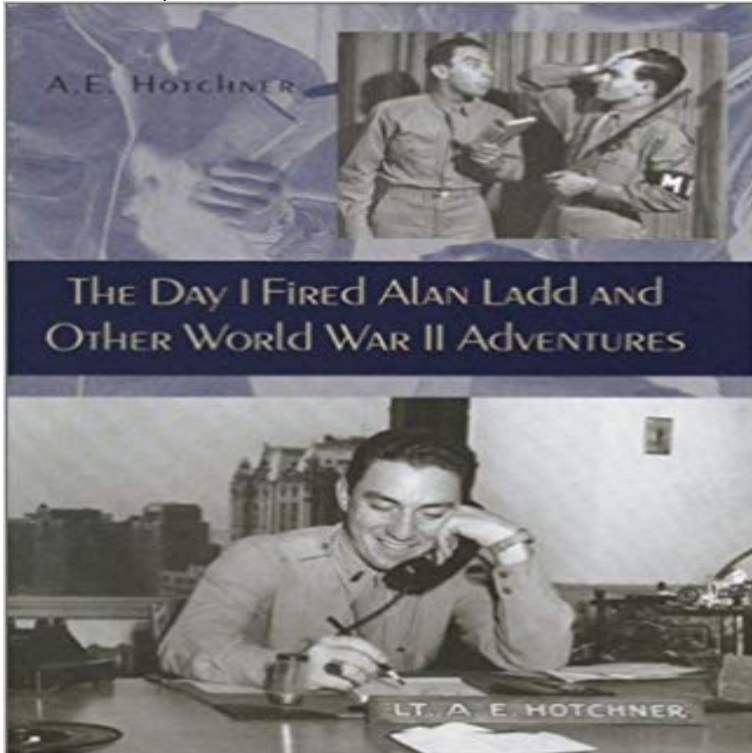


The Day I Fired Alan Ladd and Other World War II Adventures



To perform heroically in a perilous situation is one thing, but I found that, in my case, the real difficulty was in getting myself into a spot where heroism was possible. Nobody on latrine duty ever got the Medal of Honor. This delightful memoir of A. E. Hotchner's World War II experiences explores a different side of the troubled war years. Hotchner, who grew up in St. Louis, was a rookie lawyer fresh out of Washington University Law School when the United States declared war. Like many others of his generation, he aspired to serve his country. He tried to enlist in the navy, first as a pilot and then as a deck officer, but he was rejected for faulty depth perception and flat feet, respectively. Drafted as a lowly GI into the air force branch of the army, he was accepted to bombardier school. But on the eve of his departure, he was ordered to write and perform in an air force musical comedy instead. He eventually went to Officer Candidate School and was assigned to the Anti-Submarine Command as a lieutenant adjutant, but just before his squadrons departure for North Africa he was detached and, despite knowing nothing about moviemaking, ordered to make a film that glorified the Anti-Submarine Command's role in combating U-boats. All through his four-year military career, despite his efforts to get into combat, fate and the military bureaucracy thwarted him. The author skillfully recounts the events of those years, describing the encounters he had with many unforgettable characters, including a footsore and sentimental Clark Gable and an inept Alan Ladd best known as the star of *Shane*. Ladd, then a GI, did such a poor job reading the narration for Hotchner's film *Atlantic Mission* that Hotchner had to fire him. The author also describes his encounters with other well-known people, notably Tennessee Williams, with whom he attended a playwriting class at Washington

University, and a wistful, vulnerable Dorothy Parker. Although much of Hotchners memoir is lighthearted, it also provides a unique look at the impact of the war on everyday life in the United States. Hotchners fast-paced prose makes this memoir an insightful pleasure to read.

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