

# TURNING PAGES

~ book reviews of interest to the aviation professional

## Two Steps from Glory:

A World War II Liaison Pilot Confronts Jim Crow and the Enemy in the South Pacific.

By Major Welton I. Taylor with Karyn J. Taylor. Chicago, IL: Winning Strategy Press 2012. Photographs, appendices, 376 pp. Available in softcover and Kindle formats at [http://www.amazon.com/Two-Steps-Glory-Liaison-Confronts/dp/0983867712/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ps=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1440984492&sr=1-1&keywords=Two+steps+from+glory](http://www.amazon.com/Two-Steps-Glory-Liaison-Confronts/dp/0983867712/ref=sr_1_1?ps=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1440984492&sr=1-1&keywords=Two+steps+from+glory).

A book review by SFC Raymond E. Huff

In this compelling book, World War II Army Liaison Pilot, Major Welton I. Taylor takes the reader along with him from a brief period in his childhood thru the end of World War II, while recounting his experiences before, during, and after the war. It is a memoir of the challenges he faced including Jim Crow laws left over after the American Civil War, institutional racism during military flight training, and the dangers of fighting in a world war. The author provides

States and allied forces. Taylor's central theme is that although the war was won by allied forces, there was a continued loss to humanity in the form of humiliating post-war discrimination that limited valuable contributions from capable men.

Major Taylor organizes *Two Steps from Glory* into 29 chapters with photographs mid-book. He sets the stage in the early chapters for the two separate wars he endures throughout this biography – World War II and racism. The reader is kept cognizant of the issues addressed in the early chapters. The tone of these chapters is integral to the rest of the book, as he often references the Jim Crow laws and the Jim Crow attitude of the 1940s Army. He describes, in captivating detail, the events, and efforts leading to the culmination of his training as a liaison pilot. Chapter Six, Check Ride binds the early portion of this book together with some resolve as Lieutenant Taylor's intellect and skill as a pilot allow him to successfully overcome institutional prejudice to complete his final check ride and become an aviator in the U.S. Army Air Corps.

training were relevant throughout the war. Chapter thirteen is an introduction to Guadalcanal followed by photographs taken by the author. Taylor then puts the reader next to himself, providing suspense for the reader as he reveals events as they occur. This second half of the book provides the relevancy of its title. Taylor discusses "black troops incapable" of being combat troops and demonstrates how this was disproven. Specifically, the chapter Isle of Joy notes the achievements of the segregated 93rd Infantry Division and how they were discounted by prejudiced observers who only took into account mistakes.

In the final chapter, One War Down, Taylor ties events in the war together after his return home. In this chapter, he and other black veterans continue to experience institutional racism despite their service. Segregation still defined his life back home, just as it had dominated his military experience. Even though he was a combat veteran, there "...was no protection against racial violence." With this description, Taylor builds on the theme of this book by linking the humiliating and discriminatory events that he faced before, during, and after war. He overcame racism in his own way by becoming an award-winning Ph.D. in microbiology.

Ultimately, *Two Steps from Glory* is an uplifting story that demonstrates how a determined and resourceful individual overcame racism and discrimination to defend his country. Major Taylor's memoir is a necessary read for any military professional for its lesson on the effects of discrimination on and off the battlefield. For the aviation professional, this book provides insight into history, the evolution of tactics, and to the Aviation branch itself.



insight into how racism affected the interactions between military professionals of the United

States and allied forces. Taylor describes the valuable time spent behind the "stick" of his L-4H Grasshopper, presenting how lessons learned during

