



The Wisconsin World War II project is a stirring tribute to those of the World War II generation.

Because of WPT supporters, these and other Wisconsin veterans could share their very personal stories. Thank you, to both groups. ►

the project

During World War II, Wisconsin sent 300,000 of its proud citizens to battle the forces of tyranny. More than 8,000 never returned. They were united in a cause like never before and never since. The experience was a defining moment for freedom. It shaped the men and women who are popularly known as the “greatest generation.”

Thanks to the Wisconsin World War II Stories project, a partnership of Wisconsin Public Television (WPT) and the Wisconsin Historical Society, and in association with the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs, nearly 100 Wisconsin citizens shared vivid memories of that time.

Their stories are now preserved as a rich archive and resource for Wisconsin. Through four one-hour broadcast documentaries, community events, a Web site and more, those stories are being shared with contemporaries who have benefitted from that generation’s sacrifice.

our supporters

The project would never have happened without the generous support of:

- The Ho-Chunk Nation
- The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
- An advised fund of the Community Foundation of Southern Wisconsin
- Philip J. and Elizabeth B. Hendrickson

Additional support was provided by:

- Duard and Dorthea Walker
- The Krause Foundation
- The Evjue Foundation Inc., the charitable arm of The Capital Times
- The Boldt Company
- Demco Inc., a John E. Wall Family owned business
- Contributors to the Wisconsin Program Fund.

the impact

The project has had a measurable impact. Its effects can be tracked through hard numbers, awards and spontaneous and heartfelt comment.

The combined broadcast premieres of the series drew nearly 234,000 statewide viewers.

The Web site is heavily trafficked, with visits averaging more than 10 minutes. Plus, the total number of visits is high. In the premiere month for two of the programs–May 2004–there were nearly 9,000 visits.

The broadcast series and the Web site together have reaped seven awards, a mark of their powerful messages. The awards have come from the Milwaukee Press Club and other organizations.



Wes Todd Milwaukee
Marine Pilot, Pacific Theater



Liz Baehr Madison
Army Surgical Nurse, European Theater



Milo Flaten Madison
Army Infantry, European Theater
Landed at Omaha Beach



how their stories were told



Four broadcasts that aired in 2003-04: **“Struggle,”** veterans talking directly to viewers about their combat; **“Europe,”** veterans’ recollections from D-Day to victory in Europe; **“Pacific,”** which recounts tremendous battles above, below and on

the vast Pacific Ocean; and **“Home Front,”** which offers stories of those who stayed behind, went without and waited for the soldiers’ return.

A comprehensive Web site that is deep with broadcast content, tips on preserving stories and war mementoes, contributed stories from those who fought in the war and curriculum for K-12 educators.



wisconsinstories.org

A permanent video archive of 95 interviews of World War II veterans and critical stories from the home front. The video archive will be housed at the Wisconsin Historical Society and the Wisconsin Veterans Museum. It will be a continuing source of content for future WPT broadcasts.



Preview screening events in communities across the state and at the Governor’s Mansion that enabled the families, communities and the state to honor and thank veterans for their service.



A traveling photography display, that crisscrossed Wisconsin with installations in libraries, local historical societies and veterans medical facilities, enriched 16 communities. It was comprised of eight veterans’ portraits, all of whom appeared in the broadcasts.



our supporters and viewers respond

Striking an emotional chord, the project generated comments from a variety of interested people.

“The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and its statewide Local Unions are proud to pay tribute to the men and women of the World War II generation...Their can-do attitude and pride in workmanship in building America in the post-war years continues to inspire us to follow in their footsteps. We value this opportunity to preserve their stories, and remain forever indebted to their legacy of self-sacrifice,” **Terry Roovers, International Brotherhood of Workers.**

“As a former Secretary of the Army I think the message of these shows is very important. Service to country is essential in a democracy and is very satisfying to those who served. When this message can be delivered in an interesting fashion, it will be observed by many who as yet have not served. Keep up the good work,” **Robert F. Froehlke, former Secretary of the Army.**

“WPT is taking important and complementary steps as a public service media provider with this visionary series. By making these intimate stories available to the public now and archiving digital materials for future generations, WPT is producing a truly priceless resource. Preserving these rich stories composed of original historical content in a multi-platform digital format (broadcast, Web archives) is a model that could well be adapted in other places throughout the nation,” **Dr. James H. Billington, the Librarian of Congress.**

“The final chapters in ‘Wisconsin World War II Stories’ are every bit as fascinating—and chilling—as the first two,” wrote **Warren Gerds of the Green Bay Press-Gazette.** “Wisconsin Public Television and the veterans and citizens who participated in the series have vastly broadened understanding of the war and its impact on the state.”

“Wisconsin Public Television has done it again. You are creating a superb resource for the state of Wisconsin and students of all ages who are learning about World War II. Generations to come will have your organization to thank for preserving and archiving important pieces of Wisconsin history through ‘Wisconsin World War II Stories,’ ” **Dr. James McIntosh, author of *Wisconsin at War.***

“I’m new to Wisconsin, I haven’t been here a year yet. Sunday afternoon I was impressed and continued to be moved, inspired, saddened, really had my patriotic spirit awakened by the comments of the different soldiers, the footage. I don’t know what the documentaries are called, but I’ve been sitting here longer than I have ever sat and watched a TV program, I just can’t get away from it. It’s just fantastic.”

“I’m calling to thank you for having such a wonderful program about Wisconsin World War II stories. I watched the entire set of programs and I feel such pride. I am just so thankful to have had an opportunity to watch this whole program.”

“We’ve just seen the very impressive show about veterans of the Pacific on Sunday. I’m glad that you put this on. I think people need to see this kind of thing to realize the great sacrifices our American men and women made during this time. I was in the Army during the Korean conflict and I wish very much that international problems could be solved peacefully, but we certainly had to fight World War II. And your programs are doing a good job. Thank you very much.”



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From the home front to the frontlines, Wisconsin’s veterans tell the greatest stories of their lives.

a report

“Judy and I watched your World War II program last evening and were moved by it. PBS has asked to rerun our 15-year-old documentary ‘D-Day to the Rhine’ on D-Day in June, but your material is fresher. I would hope PBS would consider offering your film to the country,”
Bill Moyers, journalist.



Robert Sesto Racine
Army Infantry, 32nd Division, Pacific Theater



Akira Toki Fitchburg
Army Infantry, 442nd Division, European Theater
Rescued lost battalion

234,000
234,000 statewide viewers watched the combined premieres of the programs.



Articles in Wisconsin newspapers honoring veterans in the broadcasts extended the reach of the veterans’ recollections and recognized, often for the first time, these unknown heroes in their hometowns. Notably, “The Capital Times” in Madison ran profiles recognizing 12 veterans featured in Wisconsin World War II Stories broadcasts.



A project involving Wisconsin nursing homes and continuing care facilities will reach across the state. Activity directors at these facilities will distribute activity guides for and videotapes of “**Home Front.**” They hope to engage residents of the facilities and those in Wisconsin communities to learn more about this critical period in history.

