and the outcome of the Pacific War, depended on control of a single dirt airstrip-and the small group of battle-weary aviators sent to protect it with their lives.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Had a teacher who was said to have been a pilot here. He would never mention it. Now I understand. Minimal supplies. Always on the verge of losing everything. Lots of heroism and few real hits on ships. Those that did were critical. Men and planes lost on ill advised missions. All in a battle we couldn't afford to lose. Maybe the book gets bogged down in the pilots and not the action, but plenty of that. Great read.

As the son of a USMC radio gunner in an SBD squadron from '42 to '45, I had to get this book. It is a terrific account of the battles and sacrifices during 1942 by Navy and Marine aviation units. Some military histories are done in a clinical manner providing minute details about the order of battle while others are just stories of the participants. Mr. Moore skillfully blends both together in his accounts of battles mostly in the Solomon Islands in '42. His detailed descriptions of what happened to entire units and individual flight crews are fascinating. There is detail here that you will never encounter in books on this subject. It's a really rich description of how a relatively small group of aircrew helped blunt the Japanese attempts at expansion. Given how few of these men remain, it is great that their stories have been recorded.

Good work concentrating on SBD units and their pilots. Worth the read.

In June, 1942, the American Navy had defeated a superior Japanese force at the Battle of Midway, sinking four of Japan's front-line aircraft carriers. Now, in August, 1942, the Japanese had begun construction of an airfield on the island of Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands. If this airfield was completed, the Japanese would be able to harass American supply lines to Australia and the surrounding areas. On August 7, 1942, American forces invaded the island in their first amphibious campaign of the war. The unfinished airfield was captured and named Henderson Field in honor of a Marine pilot killed at Midway. Soon, American planes began operating from Henderson Field. These fliers became known as the Cactus Air Force. Often flying against superior forces, these pilots

helped their Marine brethren on the ground. Many of these pilots were displaced from American aircraft carriers. During the course of the six-month-long battle, these fearless pilots destroyed scores of Japanese planes and helped sink numerous Japanese ships. Without the heroic action of these pilots, Guadalcanal might very well have been won by the Japanese. Author Stephen L. Moore has written an excellent book about these intrepid pilots. Starting out with the early carrier raids against the Marshalls and Gilberts islands, through the Coral Sea and Midway battles and up to Guadalcanal, Moore describes the rise of American carrier tactics against the Japanese. As in his earlier book "Pacific Payback", Moore describes every aspect of the battle, including testimonies of the pilots who flew from Guadalcanal. These men provided an invaluable service by fighting with battle-damaged aircraft on a daily basis while also enduring shelling, sniper attacks, and constant bombing by Japanese forces. These men were a huge part in the capture of Guadalcanal and the turning of the tide against the Japanese. Highly recommended.

I never realized how difficult it was for the marines to take an island..

I found the book a very good reference, and offered a unique perspective on Guadalcanal. It covers in great detail the individual members of the air groups on the early WWII carriers, as well as Coral Sea. It is not a chronology, as it doesn't really cover Midway. That said, it really gets into the depths of the daily life of the pilots and crew of those pilots who ultimately played a huge part in holding Guadalcanal, and even to how the lack of food and sleep impacted their daily performance.

Definitely worth reading.

I have found in this book many minor details that were skipped in the others! For example: the torpedo Mark 0/ Mark 1 issue, or the mention about the anti-fogging liquid, prepared by Navy for the SBDs, after the Coral Sea battle. The book is well written, you read it as a novel.

great book about a great bunch of men. the detail is amazing.

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