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Mirror

American photographer who has swapped snapping
Hollywood starlets for capturing haunting images of
World War Two

By Ross Logan October 31, 2015

Like many Americans through much of 1941, John Florea did not expect to ever become involved in World War Two. But on December 7 that year the US was pulled inextricably into the conflict, when Japanese bombers attacked Pear Harbour. That infamous day was the catalyst for Florea, a Hollywood photographer specialising in celebrity snaps for Life magazine, to embark on an entirely different career path. He became one of America's first war correspondents, documenting some of the biggest battles of World War II armed only with a camera. Covering the Pacific War, he was present during the during the brutal battle of Tarawa in 1943, which killed more than



6,000 Japanese, Korean and American soldiers. Later he would follow the American army in Europe, documenting some of the most important moments of recent history, including the liberation of Jews from the Nazi concentration camps.

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Now, to mark the 70th anniversary of the end of the conflict Florea's war photographs have become the subject of a major new exhibition. Steven Kasher Gallery in New York is showing more than fifty black and white photographs from his most famous series from the Pacific and European fronts, with published and previously unpublished images.

Some of the images have appeared on front covers all over the world, and become enduring images of the war. His famous images of concentration camps were some of the first to bring home the true horrors of the holocaust for millions of people.

As the American critic Susan Sontag wrote, recalling when she first saw Florea's pictures of the camps: "When I looked at those photographs, something broke. "Nothing I have seen — in photographs or in real life — ever cut me as sharply, deeply, instantaneously."

