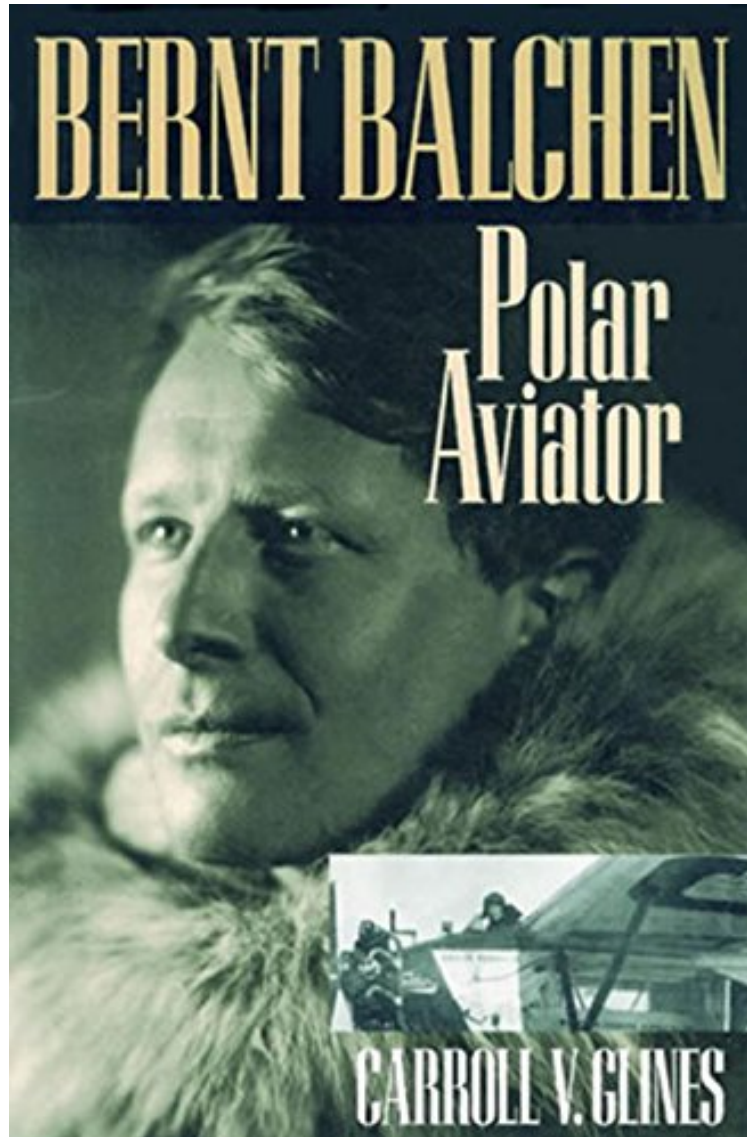


[FREE] BERNT BALCHEN; Polar Aviator

## BERNT BALCHEN; Polar Aviator

*Carroll V. Glines*

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#1716220 in Books Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press 2000-07-17 2000-07-17Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.00 x .90 x 6.00l, 1.10 #File Name: 1560989009320 pages | File size: 68.Mb

**Carroll V. Glines : BERNT BALCHEN; Polar Aviator** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised BERNT BALCHEN; Polar Aviator:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A Great Norsk/.AmericanBy Eastwind CoastyI'm a fan of Bernt, I've been down to Antarctica and Byrd was on my ship. i can really relate to Bernt's trials.. Bernt's sled dog buddy Dutch Dolleman also on my ship. Made the book personal.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I bought this for a giftBy Jan HartI bought this for a gift for someone who is interested in aviation. I've been interested in Balchen for

quite a while since reading his book *War Below Zero*. I did not read this book, but did look through it. It discussed his rivalry with Admiral Byrd, which was an interest of mine. I thought it would be interesting to any aviator, and it is not typical of the books I have given my friend in the past. Balchen was a genuine pioneer in aviation and exploration, and he is a good subject for a biography. I also bought his autobiography, *Come North with Me*, as a gift for my friend. I'd like to read them both, but did not have time. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Wow, what a genius! Where would we have ...By Anita SchnackyWow, what a genius! Where would we have been without him. Norway may have totally fallen under the Nazis and the exploring of both Arctics would have been set behind! One could go on and on about his achievements! Anita

He set polar flight records, organized a series of daring wartime air operations, and became a leader in Arctic aviation. But despite these achievements, Norwegian-American aviator Bernt Balchen saw his public image and military career repeatedly undermined by his one-time mentor, the famous and influential Admiral Richard Byrd. In this new biography, Carroll Glines describes how Byrd's respect for Balchen's talents gradually eroded even as Balchen steadily gained a wider reputation for courage and technical skill. Glines contends that Byrd derailed Balchen's postwar promotion to brigadier general, forcing his retirement from the military in 1956. He also documents how Balchen's publisher bowed to pressure from Byrd's supporters to remove material from a 1958 autobiography. Balchen had argued that Byrd's claims to have been the first to fly across the North Pole in 1926 could not be supported by speed and distance calculations.

Glines has had the guts and integrity to tell the Balchen story as it should be told, letting the chips fall where they may. For the first time anywhere, Glines lays out the facts about the controversy that has surrounded Admiral [Richard] Byrd's flight over the North Pole, as well as Byrd's long series of attacks on Balchen. Byrd bitterly resented -- and feared -- Balchen's knowledge that the flight had not been over the North Pole, as Byrd had claimed, and he did everything in his power to hamper Balchen's career. . . . In his portrayal of Balchen's fascinating wartime career, Glines really shines, following the Norwegian aviator's myriad activities with the skill and understanding of a fellow pilot. . . . He has done a masterful job relating [Balchen's] adventuresome life. (Aviation History) Carroll Glines has written a remarkable biography of a remarkable man. . . . Bernt Balchen was the first man to pilot an aircraft over both poles, the man who taught Amelia Earhart to fly on instruments so that she could solo across the Atlantic, the man who flew Admiral Byrd across the Atlantic and navigated him around Antarctica when it turned out that Byrd himself was, in truth, neither a flyer nor a navigator. (Roanoke (Virginia) Times) Glines has had the guts and integrity to tell the Balchen story as it should be told, letting the chips fall where they may. For the first time anywhere, Glines lays out the facts about the controversy that has surrounded Admiral [Richard] Byrd's flight over the North Pole, as well as Byrd's long series of attacks on Balchen. Byrd bitterly resented -- and feared -- Balchen's knowledge that the flight had not been over the North Pole, as Byrd had claimed, and he did everything in his power to hamper Balchen's career. . . . In his portrayal of Balchen's fascinating wartime career, Glines really shines, following the Norwegian aviator's myriad activities with the skill and understanding of a fellow pilot. . . . He has done a masterful job relating [Balchen's] adventuresome life. (Aviation History) About the Author Carroll V. Glines is a retired Air Force colonel and curator of the Doolittle Military Aviation Library at the University of Texas at Dallas. He is the author of thirty-one books, including *Roscoe Turner: Aviation's Master Showman* (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995). Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. All appeared ready for [Admiral Richard E.] Byrd's departure at midday on May 8 after a report was received that a high pressure area signifying good weather was developing over the entire polar area and was expected to last about 48 hours. It was a Sunday and since [Roald] Amundsen would not allow his men [including Balchen] to work on the Sabbath, they all watched as Byrd's men topped off the plane's wing tanks with fuel. The temperature was barely above freezing and there was slush everywhere. Byrd and [Floyd] Bennett climbed aboard and Bennett started the three engines. When they were warmed up, he pushed the throttles forward but the aircraft did not move. He kept blasting the engines and when the plane finally jarred loose, it moved ahead only a few feet, too slowly to attain takeoff speed. Bennett shut off the engines. Byrd and Bennett climbed out and looked at the skis. Byrd beckoned to Bernt and asked what was wrong. Bernt explained that when the temperature rises just above freezing, which it was then, the snow becomes sticky. The only thing to do is wait until the later hours when the snow freezes hard again and then the icy surface will make a takeoff possible. The suggestion made sense to Byrd and shortly after midnight Greenwich mean time when the sun was low on the northern horizon and the temperature was lowest, Bennett started the Fokker's engines. Balchen had stayed up that evening, sensing that the flight would depart, and watched as Bennett began the takeoff roll. When it was airborne, he reached in his shirt pocket, retrieved a small notebook he always carried and made an entry in his extremely small handwriting, "9 May. Jo. Ford, B and B, depart Kings Bay, 0037." Balchen watched with mixed emotions as the plane headed northward and gradually faded away over the horizon. At Amundsen's direction he had given the rival team valuable advice and assistance that had enabled the Americans to finally get off first without further mishap. He also felt a keen loyalty to Amundsen, his mentor and fellow compatriot. If Byrd succeeded in reaching the Pole first, he had been a prime factor in destroying the chances

for Amundsen to have the honor. Yet he also had the feeling that he may have helped contribute to the success of a significant historical venture. Amundsen and Ellsworth had heard the plane depart. Amundsen told Balchen later, "I was glad they were off and I hoped they'd be back safely. It meant a lot to us that they would have a safe return. If something happened, we would have had to abandon our plans for the transpolar flight in order to instigate a search and, if possible, a rescue with the aid of the [airship] Norge, which would have cruising rates and ample facilities to conduct such an operation." Amundsen's men, a little dejected, went about their work to get the Norge ready for flight. Contrary to what most historians have reported, the thought of a race was not uppermost in Amundsen's mind; he had a broader objective. Although he admitted it would have been an honor, his experience had taught him that thorough preparation was the key to success and he refused to push his men into exhaustion. Riiser-Larsen explains: "For Amundsen the North Pole was not the goal. We had been up there the year before to 88 degrees north and beyond. Amundsen's dream for many years was to explore the total stretch across the Polar Sea of which two-thirds of the distance lay between the North Pole and Alaska. If there had been a race, it had been well within our power to get off before Byrd." The great Norwegian explorer explained this to his men and restored their morale by telling them that even if the Norwegian-American-Italian team was not the first to reach the Pole, they would be helping to establish a greater aviation milestone by helping the Norge complete the world's longest flight on its transpolar trip to Alaska. Balchen's job was to check on the condition and weigh every piece of personal equipment, food and survival gear that was to be loaded aboard the Norge. Not content to be idle when his job was done, he gave ski instruction to the Italian members of the airship's crew on the mountains behind the camp. Most of them had never been on skis before and it was Amundsen's order that every crew member and ground helper must have some skiing experience in case they were selected for the flight and the dirigible was forced down. Amundsen at age 54 set an example by skiing ten or fifteen miles a day to stay in shape. While Amundsen and his men were at dinner on the evening of May 9th, an Italian worker rushed in, shouting, "She come! They here!" Amundsen led the rush to greet the Fokker as Bennett circled the settlement; the whistle on the Chantier screeched and brought men from both expedition camps racing to the airstrip. When Bennett set the plane down smoothly and brought it to a stop, Amundsen opened the plane's door. As Byrd emerged, Amundsen gave him a smothering bear hug of congratulations accompanied by kisses on both cheeks. He also kissed and hugged an embarrassed Bennett. Ellsworth extended his hand and congratulated his two fellow Americans. Balchen, standing outside the crowd of well-wishers, reached in his shirt pocket for his notebook and made another penciled entry: "9 May. Jo. Ford returns King's Bay 1607. Strangely, no one asked either Byrd or Bennett if they had reached the Pole. It was assumed they had as Byrd's men hurried forward and hoisted the two airmen on their shoulders. They rushed them to the Chautier where Byrd made the announcement over the ship's radio to the world that he had reached the North Pole, the first person to do so. The Fokker had been gone exactly 15 hours, 30 minutes, when it had been predicted that the flight would take at least 17 hours, with an estimated 21 hours of fuel aboard. The distance to the Pole and return was 1330 nautical miles (1529.5 statute miles). That meant the average ground speed of the plane had to be 85.8 knots or 98.67 statute miles per hour to cover that distance. Balchen thought about these figures briefly and then dismissed them from his mind. He had flown a number of different aircraft but not a tri-motor Fokker. He thought maintaining an average ground speed of nearly 100 miles per hour for that distance with the load it carried and the heavy skis attached was indeed excellent. Although he had no way of knowing it at the time, these simple figures would have an impact on his life far beyond what he could have imagined. They would embroil him in an unpleasant controversy that would much later become front page news all over the world. They would influence his future adversely, cause him to be denied a coveted promotion and follow him to the end of his life and after. They would cause geographers and historians to delve deeply into their significance and the historical claim they represented. And they would eventually tarnish the image of a U.S. Navy admiral and national hero who had created his own aura of greatness.