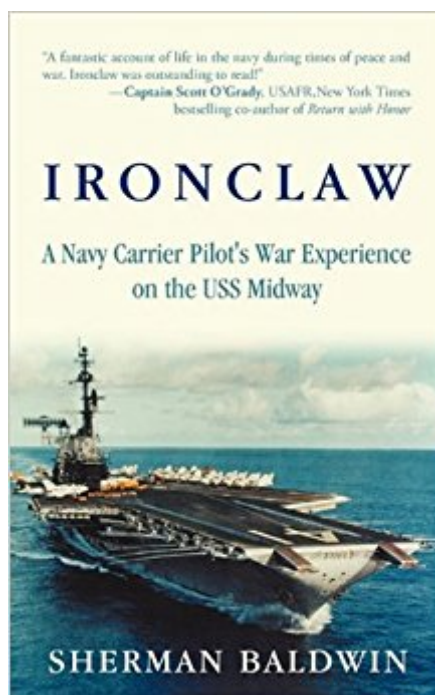


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# Ironclaw: A Navy Carrier Pilot's War Experience On The USS Midway



## Synopsis

"Fast-paced, exciting and informative, with a realism and authenticity that this old carrier aviator has not seen in a long, long time." -Admiral J. L. Holloway III, USN (Ret.), Chief of Naval Operations, 1974-78 "A fine Tom Clancy-style account...From the start, the reader is in the cockpit." -Kirkus Reviews The book that straps you into the cockpit of one of the world's most exhilarating and dangerous occupations. Slammed back into his ejection seat, catapulting from the heaving aircraft-carrier at 150 miles per hour in two seconds, he plunges into the darkness above the black waves. He is a rookie pilot on his first flight off the deck of the famed USS Midway, a "nugget" strapped in the electronics-crammed cockpit of one of the world's most expensive, sophisticated - and powerful - military machines. He is a member of the elite EA-6B Prowler squadron - call sign Ironclaw. And for Sherman Baldwin, a Yale grad turned navy carrier pilot on the eve of the Gulf War, the adventure has just begun. Here is the real world of military aviation - a world far more exciting than the depiction in bestselling novels and popular Hollywood films. Baldwin records in white-knuckled prose what it's really like to make the grade as a navy carrier pilot: the high-stakes, high-pressure world of piloting multimillion-dollar aircraft, precision flying through enemy fire over hostile territory, and zero-tolerance aircraft landings in the dead of night, when one miscalculation could result in a fatal crash. He also offers a rare behind-the-scenes look at the humor and camaraderie that bind these special individuals together, characters with nicknames like "Beast," "Chief Rat," and "Simba." From the mission-planning room to chaotic action of the carrier deck to emergency midair refuelings and the outbreak of the Gulf War, Baldwin captures the G forces of the world's steepest and most dangerous learning curve.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Baldwin was fresh out of pilot training as a lieutenant j.g. when, on Dec. 10, 1990, he was assigned to the aircraft carrier USS Midway in the Persian Gulf. A skilled aviator, the young "nugget"—a pilot on his first sea cruise—nevertheless had much to learn before becoming proficient at carrier operations. The process would be short and intense: Operation Desert Shield had begun months earlier, and Baldwin, along with his shipmates, knew that the U.S. could go to war against Iraq at any time. When Operation Desert Storm was launched in January 1991, Baldwin found himself in the thick of the action. By then, he had logged numerous hours on carrier launches, aerial refueling and landings performed at night on the pitching deck of "the smallest carrier in the fleet." As related here, these tasks are as terrifying as the later wartime missions. Baldwin's account of his attempt to hook up to a refueling tanker in the dark, while running out of gas and hampered by nervous jitters, is among the most vivid in aviation literature. His running tale of his long-distance courtship of his wife is less engaging, but it doesn't hamper the appeal of this gritty and visceral memoir. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"The lowest jet in the stack was a F/A-18 Hornet at 6000 feet. At 2152 I heard, 'Drago 307, commencing, altimeter 30.10.' The Prowler's holding speed was 250 knots." Nearly 300 pages of such technical jargon comprise this work by Baldwin, a navy fighter pilot who came to the Gulf War within a few weeks of graduation from flight school. He describes his career from basic training to advanced pilot school, the courtship of his fiancée, and his arrival on the aircraft carrier Midway. One is impressed by the tremendous amount of training, stamina, and skill needed to become a modern combat pilot. Unfortunately, Baldwin is not as skillful a writer, and his text soon becomes very tiring. Only for the most dedicated aviation technical buffs. Stanley Itkin, Hillside P.L., New Hyde Park, N.Y. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

There's an abundance of books recounting the experience of Navy carrier pilots going back to its beginning. Most portray the extraordinary superhuman demands of becoming a carrier pilot, while others depict the exploits of air combat. But few -- and in this case draws on experience I seldom find so well written: a pilot's trepidation, worries and self doubts of being competent enough to

become a naval aviator. "Ironclaw" is the definitive book. Baldwin truly opened up his soul to the reader; one could feel the anxiety as his aircraft searches in the dark for the refueling tanker, knowing that if not located soon, he would become an aquanaut. It was not just the event itself, but his thinking that moved the ball to proclaim this as a great book. I could go on and on passionately citing different tidbits from the book, but it would only soil the drama. My only regret about Ironclaw, I wish Sherman Baldwin would continue as a writer. He has a gift that can wrap your imagination as tight as a snake. Buy it. Read it. Recommended reading for anyone contemplating becoming a naval aviator.

Oddly, the book starts to flounder when the Gulf War begins - the "war stories" he tells are actually quite uneventful. The best parts of the book are when he describes the people he works with on the ship. He does a good job of bringing these people to life, and telling about his difficulties dealing with the higher-ups onboard and their intimidating leadership styles. That was very honest of him, but he didn't reveal much about why he decided to leave the Navy and go into business just a few years later. Overall, it's a good book. I recommend *Bogeys and Bandits* as the best Navy pilot book.

As a pilot I enjoyed the insight into the flying involved in carrier operations, a very good read. Pick this book up to find out more about the most challenging flight environment there is.

A great book

Great book, thanks.

While Tank's ride is now passed off to the Marines, with the Prowler being replaced by the Growler ... well, same race, just a different horse. Lends real insight to what it's like being an electronic attack pilot on a carrier. Very accurate ... and anything but sterile or dry. Not tough to see how this pilot got into Yale and then Harvard Business School.

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There has got to be a rush that comes from taking off from an aircraft carrier in a jet, being accelerated by a steam catapult and a pair of screaming afterburners to nearly 170 m.p.h. in less than 2 seconds. Nor does it take a Stephen King to imagine the stress involved in trying to get back aboard a carrier on an inky night in a plane low on fuel. Among naval aviators, this is what separates those who can "hack it" from those who cannot. For carrier pilots do not land their planes so much as slam them aboard heaving, yawing ships at sea. So it is that night landings, in which vertigo and optical illusion are routine and depth perception nonexistent, become "the practice of overcoming the fear of death," writes Lt. (j.g.) Sherman Baldwin, who spent his nugget - maiden - cruise aboard the USS Midway during the Persian Gulf War. If Baldwin's introspection sets "Ironclaw" (the call sign of his squadron) apart from others of its ilk, make no mistake: This is a book about flying. It begins with the author's first night catapult shot aboard the Midway and with great perception describes life for those who come and go on a seaborne aircraft carrier at war

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