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In the Pacific: A WWII Photograph

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Abstract

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In the Pacific: A WWII Photograph

In memory of France and Varlan Vancil, brothers

by David Vancil

In the black and white snapshot, my father and my uncle, sweaty from volleyball, stand side-by-side with other bare-chested men, by chance together on an unnamed island in the Pacific. Taller than my father, Uncle Varlan looks jaunty. Older and named for France, where Grandfather waged a war to end them, my dad, who goes by Eddie, looks triumphant, or so I see him. I conjure up Spartan athletes who spike the ball to win the game. Victorious, they share ocean-warm cans of Schlitz or Falstaff in a dark, green tent. Neither brother believes, in my rendition, he will survive the war to make babies, work in a job, or pay off home mortgages. It will be a mostly welcome surprise. This will be the last photograph of them playing together. Varlan will name his oldest son for a dead friend. And dad will act out dreams that will frighten my mother.