

Peters' s choice to all but ignore the latter stages of Willkie's public life, particularly his role in helping to banish isolationism from American political discourse, is perplexing. Willkie contributed no original ideas to the debate over U.S. foreign policy, but his massively bestselling *One World* (1943) was an effective sales pitch for world government and greater post-war U.S. involvement in international affairs. More understandable is Peters's reluctance to confront the tension between his thesis and his ideals. Unarguably, it was right for the United States to have fought the Axis Powers, and so Peters applauds Willkie for giving cover to FDR's preparations for war. But for someone like Peters, who believes that the people should determine government

policy through democratic institutions, there can be no more troubling outcome than denying citizens the option of staying out of a world-shattering conflict. If there was a real chance that voters would have chosen an isolationist in 1940, then Peters must explain why he celebrates the fact that voters were barred from making such a grievous error. A book tackling that topic would be a probing exploration of the conflict between democracy and truth. Too bad it remains unwritten.

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Ernie Pyle's War

A Documentary on Ernie Pyle, World War II Correspondent
DVD. Produced by Todd Gould.

(Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Press, 2005. 30 minutes. \$19.95.)

Just as Edward R. Murrow was the best-known radio journalist of World War II, so was Hoosier native Ernie Pyle the best-known print journalist. But far more documentaries have been made about Murrow than about Pyle. Certainly Murrow's bosses at CBS vigorously promoted their man, and his career continued into the age of video, while Pyle was never comfortable posing for promotional pictures. Only a few moving films of Pyle are known

to exist, and only a single film exists in which Pyle speaks (an excerpt of which opens this documentary). But it's also difficult to make a video about Pyle because he was a writer and a storyteller. One of his Scripps-Howard bosses referred to his Mark Twain-like quality. Without pictures, documentarists face a challenge in bringing a writer to life. Gould's documentary is only the third to focus on Pyle. While an Arts & Entertainment video pro-

duced five years ago (*Ernie Pyle: The Voice of G.I. Joe*) does a better job of conveying Pyle's role in World War II, Gould's work gives us a broader understanding of Pyle's life and the meaning of his work.

Gould solves the video challenge in several ways. In addition to the better-known snapshots and promotional pictures of Pyle, he uses relevant contemporary video. He has also employed a group of about twenty reenactors with tents, jeeps, and a machine gun and filmed them operating in northern Monroe County, Indiana, in October 2005, to provide background footage for the reading of selected Pyle columns. To these he has added a valuable cross-section of experts, from Indiana historian James H. Madison to Pyle biographer James Tobin, Pyle friends Andy Rooney and Walter Cronkite, Columbus, Ohio newspaper columnist Mike Harden, and others, including some World War II veterans.

The central theme in the video has to be stated in words by experts, because it's impossible to present it visually. Historians Madison and Tobin both emphasize Pyle's importance in presenting ordinary Americans and their lives to other Americans, whether in the peacetime 1930s or in World War II. As John Steinbeck wrote, "[T]he war of the homesick, weary, funny, violent, common men who wash their socks in their helmets, complain about the food, whistle at the Arab girls, or any girls for that matter, and bring them-

selves through as dirty a business as the world has ever seen and do it with humor and dignity and courage . . . is Ernie Pyle's war" ("A Tribute to Ernie Pyle," *Sears Peoples Book Club*, 1:6 [1944], p. 10).

Viewers will respond to this documentary in different ways. Some will find evidence of Pyle as the heroic, iconic voice of the World War II GI. Others will see a man of great complexity, who in spite of the trials of his own self-doubt and his wife's manic depression, still managed to produce often superb prose.

This documentary will be especially valuable for a modern public that knows very little about Pyle. With a good study guide, public schools can use the video as the center of a study of the Hoosier hero. Public television stations will undoubtedly use the documentary at fundraising time. The public in general will find this the most accessible summary of Pyle and his life.

The reviewer feels obligated to point out one factual error. While the School of Journalism at Indiana University proudly claims that Pyle studied journalism at IU, he could not have majored in journalism, since that major was not approved until the early 1930s, a decade after Pyle left school. Pyle's IU transcript shows that he was, in fact, majoring in economics.

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