



The First Eagles: The Fearless American Aces Who Flew with the RAF in World War I

Gavin Mortimer

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An incredible history of the American WWI pilots who refused to be grounded. There was a time when the United States didn't believe in aerial warfare. Wars, after all, were for men—not flying machines. When Europe went to war in the summer of 1914, the U.S. military boasted a measly collection of five aircraft, with no training programs or recruitment procedures in place. But that didn't mean the country lacked skilled pilots. In fact, it was just the opposite. In *The First Eagles*, award-winning historian Gavin Mortimer engagingly profiles the restless, determined American aviators who grew tired of waiting for their country to establish an aerial military force during World War I. It was these men who enlisted in Britain's desperate and battered Royal Flying Corps when, in 1917, it opened a recruitment office in New York. After an intensive and deadly year of training that gave recruits a frighteningly realistic taste of the combat they would face, 247 fresh American RFC pilots were shipped over to Europe, with hundreds more following in the next two months. Twenty-eight of them claimed five or more kills to become feted as "aces," their involvement lauded as pivotal to the Allied victory. In this book, Mortimer compiles their history through letters, diaries, memoirs, and archives from top museums in the United States and Britain—from John Donaldson, who left for France at age twenty and shot down seven Germans before being downed himself, to the Iaccaci brothers, who accounted for twenty-nine German aircraft between them. Complete with 150 period photographs, *The First Eagles* captures the bravery of these intrepid American pilots, who chose courage over idleness and saved the European skies.

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