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LOST BETWEEN WORLDS: GAY MEN IN WORLD WAR II

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ABSTRACT:

While some queer World War II soldiers, like Christine Jorgensen, returned from war to become pioneers in the field of gender and sexuality, not all had the same support and experience. Anti-sodomy laws had a long history in the United States and its military, but no specific provision barred homosexuals from service until World War II. At the center of this change was the transition from a policy considering homosexual acts as a crime to a psychiatrist-controlled policy that homosexuality was an illness that made gay men unfit to fight. For those not excluded, the threat of an other-than-dishonorable discharge, or blue discharge, loomed overhead. While World War II served as a cultural shift for queer individuals' prospects for future advancement of their civil and human rights, the threat of discharge from the United States armed forces undoubtedly conditioned a response and environment that fueled homophobic ideology as evident by the development of psychiatry and sociology on homosexuality during the war, the downplay of intimate homosocial experiences, and the trauma associated with hiding from one's sexuality and being outed at the same time. Coming out could have also meant being disowned by one's family, losing G.I. benefits, and struggling to find civilian work upon coming home from the war. To understand the complete psychological and social history of war, the experience of homosexual soldiers must be highlighted.

Some queer people, such as Christine Jorgensen, served proudly in the United States military during World War II without incident and received positive support during and immediately after the war. However, other queer people, especially homosexual men, did not necessarily have similar experiences with being in the military. While anti-sodomy laws and regulations had existed since the Revolutionary War, no specific provision barred homosexuals from service until 1943. At the center of this change was the transition from a policy considering homosexual acts as a crime to a psychiatrist-controlled policy that homosexuality was an illness that made gay men unfit to fight.

The new profession of military psychiatrists, therefore, played an integral role in the planning of military policy and the draft at the beginning of World War II. Designing guides to discover homosexuals that tried to enlist or were drafted, psychiatrists wrote lists of stereotyped signs that characterized gay men to help examiners, including an effeminate stance or a certain nervousness standing naked in front of another man during screening. Officially, the military rejected between 4,000 and 5,000 men for supposed "psychopathic personality disorders" at the beginning of the war. However, thousands of queer men and women served in the military during World War II.

For those that remained in the military, queer individuals faced the constant threat of being dishonorably discharged. These discharges, or 'blue' discharges, have been estimated to have removed between 9,000 and 10,000 soldiers from service for homosexuality. Blue discharges caused many issues for gay soldiers returning home from the war. These discharges disqualified veterans from receiving any GI rights or benefits and prevented many from getting civilian jobs or even being respected in their hometowns.

The cultural history that follows will tell the story of homosexual men that served the country during World War II that lived under the threat of exposure and discharge. While World War II served as a cultural shift for queer individuals' prospects for future advancement of their civil and human rights, the threat of discharge from the United States armed forces undoubtedly conditioned a response and environment that fueled homophobic ideology as evident by the development of psychiatry and sociology on homosexuality during the war, the downplay of intimate homosocial experiences, and the trauma associated with hiding from one's sexuality and being outed at the same time. All men serving abroad during the war faced excruciating challenges, trauma and destruction and gay men's experiences were more challenging due to battling their sexuality at the same time.

The historiography of gay men and lesbians during the World War II era is a limited field. In part, this is due to the stigmatization that persists around the LGBTQ community but also because many World War II resources and archives do not have identifiers for LGBT-related sources in catalog systems. One of the only seminal works on the subject of homosexuals in World War II was published by Allan Bérubé in 1990 titled *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II*. Prior to the peacetime mobilization in 1940 and 1941, the Selective Service system was not particularly concerned with sexual orientation when screening men to enlist. In October 1940, 16 million men registered for the draft. This resulted in the ability of the armed forces to exclude large segments of the population, including women, African Americans, and homosexuals.[1] Bérubé argues that World War II caused a dramatic change in how the military viewed homosexuals. Traditionally, the illegality of homosexuality was concerned with sexual acts. However, during World War II, psychiatrists found increased authority in the armed forces and developed new screening methods to find and disqualify gay men, changing the focus from the sexual act to the individual. Bérubé argues that the attack on Pearl Harbor further complicated the draft in that it increased the need for military personnel so local induction boards could no longer disqualify large groups of Americans from service. Instead, Bérubé argues that changes to the home front social structure and expanded women's role in a traditionally masculine institution caused the "military to adopt its first policies regarding the screening, discharge, and management of lesbian personnel."[2] Therefore, for both gay men and lesbians, the question became how one can serve their country while escaping the military's antihomosexual policies. These people were trapped between the desire to join their peers to serve the country and shame if they did not enlist. Bérubé also found that antihomosexual policies forced many soldiers and civilians to come out against their will. There were three main ways Bérubé argues this happens: being publicly rejected by induction examiners, being caught in a homosexual act, or "declaring themselves" and receiving an undesirable discharge. These self-declarations began to add a

[1] Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), pg. 2.

[2] Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire,* pg. 3.

political dimension to the sexual and social meanings of coming out.[3] Bérubé further argues that the openness of gay and lesbian relationships in World War II led veterans to settle in the safety of cities where subcultures had emerged.

Gay men and lesbians struggled to find themselves in this new environment while battling through daily tensions with antihomosexual policies, the need for the efficient use of personnel, and their private sex lives. The stories of these individuals have been pushed out of our understanding of the history of World War II. Bérubé found that psychiatrists left the most public record of involvement with homosexuality during the war. Bérubé was met with resistance in studying records associated with homosexuality. Many of the items he was looking for suddenly went "missing" – a tactic Bérubé argues both the Army and Navy used to avoid the release of their studies on homosexuality.[4] However, Bérubé's use of unpublished studies conducted by military physicians challenge the psychopathology of homosexuality and the stereotype that homosexuals cannot make good soldiers.

Psychologists and psychiatrists stood at the forefront of military psychopathology. One of the most well-known psychiatrists during the war was William Menninger. His book *Psychiatry in a Troubled World: Yesterday's War and Today's Challenge* from 1948, provides a record of the evolution of psychiatric practice in the Army during and immediately after World War II. Menninger provides a description of the solider and of war from a psychiatric viewpoint. Menninger saw homosexuality as of neurotic origin, a perversion of the mind, that could be treated with psychiatric intervention. This belief was well reflected in his book and work during the war. However, more recent scholarship has revealed this view of homosexuality was not uniform across the profession.

In his article "The Military, Psychiatry, and "Unfit" Soldiers, 1939-1942" (2007), Naoko Wake reexamines the psychiatric screening of American soldiers in World War II. Wake highlights there were dissenting opinions within American psychiatry on the view of homosexuality. Wake follows Dr. Harry Sullivan's work for the military and his inability to shield homosexuals from homophobic exclusion politics. Wake argues there were not enough psychiatrists to meet the demand created by the draft, so local boards often went without professional advice on deferment of psychiatric issues, of which homosexuality was included at the time. Moreover, Wake asserts that Sullivan tried to obscure the line between homosexuality and heterosexuality to protect the patient from a diagnosis while getting them a rejection from military service at the same time.

Exclusion from military service was also not consistent throughout the massive mobilization during World War II. Marc Wolinsky and Kenneth Sherrill argue in *Gays and the Military: Joseph Steffan versus the United States* (1993) that homosexuals were excluded on the premise of prejudice because their fellow soldiers hold irrational biases.[5] Through the use of affidavits, Wolinsky and Sherrill demonstrate that during World War II, "selective service boards and commanding officers took widely varying approaches to the level of enforcement of the then existing politics with respect to the service of gays and lesbians in order to accommodate the need for the military to obtain sufficient troop levels."[6] Further, they argue that heterosexual and

[3] Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire,* pg. 7.

[4] Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire,* pg. 283-284.

[5] Marc Wolinsky and Kenneth Sherrill, eds. *Gays and the Military: Joseph Steffan versus the United States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), pg. 5.

[6] Wolinsky and Sherrill, *Gays and the Military,* pg. 26.

homosexual men had little to no interactive sexual conduct. Homosexual men simply did not engage in sexual acts with other men in order to avoid penalty. While it was official policy to exclude homosexuals, Wolinsky and Sherrill suggest that many gay soldiers were known by their comrades to be gay and were accepted as such.[7]

Not all scholars agree, though, that homosexuals were targeted during the war. Naoko Shibusawa takes this position in his article "The Lavender Scare and Empire: Rethinking Cold War Antigay Politics" from 2012. In this article, Shibusawa argues that homosexual behavior was seldom the cause for dismissal from the military. He suggests that only 4,000 to 5,000 men out of 18 million were rejected as homosexuals.[8] He holds that it was only after the end of World War II that the prosecution and discharge of gay men began in full force. Shibusawa also notes that the civil service did not seem concerned with homosexuality prior to the start of the Cold War and that the issue was not on the public's radar. I, however, will argue this is not the case and that homophobia existed in both a military and civilian capacity during World War II.

During the 1940s, however, discussion of sexuality was not obscured from the war effort. John Loughery argues in his book, *The Other Side of Silence: Men's Lives and Gay Identities: A Twentieth-Century History* (1998), that the two world wars were at the forefront of the concept of a "homosexual identity." Loughery suggests that the induction process of World War II involved a crude effort to determine a man's sexual identity and that this process reminded young homosexuals of their society's growing concern with placing its citizens in one group or another; in this case as either gay or straight in an effort to weed out homosexual men from military service. Loughery's main argument is that gay sexuality existed, and its existence was not hidden or underground but was a piece of mainstream discussion.

Other research has taken a look at the connection between space and homosexuality. Emma Vickers argues in her article "Queer Sex in the Metropolis? Place, Subjectivity and the Second World War" from 2010 that a strong link exists between cities and queer culture. The Second World War ensured that the city became a focal point of service members on leave. Vickers, though, does not discount the importance of rural, familial spaces to the formation of queer identities. Instead, she offers that the city became a place where men who acted to pass as heterosexual were able to "surrender the pretense of heterosexuality imposed by their service in the Armed Forces" and life at home.[9] Queer men, however, were unable to always be on leave and were confined to their immediate location instead. Vickers argues that it was in these spaces that gay men had to forge their own sites of expression and sociability by finding queerness in other locations: "the barrack huts, shower blocks and 'secret corners.'"[10] Vickers suggests that these spaces saw more intimacy and sexual activity because gay men were not under the same level of surveillance as in urban spaces. She also explores the various new dimensions to queer life that developed during the war on the foreign front in both the European and Pacific theaters. Similarly, Bérubé argues that once removed from family life, young men and women in the service found opportunities to begin a "coming-out process." Gathered in these same-sex groupings – whether

[7] Wolinsky and Sherrill, *Gays and the Military,* pg. 144.

[8] Naoko Shibusawa, "The Lavender Scare and Empire: Rethinking Cold War Antigay Politics," *Diplomatic History* 36, no. 4 (September 2012), pg. 728.

[9] Emma Vickers, "Queer Sex in the Metropolis? Place, Subjectivity and the Second World War," *Feminist Review* 96, no. 96 (2010), pg. 59.

[10] Vickers, "Queer Sex in the Metropolis?," pg. 59.

in military camps or at home front defense industries – gay men and lesbians discovered themselves and others like them as mobilization for World War II relaxed social constraints.[11]

As historians pondered on the effects of space in the self-discovery of coming out, other scholars have focused on a gendered dimension to the war. In her book *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes: The Regulation of Female Sexuality during World War II* from 2008, Marilyn Hegarty adds a gendered analysis to the historiography of World War II by focusing on the role and experience of women during the war. Traditional history of World War II focuses on men and military matters. Hegarty diverges from this research by looking at the ways civilian women experienced the militarization of their daily lives. Female sexuality had a paradoxical relationship with the wartime effort. Federal agencies found female sexuality disturbing and dangerous but also included plans to use female sexuality in support of the war effort.[12] Hegarty argues women could not escape the militarization of their bodies as the state worked to both mobilize and control female sexuality.[13] She uses this dichotomy to examine the connection between citizenship and military service and how it depends on factors of race, class, ethnicity, religion and sexuality. "Women, during times of war, have participated in many ways to meet the obligations of citizenship, but seldom has their wartime service been defined or respected as such."[14] The state called women to serve and then denied them credit for what they did for the country. Hegarty also analyzes the wartime constructions of female and male sexualities. While the wartime iconic soldier was manly, heroic and protecting, not all servicemen qualified for the iconic status, particularly due to exemptions of race and sexuality. Additionally, Hegarty argues that the policies of government propaganda agencies indicate the close relationship between government and media which played a key role in urging women to support the war effort in a variety of ways. Finally, Hegarty finds that the later emphasis on family and domesticity in the 1950s was a response to the wartime disruption of sex and gender.[15]

More research continues to be done on the history of gender in the war. Due to war mobilization, the stereotypical "feminine" had become incompatible with the stereotypical masculine "soldier". In her 2004 article ""Dykes" or Whores": Sexuality and the Women's Army Corps in the United States during World War II," Michaela Hampf agrees with the work of Hegarty in that women were used in a variety of ways during the war. Hampf argues that women soldiers were subject to rumors and hostility by the public and the media. Hampf found that society viewed lesbian and heterosexual women's sexual agency as a threat to military masculinity and gender roles. Throughout her article, she shows how women's sexuality was controlled by desexualization and hypersexualization. Hampf suggests that lesbian soldiers were silenced and rendered invisible to not challenge society's and the military's established heterosexist order.[16] Like Hegarty, Hampf argues "the construction of the woman soldier in the Women's Army Corps during World War II was based on the intersection of gender, race, sexuality and class."[17] It is within this gendered military setting in which cultural images of gender are invented and reproduced. Hampf also argues

[11] Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire,* pg. 6.

[12] Marilyn Hegarty, *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes: The Regulation of Female Sexuality during World War II* (New York: NYU Press, 2008), pg. 2.

[13] Hegarty, *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes,* pg. 3.

[14] Hegarty, *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes,* pg. 4.

[15] Hegarty, *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes,* pg. 10.

[16] Michaela Hampf, ""Dykes" or "Whores": Sexuality and the Women's Army Corps in the United States during World War II," *Women's Studies International Forum* 27, no. 1 (2004), pg. 13.

[17] Hampf, ""Dykes" or "Whores," pg. 14.

that African American women found themselves in a double minority situation in that they faced both racial constructions of gender and gendered constructions of race during the war.

The issue surrounding homosexuality during World War II was also transnational. Paul Jackson takes an international approach to the history of sexuality in World War II in *One of the Boys: Homosexuality in the Military During World War II* (2004). Looking at the Canadian forces, Jackson acknowledges homosexuality was an issue at both social and administrative levels. Jackson looks at language to identify rhetoric over how Canadians conceptualized homosexuality, including the terms 'homosexual' and 'queer.' While some avoid the use of homosexual to distance themselves from categories of pathology, Jackson argues that these terms were used widely in military records by legal, medical and administrative authorities. The sources I employ also confirm that homosexual was the identifying word in the United States, as well, among both authorities and gay men themselves. Jackson argues that the sexual landscape of Canada differed from the United States in that it allowed men more room to exhibit queer behavior before a man was labeled as a homosexual. In the United States, this space of openness did not exist, and social requirements were much stricter. Like Wolinsky and Sherrill, Jackson's research also uncovered that military records show that many soldiers and officers were aware of their queer comrades and were more accepting than ideology at the official level.[18] Moreover, Jackson suggests that the Second World War came to symbolize manhood, creating a template for post-war construction of gender and sexuality.

Similarly, Stephen Bourne, in his book *Fighting Proud: The Untold Story of the Gay Men Who Served in Two World Wars* from 2017, also takes a transnational approach by looking at how queer individuals took part in the war mobilization effort, specifically in the United Kingdom. Bourne argues that being subject to homophobia and fear of exposure and court martial was part of a gay soldier's daily existence.[19] Similar to Bérubé, Bourne finds that the voices of gay men have been excluded by popular recounts of the war effort. Utilizing oral histories, memoirs, and general accounts of the war, Bourne recovers the history of gay servicemen and their experience in the war and at home.

Many factors were prevalent in how queer men and women were viewed in the mid-twentieth century. Research on this topic continues to evolve as new information comes to light. However, the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s has taken many stories before they could be collected. In this present history, I follow a small group of homosexual men who served their country in World War II with and without incident. Through their stories, though, the history of gay men during the war can be uncovered.

Prior to the United States entering the theater of World War II, the nation was stuck in the grasp of the Great Depression and outlook was bleak. For homosexual men, depression era fears followed one along like a dark shadow. The culture of the mid-twentieth century defined the notion that a "man's identity was his job."[20] Securing a job was not only the dream, but the expectation, as well. Therefore, homosexual men – notably those that were closeted – felt required to conform

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[18] Paul Jackson, *One of the Boys: Homosexuality in the Military During World War II* (London: McGill-Queens University Press (2004).

[19] Stephen Bourne, *Fighting Proud: The Untold Story of the Gay Men Who Served in Two World Wars* (London: I.B. Tauris & Company, Limited, 2017), pg. 45.

[20] George Buse Interview Transcript, 26 June 1996, Box 4, George Buse Collection, Gerber/Hart Library, Chicago, IL.

to this standard or be outed. As men aged, sexuality became secondary to having a job.[21] The expectation was that a man married, started a family, and had a profession. The reality, though, was not as lively or pleasant as the expectation. The reality was that the marriage ended in a traumatic divorce and the man also chose the wrong field of work and ended up unhappy with life. Homosexuals, too, internalized these expectations of being a man. Despite this, queer men faced difficultly meeting these expectations. While some married a woman and had children, other gay men spent their lives single and lonely.[22] Engaging in these false marriages were both acknowledged and secret. For many homosexual men, they spent their lives without a partner, dying alone.[23]

As the war approached, men faced a new obstacle – enlistment. Even prior to the United States' complete entry into the war effort in 1941, the question of voluntary conscription versus a new draft was already being asked. Without Pearl Harbor as a motivating factor, draft age men were not ready to give up their opportunity and careers to enlist. Some cited higher current pay, college attendance, or military isolationism as reasons to not enlist and instead remain in the civilian workforce.[24] However, once the draft was instituted in September 1940, men were faced with three options: enlist, get drafted, or go to jail for dodging the draft. For youth entering the service, there was no real choice. George Buse, a gay World War II veteran, said "I had to go in then we had no choice, either go to the service or go to jail, one or the other."[25] The draft was not well accepted, particularly when it came to family life. One soldier noted that "Senator Wheeler is having quite a song & dance about not drafting 'fathers' (when 50% are probably drafted already)."[26] Not only did homosexual men fear the threat of dishonorable discharge but that of getting drafted in the first place.

For some gay men, their experience with serving in the military during World War II ended without the threat of discharge. Prior to the war, Jack Hagenhofer was an artist that worked for 18 months at the Federal Art Office as part of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) receiving $86.40 per month.[27] As a civilian artist, Jack was not completely fond of participating in the war in Europe, as was true of many others in 1939. Holding an antiwar attitude, Jack produced art in the WPA that reflected his stance. Coming out of World War I, which was to be the last great war, Americans felt compelled to resist reentering a deadly war. Artists like Jack, for instance, used their art to embody this distaste. In one work, a shadow of a soldier on the battlefield runs across a field of barbed wire with a mysterious onlooker in the background.[28] The image is dark and dreary, standing in stark contrast to later patriotic art calling men to war and women to the defense factories. These such artistic representations of war do not show heroism or patriotism but show,

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[21] George Buse Interview Transcript.

[22] George Buse Interview Transcript.

[23] John D. Hagenhofer Death Record, n.d., "Illinois, Cook County Deaths, 1878-1994", *FamilySearch*, Jack Hagenhofer Collection, Gerber/Hart Library, Chicago, IL.

[24] Jimmy Jemail, "Why Don't You Enlist?," *Daily News* (New York, NY), August 4, 1940.

[25] George Buse Interview Transcript.

[26] Letter to Robert Hagenhofer, 1 October 1943, Box 1, U.S. Army Papers Folder (1942-1947), Jack Hagenhofer Collection, Gerber/Hart Library, Chicago, IL.

[27] WPA Assignment, 17 July 1939, Box 1, Miscellaneous Papers 1939-1974, Jack Hagenhofer Collection, Gerber/Hart Library, Chicago, IL.

[28] Anti-War Drawings, n.d., Box 1, U.S. Army Papers (1942-1947), Jack Hagenhofer Collection, Gerber/Hart Library, Chicago, IL.

instead, the realities of the battlefield where soldiers die, and leadership is safe behind the front lines or on the home front calling the orders.

However, with the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, attitudes of Americans had begun to change and calls to enter the war increased, causing those opposed to the war to now suddenly be willing to fight and enlist. Opposed to fascism from a young age and involved with the Young Communist League (YCL), Jack participated in Spanish Civil War relief efforts along with his brother. Despite this, Jack remained wary of enlisting until the United States was attacked. After 1941, his attitude completely changed, and he signed up to enlist in the army so he could "kick Nazi ass."[29]

In April 1942, Jack Hagenhofer enlisted in the United States army. Receiving his order for induction on April 9, Jack was excited to fight against fascism. Anxiously awaiting his induction, Jack entered active service on April 30. With his experience as an artist, his military occupational specialty was as a draftsman.[30] Serving for over three years in active service, Jack spent four months in the foreign service in the European Theater of Operations until arriving back in the United States in August 1945. Even with his eagerness to fight fascism, Jack's outlook on war remained eerie and cynical. He wrote to his brother, Robert, in 1943 that he looked "forward to it [his dream world] like I want a hole in the head."[31]

In addition to his antiwar drawings, Jack's other art had paid particular attention to the nude male form, a hint toward his sexuality.[32] His art was sensual and intimate and depicted men in environments and positions not typical for heterosexual men to view each other in during this period of time. After joining the military, Jack did not give up his art. Instead, his focus on the male form followed him into the service where he sketched military personnel.[33]

Despite the clear queer influence on his art, Jack served without incidence in relation to his sexuality. Jack received three medals for his service in World War II, including the European-African-Middle Eastern Good Conduct Medal, American Campaign Medal and World War II Victory Medal.[34] Moreover, Jack received an honorable discharge from the military despite his sexuality not fitting into the norm of heterosexuality. Discharged in January 1946, he was released from military service at Camp Grant Illinois with a "testimonial of honest and faithful service to this country."[35] In 1947, Jack received further recognition from the State of Illinois for serving "patriotically and faithfully in the armed forces of the United States during World War II."[36]

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[29] Eva Hagenhofer Email Interview, Box 1, Miscellaneous Papers 1939-1974, Jack Hagenhofer Collection, Gerber/Hart Library, Chicago, IL.

[30] Honorable Discharge Paper, 9 January 1946, Box 1, U.S. Army Papers (1942-1947), Jack Hagenhofer Collection, Gerber/Hart Library, Chicago, IL.

[31] Letter to Robert Hagenhofer, 1 October 1943, Box 1, U.S. Army Papers Folder (1942-1947), Jack Hagenhofer Collection, Gerber/Hart Library, Chicago, IL.

[32] Male Nudes, n.d., Box 1, U.S. Army Papers (1942-1947), Jack Hagenhofer Collection, Gerber/Hart Library, Chicago, IL.

[33] Military Personnel Drawings, n.d., Box 1, U.S. Army Papers (1942-1947), Jack Hagenhofer Collection, Gerber/Hart Library, Chicago, IL.

[34] Honorable Discharge Paper, 9 January 1946, Box 1, U.S. Army Papers (1942-1947), Jack Hagenhofer Collection, Gerber/Hart Library, Chicago, IL.

[35] Honorable Discharge Paper, 9 January 1946, Box 1, U.S. Army Papers (1942-1947), Jack Hagenhofer Collection, Gerber/Hart Library, Chicago, IL.

[36] State of Illinois Service Recognition Certificate, 1947, Box 1, U.S. Army Papers (1942-1947), Jack Hagenhofer Collection, Gerber/Hart Library, Chicago, IL.

This experience was not congruent for many homosexual men that served during World War II. Those men given 'blue' discharges from the military for homosexuality had an experience of the war that was entirely different than that of Jack Hagenhofer. In addition to marrying a woman to stifle any concerns about homosexuality, gay men experienced an intense amount of internalized homophobia. Many homosexual men hated being gay and resented themselves for it. People were confused about why they were different without the knowledge of what it was that was impacting them and making them stand out from their peers. Once it was clear that homosexuality was the root of their differences, many men developed a masculine image to protect themselves. George Buse, one such gay soldier during World War II, described his view on his own sexuality as developing a "very macho image, very homophobic and very macho to deflect suspicion."[37] By the time he was 18 years old, George knew that he was homosexual. He was afraid and angry that this was happening to him. He remained prudent and secretive to ensure not to raise suspicion.

While some gay men like Jack Hagenhofer served without incident and received an honorable discharge, this was not always the case.[38] Others, such as George Buse, faced negative consequences for being gay in the military during World War II. When George decided to cross the barrier between "to be" and "to do" he was 38 years old and in the Navy, where he had a love affair with a man named Jeff, his first real love.[39] Serving as a chaplain at the time, George claimed he received treatment that a soldier would not have for being gay. When he was found out for being gay, he was immediately reported to his endorsing agency and discharged from the military.[40]

These discharges were unusually traumatic for the individuals who received them. George, for example, had been working for years to repress his homosexuality and only recently had allowed himself to be his true self and have a lover. In a short period of time, no amount of internalized homophobia, repression or intimate connection could save a gay man from the trauma of being unwillingly outed to their peers and family. Receiving a dishonorable discharge for homosexuality was difficult to explain for gay men returning home from the war. Discharges for grand larceny, for instance, had an explainable reason behind the discharge. However, one of the 'blue' discharges for homosexuality was personal. Men risked losing relationships with family, well-paying jobs and, in some circumstances, even had to explain to a fiancé why they were discharged.[41] Larry R. was one of these men who was dismissed from the army for homosexuality. Upon returning home, he asked Dr. George Crane, "How can I ever explain my present discharge? I've vowed to break the habit and have prayed. My clergyman has helped me, but every so often, I succumb to temptation."[42] In another case of Dr. Crane, Morris P. was discharged from the Navy for being gay. His father stated, "We are so mortified about the matter. To think, here I am a prominent business executive and I find my son dismissed from the Navy for such degeneracy!"[43]

[37] George Buse Interview Transcript.

[38] Honorable Discharge Paper, 9 January 1946, Box 1, U.S. Army Papers (1942-1947), Jack Hagenhofer Collection, Gerber/Hart Library, Chicago, IL.

[39] George Buse Interview Transcript.

[40] George Buse Interview Transcript.

[41] George W. Crane, "Case Records, Case D-201," *Ogden Standard Examiner* (Ogden, UT), January 17, 1944.

[42] Crane, "Case Records, Case D-201."

[43] George W. Crane, "Case Records of a Psychologist, Case G-288," *Green Bay Press Gazette*, May 10, 1945.

Not only was Morris outed to his family and cast out, but his family also made his sexuality about them, questioning why it was happening to *them*. Another man was classified as a "homosexual Army deserter" by the local paper after confessing to a crime.[44] Additionally, men who were discharged were required to report the reason of his discharge to the selective service local board;[45] there was no way to hide anymore.

Some gay men, though, left the service before having the chance of being discharged for homosexuality. Sympathetic chaplains like George Buse, for instance, worked to provide young gay men called to the service more suitable discharges. In the armed forces during World War II, chaplains were the only officers with privileged communication with soldiers. There was no doctor-patient confidentiality and physicians were obliged to turn in people who confessed. At the San Diego boot camp, chaplains were trained to help young men transition into military service who were away from home for the first time. However, one issue that was new for chaplains to handle was that of being gay. For gay men that were lucky to have a chaplain like George and not somebody "who's ultra conservative or even mainline Protestant and certainly Catholic," they had someone to console in. Gay chaplains' advice was to get out early and not serve. Just being gay was enough evidence for the military to give someone a bad paper discharge. George fought for men to receive a general discharge for unsuitability while in boot camp. Leaving out of unsuitability was better and more acceptable to society than an undesirable discharge. For one, a soldier could more easily lie about why the unsuitability discharge was received. After the fight for honorable conditions, there was nothing on the discharge to indicate the reason the soldier got out. While this still carried some stigma for not serving in the war, it was much less traumatic than being discharged in the middle of the war for being outed and found to be gay.[46]

Whichever type of discharge a soldier received, there were some elements of life in the military that all gay soldiers shared. Self-denial was prevalent among men who were homosexual during World War II. While in the Marine Corps and in the midst of World War II, George could not escape his homosexuality, but he could repress it. By becoming homophobic, he could deny the way he felt yet there was no way to truly escape it. "Your sexuality keeps forcing itself on you. You can't deny your sexuality, it's like a distant air raid siren that keeps persisting and you're gonna eventually have to notice it," said Buse.[47] George enlisted in the military as soon as he turned 18. Under pressure to enlist in an officer training program, George began his military career in college. However, not satisfied with college and feeling restless, George flunked out and went to boot camp in San Diego. In these years, he was more aware of being gay and remained fearful someone would discover him. In order to suppress and deny his homosexuality, war became the outlet he used. Angry, restless and hostile, George wanted to fight in the war against the Japanese.

George's internalized homophobia was undoubtedly influenced by his devout faith. Raised in the Presbyterian church, George later became a chaplain in the Navy.[48] Perhaps the biggest influence was religious authorities citing the Bible as justification why homosexuals cannot marry one another. In a military booklet produced by a fellow Navy Chaplain, it is stated that "marriage

[44] "Lured Slain Woman to Flat, Says Deserter," *Daily News Sun* (New York, NY), June 18, 1944.

[45] Haskin Service, "Questions and Answers," *Green Bay Press Gazette*, May 10, 1945.

[46] George Buse Interview Transcript.

[47] George Buse Interview Transcript.

[48] Chaplain Indoctrination Certificate, 7 July 1955, Box 3, George Buse Collection, Gerber/Hart Library, Chicago, IL.

is designed to unite a man and woman as husband and wife."[49] Similarly, George tells the story of a friend named Don who would go to the chapel to kneel and "prayed the god would take this [homosexuality] away from him and then go out and chase these sailors."[50] Religion played a key role in defining what homosexuality meant for gay men during World War II and the repression that followed it.

Moreover, gay men during World War II were influenced by the psychiatric definition of homosexuality. Homosexuality was originally classified in terms of pathology instead of identity. In 1869, the terms homosexual and homosexuality were coined by Hungarian journalist Károli Mári Kertbeny. Kertbeny asserted that homosexuality was something a person was born with and was a normal variation in human sexuality.[51] In 1886, German psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing kept Kertbeny's terminology but distinguished homosexuality as a degenerative disease of unconventional sexual behavior. He believed that one might be born with a predisposition for homosexuality but giving into these behaviors was unnatural and a psychiatric disorder, influencing psychiatric diagnostic manuals of the early to mid-twentieth century and military policy during World War II.[52] It was not until 1973 that the American Psychiatric Association (APA) removed homosexuality as a diagnosis from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM).

Other leading psychiatrists in the 1940s also had means of describing homosexuality in adults. Dr. George W. Crane, a psychologist from Northwestern University, describes the case of Reginald D. As Crane claimed, in childhood, all males are homosexual, wanting nothing to do with the opposite sex. Homosexuality was a natural phase of emotional development. However, it is then succeeded by heterosexual interest by one's teenage years. Describing homosexual adults as abnormalities, Dr. Crane asserts that homosexuality can be cured if "the victim is willing to rule his life by his brain instead of by his emotions" and by forcing themselves into a more "mature pattern of life."[53]

Therefore, many gay men, including George Buse, did not prefer to use the term homosexual to describe themselves. While today the word has been destigmatized from its psychiatric roots, the World War II era was positioned in the hay day of homosexual pathology. As a result, men like George viewed the term homosexual as describing pathology not personality.[54] George battled with this as "to the churches I was a sinful abomination and to the so-called health professions I was a disease, so I came to the conclusion this [homosexuality] is a disability."[55] These conceptions of homosexuality as both a sinful transgression and a disease unequivocally degraded homosexual men's self-identity and image.

Another prominent idea in the development of homosexuality in adult men was that overbearing mothers emasculated their sons. A study by Leonard W. Ferguson asserted that boys tend to become feminine when parents teach a culture different from that of the rest of the

[49] Before You Marry in the Service Booklet by Frederick W. Brink, n.d., Box 3, George Buse Collection, Gerber/Hart Library, Chicago, IL.

[50] George Buse Interview Transcript.

[51] Jack Drescher, "Out of DSM: Depathologizing Homosexuality," *Behavioral sciences* (Basel, Switzerland) 5, no. 4 (December 2015). https://doi.org/10.3390/bs5040565

[52] Drescher, "Out of DSM: Depathologizing Homosexuality."

[53] George W. Crane, "Case Records of a Psychologist, Case V-160," *Post-Crescent* (Appleton, WI), November 22, 1941.

[54] George Buse Interview Transcript.

[55] George Buse Interview Transcript.

community. Further, the absence of religious education was a secondary factor to induce femininity. Though, as demonstrated by the case of George Buse who was actively religious, this claim holds no weight. What religious education did was cause doubt and self-denial, not induce heterosexuality. Ferguson concluded that pleasant, "normal" home environments produced men that were masculine and women that were feminine.[56]

The question which then arises is who decides whether homosexual men are fit for service in the United States' military during World War II. Prior to the McCarthy era, homosexual men that were discovered were at the mercy of the local command. The commanding officer would decide whether or not to keep a soldier accused of homosexuality during the war and had complete authority to keep or discharge a soldier. However, as time passed and the McCarthy era approached, "control of queers in the military went from the local command gradually to higher levels of command."[57] This resulted in greater difficulty to not only hide one's sexuality but to remain in the military once a soldier was accused or found out.

In the military, homosexual men faced three levels of stigma and discrimination. These three levels are the profane, the practical and the philosophical. The profane level involved language, the "dirty locker room jokes" and names like queer, faggot, and cock sucker. The practical level was focused on employment. If someone was discovered to be gay in the workplace, the person would be fired or demoted, at best. George provides an anecdote of a gay man working as a personnel director of a nursing home in Milwaukee. He joined a gay organization and was reported and fired. Although, had he been a low-level attendant, then it would have been more acceptable and likely would not have been fired but demoted. The final level, the philosophical, subdivides homosexuals into definitions created by the church and the psychiatric community. In the military, these problems were rampant and gay soldiers like George Buse and Jack Hagenhofer suffered from all three levels every day during their service in World War II.[58]

Until 1942-43, though, no specific provision barred homosexuals from serving in the military. As demonstrated by the narratives of gay soldiers who served during the war, this provision was not effective. Nevertheless, military psychiatrists cautioned leadership of psychopathic personality disorders and created "foolproof" guides to find and target homosexuals before they were inducted into the military. The key was the ability to hide and conceal one's homosexuality while serving. In this way, the military constructed a façade of heterosexual purity fueled by the profane, practical, and philosophical levels.[59]

Safety in concealment was also more prevalent when the soldier could differentiate between "to be" and "to do." George, for example, differentiated between these two aspects of being gay. Being gay in spirit was one thing but acting upon it was another. George felt that if he remained celibate and did not act on his homosexuality, he was not sinful nor was he doing anything wrong. This stance, though, brought about loneliness and further exasperated internalized homophobia.[60]

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[56] Associated Press, "Why Boys Become Sissies and Girls Grow Masculine," *Hattiesburg American* (Hattiesburg, MS), September 5, 1941.

[57] George Buse Interview Transcript.

[58] George Buse Interview Transcript.

[59] Catherine S. Manegold, "The Odd Place of Homosexuality in the Military," *New York Times*, April 18, 1993. https://www.nytimes.com/1993/04/18/weekinreview/the-odd-place-of-homosexuality-in-the-military.html

[60] George Buse Interview Transcript.

While several books, including Berube's *Coming Out Under Fire,* argue that World War II veterans settling in port cities establish identifiable subcultures, it was not always a peaceable relationship. Location became a defining aspect of the gay experience during World War II. In Chicago, 50,000-100,000 people were consistently in the city for weekend leave. Districts around train stations flourished as penny arcades, tattoo parlors and Burlesque joints crowded the streets. The military issued lists of clubs that were off-limits, but servicemen used the lists to find what they were looking for. Overcrowded conditions "allowed soldiers and sailors to double up in hotel beds" and a subtle system of signals and secret communication developed to see if your bedmate was straight or receptive.[61] As soldiers mustered out of the service and defense plants shut down, small town men and women stayed in the city after discovering their sexual orientation. Therefore, cities became the nucleus of activism.[62]

That being said, not all cities were places of safety for gay men and women on leave. Many straight soldiers were under the opinion that queer individuals were inferior to them. This ideology led to the callus belief that they could defile homosexual men without any repercussions from police. When money was tight toward the end of the month, threats to gay soldiers and civilians increased further. "Somebody would say 'Hey let's go out and roll a few queers tonight.'"[63] As a result, queer individuals living in the cities were not always safe despite finding others that were like them.

Location also played a role in how gay soldiers lived out their lives. A rural/ urban divide existed between gay men depending on where they grew up. While cities became a space for queer individuals to forge their own subcultures, the period before enlisting and discovering themselves is often not given much attention in scholarship. In rural areas, queer individuals did not live in an area where they could communicate with more gay people and become educated; the community did not exist as it did in the cities. If cities were the location of a thriving subculture, rural areas were the location of isolation, unhealthy self-expectations and the dominating presence of religion.

Another contradiction that was prevalent during World War II was the presence of intimate relationships that blurred the distinction between friendship and sexuality. Friendships between officers and soldiers were unusual due to the social distinctions drawn in the military's inflexible caste system.[64] Friendships existed nonetheless, particularly among soldiers who were of similar rank and on the battlefield together. "Friendships made on the battlefield and in the service endure."[65] These friendships had been built on mutual trust and loyalty tested by combat.

George mentions these friendships in depth in his interview. At one instance, he asserts that human connection between men was acceptable at war but not at home, noting a reuniting embrace with a man that would have gotten them "thrown in jail" at home or even back at the base in San Diego. As friendships were forged on the battlefield, the separation between soldiers disintegrated. "Seeing people die right and left including your buddies and in the military, especially in infantry combat, men get very close to each other. Hard to tell where the sexuality issue leads off, it's always an intense relationship because you're depending on these guys for your

[61] George Buse Interview Transcript and "Chicago's Gay & Lesbian History: From Prairie Settlement to World War II," June 1994, Box 2, George Buse Collection, Gerber/Hart Library, Chicago, IL.

[62] "Chicago's Gay & Lesbian History."

[63] George Buse Interview Transcript.

[64] Hal Boyle, "Battle Friendship Ends in Deaths," *Chippewa Herald-Telegram* (Chippewa Falls, WI), October 13, 1945.

[65] "Why I am a Member of the American Legion," *Genoa Leader Times* (Genoa, NE), April 25, 1940.

life."[66] To soldiers, comrades meant everything; they were parents, girlfriends, friends, and losing them was a difficult experience. This was especially arduous for men in the Navy and Marine Corps. In the Pacific theater, men would spend months at sea in close quarters with one another and then make landings on islands. The battles on these islands may have been of short duration but they were intensely bloody. The Battle of Iwo Jima, for example, a battle that George Buse fought in, saw over 26,000 causalities from February to March 1945.[67] Not only would these men have lost a single close companion, but countless of them, taking a mental toll with each death. For homosexual and heterosexual men alike, the Pacific theater was deadly but also blurred the lines between friendship and sexuality.

No matter the circumstance, receiving a discharge for homosexuality was difficult for gay soldiers and made the experience of the war more challenging than for their straight comrades. At the center of this dilemma was the transition from a policy considering homosexual acts as a crime to a psychiatrist-controlled policy that homosexuality was an illness that made gay men unfit to fight. The new profession of military psychiatrists played an integral role in the planning of policy and the draft at the beginning of World War II to rid the armed forces of homosexual men and women. For those that remained in the military, queer individuals faced the constant threat of being dishonorably discharged. These blue discharges caused many issues for gay soldiers returning home from the war. The discharges disqualified veterans from receiving any GI rights or benefits and prevented many from getting civilian jobs or even being respected in their hometowns. Coming out also often meant being separated from one's family, disowned for being discovered as their true selves. For those that chose to not return home after the war if fear of not being accepted, cities became the safe space where gay individuals discovered others and built a community. But it was also a space where increased visibility brought more discriminatory attacks from outsiders. The story of homosexual men that served the country during World War II, therefore, is one of living under the constant threat of exposure and discharge. Moreover, future research on this subject should take a deeper dive into the experiences of women and lesbians, in particular. Lesbians, though sharing commonalities with gay men in coming out and exploring their sexuality during the war, had experiences entirely unique as women. While World War II served as a cultural shift for queer individuals' prospects for future advancement of their civil and human rights, the threat of discharge undoubtedly conditioned response and environment that fueled homophobic ideology as evident by the development of psychiatry and sociology on homosexuality during the war, the downplay of intimate homosocial experiences during the war, and the trauma associated with hiding from one's sexuality and being outed at the same time. Uncovering the stories of gay men in World War II is important to understand the complete psychological impact of war. With the AIDS epidemic taking many of these stories away in the 1980s, we must continue to remember the ones that have been collected.

[66] George Buse Interview Transcript.

[67] "Victory in the Pacific: The Cost of War," *PBS,* n.d. https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/pacific-costs-war/

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