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IN EXTRAORDINARY TIMES, THERE ARE NO ORDINARY LIVES
Ken Burns' Epic THE WAR Premieres on WEDU

Tampa, FL – The Second World War was so massive, catastrophic and complex, it is almost beyond the mind's and the heart's capacity to process everything that happened and, more important, what it meant on a human level. That statement, made by award-winning filmmaker Ken Burns, is the compelling backdrop to his newest epic **THE WAR**. By focusing on personal stories of ordinary Americans who had extraordinary experiences in the war, the film, premiering on WEDU Sunday, September 23rd at 8 pm, tries to bring one of the biggest events in the history of the world down to a very intimate scale. And in the end, we all begin to see that there are no “ordinary lives.”

Six years in the making, this epic 14-hour film, reminiscent in scope and power of Burns' landmark series *The Civil War*, focuses on the stories of citizens from four geographically distributed American towns — Waterbury, Connecticut; Mobile, Alabama; Sacramento, California; and the tiny farming town of Luverne, Minnesota. These four communities stand in for — and could represent — any town in the United States that went through the war's four devastating years. Individuals from each community take the viewer through their own personal and quite often harrowing journeys into war, painting vivid portraits of how the war dramatically altered their lives and those of their neighbors, as well as the country they helped to save for generations to come.

This seven-part documentary series, directed and produced by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, explores the history and horror of the Second World War from an American perspective by following the fortunes of so-called ordinary men and women who get caught up in the greatest cataclysm in human history.

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THE WAR features first-person voices read by some of America's greatest actors. Tom Hanks reads the voice of Al McIntosh, the editor of the *Rock County Star-Herald* in Luverne, Minnesota, whose weekly columns poignantly tried to explain the unexplainable to his neighbors. Other voices include Josh Lucas, Bobby Cannavale, Samuel L. Jackson, Eli Wallach, Robert Wahlberg, Carolyn McCormack, Adam Arkin and Kevin Conway; overall narration is provided by Keith David.

"PBS has a deep and abiding respect for the history, drama and tragedy of war," said John F. Wilson, PBS Senior Vice President and Chief T.V. Programming Executive. "It's critical that we capture the stories of the generation that fought and lived through World War II before they are lost to us forever. Serving our mission to educate and inform, PBS' goal for **THE WAR** is to reach into every home and classroom — so together we can better understand what we as a nation experienced in those difficult years and what we as a nation accomplished."

THE WAR intertwines vivid eyewitness accounts of the harrowing realities of life on the front lines with reminiscences of Americans who never left their home towns, and who tried their best to carry on with the business of daily life while their fathers and brothers and sons were overseas. The film honors and celebrates the bravery, endurance, and sacrifice of the generation of Americans who lived through what will always be known simply as **THE WAR**.

WWII changed everything, and everyone – even in west central Florida. It resulted in hundreds of military bases being built in the state, and residents of the area were called to serve and – both on the battlefield and on the home front – they served with distinction. WEDU has produced a half-hour documentary that tells the story of many of these *Heroes from the Bay*. Through a series of interviews and archival footage, and guided by the program's host, Bob Hite, *Heroes from the Bay* focuses on the local efforts that helped win the war and make life better for the combat Veterans when they returned home. The program premieres on Thursday, September 13th at 8:30 pm and will also be shown in conjunction with **THE WAR** throughout the month of September and October. To complement both of these programs, WEDU launched a special website (www.wedu.org/thewar) where these local stories are being collected and shared; in addition the website features interesting Bay area WWII facts; WWII video/images, and Ken Burns' exclusive interview with WEDU host Jack Perkins.

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For more information about **THE WAR** series, *Heroes from the Bay*, other WEDU programming, special events, outreach efforts and community partnerships, please visit **www.wedu.org** or call 800.354.9338. WEDU, a 501(c)(3) organization, is West Central Florida's primary PBS station serving 16 counties including the Tampa, St. Petersburg, Pasco, Polk and Sarasota areas through multiple media disciplines including on-air broadcasting and online experiences. WEDU, recently awarded its second consecutive four-star rating by Charity Navigator, is financially supported by its local community, and provides the highest quality education, information, and entertainment programming on local, national, and international levels.

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