

NEW YORK GOES TO WAR

Nearly one million New Yorkers fought in World War II. Millions more joined the war effort on the home front. **NEW YORK GOES TO WAR** shares the World War II experience of men and women from the New York metropolitan area through personal stories from the battlefield and the home front. In two, one-hour segments - "Innocence Lost" and "The Road to Victory" - interviews and images capture the mood of the time, from the familiar strains of the "Make Believe Ballroom" radio program to the common threads that defined life in wartime, no matter where you lived or on what line you fought. For today's generation, the documentary provides a very personal take on events that changed the world forever.

NEW YORK GOES TO WAR shares the stories of eight New Yorkers (past and present) that represent a broad range of wartime experience:

The Soldier and His Sweetheart

Born in Puerto Rico and raised in the neighborhood in Brooklyn now known as Carroll Gardens, Manny Medina enlisted in the Army in 1939, becoming a member of the legendary 69th Infantry Regiment of the New York National Guard - ironically, a Hispanic sergeant of the "Fighting Irish." He was sent to the Pacific in 1942 and served there for three years, fighting in some of the most brutal battles of the war. He was awarded a Silver Star for his heroism on Saipan, leading his platoon out of a ravine to safety after his lieutenant was wounded on the battle field. In Okinawa, he was shot in the thigh and told he would never walk again, but proved the doctors wrong. His wife Gloria, a former Miss Puerto Rico in Brooklyn, had been a schoolmate from before the war. Romance bloomed when he was home on a furlough and ran into her at a dance. After he was shot, she took a train to an army hospital in Ohio to be by his side. They were married after the war. The couple is interviewed together.

The Tanker

Bill McBurney, who grew up in Harlem, was a member of the first African American tank battalion to see combat. Although proud to enlist, when he and his segregated battalion were sent to the Jim Crow South to train, he was confronted by racism both from the locals and from white soldiers who were training nearby. In the program he tells the story of his friend Jackie Robinson, an officer in the same battalion, who was court martialled after he refused to move to the back of an army bus. (Robinson was acquitted and honorably discharged). Despite claims that black soldiers were unfit for combat, McBurney and his battalion were sent to Europe in 1944 and fought with distinction in the Battle of the Bulge. He served in combat a remarkable 183 straight days and was awarded a Bronze Star.

The Prisoner of War

Born and raised in Borough Park in Brooklyn, Paul Canin was still in high school when Pearl Harbor was attacked. After graduating, he enlisted in the Army Air Force and was sent to Europe as a radar navigator on a bomber plane. On a bombing raid of an oil refinery on the outskirts of Auschwitz, his plane was shot down and he parachuted

out (7 of the 11 crew members on the plane were killed). He was captured by German soldiers and held as a prisoner of war for eight months. He and other Jewish soldiers were separated from the others, raising fears they would be sent to a concentration camp. A talented artist who had enrolled in Cooper Union before enlisting, he filled his YMCA-issued diary with pencil sketches of his barracks-mates, and used paints bribed from the guards and a paintbrush made out of his own hair to create dramatic watercolors of the moment his plane was shot down. His stunning artwork is featured in the program.

The Thunderbolt Maker

Josephine Rachiele, an Italian-American woman from Babylon, Long Island, talks about her decision to contribute to the war effort by becoming a riveter at Republic Aviation. Republic was one of the nation's largest manufacturers of wartime aircraft, producing thousands of p-47 Thunderbolt fighter planes. Thousands of women took part in this effort, working 60-hour weeks as they learned to operate drill presses and riveting guns. Rachiele worked at Republic alongside two of her sisters; the three of them were dubbed "The Home Front Sisters" in the company newspaper. She shares her recollections of exhausting hours on the factory floor and neighborhood boys who were killed in the war, as well as the day Tommy Dorsey came to Republic to give a morale boosting concert for the defense workers.

The V-J Day Kissers

Greta Zimmer, a dental hygienist who lived and worked in Manhattan during the war, was a young single woman in the city, fretting about the boys overseas, but also enjoying home front events like the outdoor big band concerts to raise money for war bonds. George Mendonsa, was a sailor visiting New York in August of 1945 on his way back to the war in the Pacific after a month-long furlough. In the thrill of a crowded Times Square the day Japan's surrender was announced - though they had never met - Zimmer and Mendonsa shared a memorable kiss. They believe they are the couple who was captured in Alfred Eisenstaedt's iconic photograph in *LIFE* magazine. Others have made the same claim, as acknowledged in the program, but *LIFE* brought this couple to New York City to recreate the scene in 1980.

The Marine

Raised in Westchester County, Marine Lieutenant Phil Wood enlisted after his first year at Yale Law School. During his time in the Marines he wrote frequent, poignant letters home to his mother and sister in New York. In vivid prose, he describes the rigors of training, his pride in being a Marine officer, his fears about combat, his homesickness for the city, and finally the changes he experienced after being in battle. Killed by enemy rifle fire in the Pacific, his letters are read aloud throughout the program, the universal themes tying together the stories of all the characters.

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