

## *War Letters*

### *Program Transcript*

**Soldier, WWII (read by Eric Stoltz):** I don't think any man can exactly explain combat. It's beyond words.

**Dickwitch, WWI (read by David Hyde Pierce):** If a fellow gets a yellow streak and backs down the other boys won't have anything to do with him.

**Captain David Embree, Civil War (read by Giovanni Ribisi):** Suddenly I heard the bullet go crash! and I knew by the sound that it had burst a human skull.

**Korean War (read by Lawrence Turner):** But what about the wounds you can't see? The phantoms, the nightmares, the ghosts in your head?

**Wife of soldier, Korean War (read by Joan Allen):** ... it will be wonderful to have you home again. We will get a nice car & have a nice home fixed just like we want it.

**Soldier, WWII (read by Bill Paxton):** I like to sit up these warm bright nights and watch the white clouds and dark shadows move in the night. That's when I miss you the most darling.

**Soldier, WWI (read by Giovanni Ribisi):** It was forty days of unremitting hell. In fact, the comparison is hardly fair to hell.

**Richrad Baltzegar writes to Michael Engel, Vietnam War (read by Bill Paxton):** Every second I was expecting to die; I really was.

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**Soldier, WWII (read by Eric Stoltz):** I thought I had been tired before in my life, but nothing like this.

**Soldier, WWII:** Mom tell them the truth about my age and get me out of here.

**Soldier, WWII:** I would be terribly grateful if I would get just one word from you.

**1st Lt. Dean Allen writes to his wife, Joyce, Vietnam War (read by Esai Morales):** Maybe sometime I'll try to tell you how scared I am right now.

**1st Lt. Edward Lukert , WWI (read by Edward Norton):** You'll have me back soon. The war cannot last forever.

**Various Voices:** "So long" "I love you" "All our love to you always" "See you soon" "Miss you all very much" "See you soon" "Your Son" "Your husband" "Your Marjorie" "Your devoted Son and Brother" "Your wayward son" "Your fighting Son & Brother" "Johnny" "Tim" "Hugh" "Ernest" "Ed" "Jack" "P.S. Write to me."

**Slate:** "THIS WEEK THEY ARE TEACHING US TO KILL"

**Pvt. Morton D. Elevitch writes to his mother, using an alias "Louisa", WWII (read by Kevin Spacey):**

November 23, 1943 Fort Benning, Georgia

Dear Louisa: For the Nth time, thanks for your package. Please don't send me any more

underwear, socks, or candy. The Milk of Magnesia was absolutely unnecessary. I'M HAVING NO MORE BOWEL TROUBLE AND DON'T ANTICIPATE ANY.

This week they're teaching us to kill. Now you probably looked away and shuddered. I don't like the idea, either, but we all know it's for our own good. The most strenuous work we do is bayonet drill. We lunge about and are required to growl, grimace, and look at each other with hate. They teach us how to withdraw our bayonets in a certain manner, because steel sticks to warm human flesh.

They even teach us how to scientifically stomp on a man. This will be invaluable in case anyone ever tries to pick on me. By the way everything is done in double time -- puff puff.

Confidentially, I'm tired.

S'long,

Mort

**P. Burns writes to Ann Maceubbin, Civil War (read by Eric Stoltz):**

Nashville, June 10, 1861

Ann,

It makes my heart sick to think of the state of our once happy and yet beloved country . . . to see two brave armies armed with all the deadly instruments that art and wealth could

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procure and to think that when they meet in the bloody battlefields what destruction and misery they can produce.

What is most horrid of all in this contest is that brother will meet brother and father will meet son in the strife.

No matter what side I might take, might bring me in contact with a cousin or uncle, & god forbid that I should ever be found in arms against either.

Ann, I will be in your town by the 27th, but should I not be prompt do not despair for these are squirrelly times.

Your friend, P. Burns

**1st Lt. Edward Lukert writes to his wife, Mabel, WW I (read by Edward Norton):**

June 18, 1918

Dearest Girlie:

We were all subjected to several different kinds of gas today, with and without masks. As usual, I cannot rid my clothes of the odor. It sure is horrible stuff, honey. Deadly and usually insures a slow and horrible death. There is one kind which kills quickly, Chlorine, but I do not prefer any kind or brand myself.

I had to have a photo taken today for an "Officer's Identification Book" which every officer

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must carry. I believe they take the book when your body is found and send the photo to the War Department. There's no danger tho. You'll have me back soon. The war cannot last forever.

Heaps of love for you wifie dear.

**Soldier, Vietnam War (read by Giovanni Ribisi):**

Dear Dad,

Well, here it is --We have been told that our whole company will be shipping to Vietnam. Our commander told us that there is no sense trying to fool ourselves, we are going for sure. The only thing that makes me mad is how do they expect you to tell your parents. They act as though it is an everyday experience, and that we should feel that way. I don't mind going, but there are some guys here who just won't make it. Tell mom I wished I could have told her myself, but I just didn't know how.

Your son,

Bob

P.S. Tell her not to worry. It's nothing I can't handle.

**Slate: "I DON'T THINK ANY MAN CAN EXPLAIN COMBAT"**

**Nurse Clara Barton writes to her cousin, Vira, Civil War (read by Joan Allen)**

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December 12th, 1862 -- 2 o'clock A.M.

My dear Cousin Vira,

It is the night before a battle.

The moon is shining through the soft haze with brightness almost prophetic. For the last half hour I have stood alone in the awful stillness of its glimmering light gazing upon the strange sad scene around me striving to say, "Thy Will Oh God Be Done."

The acres of little shelter tents are dark and still as death. As I gazed sorrowfully upon them, I thought I could almost hear the slow flap of the grim messenger's wings, as one by one he sought and selected his victims for the morning sacrifice....

Already the roll of the moving artillery is sounding in my ears. The battle draws near and I must catch one hour's sleep for tomorrow's labor.

Good night dear cousin.

Yours in love,

Clara

**Lt. Paul E. Spangler writes to his old friends back home in Portland, OR, WWII (read by Gerald McRaney):**

December 17th, 1941

We had a little disturbance out here a week ago Sunday and it was sumpin'.

I was not certain what was going on until I came off of the hill on my way to the Hospital. Then I saw the smoke from the fires. I expected to see my maker most any moment that morning.

I hurried up to the Surgery and already the casualties were pouring in. It was hell for a while. These poor devils brought in all shot up and burned. We gave them plenty of morphine and sent them out in the Wards to die.

Don't quote me, but this is the real dope. We have just three battleships that can fight now. Aircraft lost are certainly over two hundred. If you think these damn slant eyes didn't do a thorough job, guess again.

We wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. And Remember Pearl Harbor.

Paul

Dickwitch writes to Elmer J. Sutters, WWI (read by David Hyde Pierce):

Cote D'Or France

Dear Old Bunkie,

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I know I haven't written you a letter for some time. Too busy with Uncle Sam's affairs just now. It was here, old man, that I got my first Hun with the bayonet.

We were pressing through a thicket when this big plug-ugly Hun suddenly loomed up in front of me. It was my first hand to hand fight. I parried off his blow and had him through his throat. He went down like a log ... that was it for Jerry. He never even made a sound.

I know you would ask me if I was afraid. Now I am not going to stick my chest out and exclaim "Like hell I was" or anything of the sort. I sure was afraid, and you and any other chap would be too, but what I was afraid of most was that I would be yellow. If a fellow gets a yellow streak and backs down the other boys won't have anything to do with him and that was what I was afraid of most, of getting a yellow streak.

Your Old Friend and Comrade in Mischief, Dickwitch

**A 20-year-old Sgt. from Illinois wrote to his parents, Vietnam War (read by Esai Morales):**

Vietnam

30 MAR 71

Dear Mom and all,

Don't worry, I didn't get another purple heart. My buddies are all dead. Out of our Infantry Company 21 killed, 29 wounded, and 27 of us are left to talk about the 5 hours of hell we went through.



It's too late to bitch, but the truth will not be told to the U.S. A lot of men are killed but they tell you only half the number.

I can't sleep good anywhere now. I'm trying to forget the horror of Sunday morning. Mom, I'm sick of this shit.

**Pvt. Paul Curtis writes to his brother, Mitchell, WWII (read by Eric Stoltz):**

Dear Mitchell:

I don't think any man can exactly explain combat. Take a combination of fear, anger, hunger, thirst, exhaustion, disgust, loneliness, homesickness, and wrap that all up in one reaction and you might approach the feelings a fellow has. It makes you feel mighty small, helpless and alone.

The battle seems like something in a faraway land. The roar is even as bad as the movies have it. The cries of the wounded are pitiful. The dead seem forsaken. Things rage on all around them, but they are still and quiet.

Love,

Paul

**Slate:** This was the last letter that Paul Curtis ever wrote. He was killed the next day.

**Soldier, Korean War (read by Lawrence Turner):**

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Korea, 1951

Dear Paw en Maw en All...,

We have been working up towards that 38th parallel. 'Twas pretty awful the first time we found one of our boys lying in the snow, stripped of his shoes and clothes. We cussed and we cried too. Gosh he could have been anyone of the gang from home. Anyway, he was some mother's son.

Had a dream last night. I was sitting near our kitchen range at home. Mom was baking and she just pulled some beautiful rolls out of the oven. When I woke up, I had a hunk of snow and I was chewing on it.

Our squad leader just came by and told us to shave and wash up. What does he think? We all washed up just a week ago.

Your wayward son,

Johnny

**1st Lt. Dean Allen writes to his wife, Joyce, Vietnam War (read by Bill Paxton):**

Dearest Wife,

I am out on ambush with eleven men and a medic -- after everything is set up in position I have nothing to do but think about why I am here. Why do I have to be the one to tell

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someone to do something that may get him blown away?

Being a good platoon leader is a lonely job. I don't want to really get to know anybody over here because it would be bad enough to lose a man -- I damn sure don't want to lose a friend. But as hard as I try not to get involved with my men I still can't help liking them, and getting close to a few. They come up and say "hey do you want to see picture of my wife or girl?"

Like I said it gets lonely trying to stay separate.

Maybe sometime I'll try to tell you how scared I am now. There is nothing I can do about it, but wait for another day to start + finish.

All my love always,

Dean

**Slate:** Four days later, Dean Allen stepped on a land mine and was killed.

**Slate:** "I MISS YOU SO MUCH, IT SEEMS MY HEART WILL BURST"

**Wife of soldier, Korean War (read by Joan Allen):**

January 20 1952

Good afternoon

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It's a bright cold beautiful day here in Iowa. How are you today, my sweet hubby? Jan is snoozing in her afternoon nap & Jay plays cowboy all day long & he hardly even takes a nap anymore. I think it is high time you are coming home because Jan is beginning to call every man she sees in a magazine "Daddy."

It will be wonderful to have you home again. You can come home at night to a nice comfy chair & Jay will bring you your slippers & pipe (!) & I will bring you a nice tall glass of something cold in one of our new iced tea glasses.

The shadows are growing long on the lawn. It's 4:30 & soon will be dark again & your day just beginning....

Take good good care of yourself, Sweetie.

All our love to you always,

Lou, Jay, & Jan

**John E. Bott writes to his son, Harry, WWI (read by Gerald McRaney):**

Dear Son

You have a fine little Baby Girl, she is 5 days old today and is doing well and she will be waiting for you when you return, but your dear wife has passed to the other side today. Dear Boy it is sad news - but remember God's Will not ours to be done. Now be brave and remember the Baby will want your care and attention when you come back again.

May God give you strength to bear your burden is my prayer for you.

from your Father

**1st Lt. Sidney Diamond writes to his fiancée, Estelle Spero, WWII (read by Christopher Gehrman):**

Jan 19 -- 1945

Darling,

Somewhere in the Philippines -- In combat again -- a lot to say but -- A, very tired - B. very very dirty. -- C Busy, Busy, as all hell -- Been moving constantly -- Excuse brevity -- I love you -- you make my foxhole warm and soft -- Sweet heart -- yours,

Sid

**Slate:** Sidney Diamond was killed in the Philippines. He was 22.

**WWII (read by Kyra Sedgwick):**

Dearest Rowland --

No letter again today. I hope I get one this afternoon. The poor postman, he hates to come without a letter. He never looks my way when he hasn't got one. When I go to Church these noontimes, I kneel and I start to pray. And I can't describe the feeling that comes over me.

You and God and love are all mixed up. It's such a strong feeling, it just surges out of me and wraps itself around you wherever you are, whatever you are doing.

My mind usually sees you in a plane, and I can feel myself putting my arms around you, and cradling your head against my breast and protecting your body with mine -- my spirit, really, I guess.

I love you so, and miss you so. Be strong and have faith.

Your Marjorie

**19-year-old Artillery Gunner, Leon responds to his fiancée, Korean War (read by Edward Norton):**

Korea

Hill 10-6-2

Dear Babe,

I just received your letter in this morning's mail. I held it in my hand for a minute while a little voice in the back of my head whispered, "This is it. This is the one."

You tried to "let me down easy."

I never said I was the greatest guy on earth; you did. Anyway, he's there. I'm here.

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"Be careful," you tell me. "Take care." I almost laughed out loud. We wouldn't want to see me hurt, would we? There's no need to worry about me. I'll be all right.... Do I say something brilliant like "may all your troubles be little ones?"

How about "If you ever need a friend"? That presumes a future.

There are 500,000 N. Koreans and Chinese on the other side of that hill bound and determined to make sure I don't have a future. Over here where your past is your last breath, your present is this breath, and your future is your next breath, you don't make too many promises. Which leaves me what?

Goodbye,

Leon

**Slate:** Two days later, Leon charged an enemy machine gun nest and was killed.

**Lt. Jack Emery writes to his fiancée Audrey Taylor, WWII (read by Bill Paxton):**

Hello Darling,

Last night I saw a very amazing thing. About 8:30 P.M. we were just sitting around talking when one of the boys looked to the north and saw of all things a rainbow. It was at least an hour after sundown, so how a rainbow could form without sunlight I don't know, but there it was.

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I like to sit up these warm bright nights and watch the white clouds and dark shadows move in the night. That's when I miss you the most darling -- at night when everything is so still and quiet. Sometimes I pretend we are just sitting there with our arms about each other our hearts beating as one. Best I don't dwell on the subject cause I miss you so much right now it seems as though my heart is going to burst...

I Love You, Jack

**Slate:** By the time Audrey received this letter, Jack Emery had been killed in Burma.

**Slate:** "THE COMPARISON IS HARDLY FAIR TO HELL"

**American Revolution, read by Jordan Bridges:**

December 14, 1777

People who live at home in Luxury and Ease, quietly possessing their habitation, Enjoying their Families in peace, have but a very faint idea of the continual Anxiety the man endures who is in a Camp.

What Sweet Felicities have I left at home; A charming Wife -- pretty Children -- Good Beds-- good food -- good Cookery -- all agreeable -- all harmonious. Here, all Confusion -- smoke and Cold -- hunger and filthiness -- A pox on my bad luck.

Albigen Waldo

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## First Connecticut Infantry Regiment

**Capt. David Embree writes to his sister, Rose, Civil War (read by Giovanni Ribisi):**

February 3, 1863

Dear Sister,

The bullet came obliquely from the left and front and passed several feet in front of me. It seemed that I could almost hear it singing from the time it left its bed in the rebel's gun.

Suddenly I heard the same ball go crash! and I knew by the sound that it had burst a human skull. And then I saw Sergt. Chauncy Goldsmith quivering and dying.

We could not refrain from casting a glance at the man who lay there trembling in every limb and the blood spirting from his nostrils. In the heat of action such scenes do not much affect one but at a time like this it is awful indeed.

I have come to the conclusion that Destiny is a Deity that shields and protects, or permits to be stricken down, as his wisdom chooses.

Your Brother,

D. F. Embree

**Soldier, WWI (read by Edward Norton):**

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December 14, 1918

My Darling Mother, Dad and all:

The argonne; forty days with the booming of the guns, the nerve racking whine of the projectiles and the crash of the bombs ever in my ears, breathing and eating the damnable gases that have shocked the civilized world. Forty days of struggling, toiling and praying with very little food and sleep.

It was forty days of unremitting hell. In fact, the comparison is hardly fair to hell.

It rained continually from the time we got there until the time we left. The rain was finely woven and clammy as a funeral garment. It had a way of soaking through the skin, on into the body of a man until his very heart seemed to be pumping the rain water along his veins instead of blood. It would wet all the world.

God knows where the sun has gone.

Your devoted son and brother,

Hugh

**Combat Nurse June Wandrey, WWII (read by Joan Allen):**

Somewhere in Italy

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1-18-44

Dearest Family, We now have a mix of wounded and battle-fatigued soldiers. Each category tugs at your heart. The wounded were happy to be missing only one arm or leg...

I have a terrible earache but as usual I have to work. The patients need me.

A few days ago, I was giving medications before lights out. As I finished with this one very young soldier and was tucking his blankets around him, he said, "My mother always kissed me goodnight when she tucked me in bed." So I kissed him on the forehead. He blushed, covered his head with the blanket, and everyone else called "Mommy, Mommy."

Love, June

**Army Spc. 4/C Richard Baltzegar writes to his friend Pfc. Michael Engel, Vietnam War  
(read by Bill Paxton):**

6 September 1968

Dear Mike, I have a little war story to tell. Two weeks ago the Bien Hoa Air Base was mortared. All of a sudden a large red ball of fire soared into the sky. You can imagine how scared we were.

Every second I was expecting to die; I really was.

The past week has been one continuous HIGH. I went to Saigon and smoked opium. The

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setting was great. A lamp with a small red flame, and a Vietnamese woman softly singing some weird song. A withered man cooked the opium over a flame into a long wooden pipe. I rested my head on a wood block, and quickly inhaled and exhaled the smoke. The greatest feeling. God, I don't know how I made it back to Bien Hoa.

Write to me soon. Rick

**Warrant Officer, Frank J. Conwell writes to his aunt and uncle, WWII (read by Kevin Spacey):**

February 6th 1945

Hello John, Ann and all the Little Ones: The weather has been very cold over here with plenty of snow, snow, and more snow. As I look at the kids sledding, throwing snow balls, it brings back many memories of the good times I had when I was a kid. All us lads took out our Flexible Flyers and went belly whopping down the hills. We made snow men with it and packed it into hard, round balls that caught other kids in the head and melted down the backs of their necks. When our feet got cold we would call it a day. When we were kids snow sure was fun.

There's a lot of snow on the Western Front these days and the country looks like a Christmas card. It's beautiful.

But the Flexible Flyers have turned into tanks. The snowballs are grenades. The wet stuff trickling down the back of necks is often blood. And when you're numb with cold there's no place to go to. Nothing to look forward to. Nothing but snow. Cold, wet, beautiful snow.

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Hoping this letter finds you all in the best of health.

Sincerely, Frank

**Slate:** "I ASK MYSELF THESE QUESTIONS..."

**Pvt. Walter T. Bromich writes to his pastor, WWI (read by Lawrence Turner):**

June 4, 1918

Dear Reverend: Here I sit thinking of the little church back home, wondering how you are getting along. Don't think I am down-hearted, but ever since I volunteered I've felt like a cog in a huge wheel. The cog may get smashed up, but the machine goes on. And I can't feel God is in it.

How can there be fairness in one man being maimed for life, suffering agonies, another killed instantaneously, while I get out of it safe? Does God really love us individually or does He love His purpose more? Is it better to believe he makes the innocent suffer for the guilty and that things will be squared up some day. Sounds rather calculating, doesn't it, and not a bit like the love of a Father.

What I would like to believe is that God is in this war, not as a spectator, but backing up everything that is good in us. He won't work any miracles for us because that would be helping us to do the work He has given us to do on our own. I don't know whether God goes forth with armies but I do know that He is in lots of our men or they would not do what they do.

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Yours sincerely,

Pvt. Walter T. Bromwich

**Soldier, WWII (read by Courtney B. Vance):**

April, 1944

Dear YANK Magazine:

Myself and eight other Negro soldiers were on our way from Camp Claiborne, LA., to Fort Huachuca, Arizona. We had to lay over until the next day for our train. We could not purchase a cup of coffee at any of the lunchrooms around there. The only place where we could be served was at the railroad station but, of course, we had to go into the kitchen. As you know, Old Man Jim Crow rules.

But that's not all; 11:30 a.m. about two dozen German prisoners of war, with two American guards, came into the station. They sat at the tables, had their meals served, talked, smoked, in fact had quite a swell time.

I stood on the outside looking on, and I could not help but ask myself these questions: are we not American soldiers, sworn to fight for and die if need be for this our country? Then why are they treated better than we are? Why does the Government allow such things to go on? Some of the boys are saying that you will not print this letter. I'm saying that you will.

Cpl. Rupert Trimmingham

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**Pfc. Ernest Uno writes to his sister Mae, WWII (read by Mike Hagiwara):**

Livorno, Italy

Japanese American 442nd Regiment

Dearest Mae,

I've got a bunch of letters in my pocket that are dirty and falling apart. They keep me going until new ones come.

Being part of front line troops, we are usually the first to march thru the towns which have cost so much blood and sweat to liberate. But the people are grateful. They know that when we come, the war is over for them. As soon as we enter, we are showered with all they have to spare. What they have to give is simple but when you're tired and worn out from fighting you accept their gifts with a lump in your throat.

I know now, for certain, what we are fighting for! Our mission is to free all the nations of oppression. Give the children of this and the coming generations a chance to learn the true meaning of Freedom.

Please give my regards to the Morimotos, lots of love.

Ernest

**L. Cpl. Stephen Daniel writes to his parents, Vietnam War (read by Edward Norton):**

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August 9, 1968

Mom and Dad: Last night one more Marine died. No one will ever hear or care about it except his parents and us. There is no nation to mourn for him or fly our flag at half-mast. Yet this Marine did more for his country than any President or Senator ever did. His name was Corporal Lee Clark.

He was a good marine and a better person. He didn't deserve dying in a damn country not worth fightin' for. But he is dead and those back home whose freedom he was defending will never know his name.

Cpl. Lee Clark is dead but those who knew him and fought with him will never forget him. He had about 38 days left in the Marine Corps and in Viet Nam. 38 days to start living again, to see the world, and home, 38 days left and he is dead.

It makes you wonder.

**S. Sgt. Horace Evers writes to his family from Hitler's residence, WWII:**

2nd of May -- 1945

Dearest Mom and Lou, A year ago today I was sweating out shells on Anzio Beachhead - today I am sitting in Hitler's luxuriously furnished apartment in Munich writing a few lines home. What a contrast. A still greater contrast is between his quarters here and the living hell of Dachau concentration only 10 miles from here. I had the misfortune of seeing the camp yesterday and I still find it hard to believe what my eyes told me.

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In two years of combat you can imagine I have seen a lot of death, furious death mostly. But nothing has ever stirred me as much as this. I can't shrug off the feeling of utter hate I now hold for these people. I've shot at Germans with intent to kill before but only because I had to or else it was me -- now I hold no hesitancy whatsoever.

How can people do things like that? I never believed they could until now.

Miss you all very much

Your Son, Horace

**Slate:** "IT'S OFFICIAL...I'M COMING HOME."

**Soldier, WWI (read by Giovanni Ribisi):**

Dearest Mother: November 11th 1918 will always be remembered by yours truly. We moved out at 4:00 AM in a heavy mist and marched about 4 km. At 9:30 there was a terrific German barrage. I sure thought it was all up.

At 10:45 the order came to cease firing. Rumors started to spread that it was the end and I am sure I was not the only one to utter a prayer that it was true. Then, 11 o'clock, and a dead silence! That was absolutely the happiest moment of my life. The rest of the day little groups of smiling Germans came up to the line with tobacco and wine. At dusk as far as the eye could reach there was a regular Fourth of July celebration. Also all along the lines were campfires, a thing not seen for years. It was great and I had some sleep beside a roaring fire.

Mother dear, I will come marching home one of these days and we will all be together and

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happy again, won't we? Lloyd

**Soldier, Korean War (read by Lawrence Turner):**

I'm coming home! It's official as of this morning. It will be sometime before I crash in your door, a few weeks, maybe, but I'm coming home.

That little house is going to look like a palace to me. And, you people like Kings, and, Queens. Is it true some people eat three times a day, or more? And they sit on a chair, by a table. What's the matter, they can't dig a hole in the backyard like everybody else?

I have spent 12 months over here. The longest 30 years of my life. A short time ago I was 18, and all I was worried about was cars, girls, and how much beer a real man could drink. Don't get me wrong. I still want a hot car, a hot girl, and a cold beer, but there were times I would have traded them all for a warm blanket. A wool hat. A shoelace. A goddamned shoelace! There were times when I would have traded my soul for a cup of hot coffee. But I am coming home now.

You know, it's almost funny. We see a guy in a wheel chair, a guy on crutches, we break our backs trying to help him. But what about the wounds you can't see? The phantoms, the nightmares, the ghosts in your head? I am going to tell you now. You'll need a lot of patience with me. Patience, and, understanding. See you soon. See you soon. See you soon.

**Sgt. Nathan Hoffman writes to his fiancée, Evelyn Giniger, WWII (read by David Hyde Pierce):**

My Dearest Evelyn: This should be the letter to end all letters. When you next hear from me,

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it'll be in person. So long, honey, and pucker up -- 'cause here I come.

Nathan

**Slate:** "THERE WAS A WAR..."

**S. Sgt. Dan Welch writes to his mother and extended family, Gulf War (read by Bill Paxton):**

Saudi Arabia

8 March 91

Dear Y'all:

It never seemed like a war. More like a field problem. Even when stuff was burning all around you and firing going off all over the place. It was very real, but more a curiosity than anything else.

When we were breaching the main Iraqi defense line, an idiot popped up from a trench and started firing. My tank was the first to return fire. You just don't think of it as someone shooting at you. It's just a target, like on a range.

We passed Kuwait city on the coast road. I can't describe it. I mean the scene on the highway. We all just looked as we drove through the now silent carnage going God damn, God damn. ...

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There was a dead Iraqi in a car, eyes wide open, frozen in a silent scream.

I still think of the guy I shot. If I hadn't done it, he could have been in a Prisoner of War camp right now, waiting to go home, just like me.

This only lasted four days. It wasn't even long enough to seem like a war.

Love, Dan

**101st Airborne Division Richard A. Luttrell writes, Vietnam War (read by Gerald McRaney):**

Dear Sir, For [twenty two] years I have carried your picture in my wallet. I was only eighteen years old that day we faced one another on that trail in Vietnam. Why you did not take my life I'll never know. You started at me for so long armed with your AK-47 and yet you did not fire. Forgive me for taking your life, I was reacting just the way I was trained, to kill V. C. or gooks, hell you weren't even considered human.

Over the years I have stared at your picture and your daughter, I expect. Each time my heart and guts would burn with the pain of guilt. I have two daughters myself now.

Today I visit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in D.C. I have wanted to come here for several years now to say goodbye to many of my former comrades.

I truly loved many of them as I am sure you loved many of your former comrades.

As of today we are no longer enemies. I perceive you as a brave soldier defending his

homeland.

As I leave here today I leave your picture and this letter. Forgive me Sir, I shall try to live my life to the fullest, an opportunity that you and many others were denied.

So until we chance to meet again in another time and place, rest in peace.

Respectfully, Richard A. Luttrell

101st Airborne Division

**Lt. Lewis Plush writes to his parents, WW I (read by Kevin Spacey):**

Dear Father and Mother, I walk again over a battle field fresh with its dead and ruin; shattered villages standing as monuments of destruction. Tangled and torn wire litter the barren fields and slopes, barren of life but littered with the waste of war. Broken guns, bits of clothing, shells, and the sad remains of life.

There was a war, a great war, and now it is over. Men fought to kill, to maim, to destroy. Some return home, others remain behind forever on the fields of their greatest sacrifice.

There was a war, a great war, and now it is over.

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