

OUTLINE FOR TV SHOW ON
“THE STORY OF WORLD WAR II”

1. What kind of family do you come from, and how did the war change their life?
 - (a). What kind of military history are you writing? For each soldier a war is his own war. Will he fight or run, etc.? And when do men crack? Also its a people’s war -- bombings of civilians. Lots of wars these days are heavily air wars.
 - (b). Explain the geographic magnitude of the war.
2. Describe how you came to learn of Commager’s book, and the way in which you altered and enlarged it. Explain the importation into the work of the emotions of ordinary people.
3. Explain that the war was a crusade against barbarism, but that we had our share of blunderers, cover-ups of mistakes, cowards, breakdowns, racial prejudice against our own people and enemies, actions that may be considered atrocities, and mass killings.
- 4(a). Do you agree with Shirer (p. 25) that the Germans were stunned that Hitler had led them into a world war?
 - (b). What was the reaction of the Japanese people when they learned that Japan would be fighting the United States?
 - A. Describe the “hidden holocaust,” the rape of Nanking, where 200,000 died.
5. Describe how Russia and Finland got into war, and the defense put up by the Finns.
6. How did the Germans manage to break through so rapidly on the western front? Do you agree with those who feel the French actually had superior power to the Germans, but screwed up mercilessly, both militarily and politically?
7. Explain why Hitler decided not to invade England, and the bombing and submarine campaigns he undertook instead of an invasion. Explain what the submarine campaign accomplished in the first few years of the war (it nearly defeated Britain, didn’t it?), the reasons why (and the time by which) it ultimately was defeated, and the fantastic percentage of losses ultimately suffered by the German submarine service.

- A. Describe the heroism of the merchant seamen.
- 8(a). Explain why Hitler invaded Russia, the defense in depth undertaken by the Russians, the relocation of Russian industry, and the Russian guerilla campaign. Stress the racial aspect of the Russo-German war, and compare it with the war between the Americans and Japanese in the Pacific.
 - (b). Describe the battle of Leningrad and explain its importance.
 - (c). Describe the battle of Stalingrad. Do you think this was the most savage battle of the war and/or one of the decisive battles of history?
9. Why were the United States and Japan at loggerheads in 1941?
 10. What did Japan seek to accomplish by attacking Pearl Harbor?
 - A. Why didn't Nagami launch a third wave against Pearl? Did his decision have a long range effect on the war? -- what if the third wave had destroyed the fuel dumps?
 11. Explain how the Japanese caught MacArthur's air force on the ground, and the consequence of this.
 - A. Do you regard MacArthur as a brilliant general? As negligent? As a publicity hound? As arrogant? As some combination of these? He made numerous serious mistakes in World War II and Korea, didn't he? He also did some brilliant things, didn't he?
 12. Explain the factors which caused the Japanese to treat prisoners so cruelly.
 13. Explain why the Doolittle raid took place and what the Japanese did in reprisal.
 14. Describe the Battle of Midway, and explain why John Keegan called it "the most stunning and decisive blow in the history of naval warfare."
 15. Explain the importance of the battle for Guadalcanal, and describe the land and naval actions there.
 - A. Guadalcanal was one of the early instances, wasn't it, of Americans replying in kind to Japanese savagery?
 - B. Explain why James Jones thought that Guadalcanal answered the great question of whether citizen soldiers could stand up to the soldiers of militarized, Fascist nations with years of experience.
 16. Would you say that the tide of war had turned by about May 1942, with the Allies now going

over to the offensive?

17. Describe the origin of the “by pass” or “leapfrogging” strategy, MacArthur’s early opposition to it, and his later embrace of it.
18. Explain that two roads were followed to Japan -- the Central Pacific route run by the Navy, and the South Pacific route under MacArthur. Was it necessary or desirable to follow both of those routes?
 - A. Describe the growth of the navy that made possible the Central Pacific campaign.
19. Describe the battle for Tarawa.
 - A. Describe the censorship and self censorship which existed, and explain the psychological unpreparedness of the American public to see still pictures and movies like those of Tarawa. Describe the results of showing the pictures and movie of Tarawa, with regard to enlistments and war bonds.
- 20(a). What occurred in North Africa in 1940 and 1941?
 - (b). Why did the Allies invade North Africa rather than Europe in late 1942?
 - (c). Describe the battle for North Africa after the allies invaded it.
- 21(a). Explain why the Allies invaded Italy, who was for it and why, who was against it and why, Hitler’s reaction, the nature of the fighting, and what (if anything) the Italian campaign achieved.
 - (b). Describe the reasons for and the situations at Anzio and Monte Cassino.
 - (c). What is your view of the assertion that Mark Clark’s personal shortcomings were responsible for a fair amount of various failures in Italy?
 - (d). Explain why you feel that there could have been a public outcry if the press had told the truth about the slaughter in Italy.
- 22(a). Explain the reasons why combat soldiers felt that civilians simply could never understand what they were going through.
 - (b). Explain the combat soldiers’ feelings about the Germans.
23. Describe the experience of the Buffalo soldiers in Italy, especially the problems of racism they encountered.

24. Describe the views on air strategy held by the British and by the Americans, the changes in strategy and tactics that occurred in Europe as the war went on, the reasons for and results of the firestorm bombing of Hamburg, the importance of the improved fighter cover the bombers received as the war went on, and the "Transportation Plan" that was put into effect before the Normandy invasion and the effects of this plan on the success of Normandy.
25. Describe the losses suffered by the town of Bedford, Virginia.
26. Explain the hedgerow country of Normandy. How was it possible for the Allied high command not to know of the hedgerows -- didn't anybody talk to the French command in England about the terrain?
27. Describe the events that led up to the Falaise pocket. Do you think Bradley made a mistake in not allowing Patton to close the pocket?
28. Describe the Red Ball Express, and the reasons for it and for its success. (In the 1950s or so there was a movie about it called, appropriately enough, The Red Ball Express. But I do not remember the movie portraying African American as the soldiers of the RBE. Apparently this was another example of Hollywood slighting African Americans.)
29. Briefly describe Operation Market-Garden, what it was supposed to do, and why it failed.
- 30(a). Describe the battles of the Huertgen Forest and the Bulge.
 - (b). Describe the Malmedy massacre and the response to it of American troops. How did Joseph McCarthy manage to get Peiper's death sentence commuted?
 - (c). Is it accurate that Robert Georgen was a member of two units that suffered 85% casualties? (Pp. 336 and 345.)
 - (d). Describe the psychiatric problems experienced by men who have been in combat for an extensive period of time.
 - (e). Comment on the fact that America suffered 39,000 casualties in January 1945 in northwest Europe, and that over two-thirds of all American casualties were suffered in the last year of the war.
31. Describe the Second Battle of Britain -- the flying bombs, and how the British eventually warded off the V-1s.
- 32(a). What were the reasons for invading Saipan, and what results occurred in the air war in the Pacific because we took Saipan?
 - (b). Describe the nature of the land fighting on Saipan.

- (c). Comment on the Battle of the Philippine Sea.
 - (d). Describe the last Banzai charge and the extent of the Japanese casualties on Saipan.
 - (e). Explain what happened at Marpi point, with regard to both Japanese soldiers and civilians, and the effect this had on the thinking of the Americans.
 - (f). To what extent did racial animus play a role in the conduct of Japanese soldiers and civilians? In the conduct of Americans?
- 33(a). Describe the battle for Peleliu..
- (b). It was unnecessary to take Peleliu, wasn't it, and the invasion was therefore a serious mistake, wasn't it?
 - (c). Describe the defense in depth tactics used by the Japanese. Explain why you call Peleliu "one of the most murderously-fought battles in all of history" and a "frightning reminder of the debasing consequences of unrestrained war, war fought without let up or conscience." (P. 412.)
 - (d). Explain that the Japanese were trying to make the war so costly for America that our citizens would demand an end to the bloodshed short of unconditional surrender.
 - (e). Explain the effect on American troops of the way the Japanese fought.
- 34(a). Explain why we invaded Leyte and describe the battles on Leyte and Luzon.
- (b). Tell about the capture of Santo Tomas and Los Banos.
 - (c). Describe the cruelty of the Japanese on Leyte.
 - (d). Was it proper to hang Yamashita?
- 35(a). Describe the ways in which the B29s represented a major improvement in bombers.
- (b). Describe the reasons why we fire bombed, and the results of fire bombing, Japanese cities, including the losses in people, homes and industry. Also describe the extent of their losses from the overall bombing campaign as a whole.
 - (c). Describe the blockade of Japan.
 - (d). In the absence of the atom bomb, could massive fire bombing have enabled us to win the war?

- A. Explain the meaning of the phrase “until we eat stone.”
- 36(a). Explain the bombing campaign that used Italy as a base.
- (b). Tell the role and experiences of the Tuskegee Airmen.
- (c). Describe the background and exploits of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. Discuss its soldiers' concept of not bringing disgrace on the family.
- 37(a). Describe the moral and political reasons that were considered for and against the bombing of Dresden, and describe the bombing.
- (b). Describe the effects and the consequences -- industrial, population-wise, morale-wise, militarily, moral, etc. -- of the bombing of Germany.
38. Describe the liberation of Russia, including the amounts of materiel America sent the Russians, the battle of Kursk, what occurred at Warsaw, the Russian drive into Germany, the battle of Berlin with its horrendous Russian casualties, and the extent of Russian atrocities.
39. Describe the American and British drive into Germany, including the taking of the Ruhr.
40. Explain the reasons why only 600,000 of 2,700,000 Americans in the ETO were infantrymen or in combat support units.
41. Describe the discovery of the death camps by American troops. Include the reactions of the troops and the fact that they sometimes killed German guards on the spot, the reactions of the high brass -- Eisenhower, etc., the reactions of surviving inmates, and the purported reactions of Germans living in the area.
- A. What were the reasons why the Allies did not bomb the death camps to put a stop to what was going on.
- B. How did it come to pass that Eisenhower had such a hatred for the Germans, since he himself was of German ancestry? (Is it true, as I've read, that something like 75 or 80% of the American army that fought its way into Germany was descended from German immigrants?)
42. Explain the reasons we invaded Iwo Jima, describe the battle, including the fact that the Japanese were *in* Iwo, not *on* it, describe the participation of African Americans, and tell the effects on the air war of the taking of Iwo.
- A. You have a picture, on p. 538, whose caption says the Japanese soldier in the picture gave us information about Japanese defenses on Suibachi. Explain why this occurred even though most Japanese fought to the death (or committed suicide).

- B. Explain who General Kuribayashi was.
 - C. Describe the two flag raisings on Iwo Jima.
43. Describe the Japanese use of Kamikazes, including the mass Kamikaze attacks and the fact that there were 3,000 Kamikaze sorties at Okinawa against both B29s and ships, the number of Kamikazes the Japanese had available, the reasons that motivated the Kamikaze pilots, the Kamikaze swimmers, and the ban on American reporters writing about the Kamikazes.
 44. Explain why we invaded Okinawa, the Japanese defense in depth after the beaches, the suicidal defense, the mass suicides of Japanese soldiers and *Okinawans*, who were not even ethnic Japanese, and the extent of the Japanese losses on Okinawa,
 45. Explain the importance of the facts that the Americans who fought WWII had gone through the depression, that everyone was in it together (unlike Vietnam), and that there was still a widespread belief in core values.
 46. Describe the hell ships.
 - A. What is your view on why 38% of American captured by the Japanese died in captivity, but only one percent of those captured by the Germans did?
 47. Describe the kind of fighting, and the extent of the American and Japanese losses, that were expected if we invaded Japan.
 - A. Explain why the Japanese leaders kept fighting and intended to continue to do so, and the paradoxical effect of the battle for Okinawa.
 - B. Explain the effect on the American public of the Pelawan massacre.
 - 48(a). Explain why -- given the mass fire bombings and wholesale destruction of German and Japanese cities -- the use of the atomic bomb was, in a sense, only more of the same, only more total war, although the weapon itself represented a difference in kind.
 - (b). Explain why you believe that, in the absence of the atom bombs, LeMay's bombers would have caused death and destruction that would have dwarfed that caused by the atomic bombs.
 49. Explain the relief felt by literally millions of GIs when the bombs were dropped.
 50. You seem to agree that Hiroshito was an active participant in the Japanese war machine. Do you think he should have been removed from the throne? Should he have been tried as a war criminal?

51. Describe how the flight in Bockscar continually messed up, and the destruction wrought in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
52. Explain why soldiers didn't talk about the war afterwards.

myfiles/Outline.WorldWarII