

# **Corps 02: Call to Arms Study Guide**

## **Corps 02: Call to Arms by W. E. B. Griffin**

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## Plot Summary

Call to Arms begins 11 days after the bombing on Pearl Harbor December 7, 1941. It follows the career of Second Lieutenant Kenneth McCoy and the people and events that touch his life in the months following the bombing on Pearl Harbor. Second Lieutenant Kenneth McCoy is wounded fighting in Shanghai just before the bombing on Pearl Harbor, ending up with the nickname "Killer McCoy." He is sent back to the States, and is ordered to spy on a Colonel Carlson, who has strong ties to the President's son, James Roosevelt. Colonel Carlson is gathering a group of elite fighters, similar to the British Commandos, to be called the Raiders. General Lesterby and Colonel Wesley are concerned that Carlson is a communist, crazy, or both, and they worry about what that could mean for the Marine Corps. They send McCoy to spy on Carlson and to find proof that their suspicions are correct.

McCoy is dating a woman named Ernest "Ernie" Sage, who he met through mutual friend, Second Lieutenant Pickering. McCoy refuses to marry Ernie because he does not think that a Marine officer about to be sent over seas should be married. However, she does move to San Diego with him, where he is stationed during his Raider's training.

McCoy is impressed with everything Carlson talks to him about, and thinks he is a good Marine. He enjoys being a part of the Raiders. He and Zimmerman are important parts of the training of the volunteers, getting the weapons and helping making the strategic plans. The Commandant finds out about the plan to discredit Carlson and that his name was used to recruit the key players and quickly and quietly puts an end to it. Hoping that he stopped it before Carlson caught wind of it, the Commandant sends Major Banning to find out how much if anything Carlson knows. His findings were that Carlson had most likely heard the scuttlebutt, but did not know that McCoy was the spy. Banning, knowing McCoy from Shanghai, knew that McCoy was not happy about having to spy on another China Marine and vowed to try to get him out as soon as possible. Banning came though and got McCoy a transfer out as a linguist, but McCoy wanted to stay and be with Carlson on their first mission as Raiders. Carlson and McCoy had a successful mission on Makin Island, and upon their return Carlson signed McCoy's transfer. When Carlson was leaving he told him to tell Rickabee, which was McCoy's contact during his mission, he said hello. McCoy immediately knew Carlson had known all along that he was the spy. Carlson said, "You're a Marine officer. A good Marine officer. And good Marine officers do what they're told to do, to the best of their ability."



# Chapter I-V

## Chapter I-V Summary

Call to Arms by W.E.B Griffin is a World War II novel that takes places in the days and months after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December of 1941. It follows the military career of Second Lieutenant Kenneth McCoy as he is given the tough task of finding the truth about Colonel Carlson, who has been secretly accused of being a communist, crazy, or both.

### Chapter I

In chapter one, sub-chapter one, McCoy was wounded in the Shanghai, China, and that he is returning to the states on a Catalina plane. During the take off the wounds he received in China are once again causing him problems. He will not allow the pilot to do more than replace his bandages and take him on into the states to carry out his original orders.

In sub-chapter two, Colonel Wesley is meeting with Lieutenant Rickabee to try to find a solution to what Wesley feels is the Colonel Carlson problem. Wesley is concerned that Carlson's time in China with their Chinese Communist Route Army has turned him into a communist and that he is trying to the Corps into a Red Army. Wesley leads Rickabee to believe that the Major General Commandant has asked for this help. Rickabee thinks that McCoy might be the man for the job.

In sub-chapter three, we are introduced to Sergeant Zimmerman and Staff Sergeant Kozonwski. They have been assigned the duty of moving the new recruits from the Brooklyn Navy Yard to Parris Island, South Carolina. Zimmerman understood the philosophy of breaking down the new recruits and then rebuilding them into Marines, it had worked on him, he just couldn't do it. He could never had been a drill instructor, that's why he had been so uncomfortable when he learned he would be taking the new recruits to Parris Island.

### Chapter II

In chapter two, sub-chapter one, we meet Second Lieutenant Malcolm 'Pick' Pickering and Ernestine 'Ernie' Sage. Pick is the best friend of both Ernie and McCoy. Ernie has brought McCoy home to meet her parents. Her mother does not like him because she has always wanted Ernie and Pick to end up together.

Sub-chapter two, Zimmerman and Koznowski run into McCoy and Ernie at Penn station, this is where we first here the story of "Killer McCoy."

Sub-chapter three gives more information about the background of McCoy. He was shot in China before the bombing on Pearl Harbor. McCoy also speaks and reads Chinese and Japanese. Zimmerman was also in China with McCoy. Zimmerman has a Chinese



wife and children that he had to leave when they were shipped out of China. We also learn that Pick has volunteered for flight training as a way of avoiding the war for the next six months or so while finishing flight school. The thought of war scares him to death.

Sub-chapter four, McCoy talks to Zimmerman about getting him on a better billet than what he has been on. McCoy wants Zimmerman working with him as a translator.

### Chapter III

Sub-chapter one, Lieutenant Commander Edgar F. "Red" MacGregor, USN is the commander of the Pickerel, which is a US submarine. Commander MacGregor has been asked to transport a group of 10 blinded Marines. One of the Marines is Captain Edward Banning. Captain Banning has no medical reason for his blindness, concussion; they called it, no detectable damage to the optic nerves. Banning was an Intelligence Officer for the Fourth Marines. He had been wounded in Lingayen Gulf, and McCoy had pulled him out and gotten him to a school where Filipino nurse had taken care of him and almost gotten him to safety when the U.S. Army artillery let it fly and the concussion got him. They said there should be no permanent damage to his eye sight.

Sub-chapter two, Pick was on his way to Pensacola for flight school. As he boarded his flight, he remembered the first flight he took as a child. His grandfather had "leapt happily into the aviation age." Pickering's grandfather owns a chain of hotels. He had known for a long time he wanted to follow in his grandfathers footsteps with the hotel business, instead of his father in shipping. At an early age, Pick had learned as much about all the operations of the hotel business as possible, from cook to assistant manager.

### Chapter IV

Sub-chapter one, McCoy reports to Captain Sessions and Colonel Rickabee and they take him to the Bethesda Naval Hospital to be checked out. After they find his wounds from China are healing fine and he is other wise healthy, they go to Captain Sessions' house for a meeting.

Sub-chapter two, Colonel Rickabee, Captain Sessions, and Colonel Wesley talk to McCoy about Carlson. Carlson wants to start an group of elite with in the elite of the Marine Corps called the Raiders, similar to the British Commandos. He does not want there to be a distinction between ranks. He doesn't want the officers to get special privileges that the average enlisted men don't get. They think that maybe Carlson is a communist, crazy or both and they want McCoy to be a spy a find out. They are also concerned that Carlson is close friends with the President's son, James Roosevelt, and that he didn't go though proper channels to OK his Raiders. McCoy is to report to Sessions and Rickabee if Carlson recruits him to the Raiders, and they think they know how to make sure he does.

Sub-chapter three, Sessions and Rickabee set up another meeting at a farmhouse with Wesley, Rickabee, Sessions, General Lesterby and Brigadier General Horace W. T.



Forrest. They talked some more about McCoy being a spy against Carlson and they asked for his word that if he were ever asked about this meeting that he would lie about it. McCoy agreed to take the assignment was not happy about doing so, but he felt he had no choice in the matter.

## Chapter V

Sub-chapter one, Second Lieutenant Pickering arrives at Pensacola, Florida for his flight school training, after driving all night, only to find his hotel room is not ready for him yet. He goes to the coffee shop for breakfast where he meets Martha Sayre Culhane, who has just lost her husband in the bombing at Pearl Harbor.

Sub-chapters two- three, Pickering is made an offer by the hotel manager to stay at the hotel in the penthouse suite for a discounted rate though the week, because he is having trouble renting it to people during the week days. The younger service men would pull their money, rent it for the weekend and party there, and mess up the room, so since Pickering was from the hotel industry too he would give him the discounted rate. Pick agreed, cleaned up and went to the bar for a drink, where he saw the widow Culhane, and Captain Carstairs having dinner.

## Chapter I-V Analysis

The main character of the novel 'McCoy' was introduced in the first chapter of the story; we are not given much information about him, other than his strong will and determination. Although still wounded, his main concern is to get to Washington as soon as possible, not his own health. We are also introduced to our secondary character Pick Pickering, the best friend of, McCoy; he is also a Second Lieutenant in the Marine Corps. The author tends to give a lot of information about many different characters in the first five chapters without really tying them together or ever mentioning most of these characters again. We do understand that Ernie and Pick are very close friends even though both their mothers would prefer that they were more than that. In addition, that both Ernie and Pick think the world of McCoy.

McCoy is not very comfortable with the idea of spying on Colonel Carlson, but feels it is his duty to do so. Colonel Wesley is worried that all the time that Carlson spent in China with the Communist Route Army has turned him communist and that he is trying to bring that thinking to the Corps. He leads Rickabee to believe that the Commandant has requested that Rickabee find a solution to the Carlson problem. In later chapters we learn that to be false, and Wesley pays a high price for his deceit, his career.

Pickering is off to flight school. He drives straight through so he can have more time to get to know the town and where everything is located. When he finally gets there he needs a shave and a change of clothes, but his room is not ready. He goes to the coffee shop for some breakfast and runs into who we later learn is his flight instructor, Captain Carstairs. Captain Carstairs is not pleased with Pick's appearance and tells him so.

After which he meets the widow Culhane, they have a rough start and she storms off. Later he sees the two of them together in the bar, Carstairs and the widow Culhane.



# VI-X

## VI-X Summary

### Chapter VI

Sub-chapter one, Ernie Sage has on a lunch date with her father Ernest, who owns a Pharmaceutical products company, they talked about how she met Lieutenant McCoy. Pick was having a party that Ernie didn't really want to attend, but her father had encouraged her to go. She didn't care for the kind of parties Pick threw, but the night of the party Ernie and her friends didn't have anything better to do so went. She spotted McCoy shortly after arriving at the party and started talking to McCoy the two of them ended up leaving the party and going to a Chinese restaurant. They spent the night together, then he was sent overseas and wounded she received word that he was missing in action and presumed dead, when he returned to the States she has realized how important he is to her. She explained to her father how much she loved him and she wanted to marry him. Shortly after returning to work she got a phone call from McCoy telling her he was being transferred to San Diego immediately, she asked him to meet her at the Thirteenth Street Station.

### Chapter VII

Sub-chapter one, while driving around Pensacola trying to avoid Martha Culhane, Pickering decides to stop at the golf course on the Navy base and runs into Martha and her mother, Jeanne Sayre. Martha asks Pickering to join them, by the time the golf game was over Pick was in love.

Sub-chapter two-three, Ernie meets McCoy at the station and instead of saying good-bye, which is what he is expecting; she tells him she is going with him to San Diego. He argues with her for a while, even going as far as taking her to meet his fat, dirty sister and her husband. He thinks this will make her see they are too different and that she does not really want a future with him. Ernie sees through him and they continue on to San Diego. They stop over in Pennsylvania to stay the night where he opens up to her and tells her the reason for his transfer to San Diego, to spy on Colonel Carlson.

### Chapter VIII

When Second Lieutenant Pickering shows up for flight school he meets Second Lieutenant Stecker. Both Stecker and Pickering slipped through the cracks in the flight school system as the guidelines were being changed, as a result no one really knew what to do with the two of them. They were given a half-finished room to share with no supervisor to check in with at end of day. Pick and Stecker decided rather quickly that they would stay at the penthouse suite Pick was renting.

### Chapter IX





Sub-chapter one, Captain Jack Stecker, Second Lieutenant Stecker's father, meets with Colonel Harris about Colonel Carlson. The Colonel wants to know what Captain Stecker knows about Carlson and how he feels about him. If he agrees with Carlson's feelings on the Raiders. Colonel Harris informs Stecker his new assignment is to take care of Carlson and his battalion. If there is anything Carlson needs Captain Stecker is to make sure it happens.

Sub-chapter two, Captain Banning is still blind and on the Pickerel. He is depressed about the prospect of not being able to continue his career in the Corps. The fact that he had to leave his wife in Shanghai. He doesn't even know if she's still alive or not, or if he'll ever see her again. He thinks if he doesn't have her or the Corps he has nothing left to live for. If he still can't see when he takes off his bandages he is going to kill himself, he has planned it for days. However, when he takes off his bandages he can see the lights. He goes to tell Captain MacGregor.

## Chapter X

Sub-chapter one, Ernie Sage calls Pick's mother, Patricia Pickering, for help in finding a place to stay while she and McCoy are staying in San Diego, and cashing checks. Mrs. Pickering does not want to help her. She wants to call Ernie's mother and tell her she is shacking up the McCoy. Mrs. Pickering and Mrs. Sage want Ernie and Pick to be together; but her husband, Flem, talks her out of it reminding her of how the two of them got together, and how her own mother didn't want her with him. Mr. Pickering makes a phone call and helps her with both, housing and check cashing.

In sub-chapter two-three Captain Carstairs takes Stecker and Pick up for their first orientation flight. He takes Stecker up first and when he comes down to get Pick he notices Pick is eating a fried oyster loaf with tabasco-flavored barbecue sauce and drinking chocolate milk. He knows that isn't going to be good on his stomach especially for the kind of air maneuver's he was in for. But Pickering surprised the Captain with his gins of delight, no matter what the Captain did he couldn't rattle Pickering. After the flights Pick and Stecker go out for dinner and run into Captain Carstairs and Martha Culhane, the Captain asks them to join them. Martha gives Pick a hard time about his father's money, making Pick reconsider the dinner invitation, she quickly apologizes and asks him to join them and he does.

## VI-X Analysis

Lieutenant McCoy is what they call a mustang, an enlisted man who came up to be an officer. The other officers do not like this. They want the officer to be college graduates. That is one of the problems they have with Colonel Carlson, and probably one of the reasons McCoy likes him; Carlson does not want any distinguishing of rank between his Raiders. He does not think that it is good for them to see the officers sleeping in cots while they sleep on the ground, or eating better. Lieutenant McCoy came from a poor family and never went to college; unlike Ernie and Pick who both come from very wealthy families and attended prestigious colleges. McCoy is fluent in two kinds of



Chinese and Japanese and can write in both. During the time he was in the Philippines, he showed great courage and bravery by saving the lives of several of his fellow soldiers. He was attacked in Shanghai and single-handedly killed twenty Chinese and killed two Italian marines by himself with just a knife, earning him the nickname "Killer McCoy." He does not like being called that by anyone, but later on in the story Colonel Carlson uses the name to motivate the Raiders. Captain Banning was also with McCoy in Shanghai; he is suffering with temporary blindness. During his blindness he is thinking a lot about his wife he left in China, and how unimportant his life will be without his eyesight, her or the Corps, and has decided to kill himself if his sight has not returned when he takes off his bandages. Luckily for him, it has because once he reaches the States he finds out the entire reason for his transport back was not the blindness but he is being promoted to Major.

Pickering, is doing very well in flight school, everyone who goes up with him believes he's flown before. His love life however is another story. Pick isn't sure how to handle Martha Culhane. We know from the previous book, *Semper Fi*, that Pickering is known for being a playboy. Now that he's found someone special, and she isn't falling all over him, he isn't sure how to respond.



# Chapters XI-XV

## Chapters XI-XV Summary

### Chapter XI

Sub-chapter one, Colonel Carlson comes to Camp Elliot, where McCoy is stationed, to talk to him about becoming a member of the Raiders.

Sub-chapter two, a Navy doctor finds out that Captain Banning and the nine other blind men are going to be sent back to the states on a cargo ship, and makes a call to get the nine blind men on a courier flight.

Sub-chapter three, Sergeant Zimmerman is promoted to Gunnery Sergeant and is stationed to the 2nd Separate Battalion, Raiders.

Sub-chapter four, Captain Sessions gets Captain Banning a flight to LA to see the doctors since his sight has come back.

### Chapter XII

Ernie Sage goes to the grocery store and meets a young, pregnant woman. The wife of a Marine who has been kicked out of her hotel room and needing a place to stay. Ernie offers to the woman and her husband stay on the boat with Ernie and McCoy. When McCoy comes home he is unsure about having the Marine living with him because of his assignment with Captain Carlson, but he agrees to let them stay. He is even more concerned when he learns that the Marine plans to join the Raiders. He then makes a call to Sessions about Carlson coming to talk to him at Camp Elliot. He tells Sessions that Carlson is a good Marine and that he agrees with his ideas about the Raiders. He doesn't think that Carlson is a communist or crazy.

### Chapter XIII

Sub-chapter one and two, Second Lieutenant Pickering goes up for his first flight in flight school with his instructor Minter. Minter is convinced Pick has had flight training before and makes him take off and land the plane alone. It is only after Pick has landed the plane that Minter realizes that was Pick's very first solo flight. Later that day Pick is in a department store and sees Martha Culhane, and asks her to go celebrate his first solo flight with him and she refuses. She tells him it is too soon after her husband's death for her to be dating.

Sub-chapter three, McCoy has a younger brother Tommy, who is also in the Marines. The younger McCoy is on his way to Portsmouth Naval prison for beating up an officer of the Navy. He is let off on a technicality, and is convinced that the only way to stay out of prison is to volunteer for Carlson's Raiders.



## Chapter XIV

Sub-chapter one, McCoy makes a call to Colonel Sessions, but gets Rickabee instead. McCoy lets Rickabee know what Carlson has been talking to him about. McCoy believes Carlson to be a good Marine and he trusts his plan for the Raiders and tells Rickabee so.

Sub-chapter two, Captain Banning meets with a Navy "headshrinker" who tells him that he has a clean bill of health and that they are promoting him to Major.

## Chapter XV

Sub-chapter one, Colonel Carlson introduces McCoy to the 2nd Separate Battalion, and tells them the story of how McCoy got the nickname "Killer McCoy." He tells them how McCoy killed the Italian Marines with nothing but his knife, and tells the recruits that McCoy carries the knife on his arm. He also tells the recruits McCoy will be teaching them how to kill using the knife. He also gives McCoy and Zimmerman their assignments.

Sub-chapter two, McCoy and Zimmerman cleaned off two of the new weapons they got from the Army and went target shooting. McCoy sees his brother has just reported in from Pearl Harbor. It makes him mad, but he says he can deal with it.

## Chapters XI-XV Analysis

McCoy has a meeting with Carlson about becoming a Raider. McCoy does not think Carlson is crazy at all. He thinks what Carlson is doing is going to work and wants to be a part of it. Since McCoy has had to work for every promotion he has gotten he understands where Carlson is coming from about the no ranks with in the Raiders. Both McCoy and Carlson are what they call China Marines meaning they spent time in China; both of them speak Cantonese, and do to one another often in the book. McCoy has a lot of respect for Carlson and a lot of guilt over having to spy on him. When he does report back to Sessions and Rickabee he tells them he thinks Carlson's Raiders will work and that he's not a communist. McCoy also gets boat guests, the Burns's. He is worried that could get in the way of his mission involving Colonel Carlson, especially when he finds out Marty Burns, has volunteered for the Raiders.

Once a member of the Raiders, McCoy is introduced to the battalion, and Carlson again tells the story of "Killer McCoy," in the hopes that it would inspire the volunteers with the missions ahead of them. McCoy hates the nickname and has asked that it not be used but Carlson is not going to listen. He thinks it is something to be proud of.



# Chapter XVI-XXI

## Chapter XVI-XXI Summary

### Chapter XVI

Sub-chapter one, while Gunnery Sergeant Zimmerman was sitting alone in the Annex #2 having a beer, Gunnery Sergeant Esposito came and asked Zimmerman about McCoy's brother, Thomas. Thomas had been getting into fights once again and causing problems in his battalion. He had also been talking about McCoy and his living situation with Ernie. Zimmerman went to the bar that the younger McCoy was in, playing cards and drinking beer, and asked him to come outside to talk. Once outside Zimmerman roughed him, up a bit and told him that if he did not keep his nose clean and stop embarrassing his brother with his behavior the next time would be worse.

Sub-chapter two, Pick takes Stecker to the Foster Peachtree Hotel in Atlanta where they have lunch with Pick's "Aunt Ramona." Aunt Ramona turns out to be a madam Pick has known for years through the hotel industry. She fixes Pick and Stecker up two very beautiful southern girls, but even they can't make Pick forget about the widow back in Florida.

### Chapter XVII

Sub-chapter one, Captain Banning, now Major Banning, has been spending his leave time at the New York Public Library and has caught the eye of one of the librarians, Carolyn Spencer Howell. Major Banning is having lunch and runs into Ms. Howell in the restaurant and asks her to join him, they end up having dinner and staying the night together.

Sub-chapter two, Major Banning meets with Rickabee to get his new assignment, which is to find out if Carlson suspects that McCoy is a spy. As it turns out the Commandant was not involved in the plan to spy on Carlson and he has now found out what Wesley and Lesterby were up to and is now sending Banning to do damage control.

### Chapter XVIII

Sub-chapter one, Thomas McCoy is called out of his battalion and taken to meet with Lieutenant Plumley. Plumley tells him that Zimmerman has been talking to him and another Sergeant about him. McCoy thinks that it has to be something bad because Zimmerman has not spoken to him since he roughed him up. However, as it turns out Zimmerman has recommended him for a promotion to squad leader.

Sub-chapter three, Carolyn Howell is waiting for Banning to meet her for lunch, but when he does not show up, she thinks she has been stood up, only to find out when she returns to the library that he was only detained. Only having a few days before being



leaving for San Diego, Banning and Howell make the most of their time together and spend the rest of the week in the country.

## Chapter XIX

Sub-chapter one, Captain Stecker and Major Banning are having dinner on the boat with McCoy and Ernie and their boat guests, the Burnes. Major Banning and Stecker talk about Colonel Carlson and decide that Carlson probably does not know that McCoy has been sent to spy on him. Banning tells McCoy that he is going to talk to Rickabee about getting McCoy out of this "rotten" situation.

Sub-chapter two, Colonel Carlson has an informal meeting with his Raiders and tells them that they have finished their stateside training and are transferring to Hawaii for the rest of it. After the meeting Carlson pulls McCoy off to the side to tell him that someone has requested that he be transferred somewhere safer because of his language skills, however Carlson does not want to lose him and McCoy does not want to go. Therefore, Carlson says that he is critical to their current mission. McCoy later wonders why he didn't take the opportunity when he had it.

## Chapter XX

Sub-chapter one, Second Lieutenant Stecker comes back to the penthouse suite, after a day of flight school, and finds Ernie Sage sitting on the couch waiting for Pick to come home. Ernie has come to Florida to catch up with her best friend and to take her mind off the fact that her boyfriend is overseas again. In addition, maybe help her lovesick friend in the process. When Pick gets home the three of them go out for drinks and they run into the widow Culhane, Pick thankfully, does not see her, but Ernie does. Ernie excuses herself to the ladies room when she sees Martha do the same and has a women to woman talk to her about the way she's been treating Pick, and how she's overlooking a really great guy, and she may regret it.

Sub-chapter two-three, McCoy and the Raiders arrive on the Makin Island, their goal is to destroy any enemy, buildings, or anything of any military value.

## Chapter XXI

Sub-chapter one, Colonel Carlson and his Raiders hit the Japanese forces hard and fast. They are very successful and with in 12 hours the Raiders were back at the pick up point waiting for the submarine to pick them up. The only problem was the waves made it difficult for the exhausted and wounded men to make their way back to the subs. After a rough night on the beach, Colonel Carlson and some of the wounded soldiers were finally able to board the subs and brought were back to Pearl Harbor.

Sub-chapter two, once back at Pearl Harbor McCoy goes on to the hospital to be checked out even though none of his wounds are live threatening. While in the hospital, Colonel Carlson pays McCoy a visit and informs him that he has allowed the transfer for McCoy out of the Raiders. He is needed as a linguist. Carlson then tells McCoy to say Hello to Rickabee for him, and McCoy knows that Carlson knew all along that he was



spying on him. However, Carlson tells him that he did what a good Marine does" what he's told to do, to the best of his abilities'.

Sub-chapter three-four, Captain Carstairs comes over to the hotel Pickering is staying at and tells him that McCoy has been wounded in action. Since flight school is over, Carstairs and Pick have a beer and talk about McCoy and whether or not they should tell Ernie what has happened or wait until they have more news. Later they discuss Martha Culhane, and Carstairs tells Pick that he is going to give up on her. Stecker and Pick drive around Pensacola looking for Martha, they finally end up at the Yacht Club. Martha and her parents are there having Sunday brunch and Mrs. Sayre asks Pick and Stecker to join them. When Martha's father finds out Pick knows how to sail they decide to take the boat out. While Stecker is helping Mrs. Sayre make tea, they hear someone yell "man over board." Martha has fallen over and Pick had grabbed a life preserver and jumped in after her. Once they were both pulled from the cold water Martha admitted her feelings for Pick.

## Chapter XVI-XXI Analysis

Zimmerman is trying to help out his friend's brother by teaching him a lesson. The younger McCoy was having trouble with fighting outside of the military and within it too. Had it not been for this technicality he would be sitting in prison now. This was his second chance and Zimmerman did not want to see him mess it up or embarrass his brother.

Pickering being upset by the way things were going or rather not going with Martha, decided he would take Stecker to meet his Aunt Ramona. However, he is not the same playboy he used to be; just knowing Martha has changed him. He is no longer happy living the life he used to live and doing the things he used to do.

Major Banning has gotten his eyesight back and a clean bill of health from the doctors, all that's missing for him is his wife; but he does find some comfort with the librarian and the New York City Library, just before he learns about the plan involving his old friend McCoy. As it turns out Colonel Wesley and General Lesterby had never had the go ahead from the Commandant to send McCoy in as a spy. They had tricked Rickabee and General Forrest into believing that the Commandant had given the order to find the proof against Carlson. Everyone involved except for Rickabee and McCoy were forced into retirement in disgrace, and the Commandant was trying to clean up the mess as quickly and as quietly as possible. Banning was being sent in to find out how much Carlson knew, so the Commandant knew how public he needed to be. Hopefully no one else needed to find out.

Banning found out that Carlson had probably heard some scuttlebutt but that he did not know that it was McCoy who was the spy. Banning understood what an awful situation this was for McCoy and tried to get him out on a linguist transfer, but McCoy turned it down to stay and go on the first mission with Carlson and the Raiders. When it was over Carlson signed his transfer to the linguist job and told him to tell Rickabee he said Hello.



Rickabee had been telling Carlson what was going on all along and even though he knew McCoy was sent to spy, he understood, and trusted McCoy. He was glad he was part of the Raiders.

Carstairs comes to the penthouse to tell Pickering the news about McCoy being wounded during the battle at Makin Island. They end up drinking beer and talking about the widow Culhane, and whether Pick should call Ernie or not and tell her about McCoy. Carstairs tells Pick he is not going to go after her anymore. The next morning Pick and Stecker go to church, but actually they are looking for Martha. Pick goes to every place he thinks she may be. Finally he finds her at the Yacht Club getting ready to have lunch with her parent. Her mother asks them to join them and Pick agrees to. Once they are on the boat, Martha falls overboard. When Pick jumps in to save her instead of just throwing the life preserver in for her she realizes that Ernie was right. She was about to miss out on a really great guy who really cared about her.





# Characters

## Second Lieutenant Kenneth J McCoy, USMCR

Second Lieutenant Kenneth McCoy is the main character of the novel. McCoy is dating a woman named Ernie Sage, who he meets through a mutual friend, Second Lieutenant Malcolm, Pick, Pickering. McCoy refuses to marry Ernie because he does not think that Marine officers about to be sent overseas should be married. However, she does move to San Diego with him when he is stationed there while training with the Raiders.

McCoy is what they call a China Marine, meaning he speaks the language; actually, he speaks two dialects and Japanese. McCoy was wounded badly in an attack in the Philippines after the strike on Pearl Harbor and because of all the people he killed; he got the nickname "Killer McCoy," which he does not like.

McCoy has a sister and a brother, his brother is in the military, although he is not as good a soldier as McCoy, his younger brother was arrested and court-martialed for hitting an officer and sent to prison. He was let out on a technicality and ended up in Second Lieutenant McCoy's Raider's unit. McCoy's sister is lazy and dirty and only wants what she can get from McCoy—mostly money—so he has no family to speak of.

McCoy is stationed with the Raiders as a spy to find out if Colonel Carlson is a communist, crazy or both, but after only a few meetings with the Colonel, McCoy finds that he trusts the Colonel and he thinks the idea of the Raiders is not only a good idea but will probably work.

## Second Lieutenant Malcolm Pickering, USMCR

Second Lieutenant Pickering is the best of friends of both Second Lieutenant McCoy, and Ernie Sage. Pick's mother and Ernie's mother had met when Pick was born and had been friends ever since, they had always hoped that their children would someday end up together. He is going to flight school to avoid the front lines. Pick is a natural pilot; his instructor does not believe he has never had flight training before. He falls in love with the widow Calhane. She will not go out with him because her husband was just killed at Pearl Harbor and she feels it is too soon for her to be dating again. He is from a very wealthy family, his father has a shipping business and his grandfather has a chain of hotels. Pick is hoping to follow in his grandfather's footsteps when he gets out of the Marines.

## Sergeant Ernst W. Zimmerman

Sergeant Zimmerman was with McCoy when he was wounded in the Philippines, and McCoy asked for him to be with him on the Raiders. He is also a China Marine. He is married to—and has children with—a Chinese woman.



## **Captain Edward Banning**

Captain Banning was with Zimmerman and McCoy in the Philippines. He was also blind and contemplating suicide before his eyesight returned. Captain Banning is married to a white Russian woman named Lumilla that he had to leave in Shanghai. They had only been married for 18 hours when he had to leave.

## **Lieutenant Colonel Evans Carlson**

Lieutenant Carlson is the head of the Raiders. He sent a letter to the Commandant requesting the need for this type of fighter after the bombing on Pearl Harbor. He is very close friends with the President of the United States son. He spent a long time in China with their Chinese Eighth Route Army. He speaks fluent Cantonese.

## **Ernestine Sage 'Ernie'**

Ernie Sage is the girlfriend of McCoy. She is also the childhood best friend of Second Lieutenant Pickering. Ernie also comes from money her father has a Pharmaceutical products company. Even though she has plenty of money Ernie is still very tight with money, she does not like it when McCoy spends money on cab fare. Her mother and Pick's mother were old friends. She works for an advertising company until she moves to San Diego to be with McCoy.

## **Second Lieutenant Richard 'Dick' Stecker**

Second Lieutenant Stecker is Pickering's roommate in flight school. Pick calls him a walking encyclopedia of military lore. His father is Captain Stecker, and he had an older brother who was killed at Pearl Harbor.

## **Captain James L. Carstairs, USMC**

Captain Carstairs is one of the flights school instructors. He is also the other man who is trying to date the widow Calhane.

## **Lieutenant Colonel F. L. Rickabee, USMC**

Lieutenant Rickabee is the officer who instructed McCoy to spy on Colonel Carlson.

## **Martha Sayre Calhane**

Martha Sayre Calhane is the widow that Pickering falls in love with and is chasing though out the story. Her husband was killed in the bombing on Pearl Harbor, and now



she just hangs around the other Marines and their wives. She does not want to date Pick not because she has not attracted to him, but because she feels it is too soon for her to do so.

## **Captain Sessions, USMC**

Captain Sessions and McCoy go back and are good friends. McCoy accredits Sessions with helping him move up through the ranks. Sessions is one of the only people who can call McCoy "Killer" and not make him mad. Sessions is also one of the ones involved in getting him hooked up with Colonel Carlson.

## **PFC Thomas M. McCoy, USMC**

Tommy McCoy is Ken McCoy's younger brother. Tommy was on his way to Portsmouth Naval Prison. He had been sentenced to 5 to 10, and was dishonorably discharged from the naval service. His conviction was overturned because of a technicality. In addition, he could not be retried, so his record was cleared and he volunteered for the Raiders.

## **Captain Jack NMI Stecker**

Captain Stecker is Second Lieutenant Stecker's father. He also had an older son who was killed at Pearl Harbor. His job is to make sure that Colonel Carlson gets whoever and whatever he wants or needs for his Raiders battalion. To 'grease the wheels' so to speak.

## **Gunnery Sergeant Esposito**

Gunnery Esposito is the man who tells Zimmerman about the trouble McCoy's younger brother is still getting into while in the Raiders.

## **Carolyn Spencer Howell**

Carolyn Spencer Howell is the librarian that Captain Banning meets while on leave after becoming Major Banning.

## **First Lieutenant Martin J. Burnes, USMCR**

Marty Burnes is Dorothy Burnes' husband, and he and his wife are temporarily staying with McCoy and Ernie. He volunteered to join the Raiders.



## **Dorothy Burnes**

Dorothy Burnes is the wife of First Lieutenant Martin J. Burnes. She meets Ernie at a grocery store. She has just been kicked out of her hotel and was eight months pregnant. Ernie asked them to come stay with them on the boat she was staying on with McCoy.

## **Lieutenant Commander Edgar F. Mac Gregor, USN**

Commander MacGregor is the 35-year-old Commander of the United States submarine Pickerel that picked up a blind Captain Banning and nine others suffering from temporary or permanent loss of sight.

## **Colonel Thomas C. Wesley, USMC**

Colonel Wesley is the one who wants Rickabee to find someone, who turns out to be McCoy, to spy on Colonel Carlson.

## **Lieutenant Junior Grade Allen W. Minter, USNR**

Lieutenant Minter is one of the flight instructors at Pickering and Stecker's flight school. He does not believe that Pickering has never flown a plane before.



## **Objects/Places**

### **Pensacola, Florida 1942**

Pensacola, Florida is where Pickering and Stecker went to flight school. It is also where Pickering falls in love with Martha Sayre Culhane.

### **San Diego, California**

San Diego, California is where McCoy is stationed while he is with the Raiders and Carlson. Pick's father arranged for them to stay in a friend's boat while they were there.

### **The Philippines**

The Philippines is where they first pick up McCoy after the bombing at Pearl Harbor.

### **The Willard Hotel**

The Willard Hotel is where Colonel Wesley and Lieutenant Colonel Rickabee first talk about getting McCoy to spy on Carlson for them.

### **The United States Submarine Pickerel**

The sub that Captain Banning was on when he contemplated suicide, and where he got his eyesight back.

### **The San Carlos Hotel**

The Hotel Pickering and Stecker lived in during flight school. They stayed in the penthouse.

### **New York Public Library**

The New York Library is where Major Banning meets Carolyn Spencer Howell.

### **The Penn-Harris Hotel**

The Penn-Harris is the hotel in Pennsylvania where McCoy told Ernie about the spy mission on Carlson. It is where they stopped to spend the night on the way to San Diego where he was to report for the Raiders training.



## **Pacific & Far East Shipping Building**

The Pacific & Far East Shipping Building is the shipping business Pickering's father owns. This is where Pick's parents talked about helping Ernie find housing and a place to cash a check when she got to San Diego with McCoy.

## **Malkin Island**

The Malkin Island is where the Raiders attacked the Japanese.



# Themes

## Love of the Marine Corps

The love of the Marine Corps is what drove Colonel Thomas C. Wesley and General Lesterby to try to prove Colonel Evans Carlson a communist, crazy or both, and thus ending both of their military careers. They believed so strongly that the time Carlson spent in China with the Communist Route Army had brainwashed him that they set in motion a plan to discredit him. Wesley and Lesterby thought that if the plan Colonel Carlson had to gather the elite with in the elite of the Marine Corps and turn them into the "Raiders," a form of the British Commandos, worked that would be the end of the Marine Corps as they knew it. On the other hand if Carlson really was crazy and his plan failed then that would not only soil the name of the Marine Corps they loved so much, it would be a black eye on the Corps for years to come. They were also concerned that Carlson was so close to the President's son, James Roosevelt, and in a way had the President's ear. These Marines loved the Corps so much they were willing to risk everything, their own reputations, to save the Corps.

## Effects of War

One of the effects of war seen in this novel involves love. The main Character, McCoy, was in China for some time, he was in a battle in Shanghai his family in the states was told he was missing in action and presumed dead. As a result of his time lost in China he feels it is unfair for him to marry the woman he loves, Ernie, because he is stationed overseas and he does not want to make her a war widow. She loves him so much she does not care if they are married or not and she goes with him as he is transferred, even though this is the 1942 and it is not common practice for an unmarried man and woman to be "shacked up." McCoy's friend, Sergeant Zimmerman, married a Chinese woman and had children with her while they were stationed in China. When he was shipped back to the states he was forced to leave not only his wife but his children behind in China. Their Captain, Jack Banning, also fell in love in Shanghai. Captain Banning married his love Mudilla, at risk of his own career, only 18 before being shipped back stateside. The loss he felt leaving her behind haunts him though out this novel, even playing a role in his temporary blindness. Second Lieutenant Pickering falls in love with a war widow named Martha Sayre Culhane. Martha lost her husband in the bombing at Pearl Harbor. Pickering, a reformed playboy, thanks to the lovely Mrs. Culhane, falls quickly in love. Martha however fights her feelings for a long time because of she feels it's too soon for her to have these kinds of feelings so soon after her husband's death. Martha resorts back to the childish behavior of being mean to Pickering so he didn't see she does like him too. By the time his flight school was over and he was ready to leave she admitted her true feelings for him.



## Loyalty between lovers

Ernie's loyalty to McCoy is shown on many different levels. After falling in love McCoy knows that there is a huge chance he could die and leave Ernie a war widow if they are married, and he does not want that for the woman he loves. Ernie is very understanding and knows that if she goes with McCoy to the different places he is stationed that her reputation will be soiled. Even though the risks to her are huge she follows McCoy, unwed, through his journeys. Ernie's love is abundant and never ending and is shown as a theme throughout the story. This is one of the very strong bonds presented in this novel, shown the depth in a person's love for another and how it can take them on huge adventures.



# Style

## Point of View

The point of view for this novel is third person omniscient. This point of view provides the reader with understanding of all parts of the book without leaving them confused. It is especially helpful in a novel, such as this, where the story line is constantly changing. It allows you to know what each character is not only saying, but thinking and feeling. If not for the third person point of view it would be much more difficult to explain everything that Banning is thinking when he's considering suicide. It allows you to have background on Banning's wife he left in Shanghai, and how heartbroken he was over leaving her. The reader understands that if he couldn't continue to be a Marine then he had left his wife in Shanghai for nothing. It allows him to explain the detail of respect he has for the Captain of the submarine for sharing his own quarters with him and allowing him "on deck" when he wanted. In the storyline with McCoy and Ernie the reader can connect with McCoy in his reasoning in not marrying the woman he loves while he is stationed overseas. Ernie's actions are also explained in a way that help the reader to feel sympathy toward her while McCoy is over seas. The third person omniscient allows the reader to have insight into all the details of the book. You are not limited to the thoughts, emotions, and interactions of one single character. There are many story lines in this book, the third person omniscient point of view makes following each of the story lines much easier.

## Setting

The setting of this novel is different military bases during World War II in late 1941 and early 1942. For part of the story it is set in a military training camp in San Diego, California. There is not much detail given about the landscape in this part of California other than it is a coastal town. Pensacola, Florida is where Pickering and Stecker are stationed while in flight school. They are expecting warm tropical weather, which most of Florida is famous for, instead they are getting the rainy cooler weather that is common for the northern part of Florida. This is especially common for the time of year they are there. Most of Captain Banning's settings take place on either a boat or submarine. Therefore her mainly is confined to tight quarter with limited fresh air. He talks about enjoying the few times he is allowed above deck to feel the sun on his face.

## Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is military form. The sentences are constructed in a manner that is common in military speech even today. Some of the words are not common in every day speech, however once the reader gets used to the style, it becomes easier to understand the meanings behind the slang used in everyday military speech. This type



of language compliments the military theme of the novel and makes it more real to the reader.

In this novel, the author is very specific about weapons, places, and historic references in the book. He is very detailed in his descriptions of various arms dealers. He gives the history behind almost of the references he makes in the book. The history behind certain guns, buildings, or military tactics aren't exactly necessary to the books primary meaning, however the incite given is beneficial to the reader. In any book, closeness to the topic makes it much more interesting to read. W. E. B. Griffin provides the reader with the details needed to obtain the closeness to the story.

Although Call to Arms is a fiction work, Griffin based many of his characters and events on actual people and actual things that took place during World War II. The loose basing of these dealings gives the novel a "real" feel and actually provides the reader with knowledge of World War II and some of the tactics used in this very life changing war.

## Structure

This novel is comprised of 21 chapters, each chapter has roughly twenty pages, with each chapter containing between two and four sub-chapters some chapters have no sub-chapters at all. The chapters are very descriptive and contain a great deal of information on the lives and backgrounds of the people McCoy encounters though this phase of his career. The sub-chapters are named only by place, military time, and date.

The main plot of this novel is the plan to uncover what is going on with Colonel Carlson, who as a close friend of the President's son. Carlson is gathering a group of elite fighters called the Raiders, and McCoy's is sent to spy on Colonel Carlson. McCoy ends up believing in Carlson and what his Raiders stand for. However, there is also the story line of Second Lieutenant Pickering and his friend Stecker going though flight school, and the Widow Culhane Pickering falls in love with. The common thread for all these subplots is the period, the days after the bombing on Pearl Harbor.

Although the novel is easy to read and entertaining, the author does have the tendency to go into a lot of detail about places and characters that are never again tied back to the original story lines. This is the second in a series of ten books. Although you don't have to read each book to follow along, it would help tie some story lines together more.



## Quotes

"The way I handle drinking on duty, Colonel, is that for the first twenty-four consecutive hours I have the duty, I don't touch the alcohol. After that..."

Chap. I, sub-chap., two, pg 10

"Patriotism, is the last refuge of the scoundrel."

Chap. II, sub-chap.,three,pg 28

"If you don't know something, don't be embarrassed to ask questions."

Chap. III,sub-chap., two, pg 50

"We are all aware, further, that he is a close friend of the President's son, Captain James Roosevelt."

Chap. IV, sub-chap.,three, pg 73

"He's an old China Marine. I'm an old China Marine. He's probably-almost certainly-going to try to recruit me."

Chap. VII, sub-chap., two, pg 117

"Live today, for tomorrow we die."

Chap. VIII,sub-chap.one1,pg 131

"He thinks I'm up here to take him for a ride!"

Chap. X, sub-chap.,two pg 164

"Ken doesn't think that Marine officers, about to be sent overseas, should be married."

Chap., XII , sub-chap., one, pg 189

"When McCoy was in Shanghai, they called him 'Killer'."

Chap.,XV, sub-chap., one, pg, 238

"All things come to him who waits."

Chap.XVII,sub-chap.,two, pg 281

"I knew the good life was too good to last."

Chap.XVII,sub-chap.,two, pg 287

"You've done a good job here, Ken, in a rotten situation, I'm going to try to talk Rickabee into getting you out of here. I'm not sure he will, but I'm going to try."

Chap. XIX, sub-chap.,one, pg 312

"There were even those who said that the whole Raider concept was a Chinese fire drill, because the President's son was involved and because the Commandant didn't have the balls to tell the President the whole idea was a drain on manpower and resources that could be better used elsewhere."

Chap. XX, sub-chap.,two, pg 327

"When you get to Washington, McCoy say hello to Colonel Rickabee for me."  
Chap. XXI, sub-chap., two, pg 341

## Topics for Discussion

What was the motivation behind the plot to discredit Colonel Carlson?

What was behind Captain Banning's blindness?

What common bonds did Colonel Carlson, Gunnery Sergeant Zimmerman, Second Lieutenant McCoy, and Captain Banning share?

What was the real purpose of Pickering and Stecker's trip to see Pick's "Aunt Ramona?"

Why did Zimmerman recommend McCoy's brother for the promotion?

Was Colonel Carlson a Communist? Was he crazy? Both?

Why did McCoy stay with Carlson and the Raiders when Major Banning tried to get him reassigned?