Clarion Review

Autobiography & Memoir

Born to Live on the Edge: Experiences from Living on a Farm to Flying Combat Sorties in Vietnam to Retirement

Fredrick L. Pumroy
Trafford
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Three Stars (out of Five)

From Indiana farm boy to Vietnam fighter pilot and beyond, Fredrick L. Pumroy often seemed to "live on the edge." Stories about his narrow escapes from enemy anti-aircraft fire over the Ho Chi Minh Trail and dances with death in all manner of aircraft make for very entertaining reading in his cleanly written memoir, *Born to Live on The Edge*.

This one hundred-page book is a must-read for pilots—or for anyone who dreams of becoming one. Such readers will sigh with envy to read of a gift the eight-year-old Pumroy received from his father: a small, one-seat plane that the boy buzzed around in over the family farm until his mother made his father sell the plane. A high school jock who also played sports in college, Pumroy joined the Air Force with every intention of becoming a dashing combat ace.

It was on his first mission that reality overcame dreams of glory: "I hadn't been shot at before and I didn't like it," he remembers, adding that over a two-month period his aircraft "took 309 bullet holes." The section on Vietnam is among the more exciting and best-written in this slender volume.

There are chapters on flying all manner of aircraft—military and civilian, commercial and private—and none are dull. While he always thanked the Lord for keeping him alive through the dangers he faced, after one near-fatal incident the veteran pilot says he began to wonder just "how many more fixes God would get me out of."

The book is written in a clean and crisp manner, and it is illustrated with photos taken by the author, some while flying over hostile territory. There are anecdotes about drinking games and boyish pranks that pilots in a war zone partake in to cope with stress, and there are little asides about friends, comrades, and some top brass Pumroy met during his flying years. All of these people and events are related in a straightforward style that is honest without being

cloyingly personal.

As with many people in hazardous jobs, not every day in Pumroy's life was dangerous, exciting, or particularly interesting. The chapters about his farm and school days, his time "flying a desk," and his post-Air Force career as a technical consultant may be of most interest to friends and family, or to other once-dashing flyboys whose days of danger and glory are long gone. From the death-defying to the mundane, Pumroy kindly shares his memories with readers.

Mark G. McLaughlin