

THE FOUR TOWNS

MOBILE

Mobile, Alabama, before the war, was a sleepy southern town of 112,000, whose only real industry was shipbuilding, as it had been since the Great War a generation earlier. Discovered by Spanish explorers in the 16th century, colonized by the French, taken over by the British, then by the Spanish and finally incorporated into the United States in 1812, the city boasted a diverse, cosmopolitan population. The city's elite, "Old Mobile," consisted of the hundreds of families who traced their roots back to the city's prosperous antebellum era when it was both the cotton and slave trading capital of Alabama.

Mobile was a city deeply divided by race. Jim Crow segregation rules severely curtailed the rights of African Americans to partake of Mobile's bounty. In 1939, only 224 blacks qualified to vote. A local branch of the NAACP struggled to respond to a litany of problems: lynchings, the denial of due process, employment discrimination, wage disparities, and separate and unequal public facilities. Mobile's black community centered on Davis Avenue, where black-owned businesses, theaters and a public library served the needs of an African-American population that was often excluded from other parts of town.

All Mobilians suffered terribly from the dislocations and privations of the Great Depression. Businesses failed, shipyards closed, industrial plants laid off workers and city services were slashed. For years, as Katharine Phillips Singer recalled, "Mobile made its living by taking in each other's wash."

World War II utterly transformed the city and its economy. The explosion actually began in the late 1930s, when local companies such as Alcoa began producing war materiel for Japan and European countries. Local shipyards won contracts to build Liberty ships and destroyers in 1940, and by the time America entered the war in late 1941, Mobile was already booming. The Alcoa plant processed millions of pounds of alumina used to build many of the 304,000 airplanes America produced during the war; the Waterman Steamship Company boasted one of the nation's largest merchant fleets, and Mobile became one of the busiest shipping and shipbuilding ports in the nation. In 1940, Gulf Shipbuilding had had 240 employees; by 1943, it had 11,600. Alabama Dry Dock went from 1,000 workers to almost 30,000. Brookley Field, a major Army Air Force supply depot and bomber modification center, provided 17,000 civilian jobs.

During the war, Mobile became the second largest city in Alabama, as tens of thousands of people streamed into the area from small towns and farms all over the south. By March 1944, Mobile County's population had grown to 233,000, up 64 percent from 1940. The population explosion caused severe overcrowding, housing shortages and overburdened schools that were pronounced the worst in the nation by the U.S. Office of Education. The federal government made a documentary film, "Wartown," about what was happening in Mobile and the steps begin taken to help the city cope with the challenges it faced.

Thousands of African Americans streamed into Mobile in search of defense work and a fresh start. They found both, but they also found the same kind of discrimination they had known at home. In the spring of 1943, in response to a presidential order requiring defense contractors to engage in non-discriminatory hiring practices, as well as years of pressure from local black leaders and the NAACP, the Alabama Dry Dock and Shipbuilding Company reluctantly agreed to promote 12 black workers to become welders. Shortly after the new welders had finished their first shift, white shipyard employees attacked any black workers they could find. In the aftermath of the riot, the company created four separate shipways where blacks were free to hold every kind of position — except foreman. African Americans working in the rest

of the shipyard remained largely confined to the kind of unskilled tasks they had always performed. More violent confrontations between whites and blacks would take place in Mobile throughout the war years.

Public pronouncements encouraged women to work in war industries, and a series of articles in the *Mobile Register* featured both women war workers and those who joined the auxiliary military forces. Two-thousand-five-hundred women worked at Alabama Dry Dock, 1,200 at Gulf Shipbuilding and 750 at Brookley Field. Women would hold nearly a quarter of defense-related jobs in Alabama during the war years.

More than 15,000 people from Mobile served in the armed forces; 300 died in action. Like all Americans, Mobilians who remained at home supported the war effort through bond drives, clothing drives, fundraising campaigns for the Red Cross and a host of other charitable activities. In 1942, with Germany's "Operation Drumbeat" underway, Mobile residents responded to the threat of U-boat attacks on merchant and military ships by dimming their lights and holding blackout drills.

By the time the war ended, Mobile had been transformed from a regional port town serving the cotton trade to a major industrial and commercial center. The changes that occurred in Mobile during the war years would continue to reverberate during the post-war civil rights era, the rise of the "New South" and the emergence of the Sunbelt in the decades after the war.

Residents of Mobile, Alabama, interviewed in THE WAR include:

Maurice Bell — A carpenter from Golden, Mississippi, Bell spent the early part of the war building army camps all around the country. He then went to Mobile to work at the Chickasaw shipyard in early 1943 and was drafted when he turned 18 that spring. He chose the Navy, trained at the Great Lakes Naval Station and served on the *USS Indianapolis* in the Pacific. He witnessed the battles of Tarawa, Saipan, the Philippine Sea and many others.

Glenn Frazier — Frazier grew up in Fort Deposit, Alabama, and in the summer of 1941 ran away from home, lied about his age and joined the Army at 16. He volunteered to serve in the Philippines, hoping to be safely far away from the war then raging across Europe. The Japanese attacked in December 1941, and Frazier fought for four months in the jungles of Bataan, became a prisoner of war and endured the Bataan Death March and three and a half years in slave labor camps in Japan.

Tom Galloway — A native of Mobile, he was a senior at Auburn University when he left college for Officer Candidate School. He became a 2nd Lieutenant in the 28th Infantry Division, 109th Field Artillery, and in November 1944 was sent into the battle of the Hurtgen Forest, one of the most disastrous Allied campaigns in Europe. It was a nightmarish place to fight: with 100-foot fir trees that in some places grew just four feet apart, the forest was so dense, dark and shrouded in dank fog that soldiers could not see one another, let alone the enemy. Within two weeks, the officers of every single rifle company in Galloway's division were either killed or wounded.

John Gray — Gray grew up in Mobile, attended segregated schools and got a job in the Mobile shipyards as a carpenter's helper. He was drafted in May 1943 and joined the Marines, which had only recently allowed African Americans into its ranks. He was assigned to the 51st Defense Battalion, one of only two black units to be trained for combat. They became so skilled as expert gunners on 90 and 150 mm guns that they could "shoot the sting off a bee." But once they reached the South Pacific, their white commanders never saw fit to send them into battle. The men took to calling themselves "the Lost Battalion."

Dwain Luce — Luce was out of college, married and working at his family's thriving cannery business at the start of the war. He had been in the reserves and immediately went on active duty in late December 1941. He became a captain in the 82nd Airborne Division's 320th Glider Field Artillery Battalion. Leaving behind his wife and infant child, Luce fought in Sicily and Italy and landed in a glider in Normandy on D-Day and again in Holland as part of Operation Market Garden.

Clyde Odum — A foreman at the Alabama Dry Dock and Ship Building Company in Mobile, Odum remembers working "seven days a week — 12-hour days five days a week, 10 hours on Saturday, eight hours on Sunday, you felt like you had a week off."

Emma Belle Petcher — Originally from the small town of Millry, Alabama, Petcher moved to Mobile after graduating from high school in 1942 and got a job at Brookley Field. She learned to assemble bomber parts with such skill that she became one of only two women to be put in charge of quality control as an inspector.

Katharine Phillips — Phillips was a sophomore at Auburn at the start of the war. After graduation she returned to Mobile and worked at a nursery school for the children of shipyard workers. She also volunteered at the Red Cross Canteen, escorted visiting officers around town and scanned the newspapers every day, hoping not to read bad news about someone she knew.

Sidney Phillips — The son of the principal of Mobile's Murphy High School and the younger brother of Katharine Phillips (see above), he was 17 on December 8, 1941, when he enlisted in the Marines. He became a mortarman in the 1st Marine Division and fought at Guadalcanal and Cape Gloucester.

Ray Pittman — Pittman was working with his father as a carpenter in Mobile when the war began. In November 1942, afraid the fighting would end before he could get into it, he enlisted in the Marines. He became a sergeant in charge of a demolition team in the 4th Marine Division, 20th Marine Engineers, and fought in some of the most brutal campaigns in the Pacific, including Saipain, Tinian and Iwo Jima.

Willie Rushton — Born in northern Alabama, Rushton graduated from high school in 1941 and moved to Mobile, where he found work at the Coca-Cola Bottling Plant. He was drafted in March 1943 and joined the Marines. He was assigned to a service company and sent to the South Pacific in July 1943. Along with a number of other black Marines, he petitioned to be sent into combat and was eventually "attached" to the 1st Division, where he brought ammunition to front-line troops and evacuated the wounded. He was himself wounded on Peleliu in September 1944.

SACRAMENTO

Sacramento, California, the state capital, had been the gateway to the California Gold Rush and the western anchor of the transcontinental railroad. Europeans had first arrived in the 1830s, followed by thousands of Chinese laborers who had helped build the railroad and then settled in Sacramento. A small African-American community emerged in Sacramento as well, and by 1860, the only two black doctors in the far west had practices in the city.

Surrounded by some of the most fertile land in the west, Sacramento was a diverse farming town of 106,000, including Mexican, Italian, Filipino and Portugese Americans. The city's biggest employers were the local cannery, the state government and the Southern Pacific Railroad. Hundreds of "Okies" — refugees from the dust bowl — camped on the edge of town and worked the fields, orchards and vineyards of the surrounding Sacramento Valley. Jobs were scarce during the Great Depression, and many in the city were dependent on charity, relief and federal work programs.

Almost 7,000 Japanese Americans also lived in Sacramento and the surrounding county — doctors, lawyers, teachers and shop-owners, as well as some of the most productive farmers in America. In the years leading up to the war, relations between Japanese Americans and other Californians became increasingly tense, in part because of the economic success of many Japanese farmers.

Like Mobile, Sacramento expanded rapidly during the war, as tens of thousands migrated to the city to work at the two local aviation installations, McClellan Air Force Base (a repair and maintenance facility for aircraft, engines and flight instruments, as well as a training center for mechanics) and Mather Field (a training school for navigators and one of dozens of flight training bases that grew up all across the country during the war). McClellan was instrumental in providing operating support for many critical missions in the Pacific Theater, including retrofitting the bombers used for Lt. Col. James Doolittle's raid of mainland Japan in April 1942. McClellan and Mather provided thousands of jobs to Sacramentans during the war; by 1943, McClellan alone employed 22,000 workers.

But not all Sacramento residents shared in the good times made possible by the war. In the spring of 1942, soon after President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 authorizing the War Department to designate "military areas" and then exclude anyone from them whom it felt to be a danger, hand-lettered signs saying "Japs must go" went up all over town. In May, the Japanese residents of Sacramento, with one week's notice, were forced to abandon their homes, farms and businesses and were sent to inland internment camps. Ordered to bring only "what they could carry," most would spend the remainder of the war in the camps, fenced in by barbed wire and guarded by soldiers wielding loaded machine guns. Immigrants from Mexico, some of them part of the "bracero" program, were eventually brought in to Sacramento to work in the fields in their stead. When the war ended, only 59 percent of Japanese citizens who had been exiled chose to return to Sacramento County to try to reclaim their property and rebuild their lives.

Because of the tremendous influx of military personnel and war workers at Sacramento's air bases, historians have been unable to establish a definitive number of Sacramentans who served in the military; 130,824 Sacramento County residents registered for the draft, 14,000 Sacramentans signed on as Civil Defense volunteers and there can be no doubt that tens of thousands served in active duty. We do know that 556 Sacramento residents gave their lives during the war.

As a western city, Sacramento's focus was largely on the war in the Pacific, and the planes its air bases housed and serviced were largely directed to the Pacific Theater. When Hitler's Germany surrendered in May 1945, there were few celebrations. But when Japan finally surrendered in August 1945, Sacramento joined the nation in a jubilant celebration of the end of the war. Sailors blocked traffic, bombers from the nearby air bases buzzed the city in celebration and Sacramento poised itself for life after the war.

Residents of Sacramento, California, interviewed in THE WAR include:

Earl Burke — His older brother, Tommie, was killed while training for the invasion of North Africa; a few days later, Earl Burke left Sacramento and enlisted in the Air Corps at the age of 18. He volunteered to become a ball turret gunner on a B-17 and was wounded while serving with the 8th Air Force in France and Germany.

Barbara Covington — A third-generation Californian, Covington was the granddaughter of one of the leaders of the Fresno NAACP in the 1920s. She left college and went to Sacramento in 1942 in search of opportunity. She quickly found work as a typist at McClellan Air Force Base. Like many new African-American arrivals in Sacramento, she found housing in a home previously occupied by a Japanese family that had been interned.

Jeroline Green — She left Coffeerville, Kansas, in 1943 to visit Sacramento for a three-week vacation and never went back. She was hired as an inventory clerk at McClellan Air Force Base, where she met her lifelong best friend, Barbara Covington Perkins (see above). In 1944, she began dating Walter Thompson (see below) and later married him on the base. She worked at McClellan for decades and rose to become one of the highest-ranking civilian women on the base.

Robert Kashiwagi — The son of an immigrant farmer, Kashiwagi grew up in the California countryside, 15 miles from Sacramento. He spoke no Japanese, knew no other Japanese-American family and had been in a sanitarium being treated for a lung condition when Executive Order 9066 went into effect. He left the hospital and went with his family to a Colorado internment camp. One year later, he volunteered for the 442nd Regimental Combat Team and served in Italy and France as a scout in Company K, 3rd Battalion.

Burnett Miller — The only child of a prosperous Sacramento family, Miller was in college in 1941, then enlisted in the Army Specialized Training Program. When it was cancelled he became a private in the 11th Armored Division and went to Europe in fall 1944. He first saw combat in the Battle of the Bulge, was wounded, rejoined his unit and discovered, in the last days of the war, why it had to be fought.

William Perkins — Although he had three children, Perkins was drafted in his hometown of Newport, Rhode Island, in late 1943. He went to Sacramento on a troop train with Walter Thompson (see below) and served in the all-black 4909th Provisional Aviation Squadron at McClellan Air Force Base. He sang in the company band and later was shipped to Guam, where he drove a truck until the war ended.

Susumu Satow — Susumu Satow and his family grew strawberries, grapes and raspberries on their 20-acre farm east of Sacramento. In May 1942, along with the 7,000 other Japanese Americans in Sacramento, they were forced to abandon their property and go to an internment camp. Satow volunteered for the 442nd Regimental Combat Team from camp and was assigned to Company H. He fought in Italy and France.

Harry Schmid — A college student working at the telephone company in Sacramento when the war began, Schmid was drafted as a private. He eventually went to flight school and became a glider pilot. He was scrubbed from the Normandy invasion but flew in the invasion of southern France in August 1944 and then landed behind enemy lines in Holland as part of Operation Market Garden in September 1944.

Walter Thompson — Drafted out of college in Pennsylvania in 1943, Thompson tried to get into the Tuskegee Airmen program but washed out and eventually ended up in Sacramento, assigned to the all-black 4909th Provisional Aviation Squadron. He played trombone in the band, traveling up and down the West Coast to entertain troops and civilians. He met and married Jeroline Green (see above) and was then shipped out to Guam.

Tim Tokuno — Tokuno and all the other Japanese-American soldiers already in the army when the war began were put into a service unit in the Midwest for more than a year because the army didn't know what to do with them. His parents had to evacuate their farm outside Sacramento without his help. Tokuno volunteered for the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, became a sergeant, survived numerous artillery barrages and lost many of his men. After the war, the Tokuno family reclaimed their farm from squatters.

Sascha Weinzheimer — The daughter and granddaughter of wealthy farmers with enormous holdings in the Sacramento Valley and the Philippines, Sascha was eight years old in December 1941. A polio survivor, she and her family were living on one of the largest sugar plantations on the island of Luzon. As she detailed in a diary, they would spend most of the next four years, along with thousands of other civilians, interned in the Santo Tomas Prison Camp in Manila.

Burt Wilson — A young boy when the war began, Wilson had a paper route and remembers following the war by reading the front page each day. Like many boys his age, he often played war in the backyard with his friends. He would soon see gold stars placed in the windows of his neighbors' homes, each signifying the death of a real soldier who had lived there.

WATERBURY

A gritty industrial city of approximately 100,000, situated at the confluence of the Naugatuck and Mad Rivers in central Connecticut, Waterbury had been the center of the American brass industry since the early 19th century. By the 1920s, more than a third of the brass manufactured in the United States was made in the Naugatuck Valley, and Waterbury came to be known as the "Brass City." Its skilled workers turned out screws, washers and buttons; showerheads and alarm clocks; toy airplanes and lipstick holders; and cocktail shakers.

Waterbury was populated by successive waves of immigrants, primarily from Italy, Ireland, Eastern Europe and Great Britain. By 1930, nearly half of Waterbury's population was foreign born. It was a city of close-knit, ethnic neighborhoods, where many residents remained their entire lives. Families packed into triple-decker homes, factory row housing and boarding houses, surrounding lively commercial districts with ethnic markets and bakeries, churches and movie houses.

The city, like the rest of the country, endured hard times during the Great Depression, as industries imploded and thousands were thrown out of work. But all that changed when America began to gear up for World War II, and local factories retooled for war production. The Mattatuck Manufacturing Company switched from making upholstery nails to cartridge clips for the Springfield rifle, and soon was turning out three million clips a week. The American Brass Company made more than two billion pounds of brass rods, sheets and tubes during the war. The Chase Brass and Copper Company made more than 50 million cartridge cases and mortar shells, more than a billion small caliber bullets and, eventually, components used in the atomic bomb. Scovill Manufacturing produced so many different military items, the *Waterbury Republican* reported, that "there wasn't an American or British fighting man ... who wasn't dependent on [the company] for some part of the food, clothing, shelter and equipment that sustained [him] through the ... struggle."

Because of its concentration of war industries, Waterbury was believed to be a strategic bombing target for the German Luftwaffe. Waterbury Clock — which would later be known as Timex — built a new plant in 1942 to accommodate the military's demands for mechanical time fuses and other aircraft and artillery equipment. The new factory was nestled among the Middlebury hills and could be flooded and covered with water in the event of an invasion. Its roof was painted with a tromp l'oeil mural of trees, water and grass to deceive enemy bombers. In the wake of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, Waterbury hurriedly appointed air wardens to coordinate a local response to an air raid. The local barbers' association volunteered to equip the city's barbershops as first aid stations.

More than 12,000 men and 500 women from Waterbury served in the armed forces during the war; the mayor saw them all off at the railroad station. Each man received a prayer book and a carton of cigarettes, courtesy of the Shriners; 282 of those who served lost their lives.

The civilian men and women of Waterbury contributed to the war effort in hundreds of ways, large and small. War bonds were sold from "Liberty House," set up in the middle of the town green on the site where similar bonds had been sold to help defeat Germany during the First World War, and local residents bought \$270 million worth. They also collected 68,500 pounds of rubber; 5,097,421 pounds of scrap metal; 8,255,640 pounds of paper; and 150 tons of waste fat.

The end of the war spelled the beginning of a sharp decline of Waterbury's manufacturing base. Military contracts were cancelled in the months leading up to the Allied victory; within a week of V-J Day, 10,200 employees had been let go from Waterbury factories. Many would be rehired when the factories re-tooled for civilian production, but thousands of jobs were permanently lost. By the 1950s, plastic and aluminum had replaced brass for many uses, and cheaper labor overseas competed for the remaining jobs in brass manufacturing. By 1980, there were fewer than 5,000 workers remaining in the Naugatuck Valley's brass plants.

Residents of Waterbury, Connecticut, interviewed in THE WAR include:

Tom and Olga Ciarlo — Their brother, Corado "Babe" Ciarlo, was drafted out of a Waterbury factory in 1943, became a replacement in the 3rd Infantry Division and served in Italy. Tom and Olga spent the war in Waterbury helping their mother cope, contributing to the war effort and looking forward to Babe's letters home.

Anne DeVico — DeVico graduated from high school during the war and saw her two older brothers and most of the boys she knew go into the service. She got a job at a Waterbury newspaper office and dated a New York boy who went into the Air Corps and named his plane after her, "The Waterbury Anne." On New Year's Eve 1943, with her mother's permission, she went to New York, and in Times Square, met a sailor from Valparaiso, Indiana, named Bob Swift and fell in love.

Raymond Leopold — Twenty-seven and newly married, Leopold left Waterbury for the Army in 1943. Trained as an expert rifleman, he joined the 28th Infantry Division as a replacement and arrived on the front lines in Europe in November 1944. Leopold showed such skill in first aid that his commanding officer made him a medic — and although he had been trained to kill people, for the remainder of the war he tried to save them instead.

Joseph Vaghi — A native of Bethel (a few miles west of Waterbury), Vaghi graduated from Providence College in December 1942 and became a naval officer. He trained as a beach master and first saw combat on Omaha Beach on D-Day. He was wounded, recuperated and then assigned to train troops for amphibious operations; after a few months, he volunteered to go into combat again. He was sent to the Pacific to be a beach master for the invasion of Okinawa.

LUVERNE

In 1941, Luverne was a small prairie town of 3,110, on the banks of the Rock River, in the southwestern corner of Minnesota. The county seat of Rock County, Luverne boasted one main street with two movie theaters, a hotel, courthouse, drug store, café, bank, shoe store, electrical supply store, general store, A&P and farm supply store.

Founded in 1867 and originally settled by Civil War veterans, by the 1940s its inhabitants were mostly farmers of Scandinavian and German descent. Luverne's residents had been hard hit by the Depression and the collapse of farm prices — in 1933, 500 county residents were listed as unemployed.

War came to Luverne in January 1941, nearly a year before Pearl Harbor, when the local National Guard unit was called up, and 129 Rock County boys were put on active duty in the army. After training for six months, they were assigned to protect the naval air base in Kodiak, Alaska, where many spent the next three and a half years. An auto dealer named Ryal Miller visited the men while hunting in Alaska and

filmed them with an eight millimeter camera. When he got back, he showed his home movies at the Pix Theater on Main Street in Luverne, and families crowded in for a glimpse of how their boys were doing. Afterwards, people were encouraged to make their own home movies and to write greetings to their far-away friends on a wrapping-paper letter that stretched 120 feet.

Luverne was about as far away from the action as any place in America, but each day the war's reality grew closer and closer. Soldiers on leave began flooding into town from the nearby air force base in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, dating local girls, frequenting the local bar and flying low over Main Street, causing the windows in all the stores to rattle to the delight of local youngsters. Economically, local farmers did their best to step up production, and several businesses contracted to do war work. The first contract in town went to the A.R. Wood Company, a manufacturer of chick brooders, which agreed to produce "a small item which appears to be part of a valve for some kind of a gun," the *Rock County Star Herald* reported. Al McIntosh, the editor of the paper, chronicled the war's impact on Luverne in his bi-weekly column, reporting on war bond drives, victory gardens, rationing of essential commodities and the difficulties families faced trying to keep their farms going with so many young men in the armed forces. Of the 21 male graduates of Luverne High School's class of 1939, 20 served in the armed forces — only a boy with a heart condition stayed behind. Of Rock County's 10,683 residents, 1,065 served in the military; 32 were killed.

The people of Luverne found themselves suddenly connected to world events during the war, and that experience left a deep impression on the town for years to come.

Residents of Luverne, Minnesota, interviewed in THE WAR include:

Quentin Aanenson — A farm boy from Luverne, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps and became a P-47 Thunderbolt pilot. He flew 75 combat missions in Europe beginning on D-Day and continuing through fall 1944. He then was assigned to coordinate fighter support for ground troops and was stranded behind the lines for three days during the Battle of the Bulge.

Jackie Greer — A college student when the war began, she left school and went to work as a secretary at Harding Field in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where Army Air Corps pilots were learning to fly P-47 Thunderbolts. On Valentine's Day 1944, she met Quentin Aanenson, a pilot from Luverne, Minnesota (see above). They quickly fell in love and promised to wait for each other while he was overseas. They corresponded faithfully, and she honored his request not to date any other man more than three times.

Charles Mann — Mann grew up on a farm in Luverne and entered the Army following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. He served in combat in North Africa and was wounded in the neck by shrapnel.

Jim Sherman — Six years old when the war began, Sherman was the grandson of Luverne's most beloved doctor. He collected scrap metal, milkweed pods and bacon fat; bought stamps for war bonds; rented his bike to visiting soldiers; got a thrill when airmen on training missions buzzed Main Street; and idolized the servicemen who occasionally visited his grade school class.

Only a few people interviewed in **THE WAR** live outside of the four towns that provide the central storyline for the film, including:

Ward Chamberlin — Having lost the sight in his right eye as a child, Chamberlin was classified 4F. Born and raised in Connecticut and the son of a decorated veteran of the First World War, he left Princeton halfway through his junior year and volunteered for the American Field Service. He served as an ambulance driver for the British 8th Army in Italy and evacuated wounded from the battlefield throughout 1944 and 1945.

Walter Ehlers — The son of a farmer from Manhattan, Kansas, Ehlers was assigned to the 3rd Infantry Division alongside his revered older brother, Roland. During the North Africa campaign, they were transferred to the 1st Infantry Division, Company K, 18th Regiment and fought together in Sicily. They then were sent to England to train for the invasion of France. Just before D-Day, the Army decided to separate the two brothers because of the dangers they would face on the beaches of Normandy, and Walter was transferred to L Company. Both brothers landed on Omaha Beach in the first few waves.

Paul Fussell — A child of privilege from Pasadena, California, Fussell was in ROTC in college, then became a 2nd lieutenant in the 103rd Infantry Division, 410th Infantry Regiment, and was sent to fight in the Vosges Mountains in November 1944 — where he soon discovered that the average life expectancy for a junior officer on the front lines was just 17 days.

Sam Hynes — A native of Minneapolis, Hynes left the University of Minnesota and enlisted in the Navy in 1942. He eventually passed all the necessary tests to become a Marine torpedo bomber pilot, and in winter 1945 was sent to the Pacific Theater. He flew combat missions all that spring, culminating with the last battle of the war: Okinawa.

Daniel Inouye — A 17-year-old high school student on December 7, 1941, Inouye saw Japanese planes flying over his Honolulu neighborhood on their way to attack the American fleet. A Red Cross volunteer, he helped take care of the wounded and removed the bodies of dead civilians. Although the government declared all Japanese Americans, “enemy aliens,” ineligible for military service, the policy was eventually revoked; along with thousands of others, Inouye volunteered for the 442nd Regimental Combat Team and fought in Italy and France.

Emily Lewis — A student nurse in Arkansas when the war began, Lewis joined the army and qualified as a flight nurse. She was initially stationed in England, assigned to minister to severely wounded airmen as they came back to base from bombing missions over Germany. A few days after D-Day, she flew to France and spent weeks evacuating badly wounded soldiers from Normandy.

Several of the first-person accounts in **THE WAR** are read by actors, including those of:

Eugene B. Sledge — Sledge grew up in Mobile, the grandson of Confederate officers. Bookish and frail as a child, he had been taught to hunt and fish by his physician father and was a freshman at the Marion Military Institute, studying to become an officer, when he decided to sign on as a private in the Marines instead; he was afraid that if he waited for graduation he might not get a chance at combat. Sledge became a mortarman, assigned to the 1st Marine Division, and fought at Peleliu and Okinawa. While overseas, he kept an unauthorized journal that eventually formed the basis of a harrowing memoir of his experiences, *With the Old Breed at Peleliu and Okinawa*. Sledge’s voice is read by Josh Lucas.

Al McIntosh — The son of a North Dakota minister, McIntosh went to work as a reporter at the Lincoln, Nebraska, *Journal* after college and did well enough to be offered jobs at *The Washington Post* and *The Kansas City Star*. But he turned them down and instead, in 1940, bought the *Rock County Star Herald* and moved to Luverne, fulfilling a lifelong dream of owning and editing a small-town newspaper. He quickly got to know everyone in town and chronicled the war’s impact on his new neighbors’ lives in his bi-weekly column, “Mostly Personal Chaff.” McIntosh’s voice is read by Tom Hanks.