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The incredible combat photography of TV director who traded in Hollywood glamor to capture the devastation of WWII

By Mia De Graaf October 29, 2015

He started his career photographing Hollywood stars, and ended it shooting hit TV shows of the 1980s.

But John Florea, acclaimed director of Mission: Impossible and Dukes Of Hazzard, had an unusual hiatus.



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Trading in dazzling paparazzi bulbs for the devastating blasts of grenades and missiles, the budding photographer embedded with an American platoon to capture their experience fighting the Nazis in the Second World War.

At first, aboard a ship in the Pacific, the scenes were relatively jovial. Once he reached the trenches of Europe, that changed.

The dark images show soldiers filling in mass graves, with the victims' faces gaping out. Bodies lie strewn across a yard in another shot. In one, an American soldier inspects the bleak aftermath of a mass execution of his imprisoned comrades: soldiers lie lifeless under a thick blanket of snow and the building behind them is only half intact.

'They were all heroes,' Florea said in 1995, five years before his death at 84, according to his obituary in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. 'They had to carry a gun, and they had to shoot it. I could go up and shoot pictures of them, but I could turn around any time I wanted. They had to stay there.'



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