



# THE BEST OF AMERICA



**WORLD  
WAR II**  
FOUNDATION

FILMS THAT  
EDUCATE,  
PRESERVE,  
HONOR &  
INSPIRE



**EVERY AMERICAN WHO  
REMEMBERS WORLD WAR II HAS  
STORIES TO TELL, AND THEY TELL  
THEM IN TONES THAT STILL RING  
WITH PRIDE AND PATRIOTISM.**

**FROM MIDWAY TO LEYTE GULF, ANZIO AND SALERNO TO ROME, FROM NORMANDY AND BASTOGNE TO BERLIN, GUADALCANAL TO IWO JIMA, AMERICAN SOLDIERS, SAILORS, AIRMEN, AND MARINES GREW FROM BOYS TO MEN ON THE BATTLEFIELDS OF WORLD WAR II.** At home and in uniform, mothers, wives, and daughters nursed the sick, manned the factories, and flew planes out to both coasts for shipment overseas. Titans of industry, seemingly overnight, retooled factories to feed the insatiable demands of warfare. America's schoolchildren walked miles to collect tin foil and newspapers in wagons, and in the year 1945 alone, raised a staggering \$715 million in war bonds.

Every American who remembers World War II has stories to tell, and they tell them in tones that still ring with pride and patriotism. Veterans give voice to their comrades who perished in battle, making the ultimate sacrifice. Those who are long gone entrusted their stories to children and grandchildren who repeat them through generations, making the memory indelible.

As a body, the stories define a nation wholly dedicated to one common goal: halting evil in its tracks. We tell these stories today to honor and preserve the past, and as importantly, to inspire the future. In a nation that has never felt so fractured and divided, the example of the greatest collaborative effort in the history of the world has valuable insights to impart.

## **STORYTELLING IS AT THE CORE OF THE WORLD WAR II**

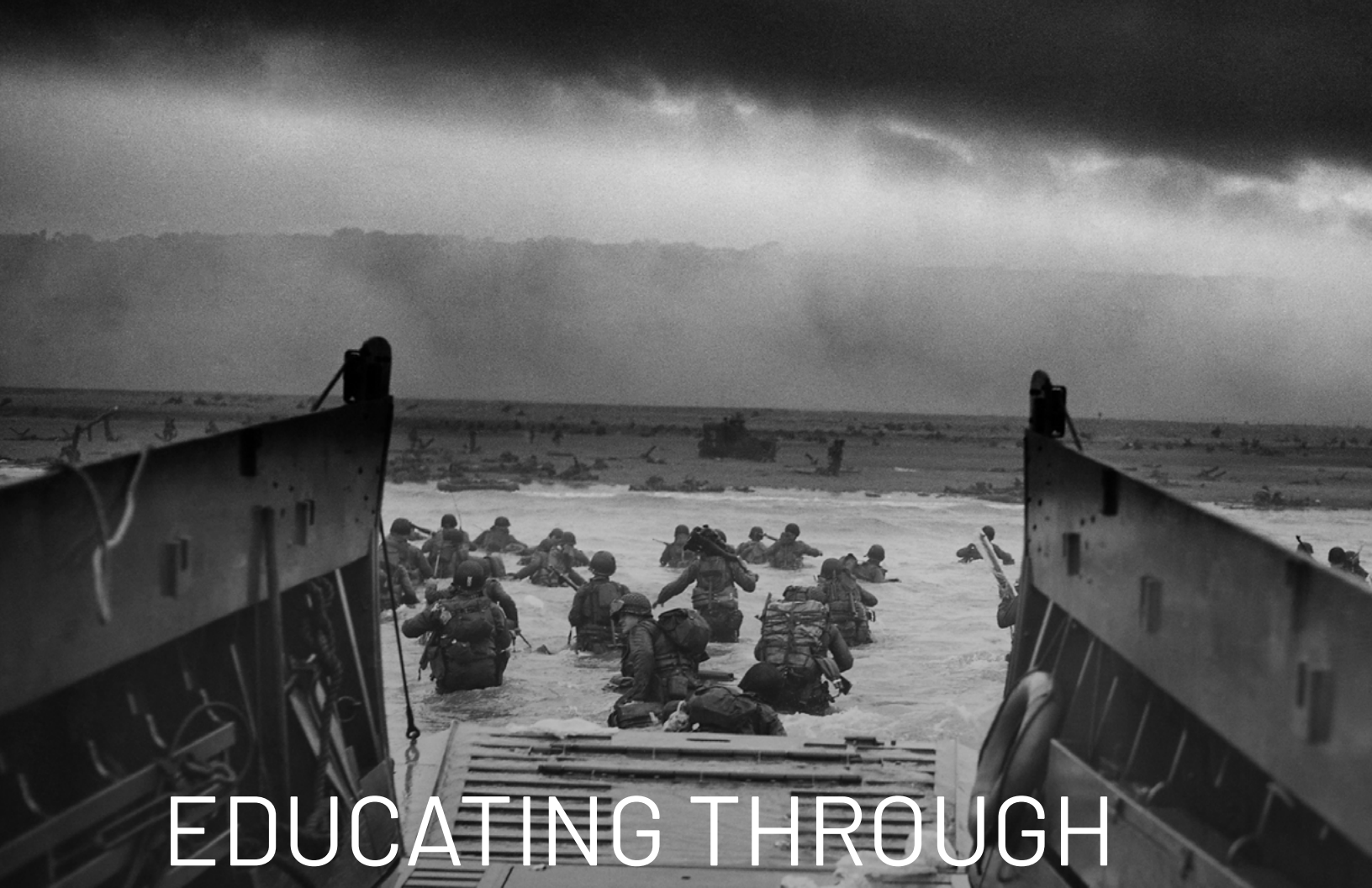
**FOUNDATION**, an organization founded in 2011 by filmmaker Tim Gray with a mission to raise awareness and appreciation, through film, of the many sacrifices made by American men and women in securing our basic freedoms. Humankind is hardwired to respond to “once upon a time,” and the Foundation is singularly positioned to leaven the facts and statistics of history, bringing them to life through stories.

Gray and his team of professional documentary filmmakers have followed in the footsteps of American heroes, capturing their stories and anchoring them in place and time. Our goal is to instill the lessons the war taught us and make them accessible, relatable, and impactful **at no cost to students, educators, veterans, or the public.**



**FOR ALL OF US WHO LONG FOR AN AMERICA THAT WORKED TOGETHER AS ONE, SUPPORTING THE WORLD WAR II FOUNDATION IS AN INVESTMENT RICH IN DIVIDENDS.**





# EDUCATING THROUGH STORYTELLING



**THE WORLD WAR II FOUNDATION'S DAILY BUSINESS IS EDUCATION**, chiefly delivered through the 30-and-counting professionally produced films shown on public television stations across the country, available at no cost online at the Foundation's website, and free to schools everywhere. There is no paywall between the product and the audience. Making the films accessible is a World War II Foundation priority made possible only through the generosity of its sponsors. Unlike other documentarians who focus on the sweep of the war, Gray focuses on its heart, recording individual, first-person stories and expertly blending them with archival and newly captured footage of the battlefields to bring the tales to life. Famous narrators such as Gary Sinise, Tom Brokaw, Jane Lynch, Tom Selleck, and David McCallum heighten the popularity of the films within a celebrity-conscious culture.

Fortuitously, Gray began filming his interviews in 2006, when many more veterans were alive to tell their stories. The archive holds over 500 interviews – with more added every year – and approximately 80% remain unused, meaning the Foundation has a hefty trove of material for decades to come. In addition to scores of individual stories, the film catalog contains offerings on the war in Europe, the war in the Pacific, and the Holocaust.

Films are the core, but not the totality, of the Foundation's educational effort. Extensive lesson planning for teachers and train-the-trainer sessions help educators use stories



## RECLAIMING HISTORY

*First-year student Gabe Jones, a biology major from North Carolina's Davidson College, got a firsthand lesson in documentary filmmaking when he and his classmates signed on to help Foundation founder Tim Gray research his new film on Iwo Jima. Gray partnered with Davidson history professor John Wertheimer's class studying World War II, charging students to unearth material not yet made public. While searching through a University of South Carolina collection of film clips shot by combat cameramen during the Battle of Iwo Jima, Jones found an old film reel that had barely been viewed since its creation 76 years ago. The newsreel featured an unfamiliar perspective, one taken from the other side as Japanese soldiers trained and speculated about their chances of returning alive. Jones not only felt the thrill of discovering valuable footage nearly lost to history, in true documentarian fashion, but he also added it to the permanent historical record.*

and objects in the classroom. Special projects engage college students in original research. A global education center in Rhode Island houses more than 3,000 authentic World War II artifacts. These assets combine to make us the central meeting place for those with an interest in World War II. And the annual, juried Normandie-World War II International Film and Media Festival shines a worldwide spotlight on the Foundation's work while showcasing the best in World War II military-themed documentaries.



# WE MAKE IT PERSONAL

**YOUNG PEOPLE ARE A TARGET AUDIENCE FOR THIS MESSAGE**, and Tim Gray prides himself on personalizing his outreach just as he does his storytelling. The average 14-year-old is consumed with video games and social media, so to reach them, Gray cuts longer feature films into video vignettes that are easy to digest. In visits to schools across America, he meets young people where they are with questions they can relate to: What was the average 14-year-old doing during the war? What must it have felt like as a young soldier waiting to board a landing craft at Omaha Beach? Word about Gray's talks to middle and high schoolers has gotten around. They are so popular, he cannot accommodate all the requests that come to the Foundation.

In *Grandpa's War Story Goes #Viral*, Gray relates the fascination Alaskan teenager Henry De Hoop has with his grandfather's secret war experience, and how Henry shared his ancestor's story across social media platforms. Henry's efforts to memorialize his grandfather's experience give him something in common with scores of World War II Foundation supporters who begin their sentences with, "my father," "my uncle," or "my grandfather." Sharing a personal story is at once the most intimate and the most public of acts. When we commemorate the lives of those we admire, we not only make their names and deeds a part of history, but we raise up their example, providing strong role models for generations to come.

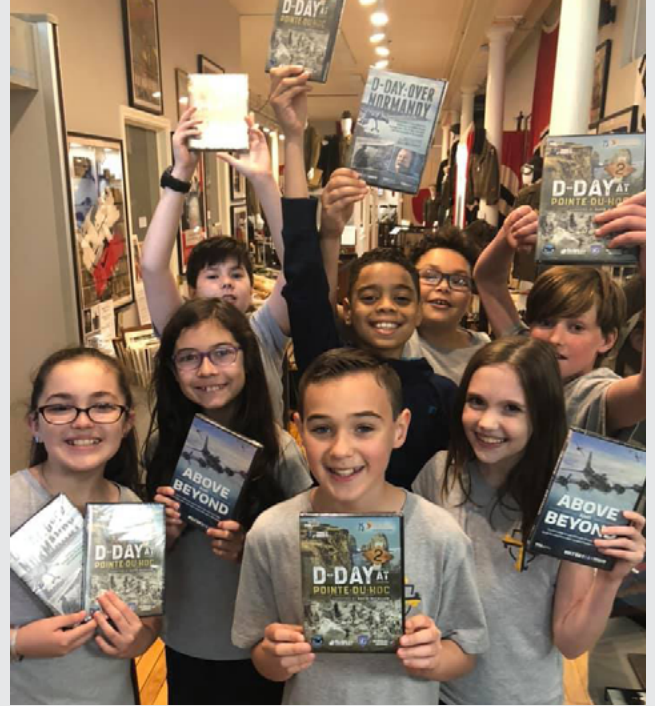




## MEETING STUDENTS WHERE THEY ARE

“Everything is relatable. We don’t give a 30,000-foot view of the war, we give a 5,000-foot view of the war. With a group of young women, I talk about Rosie the Riveter, or the women on the home front. With African Americans, I talk about the Tuskegee Airmen or segregation of the troops. If they’re Japanese students, I discuss the internment camps. If they’re Jewish students, I talk about the Holocaust. I want to present as personal an experience for them as possible. If I ask them, ‘Do you guys know about Omaha Beach?’ they say, ‘Yeah, I play the video game Call of Duty.’ That gives me an entrée to share the real story of Omaha Beach.”

**Tim Gray**  
*Founder, World War II Foundation*



# A BLUEPRINT FOR THE BEST OF AMERICA

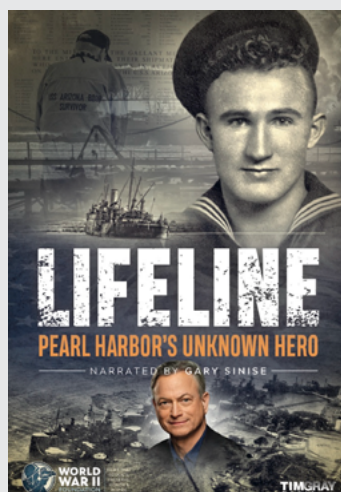
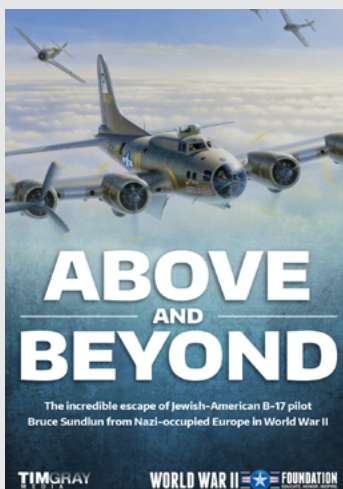
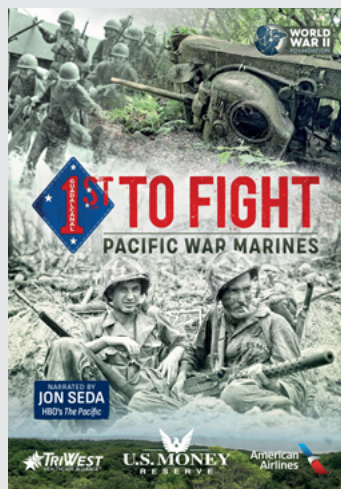
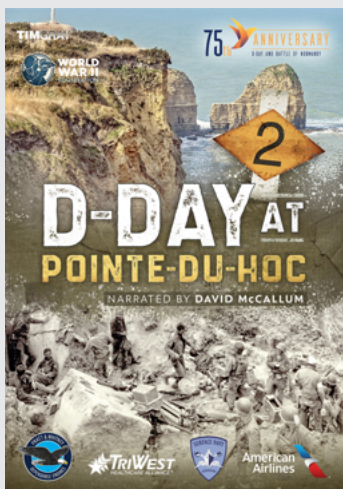


**WHILE SUBJECTS AND FORMATS VARY, THE FOUNDATION'S FILMS ARE CONSISTENT IN THEIR INTENT.** Together, they form a veritable blueprint of the characteristics and defining traits that exemplify the best of America. Members of the aptly named Greatest Generation took up their charge without fuss or fanfare. In addition to telling compelling stories of bravery and courage, the films underscore the values of resilience, self-sacrifice, and teamwork. Everyone did their part, committing to a cause greater than themselves. With a pragmatism that surprises our modern-day sensibilities, the films' protagonists illustrate that steady, forward movement is the only way through adversity.

Our recorded war stories go back to ancient Greek historian Herodotus in 450 BC, but never has it felt more urgent to gather them and listen to the lessons they impart. An estimated 16 million Americans served in uniform during World War II, and fewer than two percent remain. With nearly 300 veterans passing each day, there is no time to lose. And in what often feels like a nation divided by partisan politics and beset by violence against one another, now is the time to emphasize the relevance of America's founding values and the power of rallying around the common good. Ours is a message of unity — our films evoke an America where people not only understood but acted upon the idea that what unites them is far greater than what divides them. And the outcome saved democracy.

# 21ST-CENTURY STORYTELLING

**From the advent of World War II, when the armed forces brought Hollywood's greatest directors to the battlefields, to the modern-day works of Ken Burns and Steven Spielberg, film has been the dominant medium for storytelling. Over eight decades, film – equal parts evocative and informative – made the war real for audiences at home. Tim Gray's films have the imprimatur of the personal, making them compelling and instantly relatable, and he crafts them to speak to future generations.**



**The Foundation has introduced a one-of-a-kind experience: a filmed tour of the war's major battlefields, starting with Pearl Harbor and Omaha Beach, in 360-degree virtual reality format.**

A black and white historical photograph showing several soldiers in a trench or on a battlefield. They are gathered around a tall flagpole, and one soldier is in the process of raising the American flag. The flag is partially visible, showing the stars and stripes. The scene is set against a bright, overcast sky. The overall mood is one of triumph and historical significance.

GIVING THE PAST A  
FUTURE:  
**A VIRTUAL TIME  
MACHINE**

**BARELY A DECADE OLD**, the Foundation combines the energy of youth with a sharp vision for the work ahead. We marry the resonance of our messages to the reach of technology with a first-of-its-kind virtual reality project that features VR tours of major World War II battlefields. The Foundation will leverage the popularity of social media with specially cut excerpts of our films to pique interest among the young. While actively pursuing the remaining World War II survivors, Tim Gray has archived interviews yet to be shaped into stories, such as those about the Tuskegee Airmen and the role women played in winning the war.

Second only to the talent of our filmmakers, the Foundation's greatest advantage is the strength of our assets. With a growing video archive, collection of physical objects, and state-of-the-art footage of the battlefield, we can use emerging technology to take people back in time, putting them at the center of the action and accentuating the sights and sounds of a time when civilization itself was on the line.



Looking forward, the World War II Foundation has more opportunity than we have resources to capitalize on it. Our films rank in the top five most requested programs nationally on American Public Television. With raw material enough to generate decades of content, we seek sustaining sponsors — corporations and individuals who can make multi-year investments in our films and our film festival. This support is critical to our ability to deliver our content without charge, an immense benefit to financially struggling school systems and public television stations.

Our potential to increase educational outreach — through social media, school visits, and teacher training — is limitless. But we operate with the leanest of staffs. To keep our filmmakers in the field, where they belong, we must add people to ramp up our education effort, meeting young people in their own space. Endowing staff positions will enable the Foundation to reach thousands more students annually and allow donors to honor the names and deeds of loved ones in perpetuity.



# "THIS STORY SHALL THE GOOD MAN TELL HIS SON"

As Americans, we do well to acknowledge that if the view is good from where we are, it is only because we are standing on shoulders stronger than our own. To lose the thread of even one of these stories is to disrespect the sacrifice behind it. Each World War II story is a piece of a mosaic, and each film is the war in microcosm.



With your support, we can eventually assemble that world entire, guaranteeing that the voices of WWII – and all that they stood for – are a lasting part of our history.



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