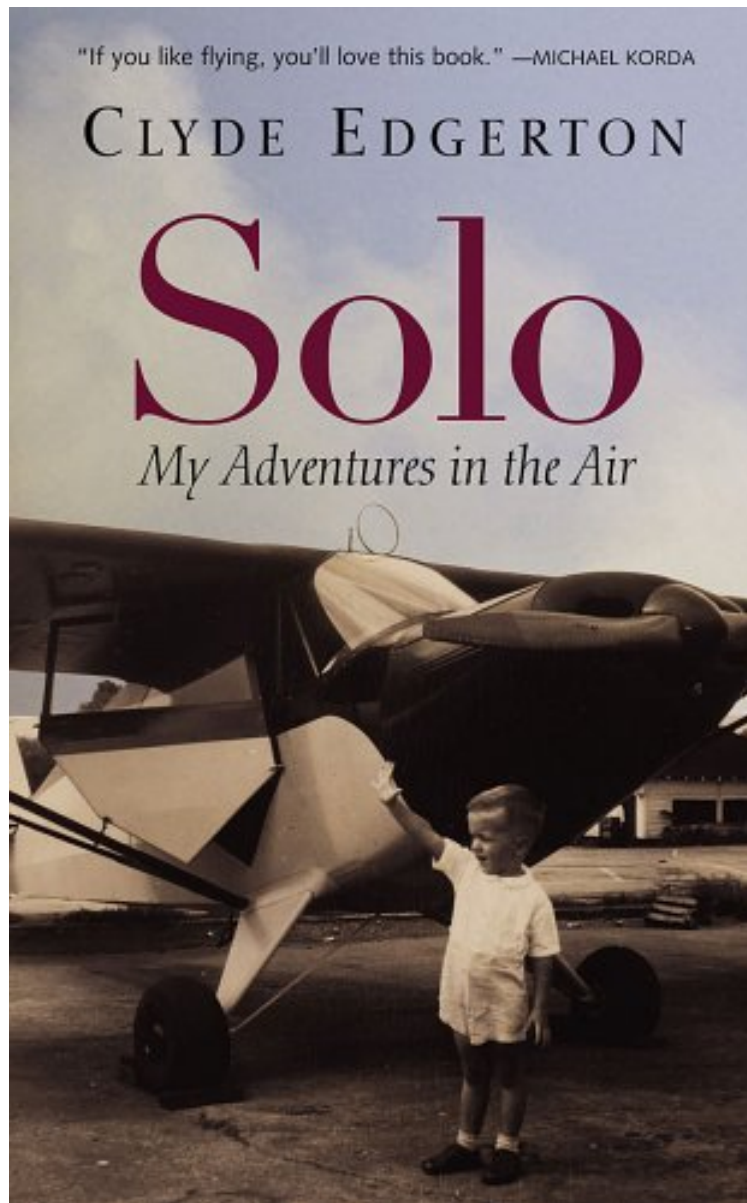


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Solo: My Adventures in the Air

Clyde Edgerton

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Clyde Edgerton : Solo: My Adventures in the Air before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Solo: My Adventures in the Air:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The BookBy Thomas SpruckWas very good to read. Will give it to my son after I read. It is very good book to read.2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. It should have been

great. By Shawn S. Sullivan Solo, by Clyde Edgerton, could have been a great book about flying. Edgerton's experience in aviation along with his obvious life long passion for flight, combined with his post-flying resume entry of Professor of Writing and the University of North Carolina (Wilmington) should have been the recipe for the best book of flying since Rinker Buck's Flight of Passage. Unfortunately, it is not. That stated, this is a good book that aviation enthusiasts will likely forgive Prof. Edgerton's flaws and enjoy its quickly passing pages. Solo begins slowly with a rather poor explanation of flight and flight controls for the non-pilot reader. It reads as some dated and poorly written instruction manual. Edgerton should have just stuck with his suggested reading mentioned in the Author's Note of Wolfgang Languisher's timeless "Stick and Rudder". My sense is that most who will want to read this book either know about the basics of flying or don't care and just want him to get to his jet training and his rediscovery of the joy of flying general aviation "taildraggers" later in his life. A good one third to one half of this book reads more like a diary than a work of a military pilot, trained also as a writer. Ah, but the second half . . . Solo literally soars in the second half, dealing with the writers training in military fighter aircraft in the Vietnam Era and of his experiences in that environment. Edgerton also nails the rediscovery of flight later in life in small and slow general aviation aircraft. He writes clearly and beautifully on what all of us in the aviation community know about flying - it almost doesn't matter what you fly, as long as you fly. Here is a fighter pilot accustomed to F-4 Phantom jets, the premier fighter of its day, falling in love with a Piper 2 seater with an engine half the size of most of today's cars. Unfortunately for all readers, just when building to this crescendo and dnouement he falls back to listing seemingly nonsensical and peripheral logbook entries and spoils the end. As a pilot and flight instructor, my predisposition was to enjoy this book and, by and large, I did. But that was only because my blinders allowed me to get past his very obvious poor and disjointed writings. As with too many books a couple of more critical edits could have made this a must read. I would say it is a fun, quick read but only for those who have a real passion for flight. 10 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Interesting book, not only for flight enthusiasts. By TamarDCI read this book because I love Edgerton's novels and hoped to gain insight into the author's life and writing. The book did not fulfill this hope. It's not an autobiography - it's the story of Edgerton's love affair with flying at different stages of his life. However, even though the book did not provide me with what I had hoped, I enjoyed it and recommend it to others. The book is thematically divided into four parts. The first describes Edgerton's training to be a fighter pilot and his growing obsession with flight. It starts with a trip to an airport at age four and ends when Edgerton is sent overseas as a combat pilot. For me this part was not compelling, because I have no interest in flying. There are long and technical explanations of such things as thrust and trim. In some sections, it reads like a manual. You can skim through this part, just to get a flavor of the training and of the determination that Edgerton had to fly, but it's not of interest to the general public in my opinion. Next comes a section devoted to Edgerton's combat career in the late sixties and early seventies in Japan (flying nuclear-readiness missions) and then in Vietnam/Laos, flying combat reconnaissance missions. I enjoyed this section very much. Edgerton is able to convey the feeling of control and freedom, the thrill of flying. He also describes the clammy fear of combat. The best section describes a failed recovery attempt of pilots whose aircraft was shot down. Edgerton's description of his growing desperation and sadness as he realizes that nothing can be done for the lost pilots is moving. Edgerton earned the Distinguished Flying Cross for his valiant and persistent efforts to help the downed pilots, despite coming under anti-aircraft fire. The most interesting aspect of the combat section is the essential theme/conflict of the book. Edgerton gamely faces up to the disconnect between the experiences of the pilots and the result of their actions. For the pilots the Vietnam experience was, by and large, a huge thrill, a power trip and a dream come true. Despite the fear, Edgerton and his fellow pilots loved flying and were empowered by their experiences. They spent precious little time considering the impact of their actions. They never really considered the death and destruction they caused. As a mature adult, Edgerton tries to make sense of this disconnect. He can't resolve the problem, but he engages with it. I was surprised that he was not able to see that governments for millennia (and even now) are able to go to war because they CAN exploit young men's natural thrill seeking and lack of moral experience. It would be much harder to send forty-five year olds to pointless wars. The third section of the book deals with Edgerton's flying experiences after he left the air force. I found this section of little interest, but I think a flight enthusiast might feel differently. In the final section, Edgerton ponders the above mentioned moral conflicts and muses over the nature of courage. This is an excellent section and makes the entire book worth reading. It could and perhaps should have been expanded further. I enjoyed the book, but it does not compare with the brilliance of Edgerton's novels. In his novels, every word is in place - they are perfectly crafted. This book has too many words and not all of them are needed. There is some humor, but Edgerton's brilliant use of satire is entirely missing. I was also disappointed that Edgerton chose to share so little of his life with us. Although he mentions his parents frequently, he shares next to nothing about his childhood. Nor do we learn much about his adult life. There are little facts thrown in, but no background with which to interpret them. This weakens the book. Read Tony Hillerman's recent autobiography and you'll see what I mean. I was a little surprised at Edgerton's lack of engagement with religion, since much of the book is about a moral dilemma. He mentioned being a churchgoer when younger, but devoted no time to what I think must be addressed when thinking about morality and war.

When Clyde Edgerton was four years old, his mother took him to the local airport to see the planes. For Edgerton, it was love at first sight. Eighteen years later, she would take him to the same airport to catch a flight to Texas for Air Force pilot training. In *Solo*, Edgerton tells the story of his lifelong love affair with flying, from his childlike wonder to his job as a fighter pilot flying reconnaissance over the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Now, nearly thirty-five years after the war in Vietnam, he looks back at his youthful passion for flying, at the joy he took in mastering it, at the exhilaration and lingering anguish of combat flying. It is a story told with empathy and humor and with searing honesty that will resonate with every pilot who remembers the first takeoff, the first landing, the first solo. For the nonpilots who always choose the window seat, it's a thrilling story to live vicariously.

From Publishers Weekly Beginning with a fateful trip to a local North Carolina airport at age four and ending with midlife adventures in a small private plane, novelist Edgerton (*The Floatplane Notebooks*, etc.) turns to autobiography, using his lifelong relationship with aircraft and flying as his navigational center. Four years in UNC's air force ROTC led to service in 1970-1971 as a forward air control pilot in Vietnam, flying missions over the Ho Chi Minh Trail out of Nakhon Phanom Air Base in Thailand. "I do not agree with everything the United States is doing in V.N.," he wrote in a letter home, "but I do believe we should be there." (Like other former believers in the domino theory, Edgerton, who was decorated for his role in a rescue mission, later bitterly changed his mind.) Edgerton presents his flying life dryly and clinically, and includes a great deal of aeronautical detail. The book ends with a paean to his Piper Cub, bought in the late 1980s, and more reflections on Vietnam. Much of the book reads as if Edgerton were sifting the technical details of flying and flight for clues into his own character without quite being aware of his audience. Buffs will get it, but others will be left on the tarmac. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist Edgerton has written a most intriguing memoir of his love affair with flying and how he fulfilled it as a combat pilot in Vietnam. When Edgerton was four, his mother took him to the local airport to look at planes; before he was out of high school, he was determined to become a jet fighter pilot. That passion attended him through the University of North Carolina as an ROTC cadet, to getting his pilot's license in his senior year (his mother then became his first passenger), and into air force pilot training in summer 1966. His recollections include detailed accounts of flying lessons and the exhilaration that came from mastering and flying increasingly complex planes. The peak of his flying career, during which he won a Distinguished Flying Cross, was a stint of combat reconnaissance over the Ho Chi Minh Trail in 1970-71--a situation that often seemed unreal to a young man who loved flying. Edgerton's vivid but laconic style should captivate Vietnam and aviation mavens and general readers alike. Frieda Murray Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved A spare, heartfelt celebration . . . The great pleasure of this modest, winning memoir is [Edgerton's] rediscovery of his youthful passion. -- William Grimes, *The New York Times*