



**PBS**

***THE GHOST ARMY* PREMIERES  
ON TUESDAY, MAY 21, 2013 AT 8:00 PM ET ON PBS**

**New Documentary Reveals the Amazing Story of the Secret WWII Unit  
That Duped Hitler's Army — With Rubber Tanks,  
Sound Effects and Multimedia Illusions**



*An inflatable tank designed to fool German soldiers.  
Credit: National Archives*

War, deception and art come together in Rick Beyer's new documentary *The Ghost Army*, the astonishing true story of American G.I.s — many of whom would go on to have illustrious careers in art, design and fashion — who tricked the enemy with rubber tanks, sound effects, and carefully crafted illusions during the Second World War. A remarkable story of a top-secret mission that was at once absurd, deadly and amazingly effective, *The Ghost Army* premieres on Tuesday, May 21, 2013, 8:00-9:00 p.m. ET on PBS ([check local listings](#)).

In the summer of 1944, a handpicked group of G.I.s landed in France to conduct a special mission. Armed with truckloads of inflatable tanks, a massive collection of sound effects records, and more than a few tricks up their sleeves, their job was to create a traveling road show of deception on the battlefields of Europe, with the German Army as their audience. From Normandy to the Rhine, the 1100 men of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Headquarters Special Troops, known as the Ghost Army, conjured up phony convoys, phantom divisions, and make-believe headquarters to fool the enemy about the strength and location of American units. Every move they made was top secret and their story was hushed up for decades after the war's end.

Each deception required that they impersonate a different (and vastly larger) U.S. unit. Like actors in a repertory theater, they would mount an ever-changing multimedia show tailored to each deception. The men immersed themselves in their roles, even hanging out at local cafes and spinning their counterfeit stories for spies who might lurk in the shadows. Painstakingly recorded sounds of armored and infantry units were blasted from sound trucks; radio operators created phony traffic nets; and inflatable tanks, trucks, artillery and even airplanes were imperfectly camouflaged so they would be visible to enemy reconnaissance. The Ghost Army staged more than 20 deception operations in

France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany, often operating dangerously close to the front lines. In the final days of the war they faced their ultimate test: a deception along the Rhine in which thousands of lives depended on their delivering a convincing performance. What they accomplished was kept secret for nearly fifty years.

*“It’s the highest kind of creativity in the art of war.”* – General Wesley Clark (Ret)

Many of the men chosen to carry out these deceptions were young artists recruited from art schools across the country. In their spare time, they painted and sketched their way across Europe, creating a unique and moving visual record of their war. Some would go on to become famous, including fashion designer Bill Blass, painter Ellsworth Kelly and photographer Art Kane.

Interviews with nineteen Ghost Army veterans are the heart of the film. *The Ghost Army* may be one of the last World War II documentaries told in the words of the men who served. Filmmaker Rick Beyer devoted a major portion of the last eight years to the project, after being introduced to the story in a Lexington, Massachusetts coffee shop. “The niece of a Ghost Army veteran brought me an armload of her uncle’s wartime watercolors and sketches and told me the story. I was hooked,” he says, “and since then I’ve been determined to bring the amazing story of these creative soldiers to the world.”

More than 65 years after the end of the war, the surviving members of the Ghost Army are proud that they used artistry and creativity to save lives. Theirs is not just another war story but a multi-layered tale of showmanship, creativity and humanity.

For more information, visit [www.ghostarmy.org](http://www.ghostarmy.org). To purchase the DVD, visit [shoppbs.org](http://shoppbs.org).

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### **About the Participants**

**Cpl. Al Albrecht** served in the sonic unit. After a long career in sales, he died in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 2010.

**Sgt. Al “Spike” Berry** served in the radio unit. He lives in Las Vegas, Nevada.

**PFC Ed Biow** served in the camouflage unit. He worked in advertising after the war, and now lives in Portland, Oregon.

**Gen. Wesley Clark** (ret) was the Commander of NATO from 1997 to 2000. He is also the author of *Waging Modern War*.

**Lt. Robert Conrad** served in the radio unit. He died in Ann Arbor, Michigan in 2010.

**Sgt. Victor Dowd** served in the camouflage unit. An illustrator, he died in 2010.

**Roy Eichhorn** was the Director of Research and Development at the U.S. Army Combined Arms Center. His father served in the Ghost Army.

**Pvt. Harold Flinn** served in the sonic unit. He lives in Maquon, Illinois.

**Jonathan Gawne** is the author of *Ghosts of the ETO*.

**Pvt. Ned Harris** served in the camouflage unit. A designer and photographer, he lives in New City, New York.

**Cpl. John Jarvie** served in the camouflage unit. After the war he became an art director at Fairchild Publications. He lives in Kearny, New Jersey.

**Cpl. Jack Masey** served in the camouflage unit. After the war he designed US government exhibits all over the world. He lives in New York City.

**Lt. Bernie Mason** served in the camouflage unit. He was a creative director for a multimedia company and graduated from college at age 75. He lives near Philadelphia.

**Sgt. Jack McGlynn** served in the sonic unit. He served five terms as mayor of Medford, Massachusetts, where he lives today.

**Sgt. Stanley Nance** served in the radio unit. He lives today in Salt Lake City, Utah.

**Lt. Gil Seltzer** served in the camouflage unit. At age 98 he is still actively working as an architect in West Orange, New Jersey.

**Cpl Arthur Shilstone** served in the camouflage unit. After the war his illustrations appeared in more than 30 national magazines. He lives in Redding, Connecticut.

**Pvt. Joe Spence** served in the camouflage unit; a professor of art, he died in 2011.

**Cpl. Irving Stempel** served in the camouflage unit. He died in 2010.

**Lt. Dick Syracuse** served in the sonic unit. A “kid from the Bronx,” he became a developer and builder in New Rochelle, New York, where he lives today.

**Cpl. Bob Tompkins** served in the camouflage unit, where he was close friends with fellow artist Bill Blass. After the war he worked as an art director. He died in 2011.

**Lt. John Walker** served in the sonic unit. A career military officer, he died in 2010.

# THE GHOST ARMY

Written, Produced, and Directed by Rick Beyer  
Edited by Jon Neuburger  
Director of Photography: Dillard Morrison  
Original Music by Matt Mariano  
Narrated by Peter Coyote

**Rick Beyer (Writer/Producer/Director)** is an award-winning documentary filmmaker, a bestselling author, and a long-time history enthusiast. His credits include *Expedition Apocalypse*, filmed in Siberia for National Geographic Channel; *The Wright Challenge* (winner of a Parents' Choice Award), *Secrets of Jamestown*, *Revolution in Boston* and *The Patent Files* for The History Channel; and *The Emancipation Proclamation* (featuring President Bill Clinton) for the Smithsonian Institution's exhibit "Abraham Lincoln: An Extraordinary Life." He is also the author of the popular *Greatest Stories Never Told* series of history books published by Harper Collins, which have been described by the *Chicago Tribune* as "an old fashioned sweetshop full of tasty morsels." He began his career as a radio and TV journalist in Chicago and Boston, and is a graduate of Dartmouth College.

## About PBS

[PBS](#), with its over 350 member stations, offers all Americans the opportunity to explore new ideas and new worlds through television and online content. Each month, PBS reaches nearly 120 million people through television and nearly 28 million people online, inviting them to experience the worlds of science, history, nature and public affairs; to hear diverse viewpoints; and to take front row seats to world-class drama and performances. PBS' broad array of programs has been consistently honored by the industry's most coveted award competitions. Teachers of children from pre-K through 12th grade turn to PBS for digital content and services that help bring classroom lessons to life. PBS' premier children's TV programming and its website, [pbskids.org](#), are parents' and teachers' most trusted partners in inspiring and nurturing curiosity and love of learning in children. More information about PBS is available at [www.pbs.org](#), one of the leading dot-org websites on the Internet, or by following [PBS on Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) or through our [apps for mobile devices](#). Specific program information and updates for press are available at [pbs.org/pressroom](#) or by following [PBS Pressroom on Twitter](#).

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## Publicity Contacts:

CaraMar Publicity

Mary Lugo	770-623-8190	<a href="mailto:lugo@negia.net">lugo@negia.net</a>
Cara White	843-881-1480	<a href="mailto:cara.white@mac.com">cara.white@mac.com</a>
Abbe Harris	908-233-7990	<a href="mailto:abbe@caramar.net">abbe@caramar.net</a>

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