

# **Myth and the Greatest Generation**

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A Social History of Americans in World War II

**Kenneth D. Rose**

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To those who told their stories ... and to those who couldn't



That was the good war, the war we won  
As if there were no death, for goodness' sake  
With the help of the losers we left out there  
In the air, in the empty air.

—Howard Nemerov<sup>4</sup>

They were a blighted generation before they ever studied war.  
These present soldiers were depression children.  
They have never known peace.

—Willard Waller<sup>2</sup>

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## World War II Timeline

28 June 1919: The Versailles Treaty is signed, placing moral responsibility for World War I on Germany, stripping Germany of her overseas colonies and Alsace-Lorraine, and levying war reparations against Germany of some \$15 billion. The German economic system is placed under Allied control, and Germany's military is drastically reduced. In November, the U.S. Senate will vote to reject the Versailles Treaty, and the United States will not become a member of the League of Nations.

27 August 1928: Sixty-two nations sign the Kellogg-Briand Pact, aimed at settling disputes among nations without resorting to what French foreign minister Aristide Briand calls the "outlawry of war."

18 September 1931: In direct violation of the Kellogg-Briand Pact, Japan invades Manchuria.

30 January 1933: Adolf Hitler becomes chancellor of Germany.

17 October 1933: Albert Einstein arrives in the United States as anti-Semitism increases in Germany.

31 August 1935: The Neutrality Act is passed, which prohibits the shipment of American arms to nations involved in hostilities.

3 October 1935: Italy invades Ethiopia.

17 July 1936: After Spanish army units in Morocco rebel against the leftist Popular Front government in Madrid, a civil war begins in Spain pitting Popular Front forces against right-wing elements under Francisco Franco.

12 December 1937: Japanese troops enter the Chinese city of Nanking (Nanjing), and in the "Rape of Nanking" will begin a mass killing of Chinese civilians that will result in the deaths of more than 200,000. In addition, the American gunboat *Panay* is attacked by Japanese planes and is sunk in China's Yangtze River.

30 September 1938: At the Munich Conference, British prime minister Neville Chamberlain and French prime minister Edouard Daladier allow Germany to take over Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland, an area largely occupied by ethnic Germans. Chamberlain proclaims "peace in our time."

9 November 1938: Hitler unleashes his Nazi thugs on Jewish homes, shops, and synagogues. This was known as *Kristallnacht* (Crystal Night) for the broken glass that littered German streets.

14 March 1939: Germany invades Czechoslovakia.

23 August 1939: A nonaggression pact is signed between the Soviet Union and Germany.

1 September 1939: Germany invades Poland, and on 3 September Britain and France declare war against Germany.

5 September 1939: The United States declares its neutrality in the war in Europe.

4 November 1939: The Neutrality Act of 1939 is enacted, which repeals the embargo on arms sales to belligerents as long as such sales are on a "cash-and-carry" basis.

9 April 1940: Germany invades Norway and Denmark.

10 May 1940: Germany invades the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Belgium.

26 May–4 June 1940: More than 338,000 Allied troops are evacuated from the French town of Dunkirk.

5 June 1940: Germany invades France. Paris falls to German control on 14 June, and France surrenders on 22 June.

13 June 1940: Congress appropriates \$1.8 billion for military expenditures.

10 July 1940: The Battle of Britain begins as Germany launches its air fleet against British targets.

3 September 1940: Roosevelt gives Britain 50 destroyers under a lend-lease agreement.

16 September 1940: The Selective Training and Service Act is enacted, requiring men between the ages of 21 and 35 to register for military training.

5 November 1940: Roosevelt is elected to a third term as president, defeating Wendell Willkie.

6 January 1941: Roosevelt asks for congressional support of lend-lease and proclaims the “four freedoms” (freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, freedom from fear).

11 March 1941: Congress approves the Lend-Lease Act.

11 April 1941: Roosevelt extends American naval patrols further into the Atlantic as German submarines continue to take a terrible toll on Allied shipping.

22 June 1941: Germany invades the Soviet Union in violation of their nonaggression pact. Roosevelt pledges aid to the Soviets.

24 July 1941: Japan invades French Indochina. The United States will freeze all Japanese assets in the country and cease trade with the Japanese.

17 October 1941: A German submarine attacks the U.S. destroyer *Kearney* off the coast of Iceland. On 30 October the destroyer *Reuben James* will also be attacked, and sunk, by a German submarine near Iceland.

7 December 1941: Japanese forces attack Pearl Harbor, inflicting heavy damage on American ships and planes and killing nearly 2,500 Americans.

8 December 1941: Roosevelt asks for and receives congressional approval for a declaration of war against Japan. Roosevelt refers to the Pearl Harbor attack as “a day that shall live in infamy.”

10 December 1941: Japanese forces land on the Philippines.

11 December 1941: Germany and Italy declare war on the United States, and the United States declares war on Germany and Italy.

15 December 1941: Another \$10 billion is appropriated for U.S. military expenditures.

23 December 1941: The U.S. territory of Wake Island is captured by the Japanese. Two days later the British colony of Hong Kong also falls to the Japanese.

2 January 1942: Manila is captured by the Japanese, and American forces on the Philippines withdraw to the Bataan Peninsula.

20 February 1942: Roosevelt issues Executive Order 9066, authorizing the removal of Japanese and Japanese Americans from their homes on the West Coast to “relocation centers.”

9 April 1942: Seventy-five thousand U.S. and Philippine troops surrender to the Japanese. On the Bataan Death March they will be forced to march some 100 miles to a prisoner-of-war camp.

18 April 1942: Under the command of James Doolittle, 16 U.S. bombers take off from the aircraft carrier *Hornet* for a raid on Japanese cities.

4–8 May 1942: In the Battle of the Coral Sea near southern New Guinea, the United States and Japan inflict heavy damage on each other's fleets. The Japanese are prevented from landing at Port Moresby.

3–6 June 1942: Japan suffers a huge defeat at the Battle of Midway in the central Pacific, losing four aircraft carriers and a large number of planes.

30 June 1942: Over \$42 billion is approved by Congress for military spending.

7 August 1942: Marines land on Guadalcanal in the first American offensive in the Pacific.

21 October 1942: The Revenue Act of 1942 is passed, which provides for a \$9 billion increase in taxes.

7–8 November 1942: Allied forces under the command of Dwight Eisenhower land in North Africa.

12–15 November 1942: The Japanese fleet suffers heavy damage in a naval battle near Guadalcanal.

14–24 January 1943: At a conference held in Casablanca, Morocco, Roosevelt and Churchill call for unconditional surrender of the Axis powers, and agree to invade Italy.

27 January 1943: The first American bombing raid on Germany (on Wilhelmshaven) takes place.

2 February 1943: The last Germans at Stalingrad surrender to the Soviets after a long siege.

9 February 1943: U.S. forces capture Guadalcanal as Japanese forces evacuate.

13 May 1943: U.S. and British forces complete the capture of Tunisia.

20–22 June 1943: A race riot in Detroit leaves 34 dead.

10 July 1943: Sicily is invaded by Allied forces. The island is captured by 17 August.

3 September 1943: Allied forces invade the Italian mainland, and Italy ceases military resistance on 8 September.

9 September 1943: Allied troops land at Salerno, Italy.

1 October 1943: U.S. forces capture Naples, Italy.

28 November–1 December 1943: Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin meet at Teheran, Iran, to discuss Allied strategy.

22 January 1944: Allied forces land at Anzio, Italy.

20–27 February 1944: Army air forces conduct a week of concentrated attacks on German aircraft factories.

6 March 1944: U.S. bombers attack Berlin for the first time.

15 March 1944: The Allies begin a major offensive operation against German forces near the Monte Cassino monastery, Italy.

5 June 1944: Allied troops liberate Rome.

6 June 1944: The Allied invasion of Normandy begins. By the end of the day the largest invasion force in history has landed 150,000 troops.

19–20 June 1944: The Japanese lose three aircraft carriers and 400 planes to U.S. naval forces in the Battle of the Philippine Sea.

22 June 1944: The Servicemen's Readjustment Act (G.I. Bill of Rights), which provides for financial aid for veterans, is signed into law.

27 June 1944: Cherbourg, France, is captured by U.S. forces.

9 July 1944: The island of Saipan in the Marianas falls to American forces.

18 July 1944: St. Lô is captured by American troops at Normandy, and the Third Army under George Patton will break out from its position and move east against German forces in Brittany.

20 July 1944: A bomb explodes at Hitler's headquarters in an unsuccessful attempt to end his life. Hitler quickly moves to execute the German officers and politicians who were part of the plot.

10 August 1944: American forces capture Guam.

15 August 1944: The Allies invade southern France between Cannes and Toulon with only light resistance.

25 August 1944: Paris is liberated.

8 September 1944: Germany begins its V-2 rocket campaign against England.

20 October 1944: U.S. forces under Douglas MacArthur return to the Philippines.

23–26 October 1944: At the Battle of Leyte Gulf, the Japanese fleet will try to halt the invasion of the Philippines but will suffer a disastrous defeat. Japan introduces the kamikaze suicide planes.

7 November 1944: Roosevelt is elected to a fourth term as president.

16 December 1944: German forces launch a massive attack in the Ardennes Forest in Belgium in the opening of the Battle of the Bulge. Outnumbered American forces will hold the center of the position at Bastogne until they are relieved on 26 December. The American counterattack ends the German offensive by the end of January 1945.

4–11 February 1945: Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin meet at the Yalta Conference.

7 March 1945: U.S. forces cross the Rhine into Germany at Remagen.

16 March 1945: Marines capture Iwo Jima. The Joe Rosenthal photograph of the flag raising at Mt. Suribachi on 23 February becomes one of the most important images of the war.

1 April–21 June 1945: The battle to capture Okinawa becomes the costliest campaign of the war in the Pacific.

12 April 1945: Roosevelt dies of a cerebral hemorrhage and vice president Harry Truman becomes president.

7 May 1945: Germany surrenders to the Allies.

21 June 1945: Japanese forces surrender at Okinawa.

16 July 1945: The first atomic bomb is tested successfully at Alamogordo, New Mexico.

17 July 1945: Truman meets with the Allied leaders at the Potsdam Conference.

6 August 1945: The United States drops an atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

8 August 1945: The Soviet Union enters the war against Japan.

9 August 1945: The United States drops an atomic bomb on Nagasaki.

14 August 1945: The war ends with Japan's surrender. The formal surrender ceremony will take place on 2 September aboard the battleship *Missouri*.



## Introduction

In 1947, James A. Michener predicted that the servicemen of World War II “will be remembered as long as our generation lives. After that, like the men of the Confederacy, they will become strangers. Longer and longer shadows will obscure them, until their Guadalcanal sounds distant on the ear like Shiloh and Valley Forge.”<sup>1</sup> What Michener predicted is now coming to pass, with veterans of the war dying at the rate of more than 1,100 a day (Bob Dole has called them “the disappearing generation”).<sup>2</sup> As World War II recedes into the past, the shadows that obscure this event and its impact on the lives of Americans have lengthened, and in the process the horrors of the battlefield have been sanitized and the frictions on the home front discounted or even ignored. What Studs Terkel once called “the good war,” a phrase that he acknowledged contained a great deal of incongruity, has become the unambiguous Good War.<sup>3</sup>

This has happened for a number of reasons. Since September 11, 2001, there has been a resurgence of patriotism in American society and a complementary need to identify genuine American “heroes” (a word put in quotation marks because those designated as such are invariably embarrassed by such a term). World War II has provided a rich vein of patriotism and heroism because the necessity for fighting this war was never in doubt and the final results—the defeat of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan—gratifyingly clear. In contrast, the wars fought by Americans since have been uncertain of purpose and doubtful of result. This has meant that World War II has had to carry a heavy load in the popular imagination, and too often interpretations of this conflict have succumbed to what veteran Paul Fussell calls “military romanticism, which, if not implying that war is really good for you, does suggest that it contains desirable elements.”<sup>4</sup> A parallel development has been the creation of a home front idyll, where Americans during wartime eagerly put aside their class, race, and personal interests to unite as one for the war effort.

Certainly, the romantic/utopian elements of World War II were harder to perceive while the war was actually being fought. Despite the comforting propaganda that was being churned out by government and industry, there was no disguising the fact that American servicemen were being killed, maimed, and traumatized in numbers not seen since the Civil War. Even combat veterans who were not physical or emotional casualties would be changed forever, and the young, eager recruits who shipped out at the beginning of the war returned home with old wizened eyes, and with experiences that they found difficult to share with family and friends. The changes on the home front were considerable as well. A radically overhauled economy dictated a wholesale shifting of the population, with millions leaving their homes to work in cities that were bursting at the seams. Uprooted Americans endured severe overcrowding and nightmare traffic jams, and were subjected to enormous social pressures that produced broken marriages, juvenile delinquency, and increased racial tensions. For the first time in almost a decade people had jobs and money, but Americans were often absent from these jobs (high absenteeism was a chronic problem in many industries), and when they could not find the consumer goods they craved, they too frequently turned to a thriving black market.

These details are mostly missing from the prevailing national narrative of World War II. What we have instead is the Greatest Generation, an idea that delineates one of the most important developments in the national mythos over the last several decades. As expressed by Tom Brokaw in his 1998 book *The Greatest Generation*, Americans who grew up during the Depression and came of age during the war “stayed true to their values of personal responsibility, duty, honor, and faith” and met “historic challenges and [produced]

achievements of a magnitude the world had never before witnessed.”<sup>5</sup> Brokaw dispenses with annoying complexities in favor of an unabashed celebration of this group and its era. The themes of *Greatest* are easy to discern and include the claim that this generation was hyperpatriotic, that it embraced personal responsibility as a moral imperative, and that it maintained a pious devotion to God (all in contrast to the decadent generations that followed).<sup>6</sup> In addition, this was supposedly a generation of rock-solid marriages—“the last generation in which, broadly speaking, marriage was a commitment and divorce was not an option.”<sup>7</sup> While Brokaw and his subjects are clearly fudging the details, this has not prevented *The Greatest Generation* from dominating how Americans think about this generation and this war.

We see this influence everywhere, and the Greatest Generation has essentially become a branded item, with Americans clamoring to identify themselves or their subjects with this label. Thus we have Tom Mathews’ *Our Fathers’ War: Growing Up in the Shadow of the Greatest Generation* and Douglas Brinkley’s *The Boys of Pointe Du Hoc*, in which Brinkley claims that the speeches Ronald Reagan made at the 40th anniversary of the D-Day invasion “triggered the so-called Greatest Generation phenomenon.”<sup>8</sup> Even those who must have their doubts about subsequent legacies of the Greatest Generation—and here the Vietnam War comes to mind—know that they ignore paying tribute to this group at their own peril. John Kerry, for instance, felt obliged to mention “the responsibilities and sacrifices of the greatest generation” in his acceptance speech for the Democratic nomination in 2004.<sup>9</sup>

This impulse has also been reflected in the creation of the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C., as well as in the development of a number of historical museums devoted to the war. To a remarkable degree, the language used to describe these ventures echoes the rhetoric of *The Greatest Generation*. Friedrich St. Florian, architect of the World War II memorial, proclaimed that World War II “unified an entire generation,” and in the *Washington Post*’s description of the opening of the memorial (inevitably subtitled “The Greatest Dedication”) writer David Montgomery praises an era in which “national sacrifice was not optional.”<sup>10</sup> Among the literature sent out in 2003 to raise money for the National D-Day Museum is a letter from board member Brigadier General Al Ungerleider (Ret.) noting that “with your support, the ‘Greatest Generation’ will receive their place in history in a major national institution.”<sup>11</sup> In the planning stages is the Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front National Historical Park in Richmond, California, home of a massive shipyard operation during the war. Among the corporate sponsors is the Ford Motor Company, which refers to the “women workers of this ‘greatest generation,’” and which claims that “the necessities of war were breaking down racial, as well as gender barriers as African-American, Asian and Hispanic women joined white women along assembly lines formerly filled mainly by white men.”<sup>12</sup>

While some academics might be tempted to dismiss the Greatest Generation idea as a simple-minded straw man unworthy of serious scholarly attention, many leading scholars have made a point of challenging the Greatest Generation idea, including Paul Fussell, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., and Joseph J. Ellis.<sup>13</sup> These protestations have had little impact on the general public, however, and Brokaw has not only flattened the opposition but also gone on to publish two wildly popular *Greatest Generation* sequels.<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps I will suffer a fate similar to other Greatest Generation doubters, but I think the best way to honor this generation is not to falsify it but to humanize it. The only way this can be done is to follow the truth where it leads, and to include the blemished as well as the valorous. While such an approach may run counter to the virtually irresistible temptation to create a satisfying national myth, in the end there is nothing very extraordinary (or very interesting) about a race of Titans striding the earth and performing mighty deeds. Myth

making always comes at a price. As Ray Raphael observes of the mythology that was created around the Revolutionary War, “By choosing stories specifically tailored to make us feel good, we turn people who once lived and breathed, with their richly textured lives, into stick figures.”<sup>45</sup> The same can be said about World War II, and if we approach this conflict through the historical record, rather than through a mythological creation, what emerges is a more subtle, that is to say more human, portrait of Americans at war. Thus we will find that Americans volunteered in great numbers for military service but also dodged the draft in great numbers. They bought bonds, collected scrap, and submitted willingly to wartime rationing but also supported a vigorous black market. Outsiders were likely to perceive this generation as optimistic, even brash, yet the literature, films, and cultural artifacts of this generation were often dark, brooding, and serious. The marriages of this generation were subjected to incredible stresses and most survived, but a strikingly large number did not. In addition, servicemen harbored a seething resentment against what they considered to be the soft life of civilians. This contempt for the civilian population sometimes led to violent clashes and at the very least did damage to the idea of an America united behind the war effort.

It was a generation where different ethnic and racial groups labored together in the military and on the factory floor, but it was also a generation that maintained a Jim Crow system in both military and civilian life. Indeed, the treatment of minorities was disgraceful throughout the war. Management resisted hiring black workers, white workers frequently staged “hate strikes” when blacks were promoted, and dozens of labor unions refused to admit blacks as members.<sup>46</sup> It is debatable whether minority workers would have made it to the factory floor at all without nondiscrimination clauses in government contracts. Things were arguably worse in the segregated military, and the irony of Americans segregating their military units to fight against a Nazi regime that proclaimed a white “master race” is obvious. Black troops were typically assigned to menial positions with few opportunities for promotion, and throughout the country there was violence between black soldiers and local whites. Violence between black and white civilians culminated in one of the worst race riots in American history when Detroit erupted in 1943.

The “yellow peril” idea, which had been simmering in America for decades, came to a full boil with the attack on Pearl Harbor. It should be remembered that the forced relocation of 110,000 people of Japanese ancestry that followed—the greatest violation of civil liberties in American history—came about not so much by official edict as by pressure from an extremely popular grassroots movement. Anti-semitism festered throughout America during the war, and the extent to which casual racism dominated American life is appalling.

Above all, what one expects to find in American society during these years, at least according to the testimonials in *The Greatest Generation*, is a strident patriotism. Certainly, this was the line promoted by government, industry, and film producers during the war, but there is scant evidence that ordinary Americans bought into it. Especially for frontline troops, patriotism was an abstraction for which they had little use. When one infantryman was asked why he was fighting, his response was typical: “Ask any dogface in the line. You’re fighting for your skin on the line. When I enlisted I was patriotic as all hell. There’s no patriotism on the line. A boy up here 60 days in the line is in danger every minute. He ain’t fighting for patriotism.”<sup>47</sup> Americans arguably fought this war on less idealism than the people of any other nation involved. Instead, they fought out of loyalty to those around them, and for reasons of pragmatism, because they had little choice in the matter. Reading the personal accounts of American servicemen in this war, one is struck by the extent to which they viewed appeals to idealism and patriotism as a base alloy that deserved only their cynicism. When “Iron Mike” Moran arrived in the Solomons to take command of the PT boats there, John F. Kennedy noted:

He’s fresh out from six months in the States and full of smoke and vinegar and statements like:

“It’s a privilege to be here and we would be ashamed to be back in the States—and we’ll stay here ten years if necessary!” That all went over like a lead balloon.<sup>18</sup>

A bellicose patriotism may have drawn young men into the military, but as veteran William Manchester observed, “Despite our enormous pride in being Marines, we saw through the scam that had lured so many of us to recruiting stations.”<sup>19</sup>

With the passage of sixty years, however, the young serviceman skeptical of patriotic appeals has become the old, aggressively patriotic veteran. Lee Kennett, who published a book on the American G.I. in World War II in 1987, attended the fortieth reunion of the army’s 84th Infantry Division and noted of one meeting that it “had been filled with God-and-country symbols.” “The patriotic display had particularly struck me,” said Kennett, “because it was not the sort of thing the G.I. of 1945 would have felt comfortable with. In this respect the men had changed.”<sup>20</sup> As we will see, the patriotism that supposedly dominated American life during World War II is mostly of the hindsight variety.

Like patriotism, the alleged solidity of Greatest Generation marriages and family life also has to be called into question. There was a spike in child neglect and juvenile delinquency during the war, as unsupervised children were left alone or took to the streets. Marital unions made in haste came unraveled under the pressures of wartime and its immediate aftermath, and while it is frequently mentioned that Americans set a record for per capita marriage in 1946, they also set a record for per capita divorce in the same year.

All history worth its salt is revisionist history, and this history is hopefully no exception. This book will examine this generation during the war years, and perhaps along the way revise how we view these Americans. I think we will discover that this generation was no “greater” than any other, that scoundrels coexisted with heroes, that people made great sacrifices but also feathered their own nests, and that Americans worked hard for the war effort but also grumbled about their labors. In addition, economics often trumped patriotism. By the summer of 1944, for instance, a serious labor shortage developed as millions of workers anticipating the end of the war left their war industry jobs to get a head start in peacetime industries.

For those unlucky few who did the actual fighting, the essential fact of World War II is that it was a horror, a stark reality largely lost to Americans in recent years. The evidence for the horrific is everywhere. When a shell landed in the middle of a landing craft during an amphibious assault, corpsman Lieutenant Charles S. Stevenson saw “a bright flash, a roar, and arms and heads and legs seemed to explode into the air. It was ghastly.” A sergeant on the same beach was knocked out by an object after a shell exploded in front of him. He woke to find that “my buddy had been killed, and that it was his head that had hit me in the face.”<sup>21</sup> The war would leave its mark on all who got close to it and most who did not. When Martha Gellhorn accompanied a group of wounded troops on a plane back from Europe, she noted that “there were no amputation cases on this plane and everyone here would one day be well, with nothing much changed except the heart, the mind and the soul.”<sup>22</sup>

If there is a “fog of war,” surely there is also a fog of nostalgia and forgetting that settles in after every war. As the years pass, the stark outlines of the conflict become blurred, softened, and even ennobled. As Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., veteran of the bloody fighting at Fredericksburg and Antietam, put it in a speech to Harvard’s graduating class in 1895, “War, when you are at it, is horrible and dull. It is only when time has passed that you see that its message was divine.”<sup>23</sup> This disconnect between the experience of warfare and how one assesses that experience over time is perhaps a necessity in order for human beings to survive psychologically. It is never an easy process, and reaching an accommodation with humankind’s greatest catastrophe would not be easy for the



World War II generation. Kurt Vonnegut, who experienced the firebombing of Dresden, tried for years to write about the experience, but “it took me a long time and it was painful.” The biggest problem for Vonnegut was that, like other survivors of disasters, “I had forgotten about it.”<sup>24</sup> The war would never be over for some and would end only slowly for others. Many would later idealize the time they spent in the military, even though a large majority of soldiers polled directly after the war described their military service in negative terms.<sup>25</sup> In James Jones’ war novel *The Thin Red Line* (Jones was himself a veteran of the Pacific), one of Jones’ characters looks into the future and anticipates the forgetfulness that would slowly envelop those who had experienced the trauma of combat:

Perhaps long years after the war was done, when each had built his defenses of lies which fitted his needs, and had listened long enough to those other lies the national propaganda would have distilled for them by then, they could all go down to the American Legion like their fathers and talk about it within the limits of a prescribed rationale which allowed them self-respect. They could pretend to each other they were men. And avoid admitting they had once seen something animal within themselves that terrified them.<sup>26</sup>

Recent years have only increased the tendency to think of this war not as it was but as it should have been. But believing that something must have been so does not make it so, and the positive spin that World War II romantics have put on military life and the American home front disguises the fact that at base this conflict was, in Gerald F. Linderman’s words, “a disintegrative experience.”<sup>27</sup> There was the disintegration of life in a quite literal manner, with more than 400,000 American military personnel dying in the war and 670,000 Americans wounded.<sup>28</sup> But there was also a disintegration of another kind among home front Americans—a social disintegration that would have a lasting impact.

While many excellent secondary sources are utilized in this history, the emphasis is on source documents produced by those who lived through these times. Such documents include memoirs, letters, and stories posted by reporters, as well as films (both documentary and feature films), posters, and training materials. The writers who experienced this war often made the war itself their subject, and their novels and poetry are examined. And because they produced a literature both vast and rich, we are afforded the luxury of eliminating what might otherwise be excellent writing on the war by those without personal experience of it. (Thus a discussion of Joseph Heller’s *Catch-22* is included because Heller was a combat veteran, but Thomas Pynchon’s *Gravity’s Rainbow* is not because Pynchon came out of a different generation.)

Many Americans who lived through World War II have tried on the Greatest Generation label and have discovered that they like it just fine.<sup>29</sup> But there is also a large proportion of this group that is clearly embarrassed by this phrase, including someone that Tom Brokaw himself interviewed, Andy Rooney. Brokaw noted of Rooney that “he’s challenged my premise that his was the greatest generation any society could hope to produce. He believes the character of the current generation is just as strong; it’s just that his generation had a Depression, World War II, and a Cold War against which to test their character.”<sup>30</sup>

Rooney’s insightful observation reminds us that canonizing the Americans of World War II does a disservice both to the historical record and to the individuals themselves. This generation was forced to come to grips with the greatest calamity in human history, and in the end, what is compelling about this story has less to do with “greatness” than with ordinariness—with ordinary people responding to extraordinary times. Long before the advent of the Greatest Generation debate, John Steinbeck stated what should have been obvious: that no

generalized nobility prevailed among this group, that their number included “the good, the bad, the beautiful, the ugly, the cruel, the gentle, the brutal, the kindly, the strong, and the weak.”<sup>31</sup> Bill Mauldin was also able to look at this generation with clear eyes. Referring to the infantrymen whose lives he chronicled in his cartoons, Mauldin described them as “normal people who have been put where they are, and whose actions and feelings have been molded by their circumstances. There are gentlemen and boors; intelligent ones and stupid ones; talented ones and inefficient ones.” But when they are fighting together, “they are facing cold steel and screaming lead and hard enemies, and they are advancing and beating the hell out of the opposition.”<sup>32</sup>

## Part I

# Americans Abroad

# Fairness, Savagery, Delight, Trauma, and Vice

## I. The Fair and the Savage

Americans fought two distinct wars between 1941 and 1945, wars separated not only by geography but also by the most basic assumptions of moral behavior. In terms of battlefield conduct, the war that Americans fought in Europe was not markedly different from the Napoleonic wars. But the war in the Pacific was revolutionary, a plunge into brutality and race hatred with seemingly no bottom. More than any other single factor, the differences between these two wars were rooted in the ways the enemies regarded each other.

In his memoir, Paul Fussell notes that “we always called the Germans ‘Krauts,’ doubtless to bolster our sense that we were killing creatures very odd and sinister and thus appropriate targets of contempt.”<sup>1</sup> “Hun,” an appellation borrowed from World War I, was another derogatory word applied to Germans, and also in wide use was the almost affectionate-sounding “Jerry.” Robert Rasmus, who fought in Europe, remembered that he initially hated Germans both collectively and individually, but as increasing numbers of German dead came under his view, Rasmus had a revelation in which “each took on a personality. These were no longer an abstraction. These were no longer the Germans of the brutish faces and the helmets we saw in the newsreels. They were exactly our age. These were boys like us.”<sup>2</sup> A soldier in Italy told Martha Gellhorn that he felt a similar kinship with German soldiers, “We’re not mad at anybody. Jerry’s in there just because he’s ordered, same as we are.”<sup>3</sup> This was so common an attitude that the army worried that “identification with the enemy” was becoming a “liability.”<sup>4</sup>

Because of this feeling of commonality among Germans and Americans, there was widespread agreement that combat between them, with some exceptions (such as the operations of German SS units), was “fair.” German tank commander Hans von Luck described the fighting in North Africa as “merciless, but always fair.”<sup>5</sup> German and American medics and doctors not only gave medical relief to each other’s troops but also sometimes performed operations side by side.<sup>6</sup> Lieutenant Sidney Hoffman, a frontline doctor in Africa, noted that the Germans “ran their own ambulances right into no man’s land ... we tried not to hit them.” Twelve American ambulances were destroyed by the Germans, but Hoffman was quick to add, “I think it was accidental. ... They seemed to respect the Red Cross as we do.”<sup>7</sup>

Corporal John F. O’Neill, who was repatriated after a stay in German hospitals and prison camps, insisted that “German front-line soldiers are always gentlemen. The experiences of all our wounded have proven that.”<sup>8</sup> In addition, both sides honored the surrender of enemy troops, and once former enemies became noncombatants, it was often the case that relations between them not only relaxed but even became remarkably cordial. J. Glenn Gray recalled one incident when Americans fighting in Italy took prisoner a group of Germans:

We stared at one another with a confused mixture of hostility and fear, all alike victims of ignorance. Suddenly I heard some of the prisoners humming a tune under their breath. Four who were a trained quartet and had contrived to be captured together started to sing. Within a



few minutes, the transformation in the atmosphere of that stable was complete, and amusing, too, in retrospect. The rifles were put down, some of them within easy reach of the captives. Everybody clustered closer and began to hum the melodies. Cigarettes were offered to the prisoners, snapshots of loved ones were displayed, and fraternization proceeded at a rapid rate. When the commanding officer, just as new to combat as his men, arrived on the scene, he was speechless with fury and amazement.<sup>9</sup>

Undeniably, the doctrine of “fairness” between German and American troops was constantly being stretched and challenged. In Italy, Eric Sevareid came across the body of a German soldier and asked two American soldiers standing nearby what had happened. “Son of a bitch kept lagging behind the others when we brought them in. We got tired of hurrying him up all the time.” Sevareid found he was not shocked by this “deliberate murder,” “merely a little surprised.”<sup>10</sup> But despite innumerable violations, “fairness” at least existed as an ideal between Americans and Germans. Elsewhere, warfare was conducted on a radically different premise. Germans and Russians fought each other on the Eastern Front with a savagery that was virtually unrestrained.<sup>11</sup> In the Pacific, Americans and Japanese waged a war of primal hatred.<sup>12</sup>

The way the American public viewed the Japanese was consistently more negative than its view of Germans, which helps explain why there were no German “relocation” camps in the United States. Robert Redfield noted:

We distinguish Nazis from Germans. Not all Italians are followers of Mussolini. We know these things and recognize them. But the Japanese are all “Japs.” The Japanese, in the thinking of most of our people, are all one thing: a people fanatically devoted to the destruction of the United States—our enemies, all of them.<sup>13</sup>

More than anything else, it was a perceived difference of mind that American writers focused on in articles on the Japanese psyche. In *Atlantic Monthly*, for instance, Helen Mears described the Japanese as “repressed” both socially and intellectually, and explained that “the ruthlessness of his attacks is the energy of years of pent-up repressions.”<sup>14</sup> A *Life* magazine article claimed that Japanese behavior during the war—“a cold-blooded ruthlessness” and a “stubborn fanaticism in the face of death”—was not a wartime anomaly but was deeply rooted in Japanese culture. As evidence, *Life* analyzed *The 47 Ronin* (“the most popular play in Japan”) and found a blood-soaked drama in which “the Japanese audience demands extreme realism in scenes of cruelty.”<sup>15</sup>

American depictions of the Japanese were uglier, more intense, and more personal than their portrayals of the Germans, and the Japanese were much more likely to be reduced to subhuman caricatures than the Germans.<sup>16</sup> When Americans were asked in 1945, “Which people do you think are more cruel at heart—the Germans or the Japanese?” 82 percent responded that it was the Japanese. Gallup pollsters commented that “attitudes toward the German and Japanese people do not vary to any important extent by education levels in this country” and that all strata of society believed that “the Japanese people show instincts considerably less civilized than the German people.”<sup>17</sup> The difference in the way Americans viewed their two enemies is made clear in the popular song “There’ll Be No Adolph Hitler nor Yellow Japs to Fear.”<sup>18</sup>

Racism is frequently offered up as the explanation for this difference, and undeniably there was a racial component to the fighting in the Pacific that was not found in Europe. In America, the ingrained Jim Crow system, the internment of resident Japanese, and the segregation and ill-treatment of black U.S. troops were all

clear indications of the blithe assumptions of white racial superiority that prevailed in American society. When the fighting started, these assumptions were applied to the Japanese, whom in the popular imagery of the war were portrayed as rats, monkeys, cockroaches, snakes, dogs and bats.<sup>19</sup> Senator Alben W. Barkley called the Japanese “brutes and beasts in the form of man.”<sup>20</sup> One indication of the epithets that Americans were directing against the Japanese is found in the list released by the Office of War Information to radio broadcasters of words that were “recommended” and “not recommended” to describe the Japanese:

*Not Recommended*

slimy  
Fiendish  
Bestial  
Grinning  
Toothy  
Monkey-man  
Jap-rat  
Yellow  
Inhuman  
Slant-eyes

*Recommended*

Brutal  
Traacherous  
Cruel  
Tough  
Wanton  
Desperate  
Scheming  
Fanatical  
Venomous  
Ruthless<sup>21</sup>



**Fig. 1.1** *Collier's* cover by Arthur Szyk, 12 December 1942. (Reproduced with the cooperation of Alexandra Szyk Bracie and the Arthur Szyk Society.)

Even more xenophobic and racist than Americans were the Japanese. The Japanese took for granted their own racial superiority, and despite Japan's promotion of a pan-Asianism and a "Co-Prosperity Sphere," it soon

became clear that these were concepts based not on cooperation among equals but on formulas for Japan's subjugation of client nations. Japanese propaganda emphasized the purity and superiority of the Japanese race, which meant that the other degraded races of the world were fit only to obey and follow the Japanese. Nakajima Chikuhei, a Japanese industrialist and political leader, claimed that "it is the sacred duty of the leading race to lead and enlighten the inferior ones" and that Japan was "the sole superior race in the world."<sup>22</sup> This attitude would have grim repercussions for non-Japanese. Tamura Yoshio, a Japanese medical technician who infected human subjects with bacteriological agents (including bubonic plague, typhoid and syphilis) at Unit 731 in China, was asked in an interview if he had ever felt pity for his victims. He replied, "I had gotten to the point where I lacked pity. After all, we were already implanted with a narrow racism, in the form of a belief in the superiority of the so-called 'Yamato Race.' We disparaged all other races."<sup>23</sup>

All of Asia would bear the brunt of this Japanese-style enlightenment, and as John W. Dower has noted, Japan's "oppressive behavior toward other Asians earned the Japanese more hatred than support."<sup>24</sup> Certainly, the Chinese needed no reminders of the barbarity of the Japanese. China had already suffered one of the largest massacres in human history when Japanese soldiers put to death some 260,000 Chinese civilians in the Rape of Nanking.<sup>25</sup> Rather than an incident in which the military got temporarily out of control, the Rape of Nanking lasted for seven weeks, with the Japanese exhibiting a wanton cruelty that exceeded even Nazi atrocities. Japanese soldiers held killing contests to see who was fastest at beheading prisoners, buried people alive (some were only partially buried, then run over by horses or tanks), nailed prisoners to trees and telephone poles and used them for bayonet practice, sprayed Chinese with gasoline and burned them alive, and were responsible for other Nanking residents being torn to pieces by dogs. In addition, this was one of the largest-scale rapes in human history, with some 20,000 to 80,000 victims. The Japanese went into a raping frenzy, violating women of all ages, from the youngest girl to the oldest woman. Often this was done in front of the women's families, to make the rapes more satisfying to the Japanese.<sup>26</sup> The peoples of other Asian nations under the yoke of the Japanese would soon have their own horror stories.

Some idea of the casual Japanese brutality toward native populations can be gleaned from a diary that was taken from the body of a dead Japanese artillery lieutenant in Burma. The lieutenant noted that natives were reluctant at first to become coolie laborers for the Japanese until "a first-class soldier, Hamauchi, a fellow graduate of mine at Arioki, took some to the edge of a ricefield, and the remainder saw that it was necessary to do as they were told." Elsewhere, "the natives left behind did not show themselves but we had some fun pulling out some of the native girls."<sup>27</sup> *Life* editorialized in January 1942 that "the Japanese Army has spread across Asia a tale of horror that will be told for a thousand years," and four months later the same magazine claimed that "the Japanese soldier is uncontrollable, shows no mercy and takes no prisoners. He is a fanatical, frenzied murderer."<sup>28</sup>

Not surprisingly, the American hatred of the Japanese was mirrored by a Japanese contempt for their American enemies, who were portrayed as demons, devils, or beasts with tails.<sup>29</sup> John Dower notes that in one Japanese drawing, Roosevelt and Churchill were rendered as "debauched ogres carousing with fellow demons in sight of Mount Fuji."<sup>30</sup> Even on the Eastern Front, the racial hatred was not as intense as it was in the Pacific.

The style of fighting practiced by the Japanese reflected both official military policy and societal norms. The 1908 Japanese army criminal code declared that "a commander who allows his unit to surrender to the enemy without fighting to the last man or who concedes a strategic area to the enemy shall be punishable by death." The 1941 Japanese Field Service Code was even more blunt: "Do not be taken prisoner alive."<sup>31</sup> Japanese

soldiers were trained to fight to the death for the glory of the emperor. To do so brought honor to the soldier and his family; to surrender brought shame to the soldier and humiliation to his family. One Japanese soldier explained that a Japanese who surrenders “commits dishonor. One must forget him completely. His wife and his poor mother and children erase him from their memories. There is no memorial placed for him. It is not that he is dead. It is that he never existed.”<sup>32</sup> Not surprisingly, this attitude, coupled with intense racial hostility, made the fighting in the Pacific much less “conventional” than the war in Europe, and more frightening to most Americans. This unconventionality was reflected in very low Japanese surrender rates, with military units fighting to the death or committing suicide rather than suffering the disgrace of surrender. Said the U.S. general W. E. Lynd, “Japs do not leave any place they hold. They don’t go away. You just kill them.”<sup>33</sup> Only a week after the attack on Pearl Harbor, there was already speculation that suicide might be a *national* characteristic, that Japan was “committing national hara-kiri by throwing itself at the throat of its mightiest enemy.”<sup>34</sup>

From the beginning, American soldiers were astonished at the willingness of Japanese to sacrifice themselves by the hundreds in banzai suicide attacks that made no sense militarily. Fighting on the Bataan Peninsula in December 1941, Clayton Dahl of the 31st Infantry Regiment described Japanese attacks in his diary:

They’d come in waves, with their rifles high above their heads, screaming. God! What mass murder. They’d jump and stumble over their own dead. The smell of the dead was sickening. God, such a nightmare, like a bad dream.

About dusk they’d come, like lambs to slaughter. Several times 500 were burned in cane fields, or cut down in water waist deep, with oil burning on the water. Just like Dante’s Inferno. Sometimes we’d be close, especially in nighttime attacks, and you’d hit them and they’d cry like rabbits, squeal like pigs.<sup>35</sup>

Marine lieutenant Cord Meyer Jr., describing a banzai attack on Eniwetok, said that the marines “cut them down like overripe wheat, and they lay like tired children with their faces in sand.”<sup>36</sup>

Equally as baffling and disturbing to Americans as the banzai attacks were the kamikaze operations that were introduced late in the war by Japanese admiral Takijiro Onishi. Told by his superiors to turn the tide of the war at any cost, Onishi believed that kamikaze attacks were no more futile than other Japanese military efforts because “these young men with their limited training, outdated equipment, and numerical inferiority are doomed even by conventional fighting methods.” Onishi himself committed suicide at the end of the war.<sup>37</sup> American admiral C. R. Brown, who witnessed kamikaze attacks at the Philippines and Okinawa, remembered that “there was a hypnotic fascination to a sight so alien to our Western philosophy. We watched each plunging kamikaze with the detached horror of one witnessing a terrible spectacle rather than as the intended victim.”<sup>38</sup>

This appetite for self-destruction was shocking enough, but even more appalling to Americans was the Japanese flair for the sadistic. On Bataan, the Japanese routinely tortured prisoners to death (one American soldier was found “with his hands and feet cut off, bayonets driven into his stomach”), and Samuel Grashio, an American flyer, said that it was “commonplace to find the bodies of one’s comrades, tightly bound, obviously tortured, disemboweled, with the severed genitals stuffed in their mouths.”<sup>39</sup> Nogi Harumichi said that when American flyers fell into the hands of the Japanese in Indonesia, they were first interrogated, “then the order came down, ‘Process them.’ ... ‘It’s illegal,’ I thought, ‘but the only chance for Japan is total annihilation or victory.’” The flyers were “processed” by having their heads lopped off.<sup>40</sup> The sword was also the favorite co-prosperity tool of Uno Shintaro, who boasted that during service in China he personally severed more than 40 heads, and that “if more than two weeks went by without my taking a head, I didn’t feel right. Physically, I



needed to be refreshed.” He described an instance in which he “dispatched our reserve squad, took the village mayor and others captive, and tortured them. They claimed they didn’t know anything. I was furious. I’ll show them, I thought. I lined them up, nine of them, and cut their heads off.”<sup>41</sup> Everywhere in Asia, casual sadism went hand in hand with the Japanese war effort. Included in the diary of the previously mentioned Japanese artillery lieutenant was an entry that described the killing of an American prisoner of war in Burma:

First, Hosogawa bayoneted him in the behind, which gave the men much amusement. Then he stuck him in the belly. He did not die at once, but of course it is not permitted to waste bullets when killing prisoners of war.<sup>42</sup>

Kamikaze suicide missions, banzai attacks, the torture of captives, fake surrenders, and atrocious treatment of prisoners of war (the Japanese considered a person’s imprisoned condition as proof of his inferior status) defined the Japanese style of warfare in the Pacific.<sup>43</sup>

Early in the war, American newspapers and magazines began running stories documenting Japanese atrocities against prisoners. In “Slow Death in a Jap Cage,” published in September 1942, M. C. Ford related his experiences in a Japanese torture center in Shanghai. Here prisoners were beaten with sticks, tortured by sticking a water hose into the victim’s nose, and abused in countless other ways.<sup>44</sup> The most notorious example of prisoner abuse was the Bataan Death March, where at least 7,000 prisoners died on a long forced march to a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp after surrender of the Philippines in May 1942.<sup>45</sup> Among the first to tell his story was William E. Dyess, who described a horrific ordeal of prisoners deprived of water, beaten, tortured, and buried alive.<sup>46</sup> Clayton Dahl was also part of this march, noting, “We were beaten with guns and clubs. When a man fell down, he was bayoneted. ... We walked 30 miles in a day. Every foot of each mile was marked with a leg, a head, or arm. Nice young kids, it was like a nightmare, boys pleading to die.”<sup>47</sup> One of the Bataan marchers told navy commander Melvyn McCoy (McCoy was one of 10 American escapees from the Philippines) that he had been forced by the Japanese to bury alive Americans who had dropped from exhaustion on the march. To this man’s horror, one of the buried regained consciousness and clawed his way out of the dirt that covered him:

Then I learned to what lengths a man will go, McCoy, to hang onto his own life. The bayonets began to prod me in the side and I was forced to bash the soldier over the head with the shovel and then finish burying him.<sup>48</sup>

As bad as Bataan was, in terms of sheer numbers the 12,000 Allied prisoners and the 90,000 Asian laborers who died building a Japanese railroad through the jungles of Burma and Thailand is the best example of how the Japanese often treated those under their control.<sup>49</sup> Appallingly, nearly 45 percent of Americans taken prisoner by the Japanese would not survive the war. Among American prisoners held by the Germans, only 1 percent would die in captivity.<sup>50</sup>

In America’s first offensive in the Pacific, at Guadalcanal in 1942, U.S. troops were immediately shaken by the ferocity of combat with the Japanese. In the first three days of fighting not a single Japanese soldier surrendered, and of the 2,000 Japanese defenders engaged on the eastern end of the island, only 23 were taken alive.<sup>51</sup> Among the Americans having their first combat experience at Guadalcanal was John F. Kennedy, whose ship found itself in the middle of a naval battle on 7 April 1943. A Japanese flyer had parachuted into the water and Kennedy’s ship was maneuvering to pick him up when “he suddenly threw aside his life jacket + pulled out a

revolver and fired two shots at our bridge.” A soldier next to Kennedy returned fire and “blew the top of his head off,” but Kennedy reflected that “the thought of him sitting in the water—battling an entire ship ... brought home very strongly how long it is going to take to finish the war.”<sup>52</sup>

The pattern established on Guadalcanal would be repeated throughout the Pacific. The Japanese contempt for the “rules” of war (Japan had not signed the accords of the Geneva Conventions) meant that the Japanese dictated their own style of warfare, which Americans were forced to adopt.<sup>53</sup> Colonel George S. Clarke, who had fought on Bataan early in the war, declared that the Japanese “threw away the book of war and wrote their own rules.”<sup>54</sup> The Japanese “showed us the way [and] there was nothing for it but to play the game the way they wanted it played,” said marine major Frank Hough.<sup>55</sup> And as Gerald F. Linderman observes, once committed, American fighting men “did more than accommodate to the Japanese terms: they embraced them.”<sup>56</sup> Edgar L. Jones, who during 40 months of war duty had jobs that included ambulance driver, merchant marine, and war correspondent, said of the war in the Pacific that “we saw mankind reach the blackest depths of bestiality.”<sup>57</sup>

The troubling moral implications of answering brutality with brutality were obvious, but in this war an exception was made for the Japanese. As a *Collier's* editorial put it in June 1945, “The barbarism of your enemy is never an excuse for descending to barbarism yourself—though of course our men in the Pacific have to fight the Japanese devils with fire.”<sup>58</sup> Had the war in the Pacific been fought in a more conventional manner, the combatants might have developed feelings of mutual respect based on their common humanity. The savagery of the Pacific fighting precluded any such development. Not even death could bring out shared feelings, and while Americans and Germans gave proper respect to the burial of enemy troops, the Japanese cremated dead Americans, while the Americans buried Japanese corpses with bulldozers.<sup>59</sup> American troops also collected Japanese body parts as souvenirs, something they did not do with German troops. *Life's* “Picture of the Week” for its 22 May 1944 issue (which would become a justifiably famous image of the war) showed Natalie Nickerson contemplating a Japanese skull that her boyfriend had sent her. The skull had been autographed by her boyfriend and 13 of his comrades and inscribed, “This is a good Jap—a dead one picked up on the New Guinea beach.”<sup>60</sup>



Fig. 1.2 "The only good Jap." Ralph Crane, *Black Star*, *Life*, 22 May 1944, 35. (Courtesy of Getty Images.)





**Fig. 1.3** Bodies on Tarawa beach, November 1943. (Navy) NARA file #080-G-57405.

The fighting in the Pacific produced almost unbelievable casualty rates. A force of 5,000 marines landed on Tarawa, an island encompassing less than three square miles, and the Japanese killed 1,000 of them and wounded 2,000 more. As Ronald Spector notes, “Newspaper photos of corpses floating in the tide, or piled on the beach near wrecked and burning landing craft, made an indelible impression” on the American public.<sup>61</sup> At Iwo Jima, the Japanese constructed an elaborate system of tunnels and fortifications (a single area of only eight square miles contained some 800 pillboxes and three miles of tunnels), which the marines had to methodically destroy.<sup>62</sup> The fighting was so savage that the marines lost more than 6,800 men killed and 20,000 wounded. The 21,000 Japanese on the island died almost to the man.<sup>63</sup> As events turned against the Japanese on Iwo Jima, marines could hear the Japanese in the tunnels below “blowing themselves up with grenades held to their stomachs.”<sup>64</sup>

The campaign in the Pacific climaxed at Okinawa, which saw some of the most brutal fighting of the war. Kamikaze planes attacked in dense waves. Phelps Adams witnessed the attack on the carrier *Bunker Hill* as

three kamikazes smashed into that ship. The *Bunker Hill* was quickly turned into an inferno:

The entire rear end of the ship was burning with uncontrollable fury. It looked very much like the newsreel shots of a blazing oil well, only worse—for this fire was feeding on highly refined gasoline and live ammunition. Greasy black smoke rose in a huge column from the ship's stern, shot through with angry tongues of cherry-red flame. Blinding white flashes appeared continuously as ready ammunition in the burning planes or in the gun galleries was touched off. Every few minutes the whole column of smoke would be swallowed in a great burst of flame as another belly tank exploded or as the blaze reached another pool of gasoline flowing from the broken aviation fuel lines on the hangar deck below.

Almost 400 sailors were killed on the *Bunker Hill*, but incredibly this ship was not sunk.<sup>65</sup> The *Bunker Hill* was not alone, and before the Battle of Okinawa was over, kamikazes would sink 34 warships, damage dozens of others, and kill more than 5,000 American sailors in what would become the most costly naval campaign in U.S. history. In addition, 7,000 American soldiers and marines were killed, 32,000 were wounded, and as many as 107,000 Japanese soldiers died in the defense of Okinawa. Somewhere between 75,000 and 80,000 Okinawan civilians were killed.<sup>66</sup> One vessel that was badly damaged at Okinawa was the *USS Comfort*, a hospital ship that was evacuating casualties when it was attacked by a kamikaze. The kamikaze pilot “apparently used the huge red cross painted on the starboard side as his point of aim, for his plane crashed through the superstructure directly above this symbol.” Repeating the pattern of other Pacific battles, Japanese troops refused to surrender and fought to the death. Only 7,400 would live to become prisoners. All of the Japanese senior officers on Okinawa committed suicide.<sup>67</sup>

Appallingly, the Japanese willingness to destroy themselves rather than surrender to the enemy was not restricted to the military. On Saipan, the first island taken by marines that had a significant civilian population (some 20,000), civilians committed suicide by the hundreds. One marine told reporter Robert Sherrod:

Yesterday and the day before there were hundreds of Jap civilians—men, women, and children—up here on this cliff. In the most routine way, they would jump off the cliff, or climb down and wade into the sea. I saw a father throw his three children off, and then jump down himself. Those coral pockets down there under the cliff are full of Jap suicides.

Sherrod observed in a telling phrase that these gruesome acts were “incomprehensible to the occidental mind,” and asked, “Do the suicides of Saipan mean that the whole Japanese race will choose death before surrender?”<sup>68</sup>

Japanese civilian suicides at Saipan, Okinawa, and elsewhere were prompted by Japanese propaganda that warned them they would all be murdered in a hideous fashion by Americans. Kinjo Shigeaki, who lived on Tokashiki, an island about 20 miles west of the main island of Okinawa, remembers being told that “if we were captured we’d be chopped to pieces. They’d cut off our noses, our ears, chop off our fingers, and then run over our bodies with their tanks. Women would be raped. That’s why we were committing suicide.” To prevent such suffering from visiting his family, Shigeaki and his brother stoned their mother to death, then killed their younger brother and sister. “Hell engulfed us there,” said Shigeaki.<sup>69</sup> Miyagi Kikuko, a Japanese nurse on Okinawa, notes of Americans that “from the time we’d been children, we’d only been educated to hate them. They would strip the girls naked and do with them whatever they wanted, then run over them with tanks. We really believed that.” To Kikuko’s astonishment, the soldiers and marines on Okinawa “took care of Okinawans

really well, according to international law.”<sup>72</sup> What is most interesting in these revelations is that Japanese propaganda imputed to the enemy the very acts the Japanese army was committing on a wholesale basis.

The American public’s perception of Japan as a nation of frightening, fanatical kamikazes who were indifferent to human life had no counterpart in the European theater. John Lardner described the German soldier as “a far more advanced and imaginative fighter than the Jap, though perhaps not so hardy and primitively zealous.”<sup>73</sup> A marine on Guadalcanal complained to John Hersey:

I wish we were fighting against the Germans. They are human beings, like us. Fighting against them must be like an athletic performance—matching your skill against someone you know is good. Germans are misled, but at least they react like men. But the Japs are like animals. Against them you have to learn a whole new set of physical reactions. You have to get used to their animal stubbornness and tenacity. They take to the jungle as if they had been bred there, and like some beasts you never see them until they are dead.<sup>74</sup>

*Newsweek* reporter William W. Boddie also believed that the Pacific island jungles were “built to order” for the Japanese: “It fits their psychology—their cunning, patience, stability of nerves.”<sup>75</sup>

In addition to providing nasty combat conditions, Pacific jungles were also fabulous incubators for insects and disease. On Bougainville, for instance, troops were attacked by both centipedes (“the blitzed spot aches for a week”) and “snapping ants” (“their bite feels like a stab from a hot needle”).<sup>76</sup> Malaria was ubiquitous. The Army Research Branch found that 66 percent of the infantry veterans in two divisions in the Pacific had at one time been hospitalized or sent to a rest camp for malaria.<sup>75</sup> A character in James A. Michener’s *Tales of the South Pacific* (1947) noted, “We were all sick at the time. Malaria. Running sores from heavy sweating. Arm pits gouged with little blisters that broke and left small holes. Some had open sores on their wrists. The jungle rot.”<sup>76</sup> The incidence of malaria was so high on Guadalcanal that for a time there was a standing order that no man was to be pulled from the line until his temperature reached 103 degrees.<sup>77</sup>

The intense hatred of the Japanese that evolved during the war sometimes disguised a grudging respect, and even a supernatural fear. *Infantry Journal* felt obliged to run an article entitled “The Jap Is Not Mysterious!” in which it attempted to defuse such perceptions as “Japanese are invisible, especially at night,” and that “Japanese tactics of infiltration and night attacks have an element of mystery about them.”<sup>78</sup> Myles Babcock declared, “We cannot compete with the Japs in jungle conditions,” and a marine corporal noted that when the Japanese ran low on ammunition, “they cut bamboo and crack it together to simulate rifle fire to draw our fire. They ain’t supermen; they’re just tricky bastards.”<sup>79</sup>

Fighting the Japanese dictated the adoption of peculiar tactics. Many outfits abandoned ranks and titles and instead assigned nicknames for everyone. One platoon did this because “the Nips caught onto the names of the officers and would yell or speak in the night. This is Captain Joe Smith talking. ‘A Company’ withdraw to the next hill.” A number of soldiers and marines emphasized the importance of looking into trees where Japanese snipers were often hidden, while others noted that the Japanese sometimes worked the bolts on their rifles back and forth to draw American fire and reveal American positions.<sup>80</sup> By all accounts, the Japanese were superb nighttime infiltrators.<sup>81</sup> This dictated that American troops remain absolutely silent and stationary, and assume anything that moved or made noise was the enemy. During a Japanese night attack in the fighting at New Georgia, a grenade explosion tore apart an American soldier’s leg. He remained silent until next morning because “even a whispered word might have meant the death” of his three comrades. In another foxhole, a

mortar blast severed a man's arm, and the next morning the men who had been around him discovered that "he had bled to death, in silence."<sup>82</sup> Several Pacific veterans offered advice that ran counter to the basic instincts of fighting men everywhere—that rather than being immediately evacuated, the wounded should be left where they were. An army sergeant who fought the Japanese in New Guinea said that the Japanese would frequently capture a wounded man and then "torture him until he screams and yells for help, but it is absolutely suicide to send him help."<sup>83</sup> This was confirmed by a marine who said that "we have taught our men that the best way to aid a wounded man is to push ahead so that the wounded man can be cared for by the Corps men."<sup>84</sup>

This primal hatred of the Japanese, and their reduction to a subhuman level, was not limited to the military but permeated the entire society, from bottom to top. Peggy Terry, who was able to escape the crushing poverty of rural Kentucky by getting a job at a shell-loading plant during the war, notes that while workers there had only a vague notion of the politics of the war, there was a near unanimity in their attitudes toward the Japanese: "We were just ready to wipe them out. They sure as heck didn't look like us. They were yellow little creatures that smiled when they bombed our boys."<sup>85</sup> When Gallup pollsters asked Americans in November 1944 if "Japanese military leaders should be punished in any way" once the war was over, 88 percent said yes. When asked what form the punishment should take, Americans responded with suggestions that included "torture them in a slow and awful death," "put them in a tank and suffocate them," and "kill them like rats." Interviewers noted that only 4 percent had suggested that we "treat them justly, handle them under International Law, (or) demote them."<sup>86</sup>

Pacific naval commander Admiral William "Bull" Halsey called the Japanese "little yellow monkeys" and declared that "the only good Jap is a Jap who's been dead six months."<sup>87</sup> In a letter to his wife, General Alexander Vandegrift, the U.S. commander on Guadalcanal, said of the Japanese on that island that "the 'Termites,' as they are called, are being exterminated."<sup>88</sup> *Time* magazine referred to the Japanese as "a beast which sometimes stands erect," and just a few days after Nagasaki, Truman wrote of the Japanese, "When you deal with a beast you have to treat him as a beast."<sup>89</sup>

American businesses, sensing the mood of the country, calculated that they could curry favor with the public by making Jap-bashing part of their advertising campaigns. Early in the war, the Warner & Swasey lathe company prodded Americans under the banner, "In Heaven's name, let's get mad!" Warner & Swasey asked, "Are we going to let those yellow criminals slaughter our brothers in the East at will? ... Are we going to let a gang of heiling Huns and yellow Japs give their fighting men more than we give ours?"<sup>90</sup> The Ethyl Corporation, producer of gasoline additives, insisted that "'softening up' Japan isn't a matter of a bombing raid or two. It takes more than that to whip 72,875,800 fanatics who are pledged to war and ready to die for their emperor." Instead, bombing raids must be conducted "around the clock" and "from every point of the compass." And *that*, the Ethyl Corporation reminds us, "is going to take a lot of high-octane gasoline."<sup>91</sup> The Bell aircraft company declared "tonight's lesson for Japs ... subtracting Zeros," and the Micromatic Hone Corporation, purveyors of a machining process used on bulldozers, ran an ad that described how American bulldozers were burying Japanese pillboxes that refused to surrender. The ad ran under the headline "A New Deal for Nips—Plow 'Em Under."<sup>92</sup> "You asked for it, Jap," proclaimed the Wickwire Spencer Steel Company, accompanied by a Boris Artybasheff illustration showing a cartoon character made of cables hanging Japanese premier Tojo.<sup>93</sup>

Not surprisingly, hatred of the Japanese was especially pronounced among the marines, soldiers, and war correspondents who came face-to-face with them. On the way to Guadalcanal, Richard Tregaskis overheard the following conversation between two marines:



“They say the Japs have a lot of gold teeth. I’m going to make myself a necklace.”  
“I’m going to bring back some Jap ears,” said another. “Pickled.”

Tregaskis commented that “the marines aboard are dirty, and their quarters are mere dungeons. But their *esprit de corps* is tremendous.” Later, as a group of captured Japanese and a group of their captors glared at each other, Tregaskis observed, “There was no doubt as to what either we or they would have liked to do at that moment—if we had not remembered our code of civilization or if they had not been unarmed.”<sup>94</sup> (The contrast between this scene and J. Glenn Gray’s account of the fraternization that immediately developed between German prisoners of war and their American captors could not be starker.)

Robert Sherrod said of the troops on Tarawa that “all the Marines, it seemed, hated the Japs,” and Sherrod later described Japanese fortifications as “pillboxes full of the loathsome bugs.” Sherrod extended this metaphor by claiming that “there was no way to defeat the Japanese except by extermination.”<sup>95</sup> Marine lieutenant Cord Meyer Jr. said of the Japanese, “I have no regrets over killing them. They are or seem inhuman. We kill them with as little feeling one way or another as one might kill mad dogs.”<sup>96</sup>

James Jones and Herman Wouk, two veterans of the Pacific who went on to write novels based on their experiences, also created characters who viewed the Japanese in less than human terms. In Jones’ *The Thin Red Line*, a Japanese prisoner on Guadalcanal is described as looking “more like some lower grade type of animal and really did not appear to be worth saving.”<sup>97</sup> Herman Wouk’s character Ensign Keith (“a pleasant little fellow”) had a similar attitude toward the Japanese in *The Caine Mutiny*:

Like most of the naval executioners at Kwajalein, he seemed to regard the enemy as a species of animal pest. From the grim and desperate taciturnity with which the Japanese died, they seemed on their side to believe they were contending with an invasion of large armed ants. This obliviousness on both sides to the fact that the opponents were human beings may perhaps be cited as the key to the many massacres of the Pacific war.<sup>98</sup>

E. B. Sledge maintained that “our attitude toward the Japanese was different than the one we had toward the Germans.” Sledge’s brother, who was in the infantry in Europe, told him that when things became hopeless for the Germans, they surrendered and then “they were guys just like us.” With the Japanese, however, “it was not that way.” Early in Marine Corps boot camp Sledge’s drill instructor told his company, “You’re not going to Europe, you’re going to the Pacific. Don’t hesitate to fight the Japs dirty.”<sup>99</sup> Once involved in the fighting, said Sledge, the marines hated the Japanese “deeply, bitterly, and as certainly as danger itself,” and the Japanese “held mutual feelings for us.” The consequence of this collective attitude was “savage, ferocious fighting with no holds barred. This was not the dispassionate killing seen on other fronts or in other wars. This was a brutish, primitive hatred as characteristic of the horror of the war in the Pacific as the palm trees and the islands.”<sup>100</sup> Life was reduced to a primal state, and as John Hersey put it, “here in the jungle a marine killed because he must, or be killed. He stalked the enemy, and the enemy stalked him, as if each were a hunter tracking a bear cat.”<sup>101</sup> Indicative of the mental strain produced by this form of warfare was that the largest single category of men evacuated from the Pacific were those suffering from psychiatric disorders.<sup>102</sup>

## II. Delights

If there was a common denominator between the fighting in Europe and in the Pacific, it was that war is a horror. Yet if this was war's only trait, human beings would have ceased fighting each other eons ago. War also has its attractions, what J. Glenn Gray calls "the enduring appeals of battle," and they are often unacknowledged because of their troubling implications. The three essential appeals of battle, according to Gray, are "the delight in seeing, the delight in comradeship, the delight in destruction."<sup>103</sup> Surely the delight in comradeship is the greatest of these, and the loyalty of the soldier to his comrades almost always trumped patriotism or other idealistic appeals as a motivation for fighting. Indeed, Gray notes that many soldiers were willing to die "not for country or honor or religious faith or for any other abstract good, but because they realized that by fleeing their post and rescuing themselves, they would expose their companions to greater danger. Such loyalty to the group is the essence of fighting morale."<sup>104</sup> Among the surprises that John Ciardi found in war was that "there was gentleness and tenderness and confessed fear everywhere in it." Ciardi described the scene of a guard who had been wounded in an air raid being attended by an armorer:

Leon, the wounded guard, lay pale and gentle as a ghost under the full moon, and the great bearded armorer touched his flesh with fingers light as butterflies. I shall always think of that swatch of moonlight in which we waited for the ambulance. The gunner hurt and graceful as a girl, the armorer whole and graceful and gentle as a flower.<sup>105</sup>

War as spectacle also has few equivalents in civilian life. Troops landing on Normandy "were thrilled by the spectacle of Allied power that was displayed around them on every hand," and B-26 bombardier Clarence "Buzz" Walters said that from above "it looked like a movie in technicolor. Sky full of planes and the English Channel black with boats."<sup>106</sup> The spectacle of the liberated city, like the amphibious assault, is also unique to warfare. Eric Sevareid reported "having to hold tight to my emotions" as he entered liberated Rome: "Everyone was out on the street, thousands upon thousands from the outlying areas walking toward the center of the city. A vast, murmurous sound of human voices flooded everywhere and rose in joyous crescendo at every large avenue we crossed."<sup>107</sup> Joe McCarthy remembered that when he and his fellow soldiers entered liberated Athens, "the crowd swallowed us up, and the next thing I knew I was being squeezed, shaken, thumped, kissed and then picked up and carried down the street on somebody's shoulders."<sup>108</sup> An American who was traveling on a train through rural England the evening that Germany surrendered was witness to another unforgettable sight. From his window he could see the horizon in flames as farmers burned their haystacks, "making huge, leaping bonfires. After six years of darkness, England just lit up in victory and celebration."<sup>109</sup> The thrill of wartime spectacle can also be rooted in horror. Hidezo Tsuchikura said of the firebombing of Tokyo that "the whole spectacle with its blinding lights and thundering noise reminded me of the paintings of purgatory—a real inferno out of the depths of hell itself."<sup>110</sup> The firestorm burned with such intensity that it could be seen 200 miles out at sea.<sup>111</sup>



**Fig 1.4** The spectacle of war: Okinawa, 13 April 1945. (Coast Guard) NARA file #026-G-4426.

The darkest of war's appeals is surely the "delight in destruction," which Gray describes as "the satisfaction that men experience when they are possessed by the lust to destroy and to kill their kind."<sup>142</sup> Gray calls this a "devilish" inclination directed toward "chaos and moral anarchy."<sup>143</sup> On Eniwetok, marine lieutenant Cord Meyer Jr. described a battle with the Japanese in which "they fell like ducks in a shooting gallery and the exhilaration of battle rose in us."<sup>144</sup> While few soldiers would admit to such a "delight," novelists with combat experience who had seen this phenomenon for themselves incorporated destruction's delight into their novels. In James Jones' *The Thin Red Line*, a group of American soldiers bursts into a Japanese bivouac area. "A crazy sort of blood lust, like some sort of declared school holiday from all moral ethics, had descended on them. They could kill with impunity and they were doing it."<sup>145</sup> Perhaps even more chilling is a scene from Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* in which a single Japanese prisoner is murdered by a soldier:



**Fig 1.5** The spectacle of war: an American soldier holds an Italian baby in liberated Rome. Photograph by Sgt. George Aarons in *The Best from Yank, the Army Weekly* (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1945), 263.

He realized suddenly that a part of his mind, very deeply buried, had known he was going to



kill the prisoner from the moment he had sent Red on ahead. He felt quite blank now. The smile on the dead man's face amused him, and a trivial rill of laughter emitted from his lips.

"Goddam," he said.<sup>116</sup>

Complicating Gray's critique of the "delight in destruction" is that destruction is the military's business, and soldiers can hardly be held at fault for conducting efficiently the business for which they have been trained, and even taking some satisfaction in destruction as a job well done. In this case, there is a woolly line between satisfaction and enjoyment.

It is one of war's side effects that it enhances ordinary experiences, and S. L. A. Marshall argues that few men who have experienced warfare "would deny that some of the fullest and fairest days of his life have been spent at the front or that the sky never seems more blue or the air more bracing than when there is just a hint of danger in the air."<sup>117</sup> Cord Meyer Jr. said that after combat he looked "with an affectionate eye on the commonplaces of the day and night, on the blue of the lagoon and the long sandy beach, because I came too close to losing all to undervalue even the littlest thing."<sup>118</sup>

Especially in the presence of war's destruction, things of great beauty or nobility or innocence will shine even more brilliantly. One of the best illustrations of this phenomenon of which I am aware occurred in Rittersshoffen on the Maginot Line in January 1945. A fierce battle between American and German forces that lasted nearly two weeks had been fought in and around this town, and the result, as described by German colonel Hans von Luck, was the near total destruction of Rittersshoffen:

The place became a phantom village after only a few days. Almost all the buildings, including the church, which was defended by Major Kurz's men, were in ruins. Many of the houses were on fire and lit up the scene at night. The dead lay about the streets, among them many civilians.<sup>119</sup>

After American forces withdrew, von Luck climbed through the rubble of the aforementioned church and found to his astonishment that the organ was still intact. What followed was a moment of intense beauty that touched the emotions of everyone present, in large part because of the devastation that surrounded them:

On the spur of the moment I began to play Bach's chorale *Nun danket alle Gott*. It resounded through the ruins to the outside. More and more of my men climbed into the battered church, followed by old women and children, who knelt on the ground and quietly prayed. My men were not ashamed of their tears.<sup>120</sup>

There can also sometimes be a sheer exaltation in battle that combines all the delights of seeing, comradeship, and destruction. A perfect example of this is an experience related to me by P-47 pilot William J. Bailey. Bailey and his fellow pilots in the Ninth Air Force were mainly involved in close support of ground troops. One day Bailey was in the air when he got a call from an American tank column that was being stalled by an enemy contingent on the road:

Sure enough, I go up the road and there it is. It's a half track and eighty-eights and they could fire right straight down at anything that stuck its nose up the road. Luckily we came in fast, low

with bombs and we skipped them and we blew them to hell. I'll always remember looking back and seeing all those pieces going flying and my wingman flying through it. It was really something. The guys in the tanks were cheering like at a football game. We go up the road. We were acting just like bird dogs—my wingman took one side of the road I took the other side—and we strafed both sides. ... I remember flying right through a little town and there was a German trying to get on his coat and running out of a house and looking at me straight in the eye. We were really close, we were about 200 feet off the ground. And sure enough they were all getting in buses so we knocked hell out of the buses, strafed them all and kept going up the road. We were like bird dogs going up ahead of the hunters. Lo and behold we're over a German airfield on one side of the road and we're low about 200 feet and OK we start strafing the airplanes. We got hits on the planes on the ground. My wingman is coming in on one direction and I'm crisscrossing and I saw that we're more of a hazard to ourselves and said, "The hell with this, let's go home." So we came home.<sup>121</sup>

What does civilian life have to compare with such an experience? Bailey stayed in the air force and, amazingly, would fly another 100 missions in Vietnam.<sup>122</sup>

### III. Trauma

When Pearl Harbor was attacked, the army had exactly 35 psychiatrists. This number would expand to 2,400 as the war progressed, and would be augmented by the addition of clinical psychologists in army hospitals.<sup>123</sup> Overwhelmingly, psychiatrists came from civilian life and were largely innocent of the debilitating impact of combat on the human psyche. Combat trauma was not a new phenomenon. The First World War had produced a large number of psychiatric casualties, and some 100,000 cases of shell shock had entered army hospitals through 1919.<sup>124</sup> The Veterans Administration had spent close to a billion dollars on their treatment.<sup>125</sup> Of the 11,501 veterans of World War I who were still receiving hospital care by the mid-1940s, 81 percent had psychiatric disorders.<sup>126</sup>

But few American psychiatrists stopped to ponder the lessons of World War I. Instead, newly minted physicians, imbued with the theories of Freud, examined traumatized World War II soldiers with the goal of determining the deep-seated childhood problems that had produced their present symptoms.<sup>127</sup> The naivete and uselessness of such an approach was rooted in the fact that there is no civilian corollary to combat, which is an inherently insane activity. When these same doctors visited the front lines they found to their surprise that most troops had the same symptoms—nightmares, shakes, sweats—as their psychiatric patients but were still somehow functioning.<sup>128</sup> One army psychiatrist noted that "adjustment to combat ... means not only adjustment to killing, but also adjustment to danger, to frustration, to uncertainty, to noise and confusion and particularly to the wavering faith in the efficiency or success of one's comrades and command."<sup>129</sup> Another army doctor observed of the North Africa campaign that "a state of tension and anxiety is so prevalent in the front lines that it must be regarded as a normal reaction in this grossly abnormal situation."<sup>130</sup> Combat and fear were inextricable, and an overwhelming majority of combat veterans insisted that combat became more, rather than less, frightening the more they saw of it.<sup>131</sup>

Ben Shephard has emphasized that military psychiatrists were put in the difficult position of serving both the

military and the individual—“a half-way house between two extremes.”<sup>132</sup> The patient’s mental health would obviously be enhanced if the psychiatrist withdrew him permanently from combat. Army psychiatrist A. Kardiner observed of military trauma patients that “it is certain that a good many will do well with rest and comfortable surroundings, if they do not have to return to the danger zone.”<sup>133</sup> Military requirements, however, dictated that the psychiatrist rehabilitate patients sufficiently so that they could return to combat as soon as possible. Military psychiatrists tried a number of approaches to patient treatment, with most embracing drug therapy, while a few turned to hypnosis. Regardless of treatment, only about 33 percent of psychiatric patients returned to combat.<sup>134</sup> By July 1945, 314,500 army servicemen had been discharged for “neuropsychiatric causes” (43 percent of all discharges for medical reasons), and another 130,000 had been discharged for “personality defects which made them incapable of fitting into the Army.”<sup>135</sup>

Psychologists who followed American soldiers after Normandy concluded that the effectiveness of troops deteriorated rapidly after 30 days of combat, and by the 45th day they were close to “a vegetative state.”<sup>136</sup> As in World War I, it was shell shock—proximity to an explosion—that produced the largest number of psychiatric patients.<sup>137</sup> Bill Mauldin confirmed that “the infantryman hates shells more than anything else” and that the “88mm. is the terror of every dogface.”<sup>138</sup> Red Cross worker Eleanor Stevenson said that in Italy each of the psychiatric wards had a shelter of heavy construction for men who were “abnormally sensitive to raids.” Even so, noted Stevenson, “during a raid I’ve seen the men in those wards digging, scratching and scrabbling at the dirt with their hands and fingernails in an effort to persuade the earth to open and receive them.”<sup>139</sup> The psychiatrist John Appel, who spent six weeks studying psychiatric disorders at Monte Cassino and Anzio, concluded that just as a truck will wear out after a certain number of miles, so too will a soldier cease to function after extended exposure to combat and that “practically all men in rifle battalions who were not otherwise disabled ultimately became psychiatric casualties.”<sup>140</sup> In the Pacific, the average marine who served for the duration of the war saw 120 days of combat. The battle for Okinawa by itself created more than 26,000 psychiatric cases.<sup>141</sup>

Flight crews were also expected to fly beyond what might normally be expected of a human being. The duty of flight surgeons, according to air force official history, was “to help the men carry on to the limit of their capacity, and then perhaps fly a few more missions.”<sup>142</sup> As the number of missions flown increased, the aircrew member became less motivated and more tense, and developed symptoms that included sleeplessness, nausea, tremors, diarrhea, and depression. As was the case with infantrymen, the trauma of combat for airmen included the killing as well as the possibility of being killed. B-17 gunner Bill Fleming, whose plane took part in the firebombing of Hamburg, was disturbed by the results. “German children and old people were there,” he said. “Of all my experiences that’s the one that continues to bother me, even though I never spoke to my wife about it.”<sup>143</sup> Air force studies indicated that the navigator was more likely to crack up than the pilot or gunner because he fought only with his head and had no physical outlet to release tension.<sup>144</sup> By the spring of 1944, bomber groups were awarding “Lucky Bastard” certificates to those who had completed their required missions and could go home. This practice was not sanctioned by the high command.<sup>145</sup> Randall Jarrell, who taught navigation for the Second Air Force (the bomber training command) in Tucson, remembers that at one time “one member of every bomber crew was ordered to learn to play the ocarina ‘in order to improve the morale of the crews overseas.’ It was strange to walk along a dark road and look up at the big desert stars and hear from the distant barracks a gunner playing his ocarina.”<sup>146</sup> Why ocarina playing was deemed an effective morale booster remains a mystery of the war.

In Gerald Astor's interviews with veterans of the Battle of Bulge, many confessed to lingering psychological problems after the war. Some were haunted by recurring nightmares. Dee Paris did not remember his dreams, but various people told him that he would often scream, "'Get out, get out,' as if the tank was on fire." Medal of Honor winner Mel Biddle was told by his wife that "I would have nightmares and scream in the first few months after we were married." Most were eventually able to resume normal lives, but some, like Curtiss Martell, were in a sense never able to return from the war:

I entered military service as a mild, meek, compassionate young man. I returned home just the opposite; hard, callous, mean, a difficult person to live with. I would jump at the slightest unexpected noise. At night I would lie in bed and cry. I also would have very severe stomach cramps. My immediate family recognized the disorder but hesitated to even mention it for fear of my violent temper.

His problems would not go away, and as late as 1982 Martell had to seek psychiatric treatment. One doctor told him that all his problems were the result of his war experiences, and even offered to file a disability claim for Martell. Martell told him "to forget it; it is much too late. I currently take tranquilizers."<sup>147</sup>

The most moving portrayal by far of the traumatized soldier's long climb back to mental health is the seldom seen documentary *Let There Be Light*. Both written and directed by John Huston, *Let There Be Light* was initially released in 1948 and was almost immediately suppressed because of controversy over its treatment of the subject of mental illness. Filmed entirely at Mason General Hospital on Long Island, New York, the documentary contains no staged scenes. Instead, real soldiers with mental disabilities are shown struggling with their traumas and working with the psychiatrists who are trying to bring them back. Early on the film notes that 20 percent of the war's casualties were psychiatric in nature, and it challenges the stigma attached to mental problems by insisting that "psychoneurotic soldiers" are no less victims of the war than the badly wounded: "These are the casualties of the spirit, the troubled-in-mind, men who are damaged emotionally ... Here are men who tremble, men who cannot sleep, men with pains that are none the less real because they are of mental origin—men who cannot remember, paralyzed men whose paralysis is dictated by the mind." While their symptoms vary, what they have in common is "unceasing fear and apprehension, a sense of impending disaster, a feeling of hopelessness and utter isolation."

Huston's cameras show us soldiers as they are being admitted. Some speak barely above a whisper and some stutter, the eyes of others dart nervously back and forth, and one soldier begins weeping when recalling a photograph of his sweetheart. In addition to lengthier interviews, Huston also creates a montage of short responses: "I guess I just got tired of living, you can put it that way ... I have trouble sleeping, yes, dreaming of combat, you know ... I just took off because I seen too many of my buddies gone and I figured the next one was for me. A man can just stand so much up there, see?"

One patient, unable to walk, is put into a hypnotic state and the narrator explains that "as a surgeon probes for a bullet, the psychiatrist explores the submerged regions of the mind attempting to locate and bring to the surface the emotional conflict which is the cause of the patient's distress." The psychiatrist takes the patient to the source of his trauma and, like a faith healer, commands the patient to rise and walk again. Because hypnosis sometimes produces results that are both spectacular and immediate, the most dramatic footage in this film is of hypnotized patients. In one case, a soldier who experienced combat in France has developed a violent stutter, and psychiatric probing reveals that the first words he stumbled over were words with an s sound, which he associated with the hissing sound a German 88 mm. artillery shell makes in the air. His speech impediment is



eliminated under hypnosis, and the restored patient exclaims, "I can talk! I can talk! I can talk! Listen, I can talk! Oh God, listen I can talk."

In another dramatic exchange between a psychiatrist and a hypnotized patient who is suffering from amnesia, the patient is taken back to the incident on Okinawa that traumatized him. As psychiatrist and patient near the climax of the incident, the patient begins to tremble violently. The psychiatrist keeps pressing.

"Yes, go on. You remember it now. Tell me. It's all right now, but you can tell me.

"Explosion."

"Yes, you remember the explosion now. All right. Go on."

"They're carrying me."

When the psychiatrist asks the patient, "Why are you fearful now?" the patient murmurs something inaudible, and the psychiatrist says, "You don't want any more. You want to forget it. But you're going to remember it because it's gone now. It's gone, you're back here now. You're away from Okinawa. You've forgotten it. But you remember who you are now. Who are you?" An amnesiac no longer, the patient can now tell the psychiatrist his name and the names of his parents.

By the end of the film, with rehabilitation nearly completed, patients in group therapy sessions express their hopes for civilian life. Overwhelmingly they want to be treated like anyone else. The soldier who couldn't walk says, "All I want is that they give us a chance to prove our equality like they said they would. I hope they keep their promise." The final segment of *Let There Be Light* juxtaposes scenes of the patients as they were when they first arrived with scenes of a happy baseball game they are all playing together. Finally they are granted their discharges, and a bus full of waving former patients pulls away from Mason General Hospital.<sup>448</sup>

This film quickly became the subject of controversy and was shelved for some 35 years. Huston repeatedly blamed the War Department for *Light's* suppression, claiming that "it was banned because, I believe, the War Department felt it was too strong medicine," and "what I think was really behind it was that the authorities considered it to be more shocking, embarrassing perhaps, to them, for a man to suffer emotional distress than to lose a leg, or part of his body."<sup>449</sup> One critic, however, has insisted that the film was not released because "Huston did not get written releases from the soldiers undergoing psychiatric treatment; for years he falsely insisted that the Pentagon had censored his film because it was antiwar."<sup>450</sup> Only rarely seen, *Let There Be Light* is compassionate, touching, and fierce in its advocacy, and, along with Huston's own *San Pietro* (1945) and William Wyler's *The Memphis Belle* (1944), ranks as one of the great documentaries to come out of the war.<sup>451</sup>

#### IV. Tourism and Vice

The American G.I. often served a dual role as both fighter and tourist, engaging the enemy, on one hand, and interacting with the local population (especially the female portion), on the other. This interaction was almost totally restricted to Europe, and to a lesser extent to North Africa. The Pacific, as Robert Lekachman concluded after a tour of duty there, had "none of the European diversions." Instead, "what you tended to see were miserable natives and piles of dead Japanese and dead Americans."<sup>452</sup> Certainly, the Pacific was not devoid of women, but it might as well have been because American servicemen emphasized that there were no *white* women in the Pacific. On Bougainville, for instance, soldiers strolled stark naked a third of a mile down to the beach because "no one has any worries about coming across any women. ... The men of the 37th Division

headquarters detachment, for instance, have seen only one white woman in nine months.”<sup>153</sup> In James A. Michener’s *Tales of the South Pacific*, a character stationed in the New Hebrides observes of some newly arrived nurses that “they looked lovelier, perhaps, than they were, for Bill had seen no white women for some time.”<sup>154</sup>

To cut down on cultural clash, the government printed etiquette guides for American military personnel, and two of these guides, one for North Africa and one for England, were excerpted in *Life* magazine. Servicemen in North Africa were told that when they were offered tea, it was polite to drink three cups but never four because “to drink less than three is considered as ill-bred as to take more than that.” Food was to be eaten only with the right hand because the left “is used exclusively in attending to a call of nature.” As for relations with Moslem women:

Never stare at one.  
Never jostle her in a crowd.  
Never speak to her in public.  
Never try to remove the veil.

Failure to follow these rules may result in “serious injury if not death at the hands of Moslem men.”<sup>155</sup> In the end, it was probably the rumors of what happened to soldiers who harassed Arab women, rather than the admonitions of etiquette guides, that cooled the ardor of service personnel in North Africa. One such rumor claimed that soldiers who had been too aggressive toward Arab women had been found dead with their testicles cut off and sewn into their mouths.<sup>156</sup>

On the eve of the Normandy invasion, there were more than 1.6 million American troops in the United Kingdom, and getting along with the British was of obvious importance to the Allied effort. Much of the friction between American and British males in the United Kingdom had to do with British females, and as Paul Fussell has noted, “for British women, the Yanks were nothing short of a gift.”<sup>157</sup> Aside from their outgoing nature and the fact that they talked like the stars in the movies the British eagerly consumed, American servicemen also enjoyed a considerable financial edge, with an American private receiving \$60.00 per month while a British private received \$18.34 per month.<sup>158</sup> For tens of thousands of British women, the American serviceman was irresistible. John Costello relates a popular joke that circulated through wartime Britain: “Heard about the new utility knickers? One Yank—and they’re off.”<sup>159</sup>

To illustrate the war department’s etiquette guide for Britain, *Life* took Sergeant “Slim” Aarons around Britain for a photo shoot. For the purposes of the article, Aarons does everything wrong. The guide advises, “Don’t swipe the Tommy’s girl,” and a photo captures Aarons blissfully floating down the Thames with a British girl. The gauche Aarons also butts into a domino game at a pub. Finally, when a British family makes the mistake of inviting Aarons to dinner, Aarons blithely helps himself to seconds—a faux pas, as “it may be the family’s rations for a whole week spread out to show their hospitality.”<sup>160</sup> Britain’s military also issued a pamphlet to acquaint canteen workers with the ways of American servicemen: “The first time an American approaches the counter and asks ‘Howya, baby?’ you will probably think he is being impudent. ... Yet to them it will be merely the normal conversational opening, just as you might say, ‘Lovely day, isn’t it?’”<sup>161</sup>

As one commentator has noted, “the United States soldier in this war saw Europe at its worst ... shattered buildings; rubble-littered streets; damaged means of transportation; dismal fortifications and air-raid shelters; inadequate public food supplies; poor sanitation; shabbily clothed civilians; lack of soap (in France); expanded vice enterprises; and an often cynical, too long disappointed populace.” Even without this devastation, there was

much in Europe to give offense to provincial Americans, including French sidewalk urinals, “which sometimes hid their male occupants by nothing more than a 4-foot wall”; the sight of an Englishwoman “walking nonchalantly along the street with a cigarette hanging from her mouth”; and “the American Negro soldier’s freedom to associate with white civilian girls.”<sup>162</sup> American troops were often inclined to hold in disdain anything that lay outside their own limited experience. Army chaplain Renwick C. Kennedy referred to the spectacle of Americans “judging whole populations by the few harlots, drunks and black marketeers they met; men from tenant farmer cabins in the south scoffing at the rock houses of European peasants, which were better than any they had ever lived in; illiterates from Brooklyn, Texas and Los Angeles deriding the mellow folkways of ancient European communities.”<sup>163</sup> When asked for his impressions of Europe, one American soldier responded, “England? My God! You never saw so many perverts in your life. It’s full of them. And France, I’d say, is a country without morals.” Another preferred the Germans to the English and French because “I saw more honesty and kindness coming from them than I did from any other place I visited over in Europe.”<sup>164</sup>

But American troops were also moved by the extreme poverty of many European residents. One said, “People starve to death over there like we catch colds over here, and nobody seems to think any more of it. It’s the whole goddam setup they live under. Rotten, dirty-rotten.”<sup>165</sup> One sailor described Italy as “starved out. We could get anything for a package of cigarettes.”<sup>166</sup> The plight of impoverished children was especially disturbing to American servicemen, who sometimes went so far as to informally adopt local children into their military units. Ernie Pyle mentioned two adopted Sicilian children who accompanied American troops in the invasion of Italy, and two who landed with the troops at Anzio.<sup>167</sup>

The reaction of American troops to Europe covered a spectrum that included fascination, intimidation, compassion, and contempt. But regardless of how they viewed Europe, they wanted a memento to prove that they had been there. In a tongue-in-cheek observation, John Steinbeck engaged the much-discussed “why we fight” question by claiming that “while the Germans fight for world domination and the English for the defense of England, the Americans fight for souvenirs.” In Italy he found pup tents piled high with mementos, and Americans diligently collecting souvenirs that could not possibly be shipped home, including a 50-pound plaster-of-Paris angel that was the prize of one soldier.<sup>168</sup> (The aspirations of souvenir-loving American servicemen could be even more ambitious than this. One soldier sent home a series of cases containing pieces of machinery that initially baffled customs officials until they figured out that he had taken apart a Volkswagen and was sending it box by box to his family.)<sup>169</sup>

Souvenirs were often acquired to be sold or traded rather than kept. Bill Mauldin reported that the going rate for a German Luger pistol was \$100, while the P-38 pistol brought in \$70.<sup>170</sup> One ship that left Le Havre at the end of the war carried 5,000 American soldiers and 20,000 souvenir weapons, and in his novel *Slaughterhouse-Five* Kurt Vonnegut observed, “That was one of the things about the end of the war. Absolutely anyone who wanted a weapon could have one.”<sup>171</sup> Pacific veteran William Manchester noted that even servicemen whose jobs were well removed from the front would put themselves at risk to claim souvenirs from combat zones. “One wonders,” mused Manchester, “how many attics in the United States are cluttered with samurai swords and Rising Sun flags, keepsakes that once seemed so valuable and are worthless today.”<sup>172</sup> At Bougainville, military officials had to put up a sign that read “All Sightseers Forward of This Area Will Be Arrested” because troops not directly involved in the fighting “had been scooping up all the best souvenirs and even getting in the way of the fighting.”<sup>173</sup> The army found that in the closing weeks of the war in Europe “some units actually raced to be the first at an objective which promised valued booty—a jewelry store, camera shop, weapons cache, liquor

warehouse, etc.—or which promised gratifying contacts with women.”<sup>174</sup>

In addition to playing the tourist, the soldiery of World War II also indulged in the traditional vices, arguably to a greater extent than any previous generation of American fighting men. In the early months of the war, prohibitionists backed a bill that would have banned the sale of intoxicants to military personnel.<sup>175</sup> But memories of the wretched excesses of the Prohibition era were still relatively fresh, and House Democratic whip Robert Ramspeck spoke for many of his colleagues when he said, “I’m not going to have 10,000,000 boys come home the way 4,000,000 did from the last war, and say ‘You voted my drinks away while I was gone.’”<sup>176</sup> Dry forces made little headway during the Second World War, and soldiers would be able to obtain beer (but not hard liquor) at army canteens. Few efforts were made to shut down bars near military bases, and as John Burnham puts it, “military and wet came to be synonymous” during the war years.<sup>177</sup> Brewery workers received draft deferments, and per capita beer sales increased 50 percent between 1940 and 1945. The distilling industry was converted to war production, but distillers did not suffer greatly during the war because they had built up a four-year inventory of hard liquor, and held much of it back for higher prices.<sup>178</sup>

Paul Fussell claims that drinking was ubiquitous during the war among all servicemen of all ranks, and that “drinking to ‘overcome’ fear was a practice openly admitted by all hands.”<sup>179</sup> The British dispensed rum before an engagement (one British soldier found that “eventually it became unthinkable to go into action without it”), while German troops were given schnapps, which could be “smelled in the air sometimes as the German soldiers formed up.”<sup>180</sup> On the U.S. side, Bill Mauldin lamented the lack of a liquor ration in the army and noted that at Anzio troops built their own distilleries from salvaged parts. The end result was called “Kickapoo Joy Juice,” which, according to Mauldin, “wasn’t bad stuff when you cut it with canned grapefruit juice.”<sup>181</sup> During his time in the Pacific, James Jones reported that his outfit got “blind asshole drunk every chance we got,” and in Jones’ novel *The Thin Red Line*, troops on Guadalcanal who experienced a liquor shortage turned to Aqua Velva aftershave as an alternative to more orthodox inebriants before finally building their own still.<sup>182</sup> Les Lawrence, who served with the navy in the Pacific during the war, confirms that Aqua Velva was also popular with sailors caught in a liquor shortage.<sup>183</sup>

The troops were also enthusiastic consumers of more innocent potables. The serviceman on average consumed 45 pounds of coffee per year, or about five cups per day—twice the civilian average.<sup>184</sup> John Ellis has emphasized that “at times the regular supply of hot drinks was all that stood between a resigned acceptance of conditions at the front and complete demoralisation.”<sup>185</sup> Coca-Cola also did extremely well, with servicemen drinking 10 billion bottles and the company building 54 overseas bottling plants during the war.<sup>186</sup>

Less benign stimulants included amphetamines. When Lou Stoumen, on assignment from *Yank* magazine, accompanied a B-29 crew on a mission to Japan, he noted that in addition to the candy bars that everyone was eating, “the engineer and the navigator also took benzedrine tablets, the same drug I remembered using back in school to keep awake for my final exams.”<sup>187</sup> There was also the danger that the drugs taken for wounds would become addictive. One high-profile example was Barney Ross, former lightweight and welterweight boxing champion. He had won the Silver Star on Guadalcanal, and had been brought back to the United States and put on tour, where the government exploited his name and medal. While in the Pacific he had been given drugs for malaria and shock, and had become addicted. After the war he turned himself in as a drug addict to the U.S. attorney’s office in New York.<sup>188</sup>

Smoking was even more popular than drinking, and it is not an exaggeration to claim that America became a



nation of smokers during World War II. In the last six months of 1944 alone the industry produced more than 137.5 billion cigarettes.<sup>189</sup> Some draft boards gave cartons of cigarettes to inductees, and Red Cross workers handed out cartons as soldiers got on troop ships. Cartons were also distributed to troops prior to the Normandy invasion, and among the wreckage that littered the Normandy shore were hundreds of cartons of cigarettes.<sup>190</sup> Servicemen received free cigarettes with their rations, amounting to some five to seven packs a week, and in fact 30 percent of the cigarettes made went to the armed forces, even though servicemen were only 10 percent of the population.<sup>191</sup> Tobacco farmers were exempted from the draft as “essential workers,” and Paul Fussell remembers that “part of the unique atmosphere of the war is provided by the constant scent of cigarette smoke.”<sup>192</sup> Anecdotal evidence supports the perception that those in the service who *didn't* smoke were a distinct minority. Bill Mauldin's famous G.I. cartoon characters Willie and Joe are almost constantly smoking as they slog their way through Europe, and in interviews I conducted of Ninth Air Force pilots, a number noted the ubiquity of smoking among fliers as well. On his way to Europe aboard the USS *Brazil*, William H. Readshaw remembered that “it was pretty nice but the smokers got to me.” In Readshaw's cabin there were 16 smokers and Readshaw, who ended up renting a room from the steward during the day. “I just walked the ship at night to keep away from that smoke 'cause it made me sick.”<sup>193</sup> According to Paul Robinson, pilots even smoked in their planes on missions because “nobody ever said you can't do it or it's dangerous, so we did. Almost everybody smoked in those days during the war so pretty soon we were doing it too. It was funny though because you could see the smoke—it just filled the cockpit.”<sup>194</sup> As in all other things, officers got better cigarettes than enlisted men, especially if there was a shortage. One enlisted man stationed in Khorramshahr went to the PX and was told by the clerk that only Chelsea and Twenty Grand cigarettes were available. “While I was still at the counter the same clerk sold Philip Morris to officers. I asked the clerk if I might trade for a carton of Philip Morris and he refused me.”<sup>195</sup> Seventy-one percent of men smoked some form of tobacco in 1944 (mostly cigarettes), as did 36 percent of women. The number of female smokers doubled between 1935 and 1945. After the war smoking remained popular, and by 1948 cigarette production in the United States dwarfed World War II totals. Two brands, Lucky Strike and Camel, sold more than 100 billion cigarettes *each* in that year.<sup>96</sup>



**Fig 1.6** In the midst of German shelling, American infantrymen pause for a cigarette behind the shelter of a tank, Geich, Germany, 11 December 1944. Roberts (Army), NARA file #111-SC-197261.

Many of the same brands that we have today existed in 1945, but Marlboro, now famous for its advertisements featuring tough ranch hands, was being marketed as a smoke for the upper class, especially women. It was “the cigarette of distinction” for “successful men and lovely women” that featured an optional red “beauty tip” “*especially* for her.”<sup>197</sup> Health concerns were virtually nonexistent, and science and cigarettes still coexisted in blissful harmony. Philip Morris told smokers in 1942, “Don’t let inhaling worry *you*,” and in 1945 the company launched an ad campaign proclaiming that “Philip Morris are scientifically proved far less irritating to the smoker’s nose and throat.”<sup>198</sup> Even doctors, it seems, were avid smokers. In May 1944 Camel ran an ad featuring an army combat doctor who was described as a “doctor of medicine and morale ... he well knows the comfort and cheer there is in a few moments’ relaxation with a good cigarette.”<sup>199</sup> One ad produced by the Upjohn pharmaceutical company bears the caption “We’ve come a long, long way in pneumonia.” It is

illustrated by a painting of a friendly family doctor writing out a prescription and smoking a cigarette.<sup>200</sup> The makers of Camel cigarettes were even more direct, declaring that according to a national survey “more doctors smoke Camels than any other cigarette.”<sup>201</sup>

Where there were soldiers, there was always going to be a vigorous trade in the oldest profession. After driving the Japanese army out of Manila in the spring of 1945, American military officials were confronted by an army of 8,000 local prostitutes.<sup>202</sup> In Naples, where legitimate commerce had been disrupted and where the locals were nearly totally dependent on the black market, there were an estimated 42,000 prostitutes.<sup>203</sup> Guilty consciences and fears that they might catch venereal disease did little to discourage servicemen from the pursuit of sex. In an army survey that was conducted in 1945, 75 percent admitted that they had had sex overseas.<sup>204</sup> This is an impressively high rate, and as John Costello notes, this survey would “be kept a classified secret for nearly forty years because it reflected badly on the public image of the GI as a clean-living crusader for democracy.”<sup>205</sup>

While the military officially discouraged sexual relations between servicemen and local women, it unofficially acknowledged that such contact would take place regardless and made attempts to reduce the incidence of venereal disease by providing condoms. At one point, 50 million condoms a *month* were reaching military personnel.<sup>206</sup> The rate of venereal disease was especially high among black troops. Fifty-four percent of blacks in the army admitted that they had had a venereal disease at some point in their lives, and 21 percent said that they had contracted the disease since coming overseas (compared with 15 and 8 percent, respectively, for whites).<sup>207</sup> The explanation for the high rate of venereal disease for blacks overseas seems to be rooted in the army’s own Jim Crow policies (enforced by the military police) that allowed blacks to associate only with certain women—typically the lowest prostitutes.<sup>208</sup> Within a few hours of the liberation of Cherbourg, two houses of prostitution (one for black troops and one for white) were doing a roaring business, with MPs stationed outside to keep order.<sup>209</sup> Geoffrey Perret notes that while the army could not officially operate brothels, the First Armored Division established one in Oran in order to control venereal disease. There were probably a dozen other brothels maintained by army divisions in France and Italy. In Rennes, the 29th “Blue and Gray” Division maintained a house of prostitution with a sign outside that read, “Blue and Gray Riding Academy.”<sup>210</sup>

The availability of easy sex had “a very unsettling influence in the typical G.I.,” according to sociologist Henry Elkin. Whereas going out with a girl at home had been sufficient to “prove his virility,” now the G.I. had “to reach the ultimate limit of physical intimacy, as was offered to him cheaply and at every hand.” In his study of sexual behavior among different cultures, Elkin found the sexual formulations of the average G.I. extremely crude. He theorized that “if animals could talk, their conversations about sex would doubtless be quite similar to that of the Moslems, Arapahos, and G.I.’s.”<sup>211</sup> The language used by soldiers was both profane and limited, and as Willard Waller noted in 1944, a single four-letter word was used by American soldiers “to express practically everything and anything. It is the universal verb of our army, for ex-teamsters in uniform as well as ex-professors in uniform.”<sup>212</sup>

As on the home front, there was a flourishing black market overseas, and many soldiers became not only vice consumers but vice entrepreneurs as well. Stephen E. Ambrose claims that the mountain of American supplies that flowed into Europe during World War II produced “the greatest black market of all time” and that “most American soldiers participated in it to some extent.”<sup>213</sup> The war matériel for the fighting in Italy was funneled through Naples, and perhaps one-third of all supplies that went through that port were stolen.<sup>214</sup>

The profit to be made from trading on the black market was considerable. In Germany and France cigarettes went for \$2.40 a pack, a chocolate bar for a dollar, and a pair of government issue shoes for \$30.<sup>215</sup> Even Armed Services Editions books were valuable commodities on the European black market.<sup>216</sup> Most military black marketeers were not apprehended, but the details of the cases of those who were give us some idea of the scale involved. In Paris, for instance, three American military officers and 181 G.I.'s were arrested for selling a trainload of U.S. cigarettes and soap to the French in January 1945.<sup>217</sup> While this operation was impressively larcenous, it was small change compared to the huge black market that 2,000 American deserters were running in Paris.<sup>218</sup>

The traditional alternative to vice—religion—seemingly counted for little as a sustainer of American troops during the war. And if there were no atheists in foxholes, it was only because troops were too indifferent to religion to bother becoming atheists.<sup>219</sup> A series of articles in *Time* that appeared early in 1944 made it clear that religion played almost no role in the lives of ordinary servicemen. After a tour of American battlefronts, Daniel A. Poling, editor of the *Christian Herald*, found “overwhelming indifference to organized religion” among the troops.<sup>220</sup> Episcopalian Bernard Iddings Bell was in complete agreement and predicted that when American servicemen came marching home, “most of them will not be bothering their young but hard-boiled heads about religion in the old home parish than they did about religion in their outfits—which was mighty little.”<sup>221</sup> In a separate article, an anonymous Catholic chaplain noted, “If you read the Catholic press nowadays you get the impression that there is a great religious revival going on in the armed forces. Personally I think that is a lot of tripe. So do the few Catholic chaplains I have talked with.” The anonymous chaplain had about 900 Catholics in his flock, but at most only 300 ever showed up at Mass on Sundays. Even so, such a turnout was the envy of Protestant ministers.<sup>222</sup>

A broad range of experiences awaited Americans who fought overseas, beginning with combat itself. In North Africa and Europe, Americans fought a tough, resourceful enemy, but there was wide agreement on both sides that the fight was “fair.” In the Pacific, Americans were forced to adopt a style of warfare unlike any in the national experience. The savage, tooth-and-nail fight with the Japanese was compounded by the alien, even hostile environmental conditions of these tiny Pacific islands.

The war traumatized hundreds of thousands, but it left others exhilarated by its sheer excitement and spectacle. American servicemen also became tourists, collecting souvenirs in great numbers and doing their best to experience the local culture through the medium of the local women. They were remarkably successful, and perhaps more credit is due to the American G.I. for initiating what would be called in the 1960s the “sexual revolution.” War quickly strips away any vestiges of innocence, sexual and otherwise, and the wide-eyed boys who shipped overseas quickly acquired the tired, wary eyes of combat veterans. This evolution from innocence to experience was chronicled by both the servicemen themselves and the correspondents who covered the war, and will be the subject of our next chapter.



## Combat Remembered

Sixteen million Americans served in the armed forces during World War II, and most were in support positions, a necessity given that the American military had to maintain a very long supply line for both the European and Pacific theaters. Probably only about 800,000 to 1 million Americans actually saw combat, and of all the differences that separated Americans during the war, none was greater than the gulf between those who experienced combat and those who did not.<sup>1</sup> Through vigorous, even oppressive censorship, the government did its best to maintain this gulf, keeping the public ignorant (in the name of morale) of the appalling realities of combat. Preserving the public's innocence was easier in America than it was in Europe or Asia because no fighting took place on the U.S. mainland, but World War II was too big a catastrophe for any government to totally stage-manage. There was no way to keep the public uninformed of the American dead, or of the wounded that began to appear on American streets in numbers not seen since the Civil War. And while combat reporters and photographers were subject to severe restrictions, the best of them were able to provide Americans with at least a glimpse of the war.

### I. The Correspondents' Tales

Correspondents and photographers ran similar risks to troops on the front line, but there were certain conventions that had to be observed by those in service to what John Steinbeck referred to as the "huge and gassy thing called the War Effort."<sup>2</sup> Of paramount importance was the notion that "unless the home front was carefully protected from the whole account of what war was like, it might panic."<sup>3</sup> Guiding principles for war correspondents included "there were no cowards in the American Army," "we had no cruel or ambitious or ignorant commanders," and "five million perfectly normal, young, energetic and concupiscent men and boys had for the period of the War Effort put aside their habitual preoccupation with girls."<sup>4</sup>

The interests of military censors and of war correspondents were, as Phillip Knightley puts it, "diametrically opposed." And since it was the military that was running the war and not correspondents, "censorship was spectacularly successful."<sup>5</sup> The military was "shielding the nation from reality, maintaining morale by avoiding the truth, and convincing the public that the war was being conducted by a command of geniuses."<sup>6</sup> In the Pacific, catastrophes became mere flesh wounds (the official report from Pearl Harbor initially claimed that only one "old" battleship had been sunk while in actuality five were resting at the bottom of the harbor), and inconclusive actions became great victories (the Battle of the Coral Sea). The military even concocted its own version of the loaves and the fishes by claiming that 19 Japanese heavy cruisers had been sunk before the Battle of Leyte Gulf when only 14 existed.<sup>7</sup> In Europe, reports of Allied bombing of civilian populations in Germany were suppressed, as were losses of Allied planes and the details of the catastrophe at Arnheim.<sup>8</sup> In terms of presenting accurate reports, according to Knightley, coverage of the war "was not remarkably better in the United States than it was in Japan." It was no better in Britain, where Reginald Thompson of the *Sunday Times* insisted that "readers of *The Times* in 1854 had a damned sight better view of the Crimean War than readers of

*The Times* in 1939–45 did of the Second World War.”<sup>9</sup>

Military censors also looked at photographs with a jaundiced eye. In his study of suppressed war photographs, George H. Roeder Jr. found that “things unseen had at least as great an influence on American understanding of World War II as things seen.”<sup>10</sup> Because of their visual impact, photographs that suggested that “war might bring about disruptive social changes, or [that] undermined confidence in the ability of Americans to maintain control over their institutions and their individual lives,” were not released to the public.<sup>11</sup> Instead, unsavory photographs were secreted away in the Pentagon in what Bureau of Public Relations staffers called the “chamber of horrors.”<sup>12</sup> Censored material included photographs that showed elderly, young, or female victims of American bombs and bullets. Photographs showing those who had been run over by American soldiers in traffic accidents were also suppressed, as were photographs of soldiers collecting body parts for souvenirs.<sup>13</sup> Also excised were photographs showing American doctors giving medical aid to prisoners (this to avoid exciting any public sympathy for the enemy) and pictures of black troops mixing with white women.<sup>14</sup> Finally, any photographic evidence of what warfare actually did to the human body, including “decapitation, dismemberment ... limbs twisted or frozen into unnatural positions,” and, in one case, “photographs of a field littered with bits of human flesh” did not appear before a squeamish public.<sup>15</sup> “Undermining morale” and evidence of the grim reality of this conflict were one and the same, and censorship was one tool used by the government to convince a complacent public of war’s goodness.

While there was much about the war that was off-limits to photographers and correspondents, many were able to overcome the restraints of censorship and at least give readers some idea of what the war was like. When American troops launched their first offensive in the Pacific, they were accompanied by Richard Tregaskis, whose *Guadalcanal Diary* would become an instant classic of the Second World War. As Tregaskis became immersed in the fighting, he was frequently shot at, and learned—as the marines were learning—the lessons of survival on Guadalcanal. He notes, for instance, that because Japanese soldiers sometimes pretended to be dead, then shot or stabbed passing American troops, Japanese casualties “were shot again, with rifles and pistols, to make sure.”<sup>16</sup> As a correspondent, Tregaskis was officially a noncombatant, but he found it difficult to maintain his objectivity, observing that “war takes on a very personal flavor when other men are shooting at you, and you feel little sympathy at seeing them killed.”<sup>17</sup> *Guadalcanal Diary*’s descriptions of the carnage of war are vivid (one corpse had “a backbone visible from the front, and the rest of the flesh and bone peeled up over the man’s head, like the leaf of an artichoke”), but Tregaskis insists that “there is no horror to these things.” The first one shocks, and “the rest are simple repetition.”<sup>18</sup> Because *Guadalcanal Diary* was one of the first full-length American treatments of the war, and because it was widely distributed (it was a selection for Book-of-the-Month Club), it had a significant impact on the public’s perception of the war in the Pacific. Tregaskis was forced to leave Guadalcanal when he ran through his last pair of serviceable shoes. Almost certainly the tallest correspondent of the war (he was six feet seven inches tall), Tregaskis’ fate was sealed when the quartermaster told him that there was not a pair of size 14 shoes on the entire island.<sup>19</sup>

During his stint on Guadalcanal, *Chicago Sun* correspondent John Graham Dowling was among those who endured a three-day bombardment from Japanese battleships, which he describes as “the worst experience I’ve ever been through in my life ... It goes on for hour after hour. I begin trembling. It is uncontrollable. Francis McCarthy and I clutch each other’s hands for mutual comfort.”<sup>20</sup> Also on Guadalcanal was John Hersey, who accompanied a group of marines on a skirmish into the interior and wrote about this experience in *Into the Valley* (1943). Hersey was struck by the youth and relative innocence of the troops among whom he moved, boys

who were “ex-grocery clerks, ex-highway laborers, ex-bank clerks, ex-schoolboys, boys with a clean record and maybe a little extra restlessness, but not killers.”<sup>21</sup> When Hersey met with Colonel Julian Frisbie before going out on patrol, Frisbie tried to describe to Hersey what the American dead looked like. “It’s a pathetic sight,” he said. “You’ll see. They look just like dirty-faced little boys who have gone to bed without being tucked in by their mothers.”<sup>22</sup> Like other Americans, Hersey found the jungle environment of Guadalcanal sinister and oppressive—and ideal for the Japanese style of fighting:

The vegetation closed in tightly on either side of the trail, a tangle of nameless trees and vines. It was lush without being beautiful; there were no flowers, and the smell of the place was dank rather than sweet. Each time we came out into the light on the grassy knolls, we breathed deeply and more easily. These open spaces were our natural terrain. They were American; the jungle was Jap.<sup>23</sup>

Reporters were also able to capture the tension and terror at sea. Foster Hailey was at the Battle of Midway and watched the carrier *Yorktown* fight for her life. Successive attacks by Japanese planes staggered the *Yorktown*, and like a wounded beast, “she would seem, at times, to regain some of her trim. Then she would lean over again, as though tired of the struggle.” In the end, the *Yorktown* had to be abandoned, leaving an oil-covered sea “alive with bobbing heads.”<sup>24</sup> Another reporter who went to sea was John Field, who joined the crew of an American submarine on patrol in Japanese waters. They would sink 70,000 tons of Japanese shipping, but under extremely dangerous conditions. After sinking one ship, the crew had to endure what everyone most dreaded, an attack by an enemy destroyer:

Overhead they heard a destroyer coming closer and the distant rattle, coming closer, of exploding depth charges. Fear was natural for the boys huddled below water, but there was no panic. They sweated and looked at each other and cursed. Their faces were strained and home was a long way away.<sup>25</sup>

Among the most renowned of war reporters was John Steinbeck, who gave readers a rare opportunity to watch one of America’s greatest writers responding to this conflict. Even before Steinbeck arrived in Europe, he captured an extremely evocative moment that occurred on the troopship that was carrying him across the Atlantic. A USO unit was entertaining the troops, and a female accordion player was taking requests that included such sentimental favorites as “Harvest Moon,” “Home on the Range,” and “When Irish Eyes Are Smiling.” Up on the deck, segregated from the white servicemen, were the black troops (and Steinbeck). One bass voice began singing “When the Saints Go Marching In,” and other voices joined in until “the voices take on a beat, feeling one another out. The chords begin to form. There is nothing visible. The booming voices come out of the darkness. The men sing sprawled out, lying on their backs. The song becomes huge with authority.” Comments Steinbeck, “This is a war song. This could be *the* war song.”<sup>26</sup>

The human costs of this war were brought home to Steinbeck in ways subtle and not so subtle. In Africa, Steinbeck visited a reconditioning yard for equipment damaged in battle. In one tank he found “a splash of blood against the steel side of the turret,” and in another “a large piece of singed cloth and a charred and curled shoe.”<sup>27</sup>

As a correspondent, Steinbeck demonstrated a talent for immersing himself in the inner world of American



servicemen, a world of skewed logic and idiosyncratic ritual. For instance, while Steinbeck was with a B-17 bomber crew in England, one of the men lost the medallion he carried for luck. Nobody questioned the value of such a thing, and “everybody gets up and looks.” In addition to carrying a talisman to ensure that he would not be killed, each crew member prepared the things that were to be sent home in case he was killed:

You leave them under your pillow, your photographs and the letter you wrote, and your ring. They're under your pillow, and you don't make up your bunk. That must be left unmade so that you can slip right in when you get back. No one would think of making up a bunk while its owner is on a mission.<sup>28</sup>

Another common superstition among flyers was to call their 13th mission “12-B” to avoid the unlucky number.<sup>29</sup> Steinbeck also described how the peculiar accident or the odd piece of bad luck could play as big a role in combat as the malevolence of German antiaircraft fire. Once, for instance, the crew's bomber was knocked out of action when one of the gunners in a plane ahead and above them jettisoned his shell casings and they smashed into the nose of the bomber below.<sup>30</sup>

Flight crews were obsessed with luck because they knew they needed as much as they could get: they were doing the most dangerous work of the war. Of the 350,000 airmen serving with the Eighth Air Force in England, 26,000 would be killed, or 7.42 percent. The second highest mortality rate was recorded by merchant sailors at 3.80 percent, followed by the marines at 3.29 percent, the army at 2.25 percent, and 0.41 percent for the navy. In addition, 21,000 airmen from the Eighth Air Force ended up in German POW camps when their planes were shot down.<sup>31</sup> Walter Konantz of the 55th Fighter Group said that “at times over heavily defended German targets it looked like a snowstorm with so many B-17 crewmen floating down.”<sup>32</sup> Among the most notorious engagements of the war for the Eighth Air Force was the 17 August 1943 combined raid on the Schweinfurt ball-bearing factories and the Regensburg Messerschmitt factory. The plan had originally called for all planes to fly as a single force and then split near Frankfurt, with one group attacking Schweinfurt and one group attacking Regensburg. The thinking was that these massive numbers would overwhelm German fighter resources, but bad weather prevented the two groups from leaving together, and the Regensburg B-17s left four hours ahead of the Schweinfurt bombers. As a consequence, the Germans were able to concentrate their full fighter force against the Regensburg bombers.<sup>33</sup> The fighting was intense and losses were heavy.<sup>34</sup> After mauling the Regensburg bombers, the Luft waffe refueled and rearmed for the late-arriving Schweinfurt bombers. For 90 minutes, from the Belgian coast to Schweinfurt, there was heavy flak and savage fighting between B-17s and German fighters.<sup>35</sup> Combined losses on the Schweinfurt-Regensburg raids were 71 aircraft and 46 crews—565 airmen were killed, captured, or unaccounted for.<sup>36</sup> These appalling numbers were not validated by success on the ground because neither the tonnage nor the size of the bombs was sufficient to destroy the targets. The Schweinfurt-Regensburg raids illustrate the problematic history of strategic bombing during the war, where terrible sacrifices were made for questionable results.<sup>37</sup> In another example of government fabrication to make American military operations look better, army publicists claimed that American planes had destroyed 307 German fighters during the Regensburg-Schweinfurt raids, when the Luft waffe's actual loss for the day was 47.<sup>38</sup>

A few months previously, the *Memphis Belle* became the first bomber to complete 25 missions without the loss of any crew members. While celebrated with a documentary film and a war bond tour of the United States, the grim subtext of the *Memphis Belle* story was that while many crews had preceded this one to Europe, only

the *Belle's* crew had survived intact.<sup>39</sup> Army air forces personnel were enormously proud of their units and gave their branch the highest marks in the army, but morale problems began to surface as heavy bomber crews were pushed to the limits of their endurance. It did not help that the required missions needed before being released from flight duty were progressively increased from 25 to 30 and then to 35.<sup>40</sup>

If the prospect was grim for American flight crews, it was even grimmer for British aviators. From 1941 to late 1944, the casualty rate for British aircrews was close to 65 percent, and by the end of the war the British Bomber Command had lost 55,000—more than the number of British officers killed in World War I.<sup>41</sup> Perhaps Edward R. Murrow and three other reporters were unaware of this ghastly mortality rate when they accompanied the crews of British Lancaster bombers on an incendiary raid over Berlin in late 1943. Murrow's bomber, *D for Dog*, dodged flak, searchlights, enemy fighters, and other British aircraft (one Lancaster came within 25 feet of colliding with them) before managing to drop its incendiaries. Down below, Berlin appeared to Murrow as an "orchestrated hell, a terrible symphony of light and flame." Murrow and *D for Dog* survived this raid, but others in the group were not so lucky. Two of the four reporters did not make it back. In the stark equation of the war, said Murrow, "men die in the sky while others are roasted in their cellars."<sup>42</sup>

Making war was overwhelmingly a male occupation, and Mildred McAfee Horton, who was director of the Women's Reserve of the navy, observed that "the military services are so conspicuously a man's world that the appearance of women therein was startling."<sup>43</sup> While most women in the military performed clerical or other duties away from the front lines, one group, overseas nurses, had ample opportunity to contemplate the horrors of war. In one army field hospital that Margaret Bourke-White visited in Italy (the 38th Evac), a light day brought in 70 casualties, while one especially heavy day saw 238 cases. Nurses, doctors, and technicians often worked around the clock, with nine operating tables in use at all times. Nurses of the 38th Evac bathed out of helmets and lived in tents that were pitched on muddy, frequently flooded ground. Fatigue, stress, and fear produced the same numbness in frontline nurses that it did in frontline soldiers, and nurses, like soldiers, occasionally broke down. On the last day of her visit, Bourke-White saw the woman in charge of the 60 nurses emerging from a tent carrying several pairs of muddy boots. When Bourke-White asked this woman what she was doing, she responded:

"I thought the girls might feel better if I washed off their boots for them. They have been crying."

"Why are they crying?" I asked.

"I wish I knew," she said. "They never answer me when I ask. It's a fatigue neurosis. They just can't help it, living in the mud and taking the same thing every day; but I have noticed that they only cry when the work is the lightest. The minute we get a flow of badly wounded patients, they are back on their feet, smiling and telling little jokes to make the boys feel better."<sup>44</sup>

In the Seventh Army hospital where Paul Fussell was taken after he was wounded, Fussell heard "a woman crying as if her heart would break, and I turned my head to behold a nurse weeping uncontrollably over a boy dying with great stentorous gasps a table away."<sup>45</sup> A few nurses made the ultimate sacrifice. The Paris edition of *Stars and Stripes* printed a letter from army nurse Frances Sanger in November 1944 in which Sanger expressed her gratitude for being able to share some of the hardships of the soldiers she ministered to. Only hours after sending off her letter, Sanger was killed by a German shell.<sup>46</sup>

Among World War II correspondents, Ernie Pyle was easily the most loved because he wrote his stories from the viewpoint of the common soldier, and because he was willing to expose himself to the dangers of combat. His descriptions are often able to capture the feeling of the war through the use of the telling detail. Describing the Normandy beachhead in the aftermath of the invasion, Pyle observed, "There in a jumbled row for mile on mile were soldiers' packs. There were socks and shoe polish, sewing kits, diaries, Bibles, hand grenades ... There were toothbrushes and razors and snapshots of families back home staring up at you from the sand." Pyle picked up a pocket Bible and carried it up the beach with him, then put it back on the sand, confessing, "I don't know why I picked it up, or why I put it down again." The strangest artifact Pyle found on the beach was a tennis racket brought ashore by a soldier: "It lay lonesomely on the sand, clamped in its press, not a string broken."<sup>47</sup> One of the most terrifying moments for Pyle was having to endure an accidental bombing by Allied planes during the breakout from the Normandy hedgerows. Pyle described a giant rattling sound made by "bombs by the hundred, hurtling down through the air above us ... it was chaos, and a waiting for darkness. The feeling of the blast was sensational. The air struck us in hundreds of continuing flutters. Our ears drummed and rang. We could feel quick little waves of concussion on the chest and in the eyes."<sup>48</sup>

As much as Pyle was part of the lives of the troops among whom he moved, he was honest enough to admit that there would always be a distance between himself as a noncombatant and the soldier. Pyle commented on the adjustment soldiers had to make in order to transform killing into what he called "a craft": "No longer was there anything morally wrong about killing. In fact it was an admirable thing." But because Pyle's own life was only in danger "by occasional chance or circumstance ... I didn't need to think of killing in personal terms, and killing to me was still murder."<sup>49</sup>

Despite Pyle's dedication to telling this story, there were periods when he was clearly overwhelmed by the war. When Pyle began to ruminate on the "wholesale death and vile destruction" of the war, "the enormity of all those newly dead struck like a living nightmare. ... I felt I couldn't stand it and would have to leave."<sup>50</sup> At the end of his book *Brave Men*, Pyle confessed that "for me war has become a flat, black depression without highlights, a revulsion of the mind and an exhaustion of the spirit."<sup>51</sup> Pyle did not survive the war, dying at Okinawa in April 1945. An army broadcast commemorating Pyle described him as a man who "gave his life that we at home may know how war tastes, and smells, and sounds and feels."<sup>52</sup>

Robert Sherrod, a war correspondent for *Time* magazine who was in some of the worst fighting in the Pacific, also crafted vivid descriptions of what he saw. Landing on the beaches at Tarawa, Sherrod and the marines were subjected to withering Japanese machine gun fire, and Sherrod had the experience so often cited in combat literature of a simultaneous extreme fear and heightened awareness: "I was scared, as I had never been scared before. But my head was clear. I was extremely alert, as though my brain were dictating that I live these last minutes for all they were worth."<sup>53</sup> The absurd and the horrific were often intertwined at Tarawa. When a Japanese soldier was set afire by a flamethrower, the bullets in his cartridge belt continued to explode long after he was dead. Everyone took cover because "nobody wanted to be killed by a dead Jap."<sup>54</sup> Just when Sherrod believed he had become inured to the horrors of war, he saw a marine whose head and left arm had been blown off. Sherrod turned to a gunner near him and exclaimed, "What a hell of a way to die!" The gunner looks me in the eye and says, 'You can't pick a better way.'<sup>55</sup>

As bad as Tarawa was, Iwo Jima was worse. The importance of this tiny island for both Japanese and Americans had never been in doubt. In Japanese hands, fighters based at Iwo Jima had threatened American B-29s in the Marianas, but if Americans could capture this island, fighters capable of escorting B-29s all the way to

Tokyo could be based there. Because Iwo Jima was a volcanic island that rose straight out of the Pacific, there was no shallow water along the shore and the landing craft were immediately swamped upon reaching land. Fire from the Japanese was intense, and further retarding any advance was the soft volcanic ash into which a man would sink up to his knees.<sup>56</sup> The fighting for Iwo Jima was savage, and Sherrod reported that both Japanese and Americans were dying “with the greatest possible violence. Nowhere in the Pacific war have I seen such badly mangled bodies.” Legs and arms were strewn all over the battlefield and “only the legs were easy to identify—Japanese if wrapped in khaki puttees, American if covered by canvas leggings.” Many men who were only wounded and were carried back to casualty stations on the beach were subsequently killed when the casualty stations themselves were attacked.<sup>57</sup> Marine staff sergeant David Dempsey took note of the “indescribable wreckage” of the beach at Iwo Jima. Heavy machinery was smashed everywhere, and “picks, clothing, gas masks, and toilet articles, many of them ripped by shrapnel, are scattered across the sand for miles. Rifles are blown in half. Letters are strewn among the debris.”<sup>58</sup> When the U.S. flag was raised over Iwo Jima’s Mt. Suribachi, “many Marines wept openly”; Joe Rosenthal’s photograph of this event would become an instant classic, and eventually the image most closely associated with the marines.<sup>59</sup>





## II. The Soldiers' Tales

One of the ironies of World War II is that those who would have to bear the worst of the fighting—men in rifle companies—ended up in these outfits because the military considered them to be of the lowest caliber in terms of skills and education.<sup>60</sup> The Research Branch of the army called the infantry “the dumping ground for men who could pass physical standards but who need not satisfy any other test,” and when infantrymen themselves were surveyed, 74 percent said “the Infantry gets more than its share of men who aren’t good for anything else.”<sup>61</sup> But infantrymen developed a pride in their outfits and in their privations, with one soldier observing, “I never knew I could take so much till I joined the infantry.”<sup>62</sup> It would be the lowly army infantrymen, along with the more selective marines and the crews of the army air forces’ heavy bombers (and merchant sailors at the beginning of the war), who faced the worst dangers and made the greatest sacrifices. Some of these men were able to write about the war that had changed their lives forever, but it would often take combat veterans years to do so as they mulled over the enormity of their experiences.

When combat memoirs—and the novels based on combat experiences—began appearing after the war—they were often shocking to an American public that had been kept largely ignorant of the real nature of this war. One of the first memoirs to appear, and arguably the most famous, was Audie Murphy’s *To Hell and Back*. Published in 1949, *Hell* is a description of Murphy’s trek through Italy, France, and Germany as an infantryman. In the course of these exploits Murphy became the most decorated soldier of the war, winning 33 medals including the Medal of Honor.<sup>63</sup> As Murphy’s fame spread, first among his fellow soldiers and then among the general public, part of his intriguing story was the unlikelihood of this particular soldier becoming a war hero. Certainly Murphy did not possess a martial bearing. Freckled, shy, and baby-faced, he stood barely five feet five and a half inches tall and weighed 112 pounds. When he tried to enlist in the marines, Murphy was rejected as too small.

Murphy came from a background of extreme, rural poverty. Born in Hunt County, Texas, Murphy was the 7th of 12 children. His parents were sharecroppers who drifted through Texas, finding what little work there was. On two occasions they lived in abandoned railroad boxcars. By the time Murphy was 16 years old his father had deserted the family, his mother was dead, and Murphy was on his own. The farthest he had progressed in school was fifth grade. Murphy was saved from an uncertain future by the advent of World War II. (Indeed, it should be emphasized that for some young men such as Murphy, military service was a step up in life. At Fort Benning, Georgia, it was not unusual for inductees to arrive without shoes.)<sup>64</sup> Known in the army for his shooting abilities, which he had perfected as a boy while hunting food for his family, Murphy thrived in the military and returned home to great celebrity.<sup>65</sup>

Helping to fan the flames of Murphy’s notoriety was a 1945 *Life* cover story. Primarily a photo fluff piece, “*Life* Visits Audie Murphy” followed Murphy around as he returned to his hometown (Farmersville, Texas). Still in uniform, Murphy was shown chatting with the locals, including a woman to whom he used to deliver newspapers. Then it was off to the barbershop to spruce up because he was going down to Dallas “to see a special girl named Mary.” Even here Murphy could not escape his notoriety, and *Life* captured a remarkable image of a crowd of men staring through the barbershop window as Murphy got his hair cut. Finally, there was a photo of Murphy with the special girl as they prepared to go out on a date. *Life* observed of America’s most illustrious soldier that “he usually blushes when he gets within ten feet of any girl.”<sup>66</sup>

*To Hell and Back* was an immediate best-seller, and while it is written in the first person, the prose is clearly beyond the abilities of someone with a fifth-grade education. In fact, *Hell* was ghostwritten by David McClure, which makes this a peculiar hybrid of a book.<sup>67</sup> While Murphy clearly did not do much of the writing, it is difficult to call it a biography rather than a memoir because it also contains novelistic, first-person flourishes. None of this detracts from the power of the story, which has a hard, truthful ring to it.<sup>68</sup>

When Murphy described how it felt to kill for the first time, he notes simply, “I feel no qualms; no pride; no remorse. There is only a weary indifference that will follow me throughout the war.”<sup>69</sup> The combat scenes are vivid and horrific, such as when one of Murphy’s fellow soldiers was killed by a German machine gunner:

He takes a step and his right lower leg bends double. The bone thrusts through the flesh; and he tries to walk on the stump. I cannot locate the enemy gunner, and he either has ammunition to waste or is bored with the lack of targets. His second burst is long and unhurried. The lead eats through Antonio’s mid-parts, like a saw chewing through wood.<sup>70</sup>

As the war progressed, the comrades that Murphy started with disappeared one by one, either dead or wounded. Murphy’s company began its journey through Europe with 235 men. At the end only Murphy and a supply sergeant would be left.<sup>71</sup> The war scarred and transformed Murphy and his comrades to the point where they became unrecognizable even to themselves. Murphy related an incident in which he was quietly moving through the interior of a house looking for Germans when “suddenly I find myself faced by a terrible looking creature with a tommy gun. His face is black; his eyes are red and glaring.” Murphy turned his own tommy gun on this terrible creature only to discover that he had blasted his own reflection in a mirror.<sup>72</sup> Murphy was wounded several times, suffered from malaria, and at one point had to be treated for gangrene.<sup>73</sup>

After the stand against the Germans that won Murphy the Medal of Honor (he single-handedly held off a German attack by manning a machine gun on top of a burning tank destroyer), Murphy felt nothing—“no sense of triumph; no exhilaration at being alive. Even the weariness seems to have passed. Existence has taken on the quality of a dream in which I am detached from all that is present.”<sup>74</sup> In the last pages of *To Hell and Back*, Murphy ruminated on whether the war had “stripped me of all decency,” and he resolves to “look at life through uncynical eyes, to have faith, to know love.”<sup>75</sup>

Murphy *did* know love after the war, but readjusting to civilian life was not easy for him. By 1948 Murphy was in Hollywood and had begun an acting career, and a year later, in a highly publicized wedding, Murphy married Hollywood starlet Wanda Hendrix. The following year they were divorced.<sup>76</sup> Murphy made some 40 films over a 20-year period, mainly westerns or war dramas, and most were undistinguished (one exception was his portrayal of himself in the 1955 film version of *To Hell and Back*). Murphy was always self-deprecating about his acting abilities, telling one director that he had to work under a great “handicap.” When asked what this handicap was, Murphy replied, “No talent.”<sup>77</sup> The war continued to haunt Murphy with recurring nightmares, and for years he slept with a loaded pistol under his pillow. He gambled away most of the money that he made, and by the time of his death in an airplane crash in 1971 his film career had faded and he was near bankruptcy.<sup>78</sup> Murphy was once asked how people were able to survive a war. Murphy replied, “I don’t think they ever do.”<sup>79</sup>

E. B. Sledge, who served in a marine mortar squad in the Pacific, wrote another vivid account of combat in *With the Old Breed at Peleliu and Okinawa*. Marines were not allowed to keep diaries, lest they fall into enemy

hands and reveal something of military value, so Sledge wrote notes in his Gideon Bible. (Sledge's writing aspirations were not generally known in his company, and his constant recourse to the Bible gained for Sledge a perhaps undeserved reputation for piety.)<sup>80</sup> An articulate, reflective person, Sledge was forced to observe his own descent into brutality and madness as he was subjected to almost continuous fighting in the Pacific. As Sledge put it, "The veneer of civilization wore pretty thin. ... It was so savage. We *were* savages."<sup>81</sup> The fighting on Okinawa in 1945 was especially horrific, as "men struggled and fought and bled in an environment so degrading I believed we had been flung into hell's own cesspool."<sup>82</sup> Sledge and his fellow marines moved through a desolate landscape "choked with the putrefaction of death, decay, and destruction ... Every crater was half full of water, and many of them held a Marine corpse. The bodies lay pathetically just as they had been killed, half submerged in muck and water, rusting weapons still in hand. Swarms of big flies hovered about them."<sup>83</sup>

Inevitably, the coarsening took its toll. At one point Sledge had a conversation with a fellow marine who was idly tossing coral pebbles into the open skull of a Japanese soldier: "My buddy tossed the coral chunks as casually as a boy casting pebbles into a puddle on some muddy road back home; there was nothing malicious in his action. The war had so brutalized us it was beyond belief." Shortly thereafter Sledge himself took out his knife and began to remove the gold teeth from a Japanese corpse—a common practice in the Pacific. He was gently persuaded by the company doctor to stop this ghastly activity.<sup>84</sup> What sustained Sledge and his fellow marines through this nightmare was not some abstract ideology but a "loyalty to each other—and love ... we'd forged a bond that time would never erase. We were brothers."<sup>85</sup>

William Manchester's descriptions of Okinawa and of the combat experience are remarkably similar to Sledge's. Like Sledge, Manchester called Okinawa "one vast cesspool," a "monstrous sight, a moonscape. Hills, ridges, and cliffs rose and fell along the front like gray stumps of rotting teeth. There was nothing green left; artillery had denuded and scarred every inch of ground."<sup>86</sup> As Manchester and his outfit moved into position they passed a hundred dead marines, "stacked as you would stack cordwood." Later, after a mortar attack, the man next to Manchester slumped against him. Manchester turned and "stifled a scream. He had no face, just juicy shapeless red pulp."<sup>87</sup> The most intense fighting on Okinawa was for Sugar Loaf Hill, where marines fought continuously for 10 days. The stench of their own human waste mingled with "the corrupt and corrupting odor of rotting human flesh," and the casualties for two marine regiments were a staggering two-thirds.<sup>88</sup> Said Manchester, "I was in the midst of satanic madness: I knew it. I wanted to return to sanity: I couldn't."<sup>89</sup>

In his memoir, *Doing Battle*, Paul Fussell argues that surviving combat psychologically required a "severe closing-off of normal human sympathy so that you can look dry-eyed and undisturbed at the most appalling things. For the naturally compassionate, this is profoundly painful, and it changes your life."<sup>90</sup> The extent to which this adjustment is necessary was made clear to Fussell as he made his way through Europe with the American Seventh Army. In an attack launched against the Germans near the French town of St. Dié, a helpless Fussell saw his fellow G.I.'s "savaged by machine-gun and mortar fire, crying, calling on Mother." Later, one of Fussell's men found something he would never forget—"a bloody liver or kidney or similar organ, blown out of one of our attacking soldiers."<sup>91</sup>

As the body count increased, Fussell discovered that the trick in dealing with the dead was to master the principle that "the dead don't *know* what they look like. The soldier smiling is *not* smiling, the man whose mouth drips blood doesn't know what he's doing, the man with half his skull blown away and his brain oozing onto the ground thinks he still looks OK."<sup>92</sup> As to what kept these men fighting, it was not the Four Freedoms or



the Allied cause but “something much less romantic and heroic. We were maintaining our self-respect, protecting our manly image from the contempt of our fellows.”<sup>93</sup>

Bill Mauldin’s *Up Front* is unique among World War II memoirs because Mauldin was first and foremost a cartoonist who chronicled the lives of ordinary infantrymen. The text in *Up Front* is therefore more of a gloss on the accompanying cartoons than vice versa. Serving as a sergeant during the war, Mauldin created a hugely popular cartoon strip for the service publication *Stars and Stripes* featuring two unkempt, unshaven dogface G.I.’s named Willie and Joe. Reactions to Mauldin’s cartoons seemed to run to one extreme or another. In Italy they so enraged one commander that he forbade the distribution of Mauldin’s cartoons. In the midst of this flap a corps commander asked Mauldin for an original of one of Mauldin’s strips, and told him, “When you start drawing pictures that don’t get a few complaints, then you’d better quit, because you won’t be doing anybody any good.”<sup>94</sup> Mauldin’s most famous clash with his superiors, however, was with General George Patton, who hated Willie and Joe for the same reasons that ordinary soldiers liked them—for their unkempt, “unsoldierlike” bearing. Patton put pressure on *Stars and Stripes* either to force Mauldin to shave Willie and Joe or to stop running the strip, and when Patton received no satisfaction from this quarter he even took his complaints to supreme Allied commander Dwight Eisenhower. Unfortunately for Patton, Eisenhower was also a Willie and Joe fan.<sup>95</sup>

Mauldin described the infantry as the group “which gives more and gets less than anybody else.”<sup>96</sup> Mauldin acknowledged that while it is in the nature of war not to be funny, he strived “to make something out of the humorous situations which come up even when you don’t think life could be any more miserable.”<sup>97</sup> He succeeded admirably, putting Willie and Joe in situations and predicaments that ordinary troops had been in themselves. Like others who had firsthand experience of the war, Mauldin found that “friendship and spirit” among the troops was “a lot more genuine and sincere and valuable than all the ‘war aims’ and indoctrination in the world.”<sup>98</sup>

In fighting the enemy, said Mauldin, “you kill or maim him the quickest and most effective way you can with the least danger to yourself. ... But you don’t become a killer. No normal man who has smelled and associated with death ever wants to see any more of it.”<sup>99</sup> In one Mauldin cartoon, an exhausted Willie and Joe are leaning against a wall as a truculent-looking soldier strides by. Willie comments to Joe, “That can’t be no combat man. He’s lookin’ fer a fight.”<sup>100</sup> Mauldin also took note of the fear that haunted all combat veterans: “You don’t want to come back all banged up. Why the hell doesn’t somebody come up and replace you before you get hurt? You’ve been lucky so far but it can’t last forever.”<sup>101</sup>



*"That can't be no combat man. He's lookin' for a fight."*

**Fig 2.2** From Bill Mauldin, *Up Front* (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1945), 141. (Copyright 1945 by Bill Mauldin. Courtesy of the Mauldin Estate.)

John Ciardi was a promising young poet teaching at a university when the war started, and rather than being drafted, he joined the army air forces. After washing out of pilot training, he was slotted to become a navigator and an officer. When a petition that he had signed supporting the Loyalists in the Spanish Civil War turned up before the House Un-American Activities Committee, Ciardi lost his commission and his chance to become a

navigator. Instead, he was trained as a gunner on a B-29.<sup>102</sup> Stationed on Saipan, Ciardi began writing what would eventually become *Saipan: The War Diary of John Ciardi*. His first taste of combat on a bombing raid over Tokyo drew from Ciardi a wide range of emotions. There was confusion, as their plane was attacked by Japanese “Zeke” fighters, which “flashed by every which way and it was impossible to know exactly what was happening ... up ahead there was a puff of smoke and fire, and pieces of a Zeke’s wreckage went floating past my window.” There was horror, when the number one ship in the formation suffered flak damage to its engines and had to drop back. Japanese fighters converged and “dove at No. 1 for an easy kill. When I saw her last fighters were all over her.” Finally, there was exaltation. Having survived this first mission, Ciardi was “cockeyed proud of the crew. Not a rattle in the bunch.”<sup>103</sup>

But as the missions mounted up, Ciardi became haunted by his own mortality and had difficulty sleeping “knowing that I may be killed the next day.”<sup>104</sup> Certainly, the rising death toll was a reminder of this possibility, and Ciardi observed of his lost comrades that “it hurts and it darkens to see them go. And a lot of it because it might have been any one of us, or all of us, or me.”<sup>105</sup> On one mission the plane next to Ciardi’s was hit, and Ciardi looked over at the “barber’s-chair gunner in the big bubble at the very top. He was right there beside us in plain sight, beginning to go down. He just waved his hand goodbye. There was nothing you could do.”<sup>106</sup> Things continued to deteriorate for Ciardi, as first his crew was broken up, then a new commanding general ordered the wing to conduct its bombing raids at lower altitudes, making them more vulnerable to Japanese fighters. Ciardi now referred to himself in the third person—“Ciardi seems to be having combat nerves”—and wrote a letter to be sent home in case he did not survive.<sup>107</sup> Ciardi also wrote a poem for the occasion of his own death, called “Elegy Just in Case,” that begins, “Here lies Ciardi’s pearly bones / In their ripe organic mess.”<sup>108</sup> Fate intervened on Ciardi’s behalf, however, in perhaps one of the few examples in which a serviceman’s life was saved because of an expertise in poetry. An air force personnel officer needed what he called a “grammarian,” and a search through the files revealed Ciardi’s status as a poet and resulted in Ciardi’s transfer to headquarters. His new duty was to write up citations and letters of condolences to the families of those killed in action. Shortly thereafter, those from Ciardi’s original crew were blown out of the sky over Tokyo Bay.<sup>109</sup>

What one expects to find above all else in American society during the war years is a patriotic fervor, a single-minded devotion to cause and country that crossed all class and ethnic barriers. Certainly this was the view promoted at the time by government, by business (especially through its advertisements), and by Hollywood, and in the fog of peace that settled over America after the war, Americans themselves widely accepted that this must have been the case.<sup>1</sup> A reexamination of this era, however, reveals little in the way of flag-waving patriotism among ordinary Americans, and even less in the way of a rationale for taking part in the war in the first place. Even the *Infantry Journal* observed that while hyperpatriotism may be characteristic of some wars (“A martial spirit spreads throughout the community. ... Flags are waving, bands are playing, drums beating, and crowds cheering”), “there has not been much of this in the present war.”<sup>2</sup> Early in 1942 columnist Raymond Moley also lamented the absence of patriotism in America and claimed that what the country had instead were “shabby itemizations, these puny lists of material benefits.” America, said Moley, was now a land in which soldiers “pass silently through drowsy stations in the night; tank, plane, gun production is veiled in the smokescreen of censorship; flags are seemingly rationed; and there are no more parades.”<sup>3</sup> While Moley’s assessment was correct, his bafflement as to cause reveals a short historical memory.

The senseless carnage of World War I was still fresh in the minds of Americans as they entered World War II, and they remembered all too well that it had been appeals to American idealism and patriotism that had led to U.S. participation in that earlier catastrophe. Quite simply, the Great War turned America into a nation of isolationists. As late as July 1941, when Gallup pollsters asked Americans, “If you were asked to vote today on the question of the United States entering the war now against Germany and Italy, how would you vote—to get into the war now or to stay out of the war?” a resounding 79 percent answered “stay out.”<sup>4</sup> Once the United States was committed to fighting in World War II, the army’s Samuel A. Stouffer admitted that “there is much cynicism to overcome. Most men of military age grew up in the midst of disillusionment about the Great Crusade of a generation ago.”<sup>5</sup> Americans would remain distrustful of patriotic appeals for the duration, especially those destined to participate directly in the fighting.<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps more than any other nation, America entered the war free of an informing ideology. In their tracking of 416 American servicemen from the small city of “Midwest” (a pseudonym), researchers noted that the “inability to conceive of U.S. war aims in positive, personal terms was a disturbing theme in nearly all the interviews with Midwest veterans.”<sup>7</sup> One veteran said, “I really couldn’t say—in the long run—why we fought the war. It just seemed like we worked into it,” while another ruminated that “if you’d asked the average fellow in the front lines why he was fighting the war, chances are you’d run into a brick wall.”<sup>8</sup> Overall, as Herbert Blumer asserted, “the evidence is all too convincing that the American people ... are not animated by the sense of a cause, of engaging in a crusade, of carrying out a sacred mission; or of affirming new conceptions of themselves in terms of glory, prestige, power, or esteemed position.”<sup>9</sup>

The Research Branch of the army’s Information and Education Division, which interviewed half a million young army men during the war on a bewildering number of subjects, also found little in the way of a motivation



for fighting.<sup>10</sup> The Research Branch concluded that “beyond acceptance of the war as a necessity forced upon the United States by an aggressor, there was little support of attempts to give the war meaning in terms of principles and causes involved, and little apparent desire for such formulations.”<sup>11</sup> Army chaplain Renwick C. Kennedy observed of the American soldier that “the draft caught him, he was inducted into the army, and after a while he found himself taking German towns. He does not understand much more than that about it, and is not concerned to understand more.”<sup>12</sup>

Arthur Miller, who worked at the Brooklyn Navy Yard for part of the war, took note of “the near absence among the men I worked with ... of any comprehension of what Nazism meant—we were fighting Germany essentially because she had allied herself with the Japanese who had attacked us at Pearl Harbor.”<sup>13</sup> Writing from Chanute Field, Illinois, in July 1943, Randall Jarrell asserted that while “99 of 100 people in the army haven’t the faintest idea what the war’s about,” their strongest motives were nationalism and “race prejudice—they dislike Japanese in the same way, though not as much as, they dislike Negroes.”<sup>14</sup> Complicating the picture somewhat is that even in the week following Pearl Harbor, nearly 65 percent of Americans viewed Germany as a greater threat to America’s future than Japan (an attitude reflected in the Roosevelt administration’s “Europe first” strategy). This public perception would not change until early 1943.<sup>15</sup>

But if Americans were fighting *against* the Axis powers, there still remained the question of what they were fighting *for*. While Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms (freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, freedom from fear) were widely promoted through official films, pamphlets, and radio broadcasts, this was not exactly soul-stirring material.<sup>16</sup> To rouse Americans to action, a 13-week radio series called *This Is War* was inaugurated in February 1942. Broadcast every Saturday night by every national network, the individual shows carried titles such as “The Enemy,” “America at War,” and “Mr. Smith Against the Axis.” An estimated 20 million Americans heard these broadcasts. The Office of War Information (OWI), which was aggressive in its use of the radio for propaganda purposes, claimed that every American heard at least four war messages a week.<sup>17</sup>

The government also hoped that Hollywood might be able to supply the motivation for fighting, and retained the services of Frank Capra, already famous as the director of screwball comedies such as *It Happened One Night* and inspirational populist films such as *Meet John Doe* and *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. Capra, summoned to Washington by General George Marshall, remembered that Marshall was anxious because millions of civilians were being uprooted and drafted into the army and “the reason why was hazy in their minds” (Capra’s emphasis). Marshall believed that this citizens’ army could be superior to those of the enemies “if—and this is a large if, indeed—they are given answers as to why they are in uniform, and if the answers they get are worth fighting and dying for” (Marshall’s emphasis).<sup>18</sup> Marshall had chosen the medium of film to provide the answers because, according to Capra, servicemen weren’t responding to lectures and books.

Shortly after meeting with Marshall, Capra saw *Triumph of the Will*. In perhaps the greatest propaganda film of all time, director Leni Riefenstahl memorializes the consolidation of Nazism and the deification of Adolf Hitler. She begins her film with the descent from the clouds of Hitler’s plane, as if from a Nazi Valhalla. On the ground, she juxtaposes images of the awesome military might of the German state with the ecstatic expressions of the German people as Hitler travels through their midst. *Triumph* concludes with a monstrous nighttime rally at the Zeppelin Field in Nuremberg, an event overwhelming in its displays of pageantry, power, and sheer stagecraft. The crowning theatrical touch, crafted by Hitler’s architect, Albert Speer, was the placing of 130 searchlights at 40-foot intervals around the field—a “cathedral of light,” as Speer put it, “with the beams serving

as mighty pillars of infinitely high outer walls.”<sup>19</sup> Capra called *Triumph of the Will* “the classic, powerhouse propaganda film of our times,” a film that “practically paralyzed my own will.”<sup>20</sup> Despairing that he could ever counter *Triumph’s* message, Capra hit upon the strategy of creating propaganda films that emphasized the frightening work of *enemy* propagandists such as Riefenstahl, Fritz Hippler, and others. “Let the *enemy* prove to our soldiers the enormity of his cause—and the justness of ours,” was how Capra put it in his autobiography.<sup>21</sup> Eventually Capra would produce *Why We Fight*, a series of seven propaganda films that would be seen at military bases, factories, and virtually everywhere else. The first of these films, *Prelude to War*, was released late in 1942, and by 1945 9 million soldiers had seen it. In addition, 150 copies were made available for theatrical showings without charge. The other films in the series would receive equally wide distribution.<sup>22</sup>

But despite the best efforts of Capra and others, the extent to which American soldiers and civilians ever formulated a coherent wartime ideology is debatable.<sup>23</sup> In mid-1943, a *Life* editorial complained that the trouble with the American war effort was that “when you look over the U.S. as it is today it’s hard to find the real purpose.”<sup>24</sup> Things had not improved seven months later when another *Life* editorial stated that “the bewilderment of the boys in the armed forces concerning the meaning of the war is noted by almost everyone who goes out to the front.”<sup>25</sup> That Americans in general and American soldiers in particular were seemingly ignorant of any purpose for fighting was noted by enemies as well as friends. A Japanese report in 1943 observed of American soldiers, “With the enemy there is little idea of dying for one’s country.”<sup>26</sup> German propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, in the 16 December 1942 entry in his diary, took note of the “wholly unpolitical attitude” of American prisoners. “They are without knowledge of even the most elementary causes of this war.”<sup>27</sup> Goebbels repeats this assertion in his 7 March 1943 entry, declaring that Americans have “no clear political conception whatever. The American soldiers, for the most part, have no idea as to why this war is being fought.”<sup>28</sup> By the spring of 1944, in an article assessing the army’s orientation program, *Fortune* concluded that “the American does not know why we are at war and has not sought to know.” *Fortune* added, however, that the lack of “political development” displayed by the American soldier often had “very little to do with how well he fights.”<sup>29</sup> It was a characteristic of World War II that Americans would formulate their own reasons for fighting the war that typically had nothing to do with ideology.

During her sojourn in wartime Italy, Margaret Bourke-White repeatedly asked American combat troops why they were fighting. One soldier responded that his group had recently been asked to write an essay on that exact subject, and that the winning composition was just six words long: “Why I’m Fighting, I was drafted.” Bourke-White continued to pose this question to the soldiers she met (at one point she asks, “Does the average man do much thinking about whether there’s a connection between our war aims and getting rid of Fascism?”) because she was obviously distressed by the answers she was receiving. The responses continued to disappoint, and the dominant reason these men seemed to be fighting was so they could go home.<sup>30</sup> The army itself concluded that “officers and enlisted men alike attached little importance to idealistic motives—patriotism and concern about war aims.”<sup>31</sup> The lack of an informing ideology seemed to affect the entire society. Late in the war, as a group of discharged marines made a six-day train journey from the West Coast to the East Coast, *Time* magazine observed that “in another war there might have been brass bands at every stop. But in this pageantry-less, slogan-less war, the train just rumbled on.”<sup>32</sup> Arthur Miller concluded that many men in the army viewed the war “as a kind of personal calamity, like an auto accident.” Miller complained that “I can’t seem to find men who betray a social responsibility as a reason for doing or not doing anything.”<sup>33</sup>



Ernest W. Burgess was another who observed that “to the great majority of men the war is a disagreeable job to be finished as soon as possible”; indeed, “the job” should not be underestimated as a motivator.<sup>34</sup> Gerald F. Linderman has emphasized that because the nation had only recently emerged from the high unemployment of the Depression, the belief that “every adult male should have a job and perform it satisfactorily provided a less exalted but still practicable substitute for that concept of duty so much more powerful in other armies.”<sup>35</sup> Efficient job performance thus became a war aim. The most popular response among army enlisted men in 1944 for why they were fighting was “ending the task,” and air force general James Doolittle maintained that “if you are put in a position where you have a responsible thing to do, you don’t do that for God and country—you do that because it’s your job.”<sup>36</sup> Another flyer, John Muirhead, put it in even more pedestrian terms: “I’m employed to fly a bomber from here to there. I drop some bombs there, and then I come back here—if I’m lucky. That’s my job.”<sup>37</sup>

When infantryman Paul Boesch killed a German face-to-face in the Hürtgen Forest, he remembered that he could “stand there and watch him die and feel absolutely no qualms of any kind ... It was as if I were a carpenter and had driven home a nail which secured one beam to another, the job I was assigned to do.”<sup>38</sup> Correspondent Eric Sevareid found that the troops in Italy “did not hate the concept of Fascism because they did not understand it.” Instead, they fought the war based on “pride in their outfits” and on “the sheer American ‘pride in competence,’ for in the American tradition to be guilty of incompetence is the one unbearable disgrace.”<sup>39</sup> Win Stracke, who served with the artillery, said of his fellow soldiers, “I don’t think very many were ideologically motivated. Some couldn’t tell the difference between the Nazis and our allies.” But there was a cohesiveness in the unit—“There’s a job to be done and everyone pitches in.”<sup>40</sup>

One group that *did* understand why they were fighting was American Jews, because the war was personal for them in a way that it could not be for other servicemen. Leon S. Bloom said of the Jews in his army outfit in England that “they know of the persecution and terrors that their brother Jews have been going through.”<sup>41</sup> Late in 1944, Emanuel M. Asen got a close-up view of Nazism’s handiwork in Belgium, observing “our Jews suffered terribly over here. There were atrocities, unbelievable things committed upon these unfortunates.”<sup>42</sup> But it was not easy to raise the consciousness of non-Jewish soldiers. One Jewish soldier noted that his army unit had instituted discussion periods that were meant to stimulate thinking about politics and motivations. But the sessions were resented because the men had to attend them during their time off, and in the end “only a few know and care why they are fighting.”<sup>43</sup> Such apathy was dealt a blow when Americans liberated the Ohrdruf concentration camp in April 1945. A grim Dwight Eisenhower observed, “We are told that the American soldier does not know what he is fighting for. Now, at least, he will know what he is fighting *against*” (Eisenhower’s emphasis).<sup>44</sup>

Almost unique in its treatment of what motivates the frontline soldier is S. L. A. Marshall’s *Men Against Fire*, published in 1947. Marshall worked for the army’s historical division during the war, and he and his associates conducted some 400 interviews with infantry companies in both the European and Pacific Theaters.<sup>45</sup> The goal was to find out exactly how ordinary soldiers responded under combat conditions. In the course of his work Marshall came to grips with a strange, unexpected phenomenon: American infantrymen were not firing their weapons. Reports that American soldiers were either not firing their rifles at all or not firing them enough began to trickle in during the North African campaign. By the time American troops were fighting in Italy and France, according to Colonel Roy E. Moore, “the trickle of reports grew to a torrent. Always it was the same simple ‘Our soldiers aren’t firing their rifles enough.’” When the soldiers were asked directly why they weren’t firing, they

would reply either that they couldn't see anything to fire at, that they were afraid of giving away their positions, or that no one had ordered them to fire.<sup>46</sup>

Marshall's work would not only confirm what was mostly anecdotal evidence but also would produce the startling revelation that a full 75 percent of infantry soldiers would not fire their weapons in combat.<sup>47</sup> That a company commander could depend on only a 25 percent ratio of fire was clearly disturbing to the military, and while officers might grudgingly admit that this might be the case for other companies, they adamantly denied that this described their own outfits. Yet Marshall and his compatriots were thorough in their research, taking into account circumstances that might have mitigating effects such as terrain or opportunity, and still they concluded that most of the actions took place with ground positions that could have permitted an 80 percent fire rate.<sup>48</sup> The same pattern was found both in Europe and the Pacific. Even those who were able to fire their weapons had ambivalent feelings, such as the veteran rifleman who told the army Research Branch, "I'll tell you a man sure feels funny inside the first time he squeezes down on a Kraut."<sup>49</sup> Nor were those who failed to fire necessarily bad troops who refused to risk battle. Marshall found that "they were not malingerers. They did not hold back from the danger point. They were there to be killed if the enemy fire searched and found them. For certain tasks they were good soldiers."<sup>50</sup> But not for the task of shooting at the enemy. Instead, "the same men were carrying the fire fight for each company day after day."<sup>51</sup> As an example, Marshall claims that only five infantry companies were effective on Omaha Beach on D-Day, and that only 20 percent of the men in these companies fired their weapons during the day—"a total of perhaps not more than 450 men."<sup>52</sup>

Marshall claimed that the explanation for this phenomenon was in the basic nature of the soldier, who comes "from a civilization in which aggression, connected with the taking of life, is prohibited and unacceptable. The teaching and the ideals of that civilization are against killing, against taking advantage." Army psychiatrists concluded that this prohibition against the taking of human life was so ingrained that "fear of killing, rather than fear of being killed, was the most common cause of battle failure in the individual."<sup>53</sup> Since, as Marshall notes, "war is the business of killing," the conflict between the moral system of the individual and the needs of the army is obvious.<sup>54</sup>

How, then, to motivate the soldier to do something so contrary to everything he has learned? Marshall began to explore this issue in an *Infantry Journal* article he wrote in 1943. "Not obedience, but duty, is the strongest and most honorable word that can ever be put before a soldier," said Marshall, and it is in the "mutual confidence in one another that the ranks of old regiments are able to convert their *esprit* into battle discipline."<sup>55</sup>

For Marshall, the key was human companionship—a spiritual link forged over time among soldiers that "gives men courage and enables them to make proper use of their weapons."<sup>56</sup> Men will want to give a good account of themselves because their personal honor is wrapped up in the bond that has been forged with other soldiers.<sup>57</sup> But when a soldier is unknown to those around him, "he has relatively little reason to fear losing the one thing that he is likely to value more highly than life—his reputation as a man among other men."<sup>58</sup> Thus "social pressure, more than military training, is the base of battle discipline," and as Marshall emphasizes, not even "pride in a uniform or belief in a national cause" will in the end be sufficient as motivators.<sup>59</sup>

The idea that the soldier's chief reason for fighting is loyalty, love, and respect for his comrades is an old one, and this kind of motivation was perhaps more prominent in the Second World War than in other wars because Americans in this war seemed so little susceptible to idealistic appeals.<sup>60</sup> After extensive interviews with

veterans of the Battle of the Bulge, Gerald Astor concluded that while soldiers believed in the American system, “during the crunch, nobody advanced under fire with the motivation of striking a blow against tyranny or to preserve the Stars and Stripes.” And while religion sustained some troops, “it was not a motivator for combat.” Above all, says Astor, “the motivation to combat spells the word ‘camaraderie.’ That sums up the critical element in the GIs’ makeup.”<sup>61</sup>

Among the other benefits of loyalty to one’s comrades was that it served as a check on desertions, which peaked at 6.3 percent of the armed forces during the heavy fighting of 1944.<sup>62</sup> In all, some 40,000 deserted, 2,800 were courtmartialed, and 49 received death sentences. Only the hapless Ernie Slovik was actually executed, apparently to serve as an example during the disarray of the Battle of the Bulge. Desertion was virtually unheard of in the Pacific, where there was no place to desert to, and in Europe large numbers of men were classified as absent without leave (AWOL) rather than as deserters. When the First and Third U.S. armies crossed the Seine in 1944, as many as 10,000 soldiers went AWOL to see Paris, and when these men returned (or were returned) to their units, most received light punishments.<sup>63</sup> This tolerant attitude can partly be attributed to a psychologically enlightened army, but more likely it has its origins in the manpower shortage of frontline troops. Above all, it was unit loyalty, and the shame of leaving one’s fellow soldiers in the lurch, that worked against desertion and AWOL.<sup>64</sup> So strong was this loyalty that many refused to leave their outfits even when they were sick or wounded, and some would go AWOL from hospitals so that they could rejoin their old units. One soldier said, “The fellows don’t want to leave when they’re sick. They’re afraid to leave their own men—the men they know. They don’t want to get put in a different outfit.”<sup>65</sup>

*Infantry Journal* identified three reasons why a man will fight: “Out of loyalty to his comrades and his unit,” “because he is led” by someone who emerges during a battle with “seemingly competent leadership,” and because he has no choice and “there is literally nothing else to do.” In the end the “why” question, deemed so crucial in the early days of the war, became moot, and with the fighting well advanced, “the only question there is left is how to fight best” (original emphasis).<sup>66</sup>

There is general agreement that American troops fought a silent war. Paul Fussell contrasts what he calls the “loquacity” of World War I with the tendency to “silence, or at least to a disenchanting brevity,” during World War II.<sup>67</sup> The American army of World War II, in S. L. A. Marshall’s estimation, “was about the mutest army that we ever sent to war.”<sup>68</sup> While Marshall saw this as a great deficiency in battle, there is some evidence that a silent American army had an unnerving effect on its enemies. James Jones notes that “German prisoners, asked to assess their various enemies, have said that the British attacked singing, and the French attacked shouting, but that the Americans attacked in silence. They liked better the men who attacked singing or shouting, than the grimly silent men who kept coming on stubbornly without a sound.”<sup>69</sup>

Paul Fussell, himself an infantryman in World War II, bitterly denounces the war as “indescribably cruel and insane,” and concludes that “the war seemed so devoid of ideological content that little could be said about its positive purposes that made political or intellectual sense.”<sup>70</sup> Soldiers created their own “purpose” in the personal ties to those around them and, as Fussell puts it, “if loyalty to your unit might even seem an insufficient reason to fight the war, there was always the fall-back reason, which close scrutiny might expose as equally irrational: namely, to get home.”<sup>71</sup> John F. Kennedy noted of the men he served with in the Pacific that “no one out here has the slightest interest in politics. ... They just want to get home—morning, noon and night.”<sup>72</sup> Reporter George Biddle told people on the home front that rather than imagining troops as heroes, “they might better visualize them as miners trapped underground. They are always frightened and they are always homesick.

Their one dream and ambition is not to march on Berlin, as propaganda stories say, but to go home.”<sup>73</sup>

When John Hersey posed the “why we fight” question to a group of marines on Guadalcanal, the surprising answer was pie:

He whispered: “Jesus, what I’d give for a piece of blueberry pie.”

Another whispered: “Personally I prefer mince.”

A third whispered: “Make mine apple with a few raisins in it and lots of cinnamon: you know, Southern style.”

Of course the marines were not fighting for pie per se but “fighting for home—to get the goddam thing over and get home.”<sup>74</sup>

What “back home” meant for many servicemen was the women back home. Aircrews painted pictures of them on the noses of their bombers for inspiration (nose art featuring the unsexy Uncle Sam was not to be found).<sup>75</sup> In addition, full-color renderings of *Esquire’s* scantily clad “Vargas Girls” were popular with the troops but unpopular with Postmaster General Frank C. Walker, who canceled *Esquire’s* mailing privileges because of obscenity.<sup>76</sup> Pinups were ubiquitous, and Irving Klaw, who made his living selling pinup photos, reported that Betty Grable was the pinup queen, with Dorothy Lamour and Lana Turner finishing second and third.<sup>77</sup> Robert B. Westbrook has concluded that pinups such as Grable were not merely objects of sexual fantasy but represented all women “standing in for wives and sweethearts on the homefront.”<sup>78</sup> *Strip for Action*, a popular Broadway play in 1942, also knew what inspired the troops. In one scene, a stripper who is trying to gain permission to do her act for the army asks whether or not the boys were fighting for American womanhood. When assured they were, she replies, “Well, then, why can’t we show them what they’re fighting for?”<sup>79</sup>

The servicemen of World War II rejected the braying patriotism of World War I and instead found motivation in the things of home and the comradeship that they found in each other. William Manchester, who served with the Marine Corps in the Pacific, notes that “unlike the doughboys of 1917, we had expected very little of war. We got less.” Three years of fighting in the Pacific would leave the marines bereft of most idealism, and when a haggard, battle-weary Manchester addressed an inexperienced group of marines newly arrived on Okinawa, he told them that they “were going to lose a lot of illusions, but if they lost faith in everything else, including the possibility of winning this fight, including the rear echelon and even the flag, they should keep faith with the regiment. It had an outstanding record, and all its men were proud of it.” Later, Manchester would reflect that men “do not fight for flag and country, for the Marine Corps or glory or any other abstraction. They fight for one another.”<sup>80</sup> These views were largely confirmed by others close to the combat. Reporter Robert Sherrod, who was with the marines during the invasion of Tarawa, concluded that the marines “didn’t know what to believe in, either—except the Marine Corps. The Marines fought almost solely on *esprit de corps*.”<sup>81</sup>

Bill Mauldin, who created the famous Willie and Joe cartoon characters while covering the war in Europe for *Stars and Stripes*, emphasized that “I didn’t beat the drum too hard about the ‘glorious war and the ideals for which we fought,’ as a great number of people were doing. I did it a couple of times, but it was a phony attitude to take, and smelled strongly of propaganda rather than fact.”<sup>82</sup> Later, Mauldin would tell Studs Terkel, “People who fight these wars could care less about ideology. Me, too.”<sup>83</sup> Also distrustful of patriotic motivation was James Jones. As he was recovering from a wound he received at Guadalcanal, Jones wrote a letter home in which he ruminated on what motivated men to fight. “You don’t spend any time in consoling yourself that if you



die, you will be dying for your country and Liberty and Democracy and Freedom,” said Jones, “because after you are dead there is no such thing as Liberty or Democracy or Freedom.” Instead, men kept fighting because “there is nothing else for you to do.”<sup>84</sup> The Army Research Branch found that one of the strongest group codes among soldiers was “the taboo against any talk of the flag-waving variety ... The usual term by which disapproval of idealistic exhortation was invoked was ‘bullshit.’”<sup>85</sup>

Psychiatrist William C. Menninger believed that the lack of a motivating ideology explained why there was a higher incidence of mental illness among troops in the Second World War than in World War I. The soldier in World War I was fighting “to make the world safe for democracy,” but during World War II “the average soldier was none too clear as to why he was fighting, despite the Army’s efforts to indoctrinate him.”<sup>86</sup> Another psychiatrist observed that “the men who fought the last war were better prepared psychologically, both for the war and for the demobilization which followed it ... they were surer of what they were fighting for and were thus given a greater emotional cushion to absorb the shock of battle.”<sup>87</sup> These and other data suggest that America’s only “patriotic war” during the twentieth century was World War I.

Because of their physical distance from the war, civilians had even vaguer notions of why the war was being fought. The full-throated patriotism that had propelled so many young men into the military at the beginning of the war had also gripped the civilian population. Dellie Hahne remembered that “the patriotic fervor was such at the beginning that if ‘The Star Spangled Banner’ came on the radio, everybody in the room would stand up at attention.” Such ardor was as short-lived among civilians as it was among military personnel, and Hahne recalled that as the war dragged on, “our enthusiasm waned and we became cynical and very tired and sick of the bloodshed and killing. It was a completely different thing than the way it started.”<sup>88</sup> Even news from the front did not seem to act as a motivator. Surveys consistently showed that it was “high pay” rather than “to help win the war” that prompted most persons to take war industry jobs.<sup>89</sup> When John Dos Passos asked New England shipyard managers about the impact of war news on the efficiency and enthusiasm of the workers, he was told that the course of the war did not seem to have an effect. One boss lamented that nothing seemed to curb the problem of absenteeism, and “it was hard to keep a man from taking a couple of days off to paint his house, or a woman from staying out till she got her dishes washed and laundry done.” The problem was especially acute during hunting season.<sup>90</sup> Mary Heaton Vorse, who wrote an article on female munitions workers in Elkton, Maryland, observed that “they never talk about the war and seem to have no curiosity about it. They seldom listen to news broadcasts and rarely look at a newspaper. In this they follow a pattern that is common throughout the munitions towns of the country.”<sup>91</sup>

Like their counterparts in the military, it was personal considerations rather than ideology or patriotism that resonated with civilians. When an aircraft carrier that was built in one shipyard was sunk, the war was finally brought home because “there are men in the yard who knew every bolt and rivet on that ship. They knew the crews too.”<sup>92</sup> The war also became personal for the residents of Houston, Texas, after the navy cruiser *Houston* was sunk with the loss of over 700 men in the Battle of the Java Sea. One thousand young Houston men volunteered to take the place of these lost sailors and were inducted into the navy.<sup>93</sup> Likewise, in the third war bond drive residents of Montana dedicated themselves to replacing the cruiser *Helena*, while the focus in Oklahoma was replacement of the battleship *Oklahoma*, sunk at Pearl Harbor.<sup>94</sup>

When Americans were unable to articulate fully why it was they were fighting, American business through its advertisements eagerly stepped into the breach, often with a stunning presumption. Madison Avenue had taken a pounding from New Dealers in the previous decade, who criticized advertising for being wasteful economically



and for stretching the truth. And as the nation mobilized in the late 1930s and early 1940s, advertising's *raison d'être* was called into question because businesses could sell whatever they made without advertising. The attack on Pearl Harbor revived a flagging industry and gave advertisers and the businesses they represented an opportunity to present themselves to the public as patriots totally devoted to the war effort. As advertising executive Walter Weir put it, "If we make advertising fight today, we'll never again have to defend its place in our economy."<sup>95</sup>

The instrument that would accomplish this was the War Advertising Council, which urged all advertisers to see to it that "every ad devotes some space to a war message." The Office of War Information eliminated its own home front propaganda campaign and ceded it to the council, and as a reward for the council's patriotism, the government promised industry that its advertising expenditures would not be subject to inclusion as profits, and therefore not taxed.<sup>96</sup> The result, as a *New Republic* article put it, was boasting from business that ranged from "crude to subtle, all contributing to a one-sided, overweighted picture of industry's contribution to the war—at the expense of the effort of the soldiers, the farmers and the workers."<sup>97</sup>

American citizens no longer needed to have doubts about the purpose of the war because American businesses would supply the purpose for them. The "Brewing Industry Foundation," for instance, presumed to put itself into the mind of the overseas veteran with an ad that included the following copy:

"Remember the time we taught Mary to bat?" ... "Sure could go for one of Mom's bean suppers!" ... "Is my hammock still hanging in the orchard?" "Little" things? ... Certainly. But to him these things loom big. They stand for home ... for family life ... and everything that he holds dear in America. In a sense, these little things are what he is fighting for.

And, lest we forget, these important little things "include the right to enjoy a refreshing glass of beer."<sup>98</sup>

The Nash automobile company also produced some stirring, patriotic copy in a series of ads in which fictitious servicemen addressed home front readers. One of these characters expressed the desire "to go back to living our lives in a land, and a world, where every man can be free to be somebody ... where every man is free to grow as great as he's a mind to be."<sup>99</sup> The copy was a vivid purple in another Nash ad narrated by another make-believe infantryman:

They kept one gun going ...  
And it swept the dunes like a breeze from hell ... and the sound of bullets ricocheting was  
the sound of sandpipers crying along all the dreary beaches of the world.

After being wounded, our infantryman tells the reader that he will be returning to an America "where every man and woman and child is a free *individual* ... free to live their lives as they want them in liberty, and equality. That's the America I fought for."<sup>100</sup> Less rousing and more domestic was the Nash creation in which another invented serviceman asked the reader to "tell us how bright the dresses swirl when girls go into Putnam's in the afternoon for cokes. Tell us they still laugh and joke and make a game with drops of water and wrinkled jackets off their soda straws."<sup>101</sup>

Some American businesses went so far in their identification with the war effort as to suggest that their own operations be considered in military terms. The Association of American Railroads described its workers as "a

trained army more than a million strong,” while those who labored for the Philco Corporation were “soldiers of production.”<sup>102</sup> Oldsmobile referred to “our armies of workmen who *build* the sinews of war” (original emphasis).<sup>103</sup> Even the dairy industry got into the act with an ad featuring cheeses, milk, and butter marching in military formation (“This army was raised to attack!”). Another dairy ad was illustrated by a farmer watching his milk cows amble past him; the caption read, “The General reviews his troops.”<sup>104</sup> Robert Fleisher, reporting on the morale of the American soldier on the Italian front, said that “it doesn’t help his frame of mind to learn that Hollywood, Crispy Crackers, and the Stitchless Sewing Machine Company are, by their own admission, making every sacrifice for victory.”<sup>105</sup> He might have added the Bostitch company, which asked rhetorically, “Can this little Bostitch stapler help win the war?” or the Talon zipper company, which described its product as “vitaly important” to the prosecution of the war. Talon promised that when Americans landed in Germany, “paratroopers’ uniforms will be closed with a slide fastener.”<sup>106</sup> One laxative manufacturer, Sal Hepatica, even suggested that its brand was playing a leading role in the war effort by producing more regular bowel movements. Sal Hepatica contrasts two women trying to raise money for a war relief drive: the unfortunate “Mrs. Tom,” who needs a laxative but puts it off and is only able to raise a small amount because of her indisposition, and the wise “Mrs. Dan,” who takes her Sal Hepatica. To no one’s surprise, “money rolls up to a grand total after Mrs. Dan’s enthusiastic speech.”<sup>107</sup>

Businesses also targeted special audiences with their ads. Some ads, for instance, were aimed directly at home front women. A United States Rubber advertisement featured an extended monologue of a young mother explaining to her son, “Your father will not be here for this, your first Christmas. The war has taken him far away from us, but his love warms our family hearth.” The ad concludes by saying, “We have loaned him to America ... We have loaned him, so that in the years to come, young mothers everywhere, on Christmas day, shall be able to say ‘Merry Christmas’ to their sons.”<sup>108</sup> The Community silverware company ran an ad illustrated by a woman kissing a soldier under the tag, “Back Home for Keeps.” While Community noted that “today he has a war on his hands,” it promised that “the day will come, please God, when *your* Tom or Dick or Jack comes home for keeps ... when kisses will be real, not paper; when you may know the good feel of a tweedy shoulder, the dear sound of a longed-for voice, a strong hand on yours in a dim-lit room ... when crystal will gleam and silver will sparkle on a table set for two.”<sup>109</sup>

The extent to which Americans on the home front embraced these sappy, Joe Blow appeals is difficult to determine, but it certainly seemed to be the case that the troops themselves weren’t buying them. Bill Mauldin remembered a refrigerator ad “showing a lovely, dreamy-eyed wife gazing across the blue seas and reflecting on how much she misses Jack ... but she knows he’ll never be content to come back to his cozy nest (equipped with a Frosty refrigerator; sorry, we’re engaged in vital war production now) until the Hun is whipped and the world is clean for Jack’s little son to grow up in.”<sup>110</sup> Another outstanding example of this kind of advertising corn pone featured a fictional “Dearest Mom” letter from a G.I. responding to the news from home that “old Bess” had given birth to a litter of pups. The earnest soldier writes that what he yearned for was “that world back home where a fellow can give the sort of welcome he ought to give to a litter of setter pups in the spring. To watch them grow up with all the other new, young things in a world that’s bright and free ... Your loving son, Bill.” Judging by the reaction, this ad made a large number of soldiers gag. One soldier-writer in Normandy, who contributed to a service paper called *Le Tomahawk*, bristled at the implication that “the public seems to think that soldiers are simple asses,” and offered an alternative “Dear Mom” letter of his own:



**Can this  
little Bostitch stapler  
HELP WIN THE WAR?**

**E**QUIPMENT delayed...food or ammunition damaged in shipment—let's not add such accidents to a soldier's other hazards.

This handy little stapler—smallest of over 700 Bostitch models for applying wire staples as a stitch or tack... illustrates a vital fastening principle...*speed!*

*Speed!* Fastening two sheets of paper for filing... or two sheets of aluminum for a plane... or steel and leather for a tank — Bostitching gives you *speed!* Assembling war materials of metal, wood, cloth... sealing shipping containers bound for the war zone... or building cantonnments—Bostitching gives you *speed*. Often, 50% more speed!

Bostitch products... staplers, stitchers, tackers and hammers... are committed to *winning the war*. So are Bostitch plants... seven days... three shifts. Can Bostitching help speed your work? Investigate!

The pocket-size desk fastener is a lesson in conservation. Compact, durable, it uses no rubber, one-fourth the metal, is one-fourth the price — yet does all that a large fastener can do. BOSTITCH, 65 Blackmore St., East Greenwich, R.I. (Bostitch-Canada, Ltd., Montreal.)

**BOSTITCH**

*AND FASTER  
fastens it better, with wire*

STAPLING · STITCHING · TACKING

Fig. 3.1 Winning the war with staplers. *Time*, 1 June 1942, 57.

Dear Mom: Well, here we are in Normandy. I saw a cute little piggywiggy today, Mom, and gracious was he cute. That's what I'm fighting for, Mom—little piggy-wiggies and little ducky-wuckies and little lambie-wambies and, oh, just oodles of young, free things to brighten a brave new world. Your loving son, Joe.<sup>111</sup>

Other advertisements adopted a tough-guy tone that businesses no doubt believed would resonate with servicemen. The Victor Adding Machine Co., with the bravado that was possible only for those safely ensconced stateside, ran an ad that, referring to a German fighter plane, asked, "Who's afraid of the new Focke-Wulf?"<sup>112</sup> An Eighth Air Force group commander, whose planes would shortly be engaging this new fighter, signed his name to the ad to indicate his own fears on this account, and pinned the ad to the bulletin board. After all the other pilots had also signed their names, the ad was sent back to Victor.<sup>113</sup>

Casual readers of ads during the war might conclude that the real purpose for fighting was to serve capitalism. This was the conclusion of George W. Christians of Chattanooga, Tennessee, and when he sent a note to officers at Camp Forrest that asked, "What are we fighting for? Do we die for dollar domination ... ? Do Germany, Italy and Japan have the right to fight for freedom from our economic strangulation?" Christians became the first person prose cuted for sedition in World War II.<sup>114</sup> Angry American servicemen would be less easy to dispose of, and the *New Republic* asserted that industry's taking credit for winning the war "has burned up the boys in the services and it has frightened business and advertising leaders, who visualize the harvest of this crop of dragon's teeth." The *New Republic* predicted that if present trends continued, veterans might have to "employ a press agent to convince the public that soldiers, too, had something to do with our victory."<sup>115</sup>

It seems clear that much of the flag-and-country patriotic fervor that supposedly engulfed American society during the war years has been imposed on that era in hindsight. Indeed, the hyperbolic language of patriotism was especially suspect to those who knew what war was. The bloody meaninglessness of World War I would cast a long shadow over World War II, leaving Americans less likely to frame the war in patriotic terms, and struggling to find a purpose that would justify the terrible cost of the war. Those costs were dramatically brought home when *Life* magazine printed the names of Americans killed in action in the first 18 months of the war. The list was 23 pages long.<sup>116</sup> In the same issue, *Life* ruminated on the meaning of the American casualty of war, noting, "It is for us to decide whether he died for the fulfillment of purpose, like the boys of the American Revolution, or whether he died for the fulfillment of practically nothing, like the boys of World War I."<sup>117</sup>





## Who's afraid of the new Focke-Wulf?

"This Mitchell B-25 we're flying is a lot of fighting airplane, too!"

"Take a squint at the record and you'll see that this sweet medium bomber has three important 'fines' to its credit.

"It was the first Army plane to 'sight and sink some' in the Atlantic. First to bomb the Japs in the Philippines, with General Roscoe. First to smash them in their own 'home park,' with General Doolittle. Add to this the steady posting that hundreds of these B-25's are dishing out to Hitler & Co. right now, and the score looks mighty good for our side.

"So we're not afraid of the new Focke-Wulf... or the Messerschmitt... or the Jap Zero. They're

good, and don't tell me they're not. But with planes like *this* baby, we're taking care of them... and ourselves, too!"



► Victor workers' production record of vital aircraft parts—precision-built, many of them, to one-tenth the thickness of a human hair—is backing our fliers with the kind of firepower they need to win.

► Naturally we can't say what parts, or how many, they're turning out. But you can take it from us that these men and women, working to standards already familiar to Victor, are doing a great war job.

**VICTOR ADDING MACHINE CO.**

*Keep your adding machines by having them inspected and cleaned at regular intervals by your local Victor Dealer or factory branch.*





John Costello has argued that motivations for fighting World War II “had less to do with abstract notions of freedom or patriotism than with individual emotional values represented by sweethearts, wives, and families.”<sup>118</sup> Indeed, the reasons that Americans went to war and put their lives at risk were many and diverse, but typically these reasons were more mundane (or, alternatively, more profound and more personal) than the stuff that was promulgated by government and industry. In a letter that Lieutenant Robert Lee Shannon Jr. of the navy wrote to his mother from Iwo Jima, Shannon responded to the question of patriotism:

Patriotism? Well, yes, there is patriotism among us, not the synthetic kind that comes forth in the war mongerers and profiteers—the kind that is amassed in the throats of people when our national ensign is unfurled, or like as many sheep cheer at a passing parade—but rather the kind which lies deep and still in the hearts of our defenders.<sup>119</sup>

Sometimes the sacrifices were so terrible that no degree of patriotism, real or otherwise, seemed just compensation. Even the ebullient Red Cross worker Eleanor Stevenson confessed that her “Pollyannaish” attitude wilted away in the military hospital ward. As Stevenson put it, “You simply couldn’t look those men in the eye and say, ‘Your sacrifice was worthwhile. It’s men like you who are ending war for all time to come and are bringing Christian brotherhood to the world.’” Stevenson explained that “you can’t sit in a ward like that and see the things you see, and hear the things you hear, and believe that the world is a very Christian place, or that there is any brotherhood of man, or that the world will have learned its lesson and this will be the last war.”<sup>120</sup>

## Part II

### **Americans at Home**

## Gearing Up for War

With the attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States “embarked on the greatest adventure in its history.” In high dudgeon Henry Luce thundered that “it would be better to leave America a heap of smoking stones than surrender it to the mechanized medievalism which is the Mikado or to the anti-Christ which is Hitler.” The sense of momentousness was felt from coast to coast. In St. Louis, crowds were “half-confused, half-scared, but elated at the epochal portent of the struggle.” In Boston guards were doubled at power plants, factories, and shipyards, and bellboys were dispatched to the roof of the Hotel Statler to dump black paint on the arrow that pointed to the airport. Mothers in Scarsdale, New York, parked their cars outside the high school, ready to take their children home if enemy bombers attacked that city, and in Washington, D.C., an especially dim-witted patriot chopped down four Japanese cherry trees along the Tidal Basin.<sup>1</sup>

Anxieties were running especially high on the West Coast. *Life* reported that residents here “waited for something. They didn’t know what. They feared almost anything.”<sup>2</sup> To show their support for their government, people began sending contributions to the U.S. Treasury that included jewelry, bonds, cash, and even gold teeth. Forty-two stenographers had to be hired by the Treasury to handle the unsolicited gifts.<sup>3</sup> At the army’s suggestion, the Rose Bowl game between Oregon State and Duke was moved from Pasadena, California, to Durham, North Carolina.

Major West Coast cities were put under blackout orders, and during the first evening of Seattle’s blackout, “a mob of about 3,000 citizens gathered on a downtown corner, milled along the street, smashing 28 lighted shop fronts.”<sup>4</sup> Boeing’s B-17 assembly line had to be shut down until 1,700 gallons of black paint could be found to paint its windows. Near Portland, the freighter *Mauna Ala* went aground and broke up as it was looking for the mouth of the Columbia River in a blackout. Its cargo of 60,000 Christmas trees washed ashore.<sup>5</sup> Blackouts were less successful elsewhere. On an evening in late December 1941, when officials believed that San Francisco was under aerial attack, “Alcatraz Island was lit up like a gay ocean liner. A rosy neon glow bathed the downtown sky. A big insurance company sign on Market Street placidly spelled out its traditional message: ‘s-a-f-e.’”<sup>6</sup> When John O’Hara visited the West Coast in January 1942, he noted that “twenty times I have been told the classic story of the Long Beach blackout, which was perfect except for a big blazing electric sign which said: ‘Welcome to Long Beach.’”<sup>7</sup> As if this weren’t enough, American pilots reported that even cities that *were* blacked out “were nightly nullified by constellations of lights flashing from the barns and cowsheds of outlying farms.” Instructors from the University of California’s Farm Extension Service began meeting with farmers to teach them how to milk in the dark.<sup>8</sup> Farmers elsewhere were pressed into service for beach patrols, and forest lookout towers were manned 24 hours a day as spotters searched the skies for enemy aircraft.<sup>9\*</sup>

There was also the possibility of sabotage, which columnist Raymond Moley called “at least as probable as air raids on either coast ... It is silly to assume that after two years of growing likelihood of our entering the war, the Axis Powers have not laid sabotage plans with deadly thoroughness and daring.”<sup>10</sup> On 23 February 1942 a Japanese submarine surfaced near Santa Barbara and began lobbing shells at the Bankline Oil Refineries.

Nothing was hit, and the major impact of this attack was the halting of traffic on Highway 101.<sup>11</sup> (On the East Coast, the toll from submarines was much grimmer, and by late February the 16th victim of German U-boats, the oil tanker *W. L. Sneed*, was sent to the bottom of the ocean.)<sup>12</sup>

Two days after the Santa Barbara attack, there was the “Battle of Los Angeles.” Convinced that Los Angeles was under attack by enemy planes, army anti-aircraft units opened fire early in the morning on the 25th. *Life* employed its most breathless prose for this event, reporting that “searchlights poked long silver fingers into the cloudless sky. Golden-yellow tracer bullets and high-explosive shells raced toward the stars.”<sup>13</sup> For an hour, anti-aircraft batteries blazed away into the evening sky, expending more than 1,400 rounds of ammunition. The major effect of this engagement was “the most severe traffic jam in the city’s history” and the death of six people in car accidents. There was also collateral damage done to cars and homes by shrapnel falling back to earth, but no trace of enemy aircraft could be found. It quickly became obvious that hysteria, rather than enemy attack, had produced this incident, and the following day Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox concluded, “There were no planes over Los Angeles last night.”<sup>14</sup>

With California now gripped by fear, residents “began to look hard at the 33,000 Japanese aliens in their midst.”<sup>15</sup> Often when they looked they couldn’t tell the difference between resident Japanese and Chinese, and members of both nationalities were roughed up by patriotic citizens. In an article called “How to Tell Japs from the Chinese,” *Life* helpfully delineated the differences in physiognomy between the two, describing the Chinese as having a “parchment yellow complexion,” while the Japanese possessed an “earthy yellow complexion.”<sup>16</sup> The resident Japanese population of the West Coast would be removed to relocation camps in the spring of 1942, and Carey McWilliams claimed that if the Japanese population had remained in place and the West Coast had been attacked, angry mobs “would not have distinguished between Japanese and, for example, Korean, Chinese and Filipinos.”<sup>17</sup>

The West Coast was not the only area with racial tensions, and two weeks after the “Battle of Los Angeles,” Detroit had its own battle when plans were announced to move black workers into the Sojourner Truth housing project. White neighbors put a 24-hour picket line around the project, and the Ku Klux Klan held a rally, burned some crosses, and urged residents to violent action.<sup>18</sup> They got it shortly thereafter. When blacks tried to move into Sojourner Truth, they were blocked by more than 500 white men and women carrying signs that read, “We want White Neighbors.” In the melee that followed, “bricks felled a cop, hit a white woman. Negroes tried to drive one truck through the line. The white men swarmed forward.” Police had to use tear gas to break up the riot, and 20 people were hospitalized and more than 100 were hauled off to jail. Commented police commissioner Frank Eamans, “There is no use moving these people in if you need an army to protect them.”<sup>19</sup>

Enlistments in the military in the months immediately following Pearl Harbor were the highest in history, although the overall volunteer rate for the rest of the war would be relatively low.<sup>20</sup> More than 90 percent of UCLA’s fraternity members signed up for military service, and one fraternity (Theta Chi) was broken up when an army recruiter visited the house and left with 17 brothers in tow.<sup>21</sup> Volunteers for military duty included Louis A. Tyler, whose son had been killed at Pearl Harbor, as well as all four sons of Franklin Roosevelt. One volunteer, who had been rejected by the navy because he had a naked woman tattooed on his arm, came back the same day with the woman more chastely clad in a skirt and brassiere.<sup>22</sup> Also rejected for military service was Superman (his X-ray vision inadvertently read the eye chart in the next room). The Man of Steel would spend the rest of the war catching spies.<sup>23</sup>

Draft boards were organized on the local level, and their grim duty of sending young men off to war subjected

them to complaints and criticism throughout the war. In their study of the small midwestern city “Midwest,” researchers found “a town divided against itself,” with families with sons in the service pitted against those whose sons had escaped the draft.<sup>24</sup> There were complaints that many young men had taken “essential” jobs to avoid military service, that the draft board had been too generous in awarding exemptions for farm workers, and that the sons of upper-class families received more exemptions than the sons of the lower class. While the researchers acknowledged that many had taken essential jobs to avoid induction, they found little validity in the notion that too many agricultural exemptions were given, and no evidence that socioeconomic class played a role in induction.<sup>25</sup>

It was not only in Midwest that men took on essential war work to avoid the draft. Forrest Eaton, a Maine fisherman, remembers that during the war years, “most people fished for cod; you couldn’t get deferred for fishing lobsters, because they were a luxury. So all the young fellows went trawling for cod—so they could get deferred from war.” John Nies claims that the Ford Willow Run plant, producer of B-24s during the war, was “filled with draft dodgers, draft evaders, relatives of plant managers. It was a haven from the war.”<sup>26</sup>

Between 1940 and 1945, 29.1 percent of the young men examined by the Selective Service were rejected. The rejection rate was especially high during 1940–41, when the War Department’s emphasis on quality over quantity produced a 50 percent failure rate. Grounds for rejection included bad teeth, poor eyesight, and criminal records.<sup>27</sup> One-fourth were rejected for psychological reasons, although it was frequently the case that a draftee would be examined by a psychiatrist for a total of only three minutes (one psychiatrist reported seeing 512 men in a single day).<sup>28</sup> Questions such as “What do you think about the war?” “Have you had a nervous breakdown?” and “Do you like girls?” were supposed to determine the mental fitness of the draftee.<sup>29</sup> William C. Menninger, who became director of the Neuropsychiatry Consultants Division in the Surgeon General’s office during the war, described the impossible situation faced by physicians at the induction center: “In the space of from one to five minutes the physician was supposed to do some sort of crystal gazing to determine whether an inductee, strange to him, might fit into an unknown job under unknown leadership with unknown motivation toward doing that job.”<sup>30</sup> (The process became less prone to error when induction centers began to employ social workers to sift through patients’ histories.)<sup>31</sup> Rejection by draft board doctors on mental grounds was shattering to the individual. Nor did this process succeed in “weeding out” those who were mentally unfit to fight a war. When American soldiers finally had their first taste of combat in Africa, about a third of the nonfatal casualties would be psychiatric.<sup>32</sup>

A majority of U.S. servicemen had only the bare rudiments of a formal education.<sup>33</sup> Just six months into the war, draft boards had already rejected a quarter of a million men for illiteracy, a low mentality, or lack of education (a sample question from the army intelligence test: “Will a boat float in water?”). As *Time* rather indelicately phrased it, the “largest group of ignoramuses were neither aliens nor Negroes, but native whites.” The states that produced the lowest mental scores were Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina.<sup>34</sup> Of those who did qualify for military service, 70 percent had less than a high school education, and according to Army psychiatrist Major Leo Alexander, the average “mental age” of Army servicemen was between 13 and 14 years—only slightly higher than it had been during World War I. While mental age tests were designed for children and were not necessarily an accurate gauge of adult mental capacity, what was not in doubt was the existence of 500,000 veterans with less than a fourth-grade education and 4.4 million with less than an eighth-grade education.<sup>35</sup> Three percent were college graduates.<sup>36</sup> Though they were generally held in contempt by servicemen, the women who entered military service during the war were much better educated than their male



counterparts. Nine-tenths of the women who initially joined the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (soon to be the Women's Army Corps) were college graduates.<sup>37</sup>

Selective Service became increasingly less selective under the press of manpower needs. Eventually, the army would take in some 800,000 illiterates, setting up special classrooms and teaching troops to read with such books as *Meet Private Pete*. (Pete progresses from simple declarative sentences at the beginning of the book to a touching proposal of marriage at the end.)<sup>38</sup> In addition, the army would pull 15 million teeth and fashion 2.5 million dentures by 1945. It also issued 2.25 million pairs of glasses and welcomed 100,000 former felons into army life.<sup>39</sup> By the fall of 1942 the draft age had been reduced from 20 to 18, and by war's end some 16 million had served in the military.<sup>40</sup>

Despite initially high enlistments, in the early months after Pearl Harbor there was widespread anxiety that complacent, comfortable Americans would not be able to make the sacrifices necessary to win the war. John T. Whitaker returned to America after living in Europe for 10 years and reported that the German military men he had talked to felt that Germany had too much of a military head start for America ever to catch up, and that "America will have no stomach for war." For Whitaker, the question of the hour was, "Can the American people as a whole give up their complacency and come up fighting?"<sup>41</sup> Donald W. Mitchell called "the attitude of the general public" the "greatest weakness on the home front." "The pensions for Congressmen, the newest veterans' bonus grab, the farm bloc's insistence on special treatment, the unwillingness of organized labor to abandon any of its gains" were cited by Mitchell as evidence that "civilians either fail to realize the significance of the struggle or are so blindly selfish as to put personal gains above the threatened loss of all that makes democratic existence worth living."<sup>42</sup>

What Mitchell could not have predicted is that home front Americans not only would be able to respond to the industrial challenge presented by the war but also would be able to enjoy those "personal gains" in the form of unprecedented prosperity. In February 1942, the last automobiles rolled off American assembly lines, signaling, as *Time* put it, "the end of an epoch in U.S. industrial history."<sup>43</sup> From now on, Detroit would be producing weapons rather than passenger cars.<sup>44</sup> To spur on wartime production, the federal government offered industry generous tax breaks, government loans for plant expansion, and cost-plus contracts—providing, in David M. Kennedy's words, "iron-clad guarantees of profits beyond the most avaricious monopolist's dreams."<sup>45</sup>

With industry converting for the war, the specter of forthcoming shortages produced an Easter shopping frenzy, with men buying three suits instead of one (after April 1 suits would be both cuffless and vestless to preserve wool), and women snapping up everything "from snoods to girdles" because of predicted shortages in silk, rubber, and other fabrics.<sup>46</sup> The world of fashion had to make accommodations for the war and clothe itself in the robes of patriotism. In April the chief of the clothing section of the War Production Board (WPB), Harold Stanley Marcus of Texas' Neiman Marcus store, assembled seventy fashion editors from women's magazines. To preserve fabric, Marcus' plan was to freeze the current silhouette, to eliminate the extraneous (e.g., deep hems, wide belts, voluminous skirts), and to sell jackets separately from their dresses, and coats separately from their suits. As Adela Rogers St. Johns put it, "The overdressed woman will be as unpatriotically conspicuous as though she wore a Japanese kimono."<sup>47</sup> The most conspicuously overdressed men were wearing zoot suits, which, because of the yards of cloth needed to make each suit, were condemned by the WPB in the fall of 1942 as interfering with the war effort.<sup>48</sup> In addition to freezing the fashion silhouette, the WPB also froze stocks of 10 vat dyes necessary for military uniforms. Of the colors that remained, black was not featured in fashion

collections because of its depressing associations with mourning war widows, and other colors were renamed to reflect a more patriotic imperative. Examples included “Valor and Freedom reds; Atlantic sand; Gunpowder, Air, Bomber and Pursuit greys,” and “Iceland, Gallant, Commando, Salute, Alaska, Independence and Overseas blues.”<sup>49</sup> Other military incursions into the world of fashion included a 1943 fad for berets, inspired by the headgear favored by British general Bernard Montgomery.<sup>50</sup>

Anticipating a metal shortage, men and women alike “grabbed up bicycles, housewares, appliances, and garden tools—anything made of metal.”<sup>51</sup> Razor blades would be limited to one per week per shaver.<sup>52</sup> The manufacturing of alarm clocks was halted to save metal, and when a jewelry store in Burbank announced the sale of 500 Swiss-made metal alarm clocks in the summer of 1943, a line a block long formed outside the door.<sup>53</sup> Manufacturers of toys turned back to unrationed wood and by fall were showing a full line of “militoys” (wooden tanks, Jeeps, PT boats, cannons, etc.) for the Christmas season.<sup>54</sup> (The militarization of America’s tots would also be reflected in a fad for dressing children up in military-style uniforms.)<sup>55</sup> The rubber shortage spelled doom for the rubber doll, and the dolls that were produced wore clothing that reflected the same fashion restrictions as adult clothing, such as narrow belts and simple lines.<sup>56</sup> Shoes were also rationed, and in one case women who were making incendiary bombs at the Electromaster plant in Detroit worked barefoot to preserve their shoes. A horrified management successfully petitioned the government to provide workers with safety shoes.<sup>57</sup> Cities started salvage collections of paper, steel, and rubber, but with mixed results. *Life* praised Binghamton, New York, as a “shining example,” while New York City’s salvage efforts were condemned as “shameful” because the city concluded that the pickup was costing more than the scrap was worth.<sup>58</sup> In total, the WPB estimated that its conservation program for 1942 had saved 1.65 million tons of steel and 163 million yards of cloth.<sup>59</sup>

There was also a ration on gasoline. Those who did only “nonessential” driving would get an A ration card and three gallons a week, but those who were able to obtain the coveted X ration card would be entitled to unlimited gas. So many claimed X status that the Office of Price Administration (OPA) announced that those who made false statements about their driving needs would be subject to penalties that could amount to ten years in prison and a \$10,000 fine.<sup>60</sup> By June 1942, gas rationing was casting a shadow over the summer vacation, with dude ranches and other remote destinations taking a hit.<sup>61</sup> Nor was a trip to the beach the attractive option it once had been. *Time* reported that Atlantic waters were often coated with oil and that bodies washed ashore “often enough to shock swimmers.” On the West Coast, “beaches are strung with barbed wire, studded with anti-aircraft batteries, coast artillery, searchlight crews.”<sup>62</sup>

Before the war was over, organized crime would move into the business of stealing gas ration coupons and counterfeiting its own, with the OPA itself estimating that counterfeit coupons accounted for 5 percent of the gas sold in the country.<sup>63</sup> In Detroit, the OPA discovered that 30 percent of gas coupons were counterfeit. The situation in that city became even more painful for the OPA when it had to bring charges against one of its own employees for selling 19,000 gas coupons on the black market.<sup>64</sup> The government estimated that total profits for counterfeit and stolen gas ration coupons amounted to a cool \$1 billion a month.<sup>65</sup>

Shortages would get worse as the war dragged on, and were already beginning to pinch by the end of 1942. Hoarding began as people bought things they did not need, or felt that they might need in the future. Residents of Atlanta, Georgia, descended on the town of Monroe and cleaned it out of its coffee, in Seattle there was a run on canned milk, and Denver experienced its first fire caused by hoarded gasoline. The editors of *Life* identified a

“me first” attitude [that had] swept the country,” and lamented that Americans “did not show themselves worthy of the boys at the front.”<sup>66</sup>

Finding adequate sources of labor and reaching accommodations with trade unions became the most pressing problem for the home front war effort. In 1941, more workers had been out on strike than in any previous year, and unions had won important closed-shop victories at Ford and in the coal industry.<sup>67</sup> With the United States now at war, such conflict between labor and capital had to cease, and ten days after Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt convened a conference of business and labor leaders. These representatives would ultimately hammer out a three-point program that specified no lockouts or strikes during the war, peaceful settlement of industrial disputes, and the creation of the National War Labor Board, on which labor, management, and the public would serve. The board was given the power to resolve labor disputes that could not be addressed in any other manner. The number of work stoppages dropped dramatically, from 23 million lost man-days in 1941 to 4.18 million lost man-days in 1942.<sup>68</sup> But after stabilizing early in the war, worker discontent became a growing problem as the war progressed.

The daunting task of manning America’s war industries would ultimately be addressed by what *Newsweek* called “the greatest shifting of population in the nation’s history” and by “the second winning of the West.”<sup>69</sup> The chaotic impact of this shift would be apparent from the beginning, bringing about changes that Ernest W. Burgess called “disquieting and disrupting.”<sup>70</sup> Catherine Bauer, a consultant to the Federal Housing Authority, agreed, taking note of the “waves of immigration and emigration dislocating the country ... one-sixth of our population are in a state of flux, physically and psychologically. If you ask them where they expect to be five years from now, they shrug their shoulders.”<sup>71</sup> One observer claimed that “the defense migrants are the 1940s successors to the 1930s Okies,” especially in “arousing fear and distaste” among those who were already living in the migrants’ destinations.

Unlike the Okies, the defense migrants of the 1940s had much brighter prospects for good-paying jobs.<sup>72</sup> In the Chicago area, 320 new factories were built (including four major aircraft plants) and the federal government spent \$2.4 billion. Some 65,000 blacks migrated from the South to Chicago, as well as 20,000 Japanese Americans who had been held in relocation camps.<sup>73</sup> As residents relocated for better jobs, some areas of the country experienced devastating population losses (the Middle Atlantic states and New England would be especially hard hit). Other regions saw population booms for which they were ill prepared.<sup>74</sup> Between 1940 and 1943, metropolitan counties in the Pacific and mountain states gained 920,000 residents at the same time that metropolitan counties in the Northeast were losing over a million. This trend would continue, and by the end of the war the population of San Diego would be increased by 190,000, that of San Francisco by 125,000, and Portland and Seattle by over 160,000 each. Most spectacular was the population boom of the Los Angeles area, which grew from 1.5 million to 3.3 million.<sup>75</sup> The sleepy town of Richmond, California, had a population of 23,000 in the late 1930s. After Henry Kaiser built four huge shipyards there during the war, the yards by themselves employed 150,000.<sup>76</sup> Even Las Vegas increased in size from 14,000 to 20,000, fueled by gambling around the clock and “the town’s quick marriage and divorce mills.”<sup>77</sup>

In America’s boomtowns housing was in chronically short supply, traffic was perpetually snarled, crime was on the upswing, pollution blotted the air, and city services and schools were stretched to the breaking point. W. Lloyd Warner bemoaned the fact that formerly sleepy villages now found themselves transformed into “brawling young cities with no past and with only a problematical future ... The usual recreational life has disappeared to be supplanted by the taxi dance, juke joint, beer hall, and gambling dive. Institutions such as the church and

lodge have almost ceased to function.”<sup>87</sup> Longtime residents and new arrivals viewed each other with mutual suspicion, and communities split into hostile camps.<sup>89</sup> Even in farm towns, “honky-tonks are springing up out of the prairie; farm boys are making big money in the new war plants ... and they feel cash burning in their pockets. Lots of boys in uniform are there too, and there are girls enough to go around.”<sup>90</sup> Commercialized prostitution moved in, “attempting the exploitation of soldiers from forts and camps in every part of the country,” and by mid-1941 the army already had a dramatic increase in venereal disease.<sup>81</sup>

There were problems, but there was also a sense of adventure and excitement—and, for the first time in many years, plenty of money. Cities never went to sleep because defense plants ran three shifts, 24 hours a day, and when people were not working they were looking for places to spend their cash. America’s urban centers became more cosmopolitan, with greater mixing of racial and ethnic groups. At least 2 million blacks would leave the South during the 1940s for opportunities in the North and West.<sup>82</sup> San Francisco by itself experienced an increase in its black population from less than 5,000 in 1940 to 12,000 by 1944.<sup>83</sup>

Paralleling the military efforts of 1942 was what one commentator called “the spring campaign that may decide them all”: the planting season on American farms. The requirements of war necessitated that some crops be curtailed (the planting of wheat was down by 12 percent), while others were increased (soybeans, field peas, and peanuts were increased by 54 percent, 75 percent, and 155 percent, respectively). While farmers and farm laborers were the most deferred groups in America, agricultural labor shortages still amounted to at least a million workers, and bringing in the crops was going to be a challenge.<sup>84</sup> The supply of migratory workers was severely affected by gas and tire rationing (and by better jobs elsewhere).<sup>85</sup> The YMCA announced plans to enlist 80,000 young people for farm work, and the American Women’s Voluntary Services began enrolling 10,000 California women to help with the harvests. Women now constituted 13 percent of the farm labor total (up from 1.5 percent in 1941), but in the end they would not be enough.<sup>86</sup> Farm workers were frozen on the job to prevent them from seeking more lucrative manufacturing jobs, and by the spring of 1943 arrangements had been made to import 50,000 farm workers from Mexico, 10,000 from Jamaica, and 5,000 from the Bahamas.<sup>87</sup> Between 1942 and 1947, 309,000 farm workers (219,000 of them Mexican *braceros*) were brought to the United States.<sup>88</sup> The gearing up of American industry and the massive population shift that went with it would make home front America a social experiment on a vast scale, with consequences that stretched far into the future.

## I. The Job

American workers during the war found themselves in the unaccustomed position of being a sought-after commodity. There were 8 million unemployed Americans in 1940 but only half that number in 1941, and by the following year there was a labor shortage.<sup>89</sup> Industry was thrown into turmoil as workers shifted from job to job, and businesses themselves pirated workers from other companies (a practice called “scamping”). Businesses also hoarded workers against possible plant expansions or losses to the draft by assigning many workers to a job that required only a few.<sup>90</sup> Worker turnover was fierce. By the fall of 1942 the Pittsburgh Coal Co. had experienced a 35 percent turnover (one southern boom town had a labor turnover of 25 percent per quarter), while in Seattle the aircraft mechanics union had lost more than 2,500 members in a single month: a third to the draft and the rest to higher-paid shipyard jobs. Apple growers in Washington’s Yakima Valley complained that they needed 35,000 more pickers immediately or they would lose their crop, and in Portland, Oregon, the Kaiser shipyards sent agents to New York City (one of the few places where there was high



unemployment) looking for workers. They signed up 4,000 workers in three days and shipped them across the country.<sup>91</sup> Even prison labor was pressed into service. Prisoners at the McNeil Island Federal Penitentiary in Washington were building patrol boats, while Alabama State Prison inmates were making shirts for the navy. Female prisoners at the Federal Reformatory for Women in West Virginia made bandoleers for the army, and San Quentin inmates made mattress covers, cafeteria trays, and nightsticks.<sup>92</sup>

In Seattle, the housing crunch was so severe that war workers from the Lake Washington Shipyards were sleeping in their cars and in chicken sheds. The nearby Inglewood Country Club turned its clubhouse into a dormitory for 300 men who paid \$12.50 per week for room and board.<sup>93</sup> The Los Angeles Housing Authority opened what it called “the world’s largest hotel for men” in late 1942, a facility designed to house 3,000 shipyard workers.<sup>94</sup> There was also a shortage of housing for shipyard workers in Portland, and Henry Kaiser had already begun constructing a housing tract that would accommodate 40,000, making this the second-largest community in Oregon. Included in the plans were two community halls, three shopping centers, and 107 playground areas.<sup>95</sup>

Washington, D.C., more than doubled its population between 1940 and 1943, with the number of federal employees increasing from 132,000 to 281,000. This made Washington one of the greatest boomtowns in the country, and with a greatly expanded federal bureaucracy, the demand was especially heavy for women with secretarial skills. “At that time, a warm body who could type was a very valuable asset,” said Irma Lee Wyatt, who migrated to Washington from Paducah, Kentucky. Wyatt was offered a job even before her civil service test was graded. The flood of secretarial workers created a typewriter shortage in Washington, and a radio call for donations was accompanied by a jingle that proclaimed, “An idle typewriter is a help to Hitler.” Housing was at a premium, and private home owners helped fill the gap by renting out rooms to “government girls.”<sup>96</sup> Always quick to identify a trend, Hollywood turned out an Olivia DeHavilland vehicle in 1943 called *Government Girl* (“Where the men are one to ten a gal’s gotta be good! No wonder no man is safe after dark!”).<sup>97</sup> When she went to work in Washington for the Navy Department, Elsie Bray lived at Arlington Farms, a small town that had been created with 9,000 residents—all female. Arlington Farms had nine two-story dormitories as well as a theater, bowling alley, beauty shop, dry cleaner, and department store. Every Monday night, the dormitories were closed to male visitors and “the lobby became the site of a huge pajama party.” After the war, Arlington Farms was demolished and became part of Arlington Cemetery.<sup>98</sup> In the estimation of many, the crowding, high prices, and the “endless, wearying succession of waiting” made Washington “a terrible place to live.”<sup>99</sup>

Challenging Washington on the misery index was Norfolk, Virginia, which J. Blan van Urk called “our worst war town.” In three years, Norfolk had doubled in population because of shipbuilding and an expansion of naval personnel. Every night, 12,000 sailors crowded into Norfolk looking for liquor and women, and the locals happily provided them. Venues for prostitution ranged from the 50-bedroom “service man’s stockade” outside of town to an alley with “a quilt spread on the brick pavement between garbage cans” where a prostitute plied her trade for a dollar a trick. As in other boom towns, housing for Norfolk civilians was in extremely short supply. In one 11-room house, 21 people were living with one bath and one toilet.<sup>100</sup>

Every American city involved in war production experienced troubles, but Detroit was arguably the most troubled. In mid-August 1942 an article appeared in *Life* called “Detroit Is Dynamite.” Detroit’s problems were legion and included long-standing friction between management and labor that was hindering war production. The city also attracted “demagogues of every persuasion—Communists, Fascists, Ku-Kluxers, Coughlinites, pro-Nazi leaders of the National Workers League.” Detroit already had one race riot under its belt, and racial



tensions continued to seethe. Perhaps Detroit's worst problem was housing. Detroit had an occupancy rate of 98.7 percent (85 percent was considered dangerously high), which forced some workers to live in tents, shacks, and trailers. North of the city some 300 families of defense workers had to lug their own water from a public hydrant because their water mains had been removed to supply another area. All of this, according to *Life*, had created "a morale situation which is perhaps the worst in the U.S."<sup>101</sup> *Life* published a follow-up article in March 1943 called "Detroit: Six Months Later," which acknowledged that while there were still problems in Detroit, most notably in the realms of housing and transportation, "the face of Detroit has changed tremendously in six months." Especially important was that "Detroit is no longer so worried about wartime race relations."<sup>102</sup> (Future developments would prove this to be a spectacularly bad analysis.) Detroit had a volatile ethnic and racial mix that consisted of some 210,000 blacks, 500,000 southern whites, 350,000 mostly Catholic Poles, and 70,000 Jews.<sup>103</sup> They did not celebrate their differences. There were considerable racial tensions on the job, and a *Harper's* article estimated that there were at least 2,500 southern-born evangelists in Detroit, who fed the faithful a steady diet of anti-black, anti-Jewish, anti-Catholic rhetoric.<sup>104</sup>

The UAW-CIO had successfully organized Detroit's auto industries by 1941, signing up some 450,000 workers in Detroit, including 55,000 blacks. This mass of humanity proved nearly impossible for the union to control.<sup>105</sup> The union's efforts to upgrade blacks to better jobs, for instance, prompted "hate strikes" by resentful whites. In 1942 there was a sit-down strike by white workers at Chrysler and Packard plants when skilled black workers were promoted.<sup>106</sup> In March 1943 there was a strike at Vickers when two blacks were promoted, followed by another hate strike at Ford's River Rouge plant. The 27 May 1943 strike at Packard was especially impressive: 20,000 white workers walked off the job because three black workers were promoted. As one southern white explained it, "I don't wanta work nex' to no nigger. They all got syphilis. If one of 'em touches you, you'll sure get it." Another feature of these hate strikes was the dissemination of anti-Semitic literature at the plants.<sup>107</sup>

Detroit's poisonous atmosphere finally spawned the inevitable. On 20 June 1943 a fistfight broke out between a black man and a white man on a bridge near Detroit's Belle Isle amusement park. The fighting spread to Belle Isle itself, where there were perhaps as many as 100,000 people on a humid Sunday afternoon. By the time the police arrived, the fighting had moved into other parts of Detroit and had become a full-fledged riot. Inflaming the rioters were two equally false rumors: that whites had killed a number of blacks on Belle Isle (and in one case had killed a black mother and child and had thrown their bodies in the water) and that blacks had raped and killed a white woman on the Belle Isle bridge. Blacks in Paradise Valley (a black ghetto) armed themselves, looted white-owned stores, and stoned cars with white drivers. Whites retaliated in kind, and the police seemed unable or, in the case of white violence against blacks, unwilling to stop the violence (of the 3,600 police in Detroit, only 40 were black). The rioting did not end until 6,000 armed troops occupied Detroit. At the end of this melee, 25 blacks and 9 whites were dead, 600 were injured, and 1,800 had been arrested.<sup>108</sup> It was the worst race riot in America since 1919. Detroit's prosecutor blamed the NAACP and the local black press for starting the riot, and Attorney General Francis Biddle came up with the novel, if unconstitutional, idea of barring all further black migration to Detroit.<sup>109</sup> Michigan's governor, Harry F. Kelly, offered a wider perspective: "Whatever the cause, it is not a local problem. It is America's problem."<sup>110</sup>

Indeed, it should be emphasized that bigotry was an option open to all colors and creeds in every American city. Italian Americans in New York, who had been on the receiving end of a great deal of discrimination themselves, harbored their own prejudices toward Jews and blacks. Paul Pisicano remembered that during the

wartime racial disturbances in Harlem someone threw open his door and said, "Let's beat up some niggers." It was wonderful. It was new. The Italo-Americans stopped being Italo and started becoming Americans."<sup>111</sup> Some 700,000 people from southern Appalachia moved north during the war for industrial jobs in cities such as Dayton, Detroit, and Muncie, but northern hostility toward "hillbillies" was strong enough that many of these same people drove back to their old homes on weekends.<sup>112</sup> In Buffalo, it was Catholic Polish immigrants who led objections to black housing projects, while in Denver, a federal housing plan that included blacks, eastern European immigrant workers, and Mexicans was rejected by Denver blacks because they did not want to live close to Mexicans. As *Fortune* magazine wryly observed, "Everybody is somebody else's Negro."<sup>113</sup>



**Fig 4.1** The Greatest Generation in action: street scene from Detroit race riot of 1943. Photograph by International, *Life*, 5 July 1943, 93.

In addition to race problems on the job site, there was a generalized worker suspicion of management. Workers remembered how they had been treated during the pre-union days of the Depression, and they were determined to oppose any resumption of what they saw as oppressive management practices. When

management put up a gate at Ford's Willow Run plant to make sure workers away from their stations were on legitimate errands, employees quit working until the fence was removed. On another occasion at the same plant, a one-day maintenance workers' strike that idled 15,000 other workers resulted in the loss of 100,000 man-hours. At Detroit's Continental Motors, workers were not given cigarette breaks, so they turned lavatories into smoking rooms, with some workers reportedly spending 45 minutes in the toilet.<sup>114</sup> Smoking was also an issue at Detroit's Chrysler plant, and when a worker was dismissed for "smoking and loitering," a wildcat strike idled 2,800.<sup>115</sup> One Detroit worker noted that when a group of employees at his plant went on a sit-down strike because of a perceived offense by a foreman, "it was two and a half hours before I realized they weren't working as usual."<sup>116</sup> Certainly, Detroit was not the only city to experience labor problems, and throughout the country work disruptions occurred for the most frivolous reasons. In Bayonne, New Jersey, for instance, employees at General Cable went on strike because workers were required to wear green buttons when going to the toilet, and the 100 female employees complained that this practice was especially embarrassing. Labor relations here were so bad that Roosevelt was forced to send in the navy to take over operations of the plant.<sup>117</sup>

In contrast to the labor problems of eastern cities was Los Angeles, which *Life* magazine depicted as a sort of workers' paradise. *Life* described the residents of southern California as "uninhibited to the point of being screwy, and energetic to the point of being frenzied," and claimed that Hollywood's dominance of the town was being overshadowed by its war industries—especially aircraft manufacturing.<sup>118</sup> A photo spread showed black and white women working together "with very little friction," and the article emphasized the amenities these workers enjoyed. These included dances for workers at the Douglas plant, a fashion show at Lockheed, and a boxing match at North American. Douglas retained a full-time lawyer and staff to provide legal services to workers, which included sending proxies to court to pay for worker speeding tickets.<sup>119</sup>

Los Angeles may have been the exception. By early 1943, the honeymoon that labor, management, and government had established at the beginning of the war was over, and the strain was beginning to show in all parts of the country. Early on, labor leaders had signed on to the "Little Steel" agreement, in which wage hike demands would not exceed 15 percent (to match the projected rise in living costs). But living costs had risen 20 percent since the beginning of 1941. Union presidents, including R. J. Thomas of the United Auto Workers, now demanded a 30 percent wage increase, and workers in other industries were prodding their own leaders in that direction by staging unauthorized "quickie" strikes for a few hours or a few days.<sup>120</sup> The month of May saw a 3.5 percent drop in war production, which Undersecretary of War Robert P. Patterson blamed on sagging morale.<sup>121</sup>

Nowhere was labor unrest more pronounced than in America's coal fields, and the United Mine Workers' (UMW) strike against coal operators in 1943 would be the most serious work stoppage of the war.<sup>122</sup> This strike would also envelop UMW chief John L. Lewis in what *Fortune* called an "unholy aura," and make him the most hated American of the war.<sup>123</sup> The government seized the mines and threatened to draft miners, but dwindling coal supplies were forcing production and scheduling cuts in the crucial steel and railroad industries. Lewis would win the wage increases that he sought, but public support for labor unions suffered as a result, and vilification was heaped on Lewis. *Life* compared Lewis' coal strike to Stalin's break with Poland and called Lewis "equally ruthless."<sup>124</sup> *Newsweek* ran a cartoon showing Lewis' bushy eyebrows addressing Hitler's mustache. The eyebrows ask, "Does the U.S. mine situation please you now?" and the mustache replies, "Ach, Sehr goot, mein freund! Sehr goot!"<sup>125</sup>

Hatred of Lewis was especially pronounced among servicemen. In a letter that he sent home from North Africa, airman Carl Victor Abrams referred to the coal strike and said, "To us, it seems unreal. A few of the boys

were talking about it and were very bitter toward the strikers.”<sup>126</sup> Artilleryman Win Stracke remembered “heated discussions when John L. Lewis pulled out the miners. Oh, the terrible bitterness. ‘Those sons-o’-bitchin’ miners are makin’ a hundred and fifty or two hundred bucks a week and we’re bustin’ our asses for a hundred dollars a month. They oughta string ‘em up.”<sup>127</sup> The army’s newspaper *Stars and Stripes* editorialized, “John L. Lewis, damn your coal-black soul.”<sup>128</sup>

In an atmosphere of home front grouching about wages and rationing, the president authorized the release of graphic photos of war casualties in May 1943 as a way of emphasizing the sacrifices that American servicemen were making.<sup>129</sup> They seemingly had little effect. Encouraged by Lewis’ success, both railroad workers and steel workers walked off the job at the end of 1943. Roosevelt responded by ordering Secretary of War Henry Stimson to seize the entire U.S. railroad system on 27 December. This action was widely viewed as a shot across the bow for the 170,000 striking steel workers.<sup>130</sup> The number of workers on strike in 1943 was more than double the 1942 total, and walkouts in 1944 and 1945 continued to increase. By the time Japan surrendered in 1945, the number of Americans on strike was quadruple the 1942 total—involving about an eighth of the workforce.<sup>131</sup>

## II. Women on the Job

From the beginning, it was obvious that America would have to turn to female workers to fill the labor shortfall, but the creation of a feminized workplace would not occur without a great deal of resistance. As early as the spring of 1942, the government was considering registering women for possible defense work (Oregon had already done so, signing up some 450,000 in the state, including a 100-year-old Indian woman who had toured Europe with Buffalo Bill).<sup>132</sup> But many women who tried to sign up for war work in the early months after Pearl Harbor were told, “No defense jobs unless you are a trained machinist or assembler.”<sup>133</sup> *Fortune* magazine took note of the “strong, ingrained ideas about what women should or should not do,” and reported that many people were “seriously disturbed over the wisdom of bringing married women into the factories.”<sup>134</sup> One poll showed that fewer than 30 percent of men supported the idea of their wives working a full-time job in a war plant.<sup>135</sup> Such attitudes had carried over from the previous decade, when the widespread hostility toward married women who worked outside the home was based on the public perception that these women were taking jobs away from male breadwinners. Such chauvinistic attitudes were luxuries in this national emergency, and in late 1942 *Time* proclaimed that the millions of women now employed in industry had produced a “social revolution”: “There is hardly any job—truck driver, mechanic, cobbler, oyster shucker, engineer, bartender, butcher, baker or candlestick maker—that women cannot get if they want them and more & more women are getting them.”<sup>136</sup> Women were now actively recruited for war work throughout the country. In Chicago, for instance, “teams from Johnson and Johnson, Douglas Aircraft, and other war contractors went door-to-door selling women on a temporary industrial career.”<sup>137</sup>

Indeed, of all the changes that took place in America during the war years, it was the addition of millions of women to the workforce—many in industrial jobs that had formerly been the exclusive purview of men—that arguably had the greatest social impact. More than 19 million American women would be part of the labor force during the war years (some 36 percent of the total), with some 6.5 million women (most of them married) entering the workforce for the first time between 1941 and 1945.<sup>138</sup>

Attracting women to jobs previously held by men was the work of the War Manpower Commission, which waged an aggressive promotional campaign on a broad front that utilized films, newspaper ads, and radio



programs.<sup>139</sup> One tactic used to make the work itself less intimidating to women was to describe it in domestic terms. A propaganda film called *Glamour Girls of '43* portrayed industrial work in homey terms, declaring that “instead of cutting the lines of a dress, this woman cuts the pattern of aircraft parts. Instead of baking cake, this woman is cooking gears to reduce the tension in gears after use.”<sup>140</sup>

One of the main challenges in recruiting women to war work was overcoming the perception that such work would defeminize them. *Newsweek* ran a cover story that proclaimed, “Glamor in Overalls: War Work Draws Women.”<sup>141</sup> A *Life* article admitted that while Boeing worker Marguerite Kershner might have smudged makeup and grease under her nails at the end of the day’s work, “when she checks in the next morning at 6:30 a.m. her hands will be smooth, her nails polished, her makeup and curls in order, for Marguerite is neither drudge nor slavey but the heroine of a new order.”<sup>142</sup> In the feature film *Tender Comrade* (1943), smartly dressed female aircraft factory workers emerge from their day’s work still looking terrific.<sup>143</sup>

Businesses also got in on the act through their advertisements. An ad from a private power consortium that appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* described a woman who’s

5 feet 1 from her 4-A slippers to her spun-gold hair. She loves flower-hats, veils, smooth orchestras—and being kissed by a boy who’s now in North Africa.

*But, man, oh man, how she can handle her huge and heavy press!*<sup>144</sup>

North American Aviation asked, “What! An artist’s model building a bomber?” and the ILG ventilation company described a worker as “cute as a trick ... you’d never think she could inspect shells all day, then be fresh and eager for a date at eight!”<sup>145</sup> In a Pond’s cold cream ad that proclaims, “She’s Engaged! She’s Lovely! She Uses Pond’s!” Susan Huntington is shown learning how to use a drill press. All well and good, but “after a grimy day in the school shop, it’s wonderful to feel feminine again.” Somewhat bizarrely, the ad also features a close-up and description of Huntington’s engagement ring.<sup>146</sup> Bucking the trend toward using glamorous-looking females in industrial settings was the Pennsylvania Railroad, which employed a hefty woman in coveralls with the caption “Meet Mrs. Casey Jones.” Readers are told that women workers on the railroad can be found “where ‘man-size’ jobs have to be done.”<sup>147</sup>

While some companies portrayed working women in heroic terms—Mimeograph praised “the deft hands and strong hearts of women ... drafting and riveting, wiring and welding, loading and inspecting ... doing men’s work ... releasing men to fight”—much of the campaign to promote the suitability of women to war work was condescending in the extreme.<sup>148</sup> One ad placed by the Alemite lubrication company featured an illustration of a smiling female industrial worker holding a grease gun in one hand while pointing to herself and saying, “I’m the gal who couldn’t oil a sewing machine.” This fictional worker goes on to say that “my guy overseas would pass out if he could see me now ... the handiest gal with a grease gun this side of Hoboken.” Alemite, however, was less interested in demonstrating that the sexes were equally competent on the job than in showing that its new “Coloroute plan,” with color-coded lubrication points, made lubrication virtually idiot-proof. Learning this system, according to our worker, “took only a few hours because colors are easy for anyone.”<sup>149</sup>

A chronic problem plaguing war industries centered around the concerns of female workers with personal appearance versus the company’s need for worker uniformity and safety. In a single day in 1942, one aircraft company sent 53 women home for wearing tight sweaters (the sweaters’ alleged flammability, rather than their inflaming effect on male workers, was management’s justification).<sup>150</sup> The female workers wondered why men



were allowed to wear sweaters, if they were so dangerous.<sup>151</sup> In truth, manufacturers of work clothes were unprepared for female industrial workers. Managers had to provide small-size men's gloves for female employees because women's gloves weren't being made, and women's work shoes were virtually nonexistent. As for the leather pants worn by welders, "it was next to impossible to get a pair which leaves room for the hips and yet is not too big round the waist."<sup>152</sup>

Ruth Winkler, in charge of female personnel at the Glenn Martin plant in Baltimore, agreed that "the number one problem is clothes." Coming to industry's aid was a fashion trend for trousers that surfaced early in 1942. *Life* ran a cover story on "slack-crazy women," and *Time* opined that not since Amelia Bloomer appeared in trousers in 1849 "had such a feminine trouser sensation swept the country."<sup>153</sup> Soon trousers would be mandatory in many war industries. The Cadillac plant in Detroit required its female workers to wear coveralls (furnished and laundered by the company), and in some places women adopted the stylish uniform (a red bandanna and smart blue coveralls) created by the Woman Ordnance Worker movement.<sup>154</sup> The blue slacks that North American Aviation prescribed for its female workers were popular with workers because these trousers were attractive as well as functional, and much the same can be said for the "flying fortress fashions" created by the Boeing company.<sup>155</sup> Despite such advances, the clothes issue was never totally resolved, as women continued to bridle against being forced to wear unattractive garb on the job.

Equally daunting was the question of hair. Despite plant regulations that required turbans, bandannas, or other coverings to prevent women's hair from being pulled into the machinery, female workers repeatedly flaunted these restrictions. One manufacturer complained, "It's hard to make the youngsters tie up their glamour bobs," and a manager at another plant resorted to scare tactics by posting on its washroom walls photographs of a woman who had been scalped by a machine. These were "regularly ripped down by scornful females—who keep on fluffing their hair."<sup>156</sup> Mainstream magazines ran articles promoting the short do (*Life* declared that "for ten years the long 'glamor' bob has had a stranglehold on feminine coiffures, but today's war effort has broken down all resistance to barbers' shears"), but a more successful tack was to appeal to the Hollywood role models of these young women.<sup>157</sup> Veronica Lake, whose long, peek-a-boo hairstyle was much emulated by American women, was asked by government officials to cut her hair for the duration of the war. Lake agreed, first posing for a publicity photo in which her long tresses have become entwined with a drill, then adopting a shorter, upswept style. By doing so, Lake made a significant contribution to the war effort.<sup>158</sup>

Such concerns aside, once women were actually on the job they were nearly universally lauded by plant managers as excellent workers. In the piece that he wrote in 1943 on the New England shipbuilding industry, John Dos Passos referred to the "two great revolutions" that had occurred in shipbuilding in America: the substitution of welding for riveting, and the employment of women. The personnel director of one shipyard was effusive in his praise of female workers, who, he noted, had come to this job from all walks of life. Some were the wives of servicemen, some came from farm families, some had been textile workers, and, as Dos Passos put it, "some of them were tough little numbers from juke joints and dance halls." While it was oft en the case that these women were "scared to death" when first introduced to welding, after only a few days on the job they could "weld two steel plates together as coolly as they sew a hem on a dress."<sup>159</sup>



Fig 4.2 Women model worker safety gear (including plastic bra on the right), Los Angeles, 1943. Acme

Conditions for female shipyard workers varied greatly. Susan B. Anthony II, who was employed at the Washington Navy Yard, discovered that even though federal law supported the idea of equal pay and promotions for women, "the navy yards themselves seem to be unaware of the fact." Women started at a low wage and "they stay at it." Women were not allowed to join the main union at the yard, the International Association of Machinists, and Anthony took home just \$23 a week, which did not go very far in wartime Washington.<sup>160</sup>

Women elsewhere found war work to be an entree into a cosmopolitan world of which they had previously been only vaguely aware. One industry that aggressively courted rural women was the munitions plant at Elkton, Maryland. Through advertisements in local papers, young women were recruited from the mining regions of West Virginia and Pennsylvania, as well as from North Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky. Every day buses pulled up to the Elkton personnel office carrying new employees who had traveled between 12 and 18 hours. Mary Heaton Vorse described them as "young little mammas' girls with their hair curling in page-boy bobs over their shoulders. Fluttery high-school girls on the great adventure of their first jobs."<sup>161</sup> The months ahead of them produced startling changes in these young women. When Ellen Dearson first arrived in Elkton, she was "a solitary girl standing near the bus station. There was never anyone as lonely and forsaken-looking as she. Her skirt flapped about her ankles, her hair fell lank about her ears. Everything about her spoke of some remote Southern hill town." Two months later

she had on a wine-colored corduroy skirt, a pretty shirtwaist and some costume jewelry, little red flowers that went with her dress. Her dark hair was swept back from her eyes, which had been so guarded and lackluster before, but now shone with pride as though to say, "You wouldn't know me." ... She made more money than she had ever thought possible. The dormitory was luxury. The clothes were something she had not even dreamed of. Here all at once was companionship, adventure, a different status.<sup>162</sup>

Ellen Dearson's story would be multiplied a million times over. Young country girls, whose only prewar option had been to assume the lives that local custom dictated, suddenly found themselves working in strange cities hundreds of miles away, earning, by their standards, fabulous amounts of money, and having their social horizons expanded to an unimaginable extent.<sup>163</sup>

The presence of large numbers of female wage earners also changed the social landscape. Despite occasional government attempts to restrict the hours of bars and other entertainment venues, nightlife flourished during the war years, especially among swing shift workers. Hollywood's Florentine Gardens, for instance, filled its thousand seats every night with shows specializing in "tall, handsome showgirls parading around in various states of undress." While pricey, money was "no barrier to the aircraft workers and flush servicemen who jam it seven nights a week for an opportunity to purchase something they could never afford on pre-Pearl Harbor pay."<sup>164</sup> Released from their jobs at 12:30 a.m., these mostly young workers (average age 21) "are not ready to go home. They have money to spend, and they are hungry for romance and fun."<sup>165</sup>

When Walter Davenport and two companions investigated Los Angeles' nightlife in 1942, they adopted as their guide a female welder from Douglas Aircraft whom they met in a bar. She worked the swing shift from four in the afternoon to midnight, at which time the graveyard shift took over at a plant that never closed. Servicing



the swing shift in southern California were “rollerdromes, dance halls, bowling alleys, movies, taverns and trailer dingdongs which don’t flutter an eye until midnight. Speakeasies struggle to their feet at two a.m. because California’s legitimate bars close at that hour.”<sup>166</sup> The bar scene encountered by the researchers was raucous, and at one point a rumble that was about to break out between rival workers from Lockheed and Vega was forestalled when the two camps united to take care of a zoot suiter who had shown up (“the girls took his buttons for souvenirs and the lads took what was left”). Sharing the bars with zoot suiters and defense workers were servicemen, one of whom was confronted by MPs because he had a rye highball sitting in front of him (armed forces personnel were not supposed to drink anything but beer after ten o’clock at night). Also prowling the bars were undercover FBI agents, monitoring the conversations for any lapses in security.<sup>167</sup> At the dance halls, there was the weird sartorial mix of women in evening gowns meeting spouses or boyfriends who were still wearing coveralls from work. One dance hall bouncer observed:



**Fig 4.3** Female workers and the nose sections of A-20 bombers at the Douglas plant in Long Beach, California, October 1942. Alfred Palmer (Office of War Information), NARA file #208-AA-352QQ-5.

More than half of these fine mammas never wore an evening gown before. As for paying a dollar for an orchid—nuts! But now that their swell husbands are making ninety, a hundred and maybe a hundred and fifty bucks a week with overtime, what's a dollar? And if the mamma is on the assembly line, too, it's like President Hoover used to say—a chicken in every pot, all white meat.<sup>168</sup>

When the investigators called it a night, they left their welder guide at the bar, peacefully sleeping with a beer in her hand.<sup>169</sup>

The nightlife in New York was also extremely active, with nightclubs experiencing their greatest boom in history. Americans were now spending their money on entertainment rather than consumer items because there was little available for them to buy. While much about these clubs had changed—hardly anyone wore evening clothes anymore and women danced with each other because of the shortage of men—the food was still indifferent and the drinks small and expensive. But night after night, a flush economy and a “wartime craving for escape” drove patrons into such venues as El Morocco, La Martinique, and the Copacabana.<sup>170</sup>

A large body of anecdotal evidence suggests that one of the side effects of the wartime employment boom was a loosening of morals among workers of both sexes. One young woman in Chicago observed that “there were servicemen of all varieties roaming the streets at all times. There was never, never a shortage of young, healthy bucks ... and unless you were an absolute dog, you could pick up anyone you wanted to.” This woman and a co-worker who was also burning the candle at both ends took turns napping in the back room at the job site.<sup>171</sup> One male teenage worker said that during the war, “the plant and the town were just full of working girls who were on the make. Where I was, a male war worker became the center of loose morality. It was a sex paradise.”<sup>172</sup> When James Jones was in Memphis during the war, he went out with a young defense plant worker who lived with her parents and two sisters who also worked in defense plants. According to Jones, “this family's morals had changed sufficiently that nobody in the household cared if I came home and slept with her there in her little thin-walled room, as long as I did not keep her from getting to her plant in time for work.”<sup>173</sup>

Fred Kirkham, who was a supervisor at a shipyard in Hingham, Massachusetts, noted of the women at his plant that “some of the Rosies were conducting a little business on the side. The oldest profession. Some were doing it for promotion and some for actual dollars.” (Kirkham had grace enough to admit that his own morals weren't stainless. He was offered gas and meat coupons as bribes, and “I would lie if I didn't say I had a little piece of meat once in a while.”)<sup>174</sup> Indeed, there was gender equality when it came to moral mischief at the war plant. In one study of extramarital relations in war industries (conducted by the Domestic Relations Division of the Municipal Court of Philadelphia), 89 out of 100 complaints were lodged by wives whose husbands had had an affair at work.<sup>175</sup> That war work stimulated the libido is confirmed by historian Kevin Starr, who notes that a common occurrence in the aircraft factories of southern California was couples having sex in the plants' bomb shelters during lunch. According to Starr, the problem became so acute at Lockheed that “management requested that employees refrain from leaving garments and discarded condoms on the floor.”<sup>176</sup>

Women were also filling other jobs outside the war industries. In Gary, Indiana, 4,800 women were employed by U.S. Steel performing a wide variety of jobs.<sup>177</sup> In Omaha's Armour meatpacking plant, which was running 24 hours a day, “muscular women carve the slaughtered pigs with glistening ten-inch knives.... When the war news is bad, they sometimes slash at the pigs as if they had Hitler himself in their grasp.”<sup>178</sup> Women were also employed to do farm work, with International Harvester training women to become “Tractorettes”—



experts in the operation and maintenance of farm machinery. In an ad that would do any socialist realist proud, International Harvester shows smiling young women happily plowing fields, and includes the following bit of conversation from a farmer:

"I've got to go into town this morning and I'll be gone for a while. Meantime, Emily and Ruth might as well start in on the north forty."

Emily? Ruth? Girls? Sure, why not? For Emily and Ruth are Tractorettes ... and they know their stuff.<sup>189</sup>

It is difficult to argue that the influx of women into the American workforce had an impact that extended much beyond the war years (even in 1943, some 75 percent of young women expressed a preference for a housewife role over combining marriage and career).<sup>180</sup> But in terms of contributing to the American productivity miracle of World War II, the experiment with female workers was a brilliant success. Barely a year into the war, the United States was already producing more weapons than the Axis nations combined.<sup>181</sup> Much of the equipment that American industry produced for the military was excellent. The M-1 rifle was considered by many the best small arm of the war, and the American Jeep and two-and-a-half-ton truck were praised by friends and enemies alike. In addition, the American army was more mechanized than any of the belligerents. While a German infantry division used more than 4,000 horses, every American infantry division was totally motorized.<sup>182</sup>

But not all of the American war matériel was of sterling quality, and many of the weapons that American industry put in the field were technologically less advanced than those of the enemy. The German 88 mm. was by far the best artillery piece of the war, and American machine guns and mortars were inferior to German models. Nor could American tanks, nicknamed "Ronsons" by their crews because of their tendency to burst into flame, match German tanks.<sup>183</sup> Shells from German Tiger and Panther tanks could penetrate American Sherman tanks at 2,500 yards, but American tank destroyers often had difficulty disposing of German tanks even at a distance of 150 yards.<sup>184</sup> One of the few tactics available to Sherman tanks was to surround German tanks and hit their vulnerable flanks. General Omar Bradley commented that "this willingness to expend Shermans offered little comfort to the crews who were forced to expend themselves as well."<sup>185</sup>

Equally glaring was the technological gap in fighter aircraft. The two fighters that the U.S. relied on at the beginning of the war—the P-39 Airacobra and the P-40 Tomahawk—were undergunned, underarmored, and incapable of high-altitude operations (General Henry H. Arnold, chief of the army air forces, put the best face on it by calling them "medium-altitude fighters").<sup>186</sup> American fliers rated the Messerschmitt 109 the best plane, with the Focke-Wulf 190 not too far behind.<sup>187</sup> America's P-38 would be a step forward, and development of the P-47 and P-51 would make U.S. planes competitive with Germany's best. But by 1945 America had fallen behind again with the introduction of German jet fighters (the Me 163 and Me 262), and some American flyers worried that if the war extended into the summer, the Luft waffe might reclaim air superiority.<sup>188</sup> In the meantime, there were persistent rumors that Germany had developed a secret weapon based on "the release of atomic energy" that would be dropped by "super-stratosphere" planes.<sup>189</sup>

Charles G. Bolté concluded early in 1945 that this weapons technology gap "lends some weight to the German complaint that we defeat them by manufacturing large amounts of metal and then dropping the metal on their heads."<sup>190</sup> But sheer quantity was more than ample compensation for what the United States sometimes lacked in advanced technology. In the autumn of 1942 there were 3 aircraft carriers in the American fleet, but by the end of the war, there were more than 100.<sup>191</sup> Between 1940 and 1944 American tank production increased from

346 per year to 17,565, shipping from 1.5 million tons per year to 16.3 million tons, and aircraft production from 2,142 per year to 96,318. By 1944 the United States was producing 40 percent of the world's armaments. John Keegan contends that "in the final enumeration of Hitler's mistakes in waging the Second World War, his decision to contest the issue with the power of the American economy may well come to stand first."<sup>92</sup>

## The Home Front and Its Discontents

Wars always exact a terrible price. The most dreadful costs are in the form of lives and flesh and bone, but there are subtler costs as well. There are the financial costs of war, and nothing that human beings do costs as much as a war. Many citizens paid taxes for the first time during World War II, but taxes were not enough, and the government also turned to bond sales to finance the war. Bond drive promotions were ubiquitous during the war, bombarding citizens with appeals to their patriotism, appeals to their financial future and, if all else failed, appeals to their sense of shame. Citizens also paid a price for the war in the form of rationing. Virtually every commodity of any value was rationed, and supposedly the only way Americans could purchase these items was with ration cards. But when rationing began to pinch, a vigorous black market developed to fulfill the needs of the many who were not willing to play by the rules. Finally, there was a cost to be paid by the American family. The excitement of war drew men and women together, but it also tore them apart. The marriage rate was up, but so was the divorce rate. There was a boom in the birth rate, but there was also an epidemic in child neglect. Older children also fell victim to the war, and they (and society) paid the price in the form of greatly increased juvenile delinquency.

### I. Love and Marriage

The links between war and sexual arousal have been long recognized (Freud famously engaged this topic in 1917), and it was undeniably the case that millions of American men and women found World War II to be a powerful aphrodisiac.<sup>1</sup> Writing early in the conflict, Ernest W. Burgess referred to the “glamour of the uniform, patriotic justification in acceding to the desire of a man about to give his life for his country, and the declining value of virginity and chastity.”<sup>2</sup> J. Glenn Gray remembered that “when we were in uniform almost any girl who was faintly attractive had an erotic appeal for us. For their part millions of women find a strong sexual attraction in the military uniform, particularly in time of war. ... Not only are inhibitions on sexual expression lowered, but there exists a much more passionate interest of the sexes in each other than is the case in peacetime.”<sup>3</sup> As Samuel Tenenbaum bluntly put it, “war creates a pathological interest in sex.”<sup>4</sup> Writing in *Social Forces* in 1943, Constantine Panunzio argued that the uncertainties of wartime made women who were ordinarily cautious “more daring,” and that “there is something about the uniform that makes women fall far more readily for soldiers than for mere men.”<sup>5</sup> One woman, who was 16 during the war, recalled that

I let a sailor pick me up and go all the way with me. I had intercourse with him partly because he had a strong personal appeal for me, but mainly because I had a feeling of high adventure and because I wanted to please a member of the armed forces.<sup>6</sup>

Love became entwined with the war effort, and marrying a departing soldier was frequently encouraged as an act of womanly patriotism. The result was that after Pearl Harbor a thousand war brides a day were going to the

altar.<sup>7</sup> More than 10 percent of 1941's weddings were performed after Pearl Harbor, which helped make the marriage rate in the United States the highest ever recorded up to this point.<sup>8</sup> Among the war brides was Dellie Hahne, who confessed that she did not much care for the man she married during the war but that "the pressure to marry a soldier was so great that after a while I didn't question it. I have to marry sometime and I might as well marry him."<sup>9</sup> Reinforcing this idea were countless advertisements featuring a woman embracing a soldier on his way off to war.<sup>10</sup>

One revealing study of American attitudes toward wartime marriages was conducted by Ohio State in 1944. Included in the study were 105 college sociology students (65 women and 40 men), 100 office workers (58 women and 42 men), and 50 defense workers (all women). While overall 68 percent approved of war marriages (the two most popular reasons for marriage among all groups were "will at least have 'memories'" and "take happiness while you can"), there were some revealing gender differences. In the college group, for instance, wartime marriage received a 71 percent female approval rate, but only a 40 percent approval rate among males.

The responses also exposed certain class differences. One college woman claimed that marriage would give a serviceman "a sweet memory to think about and carry with him to the front. When he remembers and plans for the future, surely he will have no heart for shoddy though immediate pleasures." This was *not* a view generally shared by the female office and defense workers. "Mary," for instance, insisted, "No ceremony is enough to stop 'em steppin out. Don't I see it every day and night? What ails these college girls is, they've got their heads in the clouds." There was also a sharp class difference in the importance that women attached to government payments and insurance for dependents of military personnel. While office and defense women ranked it sixth or fifth in importance, the college women ranked it last and, according to the interviewer, "were oft en shocked, sometimes angry, that such an item should even be taken seriously." Sheila, a riveter, replied, "It's all right for those who can go home to mother, but what if there's a baby? I'm on my own. My folks couldn't help and Bob's [her fiancé] wouldn't, so I've *got* to be practical."

Many women also expressed anxieties about delaying marriage until the end of the war. As one put it, "If we wait until men come back after this war lasts several years, they'll pass us up for younger women."<sup>11</sup> (In fact, many servicemen passed up American women altogether. By the end of the war immigration applications had been made for 60,000 British war brides, 8,000 war brides from France, Italy, and Holland, and 4,000 war brides from Australia and New Zealand.) Another woman claimed that in the marriage market even widowhood was preferable to not having been married at all, and that "society has little place for an old maid but with a widow, it's different." All groups and both men and women expressed considerable fear about the physical disabilities that might result from the war. One man said, "If I'm physically incapacitated, I hope it's curtains. How would I ever be sure that it wasn't just *pity* or *duty* instead of love?" Despite these apprehensions, a considerable majority favored wartime marriage, and researchers described this group as "healthy, eager, vitally alive," and determined "to win this business" and "have a shot at real living [via marriage] not because of war but in spite of it."<sup>12</sup>

That the war bride was often woefully ignorant not only of the man she had married but of men in general was confirmed by most counselors. One source of this ignorance was that many, if not most, of these newly minted wives were still living with their parents. A veterans' service bureau in Bridgeport, Connecticut, reported that nine-tenths of local war brides had gone back to living with their parents, and a wartime housing shortage encouraged this pattern throughout the country. One possible consequence of this wifely arrested development was, "Deposit a man matured by Cassino and Bastogne in that locale and he realizes he's wed to a juvenile."<sup>13</sup>

This trend had already become apparent early in the war, and in a 1942 *Ladies' Home Journal* article

American Institute of Family Relations director Paul Popenoe encouraged war brides to use the opportunity of the husband's absence "to become better acquainted with her husband's background if, as is often the case, she really knew little about it before marriage." Popenoe also suggested volunteer work at the USO, not only to contribute to the war effort but also to "learn more and more about men, which is a valuable education for any bride." Finally, this was an excellent opportunity for the war bride to "break with the old home and begin to be independent. They will be better prepared for homemaking when 'he' returns than they will if they simply stay on with mother."<sup>14</sup> In a *Life* cover story on the "lonely wife," Ethel Gorham (author of *So Your Husband's Gone to War*) advised the wife to maintain her own household: "you as the mistress of the house—instead of another female or assorted females—your husband as the master when he returns on furlough."<sup>15</sup>

## II. Dear John

If the naive war bride represented one side of the marital equation, the other side was the war bride who established her own home, worked her own job, and became all too independent of her husband and all too knowledgeable about the ways of men. With millions of women now working in factories, making new male acquaintances on the job, and making good money (the wages of female factory workers went up over 50 percent during the war years), the temptations were abundant.<sup>16</sup> Opportunities were somewhat less abundant than temptations, however, especially in smaller towns and cities. In its study of servicemen and their wives in the small city of "Midwest," researchers observed that "the dictum 'Be faithful' was enforced by an alert, community-wide network of gossip and informal espionage."<sup>17</sup> One Midwest wife said, "It doesn't matter what time it is, the people upstairs jump up to peek whenever I go out or come in," while another declared, "You can't go dancing, because in a town like this it would cause too much comment."<sup>18</sup> In one case, a mother of a serviceman expressed anxieties about her daughter-in-law: "Two different women have been to see me and tell me that they've seen her out with a man in town who's married and has three children. They saw her out at some kind of tavern, eating with him one night. Of course I wouldn't dream of telling Dan about her going out."<sup>19</sup>

Many were not as reticent, and the serviceman most likely first heard about the straying wife through the mail. While mail call was universally considered one of the most important events in a serviceman's life (Bill Mauldin said flatly, "A soldier's life revolves around his mail"), the piece of mail that soldiers dreaded most was the Dear John letter or, perhaps even worse, the letter from a "concerned party" detailing a wife's infidelities.<sup>20</sup> As early as September 1942, a *Collier's* editorial suggested that people writing to servicemen refrain from telling him "that his gal is dating somebody else, even if she is; or that his wife is not devoting quite 24 hours per day to pining piously for him."<sup>21</sup> By January 1945 the Red Cross warned that letters from wives seeking divorce and notes from acquaintances passing on rumors of a straying spouse were creating morale problems (and efficiency problems) among servicemen overseas. In Italy, a G.I. told Red Cross field director Ted Andreas about the divorce his wife was seeking, leaving Andreas with the impression that this soldier had "lost his spirit." Shortly thereafter the soldier was killed, and when Andreas went through this soldier's things he found "a crumpled, blood-stained letter from his wife's lawyer in his pocket. I could never make up my mind whether he had deliberately walked in front of death or not."<sup>22</sup> Bill Mauldin, who also served in Italy, observed:

A man feels very fine fighting a war when his girl has just written that she is thinking that perhaps they made a mistake. He might figure: What the hell, the only thing I was living for was that I knew she would wait for me. He's going to feel pretty low and he might get a little



careless because of it, at a place where he can't afford to be careless.<sup>23</sup>

The Red Cross estimated that in the Seventh Army alone, an average of five soldiers a day received word that their wives were seeking divorce or were involved in an infidelity. After touring the Pacific theater for six months, Red Cross representative Margaret Hagan observed that following a mail call a pall of gloom often settled over a military camp after servicemen opened Dear John letters. (Such letters were sometimes called the “Green Banana” in the Pacific.) Worse than these, according to Hagan, were the “I thought you ought to know” letters from friends and family reporting on the wife’s supposed unfaithfulness. Hagan advised wives seeking divorces and those bearing tales to hold their concerns until the serviceman returned. “Since most men hope to come back and find their homes just like they left them—with even the furniture in the same place—such letters shock and upset them.”<sup>24</sup> Some victims managed to respond in innovative ways. At an air base in India, a group created the “Brush-Off Club,” with membership restricted to jilted G.I.’s. One of the newest members was immediately elevated to the highest status because of the spectacular circumstances of his brush-off. In the last paragraph of a long letter, his fiancée casually mentioned that “I was married last week but my husband won’t mind you writing to me occasionally. He’s a sailor and very broadminded.”<sup>25</sup> When one marine received a Dear John letter, accompanied by a request that he send the former fiancée’s picture back to her, he collected pictures of women from everyone he knew (“pictures of Australian girls, native women with nothing above the waist, movie actresses, pin-up girls”), and sent the stack to the girlfriend with a note: “I don’t remember exactly who you are, but if your picture is among these, please pick it out and send the rest back to me.”<sup>26</sup>

While it was the typical pattern for divorces to decline during war (one commentator observed that a great number of men “temporarily solve their marital difficulties by enlisting”), many wartime marriages did not make it through the conflict.<sup>27</sup> By 1945, divorce petitions had doubled, with 31 couples legally separating for every 100 that got married.<sup>28</sup> In Los Angeles, the clamor for divorces was so intense that Superior Court judge Walter S. Gates suggested the establishment of a night court that would handle divorces for men and women who were busy in war plants during the day.<sup>29</sup> “Doughboy divorces” were filed by the thousands, with many states establishing records for marital dissolutions (the divorce business was especially brisk in Nevada, the state where it was easiest to obtain a divorce). In the many cases where the divorce-seeking serviceman had no idea where his spouse was residing, the military published a two-by-two-inch notice of the divorce proceedings in a newspaper located near the wife’s last known address. Sometimes the spouse did not hear of the divorce until receiving a note from the Office of Dependency Benefits that read, “Family allowance has been discontinued. Reason: soldier divorced.”<sup>30</sup>

### III. Wartime and Children

The disruptive impact that war had on marriages extended to the off spring of these unions. The baby boom associated with the immediate postwar period arguably began in the year before the war. There was a rush to the altar in the four months prior to passage of the Selective Service Act of 1940 in large part because the act exempted fathers from the draft. (A similar phenomenon was seen during World War I, when many draft boards extended deferments to married men.)<sup>31</sup> And it is perhaps no coincidence that nine months or so after the 1940 law went into effect there was an 11 percent spike in the birth rate. One Selective Service official bluntly asserted that “about half the increase in marriages must be traced to bare-faced draft evasion.”<sup>32</sup> An anecdote making

the rounds early in the war was the story of a woman who was making arrangements to meet another woman she did not know in front of a department store. When asked how she would be recognized, she replied, "I will be the woman who is not pregnant."<sup>33</sup> As the birth rate was increasing, the age of mothers was decreasing. Recognizing this trend, manufacturers brought out new lines of "junior mother" maternity clothes. Girls of 18 and 19 were "marrying soldiers home on leave in ever-increasing numbers and having babies quickly because they know their new husbands may be sent away for a long time or forever." The problems faced by these "good-bye" babies and their mothers would be considerable.<sup>34</sup>

Many women with absent spouses developed what psychiatrist Jacob Sergi Kasanin called a "new disease" that was characterized by colitis, depression, diarrhea, and heart palpitations. Kasanin reported that over the course of 18 months some 2,500 women had been treated for this neurosis in the San Francisco area alone.<sup>35</sup> Other women withdrew into what Hannah Lees called "the shell of their homes," where they threw "the entire burden of their loneliness on the children they think they are taking such good care of." Among the many challenges faced by mothers with absent husbands was how "to keep our children from growing to believe that a world of women is the only normal one."<sup>36</sup> There was also the problem of the emotional impact of the war itself on children. A government publication called *To Parents in War Time* recommended that "war's grim realities be incorporated into family life as rapidly and as casually as possible. Matter-of-fact discussion of disaster reduces its terror."<sup>37</sup> Still, at least one study of servicemen and their wives concluded that "the everyday rewards seemed far to outweigh the occasional anxieties" of having children.<sup>38</sup>

Millions of mothers entered the workforce during the war, and one of the dark sides to Rosie the Riveter working overtime while G.I. Joe fought America's enemies abroad was the effect these absentee parents had on their children. In a *Woman's Home Companion* article that he wrote in 1944, Alfred Toombs declared that at the same time America was experiencing its greatest baby boom, "normal patterns of family life are being destroyed" as men entered the military and women the workforce.<sup>39</sup> The consequences, according to *Fortune* magazine, was that "child neglect is verging on a national scandal."<sup>40</sup> It should also be noted that female workers who became pregnant on the job were typically discharged by management. To keep their jobs, many women had abortions. In an unusually frank *Harper's* article from September 1943, A. G. Mezerik observed that "abortion rings are doing a land-office business."<sup>41</sup> In San Francisco, District Attorney Edmund G. Brown reported that some 18,000 abortions had been performed in that city in the year 1945 (dwarfing the city's robust birth rate of 16,400). Brown, according to *Time* magazine, was "wading into a sordid abortion racket which he claims lures pregnant women to the Golden Gate city from all over the West Coast."<sup>42</sup>

Of the American women who joined the labor force between 1940 and 1944, 3 million were married and half of these women had children under the age of 10. Of this latter group, 280,000 had absent husbands in the military as of February 1944. What followed was an alarming spike in juvenile delinquency and "reports from all over the country of neglect of small children, locked in the house, the apartment, or the trailer during the hours the mother is employed in war industry."<sup>43</sup> James Madison Wood, president of Stephens College, put it bluntly: "We have thousands of underfed neglected children tied to clotheslines, locked in cellars or left to run wild, while Mother wields a blowtorch. We have courtesans, schoolgirl age, diseased in mind as well as body."<sup>44</sup>

Child neglect more often than not had financial roots, with military families especially vulnerable. A military wife received \$50 a month for herself, \$30 a month for one child, and \$20 a month for each additional child. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated that at least \$84 a month was needed to maintain a mother and one child, and with rising prices it was increasingly difficult to make ends meet on such a sum.<sup>45</sup> With women forced

to seek employment in order to survive, and with child care facilities either inadequate or nonexistent, the horror stories proliferated. Perhaps 6 percent of working women had infants, and in California it was closer to 10 percent. Louise Moss, employed by the Office of Civilian Defense in California's San Fernando Valley, told a Senate committee, "I have seen children locked in cars in parking lots in my valley and I have seen children chained to trailers in San Diego."<sup>46</sup> Alfred Toombs reported visiting "shabby rooming houses where I saw underfed babies sharing their cribs with vermin. I went to war housing projects where infants less than two years old were left under the loose supervision of neighbors—or under no supervision at all—while their mothers worked." One child had been left alone in its playpen in the backyard, and only the kindness of a next-door neighbor had saved the child from being drenched in a passing storm. The next day the child was back out in the yard again.<sup>47</sup>

The war years saw the creation of a legion of "door-key kids," named after the keys they wore around their necks to let them back in their homes after school was out. In Chicago, a nine-year-old began his day by getting his four-year-old sister up, feeding her, and dropping her off at kindergarten on his way to school. At lunchtime, he picked her up, fed her, then locked her in the house while he returned to school.<sup>48</sup> In the boomtown of Norfolk, Virginia, child welfare authorities handled more than 300 cases of child neglect and abuse in 1942 alone (there had only been a hundred such cases per year before the war).<sup>49</sup> One possible solution was temporary foster homes. In 1945 some 120,000 American children, ranging from "ten-day-old infants to teenagers," were in such homes. These children were not meant to be adopted permanently but were "duration orphans" who would presumably be reunited with their parents once the war was over.<sup>50</sup> It is obvious that working women were put into a double bind. When they were tending to their children, they were criticized for being absent from their jobs, and when they were tending to their jobs, they were criticized for being absent from their children.

The impact of the war on older children was also significant and was reflected in increased juvenile delinquency. The trend was obvious as early as the fall of 1942, when a series of articles detailed what *Life* called "lurid accounts of murders, muggings, rapes and robberies" committed by boys, and girls "leaving home to play harlot."<sup>51</sup> Statistics kept by juvenile courts and police departments during these years were not uniform, but using 1940 as a base year, cases tried in juvenile courts had increased by 56 percent by 1943, dropped somewhat in 1944, then returned to the 56 percent level in the last year of the war.<sup>52</sup> In Walter A. Lunden's study, which includes juvenile cases in 200 courts, the increase in juvenile delinquency between 1940 and 1945 is a sobering 72 percent.<sup>53</sup> In Brooklyn it was even worse, with youthful offender cases rising by 100 percent during the war years.<sup>54</sup> In Harlem, there had been youth gangs for generations, but as *Time* magazine put it, "war brought a disquieting transformation" to these gangs. Now they were more heavily armed, more violent and more likely "to terrorize the law-abiding folk of Harlem."<sup>55</sup> Boys committed such mindlessly destructive acts as starting movie theater fires by slashing open seats and putting burning cigarettes in them. Sometimes they even derailed trains. Two boys in New York derailed a train with tank cars that exploded and set three houses on fire, while in another case three boys derailed a troop train. The FBI reported that now it was spending as much time on bringing youthful saboteurs to justice as it was on pursuing agents of the Axis.<sup>56</sup>

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of juvenile offenses during World War II was the epidemic in female delinquency. While boys continued to commit the large majority of offenses, the juvenile delinquency rate among girls had increased by 94 percent by 1943. This increase was rooted in the social dynamic created when soldiers and sailors "free from home restraint and out for a good time" met "restless and venturesome girls"

without home guidance.<sup>57</sup> A remarkable increase in prostitution and other “sex offenses” and an epidemic in venereal disease were the end results.<sup>58</sup> In the six months between the attack on Pearl Harbor and June 1942, venereal disease and pregnancy among San Francisco schoolgirls doubled.<sup>59</sup> By 1945, New York City health commissioner Ernest Stebbins was reporting that over the course of two years there had been a 204 percent increase in syphilis among girls 15 to 19 years old.<sup>60</sup> The *New York Times* argued that “the girls of high-school age are not prostitutes in the professional sense of the word. They are the victims of lower moral standards and of their own recklessness.”<sup>61</sup> Vera Connolly compared female juvenile delinquents to “excited little moths flying from neglect at home to the bright lights of the cities, getting singed and disappearing down dark streets—this is a grim product of the war.”<sup>62</sup> Roger Butterfield declared that “the teen-age girl, with a pretty but empty head, and an uncontrolled impulse to share somehow in the excitement of the war, has become a national problem child.” Servicemen had a number of nicknames for these girls, including “patriotutes,” “khaki wackies,” and the name most commonly used, “Victory girls.”<sup>63</sup>

The juvenile delinquency rate was higher in areas with defense industries, but it was high elsewhere as well. There was never any great mystery as to the source of this problem. Millions of American families had uprooted themselves and migrated to other parts of the country. There they typically faced crowded living quarters with one or both parents absent while their children were unsupervised at home or working their own jobs. The previous decade had been an era of low wages (and low juvenile delinquency), but the war years brought ample employment opportunities, good wages—and youthful unrest. As *Life* put it, “When fathers go to war and mothers go to work, children seek companionship and amusement in pool rooms, poorly policed parks and areaways where crime breeds freely.”<sup>64</sup> To make matters worse, probation officers emphasized that in many households with absent fathers, the work that women were doing was neither war work nor financially necessary. A Phoenix probation officer claimed that “some parents are making every effort to catch up financially, leaving the children on their own for most of the day.” A probation officer in Oklahoma City insisted that “there are mothers working where it is not financially necessary,” and added that their children “would benefit by their remaining in the home.”<sup>65</sup> Summarizing a 1943 study, the National Probation Association’s Frederick W. Killian observed, “It becomes apparent that in many cases mothers are not obliged to work but do so merely for more spending money; that many mothers are not employed in war industries or essential industries; and that in many industrial towns the pattern of expenditure is frivolous.” According to Killian, formerly destitute families were now engaged in “orgies of spending,” creating in their children a “severe temptation to leave school for lucrative wages.”<sup>66</sup>

Many children abandoned their homes and went on the road seeking their own wartime opportunities. In Seattle, local law enforcement agencies received scores of letters from around the country expressing concerns that runaway juveniles had gone to Seattle to do war work.<sup>67</sup> High school enrollment during the war years dropped from 7.25 million to 6 million as the number of young people between 14 and 17 holding down jobs nearly tripled.<sup>68</sup> To keep students in high school, the War Manpower Commission created the Victory Corps, where students spent an hour a day on military drills and took intensive courses that included riveting, drafting, blueprint reading, and metal work. Seniors left classes at noon to work at jobs.<sup>69</sup> The schools themselves were often subpar because huge numbers of teachers were also leaving the schools. Between 1941 and 1943, out of a population of about 900,000 teachers, 150,000 left the profession.<sup>70</sup> By October 1943, approximately 2.75 million children were working (1.5 million had full-time jobs) and 27 states had modified their child labor laws



to meet manpower demands.<sup>71</sup>

California, with its booming economy and numerous war plants, was especially alluring to older children.<sup>72</sup> Four thousand boys of high school age were working for a single southern California aircraft company—Lockheed—in the summer of 1943.<sup>73</sup> The same year, 10,000 transient children were arrested in California, and half of them were from other states.<sup>74</sup>

Ever alert to the possibility of making a buck, Hollywood tried to cash in on the public's interest in juvenile delinquency with a potboiler called *Where Are Your Children?* The Bureau of Motion Pictures was appalled by this film's "sensational portrayal of a young girl's downfall," which included scenes of "youthful drunkenness, orgiastic dancing and necking, a seduction resulting in pregnancy, a stolen car, a joy ride, [and] an attempted murder." Monogram Pictures was forced to cut more than 500 feet from the film before it was approved for release. Rival RKO's proposed juvenile delinquency film went through a series of name changes (from *Youth Runs Wild* to *Are These Our Children?* to *The Dangerous Ape* to *Look to Your Children*) before gaining approval. Its final scene was gratifyingly uplifting, with "stock shots showing how the Boy Scouts, 4-H Clubs, city playgrounds and similar institutions are combating juvenile problems."<sup>75</sup>

As is often the case, it was the mother who was forced to accept the blame for the huge societal changes that were at the root of youthful unrest. James Madison Wood took to task the mothers who "swap their aprons for overalls and trade their homes for auto-trailers," while their children were "learning every form of vice and crime—drunkenness, dope addiction, murder, kidnaping, rape and robbery." Young offenders might have turned out decently if only their mothers "had not put activities outside the home ahead of their duty to their children and society."<sup>76</sup> J. Edgar Hoover insisted that "*there must be no absenteeism among mothers*" (Hoover's emphasis) and that "if the drift of normal youth toward immorality and crime is to be stopped, mothers must do the stopping."<sup>77</sup>

While parental neglect was a prime cause of youthful delinquency, underfunded and understaffed schools and child welfare agencies exacerbated the problem. In addition, youth programs were often rejected by those they were supposed to serve. When members of a New York youth gang called the Dukes addressed the annual meeting of the American Prison Association in 1944, conventioners were told by one gang member that community social programs were often "the ideas of fellows outside who don't know what we want, and who want to do something to us, without asking us what we think about it." Another Duke said that youths collected in gangs because if they did not, other gangs would beat them up. He added, "We like excitement, too. And we go looking for a fight. That's something; that's fun."<sup>78</sup> Youth gang activities also became entangled with race. In Detroit, for instance, black and white youth gangs fought a "pitched battle" with each other in June 1943 (their elders would stage their own race riot a month later).<sup>79</sup> Perhaps it was the war itself, rather than any single element, that was the cause of juvenile delinquency. Martin Neumeyer, who published "Delinquency Trends in Wartime" in the spring of 1945, claimed that the wartime atmosphere, with its "tensions, frustrations, restlessness, relaxation of social control, adventurous spirit, mental disorganization, the effects of military life, [and] the imbalance of the sexes in the community," had all contributed to juvenile delinquency.<sup>80</sup>

In *A Cycle of Outrage*, James Gilbert emphasizes that juvenile delinquency became a public issue late in 1942 not only because the data indicated an increase in youth crime but also because the warnings of juvenile experts "generated public expectation of a crime wave."<sup>81</sup> To much of the public, the notion that juveniles were now running wild seemed to be confirmed in the "zoot suit riots" of 1943. The zoot suit was an outlandish clothing style that had been adopted by many young people in the 1940s and was especially popular among Mexican



American youths in the Los Angeles area. Los Angeles was also home to a large number of military installations, and Mauricio Mazón has suggested that for young servicemen, the zoot suit represented everything that they were denied:

The zoot suit symbolized youthful disdain for established mores. It was iconoclastic, taunting; a statement of adolescent narcissism, omnipotence, and overcompensation. It conferred entry into a select culture unavailable to servicemen.<sup>82</sup>

For 10 days, beginning on June 3, 1943, zooters and servicemen clashed on the streets of Los Angeles in what *Life* called “the strangest campaign World War II has yet produced.”<sup>83</sup> Carey McWilliams placed responsibility for the riots on the police and on the press—especially Hearst publications. “The constant repetition of the phrase ‘zoot-suit,’” said McWilliams, “coupled with Mexican names and pictures of Mexicans, had the effect of convincing the public that all Mexicans were zoot-suiters and all zoot-suiters were criminals; ergo, all Mexicans were criminals.”<sup>84</sup> Mazón agrees, and observes that in Los Angeles during the war, “the problem of juvenile delinquency was reduced to a Mexican problem—a zoot-suit pachuco gang-member problem,” and despite evidence to the contrary, the public perception was that it was the zoot suit wearers who began the riots by attacking military personnel.<sup>85</sup>

By the end of 1945 the war was over, but the juvenile delinquency problem remained. A national meeting of police chiefs in December reported that juvenile offenses had sharply increased since May. In an address written by President Truman and delivered at the same meeting, Truman noted that while police departments were faced with many serious problems, “perhaps the most alarming is the increase in juvenile delinquency.”<sup>86</sup> It was ironic, given subsequent experience, that one of the proposals for reducing juvenile delinquency was moving families into public housing projects.<sup>87</sup>

Sharply increased juvenile delinquency and a generation of neglected children was one of the grim costs of the Second World War. Allan Knight Chalmers, pastor of the Broadway Congregational Tabernacle in New York, summed up the impact of the war on American children: “From Park Avenue to Hell’s Kitchen mother was in war work, and men and money were siphoned off into the national emergency, as they called it, and the kids were neglected. We have that bill to settle now.”<sup>88</sup>

#### IV. The War Bond Drives

The bond drive was an inescapable part of life on the American home front. The great bond drives of the Second World War had their antecedents in the Civil War, when modern selling techniques were used for the first time to convince individual Americans to purchase bonds. While the bulk of Treasury bonds were sold to the wealthy and to financial institutions, newspaper campaigns convinced a million middle-class northerners (representing a quarter of all families) to buy them too.<sup>89</sup> The propaganda efforts pioneered during the Civil War were greatly expanded by the Treasury Department during World War I, which conducted five Liberty Loan campaigns aimed at convincing Americans to put their savings into bonds. It was, said George Creel of the Committee on Public Information, “the world’s greatest adventure in advertising.”<sup>90</sup> War bond campaigns enlisted movie stars and patriotic speakers to address monster rallies, as well as writers to create pamphlets and artists to fashion posters.

World War I Liberty Loan posters were lavishly crude and included scenes of brutish German “Huns”

ravishing and murdering helpless Belgians. One poster, purporting to show the consequences of a German victory, featured bombs falling on New York City and a Statue of Liberty surrounded by flames.<sup>91</sup> And in case anyone had missed the point, Treasury Secretary William G. McAdoo bluntly asserted that every American who refused to buy bonds was “a friend of Germany.”<sup>92</sup> Crude or not, these campaigns were highly successful. All were oversubscribed, and even more so than during the Civil War, the Treasury Department succeeded in involving the middle class. In the Third Liberty Loan campaign of 1918, at least one-half of all American families signed up. The five campaigns raised \$20 billion, 30 percent of it from people earning under \$2,000.<sup>93</sup>

World War II would also see a massive effort to sell bonds, with the government hoping to simultaneously fund the war and reduce inflation “by taking money out of consumers’ hands and putting it into its own.”<sup>94</sup> But Treasury Secretary Henry J. Morgenthau Jr. was sensitive to the excesses of the World War I Liberty Loan campaigns and insisted that there would be “no quotas ... no hysteria ... no appeal to hate or fear.” Selling bonds would “sell the war, not vice versa.”<sup>95</sup> The government issued three different bonds, with the lower-denomination Series E bonds sold to individuals, while F and G bonds were sold to large investors. Savings stamps with values as low as 10 cents were also created, which enabled children to participate in bond drives through the Treasury Department’s “Schools at War” program. The A. B. Dick company helpfully provided the motivation for stamp purchases: “Every time we lick a War Stamp we make it surer we won’t ever have to lick the boots of a Nazi officer.”<sup>96</sup> “Liberty bricks”—bricks taken from Independence Hall after a renovation—were awarded to schools for their participation.<sup>97</sup>

The Treasury Department would mount seven war bond drives, and arguably the first and the last of these campaigns would attract the most public interest. It would be the presence of Hollywood stars, and the newness of these campaigns, that made the first bond drive a favorite with the public. Already there had been a Hollywood casualty when Carole Lombard was killed in a plane crash while on a war bond tour in January 1942. An all-out Hollywood “bond blitz” was launched in September 1942 with the “Stars over America” tour. Some 337 actors put in 18-hour days and were mobbed by enthusiastic crowds. Greer Garson and Rita Hayworth collapsed from exhaustion, but the tour sold more than \$838 million in bonds. In the course of the war Hollywood stars made bond appearances in 300 towns, with 20 percent of all war bonds sold in movie theaters.<sup>98</sup>

The government also enlisted the aid of songwriters to promote bond drives, and the result included such forgettable tunes as “One More Mile,” “Swing the Quota,” “Get Aboard the Bond Wagon,” and “Unconditional Surrender.” The immortal Irving Berlin crafted “Any Bonds Today.”<sup>99</sup> At the other end of the musical spectrum, Chicago’s Metropolitan Opera did benefit concerts for war bonds, as did Arturo Toscanini and the National Broadcasting Company Symphony Orchestra.<sup>100</sup>

Organized labor supported bond sales to union members, and virtually every American company instituted a payroll deduction plan for the purchase of bonds.<sup>101</sup> In fact, no group was neglected in the pitch for war bonds. In addition to the “Schools at War” program, there was also a Women at War organization and even a Grandmothers’ War Bond League.<sup>102</sup> Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and Future Farmers of America were all pressed into service, and there were “Bonds for Brides” and “Bonds for Babies” promotions (“For Baby’s Future, Buy War Bonds”).<sup>103</sup> Every ethnic group, including Japanese Americans, had war bond drives, and surveys showed that virtually the only bond slackers were university professors, their students, and the clergy, who were reluctant to ask congregations to contribute to war.<sup>104</sup>

American awareness of bond drives was virtually guaranteed because the government could rely on free and

nearly unlimited access to the media, and on the enthusiastic participation of American business. Hard-hitting advertising copy tried to shame Americans who weren't buying enough bonds. The makers of Pepsodent toothpaste ran an ad showing a woman at a drill press with the caption, "Her husband in a Jap prison camp in the Philippines ... her father in a Formosa prison camp ... she leaves 4 children at home ... while she works 8 hours a day—but *she* invests 25% in War bonds. Do you think you're buying enough?"<sup>105</sup> And for the backslider who might be considering cashing in his bonds before the end of the war, the Gruen watch company warned that such an action would "make deserters out of your dollars—a coward out of your cash."<sup>106</sup>

If one person could be said to have dominated the Third War Loan Drive, it was singer Kate Smith. Well known to Americans—an audience of 23 million a week tuned in to her daytime programs—Smith went on the air on 21 September 1943 for the Columbia Broadcasting System's War Bond Day. Over a marathon span of 18 hours, Smith would speak for a minute or two at intervals, urging Americans to buy bonds. She told stories of American bravery on the battlefield and American sacrifice at home. She spoke of honor and love and hometown boys facing danger. Her appeals were heartfelt and apparently unscripted, and Americans responded by pledging an astounding \$39 million in bonds in a single day. It was a bravura performance so impressive that an entire book would be written analyzing Smith's success.<sup>107</sup>

The Third War Loan Drive was also notable for its advertising overkill. Every possible medium—including posters, print, radio, matchbox covers, and milk bottle tops—was used to encourage Americans to buy bonds. Polls revealed that some 86 percent of nonfarming Americans had heard of the drive, and the Third War Loan Drive succeeded in bringing in more money than the Second.<sup>108</sup>

War bond posters were ubiquitous and could be found in banks, post offices, schools, factories, and virtually any other public space. Posters took a number of approaches to stimulate sales, including suggesting that there was a direct connection between a bond purchase and military action, by referring to sacrifice and a sense of community, and by portraying bonds as an investment in America's future. Another important theme was promotion of Franklin Roosevelt's Four Freedoms—freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, freedom from fear—the most famous renderings of which were done by Norman Rockwell. His Four Freedoms posters appeared on the covers of the *Saturday Evening Post*, and in 1943 the government sent Rockwell and his paintings out on a tour of department stores for the immensely popular Four Freedoms War Bond Show.<sup>109</sup>

One of the most successful war bond drives occurred at the end of the war in an atmosphere of widespread war weariness and discontent. Hostility was growing between soldiers and civilians, families were packed into inadequate housing, the hours on the job were long, consumer items were few, and marriages were unraveling at alarming rates. Key industries reported problems with high absenteeism. In the midst of this general disillusionment with the war, the Treasury Department launched its Seventh Bond Drive with the goal of raising \$14 billion—nearly \$100 from every man, woman, and child in the United States.<sup>110</sup> A daunting task, but "Mighty Seventh" organizers had something that no previous bond drive had: the Iwo Jima flag raisers. These were the men who raised the American flag over Iwo Jima's Mt. Suribachi on February 23, 1945. The Joe Rosenthal photograph of the flag raising would become, at least for Americans, the most famous image of the war, quickly assuming iconic status (see [Figure 2.1](#)). One of the six men who helped raise the flag was John "Doc" Bradley, and his son James Bradley has written movingly of the impact of this event on both the flag raisers and the American public in *Flags of Our Fathers*. It is a tale full of ironies, and revealing of how great the distance had become between those doing the fighting and those on the home front.

The fighting on Iwo Jima had been the toughest yet experienced by the marines, and the raising of the flag on Suribachi was symbolically very important, even though much fighting still remained. However, the flag raising

that was captured in Rosenthal's photograph was not the original, but a substitute flag raising (the original flag was claimed for the battalion by Colonel Chandler Johnson, who ordered that a second, larger flag be put up). Such details were lost in press reports that, in James Bradley's words, transformed "an unopposed forty-five-minute climb up a hill and a quiet flagraising" into a "heroic fight up the slopes, and the flagraising among whizzing bullets."<sup>111</sup> Such stories, and the perfect composition of Rosenthal's photograph, captured the public's imagination and became the symbol of the Seventh Bond Drive.<sup>112</sup> The three surviving flag raisers—John Bradley, Rene Gagnon, and Ira Hayes—were summoned back to the States in April 1945, and in May they were sent out to raise money on the bond tour.

In rallies all across the country the three men were feted and called upon to raise flags and make speeches. In New York, two statues based on the flag raising were unveiled—one at Times Square and one on Wall Street. In attendance were Mayor Fiorello La Guardia, marine commandant Alexander Vandegrift, and 50 marines who had been wounded on Iwo Jima. The flag raisers were described by the *New York Times* as looking "a bit harried," with one of them confessing that working for the bond drive was "not as much fun as it would seem."<sup>113</sup> In Boston 100,000 watched simulated military maneuvers as the flag raisers were praised, and in Chicago a miniature Mt. Suribachi was built at Soldier Field and 50,000 watched the Iwo Jima veterans raise yet another flag.<sup>114</sup> Throughout the tour the flag raisers were bewildered at being proclaimed heroes, and steadfastly refused to embroider the truth. Only weeks removed from the ordeal of combat, each was battling his personal demons: Rene Gagnon had developed a tic, John Bradley was crying in his sleep, and Ira Hayes was drinking heavily.<sup>115</sup> Hayes was made sober only with great difficulty for the Chicago flag raising, and shortly thereafter was sent back to his old outfit in the Pacific. The marines gave Hayes a fig leaf of an excuse that he had requested the return to combat duty.<sup>116</sup> The Seventh Bond Drive itself was a great success, raising \$26.3 billion—almost double the target amount.<sup>117</sup>



*Hasten the Homecoming*



**BUY VICTORY BONDS**

**Fig 5.1** “Hasten the Homecoming,” Norman Rockwell, date unknown (Office of Government Reports), NARA



The bond drives of World War II had mixed results. Eighty-five million war bonds were bought by Americans for a total of \$185.7 billion, but bond drive quotas were often not met and individual bond sales accounted for only 27 percent of the total, with the rest bought by large investors.<sup>118</sup> While 8 out of 13 Americans bought at least one bond during the war, and most bought many more, the extent to which bond purchases were “voluntary” rather than the product of intense social pressure needs to be considered. By the summer of 1943, bond holders were also increasingly cashing their bonds in early.<sup>119</sup> Still, bonds not only provided money for the war effort but also helped mitigate the impact of inflation by giving the public a place to park its money until consumer goods became more widely available. Most importantly, war bond drives cut across ethnic, racial, and gender lines, and gave home front Americans a concrete way of participating in the war effort.

## V. Black Market

From the beginning of the war American black markets thrived, and as John Steinbeck observed in 1943, “black markets are flourishing and the operators are not little crooks, but the best people.”<sup>120</sup> This was confirmed by Patricia Lochridge, who went undercover for *Woman’s Home Companion* to determine the extent of the American trade in illicit goods. Lochridge traveled some 11,000 miles and visited eight American cities. She reported, “I was genuinely shocked by what I saw. I found that the black market has no social or economic boundaries.” During Lochridge’s odyssey, she “bought some ninety pounds of various meats, dozens of cans of fruit juices, beans and tomatoes, pounds of sugar and assorted shoes, nylon stockings and consumer durables”—all without the required ration points.<sup>121</sup> In Kansas City, she paid a doctor \$5 for a prescription that would entitle her to 300 extra processed-food points (for an “enemic condition” invented by the doctor).<sup>122</sup> She bought without points scarce nylon stockings at a lingerie shop in New York, but also found them widely available from nightclub proprietors and “bookies, tipsters and other Broadway characters.” She even bought a pair from “a bank president whose bottom desk drawer was full of nylons for sale at five dollars a pair to his best depositors.” Lochridge’s conclusion was that “black market buyers are undermining one of the basic democratic principles for which we are fighting.”<sup>123</sup>

Veterans who encountered the home front black market were especially incensed. Ted Jones, who lost both hands and one leg at Guadalcanal, related the story of a woman who used to take the wounded from an Oakland hospital out on various field trips around the Bay Area. Jones began to feel uneasy when she began to show off “my boys” to her friends, and even suggested that the boys write her a letter of thanks. The worst was yet to come, and when Jones expressed surprise at her new tires one day, the woman responded by asserting, “Oh, rationing is a lot of nonsense. You can get anything you want, if you know how.” Proudly, she showed him banked cases of scarce canned goods in her cellar, big fine cheeses and foods he knew even the hospital had trouble getting in sufficient quantities. Then, in a closet in her bedroom, she showed him boxes containing nearly 100 pairs of silk stockings.” Jones responded by telling her what he thought of her in “words he had never used to a woman before.”<sup>124</sup>

In especially short supply during the war years was meat, which affected everyday American life in a number of ways. For instance, feeding a pet became a luxury many Americans could not afford, and many abandoned their cats and dogs, creating a serious animal control problem.<sup>125</sup> Some Americans raised rabbits (“one of the few pets which can be enjoyed dead or alive,” as *Life* put it), and a meat shortage in December 1942 contributed

to the closing of 900 restaurants in the Los Angeles area alone.<sup>126</sup> In addition, Americans who had previously “recoiled from the thought of carving a steak from old Dobbin” were now turning to the consumption of unrationed horse meat.<sup>127</sup>

By early 1943 the practice of “meatlegging” had begun. Meatleggers would buy cattle from farmers at prices over market value and would rent a barn to serve as a slaughterhouse. The meat would then be sold to butchers at 1 to 3 cents over the legal price, who would in turn raise the retail price. Thus butchers could get more, and better, cuts of meat than they were entitled to by paying wholesalers a premium. This shortfall could easily be made up in the course of a day by selling customers packages of meat that were a few ounces short. And, since customers could legally purchase meat only with ration points, this system yielded a surplus that butchers could sell to buyers “without points.” Butchers shook down their customers in other ways as well, with many expecting generous tips. A butcher in Houston received between \$1 and \$5 per week from each customer, and rated his customers according to their largesse, with the big tipplers getting the best cuts of meat. As the Houston butcher so eloquently put it, “Those who don’t come across don’t git!” One butcher in Queens, New York, let it be known that he wanted liquor for Christmas, and he received 500 bottles. Butchers laid the blame on the public itself: “widespread popular indifference to ceilings, and competition among customers to get the cuts they wanted at any price.”<sup>128</sup> In truth, butchers were no more debased than members of any other profession, and in W. B. Courtney’s words, it was the customers who had “corrupted a whole class of retailers” by deciding that “rationing is a scheme to deprive us; and therefore, something to be outwitted.”<sup>129</sup>

As huge quantities of meat began to be diverted to the black market, the impact on local markets was considerable (as much as 50 percent of Cleveland’s meat supply in 1943 may have come from the black market).<sup>130</sup> Acknowledging this problem was a public service ad placed by the Tobe Deutschmann Corp. early in 1944 in which a woman buys a piece of meat on the black market to serve to her favorite uncle. She rationalizes it as a “Little Thing to ‘forget’ the rules just this once,” but Tobe Deutschmann reminds Americans that “it’s a Little Thing that becomes so Big a Thing when thousands buy at Black Markets that it can break down our whole domestic economy and open the flood gates of inflation.”<sup>131</sup>

The meat shortages of 1945 were the worst of the war, and the American Meat Institute confirmed what everyone suspected, that “black markets and other serious diversions” were to blame for the problem.<sup>132</sup> In an investigation for the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Ray Sprigle estimated that the trade in black market meat in western Pennsylvania amounted to some \$16 million a year, and that “the attitude of black market operators themselves toward the Office of Price Administration is one of vast and humorous contempt.”<sup>133</sup> There were hijackings of meat shipments and even some cattle rustling, but meatlegging was a system that prospered because most of those involved acquiesced in the system.

Also in short supply on the home front was liquor, facilitating the return of bootlegging to the United States. In December 1943 *Life* reported that in New York “the FBI nabbed a gang of thugs in the act of hijacking more than 1,200 cases of whisky. In back rooms and loft buildings, Federal raiders dismantled illicit stills and poured bootleg liquor down drains. It was sort of like old times.”<sup>134</sup> Herbert Asbury declared that “the bootlegger, the hijacker and the illegal distiller are again on the prowl,” and warned that if the shortage of liquor continued, “conditions similar to those which made the noble experiment a national nightmare will certainly develop.” Already, sugar was being burglarized from warehouses and grocery stores, ration stamps were being counterfeited, and illegal distillers were somehow finding the copper tubing they needed.<sup>135</sup>

The permutations of the illegal booze trade were nearly endless. There were big-time violators (the federal

government had a case pending in 1944 against two liquor corporations accused of running a \$2 million black market business) as well as small-time operators. In San Francisco, for instance, a great deal of bootlegging was being done in tailor shops. The customer would leave a suit to be pressed with \$8 in the pocket, and when he picked it up the \$8 would have been replaced by a pint of whiskey. The suit itself would remain unpressed.<sup>136</sup> Oft en, customers who wanted to buy Scotch or other desirable liquor were forced to buy a case of light wine as well. But as one man who knew his way around the black market put it, “A man deserves some reward for being foresighted.”<sup>137</sup>

The black market probably had its best year in 1945 because rationing was pinching the United States tightly by the end of the war. The WPB cut the civilian allotment of tires by a third and announced in May that the armed forces would be getting 55 percent of the country’s butter.<sup>138</sup> Ration coupons had to be used before their expiration date, and the Chicago branch of the Office of Price Administration (OPA) did not win many friends when it ordered undertakers to collect the ration books of the dead.<sup>139</sup> Cigarettes were in short supply, and dwindling coal supplies forced the government to decree that 68 degrees be the maximum temperature in public and private buildings.<sup>140</sup> Making these shortages even harder to swallow was the nagging suspicion that there was an abundance of everything on the black market. Columnist Ralph Robey mused that “one cannot quite say that at a price it is possible to get anything, but that is too close to the truth to be passed off with a shrug.”<sup>141</sup>

## V. Gearing Down

Despite shortages, evidence that the nation had pulled off the neat trick of delivering both military *and* consumer goods seemed to be validated by the figures. In 1943, the United States produced \$84 billion in war goods and \$90 billion in consumer goods, prompting *Time* to declare that “the people had provided themselves with guns and butter too—the most guns in history, and, if not butter for every meal, with plenty of fur coats to wear between meals.”<sup>142</sup> America’s fabulous industrial roll continued into 1944, with \$90 billion in goods produced for the war and \$100 billion in consumer items. Department store sales in 1944 exceeded by 10 percent the sales of 1943, the stock market was at its highest point since 1940, and spending on amusements was up \$1 billion over 1943.<sup>143</sup> After-tax corporate profits had nearly doubled, from \$6.4 billion in 1940 to almost \$11 billion in 1944, and total consumption expenditures for Americans, which had amounted to just under \$72 billion in 1940, were over \$121 billion by 1945.<sup>144</sup> In January 1945, *Time* reported that Americans “had just enjoyed one of the biggest Christmas sprees since the fabulous ’20s.”<sup>145</sup> It was “exuberant productivity,” as *Collier’s* put it, that had enabled the American home front “to maintain more of the outward trappings of fun” than any other nation.<sup>146</sup>

But in truth, the fun was frayed about the edges, and it should be emphasized that high industrial output was achieved despite chronic absenteeism in many industries. Also, because Americans were increasingly anxious that the end of wartime spending would make jobs difficult to find, they began to shift out of war industry jobs long before the war was over, moving into jobs they believed had a brighter peacetime future.<sup>147</sup> Willard Waller has claimed that at the beginning of a conflict there is a “honeymoon of war” in which sacrifices are asked for and received, but as the war drags on “sentimental assets are gradually expended.”<sup>148</sup> The honeymoon did not last long, and in the first full year of the war high absenteeism was already becoming a problem. The National Association of Manufacturers reported that absenteeism had increased 58 percent over the peacetime norm, and that in 1942 a total of 3 billion man-hours had been lost.<sup>149</sup> *Fortune* magazine, which called absenteeism a

“national malady,” estimated that in the shipbuilding industry alone, worker hours lost to absenteeism in 1942 would have built better than 4 ships a week, or 208 annually.<sup>150</sup>

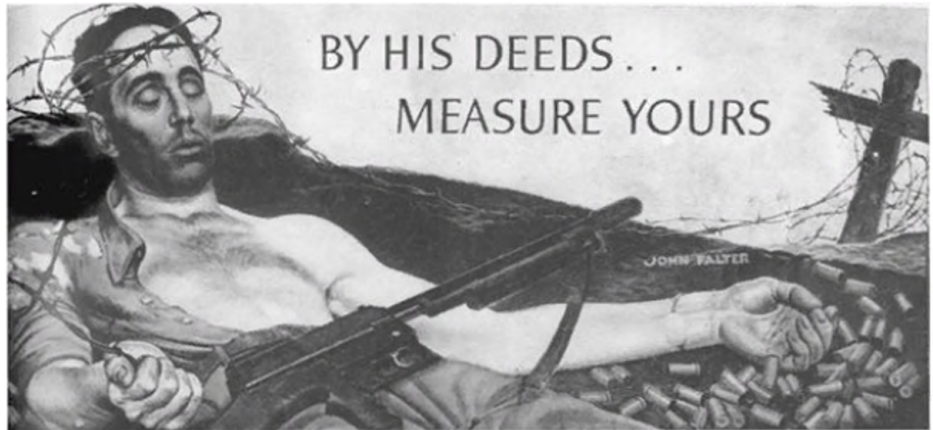
Overall absenteeism was seldom below 4 percent during the war (the peacetime rate was about 2 percent), and absenteeism in some industries rose as high as 15 to 20 percent.<sup>151</sup> In one example, 26 percent of Boeing workers—who had Christmas off—did not show up for work on the day after Christmas in 1942. In Detroit, 3,000 workers at a large war production plant also failed to show up on the day after Christmas. Absenteeism was not just a holiday phenomenon but a year-round problem as well. As *Time* put it, “Girls now take time off for shopping, for tea, for almost anything that seems important to a woman at the moment,” while “boys take time off for hangovers,” and registered an especially high absentee rate during deer-hunting season. By the beginning of 1943 *Time* had concluded that “U.S. factory morale and discipline seems to be at a very low pitch,” and *Newsweek* referred to the “general slackness of war prosperity.”<sup>152</sup> A “deep-seated national malaise, a mood of passive patriotism,” said *Fortune*, “had produced the chronic absenteeism of American industry.”<sup>153</sup> It seemed that no industry was exempt. In New York, the WLB convinced 700 striking coffin makers to return to work after the coffin supply dwindled down to a two-day reserve.<sup>154</sup> In Wyoming, absenteeism among miners stood at 25 percent, which union officials attributed to an inadequate meat ration for miners.<sup>155</sup>

The absenteeism problem was acknowledged through posters and industry ads that tried both to shame workers and to appeal to their patriotism. One poster featured a hideous monster with two heads (one German, one Japanese) that was tearing the Statue of Liberty off her pedestal. A wrench labeled “Production” is clutched in a fist in the foreground, and the caption reads, “Stop this monster that stops at nothing ... Produce to the limit! This is *your* war!”<sup>156</sup> The army produced posters that incorporated headlines describing the Bataan atrocities: “This isn’t war ... It’s Murder. Make ‘em pay ... Keep producing.”<sup>157</sup> A poster produced by Texaco featured a leering, buck-toothed Japanese soldier with the caption, “Go ahead please—take day off!”<sup>158</sup> The industrial deadbeat might also receive registered letters from “Tokyo Joe” expressing his joy over delays caused by absenteeism, or even receive wage “payments” in Nazi marks.<sup>159</sup>

One of the most dramatic ads encouraging worker productivity was placed by the Magazine Publishers of America. Illustrated by a Christ-like soldier, arms outstretched, a crown of barbed wire around his head, and a nearby piece of broken fencing in the shape of a cross, the caption reads, “By his deeds ... measure yours.” The reader is reminded that “till the war is won you cannot, in fairness to them, complain or waste or shirk.”<sup>160</sup> Warner & Swasey, makers of turret lathes, asked, “How are you going to face the man with the empty khaki sleeve? ... Those cripples will be around all the rest of your life to remind you (*they’ll never let you forget*) that you went hunting the day you could have produced enough to save that arm ... you slowed down your work at the cost of that man’s eyes.”<sup>161</sup> The United States Rubber Company acknowledged that rubber production was lagging due to high absenteeism and sagging worker enthusiasm in an ad it placed in January 1945 under the caption “I’ve got my second wind.” The ad shows a picture of a worker reading a newspaper and making such comments as “Sure, I’m tired of war. Sure, I thought we’d have the Germans licked by now ... Sure, I could use a good, long rest.” However, this worker realizes that “wars are won by men who stick it out” (such as the men at Valley Forge) and declares, “I’m sticking it out on my war job. I’ve got my second wind. Until this war is settled the way we want it settled, I know America still needs me.”<sup>162</sup>



It is not pleasant to have your peaceful life upset by wartime needs and restrictions and activities. . . . It is not pleasant to die, either. . . . Between you who live at home and the men who die at the front there is a direct connection. . . . By your actions, definitely, a certain number of these men will die or they will come through alive. If you do everything you can to hasten victory and do every bit of it as fast as you can . . . then, sure as fate you will save the lives of some men who will otherwise die because you let the war last too long. . . . Think it over. Till the war is won you cannot, in fairness to them, complain or waste or shirk. Instead, you will apply every last ounce of your effort to getting this thing done. . . . In the name of God and your fellow man, that is your job.



The civilian war organization needs your help. The Government has formed Citizens Service Corps as part of local Defense Councils. If such a group is at work in your community, cooperate with it to the limit of your ability. If none exists, help to organize one. A free booklet telling you what to do and how to do it will be sent to you at no charge if you will write to this magazine. This is your war. Help win it. Choose what you will do — now!

EVERY CIVILIAN A FIGHTER

Fig 5.2 “By his deeds ... measure yours.” John Falter, *Life*, 15 March 1943: 97.



An experiment was already under way at Los Angeles rubber plants that promised to boost both worker production and dedication. Some 600 soldiers were given emergency furloughs to work in the plants, and the presence of uniforms at these jobs, as well as the enthusiasm of the soldier-workers, had a shaming effect on civilian workers. Absenteeism dropped and production increased.<sup>163</sup> Perhaps a similar strategy should have been used at the Chrysler tank testing grounds in Detroit, where test drivers first threatened to strike because the grounds were too dusty, then, after the grounds had been watered, threatened to strike because they were too wet.<sup>164</sup>

Defense spending had peaked in June 1944 at \$250 million per day and had stayed at that high level, but the Normandy invasion seemed to signal that Germany would soon be defeated.<sup>165</sup> Confidence in Germany's imminent collapse was now reflected in a reverse worker migration. By August 1944, the great wartime movement in which thousands of Americans had left their homes in the East for war jobs on the West Coast was being reversed. For several months Los Angeles had been losing some 7,000 workers a month, while San Francisco was losing 4,000, and Portland and Seattle 15,500. In Seattle, Boeing was short 4,000 workers, and the Kaiser shipyards in Portland needed 11,500. The reverse migration seemed to be rooted in the desire of American workers to become involved early in the peacetime industries and businesses of their hometowns.<sup>166</sup> Sherry Mangan, in a *Fortune* article, claimed that "approaching victory, far from cementing national unity and social peace, tends to destroy them" because Americans no longer saw it essential to submit to conditions that had been necessary when the outcome had been in doubt.<sup>167</sup> Editorials chided Americans, claiming that "about as unpatriotic a thing as anybody can do right now is to quit a war-plant job and settle into some non-war job which seems to have a bright postwar future."<sup>168</sup> At its peak in the summer of 1943, aircraft manufacturers had employed more than 307,000. Between August 1943 and August 1944, more than 226,000 aircraft workers quit, with few of them indicating that they were going to work in other aircraft factories. Despite a massive effort to hire new workers, overall employment in the industry stood at less than 240,000 workers in the fall of 1944.<sup>169</sup>

With the German offensive in the Ardennes in December 1944, plans for conversion to civilian production were hurriedly abandoned by the WPB. "From now on," said *Newsweek* early in January 1945, "nothing matters but the war."<sup>170</sup> That may have been wishful thinking, as workers continued to shift out of war jobs. By the beginning of 1945, production in the vital steel industry had slumped to its lowest level since the spring of 1941, and the number of steel workers had dropped from 600,000 to 400,000 in a little over a year. The problem was exacerbated by the military's insatiable appetite for young men. Some 250,000 workers in deferred industrial jobs were now slated to be drafted, including 60,000 young male steel workers. Donald M. Nelson of the WPB put it bluntly: "The Army and Navy must get the men, even if it means losing production."<sup>171</sup>

By the spring of 1945, the troops were once again advancing, but the home front was mired in widespread war weariness and discontent. Many American workers were convinced that what they were producing was not necessary to win the war and would never be used, and that government contracts (and their jobs) would be canceled immediately at the end of the war. At shipyards in the Northwest, for instance, foremen and superintendents had

given up hope of inspiring workers to any real interest in their work. Loafing has become an established custom. Thousands of men and women lurk idly in hulls; hundreds sleep through entire shifts in out-of-the-way places. Crap games, particularly on night shifts, are numerous in every shipyard.<sup>172</sup>

Workers also whiled away their hours on the job by welding trailer hitches onto their cars and by making custom ashtrays and hunting knives for each other. These jobs were known euphemistically as “government projects.” Not surprisingly, production at these facilities was down an estimated 25 percent.<sup>173</sup> Another way Americans responded to their collective ennui was by “pouring millions of dollars into bars, night clubs, and other entertainment enterprises,” celebrating “victory in advance.” The director of war mobilization and reconversion, James F. Byrnes, was forced to put a midnight curfew on America’s nightspots because of worker absenteeism and to preserve the coal that was heating these venues after midnight.<sup>174</sup> The gap between soldiers and civilians had increased to alarming levels, with Robert Fleisher observing that “with millions of soldiers going into their second or third year overseas, the cleavage today is more pronounced and dangerous than ever before.”<sup>175</sup> The soft life of civilians was resented by servicemen, and complaints about the supposed privations on the home front fell on deaf ears. Those serving in the military were also well aware that Americans by the hundreds of thousands had done their best to avoid the draft. The month before the war ended in Germany, the FBI reported that it had handled more than 460,000 cases of draft evasion since 1940 and had reclaimed enough men for 13 divisions.<sup>176</sup>

The idea of a home front America totally united for the war effort owes a great deal to the warm afterglow of nostalgia. Tom Brokaw insists that “the men and women who stayed behind were fully immersed in the war effort. They worked long shifts, rationed gasoline, and ate less meat. They rolled surgical dressings for the Red Cross and collected cigarettes for the boys ‘over there.’”<sup>177</sup> As we have seen, this is not quite the whole story. American civilians *did* sacrifice for the war, but as Mark H. Leff has pointed out, “what Americans called sacrifice often involved limits on substantial gains rather than the horrific deprivations and destruction suffered by the citizens of other belligerents.”<sup>178</sup> Americans often chafed against even these comparatively modest sacrifices, as evidenced by widespread black marketeering, absenteeism, draft dodging, racial tensions, adultery, grumbling about food and housing, child neglect, and juvenile delinquency—clearly not the comforting stuff of celebratory histories.

## Life at the Margins

Early in the war, correspondent Eric Sevareid gave a speech in an Alabama auditorium that was connected to the local police station. As Sevareid was walking through the station, a policeman literally dragged in a young black woman and began to search her. According to Sevareid:

It was a methodical, deliberate, and quite sexless act—like a man carefully looking through the hair of a hound for ticks. He pulled open her blouse front, felt under her breasts, carefully patted her waist, pulled out the sweater, and thrust his hand down into the front of her skirt. All through this performance she remained inert, her expressionless eyes blankly regarding a wall. It was not inhuman, but unhuman, and therein lay the immeasurable brutality, not of man to man but of species to species.

America was triumphantly a country of white Protestant heterosexuals during the 1940s, and those who dwelt outside this realm understood that what separated them from the mainstream was, as Sevareid put it, “not a social problem but a condition of nature.”<sup>4</sup>

### I. Blacks

In both North and South white assumptions of black inferiority were so firmly rooted that they were rarely questioned. Joseph Heller notes that the blacks he worked with in a Virginia navy yard in 1943 “were held in such irrelevant regard and were fixed so solidly in caste that they were never even spoken about.”<sup>2</sup> “The war has changed the nature of the race problem,” said Robert E. Park, “but it has not changed fundamentally the mind of the American people.”<sup>3</sup> Echoing Park’s conclusions was Gunnar Myrdal, who in 1944 published an exhaustive study of race in America under the title *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*.<sup>4</sup> Myrdal found that “the American Negro problem is a problem in the heart of the American,” and ultimately it is “a white man’s problem.”<sup>5</sup>

Day-to-day life in America during the war brought constant reminders to blacks of their inferior status. A couple of incidents in Georgia will illustrate this point. In Rome, Georgia, Roland Hayes and his wife were roughed up and thrown in the local jail after Hayes’ wife refused to remove herself from a seating area designated for whites in a shoe store. Such routine racial abuse would have excited little comment but for the fact that Hayes was Rome’s most renowned resident, an international opera star making \$100,000 a year. An exchange of phone calls between Rome’s police chief, Charles Harris, and Governor Gene Talmadge resulted in the dropping of all charges.<sup>6</sup> Talmadge fell very short of being a champion of civil rights, however, declaring that blacks who did not like segregation in Georgia could stay out of the state.<sup>7</sup>

Elsewhere in Georgia, a young black girl stepped off a streetcar in Atlanta and was knocked down and left unconscious by a speeding automobile. A white witness called for an ambulance, but when it arrived “the driver,

seeing that the victim was a Negro girl, said, 'We can't haul a nigger,' and drove away, leaving the victim of the accident by the roadside."<sup>8</sup> Voting in Atlanta was also problematic for blacks. Five thousand black voters had registered to vote in Democratic primaries in Atlanta, but white election officials had told them at the polls, "This primary is for white voters only." The U.S. Supreme Court had to intervene in the spring of 1945, ruling that blacks have a right to vote in Democratic primaries.<sup>9</sup>

Conditions outside the South were often not much better. Sarah Killingsworth, who moved from Clarksville, Tennessee, to Los Angeles in 1935, said, "I know one thing, this place was very segregated when I first come. Oh, Los Angeles, you just couldn't go and sit down like you do now. You had certain places you went. You had to more or less stick to the restaurants and hotels where black people were. It wasn't until the war that it really opened up. 'Cause when I come out here it was awful, just like bein' in the South."<sup>10</sup> Paul Fussell observed that in Pasadena "Negroes' had seemed creatures quite alien, comical and harmless, not to be teased or tormented but also not to be taken on as intimates and hardly to be imagined as social equals."<sup>11</sup>

The ongoing popularity of blackface comedy in America, with blacks portrayed as dim, hapless comic characters, confirms Fussell's impressions. The radio show *Amos 'n' Andy*, which began in 1928 and extended into the 1940s, was one of the longest-running nightly shows in American history. Two black characters, Amos and Andy, were played by two white men, Freeman F. Gosden and Charles J. Correll, in what *Time* magazine called "blackface comedy at its greatest spread and financial return."<sup>12</sup> Bing Crosby, one of the most popular entertainers of the era as both a singer and actor, did several blackface turns during the war: in *Holiday Inn* (1942), and in *Dixie* (1943), a fictionalized history of blackface.<sup>13</sup>

Black entertainers who stepped out of their customary roles by putting on *whiteface* received considerably less acclaim. In 1945, the Memphis Board of Motion Picture Censors banned the showing of *Brewster's Millions*, featuring the black actor Eddie Anderson, because Anderson "has an important role and has too familiar a way about him." According to the Board, the picture "presents too much social equality and racial mixture."<sup>14</sup> When *Life* ran a story on a production of *Othello* and included a photograph of Paul Robeson as Othello with his arm around Uta Hagen as Desdemona, it provoked a furious response from readers.<sup>15</sup> One reader said the photo was "more than I can stomach," while another referred to "the horrible, indelible, undeniable and terrifying fact that there are white men with so little respect for themselves that they would cause to be printed the picture of a Negro man with his arm around a white woman in a love scene."<sup>16</sup>



**Fig 6.1** Paul Robeson as Othello with Uta Hagen as Desdemona. Karger-Pix, *Life*, 31 August 1942, 82.



(Reprinted courtesy of *Time-Life*.)

Others saw black skin less as a threat than as a horrible handicap, and no incident better illustrates this than public reaction to a February 1942 radio broadcast made by the Reverend Paul E. Becker, of Lincoln, Nebraska. A champion of civil rights, Becker broadcast a script in which his entire family had gone to bed white the preceding night but had woken up in the morning with black skins. There was an immediate barrage of phone calls from worried listeners asking for details “on the terrible disaster to the pastor.”<sup>17</sup>

Despite the expansion of American industry for the war effort and an increasing labor shortage, employers (and unions) seemed determined to see to it that as few jobs as possible went to black workers. Not wishing to rock the industrial boat, Roosevelt acquiesced in what amounted to a nationwide job discrimination against blacks, until his hand was forced by A. Philip Randolph, head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. In March 1941, Randolph proposed that “10,000 Negroes march on Washington for jobs in national defense and equal integration in the fighting forces.” The march was to take place on 1 July. By the end of May Randolph had raised the stakes and was calling for 100,000 black marchers.<sup>18</sup> Randolph declared that only an executive order banning discrimination in defense industries could stop the march.<sup>19</sup> Finally, Roosevelt summoned Randolph to the White House on 18 June, just weeks before the march was to take place. When Roosevelt protested to Randolph that “questions like this can’t be settled with a sledge hammer,” the following exchange took place:

“I’m sorry, Mr. President, the march cannot be called off.”

“How many people do you plan to bring?” Roosevelt wanted to know.

“One hundred thousand, Mr. President.”<sup>20</sup>

Whether Randolph could have delivered 100,000 marchers is uncertain, but because such a march would have been extremely embarrassing to his administration, Roosevelt concluded that he could not take the chance. On 25 June 1941 the president signed Executive Order 8802. The order declared that it was U.S. policy “that there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries or government because of race, creed, color or national origin” and that it was “the duty of employers and of labor organizations ... To provide for the full and equitable participation of all workers in defense industries.” Established at the same time was a Fair Employment Practices Committee to investigate complaints.<sup>21</sup>

But between the word and the deed fell the shadow. In September 1941 the U.S. Bureau of Employment Security inquired of selected defense industries how many job openings they anticipated in the immediate future and what proportion of these jobs would be barred to black workers. The industries responded that while they would have to fill 280,000 job openings over a six-month period, 51 percent of these jobs would not be open to black workers. There was little difference in employment attitudes between North and South.<sup>22</sup> The president of North American Aviation stated that “regardless of training, we will not employ Negroes,” and an executive from the Standard Steel Corporation bluntly proclaimed, “We have not had a Negro worker in twenty-five years, and do not plan to start now.”<sup>23</sup> The Fair Employment Practices Committee found it difficult to enforce anti-discrimination laws because with full production needed from industry, the threat of canceling war contracts was seldom a viable option. Instead, moral suasion was the committee’s primary weapon against discrimination.<sup>24</sup>

Evidence of the ineffectiveness of this approach could be found everywhere. Aircraft factories in Hartford and Baltimore typically hired out-of-town workers before they hired local unemployed blacks, regardless of the skill

level of the blacks.<sup>25</sup> Even after black workers landed a job, the struggles continued because white workers were fiercely resentful when blacks were promoted. In Philadelphia, white transit workers walked off the job when eight black workers were promoted.<sup>26</sup> A labor leader in Portland, Oregon, noted that when a local shipyard hired a black worker, “so many wrenches and hammers fell off decks around him he quit within twenty-four hours.”<sup>27</sup>

As bad as things were in the North for black workers, they were worse in the South, where the number of racial incidents was greater and where attacks on blacks tended to be more deadly. Hate strikes were extremely common. White workers walked off the job at the Pullman plant in Birmingham, Alabama, after the promotion of a black worker. In Mobile, white shipyard workers staged a full-fledged riot after several black welders were promoted. Eleven black workers were seriously injured in the Mobile fracas. In one southern town a worker claimed, “I know of two of those niggers that fair-practices board ordered upgraded who are dead niggers today. A piece of iron just fell on ‘em.” There were no less than 111 racial incidents in the South between March and the end of December 1943 that were important enough to be picked up by the national press.<sup>28</sup> Many blacks were tempted to vacate the South altogether; during the 1940s 2 million blacks left the South, and 3 million more would leave over the next 20 years.<sup>29</sup>

There was also a long-standing union bias against blacks. While Congress of Industrial Organization (CIO) unions accepted blacks as members, there were 24 national and international unions (10 of them affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, AFL) that barred membership to blacks.<sup>30</sup> The constitution of the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen stated that membership was available to “any white male,” and the boilermakers’ union at the Kaiser shipyards in Richmond, California, similarly resisted extending membership to black workers. When blacks in Seattle agitated for an end to the union color bar at Boeing, a spokesperson for the International Association of Machinists responded that “labor has been asked to make many sacrifices in this war and has made them gladly, but this sacrifice ... is too great.”<sup>31</sup> A FL machinists made prospective union members swear to introduce into the union only “competent white” persons, and even in places where the labor of blacks was needed, they were still denied membership. Instead, blacks purchased “working permits” from the union.<sup>32</sup>

Black female workers received even worse treatment than black males. Industry was going to great lengths to encourage women to become part of the workforce, but race frequently trumped labor needs. A United Auto Workers survey conducted in 1943 found that 280 plants were employing white women, but only 74 of them were willing to hire black women.<sup>33</sup> The one industry most likely to hire black women was the munitions industry—perhaps because the work was so dangerous.<sup>34</sup> But even here, black women were treated as second-class workers. In her article on women workers at the munitions plant in Elkton, Maryland, Mary Heaton Vorse noted that “the company does not assume any responsibility for the Negro girls that come looking for work, nor for finding them places to live, as it does for the white girls. The theory is that the Negroes employed shall all commute, and if they come to Elkton they come at their own risk. ... In the plant they mostly work in separate departments from the white girls, though there are some white foremen who direct the Negroes. Of course numerous local people expected ‘trouble,’ but there hasn’t been any.”<sup>35</sup>

Once they had been hired, black women were often given the worst jobs (in aircraft plants, for instance, it was black women who worked in the “dope rooms” with toxic glue fumes, while white women worked in well-ventilated facilities).<sup>36</sup> In addition, black female employees were often the objects of intense hostility from their white sisters because, as Karen Anderson puts it, white women “feared that blacks were dirty or diseased.” In

Detroit, more than 2,000 white female workers walked off the job at the U.S. Rubber plant because they objected to sharing bathroom facilities with black women. White female employees shut down a Western Electric plant in Baltimore for the same reason.<sup>37</sup> In Belleville, New Jersey, 600 female members of the Chemical and Oil Workers Union “threatened to quit if Isolantite, Inc. hired Negro girls.”<sup>38</sup>

## II. A Jim Crow Army

Not surprisingly, racial attitudes in the military reflected those of the general population, and as early as 1940 the War Department declared that its policy was “not to intermingle colored and white enlisted personnel in the same regimental organizations.”<sup>39</sup> In its study of black troops during the war, the army’s Research Branch concluded that “Negroes were needed and were not excluded, but neither were they fully integrated or fully accepted.”<sup>40</sup> In other words, “the Army in World War II was merely a new setting for an old conflict.”<sup>41</sup> The conflict was old indeed, and the military racial tensions of the Second World War were not unlike those of the First World War, where much of the resistance to World War I’s Selective Service Act came from white southerners. Senator James K. Vardaman of Mississippi, for instance, had opposed the drafting of blacks because it would, he said, put “arrogant strutting representatives of the black soldiery in every community.”<sup>42</sup> There was friction between black troops and local whites throughout World War I, which climaxed in August 1917 when harassed black troops killed 17 white civilians in Houston. Thirteen black troops were court-martialed and hanged for this incident.<sup>43</sup> While two-thirds of the white soldiers who were sent to Europe during World War I saw combat duty, only one out of five black soldiers took part in combat operations. Overwhelmingly black troops were relegated to serve as common laborers.<sup>44</sup> This pattern also prevailed in World War II.

A preponderance of army training camps during the Second World War were located in the South (Fort Lewis in Washington state was the only major training facility located outside of the South), and because army policy was to honor local custom, that meant acceding to southern Jim Crow arrangements.<sup>45</sup> As Ulysses Lee notes in *The Employment of Negro Troops* (a volume in the army’s official history of the war), a black soldier transferred to a southern post not only had to deal with the normal problems of adjustment but also faced such worrisome questions as

Would he be served if he tried to make a purchase at the main post exchange, or was there a special branch exchange for Negro units? Which theater, which bus stop, which barber shop could he use? Where could he place a long distance call? Which prophylactic station could he use? Was he free to enter the main Red Cross office? The gym? The bowling alley? Would the station cleaning and pressing concessionaire accept his soiled clothing? How would he be received in the nearby camp town?<sup>46</sup>

For northern blacks, the experience of being posted to a southern town was a revelation. As Lucille B. Milner put it in a 1944 *New Republic* piece, “Northernborn Negroes are appalled at meeting Jim Crow on his home ground for the first time, and as a rule the Northern whites are also shocked.” One black officer stationed in the South referred to “chain-gang practices and disgraceful and embarrassing verbal abuse.” Black troops lived in segregated barracks. Post exchanges, theaters, and USO facilities were barred to black recruits or segregated,

and it was often the case that black MPs were not allowed to carry arms.<sup>47</sup> Paul Fussell, who was in Fort Benning during the war, remembered that “we no longer were obliged to clean the barracks weekly with brooms and wet mops and window rags: Black troops did these things, and picked up outside too, facts that never let us forget that if we were in the army, we were also in Georgia, where movie theaters and drinking fountains were segregated and no one thought anything wrong.”<sup>48</sup> Exposing black troops from the North to such conditions was, as William Cecil Headrick put it, “disastrous,” and Headrick maintained that it would be better to send them “to Iceland or Alaska than to our southern states.”<sup>49</sup>

As was the case with Jim Crow everywhere, black troops found that facilities were certainly separate but definitely not equal. Frequently they were nonexistent, and the local facilities that were open to black soldiers—the restaurants, bars, and movie theaters—were typically not very sanitary and were often in the center of the town’s vice district.<sup>50</sup> The lack of adequate facilities was the most frequently cited complaint among black troops. Often troops simply wanted a place to gather, and as one report put it, “Their desires were not for swimming pools and bowling alleys, but for some building, some center, that might serve as a nucleus of recreational activities.”<sup>51</sup>

Providing transportation for black soldiers in the South also created complications. Washington, D.C.’s Union Station became notorious among black soldiers because it was here that blacks on southbound trains were forced to relinquish their seats and move to the segregated section of the train. One black soldier said, “I hate Washington even if it is the capital of the country; there you have to change to Jim Crow cars and then you know what kind of country you’ve got.” In Chicago, trains going to the South seated black passengers ahead of time in separate cars.<sup>52</sup>

Nothing better illustrated the bitter irony of Jim Crow accommodations than the preferential treatment that German prisoners received over black American troops. On one troop train that went through Texas, black troops were fed behind a curtain at one end of the dining car, while German prisoners dined with whites in the main section.<sup>53</sup> Wittner Bynner commemorated this Jim Crow train in his poem “Defeat”:

On a train in Texas German prisoners eat  
With white American soldiers, seat by seat,  
While black American soldiers sit apart,  
The white men eating meat, the black men heart.  
Now, with that other war a century done,  
Not the live North but the dead South has won,  
Nor yet a riven nation comes awake.  
Whom are we fighting this time, for God’s sake?  
Mark well the token of the separate seat.  
It is again ourselves whom we defeat.<sup>54</sup>

When the black singer Lena Horne performed for the troops at Camp Robinson, Arkansas, she was incensed to discover that German prisoners of war had better seats than black troops. She later performed at the town’s black USO club.<sup>55</sup>

In April 1944, black soldier Corporal Rupert Trimmingham wrote a famous letter to *Yank* magazine that began, “Here is a question that each Negro soldier is asking. What is the Negro soldier fighting for?” Trimmingham then described an incident that he and eight other soldiers had experienced on a layover in



Louisiana. Because of southern Jim Crow rules, they were not allowed to eat at the railroad station lunchroom but had to take their meals in the kitchen. Shortly thereafter, “two dozen German prisoners of war, with two American guards, came to the station. They entered the lunchroom, sat at the tables, had their meals served, talked, smoked, in fact had quite a swell time. I stood on the outside looking on.” Trimmingham closed by noting that some of his companions believed *Yank* would never print his letter, but it did, and Trimmingham received some 287 letters, mostly from whites and overwhelmingly supportive.<sup>56</sup>

Martha Settle Putney, an officer in the Women’s Auxiliary Corps who was stationed in Des Moines, also remembers that German POWs were invited to the Fort Des Moines officers’ club while American black officers were barred. The pool on the post was open to blacks on Fridays, after which it was cleaned.<sup>57</sup>

While the army had allowed blacks into its officer corps, it was initially reluctant to allow blacks to train for its elite air arm. It finally established a segregated air force training unit near the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. Pilot trainees at Tuskegee had to endure both the hatred of local whites (who referred to Tuskegee as “that nigger airport”) and the contempt of the black press, who condemned these flyers as “Uncle Toms” for agreeing to serve in segregated units.<sup>58</sup> The pressure on these airmen was intense. When Lieutenant Mac Ross’ plane failed him and he was forced to bail out, he remembered thinking, “I’ve wrecked a ship worth thousands of dollars. Maybe they’ll start saying Negroes can’t fly.”<sup>59</sup>

Army segregation of blacks and whites into separate units not only was official policy but also was overwhelmingly endorsed by white soldiers.<sup>60</sup> The view that white soldiers had of black troops could be seen throughout the service. There was a revealing incident when the army announced that it would name the parade ground at Fort Knox after Robert Brooks, the first American serviceman killed in the Philippines. When the army made the unexpected discovery that Brooks was black and that he had lied about his race, the soldiers he had served with were equally surprised. One of them described Brooks as “yellow-complected, had kinda kinky hair. I called him Nig all the time and I didn’t know he was a nigger, see? ... We didn’t know he was colored, because he came to Harrodsburg, spent the weekend sometimes with a lotta white boys. That would be somethin’ unusual for a nigger.”<sup>61</sup>

White soldiers resented contact with blacks even when such contact benefitted whites. At an army armored training center, an officer told Arthur Miller about a recent incident where a group of trainees upended a tank and the crew was rescued by a black cadreman:

“I guess they’re pretty thankful,” I said.

He shifted a foot, chucked his head, and smiled. “I guess they are, but I know they’d rather it’d been a white man did it for them,” he said, as though that was the way he would have felt about it.<sup>62</sup>

Even soldiers who considered themselves open-minded were tempted to see blacks as ignorant and in need of white guidance. In her coverage of the war in Italy, Margaret Bourke-White reported the following conversation between two soldiers, Slats and Spike:

“But something *must* be done to curb the Negro vote in the South,” Slats advanced emphatically. “I’m not too strong on racial prejudice, but if the Negroes are allowed the same vote as white people, it won’t be very many years until they’ll control the South, and in their present condition they have no business being in executive positions.”

“It’s quite a paradox,” Spike broke in, “that we’re fighting for democracy and yet the South is upset about the



Negro vote. Too bad—though personally I don't care for Negroes any more than the next man.”

“It's a stunt that was pulled on us while we were over here! That's what it is,” Slats reported heatedly.

The top sergeant smiled. “See, I told you they'd never agree,” he said.

“Well, if the Supreme Court has ruled that Negroes can vote in the primaries, that's all right with me,” Spike said quietly. “The bad part of it is that a lot of dirty politicians will take advantage of their ignorant ideas.”

“The whole thing is a bad move,” Slats asserted. “Believe me, we over here ought to know if anybody does. The Negro in the Army is hard to control.” Slats was becoming excited.<sup>63</sup>

Racism was so ingrained in the basic fabric of society that its practitioners seemed largely oblivious that they might be offending anyone. The army frequently had to spell it out to the clueless. In one example, the commanding general of the 28th Infantry Division at Camp Livingston, Louisiana, posted a notice saying, “The word ‘nigger’ is a provocative word when used in speaking to or about colored soldiers.” Another officer, who had charges brought against him for authorizing the beatings of black troops, said in his own defense, “You know how Niggers are, if you don't keep after them they simply lie down on the job.”<sup>64</sup> (As evidence of white society's weird racial gradations, Hispanics were allowed to serve in white units, though they were not always welcome. In one case, a Puerto Rican soldier in a white battalion “was considered Negroid by the Southerners, who quickly let him know their antagonism.”)<sup>65</sup>

The lack of tact or even good sense in regards to the treatment of black troops was often stunningly obvious to all but army policy makers. In 1943, for instance, the army proposed using a contingent of Arizona troops (the majority of whom were black) to bring in the cotton crop. A spate of bad publicity sidelined this venture. Even more bizarre was the Red Cross' decision to segregate the blood of blacks for transfusion purposes even though all human blood is biologically the same. The Surgeon General's office explained that “this action was taken in the interest of removing any possible objection to this form of therapy on the part of a patient who holds a prejudice against the injection of Negro whole blood or plasma.”<sup>66</sup>

Not surprisingly, racial tensions between black troops and local whites were especially high in southern camps, and sometimes turned violent. The violence began before the war started, as the first black draftees entered the army. In April 1941, a black private stationed at Fort Benning, Georgia, was found in a nearby woods hanging from a tree with his hands tied behind his back. Post officials suggested that it was suicide. In Fort Jackson, South Carolina, and in Tampa, Florida, black troops clashed with local whites and military police during the summer of 1941. In Fayetteville, North Carolina, there was a shootout involving black soldiers and military police that left one policeman and one black soldier dead and five others wounded. There were other disturbances that year involving black troops at half a dozen other camps.<sup>67</sup> Relations continued to deteriorate in 1942, with clashes involving black troops in Alexandria, Louisiana, as well as Little Rock, Arkansas, and Tuskegee, Alabama. Nor were such tensions limited to the South. A gun battle erupted between black soldiers and military policemen at Fort Dix, New Jersey, that left one MP and two black troops dead.<sup>68</sup>

The military's initial response was to blame the black press for printing “propaganda” that stirred up the troops.<sup>69</sup> Predictably, this facile analysis did not put an end to the army's racial problems, and there were more troubles in 1943, including a riot at Camp Stewart, Georgia. The army board that investigated *that* disturbance blamed the presence of northern blacks and the “average negro soldier's meager education, superstition, imagination and excitability.”<sup>70</sup> Little progress was made in addressing the root cause of military racial conflicts because little progress was made in addressing the race issue in society as a whole. One army investigator, Colonel Elliot D. Cooke, admitted that “racial prejudice exists to some extent in the Army itself” and that “many

officers and men find it difficult to alter hereditary feelings and emotions."<sup>71</sup>

Racial clashes involving black troops would continue for the rest of the war in every part of the country, and even civilian racial disturbances often had a link to black military unrest. Black soldiers and sailors were involved in riots in Detroit and Los Angeles, and the military link was especially evident in the Harlem riot of 1943. This disturbance began when a black MP intervened in an altercation between a white policeman and a black woman. The MP struck the policeman and walked away, and was shot in the shoulder. The rumor quickly spread that a black soldier had been shot in the back and killed. The ensuing riot took the lives of 5, wounded 367, and created damages of more than \$5 million.<sup>72</sup> In a radio address, Mayor LaGuardia said that "I want to make it clear that this is not a race riot," but the racial elements were clearly evident.<sup>73</sup>

After blacks received their military training, the discrimination continued, with few chances for blacks to fight in combat units or to advance in rank. The opportunities for blacks to become noncommissioned officers were poorer than for whites, and their prospects for becoming commissioned officers were even more limited. White officers were put at the head of black units, and often those officers were southerners because the army believed that southern whites best understood blacks.<sup>74</sup> By the end of the war, 11 percent of white soldiers were officers, but less than 1 percent of black soldiers were officers.<sup>75</sup> The army saw combat as a white man's prerogative, which was made clear by its treatment of the Second Cavalry Division. A black outfit with a history going back to the Civil War, the Second was one of two cavalry divisions activated during World War II. The white division quickly dispensed with its horses and went into combat, while the Second was sent to North Africa and was then broken up into service units. The story of the Second's fate was portrayed by the black press as an insult to the race.<sup>76</sup>

The official government line, as enunciated by *Life* magazine, was that "the U.S. Army is getting rid of its old prejudices against the Negro and is putting him where he will do the most good—in the front ranks of its fighting men."<sup>77</sup> The reality was totally different, with some 75 percent of blacks placed in service force branches (such as the Corps of Engineers, the Quartermaster Corps, and the Transportation Corps) doing labor and driving rather than fighting in combat. By the end of the war, blacks made up only 1.97 percent of the armor, 2.45 percent of the artillery, and 3.05 percent of the infantry personnel.<sup>78</sup>

The army's treatment of its black soldiers was shabby, but it was arguably better than the treatment of blacks elsewhere in the military. When a group of blacks graduated from the Great Lakes Naval Training Station late in the summer of 1942, they represented the first black sailors in the navy since 1922.<sup>79</sup> There would be no black officers in the navy, the Marine Corps, or the Coast Guard until February 1944.<sup>80</sup> As in the army, black naval personnel were typically assigned to mess duty or labor details.<sup>81</sup>

At Port Chicago, near San Francisco, it was black sailors who were assigned the duty of taking explosives out of boxcars and loading them into the holds of ammunition ships. The work crews were all black, the officers all white, and no one had received any specialized training in this dangerous work.<sup>82</sup> Workers were told that an explosion could not take place because the bombs had no detonators.<sup>83</sup> When Coast Guard observers were allowed to monitor the Port Chicago operations in October 1943, they expressed alarm at the standard Port Chicago practice of rolling and dropping bombs (a short distance) to get them into place. The Coast Guard was not invited back.<sup>84</sup>

On the evening of 17 July 1944, workers were loading explosives onto the E. A. Bryan. Over the course of four days the E. A. Bryan had received 4,600 tons of explosives that included 40 mm. shells, fragmentation cluster bombs, 1,000-pound bombs, depth charges, and incendiary bombs. These latter bombs were armed, and the

crews were having difficulty getting them out of a tightly packed boxcar. At 10:15 p.m., there was a dreadful explosion.<sup>85</sup> With a blast force estimated at five kilotons of TNT, the explosion blew the *E. A. Bryan* to bits, cut the nearby *Quinalt Victory* in half, and threw the latter's stern 500 feet downriver. The blast disintegrated the boxcars and vaporized the pier. Killed instantly were 320 men—202 of them black enlisted men. Another 390 men were wounded, making this the worst home front disaster of the war.<sup>86</sup> The court of inquiry that looked into this catastrophe concluded that “colored enlisted personnel are neither temperamentally or intellectually capable of handling high explosives.”<sup>87</sup> Capable or not, the survivors were ordered to resume explosives loading operations shortly thereafter even though no new safety procedures were put in place. They balked, and 50 black sailors were arrested, charged with mutiny, tried, and punished with prison sentences ranging from 8 to 15 years.<sup>88</sup> The case highlighted the inequities of the Jim Crow navy and was a source of great bitterness among American blacks.<sup>89</sup>

Throughout the war, the issue of race would color the attitudes of blacks toward the conflict and would influence the views of white and black servicemen toward each other.<sup>90</sup> Black troops were even less likely than white troops to view the war in idealistic terms because they were fighting for a country that denied them basic rights. As S. Edward Young put it, “In most instances, men fight to keep what they have or to get what they want. The Negro has been conscripted to fight for what he hasn't in order to keep it for others.”<sup>91</sup> A black serviceman who was a lawyer before the war told Arthur Miller that “the uniform highlights all the irony of our position; we are asked to die for a country that literally doesn't always let us live.”<sup>92</sup> Many blacks believed that they were fighting two wars, one against the Axis powers and one against prejudice at home. The “Double-V” idea created by the *Pittsburgh Courier*—victory in the war and victory against discrimination on the home front—became a popular slogan among blacks.<sup>93</sup> Clearly, blacks hoped that their service during the war would lead to an enhanced position in American society once the war was over, but white troops felt that blacks were contributing no more to the war effort than anyone else, and should not expect more rights and privileges after the war.<sup>94</sup>

Overseas, Europeans reacted to the presence of black American servicemen with polite curiosity, and often even invited them into their homes. There was no Jim Crow in England, and John Parrish, pubkeeper of the Bull, said, “My pub is open to everyone who behaves himself. The Negroes could teach some of our boys some manners.”<sup>95</sup> George Orwell agreed, insisting that “the only American soldiers with decent manners are the Negroes.”<sup>96</sup> Black American troops found the British to be highly cordial—some 80 percent had a favorable view of the British—but white American soldiers, especially those from the South, tried to stir up racial hatred among British locals. Blacks complained that white Americans had “poisoned the mind of a few of the British people toward us ... telling the British that ‘we were ‘bears without tails,’ ‘wild, sex crazy maniacs,’ etc.”<sup>97</sup>

Army authorities overseas often enforced segregation even in situations where it was not official army policy. Henry Hooten, of Tuskegee, Alabama, remembers that shortly before his group left for North Africa, the local residents of Birmingham, England, invited them to a party “to show their appreciation toward us black servicemen.” But when Hooten asked for passes from his commanding officer, a white from Mississippi, the officer said, “Well, there ain't no black girls in Birmingham, England. None of my black boys are going to dance with no white girls.”<sup>98</sup> In Bristol, recreational areas were divided into black and white sections, but this did not prevent a race riot from breaking out that involved some 400 black and white soldiers. One soldier was killed and several were seriously injured.<sup>99</sup> Clashes between black and white troops continued after the war was over,

including in occupied Japan, where “fueled with Saturday-night booze, white and black would go after each other before crowds of interested Japanese bystanders.”<sup>100</sup>

When black troops did participate in combat with white troops, whites by a large margin approved of their comrades in arms. One platoon sergeant from South Carolina noted, “When I heard about it, I said I’d be damned if I’d wear the same shoulder patch they did. After that first day when we saw how they fought, I changed my mind. They’re just like any of the other boys to us.” When Paul Fussell came upon the corpse of a black soldier in December 1944 he ruminated, “The lucky among us, black or white, survived, the unlucky, black and white together, died in the open or under trees or at the bottom of slit trenches. Where it mattered at all, we were quite the same.”<sup>101</sup> There were limits to this brotherhood, however, and one comment that was typical was, “They fought and I think more of them for it, but I still don’t want to soldier with them in garrison.”<sup>102</sup>

It is also important to note that even in combat operations, segregation often prevailed. Harvey Shapiro, who was a gunner on a B-17, took note of what he called the “rigid and bizarre” system of segregation that prevailed in the army air forces:

All the combat crewmen in my bomb group were white—officers and enlisted men alike. Yet frequently over our targets in Germany, we were covered by black pilots from an all-black P51 fighter group, also stationed in southern Italy, known as the Tuskegee Airmen (after the Alabama college where they had trained). We met only in the air.<sup>103</sup>

One black airman summarized the situation as “we will be permitted to die for our white brother, if not with him.”<sup>104</sup>

Black resentment of the Jim Crow military had become serious enough by 1943 that Undersecretary of War Patterson approached Frank Capra about producing a film that would, as Capra put it, “buck up the morale of our black soldiers.” A young black writer named Carlton Moss was assigned to help Capra with the script of what was to become *The Negro Soldier*, and in January 1944 this film was shown for the first time before what Capra described as “two hundred silent, skeptical Negro publishers, editors, and writers of Negro papers.” But as the film unrolled this skepticism turned into a mesmerized silence as the audience viewed a film very different from the “snow job” they were expecting.<sup>105</sup>

In its structure, *Soldier* is a history lesson given by a black minister to his congregation. The minister emphasizes the threat that Nazi Germany poses to the freedoms of *all* Americans, black and white, then shows how black Americans helped plant the “seeds of liberty” at Bunker Hill and Valley Forge, then worked with whites to transform a wilderness “into a great nation.” Blacks are shown playing key roles in defeating the British in the War of 1812. Then the minister moves somewhat hurriedly through the Civil War, allowing a few words from Lincoln to suffice without mentioning slavery. The theme of black and white Americans working shoulder to shoulder continues as they build railroads, work on oil rigs, fight the Spanish-American War, and build the Panama Canal. Now black American troops are fighting in World War I, and “when they cleaned up in France, the boys came marching home.” The full depravity of the Nazis is demonstrated when they blow up a monument that France had erected to American black soldiers.

Notable black doctors, scientists, financiers, artists, and symphony conductors are praised, and the accomplishments of Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver, and Jesse Owens are noted. At the end of the film Capra pulls out all the stops, with black aviators climbing into planes, black armored and artillery men manning tanks and anti-aircraft guns, and black engineers building bridges. Finally, black infantrymen



parade across the screen to a stirring soundtrack that includes “Onward Christian Soldiers” and “My Country ‘Tis of Thee.”<sup>106</sup>

The black audience that viewed *The Negro Soldier* for the first time asked Capra if white soldiers would be seeing this film, and Capra emphasized that *all* soldiers would be seeing it “whether they wanted to or not.”<sup>107</sup> The reaction of the black press was overwhelmingly positive, with the Pittsburgh *Courier* calling it “one of the most outstanding and factual characterizations of the Negro ever made,” and Langston Hughes of the *Defender* describing it as “the most remarkable Negro film ever flashed on the American screen ... It is distinctly and thrillingly worthwhile.”<sup>108</sup> This film treated its subjects with an honest respect, but unfortunately, it is only by omitting the painful fact that American blacks were treated as second-class citizens in a segregated society that this film is able to function as an effective propaganda piece.

The war ended with a Jim Crow military intact, but it was unreasonable to expect a conservative military establishment to venture too far beyond the constraints of civilian society. Black servicemen returning to the States found that little had changed.<sup>109</sup> Johnnie Holmes, whose 761st Tank Battalion saw some of the worst fighting in the Battle of the Bulge, went looking for work at the Foot Brothers factory in Chicago and was immediately asked, “What are you doing here? We don’t hire niggers. Get outta here.”<sup>110</sup> William Perkins remembered that “when I got back from Germany and Guam and I had my little ribbons on and a waitress said she couldn’t serve me—I wasn’t expecting that.”<sup>111</sup> When Captain Harold Montgomery, who served with the 92nd Infantry Division in Italy, returned to Washington, D.C., to reclaim his job in the post office, he discovered that there was not a single African American listed on the plaque that honored postal employees who had served in the war. In addition, he was informed that he would not be receiving the pay raise that returning white veterans were getting. “To hell with that,” said Montgomery, and reenlisted in the military.<sup>112</sup>

### III. Jews

One of the trends in American Judaism by 1940 was an increasing secularization. An estimated one-half of American Jews gave their friends Christmas presents, decorated their homes with trees and wreaths, and even told their children about Santa Claus. *Time* claimed that the phenomenon of Jews celebrating the social aspects of Christmas had become so common that “few rabbis bother any more to inveigh against it.”<sup>113</sup> But despite the efforts of Jews to accommodate themselves to mainstream American culture, anti-Semitism in the United States increased in the late 1930s and hit its apex during World War II. American anti-Semites included Father Charles Coughlin, who by 1938 was railing against Jews in his popular radio sermons and in the pages of *Social Justice*. In one shrill editorial, Coughlin claimed that “almost without exception, the intellectual leaders—if not the foot and hand leaders—of Marxist atheism in Germany were Jews.”<sup>114</sup> Coughlin even suggested that Roosevelt’s real name should be “Rosenfeld.”<sup>115</sup> In Charles Lindbergh’s famous September 1941 speech calling for American neutrality, Lindbergh identified “the British, the Jewish, the administration” as “the major agitators for war.”<sup>116</sup> Even members of Congress were not exempt. Notorious southern demagogue John Rankin, representative from Mississippi, referred to Walter Winchell on the House floor as a “little kike.”<sup>117</sup>

Once the United States became involved in the war, according to Edward S. Shapiro, “efforts to instill a sense of national unity, exemplified by the song ‘When Those Little Yellow Bellies Meet the Cohens and the Kellys’ and by Hollywood war movies featuring servicemen who were identifiably Jewish,” did little to halt the growth of anti-Semitism.<sup>118</sup> Early in 1942 *Collier’s* acknowledged that “we’re hearing from more and more people that the



Jews somehow got us into this war, or are keeping us in it, or are winning us more enemies all the time.”<sup>119</sup> By 1944 those views had changed little, and the same magazine ran an article called “The Jew as a Soldier” that profiled Jews in the military to dispel the myth that Jews were “a race of merchants and moneylenders.”<sup>120</sup> It was on this point especially—that Jews were dishonest in their business dealings—that American anti-Semites were most adamant. In one study of anti-Semitism in New York, only 65 percent of those interviewed answered yes to the question “Do you think Jewish business men are as honest as other business men?”<sup>121</sup> American Jews were accused of being war profiteers and of shirking military duty, and at the peak of anti-Semitism in 1944 polls showed that Americans considered Jews to be a greater “menace” to the United States than German Americans or Japanese Americans.<sup>122</sup> In a series of articles he wrote during the war, Reinhold Niebuhr called the Jews a minority group that “is hated for its virtues as well as its vices.” In the societal prejudice against Jews, said Niebuhr, “we are obviously dealing with a collective psychology which is not easily altered by a little more enlightenment.”<sup>123</sup>

Judging from a collection of letters from Jewish servicemen, the evidence for anti-Semitism in the military is mixed. Answering a query from his father about discrimination in the military, one Jewish serviceman said bluntly, “There isn’t any here,” and another soldier claimed, “There is less Jew-baiting in the service than in civilian life.”<sup>124</sup> But another Jewish serviceman stated, “Putting a man into uniform doesn’t change a man’s prejudices. I heard a lot of uncomplimentary remarks about my people.” He added that there were many in the military who would “be more at home with Hitler.”<sup>125</sup>

One Jewish marine observed that “there seem to be fewer Jews in the Marines than in the other services,” and indeed, Art Buchwald was one of those who found that being a Jew in the Marine Corps was a hard row to hoe.<sup>126</sup> Buchwald notes that “I often found myself in fistfights over my Jewish persuasion. ... Once you were called a dirty Jew, or even just a Jew, you had no choice but to fight, or risk being considered a Jewish coward.” While Buchwald tried to make light of his experiences (“I wasn’t sure whether my fights with other Marines were because they thought I was a little shit, or because I was Jewish”), the discrimination was real enough. A marine named Fedlock broke Buchwald’s thumb “because he said I had killed Christ,” and when Buchwald received a promotion, another marine complained to the commander, “How can you promote a kike before you promoted me?”<sup>127</sup>

Filmmaker William Wyler became involved in several controversies during the war because he was a Jew. After Wyler flew a number of dangerous bombing runs while filming the air war in Europe, his commander, Ira C. Eaker, ordered Wyler not to fly any more. Because Wyler was a Jew and had directed *Mrs. Miniver*, a film that Roosevelt believed had been instrumental in swaying American public opinion against the Nazis, Eaker believed that Wyler would have a hard time of it if he was shot down and captured. Wyler disobeyed orders and flew on a mission to Hamburg the next day. When told he could be court-martialed for this act of defiance, Wyler shot back that he was doing his job, and if he was going to be court-martialed for doing his job he was willing to leave his fate to public opinion. No disciplinary measures were forthcoming.<sup>128</sup> Wyler was not so lucky in another, more personal incident that occurred in front of the Statler Hotel in Washington. Wyler witnessed an argument between a bellhop and a man over a taxi. When the man left, the bellhop turned to Wyler and said, “Goddamn Jew.”

“Look, you’re saying that to the wrong fellow,” Willy told him.

“I didn’t mean you, I meant *him*,” the bellhop answered, pointing toward the

disappearing cab.

“That doesn’t make a goddamn difference,” Willy said as he slugged him.

Wyller received a letter of reprimand from the military.<sup>129</sup>

The immediate postwar period saw an increased confidence and pride among American Jews. The defeat of Nazi Germany had also been a defeat for anti-Semitism, and in the year the war ended American Jewish self-esteem received a great boost when Bess Myerson became the first Jewish Miss America and Hank Greenberg returned from military duty to lead the Detroit Tigers to victory over the Chicago Cubs in the World Series.<sup>130</sup>

It would be a mistake, however, to claim that anti-Semitism died with Nazi Germany. In a poll of 1,700 American soldiers stationed in postwar Germany, 51 percent expressed the opinion that Hitler had done the Reich a lot of good between 1933 and 1939, and 22 percent believed that the Germans had “good reasons” for the persecution of the Jews.<sup>131</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, who spent four months in the United States in 1947, concluded that Jews and blacks were “both despised by the average American,” and that the two groups frequently turned their resentment toward each other.<sup>132</sup>

Anti-Semitism is a minor theme in several war novels, including Herman Wouk’s *The Caine Mutiny*. (Wouk observes of his protagonist Willie Keith that “Willie liked Jews as a group, for their warmth, humor, and alertness. This was true even though his home was in a real-estate development where Jews could not buy.”)<sup>133</sup> But it is in Norman Mailer’s *The Naked and the Dead* and Irwin Shaw’s *The Young Lions*—the two most important war novels of the period and both written by Jewish writers—where anti-Semitism became more than just a minor motif. In *The Naked and the Dead*, Joey Goldstein discovers that life in the Army is replete with casual hostility toward Jews. In one conversation overheard by Goldstein, a truck driver declares, “Just hope you all don’t get in F Company, that’s where they stick the goddam Jewboys,” and Goldstein later turns his anger at such prejudice against God: “Why don’t you stop things like that?” he asked bitterly. It seemed a very simple thing to accomplish, and Goldstein was irritated with the God he believed in, as if he were a parent who was good but a little thoughtless, a little lazy.”<sup>134</sup>

In *The Young Lions*, Noah Ackerman is the victim of intense Jew-baiting by the men in his barracks, who will finally push him to the limit by stealing \$10 from his footlocker. Ackerman posts a notice asking for “satisfaction” from the guilty parties, and 10 men in the barracks sign their names to their own note, which reads, “We took it, Jew-Boy. We’re waiting for you.” Over the next several months Ackerman fights each of the signees individually, becoming progressively more bruised and battered until he has fought the last man. The grudging respect he gains during this ordeal is further enhanced when Ackerman goes AWOL for four weeks. Although he is captured and returned to his barracks, Ackerman’s absence will get the platoon’s hated commanding officer in trouble, to the great delight of the rest of the platoon.<sup>135</sup>

Anti-Semitism in America was the main focus in two notable novels of the 1940s: Arthur Miller’s *Focus* (1945) and Laura Hobson’s *Gentleman’s Agreement* (1947). While the war is not the direct concern of these novels, they deserve a brief mention because of the insights their authors provide into American views toward Jews. The protagonist of *Focus*, Lawrence Newman, summarizes his own latent anti-Semitism in the following way:

For to him Jew had always meant imposter. Since the beginning. It was the one thing it had always meant. The poor Jews pretended they were poorer than they were, the rich richer. He had never been able to pass a Jewish neighborhood without seeing behind the dingy curtains

hidden sums of money. He had never seen a Jew driving an expensive car without likening him to a nigger driving an expensive car. To him they had no tradition of nobility such as they attempted to flaunt. Had he had an expensive car he would instantly have appeared as one who had been born to it. Any gentile would. Never a Jew. Their houses smelled, and when they did not it was only because they wanted to seem like gentiles.<sup>136</sup>

It will be Newman's fate to be routinely mistaken for a Jew once he gets new glasses. The consequences that flow from this mistaken identity include the loss of Newman's job, being refused accommodations at a hotel, and getting roughed up by members of the Christian Front.<sup>137</sup>

Easily the most prominent postwar novel dealing specifically with anti-Semitism was Laura Hobson's *Gentleman's Agreement*. The novel sold more than 10,000 copies on its first day of release, and a million copies in the first year.<sup>138</sup> The film adaptation would become Twentieth Century Fox's most profitable film of the year and would go on to win the Academy Award for best picture of 1947, as well as garnering Oscars for Celeste Holm for supporting actress and Elia Kazan for director.<sup>139</sup> *Gentleman's Agreement*, like many consciousness-raising novels, holds up poorly as a literary work once it has been removed from its historical roots. Readers must endure turgid pacing, wooden characterizations, and unwieldy staging to get at the "message" of this novel—that "antisemitism was seeping into all the arteries of daily life."<sup>140</sup> But the popularity of the novel and film clearly indicates that this message struck a nerve with the public.<sup>141</sup>

The central character of *Gentleman's Agreement* is Philip Green, hired by a New York publisher to do a series on anti-Semitism. The angle Phil hits upon to do the series is that he will "be" Jewish for the duration of his project in order to gain an insider's view. Upon assuming this role, Phil finds a subtle, pernicious anti-Semitism everywhere. One of his fellow employees will describe him as "pushy the way they all are," and a room that he has booked at an exclusive resort suddenly becomes unavailable when he reveals he is Jewish.<sup>142</sup> Phil's "Jewishness" also becomes entangled with his personal life when his fiancée, Kathy, asks Phil to drop his Jewish role playing for the benefit of Kathy's sister Jane, who wants to avoid any unpleasantness at a party she is giving for the newly engaged couple in a WASPy suburb.<sup>143</sup> Phil's son is also taunted for being a "dirty Jew," and Kathy's reluctance to rent a cottage she owns in a "restricted" neighborhood to Phil's Jewish friend Dave (Kathy explains, "It's a sort of gentleman's agreement when you buy") results in the breakup of the couple.<sup>144</sup> In the end all the major characters have been enlightened by their experiences and will begin applying the lessons they have learned to their community.

The film version of *Gentleman's Agreement* adheres closely to the novel, but there is an ironic twist in the casting of John Garfield as Dave because Garfield's real life eerily reflected the social message of the film. Garfield was himself a Jew, but Jack Warner gave him a film contract only after he changed his name from Julius Garfinkle to John Garfield.<sup>145</sup> Both novel and film were widely praised, but not everyone shared the general enthusiasm for *Gentleman's Agreement*. After viewing the film version, Ring Lardner Jr. concluded that the moral of the story was, "Never be mean to a Jew, because he might turn out to be a Gentile."<sup>146</sup> But *Gentleman's Agreement* is more than that. Filled with stirring speeches and noble sentiments, it is a call to action, and ultimately succeeds as a polemic even while failing as a work of art.

Darryl F. Zanuck was not the only studio head who wanted to explore the theme of anti-Semitism. Jewish studio moguls had for many years tried to keep their own Jewishness out of the public light, believing it was bad for gentile business (Louis B. Mayer reportedly had portraits of Cardinal Spellman and J. Edgar Hoover placed

next to each other on his desk). But the end of the war ended the studios' mission to produce only films with "positive" themes, and the revelations of the Nazi death camps and an increasing concern among American liberals over what they saw as creeping "fascism" in American society helped bring the issue of anti-Semitism to the forefront. Having heard of Zanuck's plans to produce *Gentleman's Agreement*, RKO pushed into production its own film with an anti-Semitism theme, *Crossfire*, with the goal of beating *Gentleman's Agreement* into the theaters and stealing some of Zanuck's thunder.<sup>447</sup> While not garnering the attention or awards of *Gentleman's Agreement*, *Crossfire* did surprisingly well at the box office, and people associated with the film were nominated for five Oscars.<sup>448</sup>

What makes *Crossfire* intriguing is that it functions simultaneously as a "message" film, as a war film, and as a film noir. While film noirs often have social commentary, they are rarely as didactic—or as ambitious—as *Crossfire*. In the course of this film a murder is solved, the role that anti-Semitism played in it is addressed, and the theme of postwar veteran readjustment is developed. The plot opens with a number of soldiers marking time as they wait for their discharges, and with the murder of a Jewish civilian named Samuels (Sam Levine). Suspicion will eventually center on Monty (Robert Ryan), who has the following exchange with police detective Finlay (Robert Young):

"I've seen a lot of guys like him [Samuels]."

"Like what?"

"Oh, you know—guys that played it safe during the war. Scrounged around keeping themselves in civvies. Got swell apartments. Swell dames. You know the kind."

"I'm not sure that I do. Just what kind?"

"Oh, you know. Some of them are named Samuels. Some of them got funnier names."

Finlay and the soldiers set a trap for Monty as Finlay intones, "Hating is always the same, always senseless. One day it kills Irish Catholics, the next day Jews, the next day Protestants, the next day Quakers. It's hard to stop. It can end up killing men who wear striped neckties." As for anti-Semitism, Finlay notes that "this business of hating Jews comes in a lot of different sizes. There's the you-can't-join-our-country-club kind, and the you-can't-live-around-here kind. Yes, and the you-can't-work-here kind. And because we stand for all of these we get Monty's kind. He's just one guy, we don't get him very often, but he grows out of all the rest." This sort of speechifying could easily devolve into tedium, but Robert Young is able to sell this scene by avoiding histrionics and delivering his lines in a steady, matter-of-fact fashion.

Producer Adrian Scott called *Crossfire* "a story of personal fascism as opposed to organized fascism. [It] indicates how it is possible for us to have a gestapo, if this country should go fascist." Monty's character, according to Scott, "would qualify brilliantly for the leadership of the Belsen concentration camp."<sup>449</sup> While critical assessment of *Crossfire* was mixed, this film is effective because the dark heart of anti-Semitism and postwar disorientation finds a corollary in the dark, sinister confines of the film noir style.<sup>450</sup> Indeed, as directed by Edward Dmytryk, not a single scene of *Crossfire* takes place in the daylight.

#### IV. Homosexuals

The military was aggressive during the war in enforcing prohibitions against homosexual behavior among servicemen (and, to a lesser extent, servicewomen). Those with homosexual tendencies were supposedly "weeded out" during induction physicals, but as army psychiatrist William Menninger put it, "for every



homosexual who was referred or came to the Medical Department, there were five or ten who never were detected.” In fact, Selective Service rejected only about 1 percent of draftees as homosexuals unfit for the military.<sup>151</sup> Most homosexuals were eager to serve their country, and passing the ludicrously brief psychiatric part of the exam was not difficult. Merle Miller, who feared the exam might reveal his homosexuality, remembers that “I was afraid I would never get into the army, but after the psychiatrist tapped me on the knee with a little hammer and asked how I felt about girls, before I really had a chance to answer, he said ‘Next’ and I was being sworn in.”<sup>152</sup>

Sexual tensions were high in the military because most servicemen were very young and many were removed from the company of women for months or even years at a time. While it is nearly impossible to quantify, the incidence of “situational sex” between men who were normally heterosexual was probably high.<sup>153</sup> The same was probably true for women in the military. The Women’s Army Corps (WAC), according to its official historian, labored throughout the war under a “public impression that a women’s corps was the ideal breeding ground” for lesbians. (One columnist compared the WACs to “naked Amazons ... and the queer damozels of the Isle of Lesbos.”) Almost certainly, a disproportionately large number of lesbians were drawn into the service.<sup>154</sup>

Those accused of homosexual activity by the military could receive sentences that ranged from dishonorable discharge to prison sentences of over a decade. Some 50,000 men and women a year were discharged from the military as homosexuals during the war. Significantly, this rate would double in the years after the war, and the more tolerant wartime policy perhaps indicates that the military could ill afford to dismiss homosexuals from key positions.<sup>155</sup> Especially tolerant was the WAC, which issued a pamphlet to its officers that proclaimed that “every person is born with a bisexual nature” and encouraged officers to be “generous in your outlook” on those suspected of homosexual behavior. But when a mother complained that the WAC camp at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, was “full of homosexuals and sex maniacs” and that a lieutenant and a sergeant had practiced this “terrible vice” with her daughter, the army was forced to conduct a full-scale investigation to avoid a scandal. The lieutenant and sergeant were allowed to resign, the other lesbians at Fort Oglethorpe were transferred, and the whole incident was classified “top secret.”<sup>156</sup>

Accounts of homosexual socializing in the military are necessarily fragmentary, but anecdotal evidence suggests that opportunities were abundant for gay sexual liaisons. Openly gay bars frequented by homosexual men during the war included the Black Cat in San Francisco and the Howdy Club in New York, while lesbians were welcomed at Mona’s in San Francisco or the It Club in Los Angeles. Straight bars that attracted a large gay clientele included New York’s Astor Bar, the Top of the Mark in San Francisco, and the Biltmore in Los Angeles. Cruising was discreet but not too discreet for those in the know.<sup>157</sup> Smaller towns also had bars that catered to homosexuals, including Cleveland with four and Worcester, Massachusetts, with one.<sup>158</sup> While John D’Emilio believes that the war did not precipitate “a shift from heterosexuality to homosexuality,” he goes on to argue that because the war removed men and women “from familial—and familiar—environments, it freed homosexual eroticism from some of the structural restraints that made it appear marginal and isolated.”<sup>159</sup>

There are a number of literary sources that address homosexuality during the war, including Richard Brooks’ 1945 novel *The Brick Foxhole*, the novel on which the aforementioned film *Crossfire* was based. While it is certainly not unusual for film adaptations to wander from their source material, the differences here between novel and film are significant. The most notable change is Monty’s motivation for the murder. While Brooks makes it obvious that Floyd (the book’s Monty character) is an all-around bigot, Floyd will kill Edwards (the book’s Samuel character) not because he is a Jew but because he is a homosexual. In the screenplay all



references to homosexuality were deleted, and the homosexual Edwards in the novel will be transformed into the Jewish Samuels in the film because there was so little public sympathy for homosexuals.<sup>160</sup>

*Brick Foxhole* nurtures a profound cynicism throughout. The racism expressed by the soldiers is of the most virulent nature, such as Floyd calling Mitchell a “nigger-lover”: “You love niggers. An’ you know same as I do that there ain’t a good nigger in the world ‘less he’s dead.”<sup>161</sup> There is also an unsettling nihilistic element in *Foxhole*, as when one soldier concludes that the philosophy that best explains human behavior is “kill or be killed. Wonder if God’s killed anybody? Maybe. But who could pin it on Him?”<sup>162</sup> Relations between the sexes are feral and desperate, and when one soldier visits a prostitute named Ginny, they hear a scream from the room next door. Ginny reveals that a fellow prostitute is being beaten by a naval officer, a regular customer that Ginny contemptuously refers to as a “hero.” When Mitchell asks her what she has against the uniform, Ginny replies: “Nothing. I’m patriotic. I’m for the four freedoms. I’m for democracy. I’m giving my all for my country. In God we trust. Salute the flag. Hail Columbia.”<sup>163</sup> Disturbing, cynical, and dark, *The Brick Foxhole* deserves better than the literary obscurity to which it has been consigned.

John Horne Burns’ *The Gallery* (1947) includes a portrait of “Momma,” a proprietor of a gay bar in Naples catering to Allied servicemen (Burns himself served in Italy and North Africa). Momma describes her “boys” as possessing “an awareness of having been born alone and sequestered by some deep difference from other men ... She could only conclude that these boys who drank at her bar were exceptional human beings. The masculine and the feminine weren’t nicely divided in Momma’s mind as they are to a biologist. They overlapped and blurred in life.”<sup>164</sup> As we are introduced to Momma’s clientele, they are getting progressively drunker and more raucous as the evening wears

- Jesus, baby, those bedroom eyes! someone said to Vittorio.
- I hateya and I loveya, ya beast, one of the sailors said.
- Coo, it teases me right out of my mind, one of the British sergeants said. So simple and complex. Masculine and feminine. All gradations and all degrees and all nuances.<sup>165</sup>

For other patrons, the liquor released philosophical ruminations, with one observing of those around him:

Some hold back in their minds and distrust what they’re doing. In them are the seeds of schizophrenia and destruction. Others give themselves wholly up to their impulses with a dizziness and a comic sense that are revolting to the more serious ones.<sup>166</sup>

Predictably, this evening at Momma’s ends with a raid by the MPs.

Burns explored themes other than homosexuality in the military, but Gore Vidal makes this his main subject in his 1948 novel *The City and the Pillar*. Vidal had been proclaimed a promising war novelist after the publication of *Williwaw* in 1946, but when he submitted the manuscript of *City* to E. P. Dutton, an editor told Vidal, “You will never be forgiven for this book. Twenty years from now you will still be attacked for it.” Vidal has noted that he was accused of being “too stupid at the time to know what I was doing, but in such matters I have always had a certain alertness. I knew that my description of the love affair between two ‘normal’ all-American boys of the sort that I had spent three years with in the wartime army would challenge every superstition about sex in my native land.”<sup>167</sup>

Vidal’s protagonist, Jim Willard, is a popular high school athlete who will initiate a homosexual affair with

another athlete, Bob Ford, while they are still in school. Shortly thereafter, the two are separated and will not be reunited until the war is over at the conclusion of the novel. In the meantime, Jim tries to put the memory of Bob behind him by trying “normal” sex, but with dismal results.<sup>168</sup> Drifting around the country, Jim ends up in Los Angeles and is gradually pulled into the demimonde of homosexual L.A. He will have affairs with an actor and a writer, and will end up in the military when the war begins. There he will keep himself occupied and amused by constantly appraising his fellow soldiers for signs that they might be like himself, and by listening to the troops relate unlikely tales of conquests of beautiful women.<sup>169</sup>

While *The City and the Pillar* has little in the way of graphic sex, there are a number of things in this novel that disturbed readers in 1948. First, there is Jim’s eventual acceptance of, and indeed preference for, his own homosexuality.<sup>170</sup> There is also the suggestion that homosexuality is ubiquitous in society and as “natural” as heterosexuality.<sup>171</sup> Another pioneering aspect of this novel is that Vidal introduces the reader to the lexicon of terms used in the homosexual underground, including an early mainstream use of the word “gay”:

Like jazz musicians and dope addicts, they spoke in code. The words *fairy* and *pansy* were considered to be in bad taste. They preferred to say that a man was *gay*, while someone quite effeminate was a *queen*. As for those manly youths who offered themselves for seduction while proclaiming their heterosexuality, they were known as *trade*, since they usually wanted money.<sup>172</sup>

Finally, Vidal will alienate what few straight readers he may have had left by having Jim rape his old high school lover (in the original ending, Jim kills Bob after being rejected by him).

Certainly, Vidal burned a few bridges behind him with this book, and Vidal himself notes of *The City and the Pillar* that the “*New York Times* would not advertise it and no major American newspaper or magazine would review it or any other book of mine for the next six years.”<sup>173</sup> While the war itself is not given a prominent treatment in *City*, its role in breaking down social and moral values is unmistakable. One character theorizes that “the war has caused a great change. Inhibitions have broken down. All sorts of young men are trying out all sorts of new things, away from home and familiar taboos.”<sup>174</sup>

By the time James Jones’ *The Thin Red Line* appeared in 1962, social attitudes had greatly liberalized, and Jones was able to give the theme of military homosexuality a prominent place without suffering the same public censure as Vidal. In *Thin Red Line* there are individual sexual encounters as well as discussions of homosexuality as an army institutional phenomenon. One soldier is described as “a rather girlishly-built, girlish-looking young man, who was continually having his bottom felt in joke or perhaps not in joke,” and there is a series of sexual liaisons between tentmates Bead and Fife.<sup>175</sup> A bewildered Fife tries to put his experiences in the context of the two types of army homosexuality with which he was familiar: “oldtimers in the army who had their young boyfriends” (“none of this bugging was considered homosexual by anyone”), and “overt homosexuals” who were disliked by everyone “though many might avail themselves of their services.” Fife is unable to place himself in either group “but was terrified that someone else might.”<sup>176</sup>

It is important to remember that even the most enlightened Americans during the 1940s tended to see homosexuality as a pathological condition, with uncertain prospects for a cure. Professor Noel Keys, who taught a popular sex and marriage course at Berkeley (and was considered a bit of a radical for his frank discussions of sexuality), stated in 1945, “There is a type of invert whose sexual nature is so misdirected from childhood that medicine and psychology can’t help much. There are other perfectly normal individuals who through force of

circumstances fall into homosexual inclinations or practices. They can be cured, if there is a will."<sup>177</sup>

## V. Japanese Americans

Early in 1942 Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which authorized the military to remove 110,000 people of Japanese ancestry from their homes on the West Coast to relocation camps in the interior. Three-fourths lived in California, and two-thirds were American citizens.<sup>178</sup> This would be the greatest violation of civil liberties in American history, and it was not an aberration but the logical outcome of an intense anti-Oriental hatred that had festered in American society since the mid-19th century. California had led the way in securing passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which halted all Chinese immigration to the United States, and exclusionists were, if anything, even more agitated by the Japanese. The increasing unease with Japan after the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 was mirrored in the unease toward the West Coast's resident Japanese, who were making serious inroads in the businesses and professions.<sup>179</sup> As they had done with the Chinese, frustrated Californians would take their case against the Japanese to the national level, clamoring for an end to Japanese immigration altogether. The arguments they made were often nakedly racist. V. S. McClatchy, retired publisher of the *Sacramento Bee*, testified before Congress in 1924 that the Japanese were "less assimilable and more dangerous" than any other group in the country. McClatchy feared that the influx of "alien races" would certainly "drive the white race to the wall."<sup>180</sup> The testimony of McClatchy and others prompted Congress to pass the Immigration Act of 1924, which excluded further Japanese immigration.<sup>181</sup>

Two months before Pearl Harbor, *Collier's* referred to "the fantastic improbability of a Japanese invasion of the West Coast. Japanese navy and air force[s] are, at best, second rate."<sup>182</sup> After the stunning attack on Pearl Harbor, Japanese armed forces were no longer regarded as second-rate and an invasion of the West Coast no longer seemed fantastically improbable. The Pearl Harbor attack confirmed many West Coast residents in their views of the Japanese as a treacherous, fanatical people capable of anything, and won others over to the anti-Japanese side who had not previously harbored such sentiments. Frightened Americans now began bracing for an attack on the West Coast, and began creating in their fevered imaginations phantom fleets of Japanese ships just off the shore and spectral squadrons of Japanese planes overhead.

Resident West Coast Japanese and Japanese Americans, whose relationship with the rest of the population had never been cordial, were increasingly scrutinized as potential fifth columnists who might be about to initiate a program of sabotage against defense plants and hydroelectric facilities. Immediately, 3,000 people of Japanese ancestry deemed to be potentially dangerous were arrested and sent to Fort Lincoln in Bismarck, North Dakota, for questioning.<sup>183</sup> *Time* declared that California was "Japan's Sudetenland" and that "in the eyes of Tokyo, even the most domesticated U.S.-born Nisei are loyal subjects of Japan."<sup>184</sup> Early in March the 5,000 Japanese residents of Terminal Island, who were mainly involved in fishing, were removed by the army because of their proximity to the naval facility at San Pedro. Even at this early date, the difference in attitudes of Americans toward the enemies they now faced were beginning to surface, as "officials found themselves torn between a violent popular outcry for tough treatment of Japs, and perverse apathy toward the even more numerous but equally dangerous Germans and Italians."<sup>185</sup>

The grassroots hysteria to "do something" about the resident Japanese was fanned by the media (the *Los Angeles Times* noted that "treachery and double-dealing are major Japanese weapons"), and began to have an effect on the political leadership.<sup>186</sup> California's attorney general, Earl Warren, put the Japanese of his state in

an impossible damned-if-you-do/damned-if-you-don't position, describing the *lack* of any Japanese sabotage as “ominous” because it was being “timed for a different date.”<sup>187</sup> *Newsweek* columnist Ernest K. Lindley also claimed that “the absence of sabotage both in Hawaii and on the Pacific Coast is the surest sign that Japanese agents will go into action later.”<sup>188</sup> Meanwhile, Lieutenant General John DeWitt, the highest-ranking military officer on the West Coast and head of the Western Defense Command, was among the most outspoken in advocating “the evacuation of Japanese and other subversive persons from the West Coast” as a way of eliminating “sabotage, espionage and subversive activities in this theater.”<sup>189</sup> DeWitt dismissed any suggestion that there might be loyal Japanese Americans because “the racial strains are undiluted.”<sup>190</sup>

The clamoring reached the national level, and testimony at congressional hearings was stridently anti-Japanese. As columnist Westbrook Pegler so eloquently put it, “The Japanese in California should be under armed guard to the last man and woman right now—and to hell with habeas corpus.”<sup>191</sup> Finally, on February 19, 1942, Franklin Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, which ceded to the War Department sweeping authority to designate “military areas” from which “any or all persons may be excluded.” No specific ethnic group was named, and Executive Order 9066 conceivably could have been used against anyone.<sup>192</sup> But there was little doubt as to the target group, with congressional testimony as well as statements from various citizens’ groups overwhelmingly endorsing evacuation of the West Coast Japanese, regardless of citizenship, but opposing similar treatment for German and Italian aliens.<sup>193</sup> Representative A. J. Elliott declared that “we must move the Japanese in this country into a concentration camp somewhere,” and added, “Don’t kid yourselves and don’t let someone tell you there are good Japs.” In Riverside, local farmers informed the County Board of Supervisors that unless something was done about the local Japanese population, they might take “matters into their own hands.”<sup>194</sup>

Why did Roosevelt issue the relocation order? The simple answer is politics. Roger Daniels notes that Roosevelt made his decision during a period of continuing military setbacks to the Japanese, and that Roosevelt “could read the congressional signs well, and knew that cracking down on the Japanese Americans would be popular both on Capitol Hill and with the nation at large.”<sup>195</sup>

The 70,000 West Coast Nisei were learning, as *Time* put it, that “in a nation’s hour of peril, having been born a citizen is not enough.”<sup>196</sup> Initially, those of Japanese ancestry within West Coast military zones were allowed to leave voluntarily, and within three weeks some 8,000 packed up and started east. They did not receive a warm welcome anywhere. Highway patrolmen turned back migrating Japanese at the border in Arizona and Kansas, and the states of Nevada and Wyoming announced that they were not willing to receive people deemed too dangerous for California. By late March the army rescinded voluntary evacuation, and by August, 110,000 people of Japanese ancestry had been placed under “protective custody” in army assembly centers. These centers provided extremely primitive living conditions (the stables of the Tanforan race track near San Francisco and the Santa Anita track near Arcadia were two such centers). Such temporary facilities would be replaced by 10 permanent relocation camps that a new civilian agency, the War Relocation Authority (WRA), was building in the interior.<sup>197</sup>





**Fig 6.2** Dressed in his World War I uniform, this veteran reports to the Santa Anita assembly center, Arcadia, California, 8 May 1942. Dorothea Lange (War Relocation Authority), NARA file #210-G-3B-424.

Almost immediately the WRA was accused by Hearst papers, congressional committees, and private individuals of “coddling” interned Japanese. Partially in response to these accusations, *Fortune* magazine published what is arguably the most thoughtful piece on Japanese relocation to appear during the war. *Fortune* described the internment camps as spartan in the extreme, with no running water or cooking facilities inside the barracks. Communally prepared meals were near the nutritional minimum, and residents were forced to make furniture out of scrap lumber. The average salary of a camp resident was \$16 per month, the maximum \$19 (the wage earned by a doctor). “No one who has visited a relocation center,” said *Fortune*, “and seen the living space, eaten the food, or merely kept his eyes open could honestly apply the word ‘coddling’ to WRA’s administration of the camp.”<sup>198</sup> A woman whose family was interned at the camp at Heart Mountain, Wyoming, responded to the charges that “we Japanese are being coddled” by noting that the current temperature was 20 degrees below zero, and inviting “anyone to try living behind barbed wire and be cooped in a 20 ft. by 20 ft. room.”<sup>199</sup>

In terms of the culture and social life of the camps, Carey McWilliams was struck by the same ironies as other



observers. At Santa Anita he found a flourishing American Legion post and a baseball league with a World Series—evidence that the inmates “are painfully American in speech, action, and behavior.”<sup>200</sup> At Pomona, McWilliams uncovered the bizarre case of the Hayward family, a 21-member clan whose members did not speak, read, or write Japanese, who had never been to Japan, and who did not resemble the Japanese in any way. But because the patriarch of this family was one-fourth Japanese, and because the army insisted that people with any Japanese blood be evacuated, the Haywards found themselves locked up in Pomona.<sup>201</sup>

While the most fervent American “patriotic” groups continued to press for punitive actions against those of Japanese ancestry (the American Legion urged deportations for relocated Japanese at the conclusion of the war, and the Native Sons of the Golden West advocated the cancellation of American citizenship for Japanese Americans), it is clear that once the removal of the Japanese had taken place and the hysteria of a possible Japanese invasion had passed, Americans began to have second thoughts.<sup>202</sup> *Fortune* referred to the relocation camps as “a kind of Indian reservation, to plague the conscience of Americans for many years to come,” and called the doctrine of “protective custody”

too convenient a weapon in many other situations. In California, a state with a long history of race hatred and vigilanteism, antagonism is already building against the Negroes who have come in for war jobs. What is to prevent their removal to jails, to “protect them” from riots? Or Negroes in Detroit, Jews in Boston, Mexicans in Texas? The possibilities of “protective custody” are endless, as the Nazis have amply proved.<sup>203</sup>

Robert Redfield characterized the American attitude toward resident Japanese as “confused,” and pondered the significance of “what has happened or may happen to all the rest of us as a result of the evacuation and confinement of the Japanese-Americans.”<sup>204</sup>

Conditions were humiliating enough in the camp, but authorities also insisted that everyone 17 and over fill out a loyalty questionnaire that would serve as the basis for determining whether internees might be granted leave to go east to look for work, or moved to a special encampment at Tule Lake for the hard-core disloyal (some 18,000 would end up at this facility).<sup>205</sup> The questions were:

Are you willing to serve in the Armed Forces of the United States on combat duty, wherever ordered?

Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, or any other foreign government, power, or organization?<sup>206</sup>

Question two put the Issei generation in an especially bad position. Since they were unable to become naturalized citizens of the United States, renouncing their Japanese citizenship would leave them with no citizenship at all.

By February 1943 the Army was drafting Japanese Americans into a segregated combat unit (eventually some 21,000 would be inducted, but none would serve in the navy, which flatly refused to accept Japanese Americans as sailors).<sup>207</sup> The irony of drafting men to serve in the military by the same government that had incarcerated them as potentially dangerous is obvious, but thousands of young Japanese American men would not only agree to serve but eagerly volunteer for this duty. The Japanese American 442nd Regimental Combat Unit would see some of the heaviest fighting in Europe, and the unit itself would become the most decorated in American

history.

Major General Charles W. Ryder, commander of the 442nd, called these troops the best in the division, and Bill Mauldin noted that “as far as the army in Italy was concerned, the Nisei could do no wrong. We were proud to be wearing the same uniform.”<sup>208</sup> What kept these men going after suffering casualties on the order of two-thirds was, as one writer put it, “personal reasons.”<sup>209</sup> The mainstream media slowly began to take note of the sacrifices of these men. Even *Life*, which had gone in for plenty of Jap-bashing during the war, ran an article called “Blind Nisei,” about a Japanese American soldier who had been blinded in Italy during the crossing of the Volturno. He was described as an “American hero.”<sup>210</sup>

But much of home front America was less generous. In one example, a white officer who had served with Nisei units in Europe was sent out by the War Department to talk to businessmen and farmers about the commendable job done by Japanese American soldiers. The officer had the following conversation with a farmer in northern California:

“How many of them Japs in your company got killed?” “All but two of the men who started in my platoon were killed by the end of the war,” the lieutenant replied. “Too goddam bad they didn’t get the last two,” said the farmer.<sup>211</sup>

In Hood River, Oregon, the local American Legion struck off the names of 16 Japanese American soldiers from a public honor roll. When the local Legion was pressured by the national organization to restore these names, the Hood River Legion claimed that such a move would be “inadvisable” because of the local mood, and cited a newspaper ad signed by 500 locals that proclaimed, “So Sorry Please. Japs Are Not Wanted in Hood River.” Resident Japanese and Japanese Americans were well aware of the strong anti-Japanese sentiment that continued to flourish. Groups that were specifically anti-Japanese included No Japs Incorporated (San Diego), Home Front Commandoes (Sacramento), and the Pacific Coast Japanese Problem League (Los Angeles).<sup>212</sup> In the first four months of 1945, there were 24 cases of violence or open intimidation against returning Japanese in California. In one case, two soldiers and a bartender tried to blow up the home of Sumio Doi in Newcastle, California. The perpetrators were freed after their defense attorney argued that “this is a white man’s country.”<sup>213</sup> Fearing the reception they might receive, by March 1945 only 1,900 of the 60,000 who still remained in the relocation camps expressed a desire to return to their West Coast homes.<sup>214</sup>

Among those who had fought with the 442nd was Daniel Inouye. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for an engagement in which he was wounded a number of times and lost his right arm. He would spend 20 months in hospitals. As Inouye relates it, he was on a layover in Oakland on his way back to Hawaii when he stopped to get a haircut:

I went into an Oakland barbershop—four empty chairs—and a barber comes up to me and wants to know if I’m Japanese. Keep in mind I’m in uniform with my medals and ribbons and a hook for an arm, I said, “Well, my father was born in Japan.” The barber replied, “We don’t cut Jap hair.”<sup>215</sup>

Those who lived on the margins of American society during the war years could hope for tolerance, or at least a benign neglect, but they could not reasonably expect acceptance. Racism and religious and sexual discrimination were deeply set into the culture, and changes in societal attitudes would occur only slowly,

stretching decades in the future. In the meantime, it is no exaggeration to say that during World War II blacks, Jews, homosexuals, and Japanese Americans fought two wars: one against the enemy abroad and one against the enemy next door.

## **Part III**

# **Americans and the Culture of World War II**

The heavy hand of win-the-war bureaucracy was ubiquitous during World War II, making popular culture and the war effort virtually inseparable. All media were working under the constraints of “maintaining morale,” and the adage that politics and art make for wretched bedfellows is painfully obvious in the great quantity of bad films that were made about the war and in the creation of a musical canon that was virtually unlistenable. It is encouraging that audiences approached these art forms with a sophistication that often frustrated the official government line.

Films and music with ludicrous patriotic sentiments were greeted with the contempt and hilarity they deserved, especially by servicemen. Justin Gray reported that when his Ranger platoon was ordered to take up an especially precarious position during the fighting in Italy, one member of the platoon began singing with mock enthusiasm, “There’s a Star-Spangled Banner waving somewhere, over a distant land so very far away. Only Uncle Sam’s brave heroes get to go there; O how I wish I could go there, too.” Commented another platoon member: “I’ll kill the bastard that wrote that song.”<sup>1</sup> Then, as now, audiences chose their own favorites. Thus “White Christmas,” with its wistful lyrics, became the most popular song of the war (in Britain it was “We’ll Meet Again,” a song with similar sentiments). And it was *Casablanca*, with its superb acting and believable love story, that was the surprise best-picture winner for 1943.

Servicemen enjoyed much the same access to films and music as civilians, as well as being entertained by United Service Organizations (USO) shows—all deemed critical to military morale. But military personnel were also fully capable of entertaining themselves. There were the usual vice entertainments of drinking, gambling, and sex, but servicemen also played sports, created their own musical groups, and even put on their own theatrical performances. Most importantly, many soldiers during the war became voracious readers—a phenomenon that was made possible by the Armed Services Editions book program, through which the government made available to American servicemen some 123 million copies of 1,300 titles. The impact of this program in creating a love of reading among the many who had never before taken a great interest in books is incalculable.

## I. Film

Just four months before the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Senate’s Nye-Clark Committee began its investigation of Hollywood filmmakers for allegedly violating the official neutrality of the United States by actively promoting American involvement in the war. The committee was dominated by isolationists, and there was more than a tincture of anti-Semitism in the committee’s emphasis on the Jewish dominance of Hollywood.<sup>2</sup> Pearl Harbor changed everything, and now Hollywood was wooed by the government to assist in the mobilization of public opinion.<sup>3</sup> The film industry became an official part of the war effort in February 1942, when Selective Service director General Lewis Hershey declared motion pictures to be an “essential” industry and allowed Hollywood employees to apply for draft deferments as “irreplaceable” workers.<sup>4</sup> Riding herd over the content of Hollywood films was the Office of War Information (OWI). The OWI enlisted the services of two high-profile writers,



Archibald MacLeish and Robert Sherwood, and everyone involved in the OWI was determined that the agency not be a crude propaganda machine such as World War I's Committee on Public Information. Instead, the OWI would pursue a "strategy of truth" because, as Sherwood put it to a House committee, "the truth, coming from America, with unmistakable American sincerity, is by far the most effective form of propaganda."<sup>5</sup> This Edenic vision soon collided with the necessities of waging total war, and as Allan Winkler has noted, OWI idealists were forced to become acquainted with both "the limits of their expectations" and "the troubling conflicts between the values of democracy and the requirements of war."<sup>6</sup>

By the end of the war the OWI would resemble a more traditional propaganda agency, but signs that this agency was moving in that direction were already visible as early as the summer of 1942, when the OWI issued its *Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry*. This outlined the themes that the OWI wanted to see in Hollywood films, with the bottom line being, "Will this picture help win the war?" To that end the OWI encouraged filmmakers to "show democracy at work, in the community, the factory, the army." Films should portray a unified home front, with everyone gladly sacrificing for the war effort. Allies should be praised, and women should be shown shouldering new responsibilities in war plants. Racial stereotypes were to be avoided, and the use of multicultural platoons "using names of foreign extraction" was encouraged.<sup>7</sup>

The American motion picture industry responded enthusiastically, placing an ad in 1942 that proclaimed "Morale is Mightier than the Sword." Filmmakers argued that "just as it is the job of some industries to provide the implements that will keep 'em flying, keep 'em rolling, and keep 'em shooting, so it is the job of the Motion Picture Industry to keep 'em smiling."<sup>8</sup> It was greatly to be feared that annoying complexities and conflicts might keep 'em frowning. Eric Johnston, head of the Motion Picture Producers' Association, told the Screen Writers Guild, "We'll have no more *Grapes of Wrath*, we'll have no more *Tobacco Roads*, we'll have no more films that deal with the seamy side of American life. We'll have no more films that treat the banker as a villain."<sup>9</sup> In the Hollywood/OWI version of World War II, according to Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, "labor and capital buried their differences for a greater cause; class, ethnic, and racial divisions evaporated in the foxholes and on the assembly line; even estranged family members were reconciled through the agency of war." Implicitly, Hollywood films of this era argue that "war, however horrible, might be a tonic."<sup>10</sup>

Anthony Rhodes claims that the two areas where Americans surpassed all other nations in wartime propaganda was in leaflets and "films for domestic consumption."<sup>11</sup> But audience receptivity to filmic propaganda is difficult to gauge. Dellie Hahne remembers watching a movie in which a character played by George Murphy reads a telegram that transports him to realms of ecstasy. When asked about the contents of the telegram, Murphy exclaims, "I've been drafted! I've been drafted!" According to Hahne, "The whole audience howled. 'Cause you know you can feed 'em only so much bullshit."<sup>12</sup> Still, it is a tribute to the power of film propaganda that movies made during the war, while having only a wobbly footing in reality, continue to color our understanding of World War II.

Some of Hollywood's best directors, including Frank Capra, John Ford, and William Wyler, went to work directly for the government, often under extremely hazardous conditions. While John Ford was filming the *Battle of Midway* from Midway Island, bomb concussions ruined much of his film, two of his three cameras were destroyed, and Ford himself was knocked unconscious.<sup>13</sup> William Wyler, whose film *Mrs. Miniver* (1942) did much to garner American support for the British, wanted to make a documentary of the air war over Europe. In Corsica, Wyler had watched films with airmen who booed any corny sentiment or heroic portrayal of air force officers, and he was determined to do better.<sup>14</sup> He was told that no one could fly on a B-17 mission unless

trained as an emergency gunner who could take over if a crewman was wounded. Wyler went to gunners' school, and the film that he and two other cameramen took on bombing raids would go into the documentary *The Memphis Belle* (1944). Ostensibly, the purpose of this documentary was to commemorate the completion of 25 missions by the crew of the *Memphis Belle*, but it also documents the opening of daylight bombing operations against Germany and its terrible dangers to American flyers. Wyler recalled that the "flak was terrific. We'd fly through entire belts of it, so thick that at twenty-six thousand feet the blue sky looked like a punctured sieve." B-17 crews reported that Wyler himself seemed oblivious to the danger, "walking the open catwalk of the bomb bay five miles above Germany, breathing out of a walk-around oxygen bottle, his body clothed in bulky flying equipment, the temperature at forty-five degrees below zero, pointing his hand camera at flak bursts and at German fighters trying to break up the formation."<sup>15</sup> In the course of the filming one of Wyler's cameramen was killed, and Wyler himself lost the hearing in one of his ears.<sup>16</sup>

Back home in Hollywood, studio mogul Darryl Zanuck (who had been commissioned a colonel) supervised the production of military training films for the Signal Corps. Titles included *Military Courtesy and Customs of the Service*, *The 37-mm. Anti-Aircraft Gun Battery—Care After Firing*, and *Sex Hygiene*—more than 400 training films in all. Famous actors often lent their voices to these films. A 10-minute short called *Tanks* was narrated by Orson Welles, while *Bomber* had commentary by Carl Sandburg.<sup>17</sup> Seventy-five percent of the Walt Disney studios was dedicated to wartime production by 1942. In Disney's first government film, *The New Spirit*, Donald Duck is pressed into service to remind citizens that many of them would now be paying taxes for the first time. The world's most famous waterfowl is predictably enthusiastic ("Taxes to beat the Axis!").<sup>18</sup> Ronald Reagan donned an army air forces uniform and made films for the war effort, including narrating instructional films for B-29 bomber crews staging raids on Japan. In his appropriately titled autobiography *Where's the Rest of Me?* Reagan described this work as "one of the better-kept secrets of the war, ranking up with the atom bomb project."<sup>19</sup>

Hollywood produced these films on a nonprofit basis, and in turn the government allowed the film industry to continue production of feature films at a virtually uninterrupted rate. Between 1942 and 1944, Hollywood studios produced about 440 films per year, compared to around 500 per year during the 1930s. More high-quality films and fewer B movies were produced during the war, and movies continued to be popular because theaters were among the few places for employees to spend their money (the average price of admission was a little over 25 cents in 1942). Many movie houses stayed open 24 hours a day to accommodate factory workers from swing and graveyard shifts.<sup>20</sup> Films were also distributed free of charge to overseas military personnel, who often saw the new movies before the domestic audience. At Anzio, movies were shown every night, and in the Marianas there were more than 200 outdoor movie screens.<sup>21</sup> Each night, 630,000 members of the armed forces watched a movie, and nearly a thousand different features were distributed overseas during the war years.<sup>22</sup> As to subject matter, some 28 percent of the films made in the full war years of 1942 and 1943 were concerned with the war.<sup>23</sup>

On the Hollywood home front, wartime hardships included the end of horse racing at Santa Anita (the racetrack served as an army training center and as a holding area for West Coast Japanese before they were moved to relocation camps), restricted hours for clubs such as Ciro's and the Coconut Grove, and the curtailment of yachting (virtually the entire Hollywood fleet was handed over to the navy and coast guard). Swimming pool owners were also required to keep their pools filled in case there was an attack on the local water supply. *Fortune* magazine noted, "It is quite an issue in swimming-pool circles whether it is patriotic to

bathe in water that may be needed for drinking sometime in the future.”<sup>24</sup>

A number of high-profile stars volunteered for the military itself, including Douglas Fairbanks Jr. and Robert Montgomery, who served in the navy, and Jimmy Stewart and Clark Gable, who enlisted in the army air forces. Jimmy Stewart was the first to go. He put on 10 pounds to meet the army weight requirement and in the spring of 1941 volunteered for army flight duty (he was already a private pilot). *Fortune* revealed that Hollywood producers viewed Stewart’s enlistment “with mixed feelings. ‘Which is better for the country—Gary Cooper as Sergeant York, or Gary Cooper as Sergeant Cooper?’ is a frequent question in Hollywood.”<sup>25</sup> As head of the 445th Bomber Group flying B-24s out of England, Stewart flew 20 missions over Germany as a pilot. He put himself in danger more than he had to and earned the respect of his men because, as one of them put it, “I always had a feeling that he would never ask you to do something he wouldn’t do himself.”<sup>26</sup> On one mission Stewart’s plane was badly hit by flak and Stewart had to nurse the plane back to England for a crash landing. According to one witness, “the tail of the ship was sticking up in the air and the nose was sticking up in front. Just in front of the wing at the flight deck the airplane had cracked open like an egg.” Stewart surveyed the damage and said, “Sergeant, somebody sure could get hurt in one of those damned things.”<sup>27</sup> After serving in the air force for four and a half years, Stewart returned to the States and reestablished a flourishing career (his first postwar film was *It’s A Wonderful Life*).

Clark Gable entered the service after his wife, Carole Lombard, was killed in a plane crash while on a war bond tour. He was persuaded by army officials to undertake training as an aerial gunner to make the job more popular with recruits. He told one friend, “I’m going in, and I don’t expect to come back, and I don’t really give a hoot whether I do or not.”<sup>28</sup> At the end of gunnery school he was assigned to work for an Eighth Air Force documentary unit taking air combat footage of B-17s. Once word got out that Gable was in Europe, German air force commander Hermann Goering offered a \$5,000 reward to the pilot who shot Gable down. Gable’s first flight (over Antwerp) was nearly his last. A 20 mm. shell ripped into his plane, knocking the heel off one of his boots, and exiting just a few inches above his head. On subsequent flights he would take over for gunners wounded in action, and like Stewart, would earn the admiration of those around him.<sup>29</sup> A few of Gable’s superiors worried that Gable’s frequent flights amounted to a death wish, and because no one wanted to be known as the commander who let Clark Gable get killed, he was given the Distinguished Flying Cross and the film project was deemed finished.<sup>30</sup> The Clark Gable who returned to the United States to work on the documentary was a different man. He was thinner, grayer, and more somber, and had been drinking at least a quart of Scotch a day since Lombard’s death.<sup>31</sup> Gable’s career never returned to its former eminence.

In contrast to Stewart and Gable, Lew Ayres, best known for his film role as Dr. Kildare, stunned his Hollywood associates by announcing that he was a conscientious objector. Ayres said that he had made his decision after much thought, and admitted that his role in the anti-war film *All Quiet on the Western Front* had had an influence. As Ayres took his place at a camp for conscientious objectors at Cascade Locks, Oregon (early in 1942 there were 25 such camps for 2,500 COs), theaters throughout the country took steps to ban the showing of his films.<sup>32</sup> Eventually there would be 75,000 Americans registered as objectors, but only 12,000 would end up in camps.<sup>33</sup> The rest would be drafted into the military, and 14,000 would be sent to prison (including 4,000 Jehovah’s Witnesses).<sup>34</sup>

Film goers during the war years had a lot on their minds, and it is probably fair to say that the last thing most audiences wanted from a movie was “realism,” especially as it pertained to the fighting itself. In his book *Back Home*, Bill Mauldin has a cartoon of combat veteran Willie, flustered and wiping his brow, outside a movie

theater advertising a showing of *San Pietro* (the John Huston documentary of an Italian battle). Willie is saying to the ticket seller, “Dern tootin’ it’s realistic. Gimme my money back!”<sup>35</sup> Still, much of what the public understood about combat conditions was gleaned from films, and it was a chronic complaint among servicemen that the public was being misinformed.

Pacific veteran James Jones claimed that movies “didn’t understand anything about the war” and that “instead of trying to show the distressing complexity and puzzling diffusion of war, they pulled everything down to the level of good guy against bad guy.”<sup>36</sup> Still, such was the power of film that even those involved in combat continued to try to interpret their experiences through the movies they had seen. Foster Hailey, who witnessed Japanese aircraft attacking American carriers at the Battle of Midway, said, “I don’t know how it is with others, but for me it was like watching a slow-motion picture.”<sup>37</sup> One paratrooper, who was waiting to jump from a plane that was being fired upon during a night mission, noted that “I could see those tracers coming up alongside us and under us and I could hear the explosions of the shrapnel, but it seemed as if in a movie. It wasn’t happening to me.”<sup>38</sup>

If war could be cinematic, there was also a jarring disconnect between film and reality. After surviving the Second Battle of Bougainville, one soldier concluded that “battles are not like the ones they show in the movies.”<sup>39</sup> In James Jones’ *The Thin Red Line*, Jones’ character Bell ruminates after an attack on Guadalcanal that “if this were a movie this would be the end of the show and something would be decided. In a movie or a novel they would dramatize and build to the climax of the attack.... The audience could go home and think about the semblance of the meaning and feel the semblance of the emotion. Even if the hero got killed, it would still make sense. Art, Bell decided, creative art—was shit.”<sup>40</sup> When the troops in Jones’ novel are moved to a rear area, they see an open-air movie every night that typically featured the “glittering, free, sophisticated life of Manhattan, Washington and California which they were fighting for but which none of them had ever seen outside of the films.”<sup>41</sup>

A marine on Iwo Jima said that if a film was made showing war as it really was, it would include “people falling in crap, parts of people lying around, bodies flung apart, people getting shot while they was trying to take a crap.”<sup>42</sup> One soldier, after viewing an especially bad war film, complained, “They make us look like fools. What do they think we’re doing over here anyway?” Soldiers also expressed boundless contempt for what Robert Fleisher called “the steady stream of ‘look what we are doing for the boys at the front’ pictures.”<sup>43</sup> The preposterousness of these films did not escape home front observers, either. In its review of *Objective, Burma!*, *Time* magazine noted that “at the rate Errol Flynn & Co. knock off the Japanese, it may make you wonder why there is any good reason for the war to outlast next weekend.”<sup>44</sup>

Preposterous or not, the reach of Hollywood films was virtually inescapable. The day after flying a combat mission from Saipan, John Ciardi saw *A Guy Named Joe*, a film in which a dead bombardier (played by Spencer Tracy) returns in ghostly form to instill courage in the living. Certainly, this is a curious entertainment choice to show at an air base, and Ciardi noted that he resented “the Hollywood touch in it.” Ciardi contrasted the unrealistic portrayal of war in this film to what was left of a Japanese pilot that had been shot down over the Saipan base a few days earlier: “The Jap our guns shot down a few days ago is the way it ends: a piece of jaw here, an arm there, and a dismembered torso smoking like a charred roast. There aren’t enough speeches or parades or posters in the world to make it pretty.”<sup>45</sup>

William Manchester once polled members of a rifle company as to why each of them had joined the marines, and a majority responded that the main factor had been the film *To the Shores of Tripoli* (1942). In what



Manchester describes as a “marshmallow of a movie,” there was the clear implication that “combat would be a lark, and when you returned, spangled with decorations, a Navy nurse like Maureen O’Hara would be waiting in your sack.”<sup>46</sup> The actor most commonly associated with the World War II combat film is John Wayne, who made half a dozen of these films during the war years and the years immediately following. They include *Flying Tigers* (1942), *The Fighting Seabees* (1945), *Back to Bataan* (1945), *Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949), *Operation Pacific* (1951), and *Flying Leathernecks* (1951)—all of dubious authenticity. A number of these films are well crafted and entertaining: *They Were Expendable* (1945), a John Ford-directed film about an American PT boat detachment in the Philippines, was Wayne’s best World War II film, but they all fell short in portraying the war in realistic terms.

The Hollywood war that Wayne was fighting especially rankled combat veterans because Wayne’s characters never exhibited any traces of combat’s most common denominator: fear. American servicemen who were polled during the war overwhelmingly agreed that combat never became less frightening, and more than 20 percent of the men in one division reported that fear had made them lose control of their bowels during combat. As John Ellis observes, “If over one-fifth of the men in one division actually admitted that they had fouled themselves, it is a fair assumption that many more actually did so.”<sup>47</sup> Manchester reported that he once had “the enormous pleasure of seeing Wayne humiliated in person” while Manchester was recovering from his wounds in a navy hospital in Hawaii. A nightly movie was provided for the patients, and one evening the patients were told that there was a surprise for them:

Before the film the curtains parted and out stepped John Wayne, wearing a cowboy outfit—10-gallon hat, bandanna, checkered shirt, two pistols, chaps, boots and spurs. He grinned his aw-shucks grin, passed a hand over his face and said, “Hi ya, guys!” He was greeted by a stony silence. Then somebody booed. Suddenly everyone was booing.

This man was a symbol of the fake machismo we had come to hate, and we weren’t going to listen to him. He tried and tried to make himself heard, but we drowned him out, and eventually he quit and left.

After the war Manchester and another ex-marine went to see *Sands of Iwo Jima* and “we were asked to leave the theater because we couldn’t stop laughing.”<sup>48</sup> Bill Mauldin reported that Humphrey Bogart’s “tough-guy act” received a similar reception from American troops in Naples. Unexpectedly, Frank Sinatra, whom soldiers resented for his 4-F status and his enormous popularity with young American women, was well received by G.I.’s because he stuck to singing.<sup>49</sup> Of all the films made during the war about the war, the two films that best epitomize the Hollywood vision of Americans in combat and the home front idyll are *Bataan* (1943) and *Since You Went Away* (1944). Because of their influence on the public’s perception of the war, they deserve a close examination. While *Since You Went Away* is the better film, *Bataan* is perhaps the more important of the two because, according to Jeanine Basinger, it incorporated many conventions that would be repeated with numbing regularity in countless combat films to come.<sup>50</sup>

One of those conventions was the prologue (“When Japan struck, our desperate need was time—time to marshal our new armies. Ninety-six priceless days were bought for us—with their lives—by the defenders of Bataan”), and another was the creation of a ragtag, ethnically mixed crew that in *Bataan* includes a navy musician, a Filipino boxer, a black engineer who had studied at a seminary, an Hispanic hipster, and even a teacher of Latin who has been officially classified as a noncombatant. These men have blown a key bridge at Bataan, and their doomed mission is to keep the Japanese from rebuilding it for as long as they can. One by one,



members of this badly outnumbered detachment will fall victim to a relentless, sadistic enemy. When one of them is found hanging from a tree after being tortured by the Japanese, his comrade mutters, "Dirty, dirty, dirty, dirty ..."

The fighting has a redemptive impact on the group. The toughness and dedication of the men win over the outfit's resident cynic, and even the noncombatant will become a grenade tosser before he is killed. Finally only one man is left. He is standing in the grave he has dug for himself, machine gun blazing and yelling at the Japanese, "You didn't think we were here, did you, you dirty, rotten rats? But we're still here, we'll always be here. Why don't you come and get it?" A postscript superimposed over the muzzle of the machine gun reads, "So fought the heroes of Bataan. Their sacrifice made possible our victories in the Coral and Bismarck Seas, at Midway, on New Guinea and Guadalcanal. Their spirit will lead us back to Bataan."<sup>51</sup> A superb propaganda piece, *Bataan* succeeds because it puts a human face on the Americans and their allies, making the viewers care about their aspirations and fates, while simultaneously demonizing the mostly faceless Japanese. In one of the film's most important combat scenes, in fact, the Japanese will attack not as recognizable human beings but disguised as shrubbery!

*Since You Went Away* depicts home front Americans in much the same way that *Bataan* portrayed Americans in combat. The characters here are overwhelmingly decent human beings, struggling to make sense of the war and willing to sacrifice greatly to bring about its conclusion. People of all colors, creeds, and national origins put aside their differences for the common effort, and as in *Bataan*, the cynic is redeemed, the guileless matures, and the weak discover unexpected reserves of determination and courage. While home front enemies are less physically threatening than the Japanese, the manner of their portrayal leaves little doubt who they are and how we are to respond to them.

*Since You Went Away* shares a few of *Bataan's* stylistic flourishes, including a dedicatory prologue to orient the viewer: "This is the story of the Unconquerable Fortress: the American Home ... 1943." As the film opens, Anne Hilton (Claudette Colbert) has just returned home after seeing her husband, Tim, off to the war. In an interior monologue with her departed husband, she confesses her loneliness and asks for strength. Her first task will be to put on a brave face for her two daughters, Jane (Jennifer Jones) and Brig (Shirley Temple). This household of women, much like the female household of *Little Women*, will enshrine the absent husband/father who has gone off to war as the best of all possible men, and this male figure will remain at the center of this story even though he is never physically present.

The Hilton women struggle financially and are forced to take in a boarder. Jane falls in love with a soldier named Bill (Robert Walker) who is about to be shipped overseas. Many of the characters in *Since You Went Away* are high-minded and noble, such as the local grocer who steadfastly resists involvement in the black market, and the Hilton women themselves are home front paragons. They collect scrap and plant a victory garden, while Jane works with the wounded at a hospital and Anne takes up welding at the war plant. But this film also emphasizes that there are plenty of selfish home front Americans. In one key scene in a railway car—the Hilton women are taking the train in an attempt to see Tim Hilton before he leaves for overseas—the train is delayed to allow a military shipment to pass. A businessman complains, "If we keep stopping like this I'll miss the biggest deal of my life." A nearby sailor smiles and says, "Oh, I'm in no hurry. I've got plenty of time from now on." The camera pans down to the sailor's missing arm. In another scene, the self-centered society matron Emily Hawkins (Agnes Moorehead) visits the Hiltons and questions the propriety of Jane's work at the hospital ("I simply feel that well brought up young girls shouldn't be permitted to have such intimate contact with all sorts of ..."). Jane replies, "All sorts of boys who have lost their arms and legs? They're young too, lots of them, but they weren't too young for that, Mrs. Hawkins."

Both Anne and Jane will suffer heavy blows, as Tim is reported missing in action and Bill is killed at Salerno. In the last scene of this film, which takes place at Christmastime, Anne receives word that Tim is alive and is coming home. As the three Hilton women embrace, the camera pulls back from their window and house and superimposed over the screen are the words "Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord." In the background "O Come All Ye Faithful" is playing.<sup>52</sup> Viewed from the vantage point of the early 21st century, there is much here to make viewers wince. The relentless virtuousness of the film's principals and the manipulative sentimentality that dominates this film is distracting, as is the falsity of the final scene.<sup>53</sup> Most of those reported missing in action, after all, are not going to be returning home, and to suggest otherwise amounts to cruelty. But *Since You Went Away* has a number of scenes that are still genuinely moving, and for Americans going through the crucible of war this film surely carried a great emotional authority. Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black maintain that *Since You Went Away* "triumphed precisely because it was not realistic," and that it "remains in its symbolic grandeur and grandiloquence the ultimate summation of the home front."<sup>54</sup> In part, the genius of this film is that it depicts Americans not as we are but as we would like to be, as we instinctively feel we could be if only the better angels of our natures were allowed to come forward.

One of the best films made about the war while the war was still in progress (and released two months after VJ Day) was *The Story of G.I. Joe*, made under the close supervision of war correspondent Ernie Pyle. While Pyle shows up as a character in this film (played by Burgess Meredith), the real subject of *Story* is the average American G.I. who, in Pyle's words, "lives so miserably and he dies so miserably." Pyle attaches himself to an infantry company commanded by Captain Bill Walker (Robert Mitchum) in North Africa at the beginning of the war and remains with it as the company both matures and loses more and more men to combat. While *Story* contains a number of combat film clichés, including the adoption of a cute pup, the harmonica-playing Southerner, and the voice-over, the extent to which the genre has matured in just a few years is striking.<sup>55</sup> There is less of everything. There is less vilification of the enemy—the only German soldier we see up close is a prisoner who is virtually indistinguishable from his captors and is just as cold and wet and miserable as they are. There is less in the way of rousing patriotic sentiments, and the overwhelming purpose of the fighting seems to be to get back home, although there are fewer illusions about what home consists of. When Pyle, for instance, asks Walker if he is married, Walker replies, "Yes and no. I wanted one thing, she wanted another."

Because he is not a soldier himself, the Pyle character by necessity is at the periphery of the action, and the dramatic focus of this film is on Walker. The weight of command hangs heavily on Walker's soldiers. His most reliable NCO cracks under the strain of combat and Walker must send him away. Worse than this for Walker are the young replacements: "They don't know what it's all about. Scared to death ... It isn't my fault they get killed, but I get so I feel like a murderer. I hate to look at them, the new kids." In one of the final scenes, the company is resting next to the road as a train of pack animals begins to arrive. The animals are carrying the bodies of the recently killed, and one of them is Walker. Walker's men gather around to take their leave of him. Some cannot speak, another says, "I sure am sorry, sir," and one holds Walker's hand and gently strokes the back of it.<sup>56</sup> As the company gets back on the road on the way to yet another battle, Pyle in a voice-over expresses the hope that "we will try, try out of the memory of our anguish, to reassemble our broken world into a pattern so firm and so fair that another great war can never again be possible. And for those beneath the wooden crosses, there is nothing we can do except perhaps to pause and murmur, 'Thanks pal. Th anks.'"<sup>57</sup>

A special mention should be made of the film *Twelve o'Clock High* (1949) for its examination of the mental costs of the war. While most combat films made during the 1940s lack complexity, this film is an exception, perhaps because its late release date allowed for some perspective on the war. At the heart of *Twelve o'Clock* is

an inquiry into the psychological impact of combat. The film focuses on a particular bomber command, which has gained a reputation as a “hard luck” outfit because of its heavy losses, and which has pushed many of its flyers to the psychological breaking point. When the group’s commander is replaced by General Frank Savage (Gregory Peck), Savage delivers a brutally frank assessment to his men:

And I can tell you now one reason I think you’ve been having hard luck. I saw it in your faces last night. I can see it there now. You’ve been looking at a lot of air lately and you think you ought to have a rest. In short, you’re sorry for yourselves. Now I don’t have a lot of patience for this “what we are fighting for” stuff. We’re in a war, a shooting war. We’ve got to fight. And some of us have got to die. Now I’m not trying to tell you not to be afraid. Fear is normal. Let’s stop worrying about it and about yourselves. Stop making plans. Forget about going home. Consider your-selves already dead. Once you accept that idea, it won’t be so tough.

Savage finishes his speech by noting that if anyone “rates himself as something special” he should come forward because “I don’t want him in this group.”

Savage’s ruthlessly efficient training methods finally succeed in molding this group into a crack outfit when something strange happens as the bombers are warming up for another mission. As Savage starts to enter his plane he begins shaking, his strength deserts him, and his arm won’t function. He begins raving—“They can’t take it. They can’t go. We can’t send them out there again”—and has to be pulled away as the planes take off. Savage lapses into a catatonic state and is able to partially rouse himself only when the planes return at the end of the film. This is far from a typical ending to a Hollywood combat film, and what is most important about *Twelve o’Clock High* is its plea for understanding of the mental casualties of the war. Its clear message is that if combat can mentally break a man like Savage, it can break anyone.<sup>58</sup>

## II. Music

While movies were probably the most popular wartime entertainment for Americans both on the home front and abroad, music was a close second. Every month, the army’s Special Services Division distributed 2 million Hit Kits to encourage soldiers to sing. These collections of songs included “Blue Skies,” “Dinah,” and “For Me and My Gal,” but the soldiers weren’t singing them. Nor were they singing songs especially crafted for the war effort, such as the inspirational “Goodbye Mama, I’m Off to Yokohama” and “You’re a Sap, Mr. Jap.” John Ellis believes that while American troops enjoyed listening to singers at USO shows, they did not sing themselves as they had during the First World War. Bill Mauldin complained that “our musical geniuses at home never did get around to working up a good, honest acceptable war song, and so they forced us to share ‘Lilli Marlene’ with the enemy.”<sup>59</sup> The OWI tried to ban “Lilli” from the airwaves as enemy propaganda, but this song was adopted by both sides because it spoke to the universal theme of the soldier leaving his loved one.<sup>60</sup>

While the phonograph and the radio made music a mostly passive activity during the war, it is wrong to claim that servicemen had totally ceased to sing. It is simply that the songs they sang were not officially sanctioned and could not be found in any Hit Kit. Instead, soldiers adopted songs that were ribald, spontaneously created, with mostly unprintable lyrics. In North Africa, “Dirty Gertie from Bizerte” was the clear favorite:

Dirty Gertie from Bizerte, had a mousetrap 'neath her skirtie.  
Strapped it on her kneecap purty, baited it with “Fleur de Flirte.”

Made her boy friends most alerty. She was voted in Bizerte, “Miss Latrine” for nineteen thirty.

Dirty Gertie from Bizerte, saw ze capitaine, made ze flirty.

Captain think she veree purty; Lose his watch and lose his shirty.

In Italy, “Filthy Annie from Trapani” was hugely popular, and in other quarters “The Old Flannel Drawers That Annie Wore” had its devotees.<sup>61</sup> In Herman Wouk’s novel *The Caine Mutiny*, the men are singing “Roll Me Over in the Clover,” “Hi-ho Fafoozalum,” “The Bastard King of England,” and “The Man Who Shagged O’Reilly’s Daughter.”<sup>62</sup>

The war effort was amply supported by American music, but with mixed artistic success. In 1942 Hoagy Carmichael penned what had to be one of the first songs about tanks (“The Cranky Old Yank”), and Spike Jones and the City Slickers found sudden fame with “Der Fuehrer’s Face,” which featured the wacky sound effects (including liberal portions of the Bronx cheer) that would become characteristic of Jones’ music:

Ven der Fuehrer says, “Ve iss der Master Race,”

Ve Heil! Heil! Right in der Fuehrer’s face.

Not to luff der Fuehrer iss a great disgrace,

So ve Heil! Heil! Right in der Fuehrer’s face.<sup>63</sup>

But arguably the first hit war song was Frank Loesser’s “Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition!” The lyrics were based on a phrase supposedly uttered by navy chaplain William A. Maguire as he took over operation of an antiaircraft gun during the Pearl Harbor attack:

Down went the gunner, and then the gunner’s mate

Up jumped the sky pilot, gave the boys a look

And manned the gun himself as he laid aside the Book, shouting

“Praise the Lord, and pass the ammunition! Praise the Lord, and pass the ammunition!

Praise the Lord, and pass the ammunition and we’ll all stay free.

The fact that Maguire did not remember saying such words (“If I said it, nobody could have heard me in the din of battle”) and did not fire a gun did not prevent this song from becoming a huge hit.<sup>64</sup> The song was so popular that OWI feared that the public would burn out on the tune and requested that radio stations play it only once an hour.<sup>65</sup> Not all of Loesser’s war songs were as successful. His celebration of an infantryman, “Rodger Young,” sank like a stone.<sup>66</sup> Vera Lynn’s rendition of “We’ll Meet Again” was popular on both sides of the Atlantic, but destined to outsell them all was Bing Crosby’s rendition of Irving Berlin’s “White Christmas.”<sup>67</sup> While not strictly a war song, *Time* noted that “with thousands of U.S. servicemen facing snowless Christmases from North Africa to Guadalcanal, ‘White Christmas’ has unexpectedly become the first big sentimental song hit of World War II.”<sup>68</sup>

Perhaps more than any art form, music can evoke other times and places. As one soldier put it, hearing Fred Waring’s theme song “conjures up the picture of our supper table at home,” but the single musician who was most dedicated to bringing that touch of home to servicemen was Glenn Miller.<sup>69</sup> Giving up the most lucrative band in the country, Miller joined the military to head the Army Air Force Orchestra. Miller believed that a



swing band, rather than a traditional military band, could better raise troop morale because servicemen wanted “as narrow a chasm as possible between martial and civilian life.”<sup>70</sup> Miller’s style of swing was very far from cutting-edge and was characterized by a smooth, homogenized sound. The romantic ballad was Miller’s specialty, and Miller’s singer Tex Benecke believed that the orchestra was successful because the public “liked sweet ballads, reminiscent melodies, sentimental words.”<sup>71</sup> Miller did not challenge social conventions—his band was segregated, much like the Jim Crow military itself—and as Lewis A. Erenberg has noted, Miller made swing “clean-cut and respectable, less a challenge to society than one of its commodities.”<sup>72</sup> The band played a grueling schedule, broadcasting over the Armed Forces Network 13 times a week and playing an estimated 71 concerts for 247,500 listeners.<sup>73</sup> The impact of Miller and his band was profound. One soldier reported seeing “men openly crying” at a Miller concert. The music was “tied up with individual memories, girls, hopes, schools. It’s a tangible tie to what we are fighting to get back to.”<sup>74</sup> Miller made the ultimate sacrifice when his plane disappeared over the English Channel in December 1944. It was a terrible loss. What Miller and his band meant to Americans overseas had been summed up five months earlier by General Jimmy Doolittle: “Next to a letter from home, Captain Miller, your organization is the greatest morale builder in the ETO.”<sup>75</sup>

Back in the States, swing was enjoying its last, feverish golden years, and producing the greatest fever of them all was Frank Sinatra. After stints with the Harry James and Tommy Dorsey bands in the 1930s, Sinatra went solo, and by 1943 he was making \$2,500 a week. His ability to create hysteria, especially among young female fans, baffled parents and mobilized psychiatrists. Sinatra received some 5,000 fan letters a week, one of which declared, “I love you so bad it hurts. Do you think I should see a doctor?”<sup>76</sup> Some tried to explain the Sinatra phenomenon as a by-product of “wartime degeneracy,” while others took note of Sinatra’s ability to arouse the “maternal instinct” in young women.<sup>77</sup>

One key to Sinatra’s success was his devotion to, and identification with, his fans. He dressed and spoke like them, and once took a punch at drummer Buddy Rich when Rich was rude to a group of autograph seekers.<sup>78</sup> When Sinatra did a concert backed up by the New York Philharmonic, he ruffled some feathers in the orchestra by thanking his young fans on behalf of himself and “the boys in the band.”<sup>79</sup> Sinatra could also sell a song because, as George Frazier put it, he had “the ability to believe implicitly the rhythmic goo he sings.”<sup>80</sup> *Collier’s* argued for a bemused tolerance of the Sinatra phenomenon, insisting that “we can’t see that Sinatra and his teen-age idolatresses are the menace to society and morals that some alarmed persons think they are. Teenage girls—and boys, for that matter—never were noted for stability, poise and similar virtues which come later.”<sup>81</sup>

Sinatra was not the only musician creating instability among the younger set. Sinatra’s old boss Harry James and his band played a stint at New York’s Paramount Theater in 1943, producing hysteria that found fans lining up at the box office every morning at 4:00 a.m. Fans sighed during the slow songs, were “twitching and squeaking ecstatically” through uptempo numbers, and even jitterbugged in the aisles. While learned pundits tried to find the meaning of it all, fans only noted that “shivers run down your spine when that trumpet gets hot.”<sup>82</sup> The *New York Times* devoted a news story, three features, and two editorials to this primal event.

Across town, Jimmy Dorsey’s band settled in for a four-week stay at the Roxy, breaking attendance records for the massive 6,000-seat house. The trend toward long engagements at huge venues was largely dictated by gas rationing, which made it extremely difficult for bands to travel around the country.<sup>83</sup> Late in December, Tommy Dorsey’s band was booked into the Paramount. On drums, and unannounced beforehand, was Gene Krupa, playing his first date since being released from San Quentin on a narcotics charge. When fans spotted him, they gave Krupa “the greatest ovation in the history of Broadway’s Paramount Theater ... Four thousand



enthusiasts shouted and beat their hands off. Drummer Krupa wept on his drums.”<sup>84</sup>

### III. USO Shows

A distinctive form of World War II entertainment was USO shows. These shows had no standardized format and could include singers, musicians, dancers, actors, and comedians in various combinations. The famous as well as the not-so-famous did USO shows. Hollywood stars enthusiastically volunteered for USO work (Judy Garland and her new husband and piano accompanist Dave Rose spent their honeymoon on a USO tour).<sup>85</sup> There were also USO tours overseas, and while the big stars only infrequently got to the front lines, troupes of unknown performers made a valiant effort to reach the soldiers who were doing the fighting. One soldier remembered a group of five a capella singers who performed in Hollandia in 1944. “They stood up there in that hot mess hall sweating and singing til they were exhausted. They weren’t ‘name’ entertainment, just folks doing a job. Everybody felt better for days.”<sup>86</sup> One big-name performer who made a point of visiting the troops on the front lines was comedian Joe E. Brown. Brown’s own son had been killed in a bomber crash in 1943, and Brown became the first big-name entertainer to go to Alaska, the South Pacific, India, and China. Brown paid all his own expenses.<sup>87</sup>

The big USO shows were usually variety acts with a headliner (often a comedian) and various support entertainers. Of all the comics who worked these venues, Bob Hope was clearly the most successful. Hope’s routines were perfectly suited for a raucous military audience because he was an accomplished ad-libber who would almost routinely depart from the script. In Africa, he claimed he was a target of the Luft waffe, which had dropped leaflets reading, “Give up Hope,” and when he visited a hospital ward he quipped, “Did you boys see my show or were you sick before?”<sup>88</sup> Hope tirelessly toured overseas and appeared before an estimated 7 million troops.<sup>89</sup> While Hope frequently left his audiences paralyzed with laughter, it is difficult today to appreciate how funny Hope was because humor tends to be specific to its era and place and typically does not age well. Abbott and Costello’s supposedly “classic” “Who’s on first?” routine now seems tedious beyond belief, as does Hope’s own shtick featuring the wolfish pursuit of blondes, brunettes, and redheads. An example of a Hope joke whose humor mystifies today but apparently had them rolling in the aisles in the 1940s is the following:

*Girl:* I meant to ask you, Bob ... are there any sharks around San Diego?

*Hope:* Did you ever meet a Marine with a pair of dice?<sup>90</sup>

The reaction of the troops themselves to USO performers was not always what the military hoped for. Bill Mauldin noted that when Bing Crosby returned from entertaining troops in France, he told reporters that “entertainment is needed most by the dispirited troops of the rear echelon rather than by the front-line soldiers.” Up front, according to Crosby, “morale is sky-high, clothes are cleaner and salutes really snap.” Observed Mauldin, “The dog-faces who read that dispatch in the foxholes didn’t know what front Bing was talking about.”<sup>91</sup> Joseph Heller also mentions USO shows in his novel *Catch-22*, which takes place on an air base in Italy. The airmen are nervous and depressed because they have been flying too many missions, and the generals have inundated them with USO shows to raise their morale. But because the only thing that can truly raise the morale of these flyers is to be relieved of combat duties, these entertainers have elicited only a tepid response. The troops must be given a pep talk by their commander:

Now, men, it's no skin off my behind. But that girl that wants to play the accordion for you today is old enough to be a mother. How would *you* feel if your own mother traveled over three thousand miles to play the accordion for some troops that didn't want to watch her? ... I'd be the last colonel in the world to order you to go to that U.S.O. show and have a good time, but I want every one of you who isn't sick enough to be in a hospital to go to that U.S.O. show right now and have a good time, and *that's an order!*<sup>92</sup>

Another comedian who did extensive USO work was Jack Benny. Traveling with Benny were Carole Landis and other female performers, whom Benny praised because even though the rain came down in torrents while on tour in the Pacific, the women always wore evening gowns and “never covered themselves with coats—after all, the boys wanted reminders of the girls back home.”<sup>93</sup> Also serving with Benny's troupe was harmonica virtuoso Larry Adler, whose amazing talent had won him solo performances with symphony orchestras and even opera companies (Adler played “The Blue Danube” with the Philadelphia Opera Company to great acclaim).<sup>94</sup> In 1945, Adler wrote an article for *Collier's* magazine describing his USO experiences. What makes Adler's article interesting is that his views of this particular form of entertainment were far from standard issue. Adler described the difficulties of doing shows in hospital wards, where he confessed that he frequently felt guilty because of his own good health, and where he sometimes felt that he was intruding on the privacy of the patients. The courage of the men frequently astounded him. In one ward Adler “met a chap who had had both legs blown off at Biak. ‘Do a number for some of the other boys, will you, Larry?’ he whispered. ‘Some of them are in pretty bad shape.’”<sup>95</sup> Adler was surprisingly critical of the standards of many of his fellow performers, especially women “who use sex appeal as the basis of their act.” One soldier told Adler in New Guinea that the troops had accustomed themselves to living in a world without women, “then a few luscious items appear in a USO show. They're thoroughly out of reach ... I'm not at all sure that bringing women out here is a good thing. Certainly it hasn't helped my morale.”<sup>96</sup>

#### IV. Reading

Films and USO troupes often did not make it to the most remote areas of the front lines, but the military took steps to ensure that at least one form of entertainment would be available to virtually everyone: reading. The military had its own periodicals, including *Yank* and the daily *Stars and Stripes*, with features of special interest to military personnel. Especially popular was the work of cartoonists Bill Mauldin and Milton Caniff. While Mauldin's infantrymen Willie and Joe spoke directly to the experiences of frontline troops, Caniff's strip had a different appeal to servicemen. Caniff drew a special edition of *Terry and the Pirates* for military publication that featured “damsels as breasty and near nude as Caniff dared draw them.” One strip had Caniff's famed, shapely “Burma” entertaining Yanks at a dinner at which food was hauled in by slave girls “apparently unclad from the waist up.”<sup>97</sup>

The military also distributed books free of charge to overseas military personnel through its Armed Services Editions (ASE) program. Between 1943 and 1947, ASE issued 123 million copies of more than 1,300 titles, at an average cost to the government at just over six cents per volume.<sup>98</sup> This program had its skeptics, including Willard Waller, who claimed that “the soldier does not read much, the Armed Services Editions notwithstanding,” and that of the reading that was being done, the soldier “prefers Super-Man and other comics to the Five-Foot Shelf.”<sup>99</sup> This was distinctly a minority view, however, and Matthew J. Bruccoli claimed that

the ASE program was not only the biggest book giveaway in history, “it was the biggest *good* book giveaway in history.”<sup>100</sup> While American Service Editions included Zane Grey’s *Forlorn River*, Edgar Rice Burroughs’ *Tarzan of the Apes*, and Erle Stanley Gardner’s *The Case of the Half-Wakened Wife*, Homer’s *Odyssey*, Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair*, and Voltaire’s *Candide* were also part of the series.<sup>101</sup> A surprisingly popular title among servicemen was Emile Zola’s *Nana* (apparently because of its reputation for salaciousness).<sup>102</sup>

Servicemen who had not previously been exposed to books now picked them up and began reading when there was nothing else to do. The ubiquitous distribution of these books was legendary. One officer reported seeing “a GI lying in the shade of a bomber reading *Huckleberry Finn*” and “men in chowlines reading worn copies of *Moby Dick*, *The Robe* and dozens of other good books.”<sup>103</sup> As the Normandy invasion began, each soldier received a copy of an ASE title (reporter A. J. Liebling remembered soldiers reading these books on the landing craft themselves), while in the Pacific a dead marine on Saipan was found with a copy of *Our Hearts Were Young and Gay* sticking out of his pocket.<sup>104</sup>

Printed in cheap paperback editions in a small format that could easily be carried in a pocket, the military and the book industry cooperated in this remarkable venture and everyone benefitted. The book industry picked up millions of new readers for its authors without a significant loss of revenue because the military agreed that ASE books would only circulate overseas so as not to compete with the domestic book trade.<sup>105</sup> Often ASE titles were printed in numbers that far exceeded stateside output. Some 155,000 ASE copies of *The Great Gatsby* were printed, compared to a relatively meager 25,000 copies that Scribner’s printed domestically between 1925 and 1942. Indeed, the resurgence of Fitzgerald’s popularity in the late 1940s may have been related to the exposure his work received through the ASE program.<sup>106</sup> Some idea of what these books meant to servicemen, and to the authors who wrote them, can be gleaned from the letters that ASE authors received. James Thurber said that “about 75 per cent of the men who wrote encountered my books for the first time. Almost all of the letters were hugely favorable, particularly those from boys who picked up my books in hospitals or managed to get hold of one on a ship or in some far off place, and a great number of the boys mentioned the fact that the books had helped their loneliness and it helped remind them of home.”<sup>107</sup> Wallace Stegner, who taught at Stanford following the war, remembers a “flood of GI students” in his classes, many of whom had already read the Armed Services Edition of *The Big Rock Candy Mountain*.<sup>108</sup>

One genre of writing popular among both troops and the home front was humor. The Pocket Books company recognized the importance of humor as a morale booster by employing Bennett Cerf to compile a series of humor books. The first of these, *The Pocket Book of War Humor*, sold half a million copies in six months and would go on to sell 1.3 million copies by the end of the war. Others titles included *The Pocket Book of Cartoons* (which would edge out *War Humor* by selling 1.4 million copies) and *The Pocket Book of Anecdotes*.

Of the two best sellers of the war years, one was a humorous book (Marion Hargrove’s *See Here, Private Hargrove*, which sold 2.1 million copies) and one was an advice book (Dale Carnegie’s *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, which sold 1.8 million copies).<sup>109</sup> It is a peculiar pair—one an unabashedly manipulative formula for success, the other a witty, gently humorous depiction of a new recruit as he learns about army life. *Friends* was an instant hit when it was released in 1936, quickly selling more than a million hardbound copies.<sup>110</sup> Today, the appeal of this collection of success stories and how-to bromides is hard to fathom. Unmistakably, there is a subtext of crude calculation. Under the category of “six ways to make people like you,” Carnegie advises the go-getter, “Be a good listener. Encourage others to talk about themselves,” and in his “fundamental techniques in handling people,” Carnegie suggests, “Give honest and sincere appreciation” and

“Arouse in the other person an eager want.”<sup>111</sup> Self-improvement books have a long history in America, but few have been more annoying than Carnegie’s collection of shallow, glad-handing nostrums.<sup>112</sup>

While *How to Win Friends* leaves behind a chill impression, *See Here, Private Hargrove* is sunny and good-natured throughout. Marion Hargrove was feature editor of the Charlotte, North Carolina, *News* before he entered the army in July 1941. He began writing columns for his paper describing army life, which caught the attention of playwright Maxwell Anderson and resulted in Hargrove’s columns being collected in a book.<sup>113</sup> Hargrove is magnificently unsuited for military life. Everything he undertakes, he screws up. He is hopeless at dressing himself and slow to grasp the rudiments of cleaning his rifle. Marching in formation is a formidable challenge, and cooking school is beyond him. Hargrove is a source of wonder to those entrusted with his training:

“Friday morning you fell out for reveille without your leggins. Saturday you had your leggins but no field hat. Monday morning neither of your shoes was tied and none of your shirt buttons were buttoned. Tuesday morning it was with leggins again.”

“I’m never really awake,” I protested, “until ten o’clock.”<sup>114</sup>

Standing in line for inspection, Hargrove torments himself with thoughts of the endless KP he knows will be his lot when he messes up again:

The officer reached me several lifetimes later. He looked at my face and sighed wearily. Then, with infinite tenderness, he gently lifted the rifle from my grasp. He inspected it and handed it back to me as though he was laying a brick on an orchid or giving a hundred-pound weight to his aged grandmother.<sup>115</sup>

It is easy to understand the popularity of *Hargrove*. It is funny without being mean-spirited, and it was no doubt reassuring both for the young man nervously facing military service and for his parents. After all, if Hargrove can make it through, anyone can.

## V. Acting

Another way that troops could entertain themselves was by acting. Indeed, a goodly number of professional actors were drafted into the military. (Lee Kennett notes that draft boards considered acting “the most expendable of professions,” with a larger proportion of actors ending up in the army than individuals from any other profession.)<sup>116</sup> Servicemen put on acting performances both at home and overseas, to the delight of participants and audiences alike. In December 1942, soldiers at Camp Lee, Virginia, thrilled audiences (and perhaps themselves) by putting on women’s clothing for a production of Clare Boothe Luce’s *The Women*, written for an all-female cast. Reportedly, “after the first half hour the audience forgot that ‘the women’ were men.”<sup>117</sup> The Special Services Division provided kits for soldiers who wanted to put on their own shows (including, according to John Costello, “complete instructions for crepe-paper skirts for the all-male chorus”). When the 4th Armored Division captured Bayreuth late in the war, it put on a show at the Festspielhaus, where so many Wagner operas had been performed. Among the delights of the “4th Armored Follies” were soldiers “in drag, kicking up hairy legs and intoning ‘See What the Boys in the Back Room Will Have,’ and lecherous verses to ‘Lilli Marlene.’”<sup>118</sup>

Among the most quixotic of servicemen-actors was Major Maurice Evans, who spent much of the war bringing theatrical performances—especially Shakespeare—to the troops overseas. A celebrated actor before the war, Evans was now in charge of Army Special Services in the Pacific, a division that recruited and trained G.I.'s to be actors. In addition, Special Services troops had to paint scenery, sew costumes, and jerry-rig stage lights so that they would work in the jungle. Resistance to Evans from his superiors was considerable. One general asked, "Why the hell do they send a Shakespearean actor out here? Not one per cent of our G.I.s ever read or saw Shakespeare—including me." Evans persisted, however, and his productions were enthusiastically received by his soldier audiences. Between acts of *Hamlet*, correspondent Quentin Reynolds heard the following comments:

"That's the actingest major I ever did see." A big Negro corporal shook his head admiringly.

"I never would read that stuff at high school," another said. "It didn't add up to me. But the way this guy puts it over, anybody can understand it."

"I wonder if he ends up with the dame?" another asked.

"She's a cute dish," another answered. "I hope Hamlet knocks off that jerk who murdered his father and goes off with the quail."<sup>119</sup>

Throughout the war, the federal bureaucracy tried to harness popular culture in service to the war effort. Ideally, films, music, and other media would become part of a propaganda machine devoted to maintaining morale and winning the war. But there are few things that lower morale more quickly than a bad film or song, and Americans bristled when they sensed they were being spoon-fed uninspired, patriotic tripe. The sentiments that Americans responded to best were not rousing, nationalistic appeals but emotions that expressed loneliness, longing, and hope.

Servicemen were especially sensitive to any attempts to "indoctrinate" them through popular culture. Many had been exposed to the real nature of combat, and they knew that neither Hollywood nor Tin Pan Alley reflected that reality. They were contemptuous of film portrayals of the war, and the songs they adopted tended to be both ribald and unsanctioned by authority. They had passive entertainment in the form of films, musical groups, and USO shows, but they also entertained themselves, with many discovering that the most satisfying form of entertainment was also one of the oldest: reading.



## The Literature of War

We were only children after all. The dead boys were cuddled up, the wounded cried for dead friends. All children, after all.

Sanford Afriek<sup>1</sup>

Our innocence shall haunt our murderous end  
 Longer than statues or the tabled walls  
 Alphabetized to death. Shall we pretend  
 Destruction moves us or that death appalls?  
 Are we the proud avengers time returned?  
 —We dreamed by all the windows while time burned.

John Ciardi<sup>2</sup>

It is one of the conventions of literary criticism that World War I produced great writers but World War II did not. David M. Kennedy, for instance, claims that World War II “did not loose the same creative wave in American literature that World War I did,” and that the literature of the Second World War lacked both the “stylistic inventiveness” and “the direct and searing *anger*” [Kennedy’s emphasis] of World War I writing.<sup>3</sup> Perceived wisdom aside, it is difficult to find the justification for such a critique. Writers such as Norman Mailer, Joseph Heller, James Jones, Kurt Vonnegut, Herman Wouk, Randall Jarrell, and John Ciardi, all of whom experienced the war directly, produced sardonic, penetrating novels and poems that had much in common with the work produced by World War I writers such as Ernest Hemingway and e. e. Cummings. The unconventional organization of Mailer’s *The Naked and the Dead* and the elasticity of time in Kurt Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse-Five* are as stylistically inventive as any writing that came out of World War I, and there are few poems in English literature that are as disturbing as Randall Jarrell’s “The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner” or John Ciardi’s “A Box Comes Home.” The connections between the authors’ own war experiences and their writings are often so direct that the “fiction” produced by this generation of writers should be considered as much a chronicle of this war as the nonfiction.

### I. Early Novels

The first really good American novel of World War II was Harry Brown’s *A Walk in the Sun*, published in 1944. While Brown is not well remembered today, he was widely respected in the mid-1940s. One illustration of Brown’s prestige can be found in a scene set at a publisher’s cocktail party in Gore Vidal’s *The City and the Pillar* (1948). Someone proclaims, “The real horror of war is the novels which are written about it. But don’t expect anything good for at least a decade. I wouldn’t publish a war book for the world. Harry Brown of course is

an exception."<sup>4</sup> The comment is tongue-in-cheek on the part of Vidal, who had already published his own war novel two years earlier, but it is also an acknowledgment of the high regard in which Harry Brown was held. Brown served with the army in England from 1942 to 1945, writing for *Yank* magazine and working for the Films Division. While Brown would incorporate his war experiences into a number of his writings, including the script for the film *Sands of Iwo Jima* and the play *A Sound of Hunting, A Walk in the Sun* would become his best-known work.<sup>5</sup> Conceptually simple, *Walk* examines a day in the life of a single platoon as it lands on a beach in Italy, then makes its way inland toward a German-occupied farmhouse. While the action scenes are well rendered, what is best about this novel is Brown's ruminations on the nature of warfare and the inner life of the soldier. Brown emphasized that much of war is taken up by waiting: "The soldier waits for food, for clothing, for a letter, for a battle to begin. And often the food never is served, the clothing is never issued, the letter never arrives, and the battle never begins."<sup>6</sup> War's great by-product, death, surrounds the soldier and transforms the familiar into the unrecognizable. In the face of a dead man "something has gone from the features"; the body has "the nakedness of being unsouled, and there is no deeper nakedness than that."<sup>7</sup> The ability to tolerate war varies from man to man, with some good for only a single action, while others endure it for years. But when a man "begins to tremble slightly and shift his eyes around or tremble slightly and stare eternally at one fixed spot, there is only one thing to do. Pull him out of the line and ship him back where the steak grows on trees and the only noise is that of the sunset gun."<sup>8</sup> As in real life, the reason for fighting is vague and even unimportant among these infantrymen:

"Do you know who you're fighting?" Rivera asked.

"They never told me. Germans."<sup>9</sup>

Brown would go on to win an Academy Award in 1952 for co-writing (with Michael Wilson) the script for the film version of *A Walk in the Sun*.<sup>10</sup>

Gore Vidal, who had paid tribute to Brown in his second novel, published his first novel, *Williwaw*, in 1946. Vidal enlisted in the army in 1943 and had the absurd fortune of being assigned to serve as a mate on an army cargo ship for the duration, mostly in the Aleutian Islands in Alaska. The williwaw of the title is described by Vidal as "sudden devastating winds that come without warning down from the island mountains, making tidal waves beneath, swamping ships."<sup>11</sup> While *Williwaw* is technically a war novel (most of it is set aboard an army ship in the Aleutians during World War II), for the most part the war is only a distant presence. The guns on the ship have been stowed away because "no one ever saw the Japanese in these waters."<sup>12</sup>

Posing a greater threat than the war to these men are the weather and each other. Shipboard, the men are thrown together under claustrophobic conditions, while on shore men roam the muddy streets of Big Harbor, "looking for liquor and women."<sup>13</sup> While Vidal mentions *The Open Boat* and *Lord Jim* as influences, what this novel most resembles after the williwaw strikes is Conrad's *Typhoon*, where men must struggle against a storm of malevolent fierceness.<sup>14</sup> As in the novels of Conrad, malevolence is not restricted to nature, and one sailor will push another overboard without reporting the incident.<sup>15</sup> The official inquiry rules this an "accident," and the perpetrator, who does not seem especially remorseful at what has happened, has gotten away with murder. The lack of an informing morality and the spiritual bleakness of this novel are unmistakable. The captain, Evans, "wondered if there was anything to religion. Probably not, at least he himself had gotten along without it. He tried to recall if he'd ever been inside a church. He could not remember."<sup>16</sup>

The two great war novels from the immediate postwar period, and arguably two of the best ever produced by Americans, are Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* and Irwin Shaw's *The Young Lions*. Both were published in 1948, and both were best-sellers. When Norman Mailer was drafted into the army in 1943 at the age of 20, he announced to his wife of two months that he was going to write *the* war novel.<sup>17</sup> Sent to the Pacific and unhappy with his role as a clerk during the Luzon fighting, Mailer requested (and received) a transfer to a combat reconnaissance platoon. Whatever his expectations may have been, Mailer reported that "ever present fatigue and diarrhea and just feeling generally awful, broke down any desire I had for action and adventure." Like many who experienced combat, Mailer remembered "the feeling that you're going to be killed—I became emotionally convinced of it, and I didn't care much anymore what happened."<sup>18</sup> Mailer returned to the United States after the war and wrote *The Naked and the Dead* in 15 months. He was 25 years old.

Mailer's use of profanity in this novel, which he considered crucial to an accurate portrayal of the soldiers who are his subject, caused him a great deal of grief. Little, Brown rejected Mailer's manuscript because of its language, and Rinehart agreed to publish it only after Mailer cut the profanity content by 20 percent.<sup>19</sup> This was not enough for some readers, who condemned *The Naked and the Dead* for its mean, profane characters and its nihilistic spirit. A good portion of the general public was shocked by the war depicted in this novel (perhaps because, as John Steinbeck theorized, the same public "had been carefully protected from contact with the crazy hysterical mess" while the war was being fought).<sup>20</sup> Yet this novel was almost universally praised by the critics, who were sometimes forced to defend themselves to angry readers.<sup>21</sup>

With the passage of 60 years, it is difficult now to see what all the agitation was about. While there are plenty of low-life characters inhabiting this novel, the "filth" that seems to have troubled so many readers in 1948 was the extensive use of the word *fugging* by Mailer's characters. This substitute for a word that is now in such wide circulation strikes the contemporary reader as fussy, almost Victorian, but the distress of postwar readers was genuine. Also disturbing to the public, and something that makes *Naked and the Dead* a fascinating vehicle for gaining insight into the world of the 1940s, is Mailer's unflinching examination of the day's social issues. Racism, anti-Semitism, misogyny, homosexuality, adultery, and the class divide all receive extensive treatment in this novel.

The focus of Mailer's novel is the 9th Recon Platoon, which is part of an invasion force that lands on the Japanese occupied island of "Anopopei." Mailer peoples his platoon with the usual soldierly clichés from all back-grounds—Jewish, Italian, Irish, Hispanic, Polish, southern cracker, Ivy League elite—but it quickly becomes apparent that Mailer has more in mind than a hackneyed propaganda piece. Instead of learning to work as a unit, finding a commonality of purpose, and ultimately gaining a mutual self-respect, the built-in prejudices of these types if anything become more entrenched. The redeeming "common purpose" that Mailer devises for these troops, a patrol into the rear of the enemy's forces, becomes an ordeal so exhausting and harrowing that the humanity of these men is stripped away and they are reduced to a brute animal existence of mutual loathing. The final agony, a climb up the island's Mt. Anaka, resembles the stations of the cross but with no redemption at the end, as the troops finally discover that their patrol has been totally unnecessary.

The structure of the novel is unconventional and ambitious, with Mailer first introducing the characters, then later providing individual biographical chapters for them, which Mailer calls "The Time Machine." In the years before the war began, one of Mailer's characters deserted his pregnant girlfriend, while another abandoned his dependent mother and sister. One character was a small-time criminal, while another spent the family's money on whores while his wife was in the hospital delivering their first child. Even Joey Goldstein, the Jewish soldier and perhaps the one decent man in the platoon, is haunted by memories of marital sexual conflicts, anti-

Semitism directed at him and his family, and difficulties fitting in among his peers.<sup>22</sup>

The scenes involving these men are disturbing and superbly written, such as when platoon members are looting the bodies of dead Japanese soldiers:

A discarded rifle was lying at his feet, and without thinking he picked it up, and smashed the butt of it against the cadaver's mouth. It made a sound like an ax thudding into a wet rotten log. He lifted the rifle and smashed it down again. The teeth spattered loose. Some landed on the ground and a few lay scattered over the crushed jaw of the corpse. Martinez picked up four or five gold ones in a frenzy and dropped them in his pocket.<sup>23</sup>

The officers, principally General Edward Cummings, who is directing the military operation on the island, and Lieutenant Robert Hearn, his staff officer, do not come off much better, and the sparring between the liberal Hearn and the right-wing Cummings is the intellectual core of *The Naked and the Dead*. Cummings argues that following the war fascism will prevail in America because of its ability to unlock "intrinsic potential power ... After the war our foreign policy is going to be far more naked, far less hypocritical than it has ever been. We're no longer going to cover our eyes with our left hand while our right is extending an imperialist paw."<sup>24</sup> Adding to the tension of these debates is the homoerotic charge that crackles between these two men.<sup>25</sup>

Mailer adds to Cummings' complexity by endowing him with godlike powers, yet Cummings makes for a strangely ineffectual god, one who is barely capable of suppressing his own erotic desires and whose meticulous plan for defeating the Japanese on the island becomes totally irrelevant when the battle is won by a blundering subordinate while Cummings is away for a few days. A spiritual bleakness dominates the end of this novel, as Cummings is forced to acknowledge that the victory over the Japanese "had been accomplished by a random play of vulgar good luck larded into a casual net of factors too large, too vague, for him to comprehend ... it caused him a deep depression."<sup>26</sup> As for the men of the 9th Recon, at the conclusion of their meaningless mission one soldier is left weeping "from exhaustion and failure and the shattering naked conviction that nothing mattered" while Goldstein, who had clung to his optimism longer than any of the others, finds "nothing but a vague anger, a deep resentment, and the origins of a vast hopelessness."<sup>27</sup>

*The Naked and the Dead* was a huge success, staying at the top of the best-seller list for almost three months and prompting Sinclair Lewis to call Mailer "the greatest writer to come out of his generation."<sup>28</sup> While *Naked* has subsequently been criticized for its "clumsy, mechanical structure" and for Mailer's lack of writerly economy ("his effort to tell it all by telling it all"), this is a remarkable novel by a very young writer.<sup>29</sup> It would be Mailer's curse that over a very long writing career, his first major work would also be his best.

Like Mailer, Irwin Shaw served in the army during World War II, but in Europe rather than in the Pacific. Unlike Mailer, Shaw was already a well-known playwright and short-story writer when the war began. Stationed in North Africa in 1943, Shaw worked in a photographic unit and wrote for *Yank* and *Stars and Stripes*. Shaw was in Normandy shortly after the invasion, taking photographs as the Allied armies advanced and witnessing the liberation of Paris in August 1944. Shortly thereafter, he returned to the United States.<sup>30</sup> In 1948 Shaw published *The Young Lions*, a World War II novel mostly set in Europe. In contrast to *The Naked and the Dead*, *The Young Lions* is structurally more conventional and lacks the experimental elements of Mailer's novel.

Shaw begins his story on New Year's Eve 1937, focusing on the activities of three characters he will follow throughout his novel: Christian Diestl, a German ski instructor at an Austrian resort, Michael Whitacre, a cynical New York writer, and Noah Ackerman, also living in New York and working as a playground director at a



settlement house. The vortex of the war will pull each of these men out of his comfortable civilian life and toward a fatal climax in which their fates will become intertwined. Only one will survive. Whitacre is outwardly a cynic, but as is often the case, Whitacre's cynicism masks a core of idealism. He yearns for a wartime of "roistering and wild-eyed soldiers, crazy with faith, oblivious of death," but instead finds "the chicanery and treachery of the lovers of six percent, of the farm bloc and business bloc and labor bloc."<sup>34</sup> Passing up the opportunity for a cushy USO job, Whitacre volunteers for the infantry, yet even here he will not find the passion of a cause. When his company is assembled for a "why we fight"-style orientation, Whitacre wants to be reassured that "he was fighting for liberty or morality or the freedom of subject peoples." He receives none of these reassurances, and as Whitacre looks around at his fellow soldiers, "there was no sign on those bored, fatigue-doped faces that they cared one way or another ... There was no sign that they wanted anything but to be permitted to go back to their bunks and go to sleep."<sup>32</sup>

One element found in Shaw's novel but absent from Mailer's novel is the perspective of the enemy, focused through the person of Sergeant Christian Diestl. The conversations that Diestl has with his commanding officer, Lieutenant Hardenburg, are similar to the Hearn-Cummings conversations in *The Naked and the Dead*, with Hardenburg proclaiming that "we can be prosperous only if all Europe is a pauper, and a soldier should be delighted with that concept ... I want servants, not competitors. And failing that, I want corpses."<sup>33</sup> Hardenburg prophesies that Germany will eventually fight a war against Japan, and emphasizes that a great nation "must always be stretched to the limits of its endurance. A great nation is always on the verge of collapse and eager to attack."<sup>34</sup> Mailer's Cummings has a kindred spirit in Hardenburg, and the fascistic tendencies of these two characters reflects Mailer's and Shaw's pessimism about the prospects of the postwar world.

The combat scenes in *The Young Lions* are adroitly handled, as when Shaw juxtaposes the deliberations at Supreme Headquarters during the Normandy invasion with the experiences of the individual soldier on the beach:

To the Generals eighty miles away, the reports on casualties are encouraging. To the man on the scene the casualties are never encouraging. When he is hit or when the man next to him is hit, when the ship fifty feet away explodes, when the Naval Ensign on the bridge is screaming in a high, girlish voice for his mother because he has nothing left below his belt, it can only appear to him that he has been involved in a terrible accident. ... "Oh, God," he sobs, seeing the friend he has loved since Fort Benning, Georgia, in 1940, blow up on a mine and hang across a barbed-wire fence with his back wide open from neck to hip, "Oh, God," sobs the man on the scene, "it is all screwed up."<sup>35</sup>

*The Young Lions* concludes with the description of a concentration camp freed by Ackerman and Whitacre's army group, and "the endless depravity and bottomless despair which the Germans had left at the swamp-heart of their dying millennium."<sup>36</sup> Ackerman is especially affected by the horrors of this camp, and when he and Whitacre take a walk outside the camp Ackerman raves that "human beings" must run the world when the war is over. His shouts will attract the attention of Diestl, who has been separated from his unit in the German retreat and has been wandering aimlessly about the countryside. Diestl ambushes and kills Ackerman, Whitacre kills Diestl, and this novel ends with Whitacre carrying Ackerman's body back to the camp.

Somewhat less bleak is Herman Wouk's *The Caine Mutiny*, which resembles *Williwaw* in that it is concerned less with the impact of war on Americans than with shipboard living conditions and the dangers of the sea itself.



Wouk himself had served in the South Pacific during the war on an old destroyer-minesweeper much like the USS *Caine* in his novel, and had ruminated on the fictional possibilities of a mentally disturbed captain being relieved of his duties. Wouk finished *The Caine Mutiny* in 1950, but publishers told his agent that “nobody is interested in World War II anymore.” While Doubleday reluctantly agreed to publish *Mutiny* in 1951, it was the immense popularity of James Jones’ *From Here to Eternity*, which came out the same year, that gave *The Caine Mutiny* a great boost. Many people were now buying both novels, and *Mutiny* went on to win a Pulitzer Prize in 1952. Wouk wrote in his diary that “this is a good book, or I am the more deceived, but it is not yet my War Novel.” Wouk would try his hand twice more at writing the War Novel—*The Winds of War* in 1971 and *War and Remembrance* in 1978—but neither was as good as *The Caine Mutiny*.<sup>37</sup>

Much of Wouk’s novel centers on Willie Keith, a young, spoiled New Yorker whose only talent seems to be the ability to amuse people with his slightly off color ditties on the piano. Keith’s confidence that a high draft number will keep him out of the war evaporates when he receives his draft notice. Keith decides to enlist in the navy as a midshipman, and after graduating at the bottom of his class, he receives orders to report for duty aboard the old, World War I-era destroyer-minesweeper *Caine*. Among Keith’s fellow officers is Tom Keefer, who mostly eschews his shipboard duties in favor of working on his novel, and the conscientious Steve Maryk, who plans on making a career out of the navy.

Keith’s apprenticeship as a naval officer has barely begun when the *Caine* receives a new captain: Philip Queeg. Queeg is both a petty tyrant in his relations with his men, and an incompetent in his handling of the ship (while towing a target the *Caine* will cut its own tow line). He also seems to lose his nerve under pressure, panicking when the *Caine* is caught in a fog bank, ordering his ship to prematurely break off its escort duties for a group of landing craft, and staying away from the exposed side of the bridge during the bombardment of Kwajalein. Such behavior will earn Queeg the nickname “Old Yellowstain.”<sup>38</sup> Queeg’s paranoia and obsessions also undermine morale aboard the *Caine*.

None of this necessarily would have been fatal had not the fleet been struck by a typhoon in December 1944 (an actual event described in [Chapter 9](#)). Here we have some of Wouk’s best prose in his descriptions of the storm’s malignant power, which he calls “death, working up momentum”:<sup>39</sup>

There was nothing in sight all around the ship but gray waves streaked with white. But they were like no waves Willie had ever seen. They were as tall as apartment houses, marching by majestic and rhythmical; the *Caine* was a little taxicab among them. It was no longer pitching and tossing like a ship plowing through waves, it was rising and falling on the jagged surface of the sea like a piece of garbage.<sup>40</sup>

Willie “now knew the difference between honest fright and animal terror. One was bearable, human, not incapacitating; the other was moral castration.”<sup>41</sup> With the *Caine* in danger of being capsized because a mentally distracted Queeg refuses to deviate from the fleet course, Maryk takes over command of the ship.<sup>42</sup>

The last fourth of the book is dominated by Maryk’s court-martial. It is the most puzzling part of the novel because Wouk seems to want to have it both ways, that is, to condemn Queeg and to exonerate him at the same time. Maryk’s Jewish lawyer, Barney Greenwald, builds a brilliant case against Queeg, then later confesses, “Queeg deserved better at my hands. I owed him a favor, don’t you see? He stopped Hermann Goering from washing his fat behind with my mother.”<sup>43</sup>

While *The Caine Mutiny* has its flaws (the less said about Keith’s cross-class romance with a nightclub singer

the better). Wouk does an admirable job of immersing his reader in the arcane world of the navy through telling technical details and believable characters. The tedium and claustrophobia of shipboard life are made real, but so are the excitement and humor.<sup>44</sup>

## II. Later Novels

It was strikingly the case that much of World War II's best war fiction would not be published until many years after the war, and that these later novels would be even more intensely autobiographical than novels published immediately after the war. Paul Fussell has emphasized that the inclination toward silence that seemed to overwhelm ordinary soldiers during World War II was also characteristic of its writers. John Ciardi noted, "We all came out of the same army and joined the same generation of silence."<sup>45</sup> Joseph Heller, who served as a bombardier during the war, took until 1961 to publish his war novel *Catch-22*. James Jones, who was an army rifleman in the Pacific, would not complete *The Thin Red Line* until 1962. Kurt Vonnegut, who was taken prisoner during the Battle of the Bulge and who later witnessed the firebombing of Dresden (some 135,000 would be killed in a city of little strategic value), took even longer. He spent "twenty years of this sort of living with Dresden and the aftermath" before he could overcome his own silence and write about an event that had dramatically affected his life.<sup>46</sup> Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* would not appear until 1969.

Reading the memoirs, letters, and interviews of these authors leaves little doubt that their war experiences served to anchor the novels they wrote. The links these authors forged between fact and fiction were often strikingly direct, and some of the clearest examples can be found in the work of Joseph Heller. Heller was a bombardier on a B-25 during World War II, and his overwhelming impression of the war was that "they were trying to kill me, and I wanted to go home. That they were trying to kill all of us each time we went up was no consolation. They were trying to kill *me*."<sup>47</sup> When Heller later crafted *Catch-22*, which follows the lives of a bomber group stationed in Italy (not unlike the one that Heller was part of), his lead character, Yossarian (also a bombardier), has the following conversation:

"They're trying to kill me," Yossarian told him calmly.

"No one's trying to kill you," Clevinger cried.

"Then why are they shooting at me?" Yossarian asked.

"They're shooting at *everyone*," Clevinger answered. "They're trying to kill everyone."

"And what difference does that make?"<sup>48</sup>

In one of the key scenes in the novel, Yossarian has to crawl to the back of the plane to aid a wounded crewman during a bombing mission:

And almost immediately Snowden broke in, whimpering, "Help me. Please help me. I'm cold. I'm cold." And Yossarian crawled slowly out of the nose and up on top of the bomb bay and wriggled back into the rear section of the plane—passing the first-aid kit on the way that he had to return for—to treat Snowden for the wrong wound, the yawning, raw, melon-shaped hole as big as a football in the outside of his thigh, the unsevered blood-soaked muscle fibers inside pulsating weirdly like blind things with lives of their own, the oval naked wound that was almost a foot long and made Yossarian moan in shock and sympathy the instant he spied it and

nearly made him vomit. And the small, slight tail gunner was lying on the floor beside Snowden in a dead faint, his face as white as a handkerchief, so that Yossarian sprang forward with revulsion to help him first.<sup>49</sup>

The source for this scene was an experience Heller himself had:

Our gunner was right there on the floor in front of me when I moved back through the crawlway from my bombardier's compartment, and so was the large oval wound in his thigh where a piece of flak—a small one, judging from the entrance site on the inside—had blasted all the way through. I saw the open flesh with a shock. I had no choice but to do what I had to do next. Overcoming a tremendous wave of nausea and revulsion that was close to paralyzing, I delicately touched the torn and bleeding leg, and after the first touch I was able to proceed with composure.<sup>50</sup>

After completing 60 bombing missions in Europe, Heller returned home. He refused to get in another plane for 17 years.<sup>51</sup>

In its initial chapters, *Catch-22* is less about the horror of war than the horror of bureaucracy—in this case the military bureaucracy—with its attendant incompetence, inhumanity, and insanity. This theme of a relentless, bureaucratic apparatus that crushes the life from the individual calls to mind the work of Kafka more than anyone else. But while Kafka develops his ideas through the nightmarish detail, Heller more often than not turns to absurdist humor, and here *Catch-22* resembles the work of Lewis Carroll. Populating his novel with navigators who get lost, surgeons who can't locate the body's organs, a minister who doesn't believe in God, psychotic psychiatrists, and senior officers who are fighting not to win the war but to win a place in the *Saturday Evening Post*, Heller creates an *Alice in Wonderland* world where nothing functions as it should.

Like everyone in his bomber group, Yossarian wants to be relieved of combat duty because, very reasonably, he doesn't want to be killed. Under base rules, a flyer can be grounded if he's crazy, but if he asks the doctor to be grounded he is obviously a rational person rather than a crazy person and therefore cannot be grounded. This is the *Catch-22* of the title—that a person "would be crazy to fly more missions and sane if he didn't, but if he was sane he had to fly them. If he flew them he was crazy and didn't have to; but if he didn't want to he was sane and had to."<sup>52</sup> In a single concept Heller crystallizes the meaningless irrationality that is at the center of the novel, and the power of Heller's creation is such that "*Catch-22*" has become part of the language.

Absurdity rules in *Catch-22*. Heller paints with a broad brush, and there is little that escapes his observation. The Indian in the group, Chief White Halfoat, condemns racial prejudice, noting, "It's a terrible thing to treat a decent, loyal Indian like a nigger, kike, wop or spic."<sup>53</sup> Heller observes of Major Major that he took his studies at the university so seriously "that he was suspected by the homosexuals of being a Communist and suspected by the Communists of being a homosexual." Colonel Cathcart, on the other hand, "was certainly not going to waste his time and energy making love to beautiful women unless there was something in it for him."<sup>54</sup> Capitalism in *Catch-22* is personified in Milo Minderbinder, an entrepreneur whose expertise in buying, selling, and manipulating the black market excites the admiration of everyone, even after he bombs the base itself to honor a contract he has signed with the Germans.<sup>55</sup> Heller even critiques God Himself, "a clumsy, bungling, brainless, conceited, uncouth hayseed. Good God, how much reverence can you have for a Supreme Being who finds it necessary to include such phenomena as phlegm and tooth decay in His divine system of creation?"<sup>56</sup>

There is a maniacal, even cartoonish energy to much of *Catch-22*, but this novel also contains abrupt mood changes that tend toward the somber. Many of Heller's really serious reflections are saved until the end, as if Heller has wearied of his own amusing caricatures. Yossarian replays in his mind the incident with the wounded Snowden, and this time we learn that the real horror lay not in Snowden's leg wound but in something much worse:

Yossarian ripped open the snaps of Snowden's flak suit and heard himself scream wildly as Snowden's insides slithered down to the floor in a soggy pile and just kept dripping out. A chunk of flak more than three inches big had shot into his other side just underneath the arm and blasted all the way through, drawing whole mottled quarts of Snowden along with it through the gigantic hole in his ribs it made as it blasted out .... Here was God's plenty, all right, he thought bitterly as he stared—liver, lungs, kidneys, ribs, stomach and bits of the stewed tomatoes Snowden had eaten that day for lunch.<sup>57</sup>

In Rome, Yossarian has an apocalyptic vision that fills him with revulsion. He passes by a raggedy, barefoot boy and an impoverished woman nursing an infant.<sup>58</sup> He sees a woman being raped and a child being brutally beaten as an impassive crowd gathers to watch. "The night was filled with horrors, and he thought he knew how Christ must have felt as he walked through the world, like a psychiatrist through a ward full of nuts, like a victim through a prison full of thieves. What a welcome sight a leper must have been!"<sup>59</sup> There are few examples in literature that contain a more withering indictment of collective humanity. "How many honest men were liars, brave men cowards, loyal men traitors, how many sainted men were corrupt, how many people in positions of trust had sold their souls to blackguards for petty cash, how many had never had souls?"<sup>60</sup> Finally, Yossarian takes the only sane action possible in an insane world: he deserts the military.

Like Joseph Heller, James Jones incorporated his own war experiences into his fiction. Jones, who experienced combat on Guadalcanal as a corporal in a rifle company, reported that what stayed with him about the war, and caused him nightmares, was his "private casualties"—the dead he could not forget. Jones described coming upon an abandoned stretcher containing a body whose "blood had run out of him from somewhere until it nearly filled the depression his hips made in the stretcher. And that has always stayed with me. It didn't seem a body could hold enough blood to do that."<sup>61</sup> This personal experience will be incorporated directly into *The Thin Red Line*:

On the steep slope, which was thinly scattered with pieces of abandoned equipment including two rifles, lay an abandoned stretcher. On it lay a boyish looking soldier who was dead. The boyish soldier's eyes and mouth were closed, and one hand and arm hung outside the stretcher. His other hand, which was inside the stretcher, was submerged to the wrist in an astonishing amount of drying, almost jellylike blood which all but filled the cavity made by his buttocks in the canvas.<sup>62</sup>

Of his combat experiences, Jones declared, "I was scared shitless just about all of the time," and he eventually came to the realization that one of the crucial elements in what Jones calls the "soldier's evolution" is "full acceptance of the fact that his name is already written down in the rolls of the already dead."<sup>63</sup> The fighting would change Jones' life forever. He kills a Japanese soldier, and is himself wounded in a fight to take a group of

hills called the “Galloping Horse.” As Jones recuperated in an army hospital he composed a poem called “The Hill They Call the Horse,” which describes a procession of dead soldiers passing Jones, each appearing as he was the instant he was killed:

George Creel—  
A little string of brains hanging down between his eyes;  
Joe Donnicci—  
His eyes big behind his glasses and a gaping hole where once had been his ear;  
Young Shelley—  
Balls shot away and holding in his guts that pooch out between his fingers ...

Much of what appears in this poem, as well as the incident where Jones kills the Japanese soldier, would be reworked in *The Thin Red Line* in 1962.<sup>64</sup>

Set on Guadalcanal, *The Thin Red Line* follows a single group of soldiers—C-for-Charlie Company—as they fight for control of the island. One of Jones’ prominent themes is that people create their own fictions about who they are and especially about what they have experienced in war. Private Doll muses that “everybody lived by a selected fiction. Nobody was really what he pretended to be.”<sup>65</sup> When Captain James Stein thinks of his father’s stories about World War I, he filters them through his own experiences on Guadalcanal and concludes that “men changed their wars in the years that followed after they fought them. ... Stein knew now his father had lied—or if not lied, had augmented.”<sup>66</sup>

Of all the American World War II novelists, it is Jones who most explicitly makes a connection between war and sex. When a group of men from Charlie Company run across the body of a dead soldier, “there was a peculiar tone of sexual excitement, sexual morbidity, in all of the voices—almost as if they were voyeurs behind a mirror watching a man in the act of coitus.”<sup>67</sup> When Private Bell’s commander instructs the men to “get as close to them as we can before we put the grenades to them,” to Bell, “overheated and overwrought, the Captain’s phraseology sounded strangely sexual.”<sup>68</sup> Another soldier, thinking of his companions, “loved them all, passionately, with an almost sexual ecstasy of comradeship.”<sup>69</sup>

In the end, however, *The Thin Red Line* resembles other American novels of World War II in its deep cynicism. While each soldier interprets the meaning of the war differently, none of the interpretations is especially uplifting. For Welsh, “property” was the only reason the war was being fought: “One nation’s, or another nation’s. It had all been done; and was being done, for property.”<sup>70</sup> Fife concludes it “was only numbers. He was being killed for numbers.”<sup>71</sup> Another soldier, who had been “scared shitless” for most of the war, insisted that “the pageant, the spectacle, the challenge, the adventure of war they could wipe their ass on.”<sup>72</sup>

Even more intensely autobiographical than *Catch-22* or *Thin Red Line* is Kurt Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Vonnegut was an infantryman in Europe, and during the Battle of the Bulge he and others of his unit were taken prisoner by the Germans. He was sent to a prisoner-of-war camp in Dresden, and through sheer dumb luck survived the Allied firebombing of that city. Parallels between events in the novel and Vonnegut’s own experiences can be found everywhere, beginning with the capture of Vonnegut’s unit. In a 1977 interview, Vonnegut described this event in less than heroic terms. His outfit was hopelessly lost, and instead of scouting for the enemy’s emplacements, Vonnegut was (unsuccessfully) trying to find his own. The woods filled up with Germans, and while the Americans could not see their enemy, the enemy could see them, a circumstance that



became clear when the Germans demanded through a loudspeaker that the Americans surrender. When Vonnegut and company did not surrender immediately, the Germans responded by firing 88 mm. shells into the trees over them:

The shells burst in the treetops right over us. Those were very loud bangs right over our heads. We were showered with splintered steel. Some people got hit. Then the Germans told us again to come out. We didn't yell "nuts" or anything like that. We said, "Okay," and "Take it easy," and so on.<sup>73</sup>

In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, one of the prisoners describes his capture in nearly the same way:

Shells were bursting in the treetops with terrific bangs, he said, showering down knives and needles and razorblades. Little lumps of lead in copper jackets were crisscrossing the woods under the shellbursts, zipping along much faster than sound.

A lot of people were being wounded or killed. So it goes.

Then the shelling stopped, and a hidden German with a loudspeaker told the Americans to put their weapons down and come out of the woods with their hands on the top of their heads.<sup>74</sup>

In Dresden, Vonnegut noted, his group of prisoners "went to work every morning as contract labor in a malt syrup factory. The syrup was for pregnant women."<sup>75</sup> In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, the prisoners "worked in a factory that made malt syrup. The syrup was enriched with vitamins and minerals. The syrup was for pregnant women."<sup>76</sup> Other similarities between Vonnegut's own experiences and those portrayed in the novel include the work of pulling victims from the rubble after the firebombing.<sup>77</sup>

While Vonnegut's protagonist, Billy Pilgrim, is often a stand-in for Vonnegut, sharing many of Vonnegut's own experiences, Vonnegut goes even further in his determination to impress upon the reader that while *Slaughterhouse-Five* is a novel, the events portrayed really happened. For instance, rather than writing a preface or introduction explaining how the novel evolved out of his own experiences, Vonnegut does this in [Chapter 1](#), making it part of the novel itself and insisting in the book's first sentence, "All this happened, more or less."<sup>78</sup> Vonnegut further breaks down the distance between novelist and reader by occasionally breaking into the narrative in his own voice. In one scene, a boxcar full of prisoners is pulling into the fairy-tale city of Dresden, and one prisoner describes it as "Oz." Vonnegut enters in to say, "That was I. That was me. The only other city I'd ever seen was Indianapolis, Indiana."<sup>79</sup>

All great war novels are antiwar novels, and *Slaughterhouse-Five* is no exception. Vonnegut goes to extreme lengths to deglamorize war, and there is not a single heroic moment in the novel. Protagonist Billy Pilgrim is singularly unwarlike. He is a chaplain's assistant—"a valet to a preacher, [who] expected no promotions or medals, bore no arms, and had a meek faith in a loving Jesus which most soldiers found putrid."<sup>80</sup> Billy is transferred to a regiment in the middle of the Battle of the Bulge and, without overcoat, weapon, or boots, he and his three companions immediately become lost in the snow. A heel has come off one of Billy's shoes, "which made him bob up-and-down, up-anddown ... He didn't look like a soldier at all. He looked like a filthy flamingo."<sup>81</sup> Billy has also become mentally unhinged—"unstuck in time," as Vonnegut puts it—and begins to randomly travel among the past, present, and future of his own life.<sup>82</sup> In addition to putting this pathetic human

being at the center of his narrative, Vonnegut also regales the reader with his negative observations on the nature of war. When Billy is taken to a collecting point for prisoners, Vonnegut notes, “Nobody talked. Nobody had any good war stories to tell.”<sup>83</sup> Vonnegut tells the reader that “there are almost no characters in this story, and almost no dramatic confrontations, because most of the people in it are so sick and so much the listless playthings of enormous forces. One of the main effects of war, after all, is that people are discouraged from being characters.”<sup>84</sup>

If Vonnegut brilliantly describes the cruelties of war, he also provides a millenarian vision of war in reverse, an un-war in which things un-explode and people un-die and the weapons of war return to the quiescent, natural state from which they sprang:

American planes, full of holes and wounded men and corpses took off backwards from an airfield in England. Over France, a few German fighter planes flew at them backwards, sucked bullets and shell fragments from some of the planes and crewmen. ... The formation flew backwards over a German city that was in flames. The bombers opened their bomb bay doors, exerted a miraculous magnetism which shrunk the fires, gathered them into cylindrical steel containers, and lifted the containers into the bellies of the planes. ... When the bombers got back to their base, the steel cylinders were taken from the racks and shipped back to the United States of America, where factories were operating night and day, dismantling the cylinders, separating the dangerous contents into minerals.

The minerals were then put into the ground “so they would never hurt anybody ever again.”<sup>85</sup> Here Vonnegut has crafted one of the most strangely moving passages in any war novel, reversing the laws of physics and the natural course of mankind’s own brutality to create a beautiful, impossible utopian world.<sup>86</sup>

### III. Poetry and Drama

The depth of despair and lack of idealism revealed by these novels is mirrored in the poetry of World War II. World War II’s best-known poem, Randall Jarrell’s “The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner,” is as ghastly as it gets:

From my mother’s sleep I fell into the State,  
And I hunched in its belly till my wet fur froze.  
Six miles from earth, loosed from its dream of life,  
I awoke to black flak and the nightmare fighters.  
When I died they washed me out of the turret with a hose.<sup>87</sup>

Perhaps it is no accident that arguably the greatest poem of the Second World War is taken from the air war. (Jarrell began his own military life in flight school, was washed out, and ended up in Tucson teaching celestial navigation to bomber navigators.)<sup>88</sup> Harvey Shapiro, a poet who served as a B-17 gunner in 35 combat missions over Europe, argues that what “changes everything” in this war is the airplane. In Shapiro’s view, “The way trench warfare dominates the imagery of World War I, the fleets of bombers and the smoking cities dominate the imagery of World War II.” Edward Field, who was a navigator on a bomber, begins his poem “World War II”

with

It was over Target Berlin the flak shot up our plane  
just as we were dumping bombs on the already  
smoking city.<sup>89</sup>

In another Jarrell poem called “Losses,” the bombers and the bombed are united in death:

In bombers named for girls, we burned  
The cities we had learned about in school—  
Till our lives wore out; our bodies lay among  
The people we had killed and never seen.<sup>90</sup>

James Dickey, a radar observer on a P-61 fighter-bomber who flew 38 combat missions in Asia, describes an “anti-morale” incendiary raid on the Japanese town of Beppu in his poem “The Firebombing.”<sup>91</sup> Narrated some 20 years after the war, this raid and those who might have died in it continues to haunt the narrator (“Twenty years in the suburbs have not shown me which ones were hit and which not.”)<sup>92</sup> He is transported back to that evening, with the engines of his plane “sighing for the moment when the roofs will connect their flames, and make a town burning with all American fire.”<sup>93</sup> As the flames spread below,

Oriental fish form quickly  
In the chemical shine,  
In their eyes one tiny seed  
Of deranged, Old Testament light.<sup>94</sup>

Finally, his mind returned to the present, the narrator imagines inviting the shades of those he has killed into his house, and in the end buries his feelings under a blustering patriotism:

It is that I can imagine  
At the threshold nothing  
With its ears crackling off  
Like powdery leaves,  
Nothing with children of ashes, nothing not  
Amiable, gentle, well-meaning,  
A little nervous for no  
Reason a little worried a little too loud  
Or too easygoing Nothing I haven't lived with  
For twenty years, still nothing not as  
American as I am, and proud of it.<sup>95</sup>

In “The War in the Air,” Howard Nemerov observes of aircrew casualties that “we didn’t see our dead, who rarely bothered coming home to die,” and Richard Hugo meditates on the watery grave of fellow flyer Richard

Ryan, who crashed in the Adriatic, asking

What's your face like now with slow eels  
sliding through your eyes? Bones can't glow  
through barnacles and green piled dark as flak.<sup>96</sup>

The transformative effect of war on young boys is a common theme in World War II poetry. May Sarton proclaims, "This can be done in six months. Take a marvelous boy and knead him into manhood for destruction's joy."<sup>97</sup> In Stanley Kunitz's poem "Careless Love," war is a lover to the young, "a dark beauty, whose cheek beside their own cheek glows." War is not a lover easily sated, however, and "what this nymphomaniac enjoys inexhaustibly is boys."<sup>98</sup>

The antipatriotic virulence of many World War II poems is striking. There is little doubt that the opening lines of John Ciardi's savage poem "A Box Comes Home" articulated for many not only the sorrow and loss that they experienced during the war but also deep anger at easy patriotism:

I remember the United States of America  
As a flag-draped box with Arthur in it  
And six marines to bear it on their shoulders.<sup>99</sup>

In Ciardi's "Remembering That Island," a veteran casts his mind back to "the vast stinking Pacific suddenly awash once more with bodies," then waits "while the rich oratory and the lying famous corrupt senators mine our lives for another war."<sup>100</sup> These sentiments are repeated in William Stafford's "At the Grave of My Brother: Bomber Pilot":

Reluctant hero, drafted again each Fourth  
of July, I'll bow and remember you. Who  
shall we follow next? Who shall we kill next time?<sup>101</sup>

In Peter Bowman's "Beach Red,"

Nobody's talking themselves red, white and blue in the face and only the sea is behind  
you if you turn.  
It's just you and your firearm, the enemy and his,  
and a perfectly democratic opportunity to use your own judgment.<sup>102</sup>

The plays that came out of the war did not, for the most part, have the visceral impact of the war's novels and poetry, and it was peculiarly the case that of the two best "war plays" crafted by Americans, one would be written before American involvement began and the other after the war was over.<sup>103</sup> It was in 1940 that Robert Sherwood's *There Shall Be No Night* was first staged. A plea to take up arms against the forces of oppression, *Night's* impact was enhanced by the fact that Sherwood was well known as a pacifist. His experiences fighting in World War I had led him to the view that "war was a hideous injustice and that no man had the right to call himself civilized as long as he admitted that another world war could conceivably be justifiable."<sup>104</sup> The two

events that led Sherwood away from pacifism were the Soviet invasion of Finland and a speech by Charles Lindbergh that “proved that Hitlerism was already powerfully and persuasively represented in our own midst.”<sup>105</sup>

Sherwood’s play is set in Finland shortly before the invasion. It opens in the home of Finnish pacifist Dr. Kaarlo Valkonen and his American wife, Miranda. Kaarlo has just been awarded the Nobel Prize in medicine, and Dave Corveen, an American reporter, has set up equipment in Kaarlo’s living room for a live radio broadcast. In an obvious reference to Germany’s Nazis, Kaarlo tells listeners that “they glorify a theory of government which is no more than co-ordinated barbarism, under the leadership of a megalomaniac who belongs in a psychopathic ward rather than a chancellery.” Despite advancements in medicine, Kaarlo detects a degeneration in the human species, and in a foreshadowing of his own abandonment of pacifist principles he asks, “Of what avail are these artificial protections if each man lacks the power of resistance within himself?”<sup>106</sup>

With the Soviet invasion, Kaarlo’s son, Erik, leaves for the front to fight, followed shortly thereafter by Kaarlo, who will serve with the army medical corps. When Dave observes that such duty “isn’t suitable work for a winner of the Nobel prize,” Kaarlo responds, “It is not suitable work for any member of the human race, Mr. Corveen. But some one must do it.” Kaarlo insists that he is not doing it out of patriotism because “patriotism’ as now practiced is one of the most virulent manifestations of evil.”<sup>107</sup> Sherwood’s distrust of patriotic appeals is obvious throughout this play. When one character asks Gosden, an Englishman fighting for Finland, why he was there, Gosden asks, “Are you trying to trap me into making any remarks about fighting for freedom and democracy? ... Because I had enough of *that* muck when I fought in the last war!”<sup>108</sup>

In the battle that follows, Erik dies of his wounds, and on his deathbed he marries his pregnant fiancée, Kaatri, who is persuaded by Miranda to leave the country for America. Now, Kaarlo too will take up the gun, as Gosden observes, “Every one of us can find plenty of reasons for *not* fighting, and they’re the best reasons in the world. But—the time comes when you’ve bloody well got to fight—and you might just as well go cheerfully.”<sup>109</sup> Facing hopeless odds, Kaarlo and his comrades are killed. Miranda, now bereft of both her husband and son, makes her own preparations for war. She and Kaarlo’s uncle Waldeman have armed themselves, and the play ends with the two of them calmly awaiting the arrival of the Soviet army.

*There Shall Be No Night* is quite unabashedly a propaganda piece; removed from its particular place and time, it is not particularly good theater. But like other propaganda pieces, and here such 19th-century classics as *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room* or the theatrical version of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* come to mind, the merits of *There Shall Be No Night* should properly be judged on its power to move audiences of its era rather than on its literary merits. By this standard, *Night* succeeded admirably. Walter J. Meserve notes that “people were moved to tears by Sherwood’s eloquent plea and then heartened by his concluding suggestion that barbarism could be conquered.”<sup>110</sup> By the fall of 1940, Sherwood was writing speeches for Franklin Roosevelt, and would eventually work for the Office of War Information. The play won for Sherwood a Pulitzer Prize and was revived in 1943 after the invasion of Greece, with Sherwood substituting Greece for Finland.<sup>111</sup>

Very different in tone is Arthur Miller’s first major theatrical outing, *All My Sons*, which premiered in 1947. While set in the United States immediately after the war, *All My Sons* is very much a product of the war — “conceived in wartime and begun in wartime,” as Miller puts it. The plot of *All My Sons* centers around a manufacturer that has knowingly sold defective aircraft engines to the military, causing the deaths of 21 young flyers. Joe Keller has blamed his partner for the sale, an explanation that has been accepted by Keller’s family until the truth emerges that it was Keller who authorized the sale over his partner’s misgivings. When Keller is confronted by his son, Chris, a veteran of the war, Keller responds that had he admitted that the parts were



defective, the military would have closed up his business. It was a business he claimed to be nurturing for Chris. “You lay forty years into a business and they knock you out in five minutes, what could I do, let them take forty years, let them take my life away?”<sup>112</sup> Keller also insists that the war was run on money, and that every business exacted its price:

Who worked for nothin' in that war? When they work for nothin', I'll work for nothin'. Did they ship a gun or a truck outa Detroit before they got their price? Is that clean? It's dollars and cents, nickels and dimes; war and peace, it's nickels and dimes, what's clean?<sup>113</sup>

Chris is appalled, raging at his father that “I was dying every day and you were killing my boys and you did it for me? What the hell do you think I was thinking of, the Goddam business? Is that as far as your mind can see, the business? What is that, the world—the business? What the hell do you mean, you did it for me? Don't you have a country? Don't you live in the world?”<sup>114</sup>

Miller called this play a “spectacle of human sacrifice in contrast with aggrandizement,” a reality of wartime America that ran counter to the line promulgated by public officials:

At a time when all public voices were announcing the arrival of that great day when industry and labor were one, my personal experience was daily demonstrating that beneath the slogans very little had changed. In this sense the play was a response to what I felt “in the air.” It was an unveiling of what I believe everybody knew and nobody publicly said.<sup>115</sup>

Miller's observation that it was business and profit, rather than patriotism, that drove home front American society is in its own way as bleak as any battlefield portrayal.

A striking characteristic of those who wrote about World War II—especially those who had experienced the war—is that they nearly universally rejected the idea of patriotism as justification for this ghastly event. Patriotism in these works is invariably invoked only for the purposes of irony, as a way of demonstrating its tawdry, moral emptiness. And in a mechanized conflict in which the nation states of the world ground down their young men into grist, notions of battlefield nobility and heroism were quickly swallowed up in the black maw of despair and nihilism. What the war meant to these writers was depravity, death, dismemberment, horror, waste, and nightmares. In terms of creativity, insight, and sheer emotional power, not only is the war literature produced by this generation as good as that produced by other generations, it is better.

## Part IV

# **Americans and the End of the War**

## Haunted Forests and Death Camps, Kamikazes and Atomic Bombs

It is perhaps fitting that the most horrendous conflict in human history ended under the most appalling circumstances. One last, desperate German offensive in the Ardennes in December 1944 became for Americans the costliest engagement of the war in Europe, and in the months ahead the fighting became increasingly tough as the Germans were pushed back behind their own borders. Finally, in the last month of the war, the Allies uncovered the death camps—an atrocity on a horrific scale.

Like the Germans, the Japanese fought more desperately as Americans closed in on their homeland. At Okinawa, a thousand kamikaze suicide planes flung themselves at American ships, while ashore tens of thousands of Japanese troops fought to the death. More American lives were lost at Okinawa than at any other battle in the Pacific. Now fears were raised that the next step in the island campaign—an invasion of the Japanese home islands themselves—would mobilize an entire nation of kamikazes and result in a bloodbath for invaders and defenders alike. Atomic bombs made such an invasion unnecessary and ended the war, but their use remains controversial to this day and ushered in a terrible new era.

By the fall of 1944, Americans on the home front began to anticipate the imminent defeat of Germany and to make plans for a postwar world. But the American troops that were actually fighting the Germans were finding the news of Germany's demise to be greatly exaggerated. German resistance had stiffened as Allied troops approached Germany's borders, and the period between the fall of 1944 and the spring of 1945 would see the highest casualties of the war.<sup>1</sup> "A morale problem began to develop. For troops who had resigned themselves to almost continuous fighting and even the idea that they might be killed, hope added another burden as they mulled over the bitter prospect of being killed with the war's end in sight.<sup>2</sup> The burden was compounded by letters from home. As Eric Sevareid put it, "Parents and wives at home became an unwitting threat, for in their well-intentioned letters they spoke of the war's quick ending and of their joy that their men were still alive."<sup>3</sup> One soldier noted, "My own parents are tearing down my morale, because the radio and newspaper tell them that the men who have 2 years overseas are coming home."<sup>4</sup>

In November, Americans began operations in what Russell F. Weigley has called "the long nightmare in the Hürtgen Forest."<sup>5</sup> Located near Aachen on the Siegfried Line, the dense, perpetually dark Hürtgen Forest exuded a sinister malevolence. Here, the American advantages of firepower and air superiority were of little use, and the infantry immediately found itself locked into a grim, seemingly endless struggle. One soldier remembered that "the Germans' artillery kept firing at the tops of trees and artillery bursts hit the trees. The shrapnel fell just like rain and the artillery was constant—day and night."<sup>6</sup> The casualties, inflicted both by the Germans and by the environmental conditions, were frightful. The American 4th Division, for instance, suffered 4,000 battle casualties in the Hürtgen and lost another 2,000 to respiratory disease, trench foot, and exhaustion.<sup>7</sup> The men in the 8th Division were so reluctant to move forward into this morass that three company commanders and two battalion commanders had to be relieved of their duties, and a platoon

commander was placed under arrest for refusing to advance.<sup>8</sup> The weather was bitter cold in the winter of 1944–45, and during his time in the Hürtgen, Clarence Ollom of the 82nd Airborne remembered seeing something he would never forget: “huge piles of German and American frozen bodies stacked up like cordwood.”<sup>9</sup> The fighting here would produce some 30,000 American casualties, and without the justification of military necessity, it is difficult to see the Hürtgen foray as anything other than a military blunder. In Russell Weigley’s words, “The Huertgen Forest was a worse American military tragedy than the Wilderness or the Argonne.”<sup>10</sup> The worst was yet to come.

In December 1944, only days apart, U.S. armed forces suffered twin catastrophes. At sea, Typhoon Cobra struck the Pacific Third Fleet, while on land the Germans launched their offensive in the Ardennes. The Third Fleet under Admiral William “Bull” Halsey had been supporting Douglas MacArthur’s invasion of the Philippines, and in mid-December the fleet, especially the destroyers, was low on fuel and the ships were riding dangerously high in the water. The weather was worsening, and while ships could have pumped seawater into their empty tanks for ballast, replacing the seawater with fuel would have caused at least a 10-hour delay. Halsey, anxious to resume operations, continued to try to refuel the ships, but the seas were too rough. Finally, Typhoon Cobra hit the fleet on 18 December. With gusts of 150 knots and 70-foot seas, Cobra swept men and airplanes overboard and left the fleet fighting for its life. By the time the storm subsided, 200 airplanes had been destroyed, nine ships had been put out of commission, and three destroyers had capsized and sunk. Seven hundred and ninety sailors lost their lives. It was the navy’s worst natural disaster of the war, with twice as many Americans dying as at the Battle of Midway.<sup>11</sup>

## I. Europe

Meanwhile in Europe, Hitler was setting in motion a plan that he hoped would retrieve his increasingly desperate military fortunes. Beginning in September 1944, Hitler began to secretly assemble a massive force of armor and infantry under the cloak of the Ardennes forest. He planned to launch an offensive with the goal of separating Allied forces and capturing the port of Antwerp. Hitler hoped that the resulting disarray on the Allied side, coupled with increased V-2 rocket attacks on London, would shift the balance of power in the West.

A distracted Allied command attached little importance to this area at the time, but it should have, as it was through the Ardennes that the Germans had broken open the French front in 1940. Beginning on 16 December 1944, the Germans would try to produce a similar result in what Americans called the Battle of the Bulge. When the attack began, some 200,000 Germans were opposed by only 83,000 Americans. Ironically, two of the four divisions that stood in the way of the German onslaught were divisions that had suffered heavy casualties in the Hürtgen Forest and had been moved to the Ardennes for a “rest.”<sup>12</sup> It would be the tenacity of these and other soldiers who were rushed to the area that would blunt the German offensive until improving weather for American fighter-bombers and the Allies’ own counterattacks reversed the situation by January. Doing so was extremely costly, however, with American casualties amounting to just under 81,000.<sup>13</sup>

The German offensive in the Ardennes came as a profound shock to the American public and provided evidence that Germany was far from ultimate collapse.<sup>14</sup> *Time* observed that “the nation was now spending, at a rapidly rising rate, something which no nation is young enough or big enough or rich enough to spend lavishly: its young manhood.”<sup>15</sup> One of these young men, army captain Lillard E. Pratt of the 343rd Field Artillery, sent a letter to his wife dated 13 December 1944 in which he said, “We are having a plenty tough time just now. The battle for Germany is much more savage than Normandy ever thought of being.” Compounding the ferocity of

the fighting was the extraordinarily cold weather, with Pratt noting that “some soldiers have trench foot so bad they can barely get their bare feet into overshoes.” “War is terrible at its best,” said Pratt, “but at its worst it is a living and dying hell.” Two months later, Pratt was killed by a German artillery shell in the fighting in front of Lichtenberg, Germany.<sup>16</sup>

As the war ground on and infantry units were decimated by heavy losses (the infantry represented only 14 percent of the army’s overseas strength but 70 percent of its casualties), the killed and wounded were replaced by new, inexperienced troops.<sup>17</sup> While those drafted at the beginning of the war were given some opportunities by the army to utilize their civilian skills, those drafted later tended to become infantrymen, regardless of their aptitudes.<sup>18</sup> Squads were increasingly unrecognizable to the old-timers, and the bonds of comradeship that had kept these men fighting became more tenuous. As one veteran of the First Division put it, “The Army consists of the 1st Division and eight million replacements.”<sup>19</sup>

The suspicion among combat troops that the military intended to keep them in the field until they were dead or seriously wounded was ubiquitous. One veteran of the Italian campaign noted, “Men in our division gave up all hope of being relieved. They thought the Army intended to keep them in action until everybody was killed.”<sup>20</sup> Another complained that the veteran “feels as long as he is able to keep going he will be kept over here, until he is a physical wreck or his body is buried with 4 or 5 more in some dark jungle or scattered over the ground by artillery shells or bombs.”<sup>21</sup> The army tried to boost the sagging morale of the infantry by authorizing the Combat Infantryman’s Badge for those who had participated in combat operations. The badge was widely popular among infantrymen (for many, it was the only military award that meant anything to them), but the army demonstrated its genius for imbecility by taking the badge away from frontline medics. The troops were incensed, both because of the high regard in which medics were held and because medics probably saw more combat than anyone else. While the army eventually restored the badge to medics, the damage had already been done.<sup>22</sup>

As for the army replacement, he was “installed in a depleted squad, whose members seldom learned his name although they would identify him by a designation like Iowa, Pittsburgh, or Shorty. One young master of irony said of his assignment to an infantry platoon: ‘There wasn’t a lot of companionship.’”<sup>23</sup> Another declared that “being a replacement is just like being an orphan. You are away from anybody you know and feel lost and lonesome.”<sup>24</sup> In one survey of replacement troops in Italy, fully half said that they went into combat less than three days after joining their outfits.<sup>25</sup> These “orphan[s] of the Army” were sometimes wounded so quickly that they could not tell the medics which platoon they were from.<sup>26</sup> Russell Weigley notes that “too often the system of individual replacements flung a lone man into a group of strangers, with no chance to get to know them before he entered combat with them.”<sup>27</sup> The managers of this system, in S. L. A. Marshall’s words, “have moved men around as if they were pegs and nothing counted but a specialist classification number. They have become fillers-of-holes rather than architects of the human spirit.”<sup>28</sup> Because the lone replacement lacked the powerful motivation of fighting to retain the respect of people he knew, the overall consequence, according to Paul Fussell, was that “the Allied ground army grew worse as the war proceeded, at the same time the enemy (what remained of it) grew more intensely anxious not to be defeated.”<sup>29</sup>

Many in the army were well aware of these problems. In January 1942, General T. J. Christian complained of the inadequacies of the replacement system, and suggested that replacements be sent in as units rather than as individuals. Christian’s proposal was rejected by the War Department on administrative grounds.<sup>30</sup> Two years



later, this same suggestion was made by army psychiatrist Major John Appel, who further proposed that infantry soldiers serve a tour of duty with a specified number of days (similar to the system practiced by the air wing of the army). Appel's suggestions were not adopted.<sup>31</sup>

The glaring deficiencies in the U.S. army's replacement system, however, did not prevent Germany's military situation from deteriorating rapidly. By the first week of April 1945 the Soviets had put Vienna under siege in the east, while in the west the Ninth and First American armies completed the encirclement of Germany's Ruhr industrial area. Other Allied armies crossed the Weser River and swept across Hanover province. There was no longer any doubt that Germany would soon be defeated. In the Pacific, Americans launched the invasion of Okinawa, the last campaign before the projected invasion of the Japanese home islands themselves. While the Japanese were far from finished (the fighting on Okinawa would prove to be both savage and costly), the Japanese navy had been virtually eliminated, the army had incurred staggering losses, and the kamikazes had become the most effective component of the Japanese air force. Japanese industry had been gutted, and now American bombers were launching incendiary bombing against Japanese cities, with devastating results.

Despite the official government line that much difficult work lay ahead in winning the war, there was a genuine fear that victory in Europe would create a letdown that, in the words of columnist Ernest K. Lindley, "might postpone, or even prevent, a complete victory over Japan."<sup>32</sup> This problem had been anticipated a year earlier, when General George Marshall expressed the concern that following a German defeat "an uninformed and unreasoning clamor to 'bring the boys back home' might play havoc with discipline and morale" and delay victory over Japan. The War Department turned once again to Frank Capra and asked him to produce a film that would explain to servicemen who among them would be able to return to civilian life and who would be shifted to the Pacific to fight Japan. The result was *Two Down and One to Go!*, a film shot in great secrecy in the summer of 1944 and shown on 10 May 1945, three days after the German surrender. Perhaps as many as 97 percent of servicemen saw the film, as well as audiences at 800 movie theaters.<sup>33</sup> Still, the army found that even among those European units that had been informed that they were going to be redeployed to the Pacific, "there was little interest in discussing the situations and problems they would confront in the Orient." Instead, the men were obsessed with the possibility that their outfit might be reclassified and sent home, or that they themselves might transfer to a unit slated for rotation to the United States.<sup>34</sup> Clearly, the unit loyalty that had served the military so well during the war was rapidly unraveling under the pressures of demobilization.

As we have seen, the style of fighting in the Pacific often resulted in wholesale atrocities, while in Europe battles for the most part were fought in a conventional manner. The wartime atrocities of Europe were of a different nature altogether, and as the full scale of these horrors slowly emerged, it became painfully obvious that nearly six years of war not only had stripped Europe of the material trappings of civilization but had badly eroded its moral foundations as well. As early as February 1942, Reinhold Niebuhr predicted that "a spiritually corrupted Europe will not purge itself quickly of the virus of race bigotry with which the Nazis have infected its culture."<sup>35</sup> What this virus produced was the Holocaust.

By April 1945, a comprehension of the full savagery of the Nazis began to emerge with the Allied liberation of the concentration camps. Well-documented stories of the Nazi slaughter of the Jews had appeared in mainstream American publications relatively early. In June 1942, for instance, the *New York Times* quoted World Jewish Congress claims that the Nazis had killed a million Jews since the beginning of the war.<sup>36</sup> But Americans found it difficult to accept reports of huge numbers of death camp exterminations. Robert H. Abzug believes that there are two reasons for this. First, many Americans remembered the propaganda excesses of the First World War and suspected that the number of fatalities cited for the camps were inflated for propaganda

purposes.<sup>37</sup> As late as January 1945, *Collier's* concluded that “a lot of Americans simply do not believe the stories of Nazi mass executions. ... These stories are so foreign to most Americans’ experience of life in this country that they seem incredible. Then, too, some of the atrocity stories of World War I were later proved false.” The estimate of “millions” of victims was put in quotes by *Collier's*.<sup>38</sup> The second reason that Americans had problems dealing with the death camp revelations was, as Abzug puts it, “reports of Nazi genocide pushed one’s imagination to the very brink.”<sup>39</sup> The scale of this event was so vast, so unbelievable, so incomprehensible. Soldiers had an especially keen ear for the propaganda piece, but seeing the camps for themselves made believers of them. One American sergeant admitted, “Before this, you would have said those stories were propaganda, but now you know they weren’t. There are the bodies and all those guys are dead. I never was so sure before of exactly what I was fighting for.”<sup>40</sup>

Ohrdruf was the first camp to be liberated by Americans, and though small compared to other camps, Ohrdruf contained horrors enough to shock all who entered it. After receiving word of what had been found at the camp, Generals Eisenhower, Bradley, and Patton converged on Ohrdruf on 12 April 1945. Omar Bradley remembered that “more than 3,200 naked, emaciated bodies had been flung into shallow graves. Others lay in the streets where they had fallen. Lice crawled over the yellowed skin of their sharp, bony frames.” Here “death had been so fouled by degradation that it both stunned and numbed us.” Bradley recalled that Eisenhower turned pale, and that Patton walked over to a corner and threw up.<sup>41</sup> Later in the month, *Newsweek* reporter Al Newman was with the American First Army when it liberated what Newman called the “charnel house of Nordhausen.” The eyes of the prisoners “were sunk deeply into their skulls and their skins under thick dirt were a ghastly yellow. Some sobbed great dry sobs to see the Americans. Others merely wailed pitifully, and one poor semiconscious Jew who kept crying ‘Ey yaah’ will haunt my dreams for many years.”<sup>42</sup> The smells at Nordhausen were so appalling that, like Patton, tough soldiers who had seen years of campaigning “were ill and vomiting, throwing up.”<sup>43</sup>

At Dachau, Martha Gellhorn described the “skeletons” who “sat in the sun and searched themselves for lice. They have no age and no faces; they all look alike and like nothing you will ever see if you are lucky.”<sup>44</sup> As she toured the camp the horrors accumulated. At a siding the Germans had locked up the last 50 boxcars full of prisoners and had allowed them to die of suffocation, starvation, and thirst. There had been ghastly medical experiments and castrations at Dachau, and next to the gas chamber and crematorium “the bodies were dumped like garbage, rotting in the sun, yellow and nothing but bones, bones grown huge because there was no flesh to cover them, hideous, terrible, agonizing bones, and the unendurable smell of death.”<sup>45</sup> Gellhorn confessed to “a kind of shock that sets in and makes it almost unbearable to remember what you have seen.”<sup>46</sup>

At Buchenwald, it had been extermination on a massive scale, with over 32,000 prisoners killed since 1937. The emaciated state of the prisoners who had survived (in his memoir Patton described them as “feebly animated mummies”) and the gallows, torture rooms, and crematoriums all made a vivid impression on those who entered this camp.<sup>47</sup> But for sheer, numbing ghastliness the collections of “parchment” found at Buchenwald was in a class by itself. These were pieces of human skin with elaborate tattoos. It was a hobby pursued both by a doctor at the camp and by the wife of the camp commander, who kept an eye out for prisoners with especially striking tattoos that she could add to her collection.<sup>48</sup> Reporter Percy Knauth called Buchenwald “a fact which will stink through the years of history as long as generations of mankind have memories.”<sup>49</sup> Local German residents were rounded up by the Allies and forced to take tours of the camps, and the information services of Britain and the United States announced plans to place concentration camp

photographs on billboards and to display them prominently in German towns.<sup>50</sup>

A joint congressional committee toured the camps, as did a contingent of American journalists that included Joseph Pulitzer. Like many Americans, Pulitzer was initially skeptical. "I came here in a suspicious frame of mind," he reported from Europe, "feeling that I would find that many of the terrible reports that have been printed in the United States before I left were exaggerations, and largely propaganda. They have been understatements." Accompanying Pulitzer was reporter William L. Chenery, who concluded that "nowhere since the Dark Ages has death been a more frequent visitor than at Dachau" and that "no other generation was ever required to witness horror in this particular shape."<sup>51</sup> Shaken by what he had seen, Joseph Pulitzer went back to St. Louis and mounted an exhibition of photos taken of the camps called "Lest We Forget." It was viewed by 80,000 people in less than a month.<sup>52</sup> Others tried to avoid such ghastly images. When newsreels of the liberated camps were shown at British theaters, many patrons got up to leave. At London's Leicester Square cinema, Allied soldiers blocked this mass exodus, forcing patrons back into their seats to see "what other people had to endure."<sup>53</sup> By the end of the war the world had witnessed what *Time* magazine called "a brutality which exceeded that of primitive times" and "a revolution against the moral basis of civilization."<sup>54</sup> Many in America expressed grave doubts as to the future of this continent, with both Secretary of State Dean Acheson and Columbia University president Nicholas Murray Butler worrying that the war had set back European civilization by hundreds of years.<sup>55</sup>



**Fig 9.1** Bodies of inmates at the Nordhausen camp, Germany, 12 April 1945. Myers (Army), NARA file #111-SC-203456.





**Fig 9.2** A German woman staggers past the exhumed bodies of eight hundred slave workers, Namerig, Germany, 17 May 1945. Cpl. Edward Belfer (Army), NARA file #111-SC-264895.

Overwhelmingly, Americans in Europe perceived in most Germans a refusal to take responsibility for the war and for the atrocities of the camps. A *Time* reporter found that the strongest impression made on the average G.I. by the German people was that “they had no conception of the degree to which they had been thrust beyond the pale of the human race,” to which William Chenery added that “the detached attitude of the Germans toward the crimes committed in the concentration camps was remarkable.”<sup>56</sup> In Limburg, for instance, SS units had established a facility to kill old and rebellious slave laborers by gassing and cremating them. Some 15,000 had been killed in this manner before locals complained. They objected not to the killings themselves but to the polluted air. To assuage these concerns, the next 5,000 were poisoned instead.<sup>57</sup> Frederick Graham, a reporter traveling with the U.S. First Army, wrote:

The thing that puzzles and irritates the American fighting men is the Germans' utter lack of regret about anything except the loss of the war. German civilians show no trace of a sense of



responsibility for starting the whole thing, much less a sense of guilt.

Graham concluded that the postwar task of educating Germans in the realities of the late Nazi regime would be “a big job.”<sup>58</sup> Raymond Daniell referred to a “huge German population on our hands feeling sorry for themselves.” Like Graham, Daniell believed that it would be a “gigantic task” to reeducate a nation “which for twelve years has been steeped in a philosophy in which ethics have had no part.”<sup>59</sup>

One reporter traveling in Germany immediately after the war declared, “I haven’t seen a single Nazi,” and that every German he met told him “how he had always loathed the Nazis and their tricks.” Virtually overnight, nearly every symbol of the late regime had disappeared, with nary a swastika to be found.<sup>60</sup> Martha Gellhorn summed up German attitudes at the end of the war:

... No one is a Nazi. No one ever was. There may have been some Nazis in the next village. ... I hid a Jew for six weeks. I hid a Jew for eight weeks. (I hid a Jew, he hid a Jew, all God’s chillun hid Jews.)<sup>61</sup>

“To see a whole nation passing the buck is not an enlightening spectacle,” observed Gellhorn. The Germans were “untroubled by regret—because after all they did nothing wrong, they only did what they were told to do.”<sup>62</sup>

Many feared that fanatical Nazis would continue to fight in “werewolf” commando units. Indeed, there was some evidence of werewolf activity in Germany’s rugged Harz Mountains (a perception that was being encouraged by German propaganda radio broadcasts), and in early April “werewolves” assassinated the Allied-appointed mayors of Aachen and Meschede.<sup>63</sup> But military commanders for the most part found guerrilla resistance to be scattered and unorganized. Instead, in most of the country Germans exhibited what reporter Gladwin Hill called “the docility of benumbed, browbeaten people habituated to following orders with little consideration for their origin.”<sup>64</sup>

Still, there seemed to be a difference between how Americans viewed the nation of Germany and their views of individual German citizens, and there is evidence that in the months after V-E Day servicemen occupying Germany were more favorably disposed toward Germans than they were toward the French. American soldiers enjoyed especially congenial relations with German women. One soldier said that “the German women are so much like the American women that it is hard to pass one without talking to her when she speaks to you in English. As far as the other countries go, the Germans are a hell of a lot better. One main reason: they are clean.”<sup>65</sup> The army’s policy of nonfraternization with Germans was in tatters even before the fighting was over.<sup>66</sup> An estimated 20 percent of German births in 1945 were illegitimate, and a large percentage of the fathers were Allied soldiers.<sup>67</sup>

## II. The Pacific

By the spring of 1944 home front prognosticators were united in their belief that the Japanese military was finished and victory was ensured. Those who were doing the fighting knew better. From the Pacific, John F. Kennedy wrote, “The war goes slowly here, slower than you can ever imagine from reading the papers at home. ... When I read that we will fight the Japs for years if necessary and will sacrifice hundreds of thousands if we must, I always like to check from where [the writer] is talking—it’s seldom out here.”<sup>68</sup> Reflecting the view of

servicemen in the Pacific that the war would drag on for years longer was the popular slogan “The Golden Gate by ’48,” and even less upbeat was the navy, which was planning for a Pacific war that would last until 1949.<sup>69</sup> When marine lieutenant Cord Meyer Jr. gazed out at the Pacific he saw “the limitless distances of this colossal ocean, the bitterly defended fortresses that the Japs have made of their islands, the almost impenetrable jungles where operations must necessarily move at a snail’s pace; and finally, when we have won through to the China coast, the problem of conquering 200 well-trained Jap divisions operating on interior lines of supply.” “The dark days are only beginning,” predicted Meyer, “and the country had better pull itself together to face them.” Four months after writing this, the days became literally darker for Meyer when he lost an eye in combat on Guam.<sup>70</sup>

The Japanese had removed themselves from the ranks of civilized nations during World War II, accumulating horrors on a monstrous scale on the battlefield, in prisoner-of-war camps, and in its administration of subject peoples. And as American forces worked their way closer to the Japanese home islands, the Japanese became, if anything, more frenzied in their atrocities. Veteran correspondent Robert Sherwood reported from the Philippines:

I’ve seen plenty of destruction in Europe, but Manila is the most shocking sight I’ve ever seen. It’s not only the complete physical wreckage: it’s the evidence which you can see and hear and smell everywhere, of the horrible, savage ferocity which the Japs visited upon this lovely place and upon its lovely people.<sup>71</sup>

The last year of the war was the hardest for both the Japanese and the Americans. The United States suffered more than half of the casualties it experienced in the Pacific (including deaths in prisoner of war camps) between July 1944 and July 1945.<sup>72</sup> After the capture of Saipan in mid-1944, an increasingly desperate Japanese government began to promote the idea of militarizing the entire population through slogans such as “The hundred million as a Special Attack Force.” By October of 1944 the kamikazes had appeared.<sup>73</sup>

The fighting at Okinawa in the spring of 1945 had been a bloodbath for both sides, and now the Japanese army issued the *People’s Handbook of Resistance Combat*, outlining techniques civilians could use against enemy armed forces.<sup>74</sup> To repel the invaders, Japanese civilians were formed into the Kokumin Giyutai (National Volunteer Corps), and only the elderly, the infirm, the very young, and pregnant women were exempt from service. As Bernard See-man expressed it in July 1945, “This forebodes a long, costly campaign, not only against Japan’s fanatical soldiers, but against her equally fanatical civilians.”<sup>75</sup> The strategic bombing campaign against Japan, which had already killed 665,000 people and destroyed 20 percent of civilian housing, had seemingly not been any more effective at undermining civilian morale than the bombing campaigns against Britain and Germany.<sup>76</sup> At the end of April 1945, the Japanese supreme war council stated that if Germany surrendered, the Japanese would “have to be unified to the last man, to ensure victory, protect the fatherland, and carry through the war.”<sup>77</sup> This view had not changed by June, when a Japanese radio broadcast raised the possibility that Japan would continue fighting for another 20 years or longer. As the Japanese put it, it might take “a minimum of 100 years before the enemy leaders will be able to appreciate our views.”<sup>78</sup>

In addition to the potentially high casualties of an invasion of Japan were the nightmarish logistical challenges. The War Department declared that the problem of redeployment to the Pacific would entail “the greatest transportation that has ever been undertaken in war ... the supply lines to the Orient are so long that it takes three cargo ships to do the work one was able to do in supplying our troops in Europe.”<sup>79</sup> This is how

correspondent Frederick Pain-ton described the problem in April 1945:

Next time an armchair strategist tells you about the quick defeat of the Jap by landing on his homeland, get a reasonable-sized map and ask him politely to point out some land close enough to Japan, and big enough, to organize an attack by a million assault troops. And if the Kwantung army of Japan, based in Manchukuo, goes on fighting after defeat in the Jap homeland, give a thought to moving several armies fifteen hundred miles to offer battle in Manchukuo. Think also of the endless Ferris wheel of ships necessary to carry millions of tons of supplies and equipment to that army.<sup>80</sup>

Responsibility for preparing for an invasion of Japan fell to President Harry Truman and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and while the logistical problems and the difficulties involved in the mass transfer of war-weary troops from Europe to the Pacific were considerable, what haunted everyone was the price in human lives that the invasion would exact. Truman noted that the Joint Chiefs “were grim in their estimates of the cost in casualties we would have to pay to invade the Japanese mainland” and that “all of us realized that the fighting would be fierce and the losses heavy.”<sup>81</sup>

It was America’s great good fortune (and arguably Japan’s good fortune as well) that the atomic bomb would make such an invasion unnecessary. The product of the most expensive research and development project of the war, the atomic bomb would redefine the very notion of warfare and usher in a terrible era stretching decades into the future. But what people understood in 1945 was that this weapon was the one resource the Allies had that might force Japan to surrender. On 6 August 1945, a B-29 bomber dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima. As pilot Paul Tibbets looked into the center of the explosion he remembered that “the thing reminded me more of a boiling pot of tar than any other description I can give it. It was black and boiling underneath with a steam haze on top of it.”<sup>82</sup> Tail gunner George Caron called the mushroom cloud “a spectacular sight, a bubbling mass of purplish-gray smoke and you could see it had a red core to it, and everything was burning inside.” Bombardier Thomas W. Ferree claimed that “you could actually see parts of things moving up in the cloud, parts of buildings or just rubbish of all kinds.”<sup>83</sup>

At ground zero that day was photographer Yoshito Matsushige. One horrific tableau after another unfolded as Matsushige stumbled through a devastated Hiroshima. There was the swimming pool that people had jumped into when the bomb went off. The heat from the bomb had evaporated the water and those who had taken refuge there now lay “like boiled fish at the bottom of the pool.” There was a streetcar packed with people, “all in normal positions, holding onto streetcar straps, sitting down or standing still, just the way they would have been before the bomb went off. Except that all of them were leaning in the same direction—away from the center of the blast. And they were all burned black, a reddish black, and they were stiff.”<sup>84</sup>

In *Hiroshima*, which was first published in 1946 in the *New Yorker*, John Hersey produced a narrative recreation of the Hiroshima attack:

He was the only person making his way into the city; he met hundreds and hundreds who were fleeing, and every one of them seemed to be hurt in some way. The eyebrows of some were burned off and skin hung from their faces and hands. Others, because of pain, held their arms up as if carrying something in both hands. Some were vomiting as they walked. Many were naked or in shreds of clothing. On some undressed bodies, the burns had made patterns—of

undershirt straps and suspenders and, on the skin of some women (since white repelled the heat from the bomb and dark clothes absorbed it and conducted it to the skin), the shapes of flowers they had had on their kimonos.<sup>85</sup>

Three days after Hiroshima, an atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, and Japan surrendered. Referring to the atomic bomb, Truman said that “we labored to construct a weapon of such overpowering force that the enemy could be forced to yield swiftly once we could resort to it.”<sup>86</sup>

In reporting the bombing of Hiroshima, *Newsweek* had it about right when it said, “If anything short of invasion could bring Japan to surrender, atomic power was it.”<sup>87</sup> The Japanese media immediately denounced these attacks as “inhuman,” “barbaric,” “wanton,” “cold-blooded,” “bestial,” “diabolic,” and “sadistic,” but given Japan’s own abominable conduct from this war’s beginning to its end, these protests rang a little hollow.<sup>88</sup>

The reaction of servicemen to the atomic bombings and the news that Japan had surrendered was nearly universally the same. Four troop ships were landing in New York when word began to circulate that Japan had surrendered: “A leather-lunged stevedore raced along the piers shouting at the GIs on the deck: ‘Japan has surrendered.’ Crying ‘We won’t have to go,’ the veterans tumbled down the gangplanks almost delirious with happiness.”<sup>89</sup> Paul Fussell remembered that

when the atom bombs were dropped and news began to circulate that “Operation Olympic” would not, after all, be necessary, when we learned to our astonishment that we would not be obliged in a few months to rush up the beaches near Tokyo assault-firing while being machine-gunned, mortared, and shelled, for all the practiced phlegm of our tough facades we broke down and cried with relief and joy. We were going to live.<sup>90</sup>

In Studs Terkel’s “*The Good War*,” one serviceman after another praises the decision to drop the atomic bombs and credits the bombs with possibly saving their lives. Robert Rasmus had been in the infantry in Europe: “Later, we were back in the States being retrained for the Japanese invasion. The first atom bomb was dropped. We ended halfway across the Pacific. How many of us would have been killed on the mainland if there were no bomb? Someone like me has this specter.”<sup>91</sup> Anton Bilek, who had survived the Bataan Death March and was a prisoner of war in Japan when the war ended, credits the bomb for saving his life because “all the prisoners of war would have been killed, of course. I doubt if dropping it on an uninhabited place woulda done any good. Not to Japanese people. Maybe another people. They were a hard nut.”<sup>92</sup> Frank Keegan said of Truman, “He saved our lives, he terminated the goddamn thing.”<sup>93</sup>

The question that is often asked about the atomic bombings is, “Were the bombs necessary to end the war?” A better question is, “Were the bombs necessary to end the war *quickly*?” An embargo of Japan might have ended the war eventually, but the Japanese were a people already used to extreme privations. It is also unlikely that more incendiary raids on the Japanese population would have led to an early surrender (the American bombing fleet had so effectively decimated Japanese cities that by the summer of 1945 there was a dearth of targets). It is also difficult to argue that atomic bombs were worse than incendiary bombs. Curtis LeMay claimed, with a touch of pride, that “we scorched and boiled and baked to death more people in Tokyo on that night of 9–10 March than went up in vapor at Hiroshima and Nagasaki combined.”<sup>94</sup> Also, with the substitution of incendiary raids for precision bombing, the prohibition against large-scale attacks against Japanese civilian



populations was eliminated, clearing the way for the use of atomic weapons.<sup>95</sup> An American invasion of Japan was another possible alternative to the use of the bomb, but at what cost? Of all the options, only the atomic bombs could have succeeded in what Lawrence Freedman and Saki Dockrill have called “shocking Japan into surrender.”<sup>96</sup> The total surprise of the attacks themselves, and the unprecedented power of these weapons, produced an effect that was close to supernatural.

In the days and weeks ahead, people began to absorb the enormity of what had occurred at Hiroshima. Future senator Mark Hatfield was part of a navy crew that went into Hiroshima about a month after the bomb had been dropped and noted that “there was a smell to the city—and total silence. It was amazing to see the utter and indiscriminate devastation in every direction, and to think just one bomb had done it. We had no comprehension of the power of that bomb until then.”<sup>97</sup> Wilfred Burchett of the *London Daily Express* was also in Hiroshima a month after the dropping of the bomb, and was the first to describe radiation sickness: “In Hiroshima, thirty days after the first atom bomb destroyed the city and shook the world, people are still dying, mysteriously and horribly, people who were uninjured in the cataclysm—from an unknown something which I can only describe as the atomic plague.” The army called a press conference and declared that there was no such thing as radiation sickness.<sup>98</sup>

In what should have been America’s great moment of triumph, it seemed that our troubles—and the world’s troubles—had only started. Eric Sevareid said that “up to the sixth of August, 1945, we had been trying to make it possible for men to live better. Now we should have to try to make it possible for men to live.”<sup>99</sup> Albert Camus proclaimed that “our age marks the end of ideologies. The atom bomb prohibits ideologies.”<sup>100</sup> To which Mary McCarthy added, “Unfortunately, as things seem now, posterity is not around the corner.”<sup>101</sup> The future also looked uncertain to Senator Warren G. Magnuson of Washington, who said that the major powers of the world must be persuaded to establish democratic rights, “or we must at once begin the race to win the Third World War—the war that would destroy every building above the surface of the earth and put us all into caves.”<sup>102</sup>

Of all the events of the twentieth century, none has attracted so many practitioners of 20/20 hindsight as Truman’s decision to use the bomb. Barton J. Bernstein claims that strategies available to Truman other than the bomb included a blockade, a noncombat demonstration of the bomb, guaranteeing the position of the emperor, and waiting for Russia to enter the war.<sup>103</sup> Gar Alperovitz likewise argues that if the Japanese had been given time to mull over the shock of Russia’s declaration of war against Japan and had been given assurances that the institution of the emperor would be maintained, the war could have ended without invasion. “The notion that it [the bomb] was the only way to save large numbers of lives is clearly a myth,” says Alperovitz. He adds that “the most that may be said is that the atomic bombs may have saved the lives which might have been lost in the time it would have taken to arrange the final surrender terms.”<sup>104</sup> While Bernstein and Alperovitz are solid researchers and writers, it is peculiarly the case that the atomic bomb question seems to attract both great passions and dubious scholarship. A recent example is Ronald Takaki’s 1995 *Hiroshima*. Here, Takaki turns amateur psychoanalyst, informing us that Truman developed a massive inferiority complex because he was called a “sissy” when he was young, and the result was a masculine overcompensation bolstered by the atomic bomb (“little wonder that the atomic bomb symbolized virility”).<sup>105</sup>

In contrast, one of the best books in recent years on the use of atomic bombs is Richard B. Frank’s *Downfall* (1999). Frank sorted through the “Magic” summaries of Japanese diplomatic messages and concluded that any notion that Japan was on the verge of surrender before the use of atomic weapons is “illusory.” Frank emphasizes that, “As the Magic interpreters underscored, not a single diplomatic message originating from



Japanese authorities in Tokyo indicated any disposition for peace prior to mid-July.” Frank also believes that the Japanese military buildup on Kyushu would have made the cost of invasion “unacceptable,” and that in a “nonnuclear arena” the Japanese had sufficient leverage to force a negotiated peace.<sup>106</sup>

Those who believe that the United States should have waited for Japan to surrender are also vulnerable to the accusation that they are being cavalier with Allied lives. With Allied casualties running at 7,000 a week, the practical consequence of waiting was more death. As Paul Fussell observes, a few weeks would “mean the world if you’re one of those thousands or related to one of them.”<sup>107</sup> Richard Frank also emphasizes the high cost that the victims of Japanese aggression in Asia would be paying by delaying action against Japan. The Chinese by themselves were losing as many as 100,000 lives a month to the Japanese, and as Frank puts it, “arguments that alternative means could have ended the war without atomic weapons in ‘only’ three months need to be held against this reality.”<sup>108</sup> Finally, by the time the battle for Okinawa ended, there were 350,000 Allied prisoners of war, and the sudden end of the war brought about by atomic weapons may have saved their lives. Japanese vice minister of war Shitayama had issued an order to POW commandants to make preparations for the “final disposition” of prisoners, urging that “whether they are destroyed individually or in groups, and whether it is accomplished by means of mass bombing, poisonous smoke, poisons, drowning, or decapitation, dispose of them as the situation dictates. It is the aim not to allow the escape of a single one, to annihilate them all, and not to leave any traces.”<sup>109</sup>

Truman himself expressed no regrets about the use of atomic weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and in a 1961 speech he responded to his critics in his inimitable fashion by observing, “I haven’t heard any of them crying about those boys in those upside-down battleships at Pearl Harbor.”<sup>110</sup> But while Truman had no misgivings about this decision, he continued to wrestle with the hugeness of it even as he lay dying at a Kansas City hospital in 1972. Former Supreme Court justice Tom Clark went to visit Truman there and was told by Truman’s doctors to limit his visit to 5 minutes. Clark stayed for 45 minutes because Truman wanted to talk about the atomic bomb and defend his decision to use it.<sup>111</sup>

Even though the Japanese killed tens of millions during the war, the devastation of the atomic bombs allowed Japan to fashion a new postwar role for itself: Japan as victim. This process began remarkably early. In January 1946, Hiroshima’s acting governor, Shigeru Kojo, spoke to a group of U.S. reporters and suggested that America help rebuild Hiroshima. One newsman pointedly asked, “Don’t you think we ought first rebuild Nanking and Manila?”<sup>112</sup> The real reason for Hiroshima’s destruction could be found in the text of the Japanese emperor’s renunciation of his own godhead in the same month. Hirohito referred delicately to the “misguided practices of the past” and to “the false conception that the Emperor is divine and that the Japanese people are superior to other races and fated to rule the world.”<sup>113</sup>

Surprisingly, postwar relations between Japan and the United States were better than anyone could have hoped for. John W. Dower concludes that in Japan it was the bomb itself, rather than those who used it, that “absorbed the characteristics of being cruel and inhuman; and from this, what came to be indicted was the cruelty of war in general. Defeat, victimization, an overwhelming sense of powerlessness in the face of undreamed-of weapons of destruction soon coalesced to become the basis of a new kind of antimilitary nationalism.”<sup>114</sup> One of the most unexpected aspects of the war in the Pacific was how quickly Japanese and American racial hatred dissipated once the war was over. By the spring of 1946, “U.S. soldiers strolled arm in arm with Japanese girls along the carp-filled Imperial moat, lolled amorously on the grass of Hibiya Park, made love in the back of Army jeeps.” Fraternalization proceeded so rapidly in Japan that General Robert Eichelberger

was forced to issue an edict forbidding all “public displays of affection.”<sup>115</sup> “The dominant wartime stereotypes on both sides were wrong,” says Dower. “The Americans were not demons, as the Japanese discovered when they were not raped, tortured, and murdered as wartime propaganda and rumors had forecast. And the Japanese were more diversified and far more war-weary than their enemies had been led to believe.”<sup>116</sup>

World War II would kill, wound, traumatize, and exhilarate, and would shape the culture for many years to come. For the vast majority of combat veterans, the war would be the most important event of their lives. Boys who had strayed only a few miles from their small towns would become men fighting in places they could not have located on the map before the war. Fred Beaty, who grew up in tiny Clinton, Minnesota (population 660 in 1940), enlisted in the same infantry company with 14 of his friends and relatives. On their way to war, they marveled at the bright lights of New York, then boarded a giant ship and crossed the Atlantic. Landing in Northern Ireland, they hunted for girls, played the role of tourists, and even spotted the king and queen. It was a great adventure, but combat changed everything. As Beaty looked back on the war late in 1944, he mused, “It’s just two years tonight since we landed at Algiers—our first action. What a green, dumb bunch we were. It’s a good thing we didn’t know what was ahead.” By the end of the war, 10 of the original 15 had been either killed, wounded, or captured. Beaty himself was wounded in Africa, and after surviving the war, he was hit and killed by a drunk driver in 1953.<sup>117</sup>

Even the misery of war was vivid in a way not found in civilian life. Richard M. (Red) Prendergast, for instance, who was captured by the Germans during the Battle of the Bulge and spent the rest of the war in a German prisoner-of-war camp, still counts the war as “the most exciting experience of my life ... As I see it, at that young age we hit the climax. Everything after that is anticlimactic.”<sup>118</sup>

It was the climax even for those who would later achieve great fame. Among the most unlikely participants in the Battle of the Bulge was jazzman Dave Brubeck. When the battle began, Brubeck and a group of army musicians that called themselves the Wolf Pack Band were driving around the Ardennes in a flatbed truck with a piano on the back. They had orders to find any group of soldiers and play for them. Instead they found themselves “mistakenly in the midst of the Battle of the Bulge.” The Wolf Pack Band had a close call, and Brubeck said that it “changed me forever. I knew that if I could live through the war, I would write music about peace and the brotherhood of man. ... The war made me deeply aware that life is a sacred gift.”<sup>119</sup> The war over, Brubeck became a prominent jazz improviser and composer.

Like Brubeck, actor Jimmy Stewart would enjoy great renown after the war, going on to become one of Hollywood’s enduring icons. The war years had a profound impact on Stewart, who served as the commander of a bomber group and flew 20 combat missions over Germany. Late in life, Stewart told an interviewer that his military experience was “something that I think about almost every day: one of the great experiences of my life.” In answer to the question, “Greater than being in the movies?” Stewart responded, “Much greater.”<sup>120</sup>

It is also important to remind ourselves that the fighting in the Pacific was qualitatively different from the fighting in Europe. It was a ferocious, savage, no-holds-barred affair between two enemies with an implacable hatred for each other. The style of warfare practiced by the Japanese in the Pacific, characterized by a low Japanese surrender rate, a Japanese contempt for prisoners of war and for the subject peoples under their control, and kamikaze suicide attacks was clear evidence to the American people that they were fighting a fanatical enemy to whom the ordinary rules of warfare could not apply. Even *The Nation*, whose masthead proudly proclaimed, “America’s Leading Liberal Weekly Since 1865,” understood this. In an article that ran in March 1945, Charles G. Bolte reflected on the horrendous casualties on Iwo Jima and the extremely low

Japanese surrender rate. "There is no use denying that the Japanese die well," said Bolte, "but we can feel that theirs is the rat's death, defiant in a corner until all fails and then suicide."<sup>121</sup> To understand the nature of the fighting in the Pacific is to understand the last cataclysmic event of the war, the use of atomic weapons at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Finally, there was the impact of the death camps, where the scale of the horrors perpetrated by the Nazis seemed beyond human comprehension. What blackened these atrocities even further was that they had been committed not in a nihilistic frenzy but in a manner that was orderly and smoothly efficient. Of all that still haunts us from the catastrophe of World War II, the legacy of the death camps is the darkest, and the most enduring.

## Going Home

In April 1945, the American wounded were being evacuated from Iwo Jima in the Pacific. Among the evacuees was a bosun's mate who had lost his right arm. A mail carrier before the war, he now brooded over returning home to his wife and two children. As USO entertainers circulated in the ward trying to cheer up the wounded, one of them stopped at this young man's bed and whispered:

"Come on, sailor. There must be some special song you like." The bosun's mate named his choice and the girl sang, sweet and low:

You'd be so nice to come home to  
 You'd be so nice by a fire  
 While the breeze on high  
 Sings a lullaby  
 You'd be all that I desire. ...

Tears ran in rivulets down the wounded man's cheeks, and the underground wardroom lamps picked highlights from the beads that streamed from the other men's eyes.

You'd be so nice  
 You'd be paradise  
 To come home to, and love.<sup>4</sup>

When the war was finally over, American veterans immediately began clamoring to be sent home. The military had been discharging servicemen at a rapid rate (in a single month, December 1945, the army released a million men). But by January 1946, the military abruptly realized that it would have to slow demobilization or it would cease to exist.<sup>2</sup> The decision to drastically reduce discharges was greeted by rage among servicemen. G.I. demonstrations in Honolulu, Paris, and Frankfurt reached near riot proportions. In London, a mob of servicemen marched to the hotel where Eleanor Roosevelt was staying and demanded that she help them. She promised to "do all I can." In Yokohama, a G.I. mob booed Secretary of War Robert Patterson. In Manila, 20,000 servicemen took to the streets. Civilians in the United States were also putting heavy pressure on Congress. (Senator Elbert Thomas received some 200 pairs of baby booties, some of which contained notes such as "I miss my daddy.")<sup>3</sup>

But while American servicemen were extremely vocal in their demands for release from the military, once that release had taken place they became once again the silent generation that had fought the war. When he landed with his fellow marines at San Francisco, David Dempsey remembered that "no one said much; there was too much to say."<sup>4</sup> The returnees, as *Newsweek* put it, "had young faces with old, wise eyes which had seen sights never to be forgotten and some never to be retold," and that "debarkation observers noted ten thoughtful,

grave-eyed soldiers to every raucous one.”<sup>5</sup>

Despite their eagerness to return home, it was paradoxically the case that American servicemen almost universally expressed anxiety about being reunited with family, friends, and civilian life. This had become apparent long before the war was over. One marine, who came home in 1944, no doubt spoke for a great number of veterans when he told a reporter, “I’m a little worried about how I’ll look to them, about how much I’ve changed.”<sup>6</sup> Thomas McGrath, who was with the army air forces during the war, described the dilemma of the returning veteran in his poem “Homecoming”:

Then we were troubled by our second coming:  
The thing that takes our hand and leads us home—  
Where we must clothe ourselves in the lives of strangers  
Whose names we carry but can no longer know—  
In a new fear born between the doorstep and the door  
Far from the night patrol, the terror, the long sweat.  
And far from the dead boy who left so long ago.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to the anxieties associated with family reunions, veterans harbored other fears—and resentments. In his conversations with servicemen in Europe, John Steinbeck concluded that “almost universally you find among the soldiers not a fear of the enemy but a fear of what is going to happen after the war.” Among their fears was “the unemployment of millions” due to automation, and an economic depression “that will make the last one look like a holiday.” What they expected to come home to was “either a painless anarchy, or a system set up in their absence with the cards stacked against them.”<sup>8</sup>

### I. The Resentful Veteran

Veteran resentment of civilians had simmered throughout the war, focusing on the soft life that they believed civilians were enjoying, and on home front ignorance of the nature of warfare.<sup>9</sup> The waist gunner from a B-17 bomber told Steinbeck in 1943, “It seems to me that the folks at home are fighting one war and we’re fighting another one. They’ve got theirs nearly won and we’ve just got started on ours. I wish they’d get in the same war we’re in. I wish they’d print the casualties and tell them what it’s like.”<sup>10</sup> During some of the toughest fighting in the Italian campaign, a soldier read aloud a letter that he had received from his wife. She said, “I am so glad you are in Italy instead of in France where all the fighting is.” The laughter that followed contained more than a tinge of bitterness, and Robert Fleisher observed that while there had always been a divide between military personnel and civilians, “the cleavage today is more pronounced and dangerous than ever before.”<sup>11</sup>

Red Cross worker Eleanor Stevenson, also in Italy, had the same impression, noting that “many a G.I. thinks every man back home is a 4-F making easy and overlarge war profits. This is a frightening indication of the growing gap in understanding and mutual tolerance between the civilian and the man in uniform.”<sup>12</sup> Speaking early in 1944, Secretary of War Henry Stimson expressed fears that “industrial unrest and lack of a sense of patriotic responsibility ... has aroused a strong feeling of resentment and injustice among the men of the armed forces. If it continues it will surely affect the morale of the Army.”<sup>13</sup> While a cleavage has existed between soldiers and civilians for as long as there have been wars (a veteran of the fighting in Iraq recently wrote of his return to the United States that “every time I saw someone sitting contentedly inside a coffee shop or restaurant,



I wanted to yell at them to wake them up”), the large numbers of veterans returning from World War II exacerbated this divide.<sup>44</sup>

Veteran disgruntlement sometimes became violent. The zoot suit riots of 1943, for instance, which some have portrayed as a racial incident, should more properly be interpreted as a rumble between rival youth gangs—civilian and military—and as a symptom of a growing hostility among servicemen toward civilians.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, there had been seven major incidents in Los Angeles in May and June 1943 involving military personnel and civilians, and none of the previous disturbances had involved zoot suiters.<sup>46</sup> In a society in which civilians were still talking about “doing their part,” soldiers were beginning to speak of “having done their share,” and suggesting that it was now someone else’s turn.<sup>47</sup>

Late in 1944, about half the veterans in one poll expressed some resentment toward civilians. “We thought they had it worse than they did,” said one veteran of the civilian population. “That’s why I probably have this feeling, like when I hear someone complain about not getting tires or something, I think ‘You civilian.’”<sup>48</sup> Some much-needed perspective on the supposed privations of home front Americans was provided by John Lardner in a tongue-in-cheek article called “Horrors of War in America”:

I know personally of several cases that would make your blood run cold, including that of a housewife who told me that her family had had to eat spaghetti twice in one week.

“We simply cannot get steak without going to a restaurant,” she said, but the calm lines of courage in her face told me that she would survive this ordeal if it was within the scope of human fortitude to do so.<sup>49</sup>

The Germans recognized the growing divide between veterans and civilians and produced a propaganda leaflet that it dropped on the Saar Front that juxtaposed two illustrations, one showing a group of partying civilians and another depicting soldiers crawling in the mud. The caption read, “The draft-dodgers on the homefront expect every Joe to do his duty.”<sup>50</sup> Bill Mauldin said that the leaflet Germans distributed in Italy “had something to do with a profiteer and an infantryman’s wife in America. The continuity was awkward, but the pictures were spicy.”<sup>51</sup>

Nowhere was the contrast between the sacrifices of the few and the indulgences of the many more stark than in Miami. In February 1944, Philip Wylie visited Miami and found that “the beaches are deep in vacation humanity, the nightclubs are roaring,” and Hialeah racetrack was taking in more than \$600,000 a day. While civilians were enjoying Miami’s high life, servicemen were being rotated through the same city, some wounded and many with several years of overseas duty. This would be the last opportunity for many of them to spend time with their wives and families, but with high rents and many landlords refusing to rent except on a seasonal basis, such reunions were often out of the question.<sup>52</sup> The reaction of military families toward what they found in Miami, according to Wylie, “bordered upon maniacal fury,” and he added that “if fighting men in this region become bitterly certain that the home front is not backing the attack—as they do—it is for the simple reason that the men who have sacrificed most meet in Miami those who sacrifice least.”<sup>53</sup> *Life* also pilloried Miami and its “shameless display of wartime slackening,” and noted that “if the fighting men of Anzio and Kwajalein could see Miami and Miami Beach now, the anger they bear toward their enemies would probably turn against their countrymen.”<sup>54</sup>

Miami was not a special case, as servicemen discovered when they received furloughs to their hometowns or were released from the military because of their wounds. In Audie Murphy’s *To Hell and Back*, a combat veteran

returned to the United States and “when he saw how casually people back there were taking the war, it broke his heart.” He tried to “cram what he’d seen over here down people’s throats. But he couldn’t.” The soldier asked to be returned to his overseas unit.<sup>25</sup> William Manchester said that what had kept him and his fellow marines fighting the war was the conviction that what they were doing was “of immense historical import, and that those of us who survived it would be forever cherished in the hearts of Americans. It was rather diminishing to return in 1945 and discover that your own parents couldn’t even pronounce the names of the islands you had conquered.”<sup>26</sup> While it was the desire of every serviceman to escape the hell of combat, E. B. Sledge discovered that marines rotated back to the United States often expressed bitterness and disillusionment at a civilian society that seemed not to understand what they had been through. Sledge’s account demonstrates the impossibility of such an awareness, with Sledge conceding that “the folks back home didn’t, and in retrospect couldn’t have been expected to, understand what we had experienced, what in our minds seemed to set us apart forever from anyone who hadn’t been in combat.”<sup>27</sup> In one survey, home itself was a disappointment to 40 percent of soldiers.<sup>28</sup>

Although correspondent Eric Sevareid had spent a lot of time with American servicemen, he felt that he had never “arrived in the realm of common identity with the soldiers.” In a radio broadcast Sevareid confessed that he now knew the reason why:

War happens inside a man. It happens to one man alone. It can never be communicated. That is the tragedy—and perhaps the blessing. A thousand ghastly wounds are really only one. A million martyred lives leave an empty place at only one family table. That is why, at bottom, people can let wars happen, and that is why nations survive them and carry on. And, I am sorry to say, that is also why in a certain sense you and your sons from the war will be forever strangers.<sup>29</sup>

Ernie Pyle also understood that what separates a civilian and the combat soldier amounts to a vast chasm. Pyle directly addresses the civilian at the end of his book *Here Is Your War*. “They [the soldiers] are rougher than when you knew them,” warns Pyle. “Killing is a rough business.” The transition from “normal civilians into warriors” and the “mere process of maturing” means that these men have changed. Adding to that “the abnormal world they have been plunged into, the new philosophies they have had to assume or perish inwardly, the horrors and delights and strange wonderful things they have experienced, and they are bound to be different people from those you sent away.”<sup>30</sup> In an *American Journal of Sociology* article, August B. Hollingshead was more blunt. Veterans would find it impossible, he said, “to communicate their inner sense of accomplishment in the fine art of killing to civilians.”<sup>31</sup> The instincts acquired in practicing that art also receded only slowly. J. Glenn Gray remembers that for a period of time “I felt curiously undressed without a pistol on my hip, and trod softly for a while on all loose sod, unconsciously fearing booby traps, those devilish antipersonnel mines designed to kill or castrate the unwary soldier who stepped on one.”<sup>32</sup>

## II. Becoming a Civilian

In a 1945 *Harper's* article, Christopher La Farge warned veterans that while anger at the home front was natural, “he had better bury it in a foxhole when he leaves to come home: it will do no good.” La Farge also cautioned the veteran that “gratitude has its limits, and it is wise to realize this.”<sup>33</sup> A virtual case history of

veteran anger can be seen in the example of John Paris, who came home early because of wounds received in the infantry. His welcome was less than expected. No one except his wife met him at the station, even though she had tipped off the local paper that Paris was arriving. Paris, in fact, had worked for that paper at one time, but nothing was printed subsequently about Paris' return. When Paris dropped around to the office where he had worked before the war, he met the man who had replaced him (and from whom he would be claiming his old job). His replacement regarded Paris coldly, and the old veteran resentment of civilians came bubbling up to the surface:

I hated him; in my mind I cursed him, and then with equal fervency I cursed myself. I couldn't go around hating people like this. But for three years he had been safe and warm—or cool if he chose—in my office, while I wallowed in slime or froze.<sup>34</sup>

Paris met with his old boss, who reminded him that people on the home front had made sacrifices too, and praised the marvelous work done by Paris' replacement. Paris refused to take the bait and insisted on the return of his old job. But Paris became restless and had trouble concentrating when he resumed his duties, and when his boss leaned into the room and asked, "And how is the soldier making out?" Paris blew his top, ranting, "I dealt in life and death; my commands determined whether those men lived or died. Hell, and now I'm expected to sit here and read tripe and make corrections with my little red pencil—when I've dealt in life and death." Paris quit his editing job and took a job as a miner for lower pay. Finally, he was "too tired, come the end of the day, to hate anybody."<sup>35</sup>

There was little doubt that veteran readjustment to civilian life would be one of the most pressing problems in American society. Simply stated, "we know how to turn the civilian into a soldier ... but we do not know how to turn the soldier into a civilian again."<sup>36</sup> Sociologist Robert A. Nisbet believed that it would be especially difficult for the youngest veterans, who had gone straight from the paternalism of school to the paternalism of military life. Once released from these confines, "the effect upon society may not inaptly be likened to an invasion by a race of overgrown children."<sup>37</sup> By 1944, in fact, army psychiatrists had concluded that air force personnel who had finished their tours of duty "showed a quantity of aggressive behavior so great that they have been likened to delinquent adolescents, or 'dead-end kids.'"<sup>38</sup> These "children" sometimes had children of their own, and virtually everyone could cite some anecdote of a veteran unable to cope (such as the case of a returning soldier who could not take the crying of his infant and decided to live in a hotel). A poll taken of one group of returning soldiers revealed that 40 percent expressed a preference for living and finding work someplace other than home.<sup>39</sup>

American business through its advertisements tried to make the same noble contribution to postwar readjustment that they had made to wartime morale. In one example, a picture of a group of servicemen lined up to take the train home appeared above the caption "A tip to the women in their lives!" The "tip," courtesy of the National Dairy Products Corporation, was, "Chances are, your man will want more milk, butter, cheese and ice cream than he ever did before."<sup>40</sup> More pertinent was the ad run by Lambert Pharmacal Co. (makers of Listerine) with the caption "The Reception Committee—(Know Anybody Here?)." This showed the five types of people likely to greet the returning veteran: "The Greeter" professes that "nothing's too good for Our Boys," and "that's exactly what he gives them"; "The Bloodhound" wants the gory details—"How does it feel to be bombed? Ever knife a Jap?"; "The Patriot" tries to impress the veteran with all the sacrifices he has made on the home front; "The Rock" can't understand why the veteran "should need time to get over the War, *He* doesn't." Finally

there is the “Blue Ribbon Citizen”:

Like all good people, she asks no questions, weeps no tears, doesn't stare at disabilities. To her, a returned veteran is an abler, more aggressive and resourceful citizen than the boy who went away. She's proud of him, proud to know him. Anxious to be of real help to him. She's the kind of person we should all be.<sup>41</sup>

Veterans were contemptuous of home front attempts to “rehabilitate” them. Marine David Dempsey sneeringly referred to “kitchen psychologists determined to ‘cure’ the veteran—even at the cost of his sanity.”<sup>42</sup> Carlton R. Rouh, who won a Medal of Honor with the marines, believed that the best possible present a veteran could receive was “a chance to take up where you left off and get going again on your life ... to throw the whole thing over his shoulder, count his life in the war as dead and take up as a civilian where he left off.”<sup>43</sup> Often what soldiers wanted from civilian life was relatively simple. Joseph Hallock, who flew 30 missions as a B-17 bombardier over Europe, told writer Brendan Gill that what he wanted after the war was “to feel that maybe I can look two days ahead without getting scared. I want to feel *good* about things.”<sup>44</sup> An infantry veteran of the fighting in Europe said that “all you want to do is to get away and live and never fight again, just sleep and feel safe.”<sup>45</sup> Even veterans who had not ventured beyond the home front managed to sound impressively war-weary. Ronald Reagan, who had spent the war in Culver City making movies, remembers that “by the time I got out of the Army Air Corps, all I wanted to do—in common with several million other veterans—was to rest up awhile, make love to my wife, and come up refreshed to a better job in an ideal world.”<sup>46</sup> One has to wonder—rest up from *what*?<sup>47</sup>

Many returning soldiers could not help but conclude that military service had put them at a competitive disadvantage against those who remained behind. Combat surgeon Brendan Phibbs summed up the bitter outlook of veterans:

They were going to be poor while others would have grown rich. Fat, safe generals from plush-lined headquarters would make speeches at banquets and hand each other medals and call each other heroes, and at American Legion halls the parasites from the quartermaster battalions would wave flags and scream about patriotism.<sup>48</sup>

One veteran told Agnes Meyer that “the war worker who stayed at home and feathered his nest has money and a job,” and Meyer concluded that “the selfishness, greed and dishonesty which total war has increased throughout the country have poisoned many a veteran's soul.”<sup>49</sup> When they looked to the future, said Meyer, they often saw it as “a choice between another depression or another war.”<sup>50</sup>

A question posed by nearly every American was that if wartime spending had succeeded in pulling the United States out of the Great Depression, what would be America's peacetime fate without such spending? Early in the war a *Collier's* editorial declared that Americans “seem resigned to a record-breaking depression after this war, no matter how decisively we may win the war.” The magazine warned that postwar unemployment could reach 18 million, plunging the United States into “chaos” and giving communists and fascists the opportunity to “fight it out for control of the ruins.”<sup>51</sup> Americans had put on the military uniform, but would they take it off again after returning to a depression and discovering that “they have fought for a chance to sell apples”?<sup>52</sup> Louis Wirth



predicted that if Americans were “as unprepared for demobilization day as we were for mobilization day, the consequences for urban communities and for the nation might be disastrous.”<sup>53</sup> For *Time* magazine, the problem was how to abolish “an evil which mankind has long considered far less avoidable than war: depression.”<sup>54</sup> In December 1944, when Americans were asked the question “After the war, do you think that everyone who wants a job will be able to get one?” 68 percent answered no.<sup>55</sup>

This pervasive fear of economic depression was reflected in an ad placed by the War Advertising Council encouraging Americans to help keep prices down by “*buying only what you really need. It means paying off your debts, saving your money*” (original emphasis). Not only would such a program ensure prosperity, but it was “also the best possible way to get yourself in shape to take another depression if one comes.”<sup>56</sup>

The prevailing cynicism among soldiers about the life that awaited them can be found in many written accounts by veterans, including Audie Murphy’s *To Hell and Back*. Here, one soldier sardonically notes:

Home is the place where they send you when you lose an arm or a leg. I’ve read all about it in the papers. You ride in a hospital train, with beautiful nurses and Red Cross dames drooling all over you. With newspapers writing how you gave your all for your country. With the train stopping at little towns, where the people are waiting at the depots to cheer ... Your mama cries and calls in the neighbors to see her hero. You sit around the old store with your chest full of ribbons, and tell the people about the war. You say, “It wasn’t so bad; and we’re beating the hell out of the Krauts.”<sup>57</sup>

As for resettling into civilian life, “you won’t have to go back clerking in a grocery store, because the good old army has trained you for a better life. ... You can pick off a man at three hundred yards with an M-1. You can toss a grenade further than anybody else in town. You can sleep among corpses, bathe in ditch water without any complaint a-tall. As civilians we’ll be in great demand.”<sup>58</sup>

One veteran who had plenty to say about postwar conditions was Bill Mauldin. Because of the enormous popularity of his Willie and Joe cartoons for *Stars and Stripes*, Mauldin arguably wielded more power than any enlisted man in the armed services, and there was going to be considerable interest in Mauldin’s take on postwar life. While far from an average returning veteran, Mauldin had some of his own adjustments to make: He had gone into the army at age 18 and had not been a civilian for five years. Shortly after his return he was divorced.<sup>59</sup> Mauldin became a syndicated cartoonist in 1945 and returned to doing what he knew best, drawing Willie and Joe. Now, however, Mauldin was chronicling their adjustment to civilian life. In 1947 he published *Back Home*, a rumination on postwar life illustrated by cartoons that featured not only Willie and Joe but other subjects of political commentary as well.

Willie especially has a number of domestic problems with various family members, including his mother, who has consumed every piece of literature on “how to rehabilitate the veteran.”<sup>60</sup> Willie’s wife, who had always been somewhat disappointed that he never became an officer, had at least looked forward to seeing him “coming home with his medals and ribbons and sleeve decorations” and is dismayed when Willie returns home wearing a blue suit and looking “a little baggy and undistinguished.”<sup>61</sup> Willie is also a father, and one of Mauldin’s cartoons shows a haggard-looking Willie leaning against a baby stroller and talking to a friend still in uniform who is asking, “How’s it feel to be a free man, Willie?”<sup>62</sup> Employers were obliged to give returning veterans their old jobs back, but Mauldin describes the stratagem employed by many bosses of telling the veteran that of



course he can have his job back, but that he will be displacing a family man with many dependents.<sup>63</sup> (Eventually, Mauldin will have Willie and Joe running a gas station.) Mauldin also points out the tendency of newspapers to play up any assault perpetrated by a returning vet, despite evidence that veterans were no more nor less criminally inclined than the general population.<sup>64</sup>

In his reaction to the woeful lack of adequate housing for vets we see a Mauldin that is bitter, snide, even revolutionary. A number of Mauldin's cartoons feature soldiers and sailors sleeping on park benches, and Mauldin speculates whether "several thousand families evicted because they couldn't pay a skyrocketing rent, sitting on the sidewalks with their worldly goods decomposing in the rain, waiting for a few years to pass for things to level off, form a suitable sacrifice to lay on the altar of the great god Free Enterprise."<sup>65</sup> Aside from sleeping on park benches or submitting to a rent-gouging landlord, the only other alternative for veterans and their families was moving in with the in-laws. Mauldin asserts that "broken families are often the result of forcing young couples to crowd in with their in-laws. This creates chaos, and everybody knows that chaos breeds revolution."<sup>66</sup> A combination of factors, according to Mauldin, was prompting veterans "to judge all nonveterans by the landlord who chisels, the grocer who cheats, and the woman who didn't wait ... The gap between citizen and veteran has widened in many ways."<sup>67</sup> Later, in an interview with Studs Terkel, Mauldin remembered this time as "a terrible period of unemployment and relocation" that was mitigated only by "the 52-20 club"—the \$20 a week for 52 weeks that veterans received.<sup>68</sup>

Like Mauldin, Agnes Meyer also found that the housing shortage had forced a large number of veterans and their families into a nomadic existence as they drifted from house to house. One veteran reported that "since I came home my wife and four-year-old daughter have 'visited' from one inlaw to the other. There doesn't seem to be room for us anywhere and we are running out of relatives."<sup>69</sup> The housing crunch, said Meyer, was "undermining the nation" because it was "creating discord between the generations and between the newlyweds. It is augmenting the divorce rate. It destroys privacy, morality and common decency."<sup>70</sup>

Even the veteran who was fortunate enough to have a job and adequate housing had to adjust to the relatively mundane quality of civilian life compared to wartime military life. Eleanor Stevenson said of the fighter pilots she knew that they "would rather die than not fly their planes," and she wondered "what would happen to them when they returned home and found everything flat and dull."<sup>71</sup> James Jones maintained that what civilians failed to understand about combat was "how we could hate it, and still like it; and they do not realize they have a lot of dead men around them, dead men who are walking around and breathing."<sup>72</sup>

Many servicemen detected a self-absorption in America after the war, and little trace of the community spirit that had helped win the war. One veteran came home from the Pacific to find that "the great camaraderie of savin' tinfoil, toothpaste tubes, or tin cans, all that stuff that made people part of somethin'" had disappeared. Instead, "everybody was out for what they could get from then on. Everything changed."<sup>73</sup> The government maintained price ceilings after the war, but what resistance there had been to the wartime black market now totally disappeared. *Time* reported that "the pattern was uniformly ugly; the public not only tacitly approved of price cheating shady dealings; it connived in them." Eager customers were willing to pay well over the ceiling price to get the cars, lumber, meat, cement, or any other item that they wanted. Truckloads of lumber were being sold for \$1,200 (ceiling price \$720), while concrete blocks went for 60 cents (ceiling price 17 cents). In rural areas, veterans with priority status bought new tractors, then immediately sold them for a \$500 profit.<sup>74</sup> Sometimes Americans did not bother to pay for what they wanted. In an especially ugly incident, a bread truck lost its entire load after a mob overwhelmed the driver in front of a Denver grocery store.<sup>75</sup> Summarizing the

civilians that he encountered, one veteran observed that “they live only for themselves. They push and shove to get onto streetcars and get ahead of you in line. ... They’re selfish, self-centered. They don’t deserve what they have.”<sup>76</sup>

Even before the war was over, Arthur Miller warned that the lack of common purpose and dedication in civilian life would be one of the greatest obstacles faced by the veteran attempting to adjust to life after the war. “Half of him, in a sense, must die,” said Miller, “and with it must pass away half the thrill he knew in being alive. He must, in short, become a civilian again.”<sup>77</sup> Miller’s fictional character Chris Keller in *All My Sons* (1947) said that his comrades in arms “killed themselves for each other” during the war, but back in civilian life “there was no meaning in it here; the whole thing to them was a kind of a—bus accident.”<sup>78</sup> Robert Lekachman, who served in the Pacific during the war, said that when the boys came back home “eager to make up for lost time,” there was “less concern for those beyond your immediate family. Making it yourself was what it was all about.”<sup>79</sup> Inevitably, the pressures of competition and class loosened the ties among veterans that had once seemed indissoluble.

### III. “Midwest”

Among the most useful documents in discerning the attitudes of returning servicemen is a University of Chicago study conducted from 1941 to 1949 (and published in 1951) under the title *The American Veteran Back Home*. This study, which I have previously referred to, tracked 418 young men from a small city in Illinois that was given the fictional name “Midwest.”<sup>80</sup> Almost all the veterans who returned to Midwest attended various welcome-home gatherings, large and small, but “the veteran’s participation was likely to be reluctant.”<sup>81</sup> Where they seemed most comfortable was at the local bar, where they could blow off steam and find the company of other veterans. One Midwest woman claimed that even the veterans who did not drink before the war had taken up the habit, and that those who had been casual drinkers before the war were now drinking more. As a consequence, “by nightfall—and often until midnight—the veterans, elbow to elbow, would dominate the bars, booths, and tables of every tavern in Midwest.”<sup>82</sup>

Members of both sexes noticed changes in the other, with one woman describing veterans as “more insulting. If they don’t like who you’re running around with, male or female, they don’t hesitate to tell you so.” One veteran claimed that “the girls are more wild. They seem to drink more. They don’t mind shacking up. Their morals are much worse.”<sup>83</sup> The adjustment for married veterans was made more difficult by Midwest’s housing shortage (a phenomenon seen throughout the country) and by the challenge of “working out a satisfactory division of labor between husband and wife.” Further complicating matters was the presence of children, whom the veteran often had not seen at all or had not seen for several years.<sup>84</sup>

When the Midwest veteran finally grew tired of idleness and went looking for a job, the results frequently fell short of expectations. Those expectations had been inflated during the war years from an ordinary job to a job “with a future.” As in other American cities, however, Midwest’s war industries were shutting down, and the reconversion of industry back to a civilian standing was proceeding only slowly. Many veterans blamed the disappointing job prospects on “the fellows that were left behind, that didn’t have to go, they’ve got better jobs all the way through.”<sup>85</sup> Despite expectations of a better job—and talk of traveling or moving to a different town—within two weeks of their discharge half of Midwest’s veterans were back at work at the same kinds of jobs they’d had before the war.<sup>86</sup> Upper-class veterans and veterans with children were among the first to return to

the workforce—one because of social expectations and the other because of economic necessity.<sup>87</sup> Veteran economic mobility was no greater, and no less, than it was for the civilian population.<sup>88</sup>

Fears about “pre-adult veterans” proved to be groundless, at least in the case of the 70 Midwest servicemen who were just 18 years of age in 1944. They had, on the whole, “assimilated and borne their war years well,” and “the changes caused by war experience are not so impressive as the continuity that was evident in their pre-service, in-service, and post-service behavior” (original emphasis).<sup>89</sup> Somewhat contradictorily, almost 70 percent of all Midwest veterans said that their military experience had been worthwhile, but “few had actually enjoyed their time in the service,” nor were they anxious to repeat the experience.<sup>90</sup>

#### IV. Love Among the Ruins: The Unfaithful

Among the most difficult of postwar adjustments was that between a veteran and his wife. For obvious morale reasons, cultural messages that Americans received during the war tended to be supportive of wartime unions. But the underlying anxiety that haunted separated lovers during wartime oft en surfaced even in seemingly innocent settings, especially in music. Some songs communicated a longing, such as in Kurt Weill’s “Speak Low,” which laments, “Our moment is swift / Like ships adrift, we’re swept apart, too soon,” but there was resentment in other songs, such as in the self-explanatory “Everybody Loves My Baby.” Likewise, in the bouncy, hugely popular “Don’t Sit Under the Apple Tree,” little in the way of interpretive subtlety is needed to flesh out the meaning of the admonition “Don’t go walking down lover’s lane with anyone else but me, ‘til I come marching home.”<sup>91</sup>

Once the marching home had been accomplished, reunited couples were widely celebrated in popular music, but even here a somber tone oft en intruded. In Dinah Shore’s rendering of the 1945 ballad “He’s Home for a While,” the first two verses are routine in their declarations of love. The bridge, however, alludes to changes that have taken place in the returning soldier because of the war:

He’s sort of changed.  
He’s kind of different from the boy I used to know a while ago.  
Strange how much he says without a word.  
And when he holds my hand I understand.<sup>92</sup>

The phrases “he’s sort of changed” and “he’s kind of different” no doubt spoke volumes to America’s young women who were anxiously renewing relationships with men returning from the war. Even in the most solid of unions, the reunited couple faced what Edward C. McDonagh called “the cold reality of the second appraisal.”<sup>93</sup>

The great hope among veterans was to return to an unchanged spouse—“just let her be the same as the day I left her”—while on the home front there was “a pathetic eagerness on the part of many war wives to ‘keep things exactly as they were’” for their returning husbands. Less easy to manage were “the ravages of time where wrinkles, gray hair, and considerable loss or gain of weight are concerned.”<sup>94</sup> Naturally, American business was an eager exploiter of such anxieties and hopes, and a prime example is a Palmolive ad that manages to incorporate in its illustration a young woman, a picture of a soldier in uniform, a love letter (presumably from the same soldier), and a bar of soap. Palmolive asked, “When he comes home to you, will he find you as lovely as his heart has dreamed you’d be? Day’s end or year’s end ... will the sweet look of you, the soft touch of you ... be just as he remembered?” To ward off potential disappointment, women were urged to “guard your loveliness”

with Palmolive.<sup>95</sup>

Of course the expectations that things would be just as they were could not be met. Even if some miracle had produced an unchanged wife, the soldiers themselves had been profoundly changed by the war and would not be able to relate to their wives in the same way. Husbands who had departed as guileless 18-year-olds were returning as combat veterans, or at least as individuals whose horizons had been greatly widened after extended tours of Europe or the Pacific. Al Neuharth, who later founded *USA Today*, was one of countless Americans whose military service opened their eyes to people and places beyond his small corner of America: "I met people from Brooklyn who talked funny and people from Texas who you couldn't understand at all. I realized for the first time that the world is not made up of the white Germans and Scandinavians who settled my part of South Dakota."<sup>96</sup> One veteran affirmed that "you begin to realize that New York isn't the whole country, that there's more to the United States than Broadway and Allerton Avenue," while another observed that the people he met in the military "amazed me by their differences. I have not known their like before, nor have I met them since."<sup>97</sup> The war had also expanded the horizons of American women, as they took on new responsibilities, ran their own households, and held down jobs in war industries. Many were reluctant to give up their newfound autonomy.

One of the key issues between reunited couples was how the two parties had comported, or *disported*, themselves while they were apart. This issue had ended many marriages before the war was over, and even in the marriages that survived there was often antagonism between the sexes on the issue of fidelity. Sociologist Edward C. McDonagh found that "some women have adopted an attitude that 'an occasional date with a male companion is good for morale.'" "Such morale tonics," said McDonagh, "are almost certain to cause trouble."<sup>98</sup> Indeed, one of the most frequent complaints that returning servicemen had about their wives was "she tells fibs about dates she has had while he has been away," while for the wives it was "he is overly jealous about the most casual male acquaintances she has had while he has been away."<sup>99</sup> There was a class, or at least a rank, divide on this issue. A poll taken of soldiers in the XII Corps, Third Army, revealed that officers were more tolerant than enlisted men of their wives' activities.<sup>100</sup>

Time had moved on during the war, and frequently so had the spouse. In one case, the archetypal scenario of the serviceman returning home after a long absence to find his wife pregnant was given an intriguing twist when the soldier discovered that his wife had been artificially inseminated in his absence. When this case ended up in court, the judge ruled that artificial insemination was not sufficient grounds for adultery.<sup>101</sup>

Few cases were as bizarre as this, but clearly the unraveling of marriages because of the stress of war, and especially marital infidelity, was part of the culture during these years. Depictions of infidelity typically featured the unfaithful wife or sweetheart and the jilted serviceman (it was seldom the other way around) and could be found in novels, films, and elsewhere. Indeed, when correspondent John Field accompanied the crew of a submarine on patrol in Japanese waters in 1943, he noted that one of the favorite songs on board was Bing Crosby's "I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now." Field comments, "The crew thought it appropriate."<sup>102</sup>

The theme of the serviceman returning to a wayward spouse and a corrupt society was especially prominent in film noir. A style of film that began to emerge during the war, film noir has a look and a moral tone that are dark and brooding, with an emphasis on deceit, ambiguity, and disillusionment. Among the most disillusioned of film noir characters is the soldier, an idealist who has sacrificed much during the war but who becomes increasingly cynical when he returns to an indifferent civilian society. The returning soldier is so prevalent in film noirs that it almost constitutes a subgenre. *Somewhere in the Night* (1946) tells the story of amnesiac marine George Taylor (played by John Hodiak) trying to discover who he was in civilian life. The hoodlums and



police that he clashes with are convinced that he used to be a criminal.<sup>103</sup> In *Key Largo* (1948), Frank McCloud (Humphrey Bogart) is a combat veteran who has been drifting from place to place since the end of the war and is forced to revive his lost idealism in a psychological and physical battle with gangster Johnny Rocco (Edward G. Robinson).<sup>104</sup> In *Gun Crazy* (1950), Bart Tare (John Dall) has spent time in a youth correctional facility and has just finished a tour in the army. He goes on a bank-robbing spree with a woman he meets at a carnival.<sup>105</sup> In *Kansas City Confidential* (1952), another former soldier, Joe Rolfe (John Payne), has been trying to go straight after serving a prison term on a gambling charge. He is framed for an armored car holdup, and during questioning at police headquarters the insurance investigator Andrews (Howard Negley) reads Joe's file aloud:

Andrews: "Left school to enlist with the engineers. Pretty good soldier too: bronze star, purple heart."

Joe: "Try and buy a cup of coffee with them."<sup>106</sup>

Especially important in film noirs with returning soldiers is the motif of infidelity. A prime example is *The Blue Dahlia*, based on an original screenplay by Raymond Chandler and released in the spring of 1946. This film tells the story of B-17 pilot Johnny Morrison (played by Alan Ladd) and two of his crewmen, Buzz (played by William Bendix) and George (Hugh Beaumont), returning home from the war. Johnny finds a party in full blast at his house, and shortly thereafter discovers that his wife, Helen (Doris Dowling), has been cheating on him. When Helen subsequently ends up murdered, suspicion centers first on Johnny, then on Buzz, who is mentally unstable as a result of a traumatic head wound suffered in the war. Chandler apparently wanted Buzz to be the actual murderer as an illustration of the brutal impact of the war, but the military protested to the studio, and Chandler was forced to write in a different killer.<sup>107</sup>

In the film noir *Crossfire* (1947), one soldier compares his own marital relations with those of a soldier named Mitchell, who suspects his wife has been unfaithful to him:

This sort of life doesn't bother some soldiers. It doesn't bother me much. I haven't seen my wife for two years. When I do maybe we'll pick up again. I don't know, maybe we won't. But I don't worry about it now. Mitchell isn't like that. Mitchell isn't tough. He needs his wife.<sup>108</sup>

The returning soldier encountering an unfaithful wife was also a theme in postwar mainstream films. In *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946), we learn at the beginning that bombardier Fred Derr (Dana Andrews) and his wife, Marie (Virginia Mayo), were married less than a month before he shipped out. Their reunion is a rocky one, and when Fred finds Marie entertaining another man (whom she describes as "an old friend") at their apartment, Fred asks her,

"Did you know him when I was away?"

"I know lots of people," says Marie. "What do you think I was doing all those years?"

Fred replies, "I don't know, babe, but I can guess."<sup>109</sup>

Novelistic depictions of this theme appeared as early as 1945, in Harry Brown's *A Walk in the Sun*. Here, two soldiers debate the merits of being married, with one declaring, "If I was married I'd have to be sending money home all the time, too. And God knows what my wife might be doing. The hell with it."<sup>110</sup> Even when no infidelity took place, novelists portrayed war as a solvent that dissolved emotional ties between men and women. This is made clear in Gore Vidal's novel *Williwaw* (1946), where much of the action takes place aboard



a ship in the Aleutian Islands. At one point the marital history of Evans, the ship's captain, is discussed by two crewmen:

"They say he married a girl in Seattle. He'd only known her a week."

"How long did they live together?"

"Around a month. He was up in Anchorage last month getting a divorce from her."

"Did she ask for it?"

"I don't know. I gather he hadn't heard from her in the last three years."<sup>111</sup>

Evans himself ruminates, "She was a nice girl. If he had met her at any other time than during a war they might have been happy."<sup>112</sup>

In the most influential novel to appear in the immediate postwar era, Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead*, the characters often ponder the burdens of marriage during wartime. In this novel the enlisted men especially are fanatically obsessed with the idea that their wives are cheating on them while they themselves are risking their lives trying to take a Japanese-held island. While on guard duty Brown envisions his wife "in bed talking to a guy this very minute and they're figuring out what they're gonna do with the ten thousand insurance on me when I get knocked off."<sup>113</sup> Sergeant Croft observes of women that "you're all fuggin' whores," and even General Cummings, who is in charge of the entire operation, asks his aide, "Then why all this concern about women 'cheating'? It's in their nature to do that."<sup>114</sup>

In James Jones' *The Thin Red Line*, Corporal Fife puzzles over which marital scenario is worse: "To have her write and tell you honestly that she was going out and screwing some guy or guys although she still loved you? Or to have her go ahead and do it, screw somebody, but *not* tell you."<sup>115</sup> Private Bell, whose wife sends him a Dear John letter, concludes that only four scenarios were possible in the face of wifely infidelity: "sad little husband attacking big strong lover, big strong lover attacking sad little husband, sad little husband attacking big strong wife, big strong wife attacking sad little husband. But always it was a sad little husband."<sup>116</sup>

While Private Bell was probably correct, there were at least two novelistic exceptions to the sad-little-husband rule, both provided by Sloan Wilson. In *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, Wilson's protagonist, Tom Rath, cheats on his wife, Betsy, while on leave in Rome. Tom has only a momentary hesitation—"Betsy, Tom had thought, but somehow she had dissolved into nothing more than an ironic and rather painful memory, something to be kept out of his mind."<sup>117</sup> When Tom's past resurfaces some years after the end of the war and he finally tells Betsy about this affair, Betsy responds that while she did not know anything about war, she knew the wife's side of it: "four years of sitting around waiting, believing that faithfulness is part of what you call love."<sup>118</sup>

In Wilson's *Pacific Interlude* (1982), coast guard Captain Sylvester ("Syl") Grant has even fewer qualms about infidelity than Tom Rath. As he appraises the local beauties in a bar in Brisbane, Syl finds that "his whole body demanded action, even though he was bound to feel bad about Sally when he was finally able to get his mind back to his sweet, confused, shadowy memories of her. There were times in life when a man only imagined that he had a choice."<sup>119</sup> Syl has brief love affairs with two Australian women, both of whom display admirable energy in the sack. "He thought briefly of Sally, could not imagine her so hungry. This was no time to think of her."<sup>120</sup> An original element of these liaisons is that, in what is more typically male fashion, the women use Syl for their own physical pleasure, and terminate the relationship when it is no longer convenient.

## V. Love Among the Ruins: The Disabled

Returning home was difficult for everyone, but the prospect was even more daunting for the wounded, who, in James Jones' words, "had been initiated into a strange, insane, twilight fraternity where explanation would be forever impossible."<sup>121</sup> John Steinbeck talked to one soldier in a military hospital who was frantically trying to recover the use of his hand before returning to the States:

"My wife knows I was hurt. She doesn't know how bad. She knows I'm going to get well all right and come home, but—she must be thinking pretty hard. I got to get that hand working. She wouldn't like a cripple with a hand that wouldn't work."

His eyes are a little feverish. "Well, how would you like a cripple to come home? What would you think about that?"<sup>122</sup>

Flyer Darrel Brady, who had received a leg wound in the Pacific, was on the way home to his wife when he looked intently into a mirror and discovered that "something funny had happened to my hair. There were strange lines in my face. Could this be an old man coming back to my bride of three weeks?" Brady threw away his cane and resolved that "I must try my best not to limp as I walked down the ramp to her."<sup>123</sup>

Servicemen knew that the understanding wife or sweetheart was not a given, especially when confronted by the badly wounded. By January 1945, 5,000 soldiers in the army had lost legs or arms, and the army was continuing to get 600 to 800 amputation cases a month.<sup>124</sup> Red Cross worker Eleanor Stevenson remembered a depressed amputee patient at an evacuation hospital in Italy who responded to no one. Finally, he showed Stevenson a letter he had received from his fiancée. The fiancée, after writing a few paragraphs of the standard pleasantries, ended her letter by declaring, "You might as well know it now. If you don't come back all in one piece, you'd better forget me."<sup>125</sup>

The repugnance of civilians toward the badly wounded was something that nurse Betty Basye Hutchinson saw on a daily basis. A specialist in plastic surgery during the war, Hutchinson continued to work with these patients after the war in a facility in downtown Pasadena. In the course of her work she befriended a pilot named Bill whose face had been destroyed, and remembered vividly the reaction of the locals when the two of them went for walks:

I would walk him in downtown Pasadena—I'll never forget this. Half his face completely gone, right? Downtown Pasadena after the war was a very elite community. Nicely dressed women, absolutely staring, just standing there staring. He was aware of this terrible stare.

Later, indignant letters appeared in Pasadena papers suggesting that such patients be kept off the streets. Hutchinson calls this her "introduction to peacetime, through the eyes of that woman when she looked at my friend Bill. It's only the glamour of war that appeals to people. They don't know real war."<sup>126</sup>

Women trying to grapple with such serious issues found little or no guidance when they turned to those traditional dispensers of domestic wisdom, women's magazines. For the most part, these magazines stuck with the same trivial fare they had churned out before the war. For instance, in *Good Housekeeping's* January 1945 article "How to Cope with Catastrophes on the Very Day of the Party!" the catastrophes do not include the German offensive in the Ardennes but do include the pimple ("Don't open, don't squeeze, don't touch with

fingers”), “snowflakes” (more commonly known as dandruff), and “circles under eyes” (“They are easily disguised by makeup”).<sup>127</sup> But the impact of the war was so pervasive that even in women’s magazines a more serious tone is apparent by the beginning of 1944. An especially pressing issue, in both fiction and nonfiction, was the return of the veteran and the uncertainties of domestic life after the war.

In Leon Ware’s 1944 short story “The Afterward,” published in *Ladies’ Home Journal*, a returning soldier who had been married for all of two days before shipping out wonders if his wife will remember him. A melodramatic twist is that he has been disfigured by the war to the point where “even his mother wouldn’t have recognized him.”<sup>128</sup> Love inevitably triumphs over adversity in women’s magazine fiction, but people making such adjustments in real life were seldom so lucky. In “How Can I Help the War-Blinded Soldier?” Enid Griffis advises, “Treat your blinded son, husband or father exactly as you would if he still had his sight. Act as if nothing had happened.” After all, if he senses that those who know him are treating him as an invalid, “his slowly returning self-confidence will receive a blow that may very well prove fatal.”<sup>129</sup> One factor that complicated the care of the disabled veteran was the unwillingness of the veteran himself to be cared for. One study indicated that while women overwhelmingly endorsed the idea of supporting the incapacitated soldier, two-thirds of soldiers said that they would refuse such help.<sup>130</sup>



**Fig 10.1** A sailor badly burned in a kamikaze attack is fed aboard the USS Solace, 1945. Attributed to Lt. Victor Jorgensen (Navy), NARA file #080-G-346694.

The badly wounded serviceman attempting to adjust to civilian life was brilliantly depicted in the 1946 film *The Best Years of Our Lives*. It is a film that not only represents all that is best in American cinema but also is a corrective to the notion that veterans were able to quickly put the war behind them and slip back into civilian life.<sup>331</sup> Much of the impetus for making *Best Years* came from director William Wyler, who was determined to make a film about veteran readjustment (rather than a film biography of Dwight Eisenhower, for which the studio had him slated).<sup>332</sup> Wyler had seen combat up close, filming two documentaries during the war, including *The Memphis Belle* (1944). After showing Americans at war in his documentaries, Wyler now had the opportunity to show them making their adjustments to peacetime in a feature film. Wyler said that “the picture was the result of the social forces at work when the war ended. In a sense, it was written by events and imposed a responsibility on us to be true to these events and refrain from distorting them to our own ends.”<sup>333</sup>

Before beginning work on the film, Wyler and screenwriter Robert Sherwood visited a number of veterans' hospitals, including one in Pasadena where they met four amputees. The veterans were suspicious about the motivations behind this film, and one of them said, "So you're gonna make a picture about fellows like us. You gonna make a lot of money, eh? Exploit this thing?" Wyler and Sherwood reassured the men that they were intent on making a totally honest picture.<sup>134</sup> Wyler finally decided to cast Harold Russell in the role of Homer. Russell had been in the army and had lost his hands when the dynamite he was loading exploded. He was fitted with a pair of hooks, and his progress in learning to use these hooks was documented in an army Signal Corps film called *Diary of a Sergeant*, which Wyler had seen. *Life* also ran a feature on Russell with photographs showing Russell learning to dial a phone, grasp a coffee cup, drive a car, and even change a tire. On a train he hesitates to sit next to a pretty girl "because he thinks she will be shocked to see that he has no hands." But when he finally meets her "she looks at his hooks casually. 'She took them for granted,' Russell says, 'like too many freckles or flaming red hair.'"<sup>135</sup> For his film, Wyler rejected the idea of having Russell take acting lessons.<sup>136</sup>

*The Best Years of Our Lives* tells the story of three veterans sharing a plane ride back to their home town of Boone City (a fictional stand-in for Cincinnati). They are Fred Derry (Dana Andrews), a former air force bombardier, Al Stephenson (Frederic March), army sergeant and veteran of the fighting in the Pacific, and sailor Homer Parish (Harold Russell), whose aircraft carrier was sunk in the Pacific. In the story line, Russell's hands were lost in the ship's fire and replaced by hooks. One of the film's key points is that while Homer is the only one of the three veterans who has been physically disabled, all veterans have, in a sense, been disabled because of their experiences in the war. In fact, they no longer know how to act as civilians, and as they get closer and closer to home, their apprehensions mount. Fred tells Al he has the same nervous feelings returning home that he had when he went overseas, "only more so." Al confesses that "the thing that scares me most is that everyone's going to try to rehabilitate me." Al, Fred, and Homer share a taxi into Boone City, and no one wants to be the first to get out. Finally, Homer is dropped off and Al and Fred observe his homecoming from the taxi as he is reunited with his parents and with his girlfriend Wilma. Homer's mother involuntarily bursts into tears, and Homer is unable to put his arms around Wilma. As the cab travels on, Fred says to Al, "You gotta hand it to the navy. They sure trained that kid how to use those hooks." Al, now sunk in thought, responds, "They couldn't train him to put his arms around his girl, or stroke her hair."

Homer's reunion is excruciating. His family and Wilma's family have assembled in the living room, and Wilma's father—a bit of a gasbag—tells the group that "as I see it, we're headed for bad times in this country. ... In my opinion, we'll see widespread depression and unemployment." He offers Homer a job in his insurance firm ("They make very good salesmen, you know. Men who have suffered from some kind of disability"). Everyone else has meticulously avoided mentioning Homer's disability, but when Homer spills his lemonade his mother says, "Wilma will hold it for you." Homer storms out of the house. He will later complain to his uncle Butch that "they keep staring at these hooks, or else they keep staring away from them."

Al's stop is next, and he tells Fred, "It feels as if I were going in to hit a beach." Al, a former bank executive, is returning to a swank apartment and a reunion with his wife and two children. He is astonished at how grown-up his children have become, and paces about nervously. Al has been home for only a short time when he gets a call from his previous employer at the bank. They want to make him vice president of small loans because "we need a man who understands the soldiers' problems." But when Al approves a bank loan for a veteran named Novak who wants to buy a farm, Al gets into trouble with the bank manager because Novak has no collateral.

Fred moves into the apartment of his wife, Marie (Virginia Mayo), and the two begin spending his money until it is all gone. After unsuccessfully looking for a job, Fred reluctantly returns to the drugstore where he used to work. He accepts a low-level sales position, and by doing so this former air force officer suffers a humiliating



loss of caste. Marie is less than supportive and tells Fred, “You know the war’s over. You won’t get anyplace until you stop thinking about it. Come on. Snap out of it.” Fred replies, “OK, honey, I’ll do that.”

Homer has hesitated to marry Wilma because, as he tells her, “You don’t know what it would be like to have to live with me, to have to face this every day, every night.” When Wilma expresses a willingness to try, Homer comes to a decision: “I’m going upstairs to bed. I want you to see for yourself what happens.” In the most moving scene of the film, Homer demonstrates how he takes his harness off and then wiggles into his pajama top—“but I can’t button them up.” Wilma takes over, buttoning the pajamas and smiling at Homer as she adjusts his collar. Homer says, “This is when I know I’m helpless. My hands are down there on the bed.” He is “as dependent as a baby who doesn’t know how to get anything except to cry for it.” When Homer suggests that Wilma probably doesn’t know what to say, Wilma answers, “I know what to say, Homer. I love you and I’m never going to leave you.” Homer replies in kind, they embrace, and she tucks him in.

*Best Years* ends with the three veterans reunited for Homer and Wilma’s wedding, but the prospects for the three men are far from certain. It is obvious that Wilma’s father disapproves of the marriage, and the crowd tenses as Homer maneuvers Wilma’s wedding ring in his hooks. Fred’s marriage has broken up (his wife has had an affair with another man), he has lost his job at the drugstore after a violent outburst, and still suffers from nightmares from the war. He has accepted a job salvaging for scrap the same planes he used to fly in. There is a hopeful element in Fred’s blossoming relationship with Al’s daughter, Peggy, but it is a guarded, fragile hope. Even Al, with seemingly the fewest “adjustment” problems of the three, has become a heavy drinker, and it is apparent that his clashes with the bank’s management will continue into the future.<sup>137</sup>

This film works in part because the success of its characters is never made easy and is never a foregone conclusion. As Wyler put it, “We had to be honest in ending the three stories. We could not indicate any solution which would work only for a character in a movie.”<sup>138</sup> *Best Years* also avoids cheap moralizing. One obvious ploy, for instance, would have been to have the man who has stolen Fred’s wife from him be a civilian who enjoyed a soft life during the war. Instead, he is a veteran, like Fred. Warriors have no exclusive claim on virtue. Above all, *The Best Years of Our Lives* reminds us that human beings go on paying the cost of war long after the war is over.

This film obviously struck a responsive chord with the public. It won seven Oscars for the film year 1946, including best picture, best director, and best screenplay. The music and editing also won Oscars, and Frederic March and Harold Russell won acting awards. Russell also won a special Oscar “for bringing hope and courage to his fellow veterans.” (Russell remains the only actor to have won two Oscars for the same role.) Because of its resonance with veterans, *The Best Years of Our Lives* was rereleased in 1954 for the Korean War generation.<sup>139</sup>

The 1950 film *The Men* also deserves a mention for its frank and unromantic portrayal of the victims of paraplegia. In his first film role, Marlon Brando stars as Lieutenant Ken Wilocek, who is wounded in the war and loses the use of his legs. He is sent to an army hospital for rehabilitation (the extras are played by the men of the Birmingham Veterans Administration Hospital), where he initially rejects treatment and refuses to see his fiancée, Ellen (Teresa Wright). In the ward, an atmosphere of sarcasm prevails, and when the doctor asks one patient about rehabilitation, the patient responds, “No, I don’t want to be rehabilitated, readjusted, reconditioned, or re-anything. And if you don’t mind, I don’t want to take my proper place in society either. Does that make my position clear?”

When Ellen finally sees Ken, he asks her, “What do you want to do? Wait on me hand and foot all your life? I’m like a baby.” Ellen persists, however, and soon the two are making marriage plans. Ellen’s father reasonably argues that such a marriage would have many problems, and suggests that she break it off. Ellen angrily retorts, “You weren’t quite so logical a few years ago when we needed some boys to go out and get killed—or paralyzed.”

Ken and Ellen get married, but they quarrel on their wedding night and Ken returns to the hospital ward—the only place he feels at home. While the two will eventually reconcile, it is far from a happy ending. Surely, this is one of the most unflinching films ever made on the costs of war. There are no miracle cures or easy transitions, and the difficulties that await a couple confronting paraplegia are never minimized. Even Ellen, whose goodness of heart and strength of character are never in doubt, momentarily falters under the burden.<sup>141</sup> While other films were released that dealt with postwar readjustment (such as *Till the End of Time*), none had the power of *The Best Years of Our Lives* or *The Men* because these two films refused to compromise in the name of “entertainment.”<sup>141</sup>

Not all war casualties were of the physical type, and dealing with a spouse suffering from a psychiatric condition, or “combat fatigue,” could be especially daunting. In 1945, 10,000 returning veterans a month were diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder (there had been more than 300,000 in the previous year).<sup>142</sup> Psychiatrists reported that wives of traumatized veterans often described their husbands as “irritable, cross, hard to please, with violent fluctuations of mood from maudlin, tearful softness to violent outbursts of temper and actual destructiveness.”<sup>143</sup> In one example, Peggy Terry reported that her husband had totally changed when he returned from the war after serving in the paratroopers. A teetotaler before the war, now he was an “absolute drunkard” subject to nightmares that left him violently shaking. Finally, “he started slapping me around and slapped the kids around. He became a brute.”<sup>144</sup>

In a *Ladies' Home Journal* piece called “Meet Ed Savickas,” the psychiatric damage takes a different form. Savickas had served in North Africa and Italy, and during his last days in the military he had been subjected to a bombing raid; he had emerged from his foxhole shaking and unable to eat. He was discharged, even though he wanted to stay with his outfit. At his home in New Jersey, Savickas suffered from “bad dreams about the things he saw happen under fire, sleeplessness forcing him to get up and prowl miserably about the little apartment, inability to stay long indoors ...”<sup>145</sup> Sharing the apartment with Savickas was his wife, Stella, and their young daughter and infant son. Stella had a formidable task in dealing with Ed, but she had succeeded in persuading Savickas to gradually take on more responsibilities and to socialize more with their friends. To Stella's frustration, her hard work would occasionally be undermined when someone asked Savickas about his war experiences and “how many Germans he killed.”<sup>146</sup> While an accompanying article emphasizes that there is no more disgrace in having a psychiatric discharge than in having pneumonia, the insistence on this point makes it clear that the public *did* make a distinction between physical and psychiatric casualties.<sup>147</sup> As Willard Waller bluntly put it, “There is a stigma connected with psychological breakdown, even a suspicion of malingering.”<sup>148</sup>

Even married couples who emerged from the war physically and emotionally intact faced daunting problems, especially if they had married in haste. In a 1944 article on war marriages, psychiatrist James H. S. Bossard asked frankly, “Are they worth saving?” For the many marriages that had been established on an extremely shaky foundation, the answer was clearly no.<sup>149</sup> In 1946, the first full year of peace, the marriage rate *and* the divorce rate rose to unprecedented levels. The number of marriages increased by a third, while divorces more than doubled.<sup>150</sup>

The 1946 national divorce rate—about one divorce for every three marriages—was the highest in history to date and twice the prewar rate.<sup>151</sup> It would not be exceeded until 1973 (mainly due to the increasing number of states with no-fault divorce laws). The 1946 marriage rate remains unsurpassed.<sup>152</sup> Clearly, the immediate postwar era was a time of intense marital disorder, with a shockingly high divorce rate seemingly *not* having a dampening effect on a shockingly high marriage rate.

Some believed that the difficulties of postwar readjustment would transform the serviceman into a social revolutionary. Writing in 1944, Willard Waller called the returning veteran an “immigrant in his native land” and maintained that “*unless and until he can be renaturalized into his native land, the veteran is a threat to society*” (original emphasis).<sup>153</sup> The veteran’s anger could become a political force that demagogues would try to bend to their own uses, and Waller poses the question, “Will the veterans of World War II turn into Storm Troopers who will destroy democracy?”<sup>154</sup> The black veteran especially would be “a storm center of trouble when he returns to his home community” because he would no longer be willing to submit to the injustices of former days. “There will be fierce and terrible men among the Negroes who come back from the war,” said Waller. Standing in their way will be Southern white veterans, “among our best soldiers” and effective counterrevolutionaries. “The stage is set for conflict between the races.”<sup>155</sup>

Charles G. Bolté, who lost a leg at El Alamein, feared that “unless we devise *now* a democratically planned and ordered method of restoring the veteran to civilian status,” veterans might “demand their own version of justice.”<sup>156</sup> According to Edgar L. Jones, the veteran had developed “bitter contempt for the home front’s abysmal lack of understanding, its pleasures and comforts, and its nauseating capacity to talk in patriotic platitudes.” The veteran had also come to a keen understanding of “the horror and degradation of war,” said Jones, and once the serviceman woke “from his deep dreams of peace, a job and a home and realizes that his country has let him down, and badly ... this country is going to have its wartime illusions badly shattered.”<sup>157</sup>

These fears proved to be largely groundless, and there would be no storming of the Winter Palace by American veterans. While the immediate postwar world brought many hardships to Americans, the dire predictions of an economic depression did not materialize.<sup>158</sup> Continued high employment, as well as what *Time* called “more than indulgent treatment” for veterans in the form of terminal pay and the G.I. Bill, also helped siphon off veteran unrest.<sup>159</sup> The last was an especially brilliant success, with John S. Allen, New York’s Director of Higher Education declaring in 1947 that “no one in his wildest flights of imagination anticipated that veterans would attend college in such numbers.”<sup>160</sup> In total, 2,232,000 World War II veterans would attend college under the G.I. Bill.<sup>161</sup>

When the army Research Branch concluded its massive study with a chapter called “The Soldier Becomes a Civilian,” a portrait of an average returning serviceman began to emerge. The veteran had most likely criticized labor unions during the war, but a large number expected to join unions once the war was over.<sup>162</sup> Many veterans talked of locating elsewhere after the war, but by 1947, 85 percent were back living in their home states.<sup>163</sup> One-half of soldiers predicted there would be trouble with blacks after the war, and one-sixth said there would be trouble with Jews, although there was no clarification of what “trouble” meant.<sup>164</sup> The veteran was most likely to say that the war had changed his life for the worse rather than the better (48 percent as against 24 percent), and 81 percent agreed with the statement “My experiences in the Army have made me more nervous and restless.”<sup>165</sup> Overwhelmingly, veterans wanted to keep America’s defenses strong, and while they were skeptical that another war could be avoided, some 86 percent favored establishing an international organization to keep the peace.<sup>166</sup>

The veteran showed little inclination toward taking social action after the war and was mostly concerned with himself, his family, and getting on with life. Potential radicals became conservatives, resisting change and joining veterans’ organizations that were “more interested in defending the Constitution than in understanding it.”<sup>167</sup> There was little bitterness or disillusion about the value of the war because, as the Research Branch noted,

“there were very few illusions to be shattered.”<sup>168</sup> David Riesman observed in 1950 that “the veterans of World War II bring scarcely a trace of moral righteousness into their scant political participation.”<sup>169</sup>

Like the veteran, working women would also have to make adjustments after the war. Having been persuaded that their labor was crucial to the war effort, they were now put under pressure by industry and the public to leave their jobs and return to more domestic pursuits. While some polls showed that at least two out of three female war workers wanted to continue working, a number of factors combined to make it difficult for them to do so. Many of those war jobs would cease to exist as industry converted to civilian production. In addition, male industrial workers who had entered the service during the war would be given their jobs back. Most industries also had a “last hired, first fired” policy, with the consequence that recently hired women would be the first to be laid off. While many business managers, such as Henry Kaiser, praised female workers and expressed the hope that they could continue in their jobs, many others believed that the changes in gender roles that the war had produced must now return to “normal.” Frederick C. Crawford, chairman of the board of the National Association of Manufacturers, proclaimed, “From a humanitarian point of view, too many women should not stay in the labor force. The home is the basic American unit.”<sup>170</sup> Labor leaders were also less than enthusiastic about female workers. The improvements in wages and working conditions that unions had obtained for their members had been won before large numbers of women entered the workforce. Women industrial workers tended to view these gains as a given, and according to R. J. Thomas, president of the United Automobile Workers, “numbers of women have been actively hostile to the idea of paying their union dues.” Only one in five working women was a union member, and as Thomas put it, “women have not yet, in the mass-production industries, shown any real sense of responsibility in fighting for their own needs.”<sup>171</sup>

Putting the pieces of America back together at the end of World War II would not be easy, but at least America had been spared the ravages of war that had desolated Europe and Asia. And because Americans ended the war with their country physically intact, had enjoyed full employment for the first time in over a decade, and had fought in a righteous cause, the myth of the Good War began to emerge with the beginning of peace. The uncertain, frustrating decades that followed added further luster to American participation in World War II, until by the end of the twentieth century the ordinary mortals who fought this war had been elevated to the Greatest Generation. As we have seen, however, the Greatest Generation possessed some of the same frailties as lesser generations, and the Good War exacted a steep price on Americans both at home and abroad.



## Conclusion

World War II was the greatest disaster in human history, but was this a just war that Americans had to fight despite its appalling price? Was it worth the massive disruption of American society on the home front, with its racial tensions, displaced families, marital discord, and juvenile delinquency? Was this a war worthy of the sacrifice of hundreds of thousands of Americans overseas who suffered untold miseries and gave their bodies and their minds and their lives? And in the worldwide perspective, did this war justify the final butcher's bill of 55 million dead? The alternative would have to be horrendous indeed to validate such a price—nothing less than an abomination on the human species. That such an abomination was already in the works was made plain by the ghastly revelations of the Nazi camps. The dire consequences of a German victory don't make this war "good," but they do make it just, and necessary. As James M. Gavin, commander of the 82nd Airborne Division, put it:

We had left in our wake thousands of white crosses from Africa to Berlin. And when it came to an end, there was not a man in the ranks of the 82nd Airborne Division who did not believe it was a war that had to be fought. ... It had been a long and costly journey, and when we overran the concentration camps and looked back with a better understanding of where we had been, we knew it had been a journey worth every step of the way.<sup>1</sup>

Likewise, the catastrophic results of a Japanese victory cannot be overestimated. As the years have passed since the end of the war, what the Japanese did in the "Pacific Holocaust" have become increasingly clear: They pillaged with abandon, tortured with a savage delight, infected live human beings with bubonic plague, typhoid, and syphilis in medical experiments, maintained "comfort stations" that forced hundreds of thousands of Asian women to serve as sex slaves, and nurtured a contempt for all human life except their own.<sup>2</sup> While the argument can be made that all nations that participated in the war committed "war crimes," the vast scale of the Japanese atrocities can be matched only by the German camps. In James Jones' novel *The Thin Red Line*, one of the characters says of the Japanese that he "had never understood them. Their incredibly delicate, ritual tea service; their exquisitely sensitive painting and poetry; their unbelievably cruel, sadistic beheadings and torture."<sup>3</sup> No amount of Japanese cultural refinement could atone for the Japanese sadism of World War II. Undeniably there were innocent Japanese who suffered during the war, and they deserve our compassion no less than other victims of this conflict. But it is also true that the citizens of every nation must accept responsibility for their leadership and the consequences that flow from it. The Germans have acknowledged such responsibility and have tried to atone for the sorrow that Hitler visited on their nation and the world, but the Japanese have yet to come to grips with their own wartime behavior. Once they do, they will see that they themselves sowed the dragon's teeth that matured into the terrible judgment of the atomic bomb.

Full employment and expansion of the American economy have often been cited as some of the "good" aspects of World War II, as has the opening up of job opportunities for women and minorities. For most of these new workers, however, these opportunities had a shelf life that was limited to the war itself. Elaine Tyler May has emphasized that "in spite of all the changes wrought by the war, in the long run work for women remained limited to certain occupations, with low pay and the expectation of short duration.... Men and women alike



expected to relinquish their emergency roles and settle into domestic life as breadwinners and homemakers.<sup>4</sup> In addition, many women found war work to be dull and dirty. Munitions worker Josephine von Miklos concluded that “working in munitions ... isn't very exciting, if you want the truth. Most of it is filthy and grimy, much of it is a very boring job.”<sup>5</sup> Domesticity returned with a vengeance after the war, and a resurgent feminism would lie dormant for another generation. “For the majority of American women,” says D'Ann Campbell, “the war years may have altered some specific activities, but they did not change their interpretations of their primary roles.”<sup>6</sup>

Likewise, many of the employment gains made by minorities during the war—and it is important to remember that minority hiring won only grudging approval from government, industry, and unions—proved to be ephemeral. With the war over, minority workers along with women suffered disproportionately from the “last hired, first fired” policy of most industries, and gaining equal employment opportunities for minorities and women would prove to be a very long political and social struggle. The postwar accomplishments of this generation, according to Stephen Ambrose, included the Interstate Highway System, the cure for polio, and the creation of NATO and the United Nations. Members of this generation “developed the modern corporation while inaugurating revolutionary advances in science and technology, education and public policy.”<sup>7</sup> True enough, but the Greatest Generation also gave us McCarthyism, urban sprawl, Dixiecrats, mutually assured destruction, and planned obsolescence, as well as a grasping consumerism, a stultifying conformity, Watergate and Vietnam.

Undeniably, military spending extricated the United States from the economic doldrums of the Great Depression. Emphasizing the impact of defense spending on the residents of a Southern town, John Dos Passos declared that

they can make more cash money in a month than they saw before in half a year. They can buy radios, they can go to the pictures, they can go to beer parlors, bowl, shoot craps, bet on the ponies ... Housekeeping in a trailer with electric light and running water is dazzling luxury to a woman who has lived all her life in a cabin with half-inch chinks between the splintered boards of the floor.<sup>8</sup>

When columnist Michael Griffin visited booming Louisville in the summer of 1942, he took away the impression that even if the war ended immediately, “folks here could truthfully say that the war was the best thing to happen in their lives. They have more of everything and they are getting more every day.”<sup>9</sup> The same was true throughout much of the country, but there was a curious disconnect among home front Americans between the prosperity that they enjoyed and the death and suffering that made that prosperity possible. An upbeat propaganda machine created by the government and abetted by industry through its advertisements helped feed what Paul Fussell has called a “complacent, unimaginative innocence” on the home front.<sup>10</sup> Few pondered the effects that the weapons they were making had on human flesh, or considered that their newfound material comfort was based on the privations of American servicemen. Civilian complacency, however, cannot disguise the fact that, in Michael C. C. Adams' words, Rosie the Riveter was also “part of the war machine.”<sup>11</sup> And so, for that matter, was the rest of home front America.

One group that was not naive about the real cost of the war was veterans. James Jones noted that for overseas veterans returning to the States on leave, “what shocked, and even rankled, was the richness of everybody ... it seemed they were truly making it off our red meat and bone.”<sup>12</sup> Despite the fact that most

Americans wanted the war to end, there were also an uncomfortably large number who were not averse to a continuance of the war in order to preserve their own prosperity. Veteran Ed Savickas found this to be true at his job at Eastern Aircraft. Savickas took note of the prevalence of the “what’ll-we-do-when-the-war-boom’s-over” talk at the plant, with some even acting “like they want the war to go on and a lot more guys get shot up and killed just so their jobs will keep going.”<sup>43</sup> One soldier in the 101st Airborne said of the home front that “few people seemed to care. Hell, this was a boom, this was prosperity, this was the way to fight a war. We wondered if the people would ever know what it cost the soldiers in terror, bloodshed, and hideous, agonizing deaths to win the war.”<sup>44</sup> Soldiers who returned home to Germany or Russia or Britain and surveyed the bombed-out cities that everywhere marred the landscape needed little convincing that civilians had shared the privations of war with them. But because the American home front was removed from such devastation, “the burden of war, emotional and physical,” fell totally upon the American soldier, making the distance between civilians and servicemen greater in the United States than in any other country.<sup>45</sup>

Surely it was the wish of every American who knew combat in World War II that other human beings would not have to experience what he had endured. All cherished the hope that they had fought so that other young Americans in the future would not have to do so. Other American veterans of other wars have felt the same way, including William Tecumseh Sherman, who in 1880 made the most famous speech of his life at the Ohio state fair. Addressing the youths in the crowd, Sherman said, “There is many a boy here today who looks on war as all glory, but, boys, it is all hell. You can bear this warning voice to generations yet to come.”<sup>46</sup> In 1946 Edgar L. Jones made much the same observation about a different war, insisting that “war does horrible things to men, our own sons included. It demands the worst of a person and pays off in brutality and maladjustment.” The returning World War II veteran, said Jones, would be glad to pass this on to any civilian “who blithely assures him that military life is a grand experience for young men.”<sup>47</sup>

Bill Mauldin said of American soldiers that “they are so damned sick and tired of having their noses rubbed in a stinking war that their only ambition will be to forget it.”<sup>48</sup> Indeed, members of the World War II generation have earned the right to forget as best they can the waste and cruelty of this terrible war. But this generation can make one last great contribution to this country by rejecting the false nostalgia that now envelops World War II, and to do as Sherman did: to tell Americans the truth about what war is. The Greatest Generation is more invention than truth, and the consequences of such an invention, even one as attractive as this one, are far from harmless. It leaves behind the impression that war draws all people closer together, that cohesion is maximized and conflict minimized. We are seduced into thinking that selfish economic concerns are forgotten during war, patriotism flourishes, marriages and family life are strengthened, racial harmony is enhanced, and all generals are wise, all servicemen brave, all wives virtuous. Who could blame the guileless for thinking that war itself is an attractive option rather than an absolute last resort?<sup>49</sup> Paul Fussell is one of many World War II veterans who worry about how perceptions of war will impact future generations. With all the talk of the Good War, says Fussell, “the young and the innocent could get the impression that it was really not such a bad thing after all. It’s thus necessary to observe that it was a war and nothing else, and thus stupid and sadistic.”<sup>50</sup>

The lesson that war must be resorted to only under the greatest of provocations and that even the most just of wars carries a terrible price has never been more relevant. The best way to honor those who have paid the price for war is for all of us to hate war more than we do, and to work harder to settle human conflicts without killing each other. Many will say that the idea of a world without war is hopelessly naive. Kurt Vonnegut remembers that when he admitted to Harrison Starr that he was writing an antiwar book, Starr said, “Why don’t

you write an anti-*glacier* book instead?”—meaning, of course, “that there would always be wars, that they were as easy to stop as glaciers.”<sup>21</sup> That may be, but it is a different sort of naivete to maintain that war ever really brings about a lasting good. The human species has tried it for thousands of years. “In ancient Greece,” said John Steinbeck, “it was said that there had to be a war at least every twenty years because every generation of men had to know what it was like. With us, we must forget, or we could never indulge in the murderous nonsense again.”<sup>22</sup> While our own history does not extend back as far as ancient Greece, that has not stopped virtually every American generation since the early 17th century from having its own war. The only conclusion to be drawn from this woeful record is that humanity has a genius for inflicting heartbreak and misery on itself.

In their darkest hours, servicemen themselves had doubts about the war. More than 60 percent of army combat veterans answered yes to the question “Do you ever get the feeling that this war is not worth fighting?” and the army Research Branch found that “the more closely men approached the real business of war, the more likely they were to question its worthwhileness.” There was also a “sense of futility” among these men, rooted in the idea that “though winning the war saved the United States from a worse evil, there would be little in the way of positive gains and, especially, there would be other wars.”<sup>23</sup> Writing from the Pacific in March 1944, marine lieutenant Cord Meyer Jr. pleaded that “we cannot continue to make a shambles of this world, and already a blind man can see the shortsighted decisions that point inevitably to that ultimate Armageddon, World War III.”<sup>24</sup> The feeling of futility among veterans was well founded. At the 2004 dedication of the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C., Fred Helfenstein of Roanoke, Virginia, quietly observed, “This is so late. So many who aren’t here. And look at today. We thought we had learned. But war goes on forever.”<sup>25</sup> Indeed, contemporary politicians cynically pay lip service to the sacrifices of this generation while aggressively pursuing policies guaranteed to create what this generation fought against: more wars.<sup>26</sup>

As is fitting, we should give a World War II serviceman the last word in this narrative. In a letter to his parents, PFC Richard King wrote the following from Okinawa:

Some boys were jumping into the sea, when their faces were blown away. Two of us, carried one boy back with us, and our aid men gave him plasma all night but he died next morning. He had his jaw, tongue, and nose blown away. This is a horrible thing to write about, but people should understand what war means, then maybe they wouldn’t start another so soon. They should be able to live together in peace.<sup>27</sup>

## Epigraphs

1. Howard Nemerov, "The War in the Air," in Howard Nemerov, *War Stories: Poems About Long Ago and Now* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 31.
2. Willard Waller, *The Veteran Comes Back* (New York: Dryden Press, 1944), 248. Willard adds, "Most of the present generation of soldiers have known poverty, hunger, and the fear of the gaunt, grey wolf. Nearly all have known what it is to be unemployed." *Ibid.*, 248–249.

## Introduction

1. James A. Michener, *Tales of the South Pacific* [1947] (New York: Macmillan, 1954), 3.
2. *Sacramento Bee*, 10 November 2003. The Department of Veterans Affairs predicts that by 2013 only 1 million of the 16 million Americans who served in World War II will still be alive. Ellen Creager, "Friendly Invasions of WWII Battlefields Mark 60 Years," *Sacramento Bee*, 15 February 2004.
3. Terkel explained that this expression had been suggested to him by World War II journalist Herbert Mitgang, and that "it is a phrase that has been frequently voiced by men of his and my generation." Terkel noted that the quotation marks had been added "simply because the adjective 'good' mated to the noun 'war' is so incongruous." Studs Terkel, *The Good War: An Oral History of World War Two* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1985), n.p.
4. Paul Fussell, *The Boys' Crusade: The American Infantry in Northwestern Europe, 1944–1945* (New York: Modern Library, 2003), xiii.
5. Tom Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation* (New York: Random House, 1998), xx, xxi.
6. One of Brokaw's Greats proclaims this era as the last time in American history "when a full-blown spirit of true patriotism was in every heart." Another person is described by Brokaw as "an unabashed patriot. That's a part of American life lost on younger generations." and just in case we haven't gotten the point, what Brokaw describes as a "common lament" among the Greatest Generation is the present-day lack of "the old-fashioned patriotism that got them through so much heartache and sacrifice." Brokaw, 152, 75, 159. Brokaw notes that personal responsibility was "such a defining characteristic of the World War II generation that when the rules changed later, these men and women were appalled." Brokaw also insists that "faith in God was not a casual part of the lives of the World War II generation." Brokaw, 39, 55.
7. *Ibid.*, 232.
8. Tom Matthews, *Our Fathers' War: Growing Up in the Shadow of the Greatest Generation* (New York: Broadway Books, 2005); Douglas Brinkley, *The Boys of Pointe Du Hoc: Ronald Reagan, D-Day, and the U.S. Army 2nd Ranger Battalion* (New York: William Morrow, 2005), 9. Commenting on Reagan's Normandy speeches, Lou Cannon

observes that Reagan “had spent his nights at home throughout World War II. But because he believed he had been to war, he was able to play his part perfectly in Normandy, where old soldiers wept at his speeches and eighty-eight-year old retired General Lawton Collins, the ‘Lightning Joe’ who had commanded the U.S. VII Corps that took Utah Beach on D-Day, proudly told reporters that he had voted for Reagan and would vote for him again.” Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 486.

9. “Kerry’s Acceptance: ‘We Have It in Our Power to Change the World Again,’” *New York Times*, 30 July 2004.

10. St. Florian quoted in Muriel Dobbins, “National WW II Vets Memorial Is Unveiled,” *Sacramento Bee*, 29 April 2004; David Montgomery, “Final Muster,” *Washington Post*, 30 May 2004.

11. Another letter from George H. W. Bush observes that “our Nation came together as never before or since to win the largest war of all time and literally save the world from the forces of tyranny.” Premiums offered as inducements for D-Day Museum membership include, at the \$60 level, your choice of an “Official D-Day Museum Golf Cap with embroidered logo” or an “authentic reproduction of historic World War II ‘V for Victory’ Pin.” But the premium that should raise more than a few eyebrows, especially among veterans, is gained at the \$25 level: a “commemorative World War II Dog Tag.” Form letters, National D-Day Museum, New Orleans, 2003.

12. *Time*, 10 November 2003, 98.

13. In the forefront of opposition to the Good War/Greatest Generation trend has been Paul Fussell, noted writer and himself a combat veteran of the war. In his recent book *The Boys’ Crusade*, Fussell takes note of “all the chatter about the Good War and the suggestions of special virtue among the boyish citizen soldiers.” Fussell, 161. Other historians expressing skepticism of Brokaw’s thesis include Arthur Schlesinger Jr., who flatly states that “my generation, the generation that fought World War II, wasn’t, despite Tom Brokaw’s generous phrase, the ‘greatest generation.’” Arthur Schlesinger Jr., “The Rediscovery of World War II,” *AARP Bulletin*, May 1999, 22. Instead, Schlesinger believes that this group “was like most other generations in American history. It consisted of plain people who, confronted by moral threats to their country, accepted their duty and performed it laconically, modestly, self-effacingly, without show, without flourish.” Schlesinger believes that if any generation deserves the “greatest” moniker it is “the generation that won the War for Independence and drew up the Constitution.” Schlesinger, 23, 22. Not surprisingly, Joseph J. Ellis, who specializes in the Revolution and early Republic, agrees. Referring to the generation that he calls the “founding brothers,” Ellis notes that “despite efforts to locate the title in the twentieth century, they comprised, by any informal and fair-minded standard, the greatest generation of political talent in American history.” Joseph J. Ellis, *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation* (New York: Vintage, 2000), 13. Ellis further argues that “America’s emergence as the dominant world power in the



1940s could never have occurred if the United States had not established stable national institutions at the start that permitted the consolidation of the continent.” *Ibid.*, 12.

Writing in *Esquire*, Charles P. Pierce observes that among the stories of the Greatest Generation that Tom Brokaw *doesn't* pass on is the one about World War II veteran Byron De La Beckwith shooting veteran Medgar Evers in the back, and speculates that Brokaw has “discovered in himself a native South Dakotan’s genius for getting rich off corn products.” In Pierce’s view, the “beatification of the Greatest Generation” has taken place because “some vague unpaid cultural debt has been conjured out of a kind of sentimental historicity.” Charles P. Pierce, “The Complaint: The Beatification of the Greatest Generation,” *Esquire*, September 2001, 74. Rick Atkinson refers to the “gauzy mythology” that has settled over World War II and its participants: “The veterans are lionized as ‘the Greatest Generation,’ an accolade none sought and many dismiss as twaddle. They are condemned to sentimental hagiography, in which all the brothers are valiant and all the sisters virtuous.” Rick Atkinson, *An Army at Dawn: The War in North Africa, 1942–1943* (New York: Owl, 2003), 4. Less diplomatically, Paul Fussell adds that “what has been celebrated as the Greatest Generation included among the troops and their officers plenty of criminals, psychopaths, cowards, and dolts.” Fussell, 174. For other discussions of the “Greatest Generation” thesis, see Kevin Baker, “The Guilt Dogging the Greatest Generation,” *New York Times*, 12 November 2000; Rick Marin, “Raising a Flag for Generation W.W.II,” *New York Times*, 23 April 2001; Maureen Dowd, “The Gabbiest Generation,” *New York Times*, 25 April 2001; Mike Males, “The True ‘Greatest Generation’ of Our Time: X,” *Los Angeles Times*, 26 April 2001; and Gordon S. Wood, “The Greatest Generation,” *New York Review of Books* 48, no. 5 (29 March 2001): 17–22.

A number of historians were questioning the goodness of the Second World War before the appearance of Brokaw’s book, including John Morton Blum in *V Was for Victory* (1976) and Michael C. C. Adams in *The Best War Ever* (1994). In addition, scholars at a symposium held at Loyola University of Chicago in 1992 reevaluated the impact of the war years on American society in largely negative terms. John Morton Blum, *V Was for Victory: Politics and American Culture During World War II* (New York: Harvest/HBJ, 1976); Michael C. C. Adams, *The Best War Ever: America and World War II* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); *The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness During World War II*, ed. by Lewis A. Erenberg and Susan E. Hirsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

14. See Tom Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation Speaks: Letters and Reflections* (New York: Delta, 1999) and Tom Brokaw, *An Album of Memories: Personal Histories from the Greatest Generation* (New York: Random House, 2001).

15. Ray Raphael, *Founding Myths: Stories That Hide Our Patriotic Past* (New York: The New Press, 2004), 276.

16. The Ford Motor Company, which has not been shy about proclaiming its own role in promoting the welfare of women and minorities during wartime, had to be coerced by the War Manpower Commission into hiring black women. See Karen Anderson, *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women During World War II* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1981), 38; See Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, “Traditions from Home: African Americans in

Wartime Richmond, California," in *The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness During World War II*, ed. by Lewis A. Erenberg and Susan E. Hirsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 267, 268.

17. Samuel A. Stouffer et al., *The American Soldier*, v. 2: *Combat and Its Aftermath* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), 169.

18. Quoted in Nigel Hamilton, *JFK: Reckless Youth* (New York: Random House, 1992), 607.

19. William Manchester, "The Bloodiest Battle of All," *New York Times*, 14 June 1987, 74.

20. Lee Kennett, *G.I.: The American Soldier in World War II* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1987), 240.

21. Charles S. Stevenson, "On the Beaches: The Atlantic," *Atlantic Monthly* 174, no. 4 (October 1944): 49, 53.

22. Martha Gellhorn, "You're on Your Way Home," *Collier's*, 22 September 1945, 22.

23. Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., "The Soldier's Faith," in *The Occasional Speeches of Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes*, comp. by Mark DeWolfe Howe (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 1962), 80.

24. Robert Musil, "There Must Be More to Love than Death: A Conversation with Kurt Vonnegut," in *Conversations with Kurt Vonnegut*, ed. by William Rodney Allen (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1988), 230.

25. When the army Research Branch asked soldiers in November 1945 to agree or disagree with the statement "On the whole, I think the Army has hurt me more than it has helped me," 64 percent agreed. Stouffer et al., v. 2, 611.

26. James Jones, *The Thin Red Line* (New York: Delta, 1998), 350. In *WW II*, Jones notes that "when the veterans began to spend two nights a week down at the local American Legion, the families and parents and wives would heave a sigh of relief. Because they knew then that, after all, it—the war—was truly over." James Jones, *WW II* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1975), 256.

27. Gerald F. Linderman, *The World Within War: America's Combat Experience in World War II* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 361. Linderman believes that the reluctance of this generation to describe what the war was really like created a vacuum, and "into this vacuum moved home-front images of warfare still expansive, dramatic, valorous. The cost of healing was that the next generation would acquire an expurgated version of combat, 1941–45." *Ibid.*, 362.

28. For American military personnel during World War II, there were 291,557 battle deaths and 113,842 "other deaths" for a total of 405,399. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1957* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1961), 735.

29. Joan Pearson and Robert Iadeluoca, for instance, have conducted an ongoing discussion of Brokaw's books on the Web site SeniorNet, which includes an adoring interview of Brokaw himself. Pearson told Brokaw, "We are awed on a daily basis by the humility and the humor of the WWII veterans and other

members of this generation.” Joan Pearson, “SeniorNet Conversation with Tom Brokaw about the Greatest Generation,” on [www.seniornet.org/edu/art/brokaw.shtml](http://www.seniornet.org/edu/art/brokaw.shtml).

30. Brokaw, *Greatest Generation*, 293.

31. John Steinbeck, “Once There Was a War: An Introduction,” in John Steinbeck, *Once There Was a War* (New York: Viking, 1958), xiii.

32. Bill Mauldin, *Up Front* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1945), 15.

## Chapter 1

1. Paul Fussell, *Doing Battle: The Making of a Skeptic* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1996), 108.

2. Studs Terkel, *The Good War: An Oral History of World War Two* (New York: Ballantine, 1984), 43, 42. A similar response to the sight of a dead Japanese was more rare, although this was Robert Lekachman’s experience when he saw his first dead Japanese on Guam: “He looked pitiful, with his thick glasses. He had a sheaf of letters in his pocket. He looked like an awkward kid who’d been taken right out of his home to this miserable place.” *Ibid.*, 63–64.

3. Martha Gellhorn, “Postcards from Italy,” *Collier’s*, 1 July 1944, 41. Another soldier told a Red Cross worker that he was nurturing a hatred of a more personal nature: “I don’t hate the Germans as much as I hate the Four-F back in New York who stole my wife and my car. I want to kill him.” Quoted in Eleanor (Bumpy) Stevenson, “I Knew Your Soldier, Pt. 2,” *Saturday Evening Post*, 28 October 1944, 70.

4. When soldiers were asked, “How did seeing German prisoners make you feel about the Germans?” 54 percent responded, “They are men just like us. It’s too bad we have to be fighting them.” Samuel A. Stouffer et al., *The American Soldier*, v. 2: *Combat and Its Aftermath* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), 161.

5. Hans von Luck, *Panzer Commander: The Memoirs of Colonel Hans Von Luck* (New York: Dell, 1991), 155.

6. Gerald F. Linderman, *The World Within War: America’s Combat Experience in World War II* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 95, 104.

7. “Doctors in Foxholes,” *Newsweek*, 7 July 1943, 86.

8. Quoted in Willard Waller, *The Veteran Comes Back* (New York: Dryden Press, 1944), 49.

9. J. Glenn Gray, *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle* [1959] (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1967), 138.

10. Eric Sevareid, *Not So Wild a Dream* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), 388. Sevareid was a correspondent for the Columbia Broadcasting System and covered the war extensively. He had a number of close calls, including leaving Paris just ahead of the Nazis and parachuting into the Burmese jungle when his plane developed engine problems. See “Burma Shave,” *Newsweek*, 23 August 1943, 80.

11. Because German troops knew they could expect no mercy from the Russians, the end of the war saw German divisions hurrying to surrender to the Americans. In one example, Generalfieldmarshal Schörner told Siegfried Knapp that even

though the formal surrender had already taken place “my army group and I fought our way through from Czechoslovakia to the west and surrendered to the Americans. However, the Americans just turned us over to the Russians anyway, so it was all for nothing.” See Siegfried Knapp with Ted Brusaw, *Soldat: Reflections of a German Soldier, 1936–1949* (New York: Dell, 1992), 334–335.

12. Gerald F. Linderman observes that “both the U.S. Army and the Wehrmacht established as policy the acceptance of enemy soldiers’ surrender—if those yielding were German or American rather than Japanese or Russian.” Linderman, 108.

13. Robert Redfield, “The Japanese-Americans,” in *American Society in Wartime*, ed. by William Fielding Ogburn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943), 149.

14. Helen Mears, “The Japanese Riddle,” *Atlantic Monthly* 172, no. 3 (September 1943): 104.

15. “The 4<sup>th</sup> Ronin,” *Life*, 1 November 1943, 52.

16. One example of this readiness to create Japanese caricatures was Douglas Aircraft’s “Tokio Kid.” The Kid was a drooling Japanese cartoon character with thick glasses, sharpened teeth, and pointed ears whose image was put on posters in an attempt to cut back on waste and breakage. A typical line delivered by the Kid was, “Oh sooo happy for honorable scrap busting of tools—help winning for Jap. Thank you!” The Kid became immediately popular and was adopted by 450 other industries as well as the Department of Treasury for its war bond drives. “The Tokio Kid,” *Time*, 15 June 1942, 36.

17. American Institute of Public Opinion, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935–1971* (New York: Random House, 1972), 509. Americans also believed that 63 percent of the Japanese people “entirely” approved of the “killing and starving of prisoners,” while only 31 percent of the German people entirely approved of the inhumane treatment of prisoners in Germany. *Ibid.*, 508–509. Polls taken in America consistently reveal the opinion that it was the German government, not the German people, that was the enemy. In late May 1942, 79 percent answered “German government” when asked, “In the war with Germany, do you think that our chief enemy is the German people as a whole, or the German government?” In November 1942, 74 percent answered “German government” to the same question. *Ibid.*, 336, 356.

18. John W. Dower, “Race, Language, and War in Two Cultures: World War II in Asia,” in *The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness During World War II*, ed. by Lewis A. Erenberg and Susan E. Hirsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 172. Other tunes included “We’re Gonna Find a Fellow Who Is Yellow and Beat Him Red, White, and Blue” and “Oh, You Little Son of an Oriental.” *Ibid.*, 184.

19. John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon, 1986), 81. Before the onset of the war, Churchill told Roosevelt that he hoped the president would be able “to keep the Japanese dog quiet in the Pacific.” *Ibid.*, 82.

20. “Nation Replies in Grim Fury to Jap Brutality to Prisoners,” *Newsweek*, 7

February 1944, 19.

[21.](#) Lawrence R. Samuel, *Pledging Allegiance: American Identity and the Bond Drive of World War II* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 57.

[22.](#) Quoted in Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 217.

[23.](#) Tamura Yoshio, "Unit 731," in *Japan at War: An Oral History*, ed. by Haruko Taya Cook and Theodore F. Cook (New York: The New Press, 1992), 164.

[24.](#) Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 7. Dower observes that "the Japanese themselves looked down on all the other 'colored' races. At the same time, intriguingly, they themselves had esteemed 'whiteness' since ancient times—not only in an individual's complexion, but also as a more abstract symbol of purity." *Ibid.*, 208.

[25.](#) The Military Tribunal of the Far East estimated 260,000 killed at Nanking, but Iris Chang notes that this number "does not include Japanese burial statistics of the Chinese dead, which could push the figure into the 300,000 or even 400,000 range." Iris Chang, *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 101–102. Masahiro Yamamoto argues that "the Rape of Nanking lasted six weeks and claimed the lives of 15,000 to 50,000 people, a vast majority of whom were adult men." Masahiro Yamamoto, *Nanking: Anatomy of an Atrocity* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2000), 282.

[26.](#) Chang, 85–99.

[27.](#) See William Munday, "Diary of a Dead Jap," *Collier's*, 25 July 1942, 15.

[28.](#) "Its Soldiers Are Veterans," *Life*, 5 January 1942, 46; Cecil Brown, "How Japan Wages War," *Life*, 11 May 1942.

[29.](#) Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 244.

[30.](#) Dower, "Race, Language, and War in Two Cultures," 191.

[31.](#) Quoted in Saburo Ienaga, *The Pacific War, 1931–1945: A Critical Perspective on Japan's Role in World War II* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), 49.

[32.](#) Quoted in Linderman, 150.

[33.](#) "How Strong Is Japan? It Is Intelligent, United, Faithful," *Life*, 16 August 1943, 93.

[34.](#) "War: Japan Launches Reckless Attack on U.S.," *Life*, 15 December 1941, 27.

[35.](#) Michael Doyle, "A Veteran's Memorial: Diary Describes Bataan Death March, Prison Camps, Liberation," *Sacramento Bee*, 31 May 2004.

[36.](#) Cord Meyer Jr., "On the Beaches: The Pacific," *Atlantic Monthly* 174, no. 4 (October 1944), 42.

[37.](#) Rikihei Inoguchi and Tadashi Nakajima, *The Divine Wind: Japan's Kamikaze Force in World War II* (Annapolis, Md.: United States Naval Institute, 1958), 186, 187. Relatively rare in Western culture, the contemplation of the beauty in death was prevalent among the Japanese, and often bordered on the erotic. Just before his death, Onishi composed the following haiku: "Refreshingly / After the violent storm / The moon rose radiant." *Ibid.*, 187. Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney has recently questioned the "fanaticism" of kamikazes, arguing that most were assigned to this duty or pressured into it. See Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *Kamikaze Diaries*:



*Reflections of Japanese Student Soldiers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

38. C. R. Brown, "Foreword," in Rikihei Inoguchi and Tadashi Nakajima, *The Divine Wind: Japan's Kamikaze Force in World War II* (Annapolis, Md.: United States Naval Institute, 1958), v.

39. Quoted in Linderman, 147.

40. Nogi Harumichi, "Keeping Order in the Indies," in *Japan at War: An Oral History*, ed. by Haruko Taya Cook and Theodore F. Cook (New York: The New Press, 1992), 110–111.

41. Uno Shintaro, "Spies and Bandits," in *Japan at War: An Oral History*, ed. by Haruko Taya Cook and Theodore F. Cook (New York: The New Press, 1992), 155–156.

42. Munday, 29.

43. See John Costello, *The Pacific War, 1941–1945* (New York: Quill, 1982), 216.

44. M. C. Ford, "Slow Death in a Jap Cage," *Collier's*, 5 September 1942, 14.

45. Costello, *The Pacific War*, 228. The exact number of fatalities on the Bataan Death March cannot be known. Ronald Spector believes that 600 Americans and 5,000–10,000 Filipinos died on the march itself, and 16,000 more Americans and Filipinos died in the first few weeks in the prison camp. Ronald H. Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun: The American War with Japan* (New York: Free Press, 1985), 396. John Keegan believes that "some 25,000 had died of wounds, disease or mistreatment" on the Bataan Death March. John Keegan, *The Second World War* (New York: Penguin, 1990), 266.

46. The Bataan story was not released to the public until early 1944, even though officials had known the details since April 1943 when a group of prisoners managed to escape from the Philippines. The official explanation was that officials had held up the story until all hope of providing relief to the prisoners was exhausted. But many suspected that the timing of the story had more to do with the selling of war bonds, and indeed, the Bataan revelations pushed war bond sales to new heights. "The Nation: The Nature of the Enemy," *Time*, 7 February 1944, 13, 12.

47. Quoted in Doyle, *Sacramento Bee*.

48. Melvyn McCoy and S. M. Mellnik, "Death Was Part of Our Life," *Life*, 7 February 1944, 30.

49. Keegan, 281.

50. *The Oxford Companion to American Military History*, ed. by John Whiteclay Chambers II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), s.v. "Prisoners of War." A survey after the war found that the average American prisoner held by the Germans had lost 38 pounds in captivity, compared to the 61 pounds that the average American lost under the Japanese. Lee Kennett, *G.I.: The American Soldier in World War II* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1987), 187.

51. Costello, *The Pacific War*, 323. John W. Dower notes that it was on Guadalcanal that the Japanese first booby-trapped their dead and wounded and

staged fake surrenders to kill American troops. The “Goettge patrol,” in which a fake Japanese surrender resulted in the killing of 20 Americans, achieved legendary status among marines and hardened the “kill or be killed” psychology of the Pacific campaign. Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 64.

52. Quoted in Nigel Hamilton, *JFK: Reckless Youth* (New York: Random House, 1992), 531.

53. On the differences between Japanese prisoner of war camps and camps maintained by Germans and Italians see Stephen C. Sitter and Charles J. Katz, “American Prisoners of War Held by the Japanese,” and Robert J. Bernucci, “American Prisoners of War Held by the Germans and Italians,” in *Neuropsychiatry in World War II*, v. 2: *Overseas Theaters*, ed. by William S. Mullins (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Surgeon General, Department of the Army, 1973), 933, 977.

54. Quoted in John Lardner, “There’s Only One Way to Lick the Japs,” *Newsweek*, 22 June 1942, 21.

55. Quoted in Linderman, 159–160.

56. Linderman, 178.

57. Jones asked, “What kind of war do civilians suppose we fought, anyway? We shot prisoners in cold blood, wiped out hospitals, strafed lifeboats, killed or mistreated enemy civilians, finished off the enemy wounded, tossed the dying into a hole with the dead, and in the Pacific boiled the flesh off enemy skulls to make table ornaments for sweethearts, or carved their bones into letter openers.” Edgar L. Jones, “One War Is Enough,” *Atlantic Monthly* 177, no. 2 (February 1946): 49.

58. “Do We Pamper POWs?” *Collier’s*, 2 June 1945, 78.

59. Kennett, 181.

60. “Picture of the Week,” *Life*, 22 May 1944, 34, 35.

61. Spector, 266.

62. John Ellis, *The Sharp End: The Fighting Man in World War II* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1980), 82.

63. Spector, 502.

64. James Bradley (with Ron Powers), *Flags of Our Fathers* (New York: Bantam, 2001), 215. More Medals of Honor (27) were awarded at Iwo Jima than at any other battle in U.S. history. *Ibid.*, 247.

65. Phelps Adams, “Attack on Carrier Bunker Hill,” in *Reporting World War II: American Journalism, 1938–1946* (New York: Library of America, 2001), 659, 662.

66. Costello, *The Pacific War*, 578. Ronald Spector believes that the Japanese dead at Okinawa was closer to 70,000, but concurs with Costello on the cost of this campaign. Spector emphasizes that the casualties suffered by the U.S. Navy were “far exceeding the losses suffered in any previous U.S. naval campaign.” Spector, 540.

67. Frank D. Morris and Jack Turcott, “Flying Coffin Corps,” *Collier’s*, 9 June 1945, 18; Keegan, 571–573.

68. Robert Sherrod, "The Nature of the Enemy," *Time*, 7 August 1944, 27.
69. Kinjō Shigeaki, "Now They Call It 'Group Suicide,'" in *Japan at War: An Oral History*, ed. by Haruko Taya Cook and Theodore F. Cook (New York: The New Press, 1992), 365.
70. Miyagi Kikuko, "Student Nurses of the 'Lily Corps,'" in *Japan at War: An Oral History*, ed. by Haruko Taya Cook and Theodore F. Cook (New York: The New Press, 1992), 360.
71. John Lardner, "Why the American Soldier Doesn't Always Win," *Newsweek*, 8 March 1943, 23.
72. John Hersey, *Into the Valley: A Skirmish of the Marines* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1943), 56.
73. William W. Boddie, "Our Pacific Foe: Deadly Sniper, Bold Flier, He'll Stick to End," *Newsweek*, 29 November 1943, 28.
74. Barrett McGurn, "Modern Living on a Beachhead in Bougainville," in *The Best from Yank, the Army Weekly*, selected by the editors of *Yank* (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1945), 41, 42.
75. Stouffer et al., v. 2, 70. WACs serving in the Pacific were evacuated for medical reasons at a higher rate than noncombat men because of deficiencies in the uniforms they were issued. See Doris Weatherford, *American Women and World War II* (New York: Facts on File, 1990), 87.
76. James A. Michener, *Tales of the South Pacific* [1947] (New York: Macmillan, 1954), 64–65.
77. Kennett, 154.
78. Eugene A. Wright and Michael Mitchell, "The Jap Is Not Mysterious!" *Infantry Journal* 53, no. 6 (December 1943): 12. "The only way we could see the Japs," said one soldier, "was to let them get close enough so we could make them out against the sky over our holes. Then we'd cut loose." See Bill Alcine, "Landing on Los Negros," in *The Best from Yank, the Army Weekly*, selected by the editors of *Yank* (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1945), 145.
79. Babcock quoted in Kennett, 167; corporal quoted in "Jungle War: Actual Comments from Fighting Men in the South Pacific Theater," *Infantry Journal* 52, no. 3 (March 1943): 9.
80. See "Jungle War," 8, 13, 10.
81. Barrett McGurn notes of the Japanese on Bougainville that they "displayed an amazing ability to infiltrate. At one point they tunneled under the barbed wire and kept on crawling deeper into our area all night long, creeping from bush to tree, through our communication trenches and even from one heap of dead to the next. One group of Japs opened a grave we had dug for others killed two days earlier and huddled among the corpses. Still another Jap used a latrine hole as a pillbox." Barrett McGurn, "The Second Battle of Bougainville," in *The Best from Yank, the Army Weekly*, selected by the editors of *Yank* (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1945), 54.
82. Mack Morriss, "The Five-Day Attack on Hastings Ridge," in *The Best from*

Yank, *the Army Weekly*, selected by the editor of *Yank* (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1945), 19.

83. Anonymous, "Jungle War," in *The Best from Yank, the Army Weekly*, selected by the editors of *Yank* (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1945), 10.

84. "Jungle War," 8, 9.

85. Terkel, 107.

86. American Institute of Public Opinion, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1935–1971*, 477–478. When a group of infantrymen who had had some contact with the Japanese was asked, "What would you like to see happen to the Japanese after the war?" 58 percent chose "Wipe out the whole Japanese nation." Stouffer et al., v. 2, 160.

87. Quoted in Linderman, 169, 178.

88. Alexander Archer Vandegrift, "Gen. Vandegrift Writes His Wife," *Life*, 16 November 1942, 83.

89. "The Nation: The Nature of the Enemy," 12; Truman quoted in Spector, 555.

90. *Newsweek*, 2 February 1942, 13.

91. *Time*, 15 January 1945, 47.

92. *Time*, 18 January 1943; inside front cover; *Newsweek*, 1 January 1945, 34.

93. *Time*, 27 July 1942, 72.

94. Richard Tregaskis, *Guadalcanal Diary* (New York: Random House, 1943), 16–17, 107.

95. Robert Sherrod, *Tarawa: The Story of a Battle* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1944), 46, 99, 149. A survivor of the Cabanatuan camp on the Philippines used the same term as Sherrod, claiming that "there is only one solution for the Japanese problem—and that is total extermination." Quoted in Robert Sherrod, "I Can't Make Your Party, Pete," *Collier's*, 26 May 1945, 24.

96. Cord Meyer Jr., 43.

97. James Jones, *The Thin Red Line* [1962] (New York: Delta, 1998), 369.

98. Wouk added that "a white flag should have flown from each island at sunrise, by all the logic of war. Since the Japs appeared illogically unwilling to surrender, the naval bombardiers set about annihilating them with an oddly good-humored, ribald ferocity." Herman Wouk, *The Caine Mutiny* [1951] (Boston: Back Bay Books, 2003), 257.

99. Terkel, 58, 59.

100. E. B. Sledge, *With the Old Breed at Peleliu and Okinawa* (Novato, Calif.: Presidio, 1981), 34.

101. Hersey, *Into the Valley*, 55.

102. William C. Menninger, "Psychiatry and the War," *Atlantic Monthly* 176, no. 5 (November 1945): 109.

103. Gray, 28–29.

104. Gray, 40. As Bill Mauldin has demonstrated, combat also presents unique opportunities for humor, though often of the gallows variety. In a famous anecdote, an officer tells his men who are pinned down by enemy fire on a beach,

"We are getting killed on the beaches—let's go inland and get killed." Stouffer et al., v. 2, 68.

[105.](#) John Ciardi, *Saipan: The War Diary of John Ciardi* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1988), 94.

[106.](#) Carlo D'Este, *Decision in Normandy* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991), 112; Bob Sylva, "Four Veterans Share Memories of the Invasion," *Sacramento Bee*, 6 June 2004.

[107.](#) Sevareid, 412.

[108.](#) Joe McCarthy, "Liberation of Athens," in *The Best from Yank, the Army Weekly*, selected by the editors of *Yank* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1945), 218.

[109.](#) John E. Donaldson Jr., "The Lights Go On Again," *Washington Post*, 28 May 2004.

[110.](#) Costello, *The Pacific War*, 551. Vichy French correspondent Robert Guillain, who witnessed the Tokyo firebombing from a hillside, reported, "The Japanese people in the gardens near mine are all outside, or at the mouths of their holes, and I hear their cries of admiration (how typically Japanese!) at this grandiose, almost theatrical, spectacle." *Ibid.*, 550.

[111.](#) "Blazing Tokyo Symbolizes Doom That Awaits Every Big Jap City," *Newsweek*, 28 May 1945, 41. The stench of burning flesh over Tokyo forced American aircrews to put on oxygen masks so they would not vomit. Conrad C. Crane, *Bombs, Cities and Civilians: American Airpower Strategy in World War II* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 132.

[112.](#) Gray, 52.

[113.](#) Gray, 55, 56.

[114.](#) Cord Meyer Jr., 43.

[115.](#) James Jones, *The Thin Red Line*, 328.

[116.](#) Norman Mailer, *The Naked and the Dead* (New York: Picador USA, 1998), 196.

[117.](#) S. L. A. Marshall, 184, 185.

[118.](#) Cord Meyer Jr., 43.

[119.](#) von Luck, 232.

[120.](#) von Luck, 236.

[121.](#) Telephone interview of William J. Bailey by Kenneth D. Rose, 10 October 2000.

[122.](#) Bailey's missions in Vietnam were arguably even more dangerous than the ones he flew in Europe. Bailey became part of the "Wild Weasel" program, which was dedicated to knocking out enemy surface-to-air missile sites. Those flying these missions would deliberately allow enemy radar to lock on their planes in order to get a fix on the enemy's location. Bailey interview.

[123.](#) Menninger, "Psychiatry and the War," 108.

[124.](#) The term "shell shock" was coined by British pathologist Frederick Mott, who believed that exploding shells caused minute hemorrhages in the brain. Only a few



victims had these hemorrhages, however, and many who developed the symptoms of shell shock had not been near an exploding shell. By World War II, the term “shell shock” had been abandoned in favor of “traumatic neurosis.” See S. Kirson Weinberg, “The Combat Neuroses,” *American Journal of Sociology* 51, no. 5 (March 1946): 466 n. 4.

[125.](#) Kennett, 28.

[126.](#) See Robert H. Zieger, *America's Great War: World War I and the American Experience* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 111.

[127.](#) Ben Shephard, *A War of Nerves: Soldiers and Psychiatrists in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 219. Joseph Heller parodies army psychiatrists in his novel *Catch-22*. When Heller's protagonist Yossarian has a dream that he's holding a live fish in his hands, the psychiatrists immediately become excited:

“What does the fish remind you of?”

“Other fish.”

“And what do other fish remind you of?”

“Other fish.”

Major Sanderson sat back disappointedly. “Do you like fish?”

“Not especially.”

“Just why do you think you have such a morbid aversion to fish?” asked Major Sanderson triumphantly.

“They're too bland,” Yossarian answered. “And too bony.”

Major Sanderson nodded understandingly, with a smile that was agreeable and insincere. “That's a very interesting explanation. But we'll soon discover the true reason, I suppose.” Joseph Heller, *Catch-22* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 305.

[128.](#) Shephard, 221.

[129.](#) Quoted in Stouffer et al., v. 2, 76–77.

[130.](#) Weinberg, 471 n. 18.

[131.](#) An army Research Branch poll asked enlisted men in the Mediterranean campaign the question “In general, would you say that battle fighting became more frightening or less frightening the more you saw of it?” Seventy-four percent answered “more frightening.” Stouffer et al., v. 2, 71. One group in the army that collectively refused to acknowledge fear and anxiety were the paratroops, with the consequence that members of this group developed their own distinctive psychiatric distresses that included “weakness or paralysis of one or both legs” and a “total black-out of insight.” *Ibid.*, 206.

[132.](#) Shephard, 225.

[133.](#) A. Kardiner, “Forensic Issues in the Neuroses of War,” *American Journal of Psychiatry* 99, no. 5 (March 1943): 657.

[134.](#) Shephard, 227, 226.

[135.](#) Menninger, “Psychiatry and the War,” 109.

[136.](#) Linderman, 356.

[137.](#) Ellis, *The Sharp End*, 70. While soldiers overwhelmingly feared the louder

weapons, the mortality rate from machine guns was higher than from artillery. *Ibid.*, 89. John Dollard, who did a study of 300 veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade from the Spanish Civil War, found that the wounds that soldiers feared most were to the abdomen, eyes, brain, and genitals, in that order. See Waller, 50.

138. Bill Mauldin, *Up Front* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1945), 93.

139. Eleanor (Bumpy) Stevenson, "I Knew Your Soldier, Pt. 3," *Saturday Evening Post*, 4 November 1944, 109. An army psychologist witnessed episodes in which "the patient executes strenuous digging and scraping movements in his bed, reproducing the common experience of a soldier lying in a shallow depression under heavy fire, and attempting to convert it into a deeper hole." Quoted in Kennett, 136.

140. Appel estimated that a soldier could only endure between 200 and 240 days of combat before he became ineffective. See Shephard, 245. Army psychiatrists Roy R. Grinker and John P. Spiegel also believed that "no one is immune from a war neurosis; anyone no matter how strong or stable may develop a war neurosis under proper circumstances." Quoted in Weinberg, 475 n. 33. By the end of 1943, 10,000 men a month were being discharged from the army for psychiatric reasons. "The Psychiatric Toll of Warfare," 141.

141. See Linderman, 356.

142. Quoted in Shephard, 292.

143. Astor, *The Mighty Eighth*, 157–158.

144. "The Psychiatric Toll of Warfare," *Fortune* 28, no. 6 (December 1943): 277.

145. Stouffer et al., v. 2, 370–375, 383.

146. Randall Jarrell, "Introduction," in *Randall Jarrell: The Complete Poems* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969), 8.

147. Gerald Astor, *A Blood-Dimmed Tide: The Battle of the Bulge by the Men Who Fought It* (New York: Dell, 1994), 498.

148. *Let There Be Light*, dir. John Huston, U.S. Army, PMF 5019, 1948, Educational Video Library, VHS No. EVL 112, *A History of World War II*, v. 12. In 1945's *I'll Be Seeing You* we have Hollywood's first attempt to portray the trials of a shell-shocked soldier trying to return to normal life after his release from a psychiatric hospital. *Time* observed that the picture's "crucial weakness" was that "it confronts its fumbling, humiliated, pitiful soldier Zack (Joseph Cotton) with a girl (Ginger Rogers) who, instead of being reasonably average, is also a decidedly special case. Zack is on Christmas furlough from an Army psychiatric hospital; Mary is on Christmas furlough from a penitentiary." See "The New Pictures: I'll Be Seeing You," *Time*, 22 January 1945, 91–92.

149. Quoted in Stuart Kaminsky, *John Huston: Maker of Magic* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978), 43; quoted in Gerald Pratley, *The Cinema of John Huston* (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1977), 56.

150. John Whiteclay Chambers II, editor in chief, *Oxford Companion to American Military History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), s.v. "Film, War and the Military." On the subject of releases, Huston claimed, "At first they said they had

no releases. Then they did have the releases and this was brought to their attention. Then the releases were lost." Quoted in Pratley, 56.

[151.](#) Ben Shephard believes that Huston "romanticised what was going on at Mason General," and "put a warm, Irish, humanistic gloss on what was in reality a tough and authoritarian regime." But Shephard concludes that "in conveying a sense of optimism and purpose, I do not believe he misrepresented the overall truth." Shephard, *272*, 278.

[152.](#) Terkel, 64. The one exception in the Pacific was Australia, where tensions between American and Australian troops sometimes exploded in violence, such as the 1943 clash between a trainload of American GIs and a group of Australian commandoes at the Rockhampton, Queensland, train station. Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-Maker from the Crimea to Iraq* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 326. For wartime relations between Australian women and American servicemen, see Marilyn Lake, "Female Desires: The Meaning of World War II," in *The World War Two Reader*, ed. by Gordon Martel (New York: Routledge, 2004), 359–376.

[153.](#) McGurn, "Modern Living on a Beachhead in Bougainville," 42.

[154.](#) Michener, 43.

[155.](#) "How to Behave in North Africa," *Life*, 11 January 1943, 59.

[156.](#) Geoffrey Perrett, *There's a War to Be Won: The United States Army in World War II* (New York: Random House, 1991), 470.

[157.](#) Kennett, 111; Paul Fussell, *The Boys' Crusade: The American Infantry in Northwestern Europe, 1944–1945* (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 16.

[158.](#) American corporals received \$79.20 per month and British corporals \$30.59 per month. American sergeants received \$93.60 per month and British sergeants \$42.76 per month. See Michael Young, "Yanks in Britain," *New Republic* 110, no. 11 (13 March 1944): 343.

[159.](#) John Costello, *Virtue Under Fire: How World War II Changed Our Social and Sexual Attitudes* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1985), 237.

[160.](#) "How to Behave in England," *Life*, 21 September 1942, 101, 102.

[161.](#) "Lovely Day, Isn't It?" *Time*, 11 January 1943. A similar guide was printed for British troops going to France, called "Instructions for British Servicemen in France, 1944." Observations include: "The French are more polite than most of us. Remember to call them 'Monsieur, Madame, Mademoiselle,' not just 'Oy!'" and "If you happen to imagine that the first pretty French girl who smiles at you intends to dance the can-can or take you to bed, you will risk stirring up a lot of trouble for yourself—and for our relations with the French." *New York Times*, 2 July 2006.

[162.](#) Daniel Glaser, "The Sentiments of American Soldiers Abroad Toward Europeans," *American Journal of Sociology* 51, no. 5 (March 1946): 434.

[163.](#) Renwick C. Kennedy, "The Conqueror," *The Christian Century* 63, no. 16 (17 April 1946): 496.

[164.](#) Robert J. Havighurst, *The American Veteran Back Home: A Study of Veteran Readjustment* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1951), 221, 222.

[165.](#) Havighurst, 224.

[166.](#) Aaron Goldman, "A Few More Oceans to Go," in *Jewish Youth at War: Letters from American Soldiers*, ed. by Isaac E. Rontch (New York: Martin Press, 1945), 71.

[167.](#) See Waller, 66.

[168.](#) Steinbeck, 167, 168.

[169.](#) See William S. Abbott, "Pickup Boys," *Collier's*, 20 January 1945, 26. In James Jones' *The Thin Red Line*, troops on Guadalcanal "came down from the hills and out of the jungle with their haunted faces and pool-deep, seadark eyes, lugging every ounce of booty they could carry and looking more like Bowery scavengers than soldiers. Japanese pistols, rifles, helmets, belts, pouches, swords and sabers, and even one machinegun." Jones, 351.

[170.](#) Mauldin, *Up Front*, 163.

[171.](#) Kennett, 226; Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five* (New York: Dell, 1991), 195.

[172.](#) William Manchester, *Goodbye, Darkness: A Memoir of the Pacific War* (New York: Laurel, 1980), 363.

[173.](#) Barrett McGurn, "The Second Battle of Bougainville," 52; Merele Miller reported from Kwajalein that "no one who has acquired a complete Imperial Marine or Jap Navy uniform would consider selling it, but a pistol, carried only by the enemy officers, can be had for a month's overseas pay of a private." Merele Miller, "After the Battle at Kwajalein," in *The Best from Yank, the Army Weekly*, selected by the editors of *Yank* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1945), 235; James Michener suggests in *Tales of the South Pacific* that when Tonkinese locals could not make souvenirs fast enough, the Seabees got into the game, "making Jap flags, Australian bracelets, and New Zealand memorial gods. They were remarkable men, ingenious men, and there just wasn't enough airfields to build to keep them busy all the time." Michener, 140.

[174.](#) Stouffer et al., v. 2, 171.

[175.](#) "Drys' Drive Against Liquor for Armed Forces Seen as Second Wartime Wedge for Prohibition," *Newsweek*, 11 May 1942, 60. This was based on a similar measure that had been established in 1917 when the War Department banned the sale of liquor in the vicinity of military facilities and even forbade a person in uniform from drinking. See David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 185.

[176.](#) "Volstead's Ghost," *Newsweek*, 17 January 1944, 35.

[177.](#) John C. Burnham, *Bad Habits: Drinking, Smoking, Taking Drugs, Gambling, Sexual Misbehavior, and Swearing in American History* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 70.

[178.](#) Burnham, 71.

[179.](#) Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 99.

[180.](#) Fussell, *Wartime*, 101.

- [181](#). Mauldin, 86.
- [182](#). Jones, *W W II*, 130; Jones, *The Thin Red Line*, 94. John F. Kennedy noted that the liquor that was served at the Guadalcanal "Officer's Club" (a tent) was "an alcoholic concoction which is drawn out of the torpedo tubes, known as torp juice. Every night about 7:30 the tent bulges, about five men come crashing out, blow their lunch and stagger off to bed." Quoted in Hamilton, 534.
- [183](#). Interview with Leslie Lawrence, Paradise, Calif., 24 December 2003.
- [184](#). "Commodities: coffee Next," *Time*, 25 May 1942, 82.
- [185](#). Ellis, *The Sharp End*, 285.
- [186](#). Ellis, *The Sharp End*, 288–289.
- [187](#). Lou Stoumen, "B-29 Raid on Japan," in *The Best from Yank, the Army Weekly*, selected by the editors of *Yank* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1945), 118.
- [188](#). "On the Ropes," *Time*, 23 September 1946, 47.
- [189](#). The Veeder-Root company, maker of counters and computers, put the number of cigarettes at 137,671, 282,000 for this six-month period. *Newsweek*, 16 April 1945, 20.
- [190](#). See Kennett, 94.
- [191](#). Ellis, *The Sharp End*, 294; Richard R. Lingeman, *Don't You Know There's a War On? The American Home Front, 1941–1945* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1970), 253.
- [192](#). Fussell, *Wartime*, 145.
- [193](#). William H. Readshaw telephone interview with Kenneth D. Rose, 14 December 2000.
- [194](#). Paul Robinson interview with Kenneth D. Rose, 7 September 2000, Paradise, Calif. American bomber crews flying missions over Europe operated at high altitudes, which necessitated the wearing of oxygen masks. B-17 pilot Raymond W. Wild remembered that coming back from a mission "we'd take off the oxygen mask and smoke a cigarette, and there was *that* smell, and always the cold sweat smell, until we got back on the ground." Quoted in Philip Kaplan, *Bombers: The Aircrew Experience* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2000), 14.
- [195](#). Samuel A. Stouffer et al., *The American Soldier*, v. 1: *Adjustment During Army Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), 371.
- [196](#). American Institute of Public Opinion, 477, 874; see Burnham, 101–102. Burnham claims that by 1950 80 percent of the male population between 18 and 64 was smoking. *Ibid.*, 102.
- [197](#). *Newsweek*, 9 April 1945, 81.
- [198](#). *Life*, 27 April 1942, 101; *Time*, 19 November 1945, 4.
- [199](#). *Collier's*, 13 May 1944.
- [200](#). *Time*, 15 January 1945, 51.
- [201](#). *Collier's*, 118, no. 13 (28 September 1946): back cover.
- [202](#). Costello, *Virtue Under Fire*, 96.
- [203](#). Kennett, 203.



[204.](#) Costello, *Virtue Under Fire*, 89.

[205.](#) *Ibid.*, 99.

[206.](#) Burnham, 189.

[207.](#) Stouffer et al., v. 1, 546. A prevalent rumor in the military was that Eleanor Roosevelt had arranged for all military personnel with venereal disease to be quarantined on an island off the coast of the United States once the war had ended. The persistence of this story forced her to issue a denial. Kennett, 132.

[208.](#) One black soldier in Italy noted that “when a Negro soldier takes a girl out the MP’s look upon her as a whore. They take her down to have a physical examination of her, which she does not like. A lot of the better class girls are afraid they might have to do the same thing; so most Negro soldiers turn to whores, which brings us a higher rate of VD.” Stouffer et al., v. 1, 548.

[209.](#) Costello, *Virtue Under Fire*, 245.

[210.](#) Perret, 471.

[211.](#) Henry Elkin, “Aggressive and Erotic Tendencies in Army Life,” *American Journal of Sociology* 51, no. 5 (March 1946): 412, 413.

[212.](#) Willard Waller, *The Veteran Comes Back* (New York: Dryden Press, 1944), 35.

[213.](#) Stephen E. Ambrose, *Citizen Soldiers: The U.S. Army from the Normandy Beaches to the Bulge to the Surrender of Germany, June 7, 1944–May 7, 1945* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 333.

[214.](#) Ambrose, *Citizen Soldiers*, 332–333; John Horne Burns, who served in Italy during the war, describes an American G.I. conducting a Neapolitan black market transaction in his novel *The Gallery*: “Out of his haversack he took bars of Palmolive, cigarettes, chewing gum, flints and wicks, lighter fluid, a fountain pen, a watch, and two boxes of K-rations. All these he sold covertly and swiftly to the Italians, who scattered when his small store was exhausted. Then he had a drink at the bar, counted his receipts, and left.”

John Horne Burns, *The Gallery* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), 39. Because of a preponderance of black troops in the Quartermaster Corps, white soldiers were resentful of the natural advantage that this gave black troops in pilfering supplies. Elkin, 413 n. 13.

[215.](#) See Ellis, *The Sharp End*, 234; In Iran, American cigarettes on the black market were more reasonably priced at 80 cents a pack. Al Hine, “GI Report from Iran: It’s Cold, Expensive and Strange,” in *The Best from Yank, the Army Weekly*, selected by the editors of *Yank* (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1945), 66.

[216.](#) Kenneth C. Davis, *Two-Bit Culture: The Paperbacking of America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984), 78.

[217.](#) “Shortages: The Outlook for ‘45,” *Time*, 1 January 1945, 13.

[218.](#) Fussell, *The Boys’ Crusade*, 40.

[219.](#) One character in a Sloan Wilson novel observed, “I don’t know if he’s right when he says there are no atheists in foxholes, but there sure as hell are no generals there.” Sloan Wilson, *Pacific Interlude* (New York: Arbor House, 1982), 153.

[220.](#) “The Church Came Out to Us,” *Time*, 3 January 1944, 73.

[221.](#) “Soldiers into Churchmen,” *Time*, 31 January 1944, 60.

[222.](#) “A Jesuit Reports,” *Time*, 21 February 1944, 59.

## Chapter 2

[1.](#) See Gerald F. Linderman, *The World Within War: America's Combat Experience in World War II* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 1. Among these, the great majority of casualties was coming from rifle companies. In the first month of fighting at Normandy, 85 percent of the losses were from the infantry. See also Russell F. Weigley, *Eisenhower's Lieutenants: The Campaign of France and Germany, 1944-1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 370. Specific jobs within the infantry that were considered to be especially dangerous included taking the “point” on patrol, handling a flamethrower, and operating a radio (because the antenna supposedly gave away the operator's position). See Lee Kennett, *G.I.: The American Soldier in World War II* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1987), 174. The army Research Branch notes that at the beginning of the war there was a tendency to consider anyone who had been close enough to receive enemy shelling or bombing as having experienced “combat.” By the end of the war, “front-line soldiers were decidedly not a good audience for tales of the dangers experienced by those who were subject to bombing in rear areas.” Samuel A. Stouffer et al., *The American Soldier*, v. 2: *Combat and Its Aftermath* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), 62-63.

[2.](#) John Steinbeck, “Once There Was a War: An Introduction,” in John Steinbeck, *Once There Was a War* (New York: Viking, 1958), xi.

[3.](#) *Ibid.*, xvii.

[4.](#) *Ibid.*, “Once There Was a War: An Introduction,” xii, xiii.

[5.](#) Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent As Hero and Myth-Maker from the Crimea to Iraq* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 300.

[6.](#) *Ibid.*, 304.

[7.](#) *Ibid.*, 297, 308, 323.

[8.](#) *Ibid.*, 341-342, 354.

[9.](#) *Ibid.*, 330, 346.

[10.](#) George H. Roeder Jr., “Censoring Disorder: American Visual Imagery of World War II,” in *The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness During World War II*, ed. by Lewis A. Erenberg and Susan E. Hirsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 46-47.

[11.](#) Roeder notes that the largest collection of these photographs are in the Still Pictures Branch of the National Archives marked RG 319-CE. Roeder, 48.

[12.](#) *Ibid.*, 49.

[13.](#) *Ibid.*, 51.

[14.](#) *Ibid.*, 52, 56.

[15.](#) *Ibid.*, 59.

[16.](#) Richard Tregaskis, *Guadalcanal Diary* (New York: Random House, 1943), 146.

[17.](#) *Ibid.*, 141.

18. *Ibid.*, 148.

19. *Ibid.*, 261, 253. Tregaskis will be wounded in Italy. See Richard Tregaskis, "Then I Got It," in *Reporting World War II: American Journalism, 1938–1946* (New York: Library of America, 2001), 322–332.

20. "Tough as Marines," *Time*, 16 November 1942, 47.

21. John Hersey, *Into the Valley: A Skirmish of the Marines* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1943), 43.

22. *Ibid.*, 65.

23. *Ibid.*, 48–49.

24. Foster Hailey, "The Battle of Midway," in *Reporting World War II: American Journalism, 1938–1946* (New York: Library of America, 2001), 159, 160.

25. John Field, "West to Japan," *Life*, 15 March 1943, 90.

26. John Steinbeck, *Once There Was a War* (New York: Viking, 1958), 18, 19.

27. *Ibid.*, 138.

28. *Ibid.*, 30, 31.

29. See Walter Peters, "The Birth of a Mission," in *The Best from Yank, the Army Weekly*, selected by the editors of *Yank* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1945), 206.

30. Steinbeck, *Once There Was A War*, 28–29.

31. More lives were lost in the Eighth Air Force than in the entire Marine Corps, which had 250,000 more people. The number of Eighth Air Force planes destroyed included 6,537 B-17s and B-24s and 3,337 fighters. See Gerald Astor, *The Mighty Eighth: The Air War in Europe as Told by the Men Who Fought It* (New York: Dell, 1997), 486. By the spring of 1944, the army air forces had apparently recognized that high casualty rates for bomber crews might represent a problem for recruitment. It began running ads bragging about the successes of the B-26 in North Africa and Italy, noting that "in all these fights, *not a man in her crew was scratched* [original emphasis]. That's the kind of fighting record that makes bad reading in Berlin!" What the ad failed to mention was that the B-26 was not a heavy bomber and would not be engaging the formidable air defenses over places such as Berlin. *Life*, 27 March 1944, 124. For merchant sailor casualties, see "3,200 Casualties," *Time*, 16 February 1943, 20. Paul R. Schratz argues that it was submarine crews—who represented a tiny 1.6 percent of American naval forces—who suffered the highest casualty rates: "The loss of fifty-two American submarines carrying 375 officers and 3,131 crewmen either down with their ships or to lingering deaths in prison camps was the highest casualty rate for any element of the U.S. armed forces." Paul R. Schratz, *Submarine Commander: A Story of World War II and Korea* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1988), ix–x. Casualties were also extremely high among infantry second lieutenants. They were 0.9 percent of the total strength yet accounted for 2.7 percent of all battle casualties. The army Research Branch estimated that an infantry division "would lose a full complement of its Infantry second lieutenants in 88 combat days." Stouffer et al., v, 2, 102. Evelyn Waugh succinctly described the duties of an officer:

"The officer's job was to sign things, to take the blame and quite simply to walk ahead and get shot first." Evelyn Waugh, *Men at Arms* [1952] (New York: Little, Brown, 1980), 236.

32. Astor, *The Mighty Eighth*, 433. Some notion of the intensity of the fighting in the air war can be gleaned from what happened to a single B-17—*Chennault's Poppy*—on a bombing raid on St. Nazaire. Attacked by a group of Focke-Wulf 190s on the way back, two cannon shells plowed in the ship's elevators and punched holes in the fabric "big enough for a man to jump through," according to co-pilot Warren George Jr. Both George and pilot Robert C. Williams had to brace their hands and feet on the control column to keep the ship stable. Elsewhere on the *Poppy* a shell exploded in the face of the top turret gunner (he would die shortly thereafter), the no. 2 engine was knocked out, the no. 3 engine began to badly leak gas, and fire broke out near one of the waist-gun ports. While crew members were trying to put out the fire, another shell exploded in the interior that knocked the navigator down on the bomb doors (which fortunately did not open—the navigator was not wearing a parachute). The navigator and waist gunner were both wounded. When against all odds the *Poppy* managed to make an emergency landing, a reporter asked the pilot why the crew had not bailed out. A puzzled Captain Williams responded, "We couldn't bail out—we had wounded men aboard." "Battle of Europe: Story of a Raid," *Time*, 30 November 1942, 31–32.

33. Astor, *The Mighty Eighth*, 168–169.

34. In the midst of the fighting over Regensburg, Beirne Lay Jr. was startled as "a black lump came hurtling through the formation, barely missing several propellers. It was a man, clasping his knees to his head, revolving like a diver in a triple somersault, shooting by us so close that I saw a piece of paper blow out of his leather jacket. He was evidently making a delayed jump, for I didn't see his parachute open." Beirne Lay Jr., "I Saw Regensburg Destroyed," in *Reporting World War II: American Journalism, 1938–1946* (New York: Library of America, 2001), 313.

35. Astor, *The Mighty Eighth*, 169, 178. See also Walter Peters, "Schweinfurt Raid," in *The Best from Yank, the Army Weekly*, selected by the editors of *Yank* (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1945), 14–16. American bomber crews were also dropping a snowstorm of leaflets on enemy positions. An average of 7 million leaflets were dropped per week, a task that was made more efficient when American flyer James Monroe invented the "leaflet bomb," a cylinder containing 80,000 leaflets that was fused to open at 1,000 feet. Some leaflets contained warnings of bombing raids or counterfeit ration cards or currency. Others were in the form of "safe conduct" passes that enemy troops could use to surrender. Safe conduct passes included the following instructions for American soldiers: "The man who carries this leaflet is no longer an enemy. Under International Law, you will ensure that he is guaranteed personal safety, clothing, food, living quarters and if necessary medical attention." Anthony Rhodes, *Propaganda, The Art of Persuasion: World War II* (New York: Chelsea House, 1976), 146–147. Some 80

percent of Italian prisoners in Sicily had such a leaflet in their possession or had read it. "Psychological Warfare," *Life*, 13 November 1943, 81.

36. Martin Middlebrook, *The Schweinfurt-Regensburg Mission* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1983), 279, 286–287.

37. The United States Strategic Bombing Survey, conducted after the war, concluded that ball bearing production at Schweinfurt was actually greater in September than it had been in August. Limited production of fighters resumed at Regensburg within a month. *Ibid.*, 291–292, 288. Another lesson of Schweinfurt-Regensburg, according to Martin Middlebrook, was that "American bombers should not have been risked on flights deep into Germany until realistic fighter escort was forthcoming." *Ibid.*, 297.

38. *Ibid.*, 285–286.

39. Astor, *The Mighty Eighth*, 152.

40. An army Research Branch survey found that 76 percent of air force personnel "liked most to be in their own branch" compared to just 11 percent of infantry personnel. Samuel A. Stouffer et al., *The American Soldier*, v. 1: *Adjustment During Army Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), 300.

41. John Ellis, *Brute Force: Allied Strategy and Tactics in the Second World War* (New York: Viking, 1990), 527; John Keegan, *The Second World War* (New York: Penguin, 1990), 433.

42. Edward R. Murrow, "The Target Was to Be the Big City," in *Reporting World War II: American Journalism 1938–1946* (New York: Library of America, 2001), 363–370, 369. John Ellis claims that British Bomber Command "pinned its hopes for victory on being able to fry enough German civilians. The US Strategic Air Forces adopted an identical strategy in Japan." Ellis, *Brute Force*, 526.

43. Horton noted that "the girl in a job equally open to men had to be better than the ordinary man to prove her capacity. When she had done so, she was oft en commended as though she had performed a miracle." Mildred McAfee Horton, "Women in the United States Navy," *American Journal of Sociology* 51, no. 5 (March 1946): 449.

44. Margaret Bourke-White, *They Called It "Purple Heart Valley"* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1944), 114–115.

45. Paul Fussell, *Doing Battle: The Making of a Skeptic* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1996), 146.

46. Geoffrey Perrett, *There's a War to Be Won: The United States Army in World War II* (New York: Random House, 1991), 494.

47. Ernie Pyle, *Brave Men* (New York: Henry Holt, 1944), 367.

48. Pyle, *Brave Men*, 436, 437.

49. Ernie Pyle, *Here Is Your War* (New York: Henry Holt, 1943), 241.

50. Pyle, *Here Is Your War*, 241.

51. Pyle, *Brave Men*, 465.

52. *New York Times*, 23 April 1945. Pyle was the 23rd war correspondent to be killed in the war.



53. Robert Sherrod, *Tarawa: The Story of a Battle* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1944), 68.

54. *Ibid.*, 74.

55. *Ibid.*, 110.

56. See John Ellis, *The Sharp End: The Fighting Man in World War II* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980), 62–63.

57. “Battle of the Pacific,” *Time*, 5 March 1945, 27. As in any battle, the bizarre mixed freely with the merely horrific. During the battle for Iwo Jima, Luther Winans was standing near a fellow marine and the colonel of a command post when he heard the marine comment, “I would rather lose my right arm.” At almost the same instant a shell exploded that killed the colonel—and tore off the arm of the marine. Luther Winans (as told to Stephen M. Kerbow), “A Marine from Texas Recalls the First Wave at Iwo Jima and the Occupation of Sasebo, Japan,” *Military History*, February 2003, 22.

58. Quoted in Charles G. Bolté, “This Is the Face of War,” *The Nation* 160, no. 9 (3 March 1945): 239.

59. “Battle of the Pacific,” 25. As a reward for his photograph, Rosenthal’s draft board decided that he deserved “a classification better than 4-F,” and it changed his status from 4-F (bad eyes) to 2-AF (essential deferment). See “Story of a Picture,” *Time*, 26 March 1945, 60.

60. See John Ellis, *The Sharp End*, 12–13.

61. Stouffer et al., v. 1, 309. Stouffer et al. note that because of the infantryman’s combat status, “men in the Army at large had a high regard for the infantryman, though they had little wish to be one.” Likewise, despite the pride the infantryman felt in his frontline status and the resentment he harbored toward rear echelon troops, “he would nevertheless gladly have changed places with the men of whom he was so scornful to the rear.” Stouffer et al., v. 2, 305, 292.

62. See S. Kirson Weinberg, “The Combat Neuroses,” *American Journal of Sociology* 51, no. 5 (March 1946): 473.

63. *Dictionary of American Biography*, Supplement 9: 1971–1975 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1994), s.v. “Murphy, Audie Leon,” by Allan L. Damon; *American National Biography*, volume 16 (New York: Oxford University Press), s.v. “Murphy, Audie,” by John H. Lenihan.

64. Kennett, 40.

65. *Dictionary of American Biography*, s.v. “Murphy, Audie Leon,” by Allan L. Damon.

66. “Life Visits Audie Murphy,” *Life*, 16 July 1945, 94–97.

67. Allan L. Damon notes that “despite the publisher’s fiction that Murphy had written *To Hell and Back* in longhand, he only contributed about ten pages to the book, which was ghostwritten by David (“Spec”) McClure, a screen-writer and close friend.” *Dictionary of American Biography*, s.v. “Murphy, Audie Leon,” by Allan L. Damon.

68. This was acknowledged by *New York Times* reviewer Gladwin Hill, who noted

that while a writer had obviously given this book “a polish job,” “the vitals of the book, along with a wealth of trenchant detail, manifestly could only come from one who has experienced the ugliness of war with exceptional sensitivity and balance.” Gladwin Hill, “Dogface Odyssey,” *New York Times*, 27 February 1949.

69. Audie Murphy, *To Hell and Back* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1949), 11.

70. *Ibid.*, 32–33.

71. Deidre Carmody, “Alone Against the Enemy” [obituary], *New York Times*, 1 June 1971.

72. Murphy, 188.

73. Murphy, 226.

74. *Ibid.*, 243.

75. *Ibid.*, 273–274.

76. *New York Times*, 15 April 1950.

77. Quoted in Carmody.

78. See Damon.

79. Quoted in Carmody.

80. Terkel, 62–63.

81. *Ibid.*, 58, 59.

82. E. B. Sledge, *With the Old Breed at Peleliu and Okinawa* (Novato, Calif.: Presidio, 1981), 253.

83. *Ibid.*, 252.

84. *Ibid.*, 123.

85. *Ibid.*, 315.

86. William Manchester, *Goodbye, Darkness: A Memoir of the Pacific War* (New York: Laurel, 1980), 412.

87. *Ibid.*, 418, 428.

88. William Manchester, “The Bloodiest Battle of All,” *New York Times*, 14 June 1987, 44, 80.

89. Manchester, *Goodbye, Darkness*, 430.

90. Fussell, *Doing Battle*, 123.

91. *Ibid.*, 112.

92. *Ibid.*, 122.

93. *Ibid.*, 124. Fussell argues that “the real war is unlikely to be found in novels” (even such “honorable” novels such as *The Naked and the Dead* and *The Thin Red Line*) in part because novels have difficulty “persuading readers that the horrors have not been melodramatized.” The memoir, on the other hand, delivering the facts without carrying the weight of literary flourishes, “seems to argue absolute credibility.” Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 290, 291, 292.

94. Bill Mauldin, *Up Front* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1945), 28, 29.

95. Ladislas Farago, *Patton: Ordeal and Triumph* (New York: Dell, 1963), 719–720. Willie and Joe’s appearance accurately reflected the appearance of ordinary G.I.’s. Eisenhower once described American troops as looking like “an armed

mob.” See Kennett, 82.

[96.](#) Mauldin, *Up Front*, 5.

[97.](#) *Ibid.*, 7–8.

[98.](#) *Ibid.*, 60.

[99.](#) *Ibid.*, 14.

[100.](#) *Ibid.*, 141.

[101.](#) *Ibid.*, 148–149. Mauldin’s sophisticated observations and his abilities as a draftsman put him head and shoulders above the competition. For instance, George Baker, who originated the “Sad Sack” cartoons that appeared in the weekly *Yank* magazine, had only crude drawing abilities, and his content repeated the same joke over and over again. See “Yank: Army’s Famous Magazine Stars ‘Sad Sack,’” *Life*, 15 November 1943, 119.

[102.](#) Edward M. Cifelli, “Introduction” to *Saipan: The War Diary of John Ciardi* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1988), xii, xiii.

[103.](#) John Ciardi, *Saipan: The War Diary of John Ciardi* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1988), 41, 42, 40. B-29 missions to Japan were also flown out of forward bases in China that had been constructed by half a million Chinese workers. See Lou Stoumen, “B-29 Raid on Japan,” in *The Best from Yank, the Army Weekly*, selected by the editors of *Yank* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1945), 119.

[104.](#) Ciardi, *Saipan*, 58.

[105.](#) *Ibid.*, 82.

[106.](#) Interviewed in Studs Terkel, *The Good War”: An Oral History of World War Two* (New York: Ballantine, 1984), 197.

[107.](#) Ciardi, *Saipan*, 90, 100.

[108.](#) Ciardi, “Elegy Just in Case,” in *Saipan*, 114.

[109.](#) Cifelli, xix.

## Chapter 3

1. In one such patriotic scheme, the National Publishers Association convinced 300 American magazines to carry a picture of the American flag on the front covers for America’s first Fourth of July as a belligerent in World War II. See, for instance, *Life* magazine, 6 July 1942.

2. “Psychology for the Fighting Man,” *Infantry Journal* 52, no. 1 (January 1943): 52.

3. Raymond Moley, “No More Parades?” *Newsweek*, 16 March 1942, 76.

4. American Institute of Public Opinion, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935–1971* (New York: Random House, 1972), 290.

5. Samuel A. Stouffer, “Social Science and the Soldier,” in *American Society in Wartime*, ed. by William Fielding Ogburn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943), 106. The generalized devaluation of patriotism on both sides of the Atlantic after World War I was emphasized by Vera Brittain, who noted that “patriots, especially of the female variety, were as much discredited in 1919 as in 1914 they had been honored.” The “post-war generation was wise in its assumption that patriotism had ‘nothing to do with it,’” said

Brittain, "and we pre-war lot were just poor boobs for letting ourselves be kidded into thinking that it had." Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth: An Autobiographical Study of the Years 1900–1925* (New York: Macmillan, 1933), 490.

6. Anthony Rhodes concluded that "the greatest obstacle to Allied propaganda in World War II was the propaganda that preceded American entry into World War I." Anthony Rhodes, *Propaganda, The Art of Persuasion: World War II* (New York: Chelsea House, 1976), 139.

7. Robert J. Havighurst et al., *The American Veteran Back Home: A Study of Veteran Readjustment* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1951), 24 n. 5. One Midwest serviceman noted, "I've never given much thought to whether the war was worth fighting. I know the thing we were fighting for was democracy, and yet what they taught in the army was just the opposite. So I guess in a way it accomplished its mission." *Ibid.*, 36.

8. *Ibid.*, 231.

9. Blumer found that the sentiment "Let's get it over with" was "about the only common view and feeling among American people." Herbert Blumer, "Morale," in *American Society in Wartime*, ed. by William Fielding Ogburn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943), 223.

10. The Research Branch modestly claimed to have created "a body of facts unique in the annals of war." Samuel A. Stouffer et al., *The American Soldier*, v. 2: *Combat and Its Aftermath* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), 3.

11. Samuel A. Stouffer et al., *The American Soldier*, v. 1: *Adjustment During Army Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), 433.

12. Renwick C. Kennedy, "The Conqueror," *The Christian Century* 63, no. 16 (17 April 1946): 495.

13. Miller quoted in Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 138. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry relates a conversation that he had with an American pilot flying missions over France. The pilot said of Saint-Exupéry, "You know why you are fighting: You have to save your country. But I have nothing to do with your problems in Europe. Our interests lie in the Pacific." Because the pilot was risking his life for Europe, he wanted Saint-Exupéry's assurances that he would "help us in turn in the Pacific." Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Wartime Writings, 1939–1944*, trans. by Norah Purcell (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986), 197.

14. Randall Jarrell to Amy Breyer de Blasio, letter of 22 July 1943, in *Randall Jarrell's Letters: An Autobiographical and Literary Selection*, ed. by Mary Jarrell (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985), 103. Jarrell added, "They feel neither gratitude nor affection for our allies—they'd fight Russia tomorrow, for instance. They have no feeling against the Germans—they dismiss all information about them as 'propaganda.'" *Ibid.*, 103–104.

15. American Institute of Public Opinion, *The Gallup Poll*, 338, 370. In February 1943, 53 percent saw Japan as the chief enemy of the United States.

16. The army's Research Branch interviewed over 3,000 soldiers and only 13

percent could name more than two of the Four Freedoms. One-third had never heard of them. Stouffer et al., v. 1, 433.

[17.](#) Rhodes, 148, 150.

[18.](#) Frank Capra, *The Name Above the Title: An Autobiography* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 326, 327.

[19.](#) Albert Speer, *Inside the Third Reich* (New York: Avon, 1970), 97.

[20.](#) Capra, 328, 329.

[21.](#) *Ibid.*, 331. In an interview with Bill Moyers, Capra emphasized that “my specific aim was to show the difference between our method of living, our thinking, our families and so forth and the enemies.” “A Walk Through the 20th Century with Bill Moyers”, *World War II: The Propaganda Battle*, PBS Video, 1984.

[22.](#) Charles J. Maland, *Frank Capra* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980), 121–122. Referring to the *Why We Fight* films, Benjamin L. Alpers observes that “much of the footage was, quite simply, not what it claimed to be. Following a cinematic tradition established long before by newsreels, the *Why We Fight* series included footage from Hollywood features passed off as actual battle footage, staged scenes of life in the Axis countries, and captured footage taken entirely out of its original context. Benjamin L. Alpers, “This is the Army: Imagining a Democratic Military in World War II,” in *The World War Two Reader*, ed. by Gordon Martel (New York: Routledge, 2004), 167.

[23.](#) The army’s Research Branch found that “the ‘Why We Fight’ films had marked effects on the men’s knowledge of factual material concerning the events leading up to the war,” but concluded that it was difficult to make a case “for a close sequential relationship between changes in factual information and changes in motivation.” Stouffer et al., v. 1, 461, 466.

[24.](#) “The American Dead,” *Life*, 31 May 1943, 20.

[25.](#) “Time for Patriots,” *Life*, 10 January 1944, 24.

[26.](#) Quoted in Lee Kennett, *G.I.: The American Soldier in World War II* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1987), 169.

[27.](#) Joseph Goebbels, *The Goebbels Diaries, 1942–1943*, ed. and trans. by Louis P. Lochner (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1948), 246. Many British soldiers were also unclear on the concept. In Evelyn Waugh’s *Men At Arms*, Guy Crouchback ruminated on the purpose of the war: “And at the very opening of this heterogeneous catechism stood the question that was quintessential to his very presence among those unchosen companions.

“What are we fighting for?”

“The Training Memorandum mentioned with shame that many private soldiers had been found to entertain hazy ideas on the subject.” Evelyn Waugh, *Men at Arms* [1952] (New York: Little, Brown, 1980), 239.

[28.](#) Goebbels, 277. In fairness, the extent to which German soldiers were ideologically motivated is also open to question. Martin van Creveld found that postwar investigations “described the mass of the German troops as indifferent, not to say apathetic, vis-à-vis the great moral, political, and strategic issues arising



from the war ... One survey among prisoners of war showed that only 5 percent were concerned with any but their personal problems." Martin van Creveld, *Fighting Power: German and U.S. Army Performance, 1939–1945* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1982), 87.

29. "Army Orientation," *Fortune* 29, no. 3 (March 1944): 152, 166. David Riesman later observed in *The Lonely Crowd* that "political indifference did not imply an inability to stand physical hardships" among American soldiers. David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd* [1950] (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 296.

30. Margaret Bourke-White, *They Called It "Purple Heart Valley"* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1944), 73, 78.

31. Stouffer et al., v. 2, 111.

32. "The Nation: The Way Home," *Time*, 7 August 1944, 15.

33. Arthur Miller, *Situation Normal ...* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1944).

40, 42. Writing after the war, David L. Cohn said of American servicemen that "they did not know why they fought beyond the negative necessity of defense. Thus they found themselves plunged accidentally, as they thought, into the supreme crisis of their lives with no sense of its origin and without goal or direction for the future, since none had been given them." David L. Cohn, "Should Fighting Men Think?" *Saturday Review of Literature* 30, no. 3 (18 January 1947): 8.

34. Ernest W. Burgess, "The Family," in *American Society in Wartime*, ed. by William Fielding Ogburn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943), 21.

35. Gerald F. Linderman, *The World Within War: America's Combat Experience in World War II* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 49.

36. The next most popular response, at 14 percent, was "solidarity with group." Stouffer et al., v. 2, 108–109; Doolittle quoted in Linderman, 50. The U.S. Army Air Corps officially became the U.S. Army Air Forces in 1941.

37. Linderman, 51.

38. *Ibid.*, 55.

39. As Severeid watched some of these men "die in ignorant glory, I had to fight and reason away sharp stabs of conscience: 'What right have I to live and urge them on in behalf of my beliefs, these children who die not comprehending?'" Eric Severeid, *Not So Wild a Dream* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), 378.

40. Studs Terkel, *The Good War": An Oral History of World War Two* (New York: Ballantine, 1984), 157.

41. Leon S. Bloom, "A Jew in the Army," in *Jewish Youth at War: Letters from American Soldiers*, ed. by Isaac E. Rontch (New York: Martin Press, 1945), 30.

42. Emanuel M. Asen, "Somewhere in Belgium," in *Jewish Youth at War: Letters from American Soldiers*, ed. by Isaac E. Rontch (New York: Martin Press, 1945), 14.

43. Sidney Glassman, "Wounded by Intolerance," in *Jewish Youth at War: Letters from American Soldiers*, ed. by Isaac E. Rontch (New York: Martin Press, 1945), 63.

44. Quoted in Robert H. Abzug, *Inside the Vicious Heart: Americans and the*

*Liberation of Nazi Concentration Camps* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 30.

45. S. L. A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command in Future War* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1978), 53.

46. See Roy E. Moor, "Shoot, Soldier!" *Infantry Journal* 56, no. 4 (April 1945): 21.

47. Marshall, *Men Against Fire*, 50. This, as it turns out, was a generous estimate, as Marshall claims that "in an average experienced infantry company in an average stern day's action, the number engaging with any and all weapons was approximately 15 per cent of total strength. In the most aggressive infantry companies, under the most intense local pressure, the figure rarely rose above 25 per cent of total strength from the opening to the close of action." *Ibid.*, 56.

48. *Ibid.*, 54.

49. Stouffer et al., v. 2, 87.

50. Marshall, *Men Against Fire*, 59.

51. *Ibid.*, 58.

52. *Ibid.*, 68.

53. *Ibid.*, 78.

54. *Ibid.*, 67. The psychological impact of killing on the soldier is a subject that is still largely avoided by the military. Lieutenant Colonel Elspeth Cameron Ritchie, an army psychiatrist at Bethesda, has called killing "the dead elephant in the living room that nobody wants to talk about." See Dan Baum, "The Price of Valor," *New Yorker*, 12 and 19 July 2004, 47.

55. S. L. A. Marshall, "Esprit," *Infantry Journal* 53, no. 3 (September 1943): 46.

56. Marshall, *Men Against Fire*, 41.

57. *Ibid.*, 149.

58. *Ibid.*, 153.

59. *Ibid.*, 149, 153–54. Roger J. Spiller insists that "S. L. A. Marshall's ratio of fire cannot be proved. The foundations of Marshall's claim lay not in statistical formulations of scholarly research but in his own experiences and observations of war." Spiller notes that none of Marshall's notebooks or his own service record "indicate Marshall collected statistics that could be used in establishing a ratio of fire." Roger J. Spiller, "S. L. A. Marshall and the Ratio of Fire," *Royal United Services Institute Journal* 133 (winter 1968): 69, 71 n. 53. Spiller also observes that while American military theory maintained that infantry units should advance with suppressive fire from automatic weapons, soldiers in the field found that such a tactic attracted the fire of the enemy. Instead, the infantry preferred to let its supporting artillery break up the enemy. *Ibid.*, 69.

60. History and literature is replete with examples. Leo Tolstoy, for instance, who was himself a veteran of the Crimean War, staged a scene in *War and Peace* in which his protagonist, Andrei Bolkonsky, is contemplating the coming day's battle. As he looks over the soldiers in his camp, Bolkonsky thinks to himself that he would trade everything and everyone that is precious to himself for "love from men I don't know and never shall know, for the love of these men here." Leo Tolstoy,

*War and Peace*, trans. by Rosemary Edmonds (New York: Penguin, 1978), 306.

61. Gerald Astor, *A Blood-Dimmed Tide: The Battle of the Bulge by the Men Who Fought It* (New York: Dell, 1994), 511–513.

62. *The Oxford Companion to American Military History*, s.v. “Desertion.”

63. Kennett, 153.

64. See John Ellis, *The Sharp End: The Fighting Man in World War II* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1980), 243–246; The army did execute 102 soldiers during the war, but all executions were for murder or rape, except for Slovik. Stouffer et al., v. 2, 112.

65. Stouffer et al., v. 2, 143.

66. “Psychology for the Fighting Man: Why Men Fight,” *Infantry Journal* 52, no. 1 (January 1943): 55.

67. Paul Fussell, *Wartime*, 132. A character in Evelyn Waugh’s *Men at Arms* lamented that “this war has begun in darkness and it will end in silence.” Waugh, 278.

68. Marshall, *Men Against Fire*, 136.

69. James Jones, *WWII* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1975), 208.

70. Fussell, *Wartime*, 132, 133, 136.

71. *Ibid.*, 141.

72. Quoted in Nigel Hamilton, *JFK: Reckless Youth* (New York: Random House, 1992), 536.

73. “People Fighting at the Front Want the People Back Home to Know What War Is Really Like,” *Life*, 3 January 1944, 14.

74. John Hersey, *Into the Valley: A Skirmish of the Marines* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1943), 74, 75. In Audie Murphy’s *To Hell and Back*, one of the soldiers asked, “We fight. And fer what? I’m askin’ you: Fer what?” The sarcastic answer of one of his companions was, “For the cause, my boy. For the cause. If you keep your bowels open and your mouth shut; your head down and your chin up, you too may become a civilian.” Audie Murphy, *To Hell and Back* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1949), 28.

75. B-17 navigator George R. Klare reviewed 1,000 examples of nose art and concluded that “55% were female figures, with about a quarter of them nude and most of the rest partially clothed. Four-legged animals, birds and insects made up almost 15% of the total. Another 30% involved cartoon characters, babies and children, death symbols, zodiacal signs, devils and gremlins.” See Philip Kaplan, *Bombers: The Aircrew Experience* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2000), 126, 127.

76. John Costello, *Virtue Under Fire: How World War II Changed Our Social and Sexual Attitudes* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1985), 152.

77. “Service Sweethearts,” *Newsweek*, 2 August 1943, 36.

78. Robert B. Westbrook, “The ‘Pin-up Girls’ Taught Americans Less About Sex and More About Political Obligations,” in *Major Problems in the History of World War II*, ed. by Mark A. Stoler and Melanie S. Gustafson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003), 271. In a letter to *Yank* magazine, one unusually perceptive soldier

asked, "How many of you GIs would like to go home and find the room of your wife or girl friend covered with pictures of a guy stepping out of a bathtub, draped only in a skimpy little towel ... ?" Joseph H. Saling to *Yank* in *The Best from Yank, the Army Weekly*, selected by the editors of *Yank* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1945), 214.

79. "New Play in Manhattan: Strip for Action," *Time*. 12 October 1942, 41.

80. William Manchester, *Goodbye, Darkness: A Memoir of the Pacific War* (New York: Laurel, 1980), 431, 422, 451.

81. Robert Sherrrod, *Tarawa: The Story of a Battle* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1944), 35.

82. Bill Mauldin, *Back Home* (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1947), 176.

83. Terkel, 359.

84. James Jones, *To Reach Eternity: The Letters of James Jones* (New York: Random House, 1989), 26. When Frank Mercurio was under fire on an Italian beach, he had the revelation that if he died he would not have the benefit of the causes for which he was fighting: "So why fight for them, if I can't live to go home and enjoy them? I don't want any part of it." Quoted in Linderman, 24.

85. Stouffer et al., v. 2, 150. The Research Branch went on to say that "while one may deplore the combat soldier's lack of concern with the larger issues of the war, the fact remains that with the framework of the war as a 'given,' he knew that what he was doing was very important." *Ibid.*, 151.

86. William C. Menninger, "Psychiatry and the War," *Atlantic Monthly* 176, no. 5 (November 1945): 109.

87. Robert A. Nisbet, "The Coming Problem of Assimilation," *American Journal of Sociology* 50, no. 4 (January 1945): 267.

88. Terkel, 117.

89. Costello, *Virtue Under Fire*, 190.

90. John Dos Passos, "Downeasters Building Ships," *Harper's Magazine* 186, no. 114 (March 1943): 342.

91. Mary Heaton Vorse, "The Girls of Elkton, Maryland," *Harper's Magazine* 186, no. 114 (March 1943): 354.

92. Dos Passos, 344.

93. "Houston Replaces 'Houston's' Losses," *Life*, 15 June 1942, 33. See also "Death of the *Houston*," *Time*, 11 March 1946, 25.

94. "Bonds for Bombs," *Newsweek*, 6 September 1943, 82.

95. Mark H. Leff, "The Politics of Sacrifice on the American Home Front in World War II," in *The World War Two Reader*, ed. by Gordon Martel (New York: Routledge, 2004), 344, 346.

96. "Madison Avenue," "Advertising in Wartime," *New Republic* 110, no. 8 (21 February 1944): 235.

97. "Madison Avenue," 236.

98. *Time*, 24 July 1944, 71.

99. *Collier's*, 1 April 1944.

[100.](#) *Life*, 6 March 1944, inside cover.

[101.](#) *Collier's*, 14 October 1944, 9. The copywriters/poets of Nash were not ones to blush at the idea of combining overwrought verse with the domestic verities, as in the following ad: "Off there, somewhere, / A whippoorwill will call ... / Back there, somewhere, the sun will drop / like a penny into the pocket of night. And a / breeze will freshen and cool, / and the dark will be filled with quiet ... / And we'll smoke together again ... / And Joe's hound will sigh and turn around / and lie down in the soft dust, and we'll watch / the lights come up in houses down below, / and a door will slam and a dog bark, and a girl's voice call and then ... / We'll be home again." *Collier's*, 25 November 1944, 9.

[102.](#) *Life*, 11 May 1942; *Time*, 8 June 1942, 12. Bell Telephone described a telephone worker as a "Soldier of Service." *Life*, 1 March 1943, 3.

[103.](#) *Life*, 27 July 1942, 10.

[104.](#) *Life*, 28 June 1943, 43; *Life*, 3 May 1943, 73.

[105.](#) Robert Fleisher, "Wise Up, Civilian!" *The Nation* 160, no. 8 (24 February 1945): 207.

[106.](#) *Time*, 1 June 1942, 57; *Life*, 15 February 1943, 58.

[107.](#) *Life*, 16 November 1942, 15.

[108.](#) *Life*, 21 December 1942, 3. Another monologue produced by the scribes at Nash had a woman addressing her absent husband and offering reassurances that "our house still stands, white and lovely as it always was, and down the street the maples march straight and tall, unwithered by the heat of war! And every Sunday, steeple bells still ring and in our church we stil sing hymns to God ... I've told the children, and I tell myself, this is what you're fighting for!" *Life*, 24 May 1943, 39.

[109.](#) *Life*, 18 October 1943, inside front cover.

[110.](#) Bill Mauldin, *Up Front* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1945), 131. Mauldin commented that when the veteran did come home, "you can bet he'll buy some other brand of refrigerator with his demobilization pay, just to spite the Frosty adman." *Ibid.*, 131-132.

[111.](#) Another *Tomahawk* entry included the following: "Dear Mom: We are camped in an orchard not far from Carentan that you've read about, Mom, and there are dairy cows grazing in our orchard and the peasants come right out in their wooden shoes and milk them, and Mom, one of the cows made fertilizer right where I put down my blankets. Golly, Mom, it sure smelt good and reminded me of you and Dad and old Muley. That's what I'm fighting for, Mom, a world in which there won't be no soldiers putting down their blankets right where old Muley wants to make fertilizer. Your Loving son, Junior." "Dear Mom," *Time*, 14 August 1944, 60, 61.

[112.](#) *Newsweek*, 26 April 1943, 83.

[113.](#) Kaplan, 112.

[114.](#) See "Voices of Defeat," *Life*, 13 April 1942, 86.

[115.](#) "Madison Avenue," 233. In a 1943 *Fortune* article, Sherry Mangan lamented that "it has been less an ideological than an advertising man's war, an attempt to



'sell' the war as if it were a new-model motorcar." Mangan said that given advertising's success in the commercial realm, "one is forced to the conclusion that its failure in the political field arises rather from its not having a very good product to sell." Sherry Mangan, "State of the Nation," *Fortune* 28, no. 5 (November 1943): 138.

[116.](#) "Killed in Action," *Life*, 5 July 1943, 15.

[117.](#) "The American Purpose," *Life*, 5 July 1943, 39.

[118.](#) Costello, *Virtue Under Fire*, 1.

[119.](#) *World War II Letters*, ed. by Bill Adler (New York: St. Martin's, 2001), 83.

[120.](#) Eleanor (Bumpy) Stevenson, "I Knew Your Soldier," pt. 3, *Saturday Evening Post*, 4 November 1944, 109.

## Chapter 4

[1.](#) "Pacific Coast Defense," *Life*, 12 January 1942, 65.

[2.](#) *Ibid.*, 65.

[3.](#) Lawrence R. Samuel, *Pledging Allegiance: American Identity and the Bond Drive of World War II* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 27.

[4.](#) "The Mainland: December 7, 1941," *Time*, 15 December 1941, 19; Henry R. Luce, "The Day of Wrath," *Life*, 22 December 1941, 12; "The People: Great Change," *Time*, 11, 12.

[5.](#) "The People: The West at War," *Time*, 29 December 1941, 9.

[6.](#) "Air Alerts & Blackouts," *Life*, 22 December 1941, 20.

[7.](#) John O'Hara, "N.Y. to L.A.," *Newsweek*, 19 January 1942, 58.

[8.](#) "University of California Teaches Farmers How to Milk Cows in a Blackout," *Life*, 2 March 1942, 56.

[9.](#) "The People: The West at War," 9.

[10.](#) Raymond Moley, "The Citizen Meets the Crisis," *Newsweek*, 22 December 1941, 68.

[11.](#) "California Attack by U-Boat Brings War Home to the U.S.," *Newsweek*, 2 March 1942, 13; "Japanese Carry War to California Coast," *Life*, 9 March 1942, 19.

[12.](#) "The Nation: Worst Week," *Time*, 23 February 1942, 13.

[13.](#) "Army Guns Open Up at Unknown Foe," *Life*, 9 March 1942, 23.

[14.](#) "Mystery Alarm at Los Angeles Bares Army and Navy Confusion," *Newsweek*, 9 March 1942, 22.

[15.](#) "Enemy Aliens: Asps on the Hearth," *Time*, 9 February 1942, 16.

[16.](#) "How to Tell Japs from the Chinese," *Life*, 22 December 1941, 81. A refresher course of sorts appeared in 1943 (Chinese eyes "are set like any European's or American's" while Japanese eyes "have a marked *squint*"), with illustrations by Milt Caniff, creator of *Terry and the Pirates*. Milt Caniff, "Speaking of Pictures," *Life*, 1 March 1943.

[17.](#) Carey McWilliams, "Moving the West-Coast Japanese," *Harper's* 183, no. 1108 (September 1942): 366.

[18.](#) "Detroit Has a Race Riot as Whites Bar Negroes from New Homes in U.S. Housing Unit," *Life*, 16 March 1942, 40.

19. "Races: Two Sides of a Street," *Time*, 9 March 1942, 14.
20. When the army's Research Branch interviewed 3,700 enlisted men in January 1944, one-third were unhappy that they had been drafted when they were. See Samuel A. Stouffer et al., *The American Soldier*, v. 1: *Adjustment During Army Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), 450.
21. "Last Days of School," *Time*, 1 June 1942, 76. All universities experienced decreased enrollments during the war, and those that wanted to survive had to accommodate themselves to the needs of the military. Yale University, for instance, created the "Yale Plan" under which undergraduates would complete course work in two and two-thirds years rather than four years, and in which special military and physical education courses would be added. Participants would graduate as members of one of the armed forces. "Yale at War," *Life*, 1 June 1942, 55.
22. "Man Power: Immediate Goal: 4,000," *Time*, 19 January 1942, 63; "The People: The West at War," 9; "Roosevelts at War," *Time*, 29 December 1941, 8.
23. The dilemma for Superman was that "as the mightiest, fightingest American, he ought to join up. But he just can't. In the combat services he would lick the Japs and Nazis in a wink, and the war isn't going to end that soon. On the other hand, he can't afford to lose the respect of millions by failing to do his bit or by letting the war drag on." Superman's creator, Jerry Siegel, tried to free his character from this conundrum by involving him in counterespionage. Superman comic books had a monthly circulation of 1.53 million, with a probable readership of 12 million. "Superman's Dilemma," *Time*, 13 April 1942, 78.
24. Robert J. Havighurst et al., *The American Veteran Back Home: A Study of Veteran Readjustment* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1951), 15.
25. *Ibid.*, 14–19.
26. Roy Hoopes, *Americans Remember the Home Front: An Oral Narrative of the World War II Years in America* (New York: Berkley Books, 2002), 202, 95.
27. Michael C. C. Adams, *The Best War Ever: America and World War II* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 78.
28. Lee Kennett, *G.I.: The American Soldier in World War II* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1987), 30.
29. Ben Shephard, *A War of Nerves: Soldiers and Psychiatrists in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 199. Shephard found that at their worst these interviews "descended into sub-Freudian farce, with any admission of masturbation being grounds for rejection, and interviewers taking a particularly dim view of nail-biters." *Ibid.*, 200. William C. Porter and other army psychiatrists at Walter Reed Hospital examined a group of psychiatric patients during the war and asked them questions about 15 traits from their past histories. These included "thumbsucking or nail biting beyond six years of age," "failure to engage in competitive games involving risk of injury," "shunning of girls after puberty," "sulkiness under discipline," and "abnormal attachment to mother after puberty." Porter concluded that "the presence of four significant traits is not

uncommon in individuals who have not become serious military problems, but the presence of six or more should cause one to prognosticate a probable breakdown under stress." William C. Porter, "What Has Psychiatry Learned During Present War?" *American Journal of Psychiatry* 99, no. 6 (May 1943): 851.

30. William C. Menninger, "Psychiatry and the War," *Atlantic Monthly* 176, no. 5 (November 1945): 108.

31. "The Psychiatric Toll of Warfare," *Fortune* 28, no. 6 (December 1943): 270.

32. Shephard, 212.

33. Describing American troops in Europe, Eric Sevareid said, "They were learning almost nothing because they did not care to learn. Their education had given them the ability to read and write and follow a map; it had not given them intellectual curiosity. And without this they could not be said to have received any education. What they had received was a kind of cultural manual of arms." Eric Sevareid, *Not So Wild a Dream* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), 487.

34. "Manpower: Ignorance," *Time*, 8 June 1942, 73.

35. See "The Record Stinks," *Time*, 29 January 1945, 90. *Time* cited the case of 22-year-old veteran Arlie Morgan, who was receiving \$50 per month under the G.I. Bill and was enrolled in the sixth grade in Tampa.

36. Willard Waller, *The Veteran Comes Back* (New York: Dryden Press, 1944), 254. While blacks would compose between 8 and 9 percent of the army's total strength, a higher percentage (33 percent) were rejected for military service than were whites (16 percent). The difference was mainly a function of a failure to meet minimum education requirements. Black Americans had made great strides since World War I, but some 67 percent of black soldiers from the South (and 37 percent from the North) had only grade school educations. Stouffer et al., v. 1, 489, 493–494, 490. In the Army's 92nd Division, a black infantry outfit, 17 percent of the men were illiterate and 75 percent were semiliterate, compared with 4 percent and 16 percent of white troops. "Report on the Negro Soldier," *Time*, 26 March 1945, 22. During World War I, 25 percent of the draftees were classified as "illiterate." The median number of years of formal education was 6.9 for native-born whites, 4.7 for immigrants, and 2.6 for southern blacks. See David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 188.

37. John Costello, *Virtue Under Fire: How World War II Changed Our Social and Sexual Attitudes* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1985), 44.

38. United States Armed Forces Institute, *Meet Private Pete: A Soldier's Reader* (War Department Education Manual EM 160) (Washington, D.C.: War Department, 1944); *Newsweek* noted that the army tailored its literacy classes to its own needs, and that "instead of learning how to read 'I see a cat,' the illiterate soldier was taught sentences like 'I see a gun' and 'I see a sergeant.'" "They See the L-i-g-h-t, Too," *Newsweek*, 24 January 1944, 68.

39. Kennett, 17–19.

40. See "Manpower," *Life*, 26 October 1942, 29.

41. John T. Whitaker, "Return of a Native," *The Nation* 154, no. 16 (18 April 1942): 457, 458.
42. Donald W. Mitchell, "How Strong Is Our Home Front?" *The Nation* 154, no. 11 (14 March 1942): 305–306.
43. "Production: Detroit: New Era Begins," *Time*, 9 February 1942, 18.
44. "No. 1 Industry Marches to War as Last Autos Roar off Lines," *Newsweek*, 9 February 1942, 42. By June 1942, half of America's industrial output was war matériel. "Production: Half-Way," *Time*, 20 July 1942, 13.
45. David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 623.
46. "Flood of WPB Orders Swings U.S. Industrial Strength to War," *Newsweek*, 13 April 1942, 46.
47. "Wartime Living: In the Stretch," *Time*, 20 April 1942, 17. Women were also encouraged to take up sewing and to modify already existing garments rather than to buy new ones. "Wartime Living: Stitch in Time," *Time*, 30 March 1942, 14.
48. "Zoot Suits," *Life*, 21 September 1942, 44.
49. "Women: War Styles," *Time*, 29 June 1942, 19.
50. "Monty's Beret," *Life*, 5 April 1943, 51.
51. "Flood of WPB Orders Swings U.S. Industrial Strength to War," 46.
52. "Shortages: V for Vandyke," *Time*, 6 April 1942, 13.
53. "Alarm Clocks," *Life*, 2 August 1943, 29.
54. "Wartime Living: Militoys," *Time*, 2 November 1942, 25.
55. See "Kids' Uniforms," *Life*, 11 January 1943: 95.
56. "Wartime Living: Militoys," 25.
57. "All SLB's Chillun," *Newsweek*, 31 January 1944, 54.
58. "Binghamton's Salvage Collection Sets Example for Laggard Country," *Life*, 2 March 1942, 28.
59. "From Egg Beaters to Pajamas, Simplified Styles Lie Ahead," *Newsweek*, 11 January 1943, 48.
60. "Vacations and Joy Riders Bear Brunt of Eastern Gas Ration," *Newsweek*, 18 May 1942, 40; "Get a Horse' Is Sound Advice as Gas Rationing Clears Roads," *Newsweek*, 25 May 1942, 27. *Time* observed that "the public immorality that went with bootlegging came back to the U.S., in one swift week. Citizens, thousands of them, chiseled or lied to their rationing boards, drove off with X cards and B-3 cards—giving them more than those who could not or would not think up reasons why they should be given preferential treatment during a war." "Wartime Living: First Blow," *Time*, 25 May 1942, 16.
61. Louis Wirth claimed during the war that "no single aspect of city life is as visibly different from the pre-war period as the marked reduction in private automobiles on the streets and in the parking lots." Louis Wirth, "The Urban Community," in *American Society in Wartime*, ed. by William Fielding Ogburn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943), 73.
62. "Wartime Living: Vacation Days," *Time*, 8 June 1942, 17.

63. By the summer of 1944, black market gas prosecutions had resulted in the conviction of 1,300 people, as well as the confiscation of licenses at 4,000 gas stations. A total of 32,500 motorists also lost their coupon books for black market activities. See Richard R. Lingeman, *Don't You Know There's a War On? The American Home Front, 1941-1945* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1970), 241-243.
64. "In the Black," *Newsweek*, 20 March 1944, 50.
65. "Theft by Counterfeit," *Newsweek*, 27 March 1944, 46. There were also problems with fuel oil supplies, especially during the bitter winter of 1942-1943. It was the coldest winter on record in Pittsburgh, and in Boston emergency shelters for half-frozen families had to be established. "Wartime Living: Days of Necessity," *Time*, 4 January 1943, 16.
66. "The 'Me First' Americans Fight the War in the Grocery Stores," *Life*, 4 January 1943, 16.
67. "Speedy Change to War Effort Highlights Industry in 1941," *Newsweek*, 3 January 1942, 34.
68. See Foster Rhea Dulles and Melvyn Dubofsky, *Labor in America: A History* (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1984), 321-322.
69. "War Effort Forges West Coast into a New Industrial Empire," *Newsweek*, 22 June 1942, 46.
70. Ernest W. Burgess, "The Family," in *American Society in Wartime*, ed. by William Fielding Ogburn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943), 36.
71. Quoted in Gerald D. Nash, *The American West Transformed: The Impact of the Second World War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 58.
72. Blair Bolles, "The Great Defense Migration," *Harper's* 183 (October 1941): 460.
73. Perry R. Duis, "No Time for Privacy: World War II and Chicago's Families," in *The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness During World War II*, ed. by Lewis A. Erenberg and Susan E. Hirsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 29.
74. "War the Decentralizer," *Time*, 1 June 1942, 67.
75. Nash, 56, 59, 67, 75, 79, 62.
76. Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, "Traditions from Home: African Americans in Wartime Richmond, California," in *The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness During World War II*, ed. by Lewis A. Erenberg and Susan E. Hirsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 263, 267.
77. "Las Vegas Gambling," *Life*, 21 December 1942, 91.
78. W. Lloyd Warner, "The American Town," in *American Society in Wartime*, ed. by William Fielding Ogburn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943), 41-42.
79. See Wirth, 71-72.
80. "Main Street Has a Wartime Boom," *Life*, 9 November 1942, 104.
81. Ernest W. Burgess, "The Effect of War on the American Family," *American Journal of Sociology* 48, no. 3 (November 1942): 343.
82. Alan Brinkley, "World War II and American Liberalism," in *The War in*



- American Culture: Society and Consciousness During World War II*, ed. by Lewis A. Erenberg and Susan E. Hirsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 315.
83. Robert L. Allen, *The Port Chicago Mutiny* (New York: Warner Books, 1989), 129.
84. Agricultural workers made up 23 percent of the male workforce, but only 15 percent of the drafted. See Kennett, 15; "Spring Planting," *Life*, 25 May 1942, 79. In 1941 farms had a net loss of 1.35 million in population—twice that of 1940 and three times that of 1939. William Fielding Ogburn, "Population," in *American Society in Wartime*, ed. by William Fielding Ogburn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943), 15.
85. Lowry Nelson, "Farms and Farming Communities," in *American Society in Wartime*, ed. by William Fielding Ogburn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943), 89.
86. "Farm Hands Wanted," *Newsweek*, 18 May 1942, 42. Farmers would share in the national prosperity of the war years, with farm income increasing from a low of \$4.7 million in 1932 to \$15 billion in 1942. Nelson, 85.
87. "Eleventh Hour Aid for Farms Fails to Soothe Man with Hoe," *Newsweek*, 26 April 1943, 58.
88. Nash, 52. In addition, more than 80,000 Mexicans had been recruited to work on American railroads by the beginning of 1945. *Ibid.*, 55. The one state where the Mexican government refused to send braceros was Texas, because of the notoriously bad treatment of Mexicans there. *Time* magazine maintained that "big, bumptious Texas is the most assertive in maintaining the doctrine that anyone with a dark skin, however cultivated, industrious and well-behaved, is forever inferior to any light-skinned person." "Mexico: Bad Neighbors," *Time*, 2 February 1944, 34.
89. Wirth, 65–66.
90. See "Absenteeism: The New National Malady," *Fortune* 27, no. 3 (March 1943): 104. Sherry Mangan quoted an air transport company employee who said, "They're hoarding about a hundred mechanics, with only enough work to keep them busy about an hour a day each. People begin to talk, so what do they do? They build them a shed on the field so they can take naps and play cards comfortably without scandalizing the whole neighborhood." Sherry Mangan, "State of the Nation," *Fortune* 28, no. 5 (November 1943): 252.
91. "Manpower: M-Day Is Around the Corner," *Time*, 5 October 1942, 22; John Dos Passos, "The People at War, III: Gold Rush in the South," *Harper's* 186, no. 116 (May 1943): 605.
92. "Prison War Work," *Life*, 7 December 1942, 49.
93. "Wartime Living: Men of Vision," *Time*, 26 October 1942, 23.
94. "Wartime Living: For Men Only," *Time*, 23 November 1942, 27.
95. "Cities: Miracle Town," *Time*, 23 November 1942, 27.
96. Peter Whoriskey, "Employee Explosion Transforms Washington," *Washington Post*, 25 May 2004.

- [97.](#) *Life*, 8 November 1943, 85.
- [98.](#) Elsie Bray, "The Gang at Arlington Farms," *Washington Post*, 28 May 2004. Among the most prized of accommodations in the Washington area was Scotts Hotel, where 250 female government workers lived. Amenities at the Scotts included a sunbathing deck, movies, weekly dances, and "a dating bureau for lonesome girls." Unique to the Scotts were the "beau parlors," a series of small rooms named after famous lovers (Anthony and Cleopatra, Romeo and Juliet, etc.) where residents could entertain their boyfriends in semiprivity ("decorum is preserved by curtains which are too narrow to be closed completely"). "Life Visits Scotts Hotel for Women in Washington, D.C.," *Life*, 10 August 1942, 78, 79.
- [99.](#) "Washington in Wartime," *Life*, 4 January 1943, 47.
- [100.](#) J. Blan van Urk, "Norfolk—Our Worst War Town," *The American Mercury* 56, no. 230 (February 1943): 144–151.
- [101.](#) "Detroit Is Dynamite," *Life*, 17 August 1942, 15, 19, 20.
- [102.](#) "Detroit: Six Months After," *Life*, 1 March 1943, 29.
- [103.](#) Earl Brown, "The Truth About the Detroit Riot," *Harper's* 187, no. 1122 (November 1943): 489.
- [104.](#) *Ibid.*, 491.
- [105.](#) *Ibid.*, 493–494.
- [106.](#) "The Negro's War," *Fortune* 25, no. 6 (June 1942): 158.
- [107.](#) Brown, 495.
- [108.](#) "Race War in Detroit," *Life*, 5 July 1943, 93; Brown, 495–496, 493, 488.
- [109.](#) Brown, 497, 498.
- [110.](#) Kelly quoted in "Festering Tension," *Newsweek*, 5 July 1943, 40. *Newsweek* declared that "the shame was not Detroit's alone. Its outbreaks were a symptom of a racial tension festering all over the country." *Ibid.*, 35.
- [111.](#) Studs Terkel, *The Good War: An Oral History of World War II* (New York: Ballantine, 1985), 138.
- [112.](#) D'Ann Campbell, "The War and Beyond: Women's Place in American Life," in *World War II: Crucible of the Contemporary World*, ed. by Loyd E. Lee (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1991), 282.
- [113.](#) "The Negro's War," 161–162.
- [114.](#) "Michigan: Hitler or the U.S.?" *Time*, 24 August 1942, 17; "Labor Notes," *Newsweek*, 11 January 1943, 50.
- [115.](#) "Waves of Labor Unrest Set Off by Lewis Coal-Strike Threats," *Newsweek*, 3 May 1943, 48.
- [116.](#) Mangan, 252.
- [117.](#) "Labor: Revolution in Bayonne," *Time*, 24 August 1942, 71.
- [118.](#) "The West at War," *Life*, 12 October 1942, 103.
- [119.](#) *Ibid.*, 110, 111.
- [120.](#) "Little Steel Formula Swaying in Labor's Storm for Raises," *Newsweek*, 8 February 1943, 56.
- [121.](#) "Strife and Strain in the Nation Reflect Home-Front Bungling," *Newsweek*, 5

July 1943, 31.

[122.](#) The UMW not only wanted a pay increase but also wanted miners to be paid on a “portal-to-portal” basis. This prompted Cincinnati hotel workers to threaten a strike unless they were paid on a “street dress to street dress” basis (in other words, paid for changing their clothes). “Waves of Labor Unrest Set Off by Lewis Coal-Strike Threats,” 48.

[123.](#) In a *Fortune* survey, 70.6 percent of those who answered “yes” to the question, “Are there any prominent individuals in this country who you feel might be harmful to the future of the country unless they are curbed?” identified Lewis as that individual. The second-place finisher was Franklin Roosevelt at 5.5 percent. “The *Fortune* Survey,” *Fortune* 28, no. 5 (November 1943): 10.

[124.](#) “Where Do We Stand?” *Life*, 17 May 1943, 22.

[125.](#) “Coal Truce Relieves Nation but the Basic Issues Simmer,” *Newsweek*, 10 May 1943, 32.

[126.](#) Carl Victor Abrams, “Paying My Rent to Democracy,” in *Jewish Youth at War: Letters from American Soldiers*, ed. by Isaac E. Rontch (New York: Martin Press, 1945), 9.

[127.](#) Terkel, 157. Almost alone in its defense of Lewis and the coal miners was C. Wright Mills. Writing in *The New Republic*, Mills claimed that the real issue of inflation had been bypassed by the “identifying of government and business with the ‘prosecution of the war’ and Lewis with the ‘holding up of the war.’” Mills added that “given the distribution of income, prices and profits rather than wages might well be used in stopping the spiral of inflation.” C. Wright Mills, “The Case for the Coal Miners,” *The New Republic*, 24 May 1943, 695, 696.

[128.](#) Quoted in Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 643. Several memoirs of the war also specifically mention Lewis. Margaret Bourke-White, in her relentless pursuit of the why-we-fight holy grail, reported the following conversation between two soldiers: “I can tell you what we ain’t fighting for,” volunteered an auburn haired PFC they called Ruby. “We ain’t fighting for none of those labor leaders.”

“That’s right,” said the winch operator. “Let some of those jokers hear a few screaming meemies come whistling at them and they’d be glad to go back down into a nice deep coal mine.” Margaret Bourke-White, *They Called It “Purple Heart Valley”: A Combat Chronicle of the War in Italy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1944), 77–78.

In *To Hell and Back*, one soldier filled in his comrades on the news from the home front: “The miners are talking about a strike.”

“A strike?”

“Yeah. You know: People demand higher wages, shorter hours, better living conditions. If they don’t get them, they quit work.”

“Americans?”

“Why, hell, yes. Who do you think they are? The Chinese?” Later, a soldier will describe the denizens of hell “waiting for John L. to arrive and pull off a strike that’ll top the devil himself.” Audie Murphy, *To Hell and Back* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1949), 137, 158.

[129.](#) “Morale Photography,” *Newsweek*, 24 May 1943, 15; “Photo with a Message,”

*Newsweek*, 24 May 1943, 27.

130. See "Labor: Strong Arm," *Time*, 3 January 1944, 13.

131. Nelson Lichtenstein, *Labor's War at Home: The CIO in World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 133, 134.

132. "Oregon Coup," 9 March 1942, *Newsweek*, 46.

133. "Women Find Troubles in Path of Connecting with War Jobs," *Newsweek*, 16 March 1942, 44.

134. "The Margin Now Is Womanpower," *Fortune* 27, no. 2 (February 1943): 99.

135. Costello, *Virtue Under Fire*, 179.

136. "Women: Women, Women Everywhere," *Time*, 19 October 1942.

137. Duis, 31.

138. Susan M. Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s* (Boston: Twayne, 1982), 24; John Morton Blum, *U Was for Victory: Politics and American Culture During World War II* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1977), 94.

139. The War Manpower Commission employed the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency to run its recruitment campaign in 1943, and in September of that year spent \$1.5 million just on radio programs aimed at potential female workers. Mary P. Ryan, *Womanhood in America: From Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1983), 255–256.

140. Quoted in Sara M. Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* (New York: Free Press, 1989), 222.

141. *Newsweek*, 16 February 1942.

142. "Girls in Uniform," *Life*, 6 July 1942, 41.

143. Charles Higham and Joel Greenberg call *Tender Comrade* "the nadir of home-front films." Charles Higham and Joel Greenberg, *Hollywood in the Forties* (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1968), 100.

144. See Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits, and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* (New York: Free Press, 1987), 167; *Saturday Evening Post*, 12 June 1943, 55.

145. *Life*, 19 October 1942, 57; *Time*, 18 January 1943, 6.

146. *Life*, 1 February 1943, 82.

147. *Newsweek*, 30 August 1943, inside front cover.

148. *Time*, 25 January 1945, 74.

149. *Time*, 24 July 1944, 95.

150. Kevin Starr, *Embattled Dreams: California in War and Peace, 1940–1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 128.

151. One of the reprimanded women, Madeline Purtell, complained, "Even a war can't change a woman. She's built the way she is and no company rule can do anything about it." "Sweater Girls," *Newsweek*, 22 February 1943, 63.

152. A. G. Mezrik, "The Factory Manager Learns the Facts of Life," *Harper's* 187, no. 1120 (September 1943): 291.

153. "Men Lose Their Pants to Slack-Crazy Women," *Life*, 20 April 1942, 63;

"Wartime Living: Pants," *Time*, 13 April 1942, 19.

154. "Wartime Living: Pants," 19; "The Margin Now Is Womanpower," 222–223.

155. Kevin Starr contrasts the garb worn by female aviation workers with shipyard workers, noting that "photographs from the period depict women aviation workers rather well dressed in slacks, denim shirts, and bandannas, in contrast to the overalls and heavy denim jackets of women employed in the shipyards. Aviation, in other words, had a glamour that included its spiffy uniform." Starr, 129. "Flying Fortress Fashions," *Life*, 17 May 1943, 64. The Ford company decided to require slacks not only for women on the shop floor but also for women doing office work. The office staff rebelled, with one worker noting, "I never heard of any stenographer getting her skirt caught in the gear of her typewriter." A. G. Mezerik, "The Factory Manager Learns the Facts of Life," *Harper's* 187, no. 1120 (September 1943): 292.

156. "The Margin Now Is Womanpower," 223.

157. "Short Bobs for Wartime," *Life*, 2 February 1942, 50.

158. Lake said of her hair, "I've been worrying with it, stumbling through life. This request from the Government isn't only a pleasure, it's a relief." "Veronica Lake," *Life*, 8 March 1943, 39. See also Ephraim Katz, *The Film Encyclopedia*, 4th ed., s.v. "Lake, Veronica"; and Hartmann, 195.

159. John Dos Passos, "The People at War, I: Downeasters Building Ships," *Harper's* 186, no. 1114 (March 1943): 340.

160. Susan B. Anthony II, "Working at the Navy Yard," *New Republic*, 1 May 1944, 598, 597.

161. Mary Heaton Vorse, "The Girls of Elkton, Maryland," *Harper's* 186, no. 1114 (March 1943): 352.

162. *Ibid.*, 352, 353.

163. Another example was Dorothy Haener, who before the war fully expected "to get married and raise a family; something modern women's organizations don't like to hear me say, but that's the way I was raised." The war changed those expectations, and Haener found herself working nine-hour days, six days a week, as a parts inspector at a B-24 plant at Willow Run, Michigan. Tom Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation* (New York: Random House, 1998), 97.

164. "Florentine Gardens," *Life*, 31 January 1944, 61.

165. "Life Goes to a Swing Shift Dance," *Life*, 19 January 1942, 87.

166. Walter Davenport, "Swing It, Swing Shift!" *Collier's*, 22 August 1942, 26.

167. *Ibid.*, 28.

168. *Ibid.*, 30.

169. *Ibid.*, 28.

170. "Night Clubs," *Life*, 10 May 1943, 69.

171. Quoted in Elaine Tyler May, "Pushing the Limits: 1940–1961," in *No Small Courage: A History of Women in the United States*, ed. by Nancy Cott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 476.

172. Quoted in John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A*



*History of Sexuality in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 260.

[173.](#) James Jones, *W W II* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1975), 152.

[174.](#) Hoopes, 79.

[175.](#) J. O. Reinemann, "Extra-Marital Relations with Fellow Employee in War Industry as a Factor in Disruption of Family Life," *American Sociological Review* 10, no. 3 (June 1945): 400. The researchers concluded that "longer married life and more advanced age of the husbands tend to produce a greater readiness for extra-marital relations." *Ibid.*, 404.

[176.](#) Starr, 129.

[177.](#) "Women in Steel," *Life*, 9 August 1943, 75.

[178.](#) "Labor: The Workers," *Time*, 24 August 1942, 16.

[179.](#) *Time*, 31 August 1942, 5.

[180.](#) D'Ann Campbell, 288.

[181.](#) "The Nation: How Goes the Battle?" *Time*, 21 December 1942, 17.

[182.](#) Kennett, 106–108, 96.

[183.](#) Paul Fussell, *The Boys' Crusade: The American Infantry in Northwestern Europe, 1944–1945* (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 8.

[184.](#) Charles G. Bolté, "The War Fronts," *The Nation* 160, no. 2 (13 January 1945): 34.

[185.](#) See Russell F. Weigley, *Eisenhower's Lieutenants: The Campaign of France and Germany, 1944–1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 20–21. At Anzio, Bill Mauldin reported that "four American tank destroyers crossed the canal and bounced armor-piercing shells off the turret of a Tiger until it turned its massive guns and disintegrated them with five shells." Bill Mauldin, *Up Front* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1945), 167. The superiority of Tiger tanks had a considerable psychological impact and, as David Holbrook has noted, "the legend of their invulnerability was paralyzing." Holbrook quoted in Shephard, 251.

[186.](#) The army tried to stifle the complaints of American pilots, but American pilots in Europe who had had the opportunity to fly British Spitfires told one reporter "they found the British Spitfires infinitely preferable in nearly every way to the Airacobras." "Air: The Best Planes?" *Time*, 31 August 1942, 75.

[187.](#) John Lardner, "How Our Planes Shape Up," *Newsweek*, 5 April 1943, 23.

[188.](#) Russell F. Weigley, *Eisenhower's Lieutenants: The Campaign of France and Germany, 1944–1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 573.

[189.](#) See Ernest K. Lindley, "Notes on the War: Those Troop Percentages Are Vague," *Newsweek*, 10 January 1944, 24.

[190.](#) Bolté, "The War Fronts," 34, 35.

[191.](#) Anthony Rhodes, *Propaganda, The Art of Persuasion: World War II* (New York: Chelsea House, 1976), 158. In November 1942, the Kaiser shipyards in Richmond built a Liberty ship in the record time of 4 days, 15 hours. Costello, *Virtue Under Fire*, 184.

[192.](#) John Keegan, *The Second World War* (New York: Penguin, 1989), 219. This huge material advantage dominated military tactical thinking as well. John Ellis

contents that rather than “unbalancing the enemy or forcing him to give up ground by threatened moves into his flanks and rear,” the Allied strategy time and again “was simply to shell and bomb him into submission.” John Ellis, *Brute Force: Allied Strategy and Tactics in the Second World War* (New York: Viking, 1990), 535. Paul A. C. Koistinen casts doubt on the U.S. “miracle of production” during the war and argues that “when placed in the proper context, the American production record does not appear exceptional, unless the characterization applies to all other belligerents.” The proper context, according to Koistinen, is the percentage of the world’s manufacturing in the prewar period. Paul A. C. Koistinen, *Arsenal of World War II: The Political Economy of American Warfare, 1940–1945* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 498.

## Chapter 5

1. See Sigmund Freud, *Reflections on War and Death*, trans. by A. A. Brill and A. B. Kuttner (New York: W. W. Norton, 1950).
2. Ernest W. Burgess, “The Family,” in *American Society in Wartime*, ed. by William Fielding Ogburn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943), 34.
3. J. Glenn Gray, *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1967), 61–62.
4. Samuel Tenenbaum, “The Fate of Wartime Marriages,” *The American Mercury* 61, no. 263 (November 1945): 531.
5. Constantine Panunzio, “War and Marriage,” *Social Forces* 21, no. 4 (May 1943): 443. Willard Waller saw war as a “masquerade,” and as in other masquerades, the normal checks on sexual expression go by the wayside and “morality is dissolved.” Waller observed that in wartime “school teachers dress up in brilliant uniforms and become handsome young officers; business men strut and pose awhile as bureaucrats; the harmless postman becomes a hard-boiled sergeant; doctors of philosophy supervise the manufacture of munitions; an obscure garage mechanic or a man from a cross-roads town becomes a national hero; the housewife drives a taxi or runs a lathe.” Willard Waller, *The Veteran Comes Back* (New York: Dryden Press, 1944), 130.
6. Quoted in John D’Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 260.
7. Mona Gardner, “Has Your Husband Come Home to the Right Woman?” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, December 1945: 74.
8. “War Brides,” *Time*, 30 March 1942, 14; Burgess, “The Family,” 23. The marriage rate in 1941 was 12.6 per thousand. Panunzio, 444. At the University of Kansas, where the former coed pattern had been to “join a good sorority, date the field as freshman and sophomore, go steady with a well-heeled fraternity man in her junior year, get engaged as senior, marry him on graduation,” the number of engagements and marriages tripled in the six months after Pearl Harbor. “Last Days of School,” *Time*, 1 June 1942, 76.
9. Studs Terkel, *The Good War: An Oral History of World War Two* (New York: Ballantine, 1984), 114. Hahne notes that the idea that “that women married soldiers and sent them overseas happy was hammered at us” in radio plays, magazine short stories,

and movies. She concludes, "I don't think I'd have married so foolishly, if it weren't for the war. If I hadn't married a uniform. I wouldn't marry a civilian that fast. The man was a soldier. Somebody had to marry him, and I married him. The war directly influenced the rest of my life." *Ibid.*, 114, 119–120. Some women married soldiers for motivations more predatory than patriotic. "Small-scale fortune hunters," typically divorced women with children, married soldiers because the government provided monetary allowances for children from previous unions. One woman married 13 servicemen (without the benefit of any divorces) and applied for family allowances from all 13. Harold M. Wayne, "G.I. Divorce Dangers," *Collier's*, 21 October 1944, 80.

[10.](#) In a Barbasol ad, a G.I. embracing a woman is shown winking at the reader. He has been reassured that "absence makes the heart grow fonder ... if you kiss her goodbye with a smooth, fine-as-silk Barbasol Face. What a memory for a darling to cherish, as compared with a grizzly skin that scratches her face and leaves her wondering whether she ought to wait." *Life*, 5 January 1942, 69.

[11.](#) These fears were confirmed by statistics. In one study of marriage expectation of women for the American Southeast, at age 20 the chances were 84.3 percent; at 25, 67.6 percent; at 30, 42.6 percent; at 35, 19.7 percent; at 40, 9.5 percent; at 45, 3.2 percent. See Tenenbaum, 533.

[12.](#) Florence Greenhoe Robbins, "Reasons for and Against War Marriage," *Sociology and Social Research* 29 (September–October 1944): 25–34. On war brides, see Costello, *Virtue Under Fire*, 254. Another study of 750 young adults (60 percent college women and 40 percent servicemen) confirmed that women were more enthusiastic than men about wartime marriage. Women twice as frequently as men expressed a willingness to marry before the serviceman was shipped overseas. See John H. Burma, "Attitudes of College Youth on War Marriage," *Social Forces* 24, no. 1 (October 1945): 98.

[13.](#) Gardner, 74.

[14.](#) Paul Popenoe, "If You're a War Bride," *Ladies' Home Journal*, September 1942, 24.

[15.](#) "Lonely Wife," *Life*, 21 December 1942, 71.

[16.](#) John Morton Blum, *V Was for Victory: Politics and American Culture During World War II* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 95.

[17.](#) Robert J. Havighurst et al., *The American Veteran Back Home: A Study of Veteran Readjustment* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1951), 39.

[18.](#) *Ibid.*, 40, 41.

[19.](#) *Ibid.*, 40.

[20.](#) Bill Mauldin, *Up Front* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1945), 24. In 1943, soldiers received an average of 14 pieces of mail per week. See Gerald F. Linderman, *The World Within War: America's Combat Experience in World War II* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 303. Much of this was in the form of "V-Mail," in which letters both from home and abroad would be microfilmed to save weight, and then blown back up to full size upon arrival. See *Time*, 9 November 1942, 29. By 1944 American servicemen were getting 63 million

V-mail letters a month. Geoffrey Perret, *There's a War to Be Won: The United States Army in World War II* (New York: Random House, 1991), 467. Combat nurses sometimes received the letter most dreaded by soldiers. Italian field nurse June Wandry got a letter from her beau Del that started, "I tell you now, otherwise I'm afraid that some day I might feel the perfect heel and be ashamed even to face myself. If you've not already guessed, I am referring to the love tangle I've become involved in." *War Letters: Extraordinary Correspondence from American Wars*, ed. by Andrew Carroll (New York: Scribner, 2001), 248.

[21.](#) "Don't Worry Your Soldier," *Collier's*, 5 September 1942, 70.

[22.](#) Quoted in Eleanor (Bumpy) Stevenson, "I Knew Your Soldier, Pt. 2," *Saturday Evening Post*, 68.

[23.](#) Mauldin, *Up Front*, 24.

[24.](#) *New York Times*, 8 January 1945; Lee Kennett, *G.I.: The American Soldier in World War II* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1987), 75. Martha Gellhorn observed of the soldiers in Italy that "everyone wants to go back and find everything exactly as it was before; one feels sure that if a cigarette burn on a living-room sofa is repaired, it will shock them; if a wife has changed her hair-do, it will cause pain. The memories are fixed in their minds with a fierce and longing love." Martha Gellhorn, "Postcards from Italy," *Collier's*, 1 July 1944, 41.

[25.](#) Ed Cunningham, "Jilted GIs in India Organize First Brush-Off Club," in *The Best from Yank, the Army Weekly*, selected by the editors of *Yank* (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1945), 35; For a similar Brush-Off Club in North Africa, see John Costello, *Virtue Under Fire: How World War II Changed Our Social and Sexual Attitudes* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1985), 16.

[26.](#) "The Nation: The Way Home," *Time*, 7 August 1944, 16.

[27.](#) Burgess, "The Family," 25. Red Cross worker Rose Rabinoff maintained, "Army life, particularly at distant posts, offers a present means of escape for many husbands." Quoted in Edward C. McDonagh, "The Discharged Serviceman and His Family," *American Journal of Sociology* 51, no. 5 (March 1946): 452.

[28.](#) Costello, *Virtue Under Fire*, 200.

[29.](#) "Wartime Living: Christmas Thaw," *Time*, 14 December 1942, 31.

[30.](#) Wayne, 13, 80.

[31.](#) See David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 156.

[32.](#) Costello, *Virtue Under Fire*, 193. During discussion of the Selective Service Act from August to October of 1940, marriages in 26 states rose 25 percent over the 1939 totals. Tenenbaum, 531.

[33.](#) William Fielding Ogburn, "Population," in *American Society in Wartime*, ed. by William Fielding Ogburn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943), 7, 6.

[34.](#) "Junior Mothers," *Life*, 31 August 1942, 41; See also Sara M. Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* (New York: Free Press, 1989), 220.

[35.](#) "Heartsickness," *Time*, 29 January 1945, 65.

[36.](#) Hannah Lees, "Mothers Without Fathers," *Collier's*, 14 April 1945, 19, 35.

37. Quoted in "Children in War," *Life*, 30 March 1942, 58.
38. Havighurst et al., 47.
39. Alfred Toombs, "War Babies," *Woman's Home Companion*, April 1944, 32.
40. "The Margin Now Is Womanpower," *Fortune* 27, no.2 (February 1943): 224. In New York City, 78 babies were abandoned in 1943—more than at any time since the Great Depression. See "Foundlings," *Life*, 21 February 1944, 109.
41. Mezerik noted that abortions were being done "less dangerously than of old now that the sulfa drugs have lowered the death rate." A. G. Mezerik, "The Factory Manager Learns the Facts of Life," *Harper's* 187, no. 1120 (September 1943): 296.
42. "Abortion in San Francisco," *Time*, 4 February 1946, 66.
43. Ernest W. Burgess, "The Effect of War on the American Family," *American Journal of Sociology* 48, no. 3 (November 1942): 344.
44. James Madison Wood, "Should We Draft Mothers?" *Woman's Home Companion*, January 1944, 21. A 1944 Woman's Bureau survey revealed that 16 percent of mothers working in war industries did not have any child care arrangements. Evans, 224.
45. Toombs, 32.
46. *Ibid.*, 76.
47. *Ibid.*, 32.
48. "The Margin Now Is Womanpower," 224.
49. Toombs, 76.
50. "Help the Children Now!" *Ladies' Home Journal*, June 1945, 6.
51. "Juvenile Delinquents," *Life*, 26 October 1942, 58.
52. Martin H. Neumeyer, *Juvenile Delinquency in Modern Society* (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand, 1964), 61. Neumeyer drew on data produced by Juvenile Court Statistics, 1959.
53. Walter A. Lunden, *Statistics on Delinquents and Delinquency* (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1964), 167. Lunden analyzes the impact of war on 13 nations in Walter A. Lunden, *War and Delinquency*, prepared for the Social Defence Section of the Bureau of Social Affairs, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations, 1960. In Brooklyn, chief assistant district attorney Burton B. Turkus claimed that youthful offender cases under his jurisdiction had increased by 100 percent in five years. *New York Times*, 1 December 1945.
54. *New York Times*, 1 December 1945.
55. The occasion for the *Time* article was a gunfight involving two gangs and the police that left one person dead and a number of wounded. "New York: 'Light Him Up!'" *Time*, 31 July 1944, 14.
56. Roger Butterfield, "Our Kids Are in Trouble," *Life*, 20 December 1943, 97.
57. Charles L. Chute, "Juvenile Delinquency in Wartime," *Probation*, June 1943, 132.
58. Harry Manuel Shulman, *Juvenile Delinquency in American Society* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), 58. Venereal disease was also a pressing problem among American troops overseas. In late 1943 four American infantry divisions in



Italy reported losing more casualties to venereal disease than to combat. In the fighting at the end of the war for northwestern Europe, the U.S. Third Army was losing 12.41 troops per thousand per month to venereal disease. John Ellis, *The Sharp End: The Fighting Man in World War II* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980), 306.

59. "War Effort Forges West Coast Into a New Industrial Empire," 48.

60. *New York Times*, 13 January 1945.

61. *New York Times*, 27 January 1945.

62. Vera Connolly, "Job for a Lady," *Collier's*, 10 June 1944, 48.

63. Butterfield, 100, 102.

64. "Juvenile Delinquents," 59.

65. Chute, 134.

66. Frederick W. Killian, "Juvenile Delinquency: Wartime Trends 1943," *Probation*, June 1944, 140.

67. *New York Times*, 1 May 1944.

68. Katherine Lenroot, chief of the Children's Bureau of the United States Department of Commerce, estimated that 2.75 million children between the ages of 14 and 17 were employed in 1944, compared to 1 million before the war. *New York Times*, 20 February 1944. See also "Boypower," *Life*, 17 May 1943, 45; Howard Whitman, "The Forgotten Boy," *Collier's*, 2 November 1946, 97.

69. "Victory Corps," *Life*, 9 November 1942, 53.

70. Willard Waller, *The Veteran Comes Back* (New York: Dryden Press, 1944), 84.

71. "Children at Work," *Business Week*, no. 772 (17 June 1944): 100, 101; Whitman, 97.

72. Wartime labor shortages were severe enough in California to prompt that state's attorney general to authorize students who were 16 and older to alternate four weeks of war work with four weeks of school over a 12-month period. *New York Times*, 5 February 1944.

73. Kevin Starr, *Embattled Dreams: California in War and Peace, 1940-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 126.

74. Martin H. Neumeyer, "Delinquency Trends in Wartime," *Sociology and Social Research* 29 (March-April 1945): 268. Labor shortages continued to the end of the war. In January 1945, war industries were 300,000 workers short and the armed forces estimated that they would need 1.5 million men for replacements and expansion. Roosevelt asked for legislation that would put the nation's 4.5 million 4-Fs to work in the war effort, and even considered drafting women for a shortage that was especially acute: trained nurses. "Manpower: Riding the Cow," *Time*, 15 January 1945, 19; "Draft Women?" *Time*, 15 January 1945, 19.

75. See Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, "What to Show the World: The Office of War Information and Hollywood," in *Hollywood's America: United States History Through Its Films*, ed. by Steven Mintz and Randy Roberts (St. James, New York: Brandywine Press, 1993), 166.

76. Wood, 21.

77. J. Edgar Hoover and Frederick L. Collins, "Mothers ... Our Only Hope," *Woman's Home Companion*, January 1944, 21, 20.
78. *New York Times*, 15 October 1944.
79. "Race War In Detroit," *Life*, 5 July 1943, 93.
80. Neumeyer, 268, 269.
81. James Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage: America's Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 25.
82. Mauricio Mazón, *The Zoot-Suit Riots: The Psychology of Symbolic Annihilation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 64.
83. "Zoot-Suit Riots," *Life*, 21 June 1943, 31.
84. Carey McWilliams claimed that while juvenile delinquency had increased in Los Angeles, it had increased less among Mexican youth than among any other ethnic group. Carey McWilliams, "The Zoot-Suit Riots," *The New Republic*, 21 June 1943, 819.
85. Mazón, 61.
86. The chiefs found that boys most commonly committed "petty larceny, burglary, runaways, car thefts, disorderly conduct and malicious mischief," while among girls "runaways, sex offenses, petty larceny, incorrigibility, truancy and disorderly conduct" were most prevalent. *New York Times*, 12 December 1945.
87. A 1945 study made by the Yale School of Medicine claimed a 50 percent decrease in juvenile delinquency among a group of 317 families that had been resettled in a New Haven housing project. The Yale researchers concluded that "a substantial improvement in the social adjustment of children in a given group of families may be reasonably attributed to the conditions of project life." *New York Times*, 14 December 1945.
88. *New York Times*, 17 December 1945.
89. *The Oxford Companion to American Military History*, ed. by John Whiteclay Chambers, II, s.v. "Public Financing and Budgeting for War" (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 576.
90. Robert H. Zieger, *America's Great War: World War I and the American Experience* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 80.
91. *Ibid.*, 82.
92. Kennedy, *Over Here*, 106.
93. Zieger, 76.
94. Lawrence R. Samuel, *Pledging Allegiance: American Identity and the Bond Drive of World War II* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 10.
95. David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 626.
96. *Newsweek*, 26 July 1943, 1.
97. Samuel, 18, 35.
98. Richard R. Lingeman, *Don't You Know There's a War On? The American Home Front, 1941-1945* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1970), 175-176; Lary

May, "Making the American Consensus: The Narrative of Conversion and Subversion in World War II Films," in *The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness During World War II*, ed. by Lewis A. Erenberg and Susan E. Hirsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 74.

99. Lingeman, 221.

100. Samuel, 98.

101. *Ibid.*, 25.

102. *Ibid.*, 33.

103. *Ibid.*, 37, 41.

104. *Ibid.*, 36–37, 48.

105. *Newsweek*, 16 August 1943, 8.

106. *Life*, 24 January 1944, 68.

107. See Robert K. Merton, *Mass Persuasion: The Social Psychology of a War Bond Drive* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1946), 2–3.

108. Lingeman, 296–297.

109. Samuel, 50–51, 67–68.

110. James Bradley (with Ron Powers), *Flags of Our Fathers* (New York: Bantam, 2001), 281.

111. *Ibid.*, 207, 224.

112. See, for example, the Bankers Trust promotion for the drive which included the Rosenthal photograph and the caption "Now It's Our Turn." *Newsweek*, 14 May 1945, 16.

113. *New York Times*, 12 May 1945.

114. Bradley, 287, 189–190.

115. *Ibid.*, 289.

116. *Ibid.*, 290–291.

117. *Ibid.*, 294.

118. Samuel, 73, 216.

119. *Ibid.*, 45. Bond redemptions between July 1943 and March 1944 were averaging 12 percent of sales. And because of looming income tax deadlines, they averaged 84 percent of sales in the first week of March 1944. "Bonds and Redemptions," *Newsweek*, 20 March 1944, 65.

120. John Steinbeck, *Once There Was a War* (New York: Viking, 1958), 77.

121. Patricia Lochridge, "I Shopped the Black Market," *Woman's Home Companion*, February 1944, 20.

122. *Ibid.*, 21.

123. *Ibid.*, 82.

124. David G. Wittels, "It Will Be Tough, But—" *Saturday Evening Post*, 3 February 1945, 40.

125. Perry R. Duis, "No Time for Privacy: World War II and Chicago's Families," in *The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness During World War II*, ed. by Lewis A. Erenberg and Susan E. Hirsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 25.

126. "Rabbits," *Life*, 4 January 1943, 43; "No Meat for Sale," *Life*, 28 December 1942, 19.
127. "Horse Meat," *Life*, 21 June 1943, 65.
128. "Profiteers and Bootleg Meat Bring Drive on Black Markets," *Newsweek*, 1 February 1943, 25. Patricia Lochridge reported that a butcher sold her a 10-pound ham that was supposedly in "imminent danger of spoilage." While such meat could be sold without points, by law it was to be sold at a reduced price. Instead she paid 16 cents over the legal ceiling. Lochridge, 20.
129. W. B. Courtney, "Why You Don't Get Meat," *Collier's*, 19 May 1945, 16, 17. Boneless ham could be procured on the black market in Washington, D.C. for \$1.25 a pound (twice the legal rate), and in almost every city consumers could find black market nylon stockings for five dollars a pair. Blum, 97.
130. "Unregulated Slaughter and Poor Planning Cause Severe Meat Shortages," *Life*, 5 April 1943, 17. There was another estimate that overall, perhaps as much as one-third of the meat supply was being diverted to the black market. "The Meat Situation in the United States," *Collier's*, 12 May 1945, 28.
131. *Time*, 3 January 1944, 87.
132. *New York Times*, 16 April 1945.
133. *New York Times*, 14 April 1945. A Senate investigation revealed that there was no agreement as to the extent of the black market meat trade. The OPA's Thomas I. Emmerson estimated that the retail black market trade in a city such as New York might constitute 15 to 20 percent of the total, while Senator Wherry of Nebraska believed that 90 percent was closer to the mark. Walter H. Waggoner, "Senate Black Mart Inquiry Criticizes the OPA and WFA," *New York Times*, 15 April 1945.
134. "Whisky Shortage," *Life*, 13 December 1943, 38.
135. Herbert Asbury, "Here We Go Again!" *Collier's*, 27 May 1944, 15.
136. *Ibid.*, 48. There was also a bustling trade in tire thievery. In March 1942 the Pure Oil Company published "An Open Letter to Tire Thieves" in which it declared that "tire theft has risen to new heights" and called the tire thief "as obnoxious as a fifth columnist, as despicable as a Benedict Arnold." *Life*, 2 March 1942, 79.
137. Pete Martin, "Solid Citizen," *Saturday Evening Post*, 6 May 1944, 102.
138. "Shortages: Who Is to Blame?" *Time*, 2 April 1945, 17. The army air forces had warehouses of cast-off tires, but only 10 percent of them fit most automobile rims. As a consequence, there was "a terrific demand for rims and wheels that might be used to adapt aircraft tires to automobiles, trucks, tractors, and other equipment." See "Early Birds in War Salvaging Pick Profits From AAF Tires," *Newsweek*, 19 March 1945, 72.
139. *Ibid.*, 33.
140. "Don't You Know There's a War? Get Unanimous Civilian Yes," *Newsweek*, 29 January 1945, 38.
141. "Mysteries on the Home Front," *Newsweek*, 8 January 1945, 62. John Kenneth Galbraith, who was in charge of organizing price controls during the war,

- maintained “there was a black market, but it was small. There were troublesome moments in the case of meat, but there was a great deal of obloquy attached to illegal behavior.” Terkel, 320.
142. “Problems of Plenty,” *Time*, 10 January 1944, 88.
143. “War & Peace,” *Time*, 8 January 1945, 72.
144. Kennedy, “Freedom from Fear”, 622; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1957* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1961), 178. Between 1941 and 1945, the cost of living climbed by 23 percent, but wages rose by 68 percent. Linderman, 334.
145. “The Nation: Conscience and Casualties,” 13.
146. “Home-Front ‘Happiness,’” *Collier’s*, 14 April 1945; 78.
147. In a Gallup poll taken in early December 1944, Americans were asked, “After the war, do you think that everyone who wants a job will be able to get one?” Sixty-eight percent answered “no.” American Institute of Public Opinion, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1935–1971* (New York: Random House, 1972), 478.
148. Waller, *The Veteran Comes Back*, 37.
149. “Absenteeism,” *Life*, 31 May 1943; 31.
150. “Absenteeism: The New National Malady,” 104.
151. E. William Noland, “Worker Attitudes and Industrial Absenteeism: A Statistical Appraisal,” *American Sociological Review* 10, no. 4 (August 1945): 503; “Absenteeism: The New National Malady,” 104. Absenteeism stood at 6 percent at Ford’s River Rouge plant, and 7 percent at its Willow Run plant. Absenteeism at Lockheed’s and Douglas’ West Coast plants were ranging between 5 and 6 percent. “Absentee Workers Are Target of Congressional Hocus-Pocus,” *Newsweek*, 8 March 1943; 53.
152. “Labor: Absent Without Leave,” *Time*, 11 January 1943, 73. “Absentee Workers Are Target of Congressional Hocus-Pocus,” 54.
153. “Absenteeism: The New National Malady,” *Fortune* 27, no. 3 (March 1943): 105.
154. “Labor Disputes, Farm Unrest—Together They Spell Inflation,” *Newsweek*, 29 March 1943; 44.
155. Lingeman, 261. As one way to cut down on absenteeism, the Hanovia Manufacturing Co. provided a tanning device that placed swimsuit-clad employees on a platform that rotated around an ultraviolet “health lamp.” A similar device had supposedly reduced absenteeism in British factories by up to 60 percent. “Stayon-Job Sunshine,” *Newsweek*, 5 April 1943, 90.
156. Anthony Rhodes, *Propaganda, the Art of Persuasion: World War II* (New York: Chelsea House, 1976), 175.
157. “Shockers,” *Newsweek*, 14 February 1944, 61.
158. Rhodes, 164.
159. Some industries also had attendance contests modeled after bingo games that would award the winners with “jackpots” of war bonds or Florida vacations. “Absenteeism: The New National Malady,” 105.



- [160.](#) *Life*, 15 March 1943, 97.
- [161.](#) *Time*, 8 February 1943, 43.
- [162.](#) *Newsweek*, 22 January 1945, 37.
- [163.](#) "Rubber: A Matter of Pride," *Time*, 19 February 1945, 80.
- [164.](#) "Trouble in Detroit," *Time*, 12 March 1945, 23.
- [165.](#) "War & Peace," 72.
- [166.](#) "Manpower: The Deserters," *Time*, 21 August 1944, 18–19.
- [167.](#) Sherry Mangan, "State of the Nation," *Fortune* 28, no. 5 (November 1943): 139–140.
- [168.](#) "Stay on That War Job!" *Collier's*, 9 December 1944, 82. *Collier's* further encouraged Americans to "get back on your war-essential job if you have one, and stay on it as long as you're needed. Build up resistance toward less necessary even if better paid or more attractive jobs." "Don't Forget the Japs," *Collier's*, 11 November 1944, 86.
- [169.](#) Jim Marshall, "Trouble in the Sky," *Collier's*, 28 October 1944, 11.
- [170.](#) "Byrnes Lashes the Home Front Toward All-Out Effort for War," *Newsweek*, 1 January 1945, 48. *Time* put it slightly differently, noting that "the productive miracle of industry was being outdone by the wasteful miracle of war." "War & Peace," 72.
- [171.](#) "Steel: Frozen at the Low," *Time*, 12 February 1945, 81; "Evolution of Armored Warfare Puts Premium on Fighting Youth," *Newsweek*, 27 March 1944, 42.
- [172.](#) Al Lake, "Ship Workers in the Northwest," *The American Mercury* 60, no. 254 (February 1945): 145, 144.
- [173.](#) *Ibid.*, 148, 143.
- [174.](#) "Night-Life Curfew Prods Spenders Who Celebrate Victory in Advance," *Newsweek*, 5 March 1945, 40. The midnight ban was especially unpopular with servicemen, and unforeseen negative effects of the curfew included "more drunken brawls induced by quick drinking before curfew hour. Flask and bottle toting. 'Spiking' of coffee and softdrinks at all-night eating places. Drinking and love making in hallways." Also arriving with the curfew was what one paper called the "curfloozies," who offered "curb service." "Now the Home-Front Question Is How Long Curfew Will Last," *Newsweek*, 26 March 1945, 44.
- [175.](#) Robert Fleisher, "Wise Up, Civilian!" *The Nation* 160, no. 8 (24 February 1945): 207.
- [176.](#) Samuel A. Tower, "FBI Keeps Plugging at Job of Catching Draft Dodgers," *New York Times*, 1 April 1945.
- [177.](#) Tom Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation* (New York: Random House, 1998), 87.
- [178.](#) Mark H. Leff, "The Politics of Sacrifice on the American Home Front in World War II," in *The World War Two Reader*, ed. by Gordon Martel (New York: Routledge, 2004), 337.

## Chapter 6

1. Eric Sevareid, *Not So Wild a Dream* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), 219.
2. Joseph Heller, *Now and Then: From Coney Island to Here* (New York: Vintage, 1998), 151.
3. Robert E. Park, "Racial Ideologies," in *American Society in Wartime*, ed. by William Fielding Ogburn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943), 183.
4. Myrdal, a Swede, was brought to the United States by the Carnegie Corporation in 1938 and provided with a staff of 75 to write his study. See "Races: American Dilemma," *Time*, 7 February 1944, 16.
5. Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* [1944] (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), xxi, xxxvi.
6. "Georgia: The Rome Incident," *Time*, 27 July 1942, 17.
7. E. Franklin Frazier, "Ethnic and Minority Groups in Wartime, With Special Reference to the Negro," *American Journal of Sociology* 48, no. 3 (November 1942): 377.
8. Will W. Alexander, "Our Conflicting Racial Policies," *Harper's* 190, no. 1136 (January 1945): 176.
9. "Races: Voting Proposition," *Time*, 16 April 1945, 23. Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black was a liberal stalwart on the court, but as a young man he had joined the Ku Klux Klan in Alabama in order to have a political future in that state. If he had not, "he would still be a practicing attorney in Birmingham ... for in Alabama in the Twenties, membership was a sine qua non for election to public office." Fred Rodell, "Justice Hugo Black," *The American Mercury* 59, no. 248 (August 1944), 140.
10. Quoted in Studs Terkel, *The Good War": An Oral History of World War Two* (New York: Ballantine, 1984), 111–112.
11. Paul Fussell, *Doing Battle: The Making of a Skeptic* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1996), 122.
12. Fans of the show included Henry Ford, J. Edgar Hoover, James Thurber, and Arthur Brisbane. "Blackout," *Time*, 25 January 1943, 51.
13. "Minstrel Shows," *Life*, 5 July 1943, 80.
14. "Races: Entertainment Proposition," *Time*, 16 April 1945, 23.
15. "Life Goes to a Performance of Othello," *Life*, 31 August 1942, 82, 83.
16. "Letters to the Editors," *Life*, 21 September 1942, 11.
17. "Orson Welles Jr.," *Newsweek*, 9 March 1942, 52.
18. Jervis Anderson, *A. Philip Randolph: A Biographical Portrait* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), 250, 251.
19. Roosevelt did everything possible to convince Randolph to stop the march, including having Randolph meet with Eleanor Roosevelt and New York mayor Fiorello La Guardia. *Ibid.*, 255.
20. *Ibid.*, 257.
21. *Ibid.*, 259. *Fortune* magazine described this outcome as a "compromise between hardboiled pressure groups." "The Negro's War," *Fortune* 25, no. 6 (June

1942): 80.

22. "The Negro's War," 79.

23. Quoted in Anderson, A. *Philip Randolph*, 241–242.

24. See Myrdal, 415. Instructions from the United States Employment Service to its officials included a clause that said if "community custom or past hiring practices of the employer indicate that he may refuse to hire individuals of a particular race, color, creed, or national origin, the employment office interviewer shall ascertain whether or not he has any restrictive specifications." Gunnar Myrdal commented that it was difficult to see how field workers sent out to enforce antidiscrimination laws "can have much to go on when discriminatory referrals are endorsed in official instructions to this extent." Myrdal, 418.

25. Blair Bolles, "The Great Defense Migration," *Harper's* 183 (October 1941): 466. Baltimore had a large black population of 167,000, and the *Baltimore Evening Sun* took note of the ironic situation of having "on the one hand a desperate shortage of skilled and semiskilled workmen for our war industries, and on the other hand the existence of a large reservoir of labor which is rarely considered." Quoted in "The Negro's War," 80.

26. See George S. Schuyler, "More Race Riots Are Coming," *The American Mercury* 59, no. 252 (December 1944): 686.

27. Al Lake, "Ship Workers in the Northwest," *The American Mercury* 60, no. 254 (February 1945): 150.

28. Susan E. Hirsch, "No Victory at the Workplace: Women and Minorities at Pullman During World War II," in *The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness During World War II*, ed. by Lewis A. Erenberg and Susan E. Hirsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 249; John Dos Passos, "The People at War, III: Gold Rush in the South," *Harper's* 186, no. 1116 (May 1943): 603; Charles S. Johnson, "The Present Status of Race Relations in the South," *Social Forces* 23, no. 1 (October 1944): 28.

29. Alan Brinkley, "World War II and American Liberalism," in *The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness During World War II*, ed. by Lewis A. Erenberg and Susan E. Hirsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 315.

30. David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 770; "Races: White Man's War?" *Time*, 2 March 1942, 14.

31. Herbert R. Northrup, "Race Discrimination in Unions," *The American Mercury* 61, no. 259 (July 1945): 92; Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, "Traditions from Home: African Americans in Wartime Richmond, California," in *The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness During World War II*, ed. by Lewis A. Erenberg and Susan E. Hirsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 268; I.A.M. spokesperson quoted in Anderson, A. *Philip Randolph*, 242.

32. "The Negro's War," 157.

33. Karen Tucker Anderson, "Persistent Discrimination Against Black Women During World War II," in *Major Problems in American Women's History*, ed. by

- Mary Beth Norton and Ruth M. Alexander (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1996), 379.
34. See Doris Weatherford, *American Women and World War II* (New York: Facts on File, 1990), 139.
35. Mary Heaton Vorse, "The Girls of Elkton, Maryland," *Harper's* 186, no. 1114 (March 1943): 348–349.
36. See Elaine Tyler May, "Pushing the Limits: 1940–1961," in *No Small Courage: A History of Women in the United States*, ed. by Nancy Cott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 482.
37. Anderson, "Persistent Discrimination Against Black Women During World War II," 381; Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, 770.
38. "Races: White Man's War?" 13.
39. Quoted in Anderson, A. *Philip Randolph*, 244.
40. Samuel A. Stouffer et al., *The American Soldier*, v. 1: *Adjustment During Army Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), 486–487.
41. *Ibid.*, 487.
42. David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 159.
43. *Ibid.*, 159–160.
44. *Ibid.*, 162.
45. Lee Kennett, *G.I.: The American Soldier in World War II* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1987), 44.
46. Ulysses Lee, *The Employment of Negro Troops* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army, 1966), 300.
47. Lucille B. Milner, "Jim Crow in the Army," *The New Republic*, 13 March 1944, 340.
48. Fussell, *Doing Battle*, 85–86.
49. William Cecil Headrick, "Race Riots—Segregated Slums," *Current History* 5, no. 25 (September 1943): 34.
50. Lee, 309–311.
51. *Ibid.*, 306. Black troops often improvised their own recreation. William Perkins, who served at Sacramento's McClellan Field in the all-black 4809th Aviation Base Unit in the early 1940s, said that black troops put together their own band (the Barons of Swing), "playing at all the dances and having a great time," as well as their own football team, the McClellan Flyers, which would be good enough, according to Walt Thompson, "to beat everybody on the West Coast. We even beat the 49ers scrub team at Kezar Stadium." Fahizah Alim, "Standing Together," *Sacramento Bee*, 18 September 2002.
52. Lee, 316.
53. Milner, 341.
54. Wittner Bynner, "Defeat," in *Poets of World War II*, ed. by Harvey Shapiro (New York: Library of America, 2003), 1.
55. Lee, 307–308.

56. Rupert Trimmingham to *Yank*, reprinted in *The Best from Yank, the Army Weekly*, selected by the editors of *Yank* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1945), 212–213. One respondent, stationed in Burma, observed that the blacks in Burma “were doing more than their part to win this war. We are proud of the colored men here.” The letter closed by asking, “What is the Negro fighting for? If this sort of thing continues, we the white soldiers will begin to wonder: What are we fighting for?” Four soldiers signed their names to this letter, and after each name they put their ethnic origin in parentheses (Italian, French, Swedish, Irish). *Ibid.*, 213. Trimmingham’s story would be dramatized on the radio and would be the basis for a short story in the *New Yorker*.

57. Tom Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation* (New York: Random House, 1998), 187, 188.

58. “Races: The Ninety-Ninth Squadron,” *Time*, 3 August 1942, 17.

59. Lee, 342.

60. When white soldiers were asked, “Do you think white and Negro soldiers should be in separate outfits or should they be together in the same outfits?” 84 percent said they should be in separate outfits. Only 36 percent of blacks preferred separate outfits. Stouffer et al., v. 1, 568. The army’s Special Service Division prepared a confidential document in 1942 in which white army personnel were polled on their attitudes toward black soldiers. The report concluded that “Northerners and Southerners tend to agree that the Negro should be segregated as a matter of Army policy. ... They tend to disagree on willingness to work personally alongside the Negro. Two-thirds from the North are willing, two-thirds from the South are not willing” (emphasis in original). Quoted in Lee, 304.

61. Terkel, 67–68.

62. Arthur Miller, *Situation Normal ...* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1944), 93.

63. Margaret Bourke-White, *They Called It “Purple Heart Valley”: A Combat Chronicle of the War in Italy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1944), 74–75.

64. Lee, 325, 329.

65. See S. Kirson Weinberg, “Problems of Adjustment in Army Units,” *American Journal of Sociology* 50, no. 4 (January 1945): 277.

66. Lee, 331.

67. These included Camp Wallace, Texas, Camp Livingston, Louisiana, Shelby, Mississippi, Camp Claiborne, Louisiana, Camp Davis, North Carolina, and Camp Stewart, Georgia. *Ibid.*, 349–355.

68. *Ibid.*, 356.

69. Colonel Elliot D. Cooke, who investigated the disturbances for the army chief of staff, found that “an increasing amount of propaganda is being promulgated by outside agencies in an effort to foster demands for post-war privileges in payment for present military services.” Like Cooke, the War Department claimed that “with respect to the isolated cases referred to, certain organizations and certain sections of the press are utilizing them to promote, in the Army, social gains which have not been attained in the country as a whole.” Lee, 362, 364.



70. Lee, 373.

71. Lee, 362.

72. Lee, 376; John Patrick Diggins, *The Proud Decades: America in War and in Peace, 1941–1960* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1988), 29.

73. "Harlem's Wild Rampage," *Life*, 16 August 1943, 32.

74. See Geoffrey Perrett, *There's a War to Be Won: The United States Army in World War II* (New York: Random House, 1991), 451.

75. Stouffer et al., v. 1, 499–501.

76. *Ibid.*, 530–532.

77. "Negroes at War," *Life*, 15 June 1942, 83.

78. John Ellis, *The Sharp End: The Fighting Man in World War II* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980), 329; Stouffer et al., v. 1, 495.

79. "Navy: Black Sailors," *Time*, 17 August 1942, 54.

80. On 15 February 1944, the secretary of the navy announced that 22 blacks would receive commissions. Milner, 339.

81. Robert L. Allen, *The Port Chicago Mutiny* (New York: Warner Books, 1989), 32.

82. *Ibid.*, 23, 41.

83. *Ibid.*, 50.

84. *Ibid.*, 45–46.

85. *Ibid.*, 56–57.

86. *Ibid.*, 64–65.

87. *Ibid.*, 70–71.

88. *Ibid.*, 127.

89. *Ibid.*, 132.

90. When black and white troops were asked about their main dissatisfactions with the army, number one on the list of black soldiers was "racial discrimination," followed by "discharge policies" and "job assignment." For whites, the number one complaint was "job assignment," followed by "promotion policies" and "outfit or branch criticisms." Stouffer et al., v. 1, 541.

91. S. Edward Young, "Black Restlessness," *The Christian Century*, 1 November 1944, 1252.

92. Miller, 118–119.

93. Stouffer et al., v. 1, 507, 516.

94. *Ibid.*, 519–520.

95. "We Sho' Like It Here," *Time*, 20 July 1942, 29. One American Jewish soldier observed of black troops that "occasionally they are invited to various affairs and dances where they mix with English girls. In the few instances where I came in contact with this situation I have found them well mannered and trying to enjoy themselves, and if they were accepted as human beings and as part of our armed forces, no comments or discomforts would be necessary." Manny Krupin, "Life in the Army," in *Jewish Youth at War: Letters from American Soldiers*, ed. by Isaac E. Ronch (New York: Martin Press, 1945), 108.

- [96.](#) Quoted in Paul Fussell, *The Boys' Crusade: The American Infantry in Northwestern Europe, 1944–1945* (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 21.
- [97.](#) Stouffer et al., v. 1, 544.
- [98.](#) *Remembering Jim Crow: African Americans Tell About Life in the Segregated South*, ed. by William H. Chafe et al (New York: New Press, 2001), 25.
- [99.](#) See Fussell, *The Boys' Crusade*, 21.
- [100.](#) John Curtis Perry quoted in Kennett, 221.
- [101.](#) Fussell, *Doing Battle*, 123.
- [102.](#) Stouffer et al., v. 1, 589, 592.
- [103.](#) Harvey Shapiro, "Introduction," in *Poets of World War II*, ed. by Harvey Shapiro (New York: Library of America, 2003), xxxi.
- [104.](#) Walter Davenport, "Hampton Fights the Battle of Jericho," *Collier's*, 14 March 1943, 23.
- [105.](#) Frank Capra, *The Name Above the Title: An Autobiography* (New York: MacMillan, 1971), 358.
- [106.](#) *The Negro Soldier*, Frank Capra, dir. (War Department Special Service Division, Army Service Forces, 1944) VHS Video, Republic Pictures Home Video.
- [107.](#) Capra, 358.
- [108.](#) *Ibid.*, 358, 359.
- [109.](#) In *Back Home* (1947), Bill Mauldin observed that racial prejudice was "probably more widespread in this country than anywhere else in the world." Mauldin mused "whether it is better to know how you stand, as in the South, where if a Negro tries to act like a human being he knows his teeth will be kicked in, or to undergo the agonies of psychological persecution, as in the North, where Negroes can ride in any part of a trolley but are never treated as anything but second-class citizens." Bill Mauldin, *Back Home* (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1947), 154, 181.
- [110.](#) From Brokaw, 198, 200.
- [111.](#) Quoted in Fahizah Alim, "Standing Together," *Sacramento Bee*, 18 September 2002.
- [112.](#) Nurith C. Aizenman, "Black Soldiers Battled Fascism and Racism," *Washington Post*, 26 May 2004. Once the war was over, the army released the "Gillem Report," which made suggestions on decreasing racial tensions in the military. Among the recommendations was that blacks should be assigned to combat as well as service units, that more black officers be commissioned, that segregated recreational facilities be eliminated, and that black troops be stationed "in localities and communities where attitudes are most favorable." Stouffer et al., v. 1, 597–598.
- [113.](#) "Jesus for Jews?" *Time*, 1 January 1940, 32.
- [114.](#) Coughlin quoted in Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin and the Great Depression* (New York: Vintage, 1983), 266.
- [115.](#) Coughlin quoted in Anthony Rhodes, *Propaganda, the Art of Persuasion: World War II* (New York: Chelsea House, 1976), 141.

116. Charles Lindbergh, "Address on U.S. Neutrality," in *Great Speeches of the 20th Century*, vol. 4, Rhino World Beat CD collection, 1991, R2 70667.

117. See Russell Whelan, "Rankin of Mississippi," *The American Mercury* 59, no. 247 (July 1944): 32.

118. Edward S. Shapiro, *A Time for Healing: American Jewry Since World War II* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 5.

119. "Don't Hate the Wrong People," *Collier's*, 16 May 1942, 74.

120. Frank Gervasi, "The Jew as a Soldier," *Collier's*, 22 April 1944, 11.

121. Duane Robinson and Sylvia Rohde, "A Public Opinion Study of Anti-Semitism in New York City," *American Sociological Review* 10, no. 4 (August 1945): 511. The other questions were, "Do you think there are too many Jews holding government offices and jobs?" (17 percent answered yes), "Do you think that the Jews have too much power in the United States?" (18 percent answered yes), and "Do you think that Jews are as patriotic, more patriotic, or less patriotic than other citizens?" (11 percent answered less). *Ibid.*, 512–513. *Fortune* found in 1943 that only about one-third of those surveyed answered yes to the question, "Are there any groups of people you think are trying to get ahead at the expense of people like you?" But of those who expressed this resentment, Jews, at 21.5 percent, were identified more often than any other specific group. "The Fortune Survey," *Fortune* 28, no. 5 (November 1943): 10.

122. See Edward S. Shapiro, 5, 6. According to Shapiro, films during the war that had Jewish characters included *Air Force* (1943), *Bataan* (1943), *Guadalcanal Diary* (1943), *The Purple Heart* (1944), *Objective Burma* (1945), and *A Walk in the Sun* (1945). In *Pride of the Marines* (1945), a Jewish character says, "Maybe some guys won't hire me because my name is Diamond and not Jones. 'Cause I celebrate Passover instead of Easter ... We need a country to live in where no one gets booted around for any reason." *Ibid.*, 18.

123. Reinhold Niebuhr, "Jews After the War—I," *The Nation* 154, no. 8 (21 February 1942): 215; Reinhold Niebuhr, "Jews After the War—II," *The Nation* 154, no. 9 (28 February 1942): 254.

124. Jack Broudo, "At the Other End of the World," *Jewish Youth at War: Letters from American Soldiers*, ed. by Isaac E. Rontch (New York: Martin Press, 1945), 34; Jack Gorelick, "Today I Filed My Ballot," in *Jewish Youth at War: Letters from American Soldiers*, ed. by Isaac E. Rontch (New York: Martin Press, 1945), 77.

125. Albert Eisen, "In England," *Jewish Youth at War: Letters from American Soldiers*, ed. by Isaac E. Rontch (New York: Martin Press, 1945), 43; Harry Kulkowitz, "Meeting Refugees," *Jewish Youth at War: Letters from American Soldiers*, ed. by Isaac E. Rontch (New York: Martin Press, 1945), 111.

126. Sam Solomon, "Tarawa," in *Jewish Youth at War: Letters from American Soldiers*, ed. by Isaac E. Rontch (New York: Martin Press, 1945), 199.

127. Art Buchwald, *Leaving Home: A Memoir* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1993), 174, 175.

128. Axel Madsen, *William Wyler: The Authorized Biography* (New York: Thomas

Y. Crowell, 1973), 236.

[129.](#) *Ibid.*, 241, 242.

[130.](#) See Edward S. Shapiro, 8–14.

[131.](#) “Who Won What War?” *Time*, 4 February 1946. In their postwar study of 416 veterans from a small midwestern city, Havighurst et al. found that a scant 3 percent were willing to allow “several hundred thousand Jews from Europe to enter this country.” Robert J. Havighurst et al., *The American Veteran Back Home: A Study of Veteran Readjustment* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1951), 226.

[132.](#) Beauvoir noted that “there are beaches reserved for Jews, who don’t have the right to go swimming with Aryans; but the Jews in turn send their black domestics to swim at another beach.” For their part, blacks were “quick to turn anti-Semitic” because many of the landlords and shopkeepers they deal with are Jews. Simone de Beauvoir, *America Day by Day*, trans. by Carol Cosman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 322, 323. In the Harlem riot, there was an undeniable anti-Semitic element. As one commentator noted, “most of the stores in Harlem, the same stores which have taken a large share of meagre depression earnings in high prices, have been owned by Jews.” Head-rick, 32–33.

[133.](#) Herman Wouk, *The Caine Mutiny* [1951] (Boston: Back Bay Books, 2003), 21.

[134.](#) Irwin Shaw, *The Young Lions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 53, 206.

[135.](#) *Ibid.*, 308, 338.

[136.](#) Arthur Miller, *Focus* (New York: Book Find Club, 1945), 33.

[137.](#) Newman inwardly rages that “he was not this face which looked like it had grown out of another alien and dirty history.” Miller, *Focus*, 67.

[138.](#) Laura Z. Hobson, *Laura Z, a Life: Years of Fulfillment* (New York: Donald I. Fine, 1986), 25, 43.

[139.](#) Edward S. Shapiro, 19. See *Gentleman’s Agreement*, Twentieth Century Fox 1947, VHS, Twentieth Century Fox cat. no. 1077.

[140.](#) Laura Z. Hobson, *Gentleman’s Agreement* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1947), 26.

[141.](#) When Hobson asked studio head Darryl F. Zanuck why he had bought *Gentleman’s Agreement*, he explained that “if this country ever did go fascist” and his children asked him what he had done to try to stop it, “I want to be able to say to them, ‘Well, I made *Wilson*, and then I made *Gentleman’s Agreement*, I made *Pinky ...*’” Zanuck added that “I felt in my bones your book would be a sensation, and I wanted to be in on a sensation.” Hobson, *Laura Z.*, 32.

[142.](#) Hobson, *Gentleman’s Agreement*, 157, 170–171.

[143.](#) *Ibid.*, 124.

[144.](#) *Ibid.*, 188, 186.

[145.](#) Eddie Muller notes that “when Jack Warner offered Julius Garfinkel a contract, he demanded his name be changed to James Garfield. The actor protested: ‘You wouldn’t name a goddamn actor “Abraham Lincoln,” would you?’”

No, came the response: 'Abe is a name most people think is Jewish, and we wouldn't want people to get the wrong idea.' 'But I am Jewish,' barked the soon-to-be John Garfield, clinging to the last vestiges of his heritage." Eddie Muller, *Dark City: The Lost World of Film Noir* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1998), 139.

146. Quoted in *ibid.*, 141.

147. *Ibid.*, 139, 141.

148. Those nominated included producer Adrian Scott, director Edward Dmytryk, screenplay writer John Paxton, and actors Robert Ryan and Gloria Grahame. See James Naremore, *More Than Night: Film Noir In Its Contexts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 122.

149. Quoted in Muller, 141.

150. Blake Lucas claims that *Crossfire* "lacks a meaningful style" while James Naremore believes that it contains the same flaw of other "social-problem films": the problems depicted "never appear systemic." See *Film Noir: An Encyclopedic Reference to the American Style*, 3rd. ed. (1992), Alain Silver and Elizabeth Ward, eds., s.v. "Crossfire," by Blake Lucas; Naremore, 120.

151. John Costello, *Virtue Under Fire: How World War II Changed Our Social and Sexual Attitudes* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1985), 103.

152. John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 25.

153. Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two* (New York: Free Press, 1990), 192.

154. John D'Emilio claims that "popular stereotypes, army policy, and the special conditions of military life may have kept women of confirmed heterosexual persuasion away from enlistment, while drawing in an unusually large proportion of lesbians." D'Emilio, 27. "Naked Amazons" quoted in Costello, *Virtue Under Fire*, 43. Also keeping many white women out of the military was the prospect that they might have to share a classroom with black women or even be outranked by one. The army discouraged recruitment of black women because it found it "prejudicial to white recruiting." Weatherford, 41-42, 66.

155. Bérubé, 262. Those who received "blue" or undesirable discharges were forced to report to their local draft boards with their discharge papers, making it a certainty that their communities would know the circumstances of their termination from the military. *Ibid.*, 228-229.

156. See Costello, *Virtue Under Fire*, 69-72.

157. Bérubé, 112, 113.

158. D'Emilio, 32.

159. *Ibid.*, 31, 38.

160. Quoted in Naremore, 115. Naremore notes that while "the studios in general strongly discouraged any suggestion that American society was prejudiced, World War II had made attacks on anti-Semitism topical, safe, and even patriotic." *Ibid.*,

116.



- [161.](#) Richard Brooks, *The Brick Foxhole* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1945), 12.
- [162.](#) *Ibid.*, 60.
- [163.](#) *Ibid.*, 191.
- [164.](#) John Horne Burns, *The Gallery* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), 123, 145.
- [165.](#) *Ibid.*, 143.
- [166.](#) *Ibid.*, 149.
- [167.](#) Gore Vidal, "Preface," *The City and the Pillar and Seven Early Stories* (New York: Random House, 1995), xiii.
- [168.](#) *Ibid.*, 46.
- [169.](#) The tale of putting homosexuals in their place was also a barracks favorite: "Just the other day this queer came up to me in the can in the movie house in town and wants me to go with him. Me! Well, I told the bastard what I thought of him. I told him if he didn't get out of there quick I'd break his neck, that's what I told him, and boy, he got out of there fast!" The others nodded solemnly when they heard this story, and each told an identical story, although in some instances the outraged man had indeed slugged the fairy. Jim tried not to laugh. It was always the ugliest and most suspect of the men who was invariably propositioned." *Ibid.*, 125–126.
- [170.](#) Jim felt "oddly superior when he was with normal people who assumed that everybody shared their tastes," and when Sullivan suggests that Jim become involved with a particular woman because she could "get you out of this world," Jim responds, "Why should I get out?" For the first time Jim admitted what he was." *Ibid.*, 107, 113.
- [171.](#) Vidal notes that "for every one who lived openly with men, there were ten who married, had children, lived a discreet, ordinary life, only occasionally straying into bars or Turkish baths." He adds that "life would certainly be better for everyone in a world where sex was thought of as something natural and not fearsome, and men could love men naturally, in the way they were meant to, as well as to love women naturally, in the way they were meant to." *Ibid.*, 164, 189.
- [172.](#) *Ibid.*, 164.
- [173.](#) *Ibid.*, xvi.
- [174.](#) *Ibid.*, 159.
- [175.](#) James Jones, *The Thin Red Line* (New York: Delta, 1998), 414.
- [176.](#) *Ibid.*, 127–128.
- [177.](#) Dean Jennings, "Sex in the Classroom," *Collier's*, 15 September 1945, 23.
- [178.](#) See Frazier, 370.
- [179.](#) Roger Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 106.
- [180.](#) *Ibid.*, 99.
- [181.](#) *Ibid.*, 98.

- [182](#). Jim Marshall, "West Coast Japanese," *Collier's*, 11 October 1941, 71.
- [183](#). George E. Taylor, "The Japanese in Our Midst," *Atlantic Monthly* 171, no. 4 (April 1943): 105.
- [184](#). "Rumbles from the Coast," *Time*, 23 February 1942, 14.
- [185](#). "U.S. Uproots Jap Aliens," *Life*, 9 March 1942, 24.
- [186](#). Roger Daniels, *The Decision to Relocate the Japanese Americans* (Malabar, Fla.: Robert E. Krieger, 1986), 12.
- [187](#). *Ibid.*, 25.
- [188](#). Ernest K. Lindley, "Problems of the Japanese Migration," *Newsweek*, 30 March 1942, 26.
- [189](#). Daniels, *The Decision to Relocate the Japanese Americans*, 109.
- [190](#). Reed Ueda, "The Changing Path to Citizenship: Ethnicity and Naturalization During World War II," in *The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness During World War II*, ed. by Lewis A. Erenberg and Susan E. Hirsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 208.
- [191](#). Daniels, *The Decision to Relocate the Japanese Americans*, 47–48.
- [192](#). "Executive Order—No. 9066" in *ibid.*, 113–114.
- [193](#). Daniels, *The Decision to Relocate the Japanese Americans*, 52.
- [194](#). *Los Angeles Times*, 25 February 1942.
- [195](#). Daniels, *The Decision to Relocate the Japanese Americans*, 45.
- [196](#). "Eastward Ho," *Time*, 16 March 1942, 14.
- [197](#). "Issei, Nisei, Kibei," *Fortune* 29, no. 6 (April 1944): 32. See also "Moving Day for Mr. Nisei," *Time*, 6 April 1942, 12.
- [198](#). "Issei, Nisei, Kibei," 74.
- [199](#). Valerie Matsumoto, "Japanese American Women During World War II," in *Major Problems in American Women's History*, ed. by Mary Beth Norton and Ruth M. Alexander (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1996), 389.
- [200](#). Carey McWilliams, "Moving the West-Coast Japanese," *Harper's* 183, no. 1108 (September 1942): 361, 362.
- [201](#). *Ibid.*, 363.
- [202](#). Robert Redfield, "The Japanese-Americans," in *American Society in Wartime*, ed. by William Fielding Ogburn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943), 159.
- [203](#). "Issei, Nisei, Kibei," 106, 118. The comparison of Japanese relocation camps to Indian reservations was less fanciful than one might think. In one instance, the relocation camp at Poston, Arizona, was located on an Indian reservation, with the WRA delegating much of the work on the Poston camp to Indian Service officials. Taylor, 106.
- [204](#). Redfield, 145.
- [205](#). Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston, *Farewell to Manzanar* (New York: Bantam, 1973), 58, 61.
- [206](#). Quoted in Houston, 58.
- [207](#). Kennett, 20.

[208](#). “Personnel: No Problem,” *Time*, 31 July 1944, 65; Mauldin, *Back Home*, 166, 164, 166. While on leave in Italy, Audie Murphy related an incident in which “a group of Japanese-American G.I.s round a corner and advance toward us at a brisk walk. Kerrigan halts, blinks his eyes incredulously, and crumples to his knees.

‘My god,’ he groans. ‘All is lost. The Japs have captured Naples.’” Audie Murphy, *To Hell and Back* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1949), 79.

[209](#). Gene Casey, “G.I. Japyank,” *Collier’s*, 3 August 1944, 41.

[210](#). “Blind Nisei,” *Life*, 7 February 1944, 53.

[211](#). Quoted in Mauldin, *Back Home*, 169, 170.

[212](#). Houston, 93.

[213](#). “Are Japs Wanted?” *Newsweek*, 28 May 1945, 33.

[214](#). “More About Hood River,” *Collier’s*, 21 February 1945, 82; “Races: American Fair Play?” *Time*, 19 March 1945, 19.

[215](#). Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation*, 352, 354.

## Chapter 7

1. Justin Gray, “Security Mission,” in *The Best from Yank, the Army Weekly*, selected by the editors of *Yank* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1945), 20.

2. The committee derived its name from Senators Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota and Bennett Champ Clark of Missouri. The films identified by the committee included *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, *The Great Dictator*, *Dive Bomber*, *Flight Command*, *That Hamilton Woman*, *Escape*, *Underground*, and *Sergeant York*. Michael E. Birdwell, *Celluloid Soldiers: The Warner Bros. Campaign Against Nazism* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 154–155.

3. Birdwell, 173.

4. “Hollywood in Uniform,” *Fortune* 25, no. 4 (April 1942): 130.

5. Quoted in Allan M. Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda: The Office of War Information, 1942–1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 76.

6. Winkler, 150.

7. Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits, and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* (New York: Free Press, 1987), 65–68.

8. Quoted in Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 152.

9. Quoted in Lary May, “Making the American Consensus: The Narrative of Conversion and Subversion in World War II Films,” in *The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness During World War II*, ed. by Lewis A. Erenberg and Susan E. Hirsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 71–72. May calls this “a ‘conversion narrative’ in which the protagonists put aside the class and ethnic consciousness that had informed politics and popular art in the thirties.” *Ibid.*, 72.

[10](#). Koppes and Black, 325.

[11](#). Anthony Rhodes, *Propaganda, the Art of Persuasion: World War II* (New York: Chelsea House, 1976), 146.

12. Studs Terkel, *The Good War: An Oral History of World War Two* (New York: Ballantine, 1984), 117.
13. "Cinema: The New Pictures," *Time*, 28 September 1942, 82.
14. Axel Madsen, *William Wyler: The Authorized Biography* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1973), 258.
15. *Ibid.*, 231, 236, 233.
16. *Ibid.*, 256.
17. Lee Kennett, *G.I.: The American Soldier in World War II* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1987), 49; "Hollywood in Uniform," 137.
18. "The New Pictures: The New Spirit," *Time*, 9 February 1942, 36. Beginning in 1943, the government began withholding taxes from worker paychecks in the "pay-as-you-go" system. Perry R. Duis, "No Time for Privacy: World War II and Chicago's Families," *The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness During World War II*, ed. Lewis A. Erenberg and Susen E. Hirsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 31.
19. Ronald Reagan with Richard G. Hubler, *Where's the Rest of Me?: The Autobiography of Ronald Reagan* (New York: Karz, 1981), 118.
20. Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies* (New York: Random House, 1975), 250; "Movie March," *Newsweek*, 26 July 1943, 54.
21. Geoffrey Perrett, *There's a War to Be Won: The United States Army in World War II* (New York: Random House, 1991), 468.
22. Charles Higham and Joel Greenberg, *Hollywood in the Forties* (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1968), 14; Sklar, 252.
23. See Richard R. Lingeman, *Don't You Know There's a War On? The American Home Front, 1941-1945* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1970), 205.
24. "Santa Anita Goes to War," *Life*, 8 February 1943, 30; "Hollywood in Uniform," 95.
25. "Hollywood in Uniform," 132.
26. Donald Dewey, *James Stewart: A Biography* (Atlanta: Turner Publishing, 1996), 244-245.
27. *Ibid.*, 247.
28. Warren G. Harris, *Clark Gable: A Biography* (New York: Harmony, 2002), 261.
29. *Ibid.*, 268, 269.
30. *Ibid.*, 271. See also Philip Kaplan, *Bombers: The Aircrew Experience* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2001), 88.
31. Harris, 272, 275. Gable said, "I saw so much in the way of death and destruction that I realized that I hadn't been singled out for grief—that others were suffering and losing their loved ones just as I love Ma [Lombard]." *Ibid.*, 272.
32. "Objector Ayres," *Newsweek*, 13 April 1942, 30.
33. See John Ellis, *The Sharp End: The Fighting Man in World War II* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980), 11.

34. See Kennett, 12.
35. Bill Mauldin, *Back Home* (New York: William Sloane, 1947), 114.
36. James Jones, *W W II* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1975), 150.
37. Foster Hailey, "The Battle of Midway," in *Reporting World War II: American Journalism, 1938-1946* (New York: Library of America, 2001), 155.
38. A. Suer, "From a Jump Master," in *Jewish Youth at War: Letters from American Soldiers*, ed. by Isaac E. Rontch (New York: Martin Press, 1945), 211. The typhoon that hits the *Caine* in Herman Wouk's *The Caine Mutiny* is described by protagonist Willie Keith as "a sort of movie adventure, exciting and mock-dangerous, and full of interest and instruction, if only he could remember to keep his head." Herman Wouk, *The Caine Mutiny* (Boston: Back Bay Books, 2003), 356.
39. Barrett McGurn, "The Second Battle of Bougainville," in *The Best from Yank, the Army Weekly*, selected by the editors of *Yank* (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1945), 51.
40. James Jones, *The Thin Red Line* (New York: Delta, 1998), 237.
41. *Ibid.*, 376. When one of the men is caught out in the open and fatally wounded, his cries unnerve the entire company and one soldier "had a lurid romantic vision of taking up his carbine and shooting the dying man through the head. You saw that in movies." *Ibid.*, 248.
42. Gerald F. Linderman, *The World Within War: America's Combat Experience in World War II* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 314.
43. Robert Fleisher, "Wise Up, Civilian!" *The Nation* 160, no. 8 (24 February 1945): 207.
44. Time observed of this film that "within the limits possible to fictional war movies, it is about as good as it comes." "The New Pictures: *Objective, Burma!*" *Time*, 26 February 1945, 92.
45. John Ciardi, *Saipan: The War Diary of John Ciardi* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1988), 44.
46. William Manchester, "The Bloodiest Battle of All," *New York Times*, 14 June 1987, 42.
47. Ellis, *The Sharp End*, 102, 103. Infantrymen were not the only ones to lose control during combat. Bill Fleming was a gunner on a B-17 that was part of the 17 July 1943 firebombing of Hamburg. Fleming's plane was hit and began a steep, diving spin that made it impossible for the crew to bail out. Fleming was convinced he was going to die, but somehow the pilot leveled the plane out at 6,000 feet. "I realized I had a terrific pain in my left leg, a searing pain. I thought I'd been hit by antiaircraft. I tried to paw along my clothes to see where the hole in my clothes was but couldn't find it. Then it dawned on me. I had wet on myself and shorted out my electrical suit and it was burning me from my crotch down to my ankle, resulting in a solid blister all the way down. When we got back I spent two weeks grounded on that account. It wasn't that funny when it happened." Quoted in Gerald Astor, *The Mighty Eighth: The Air War in Europe as Told by the Men Who Fought It*



(New York: Dell, 1997), 157.

48. Manchester, "The Bloodiest Battle of All," 84.

49. Linderman, 316, 317. Sinatra was rejected for a punctured eardrum, which prompted an angry letter from army chief of staff George Marshall that called for a review of Sinatra's deferment. Marshall snidely observed, "If we judge by the salaries paid, Sinatra's ears are reasonably effective." Quoted in Kennett, 16.

50. According to Jeanine Basinger, *Bataan* established the "generic requirements" of the World War II combat film, which include the establishment of the setting and military branch involved with maps and official dedications, the creation of a motley, ethnically mixed unit and a hero who emerges from the group to assume leadership, conflicts within the group, a stated objective and a faceless enemy, discussions of home and "why we fight," combat and death. Basinger compares *Bataan* to *Citizen Kane*, noting that "what *Kane* did for form and narrative, *Bataan* does for the history of the combat genre. It does not invent the genre. It puts the plot devices together, weds them to a real historical event, and makes an audience deal with them as a unified story presentation—deal with them, and remember them." Jeanine Basinger, *The World War II Combat Film: Anatomy of a Genre* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 61–62.

51. *Bataan*, dir. Tay Garnett, MGM 1943. MGM/UA Home Video, VHS, M600927.

52. *Since You Went Away*, dir. John Cromwell, Fox 1944. CBS Fox Video, VHS, 8082.

53. Lary May has referred to the "patriotic domesticity" of the female characters in this film. May, 91.

54. Koppes and Black, 161, 154.

55. While the puppy in *G.I. Joe* is a sentimental ploy, combat units did oft en adopt pets. One paratrooper in Italy described "a poor forlorn little white puppy whom we've named '88' (for the German gun) and whom the men have adopted as a pet." Suer, 216. William Saroyan also described a dog, named Shorty, adopted by the troops of Company D. Saroyan insisted that "there is something in the heart of street dogs which draws them close to men, and there is probably no camp or post of the Army which does not have at least one dog." William Saroyan, "The Sweetheart of Company D," in *The Best from Yank, the Army Weekly*, selected by the editors of *Yank* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1945), 136.

56. This scene is re-created almost exactly in a Scripps-Howard column Pyle wrote in 1944 called "The Death of Captain Waskow." It is reprinted in Willard Waller, *The Veteran Comes Back* (New York: Dryden Press, 1944), 33–34.

57. *The Story of G.I. Joe*, dir. William Wellman, Lester Cowan Productions 1945. Video-Cinema Films, VHS, ID9056VM.

58. *Twelve o'Clock High*, dir. Henry King, Twentieth Century Fox, 1949. Fox War Classics DVD.

59. Bill Mauldin, *Up Front* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1945), 50.

60. John Costello, *Virtue Under Fire: How World War II Changed Our Social and Sexual Attitudes* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1985), 126, 127.

61. Costello, *Virtue Under Fire*, 79–80; Lilian Rixey, “Soldiers Still Sing,” *Life*, 27 September 1943, 48–49.
62. Wouk, 335.
63. “War Songs,” *Time*, 26 October 1942, 50; “Disney Song ‘Der Fuehrer’s Face’ Razzes Nazis with a German Band,” *Life*, 2 November 1942, 44. Lyrics by Oliver Wallace.
64. “New U.S. War Songs,” *Life*, 2 November 1942, 43.
65. “War Songs,” 50.
66. Writing simple-minded songs did not mean that the composers themselves were simple. Loesser noted that what composers gave the public was “hope without facts; glory without blood,” and the opportunity to forget that “the handsome fellow with the silver wings has had half his face burned off in a crash, and that Joe is all drawn and skinny from malaria, and has some very unattractive jungle lice in his beard.” Quoted in Lingeman, 212–213.
67. Costello, *Virtue Under Fire*, 122.
68. “White Christmas,” *Time*, 23 November 1942, 67.
69. Ruby Firstman, “In China,” in *Jewish Youth at War: Letters from American Soldiers*, ed. by Isaac E. Rontch (New York: Martin Press, 1945), 57.
70. Lewis A. Erenberg, “Swing Goes to War: Glenn Miller and the Popular Music of World War II,” in *The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness During World War II*, ed. by Lewis A. Erenberg and Susan E. Hirsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 144, 145.
71. *Ibid.*, 146.
72. *Ibid.*, 150, 148.
73. *Ibid.*, 153.
74. *Ibid.*, 161.
75. Quoted in Kaplan, 147.
76. Legend: *Frank Sinatra and the American Dream*, ed. by Ethlie Ann Vare (New York: Boulevard, 1995), 30.
77. George Frazier, “Frank Sinatra,” *Life*, 3 May 1943, 55, 56.
78. *Ibid.*, 58, 62.
79. “Swooner-Crooner,” *Life*, 23 August 1943, 127.
80. Frazier, 56.
81. *Collier’s* also suggested that “any lady now worried about her daughter’s hysterical worship of this crooner should ask herself soberly whether she was or was not as crazy as a May fly on the subject of Rudolph Valentino twenty years ago.” “Eggs for Mr. Sinatra,” *Collier’s*, 25 November 1944, 78.
82. “Jitterbugs Jam James’s Jive Jag,” *Life*, 10 May 1943, 34.
83. “Battle of Bands: Yen to See Tooters Brings a New Boom to Broadway,” *Newsweek*, 10 May 1943, 64.
84. “Drummer,” *Time*, 3 January 1944, 39.
85. “Stage and Movie Stars Help in Huge Campaign to Entertain Soldiers,” *Life*, 23 March 1942, 45. The American Theatre Wing established eight Stage Door

Canteens around the country, and contributed to the USO to bring legitimate drama to the troops overseas. "History of the American Theatre Wing" in *The Tony Award: A Complete Listing*, ed. by Isabelle Stevenson (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1994), viii.

[86.](#) Perrett, 468. Troops also commonly complained that USO performers favored officers over enlisted men. See Gerald F. Linderman, *The World Within War: America's Combat Experience in World War II* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 317.

[87.](#) "Show Business at War," *Life*, 21 June 1943, 71; "On the Go Joe," *Newsweek*, 28 February 1944, 76.

[88.](#) "Top Comedians," *Life*, 10 January 1944, 73.

[89.](#) Costello, *Virtue Under Fire*, 132.

[90.](#) "Radio, Vaudeville & Camps," *Time*, 13 April 1942, 43.

[91.](#) Mauldin, *Up Front*, 132.

[92.](#) Joseph Heller, *Catch-22* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 37. This scenario is less far-fetched than it might seem. Ray Bonneville, who was in the Marine Corps in Vietnam, told me in 1983 that the marines in his outfit were ordered to attend a Bob Hope USO show, even though many of them did not want to go.

[93.](#) Costello, *Virtue Under Fire*, 132–133.

[94.](#) See "Opera with Harmonica," *Time*, 2 February 1942, 41.

[95.](#) Larry Adler, "They Must Have Loved You over There," *Collier's*, 10 February 1945, 20.

[96.](#) *Ibid.*, 58.

[97.](#) "Army's Terry," *Time*, 18 January 1943, 75.

[98.](#) Michael Hackenberg, "The Armed Services Editions in Publishing History," in John Y. Cole, ed., *Books in Action: The Armed Services Editions* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1984), 17–18; Kenneth C. Davis, *Two-Bit Culture: The Paperbacking of America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984), 72.

[99.](#) Willard Waller, *The Veteran Comes Back* (New York: Dryden Press, 1944), 26–27. Waller was perhaps aware that a special overseas edition of Superman printed for American troops sold 35,000 copies a month. Overall "comics" sales in 1943 were 25 million a month. "Escapist Paydirt," *Newsweek*, 27 December 1943, 55.

[100.](#) Matthew J. Bruccoli, "Recollections of an ASE Collector," in John Y. Cole, ed., *Books in Action: The Armed Services Editions* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1984), 26.

[101.](#) See "Appendix: A List of the Armed Services Editions," in John Y. Cole, ed., *Books in Action: The Armed Services Editions* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1984), 33–78.

[102.](#) Davis, 65.

[103.](#) *Ibid.*, 76.

[104.](#) John Y. Cole, "The Armed Services Editions: An Introduction," in John Y. Cole, ed., *Books in Action: The Armed Services Editions* (Washington, D.C.:

Library of Congress, 1984), 9; Hackenberg, 18.

[105.](#) W. Warder Norton, in a 1942 letter to the Council on Books in Wartime, claimed that “the very fact that millions of men will have an opportunity to learn what a book is and what it can mean is likely now and in post-war years to exert a tremendous influence on the post-war course of the industry.” Hackenberg, 17.

[106.](#) Bruccoli, 26.

[107.](#) Quoted in Davis, 78.

[108.](#) Hackenberg, 19–20. The ASE program is currently being revived with the release of 100,000 copies of four titles. See Mel Gussow, “Literature Re-enlists in the Military,” *New York Times*, 7 November 2002.

[109.](#) Davis, 67, 79.

[110.](#) See *ibid.*, 42–43.

[111.](#) Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, rev. ed. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981), 142, 80.

[112.](#) Surely Arthur Miller had *How to Win Friends* in mind when he crafted his 1949 play *Death of a Salesman*. Miller’s protagonist, Willy Loman, preaches a similar formula for success in the business world that relies on verve, personality, and good impressions. He tells his sons that “the man who makes an appearance in the business world, the man who creates personal interest, is the man who gets ahead. Be liked and you will never want.”

Unlike the many successful men described by Carnegie, Loman will in the end be rejected by his customers, overwhelmed by his personal demons, and will take his own life. Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*, in *Arthur Miller’s Collected Plays* (New York: Viking, 1961), 146.

[113.](#) Marion Hargrove, “See Here, Private Hargrove,” *Life*, 21 September 1942, 81.

[114.](#) Marion Hargrove, *See Here, Private Hargrove* [1942] (Garden City, New York: Sun Dial, 1943), 46.

[115.](#) *Ibid.*, 33.

[116.](#) There were 6,991 working actors in the country in 1940, and 3,503 of them were in the army by mid-1942. Kennett, 15.

[117.](#) “Men in Khaki Take Over ‘The Women,’” *Life*, 21 December 1942, 16.

[118.](#) John Costello, *Virtue Under Fire*, 134, 135.

[119.](#) Quentin Reynolds, “G.I. Hamlet,” *Collier’s*, 24 March 1945, 14.

## Chapter 8

1. Sanford Africk, “Children After All,” in *Jewish Youth at War: Letters from American Soldiers*, ed. by Isaac E. Rontch (New York: Martin Press, 1945), 272.

2. John Ciardi, “Poem for My Twenty-ninth Birthday,” in *Saipan: The War Diary of John Ciardi* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1988), 111.

3. David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 227.

4. Gore Vidal, *The City and the Pillar* (New York: Random House, 1995), 169.

5. *Contemporary Authors*, v. 120, ed. by Hal May (Detroit: Gale Research Company,

1987), s.v. "Brown, Harry (Peter McNab Jr.); *Contemporary Authors*, vols. 69–72, ed. by Jane A. Bowden (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1978), s.v. "Brown, Harry (Peter McNab)".

6. Harry Brown, *A Walk in the Sun* (Philadelphia: Blakiston, 1945), 34.

7. *Ibid.*, 52, 53.

8. *Ibid.*, 78.

9. *Ibid.*, 57.

10. *Contemporary Authors*, v. 120, s.v. "Brown, Harry (Peter McNab Jr.)."

11. Gore Vidal, "Preface," in *Gore Vidal, Williwaw: A Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 6. Sloan Wilson found himself in an even more bizarre situation. He was in the Coast Guard, which became part of the navy during the war, but was captain on an army ship. The situation is explained in Wilson's novel *Pacific Interlude*: "Damn it, I joined the Coast Guard! Why do we have to man these damn army ships?"

"That is because the Coast Guard is part of the navy in time of war," Syl replied solemnly."

"Cramer thought about this a moment, his craggy face wooden before he broke into a grin."

"Jesus!" he finally bellowed. "That makes as much sense as anything else in this damn war, don't it?" Sloan Wilson, *Pacific Interlude* (New York: Arbor House, 1982), 10.

12. Gore Vidal, *Williwaw: A Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 162.

13. *Ibid.*, 59.

14. Vidal, "Preface," 6–7.

15. Vidal, *Williwaw*, 179.

16. *Ibid.*, 167.

17. Louise Levitas, "The Naked Are Fanatics and the Dead Don't Care," in *Conversations with Norman Mailer*, Michael Lennon, ed. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1988), 3.

18. Levitas, 10. The inadequacies of a formalist approach to these writings can be seen in Morris Dickstein's *Leopards in the Temple*. Dickstein claims that Mailer in *The Naked and the Dead* "deliberately" chose "the Pacific theater to avoid the cultural complications of a European setting," without Dickstein reflecting on the fact that it was the Pacific where Mailer served, and that it was the army, not Mailer, who decided where Mailer was to be posted. Dickstein's historical innocence is obvious throughout, especially in the following statement: "For the duration of the war, a sense of unified purpose linked workers and businessmen, Communists and capitalists, farmers and city dwellers, women in factories and men in uniform." Morris Dickstein, *Leopards in the Temple: The Transformation of American Fiction, 1945–1970* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 33, 30.

19. Levitas, 8.

20. John Steinbeck, "Once There Was a War: An Introduction," in *John Steinbeck, Once There Was a War* (New York: Viking, 1958), xviii.

21. For instance, in a letter sent in 1948 to New York Times book reviewer Orville



Prescott was taken to task for recommending “a book containing such filth.” The letter asked, “How could one read this book without a feeling of revulsion?” Prescott replied that he lamented the “unfortunate excess” that resulted from Mailer’s attempts to “report faithfully the obscenity of soldier speech,” and admitted that the characters in Mailer’s novel were “frighteningly primitive and generally deplorable.” But Prescott also found Mailer to be a “promising literary talent,” and called *The Naked and the Dead* a “remarkable work, dramatic, powerful, honest and moving.” Orville Prescott, “Books of the Times,” *New York Times*, 20 December 1948.

22. Norman Mailer, *The Naked and the Dead* (New York: Picador USA, 1998), 483.

23. *Ibid.*, 214.

24. *Ibid.*, 321, 322.

25. When Cummings is slighted by Hearn, Mailer’s omniscient narrator observes of Cummings that he felt “an odd compound of disgust and fear perhaps, and something else, a curious troubled excitement, a momentary submission as if he had been a young girl undressing before the eyes of a roomful of strange men.” *Ibid.*, 318.

26. *Ibid.*, 716.

27. *Ibid.*, 682. The visceral despair of this novel is unmistakable, but in interviews Mailer insisted there was room for optimism. “A great writer has to be capable of knowing the rot, and he has to be able to strip it down to the stink, but he also has to love that rot,” said Mailer. Quoted in Harvey Beit, “Talk with Norman Mailer,” in *Conversations with Norman Mailer*, J. Michael Lennon, ed. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1988), 17. Even in man’s “corruption and sickness there are yearnings for a better world.” Quoted in Lillian Ross, “Rugged Times,” in *Conversations with Norman Mailer*, J. Michael Lennon, ed. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1988), 14. Mailer’s own thoughts on the symbolic meaning of the novel are not terribly enlightening. When he was interviewed in 1951, he said “the biggest influence on *Naked* was *Moby Dick*” with the mountain serving as the white whale. In the fiftieth-anniversary edition of this novel, however, there is no mention of Melville, and Mailer instead professes that he had been “influenced profoundly by Tolstoy” while he was writing *The Naked and the Dead*. Harvey Beit, “Talk with Norman Mailer,” *New York Times*, 3 June 1951; Norman Mailer, “Introduction to Fiftieth Anniversary Edition” of *The Naked and the Dead*, xii.

28. *American Writers: A Collection of Literary Biographies*, v. 3, Leonard Unger, ed. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1974), 28.

29. Dickstein, 36; Peter Conn, *Literature in America: An Illustrated History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 446.

30. James Salter, “Forward,” in Irwin Shaw, *The Young Lions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), viii–ix.

31. Irwin Shaw, *The Young Lions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 229.

32. Ibid., 295.
33. Ibid., 277–278.
34. Ibid., 275.
35. Ibid., 444–445.
36. Ibid., 649.
37. Herman Wouk, “Preface to a New Paperback Edition,” in Herman Wouk, *The Caine Mutiny* (Boston: Back Bay Books, 2003), v–vii.
38. Herman Wouk, *The Caine Mutiny* (Boston: Back Bay Books, 2003), 171, 258.
39. Ibid., 352.
40. Ibid., 353.
41. Ibid., 371.
42. Ibid., 368.
43. Ibid., 483.
44. We should also take note of several minor entries in this group of early war novels. Saul Bellow’s *Dangling Man*, published in 1944 and the first novel by this major American writer, is not so much a war novel as a waiting for war novel. The protagonist is waiting to be inducted into the military and in the meantime “there is nothing to do but wait, or dangle, and grow more and more dispirited.” Saul Bellow, *Dangling Man* (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1964), 12. In a limbo between two lives and sunk in a torpor, this young man is like thousands of other young men of this era—“a moral casualty of the war.” Ibid., 18. James A. Michener published *Tales of the South Pacific* in 1947. Part memoir and part fiction (it won a Pulitzer Prize in the latter category), *Tales* focuses on the nostalgic and whimsical. It was the basis for the musical *South Pacific*. James A. Michener, *Tales of the South Pacific* [1947] (New York: Macmillan, 1954).
45. Ciardi quoted in Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 134.
46. Vonnegut quoted in Joe David Bellamy and John Casey, “Kurt Vonnegut Jr.,” in *Conversations with Kurt Vonnegut*, ed. by William Rodney Allen (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1988), 163. Frederick Taylor has recently questioned the idea that Dresden was of no strategic value, claiming instead that Dresden was heavily involved in the production of armaments. Frederick Taylor, *Dresden: Tuesday, February 13, 1943* (New York: Harper Collins, 2004).
47. Joseph Heller, *Now and Then: From Coney Island to Here* (New York: Vintage, 1998), 181.
48. Joseph Heller, *Catch-22* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 25.
49. Ibid., 341–342.
50. Heller, *Now and Then*, 180.
51. Ibid., 171. Joseph Hallock, who completed 30 missions as a B-17 bombardier over Germany and occupied Europe, had the same reaction as Heller: “I don’t particularly want to fly again. Pilots and navigators seem to feel different about the flying end of it; they don’t seem to get that feeling of never wanting to go up again. Maybe that’s because they’re really flying the ship. When you’re only one of the

hired hands, who's being carried along to do the dirty work, to drop the bombs and do the killing, you don't feel so good about it." Brendan Gill, "Young Man Behind Plexiglass," *New Yorker*, 12 August 1944, 36.

52. Heller, *Catch-22*, 55.

53. *Ibid.*, 53.

54. *Ibid.*, 95, 221.

55. Minderbinder spiritedly defends this action: "Frankly, I'd like to see the government get out of war altogether and leave the whole field to private industry. If we pay the government everything we owe it, we'll only be encouraging government control and discouraging other individuals from bombing their own men and planes. We'll be taking away their incentive." *Ibid.*, 269.

56. *Ibid.*, 189.

57. *Ibid.*, 449, 450.

58. *Ibid.*, 422.

59. *Ibid.*, 424, 425.

60. *Ibid.*, 423. One scene that comes close is Todd Hackett's vision of Los Angeles in Nathaniel West's *The Day of the Locusts* (1939).

61. James Jones, *WWII* (New York: Grossett & Dunlap, 1975), 91.

62. James Jones, *The Thin Red Line* (New York: Delta, 1998), 357.

63. Jones, *WWII*, 52, 54.

64. James Jones, *To Reach Eternity: The Letters of James Jones* (New York: Random House, 1989), 32.

65. James Jones, *The Thin Red Line*, 14.

66. *Ibid.*, 381.

67. *Ibid.*, 66.

68. *Ibid.*, 303.

69. *Ibid.*, 319.

70. *Ibid.*, 50.

71. *Ibid.*, 260–261.

72. *Ibid.*, 368.

73. David Hayman et al., "Kurt Vonnegut: The Art of Fiction LXIV," in *Conversations with Kurt Vonnegut*, ed. by William Rodney Allen (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1988), 171.

74. Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five or The Children's Crusade: A Duty-Dance with Death* (New York: Dell, 1991), 106.

75. Hayman et al., 173.

76. Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, 160.

77. Hayman et al., 173; Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, 181, 214.

78. Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, 1.

79. *Ibid.*, 148.

80. *Ibid.*, 30–31.

81. *Ibid.*, 33.

82. *Ibid.*, 43.

83. *Ibid.*, 55.

84. *Ibid.*, 164.

85. *Ibid.*, 74–75.

86. Sloan Wilson's *Pacific Interlude*, a novel of only modest accomplishments, also has striking autobiographical elements. While Wilson used the war as an important element of *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, this was primarily a suburban study rather than a war novel. *Pacific Interlude* is a straight war narrative set in the Pacific with a protagonist who is the captain of a small gas tanker. It should come as no surprise to learn that Wilson himself was a captain of a small gas tanker. In an author's note to *Pacific Interlude*, Wilson says, "This fiction is based on fact. During World War II, I was one of the Coast Guard officers who went from the Greenland Patrol to the Southwest Pacific, where we manned small army supply ships. I commanded first a freighter and then a gas tanker." See "Author's Note" to Sloan Wilson, *Pacific Interlude* (New York: Arbor House, 1982), 7. The best parts of *Pacific Interlude* are Wilson's descriptions of the work that these little ships did, and the precautions the crew had to take to prevent what was essentially a 500-ton bomb from going off. Each ship carried 220,000 gallons of high-octane aviation fuel, which it brought in to shore to supply army aircraft. Most of these ships met their demise not by enemy action but through carelessness (especially the use of cigarettes) or bad luck. Misfortune was not redeemable on a gas tanker, and the joke was that "tanker men were lucky because they never had to worry about getting wounded and spending the rest of their lives in hospital wards." Wilson, *Pacific Interlude* (New York: Arbor House, 1982), 155. *Pacific Interlude* was not published until 1982.

87. Randall Jarrell, "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner," in *Randall Jarrell: The Complete Poems* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969), 144. In his introduction, Jarrell described the ball turret gunner as "hunched upside-down in his little sphere, he looked like the foetus in the womb. The fighters which attacked him were armed with cannon firing explosive shells. The hose was a steam hose." Randall Jarrell, "Introduction," in *Randall Jarrell: The Complete Poems* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969), 8.

88. In a letter to Allen Tate, Jarrell characterizes military life as "lying, meaningless brutality and officiousness, stupidity not beyond belief but conception—the one word for everything in the army is *petty*" (Jarrell's emphasis). Randall Jarrell to Allen Tate, Letter of March 1944, in *Randall Jarrell's Letters: An Autobiographical and Literary Selection*, ed. by Mary Jarrell (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985), 120.

89. Edward Field, "World War II," in Edward Field, *Counting Myself Lucky: Selected Poems, 1963–1992* (Santa Rosa, Calif.: Black Sparrow Press, 1992), 229, 248.

90. Randall Jarrell, "Losses," in *Randall Jarrell: The Complete Poems*, 145.

91. James Dickey, "The Firebombing," in James Dickey, *The Whole Motion: Collected Poems, 1945–1992* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1992), 196.

92. *Ibid.*, 195.
93. *Ibid.*, 198, 197.
94. *Ibid.*, 198.
95. *Ibid.*, 200.
96. Howard Nemerov, "The War in the Air," in Howard Nemerov, *War Stories: Poems About Long Ago and Now* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 31; Richard Hugo, "Note from Capri to Richard Ryan on the Adriatic Floor," *Poets of World War II*, ed. by Harvey Shapiro (New York: Library of America, 2003), 180.
97. May Sarton, "Navigator," in *Poets of World War II*, ed. by Harvey Shapiro (New York: Library of America, 2003), 77.
98. Stanley Kunitz, "Careless Love," in *Poets of World War II*, ed. by Harvey Shapiro (New York: Library of America, 2003), 40.
99. John Ciardi, "A Box Comes Home," in *Poets of World War II*, ed. by Harvey Shapiro (New York: Library of America, 2003), 102.
100. John Ciardi, "Remembering That Island," *Poets of World War II*, ed. by Harvey Shapiro (New York: Library of America, 2003), 106, 107.
101. William Stafford, "At the Grave of My Brother: Bomber Pilot," *Poets of World War II*, ed. by Harvey Shapiro (New York: Library of America, 2003), 94.
102. Peter Bowman, "Beach Red," *Poets of World War II*, ed. by Harvey Shapiro (New York: Library of America, 2003), 112.
103. Others include Maxwell Anderson's *Candle in the Wind*, Lillian Hellman's *Watch on the Rhine*, Clare Boothe Luce's *Margin for Error*, Clifford Odets' *Til the Day I Die*, and Elmer Rice's *Flight to the West*. See R. Baird Shuman, *Robert E. Sherwood* (New York: Twayne, 1964), 101.
104. Robert E. Sherwood, "Preface," in Robert E. Sherwood, *There Shall Be No Night* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), xi. As late as 1936, in the postscript to his play *Idiot's Delight*, Sherwood had written: "If decent people will continue to be intoxicated by the synthetic spirit of patriotism, pumped into them by megalomaniac leaders, and will continue to have faith in the 'security' provided by those lethal weapons sold to them by the armaments industry, then war is inevitable; and the world will soon resolve itself into the semblance of an ant hill, governed by commissars who owe their power to the profundity of their contempt for the individual members of their species." Sherwood also referred to "forces which would drive us back into the confusion and the darkness and the filth of No Man's Land." Robert Emmet Sherwood, "Postscript," *Idiot's Delight* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), 189-190.
105. Sherwood, "Preface," xxvii.
106. Robert E. Sherwood, *There Shall Be No Night* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940), 20, 21.
107. *Ibid.*, 78, 79.
108. *Ibid.*, 144.
109. *Ibid.*, 162.
110. Walter J. Meserve, *Robert E. Sherwood: Reluctant Moralizer* (New York:



Pegasus, 1970), 153. See also Shuman, 92–102.

[111.](#) Meserve, 156, 154.

[112.](#) Arthur Miller, *All My Sons*, in *Arthur Miller's Collected Plays* (New York: Viking, 1961), 115.

[113.](#) *Ibid.*, 125.

[114.](#) *Ibid.*, 116.

[115.](#) Arthur Miller, "Introduction to the Collected Plays," in *Arthur Miller's Collected Plays* (New York: Viking, 1961), 22.

## Chapter 9

[1.](#) See Frank A. Reister, *Medical Statistics in World War II* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Surgeon General, Department of the Army, 1975), 4.

[2.](#) John Ellis, *The Sharp End: The Fighting Man in World War II* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980), 259–262.

[3.](#) Eric Sevareid, *Not So Wild a Dream* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), 473.

[4.](#) Samuel A. Stouffer et al., *The American Soldier*, v. 2: *Combat and Its Aftermath* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), 90.

[5.](#) Russell F. Weigley, *Eisenhower's Lieutenants: The Campaign of France and Germany 1944–1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 432.

[6.](#) Gerald Astor, *A Blood-Dimmed Tide: The Battle of the Bulge by the Men Who Fought It* (New York: Dell, 1994), 40.

[7.](#) Weigley, 420.

[8.](#) Ellis, *The Sharp End*, 258.

[9.](#) Steve Anderson and Louis Eschle, "Interview: 82nd Airborne Trooper, from Sicily to the Siegfried Line," *Military History* 20, no. 2 (June 2003), 57.

[10.](#) Weigley, 432, 433.

[11.](#) Bob Drury and Tom Clavin, "Typhoon Cobra: 1944," *Men's Journal* 44, no. 1 (February 2005), 73–77, 94–95.

[12.](#) John Keegan, *The Second World War* (New York: Penguin, 1990), 440, 442.

[13.](#) Weigley, 574.

[14.](#) "Don't You Know There's a War?' Gets Unanimous Civilian 'Yes,'" *Newsweek*, 29 January 1945, 38. According to War Secretary Stimson, U.S. Army casualties in Europe from D-Day to January 1 were 54,562 dead, 232,672 wounded, and 45,678 missing. The casualties for the Normandy invasion were lower than expected, but the total casualties by the beginning of 1945 were much higher than anticipated. "Casualties: Three Years' Toll," *Time*, 29 January 1945, 21.

[15.](#) "The Nation: Conscience and Casualties," *Time*, 8 January 1945, 13.

[16.](#) Bill Adler, ed., *World War II Letters* (New York: St. Martin's, 2001), 147.

[17.](#) Rick Atkinson, *An Army at Dawn: The War in North Africa, 1942–1943* (New York: Owl, 2003), 536.

[18.](#) See Anonymous, "The Making of the Infantryman," *American Journal of Sociology* 51, no. 5 (March 1946): 377.

[19.](#) Stouffer et al., v. 2, 4.

- [20.](#) *Ibid.*, 88.
- [21.](#) *Ibid.*, 90.
- [22.](#) On the significance of the Combat Infantryman's Badge, see Bill Mauldin, *Up Front* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1945), 122–125, and Paul Fussell, *The Boys' Crusade: The American Infantry in Northwestern Europe, 1944–1945* (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 101–103.
- [23.](#) Fussell, *The Boys' Crusade*, 96.
- [24.](#) Stouffer et al., v. 2, 273.
- [25.](#) *Ibid.*, 277.
- [26.](#) *Ibid.*, 60, 278.
- [27.](#) Weigley, 372.
- [28.](#) S. L. A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command in Future War* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1978), 156.
- [29.](#) Fussell, *The Boys' Crusade*, 99, 100.
- [30.](#) Martin van Creveld, *Fighting Power: German and U.S. Army Performance, 1939–1945* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982), 78.
- [31.](#) William C. Menninger, "Psychiatry and the War," *Atlantic Monthly* 176, no. 5 (November 1945): 114.
- [32.](#) According to Lindley, the government's three main concerns were "war production, the transfer of troops from Europe to the Far East, and probable Japanese peace proposals." Ernest K. Lindley, "V-E Day Will Test Home-Front Morale," *Newsweek*, 19 March 1945, 44.
- [33.](#) Charles J. Maland, *Frank Capra* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980), 122. Capra described the dilemma faced by the military in the following way: "My generals *had* to look directly into the eyes of millions of tired, homesick, anxious G.I.'s and tell it to them like it was: Some *could* go home and some could *not* and why! They'd have to look into the faces of millions of heartsick, emotionally irrational parents (who wanted their sons home *now*) and tell them that many of their boys who escaped death in Europe would have to face death again in Asia" (Capra's emphases). Frank Capra, *The Name Above the Title: An Autobiography* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 364–365.
- [34.](#) Stouffer et al., v. 2, 580.
- [35.](#) Reinhold Niebuhr, "Jews After the War," *The Nation* 154, no. 8 (21 February 1942): 214.
- [36.](#) *New York Times*, 30 June 1942.
- [37.](#) Robert H. Abzug, *Inside the Vicious Heart: Americans and the Liberation of Nazi Concentration Camps* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 10, 11. Ellsworth Faris noted early in the war that "there is much complaint among the propagandists of the present because the public is skeptical of atrocity stories." Ellsworth Faris, "The Role of the Citizen," in *American Society in Wartime*, ed. by William Fielding Ogburn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943), 131.
- [38.](#) "The Atrocity Stories," *Collier's*, 6 January 1945, 62.
- [39.](#) Abzug, 14.

40. Quoted in Robert Sherwood, "I Can't Make Your Party, Pete," *Collier's*, 26 May 1945.

41. Omar N. Bradley, *A Soldier's Story* (New York: Henry Holt, 1951), 539.

42. Al Newman, "Nordhausen: A Hell Factory Worked by the Living Dead," *Newsweek*, 23 April 1945, 51.

43. Abzug, 31.

44. Martha Gellhorn, *The Face of War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959), 235.

45. *Ibid.*, 235, 236–238, 240.

46. *Ibid.*, 241.

47. George S. Patton Jr., *War As I Knew It* (New York: Pyramid, 1970), 262.

48. Gene Currivan, "Nazi Death Factory Shocks Germans on a Forced Tour," *New York Times*, 18 April 1945.

49. Percy Knauth, "Buchenwald," *Time*, 30 April 1945, 43. Robert H. Abzug has recently called the scenes at the camps "a turning point in Western consciousness ... a benchmark in our moral discourse, a symbol of humankind's expanded capacities for evil." Abzug, ix, x.

50. Charles E. Egan, "All Reich to See Camp Atrocities," *New York Times*, 24 April 1945.

51. William L. Chenery, "I Testify," *Collier's*, 16 June 1945, 14.

52. Abzug, 132, 134.

53. *Ibid.*, 172.

54. "The First Victory," *Time*, 14 May 1945, 17.

55. *New York Times*, 17 April 1945; *New York Times*, 3 April 1945.

56. "Germany: Chaos and Comforts," *Time*, 16 April 1945, 38; Chenery, 28. Dwight Eisenhower also expressed these concerns. Omar Bradley remembers the following conversation some days after the tour of the Ohrdruf camp: "I can't understand the mentality that would compel these German people to do a thing like that," Ike said. "Why, our soldiers could never mutilate bodies the way the Germans have."

"Not all the Krauts can stomach it," Patton's deputy chief of staff explained. "In one camp we paraded the townspeople through to let them have a look. The mayor and his wife went home and slashed their wrists."

"Well that's the most encouraging thing I've heard," Ike said slowly. "It may indicate that some of them still have a few sensitivities left." Bradley, 540–541.

57. "Occupied Germany: Marks of Madness," *Time*, 23 April 1945, 38.

58. Frederick Graham, "No German Regret Is Found in Reich," *New York Times*, 18 April 1945.

59. Raymond Daniell, "The Defeat of Germany Is Only the Start," *New York Times*, 15 April 1945.

60. Anonymous, "Letter from Germany," *The American Mercury* 61, no. 260 (August 1945): 156.

61. Gellhorn, 213.

62. Gellhorn, 222–223.

63. "Wolves of Vengeance," *Time*, 16 April 1945: 40.
64. *New York Times*, 17 April 1945 and 23 April 1945; Gladwin Hill, "Werewolf Threat Only Propaganda," *New York Times*, 26 April 1945.
65. Quoted in Daniel Glaser, "The Sentiments of American Soldiers Abroad Toward Europeans," *American Journal of Sociology* 51, no. 5 (March 1946): 437. Other researchers who concluded that soldiers had a more favorable view of the Germans than they did of the French in the months after the war include Stouffer et al., v. 2, 566–572, 578 and Henry Elkin, "Aggressive and Erotic Tendencies in Army Life," *American Journal of Sociology* 51, no. 5 (March 1946): 413.
66. To get around being fined \$65 for fraternizing with German women, *Newsweek* reported that "a common dodge when a GI spots a likely looking fräulein is: 'Hey guys, look at that lovely Ukrainian.' Inevitably the girls have learned to respond to the soldiers' question, 'You're Ukrainian, aren't you?' with, 'Ja wohl.'" "Of Course They Fraternize—It's an Old Yankee Custom," *Newsweek*, 9 April 1945, 57.
67. John Costello, *Virtue Under Fire: How World War II Changed Our Social and Sexual Attitudes* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1985), 250. *Time* noted that "in a single Dahlem [W. Ger.] block of 52 swank apartments occupied by U.S. officers, two-thirds of the tenants had German mistresses whom they supplied with coffee, cake and sandwiches from the Army mess—besides food received in packages from U.S. womenfolk. "I Thee Endow," *Time*, 7 January 1946, 18.
68. Quoted in Nigel Hamilton, *JFK: Reckless Youth* (New York: Random House, 1992), 616, 607.
69. Hamilton, 536; William V. Pratt, "Concerning the Length of the War," *Newsweek*, 2 August 1943, 22.
70. Cord Meyer Jr., "On the Beaches: The Pacific," *Atlantic Monthly* 174, no. 4 (October 1944): 45.
71. Sherwood added that "when we saw those Filipino people and when we saw what the Japs had done to them, we knew what we'd been fighting for all these years." Sherwood, "I Can't Make Your Party, Pete," 24.
72. John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon, 1986), 300.
73. *Ibid.*, 246.
74. "Japan Foresees Victory in Suicide for Beaten Peoples of Homeland," *Newsweek*, 18 June 1945, 39.
75. Bernard Seeman, "Life in Japan Today," *The American Mercury* 61, no. 259 (July 1945): 15.
76. See Lawrence Freedman and Saki Dockrill, "Hiroshima: A Strategy of Shock," in *The World War Two Reader*, ed. by Gordon Martel (New York: Routledge, 2004), 80, 69. In addition were reports that the Japanese had created an elaborate tunnel system on the home islands from which to fight the invaders. Quentin Reynolds, "D-Day Japan," *Collier's*, 25 August 1945, 22.
77. Akira Iriye, *Power and Culture: The Japanese-American War, 1941–1945*

(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 241. Iriye believes that “the Potsdam declaration should have been accepted immediately and unequivocally by the Japanese government, for it gave them just what they were seeking, ‘a peace on the basis of something other than an unconditional surrender.’” *Ibid.*, 263.

78. “Japan’s 100-Year-War Plans,” *Collier’s*, 23 June 1945, 82.

79. “And Now Japan,” *Newsweek*, 14 May 1945, 45.

80. Frederick Painton, “The Grim Lesson,” *Collier’s*, 14 April 1945, 17.

81. Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman: Year of Decisions*, v. 1 (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1955), 416.

82. Tibbets quoted in John Costello, *The Pacific War, 1941–1945* (New York: Quill, 1982), 591.

83. Quoted in “15 Years Later: The Men Who Bombed Hiroshima,” *Coronet* 48, no. 4 (August 1960): 87.

84. Robert Del Tredici, *At Work in the Fields of the Bomb* (New York: Perennial, 1987), 188. see also Tibbets quoted in John Costello, *The Pacific War, 1941–1945* (New York: Quill, 1982), 591.

85. John Hersey, *Hiroshima* (New York: Bantam, 1985), 38.

86. Truman, 418.

87. “Awesome Force of Atom Bomb Loosed to Hasten Jap Surrender,” *Newsweek*, 13 August 1945, 30.

88. Quoted in “The Greatest Weapon: Conquest by Atom,” *Newsweek*, 20 August 1945, 22.

89. “Suspense Unlimited,” *Newsweek*, 20 August 1945, 32.

90. Paul Fussell, “Thank God for the Atom Bomb,” in *Thank God for the Atom Bomb and Other Essays* (New York: Ballantine 1988), 15, 28.

91. Studs Terkel, *“The Good War”: An Oral History of World War Two* (New York: Ballantine, 1984), 45.

92. *Ibid.*, 93.

93. *Ibid.*, 35. Luther Winans was a marine involved in heavy fighting on Iwo Jima: “However, we were making plans to invade Japan, and that’s what we were training for. Everyone knew that Iwo Jima and Okinawa was going to be nothing compared to the fanaticism of the Japanese when we got there. You can’t imagine the relief when the atomic bombs were dropped and that ended the war. Don’t let anybody try to fool you, those bombs ended the war.” Luther Winans (as told to Stephen M. Kerbow), “A Marine from Texas Recalls the First Wave at Iwo Jima and the Occupation of Sasebo, Japan,” *Military History*, February 2003, 22.

94. LeMay quoted in Conrad C. Crane, *Bombs, Cities, and Civilians: American Air-power Strategy in World War II* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 143.

95. See Crane, 161–162.

96. Freedman and Dockrill, 80.

97. From Tom Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation* (New York: Random House, 1998), 336. Later, Hatfield and his companions will share their sandwiches with



some Japanese children, and Hatfield notes “sharing those sandwiches with the people who had been my enemy was sort of a therapy for me. I could almost feel my hate leaving me. It was almost a spiritual experience.” *Ibid.*, 337.

98. See Phillip Knightley, *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-maker from the Crimea to Iraq* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 329.

99. Severeid, 512.

100. Albert Camus, *American Journals*, trans. by Hugh Levick (New York: Paragon, 1987), 53.

101. Mary McCarthy, “America the Beautiful: The Humanist in the Bath tub,” in Mary McCarthy, *On the Contrary* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1961), 19.

102. “Epoch,” *Newsweek*, 20 August 1945, 34.

103. Barton J. Bernstein, *Politics and Policies of the Truman Administration* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), 33.

104. Gar Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb* (New York: Vintage, 1996), 10, 13, 633–34.

105. Ronald Takaki, *Hiroshima: Why America Dropped the Atomic Bomb* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1996), 110–112, 115.

106. Richard B. Frank, *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire* (New York: Random House, 1999), 238, 343.

107. Paul Fussell, “Thank God for the Atom Bomb,” 18.

108. Frank, 359. More than 19 million Chinese were killed by the Japanese during the war. Iris Chang, *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 216–217. John Ellis believes that as “horrific as these weapons were, it is not necessarily the case that their use constituted an example of brute force, for on the operational level at least there was considerable justification for trying to avoid an amphibious assault on the main Japanese islands that must have involved enormous casualties. ... Hiroshima and Nagasaki were rational alternatives to invasion, but this choice would never have been necessary if economic blockade had been the consistent watchword of the American forces.” Ellis refers to “the speediest and most cost-effective way of defeating Japan, by strangling her economically.” John Ellis, *Brute Force: Allied Strategy and Tactics in the Second World War* (New York: Viking, 1990), 537.

109. Quoted in James Bradley, *Flyboys: A True Story of Courage* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2003), 295.

110. Truman claimed that in an invasion of Japan American forces would have sustained losses of 250,000 dead and 500,000 wounded, with similar casualties for Japan. “Truman Doesn’t Regret A-Bombing of Japanese,” *Los Angeles Times*, 15 September 1961.

111. Ralph E. Weber, *Talking with Harry: Candid Conversations with President Harry S. Truman* (Wilmington, Del.: SR Books, 2001), 4.

112. “The Atomic Age: Reciprocity,” *Time*, 7 January 1946, 21.

- [113.](#) “Japan: Diversion from Divinity,” *Time*, 14 January 1946, 27.
- [114.](#) John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000), 493.
- [115.](#) “By the Gods,” *Time*, 1 April 1946, 25.
- [116.](#) Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 301.
- [117.](#) Claudia Beaty, “Clinton Goes to War,” unpublished seminar paper, California State University, Chico, 2006.
- [118.](#) Terkel, 55.
- [119.](#) After momentarily straying behind enemy lines, Brubeck and his band were stopped at an army checkpoint by a soldier with a grenade in each hand with the pins pulled. Nearby machine guns were also trained on the truck. Earlier, Germans disguised as Americans had killed a number of soldiers at the same checkpoint, and if Brubeck failed to render the correct password, he and his band would be instantly killed. Fortunately, Brubeck did know the password. Dave Brubeck, “Musical Prayers,” *Time*, 16 February 2004, 102.
- [120.](#) Quoted in Jonathan Coe, *Jimmy Stewart: A Wonderful Life* (New York: Arcade, 1994), 75.
- [121.](#) Charles G. Bolté, “This Is the Face of War,” *The Nation* 160, no. 9 (3 March 1945): 240.

## Chapter 10

1. Meyer Berger, “Two Wounded Find Cheer in Ballads,” *New York Times*, 4 April 1945. While serving as a war correspondent, John Steinbeck reported a similar incident in an English hospital in 1943. Frances Langford, who was with Bob Hope’s USO show, asked the servicemen in a hospital ward if there was anything they wanted her to sing. They requested “As Time Goes By”: “She stood up beside the little GI piano and started to sing. Her voice is a little hoarse and strained. She has been working too hard and too long. She got through eight bars and was into the bridge, when a boy with a head wound began to cry. She stopped, and then went on, but her voice wouldn’t work any more, and she finished the song whispering and then she walked out, so no one could see her, and broke down. The ward was quiet and no one applauded.” John Steinbeck, *Once There Was a War* (New York: Viking, 1958), 91.
2. “Demobilization: Home by Spring?” *Time*, 14 January 1946, 21.
3. “Morale: My Son, John,” *Time*, 21 January 1946, 20–21; “Eligible or Not, GI’s Whoop It Up Against Slowdown in Getting Out,” *Newsweek*, 21 January 1946, 59. The army Research Branch noted that while “in retrospect history may find that the greatest American Army ever created was broken up too rapidly, history also will record the irresistible political pressure to ‘bring the boys home’ and the impatience of the soldiers themselves, some units of whom behaved in a manner hardly describable in terms other than mutiny.” Samuel A. Stouffer, *The American Soldier*, v. 2: *Combat and Its Aftermath* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), 547.
4. David Dempsey, “Veterans Are Not Problem Children,” *The American Mercury* 61, no. 261 (September 1945): 326.

5. "Coming Back from Over There: Milk, Steak, French Fries, Girls," *Newsweek*, 11 June 1945: 33; 35.
6. "The Nation: The Way Home," *Time*, 7 August 1944, 15.
7. Thomas McGrath, "Homecoming," in *Poets of World War II*, ed. by Harvey Shapiro (New York: Library of America, 2003), 105.
8. Steinbeck, 75, 76. The belief in a postwar depression was extremely widespread. In Arthur Miller's 1945 *Focus*, a character reflects on the good news that "the firm was going to keep him on after the war was over. He thought of how it would be, earning sixty-two a week during the coming depression, and pleasantly recalled how much sixty-two could buy when things were down to normal once more." Arthur Miller, *Focus* (New York: Book Find Club, 1945), 153.
9. Mauricio Mazón, *The Zoot-Suit Riots: The Psychology of Symbolic Annihilation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 56.
10. Steinbeck, 28.
11. Robert Fleisher, "Wise Up, Civilian!" *The Nation* 160, no. 8 (24 February 1945): 207. Sociologist Robert A. Nisbet also referred to the "tragic cleavage" between veterans and civilian society. Robert A. Nisbet, "The Coming Problem of Assimilation," *American Journal of Sociology* 50, no. 4 (January 1945): 262. In *Up Front*, Bill Mauldin noted, "And these guys have been getting letters which say, 'I'm so glad you're in Italy while the fighting is in France.'" Bill Mauldin, *Up Front* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1945), 38.
12. Eleanor (Bumpy) Stevenson, "I Knew Your Soldier, Pt. 2," *Saturday Evening Post*, 28 October 1944, 70. Audie Murphy's *To Hell and Back* is typical of many veteran accounts of the war in that one of its major motifs is resentment toward civilians residing in safe comfort back in the states ("When I think of some of those 4-F, draft-dodging bastards I know back home, I want to spit nails. Whose the hell war is this?"). Audie Murphy, *To Hell and Back* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1949), 94-95.
13. Stimson quoted in "It's a Tough War," *Life*, 31 January 1944, 17.
14. Quoted in Joe Klein, "The Danger of Yellow Ribbon Patriotism," *Time*, 29 August 2005, 23.
15. Mazón notes that how servicemen chose to express their anger against zoot suiters, which included forced haircuts and the stripping off of the zoot suit, paralleled their own recent experiences of induction into the military: "When they stripped and gave a haircut to the zoot-suiters, they were not degrading Mexican youth as much as they were aggressively mimicking and reenacting their own experience in basic training." Mazón, 86-87.
16. Mazón, 68. Mazón emphasizes that while the cultural importance of the zoot suit riots would be proclaimed by later generations, its immediate impact was not greatly significant and that "there was no looting, burning, raping, or killing." *Ibid.*, 85.
17. Samuel A. Stouffer et al., *The American Soldier*, v. 1: *Adjustment During Army Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), 451.

18. Stouffer et al., v. 2, 634.
19. John Lardner, "Horrors of War in America," *Newsweek*, 12 July 1943, 23.
20. See *Newsweek*, 15 January 1945, 26. Not all servicemen were hostile toward the pleasant life of the home front. One sailor asked, "What would we want to come home for at all, if all the people were running around in sackcloth sprinkling ashes in the hair, if any? I only hope you folks at home keep plenty of these joints going, and plenty of sports and theaters and saloons in operation, so that I can always count on forgetting the war for a while when I come ashore." Quoted in "Home-Front 'Happiness,'" *Collier's*, 14 April 1945, 78.
21. Bill Mauldin, *Up Front* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1945), 97.
22. Philip Wylie, "War and Peace in Miami," *New Republic* 110, no. 8 (21 February 1944): 238.
23. *Ibid.*, 239.
24. "Miami Spectacle," *Life*, 21 February 1944, 40.
25. Murphy, 144, 145.
26. William Manchester, "The Bloodiest Battle of All," *New York Times*, 14 June 1987, 44.
27. E. B. Sledge, *With the Old Breed at Peleliu and Okinawa* (Novato, Calif.: Presidio, 1981), 267.
28. In addition, combat veterans who were rotated home often experienced feelings of guilt that they were deserting their comrades who were still in the field, as well as feelings of abandonment at no longer being affiliated with their old unit. Stouffer et al., v. 2, 464.
29. Eric Sevareid, *Not So Wild a Dream* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), 493, 495.
30. Ernie Pyle, *Here Is Your War* (New York: Henry Holt, 1943), 298. Eleanor Stevenson noted that if the families of servicemen "can keep in mind the fact that they've been engaged in a new, strage business—the business of mass killing or of being killed—and that such an undertaking will leave its mark on a boy; it will help." Eleanor Stevenson, "I Knew Your Soldier, Pt. 3," *Saturday Evening Post*, 1 November 1944, 110.
31. August B. Hollingshead, "Adjustment to Military Life," *American Journal of Sociology* 51, no. 5 (March 1946): 446.
32. J. Glenn Gray, *The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle* [1959] (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1967), 22.
33. Christopher La Farge, "Soldier Into Civilian," *Harper's* 190, no. 1138 (March 1945): 345.
34. John Paris, "I Came Home Early," *Atlantic Monthly* 175, no. 6 (June 1945): 72.
35. *Ibid.*, 73.
36. Willard Waller, *The Veteran Comes Back* (New York: Dryden Press, 1944), 15. August B. Hollingshead contended that "the perfectly trained soldier is one who has had his civilian initiative reduced to zero." He is encouraged by the military "to be a dependent of the [military] institution," which tries to keep him "in this

infantile state." Hollingshead, 441, 442.

37. Nisbet, 265, 266.

38. See Waller, *The Veteran Comes Back*, 54–55.

39. "After They've Seen Paree," *Newsweek*, 5 February 1945, 84.

40. *Newsweek*, 19 March 1945, 5.

41. *Time*, 11 June 1945, 9.

42. Dempsey, 326.

43. Ira Wolfert, "That's How It Is, Brother," *Collier's*, 22 September 1945, 14.

44. Brendan Gill, "Young Man Behind Plexiglass," *New Yorker*, 12 August 1944, 37.

45. Willard Waller, "Why Veterans Are Bitter," *The American Mercury* 61, no. 260 (August 1945): 151.

46. Ronald Reagan with Richard G. Hubler, *Where's the Rest of Me? The Autobiography of Ronald Reagan* (New York: Karz, 1981), 138.

47. Garry Wills asks, "Where had he [Reagan] been that he could not make love to his wife? They had been in the same town for the last three years. Their only prolonged time of separation was Wyman's tour of the Southern states as part of a bond drive—she got farther from Hollywood than he did. Yet Reagan obviously believes he was 'off to war.'" Garry Wills, *Reagan's America: Innocents at Home* (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, 1987), 168. Perhaps the key to Reagan's mind-set is revealed in an interview quoted in Lou Cannon's biography: "Maybe I had seen too many war movies, the heroics of which I sometimes confused with real life." Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 486.

48. Quoted in Gerald F. Linderman, *The World Within War: America's Combat Experience in World War II* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 344.

49. Agnes E. Meyer, "The Veterans Say—Or Else!" *Collier's*, 12 October 1946, 116.

50. *Ibid.*, 117.

51. "Can We Head Off a Postwar Crash?" *Collier's*, 12 September 1942, 74.

52. John K. Jessup, "America and the Future," *Life*, 13 September 1943, 105.

53. Louis Wirth, "The Urban Community," in *American Society in Wartime*, ed. by William Fielding Ogburn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943), 75.

54. "War & Peace," *Time*, 8 January 1945, 72, 73.

55. American Institute of Public Opinion, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1935–1971* (New York: Random House, 1972), 478.

56. *Time*, 8 January 1945, 80.

57. Murphy, 50.

58. *Ibid.*, 51. Willard Waller also concluded that "when the war is over, the sergeant's stripes, the lieutenant's bars, and even the aviator's wings open fewer doors than people suppose. And as for those humbler skills, such as that of digging a fine fox-hole or throwing hand-grenades with dexterity, they are utterly valueless." Waller, *The Veteran Comes Back*, 143.



59. Bill Mauldin, *Back Home* (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1947), 35, 45.
60. *Ibid.*, 40.
61. *Ibid.*, 44, 45.
62. *Ibid.*, 48.
63. *Ibid.*, 51.
64. *Ibid.*, 53–55. Wilbur B. Brookover, who served as “civil readjustment officer” for the navy, also took note of the prevalence of a public opinion that “all servicemen who return to civilian life have serious problems.” Wilbur B. Brookover, “The Adjustment of Veterans to Civilian Life,” *American Sociological Review* 10, no. 5 (October 1945): 579.
65. Mauldin, *Back Home*, 64, 69, 85, 110, 66–67.
66. *Ibid.*, 61–62.
67. *Ibid.*, 110, 111. Mauldin’s overall assessment of postwar America was that while “we have more provincialism and bigotry and superstition per square mile than almost any other nation,” the one thing Americans did have going for them was “a fairly free opportunity to say what we think” despite the efforts of HUAC and others. *Ibid.*, 302.
68. Studs Terkel, *“The Good War”: An Oral History of World War Two* (New York: Ballantine, 1985), 360. By August of 1946, Veterans Administration director Omar Bradley worried that the large numbers of veterans who were staying on the rolls rather than seeking employment were putting the program into jeopardy. “Veterans: 52–20 or Work,” *Time*, 26 August 1946, 17.
69. Robert I. was more fortunate than Michael J. P., who was currently living apart from his wife and daughter, and had spent only seven weeks with them since his discharge. Meyer, 17.
70. *Ibid.*, 115.
71. Eleanor (Bumpy) Stevenson, “I Knew Your Soldier, Pt. 1,” *Saturday Evening Post*, 21 October 1944, 11.
72. James Jones, *WWII* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1975), 54.
73. Terkel, 99.
74. “The People: Scofflaws,” *Time*, 6 May 1946, 20.
75. See Norman L. Rosenberg and Emily S. Rosenberg, *In Our Times: America Since World War II* (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2003), 29.
76. Waller, “Why Veterans Are Bitter,” 153.
77. Arthur Miller, *Situation Normal ...* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1944), 157.
78. Arthur Miller, *All My Sons*, in Arthur Miller, *Arthur Miller’s Collected Plays* (New York: Viking, 1961), 85.
79. Terkel, 65.
80. See Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1957).
81. Robert J. Havighurst et al., *The American Veteran Back Home: A Study of Veteran Readjustment* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1951), 69.

[82.](#) Ibid., 72.

[83.](#) Ibid., 76. Another study also noted 75 percent of both sexes believed that the morals of the opposite sex had become “more lax” during the war. See John H. Burma, “Attitudes of College Youth on War Marriage,” *Social Forces* 24, no. 1 (October 1945): 99.

[84.](#) Havighurst et al., 80, 84.

[85.](#) Ibid., 94, 92, 93. Havighurst et al. note that “many servicemen reached levels of salary, responsibility, privilege, and prestige far above those they had attained in civilian life.” Ibid., 96.

[86.](#) One-fourth of Midwest’s veterans got some kind of training or education at government expense, and one-fourth drew unemployment compensation for periods ranging from one month to a year before returning to the workforce. Ibid., 99. Only about 10 percent of Midwest’s veterans moved elsewhere. Ibid., 118.

[87.](#) Ibid., 100–101.

[88.](#) Ibid., 150.

[89.](#) Ibid., 179, 191, 197.

[90.](#) Ibid., 150, 163.

[91.](#) See Lewis A. Erenberg, “Swing Goes to War: Glenn Miller and the Popular Music of World War II,” *The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness During World War II*, ed. by Lewis A. Erenberg and Susan E. Hirsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 156, 157.

[92.](#) “He’s Home for a While” (Goell-Shapiro), *Famous Music in Timeline, A Historical Series: 1945* (DVD) (Sebastopol, Calif.: Whirlwind Media, 2001).

[93.](#) Edward C. McDonagh, “The Discharged Serviceman and His Family,” *American Journal of Sociology* 51, no. 5 (March 1946): 453.

[94.](#) Edward and Louise McDonagh, “War Anxieties of Soldiers and Their Wives,” *Social Forces* 24, no. 2 (December 1945): 198.

[95.](#) *Life*, 4 May 1942, 78.

[96.](#) Quoted in Tom Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation* (New York: Random House, 1998), 322–323.

[97.](#) Irving Bassow-Kuperman, “Fighting for a Little Corner,” in *Jewish Youth at War: Letters from American Soldiers*, ed. by Isaac E. Rontach (New York: Martin Press, 1945), 275; Quoted in Kennett, 60.

[98.](#) Edward C. McDonagh, 453. One woman told a social science researcher that while her serviceman husband was away, “someone suggested that I go on a ‘date’—a purely platonic date, of course, with a fraternity brother of my husband. And the date was platonic to the point of brutality. Both of us were so anxious that it remain platonic and that there be no infidelity that the whole affair was funny or tragic depending upon how you look at it. There being no harm on that date there was another and another and suddenly they weren’t so platonic. Gradually I began to realize that I was falling in love with this man and he with me. And accordingly we broke off the relationship, abruptly.”

Her resolve was crumbling, however, and “the second man, like me, finds it difficult to call

our relationship off." Quoted in Waller, *The Veteran Comes Back*, 137.

99. Mona Gardner, "Has Your Husband Come Home to the Right Woman?" *Ladies' Home Journal*, December 1945, 41.

100. "The Soldiers Think of Home," *Time*, 16 April 1945, 24.

101. "Artificial Bastards?" *Time*, 26 February 1945, 58.

102. John Field, "West to Japan," *Life*, 15 March 1943, 85. One sailor noted of his submarine that "we had a lot of fun with rivalling Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby clubs. The old man hates the sight of 'our Frankie' and he'd always find his pictures and poems about him in his stateroom. The fellows made up club badges, secret handshakes." Milton Seltzer, "On a Submarine," in *Jewish Youth at War: Letters from American Soldiers*, ed. by Isaac E. Rontch (New York: Martin Press, 1945), 184–185.

103. *Somewhere in the Night*, 20th Century Fox, 1946, Joseph L. Mankiewicz, dir., Fox Film Noir DVD no. 8.

104. *Key Largo*, Warner Brothers, 1948, John Huston, dir., DVD 65010.

105. *Gun Crazy*, United Artists, 1950, Joseph H. Lewis, dir., Warner Brothers DVD 31971.

106. *Kansas City Confidential*, United Artists, 1952, Phil Karlson, dir., Alpha Video DVD ALP 6287D.

107. See *Film Noir: An Encyclopedic Reference to the American Style*, Alain Silver and Elizabeth Ward, eds. (Woodstock, New York: Overlook Press, 1992), 36–37.

108. *Crossfire*, RKO, 1947, Edward Dmytryk, dir., TCM-Turner Movie Classics, VHS, 6396.

109. *The Best Years of Our Lives*, MGM 1946, William Wyler, dir., DVD, MGM Home Entertainment 100682.

110. Harry Brown, *A Walk in the Sun* (Philadelphia: Blakiston, 1945), 103.

111. Gore Vidal, *Williwaw* [1946] (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 98–99.

112. *Ibid.*, 110.

113. Norman Mailer, *The Naked and the Dead* (New York: Picador USA, 1998), 120.

114. *Ibid.*, 163, 181. Even without the specter of infidelity, the burdens of wartime marriage were considerable. In *The Young Lions*, the cynical Whitacre observes that "marriage in this bloody year was a cloudy and heartbreaking business. Marry and die, graves and widows; the husband-soldier carrying his wife's photograph in his pack like an extra hundred pounds of lead; the single man mourning furiously in the screaming jungle night for the forsworn moment, the honorable ceremony, the blinded veteran listening for his wife's chained footstep." Irwin Shaw, *The Young Lions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 227.

115. James Jones, *The Thin Red Line* [1962] (New York: Delta, 1998), 30.

116. *Ibid.*, 304. In Herman Wouk's *The Caine Mutiny*, a seaman requests emergency medical leave, but his real purpose in visiting his home "was that he had a wife and child in Idaho, and that he had reasons to doubt his wife's

faithfulness.” Herman Wouk, *The Caine Mutiny* (Boston: Back Bay Books, 2003), 188. In John Horne Burns’ *The Gallery*, another sailor complains of his wife that “I buy her furs and I buy her flowers. I buy sateen-covered chairs for her dive. And what for? So she can hold open house while I’m at sea and give away for nothing what I’m paying for.” John Horne Burns, *The Gallery* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), 70.

[117](#). Sloan Wilson, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* [1955] (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2002), 78.

[118](#). *Ibid.*, 267.

[119](#). Sloan Wilson, *Pacific Interlude* (New York: Arbor House, 1982), 32.

[120](#). *Ibid.*, 98–99.

[121](#). Jones, *The Thin Red Line* (New York: Delta, 1998), 45.

[122](#). Steinbeck, 101.

[123](#). Darrfrel Brady, “Coming Home,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, July 1945, 4.

[124](#). The army compensated soldiers \$30 a month for life for the loss of a leg. “New Limbs for Old,” *Time*, 22 January 1945, 52; *Time* reported in July of 1946 that one-fourth of World War II veterans had filed a disability claim. “Veterans: Account to Date,” *Time*, 22 July 1946, 18.

[125](#). Stevenson, “I Knew Your Soldier, Pt. 1,” 9.

[126](#). Terkel, 130.

[127](#). Sally Berry, “How to Cope with Catastrophes on the Very Day of the Party!” *Good Housekeeping*, January 1945, 100.

[128](#). Leon Ware, “The Afterward,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, January 1944, 18.

[129](#). Enid Griffis, “How Can I Help the War-Blinded Soldier?” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, March 1945, 62. Willard Waller noted that the relatives of the disabled were mostly being advised to “receive him casually, without emotion.” Waller, however, believed that he had sounder advice: “If your son comes home disabled or disfigured, cry! That is the natural and human thing to do. Let him cry too. Let everybody cry. Cry until you get it out of your systems. Then when you have had your cry, and he has admitted and expressed his own heartache, try to pick up the pieces of your lives and put them together again. Admit the disability. Get used to it. Then help your son to build up the best possible life with what he has. This will rule out all possibility of pampering or encouraging invalidism. But do not start being hard-boiled until you have been sympathetic.” Waller, *The Veteran Comes Back*, 289, 290.

[130](#). See Burma, 99.

[131](#). No less a cultural observer than Thomas Mann said that *Best Years* was “unsurpassed in its naturalness, profoundly decent in its opinions, brilliantly acted, and full of genuinely American life,” and that “the difficulties of readjustment to civilian life by the returning soldiers are portrayed with discretion, humor, and kindness.” Thomas Mann to Agnes E. Meyer, 10 October 1947, in Thomas Mann, *Letters of Thomas Mann, 1889–1955*, trans. by Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), 535. Mann added that “the women are

touching except for the one vulgar creature who belongs in the general scheme; the men as individuals, with their class-shaped destinies, are completely true to life—as the world to which they return is true to life.” Film critic Ronald L. Davis has called it “among the finest films Hollywood ever produced, rich in entertainment yet an honest record of its moment in history.” Ronald L. Davis, *Celluloid Mirrors: Hollywood and American Society Since 1945* (Ft. Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1997), 3. But *Best Years* has attracted some naysayers, and in a recent *Atlantic* article Francis Davis takes note of Robert Warshaw’s denunciation of the film for its “denial of the reality of politics” and Manny Farber’s description of it as a “horse-drawn truckload of liberal schmaltz.” Davis counters that “we’ve become so used to feeling manipulated by movies that we instinctively distrust one that stirs something real in us.” Francis Davis, “Storming the Home Front,” *The Atlantic* 291, no. 2 (March 2003): 126.

132. Francis Davis, 127, 128.

133. Axel Madsen, *William Wyler: The Authorized Biography* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1973), 261–262, 257–258.

134. *Ibid.*, 262.

135. “Without Hands,” *Life*, 23 July 1945, 83–89.

136. Francis Davis, 131.

137. *The Best Years of Our Lives*, MGM, 1946, William Wyler, dir., MGM DVD 100682.

138. Madsen, 263. For a discussion of Wyler’s visual style, see Barbara Bowman, *Master Space: Film Images of Capra, Lubitsch, Sternberg, and Wyler* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992).

139. Francis Davis, 125.

140. *The Men*, Republic, 1950, Fred Zinnemann, dir., Republic Pictures Home Video VHS No. 2710.

141. In *Till the End of Time*, three troubled war veterans and a war widow struggle to put their lives back together, but as *Time* magazine’s review of the film put it, “an honest solution to all their complex problems would certainly have endangered the film’s entertainment possibilities.” Instead, there is “an exchange of neat, safe platitudes, [and] everything at the fade-out is suddenly just dandy for everybody.” “The New Pictures: *Till the End of Time*,” *Time*, 15 July 1946, 97.

142. “How to Sleep in Bed,” *Newsweek*, 9 July 1945, 104.

143. A. Kardiner, “Forensic Issues in the Neuroses of War,” *American Journal of Psychiatry* 99, no. 5 (March 1943): 658.

144. Terkel, 105, 108.

145. J. C. Furnas, “Meet Ed Savickas,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, February 1945, 141, 142.

146. *Ibid.*, 143, 142.

147. *Ibid.*, 141, 147.

148. Waller, *The Veteran Comes Back*, 168.

149. *Ibid.*, 286. Samuel Tenenbaum noted that “a fair percentage of marriages



peculiar to war are nevertheless not worth saving." Samuel Tenenbaum, "The Fate of Wartime Marriages," *The American Mercury* 61, no. 263: 533.

150. In 1940, the marriage rate was 12.1 per 1,000 population. During the war it was 13.2 in 1942, 11.7 in 1943, 10.9 in 1944, and 12.2 in 1945. In 1946 the marriage rate jumped to 16.4. The divorce rate in 1940 was 2.0 per 1,000 population. It increased steadily during the war, from 2.4 in 1942, 2.6 in 1943, 2.9 in 1944, and 3.5 in 1945, then jumped to 4.3 in 1946. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970*, pt. 1 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce, 1975), 64. Divorces in the 1940s typically required that there be a plaintiff and a defendant, but in the state of Nevada a divorce could be obtained after a six-week's residence—a liberal policy that would make Nevada the divorce capital of the United States. When Simone de Beauvoir visited Reno in 1947 she took note of the town's many cottages where "people who want divorces come to stay for the required six weeks' residence." Every morning, said de Beauvoir, "the Reno newspapers proudly list the divorces granted the day before. It's a long list that sometimes includes the name of some well-known star." Simone de Beauvoir, *America Day by Day*, trans. by Carol Cosman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 147, 149.

151. See "Vital Statistics: Rise," *Time*, 23 September 1946, 25.

152. *The First Measured Century: An Illustrated Guide to Trends in America, 1900–2000*, Theodore Caplow et al., eds. (Washington, D.C.: AEI Press, 2001), 79; George Thomas Kurian, *Datapedia of the United States, 1790–2000: America Year by Year* (Lanham, Md.: Bernan Press, 1994), 46.

153. Waller, *The Veteran Comes Back*, 180, 13.

154. *Ibid.*, 186–191.

155. *Ibid.*, 110, 111. A *Collier's* article took note of the "dog-eat-dog struggle that has arisen between the poor Southern white and the Negro veteran, both of whom have fewer opportunities for decent jobs or an education than any other groups in the country. Blood will flow even more freely down there than it has already, if these boys are not provided with schools in which to develop the new ambitions and the semiskills with which they returned from the war." Agnes E. Meyer, "The Veterans Say—Or Else!" *Collier's*, 12 October 1946, 116.

156. Charles G. Bolté, "The Veterans' Runaround," *Harper's* 190, no. 1139 (April 1945): 386.

157. Edgar L. Jones, "One War Is Enough," *Atlantic Monthly* 177, no. 2 (February 1946): 49, 50. In a *Saturday Review* piece on servicemen, David L. Cohn said, "Seeing their wounding, dying and hardships, one felt that they were better than the nation which bred them; that they had risen above it as a child rises above a profligate, irresponsible father who has taught it nothing that is good." David L. Cohn, "Should Fighting Men Think?" *Saturday Review of Literature* 30, no. 3 (18 January 1947): 8.

158. At the high point of reconversion in September 1945, only 1.65 million were unemployed compared to the 8 million unemployed that many had predicted. "The

Primrose Path," *Time*, 7 January 1946, 83.

159. *Time* reported that the House approved funding for automobiles for veteran amputees "after a group of amputees marched into the House gallery and let their metal braces fall to the floor with a soul-withering clank." "Home Again, Home Again," *Time*, 12 August 1946, 16.

160. Quoted in Keith W. Olson, *The G.I. Bill, the Veterans, and the Colleges* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1974), 41.

161. *Ibid.*, 43.

162. Stouffer et al., v. 2, 637, 642–643.

163. *Ibid.*, 641.

164. *Ibid.*, 637.

165. *Ibid.*, 632–633, 612.

166. *Ibid.*, 624.

167. Waller, *The Veteran Comes Back*, 195.

168. Stouffer et al., v. 2, 596.

169. David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 179.

170. A. G. Mezerik, "Getting Rid of the Women," *Atlantic Monthly* 175, no. 6 (June 1945): 81.

171. *Ibid.*, 79.

## Conclusion

1. Quoted in Paul Fussell, *The Boys' Crusade: The American Infantry in Northwestern Europe, 1944–1945* (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 157.

2. Japanese medical experiments were conducted at "Unit 731," located outside the Manchurian city of Harbin. The Japanese government has never officially acknowledged the existence of this station, but some of those who worked there have admitted their roles. See Tamura Yoshio, "Unit 731," in *Japan at War: An Oral History*, ed. by Haruko Taya Cook and Theodore F. Cook (New York: The New Press, 1992), 158–167. A report from General Headquarters, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, that was issued on November 15, 1945, was declassified in 2003. It provides clear evidence that the Japanese government was maintaining a system of brothels during the war even though the Japanese government continues to claim that these were operated by civilians. Between 200,000 to 400,000 Asian women were forced by the Japanese into the life of sexual servitude during the war, receiving no pay and no compensation from the Japanese government after the war. K. Connie Kang, "Report: U.S. Knew of Brothels," *Sacramento Bee*, 7 December 2003.

3. James Jones, *The Thin Red Line* [1962] (New York: Delta, 1998), 240.

4. Elaine Tyler May, "Rosie the Riveter Gets Married," in *The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness During World War II*, ed. by Lewis A. Erenberg and Susan E. Hirsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 137, 141. Karen Anderson claims that "in the long run the war did not significantly alter the economic structure" and that "the postwar stress on traditional family roles and values for women did not constitute a

- dramatic break with wartime themes." Karen Anderson, *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women During World War II* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1981), 160, 177.
5. Quoted in John Costello, *Virtue Under Fire: How World War II Changed Our Social and Sexual Attitudes* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1985), 177.
6. D'Ann Campbell, "The War and Beyond: Women's Place in American Life," in *World War II: Crucible of the Contemporary World*, ed. by Loyd E. Lee (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1991), 298.
7. Stephen E. Ambrose, *Citizen Soldiers: The U.S. Army from the Normandy Beaches to the Bulge to the Surrender of Germany, June 7, 1944–May 7, 1945* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 472.
8. John Dos Passos, "The People at War, III: Gold Rush in the South," *Harper's* 186, no. 116 (May 1943): 601.
9. Michael Griffin, "What Is the Matter with the People?" *Time*, 20 July 1942, 12.
10. Paul Fussell, "The Real War, 1939–1945," *The Atlantic* 264, no. 2 (August 1989): 35.
11. Michael C. C. Adams, *The Best War Ever: America and World War II* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 75.
12. James Jones, *W W II* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1975), 150.
13. J. C. Furnas, "Meet Ed Savickas," *Ladies' Home Journal*, February 1945, 144.
14. Stephen E. Ambrose, *Band of Brothers: E Company, 506th Regiment, 101st Airborne from Normandy to the Eagle's Nest* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 232–233.
15. Willard Waller, "Why Veterans Are Bitter," *The American Mercury* 61, no. 260 (August 1945): 148.
16. Michael Fellman, *Citizen Sherman: A Life of William Tecumseh Sherman* (New York: Random House, 1995), 306. Sherman biographer Michael Fellman calls Sherman "an ardent man of peace" who "opposed cheap militarism." One wonders what Sherman would make of the cheap militarism of our own era.
17. Edgar L. Jones, "One War Is Enough," *Atlantic Monthly* 177, no. 2 (February 1946): 50, 51.
18. Bill Mauldin, *Up Front* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1945), 9–10.
19. Describing the consequences of a different invented past—the invented past of the Revolutionary War—Ray Raphael notes that "it leaves us in awe of superhuman stars. It encourages us to follow leaders who ostensibly know more than we do. It discourages ordinary citizens from acting in their own behalf. It promotes a passive nostalgia for an irretrievable past. It touts militarism and glorifies war." Ray Raphael, *Founding Myths: Stories that Hide Our Patriotic Past* (New York: The New Press, 2004), 6.
20. Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 142.
21. Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five* (New York: Dell, 1991), 3.
22. John Steinbeck, "Once There Was a War: An Introduction," in John Steinbeck,

*Once There Was a War* (New York: Viking, 1958), x.

23. Samuel A. Stouffer et al., *The American Soldier*, v. 1: *Adjustment During Army Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), 440, 441.

24. Cord Meyer Jr., "On the Beaches: The Pacific," *Atlantic Monthly* 174, no. 4 (October 1944): 44.

25. Quoted in Muriel Dobbin, "WWII Vets Get a Nation's Th anks," *Sacramento Bee*, 30 May 2004.

26. The extent to which politicians have co-opted World War II for their own purposes was made clear in March of 2004 when George W. Bush gave a speech to the 101st Airborne that compared the Iraq War to World War II. Bush told the paratroopers, "American has done this kind of work before. We lifted up the defeated nations of Japan and Germany and stood with them as they built representative governments. ... America today accepts the challenge of helping Iraq in the same spirit, for their sake and our own." Quoted in Nancy Gibbs, "The Greatest Day," *Time*, 31 May 2004, 40. On the anniversary of V-J Day, Bush once again turned to the World War II analogy to compare American efforts in Iraq to the reconstruction of postwar Japan, and to draw a parallel between the Pearl Harbor attack and the war on terror: "Once again, war came to our shores with a surprise attack that killed thousands in cold blood. Once again we face determined enemies who follow a ruthless ideology that despises everything America stands for." Peter Wallstein and Tony Perry, "Bush Likens Democracy Effort in Iraq to That in Postwar Japan," *Los Angeles Times*, 21 August 2005.

27. *War Letters: Extraordinary Correspondence from American Wars*, ed. by Andrew Carroll (New York: Scribner's, 2001), 301.

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