Archie Buckley Biography

Pre-WSC Background

Archie Myrl Buckley was born on July 16, 1906 in Colville, Washington to Mr. and Mrs. W.L. Buckley. Colville, located 65 miles north of Spokane and 45 miles south of the Canadian border, occupies the county seat of Stevens County and was established after the closure of the Fort Colville military post in 1882. Incorporated in 1890, Colville earned a reputation as a "melting pot" of European immigrants, with many of the town's early residents hailing from Ireland and Germany, along with French Canadian and Scottish retirees from the Hudson's Bay Company.[1] Profitable mines just over the border in British Columbia supported the Colville economy during the late nineteenth century, contributing to the establishment of the Spokane Falls & Northern Railway in the town on October 18, 1889.[2] Homesteaders, farmers, and businessmen began to make their homes in Colville, and by 1904, two years before Buckley was born, Colville had a population of 800 residents.[3] The 1909-1910 edition of R.L. Polk & Co's *Directory of Stevens County Washington* described Colville as "one of the best towns in the Northwest…It is a city of magnificent promise. It gives evidence of progressive and strenuous life."[4] Much of Archie Buckley's life reflected the promise of the town he was born in.

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[1] Laura Arksey, "Colville – Thumbnail History," historylink.org. https://www.historylink.org/File/9266 (accessed June 11, 2019).

[2] Arksey, "Colville – Thumbnail History," historylink.org. https://www.historylink.org/File/9266.

[3] ibid

[4] ibid

WSC Experience

Buckley graduated from Colville High School, where he excelled at sports and was known as "one of the outstanding prep stars of the Inland Empire."[5] He attended Washington State College (WSC) from 1926 through 1930, graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in Physical Education on June 2, 1930. During his WSC athletic career, Buckley earned nine letters, three each in football, where he played quarterback and place kicker; basketball, where he was a forward; and baseball, where he shone as a third baseman.[6] Newspaper articles, such as the one written by *The Evergreen* on November 27, 1929 reference Buckley's small stature, referring to him as "Little Archie Buckley" and noting that he weighs "slightly over 150 pounds."[7] Despite his small stature, Buckley's exploits in his athletic endeavors were legendary in WSC lore for years after he graduated. Described as a "bouncing, squirming type," Buckley was adept at "slipping through the opposition for pretty yardage."[8] He was known as a leader on each team he played, and his drive and competitive edge gave him a legendary moment in the WSC versus University of Washington football game during the 1929 season.

During his first two years at WSC, Buckley was an understudy on the Cougar football team, earning his spot as the starting quarterback during his senior year. Buckley didn't start the

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[5] "Archie Buckley to Coach," *Spokesman-Review,* March 27, 1930, Wallis and Marilyn Kimble Northwest History Database, Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections, State history, box 46.

[6] "Six Past 'Greats' Picked as Athletic Hall of Fame Inductees," *WSU Hilltopics,* August 1984, WSU 175, WSU Publications: Hilltopics http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc/finders/wsupubslist.htm at Washington State University Libraries' Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).

[7] "Cougars to California," *The Evergreen,* November 27, 1929, WSU 1, WSU Publications: Evergeens http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc/finders/wsupubslist.htm, Washington State University Libraries' Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).

[8] "Buckley Voted Bohler Medal," *The Powwow,* January 1930. WSU 25, WSU Publications: Alumni Office http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc/finders/wsupubslist.htm at Washington State University Libraries' Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).

game at quarterback against Washington, and the Huskies jumped out to a 13-0 lead in the second quarter. WSC Coach "Babe" Hollingbery put Buckley in as quarterback to try and reverse the early damage handed to his team by Washington, and by halftime the score was narrowed to 13-7.[9] As described by *The Evergreen* reporter Ray Sandegren, Buckley "broke loose and ran the Husky ends ragged, ripping off gain after gain, many of them good for first downs."[10] Not only was Buckley successful in leading the Cougars to victory in the quarterback position with his "ghostly running," he had developed "the most educated toe for place-kicking that has been seen in the conference for years," kicking a school-record 46-yard field goal against Oregon State earlier in the season.[11] He kicked the extra point to put WSC ahead 14-13. The Cougars won the game 20-13, with Buckley receiving an ovation from the crowd of more than 15,000 fans at Rogers Field for a "warrior" who "threw himself into the fray with reckless abandon and simply would not admit defeat."[12]

Buckley received the J. Fred Bohler Award in 1929 for "being the greatest inspiration to the eleven during the season."[13] He was described as a "smart field general and a cool strategist in directing his team movements" and "ran his team without a falter."[14]The award was given annually, with selections made by a secret vote among the team and presented by the Associated students. Buckley was also an AP All-Northwest first team selection. Away from football, he

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[9] Jason Krump, "Stories That Live Forever, Part VII: Throwing Himself Into The Fray," https://wsucougars.com/sports/2008/5/22/207878308.aspx (accessed June 11, 2019).

[10] Ray Sandegren, "Sever Stars Play last Game: 'Babe' Will Find Men Missing," *The Evergreen,* December 4, 1929, Wallis and Marilyn Kimble Northwest History Database, Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC), State history, box 46.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Krump, "Stories That Live Forever, Part VII: Throwing Himself Into The Fray," https://wsucougars.com/sports/2008/5/22/207878308.aspx (accessed June 11, 2019).

[13] "Buckley Voted Bohler Medal," *The Powwow,* January 1930, WSU 25 Publications: Alumni Office http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc/finders/wsupubslist.htm at Washington State University Libraries' Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).

[14] Ibid.

helped the Cougars win the Northern Division baseball title in 1928 and led the team in home runs. He was also a member of Coach Jack Friel's first basketball team in 1929 and the second leading Cougar scorer in ND play.[15]

During his time at WSC, Buckley was a prominent fixture in campus activities outside of sports. He served on the athletic council and board of control, was president of his class, and was a member of the Kappa Sigma fraternity. Following his graduation from WSC, Buckley went to work as a coach of all sports except track at Centralia High School in 1930.[16] He married Miss Mary Maude Hungate on December 27, 1930 in Centralia. Mary was a member of the Pi Beta Phi sorority and graduated from WSC in 1929. Following her graduation from college, she worked as a kindergarten teacher in Wenatchee along with running that city's YWCA.[17] The newlyweds lived in Centralia for only a short time, as Buckley soon accepted a position as a football and baseball coach at North Central High School in Spokane, Washington for the 1931-1932 school year. The Buckley's had two children, son James William (Bunky), and daughter Betty Moe.[18]

Buckley served as North Central's football coach from 1931 through 1936, then resumed his position in 1939. He was the high school's baseball coach from 1931 until he left for the Navy in 1943. Buckley's mantra was "A North Central team never quits!," with one player

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[15] "Six Past 'Greats' Picked as Athletic Hall of Fame Inductees," *WSU Hilltopics,* August 1984, WSU 175, WSU Publications: Hilltopics http://libraries.wsu.edu/masc/finders/wsupubslist.htm at Washington State University Libraries' Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).

[16] "Archie Buckley to Coach," *Spokesman-Review,* March 27, 1930, Wallis and Marilyn Kimble Northwest History Database, Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections, State history, box 46.

[17] "Grads Announce Marriage," *The Daily Evergreen,* January 12, 1931, Northwest History Social Events Cont'd Student Activities Box 73, Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).

[18] "Archie Buckley Killed in Action," *Spokesman,* 1945, Box 1, Folder 18, Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).

relating that "if he told me to run through a brick wall, I'd do it with glad cries of joy."[19] He was recognized throughout eastern Washington for not only his coaching ability but as an outstanding Pacific Coast conference football and basketball official, serving as the Vice-President of the Spokane Officials' Association, an organization of officiants for high school football games.[20] He urged students off the field to get involved, whether it be athletics, debate, or band.[21] Buckley did the same for his country, leaving North Central in March, 1943 for service in the Navy.

Wartime Service and Death

Buckley received a commission as a lieutenant (junior grade) in the United States Navy, reporting first to Chapel Hill in North Carolina followed by Navy pre-flight school at St. Mary's California, where he was charged with overseeing the physical conditioning of the Navy's pilots in training.[22] Following the closure of the pre-flight school, Buckley was assigned to the aircraft carrier U.S.S. *Saratoga* for duty at sea, departing out of Bremerton, Washington.[23] The *Saratoga* was the first fast carrier in the U.S Navy and saw action in the Midway and Guadalcanal campaigns in the Pacific.[24] She left Pearl Harbor on January 29, 1945 in order to "form a night fighter task group with *Enterprise* for the Iwo Jima operation."[25] By February, the *Saratoga's* assignment was to provide fighter cover while remaining carriers launched strikes on Japan, but

[19] Krump, "Stories That Live Forever, Part VII: Throwing Himself Into The Fray," https://wsucougars.com/sports/2008/5/22/207878308.aspx (accessed June 11, 2019).

[20] "Archie Buckley Killed in Action," *Spokesman,* 1945, Box 1, Folder 18, Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).

[21] Ibid.

[22] "Lieutenant Buckley Now at St. Mary's," newspaper clipping, Box 1, Folder 18, Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).

[23] Letter from Mrs. W.L.Buckley to E.O. Holland, August 26, 1946. Box 1, Folder 4, Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).

[24] "Saratoga V (CV-3)," Naval History and Heritage Command website, https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/s/saratoga-v.html (accessed June 9, 2019).

[25] Ibid.

"in the process, her fighters raided two Japanese airfields…as she approached her operating area at 1700 on the 21st, an air attack developed…taking advantage of low cloud cover and *Saratoga's* insufficient escort, six Japanese planes scored five hits on the carrier in three minutes."[26] 123 *Saratoga* crew members were dead or missing, including Lieutenant Archie Buckley.

The attack against the *Saratoga* was described by the Navy as "one of the most concentrated attacks in which a carrier has survived, which might have sunk any other ship."[27] Japanese bombers crashed and bombed the ship, with one exploding into the side of the vessel, leaving a large hole. Another bomb ruptured the ships fuel lines, with fires breaking out and destroying the forward part of the flight deck. Within an hour and a half after the first attack, the Japanese bombers launched a second, although this time the crew was able to staunch further damage that might have sunk the ship.[28] In a letter written by Mary Buckley to E.O. Holland, President Emeritus of Washington State College, on April 25, 1945, she reported that an officer who was with Lieutenant Buckley during the February 21, 1945 attack on the *Saratoga* said he (Buckley) "had time to get to safety, but that he stopped to warn a pilot in a plane of the danger."[29] Mrs. Buckley went on to write, "It is just what he would do, isn't it?"[30]

Postwar Legacy

Buckley's legendary athletic career and commanding presence on campus during his college years at WSC meant that his death touched many in the college community, including

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[26] Ibid.

[27] "Battle-Smashed Carrier Saratoga Back in Service," Newspaper Clipping, Box 1, Folder 18, Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).

[28] Ibid.

[29] Letter from Mrs. Archie Buckley to E.O. Holland, April 25, 1945, Box 1, Folder 4, Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).

[30] Ibid.

President Emeritus E.O. Holland. In a letter dated March 30, 1948 to Buckley's widow, Holland wrote that he knew Buckley intimately, describing him as a "fine upstanding fellow and a good citizen."[31] Holland wrote that the record Buckley made in "public school work bore out my impression and prediction for Archie," and that "Archie had so many years of service and leadership before him…"[32] Holland also wrote to Buckley's children, Bunky and Betty Moe, telling them that their father was a "fine college student, a splendid athlete, and in many respects best of all…a splendid college citizen. When you are older you will understand what this statement means."[33] Mrs. W.L. Buckley, Archie Buckley's mother, wrote to Holland in a letter dated April 11, 1946 that her son's death "was such a shock that I just can't get over it. I know I have to. But it is so very hard to do."[34]

Buckley's death on February 21, 1945 wasn't officially confirmed until June 1945, according to Mrs. Buckley. In a letter to E.O. Holland dated February 17, 1949, she wrote that her husband was listed as "missing in action" until June, 1945, and that he posthumously received the Bronze Star and Purple Heart.[35] Buckley's Bronze Star commendation states how he was the first to see a Japanese plane "headed in on a lightning course for his carrier," remaining "in the line of enemy strafing, desperately striving to attract the attention of his crews and the pilots of two aircraft secured to the catapults."[36] Buckley directed his men to positions of

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[31] Letter from E.O. Holland to Mrs. Archie Buckley, March 30, 1945, Box 1, Folder 4, Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).

[32] Ibid.

[33] Letter from E.O. Holland to Bunky and Betty Moe Buckley, March 30, 1945, Box 1, Folder 4, Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).

[34] Letter from Mr. & Mrs. W.L. Buckley to E.O. Holland, April 11, 1946, Box 1, Folder 4, Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).

[35] Letter from Mrs. Archie Buckley to E.O. Holland, February 17, 1949, Box 1, Folder 4, Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).

[36] Bronze Star Medal citation for Lieutenant Archie Myrl Buckley, United States Naval Reserve, Box 1, Folder 4, Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).

"comparative safety" rather than seek cover for himself, and was "still at his post when the attacker crashed into the forward end of the flight deck on the starboard side. Through his alert warning and gallant consideration of others in the face of imminent peril to himself, the lives of several men were saved. His courageous conduct was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."[37]

Buckley is memorialized at Tablets of the Missing at the Honolulu Memorial within the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific.[38] North Central High School in Spokane established an Inspirational Award in his name. In 1984, he was inducted into Washington State University's Athletic Hall of Fame. Following his death, Buckley was honored throughout eastern Washington as a coach who touched the lives of numerous athletes. In an excerpt from an article titled "Archie Buckley Leaves the Park," an unnamed author wrote the following:

> *Scattered throughout the west are lads who played football and baseball under his dynamic leadership. They will forget most of the details of the game they played, the scores, the high lights, the plays-everything but the ecstasy and the heartache. These they will remember and with them, Archie Buckley. If ever a coach who felt the pain and delight of his charges, who scaled the heights with them and descended with them to the depths, it was the fiery mentor from North Central high school.*

[37] Bronze Star Medal citation for Lieutenant Archie Myrl Buckley, United States Naval Reserve, Box 1, Folder 4, Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).

[38] "Archie M. Buckley," HonorStates.org, https://www.honorstates.org/index.php?id=122971 (accessed June 4, 2019).

And now the enemy has taken him from the game. Killed in action. Make it strong fellows; fifteen for the coach.[39]

[39] "Archie Buckley Leaves The Park," newspaper clipping, Box 1, Folder 18, Washington State University Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections (MASC).