



# I Always Wanted to Fly: America's Cold War Airmen

*Wolfgang W. e. Samuel*

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Until now, no book has covered all of Cold War air combat in the words of the men who waged it. In *I Always Wanted to Fly*, retired United States Air Force Colonel Wolfgang W. E. Samuel has gathered first-person memories from heroes of the cockpits and airstrips.

Battling in dogfights when jets were novelties, saving lives in grueling airlifts, or flying dangerous reconnaissance missions deep into Soviet and Chinese airspace, these flyers waged America's longest and most secretly conducted air war.

Many of the pilots Samuel interviewed invoke the same sentiment when asked why they risked their lives in the air--"I always wanted to fly." While young, they were inspired by barnstormers, by World War I fighter legends, by the legendary Charles Lindbergh, and often just by seeing airplanes flying overhead. With the advent of World War II, many of these dreamers found themselves in cockpits soon after high school. Of those who survived World War II, many chose to continue following their dream, flying the Berlin Airlift, stopping the North Korean army during the "forgotten war" in Korea, and fighting in the Vietnam War.

Told in personal narratives and reminiscences, *I Always Wanted to Fly* renders views from pilots' seats and flight decks during every air combat flashpoint from 1945--1968. Drawn from long exposure to the immense stress of warfare, the stories these warriors share are both heroic and historic.

The author, a veteran of many secret reconnaissance missions, evokes individuals and scenes with authority and grace. He provides clear, concise historical context for each airman's memories. In *I Always Wanted to Fly* he has produced both a thrilling and inspirational acknowledgment of personal heroism and a valuable addition to our documentation of the Cold War.

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