



The Magnificent Flying Machine: PBY Catalina

Frank Newby

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The PBY Catalina was designed and built in the heart of the great depression. In 1933 the Navy saw the need for a long range reconnaissance and utilitarian airplane which was amphibious. It could operate from a seaplane tender without expensive ground facilities. It would serve as a patrol bomber on occasion and be able to fly in bad weather. That was a tall order in the early years of aviation. The first version of the plane which was accepted had the pilot and co-pilot still in an open cockpit in the nose of the plane. It had massive struts to support the wing pontoons which combined with the inadequately powered engines, made a slow ungainly flying machine but at its worst, it was the best design available at the time.

This book is the story of how that ugly duckling turned into the most versatile, most feared and most valuable airplane in the United States arsenal in World War II. The value of the PBY has been sadly neglected in most accounts of the war in the South Pacific. It destroyed more enemy shipping than the submarines, it spotted and enabled the Navy to be forewarned and given the advantage in major sea battles, and it flew in the worst weather under the most adverse conditions. It was tough, reliable and adaptable. The future pilots and crews made it better.

It is time to give the most valuable aircraft ever built its just rewards. This is my salute to a magnificent machine and the brave men who flew them to unbelievable feats. We must never forget that a machine can be incomparable, but if it does not have the proper handlers it will not perform to its full potential. The young civilians who became the professional pilots of WWII turned a useful plane into an unbelievable tool of warfare. This is a "must read" book of valor and dedication to a cause which determined the fate of the free world. The PBY Catalina is a story of America at its finest!

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