

---

Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects

Theses, Dissertations, & Master Projects

---

1998

## Let us now praise famous men: A history the American World War II personal narrative, 1942-1945

Hildy Michelle Neel

*College of William & Mary - Arts & Sciences*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wm.edu/etd>



Part of the [American Studies Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Neel, Hildy Michelle, "Let us now praise famous men: A history the American World War II personal narrative, 1942-1945" (1998). *Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects*. Paper 1539623934.

<https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/s2-07gb-1j68>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses, Dissertations, & Master Projects at W&M ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects by an authorized administrator of W&M ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@wm.edu](mailto:scholarworks@wm.edu).

## **INFORMATION TO USERS**

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

**The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.** Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

**UMI<sup>®</sup>**

**Bell & Howell Information and Learning  
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA  
800-521-0600**



**LET US NOW PRAISE SERVICE MEN: A HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN  
WORLD WAR II PERSONAL NARRATIVE, 1942-1945**

---

**A dissertation  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the American Studies Program  
The College of William and Mary**

**In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy**

---

**by  
Hildy Michelle Neel  
1998**

UMI Number: 9920305

Copyright 1999 by  
Neel, Hildy Michelle

**All rights reserved.**

---

**UMI Microform 9920305**  
**Copyright 1999, by UMI Company. All rights reserved.**

**This microform edition is protected against unauthorized  
copying under Title 17, United States Code.**

---

**UMI**  
**300 North Zeeb Road**  
**Ann Arbor, MI 48103**

APPROVAL SHEET

This dissertation is submitted in partial  
fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Author

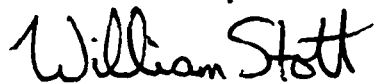
Approved, August 1998

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Robert Gross

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Richard Lowry

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Leisa Meyer

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Edward Crapol

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
William Stott

## DEDICATION

To my dad, who taught me how to catch and throw and field with my glove on the ground, who taught me how to play fair and square on and off the basketball court, and who always was there to cheer me on.

Incidentally, he gave me the idea for this work.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	iv
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....	v
ABSTRACT.....	vi
PREFACE.....	2
CHAPTER 1. THE DOCUMENTARY GOES TO WAR.....	6
CHAPTER 2. THE BOOM IN NARRATIVES.....	25
CHAPTER 3. RATIONING KNOWLEDGE: CENSORSHIP AND SELF- CENSORSHIP.....	50
CHAPTER 4. "BOOKS ARE BULLETS": WAGING WAR THROUGH PRINT	80
CHAPTER 5. NECESSARY HEROES, EXPENDABLE MEN.....	98
CHAPTER 6. CONFRONTING THE HORROR: SLAUGHTER ON TARAWA..	158
CHAPTER 7. DIVISIONS OF LABOR.....	184
CHAPTER 8. ALL BRAVE SOLDIERS: CONSTRUCTING WHITENESS...	234
CHAPTER 9. MISSIONS OF FAITH.....	254
CHAPTER 10. THE AFRICAN THEATER: A VENUE DIFFERENCE.....	273
CHAPTER 11. THE EUROPEAN FRONT: CONSCRIPTED SOLDIERS PERFORM.....	297
CHAPTER 12. SALUTING GI JOE: PYLE AND MAULDIN.....	320
CONCLUSION.....	366
APPENDIX.....	400
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	405
VITA.....	421



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am considerably indebted to Bob Gross for encouraging me to persue this project and lending direction to my unbridled thinking. His sound advice on organizational and developmental matters was invaluable. Without the dissertation grant, which as Program Director he authorized, I could not have completed the writing in one year's time.

More personally, reaping the benefits of Bryan's love and sense of humor, I never once had a lousy day at the office.

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation charts the publishing history, marketing, packaging, authorship, and reviewing of WWII personal narratives, explores connections between wartime narratives and issues of censorship, rationing, and the use of books as propaganda, and closely examines the main themes of twenty-five of the nearly two hundred written between 1942 and 1945. The books being assayed offered an insider's view of combat from every theater of war and every branch of the service as well as the Merchant Marines.

An offshoot of the documentary impulse of the Thirties, the personal narrative became an American publishing phenomenon during the next decade's war. In general, the fundamental character of the American white male hero was portrayed in the trials and triumphs of the citizen-soldier of democracy. Narratives celebrated the transformation of the Thirties "common man" into the "giant in the earth" figure, cast simultaneously in an ordinary and epical mold. In each decade, monumental challenges galvanized witnesses to provide insightful information about events which affected millions. To serve a different set of war-related needs, however, the WWII books recruited new writers, acquired new commercial sponsors, and drew upon Hemingway's concrete renditions of war. In order to sustain morale on the home front and in the armed forces, civilians obtained these war narratives (GI's received a different set of Armed Services Editions.). For the publishers of personal narratives, patriotism and profits went hand in hand.

The war narratives performed crucial ideological work. They engaged issues that touched deep anxieties in the public. Amidst a vast military effort that mobilized millions for a far-flung international conflict, these books personalized the soldier thereby keeping alive the American ideal of the heroic individual, full of "can-do" spirit, committed to democracy, ready to sacrifice his life for a return to an American way of life. Romanticizing the individual, they reinforced deep-seated national myths.

Though a less popular theme with audiences, the triumph of large-scale enterprises was also depicted, mainly in narratives of naval operations where the crew and the ship took precedence over the individual. The teamwork of men on submarines and aircraft carriers and in Seabee battalions epitomized successful cooperative labor. In these instances, the narratives addressed the dilemma of the individual dwarfed by great, impersonal mechanisms and forces. In the unity of diverse backgrounds and specialties lay the key to personal fulfillment and national victory.

**LET US NOW PRAISE SERVICE MEN: A HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN  
WORLD WAR II PERSONAL NARRATIVE, 1942-1945**

"You have written your names in golden letters."  
--Admiral Halsey, of those  
who died in action

#### PREFACE:

From 1942 through 1945 book-length documentaries known as personal narratives were wartime America's publishing phenomenon. They comprised eye-witness and sometimes secondhand accounts of the battles that raged between the United States forces and Axis powers. The fact that nearly 200 were produced demonstrated both the industry's energetic support of the war and the public's insatiable appetite for fresh news about the United State's military trials and achievements. *The Raft, They Were Expendable, Guadalcanal Diary, Into the Valley, Tarawa, Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo, The Battle is the Pay-off, Tunis Expedition, Here Is Your War,* and *Brave Men* were among the most popular during the war. This dissertation will examine the history, analyze the contents, and evaluate the cultural significance of these books.

By and large, personal narratives were written by professional journalists such as Richard Tregaskis (*Guadalcanal Diary*), John Hersey (*Into the Valley*), Ernie Pyle (*Brave Men*), and Robert Sherrod (*Tarawa*), who

accompanied troops into battle throughout the islands of the Pacific, the deserts of North Africa, the hills of Italy, the hedgerows of France, and remote outposts like the jungles of Burma and the frozen tundra of the Aleutians. Others were written by professional journalists who enlisted as military personnel: former editor of *PM*, Capt. Ralph Ingersoll (*The Battle is the Pay-off*), Navy Lt. John Mason Brown (*To All Hands*), ex-newsmen Major John Redding and Capt. Harold Leyshon (*Skyways to Berlin*), and head of Twentieth Century picture studio, Col. Darryl Zanuck (*Tunis Expedition*), who all carried typewriters along with sidearms into battle. Still, some narratives were conceived by amateurs with no previous and often no subsequent authorial experience. For example, Tom Harmon, a Hall of Fame football star from Michigan University (*Pilots Also Pray*), Eddie Rickenbacker, World War I flying ace (*Seven Came Through*), Theresa Archard, a trained nurse (*GI Nightingale*), Al Schacht, "The Clown Prince of Baseball" (*GI Had Fun*), Archie Gibbs, a sailor on a torpedoed merchant ship (*U-Boat Prisoner*), and A.A. Schmid, blinded on Guadalcanal (*Al Schmid, Marine*), each wrote one. Taken together, their reports contributed to an overall documentary tableau of the war.

Undoubtedly, for their ideological as well as informational content, these narratives deserve scholarly attention. As *Publisher's Weekly* claimed, they were "woven into the thinking of a nation when history was being written in every part of the world" (Jan. 16, 1943). Yet despite

their breadth and worth as primary sources and cultural relics, post-war scholars have given them scant consideration. Of the hundreds of World War II histories, from those with a wide lens view, like Paul Fussell's *Wartime* (1989), to those with a narrow focus, like Richard Frank's *Guadalcanal* (1990), only a few make curiously cursory references to a short list of the best-known titles. For instance, Fussell claims that Ernie Pyle was "the most important interpreter of the war to the American public," while sprinkling his study with thirteen brief and sometimes anecdotal references to the journalist. Jack Goodman, editor of *While You Were Away* (1946), labels Pyle "the G.I.'s correspondent" who wrote "hometown Americana." And, according to Edwin Hoyt in *The G.I.'s War*: "Among all the war correspondents who were writing about Americans during WWII, [Pyle] stood out as the soldier's historian." Much of the same fate, but worse, befalls Richard Tregaskis' *Guadalcanal Diary*. In fact, according to Frank, the important thing about *Guadalcanal Diary* is that it was made into a movie, which keeps the memory of that sensational episode alive for Americans fifty years later by continually airing on TV: "Guadalcanal provided real-life grist for the celluloid mills.... *Guadalcanal Diary* became in 1943 a meaningful film, which remains one of the most evocative of the period." Lacking critical analysis, perfunctory and routine remarks like these replicate themselves in dozens of

post-war texts, many of which ignore the historical or literary value of personal narratives.

Yet, these popular, non-canonical books told an important version of a defining crisis in American history, together forming part of the basis upon which contemporary Americans judged the war, the nation, and themselves. They may also have been the foundation upon which latter-day public memories of World War II were molded. Retrieving these personal narratives from obscurity, along with following their publishing history, tracking critical reviews and reader reception, and analyzing their language, tone, conventions, and plots, this dissertation assays a neglected set of cultural texts produced during World War II.

## CHAPTER 1: THE DOCUMENTARY GOES TO WAR

Aimed at civilians as well as off-duty soldiers, personal narratives appeared within months of Pearl Harbor and continued to pour off the presses well after Hiroshima. Reaching those eager for firsthand accounts of war, many appeared on best-seller lists, displacing novels in the literary preferences of Americans. The simplest explanation for their tremendous appeal was Americans' desire better to understand the war, which consumed the attention of the reading population. In addition, public tastes had been prepared by the Great Depression documentarians. World War II personal narrative authors, like their predecessors of a decade earlier, sought to capture a sense of the extraordinary, far-flung, and disturbing forces affecting the lives of millions. In Thirties America, photographers, moviemakers, and writers documented the Depression as it affected commonplace communities and ordinary individuals and families. Similarly, in Forties America, the challenge and accomplishment of wartime narratives was the personalization of the war. More specifically, narratives typically portrayed individuals who, though anguished, still continued to fight for the preservation of the American way of life; in turn, readers were made to sympathize with the pains of these



"sons and lovers," while identifying with the larger national effort to defeat the enemy.

Thirties and Forties documentarians had in common their concern for average human beings. Whereas 1930s documentaries described the plight of the hungry and homeless as an "unimagined existence," World War II personal narratives recorded the immediate and all but unthinkable hurdles of war participants. Whether the life of a tenant farmer dispossessed from his land or a marine crouched in his foxhole, the documentarians described the place and time of Americans in crisis. Therefore, war narratives satisfied the simplified definition of documentary offered by William Stott in his *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (1973): they treated "... the actual unimagined experience of individuals belonging to a group...in such a way as to render it vivid, 'human,' and--most often--poignant to the audience" (Stott 62).

Another related common denominator that squarely placed wartime narratives beside Great Depression documentary expression was that both tried to depict events in a way that would give readers "the impression and the feel of the experience," as Bourke-White once said; "the feel of things," Sherwood Anderson wrote in *Puzzled America* (1934). Personal narrative writers, like their predecessors, strived for a sensory assault:

The whole island of Tarawa would tremble whenever our warships loosed a salvo of shells or a formation of our planes dropped their bombs upon it. If the bombs were close

enough, the island seemed to jump from under us, and sand ran into our shoes. These things have to be felt to be fully realized. And certainly, no one who has not been there can imagine the overwhelming, inhuman smell of five thousand dead who are piled and scattered in an area of less than one square mile (Sherrod vi).

In order to fill the gap between the soldier and "civilian concept of war and the realities of war--something the soldier himself does not bridge until he has been in a bloody stinking, unromantic battle" (Sherrod 114)--narratives provided excruciating details about the specific events and living conditions of combat, things distant and unknowable to most home-front readers. Such documentaries, through the inclusion of anecdotes, small talk, relatively inconsequential facts, and personal sketches, according to Stott, "increase...our knowledge of public facts...sharpen it with feeling; put [us] in touch with the perennial human spirit...show it struggling in a particular social context at a specific historical moment" (Stott 18). Because of the immediacy of the reportage and the authors' closeness to events, worker and soldier narratives alike managed to capture peoples' plights as well as the shocks and disorders of the times with a vividness that most secondary histories are unable to match. In important ways, therefore, the reportorial and artistic feats of the World War II personal narrative represent yet another phase of the New Deal documentary impulse.

Of course, there were essential differences between the two decades' documentaries. First and foremost, the

Depression works sought to expose and condemn the economic injustice of the capitalist system and rally people to work on behalf of the down-trodden, while the primary purpose of most wartime narratives was to show the good and bad, noble and ignoble aspects of war. Librarian of Congress, Archibald MacLeish, transferring his 1930s sensibilities<sup>1</sup> to the war period, stressed an advocacy approach for writers in a speech given at a meeting of the American Booksellers Association (ABA):

The ideas with which this war is fought...are tremendous in their potentialities for good and evil. In this fight, books are... instruments by which the lives of men and nations can be shaped...powerful influences on the nation's life and on the nation's future ....Books were never more important to this country than they are today--the strongest and most enduring weapons in our fight to make the world a world in which the free can live in freedom (PW May 16, 1942: 1810-14).

With one or two exceptions, wartime narratives did not engage in political persuasion since justification for the war was hardly if ever called to question. Rather, separately and together, they commended the indomitable spirit of Americans fighters and displayed a patriotic determination to do justice to such sacrifices by reassuring each reader of the soldier's personal worth and the worth of his cause. The authors' words consistently conveyed a sense of responsibility to buddies and faceless compatriots who fought and died, to home-front families who needed

---

<sup>1</sup> In 1938 MacLeish authored a documentary entitled *The Land of the Free*, basically a prose-poem accompanying a series of FSA photographs.

consolation, and to possible future American casualties. The books let people know that all the suffering done by Americans was meaningful.<sup>2</sup> While these narratives intended to rally support for the war, they did not have a preachy quality. Contemporary book reviews reiterated that one of the primary value of these works was their ability to provide accurate, unembellished information about what the troops were doing.

This is not to say that narrators, afforded the opportunity to write America's wartime experience practically as it was unfolding, presented the entire picture. Off-limits in these books was dialogue about domestic politics and foreign policy, and therefore, the war was predominantly depicted as a depoliticized battlefield. John Steinbeck admitted to "deliberately slant[ed] his stories to omit anything that might shock civilians, like rotten conditions suffered by the infantry or homosexual activity in the military (Adams 9-10). In 1958,<sup>3</sup> Steinbeck announced that writers "were all part of the war effort. We went along with it,...abetted it. I don't mean that correspondents were liars....everything set down happened. It is in the things

---

<sup>2</sup> Loss of life during World War I, in contrast, created victims and a crisis of meaning. Paul Fussell in *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975) argued that English poets drew on the disjunctive and fractioned language of modernism to fashion ironic ways of presenting the First World War because of their sense of bitter disillusionment.

<sup>3</sup> Steinbeck was a correspondent in England and Africa in 1943. He also wrote a book for the U.S. Army Air Force entitled *Bombs Away: The Story of a Bomber Team* (Viking Press, 1942).

unmentioned that the untruth lies" (*Once There Was* xiii). In qualified respects, war narratives exemplified Michael Adams's statement that "the result was a clean-up, cosmetically-enhanced version of reality" (Adams 9). The more offensive aspects of the infantry private's life--the drinking, the concupiscence for women, and the sexually transmitted diseases that Fussell emphasized--were sifted out. As Steinbeck confirmed, another literary

convention was that we had no cruel or ambitious or ignorant commanders [and]....Of course no [correspondents] even casually inspected the fact that the infantry private had no choice. If he exercised a choice, he was either executed immediately or sent to prison for life (*Once There Was* xiii).

Though Steinbeck's last remark was a distortion of reality, he was correct in saying that certain truths were not reported at the time. As will be amplified in the course of this study, the reason was partly a matter of societal mores and tradition, partly due to orders, and mostly because essentially nobody wanted to hurt the war effort.

Though Forties writers were aware "of the propagandistic needs of the war effort [they were] less overtly manipulative of the subject than had been true of the Thirties documentarians" (Moeller 241). It is common knowledge that purposeful rearrangement of facts, such as Arthur Rothstein moving a prop in the form of a cow's skull against parched earth and then photographing it (Stott 61), was conducted during the Thirties. Indeed, this tendency purposely to manipulate for optimum effect was greater than in the

following decade. A couple of glaring exceptions to the rule was the government's choreographing of the landing of General Patton on Sicilian soil and MacArthur's numerous stagings for publicity that would reflect well upon him.

Thirties documentarians were often struggling artists, many subsidized if not sponsored by New Deal agencies, which may have influenced the prevailing political biases of their work. Some were leading literary figures such as Erskine Caldwell, John Dos Passos, Richard Wright, Sherwood Anderson, Archibald MacLeish, and John Steinbeck. On the heels of the Twenties Modernists, their presentations were a mixture of poetry, naturalism, and expressionism. Depression artists intended to use emotionally charged words and photographs to persuade people to do something about contemporary social ills.

On the other hand, journalistic realism was the stock-in-trade of World War II personal narrative writers. Those who were not beginners were primarily schooled and experienced newspaper reporters. Also, Forties correspondents had to do minimal convincing and changing of minds; due to the level of outrage after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, merely laying out the ugly truths of life on the front sufficed to galvanize the public conviction that Americans must do all they could to support the effort to win.

The subject matter as well as the style was different in each decade. The dilemma of the individual dwarfed by huge

impersonal mechanisms and natural forces was a central theme of documentary in the Depression era. Even before the onset of World War II, many American readers were tiring of subjects dealing with the helpless and brutalized victims of domestic conditions. For only part of the nation suffered the grim realities of joblessness and an uncertain existence, while the majority and even some of the downtrodden themselves preferred to avoid reminders of the parlous times. The huge popularity of screwball comedies, horror shows, gangster films, and cowboy movies at local picture palaces attested to the public's instinct for escapist entertainment as antidote against an unpleasant everyday reality. If in the 1930s emerged the romance of the Common Man--characters like Charlie Chaplin's tramp in tattered suit and hat--a decade later this symbol transformed itself into the invincible American hero, able to assert his individuality despite large-scale regimentation on the nation's behalf. Thus, personal narratives appropriated a crucial theme from the 1930s culture, but dressed it up in military garb.

When published, books dealing with serious domestic problems received scarce promotion from publishing firms throughout the war and limited encouragement from readers. For example, Sherwood Anderson's Depression-age *Puzzled America* (1935), despite receiving the lead review in the *New York Times*, complemented by favorable reviews in other dailies and magazines, was minimally promoted. Ads in the *Times*, for example, amounted to one-inch notices listed among

other titles running for a few Sundays at most. In contrast, Thomas Wolfe's semi-autobiographical novel about his southern family, *Of Time and the River* (1935), published the same month, was the beneficiary of full, half, and quarter page ads for several weeks. More pertinently, unlike the miniature-size Depression documentary ads, blockbuster ads accompanied many newly-published wartime narratives, helping to make them runaway best sellers. *The Raft, They Were Expendable, Into the Valley, and Guadalcanal Diary* frequently had nation-wide full- and half-page ads in newspapers and journals, stretching over several months.

Copy excerpted from glowing reviews attempted to enrich the ads' effectiveness. For example, Dorothy Canfield's remarks for the *Book of the Month Club* about Tregaskis's *Guadalcanal Diary* were used: "This is the...letter home we had longed for...a picture of what, almost hour by hour, our faraway men actually do....It will wipe away any complacent smile from our faces." Similarly, advertisers attached dynamic reviewer quotes to many of the personal narratives: *They Were Expendable*--"All honors to the Best War Book"; *Battle For the Solomons*--"Eye witness history of a most critical month....Gives you the very core of the American fighting spirit"; *Into the Valley*--"What it is really like to fight Japs in the jungle"; and *Tarawa*--"an unforgettable chapter in the history of the U.S. Marines, by a correspondent who arrived on one of the first landing craft



under heavy fire." Such positive blurbs combined with daily headlines of war undoubtedly increased sales of these books.

On the other hand, James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941)--"a photographic and verbal record of the daily living of an 'average' or 'representative' family of white tenant farmers"--although recognized today as a classic of the documentary genre, had a difficult time even finding its way into print. Ralph Ingersoll, then the managing editor of *Fortune*, though sympathetic to Agee's work, could not fully convince his staff of its appropriateness. Although *Fortune* held the manuscript for a full year, two successive editors also rejected it. *Harper's* contracted for the book, but in the end dismissed it, too. *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* was finally published by Houghton-Mifflin years after it had been written, appearing in stores at an inopportune moment, September 1941, the height of the European war. "Five years earlier, when Agee began the article, tenancy was 'stylish' and a 'focus of reform'. By 1941 the American people had all they wanted to about the problem" (Stott 264). Insult was added to injury when the book was not promoted. It, therefore, did not sell and was not read, in this sense typifying the fate of many Thirties documentaries and the attitude of publishers and readers alike toward them. A disgusted Agee, speaking for his fellow documentarians, facetiously appraised the intellectual and political climate in 1941, "Now that we are busy buttering ourselves as the last stronghold of democracy, interest in such embarrassments

[as the evil conditions of tenant life] has tactfully slackened off" (Stott 265).

At the start of World War II, Depression-age types of documentaries dwindled practically to zero. Audience curiosity and wonderment was shifting to the arena of war. More importantly, as time passed, the war became a highly personal issue for the majority of readers. Driven primarily by market forces, "World War II Personal Narratives," (as *Book Review Digest* classified them for the purposes of marketing and acquisition) replaced books like Erskine Caldwell and Margaret Bourke-White's *You Have Seen Their Faces*, Richard Wright's *12 Million Black Voices*, and Louis Adamic's *My America*. The story of low standards of living, bad nutrition, and the poor health of dispossessed Americans was never a best-seller in the Thirties; it was written more out of a sense of socio-political obligation than for financial gain. The basic formula, however, became sound business when low standard of living meant sleeping in jungles, bad nutrition signified creamed chipped beef on toast<sup>4</sup>, and poor health referred to the frost bite suffered at the Battle of the Bulge.

America's social landscape had changed drastically in a very short span of time. An unstable economy threatened the nation's political viability throughout the entire decade of the Thirties; in the early Forties, foreign enemies

---

<sup>4</sup> This meal was standard fare of the armed services; GIs called it S.O.S., which stood for **Shit On a Shingle**.

threatened the Republic's very existence (while the economy prospered). The male and female reporters who traveled the highways and byways of America in the Thirties operated in a safe environment. With notable exception, they were principally outside observers, apart from their human subjects and the conditions they witnessed. By contrast, many World War II correspondents were participant-observers operating in a dangerously violent and alien terrain.

Numerous wartime journalists, as integral parts of the skirmishes, had to rise to dangerous physical and difficult emotional challenges. Their lives, along with the men in uniform, were often on the line. Richard Tregaskis, in a letter to Jack Oestreicher, Foreign Service Editor at International News Service, wrote:

This is just to let you know I am recouped, O.K., and ready to shove off again very soon. I have had a pretty strenuous time of late; the Guadalcanal thing was no picnic (although I wouldn't trade the experience for the world) and I was pretty tired when I left there. Then after leaving, I spent every moment pounding away at the book [Guadalcanal Diary]; and that was more exhausting than [sic] dodging Jap shells and bullets....Those adventures were harrowing at the time, but the unpleasant aspects fade pretty fast. I guess in about 20 years, Midway and Guadal. will sound like the adventures of Alice, as I mutter them in my beard to my grandchildren (Columbia U., Random House Archives, Nov. 7th, 1942).

Yet, due to their desire to report the war truthfully to those back home, or to discover for themselves what war was really like, many reporters were drawn to witness it as opposed to hearing about it second hand. To varying degrees,

depending on the makeup of the reporter and the luck of the draw, they immersed themselves in the uncomfortable experience of battle.

Reporters of World War II had a distinct advantage over their counterparts in World War I. In the 1917-1918 conflict, the American public received information from the battlefronts third hand at best--from reports issued by the military to correspondents many miles away from the action. On notable occasions, World War I correspondents were allowed to venture into a quiet section of the front, to get a brief look at army life under less than battle-intense conditions. World War II reporters, on the other hand, experienced few if any restrictions to their movement. They flew on bombing raids, sailed into naval encounters with the enemy, joined the infantry on D-Day beachhead assaults. A vivid example of the deep involvement of Marine Combat Correspondents occurred during the battle of New Britain:

These men would find a place quiet enough to set up their typewriters and set to work writing on-the-spot, detailed action accounts of the engagement of the moment. They fought with the infantry, stepped in to help out the engineers and did any other jobs, where needed (Columbia U., Random House Archives, Dec. 11, 1944, rejection of *Muddy Victory*, signed AD).

The hardships and risks endured by the fighters were also endured by the correspondents.

Inevitably, they became more than witnesses to suffering; they suffered themselves. Indeed, *The*

*Encyclopedia of American Journalism* included "The Honor Roll"<sup>5</sup> of thirty-one American correspondents who lost their lives between December 7, 1941 and V.E. day, May 7, 1945. Another source listed 37 dead, 112 wounded, and 50 interned in prisoner-of-war camps (Moeller 183) on bombers, battle ships, convoys, invasion barges, and at the front line of every major battle in order to capture and disseminate various tragedies along with the great price paid by American fighting men. In *Once Upon a War*, John Steinbeck pointed out that,

Even combat units got some rest after a mission was completed. But the war correspondent found that their papers got restive if they weren't near where things were happening....If you stayed a correspondent long enough...the chances were that you would get it (*Once There Was* xvi).

It might seem logical for writers already versed in tragic events and the documentary craft to transfer skills

---

<sup>5</sup> Pages 393-395 also told where, how, and when the following correspondents were killed: Webb Miller, *United Press*; Ralph Barnes, *New York Herald Tribune*; Harry L. Percy, *United Press*; Mrs. Leah Burdett, P.H.; Melville Jacobs, *Time-Life Magazines*; Eugene Petrov, *North American Newspaper Alliance*; Jack Singer, *International News Service*; Byron Darnton, *The New York Times*; Harry E. Crockett, *Associated Press*; Sam Robertson, *New York Herald Tribune*; Frank J. Cumel, *MBS*; Robert P. Post, *The New York Times*; Carl Thusgaard, *Acme Pictures*; Lucien A. Labaudt, *Life Magazine*; Bryden Taves, *United Press*; Raymond Clapper, *Scripps-Howard Newspapers*; Frederick Faust, *Harper's Magazine*; Bede Irvin, *Associated Press*; Tom Treanor, *Los Angeles Times*; Harold W. Kulick, *Popular Science Monthly*; Damien Parker, *Paramount News*; David Lardner, *The New Yorker*; Asahel Bush, *Associated Press*; Stanley Gunn, *Fort Worth Telegram and Houston Chronicle*; John B. Terry, *Chicago Daily News*; Frank Prist, *Acme Newspapers*; Jack Frankish, *United Press*; William Chickering, *Time-Life Magazines*; Frederick G. Painton, *Reader's Digest*; Ernie Pyle, *Scripps-Howard Newspapers*; Bill Stringer, *Reuters*.

and tackle the even bigger news of war. But the only 1930s authors who produced comparable eye-witness accounts were Margaret Bourke-White, Erskine Caldwell--who collaborated with her on a Thirties documentary--and John Dos Passos. Part of the reason lies simply in the fact that many of the early authors were too old to embrace the awesome challenge of war by the time it came around. In addition, many documentaries of the Depression were compiled by women; on the other hand, virtually all accounts of the fighting were witnessed by men. Since war is a gendering event, one that often separates men from women and "marks the gender of all members of a society" (Higonnet 4). The laws and mores of the country, the physical challenge of the front lines, the pervasive discourse of militarism with its stress on "masculine" qualities, and the possibility of death and mutilation, effectively precluded opportunities for females to become accredited as correspondents attached to fighting units. Accompanying Marine assaults of enemy beachheads and sharing muddy foxholes with army privates under German mortar attack were considered off-limits for women in America. On account of the brutal nature of events, only a score of them published wartime narratives on subjects peripheral to the fighting, including Gwen Dew (*Prisoner of the Japs*), Juanita Redmond (*I Served on Bataan*), R.G. Haskell (*Helmets and Lipstick*), L.R. Spencer (*Guerrilla Wife*), Etta Shiber (*Paris Underground*), Alice Moats (*Blind Date with Mars*), Olga Greenlaw (*The Lady and the Tigers*), M. Gillmore and P.

Collinge (*The B.O.W.S.*), Henrietta Broce Sharon (*It's Good To Be Alive*), Margaret Vail (*Yours Is the Earth*), and Theresa Archer (*G.I. Nightingale*). Two women, however, did become officially certified as civilian correspondents to accompany troops into war zones: Marguerite Higgins, who received army approval in March, 1945, near the end of the war in Europe and before that, Margaret Bourke-White, who spent many weeks in 1944 gathering material for her wartime narrative about the Italian campaign, *They Called It "Purple Heart Valley."*

Then again, work habits and political temperaments are hard to overcome, which might further explain why Thirties documentarians dedicated to the advocacy principles of social reform rarely ventured into the more objectively-oriented area of wartime narration. In Thirties documentaries there was an agenda for change. According to Robert Coles who introduced Dorothea Lange's *Photographs of a Lifetime* (1982), for instance, Lange's work was done "in the documentary spirit, trying to create social and political change....The worrisome question is...to what extent does even the finest, more rigorous documentary effort serve the lie more than the truth" (Coles in Lange 35). A prominent documentary photographer of the Thirties, Lange was known painstakingly to select, re-do exposure, and crop her prints. While not a contributing photographer to any wartime narrative, Lange plied her trade for a time during the war as a photographer for the War Relocation Agency of the government.

Stunned by the injustice of the internment, Lange began deeply to identify with the victims. As she learned more about the program, she apologized for its concept and implementation. The pictures she shot of Japanese Americans interns at the Santa Anita Park Assembly Center manifested her concern and compassion. "The lie" Coles refers to is at issue with her thematic portrait of an apparently elderly Japanese-American among aliens and citizens alike. This gentleman was distinguished by his American sailor outfit with uniform markings of rank and service indicating duty with the United States Navy for nearly thirty years. The photo seemed calculated to evoke empathy for the interned and disillusion with the United States' version of democracy. In order to protect the national civil rights image, all of her photos were hid in government vaults until after the war.

Social documentary for social improvement also motivated John Dos Passos, who along with publishing a World War II personal narrative, *Tour of Duty*, had previously written several accounts of Depression misery. Acting as spokesman for the World War I Bonus Marchers in 1932 at Anacostia Flats in Washington DC, he asked, "How about the men who made the world safe for democracy getting their bonuses?" He continued to champion the cause of the disenfranchised, unemployed, and basically hard-working average American while traveling extensively throughout 1943 to research a series of articles that would appear in *Harper's* under the heading, "The People at War." After multiple interviews with



laborers at the humming war plants of Detroit, Dos Passos concluded in *Harper's* that "the nation had been remarkably successful in the methods of production, with the result that the lives of Americans were improving while social disfunction lessened" (186: 452).

Ralph Ingersoll was another author who published a wartime narrative, *The Battle Is the Pay-off*. Although he did not produce a book-length documentary in the thirties, for all intents and purposes he can be considered a fellow-traveling documentarian. Ingersoll had been a career journalist and editor who worked on the staff of *Fortune* when the magazine, with his endorsement, planned to print a shortened version of Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. But the most telling credential of an abiding documentary spirit came shortly before the war when Ingersoll helped organize and finance an experimental ad-less daily tabloid named *PM* with the christening proclamation, "We are against people who push other people around....We are against fraud and deceit and cruelty and greed, and will...expose their practitioner." The tone was set for *PM's* determined policy of New Deal support and Common Man perspective (Tebbel *Fields* 193). Closely resembling Thirties-style documentary literature, the daily's format featured prominent graphics that covered half the space of each issue. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who assumed the presidency when "one third of a nation [was] ill-housed, ill-clad, and ill-nourished," sent his good wishes to Ingersoll upon learning of his newly

formed daily's character and purpose. Indeed, documentary literature flourished during Roosevelt's administration, having been commissioned and subsidized by newly-inaugurated government agencies. This fact calls attention to another inherent difference between Depression-age and wartime documentarians: The former were often subsidized by government to do their research and writing, the substance of which was presumably influenced by New Deal agency bureaucrats; by contrast, wartime narratives, about which censoring agencies sometimes had ambivalent feelings, were products of private enterprise and driven primarily by market forces. In conclusion, the documentary genre as developed in the thirties was adapted and popularized in the war setting. While serving a different set of needs from those of the Depression, it recruited new writers and acquired new commercial sponsors.

## CHAPTER 2: THE BOOM IN NARRATIVES

When the war broke out, "Publishers were concerned and uncertain. We had weathered the Depression all right, but would people who were preoccupied with the war, and deeply disturbed by the way it was going, still read?" (Cerf) asked Bennett Cerf, then president of Random House. Given the changing landscape, the volatile war situation at hand and the concomitant necessity to rally Americans around the flag, every publisher closed its lists to books like E.W. Bakke's *The Unemployed Workers* and Thomas Minehan's *Twenty Thousand Homeless Men*, inherently critical of American social justice, and opened its presses to books like Trumbull's *The Raft* and Pyle's *Brave Men*, inherently patriotic and respectful of the heroism and sacrifice of American servicemen. It is remarkable that a Marine with no professional writing experience named Robert Trumbull wrote the first book-length eye-witness account of American involvement in World War II. His personal narrative, *The Raft: The True and Compelling Story of 34 Days at Sea on a Rubber Raft* (Holt and Co., 1942), was not only the first of its kind, it was the first to become a best-seller. Two journalists quickly followed his lead; W.L. White's *They Were Expendable* (Random House, October 1942) and Richard Tregaskis' *Guadalcanal Diary* (Random House, March 1943) were early contributions and are

better-known today thanks to their movie versions. Similar books came in rapid succession. Within six months of the start of hostilities, memorable reports by both professional and amateur writers were published and in effect a genre or sub-genre had been conceived and was growing. 1943 produced a greatly acclaimed bumper crop: in March, John Hersey's *Into the Valley* (Knopf), in April, Eddie Rickenbacker's *Seven Came Through* (Doubleday), and in September, Capt. Ted Lawson's in conjunction with Bob Considine's *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo* (Random House), and Robert L. Scott's *God Is My Co-Pilot* (Scribner's). The flood gates were now open wide and narratives poured from the presses. No branch of the service would be neglected recognition from the Marines on the tiny islands in the Pacific to the Merchant seamen delivering cargo across the Barents Sea. Personal narratives were the publishing industry's staple commodity from after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor in December of 1941 through the height of the war.

In general, publishers realized that it was their patriotic duty to publish personal narratives for an eager public. *Publisher's Weekly*,<sup>6</sup> championing the idea that books should boost citizen morale, consistently applauded the valuable contributions of personal narratives toward that

---

<sup>6</sup> *Publisher's Weekly*, the official newsletter of the industry, reported the activities of publishing firms and their adjunctive organizations--printers and binderies, packaging and shipping companies, advertising agencies and booksellers, along with thumbnail biographies of individual editors, many of whom went into the service.

end. Max Werner, author of the *Great Offensive*, told *Publisher's Weekly* that personal narratives were "clearly of the greatest importance in the democracies' tragic and sacrificing struggle for survival." And Frederick Melcher, weekly editorialist for *PW*, wrote that,

The opinion-making possibility of such books (as *They Were Expendable* and *The Raft*) are enormous. People can be startled out of their complacency by the first and get a fresh sense of human fortitude from the second. These are but two current examples of the new...books that are to come which will put one publishing office after another to the test (*PW* Sept. 19, 1942: 1005).

Moreover, Melcher frequently urged publishers to produce more eye-witness accounts by service men and correspondents, while summoning "...booksellers to promote these books vigorously" (*PW* June 1, 1944: 19).

Besides believing that personal narratives were good for home-front morale, publishers banked on the strong hunch that they would be smart business investments. Indeed, Forties personal narratives, riding the coattails of urgency and the intoxication of danger, attracted a wide readership and hefty profits for both publisher and author. Apparently, home-front readers hankered for exactly what the majority of narratives delivered--uncomplicated and fairly unproblematic versions of heroism. Book publishers and sellers also satisfied Americans' wartime craving for facts, information, detail, and opinions of and by servicemen by loading booksellers' lists and shelves with dozens of personal narratives at a time.

Consumer interest combined with increased purchasing power brought about by a booming war economy created a spectacular market for eye-witness books upon which publishers capitalized. According to *Publisher's Weekly*, "The war gave a tremendous impetus to reading in the past few years [and] war-created incomes increased for books [which reported] the dramatic events all over the world [for] an immediate audience" (*PW* June 23, 1945). Compared to some two dozen Thirties documentaries over a ten-year period, wartime personal narratives were published by the scores every year during the war, totaling nearly two hundred. The roll call of companies with personal narratives to their credit included: Farrar and Rinehart, Putnam, Scribner's, Random House, Harper's, Macmillan, Knopf, Doubleday, Viking, and McGraw to name a very few.

Once the war as an event became marketable, the nation's publishers, like its commanding generals, seized the offensive. In addition to newspaper ads and reviews, personal narrative promotion assumed many forms: book fairs, radio interviews with authors, large full-color posters in bookstore windows, a commitment on the part of booksellers to "arrange for at least one week each month, a window [display] to one specific type of war book" (*PW* July 11, 1942: 106) and awards to personal narratives judged to have "done the most in furthering the war effort" (*PW* July 11, 1942: 117). And publishers' advertising budgets for personal narratives were lavish by early Forties' standards. Clark Lee's *They*

*Call It Pacific* benefited from more than \$5,000 worth of advertising. The advertising for Eddie Rickenbacker's *Seven Came Through* began at \$10,000 and featured large ads in Sunday book sections of major city newspapers unabated for months; salability enhanced when the movie rights were bought by Twentieth Century-Fox. A Franklin Spier and Aaron Sussman Advertising invoice recorded that Random House owed them \$6,520.65 for *Tunis Expedition* newspaper ads from April 21 to May 9, 1943 (Columbia U., Random House Archives, May 12, 1943).

The following is a representative example of the copy that usually appeared in *Publisher's Weekly* as a pre-publication notice of a personal narrative: "The firm has already spent several thousand dollars in advertising in New York, Chicago, Boston, and Atlanta newspapers, and plans to continue to support the book actively" (*PW* Apr. 22, 1944: 1610). Sometimes in such pre-release announcements would be the pledge to allocate substantial sums of money "to be spent in the first three weeks" on promotion and on active marketing through the next several months. Specific examples are plentiful: pre-publication notice in *Publisher's Weekly* assured booksellers that Stanley Johnson's "eye-witness account of the Coral Sea Battle," *Queen of the Flattops*, "will get big publicity, bigger advertising." Whittlesey House, the publisher of John Mason Brown's *To All Hands* promised booksellers that "the book will be launched with a \$5,000 initial campaign--to be spent in the first three

weeks--and will actively be supported right through Christmas." The Brown book, in turn, enjoyed brisk sales totaling more than 50,000 the first two months. Its success, in part, relied on "a heavy ad campaign...featuring...enthusiastic reviews...backed by extra publicity," which included recommendations by the Council on Books in Wartime, dramatizations on NBC's weekly radio program, "Words at War," book fairs, special displays at major book retailers, author luncheons as well as plant-tour appearances throughout the country (*PW* Nov. 27, 1943, 2035). In fact, due to paper rationing, the use of window displays, fairs, radio time, and book signings at clubs and war plants became the rule during the war.

Similarly, when *They Were Expendable* was about to be released, Random House placed an ad in *Publisher's Weekly* asking booksellers in bold heavily inked type--rare given the circumstances of paper and ink shortages--to "watch for the PT boat in advance publicity, in a pre-publication ad campaign, in full page Book Review advertising, in daily newspaper space, in magazines, posters, circulars. Watch for the PT boat. You will see it often." The announcement further trumpeted the book as "the first great story of our war as seen by the men fighting it."

Reviewers frequently followed the lead of publishers in their response to books. Cases in point were two premiere best-selling books about the war, Henry Holt's *See Here*, *Private Hargrove* and *The Raft*, whose campaigns were tied for



First Honorable Mention in the 1942 PW-Adclub contest. The two promotional campaigns were planned by the same advertising agency, Russell Hamilton and Norman Hood, but conducted quite differently because of the unique problems involved. In the case of *See Here, Private Hargrove*, the author was an unknown young soldier and the public's reactions to books about Army life were yet untested. Consequently, the chosen method was to give first the trade and then the public a sampling of the book itself. To the trade went a letter telling of the discovery of the book by critic Maxwell Anderson and a bit about the background and personality of the author, Marion Hargrove. Shortly after, advance copies were mailed to 150 selected names in addition to the regular review list. In copy-cat fashion, the *New York Times* used one quarter of its review of Hargrove to supply an anecdotal biography about the author, including the fact his work became the ultimate enjoyment of Maxwell Anderson. Moreover, all the reviews delighted in the insightful memoirs of this laughable rookie. As a key to the campaign, the layouts of the ads constantly used the author's photograph; the picture of the young soldier in his Army cap must have become extremely familiar to the public. In accordance with the idea of allowing the public a taste of the book's qualities, the layouts initially stressed excerpts from the book. "Up to December 16, the Hargrove campaign had cost for space advertising alone [a whopping] \$15,500 and the

whole promotion job had resulted in sales of over 330,000 copies" (*PW* Jan. 23, 1943).

On the other hand, there was no problem letting people know what *The Raft* was about. Because the newspapers and radio had already dedicated much space to the story of three Navy fliers who spent thirty-four days on an inflatable raft in the Pacific, the public knew the story well. Holt needed only to demonstrate the book's quality. Pre-publication publicity and promotion, therefore, talked of Holt's initiative in acquiring the manuscript. That is, after reading all newspaper accounts of the story, Holt picked the best, then telephoned the author of the article, Robert Trumbull, in Honolulu and got him to agree to do a book.

The story as told by Trumbull was characterized by dignity and beauty. The same austere lettering and simple picture of three men on a raft were used throughout the campaign along with a quotation from Vice-President Henry A. Wallace's "Price of Free World Victory" speech: A "story that... illustrates [Americans'] ability to master any fate." Interestingly, the *New York Times* review managed to cover every key point that promotions for *The Raft* pushed:

When the Vice President cited the story as one Americans will pass along for generations to illustrate "man's ability to master any fate," it was a tale still fresh in the newspapers. ....It was a thrilling story as first telephoned to this paper from Hawaii by Robert Trumbull; told completely by the same writer, it takes on even greater epic proportions.... To tell more is to sacrifice Trumbull's sparse reconstruction (Aug. 23, 1942: 3).

Although the *Saturday Review of Literature* panned Trumbull's writing skills, most others remarked positively on Trumbull's literary ability, his "clean, crisp and dramatic English that is the hallmark of a good reporter" (*Boston Globe* Aug. 10, 1942: 19). Reviewers were heavily influenced by press releases and vice versa--publicity campaigns clipped quotes from review columns to sell already released narratives.

On the basis of these and similar examples, it could be argued that the success of a book's title during the war was determined in large part by the publicity campaign for it. It should be noted, however, that book reviewers did not follow the lead of publishers exclusively; they brought certain of their own expectations to the reading of narratives. Joseph Greene in a review of *The Battle is the Pay-off* reflected that narratives in general have two important functions:

they give the new soldier strength through making him aware of what he must face and the fact that others have faced it. And such writing tells the citizen also, as no other writing can, what his armies must be ready to face (*NY Times* Oct. 24, 1943: 1).

Reviews like this one evaluated narratives on the basis of their pedagogical value.

Although truth value is a problematic concept to assess, many a reviewer made judgment about narrative's historical accuracy. A well-constructed account had "no exaggeration in the book and its very simplicity drives each incident and point home to the reader with extra impact" (*Wkly Bk Rev* June

20, 1943). *Tunis Expedition* stood out for its quantity of truthful information: "Colonel Zanuck's...report gives more insight into what the actual African fight is like than many more pretentious accounts by reporters who can see only grand strategy from foxholes" (*Wkly Bk Rev* Apr. 11, 1943: 3). To critics, the admired "honest" and "straight story"--which gave civilians an intimate understanding of the "complex, intensely human machinery of an army moving into battle"--would emanate best from those who had seen and heard the battle. As one commentator wrote, "for what [Pyle] termed 'think stuff' turn elsewhere; but for the tiny, detail, the 'worm's-eye view, go to Ernie Pyle" (*New Yorker* (Oct. 30, 1943) 19: 93).

Narratives were, therefore, considered less in "literary" terms than journalistic terms. However, narratives typically went beyond newspaper journalism to explain the character of the men who fought the war and the conditions under which they carried out the day-to-day fighting. "The capacity for portraying the forest and the trees"--the trees were what chopped-up daily cables provided--was what a reviewer for *The Nation* regarded excellent narrative talent (Nov. 6, 1943, 157: 532). So too, reviewers disliked versions that seemed to downplay the brutal nature of World War II fighting. By way of reviewing Howard Handleman's *Bridge to Victory*, Foster Hailey asserted that "There has been too much writing and not enough reporting of war, too obvious an effort to make the killing...appear

glamorous and romantic instead of the obscene and idiotic way of life it is" ("A Graphic Account of Jap-Hunting in the Aleutians," *NY Times* Nov. 7, 1943: 4). Similarly, "If anyone doubts the nature of the enemy in the Far East, let him read Miss Dew's account of the disemboweled babies and mass-raped British nurses" (*Sat Rev of Lit* June 19, 1943: 17).

The most appreciated literary style for this non-fiction genre, which went hand in hand with detailed and unsanitized content, was concise, clear, and stark prose, written "matter-of-factly, in good newspaper language that you don't need a thesaurus to translate" (*Ibid*). Authors, for the most part, followed Hemingway's lead, avoiding abstractions and sentimental elaborations. Or was Hemingway refining the craft of newspaper reporting? Certainly, a major influence on Hemingway's formative years was his journalistic experience on the *Kansas City Star* (1917-18) and the *Toronto Daily Star* and *Star Weekly* (1919-23). He, and later the journalists of the Second World War, practiced the famous *Kansas City Star* edict: "Use short sentences....Use vigorous English. Be positive, not negative" (in *Rovit and Brenner* 25).

The standards by which reviewers judged a wartime narrative's literary merit were far less explicit. For example, Clark Lee's book was recommended for containing "almost all narrative--without flourish but with flow. He makes the truth seem hard, amusing, horrible, prideful, or touched with despair when it seemed any of these things to

him" (*NY Times* Mar. 21, 1943: 4). Ironically, Edward Streeter was being enthusiastic about *Here Is Your War*," whilst remarking how "There is no embellishment, no fine writing" (*NY Times* Oct. 31, 1943: 1). Readers were fed the vague explanation that they would enjoy the "homey quality" of Albert Schmid's *Al Schmid, Marine*. Similarly, the simplicity of Carse's *There Go the Ships* caught the attention of one: "If ever a story was free of literary pretense it is. There is no...dawdling to literary curlicues, only relentless movement. That's the way it happened. That's the way it's told....You get it mostly in one or two syllable words" (*NY Times* Dec. 6, 1942: 2). Almost a carbon-copy was issued on Ruth G. Haskell's *Helmets and Lipstick*, "a story "simply and unaffectedly" told; but unlike Carse, "Unfortunately... she hasn't made half enough of [the moments] excitement and drama" (*Sat Rev of Lit* (Apr. 15, 1944) 27: 64). Critically acclaimed narratives appeared to strike a balance between faithfulness to detail and rejection of the "trivial." All told, unslackening histories of battle-front episodes, along with revelations of inside information were in vogue.

The publishers of personal narratives also enjoyed free publicity when celebrated writers of other personal narratives served as guest reviewers for their fellow authors. Ira Wolfert, John Hersey, Clark Lee, John Mason Brown, Robert Carse, John Lardner, among others gave favorable commentaries in the pages of the *New York Times*,

*New Republic*, *Weekly Book Review*, *Saturday Review of Literature*, *New Yorker*, and *Book Week*. For example, Mason wrote of Bourke-White that "her gift for characterization with words is no less [than] with her camera" (*Wkly Bk Rev* Dec. 10, 1944: 1). Hersey called *Guadalcanal Diary* "a very good book" (*Books* Jan. 24, 1942: 1). Hersey also concurred with Ira Wolfert's estimate of Lee's *They Call It Pacific*, "one of the best there has been [on the war] in the Pacific" (*New Republic* May 10, 1943: 643). Lee, in turn, reviewed Willoughby's *I Was on Corregidor*, explaining how it "does not attempt to inject false heroics into the story" (*NY Times* June 6, 1944). Ira Wolfert, who wrote two narratives, *Battle for the Solomons* and *American Guerrilla in the Philippines*, reviewed several personal narratives. In particular, he remarked of Ernie Pyle's *Here Is Your War* that "it is true there is more meat in this blueplate of our army in the Mediterranean than can be found in any other...book that I have read" (*New Rep* Dec. 6, 1943) and said that Ingersoll's *The Battle Is the Pay-off* "will give...much more of an idea of what a battle is like than my books will, and that is a hell of an admission for one journalist to make to another" (*New Republic*, Oct. 25, 1943: 109). Ingersoll's personal narrative had already received public compliments from many insiders. An assessment by W.L. White who also wrote two personal narratives, *They Were Expendable* and *Queens Die Proudly*, compared Ingersoll's simple syntax and unembellished diction to the way Ernest Hemingway could evoke war: "The

moonlight march through enemy lines...rivals the best of Hemingway." Robert Carse's review of Frederick Herman's *Dynamite Cargo* reminded readers that this book "can awaken America to what the Merchant Marine is doing" (*Wkly Bk Rev* May 11, 1943: 5). Lardner wrote of Robert Lee Scott's second wartime narrative, *Damned to Glory*, that it "evokes stirringly, deeply, even mystically the spirit of a new breed of men and the courage and skill with which they fought" (*NY Times* Oct. 22, 1944: 6). This practice of having books glowingly assessed by famous authors who had written similar accounts of the war assumed the appearance of a mutual admiration society. Experienced journalists, by lending their endorsement to other wartime books, helped to convince the reading public of the value of personal narratives as a source of human interest and historical insight. Simultaneously, reviewers were able to introduce modest reminders of their own past contributions to the genre.

First, advertisements and reviews disseminated information about available personal narratives. Then, customers purchased them in record numbers. Side by side with other war-related non-fiction telling how the war should be fought or how the peace might be won, these books sold at a rate two to three times that of fiction. Many of them became best sellers; several became *Book of the Month Club* selections; a few were made into movies. The popularity of personal narratives over the course of four war years is also



evidenced by the breakdown of those that made the *New York*

*Times* Best Seller lists from 1942-1945:

1942

*Convoy* by Quentin Reynolds  
*Only the Stars Are Neutral* by Quentin Reynolds  
*Queen of the Flat-tops* by Stanley Johnson  
*The Raft* by Robert Trumbull  
*Suez to Singapore* by Cecil Brown  
*There Go the Ships* by Robert Carse  
*They Were Expendable* by W.L. White  
*Torpedo Junction* by Robert Casey

1943

*And a Few Marines* by J.W. Thomason  
*Battle for the Solomons* by Ira Wolfert  
*The Battle Is the Pay-off* by Ralph Ingersoll  
*Blind Date with Mars* by Alice Moats  
*C/O Postmaster* by Thomas St. George  
*Dress Rehearsal* by Quentin Reynolds  
*Flying Marine* by Joe Foss  
*Guadalcanal Diary* by Richard Tregaskis  
*God Is My Co-Pilot* by Robert Lee Scott  
*Here Is Your War* by Ernie Pyle  
*Into the Valley* by John Hersey  
*Long Were the Nights* by Hugh Cave  
*Mercy in Hell* by A. Geer  
*Paris Underground* by Etta Shiber  
*Queens Die Proudly* by W.L. White  
*Retreat with Sitwell* by Jack Belden  
*Seven Came Through* by Eddie Rickenbacker  
*They Call It Pacific* by Clark Lee  
*Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo* by Ted Lawson  
*To All Hands* by John Mason Brown

1944

*Brave Men* by Ernie Pyle  
*Pipeline to Battle* by Peter Ranier  
*Tarawa* by Robert Sherrod  
*They Shall Not Sleep* by Leland Stowe  
*Your Kids Are Mine* by Joe. E. Brown

1945

*An American Guerrilla in the Philippines* by Ira Wolfert  
*Battle Below* by Robert Casey  
*Brave Men* by Ernie Pyle  
*Up Front* by Bill Mauldin

Never before in American history had so much fighting been accompanied by so much writing.

A couple of authors were awarded Pulitzer prizes for their work. Ira Wolfert, for instance, a reporter from the North American Newspaper Alliance, received a Pulitzer for his series of 1943 articles on the fifth battle of the Solomons, which formed the basis for his book *Battle for the Solomons*. Likewise, Ernie Pyle (referred to as the GI's Poet Laureate) of the Scripps-Howard Newspaper Alliance, won a Pulitzer for his distinguished stories from the war front, *Here Is Your War*, published by Holt in 1944.

Meanwhile, editors looked for other prospective manuscripts that might prove as polished and popular as so many of the early narratives. In other words, sales kept profit-conscious editors busy screening manuscripts for new angles on action taking place at major fronts, or unearthing an interesting experience of a participant in some remote corner of the globe. From a dwindling pool of correspondents, publishers either commissioned willing journalists to cover hot spots abroad or contracted past witnesses to recount their stories usually within months of a specific battle. Abundant correspondence and notes from the archives of several large firms indicate that publishers actively recruited veterans of combat to tell their stories. They not only solicited manuscripts from civilian war correspondents, but generally encouraged servicemen, even targeted specific servicemen, to submit ideas and material for consideration. In a letter to Lt. Commander L. Barry,

for instance, Paul Hoffman, an editor at Knopf, wrote on Nov. 11, 1943,

We are running a competition for first-person books by an American aviator and our immediate problem is to know how best to start circulating these people most interested. Can you tell me whether there is available a list of navy air bases to which brochures could be sent to be posted? (NY Public, A.A. Knopf Archives).

Another note written by Alfred A. Knopf himself to his editorial staff suggested to "get in touch with Lyndon B. Johnson, Texas Congressman, lately defeated. He has a diary on his experiences in the Solomons, and elsewhere" (N.Y. Public Library, Knopf Archives, Box #3, 11/19/42).

Talent agencies, too, worked jointly with certain publishers to obtain eye-witness accounts of war deemed worthy of publication. King Features Syndicate, for example, wrote to Bennett Cerf, President of Random House, that "The story of the Merchant Marine in this war has not been told" (letter from Ward Greene, King Features representative, to Cerf, Random House Archives, Columbia University). The letter proceeded, "I have in my office a manuscript by Archie Gibbs, a sailor in the Merchant Marine, who was torpedoed and picked up by a German submarine and spent four days and nights on the sub." He then added a quip about Trumbull's *The Raft*: "If three men on a rubber boat make a best seller, I am assured that the story of Archie Gibbs, with his submarine adventure as the high spot...can be [one]"<sup>7</sup> (Ibid).

---

<sup>7</sup> While it never became a sensation, Gibb's book entitled *U-Boat Prisoner* did receive favorable reception.

Written contracts between publisher and author of an already accepted manuscript were common. They usually attended to particulars such as suitable title, appropriate marketing strategy, viability of abridged editions, endorsements, remuneration, and royalties. Though most sets of letters are not as well preserved, an illustration of the thought and effort that went into the preliminary stages of making and marketing personal narratives may be gleaned from the way in which Random House handled Colonel Darryl Zanuck's eventual best seller, *Tunis Expedition*. Over the course of a month and a half--February to Mid-March 1943--letters passed between writer and publisher, addressing several issues. They attended to details such as the catchiness of the title: Bennett Cerf feared that "Tunis Expedition" sounded like an archeological dig, but Zanuck's partiality for that name eventually won out. Promotion and pricing was discussed at length: At first, the two agreed that a price of \$1.50 a copy, "sounds just right,"; later they settled upon a \$2.00 figure "because anything less may have looked like something that was tossed off in a hurry." Cerf and Zanuck both welcomed the idea of condensing *Tunis Expedition* for *Reader's Digest* and *Coronet* magazines. Arrangements were made for reviews by such notables as William Saroyan, most noted at the time for his war novel, *The Human Comedy*, and Laurence Stallings who wrote *What Price Glory?*, "both of whom raved about the manner in which you have presented *Tunis Expedition*," wrote Cerf, "a book that has the qualities of

strong human values in addition to gripping thrills and excitement of adventure." Finally, they talked about having the famed fictionalizer of the New York City demimonde, Damon Runyon, write the introduction.

Despite demands for personal narratives, not every unsolicited or even solicited manuscript that managed its way to an editor's desk received acceptance. The files of Random House, Macmillan, and Knopf contain dozens of editors' rejections. One reader assayed an eye-witness book draft tentatively named *Fight a Dragon* submitted by army air force officer Harold Turrell as "a piece of non-fiction...a straight forward eye-witness [report] of the standard missions of the heavy B-24 and her [gallant] crew...over Berlin." Rejection of this manuscript was primarily justified by its lack of timeliness. "It is unfortunate that this was not submitted twelve months ago when...such reporting had not lost so much of its edge." Editors discriminated still more as the war progressed, noting, for example, "I can't see a sale for it as a book. The story has been told in a similar way too many times and the public is laying off!" (Columbia U., Random House Archives, Oct. 23, 1944).

Just as Americans "tired of tenancy" in the late Thirties, so they lost interest in war books beginning in 1944. Near the end of 1943, a cautious Bennett Cerf informed Howard Handleman that he would promote as much as possible his *Bridge to Victory*, but warned that "I don't have to tell

you that the public appetite for this sort of book ain't what it used to be" (Columbia U., Random House Archives, Box 83, December 1, 1943). Some editors attached nostalgic notes to their rejection slips. For instance, one alluded to W.L. White's enviable formulaic narrative skills, which were missing in so many later submitted manuscripts. Others pointed to the special advantage enjoyed by the Guadalcanal narratives of Tregaskis, Hersey, and company, who benefited from the excitement of a campaign that monopolized the headlines and kept people interested in the event for nearly half a year.

Since book review sections were a significant place to market narratives, stricter rationing of newspaper space in late 1943 and 1944 also must have contributed to the drop in sales. Due to paper shortages, the *Sunday New York Times* and *New York Herald* did not accept more than one page of advertising from a given publisher per issue. (Though rare, some publishers still requested and were allotted full- or half-page ads to promote a promising wartime narrative.) Likewise, in December 1944, a prospective book entitled *Muddy Victory* by Captain Frank Hough involving the U.S. Marines' defeat of the Japanese on a tiny island of the New Britain chain received the ax from Random House. Sounding an aesthetic objection, one Random House editor commented on how the book was written "largely in a radio commentator manner, as though broadcast from the scene of action....newspaperish ....too many digressions" (Columbia U., Random House

Archives, Aug. 23, 1944). On behalf of *Muddy Victory*, a different note, one of dejection rather than rejection, passed from a junior to a senior editor:

Nevertheless, what a vast number of civilians want to know is what a battle is like, and these accounts tell you, hot off the griddle, in the words of the men who were there. You see it, hear it and smell it. Also, you follow more clearly than in most descriptions, each step of the campaign, and each phase of the battle. It seems to me a *great pity that we cannot make available the paper for this book*. I assume that we cannot, but I am passing through this report on the off chance that someone else might want to read it and join me in a raid on your paper quota (Columbia U., Random House Archives, italics mine).

Clearly, some editors and readers believed that every American engagement in war deserved a personal narrative regardless of its quality. Others were more calculating; even though a particular narrative might have been "lively, anecdotal and pretty interesting...", said one editor, "it doesn't seem to me quite good enough to justify the paper it would take to print it" (Columbia U., Random House, Box 232, "Editorial Reports, S-2," Mar. 12, 1945: Reader Robert Linscott). Still other staff members with editorial power ardently felt that certain submissions fell short of the stylistic standard and lacked the craftsmanship required of a publishable book.

Harry Maule, who edited the personal narrative *A Book of War Letters* while working as a senior editor at Random House, recommended the rejection of Martin Weldon's manuscript on

the grounds that its writing was "a combination of small-town journalism and high school newspaper," and that

it covered essentially the same sort of topics treated by Private Hargrove and all his host of imitators. It is a pattern that every reader has come to know through and through. The pieces cover all the old familiar topics, K.P., the brutality of first sergeants, pin-up girls, latrine duty, the technique of getting a furlough, sweeter soldier songs, feminine contours, receiving mail, sex in the barracks, Army talk, the GI view of movies, dames, etc., girls, etc., women etc. (Columbia U., Random House Archives, Letter to Bennett Cerf, Apr. 20, 1945).

In essence, certain areas were becoming overdone and editors were against them.

At the same time, Maule mentioned another Random House personal narrative that was published in 1945, Ira Wolfert's *American Guerrilla in the Philippines*, declaring that the Weldon book was "pretty pallid stuff by comparison" (Columbia University, Random House Archives, Letter to Bennett Cerf, Apr. 20, 1945). Maule regretfully concluded his letter with a professional judgment based on the reality of the marketplace in the spring of 1945: Other soldier manuscripts "that are infinitely more interesting and worth while" were also turned down because of lack of reader enthusiasm. The fact that new fodder for war-based books was becoming increasingly harder to deliver contributed to waning public interest in such material.

Despite editors' growing wariness about the ability to sell personal narratives, more than fifty made the 1944 Fall lists of a variety of publishers: Paul Madden's *Survivor*



(Bruce), Tom Harmon's *Pilots Also Pray* (Thomas Y. Crowell Co.), Don Gentile's *One Man Air Force* (Fischer), Oliver La Farge's (Brent Balchen's), *War Below Zero* (Houghton Mifflin), Ernest Vetter's *Death Was Our Escort* (Prentice Hall), Chaplain W.W. Willard's *The Leathernecks Come Through* (Winston), Chaplain James Claypool's *God on a Battle Wagon* (Winston), Theresa Archer's *GI Nightingale* (W.W. Norton), Al Schachts's *GI Had Fun* (Putnam's), and Ira Wolfert's *American Guerrilla in the Philippines* (Random House) were among them. And forty or so were printed in 1945. Except for Pyle's and Wolfert's books, most narratives of late 1944 and 1945 were awarded no special marketing treatment. The ads were tiny and generally buried alongside a group of other books unconnected to the war such as fiction, how-to books, ancient history and literary criticism. Even earlier written personal narratives began to find more competition for shelf space according to a report in *Publisher's Weekly*, January 29, 1944 (484). By this time the war was winding down and for some the victory was a forgone conclusion. Accordingly, the heyday of personal narratives was over.

By the war's official end, after the surrender of Japan, August 14, 1945, the focus of the publishing industry shifted to post-war topics.<sup>8</sup> As a consequence, the number of battlefield books and the interest in them diminished. In

---

<sup>8</sup> The greatest furor of the century caused by the dropping of the bomb caught the book business completely unprepared. The trade, with characteristic energy, quickly began to fill its atomic physics void (Tebbel *History* 59).

1945, even though much of the still-critical 1944 year had not been covered, only four personal narratives made the Best Seller list, down from twenty in 1943. However, the confident Henry Holt company published Ernie Pyle's second wartime report, *Brave Men*, with a first printing of an astonishing 150,000 copies. It was the right decision. Not only did *Brave Men* reach the top of the Best Seller list almost immediately, it remained high on the list through all of 1945 and into much of 1946,<sup>9</sup> testifying to the still potential success of well-executed war narratives. Even an earlier Pyle book, *Here Is Your War*, though first printed in 1943, made its way back to the Best Seller list in 1945. This was attributable to both the impetus derived from the release of *Brave Men* and the emotional reaction to the bitter news that Pyle, the reputed "GI's correspondent", was killed covering the savage Okinawa battle.

---

<sup>9</sup> That year Pyle's third book, *Last Chapter*, was published posthumously.



CHAPTER 3: RATIONING KNOWLEDGE: CENSORSHIP  
AND SELF-CENSORSHIP

One of the greatest barriers faced by the entire publishing industry during the war was the government's rationing of material. Due to wartime exigencies, paper supplies were cut by ten percent, while a twenty-five percent reduction was forecast to take effect by winter 1944. Printers' two most essential raw materials, paper and ink, had to be reduced precipitously. Correspondingly, smaller and lighter books for each ton of paper became the watchword when supplies were scarce though sales heavy. Furthermore, the limited availability of chlorine (which makes paper whiter as well as thinner, thereby stretching its use) along with shortages of ink, bindery essentials (glue, cloth, stitching cord, and wire), and shipping containers handicapped publishing. The War Production Board had within its management a Pulp and Paper Division and a Printing and Publishing Bureau, which restricted chlorine content for paper to fifty percent of the prewar level. This restriction affected the "brightness and to some extent perhaps the color of paper" (*PW* Jan. 31, 1942: 414). Not only were pages looking a creamier shade, "page and size and illustrations were being affected by paper and ink restrictions" (Tebbel *History* 24). So too, "Simpler jacket designs were being used

instead of color-processed coated paper jackets, and color illustrations in general suffered from the use of badly bleached paper" (Tebbel *History* 24).

On top of cosmetic faults, lack of skilled workers in printing shops and binderies caused all sorts of delays in manufacturing. Unpredictable shipping schedules merely exacerbated late deliveries. "It was a continuing sore point in the business that the War Manpower Commission had refused to list books<sup>10</sup> among the essential industries" (Tebbel *History* 42). It is remarkable that despite the many snafus,<sup>11</sup> including a serious shortage of labor ("some of the best men and women in the business enlisted or were drafted into service"<sup>12</sup> (Tebbel *History* 19)) and materials, personal narratives of all kinds, qualities, and sizes rolled off the presses at a furious pace from mid 1942 to early 1944.

Simultaneously an acknowledgment of compliance with government rationing and a disclaimer for readers, the following sentences were familiar features on one of the free endpapers of a book:

This volume is printed on lighter paper than  
would have been used before material

---

<sup>10</sup> Exceptions were made for the publication of technical and scientific books, which the War Manpower Commission listed as essential industries.

<sup>11</sup> A popular WWII neologism standing for Situation Normal All Fucked Up, the GI way to describe the multiple manifestations of chaos in war.

<sup>12</sup> Of those bookpeople who went into the service, many were assigned to publication areas where their talents could be utilized. For example, they staffed *Yank* and *Stars and Stripes*, camp newspapers and magazines, or public relations departments (Tebbel *History* 20).

limitations became necessary, and the number of words on each page has been substantially increased. The smaller bulk in no way indicates that the text has been shortened.

The publishing industry on a whole publicly recognized its obligation to produce within the limits imposed by wartime restrictions. The following declaration by a major bindery typified the public service announcements of many bindery companies:

#### **BOOKS CARRY ON IN WARTIME**

Books don't go to war on the front line but they do fit into a wartime economy. Bindings must be in tune with the times. We must do without materials needed for military use but by working together we can accomplish much.

Military demands for raincoats, sandbags, sleeping bags and the like have taken almost total production of certain fabrics and have made it necessary to replace them with other fabrics that fully meet the requirements of bookbinding. Here again, cooperation in American Industry carries on.

#### **Zapon-Keratol Division**

(PW June 6, 1942: 2137)

Since one of the current government information objectives was "Sacrifice," that is, "showing that going without is half of the war effort" (NY Public, Chester Kerr to American Book Association May 21, 1942: 5), the publishing industry taught by example.

Yet, as often happens, reality fell short of the pronounced ideal. The extravagant use of rationed material in a 1944 volume produced by McGraw-Hill appeared in total disregard of wartime shortages. *Daybreak for Our Carrier*, a personal narrative by Max Miller of *On the Waterfront* fame,

7

was quite an ornate book. The text was expensively bound by a heavy cover ornamented with camera images of sea, carrier, and circling fighter plane in soft tones of blue. Upon opening the book, one noticed the use of pica type instead of elite (ten characters to a linear inch instead of twelve). With further disregard for paper or ink conservation, "**Daybreak for Our Carrier**" appeared atop every thick-sheeted page. Forty full-page photographs were printed solo, while at least eight of them were superfluous and judicious cropping might have allowed for less waste. All things considered, these 184 pages could have easily been shrunk to half. It is a wonder to have passed inspection, since it hardly seemed "produced in full compliance with the government's regulations for conserving paper and essential materials," as it falsely claimed.

Carl P. Rollins, on the editorial staff of the Yale University Press, expressed doubts about publishers' compliance with government rules in a letter to the editor of *Publisher's Weekly*:

Just what does the statement "this edition is produced in full compliance with the governments regulations for conserving paper and other essential materials" mean...? A recent example was a four-hundred page book on 60-lb. paper, with several half titles taking two pages each, deep sinkage of chapter heads, and a stained top....Another recent book had all three edges stained....From casual examination of many books printed recently, it looks as if the recommendation to abolish margins was the only stipulation taken seriously by publishers (*PW* May 22, 1944: 1591).

Obviously, some first-edition personal narratives were purposely printed on heavy paper and with plenty of margin to spare. Even though it probably cost publishers more to use heavier paper and left them with less paper for future endeavors, they chose to flout the government's guidelines or proscriptions in order to gain the perceived competitive edge of a more aesthetically pleasing item.

In addition to their physical production, books also presented government with the problem of handling information--direct or inferable--that might prove detrimental to the war effort or helpful to the enemy. The United States government dealt with the dilemma by establishing several bureaucratic agencies and mechanisms to control information handled by the communications media. An early agency, the Office of Facts and Figures, headed by Chester Kerr, a furloughed editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*, inaugurated a Book Division within the Bureau of Liaison in order to "help both publishers and authors get information about the war effort that they might be able to use in connection with books about the war. The division was also expected to interpret for publishers and authors the government's wartime information policies" (Tebbel *History* 22).

In his speech to the ABA in New York on May 6, 1942, Archibald MacLeish, then Director of the Office of Facts and Figures, promised a chart describing six basic government information objectives based on the Commander-in-Chief's



State of the Union address (NY Public Library, A. Knopf Archives, Chester Kerr letter to Members of the ABA, May 21, 1942). He urged booksellers to help people understand the goals in terms of the books they read. The principles to apply fell under several headings: "The Issues....and the Definition of Our Cause," "The Nature of the Conspiracy Against Us and Our Way of Life," "The Counter-Strategy of the United Nations," "Work and Production....to Win the War and Win the Peace," "Sacrifice [and]...the Effect of the Production Program on Civilian Life," and "The Fighting Front." Yet even before this policy was made public, the content of personal narratives reinforced many of the government's themes regarding the fighting job and the task of the armed forces, emphasizing in particular "that this cannot be merely a defensive war" and that Americans must guard against complacency.

The Office of Facts and Figures promptly mailed a follow-up six-page outline to Members of the ABA on May 21. In the cover letter, Kerr wrote,

If the word weren't so slimed down by our enemies, we might say these objectives constitute "an American line." Not a set of lies dictated from above, the strategy of terror. But a set of principles arrived at and applied under democratic methods, the strategy of truth (NY Public, A. Knopf Archives, Chester Kerr letter to ABA, May 21, 1942, italics mine).

In an apparent contradiction, Kerr then employed certain scare tactics of his own, intended to strike a chord with his bookish audience: "If we win, your children will learn parts

of the [President's] speech by heart. If we lose, it is quite possible that your children's children will never learn to read." In Kerr's estimation, the war was about freedom versus slavery, civilization versus barbarism. He was not alone in his alarm that if the Nazis triumphed, future generations would live in ignorance--a view that coincided with a long-standing American faith that democracy rests upon an informed citizenry. However, impressionable little children memorizing the President's speeches is hardly an emblem of free minds at work; nor is literacy a guarantee of freedom. After all, Germans at the time were among the most literate people of the world.

In a letter to Alfred A. Knopf, Kerr attempted to answer the inquiries of several publishers on the issue of censorship. After advising Knopf to have questions directed to the "Byron Price Office [of Censorship, which] has the authority to speak for both the Army and Navy in passing on a book," he explained that a follow-up censorship "code" promulgated by the government "is a simple document and I can't imagine that you'll have many books on your yearly list which need to be examined with an eye to its restrictions.... Once you know what to look for, you'll be able to make the decisions yourself" (NY Public, A.A. Knopf Archives, Box 3, June 10, 1942). Kerr clarified later that "a maximum accomplishment will be attained if editors will ask themselves with respect to any given detail, 'Is this information I would like to have if I were the enemy?' and

then act accordingly" (NY Public, A.A. Knopf Archives, letter to Alfred Knopf, Box 3, June 15, 1942). Statements pertaining to fortifications, weather, production, rumors, troop and ship movement, sinkings, and damage by the enemy, particularly if contained in photos and maps, all lent itself to the category of information potentially useful to the Axis.

Still, negotiations between publisher and government censoring agencies had to be conducted. In the case of Howard Handleman's *Bridge to Victory*, misgivings about certain events reported in the book generated multiple letters between Bennett Cerf and retired U.S. Navy Admiral consultant, H.E. Yarnell. In a long note from the Random House chief dated August 24, 1943, Cerf explained:

The finished book will contain detailed maps of both Attu itself and of the entire area in which the Aleutian fighting took place. There will also be sixteen pages of photographs. Furthermore, Handleman is rushing to us a last chapter which will describe the taking of Kiska, and this will make the story of the campaign complete. We have accepted with thanks your suggestion that we soften the account of the hard-boiled transport Captain. We are leaving out entirely the paragraph that describes his failure to attend the burial at sea. This episode would certainly leave a bad taste in every reader's mouth (NY Public Library, Random House Archives).

The Naval consultant's objection to a section about "the hard-boiled transport Captain" illustrated how censors went beyond government guidelines. The revelation that a captain failed to attend a funeral at sea is not a threat to military security. It could have been construed, however, as a

callous or insensitive act that Admiral Yarnell preferred not to have publicized and Bennett Cerf happily accommodated. Other internal Random House memos suggested the inclusion of "a colorful description of an Air Corps party after an Attu raid" (August 2, 1943) and reminded themselves to wait for "any Army or Navy objections to any lines they wish to eliminate" (August 4, 1943) before proceeding with production.

The Army and Navy Departments recommended an absolute censorship of all outlets of information. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, nonetheless, flatly rejected the idea as extreme. He asserted that such strict centralized control of information did not keep faith with "the American public--let alone the American press," who should find draconian restrictions either inimical to the doctrine of freedom-of-the-press or too closely resembling the controls of the totalitarian powers America resisted. President Roosevelt, therefore, judged "it necessary to the national security that military information [should]...be scrupulously withheld at the source...[and] called upon a patriotic press...to abstain voluntarily from the dissemination of...information which might be of aid to the enemy" (*American Political Science Review*, Oct. 1942, 36: 841).

A "code" was then distributed in the form of a vague set of requests to publishers, free of specified penalties for violators. Byron Price, Director of the Office of Censorship, announced the emergency censorship requirements

on books, newspapers, and periodicals. The code elicited no strenuous objections because it plainly functioned to permit the widest possible freedom to publishers under the current circumstances. Editors and writers were told to "follow the dictates of common sense" in what they presented and what they withheld. In addition, even specific types of data that normally should be concealed could be published, the code stated, "if authorized by proper authority" (Tebbel *History* 88-89).

Price insisted that there was no intention to enforce "an editorial blackout....It is the hope and expectation," he said, "that ...American publishers will remain the freest in the world, and will tell the story of our national successes and shortcomings accurately and in much detail" (*PW* Sept. 5, 1942: 829). In other words, exercising flexible, even permissive, authority, the government condoned accurate and detailed tellings of the nation's strengths and weaknesses, triumphs and failures, advances and setbacks at home and abroad. The Office of Censorship advised that if publishers desired "clarification" as to what disclosures might or might not be in the country's best interest, the agency "will cooperate gladly" (*Congressional Digest* (Feb. 7, 1942) 21: 37).

Hence, even though the government established rules explaining what material fell within a scope of worry (anything that subverted the war effort or provided aid and comfort to the enemy), it trusted the patriotism and good

soldierliness of vital private companies to do their share in support of the war. The book trade had been made largely responsible for its own censorship. And to a great extent, judgment rested in the hands of the correspondent himself. According to John Steinbeck, a correspondent (who he labeled a "liaison with the public"),

carried his rule book in his head and even invented restrictions for himself in the interest of the War Effort...but if he forgot...and broke any of the rules, there were the Censors, the Military Command...and finally, most strong of all in discipline, there were the war-minded civilians...to jerk a correspondent into line (*Once There Was* xi).

In sum, the do's and don't's were imposed and self-imposed.

From the following evidence, it can be assumed that publishers and writers accepted the fact that restrictions were in order and responded obediently to the government's wishes: (a) the kinds and contents of books printed, (b) the absence of legal action or sanctions against uncooperative houses, (c) the government did not need to employ any other persuasive tool, and (d) not until March 1943, late in the game, did the Office of Facts and Figures announce the establishment of a "book division" whose purpose was "to keep both publishers and authors [informed] about the government war effort [which] they might use in connection with books about the war" (Tebbel *History* 24).

Why was the government so hesitant to interfere with a free-wheeling press? First, on a practical level, supervision proved to be a daunting task. Monitoring unwanted disclosures interspersed within the numerous pages

of personal narratives, for instance, created plenty of tedious work for government employees. Censoring bureaucracies were evidently far more prepared to supervise the daily press and even the motion picture industry than book publishers. Second, officials did not want to incite protest by mimicking totalitarian behavior. Third, the administration, feeling morally right and militarily strong, led a fairly transparent operation, hence, it had little to hide or censor except military plans and resources.

Even so, "in those days immediately before America's entry into the War, a general atmosphere of hostility to dissent prevailed..." (Tebbel *History* 81). In July 1940, Roosevelt signed the *Smith Act*, regarded by media opponents as the "omnibus gag bill," which curtailed publishing liberties. The limited legislation enacted in Congress made

antiwar literature or even criticism of the national military program subject to prosecution....That meant [publishers] could be penalized for publications that a court might rule resulted in disaffection among the armed forces (Tebbel *History* 81).

Books deemed to have the ability to undermine wartime commitment included those that might debilitate the spirit of the fighting men or weaken the resolve of industrial workers. In addition, the *Soldier's Veto Bill*, amended by Senator Taft in 1944, outlawed anything "containing political argument or political propaganda of any kind" to be sent in bulk to the soldiers abroad, if "...calculated to affect the result of any...election" (Tebbel *History* 92). Quickly after the

United States won the war, restrictions of this sort were stricken from the books.

"The government's [own] record on censorship was considered exemplary" (Tebbel *History* 83) by people in journalism. Byron Price won a special Pulitzer citation for creating and administering the code of the Office of Censorship, in part because of his liberal attitude toward the press and publishers. The press argued that it worked most effectively and served the public best under a system of voluntary censorship. The ruling sentiment among journalists and their bosses about censorship maintained that adherence to any guidelines, government suggested or corporately devised, was to be a "matter of personal judgment. One editor decides he should not print a certain story. Another, equally patriotic, regards the [guidelines] as imposing no restrictions on the same story. He goes ahead and prints it" (*Am Pol Sci Rev* Nov. 6, 1942: 841). Given such a scenario, some editors' professional judgments could be swayed more by economic interests, others by morale-building objectives. That is the way the press should function in America, a spokesperson for *Newsweek* pronounced:

In time of war a nation has two means of protecting military information...censorship, and suppression of information at the source. The first concedes the right of the press to the facts but limits their use; the second... denies access to information...American tradition calls for voluntary censorship" (*Newsweek*, Feb. 19, 1945: 40-41).

Another major censoring agency known as the innocent-sounding Office of Facts and Figures and later the Office of



War Information (OWI)<sup>13</sup> was headed by the irrepressible Elmer Davis, an author, news analyst, and former *New York Times* journalist. The OWI was created in 1942 to consolidate government information services, absorbing the functions of the Office of Facts and Figures, the Office of Government Reports, the division of information of the Office for Emergency Management, and the foreign information service of the Coordinator of Information. Although the OWI did not exert control over the content of personal narratives, its job was to formulate and disseminate information through the use of the press, radio, motion pictures, and other facilities as well as coordinate the war information activities of all federal departments and agencies "to assure accurate and consistent flow of war information...to the American public; and in cooperation with the Military and the State Department, conduct informational and psychological warfare activities abroad" (*World Almanac 1945*: 111). The character of this agency was less that of eraser and more of pencil. Analogously, it is fair to describe the Office of Censorship as minding the defensive side of psychological warfare,<sup>14</sup> the Office of War Information as pressing the offensive.

---

<sup>13</sup> Besides coordinating the release of war news for domestic use, the office established an overseas branch, under Robert E. Sherwood, which launched a huge information and propaganda bureau abroad. Congressional opposition to the domestic operations of the OWI resulted in increasingly curtailed funds, and by 1944 the OWI operated mostly in the foreign arena to undermine enemy morale.

<sup>14</sup> The Office of Censorship dealt with censorship of all

The offense worked best on the playing fields of Los Angeles. The OWI, in fact, collaborated with many Hollywood studios to rework and rewrite scripts. Picture producers were usually ready, willing, and able to incorporate the propaganda suggestions of the government with regard to portraying the war, servicemen, and the home front in a positive light. Indeed, movie makers and theater people were apt to want to explain the "why we fight" values of the nation. Many early movie industry executives came from Europe, having earlier fled the poverty and tyranny of repressive political systems. Some were Jews resentful of Nazi anti-semitism and some political leftists outraged by the economic chaos of the Great Depression, hence their sympathies lay with the Russians when Germany brought the war East.

While it is true that Jews like Knopf, Liveright, Simon, and Schuster staked a decisive presence in New York, Protestant Americans of indigenous heritage dominated the publishing industry during the war. Though harboring more politically conservative views, the print media was as activist in its unmitigated support of the war as the screen media showed itself to be. The main reason for more concern and meddling on Elmer Davis's part over that of Byron Price, was that Hollywood had an audience of 80 to 90 million a week

---

civilian modes of communication. It checked letters, cables and telegrams, tapped telephone conversations, and ensured papers and radio shows followed the Code of Wartime Practices, which was frequently revised (Knightley 275).

for whatever it chose to depict (Kornweibel 8), and "by the 1940s on average each American went to the movies three times a month, and the moviegoing audience cut across class, regional, and ethnic lines" (Roeder 4); by contrast, the number of books sold in 1942 was only 225,000, including 75,000 school textbooks. Film had been accruing rising status in the Twentieth Century. And both friend and foe of the United States were utilizing motion picture's charm to propagandize. Therefore, "Despite considerable studio willingness to voluntarily cooperate with the government, the OWI's Bureau of Motion Pictures grasped unprecedented powers to manipulate and control the screen industry, through both persuasion and intimidation" (Kornweibel 7).

Though reaching a substantially smaller audience, publishers took their propaganda responsibility seriously. Publishers support for the war was total, if not always judicious. Certainly, no mainstream book or pamphlet was published that purposely tried to subvert the war effort. Indeed, this was the first American war that did not give rise to significant anti-war literature. When and if a publishing house selected a book that purportedly hurt the Allied cause, it could be blamed on miscalculation or the highly competitive nature of the business--bidding for personal narrative manuscripts was especially vigorous. Still, there was little or no conflict of interests between the public and private sphere when it came to personal narratives, since they overwhelmingly built morale by

concealing from the home front the extent of American losses. On the other hand, the ones that did not leave readers with a good feeling, the grimmer published reports, such as *Tarawa*, *Guadalcanal Diary*, or *Into the Valley*, were tempered by the fact that the deadly and destructive enterprises represented were generally successful militarily. Then again, depictions that may have included high costs in human sacrifice were always several months delayed in disclosure, likely softening some of the consequent unbearableness for the home-front reader and revealing nothing about the United State's position that the enemy did not already know.

Once again, while most of the stringent restrictions that applied to the daily press were in principle equally applicable to the book industry, government sanctions on the latter were less vigorously enforced due to the time lag between a war action and its hard cover rendition. In sharp contrast, newspapers had no choice but to suppress the worst reports, as George Roeder asserted in his article, "Censoring Disorder: American Visual Imagery of World War II":

The dreaded consequences of battle with especially heavy loss of American lives caused many...to wonder. While the military brass had no doubt how the fighters themselves would stand up under the maiming and the killing, some correspondents worried about how the people back home were going to react to the ugly truth. Verbal and occasionally photographic images of dead American Marines being bulldozed into a mass pit grave or thousands of sailors lost with the sinking of one battleship would be terrible reminders of the true nature of the sacrifice and the horror (in Erenberg 65).

The freshness of newspaper reporting dictated that dailies sanitized battle difficulties and casualty figures as much as possible. No American in good conscience wanted to administer the double dose of aid to the enemy and distress to the ally.

Daily lists of wounded, dead, and missing in action were disseminated for printing, but only by local media in order to avoid the alarm that a nation-wide tally could trip. If, for argument's sake, twenty deaths were noted in the *New York Times*, fourteen in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, five in the *Hartford Courant*, three in the *Grand Rapids Press*, seven in the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, four in the *Hackensack Record*, and five in the *San Jose Mercury News*--each community uninformed of the losses suffered in a thousand other communities--the negative impact on morale would be blunted in an era when information traveled more slowly than now.<sup>15</sup> In summary, the government allowed the names of dead servicemen to appear in local area papers:

There is no objection to publication of information about casualties from a newspaper's local field, obtained from the nearest of kin, but it is requested that in such cases, specific military and naval units, and exact locations, be not mentioned (*Congress Dig* (Feb. 7, 1942) 21:37).

To be sure, the military harbored its own constant fear that the release of war news to the press spelled disastrous disclosure to the enemy. Early in the war and sporadically

---

<sup>15</sup> Long-distance communication was conducted by wireless, in contrast to the speedy satellite and computer networks of the late Twentieth Century.

thereafter, control over the news was exercised by (1) issuing only periodic, tight-lipped official communiqués to journalists and press agencies, known as "censoring at source"--that is, preventing correspondents within the United States from learning anything they did not want them to know and (2) not allowing correspondents "in the theaters of war unless they were accredited; one condition of accreditation was that the correspondent must sign an agreement to submit all his copy to military or naval censorship" (Knightley 275).<sup>16</sup>

However, protests of the two policies came from many quarters. In an article in *Harper's* magazine, a contributor decried in no uncertain terms that "in this matter, America had nothing more and nothing less than her reputation for freedom of the press to defend" (*Harper's* Apr. 1943: 509). Also, the Council on Books in Wartime, a committee established by the publishing field as a patriotic endeavor to coordinate its role in the war effort, was strongly disturbed by what it viewed as "an apparently increasing tendency on the part of some branches of government to encroach on that freedom" (Tebbel *History* 90). At the same time, members of the Advisory Board of the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University deplored "certain acts and policies of Army and Navy censorship in handling news at the

---

<sup>16</sup> Censors were overworked men in a tough position. They would not get into trouble if they cut out information that could have been left in. However, they would be berated if they let material pass that should have been cut.

source, and for the unreasonable suppression of information to which the American people are entitled" (*World Almanac* 1945). It is understandable that the press decried military censorship, since journalists usually "seek to tell as much as possible as soon as possible; the military seeks to tell as little as possible as late as possible" (Knightley 276). But even the Director of the Office of Censorship, Byron Price, cautioned that concentrating the authority to censor was a dangerous proposition:

It has been a lesson of history that censorship feeds on itself and that once any man is given the authority of suppressing [information] the tendency is to expand that authority more and more until we arrive at a system of intellectual slavery (*Harper's* Apr. 1943: 504).

Furthermore, it was hard for a stereotypically independent-minded, free-spirited, rough and ready American newspaperman to submit to anybody's rules but his own.<sup>17</sup> Secondly, news reporters always believed that this was a people's war, and within reason, the people should be kept abreast of how it was going. They consistently expressed the opinion that heavy-handedness had an inherently self-defeating effect: Shielding the nation from news, as bad as it might have been, made the war remote for civilians, which

---

<sup>17</sup> His models were the popular crusading silver-screen heroes: Clark Gable in *It Happened One Night* (1934), *Too Hot to Handle* (1936), and *Comrade X* (1940); Cary Grant in *His Girl Friday* (1940) (An update of the Ben Hecht/Charles MacArthur quintessential newspaper drama, *The Front Page.*); Edward G. Robinson in *Five Star Final* (1931) and *Unlucky Partners* (1941); James Cagney in *Johnny Come Lately* (1943); Joel McCray in Hitchcock's *Foreign Correspondent* (1940), among many more.

in turn could lead to apathy or indifference on their part. Only when the awful truth of danger, bloodshed, and lost lives became known, would Americans at home be galvanized into forceful determination.

The Guadalcanal campaign, the first major American offensive of the war, presented a fine example of how government censors interacted with correspondents. Commanding General A.A. Vandergrift granted approval to correspondents such as Tregaskis and Hersey to go where they liked and write what they wanted--"within logical security confines." Tregaskis's and Hersey's unmasking of the perilous situation of their countrymen on Guadalcanal, perhaps in order to prepare the nation for a defeat, demonstrated the considerable differences between the official government policy on censorship of the "ephemeral" press and the less immediate, though more permanent, bound book. What was disallowed in newspapers might very well have been acceptable in book form. For example, disturbing reports and visual images of war's carnage, while severely limited in the daily press, were available to personal narratives audiences.

The publishing history of the eventual best-selling *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo* is a more interesting case of censorship. The manuscript submitted by Captain Ted Lawson, written with the noted Hearst *World-Telegram* sports columnist Bob Considine, had been obtained by Random House in the spring of 1943. The narrative recorded the celebrated and



unprecedented Jimmy Doolittle raid, which employed B-17 bombers to attack Tokyo on April 18, 1942. The dates were significant because actual details of the raid were not released by the Navy department until more than a year after the event. The fact that such large planes had taken off from the relatively small deck of a carrier near to the Japanese home islands was considered highly classified military information. Strategists deemed it a tactical advantage to keep secret the origin of the bombers because how the operation was carried out was thought to be critically useful to the enemy's defensive, and perhaps long-term offensive, planning. Those not already aware of the takeoff sites were denied this information.

President Roosevelt, coining one of his memorable phrases, had remarked that they came from Shangri-la. The truth could not be disclosed until the air force cleared the story, which did not occur until April 20, 1943, months after Random House had acquired the manuscript. It was published in June, with a first printing of 100,000 and the assurance of another Book of the Month Club selection (Tebbel *History* 20).

A more mysterious aberration in the government's "hands-off" censorship policy occurred in the strange case of three manuscripts that were prevented from publication by the Navy Department in 1943. In the first instance, Robert Trumbull learned about the history of the *U.S.S. Silversides* at Pearl Harbor from the officers and men stationed on the submarine. He wrote their story in *Silversides*, a book that originally had been passed by Navy censors. Later on, when the book was

in galley proofs, the Navy withdrew its permission to publish. Such curious last-minute reversals happened in at least two other cases. Robert Casey's book, entitled *Torpedo Below* or *Torpedo Junction*, (reports differ) and Carl Carmer's *Stars Fell on Alabama* were also denied publication in 1943. Inexplicably, censors confiscated manuscripts, proofs, and correspondence without explanation. All three books on submarines, in varying degrees of completion, "were suppressed by the Navy with no itemized reports on what is wrong," except that they divulged "details of submarine tactics and operations that the Japs do not yet know. But when publishers request[ed] specifics as to...[possible] changes or deletions," (*Time* , August 23, 1943: 56-57), or challenged the decisions by citing newspaper articles with quotes that scarcely differed from the information contained in these books, the Navy did not comment. Eventually, the three submarine narratives were published, two of them near the end of the war when their contents could no longer benefit the enemy. Holt published *Silversides* in 1945, a story that narrated the sub crew's battle adventures in the Pacific, sinking or damaging more than 90,000 tons of enemy cargo. The Casey book, too, was finally published under the title *Battle Below* by Bobbs, Merrill in 1945 as an account of the activities and accomplishments of members of a United States submarine. When Reinhart published Carmer's book under a new title, *The Jesse James of the Java Sea*, it had evolved into a fictionalized history of the *U.S. Sturgeon*

during its missions in the China and Java Seas the months following Pearl Harbor. The book, highlighted by eight successful encounters with Japanese shipping, was the last of the "lost" submarine narratives to be recovered. And even though it was released after the war had ended, the book bore the marks of the original censorship imposed by the Navy. Of course, the editor could have restored the deleted passages, but neglected to bother.

Interestingly, a fair amount of stringent censorship concerned material which had little or no relevance to the war per se, but to the protection of soldiers' morals. Some quarters frowned upon certain prevailing jokes, gags, wisecracks, slang, scatological diction, and sexual innuendoes about the war and its superior officers, civilians, and "girls" (or lack thereof). To the consternation of Chaplains and church groups, not only was obscene language a daily feature of military life, Harold Hersey collected the best of it in a book called *GI Laughs*, which circulated through state-side and overseas barracks. By comparison, Bennett Cerf's watered-down, commercially inspired, and bland *Pocket Book of War Humor* ran no risk of any moral or legal sanctions.

Another arm of the federal government, the United States Post Office, used its self-proclaimed authority as keeper of the moral flame to censor certain matter it deemed obscene or in just plain bad taste. One of the more preposterous attempts by the Post Office to usurp moral high ground

occurred in 1943, when it refused to mail a collection of "Songs of, for, and by the Men in Service," published in a little volume called *Give Out!*, edited by Eric Posselt (pseudonym of Edgar A. Poliner). Before the Post Office got wind of the book, however, it had been widely distributed to army camps by Post Exchanges. No matter, postal officials belatedly began to deny it access to federal mailing services.

Consequentially, the Civil Liberties Union registered serious protest against the Post Office. Editorial writers ridiculed the government agency, also. For instance, a satiric commentary appeared in *Time* magazine on September 13, 1943:

#### **Keep Em' Blushing**

U.S. fighting men may be taught the niceties of the knife and the noose, but never should their ears be reddened with even laundered versions of such bawdy ballads as *Dirty Gertie* or *Mademoiselle from Armentieres*. Such, apparently, is the chaste opinion of the U.S. Post Office, which has closed the mails to *Give Out!*, a book of military ditties compiled with an approving nod from the armed services.

*Give Out!* ...a book of songs sung by servicemen, not at them. [Posselt] ruled out Tin Pan Alley and Hollywood tunes (except for parodies masculine or martial), tracked down the favorites of the corps and the camps. The collection includes the solemn, the irreverent, the rowdy. There is a long-faced hymn of high resolve by Robert E. Sherwood (Tune: *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*). Another contributor Beatrice Ayer Patton (wife of General "Blood and Guts") whose *March of the Armored Corps* is appropriately scored for pistol.

Inevitably, high purpose was outvoted by

low comedy: the salty songs roared by men away from women. Some are as topical as *Tunisia*, some such timeless bottle-bellowings as *Cristofor Colombo*, *The Bastard King of England*, all with well-scrubbed lyrics save for the commoner low-voltage expletives.

The Post Office called the songbook "lewd and obscene," even though it had been reviewed by the military. Post Exchanges continued to sell it. Men in service, never noted for dainty diction, continued to sing of disrespect and dirt as they went about their dirty business.

Disregarding sanctimonious critics, Posselt introduced a sequel volume one year later, simply entitled *GI Songs*. He prefaced the collection with mild sarcasm, "lest overly sensitive ears are offended by some of the tried and true old Anglo-Saxon terms, these have been replaced with inoffensive weasel words...to make a book of this kind acceptable to...our zealous post office" (*Posselt Songs* 6). Actually, most of the lyrics in both songbooks are spirited fighting ditties, celebrating the derring-do of air men, tank crews, and the more marginalized cooks, medics, etc. The closest any verse came to seeming hurtful or vulgar was contained in "The Tattooed Lady." Placed beside a full-page cartoon drawing of a voluptuous and totally naked woman with ink tattoos covering her bareness from head to toes, the lines went, "But what I like best/ across her chest/ was one of my home in Tennessee" (*Songs* 111).

Virtually all the others were designed to enthuse, on the order of one written by Alexander de Seversky (famed helicopter engineer/inventor) and his wife, Evelyn: "We've really got a job to do before this war is won/ with lots and

lots of things ahead that may not be much fun/ but Hit and Muss and Hito we'll put on the run/ and never hesitate until the job is done." Another anonymous ditty with a Kiplingesque flavor of bravado and melancholy ran:

And when you meet a Zero  
and he shoots you down in flames  
Don't waste your time a-bellyachin'  
and calling the beggar names  
Just push your stick into the ground  
and very soon you'll find  
there ain't no hell and all is well  
and you will never mind...  
Oh what a dish for crabs and fish  
but you will never mind

The naive and prudish fear that hard-bitten soldiers, sailors, and marines might be corrupted by such mild remarks, especially given the overall intrinsic obscenity of war, seems ludicrous.

In like fashion, the war department made an amusing effort to censor airplane "nose art," decorations painted on the noses of aircrafts by their flyers. So-called nose art lent identity, character, and humor to impersonal modern machinery. It personalized and sometimes personified a plane. Inspiration for most of the illustrations derived from photos of girl friends or wives, drawings of Disney and Looney Tune characters, and calendar and poster pictures of pin-up girls. The famous scantily-clothed Varga Girls created for *Esquire Magazine*, precursor to *Playboy* and *Penthouse*, were the most copied images, duplicated in various degrees of nakedness, as Max Miller explained in his wartime narrative, *Mission Beyond Darkness*:

Formerly aboard this carrier many of

the planes bore individualized names painted on the hoods, such names as "Flying Jenny," "Captain Blood," "Celia," "Juliana," "Rosie the Riveter," and so on....But as with all things in life, there came a time when the painted names were being overdone. In fact, there came a time when the names on the hoods were being accompanied by illustrations as well, and when the illustrations were not always with clothing.

So now there are no names, and no illustrations either. But those names, as long as they were allowed to last, did do something: they added a recognizable individuality to the planes as they passed in review to the take-off spot. It was much like the review of blanketed race-horses before a race. From the island we could say of the pilot something to the effect: "Hi, here comes Johnnie in the 'Naughty Lady.' Wonder how he's going to do today" (*Miller Mission* 60).

Offended censors, as Miller noted, tried to ban early World War II nose art, but it was not long before they acknowledged that the creative process along with the end-product, an individualized instrument, improved Air Force morale. American crew members felt privileged to be part of what they perceived to be a uniquely easy-going and anti-authoritarian military structure; and perhaps more importantly, pilots believed that their paintings brought them the extra luck needed to return home safely. So the army quickly recanted its proviso to abolish the artwork.

Two further attempts to muffle free speech stand out more than the others precisely because they were instigated by people in publishing and completely contradicted the democratic principles upon which the war was said by them to be waged. The subtler case of opinion-repression centered around Ralph Ingersoll, a "radical" who vigorously supported

the New Deal, the interests of labor, the Common Man, along with Roosevelt's interventionist foreign policy in behalf of Great Britain. At issue was the fact that Ingersoll, a veteran of World War I, was *drafted* into the Second War at the ripe old age of forty-one! Since some of his outspoken left-wing positions conflicted with an anti-socialist and yet unreconstructed isolationist contingency of the establishment press, a few political analysts at the time posited a sort of conspiracy theory. Anti-Roosevelt conservatives--newspaper people and others--influenced members of the Selective Service Draft Board 44 to get the editor into uniform and his paper, *PM*, out of the way; "the memorable thing about the squabble is the manner in which *PM*'s enemies used a spurious patriotism to justify what they hoped would be a *coup de grace* for" Ingersoll's New York liberal tabloid (Tebbel *Fields* 210).

The next more substantiated and arguably more despicable and dangerous example of intra-industry imposed censorship surrounded Bennett Cerf. In an address before the Women's National Book Association in early 1943, Cerf (at the age of forty-four, too old for military service), clearly one of the most visible and influential editors in the business, advised fellow editors not to publish anything that might contain "sly or poisonous propaganda." He continued, "If any one publisher, inadvertently, or by design, slips through a single book that preaches a creed inimical to the war effort, the retailer will be performing a service to the country by



deliberately sabotaging that book" (*PW* Mar. 28, 1942: 1248). The irony of such an appeal is that it showed some resemblance to the book-burning tactics of the Nazis. Cerf's readiness to serve the nation's cause and police himself and others is a prime example of how independent institutions participate in the abridgment of their own freedom in the name of freedom. Further on, Cerf compounded the totalitarian crime by rewriting history, proposing that "our old conceptions of the Russian purges and trials...evidently were mistaken, and books that encourage these beliefs should be taken off sale immediately" (*Ibid*). It is interesting that publishers treaded into areas of thought control where even the government refused to walk.

Even the Victory Book Campaign, whose slogan read, "Our Boys Want Books" at training camps and distant fronts for both diversion and information, practiced grand-scale content control. Of the six million books it collected, just three million were distributed after "appropriate selections" were made, meaning that half were "sifted" out [read: censored] and, apparently "destroyed" (*PW* Jan. 3, 1942: 19). A later estimate compiled by *Publisher's Weekly* claimed that "more than ten million books were distributed to the armed forces during the two-year life of Victory"; but unfortunately, there is no statistic on the number of books rejected (*PW* May 31, 1944). More pertinent to this study, the Victory Book Campaign failed to stock military libraries with wartime narratives.

CHAPTER 4: "BOOKS ARE BULLETS": WAGING  
WAR THROUGH PRINT

Given the plethora of government censoring and quasi-censoring agencies (the Office of Censorship, the Office of War Information, the Book Division of the Office of Fact and Figures, the Special Services Division of the Army and Navy Bureau of Personnel, War Department Bureau of Public Relations), no matter how flexible the guidelines of each, unbridled freedom of the press was *ipso facto* impossible. Minor deletions of words, and in rare cases passages, were made before "No objection to publication as amended" was stamped on most personal narratives. These books went to print with slight to no interference from officials precisely because many authorities in the government and book business treasured them as alternative "weaponry" that strengthened American resolve. If, as Archibald MacLeish surmised, "The principal battleground of the war is not the South Pacific. It is not the Middle East. It is not England or Norway, or the Russian Steppes. It is American opinion," then personal narratives were a form of ammunition for the homefront (Bredhoff 1).

Taking its powerful influence and resulting responsibility seriously, the publishing industry through its own impetus formed a committee known as the Council on Books

in Wartime comprised of representatives from major publishing houses. The Council functioned to establish and monitor guidelines for the publication of war-related books and to put the book business more directly at the service of the Army, Navy, and OWI. In the energetic ramblings of the Council, its charter was:

to achieve the widest possible use of books contributing to the war effort of the United States by the use of books in the building and maintaining of the will to win; by use of books to expose the true nature of the enemy; by technical information in books on the training, the fighting, the production and the home front; by the use of books to clarify our war aims and the problems of peace; ...[to] mobilize books for whatever values they may have in the war effort (Sat Rev Lit July 1, 1944: 12).

The Council's purpose was endorsed by the OWI. Even the OWI slogan, "Books are weapons in the war of ideas," which President Roosevelt was credited for inventing, became incorporated into a prominent "Book Mobilization" poster. The poster printed the top Ten book titles honored with "having done the most for the war effort" on the face of falling bombs. Declaring his conviction and admiration for good books, Roosevelt read a message to the ABA at their annual meeting on May 6, 1942:

I need not labor the contrast between the estate of books in the free democracies and the estate of books in countries brutalized by our foes. We all know that books burn--yet we have the greater knowledge that books cannot be killed by fire....No man and no force can abolish memory. No man and no force can put thought in a concentration camp forever (complete text printed in PW May 9, 1942: 1741).

The Council's assignment, therefore, was to increase the number of books available, which would increase the home front's understanding of why the war was fought and why the "good guys" must win.

Frederich Melcher declared that an industry which had prided itself on individualism had found a common purpose in united action to help books take an "essential" place in wartime. Originally, it seemed as if each representative of the Council was willing to subordinate the interests of his own firm and support rival companies by placing the imprimatur of "IMPERATIVE" on selected books to indicate their especial value. The "I" was awarded to new books "that are adjudged important contributions to the war effort and thought of the nation." Of course, calling attention to the "essential" or "imperative" nature of books was in the long-term best interests of all publishers. ("Imperative," receiving an "I," was equivalent to the "E" for essential, awarded to a manufacturing plant by the Navy Department.)

With an eagerness characteristic of the *esprit de corps* of the Marines, the Council stamped the Random House issue *They Were Expendable* with the first Imperative label. While several books not belonging to the personal narrative genre were anointed Imperatives, like Wendell Wilkie's *One World*, Walter Lippman's *U.S. Foreign Policy*, and Edgar Snow's *People on Our Side*, the first book to gain the Imperative distinction was a personal narrative.

Thereafter, Imperatives "would be chosen only when suitable titles appeared, not on a regular basis, so that several might be named in a single month--or none for irregular intervals" (Tebbel *History* 29). The search for Imperative books established by the Council during the early stages of the organization curiously ceased after a few selections had been named. Committee members began to wrangle when pursuit of profit and prestige was perceived to determine publishers' choices. The reality of competition defeated the ideal of cooperation.

Aside from vested interests, a more philosophic/semantic issue was raised to justify ending the Imperative policy. To some, the term "imperative" sounded inferentially coercive, excessively propagandistic, and in its most cynical sense, anti-democratic. Lewis Gannett, book reviewer for the *New York Times*, questioned the wisdom of the choice "Imperative" because it could be read as a command, i.e. "You must read this":

It smacks of coercion. Further he suspected that the Council was indulging in too much propaganda, "that Americans will resent being told what they should and should not read"....Mr. Gannett repeated his feeling that the reading public is in danger of being regimented. He objected to the council's recommended lists... on the same grounds (*PW* May 10, 1943: 1053).

Though there was some difference of opinion in the matter, bottom-line economics and the self-interests of contending publishing companies dictated the demise of the Imperative

policy.<sup>18</sup> The Council, however, continued issuing periodic lists of "recommended" books, many of them from the personal narrative category. Independent publishers continued to support the policies of the Council on Wartime Books, hoping that the substance of their books would impress the Council's officers enough to warrant a place on the recommended list.

The Council of Books in Wartime conducted itself in the faith that personal narratives would play a critical role in bolstering society's will to win. One accepted reason voiced by J. Donald Adams, a *New York Times* commentator, was repeated with slight variation by many others in the book business:

The experience and attitude of a typical group of our fighting men...merits such [a large] audience. With no false heroics, no sensationalizing, it leaves an indelible impression of the courage and determination with which the men of the armed forces are doing their part (*NY Times* Nov. 8, 1942: 2).

According to Adams, "it is hard to conceive of any reader who, having finished" such stories about the impressive habits and extraordinary sacrifice of American fighters, "...could not be strengthened in his resolve never to let them down."

Consciously or not, the promotion of these works by the entire book industry may have helped win the war in an

---

<sup>18</sup> At least for a year, the Imperative label was dropped. Then in March 1944, Hersey's *A Bell for Adano* was named the first work of fiction to receive the "new" Imperative. The Council prepared a new poster (distributed free of charge to bookstores and libraries) and a new dodger (furnished at low cost to dealers) (*PW* Mar. 25, 1944: 1288).

indirect way, for they championed the war effort and sustained civilian morale. They did so by sanitizing the war to a large degree, by playing up the heroism of individuals, the willing sacrifices they made, the democratic virtues they displayed, and the way of life they loved. Mobilizing Americans for war thus meant invoking American ideals and myths that held wide currency and saw recycling throughout American cultural history.

One residual reason why personal narratives served the national agenda of winning the war was that companies like Doubleday/Doran<sup>19</sup> used these products to campaign successfully for Defense Bonds. Often, the strategy entailed reproducing a familiar cut and copy on the back flap of dust jackets.

"This plan is not only a patriotic one, but is very

---

<sup>19</sup> Not only did representatives of major book companies rally around the flag, several small presses also tried their best to furnish the public with inspirational books and leaflets. A little-known press based in Richmond, Virginia and sponsored by the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation did its modest share by printing and distributing a variety of books and pamphlets "important to a people now engaged in a worldwide battle for freedom" (Tebbel *History* 21). Countering the totalitarian challenge to America's liberty, they applauded colonial and early nationhood struggles for justice.

In various other ways, the town of Williamsburg was active in the war effort soon after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. A special one-day course in American history for soldiers was developed by Williamsburg researchers and writers. In 1942, more than 15,000 men from nearby Fort Eustis attended the class arriving in army trucks every day in groups of 250. That same year, the "March of Time" produced a motion picture of Williamsburg in wartime for release by the Restoration. And as an offshoot of the history course, a national radio program was formed for the benefit of army installations, high school students, and any other interested listeners. (Donald P. Bean, "The War and Williamsburg," printed in *PW* Aug. 22, 1942: 549-550).

adroit...because it manages to serve two [purposes] at once" (*PW* Jan. 31, 1942), promoting the sale of defense bonds while contributing books to the U.S.O. for men in the service to enjoy. Doubleday/Doran was so proud of the illustrated back flap that it mailed proofs to other publishers, persuading them to run the same in their books as a "patriotic gesture" and a way of building "a great deal of good will with customers" (*PW* Jan. 31, 1942: 414). At least one other publisher, Hastings House, followed the suggestion, urging book buyers also to buy Defense Bonds in order "to Keep 'em Flyin."

Continuing to apply the axiom "books as weapons in the war of ideas," the Council created many sub-committees whose activities included publishing book lists about various phases of the war, designing snappy posters (14 X 22 in.) for titles selected as outstanding reading, sponsoring radio programs about books, furnishing speakers for book fairs, clubs, schools, and other organizations, producing movie newsreels, working intensely with book stores and libraries to promote war books, and finally launching publicity campaigns via national press and radio.

The Council on Books in Wartime played a big hand in the creation of a radio program, "Books are Bullets," in the Fall of 1942. On the show, authors who had written impressive books about the war were interviewed by Bennett Cerf, the Random House editor-in-chief who was then a ranking member of the Council. The second guest to appear on the October 14,



1942 program was W.L. White, author of *They Were Expendable* (*PW* Oct. 10, 1942: 1527). Gaining steady popularity, the weekly broadcasts began dramatizing portions of other popular war books, a sampling of which were Clark Lee's *They Call it Pacific*, Fred Herman's *Dynamite Cargo*, Gwen Dew's *Prisoner of the Japs*, Michael Murphy's *Eighty Three Days*, John Mason Brown's *To All Hands*, J.M. Reddings's *Skyways to Berlin*, H.E. Maule's *A Book of War Letters*, and Ernie Pyle's *Here Is Your War* (*PW* Dec. 25, 1943: 2303). A newsreel venture in late 1943 showcased authors of personal narratives, delineating their biographies and war work.

Another noteworthy creation of the Council was the Armed Services Editions (ASE) of books. Where civilians needed images of Americans at war to reinforce a mutuality of interests, GIs needed images of civilian pursuits to inspire them. So while civilians obtained narratives of the distant World War, GIs for the most part received ASE books written for people in peacetime.<sup>20</sup>

In the beginning of 1943 the Council faced the formidable task of mobilizing the entire American book industry in favor of the ASE project. To do so, the Council developed guidelines that publishers, authors, booksellers, and librarians could follow:

The Council determined that royalties of 1 cent split between publisher and author would be paid for each book produced--not a bad sum for press runs exceeding a hundred thousand

---

<sup>20</sup> Three personal narratives became ASEs: *American Guerrilla in the Philippines*, *Brave Men*, and *Up front*.

copies....The books would be distributed gratis to Armed Services personnel. The selections would not only include a preponderance of current publications and books of wide-spread popular appeal, but would also include a number of titles that catered to less general audiences (Daniel Miller 9).

Here, the Council was "the catalyst that turned a good idea...which involved the United States Army, the Navy, the War Production Board, [and over seventy firms] into an efficient, cooperative enterprise" (Cole 3). The ASE was improving upon a program which had been instituted by the already existing Victory Book Campaign (VBC). The VBC had been soliciting new and used book donations from the public and the trade itself. The Red Cross and the U.S.O. then delivered the books to each branch's servicemen, especially to the wounded, in order to alleviate the loneliness, discomfort, boredom, and weariness of army life. Though well-intentioned, the VBC confronted insurmountable practical and logistical snags: Bulky hard-covers were difficult to deliver to soldiers; on top of that, soldiers who procured copies found them inconvenient to carry around.

Meanwhile, a couple of fledgling publishers were introducing more portable, pocket-sized paperbacks, but the list of titles was limited. The renegade Dell Inc., for example, reprinted *The Raft*<sup>21</sup> in 1942. Dell War paperbacks

---

<sup>21</sup> The page facing the title-page of *The Raft* contained the message: "BOOKS ARE WEAPONS--in a free democracy everyone may read what he likes. Books educate, inform, inspire; they also provide entertainment, bolster morale. This book has been manufactured in conformity with wartime restrictions--read it and pass it on. Our Armed forces especially need books--you may give them to your nearest U.S.O. office, leave

featured popular titles that could be sent to Armed Services personnel in the early days of the war. Companies such as Dell and Pocket Books, indeed, helped surmount the obstacles of portability. They pioneered the production of items that were small and light enough for distributors to package cost-efficiently and servicemen to carry around conveniently. The next step was to make books cheap enough for the Services to buy and distribute free of charge.

After figuring out the mechanics of size (exactly how small),<sup>22</sup> binding (wet-resisting glue, rust-resisting wire binding), and production (cheap and fast printing), Philip Van Doren Stern along with a directorate of over twenty prominent book-world figures--publishers, authors, librarians, and critics--enacted and managed the ASE project. A representative for the project estimated that "The Council manufactures books at what is probably the lowest cost in history for books of comparable length" (*PW* Sept. 11, 1943: 901). In order to save space, appendices, bibliographies, indexes, lists of illustrations, and sometimes even the table of contents were eliminated. They soon churned out these

---

them at your public library, or send them direct to *Commanding General, 4th Corps Area Headquarters, Atlanta, GA., marked 'For Army Libraries.'*" Other paperback series contained similar statements, according to Daniel Miller, who edited an exhibition of ASE editions at the University of Virginia in 1995.

<sup>22</sup> The private who slept in a barracks had to keep his library in a tiny corner of his foot-locker, together with, for example, letters, tobacco, and, extra toothpaste; there was only limited space for non-GI articles. The pocket-sized books could be crammed into the uniform, and were usually passed on after being read to eliminate excess baggage (*PW* Sept. 1, 1943).

somewhat abridged books at the rate of 2,500,000 copies per month. Each month thirty, and eventually forty, new titles, were sent to every fighting front and sold at absolute cost to the services. In short, the idea was to produce attractive,<sup>23</sup> expendable volumes--to be read and "read out"--and a diverse enough portfolio of works, which would "appeal to a broad audience" (D. Miller 5).

A screening committee of the Council on Books in Wartime selected the books to be reproduced and submitted them to the Special Services Division of the Army and the Bureau of Navy Personnel for final approval. Books were vetoed if they contained statements or attitudes offensive to our allies, any religious group, any trade or profession, or broadly did not accord with the spirit of American democracy. Daniel Miller in *Books Go to War*, contended that "Considering the restraints of wartime, it is remarkable how few ASE books were censored or banned. Before 1944, only [seven] were dropped for political reasons (D. Miller 30). (Unfortunately, Miller did not make clear what the initial winnowing out process by the publishing industry entailed.) Mostly, ASE members chose top contemporary books or classics.

A sample of authors and books on their "rejected" list were: George Santayana's *The Last Puritan* (considered to be vaguely anti-democratic); Zane Grey's *Riders of the Purple Sage* (judged anti-Mormon in its rhetoric); Louis Adamic's

---

<sup>23</sup> Each jacket had four basic flat colors--red, yellow, blue, and black--although the covers were not uniform in appearance.

*Native's Return* (thought to contain passages sympathetic to communism). Adamic's book was later approved when he removed a controversial passage. ASEs that fell under a temporary ban included Catherine Drinker Bowen's biography of Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, *Yankee From Olympus*, Charles A. Beard's history of the United States entitled *The Republic*, and Sumner Welles's opinionated *The Time of Decision* (D. Miller 31-2). James T. Farrell's *Studs Lonigan* had the peculiar distinction of being acceptable to the Army but not to the Navy. In the end, all but Santayana and Grey were printed by ASE.

There are conflicting data regarding the total number of ASE books distributed around the world. In part, the discrepancy may be due to the fact that there were several different publishers involved in production, although all books were issued under the imprint of the Council on Books in Wartime. According to Cole in *Books in Action*, "between 1943 and 1947 [there were] nearly 123 million copies of 3,322 titles" (Cole 3). Yet, another source, John Jamison in his *Books for the Army* (1950), cited "the precise number of volumes delivered to military personnel [as] 122,951,031.... The correct number of titles printed [as] 1,322," a figure with which Daniel Miller concurs. In any event, David G. Wittles in his article, "What the G.I. Reads," made a key point with his synopsis: "In the most murderous struggle in history, millions of men have been going into battle with books as well as guns" (*Saturday Evening Post* June 23, 1945:

11), including mysteries, swashbucklers, westerns, sports books, poetry, past and current fiction, philosophy, humor, and a short list of personal narratives, including *American Guerrilla in the Philippines*, *Brave Men*, and *Up Front*.

Copies of these books went with the troops in the landing vessels on D-Day in Europe, and in the landings at Leyte and Luzon. They were flown to the beachhead at Anzio. They flew the Hump into China....They have been dropped by parachute to lonely isolated posts on South Pacific islands, in India, China, New Guinea, Greenland, Alaska and Africa, brought by transport to some god-forsaken hole where an old telephone directory would be worth more than gold. Fun, relaxation, a chance to forget the war and brass hats and how far away home is...that's what a book means out there (*Sat Even Post* June 23, 1945: 11).

The *Infantry Journal* reviewer of Ingersoll's personal narrative, *The Battle is the Payoff*, asked "every reader who has finished with his copy to forward it to an Army camp library or see that it gets into the hands of at least one American soldier." He further advised that "there isn't a [rookie] soldier who won't be a better soldier for having read *The Battle is the Payoff*" since it offered insight and strength to those who had not yet faced genuine battle by showing them what the future holds and how others coped. And practiced soldiers particularly sought personal narratives covering campaigns with which they had been involved.

In interviews that sounded canned, servicemen expressed how much they looked forward to reading: "These books helped in no little manner to preserve my sanity;" "They made me feel a part of civilization;" "It would be a bad bargain to

win territories, but lose the magic kingdom which lives in books." (*Sat Even Post* June 23, 1945: 91-92). Moreover, an article in *Publisher's Weekly* entitled, "Soldiers Who Read," claimed that, "Many who are stationed at quiet posts will become readers in spite of themselves" (Sept. 11, 1943: 904). The long distances and time consumed in air and ocean travel as well as waiting for task forces to form and move into theaters of operation gave the men plenty of leisure to read.

No doubt, many others were too preoccupied with staying alive or too busy taking advantage of their limited time abroad to bother with much reading. Supreme Court Chief Justice William Rehnquist, oddly enough, did not remember the ASEs from his fighting days. "In a letter...he explained that during the war men his age had more pressing concerns," (D. Miller 29) than what books had to offer. For the most part, however, the dual factors of widespread access to books and long periods of waiting between battles caused a generation of Americans to develop a taste for reading. In fact, soldiers spent more time reading than the average civilian (Tebbel *History* 10). To the pleasure of the publishing industry, the number of readers grew even greater when veterans capitalized on the generous educational opportunities of the GI Bill of Rights.

One particular book was officially issued to every man along with a uniform and gun: a pocket-sized *New Testament*.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> In addition to the *Bible's* supposed spiritual value, an allegedly true tale circulated throughout the Army when newspapers carried an unverified story about a soldier who

In Tebbel's estimation, "The public became acutely and emotionally aware of what this distribution could mean in specific cases when they read Captain Eddie Rickenbacker's [personal narrative] *Seven Came Through* about his twenty-one days lost in the Pacific with seven companions on three small life rafts after their plane crashed" (Tebbel *History* 33). Reflecting the attitude of others lost at sea, the famous religious passage read:

Bartek had a *New Testament* in his jumper pocket. Watching him read it, the thought came to me that we might all profit by his example.... With the *New Testament* as an inspiration, we held morning and evening prayers. The rafts were pulled together making a rough triangle. Then, each in turn, one of us would read a passage. None of us, I must confess, showed himself to be very familiar with them, but thumbing the book we found a number that one way or another bespoke our needs (Rickenbacker 33).

Still, the personal narrative, more than any other book published during the war, rivaled the *Bible* in terms of its blessing to Americans. Because the genre was simultaneously a propaganda and money-making proposition, it smoothly melded the public interest of government to the private interest of

---

was saved from a direct hit to the heart when a metal-covered *Bible* he purposely kept close to his soul (in his chest pocket) deflected a bullet. Manufacturers of metal-covered Bibles, subsequently, promoted such products as "Armored Bibles," "Heart-Shield Bibles," and "Shields of Faith." Explanatory notes extolled the "armored *New Testament*" as a protective device, "capable of deflecting bullets, shrapnel, or bayonets," to save a life. "It fits in a uniform pocket and protects the heart. Consumers were urged to send their loved ones a "Shield of Faith" today (PW May 13, 1944).

The promise of protection was never substantiated. Tests proved, to the contrary, that the thin metal cover not only could not stop bullets, it would probably cause more serious wounds by distorting the impact.



companies. The overwhelming discrimination and discretion that characterized the book industry reflected a desire (or perceived obligation) to work for the good of the state.

What specific needs and aspirations did wartime narratives serve for the average reader? How can one establish the relevance of the genre to ordinary readers without interviewing them, preferably at the time? Unfortunately, a search through the growing body of autobiographies and memoirs of the war years reveals no reference to these books. Perhaps, a survey of the commonly recurring themes and attitudes toward the nature of World War II battles found in a cross-section of personal narratives might indicate what appeal they had for readers. They include: (a) First and foremost, the generally reassuring idea that Americans were going to win; (b) Americans were fighting a just cause in which Freedom was at stake for Europe and Asia as well as the United States; (c) Americans have reason to be proud of the average soldier, sailor, and Marine because he was fighting with courage, dignity, and initiative even though he was not by nature military-minded; (d) American servicemen could not wait to get home and return to normal life; (e) Women were meant to be on the peripheries of war, functioning as loyal wives, preservers of the home, loving caregivers, and sacrificing workers (although one finds exceptions to this rule in *Daybreak for Our Carrier*, *They Called It "Purple Heart Valley,"* and one or two others);

(f) American forces were strengthened by their ethnic and even racial diversity.

Another way to gauge reader response is to examine the way specific texts were promoted. Not many blurbs endowed personal narratives with timeless qualities or lasting value. The exceptions predicted that, "When this war is done, it will be books like Robert J. Casey's *Torpedo Junction* that we rely upon for the story of when and how;" and *Guadalcanal Diary* will have been "An unforgettable chapter in the history of the U.S. Marines." Promotions of firsthand accounts, instead, emphasized the authority of the eye-witness. Experiencing the war made one a reliable and trustworthy source, according to authors and publishers. On the whole, ads stated that these authors have performed a courageous, energetic, and ultimately worthwhile exercise in gathering and reporting news:

Tregaskis...a correspondent who arrived on one of the first landing barges...was right with them, taking his chances with the rest, reporting everything that happened as he saw it with his own eyes. He wore a "C" band on his arm, and he carried no gun, but he had to duck Jap bullets as the others did.

Yet, the major pitch of newspaper and magazine advertisers was that, without having actually participated, personal narrative readers would be able to vicariously "experience" some aspect of the war. The advertisement for *Into the Valley* promoted this idea:

What is it really like to fight Japs in the Jungle? If you'd like to experience with all five senses the actualities of jungle

fighting, if you'd like to know exactly how it feels to move in against an enemy you can't see, to be trapped in an impossible position with death hurtling at you from all sides, to get out of it and bring out the men who went in with you, read at once.

Again, the large 3/4 page ad in the *New York Times Book Review* section for *To All Hands: An Amphibious Adventure* by Lt. John Mason Brown made the necessarily fallacious claim that "*this is it: This is how it feels to be aboard a convoy bound for battle.....This is how you team up with ships whose home ports are the other side of the world.*" A more genuine spiel about Ira Wolfert explained that, "He has seen what an American looks like when he fights," so he can give "you the very core of the American fighting spirit." In sum, prospective consumers were invited to join "history in the making," for reading these narratives was "an experience in participation" as reviewers repeatedly alleged. And if all else failed, audiences could always rely on such tales for loads of excitement and harrowing adventure!

## CHAPTER 5: NECESSARY HEROES, EXPENDABLE MEN

Robert Trumbull's *The Raft* was one of the first World War II narrative to be published. Also, as the first of many "survivor" tales in the genre (see Chapter 9), it gave the American fighting spirit full definition, depicting what Admiral Chester A. Nimitz recognized as "American steadfastness and endurance in the face of desperate trouble" (*Library Journal* Sept. 1942: 105). Robert Trumbull, city editor of the *Honolulu Advertiser*, related the harrowing story of three navy men adrift on the Pacific for thirty-four days in a rubber raft told to him by Harold F. Dixon, the highest ranking man in the group. In an unusual move for non-fiction, Trumbull, the accredited author, employed a first-person narrative technique, but the speaker was not he; the "I" was Chief Petty Officer, Harold Dixon.

The story was simple and sensational sea-adventure fare. Three Navy men flying a reconnaissance mission in search of Japanese submarine activity lost their bearings and the aircraft carrier on which they were based. They eventually ran out of gas and had to ditch in the sea. For more than a month, floating across 1,000 miles of inconstant ocean, the downed fliers struggled to stay alive on a 4 x 8 foot rubber raft (the inside dimensions were a mere 40 x 80 inches). During the course of struggle, their numb, shrunken stomachs

went without food for a week at a time. Since they drank only what they collected from sporadic rainfall, they were constantly thirsty and nearly died of dehydration. Due to the confined space, the rough seas, and the vigilant watch that they kept, sleep was difficult to achieve:

Imagine [sleeping] doubl[ed] up on a tiny mattress, with the strongest man you know striking the underside as hard as he could with a baseball bat, twice every three seconds, while someone else hurdles buckets of cold salt water in your face (Trumbull 24).

On top of everything else, their clothes had washed away to shreds and "the sun's rays came down like red-hot corkscrews and cooked our brains." They felt "like birds on a spit" beneath a flaming torch every rainless day, in an endless cycle, burning, blistering, peeling, and burning again. At night they suffered the opposite problem--their garments became clammy and cold. Sharks threatened the boat and one even chewed off the tips of a crewmate's fingers. When gale winds struck, the sea banged against their faces, stinging their eyes and filling their mouth with brackish water. (Ironically, no one ever got seasick.)

The heat, cold, hunger, and tedium strained their bodies to the point of blackout and corroded their consciousness to the point of delirium. But working together, they stubbornly fought off despair, defeat, and death. They also managed to live because they were in the best of health from the start; Navy training had made their physiques husky and hardened. And by eating raw fish and drinking rainwater whenever they ingeniously caught some on their tongues or in clean rags,

they were sustained just enough. Finally, crudely tracking the raft's coordinates on the front of a life jacket and controlling the direction of the craft as best they could, they eventually "sailed"<sup>25</sup> to an island with friendly natives.

Other less tangible factors contributed to their survival, according to Captain Dixon. Above all, a positive attitude was essential. Dixon explained that he refrained from sharing his sense of doom and misgivings with the boys, for that might have lowered their morale. Radioman and Gunner Gene Aldrich and Bomber Tony Postula maintained a cheerful, confident, and professionally calm pose, too. In addition, the act of prayer gave them something to do and indeed became the high spot of their evenings. They discovered of one another that all had been reared in some religious atmosphere, but subsequently had drifted away from the church. Now, they called on God anew either to bless their loved ones or make rain. "Despite our elaborate irreverence," referring to the fact that they interrupted their prayers to sing "It Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo'," "there was no denying that the prayer had made us feel better. Gene, who had more piety in his nature than either Tony or I, took evident satisfaction. His mind now was obviously clean of worries or self-reproaches" (Trumbull 57). Other than a faith in God, "continual practice of deliberate idiocy"

---

<sup>25</sup> Dixon resented people who said or insinuated that they "drifted," instead of "sailed." "I was determined to sail it if I could. And I maintain that I did sail it. I worked like the devil to sail it..."

prevented them from going insane in their exposure, starvation, and thirst. For example, mornings they burlesqued a Park Avenue drawing-room manner while pretending to sip coffee. In the end, thoughts of home such as Gene noting that "'Back in Missouri the peach trees bloom swell,'" besides "there [being] a lot of squirrels" for shooting, and Tony talking about his girlfriend, raised their cumulative hopes and spirits.

Perhaps most importantly, the forceful leadership of Chief Petty Officer Dixon, a man with infinite resources and sagacity, kept not only the raft afloat but also his shipmates' spirits. Early on, he informed his men: "'We've got to be all for one and one for all,' I explained, 'but when a final decision has to be made by one of us for us all, the captain's word has got to be the law.'" When he tried to teach them navigation, he was not sorry that their sun-dulled minds could not absorb the lessons, "as this left the responsibility for our progress entirely in my hands." Skilled in seacraft with twenty-two years of service behind him and enormously sure of his strength and determination, Dixon inspired an equal measure of these virtues in the less experienced men, neither of whom possessed "any extraordinary advantages. One was a farm boy, the other was the son of a Polish immigrant. They had joined the colors to fight a war....it was good to have these lads along." Upon rescue, Pastula and Aldrich were cited for "extraordinary courage, fortitude, strength of character and exceptional endurance."

Dixon, moreover, received the Navy Cross for "extraordinary heroism, exceptional determination, resourcefulness, skilled seamanship, excellent judgment and highest quality leadership."

The resonating theme was that a salt-of-the-sea figure, along with two men in their early twenties, displayed considerable discipline, fortitude, resourcefulness, and indomitability--traits needed to overcome nature and conquer the human enemy. Trumbull expressed in the preface that "they looked like any three men of our navy such as I might meet on Waikiki Beach....That was the wonder of the story to me: they were just three men." He was implying that they were typical of their warring compatriots. Furthermore, the grit and grace they displayed were what hundreds of thousands would soon be called upon to exhibit in the face of even greater obstacles. During the gloomiest days of the allied war, Americans pinned their hopes on such dauntless icons. And when the nation was preparing to send millions of others like them into deadly battle, Americans recalled the stamina and psyche of these three American men, simultaneously cast in an ordinary and in an epical mold. Hence, the scenario offered comfort to the home front. It uplifted and warmed hearts because it featured the attitudes that lie dormant in most during times of peace, but which Americans knew were potentially within themselves as earlier historical moments of glory had testified. Newspaper ads promoted the book as "an episode in our history cut from the same cloth as Valley



Forge, the Alamo....What these men did is an epic of human courage and ingenuity." One reviewer claimed that,

This tale, one of the oldest and most frequently repeated narratives of the sea, is always fresh--always gripping. It is encouraging to learn anew that our generations, often called soft and decadent, can "take it" as well as any hardy seafarers of the past--take it not only physically, but with spiritual fortitude and grace of character. These three modern American sailors, ordinary men typical of thousands of their comrades, displayed in their struggle the qualities that will win this war for us, the qualities that pass beyond stamina into living epos (Sat Rev of Lit Aug. 22, 1942: 6).

For many readers, the story recalled epic nobility. A *New Yorker* reviewer said that it was in the tradition of Captain Bligh's legendary survival ordeal (a result of the infamous mutiny on the HMS's *Bounty*), but a "far greater [achievement] than Bligh's voyage." Other reviews noted elements in *The Raft* that resembled those found in past literary and historical voyages, while using such nouns as "epic," "saga," and "chronicle" to reinforce their claims. Critics commended Chief Dixon for being cast in the true heroic mold. Accordingly, not only did the stalwart figure of Chief Dixon assume Olympian proportions, the problems he handled while guiding his little crew to safety on a desert island became Odyssean.

Perhaps critics took their cue from Trumbull/Dixon?, who set a tone of fantasy for the strange and legendary events that followed this first scene: "The sinking of that plane was like a magician's trick. It was there, and then it was gone, and there was nothing left in our big, wet, darkening

world but the three of us and a piece of rubber that was yet a raft" (Trumbull 2). In sum, a mix of sorcery and miracle combined with human capacity successfully to challenge what nature and fate decreed. In more rational terms, the threesome worked together, physically and emotionally supporting one another, as Dixon commanded, thereby surmounting the exigency that sought to dwarf them.

William Lindsey White, who successfully tackled one of the first histories of World War II American combat, met with a greater challenge than Trumbull. His personal narrative was simultaneously expected to be a morale-building enterprise and a depository of information about what it was like for Americans to fight and die. Furthermore, White was covering a period of retreat, surrender, and embarrassment for the American forces. His story of a PT boat crew in and around the Philippines waters after the Japanese forces invaded that American protectorate a month following their December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor occurred simultaneously with Japanese infiltrators forcing the United States to surrender half its territory, and place 26,000 refugees and 83,000 soldiers on half-rations (Keegan *Second WW* 266). By March 12, MacArthur fled to Australia on Roosevelt's orders. Later, when the Japanese opened a final offensive, most of the Americans and Filipinos within the Bataan pocket were suffering from beriberi or other deficiency diseases before embarking on the notorious "death march." The last survivors of the Philippines garrison, who

occupied the island of Corregidor, were shelled into capitulation between April 14 and May 4. The Japanese fleet remained intact, while the United States Pacific Fleet had lost use of all its battleships and large numbers of cruisers and destroyers. While the Japanese strategic horizon looked immense, Americans merely hoped to offset the astonishing triumphs and overpowering position of their enemy.

White was not an eye-witness to the fighting. Rather, he took a lead from the Navy publicity department that suggested a good piece might come of various early PT adventures in the South Pacific. The idea appealed to White, so he immediately interviewed the officers back from Bataan. In White's words, this informant

story was told me largely in the officers' quarters of the Motor Torpedo Boat Station at Melville, Rhode Island, by four young officers of MTB Squadron 3, who were all that was left of the squadron which proudly sailed for the Philippines last summer (*Expendable* vi).

Initially, White developed a shorter piece for *Reader's Digest*. Given that White was recreating the thoughts and experiences of others, when expanding *They Were Expendable* into a full-length book, he had to make careful decisions about the shape of the narrative, the characterization of the participants, the language of the description, and the central themes to develop.

When the war began, White was a journalist who had worked on the staffs of the *Washington Post*, *Fortune*, the *New York Post* as European correspondent, and *Reader's Digest*. Before holding these positions, he wrote the novel *What*

*People Said*, filled with the left-leaning social consciousness prevalent at the time in America. White was already committed to President Roosevelt's interventionist policies even before the Japanese sneak attack.<sup>26</sup> A lengthy report he contributed to the collection of essays entitled *Zero Hour: A Summons to the Free* (1940), debunked widely held isolationist notions<sup>27</sup> by recounting his worrisome travel experiences through war-torn Europe at the outbreak of hostilities between Germany and Anglo-French forces. White's article "I Saw It Happen" was specifically aimed at the youth of free nations, particularly Americans, who he thought had the largest stake in--and would eventually have the ultimate responsibility of--resisting the world-conquering ambitions of totalitarian governments. White cautioned not to underestimate the zeal and objectives of Hitler's Nazism. "Mercy and tenderness and love of fellow men...", he declared, "are not in the Nazi makeup" (in Benet 165). According to White, Germany in 1940 was a "well-organized madhouse, run by the most pathological inmates" (in Benet 172). Hence, White considered isolationists "very nice people dream-walking in the face of terrible danger" (in Benet 172) if they still believed Hitler meant no harm to the

---

<sup>26</sup> In 1940, polls indicated that one-third of the American population who was in favor of war.

<sup>27</sup> In the preface to *Zero Hour*, editor Stephen Vincent Benet commented that American trust in the "Maginot Ocean myth" was as foolhardy as the French trust in their Maginot Line and could be equally disastrous.

world or posed no threat to American freedom. White termed the United States a land with a divided youth,

free to shrug its shoulders and say "all this is none of my making, so why is it a responsibility of mine," but also a land in which there are men who will rise as men have risen before, who are proud to fight and willing to die [for] concept[s] of life higher than [those] which the totalitarian states would impose (in Benet 174-175)

Armed with this viewpoint, White's technique was to humanize conflict by personalizing the participants. In *They Were Expendable*, he captured the irrepressible spirit of the men who fought in an early-stage losing campaign of World War II. He presented the "treasure of American young men" (what FDR labeled the country's D-Day invaders of Europe) as brave individuals risking their lives for the greater goods of democracy, family, and the American way of life. As a result, his narrative was calculated to make the home folks proud of their countrymen, brothers, sons, and sweethearts, despite the debacles of the first Pacific challenges.

The title he chose signaled the theme that in war high ranking officials sometimes consider men (and everything else for that matter) more easily and efficiently replaced than rescued or protected. In the beginning, White admitted not fully comprehending the young naval officer who said, "we were expendable....They are expending you and that machine gun to get time. They don't expect to see either one again." It troubled him to think that American military leaders knowingly sacrificed lives to stall the Japanese perhaps a minute or two, and that sailors were ordered to hold position

until killed or captured. Yet, his narrative detailed the tragic effort to gain some time, in large part to rescue General MacArthur, who happened to be with a contingent of other generals and technicians on Luzon. As *They Were Expendable* made plain, the military deliberately sacrificed the lives of American men for the sake of larger objectives, deeming the safety of Douglas MacArthur and his elite company more important than roughly one thousand PT boaters. In effect, American boys could be instruments of the state just as much as German youth.

The notion of expendability was subsequently explored frequently in personal narratives. What value did the individual have in such a setting? Here, Ira Wolfert confronted that problem in *Battle for the Solomons*:

Men who have believed all their lives (as all those who are convinced about democracy believe) that men are more important than property, have on occasion to throw over their beliefs and value such property as ships and planes and battle real-estate over their own men....for nothing and nobody, no personal tragedies or disasters or selfishness, or any human emotion at all, can be allowed to stand in the way of winning (*Solomons* 195).

This was the American military's position from the start in the South Pacific. As told to White by Lt. John Bulkeley, when aggressive Japanese planes flew over Manila Bay, the only remaining United States defense was a tiny flotilla of oversized motorboats and the sailors who manned them. To make the difficulty and terrible odds of the mission understood, White called it America's little Dunkirk, drawing a comparison to what the British expeditionary forces

faced when they miraculously managed to evacuate the Continent.

The dilemma of the individual minimized by great, impersonal forces was a central subject of the documentary in the Depression era and it similarly served to shape the wartime personal narrative. The main strategy adopted by White and others was to dramatize small unit action and personal heroism, thereby highlighting the importance of individual agency and stressing that Americans were people who did not wait for fate, but took the initiative, went on the offensive, and seized control of their destiny. Yet anxieties persisted beneath the surface. White was clearly upset that his subjects were doomed to be cogs in a machine, their lives sacrificed by others. White showed that those who died were not dealt a fair enough hand. For men were run completely ragged in a disorganized operation, which lacked sufficient communication lines. They were "doomed... knowing that they were expendable like ammunition and that it was part of the war plan that they should sell themselves as dearly as possible before they were killed...by the Japs" (*Expendable* 95). In an analogy between the men on the PT boats and the capitalist marketplace, the author observed that the men on the PT boats were "selling themselves" for as much as they could get. Indeed, the determination of such men in the face of insuperable odds awed the author. Faced with a situation they did not create and could not control,

the men he chronicled acted with courage, decency, and dignity.

The willingness of the United States to expend men, combined with the willingness of men and women to expend themselves, engendered this book's paradox: Though totalitarian states treat individuals as expendable in the service of state power, democracies attribute intrinsic worth to every person. Yet in order to defend democracy during World War II, it became necessary for individuals to sacrifice themselves for the good of the state.

Readers might have experienced a confluence of mixed emotions. That is, anger toward a nation that would jeopardize its young people--supplying them with eggshell-like boats without an ounce of armored steel and with fuel said to have been half gas, half rust--blended with pride in those sailors who, ignorant of their role in the big military picture, nevertheless accepted their unenviable assignment and fought with minimum grievances:

when something poops out, and help doesn't come, and everything goes to hell, we can only hope help didn't come in time for some sensible reason like bad weather conditions. ...We hope, but at the time we can't be sure, and we get mad (*Expendable* 187).

Or the tone became one of peaceful resignation: "You know the situation, and you don't mind." A nurse in the book named Peggy was aware that she too was discardable. She foreshadowed that everyone there "would finish up the war in the southern islands when the Japs got around to mopping up



the last American resistance," and that she would die, never to see her home again.

Despite some gloomy banter, there were always PT boaters who brought a cheerful angle to a desperate situation, thus raising the spirits of pessimists. Morale stayed high and the lonely crew members "never lost faith." In fact, when the "Admiral [contemplated] sending boats on a raid off Lingayen [everyone] was rarin' to go." What excited them most was the possibility of staging an offensive. Upon sinking a Japanese cruiser and torpedoing an auxiliary aircraft carrier, "they rejoiced in the knowledge that they had probably sunk a hundred times [their] own combined tonnage in enemy warships." "It felt good seeing [Japanese] spinning around or kneeling and then slumping as the bullets hit." Statements such as these indicated that Americans were so eager to avenge the attack on Pearl Harbor that they could take pleasure in the sight of Japanese mowed down by bullets. The *esprit de corps* in this book stood in marked contrast to later depictions of GIs merely intent on doing the job in order to return home to normal life.

There were multiple episodes of dazzling high-speed pursuit that would later be incorporated into a Hollywood film starring John Wayne at the helm. "We gave our boats full throttle and began circling and twisting, both to dodge the bombs [fired by Japanese destroyers] and to get a shot at them. Our gunners loved it--it was their first crack at the Japs" (*Expendable 19*).

Br-r-r-r-r-r! [the Japanese] opened on [us] with machine guns. It looked like a fire hose of tracer bullets headed for our cockpit ....But we were pouring the fire back at them. Our four 50 calibers were rattling away. Bulkeley had picked up an automatic rifle and was pumping it into them, and even the men down in the engine room hearing the row, had grabbed their rifles and come up to fire over the sides...pouring the steel down into [them] (*Expendable* 24).

White turned the war into boyhood games like cops and robbers or cowboys and Indians, games they were recently playing on streets and backyards of American neighborhoods.<sup>28</sup> Then again, much of the fighting was of the hide-and-seek variety, from coves, to backwaters and open seas, then back to hugging the coastline. While the cost in men, gas, equipment, and 70 X 20 feet plywood speedboats appeared horrific, the carnage was obscured by the glorification of rousing fights with the enemy.

Concentrating on the thrilling aspects of *They Were Expendable*, reviewers failed to mention the sad fate of many Americans, the "little guys--the ones who are expended--[who] never get to see the broad picture of the war, never find out the reasons back of the moves or failures to move"

---

<sup>28</sup> In "Why Men Love War," William Broyles contends that there is a connection between the thrill of war and the games children play, "the endless games of cowboys and Indians and war," the games that ended with 'Bang, bang you're dead.'" This type of war as fantasy, he writes, is the same emotion that touches us in war movies and books, where death is without consequence, "and not something that ends with terrible finality as blood from our fatally fragile bodies flows out onto the mud" (Broyles 61). Real war, according to Broyles is a brutal and deadly game: "No sport I had ever played brought me to such deep awareness of my physical and emotional limits....Nothing I had ever studied was as creative as the small unit tactics of Vietnam" (58).

(*Expendable* 187). These sailors epitomized the phrase "yours is not to wonder why, yours is just to do or die." Instead, typical enthusiasm about the book's value came from *The Christian Science Monitor*, which called it "an adventure story, a romance, and a field day for [war] worshippers." The *New Republic* remarked that "Mr. White has produced a really thrilling story of heroic achievement," and the *New York Times* called it "adventure packed." Other major reviewers concurred that it was a tale of heroic achievement, "gallantry, hardship, action."

White avoided delivering scenes of suffering. The only casualty recorded with understatement was of an ensign whose job it was to ferry unspecified wounded to a distant safe hospital. He was said merely to have taken a bullet through "both his ankles." Moreover, White casually managed to gloss over the worst news: Of the original seventy-eight officers and enlisted personnel attached to Motor Torpedo Boat, Squadron Three, there remained alive just the four young officers whom White wrote about, "and one other since arrived from Australia." That seventy-three servicemen expended themselves in the defense of their country was not stated outright; the names of Squadron Three's casualties, however, were listed at the back of the book.

Instead, what continuously emerged out of the rubble of these expendables who battled on with little hope was the strongest sense of American heroism. "Green kids who had no idea what the score was" fought without fear. "Even" a black

from a merchant marine boat with a shoulder bone sticking out behaved stoically. They put a tourniquet on him "and never once did he whimper--a very brave guy." Another memorable episode of bravery involved the work of women nurses attending to wounded men who poured into the infirmary, tracking blood an inch thick. "We could hardly keep on our feet, for blood is as slippery as crude oil." Yet the female hospital attendants conducted themselves professionally, although "so blood-splattered they looked like butchers."

Overall, White taught his audience that people back home should not "waste hours, days and sometimes weeks," while others "give their lives to save minutes." Stephen Benet took that message to heart; the uneasiness he felt after reading *They Were Expendable*, he told readers, stemmed from the complacency still apparent at home. That is, for the time being the casualties may be small, but many good men would die needlessly if indifference, ignorance, selfishness, and smugness persisted. If production lagged at home, men abroad would not be armed with the necessary materiel and ammunition to protect themselves and destroy their foe. Less tangibly, if men on the lines psychologically detected a lack of support from civilians they might not fight wholeheartedly. Benet said the book "demonstrated also that the rest of us still have to do a damn sight better than we are doing, in backing up our best, before we defeat the tough and resolute enemies whose aim is not merely our defeat but our destruction" (*NY Times* Sept. 12, 1942: 5). Finally,

harkening back to what he espoused in *Zero Hour* (1940), Benet chastised Americans who were still neither prepared to intervene in world affairs, nor willing to make the sacrifices needed to accomplish such an awesome undertaking:

Well that was the way it was...they didn't have enough and they fought to the last ditch and still it wasn't enough. And so Bataan fell, and Corregidor, and the islands we thought we might hold. They fell because we didn't have the planes, the material, the trained men to hold them against a modern and well-equipped enemy moving in great force. We might have them in six months, but war don't wait six months for you to get ready. The fault was in the Army, Navy, the Administration? Let us remember, please certain voices in Congress, certain editorials in newspapers, and the general temper of our people before we ascribe that fault to anybody but ourselves (*NY Times* Sept. 12, 1942: 5).

It stands to reason that Benet blamed the fall of Bataan and Corregidor on a lack of military preparedness. White and Benet, having crusaded for American entry into the European war, were determined to discredit the isolationists and thereby silence anybody who questioned the sacrifices needed to win the war.

Civilian and soldier had far more reason to feel good about themselves when White released his second book, *Queens Die Proudly*. He employed the same winning narrative strategy, making it appear as though he were transcribing what others had said by subordinating his own voice. The men of the Creaky B-24 spoke in a colloquial and sincere manner. Like *They Were Expendable*, *Queens Die Proudly* revealed the nature and character of the men who sacrificed their lives

for the people at home. *Queens Die Proudly* told about a Flying Fortress christened on the side of its nose with a Disney cartoon image of a hybrid bird, half swan and half goose, dubbed "The Swoose."<sup>29</sup> Underneath the Swoose, there appeared the unpretentious sentence, "It Flies," playing off this Flying Fortress' ragged appearance and marginal functionality. The Swoose muddled through a series of actions across a wide landscape from the Philippines to Borneo and Java to Australia. Ultimately, the plane was demoted to transport missions because of its unworthy fighting fitness. *Queens Die Proudly* chronicled the odyssey of a fighter bomber and its crew, from a narrow survival during the Japanese raid on the Clark Air Force Base near Manila, through months of dangerous engagement. Though the machine was overmatched, its workers disrupted the enemy's advance in all sectors until it was relieved of duty.

A considerably more popular air force saga was *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo*, the events of which were related by Capt. Ted Lawson to an International News Service Foreign Correspondent and later Sports Writer for the *New York Herald Tribune*, Bob Considine. Officially, Lawson authored and

---

<sup>29</sup> This iconographic fad was widespread. Images often evoked a childhood home, a place that in some instances GIs just recently left behind. Most often, illustrators drew something on the fuselage they thought would possess the talismanic power to bring their plane luck, if not strength. "B-25s took on such names as Hari Kari-er..., Anger Angel, Whirling Dervish, Fickle Finger of Fate and one fellow painted the chemical formula for TNT on the side of his ship" (Lawson 25), "bragging like [a kid] about how fast and how far [it] could go" (Lawson 35).

Considine edited. Unfortunately, the extent of Considine's editing is undocumented.

The opening quarter of the text focused on the intricate preparation for the historic Doolittle Raid. The retaliatory mission would be performed by a group of B-17s, destination Tokyo. The tricky part was ordering these huge planes to depart from the short runway of a carrier, which would be cruising as close to Japan as militarily advisable. After months of simulated practice, weeks of waiting, hours of geography lessons, and last minute pep talks, the high drama began.

Of course, there were one or two snags to overcome. When a Japanese patrol boat that apparently spotted the cruiser was in turn spotted by the United States, a much earlier bomber lift-off was scheduled, necessarily farther from the target areas. Anxious about the possibility of detection, General Doolittle insisted that flyers travel only twenty feet above wave crest height in order to escape enemy radar.

Finally, Mt. Fujiyama and "land that barely rose above the surface of the water" loomed before the crews, appearing like the pictures from the Japanese stamps they collected as children. Oddly enough, three different groups of Japanese waved from the ground at the B-17s. Lawson reasoned that "the emblems of our planes were the old style: blue circle and white star and red ball in the middle. Maybe that's what confused them. I'm sure we weren't hailed as liberators."

Lawson also snatched a fleeting glimpse of the playground where a lot of children were waving up. At the same moment, he caught a "quick look at a tall flagpole from which fluttered a Japanese flag." He described it "like getting hit in the chest very hard. This was for keep[s]." Then, the planes were over Tokyo, a city that "spreads all over creation like Los Angeles," and just as they were dropping their bombs, "a black cloud [of flak] appeared about one hundred yards in front of us and rushed past at great speed." Lawson had to nose down so low exiting metropolitan airspace that "he passed a locomotive close enough to see the surprised face of the engineer." With the fuel tank low, due to the unanticipated distant take-off, and darkness falling as they approached China, Pilot Lawson made an emergency landing on an inviting beach to save both crew and plane.

If the raid on Tokyo was the exciting climax, the next series of events comprised the fascinating denouement. For as Lawson's plane approached the beach, the fuel ran out and the engine died (along with hopes for a safe landing) bringing curses of "desperation and disappointment [which were] drowned out by the most terrifying noise I ever heard." Lawson realized that he was still strapped into his "pilot's seat on the sand in fifteen feet of water" with a severely gashed leg. The rest of the dazed and wounded crawled onto the beach. They later made contact with Chinese guerrillas who helped them evade Japanese search parties by trucking



them to safe haven at Chunking. There, Lawson had his gangrenous leg amputated by Chinese doctors.

Although the official government communiqué of the raid itself was blasted all over the media as soon as it occurred, the information contained in Lawson's book had to wait nearly a year to clear Navy censorship. The manuscript sat on a Random House desk in the mean time.

Why was the military so cautious? To begin with, the raid was plagued by serious controversy from start to finish. W.L. White, in a review of *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo*, hypothesized a propaganda motive behind the risky attack: it symbolized the first aggressive air offensive in the war as well as a sort of retaliation against Japan, duplicating the Imperial Navy's hit on Hawaii a few months before. Additionally, White claimed that the assignment clearly had characteristics of a suicide mission, which would account for the bitterness displayed among many airmen at the time. Maybe White was right. In the end, the Doolittle mission lost every plane, eleven airmen were captured or killed, several seriously wounded. In retrospect the raid had a sprinkle of strategic value mixed with handful of positive effects on civilian morale.

White submitted that many would "concede" the importance of morale in wartime and encourage every effort in that behalf, but he wondered "if people, in order to sustain their interest in war, need to be amused and thrilled" (*NY Times*, July 11, 1943: 1). As he searingly stated,

such amusements should be provided by Bob Hope or Sally Rand [Burlesque strip-teaser] at bond rallies and scrap drives, and it is hardly province of the Air Corps to expend its precious blood and equipment rescuing the home front from boredom (Ibid).

In direct contrast to the above kind of criticism, Ted Lawson--who had every right to feel betrayed by his country--expressed no anger about Doolittle's decision and no regrets about his own personal involvement. While White questioned the wisdom of what he deemed a suicide mission, Lawson embraced the assignment. In short, he was willing to sacrifice his life in order to stir American determination. One could argue that Lawson was operating on the same principle as the *kamikaze* pilots. He reflected in his published memoir, *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo* that

I thought it over for a while, trying to see the whole thing objectively....We'll probably never know just how much damage we caused. The important thing, I figured was that our people got a life out of it. It made them sure that we could go to work on the Japs, no matter how far away they were (Lawson 170).

Participant/narrator Lawson, in *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo*, in contrast to civilian/political commentator White, appeared to be very grateful that the attack's press coverage might boost civilian morale. Even Lawson's understanding of "retaliation" expunged the negative connotation of the word:

There was also the sobering thought that the same Japanese aircraft carriers which must have brought the bombers and certainly brought the fighters and torpedo planes to Hawaii might even now be on the way to our Coast. And too, there was a helpless, filled-up want-to-do something feeling that they were coming--that we'd have to go all the way over there to punch back and get even. That's the way it turned out

(Lawson 14).

Lawson conceptualized the mission not as an act of revenge but as a means of prevention.

Yet, the most significant aspect of Lawson's history, one thing he could not soften, or euphemize, or indeed pussyfoot was the fact that he lost a leg (in addition to all his teeth). His mouth had been so bent out of shape, it was doubtful that seeing Lawson in person after the event, one would have connected him with the frontispiece photograph of a poised All-American boy, huge grin, aviation goggles, and rakishly tilted captain's hat. In general, documentaries of the war avoided pictures of dead bodies. In this particular case, editors preferred to show a handsome, smiling young Lawson, rather than expose the badly wounded veteran who wrote the book.

Yet despite the fact that the author had to associate his own condition "with the condition of the [downed] plane...[whose] engine had been ripped off the wing, leaving a tangle of broken wire and cable" (Lawson 75) and break this awful news to his wife, he did not harbor an ounce of ill-will. "Some people have asked me if I find myself getting bitter. It's just the opposite. I'm proud, honest." An ideal type of fighting man, coveted by officers, Lawson acted in the romantic tradition of *Semper Fidelis*. Once he signed up for the Doolittle expedition (According to Doolittle, it was "perfectly all right for any of you to drop out.") , he never looked back. Moreover, he defended his country's

decision in word and in deed, even though he was not clamoring to be there, and even though he was not confident that it was a mission well-conceived. Lawson's persona served as an exemplar for all GIs.

In the last section of the book, shifting attention from himself, Lawson showed "what happened at the time to [others] who took part in the raid on Japan." What followed was a four page list of the men, their next of kin and addresses, arranged under "Missing in Action," "Interned in Russia Prisoners of War," "Presumed POWs and Killed in Action," and "Participated in Raid and Reached Safety Thereafter."

The story of this half year in one man's life promised big bucks in book and later movie sales. *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo* was made into a movie by MGM Studios when the brutal, often discouraging war with Japan raged. The screen writer, Dalton Trumbo (blacklisted in the McCarthy era) was experienced in scripting morals; he crafted the anti-war novel *Johnny Got His Gun*. "[N]ot known for his wrath... Trumbo [was] magnanimous compared to most writers who endorsed the national position that hatred of Japan is an inalienable right," wrote Koppes in *Hollywood Goes to War* (Koppes 231). In fact, Trumbo was being faithful to the text. In the printed narrative, Lawson had entered only one value-laden judgment of the Japanese. Engaged with Lawson in a friendly chat, a Chinese interpreter said, "those Japanese are smart guys. They know that education produces leaders. So they attempted to crush the source--our universities and

schools." This remark alerted Americans to the intelligence and cunning of their adversary. To its credit, the movie version skipped all opportunity for anti-Japanese speech. The on-screen Lawson persona "concedes he does not like the Japanese; but on the other hand, he does not hate them either....a rare confession by an American fighting man in films dealing with the Japanese" (Koppes 267) given American stereotypes of the Japanese as ruthless murderers, perpetrators of the "rape" of Nanking, and of the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor.

Hollywood directors and writers, in their everlasting search for timely, stirring melodrama, managed to remodel the story of the Doolittle raid in a manner that would define the "Japs" as an implacable, pernicious, and above all, savage foe, extracting every bit of pro-American and anti-Japanese sentiment the story would yield. Twentieth Century's *The Purple Heart* (which preceded the release of MGM's film adaptation of Lawson's narrative by six months) was a blatant example of the "hate-the-Japs" material that dominated many Hollywood war films. In comparison to *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo*, *The Purple Heart* was more hyperbolic in singing the praises of the American grain, while grimly racist in its projection of all Japanese. Darryl F. Zanuck wrote and produced the movie shortly after publishing his own personal narrative, *Tunis Expedition*. In promoting the film, he proclaimed *The Purple Heart*,

an heroic, patriotic tribute to the men who gave their lives in the Tokyo raid....This is

a story of real bravery, of men who honestly have Purple Hearts....The army will love it, as it visualizes the application of everything soldiers are taught (Columbia University, Random House Archives, Letter Dec. 3, 1943, from Zanuck to Cerf).

The above statement placed the film's essence in the most positive light.

Zanuck apparently wanted to punish the Japanese for their violation of the international rules of war by treating the Doolittle raiders not as prisoners of war but as criminals to be put on trial, condemned, tortured, and executed:

I, for one, am sick and tired of the idea of treating the Japs with kid gloves--and the fact remains that they did try eight of the Doolittle aviators in a civil court and convicted and executed four of them (Columbia University, Random House Archives, Letter Dec. 3, 1943, from Zanuck to Cerf).

Though subsequently much has been made of the racism contained in *The Purple Heart*, it is interesting that Zanuck felt he acted mercifully and tastefully in refraining from shooting the actual torture and executions of the American prisoners. These crimes were "all done off-stage by suggestion," Zanuck said in a letter to Bennett Cerf. Being an experienced and talented movie-maker, he knew that leaving out the process, yet showing the results of the Japanese atrocities, including a maiming, a tongue chopping, and a mind broken (for which President Roosevelt communicated to Japan his greatest outrage) were sufficiently disturbing and accusatory images. The film's public reception indicated

that it ranked among the most popular and forceful pieces of Hollywood war-movie propaganda.

It is fascinating that the majority of the early narratives concerned the Pacific war, when for many writers and activists, it was Hitler and Mussolini who had caused the urgent push for intervention. Yet, there was little American involvement to report from Europe until 1944. The principal action for United States troops was happening in the Pacific. Given the daunting task of reconquering territories previously overtaken by the lightning sweep of Japanese forces across the Pacific, and the need to defuse the Japanese threat to invade Australia (from already captured parts of New Guinea), America concentrated its initial war efforts on the Pacific. In other words, not yet prepared to fight a global war in 1942, the United States Armed Forces aimed its fire power at the Japanese to block further advances and undo consolidation of conquests. Most of the clashes were short, spectacular, and favorable to the Allies, thus dramatically suited for personal narratives.

When the United States embarked on a total offensive, the land, sea, and air routes to Tokyo were already opened by several successes over the summer and fall of 1942. Most notable was the tide-turning battle of Midway, where the Japanese fleet suffered a disastrous defeat in a day-long air and sea fight. The intense struggle culminated in the destruction of Japan's stronghold on the Solomon Islands, including the first ground offensive on the storied isle of

Guadalcanal. American servicemen's deep involvement in the Pacific and Japan's treachery at Pearl Harbor rendered that nation a greater foe than Germany, thereby causing American attention to focus on the Pacific region. Such factors combined to account for the preponderance of eye-witness narratives set in the Pacific between 1942 and 1943.

Not only was the war a fresh and fascinating curiosity for many Americans, it was also a superb opportunity for publishers to invigorate their line of business. Dozens of personal narratives were released: W.L.J. Baylor's *Last Man Off Wake Island*, J. Belden's *Retreat with Sitwell*, G. Dew's *Prisoner of the Japs*, Joe Foss' *Flying Marine*, V. Haugland's *Letter from New Guinea*, J.D. Horan's *Out in the Boondocks*, C. Lee's *They Call It Pacific*, J.H. Morrill's *South from Corregidor*, J. Redmond's *I Served on Bataan*, E. Rickenbacker's *Seven Came Through*, R.L. Scott's *God Is my Co-Pilot*, W.L. White's *Queens Die Proudly*, S. Willoughby's *I Was on Corregidor*, K. Wheeler's *The Pacific Is My Beat*, and R. Tregaskis's *Guadalcanal Diary*, being the most popular of the 1943 lot.

When Ward Greene, literary agent at King Features Syndicate, received word from Bennett Cerf regarding the prospects of finding a book that covered an important, first American offensive against Japan, it happened that Richard Tregaskis had already mailed Greene a manuscript based on his experiences as correspondent for International News Service. In August and September of 1942, Tregaskis had held "a grand-



stand seat [at] one of the bloodiest cockpits of war, the worst weeks, the almost hopeless weeks [of] the Gethsemane of Guadalcanal" (Columbia U., Random House Archives, Greene letter to Cerf). Tregaskis, in a cable to King Features, summarized his work and business offer as follows:

EYE WRITTEN CENSOR PASSED EIGHTY THOUSAND WORD  
 BOOK DEALING EXPERIENCES GUADALCANAL DIARY  
 FROM WRITTEN EXAMINUTEST [sic] NOTES MADE  
 DAILY BEGINNING TWO WEEKS BEFORE LANDING  
 ABOARD TRANSPORT AND COVERING FIRST GRUELING  
 SEVEN WEEKS ASHORE DURING WHICH EYE WITNESSED  
 PRINCIPAL LAND ACTIONS FROM FRONTTEST LINES  
 ACCOMPANIED ALL EXPEDITIONS EYE FIRST  
 CORRESPONDENT TO LAND GUADALCANAL STAYED  
 LONGEST PERIOD STOP WANT OFFER YOU BOOK  
 SERIALIZATION OR WHATEVER ELSE YOU WANT DO  
 WITH IT BUT I'D LIKE ROYALTIES CUT PROFITS  
 STOP PLEASE WIRE WHETHER WANT IT MOST CORDIAL  
 REGARDS.

--DICK TREGASKIS...\$)#AM  
 (Columbia U., Random House Archives)

Cerf contracted to publish the book after speedily reading the manuscript, and before any of the other nine firms to whom it had been simultaneously submitted for bids in an auction-like procedure (something that had never been done before) had even begun reading it (Cerf 162). It turned out to be a smart pick on Cerf's behalf, becoming a an overnight best seller. Twentieth Century-Fox bought film rights before the January 1943 rush publication date. The original hard-cover sold well in excess of a hundred thousand copies, a first in book sales for Random House. As testimony to its more lasting interest among readers, it appeared in a number of less expensive editions, one from the Book of the Month Club, another in a special edition for the armed forces, as well as a Blue Ribbon Books reprint (cost: one

dollar), and an abridged "picture version in paper format" (cost: one dime).

When American Marines staged their first significant land offensive on Guadalcanal, the entire string of Solomon Islands located at the doorstep of Australia was in Japanese hands. The United States military strategy was to retake Guadalcanal and surrounding areas of sea and air, initially to prevent a convenient and predicted Japanese assault on Australia, and secondarily to begin a process of island hopping to gain control of the ocean islets, atolls, and tiny parcels of land that dotted the vast Pacific. According to American military planners, these small footholds were links in a great chain that stretched from South to North across the Pacific Ocean, strategic objectives for the preparation of the invasion of Japan proper. Therefore, the far-sighted American objective was seizure of airfields necessary for a non-stop offensive prosecution of the war. This process began with an amphibious landing on the beaches of the Japanese-held island, Guadalcanal.

The six-month battle to secure Guadalcanal was the experimental application of that long-term strategy. The 1st Marine Division landed on August 7, 1942 and took the offshore islands of Tulagi, Guavutu, and Tanambogo. The Japanese resolved to retake Guadalcanal, assuming that a breach in their defensive perimeter there would jeopardize the rest of the Southern Area they were controlling. Beginning August 18th "they poured reinforcements into the

island, supported by naval guns and aircraft which continuously attacked its airfield (renamed Henderson Field in honour of a Marine pilot killed at Midway)" (Keegan *Second WW* 291). Repelled at sea, the Japanese fought furiously on land. Due to the unique nature of Pacific island fighting, the elite American troops "learned on Guadalcanal both the professional respect and ethnic hatred they were to feel for the Japanese throughout the Pacific war" (Keegan *Second WW* 292). Keegan also claims that the "[m]en who had fought there bore an aura of endurance which veterans of almost no other Pacific campaign acquired" (Keegan *Second WW* 293).

The struggle played against a background of months of failure and dips of fortune for Americans. "The fact that this was the first move to retake soil from the defeated Japanese guaranteed [its] distinction, and the absence of major...competing European or African campaigns until November guaranteed coverage of the campaign exclusively" (Frank *Guadal* 616). Tregaskis was able to enshrine the incidents forever, covering the off-shore naval bombardment, the beachhead landing, and the arduous jungle fighting. Assigned to General Vandergrift's Marine invasion force, Tregaskis was in the middle of the fray. He was present in the landing craft and alongside the advancing troops where he saw, heard, and smelled the killing.

In at least one sense, the term "diary" in the book's title accurately characterized the work. It read like "a record of events, transactions, or observations kept daily or

at frequent intervals" (*Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*). Entries began on Sunday, July 26, 1942 and ended on Saturday, September 26, 1942; quite often a date was broken into time markers rounded off to the nearest five minutes. As Clifton Fadiman noted in his harsh *New Yorker* review, contributing to its diary-like quality, the book exhibited a "total lack of literary finish" (Jan. 23, 1943: 58). Attentive to the comparative strength of personal narratives, Clifton added that it was "no *They Were Expendable*."

The ultimate stylistic difference between White and Tregaskis was that the latter did not bother to edit out repetitious events, to introduce smooth transitions, to develop characters, or to vary his language or sentence pattern. The limited cohesion he achieved was the result of a strict chronological telling. And although the pronoun "I" was splattered over the pages of *Guadalcanal Diary*, the first-person narrator failed to record his personal feelings or opinions as one would expect of a diary.

Often, however, Tregaskis described the natural and man-made panorama and its effects upon his eyes. Certain entries poetically camouflaged the otherwise murderous scenes of war: "It was pleasant to watch the streaks of tracer bullets branching up into the blue, and then, as they burned out, shrinking into bright glowing spots clustering like stars for a moment, then fading"; "the prelude to the coming offensive in the Guadalcanal area took on some of the quality so

unbelievable that seemed like a dream"; battleship guns fired in their "brilliant breath of death...unearthly flash[es] of lightning...a nether world of pandemonium was about to be entered"; the Japanese planes,

silvery and beautiful in the high sky. They were so high that they looked like a slender white cloud moving slowly across the blue. But through my field glasses, I could see the silvery-white bodies quite distinctly: the thin wings, the two slim engine nacelles, the shimmering arcs of the propellers. I was surprised that enemy aircraft, flying overhead with the obvious intention of dropping high explosives upon us, could be so beautiful (Guadalcanal 99-100).

Tregaskis as spectator clearly discerned an aesthetic beauty in watching planes in combat.

According to Gerald Linderman in *The World Within War* (1997), a study based upon letters and recollections published by approximately 500 combat soldiers, what a soldier saw before him changed as his purview narrowed to combat. "Men at war," said Keith Wheeler, "have little appreciation for the esthetic effects of white phosphorus." Bill Mauldin put it best: Yes, "Invasions are magnificent things to watch," but added, "awful things to be in" (Mauldin 196). The point was made sarcastically in Mauldin's cartoon of two Army officers peering down at a distant battlefield that looked like a scenic, illuminated, and mountainous landscape from their perspective. The caption read, "Beautiful view. Is there one for the enlisted men?"

J. Glenn Gray, author of *The Warriors*, pursued the problem of varied and contradictory impressions on the senses

made by battle. Specifically, he concurred with Tregaskis that the spectacle and expanse of vision afforded by planes in combat allowed for grace, harmony, and aesthetic beauty:

There are spectacular sweep and drama, a colorfulness and a precision about such combat which earlier centuries knew only in a few great sea battles. It is true that the roar of fighting planes can be unpleasant in its assault upon the ears, and their dives upon their victims for strafing or bombing can be terror-inspiring. But the combatant who is relieved from participation and given the spectator's role can nearly sate the eye with all the elements of fearful beauty (Gray 32).

William Broyles, a veteran of Vietnam, went so far as to say that although there exists ugliness in war, its "great and seductive beauty...divorced from all civilized values, but beauty still" is one of the things men love about war:

Part of the love of war stems from its being an experience of great intensity; its lure is the fundamental human passion to witness, to see things, what the Bible calls the lust of the eye and the Marines in Vietnam called eye fucking (Broyles 62).

Because he did not have to fight, Tregaskis was in the catbird seat. Curled in a fox hole under heavy mortar and machine gun attack, bullets whizzing overhead and bombs rocking the ground, he acknowledged occupying a front-row theater seat at a war movie with super-sophisticated special effects for its time. The scene he witnessed was undeniably real, simultaneously and equally unreal. Perhaps as one critic argued, Tregaskis as well as the marines around him, "lost sight of the line between reality and fantasy, and indeed, merged the two" (Cameron 62). Once again, Gray addressed this phenomenon:

I found it easily possible, indeed a temptation hard to resist, to gaze upon the scene spellbound, completely absorbed, indifferent to what the immediate future might bring. Others appeared to manifest a similar intense concentration on the spectacle (Gray 33).

As Gray concluded in his reflections on war, and Tregaskis implied in his personal narrative, what was being described was not beauty in the ordinary sense, but the fascination that extraordinary power and magnitude hold for humans (Gray 33).

In a familiar metaphor, Tregaskis compared a live war and a play: "the show had begun...The curtain was up in the theatre of death." Although it is commonplace to refer to war zones as "theaters of war," this author broadened the cliché into a trope:

We of the Press Club decided to go down...to watch the show for today (dog fights, air battles). There was quite a group of us... this day, watching the 'show'....Now they were cheering like a crowd at a football game. 'Whooooo-ee,' shouted someone....In the beautiful amphitheater of the sky, the kill of the isolated bomber by the fighter was continuing (*Guadalcanal* 221).

Tregaskis's delight in seeing, however, overpowered the undeniable human suffering, desecration, and deaths that defined Guadalcanal. When he was not altogether silent about such indelicate matters, he provided opaque descriptions coupled with sidelong glances of the slaughter. All in all, he preferred mentioning Japanese losses to American

casualties:<sup>30</sup> "we found that the final score for the day was ten bombers and three zeroes; another goodly addition to a total that is mounting much too fast to please the Japs" and the effects of battles saw "so little damage" and American casualties "amazingly light." He elected to write about near misses, rather than direct hits: "two bullets had actually ripped through his blouse, without touching him....the colonel was still wearing the garment. Bullet holes marred the collar and waist." Here and there, Tregaskis mentioned how so and so had been shot, or told of a marine who when asked if his wounds hurt, replied, "Sure they hurt some...like a bee-sting. But outside of that they're O.K." Innocuous, "feel-good" reflections such as the above were the book's rule.

Using narrative sleight-of-hand, Tregaskis glossed over the close-up combat, the destruction, and the injuries by discussing maneuvers in the abstract. For instance,

In that moment I think most of us who were there watching the gun fire suddenly knew the awful feeling of being pitifully small, knew for a moment that we were only tiny particles caught up in the gigantic whirlpool of war. The terror and power and magnificence of man-made thunder and lightning made the point real. One had the feeling of being at the mercy of great accumulated forces far more powerful than anything human. We were only pawns in a battle of the gods (*Guadalcanal* 62).

---

<sup>30</sup> The Japanese had 22,000 killed or missing; the 1st and 7th Marine Divisions, which bore the brunt of the fighting, had a little over a thousand die.



The horrible things that happened to some of these chess pieces he scarcely mentioned. One book review, a lone complaint in a sea of compliments, echoed that while the book described jungle warfare, there remained no clear picture of the jungle: "It depicts life on Guadalcanal; yet it fails to reproduce for [the reader] the picture of the average day in the life of an average marine on the island."

*Guadalcanal Diary* also indulged in heroic conceits about men sent to hostile terrain far away from home and loved ones where they would kill or be killed, yet remaining undaunted and cheerful. Sailing to the invasion sight, for instance, "the lands were relaxed and in high spirits" and "leisurely"; "full of banter, some played cards, others slept, and a few talked about their favorite subject 'home'"; "I had imagined that in such a situation, the atmosphere would be more tense. But now it seemed perfectly natural to be joking about beards, while there was a Jap invasion in the offing" (*Guadalcanal* 101). Displaying an inclination for the light-hearted, Tregaskis chose to elaborate on a

marine jitterbug, minus his shirt, his torso shiny with sweat, did racy jive steps near the juke box, while another marine danced the part of the girl. After a few moments two sailors joined in the fun, themselves cut a rug of two (*Guadalcanal* 33).

To his credit, part of Tregaskis's agenda was to communicate that "humor does not desert Americans in such [trying] situations." Tregaskis felt that one admirable quality of the GIs was their uncanny ability to exchange wisecracks in the most tense of moments.

The same marines were eager to kill at other times. One officer remarked that "These boys are eager to fight." "One sweaty, dirty marine lamented, indulging in the marines' favorite adjective for anything distasteful, 'I wish those f----- Japs would come out and fight'" They were looking for a scrap. Essentially, Tregaskis showed Americans to possess a hard side and a soft side, a "get down to business" side and a "let's have fun side." Photo #21 succinctly illustrated this balanced dualism. It captured three men in uniform checking a board map entitled "Latest News, Solomon Island Dope" for the progress of military operations, while a fourth peered underneath at an attached chalkboard with National and American League "Latest Ball Scores." In *Guadalcanal Diary*, American boys were not militaristic by nature, but "when the going gets rough," they perform faithfully and valiantly for their country. Tregaskis drew a composite portrait of a "daring young Man," for whom the people at home had cause to feel pride.

The most remarkable facet of *Guadalcanal Diary*, however, was its 257 pages of accumulated nitty-gritty. Tregaskis offered a blow-by-blow report with little color commentary beginning with the "softening" of the beachhead by naval gunfire, the landing crafts shuttling to and from the shores, and the hurried unloading of supplies, including jeeps, ammunition, and heavy equipment. The scene, in fact, would become a familiar one time and time again as Marines made their way closer to enemy homeland. "As conceived and

executed, [these battles] brought about a contest between morale and material" (Keegan *Second WW* 293). In this particular case, while the initial landing was virtually unopposed, the Marines subsequently encountered six months of heavy resistance by the Japanese who kept bringing in reinforcements. To make matters worse, the Marines were considerably undermanned for such an aggressive and well-secured foe. But they were able to call upon overwhelming firepower, so were bound to win in long run.

The fighting as Tregaskis described it was different from what Americans were accustomed to and, therefore, exceedingly difficult. Picture endless "Japs in caves, snipers in trees, night assaults by [Japanese] suicide troops." The marines on Guadalcanal were asked to do and endure more than they ever could have imagined. Tregaskis reported the period of greatest American losses, when soldiers gave their lives in appalling numbers for a military plan that could have been better conceived. Yet, he testified to the sacrifices they could and did make in the best tradition of the Corps. In terms of the United States' southwestern Pacific scheme, the importance of taking Guadalcanal could not have been exaggerated. Still, it took self-censorship or a blind eye on Tregaskis' part to refrain from expressing the troubling thought that misguided strategy, "green" or inexperienced soldiers, and lack of communication had definitely placed young lives in harm's way. More glaringly, too small a force was sent on too

desperate a venture. Another correspondent, Ira Wolfert, expressed much the same chagrin about Pacific battles in general: "We...have consistently asked the men...to fight against overwhelming odds" (*Solomons* 66). At the same time, it was precisely this one-hand-tied posture that was implicitly celebrated in *Guadalcanal Diary*, fostering the post-war mythological belief in American invincibility.<sup>31</sup>

The gung-ho spirit of *Guadalcanal Diary* can be summed up in the rousing postscript by the book's editors:

The American fleet met the Japanese armada and sank or damaged thirty of their warships. We know, because the Navy says so, that the waters are clear where once the Japs sent in their subs and transports. We know our fliers rule the skies. We know the Marines are still holding and pushing farther on Guadalcanal. And we suspect that somewhere in the thick of it Dick Tregaskis is telling another story of American valor (*Guadalcanal* 263),

and the "bravest of the brave."

Tregaskis surmounted an incredible challenge: he turned a losing campaign into heroic narrative. Due to the author's optimistic slant on a sad episode in American

---

<sup>31</sup> As Michael Adams argues in *The Best War Ever: America and World War II* (1994), people come to believe partial portraits such as Tregaskis' as the whole landscape of history. In turn, the Second World War has become a benchmark of excellence for American defense. "Like any enduring myth, it rests on a solid core of credible argument. America cemented its final rise to world power with relatively light losses: about 300,000 Americans died; a further 1 million were wounded, of whom 500,000 were seriously disabled. Tragic as these figures are, they are dwarfed by those for other belligerents" (Adams 5-6). And "American troops fought well, under good leadership, and with plenty of the tools of war. But [it is self-deceiving to think] American performance was...the only factor in Allied victory" (Adams 90). Yet, personal narratives contributed to the myth that America's war machine was and is invincible.

history, it would have been hard to gather from reading Tregaskis that the almost nine weeks of battle he covered were indeed some of the worst--"the almost hopeless weeks"--for the American side. Ironically, by the time the reporter closed up his portable typewriter and "finished translating into trenchant English his 'satchelful of notes,'" the tide had already turned in the American favor:

The first reinforcements had come and others were on the way. The friendly roar of Grumman Wildcats and PBY's was no longer a rare occasion for wild rejoicing. In the making were two naval battles. In the second one... the Japanese in the three days between November 13 and 16, 1942, lost at least thirty warships and transports sunk or damaged (*Guadalcanal* afterword 259).

In fact, the battle picture changed for the better right after Tregaskis left the island. American Army troops finally landed, more American ships were able to stream in, and "American fighting and bombing planes made Henderson Airport an offensive base, destined to play a major role in pushing the Japs right back where they came from."

For Americans, the island of Guadalcanal had moved from virtual obscurity to legendary status over the course of those ninety days. The Guadalcanal campaign was of such serious concern to Americans because it saw substantial violence on three levels--sea, land, and air--and its conclusion hung in doubt for a relatively long time. The accumulation of daily battle communiqués alongside casualty lists made the home front worry and despair.

For fear of causing exponentially more grief to an entire population that was just beginning to confront and compute, and perhaps reconcile the cost of war, the government opted not to release to the media a different calamity that occurred to one American family (until several months after the tragedy). The Sullivans lost all five sons when the cruiser *U.S.S. Juneau*, on which the brothers served, sank November 15, 1942 during a naval engagement off Guadalcanal. Not since a mother in Boston lost five sons in the Civil War had any single family suffered so many dead in service to the country. The Navy learned the hard way, and quickly changed its policy to bar members of the same family from serving in the same military unit. In tribute to these boys, a new destroyer was christened the *U.S.S. Sullivans* in September 1943.

In 1942, American mettle had yet to be fully tested. The uncertainty of the outcome in a remote part of the world, against what the media interchangeably labeled an "inscrutable," "subhuman," "bestial" enemy offered a script for the home front as compelling as the horror movies their audiences grew up watching in the Thirties. Partly for this reason, correspondents like Ira Wolfert were sent and drawn to the Pacific war on the other side of the globe. A writer for the North American Newspaper Alliance (NANA), Wolfert had been assigned to Guadalcanal in late summer 1942 to cover the action "as the fighter experiences and endures it." Wolfert had been vocally disparaging about the censorship being

imposed on reporters. His basic view was that if news from the battlefield was blocked or delayed by the military, it affected the assumptions of people at home in manners unintended. More precisely, Wolfert argued that people would not be excited by obsolete facts, nor could they understand and sympathize with the daily hardships and dangers faced by servicemen without thorough and immediate knowledge of their experiences. In despair, he wrote to NANA,

I don't know whether this dispatch will reach you in a week or two or three months, or even whether it ever will reach you, but I do know ...that people cannot be stirred by facts as old as these will be by the time they reach print, and cannot get any sense of continuing pressure on their emotions unless there is daily communication between them and the battlefield....I had no idea until I got [to Guadalcanal] that war was going on in this sector. I had no idea of this because the press, where I am accustomed to getting my impressions of what's going on in the world, was not allowed any means of telling the story.

Wolfert's criticisms of war reportage were duplicated many times over by fellow correspondents. Though it probably was the best-reported war in history, coverage still left much to be desired. A letter from the *Chicago Times* correspondent, Keith Wheeler (author of the wartime narrative *The Pacific Is My Beat*), criticized the American press's mishandling of the battle of Saipan--"one of the most disgraceful flubs in the history of American journalism." The mishandling was partially an issue of priority; there were other "big" stories to feature like "the investment of Cherbourg, the flight of B-29s to Japan, the Republican

National Convention. The American press, with its stubborn refusal to recognize [Saipan] played it for a very bad fourth" (*Time* Aug. 7, 1944: 64-65). Equally frustrating was the inability of correspondents at the scene to expedite their reports, while reporters stationed at distant Pearl Harbor

pump their stories full of pure fancy and balderdash...of American troops swamping the Japs, sweeping up Saipan's [etc.]...with such smug confidence of victory that no reader... could doubt that American troops here were engaged in a picnic of no consequence (*Time*, Aug. 7, 1944: 64-65).

And since Navy communiqués were frequently reticent to relate activity on Guadalcanal, a favorite line in papers became, "United States ground forces on Guadalcanal Island supported by air forces continued their advance"--no further comment.

Through somewhat self-contradictory means, Wolfert attempted to counterbalance insufficient information by writing a personal narrative, published months after he witnessed the events. Though up-to-date material was at stake, *Battle for the Solomons* retained its sense of immediacy, which he regarded as vital to all reporting, due to ongoing jungle fighting on Tarawa, Iwo Jima, Okinawa, and in-between islets such as Eniwetok, Tinian, and Saipan. Essentially, subsequent applicable battles kept the image and legend of previous ones alive in the public's mind due to their similarities and causal relationships.

More than fifty years later, *Battle for the Solomons* still packs a punch. Richard Frank's assessment in



*Guadalcanal* that eye-witness accounts offer a valid and generous resource for study could have cited *Battle for the Solomons* as a prime example. Wolfert struck a proper blend of fact, anecdote, insider information, "I was there" authority, and personal reflection, all encased in entertaining prose.

The author seemed to have set one large purpose for himself: to pacify the nagging doubts and worries of the folks at home without lying. He accomplished his task with a repertoire of approaches. First, he proffered a layman's understanding of the technical matters of war in order to pique and sustain the reader's interest. Second, Wolfert regularly evaluated and reevaluated the state of the war, backing his judgments with hard figures. Third, he credited not the exceptional hero, but the majority of "ordinary, run-of-the-mill guy[s]," whom he felt, "...ha[d] to be relied on to win for our side."

Armed with firsthand knowledge, he introduced the situation in the Pacific to an uninitiated audience:

If the nature of the war here has been puzzling you, then you have plenty of company, but it seems primarily to be a naval free-for-all in which every weapon known to man, from the most primitive to the most modern, plays a part....Admirals not only use carriers, battleships, and submarines, but also field artillery, machine guns, rifles with telescope sights, machetes, and even bows and arrows (*Solomons* 60).

Directly afterward, he qualified his authority on military issues, admitting, "This at least, is the view of war obtained by a man lifting his head from a foxhole every now

and then to take hasty peeks and squints through the fog of flame-licked smoke."

Subsequent to this statement, however, he found himself "in the thick of it." He wound up in a Flying Fortress, which tangled with a Japanese flying boat for forty-five minutes in the midst of a tropical storm, to boot. It was then that he quickly grew to appreciate a dogfight's many dimensions:

It was not only a question of fighting in the kind of weather that no pilot in his right senses cares to meet and of stunting and half-rolling and power-diving and turning tight in that weather, straining the plane past the charted limits of endurance, but it was a question, too, of trying to remember what the Army or Navy Intelligence had said about the guns on this spectacular Jap plane and trying to remember which of your own guns had been shot out. Also, it was a question of maneuvering, in the midst of all that turmoil with Sergeant Paul Butterbaugh pumping cones of bullets right across Lieutenant Loberg's... eyes (*Solomons* 84).

Forceful and informed detail like this was a Wolfert forte. Suffice it to say, any war buff eager for colorful description on the Solomon Island clashes from October 14 through November 14 should refer to the body of this text.

Furthermore, Wolfert tried to ease Americans' concerns a notch by supplying subjective evaluation backed by "objective" statistics that proved U.S. forces were beating the Japanese Imperial foe. True to his literary bent, he summarized the fourth battle of the Solomons, the engagement that "gave Admiral Halsey his baptism of fire as Commander of the South Pacific Force," with the lines, "Our side wrote the

story. The Jap supplied terrible chapters in it, but we were in charge almost all the way through and in charge of the ending....the Jap failed to achieve his objective" (*Solomons* 98). Through the course of the Solomons operation, Japanese losses totaled about "fifteen times as much in ships, planes and trained men--the best men he has," according to Wolfert. He cited week by week tallies as well as figures from a twenty minute assault--"Our rear gunners shot down fifteen Zeros in this approach, killing expensively armored Japs at a rate of one every eighty seconds"--all of which would have fallen favorably on American ears. And in the last telling example of Wolfert's score-keeping style, "this reporter, being less conservative than the United States Navy and more willing to trust the evidence of his own eyes, personally scores more than half of the ten 'damaged' [Japanese ships] as being sunk" (*Solomons* 151). Wolfert blatantly disagreed with the popular argument that good news would make civilians falsely confident, thereby causing production and/or moral support for the troops to slacken. Above all, he hoped *Battle for the Solomons* would be of use.

His habitual use of the term "fellow" begged association with youth, wholesomeness, and amicability. As a substitute for the more formal, job-descriptive labels, "soldier" and "Marine," the descriptor also worked a comforting effect by clearing minds of the dirty work being performed. He vaguely referred to

fellows who do more than they are expected to do....[There] doesn't seem that there is

anything on earth, not any people or anything done by any people or invented or manufactured by any people, that can keep an American from doing a job he knows he really has to do (*Solomons* 107).

Consistent with the industrious nature of the national character, Wolfert reiterated the theme that Americans are "just doing a job with this gun or that...and that's the way they look, like fellows preoccupied with a job and wrinkling up their brows over it," yet, "in all there is an air of great cheerfulness and bustle and friendliness." Given a choice, they preferred cracking jokes, talking sports, or singing to warring. However, they summoned the old Protestant work ethic when necessary. Always stressing the positive, Wolfert concluded having "seen nothing...to make me think we are going to lose [or] to make me feel anything but very proud of American guys."

Published almost simultaneously with *Guadalcanal Diary* and *Battle for the Solomons*, was a third eye-witness account to explore the American effort to dislodge the Japanese from that sector of the Pacific Ocean, John Hersey's *Into the Valley*. Of the three, Hersey's narrative was the most hard-hitting. Armed with a Yale education and artistic talent, Hersey used the war as a springboard into a career as a novelist. While serving as a war correspondent for *Time* magazine since 1939, Hersey wrote *Men of Bataan* (1942), produced from cabled material to which he had access, *Into the Valley* (1943), the title of which comes from the Twenty-Third Psalm and later a Tennyson poem about the gallant six

hundred who rode into the valley of death on another battlefield, and *A Bell for Adano* (1944), a novel set in that liberated town of Southern Italy. All three works were inspired by his war experience. The last two had received the honor of being named by the Council of Books in Wartime as IMPERATIVE. *Into The Valley*, in addition, became the subject of a short film.

Hersey's personal narrative depicted a small unit's action lasting just three days. If what Tregaskis and Wolfert offered amounted to a tour of the whole house of war, Hersey's more focused narrative tackled a single room, corners of which were never shown before. Where the others presented a sweeping picture of the total Guadalcanal offensive, Hersey pinpointed what would have been a virtually forgotten two-day battle in an obscure valley on the island, having "wangled permission to go along with the Marine company...in an attack designed to pry the Japanese loose from the Mataniku River."

In an article, "Battle of the River," from which *Into the Valley* was expanded, Hersey wrote how,

The third battle of the Mataniku River on Guadalcanal was a laboratory sample of the thousands of skirmishes our boys are going to have to fight before the war is won. In terms of Stalingrad, or Changsha or El Alemin, it was not a great clash. But it affords an example of how battle feels to men everywhere (in Carroll 118).

Repeating the same message of universality in *Into the Valley*, he said that "The terrain, the weapons and the races of war vary, but certainly never the sensations, except in

degree, for they are as universal as those of love" (*Valley* 3-4). Sharing the dangers of men who had walked into a dense jungle trap, Hersey studied their reaction to battle, to their enemies, and to war in general. The skirmish in which Hersey played an active role afforded him directly--and the reader vicariously--a glimpse of American young men caught in the grip of ghastly adversity.

Originally thinking that he "was going to have a great experience" in the company of troops in battle, Hersey admitted to being "almost elated over the prospect of being baptized in fire." However, he may have received more than he bargained for. He certainly had not foreseen that the atmosphere on the frontlines would spin so out of control. The civilian correspondent not only shared with marines the expected discomforts of rain, mud, and heat, the swatting of mosquitoes, the dodging of sniper bullets, he was forced forward to where the fighting was heaviest. At the front, he even helped rescue the wounded under fire and brought them to safety at high personal risk.<sup>32</sup> "The operation," remarked Hersey with terse understatement, "was not wholly successful. The company got caught in a pocket, lost more men than it should have, and had to withdraw." The only qualified success among the helter-skelter was a withdrawal from an untenable position and a retrieval of comrades who were

---

<sup>32</sup> He was later awarded a commendation by the Navy. Acting bravely was no fluke, for the following year in Italy, Hersey escorted injured "to the rear, even though he would...have to pass through a zone covered by [enemy] sniper" (*Invasion* 40) as "an old friend," Dick Tregaskis testified.

incapable of returning to safety on their own. Out of this small engagement (if any might be called small where men die), "The Marines lost sixty dead--their worst casualty in any single operation on Guadal up to that time."

Notwithstanding these disturbing figures, Hersey derived interesting insights and promising lessons from the mishap. While in general, Hersey supplied anecdotes that reflected the behavior of unsung heroes, he tempered his tale with the view of a more vulnerable side of men in battle. Certain marines who bragged when the move started, turned stiffer as they began to "smell the dead Japs"; the palpable image of mortar shells "bleach[ed] some of the bravery out of them. The noise and seeing friends hurt were not things to be dismissed." Hersey also examined what happened when Americans like himself were caught between "a rock and a hard place" in a condensed clash of arms and will. He described one episode at great length in which marines under intense fire panicked: the "fear began to be epidemic in that closed-in place," "tiny noises became exaggerated in our minds," and signs of flight could be read in every face. He lamented,

This was a distressing sight, and though I myself was more than eager to be away from the spot, I had a helpless desire to do something to stop the flight. It seemed wrong.

One had heard so much about how the marines kill ten Japs for every man they lose (which is true), of the callousness of the marines (true in a way), and of our endless successes against the Japs (true in sum total).....And yet here were our men running away.

I couldn't do anything about it because I was caught up in the general feeling. It is curious how this feeling communicated itself. Except for the hard knot which is inside some men, courage is largely the desire to show other men that you have it. And so, in a large group, when a majority have somehow signaled to each other a willingness to quit acting, it is very hard indeed not to quit (Valley 89).

This passage begs comparison to the retreat chapter in Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*. Henry Fleming, "a young lad whose face bore an appearance of exalted courage ...was at an instant, smitten abject." For as the "skirmish fire increase[d]...the youth could see the skirmishers running....They grew in numbers until it was seen that the whole command was fleeing....[The] stampede exerted a floodlike force." And Crane's protagonist, prefiguring Hersey's thoughts, "resolved to get a view of it, and then, he thought he might very likely run better than the rest of them." Thus as Crane intuited and Hersey witnessed, "many men of courage ...would be obliged to desert the colors and scurry like chickens" under pressure.

Hersey observed differing manifestations of and outlets for intense terror. Scared to death, one guy polished his rifle, another removed and screwed on the cap of his canteen, someone else counted the buttons on his shirt; the writer found comfort tearing leaves into tiny pieces. In general, "the instinct to crawl into a hole was almost irresistible." Furthermore, the men proved short-fused and testy on the whole. Based on more scientific psychological studies of combat and its aftermath, one can assume that frightened



soldiers--that includes virtually all World War II Marines to a greater or lesser degree--suffered a variety of debilitating symptoms on the frontlines such as heart palpitations, upset stomachs, trembling, shortness of breath, nausea, vomiting, involuntary urination, and defecation (Stouffer 2: 197-205). Nor is Hersey reluctant to speak about embarrassing scatological matters. He asserted that dying men have simple bodily requests: "Say, fellows, would you help me take a crap? My stomach hurts, if I could just take a crap." No rhetorical genius wells up and bursts from the wounded--"famous last words are usually edited after the fact." Even given these effacements to the hero's aura and to popular notions of bravery, Hersey's final analysis of the American character redeemed each and every Marine.

In a climatic moment, they had transformed from "lads" to seasoned, disillusioned warriors. It simply required a calculated (and telling) comment from Captain Rigaud to rally these scared young men: "Gosh, and they call you marines" was all he said. "The men hurried back into the positions they occupied before. They did this without apparent fear, and yet it was, in effect, the most difficult kind of operation psychologically---a counterattack" (Valley 91). They "were no longer boastful joking lads. The music in that valley made them almost elderly." After a moment, Captain Rigaud realized his corps position was untenable. Because he could not get his weapons into play, the "pocket was a place to get killed, nothing more." He wisely ordered his men to

"retire" in good order as opposed to the way they "ran away" helter-skelter. In the end, they had all passed their trial by combat.

This scene in *Into the Valley* assumed aspects of an archetypal rite-of-passage tale. As such, it was very much reminiscent of Hemingway's hunting story, "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber." Among other things, "Macomber" illustrates the process of learning what Philip Young, in his book *Ernest Hemingway: A Reconsideration*, defines as the Hemingway code and its value. The code has been described variously by critics as grace under pressure; the effort to hold tight against fear and pain; the internalization of honor and courage, which make a man a man as distinguished from a coward; and the self-discipline to follow inviolable rules for how to live with dignity and morality. In this regard, Macomber begins an African safari ignorant and frightened, but with the help of a professional guide named Wilson (the equivalent of Capt. Rigaud in *Into the Valley*), "he painfully learns about hunting and becomes a man in the process" (Young 70). Initially, Macomber disgraces himself by running away from a charging lion. But as Wilson says, this behavior just does not meet standards. When a second chance arises, Macomber earns code-hero status by standing in the path of a charging buffalo and killing it. Macomber has shed his fear. "It had taken a strange chance of hunting, a sudden precipitation into action without opportunity for

worrying beforehand, to bring this about with Macomber," writes Hemingway. The incident "made him a man."

The Marines in the second world war, even more than Hemingway's hunter, gambler, deep-sea fisherman, or bull-fighter, operated within a professional ethic or "code." If they obeyed just orders, their reward included an increased chance of survival as well as "satisfaction in doing a difficult thing well, and emotional thrill of meeting demanding challenge with grace and adequacy" (Rovit and Brenner 91). In Rovit's and Brenner's analysis of Hemingway, when a sport includes the risk of losing one's life, then the courage to control the natural fear displayed by Hersey's Marines and Hemingway's heroes makes them great and enviable (Rovit and Brenner 91).

Hersey also saluted the heroism of unreckoned groups: the bandsmen, "the ones you have seen dressed up so fine and marching....Only at the front they don't carry piccolos or trumpets....they carry stretchers and syringes of morphine and take their chances just like any riflemen (Valley 100-101); the runners, "who risk their lives carrying messages"; and last but not least, the wire-stringers, "whose job it is to carry out a heavy steel spool of copper telephone wire, two in a team...everywhere that a command unit goes." According to the author, "Those boys deserve (and almost never get) medals." Perhaps above all, he was impressed by the Navy Medical corpsmen.<sup>33</sup> Since military nurses were not

---

<sup>33</sup> "There were cases, however, of female nurses caught in

allowed to tend soldiers directly on the field of combat, nurses trained male hospital corpsmen and "pharmacists' mates (navy) to administer first aid on the battlefield and then transfer the wounded to hospitals behind the lines, where the nurse would tend them" (Williams 36). Hersey referred to corpsmen as male nurses, which may sound "sissy," but they went into every single battle unarmed where the enemy is doing the most harm in order to save the wounded or relieve their torturing pain.

Along with including the marginalized, Hersey, a thorough and schooled professional, framed his narrative around the five "W's" of journalism: Who, What, When, Where, and Why. Most significantly, from opening to close, he searched for answers to the question, "What were they fighting for, anyway?" It bothered him that no one knew the exact reason for which he was risking his neck in such a godforsaken spot. Idealistic thoughts about forging a better world were not on the men's minds. "The attitude seemed to be," rather, "what is there in this for them?" Some spouted cynicism like, "I am alive and well and after what I've seen that is the most you can ask for."

To paraphrase the attitude of Marines in *Into the Valley* as well as the general attitude of service men throughout other personal narratives, they were there simply because, out of a clear blue peaceful Sunday sky, not very long before, Japanese pilots bombed Pearl Harbor. And since the

---

combat and forced to work under fire" (Williams 36).

Japanese caused them to have to leave home, they were pretty sore at the Japanese. Americans, having the proverbial chip knocked off their shoulder, wanted to even the score against a sneaky enemy. Their next objective was to get back to normal living, which entailed hanging out with friends, playing ball, driving a Chevy, taking a girl to the movies, going to school, or as one Marine whispered, speaking for a dozen more characters in *Into the Valley*, "'Jesus, what I'd give for a piece of blueberry pie.'" And so Hersey learned that their war aim was actual and metaphorical home-made pie. That is, "Here, in a place where they had lived for several weeks on mostly captured Japanese rice...hungry and never given a treat--here pie was their symbol of home" (*Valley* 74). When America's soldiers began to see the world, America became defined as everything American. As Stott explained, America "couldn't be further analyzed or defined," men laying their lives on the line for it "could only call attention to instances of it" (Stott 256).

Hersey's Marines apparently could not articulate purposes beyond returning to the creature comforts of home. Paul Fussell pithily characterizes this World War II mind-set of homesickness mixed with political detachment the "ideological vacuum." Even though the men Hersey interviewed did not say directly that they were fighting on behalf of a political principle, he knew that "democracy" was surely part and parcel of the implication of the word "home". Lending a more positive spin to the same phenomenon discerned by

Fussell, Hersey acknowledged that "It certainly sounds less dynamic than the axis slogans. But home seems to most Marines a pretty good thing to be fighting for" (Valley 75).

Another intertextual parallel can be drawn between American soldiers' attitudes commonly registered in personal narratives and the attitude of Hemingway protagonist, Robert Jordan, toward the Spanish Civil War in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Jordan, an American college instructor in Spain fighting as a Loyalist guerrilla, is fairly well convinced of the righteousness of the cause of the Republic. But when he asks himself "What were his politics then?," his reply is that, "He had none now." Feeling generally indignant at the social injustice in the world, he showed revolutionary instinct by emotional necessity only. Jordan "had only one thing to do," blow up the bridge, "and that was what he should think about" and that is what motivates him throughout the three-day span of the novel. Communism as a socio-political abstraction is essentially irrelevant as a driving force for him. Like Robert Jordan, World War II soldiers viewed their missions as necessary and affirmative. It was no one's aim to spout social theories. Both *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and wartime narratives concentrated on personal happiness and misery, and individual death (Baker 93), not political ideology.

Personal narratives portrayed the geo-political conflict in terms of individual experience, inducement, and purpose. Getting back home and in one piece was the best reason to

fight. Robert Westbrook, in "'I Want a Girl, Just Like the Girl That Married Harry James': American Women and the Problem of Political Obligation in World War II," posits that without direct articulation of personal motives, there would not have been sufficient ground for people to sacrifice their lives, and wartime mobilization would not have been as successful as it was (*American Quarterly* (Dec. 1990) 42: 588-9). It is quite possible, then, that war narratives were a crucial instrument by which the United States, a liberal polity, galvanized its energies and people for war.

## CHAPTER 6: CONFRONTING THE HORROR: SLAUGHTER ON TARAWA

The amphibious invasions of Pacific atolls--mere spits of sand and shelves of coral surrounding a lagoon with a few palm trees--like Tarawa set the stage for the most savage early fighting of the war. Robert Sherrod's *Tarawa* was the story of a battle the Marines fought many months after the Guadalcanal campaign, this time on one of the twenty-five tiny islands in the Gilbert chain. In no uncertain terms, *Tarawa* related the fiercest battle to date along with its tragic consequences. In minor respects, the narrative was similar to others reporting about encounters with the enemy in the South Pacific. In a major respect and for the first time, however, it revealed to the people in the States the hellishness of warfare, specifically the flow of blood and mass of dead bodies left on the battlefield. If the earlier narratives minimized suffering, it proved impossible to do the same with *Tarawa*. Faced with such appalling losses, Sherrod's account of combat assumed a more sober realism. Americans lost their innocence and so did the personal narrative.

The publisher, Duell, Sloan, and Pierce, was especially pleased with the reception of the book, brought to the public less than four months after the initial landing on Tarawa. The Council on Books in Wartime designated it "highly



recommended," just a rung below "Imperative." The publicity for the book was massive: Walter Winchell plugged it and Leonard Lyons of the *New York Post* raved about it. In addition, the publisher sponsored an extensive speaking tour for the author and cooperated with Universal Studios and the Marine Corps to adapt a documentary film entitled, "With the Marines at Tarawa," which cinematized the battle scenes depicted in Sherrod's book.

Not a tyro of war by the time he reached Tarawa, Sherrod spent his first few months overseas employed by *Time* to cover the area around Attu in the Aleutians. He talked of that experience as being "no Taxi war....The only way to get to the battle line was to walk over mountains [at the] fair speed [of] a mile an hour" in the cloud-hung volcanic wastes of sub-Arctic tundra (*Time* June 14, 1943: 17 and July 5, 1943: 15). This rude christening prepared him for even rougher adventures in the Gilberts. Eager to be on the inside-track in order to get the full scoop on the Pacific front, he volunteered to join the first wave of troops to land on Betio (otherwise known as Tarawa) well before the beachhead had been secured. Indeed, for Sherrod's "courage," "fortitude," and "superb aplomb," Lieutenant Colonel Evans "Raider" Carlson awarded him the Marine Corps citation. In *Tarawa*, Sherrod expressed his basic philosophy toward war-- "People made me sick who say--What dangers you war correspondents go through! I say: war is dangerous, period."

Sherrod witnessed 17,000 trained Marines storm Betio, a small strategic island northeast of Guadalcanal. It was one of the toughest assignments in the book for a battalion: landing on a well-fortified beach in the face of hostile fire from "the best Tojo's got." The Marines who made for the shores found tenacious enemy garrisons ready and waiting. They were prepared "to give their lives for one hundred and thirty million Americans, who realize it, I fear, only dimly." He reported, too, that of the 17,000 ready for combat, only sixteen went A.W.O.L. or otherwise failed to show when the call to set sail was made.

Before transports of men reached an appointed rendezvous with the battle-ready task force, there had been a preliminary bombardment along the beach and interior defense of the entrenched enemy. From that moment on, and for the next three days and nights, Betio became synonymous with an abattoir. For starters, an infamous miscalculation occurred when American landing crafts, commissioned to ferry the troops over the reefs, failed to clear coral ridges. Consequently, hundreds of Marines had to wade ashore in neck-deep water while machine gun fire, like a nest of bees, swarmed overhead, decimating men and their machines. Dozens of others got snagged on under-water, barbed wire traps and drowned. "Some 5000 men landed; by nightfall 500 were dead and 1000 wounded" (Keegan *Second WW* 303).

Sherrod along with two other newsmen (Richard Johnson of the United Press and William Hipple of the Associated Press)

were positioned on the first wave of landing crafts. Circumstance stranded their Higgins boat on shallow reefs. Those on board swam several hundred yards to the shore. Japanese shots killed many swimmers. Approaching the coast, "we had several hundred yards to walk, slowly into that machine gun fire....I was scared as I have never been scared before." Sherrod and others were lucky to locate temporary shelter at the pier, where they crouched behind wooden piles and eventually sneaked to the beach by drafting a bulldozer that crawled ahead of them. At dawn, as American off-shore naval guns and planes showered Tarawa with the most concentrated mass of high explosives in history, the Japanese were able to answer tit-for-tat with a concentrated mortar fire from seemingly undamaged bunkers. "All during the first day...dozens of marines were being killed every five minutes. Anyone who ventured beyond the precarious beachhead...was more likely to become a casualty than not [by] Jap snipers...[raking] the Americans." Inland was no less intense, no less costly. Chaos ran rampant the next day-- spent lives, spent shells, ripped knapsacks, bomb craters, shattered bones, emptied gunbelts, wrecked ordnance, and fallen trees everywhere. While Sherrod survived, physically uninjured, he described in a chapter entitled "View of Carnage" suffering severe emotional damage from the shock incurred by close-ups of mangled and dead bodies littering the beaches.

The unmitigated horror of Sherrod's report--3,000 casualties, including more than 1,000 dead (subsequently revised to 931 dead, presumed dead, and M.I.A)--was magnified by the fact that so much blood had been spilled in the dense three day period. The book must have been cold, more like frigid, comfort to readers. To put things in perspective, the total casualties on Guadalcanal after nearly six months, not including malaria cases, were no greater than on Tarawa. Marines who had fought on both islands endearingly called the previous action "Duck Soup," explaining simply that "Betio was much worse."

Sherrod had indisputable first-hand proof as well as the predisposition to challenge "irrepressible optimis[ts]," and "radio-announcing pollyannas back home who, by their very inflections, nightly lull people into false sense of all-is-well." In comparison to *Tarawa*, the battle descriptions of contemporaries ought to be characterized as damage control. In general, newsmen were sensitive to the fact that American morale was still wobbly after Pearl Harbor, followed by an unbroken string of Japanese takeovers. Americans naturally preferred to hear: one, the tide of battle was turning; two, young Americans were a match for any foe. Taken together, the Tregaskis, Wolfert, and Hersey narratives, for example, demonstrated that despite rough fighting, setbacks, and inexperience, against odds and stiff competition, without fervent political motivation, Americans would still prevail.

Before Tarawa, personal narratives were big on feats of heroism and battle successes, short on pain and destruction so as not to disturb the fragile mood of war-news followers. Tarawa came as a nasty surprise to its audience. But Sherrod minced no words: "This was not only worse than Guadalcanal. It was the damnedest fight I've seen in thirty years of business." He was, therefore, determined to expose what lay under the "sugar-coating you see in the newspapers... tens of millions of people getting false impressions about the war." For example, he informed that "we had inadequate P39's in spite of communiqués which daily told of our prowess." To get at the truth of war, Sherrod corrected the Hollywood image of "civilized" combat against an evil and implacable foe ending in a glorious American victory. Another way he opposed sanitized reports was to critique their word selection, "liberally sprinkled with 'smash' and 'pound' and other 'vivid' verbs."

Besides addressing the incredible horror of war, he wanted Americans to know what they were in for, since "we were just beginning to fight the Japs," their almost suicidal enemy resistors. The nation had to prepare itself for high casualties. Indeed, the disturbing percentage of casualties among Privates had been lighter than among officers and platoon sergeants, key men who were "irreplaceable." What probably had the most chilling effect on the readers of Tarawa, however, was the thirty-two-page roll call of names at the back of the book, listing Americans who served and

were wounded or killed on that one island. Like the Vietnam Memorial, to fix one's eyes and thoughts on the 3,500 names and ranks, typed in two columns of thirty names each, must have dizzied and devastated readers as it does today. The icons cause an odd mixture of lament, shock, breathlessness, personal guilt, and pride. The more than 5,000 Japanese corpses provided italicized testimony to the slaughterhouse that was Betio. Marine General Holland Smith was awestruck when he inspected the pillboxes that assault troops had to knock out. Speaking in a voice of adoration, he said, "By God, those Marines just kept coming. Many of them were killed, but more came on. It looks beyond the realm of a human being that this place could ever be taken....How can men like that ever be defeated" (Sherrod 139).

Nonetheless, Sherrod played down the oft-celebrated heroism of the American soldier on numerous occasions. He frankly "didn't know whether we had the heart to fight a war. Our men who had to do the fighting," he continued, "didn't want to fight." Again, at a crucial point in the battle, when not one Marine would follow his superior across the air strip, he called a spade a spade: "Some are yellas." These disclaimers aside, it was the "supreme courage of the Marines" that broke the enemy's morale and won the battle according to Sherrod; and to think anything less, was "almost to defame the memory of the gallant men who lost their lives achieving it."

The *New York Times* review of Sherrod's book signaled the epic nature of these exploits. In bold, half-inch type, it described Tarawa as a saga, with the subtitle "the Wolf-Iliad," elevating the heroics of "the toughest the United States has produced," to the level of mythology. To anyone familiar with folk-lore, the blood-stained waters and beaches of Tarawa have much in common with the mayhem of Heorot Hall in *Beowulf*, the annihilation of Odysseus's crew, and the Babylonian Gilgameish's confrontation with man's last great enemy, Death. As seen by the *Times* reviewer, the epic component of *Tarawa* was not to be construed as a glorification of violence and havoc. The essence of the story was that this battle both degraded and ennobled; "One of the greatest works of devastation wrought by man," was balanced by the actions of courage and sacrifice it inspired.

From all evidence, the news of Tarawa had disturbed American consciences more than any wartime battle to date. Newspaper editorials, registering the sentiments of many people, encapsulated the outrage. Admiral Chester A. Nimitz concurred: "People on the U.S. Mainland had gasped when they heard the dread phrase, 'heavy casualties'....They gasped again when it was announced that 1,010 marines had been killed, 2,600 wounded. This must not happen again, thundered an editorial," written by second-guessing members of Congress (Sherrod 147). In fact, many congressman were outspokenly appalled by the extent of carnage, putting the military on notice that such a debacle should not be repeated. The

published estimated ratios of five or eight or ten Japanese to one American packed little consolation. In this regard, Admiral Nimitz, who one might expect to display more equanimity, was visibly shocked when he flew over to inspect the devastation on Tarawa. He reassured Americans that "our commanders returned to Pearl Harbor determined to avoid such costly landings in the future" (Layton 479).

Sherrod assumed a different posture: "Those Americans who were horrified by Tarawa were playing into the Japanese hands." He raised the specter that a war-weary America might ultimately capitulate to the enemy's conquests in the Pacific. Sherrod admitted, as few others were honest enough to do, that America's preparation for war (through the first two years) had been woefully inadequate, both in terms of weapons and psychological readiness of citizens, who after the First World War had been conditioned to think that peace at almost any price was better than killing.

Sherrod insisted that civilians, instead of throwing up their hands at the heavy losses as he saw them do, must "gain from their own dead an inspiration which would sustain....The cost must be worthwhile...whatever the cost." Every thinking adult, in Sherrod's estimation, should already know that war is hell. Still, "somebody's got to win the war," as one Marine told him. "I could have gone back--I had malaria, too. But now I don't want to go back till it's over. You're not fighting just for yourself; you're fighting for the whole United States." It seemed "a pity" to Sherrod that Americans



at home could not display the same unselfish attitude. The author, therefore, pleaded for a home-front effort to match the effort of the men fighting and dying, by making meager sacrifices, ones that hardly compared to theirs, but which so many civilians had not yet done.

More specifically, he disagreed with American labor unions that struck in war-related industries. To Sherrod, striking meant non-productivity, which deprived the troops of desperately needed materiel. He implied that strikers were bums, who while wasting precious minutes, cost other people's lives. Furthermore, he thought it pathetic that strikes were sometimes staged by the parents, siblings, and friends of the soldiers they should have been supporting. Sherrod cautioned that such public demonstrations offered fuel for the propaganda mills of the enemy. Might not it inspire the Axis powers, if America were seen in the eyes of the world as a divided nation?

Uppermost in his mind was a recent coal miners' strike taking place during the battle on Attu Island. And concomitant with the action on Tarawa, steel workers were striking while railroad men threatened to do the same. Demonstrating dislike for such misguided individuals, Sherrod incorporated into his narrative the following nasty remarks by a soldier:

"I have only one regret," a marine said to his buddy, both of them crouched under cover in a shell, while soprano bullets [sang] over head...that John J. Lewis [leader of the United Mine Workers Union, who called the miner's strike] "is not beside me. I don't

mean the Japs would kill him. I would"  
(Sherrod 114).

Sherrod was not alone in his rebuke of strikers. In a fervent letter printed in the *New York Times* magazine section, one GI wrote, "People who lead others to strike, buy from the black market and such things are sabotaging our war effort as surely as if they were burning our planes and equipment" (Nov. 19, 1944: 18). In *A Book of War Letters* collected by Harry Maule, a resentful GI summarized what servicemen thought of strikers back home:

Boy, these guys make me sick....If the leaders of those strikes were sent here for only a few days, I'll bet anything they wouldn't strike again. For crying out loud, they ought to be shot. Money's all they're thinking of (Maule 148-9).

while far away guys are being blown to bits.

Yet despite his indictment of strikers, unsupportive civilians, and untruthful reporters, and notwithstanding his ostensible desire to de-glamorize the horrors of war, Sherrod can be accused of succumbing (though less frequently) to glorification of impending destruction. In a classic example of personification, he wrote, "now the fury of the warships, big and small, mounted in a crescendo of unprecedented fire and thunder...an unearthly flash of lighting...a nether world of Pandemonium." Again sounding like an emcee or shill for war, he said, "The show had begun....The curtain is up in the Theatre of Death," where one may listen to the "awful symphony of big guns." Another time, among several

references to war as sport, Sherrod announced a "play-by-play"<sup>34</sup> chronology of the action.

Both in his works and his life, he exhibited an insidious fascination with war, what Crane described beautifully as "A certain mothlike quality within him [which] kept him in the vicinity of the battle. He had a great desire to see and get news." Why then not go with the first wave of Marines on to the island? "What the hell?," he exclaimed; it was his duty, the duty of every American, for that matter, to participate in the war as fully as every other American.

Due to the nature of his calling, its responsibilities and hazards, Sherrod felt that he comprehended the fighting and cared about its historical significance more than the average non-combatant. The accumulation of all Sherrod's indictments pointed to an attitude of superiority about his own military expertise. Overall, authors of personal narratives who actually saw combat positioned themselves as firsthand observers, in contrast to arm-chair commentators who had merely studied war. "Being there" was calculated to accord them more authority and reliability than those who had faced neither bullets nor carnage. Sherrod thus lumped

---

<sup>34</sup> Some cultural theorists claim that sports competitions originated from highly ritualized fighting and contain aggressive motivation. Konrad Lorenz suggested that sports is a form of non-hostile combat governed by strict rules. Geoffrey Best in *The Victorian Public School* identified two useful military functions of sport: first, as the road to physical strength and second, as a way of fostering teamwork. Stouffer and his colleagues detected a correlation between interest in body-contact sports and adjustment to army life.

together the hundreds of thousand Americans safe at home as indifferent or ignorant about the war.

In comparison, John Monks, in his personal narrative *A Ribbon and A Star*, while also ridiculing complacency and selfishness, acknowledged gradations of involvement in the war. Monks laid out a more nuanced barrage against

Those who bury their heads in the sand and try to escape the unpleasant, those on the outside who fight their war vicariously through books ...will learn only a part of this great world story...and those who refuse to help won't learn much about the war. Nor will the selfish few who work the angles, scorn the idealist, avoid the unfortunate, snub the more honest; who burn their fingers in a frenzied effort to snatch up the torch of patriotism when danger is imminent, and then crawl back smugly into their sheltered castles to nurse their power complex....Those selfish few--and there are only a few--will learn nothing about the war, nothing about the men, nothing about the courage, nothing about tempered steel friendships (Monks 233).

The similarity between Sherrod and Monks evidently was that they both privileged, almost worshipped, the direct experience of men on the fighting front:

The curious onlooker who saw the picture from a sheltered observation post will understand only the little that he is professionally equipped to understand. Only the man who is a member of that special fraternity which is always open for new members, yet remains a small distinctive organization, only the fighting man, though he may never tell--only he will know the truth (Monks 233).

By the end of November 1943, Sherrod was back in Honolulu organizing his book notes. When through, he returned to the continent, still incensed.

My...trip [home] since the war began was a letdown. I had imagined that everybody, after

two years, would realize the seriousness of war and the necessity of working as hard as possible toward ending it. But I found a nation wallowing in unprecedented prosperity ...Men lobbying for special privileges swarmed around a Congress which appeared afraid to tax the people's new-found, inflationary wealth (Sherrod 151).

Sherrod was not alone in his complaint. A war correspondent for the *New York Times*, Foster Hailey, registered the same protest in his personal narrative, *Pacific Battle Line*. Returning from the war zone, he was profoundly disturbed to discover how little the people at home seemed to know or even care about what the fighting was like, and meant.

In early June 1944, Sherrod was again assigned to the Pacific as a war correspondent. He covered much of the action against Japan on Saipan Island. There, he witnessed the reprise of the fighting at Tarawa and attained dozens of photographs which he planned to use for another book. Reflecting the war's changing tide, this trip's most disturbing memory was a gruesome mass suicide among Japanese civilians.

Robert Sherrod's *Tarawa* lends fruitful comparison to another book-length report about that exact operation entitled *Betio Beachhead* (1945), published one year later. In contrast, this personal narrative was documented and written by four Marines--Captain Earl J. Wilson and Marine Combat Correspondents, Master Technical Sergeant Jim G. Lucas and Samuel Shaffer, and Staff Sergeant C. Peter Zurlinden. It was promoted as the United States Marines' own tale of the assault. With the blessing of General T. Holcomb and the

postscript by Commandant of the Marine Corps Lieutenant General Vandergrift, the book assumed a documentary aura with a government stamp of approval. Although *Betio Beachhead* read like it was official government material, it was actually issued by the private publishing house of G.P. Putnam. And Putnam was grateful to Time, Inc. for providing the specially drawn maps that appeared in the book and added to its officially-sanctioned quality.

In a way, *Betio Beachhead* was a personal narrative imposture because it was conceptualized well after the fact, near war's end--Japan's defeat would prove to be only weeks away--and thus the writers had no need to concern themselves with influencing the prosecution of the war or people's morale at home. The authors instead were primarily interested in supplying stark military history.

The differences, therefore, between the *Tarawa* and *Betio Beachhead* versions of the same event are important. *Tarawa*, for all its criticism, was a warmly personal account, largely impressionistic in its telling. Sherrod's book was propaganda to stir and rally emotions. It was filled with editorials, mostly reflections on the effects that witnessing the tragedy had on him and other men. Sherrod clearly wanted his readers' commitment to measure up to his own. Distinct from the atmosphere Sherrod created, the *Betio Beachhead* authors dispassionately rendered a systematic minute-by-minute account, devoid of analysis and interpretation. In

the process, it amounted to a reference source for future armies planning to attack a similar enemy-held territory.

Here is a sample:

4:41 a.m.--The battle for Tarawa had begun. Ships from the task force commenced firing toward the shore. The task force ceased firing. Planes from aircraft carriers...began a systematic bombing. The task force resumed firing.

7:00 a.m.--A small minesweeper moved into the lagoon.

8:15 a.m.--The marines along the south coast, across the airstrip and from the pier and lagoon side of Betio, went into action; they were the First Battalion of the Sixth (94).

9:10 a.m.--2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, landed on Red Beach.

9:17 a.m.--Boats held up on reef, right flank Red 1. Troops receiving heavy fire in the water. Twenty-three members of one flame thrower platoon had their boat also struck by a direct hit. Only four men reached the beach. One of the survivors was killed as he reached the shore. The three remaining Marines wiped out four Japanese pillboxes at the water's edge, and extended the ... beachhead another...ten feet.

Page after page gave a similarly detailed record of the assault plan and execution.

Sherrod's chapters on battle, in contrast, included the good, the bad, and the ugly. Specifically, men were initially reluctant to follow their leaders; they milled on the beach while their compatriots were dying for want of support fire. He explained, "In any battle you'll find the fighting men up front. Then you'll find others who linger behind...or find some excuse....The hell of it is that in any battle you lose a high percentage of your best men" (Sherrod

97). Eventually these reluctant warriors fought as vigorously and courageously as all the others. A few discouraged Japanese prisoners remarked that what broke their spirit was not really the bombing itself, but the picture-- which demonstrated the toughness and resilience--of Marines who kept coming ashore regardless of a head-on machine-gun barrage.

The most distinguishing difference between *Betio Beachhead* and *Tarawa*, however, was their treatment of the men who fought. Sherrod fleshed-out informal portraits of anxious and determined individuals, for example, by including snatches of Marines' chit-chat: "'Oh God, I'm scared,' said the little Marine, a telephone operator who sat next to me forward in the boat"; "'Did -- get killed?'" ; "'Have you seen -- or --?'" ; "'You old dope, I thought you were dead'" ; "'A Jap shot off a piece of Jone's thumb'" ; "'I wonder what our transport did with those 1600 half pints of ice cream...?'" ; or "'It hasn't been such a bad life.'"

On the other hand, in *Betio Beachhead* the Marines were altogether flat. They were indistinguishable and personality-less: "They were boys named Bill and boys named Joe and boys named Mike." They were from Dallas, from Chicago, from Los Angeles, from Portland, Oregon and from Ogden, Utah. They carried letters in their packs which began "'Dear son' or 'My Darling.'" The anonymity of these men was striking. Frequently, number and regiment designations precluded name dropping. In essence, the authors constructed



personal events in a way largely prescribed by the military culture that mediated the experiences.

This deemphasis of the individual indicated that the unit mattered most. Each figure was a body as valuable and worthy as any other body. Figuratively speaking, Marines were cogs in a large collective military mechanism. No attempt was made to personalize the war or give a grunt's view of the ordeal. One would hardly suspect that the story was told from the vantage point of four survivors. Even references to particular Marines seemed like ledger entries: "Here Private Childress was missing, believed to be drowned as were many marines who unloaded in deep water with all of their equipment." Often as not, the book summed up a botched landing or bloody hand-to-hand combat without the impression that real flesh and blood humans were implicated. Fighters were more like clockworks, springs, and gears that were smashed and broken, quickly repaired or replaced by other springs or gears. The tone was as anti-sentimental as personal narratives came.

Finally, an example par excellence of *Tarawa's* and *Betio Beachhead's* contrasts centered around one Lt. William D. Hawkins. Sherrod not only presented an embellished story of this hero's action, he also extensively researched Hawkins' background. After Julian Smith named the airfield on Betio after Hawkins, Sherrod learned more about the twenty-nine year old Texan. The lengthy four-page biographical sketch of "Deane" before the war included homey references to his

childhood, school years, folks, the places they lived, his odd jobs, boyhood interest in girls, engineering study, and especially a traumatic injury that left him partly crippled and caused his failed attempt to join the Navy. Hawkins, according to Sherrod, returned home that day to his mother, sobbing the news that two of his friends were accepted into the Navy, while he was not. His scars and dislocated vertebra kept him out of the Army, too. Years later, when America declared war, Hawkins reapplied. "I've got to go," he said. Ironically, "the toughest outfit of them all" accepted him, "scar and all." In the end, Sherrod graciously dropped word to "Deane" Hawkins's mother about the details of her son's death, sensitively stating, "His example of devotion and unselfishness will surely serve to sustain other millions of young who must finish the job. His name will always shine brightest among men proud to call themselves Marines" (Sherrod 51).

The story honoring Lt. Hawkins' bravery was much more austere and condensed in *Betio Beachhead*. True to the book's "nothing but the facts" orientation, Lt. Hawkins was said to have "received the first wound from the blast of mortar which killed three of his men. He received his mortal wound while wiping out Japanese pillboxes." In fact, the nearest *Betio Beachhead* came to the colorful tone of *Tarawa* was the scene wherein Lt. Hawkins' death was reported to the other Marines.

The day after the rumor circulated among the men, from foxhole to foxhole, they found it hard to believe the valiant officer had been killed. Lieutenant Hawkins had boasted, 'The

Japs can't hit me. They couldn't hit me with a shotgun at point-blank range!' But he had been hit and he had died, and the men missed his swashbuckling stride and fighting heart (Wilson et al 87).

With the exception of this tribute, *Betio Beachhead* clinically recounted the prelude, middle, and aftermath of an invasion, perpetuating the view that each marine operating his equipment was just an interchangeable part in a larger battalion, expendable in the interest of the objective--in this case, to capture a minuscule chunk of dry land in the immense Pacific Ocean.

An appropriate coda to *Guadalcanal Diary*, *Battle for the Solomons*, *Into the Valley*, and *Tarawa*, was *Out in the Boondocks: Marines in Action in the Pacific; 21 U.S. Marines Tell Their Stories* (1943) by James D. Horan and Gerold Frank. Through extended interviews with twenty-one battle weary and wounded Marines of various 'canal campaigns, the co-authors of *Out in the Boondocks*<sup>35</sup>--though not themselves witnesses of the war--gave voice to key participants. More particularly,

---

<sup>35</sup> Whenever Marines found themselves far from "civilization" in remote, unpleasant, rough country thick with brush, they referred to these places as "boondocks." Servicemen borrowed the word from Austronesian (a family of agglutinative languages including practically all the native languages of the Pacific Islands with the exception of the Australian, Papuan, and Negrito languages) spoken by the Tagalog people of the Central Pacific. *Bundok* meant mountain to the natives; to Americans, it originally meant wild jungle and later evolved another significance, informally certified by World War II veterans, though not officially by the dictionary: "Boondocker," perhaps playing off the "Docker" brand of shoe, came to signify a high-tip, thick soled, hardy, leather shoe suitable for use out in the Boondocks they dredged through, as in "Davis drew the toe of his boondocker through the mud" (Monks 233).

Horan and Frank collected, transcribed, and organized individual stories, the common denominator being an injury suffered in battle, usually quite severe. Before each storyteller recuperated, he had sustained weeks or months of pain and worry. Some recovered miraculously from life-threatening wounds thanks to the medics who administered emergency treatment on the battlefield at considerable personal risk. Others were saved by swift evacuation to triage tents to the rear of the front. The most serious cases were evacuated as promptly as possible to fully equipped hospital ships<sup>36</sup>--the *Solace*<sup>37</sup> being the most famous--or flown directly to better-equipped facilities in New Zealand, Australia, or Hawaii for more thorough and extended care.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> These "Great White Ships" were noncombatant, operating under the Hague and Geneva conventions. Despite international law, some were attacked by the enemy in violation of the treaties protecting them. To distinguish them from other ships, they were painted white with red crosses on stacks and sides and a green band around the hull. Most ships were about 400 feet long, 6,000 to 8,000 tons, and traveled at speeds of 15 to 18 knots. Hospital ships all bore names of peacefulness like *Comfort, Mercy, Hope, Benevolence, Relief, Consolation, and Tranquillity.*

<sup>37</sup> During the war, the *Solace* treated more battle casualties than any other hospital ship and steamed 170,000 miles without a major mishap. The *Solace* was at Pearl Harbor when the Japanese invaded. Admiral Nimitz recognized her work there by a letter of citation. For a time in 1942, the *Solace* was the only hospital ship in the Pacific. She evacuated many wounded at the Battle of the Coral Sea, Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Kwajalein, Eniwetok, Saipan, Guam, Anguar, Peleliu, Iwo Jima on D-Day plus 4, and Okinawa. On Okinawa alone, her medical staff administered 1,800 units of whole blood, 1,200 units of plasma, 136,000 sulfa doses, and 2 1/2 billion units of penicillin to the injured aboard (Motley, Kelly 191-2).

<sup>38</sup> The handling of wounded, repairing of damages, and piecing together of the unlucky ones was actually the main subject of *The Wounded Get Back* (1944), Albert Maisel's personal

The book's view from the hospital bed, exposed the war's enduring consequences in maimed bodies. In *Out in the Boondocks*, the war was figuratively reduced to the size of a hospital bed so readers could lie beside the soldier, share his trauma, and then empathize with his pain. All of the stories lent an insider's view to the situation at hand, whether it involved food, fox-holes, boondocks, grenades or dynamite. As Private James Gerard Hall expressed, "If you were a Marine, this is the way it would look to you."

Through recurring themes--the Marines' living conditions, injuries and pains, and performances in the heat of battle--*Out in the Boondocks* tried to reenact what war on the ground felt like. For example, few knew that when eight-inch guns let loose, the vibration could shake marines "until the teeth rattle in [our] heads"; and when the U.S.S.

---

narrative. Concentrating on wartime medicine, Maisel laced his study with occupational jargon and technical detail--but not so much that a layperson would be lost. In effect, Maisel authenticated the proficiency of U.S. Navy medics and surgeons. The book assured friends and family that nothing had been neglected and no expense had been spared to insure that wounded loved-ones do get back in order to resume their normal peacetime lives. The writer demonstrated that in World War II, the medicines, the facilities, and the practitioners were painstakingly assembled.

Another side of the Second World War's history of medicine, published just after V-J day, was Keith Wheeler's *We Are the Wounded* (1945). The book revolved around Wheeler's reflections during his convalescence in an Hawaiian hospital after sustaining serious wounds during the bitter fight for Iwo Jima. It, too, discussed how the wounded were treated on the battlefield, in rear medical stations, at staffed hospitals, and sometimes continued to be assisted on their long, troubled road to recovery. Both books demonstrated that war created a training ground for new theories and practices designed to repair the damages that technologically advanced weaponry had caused.

*Vincennes* was firing its broadsides, Marines received black eyes if they did not have their binoculars glued to their faces. Furthermore, Pvt. Richard William Harding recounted an incident of hand to hand combat, which was sure to make one's skin crawl:

I grabbed the barrel at the hand guard and shoved the bayonet at him. I felt it slide home. The Jap grunted and screamed. He shook and trembled and leaped around there at the end of that bayonet like a fish on a hook. I tried to pull out the bayonet, but it was stuck...I got up on one knee, to get better leverage (*Boondocks* 35).

More often, injuries incurred by them were related in gory detail and descriptive language. One man thought he had been put through a hamburger machine: A machine gun ripped holes from head to foot in him, stitching a design of bullets in another marine; he discovered dried blood that made his shirt seem like it was heavily starched. There were a handful of blown-off fingers, a blown-off face--a blubbery mass of blood and torn flesh with fifteen pieces of shrapnel in the eyes--legs gone numb, and most bizarre of all, four teeth embedded in somebody else's jaw! If it all sounds confusing, it was confusing out in the boondocks.

These were pictures of "war in all its awfulness," yet every single man that was injured withstood remarkably well the gnawing pain as well as mental anxiety attached to possible death and/or permanent maiming. J. Glenn Gray, in his philosophical memoir of World War II, *The Warriors*, put forth that "fear of being painfully injured is unendurable. Death is less real" (Gray 105). Nonetheless, a Marine even

chuckled heartily at his freak accident--a Japanese bullet chipped off both his tonsils as neat as a surgeon knife's incision. In the aftermath, the patient responded to the incident with brazen, "I want to be the doctor this time--and I want to do a little operation on a couple of hundred Japs myself. It'll take them a plenty long time to get over the operation I'd do on them."

The brashness of these typical American boys was exemplified in Corp. Anthony Casamento who, knocked to the ground with a concussion by an exploding grenade, took out two enemy machine guns after he was patched up. PFC Mario Leroy Sabatelli, likewise, recalled being lifted into the air after he mistakenly rolled over onto a live grenade. Deadpan, he described feeling "Pretty bad," and looking like "an awful mess." Medics Ace-banded him and a week later were able to ship him to New Zealand where doctors discovered that he was swimming in a pool of blood: "It was so bad that one of the corps men pressed both thumbs down on the arteries..." Sabatelli managed to keep his life in addition to both his legs, boasting, "Those Japs got a lot of killing to do if they're going to kill a Marine."

Similarly, Pvt. Henry Deboer offered many anecdotes of bravery about his comrades, the quintessential one centering around a "Marine who'd been shot through the head. When a corps man came to help him, he said, 'G'wan, get back there and pick up the wounded.'" Corp. John Conroy summed up the theme of "bravery, the guts, the genuine, honest courage

displayed by the boys out in Guadalcanal. They were afraid, and yet they took it."

This book also devoted passages to the topic of living conditions in the boondocks. Indeed, worse than fighting the Japanese was having to fight "this goddam jungle....every step of the way." No personal narrative captured the brutality of the Pacific climate quite as forcefully. At night it rained so incessantly that the Marines' hands pinched and puckered. Daytime weather was the polar opposite. It became so hot, one dried off the instant one crossed into an opening in the trees. Put more graphically,

You'd go to sleep, and it would be dry and hot, and sweat would be pouring down your boots. You'd wake up in the middle of the night with the Japs pouring lead at you--and your fox hole would be full of water up to your neck...but while sleeping you would have been soaking, like a pickle in brine, in rain water. Hell, you'd get wet one day and you'd stay wet the next three days if you were in the jungle (*Boondocks* 81).

Men, therefore, lived in a world of heat and rain, rain and mud, fevers and foul-smelling green mold. "The mold," according to Pvt. William J. Baumgarten, "grew upon everything in our tents....We sank in mud to our knees nearly each time we dared move outside."

What constantly harassed Marines was the daily trials of jungle existence. They justifiably blamed the hostile environment for their eating wormy rice, sleeping a maximum of four hours a night, and contracting dysentery and boils. Mosquitoes and other insects were major sources of nightmares for American servicemen. Lieutenant Bayard Berghaus related



a signature event having to do with the ants in that region. A red horde of grotesque ants, each about a quarter of an inch, overwhelmed an entire brigade, covering it like a blanket. Like something out of...Edgar Allen Poe," the narrator claimed,

The jungle floor...transformed into a writhing red carpet. They got into our eyes. We screamed...The men slapped. They danced in agony. Some became hysterical...each sting was like the sharp burn of a white-hot pin (*Boondocks* 57).

There were other interesting stories told in *Out in the Boondocks* that unfortunately cannot be justly covered here. There are, no doubt, thousands more, just as valid, that will never get published. John Monks, Marine Captain, V.M.I. graduate, and co-author of the highly successful Broadway play, *Brother Rat*, properly alerted his audience in the personal narrative, *A Ribbon and a Star*:

Every man had a story; every story was a good one; most of them will never be recorded. Some will be told softly in the privacy of one's favorite gin mill; some to a listening wife who has waited anxiously for that special moment in the dead of night, not for the plot, but just to hear the sound of her man's voice. Some will never be told. Time will smother the past in a wave of forgetfulness. Potent problems of the future will blot out the bitter and the sweet will disappear in the urgency of a new objective (Monks 233).

Personal narratives practiced the theory that every man had a story to tell. In Studs Terkelian fashion, the sum of all the voices yielded an understanding of what the war meant to participants.

## CHAPTER 7: DIVISIONS OF LABOR

Although relentless naval bombardment and air strikes by carrier-based planes weakened enemy defenses before actual landings, it was clearly no picnic for the Marines and soldiers who darted for the beaches time and time again. Max Miller in *It's Tomorrow Out Here*, explained the demands of the situation well:

When we return from one task-force operation, we go right out on another, and do what we did before. When we take one island we do almost exactly what we did on taking a previous island, and what we will most likely do on taking the next and the next (*Tomorrow* 33).

Naturally, American casualties mounted with each repeat performance. While casualties figures were measurable, gauges of courage were less clear-cut. Witness accounts on the whole led readers to think that courage was ever-present among American fighting men. Miller once again echoed the sentiment of nearly all witnesses: "Physical valor has come in such quantities in the Pacific as to seem almost cheap...ordinary, the most common thing there is." There were hardly ever any Henry Flemings or stories of irresolution, timidity, and cowardice.

Fortunately for many brave Americans, after taking and securing some key islands during early offensives, the Navy altered its island-hopping strategy and switched to leap-frogging Japanese-held atolls. The new plan was to cut off

enemy supplies and reinforcements, leaving the Japanese on by-passed islands to "wither on the vine." "There had never been a campaign...now contemplated--a giant leap between stepping-stones so separated that they would stretch the United States Navy to breaking-point" (Keegan *Second WW* 302). The transformation of the Pacific fleet had made the offensive feasible, the path across the Pacific en route to the Japanese mainland quickened, and needless bloodshed declined.

After the battles for Guadalcanal and Tarawa were won, a full force of personal narratives continued to report subsequent campaigns against Japanese strongholds in the Pacific. With rare exceptions, they were simply variations on the events and themes already presented by Tregaskis, Wolfert, Hersey, and Sherrod. The following service ditty entitled "Stepping Stones to Japan," attested to the repetitive nature of the United State's step by step execution of war in the Pacific.

The islands like Kwajalin, Saipan, and Wake,  
Or Tarawa, Marcus, and Yap  
Sound funny or queer to American troops  
When they look them up on a map.

There's Engebi, Rota, the Bonins and Truk,  
Majuro, Namur, and Palau,  
Formosa, Kusaie, Eniwetok, and Roi  
Plus Ponape, Guam, and Davao.

These tongue-twisting, weird, unpronounceable spots  
Point the way that our forces will go  
Through the skies, on the seas, over the mountains  
and plains  
To knock out our Nipponese foe (*Tomorrow* 98).

The lyrics suggested that there were no out and out high-water marks, that all the territories were equally obscure, but strategically important to control. Personal narratives covered every aspect of war work on nearly every one of these islands. In this sense, the writing of the war was very much shaped by the war itself.

The story of the Pacific, like the ocean itself, just went on and on, and in all directions, and thousands of feet above the sea, and on the sea, and under the sea, and around the islands, over the islands, on the islands. There seemed to be no definite borders, no definite places for a beginning or an end (*Tomorrow 20*).

The war in the Pacific was basically carried to the enemy by land and from sea. Just as Marine personal narratives covered every perspective of amphibious and land operations, every aspect of war on the seas was covered by naval narratives, from the participation of baby bear PTs to papa bear battleships.

Most sea battles (ship against ship) were connected to land operations. Battleships and cruisers first loosed pre-invasion bombardments designed to destroy shore installations. Usually transports and larger navy vessels brought troops to island battlegrounds. Destroyers then protected invasion waters from aerial and undersea threats. Broadly speaking, submarines plagued the Japanese. Their patrols charted dangerous waters, rescued aviators, and with the help of air sweeps, strangled enemy supply lines.

The previously discussed and earliest account of action against the enemy to appear in book-length form was *They Were*

*Expendable*, a non-stop adventure tale dealing with the valiant fight of a motor squadron in Philippine waters during the first weeks of American involvement in World War II. A second PT narrative with action as its operative word was Hugh Cave's *Long Were the Nights*. It was similarly filled with dangerous patrols and the hit-and-run style for which these quick and maneuverable boats were built. For example, "Night after night [the boats] had hit the enemy hard and then fled back to their base, leaving Jap ships in distress behind them, burning, sinking ships on which men were...hurt and killed.

The material Cave accumulated, mostly in the words of the men who served deadly missions in the most vulnerable of navy crafts, evoked proud appreciation for the PT's pivotal role in America's first serious offensive. Cave's narrative offered a David vs. Goliath story: The Navy credited Cave's "Squadron X"'s eight midget mosquito boats with the sinking of a heavy cruiser, six destroyers, a submarine, and two or three small craft. The fascinating part was that this was accomplished without the loss of a single PT boat. Cave, therefore, was able to contribute a "new and improved" report on torpedo boat conduct: "I like to think we gave the Japs something to remember. I like to believe," said Squadron Commander Montgomery, in an intertextual reference, "we helped even the score for the PT men who fought so magnificently in the Philippines. And we were lucky. We were not expended" (*Long Nights* vii).

Along with PT narratives, there were several published accounts involving larger ships. One by Captain L.A. Abercrombie, *My Life to the Destroyers*, took its title from a Bible quotation: "Yae, his soul dranketh near unto Death, and his life to the destroyers" (Job 33:22). Abercrombie wrote the book to honor those who served on modern-age destroyers (groups of which were known as tin-can fleets), "the men who see war at its hardest and of whom one hears least." The destroyer *Drayton* and its workers had a slew of jobs to perform: spraying flak, slugging enemy ships, laying down smoke screens to cover the maneuvers of its task force, "riding shot-gun" anti-aircraft support for carriers as well as picking up American pilots whose crippled planes were ditched in the ocean.

Still, while wartime narratives were usually packed with excitement, this one was not. The truth was that war at sea encompassed long weeks of boredom interrupted by ten minutes of fight. Dedicated to the officers and men of the *U.S.S. Arizona*, who lost their lives at Pearl Harbor without any inkling of what was about to happen, the gist of *My Life to the Destroyers* was that men not accustomed to war learn to fight while fighting it.

During the learning process, the *Drayton* "gained the first clear-cut victory of the war in the Pacific." An enemy submarine it had struck, jutting partially above the surface and showing monster-like characteristics, conjured visions of

an intimidating black counterpart to the awesome white whale in Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*:

"Look, a submarine!"  
 It was, too; the bow of an enormous submarine, fully 50 feet of it, pushing up through the water slowly at a steep 70-degree angle, dripping oil, the net cutter at its bow looking like a set of teeth...Everybody simply stood there pop-eyed...looking at the monster.  
 The Drayton had sunk an enemy warship, one bigger than she was. That would have got us double prize money in the old days...when they were still paying prize money (Abercrombie 21).

In a menacing image, this evil sub up from the depths of the sea had the men of the *Drayton*, like the crew of the *Pequod*, startled--wide-eyed and open-mouthed. So too, Captain Abercrombie dreamt of securing the "double prize money," namely the bounty the American Navy used to award or analogously, the golden doubloons Ahab promised to whomever caught Moby Dick.

The plot thickens as the bookish New England captain greedily requested credit for the sinking of not one but two Japanese submarines. Settling the dispute, a reviewing officer proclaimed, "Like a good many such, I have acquired something of the viewpoint that would rather lose a battle according to the rules than win one by transgression" (Abercrombie 22). Though he did not get his wish, Abercrombie approved of the fundamental values reflected in the gentleman's pronouncement, a comment close in syntax and sense to Natty Bumppo's, "A bargain is a bargain, though it is made with a vagabond." The implied message of the passage in *Long Were the Nights* (and in James Fenimore Cooper's *The*

*Deerslayer*) was that American men, true to Western Civilization's "Just Warrior" dominant symbol, stood for law and order. They would win in a non-hypocritical fashion, fighting "fair and square."

Another entry among the literature of fighting surface ships was Frank Morris's *Pick Out the Biggest*, a vignette about a battle that lasted a quarter of an hour. As personified heroine of the story, the cruiser *Boise* engaged the enemy in the fall of 1942 in treacherous Solomon Islands waters. A newer member of the fleet, this ship model was designed to challenge the formidable Japanese battlewagons. In reality, according to naval historians John Motley and Philip Kelly in *Now Hear This*, "no cruiser had a finer fighting record than the *Boise*....she participated in 14 major invasions and shore bombardments, and was damaged in action only once" (Motley and Kelly 71-74). With help from a range of other ships and shipmates, the *Boise* inflicted heavy damage on six enemy ships, sinking most, according to correspondent Morris who witnessed the condensed battle from the boat's deck.

The focus of Morris's book, however, was the *Boise's* struggle with a Japanese flotilla. When the juggernaut was sighted, the skipper ordered his gunners to "Pick out the biggest, and commence firing!" Subsequently appropriated for the title of the book, the order contributed a memorable phrase to the annals of classic fighting words, taking a



place beside Farragut's "Damn the torpedoes, full steam ahead!"

For reasons of military security, no submarine narrative was published until 1945, notwithstanding the fact that undersea fortresses were among the most productive--or destructive as the case may be--of any naval fleet.<sup>39</sup> While several submarine manuscripts, including Robert Trumbull's *Silversides*, Robert Casey's *Torpedo Junction*, and Carl Carmer's *Stars Fell on Alabama*, had been submitted to Navy censors for clearance, approvals for publication were denied and manuscripts were confiscated with vague justifications. To illustrate the intense level of government secrecy during the war, none of the comings and goings of submarines were ever printed in the press. Moreover, closest relatives of sailors were told absolutely nothing about the safety of any sub even when they phoned respective bases of loved ones or Washington directly for information. Instead, they typically heard, "We're sorry....You'll just have to wait." (Frank and Horan *Seawolf* 55).

As the battle of the Pacific wound down, military apprehensions lessened, and all three of the aforementioned submarine narratives, with slight alterations, were published

---

<sup>39</sup> United States submarines sank sixty-three percent of all Japanese merchant shipping of 1,000 or more gross tons, demonstrating the devastating performance of the fleet. In addition, they "found time to sink one battleship, four carriers, four escort carriers, three heavy cruisers, nine light cruisers, 43 destroyers, 23 submarines and 189 minor combat vessels." The loss of fifty-two U.S. undersea crafts in the Pacific attested to their risky activity (Motley and Kelly 165).

near war's close. As a matter of fact, a fourth submarine personal narrative entitled *U.S.S. Seawolf: Submarine Raider of the Pacific* (1945), written by Gerold Frank and John Horan with J.M. Eckberg, was printed without emendations of any kind. Horan and Frank actually transcribed the adventures of the submarine nicknamed "Wolf" as told to them by decorated chief radioman, Joseph Eckberg.<sup>40</sup>

If we can believe Horan and Frank, both Navy-accredited correspondents, it was sheer coincidence that they spotted Eckberg on a train from New York City to New London. As explained in the introduction, the Viking-looking "beribboned figure" caught their attention, so they engaged him in conversation. It was immediately apparent to them that "he had done things and been places." In fact, he had served on the *Seawolf*, accredited with the first submarine attack of World War II on enemy shipping, for repelling a Japanese landing on Bali, and for sinking and/or damaging multiple Japanese Imperial Navy transports, destroyers, and cruisers. Even though the reporters were familiar with the fantastic history of the *Seawolf*, Eckberg insisted that news clippings could not possibly capture the whole story, and certainly did not "explain why the *Seawolf* is the best damn submarine in the United States Navy." So later that week, in the privacy

---

<sup>40</sup> Since 1931, the Navy had customarily given fish names to subs, states to battleships, cities to cruisers, historical events or places to carriers, famous Navy men to destroyers, small cities to gunboats, and apparently running out of fitting categories, birds to mine sweepers (*Newsweek* June 5, 1939: 14).

of Eckberg's Groton, Connecticut home, he expounded a book's worth on that superlative statement.

First, Eckberg informed his novice civilian audience of the submarine's specifications and characteristics: "more than 308 feet long, weighing 1,480 tons, built to make over 20 knots surface speed, air-conditioned and equipped with every modern device, she combined the best we knew in submarine construction." "Compactness, utility, efficiency" was the *Seawolf*. In addition, Eckberg described every space faithfully, including the galley and the scullery. It was no surprise he remembered every nook and cranny of the vessel; in preparation for emergency, he, along with every other crew member, had to draw thirty-four blueprints of her principal systems before heading out to sea. "By the time we completed our school work, we knew the anatomy of the *Wolf* as a surgeon knows the muscles and their insertions, the bones and their functions."

More fascinating was the discussion of the sixty-five specialists needed to man the sub. The "*Wolf*" required three complete crews each on eight-hour shifts performing the diverse functions of officers, electricians, signalmen, firemen, torpedomen, machinists, fire-controlmen, cooks, radio operators, and mess boys. The execution of missions depended upon the coordination of all the separate workers. In the foreword, Jonas H. Ingram, Commander-in-Chief of the Atlantic Fleet, reminded readers that "the successes of the *Seawolf* bears testimony to the effectiveness of single-

purposeness and teamwork." Practically speaking, "Every submarine man is a specialist, but he must be prepared to take over any other post at a moment's notice, whether it be frying eggs or firing torpedoes." Though they might first appear the equivalent of differentiated assembly-line laborers, submariners were trained to be interchangeable. Under normal circumstances, however, they functioned like a harmonious sports team:

We learned to mesh together. Our stations, our duties, were as clear-cut as the assignments given a crack football team in a championship game. Life was the title we were fighting for, and death always lurked as the penalty for a man who wasn't where he should be, for a man offside (*Seawolf* 16).

More than any other warrior, a submariner grew to know his colleagues intimately, sometimes locked together for weeks in close quarters within a sealed steel chamber. Eckberg said that they differed from crews of planes and other ships because "we had no identity outside our submarines." This was doubly true when one considers that most of the volunteers on the *Seawolf* had been in submarine service for at least ten years. "Submarines are our lives," Eckberg continued, "and our careers."

With more concrete parlance, Eckberg sounded the "unity-in-diversity" theme, which according to William Stott, succinctly characterized World War II documentary literature. In this regard, the captain of the *Seawolf* hand-picked his men from all over the world, according to acquired skills and ascriptive characteristics:

burly men, ham-fisted and barrel-chested; little wiry men who looked as though they'd jump at a noise, but turned out to be made of cold-drawn steel; soft-looking men who could bake a cake or strangle a man; psalm-singers and book-lovers; swaggering lady-killers and men with icewater in their veins; Jew and Gentile, Italian, Swede, Dane, German, Scotch, Irish, Pole (*Seawolf* 4).

The authors of the *Seawolf* drew attention to the cultural mix of the men in order to prove that strength came from diversity--ethnic and otherwise. This notion would be especially potent at a time when segments of the German and the homogenized Japanese state were propagating superior-race theories. In the case of the *U.S.S. Seawolf*, such a gathering of types had the appearance of overcoming harmful prejudicial thinking, accomplished with a dose of more acceptable stereotyping.

American diversity worked wonders for the *Seawolf* crew. They endured endless natural and man-made dangers: treacherous rocks and shoals, the most unpredictable currents on earth, mine fields, enemy planes that could easily spot submarines from overhead, and depth-charges; all despite some of the worst living conditions imaginable: salty, acrid, nauseating air born of oil, staleness, oven-like heat, and perspiration (sometimes buckets full of sweat stood in corners), including days on end without daylight.<sup>41</sup>

The *Seawolf* exceeded the military's hopes in three areas: it functioned phenomenally as (1) cargo carrier, (2)

---

<sup>41</sup> One thing submarine life had to recommend was a variety of good food. Around the clock steaks, ham, pork, lamb, pies, and pastries was the Navy's aim.

transporter of military personnel, and (3) search and destroy weapon. From construction to shakedown exercises and wartime patrols, expectations had been modest. Casting an ominous shadow over the *Seawolf's* existence, its ill-fated sister ship, *Squalas*, had been lost off the New Hampshire coast in 1939 while practicing shallow dives. The *Wolf* compensated for that fiasco. The Navy announced that the *Seawolf's* "twelve-month cruise...will go down as one of the epic stories of submarine warfare."

On the opposite end of the Navy spectrum to the submarine was the aircraft carrier. While one submerged, the other facilitated the dominance of the skies. While one was lean, angular, and stealthy, the other was fat, flat and conspicuous. Finally, while the crew of the former knew each other's every habit, carrier mates more than likely never got the chance to speak directly to one another due to the ship's enormity. The carrier was a big city, anonymous and segregated by rank and occupation. Also reminiscent of urban living, it was "compressed of too many overlapping segments for any individual to see the entirety of what is taking place."

Due to their unique make-up, the varied activities involving aircraft carriers reported by direct participants were necessarily different from other types of witness accounts. More specifically, these most behemoth and complex of all ships in the fleet inspired awe, honor, and personification. In fact, Ernie Pyle's creativity was

aroused by his first spying a carrier. In *Last Chapter*, he wrote a somewhat paradoxical "Ode to a Carrier":

An aircraft carrier is a noble thing. It lacks almost everything that seems to denote nobility, yet deep nobility is there. A carrier has no poise. It has no grace. It is top-heavy and lop-sided. It has lines of a well-fed cow....Yet the carrier is a ferocious thing, and out of its heritage of action has grown nobility. I believe that every Navy in the world has as its No. 1 priority the destruction of enemy carriers. That is a precarious honor, but a proud one (*Last Chapter* 57).

In 1944 alone, these floating airfields kindled the conception of at least five personal narratives. Among them were minor accounts like Kenneth McCracken's *Baby Flat-top* and Eugene Burns's *Then There Was One*. The former detailed the work and play routine of sailors aboard United States carriers through random profiles of representative sailors. The latter offered a fair dosage of operational information and war history. Where "baby flat-top" saw no action, its big brother, *Enterprise*, protagonist of the Burns book, played a role in nearly every action in the Pacific region during 1942. Witness to the major Battle of Santa Cruz, the author extolled the competency of the crew from highest ranking officer to ordinary deck hand. Much of the book was based on hear-say because the correspondent's tour of duty aboard the *Enterprise* was brief. Perhaps the writing was fluffed with the quality of romantic fiction and patriotic diatribes for that reason.

When Max Miller's *Daybreak for Our Carrier* came out that same year, the author had already written fourteen books.

The best known was *I Covered the Waterfront*, a collection of his journalistic ramblings for the *San Diego Sun* about that city's demimonde. His war narrative evidenced the many years of experience he had compiled as an observer and writer. *Daybreak for Our Carrier* was less a straight-forward chronological narrative (most of the text was written in present as opposed to past tense) than an artfully done manual about life aboard the average flattop during the war. Lt. Miller (USNR) never named the symbolic ship on which he was stationed, though he could have called it EVERYSHIP.

By assuming the persona of a judicious philosophic elder as a few reviewers noted, Miller, like Socrates who said, "I know nothing except the fact of my ignorance," recognized human limitation and qualified his authority. He cautioned his fellow readers and writers that

to be complete eye-witness authorities, we would have had to be back aboard the carrier at the same time we were away from her out here [with the squadron]. We would have to be aboard all the other carriers simultaneously as well, and aboard all their respective squadrons out flying (*Daybreak* 158).

Still, Miller himself became familiar with many men on board; he studied the ship's design, and he used photographs to present a universal picture of how fighting men lived, thought, and felt. Perhaps Miller was alluding to his own procedure as author or head of "intelligence" when ostensibly explaining how after a raid, intelligence officers pieced together fliers' reports in order to draw up the next day's tactics: "But by getting all their individual versions



chronicled this way, and by the use of charts and photographs, a fairly good over-all picture results." Celebrating the power and efficiency of carriers and crews, being "thousand-thousandth[s] part of the ship...the same as rivets," Miller painted for the homeland (background), a carrier world (foreground), which was in good mechanical and human hands. In a unifying conceit, Miller wrote,

The vessel is part of the United States. She became detached somehow from the mainland of America, and was speeded out here. She is a piece of the best of the [country]...We are all a part of her...Copper from Montana is in her. Steel from Pennsylvania is in her. Lumber from the mountains of Washington and from Michigan and from Minnesota is in her, too. A state cannot be named which is not represented in her somehow. The men aboard are from all these states likewise (*Daybreak* 15).

Miller wove together the story of many individuals performing diverse duties, fused to a mass of war-making hardware, all integrated into a larger naval and air force project, umbrellaed by a National goal. For the most part, narratives of naval operations demonstrated how the crew and the ship took precedence over the individual.

In so doing, Miller compromised the effects of immediacy and suspense that were the stock and trade of most personal narratives. A reviewer for the *New York Times* was on target when he claimed that *Daybreak for Our Carrier* was "No blood-and-thunder thriller. No desperate enemy attack is beaten back. There is little opposition over the target. Most of the fliers get back safely. No mock heroics introduced" (June 4, 1944: 6). Not particularly concerned with where

this one carrier had been or what her fliers had done, he rather emphasized daily affairs in order to draw an accurate illustration of the interior or heart of the carrier.

He conjured up the image of carrier as a crew's home for the duration--a floating town with its own doctors, dentists, organized sports league, and movie theater (located in the hanger when the planes were on shore). Ordinary days on Miller's model carrier were catalogued, beginning with General Quarters:

This refers to the daily morning G.Q.....That time of day when nobody likes anybody, and when the world's funniest joke would flounder still-born in a cesspool of sourness...when the time is neither night nor daylight, and when the men are awakened...by sounds resembling ashcans being hurdled (*Daybreak* 52).

Then came informal scuttlebutt or rumor sessions of which logic was not an integral part, "Nor is proof. Nor is truth." Of course, practice drills took place, along with mock briefings and recognition classes where pilots were taught to determine a plane's nationality and type instantaneously. Following these lessons the men spent long hours relaxing or playing volleyball. After dinner most navymen congregated at religious services where Chaplains of one denomination attended to the men of all different faiths.

Usually prior to hitting the "sack," the men either wrote letters or read old ones over and over again.<sup>42</sup> Once,

---

<sup>42</sup> Mail contributed to morale. "Not only does an effective postal system cheer soldiers who get mail but, in a deeper, sense, it helps raise morale by illustrating the efficiency of the organisation to which they belong" (*Holmes Acts of War*

Miller's description of this nightly ritual revealed something about the women back home. A young sailor asked his buddies how he should answer a letter from his girlfriend that he had been sitting on for a while. "Between the letter's salutation and the signature were two curt sentences: 'Darling, I'll be true to you. Send me \$50.'" His buddies gathered that this gal was just out for the innocent, absent sailor's dough. This letter was mildly uncomplimentary toward women compared to the next one that someone recalled. It plainly read, "My husband is missing in action so come and see me."

In the usual personal narrative, as in *Daybreak for Our Carrier*, women were exterior to war; they never appeared, but were evoked in the memories of men. While in the backdrop as nurses, mothers, wives, and factory workers, female figures were stereotypically at odds with war's destruction. These icons willingly supported men's efforts and praised their valor. Departing from the personal narrative norm and conventional attitudes toward gender difference during the war, Miller portrayed two threatening images of women: one disloyal, the other loose. Where other writers evoked the GI's longing for the loving women back home, Miller raised a disquieting specter: girlfriends and wives had forgotten and betrayed their men in battle so far away, rushing into the arms of those more readily available.

---

88). Bill Maudlin during World War II said that "a soldier's life revolves around his mail."

Since men were motivated in part by the desire to protect home, including families and faithful women, Miller's construction of gender, potentially undermined the cause. Perhaps Miller unveiled these concerns because he was charting life on an aircraft carrier where few men got to know one another and nobody could comprehend the whole. The very dwarfing of the individual by the military machine stirred anxieties about masculinity. Here, it made the individual feel somewhat "impotent" on his own and hence challenged his sense of manhood.

Although the book tended to focus on earthly matters, the carrier's gargantuan physical presence also afforded the vehicle for more metaphysical/metaphorical indulgences.

Mused Miller,

now comes a vessel so immense that her arms reach hundreds of miles from her body. The air is as much her realm as the sea. Clouds are as important to her as depth or current. She is, in brief, a sort of forth-dimensional creation. She is both bird and baroque. She is a new *thing* (*Daybreak* 13).

On first glance, Miller's conceptualization sounded irrational, though later he partially justified the idea of fourth-dimensionality when describing what occurs during a real-life engagement:

For a carrier's operations....[its] pattern reaches beyond sight. It extends as far as its farthest plane extends, and it extends as high as allowed by the oxygen tanks. Each of these tangents is a thread then....Back and forth they go, and in and out, and yet the weaving is so spacious and so complex that no individual can hope to follow each strand (*Daybreak* 146).

Miller, correspondingly, brought a new dimension to the World War II personal narrative genre. Harkening back to the previous decade, *Daybreak for Our Carrier* was characteristic of the more decorative reportage art associated with the finest Thirties documentaries. Indeed, Miller consciously attempted to write documentary with a difference. He opined on the "saturation point" for war-related literature:

Adventures are so easy to have these days, and so numerous to hear about, and so accessible in books, magazines and newspapers that for a fact there comes a time when one wonders how these adventures can avoid duplicating one another even more than they do (*Daybreak* 71).

Miller's unique brand of patriotic myth-making stressed the transformation of the seamen from crude, profane beings into strong, purposeful men. For example, he described aircraft-carrier gunners as a shirtless tribe of monotone grunters who looked like "they were about to draw lots for a slight case of cannibalism." And waiting pilots, "with whom you may be in the midst of exchanging the most outrageous of earthy stories," upon sensing the signal "man your planes," "instantly become other beings entirely. It is almost as if they said: 'Yes, a moment ago I was one of you. Now I am not.'"

Another book about carrier operations, *Mission Beyond Darkness*, complemented the universality of *Daybreak for Our Carrier* by presenting the most definitive account of a particular carrier in a particular action, one galaxy in a whole universe. The aircraft carrier *Lexington* played a part in the concluding phase of the First Battle of the

Philippines, which occurred June 19, 1944. The plot covered only a few hours of intense fighting, from the takeoffs to the brief aerial attack and final harrowing episode of everyone's uncertain effort to land the ships (Navy lingo for airplane) on the carrier's deck. The authors, Phillip Reed and Lt. Commander J. Bryan III, claimed that the story derived wholly from statements made by surviving officers and men of the *Lexington* company as well as the authors' witness. Furthermore, as they explained in their foreword, "No word or thought or action has been ascribed to anyone without his own authority." Their rhetoric and tone stressed that the telling was accurate, unvarnished, and substantiated. Along with roughly 125 pages of narrative, a hand drawn blueprint labeled "The Attack," a "Glossary of Technical and Slang Terms in the Text," and a roster of the officers and men who saw action (listing rank, name, hometown, age--the average was close to 24--what they were awarded for this mission, and previous awards) more fully enhanced the reader's knowledge of Task Force 58's Air Group 16.

The drama began when an American reconnaissance plane spotted a flotilla of Japanese warships. The official decision to seek and destroy was hampered severely by two problems: One, paradoxical as it was, the carrier fuel was too low to close the gap on an enemy armada steaming away, therefore the targets were outside a safe flying radius, which would have assured that the planes had enough fuel to return; two, a late afternoon takeoff meant that planes

managing to see their way back to the *Lexington* then had to land on a narrow and dark bobbing deck, a precarious exercise even under optimum conditions of light and weather. The odds dictated that aspects of the mission would go awry and they surely did. Some pilots lost their way in the darkness, eventually ditching in the ocean. A crippled plane crashed on the flight deck, injuring and killing crew members. Directly or indirectly, the attack had cost nine of the thirty-four planes sent out, and four of the sixty-four men.

*Mission Beyond Darkness* had all the elements of high drama on the high seas. It required strength balanced with total concentration to complete the mission. On the flight back to the *Lexington*, some battle-weary men were afflicted by nervous exhaustion and mind-fogging dizziness. It both saddened and frightened the helpless airmen, watching pals' planes forced to plunge into the water, yet a distance from home base. At one juncture, "Hypnosis rode with the [fatigued] pilots, too, sitting alone in the darkness. Their engines beat out a rhythm, the rhythm became a drone, the drone became a lullaby, stupefying and perilous."

The last phase of the operation required utmost composure and extreme accuracy by signalmen and already-drained pilots. Landings always presented the carrier life's most hazardous moments, which only intensified when the plane suffered damage in combat, as many had. That night, the *Lexington* flight crew was taxed to the limit, halting incoming airplanes before clearing the deck for the next

arrival. One crash landing on the carrier was pushed over the side. In numerous instances, disabled planes that were signaled to abort their landing and try again rather than foul the flight deck were forced to ditch in the ocean just moments later. All in all, the hysteria on the carrier lasted from about 8:15 pm to 10:00 pm, a lot longer than the actual twenty minute tangle with the enemy.

A narrative such as *Mission Beyond Darkness* depicted the casualty of wrecked spirits as much as of wrecked machines and men. Those who made it back alive felt mixed emotions amounting to incomplete relief. When a deckhand anxiously asked a pilot, "How was it out there?," the pilot answered, "Once in a lifetime was enough." A second pilot rejected an offer of brandy because, "I've got a belly full of war." A gunner handed in his camera, crying "Take the God damn thing!..." "I'll never use it again! I'll never fly again! Never!" Allowing such pessimistic passing remarks to go unexplained even though they invited serious speculation about the horrors of war and the fear of death, the authors stuck to their policy of nothing but the facts.

*Mission Beyond Darkness* was supposed to be factual and objective, according to the strictest sense of documentary literature. It only told *what* happened, *when*, *where*, and *to whom*, not *why* Americans were fighting. The book never broached issues like democracy, freedom, duty to country, nor "blueberry pie." It never veered from the tunnel-like



confines of the battle at hand. A representative portion of the book's avalanche of minutia came when pilots took to

1,000 feet as a safety-margin and throttled back to "automatic lean" for maximum economy of fuel, but even so there was not a pilot with them whose calculations were not wearing identical grooves: *300 miles to go...ground speed 120...that's 2 1/2 hours... allow half an hour more, maybe forty-five minutes, to find the Lex and get into the circle and take my turn coming aboard. It's going to be close...It was already close for some of the pilots from other groups, lost, and their fuel dwindling. Panicky or plaintive or defiant, their voices came over the air: "I've got ten minutes of gas left, Joe. Think I'll put her down in the water while I've still got power. So long, Joe!" "This is Forty-six Inkwell. Where am I, please? Somebody tell me where I am!"* (ellipses and italics in original, Bryan and Reed 168).

Bryan and Reed, like the war's combatants, were so preoccupied with mechanics of action that larger issues were never allowed to surface nor complicate their view.

As with so many other documentaries, a generous number of photographs were used.<sup>43</sup> Edward Steichen, who devoted a long life to photography as art, advertising medium, intelligence information, and social commentary, presided over picture-taking aboard the *Lexington* at the time of the so-called "mission beyond darkness." Steichen had once volunteered in America's First World War Expeditionary Force in France where he helped establish the first photographic

---

<sup>43</sup> The balance in Thirties documentary between written and photographed text was heavily weighted on the side of pictures; the scale in personal narratives was tipped heavily on the side of print. In just about half of the wartime narratives, the use of photography or illustration was nonexistent; the other half came with between ten and forty photographs in texts averaging less than 200 pages.

reconnaissance division for the Signal Corps. His many aerial photographs strictly served as reliable sources of information to make available to staff officers. "The average vertical aerial photographic print," admitted Steichen, "is upon first acquaintance as uninteresting and unimpressive a picture as can be imagined" ("American Aerial Photography at the Front" 360). In other words, it decidedly lacked universal appeal.

During the Twenties and Thirties, Steichen became a pivotal figure in magazine photography, shooting the leading personalities of the era such as Charlie Chaplin, Greta Garbo, H.L. Mencken, and Marlene Dietrich for *Vanity Fair*. Although Steichen's portfolio never included Great Depression documentary photography, he was impressed and influenced by the 1938 International Photographic Exposition in New York, especially the unadorned style of the three thousand images submitted by the historical section of the Farm Security Administration. Later that year, Steichen introduced the photographs of this younger generation, including Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans, Arthur Rothstein and others, to the readers of *U.S. Camera Annual*, hailing them as a "series of the most remarkable human documents that were ever rendered in pictures" (Phillips 16):<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> Steichen also directed a 1962 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York named "The Bitter Years 1935-1941: Rural America as Seen by the Photographers of the Farm Security Administration" as well as edited a book upon which it was based.

Have a look at the faces of the men and women  
....Listen to the story they tell and they  
will leave with you a feeling of a living  
experience you won't forget; and the babies  
here, and the children; weird, hungry, dirty,  
lovable, heart-breaking images; and then  
there are the fierce stories of strong, gaunt  
men and women in time of flood and drought...  
(Steichen in *US Camera* vi).

These were harrowing glimpses of the Depression's human toll. The F.S.A. project organizers hoped to make documentaries that exposed both the natural and social forces wreaking havoc on rural Americans, thereby summoning the resources of government to assist those who were distressed or starving. The job of contributing photographers, hence, was to become the understanding friends and interpreters of the migrants, sharecroppers, unemployed, and dispossessed, and to bring back to the uninformed these people's neglected philosophy, faces, and home places in photographs. The pictures prompted viewers to discover a new experience and envision a stranger's story (or the story the photographer wanted to tell). Often the strangers were presented as pitiable "images meant to break our heart" (Stott 58). Steichen "delighted in the visual and emotional power of the individual images of "such simple and blunt directness that they made many a citizen wince" (Phillips 17). By the eve of America's entry into global conflict, Steichen had absorbed some lessons of documentary photography.

At sixty-two, Steichen persuaded the Navy that American photography, like every aspect of American life, could and should be mobilized behind the war effort. The Navy,

subsequently, requested of him photographs for the limited purposes of recruiting posters and training leaflets. Though Steichen had greater visions for his war work, he undauntedly accepted a rank of lieutenant commander (lower than his World War I colonelcy), while sensing larger opportunities ahead (Phillips 22). Now as Photography Director of Naval Operations, he hand-picked a six-man team of crack photographers.

The skeptical Navy eventually listened to their suggestion that photography could "serve as an invaluable means to convey the human drama of the Navy's war to the American public as well as to future generations" (Phillips 9). Ultimately, Steichen's unit produced an archive of 15,000 images that were used both within the Navy and released to the public press (Gedrim 39). "The camera," reflected Steichen in 1947, "serves as an instrument for waging war..." (in Gedrim 127). It is, therefore, fitting that he was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for exceptionally meritorious service.

Some of Steichen's best-known photographs of the war resulted from his tour on the *Lexington*. "During the long voyage from Hawaii to the Gilbert Islands, he and [Victor] Jorgensen...roamed freely throughout the ship, photographing the daily routine of the vessel's three-thousand-man crew" (Phillips 35). Of the hundreds of photographs taken, Bryan and Reed selected approximately thirty for their narrative *Mission Beyond Darkness*. Though taken at a particular time--

the Second World War--from a particular place--the carrier which was the pilots temporary living space--the majority of photographs appeared de-contextualized and contrived. Part of the reason was that these young servicemen, in essence, had been stripped of their own context--family, friends, neighborhood, school, and workplace--and transported to a futuristic space(ship) in the middle of an unrecognizable remote sea. The other reason was that the pictures intentionally isolated subjects from their setting. *Mission Beyond Darkness* devoted three of its pages to cropped portraits of individual bomber pilots, each posed standing in front of a propeller plane. World War II was "the first time in the coverage of the United States at war, [that] the camera closed in on an individual soldier's face....It became one of the new looks of the war, sympathetic portraits of the men even when they were not being heroes" (Moeller 244). By contrast, Depression-age subjects usually found their significance in relation to life's everyday setting and cycle of chores: the offspring of slaves picking field cotton in a hot midday sun without a trace of mechanization, weather-beaten and tired (from the accumulation of many years' labor), parents feeding hungry and dirty-looking children in the starkest of farm homes.

Steichen also took group shots of the bomber pilots, torpedo pilots, and gunners outfitted and professionally organized to face the camera; their names typed alongside, including a notation, "Not shown: Jay Shields." It was

obvious that Steichen had them spruce up and smile as if for a high school yearbook portrait. It was Steichen who counseled his group to "concentrate on the men. The ships and planes will become obsolete, but the men will always be there" (Moeller 192).<sup>45</sup> What could one learn or surmise about the lives of these men from such pictures? First, that the men were not larger than life, but merely resolute kids who knew the odds they faced. Perhaps also that everyone looked jovial, easy-going, somehow loved, proud, willing, and simultaneously vulnerable. These prints encouraged such sentimental observations by concealing the lonesome and desperate side of every pilot's existence. They were the opposite of Great Depression photographs which exposed the painful and tragic side of American life. If the Great Depression, throwing so many men out of work, left men shaken and helpless, World War II military service provided an opportunity to renew and reassert American manhood. Steichen's photographs for *Mission Beyond Darkness* presented men holding their heads high for a change, thereby vaulting the "common man" into hero stature.

Although Steichen once maintained that a good photographer recorded "the gamut of feelings written on the human face" (*Steichen the Photographer* 9), far from illuminating war's balance of fear and courage or bitter and sweet, his lens appeared to have solely caught a symbol of

---

<sup>45</sup> Edward Steichen. *A Life in Photography*. London: 1963, ch.12, unpaginated.

unflinching and untainted American youth. There were only a handful of photographs that captured a sense of weakness; these showed men in prayer with their heads hung low, a man staring down the camera just before an air strike, men near collapse from exhaustion, dead men in body bags, and a youngster in panic. But the authors, Bryan and Reed, as if perceiving the need to revive the nation's spirit, opted not to comment on these occurrences in order to give the home front as uplifting and unproblematic a portraiture of war as possible.<sup>46</sup>

Once again demonstrating that each type of serviceman had his own narrative to tell, several authors recorded the history and experiences of a subset of the Navy called the Navy Construction Battalion (NCB), alias Seabees; among the works were Hugh Cave's *We Build, We Fight* (1943), two by William Bradford Huie, *Can Do!* (1944) and *From Omaha to Okinawa*<sup>47</sup> (1945), and Max Miller's *It's Tomorrow Out Here* (1945).

Of the four, the most comprehensive was *Can Do!* NCB Lieutenant Huie felt obliged to report the successes and

---

<sup>46</sup> After Steichen's stay on the *Lexington* ended, the Navy asked him to supervise the making of a feature-length documentary to be called *The Fighting Lady*. Motion picture footage that Dwight Long had obtained on the *Yorktown* and other carriers was used in this Twentieth Century-Fox film by Louis de Rochemont, originator of the "March of Time" newsreels (Barsam 198).

<sup>47</sup> A useful offering of *From Omaha to Okinawa* was its APPENDIX, which listed for the first time the complete record of where the 150 construction battalions and the thirty-nine stevedore battalions were employed during the war as of September 1, 1945.

tragedies of his own organization since, "we shall need to hear from each part extolled before we can comprehend the whole." *Can Do!* included a historical survey of the organization, stories of specific battalions told by eyewitnesses from the Atlantic and the Pacific theaters, excerpts from letters home categorized by subject, descriptions of the stevedores' (designated "Special Battalions")<sup>48</sup> contributions, and even a sampling of Seabee poetry. *Can Do!* was also the most popular of the Seabee books; as a matter of fact, it appeared in five printings.

It was during the Guadalcanal campaign that the Seabees, whose official motto was *Construimus Batuimus* (We build We fight), came to be called the "Can Do" men of the Navy. They were issued a third nickname by Bob Hope, the famous radio and movie personality who entertained troops at fighting fronts around the globe and published his own personal narrative of those experiences in *I Never Left Home*:

---

<sup>48</sup> In the Fall of 1942, the Navy organized special battalions of stevedores to relieve the unloading bottleneck in the Pacific and speed up the turnaround of ships. Of the original 995 Navy stevedores, ninety-five had stevedore experience in the States, while the other 900 demonstrated knowledge of rigging and handling barges and small boats. Once enlisted, they used cargo nets and slings, not to mention brawn to unload tons of guns, grenades, serums, plasmas, food, fuel, clothing, and tanks from ships. Amazingly, the Special Battalions were able to unload freighters twice as fast as the civilian crews had been unloading them, "willing to forget the clock and damn the weather" (*Can Do* 172). Their motto became "Keep the Hook Moving." In *From Omaha to Okinawa*, Huie praised the stevedores' work during the war, noting that some battalions performed their monotonous duties without liberty for thirty-one months straight, except for two hours off on Christmas.



If you want to know what 'Seabee' means, skip the dictionary and go to Guadalcanal and North Africa, to Attu Island and the godforsaken sand piles of the Pacific. For that is where you'll find the....Iron men of the Navy<sup>49</sup> (*We Build 7*).

Carpenter's Mate, First Class Frank Iafrate, hatched the perfect insignia to capture the role that Seabees would play in the war. It was an anthropomorphic cartoon bee, diving

with ferocious and determined features. He speeds to the attack with a machine gun gripped in his fore hand, a wrench in his midship hand, a hammer in his aft hand, and a sailor hat perched cockily atop his head. His sleeves bear the naval rating appropriate to the weapons he carries--Gunner's Mate, Machinist Mate, Carpenter's Mate. The device of the Civil Engineer Corps of the Navy adorns each wrist (*We Build 5*).

The only significant absence from the drawing was a bulldozer; Seabees constantly used bulldozers. Max Miller confirmed that "a Seabee and his bulldozer became a symbol of the Almighty." Admiral William Halsey, too, hailed the tractor-like machine, postulating that "the bulldozer [was] one of the four decisive weapons of the Pacific War, after the submarine, Radar, and the airplane" (*Encyclopedia Americana*).

---

<sup>49</sup> To refer to Seabees as "men" was appropriate since on average they tended to be considerably older, thirty-one, than the average sailor, twenty-two and a half, and the Marine, twenty and a half. They also tended to be fathers. Hence, few were subject to the draft. When the Secretary of the Navy integrated a Construction Battalion into the service on December 28, 1941, and then called for volunteers, 100,000 males put on uniforms at service wages within a few months, despite the fact that draft deferments and inflated wages in shipyards and war plants were theirs for the taking. As rapidly as they could be outfitted, they were rushed to danger zones (*Can Do 26*)

Seabees, working their machines, especially their bulldozers, laid all the groundwork for the fighting. Before there could exist a *bona fide* air war, disease had to be fought; airstrips had to be built and have such accouterments as a tank farm for fuel, widely dispersed magazines full of bombs, ammunition with interlacing roads, and gun emplacements to protect them; shore lines needed docks; islands needed fresh water supplies, warehouses, and a base of operations if not a complete community. To put it another way, "a modern fleet without great, far-flung bases--without piers, dry-docks, airdromes, vast storage and repair facilities--is like an automobile without filling stations." The Navy Construction Battalion provided all the filling stations.

Although the Seabees were subsumed under the Navy title, they were unique in many respects. First, all the officers were men of wide experience, proven specialists in various types of construction. "Some had owned their own businesses; others had been superintendents on big projects like Grand Coulee Dam." In addition, the men were not the kind that one commonly associated with a labor battalion. "Far from it. There was not one unskilled, inexperienced man in the entire detachment." The first Seabee battalions, especially, were gathered from the cream of the skilled-worker crop. In a break with Navy tradition, ranks or "rates" for enlisted personnel, which previously had to be earned through military service and performance, were awarded to carpenters,

machinists, earth movers, electricians, and lumberjacks based on civilian experience. While regular sailors resented offering rates upon enlistment to members of the building trades, recruitment needs overcame such objections. In combination with intrepidity and perseverance, attributes shared equally by servicemen in all branches, NCBs carried the distinction of experience and know-how. Huie's anecdotal profiles enabled the reader to envision a romanticized Joe Seabee--an ingenious, hard-working, competent civilian with the thinnest veneer of military training and attitude.

Huie recalled having watched them work, "and I have never felt such cold determination among a group of men. You felt that there was nothing in God's world they couldn't do if they decided to do it." Of course, Huie made no pretense of objective reporting--He was "a Seabee among Seabees, an advocate for his own gang"--yet the theme he struck was repeated in all Seabee narratives, each writer asserting, with slight variation, a god-like creative omnipotence that the "Seabees can do anything" (*Tomorrow* 10). They worked in a hurry in the face of enemy shelling and strafing. "Often they performed miracles of construction and repair under heavy fire," so well-trained were these metaphorical gifts from heaven. Yet they were not so much gods as industrial saviors: civilian work groups, who achieved miracles of construction under dangerous wartime conditions.

The exemplary Seabee, according to Huie, set no boundaries as far as the work he would tackle and was

unreservedly tolerant regarding the people under whom and with whom he would work. Seabees

have worked beside black men in Africa, brown men in Samoa, white men from Canada, Australia, and the British Isles. They have worn Army gear, Navy gear, Marine gear--or native breech cloths--and they have died alongside flyers, sailors and infantry-men (*Can Do* 205).

Many members of the Special Battalions were, indeed, black. As a matter of fact, approximately 12,500 African Americans served in the Seabees in World War II (*Negro History Bulletin*, Dec. 1993: 9). Mostly, they worked on the docks and in construction details; still, when called upon, they fought on the beaches beside whites. No prejudice toward blacks surfaced in Huie's narrative. However, Huie did not seem to be making a civil rights statement when he described whites and blacks teaming up. Instead, the overriding reason they harmoniously worked as a unit was "to get this thing over with" so everyone could go home.

As Huie persuasively argued, the Seabees deserved a load of credit for getting the job done and finishing the war as swiftly as possible. He regretted that the NCBs were overlooked and under-appreciated by people back home. Seabees did not get their pictures in the papers because their work did not seem exciting enough. The book *Can Do!* was in effect a permanent memorial to all Seabees, one which duly recognized and applauded their accomplishments and toughness.<sup>50</sup> *Can Do!*, mimicking every single World War II

---

<sup>50</sup> To this end, APPENDIX I contained a list of awards--Legion

personal narrative, sent a message loud and clear to the home front, "ATTENTION MUST BE PAID." Huie, therefore, supplied notable quotations by reputable men, which registered Seabee achievement. Here is how he introduced a few chapters: General A. A. Vandergrift, USMC, saying that, "I do not know how we could have gotten along without the Seabees"; Vice-Admiral Thomas C. Kincaid, USN, heralding that, "without the Seabees the Navy would just be lost in this war"; General Douglas MacArthur remarking that, "The only trouble with your Seabees is that you don't have enough of them."

In a good-humored tone, Huie was fueling the long-standing intra-military argument, "Who is better? Army, Navy, Air Force or Marines." In the final analysis, Huie admitted that although "each of us insists on contending that his outfit is the 'toughest goddamned outfit in the whole goddamned army,' [it is] when we add all these boisterous contentions we have the sum of our magnificent effort" (*We Build 24*).

More empowering than any superior characteristics Seabees may have possessed over fellow Americans was the incredible advantage they had over the enemy. "When it comes to military construction," Huie pontificated,

the Jap is hopelessly outclassed. While  
Americans have been building super-highways,

---

of Merit, Silver Star, Navy and Marine Corps Medal, Purple Heart, Soldiers' Medal--given to officers and enlisted personnel; APPENDIX II was the roll call of individuals reported as casualties or missing in action as of March 1, 1944; APPENDIX III included six poems written by and about Seabees.

skyscrapers and TVA's, the Japs have been building dog trails and fiber huts. As a fighting man, perhaps the Jap merits some respect from us; but as a construction man the Jap merits only the contempt which the Seabees have for him (*Can Do* 45).

Here and elsewhere, Huie implied that Americans had technologically progressive thinking, driven by private industry, to thank for their outstanding war production and prosecution. "Only a nation with our industrial might and with our men who know how to use our machines could have projected its industrial strength so far, so powerfully, and in so many directions." For example, while the Japanese "heads" (Navy parlance for latrine) "were nothing but shallow holes just outside their huts," Americans established Quonset huts complete with "Mr. Crane's best toilet fixtures," concrete floors, automatic hot-water boilers, showers, and "General Electric's best washing machines." Like Thirties documentaries about terrific engineering projects such as the Grand Coulee Dam, *Can Do!* highlighted the technological accomplishments of talented and hard-working men working collectively.

The Seabees lent a constructive quality to overwhelmingly destructive times. They alone were the creative antidote to the greatest destruction in history. Huie contended that the Marines and the Army may have driven the Japanese off Guadalcanal, but "it was the Seabees who brought America to the island," architecturally and otherwise. Once secured, many islands were quickly transformed by Seabees into bases crowded not just with men

and materiel, but with advanced facilities for American living: "Spacious dining halls, comfortable barracks, artistic chapels, telephones, radios, electricity, plumbing, movie houses, reading rooms, basketball courts" and above all hospitals, the Seabees brought to a jungle island. With advanced equipment, they built superior infrastructures to the "dog trails and fiber huts" of the Japanese.

In sum, acting together in a "can do" spirit, Americans proved that they could accomplish anything. These narratives applauded American technology, ingenuity, and will. That same faith would ultimately bog down Americans in Vietnam. Surrounded by advanced technology, American boys moved forward into the jungle and often sank in the mud. In Vietnam, Americans faced a foe that knew how to use the natural environment against us.

While Marine narratives emphasized individuals and small units, narratives of the aircraft carriers and of the Seabees became celebrations of collective achievement by interdependent, disciplined individuals, a theme idealized in the Depression era as well. In the teamwork of democracy lay the key to personal fulfillment and national success. The tales of Merchant Marines also limned "divisions of labor" and the triumph of large-scale organization. In these narratives, the National Maritime Union goes to war. Thus, the left-wing ethos of Merchant Marines offered a counterpoint to the Seabees: a celebration of labor to match the triumphs of capital.

American shipyards, working on twenty-four hour shifts and profiting by one engineering and managerial innovation after another, sent increasing numbers of merchantmen into the water and into the war (Millet and Maslowski 439). They transported steel, fuel, food as well as guns and ammunition to American troops; they brought oil, rubber, and ores of all sorts to American shores to be used in war plants. In the process, Merchant Marines braved torpedoes, bombs, kamikazes, storms, icebergs, and collisions.

The Battle of the Atlantic produced some of the war's hardest service and grimmest experiences. Weather--Arctic storms, fog, and heavy seas--plagued friend and foe alike. The U-boats attacked submerged by day and on the surface by night. Usually the first sign of an attack was the roar of a torpedo ripping open a merchantman; tankers and munitions ships often exploded and sank in a cloud of flames. Merchant seamen who escaped their vessels often perished from hypothermia in the chill seas (Millett and Maslowski 437).

The Merchant Marine was in the forefront of battle, sailing freighters to invasion war zones all over the map. So as much as Americans needed warships, bombers, tanks, and guns, they needed merchant ships to fight the war.

Starting almost from scratch, American shipbuilding constructed an incredible fleet of cargo vessels in record time. When war arrived, the mountain of precious supplies had to be delivered to the Allied troops across sub-infested waters, dictating a strategy of convoy shipping. A range of vessels like the *Booker T. Washington*, laden with cargo, and Navy warships, like the *Mason*, rode shotgun escort against



marauding German wolfpacks.<sup>51</sup> "The merchant sailor's ship [was] a constant and helpless target for the prowling, invisible U-boat" (Gibbs vi). These U-boats sank millions of tons bound for Europe, Russia, and North Africa in the early months of the war. America responded with a relentless drive to send more ships into harm's way than the Nazis could destroy. The story of this effort was detailed in a series of "convoy" narratives published from 1942 through 1945. Among the more renowned were Robert Carse's *There Go the Ships* (1943), Archie Gibb's *U-Boat Prisoner* (1943), Mark Murphy's *83 Days* (1943), Colin MacKenzie's *Sailors of Fortune* (1944), Paul Madden's *Survivor* (1944), and Lars Skattebol's *The Last Voyage of the Quien Sabe* (1944). The personal narratives of merchant seamen added another worthy chapter to the history of World War II. All fiercely contended that the Merchant Marines was a service woefully neglected by chroniclers.

Convoy narratives delineated the dangerous job of ordinary seamen sailing aboard mostly unarmed vessels, bringing sulfur to England, explosives to North Africa and machinery to Russia, hunted the majority of nautical miles along the way by German subs bent on their destruction. In *Sailors of Fortune*, MacKenzie tried "to show these [Merchant Marines] to you and perhaps you'll begin to see what kind of

---

<sup>51</sup> American supply routes to Pacific island battlegrounds were relatively safe compared with Atlantic travel conditions because of German U-Boat Patrol over the vast Atlantic combined with the diminishing Japanese naval resources after their losses at Coral Sea and Midway.

men we are who go to sea with the stuff of war and who endure hardships most people would die from, or go crazy from, or both" (MacKenzie 68). MacKenzie's tanker was torpedoed twice; the first explosion broke his leg, the second sank the ship. He reported that "the God-damned Germans were spilling us all over the seascape....There were so many ships sunk, it was like 'bank night'<sup>52</sup> for Davey Jones<sup>53</sup>....We died...and we fed the sharks of the seven seas" (MacKenzie 70). Having endured "floating around in that salt water on the...cork lifejacket" before scrambling atop a floating ship's hatch, MacKenzie "swore by all the gods not even to look at the ocean again; but when the time came to sign up for another voyage, he was "back at the gangplank with a lot of lame excuses, all set to go again."

MacKenzie was not especially patriotic nor possessed of high ideals. He never indicated a dislike for the enemy nor a knowledge of what the fighting was all about. He simply appeared swept away by the excitement of running convoys. And since the American public failed to show appreciation for the job the merchant marine was doing, he was driven to tell "just about all that one sailorman can tell."

When the war came, Robert Carse renounced his job as an apprentice reporter for the *New York Times* to join the

---

<sup>52</sup> Bank night was a popular money give-away game played in local movie theaters during the Thirties, run between full-length double-features to increase attendance.

<sup>53</sup> The bottom of the sea is personified by Davey Jones; Davey Jones' Locker is the metaphoric coffin and actual graveyard for drowned sailors and otherwise dead seamen "committed to the ocean deep."

Merchant Marines. This budding newspaper reporter and duly commissioned merchant marine officer would soon be labeled the merchant seamen's poet laureate. He said he joined the Merchant Marines because the country counted heavily upon shipping to bring victory. He claimed he wrote a personal narrative because the Merchant Marines, in turn, counted heavily upon the folks at home, especially their family and what they generically referred to as "home" to keep them fighting. "Some of the weaker men, some of them who couldn't take all the Nazis had to give, were saved from walking straight over the side by thinking of home," according to Carse. And "so if this that's written here makes any sense at all to you home folks, give us more guns and newer ships and more of a send-off next time. Do it, and we'll be better fighting men."

However, many of Carse's comments suggested that some crew members were in essence low-lives. They certainly were not fighting men when they started, "just a bunch of simple guys that you'd find in any union hall or along any dock in an American port." One twenty-four year old from the Bronx was there

to beat the draft, thinking the merchant ships better than the Army. He was dirty in his speech and personal habits; so dulled by the erotic excitation of the lewd books around the ship that the old Bosun had all but given up trying to make anything like a sailor out of him....Father Coughlin<sup>54</sup> stood only slightly

---

<sup>54</sup> Charles Edward Couglin was an anti-Roosevelt, America-First extremist of the early Thirties and Forties. He published a magazine, *Social Justice*, in which he expressed

abast the Pope in his blurred religious-political estimation, and in the messroom...he filled his loose-lipped mouth with food with both hands (Carse 24).

Even the steward, "bald-headed and with a face that in color and conformation resembled the hind quarters of a baboon was a belly-robber and a penny-griper for the company." The author himself was not beyond reproach. He was excited about going to Scotland precisely because it meant seeing women and drinking whiskey. Sure enough, they "shove[d] on from pub to pub" there and a few made love to Scottish "lasses." When

back on the ship, the other half of the crew who had been waiting for their liberty while we took ours wanted to know all about it. "How's the whiskey? Can you get laid in a hurry? Do them girls in uniform work out the same as the others?" (Carse 41-42).

In contrast to the personal narrative about United States armed services, which censored such off-limits topics, Carse reported the lewd and lascivious behavior that occurred in the ranks of the Merchant Marines.

At the same time, in *There Go the Ships*, Carse reported the extent of the contributions and sacrifices made to the war effort by a ragtag complement of ABs (Able Bodied Seamen) and the frightful cost of unsung lives lost during every crossing. The sailors who manned the "lifeline" were not many--less than 100,000--compared to the number of uniformed troops, but by 1944 more than 4,000 had given their lives in

---

pro-Nazi opinions and made increasingly anti-semitic remarks especially at Jewish members of Wall Street. The magazine was barred from the mails by the U.S. government in violation of the Espionage Act and ceased publication in 1942. Father Couglin continued his parish duties.

order to deliver goods of war to the world's Allies. Carse stated that

Sinkings of Allied shipping as I write this are at a sickening rate. My guess is that at least 3,000 seamen every month are having their ships blown out from under them. Some of these guys are picked up. But not all of them (Carse 14).

This estimate was bolstered by Herman's figures in *Dynamite Cargo*:

The toll of dead and missing (who are almost certainly dead)...is equal to the total dead among the Army, Marine Corps and Coast Guard. Almost four percent of the seamen who take out the dirty, rust-streaked merchantmen have been lost. The rate of the dead in the armed services is only three-fourths of one percent. We don't claim to be heroes. We are the bums. But we deliver the cargoes (Herman 156-7).

As with many convoy narratives, *There Go the Ships* depicted the constant anxiety of shipmates who sailed through mine fields, were bombed by planes, and took torpedo hits. Added to these potential disasters was the fact that Carse's ship carried tons of high explosives, easily ignitable by mine, bomb, or torpedo, sending all hands to the frigid waters of the Arctic Ocean.

The Merchant Marines were financially compensated for their vulnerability and risk-taking. The fact that they received ten times more pay than their U.S. Navy escorts was, indeed, a source of tension during months-long journeys. Merchant Marines, who had won high wages through hard bargaining, saw no good reason to forgo earnings at a time when ship owners were making record profits.

Although Carse steered away from that controversial topic, he included other political judgments in his personal narrative. He was angered by the men

who, through their treachery and stupidity and rapacity, have allowed this war to sweep the world and who, if they had been honest men, could have stopped it at the source--right in their own hearts and brains (Carse 52).

More explicitly revealing long-standing leftist sympathies, the thought

came to me of all the others who had taken the same desperate means to fight for freedom: those who had gone to Spain against Hitler and Mussolini and Franco in 1936-39 when most of the world yet didn't know who our enemies were....We were faced by a terrible foe. And yet, in our slowly gathered wrath, our own might would rise to equal and surpass the fascists (Carse 89-90).

Stating his position succinctly, Carse concluded that "fear was the basis of Fascism and we were going to take fear from the world."

While Carse spoke like an anti-fascist, his sympathies were routine for the time. More radical voices appeared among convoy seamen whose membership in a Union was heavily influenced by communist thinking (Fink 214). Indeed, a number of Merchant Marines from all backgrounds had fought on the Loyalist side in the Spanish Civil War. A Communist faction was, therefore, the most outspoken element in the National Maritime Union. Communists had participated in the early rank-and-file agitations and wildcat strikes. As a result of their organization of seamen, Communists had assumed numerous leadership positions. An internal struggle

between Communist and anti-Communist leaders in the NMU, however, was relatively subdued during the war since both sides outwardly supported the ideological objectives of the American war effort (Fink 214). "The NMU's policy," Herman informed, "is to lay off wrangles for the duration. After the war is over we can start squawking for higher base pay, better conditions, etc." The NMU committed itself to promoting racial harmony at home and fighting fascism abroad. In order to achieve this political agenda, they enforced a no-strike pledge to insure an uninterrupted supply line to war-ravaged Allies (Fink 214).

Fred Herman formulated another plea for greater respect for the Merchant Marines in *Dynamite Cargo*. Madeline Carroll, a movie star of the Thirties, acting as Special Representative for the United Seamen's Service, wrote an emotional endorsement of Fred Herman and his co-workers in a preface to *Dynamite Cargo*. Her purpose in lending support to their job, "one of the toughest in fighting history," was to awaken Americans:

If it will make Fred Herman's countrymen recognize their extraordinary lonely valor, if the book will make inexplicable the unhappy statement that "the people of Russia seem to appreciate the American Merchant Marine more than Americans do," then it will not have been written in vain (Herman vii-viii).

According to the *New York Times*, Herman

remarked dryly that the Russians appreciate the American Merchant Marine more than Americans do....The struggle to make the American public ship-minded is endless and apparently hopeless....We love uniforms. Merchant Marines do not wear uniforms or get

photographed at the Stork Club. They are almost invisible and inarticulate. These books in part attempt to right this wrong (Apr. 25, 1943).

Reiterating the same chagrin, Robert Carse wrote in his convoy narrative, *There Go the Ships*, that

It kind of saddened us to think that here on foreign shore we were treated better...than at home. Here we weren't scum, or the lousy seamen with radical ideas who are out on strike all the time or drunk and diseased in the gutter. Here we were men who knew our job and did it, and more than two thousand of us were already at the bottom with ships they'd tried to bring home (Carse 46-47).

The English had been known to treat their merchant seamen as equals to other fighting men. American Merchant Marines resented not being recognized as the peers of sailors, soldiers, and marines.

Herman's *Dynamite Cargo*, while formulating a plea for greater respect for the Merchant Marines, entertained a good deal of leftist idealism. A salesman, "an old-line IWW agitator, a 'Wobblie,'" maintained the creed: "down with everything, particularly capitalism. Capitalists started wars. They wanted to exterminate the common man." This statement crossed over the line that distinguished the agenda to preserve the American socioeconomic system by reforming it from the agenda to abolish capitalist America.

Lars Skattebol, who had been nurtured on such books "of social protest [as Steinbeck's] *In Dubious Battle* and Upton Sinclair's "Oil!," engaged in political debates with an anti-fascist shipmate, who argued that



antifascism, like charity, should begin at home and that there was little use fighting Hitler until fascist appeasers at home had been defeated, and big business and its fascist tools had been prevented permanently from establishing outright fascism in the United States while so many young men were busy fighting fascism abroad (Skattebol 252-3).

In reply, Skattebol contended, "that the fascist forces abroad had to be defeated first, for they were still the strong-arm and after that attention could be turned to the antidemocratic enemies at home" (Skattebol 252-3).

Despite these views, Skattebol did not express resentment toward the Germans who had caused him and his shipmates to spend seventeen days in an open boat. "We had suffered grievously from actions by Germans. Yet...it was stated by several and understood by all that the Germans had been doing their job just as we had been doing ours" (Skattebol 192). Contrary to stories circulating about the enemies' inherent meanness, when a U-boat surfaced to inspect the wreckage, the Germans not only spared the survivors, they gave directions to help them to reach land.

Instead, bitter words were reserved for Skattebol's own nation; it was incomprehensible to the Merchant Marines that "the United States had provided itself with so few escort ships that it was necessary for slow, ten-knot ships like ours to travel alone across the South Atlantic." On a matter he considered even more important, race relations, Skattebol criticized the government's attitude. He called attention to the hideous manifestations of racial prejudice in the United

States, particularly the 1943 disturbances in Detroit, Beaumont, and Los Angeles, adding that "to a varying degree, most of the articles I have read on this rioting have laid some blame on the war stresses which have been imposed on our economy." Even though Skattebol acknowledged that a similar nervous intensity affecting sailors instigated an occasional display of racial intolerance, a crew of diverse backgrounds working together for the same aim reduced these moments to small consequence. Furthermore, seamen go to all parts of the world and must work beside all nationalities. "The similarity of pay and living conditions for all races, plus the proletarian breadth of view which a seaman often acquires from his traveling, put racial tolerance quite high" (Skattebol 109).

Skattebol pointed out that the Jim Crow laws in the South and the Navy Department's restriction on "negro" recruits exacerbated social disharmony and contrasted starkly with the principles for which the war was purportedly being waged. When the crew learned of the demeaning treatment black merchant seamen received from a party of Navy gunners, "we assure[d]...those snot nose gunners...that he was an American and that those...from the South might hold his color against him, but not us. After all, wasn't he one of us?" (Skattebol 110). Similar sentiments were repeated in the other convoy narratives. In this way, the Merchant Marine narratives raised issues that more mainstream authors covering the American military did not broach. The market-

place proving ground of the Merchant Service became a model for the nation, demonstrating that men of different colors, national origins, and socio-economic backgrounds performed a common job without exception.

## CHAPTER 8: ALL BRAVE SAILORS: CONSTRUCTING WHITENESS

While scant attention was paid to African-American contributions during the war,<sup>1</sup> and while there were no published personal narratives by black servicemen or reporters during the war years, witness documents dating from that period by them have recently been retrieved and in some cases, published. Mansel Blackford, for instance, edited a volume entitled *On Board the U.S.S. Mason: The World War Diary of James A. Dunn* (1996). James Dunn served as a regular duty signalman along with 160 other enlisted blacks and forty-four white officers assigned to the destroyer escort, *Mason*. After early resistance to recruiting blacks into the regular Navy, except as stewards and cooks on ships and bases or stevedores in the Special Seabees, a more enlightened World War II policy opened opportunities for African Americans. From June 1944 through May 1945, through calm seas and peaceful days and through rough seas and adventure, Dunn kept a daily log of his life on board, despite military regulations that prohibited diaries or memoirs being written for fear that useful information might

---

<sup>1</sup> About a million black Americans served in the armed forces in World War II, including several thousand in the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAACS). By the end of the war, about 165,000 enlisted were in the Navy. (*Encyclopedia of the African-American* 836).

fall into enemy hands. Apparently, the prohibitions were loosely enforced.

Enjoying unrestricted chronicling rights, Dunn recorded the *Mason's* wartime activities from the first convoy to the final return to the United States. His diary captured the feelings of mortal danger possessed by men attacking submarines or navigating through horrendous weather on the North Atlantic. At other times, he told of men cooped up and bored as they sailed a small ship on long tedious convoys.

More significantly, Dunn exhibited a political awareness of the path-breaking exploits of the *Mason's* crew, specifically, "what it meant to be an African American in a white Navy in a segregated American society" (Blackford xxxix). He remarked at various times, "how able, how good the crew was at accomplishing its tasks, while comparing his shipmates to white crews on other ships." Furthermore, over a series of uninterrupted daily entries, he related no incidents of racial disharmony. Ironically, one moment of mild tension involved black crew members passing judgment on a fellow black seaman they described as a "brown-noser" who was looking to impress the white officers in order to advance his rate. Other than that, blacks and whites "worked good together, just like a machine, smooth most of the time." The reason he gave coincided with Mary Pat Kelly's observation in *Proudly We Serve Blackface*, that "convoy duty demanded that each man concentrate on his job, which left little time for personal conflict" (Kelly 119). Thomas Young, the first

"colored correspondent" assigned to a Navy ship at sea, testified to the *Mason* crew's busyness, highlighted by searches for German submarines--"one of the greatest thrills of the entire trip" (Kelly 96).

Another indication of racial harmony was that white officers tutored black crew members who wished to strike for higher grades. Also revealing was Dunn's November 1, 1944 entry:

Tubby, another signalman and myself were called to fire a 20mm. gun in a contest in which a few [white] officers participated. After summing up all of the scores, Tubby and I won by three points. The Captain acted as judge (in Blackford 61).

The losers did not exhibit animosity toward the winners, nor did white Captain William Blackford (father of the volume's editor) try to finagle the scores.

Once, when confronted by an officer from another ship who told him, "'Blackford, you must have somewhat of a problem with all these niggers on your ship, and so few white men,'" he replied,

almost angrily... 'Contrary to what you want to believe, I have less of a problem than you. We get along fine and do our jobs with no trouble of any sort. I regard my ship to be just like any of the hundreds of DE's [destroyer escorts] on the high seas, not as a problem child and not as an experiment. I am not a crusader. I am not trying to solve the race problem. I am simply trying to run a good, Navy fighting ship. Actually, my men get into less trouble than those of other ships because they know how to behave' (in Blackford 60).

Intended racial experiment or not, the experiences as reported by Dunn suggested that blacks and whites served well side by side--granted, as subordinate and superior respectively since black officers could not command white men--to achieve a common goal. The residual results coincided with a more wide-ranging and formal post-war social-psychological study, *The American Soldier* (1949), conducted by Samuel Stouffer and his associates. They discovered that the more contact men of different races had in the military, the less racial tension and hostility they displayed. Stouffer found that during World War II, attitudes of a historically racially divided culture became more tolerant when: (1) an authority strongly sanctioned interaction between different racial and social groups, (2) there were commonly shared duties, interests, and goals, and (3) contact between individuals of equal status was cooperative and prolonged--all of which occurred on the *Mason*.

*All Brave Sailors: The Story of the SS Booker T. Washington* by John Beecher (1945) was a witness account revolving around the first of four U.S. Navy ships to be commanded by an African American. Indeed, Captain Hugh Mulzac presided over a nationally, racially, and ethnically mixed Merchant Marine crew.<sup>56</sup> Although the Navy Department was

---

<sup>56</sup> The Navy did not commission its first black officer, Bernard Robinson, until 1942, and by the end of the war had only fifty-three black officers. Those who were commissioned faced discrimination in promotion, especially above the rank of captain.

dubious about entrusting a cargo vessel to a "Negro," two major factors, namely, shortages of able-bodied seamen and pressure from various groups dedicated to equality of opportunity, overcame any resistance:

Essentially, it required all the pressure that the National Negro Congress, the National Maritime Union, the national CIO, and the Negro press could muster to break the chains of discrimination which were keeping not only Captain Mulzac but many other qualified Negro ship's officers idle on the beach. The intervention of President Roosevelt himself, and his Committee on Fair Employment Practice, was finally required before the situation was resolved (Beecher 86-7).

Captain Macaulay, deputy administrator of the War Shipping Administration (WSA) in Washington, after studying Mulzac's sheaf of licenses and discharges, stated that Mulzac had been the victim of rank discrimination. Determined to put an end to it, Macaulay named Mulzac captain of the Liberty Ship *SS Booker T. Washington*, provided he could "round up enough qualified Negro seaman." Macaulay, falsely assumed, however, that Mulzac's "people" wanted an "all-Negro crew." At this point, Mulzac realized he had another hurdle to scale: If the ship "is going to be Jim Crow," he asserted, "I don't want to be master of her." Captain Mulzac stuck to his guns and won the clearance of the WSA for his supposed "experiment."

Even though the author disliked the tendency to consider the *SS Booker T. Washington* an experiment in race relations, what a reviewer for the *U.S. Quarterly Book Review* said was accurate:



In reading his sketches, one cannot escape the impression that the men of this ship--men who volunteered to fight for the loyalist Spain, men who risked their lives in the struggle to establish the Maritime Union, men who had a burning hatred for Fascism--had more than average ideological motivation to demonstrate to the world that racial equality can work ((Dec. 1945) 1:48).

If the word "experiment" carried a negative connotation--that integration might *not* yield positive results--the exceptional ship could have been characterized more positively as a "symbol." Indeed, the author held up the cooperative micro-community of the *SS Booker T. Washington* as a model in order to excite social change everywhere. Not only did the racial composition of the crew make it an automatic exception, the ship put into practice an allegiance to democratic principles, making it even more extraordinary. For example, "On no other ship would you find everybody...at the union meeting in the saloon...from the Captain down to the mess-boy." When news of the Detroit race riot hit the ship, it struck the men as something "incomprehensible," especially in the "ample confines of a big metropolis":

Here we were penned up, men of all races and many nationalities, in the narrow quarters of a small ship, under the strain of constant danger...yet there was no conflict among us....You could never convince anybody who was ever a part of the *BTW* that race conflict is something natural, not engineered by a few to keep the many apart (Beecher 206).

John Beecher, inheritor of the spirit that motivated his great-grandfather's sister Harriet Beecher Stowe to compose *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, crusaded ardently for integration. In the

foreword he wrote, "Whatever port we touched...we shook men to their foundations. Not by preaching, though we were sometimes accused of carrying on 'agitation,' but by simply being." The *New York Times* reviewer, John Desmond, used the very same buzz-word to disclaim the radicalism of the book: "All *Brave Sailors* deserves to be read by a lot of people who will disagree violently with what they will consider its 'agitation'" (Aug. 26, 1945: 24). There could have been no doubt that Beecher chose to expose the fraud of American democracy. Throughout a series of thumbnail sketches about various shipmates, including a short history of his own celebrated family, he intertwined tales about the Ku Klux Klan, the color-conscious United States Army, and the government's ungraciously harsh treatment toward non-citizen fighters who already had proven loyalty to the Allied cause. The book, in other words, was a vehicle for forwarding his political agenda, including his not-so-subtle disdain for anti-immigrationists, anti-unionists, Fascists of the domestic and international variety, as well as American MPs. And true to his leftist bent, he took a jab at the Italian upper-class and congratulated the Russians, "people like us," on their military prowess and political objectives.

His most damning indictment of America as well as passionate plea to Americans--"an excellent example of the emerging type of 'appeal' literature" (*U.S. Quarterly Book Review* (Dec. 1945) 1: 48)--read:

The task of making the Negro satisfied with Jim Crow is a hopeless one, more difficult of

attainment each day that our authorities battle to accomplish it against the tide of world history and common human aspiration. On our ship we know how frail the barriers of prejudice prove to be when we live, work, and fight together. Jim Crow is a straw man. It's high time he was demolished during this war. The other policy has dismally failed, with catastrophic results to our own morale and to American prestige in countries where we have imported this straw man fetish....What we need are mixed Army units, mixed Navy ships, and I mean mixed as the *Booker T. Washington* is mixed, from the topside down through the galley to the engine room below, mixed in every fo'c'sle, in every mess-room. And this should be done not on an experimental but a broad basis (Beecher 153-4).

On the other hand, Beecher was capable of defending the flag, perhaps more than it deserved. He told the story of a young Nazi prisoner of war who was led to doubt his Nazi leaders because they said America was hypocritically undemocratic where blacks were concerned. Meanwhile, this youth saw for himself that this was not true, observing the harmony on the *BTW*. However, this German would have been re-educated, had he heard about some of the more negative ways segregation was enforced at all military posts including theaters, service clubs, mess halls, PXs (post exchange stores) and living spaces, which Beecher related in the book.

As previously mentioned, *All Brave Sailors* paid particular attention to the work routine aboard a wartime freighter. Carrying a targeted cargo of troops, planes, tanks, guns, and explosives over the submarine-infested North Atlantic, the initial crossing was perceived by the military establishment as a crucial test of a black captain's competence. Caught in a terrific storm off the Newfoundland

shore, a large crate of machinery broke loose and threatened to capsize the ship. Captain Mulzac gave instructions to drop out of the convoy. By the time his gallant crew re-secured the heavy load, the convoy was long gone. Instead of turning back, Mulzac made the decisive move to set course for Ireland, alone and unprotected. Due to Captain Mulzac's navigational skill and deft seamanship on the part of officers and men, including "the black gang's meticulous care of the engines," they reached port several days ahead of their own convoy, which had lost several ships to U-boat torpedoes. The incident proved fortuitous because, as Beecher explained, the Navy ceased having misgivings about Captain and crew. To the *BTW's* men, the close squeeze was a sign of something else, that the ship was blessed. As Chief Engineer John Barrett kept harping, "'There can't anything happen to her with so many millions of people praying for her every night.'" In the author's estimation, the episode showed once again the competence of the captain and the cooperation of all: The blacks especially, "never let us down."

In conclusion, a cargo liner manned by a crew with different backgrounds and temperaments provided the proving ground and solid defense for greater ethnic and social-class interchange simply because "it is the most natural thing in the world for people to get along, when they are doing a job together":

Here was the living proof. We who sailed under Captain Hugh Mulzac were no band of

saints, no select company of fanatic volunteers, but just the common run of men. We were all races....Among us were white men, born and bred in the South, who took orders from Negro officers, ate and slept alongside Negro shipmates, went ashore in foreign ports with Negroes--and on occasion knocked down those who wanted to make something of it (Beecher 8).

Comradely affection, as William Broyles describes, can transcend "race and personality and education--all those things that would make a difference in peace" (*Esquire* 59). Even the occasional soldiers that the *BTW* transported "have been amazed constantly at the *esprit de corps* of the men on the *BTW*. Such fellowship...goes deeper than race. It goes straight to the heart of the democratic spirit" (Blackford 17). Beecher's entreaty was to allow issues of race in the whole society solve themselves in the same way they solved themselves on the test-tube ship, by mingling and working together toward mutually beneficial goals. More concretely, the achievement of the *BTW* challenged American society to be more open, in particular, to eliminate segregation in military as well as in civilian life. The keynote of *All Brave Sailors* was the "abolitionist" message delivered with the self-same fervor of his anti-slavery forebear.

And if one chose to trade on the coincidental name, "Liberty" class of transports, commanded by a black captain of a mixed crew, the gallant ship became a metaphor for the high principle of freedom on which the American ship of state needed to sail. In addition to liberty, what filled fellow sailors' souls was "the dream of brothers" or brotherhood, a

long-standing American ideal and a theme that greatly informed Beecher's narrative. Beecher can be seen as putting into words the work of the Irish artist who painted a mural on the surfaces of the ship's boiler room doors--

Booker T. Washington and the book he wrote, *Up From Slavery*. A white hand shaking a black hand in another. Intent dark faces over desks, with books. Men climb, white and black together, up tortuous stairs, behind banners, toward shining habitation (Beecher 7-8).

The book's title was suitably appropriated from the American poet of brotherhood, Walt Whitman, who wrote an inclusive "Song:" "A pennant universal,/ subtly waving all time,/ o'er all brave sailors,/ All seas, all ships."

In order to implicate every American in the war effort, a self-conscious, inclusive and democratic language defined authors' attitudes toward the war. The same characterization of the visual strategies used by government officials during the war pertained to personal narratives: their discourse gave Americans a sense of almost "equal participation in the war effort without alarming those who feared loosening of distinctions based on race, gender, and class" (Roeder 5). As exceptions to the rule, the more radical Merchant Marine and the post-war published African-American narratives raised issues that challenged America's inconsistent convictions and the administrations' skewed conception of freedom. African-American Captain James Dunn's published diary taught the lesson that more contact with racial difference made for less hostility; blacks and whites performed equally well on his ship and served together with great success.

The truth of the matter was, however, that blacks in the army served in segregated units, almost all black sailors labored in ship galleys, and as the government put it, "Applications from colored persons for flying cadet appointments and enlistments in the Air Corps" as well as for the Marines, were, "not being accepted." Polls taken by the OWI indicated that the vast majority of white Americans favored such discrimination. Since race was an explosive issue and most wished to maintain race distinctions, few mainstream personal narratives criticized the status quo. By not propagating progressive stances on race, they served the needs of the war effort.

In the main, personal narratives type-casted minorities. For instance, Daryll Zanuck in *Tunis Expedition* found himself "with the biggest and blackest man in all Africa...crouched together in the tiny hole, practically in each other's arms." Expanding upon the line, "there are no atheists in foxholes," Zanuck parodied, "and I might add that there are no social lines in a slit-trench....No sir, there are no racial or color distinctions when you are a likely target for a fifty-caliber slug or a slice of hot jagged steel from a bomb" (Zanuck 101). At such a nerve-racking time he was naturally delighted for any and all comradeship, but when threats to life and limb subsided, Zanuck regressed to racial and ethnic stereotyping that bordered on the patronizing. For example, he stereotyped a "Negro First Sergeant from the regular army [as a] faithful and devoted orderly" and a captured Italian

paratrooper as one who delighted to pose and do acrobatic stunts (like an organ grinder monkey, no doubt).

Susan Moeller in *Shooting War*, points out that a discourse of inclusiveness "was undercut by elements of racism (both toward the enemy and toward American minority groups), intolerance, and chauvinism that permeated the same rhetoric" (Moeller 165). Yet, while the domestic and foreign policy of the country was flawed, a less-discriminating nation was in the making and those who fought in the name of freedom, side-by-side with people from various backgrounds, had much to do with it. The war left legacies that contributed to open-minded ways of seeing. Right after the war, the civil rights "movement grew in part from the enhanced motivations and means for resistance to injustice and from the new opportunities which many blacks encountered during World War II" (Roeder 156).

Racial segregation in the armed forces, however, belied America's claim to be fighting for democracy, and so did demonization of the Japanese. Racism in any guise was antithetical to the ideals for which Americans supposedly fought. With regard to race and the enemy, the attitudes registered in personal narratives ranged. In a handful of narratives with Pacific settings, Marines contended that the Japanese were basically a technologically backward and measly lot. Some pilots, having fought in the Philippines and Java, verbalized their opinions about the quality of the Japanese versus the German fighter. For them, fighting against the



Germans was like an athletic performance where one matched one's skill against somebody who was good. Crewmen told Captain McCrary that they would rather kill Japanese because, as McCrary noted in *First of the Many*, "they are typical Americans, and Americans want to kill Japs;" but they would rather knock down German planes "because they are typical airmen, and airmen like to beat the best." Huie in *From Omaha to Okinawa* claimed that Americans took to Japanese slaughter, but "Despite their brutal fanaticism, the Japs were second-rate killers. They were reluctant, half-pint dragons hopped up with sake, banzai, and benzedrine" (*Omaha* 130).

The vaster majority of those quoted, however, swore just the opposite--the Japanese were tough beyond imagination: "The best anybody can possibly do is to be as good" a fighter as the Japanese, "since there is no way we can be better;" "Don't let anybody kid you. The Japs are...powerful, arrogant sons of bitches;" "I'd always thought the Japs were little people, but these soldiers weren't. [They were] five feet nine...six feet tall...square as a tree trunk;" "There is one thing that nobody in the world can be better at than the Japs and that's in the guts department....Every day I [saw]...new evidence of his intense willingness to go to any length to win;" the Japanese "put up a damn good fight. And our Marines were very much impressed by how much a few men can do if they're willing to die."

The consensus was that the Japanese fought strongly because they were fanatical (many committed suicide rather than surrender),<sup>57</sup> or uncivilized (there were reports that Japanese tortured and killed those who surrendered, ironically because they were indoctrinated with belief in the bestiality of Americans), and bestial (they fought from trees, used "Indian tricks," favored the sneak attack, and lived in tiny, smelly spaces). These attitudes bespoke a reasonable immediate assessment of the enemy in their midst.

Images of Japanese in the heat of battle, therefore, did not exactly conform to the racist propaganda in popular culture, which emphasized the enemy's inferiority. Certainly, debunking the Japanese soldiers' fighting ability and spirit (standard cartoon figures featured puny, monkey-like, bucktoothed Japanese) did not square with the remarks of Marines who showed surprise at Japan's tenacity and indomitable will. In these first-hand versions of history, battlefield reality led to a more grudging appreciation of the foe. Whatever racial stereotypes the Marines adopted, due to the long-standing antipathy toward "yellow people" in

---

<sup>57</sup> Suicide was the manifestation of careful years of deliberate indoctrination by both the Japanese military and the state religion. Soldiers were taught they were god-like, their great opportunity for glory and sanctification being death in battle and saving face in defeat. If that weren't enough, Japanese soldiers were told that it would be stupid to surrender, since the Yankees would kill them anyway. Not all of the Japanese were convinced by these doctrines. Even on Tarawa, there were scores of prisoners taken by Marines, although most were Koreans from labor battalions. On Kwajalein there were many more surrenders, and correspondents reported that still others who wanted to surrender were shot in the back by their own officers.

American society or due to the indoctrination of newly developed wartime training lectures and film propaganda (most notably Frank Capra's *Why We Fight* series), were either challenged or confirmed when baptized by fire. In other words, Japan's military strategy seemed to dictate American attitudes more than race prejudice.

Significantly, a conviction of "American racial" superiority does not emerge in personal narratives, and had nothing to do with winning or losing against a well-equipped and fully experienced adversary. The personal narratives, with two or three exceptions, did not indulge in race-baiting either to discredit the enemy. These numerous primary sources stand as a glaring counter to John Dower's claim in *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (1986) that racism and race hate were necessary prerequisites for sustaining warfare and allowing white American boys to kill in cold blood. Stouffer in his section on "The Orientation of Soldiers Toward the War," discovered that the level of "hatred and vindictiveness toward the enemy ...was probably not very high" (Stouffer 2: 156); "little evidence is found that hatred played a very important role in combat motivation" (Ibid 157). According to the information derived from personal narratives, vicious movie and poster images of the enemy as hairy-ape, inhuman butchers, or drooling degenerates were not motivating factors. "One would certainly expect that American soldiers would have more hatred to draw on when fighting the Japanese than the

Germans," but the hatred of those not present in the Pacific war zone (both soldier and civilian) significantly exceeded the very soldiers who were intimately involved (Ibid 157).

Gerald Linderman, who attempted to see World War II through the eyes of American combat soldiers, argued in *The World Within War*, that successive stages in the dehumanization of Japanese evolved: First, they were incomprehensible; second, crazy; then, not human; finally, they were animals (Linderman 161-173). On occasion, Marines in these narratives perceived the Japanese as a variety of species other than human: "They hide up in the trees like wildcats. Sometimes when they attack, they scream like a bunch of terrified cattle in a slaughter house;" "the little rat" could also appear "quiet as a snake," or "like so many bed bugs." Are these descriptors evidence of racism? Maybe. There should be no doubt about the following remark by an American Marine who wished he were fighting against Germans, since "They were human beings, like us....But the Japs are like animals.... They take to the jungle as if they had been bred there."

For the sake of sustaining the vision of America's just cause, it is very possible that writers heard racial slurs, but omitted codifying them in publishable manuscripts. In fact, all personal narrative authors, except Tregaskis, were silent about the documented American rituals of both slicing souvenir ears and gold teeth from Japanese corpses and saving trophy skulls. Not until 1946 did Edgar L. Jones, a former

American war correspondent in the Pacific, divulge in "One War is Enough," that

We shot prisoners in cold blood, wiped out hospitals, strafed lifeboats, killed and mistreated enemy civilians, finished off the enemy wounded, tossed the dying into a hole with the dead, and...boiled the flesh of enemy skulls to make table ornaments for sweethearts, or carved bones into letter openers (*Atlantic Monthly* Feb.: 48-53).

Jones added that these practices were by no means condoned by all or even most fighting men. Linderman argues that Americans accepted the importance of rules in the Pacific as much as in Europe. However, by retaining the military initiative throughout the first six months of the war, the Japanese established the patterns of how the Pacific war would be fought (Linderman 143). "The Imperial Army forced on its American antagonists an unwelcome battlefield education in the Japanese way of war" (Linderman 147): they did not take single prisoners; taken alone or in twos or threes, they made deaths excruciating; they feigned death and even capitulation, waiting for American advancement and then fired; the wounded blew themselves up along with the Americans examining them; and they persisted in heinous torturing (Linderman 147-159). If after a while hatred of the Japanese suffused the American forces, it was due more to their behavior than their looks. In *The Best War Ever*, Michael Adams contends that "In the Pacific theater, toward the end of the fighting, Allied soldiers became hardened to slaughtering Japanese soldiers, because the enemy

themselves," committing atrocities like the Bataan death march, "appeared to have no respect for life" (Adams 111).

Finally, according to personal narratives, Americans fought equally tough on both sides of the globe. Ingersoll in *The Battle is the Payoff*, implied that Americans carried out a take-no-prisoners policy against the Germans in Africa. Again, Bill Mauldin told a story in *Up Front* about an American who discovered two Germans sleeping in each others' arms and proceeded to slit the throat of one as warning to the friend. Furthermore, in *Tunis Expedition*, Zanuck directed virulent racial criticisms at the Nazis. Acknowledging that he "cannot be objective or impersonal," he labeled the Germans "lice." Bequeathing to the German people a congenitally evil strain, he wrote that "if it hadn't been Hitler, it would have been someone else." With this thought in mind, he wanted to see all of them not just "wiped off the face of the earth" but "killed...in cold blood." The retributive anger indicated in these sentiments belies John Dower's thesis, which asserts that a deep-seated American racial hostility was exhibited against non-whites, scarcely matched in the westernized subconscious of the American people toward whites. Contradicting Dower, Adams discovered that "men in all armies shot prisoners," sometimes for example, "because they were too exhausted to tend to them" (Adams 111). Though Dower documented how American war correspondents reported a more savage war in the Pacific than in the European theater--Kill or be killed, no quarter, no

surrender, take no prisoners, and fight to the bitter end were everyday words in combat areas (Dower 10)--the contents of personal narratives call into debate this standard argument that Americans fought more brutally in the Pacific than on mainland Europe.

## CHAPTER 9: MISSIONS OF FAITH

World War II personal narratives varied. Most depicted individuals dealing with man-made and unnecessary conditions in conjunction with natural and impermanent forces, that is, dealing with a particular time and place. There were also a number of human interest reports--a category delineated by William Stott in his *Documentary Expression and Thirties America*--which described how men in the grip of natural phenomena responded to the "accidental and unpreventable," like someone adrift on a small raft or lost in a thick impenetrable jungle. These conventional man vs. nature stories involved identifiable figures often far from the technology and modern implements of the fighting fronts. This kind of personal narrative had the added virtue of informing the reader of a timeless fighting spirit assumed to be inherent in all Americans.

Planes forced to land at sea occurred so frequently during the war, particularly in busy areas, that regular air patrol scouted for downed fliers. Successful as many patrols were in spotting floating men alone or in groups within hours after an accident, many more went undiscovered for days or weeks before being found or reaching the safety of land on their own. Patrols were hampered by the short range of most search planes and long stretches of bad flying weather. The



natural camouflage of a seascape with its changing hues and deceptive reflections of sunlight made it difficult to detect the tiny specks of rafts and small boats even when the plane was directly overhead. In the Pacific, where carrier planes frequently engaged the enemy over the ocean far from sight of their launching ships, planes disabled in action, leaving fliers adrift on the sea, were an everyday occurrence. In the Atlantic, enemy submarines sank merchant vessels, forcing seaman into rafts and lifeboats (if they were lucky).

A number of personal narratives told about this part of the war. Eddie Rickenbacker's *Seven Came Through*, an even more popular archetypal man-against-nature survival tale than its model, *The Raft*, recounted the ordeal of eight men whose Flying Fortress ran out of fuel and dumped them into the Pacific Ocean. Here again, "adrift on the Pacific emerged a powerful leader of men," W.L. White introduced, "battling against the elements and against discouragement, fighting despair...never relenting." Much of what the eight men (one did not survive) withstood was the same as in the case of *The Raft*: hunger, thirst, chilly nights, burning days, sporadic delirium. Slightly less inhibited a storyteller, Rickenbacker mentioned how men frothed at the mouth, talked in their sleep, acquired runny pus sores that never dried, cried out in pain, devoured rats raw, and drank bug-infested water. He also briefly discussed each man's past, his present fears, and his reactions to futile efforts to attract

planes in sight as well as to infrequent catchings of birds or fish.

Like Dixon, Rickenbacker fashioned himself a man who overcame all threats with a spoonful of determination and a sprinkle of Heaven's help. Rickenbacker stated that "there was no time that I lost faith in our ultimate rescue, but the others did not seem to share this state of mind fully with me." He forbade the men succumbing to such discouragement and despair. Sometimes his methods appeared insensitive and cruel: when all else failed, he verbally brutalized and physically jarred those whose chins sagged too far down on their chests. Apparently his abusive strategies worked, for "several of the boys confessed that they once swore an oath to live for the sheer pleasure of burying me at sea." He concluded, however, that "I shall never stop marveling at the hidden resources of men whose minds never gave up," of which he himself was a leading example.

Interspersed among the pages of *Seven Came Through* was Rickenbacker's conservative "Message to America," one which had little relevance to the story plot.<sup>58</sup> While Rickenbacker recalled no mention of the war by any of the men during their terrible adventure, in the process of writing the book he

---

<sup>58</sup> Ever since reports of his survival at sea during the early stages of World War II, Rickenbacker's hero status, already confirmed by his achievements as a combat flying ace in World War I, had grown among Americans. Capitalizing on his national renown, he made several speech appearances during the Second World War. Some saw his 1943 campaign around the country as a preliminary attempt to enter politics, even run for president.

lectured on it a good deal. In addition to saying that American industry was betraying the fighting men by striking, he complained about absenteeism in war factories, labor racketeering, poor management of resources, misuse of scarce materials, and the like. "The troops need more planes, more tanks, more ammunition, more medical supplies....Everywhere I went the cry from the troops was for more of everything." Rickenbacker's strong-leader politics contrasted with the Merchant Marine philosophy of egalitarianism. He estimated that though unrealistic, "it would be a good thing for the nation if the top men concerned with labor and war production could be given just one day on the front. There'd be much less chest-thumping about our fine production record." Indeed, Rickenbacker's views on labor aroused a fair amount of controversy. One such criticism came in a February 15, 1943 *New Republic* article, wherein the author decried Rickenbacker's remarks about half-hearted and complacent war productivity as "labor-baiting....He gives the impression...that if he had his way [he] would deprive the [American] worker of legitimate and hard-won rights" (Rickenbacker 196-8). Rickenbacker defended himself in *Seven Came Through*:

No, I am not a labor-hater. I believe in honest labor unions who are doing their darnedest to turn out the weapons we need. I have been laboring for forty-odd years--since I was twelve years of age--in many lines of endeavor. I come from humble parents. I know the value of honest labor. I have served labor as well as employer. And to those millions of honest men and women war workers

go my heartfelt thanks--to those whom the shoe fits, I say wear it (Rickenbacker 92).

Throughout his discourse, Rickenbacker extolled the virtues of self-reliance, initiative, individuality, and imagination, admitting that in this day and age, "the rugged individualist," as a political shibboleth and galvanizing national ethos, "may have few friends, but God help us if we can't recreate him on the battlefield and the factory floor."

Rickenbacker proudly disseminated his defense policy in *Seven Came Through*. In his closing chapter, he summarily chastised the nearsightedness of American policy-makers who spent money on useless enterprises between the wars, rather than on sorely needed defense projects that would have particularly strengthened air and naval power. "I am convinced," he wrote, "that Hitler would never have struck had we possessed even a small part of the military power that we are mobilizing now." Rickenbacker reminded audiences that he had proposed a national program of 50,000 transport planes<sup>59</sup> in 1939, but no one acted upon it. As a World War I flying ace, a supporter and friend of General Billy Mitchell (who argued vehemently for an large independent air force<sup>60</sup>)

---

<sup>59</sup> Because of rapidly changing design, the value of a combat plane decreased precipitously after a few years. Knowing this, Rickenbacker wanted a fleet that would merely help move goods faster and create an aircraft industry that could be converted in the event of war. Lastly, the initiative would necessitate the training of thousands of pilots and ground crew.

<sup>60</sup> William Mitchell (1897-1936), assistant chief of air service in the U.S. Army, urged the military potential of strategic bombing, airborne forces, and polar air routes. He also created a national issue after World War I, when to demonstrate the supremacy of air power, he directed the

and an appointed special consultant on air combat by Secretary of War Stimson, Rickenbacker firmly contended that the war in Europe would be won by whomever secured superiority of the air: "We must keep our aircraft plants going at full capacity and send a steady stream of bombers, fighters, air crews, and ground crews...so that in time there will be a constant cloud of Allied combat craft over the skies of Germany." For the Pacific-front operations, he suggested grabbing three or four Japanese islands at a time in order to gain more airfields. In the end, systematically compiling the practical lessons learned from the twenty-two day raft experience, he provided a list of thirteen recommendations for equipment to be included in rescue rafts to improve conditions for others who may find themselves in a similar fix.<sup>61</sup> He was writing not as much to ordinary

---

sensational sinking of several warships in prearranged tests. His sharp public criticisms of military leaders for neglect of air power led to his court martial in 1925. Not until World War II were his main ideas adopted.

<sup>61</sup> These were the additions and improvements he suggested:

1. That the rafts be made larger.
2. A silk sheet, four by six, could be used as a sail between crossed oars, a shield against the sun, and rain catcher.
3. Concentrated foods in glass bottles with water-tight tops. Vitamins and sedatives to quiet the nervous system and permit sleep.
3. First-aid, rubber patches and glue should be in an air-tight bottle.
4. Flares and Very gun should be protected from salt-water.
5. Jackknife of medium size with proper protection.
6. Fishing tackle and some bait.
7. All oceanic planes should be equipped with a small radio transmitter properly protected to give out distress signals and be used as a focal point from which to get bearings.
8. Develop a small salt-water distiller for each raft of three men or more.
9. A steel mirror and smoke bomb.

citizens as to influential military officials and policy makers.

Two other renditions of the same experience dramatized in *Seven Came Through* were published by survivors who shared the hardships with Rickenbacker and the other men floundering on a trio of tethered rafts. In terms of factual detail, the accounts given by John Bartek in *Life Out There* and James Whittaker in *We Thought We heard the Angels Sing* coincided with Rickenbacker's recollection, even though all three authors expressed concerns that they might clash. Each writer maintained that he spoke from his own unique perspective. Rickenbacker conceded that at the time his "instinct was not to remember but to live," adding that his version might not agree exactly with the recollections of his companions. Likewise, in the introduction to Bartek's narrative, the editor stated,

- 
- 10. All equipment should be housed on the inside of the raft in order to prevent their loss in case of turnover.
  - 11. The carbon-dioxide tank should be placed on the outside of the inflated roll to give occupants more room and comfort.

In addition, the military had not yet benefited from the advice offered by Harold Gatty in his *The Raft Book* (NY: Grady Press, 1940). In his introduction, the author said, "this book has been written for those who, without previous experience in navigation and without navigating instruments, find themselves in a small craft in the open sea, and who have to make their way to land." Gatty's recommendation was to publish a waterproof edition for installation in life boats and rafts. In it, he talked about migrating birds, land indications from sea birds, and similar clues from fish, the scent of land, land sounds, the kinds of sky that might indicate land, and determining directions from prevailing winds, waves, ocean colors and currents, as well as water temperature, and at night directions from stars and moon.

There may be mistakes in [Bartek's] sequence of events and disagreements with other accounts of the same story, but...it would be quite impossible for any group of men to go through such an experience and to come out with complete agreement on the details. Just as the Four Gospels of the New Testament are written from different points of view and are often dissimilar in detail (in Bartek xi).

In the case of Bartek's and Whittaker's books, the analogy to the Gospels was felicitous. Both narratives underscored the religious aspects of the experience to a greater extent than Rickenbacker. *Life Out There* sounded the note of faith in God from the first. Amazingly enough, the only thing Bartek took with him to the raft was his *Bible*. Seemingly safe in the raft, "I prayed to myself and I thanked God that he did pull us through." Bartek read often from the *Bible*, read it aloud and even had others read passages, though he did not "think they thought much of it at first" except for one or two. According to all three authors, he also made many attempts to have the men join him in singing hymns but most only knew the "Lord's Prayer" and "Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep." Rickenbacker, though "not a religious man" yet "always...conscious of god" by his own admission, encouraged Bartek's religiosity and

with the New Testament as an inspiration, we held morning and evening prayers. The rafts were pulled together, making a rough triangle. Then, each in turn, one would read a passage ...but thumbing through the book we found a number that...bespoke our needs. The Twenty-third Psalm was, of course, a favorite (Rickenbacker 33).<sup>62</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> The Twenty-third psalm reads: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want; Though I walk through the shadow of the

On the fifth day without being spotted by searchers and the food supply (inedible chocolate bars and four oranges) exhausted, Bartek opened his *Bible* and randomly read from Matthew 6:31-34, which tells how the Lord would provide. Twenty minutes later a seagull that landed on Rickenbacker's head was nabbed. It was Bartek's unflinching belief that these events were miracles from God. Remembering something his mother once said, that he was "going to get...in trouble sometime and you're going to have to depend on somebody higher to pull you out of it," he trusted in the deliverance of prayers: "if two or three men gather together in the same place and believe the same thing and pray about it, then God will be there."

Where Rickenbacker's attitude was characteristic of the faith that God helped those who helped themselves, and Bartek's was a conviction of the existence of a caring deity responsive to expressions of faith through prayer, Whittaker's experience amounted to a total conversion from atheism to faith: Lost out there, in the seemingly infinite, intimidating ocean blue, he found God. (Coincidentally, Bartek's pocket-sized and waterproof *Bible* initiated Whittaker's conversion, besides buttressing the faith of most of the others by giving them "something more than just themselves to hang on to.") In Whittaker's version, the rough waves and black nights assumed spiritual rather than

---

valley of death, I will fear no evil; for thou are with me; Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."



physical value, while the despair and suffering became almost palpable. For him, the drifting motion was configured as part of the spiritual Odyssey of one who began indifferent and ended as confirmed believer in a Supreme Being and the mysterious ways in which God visited trials on men for the sake of testing their faith in this world as prelude to saving them for the next.

In comparison, the Rickenbacker version was more a humanistic journey that culminated in a firm belief in man's capacity not only to endure but to prevail. Despite his disclaimer that "I am not a religious man," since World War I, he had carried in his coat breast pocket a leather case containing a crucifix and three St. Christopher medals:

I was certainly under no illusion as to what they could do for men. Yet after all the years...I found myself believing, as men will do when everything else is going to pieces, that my fate was somehow involved with [these medals] (Rickenbacker 50-1).

While this statement validated the premise, "There are no atheists in foxholes," concomitantly, in the spirit of "Praise the Lord but Keep the Powder Dry," "we did not neglect anything that might help us to help ourselves." Ultimately, Rickenbacker placed his faith in tough males who will not permit themselves to quit when pitted against massive obstacles.

Although the four "raft" stories and six chaplain narratives stressed religious motifs, one of the most glaring examples of a holy fighter was Tom Harmon, who wrote an autobiographical narrative, *Pilots Also Pray* (1944). After

Harmon's plane crashed in the Amazon jungle and he had been lost for weeks, he got down on his knees and "prayed...and thanked the good lord for having given me [strength]." Every morning after "I said a prayer to the Blessed Virgin....I never gave up hope." Indeed, in his humble estimation, he set the world's record for Hail Mary's. When he finally made it out alive, "a saying of General MacArthur's crossed my mind. THERE ARE NO ATHEISTS IN FOXHOLES. Truer words were never spoken....I wanted to add...PILOTS ALSO PRAY. I knew that first hand, and my prayers had been answered (Harmon 184). In addition, Harmon placed considerable faith in his little compass watch and bolo knife; indeed, he shouted his Hail Mary's "as loud as he could. Because besides giving him comfort, it might also notify anybody who heard my loud bellow that a stranger was wandering in the vicinity." Apparently, he too, religiously heeded the words of Howell M. Forgy, who, serving as a Chaplain on a cruiser at the time of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor shouted, "Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition."

John Mason Brown's *Many a Watchful Night* (1944), describing the enormously complex assault on the beaches of Normandy, nicely capsulized the attraction of religion for men during World War II. When rumors circulated that the Invasion was imminent, most of the sailors attended that Sunday's mass; even those who had never been church-goers showed up. Brown noticed a pattern: men confessed and went

to mass more frequently as battle drew near. He flamboyantly suggested that

D-Day is a more potent revivalist than Moody, Billy Sunday...Men begin going to churches in droves. The toughest sailors....even if they haven't bent an elbow to lift a hymnal for months....We all had come, or almost all, including the fellows who seem incapable of avoiding in every sentence a certain blunt, four-letter word which serves as a whole dictionary...and using it abusively as if it had no association with pleasure (*Watchful* 5-6).

Navy Chaplain Forgy more piously wrote in his narrative, *And Pass the Ammunition*,<sup>63</sup>

I found a reverence and wholesome love of God that are lacking in many pews of our churches at home....Aboard ship there are no rules requiring the men to attend church, and

---

<sup>63</sup> Frank Loesser (composer of *Guys and Dolls* and *Charley's Aunt*) was assigned to the Special Services to write songs to help win the war. He composed the lyrics and music for the popular wartime ditty, "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition" (1942):

Down went the gunner, a bullet was his fate  
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!

Yes the sky pilot said it  
You've got to give him credit  
For a son-of-a-gun of a gunner was he

Shouting "Praise The Lord we're on a mighty mission!  
All Aboard! We're not a goin' fishin'  
Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition  
And we'll all stay free."

\* A "sky pilot" is a chaplain.

certainly they were not compelled by any social niceties to bare their heads in our make-shift cathedral (Forgy 28).

Both contemporary writers and post-war sociologists observed that soldiers paid increased attention to religion when fear, nervousness, or intimidation afflicted them. But, if war increased the spirituality of the majority, there had to have existed a minority who emerged cynical and atheistic as some post-war fiction demonstrates. The only inking of a slightly heretical remark in World War II personal narratives appeared in Quentin Reynolds' *Dress Rehearsal*: a "Pole shrugged his shoulders, "when hearing the Hail May and sung out, "some men fell better when they pray. Me--I feel better when I drink."

A few wartime authors hypothesized the psychological reasons why religion was important to soldiers. They surmised that devotion gave the men a shared hope, that lone worshippers, enveloped in situations too grossly chaotic for mere mortals to handle, gained comfort from the belief that safety was in the able hands of God. Stouffer offered that men likely found prayer helpful due to "a high degree of stress and frustration from unpredictable circumstances which were beyond the control of the individual" (Stouffer 2: 188). Alternatively, religion served as a solace by "passing our burden to Someone bigger than we in this empty vastness" and "common devotion drew us together" (Trumbull 82). Participants, like Whittaker in *We Thought We Heard the Angels Sing*, converted right after averting seemingly

inescapable death. Ira Wolfert witnessed a similar phenomenon:

A few times during the day, on this island or that, in this wave or another one, Death makes up its mind and takes some of us, but there are other times when it can't seem to make up its mind at all and just passes everybody over. The fellows kiss off this kind of day by saying it makes "a lot of good Christians" out of those who survive (Wolfert 73).

Those who were not sure that their luck would sustain bought stock in some form of afterlife that made the thought of their own sacrifice tolerable (Holmes 242).<sup>64</sup>

In general, however, personal narratives, by a conspicuous absence of attention to God, implied that Americans were more preoccupied with matters of life and death. The overall sentiment was nothing like what one Chaplain from World War I said in *Enland's Effort* (1918):

What is inspiring this splendid disregard of self is partly the certainty that the Cause is Right, partly, it is they would be unhappy if they were not doing their bit--and partly (I am convinced of this too.) it is a deepening faith the Founder of their Faith whom so many appreciate and value as never before, because they realize that even He has not shirked the very mill of suffering through which they are now passing through (Humphrey 208).

---

<sup>64</sup> A more tenuous thesis put forth by at least two narratives held that a religious sensibility made for not only better men but better soldiers by manifesting itself in more sympathy and aid toward comrades and in greater willingness to accept the bitter personal risks of war (Chaplain William C. Taggart, *My Fighting Congregation*). Sherrod concurred with that notion, writing, "The man who is [spiritually] prepared to die, should that be his lot, approaches battle calmer and with a clearer head. He is a better soldier" (Tarawa 45).

The First World War had far more religious overtones for its participants. One fought for "God and Country"; alternatively, Americans were fighting God's battles. In a narrative by Thomas Tiplady entitled *The Soul of the Soldier* (1918),

the Christian fatalism at the Front destroys no man's initiative, but keeps him merry and bright, and helps him to "do his bit." When he shall pass from the banqueting-house of life, into the Great Unexplored, he will leave as his memorial, not a turned-down glass, but a world redeemed from tyranny and wrong (Tiplady 208).

In a condensed study of 400 *American War Narratives, 1917-1918*, Genthe remarks that "an almost universal acceptance of Christianity has prepared the Allied soldier to unhesitatingly make the ultimate sacrifice, or so claim many narrators like this one" (Genthe 65). Genthe demonstrates that the soldier's firm religious belief was a continuously developed theme in the literature of the Great War: "Tommy Atkins or the Doughboy was convinced that he was on God's side....The war and 'doing one's bit' often become directly connected with the state of one's soul" (Genthe 11). Soldiers, as contradictory as it sounds, saw themselves engaged in spiritual acts and accomplishing spiritual purposes as martyrs of faith. In *Soldier Silhouettes on Our Front* (1918), a Y.M.C.A. worker with the A.E.F. offered:

after all, that is what America must learn to do, to get beyond, and to see beyond, the wounds, into the soul of the boy; to see beyond the blinded eyes, the scarred faces, the legless and armless lads, into the glory of their new-born souls, for no boy goes through the hell of fire and suffering and

wounds that he does not come out newborn  
(Stidger 50).

Another American Y.M.C.A. official in France wrote in *Out There* (1918) that "'Out there' bodies are shattered, but their souls are coming to great heights, for through their sacrifices and suffering men are learning the road to the cross" (Whitehair 72). It was not only those authors involved with organized Catholicism that were moved by a sense of supreme sacrifice and the surrender of the body to the will of the soul. Maintaining a romantic concept of reality, almost every World War I narrator, saw the Allies, Nature, and God as forming an organic unity, and the Germans as being bent on destroying that bond (Genthe 107).

Aside from the World War II narratives already mentioned in this chapter, the rest either did not broach the topic of religion or merely cited perfunctory attendance at pre-invasion religious ceremonies and a small percentage of men in foxholes silently praying. Although the tendency for soldiers to pray under fire during World War II was demonstrated by anecdote and substantiated by statistic, they called upon God for different reasons. Exactly the opposite of men who forget themselves in sacrificial death, the soldiers of the Second World War asked God to protect their physical bodies from harm, and to allow them to achieve their military mission. For example, here and there men survived close-calls, admitting having cried for help and been saved. Stouffer confirms that typical remarks by soldiers were: "I sure prayed when I was in a tight spot. I just asked the old

man above to lead the way and take care of me," or "I used to say things like 'God help me.'" Three-quarters of the infantrymen questioned by Stouffer in three American divisions answered that prayer had "helped a lot," that is, it had kept them alive. Their war experience may have increased their faith in God for the time being, yet, their attendance at places of worship after the war had ended did not rise. Clearly, World War II servicemen did not feel involved in any "Holy Crusade" as Great War soldiers seemed to believe.

It stands to reason that military men attended services more than the average American. Religious figures were very visible at the front. Men of the cloth were seen kneeling beside the wounded in hospitals, cutting dog tags from the necks of men who had died, blessing bodies, and giving the deceased Christian burials. Sermons, by necessity, were delivered whenever and wherever permissible: on hills, in wadis, under olive trees, even in the dark. These speeches offering "a word of encouragement, a thought to cherish, a verse of Scripture to echo in their minds, a whispered prayer--something to hold on to as they went forth to reconnoiter" (Brink 50).

Moreover, services were given according to the dictates of freedom-of-religion, by a multi-denominational coterie of Protestant Ministers, Catholic Priests, and Jewish Rabbis. If a multi-denominational service could not be provided, preachers consciously avoided sectarianism, "that men may



feel no hesitation or strangeness in a worship whose form may differ from that which they knew before." *Prelude to War*, the first film in the seven-part *Why We Fight* series (required viewing for soldiers that was meant to boost morale and promote proper military behavior), supervised by Sicilian-born Frank Capra, conspicuously quoted from Jewish, Moslem, and Christian holy books. And in the film version of *Guadalcanal Diary*, a Roman Catholic priest led the singing of "Rock of Ages" during a shipboard ecumenical; one full-voiced Marine explained that his father had been a cantor at a synagogue. These images of inclusiveness, tolerance, and unity counteracted potentially divisive religious differences that Axis agents attempted to exacerbate (Roeder 50).

Mixing religion with war certainly entailed a study in contrasts. Even though the picture of a "house of God" on a battlefield or a combat ship seemed out of place, according to John Mason Brown, many "sailors climbed rows of aerial bombs and straddled them as they bowed their heads in reverent prayer. Others found more comfortable pews on the rubber life-rafts...in our battle grey place of worship" (*Watchful* 28). In one of Bill Mauldin's drawings, a chaplain stood before a huddle of helmeted soldiers, his eyes focused on enemy skies, preaching, "...forever, Amen. Hit the dirt." Cobb Brink noted the broader incongruity in his personal narrative *And God Was There*:<sup>65</sup> "This is a story...of men who

---

<sup>65</sup> Besides Forgy's and Brink's, four personal narratives were written by Chaplains in the war: Burris Atkins Jenkins (*Father Meany and the Fighting 69th*, 1944), William Augustus

have found God...in places...you and I should never have looked" for Him (Brink 13).

---

Maguire (*Captain Wears a Cross*, 1943), William C. Taggart and Christopher Cross (*My Fighting Congregation*, 1943), Warren Wyeth Williard (*The Leathernecks Come Through*, 1944).

## CHAPTER 10: THE AFRICAN THEATER: A VENUE DIFFERENCE

In the face of depressing news about home-front mobilization failures, of Atlantic sinkings, and of German victories in southern Russia, President Roosevelt held fast to one politico-strategic conviction: "It is of the highest importance that the U.S. ground troops be brought into action against the enemy in 1942." An Allied offensive in the Mediterranean promised to sever Italy and Vichy France from German domination, divert the Wehrmacht from Russia, and provide air and naval bases for further operations against the heart of the Third Reich. Half a world away from the pestilential forests of the South Pacific islands, American forces entered the war for the Mediterranean in November 1942. The Americans plunged ashore in a combination of commando port assaults and nighttime beach landings. (Anzio was a beach landing reminiscent Tarawa.) One year later they, together with British, had driven the Germans back to the approaches of Rome.

Yet there were considerable differences between the Pacific and European campaigns. Island assaults made for intense fighting for short periods of time (Iwo Jima and Okinawa aside), where small bodies of troops were committed to action on an intense but brief basis. As in the case of Tarawa, for instance, casualties were unusually high for

three days, but virtually non-existent thereafter. In contrast, troops positioned themselves on Italian and German front lines for months, suffering heavy daily casualties, especially at places like Anzio and Cassino. Thus, according to Stouffer, "with respect to duration of continuous combat and incidence of battle casualties, the Pacific fighting during the greater part of the war may be said to have been less severe than the combat in Europe" (Stouffer 2: 70).

When the war against Germany intensified for American forces, the number of personal narratives about the Pacific front dwindled, and those reporting action from the Mediterranean and European battle areas increased. Since the campaign against Japan began to assume a character of sameness by 1943, the presentation of the combat in personal narratives duplicated itself in plot, setting, denouements, and climaxes. By 1944, some of the correspondents on the Pacific beat left the area to witness and report on the harder and longer battles being waged against the Nazis.

Richard Tregaskis, for example, accompanied the troops through Sicily and into Italy, just as he had on Guadalcanal the previous year. Lt. Commander Max Miller described the Navy's part in the invasion of Normandy, having documented a sea-air battle earlier in the Pacific Ocean. Ira Wolfert and John Hersey brought their journalistic skills and opinions along when they shifted attention from the struggle with the Japanese to the war with the Germans. Added to these voices were the popular ones of Russell Hill, Darryl Zanuck, Ralph

Ingersoll, John Mason Brown, Margaret Bourke-White, Bill Mauldin, and the one man who would be heard and appreciated above all others, Ernie Pyle.

From the outset, the North African campaign was well covered in a number of fine personal narratives by seasoned journalists sent by news organizations. The first was *Desert War* (1942) written by Russell Hill, a twenty-four year old Cambridge University graduate-turned-correspondent, who covered Berlin in 1939, then went to the Balkans, Greece, Bulgaria, Syria, and finally made his way to Cairo representing the *New York Herald Tribune*. Dissatisfied with learning about the war from behind the lines through military handouts, Hill opted to join Allied troops in the back and forth sweeps of warring parties between Tripoli and Cairo. In the course of these expeditions, he claimed to have "had a chance to speak with most of the men who planned and directed the campaign on the ground and in the air." Bound by censorship, however, he could not tell everything he saw or say everything he knew, nor would he have wanted to. "I would like the reader to bear in mind, however, [that]...I have not written anything I do not believe, and I take full responsibility for what I set down" (Hill 7).

His lengthy personal narrative covered the 1941-42 battles in North Africa between the British and General Irwin Rommel's Afrika Korps up until the time Americans landed at Casablanca. Hill maintained that although he spent two years focused on a tiny sector of the war, it was a crucial one.

The Egyptian war, according to Hill, was being fought for a series of objectives: to protect the Nile delta, the Suez Canal, and the oil fields of Iran and Iraq; to help the Russians, to demonstrate the equality in arms of a British soldier and a German fighter; to eliminate one front (the "western desert") of a two-front war in the Middle East so British defenses could consolidate; and to control the Mediterranean Sea, enabling convoys to move with less threat.

Though published under censorship, his narrative lifted the veil shrouding the technology of various instruments manufactured by the Axis and Allied states. *Desert War* meticulously told of the tools at the disposal of the two opposing desert armies, of Hurricanes and Kittyhawks pitted against Heinkels and Messerschmidts, and the arrival of light American tanks called "honeys," which performed well under certain battle conditions. In Hill's account, which ended before America's direct participation in the North African conflict, America's "Arsenal of Democracy" played a vital role by providing weapons and important supplies to the British. Hill also impressionistically imagined the eventual coming of American troops to African soil, like the United States Cavalry riding to the rescue of some beleaguered outpost in the Old frontier West. Interestingly, old and new methods of warfare combined on that continent's flat terrain: the fixed German and British positions where armored cars, trucks, and tanks were assembled in "close laager"--an encampment protected by a circle of vehicles--were

reminiscent of the way covered wagons were closely ringed each night as the travelers rested on the American plains 150 years ago, dispersing before dawn so Indians would not find them massed together. Metaphorically speaking, war was the frontier beyond the last settlement.

An alternative narrative of Africa, Andrew Geer's *Mercy in Hell*, was an account of the author's experience with a company of volunteer ambulance drivers, attached to the American Field Service Corps in Bombay, Damascus, the Syrian desert, the Libyan campaign, and the British Eighth Army drive toward Tunisia. Unlike Hill, Geer had no ties with journalism. Instead, he was a former college boxer and sparring partner for heavyweight champion Jack Dempsey. More narrow in his focus than Hill, Geer concentrated on the gallantry of men without guns or armor who drove their American-donated ambulances through shot and shell, often within sight of enemy lines, in order to ferry the wounded back to field hospitals.

In one way, *Mercy in Hell* complements *Desert War*: they were set at the same time and in the same place. Both writers, in fact, drew a vivid image of the desert terrain "bearing equally on both sides and often seeming more malevolent than the human foe" (Linderman 92). Geer was graphic and lyrical in his depiction of the "cruel and undomesticated" weather:

Always there was the sameness--sun, flies,  
dust, rumors, battle casualties--sun, flies,  
dust. Even as beauty illumines, so this  
sterility of wastelands numbs the brain....the

silence of the land is lethal. There is no sound of wind in trees or brush, nor the sound of running water, for in the desert only the voiceless wind exists. The approach of the sandstorm is as silent as death; the only sign is visual as fever streaks of dust across the sun (Geer).

Hill described North Africa as "that yellow waste with hummocky hills and valleys like sword slashes, where your teeth chatter at night and you get a sunstroke at noon, where the sand flies so thick that it seeps into every cog of machinery as well as into your lungs and stomach."

The keynote of *Desert War's* concluding chapter was that the war is still going on, so be prepared for the worst, America. "The Afrikakorps has been badly weakened, but it is not destroyed." Both sides were pummeled, though their relative strengths remained about equal to what they were at the start:

So nothing was really decided. Thousands were killed. Large quantities of material were destroyed. Great deeds of personal heroism were performed. Generals devised brilliant plans and made costly errors. Weapons and tactics were tested under ideal fighting conditions. It looks as though it will all have to be done over again. Perhaps it will be done better the next time (Hill 310).

Perhaps he meant that next time it will have to be done by Americans.

When the armed forces of the United States landed on the beaches of North Africa, the three-day battle that raged from November 8 to November 11 marked the prelude to many months of combat for American troops along the Tunisian



front.<sup>66</sup> The movie magnate, Darryl Zanuck, serving as a colonel in the Signal Corps during the North African campaign, wrote in his wartime narrative *Tunis Expedition* under the caption, NOVEMBER 8TH,

D Day! This is it! The battle for North Africa has begun! News flashes into the War Room from every point of contact. A sea battle rages off Casablanca! Our troops are landing at Algiers and Oran! The French are resisting! (Zanuck 34).

At the time, Darryl Zanuck was supervising a contingent of cameramen to produce black and white footage of American military activity along vast areas of the Mediterranean coast. When he sent detachments to film, he "told them to stick close to the advance." Overall, some seventy-five United States army and navy filmmakers were employed for three stated reasons: a) to convey information to the War Department, b) to provide new pictures for release to the public, and c) to provide historical pictorial records of the war. The result of these efforts became a documentary movie entitled "At the Front," judged by critics to be an undistinguished work, despite the considerable input of Zanuck and famous movie director, John Ford.

---

<sup>66</sup> Two wartime narratives which documented the initial phase of the United States in North Africa were *We Jumped to Fight* by Colonel Edson Raff and *Wildcasts Over Casablanca* transcribed by Keith Ayling for two Navy fliers, Lt. M. Wordell and E. Seiler. Raff recounted the story of paratroopers under his command, who participated in the first wave of the African invasion. Ayling chronicled the operations of Navy planes launched from off-shore carriers on their missions to assist the ground forces at Casablanca where the heaviest fighting of Africa took place.

The printed version of Zanuck's cinematic mission, on the other hand, fared better with the public, even though the book was a mix of many matters: a job description of his supervisory function, psychological insight into the behavior of men in battle, political opinion and speculation, character sketches of principal players in the war drama, and a confession of how everything affected him. Bridging these seemingly disjointed parts, his overall method was to explain the participants and events of World War II by relating them to his pre-war experience. In an attempt to convey the elemental nature of life on the front, for example, specifically the food a soldier eats, he admonished himself, "When I think about what I have wasted at home and the steaks I turned back because they were a trifle underdone or overdone or didn't suit my fancy, I feel ashamed." Another technique Zanuck employed to personalize the war was to draw analogy between movie stars and war officials. When two generals stood for photographs, Zanuck remarked that "they took directions like Hollywood veterans." Again, he compared General Mark Clark ("a grand person.... Tall, lanky and good-looking in a strong, masculine way, despite his prominent nose") to Basil Rathbone, famous for his quintessential portrayal of Sherlock Holmes. He even drew an analogy between "scenically picturesque" Algeria and his home state:

The backdrop constantly changes as does the California backdrop. It has its desert...like the desert at Palm Springs. It has its citrus groves and its cultivated fields, very much like that stretch of California running northward from San Diego (Zanuck 73).

Finally, Zanuck mused, "Funny how everything in North Africa seems to remind everybody of home, no matter what part of America we come from."

Instead of representing the war as strange and unknowable, Zanuck searched for associations between the war and more familiar people, places, and things. This literary strategy performed two important functions: it had readers believe they could grasp the situation in Africa (Zanuck said that, "you people at home who read the daily communiqués know much more about the overall picture than we do"); simultaneously, it evoked nostalgia for the homeland (Zanuck echoed the words of nearly everyone abroad that "the most unpleasant phase of war...[was] separation from loved ones.")

Zanuck covered the first American forces to land in North Africa on November 8, 1942, which fought the Vichy French garrisons stationed at the ports of Oran, Algiers, and Casablanca. Resistance by the French ended after three days. The rest of the North African operation involved a combined English and American military effort to completely evict Rommel and his Afrika Korps from the continent as well as foil German designs on Egypt and the Suez Canal, including their plan to link with troops driving toward the oil fields in Southern Russia and the Arabian Near East.

The story of the struggle to wrest control of the North rim of Africa from German troops was told by Ralph Ingersoll in his best seller, *The Battle Is the Payoff* (1943). Before Ingersoll wrote his personal narrative and before he had been

inducted into the army, he had published two other books related to the war; both had bearing on his personal narrative. In 1941, previous to becoming Lieutenant and then a Major in the Army's Engineer Corps, Ingersoll wrote a little volume entitled *America is Worth Fighting For*, which attempted to refute the arguments raised by isolationists, a majority of Americans in 1939. Synthesizing editorials previously written for inclusion in his politically left-leaning daily *PM*, Ingersoll warned the public that a Fascist victory in Europe would spell disaster for the moral cornerstones and the political interests of the United States. Instantly, one detected Ingersoll's interventionism from the language of the chapter headings designed as myth-exploding statements: Myth Number One--a Nazi victory will not affect us; Myth Number Two--we should stay at home to man the fences of our own democracy; Myth Number Three--we can appease the Nazis and be perfectly safe; Myth Number Four--the British have no war aims; there's no object to the war. These statements formed the first part of the old journalistic triad, "Tell 'em what you want to tell 'em, then tell 'em, then tell 'em what you told 'em." In this case, the second step of the reporter's maxim was fulfilled by exposing the dangerous folly of quiescent isolationism. And wrapping things up, Ingersoll posited that Fascism had to be fought aggressively abroad as well as at home.

A second book he published before entering the army was *Action on All Fronts*, essentially a political travelogue

offering an Olympian view of the global war based on the author's extensive travel throughout Asia, from Rangoon and Chungking to Moscow, including interviews with Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and Marshall Stalin, both of whom were spoken of with high praise. From Russia, Ingersoll visited neutral Turkey and the Middle East, then on to Malta, Gibraltar, and England. The most interesting portions of the book, given Ingersoll's reputation as a Leftist pundit, are those which detailed depressing experiences he had in the so-called "worker's paradise." With a candor uncharacteristic of a journalist deemed at least uncritical of the Soviet Union's economic experiments, Ingersoll reported seeing "the dead level of poverty that spreads like a soiled blanket from one border of the country to the other." Despite the debilitating standard of living and the bureaucratic restrictions that frustrated the people's free movement and access to information, he perceived a depth of love, faith, and willingness on the part of the Soviets to sacrifice themselves for opportunities promised by their system of government.

Shortly after the publication of *Action On All Fronts*, then a man past forty years of age, Ingersoll was drafted into the army. The merits of Ingersoll's appeal for a deferment (which was rejected) rested on a patriotic argument: "I was a newspaper man and I thought and still do think that newspaper publishing is an essential war occupation" (*Payoff 1*). Having lost his battle with the

draft board, Ingersoll reluctantly traded in his business suit for army fatigues and his high profile job as editor for the anonymity of a soldier's life.

Since he was still more widely known as a social crusader than an army enlistee, he set matters straight in the opening of his narrative that his concerns for the immediate soldierly future were not only more practical but more fundamental or vital than previous philosophical ones: "In this book," he wrote, "there is little...about what we are fighting for or about the political situation in Europe or even about what I think of the coming peace. These subjects are missing" (Ingersoll 1). According to Ingersoll, there was no time and no use for verbal debate once you understood that sheer physical might was the only type of power that shaped politics during an all-out war.

"This is not for me, a time for writing," confessed Ingersoll, "already I am unhappy and homesick for the army which is the only place I feel at home now or can feel at home until it is over and the killers that are loose are dead or captured." True to his words, he managed to crank out *The Battle Is the Payoff* in one week when granted leave between battles. Moreover, he guiltily admitted that some kind of action, any kind of action, even filing reports would probably have been more helpful to the war effort.

If, as he said, he received paltry personal satisfaction from the making of the book, and no longer considered himself a journalist, but a soldier, what were his reasons for

writing *The Battle Is the Payoff?* First of all, Ingersoll believed that there were many things that civilians did not know about battle (they were especially misled if they read only newspaper reports), making their judgment of military issues suspect. He was, therefore, compelled to teach the layman about the complicated structure of the army, relegating a whole chapter to the four functions of the army (Administration and Personnel, Intelligence, Training and Operations, and Supply) and how they link together, every unit one part of an intricate web of responsibilities. He went into encyclopedic detail about various weapons, Axis versus Allied mines, and putting in water-points.

He also tried to paint a realistic picture of war in North Africa. Military clash was infrequent, though

These violent moments are very violent and they are what you read of in the cables from the front because why should a correspondent waste his employer's money at a dollar a word to tell of the hours of waiting on a battlefield that the soldier remembers because he was so hungry, or of marches he recalls because his feet hurt so. Yet, marching and waiting are what battles are made of....The killing and the getting killed are the punctuation marks between long sentences... (Payoff 159).

Accordingly, the plot featured the slow and steady buildup of American men and machines. Most "chroniclers and historians, by the nature of their task, describe action; they too often ignore--and would find it difficult to describe--the absence of action" (*JAH* (Sept. 1990): 565); Ingersoll did not distort the situation in this way. For him, the business of war involved ninety percent surviving and moving from one place

to the other hampered by flooding and wobbly ground. *The Battle Is the Payoff* realistically devoted the vast majority of its pages to the preparation for battle, from the stockpiling of C-rations and water, to coordinating transportation of tank crews, privates, and officers. (Virtually everyone must prepare for battle, but the proportion of those in service who see combat--estimates vary according to the definition of combat--is very small, for during World War II, only one out of eight Army men served in a combat unit.)

Foremost, Ingersoll wished to stress the urgent need for a purer level of commitment and determination from American civilians, not necessarily in the form of war work or things tangible, but more in the shape of a "spiritual force." Sure, the American war effort has thus far fed, clothed, and equipped the soldiers, but why? Because the leaders encourage it--the wrong reason--or because the people understand the threat from bloodthirsty, powerful Fascists? With mystical overtones, he explained that

As the war goes on it is public opinion that will decide whether the prosecution of the war will be even more aggressive--or more cautious. Public opinion will do this inevitably without precise knowledge of the military situation but with that deep emotional wisdom that a people as a whole have--that wisdom on which our faith in democracy is founded (*Payoff* 209).

Ingersoll told his audience, "The American army's will to win, whether it be a skirmish or a campaign or the whole war, is neither stronger nor weaker than your own. You are the



American army and what you ask of it you will get." Though the argument was not supported logically, the zeal with which he delivered it may have awakened some slumberers. His intent was also to empower home-front readers, claiming that the fate of soldiers was in their hands: "In the determination of the people at home," he emphatically stated, "lie the lives of untold thousands of men."

Even the training of the soldiers in boot camp depended one hundred percent on the American people, according to Ingersoll. His fear, like Sherrod's, was that most civilians and servicemen, consumed with a "wave of optimism," were unaware of the huge physical demands war placed on armies. Therefore, training to fight had to be as tough or tougher than any fighting might prove to be; it must certainly be tougher than the existing system, and consistently tougher than what is demanded of enemy troops: "That kind of training is the only inoculation they can give to save...lives." Yet, "mothers and fathers...cringed at the idea." Ingersoll took the extreme opposite stance, "If I were to pray for a miracle," he hyperbolically exclaimed,

it just might be that every barracks in the United States might burn down. Then the American army in training might start learning to live as it will one day have to live with the sky for a ceiling and the ground for a floor--in whatever conditions either may be found. An Army trained that way would be an army that was at home the day it arrived in the field (*Payoff* 213).

Indeed, an appropriate subtitle for *The Battle Is the Payoff* would have been *The Training is the Thing*.

The connecting thread between the training of armies--an experience every American shared--and what an army was formed to do was the battle itself. As serious as the public's unwavering commitment to German and Japanese unconditional surrender, "an order to go into battle is an irrevocable commitment. It is the beginning of which one does not know the end." For Ingersoll, the battle signified the culmination of talk and theory and the onset of a world where only action, in the form of imposing one's will on the enemy, counted. The upshot was the need for rigorous physical and mental training, for which success in battle is the payoff.

Although his voice of advocacy was never more firm, his aims were different from those of the previous decade. He realized soon after entering the service that his civilian mindset could not exist in a structured military environment and expect to operate effectively for war purposes: "The army solves its problems of surviving by two dull words: organization and standardization." Moreover, organization necessitated subordination or what he called "an enormous...submergence of the individual will to the collective welfare." Amazingly enough, this lifelong political philosopher did a sort of personal "about face" by turning warrior and harboring no qualms about obeying authority.

The African and European fronts were distinctive in that they relied largely upon the Army, composed of draftees. By

contrast, the Navy and elite Marines, who did the bulk of the fighting in the Pacific, were volunteers. (Of course, many men enlisted in these forces rather than get drafted by the Army.) With the hard-work of these GIs, by May 7 1943, mop-up operations and the capture of many thousand Axis prisoners spelled the end of the struggle for control of North Africa that lasted nearly three years. Five months earlier, the Allied high command had assembled in Casablanca to examine strategy for the upcoming year. For multiple reasons, they decided to expand the Mediterranean campaign into Italy. This tactic would divert German divisions from the Eastern Front, provide bases for Allied bomber strikes, wound the German cause politically, and weaken it militarily. Now, with North Africa secure, the Allies were in a favorable position to turn their resources in that northerly direction and the port city of Tunis appeared to be the nearest and most convenient place from which to invade Sicily.

A perfect cross-continental narrative bridge was provided by John Mason Brown's *To All Hands*, which depicted the role the author assumed as Bridge Announcer while sailing with an amphibious force toward a Sicilian invasion rendezvous. Since "naval warfare relegates many participants to battle stations below decks, where nothing of the fighting can be seen," it became standard fare "on men-of-war to have the progress of the battle described over a PA" (*Hands ix*). Rear Admiral Alan Kirk informed Brown that his job was to keep the men up-to-date of the progress of the voyage:

I want you to be up here on the bridge during the action and report it play-by-play to the men below. Only one man out of ten... on a modern ship in combat can see what is going on. I want you to do their seeing for them. After all, this is a democratic war, and I believe that men who are willing to give their lives for democracy have the right to be included in what's going on (*Hands* 3-4).

"With the salient happenings of the day recorded," Brown's manuscript needed to pass inspection by the Admiral's Intelligence Officer. After approval and at broadcast time each afternoon, the flagship "was studded with groups and knots of men, listening to this yarn of [their] daily lives" as well as the latest picture of the broader war based on communiqués from the other fronts. As the ship's self-proclaimed, "roving reporter, its scuttle-butter, and one of those cowboys of the air who round up the day's news," Brown hoped to do more than stick to the facts; he liked his talks to "articulate our altering moods and interests, and hence in a sense reflect our changing needs."

Unlike most personal narratives, the author's words were not originally aimed at those away from the action, but were spoken out loud as parts of broadcasts to fifteen hundred soldiers and sailors aboard the flagship of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet's Amphibious Force. The reader, therefore, was supposed to share the very same blow-by-blow announcements as the men who sailed to and from Sicily's shores. Although it is unknown how much Brown cut and edited in the process of developing book chapters for a completely changed audience, readers were to understand that his allusions to Ogden Nash,

Dorothy Parker, Matthew Arnold, Henry Adams, William Shakespeare, and the Greeks, for example, were part of the original scripts. On this issue, Brown commented,

there seems to me to be nothing strange or affected in this. The threatened beauties, the imperiled values, the free minds which [these great poets] symbolize, supply this war with one of its most potent excuses....Often the mere magic of their music is solace enough....[Besides] You cannot condescend to people you respect as much as I respect [these servicemen] (*Hands* 8).

His initial broadcasts were filled with either educational or amusing esoterica. First, he explained the formation of the convoy and announced, "We have left America. We are at sea. The break from home has been made....We are making several hundred sea miles a day." Recognizing that the journey to Gibraltar would be long and monotonous, he attuned the men to the alterations in the sea that they would be encountering, drawing attention to the changing patterns of seaweed, fish, and the color of the ocean. Brown also eased the men's fears of attack--"We have excellent air coverage. Some of you may have noticed the Navy blimps which followed us out...or heard... the planes...for patrol duty"--as well as cautioned them to keep a vigilant watch for enemy subs,

a strange underwater denizen, this seagoing stogie, this oil-lapping mammal, this make-filled steel whale. Yes, in the coming days and nights we will see more submarines than there are submarines to see. We will see them in the mind's eye. We will see them floating in the waves of scuttlebutt....Mainly we will see these submarines because every object sighted on the mysterious ocean is quite properly suspect (*Hands* 29).

Calculated to amuse and distract the seafaring men while traveling the Atlantic, were also poetical human interest stories about a whale who "gave his life for democracy," about the bungling of the laundry situation, and about the ship's censor:

Compared to a man who would sell his grandmother into white slavery a ship's censor may perhaps be entitled to consider himself an honorable man....Betsy Ross turns him into a snooper, a scanner of secrets, an inkwell eavesdropper, a pursuer of cherished intimacies...a Dorothy Dix from whom no advice is expected, condemned to be a reader of interrupted serials....pretending (because he cannot forget) that these men are what they would seem to be rather than what they write (*Hands* 48-50).

He most certainly entertained the troops with these and other notable excursions into lightness, sometimes beyond the pale of history, formulated often in theatrical terms.

The broadcasts took on a decidedly more serious, call it ominous tone, when the "A-B-C days" were drawing to an end and D-Day was approaching. In language that sounded identical to Edward R. Murrow's broadcasts from London, which described the German blitzes on the city, Brown said,

Perhaps you can hear it. The distant gunfire of which I spoke has greatly increased. The fires are still burning on the beaches ahead. They mean our planes have been busy....The guns you hear at first will not necessarily mean the Italians have spotted us. Most probably they will be anti-aircraft, called into action by paratroopers (*Hands* 117).

In sum, the purpose of the afternoon talks had switched from being a combination of pleasure and mental stimulation to a melding of pep rally and business.

In the second series of messages, the straightforward details of the Task Force's mission were interspersed with a well-crafted call to arms. Brown appealed to the men's noblest instincts and romantic notions by saying that they will have been "included emotionally and experientially in the major challenge of our time," because "upon [our military] success all else for us depends--our big freedoms and small pleasures--the future reachings of our minds and lives." The portentous sentiment conveyed was that these men have unwittingly stepped into history; indeed, he declared, "world history has become a part of all our individual lives." In the eventual fight to wrest Sicily from the Nazi's grip, these Americans could be proud to have contributed to a future very different from what it might have been had they done nothing. According to the author, they risked their lives for a worthy cause, to defeat a pernicious enemy, one who overran and mutilated neighboring countries, enslaved people, inhumanely tortured and killed Jews and the disabled, and harassed liberals and priests, making much of Europe dreadfully uninhabitable. As male archetype, these just warriors and self-sacrificing conquering heroes would be enacting the national interest and glory (Cooke and Wollacott 111).

Shrewdly, Brown also played on the "war-as-regeneration" theme, suggesting that war brought out the best in men or that war incited parts of the self that peace could not reach. If sleep, breakfast, and grumpy morning dispositions

are "eloquent reminders of how picayune we are as individuals...those ships--those endless ships--this morning make our group magnificence plain."

Think of the titan's effort represented by these vessels having been made, manned, and moved. Think of the conferences for which they stand; the dark mines from which they were scooped;...the sweat, the bentbacks,... the sciences mastered, which they symbolize. Think of the businessmen, with their organizational talents and indispensable aptitudes, who have slaved patriotically, regardless of health or hours, to make the delivery of these ships to the nation (*Hands* 106).

According to this grandiloquent speech, every class of "superman" was "aroused" and revitalized by its war work.

Not once does *To All Hands* (or virtually any of the personal narratives) mention women in connection with the war effort, even though the war made women's employment a national priority and women forcefully demonstrated the ability to do "men's" work. Challenging war stereotypes, more than six million women worked outside the home during World War II, many in war plants (Chafe 232). However, *To All Hands* saw women only as singers and lovers. When the armed conflict was over and the crew's manhood had been physically tested and proven, women were drawn into the narrative as sexual objects of desire. In *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, Margaret and Patrice Higgonet explain that the rhetoric of World War II "escalated from images of domestic woman to those of sexual woman (Higgonet 37). After Marian Anderson's "full-throated and glorious



singing of the "Ave Maria" played on the deck's victrola,  
Brown reflected,

It wasn't until I heard Marian Anderson...that I realized how much my ears had been aching for a voice which was not baritone....We have also been missing that which surrounds--encases--how shall I say it?--a woman's vocal cords. Needless to say, I mean her companionship (*Hands* 228).

In the final estimation of this "healthy heterosexual,"

Lord, God, what is the damn war about, if it isn't to get the damn thing over with decisively and get back to the lives and the pleasures and the values, as servicemen, we have temporarily and cheerfully forsworn? I was about to mention sex, if you remember it, but I see my time is up (*Hands* 232).

Brown's was a war without women, though they emerged as desperately longed-for symbols of sexuality when the men set their sights on home. William Broyles reiterated the attraction of sex for Vietnam soldiers in a 1984 *Esquire* article entitled, "Why Men Love War":

No matter what our weapons on the battlefield, love is finally our only weapon against death. Sex is the weapon of life, the shooting sperm sent like an army of guerrillas to penetrate the egg's defenses--the only victory that really matters (Broyles 62).

On a figurative level, Brown likened the homeward-bound post-operation blues to post-partum depression: "The real adjustment we face is getting over having Sicily over for us. We have lived this Amphibious Operation....Now it is past, we feel empty as a cow elephant might feel had she calved a circusful of mammoths" (*Hands* 214). Here, Brown appropriated the singularly female ability to give birth, by comparing the men's adjustment of "having Sicily over for us," ("we are not

as virginal as we were") with how it feels to bear young. It might be argued that Brown performed the ultimate literary essentialization of war for men. Yet, who knows? For males, war might actually signify "at some terrible level the closest thing to what childbirth is for women and visa versa: the initiation into the power of life and death" (Broyles 61). Mothers in labor and soldiers in battle are both experiencing something that "alters the identity" of who they are, Elshtain creatively configured in *Women and War*. Similarly immersed in a world that "revolves around bodily harm" or "well-being and the search for protection," each is attuned to pain, and "subject to empowerment and astonishment" (Elshtain 223).

CHAPTER 11: THE EUROPEAN THEATER: CONSCRIPTED SOLDIERS  
PERFORM

Once it began, the battles for Sicily and the Italian mainland were extensively covered by dozens of war correspondents who made it their business to describe a democratic army of ordinary Americans conscripted to fight the war against Hitler. Richard Tregaskis, whose tour of duty had ended in the Pacific, came to the European front in the belief that a war correspondent should have daily contact with the enemy. The second personal narrative he turned into Random House, *Invasion Diary* (1944), which chronicled his experiences in Italy, would have been a much bigger book had not Saxe Cummins, the senior editor assigned to prepare the voluminous copy for publication, felt that "a good deal of work remains to be done" in order to make the manuscript a worthy successor to *Guadalcanal Diary*. While he complimented the book for being "scrupulously honest and uncompromisingly objective," he felt that "Dick Tregaskis sacrificed drama, color and tempo for cold fact...with a wealth of detail [about] the episodes in recent history which have been described, discussed and exploited by nearly every working correspondent" (Columbia University, Random House Archives, undated office memo). Advising those who made ultimate decisions, Cummins suggested that the manuscript, needed

considerable tightening "in order to make it less pedestrian and give it dramatic impact while preserving its admirable quality of truthfulness." So much "tightening" was done, in fact, that the published book was half the length of the nearly six hundred-page original manuscript.

Even with fine-tuning, *Invasion Diary* did not garner the favorable reviews and sales of its predecessor, *Guadalcanal Diary*. Part of the reason why the earlier narrative became a runaway bestseller had to do with timing--the newness of events in the Pacific brought heightened curiosity and hunger for information. Moreover, the specific circumstance was compelling--the nation's first offensive of the war wherein America's fighting worth had been tested, and revenge for Pearl Harbor was being exhausted. As the war prolonged, the taste for personal narratives became affected by the law of diminishing returns, just as Cummins suggested. In one way, then, *Invasion Diary* suffered from trends in general market dynamics.

In another way, the raw ingredients for high drama--tension, fear, anxiety, unpredictability, tragedy--were more abundant in the Pacific than on the Italian front. Along with a more familiar European landscape than the Pacific isles, came fewer doubts about *whether* victory would belong to the Allies, only questions of *how long* it would take. According to Tregaskis himself, the enemy was on the defensive, driven to midnight withdrawals with infantry hungry and bedraggled. So too, General Eisenhower was quoted

as saying "'the enemy resistance is negligible, our casualties 'far lighter than expected...[the Italians] have no stomach for fighting'" (*Invasion* 5). Complacency showed as Tregaskis matter-of-factly reported small non-riveting skirmishes against rear-guard troops. These problems contributed to the diminished interest in *Invasion Diary*, perhaps along with severe editing, which produced a condensed version of campaigns in Sicily, Salerno, Naples, and Cassino.

Ironically, Tregaskis' criticism of standard military dispatches characterized his own work as well: It "is traditional verbiage which is supposed to tell all about a battle, and actually conveys nothing." In fairness, Tregaskis conveyed very little. There is little, for example, about the weary, cautious, determined soldiers in the field, and the hardship and dangers they faced; instead, he talked about "the total of all the courage and suffering." Tellingly, the index printed in the back listed fifteen names of prominent figures versus one GI. Indeed, Tregaskis performed a good deal of unabashed name-dropping of Brig. Gen. Roosevelt, Gen. Allen, Lieut. Col. Bock, plus comrades Quent Reynolds, Red Knickerbocker, John Hersey,<sup>67</sup> Clark Lee, Jack Belden of *Time*, John Steinbeck, and Bob Hope.

---

<sup>67</sup> After writing *Into the Valley*, Hersey shifted his venue to Italy, again reporting the action of American troops up close. No second narrative developed from his witnessing of the Germans in action. He remarked that "although I would hardly call one type of warfare preferable to another, now that I have had a chance to compare the two, I can see how much more horrible the war against the Japs is."

When he returned from Italy he wrote an article, "This is Democracy," telling how a liberated town functions under

Tregaskis admitted a kind of emotional distancing and unfortunately it surfaced in his writing: "I was conscious of a strange detachment, as I watched the struggle with a sort of Olympian perspective." His coverage also suffered by a bodily distancing from the war zone. The book assumed the quality of a Cook's tour as he "hitched a ride down the mountainside and through the valleys of the Simento and the Salso," and shot off to Capri "to see the famed resort...The place had been untouched by the war, and was as lovely as ever...Knick had rhapsodized over the Blue Grotto, the stunning local countesses, Luigi's Bar, and the Morgana Hotel." Readers simply may not have appreciated his basking in the sun while their relatives and friends were being shot at.

Here and there, Tregaskis tried to describe war in artistic terms, but his poor attempt at metaphors further removed him from the reality of war:

the action [was] a veritable percussion concert. The booming of the guns behind us was continuous, like the rattling of a nervous drummer's banging on kettledrums....The percussion concert continued. The dancing stars of the gun flashed twinkled on the hill...The singing of the shells was almost a sedative (*Invasion 67-68*).

---

the control of AMGOT (the Allied Military Government of Occupied Territories), a strategy used for democratizing Italian villages, towns, and cities captured by the Allies. Hersey described a day in the life of a military officer interviewing dozens of men and women, many with children, who came to him for help and advice. These interviews from the actual Sicilian town of Licata were dramatized in his novel *A Bell for Adorno* (1944).

At another point, he choice an odd simile that suggested an insidious fascination with war: the front "was hard to resist. It was like an opiate."

Finally, on the impulse of this addictive feeling, Tregaskis returned from vacation to rejoin the troops. In the field the very next day, Tregaskis received a grave head wound from flying shrapnel. Although he was unable to think or speak well at the time, subsequent to the accident, his writing ironically "came alive":

I heard the scream of something coming....Then a smothering explosion descended around me....I sensed that I had been hit. A curtain of fire rose, hesitated for an infinite second. Then the curtain descended slowly. There was no pain. Everything seemed finished (*Invasion* 208-9).

In the midst of exciting battle, incidents of death and suffering did not impact Tregaskis since the wounded were quickly carted away from sight, the dead buried forthwith. It was only when damaged by war himself, a convalescing patient amongst the accumulated casualties and omnipresent suffering, that horror struck his tone. His former clinical detachment and sometimes escapist meanderings were squashed after he saw how bravely maimed soldiers bore their afflictions and how quietly and efficiently doctors and nurses restored whatever wholeness was possible through tireless work and care. Some of Tregaskis' most riveting prose appeared in the last pages, dealing with the reactions of the wounded service men. Too little too late, as the adage goes; *Invasion Diary* was an example of what constituted a failed war narrative.

Coincidentally, Margaret Bourke-White, another war correspondent, went to Tregaskis' bedside while she was photographing and talking with hospital patients in Italy. She was glad to find Tregaskis recovering remarkably well, for "among a group of battle-hardy correspondents," she remarked, "Dick was one of the bravest [correspondents] I knew." The only woman with enough daring and pull to write an account of the Second World War's front lines in Italy, or the front lines anywhere else for that matter, was Bourke-White.

She was especially well-qualified for the job of eye-witness war reporter.

Through a lifelong interest...in industrial processes, she...had developed the ability to capture in the same image the beauty and the potential brutality of modern technology, an ability which served her well as she captured the visual contradictions of contemporary warfare (Roeder 94).

By the Forties, Bourke-White had also established a fine reputation as an advertising photographer for the food pages of the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Vanity Fair*, *The Delineator*, and other popular magazines. In 1934, she turned to aviation photography for Pan Am, TWA, and the following year for Eastern Airlines. "Those jobs were the beginning of Bourke-White's strong attachment to flying... which led to many aviation-related assignments over the following two decades" (Silverman 73). Although her background was in advertising, she was drawn to news photography for its social significance. Bourke-White learned that because people believed the stories that pictures told, they could influence a public's thinking



(on more important issues than what brand to buy.) If Americans saw the dust-bowl farmer's predicament, she wondered, might this stimulate some form of drought relief? In order to test her postulate, in 1936, she joined forces with an accomplished Southern novelist by the name of Erskine Caldwell to gather material for a documentary. Turning her sights on the heart of the Black Belt South, she snapped thousands of pictures of pained or plaintive sharecroppers and tenant farmers. Together, writer and photographer produced the photo-journalistic, commercial triumph, *You Have Seen Their Faces* (1937).

Soon afterward, when an interviewer asked her if there were one picture she wanted to take more than any other in the world, Bourke-White replied,

I'd like to photograph the next war....I want to start with starving children and the war-widowed back home. The sinking ships at sea. Guns behind the lines, battles in trenches, and in the sky, and after it I want to photograph the desolation war has left. That sequence put right down in black and white may make folks see just how horrible war is and then perhaps I shall have done my little bit toward ending war for all time (in Silverman 80-81).

Even before war had erupted, she knew what she wanted. In the years following this public comment, she was given the opportunity to cover many war fronts for *Life* magazine, among them Barcelona, Chungking, Great Britain, North Africa, Moscow, and Italy. Now, she only needed the courage to face the hazards posed by enemy artillery and the Soviet war ministry's orders to shoot on sight anyone disobeying curfew.

Before World War II, Bourke-White clung to the belief that photography possessed the strength to touch viewers more than any other form of communication. Although she used words as titles and extended captions to sway her audience, writing was ancillary to her Depression portfolio. During her time at war, her approach drastically changed and "Writing became an intrinsic facet of her photographic work....Only through writing," she felt, "could she convey a comprehensive picture of the historic event she witnessed" (Silverman 111). This new methodology, however, may very well have reflected a practical concern--stringent photographic censorship--rather than a pure epistemological position. Bourke-White had to mail every one of her negatives directly from Italy to the Pentagon, where they were developed either by *Life* technicians under Army supervision or by the Signal Corps (*Purple* 107). Captions for pictures were censored twice: rough notes, then the completed layout were reviewed. The final product was once more viewed in Washington. "Because they were far more likely to get in trouble for letting through a photograph they should have blocked than for restricting one they might have released," when in doubt, censors squelched an image (Roeder 9). In addition, due to of all the red tape, photographers were unable to see their work right away, so they were shooting without feedback.

Partially reminiscent of the documentary craft featured in *You Have Seen Their Faces*, her wartime narrative, *They*

*Called It "Purple Heart Valley"* (1944), integrated seven sections of about sixteen pages of photographs into 182 pages of prose in order to capture what Bourke-White coined the "ordered insanity of war." Until World War II presented itself,

I had considered myself eye-minded and let it go at that, but much as I love cameras, they can't do everything. The American soldier with his bitter humor and his peculiar gallantry had opened my ears....I tried whenever possible to capture the special flavor of a situation in words as well as pictures (in Silverman 117).

In *They Called It "Purple Heart Valley"*,<sup>68</sup> she experimented with language, using images to buttress words, not the other way around. Remarking on her combined print plus picture depiction of World War II and the men who fought it, John Mason Brown celebrated the book's "optical quality," not merely the photos, but the visual characteristics of the writing itself. Below, for an example, she thickly described how the chaotic ground war appeared much differently from the air:

In some olive groves the traffic patterns made by trucks and jeeps...looked as if a school child had drawn circles in a penmanship exercise....Each bridge had been demolished with a Teutonic precision. The delicate arches of the small bridges were broken through the crest; larger bridges were buckled like giant accordions....Most regular of all was German railroad demolition. Between the rails an endless succession of V's marched into the distance, an effect produced by the giant plow which the retreating Germans had

---

<sup>68</sup> Her title derived from the name that GIs gave to the area around Cassino, where American troops were under constant heavy fire from German guns in the mountains above them.

dragged from their last railroad train, cracking each tie in two so neatly it seemed as if someone had unrolled a narrow length of English tweed, flinging this herringbone strip over the hills and valley of Italy (*Purple* 5).

More importantly, if a GI in a photograph made some remark, according to her admission, Bourke-White would frequently use it in her work to enliven the situation and the people. For instance, under a photograph of an endless single-file line of GIs carrying tin skillets and cups through a muddy field, she typed a specific soldier's intent, "When I get home I'm going to the Automat and play it like a jukebox." Conversely, she explained in an introductory note to *You Have Seen Their Faces*, that "The legends under the pictures are intended to express the author's own conceptions of the sentiments of the individuals portrayed; they do not pretend to reproduce the actual sentiments of these people." Whereas, the captions in the earlier book have people say things they never said, the wartime text relied upon the soldiers' own voices to provide meaning.

Evidently, she was both awestruck and inspired by the thoughts, bravery, and fortitude of the men around her. She highlighted a corporal assigned to assist her with camera equipment, who chose to resign from this comparatively safe job to participate in the beach landing on Anzio. More than a symbol of toughness, he stood as a role model for the rest of his company and an inspiration for her. Though in rough terms, Bourke-White was already at "the front," she later requested to be driven to the edge of no man's land, to the

extent that she was ahead of the infantry, "closer to the front than any woman has been," recorded a Colonel. She implied that she needed greater entree into what it must be like in order to write with the authority of having been there:

While on the whole it is very pleasant to be a woman war correspondent, there is always the possibility that you will be protected too much. Sometimes Army officers forget that it is just as necessary for you to get your work done as it is for a male correspondent (*Purple* 146).

Jean Bethke Elshtain observed in her book, *Women and War*, that the woman writer who trespasses onto the territory of war transgresses many taboos; "First and most important, she articulates knowledge of a 'line of battle' presumed to be directly known and lived only by men" (Elshtain 206). Especially during World War II, most Americans believed that women should remain "behind the lines." Bourke-White openly shunted convention. Interestingly enough, unlike a handful of male correspondents, she never emphasized her own hardships and risks. Nor did she throw in the towel of surrender as "many a Second World War reporter simply opted out....Occasionally the military wondered where all the correspondents had gone" (Paneth 165).

In her narrative, American women displayed exceptional bravery--nurses in Italy performed "closer to the battle line than American women had ever worked in this or any other war" --while still retaining feminine ways. Nurse, Betty Cook, who "applied a coat of [red] polish to her nails as carefully

as though she were going to a party," was awarded the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star, becoming the first woman in the American Army to wear two decorations.

Besides performing the stereotypical woman's role as sources of comfort, succor, and healing, female nurses, according to the military's argument, played an important morale-boosting function. Ernie Pyle described the Army nurses welcome presence:

Most of the time the nurses wore army coveralls, but [the commanding officer] wanted them to put on dresses once in a while, for he said the effect on the men was astounding. The touch of femininity, the knowledge that a woman was around, gave the wounded man courage and confidence and a feeling of security. And the more feminine, the better (quoted in Williams 37).

As a matter of fact, "the importance of gender to military policymakers...barred men who wanted to enter an all-female preserve" (Williams 42) when a national nursing shortage existed.

Bourke-White's images of women were laced with maternal as well as sexual overtones. One of Bourke-White's photographs showed an attractive nurse cleaning off her muddy boot under an outdoor faucet along with the caption, "They walk in beauty--every damned one of them." Christine Williams in *Gender Differences at Work* interprets such statements to mean "that women could maintain their femininity in spite of the military's traditional identification as a masculine occupation" (Williams 20).<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup> Williams makes an interesting point: According to

Before leaving for Italy, even Bourke-White made sure she had a suitable dress designed for dancing with soldiers, should the occasion arise. She willingly served as a consultant and model for the tailoring of the first female Army correspondent's uniform. Always a lady, she constantly carried cosmetics in a little pigskin-fitted case, joking that "I think I would have gone to the battlefield without rations before I would go without face cream." She applied it so religiously that an infantry major called her "Crisco-puss" (Moeller 196). In addition to carrying an extravagant 250 pounds of camera equipment and supplies, "her clothes and personal effects alone weighed fifty-five pounds" (Moeller 196). Three times in *They Called It "Purple Heart Valley,"* a Neapolitan coiffeur cut, curled, swirled, and ringleted her hair. According to Ruth Milkman in *Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex during World War II*, depictions of women's new work roles were overlaid with allusions to their style and glamour (Milkman 61). Although Bourke-White pushed the boundaries of her conventional role as non-combatant, beneath her uniform (same as the one men correspondents wore) and in addition to the power she wielded

---

evidence from interviews she conducted, "women would have enlisted whether or not [propoganda] efforts had been made to convince them they could join the military without undermining their femininity" (Williams 22). Furthermore, the author believes that "the military's desire to preserve female reserves' femininity were meant to assuage the trepidations of the men in the military, not the women. Men were threatened by the idea that women could replace them at their arhetypically 'masculine' occupation. They--rather than women--needed to be convinced that military women were still feminine" (Williams 31).

as war-story teller, she aimed to look dazzling. Work at the front did not endanger her or the nurses' femininity. Bourke-White's position reconciled well with that of military policymakers who were "obsessed with... maintaining gender differences, and this concern reverberated throughout both the propaganda and the slander campaigns directed at women in the services" (Williams 42).

Somewhat of a parallel can be drawn between Bourke-White's women in Italy and Rosie the Riveter in America: Beneath her overalls, argues Leila Rupp in *Mobilizing Women for War*, this munition's maker still wore an apron, in expectation that demobilization would restore her to status quo home maker (Rupp 180). Women war workers were unable to make a permanent dent on women's economic status, nor on the public's basic belief about women's "nature." Abroad and at home, "although wartime experiences no doubt affected women's consciousness and may have temporarily altered their identities, for many women the war years were perceived and remembered, both individually and collectively, through discourses that revived rather conventional gender relations" (Higgonet 12).

Bourke-White fashioned herself playful when she could afford to be, and hard-headed the rest of the time. Due in part to her drive for social improvement caused by disagreeable memories of Depression America, she harped on the negative effects that war wrought on civilians and society: the misery of Italian citizens behind the lines and the fact



that their children were starving (a common note for her), "although, as usual the rich were...in greater comfort"; the black market by which a few ruthless Italians fleeced many vulnerable ones; the fomenting food riots in the streets; the typhus epidemic which spread and ran unchecked for two months before corrective measures were taken. Overall, she criticized the bungling inability of American authorities to get these situations straightened out despite general good will and honest intentions. "It is not easy to administer justly an occupied city, to prevent the growth of the black market, and to see that our supplies are properly distributed. Still, our failure to do this may have serious effects on the future" (*Purple* 36). Thinking long-term, she emphasized the need for democratic reforms in Europe. One agenda she wanted pursued was the reeducation of Fascist youth:

In Italy, it seemed to me, we were neglecting a magnificent opportunity. It was not enough to conquer this territory if we did not educate it in such a way that we could live at peace with it.....It mattered little whether the reasons for educating these waifs were humanitarian or based on hardheaded insurance.....

If this is important in Italy, how much more important it will be when we get into Germany. There an educational job of colossal proportions will face us. It will be difficult, partly because we do not know just what we want to teach, and partly because we have had no practice.....What is the use of leaving all these American boys behind on the battlefields, if we leave occupied countries unchanged when we move on (*Purple* 109-110)?

Bourke-White also believed (and surveys of troops in the Pacific backed her claim (*Holmes* 277)) that the higher a soldier's understanding of and convictions about America's

war aims the more likely he would be willing to fight on. Hence, the United States had to promote the rightness of the cause in order to instill in the soldier of democracy what Stouffer termed "a tacit and fairly deep conviction that we were on the right side and that the war, once we were in it, was necessary." So too, she implied that back in the States, the government had to act more responsibly than it had after the First World War, notably by giving aid to veterans, especially the wounded. Last but not least, she called attention to the ignorant racial prejudice of whites at home and abroad:

My ordnance officer....turned to me and said something that made it hard to realize that this was the same man who had been so distressed half a mile back at the plight of children. His remark was: "It makes my blood boil to see a nigger with bars on his shoulders" (*Purple 70*).

Near to this exchange, appeared a picture, "These are Fighting Frenchmen," above another picture, which read, "These are Fighting Americans"; the top one was of three unmistakably Caucasian men, the bottom of five contented-looking Asian Americans in uniform driving a jeep.<sup>70</sup>

Bourke-White amply and colorfully reported the grueling, continuous fighting against the Wehrmacht that lasted from September 1943 to the end of the war in Europe. Specifically, she covered the costly campaign to breach the

---

<sup>70</sup> A Japanese-American unit was America's most decorated outfit. A total of thirty thousand Japanese Americans served in World War II, even though many of their parents were denied American citizenship and their families were kept in detention centers when they were being drafted.

line by which the Germans defended the approaches to Rome, booby traps, mines, and artillery barrages paving the way. While the combined British American forces took only thirty-eight days to drive the Germans from Sicily, the Allies would have to fight up the entire Italian peninsula during a couple of the worst winters in decades. Weather and terrain--short battle lines caused by the narrowness of the country coupled with defensively advantageous mountains--favored the Germans. Bourke-White described the war of mud, rocks, and rubble for infantry who had to root the Germans out position by position (Millet and Maslowski 446).

The physical environment became another enemy. In the desert men suffered from hot winds, sand in their food, and lack of water. In Italy they struggled against freezing temperatures, torrential rains, savage rushing rivers and carefully defended mountain passes with narrow approaches along cliff edges (Adams 104).

The effort to make the German troops, who were of high quality and would remain so throughout the Italian war (Keegan *Second WW* 353), loosen their grip on the crags and outcrops of the Apennine mountain chain involved French Moroccans, Poles, New Zealanders, Indians, Englishmen, and Americans in the bloodiest of their struggles in Europe.

While the battles in Italy raged, preparations for landing troops on the beaches of Western France continued apace. An integral preliminary step to operation OVERLORD was so-called precision daylight bombing by the American Air Force. The air operation intended to concentrate enough large

bomb loads onto steel, iron, ore, power facilities, oil reserves, and transportation targets so that when troops invaded, the Germans would be too weak to meet them. For the first time on record, air power, without the support of armies or navies, was being used to break an enemy's will and capacity to resist.

The United States Army's Eighth Air Force had arrived in Britain in the spring of 1942 and undertaken its initial raid in August 1942, when it attacked marshalling yards at Rouen. Given the historic, not to mention histrionic nature of this first great air war, it is somewhat surprising that only seven American personal narratives dealt exclusively with these actions, none of which gained notoriety: Byron Kennerly's *Eagles Roar!*<sup>71</sup> as told to Graham Berry in 1942, James S. Childers's *War Eagle*<sup>72</sup> and John Redding's and Harold Leyshon's *Skyways to Berlin*<sup>73</sup> in 1943, Don Salvatore Gentile's *One-Man Air Force*<sup>74</sup> as told to Ira Wolfert, Bud Hutton's and Andrew

---

<sup>71</sup> *Eagle's Roar!* was about a young aviator's experience as a member of the Eagle Squadron (American volunteers) of the R.A.F.

<sup>72</sup> *War Eagles* was the account of a senior American Eagle Squadron fighter with the R.A.F. The squadron operated for eighteen months, then was absorbed into the U.S. Army Air Forces in September 1942. Out of 112 pilots, twenty-five died, three missing, and six P.O.W.

<sup>73</sup> Two former newspaper men spent several months in the Air-Force headquarters press relations office in Washington DC and then went to England in October of 1942. Assigned to press-relations working there, they wrote *Skyways to Berlin*, a story about the American Air Force in England.

<sup>74</sup> *One-Man Air Force* contained personal reflections by an Ohio boy who destroyed thirty German planes and was called by Eisenhower a "one-man air force." It described a dog fight over France when Gentile ran out of ammunition. An interesting feature of the Gentile-Wolfert autobiographical book was its brevity, only fifty-five pages. Although a

Rooney's *Air Gunner*,<sup>75</sup> Captain John McCrary's and David Scherman's *First of the Many*<sup>76</sup> in 1944, and Eric Friedheim's and Samuel Taylor's *Fighters Up: The Story of American Fighter Pilots in the Battle of Europe*<sup>77</sup> in 1945.

Maybe publishers shied away from the topic because the morality of the European air battle nagged the national conscience a bit. Both the military and the public were ambivalent about the use of air power, particularly strategic bombing. There was also growing repugnance with the German blitz against England. Edward R. Murrow's radio broadcasts conveyed that the air war against England had proved futile and barbarous.<sup>78</sup> A troubled Catholic Church vocally opposed

great number of personal narratives were some one hundred pages, the shortness of *One-Man's Air Force* could be due to another factor, namely, the temptation of publishers to cash in before interest in wartime stories diminished. Reflecting the pressures of a war gone on too long and battles entering their last stages, smaller and quicker books seemed to be the order of the day.

<sup>75</sup> *Air Gunner*, a book on which Andy Rooney collaborated, involved a series of short sketches about different aspects of the lives of the American boys stationed in England who manned the guns on the flying fortresses and liberators over Europe. A partial list of contents included Nissen Huts, Nights before Missions, Sweating, Morale, Rest, Quitters, Freaks, Leave, Average Combat, and Letter Home.

<sup>76</sup> *First of the Many* recounted some of the missions of the Eight Air Force from the time a flight of twelve bombed Rouen in August 1942 up to June 1944.

<sup>77</sup> *Fighters Up* covered the Army Air Force from November 1943 until D-Day. It highlighted the personal characteristics of top-ranking fighters and contained a list of American Aces. In addition, the authors argued the relative merits of Thunderbolts, Lightnings, Mustangs, Spitfires, and Mosquitoes.

<sup>78</sup> R.A.F. Bomber Command suffered 55,000 dead, more than the number of British Army officers killed in the First World War. The campaign, therefore, never commanded the support of the whole nation. Its morality was questioned by the House of Commons and Lords, and the Marquess of Salisbury, head of the leading Conservative family of England (Keegan 433).

indiscriminate Allied bombing practices "bent on the destruction of civilian lives and property," as it characterized. In the end, the cost of such strategic bombing on Germany's civilian population was tragically high. Altogether, 600,000 Germans died--children represented twenty percent and female deaths exceeded male--and 800,000 were seriously injured. Disruption of the vital elements upon which modern society is dependent caused privation, on top of homelessness and bereavement. Berlin, Hamburg, Cologne, Dresden, and other smaller cities were virtually reduced to rubble. When the results were assessed, "The American 8th and 15th Air Forces lost over 29,000 crewmen killed and 8,237 heavy bombers... [yet] German war industry continued to produce war materiel until the last days of the war" (Millet and Maslowski 459).

The personal narratives which skirted around such controversial matters, managed to do so by close-up focus on particular squadrons, the character of the men that manned them, the intimate details of their missions, what they did off-duty, their feats, and how they met death. The reactions of the men engaged in almost daily air combat would give readers a distinctive view of its human dimensions. Common to all narratives was the reply to the oft-asked question: Do flyers get scared? Sure they did!; but the airmen's fear was outmatched by their guts (and fleet-full of superstitions). Certainly, it required nerves of steel to withstand the anticipation of the so many unique ways, as a

crew member, you could be killed: your oxygen mask could freeze, fragments of flak or 20 mm. shells could make a mess of you, your plane could be hit by rocket projectiles or crash head-on with another aircraft carrying a dead pilot, any one of multiple engines or several gas tanks could stop an explosive slug, or if a couple of engines gave out, your plane would lag behind the formation, and then enemy fighters would likely cut it to pieces (McCrary 9). And to think, these mishaps would be taking place in an unnatural environment, five miles above the earth. Post-war research on World War II suggests that morale of fliers was a continual problem throughout the war. A high incidence of emotional casualties led to a specific study of the problem in the spring of 1943, and the discovery of the psychological reaction known as "flying fatigue." "Conventional theory in World War II taught that fear was natural but that you must not give in to it" (Adams 101). Clearly, it has been established that World War II aviators were very worried about the hazards of their missions and suffered from symptoms of fear. There was not a lot of frank talk about these issues in personal narratives, however. Once in the air, in an identifiable situation, the airmen in these books handled their demons like Richard-the-Lionhearted.

It stands to reason that apprehension before embarking upon any test activity usually lessens once the trial gets under way. For example, a study of air-war emotional stress suggested that enemy raids on Britain during World War II

actually produced relief because inhabitants had expected the attacks to be more devastating than they actually turn out to be. "Likewise a soldier who is unfamiliar with battle may invest combat with far more alarming characteristics than it turns out to possess, and may, as is so often the case, be surprised to discover how well he copes with it" (Holmes 140). Pilot Gentile's success in *One-Man Air Force*, for instance, was due to his ability to ignore all intimidations when the time came. Each battle he fought aided his self-convincing imperviousness to pressure. Speaking of the opposition in contrast to himself, he said,

But suddenly, I don't know, something happened in their minds. You could see it plainly. Their brains had dissolved away under the pressure of fear and had become just dishwater in their heads. They froze to their sticks and straightened out and ran right to their graves like men stricken blind who run, screaming, off a cliff (Gentile).

Similarly, through sheer determination and will power, bombardiers before crashing dragged themselves to their sights, released bombs, and died at their posts.

More typical than citing casualty figures, personal narratives conveyed the reality of aviation deaths through homey anecdotes. Common sagas were sudden losses that scrambled lives and shattered hopes of a family. Male lovers went down with their plane, their wives or girlfriends, a substantial ocean away, anxiously awaiting news of a landing that never happened. Indeed, risks were so great that couples in these stories often agreed not to have children until the last mission was served.



Air power had produced the minimal objectives of the Combined Chiefs of Staff; when D-Day arrived, the Allied invaders at Normandy found the German Luftwaffe unable to provide defense against neither the June 6th, 1944 amphibious landing nor advances into the French interior and toward the German border. From the beaches of Normandy to the Siegfried Line, Anglo-American armored divisions and infantry thrust forward under skies almost empty of the once-dreaded Nazi aerial armada. Indeed, the largest amphibious military operation in history could hardly have been ventured without hard-won air supremacy.

## CHAPTER 12: SALUTING GI JOE: PYLE AND MAULDIN

Ernie Pyle (1900-1945) was on hand when the Germans were driven out of Paris and was on the scenes for much more than that. As correspondent for the Scripps-Howard newspapers, he began to cover the war from London, sending dispatches home about the enemy blitz over the city in the weeks before Germany declared war on the United States. Afterwards, he was present at virtually all the campaigns where American troops fought the heaviest battles--North Africa, Sicily, mainland Italy, the D-Day invasion at Normandy and the breakthrough of German defenses in western Europe, finally traveling half-way round the world to cover the army's fight against the desperate Japanese in Okinawa, one of the bloodiest battles of the war.<sup>2</sup>

Ernie Pyle had been a professional journalist many years before he plied his trade overseas. Yet on the surface, there was little connection between the seriousness of purpose that characterized his reports of the war and the somewhat whimsical style with which he recorded the diverse scenes and eccentric personalities of Thirties America. During the earlier period, he had gained reputation writing a daily column of human interest stories for the Scripps-Howard

---

<sup>2</sup> Infantry suffered seventy percent of America's total casualties but constituted only fourteen percent of the enlisted.

chain of newspapers published nation-wide. Pyle's articles were based on what he encountered during almost ceaseless travel from 1935-1939 in a jalopy throughout the forty-eight states, Canada, Alaska, Hawaii, and some countries in Central and South America. Downplaying that Americans were beset with problems of unemployment and political rabble-rousing, Pyle produced wholesome, cheerful, and fundamentally trivial local-color vignettes in the Norman Rockwell vein. His stories encompassed a boy frightened by snakes in Maryland, Broadway musicals and Minsky's Burlesque, the stunning variety of Long Island from Mineola to Orient Point, a fire department in Connecticut, a Cape Cod fisherman, icebreakers on the Great Lakes, the soap-making city of Cincinnati, the sculptor of Mount Rushmore, an old prospector in Alaska, steam boating down the Yukon, Moonshiners in Tennessee, shrimp-canning in Biloxi, Will Rogers in Oklahoma, mail by horse and carriage in Spokane, and the like. According to his latest biographer, James Tobin, "He wrote two and a half million words that comprise a forgotten but magnificent mosaic of the American scene in the Great Depression, and in the process he created 'Ernie Pyle'" (Tobin 27).

To his audience, he came across as not having his mind on the great issues of the day (Tobin 23) and for this reason he was appreciated by a legion of readers. As one wrote, "The trouble with [Westbrook Pegler, Walter Lippmann, and Walter Winchell] is that they want to organize the world...except Pyle" (Letter to Ernie Pyle, 6/9/38, Tobin

274). Indeed, precious few of his columns commented on Depression--capital "D" or small. The instances wherein he mentioned hard times seemed to mitigate the seriousness of the crisis:

A drought is not a spectacular thing....Crops are gone. Farmers are broke. The heat is terrific. The whole thing is awful. And yet I feel sure that a city-bred man, who had heard about the drought and who came out to see the devastation, would be disappointed.... People don't gasp for water. Houses don't catch fire. Cattle aren't dead on the road. Trucks aren't moving panicky-eyed families out before sunset. Farmers don't strike a pose and hang their heads in despair (in L. Miller, 64-5).

According to David Nichols, who edited two volumes of Ernie Pyle's dispatches, "in its subject matter and tone, Pyle's travels closely parallel some of the entries in the Federal Writers' Project American guide series....But with few exceptions the Depression is mere backdrop" for Pyle (*Ernie's America* xlvi). The bitter realities of people selling apples on wintry street corners, riding the rails looking for work, or lining up for a nibble at soup kitchens were scarcely included in what Pyle later referred to as his "silly dull columns about Mt. Hood and hope ranches" (in *Ernie's America* 10). Certainly, along his journey, Pyle confronted the down-and-out, labor strife, and bank failures, yet none of it seemed to interest him. Perhaps constant travel offered a sense of detachment from the crises bedeviling America. "Stability cloaks you with a thousand personal responsibilities," he once explained, "and [I] have been able to flee from them." He was as mobile as the hoboes

he wrote about. Nowhere does Pyle suggest that this perceived indifference or obliviousness to the sadder aspects of his time was purposeful. Rather, for him, this escapist indulgence was just a temperamental, somewhat solipsistic disposition: "I need to go where I please and write what I please," said Pyle. He even admitted that "[My] travel is an escape. In the end it sums up to be the cowardly fact that [I] don't have to stay and face anything out!" (*Ernie's America* 281). Such confessions, supported by his peacetime work, pointed to a Peter Pan-like aversion to working on serious pieces while serious problems existed.

But there might well have been a conservative agenda behind such ostensibly shallow journalism. Like Charles Kuralt, who started going "on the road" for CBS in the wake of Vietnam and Watergate, Pyle sought to assure readers that the American way of life was surviving the trials of poverty, strikes, dustbowls, joblessness, social and economic dislocation. In his small stories, readers confronted ordinary people doing ordinary things, contented with their lives, indifferent to politics, the New Deal, and the threat of Fascism abroad. Only here and there, did he make reference to 1930s politics, mentioning the New Deal program or acknowledging the growing prosperity sparked by the defense boom. Hence, he portrayed what President Harding had once labeled "normalcy." America emerged in its people and way of life, most notably in its small towns, its purposeful workers, its innocent entertainments: such a discourse

reflected a popular conservatism. It also meshed well with the agenda of Pyle's employer, the arch-Republican Scripps-Howard newspaper chain, which fought bitter battles in the Thirties against the American Newspaper Guild, the union organized by its employers.

At first, Ernie Pyle was anything but a household name while a roving reporter whose columns appeared in an unimpressive forty newspapers. By 1940, however, he had become syndicated six days a week in over 300 papers with a total readership of twelve million, well on his way to becoming famous. When war came to Europe and threatened to include the United States, Pyle still appeared only remotely attentive. Ironically, by 1940 his restless and roving spirit was what made him feel "just about to bust...to get over there as a war correspondent [who] at the age of thirty-nine...still had a romantic vision of battle, an untutored conception of war" (Nichols *Ernie's War* 10). His first contact with war occurred in London. But as the title of a feature article about him in *Time*, January 13, 1941, suggested, Pyle was at first more a "Tourist in the War Zone" than a hard-news reporter. True to form, Pyle wrote how the German bombing raid over the English capital struck him as a counterpart to the climax of the Aquacade show at the 1940 New York World's Fair. To watch the blitz from his hotel balcony "seemed more like something put on just to look at, like some ultimate Billy Rose extravaganza...attaining to

such proportions of a [Gargantuan] form of entertainment" (Tobin 76).

Because "the destruction has been immense," it did not take long for Pyle to break the mold of his vagabond days and assume a more sober demeanor. From London, Pyle began telling of a David nation, alone after the Fall of France, refusing to capitulate to the Goliath Nazis. He doubtless influenced popular opinion in an America still strongly isolationist, at least to give moral and material support to a weaker nation being bullied. In the process, he touched an emotion that he believed resonated among Americans--a sympathy for the underdog.

When in the fall he moved to cover the action in North Africa, it was apparent to everyone that a sea change had washed over him. During the Thirties, rootlessly wandering over a seemingly endless horizon of highways, Pyle was a man disengaged from the plight of the Depression's victims; confined to a bunk, enduring the same privations and dangers of other men, Pyle became a man wedded to victims of war, according to Nichols. (Quite tellingly, he used the term marriage to describe his relationship with the soldiers or "spouses" in Europe whom he got to know.)

Gone was the juvenile admiration of race-car drivers and Air Mail pilots who brazened it out in the face of quick and violent death. The infantrymen with whom he now spent his time lived decidedly unromantic lives....they were the ultimate victims....By sharing their lives, Pyle was becoming one of them in spirit if not in age, in practice if not by force of conscription (in *Ernie's War* 18).

Still, the GIs did not cling to him readily and were initially cool to his newsman's inquisitiveness, viewing him as a camp follower, hardly one of them. But when letters from home arrived with clippings of his columns, which told about themselves, the enlisted men discerned a difference between him and other correspondents. Their affection for Pyle enhanced as they watched him share their discomforts and dangers day after day.

As a consequence, the men soon welcomed and trusted him because they admired his exposing himself to the same hardships and peril as the soldiers he lived among. This "Little Man" (that's what the boys called him), burdened beyond his middle-age strength and filled with constant fear, could have gone home but did not. One Purple Heart recipient said,

I often asked Ernie why he didn't quit this life and go home and live like a human being. He'd smile and shake his head. "It's just like a player in a football game. The player doesn't want to sit on the sidelines and watch. That's the way I feel about it," he said shyly. You could tell Ernie meant every word he said (in Wolfe 92).

Pyle, a product of rural Indiana and incomplete schooling, an adventurer, a risk-taker with a bohemian streak, developed a fond closeness to his subjects despite the approximately twenty-year difference between their ages. He appreciated being able to share the grubby world that enveloped the soldiers and sailors and to feel the fearful tensions of their predicament. He, in turn, became intimate with many soldiers because he identified with them and grew to like them. His



writing proved that he cared about what they were like and what they were doing.

Ernie Pyle, even before he was killed by a sniper during the Okinawa campaign near the end of the war against Japan, was the GI's favorite correspondent. One reason might be that his writing conveyed the sense that he was more a participant than an observer. Marcus Duffield, writing about Pyle's posthumously published *Last Chapter*, asked

Why was Ernie Pyle America's most beloved war correspondent? He was not flashy like the brash young British favorites writing the "Daily Mail." He did not interpret the grand strategy like Russian Ilya Ehrenburg. Probably Ernie would not have got very far in any other country. He was American, unadorned American. He was at home with these fighting men: he understood them, he loved them. They loved him back (*Wkly Bk Rev* Dec. 2, 1946: 4).

When news came that Pyle had died, many GIs felt a personal loss. An infantryman wrote, "I felt as if I had lost my own brother." He had met Pyle in a "cold, damp, muddy foxhole [where] we talked about home, about baseball, football, about religion and politics. Yes, and during that time with the finger of death pointed at us, we even told a few jokes" (in Wolfe 92). It has been remarked that he lived the battlefield life of the men "as if he were an uncle of the boys he had seen who got taken along and wants to be sure we understood" (*Atl Monthly* Dec. 23, 1946: 130). More than humble reportage of the war, it was his direct participation in the events (combined with outstanding literary talent) that distinguished his books from the eye-witness accounts of others.

War somehow made the small things and small people that Pyle was accustomed to writing about, enormously important. What he wrote about the boys at the front in 1943 was relatively true for the previous generation's homeless men at the city dump in the Thirties, though he never described the latter with the same sorrow:

I saw men...suffering and wishing they were somewhere else...bellyaching...all of them desperately hungry for somebody to talk to besides themselves, no women to be heroes in front of, damned little wine to drink, precious little song, cold and fairly dirty, just toiling from day to day in a world full of insecurity, discomfort...and a dulled sense of danger (*Here* 102).

During the Great Depression, he may not have outwardly shown sincere concern for Depression victims, but a depth of concern for them apparently surfaced later on the battlefield. Pyle's biographers agree that moods and inner thoughts like the following tapped on Pyle's typewriter keys during the Great Depression years but never printed, echoed the Pyle alter-persona that would eventually go public. As he Pyle put it, he was haunted by the

stupendousness of [the drought] at night....alone in the enveloping heat and cannot sleep, and look into the darkness, and the thing comes back to you like a living dream, that you...realize the stupendousness of it....You can see the whole backward evolution into oblivion of a great land, and the destruction of a people, and the calamity of long years on end without privilege for those of the soil....Sometimes at night when I am thinking too hard I feel that there is nothing but leanness everywhere (in *L. Miller* 65-66).

Pyle's journalism exhibited a new intensity and seriousness of purpose when he went to war. In his books, *Here is Your War* (1943), *Brave Men* (1944), and *Last Chapter* (1946), people, places, things, and events were reported with the acumen of a journalistic information-gatherer, yet imbued with the subjectivity of a man whose distance from the war was minimal. Witnessing the battles on North Africa, then Sicily and Italy, Pyle felt involved and committed: "I had been in that Italian war theater so long that I thought of myself as a part of it. I was not in the Army, but I felt like [it]" (*Brave* 293); and when he accompanied men about to enter battle he "always felt miserable, and an awful weight...on my heart...knowing that an hour from now you may be dead." This ability to connect himself with or inability to separate himself from the enlisted soldier's physical and emotional experience formed the essence of Pyle's special brand of reportage. More than any other correspondent, his personal narratives blended the public and private; or to put it another way, they combined the two modes of documentary Stott referred to as "direct" and "confessional."

More comprehensively, the basic ingredients of Pyle's books distinguishing his from other wartime narratives were that:

1. They were written as if from the bottom of the chain of command, from the "worm's eye view" as he called it.
2. They presented not so much the life and death struggle, as the attitudes and daily toils of the average GI.

3. They evoked the enormously complex scope of the war by describing the variety of military services and personnel involved, including MPs, nurses, engineers, quartermasters, cooks, and more.

4. They presented the emotions involved during war.

5. Their language was often playful and suggestive, alternating sadness with humor, anger and curses with jokes.

6. Pyle's persona was revealed through his portraits of the men, and the men revealed themselves through him.

For all these reasons, his pieces created a common bond among journalist, soldier, reader, and writer, fused by a common American identity and common humanity.

*Here Is Your War* ("your" being the operative word) was Pyle's first book-length endeavor to demystify the conflict. Culled and expanded from previously written dispatches, together with dozens of pen-and-ink drawings by Carol Johnson, it gave a rather disjointed account of what the war in Africa was like. Yet correspondents and other notables widely reviewed and highly praised Pyle's unprecedented format. Ira Wolfert, author of *American Guerrilla in the Philippines* and *Battle for the Solomons* called it "a blueplate of our Army in the Mediterranean [containing] more than can be found in any other newspaperman's [account of the war] that I have read" (*New Rep* Dec. 6, 1943: 6). Clifton Fadiman, literary critic for the *New Yorker*, wrote that "Mr. Pyle has been called the Richard Harding Davis of this war. As a matter of fact, [Pyle] has a better eye than Davis ever

had and writes without a touch of [fake] heroics" (*New Yorker* Oct. 30, 1943: 93). First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt had a strong reaction to the book as well:

To anyone who has never been near a battlefield, this book will give a vivid picture and in the future it will be one of the books to which historians will turn to explain the character of the men who fought the war and the [cruel] conditions under which they carried out the day by day fighting which led us to victory (*Survey Graphics* 1943, 13: 508).

The raves were so universally extravagant that much of the advertising for the books incorporated excerpts from the reviews. The following blurbs were used: "*Here Is Your War* is shoulders above any other diary--*Commercial Appeal*;" "What those at home want most to know--*New York Times*;" "He has brought the war to America's doorstep--*San Francisco Chronicle*;" "The finest account of the American army--*Washington Daily News*;" "Real War literature [by] a reporter who...lived with John Soldier in the foxhole--*Coast Artillery Journal*." With the help of bountiful glowing press attention, *Here Is Your War* became an instant critical success, best seller, and Book of the Month club selection. Two large printings totaling nearly 350,000 copies of the personal narrative were sold in less than a month after release (*PW* Oct. 28, 1944: 1764) and Pyle's popularity continued to grow over the course of 1943. And in 1944 he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for distinguished correspondent.

The anticipated overwhelming demand for his second wartime book, *Brave Men* (1944) brought considerable joy and problems for the same publisher, Henry Holt. Arrangements had to be made well in advance of the official release date to ship books to booksellers all over the country, especially as a result of erratic wartime transportation services. A retail outlet in New York would have its quota in days; others, in Buffalo, Dallas, or Los Angeles had to wait weeks. There was a "Gentleman's Agreement" that no books would be sold prior to the official publication date of November, 21, 1944, even though a store might have copies on hand well in advance. To the annoyance of Holt, however, many dealers violated this understanding, depleting their stock and submitting second and third orders for more books before some stores received their first allocation or before other booksellers, who had complied with the directives, sold any.

Uncooperative booksellers caused the publishing firm a great deal of anger and trouble. Indeed Holt issued a vehement editorial in *Publisher's Weekly*, which began by chastising the selfish attempt of booksellers to increase profits for themselves. As everyone in the publishing world ought to have known,

breaking publication dates ahead of time....  
destroys the timing of the publisher's  
promotional effort on the book, damages the  
author and worst of all, it creates a silly  
and unnecessary friction between one  
bookseller and the next....Here at Holt, we do  
not propose to allow a situation to grow up in  
which booksellers will be competing for  
publisher's service in order to get stock far  
enough ahead to break publication dates for

their own advantage....In the case of this particular book, publication date has unusual importance because under our 1944 paper quota we have just enough copies of the book to fill the advance orders, now totaling more than 200,000 copies, which we already have in hand. Premature selling will undoubtedly result in many stores going out of stock of the title before Christmas. This in turn means a long gap in the availability of the book to the general public and our whole production program, our paper program, and promotion program [of] thousands of dollars is thrown out of gear (*PW* Nov. 25, 1944: 2059).

Disregard of the official publication date, coupled with wartime paper restrictions, saw the limited run of nearly a quarter of a million copies of *Brave Men* exhausted after three weeks in late 1944. Worse, the book was entirely out of print during the brisk pre- and post-Christmas period, from December 10 into late January, 1945.

In the early months of 1945, after two new printings, another quarter million copies quickly sold out.

When it became apparent that the sale of *Brave Men* was reaching astronomical figures, with no end in sight, all thoughts turned at once to paper consumption. Every possible ounce of paper quota was diverted to the [further] printing of *Brave Men* but this could not entirely satisfy the demand. Besides, Holt had several other titles [to be concerned about] (*PW* Dec. 9, 1944: 2241).

Indeed, the crisis was complicated by Holt's contracting to publish Bill Mauldin's *Up Front*. By June 1945, sales of Pyle's book approached the million mark, including the new editions printed by Grosset and Dunlap, which took charge of *Brave Men*'s production in March, 1944. Grosset and Dunlap, expecting additional requests for the book upon completion of the movie, *The Story of GI Joe*, (based loosely on *Here Is*

*Your War and Brave Men* as well), found a partial solution to the paper shortages by printing the book in two-column pages.

Spectacular reviews also greeted *Brave Men*. Quentin Reynolds explained, "There isn't a false note or overdramatization in it" (*Book Week* Nov. 26, 1944: 1).

Again, "The doughboys will never have a more enthusiastic and effective advocate than this war correspondent" (*Saturday Review of Literature* Nov. 24, 1944: 7). The reviewer for the *Springfield Republican* declared, "For a long time, and in many homes where not many books are brought, *Brave Men* will be read with pangs and with American pride" (Nov. 19, 1944: 4).

Pyle's narratives told a great deal about the war that would be hard to find in any other books. As one reviewer wrote, "When future generations of Americans seek to know what kind of army fought for them in this war, they will be thankful for Ernie Pyle" (Hovey, "This is Ernie Pyle's War," *New Republic* Dec. 11, 1944). Particularly if historians have questions about how men in the ranks of the American Army lived and reacted to hardships and dangers in and around battlefields, Pyle's books provide insights and answers. His narratives were the opposite of succinct military dispatches and news reports that decidedly lacked human dimensions. Here, Pyle estimated the defect and accomplishment of his first personal narrative, *Here Is Your War*:

I haven't written anything about the "Big Picture" because I don't know anything about it. I only know what we see from our worm's eye view, and our segment of the picture



consists only of tired and dirty soldiers who are alive and don't want to die; of long darkened convoys in the middle of the night; of shocked, silent men wandering back down the hill from battle...of jeeps and petrol dumps and smelly bedding rolls and C rations and cactus patches and blown bridges and dead mules and hospital tents and shirt collars greasy black from months of wearing; and of laughter, too, and anger and wine and lovely flowers and constant cussing. All these it is composed of and of graves and graves and graves (*Here 304*).

Pyle did not write about armies, but the individuals who made up armies. He purposely focused on the grunts, the ones who fought without sleep on empty stomachs while swearing and scratching, the dirty, drooping Willies and Joes portrayed in Bill Mauldin's *Up Front* cartoons. Indeed, a comrade-inspired tribute to Ernie Pyle came from Bill Mauldin, a twenty-three year old cartoonist for *Stars & Stripes*. Acknowledging a professional and personal debt to Pyle, Mauldin wrote an affectionate commentary about Pyle for the publication of *Final Chapter*. In eulogistic tone--since Pyle had lately been killed--Mauldin concluded that "Ernie was not a man you kick controversy over--didn't hurt any feelings, follow any party line, accuse any general, nor were his personal feelings or motives a mystery (*Nation* June 22, 1946: 754). Or as David Dempsey wrote, "Compare his writing with much of the ballyhoo that passed for war reporting and you understand how intrepidly he cut through the conventions of the profession to get at the heart and soul of war" (*New York Times* June 2, 1946: 3). In short, Pyle's work possessed candor of an uncommon nature for war reporting.

Among the hundreds of narratives published between 1942 and 1945, Pyle's along with Mauldin's stood out for spending scarce time on what effects brave men had on the fighting and a preponderance of attention on what effects the fighting had on brave men. It would be hard to know what changes the years of war might have wrought on impressionable young American men. Pyle once noted that "Our men can't make the change from normal civilians into warriors and remain the same people," later adding, "Of course they changed--they had to. And yet when I sat and talked with them they seemed just like ordinary human beings back home" (*Brave* 185). Pyle saw the "waning of home" as unavoidable accommodation and acclimatization to war.

Pyle found that even though American combat soldiers and sailors remained unwarlike in most senses, still in the heat of battle they matched the enemy's ruthlessness. Mauldin explained the "killing spirit" this way:

The combat man isn't the same clean-cut lad because you don't fight a kraut by Marquis of Queensberry rules. You shoot him in the back, you blow him apart with mines, you kill or maim him the quickest and most effective way you can with the least danger to yourself. He does the same to you. He tricks you and cheats you, and if you don't beat him at his own game you don't live to appreciate your own nobleness.

But you don't become a killer. No normal man who smelled and associated with death ever wants to see any more of it (*Up Front* 13-4).

Surrounded by terror, death, brutality, and destruction, the men assumed the role of killers; but when the awfulness of war was lifted from their sight, they recovered quickly:

"The human spirit is just like a cork....a unit may be pretty well exhausted, but if they are lucky enough to be blessed with some sunshine and warmth *they'll begin to be normal after two days out of the line*" (*Brave* 270, italics mine). Pyle suggested here and elsewhere that the scars left by "the perpetual astonishments of a war life" were not permanent for most resilient Americans.<sup>80</sup> For one Buck Eversole, "The years rolled over him and the war became his only world, and battle his only profession" (*Brave* 196); however, after the war, Buck wanted to go back to the place he loved best, the West, to feed some cattle and be independent.

To Pyle, ordinary American soldiers and sailors persisted in the face of great fear and discomfort only because they had to. It was kill or be killed. The typical soldier "had no hatred for Germans, although he had killed many of them. He killed because he was trying to keep alive himself" (*Brave* 195). Describing the hedgerow war in the Normandy countryside and afterward the street to street

---

<sup>80</sup> Pyle wavered on the issue of how World War II might affect the post-war behavior and attitude of the men who served. Pyle noticed that "Every day their scope is broadening despite themselves, and once they all get back with their global yarns and their foreign-tinged views, I cannot conceive of our nation ever being isolationist again....Add to that the abnormal world they have been plunged into, the new philosophies they have had to assume...and delights and strange wonderful things they have experienced, and they are bound to be different people from those you sent away." Other times, qualifying this opinion, Pyle claimed that the "men don't feel very international." Instead, always thinking of home, they were impatient with the strange people and customs of countries they were inhabiting.

fighting in the French towns and cities (both of which Pyle loathed), he expounded,

You think of attackers as being savage and bold. These men were hesitant and cautious. They were really the hunters, but they looked like the hunted. There was a confused excitement and grim anxiety in their faces.

They seemed terribly pathetic to me. They weren't warriors. They were American boys who by mere chance of fate had wound up with guns in their hands, sneaking up a death-laden street in a strange and shattered city in a faraway country in a driving rain. They were afraid, but it was beyond their power to quit. They had no choice. They were good boys....And even though they weren't warriors born to kill, they won their battles. That's the point (*Brave* 401-2).

In battle, Pyle's "brave men" were fierce, determined fighters who risked their lives time and again to gain an objective. More than anything else, Pyle expressed how much he respected and marveled at the courage of every American fighting man:

The reactions of the American soldiers to their first bad bombings were exactly what you would expect of them. They took it in a way to make you proud. The following figures aren't literal for any certain camp or particular bombing, but just my own generalization, which I believe a real survey would have authenticated. Let's say there was a camp of five thousand men, and they went through a dive-bombing and machine-gun strafing. One man out of that five thousand would break completely and go berserk. He might never recover. Perhaps twenty-five would momentarily lose their heads and start dashing around foolishly. A couple of hundred would decide to change trenches when the bombs seemed too close, forgetting that the safest place was the hole where they were. The four thousand seven hundred and seventy-four others would stay right in their trenches, thoroughly scared, but in full possession of themselves. They would do exactly the right thing. The moment it was over they would be out with

shovels and tools helping to put out fires, working just as calmly as in the safety of broad daylight (*Here* 132).

They accepted things as they were, griped and were cheerful at once, served and sacrificed as a matter of course.

They were simple heroes, as distinguished from dashing heroic figures. His stories were nothing like Miniver Cheevey's in "days of old," "visions of a warrior bold," "whose swords were bright and steeds were prancing; rather they defined the American hero in commonplace language, like "little routine men" in "scorned" khakis. Pyle did not especially search for hero stories, "since there were so many guys who were heroes without there being any stories to it." Along with Pyle, Mauldin did not

make the infantryman look noble, because he couldn't look noble even if he tried. Still there is a certain nobility and dignity in combat soldiers and medical aid men with dirt in their ears...[coming] from the way they live unselfishly and risk their lives to help each other....But when they are all together and they are fighting, despite their bitching and griping and goldbricking and mortal fear, they are facing cold steel and screaming lead and hard enemies, and they are advancing and beating the hell out of the opposition (*Up Front* 14-5).

In other words, in the GI's at war, Pyle and Mauldin discerned typical American boys who had to rise to the harsh challenges of war, that is, ordinary Americans, in the midst of war's misery and violence, doing extraordinary things in an ordinary American spirit. "The homespun wisdom, the small-town integrity, the clear-eyed vision--all would be distilled and focused in a single human image in combat garb,

[the central symbol of the nation at war], skinny and humble, the common man gone to war" (Tobin 35-6). This image inspired ordinary readers on the home front with faith in the democratic way of life the boys were defending.

While most wartime narratives offered reports of action, heroism, sacrifice in the spectacular circumstances of battle, Pyle and Mauldin explored another part of the forest. Pyle covered the war as if it were a wheel--the hub representing the battle, the many equally important spokes signifying the before and afters of fighting. In typical style, Pyle related the ugliness of life on the battlefield:

I wish you could have seen just one of the unforgettable sights I saw....a thin line of men....For four days and nights...had fought hard, eaten little, washed none, and slept hardly at all. Their nights had been violent with attack, fright, butchery, their days...miserable with the crash of artillery....They were young men, but the grime and whiskers and exhaustion made them look middle-aged (Here 247).

There were brief episodes of battle, but mostly the reports told of the spokes, namely the associated debilitating heartaches of exhaustion, tasteless food, boredom, homesickness, and illness. After the bitter fighting and dying, for example, he explained the gory details of:

Trench feet [which] comes from a man's feet being wet and cold for long periods and from not taking off his shoes often enough. In the mountains the soldiers sometimes went for two weeks or longer without ever having their shoes off or being able to get their feet dry. The tissues gradually seem to go dead, sores break out....In extreme cases gangrene occurs. We had cases where amputation was necessary (Brave 149).

Pyle's works also talked about the issues folks at home would like to hear: what their sons and sweethearts ate, where they slept, what they talked about, how they handled being cold, scared, tired, and the like. Hence, the books contained innumerable descriptions of the more humdrum and pleasant behind-the-lines scenes--soldiers washing socks in water-filled helmets, soldiers writing letters home or reading mail from teenage brothers about dates and girls, "talking the same old small talk day after day," sleeping peacefully, playing craps, or humming to the tunes "When the Lights Go on Again" and "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home to." Jean Bethke Elshtain, who as a twelve year old girl could not get enough of Ernie Pyle, wrote that his "democratization of war and war narrative appealed to me...and appeal to me now...the ordinariness of everyday army life, dominated by boredom, sleeplessness, and fear, took on an aura all its own, a kind of populist dignity" (Elshtain 21).

A proud predilection for the underdog led Pyle to concentrate on the dark and lonely struggles of the "little man"--the private, corporal, sergeant--against a determined enemy, perfidious nature, and the relentless daily vexations of army life. Both Pyle's and Mauldin's soldiers lived stripped of conventions and niceties. Foot soldiers rarely washed and rarely ate a decent meal, living on dehydrated eggs and vegetables, and K rations of Spam, dried sausage, crackers, and gum. Mauldin was famous for his sketches of blundering, irritated, weary, mud-caked creatures.

Mauldin, too, recorder of the ordinary foot soldier and one himself, said that he had "not tried to picture the war in a big, broad-minded way. I am not old enough to understand what it is all about, and I am not experienced enough to judge its failures and successes." *Up Front* contained "pictures of an army full of blunders and inefficiency, irritations and comradeship. But most of all, full of men who are able to fight a ruthless war against ruthless enemies and still grin at themselves."

Unlike Pyle, Mauldin noted specific units and persons as little as possible because "I've just about come to the conclusion that when 15,000 men from 48 states are put together in an outfit, their thinking and their actions are going to be pretty much like those of any other 15,000" (*Up Front* 2). Mauldin generalized: his "dogfaces" all had a single point of view and a similar response to war, that is, these guys "wanted to live every bit as much as you do." Mauldin's slouching soldiers became distinctions without a difference in terms of performance, sacrifice, courage, achievement, and endurance. Tellingly, the only physical difference between Joe and Willie, his representative dogfaces, was their noses, the former's was drawn stubby and rounded, the other's looked as if it had been broken. As Mauldin realized, "The bags under their eyes and the dirt in their ears are so similar that few people know which is Willie and which is Joe." Furthermore, while Joe and Willie were no compliment to the cream of "young American manhood's



good looks, their expressions are those of [all] infantry soldiers who have been in the war for a couple of years" (*Up Front* 42).

Pyle approached his subjects from a different perspective. His technique was to track down single seamen and soldiers, young men who would be recognized by the folks back home as friends, sons, and neighborhood kids, then carefully identify them with a dog-tag accuracy. For example, a dive bomber pilot named

Ed Bland...a tall friendly fellow with blond hair cut in crew style...was raised in Waureka, Oklahoma where his parents still lived. But he married a girl from Fort Moran, Colorado...Ed's plane was named "Annie Jane" in her honor. He had seen the baby only once--he got home for a few hours when it was four days old, and then went right overseas (*Brave* 165).

Ed Bland from America's heartland was the appropriate name for someone we can surmise was a white native-born Protestant. The description sounded less like a real individual than a category to which American readers were prepared to respond. He bore no badge of social class, notwithstanding the fierce struggles of farmers and workers in the 1930s. There were hundreds of specific infantrymen, medics, airmen, even brass hats, like Ed Bland, briefly mentioned or made the subject of thumbnail sketches. However, only two meaningful references to black Americans, not as individuals but as a group, occurred in the chapter "Supply Line" in *Brave Men*: "Around seventy percent of the quartermaster troops on the beachhead [on Anzio] were colored

boys. They helped unload ship at the dock. They drove trucks. They manned the supply dumps. Hardly a day went by without casualties among them. But they took the bombing and the shelling bravely"; And "Negro soldiers sorted...out clothing of soldiers who have been killed or wounded."

For reasons to be addressed, Pyle wanted to locate a specific serviceman in his residence. To this end, *Brave Men* included an "Index of Persons and Places." His books, therefore, managed to earn many an anonymous enlistee a short-hand identity indelibly written in the annals of war. A GI was expected to identify himself in terms of organizational imperatives--name, rank, and serial number. But Pyle restored him to the familiar contexts that made him American. Paul Fussell claimed that most servicemen, thirsty for recognition, "would rather have had their names appear in one of Pyle's dispatches than a medal" (*Wartime* 156). Now they were no longer GI Joes, but individuals with shapes, sizes, personalities, drawls, and aspects that linked them to specific people and places back home. Pyle's mission was to retrieve the individual from the mass and show the ordinary soldier and sailor that he was far from being a forgotten or inconsequential man. And as Studs Terkel elaborated, Pyle also

knew it was easy for the American public to become emotionally detached from young men whose identities were obscured by distance. Thus Pyle's obsession with names and addresses, with pre-war lives and post-war dreams, was an attempt to counter with specificity the all-too anonymous tone of much war correspondence (Terkel xiv).

Most practically, his journalism eased popular anxieties about the fate of GI Joe who according to Pyle, for the most part remained the boy next door, and would come home from war much the same.

At the time, critics saw the dog-faced cartoon creations of Bill Mauldin as visual counterparts to Pyle's GIs. There was scarcely a reviewer who did not point out the resemblances. Edward Weeks, in his *Atlantic Monthly* review of *Up Front* reminded those who looked at the drawings of "his bearded heroes, Joe and Willie, unlovely" that, "their heroism belongs on the same shelf with Ernie Pyle." *Kirkus* said that, "Bill Mauldin is giving us your dogfaces, Ernie Pyle." Among other things, the *New Yorker* declared that, "the twenty-one-year old [Mauldin] might perhaps be called the Ernie Pyle of Artists." Reading these reviews, one would think that the combination of *Up Front* and *Brave Men* together offered a marriage of illustration and text equal to the achievement of James Agee and Walker Evans, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*.

Possessing more interpersonal aplomb than Mauldin, however, Pyle got the men of high rank and low to confide in him about what they thought and how they felt. According to biographer Tobin, Pyle valued the intimacy he cultivated with soldiers. He appreciated the trust they felt for him, and the warm affection and gratitude for his being with them during the best and worst of times. This middle-aged avuncular journalist gave simple eloquence to the voices of

men who, like him, feared, laughed, worried for their skins, and perennially longed for home. Sometimes the feelings the American footsloggers could not express about their own experiences in letters home, he said for them. Pyle's appealing persona remained friendly, mild-mannered, and essentially humble. Due to this certain unobtrusiveness on Pyle's part, what came across in his personal narratives was not so much his own voice but a voice attuned to the men's; he said what they expressed or wanted to express in letters home. Because the soldiers may not have been as articulate, or were too preoccupied and distracted by the business at hand, Pyle's words conveyed what many of them would have liked. Pyle was every soldier's amanuensis, his Cyrano writing to their Roxannes. Each anecdote became a genuine and loving letter to the home front, which encouraged its members to keep faith and maintain good hearts.

While Pyle was "America's Favorite War Correspondent," the people's darling correspondent, adored by soldiers, officers, generals, home folks, Mauldin appeared less diplomatic, to put it mildly; he was disliked some, especially the Army's brass. Mauldin knowingly offended certain types of professional Army men by puncturing their stiff-shirt fronts, something he loved to do "because it's fun to hear them squawk." Capable of applauding officers who were willing to share equably the leveling conditions of combat (Willie and Joe enjoyed drinking and poker with some of the more regular officers), Mauldin openly reproached

"those who sent [soldiers] toward battle, humiliated them en route, and then (with some exception) failed to go with them to the juncture of ultimate danger" (Linderman 197). One of his cartoons had two officers who decided to dispossess four privates, who were cleaning and refurbishing an abandoned cottage for what they assumed to be their new living quarters. Seating himself outside, one officer proposed to the other that they wait until the lower-ranking men finish their repair of the stove before posting an "Officers' Quarters" sign and usurping the spot. A source of privates' further resentment and isolation from officers was inequitable leave packages and the ruling that officers clubs served hard liquor, while enlisted men's facilities were restricted to 3.2 beer. Mauldin rebelled against all types of "chickenshit":

behavior that makes military life worse than it need be: petty harassment of the weak by the strong; open scrimmage for power and authority and prestige; sadism thinly disguised as necessary discipline; a constant "paying off of old scores"; and insistence on the letter rather than the spirit of ordinances....Chickenshit can be recognized instantly because it never has anything to do with winning the war (Wartime 80).

Actually, "the American Army emphasizing behavioral management, was hierarchical with rigid caste walls separating the ranks" (Adams 80). Pettiness, high-handedness, and discrimination angered enlisted men. The ideal officer, however, in Mauldin's words,

knows his business. He is firm and just. He is saluted and given respect due a man who knows enough about war to boss soldiers around

in it. He is given many privileges, which all officers are happy to accept and he is required, in return, to give certain things which a few officers choose to ignore (*Up Front* 178-9).

He had a great deal of respect for the good ones and a great deal of contempt for the bad.

Ultimately, Mauldin's enlisted ranks recognized that a "democratic Army" was an oxymoron:

It's an accepted fact that you must be totalitarian in any army. The guys know that, but sometimes it chafes a little. That's why we do more bitching and groaning than any other army. And that is why it is a tremendous relief to get a little breath of democracy and freedom into this atmosphere of corporals and generals and discipline and officers' latrines (*Up Front* 32).

Sometimes Mauldin showed combat soldiers contesting the system of discipline by vocalizing their gripes, by passive resistance, or by circumventing regulation. For example, though shooting livestock was illegal, the soldiers killed a lot of it. "One rifleman at Anzio insisted that a cow had attacked him and that he had fired in self-defense" (173).

Most often, dogfaces took what lousy situation was dealt them and made the best of it. Always, amongst themselves, his cartoon soldiers subtly denounced the ethos as well as the intelligence of command because "the orders it engendered often seemed less intent on enhancing their effectiveness as fighting men than on humiliating them as enlisted men" (Linderman).

Beneath ostensible submission, there developed a disobedience to authority that became a fundamental feature of the soldiers' experience in World War II, according to Linderman.

Pyle declared that, "the infantry is the group in the army which gives more and gets less than anybody else." Pyle said that the war "seemed to be borne by the few thousand front-line soldiers...destined merely by chance to suffer and die for the rest of us." As a matter of fact, the infantry garnered the lowest prestige, while assuming the maximum risk with the minimum compensation. In a salute to "the fabulous infantry," he proclaimed,

I love the infantry because they were the underdogs. They were the mud-rain-frost-and-wind boys. They had no comforts and they even learned to do without the necessities. And in the end they were the guys without whom the [war] could not be won (*Here* 147).

No less than the Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Forces in Europe, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, echoed this accolade: "In the glorification [of] the strange and wonderful machines of war, most people forget that the battles of World War II have been won by the foot soldier" (*Life* Nov. 1943: 32).

Pyle not only gave voice to miserable and miserably treated soldiers, he fought for political justice on their behalf. Pyle was in large part responsible for legislative recognition of ordinary infantrymen and (some say single-handedly) compelled congress to reward combat soldiers extra pay. "When he espoused a GI cause in hundreds of daily newspapers...the military authority gave heed. On his demand all soldiers were allowed to wear stripes on their sleeves for overseas service, and combat infantrymen received ten dollars a month extra pay. Congress nicknamed the

legislation approving these measures "The Ernie Pyle Bill" (Knightley 187-8).

Both of Pyle's wartime narratives, *Here is Your War* (1943) and *Brave Men* (1944) seemed calculated to evoke national pride. The war is romantic to American soldiers "only twice," he wrote, "once they could see the Statue of Liberty and again on their first day back in the hometown with the folks" (*Here* 102). Pyle recorded the remarkable success story of industrialized, materialized, democratized America, which differed dramatically from enemy nations. The result was that Pyle's army spread--sometimes fortunately by peaceful means, other times unfortunately by violence--the concept of a dynamic, freedom-loving people through North Africa, Italy, France, Germany, and Japan, somewhat like Walt Whitman suggested in his poem "Passage to India." Pyle recognized,

We won because we were audacious. One could not help but be moved by the colossus of our [war machine]. It was a bold and mighty thing, one of the epics of all history. In the emergency of war our nation's powers are unbelievable. The strength we have spread around the world is appalling even to those who make up the individual cells of that strength. I am sure that in the past two years I have heard soldiers say a thousand times, "If only we could have created all this energy for something good." But we rise above our normal powers only in times of destruction (*Brave* 465).

Whitman wrote in "Passage to India" that "some hidden prophetic intention....born America/ For purpose vast," presuming throughout that America "with the grandest scenery in the world" housed the most accomplished, powerful, and



wise people, too. "Perhaps even now the time has arrived," according to his 1871 poem, for America's "noble" inventors, scientists, engineers, architects, and great captains to "launch out," "journey forth," "Passage to you [Asia and Africa], your shores, ye aged fierce enigmas!/ Passage to you, to mastership of you, ye strangling problems!," "the Elder Brother found,/ The younger melts in fondness in his arms." In other words, it was America's Godly mission to spread the "repressless" American Dream of technology and modernity over the entire globe. The Stars and Stripes image waving over the newly conquered territory at Iwo Jima was a symbol of a similar Manifest Destiny urge.

Both Pyle and Whitman<sup>81</sup> suggested that a providential passage or transfer takes place between the New and the Old Worlds (whether permission is granted or not). In addition, John Mason Brown paraphrased "Passage to India" while exploring the significance of the D-Day invasion: "Certainly in the annals of migration this huge ferrying back to the Old World of the New World's accumulated prowess is a miracle

---

<sup>81</sup> Walt Whitman was also a poetic chronicler of war. From 1862 to 1865, he volunteered as a hospital assistant in Washington, where he kept notes on paper he pinned to his body. These snippets, he used as germs for a series of Civil War poems entitled *Drum Taps* (1865). In these poems as in real life, the narrator exhibited the desire to mother, love, and nurture the wounded. The cock-sure posture of this great American poet appeared to have beaten-down and humbled by the war. The "First O Songs for a Prelude," giving an exalted image of Manhattan arming to the beat of drums, contrasted with the uncertainty and deep mournfulness of darker poems that mention surgical operations, attendants holding lights, smells of ether, odors of blood. Whitman sounded less like the exuberant youth of pre-war years, and more like an experienced and saddened veteran.

(*Watchful* 24). More cautiously than Whitman, Pyle understood that "it was all right to have a good opinion of ourselves, but we Americans were so smug with our cockiness. We somehow felt that just because we were Americans we could whip our weight in wildcats" (*Here* 177). Pyle readily added, however, that the feeling of superiority quickly vanished from these Americans' scopes when the shooting stopped.

Pyle's army had a Whitmanesque instinct to embrace otherness: "The first contacts of our troops with prisoners was extremely pleasant. So pleasant in fact that American officers got to worry because the men found the Germans so likable" (*Here* 279); even prior to the cease fire on Okinawa, "a good many Okinawan civilians...bowed to every American they met...and the Americans bowed back (*Last* 128); furthermore, "The Japanese kids were as cute as all kids over the world. I noticed a Marine reaching out and tousling their hair as he marched past them (*Last* 108); while in general GIs did not trust the enemy, "in typical American tenderheartedness they felt sorry for them...became fond of them" (*Brave* 118). Pyle thought that on the whole, no matter who they were or where they came from, American boys were "friendly," "natively courteous," and especially generous. They donated their personal cash, C rations, and clothing to Italian children and German and Japanese prisoners. "The average dogface feels dreadfully sorry for these poor trampled wretches, and wants to beat his brains out doing

something for them," echoed Mauldin. Pyle observed that Americans were "suckers for the guy who loses" (*Here* 274).

Finally, Pyle's servicemen fulfilled Ralph Waldo Emerson's metaphorical dreams of "Self Reliance" that "our thoughts should smell of pine and buzzing of bees." Pyle's characters were influenced by the landscape's transcendental goodness: "Most of the men were from small towns or farms. They were mainly hill people. There was something fundamentally fine and sound with their character that must have been put there by closeness to their hills and their trees and their soil" (*Brave* 102). Pyle reaffirmed the theories (to become entrenched national myths) of Crèvecoeur's American Farmer and the American Romantic writers that informed by America's diverse, beautiful, and expansive landscape, citizens would develop especially promising traits. Ironically, whatever sense of patriotism the soldiers and sailors expressed in Pyle's narratives was in terms of the benefits of their native land--the new space of hamburgers, cars, name brands, ice cream sodas, and movies.

Pyle never claimed or attempted to register a universal representative "I" as Whitman did, but the effect was similar nonetheless. Lacking the nineteenth-century poet's self-assurance, Pyle humbly stated that his own spirit did not match the spirit of the armies; if it did, "we probably would not have had the power to win. Most men are stronger." His courageous behavior belied his words, however, for Pyle exposed himself more directly over a longer time-frame than

most World War II correspondents. After a while, the writer and his subjects became "members of a fraternity or a little family" (*Brave* 83); whilst "everything in the world had stopped except war...we were all men of a new profession in a strange night caring for each other" (*Brave* 18).

When implicated in such a communal experience, wrote J. Glenn Gray, "'I' passes insensibly into 'we,' 'my' becomes 'our,' and individual fate loses its importance" (Gray 45), the way it often did in Pyle's writing. Pyle's words evidenced loyalty, concern, empathy, and tenderness for those around him. Men facing the hardest moments of their life, found in him a caring and kindred spirit--a kind of nurse--and furthermore a spokesman to a world that was apart from and probably ignorant of the puzzling senselessness of war. Indeed, soldiers became frustrated, distressed, and more and more angered by the gulf of experiential knowledge between the war front and the home front. They particularly "directed disdain at those who continued to believe Hollywood's version" of things (Linderman 314).

Perhaps the servicemen believed that Pyle, more than anyone else, could make the experience of combat comprehensible to civilians. Indeed, Linderman argued that,

No one struggled more earnestly to portray the war realistically ...War front and home front he sensed were drawing apart....If civilians could not be helped to comprehend combat, soldiers would be thrust into a desolate, inconsolable isolation. GIs understood what he was attempting (Linderman 324).

When an exhausted soldier approached Pyle and belligerently questioned,

"Why don't you tell the folks back home what this is like? All they hear about is victories and a lot of glory stuff. They don't know that for every hundred yards we advance somebody gets killed. Why don't you tell them how tough this life is?" (*Brave* 400),

the correspondent replied that he tried to do that all the time. In comparison, Mauldin was more suspicious about the potential and ultimate worth of his own drawings and words. He once wrote that he lacked the capacity to make civilians understand, holding the conviction that the battlefield experience was accessible only to those who passed through it:

[You] have to go through it to understand its horror....You have to smell it and feel it all around you until you can't imagine what it used to be like when you walked on a sidewalk or tossed clubs up into horse chestnut trees or fished for perch or when you did anything at all without a pack, a rifle, and a bunch of grenades (*Up Front* 30).

For Mauldin, combat outdistanced any comparison to normalcy.

Pyle depicted the war as the best of times and the worst of times. Despite the fresh blood and demolished structures that perpetually marred his surroundings, he demonstrated an appealing open-minded and ambivalent attitude toward World War II. On one level, Ernie Pyle disliked war intensely, having seen a lot more of it than most soldiers. Knowing, too, that it was the foot soldiers who bore the brunt of war, before, during, and after the battles, he resented the situation even more. With Pyle as

with them...it's the ceaselessness, the endlessness of everything that finally worms its way through us and gradually starts to devour us. It's the perpetual, choking dust, the muscle-racking hard ground, the snatched food sitting ill on the stomach, the heat and the flies and dirty feet and the constant roar of engines and the perpetual moving and the never settling down and the go, go, go, night and day, and on through the night again. Eventually it all works itself into an emotional tapestry of one dull, dead pattern-- yesterday is tomorrow and Troina is Randazzo and when will we ever stop and God, I'm so tired (*Brave* 85, italics mine).

Basically, he reinscribed Hemingways' modernistic understanding of war as expressed by the protagonist Lieutenant Frederic Henry in *A Farewell to Arms*:

I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious, and sacrifice and the expression in vain. We had heard them, sometimes standing in the rain almost out of earshot,...and had read them...There were many words that you could not stand to hear and finally only the names of places had dignity....Abstract words such as glory, honor, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates (*Farewell* 177-8).

(Of course, Pyle would change the last few lines to "concrete names of villages where the soldier grew up, the number on his house, the names of his family members, the date of his birth.") As Elshtain wrote in *Women and War*, "[Pyle] wages war against war, against abstract celebration of war and vague stories of campaign" (Elshtain 20).<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup> Stylistic resonances of Ernest Hemingway were also apparent throughout Ernie Pyle's work, and content-wise in Pyle's depiction of heroism as discipline of self under pressure or as stoic endurance.

In fact, Pyle paid unique homage to Sergeant Bill Mauldin's cartoons precisely because they were as heart-wrenching as they were humorous: He "seemed to us over there to be the finest cartoonist the war had produced. And that's not merely because his cartoons are funny, but because they are also terribly grim and real" (*Brave* 128). Take the one featuring Willie standing in front of a Red-Cross worker who nonchalantly holds open a boxed medal. Willie reacted, "Just gimme a coupla aspirin. I already got a Purple Heart." Another simple cartoon showed two men lying in the rain on a flooded field under a tree with the caption: "This damn tree leaks." Lastly, knowing that "a soldier's life revolves around his mail,"<sup>83</sup> he drew a cartoon of a demolished U.S. mail truck--it probably had run over a mine--once loaded with bags of letters that were now strewn across the road. Willie, with his hand placed on the shoulder of a disbelieving comrade, consoled, "Why ya lookin' so sad? I got out of it okay." In summation, Maudlin described his craft as constructing things out of the blackly humorous situations that continually arise just when you don't think life could get any more distressing. Through all their fiddling and fooling around, "they are so damned tired of having their noses rubbed in a stinking war that their only ambition will be to forget it." James Jones once remarked that "there was a lot more bitterness in World War II than

---

<sup>83</sup> Each soldier received on average fourteen pieces of mail per week (Linderman 303).

historians allow (*Time* Sept. 1 1975: 59). Mauldin, a sort of contemporary historian of his times, lent operatic voice to bitterness.

Pyle offered a more multi-faceted interpretation of war than anyone else. That is, he filled his writing with the dual sense of war's tragic and wondrous character. As an experience, he treated war ambivalently, neither glorifying nor debunking it. Graham Hovery, a military correspondent, formerly of International News Service, succinctly characterized Pyle as a man who "was sensitive to the beauties as well as the horrors of war." Pyle, however, represented his own position more evocatively: "I hated the whole damn business just as much as they did who suffered so much more. I often wondered why I was there at all, since I didn't have to be, but I found no answer anywhere short of insanity....but I was glad I was there" (*Brave* 294).

Pyle frankly acknowledged war's occasionally positive features. The "usual responsibilities and obligations were gone," "no appointments to keep," and nobody caring how anybody looked. Other than what wasn't there, there was a "magnificent simplicity" at the front where normal life's rules and responsibilities evaporated as well as "some exhilaration there in Italy, and some fun along with the misery and sadness." Here, for instance, he confessed to feeling war's vitality:

vitality...being in the heart of everything,  
of being a part of it--no mere onlooker....  
I've written that war is not romantic when a  
person is in the midst of it. Nothing



happened to change my feelings about that. But I will have to admit there was an exhilaration in it; an inner excitement that built up into a buoyant tenseness seldom achieved in peacetime (*Brave* 214).

And infrequently, Pyle's passages romanticized the struggle:

One envies the soldiers at the end of the day, wiping the sweat and blood from their faces, counting the dead fallen to their hands, looking at the devastated fields, the torn earth that seems to suffer and bleed with them. One does really. The final brutality of it--the taste of primitive passion--the ferocious frankness of the blow struck with one's own hand--the direct call and straight response (*Brave* 17).

Pyle summarized the situation in a syndicated column published on March 10, 1943 in the Scripps-Howard chain:

"The drama and romance are here, of course, but they're like the famous falling tree in the forest--they're no good unless there's somebody around to hear (in *Tobin* 83).

A variety of other participants echoed and captured Pyle's awareness of an "acute sense of drama," "almost like Hollywood," at having a share "of the world's great warfare." Bourke-White likened going to war to a religious ritual (*Purple* 147). The war photographer, George Silk, boasted, "If you didn't get killed, [World War II] was really a very enjoyable time for a hell of a lot of people including me" (*Moeller* 208).

One significant and enduring appeal, registered implicitly and explicitly in Pyle's personal narratives, was experiencing and sensing in others a brotherhood heretofore unknown, maybe inconceivable. It was this "fraternalism in war" that civilians would have virtually no occasion to feel.

As Pyle imagistically wrote, "To go to the brink of possible death in the nighttime in a faraway land, puzzled and afraid, knowing no one, and facing the worst moment of your life" (*Brave* 271) bonded men together. Remarkably,

in all the waste and despair and suffering, men not only held on to [civilized values] but there were moments when war quickened in them a sense of comradeship...seldom experienced in peace. Since the war was merely an experience to be endured and, for values of comradeship, to be won, it was genuinely touching to hear in battle a wounded soldier, emblem of so many others, tell a medic, "I'm done for so don't waste your time on me. Go help the other boys."

A comrade "offered an immediate, material relationship in substitution for distant, weakening roles," such as son, sweetheart, father, "and an intimacy promising to free the soldier from the isolating orbits of both self-absorption and military depersonalization" (Linderman 273). Interestingly enough, potent lines of German propaganda directed at Americans aimed to exploit this facet of army life: "Why are you fighting us?...No one cares about you." To that assertion, the rejoinder, "My buddies care," was as plain as the nose on one's face.

In World War II, "those who went into battle together had probably trained together, and except for casualties and replacements, they remained together....This provided a sense of security lacking in Vietnam, where rotation meant...your comrades changed...more often" (*JAH* Sept. 1990: 566). Pyle informed readers that the power of small unit loyalty induced soldiers to persist. Mauldin wrote how "friendship [was] a

lot more valuable than 'War Aims' and indoctrination. From Pyle's perspective, comradeship, not patriotism or political ideology, figured prominently into the equation of why Americans fought. In short, there were thousands of young men "fighting for...for...well, at least for each other." Pyle claimed, "Where the Japs fought for the Emperor, and the Germans fought for Hitler, and the Russians fought for Communism, and the English fought for the Commonwealth, the...Americans fought generally for each other." He seemed to be myth-making here. Was the American soldier really any different from the enemy? Not to judge from the soldiers' discovery that they liked German prisoners of war. Surely, the troops in Hitler's army were as devoted to their *frauleins* and their mother's cooking as were the GIs to theirs. But from Pyle's perspective, comradeship, not patriotism or political ideology,<sup>84</sup> figured prominently into the equation of why Americans fought with such determination. S.L.A. Marshall agreed in *Men Against Fire*, that

---

<sup>84</sup> Arthur Miller who became a celebrated American dramatist after the war with *Death of a Salesman*, *All My Sons*, and *The Crucible* among his major theatrical achievements, was a young writer in Hollywood during the war. He had been assigned to work with Pyle in developing a script from Pyle's disconnected series of articles, but divergent philosophical objectives short-circuited their collaboration. The two disagreed on the opportunity the movie presented: Pyle wanted to tell just the human side of the story, Miller, on the other hand, wanted to project political motivation onto the soldiers. "He and Ernie had fundamentally different motives. Miller yearned to say what the war ought to be [about]. Ernie wanted to say what it was [like]" (Tobin 122). Feeling that Pyle's reports lacked moral definitiveness, Miller withdrew from the project.

the only answer...supportable in all that I have seen of man on the battlefield is that he will be persuaded to [risk his life] by ... friendship, loyalty to responsibility, and knowledge that he is the repository of the faith and confidence of others (160-1).

And with his usual understated succinctness, Mauldin explained the gravity of soldierly bonds: when within the range of bullets the important thing "is to have a few acquaintances."

Mauldin spoke of comradeship, not as a convenience, but as a necessity: "The infantryman can't live without friends..., the best life insurance." As J. Glenn Gray knew, some wartime comrades would never have picked one another as friends under normal circumstances and did not care to keep in touch after the war. Mauldin depicted some acting downright hostile to others even during the war; but if they wanted to get home, they overlooked their incompatibility and differences and "worked as a team when on patrol or when taking a town."

Ultimately, the fantastic mix of highs and lows, the inexplicable abnormalcy or insanity of it all got to Pyle, war being a "silly business...the craziest thing I ever heard of," as one soldier told him, to which he agreed. Ironically, Pyle wondered why Richard Tregaskis, who had been through four invasion assaults in the Pacific and the Mediterranean, "a very thoughtful person...married....after so much war as he had seen, and after such a hairbreadth escape" was not "ready to call it a day. If I had his wounds," he imagined, "I would have gone home and rested on

my laurels forever" (*Brave* 121-122). Having spent a few days in and around Normandy during the allied invasion loaded with snipers, butchery, and fright, Pyle renounced the "semi-barbaric life": "war has become a black depression without highlights, a revulsion of the mind and an exhaustion of the spirit." Situated in the crucible of the vortex of war, Pyle became confused and complicated man, a far cry from the self-assured personality revealed in his Depression pieces. In the Thirties he had fashioned a sort of aesthetic distance from the hard times, which allowed him to avoid judgment, whereas an unmistakable moral tone became the essence of his wartime journalism. Perhaps lurking beneath his end-game sense of caring was simultaneously a past, regrettably unarticulated concern for dust-bowl sufferers and a future, unarticulable concern for a world that might one day mock the war's noblest aims and sacrifices. A discouraging cryptic note in one of his September 11, 1943 columns read: "I couldn't find the Four Freedoms among the dead men."

In any event, he had reached a *Weltschmerz* or a type of battle fatigue that gripped many of the fighters after a while. Pyle reacted more viscerally than intellectually, mentally "wobbly" and emotionally revolted to the verge of depression. When Paris fell to the Allied forces Pyle looked exhausted of spirit. According to a friend who asked him if he were going with the victorious troops to Paris, he replied,

To hell with Paris....I'm leaving here to go home. I can't take it any longer. I have

seen too many dead. I wasn't born for this part. It haunts me. I'll never go to war again. I'll never let anyone send me. I'll quit the business first (in Marshall 220).

Having openly declared the lifestyle punishing and announced an uneasy sort of separate peace, Pyle, nevertheless, could not stay away when the moment of decision arrived.

Notwithstanding his seeming revulsion for the war, he reported from Paris, and despite premonitions of death which haunted him in North Africa, Sicily, Italy, and Normandy, he more astonishingly transferred to the Pacific to be at the battle of Okinawa after a brief *entr'acte* respite in the sunshine of his beloved Southwest. Linderman claimed that it was all part of "a cycle of withdrawal and return, rejection and embrace, that Pyle would complete often during the war" (Linderman 158). Given his many protestations and overwhelming war weariness, it is psychological speculation to suppose why he continued the fight, except to say that fellow Americans were still fighting and he somehow needed to be with them and write of them. After he swore never to let anyone send him to war again, he sent himself "because there were American boys...in battle still, and he had to be with them." His deep loyalty toward those he met, outweighed worries about physical harm or personal failure.

As trite as it sounds, it was a story-book bitter-sweet ending for Ernie Pyle who was killed by machine gun fire near Okinawa. Appropriately, he was buried in the 77th Division cemetery; a wooden coffin and marker, hand-done by soldiers,

was placed where he fell recording simply that "On this spot the 77th Division lost a buddy, Ernie Pyle, 18 April 1945."<sup>85</sup>

Why was he considered the greatest correspondent of World War II? It may have something to do with the familiarity that Americans felt toward him carried over from their knowledge of his Depression writing. As a soft-spoken unpretentious, non-political teacher against a flood of outspoken Thirties partisans, he was a man in whose presence one would have felt comfortably at home. Insofar as Pyle's portraits of GI Joe centered around "domestic" scenes of friends, everyday pastimes, and familiar enjoyments, they, too, were easily accessible and avoided any explicit divisive political meaning. Just as he was a welcome conduit between provincial Americans of a nation still sectioned, he became the instructor and go-between for family/friends at home and soldiers who left them behind. In poetically symmetrical fashion, always celebrating the American character and idealizing the American way of life, Pyle's personality and life's work became American legend in their own right.

---

<sup>85</sup> Later, the engineers erected a permanent concrete monument in the form of a truncated pyramid five feet high and three feet wide bearing a brass plaque with the same inscription. It remains today, one of just three American memorials of the Okinawan campaign.

## CONCLUSION:

Within six months of the start of America's direct military participation in hostilities, book-length reports centering around World War II combat were rendered. The enormous success of two of the first, Robert Trumbull's *The Raft* and William L. White's *They Were Expendable*, sparked a new category of trade books classified by the industry as "personal narratives." Aimed at the 140 million Americans at home, who, according to Roeder, combined "the roles of engrossed spectator and committed participant (Roeder 66), these stories became among the most profitable items on nearly every publisher's list from 1942 to 1945.

They were written by four categories of authors: 1) civilian journalists licensed to cover any of the various war zones, 2) men in the military who had previous journalistic experience, 3) once-removed professional writers who had the events related to them by those who actually participated, 4) and amateurs, who with editorial assistance wrote their own story. Wartime narratives immediately caught the attention of Americans because the war consumed nearly everyone's interest. Max Miller, author of two personal narratives, captured some of the attraction of writing and reading about wars throughout recorded history in *It's Tomorrow Out Here*:

To write of war is easy. The subject is the easiest one there is. The plot already is



there. It is waiting. It has all the required elements. It has suspense. It has danger. It has death. It has opposition. It has sacrifice. It has heroes. And it has everyone's attention--for a while. War as a subject is a natural pushover--for a while. People who have not written before can start right out writing about war, and behold, they have a public surpassing the public of Shakespeare--for a while (*Tomorrow*).

Personal narratives, more importantly, constituted a brief but distinctive event in the history of writing, reading, and publishing that give clues about the era's public values and cultural tastes.

The writing of World War II was not only reflective of its time and place, but very much shaped by the contours of the war--an event which average Americans did not make, nor could they control. Journalistic coverage of the war was as extensive as the war itself. Hundreds of correspondents joined the troops at various staging areas and on front lines everywhere. They went on commando raids to Dieppe, flew bomber missions over Germany, rode in landing crafts bound for enemy-held atolls in the Pacific, made parachute jumps into Fortress Europe, and froze in foxholes with riflemen in Italy. Among the war's heroes were journalists who, seeking firsthand reports of conflict, placed themselves in dangerous positions to be able to see and record the war. They were people with the same personal code as Manuel in Hemingway's short story "The Undefeated," who "was just a man who backs his play." According to Roeder in *The Censored War*, "those who mustered the courage, imagination, and skill to broaden awareness of the diverse consequences of the American war

effort made it more likely that Americans would act knowingly" (Roeder 157).

Newspeople and government officials made it a priority to keep civilians in touch with the prosecution of a war thousands of miles away. Shielding the nation from news, they believed, would lead to apathy or indifference on the part of those not directly involved. For example, John Mason Brown wrote,

The Army and the Navy realize the value...of news...coverage....The newsmen are walking delegates for the American Public, which, since it contributes both men and money that make the show possible, has the right as well as the desire to know what is going on. These men, armed only with their typewriter...are the liaison...between technical operations of the most delicate sort and public opinion, which can be no less delicate. That they happen to be the forward echelon of history, writing their annals in the heat of events, is also in their favor (*Watchful* 72).

A line of dialogue from Alfred Hitchcock's 1940 film, *Foreign Correspondent*, summarized: correspondents were "soldiers of the press...who are writing history beside the cannon's mouth." They hoped to open a dialogue on the war's nature and meaning.

Book-length accounts of war supplemented by censored journalism and photographs constituted the "truth" about World War II available to Americans at home. From their initial conception, these books were packaged to bridge the gap between the home front and the battle front. Their content, too, reinforced the government's propaganda policies regarding the industrial job at home and military agenda

abroad. As requested by the OWI, they exposed the nature of the enemy and provided information on training, fighting, and production. They exemplified best the metaphoric pronouncements, "Books are weapons in the war of ideas" and how "Books like ships, have the toughest armor, the longest cruising range, and the most powerful guns" as Franklin Delano Roosevelt exclaimed to W.W. Norton, then Chairman of the Council on Books in Wartime (PW Dec. 12, 1942: 2353). These publications buttressed the war effort by sending the message that Americans must always guard against complacency. Sometimes subtly and other times openly, they informed the folks at home how they could assist the men doing the fighting: Women should be emotionally supportive; defense production is needed; striking is anathema; temporary sacrifices of lifestyle and material possessions would have to be made.

Allowed completely independent decisions about what books they would print, publishers ranked personal narratives high in priority.<sup>86</sup> Publishers, in other words, voluntarily

---

<sup>86</sup> Maps were also a priority for publishers, selling like hot cakes during the war. President Roosevelt stimulated the public's interest and as a consequence the publishers interest in maps: He wished that every household "would have a map of the world or a world globe" in front of it while brothers, husbands, sweethearts, friends, and neighbors were scattered over foreign parts. People were naturally curious to know about the Solomons, North Africa, the Aleutians, not to mention Pearl Harbor, places yet unfamiliar to some. Although specialized firms such as Rand McNally and Hammond already had atlases and globes on the market, regular trade book companies began making atlases, too, prompted by increased interest in the places where Americans landed, encountered the enemy, and left dead bodies. Harper's, for example, issued *The Atlas of Global Geography*, Crowell, A

enlisted to serve government or public goals by turning out such books of individual experience in the war. Patriotism and profits went together because narratives integrated the financial interests of the private sector with the goals of the government on behalf of the people.

The actual content and form of personal narratives were shaped by a variety of factors. First, both self-censorship and government censorship determined what could and could not be said in books. (Centralized control of information, however, did not affect the book industry as much as it did the newspaper and movie business; censorship codes permitted a wide freedom to authors as far as what they could include and should exclude from books.) Literary conventions, such as the Thirties documentary model and Hemingway's terse pioneering writing style,<sup>87</sup> both of which reconciled well with journalistic schooling, influenced how the war would be represented as tough poetry. Authors, recreating the thoughts and experiences of themselves and others, decided on

---

*Global Geography*, and Knopf, *Look of the World Atlas*. By far the most outstanding and commercially successful atlas was *A War Atlas for Americans*, put out by Simon and Schuster after a year and a half of preparation with the cooperative assistance of "the book division of the OWI, other government departments, and the Council on Books in Wartime" (*PW* May 6, 1944: 1755). With its format of eighty-four invaluable maps augmented by text to clearly reveal the whole progress of the war--from the Japanese invasion of China and Germany's march to the English Channel, to the advent of the Allied invasion of the Continent--and backed by a large advertising budget, *A War Atlas for Americans* sold nearly a quarter of a million copies within the first year (*PW* June 17, 1944: 2239).

<sup>87</sup> As Quentin Reynolds stated, "ever since Ernest Hemingway discovered the simple declarative sentence, writing has been easy (*Convoy* 79).

the characterization of participants, the language of description, and the central themes to develop. Editors and professional collaborators helped amateurs tell their stories. Due to these exigencies, personal narratives were not transparent transcripts of experience, but artful (some more than others) remakings of life, dictated by personal biases, national visions, political and publishing imperatives, genre rules, and ideological design.

In 1942, the intellectual challenge for the book business was not merely to represent the experience of combat for people who had never encountered it; in order to sustain the interest and morale of the home front, books had to balance (a) rendering unspeakable and incomprehensible aspects of combat to the uninitiated via effective and palpable realism, with (b) relating unwelcome details of combat in a palatable way. The best-selling authors ably negotiated that precarious balance.

What were their models? Certainly the catastrophic Great War had not established a tradition upon which publishers and writers could readily draw. The personal narratives of World War I were very different from those produced by the next generation of who recorded their experiences. World War I narratives, according to Genthe in *American War Narratives, 1917-1918*, encouraged a romantic spirit and a good struggling against evil Hun mentality. They also revealed Doughboys on their journey Over There filled with noble ideals, patriotism, chivalry, and

excitement, rather than realistic or practical objectives (Genthe 2, 12). These volumes, taking a predominantly positive approach to war and the "cause" itself, "provide a deeply revealing look into what constituted the social, religious and political beliefs of the 'Old Gang' against whom Hemingway, Dos Passos, E.E. Cummings and others rebelled" (Genthe 1). The general reading public "who bought the narratives by the hundreds of thousands, reflected the narrators' simplistic view of war, morality, good versus bad, religion" (Genthe 3). The 1920s, a time of newly found sophistication and experimentation, saw the flourishing of the Lost Generation with its novels of postwar disillusion and pacifism, and of anti-war isolationism. Yet among that period's authors, Ernest Hemingway--who called war "one of the major subjects...and those writers who had not seen it were always very jealous and tried to make it seem unimportant, or abnormal, or a disease as a subject, while really, it was just something quite irreplaceable that they had missed" (*Green Hills* 70)--emerged as a guiding light.

After serving democracy in real life as an ambulance driver in Italy during the First World War, Hemingway's personas had proclaimed a "separate peace" in *In Our Time* and ratified it with the baptismal plunge into the Tagliamento River in *A Farewell to Arms*. Although this World War I novel suggested that all causes are lost, war as Hemingway constructed it, intrinsically fulfilled the need for authentic action and manly testing, stuff which the quotidian

world no longer provided. In *No Place of Grace*, Jackson Lears says that Hemingway saw toughness and manhood in combat as ends in themselves. (He was always fascinated with worlds beyond the boundaries of modern safety and routine.) In true Hemingway form, Ingersoll reiterated that

I remembered, at the end of that day[ 's battle], feeling wonderful. I felt that there was nothing as a soldier that I was afraid of because I could shoot straight--and shooting straight is more than just pointing a steel barrel and tripping the hammer with the trigger. It is a feeling so strong and satisfying that it must come in the blood from days when men were hunters (*Payoff* 138).

Although World War II writers did not seem obsessed with risk-taking or with understanding the relationship between men and violence the way Hemingway was, their narratives included plenty of armed conflict constructed as manly, virile action.

For some correspondents, Hemingway was, no doubt, their hero. Although resolutely refusing to be involved in politics through the early to mid-thirties (Nahal 121-122), with the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, Hemingway went to Spain to report for NANA. Photojournalist Robert Capa,<sup>88</sup> who met Hemingway while covering the Spanish Civil War, called on "Papa" in the emergency room of a London hospital during World War II; thereafter the nurses nicknamed him "Mr. Capa Hemingway" (Moeller 208).

---

<sup>88</sup> Capa's travels to Spain in 1936 culminated in a collaborative book with photojournalist Gerta Taro, entitled *Death in the Making*.

Like all reporters who thrive on action, Hemingway aggressively quested for experience and wrote about what had happened to him. The book critic, John Chamberlain, praised John Hersey's style as evidence of "the birth of a new Hemingway, one whose single desire is to write 'truly,' basing every word on what the eyes have seen and the ears have heard." Later-day literary scholars, Earl Rovit and Gerry Brenner surmise that "Hemingway could not deny the fundamental joie de vivre of experiencing physical action, of delighting in the increased awareness of life and self that the operation of his five senses so abundantly offered him" (Rovit and Brenner 38). If one is looking for action, there probably is no better place than war. Immensely attuned to the physical world around him, Hemingway offered battlefront scenes in *A Farewell to Arms* of pictorial quality with minute physical detail and accuracy. Reflective of Hemingway's art, the better World War II personal narratives attempted to select just those details that would evoke and control a desired emotional response. As a consequence, there were stylistic resonances of Hemingway in personal narrative prose. Contemporary critics and writers rightly perceived echoes of the author among war journalists whose formative years were affected by his infectious literary realism. Because combat was so concrete and often fatal, its experience had to be recounted in appropriate terms; Hemingway fashioned that aesthetic and bequeathed it to the writers of the next generation.



Hence, two influences came together in the personal narrative: one was Hemingway's rendition of war; the second was the documentary tradition. Like the documentarians of the thirties, personal narrative writers, more frequently than not, took-to-the-road in order to experience events firsthand. Both decade's authors tried to conjure up the indelible smell, taste, and "feel" of things, the one at home, the other on foreign soil. The war era allowed for a new and improved version of the thirties "common man," transforming him into the invincible American hero. In the politics of the Thirties, the documentary exposed poverty and social failures; by contrast, in World War II, the power of documentary was harnessed to the cause of national unity and success. Broadly speaking, however, both periods' writers sought to capture the immense circumstances affecting the lives of ordinary people. Such parallels squarely place wartime narratives in the same family tree as the documentary expression of the Great Depression, which helped to spawn them.

Yet, documentary-style books had not sold well in the Depression, notwithstanding the critical praise some achieved. Publishers in the Forties, therefore, could not bank on the fact that a similar type of documentary about war would be profitable. It was only after the successes of 1942 personal narratives that a great many others rushed in, profitably for over a year--1943 marked the peak--before their popularity went into decline. Against this market

context, publishers may well have acted on patriotic rather than profit motives when issuing the first narratives and been happily surprised by the results.

Then after 1942, editors vigilantly kept watch for prospective manuscripts or targeted specific players to write their war stories. Aggressive advertising budgets and marketing strategies--book fairs, radio interviews with authors, large full-color posters, window displays, huge ads in newspapers and magazines--accompanied the publications of personal narratives, enhancing sales especially in 1943 and early 1944. The war in general spelled big business for book sellers. When, for example, a publisher boosted the idea of sending its books to GIs, it found sales increased noticeably. Even the mere "Buy War Bonds" slogan attached to the dust jackets of a book placed a virtuous face on a firm and had a positive effect on its public image.

When repetition of military maneuvers caused duplication of personal narratives' plots and when severe rationing of newspaper ad-space became a problem in 1944, the popularity of the genre dwindled. Statistics show that of the approximately two-hundred narratives published during the war years, eight out of twenty-five gained best-seller status in 1942, twenty out of sixty in 1943, only five out of seventy in 1944, and four out of forty in 1945 achieved the best-seller list. Publishers seemed well-aware of the trend of decreasing interest by late 1943, and formed their editorial decisions in that light. Increased purchasing power, brought

about by a booming war economy, allowed Americans to buy more of everything. Bennett Cerf reflected that

Publishing during the war was not just a matter of bringing out war books. It was business as usual--in fact, more business than usual. We soon found out that gasoline rationing and military pre-emption of space on trains and planes made travel extremely difficult so that many people even found it impossible to get to the movies very often (and of course, there was no television). So people stayed home and read books and the market expanded tremendously. Book-of-the-Month-Club, for example, more than doubled its membership during the war and *Reader's Digest* doubled its circulation (Cerf 170).

By the middle of the war, publishers already were looking for alternative subject matters, knowing that the market for all products had greatly increased during World War II. Far-sighted companies began cultivating the interest of prospective readers for other subjects when post-war shimmered on the horizon.

During their heyday, however, personal narratives disseminated in-depth, specialized information about the ways men were fighting and the conditions under which they carried out their missions. Other than "informant narratives" written by those who were not present--White, Frank and Horan, and Trumbull to name a few--the majority of personal narrative were authored by witnesses, people who had experienced war, not arm-chair commentators who had communiqués sent to them. In comparison, much of what was gathered in newspapers was second hand, passed along hearsay or released by military censors. Indeed, Robert Sherrod, author of *Tarawa*, positioned himself in opposition to the

daily columnists who remained safely behind the lines and did not accompany troops "into the valley of death." According to Sherrod's accusations, such reports presented a very abstract understanding of war at best and usually a false impression of it filled with wishful thinking and comfort-inspiring yarns. Accordingly, closeness to events counterbalanced the diluted and misleading information retrieved from highly-censored UPI dispatches. A first-hand, first-person, narrative strategy was calculated to accord writers the authority and reliability that are intuitively thought to come from "I-was-there"- or "Only so much do I know, as I have lived"-type reports. In numerous instances, authors had put their lives on the line and by implication, had more at stake, cared more about the men, and could not be accused of hypocrisies. Book reviewers and critics of the era, ostensibly overlooking the very real possibility that correspondents were exploiting an extraordinary, once-in-a-life-time event, emphasized the selfless nature of these authors: the essential goodness of the authors, their consideration for the folks back home, their gallantry, and determination to see things through to a better world. In this way, writers were making their specialized donations to wartime service; and those responsible for the written reproduction of the war became a part of the event almost as much as the sailors, soldiers, and Marines.

The result of their efforts was typically a passionate insider's view of war that allowed audiences vicariously to

experience or imagine what the war was like. Narratives offered Americans a way of comprehending the war in terms that made sense. Bill Mauldin alerted his readers, for example, that if they truly wanted to get a little taste of the war in Italy,

dig a hole in your back yard while it is raining. Sit in the hole until the water climbs up to your ankles. Pour cold mud down your shirt collar. Sit there for forty-eight hours, and, so there is no danger of your dozing off, imagine that a guy is sneaking around waiting for a chance to club you on the head or set your house on fire (Mauldin 144).

In other narratives, colorful commentary like the above was often aided by illustrations, charts, maps, photographs, and lists. Wartime books, therefore, supplied details about the mechanics of action and life at every different kind of war zone. In essence, this body of literature was an integral and important source of knowledge about episodes in recent history to an audience that demanded to gauge the thrust and ramifications of battle.

In addition to contributing to the public's understanding of combat, personal narratives sustained morale, a spirit of whole-hearted cooperation based upon the conviction of being in the right and on the way to success. Yet, the idea that so many writers willingly fostered "morale" disconcerts Paul Fussell, author of *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War*:

Anyone feeling an urge to study seriously the intellectual damage wrought by the war could begin with an analysis of [the definition of morale], its rhetoric, its purpose, and its assumptions about its audience....Those

attentive to the maintenance of home-front morale became skilled at optimistic prose (Wartime 144-6).

Certainly, personal narratives always maintained, even during the bleak, opening stages of the Pacific War, that no matter how bad things appeared for the time being, Americans would persevere and win. Moreover, America had to win because it was on the side of moral right, international social justice, freedom, and decency. "Military might [during World War II] was a symbol of unalloyed good, free of the political ambiguities of Vietnam, Grenada, Lebanon or Panama" according to Adams (3). That the Allies were fighting a "just war" was never in question. Indeed, it would have been wrong not to fight: to appease would have been to surrender to Nazi and Japanese-Imperialist aggressors and to yield to coercion.

Personal narrative authors, while sharing such opinions, ran the gamut of political persuasions from communists to conservatives, from die-hard interventionists to neutral thinkers, from civil-righters to anti-feminists--yet all unitedly sure of America's war mission. Although their particular social agendas and domestic messages may have differed, political disagreements never appeared to mix with action on the battlefield. Fussell maintains in *Thank God for the Atom Bomb and Other Essays*, that during the war there was a dearth of "wit and nuance, moral outrage, irony," in writing "partly because the OWI generation enlisted literature in the cause of Victory...the Allies won the war. But literature lost" (*Thank God* 77). He concludes that the

American zeitgeist needed an injection of more critical self-analysis and skepticism to revive its poor health.

True, World War II, as Roosevelt ideally defined it and these writers monolithically conceived it, was a fight for democracy and liberty against totalitarian foes who treated people as subordinate to the state, disregarded human rights, and reordered national boundaries without consent. Yet, paradoxically, in defending individual freedom and equality, the United States was obliged to adopt methods and strategies at odds with its own values. As *They Were Expendable* made plain, the military deliberately sacrificed the lives of American men for the sake of larger military objectives. More broadly speaking, the vast machine created to wage the war implicated Americans in the service of the nation, while large-scale drafting and regimentation made American boys servants, instruments, or cogs of the state just as much as German youth.

The dilemma of the individual, dwarfed by huge, impersonal mechanisms and forces--an idea quintessentially captured by Chaplin's *Modern Times* and a central subject of the documentary tradition in the Depression era--served equally to shape the wartime personal narrative. In *Many a Watchful Night*, Brown reassured his audience that

it is only the skin of an American that can be encased in a uniform. Our individualism is nowhere more rugged than among those truck-drivers, those young lawyers and doctors, those farm hands and soda jerkers, those schoolteachers or those mechanics, whose temporary duties are designated by identical clothes (*Watchful* 26).

Underlying this defensive posture was the need to ease societal anxiety over the loss of individual identity and maintain that uniformity did not conflict with individuality. Authors of personal narratives practiced one or more of three principal strategies to overcome the dilemma. They: (1) dramatized small-unit action with common and uncommon personal heroism, thereby championing individual agency, as well as stressing that Americans were people who did not wait for fate, but took the initiative, went on the offensive, and seized control over their destiny; (2) emphasized "unity amidst diversity," showing democracy in action through the teamwork of Americans of all ethnicities and races for a mutual goal; and that difference led to stimulating variety, not conflict (3) played up the triumph of organization and industry, attributing it to the ingenuity and willingness of countless individuals acting in concert; most notably in the sagas of the aircraft carrier and submarine, the achievement of independent, yet interdependent individuals was celebrated. The common democratic cause was served best by grouping unique individuals. Despite the reality of involuntary intermingling,<sup>89</sup> personal narratives emerged as an unproblematic reminder of what had been faced in common and are a gesture to advance.

---

<sup>89</sup> The reality of the situation was that although forming a tight-knit crew, World War II soldiers were encountering "differentness" and heterogeneity perhaps for the first time in their lives. Comrades often "had no prewar connection with each other or each other's home towns" (Gray 15); the majority of these fighters represented the discontinuity of each others' lives and rural homogenous upbringings.



The terror and the casualties of World War II were so overwhelming that in order to make matters comprehensible, writers fastened onto the small and the ordinary. Personal narratives' undergirding motto was a quote from French writer Phillippe Berhelot: "When a man dies, I suffer; when a million and a half die, that's statistics." Reducing grand-scale, impersonal events to the perspective of the individual may well have reflected the American ideology of individualism. On the one hand, the feedback of journalists and other bystanders emphasized the common participatory experience and opinionion of various sorts of Americans, and broke down the division between scholarly historian and small-scale interpreter; "instead of being a diversion from history, they point us toward fresh possibilities for doing history" (*JAH* (Sept. 1990): 593). On the other hand, such a narrow-lensed perspective may have distorted as much as it clarifies, especially so in the case of war. J. Glenn Gray decided that no soldier in battle ever can comprehend the whole. And Keegan explains in *The Face of Battle*, that while generals usually possess the overview--the grand plan, according to which multiform military personnel are deployed to interrelated purpose--few participants grasp anything beyond their little area of combat. Furthermore, *The Red Badge of Courage's* protagonist hardly could make sense of his tiny part in the action; nothing computed for the emblematically battle-confused Henry Fleming who found himself to be one desperate cog in an erratically spinning

environment where time inexplicably speeded up and slowed down, "splatters of blood" and the tremendous sounds of "crimson roar" were heard, and corpse-like hues and tangled limbs, pulseless and dead (but alive) were seen. Put more scientifically, "modern war is unreasonable to the person engaged....senses are assaulted by noise, chaos, and shocking images of violence" (Stouffer 2:83). The point is that although Crane never experienced war and most of the World War II authors under discussion did, personal narrative accounts were still somewhat untrustworthy renditions of military campaigns. More significant for the purposes of this study, they revealed an ideological position that asserts the importance of the individual perspective in the telling of history.

It is also quite significant that personal narratives created a composite story about citizen-soldiers, using historical events and related information primarily in terms of individual motives and goals, not in terms of universal ideas of freedom. With no animating civic or philosophical purpose, Americans were depicted as having simply been summoned, collected, then dispatched on a mission. Beginning December 7th, 1941, the so-called "do-or-die" stickball games, bucking bronco rides at Rodeos, and surfing contests on coastal waves were laid aside for the deadly serious struggle of war. It was not a war of self-defense as with England and the Soviet Union (although Hawaii had been bombed, numerous commentators observed that, protected by

two-oceans and the country's seemingly boundless natural resources, Americans were not fighting a total war). Nor was it a war for race and hegemony, as with Germany and Japan. Roosevelt could not even claim with clear conscience that it was a "war to save the world for democracy," as Woodrow Wilson had charged twenty-five years before. Personal narratives, as a consequence, were unable to provide a political basis for deliberate ideological defense of the nation-state.

Robert Westbrook along with John Blum and Michael Waltzer have speculated that the administration's failure to forge a clear sense of the public purposes for which Americans were fighting and sacrificing left a vacuum that would be filled by private motivations. Personal narratives support this claim. Rather than call upon sentiments of civic obligation, they elicited personal identification with the common soldier. Every reader could identify with home, therefore, the love of home was a constant refrain. As Hersey and other correspondents learned, men fought because they wanted "to get the goddamn thing over and get home" (Valley 74). Homesickness, too, appeared among Ernie Pyle's interviewees (but was often stoically concealed). Tom Harmon wrote,

I was thinking about home, and then about America....You needn't explain why you like it and why you can't imagine life without it. It's simple and good and wholesome. It means home, and then it means the ones you love, and the thrill of the football game in the fall with the stadium full and the boys running out on the field and the bright colors in the

bleachers, and it means taking your sweetheart to the Junior Prom all dressed up and looking so pretty you are prouder of the winter, and standing in front of the library and chewing the fate with the boys--and you say Apple Pie (Harmon 103).

Readers might also have come to resent the Japanese and the Germans for keeping Americans, just like themselves, away from home. Hating the enemy for what they did to Americans, readers subsequently sympathized with servicemen. In circuitous fashion, civilians identified with the larger national effort by caring for the individuals involved.

In general, narratives exploited private obligations to family, to pals, to sons, and "to an 'American Way of Life'...that formed a crucial element in the campaign to mobilize Americans for World War II" (Westbrook 591). Without such direct address to private interest, wartime mobilization would, to follow Westbrook's argument, have been a failure. Since "few private obligations were more apparent in pronouncements about 'why we fight' than those binding men and women," (591) Westbrook's fine essay, "I Want a Girl, Just Like the Girl that Married Harry James: American Women and the Problem of Political Obligation in World War II," argues that pin-up posters were a crucial instrument by which a liberal society mobilized its male soldiers' energies for war. Personal narratives, on the other hand, were intended to function equivalently on the home front to solidify civilians' resolve. These publications increased the home front's understanding of why the war was fought--personal reasons--and why the good guys must win--very simply because

America will not be the same place and life will change for the worse if imperialistic, totalitarian, genocidal governments rule.

Thus, personal narratives also stressed the importance of national unity in a multi-ethnic nation, wherein the infantry platoon became a melting pot and diversity was a unique power source, which, among all the warring nations, only America was capable of tapping. Service in the armed forces was rendered as a common experience among a wide range of previously isolated segments of society, which fostered belongingness and a shared tradition. In World War I, Italian-American troops were often led by an Italian speaking leader; conversely, World War II stimulated a push toward intergroup relations. Although pictures of an "all-American type" were infrequently promulgated, Joes and Willies, Poles and Swedes, Japanese-Americans and German-Americans visibly comprised the American Army. What made them "Americans all" was their universal commitment to a long-standing value system. This American creed showed reverence for democracy, love of freedom, desire for equality, and respect for individual dignity. World War II shaped the self-understanding of Americans, not only with respect to the nation's role on the stage of world affairs, but also in regard to what we might call a national persona. Personal narratives functioned the way "Literature in an open democratic society must" according to Rovit and Brenner, "as a potential instrument for the creation of identity and

culture definition" (105). Despite ethnic and class difference, the foundations for this common national identity were an upholding of the aforesaid basic tenets.

Throughout the narratives, the average American soldier was also the idealized soldier. He had both a soft edge and a hard edge that helped him rise to the awesome challenges of war as he or his father had surmounted the harsh challenges of the Great Depression. At the outset of fighting, the American soldier was cheerful, innocent, and plucky--sort of a combination between the wise-cracking, devil-may-care James Cagney<sup>90</sup> and the powerful, upstanding, and wholesome cartoon Superman. As things dragged on, he liked to grouse about inconveniences and was impatient with fuss-and-feathers especially when it was linked to incompetence. In Mauldin's estimation, a "doggy" was a no-nonsense, tough-as-nails fellow. How else could one explain that despite setbacks and inexperience, against stiff opposition, and without direct threat to his homeland, this American summoned the strength to prevail on the battlefield?

American soldiers, however, were no war mongers. Not men who could ever truly relish a lifetime of combat. In

---

<sup>90</sup> Thirties movie stars, like James Cagney, whose brash and pugnacious persona was dramatically illustrated in the Warner Bros. films, *Here Comes the Navy* (1934), a fictional account of a tough little red-headed Irishman from Brooklyn serving on the *U.S.S. Arizona* (the very ship later doomed at Pearl Harbor), and a flying Marines adventure *Devil Dogs of the Air* (1935), appealed to and perhaps conditioned young boys who would later be called upon to exhibit some of Cagney's fighting spirit in real battles. Indeed, many of that generation "tended to see the war as a movie" (Moeller 74).

Wolfert's *Battle for the Solomons*, men dropped crying in the heat of battle, pressing the trigger and whimpering in unison. Due to ingrained democratic inclinations, they disliked stringent military life and wanted to complete the assignment as quickly as possible. Alternatively stated, there may have been "pride in doing a job well, but the soldier made no claims to it being a particularly noble occupation" (Linderman 52). In *The World Within War*, Gerald Linderman, moreover, found that the word "job," "rather than the killing of human beings and the destruction of buildings and bunkers, provided the framework within which [combat soldiers] contemplated their actions" (Ibid 52). To use a Kipling phrase, the typical serviceman, due to an innate salty practicality, set his focus on "the instant need of things." Again, a contemporary book-reviewer said it differently:

He is the Colonial woodsman who, marching with Braddock into the wilderness, shook his head over parade-ground tactics, knew darned well that was no way to beat Injuns. He is also today's soldier on Attu who, answering a query about Japanese fighting abilities, said with a slow thoughtfulness: "They are tough cookies every way you take them--but we can take them (Taylor, *NY Times* review of *The Fighting American*).

According to Taylor, a determined fighting spirit was inherently American.

The human interest narratives clearly presented native models of courage, selflessness, resourcefulness, and fortitude--essentials for personal survival and Allied victory. As the nation drafted hundreds of thousands of run-

of-the-mill guys, the home front would take heart in such stories of withered castaways' stamina and ultimate indomitability. Draftees, doing their part, performed Herculean feats and performed them with dignity. (Hemingway, too, attempted to retain the ideal of male dignity, while the majority of fiction writers of the Twentieth Century produced modern heroes who were grotesques, rebels, victims, or underground/invisible men.) Taken together, the images of Americans in the jungle of the Solomons, on the sandy desert of North Africa, on the ice tundra of the Aleutians, on the craggy mountains of Italy, in the hedgerows of France, on the globe's water and in the earth's atmosphere, created the appearance that there were "giants in the earth" at that time--quite an inspiring mural for people back in the States to absorb. Using down-to-earth language, authors basically paraphrased Winston Churchill's declaration, "if the country were to last a thousand years, these would have been its finest sons." Among other things, the narratives remain a repository of a heroic generation's memories and legends of a special breed of American who lived and died on faraway shores.

In the process of lionizing the American "character" and American values, personal narratives mythologized the war. The histrionics went as follows: the war was an all encompassing, all-devouring, part of an overriding fate that rescued anonymous millions of young men from prosaic life to one of poetic proportions; it gave them an opportunity to



play starring roles in a monstrous struggle of mythical proportions after the long-lingering morass of the Great Depression; yet within this metaphoric conflict of good versus evil, the country suffered and endured untold agonies. "Like any enduring myth, it rests on a solid core of credible argument," says James Robertson:

All of us are aware of our myths. They are part of the world we live in. But when we study our history, when we try consciously and rationally to understand ourselves and our past, we tend to discount myths. We think of them as fictions, "only stories," "made-up" things which have nothing to do with reasonable understanding. We contrast myth and reality, the one is mistaken, unreal, false, a lie; the other is objective, understandable, real, the truth. But the "truth" about a people, the "truth" about America and Americans, resides both in American myths and in American realities (Robertson xv).

Hence, in order to understand the World War II generation, one must understand its myths--the nonrational composition of experience upon which a society depends for its motivations, beliefs, and ideals--embodied in the era's personal narratives. During World War II, the literature of Americans at war was an affirmation of what was possible, whereas the Vietnamese and Korean war exposed American limitations.

These cultural artifacts are not, however, to be relied upon by the military historian or the historian of servicemen's emotions and attitudes because, for the most part, they were composed in the Platonic cave-like setting of battle as well as under the shroud of a morale-building mind-set. A selective process of storytelling was well underway

when war erupted. In the interest of military security and protection of civilian morale, certain things were left unsaid. Controversial realities about life at the front were omitted: The cause was not marred by racial tension; it remained a splendid community effort; and among other sex-related issues, venereal disease was "subjecta" *non grata*. As Roeder claims, "By failing generally to produce [complete] pictures of themselves, Americans cut themselves off from the fullest understanding of their own humanity as well as of the war's impact" (Roeder 125). A small number of World War II narratives even glorified suspense. Only by implication was the war a means of personal and national regeneration. That is, if fought with total commitment, it was an instrument of progress, unity, efficiency, security, victory, and ultimately the fulfillment of America's democratizing destiny on the world stage. Overall, narratives played up heroism at the expense of confronting the specter of cowardice. Not one airman shrank from or shirked the Doolittle Raid, for instance. Only twenty-eight out of several thousand failed to show up at the sailing for Tarawa and why more than 3,000 laid down their lives on that God-forsaken atoll in the Pacific. Adams considered one of "the cruelest myths about combat stress," that "Cowards break down and heroes don't" (Adams 95) or as Patton simply said, "Heroes overcome their fear."<sup>91</sup> As with all history in the making, there was an

---

<sup>91</sup> Though mental breakdown was not part of narratives' versions of reality, the actual breakdown rate for men in

insufficiency to the stories rendered in personal narratives, which post-war scholars continue to flesh out with the luxury of research and hind-sight, along with the applied knowledge yielded from an up-dated set of ideologies.

What Fussell said of "the whole fictive world projected by Public Relations," however, was not perfectly true of personal narratives:

The multitudinous military blunders obviously could not be mentioned, and other interesting things could not enter the scene considered real by the public because they were so deeply secret....what was projected to the contemporary audience almost had to be fictional, an image of pseudo-war and pseudo-human-behavior not too distant from the familiar world of magazine advertising and improving popular fiction (*Wartime* 163-4).

It is easy to lump all of the culture's productions and government's propaganda together and accuse them of being irresponsibly uncritical. Still, the complaints of Fussell, Steinbeck in *Once Upon a War*, and Philip Knightley in *The First Casualty*, that World War II was "half-reported," were not borne out in personal narratives. Military authorities did not strong-arm, cajole, or brow-beat correspondents into painting a favorable mask on a "monster of so frightful mien." Male correspondents were allowed unfettered access and latitude to go where they wanted and write what they wanted, minus, of course, facts that would give strategic advantage to the enemy. Numerous narratives, accordingly, recorded destruction and spelled out Marine, carrier, PT

---

action for twenty-eight days consistently ran up to ninety percent (Adams 7).

boat, troop, and amphibious-landing disasters. Unsparing detail of "blood and gore" filled the pages of Hersey's *Into the Valley*, Sherrod's *Tarawa*, Chaplin's *Fifty-Two Days*, and dozens of others. Furthermore, the most popular correspondent, Ernie Pyle, described perhaps the most closely-followed and auspicious episode of the Allied war, the D-Day invasion, as a surreal, chaotic, living hell: a mile's worth of coast littered with shattered boats, thighs, tanks, buttocks, rations, hands, packs, and heads (*Brave Men* 366-7). Pyle had no reluctance to tell the unfettered truth, nor any hesitation to challenge censors' authority. Rather, he understood intellectually how inadequate and limiting a tool were words on a page to communicate what was in many senses incommunicable. "I've spent two and a half years carrying the torch for the foot-soldier...but haven't made [Americans] feel what he goes through. I believe it's impossible," Pyle wrote in a letter to Eisenhower, dated February 27, 1945.

John Mason Brown's work, though more abstract and pedantic than Pyle's, nonetheless tried to articulate the unconveyable scars that war inflicted on its victims:

Among war's horrors is the brutal fact that its horrors cannot be imagined. They must be seen, felt, experienced, and survived to be known or believed. Even then they resist full communication. The most gruesome photographs only seem to tell everything. They would tell more if they recorded sounds, human no less than mechanical. And tell still more if the camera, which can reach into the interior of battered buildings, could extend its reach to the inner, unspeaking consciousness of the

children, women, and men war bruises at the moment of their agony (*Watchful* 155).

In conclusion, virtually every personal narrative writer made an effort to expose the ugliness of battle.

"The patriotism evident during World War II," may have been what "shielded Americans from the horrors of war even when those horrors were published for all to see," wrote Moeller. When Vietnam photojournalists, for example, exposed the dead and maimed with candor, these images called into question the morality of the war; conversely, during World War II, "the presumption of patriotism sweetened the bile even of any potentially antipathetic images of dead Americans. American soldiers remained heroes in death" (Moeller 227). Brutal delineations of World War II did not on the whole discourage morale; they worked the opposite effect, galvanizing Americans' determination to fight back.

Failures and triumphs, hardship and happiness, gruesomeness and beauty, pettiness and highmindedness were all features of the war<sup>92</sup> registered in personal narratives that covered nearly every unit in major battles and minor skirmishes, at every theater of operation, during every month Americans fought. As Max Miller poetically put it:

Each vessel had her own narrative, and each island, each plane, and for that matter, each tractor....There are...hundreds of little things, fillers as it were, which also cling to us...certainly no news stories can be

---

<sup>92</sup> As one soldier in Studs Terkel's *The Good War* recalled, "In a short period of time, I had the most tremendous experience of [my] life: of fear, of jubilation, of misery, of hope, of comradeship, of endless excitement."

written about them....A million different men....

[T]he story...can never be told--at least not fully. For, like trying to tell the story of the earth, the narrative forever must remain unfinished, tangents leading from tangents, and with no pattern which can be called absolutely complete. The reverberations....continue back home, and will continue to continue during all our time  
(*Tomorrow* 20)

The plots and themes of personal narratives, dictated by the bountiful twists and turns of war, differed, as did writers' opinions on the nature of diverse war episodes. The creators of personal narratives did not all communicate the same interests and messages.

Over time, the war was de-individualized, abstracted, condensed, and converted (until recent historical revisions) "into a peak in the life of the society." So that while wartime narratives are implicated in the ongoing reconsideration of the war, due to their influence on public perception and collective memory, they are not to blame if the insensate violence and agony of war were left on the battlefield so-to-speak and subsequently forgotten. They did not present the war as one simple shining legend. If that was their effect, perhaps it was due to the pride civilians held in their soldiers and to the protection they enjoyed at home. As history proved, "living apart from the rest of suffering humanity, Americans were vouchsafed an ignorance of war's reality that allowed them to cherish an innocent belief in the clean and bracing atmosphere of battle" (Adams 73). Studs Terkel, too, finds it significant enough to remind in

his introduction to *The Good War*, that America was the only country among combatants that was neither invaded nor bombed; "Our Willie and Joe were up front; the rest of us were safe, [shielded] by the two big oceans" (Terkel 14).

Reading personal narratives, then (and now), enabled Americans to empathize with and feel pride in their superlative soldiers, all of whom, according to these renditions of history, deserved praise and admiration. The Seabee and Merchant Marine chroniclers addressed the issue of proper recognition head-on: considering the indispensable contributions this group made on behalf of the war effort, it perceived itself as underappreciated compared to other branches of the service. World War II personal narratives compensated for any lack of acknowledgment by celebrating both individual acts of heroism and the conglomerate achievements of all United States' enlisted men engaged in a mutually dependent deadly enterprise. Every single narrative was a testimonial to the importance of both the division and the individual soldier's existence and sacrifice, though some stressed one theme over the other. In his role as war correspondent, Pyle pointedly asked that readers "know and appreciate and be forever grateful to those both dead and alive who fought for" them. In what could properly be called Pyle's *envoi*, he wrote,

The end of the war will be gigantic relief, but it cannot be a matter of hilarity for most of us. Somehow it would seem sacrilegious to sing and dance when the great day comes--there are so many who can never sing and dance again....I hope that in victory we are more

grateful than we are proud. I hope we can rejoice in victory--but humbly. The dead men would not want us to gloat (Last 464-5).

It could be argued that the genre enacted the wartime version of the Agee and Walker sentiment, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. Perhaps writers, indeed, felt a certain compulsion to tell stories of those who were unable to speak for themselves, particularly the ones who died in service to the nation. In search of a means to pay homage to these men--so that they received a hero's welcome and the veteran benefits they deserved upon return, or that decades hence, they will have been commended in history books--the personal narrative evolved.

As one former Marine correspondent, returning years later to the island on which so many of his buddies had fallen said,

[in] the Tinian of the Marines laid out in rows, of the flares at night, of the flame-trees shedding their flowers over the youth for whom time and space had ended, did not exist. That Tinian must have been an illusion; if not, pre-history. There was no connection (Levin 129-130).

What is left of those days and nights receding on Tinian, like Fitzgerald's green light?:

Where the division cemetery must have been...there was nothing....The ground was clean. Our three thousand were dug up and shipped back long ago....It is good to bring the bodies of those you loved for home burial. But it means that these faraway islands, where their blood ran out, remain forever far away (Levin 126-7).

Today, the raging battles live only as ghosts of a dim yesterday as do the men who fought them. Levin wondered,



"How can they become part of the heart of America" again? One possibility would be for Americans to revisit enduring originals like *Can Do!*, *They Called It "Purple Heart Valley,"* *The Battle Is the Payoff*, and *Mission Beyond Darkness*, among others. These books expressed with clarity and force the experiences of one part of the population to the other part; they made and still can make the World War II combat experience understandable, thus serving the good of both wartime and peacetime.

## APPENDIX

1942:

Beattie, E. W. *Freely to Pass* (Dec.)  
 Brown, C. *Suez to Singapore* (Nov.)  
 Caldwell, E. *All-Out on the Road to Smolensk* (Apr.)  
 Carroll, W. *We're in This with Russia* (Nov.)  
 Clark, T. B. *Remember Pearl Harbor!* (May)  
 Denny, H. H. *Behind Both Lines* (Dec.)  
 Dickinson C. E. and Sparkes, B. *Flying Guns* (Dec.)  
 Gervasi F. *War Has Seven Faces* (June)  
 Hasey, J. F. *Yankee Fighter* (Sept.)  
 Hill, M. *Excchange Ship* (Feb.)  
 Hill, R. *Desert War* (Sept.)  
 Ingersoll, R. M. *Action on All Fronts* (Apr.)  
 Kennerly, B. *Eagles Roar!*  
 Mackay, H. G. E. *With Love for France* (Sept.)  
 Marsman, J. H. *I Escaped from Hong Kong* (Sept.)  
 Michie, A. A. *Retreat to Victory* (Sept.)  
 Reynolds, Q. J. *Convoy* (Mar.)  
 Reyonlds, Q. J. *Only the Stars Are Neutral* (Aug.)  
 Russell, W. *Berlin Embassy* (Aug.)  
 St. John, R. *From the Land of Silent People* (Mar.)  
 Trumbull, R. *The Raft* (Sept.)  
 White, M. B. *Shooting the Russian War* (Sept.)  
 White, W. L. *They Were Expendable* (Oct.)  
 Winston, R. A. *Aces Wild* (Apr.)

1943:

Bartek, J. F. *Life Out There* (Aug.)  
 Bayler, W. L. J. *Last Man off Wake Island* (June)  
 Belden, J. *Retreat with Sitwell* (Apr.)  
 Bennett, L. *Assignment to Nowhere* (Sept.)  
 Brock, R. *Nor Any Victory* (Jan.)  
 Brown, J. E. *Russian Fights* (Sept.)  
 Brown, J. M. *To All Hands* (Dec.)  
 Carse, R. *There Go the Ships* (Jan.)  
 Cassidy, H. C. *Moscow Dateline, 1941-1943* (Aug.)  
 Childer, J. S. *War Eagle*  
 Clausen, W. B. *Blood for the Emporer* (Oct.)  
 Coffin, M. M. *Malta Story* (Sept.)  
 Crawford, K. G. *Report on North Africa* (Nov.)  
 Dashiell, S. *Victory Through Africa* (Sept.)  
 Dew, G. *Prisoner of the Japs* (Aug.)  
 Gallagher, W. *Back Door to Berlin* (Oct.)

Geer, A. *Mercy in Hell* (Sept.)  
 Gervasi, F. *But Soldiers Wondered Why* (Aug.)  
 Gibbs, A. *U-Boat Prisoner* (Sept.)  
 Greenlaw, O. S. *Land and the Tigers* (Oct.)  
 Handleman, H. *Bridge to Victory* (Dec.)  
 Haugland, V. *Letter from New Guinea* (Aug.)  
 Herman, F. S. *Dynamite Cargo* (May)  
 Hersey, J. R. *Into the Valley* (Mar.)  
 Hill, R. *Desert Conquest* (Dec.)  
 Horan, J. D. and Frank, G., eds. *Out in the Boondocks* (Oct.)  
 Ingersoll, R. M. *Battle is the Pay-off* (Nov.)  
 Kahn, E. J. *G.I. Jungle* (Oct.)  
 Lardner, J. *Southwest Passage* (Apr.)  
 Lawson, T. W. *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo* (Sept.)  
 Lee, C. *They Call it Pacific* (May)  
 Lesueur, L. E. *Twelve Months That Changed the World* (Sept.)  
 Mitchell, R. *Serbs Choose War* (Nov.)  
 Moats, A.-L. *Blind Date with Mars* (Mar.)  
 Moore, T. *Sky is My Witness* (Oct.)  
 Morrill, J. H. and Martin, W. T. *South from Corregidor* (May)  
 Murphey, M. *83 Days* (Oct.)  
 Pyle, E. T. *Here Is Your War* (Nov.)  
 Raleigh, J. M. *Pacific Blackout* (May)  
 Redding, J. M. and Leyshon, H. I. *Skyways to Berlin* (Oct.)  
 Redmond, J. *I Served on Bataan* (Apr.)  
 Reynolds, Q. J. *Dress Rehearsal* (Apr.)  
 Rickenbacker, E. V. *Seven Came Through* (Apr.)  
 Scott, R. L. *God is My Co-Pilot* (Sept.)  
 Sheean, V. *Between the Thunder and the Sun* (Apr.)  
 Shiber, E. *Paris-Underground* (Oct.)  
 Taylor, H. J. *Men in Motion* (Aug.)  
 Thomas, E. W. *Ambulance in Africa* (Nov.)  
 Tregaskis, R. W. *Guadalcanal Diary* (Mar.)  
 Weller, G. A. *Singapore is Silent* (May)  
 Wheeler, K. *Pacific is My Beat* (Dec.)  
 White, W. L. *Queens Die Proudly* (Aug.)  
 Whittaker, J. C. *We Thought We Heard the Angels Sing* (May)  
 Willoughby, A. *I Was on Corregidor* (Aug.)  
 Wise, J. W. ed. *Very Truly Ours* (Dec.)  
 Wordell, M. and Seller, E. *Wildcats Over Casablanca* (Sept.)  
 Zanuck, D. F. *Tunis Expedition* (May)

#### 1944:

Archer, L. *Balkan Journal* (May)  
 Batcheller, T. B. *France in Sunshine and Shadow* (Nov.)  
 Belden, J. *Still Time to Die* (Oct.)  
 Berry, R. B. *Gunners Get Glory* (Jan.)  
 Biddle, G. *Artist at War* (Sept.)  
 Brink, E. C. *And God Was There* (Aug.)  
 Brown, J. E. *Your Kids and Mine* (Dec.)  
 Brown, J. M. *Many a Watchful Night* (Dec.)

Burns, E. *Then There Was One* (June)  
 Busch, N. F. *My Unconsidered Judgment* (Sept.)  
 Chaplin, W. W. *Seventy Thousand Miles of War* (Jan.)  
 Crawford, W. *Gore and Glory* (Sept.)  
 Curtiss, M. S. K. ed. *Letters Home* (Aug.)  
 Custer, J. J. *Though the Perilous Night* (Sept.)  
 Davis, H. *This Is It!* (May)  
 Donahue, A. G. *Last Flight from Singapore* (Feb.)  
 Dyess, W. E. *Dyess Story* (May)  
 Forgy, H. M. *And Pass the Ammunition* (Aug.)  
 Foss, J. *Joe Foss, Flying Marine* (Jan.)  
 Gentile, D. S. *One-Man Air Force* (Sept.)  
 Geren, P. *Burma Diary* (Apr.)  
 Goodell, J. *They Sent Me to Iceland* (Jan.)  
 Graham, G. *Bonzai Noel!* (May)  
 Gunnison, R. A. *So Sorry, No Peace* (Nov.)  
 Gunther, J. *D Day* (Apr.)  
 Harmon, T. D. *Pilots Also Pray* (Dec.)  
 Haskell, R. G. *Helmets and Lipstick* (May)  
 Hope, B. *I Never Left Home* (Sept.)  
 Huie, W. B. *Can Do!* (Oct.)  
 Ind, A. *Bataan, the Judgment Seat* (May)  
 Jenkins, B. A. *Father Meany and the Fighting 69th* (Oct.)  
 Kelly, C. E. *One Man's War* (Oct.)  
 Liebling, A. J. *Road Back to Paris* (Mar.)  
 Lucas, J. G. *Combat Correspondent* (Oct.)  
 McCracken, K. D. *Baby Flat-Top* (Sept.)  
 McCrary, J, and Scherman D. *First of the Many*  
 MacKenzie, C. *Sailors of Fortune* (Aug.)  
 MacVane, J. *Journey into War* (Jan.)  
 Madden, P. *Survivor* (Dec.)  
 Maguire, W. A. *Captain Wears a Cross* (Jan.)  
 Maisel, A. Q. *Wounded Get Back* (June)  
 Maule, H. E. *Book of War Letters* (Jan.)  
 Mead, J. M. *Tell the Folks Back Home* (June)  
 Mears, F. *Carrier Combat* (Mar.)  
 Miller, M. *Daybreak for Our Carrier* (Aug.)  
 Norton-Taylor, D. *With My Heart in My Mouth* (Aug.)  
 O'Reilly, T. *Purser's Progress* (Aug.)  
 Pyle E. T. *Brave Men* (Dec.)  
 Raff, E. D. *We Jumped to Fight* (Sept.)  
 Reynolds, Q. J. *Curtain Rises* (Apr.)  
 Robinson, D. *News of the 45th* (Aug.)  
 Rooney, A. *Air Gunner*  
 Shmid, A. A. *Al Shmid, Marine* (Apr.)  
 Scott, R. L. *Damned to Glory* (Nov.)  
 Sherrod, R. *Tarawa* (Apr.)  
 Skattebol, L. *Last Voyage of the Quien Sabe* (Oct.)  
 Smith, D. M. and Carnes, C. *American Guerrilla Fighting  
 Behind the Lines* (May)  
 Snow, E. *People on Our Side* (Oct.)  
 Spellman, F. J. *Action This Day* (Jan.)  
 Stern, M. *Into the Jaws of Death* (June)  
 Stowe, L. *They Shall Not Sleep* (Mar.)

Taggert, W. C. and Cross, C. *My Fighting Congregation* (Jan.)  
 Thomas, R. T. *Born in Battle* (Sept.)  
 Tobin, R. L. *Invasion Journal* (Nov.)  
 Treanor, T. C. *One Damn Thing after Another* (Sept.)  
 Tregaskis, R. W. *Invasion Diary* (Oct.)  
 Vail, M. *Yours Is the Earth* (June)  
 Vetter, E. G. *Death Was Our Escort* (Dec.)  
 Westrate, E. V. *Forward Observer* (May)  
 White, L. *Long Balkan Night* (Apr.)  
 Wynn, E. J. *Bombers Across* (Sept.)

1945:

Abercrombie, L. A. *My Life to the Destroyers* (Mar.)  
 Archard, T. G. *I. Nightingale* (June)  
 Beecher, J. *All Brave Sailors* (Oct.)  
 Bernstein, W. S. *Keep Our Head Down* (June)  
 Bourke-White, M. *They Called It "Purple Heart Valley"* (Jan.)  
 Brines, R. *Until They Eat Stone* (Feb.)  
 Casey, R. J. *This Is Where I Came In* (Sept.)  
 Chaplin, W. W. *Fifty-Two Days* (Jan.)  
 Clare, T. H. *Lookin' Eastward* (June)  
 Davis, H. *Half Past When* (Jan.)  
 Frank, G. and Horan, J. D. *U.S.S. Seawolf* (Oct.)  
 Friedman, E. and Taylor S. *Fighters Up: The Story of  
 American Fighter Pilots in the Battle of Europe*  
 Genovese, J. G. *We Flew without Guns* (Sept.)  
 Groth, J. *Studio: Europe* (Dec.)  
 Horan, J. D. *Action Tonight* (Sept.)  
 Howard, F. and J. *Whistle while You Wait* (May)  
 Huot, L. *Guns for Tito* (Apr.)  
 Ingham T. *Rendezvous by Submarine* (Nov.)  
 Kaitenborn, H. L. *Europe Now* (May)  
 Klitgaard, K. *Oil and Deep Water* (Nov.)  
 Miller, M. *Far Shore* (May)  
 Miller, N. M. *I Took the Sky Road* (Oct.)  
 Milne, C. *I Dream of the Day* (Oct.)  
 Moats, A. L. *No Passport for Paris* (Aug.)  
 Monks, J. *A Ribbon and a Star* (Jan. '46)  
 Parsons, R. P. *Mob 3* (Apr.)  
 Prosser, D. G. *Journey Underground* (Dec.)  
 St. George, T. R. *Proceed without Delay* (Sept.)  
 Schacht, A. *GI Had Fun* (Oct.)  
 Scrivener, J. *Inside Rome with the Germans* (Oct.)  
 Sharon, H. B. *It's Good To Be Alive* (May)  
 Spellman, F. J. *No Greater Love* (Sept.)  
 Spencer, L. R. *Guerrilla Wife* (Oct.)  
 Stone, E. C. and Melick, W. *Coming, Major!* (Jan.)  
 Tower, H. H. *Fighting the Devil with the Marines* (Nov.)  
 Tweed, G. R. *Robinson Crusoe, USN* (May)  
 Warfield, H. and G. *Call Us to Witness* (Sept.)  
 Wheeler, K. *We Are the Wounded* (Jan. '46)

West, L. *Flight to Everywhere* (Feb.)  
Willard, W. W. *Leathernecks Come Through* (Jan.)  
Wolfert, I. *American Guerrilla in the Phillipines* (May)

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abercrombie, L. A. My Life to the Destroyers. New York: H. Holt & Company, 1945.
- Adams, Michael. The Best War Ever. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U. Press, 1994.
- Agee, James and Walker Evans. Let Us Now Praise Famous Men. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1939.
- Anderson, Sherwood. Puzzled America. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935.
- Archard, Theresa. G.I. Nightingale: The Story of an American Army Nurse. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1945.
- Ayling, Keith. Old Leathernecks of the Flying Tigers: The Story of General Chennault. New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1945.
- Baker, Carlos. Ernest Hemingway: A Critique of Four Major Novels. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1962.
- Barsam, Richard. Non-Fictional Films: A Critical History. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1973.
- Bartek, John. Life Out There. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943.
- Bean, Donald P. "The War and Williamsburg." PW (Aug. 22, 1942): 549-550.
- Beecher, John. All Brave Sailors. New York: L.B. Fischer, 1945.
- Benet, Stephen Vincent (Ed.). Zero Hour: A Summons to the Free. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1940.
- Blackford, Mansel (Ed.). On Board the U.S.S. Mason: The World War II Diary of James A. Dunn. Columbus: Ohio State U. Press, 1996.

- Boughman, James. The Republic of Mass Culture: Journalism, Filmmaking, and Broadcasting in America Since 1941. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U. Press, 1992.
- Bourke-White, Margaret. Portrait of Myself. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963.
- Bourke-White, M. Shooting the Russian War. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1942.
- Bourke-White, M. They Call It Purple Heart Valley. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1944.
- Bredhoff, Stacy. Powers of Persuasion: Poster Art from WWII. Washington DC: National Archives, 1994.
- Brewer, William. Devil Boats: The P.T. War Against Japan. Novato, CA: Presideo Press, 1987.
- Brink, E. C. And God Was There. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1944.
- Brown, John Mason. Many a Watchful Night. New York: Whittlessey House, 1944.
- Brown, John Mason. To All Hands. New York: Whittlesey House, 1943.
- Broyles, William. "Why Men Love War." Esquire (Nov. 1984): 55-65.
- Bryan III, J. and Phillip Reed. Mission Beyond Darkness. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1945.
- Bunker, John. Heroes in Dungarees: The Story of the American Merchant Marine in WW II. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1995.
- Burnes, Eugene. Then There Was One. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1944.
- Caldwell, Erskine. All Out on the Road to Smolensk. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1942.
- Caldwell and Bourke-White. You Have Seen Their Faces. New York: Viking, 1937.
- Cameron, Craig. American Samurai: Myth, Imagination, and the Conduct of Battle in the First Marine Division. Cambridge, England: Cambridge U. Press, 1994.



- Carroll, Gordon. History in the Writing. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1945.
- Carse, Robert. There Go the Ships. New York: W. Morrow, 1942.
- Cave, Hugh. Long Were the Nights: The Saga of Squadron "X" in the Solomons. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1943.
- Cave, Hugh. We Build, We Fight. New York: Harper, 1943.
- Cerf, Bennett. At Random: The Reminiscences of Bennett Cerf. New York: Random House, 1977.
- Chafe, William. Paradox of Change: American Women in the Twentieth Century. New York: Oxford U. Press, 1991.
- Chaplin, W.W. The Fifty-Two Days: An NBC Reporter's Story of the Battle that Freed France. New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1944.
- Clark, T.B. Remember Pearl Harbor. New York: Modern Age Books, 1942.
- Coffman, Edward. M. The War to End All Wars: American Military Experience in World War I. New York: Oxford U. Press, 1968.
- Cole, John, (Ed.). Books in Action: The Armed Services Editions. Washington DC: Library of Congress, 1984.
- Cooke and Woollacott (Ed.). Gendering War Talk. Princeton, NJ: Princeton U. Press, 1993.
- Cooper, Helen, Adrienne Munich, and Susan Squier (Eds.). Arms and the Woman: War, Gender and Literary Representation. Chapel Hill: U. of North Carolina Press, 1989.
- Costello, John. The Pacific War. New York: Rawson, Wade, 1981.
- Crane, Stephen. The Red Badge of Courage. (Norton Critical Edition). New York: W.W. Norton, 1976.
- Dew, Gwen. Prisoner of the Japs. New York: A.A. Knopf, 1943.
- Dickstein, Morris. "War!" Partisan Review 57.4 (1990): 608-615.

- Dollard, John. Fear in Battle. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977.
- Dos Passos. Tour of Duty. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1946.
- Dower, John. War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War. New York: Pantheon, 1986.
- Elshtain, Jean Bethke. Just War Theories. New York: New York University Press, 1992.
- Elshtain, Jean Bethke. Women and War. New York: Basic Books, 1987.
- Emery, Edwin. The Press and America: An Interpretive History of the Mass Media (5th Edition). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1984.
- Erenberg, Lewis and Susan Hirsch. The War in American Culture: Society and Consciousness During World War II. Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Fahs, Alice. "Publishing the Civil War: The Literary Marketplace and the Meanings of the Civil War in the North, 1861-1865." (NYU Dissertation) 1993.
- Fink, Gary (Ed.). Labor Unions. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977.
- Fisher, Perry and Brooks E. Gray. Blacks and Whites Together Through Hell: U.S. Marines in World War II. Turlock, CA: Millsmont Publishing, 1994.
- Ford, Corey. Short Cut to Tokyo. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943.
- Forgy, Howell M. (edited by Jack McDowell). And Pass the Ammunition. New York: Appleton-Century, 1944.
- Frank, Gerold and James Horan. Out in the Boondocks: Marines in Action in the Pacific. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1943.
- Frank, Gerold and James Horan. U.S.S. Seawolf, Submarine Raider of the Pacific. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1945.
- Frank, Richard. Guadalcanal. New York: Penguin, 1990.
- French, Warren. John Steinbeck's Nonfiction Revisited. New York: Twayne Publishing, 1996.

- Fussell, Paul. The Great War and Modern Memory. New York: Oxford U. Press, 1975.
- Fussell, Paul. Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War. New York: Oxford U. Press, 1989.
- Fussell, Paul (Ed.). Thank God for the Atom Bomb and Other Essays. New York: Summit Books, 1988.
- Gatty, Harold. The Raft Book. New York: Grady Press, 1940.
- Gedrim, Ronald (Ed.). Edward Steichen. New York: G.K. Hall and Co., 1996.
- Gentile, Don S. (Edited by Ralph Ingersoll). One-Man Air Force. New York: L.B. Fischer, 1944.
- Gervasi, Frank. But Soldiers Wondered Why. New York: Doubleday, 1943.
- Gibbs, Archie. U-Boat Prisoner. Boston: Houghton Mufflin, 1943.
- Gillmore, Margalo and Patricia Collinge. The B.O.W.S. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1945.
- Gleason, Phillip. "Americans All: World War II and the Shaping of American Identity." Review of Politics 43.4 (1981): 483-518.
- Graebner, William. The Age of Doubt: American Thought and Culture in the 1940s. Boston: Twayne Publishing, 1991.
- Gray, J. Glenn. The Warriors: Reflections on Men in Battle. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1959.
- Greene, Joseph, I. (Ed.). The Infantry Journal Reader. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran, 1943.
- Greenlaw, Olga. The Lady and the Tigers. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1943.
- Handleman, Howard. Bridge to Victory: The Story of the Reconquest of the Aleutians. New York: Random House, 1943.
- Hargrove, Marion. See Here, Private Hargrove. New York: H. Holt & Company, 1942.
- Harmon, Tom. Pilots Also Pray. New York: Crowell, 1944.

- Haskel, Ruth. Helmut and Lipstick. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1944.
- Harrison, Kenneth. The Brave Japanese. Melbourne: Rigby Ltd., 1966.
- Hemingway, Ernest. The Complete Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1987.
- Hemingway, Ernest. A Farewell to Arms. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929.
- Hemingway, Ernest. For Whom the Bell Tolls. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940.
- Hemingway, Ernest. Green Hills of Africa. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935..
- Hemingway, Ernest. The Snows of Kilimanjaro and Other Stories. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927.
- Herman, Frederick. Dynamite Cargo. New York: Vanguard, 1943.
- Hersey, Harold. More G.I. Laughs, Real Army Humor. New York: Sheridan House, 1943.
- Hersey, John. A Bell for Adano. New York: A.A. Knopf, 1944.
- Hersey, John. Into the Valley. New York: A.A. Knopf, 1943.
- Higgonnet, Margaret, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel, and Margaret C. Weitz. Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars. New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1987.
- Hill, Robert. Desert War. New York: A. A. Knopf, 1942.
- Holmes, Richard. Acts of War: The Behavior of Men in Battle. New York: The Free Press, 1985.
- Holsinger, M. and M. Scholfield. Visions of War: World War II in Popular Literature and Culture. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green U. Press, 1992.
- Honey, Maureen. Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender and Propaganda During World War II. Amherst: U. of Massachusetts Press, 1984.
- Hope, Bob. I Never Left Home. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1944.

- Horan, James. Action Tonight. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1945.
- Hotchner, A.E. Hemingway and His World. New York: The Vendrome Press, 1989.
- Hoyt, Edwin. The GI's War: Stories of American Soldiers in Europe in World War II. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988.
- Huie, William Bradford. Can Do!: The Story of the Seabees. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1944.
- Huie, W.B.. From Omaha to Okinawa. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1945.
- Ingersoll, Ralph. Action on All Fronts. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942.
- Ingersoll, Ralph. America Is Worth Fighting for. New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1941.
- Ingersoll, Ralph. The Battle is the Payoff, a Personal Narrative of this War. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1943.
- Jamieson, John. Books for the Army: The Army Library Service in the Second World War. New York: Columbia U. Press, 1950.
- Jeffords, Susan. The Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War. Bloomington, IN: Indiana U. Press, 1989.
- Jenkins, Burris A. Father Meany and the Fighting 69th. New York: Fell, 1944.
- Kahn, E.J. Jr.. G.I. Jungle: An American Soldier in Australia and New Guinea. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1943.
- Keegan, John. The Face of Battle. New York: Viking, 1976.
- Keegan, John. The Second World War. New York: Viking, 1990.
- Kelly, Mary Pat. Proudly We Serve Blackface. Columbus: Ohio U. Press, 1996.

- Kessler, Lauren. "Fettered Freedoms: The Journalism of World War II Japanese Internment Camps." Journalism History 15.2-3 (Summer/Autumn 1988): 70-79.
- Kessler-Harris, Alice. Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States. New York: Oxford U. Press, 1982.
- Knightly, Phillip. The First Casualty: From the Crimea to Vietnam: The War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist, and Myth Maker. New York: Harvest Book, 1975.
- Kornweibel, Theodore. "Humphrey Bogart's Sahara: Propaganda, Cinema and the American Character in World War II." American Studies 22.1 (1981): 5-19.
- Koppes, Clayton and Gregory Black. Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits, and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies. New York: The Free Press, 1987.
- LaFarge, Christopher. East by Southwest. New York: Coward-McCann, 1944.
- Lande, Nathaniel. Dispatches from the Front: New Accounts of American Wars, 1776-1991. New York: H. Holt & Co., 1995.
- Lange, Dorothea. Photographs of a Lifetime. New York: Millerton, 1982.
- Lawson, Ted. (Edited by Robert Considine). Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo. New York: Random House, 1943.
- Layton, Edwin. And I Was There. New York: W. Morrow, 1985.
- Lears, T. Jackson. No Place of Grace. New York: Pantheon, 1981.
- Lee, Charles. The Hidden Public: The Story of the Book of the Month Club. Garden City, NY: Double Day, 1958.
- Lee, Clark. They Call It Pacific. New York: Viking, 1943.
- Leff, Mark H. "The Politics of Sacrifice on the American Home Front in World War II." The Journal of American History 77.1 (Mar. 1991): 1296-1318.
- Leff, Mark H. "The Politics of Sacrifice on the American Home Front in World War II." Journal of American History 77.1 (Mar. 1991): 1206-1318.

- Levin, Dan. From the Battlefield: Dispatches of a World War II Marine. Annapolis: Naval Institution Press, 1995.
- Linderman, Gerald. The World Within War: America's Combat Experience in World War II. New York: The Free Press, 1997.
- Lucas, James. Combat Correspondent. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1944.
- Ludington, Townsend. John Dos Passos: A Twentieth-Century Odyssey. New York: Dutton, 1980.
- MacCann, Richard. The People's Films. New York: Hastings House, 1973.
- McCarthy, Paul. John Steinbeck. New York: F. Ungar, 1980.
- McCracken, Kenneth. Baby Flat-Top. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1944.
- McCrary, John. First of the Many: A Journal of Action with the Men of the Eighth Air Force. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1944.
- McElvaine, Robert S. The Great Depression: America, 1929-1941. New York: Times Books, 1984.
- MacGregor, Morris. Defense Studies: Integration of the Armed Forces, 1940-1965. Washington DC: Center of Military History, 1981.
- MacKenzie, Colin. Sailors of Fortune. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1944.
- McKerns, Joseph. Biographical Dictionary of American Journalism. New York: Greenwood Press, 1989.
- MacLeish, Archibald. The American Cause. New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pierce, 1941.
- MacLeish, Archibald. Land of the Free. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1938.
- MacLeish, Archibald. A Time to Act. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1942.
- Madden, Paul (as told to Pete Martin). Survivor. Milwaukee, Bruce, 1944.
- Maisel, Albert. Miracles of Military Medicine. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1943.

- Maisel, Albert. The Wounded Get Back. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1944.
- Marshall, S.L.A. Men Against Fire. New York: W. Morrow, 1947.
- Mauldin, Bill. Up Front. Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1945.
- Maule, Harry. A Book of War Letters. New York: Random House, 1943.
- Mead, Margaret. And Keep Your Powder Dry. New York: W. Morrow, 1943.
- Mears, Frederick. Carrier Combat. New York: Doubleday, 1944.
- Melosh, Barbara. Engendering Culture: Manhood and Womanhood in the New Deal Art and Theater. Washington DC: The Smithsonian Institute Press, 1991.
- Milkman, Ruth. The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex during World War II. Urbana: U. of Illinois Press, 1987.
- Miller, Daniel. Books Go to War. Charlottesville: U. of Virginia--Books Arts Press, 1995.
- Miller, Lee. The Story of Ernie Pyle. New York: Viking, 1950.
- Miller, Max. Daybreak for Our Carrier. New York: Whittlesey House, 1944.
- Miller, Max. It's Tomorrow Out There. New York: Whittlesey House, 1945.
- Millet, Allan and Peter Maslowski. For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America. New York: The Free Press, 1984.
- Moats, Alice-Leone. Blind Date with Mars. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran, 1943.
- Monks, John, and John Falter. A Ribbon and a Star: The Third Maries in Bougainville. H. Holt & Company, 1945.
- Moeller, Susan D. Shooting War: Photography and the American Experience of Combat. New York: Basic Books, 1989.



- Morris, Frank. Pick Out the Biggest. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1943.
- Motley, John J. and Philip R. Kelly. Now Hear This. Washington DC: Infantry Journal Press, 1947.
- Mott, Frank. The News in America. Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. Press, 1962.
- Murphy, Mark. 83 Days: The Survival of Seaman Izzi. E.P. Dutton, 1943.
- Mydans, Carl. More Than Meets the Eye. New York: Harper, 1959.
- Nahal, Chaman. The Narrative Pattern in Ernest Hemingway's Fiction. Rutherford: Farleigh Dickinson Press, 1971.
- Nalty, Bernard c. The Right to Fight: African-American Marines in World War II. Washington DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1995.
- Nichols, David. Ernie's America: The Best of Ernie Pyle's 1930s Travel Dispatches. New York: Random House, 1989.
- Nichols, David. Ernie's War: The Best of Ernie Pyle's World War II Dispatches. New York: Random House, 1986.
- Paneth, Donald (Ed.). Encyclopedia of American Journalism. New York: Facts on File Publishers, 1983.
- Perret, Geoffrey. There's a War To Be Won: The U.S. Army in World War II. New York: Random House, 1991.
- Phillips, Christopher. Steichen at War. New York: H.N. Abrams, 1981.
- Polenberg, Richard. America at War: The Home Front, 1941-1945. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968.
- Polenberg, Richard. "The Good War?: A Reappraisal of How World War II Affected American Society." Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 100.3, (July 1992): 295-322.
- Polenberg, Richard. War and Society: The United States, 1941-1945. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1972.
- Posselt, Eric. Give Out! Songs Of, For, and By the Men in the Service. New York: Arrowhead Press, 1943.

- Posselt, Eric. G.I. Songs. New York: Arrowhead Press, 1944.
- Potter, E.B. and Chester W. Nimitz (Eds.). Triumph in the Pacific: The Navy's Struggle Against Japan. Englewood Cliffs, NJ.: Prentice-Hall, 1963.
- Pyle, Ernie. Brave Men. New York: H. Holt & Company, 1944.
- Pyle, Ernie. Here Is Your War. New York: H. Holt & Company, 1943.
- Pyle, Ernie. Last Chapter. New York: H. Holt & Company, 1946.
- Redding, John and Harold Leyshon. Skyways to Berlin. New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1943.
- Redmond, Juanita. I Served on Bataan. Philadelphia: L.B. Lippincott Company, 1943.
- Reiss, Curt. They Were There: WWII by America's Foremost Correspondents. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1944.
- Reynolds, Quentin. Dress Rehearsal. New York: Random House, 1943.
- Rickenbacker, Eddie. Seven Came Through. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran, 1943.
- Robertson, James Oliver. American Myth and American Reality. New York: Hill and Wang, 1980.
- Roeder, George, Jr. The Censored War: American Visual Experience During World War II. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.
- "A Roundtable: The Living and the Reliving of World War II." Journal of American History. 77.3 (Sept. 1990).
- Rovit, Earl and Gerry Brenner. Ernest Hemingway, revised edition. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986.
- Rowe, John C. "Eye Witness: Documentary Styles in American Representations of War." Cultural Critique (1986).
- Rubin, Joan S. The Making of Middle-Brow Culture. Chapel Hill: U. of North Carolina Press, 1992.
- Rupp, Leila. Mobilizing Women for War. Princeton, NJ: Princeton U. Press, 1978.

- Schacht, Al. G.I. Had Fun. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1945.
- Schmid, A.A. (as told to Roger Place Butterfield). Al Schmid, Marine. New York: W.W. Norton, 1944.
- Scott, Robert L. God Is My Co-Pilot. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943.
- Scroth, Raymond A. "The Good War" (Review of Reporting World War II, Part One and Part Two), American Quarterly 49:3 (Sept. 1997): 657-664.
- Sharon, Henrietta Broce. It's Good To Be Alive. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1945.
- Sherrod, Robert. Tarawa: The Story of a Battle. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1944.
- Shiber, Etta. Paris-Underground. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943.
- Shulman, Holly Cowan. The Voice of America: Propaganda and Democracy, 1941-1945. Madison: U. of Wisconsin Press, 1990.
- Silverman, Jonathon. For The World To See: The Life of Margaret Bourke-White. New York: Viking, 1983.
- Skatterbol, Lars. Last Voyage of the Quien Sabe. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944.
- Smith, Myron. The Secret Wars, a Guide to Sources in English. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio, 1980.
- Spencer, Louise Reid. Guerrilla Wife. Chicago: People's Book Club, 1945.\_
- Steichen, Edward. Edited by T.J. Maloney. "The F.S.A. Photographers." U.S. Camera, 1939 44 (1938).
- Steichen, Edward (Ed.). U.S. Navy War Photographs: Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Bay. New York: Crown Publishers, 1980.
- Steinbeck, John. Bombs Away. New York: Viking, 1942.
- Steinbeck, John. Once There Was a War. New York: Viking, 1958.
- Steinbuck, Jack. Typewriter Battalion: Dramatic Front-Line Dispatches from World War II. New York: Morrow, 1995.

- Stott, William. Documentary Expression and Thirties America of the 1930s. New York: Oxford U. Press, 1973.
- Stouffer, Samuel A. The American Soldier: Studies in Social Psychology in World War II (vol. 1 and 2). Princeton, NJ: Princeton U. Press, 1949-1950.
- Suid, Lawrence. Guts & Glory: Great American War Movies. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1978.
- Taft, Philip. Organized Labor in American History. New York: Harper & Row, 1964.
- Taggart, William and Christopher Cross. My Fighting Congregation. New York: Doubleday, 1943.
- Tebbel, John. The Marshall Fields: A Study in Wealth. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1947.
- Tebbel, John. A History of Book Publishing in the United States. New York: Bowker, 1978.
- Terkel, Studs. The Good War: An Oral History of World War Two. New York: Pantheon, 1984.
- Tobin, James. Ernie Pyle's War. Simon and Schuster, 1997.
- Tregaskis, Richard. Guadalcanal Diary. Garden City, NY: Random House--Blue Ribbon Books, 1943.
- Tregaskis, Richard. Invasion Diary. New York: Random House, 1944.
- Trumbull. The Raft. New York: H. Holt & Company, 1942.
- Vail, Margaret. Yours Is the Earth. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1944.
- Waltzer, Michael. Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations. New York: Basic Books, 1977.
- Werner, Max. The Great Offensive: The Strategy of Coalition Warfare. New York: Viking, 1942.
- Westbrook, Robert. "I Want a Girl, Just Like the Girl that Married Harry James: American Women and the Problem of Political Obligation in World War II." American Quarterly 42.4 (Dec. 1990): 587-612.

- Wheeler, Keith. The Pacific Is My Beat. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1943.
- Wheeler, Keith. We Are the Wounded. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1945.
- White, W.L. They Were Expendable. New York: Random House, 1943.
- White, W.L. Queens Die Proudly. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1943.
- Whittaker, James C. We Thought We Heard the Angels Sing. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1943.
- Wilkinson, Rupert. The Pursuit of American Character. New York: Harper, 1988.
- Willard, Warren. The Leathernecks Come Through. New York: F.H. Revell, 1944.
- Williams, Christine. Gender Differences at Work: Women and Men in Nontraditional Occupations. Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1989.
- Williams, Micheal W. African-American Encyclopedia. New York: Marshall Kavendish, 1993.
- Wilson, Earl, Jim Lucas, Samuel Shaffer, and Peter Zurlinden. Betio Beachhead: U.S. Marines' Own Story of the Battle for Tarawa. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1945.
- Wilson, Theodore (Ed.). D-Day, 1944. Lawrence: Press of Kansas U., 1944.
- Winkler, Allan M. The Politics of Propaganda: The Office of War Information, 1942-1945. New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1978.
- Whittaker, James. We Thought we Heard the Angels Sing. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1943.
- Wolfe, Don M. Wolfe (Ed.). The Purple Testament. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1947.
- Wolfe, Thomas. Of Time and the River. New York: Chelsea House, 1987.
- Wolfert, Ira. American Guerrilla in the Philippines. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945.

- Wolfert, Ira. Battle for the Solomons. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1943.
- Wordell, M.T. and E.N. Seiler. "Wildcats" Over Casablanca. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1943.
- Wright, Nathalia. Melville's Use of the Bible. Durham: Duke U. Press, 1949.
- Young, Philip. Ernest Hemingway: A Reconsideration. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State U. Press, 1966.
- Zanuck, Darryl. Tunis Expedition. New York: Random House, 1943.

American Political Science Review

Atlantic Monthly

Book Week

The Camera

The Commonweal

Congressional Digest

Harper's

New Republic

New York Herald Tribune

Time

Negro History Bulletin

New York Times

PM

Publisher's Weekly

Saturday Evening Post

Saturday Review of Literature

Survey Graphics

Time

U.S. Quarterly Booklist

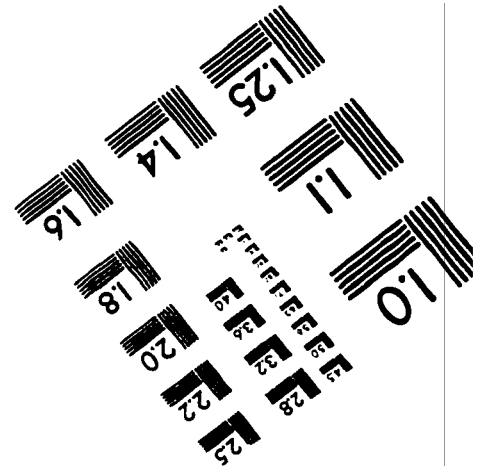
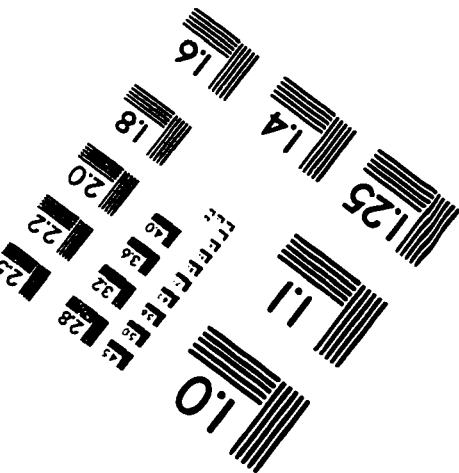
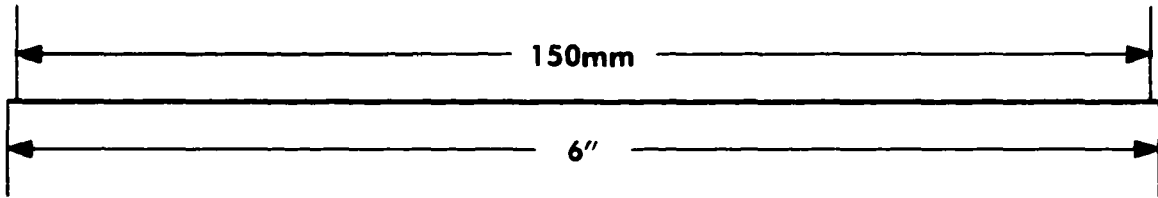
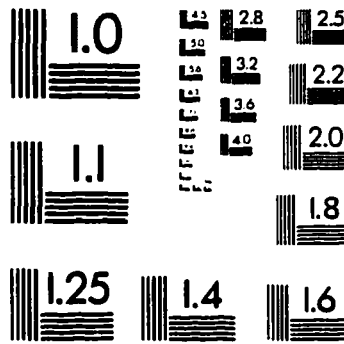
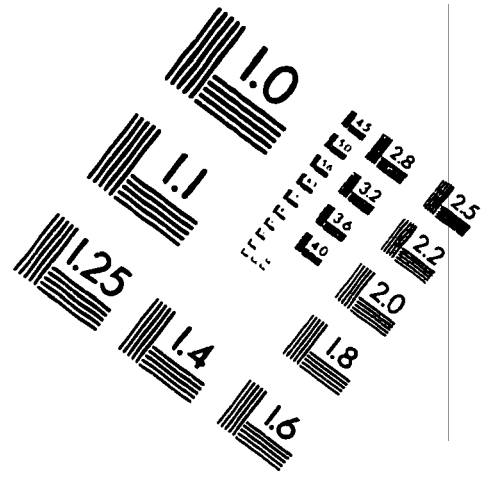
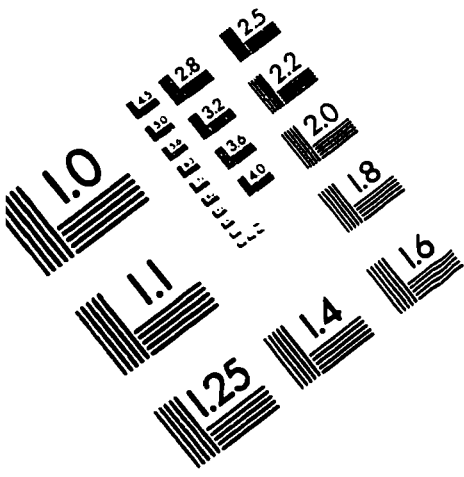
Weekly Book Review

## VITA

Hildy Michelle Neel

Born in Manhasset, New York, June 6, 1967. Graduated from Herricks High School, New Hyde Park, New York, 1985 with scholar-athlete and best athlete awards. A.B., Long Island University--C.W. Post Campus, 1989, English major. Graduated summa cum laude. Fulbright-ITT Fellowship, Italy, 1989-1990 to do research on the reception of Ernest Hemingway by Italian scholars and on translations of his work. Admitted as a graduate assistant in the American Studies Program at the College of William and Mary, September 1991. Completed course requirements for an M.A. and thesis, "Out of Left Field: William Saroyan's Thirties Fiction as a Reflection of the Great Depression," December 1992. Completed course work for a Ph.D. degree May 1994. Published five articles. Taught two courses at William and Mary, one on the Sixties, another self-developed on the era of the Great Depression and World War II. Hired as adjunct professor in the Department of English at Long Island University, 1996-97. Received grant from William and Mary, 1997-98, to facilitate completion of dissertation: *Let Us Now Praise Service Men: A History of the American World War II Personal Narrative, 1942-1945.*

# IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



**APPLIED IMAGE, Inc**  
1653 East Main Street  
Rochester, NY 14609 USA  
Phone: 716/482-0300  
Fax: 716/288-5989

© 1993, Applied Image, Inc., All Rights Reserved