Clarion Review

Biography

Valiant Young Men: Heroes of Flight
Bryce D. Gibby
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Four Stars (out of Five)

Bryce Gibby puts readers in the cockpit with three legendary airmen in his triple biography *Valiant Young Men: Heroes of Flight*. A distinguished career pilot himself Gibby is well qualified to narrate some of the notable flight exploits of Eddie Rickenbacker James Norman Hall and Antoine de Saint-Exupery. Each of his subjects exhibited the pioneer spirit and love of challenge and adventure that mark the early history of flight. But Gibby also celebrates them as "good and godly men" of character and responsibility heroes who sacrificed themselves for larger purposes.

Rickenbacker and Hall both flew fighter planes over the trenches of France during World War I. Rickenbacker became America's "Ace of Aces" before starting his own automobile company and later running Eastern Air Lines. Hall served as an infantryman with the British Army and finished the war as a US Army Air Force pilot. He spent much of his post-war life in Tahiti where he wrote many books. *Mutiny on the Bounty* which he co-authored was his biggest commercial success. Saint-Exupery blazed trails for the French Airline Aeropostale flying mail routes over North Africa and South America. His experiences as an airman inspired his celebrated books *Night Flight* and *The Little Prince*.

But Gibby's purpose in *Valiant Young Men* is not merely to highlight the accomplishments of his heroes. In addition to a long career in aviation he has worked as a counselor and advisor to young people. His intended audience is young men and those who would raise young men and these life-stories serve as illustrations for an inspirational treatise on "man-making." Each of Gibby's subjects for example "endured extreme adversity—never giving way to self-abandonment." Rickenbacker and seven others survived the ditching of a B-17 in the Pacific during World War II. They spent twenty-four grueling days on life rafts at sea before finally being spotted by rescuers. Hall's plane crashed three times during World War I.

He was finally captured and held for six months as a German prisoner of war. Saint-Exupery and his co-pilot survived a crash-landing in the Libyan desert where they wandered for four days with a few grapes and a single flask of liquid before being rescued.

The endurance of Rickenbacker Hall and Saint-Exupery is an aspect along with patience determination and faith of their sense of responsibility. “A man” Gibby writes “is a maker and keeper of righteous covenants regarding self family country and God.” Gibby’s ultimate message is that a man is a son of God and that he is blessed and exalted through his faith in God.

Valiant Young Men is Bryce Gibby’s second in a series of motivational books for young people. It is preceded by *Valiant Young Women* (2003).

Joe Taylor