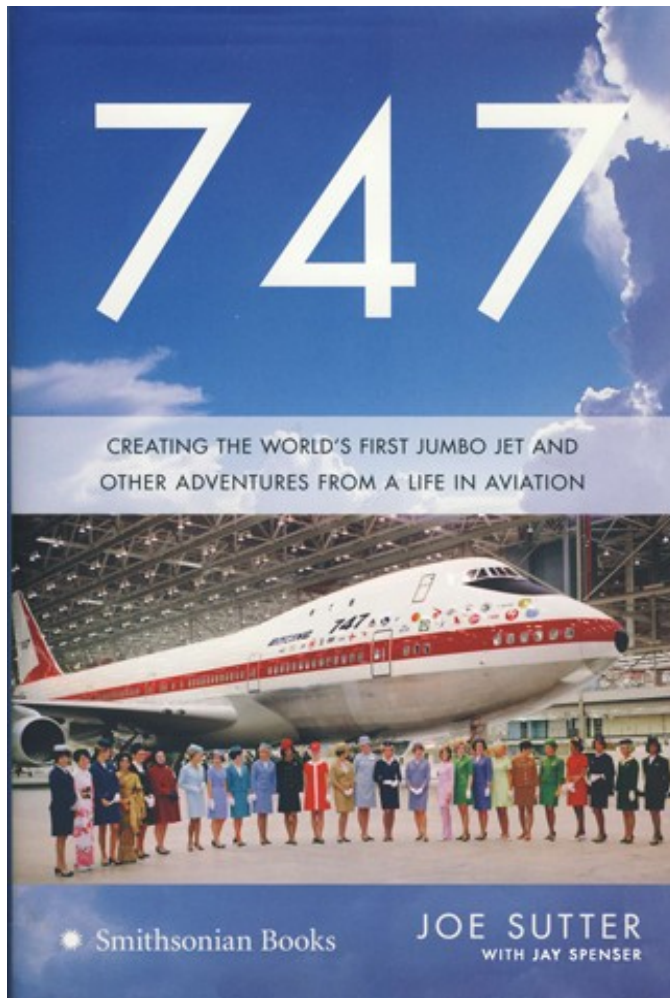


Book Review

747, Joe Sutter with Jay Spenser

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This is an eminently readable book. Not only does it cover the progression of events that dominated the design of the world's largest jetliner, it also spans the life and career of Joe Sutter, the man that made this jet his mission.

It starts literally with an overview of Boeing field in Seattle. Once a lazy farm area with the nearby Georgetown, this region now overswept by Seattle's industry is an international airfield and what could easily be described as Jet City's airliner garage. Even in Joe Sutter's youth, airplanes lined the runway where from his home on the neighboring hill he could watch test flights of new designs.

Following his school days and service during World War Two, his life could have been submerged into the humdrum of a desk jockey in any one of many corporations. This, thankfully, was not the way of the Boeing engineer in a corporate family of invention and innovation. Joe

describes how, in his youth, he could see a design fault in an airplane such that one with a poor design of the tail offered nearly fatal characteristics to its ability to land.

The story of the 747 is amazing in the context of the time when Joe's program was given a Cinderella budget eked out from the overarching charm of Boeing achieving what would have been the first Supersonic jet liner. The story guides us through the competing demands, claims, and fiefdoms within the company as the star of the Supersonic jet was falling, and that star of the 747 was rising. The drama of the story is in these competing projects.

The engineering is also interesting, but separate from the drama. However, this is an engineering story, and the slow but steady progression of concept, working with the client, laying out the design, and finally building a product is a continuum of American industry on par with the continental spread of our borders, the domination of the prairies, and the triumph of the railroads and interstate. This engineering story has the sweep of events, the momentum of will, and the triumph of achievement that comes through by craft instead of springing from pivotal moments. Reading 747 by Joe Sutter with Jay Spenser is like discovering the fine hand of design seen in a blueprint.