

THE
Mosquito
Bowl

A Game of Life and Death in World War II

Buzz Bissinger



HARPER

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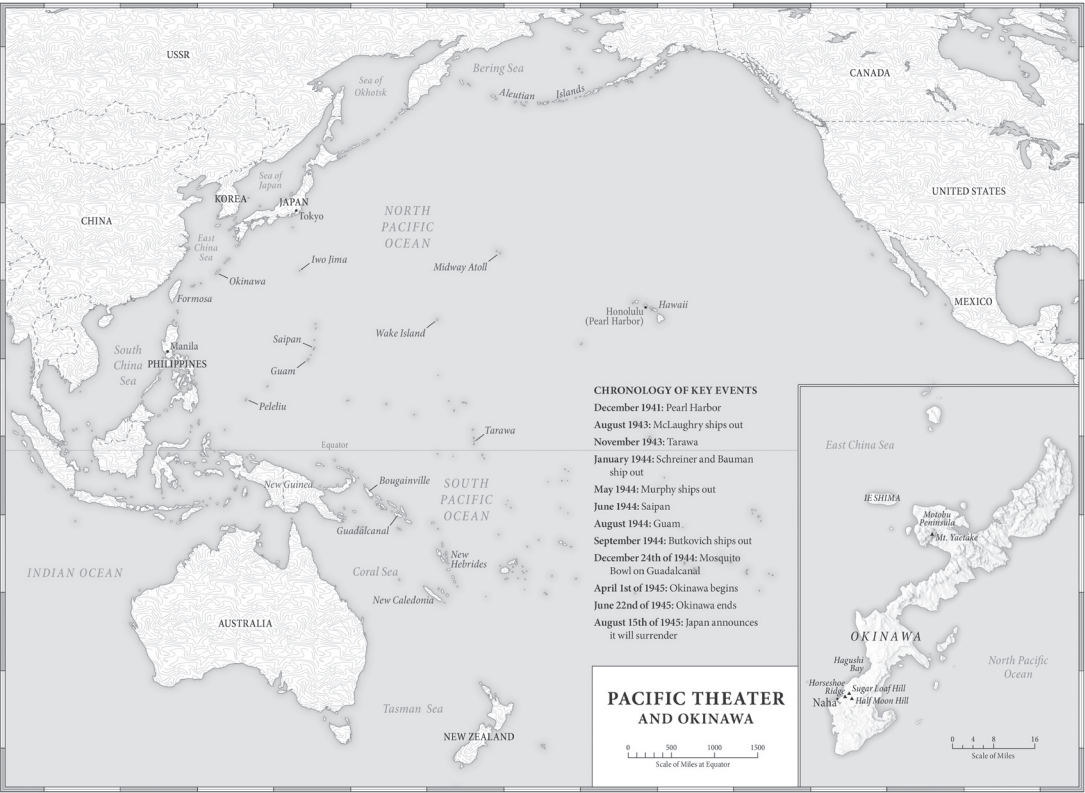
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NOTES ON SOURCES

This section has been organized differently from the usual method. Instead of line-by-line attributions, each chapter has been broken down by subject to show sources used and their context. The intent is to make it easier for readers to find information on a topic. The section also serves as a quasi-index in place of a formal one. To paraphrase the brilliant nonfiction writer Richard Ben Cramer, you are going to have to read the book if you want to know what is inside it. Books are meant to be read in their totality, not in snippets.

Of the hundreds of books and articles I read in researching *The Mosquito Bowl* over the course of five years, there are several that gave me special inspiration. E. B. Sledge's *With the Old Breed: At Peleliu and Okinawa*, about his experiences at the battles of Peleliu and Okinawa, is the best personal account of war that I have ever read, visceral, intense, literary, and disturbing. George Feifer's global account, *The Battle of Okinawa: The Blood and the Bomb*, is amazing in its scope, detail, and refusal to compromise on the inhuman level of blood and violence. I limited my reliance on these books as secondary sources, but their ability to delve so deeply into the heart of combat made utilizing them unavoidable at times. One other author I would like to cite is John Dower, emeritus professor of Japanese history at MIT. His book *Embracing Defeat: Japan in*

the Wake of World War II, about the postwar reconstruction of Japan, is an unprecedented blend of history, research, insight, and writing. I was privileged enough to be on the jury that awarded him the 1999 National Book Award for nonfiction. It also won the Pulitzer Prize.

Chapter 1: McLaughry

The author is indebted to the family of John J. McLaughry for allowing me access to personal letters and other material dating back to McLaughry's childhood, courtesy of the estate of John J. McLaughry.

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Chapter 4: Butkovich

The Harvard Library digital collection Immigration to the United States, 1789–1930, is a treasure trove. It contains more than 400,000 pages from more than 2,200 books. Of all the fine works on the subject, the one that stands out the most to me is Harvard University history professor emeritus Oscar Handlin's Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations That Made the American People*, on the great migrations to America. It is both superb history and superbly written. Fulton County historian Bruce Weirauch was instrumental in helping to draw a portrait of the Butkovich family and the community.

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Murray Sperber, professor emeritus of English and American Studies at Indiana University, has been the nation's preeminent author for three decades on the often pernicious impact of sports on American colleges. *Shake Down the Thunder: The Creation of Notre Dame Football* is an eye-opening look into Notre Dame football, written with Sperber's typical combination of exhaustive research and engaging style. Robert E. Burns's *Being Catholic, Being American: The Notre Dame Story* is a candid and comprehensive history of the school and its unique place in academia. For anyone who wants to know more about the impact of the war on a college football team, Terry Frei's *Third Down and a War to Go: The All-American 1942 Wisconsin Badgers* is an excellent and highly readable account of the legendary 1942 Wisconsin team. Among its characters are Dave Schreiner and Robert Bauman, who both played in the Mosquito Bowl.

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Chapter 10: Football Is War

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Chapter 26: April Fool

The names of marines from the 6th Marine Division killed in this and succeeding chapters were extrapolated from a database of all marine deaths from 1941 to 1945, compiled by Gordon Smith of the Naval-History.Net archive at

the Library of Congress. The sources he used were USMC casualty cards, the American Battle Monuments Commission, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, and a listing of all casualties state by state. Julia Bell, a researcher for the book, entered the names of men from the 6th Division at Okinawa who died into a database. It was then possible to break the data down in a variety of ways, including date of death, regiment, battalion, and company. The author is aware that there may be some omissions. There may also be some discrepancies in the actual date of death because of when the bodies of the fallen were recovered.

In addition to the E. B. Sledge and George Feifer books, two personal accounts were extremely helpful in depicting the battle. For the perspective of the Battle of Okinawa from the Japanese viewpoint, Hiromichi Yahara's *The Battle for Okinawa: A Japanese Officer's Eyewitness Account of the Last Great Campaign of World War II* is written with both candor and poignance in depicting the fatal hopelessness of the Japanese soldier and officer. Philips D. Carleton's *The Conquest of Okinawa: An Account of the Sixth Marine Division* was written for the U.S. Marine Corps Historical Division and based on personal observances. Max Hastings's book *Retribution: The Battle for Japan, 1944–45* is excellent for an extended account of the final years of the Pacific war.

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FOOTBALL PROGRAMS AND YEARBOOKS

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I cannot say enough about the contribution of 6th Division and Okinawa veteran Neal McCallum. He is one of the smartest men I have ever met and has an encyclopedic knowledge of Okinawa. He was instrumental in helping me separate the wheat (what really happened) from the chaff (what has been embellished over time). Whether in person or

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Other veterans of Okinawa and their families who were so gracious with their time, in some cases supplying me with personal letters of their war experiences and other artifacts, include John Baird, Harry Grover, Melvin Heckt, Melvin Kabik, Ed Marsalek, Dave Mears, John McCulloch, Les Penny, the family of Warren Rudkin, Oscar Soifer, Maurice Vail, Ken and Natalie Wells, Ed Whitten, Dick Whitaker, and Jim White. Helen Simmons allowed me full access to the letters of her father, Fred Abbott. Gloria Taylor did the same with the letters of her father, Gerald Strohacker. So did marvelous Mary Walker with letters and other material from her husband, Jack Walker. Not to mention the North Carolina hospitality of both Mary and her daughter, Lynne Warren, when I visited. Laura Lacey, the historian for the Sixth Marine Division Association and author of a hair-raising book about Okinawa called *Stay off the Skyline*, could not have been more giving. Bill Beigel made the process of obtaining military records about ten times easier than I expected. Penny Stark knows exactly why she is here.

Richard McLaughry and Marguerite Ames allowed access to a treasure trove of material on their father, John, dating back to his childhood: to simply acknowledge and offer thanks in no way conveys my debt to them. Patti and Brett Margaron shared hundreds of letters and documents in helping me to draw a portrait of Bob and Frank Bauman (Patti's father). Their sons, Matt and Frank, offered observations on the impact of Bob's life on their grandfather. Their daughter, Hana, and her husband, Dan, are just really cool.

Judy Corfield gave me a box filled to the brim with letters from her uncle, Dave Schreiner. Ann Norman so willingly shared letters and other material relating to the engagement between her mother, Odette, and Schreiner during the war. Terry Frei's book, *Third Down and a War to Go*, about the Wisconsin football team of 1942, was enormously helpful in depicting Schreiner and Bauman and is also a great read that I highly recommend. Terry gave me access to his notes and went above and beyond the call of duty in supplying names and emails of people to interview. Larry Krulac, Jim Starcevic, and Roger Parmenter greatly

helped in learning about Tony Butkovich and his family. Local historian Bruce Weirauch was indispensable in helping to depict the coal era of Fulton County. In writing about George Murphy, a big thank-you to the Steele family, including John, Brian, Emily, Theresa Steele Butts, and Tim Butts.

In fact-checking the book, I could not have done better than David Georgi. A former colleague from *Vanity Fair*, he is a heat-seeking missile when it comes to finding mistakes. He is beyond thorough, to put it mildly. Because of the amount of material within the book, Ben Kalin, another former *Vanity Fair* colleague, came in at the end to assist and was superb. Anne Metcalf was not only a genius in compiling the notes on sources and bibliography within a limited time frame but one of the nicest people I have ever met. Researchers Maria Spano, Julia Bell, and Colin Lodewick were meticulous in their work, and I was lucky to have them.

HarperCollins showed total faith from beginning to end, not flinching for a second when I asked for several deadline extensions, and then doing everything possible to make the book as good as possible. Thanks to the following: president and publisher Jonathan Burnham; deputy publisher Doug Jones; Elina Cohen, who did the interior design; Robin Bilardello, who did the cover; Tina Andreadis and Kate D'Esmond in publicity; Leah Waslielewski and Katie O'Callaghan in marketing.

Which brings me to my editor at HarperCollins, Noah Eaker. What can I say? Bright, hardworking, a deft editing touch, fun, patiently putting up with panicked and prickly emails born of insecurity and five years of tackling the beast in isolation. He has many great years ahead as an editor and could definitely work up a side practice in psychiatry. His assistant, Mary Gaule, and her replacement, Edie Astley, were great.

My agent at WME, Eric Simonoff, was an excited supporter of the project when it was nothing more than a few at-random thoughts. He is straight to the point, no-nonsense, smart as hell, and also graced with a superb sense of humor (he laughed at my quips). Eric's former assistant, Jessica Spitz, and current one, Criss Moon, were both terrific to work with. Sylvie Rabineau and Elizabeth Wachtel, who specialize in literary packaging for WME, were inexhaustible champions of the book.

For the first time ever in my career, I put my oversensitivity aside and had several people read the first draft of the manuscript. Two of them were colleagues from my former days at the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Vernon Loeb and Fen Montaigne. They pushed me to revisit the manuscript and do some major surgery that ultimately meant tearing out months and months of research. My son Caleb read the manuscript and, armed with an intuitive touch on how to shape narrative, had many terrific suggestions and insights. To tell the truth, I was a little bit in awe, that moment in life when what you suspected is now officially true: your son is smarter than you. My other sons, twins Gerry and Zach, are old hands at dealing with Dad when he is writing a book and not taking it personally when he gets that look on his face as if he is smelling something rotten.

My wife, Lisa, is warm, funny, beautiful, supportive, patient, smart as hell, and everything else. She, too, is a gifted editor and in a very early iteration suggested a structural change that helped the book to coalesce. I tend to bad-mouth my work, and since it was the pandemic with nowhere to go and no one else around, she bore the brunt of my foaming until she told me to stop feeling sorry for myself and get to work, and when I really drove her nuts, to “shut the fuck up.” Which worked quite effectively.

I would like to close by thanking Pippin. He came into our lives as an older rescue at the age of fourteen. He weighed all of five pounds with a coat of mottled gray and ears shooting up like the pyramids. Although like most small dogs he fancied himself ten times bigger than he was, his nature was gentle, affectionate, and vulnerable. He was beautiful because he wasn’t classically beautiful at all and at times beautifully silly.

Your mind plays terrible tricks when you write a book: What seemed so good on the first read turns to shit on the second. Every afternoon, as the writing spigot went dry and fear set in, I escaped to my favorite chair. Pip would climb into my lap, take what seemed like two hours to find the perfect angle of repose, and together we would both fall asleep. He gave me the love and warmth and reassurance needed to go back at it the following morning. It went on like this for nearly two years until the writing was completed.

Lisa and I knew the end was coming after he was diagnosed with cancer. We hoped for miracles when there weren't any. We tried to prepare ourselves when we could not. Our hearts will eventually heal but they will never fully mend. And so we wait, until our own time comes to cross the Rainbow Bridge.