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HAVE I GOT A WAR TO SELL YOU:
AMERICAN PROPAGANDA DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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Cean M. Burgeson

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HAVE I GOT A WAR TO SELL YOU: AMERICAN PROPAGANDA DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

By

Cean M. Burgeson

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ABSTRACT

HAVE I GOT A WAR TO SELL YOU:
AMERICAN PROPAGANDA DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

By

Cean M. Burgeson

The production thesis of Cean M. Burgeson examines American propaganda during the Second World War. The project focuses on people's reactions to the propaganda and their thoughts regarding the idea of government-sponsored propaganda during this era in history. Further investigations were made as to the effects of these propaganda messages and the success of these messages in uniting the citizenry of the United States in support of the war effort. The end product is a documentary entitled "Have I got a War to Sell You". Willing participants were interviewed as to their thoughts, feelings, and impressions of the various types of propaganda common during World War II.

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my grandfather, Millard Paul Burgeson, who served our country in the Second World War and endured an enemy Prisoner of War camp so that we could all remain free.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to my Thesis Director, Bob Albers, and to my mother, Diane Burgeson, whose research direction was greatly appreciated.

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INTRODUCTION

Guns, tanks, airplanes, and bombs were the principal weapons of World War II, but there were other, more subtle weapons of warfare at work back at home in the United States. Posters, music, radio, and films waged a constant battle for the hearts and minds of the American citizenry and citizen soldiers just as surely as the steel and gunpowder weapons engaged the enemy in the Pacific and European Theatres. Garnering support from the American public became a wartime industry with as much importance as the manufacturing of bombs and planes. To accomplish the goal of popular support for the war, the U.S. Government launched an aggressive propaganda campaign that involved some of the nation's foremost intellectuals, artists, and filmmakers (N.A.R.A 1998).

"Propaganda was more important during World War II than during any previous wars for several reasons. Radio and films had reached new heights of influence, and the world was increasingly separating into mass democracies or mass dictatorships; under either system millions of people had to be led, cajoled, and manipulated to achieve desired national ends" (Cole 1998).

OBJECTIVES/AUDIENCE

It is the hope of the producer that this thesis will provide an innovative perspective that serves to enlighten the viewer or reader and provide insight as to the effects of propaganda in World War II upon the American Public.

The finished product gives the viewer an overview of the different types of propaganda, including posters, songs, films, or advertisements. The audience can hear first-hand comments regarding their reactions to propaganda as well as their feelings on what was happening in the United States at this time from the people who lived during this era. The film's premise is that the propaganda messages in America during World War II had the effect of mobilizing and uniting the American public behind the war effort.

The intended audience is people who may feel far removed from the war-time events that occurred over half a century ago and who may not give much thought to the people who lived through this era and are still alive today to talk about it. This younger generation is a

generation which has the extreme good fortune to enjoy the benefits of peace and democracy made possible by the sacrifices of their grandparents and great grandparents and who may not stop to think about the costs that were paid for these freedoms. It is the further hope of the director that examining the messages that were intended to promote a patriotic feeling about the war in the 1940's will do so again in the 21st century for a whole new group of people.

FOCUS OF THE PROGRAM

The program focuses mainly on propaganda pieces created for the American public, and focuses partially on those used in the different branches of the armed forces. Not included were those propaganda pieces that were used as persuasive devices against enemy troops. It is difficult to separate the propaganda aimed at the public from that aimed at the soldiers, because the efforts on behalf of the government to reach both of these groups were so thoroughly intertwined. Because of this, both types of propaganda are discussed in the piece.

The propaganda produced by the Axis powers and other Allies is not covered in great depth except in relationship to the American propaganda of the era. There is some discussion of how the Axis powers were depicted as well as how the other Allies were depicted by American propaganda.

TIMING

The timing of a documentary like this seems appropriate with the current popularity of feature films like *Saving Private Ryan*, *Pearl Harbor*, and the HBO miniseries *Band of Brothers*. Awareness of the war is also at the forefront with the recent and long awaited dedication of the World War II Memorial, which had the high profile support of celebrities Tom Hanks and war veteran Senator Bob Dole.

It is important to note that American World War II veterans and their spouses are dying at a rate of over a thousand per day, and it is important to record their first-person accounts to preserve them for future generations. As a result of the research and contacts made, the producer became involved with an important

program called the American Folk Life Project, which has the aim of collecting the stories of as many World War II veterans as possible and assembling them into an archive. This is an incredibly worthwhile project and will be of extreme value to researchers and students in the years to come.

RENEWED INTEREST IN THE SUBJECT OF WAR

The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on America have re-awakened an interest in World War II as comparisons are made to the Pearl Harbor attack, which has been eclipsed in terms of the number of American lives lost in the World Trade Center tragedy. In the wake of this event, the media has drawn parallels between the national feeling of shock and resurgence in pride felt both in December 1941 and September 2001.

It is a goal of this piece to have a patriotic effect on the viewing audience which not only will increase their pride in those Americans who fought and died in World War II, but also will serve as a way to increase the patriotic feelings of Americans in the wake of recent events.

MOTIVATION

In *Directing the Documentary,* Michael Rabiger urges a documentary filmmaker to choose a topic in which he has a personal interest in order to combat fatigue with the subject, a suggestion which indeed proved valid. It required a deep passion for this subject in order to maintain the stamina necessary to complete the documentary. Rabiger also discusses the need for a direct knowledge and emotional involvement with a documentary subject. This was also necessary to the success of this program. A documentary might be less effective in imparting its message without this emotional connection and personal significance to the producer of the project.

WHAT IS PROPAGANDA?

"Propaganda is defined as any organized attempt by an individual, group, or government verbally, visually, or symbolically to persuade a population to adapt its views and repudiate the views of an opposing group" (Laurie 1996). Many theorists believe that there are two types of propaganda: "white", or overt, and "black", or covert.

The Axis powers, most notably Nazi Germany, engaged in "black", covert propaganda, and the United States and her Allies practiced "white", or overt propaganda. "Black" propaganda is difficult to organize in democratic societies because democracy and a free press makes it much easier to expose the lies, exaggerations and falsehoods that are part of this type of propaganda. Therefore, the "white" propaganda used by the United States was concerned more with stressing traditional "American" values and tying them into support for the war effort.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF U.S. PROPAGANDA IN WORLD WAR II

When the United States joined the Allies in the war against the Axis powers in December of 1941, the American media immediately directed its efforts towards the creation of a "wartime culture". This culture was one permeated by propaganda and had the primary goal of uniting the country and helping to win the war. The United States Government, under the leadership of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the Office of War Information (O.W.I.), set about the task of not just drafting men and women to serve in the military, but also

of calling upon every civilian to assist in the war effort as well.

Seven different Federal Organizations were involved in operations that were either called propaganda, psychological warfare, or information activities from 1939-1945, even though the Federal government never officially formulated a propaganda policy (Laurie 1996). Women were sent into aircraft factories to build the machines of war in place of the men who left to fight, school children were encouraged to organize scrap metal drives to use for war materials, and all citizens were asked to make sacrifices for the war effort in the form of food and gasoline rationing. World War II was the largest mobilization of military and civilians in U.S. history, and arousing civilians into action was taken as seriously as planning the military campaigns of the war (Olson 1998).

The primary forms that this propaganda took were radio, posters, and films. Radio emerged as a widely used vehicle of wartime propaganda because of its daily and continuous link with large segments of the populace. It also had a regular and predictable schedule, which

allowed for long-term planning (Horton 1996). Americans listened to president Roosevelt's "Fireside Chats" on a regular basis. Characters in popular radio programs were pressed into war-related storylines, and they were enlisted into the service to match what was happening in the real world. Comics and radio personalities geared their jokes towards topics such as rationing and joining the service. Propaganda songs with titles like "Loose Lips Sink Ships" were created and received regular airplay with help from the government. The Office of War Information claimed that through radio, each adult in America heard four war messages per week (Rhodes 1976).

Though the poster could make no claim to competition with radio in its influence on the American public, a barrage of posters was issued by assorted government agencies and private corporations (in the form of advertisements) during the war. The aims of the posters' messages were to exhort factory workers to boost production, warn civilians and servicemen against careless talk, boost war bond purchases, and gain overall popular support for the war.

Films had a wide appeal, similar to that of radio. In this pre-television era, 85 million Americans would sit each week in dark theatres for hours watching films, cartoons, and newsreels. By 1943, three out of ten films were connected with the war (Ross 1993). The topics of films turned from love stories and serial adventures to war pictures with titles like *Hitler's Children, Destination Tokyo,* and *The Story of GI Joe.* Some argue that these films were the most powerful messages created to help the allied cause during the war.

THE DOCUMENTARY FORM

The content or subject matter of a program dictates the appropriate format. The most appropriate format for this project to take, therefore, is the documentary. Historical, informational subjects lend themselves well to this form, especially when the interview format is used.

The first images captured on motion picture film were those of everyday events, of people participating in normal activities such as a train arriving at a station or a boat rowing out to sea. It was not until elements

of the theatre, vaudeville, and other popular stage entertainment of the time were combined with the film format that the subject matter of films began to expand.

Along with the growth of entertainment-oriented filmmaking, the non-fiction film genre also burgeoned with the shooting of newsreel and factual footage, such as that shot during the First World War. News from the front was available more quickly than in previous wars because of advances in communications and transportation. Never before had audiences been able to watch the horrors of war in moving pictures. The war in Europe did not seem as far away to those who saw the newsreels that made the conflict "more real" to the American public.

The documentary did not exist in its modern day form until the 1920's when the phrase "documentary" was actually coined by John Grierson while he was reviewing Flaherty's *Moana* in 1926 (Rabiger 1992). Flaherty is credited with shooting the seminal documentary, *Nanook of the North*. With this piece films began to create social dialogue rather than just present the facts as newsreels had done in the past.

In other countries such as Great Britain and Russia the form also began to take shape and become a force for social change or an attempt to examine the human condition. Examples of documentaries that had social effects are *The Plow That Broke the Plain (1936)*, and *The River (1937)*. These early ecological films made the public aware of environmental and human disasters that occur as a result of soil erosion and deforestation.

The documentary form was continually used throughout the 1920's and 1930's and received another boost in popularity at the advent of World War II, where government-sponsored films were put to very effective use by European and other governments, specifically Nazi Germany. The propaganda machine in Germany, led by Goebbels, employed producers and directors who took propaganda to a new level with films promoting the Aryans as ideal rulers of the world and Jews as the scourge of Europe. Without films such as these, the spread of the Nazi juggernaut across Europe and the attempt at total annihilation of the Jewish population would have been much more difficult.

Learning from the success of such Nazi propaganda, allied countries such as Britain and the United States made the decision to employ their own propaganda campaigns aimed at support for the war from their own citizens and other nations, as well as to develop propaganda films aimed at creating opposition to the Axis powers.

After the war, the documentary form was again expanded by the advent of television and has continued to grow and remain a "vitally dramatic form of factual argument" (Rabiger 1987). Alain Resnais's *Night and Fog (1955)* forced the public to confront the horrors of Auschwitz for the first time. Paul Rotha's *The Life of Adolph Hitler (1961)* examined its subject from a point of view that indicted the German people. In more recent years, this growth of the documentary has been further spurred by the advent of cable television and entire cable networks such as the History Channel and The Learning Channel devoted almost entirely to the documentary art form.

The function of the documentary is to convey information, ideas, and history, to describe a subject, and to develop issues (Smith 1991). In this vein, information presented

by this program is posed in the most objective form possible, and the viewer is allowed to draw his or her own conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the American propaganda effort during the Second World War. The audience may draw further conclusions as to whether government-sponsored propaganda is consistent with good ethical practices.

Documentaries are concerned with what Michael Rabiger describes as "the richness and ambiguity of life" rather than cold facts (Rabiger 1987). The director, using this approach, asked interview subjects what life was like during the war era, what sacrifices people had to make, what feelings propaganda messages evoked, and how people felt about a concerted government effort to sway the hearts and minds of its people. Instead of merely reporting the facts, an attempt was made to tap into the hopes, dreams, and emotions of the interview participants. It is hoped that the viewer will be emotionally drawn into the lives of these people for the brief period of time they are onscreen and may better understand what it was actually like to have been alive during this era.

In order to keep the interest of the viewer, there must be a story. The "story" of this documentary is the collective stories of the interview subjects which when combined represent the story of their generation's wartime relationship with propaganda. When presented with this story, the audience is invited to draw what Rabiger calls a "socially critical conclusion" based on the material presented (Rabiger 1987). The hypothesis is that viewers will conclude that American propaganda during WWII was an effective tool in keeping morale up among American citizens and soldiers alike and acted as a positive force in winning the war.

DOCUMENTARY: HAVE I GOT A WAR TO SELL YOU

This documentary focuses its attention on the first-person accounts of World War II propaganda and its effect on the American Public. Videotaped interviews conducted with people active during the war compose the main body of the piece. Their stories are inter-cut with actual examples of the propaganda media they discuss, i.e. films, newsreels, posters, radio clips, etc.

PRE-PRODUCTION/PRODUCTION

INTERVIEW SUBJECTS

The largest part of pre-production was determining suitable interview subjects and arranging for interviews. Contacts were made through local lodges and fraternal organizations, veterans groups, and friends and family members. These contacts were made via the telephone and direct mail (see letter, Appendix). For obvious reasons, these organizations were not willing to give the phone numbers of their members, so the direct mail approach was the best initial contact to these groups. The issue of nuisance calls is prominent among senior citizens, making it difficult at times to reach subjects via the phone.

Most interviews were obtained through referrals from other interview subjects. Many vets do not want to recount their stories to someone who did not share their combat experience. Although there were quite a few possible interview subjects, not all of them were willing to be interviewed. Their refusal is understandable, but it is historically unfortunate that their stories will be forever lost when these veterans pass away.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Men who served in the military were not the only ones interviewed. Some of the subjects were women who were civilians and two were women who served in the military. One African American serviceman was videotaped for the documentary. Some of the subjects were in service when war was declared while others entered into service after December 7th, 1941. Some were draftees; others were enlistees.

The only category not represented was a male subject who did not serve in the military. This exclusion was due mostly to the fact that most men of appropriate age at that time were in service. From the interviews it was found that almost everyone who was not in service (because of age, disability, etc.) was ashamed of that fact, with the obvious exception of conscientious objectors. The piece did not suffer from lacking this demographic, as the goal of the program was to gain a reaction to propaganda from the majority of the American public. A minority opinion would not have fit into this theme.

Interviews were conducted one on one with individuals. Interview candidates had a pre-interview meeting with the director and were then provided a list of questions before the interview if they so desired. Interviews were held in their homes or other places suitable for the lighting and sound needs of the project, including the producer's own home and the veterans' home in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

SHOOTING

The interviews were shot using a Canon ZR-25 Mini-DV camcorder and lights and other sound equipment owned by the producer. The camera has manual white balance, zoom, focus, and other settings. It also has a microphone input and 2.5" color LCD screen. Interviews took place during the fall of 2001.

In selecting locations, an attempt was made to find the most interesting and comfortable backdrops in people's homes in order to give the viewer a comfortable feeling. The desired effect was that of talking to individuals in their homes about their experiences during the war. Sometimes this scenario was not possible, as in the case of the veterans' home, where the most convenient place to

shoot interviews was in the boardroom. The background of this room was a bit drab, so these scenes were shot in a medium close-up, a decision that eliminated the surroundings and focused more on the subjects. The addition of a United States flag contributed to the atmosphere and added some color, as well as a subliminal patriotic effect, to the scene.

This setup worked fine, although the lighting was affected by a large row of windows, which, over the course of three hours of interviewing, forced the camera setup to move as the sun moved across the horizon and shined into the interview area at different angles. A fortunate side effect of having the sunlight was a slightly dramatic lighting effect from the sunshine's falling on the shoulders and sides of the interview subjects' faces. This natural lighting combated the harsh, almost stark, lighting given off by the overhead fluorescent lights that gave the footage a colder color temperature. This natural light helped to keep a more consistent lighting feel when matched with the footage taken under the incandescent lights of the lighting kit in people's homes.

Consistency in lighting is a challenge in a program such as this. The goal was to light the scene as if there were no professional lights. The edges of the lights from the lighting kit were used rather than focusing them directly on the subjects, and barn doors were used to keep the amount of direct light at a minimum. Soft lighting from lamps and overhead lights were used to give viewers the feel that they were sitting in the subject's living room, not in a cold studio or news program interview.

There were two choices of how the interviews could be shot, with the subject looking either into the camera or off camera at the interviewer. Interviews were set-up so the subjects would look off camera at the interviewer to make them less self conscious of the camera, since these subjects were not professional talent. Some of the interview participants, however, chose to look directly into the camera and this choice added to the shot variety and also gave a more intimate feel to some of the interviews.

A stronger feeling of connection to the audience occurs when this eye contact is established. According to

Rabiger, someone who speaks directly to you stimulates you to formulate your own ideas more than a person plainly talking to someone else. The idea was to mobilize the viewer's sense of involvement as much as possible.

In order to add to the variety of shots, some were shot looking off camera left and some off camera right. Overall, the variety of shots and backgrounds seemed to work well, and the "homey" effect was accomplished.

QUESTIONS

All of the respondents were asked the same questions (see Appendix) and leeway was given for them to meander into other interesting topics and add any personal comments at the end of the session. The producer attempted to keep them focused and on track and asked the same questions repeatedly in different ways or with a slightly different slant in order to give a better variety of sound-bites for use in the editing room.

Additional interesting material was gathered in addition to what was used in the final piece (that could be used for a different program in the future). After each interview, questions were added or changed if they were

not working. As the direction of the piece became clearer, the focus of some questions changed as well.

The answers to the questions that found their way into the final program were the answers that told stories. Some parts of the piece are interesting short stories; other parts are statements of feeling or emotion. The selections made were chosen to elicit emotion from the viewer, whether it was sadness, joy, or patriotism. It is hoped that the audience feels the emotions of the subjects and can take away some of the subjects' feelings from the program. From a learning standpoint, people recall facts more readily and retain them more strongly if these facts are delivered in the form of an interesting story that contains moving statements.

AUDIO

Audio was gathered with a stereo lavalier microphone that was hardwired directly into the camera. Audio was monitored with headphones during the entire course of the interview. This monitoring was done for quality control reasons and the occasional occurrence of interference from electrical cords. Unfortunately, the one feature

missing on the Canon ZR-25 was an audio recording level meter.

Audio was good and strong from the microphone and transferred well to tape, regardless. If additional funds had been available, the purchase of a small audio board would have been desired for use in maintaining audio levels.

The interviews were conducted so that no background or outside noise was present. The desired effect was to allow for focus on the speaker only. Having extraneous noises may have added to the "homey" feeling that was being created, but the noises would have served as a distraction from the subject matter.

VIDEO

Video was monitored in two different ways. One was through the built in LCD panel. Shots could also be framed with the color eyepiece. The second monitoring method was via television set in some of the homes. A portable monitor would have been preferable in this situation if one were available.

B-ROLL/SECONDARY SOURCES

Materials, such as examples of posters and film clips, were obtained from the National Archives collections. The other major source of material is the series of films made by Frank Capra titled *Why We Fight*, an Oscar winning piece and the best example of World War II propaganda. The series employed hours of stock photography, allied and enemy newsreel footage, and actual combat footage.

The main problem with source materials was with the posters. Because of their "portrait" aspect ratio, it was difficult to shoot them and frame them properly for the 4X3 aspect ratio of television. Tilting and panning the posters was attempted, but the camera moves were not as fluid as had been hoped. A tripod with a better head would have helped.

Another answer would have been to rent an Interactive Motion Camera or similar camera stand capable of making pre-programmed, fluid moves on the posters, a cost prohibitive answer though, as this time costs hundreds of dollars per hour. If this were a professional piece intended for broadcast, this step would have been the most logical solution.

In order to handle the poster problem, high quality jpg and gif files of posters were downloaded from the National Archives collection. These did the job quite nicely, but they did not fill up the entire frame. It was necessary to trim these down because they were not title or TV safe. The backgrounds were also changed so that they were all the same color. The black backgrounds were chosen because the posters stood out better and the vivid colors in them contrasted well against the color black.

The posters that were used in the final cut of the program were chosen because they had dramatic messages intended to move the viewer. The ones with the most interesting graphics were also selected because they were the most visually stimulating to the eye. These posters were created with thought to their ability to move and stimulate their intended audiences, and those included in the opening were the ones that seemed to convey their messages most effectively.

The opening of the piece was built as a "triad" of propaganda pieces. The viewer is assaulted with all of these forms of propaganda at once: posters, music, and

radio addresses, symbolic of the way in which propaganda continuously reinforces the same messages in different ways and through different media, whether they are seen, heard, or felt. The opening also gives an introductory overview to the audience and sets up the program's content.

Film footage was obtained from several video sources and from the National Archives. The Archive material was expensive and used sparingly, as it required film-to-tape transfer, a process that runs about $300 per hour. Some of the collection's material is already on tape making it more cost effective to use, although the dub costs still were not inexpensive. Two programs, *Bill Moyer's Walk Through the Twentieth Century* program on Propaganda, and the Steven Spielberg/Tom Hanks production *The Shooting War* were also useful as guides on how to present the material, and some footage from these productions was used in the final program as well.

Like the other media in the piece, the film clips that were selected for the final program were chosen because they are dramatic and convey emotion. They are also those that have distinct, recognizable propaganda

messages. As was mentioned earlier, the media that accompany the comments of the interview subjects were chosen to reinforce what is said or to provide examples of what is said. The audience is most likely seeing or hearing these pieces for the first time, just as if they were sitting in a movie theatre or in front of their radio listening during the war. The intended effect was for the audience to feel what it was like when the interview subjects viewed and heard these propaganda messages for the first time.

POST-PRODUCTION

EDIT SYSTEM

The post-production was done on a custom built non-linear editing system using the Pinnacle Studio video capture card and editing software. The computer on which the system is based is an Intel Pentium 233 Mhz processor over-clocked to 266 Mhz using a Shuttle Hot-569 motherboard. The system has 256 Meg of SDRAM and the operating system is Windows 98. The video card is a Diamond Stealth 2000 with 4 Meg of onboard RAM.

This setup was more than suitable for capture and editing, but the rendering was slower than expected because of the slower processor. In the future, a system based on an 800 Mhz or faster processor with an editing card with 32 Meg of RAM or better would be preferable.

LOGGING

The interview tapes were viewed and logged by hand using tape logs that were created with Excel. The best footage was digitized and scene selections were made from what was digitized. More footage was captured than was needed, and the rest was discarded as the scenes were trimmed down. Digitizing each scene individually rather than in large batches saved on valuable disk space, which ran low as the piece neared its completed length.

The producer's experience with non-linear editing has revealed that physical storage of the digital clips is always at a premium. Many producers do not understand this fact and try to digitize entire tapes so that they have every second of footage at their disposal. This method not only adds to their time and costs, but also makes it necessary for these producers to use a tape-logging program such as media logger to do their scene

selections. This additional step is good for creating an Edit Decision List for use in the final edit session with a hired editor, but it is an unnecessary step for someone who is doing both the producing and the editing, as was the case in this situation. The method of only digitizing the scenes that were going to be used worked well for reasons of storage and management of clips for the final edit. It also forced the producer to pre-plan those clips that were actually going to be used.

The Studio editing software can detect scene changes and would automatically break the footage into different scenes that could then be seamlessly added back together, deleted, or separated and further edited. This feature was helpful in breaking up large pieces of footage and made them more manageable.

EDITING

The opening section with the montage of posters, music and radio addresses was edited so that there was a constant barrage of media for the ears and eyes. Each poster was kept onscreen long enough to read the messages (if there was a message and it was large enough to read). Other posters had a stimulating graphic presence that was

effective even if the text could not be easily read. The music is blended with the speeches so that there is no silence between the speeches. The posters are changed at a constant rate to keep a pulse going along with the audio. At the end of this barrage, the picture fades to black and up again into the main body of the piece and an introduction from the first speaker begins.

The program is divided into sections: an introduction, which is followed by general feelings of support for the war, middle sections which talk about films, Hollywood support for the war, music, and radio, and lastly, a section which deals with comments regarding the necessity to enlist and emphasizes how everyone, civilian and military personnel alike, supported the war. The final statements reveal for the audience that propaganda was a good thing and that support from back home kept these citizen soldiers going despite all the hardships they endured.

Each section is separated by a dip to black, which serves as a visual cue that the topic is changing. Two sections, music and radio, are started by clips with an example of each. Roll-ins of newsreels are employed

during the section discussing films. There are distinct breaks where topics change, and the idea was to switch topics gently rather than abruptly so as not to lose the audience. Concise titles set up each section and help to keep the audience on track with the subject matter.

Narration was left out intentionally. The tendency with a piece such as this is to view the voice of the narrator as the viewer's voice. The narrator takes on an authoritative tone. The audience sees the narration as the message of the documentary. With this program, the objective was to present all of the information objectively and to let the audience decide whether propaganda achieved its goals. Narration might influence a viewer's ability to draw his or her own "socially critical conclusions". The message is stronger if the audience draws the intended conclusions without coercion from the producer. This type of coercion may in fact have the opposite effect of turning off the audience to the message. This is similar to the American propaganda of World War II, which informed and persuaded without making the recipients of its messages feel like they were being coerced or manipulated.

Straight cuts are used within each segment to transition from one speaker to the next, with some dissolves used when two speakers' words would meld nicely to form one sentiment, keeping a constant flow. The participants' comments were linked into one story. Their individual stories were connected to create one common story of the wartime generation. A theme of the documentary is that everyone did his or her part, and that everyone was in this effort together. Their stories, therefore, combined into one common narrative.

The program tells a story, starting with an introduction, a discussion of each topic, and a conclusion that reveals how united the American public was behind the war. The final statement the viewer is left with is how miraculous it was for the fighting men and women to keep going despite the hardships of war. The inferred conclusion is that a shared support of the war effort was bolstered strongly by American propaganda to create the "wartime culture" that kept them going, a culture composed of togetherness and patriotism.

MUSIC/AUDIO TRACKS

Music was added directly from CD collections gathered from several local library collections. CD music was utilized for its quality and ease of use in a digital editing atmosphere. There was no narration to add, which eliminated the necessity for scripting and recording narration.

The opening music was chosen because it was from the era, and was a good music bed upon which to lay the tracks of audio from radio addresses and speeches. The song also kept pace with the rate of change for the opening posters. The only other piece of music used was a song introducing and playing under the music segment of the documentary, "Just As Though You Were Here", a poignant song that dealt with the separation of a GI from his sweetheart. This song was indicative of much of the music of this era. The decision to keep music out of much of the piece was a further attempt to leave focus on the spoken words of the interview subjects.

TITLING

Titles and keys were handled with a piece of software called TitleDeko, which can incorporate any image that

could be created with computer software such as jpg or gif files. The program is capable of doing overlays such as name keys or full frame titles. The software also allows for the addition of different color backgrounds, including color gradients, and came with a large assortment of fonts to choose from. It has a title-safe and TV-safe border that helped to create titles that would not be clipped once output to the final tape.

Titles were kept simple with a white font over a black background. A black or gray drop-shadow was added to make the type stand out from the background. The black backgrounds of the titles remained consistent with the black backgrounds of the posters and the fades to black between each segment and topic. The lower third title keys were the same font and color. The keys were used only to inform, not to detract from the subjects, so they were kept simple and there were no accompanying graphics or logos. The nature of the title graphics was information, not entertainment, oriented.

OUTPUT

The program was printed to both VHS and CD ROM, although it can be outputted to any format that allows for an S-

Video or RCA cable. Masters were made to mini-DV. The Studio software and capture card allowed for a large variety of CoDec compression schemes and also allowed for changing frame rates, audio sampling rates, and a variety of other options to increase the quality of the final piece or to reduce the file size when outputting to a computer format. Unlimited dubs can be made from the digital master or from the computer itself with no generation loss.

EVALUATION OF THE PRODUCTION

The finished product was evaluated and critiqued by members of the production community as well as by the members of the thesis committee. These suggestions were used to create the final piece that was viewed by members of the prospective audience.

Screenings were held and evaluations were done by having participants fill out a written questionnaire (see Appendix). The success of the message upon the intended audience was determined by the results of the questionnaire.

FORMATIVE ANALYSIS

Screenings were done in two stages. A rough copy of the piece was shown to a small audience to gain a formative analysis of the program. This helped to guide the producer's edit decisions in future cuts. Once a final cut was created, larger groups were shown the piece and an evaluative analysis was done through the use of the questionnaire. The first group that viewed the program was made up of three professionals in the entertainment industry, as well as the members of the thesis committee. A few members of the intended audience were also shown the program during the formative phase.

The professionals were an audio designer for film and episodic television, a vice president at a post-production facility, and a member of the production staff for a weekly television drama. The feedback from these professionals, members of the audience, and the committee members was used in the formative stage of editing to make changes that would be reflected in the final program that was shown to the evaluative audience.

These changes were mostly technical or intended to make the documentary more effective. As a result of these notes, titles were added to the program to set up each

segment and to clarify the direction of the program. The length of the program was trimmed for clarity and to add a better focus to the piece, as the focus tended to drift in places. Some of the weak interview subjects' material was eliminated, and other material was moved to make the flow of the program clearer to the viewer. The open was shortened, and the order of the speeches in the opening segment was changed so that they were in historical order. Some difficult to read posters were deleted from the program. The ending was changed because the final speaker's statement wasn't strong enough to use as a conclusion. Instead, an additional film clip from Frank Capra' *Why We Fight* was added as a summary statement. The audio was sweetened and levels were adjusted in the music and interview segments. All of these changes resulted in a stronger version of the program for viewing by the evaluative audience.

EVALUATIVE ANALYSIS

The evaluative group was comprised of members of the intended viewing audience. The makeup of the group included men and women aged from twenty-five to fifty-three. None of the veterans or those who were

interviewed was asked to be a part of the evaluative audience.

The findings from the survey showed that respondents were able to give a basic definition of propaganda before viewing the program. The definitions given stated that propaganda was usually a message "slanted" or "biased" towards one government or group of people. After viewing the program, this question was again asked of the audience. The definitions sometimes stayed the same, but in other cases changed to that of propaganda being a specific message geared at a particular audience, and not necessarily slanted or biased in nature. Some audience members seemed to feel that propaganda had a less negative connotation after viewing the documentary.

The audience was also able to readily identify at least three forms of propaganda used during the Second World War in America both before and after seeing the video. After viewing the program, this question was answered by describing the forms the media took, such as films, posters, or radio. Before viewing the piece, those questions were answered with more general responses, such as the national origin of propaganda, the tone it took,

or the targets of the propaganda. The video seemed to help the audience to narrow their idea of the forms that propaganda took during this time.

It is necessary to note that older viewers knew more about the subject of propaganda during the war than younger viewers and viewers under thirty were more educated by the piece than those over fifty years of age. Older viewers also showed a greater interest in the subject before viewing the piece than younger viewers. One valuable evaluation group would have been school-aged children or young adults who may have been able to contribute suggestions that were overlooked by older viewers who already had a relatively good grasp of the material.

When asked how interested they were in learning about WWII, the average score was a 4 out of 5, with 1 being "Uninterested" and 5 being "Interested". When asked how interested viewers were in what life was like during this era, the average score was also a 4. The data showed that viewers overall were more interested in learning what life was like during the second World War than in

learning about the war in general. Answers to these questions after viewing the piece changed very little.

The documentary didn't seem to have the effect of increasing the interest of the audience in the war, although the high scores regarding interest in World War II before viewing the piece seem to reveal that this desire was already present among viewers. The positive view of these findings is that the topic is worthwhile, as it is one in which viewers find an interest.

The majority of respondents answered that their opinion of propaganda was that "It is good". The other choices were "It is bad", "It is good only in times of war", and "Don't know/don't have an opinion". Many wrote in that it is good only when used in a positive way, or that it depends on the goal of the propaganda.

The second most popular answer was that "It is good only in times of war". These answers varied little when asked the same question of respondents after viewing the documentary. This leads the researcher to believe that people hold a strong opinion of propaganda before viewing the piece, and their opinions as to whether it is good or

bad vary with the situation in which it is used. In this case, most audience members agreed that American Propaganda was good and that it was effective.

The opinion of people about the documentary in general was an average of 2 out of 5, with five being "Bad" and 1 being "Good". Respondents also averaged an answer of 2 out of 5 when asked whether they "Learned a Lot" (a score of 1) or "Didn't Learn" (a score of 5).

The answers to questions dealing with the technical and aesthetic aspects of the program were promising. The sound and music were found to be appropriate, as well as the graphics and titles. People seemed to enjoy the film clips and different propaganda media the most. Some commented that these examples of actual propaganda helped to drive the points of the speakers' home. The comment most often voiced was that the recollections of real people made the piece interesting to the viewers.

Based on all of the data gathered, it would seem that the program accomplished its goal of teaching the audience more about World War II propaganda, as well as raising the awareness of the sacrifices made by this generation

during the war. It would also seem that the viewers agreed that propaganda was a positive force in helping to win the war and keeping up morale among civilians and those serving in the military.

One important fact that was learned from the evaluations was that the program might teach a younger viewing audience more than it would an older audience. The existence of wartime propaganda was not unknown to those in the over forty age group. Younger viewers knew less about the subject, however. Based on this, the intended audience from a learning perspective should be school-aged children and young adults rather than older adults. The messages of patriotism and pride that Americans felt during the war are universally appreciated by all ages, though, according to the responses on the surveys.

CONCLUSION

WHAT THE INTERVIEW SUBJECTS CONTRIBUTED

The interview questions regarding life before, during, and after the war resulted in a myriad of information. The respondents remembered how they heard about the start and end of the war, and they were able to give detailed

descriptions of these events. Propaganda wasn't crucial to recalling these memories.

When asked specifically which posters, films, songs, etc. they remembered, very few were able to recall names or details. Few were able to give an exact description of a specific propaganda poster or leaflet. Some people were able to recall the names of stars and bandleaders, but no one recalled a specific radio program or film title.

What was evident, though, was the importance of the different media. The interview subjects all went to the movies, remembered seeing newsreels, remembered the focus of the radio programs and music on the war, and felt that there were effects on Americans from all of this.

WAS PROPAGANDA A GOOD THING?

When asked if there was a feeling that there was an active propaganda effort at work by the federal government, all of the interview participants agreed that this effort was felt but not given much attention. The propaganda was taken in stride and almost expected. People seemed to feel that it was important not only to

keep the morale of the troops up but also to keep support of the war going at home.

None of the interviewees expressed concerns that the U.S. propaganda was negative or had any negative effects. No one felt like he or she was being "propagandized". This is consistent with the idea that "Propaganda had the power to capture men's heart and bypass their natural processes in such subtle ways that many people were entirely unaware of its subliminal influence." (Laurie 1996)

A few subjects did feel that information was "sugar coated" or "covered up", but they also believed that this sweetening or deleting of information was appropriate for the government or news agencies to do in order to keep morale up. Overall, the feeling from the collective group members that were interviewed was that the government-sponsored propaganda during the Second World War in the United States was a good and necessary part of our success in winning the war against Fascism. There weren't any feelings of deceit or resentment in connection with the government's propaganda efforts.

A few of those interviewed served in the Pacific Theatre of Operations and were subject to the enemy propaganda of "Tokyo Rose". She was an English speaking Japanese woman who had a regular radio program that featured popular American music and constant anti-American messages. Most of those messages centered around subjects such as infidelity among servicemen's wives back home and the futility of fighting the war. The three soldiers who were witness to this propaganda agreed that American propaganda succeeded because it was patriotic and uplifting, and it defeated this negative type of propaganda. The other interviewees responded that they were unaffected or were not aware of the negative propaganda of the Axis powers. There seemed to be no effects of enemy propaganda on American troops or civilians.

POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PROGRAM

The material presented in the program supported the producer's hypothesis that propaganda helped to win the war. The documentary could have been more effective, however. Having the advantage of hindsight, there are some things that the producer would have done differently in creating this production. First, it would have been

better to interview more people. Some of the interviews were very strong, and others were not as effective. A few more interviews may have added to the power of the piece. The ten people interviewed for the program was not a large enough sample to draw definitive conclusions as to the effects of World War II propaganda. Research could also have been incorporated in the form of narrative that would have supported the director's theories and strengthened the arguments posed in the documentary.

Secondly, it might have added to the credibility of the piece to interview a few professionals on the subject for inclusion in the program. This material could have been used to create a better introduction and summary for each segment, and provide a base upon which to build the comments of everyday people. It would have also helped to overcome the small sampling size of those interviewed and added further support to the ideas posed in the program.

Lastly, the production values could have been increased if the project was shot on film or shot at a higher level of quality on video. Film gives the documentary subject

a richer and more "real" feeling. Film is more pleasant and natural looking. It would have given more of the "homey" effect that the producer was trying to achieve. There is also a greater sense of credibility and sensibility lent to programs shot on film.

Video could have been used more effectively than it was used, however. The lighting could have been made more effective through the use of stronger back lighting. This back lighting would have resulted in less "flat" images and would have had less of a "home video" feel. Placing the interviewees against high-backed chairs blocked any type of depth that could have been given to the images. Using stools or short backed chairs would have allowed for more back lighting and depth of field. The background could have been thrown out of focus to add this depth also.

The exposure of some of the program segments was also incorrect. More care could have been given to the exposure in the field or there could have been more attention given to correcting the exposure of the footage during the capturing stage of post-production. Overall, a stronger quality of the images would have resulted in a

stronger documentary that had a more professional, broadcast feel.

THE EFFECTS OF U.S. PROPAGANDA DURING WORLD WAR II

The video still managed to take a critical look at propaganda and revealed the thoughts of those who experienced these messages. The British author Ivor Thames wrote in 1942, "Propaganda…is an art, rather than a science; no precise rules can be laid down for successful propaganda, which depends on flair, intuition, and inspiration." (Ross 1993)

American propaganda had this flair, intuition and inspiration, and was successful because of this. The people whom the audience comes to know during the course of this program loved films, radio, and music. These mediums informed them, entertained them, gave them an escape from the horrors of war, and most importantly, kept their spirits up. This was an extremely patriotic generation in which everyone did their part and came together to support our troops and the war effort.

Propaganda didn't create their feelings of patriotism and togetherness, it merely re-enforced them. Radio, music,

and films didn't give them the strength to endure the hardships of war; it only helped to create a shared wartime culture in which these ideals flourished. Charles Curickshank wrote in his book, *The Fourth Arm* "It is virtually impossible to assess the part played by propaganda. There is no doubt that it helped [a nation's war effort], but how much can never be said with certainty." (Ross 1993) What we can be certain of is that the sacrifices made by this generation changed the world forever in a positive way, and that propaganda played its part in this change.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TODAY

Some viewers of the documentary may ask "Why do we care about this subject?" or "What difference does studying World War II propaganda make in today's world?" The answer to these questions can be found in connections drawn between the events of sixty year ago and the terrorist attacks which recently occurred in this country. The events of September 11th, 2001 have reminded the nation how proud and patriotic Americans can be when they are united in tragedy. This patriotism is not a new phenomenon, and the importance placed on the media during

a national crisis of war is not new, either, as one learns from watching the program.

This documentary also serves to remind viewers of the power that Americans have when they are united in a common cause. It gives hope to the viewing audience that this country has been through this type of horror before, and they have been victorious over their enemies. The victory over the Axis powers in World War II was due not only to the men and women fighting on the front lines, but also due to the men and women who supported them back home: in the media, working in the factories, working on scrap drives, making sacrifices through rationing, and gathering together to show their support of the war.

Similarly, the victory of America in this new war will rely not just upon the guns, tanks, airplanes, ships, bombs, and fighting troops, but upon the American public here at home, and their continued support for this country and its efforts to eradicate terrorism and its supporters abroad.

APPENDIX

INTERVIEW RECRUITMENT LETTER

Sunday, September 23, 2001

Dear Veterans:

I am a graduate student at Michigan State University working on my thesis in Telecommunication. My thesis is a video documentary on World War II propaganda, and I am hoping that some of your members would be able to help me.

I am currently interviewing veterans and their spouses, as well as anyone else who lived during this era. The questions I am asking are about films, radio, posters, and other media that helped to unite the citizenry of the United States behind the war effort. The interviews will be videotaped and compiled into a thirty-minute documentary.

This project will not only allow me to finish my graduate degree, but it also has a special meaning for me. My grandfather was a corporal in the army serving in Europe when he was captured by the Germans and sent to a POW camp. He escaped and was re-captured three times before the camp was liberated at the war's end. I am dedicating the program to his memory, and I would like to preserve the stories of your veterans in a way I was never able to for my grandfather, who passed away in 1996.

Anyone who would be willing to sit with me for an interview can contact me at 231-325-5221 or email me at burgie@traverse.net. I would be happy to speak to your members in person if you think it would be appropriate. I appreciate any help you can give and I hope that in light of recent events I can create a patriotic program that will enlighten and inspire those who watch it.

Thank you for your service to our country.

Best regards,

Cean M. Burgeson
Director/Producer

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is your name? (answer "My name is…")
2. What did you do during the war?
3. Give me your general impressions of life during the war years.
4. How did you hear about the start of the war?
5. What posters do you remember?
6. What radio programs do you remember?
7. What films do you remember?
8. What other types of what may be considered "propaganda" do you remember?
9. Did you feel like there was an active propaganda effort at work?
10. Do you support the propaganda and the way it was used?
11. Do you think propaganda was necessary for public support of the war effort?
12. Did it help in winning the war?
13. Do you think there were any negative aspects of propaganda?
14. How did Hollywood support the war effort?

15. Which Musicians, Actors, or Stars do you remember from this era? How did they support the war effort?
16. How do you feel American propaganda differed from that of Nazi Germany?
17. Do you feel that our propaganda made fun of the Axis powers?
18. How did you hear about the end of the war?
19. Is propaganda good or bad? Why?

VIEWER SURVEY

1) What is propaganda?

2) Can you name three different types of propaganda used during the Second World War in the United States?

3) How interested are you in learning about the Second World War?
   Uninterested 1 2 3 4 5 Interested

4) How interested are you in what life was like during the Second World War?
   Uninterested 1 2 3 4 5 Interested

5) What is your opinion of propaganda?
   a) It is good
   b) It is bad
   c) It is good only in times of war
   d) Don't know/don't have an opinion

6) What is your opinion of the propaganda used by America during the Second World War?
   a) It was effective
   b) It was ineffective
   c) Don't know/don't have an opinion

STOP----------WATCH THE DOCUMENTARY----------

7) What is propaganda?

8) Can you name three different types of propaganda used during the Second World War in the United States?

9) How interested are you in learning about the Second World War?
   Uninterested 1 2 3 4 5 Interested

10) How interested are you in what life was like during the Second World War?
Uninterested 1 2 3 4 5 Interested

11) What is your opinion of propaganda?
a) It is good
b) It is bad
c) It is good only in times of war
d) Don't know/don't have an opinion

12) What is your opinion of the propaganda used by America during the Second World War?
a) It was effective
b) It was ineffective
C) Don't know/don't have an opinion

13) What was your opinion of the documentary?

Good 1 2 3 4 5 Bad

14) What did you think of the quality of the program?

Good 1 2 3 4 5 Bad

15) Were the titles/graphics appropriate?

a) Yes
b) No
c) Not sure

If not, why?

16) Were the color and font of the graphics appropriate?

a) Yes
b) No
c) Not sure

If not, why?

17) Were the music and sound appropriate?
   a) Yes
   b) No
   c) Not sure

   If not, why?

18) Technically, did the program have a professional feel and look?
   a) Yes
   b) No
   c) Not sure

   If not, why?

19) What would you take out/add to the program?

20) Was there a clear introduction and conclusion?
   a) Yes
   b) No
   c) Not sure

   If not, why?

21) Did what the speakers were saying correlate to the titles of each section?
   a) Yes
   b) No
   c) Not sure

   If not, why?

22) Do you have any additional comments about the program at all?

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