



High Flight

David Hagberg

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First electronics. Then automobiles. Now the Japanese are ready to strike at our largest industrial export--airplanes. Intrigue and danger heighten as America faces its worst industrial challenge since the Great Depression. With the Cold War over, Japanese industrial espionage may succeed tomorrow where, fifty years ago, their military might failed. Expert saboteurs continue to strike at our vital industries, while hundreds of thousands of American jobs and countless billions of dollars hang in the balance. Ex-CIA field officer Kirk McGarvey is hired by Guerin Airline Company to investigate a recent rash of accidents and restore the company's, and America's, international reputation.

High Flight Details

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From Reader Review High Flight for online ebook

Mark says

Another page-turner detailing Ex-CIA Kirk McGarvey efforts to stop another threat to the US...This time its Japanese industrialists

Doni says

A little technical for my non-aeronautical brain, but the plot is plausible...Sort of sounds like it was written in the 60's, during the Cold War, instead of after.

Jerry King says

1995

David says

This book took me a long time to read, but it's just the kind of stuff I like. It was written pre Nine-Eleven, but still quite current in its application

Samuel says

OVER THE TOP

Back in the 1990's with the USSR falling to pieces, many authors in the spy thriller genre panicked. New threats were needed if the spy thriller was to be preserved for the next generation. In this century, with increasingly complex geopolitics, there is plenty of material available for most authors. Back then however, authors were not spoiled for choice. David Hagberg for instance, author of the long running Kirk McGarvey series of espionage pulp fiction, decided to use the Japanese at the threat in his fifth book. Events and changing geopolitics have inevitably made "High Flight" less prescient than it should be. However, despite the ravages of time, there are many gems and I would recommend it for anyone who is interested in a "period piece" of sorts, much like his other, earlier books. Now to the review. What sort of misunderstanding could kill millions of people around the world?

We begin the book in 1990. A Japanese extremist employed by a group of wealthy ultra-nationalists does some last minute tweaks to the mechanics of an airliner. Before he can get out, the plane takes off and he ends up plastered across an Illinois meadow when the plane crashes due to his sabotage. Cut to seven years later where Kirk McGarvey, divorced CIA shooter runs into an airline executive for the Guerin Airplane company, a stand-in for Boeing. The executive informs Kirk that a Japanese conglomerate is attempting to

acquire the technical data for their newest product, a cost-effective hyper-sonic airliner and is willing to do so by hook or by crook. He wrangles McGarvey into taking a job as a security consultant in all but name. In America, a zealot begins plans to set up the next big threat to his country, co-opting two radicals to do the dirty work. Meanwhile in East Asia, a Japanese submarine sinks a Russian Federation naval vessel. And in Europe, a ex-STASI assassin escapes the clutches of France's SDECE, leaving the continent for the USA to take on one last job.

PLOT:

Complex as hell. But in my opinion, all the better for it. Hagberg, in this book appeared to be going for the "geopolitical epic" style as mastered by Tom Clancy. Unlike the late maestro's work however, "High Flight" is slightly less complicated, there isn't any plot line which appears to have been wasted unlike the books before this one. This also appears to be the best researched of Hagberg's books. We get to see a pretty interesting method at remotely crashing planes with no survivors put into affect among other interesting kit the characters use against each other. And since the book is bigger, Hagberg has improved with settings. He takes us from the French-German border to the darker areas of Tokyo, a riot which storms the US 7th fleet hq (in a scene which reminded me of the Benghazi incident) and a sharp climax where for 12 hours, it's raining planes across America.

A great thing about "High Flight" is that the level of geopolitical intrigue is through the roof. Murder, mayhem, a down to the wire race to prevent a new world war occurring in the closing days of the cold war and one of the most grand terrorist attacks ever put to paper in fiction, High Flight shines because Hagberg was willing to go all the way and craft a engrossing scenario.

CHARACTERS:

A mixed bag like in all Hagberg books. But they're pretty colorful, unlike the later, more down to earth books. The grudge the CIA officials have against Kirk intensifies with one of the company's top brass even taking a shot at him. The main protagonist still has his more unpleasant traits like his womanizing and sexism but gets to show what he's made of in this book. It's perfectly easy to imagine Kirk as Scott Harvath or Jack Bauer's mentor. The amount of crap he has to shoot his way through while on the run and at the same time try stop a war hours away from being declared, is very fun to watch. Like "24" but a few more years early.

Females characters? Hagberg still hadn't reached book 11 where he finally wrote a somewhat strong female protagonist. Instead we get Dominique Kilbourne, an airline lobbyist. Hagberg's initially presents her as reckless and from there builds her into a "foolish damsel in distress". We get the tired routine where the "overconfident female character tries to surprise the antagonist but gets caught" type situation.

Finally we have the antagonists. "High Flight" has some of Hagberg's best. The Japanese characters, while still somewhat using the unpleasant "yellow peril" stereotypes of the previous book, are a lot more savvy and interesting. Their motivations may be melodramatic but their methods are pretty neat compared to most technothriller antagonists written in that era. Then we have the American villains who are also pretty fun to watch but they're overshadowed by Bruno Mueller. He's like Arkady Kurshin's reincarnation but a whole lot smoother and calmer. A whole block ahead of the people who are trying to take him down, he does his killing in a deadpan, blackly amusing manner and is a worthy opponent for the indestructible main character.

Overall, High Flight is an excellent "period piece". As a technothriller, geopolitics and some of the technology has moved on, rendering it implausible in this day and age. But as something to get lost in and experience what the spy thriller genre was like during its 90's mid-life crisis, it's very good and entertaining.

The main threat of the novel is a very interesting concept and leads to the terrorist attack to end all terrorist attacks, the plotting and pace are as good as can be and the characters are a bit more colorful compared to other technothrillers.

Joel Motzny says

Too long.

Joe White says

Longer than the entire Lord of the Rings Trilogy. Too long to read in one setting, and too many different detailed directions with insignificant character actions to not read in one setting.

The climax starts 200 pages from the end. Some authors throw in a final twist and wrap a book in less than five pages.

For me - too much over the top action, too much repetition of the fundamental thesis in frustration to prevent war.

The cornerstone of the central plot was actually pretty good and is more applicable today than in years past - that hardware can be engineered with back-door sabotage capability that can be exploited remotely.

If the author would have centered the action around this focus in a more tightly plotted novel of 500 or less pages, then I would have given this 4 to 5 stars.

Christopher says

That's it. Everyone out of the pool.

After sampling five books in this improbably long-lived series, I am done with this fuzzily-sketched hero and done with this author, who confoundingly decided to write in the thriller genre and then forgot to "thrill" for hundreds and HUNDREDS of pages across everything I read.

Never thought I'd say I miss Tom Clancy, but there you go.

Wayne says

Unlike Hagberg's first 3 Kirk McGarvey novels, each of which started off with a bang, High Flight takes its time getting to the action. Rather than working for the CIA, here McGarvey is hired by an American airplane manufacturer to find who is trying to destroy or take over the company. In High Flight we have Russians (who may be targeting Japanese and Americans), Japanese (who are targeting Russians and Americans and other Japanese), Americans (who are trying to figure out what is going on), and an American businessman and a German assassin.

Who is doing what to whom...and when!

It took me perhaps 200 pages or so to really get into this story; but, then, it was another fast, exciting read for the rest of the 639 pages. Much more complicated than earlier McGarvey tales, *High Flight* shows Hagberg's familiarity with high-tech machinery involving air planes, submarines, war ships, and helicopters.
