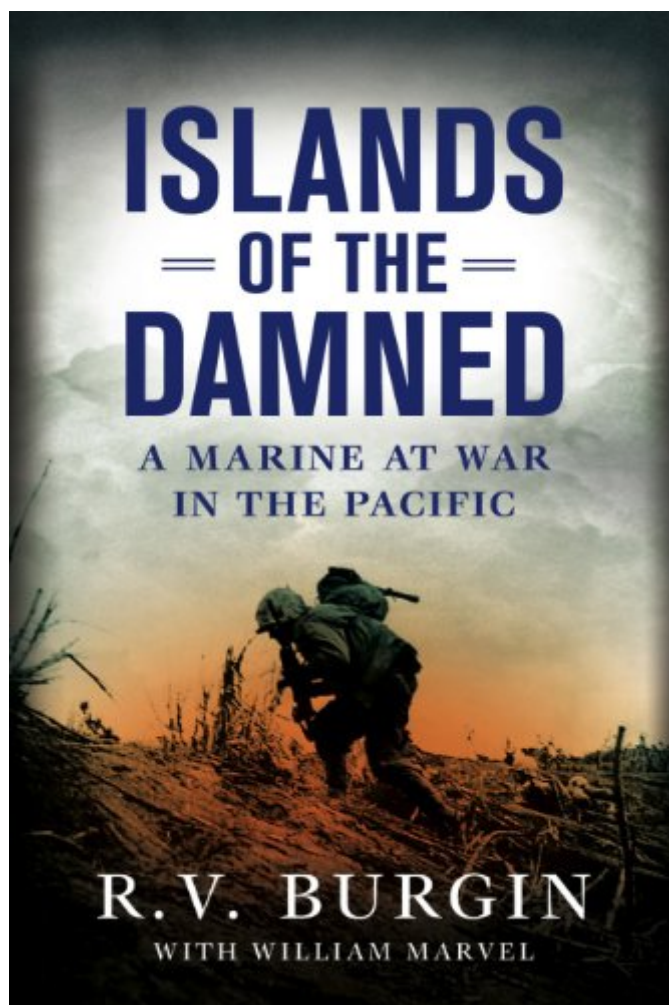


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Islands Of The Damned: A Marine At War In The Pacific



Synopsis

The true story of R.V. Burgin, the real-life World War II Marine Corps hero featured in HBO's *The Pacific*. "Read his story and marvel at the man...and those like him." —Tom Hanks

When R.V. Burgin joined the U.S. Marines on November 13th, 1942, he never imagined what was waiting for him and his fellow riflemen in the Pacific Islands during World War II. From New Britain through Peleliu to Okinawa, Burgin's platoon, Company K, Third Battalion, Fifth Marine Regiment, First Marine Division, encountered a ferocious, committed, and desperate enemy in the Japanese—engaging them in some of the most harrowing and horrifying conflicts of the war. In this harrowing memoir, R.V. Burgin reveals his experiences as a marine at war in the Pacific Theater. Schooled in Melbourne, Australia, by the veterans who had just returned from combat in Guadalcanal, Company K confronted snipers, ambushes along narrow jungle trails, abandoned corpses of hara-kiri victims, and howling banzai attacks as they island-hopped from one bloody battle to the next. During his two years of service, Burgin rose from a green private to a seasoned sergeant, and earned a Bronze Star for his valor at Okinawa. With unforgettable drama and an understated elegance, Burgin's gripping narrative chronicles the waning days of World War II, bringing to life the hell that was the Pacific War.

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Customer Reviews

This man went to Hell and back. He served his country well and honorably through through some of the toughest battles of the Pacific Theater. My own father was a marine and fought on Guadalcanal, and it was there that he received his "million dollar wound." I wanted to hear his stories, but for the rest of his life he steadfastly refused to speak of the war, and so I have to hear it from others who were part of it. My father has passed, and it is my understanding that some 500 of these heroes pass every day now. I'm glad that some of them decided to put their experiences onto paper, so that the men who come behind them will know what it meant to be a member of The Greatest Generation,

It was a real pleasure to find another first person account of the Pacific war. As mentioned in other reviews, books like this are far and few between. Especially, since our World War Two veterans are passing away far too quickly. This book was easy to read, flows very nicely, and isn't burdened by large amounts of historical data. It's personal account from the ground by a Marine who was really there. It does however, put into place the importance of the battles the author fought in. In particular, I enjoyed the descriptions of living and fighting on the South Pacific islands. The book also contains the only example of a man using a bayonet in combat on any book I've ever read. Most importantly I think the book puts in perspective ghastly nature of the war in the Pacific, in particular the cave-to-cave fighting common among the campaigns. Ironically, one of the major themes of the book is a love story. While I don't normally seek out this type of theme in a history book (or any other book for that matter), the author does a fine job of making his place in history far more personal by doing so. The best part is, it only amplifies this situation, without it distracting from the historical narration. This book makes for an excellent companion to the classic *With the Old Breed* by EB Sledge. If you enjoyed this book you would this book and *Helmet for My Pillow* by Robert Leckie...books I understand the mini-series *The Pacific* are heavily based on.

I read and listened to the audiobook narrated by Sean Runnette. I will address the audiobook specifically at the end of my review. 4.5 stars. A great read! Burgin was a mortar squad leader on New Britain, Peleliu and Okinawa. He saw lots of action and his job as a squad leader required him to move with the riflemen as a spotter for his mortar team so he is in the thick of things quite a bit.

He does actions worthy of the Silver Star, receives battle wounds and officially receives the Bronze Star and explains this in quite some detail. He also gives a solid description of his background, his exploits on Australia and a brief report of his after war activities. Burgin is much more tough and the real-deal in his account when compared to his depiction in the HBO miniseries. He defies orders, threatens subordinates and even the higher ups if he feels they are not properly performing their duty and is very to the point in doing this. This characteristic also applies to his tenure in combat. Burgin is not only deadly with the mortar but he also uses the garand, .45 and bayonet with effectiveness and is open about doing so. Because of this I feel this memoir rises up to be one of the best I've read from a marine in the PTO. The rating of 4.5 was given because the writing at times does seem like a straight transcription of an interview with Burgin and isn't as intense as the writings of Sledge or Overton's GOD ISN'T HERE but it is still written clearly and accessible. Burgin was one of several marines in K/3/5 featured in the Pacific. So far, there exists five other K/3/5 memoirs out there and the ones I've read are all exceptional. I mention those books and many others in all the lists I have of great war memoirs. The audiobook is top notch. The reader is a younger gentleman so the book's descriptions sound more fresh and engaging, imo. The audiobook is rather short (~6 hrs 30 min) though but because I enjoyed the production so much I highly recommend that buyers consider the audiobook! Self-plugging: I have a few lists about the best war/combat/medic/corpsmen memoirs that are the best, they're all kind of a big deal.

Great story told with clarity and factualness. Burgin was one of those guys that said little but did a lot, and thought a lot about what he had to do. It comes through in the book. A comrade in arms of Eugene Sledge, not only the experiences are familiar to readers of "With the Old Breed" but also how the experiences effected the speech, perspectives and values of these two men who fought side-by-side. Like Sledge's book, this is not a ripping yarn or war story as much as an exorcism of the memory of hell and an attempt to communicate the unbelievable circumstances they lived through to people who could never fully know nor understand.

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