THE WAR WE FOUGHT

Boston College Voices 1941-1946

In the summer of 1942, Russell Baker was a green college kid in Baltimore. The war then raging elsewhere in the world didn't impress him much. As he later wrote in Growing Up, "I was like a person on a summer night seeing heat lightning far out on the horizon and murmuring, 'Must be a bad storm way over there someplace.' It was not my storm."

That campus perspective would soon change, not only for Baker (who became a Navy pilot) but for millions of other Americans. Last spring, in anticipation of the 50th anniversary of Pearl Harbor, BCM wrote to 1,500 World War II-era alumni to ask if they would share their memories with us. More than 300 men and women responded. Some of their stories appear on the following pages.

Interviews by Sean Smith
After graduation, Lynch became a first lieutenant with an army antiaircraft battalion serving in the Pacific. A native of Melrose, Massachusetts, he registered for the 1940 draft lottery and was assigned “158”—the very first number drawn on November 18 of that year. Lynch worked as a credit manager for a leather company after the war.

It was about midday, and I was just taking a walk near my house, when this guy comes up to me and asks, “Are you John Lynch?” I wasn’t sure what to say at first—I didn’t know if this fellow might be a process server or a bill collector—but finally I said I was. He said he was a reporter from the Boston American and that the draft lottery had just been held and my number had been chosen.

Well, my immediate reaction was an expletive—which, fortunately, he was able to translate into a statement that I was proud to be given the opportunity to serve my country. And I certainly was. It’s just that when you’re 21, 22 years old, you figure nothing drastic will ever happen to you; it’s always going to be someone else.

JOSEPH COAKLEY ’40

Raised in Boston’s South End, Coakley went to Catholic University after graduating from BC. His studies were interrupted when he was drafted in September 1941. Coakley saw action as a special services officer with an infantry regiment in North Africa and Italy.

My basic training was at Fort Belvoir in Virginia, just below Alexandria. I was there from October 1941 to March 1942. It was quite abrupt, the change from civilian life to the military. The biggest thing to get used to, for me, was how your time frame is regulated.

It’s all by the numbers. You couldn’t structure your day the way you wanted to, the Army made all those decisions for you. In the evenings, you were either too tired or too bored to do anything. And, of course, there was the separation from your family and loved ones.

I guess you could say I was resentful of being drafted without having finished my schoolwork. Remember, we were not in the war at that time. So I was, let’s say, a little lackadaisical and laid back. That was until I met this Irish lieutenant.

He called me into his office one day, and he says, “Private, you behave as if you were not asked if you wanted to be here. But you’re intelligent enough to stay one step ahead of disobedience. Well, did it ever occur to you that I didn’t ask for you, either?”

So I said, “Touché, sir. I will soldier from here on in.” He became a real supporter of mine, and later helped me get my assignment in the service company. Of course, by then, America was in the war, so that had changed everything for me.

JOSEPH GRODEN ’41

Two months after graduating from BC, Cambridge, Massachusetts, native Groden signed up with the U.S. Naval Reserve. On the morning of December 7, 1941, he was in temporary command of the destroyer U.S.S. “Henley,” moored at Pearl Harbor. After the war, Groden worked for International Paper Co. in New York City.

I had stayed up until three a.m. playing checkers with one of the signalmen— who beat me—and we were almost five. At 7:30, I heard the ship’s general alarm, which means “man all guns instantly.” So I ran out barefoot in my pajama bottoms to see what was happening. I asked one guy and he said, “I think it’s a fire in the stern.”

I ran out to the quarterdeck, and there was a torpedoman, who was serving as petty officer, going “hush, hush” to the general alarm. He says, “Oh, I
made a mistake. I was so busy shooting the breeze, I accidentally pressed the wrong button.” But you still have to go to stations, even though you know it’s a mistake. The crews from the ships nearby had noticed all the activity, and they were starting to mock us. I was thinking of running up a signal flag saving a drill was in progress.

Then, right at that moment, I heard a plane coming in about 50 feet overhead. It was a Jap torpedo plane. That was the beginning of the attack on Pearl Harbor. And of all the ships in the U.S. Navy, we were the only one to be at general quarters with all guns manned — and it was by accident! We hacked away the mooring lines and pulled away. We wound our way through explosions, bombs. At one point, we saw the [battleship] Arizona blow up. We were also strafed, but we knocked down two of their planes.

Finally, we got out to Honolulu Harbor and did lazy eights, waiting for further orders. The senior officers returned, and for four days afterwards I broke down codes, and we were steamed around with a large task force. I ended up receiving a citation and had my photo in the paper.

FRANCIS McBride '39

After graduating from BC, West Roxbury, Massachusetts, native McBride signed up with the FBI. In 1941, he was appointed a special agent and sent to North Carolina. McBride is now a labor consultant and arbitrator based in South Norwalk, Connecticut.

The FBI had listed the names of those enemy aliens who might constitute a threat to the security of America in the event of war. Well, on December 7, the teletype rang. The next day, I had to arrest the enemy aliens in my area. There were two in all of North and South Carolina: one was in Asheville, where I was assigned, and the other was in Hendersonville, about 20 miles away.

Anyway, the first alien I was sent to arrest was in Asheville, a German major. He was a very militaristic individual. We rang his doorbell, and he acknowledged our presence and said, “I’ll be right with you.” We took him into custody with no problems, although of course his wife was upset. We had to detain him in Asheville while we went to arrest the other one.

The other guy was supposed to have a cyanide capsule, and had said he wouldn’t be taken alive. He was living in Hendersonville with his sister, but when we went there he wasn’t home. We didn’t know where the hell he could be, but we knew what he looked like. We didn’t have any great plan, we just waited in the area near his home, and when we spotted him we just came up and grabbed him. He tried to downplay the whole thing, about the cyanide, but we found the capsule.

Well, the thing was, now that we had apprehended them, what could we do with them? We ended up taking them to Camp Croft in Spartanburg, South Carolina. The two were pretty non-conversational on the trip there. Sometimes, it would be interesting to talk to criminals you were in charge of—you’d get somebody saying, “I started out as an altar boy,” and you’d say, “Well, what happened?” But the major and the other guy didn’t say much.

LEO LANDREY '39, MA'41

Landrey grew up in West Roxbury and Brookline, Massachusetts. After graduation, Landrey joined the FBI on the advice of a college friend. He stayed with the Bureau until 1943, when he became an electrical engineer.

In January of 1942, I was sent to South America to set up a clandestine radio link with Washington that would use Morse code. I worked in Santiago, Chile; Bogotá, Colombia; and Quito, Ecuador, from then until June. Some of this is still classified, though.

Most of what I did involved stringing wires, testing equipment, setting up antennas. We usually did it at night, and sometimes in odd places, like up elevator shafts. It was pretty routine, but we did have to be careful in Chile. Chile was neutral, and if anything they favored the Germans, so we had to lie low. But I enjoyed the cloak-and-dagger stuff; it was fun. We used elaborate codes and all that jazz.

The radio link worked beautifully. We were never told what kind of information we were getting, or if it was any good, but we had done the job. I have to say I was lucky. I never saw my draft board, and I had a fascinating job. I thank the Good Lord for that.

GEORGE DONELAN '47

ARoxbury, Massachusetts, native, Donelan played varsity football on the Heights for three years. After a stint as a broker on Wall Street, he joined the A.E. Staley Co. in Decatur, Illinois, and worked in sales and marketing for 38 years.

I’d gotten out of high school in 1940. After the U.S. entered the war, I had tried to enlist in the Air Corps. This friend of mine and I went down to the Commonwealth Armory to have our physical and mental examinations. We had gotten through the written exams, but when I had my physical they found I had this bloody perforated eardrum.

Now, I wasn’t completely surprised about that. I had had earaches as a kid, and so had my brother, as a matter of fact. That was natural with kids then; they’d take out tonsils or adenoids, and it would clear up—it happened with my brother, but it didn’t with me. At one point, I’d had to take up lip-reading.

But when I went to enlist, I had absolutely no idea that this was something that would keep me out. I mean, I could hear.

Well, my next shot was the Marine Corps. Before that, I went to a Dr. Kelly to see if there was anything he could do about my eardrum. He said, “There’s one thing I can do for you, but eventually you’ll be found out.” He was going to put a bit of paste over my eardrum.
It was futile, though.

It was looking pretty desperate about my going into the service. I wound up getting a scholarship from BC, and I went in in 1943. I had asked my draft board to call me every six months, because I figured maybe they'd lower the standards. They had a special "watch," like the Coast Guard, but they wouldn't even take me there.

You had to be there to understand what it was like. I was a hulk for that time, and I would be about the only guy around. All my peers were gone. I'd been told, "You slacker." I'll never forget going into this tailor shop in Eliot Square. The guy knew my family, and his son comes in in uniform and says, "Hi, buddy." See, "buddy" was what one soldier would call another; it was one of those things everybody knew. He thought I was just in mufti. I said to him, "I'm sorry, I'm your pal, but I'm not your buddy."

Nobody in my neighborhood ever forgot to observe the regulations. I think we were all so doggone scared; that was the paramount reason everyone complied.

Sometimes, I'd go up to Point Shirley, near Deer Island, and you could see the Navy ships coming in. That's what really brought it home to you. There were rumors, too—we did hear that there were some German submarines stationed offshore somewhere.

**James Malone '42**

**AND CHARLES MACKIN '42**

In January 1942, upon hearing that a classmate and fellow Marine reservist had been called to active duty, James Malone phoned the Corps' headquarters in Washington and demanded that he and his friend Charles Mackin be called up, too. Within months they were on the Guadalcanal beachhead. An Arlington, Massachusetts, native, Malone became a personnel and labor relations specialist after the war. Mackin grew up in Dorchester, Massachusetts, and later entered the retailing profession.

Malone: Some of the things I remember about Guadalcanal! We went 10 weeks with one meal a day, because our supplies had gotten lost. The average man lost 30 to 40 pounds coming off Guadalcanal. At one point, the Japanese dropped 12 parachutes with food, supplies; we got six, and they got six.

I also had malaria 31 times. When you have malaria, your temperature gets up to about 105, 106 degrees, and you're freezing to death. You can't eat, hold anything down. You lose probably a minimum of 20 pounds, and you're perspiring nonstop.

There was no place to go. You stayed with your unit and suffered. There were no replacements, because the Japanese owned the seasthen. We were listening to the radio. We were written off, and we knew it. The Japanese had compressed us into this very small area.
They probably should have won. But we had the great leadership, we pulled together and came out ahead.

But it was tough. I buried Charlie Conlan after he was killed. He was a schoolteacher and had been a second lieutenant in my unit. We thought that much of him so we had the service for him. He was our flesh and blood, and we wouldn’t trust it to anyone else. You couldn’t afford the luxury of grief, though. You had to bite your tongue and just keep going.

If there was a lull, sometimes I’d get over to Charlie’s [Mackin’s] unit, and we’d see each other. You know, he’s never paid for his half of that phone call to Washington.

Mackin: Now, I’m not going to pay Jim for that call. I’ve told him that before! [Laughs]

I did see him pretty often over there. The whole beachhead we occupied was maybe four to five miles long, and a mile-and-a-half deep, so it wasn’t hard to run into someone.

Actually, we had quite a lot in our division [1st Marine] from the New England area; we were sometimes known as the “Damn Yankee Division.” That made it a little easier, I guess, having guys around you who were from your part of the country, or the same city, or the same school as you. But one thing about the Marine Corps: they treated everyone the same, made everyone feel the same, as part of a team. There was one way to do it, the Marine way. So, really, it didn’t matter where the guy next to you was from.

One thing that Jim and I, some of the others, would do together is write to our parents. We had something we jokingly called “the telephone circuit.” If a mother got a letter, she would call the others and say, “I got a letter today, so you’ll probably get one soon.”

In the middle or end of December, we were finally shipped out to Melbourne, Australia, because the climate was better there for recuperation. The biggest thing, of course, was everyone had lost so much weight; I was down to 115, which was really low for me. We weren’t real sophisticated in those days about food, weight and so on. We had about three dinners a day at first, so eventually I got back to where I was.

I saw Jim down there in Melbourne, too. We would run into each other on streetcars, going to see our girlfriends. We ended up getting married within about four or five weeks of each other.

Proud Refrain

What are you dreaming, Soldier,
What is it you see?
A tall grey Gothic tower,
and a linden tree.
You speak so sadly, Soldier,
Sad and wistfully—
I cannot hear the tower bell
In the swirling sea.
What meaning has it, Soldier,
A tower bell, and tree?
Nothing, nothing—only once
It meant my life to me.

Joseph Regan ’39

A graduate from Brockton, Massachusetts, Regan was drafted shortly before the U.S. entry into World War II. He spent most of the war in Assam, India, with the medical corps of the 26th Fighter Squadron. Regan later joined the Central Intelligence Agency.

We were attached to the British for a good part of the time, and they gave us hardtack you could hardly eat. I got down to 98 pounds at one point; I sent a picture to my mother, and she made two novenas. A friend of mine asked me, “How can you eat this bread?” and I said, “It’s the only thing we got, and besides, I like the little seeds in them.” He says, “Those aren’t seeds, those are roaches.”

A real tough part of the job was going into the jungle after survivors—actually, they weren’t survivors, they were dead. You had to go in on elephants, it was the only way. You’d get ahold of some natives, maybe kids who were nine, 10, 11 years old and have them lead the elephants. These were tame elephants the people used all the time.

Well, we’d go in to get the bodies. The Indians wouldn’t touch them, so we had to bury them. Then we would make maps of where they had been buried. I doubt anyone would have been able to go back in [to retrieve the bodies]. But at least their families would know where they were.

There was a tribe of headhunters in the area, and sometimes they would rescue survivors. They were given a
reward if they did. Once, we had a ceremony for a headhunter who was going to receive a reward for bringing in a survivor, and he said, "Why do we get 100 rupees for bringing back someone alive and 100 for when we bring back someone dead? It's just as easy for me to bring him back dead." So we had to raise the ante for survivors.

Our job was to put a weather station on the Greenland ice cap, about 120 miles inland over ice. The reason for building the station was that the weather for Europe starts in Greenland.

We went in from the base on the east coast with two dog teams, and we had to travel at night because the surface got too soft in the day. The station was built on a rock and tied down by cable. In the winter, we'd have 18 feet of snow covering us, and it was like a giant refrigerator box. All access was through an escape hatch on top, which was kind of like a chimney. You were supposed to stay for two weeks at a time in the station, and you would be on duty for eight hours.

We had trained for isolated duty before going to Greenland. One of the biggest problems is, you can go bonkers pretty easily in a situation like that. So

**William Cadigan '42**

Raised in Dorchester, Massachusetts, Cadigan went into public relations after the war. In the spring of 1943, he was assigned to base command in one of the war's coldest settings: Greenland.
the men who were picked for the job had degrees or at least some college education. The cook didn’t, though, and after a few weeks he had to be flown out.

We had some books there, and of course you had a job to do. But survival is what takes up your time. One time, I was going from the radio shack to the barracks—we had ropes going from building to building to help us get where we were going, but I had no business going out—and I fell and lost my way. There was 28 feet of snow where the barracks were, and the snow and ice would coat your eyes. I started crawling, and ran into some rocks; I knew there were no rocks where the barracks were. But I was able to clear my eyes and look around, and I managed to find my way back.

Now, the Germans had put in a station about 120 miles north. An American ship had spotted it on patrol. There’s two schools of thought on isolated duty: you stay drunk all the time, or you don’t drink at all. The Germans were of the first school, so the Americans had no trouble capturing them. They were drunk as coots. For us, well, our rations—we had supplies for three years—our rations were the equivalent of one beer a week. So you drank that all in two weeks and had nothing left!

Isolated duty teaches you what is really important, what you think you need and what you really need. It also calms you down quite a bit. You just don’t get excited. But it really helps you learn to depend on other people.

NICK SOTTILE ’41

Born and raised in Waltham, Massachusetts, Sottile worked in the real estate business after the war. Upon entering the service in February 1942, he was assigned to the Army’s infantry armored force and later sent to North Africa.

I arrived around the time when the Allies were fighting at Kasserine Pass at the border of Tunisia and Algeria. I was in Algiers for two or three weeks, then loaned to a British unit, where I screened prisoners of war for detailed interrogation later.

What I remembered most about Africa was the desert wind, the scirocco. It was hotter than hell and just took your breath away. Of course, there was also the Casbah in Algiers, but that was off limits to us; not that you would want to go there, anyway, because the stench was so bad. You also wondered about those poor Arab kids you saw, who didn’t have a chance.

I wasn’t there very long, when I was ordered to the 3rd Infantry Division for the landing in Sicily [July 10, 1943]. It was a great outfit; they did their damnedest to kill me. We had a briefing prior to the landing, and the officer told us something that [current BC football coach] Tom Coughlin has in his locker room: “Lead. Follow. Do Something.” He said, “When you hit the beach, don’t just sit there. Be like a brook coming down a mountain that hits a big stone. Just be damn sure you go in the right direction.”

WILLIAM LEONARD, SJ, ’31, MA’32

A Boston native, Fr. Leonard taught in BC’s Theology Department for 20 years and since 1978 has been curator of the University’s “Liturgy and Life” collection at the Burns Library. Leonard left BC in late 1943 to become an Army chaplain, serving mainly in the Pacific.

I was first assigned to an infantry division camp in Louisiana. My office had no screens, so all the bugs would come out after dark and visit. I had never seen these specimens before; they were pretty revolting.

In those days, there were not a great number of conscientious objectors. There was one fellow I met, though, who was an avowed pacifist. He had been sent to me by a colonel because he wouldn’t fire a rifle or throw a grenade, and the colonel wanted me to either set him straight, or he would court-martial the fellow and send him to Leavenworth. The colonel thought the boy was taking the easy way out, that he had signed up because he would get a free ride through med school.

But when this boy came in, I wasn’t sure about that at all. He was a big, muscular fellow, from somewhere in the East—Pennsylvania, I think, or Maryland. He told me, in this slow, soft voice, that when he had signed up they had told him he could go through medical school, but he honestly didn’t think it was right to kill; he was not afraid of combat, though, and was willing to go in as a medic. I talked to him several times, and I gave him all the arguments for fighting a just war, what the consequences of an Axis victory would be, and so on.

Finally, it was just a small thing which really convinced me that he was sincere about being a pacifist. We were having one of our talks one night, and of course the bugs were crawling and flying around my office. This one insect landed on the boy’s arm and started crawling up toward his face. But instead of killing it, he very gently brushed it off him and kept on talking.

Well, I told the colonel I felt the boy was really a pacifist, and he should be transferred to the medical battalion. The colonel wasn’t happy about it, and he threatened again to court-martial him. But later on in the war, I ran into the battalion in the Philippines, and the boy was there with the medics.

VICTOR DE RUBEIS ’37

Born in Tuscino, Italy, DeRubeis came to the U.S. at age 10 and lived in Malden, Massachusetts. He became a teacher after the war. DeRubeis entered the army in February 1942, and—being fluent in the language—was assigned to the Counterintelligence Corps for the Italian campaign.

I saw the war through the eyes of a little boy who remembered the country where he had been born, and now
finds himself an enemy. But I always sought the good when I was fighting in Italy. I wasn't trying to hurt the people, just those who were hurting our cause.

At Anzio there were a few civilians left behind to watch their livestock. This one couple had a little boy about five, and one day a family member came to me and said the boy was sick. So I took him to a field hospital, and he was diagnosed with diphtheria. The doctors gave him a shot, and that saved him.

In the beginning of the war, if you were of Italian heritage, you were suspect. I went into basic training, and three, four days later, I was being asked all kinds of questions. They did a 14-point investigation on me.

In counterintelligence, you had to maintain continuous surveillance of people in your area. Depending on where the Army was, you were assigned a certain sector, and it would change as the Army moved. It was exciting. You were free, you had your own transportation. I also kept in touch with informants. We were like the FBI of the Army. We could arrest anybody, no questions asked. It was kind of scary.

I handled four or five Italian agents. We had great success due to the fact the Germans had lost their "air arm." They stepped up their counterintelligence efforts, and flooded the area with agents. We shined there. We captured many of their agents. Those of us who were Italian, we served well and served with honor. We had to find our own way to make a career in the Army.

LOUIS DIEGOLI '43

A native of Somerville, Massachusetts, Diegoli became a high school teacher and later an attorney in the Boston area. As a product of accelerated wartime classes, he went directly into the Navy upon graduation and served as a lieutenant in the North Atlantic and Pacific theaters.

I did well in midshipman school, so I had a choice of where I could go. I prayed for a job that involved saving, not taking, lives. When the commanding officer suggested serving on a minesweeper, I knew that was the job for me.

Before an invasion, we went in ahead to make the landing area safe for the craft and carriers. Sometimes we might also serve as escorts or do other things. Mostly, though, it was dull, dirty and dangerous.

The way we did it was by guess and by golly. You'd start from the farthest point where you thought there might be mines and work your way in. There were two kinds of mines, ground mines and moored mines; the moored mines might be rigged at different depths. We had all kinds of ways of triggering them. It took a long time. You couldn't stop, you couldn't back down, and it took forever to turn.

When we were on duty—everybody was on general quarters when we were in an operation—you were so damn busy you didn't have time to think about hitting a mine.

RALPH DOUGHERTY '40

Born in Stoneham, Massachusetts, Dougherty was an Army pilot and stayed with the Air Force after the war. By October 1943, Captain Dougherty had safely flown 21 missions, four short of the standard tour of duty.

We had finished the bombing run when we took a direct hit in the ball turret, at the back of the plane [killing four of the bomber's 10 crewmen]. We had to fall out of formation. Of course, the enemy fighters pick you up pretty quick when you do that. But I was able to fly us into some cloud cover, and we were able to bail the rest of the crew out. I landed in a wooded section about 30 miles outside Frankfurt.

I was on the loose for 10 days, trying to get to France. It was still occupied then, but you had a pretty good chance if you could make it there. I couldn't make very good time, because I had to travel at night. I camped out wherever I could, and scrounged food from gardens; the Germans were great for potatoes.

I was trying to make it to the Mouselle River, which was on the border of France and Germany. I was about 40 miles away, when I made the mistake of going out at twilight to see if I could figure out where I was, maybe climb a tree and look around. There was a German antiaircraft battery nearby that was really well camouflaged, and their Dobermans spotted me and started making a racket. That was it.

They took me to Frankfurt to interrogate me, which took about six or seven days. They wanted to find out who you were, where you were from, and, of course, you'd just give your name, rank and serial number. But their intelligence was good, so they were able to identify the plane and the crew. In fact, they learned that the rest of the crew had also been captured, and they told me that.

I was taken to a place called Sagan, about 80 miles southeast of Berlin, and imprisoned in Stalag 3. Now, back in August, the camp had been the site of "The Great Escape" [when some 100 British prisoners escaped from the camp], so the Germans had really tightened things up there.

The officers weren't allowed to work, so we organized athletics, exercised. It was a large camp, and they had a walking area about the size of the old Alumni Field. We also played continuous games of bridge. As long as you kept yourself busy, you were okay.

Meanwhile, my family had gotten two telegrams. The first one said I was missing after my plane was shot down over Germany. Then, on Christmas Eve, they got another telegram confirming that I was a prisoner of war.

I was in the camp for a little over a year. We knew from the new arrivals how things were going, of course. But the British prisoners had put together a radio, and they could listen to the BBC. Ten of the prisoners would dismantle the radio and put the parts
away. They would send someone to the barracks every day to brief the prisoners; it was called our “shot of gin.” I think the British probably bribed a few of the guards to keep quiet about the radio.

Naturally, the Germans put up their own postings on how the war was going. But we knew it was only a matter of time before the war ended. You’d look up and see nothing but American planes crossing the skies.

RITA MARIE QUANE  MSW ’40

A Brighton, Massachusetts, resident, Quane joined the Navy in 1944. She was a lieutenant in the Navy’s legal and investigating office in Washington for nearly two years. In the years following the war, she worked for the Red Cross, the Veteran’s Administration, and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

As part of my duties, I was with the Shore Patrol. If a woman serving with the Navy got into any kind of trouble, that was when I got involved. If someone got into the wrong hotel and the wrong situation, or got “illegally pregnant,” or, well, maybe she had been out somewhere and wound up with a broken nose.

There was another thing we did sometimes: we would be invited to witness weddings. We had a WAVE [Women’s Appointed Volunteer Emergency Service] in the brig. She had gotten tired of filing and just started ripping up papers. But before that had happened, she had met this fellow in Washington and planned to marry him.

Now, this WAVE had become acquainted with a woman named Evalyn Walsh McLean. She was the owner of the Hope diamond, and her husband was a publisher. [Evalyn McLean] knew all about this couple, and wanted to give them a big ceremony. But that was certainly not going to be possible, with the bride in the brig.

Well, we agreed that she could get married in uniform, go to the conces-

sionary and have something to eat and drink, then go back to the brig. Then Mrs. McLean said, “If I can’t give her a party, how about letting her wear the Hope diamond?” We didn’t know about having her wear a diamond on a military uniform, but we agreed. So she wore the diamond, got married, then went back to the brig. I have to say that was one of my more pleasurable experiences.

THOMAS J. FORD ’40

In March 1944, Brookline, Massachusetts, native Ford was sent to Camp Pickett in Virginia as part of the Dental Corps for the Third Service Command. Ford stayed at Pickett for about a year. On his return to civilian life, he continued his career in dentistry.

Pickett was about 60 miles southwest of Richmond. We fought the Civil War all over again there—you know, “Goddamn Yankee.” I told the girls I had worked with when I left, “You’ve been calling me a Goddamn Yankee for the last few years, but one of these days you’ll find there’s a difference between a Yankee and a Boston Irishman.” I said to them once, “Good thing we got here, or you’d never know what shoes were for.” It was a lot of kidding.

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THE MOST FREQUENTLY occurring word in the following pages,” declared the September 1942 issue of Boston College Alumni News, “is WAR.” Nine months after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, World War II supplied the central point of reference for America. It colored every aspect of domestic life, from politics to entertainment. It would cast a dark shadow over the next few years, and for decades beyond.

The small, heavily male and Catholic commuter college that published Alumni News would never be the same after World War II. Some 5,052 BC alumni and students served—approximately one out of every four then living. One hundred and fifty-four of them died, 560 were decorated and 40 received citations. Charles Conlan ’31, was the first BC graduate killed in action, at Guadalcanal on September 5, 1942.

In uniform or not, the men and women of Boston College were touched by the war. It carried many to places they knew only from maps or books, if they knew them at all: icy Greenland; Santiago, Chile; the Solomon Islands; Cherbourg, France. It uprooted others from their hometowns for the first time. If the war was about interruption, leave-taking and loss, it was also about opportunity, challenge and reward.

Boston College adapted and endured. Enrollment fell precipitously, from nearly 1,500 students in 1940 to 180 by July 1944. (In two years’ time, returning veterans would help boost that number dramatically.) Mobilization needs led the University to re-vamp and accelerate its curriculum. Soldiers swarmed over the campus during 1943, when the University contracted to host an
Army training program—a decision which likely saved BC from economic ruin.

Even before Pearl Harbor, those on campus could hear the faint drum of impending war. In 1938 the Marine Corps Reserve Fleet established a Boston College unit at the Boston Navy Yard; that unit’s grueling baptism would come four years later on a southwest Pacific island called Guadalcanal. In 1939, BC launched a civilian pilot training program, which in three years graduated 90 qualified candidates for Army or Navy commissions. In 1941 the University offered courses to train skilled defense workers and drew more than 1,000 participants.

Born in the shadow of that failed crusade known as the Great War, and reared in austere, Depression-era households, the generation of young people graduating from BC in the late 1930s and early to mid-1940s approached the war in an “upbeat but sober” fashion, recalls Michael Pierce, SJ, a BC administrator at the time.

“There was kind of an elation that they were asked to do something they were ready to do,” says Fr. Pierce. “I don’t remember any serious grousing or griping about having to go. They weren’t gung ho, but their mood wasn’t lugubrious, either. It was more like, ‘Let’s go over there, do the job and come back.’”

As the men of BC shipped out to Ft. Devens, the naval training classes at Northwestern University in Chicago, and points farther east, west, north and south, they experienced America. They rubbed shoulders with the poor and the well-to-do, with Californians and Carolinians, Mississippians and Michiganders, farm boys and big-city types.

Their education at Boston College provided a compass for the journey. Among soldiers who had attended the likes of Georgetown, Holy Cross, Marquette and Fordham, their classical schooling functioned as “a lingua franca,” notes University Historian Charles Donovan, SJ. “It was like a common language, a system of ethics they all took for granted,” he says.

But there were also servicemen from Harvard, Yale and Princeton, storied and secular institutions carrying lofty standards. “In the bull sessions around the barracks or on the decks, the BC students found they could hold their own with the guys from Harvard,” says Joseph Glavin, SJ, a former BC history professor. “I think that was a tremendous revelation for them.”

Owing to their physical condition or their sex, some Boston College students and alumni remained nearer home. They might join a neighborhood air raid patrol, or hop a Greyhound to California and work with deafened soldiers, or listen intently to Edward R. Murrow describe an air raid on Berlin from the belly of a bomber, or devour Ernie Pyle’s columns from Italy and the Pacific. Day by day, even thousands of miles from the battlefront, their lives were being transformed.

Sean Smith

I did get a chance to talk with the soldiers, because you always had to ask them what outfit they were with, where they had been, and so on. Then, I was talking with this guy who said he was with the 79th in France. I said, "Oh, my brother-in-law’s with the 79th," and he asks me his name. He says, "Hey, he's the one who carried me off the field."

EDWARD O'CONNOR '43

O'Connor grew up in Peabody, Massachusetts, and returned there after the war as a teacher and later a principal in the public school system. He was assigned to New Guinea in 1944 as a sergeant with the 168th Quartermaster Hospital Laundry Platoon.

When we first arrived, the unit we were attached to had these modern American laundry machines. But when they left for the Philippines, they took those machines with them, and we were left with these Australian units from 1910 or so. They were chain-link driven, and you had to melt the soap, which were these yellow-orange bricks.

We did the loading, the unloading and sent it up to the hospital. We just took it as it came in, for as long as we had the capacity; I don’t really have an idea how many pounds we would have done in a day or week.

Once I came back to BC on furlough and saw Francis Campbell, who was the registrar. He asked me if I was disappointed that I hadn’t become an officer, and I said, "Well..."

Then, I’ll never forget it, he says, "Now, Eddie, remember this. After the war, no one will know whether you were a lieutenant or a major general. Your parents want only one thing to come out of this war, and that's you, alive and well. Some of your friends may end up face down, dead. So don’t worry about whether you’re an officer."

Sure enough, one of the guys we knew, John Battles, who had become an officer, was killed by a buzz bomb in London. So that put the war in perspective for me.

SAUL KATZ JD '41

Katz passed his bar exam on December 8, 1941, and left his Brookline, Massachusetts, home almost immediately to join the Navy. He stayed in the service after the war as part of the 1st Naval District Legal Office in Boston. He later became counsel for the General Services Administration.

One thing that happened to me in the Pacific was I took the surrender of the Japanese at Truk Atoll [on May 1, 1944]. Now, no one ever trains you to take a surrender, and I didn’t know what to do. So I just thought back to all the movies I had seen when someone surrendered. I just asked for their sword. Actually, I ended up taking the surrender twice. The Japanese naval and army commanders were not on speaking terms, so they surrendered separately.

JOHN LEARY '40

Leary grew up in Winthrop, Massachusetts. On the morning of June 6, 1944, 1st Lt. Leary waited with his platoon off the Normandy coast for the order to storm the "Omaha" beachhead. After the war, Leary worked in the graphic arts program at MIT.

That morning we were all sort of expectant, didn’t really talk much. I had gone to confession, and I just felt as if I’d put my life in the Lord’s hands. I felt pretty cool going in. Now, most people might think, “Boy, this is a scary situation.” But I had responsibilities as
a commanding officer, and I think that helped.

We were slated to go for eight a.m., but we had to wait. I remember being in the landing craft, looking at the cliffs, and seeing all these troops lined along the bottom, not looking very aggressive.

The thing was, of course, to get on the beach safely. I’ve heard all these stories about jeeps disappearing into the water, because of craters on the bottom, but I saw nothing of that sort. What you saw was guys lying dead on the shore, or drowned in the water. You weren’t looking for those kind of things, they were just thrust into your face.

We had some trouble getting on the beach. But from what I could see, the Navy’s big ships just kept belting those forts further inland. That looked like to me what finally did it. We set up our units along the coast, and I remember we built these very long piers. Then, a few days later, a terrific storm came along and ruined everything.

ROBERT CASEY ’43, JD ’49

A graduate of the “accelerated” Class of 1943, Casey joined the Navy Reserve and took part in the Normandy invasion. He served in an intelligence unit in the reserves before returning to active duty in the early 1950s. He retired from the Navy in 1967.

After the fall of the beachhead in Normandy, we had a lot of German prisoners to take care of, at least a couple of thousand. They were largely from labor battalions, so I think they were probably glad to be out of the fighting. One thing that struck me was, that although I was young myself—I was 21—there were kids there younger than me, most of them conscripts. They were herded in a large encampment in a big field, encircled by barbed wire.

One Sunday, a nice summer day probably within three weeks or so after D-Day, I was driving in a jeep from point A to point B, running around to get stuff organized. I drove past the POW encampment, and there was the German chaplain conducting Mass out in the open field. He was standing on a raised platform in his white vestments; he really stood out among all the prisoners’ uniforms. It just caught my eye, because it was such a tranquil scene compared to the frenetic activity at the beach, and there was such a large number in attendance, all really focused on what was going on.

We had forgotten there were a large number of Bavarian Germans, and others with a Catholic background, who were serving. It was a very striking thing: here was the enemy, and they were different from us, yet they were also kind of the same.

GERARD LA ROCHE ’42

A Cambridge, Massachusetts, native, LaRoche joined the Army and went to France following D-Day as a technician with the 2nd Armored Division, advancing through the Low Countries into Germany. Along the way, LaRoche made some 250 sketches. He later became a research linguist.

If one had to go to war, I suppose, Europe was the place. I met umpteen people there, from common people to dukes and duchesses, who I still correspond with. I also met my wife over there, in Bath [England]. We spent only three hours together that time, but we corresponded when I went over to the Continent. After the war, I sent for her, and we got married.

I had been doing artwork on my own since I was seven or eight. It’s an avocation, and I have always enjoyed it. During the war I used to carry a pad and pencil in my back pocket at all times. I would sketch for 10, 15 minutes at a time. I did all kinds of things, in pencil and pen-and-ink. It was mostly portraits of GIs, scenes on location and so on. I suppose you could call my style “representational.”

The other soldiers were intrigued. I would sketch them, and sell the picture to them for a pound. I guess you could say my sketches are all over the world.

One scene I sketched was on Omaha Beach, where the big invasion had been. There was an old-fashioned Norman-style barn within view of the harbor, and there was a kind of poi-
gnancy to the scene, being so near a battle site. Another one I did later on was the Notre Dame in Paris—it ended up winning several first prizes. That was quite different, because I usually spent 10 to 15 minutes, and this one took 50 hours.

ALBERT NYREN '41

A native of Boston, Nyren was drafted in October 1941 and began an eventful tour in the Army, assigned first to Panama and later Belgium. After the war, Nyren spent 31 years on six continents working for the U.S. Foreign Service.

In early summer of 1944, during the Normandy and Brittany campaigns, I was with the Signal Corps 3rd Mobile Radio Broadcasting Company. Our job was to drive a truck with a public address system up near the German lines. We’d get anywhere from 50 yards to half a mile away. Then we would play music and broadcast to the Germans, tell them to give up. We also had recorded some interviews with German prisoners, and they’d say how mean their captain had been, like “He stole my money” or “He hit me.” It was all psychological warfare, you know.

This was a real suicide mission. The Germans would let us come, and they would listen to us, and then when we turned around and started back they would cut loose. A couple of guys who had worked with me in the truck ended up getting killed, after I had been transferred.

Now, later that summer, I was temporarily made officer in charge of the Press Service Camp with the 3rd Army, which was pushing across France. I had 57 correspondents there, mostly Americans. There was Ernest Hemingway, who I believe was writing for Collier’s at the time, Ira Wolfert, and Andrew Tully of the Boston Herald-Travels.

I was responsible for running the camp. Patton was going along pretty fast, so we had to move about every three to four days, then put up the tents again. I also went around peddling the Krations and Crations to the local French farmers for vegetables, fruit and, once a week, a cow.

We had all types of correspondents. Some used to just stay in camp and get the briefings twice a day, then report that. Others would go to Divisional HQ and say something like, “Hey, give me the name of everyone in the unit from Ohio,” so they could write about how they jumped into a foxhole, and right beside them was a guy from Cleveland or Akron or whatever. It was kind of fanciful writing, but I guess it looked good if you could mention running into a hometown guy up at the front.

Then we had writers who wrote on what we called “a magic carpet dateline,” from places we hadn’t even reached yet: “I was the first man to enter Paris” or “I was the first man to enter Metz.” We told them we weren’t going to send stuff like that.

We had 19 jeeps and 19 drivers, plus 22 officers who were supposed to be conductors. But when you piled three correspondents into a jeep, well, there wasn’t much you could do to keep them from going off where they wanted to. Hemingway was like that. He used to go off by himself and come back once a week.

There was a Chinese cook in our outfit named Wong Chung, who was about five feet tall and 95 pounds, and could hardly speak English. One night in August, when we were in the Champagne region, I heard Wong Chung calling to me from his tent, “Lieutenant, I give this man cigarette”—we used to get cigarette rations for the reporters, too. Well, the next moment, I hear “Yahhhhh!” So I run into Wong Chung’s tent.

Hemingway had lifted him off the ground and was choking him. He said, “You teach this goddamn Chink to call me Mister Hemingway!” That was Hemingway; he never even apologized. I know he was a great writer, but to be honest, I was never that hot about him.

EUGENE MCAULIFFE '40

McAuliffe, originally from Boston, was a military man from 1942 to 1947. He then served in the Foreign Service for nearly three decades. During the war, McAuliffe was a captain assigned to 3rd Army Headquarters, under Gen. George Patton.

I ended up at headquarters because I had majored in German language and literature. I don’t know why I had chosen that as a major, I was just interested in it. I did some interpreting, but mostly I was just getting things done.

I have worked in offices literally all over the world, and the most efficient one I ever saw was that headquarters. It had to be moved about every 48 to 72 hours, and there was paperwork and administrative tasks, and it all got done through sheer terror, because of the old man—he could be pretty rough.
He spoke to me twice the whole time I was there, and the only thing I said both times was "Yes, sir." He was a leader, no doubt about it. People in the headquarters had to keep their boots shined, even though it was muddy outside most of the time. He wanted discipline, and he got it: the rate of desertion in the 3rd Army was the lowest in the war.

JOHN MULROY '41

A native of the Allston neighborhood of Boston, Mulroy entered the Navy Supply Corps in November 1942. Following the war, he became a financial consultant. On the morning of October 25, 1944, Ensign Mulroy was aboard the "St. Lo," an escort carrier, when the Japanese Navy launched its attack on a virtually unprotected part of the American fleet in Leyte Gulf.

We were practically sitting ducks, because the Japanese had sent a decoy to get Admiral [William] Halsey and his battleships out of the way. But by a lot of amazing things, we survived. Our battle with the Japanese fleet was off the island of Samar, just above Leyte. We were northernmost in the group, and we were the first thing the Japs hit.

It was about 10 a.m. I was dirty and soaking wet from the rain, so I went down to wash up and change my clothes; I didn't want to go into the ward room looking like I did. While I was down there, general quarters started up again. What had happened was a kamikaze had hit us in about the middle of the flight deck, in the back third of the ship. It was the first kamikaze attack of the war.

I never could get back to my battle station, because the normal ways were blocked. Fortunately, I recalled a little-used way to get out, through the forward elevator pit. I found three other fellows trying to go the same way. By this time, we knew the St. Lo was going down. So we went through the forward elevator pit and came out on the sponson.

Then came one of these big explo-
sions. Our own torpedoes and bombs were going off. I got blown off; someone later said I went about 50 feet. Something hit my head, and then I came to in the water. This other fellow I had been with had gotten a life raft and called to me, so I got in there with him. Meanwhile, the rear admiral of our group had released his destroyer screen to go pick up the St. Lo survivors. We were only in the water for about three hours. The St. Lo was still afloat for about 30 minutes after the hit, and we were trying to maneuver the raft out of the way. We lost about 210 people.

The ship was in commission a year and a day when it went down. I had been on it right from the start. So watching it sink, it was kind of like a year's work going down. One of the things a few of us did was to start Catholic services on the ship. A few days before it sank, we had had a huge turnout at a noon Mass. We lost 210 people, and many of them died in the state of grace.

GEORGE DEVLIN '39

Raised in Somerville, Massachusetts, Devlin worked for H.P. Hood, Inc., and taught at Boston College and Suffolk University law schools. The Army assigned him to the Corps of Engineers. In October 1944 he was a captain with the 6th Army, in the Philippines.

The morning of the battle at Leyte, I was on an LST [Landing Ship Tank] going in. There were so many officers of rank on it, I had to sleep on the deck. I woke up early, ate my emergency rations, and started playing a chess game with this other fellow. I was contemplating a move when I saw this cruiser in the distance speeding off, and all our escorts pulled out. Then I

Above: Albert Nyren '41 (extreme right), with Belgian friends, St. Twid, Belgium, 1945. The previous year, working as a press officer in France, Nyren had handled 57 correspondents, including a hot-tempered Ernest Hemingway. Facing page: Nyren (extreme left) and his crew peer from behind their loud-speaker truck on a boulevard in Brittany, France, in August 1944. German troops are hiding several hundred yards away. "This," says Nyren, "was suicide."
noticed the bombing and our antiaircraft fire. The infantry landed and established a beachhead. All we saw was Japanese planes bombing everyone in the harbor.

Well, our LST became a target when we hit the beach. In fact, we took a direct hit, and you can imagine the destruction. It was loaded with trucks, tanks and personnel, and where there were no trucks there were men. It was a gory sight. I believe there were about 100 killed.

Now, I was used to being on the ground. There's no place where you can dig a hole on a deck. I actually saw this black object whiz by over the rail; it was a bomb. What happened was the deck of the LST became clogged, because of all the damage, and we couldn't move anything off.

All the officers met to decide on what we should do: we could try to abandon ship, or we could bring it onto the beach. The commander ordered us to bring it in. Then we had to determine who would be the last man off, and it was decided that it should be the one with the last vehicle in line. Unfortunately, that was me.

I must have waited an hour to get off. I made three attempts to run in, turn the jeep over and get ashore before the bombardment started up. Finally, I got ashore, and got out of the jeep to collect my senses. So I ducked under a flakbed for a few minutes. Then I said, "Well, I've got a job to do." So we worked down through to the Tacloban strip, and it looked okay.

MILDRED (KINNIER) DEL RIOS
MA '41

Del Rios grew up on Lake Street, literally in the shadow of the Heights. Too short (by an inch) to serve in the Women's Auxiliary Corps, she worked from late 1944 to war's end at a Santa Barbara, California, hospital as a civilian teacher for soldiers who had lost some or all of their hearing. After the war, she taught at several Boston-area schools for the deaf.

I had classes of five to six men, with an occasional WAC, and we went through an eight-week program of lip-reading, hearing aid use and auditory training. I'd say about 90 percent of them had been overseas. A lot of these soldiers had lost or damaged their hearing jumping out of airplanes—I guess in those days there was a real danger of injuring your ears from parachuting—or from bomb bursts.

Among the men, we also had some fakers, who were trying to pretend that they had a hearing loss so they could get out of combat. When we tested them, the results would vary; with a true hearing loss, you got more of a pattern. You could understand why they were trying to do it, because they had been through hell and they didn't want to go back.

On Saturday nights, a whole bunch of us from the hospital would go to this club called El Paseo, where there was music and dancing. Some of the soldiers went, too, and we all knew them—a few of the other women and I used to look at their records to see whether or not they were married. Well, there was this one fellow from Puerto Rico in a class, Antonio, who had volunteered for the Army and served three years. He had been in the North African campaign, and a bomb burst had shattered his eardrum. Antonio was a superb dancer and I guess you could say we had our eyes on each other, because we soon started courting.

How did it turn out? This past June, we celebrated our 45th anniversary. I guess God had a good reason in making me too short for the WACs!

DAVID MERRICK '41

In February 1942, Boston-born Merrick entered the service, where he became first sergeant with a reconnaissance outfit in the U.S. 3rd Army. After the war, he worked in sales and management for Sears Roebuck and Co.

It was December 1944, and we had crossed over into Germany and were living in foxholes, near the Hürtgen Forest. My outfit's duty was to block up any holes between the divisions so no one could get through; but we weren't supposed to fight, really, just report on the enemy and get the information back. It was pretty rough, though. We had about 220 in the outfit to start, but the number never got above 110 after that.
I remember it being very cold, and it was tough even to dig your foxhole. We were along a river, with the Jerries on the other side. At night, we would have supplies dropped to us. Well, one night, we had gotten our supplies, and this guy and I were sitting in our foxholes eating, and we couldn’t figure out what it was we had.

Finally, the other guy said, “It tastes kind of like turkey. But why are they serving us turkey instead of K rations?” So we counted up the days on our fingers, and we realized that it was Christmas. We didn’t even know it! The turkey was frozen, too, and we had to put it between our legs to thaw it out.

ROBERT REILLY EX ’45

Brought up in Lowell, Massachusetts, Reilly attended BC in 1940-41, but left when his father—already in the service—was transferred to Nebraska. He later completed his education at Suffolk and BU. On December 15, 1944, Reilly was a platoon leader with the 78th Infantry Division in the Ardennes, just over the border from Germany.

We had taken a series of villages on the Belgian side, and our objective was a dam in the town of Schmidt. So our battalion was to go into Kesternicht first. We took part of it, rested one night, then took the next part [on December 15]. I put part of my platoon out on the edge of town for security.

Then, all of a sudden, all hell broke loose. There were planes overhead, bombs exploding. What happened was, we had crossed the main road feeding the “Bulge,” and we were right about at the forward edge of the German attack. So we were overrun. Now, we had been ready for something to happen, because the Germans always counterattacked, whether it was with one division or one tank. But this was overwhelming.

My first thought was about my soldiers. So I went out and got the rest of the men, and we went to get the rest of the platoon on the edge of town. It was actually fairly peaceful there.

I kept sending messages to headquarters—“What do I do, what’s going on?”—but all I got back was “Fight the good fight,” that sort of thing. When you’re a foot soldier, they don’t tell you much. It started getting dark, so I finally sent one man to try to find out what the hell was going on. He came back and said, “We’re surrounded.” We had to figure out what to do.

We got holed up in a church rectory, and through the night they kept moving in on us, through the cemetery, to the church. Finally, they moved one of these big 88s up to the window and said “Out.” Then they just marched us away.

I guess, number one, I was fairly numb. By this time, we had a reduced number in our battalion, down to about a quarter of our strength. So there was sorrow about people you had lost. In a way, too, there was a little concern: we had surrendered, we were prisoners of

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THE PHONE CALL ON JUNE 28, 1942, had been a tough one for Lt. Commander John J. Shea. A former Boston College football star, he was about to leave California for duty in the Pacific, and he had called his wife Elizabeth to say good-bye. His five-year-old son Jackie eventually got on the phone, too. "Daddy," the little boy had piped in his small, distant voice, "you'll be home in two weeks."

John Shea knew that was not going to happen. Now, sitting at his desk far out at sea, he wanted to explain to his son why he wouldn't be coming back to their Cambridge, Massachusetts, home anytime soon. In case he never returned, Shea also wanted to give Jackie some heartfelt words to live by. The result was a letter that became a paean to American family values. Shea penned what would be his elegy. On September 15, 1942, the U.S.S. Wasp was hit by Japanese torpedoes southeast of Guadalcanal, and Shea died while trying to extinguish shipboard fires.

After the Navy publicly confirmed the sinking of the Wasp on October 26, newspapers such as the Boston Globe and the New York Times picked up the story of the "Letter to Jackie." Widely reprinted, the letter became a touchstone for an America at war.

The Boston School Committee voted to distribute copies among teachers in the Boston schools for classroom use. Luminaries such as Boston Archbishop-to-be Richard Cushing and Senator Leverett Saltonstall referred to it publicly. Over the next few years, Jack Shea and his mother became celebrities of a sort. They attended the launching of the new Wasp and christened a super-destroyer called the U.S.S. Shea.

Nearly 50 years later, the original letter sits in a strongbox in the Needham, Massachusetts, home of John R. "Jack" Shea, who no longer goes by the name "Jackie." Shea graduated from Boston College in 1958, became a teacher of Greek and Latin, and has long been a part-time faculty member in the BC Classical Studies Department. The letter is his most tangible link to his father.

"I am struck by its comprehensiveness," remarks Shea, a soft-spoken father of three. "In the space of several handwritten pages, he put down things that I hope I have communicated to my kids. I think what made the letter so appealing [to the public] is that he took some thoughts which were probably shared by many, and expressed them very directly."

It was significant at the time that such universal sentiments were expressed by a Catholic, Shea believes, since Catholics were not yet regarded as part of the mainstream of American society. Thus the letter was much appreciated in Catholic schools and neighborhoods, especially for the ringing line "Be a good Catholic and you can't help being a good American."

Born in a heavily Irish Cambridge neighborhood in 1898, the elder Shea had always endeavored to be both. John Joseph Shea studied chemistry at BC, played baseball and football, wrote for the Stylus, was vice president of the Fulton Debating Society and—according to Sub Turri—was noted for saying, "If I can do anything to help, let me know."

Shea's college years were overshadowed by World War I. Soon after obtaining his degree in 1918, Shea enlisted in the Navy.

By late August 1942, he had taken command of the Wasp, a carrier escorting troop transports to Guadalcanal through an area of the Pacific studded with Japanese submarines. On what would be the last night of his life, John Shea strolled on the hangar deck and met an old acquaintance from Cambridge. The two reminisced, talked about their families and said goodnight. Some 12 hours later, three 21-inch torpedoes slammed into the Wasp.

John J. Shea's legacy endures at his alma mater. The University's baseball field, dedicated in 1963, is named in his honor. "A Letter to Jackie," meanwhile, remains one of the most-requested items in the Burns Library archives.

Sean Smith
June 29, 1942

Dear Jackie:

This is the first letter I have ever written to my little son and I am thrilled to know that you can read it all by yourself. If you miss some of the words, I am sure it will be because I do not write plainly. Mother will help you in that case I am sure.

I was certainly glad to hear your voice over the long distance telephone. It sounded as though I were right in the living room with you. You sounded as though you missed your daddy very much. I miss you too, more than anyone will ever know. It is too bad that this war could not have been delayed a few more years so that I could grow up again with you and do with you all the things I planned to do when you were old enough to go to school.

I thought how nice it would be for me to come home early in the afternoon and play ball with you, and go mountain climbing and see the trees and brooks, and learn all about woodcraft, hunting, fishing, swimming and other things like that. I suppose we must be brave and put these things off now for a little while.

When you are a little bigger, you will know why your daddy is not home so much any more. You know we have a big country, and we have ideals as to how people should live and enjoy the riches of it, and how each is born with equal rights to life, freedom, and the pursuit of happiness. Unfortunately, there are some countries in this world where they don’t have these ideals, where a boy cannot grow up to be what he wants to be with no limits on his opportunities to be a great man, such as a great priest, statesman, doctor, soldier, businessman, etc.

Because there are people and countries who want to change our nation, its ideals, form of government and way of life, we must leave our homes and families to fight. Fighting for the defense of our country, ideals, homes and honor is an honor and a duty which your daddy has to do before he can come home to settle down with you and mother. When it is done, he is coming home to be with you always and forever. So wait just a little while longer. I am afraid it will be more than the two weeks you told me on the phone.

In the meantime, take good care of mother. Be a good boy and grow up to be a good young man. Study hard when you go to school. Be a leader in everything good in life. Be a good Catholic and you can’t help being a good American. Play fair always. Strive to win, but if you must lose, lose like a gentleman and a good sportsman. Don’t ever be a quitter either in sports or in your business or profession when you grow up. Get all the education you can. Stay close to mother and follow her advice. Obey her in everything, no matter how you may at times disagree. She knows what is best and will never let you down or lead you away from the right and honorable things in life. If I don’t get back, you will have to be mother’s protector because you will be the only one she has. You must grow up and take my place as well as your own in her life and heart.

Love your grandmother and granddad as long as they live. They too will never let you down. Love your aunts and see them as often as you can. Last of all, don’t ever forget your daddy. Pray for him to come back and if it is God’s will that he does not, be the kind of boy and man your daddy wants you to be.

Kiss mother for me every night. Goodbye for now with all my love and devotion for mother and you.

Your Daddy
war. We had heard all kinds of horror stories, like, “Once the SS gets hold of you, they shoot you.”

Once we got to the camp, which was in Limburg, things were different. It was pretty much a British camp. The officers there explained the routine, which was two pieces of bread in the morning, soup at noon and at night. Also, there was a head count twice a day, and you didn’t ‘wander outside the building. We talked about what happened if there was an air raid, but everyone said not to worry, because the British were the only ones bombing at night, and they had marked off all the POW camps.

On the night of December 23, we heard the air raid siren go off. I had been reading on my bunk, and when the bombing started I tried to slide underneath a bunk. There was no place to hide, and no way to get out of the building. Then I swung up on the bottom bunk bed, and I was huddled with these three other guys, including my closest friend, Chris.

The bombs were getting closer and closer, and somehow I knew the next one was coming in. It was just the way it sounded, like a rush of air or a plane gathering momentum. It must have exploded 10 feet from our bunk, and there was this very bright light and a howling sound. I said “Lord have mercy on my soul.”

Then I felt like I was floating, and I actually looked down on myself on the bunk. I thought I was dead, and I remember feeling peaceful, no pain at all.

I finally woke up, and the raid was over, and the barracks was on fire. Somehow, I had wound up sitting in the hole the bomb had made in the roof, and I was alive. I could hear Chris’ voice underneath me, so I dug in and tried to get him out, and these two other fellows came in and helped us. There had been 79 of us in that barracks, and Chris and I were the only ones who survived.

Schofield entered the Marine Corps in March 1942 and served in the Pacific. After returning to his South Boston home, he went to work for the Massachusetts State Police. Schofield retired a lieutenant after 40 years of service. In February 1945, he was part of the Marine force that invaded Iwo Jima.

We had fought our way up to a sugar mill, and we made a base camp there using one of the cisterns that was part of the mill. Later on, I told myself, “I shouldn’t have gone to a place with a chimney. It makes a great target.” Sure enough, I saw three rockets come in from the Japs. I never saw the fourth one. That rocket collapsed everything on top of me and some other officers, and I was buried alive. The next thing I knew, I woke up in a hospital.

What happened was, we had a medic named Anthony Tumey, and he was at the scene. I had never met the guy before. As he tells it, he saw three fingers sticking up out of the ground. They were mine. That was how they managed to find me, and save my life. You don’t forget something like that.

Once in a while, I’m fighting it all over again. At first, my wife and I couldn’t sleep in a double bed. I mean, you touched me from behind and I went for your throat.

About 10 years later, I was taking a civil service exam to become a police lieutenant. They’re calling out names before the test, and they said “Schofield.” I said, “That’s me.” Then from about 15 feet away, I hear someone say, “Are you Captain Schofield? How did you get out of Iwo?” I’m looking at him, trying to figure out who he is. He says, “This is the guy who found you and dug you out of the hole.” I never knew that [the story of my rescue] before! I didn’t know anything about the three fingers sticking up.

Born in Boston, Cadigan later became a counselor working with veterans and their families. Lt. Cadigan had been in combat only 10 days when, on February 26, 1945, enemy fire pinned down his platoon near Zerf, several miles into German territory from Luxembourg.

We were supposed to take some high ground near Zerf, which was about 12 miles south of the city of Trier. It was a very raw, misty day, about two in the afternoon, and we were moving through a varied terrain. It was hilly, with brush and some occasional clearings. The Germans opened fire with grenades and machine guns and it got very heavy.

I knew it was getting bad for us. It was a sense that I had, but it was corroborated by my company commander. He wasn’t panicking, exactly, but his voice related that we would be wiped out if something didn’t happen.

Well, I took a machine gun and some ammunition and went out alone. It was just instinct, there was no time to dwell on it. Anyway, I moved out, using what cover I could get. My training paid off. I also had a tremendous amount of luck and prayer; I consider that a good combination.

I found a good field of fire, and the enemy came into it. They thought it was all over, that they’d just go walking in, and some of them were laughing. But I fired on them; I was credited with killing 50 enemy soldiers and capturing 85 more. A few of our men were still firing, so that got them intimidated. It was really kind of wild.

The rest of the platoon were joking with me about it afterwards; they said they thought that was it for me when I went. Lateron, it dawned on me, “How crazy can you get?” But I looked at it rationally. I figured it was just something that had to get done.

Some of the men who were witnesses told me that the company commander was putting me in for a Medal
of Honor. I was just interested in doing the job, though, and getting home safe and sound, so I didn't think about it much; I did get a bronze and a silver star. What happened was our commander was wounded a few weeks later, and had to be evacuated. So he wasn't able to furnish the evidence for the Congressional Medal of Honor in the time specified by the Army.

I'd abandoned the idea of the medal, but in 1975 my old commander calls me up out of the blue. He says, "You must have gotten your Medal of Honor, otherwise you would have called me." I told him I hadn't gotten it, and he became irritated at that, so he asked me to help him find some witnesses. It took a while, but I tracked down seven; you only need two.

Editor's Note: After several unsuccessful efforts to obtain a Congressional Medal of Honor, Cadigan expects a joint congressional resolution to be introduced this fall directing the Army to determine whether he should be awarded the medal.

TED LYONS '42

The son of immigrant Irish parents, Boston-born Lyons arrived on campus in the fall of 1939. He was drafted in early 1941. After training as a B-17 bomber pilot, Lyons joined the 15th Air Force, based in Foggia, Italy. On February 24, 1944, Lyons' plane was shot down over Austria. Half the crew survived; Lyons did not. The diary entries on this page, written for his young wife Mary (also called Meg), document the pilot's final days.

Monday, February 21

Got as far as our plane this morning and the same thing happened—weather. We're not getting anywhere lately.

Took a little nap this afternoon and also wrote to my Honey—

Went to movies to see (again) "Girl Crazy"—Mickey Rooney

No other news yet—still have 18 missions in [completed]—

I miss you very much

Tuesday, February 22

We went to visit Adolf himself today—our target was Regensburg ME [Messerchmitt] factory—however when we arrived there it was covered by clouds so we dropped on the MY [marshalling yards] at Munich—Quite a bit of flak—the ship directly in front of us was peppered by it—the ball turret and tail gunners were hit—the ship looked like a sponge—the fighters attacked the group behind us—thank God for that. They shot down one of our ships. Another was lost on way to the target. [Flight] Time was 7:20—

Five hours on oxygen at that—

No mail today—

Miss you Meg—Wrote to Meg.

Wednesday, February 23

Started out for Austria this morning but again the weather made us turn back. (3:30 flying time)

Took a shower in Foggia today—what a grand feeling that is—to wash with nice hot water—

Well today quite a few of the boys got their promotions—Lucky dogs. I wish I could jump up another [level] myself—

Today I also hit another jackpot of mail—Yessir, a stack of them—

Will try to answer all Mary's questions—Miss her very much—
THOMAS LAMBE ’39

Raised in Weymouth, Massachusetts, Lambe graduated to become a teacher. After the war, he resumed his teaching duties and eventually became a principal in the Weymouth school system. Lambe fought as a Marine sergeant at Guadalcanal and Iwo Jima, where he earned a Silver Star for heroism on the night of March 16, 1945.

What happened was, there were so many casualties that we had to gather troops and fill the gaps, so we put a platoon together and I was the acting platoon sergeant.

There were sniper attacks that lasted the whole night, and they had us pinned down before we finally sent up a tank and bulldozer in the morning to drive them off. There were sulphur springs in the ground, so if you were in a foxhole, you could feel the heat rising underneath you. Some of my friends were shot down beside me. This one guy was fixing rocks around his foxhole and all of a sudden he gets shot in the head and falls back. Sometimes, when the snipers fired, the lead would come bouncing through the foxhole all around you.

In a situation like that, your thoughts are not about you. You’re wondering how everyone else back home is going to be if you don’t make it out of there.

Several years ago, I gave a testimonial speech to what I called the “Impossible Dream of Iwo Jima.” I just said how so many young people lost their lives at Iwo, and that I owe all to the impossible dream of getting out of there alive and unscathed.

It’s a little thing, but Iwo is also where I lost my second BC ring. I had lost my first, but my wife got me a second one. Then I lost that one during the fighting. It’s probably still in the sand someplace.

WILLIAM WEISS, JR. ’41

A graduate from Boston, Weiss volunteered for the Army in March 1942. He went into teaching for a few years following the war, then became an electrical engineer. On V-E Day, May 8, 1945, Lt. Col. Weiss and his Signal Corps unit were near Augsburg, Germany.

We were pretty much in touch with all the forces, so we heard about the surrender. But I can’t say we really celebrated that much. We were too busy thinking about going to Japan—we had heard that we were supposed to be deployed there. But after V-E Day, they decided not to send us.

I had accumulated a lot of points because I had been overseas so long, so I went home in late October of that year. What I remember about the trip home is there were a couple of hurricanes in the North Atlantic.

Then, when we were getting ready to disembark in New York, one of the officers threw something overboard upon seeing the Statue of Liberty. It was the mess kit he had been using for the last three years. This was kind of ceremonial, you see.

LARRY FULCHINO ’41

Fulchino, a native of Revere, Massachusetts, served in the Medical Corps with the Allied Army of Occupation stationed in Germany from 1946-48. He later entered private practice as a doctor.

I was mainly involved with Displaced Persons camps in the American occupation, but also with Americans and Germans who had committed war crimes, battlefield atrocities.

We had charge of the area including the Dachau concentration camp. I went to Dachau, but this was well after it had been liberated. I also took my wife there 25 years later, to show her what it was like. The thing that really hit me was to see how many were buried in mass graves. Once you saw the ovens, the gas chambers, the showers, you couldn’t forget it.

As for the people I had charge of, there’s a part in one of Mario Puzo’s early books, Dark Arena, where he writes about a soldier in the occupation force.

There’s a quote which I think sums it up: “I never saw a Nazi over there.” No one belonged to the Nazi party, they all claimed they were not involved. It was like the people in the town of Dachau, when they were forced to clean up the camp when it had been liberated, and they claimed they didn’t know what had been happening there.

JAMES D. McLAUGHLIN ’41

Born in Brooklyn, New York, McLaughlin and his family moved to Boston in 1931. He entered the Army Air Corps two days after his BC commencement and became a tail gunner. McLaughlin survived the attack on Pearl Harbor, plus nearly four years of aerial combat, and practiced law after his discharge.

Later on in the war, I fought in the Solomon Islands, the Marianas, two tours in all. I flew in a B-17 Flying Fortress. To me, it was a great plane. It had the ability to come back even if it was racked up, and it could fly pretty long-range. The Japanese thought those planes changed the course of the war.

It was all manual shooting then. You would be dressed in sheepskins, because you weren’t sealed in when you were on the tail. You were exposed to the elements, so you had your oxygen and flak suit on, and you stood when you fired. You had plenty of ammunition, of course. It was arranged in what was called a “2-2-1” sequence: two ball, two armor and then one tracer bullet. That way, with every fifth shot you could see where you were firing.

The experience in combat was just
kill or be killed. You would have to do everything to save your life. What you remember is feeling nothing but fear, and the hope of doing your job and getting home safely.

The last mission I flew was over the Missouri the day the Japanese surrendered in Tokyo [September 2, 1945]. We put everything in the sky we could as a show of strength, because there were reports that some of the Japanese were against the surrender, and might do something. I didn't think they would try anything. I had heard rumors they'd been trying to surrender long before, but they had asked for too many conditions. I had even heard something about them going through the Pope.

**J. Rand McNally, Jr. '39**

A graduate from Dedham, Massachusetts, McNally worked as an administrator for Union Carbide in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, between 1948 and 1982. During the war, McNally performed research at the MIT spectroscopy lab for something he and his colleagues knew only as The Manhattan Project.

In 1941, we received some uranium samples to be analyzed for purification; I developed a technique for analyzing for fluorine and chloride. That was significant because if the uranium contained them, it wouldn't be satisfactory for building a nuclear pile or reactor. The samples went down to Oak Ridge. I didn't even know where that was. We weren't told what it was to be used for.

One of our colleagues said he thought it was going to be used to make an atomic bomb. The rest of us pooh-poohed him, though. I finally knew on August 6, 1945 [date of the Hiroshima bombing] what the project was for. I read the newspaper articles and that confirmed it.

What I remember after all these years is what got me interested in atomic physics. When I was in high school, in 1935, I think, my high school teacher Edwin Peterson told me that one day, man would hold enough material in the palm of his hand to destroy a city. He said it was important that man learn to use this power peacefully.

My feeling about the whole thing was that it was important to the war effort. But at the time, I just didn't know what it was.

**Joseph Maloney '47, JD '50**

A Newtonville, Massachusetts, native, Maloney entered BC in 1939, but left to join the Army as a private in 1942. After graduating from law school, he entered private practice as a lawyer.

Around the time the war in Europe was over, I had been transferred back to England. They told me they needed people in the provost's office in Paris, and, well, I was just a kid in my 20s. No one wanted to pass that up, being in Paris. Of course, this wasn't the Paris of old; it was devastated.

One day, I was on duty at the Eiffel Tower. We were looking for an American soldier who was wanted for murder, and an informant had told us he was there. We went to search for him, and fortunately, he was not there. While we were on the second floor, we became engaged in conversation with this young French girl, about 20 years old. She asked me if I knew French, and I did. I'd had a few years in high school, and two at BC, so I was pretty fluent.

Well, that did it. She asked me for a button from my uniform. She told me she and her family needed rations, they had nothing. Her name was Jennine Morin, and she was a real doll. So, the next night, when I was off-duty, I met her again at the tower and I brought a bag full of rations. We walked up to the Champs-Elysées, had a glass of wine, it was very romantic. And in about six or seven months, we ended up getting married in her village, Brou, which is near Chartres.

Now, during all that time, I had been assigned to Frankfurt, Germany, and I stayed there until about April of 1946. Jennine came home to the U.S. about a month ahead of me. It was pretty tough. She didn't speak any English, and she was leaving her family. But after I came back, she went right out to work. She became a watchmaker in Waltham, and she supported me right through law school!

**John Leary '40**

Leary, who appeared earlier in this story, took part in the D-Day invasion of Normandy.

I came home in November of 1945; I was still living in Winthrop at the time. The troop ship got into New York City, then we went up to Fort Devens [Mass.], and we were released from there. This fellow who had a car drove me from Ayer to Harvard Square, and that's where my father and uncle picked me up.

It was just so wonderful to come home. I was in so much of a hurry to get out of my uniform—not that I hated serving in the military or ever regretted it. You were just so divested of civilian life, and it was good to get back to doing the things you had been used to doing.

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