

**Inspired by THE WAR: A KEN BURNS FILM,
WLIW21 and Thirteen/WNET Collaborate on
Multi-Media Event - September 2007**

**Television and Web Content Celebrates Local Contributions to World War II
On the Battlefield and Home Front**

**Viewer Letters and Videos Preserve Memories On-Air and On-Line
WLIW21-Produced Documentaries Premiere September 20 & 22
Rich Online Archive of Local Stories Live at wliw.org and thirteen.org**

Nearly one million New Yorkers fought in World War II. Millions more joined the war effort on the home front. This September, PBS debuts the epic mini-series **THE WAR: A KEN BURNS FILM** (premiering Sunday, September 23; for a complete list of airings visit wliw.org and thirteen.org). To bring the themes of **THE WAR** home to the New York metro-area community, public television stations WLIW21 and Thirteen/WNET are collaborating in an inspiring multi-media collaboration to ensure that the local men and women who contributed to that historic time in world history will not be forgotten.

Local Production

WLIW21 has produced two documentaries, **NEW YORK GOES TO WAR** and **NEW YORK WAR STORIES**, focused specifically on local residents' experience of the global conflict. 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 documentaries provide a personal perspective on World War II not found in most history books or Hollywood movies.

NEW YORK GOES TO WAR: Innocence Lost (Part I) will have its broadcast premiere **Thursday, September 20 at 8 p.m. on WLIW21.**

Thirteen will air the program Thursday, September 20 at 9:30 p.m.

NEW YORK GOES TO WAR: The Road to Victory (Part II) will have its broadcast premiere **Wednesday, September 26 at 9 p.m. on WLIW21.**

Thirteen will air the program Thursday, September 27 at 8 p.m.

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PBS will carry a special one-hour version of **NEW YORK GOES TO WAR** nationwide for Veterans Day on Thursday, November 8 at 10 p.m. Check local listings for airdates and times.

NEW YORK WAR STORIES will have its broadcast premiere **Saturday September 22 at 7:30 p.m. on WLIW21.**

Thirteen will air the program Saturday, September 22 at 9 p.m.

For a complete list of airdates for both programs, visit wliw.org and thirteen.org.

The two programs will also be available to stream at newyorkwarstories.org beginning Saturday, September 15. The documentaries are also being made available to public television stations throughout New York State for broadcast. Check local listings for airdates and times.

WLIW21 President and General Manager Terrel Cass said, "We are proud to expand the imprint of cultural memory preservation we established with WLIW's popular ethnic heritage and *New York the Way It Was* series and bring our viewers these very personal accounts of world history that point to the true meaning of community in our lives."

Thirteen President Neal Shapiro, who participated in the project directly by recording an interview with his father, Sumner Shapiro, adds, "These stories are so important to our understanding of who we are today as a country, and to remember the individuals who sacrificed for the greater good."

NEW YORK GOES TO WAR, airing in two, one-hour segments, 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.

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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 martialed 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.

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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.

NEW YORK WAR STORIES, a one-hour documentary with viewer-contributed videos and letters as its centerpiece, takes viewers through the trajectory of the war. Veterans and civilians from all over the tri-state area contribute their memories of what The War meant in their homes and towns to tell the emotional story of one of the most important events in world history, a dramatic time for a generation when world events turned local communities upside down and everyone was part of the war effort.

Six decades after the end of the war, childhood memories are vividly recalled in viewer letters that underscore the communal loss of innocence that still resonates in the lives of these men and women: a Western Union delivery boy who recalls the anguished response to his news at neighborhood homes; mothers crying over the ironing; the frightening prospect of losing family and loved ones and the harsh reality of young parents giving their lives too soon for the cause as war heroes; the ration stamps Marcia Lubow of Queens found "irresistible to play with" because she "didn't realize until much later why those little stamps were so important;" letters written to soldiers as classroom assignments; the blackouts Thomas Fleming, as a child in East Flatbush, innocently enjoyed "because with no lights anywhere we were better able to see the stars."

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NEW YORK WAR STORIES also takes viewers into the mindset of young men just out of high school, whose only knowledge of islands was Coney, Staten and Ellis, introduced to new ones with exotic names like Iwo Jima, whether enlisted or 'winners' of the lottery draft. Coming from New York's melting pot, their ethnic background held new significance in wartime. Arlene Calabrese of Morristown, New Jersey, whose Italian-American father joined the army to fight the enemy Italians, writes in a letter about her immigrant grandparents, "they said (in broken English) 'my son is fighting for *our* country, the United States of America'." For Maury Nadjari of Huntington being a Jewish soldier gave him even further motive to fight, recalling, "I wanted to kill the Germans... because I knew how much death they had caused to our people." Young African-American soldiers like John I. Mulzac of Brooklyn recall their first taste of racial discrimination as the Tuskegee airmen were declined the opportunity to take part in the offensive in the Pacific. On the home front, women like Sophie Sarro of Huntington, who worked as a riveter at Grumman on Long Island and had five brothers serving overseas, describe a new era for women who had never worked outside the home, providing essential support for their fathers, brothers, schoolmates and countrymen. Through their stories and others, the documentary reflects the local impact of the War. Newsreels, newspaper headlines, and archival footage round out this video time capsule spanning from the 1939 World's Fair to the aftermath of the atomic bomb.

Beyond the Television Screen

In addition to the original television programming, WLIW21 and Thirteen/WNET have launched a unique online destination designed to gather first-hand recollections of men and women who lived through the war - wherever they were and in whatever capacity they experienced it. Members of the public are encouraged to record their own video interviews with relatives, friends or acquaintances who remember World War II and upload them to the site, or to submit letters describing a personal or family member's wartime experience. Videos may also be mailed in to P.O. Box 2100, New York, NY 10116. The content will live at newyorkwarstories.org.

As an extension of the documentaries, WLIW21 and Thirteen/WNET are collaborating with Reel Works Teen Filmmaking, working with students in Brooklyn on a mini-documentary about life in New York during World War II, and hosting training sessions for students in the techniques of conducting oral interviews. A student contest, open to tri-state residents in grades 8-12, invites applicants to submit a 2- to 10-minute multimedia project about life in New York during World War II or about a New Yorker who served in the war.

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NEW YORK WAR STORIES and **NEW YORK GOES TO WAR** are made possible by funding from Arrow Electronics, Inc.; The Bank of New York Mellon Corporation; HIP Health Plan of New York; Rosalind P. Walter; and Susan and Elihu Rose. Some of the content of **NEW YORK WAR STORIES** was contributed by viewers and members of WLIW21 and Thirteen/WNET, and was made possible by the contribution of time and effort from the Friends of Thirteen. Executive Producer for both documentaries: Roy A. Hammond. **NEW YORK GOES TO WAR** Producer/Director: Julie Cohen. **NEW YORK WAR STORIES** Producer/Director/ Writer: Sam Toperoff.

About WLIW New York

WLIW New York is an innovator in broadcasting, production and distribution for public television. A leading producer of fundraising programming for PBS, WLIW brings US audiences the popular *Visions* aerial series, cultural performance specials like *The Music & Dance of Poland: Mazowsze*, and a 15-part series of ethnic heritage specials that includes profiles of Asian Indian, Mexican and Polish American communities. WLIW's groundbreaking independent distribution model brings US audiences live daily broadcasts of *BBC World News*, *Consuelo Mack WealthTrack* and *Wild Chronicles*. WLIW is also presenting station for the Emmy award-winning PBS KIDS series *Jakers! The Adventures of Piggley Winks*. In the tri-state area, WLIW's diverse programming schedule earns the distinction of third most-watched in the country, a destination for viewers of all ages, featuring public television favorites from PBS KIDS to celebrity chefs in the kitchen, enhanced by a rich local public affairs lineup. More information about WLIW can be found at www.wliw.org.

About Thirteen/WNET

Thirteen/WNET New York is one of the key program providers for public television, bringing such acclaimed series as *Nature*, *Great Performances*, *American Masters*, *Charlie Rose*, *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly*, *Wide Angle*, *Secrets of the Dead*, *NOW With David Brancaccio*, and *Cyberchase* - as well as the work of Bill Moyers - to audiences nationwide. As the flagship public broadcaster in the New York, New Jersey and Connecticut metro area, Thirteen reaches millions of viewers each week, airing the best of American public television along with its own local productions such as *The Ethnic Heritage Specials*, *The Thirteen Walking Tours*, *New York Voices*, and *Reel New York*. Thirteen extends the impact of its television productions through educational and community outreach projects - including the Celebration of Teaching and Learning - as well as Web sites and other digital media platforms. More information can be found at: www.thirteen.org.

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