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and the chaplain—each one standing on his private soap box, expounding in his own inimitable way, "loose lips sink ships?"

Other visual clichés flooded the storylines. How about the married GI with a picture of his newly-born child tucked inside his helmet liner, or the farmer-turned-soldier examining the soil on the foreign battlefield? Sometimes the GI carried a chip on his shoulder; other times, he retreated into isolation, preferring to remain a loner. Other dogfaces spent their idle moments keeping diaries as reference material for the great American novel they would write once back home. Occasionally, a European refugee popped up, now an enlisted man in Uncle Sam's Army, to detail the horrors of life under National Socialism to a younger charge. How many GIs wrote their "last" letter, asking the chaplain to mail it if they didn't "come back" from some hazardous mission?

The same scenes appeared over and over again. How many times would audiences watch the makeshift medical operation performed in the heat of battle, the bomber crew that bailed out in enemy territory, the wounded GI who visited his sweetheart with some extremity in a cast, or the elongated "escape" or "chase" from the Axis foes? Similar stereotyping included the elaborate aerial dog fights that tested America's flying mettle, the solo rescue of a friend trapped in no man's land, the occasional romance with a foreign woman, and the austere burial eulogy, performed with solemn patriotic dignity.

What else? Propaganda films highlighted the we-are-your-brothers-in-arms motif to strengthen the Allied forces concept. Other scenes showed GIs treating their mascots with tender loving care. The American flag—a tangible symbol of democracy—flew majestically as the fighting man entered the combat zone. Some times, minor disagreement served a useful purpose as various photoplays elaborated the ongoing conflict between the bomber pilot and the pursuit flyer. Who flew the better aircraft? Only Pat O'Brien or Randolph Scott knew for sure. One thing was certain: a speech of praise at the beginning or ending of any film raised the audiences' emotional state to its highest level.

The issues of the war seemed overstated. How many times were GIs told that their fight preserved religious freedom, protected the American way of life, stopped the spread of fascism? How many movies elaborated on the "we didn't start this war, but we're going to finish it" theme? How about the many scenes where

tough combat veterans vowed that no one could mock the flag, the President or the Congress and get away with it? What about revenge for Pearl Harbor?

The Axis enemies received their share of stereotyping. American moviegoers hissed when they learned that German and Japanese foes graduated from American universities. Other scenes depicted the enemy as a meticulous dresser, emblazoned with suede gloves, monocles, and swagger sticks. The sadistic medical officer was common, as was the staff member with "friends in high places." Axis villains spoke with heavy, comical accents and bragged about their skill in torture. Off to the side, a small, slimy interrogator awaited instructions while other adversaries explained to their captives that they were "liberators," not "conquerors." The Japanese routinely disemboweled themselves, adhering to the strict code of hara-kiri, while the Italian soldier sang loud arias, utilizing comical gesticulations. Sometimes a young, blond Nazi youth, not fully corrupted by Hitlerism, remembered his catechism days and those important Christian ideals.

So many of the storylines exaggerated the glamorous side of military life that most GIs, sitting in their PX theaters, wore their chukka boots to the screenings. In Warner Brothers' *Flying Fortress*, two American flyers arrived in London, ostensibly to fight for the RAF but, instead, chased pretty girls and began a pleasant, social life. Later, the twosome returned from a bombing mission over Germany, which required B-actor Richard Green to crawl onto the wing of his crippled B-17—at 10,000 feet—to make some repairs! Did Walter Forde, the film's director forget his primer on velocity? Didn't he realize that one gust of wind would send the hapless airman earthbound?

If an American pilot displayed such airborne dexterity, why couldn't an ordinary factory worker do the same? In Universal's *Saboteur*, mild-mannered Robert Cummings confronted his Nazi nemesis on top of New York's famed Statue of Liberty. For the California assembly worker, with no Alpine training, it was a routine outing. In a few seconds, Mr. Cummings saved his girl friend and routed his foe, with no loss of equilibrium in this famous end-of-the-film scene. Similar nimbleness highlighted the theme of Warner's *The Gorilla Man*. In this potboiler, a British commando exhibited such extraordinary skill climbing walls that he rivaled his anthropoid ancestor.

Other scenes aggravated the GI audience, but this was the nature of propaganda films. The foot soldier realized the futility of the frontal bayonet attack against his enemy's fortified defense line but Home Front viewers saw it differently. When John Wayne and his fighting seabees charged the Japanese stronghold, nothing could stop these construction men turned fighters. Put handsome Tyrone Power in charge of a daring midnight commando raid and moments later the Nazi's oil tanks burned incessantly. Let Brian Donlevy loose in the Pacific theater and, within minutes, a Japanese ship rested in its watery grave. While the GIs scoffed at these mock heroics, stateside civilian moviegoers applauded their men in uniform. Did anyone—beside Hollywood—realize that propaganda's efficacy rested on discrete subjectivity? The filmmakers understood the rule: show only one side of the coin.

As a film watcher, *Time* magazine's unidentified GI offered a legitimate complaint against Hollywood's stereotypical portrayal of the War. Clearly, the motion picture industry adhered to the OWI's regulations that mandated a positive view of the Allied achievements. If the GI showed annoyance at Hollywood's presentation of military service, it was because he knew the truth. Like Kilroy, the GI was there. He knew the difference between life on the battlefield and life on the screen. He realized, for example, that while the American military system preached democracy, it was prudent not to sign your name to any public complaint.

Hollywood, of course, reduced the War to simplistic terms because the industry understood the components of film propaganda. Stereotypes, clichés, myth, flag-waving, and adulation—these concepts permeated the Hollywood propaganda of World War II, and Home Front audiences, needing daily reassurance that their side was winning, flocked to the shows in record numbers. For Tinseltown, its productions adhered to these rules: sustain morale, follow FDR's dicta, and foster patriotic feelings.

If the disgruntled GI didn't like what he saw on the screen, he was in good company. Other ground pounders understood the fine distinctions that separated military life from cinematography. Most of the GIs knew that while glorification of the Allied cause was the order of the day, certain subjects were taboo. No motion picture would ever show the blunders associated with the War. What Hollywood production would highlight the miscalculations that led to the August 1942 debacle at the French port of Dieppe?

Would John Wayne star as one of the casualties in the Great Slapton Sands Disaster of 1944? Who would command the 82nd Airborne Division in its July 11, 1943, raid over the Sicilian port of Gela, an event that resulted in 229 dead paratroopers when American sailors, unclear about the situation, blasted away at their own men?

Other events never made it to the silver screen. No film depicted American Marines shooting Japanese prisoners in a manner that resembled target practice. No Hollywood productions showed headless, American bodies strewn on Pacific island beaches, with isolated arms or legs bobbing nearby. What director would approve a storyline about the fear associated with the Normandy D-Day landing as dozens of wounded American GIs, in their death throes, cried out for their mothers? Who would fly one of the American bombers that attacked American forces in the ill-planned Operation COBRA on July 24, 1944, near the French town of Saint-Lô, that killed 136 infantrymen including a prominent Lt. General?

Years later, of course, Hollywood changed its course and fired salvos against the American military system in dozens of motion picture themes that were unthinkable during the War. Stanley Kubrick's black, Cold War comedy, *Dr. Strangelove*, ran the Air Force into the ground with its depiction of such loony characters as General Jack Ripper and his commander-in-chief, President Merkin Muffley. Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* captured the darker side of America's Special Forces running amuck in Southeast Asia as Marlon Brando and his Montagnard warriors badgered the Army's command staff. Mike Nichols added more fuel to the fire with his bleak satire, *Catch-22*, an antimilitary film that described the circuitous logic found in Army Air Corps regulations. Adapted from the best-selling novel by Joseph Heller, *Catch-22*'s caricature of U.S. officers as megalomaniacs, solely interested in aggrandizing their own careers, redefined American attitudes about war and the men who manage it.

Who would have thought in the flag-waving days of World War II, when Hollywood accepted FDR's dictum to provide entertainment and propaganda, that the motion picture industry's pendulum would swing so far in such a short period? Who could envision the ephemeral nature of America's propaganda films? In those four short years, the nation's moviemakers created a type of picture that sustained morale, glorified the fighting man, and

vilified the enemy. Back in 1944—when Randolph Scott and his Marine Raiders seized Makin Island—could director Ray Enright imagine that his rousing title, *Gung Ho*, would appear on a new Hollywood film, a 1986 comedy depicting the shenanigans of automobile workers as they resisted the work rules imposed upon them by their new employer, a Japanese manufacturing company? How about Henry Hathaway? Would he believe that the title of his *Flying Tigers*, blast-them-from-the-skies, 1942 adventure film, *China Girl*—now freed of copyright restraint—would be used a second time in a 1987 Romeo and Juliet tale, about two lovers from New York's Chinatown and Little Italy?

Other titles found their storyline in the legacy left behind by the World War II propaganda films. Paramount's high-flying Navy adventure, *Top Gun* (1986), glamorized the lifestyle of the pilots who roared down the flight deck of elaborate aircraft carriers in their sophisticated F-14 Tomcats, ready to blast America's enemies out of the sky. With good-looking Tom Cruise in the computer-guided canopy, *Top Gun* served as an effective recruiting film, pandering to the John Wayne instincts found in many male adolescents. United Artists' *The Final Countdown* (1980) was another pitch for volunteers needed to service the Navy's nuclear-powered aircraft carriers. This time fighter-pilots emerged in and out of the twilight zone, traversing between 1941 and 1979. Another Navy recruitment film, Orion Pictures' *Navy Seals* (1990) glamorized the unlikely adventures of this hand-picked attack unit, composed of America's elite swimmers. In this seagong yarn, frail-looking Charlie Sheen proved that any young man could join the Navy and see the world.

As contemporary propaganda films, these three examples wax pale when placed beside their predecessors—the black-and-white films of 1941-45. As the disgruntled GI stated, the war pictures were distorted and inaccurate, but such shortcomings went unnoticed because, unlike these later titles, the propaganda storylines appealed to the emotions of millions of Americans on the Home Front. When the United States marched off to fight its second world war, in the dark hours of early 1942, few could predict the outcome and numerous questions frightened most people. Would the U.S. win this war? Did we have the proper manpower and military materiel? How long would the conflict last? Were we safe from enemy attack?

Of course they were. When John Wayne vowed retribution for the Bataan Death March, Americans felt reassured. When Spencer Tracy headed the Doolittle Raiders westward to bomb Tokyo, the Home Front cheered. When Dennis Morgan placed God in his copilot's seat, Americans offered their silent prayers. How about Claudette Colbert's husband? Didn't he return safe and unharmed on Christmas Day? What about Bogart? Didn't he capture more than 100 Nazis singlehandedly? Give Cary Grant some recognition. He was the skipper who slipped his submarine inside of Tokyo bay to wreck the Japanese defense system. Don't forget Errol Flynn. Didn't he drive the Japanese out of Burma?

For most moviegoers on the Home Front, the Hollywood motion picture industry provided the encouragement needed to sustain morale during the country's somber days of defeat, and when the tide turned, glorified the many battles that brought the armed forces closer to V-J Day. Many components contributed to the Allied final victory in August 1945 and the propaganda films ranked high on this list. For most Americans, savoring the 1990s world of computers, lasers, and cable television, World War II events probably seem long ago and far away. But every so often, a familiar, black-and-white film flickers on some large-size television screen, housed in an elaborate home entertainment center. It is Howard Hawks' 1943 adventure, *Air Force*. Don't worry, this storyline promises, America will never lose the War. Hollywood was right. Fifty years later, television viewers still cheer Captain John Ridgely and the crew of the *Mary Ann* as they roar down the runway, flaps up, machine-guns poised, heading for the wild, blue yonder.

SELECTIVE FILMOGRAPHY

WORLD WAR II PROPAGANDA FILMS: DECEMBER 7, 1941-AUGUST 15, 1945

ABOVE SUSPICION. MGM; directed by Richard Thorpe. Released: April 28, 1943. A half-spoof, half-serious story about Nazi espionage in and around the Fatherland during the ambiguous pre-Pearl Harbor days. Fred MacMurray is convincing as an Oxford don who takes his bride, comely Joan Crawford, on a Continental honeymoon that is really an intelligence mission for the Crown. A convoluted plot turns this melodrama into a typical suspense film complete with guttural-sounding Basil Rathbone as a diabolical Axis villain. Best scene: Joan Crawford eyes a group of young Nazi marchers parading by (husband to wife: "... if they don't take it easy, they'll be burned out before they're twenty one.").

ABROAD WITH TWO YANKS. United Artists; directed by Allan Dwan. Released: July 24, 1944. An insignificant B-comedy depicting the daily antics of two Marines, handsome Dennis O'Keefe and salty William Bendix, stationed in Australia, who spend most of their time trying to smooth-talk some down-under beauties, while their buddies are sequestered in the training camp, preparing for an offensive island invasion. Negative propaganda value since the film's theme, goldbricking, would rile up any serviceman seated in the movie audience. Silliest scene: the two gyrenes take French leave, in front of some pompous ladies (O'Keefe to group: "I would like to ask you to come along, but you know how it is. I'm a one-man dog.").

ACROSS THE PACIFIC. Warner Brothers; directed by John Huston. Released: August 18, 1942. A slow-moving formula film starring hard-as-nails Humphrey Bogart as a "cashiered" Ameri-