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Stephen Harding. *Last to Die: A Defeated Empire, a Forgotten Bomber, and the Last American Killed in World War II.* Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2015. 288 pp. $26.99 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-306-82338-1.

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When Japan agreed to the terms of surrender put forth by the Allies on August 10, 1945, the world breathed a sigh of relief. With President Harry S. Trumanâs order to cease offensive actions against Japan, the men stationed in the Pacific began counting the days to their return home. Little did they know that some radical Japanese officers stationed throughout the home islands were not as enthusiastic about the ending of hostilities. In this book, Stephen Harding traces the Japanese resistance to the surrender and the high cost of their defiance paid by Sergeant Anthony J. Marchione.

Japanese resistance to the surrender came in the form of an attempted coup to overthrow the emperor and take over the government to resume the fight. The coup failed, but a few die-hard Japanese airmen were not deterred. Flyers at Oppama and Atsugi air stations determined they were going to intercept any Allied airplanes flying in their districts. After the end of hostilities, the United States continued to fly a variety of missions over the Japanese home islands âto ascertain whether the enemy was actually beginning to abide by the terms of the ceasefire, to identify airfields and ports that could accommodate incoming occupation units,â and to locate Allied prisoner-of-war camps (p. 115). After providing extensive background on the conditions in Japan, Harding goes into a detailed description of Marchioneâs ill-fated final flight over Japan. Attacked by Japanese flyers, Marchione was fatally wounded as he was helping another crew member with his life-threatening injuries.

Harding postulates that General Douglas MacArthurâs decision not to respond to the attack on Marchioneâs flight was one of his most important of the war. He argues that a military response, such as the renewed bombing of Japan, would have reversed the surrender agreement. I find this a bit of a stretch considering the state of the Japanese military and government. Hardingâs poignant description of the graves registration process, moving Marchione from a temporary grave on Okinawa to his final resting place in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, however, is an aspect of war that rarely is covered. I did find the extensive description of the background into the development and fielding of the B-32 Dominator a little more than was needed to understand the story of Marchioneâs sacrifice. Other than being on a B-32 when he died, Marchione had no other apparent link to the B-32. I had trouble connecting the two different stories. Overall, this is a very interesting work on a little-known subject in the history of World War II. We have all heard the story of Hiroo Onoda, who did not surrender until 1974, but this work leads me to wonder how many other Japanese military men also resisted the surrender and continued fighting.

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