

## EPISODE GUIDE

The Second World War was fought  
in thousands of places, too many  
for any one accounting.

This is the story of four American towns  
and how their citizens experienced that war.

Episode One

**“A Necessary War”**

December 1941-December 1942

After a haunting overview of the Second World War, an epoch of killing that engulfed the world from 1939 to 1945 and cost at least 50 million lives, the inhabitants of four towns — Mobile, Alabama; Sacramento, California; Waterbury, Connecticut; and Luverne, Minnesota — recall their communities on the eve of the conflict. For them, and for most Americans finally beginning to recover from the Great Depression, the events overseas seem impossibly far away. Their tranquil lives are shattered by the shock of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and America is thrust into the greatest cataclysm in history. Along with millions of other young men, Sid Phillips and Willie Rushton of Mobile, Ray Leopold of Waterbury and Walter Thompson and Burnett Miller of Sacramento enter the armed forces and begin to train for war.

In the Philippines, two Americans thousands of miles from home, Corporal Glenn Frazier and Sascha Weinzheimer (who was 8 years old in 1941), are caught up in the Japanese onslaught there, as American and Filipino forces retreat onto Bataan while thousands of civilians are rounded up and imprisoned in Manila.

Meanwhile, back home, 110,000 Japanese Americans all along the West Coast, including some 7,000 from Sacramento and the surrounding valley, are forced by the government to abandon their homes and businesses and are relocated to inland internment camps. On the East Coast, German U-boats menace Allied shipping just offshore, sending hundreds of ships and millions of tons of materiel to the bottom of the sea. The United States seems utterly unprepared for this kind of total war. Witnessing all of this is Katharine Phillips of Mobile, who remembers sightings of U-boats just outside Mobile Bay, and Al McIntosh, the editor of the *Rock County Star Herald* in Luverne, who chronicles the travails of every family in town.

In June 1942, the Navy manages an improbable victory over the Japanese at the Battle of Midway. In August, American land forces, including Sid Phillips of Mobile, face the vaunted Japanese army for the first time at Guadalcanal, armed with single shot, bolt-action rifles and just 10 days worth of ammunition. Abandoned by their fleet with no support from the sea or the air, the men are strafed and bombed daily and under constant attack from enemy troops hidden in the jungle. After six long months the Americans finally prevail and, in the process, stop Japan's expansion in the Pacific.

At the end of America's first year of war, more than 35,000 Americans in uniform have died. Before the war can end, 10 times that many will lose their lives.

## Episode Two

### **“When Things Get Tough”**

January 1943-December 1943

By January 1943, Americans have been at war for more than a year. The Germans, with their vast war machine, still occupy most of Western Europe, and the Allies have not yet been able to agree on a plan or a timetable to dislodge them. For the time being, they will have to be content to nip at the edges of Hitler’s enormous domain. American troops, including Charles Mann of Luverne, are now ashore in North Africa, ready to test themselves for the first time against the German and Italian armies. At Kasserine Pass, Erwin Rommel’s seasoned veterans quickly overwhelm the poorly led and ill-equipped Americans, but in the following weeks, after George Patton assumes command, the Americans pull themselves together and begin to beat back the Germans. In the process, thousands of soldiers learn to disregard the belief that killing is a sin and come to adopt the more professional outlook that “killing is a craft,” as reporter Ernie Pyle explains to the readers back home.

Across the country, in cities such as Mobile and Waterbury, nearly all manufacturing is converted to the war effort. Factories run around the clock, and mass production reaches levels unimaginable a few years earlier. Along with millions of other women, Emma Belle Petcher of Mobile enters the industrial work force for the first time, becoming an airplane inspector while her city struggles to cope with an overwhelming population explosion.

In Europe, thousands of American airmen are asked to gamble their lives against preposterous odds, braving flak and German fighter planes on daylight bombing missions over enemy territory. All of them, including Earl Burke of Sacramento, know that each time they return to the air their chances of surviving the war diminish.

Allied troops invade Sicily and then southern Italy, where, as they try to move towards Rome, the weather turns bad and the terrain grows more and more forbidding — twisting mountain roads, blown bridges — all under constant German fire. With them is Babe Ciarlo of Waterbury, whose division loses 3,265 men in 56 days of fighting in Italy — and moves less than 50 miles.

As 1943 comes to a close, Allied leaders draw up plans for the long-delayed invasion of the European continent; Hitler put tens of thousands of laborers to work strengthening his coastal defenses. For the people of Mobile, Sacramento, Waterbury and Luverne, things are bound to get tougher still.

## Episode Three

### **“A Deadly Calling”**

November 1943-June 1944

In fall 1943, after almost two years of war, the American public is able to see for the first time the terrible toll the war is taking on its troops when *Life* publishes a photograph of the bodies of three GIs killed in action at Buna. Despite American victories in the Solomons and New Guinea, the Japanese empire still stretches 4,000 miles, and victory seems a long way off. In November, on the tiny Pacific atoll of Tarawa, the Marines set out to prove that any island, no matter how fiercely defended, can be taken by all-out frontal assault. Back home, the public is devastated by color newsreel footage of the furious battle, including the bodies of Marines floating in the surf, and grows more determined to do whatever is necessary to hasten the end of the war.

Mobile, Sacramento and Waterbury have been transformed into booming, overcrowded “war towns,” and in Mobile — as in scores of other cities — that transformation leads to confrontation and ugly racial violence.

African Americans, asked to fight a war for freedom while serving in the strictly segregated armed forces, demand equal rights, and the military reluctantly agrees to some changes. Blacks are allowed, for the first time in two centuries, to join the Marine Corps, and many, including John Gray and Willie Rushton of Mobile, sign on. They are trained for combat, but most are assigned to service jobs instead. Japanese-American men, originally designated as “enemy aliens,” are permitted to form a special segregated unit, the 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team. In Hawaii and in the internment camps, thousands sign up, including Robert Kashiwagi, Susumu Satow and Tim Tokuno of Sacramento. They are sent to Mississippi for training, where they are promised they will be treated “as white men.”

In Italy, Allied forces are stalled in the mountains south of Rome, unable to break through the German lines at Monte Cassino. In the mud, snow and bitter cold, the killing goes on all winter and spring as the enemy manages to fight off repeated Allied attacks. A risky landing at Anzio ends in utter failure, with the Germans gaining the high ground and thousands of Allied troops, including Babe Ciarlo of Waterbury, totally exposed to enemy fire and unable to advance for months.

In May, Allied soldiers at Cassino and Anzio finally break through, and on June 4, they liberate Rome. But in heading towards the city, they fail to capture the retreating German army, which takes up new positions on the Adolf Hitler line north of Rome. Meanwhile, the greatest test for the Allies — the long-delayed invasion of France — is now just days away.

Episode Four

**“Pride of Our Nation”**

June 1944-August 1944

By June 1944, there are signs on both sides of the world that the tide of the war is turning. On June 6, 1944 — D-Day — in the European Theater, a million and a half Allied troops embark on one of the greatest invasions in history: the invasion of France. Among them are Dwain Luce of Mobile, who drops behind enemy lines in a glider; Quentin Aanenson of Luverne, who flies his first combat mission over the Normandy coast; and Joseph Vaghi of Waterbury, who manages to survive the disastrous landing on Omaha Beach where German resistance nearly decimates the American forces. It is the bloodiest day in American history since the Civil War, with nearly 2,500 Americans losing their lives. But the Allies succeed in tearing a 45-mile gap in Hitler’s vaunted Atlantic Wall, and by day’s end more than 150,000 men have landed on French soil. They quickly find themselves bogged down in the Norman hedgerows, facing German troops determined to make them pay for every inch of territory they gain. For months, the Allies must measure their progress in yards, and they suffer far greater casualties than anyone expected.

In the Pacific, the long climb from island to island toward the Japanese homeland is well underway, but the enemy seems increasingly determined to defend to the death every piece of territory they hold. The Marines, including Ray Pittman of Mobile, fight the costliest Pacific battle to date — on the island of Saipan — encountering, for the first time, Japanese civilians who, like their soldiers, seem resolved to die for their emperor rather than surrender.

Back at home, while anxiously listening to the radio, watching newsreels and scanning casualty lists in the newspapers for definitive information from the battlefield, Americans do their best to go about their normal lives, but on doorsteps all across the country, dreaded telegrams from the War Department begin arriving at a rate inconceivable just one year earlier.

In late July, Allied forces break out of the hedgerows in Normandy, and by mid-August, the Germans are in full retreat out of France. On August 25, after four years of Nazi occupation, Paris is liberated — and the end of the war in Europe seems only a few weeks away.

## Episode Five

### “FUBAR”

September 1944-December 1945

By September 1944, in Europe at least, the Allies seem to be moving steadily toward victory. “Militarily,” General Dwight Eisenhower’s chief of staff tells the press, “this war is over.” But in the coming months, on both sides of the world, a generation of young men will learn a lesson as old as war itself — that generals make plans, plans go wrong and soldiers die.

On the Western Front, American and British troops massed on the German border are desperately short of fuel, having outrun their supply lines. Allied commanders gamble on a risky scheme to drop thousands of airborne troops, including Dwain Luce of Mobile and Harry Schmid of Sacramento, behind enemy lines in Holland, but nothing goes according to plan, and it becomes painfully clear that the war in Europe will not end before winter.

Over the next three months, American soldiers are ordered into some of Germany’s most forbidding and most fiercely defended terrain. In the Hurtgen Forest, tens of thousands of GIs, including Tom Galloway of Mobile, fight an unwinnable battle in which the only victory to be had is survival. During his missions over Germany, fighter pilot Quentin Aanenson of Luverne loses so many friends and sees so much death that he comes close to collapsing from despair. In the Vosges Mountains, the 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team, including Robert Kashiwagi, Susumu Satow and Tim Tokuno of Sacramento, is assigned to an overly ambitious general and endures weeks of brutal combat. At the end of October, they are ordered to break through to a battalion of Texas soldiers caught behind the lines — no matter the cost.

In the Pacific, General MacArthur is poised to invade the Philippines at Leyte. Although the nearby island of Peleliu holds little tactical value for his campaign, the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division, including Eugene Sledge and Willie Rushton of Mobile, is ordered to take it anyway. The battle is expected to last four days, but the fighting drags on for more than two months in one of the most brutal and unnecessary campaigns in the Pacific.

In October, with their food supplies dangerously low, Sascha Weinzheimer of Sacramento and the other internees at Santo Tomas camp in Manila thrill to the sight and sound of American carrier-based planes bombing Japanese ships in the nearby bay, and a few weeks later, American troops land on the island of Leyte, 350 miles away. In the movie theaters back home, as Katharine Phillips of Mobile recalls, Americans cheer the newsreels of General MacArthur “returning.” But months of bloody fighting lie ahead before the Philippine Islands — and the people imprisoned on them — can be liberated.

## Episode Six

### “The Ghost Front”

December 1944-March 1945

By December 1944, Americans have become weary of the war their young men have been fighting for three long years; the stream of newspaper headlines telling of new losses and telegrams bearing bad news from the War Department seem endless and unendurable.

In the Pacific, American progress has been slow and costly, with each island more fiercely defended than the last. In Europe, no one is prepared for the massive counterattack Hitler launches on December 16 in the Ardennes Forest in Belgium and Luxemburg. Tom Galloway of Mobile, Burnett Miller of Sacramento and Ray Leopold of Waterbury are there, among the Americans caught up in the biggest battle on the Western Front — the Battle of the Bulge. Back home, Katharine Phillips of Mobile and Burt Wilson of Sacramento are shocked to see newspaper headlines showing the Germans on the offensive and begin to wonder, “Are we losing now that we’re this close?”

Meanwhile, at Santo Tomas Camp in Manila, thousands of internees, including Sascha Weinzheimer of Sacramento, are now starving, desperately trying to hold onto life long enough to be liberated.

At Yalta, Allied leaders agree on a plan to end the war that includes massive bombing raids aimed at German oil facilities, defense factories, roads, railways and cities. In March alone, Allied warplanes drop 163,864 tons of bombs on Germany — almost as many as they have dropped in the preceding three years combined.

In the Pacific, Allied bombers are ready to batter Japan as well — but first, the air strip on Iwo Jima, an inhospitable volcanic island halfway between Allied air bases on Tinian and the Japanese home islands, needs to be taken. There the Marines, including Ray Pittman of Mobile, face 21,000 determined Japanese defenders, who, with no hope of reinforcement or re-supply, have been ordered to kill as many Americans as possible before being killed themselves. After almost a month of desperate fighting, the island is secured, and American bombers are free to begin their full-fledged air assault on Japan. In the coming months, Allied bombings will set the cities of Japan ablaze, killing hundreds of thousands and leaving millions homeless.

By the middle of March 1945, the end of the war in Europe seems imminent. Hundreds of thousands of Americans are crossing the Rhine and driving into the heart of Germany, while the Russians are within 50 miles of Berlin. Still, back in Luverne, Al McIntosh warns his readers to keep their heads down and keep working “until there is no doubt of victory any more” because “lots of our best boys have been lost in victory drives before.”

## Episode Seven

### “A World Without War”

March 1945-September 1945

In spring 1945, although the numbers of dead and wounded have more than doubled since D-Day, the people of Mobile, Sacramento, Waterbury and Luverne understand all too well that there will be more bad news from the battlefield before the war can end. That March, when Americans go to the movies, President Franklin Roosevelt warns them in a newsreel that although the Nazis are on the verge of collapse, the final battle with Japan could stretch on for years.

In the Pacific, Eugene Sledge of Mobile is once again forced to enter what he calls “the abyss” in the battle for the island of Okinawa — the gateway to Japan. Glenn Frazier of Alabama, one of 168,000 Allied prisoners of war still in Japanese hands, celebrates the arrival of carrier planes overhead, but despairs of ever getting out of Japan alive.

In mid-April, Americans are shocked by news bulletins announcing that President Roosevelt is dead; many do not even know the name of their new president, Harry Truman. Meanwhile, in Europe, as Allied forces rapidly push across Germany from the east and west, American and British troops including Burnett Miller

of Sacramento, Dwain Luce of Mobile and Ray Leopold of Waterbury discover for themselves the true horrors of the Nazi's industrialized barbarism — at Buchenwald, Ludwigslust, Dachau, Hadamar, Mauthausen and hundreds of other concentration camps.

Finally, on May 8, with their country in ruins and their fuehrer dead by his own hand, the Nazis surrender. But as Eugene Sledge remembers, to the Marines and soldiers still fighting in the Pacific, “No one cared much. Nazi Germany might as well have been on the moon.” The battle on Okinawa grinds on until June, and when it is finally over, 92,000 Japanese soldiers, as well as tens of thousands of Okinawan civilians, have been killed. Okinawa is also the worst battle of the Pacific for the Americans, and as they prepare to move on to Japan itself, still more terrible losses seem inevitable. Allied leaders at Potsdam set forth the terms under which they will agree to end the war, but for most of Japan's rulers, despite the agony their people are enduring, unconditional surrender still remains unthinkable.

Then, on August 6, 1945, under orders from President Truman, an American plane drops a single atomic bomb on the city of Hiroshima, obliterating 40,000 men, women and children in an instant; 100,000 more die of burns and radiation within days (another 100,000 will succumb to radiation poisoning over the next five years). Two days later, Russia declares war against Japan. On August 9, a second American atomic bomb destroys the city of Nagasaki, and the rulers of Japan decide at last to give up — and the greatest cataclysm in history comes to an end.

In the following months and years, millions of young men return home — to pick up the pieces of their lives and to try to learn how to live in a world without war.