



The noise was terrific, raw metal screeching on the concrete runway as the plane tore along at speed. Sparks flared out behind the skidding craft, with a cloud of smoke billowing out behind. The moment it cut off hard to the right and ground to a stop, out Ted jumped, running for cover before his plane was engulfed in flame.

The next morning, he was up again on another mission for Marine Air over Korea.

Ted Williams was at war. Ted Williams was at war with the Communists in Korea, and with the "gutless politicians" who sent him there. He battled on the home front as well: he battled on the ball field and he battled in his personal life.

This is the story of Ted Williams at war, the nearly five years carved out of his career as a major league ballplayer. It is a story of the training, those 39 combat missions, and how Ted Williams became regarded as a military hero for the service he rendered his country. Shot down once, and his plane badly damaged another time, he survived and came back to baseball.

Bill Nowlin is the author or editor of over a dozen books about Ted Williams and/or the Boston Red Sox, including *Blood Feud: The Red Sox, the Yankees, and the Struggle of Good versus Evil*, *Mr. Red Sox: The Johnny Pesky Story*, and *The Kid: Ted Williams in San Diego*. He has served for the last six-plus years as the editor of publications for the Ted Williams Museum, and was elected in 2004 as Vice President of the Society for American Baseball Research.



ROUNDER BOOKS  
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BURLINGTON, MA 01803



## TED WILLIAMS AT WAR



**"HE DID A HELLUVA GOOD JOB. TED ONLY BATTED .406 FOR THE RED SOX. HE BATTED A THOUSAND FOR THE MARINE CORPS AND THE UNITED STATES."**

*John Glenn*

**Ted Williams was the only Hall of Fame ballplayer who saw military service in two wars. He was a flight instructor with the United States Marine Corps in World War II and flew 39 combat missions in the Korean War – several of them as wingman for squadron mate John Glenn. Shot down once, on his third mission, Williams was lucky to escape with his life. He was back up and flying less than 24 hours later.**

**There aren't too many athletes who are truly heroes. Ted Williams was one such athlete. Imagine Alex Rodriguez or Barry Bonds flying dive-bombing missions in close air support of troops on the ground, taking anti-aircraft fire as they pulled out of the dive as low as 500 feet. Imagine the records Williams might have set had he not devoted nearly five full seasons to serving his country.**

**Most biographies of Ted Williams devote a chapter or two to the five years he spent in the Marines. Bill Nowlin has interviewed over 40 pilots who flew with Capt. Williams from K-3 in Korea, and interviewed over 120 people in all who knew or encountered Ted Williams during his years of service. Combined with access to Williams' squadron records, his personal flight logbooks, and his fitness and evaluation reports, *Ted Williams At War* presents by far the most comprehensive portrait of a man that many termed "the real John Wayne."**



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John Glenn and Ted Williams, K-3 Korea, 1953.

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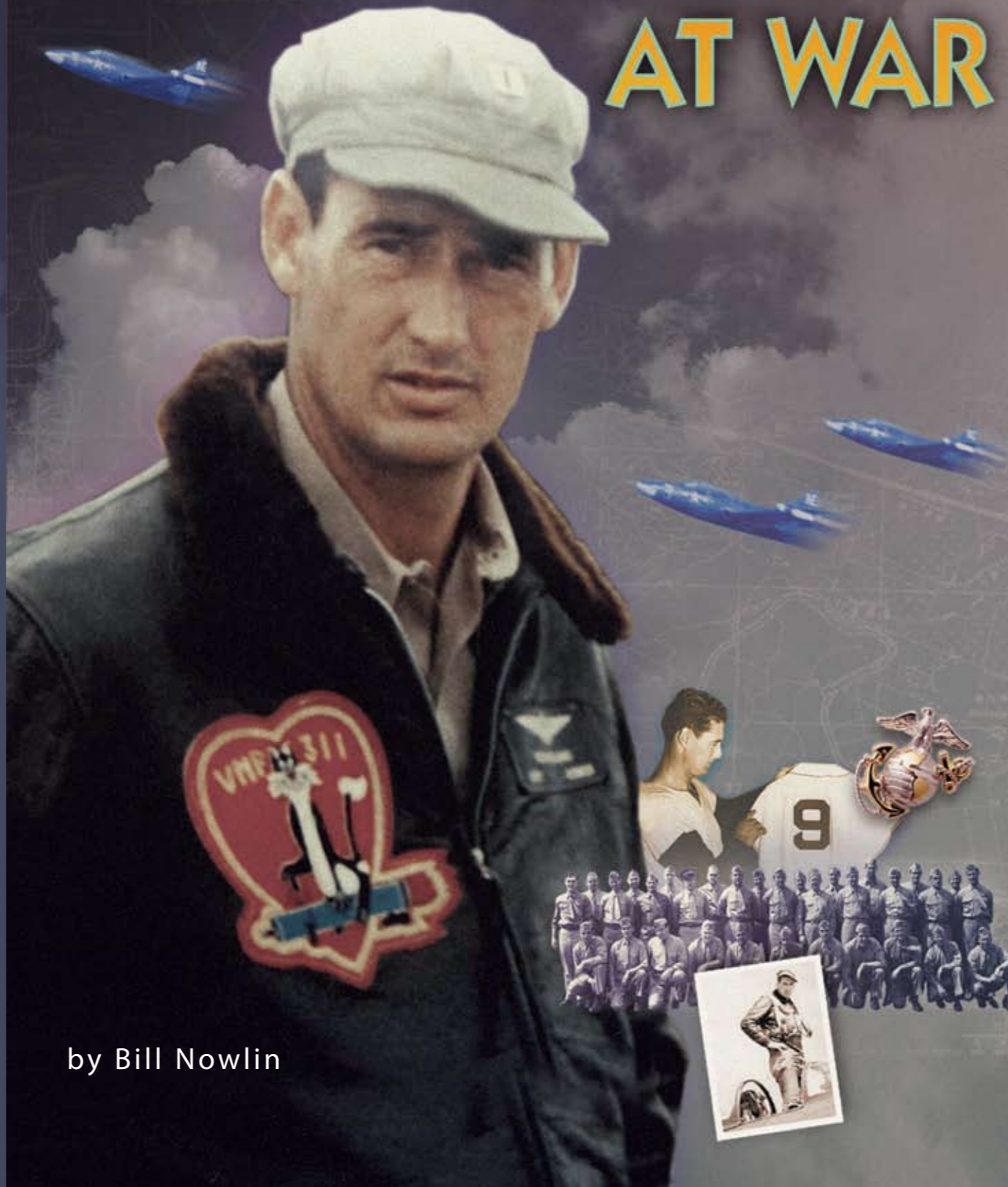
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TED WILLIAMS AT WAR

# TED WILLIAMS AT WAR



by  
BILL NOWLIN



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## TED WILLIAMS AT WAR



The hilltops below looked peaceful from five miles high. It was 10:52 a.m. on 16 February 1953.

Four jets from VMF-311 dipped into their dive. As the ground rushed closer, Captain Ted Williams could see enemy troops scattering from their personnel shelters. He opened up 20-mm suppression fire and began to take back scattered ground fire, as he got down to maybe 1,000 feet to drop his 250-pound bombs.

Then suddenly, there is silence again as the Panther pulls out of its dive, climbing, heading home. For a few seconds, the blue sky looked serene. But Williams had a problem – flashing red lights on his instrument panel – not something any pilot ever wanted to see. *"When I pulled up out of my run, all the red lights were on in the plane and the damn thing started to shake,"* he recalled, the memory still vivid years later. *"The stick stiffened up and was shaking. I knew I had a hydraulic leak. Fuel warning light, fire warning light, there are so many lights on a jet that when anything serious goes wrong the lights almost blind you. I was in serious trouble."*

Ted barely made it back alive. He crash-landed his plane at an Air Force base. Unable to lower his wheels, or effectively work the flaps to brake the plane's speed, his jet scraped down a few thousand feet of tarmac before grinding to a halt.

