The Voices and Faces of Iowans Fighting World War II

There are many ways of looking back at World War II. The massive troop movements and decisive battles. The political and military leaders facing tough choices. The gearing up of the defense industry.

What we have chosen, for this issue, are the faces and voices of Iowans.

During the war, military and civilian photographers steadily supplied newspapers with war-related photos, particularly ones that would boost the nation’s morale. Leaf through Iowa’s wartime newspapers. They are saturated with these images. Six decades later, we look again at some of these Iowa faces. Perhaps you will even recognize a few. Some sport proud grins. Others are serious and determined, intent on doing their part in winning a war. Some mask fears and worries with a big smile for the camera.

The voices in this issue are as varied as the faces. We hear from soldiers writing home from Europe or the Pacific. Other voices are those of Iowans who lived through “the duration” here at home, and, years later, wrote down their experiences or recounted them to others.

What these all represent—these faces and voices of Iowans—are individual stories, individual moments, captured on film, recorded in words, preserved by memory. Admittedly, they are only the tip of the iceberg, only a handful of the millions and millions of pieces that make up the history of World War II. But like the wartime efforts of every foot soldier, every local Civilian Defense Council, every farm kid gathering milkweed pods for life jackets, these individual moments are important and essential parts of the whole story. We offer them to you, with the greatest respect, in this special issue.

—Ginalie Swaim, editor