

**Bloeser, Bee. *Vaccines and Bayonets: A Historical Memoir*. 2021. ISBN-10. 1127878564.**

Step into the heart of a turbulent era with *Vaccines & Bayonets*, a gripping historical memoir that chronicles one woman's extraordinary journey with the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and CDC in Africa. In this vivid recounting—which one Pulitzer nominee says, “reads like a political thriller, women's history, and African adventure rolled into one.”—Bee Bloeser unveils the raw reality of her family's part in the mission to eradicate smallpox, revealing triumphs and trials faced along the way.

As a young wife, Bloeser followed her husband, Carl, to Africa, driven by ideals and a sense of duty. In Nigeria she witnessed the roots and ravages of civil war and the horrors of smallpox and leprosy, yet found beauty in the vibrant local culture.

In Equatorial Guinea, a nation newly independent but plagued by the terror of a brutal dictatorship, secrecy shrouded the people, and Bloeser confronted a world far removed from her idealistic expectations. Forbidden from interacting with locals and surrounded by oppression and suspicion, she documented her experiences in hidden notes, capturing the essence of a desperate struggle.

Through her eyes, readers experience the intense battle against a relentless virus and against tyranny. This memoir is not just a story of medical triumph and America's global aid and soft power but also a poignant reflection on humanity's capacity for courage—the indomitable spirit of those who risk everything for a better future.

Ten-year-old Bee Bloeser, in small-town Oklahoma, dreamed of going to Africa to live the life she saw in medical missionaries' filmstrips. Twenty years later she followed her husband and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) to Africa in the campaign to wipe out smallpox. The warmth of the people, rhythms of tribal music and visits with a princess in a medieval palace delighted her. But she learned hard facts of women hidden behind walls, tribal conflict, and a heartbreaking humanitarian crisis unknown to the outside world. A violent dictatorship caused her family to live on constant vigil.

Equipped with vivid memories and her personal archives of notes, letters, cables, film and official reports, Bloeser speaks and writes about this personal story set alongside the public triumph of the global eradication of smallpox. Her historical memoir, *Vaccines & Bayonets: Fighting Smallpox in Africa amid Tribalism, Terror and the Cold War*, receives high praise.

Bloeser has lived in West Africa, the Middle East and Native American nations, and supported her late husband's public health work on five continents. After decades by his side and in her own career in speech-language pathology, Bloeser now lives in California. An award-winning writer, she is an Associate Member of USAID Alumni Association and a member of Toastmasters International, PEO, multiple authors' groups and her church. She still wants to return to Africa. She is available for zooming with book clubs.