

VOLUME ONE

WAR STORIES

The True History, Music, and Memories
That Inspired The War Song Series

LACI BARRY POST

WAR STORIES

The True History and inspirations behind The War Song Series

WAR STORIES

THE TRUE HISTORY AND INSPIRATION BEHIND THE WAR SONG SERIES

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The War Stories Collection is a sampling of posts from the “War Stories” blog by Laci Barry Post. It is a glimpse into the true history, the inspiring music, and the family stories that are the basis for The War Song Series. If you have not yet discovered The War Song Series, you can find more information about it at www.TheWarSongSeries.com



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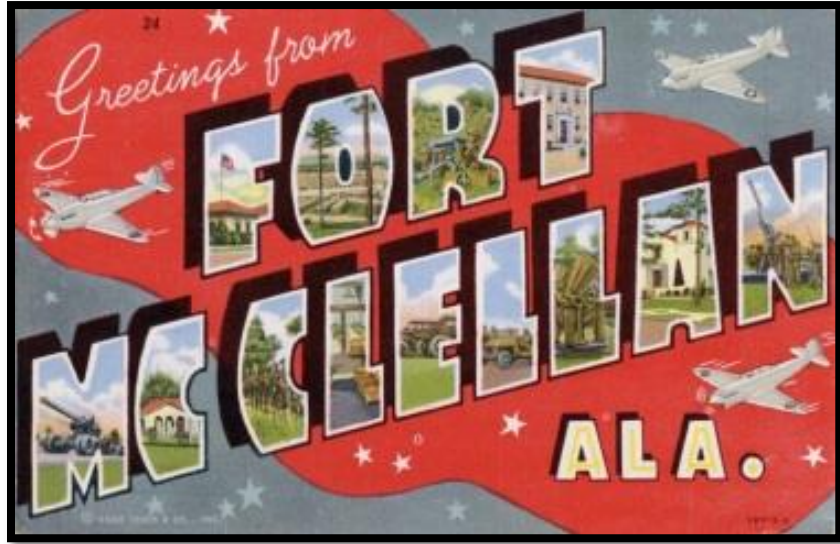
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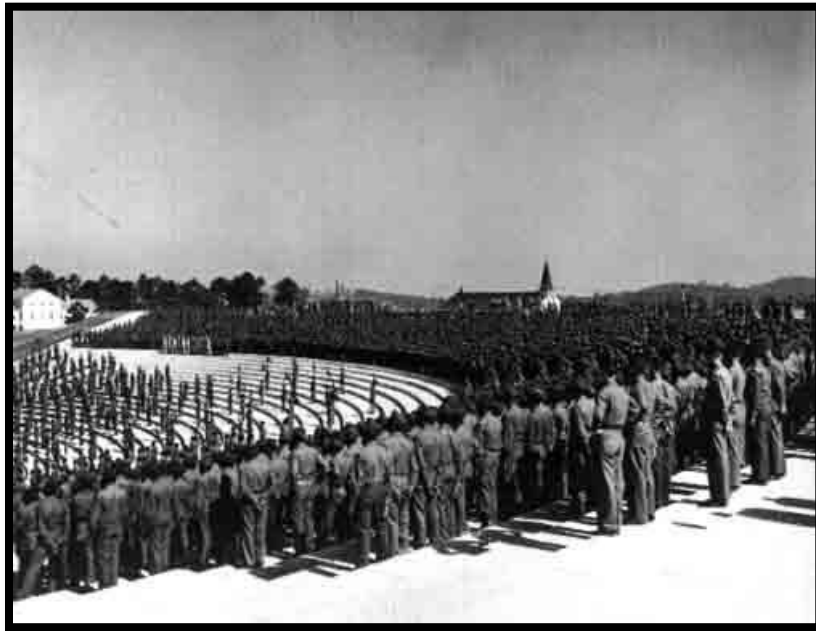
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GREETINGS FROM FORT MCCLELLAN



The small town of Jacksonville, AL and neighboring Fort McClellan form the backdrop for Songbird and The War Song Series. During World War II, Fort McClellan brought the world to this small corner of east Alabama in the form of soldiers from all over the nation and German POWs from half way around the globe. Both of which would touch and change forever the lives of Ava Stilwell and her family.



IT'S BEEN A LONG LONG TIME

Songbird is a musical in words, celebrating big band and gospel music from the 1940s. My favorite song in the book is “It’s Been a Long, Long Time.” I love this song! Listen to Harry James and his band perform this song in 1945. [Click here!](#)



Kitty Kallen and Harry James

“It’s been A Long, Long Time” is a popular song from 1945 that made a major hit at the end of World War II. A recording by Harry James with vocals by Kitty Kallen reached No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart on November 24, 1945.

Kitty Kallen had two songs recorded with the Harry James Orchestra in the top twenty, six in the top ten, and two at the #1 spot. “I’m beginning to see the light” and “It’s Been A Long, Long Time” which remains deeply associated with the end of World War II and the returning troops.

D-DAY



In the Spring of 1944, Americans anxiously awaited news of a European invasion. Radio reports announced D-Day on June 6, 1944.

The figures of her father and grandpa, sitting close by the radio, broke through her wistful thinking. She was surprised to see them. Normally, they would already be out feeding the animals. Her father's neck was bent forward over the black box, his elbows were upright on his knees, and his whole body was stiff. Grandpa Chester was more relaxed, but his arms were limp by his slouching sides, and his eyes were fixed on the ceiling above. Ava didn't dare move another step or say a word. Instead, she held her breath and listened to the clear, authoritative male voice coming through the box.

"Under the command of General Eisenhower, Allied naval forces, supported by strong air forces, began landing Allied armies this morning on the northern coast of France."

There was a long pause, and a more somber male voice spoke.

"You have just heard Colonel Ernest Dupuy, Eisenhower's press aide, confirm the invasion of Europe on June 6, 1944."

There was a loud sigh from her parents' bedroom, and Ava realized that her mother was also listening. They each knew that they had just been told where James was.

Excerpt from Songbird, Chapter 47



MEET VULCAN



Meet Vulcan! He is the largest cast-metal statue in the world and sits atop Red Mountain in Birmingham, AL. As the Roman god of the forge, he celebrates the city's industrial history. If you have never met him, Vulcan Park is a fun experience with great views of Birmingham and an interactive history museum. In *Songbird*, Vulcan Park is the backdrop for one of Ava's most memorable big band performances.

"Soon the moment came, and she ascended the stage just as the band struck up its vibrant melody. She looked up at the 1904 World's Fair Winner and fifty-six foot-high iron symbol of Birmingham industrialization and smiled to herself. The Vulcan's backside was indeed uncovered, and the fact propitiated her developing nerves while the spearhead he brandished high in his right hand encouraged her. Willie Harold gave her a confident wink, and she began her song."
Songbird, Chapter 4

ENTERTAINING OUR SOLDIERS

During the war years, Ft. McClellan published a Daily Bulletin for the soldiers. I found this excerpt from the October 17, 1941 bulletin comical. Local cities tried to entertain our soldiers as best as they could!



"A new center for enlisted men will open in Gadsden on Saturday, October 18th, at the First American Legion Amphitheater. Ping-pong, skittle, shuffle-board, a comfortable lounge, music, free showers and towels, refreshments, tours to places of interest, Sunday dinner, and girls. All enlisted man are cordially invited to take advantage of these fine recreational and social facilities at the new Gadsden Soldiers' Center."

During World War II, any city within 300 miles of the Atlantic, Pacific, or Gulf Coast was in danger of an enemy air raid. Cities in these areas performed regular bomb drills, and the government put out information to help civilians in case of an attack. Some of this information could still be used today when confronted with a crisis! This is a shortened list from the December 1941 Anniston Star.

Keep Cool.

Stay Home.

The safest place in an air raid is at home. If you are away from home, get under cover in the nearest shelter. Avoid crowded places. The enemy wants you to run out into the streets, create a mob, start a panic. Don't do it! Choose one member of the family to be the home air-raid warden – who will remember all the rules and what to do. Mother makes the best.

Put out Lights.

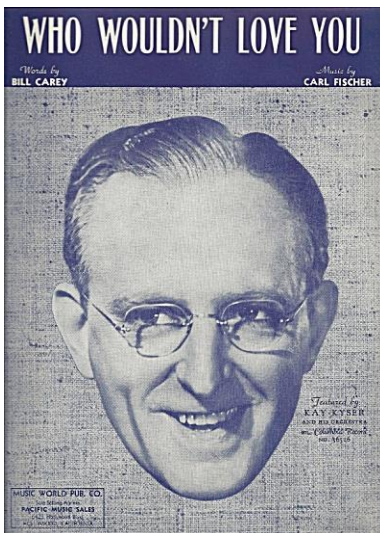
Whether or not black-out is ordered, don't show more light than is necessary. If planes come over, put out or cover all lights at once – don't wait for the black-out order. The light that can't be seen will never guide a Jap. Remember a candle light may be seen for miles from the air.



“WHO WOULDN'T LOVE YOU”

As I mentioned in one of my first posts, Songbird is a musical in words. I just love the big band music of the 1940s era! Here is another one of my favorites from the book. It is Kay Kyser's "Who Wouldn't Love You." The song was a huge hit in 1942!

The vigorous melody of the harmonizing big band instruments hushed the pre-show chatter and filled Lloyd's Crystal Ballroom and Banquet Hall. Ava sat beside Ernie with her hands folded in her lap, her legs crossed underneath her pleated yellow skirt, and her red lips upturned into an expectant smile. Even though the music was coming from the many instruments on the stage, it seemed to have absorbed into her skin and to be pounding out its rhythm on her heart. A young lady moving across the front of the room caught her attention. The girl met a man in the center of the stage and turned toward the audience just as he began to sing. She was tall and poised and wore a white dress that seemed to float about her figure. Her silky, brown hair was parted in the middle and curled away from her face and down to her shoulders, and her dark-



brown eyes seemed to mirror her suppressed smile as they peered down at the audience. She dangled her hands, which were covered in long, white gloves, unclasped and assuredly by her side, and Ava marveled at her composure. The older, tuxedoed man finished his solo, and her white-gloved hands reached for the microphone standing in front of them.

"Who wouldn't love? Who wouldn't care?" her clear voice began to sing, and Ava was mesmerized by its fluidness and the unassuming way she accented each word and traveled over each note. "Who wouldn't buy the west side of heaven if you just winked your eye?"

Songbird, Chapter 13

For more on this song, Kay Kyser, and the music of The War Song Series Check out the [Follow The Music Page](#) at

TheWarSongSeries.com

“AMERICA’S ALL-OUT DEFENSE DEPENDS UPON YOUR COMMON SENSE!”

“America’s All-Out Defense Depends Upon Your Common Sense!”

I love this article published by the Veterans of Foreign Wars during World War II. It really changes your attitude and perspective even today!

STOP...Stop crabbing about the small sacrifices in personal comforts you are called upon to make in the interest of national defense.

LOOK...Look over the needs of your community carefully, size up your own abilities, and offer your services where you can be of most help.

LISTEN...Listen to what is going on around you – discourage talk that is meant to destroy our national unity by stirring up racial, religious and political prejudices.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars nonprofit organization was started in 1899 by veterans who wanted to help all veterans secure rights and benefits for their service to their country. The organization was instrumental in the creation of the Veteran’s Administration and GI Bill and has fought for the improvement of VA medical centers.





TRAGIC IRONY IN ALABAMA HOTEL FIRE

"I don't believe it," Ava said, watching the demise of the once grand building... The dazzling chandeliers, burgundy carpet, and suited bellboys absorbed her thoughts and sickened her heart. The waste was overpowering, and she could now understand how the wreckage of war stimulated Ernie Pyle's writing. *Songbird, Chapter 49*

It is heartbreaking to me when an old building rich with history is destroyed. This story from 1944 touched my heart, and I just had to include it in *Songbird*. On September 15, 1944, the Alabama Hotel in Anniston, AL burned to the ground. What makes the story truly tragic is that two persons lost their lives to the fire. Ironically, one was a 17 year-old war bride visiting her husband at Ft. McClellan. While she and her family focused on the safety of her husband, it was her life that was lost too soon. Read below:

A policeman was shouting, "Step back," and the crowd moved and pushed backward. The news that someone might or had lost their life lessened the importance of the structure and turned Ava's thoughts horrifically to the people affected. She looked back up at the top floor, her eyes scanning the windows of the rooms that still existed. Is someone still in there? Who could it be?

The newspapers the next day answered all the city's questions. Two people died, a man who attempted to lower himself to the ground with a chain of sheets and a Mrs. Violet Hemmert. Ava read and wept over the untimely obituary that interested many who never knew the young woman. She was a soldier's wife visiting her husband at Fort McClellan. The fire not only destroyed a prized landmark, but it also emblazed the name of an unknown woman into the memories of a whole town.

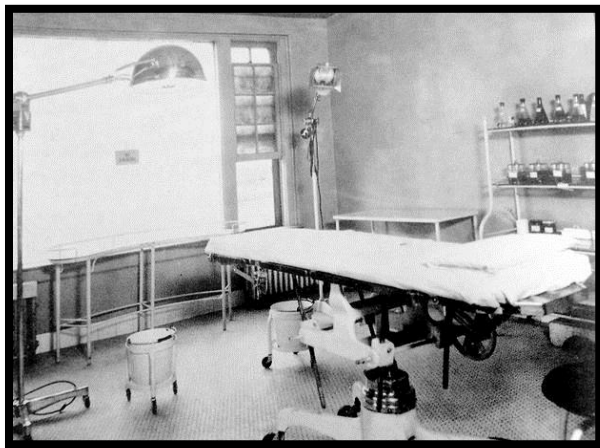
Songbird, Chapter 49

To see more pictures of this historic hotel visit The War Song Series [Pinterest](#) page.

WHEN AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE TRULY WAS



A new hospital just opened next to our subdivision this week. Fittingly, during my research time this week, I read about the first hospitals in Anniston, AL where I was born. This account from Annie's Town Revisited: A Picture History of Anniston, AL by Tee Morgan was amazing! Oh, how times have changed! She writes this account of a patient's stay at the old Garner Hospital:



"In an entry in the diary of Maximillian B. Wellborn on February 22, 1940, he writes of his surgery: 'I stayed in the hospital for nine days & he (Dr. Hugh Gray) dressed it every day & when I went home 3 or 4 more times. Expenses at the hospital \$77.95 which includes room (private with bath) \$7.50 a day, operating room \$10.00, medicines & etc. \$2.95. The room was good & the food too. So I have only kind words for Garner Hospital. Dr. Gray's fee \$150.00. Mutually agreeable.'"

PLAY BALL!

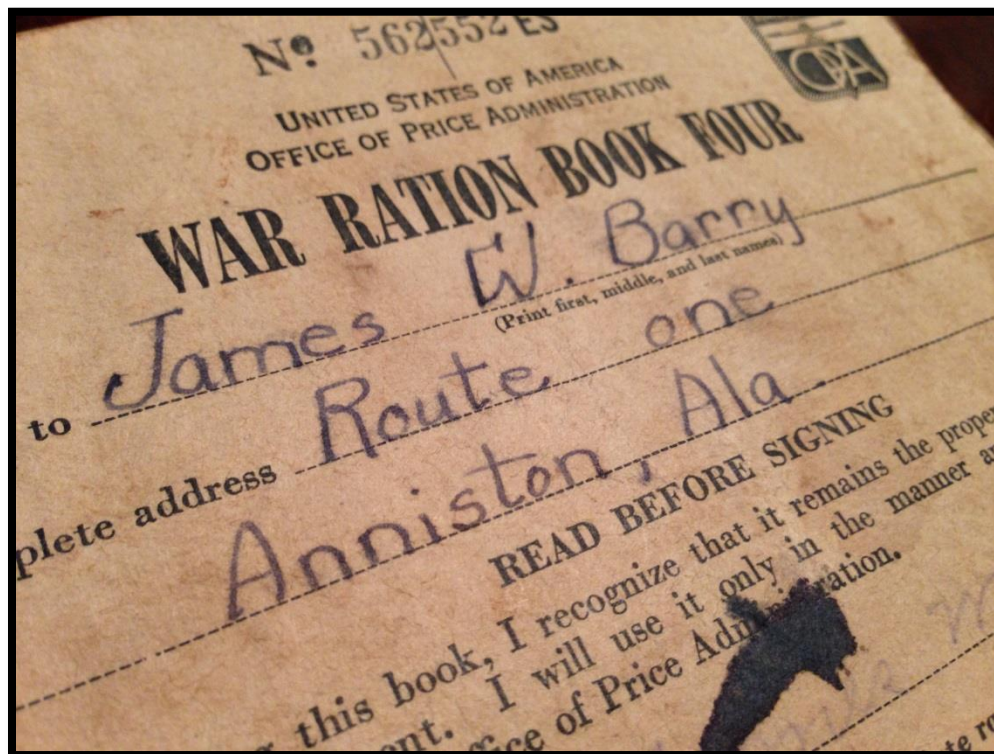
Did you know that Anniston, AL once had its own minor league baseball team? Between 1904 and 1950, Anniston's baseball team was called the Nobles, the Models, the Moulders, and finally the Rams. The famous Ty Cobb played one season in Anniston in 1904. The team took three years off during World War II, but returned in 1946 for play. Unfortunately, in 1950 the team played its last season, losing 73 games and winning 21. Attendance was low, and the people of Anniston were unable to financially support the struggling team.



The Anniston Rams

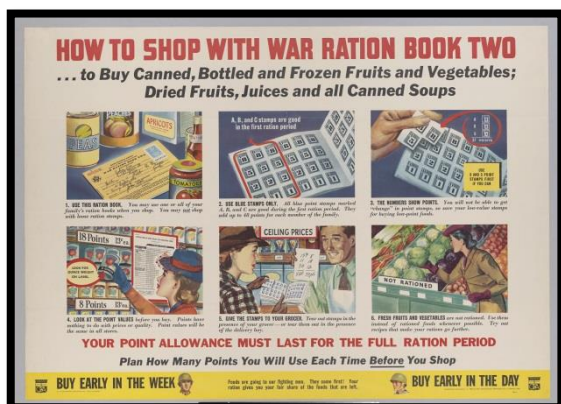
I thought you might enjoy this tidbit of history for the beginning of baseball season. Go Atlanta Braves!

A PIECE OF HISTORY

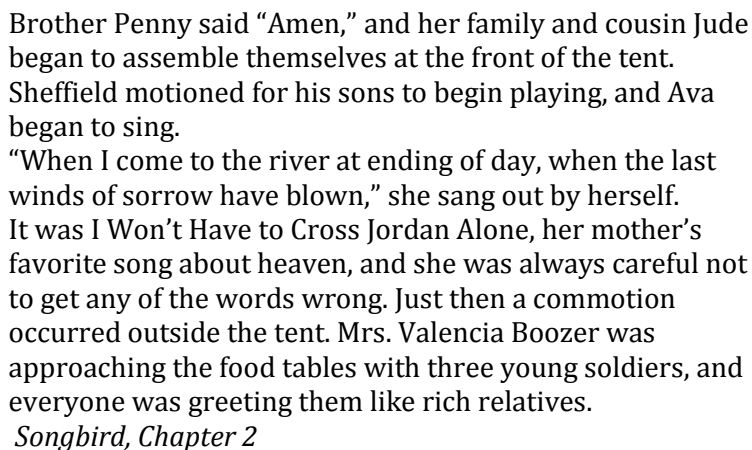


We recently discovered my grandfather's rationing book from World War II! It is amazing to hold a piece of history like this in your hands. The federal government began rationing in May 1942 on goods that were high in demand and needed for the war effort. A ration book was issued to each family indicating how much sugar, coffee, meat, processed foods, gas, tires, and other products one could purchase. To deal with the shortened amount of items, women altered recipes and got together to swap coupons.

"To begin her meeting she had called for a rations swap, which all of the women eagerly engaged in. Myrtle smiled down at her extra meat rations as Victoria silenced the chattering group."
Songbird, Chapter 14



I have said before that Songbird is a musical in words. The book is full of popular big band music from the 1940s, which I absolutely love, but it is also interlaced with gospel music. Gospel music is a big part of my family's heritage. My great grandparents loved to go to "singings" and would often stay up until the early hours of the morning singing songs from church. One of my Paw Paw's favorite gospel hymns was I Won't Have to Cross Jordan Alone. Ava sings the song with her family at a tent revival in the second chapter of the book. Enjoy this version by [Johnny Cash](#)!



THERE ARE BIG OPPORTUNITIES IN THE BIG CITY!

When I talked to older adults at the Fair on the Square a few weeks ago, they all had the same thing to say about Anniston, AL in the 1940s. They said it was a “booming” town. People from the rural surrounding areas and soldiers from Ft. McClellan poured into the city to work, shop, eat, and watch a movie.



Many cities throughout the United States experienced a similar population growth during World War II as men and women left the farm for new work opportunities. Other Alabama cities such as Mobile, Huntsville, and Childersburg grew rapidly as people came looking for jobs in defense industries. Mobile alone employed nearly 60,000 people in defense jobs. In Georgia, the quiet town of Marietta was changed forever when the United States Army and the Bell Aircraft Corporation began building a bomber plant in 1942 which would employ about 30,000 people. In California, San Diego doubled its size, and in Illinois, Seneca quintupled its size. Military bases and defense work changed many Americans’ way of life and transformed cities across the United States.

“Rosemary and Ava had never seen so many people inside or outside the store. On the weekends, people from the surrounding countryside poured into Anniston, and the city turned khaki-colored from all of the Fort McClellan soldiers that swarmed the populated streets.”

Songbird, Chapter 6



WE CAN DO IT!

Have you ever wondered just what exactly “Rosie the Riveter” did for the war effort? This fictional wartime heroine based on hundreds of women throughout the United States helped to build airplanes by shooting rivets into metal plates with a gun. She worked as a team with another woman called the “bucker”. The buckler flattened or smoothed out the rivets on the other side. According to one real-life female defense worker the job of riveting took more skill, but the job of bucking took more muscle. Which would you have preferred?

Between 1942 and 1944, five million women joined the American workforce. They filled many jobs formerly only held by men, working as welders, mechanics, crane operators, and bus drivers. Employment gave women confidence and a new sense of purpose. They liked making their own money. Women in Huntsville, AL earned \$1,400 a year as assembly line workers at the Huntsville Arsenal, and women in Mobile, AL earned \$3,600 a year working as welders in the shipyards. The majority of

these women were not ready to give up their newfound independence after the war. A 1944 Labor Department study found that 80% of working women desired to continue working after the war. Unfortunately, most of the women were laid off soon after the war, but regardless, World War II changed women’s lives forever.

“Rosemary had found a personal resolve and identity in her work that didn’t include her family, her background, or a man. Her work was for her what music was for Ava, except that instead of it being primarily an outlet for her emotions, it was a vehicle of self-worth and importance. Ava breathed in and looked away, knowing that she, Rosemary, and the whole country would be all right after the war...”

Songbird, Chapter 55

LOVE AND WAR

While World War II produced innumerable soldiers, tanks, and warships, it also produced something else – marriages! With the uncertainties of war, couples across the country rushed to the altar before men were shipped overseas to enter the war. The 1941 marriage rate, 12.6 per 100,000 population, was the highest recorded rate ever in the United States.

Anniston, AL was no exception. The Anniston Star reported in January 1942 that during the month of December 1941 alone at least 150 marriage licenses were issued and about three marriages occurred daily. The 27 Division from New York was preparing to depart for the Pacific warfront, and the men were eager to marry before leaving. Many married hometown sweethearts, and others married Alabama girls they met while training at the fort. Wartime romances were often sincere, but others were impulsive and fleeting, as shown by the increased postwar divorce rate.



In December 1941, Edward N. Burke of Fort McClellan and Lila Marie McCary of Anniston were married. James Joseph Sergio of Fort McClellan and D. Virginia Knight of Anniston were married, and Herbert Dorman of Fort McClellan and Alice Virginia Williams of Anniston were married to name a few. I wonder what happened to these wartime lovers.

GENERAL GEORGE B. MCCLELLAN

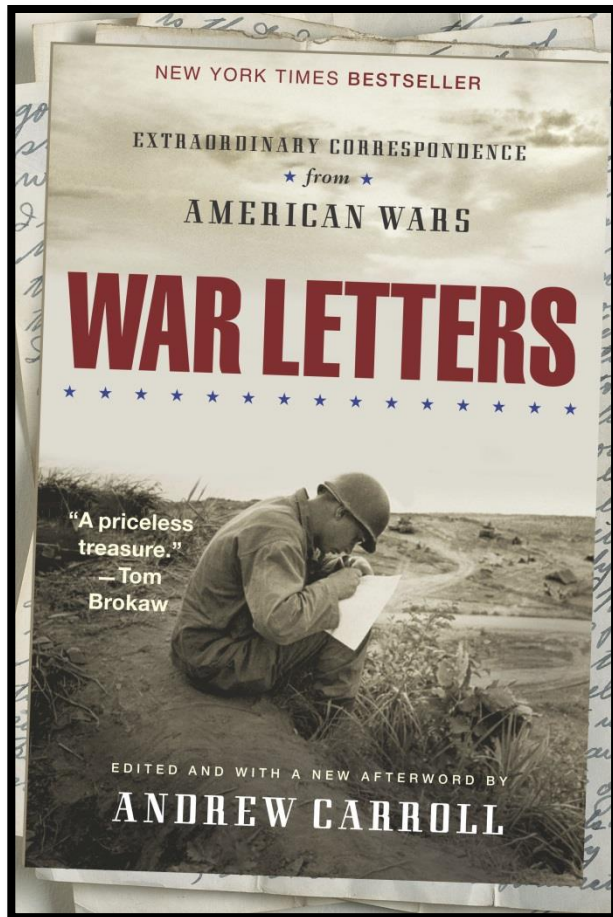
Do you know who once called President Abraham Lincoln a “well-meaning baboon”? The answer is George B. McClellan, the Civil War General for whom Fort McClellan was named. If you want to know more about the man behind the name, here are some interesting facts:

- George B. McClellan was born on December 3, 1826 in Philadelphia, PA.
- He graduated from West Point in 1846, ranking second in his class.
- He fought in the Mexican-American War from 1846 to 1848.
- After leaving military service, McClellan became the President of the Ohio and Mississippi River Railroad.
- He married Mary Ellen Marcy and had two children.
- In 1861 when the Civil War began, McClellan reentered military service and commanded Ohio’s volunteer army.
- After winning a series of small battles in West Virginia, he was given command to organize the Army of the Potomac.
- In November 1861, McClellan was named the General-in-Chief of the Union Army.
- Unhappy with McClellan’s hesitancy to attack the Confederate Army, President Lincoln removed McClellan as General-in-Chief in March 1862.
- In 1864, McClellan ran for the presidency as the Democratic Party candidate against Abraham Lincoln and failed.
- He served one term as governor of New Jersey from 1878 to 1881.
- McClellan died in 1885 at the age of 58.



WAR LETTERS

I am rereading a wonderful book. It is War Letters edited by Andrew Carroll. The book is a



collection of letters, giving special insight into the Civil War, World War I and II, Vietnam, Korea, the Cold War, and the Persian Gulf. It contains priceless, first-hand accounts of the Battles of Antietam and Gettysburg, the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Port Chicago explosion, and many more. What struck me this week in the midst of all the tragic stories were the tender letters sent home by soldiers to their families. Here are a few of the best! They will touch your heart.

“Patience what shall I write you? Shall it be more word of friendship? Oh no, my heart prompts my pen to the most wedded love. If I had never known you that flame would have been unkindled in this bosom but once set burning it will burn forever. You are associated with every thought and every action of my existence. Last night while lying on the parapet (for I slept there) viewing the starry heavens, I almost lived over the last two years. They were associated with many happy recollections. There was but one solitary cloud to mar my future happiness (this bloody war) and I hope very soon it will be dissolved. I will then be the happiest of the happy.” Sgt. Maj. James Black, Civil War soldier, writing to his wife Patience.

After the war, he returned home to his family.

“My girl, my girl, how I do miss you. I didn’t think it possible for one to be possessed of the longing I have for you. At night I lay awake and think and think of you, the roar of the big guns, giving way before the press of mental pictures of you. I go back and retravel again the entire road that we have known together.” 2nd Lt. Francis M. Tracy, World War I soldier, writing to his wife Gertrude. He was killed in action September 27, 1918.

Momie & Dad: It is pretty hard to check out this way with out a fighting chance but we can’t liveforever. I’m not afraid to die. I just hate the thought of not seeing you again. Buy Turkey Ranch with my money and just think of me often while your there. Make liberal donations to both sisters. See that Gary has a new car his first year of hi-school.” Lt. Tommie Kennedy, World War II soldier, writing to his parents. He died a prisoner of war in 1945.

FIRST HAND ACCOUNT OF OMAHA BEACH ON D-DAY

Last week, I wrote about the book War Letters I am rereading and shared some sweet letters that soldiers throughout American history sent home to their families. This week, I have to share with you one more letter I found from the book recalling a soldier's memories of D-Day to his wife Mildred. His name is Dom Bart. He was a part of the 29th Infantry Division and in the first wave of soldiers to arrive on Omaha Beach. Read his words and honor the men who fought for our freedom now 70 years ago.



"The elements were at their worst and our landing craft was half filled with water. We used our helmets to throw it overboard and I never thought we would make it. Some of the boats never reached shore. It was a horrible sight.

Finally the word came – Let's go – and there we were in combat, something new in my life. But oh, what an experience.

We didn't have a chance to fight back, as we were dropped in water over our heads. No one's fault as the entire beach was strewn with mines. With a stream of lead coming towards us, we were at the mercy of the Germans and we had all to do to reach shore and recuperate. I floated around in water for about one hour and was more dead than alive. Tried to land at several places, but always had to withdraw. It was impossible to get ashore.

I lost all hopes and said my last prayer to the Good Lord. The prayer was a passage to safety, but I sure was in a bad way. Got to the beach half frozen and almost unable to move and then I passed out. How long I remained there, I don't recall, but when I came to, the fighting was at a climax. Pulled myself together and sought a rifle and around I went trying to locate my outfit. It didn't take long to spot them and was I glad. But gracious Lord, what was left of them, just a handful, about 25 out of the 160. The battalion was almost wiped out, 800 casualties out of 1,000 men.

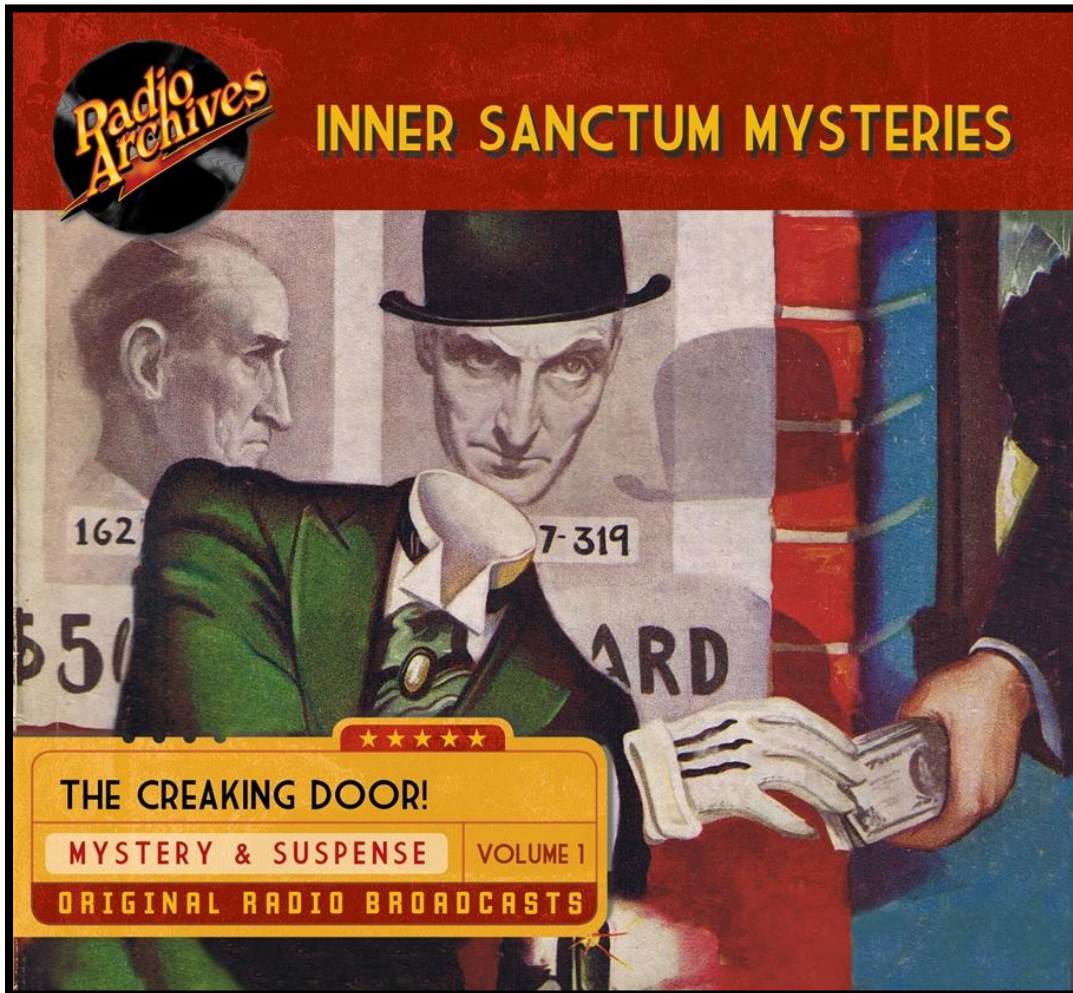
Our position was desperate, but with sheer will, fear and luck we overcame all obstacles and pushed inland to capture Vierville-sur-Mer, our first town. The price was high but covered ourselves with glory and for that we received the Presidential Citation. Later on we received another at Vire, France.

Yes darling, our outfit can be proud for the part it has played in helping to win the war. Whenever there was a tough nut to crack, the 1st BN., 116th Infantry, 29th Division was called on and always came through with flying colors. I'm very proud of it."

Pfc. Dom Bart

“THE DEAD WALK AT NIGHT.”

In the 1940s, radio was entertainment! I asked my grandfather James Barry recently about his favorite radio shows growing up. One of the first ones he mentioned was the “Inner Sanctum Mysteries”. It was a popular radio program featuring mystery, terror, and suspense. The program ran from 1941 to 1952, scaring listeners each week with its trademark creaking door which opened and closed each episode. Want to hear the famous creaking door? Travel back to the 1940s and [listen](#) to an episode!



“Good evening, friends of the screeching door,” came the eerie voice of the Inner Sanctum Mysteries host.

The slow creak of an opening door followed it. Ava giggled. The door always amused her more than anything else.

“Pass me the bag of coconut dips,” Rosemary whispered.

Ava passed her the coconut candies and motioned for the bag of fluffs. They ate with their eyes fixed on the radio, even though it didn’t move. They didn’t want to miss a word of the horrifying tale of the “The Dead Walk at Night.”

Chapter 26, Songbird

The True History and inspirations behind The War Song Series

[illegible]

“Like Sheffield, the country and soldiers everywhere now turned their eyes toward Japan. James’s next letter both rejoiced over the possible end of C-ration stew and hash and contemplated his more than likely move to the Pacific front.”
Songbird, Chapter 54

NEVER FORGET. NEVER AGAIN.

This past week I have been reading first-hand accounts from soldiers who helped liberate concentration camps in Germany. These two accounts below will truly make your heart sick and proud of these American soldiers' part in the war. An estimated six million Jews were murdered by the Nazis during World War II.



"We visited a German political internment camp. The camp had been liberated only two days and the condition of the camp has changed very little. The American Red Cross just arrived. The inmates consisted of mostly Jews, some Russians, Poles and there were six American pilots that they shot almost immediately.

When we first walked in we saw all these creatures that were supposed to be men. They were dressed in black and white suits, heads shaved and starving to death. Malnutrition was with every one of them.

We met one of them that could speak English so he acted as a guide for us. First we saw a German monument that stated 51,600 died in this camp in three years. They were proud of it. Second we went in the living barracks. Six sq. ft. per six people. Hard wood slats six ft. high. Then we went down through rows of barbed wire to a building where they purposely infected these people with disease. Human guinea pigs for German medics.

In this medical building were exhibits of human heads in jars and tattooed human flesh or skin on the walls.

After that we went up to the torture dept. Here were beating devices that I won't explain. The clubs, by the way, are still lying there with blood on them. In another room in this building were 8 cremator furnaces. The doors were open and in one I noticed one body ½ done. A horrible sight. After I snapped a few pictures I walked outside and noticed a truck with 50 naked bodies piled up six deep. Turning my head away from that I looked over against the wall and here were about 30 more. Their eyes open, their mouths open, blue, purple, cut and some with holes in them.

WAR STORIES

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The guide told us that he lived with some of these men for years. He said most of them died with-in the past 24 hrs. In fact a Red Cross man told us they were dying like flies. Nothing can be done for them. It's too late. They are much too far gone.

There is another place I never told you about. The latrine. I won't tell you about it, because you won't believe me. It's unbelievable."

1st Lt. James Carroll Jordan writing to his wife about the Buchenwald Concentration Camp, War Letters.

"You have heard the stories over the radio – I don't want to add much more – the most striking picture I saw was the 'death train' – I saw picture, no not picture, but carload and carload full of corpses, once upon a time people who were alive, who were happy and people who had convictions or were jews – then slowly but methodically they were killed. Death has an ugly face on these people – they were starved to death – the positions they were lying in show that they succumbed slowly – they made one move, fell, were too weak to make another move, and there are hundreds of such lifeless skeletons covered by some skin."

1st Lt. Fritz Schnaittacher, a German-born Jew serving with the U.S. Army writing to his wife about the Dachau Concentration Camp, War Letters.

THE JERSEY BOUNCE

Oh, how fun it would be to go back in time to a 1940s dance party! Forget a DJ; give me swing dancing and a live orchestra. One of the biggest dance songs of the time was the Jersey Bounce. The song was a number one hit for Benny Goodman in 1942. [Listen](#) and dance along!

“It’s the Jersey Bounce. We have to dance!”

“We’ll join you.” Sydney put a hand on each side of Ava’s waist and pushed her forward onto the dance floor behind them.

Ava was nervous that she wouldn’t be able to dance like the other young men and women, but Sydney moved her with smooth agility to the quick tempo of the small orchestra. Music always had an emotional power over her, and her blood coursed through her body and colored her face as she swayed to the resonating rhythm of the trumpet and trombones.

Songbird, Chapter 8



WAR HALTS TELEVISION PRODUCTION!

When World War II began, television sets were just emerging onto the scene. Manufacturers were busy figuring out how to make the television as prevalent as the radio in American households. World War II stopped everything, however. All commercial production of television equipment was banned for the duration of the war, and TV broadcasting schedules were reduced to a bare minimum. As soon as the war ended in 1945, manufacturers went right back to producing television sets. In 1946, RCA put out the 630-TS TV, which was the first mass-produced postwar television. In that same year, “Hour Glass,” the first musical variety show, and “Faraway Hill,” the first soap opera, aired. Here are some other interesting early television facts for TV lovers:

- In 1947, there were about 44,000 TV sets in American homes compared to 40 million radios.
- On September 30, 1947, the New York Yankees played the Brooklyn Dodgers in the first telecasted World Series game.
- On November 6, 1947, “Meet the Press” first aired. It is the longest-running program in television history.
- In December 1947, “The Howdy Doody Show” aired, becoming the first nationally televised children’s show.
- In 1948, only one in ten Americans had seen a television set, but television production and sales were rapidly increasing.
- In 1949, television sets hit the 2,000,000 sold mark.
- On June 27, 1949, “Captain Video and His Video Rangers,” the first science fiction television series, aired.
- In 1950, television sets sold reached 8,000,000.
- In 1951, television sets sold reached 13,000,000.
- On October 15, 1951, “I Love Lucy” aired.
- In 1952, an estimated 10.6 million homes were watching “I Love Lucy”.
- By the mid-1950s, half of all U.S. homes had a television.

NOT ALL WOUNDS ARE VISIBLE

Post-traumatic stress disorder was a term coined in 1980, but experienced by many returning World War II veterans. The husband, son, or father who returned was often not the same man who had left for the war a few years ago. Even though the war was over, it was still going on in the minds of soldiers trying to reintegrate into normal life. The men suffered from:

- A reliving of trauma through nightmares and memory flashbacks.
- Increased arousal from sudden noises that reminded them of combat sounds.
- A tendency to avoid stimuli, such as conversations about their combat experiences.
- Negative thinking, such as feeling emotionally numb or guilty about one's survival while others died.
- Self-destructive behavior to forget their combat experiences, such as drinking too much.



As a result, it was sometimes difficult for the men to reconnect with loved ones. They felt that their wives and other family members didn't understand what they had been through. Other men were now fathers to children who had been born while they were away or to children who were too young to remember them when they left. Some kids were afraid to get close to their fathers in fear that they would leave again. Life during the war was hard for the men, but life after the war had new challenges.

"Ava pretended to listen and laugh along with their conversation, but her attention was really focused on the changes to her friend. There was sadness in his face, despite his humor, and he looked and sounded like someone who had come home to the familiar only to find everything unfamiliar and displaced."

Songbird, Chapter 53

THE MOST ATROCIOUS THING YOU'VE NEVER HEARD

When I wrote Songbird, I wanted to learn and write about what life was like for men and in particular women on the home front - the sacrifices that they made, the struggles they faced, and the changes they were forced to embrace. Now, I am researching for my next book, and it has taken me to an odd place. What was life like for German women as the war was coming to an end? As a result, I learned about an atrocity that I didn't know until last week occurred. When the war was ending and the Allied forces began to occupy Germany, millions of German women were raped by conquering soldiers. Like American women, these women had lost loved ones to the war and learned to do things for survival that up until this point, only men had done. They were also faced with rebuilding a war-torn country and dealing with the consequences of corrupt leaders. Now, put on top of all that, the fear of being raped.



The raping of German women at the conclusion of War World II has been called by some historians "The Greatest Mass Raping" in history. It is estimated that as many as 2,000,000 German women were raped with 100,000 of these occurring in Berlin alone. While most of the rapists were from the Soviet Army, it is reported that men from all the Allied armies participated. Many of the men were said to have been encouraged to participate, seeing it as part of the spoils of war. The horror stories are difficult to comprehend with girls as young as 8 to 10 and women as old as 80 being victims. Many women were gang raped, raped multiple times in one day, and raped repeatedly for weeks at a time. No woman was out of danger. There are even stories of Soviet soldiers entering convents and raping nuns. More than 200,000 women are estimated to have been killed for resisting or died as a result of rape. Life for German women in the 1940s was one of great hardship both during and after the war. This is another, often unheard of part of the suffering caused by World War II.

PAUL WILBUR GREEN: 1925-2014

This past weekend, my favorite World War II veteran passed away. Paul Wilbur Green, my grandfather, served in the Navy from January 1944 to May 1946 in the Pacific. Stationed in the Marshall Islands, his job was to operate a barge ferrying bomber planes between the land and aircraft carriers. After the war, he came home to Jacksonville, AL, married Gwendolyn Livingston, raised two daughters, and farmed. He was a kind, humble man, who loved being outside and dogs. He didn't say much, but you knew that he loved you. Looking through pictures for the funeral service, I realized that he never missed an event in my life. He was always there, and he will be greatly missed. I thank him for defending our country during World War II and for being a wonderful grandfather.



*Laci Barry Post
The War Song Series*

THE MONUMENTS MEN: THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF A MEDIOCRE MOVIE

This blog is typically focused on retelling and preserving the stories of the World War II era. As such, a movie review of a current film is not our usual content. The subject matter of this film, however, brings it into particular relevance to us. So for reasons that will become clear, here is our review of “The Monuments Men.”



The Film

First off, let's look at the film itself. Overall it was generally unremarkable. It was not a bad film, but it wasn't an overwhelming success either. While the star-studded cast featuring George Clooney, Matt Damon, Bill Murray, John Goodman, and Cate Blanchett did an adequate job of bringing their individual characters to screen, the story as a whole felt a bit rushed and forced throughout the film. It's a large story that would have lent itself well to a mini-series format similar to "Band of Brothers" or "The Pacific". However, the two-hour feature format felt like it didn't allow the appropriate time to build the story and the characters and the bond between them to the level that the script required. Each member of the all-star ensemble had his or her "Oscar" moment in the film, delivering a heartfelt speech or emotional performance. Most of these moments, however, felt forced and unnaturally placed within the story. The viewer is left feeling that the film is trying way too hard to evoke an emotional response from the audience. That's not to say that there weren't a few glimmering moments in which a true chord was struck, but there could have been a lot more of those moments had the characters been developed to a point that the audience actually felt invested and cared about what happened to them. Ultimately, the film did its job. It told the story. It was enjoyable enough. It just felt a little disconnected overall. So, the big question now is... If this film is so overwhelmingly mediocre, why are we even taking the time to review it, and more importantly why are we still going to recommend you watch it? That brings us to the second aspect of the film - the history it tells.

The Story

The film is based on the non-fiction book, "The Monuments Men: Allied Heroes, Nazi Thieves and the Greatest Treasure Hunt in History", by Robert M. Edsel. As with most such tales, the book is going to be much more faithful to the true history than the screen play. The film version leans more closely to the historical-fiction category as it embellishes the details and stories surrounding the true history. That, however, is where the true power and importance of the historical-fiction genre lies. It allows us to take a piece of history that is truly worth telling the world about

and give it enough of a story to get people to want to listen to it. The overarching story of these men and women who risked their lives to preserve the art and culture of Europe in the face of the Nazi war machine is worth sharing and preserving. Some of the minor details have been changed, but the truth of the story is still present. And that is where this mediocre film finds great importance.

Obviously, there are numerous books on the subject that will give a more detailed historical account of The Monuments Men, but a major Hollywood production like this with an all-star cast is going to get the story to the masses. Hopefully, upon discovery of this amazing story, people will want to know more and will seek out the true history behind the film. A quick search of Amazon reveals not only the book that the film is based on, but a number of similar non-fiction books telling the detailed story of the Monuments Men and their mission.



The Result

The sheer numbers of artifacts, paintings, sculptures, and historical documents that were saved by these men are absolutely astounding. Until you see the whole story and truly grasp the magnitude of what they recovered and protected, the importance of this piece of history cannot be adequately comprehended. So if you haven't seen the film, it is definitely worth checking out for the history alone. Or just skip the movie and pick up the book. It's usually hard to go wrong with that. Either way, it's a story that should be remembered, preserved, and shared.

For more on the history of The Monuments Men, check out some of the links below.

TheSmithsonian.com

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/true-story-monuments-men-180949569/?no-ist>

The Monuments Men: Allied Heroes, Nazi Thieves, and the Greatest Treasure Hunt in History
by Robert M. Edsel

Saving Italy: The Race to Rescue a Nation's Treasures from the Nazis
by Robert M. Edsel

THE MARCH OF DIMES

World War II brought many changes to the world both during and after the war, and not all of the changes were bad. Did you know Americans got a new dime after the war? Before World War II,



Lady Liberty reigned on the dime. Sometimes, just her head was shown. Other times, she could be seen sitting on a rock or brandishing wings on her head to symbolize freedom of thought. The last of these is called the Mercury dime. In 1946, however, the dime was chosen to honor the President who took the country through the Great Depression and most of World War II.

Franklin Roosevelt was President of the United States from March 4, 1933 to April 12, 1945, when he died of a cerebral hemorrhage. He died

just 18 days before Hitler committed suicide and just 26 days before the celebration of Victory in Europe day. What better way to commemorate the man who led our country through so much? The new dime was released on January 30, 1946, which would have been Roosevelt's 64th birthday.

"I have some unfortunate news to share with you ladies," she began. "President Roosevelt has just died in Warm Springs, Georgia."

Everyone was silent as they were called back to the reality of the world outside of music. Several girls began to cry, and Ava felt her own eyes swimming with tears. Their president and leader throughout the war had just died, and they each felt an ineffable sense of loss.

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FRILLY FASHION IS GONE WITH THE WIND



In 1939, *Gone with the Wind* premiered, and women were beginning to wear fuller skirted and more romantic feeling clothing. Nylon stockings were new to the fashion scene and selling fast. Then came the war, and fashion took a nose dive. Dresses became sparser, shorter, and in darker colors, and nylon stockings disappeared as the DuPont company began making parachutes and airplane cords out of the material instead. Working women also began wearing pants. Now that women were running the factories, they needed clothing that would help them move about more freely and increase productivity. Clothes became simpler as everyone worked to conserve materials. Even bride and grooms were changing their wedding attires to uniform suits. Old clothes were mended, and undergarments were made out of household linens to preserve. Both the American and English governments issued regulations limiting fabric use. In spite of it all, French women used their fashion as a defense mechanism. Even when Paris fell to the German Army, Parisian women proudly wore their elaborate hats as an act of defiance. They would not be seen as downtrodden!

HITLERS MOST WANTED



Do you know which actor was Hitler's favorite? The leader of the Nazi Army liked this actor with German ancestry so much he even offered a large reward for anyone who could capture him alive. That actor would be Clark Gable! Clark Gable served in the U.S. Army Air Corps as a part of the 351st Heavy Bombardment Group. He made training films and participated in five bombing raids. In one German raid, he even came close to losing his life. Before joining the Air Corps, his wife Carole Lombard became the first war-related American female casualty when her plane crashed on January 16, 1942. The popular actress was on her way home from a war bond rally in Indiana where she raised over \$2 million in defense bonds.

Clark Gable was not the only *Gone with the Wind* star to contribute to the war. Sadly, Leslie Howard (Ashley) was killed when the KLM airplane he was on was shot down by German fighters over the Bay of Biscay. He helped the war efforts by making anti-German propaganda films and reportedly assisting British or Allied Intelligence. Vivien Leigh (Scarlett) performed for the troops in Africa and once caused a stir by wearing a "66 coupons" blouse to promote rationing. Hattie McDaniel (Mammy) also entertained the troops and actively promoted the sale of war bonds.



A WONDERFUL LIFE WORTH REMEMBERING

In 1941, men from all over America were racing to enlistment offices to “join up” and “fight the good fight” against Hitler and his war machine. At the head of this line of ordinary Joes trying to do their part was one of the most celebrated Hollywood actors of the time. With an Oscar for best actor under his belt, Jimmy Stewart pressed pause on his movie career to serve his country from 1941 to 1946. Unfortunately, Stewart didn’t meet the Army’s height and weight requirements to become a fighter pilot and was rejected in his first attempts to enlist. Unfazed by the setback, Stewart found an alternative route by joining the U.S. Air Corps, where he would quickly rise through the ranks. During the war, Hollywood would see many of its most famous actors and actresses serve, but Stewart was the first major star to wear a military uniform in WWII, enlisting eight months before the attack on Pearl Harbor.

During his time in the war, Stewart would fly 20 combat missions as a B-24 Pilot in Europe and command a squadron,



clear his intentions to go back to making movies after the Army, but with one caveat. “No war pictures.” “I’ll settle for a good comedy,” he said. True to his word, Stewart returned to film in 1946 with a little picture called “It’s a Wonderful Life”.

Today Stewart is celebrated as one of the greatest actors of all time. With numerous medals, commendations, and decorations spanning his service through two major wars, Stewart is also among the greatest American heroes of all time. His life, work, and service were a rarity even in his time, but they stand out in deeper contrast today, when role models of his caliber are few and far between. He is a life worth remembering, a life worth celebrating, and a life worth saving. Share this story with everyone possible and help us remember what a true American looks like.

For a great glimpse into the history of Jimmy Stewart and his service, check out our War Stories Board www.pinterest.com/warsongseries/war-stories/



eventually earning the rank of Colonel. He would be awarded the Air Medal, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Croix de Guerre, and seven battle stars. “As a squadron commander, he flew many dangerous missions when he could have sent others instead,” recalled Robbie Robinson, a sergeant who was an engineer-gunner in Stewart’s B-24 squadron. After the war, Stewart continued in the U.S. Air Force Reserve earning the rank of Brigadier General.

Stewart was interviewed by LIFE magazine shortly before returning home from the war, where he made



SOME LAUGHABLE LYRICS FROM A WORLD AT WAR



Many popular big band songs are featured in Songbird, but others just didn't quite make the list. During World War II, songwriters used their skills to write propaganda pieces for the war effort. I think you will find these both hilarious and terrible!

"You're a Sap, Mr. Jap"

Performed by the Murphy Sisters

(A song written to humiliate the Japanese Army)

You're a sap, Mr. Jap, you make a Yankee cranky
You're a sap, Mr. Jap, Uncle Sammy's gonna spanky
Wait and see before we're done
The A, B, C and D will sink your rising sun*
You're a sap, Mr. Jap, you don't know Uncle Sammy
When he fights for his rights, you'll take it on the lammy
For he'll wipe the Axis right off the map
You're a sap, sap sap, Mr. Jap

"Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition"

Performed by Kay Kyser

(A War Hymn?)

Praise the Lord and swing into position
Can't afford to be a politician
Praise the Lord, we're all between perdition
And the deep blue sea
Yes, the sky pilot said it, you gotta 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 ain't a-goin' fishin'
Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition



WAR STORIES

The True History and inspirations behind The War Song Series

And we'll all stay free'
Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition
Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition
Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition
And we'll all stay free

"The Deepest Shelter in Town"

Performed by Florence Desmond

(A funny British propaganda song to encourage men to stay inside during bomb raids!)

Don't run away mister
Oh, stay and play mister
Don't worry if you hear the sirens go
Though I'm not a lady of the highest virtue
I wouldn't dream of letting anything hurt you
And so before you go, I think you ought to know

I've got a cosy flat, there's a place for your hat
I wear a pink chiffon negligé gown
And do I know my stuff, but if that's not enough
I've got the deepest shelter in town.

I've got a room for two, a radio that's new,
An alarm clock that won't let you down,
And I've got central heat, but to make it complete,
I've got the deepest shelter in town.

Every modern comfort I can just guarantee
If you hear the siren call then it's probably me

And, sweetie, to revert, I'll keep you on the alert
I won't even be wearing a frown
So you can hang around here until the all clear
In the deepest shelter in town.



"They're Either Too Young or Too Old"

Performed by Rosemary Clooney

(A song to encourage women to stay true to their soldier husbands and boyfriends)

They're either too young, or too old
They're either too gray or too grassy green
The pickings are poor and the crop is lean
What's good is in the army
What's left will never harm me
They're either too old or too young

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So, darling, you'll never get stung
Tomorrow I'll go hiking with that Eagle Scout unless
I get a call from grandpa for a snappy game of chess

I'll never, never fail ya
While you are in Australia
Or off among the Rooshians
And flying over Egypt
Your heart will never be gypped
And when you get to India
I'll still be what I've been to ya
I've looked the field over
And lo and behold
They're either too young or too old

They're either too bald or too bold
I'm down to the wheelchair and bassinet
My heart just refuses to get upset
I simply can't compel it to
With no Marine to tell it to

I'm either their first breath of spring
Or else, I'm their last little fling
I either get a fossil or an adolescent pup
I either have to hold him off
Or have to hold him up
The battle is on, but the fortress will hold
They're either too young or too old

To see more on the music that did make it into "Songbird" visit the [Follow The Music](#) page.

BACK TO SCHOOL SOLDIER!



The years after World War II were big years for colleges and universities in the United States. In 1944, the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, also known as the G.I. Bill, was passed, and an estimated 2.2 million veterans used it to go back to school! College campuses exploded.

The Jacksonville State Teachers College (Jacksonville State University today) in Jacksonville, AL had to find new ways to accommodate its now larger student body. They added two-year courses in engineering, law, medicine, dentistry, and other professional fields and ensured students of full credit when transferring to another institution of higher learning. In 1947, the college also introduced an A.B. and a B.S. in Arts and Sciences, knowing that many veterans did not wish to enter the education field.

Housing for the veterans was also a challenge. In 1946, arrangements were made with nearby Ft. McClellan to house 1,000 male veterans. Trailers were brought in, and two-story apartments were quickly erected to accommodate veterans with families. Shortly after, in 1947, registration exceeded 1,000 students, and the college began building two new large dormitories and a football stadium. The year was a good one for the Jacksonville State Teachers College. The French Ambassador to the United States visited the campus for the American Association of Teachers of French, and the Gamecocks went undefeated in football! Side note for Jack State alumni - in 1946, the Jacksonville Eagle Owls officially became the Gamecocks, and the school colors changed from purple and white to red and white.

Jacksonville State University USO Dance During WWII

Across the country, other college and universities experienced similar growth, challenges, and successes. The G.I. Bill helped millions of soldiers reintegrate into a community and start new lives!

"History was the one non-musical course, besides calisthenics, that she was taking at Jacksonville's State Teachers College that semester, and it was more than indulging her fondness for learning about real-life, fascinating people."

Songbird, Chapter 60

GERMAN SOLDIERS IN ALABAMA!



German soldiers in Alabama! For those living in the state during World War II, it was a startling reality. In the summer of 1943, thousands of mostly German prisoners of war (POWs) poured into POW camps at Aliceville, Opelika, Camp Rucker, and Fort McClellan. An estimated 18,000 Germans were in captivity in Alabama that year. A government report showed 3,004 prisoners at Fort McClellan alone!

The prisoners at Fort McClellan were not mistreated. They lived in 20-man barracks and enjoyed kitchens, orderly rooms, dayrooms, dispensaries, a library, a reading room, a chapel, an open air stage, and athletic fields. The prisoners worked during their stay. They helped with excavation, drainage, and clearing operations; food preparation; and vehicle maintenance. Some of the men were also contracted out for agricultural and industrial work. They chopped cotton, harvested peanuts, and felled trees. Many developed friendships with locals, and some were treated so well, that they even returned to the United States after the war to live.

Sadly, some POWs at Fort McClellan died of health problems and did not make it home after the war. Every year, on Germany's day of remembrance, which is two Sundays before the first Sunday of Advent, there is a memorial service at Fort McClellan to remember the POWs and the 26 Germans and 3 Italians who are buried there. This year the service will occur this coming Sunday, November 16, 2014. Let us remember all the men who died during World War II.

THANK YOU!

Veterans Day began on November 11, 1919 as Armistice Day to commemorate peace between the Allied Nations and Germany during World War I and honor the soldiers who fought in the “Great War”. After World War II and the Korean War, the day of observation was renamed Veterans Day to honor American soldiers from all wars.



In honor of Veterans Day, I wanted to share with you a picture of my great uncle, Ernest Barry. He was a World War II veteran who served in the United States Army. His service was unique in that he served both in Germany and Japan before returning to Jacksonville, AL. This picture was taken of him in Germany with a fellow comrade. Ernest served in a tank division in Germany and in an explosive division in Japan. I wish he were still alive today to tell his stories! Thank you Ernest!

If you have a family story of a WWII veteran you would like to share, please leave us a comment. If you have any photos of WWII era veterans you would like to share, you can post them to our Facebook page. Help us share the stories and memories of those who gave so much for our freedoms.

A WAR TIME CHRISTMAS LIST



Have you finished your Christmas shopping yet? If you were buying for a World War II soldier, what would you buy? According to a 1941 survey by the Army Times, which was a weekly newspaper for servicemen, here is a list of things the soldiers most wanted for Christmas. It might surprise you!

- Cigarettes
- Cigarette lighters
- Cigarette cases
- Watches
- Calendars (Some wanted pin-up girls!)
- Radios with battery power
- Stationary
- Pen and pencil sets
- Stamps
- More letters from home
- Clothes
- Shaving equipment
- Toilet articles
- Sewing and shoeshine kits
- Extra socks

More than any of these items, however, the men wanted peace and to be home for Christmas. Remember and pray for soldiers today that will be away from their families this holiday season.

THE ART OF WAR



Even in war, art must go on! Edouard Patte, a Red Cross Inspector, was surprised to find an art studio when he visited Fort McClellan's POW camp in 1944. He wrote, "Since my last visit 4 barracks were set aside as art studios. Within them are working a few painters, sculptors, toy-makers and handicraft addicts who do some commendable work. Those little studios with self-made benches, old canvas frames, tin cans full of red, blue, yellow, black, and white, with paintings of European landscapes, of marines, of winter scenes, of still nature, cheeses, sausages and beer, of glorious bouquets of germanium, with portraits of soldiers, or Arabs, of nude women or of a child offer a striking resemblance to the Montparnesse Penthouse."



A 1943 POW Occupational Summary stated that four artists, three stonecutters, seven woodworkers, 13 stonemasons, and one sculptor were among the 3,000 prisoners. These men left behind stonework, stone walls, and patios. Perhaps the most visible piece they left behind, however, are the murals in Remington Hall, which was the Officer's Club. The murals are painted on the upper five feet of each wall and match the Spanish Colonial style of the building. Scenes depict

WAR STORIES

The True History and inspirations behind The War Song Series

soldiers fighting, soldiers at leisure, and everyday life in a city. In efforts to preserve the murals, two signatures were uncovered, Albin Sagadin and Herbert Bolau. Albin Sagadin studied at the Dresden Academy of Arts, arrived at Fort McClellan when he was 30 in 1944, returned to Germany after the war, married his wife Maria, had one child named Carmen, and lived to the age of 84. Less is known about Herbert. He was 22 when imprisoned at the fort and originated from East Prussia.

The POWs at Fort McCellan not only lived and worked while they were at the fort, but they left behind lasting remembrances in the form of art and physical improvements to the once busy fort. Join efforts to preserve Remington Hall and the POW murals! Visit www.facebook.com/RestoreRemingtonHall to learn more.

“A large wooden bar jutted out into the center of the room, and tables and chairs surrounded it and lined the windows looking out onto Buckner Circle. What arrested Carson’s attention, though, were the half-finished murals running across the top five feet of each wall. A man with his back turned away from him was holding a paintbrush and contemplating the wall in front of him.”

Songbird, Chapter 29



THANKS FOR READING

Thank you for reading War Stories: Volume One. I hope you have enjoyed the time, places, and people you discovered here. To continue your journey, visit www.TheWarSongSeries.com for more about the true history, the music, and the passion that inspires The War Song Series. “Like” us on Facebook. “Follow” our Pinterest boards. “Subscribe” to the War Stories blog.



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