



BOYS OF THE BURNING SKY

The air war you've never seen. The heroes you'll never forget..

VMF-322 OKINAWA

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LOGLINE

BOYS OF THE BURNING SKY is the gripping untold true story of a group of young wide-eyed cadets chasing the dream of flight. Nothing to lose and everything to prove. From Pensacola's sun-bleached runways to the burning skies of Okinawa, they must forge a brotherhood in the cockpit of their Corsairs and turn the raw Marine pilots they lead, into a lethal combat force to defend Allied troops and each other in one of the bloodiest battles of WWII.



COMPARABLES

- **“TOP GUN meets BAND OF BROTHERS.”**
- **“PEARL HARBOR” meets “HACKSAW RIDGE.”**
- **“MASTERS OF THE AIR” meets “THE PACIFIC.”**



THE FORMAT

- **As a Feature:**
Historical Drama/Action/Adventure, 120+ min
- **For TV/Streaming Series:** War Epic, Serialized,
Episodes 60min x 10
One-Two Seasons



PLOT SUMMARY

ACT I 1939-1942

- 1939- Fred is a 19yo teenager, a college student. He lives with his parents in New York City, in a flat above the family bodega. Bright, gifted even. Poland was just invaded by Germany. He hears the whispers of war. He reads a Marine recruiting ad in the newspaper while in class. He drops out of college to become an Aviation Cadet.
- Fred and several other young men are seen traveling to Pensacola, FL. They spend the entire next year training, growing from boys to men, and solidify their transformation into Marines, Pilots, and as Brothers in Arms. After graduation and commissioning in 1941, they become Instructor Pilots. Their Sr. Instructor is one of the best, 1LT Greg “Pappy” Boyington. Accidents happen and lessons are learned.

PLOT SUMMARY

ACT II 1942-44

- New assignment orders arrive scattering the group. Fred and several others volunteer for an experimental Glider Squadron 71, part of “Project George”. On Dec 7th, Pearl Harbor is attacked, and the US declares war. Scenes track each character’s advancement, development and assignments. Fred takes command of VMF-322 at age 22 in 1943. Several of the others get command positions. They conduct gunnery, dogfight, and inter-service exercises, accidents happen.
- VMF-322 deploys to San Diego in Jan ‘44. Then on to Hawaii in March. There they train and ready the unit. All plan for deployments to other South Pacific locations. All prepare for combat. Some see it and learn, there is no adequate way to prepare. Fred catches up with his half-brother, “Skid” stationed on submarines in Hawaii. Much of 1944 is “hurry up & wait” mode.

PLOT SUMMARY

ACT III Sep 1944-May 1945

- VMF-322 says good-bye to Hawaii. Oct 1944 finds them on Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides. They spend several months rearming, refurbishing, and reconstituting the squadron. They train with Marine and Army units.
- March of 1945, they embark on USS White Plains for secret destination.
- On April 1, 1945 “Operation Iceberg”, the Battle of Okinawa begins. VMF-322 enters the fray.
- Strap yourself in.

MAJOR FRED “NY” RAUSCHENBACH



Age as of 1 April 1945: 24

Gender: Male

Hometown: New York City, NY

- 1943, assumes command of VMF-322 fighter squadron “ CannonBalls” at age 22.
- His Executive Officer (X.O.), is Major Jack Mathis. They have been inseparable since the day they met as Cadets.
- He and Jack equipped, trained, and led this squadron from its inception.
- VMF-322 is 110% committed to providing accurate, timely, fire support for the ground pounders.
- Fred falls in love with Red Cross Field Officer Elaine, when they meet on Espiritu Santo Island.
- 3 April 1945, his squadron’s Ground Support element was lost when a kamikaze struck LST-599.
- 9 April 1945, VMF-322 carrier catapult launches 32 F4U Corsairs, landing at Kadena Field, Okinawa.
- 13 April 1945, Fred loses 3 men, when a sister unit VMF-323 Corsair crashes into his flightline.
- 16 May 1945, Fred is crushed when X.O. Major J.R. Mathis is killed in a crash landing.
- VMF-322 flew 599 Combat air patrols, 33 strike missions, 1487 sorties. Since 1943, lost 25 Corsairs, 8 pilots.
- Promoted to Lt. Colonel 1951. Flew additional combat missions during the Korean War. Resigned his commission in 1955 to pursue space program opportunities.

MAJOR GEORGE "AX" AXTELL



Age as of 1 April 1945: 24

Gender: Male

Hometown: Ambridge, Pennsylvania

- Survived a mid-air collision as a young Instructor that 3 pilots perished in.
- After aviation training, attended Annapolis Naval Academy 1941-1942. Assigned doing meteorological engineering at Anacostia
- Assumed command of VMF-323 fighter squadron "Death Rattlers", at age 22. Currently believed to be the youngest man in Marine Corp history to do so (George was 8 months younger than Fred).
- Served in multiple VMF units to include 312, 452, and later commanded the 2nd Marine Air Wing.
- Promoted to Lt. Colonel in 1951.
- Retired as a Lt. General in 1974
- Went on to serve in the Korean and Vietnam war.
- VMF-323 flew 309 Combat air patrols, 25 strike missions, 1764 sorties.



MAJOR RICHARD "DICK" DAY

Age as of 1 April 1945: 27

Gender: Male

Hometown: Laramie, Wyoming

- Resigned Army commission in 1939 to join Marines.
- 1940 served in rifle company 6th Marines in San Diego.
- 1941 Served with 1st Battalion, 5th Marines at Quantico, spent 9 months at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.
- September 1941 attended Flight School.
- 1942-1943 flew anti-submarine patrols from St. Thomas, Virgin Islands.
- Assumed command of VMF-312 fighter squadron "Day's Knights" June 1943.
- VMF-312 flew 297 combat air patrols, 18 strike missions, 1446 sorties.
- Killed in action 14 May 1945, last seen making a rocket run northeast of KIKAI FIELD

SUPPORTING CHARACTERS



Cadet Jack R. Mathis



Major Greg "Pappy" Boyington



C.W. "Skid" Rauschenbach



Elaine Red Cross Officer



Cadet Edmund Overend



Cadet Charlton Ivey



Cadet Quinton Johns



Cadet Hugh Russell



Cadet Douglas Leonardson

THEMES

Coming of Age in Wartime

- Young men transformed by fire from eager cadets to weary veterans.
- The loss of innocence, and what it costs to lead.

Sacrifice and Legacy

- What it means to survive when others don't.
- The burden of carrying fallen comrades' stories forward.

Hope and Resilience

- Glimpses of humanity amid devastation.
- Small acts of love, humor, and kindness that keep men going.

The Intersection of Technology and Humanity

- The Corsair as both a machine of war and a lifeline.
- Relationship with the aircraft that keeps them alive—and can betray them in an instant.

Brotherhood and Camaraderie

- How shared danger forges unbreakable bonds between pilots and crews.
- Loyalty that transcends rivalry and fear.

Courage in the Face of Chaos

- Braving constant danger to protect ground forces.
- Finding resolve when the mission seems impossible.

LOCATIONS

N.A.S PENSACOLA

HAWAII

- **NAS Pensacola-** Military authenticity, access to facilities, technical and historical experts. Proximity to open water & aircraft carriers.
- **Hawaii-** Military authenticity, access to facilities, technical and historical experts, terrain/vegetation is like many South Pacific locations (Espiritu Santo, Guadalcanal, Okinawa).

BUDGET

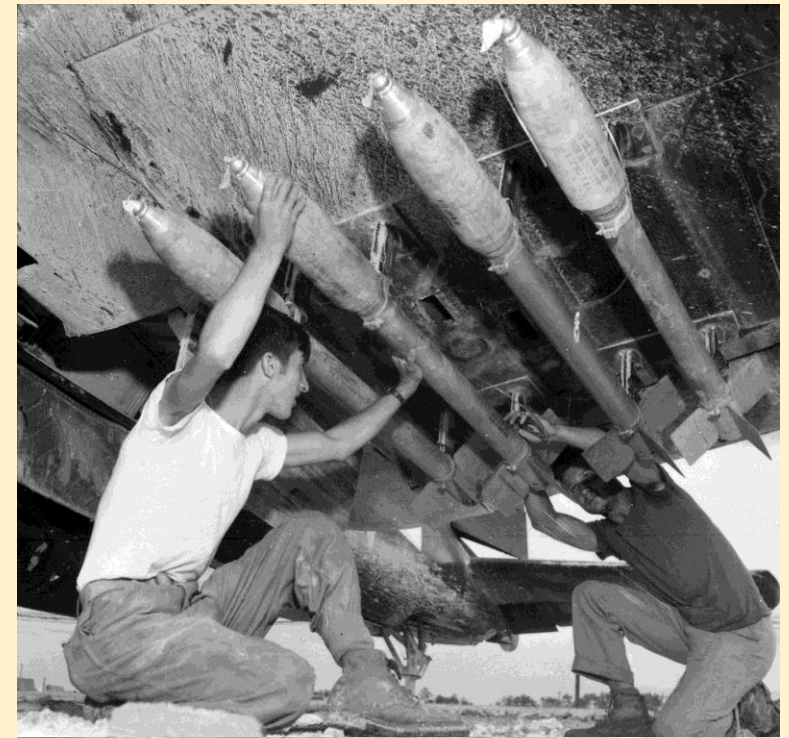
- **\$30-60 million-** Let's swing for the fence.

MARKET APPEAL

- **Fans of Prestige War Dramas**— Viewers drawn to Band of Brothers, The Pacific, Dunkirk, Masters of the Air. Military history enthusiasts.
- **Older Male Demographic** (35–65+)— Veterans, aviation buffs, and those nostalgic for classic WWII stories. Viewers who remember films like Midway, Tora! Tora! Tora!, or Memphis Belle.
- **History and Documentary Viewers**— Audiences who regularly watch History Channel, Smithsonian, and PBS war content.
- **Younger Male Audience** (18–35)— Gamers and younger viewers who love aviation action and visceral combat.
- **General Adult Drama Viewers**— Audiences who enjoy Friday Night Lights, Yellowstone, or 1917, drawn to human stories under pressure.
- **Women Viewers** (25–55)— The emotional storylines of marriages, love affairs, loss, resilience—give it cross-gender appeal. Potential to resonate through the lens of the women supporting the men.
- **International Audiences**— WWII narratives still have strong global interest. Stories of sacrifice and liberation have universal themes.
- **Military Families & Veterans**— Viewers connected to Marine Corps culture and Pacific War legacy. A built-in community that values accurate, respectful portrayals.

LOOK AND FEEL











THANK YOU!



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