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John Florea: World War II - Images from the Pacific and European Fronts



John Florea's (1916-2000) photographs of World War II and its aftermath were published in 32 issues of Life magazine between 1942 and 1946. After working for the San Francisco Examiner, he became a staff photographer for Life in 1941, specializing in celebrity images in Hollywood. With the bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Japanese on Dec. 7, 1941, Florea decided to become a war photographer and went on to chronicle the greatest battles of World War II. As one of the America's first war correspondents for the Pacific theater, he covered the Marines and the Navy, especially during the battle of Tarawa in December 1943. Later, from

1944 until the end of the war, he followed the U.S. Army in Europe, photographing battles in France and Belgium, the destruction of the German cities and the liberation of the concentration camps in Germany. This last experience left such a deep impression on him that he explained in 1993, almost 50 years later: "You don't know how many times I see those pictures in my mind. It was terrible."

Since the original Life publications, John Florea's photographs have been published in the 1950 volume "Life's Picture History of World War II," in the 1979 "Life: The First Decade," in the 1999 "Life Photographers: What they Saw," in the 2001 "Life: World War II" and in the 2004 "The Great Life Photographers." Florea's image "Read My Vote" made in Japan in 1947 was included in the iconic "Family of Man" exhibition that Edward Steichen organized at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City in 1955 and which subsequently traveled to 37 countries.

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After the war, John Florea came back to Hollywood to photograph celebrities. He stopped working for Life in 1949. His color images of stars made in the 1950s were included in a 1988 exhibition “Masters of Starlight: Photographers in Hollywood” at the LACMA in Los Angeles. He later became a producer, director and writer for more than 130 TV shows, from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s, including “Highway Patrol,” “Sea Hunt” and “CHiPs.” “But,” as he remembered in 1993, “the hilarious thing about it — maybe it’s not so hilarious — is I’ll never be remembered for that. The only thing I’ll be remembered for is what I had done for Life magazine.” Florea died in Los Angeles in 2000.

On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, Steven Kasher Gallery presents the first exhibition of Florea’s work, “John Florea: World War II, October 29th – December 19th 2015.” featuring more than 50 black-and-white photographs from his most famous series from the Pacific and European theaters.

“War Photographers,” an article in the Nov. 5, 1945, issue of Life, states that Florea “saw the first German spies caught in reoccupied territory, the first American counterattack, the first American prisoners found murdered.”

The exhibition “John Florea: World War II” opens on Thursday, Oct. 29, with a reception from 6 p.m. to 8



p.m., at the Steven Kasher Gallery in New York City, and will be on view through Dec. 19.