

Four Eyes: Eyeglasses and the WWII GI

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Section 1:

Total War, A Numbers Game

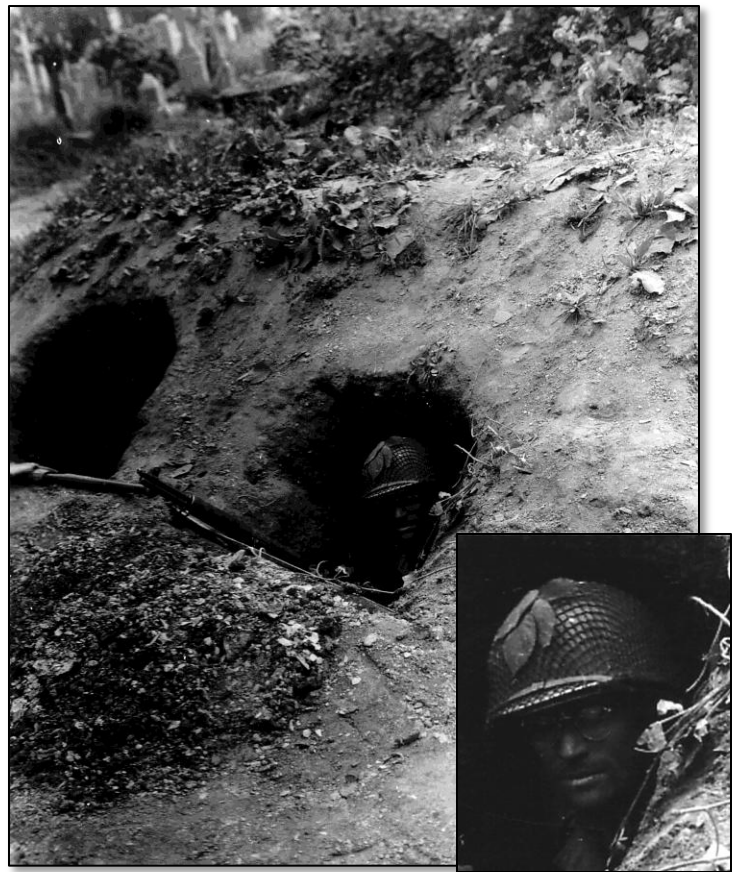




TOTAL WAR, A NUMBERS GAME

Some of you are already thinking it - they didn't wear glasses back then! The "greatest generation" didn't spend childhood watching television, or screwing around reading websites! And books weren't nearly as common either. In fact, many people believe that watching television or reading excessively is a major cause of poor vision, and that somehow this is why eyeglasses appear rare in original photographs. Yet while reenactors and the baby boom generation blame the cathode ray tube, Postwar optometrists have generally concluded that the actual cause is heredity, with environmental factors mostly unrelated. What's important for the purposes of our study is that genetic makeup does not change over a period of a few scant generations: Americans today likely see in a manner similar to those in the 1940s. Take note though, that this does not yet mean the same number of people wearing glasses today as back then. Besides, who says they were never worn in combat?

Below: Troops of the 4th Armored Division guarding German prisoners of war, July 1944. Both Soldiers have had their shoulder patch insignia blotted out by the censor's knife. The GI on the left is wearing standard issue P3 frames.



Above: "Never worn in combat". With millions of Americans under fire in Europe and the Pacific, large numbers of men with corrected vision saw combat. GI in Normandy. 1944. Normandie Collection.





TOTAL WAR, A NUMBERS GAME

the United States. Independent parent, the parent gets

Physical Disabilities—
Many Previously Rejected
Now Acceptable, Army Says

Men With Defective Eyesight May Be Assigned To Non-Combatant Duty Or Limited Service

Men with defective eyesight may be assigned to non-combatant duty as well as to limited service under current Army regulations. The difference is principally in the type of unit to which the man may be assigned. Those qualified only for limited service are attached to non-fighting branches of the Army. Those acceptable as non-combatants may be assigned to a fighting unit although they themselves will not be given combat duty.

Men with at least 20 per cent of normal vision (20-100), correctable with glasses to 50 per cent of normal (20-40) are taken for unlimited general service.

Those with eyesight ratings 20-100 to 20-200 (10 to 20 per cent of normal) in each eye, correctable to 20-40 (50 per cent normal) in each eye, are qualified for non-combatant duty.

Blind Accepted

Those with ratings of at 20-400 (5 per cent of normal) in each eye, correctable to 20-40 (50 per cent of normal) in each eye, may be taken for limited service. If the man is blind in one eye he is still acceptable for limited service if his other eye rates better than 20-200 and correctable to 20-40.

me a card but my address was wrong. (1) Where could I write to correct it? (2) Does receipt of the card mean he has named me an insurance beneficiary? (3) Can he

Nine Million More Enrolled For Army Duty

About 7,350,000 of These Now Range In Age From 35 to 44 Years

ARMY'S STANDARD REDUCED ON TEETH, EYE CONDITIONS

1,200,000 ARE ONLY 20

Organization Works Rapidly Over Entire Nation In Roundup of Manpower

There remains a stubborn misconception that eyeglasses were rare items during the war. Many claim they are not at all present in original images, and while this is to an extent true, we have to remember that there was a war on, and a draft to go with it. With each passing month after December 7th there was an increasing demand for fighting men. By spring of 1942 multiple news papers reported a curious problem: hundreds of thousands of men were deemed ineligible for military service for apparently curable ailments. During the first year of the draft, Army doctors rejected nearly one third of all selectees. Only a year and a half after starting the draft, the government was having major issues meeting the quota. On February 16th, 1942, the Army publically admitted the two main reasons for men being rejected – bad teeth, and bad eyes. That same day the standard was lowered, so that vision no worse than 20/200 was accepted as 1-B, provided it was correctible to 20/40 with glasses. And there you have it – the US Army's policy on eyeglasses for the remainder of the war.



Above: Newspaper clippings from early February, 1942. "Deferred once because of bad teeth or poor eyesight, 71 out of the first 1034 in the initial list [of local] registrants have been reclassified and placed in a tentative 1-A division, pending further physical examination" – the emphasis, to be sure, was to get bodies into the war effort wherever possible. Pittsburgh Press, 4 Feb 1942, Spartanburg Herald, 17 Feb 1942.

Left: Draft numbers being called. Men wait in line for draft registration. 1940 saw the first peacetime draft in the nation's history, and the number of inductees required was staggering; by 1945, over ten million Americans would be in uniform. September, 1942. Life Magazine Archive.



TOTAL WAR, A NUMBERS GAME



Bottom: Being drafted was not a simple matter of putting on a uniform. Selectees were often subjected to a verbal interview to check for both mental stability and loyalty, as well as a basic doctor's exam by a local general practitioner. September, 1942. Life Magazine Archive.

Left: Five members of local draft board made up of ex-servicemen who are active members of the town, intently listening during hearing on whether a 29-year-old farmer (not seen) with a 2-B classification should be drafted for service. California, Missouri, 1942. Life Magazine Archive

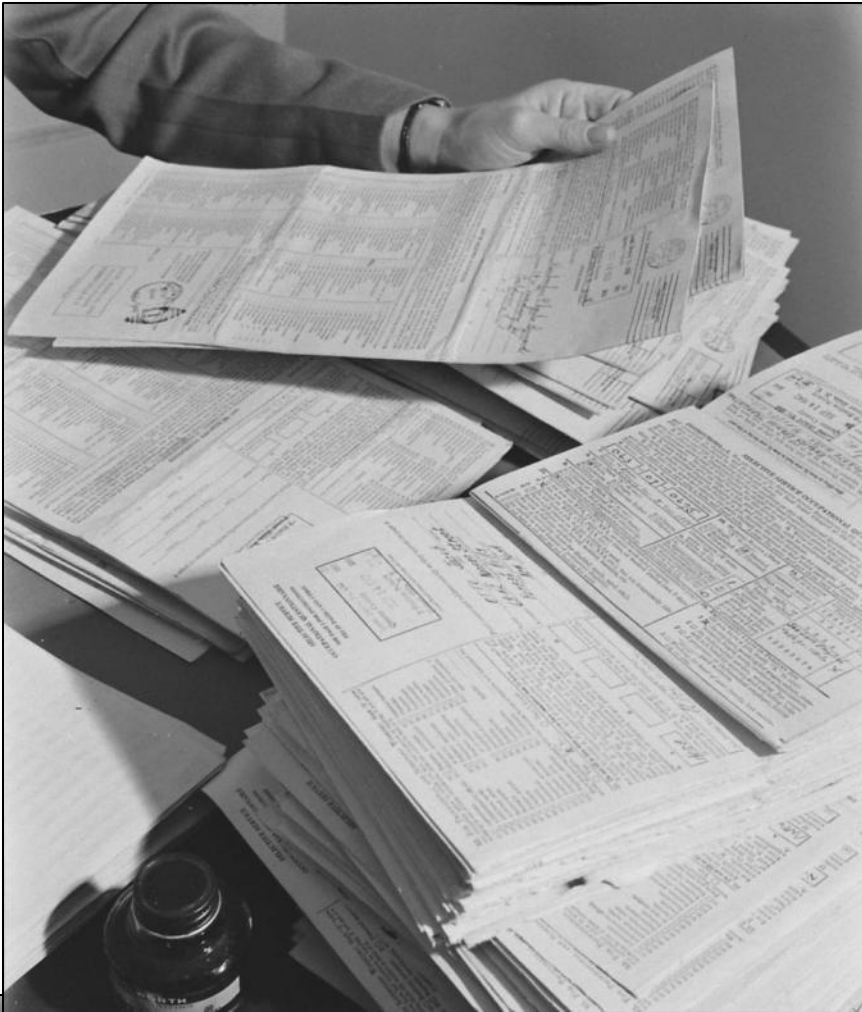


Those of you who know the vision chart know that 20/200 is a pretty loose requirement. To this day, vision of 20/200 or worse can define a person as legally blind. This score represents being unable to read text smaller than 3.5 inches (88.7mm) tall at a distance of 20 feet (6.1 meters). Anyone able to read even this top line was eligible for service, given that their eyesight was correctible to 20/40, or reading text 11/16 inch (17.6mm) tall at 20 feet. If you can read at 20/40 or better on the included chart you probably would not have been issued glasses had you been drafted by the US Army.



In comparison, modern optometrists typically recommend corrective lenses for anything worse than 20/20, or even 20/15 at patient's request. Because modern doctors (and patients) view 20/15 or even 20/10 as "normal" vision quality, today we find ourselves prescribing glasses to a much higher percentage of individuals than doctors in the 1940s.

TOTAL WAR, A NUMBERS GAME



What do these numbers even mean? This measurement is derived from the "Snellen Chart", invented in the 19th century. This is the typical eye chart at your local optometrist, doctor, or school nurse, even today. The patient reads progressively smaller text from a distance of 20 feet until they are unable to read any further – this is the first number in the measurement. The second number represents the distance that the "average" eye can see said letters on a given line of the eye chart. For example, a score of 20/15 means that the individual can read text at 20 feet that most people could only make out from 15 feet away. 20/20 would put said individual on par with most others. 20/40 means that they must be twice as close to make it out as most people. At this point remember the Army standard, and consider the effect having 20/40 vision would have on someone serving in the Infantry.

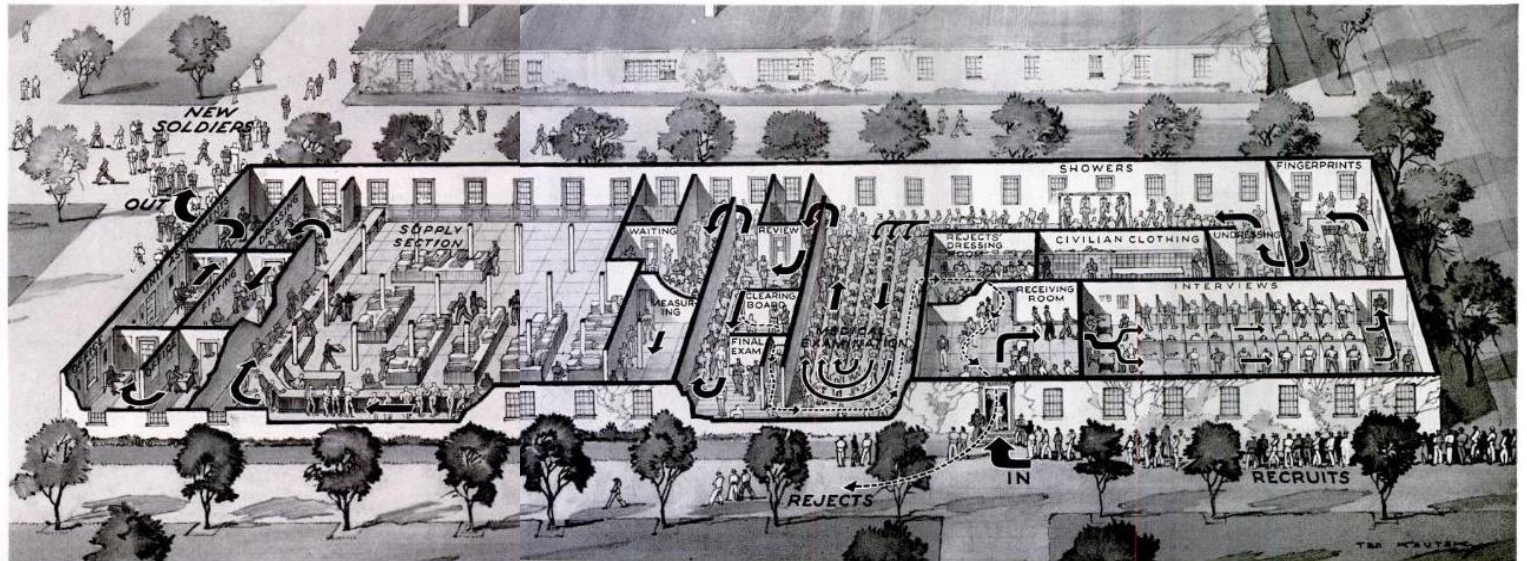


Top: Exacting records of the results were kept on file and turned over to the Armed Forces upon selection. Images of actual draft boards and records kept, September 1942. Life Magazine Archive.

Bottom: Members of the Detroit draft board make a final decision on whether a certain candidate is suitable for military service. Detroit, 1944. Life Magazine Archive

TOTAL WAR, A NUMBERS GAME

ARMY TURNS CIVILIAN DRAFTEES INTO SOLDIERS ON "PRODUCTION LINE" OF INTERVIEWS, FINGER-PRINTING, PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS, CLOTHING SUPPLY



"Processing" of draftees is organized like an industrial production line. In this typical building, drawn from Army plan, recruits enter at right, are interviewed to determine fitness for va-

rious branches of the service, are fingerprinted, then strip and shower. Naked, they proceed to a physical examination and inoculations. The men rejected by the review board and the fi-

nal examiner drop out of line to dress and go back to civilian life. The rest go on to receive their issue of Army clothing, get temporary unit assignments and emerge as uniformed U. S. soldiers.

THIS IS HOW U. S. ARMY DIVIDES UP 100 RECRUITS AMONG SERVICE BRANCHES

Top: Diagram showing the process initial draftees went through. *Life Magazine*, December 9th, 1940.

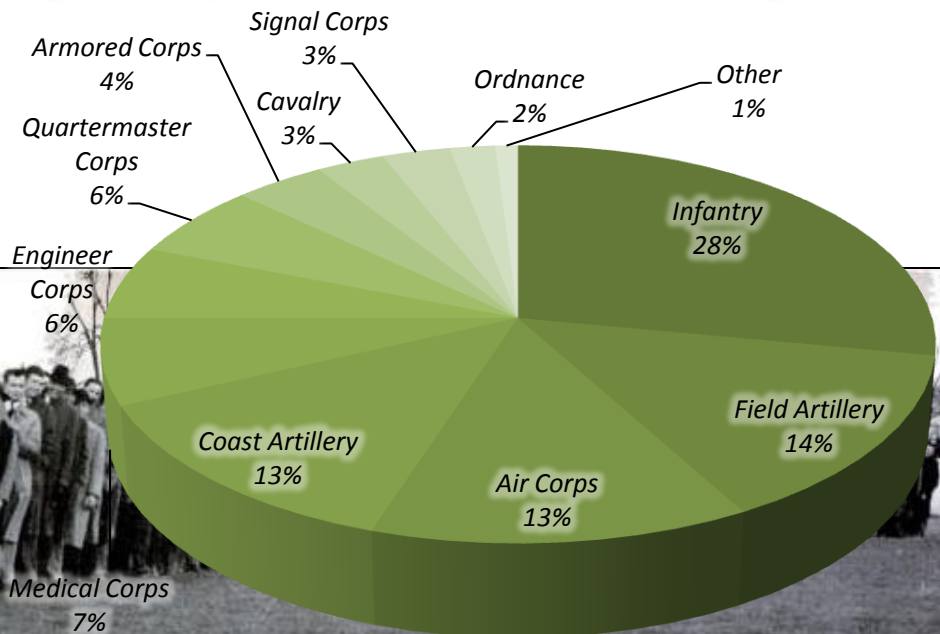
Right: The 1940 draft breakdown by service branch. According to the article, more than 50% of these men are in "non-combat" jobs. *Life Magazine*, 1940.

Lined up at the right are 100 men, representing 100 recruits in the Army. Below are pictures of what these men will do when they get into the Army. The pictures show the largest of the 17 branches of service into which the men go, and some of the jobs they do when they get there. The figures reveal the average number of them who will go into each branch. The largest number (28) will go into the infantry.

Most recruits think they will be given a rifle, sent out to the front-line trenches to shoot it. Actually, although all will be taught to defend themselves,

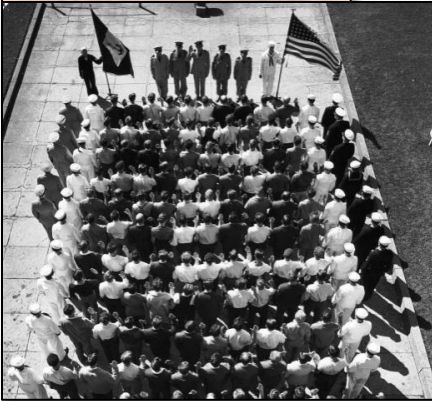
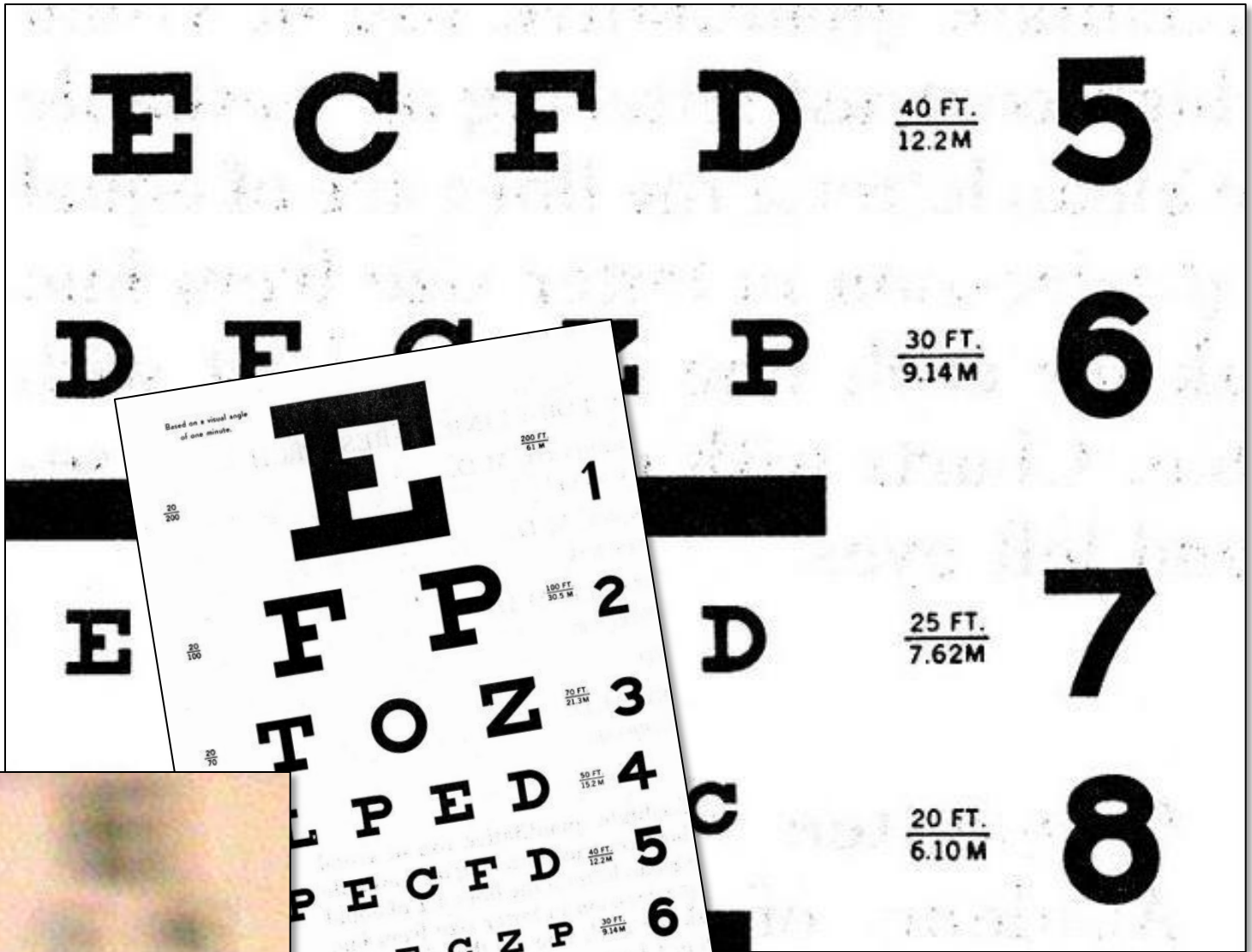
more than 50% of them will be given non-combat jobs. What each one's job will be depends on his civilian training and talents. There will be places for tailors, mechanics, barbers, writers, policemen, lawyers, truck drivers, stenographers, doctors, cooks, blacksmiths, librarians and many more.

A recruit is first given an I. Q. and aptitude test. Then he is assigned to one branch of the service and given a 13 to 16-weeks general soldiering course. After that, as soon as vacancies occur, he is given a special job for which his talents and experience suit him.





TOTAL WAR, A NUMBERS GAME



Left: Full Snellen chart. Line 5 is 20/40 vision. Line 1 was acceptable for service, provided glasses could correct vision to line 5 at 20 feet.

Far left: The same chart, as seen from 20 feet by someone with 20/200 vision. Below that: Recruits take the oath of service, 1943.

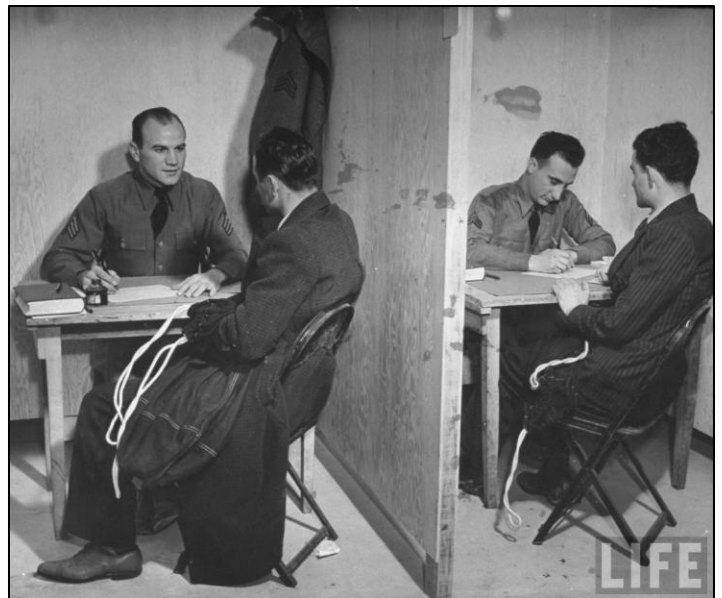
Background: A full-size excerpt of the Snellen chart. In this instance, the top line is 20/40. If you can read this, you would not have been issued glasses during the war, and likely would not have been prescribed them by an optometrist. Small wonder glasses are relatively uncommon in period photos.



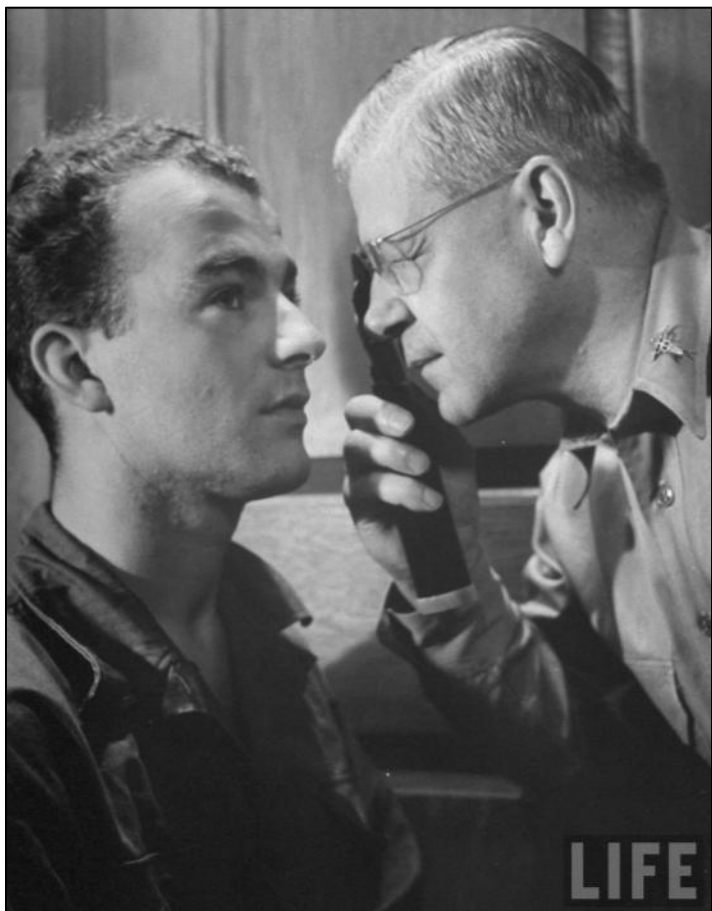
TOTAL WAR, A NUMBERS GAME

The perception of five out of six letters (or similar ratio) is judged to be the "Snellen fraction", IE 20/20, 20/100, etc. In other words, there was quite a bit of "wiggle room" for incoming draftees – particularly those who didn't want to be issued glasses. Stories of men memorizing all or part of the Snellen chart to enter the service were all-too-common, though conversely many young draftees from poor families had never seen an optometrist before. And with this, we get to the second common myth about eyeglasses during the war. On an internet forum, one individual recently commented:

"Maybe a simple reason for the lack of glasses-wearing soldiers is the lack of opticians in the 1940s. Many soldiers went into battle not knowing they needed glasses."



Above: All incoming military personnel were given a battery of basic physical and mental tests to determine whether the draft board had selected an adequate individual. New conscripts being interviewed as part of induction into US Army. Fort Dix, 1940.

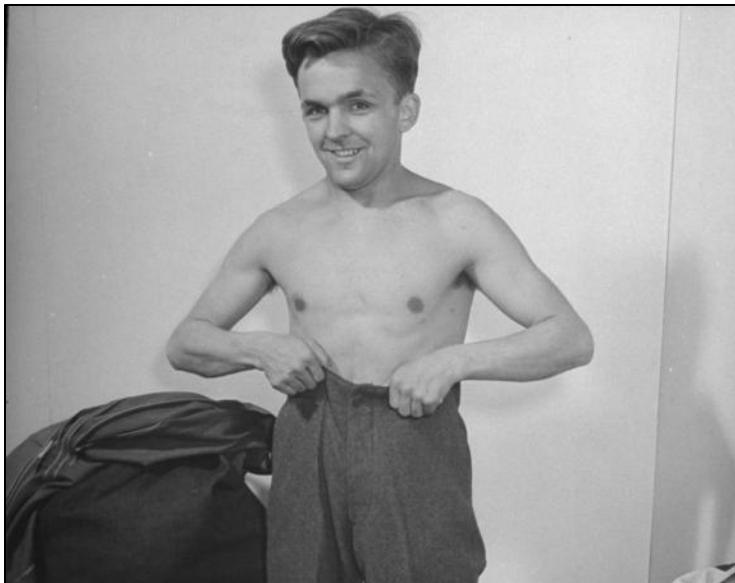


Left: Army doctor checks a Soldier's eyes. Location unknown, 1943. Life Magazine Archive.

The statement sounds logical, though only for a moment. It's quaint to think of the 1940s as a simpler time, and in some ways it was. On the other hand, this is the generation that gave us the M1 Rifle, practical radar, and the Atom Bomb. Within the decade they broke the sound barrier. The battery of tests each recruit went through during selective service is surprising, and as a minimum requirement each inductee saw a doctor, an optometrist, and a dentist. Even before leaving home, the local town doctor was required to report the individual's vision capability, which was easily measured using the above chart. In other words, the Army was well aware of who needed glasses, and made an effort to sort incoming personnel with this in mind. The number of opticians needed was actually quite small in relation to the number of men who could be screened prior to selection.

TOTAL WAR, A NUMBERS GAME

Below: The final result of this, of course, was another civilian found fit for military service. There were many who did not fit the mold, and even a few far from average. The minimum height for a draftee was initially 60 inches – vision was also a category given considerable leeway during the course of the draft. Life Magazine Archive.

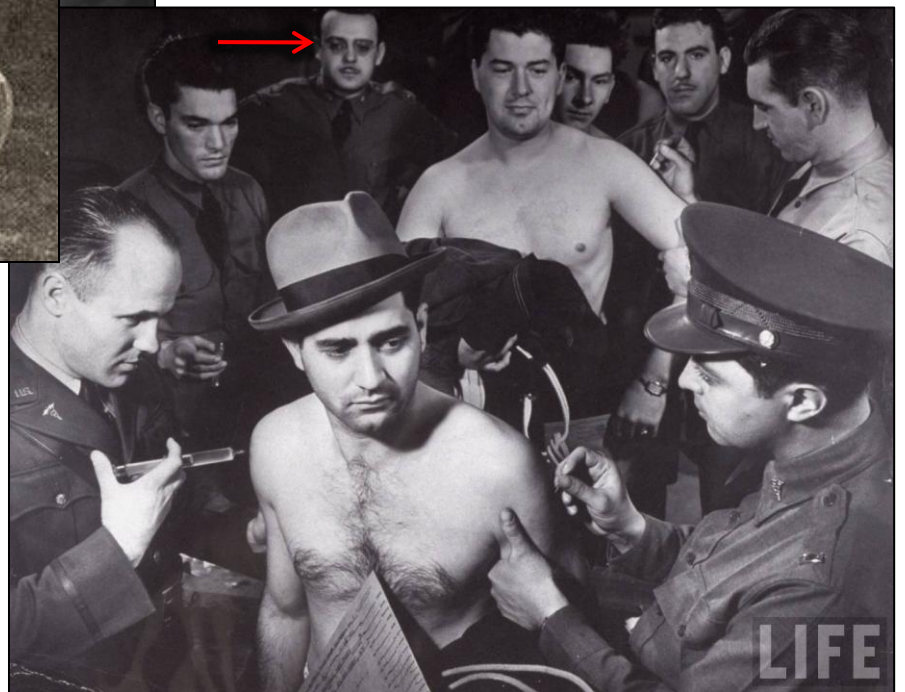


There was an additional limitation imposed on men with glasses. According to some period newspapers, men headed for “combat duty” must have vision of 20/100 or better, again correctible to 20/40. This is very interesting, because it directly states that corrected vision is permissible in “combat” units. It’s plausible that most infantrymen had natural 20/40 or better vision, but likely that those with minor corrected vision were accepted into infantry units to meet local-level draft quotas, on an as-needed basis – they were not excluded based on vision if there was a need. The other problem is that at no point is the definition of “combat unit” stated – one assumed infantry and armor would be on the list. What about the air corps? The artillery? And what of the numerous Soldiers in “support units” who found themselves at the front for various reasons? It becomes obvious that, while uncommon in the infantry, eyeglasses must have been widespread among the other services – we’ll expand on this shortly under the lineup. Optical care didn’t end with induction either; see the next page for a bit on service in the field.



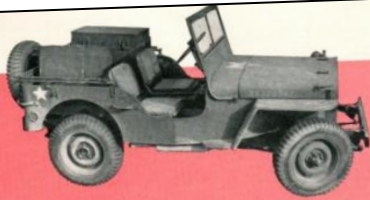
Above: Army Captain fitting Sergeant with a pair of American Optical frames. June, 1944. AO alone provided over 18 million pairs of lenses. American Optical News, 2 June 1944.

Right: Non-combat roles could be broadly or narrowly defined, but men with glasses were always around in small numbers. Note the medical corps officer in the background sporting a pair himself. Draftee gets smallpox and typhoid injections from medical officers in the first peactime draft, at Fort Dix. December 1940. Life Magazine Archive.





TOTAL WAR, A NUMBERS GAME



AO

Portable Optical Units

FOR THE BATTLE AREAS

Left: Two pages from 1944 American Optical company publication AO Vision discussing portable field units.

"A 'foxhole-jumping' prescription service has been inaugurated by the United States Army. AO is providing the equipment in the form of small, portable optical units, each of which is contained in two regulation army medical field chests weighing approximately 200 pounds apiece, fully equipped."



Although the units are small they are compact and carry thousands of different items, gathered from many optical sources. Each item must be carefully packed in its proper place, ready for instant use.

This soldier is using a specially designed AO Neutralizing Set to check an ophthalmic prescription. Notice the built-in, drop style work bench inside the right hand cover.



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Establishing and marking the axis on a ground and polished lens. All stock drawers are plainly marked for quick and efficient use. Another handy bench board can be seen pulled out at the top of the right hand chest.

The hand edger was especially designed by AO for the Portable Optical Unit. It is equipped with a pulley to utilize power where available.

The Portable Units, one of which is pictured in a jeep (top left), have withstood the roughest kind of treatment, simulating actual field use, and no breakage has occurred.

motor power where such is available, are also contained in each unit along with necessary small tools, pliers, and frame repair parts.

When a spectacle-wearing fighter loses the use of his glasses, he's a "casualty." Because of the large number of service men who have corrected vision, "eye glass casualties" might easily become serious without some practical means of assuring quick replacements. The portable units were designed to fill this need. They were wanted quickly, and a "rush" production schedule was set up. Even so, AO people beat it, to put the kits in the hands of the Army weeks ahead of time, in swift response to another of Uncle Sam's calls.

With the exception of the assembly picture on the opposite page all of the photographs shown, are scenes from the course of instruction in use of the Portable Optical Repair Unit at the Medical Supply Service School, U. S. Army.



Right: "When the spectacle wearing fighter loses the use of his glasses he's a casualty. Because of the large number of service men who have corrected vision, "eye glass casualties" might easily become serious without some practical means of assuring quick replacements."

TOTAL WAR, A NUMBERS GAME



To summarize this section, the Army set basic standards for vision among draftees. They enforced these using local doctors, medical boards, and Army physicians. Not surprisingly, the requirement of 20/40 was lax by today's standards but was an expression of wartime manpower shortages. In addition, it appears that Infantry and other "combat" units generally received men with natural vision of 20/40 or better, but by numbers alone glasses were not unheard of. By wartime standards, your vision may not be poor enough to require them at all.

Above: Fresh Draftees sign initial clothing record and final in processing paperwork, Fort Dix, 1940. Life Magazine Archive. Interestingly enough, another pair of glasses is just visible in the background.

Below: Basic Training, 1944. At least one individual can be spotted with a pair of eyeglasses in this platoon. This ratio only increased as the war dragged on.





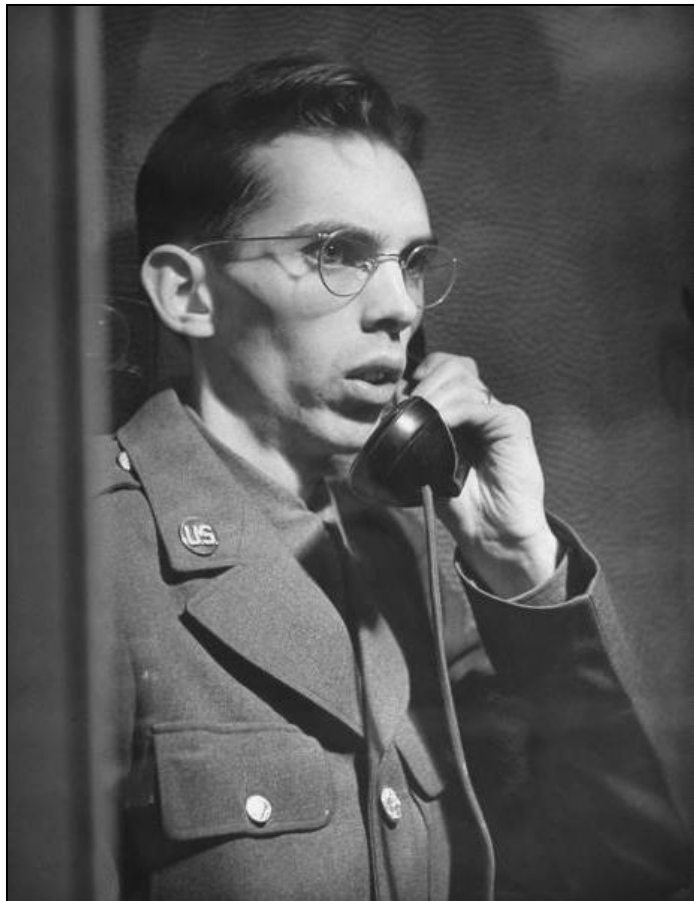
Section II:

*The
Common
Denominator*

THE COMMON DENOMINATOR

Now that we've established that eyeglasses are permissible, let's take a look at some original frames to get a better idea of their layout and construction. We'll also look at bespectacled GI's and see where they were worn.

An excellent view of stereotypically correct period frames. Candid of Pvt. Paul Willison talking from GI phone center in Times Square to his wife in Kalamazoo, MI. December 1944. Source: Life Magazine Archive



Above: Original US Government issued P3 frames with carrying case and instructions. See inset on page 17 for detail view of instructions. Private Collection.

Right: Army/Navy shore party aboard landing craft. Note the inset picture, and you can just make out P3 frames. Normandie Archive.



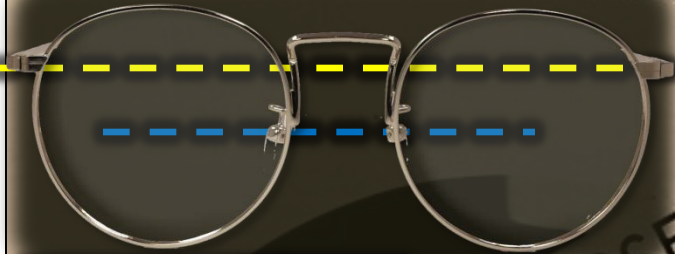


THE COMMON DENOMINATOR

1932 Ad introducing Ful-vue frames

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST

83



Wartime style frames
(Ful-Vue)

New FUL-VUE GLASSES do NOT HIDE YOUR EYES

They reveal the LIFE and CHARM of expression. FUL-VUE hinges and side-bows are high up where they do not obstruct vision.

Old Style - EYES HIDDEN - side vision blocked



Ful-Vue Frames

During the First World War, Soldiers were issued a simple form of glasses featuring round lenses centrally mounted in a round frame – the 'Windsor' frame (American Optical 5486). This frame was simple to manufacture due to round lenses and direct attachment of hinges to the frame, but it had drawbacks. The lenses were relatively small and gave a correspondingly limited field of view. The temples blocked the wearer's peripheral vision. And because the frames rested directly on the wearer's nose, under the wearer's brow line, the size of lenses was severely restricted. A better alternative was marketed starting in the early 1930s; the Ful-Vue. This new design was created by the American Optical Company, the largest eyeglasses manufacturer in the world at the time. Ful-Vue designs also made use of a round lens, but started with a much larger blank. The top of said lens was then removed to create a shape which was some 3mm shorter than it was wide – the P3. This was done in order to allow the attachment of temples in the top ¼ of the frames, moving them up and above the eyeline and giving much improved peripheral vision. (See next page)



WWI-Interwar style frames
(Windsor)

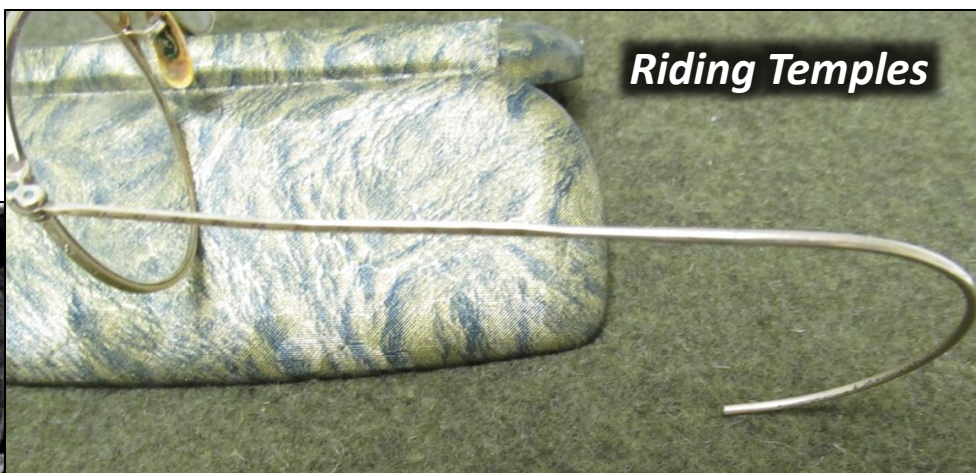


THE COMMON DENOMINATOR

While reenactors commonly ask what was the norm, there is no need for discussion among collectors. By 1940, the US Army had adopted the "P-3" model frame, which is very similar to modern eyeglasses. These frames came with nose pads, and riding temples which made it less likely they would come off if the Soldier moved quickly.

Far Below: U.S. troops rest in the cellar of a house among barrels of cider, photo taken August 3, 1944. The city was liberated August 2, 1944 by the 29th and 30th U.S. ID. Several carbines are strewn into the mix, suggesting this group is likely a gun crew, signals group, or other support element. The soldiers are obviously exhausted and may be very close to the front lines. Normandie Archive.

Below: Riding temples. This style of temple already dated back several decades by WWII, and was so named due to popularity for horseback riding. The arms are a thin wire which is relatively easy to bend, and the earpieces are flexible enough to be worn comfortably. They are much more stable during active use than modern slipper temples, which we'll cover later.



Ful-Vue Frames (continued)
In order to accommodate the larger lenses, Ful-Vue added nose pads to bring the frame up and away from the wearer's face (see original advertisement in the background). American Optical began an aggressive marketing campaign, and between 1930 and 1940 millions of Americans switched. This included the US Army, which much preferred the new design for service members who would need the best possible eye correction and retention of peripheral vision. Ful-Vue frames would be selected as the basic 'safety' design issued to Soldiers in need of eyeglasses. Despite this, there were some Soldiers who arrived already wearing glasses; many of these included older models such as the 'Windsor' frame, and various private purchase frames in Silver and Gold. While the 'P3' lens in a Ful-Vue frame is the most common, the 'Windsor' continued to appear in limited numbers for years to come.



THE COMMON DENOMINATOR



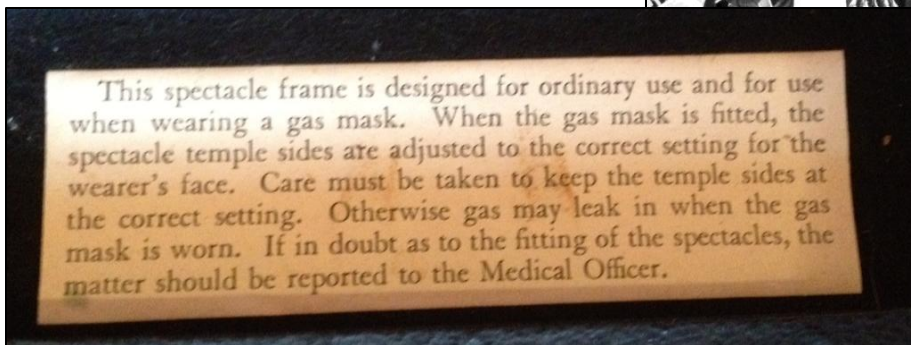
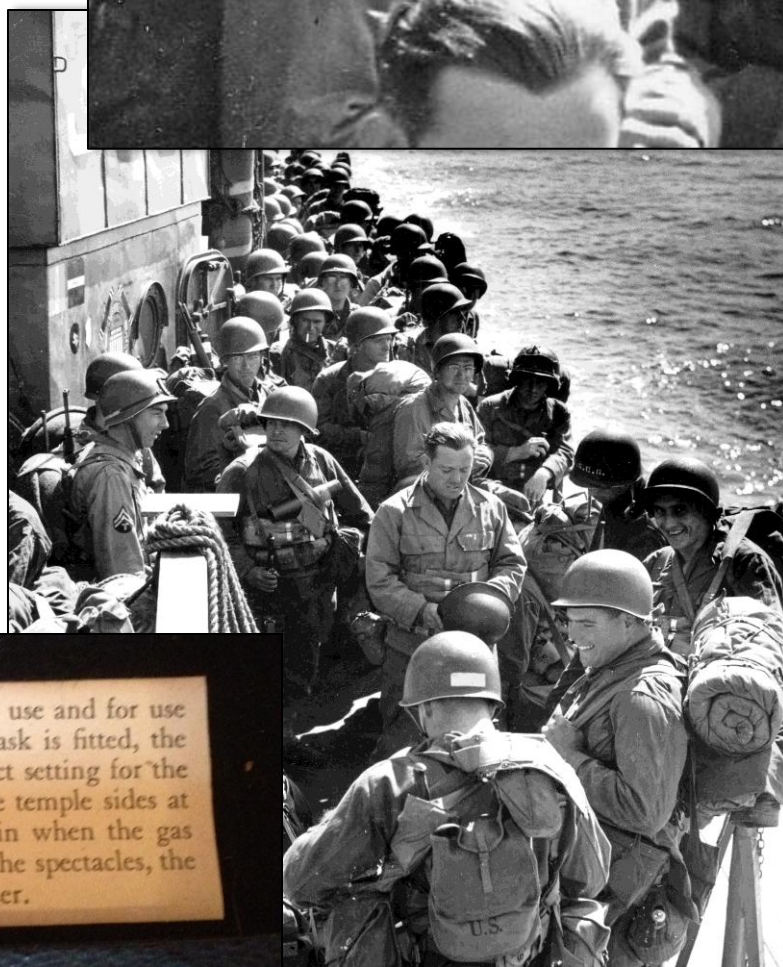
Nose Pads

Above: Nose pads on original frames. Given constant close contact with facial oils, these pads are almost always in poor condition.

While earlier generations of eyeglasses rested the bridge directly on the wearer's nose the 1920s saw the introduction of nose pads manufactured from soft materials. By WWII, American issue and private purchase frames almost always featured such nose pads.

Right: Waiting to board the LCI (L) -326 for the men of the 90th U.S. Infantry Division on their way to Utah Beach. Similar photos show what appear to be an entirely different group of men on the same ship deck – in fact, the men on board the LCIs were rotated for turns on deck! Note one lone Soldier in this assault force wearing glasses. Normandie Archive.

Below: Instructions included with original pair of Government Issue P3 frames. Private Collection.



THE COMMON DENOMINATOR

The typical 1940s military finish is silver chrome, sometimes matte, sometimes quite shiny. Examples in gold also occasionally surface, though one veteran remarked that it was considered a "Jewish style" – such stereotyping was common among some, whether or not the Soldier meant it to be hostile. Round frames are markedly less common in period photos. Plastic frames did exist, and were manufactured from celluloid (AKA zyl) – these appear less commonly in wartime pictures, but are also correct in the P3 style. For more information on these, see below.

Below: The soldier with the helmet is Donald Sheneman (only 19 in 1944) of the 302nd Military Police Escort Guard Company, he holding a young French girl, Georgette Godes, who had taken refuge with her grandmother. Donald's plastic-framed P3 glasses are hard to find in period photographs, and almost nonexistent in private collections due to the instability of early polymer construction. Normandie Archive.



Plastic Frames?

Former American Optical employee Robert Lancey recalled that "plastic (zyl) frames were given little consideration during the war. Eyewear made of plastic material were available as less expensive frames. The word, zyl, short for the English word, "rezylonite" was shortened to "zylonite" and further shortened to "zyl." New plastic formulations, patterns and colors soon found wide usage in the manufacture of eyewear. Early plastic frames such as the "Pennington," "Weymouth" and "Brockton" were available in the three basic optical frame colors at that time: Demi-Amber, Demi-Blond and Pink Crystal were forerunners of the many successful plastic frames later produced by the American Optical Company." The author advises extreme caution and attention to detail for any zyl frame, as the majority of modern reproductions are copies of postwar designs.

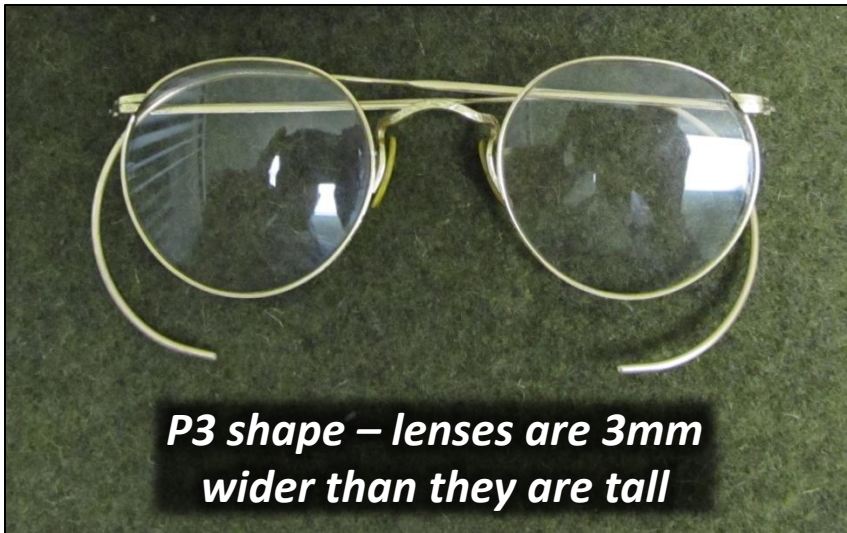
Original demi-amber zylonite P3 frames recovered among 29th ID fighting position north of St. Lo by battlefield relic hunters. These may have been sunglasses, due to the apparent tint left at the lenses at the edges. Private Collection.



THE COMMON DENOMINATOR

The "P-3" moniker is derived from the lenses being 3mm wider than they are tall. During initial entry training (basic training), Soldiers were measured for specific prescription and issued frames some days later. Standard issue was two pairs, each pair coming with a small cloth-covered case and accompanying documentation.

Left: The classic P3 shape.



P3 shape – lenses are 3mm wider than they are tall

Below: Two GI's hitting the bottle – Norman hard cider was an unexpected plus for many GIs in the bocage. According to the testimony of the Normans, many Americans were reluctant to drink when initially offered, insisting the locals drink first. After initial skepticism, the local drink quickly disappeared. Judging by this group's wear of the chinstrap, these may be 29th ID. Normandie Archive.



Original P3 frames recovered among 29th ID fighting position north of St. Lo by battlefield relic hunters. Private Collection.

THE COMMON DENOMINATOR

Below: A radio operator from the 67th Armored Regiment, 2nd U.S. AD. On August 9, 1944, the 3/67th and 2/67th were north of Barenton. Faced with the 10th SS-Panzer-Division "Fruntsberg", positioned on the wooded heights north of the town. Clearly, this man avoided "combat" because of his glasses.



The stereotypical frames have the following:

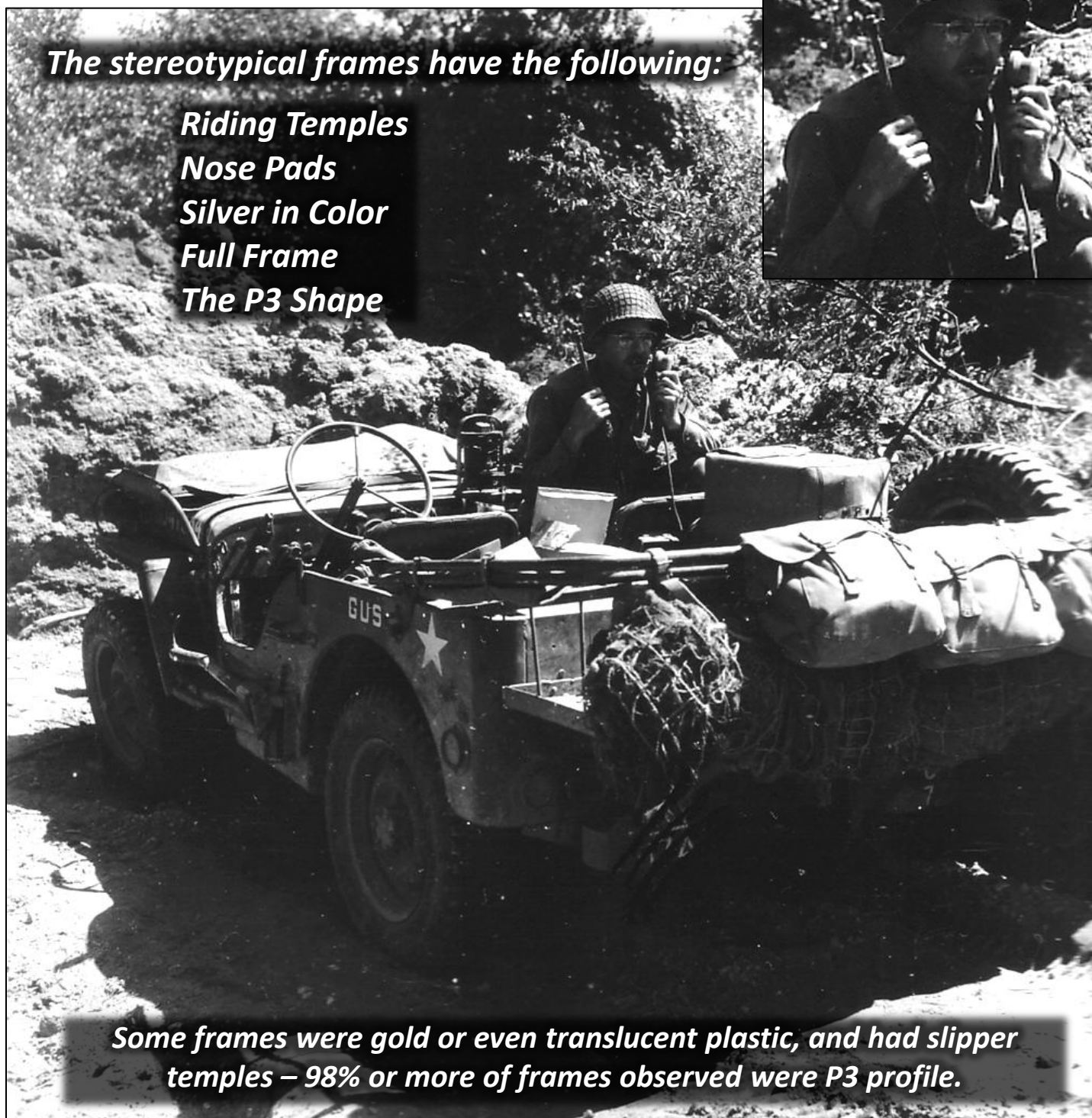
Riding Temples

Nose Pads

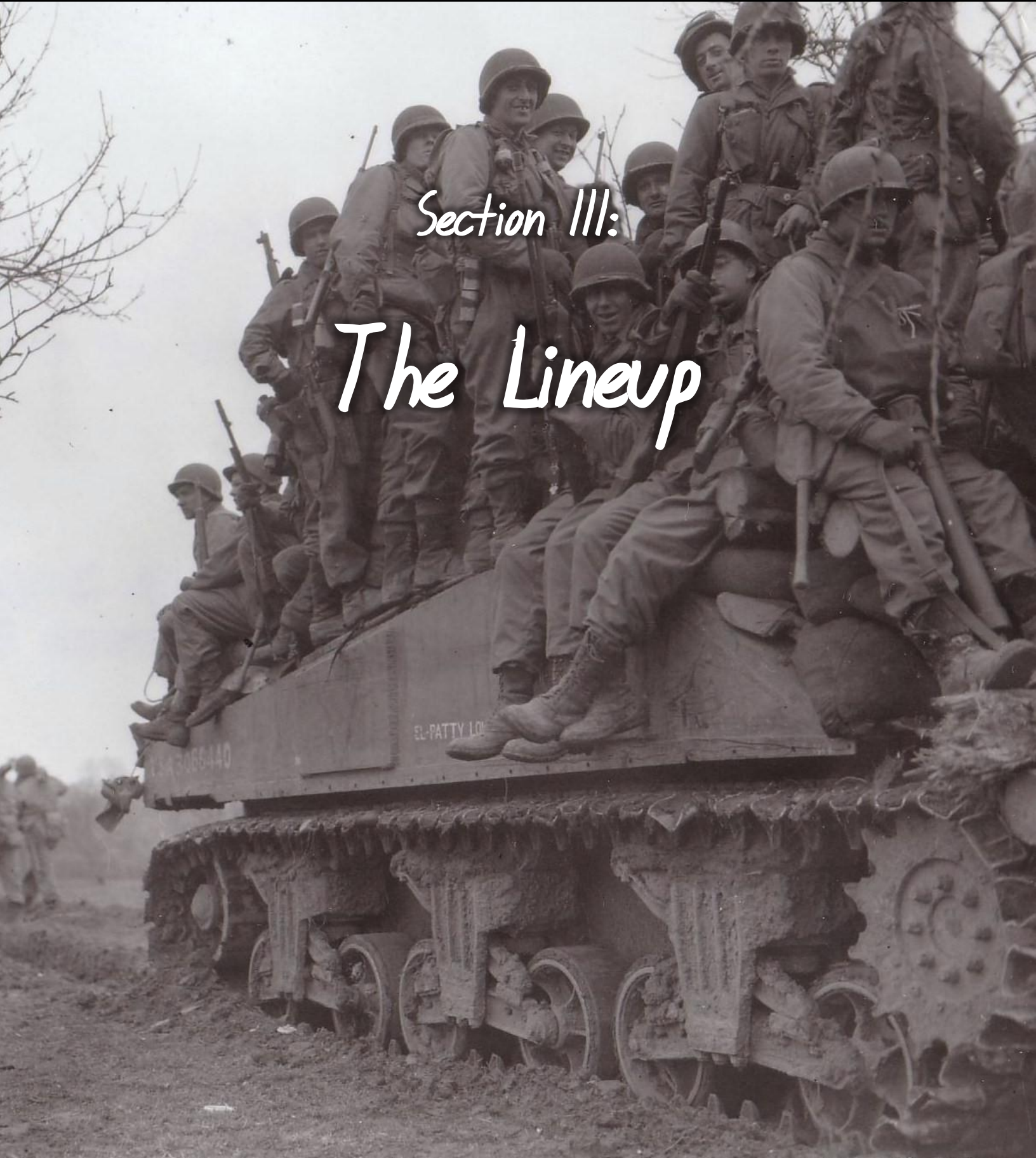
Silver in Color

Full Frame

The P3 Shape



Some frames were gold or even translucent plastic, and had slipper temples – 98% or more of frames observed were P3 profile.

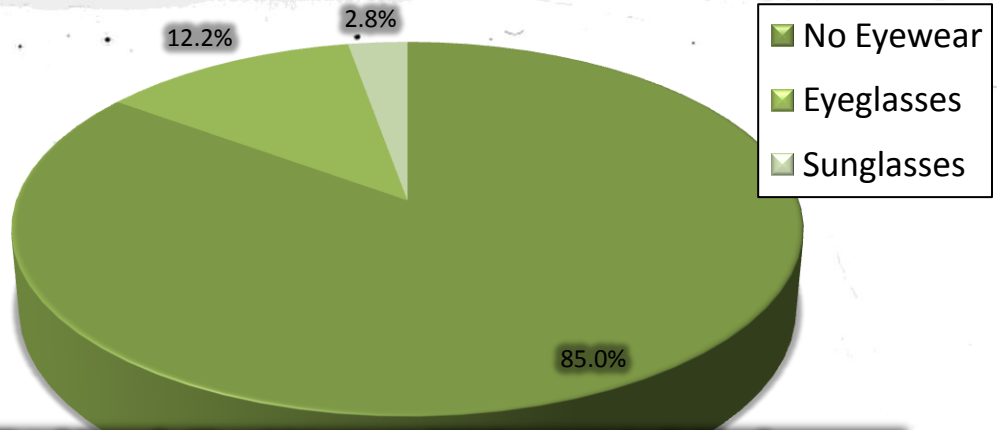


Section III:

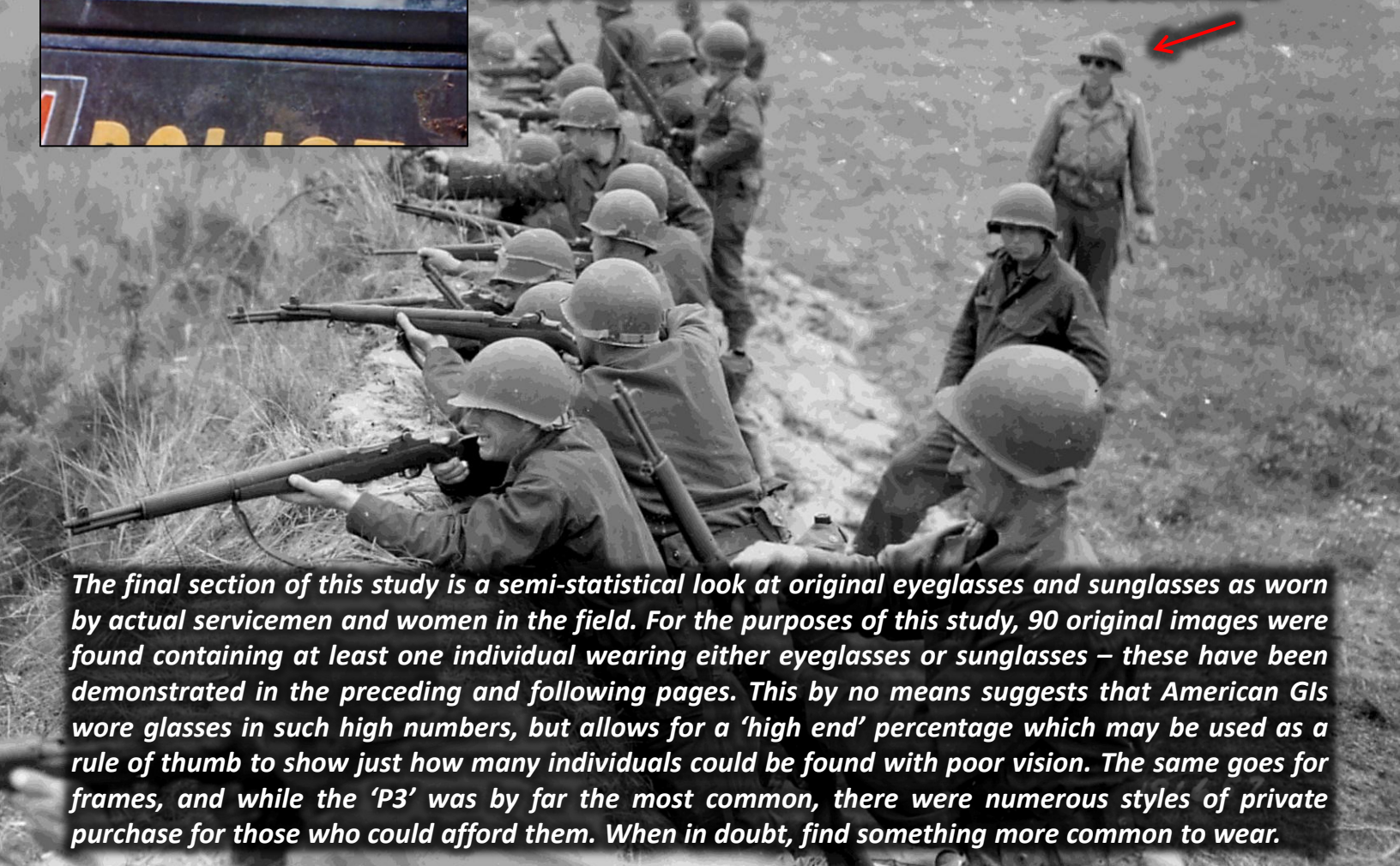
The Lineup



THE LINEUP



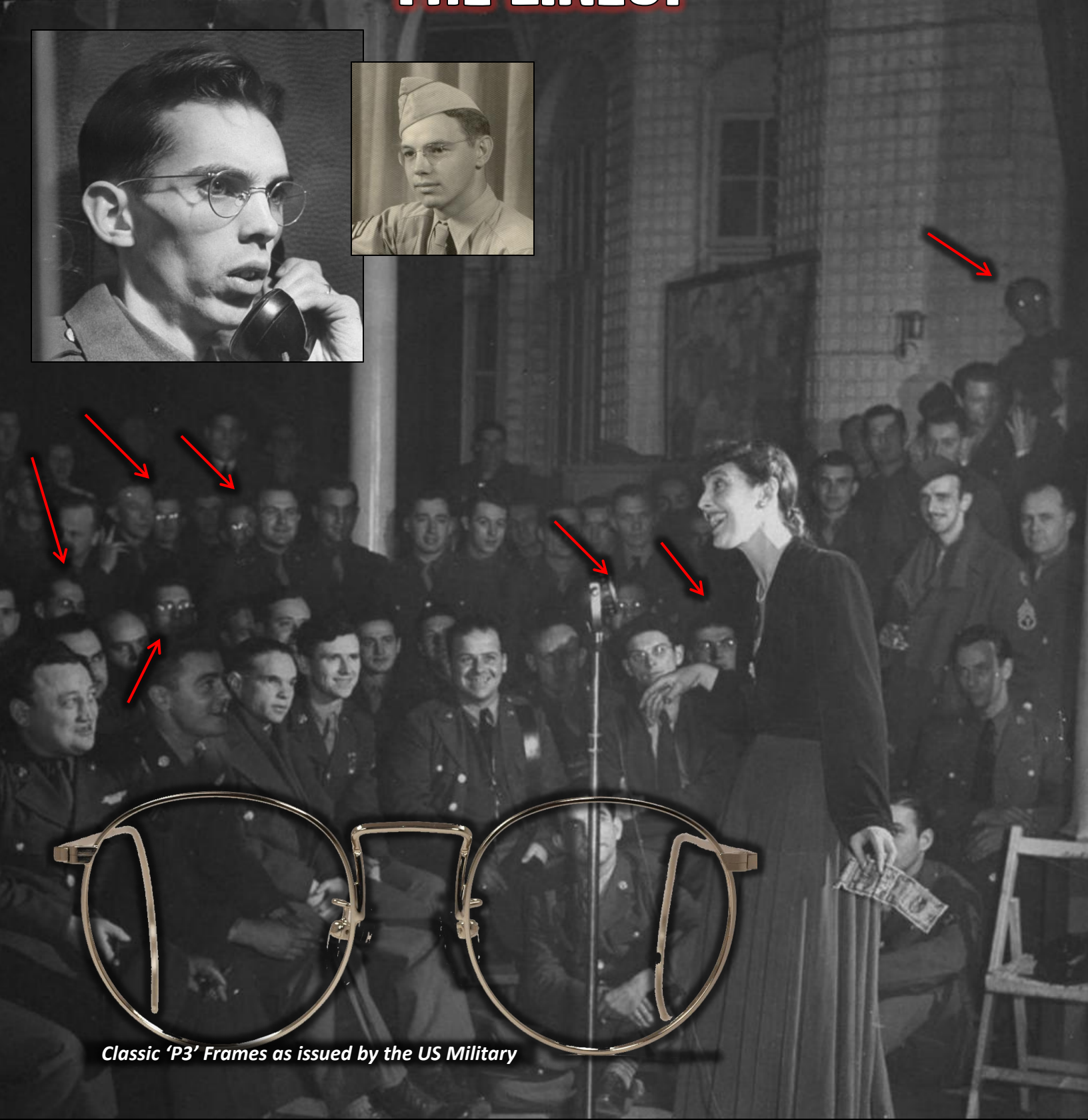
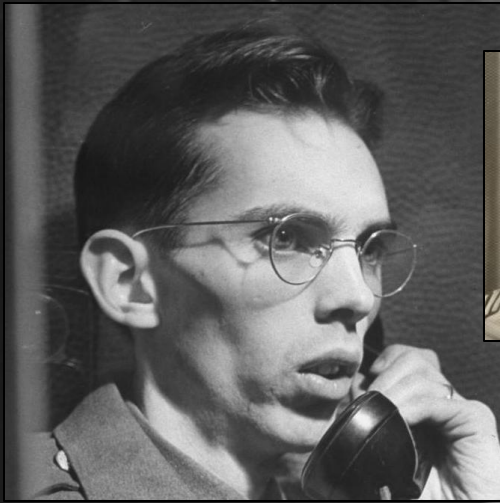
Total Sample Size: 90 Images, 866 Separate Individuals
106 Wearing Eyeglasses (12.2%)
24 Wearing Sunglasses (2.8%)
15% maximum average individuals with some sort of eyewear
Margin of error 3.5% +/-



The final section of this study is a semi-statistical look at original eyeglasses and sunglasses as worn by actual servicemen and women in the field. For the purposes of this study, 90 original images were found containing at least one individual wearing either eyeglasses or sunglasses – these have been demonstrated in the preceding and following pages. This by no means suggests that American GIs wore glasses in such high numbers, but allows for a ‘high end’ percentage which may be used as a rule of thumb to show just how many individuals could be found with poor vision. The same goes for frames, and while the ‘P3’ was by far the most common, there were numerous styles of private purchase for those who could afford them. When in doubt, find something more common to wear.



THE LINEUP



Classic 'P3' Frames as issued by the US Military



THE LINEUP

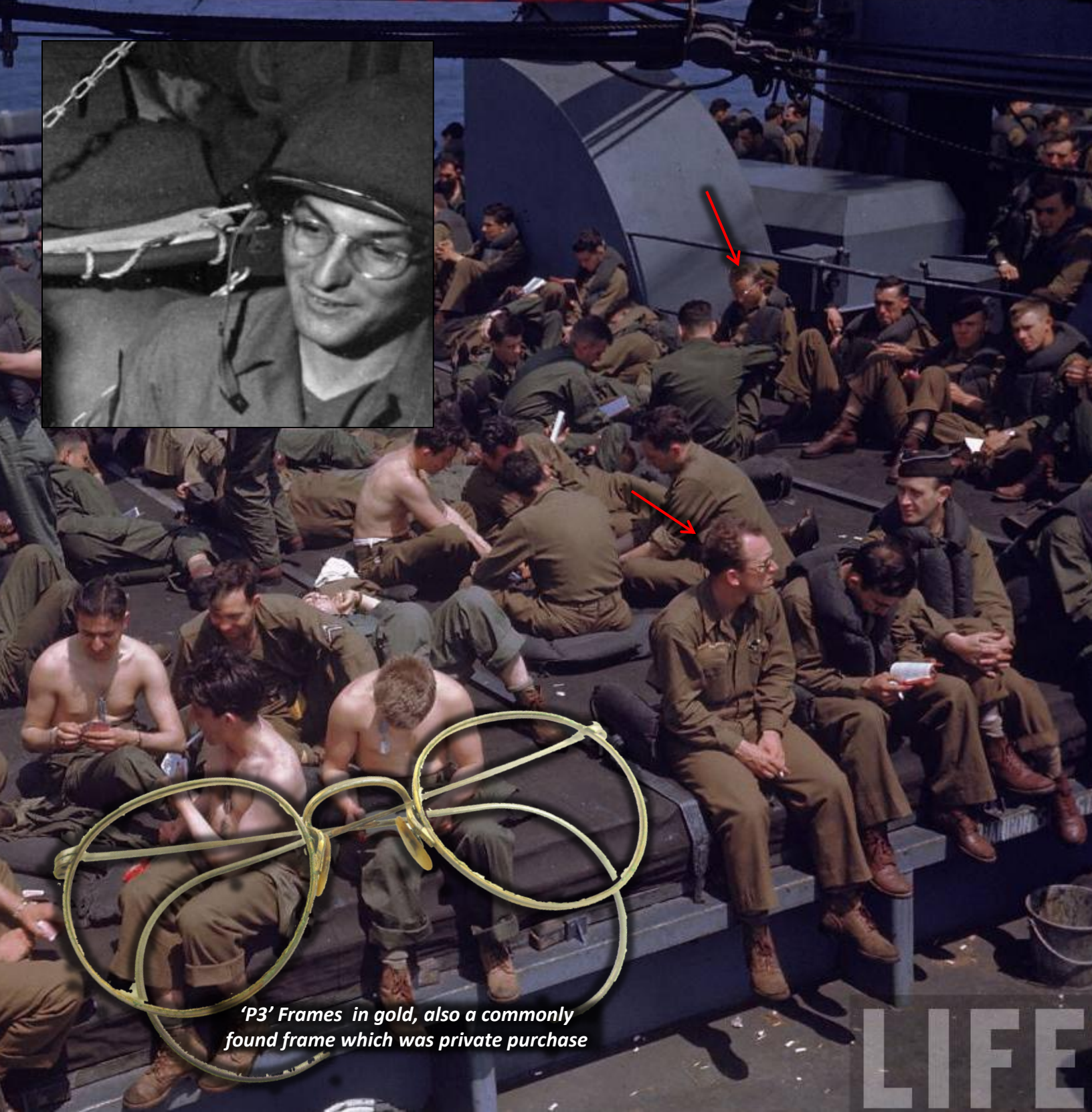


Side view of GI type 'P3' frames, showing riding temples and lustrous finish as occasionally encountered





THE LINEUP



'P3' Frames in gold, also a commonly found frame which was private purchase



THE LINEUP



Four Eyes: Eyeglasses and the WWII GI



THE LINEUP



Four Eyes: Eyeglasses and the WWII GI

*Michael Ellis
90thIDPG.us*



THE LINEUP



Four Eyes: Eyeglasses and the WWII GI



THE LINEUP



Four Eyes: Eyeglasses and the WWII GI



THE LINEUP

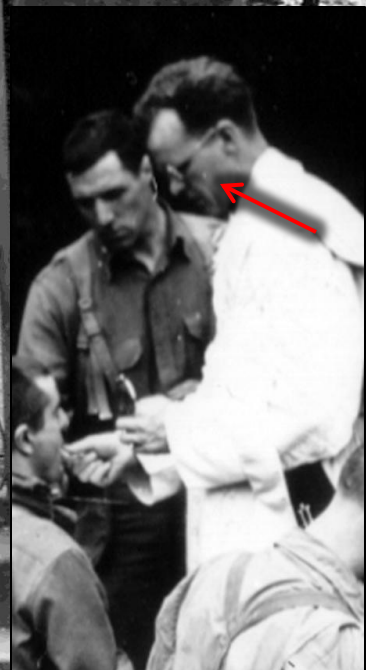


'P3' frames in period carrying case





THE LINEUP



'Numont' frames (literally, new mount), by American Optical. This frame occasionally appears in photographs, primarily on those who could afford them such as officers and those with a high-paying specialty. Gold-filled and semi-rimless, the frame was a high quality private purchase item.



THE LINEUP



Four Eyes: Eyeglasses and the WWII GI



THE LINEUP



100th ID Soldier with CIB and Eyeglasses



OFFICERS OF SIGNAL BATTALION WITH 1ST ALLIED AIRBORNE ARMY ARE PINNED DOWN BY GERMAN 88'S FIRING OVER SLOPE NEAR SCHERMBECK L-R: LT. DONALD POWELL, OF 995 SOMERSET ST., PLAINFIELD, N.J., AND LT. B. E. KILLIAN, JR., OF 523 NO. SCHOOL LANE, LANCASTER, PA. CONFIDENTIAL
54TH SIG BN FAAA 77TH AB
024
FOR PUBLICATION AS 106



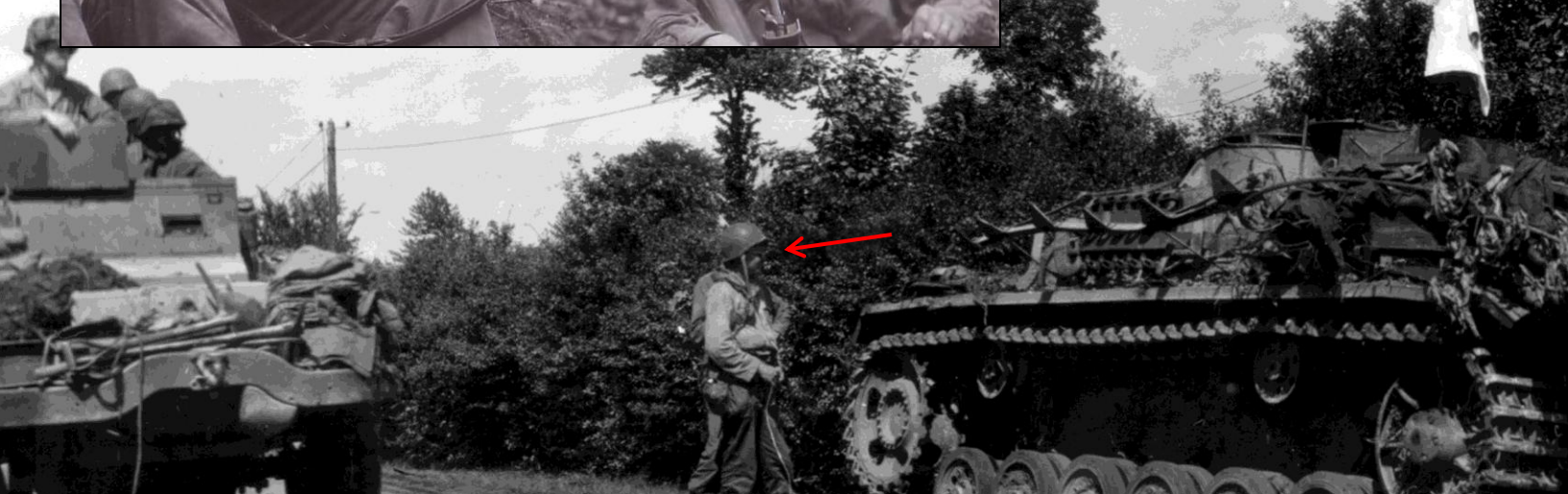
THE LINEUP



Four Eyes: Eyeglasses and the WWII GI



THE LINEUP



Four Eyes: Eyeglasses and the WWII GI



THE LINEUP





THE LINEUP

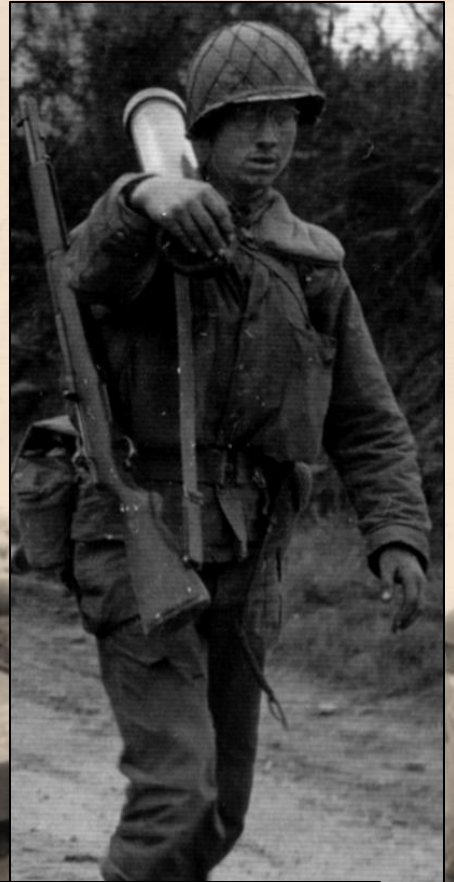
Soldiers of the 325th Glider Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division. Courtesy 82nd AB Museum



Four Eyes: Eyeglasses and the WWII GI



THE LINEUP





THE LINEUP



Four Eyes: Eyeglasses and the WWII GI

*Michael Ellis
90thIDPG.us*



THE LINEUP



Older, 'Windsor' style frames were also occasionally encountered on GIs who may have brought them from home



THE LINEUP



Four Eyes: Eyeglasses and the WWII GI



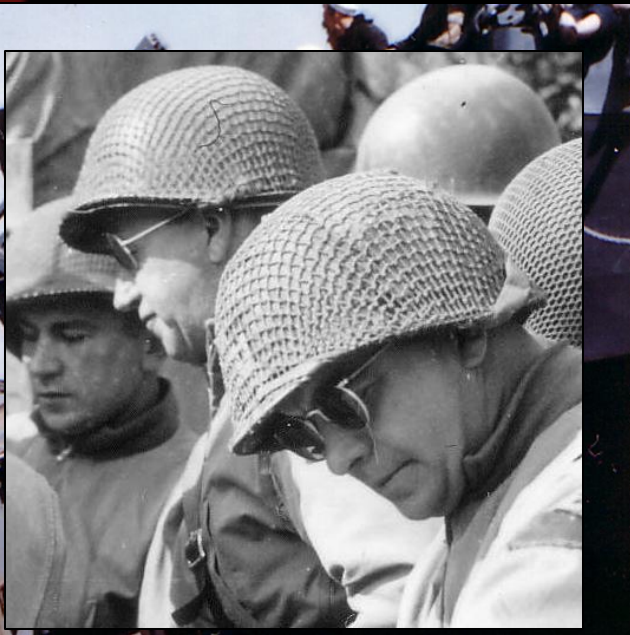
THE LINEUP



Four Eyes: Eyeglasses and the WWII GI



THE LINEUP



May 1944 Advertisement



**EYEGASSES COST LITTLE
... EYES ARE PRICELESS!**

Protect your valuable Eyesight. If your eyes are bothering you . . . come in today and let our registered Optometrist examine them and fit properly made Eyeglasses if necessary. Don't delay. Remember you can pay with a small down payment and as little as . . .

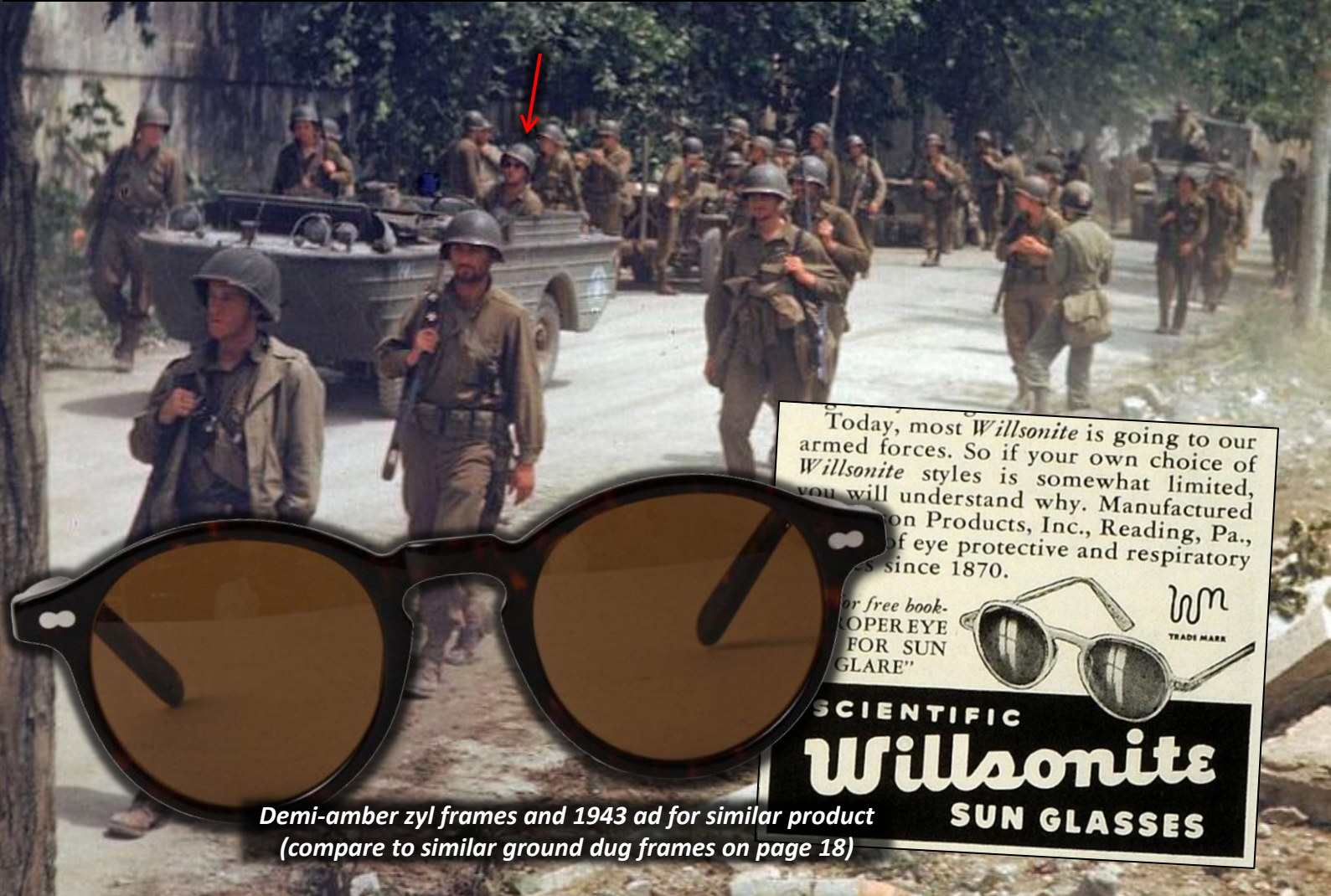
50c
A WEEK

HERE'S YOUR CHANCE

Clip on sunglasses which could be slipped over issue or private purchase 'P3' frames, and held on by spring tension



THE LINEUP



Today, most Willsonite is going to our armed forces. So if your own choice of Willsonite styles is somewhat limited, you will understand why. Manufactured by Willsonite Products, Inc., Reading, Pa., since 1870.

For free book-
"OPER EYE
FOR SUN
GLARE"

Willsonite
TRADE MARK
SCIENTIFIC
SUN GLASSES

Demi-amber zyl frames and 1943 ad for similar product (compare to similar ground dug frames on page 18)



THE LINEUP



American Optical sunglasses in blonde, with original shipping box



THE LINEUP



Period 'aviator' type sunglasses, showing carry case, rider temples, and relatively weak tint



THE LINEUP



in. Sizes 28 to 42.
3.50

*Slipper temple sunglasses
made from zyl* **New!**



Crookes Anti-Glare
SUN GLASSES
4.00 and 5.00

*These glasses have fine
ground and polished lenses,
come in several different anti-
glare colors.*

*June 1943 advertisement for
similar sunglasses*



THE LINEUP



ON
AND IN THE

PT-51
U.S.

In every branch of the
cool, green Willsonite
active duty. The
ians, too, whose
protection from
Willsonite give
of ordinary sun
of the danger
out entirely the
yet transmitting
safe, comfort
meets U. S. G
proper eye
tested and an
surgeons re
Insist on
Glasses for
popular price
Manufactured
Reading, Pa.
and respira
1970.

"PROPER EYE CARE AND GLARE"
Wm
TRADE
MARK

SCIENTIFIC
Willsonite
SUN GLASSES

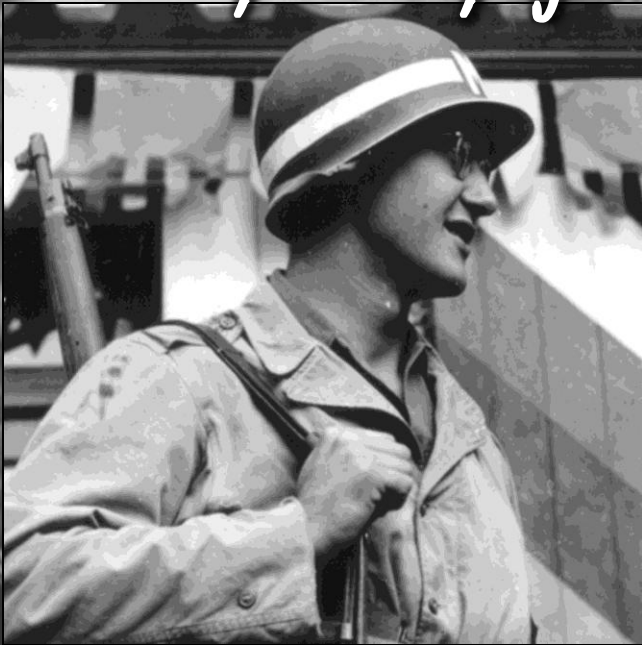
BUY BONDS FOR VICTORY



'Aviator' style sunglasses, with rider temples and sweat pad



Four Eyes: Eyeglasses and the WWII GI



Sources:
 Normandie Magazine Archive
 LIFE Magazine Archive
 NARA Archive
 US Militaria Forum
 82nd Airborne Museum
 Dickwhitney.net
 Clearlightoptical.com
 Numerous Private Collections

Special Thanks to Chris, Tom, Dick,
 Charles, Matt, and Yannick



About the Author:
 Michael Ellis has previously written such articles as "The M1 Helmet in Normandy - A Case Study", "How to Travel Light: Packing Tips for the Seasoned Reenactor", and "The M-1938 Legging - An Introduction". He is a 9 year member of the 90th Infantry Division Preservation Group and recently returned from a deployment to southern Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

No profit of any kind was made or intended from this article.