

Book Review – Book Ideas for Christmas

Searching for the Epic of Flight – 107 Books Briefly Noted by Robert Hing

Review by Chris Hope, Master CFI

So you are wondering what to put on your Christmas list so that certain someone will have the perfect flying book to put under your tree. Well, just in time for Christmas hinting, I have two thoughts for you to consider.

One, you can look first at my own list, posted on my website (check the end of this column.) for my favorites. Or two, you can pick up a copy of “*Searching for the Epic of Flight*” and browse through the list of Robert Hing’s favorites. Which I have done.

Interested in World War I aviation? Hing suggests “*Five Years in the Royal Flying Corps*”, written 1918 by the British ace, James McCudden. Or “the best written account of World War I flying”, V.M. Yeates’ *Winged Victory*.

The Battle of Britain, fought between the Royal Air Force and German Luftwaffe prompted Winston Churchill to state, “Never before has so much been owed by so many to so few,” as the young, outnumbered RAF pilots repelled the Luftwaffe and caused Hitler to abandon his idea of an invasion of the England. Peter Townsend was there, and describes it in *Duel of Eagles*. A book of WW II leadership skills that was part of our curriculum at the Air Force Academy is *Twelve O’clock High*, by Sy Bartlett. These and others, familiar and not so much so, are included in the World War II section.

For the sheer romance of flying, the works of Antoine de Saint-Exupery are included in a single section titled, “A Nod to Saint-Ex”. But other authors’ works are included as well, such as Richard Bach’s *A Gift of Wings*, and Robert Wohl’s *A Passion for Wings*.

Chris loves to read, write, and fly, but not necessarily in that order

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And here are more favorites: www.ChrisHopeFAAFlightInstructor.com/books/books.html

Looking for adventure? Hing suggests *Flight of the Phoenix*, by Ellaston Trevor, *The Flying Carpet*, by Richard Halliburton, or *20,000 miles in a Flying Boat*, by Alan Cobham. The titles alone are enough to send me to the library or my favorite book web site.

Many people have flown from coast to coast, and written of their experiences. The first successful flight was by Cal Rogers and the Vin Fiz in 1911. In his book of the same name, Eileen Lebow recounts the story of Mr. Rogers who took 90 minutes of flight instruction from Wilbur Wright, and then set out to win the \$50,000 prize for the first person who could cross the nation in less than 30 days. Yes, he completed the trip, but his 49 days and 70 landings disqualified him from the prize.

Half a century later two teenagers rebuilt a J-3 Cub and made the same crossing. Theirs was 43 days shorter, but *Flight of Passage*, a personal remembrance by Rinker Buck, is much more than a story of navigating the US. It is a story of navigating the trials of growing up.

Hing also includes books for technical junkie, as well as the bird lovers among us. Looking for something on ballooning, soaring or hang-gliding? There are some wonderful books in these areas as well.

You can expect to see reviews of some of these 107 books in the months to come as I say to myself, “I need this one. Oh, this looks good. Oh, wow, I can’t pass up this one”,

Check *The Epic of Flight* out, and let me know your favorites.