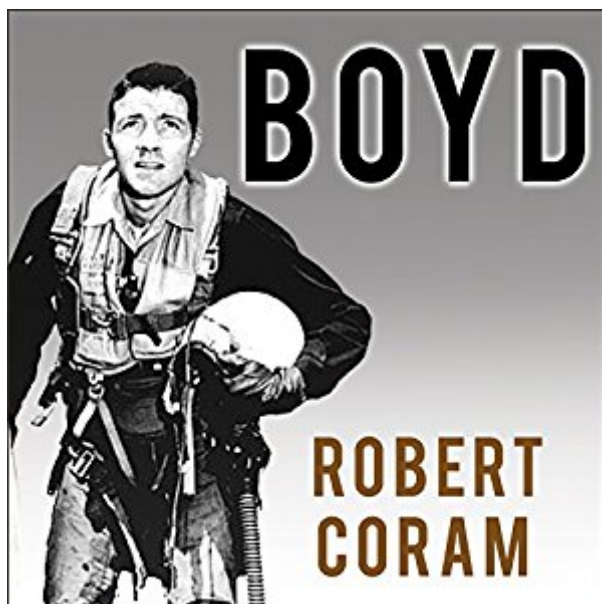


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Boyd: The Fighter Pilot Who Changed The Art Of War



Synopsis

John Boyd may be the most remarkable unsung hero in all of American military history. Some remember him as the greatest US fighter pilot ever - the man who, in simulated air-to-air combat, defeated every challenger in less than 40 seconds. Some recall him as the father of our country's most legendary fighter aircraft - the F-15 and F-16. Still, others think of Boyd as the most influential military theorist since Sun Tzu. They know only half the story. Boyd, more than any other person, saved fighter aviation from the predations of the Strategic Air Command. His manual of fighter tactics changed the way every air force in the world flies and fights. He discovered a physical theory that forever altered the way fighter planes were designed. Later in life, he developed a theory of military strategy that has been adopted throughout the world, and even applied to business models for maximizing efficiency. On a personal level, Boyd rarely met a general he couldn't offend. He was loud, abrasive, and profane. A man of daring, ferocious passion and intractable stubbornness, he was that most American of heroes - a rebel who cared not for his reputation or fortune, but for his country.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 19 hours and 41 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Tantor Audio

Audible.com Release Date: July 11, 2016

Language: English

ASIN: B01I5OK43U

Best Sellers Rank: #46 in Books > History > Military > Aviation #58 in Books > History > Military > Strategy #119 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > History > Military

Customer Reviews

In forty years of adult reading, thousands of books, hundreds of biographies, I have not in my lifetime found a better integration of subject, sources, and scholarship. This book will make anyone laugh, cry, and think. There is a deep spirit in this book, and knowing a little about all of this, I was quite simply stunned by the labor of love this book represents. The author's skill and devotion to "getting it right" is breathtakingly evident across the book. His sources, both those close to the subject and those more distant, have been exhaustively interviewed and the quality of this book is a

direct reflection of some of the most serious "homework" I have ever been privileged to read. On the theory of war, on the original contributions of John Boyd, the book renders a huge service to all military professionals by dramatically expanding what can be known and understood about the Energy-Maneuverability Theory and the nuances of the OODA Loop (Observe-Orient-Decide-Act--for the real Tigers, Observe-od-Act--a faster loop). Two things stuck out, apart from the heroic manner in which Boyd pursued the intellectual side of combat aviation: first, Boyd consistently had his priorities right: people first, ideas second, hardware last--this is the opposite of the existing Pentagon priorities; and second, truth matters--the book has some extraordinary examples of how both the Air Force and the Army falsified numbers, with disastrous results, while also selecting numbers (e.g. choosing to list an aircraft's weight without fuel or missiles, rather than fully loaded, a distortion that will kill aviators later when the aircraft fails under stress).

When I returned from Vietnam in 1969 to Luke AFB, AZ my Commander was Lt Col Doral Connor who had roomed with John Boyd during a tour in Korea, I believe. He told how his roommate would sit in his room working for hours on mathematical calculations involving air-to-air engagements. Col Connor was a tactical weapons controller, as was I, and had a good understanding of what Boyd was trying to accomplish. My next involvement with Boyd's work on Energy Maneuverability (EM) was when I attended the Air National Guard (ANG) Fighter Weapons School (FWS) at Tucson, AZ, and also when Steve Hepburn and I served as the principal radar weapons controllers for the F-15 Operational Test & Evaluation. It was during that period that I was sent TDY to Nellis AFB to become certified as an Aggressor Controller with the 64th. Based upon this background, and after reading Bob Coram's book, "Boyd" I can say the first half of the book is both very accurate and extremely well done. And If I had never gone to Air Force Project Checkmate in 1978 where I worked for 8 years I could give Coram's work nothing but a rave review. Unfortunately, that's not the case. Things are not always what they seem, and this book clearly overlooks several important points when it comes to the Reformists, including Boyd. Anyone going back and reading the material released by the Reformist at the time would see that they were against the whole concept of complex technology. The same technology that permitted striking results during Desert Storm and numerous other lesser engagements. Boyd's single focus on air-to-air overlooked the importance of accuracy during air-to-ground. For example, those hard points on the F-16 and the avionics added weight, which Boyd and the Reformists fought.

Robert Corum has done a masterly job in writing and telling a true to life story of what the United States culturally says it admires in people-intelligence, hard work and truth! The story of John Boyd should be read by as many people as possible, beginning with those aspiring to be leaders in both the military and civilian sectors. Boyd: The Fighter Pilot Who Changed The Art of War will begin a national renaissance in truth telling and seeking responsibility to stem the tide against our great nation becoming a 4th Century Rome. In reality, as Corum points out in page after page, the culture does not hold those like Boyd as the epitome of honor and selfless service. Instead, he retired a colonel (despite an incredible contribution to Air Force Fighter aviation and the theories of the art of war) and his family in poverty. But Boyd's greatest achievement of riches came not in the form of tangibles known greedily as money and property, but in the intangibles he achieved, a devoted following-the "Acolytes"-from talented men who are the true defenders of the Constitution; and who in the pursuit of truth, attempt to force the military establishment to provide our servicemen the leaders, doctrine and equipment they need to do their mission. Boyd set the heroic example for others to emulate as they desire to call themselves professionals against the tide of dishonesty; against those who are the worse when they say they speak of truth, yet practice something mendacious in promoting themselves. In light of the great popularity that the defense establishment now holds in the eyes of a novice and ignorant public, this book is a warning, maybe belatedly late one at that, given the timing of the war with Iraq.

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