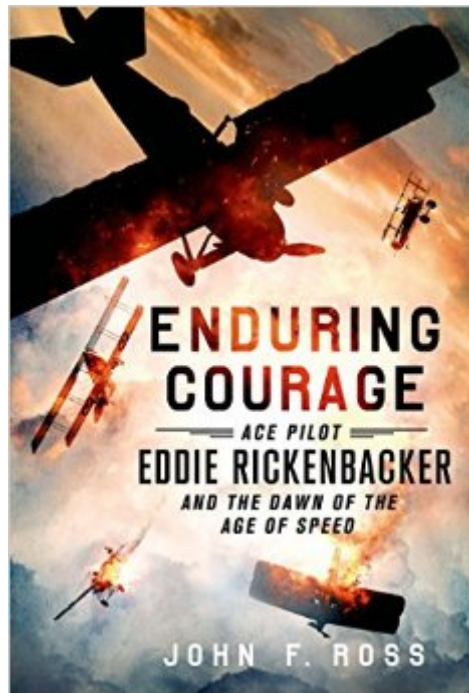


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# Enduring Courage: Ace Pilot Eddie Rickenbacker And The Dawn Of The Age Of Speed



## Synopsis

The sensational true story of Eddie Rickenbacker, America's greatest flying ace. At the turn of the twentieth century two new technologies—the car and airplane—took the nation's imagination by storm as they burst, like comets, into American life. The brave souls that leaped into these dangerous contraptions and pushed them to unexplored extremes became new American heroes: the race car driver and the flying ace. No individual did more to create and intensify these raw new roles than the tall, gangly Eddie Rickenbacker, who defied death over and over with such courage and pluck that a generation of Americans came to know his face better than the president's. The son of poor, German-speaking Swiss immigrants in Columbus, Ohio, Rickenbacker overcame the specter of his father's violent death, a debilitating handicap, and, later, accusations of being a German spy, to become the American military ace of aces in World War I and a Medal of Honor recipient. He and his high-spirited, all-too-short-lived pilot comrades, created a new kind of aviation warfare, as they pushed their machines to the edge of destruction—and often over it—without parachutes, radios, or radar. *Enduring Courage* is the electrifying story of the beginning of America's love affair with speed—and how one man above all the rest showed a nation the way forward. No simple daredevil, he was an innovator on the racetrack, a skilled aerial dualist and squadron commander, and founder of Eastern Air Lines. Decades after his heroics against the Red Baron's Flying Circus, he again showed a war-weary nation what it took to survive against nearly insurmountable odds when he and seven others endured a harrowing three-week ordeal adrift without food or water in the Pacific during World War II. For the first time, *Enduring Courage* peels back the layers of hero to reveal the man himself. With impeccable research and a gripping narrative, John F. Ross tells the unforgettable story of a man who pushed the limits of speed, endurance and courage and emerged as an American legend.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Eddie Rickenbacker, for me, has always been one of those names from 20th century history that I had heard of and even knew a tiny bit about but not much more. I knew he was an American flying Ace from World War I and generally well regarded but have long wished to know more about him, his life and the times he lived in. General George S. Patton famously said, "Wars may be fought with weapons, but they are won by men. It is the spirit of the men who follow and of the man who leads that gains the victory." He was talking about leaders like Rickenbacker, America's leading ace of WWI with 26 kills. The story of how he got there is simply incredible. From an adventurous youth demonstrating a genius for machines and mechanics to becoming a renowned race car driver (racing in the very first Indy 500), to becoming America's "Ace of Aces" pilot in WWI, his story reads like one of those thriller novels where the hero constantly encounters incredible danger but always survives. It's so refreshing to read of a person who actually lives up to the hype of history and who learns from his plentiful mistakes throughout his life. This quote from him sums it up: "I've cheated the Grim Reaper more times than anyone I know, and I'll fight like a wildcat until they nail the lid of my pine box down on me." Most of the book is devoted to the two main areas of Rickenbacker's life: his car racing career and his WWI successes. Less is devoted to his post war career even though that is pretty phenomenal as well: starting up Rickenbacker Motor Company, buying and managing the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, clashes with FDR over policy, and a lengthy stint as the leader and eventual owner of Eastern Airlines.

Eddie Rickenbacker was America's most recognizable and famous hero of World War I. He was America's ace of aces, registering 26 kills. He logged more time over enemy territory and engaged in more combats than any other U.S. flier. Author John F. Ross writes that as a race car driver and fighter pilot, Rickenbacker helped forge a new personification of the American hero. Americans hungered for a new breed of hero, and when "Eddie's brand of courage intersected with new frontiers of speed brought on by cars and airplanes, extraordinary things started to happen." Eddie was a popular pioneer in racing cars, competing in the Indy 500 four times and multiple long-distance races. The book's first 90 pages cover Eddie's racing career. Although Eddie earned

a reputation of a "carefree derring do," Ross stresses that it wasn't true. Eddie took an analytical, methodical and logical approach to managing risk and extreme danger. According to Ross, "Eddie discovered not only could he stare down death and risk, but he was good at it." It's of little surprise that Eddie, a superb mechanic and engineer, was attracted to airplanes. Pilots were largely on their own, writing the rules of safety and performance as they went along. The United States desperately needed pilots as it was ramping up its air power in quest of air superiority. Mechanically, the planes were often unreliable. Ross describes the planes as "flying pyres, highly combustible." In training, 1 of 9 pilots died. The life expectancy of a fighter pilot was two months. To add to the danger, pilots were not permitted parachutes. Washington officials decided that if pilots had parachutes, they might prematurely decide to eject and abandon the plane.

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