



The Making of Billy Bishop: The First World War Exploits of Billy Bishop, VC

Brereton Greenhous

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It's a war story that is told every time the career of Billy Bishop is discussed: On June 2, 1917, the young pilot single-handedly took out a German airfield in an early morning raid at the height of the Great War. For this, he was awarded the Victoria Cross, and a place in Canadian history.

And yet, the attack never happened.

In this explosive new biography, Brereton Greenhous exposes the myth of Billy Bishop. While his bravery never comes into question (Bishop was as courageous as any of the men who risked their lives in those early warplanes) his credibility as a storyteller does. From exaggerations and half-truths to flat-out lies, stories of Bishop's legendary exploits contain as much fiction as they do fact.

Greenhous reveals many startling truths: he presents evidence that some of the medals Bishop wore late in his career were unearned, uncovers a number of examples of Bishop embellishing or inventing combat stories, and, most significantly, shows that the only account of the ace's raid on the German airfield came from Bishop himself. Even official German records of casualties fail to corroborate the Canadian's claims.

The Making of Billy Bishop is a book certain to stir up controversy. Twenty years ago, a documentary film questioning Bishop's credentials as a hero was considered so blasphemous that a senate investigation was launched in an attempt to restore the pilot's name. Now, Greenhous's research vindicates the claims of the filmmakers, and re-ignites an argument once thought settled.

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