



# ALL-OUT FOR VICTORY!

MAGAZINE  
ADVERTISING  
AND THE  
WORLD WAR II  
HOME FRONT

John Bush Jones

A LIVELY LOOK AT HOW  
DURING WORLD WAR II  
ROLES IN SUSTAINING  
PROMOTING HOME-FRONT  
OF THE WAR, WITH LO  
ILLUSTRATIONS

Following the attack on Pearl Harbor and the entry of the United States into the war, many commercial advertisements in *Life* and *Time* magazine Avenue ad agencies instantly shifted their focus to selling products and services that supported the war effort. In the home front, manufacturers showcased their products, and many had turned to war production. The book examines their participation in the war effort. To understand, for instance, how a new washing machine helped civilians cope with shortages by offering advantages like leftovers tasty, make shoes in good working order. *All-Out for Victory!* also covers Victory Gardens, scrap drives, and (most important) bullet production. In this book, Jones examines how the war affected large-circulation news magazines of the period. The book includes original war ads, ads about the war, and the cultural support of the war.

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★★★ **ALL-OUT FOR VICTORY!**

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# VICTORY!

**MAGAZINE ADVERTISING  
AND THE WORLD WAR II  
HOME FRONT  
JOHN BUSH JONES**

BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY PRESS

*Waltham, Massachusetts*

Published by

UNIVERSITY PRESS OF NEW ENGLAND

*Hanover & London*

BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY PRESS

Published by University Press of New England,

One Court Street, Lebanon, NH 03766

www.upne.com

© 2009 by Brandeis University Press

Printed in the United States of America

5 4 3 2 1

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Jones, John Bush.

All-out for victory! : magazine advertising and the World War II home front / John Bush Jones. — 1st ed.

p. cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-58465-768-2 (cloth : alk. paper)

I. Advertising, Magazine—United States—History—20th century.

I. Title

HF6105.U5J66 2009

940.53'1—dc22 2008055182



University Press of New England is a member of the Green Press Initiative. The paper used in this book meets their minimum requirement for recycled paper.

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★★★ **PREFACE**

What drew me to study wartime advertising—and wartime popular songs before that—are two personal passions of mine. First, as a child of the home front (I was born in 1940) I still carry with me vivid memories of those years and seem to have an innate affinity with home front culture and social history. Second, ever since graduate school I've had a penchant for doing original research using primary sources almost exclusively, especially on topics not before treated extensively or comprehensively. World War II war ads (as they were called then and I call them now) qualify on both counts.

The literature on World War II advertising is scant and fragmentary. Frank W. Fox's *Madison Avenue Goes to War* has some value as a book about the advertising industry during the war but less as a treatment of the actual ads. The small selection that Fox discusses he seemingly picked to advance his theory that Madison Avenue used the war to polish up advertising's reputation. Maureen Honey's *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender and Propaganda during World War II* is not about wartime advertising per se. Rather, Honey uses magazine ads (and fiction) in only the *Saturday Evening Post* and *True Story* to examine images of women during the war, with results that do not fully represent those images. For example, Honey concludes from some ads in the *Post* alone that the homemaker with a husband overseas was portrayed as the "innocent, vulnerable mother" (131). Had she looked at ads in just one other magazine, *Ladies' Home Journal*, she would have seen strong, resilient homemakers capable of keeping not just the home but the whole home front together. From ads only in *Life*, Sue Hart's essay in *Visions of War: World War II in Popular Literature and Culture* edited by M. Paul Holsinger and Mary Anne Schofield, concludes that all wartime advertisers "were selling patriotism and promise first" (125). This conclusion is too narrow and also erroneous on the subject of patriotism, as discussed more fully in Chapter 1. Roland Marchand's splendid article "Suspended in Time: Mom-and-Pop Groceries, Chain Stores, and National Advertising during the World War II Interlude" in *Produce, Conserve, Share and Play Square: The Grocer and the Consumer on the Home-Front Battlefield*



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during *World War II* edited by Barbara McLean Ward only treats advertising and chain stores' impact on small independent grocers during the war and does not relate to the present study of war ads.

My own approach to the artifacts of cultural history is that of a narrative historian. In other words, as with wartime songs before, I simply set out to see what the ads would "say" to me, listened very carefully, and then attempted to tell their story as vividly and lucidly as possible. My research began with selecting which magazines I wanted to scour for war ads. Since upwards of six hundred national and regional magazines were published during the war, it would have been impossible to look at all of them (or even to *find* many of them), so I abandoned all thoughts of an exhaustive treatment of war ads in favor of an extensive or comprehensive treatment based on ads in a smaller but representative number of magazines. I decided on ten large-circulation general-interest and news magazines, including one women's magazine, one men's magazine, one aimed at the business community, and one with a readership primarily of farmers and other rural Americans: *Life*, *Look*, *Collier's*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Esquire*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Business Week*, and *Farm Journal and Farmer's Wife*. Nearly all these magazines had a subscriber base in the millions (even *Farm Journal*, with close to three million subscribers in the 1940s), so war ads in them had the best chance of being seen by the largest numbers of home front Americans in the widest possible geographic and demographic distribution.

Starting with *Life* since it consistently contained the most ads, for a solid year I turned every page of every issue of each magazine from January 1, 1942, through December 31, 1945. I photocopied almost every war ad and entered information about each one into a computer database: date, magazine, advertiser (company or product), and subject (War Bonds, rumor control, coping with rationing, etc.). At the end of my odyssey through the magazines, I had twenty-six three-inch ring binders full of photocopies and a database containing 5,143 ads, fewer than a hundred of which duplicate a single ad published in more than one magazine. With the photocopies, database, and wartime articles in *Business Week*, the advertising trade journals *Printers' Ink* and *Advertising & Selling*, and a few other magazines, I had all I needed strictly from primary sources to begin writing—supplemented by a little information from such secondary materials as standard histories of the home front, other books, and websites.

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I said that I photocopied “almost” every war ad since I excluded some based on the book’s focus on ads only by commercial advertisers. I did not photocopy and do not discuss ads prepared by or for any government agencies such as the Treasury Department or the Office of War Information unless they also had a commercial sponsor. But I do include ads by organizations like the American Meat Institute and the Cast Iron Pipe Research Association since these were trade associations that represented groups of commercial advertisers. I also exclude ads by commercial advertisers that merely show servicemen or women in the art when the ads themselves contain no war message and are just selling a product. Yet I include ads that exploited a wartime concern in order to sell something, such as those for toothpastes and deodorants in which getting rid of bad breath or body odor boosts a serviceman’s or civilian girl’s morale. Silly as they may be, these are kinds of war ads and have a place in the book, if only a small one.

★ ★ ★ A few aspects of the text perhaps need explanation. Instead of hundreds of footnotes leading only to the dates and page numbers of ads and citations of other sources, I employ the system of parenthetical documentation within the text as laid out in the *MLA Style Manual*. To keep some of their style and flavor when quoting from the ads, I have retained the *italics*, **boldface**, SMALL CAPS, and underscoring that occur in the original copy. In the 1940s many ads used the three separated periods ( . . . ) that we use for an ellipsis in a text as the equivalent of a dash (—) to indicate a shift in thought or a pause. I have retained these, and when needing to abbreviate a particularly long passage, I signal my doing so by placing the three ellipsis periods within square brackets [ . . . ]. Also, since I often cite percentages, instead of the formal convention of spelling them out (fifty-seven percent), I use the numeric system (57%) for brevity and to make the figures stand out. It perhaps goes without saying, but when I say “late in the war” it’s meant from a postwar perspective since no one knew when “late” in the war would be while it was still going on. Rather than repeat cumbersome phrases like “according to the ads in the magazines examined here” I often say something like “according to most ads in the magazines,” which should be understood to mean the ten magazines in this account, not all wartime magazines. Finally, following the common parlance of the day, I often refer to America’s young men and women during the war, in the service or civilians,

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as boys and girls, rather than the more politically correct “men” and “women” by today’s standards. To do otherwise would falsify the picture of the war years, the ads, and the way these boys and girls referred to themselves and were referred to by others.

★ ★ ★ My list of people and institutions to thank for helping make this book happen isn’t very long, but all their contributions have been invaluable. Deservedly first, I begin with three people whose input and thought-provoking questions helped jump-start this project—Professors Susan Smulyan of the Department of American Civilization at Brown University, William O. Beeman, then at Brown and now of the Department of Anthropology at the University of Minnesota, and my long-time friend and former colleague at Brandeis University, Stephen J. Whitfield of the Department of American Studies.

I practically lived in libraries for the year I went through magazines, and my indebtedness to them for their collections and for the helpfulness of their staffs can’t be measured. Once again I did most of my research in the libraries of Brown University, this time, because of its extensive collection of American magazines, mostly in the Rockefeller Library, where Edwin Hayslip, Steven Lavallee, Daniel P. O’Mahony, and Jennifer Martenson each gave me specialized kinds of assistance I could not have done without. Though I spent less time in Brown’s John Hay Library, I am again indebted to the Hay’s Rosemary Cullen, Ann Patrick, Peter Harrington, and Andy Moul for supporting the project in many varied ways. Splendid as the collections and personnel are in the Brown libraries, I had to range farther afield for some material, and accordingly I want to especially thank Mary Anne Sumner of the University of Rhode Island Library for unearthing from storage the run of *Farm Journal* for the war years and making it available to me. The Boston Public Library, the Providence Public Library, the Pawtucket (Rhode Island) Public Library, and the Goldfarb Library at Brandeis all filled in some holes in the runs of magazines at Brown or had some books unavailable there. Also, many thanks to home front enthusiast and lecturer Calvin Knickerbocker for extensive information on World War II posters.

Purely personally, I owe much to the encouragement and just plain “being there” of my son, Carson, and his wife, Dawn, my long-time friends Bob and Elva Mathiesen, Claudia Novack, former student Helen Lewis, attorney Jerry Cohen, and doctors Bruce Fischberg and Charles Sherman.

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Finally, in a class by herself is my editor Phyllis Deutsch. From the start, Phyllis believed in the ads project, stood by it, and worked with me and my sometimes errant prose every step of the way, seeing it through to its conclusion. For this my debt to Phyllis is far more abundant than the words I have to express it.

J. B. J.  
*Providence, Rhode Island*  
*January 4, 2009*

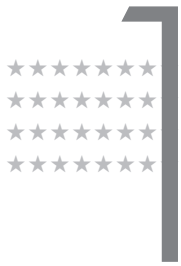


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★★★ **ALL-OUT FOR VICTORY!**



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**“ALL-OUTS” AND  
“DOUBLE-BARRELLEDS”  
HOW TO ADVERTISE  
A WAR**

It took just one day—December 7, 1941—for Americans’ perennial wrangling over isolationism versus interventionism to cease, and, in the words of *New York Times* columnist Arthur Krock, for national unity to “click into place” (*New York Times* 8 Dec. 1941: 6). Except for a handful of pacifists and conscientious objectors and approximately 15,000 so-called native fascists such as the members of the German-American Bund and Silver Shirts, as of that day roughly 130 million Americans stopped debating whether to enter the war. Pearl Harbor provided a clear answer.

The Japanese bombs that fell on Pearl Harbor also effectively detonated the biggest advertising explosion in this country’s history. Nearly three years after that fateful Sunday in 1941, the advertising agency of Young & Rubicam placed an ad in *Newsweek* on September 18, 1944, stating with absolute accuracy, “**No product** in the world has ever received such advertising support as American business has put behind U. S. War Bonds” (26). It’s equally accurate to say that nothing ever received such advertising support as civilian involvement in the war effort *generally*. The ensuing chapters examine systematically the varieties of home front support and the ways in which ads by commercial advertisers promoted them in national magazines. As background, the present chapter looks at prewar precursors to such war ads and the workings of the wartime advertising industry vis-à-vis national magazines.

### **National Unity and Advertising**

It’s become commonplace to declare that the four years comprising World War II were the longest period of sustained national unity in the American twentieth century—or, perhaps, in the entire history of the United States. But this commonplace is absolutely true. Both contemporary observers and later historians substantiate that this national unity was the real thing. The day after Arthur Krock reported from Washing-



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ton that the new national unity “seemed visibly to arise from the wreckage at Honolulu,” an unsigned *New York Times* editorial observed that “there are no party lines today in Congress,” that leading Republicans like Herbert Hoover and Alf Landon had taken their place by the side of President Roosevelt, and that the far-right America First Committee and a far-left labor union had come together in a display of national unity (9 Dec. 1941: 30).

Writing more than three decades later, historian Ronald H. Bailey in *The Home Front: U.S.A.* corroborated those contemporary observations with statistics: “On December 10, [ . . . ] a public opinion poll found that only 2 per cent of Americans disapproved of the declaration of war against Japan” (23). And as if to show that the 98% in favor of the war was not just a product of the aftershock of Pearl Harbor, Bailey offers a statistic from much later: “Sociologists reported finding a widespread sense of ‘unconscious well-being,’ which they attributed to participation in civilian defense, scrap drives and the other efforts to bring the War home” (117). In *Days of Sadness, Years of Triumph*, Geoffrey Perrett concluded from his own research that national unity not only continued but intensified as the war went on. In early 1942 when things looked bad for the American forces in the Pacific, Perrett found that “The country was fused as it had never been before in living memory. Not all the defeats, setbacks and frustration could break down that sense of national union and purpose. It was a precious thing, a strong sense of genuine community. It sustained almost the entire country during the long, bitter months from December, 1941, to October, 1942” (215). Much later in the war “the country’s participation in the war was accepted by almost everyone as a just and necessary act. If anything, it looked increasingly justified as it went on and the Nazi concentration camps fell into Allied hands” (441).

Among historians of the home front, only John Morton Blum asserted in *V Was for Victory* “that federal agencies and private institutions utilized techniques earlier developed by national advertising” to whip up national unity (16). This claim is simply inaccurate. Among the thousands of war ads in the leading magazines, national unity was central to a mere ten, and only two of those made an appeal for it. Very early in the war, Warner and Swasey Turret Lathes devoted its ad in *Newsweek* on January 5, 1942, to urging national unity: “The time has come—*now*—when every man and woman—workman, manager, politician, labor leader—is *all for America* or *all against America*. There can be no hy-

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phenated loyalty to America and some private cause” (9). About a year and a half later the Hartford Fire Insurance Company in the *Saturday Evening Post* (hereafter shortened to “the *Post*”) on July 3, 1943, urged people not to let slip the unity already in place: “Let’s fight the enemy—not each other” (71). The remaining eight national unity ads (six published in the first year of the war) did not urge it but rather described how the unity that Pearl Harbor engendered had a salutary effect on everything from support for the war effort to bringing neighbors together to share old-fashioned American values.

This virtually unified stance in support of U.S. involvement made the home front receptive to ads plugging the many ways to actively participate in the war effort. Most admen during the war seem to have known or sensed unconsciously what Roland Marchand concisely articulated in *Advertising the American Dream*, namely, that most ads contain “ideas and images that reinforce and intensify existing patterns and conceptions” (xviii), the existing conception in this case being the home front’s national unity. For admen this unity was a platform upon which to build their various campaigns for home front participation. And too, it was precisely this national unity that made the four-year blitz of war ads both possible and effective; without it the ad campaigns would have been doomed to failure. Because of Americans’ divided and divisive feelings about every war the United States has fought in since World War II, similar saturation advertising for citizen support would not have been acceptable, let alone possible. The proof of this is self-evident: From Korea to Iraq, no such ad campaigns were ever tried.

### **Prewar War Ads**

Days before Pearl Harbor, a peculiar national unity advertisement was prominently displayed inside the front cover of *Life* on December 1, 1941. At that moment in time the ad might have been seen as relevant social commentary, even raising a smile or two over the still ongoing dissension among Americans about whether or not the country should enter the war. The ad features a drawing of seven people walking toward the reader with linked arms, a sailor on the left, a soldier on the right, and five very well-dressed middle-class civilians (two men and three women) in between. Beneath the artwork and above a lot of copy in small type extolling the virtues of various Parker Pens is, in very large lettering, the caption “You Bet there’s *National Unity* in the Gift We Want This Christ-

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mas.” This wry look at national unity may have had some validity before December 7, but the ad appeared again *after* Pearl Harbor, in the *Post* on December 13, and in the January 1942 *Esquire*, which clearly hit the newsstands well before Christmas, judging by its plethora of Christmas-gift ads. The long lead time needed to create an ad and submit it to a magazine in time to meet the deadline for ad copy caused the Parker ads in the *Post* and *Esquire* to be obsolete the moment they appeared. After Pearl Harbor the effect of the ad’s caption was to trivialize the national unity that by then was a very real thing.

Still, its first appearance before Pearl Harbor does not make the Parker ad an anomaly. War-related ads didn’t just spring up overnight following the Japanese attack. There had, in fact, been war-related or, more precisely, defense-related ads as far back as 1939 with the buildup of America’s defense industries, even though the general public never saw most of them. These were informational advertisements by manufacturing firms, known as institutional advertising in ad industry terminology. Such ads didn’t sell anything. Just prior to and during the war, they simply described how one manufacturer or another was contributing to defense production. Institutional ads were published mostly in what the business and manufacturing communities referred to as business, trade, or industrial papers, which included such media as trade journals, informational booklets for specific industries, and house organs for individual manufacturers. Prior to Pearl Harbor informational or institutional ads also appeared in those national magazines with numerous readers in corporate and industrial America such as *Business Week* and *Fortune*, and even occasionally in the two most prominent weekly news magazines, *Time* and *Newsweek*, which had a similar readership. Some prewar institutional advertising even found its way into popular magazines like *Life*, *Collier’s*, *Ladies’ Home Journal*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, and *Farm Journal and Farmer’s Wife*. Once the United States was in the war, institutional ads in general-interest magazines measurably increased. These were not just ads by companies that made something as familiar to consumers as automobiles or a particular brand of tire (neither of which could be bought for the duration), but even firms that produced things as arcane to most of the public as turret lathes or roller bearings (see Chapter 3 for more on wartime informational advertising).

The war ads published in national magazines during the month preceding Pearl Harbor and in the few weeks following it — also technically

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prewar ads since they had to have been written prior to December 7—were an eclectic bunch. The purely informational ads were the most straightforward. With virtually no products to sell, such an ad simply displayed a company's participation in the war effort while keeping its name and/or its products before the business community. An extended series of Inland Steel ads in *Time* between November 10 and December 15, 1941, proclaimed in their headlines everything from "Over a Million Soldiers Will Sleep on Cots of Inland Steel" to "At Inland 'Full Speed Ahead' Helps Build Our Two-Ocean Navy." Also in *Time* on November 10, the Lone Star Cement Company could boast that thanks to its product and construction services "850-ACRE QUONSET POINT AIR BASE COMPLETED WITHIN A YEAR" (39). Prior to and during the war most magazine ads of all kinds were so prosy and prolix that few twenty-first-century Americans would take the time to read them. But the rare ad stood out for the brevity of its copy and the vividness of its art. One such purely informational ad was the Douglas Aircraft Company's in *Time* on November 24, 1941. The entire message was that Douglas was building planes for the Allies, vividly expressed in a single line of copy, "Douglas Defends the Democracies," and in the ad's striking color illustration depicting airplanes in the already familiar and symbolic "V" for Victory formation (74; see fig. 1).

When informational ads appeared in the popular magazines, they often tacked on a sales pitch for whatever consumer goods the advertiser was still manufacturing or had in stock. In *Life* on December 22, 1941, an ad stated, "Defense takes full priority at Oldsmobile" since the company was making cannon for fighter planes and high-caliber shells for field artillery "at the rate of thousands a day" (35). But farther down the page the copy managed to hype the new Olds B44 with "Hydra-Matic Drive."

Other more specious prewar ads tried to draw analogies—often pointless and far-fetched—between the armed forces and a company's goods or services. "When the Army goes into the field [for maneuvers] the Mimeograph duplicator goes with it." The ad later informs readers that "your office or factory" could have "the same speed and accuracy" of a Mimeograph machine (*Life* 8 Dec. 1941: 34). In other words, if it's good enough for the Army, it's good enough for you. In *Newsweek* on November 10, 1941, an ad for the Chase National Bank featured a handsome drawing of the huge guns on a battleship and a quotation from Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox: "The Navy is always ready." The copy then



FIGURE I

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declared, “Bank credit—like the U. S. Navy—also is always ready” to help finance defense industries (35). Ads for financial institutions were particularly prone to using absurd or gratuitous analogies. In the same issue of *Newsweek* as the Chase ad, the New England Mutual Life Insurance Company’s half-page ad was largely taken up with a drawing of some marines, rifles above their heads, sloshing through water toward (presumably) a beach. After a brief opening about how marines are “always ready to go anywhere,” the ad asks the reader, “Are you ready to meet *any* emergency—wherever and whenever it comes? Can you plunge into the uncertain years ahead as confidently as a Marine splashing shoreward through the surf?” (4). Once we were in the war there was a definite decline in analogy-based war ads. Initially, admen may have seen this approach as appealing to patriotism, but it must have eventually dawned on copywriters that such pointless, false analogies made little sense.

In the weeks just before and after Pearl Harbor, defense-associated magazine ads aimed at the general public, soon to be known as the home front, were comparatively few compared to the institutional advertising placed by large manufacturing firms. Some of these consumer-oriented ads continued to sell a product, but they were not what the advertising industry referred to as “business as usual” ads—ads devoted strictly to selling without taking any cognizance of the war at all. Two ads in *Ladies’ Home Journal* for November 1941 are typical of defense and, later, war-oriented consumer advertising, each one important for prefiguring a major theme in war ads. An ad for S.O.S. scouring pads barely mentions the defense buildup. The closest it gets is in its headline, “Aluminum is getting scarce,” after which the ad suggests ways to conserve aluminum pots and pans since no more will be readily available (82), adding that a primary means of conserving them is, of course, by cleaning them with S.O.S. In effect, then, the ad combines a plea for conserving a strategic material with selling the company’s product. In the same issue of *LHJ*, under a cartoon of a marching double boiler, teakettle, and percolator, and the headline “We’re in the Army Now,” the Aluminum Goods Manufacturing Company, maker of Mirro cookware, explains, without selling anything, why aluminum is needed for defense work (154). Like many ads during the war itself, Mirro’s patiently explains to the public why there is a shortage of something, tacitly asking for the public’s patience. The closest the ad comes to selling is in the final sen-

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tence reminding the reader that once the “national emergency” is over, Mirro products will again be available. This promise of “future goods” occurs frequently in war ads, often in conjunction with an appeal for the public to buy War Bonds (see Epilogue).

Like the popular songs of the war years, advertising frequently employed either humor or sentiment, two of the most effective means of sustaining or boosting both civilian and military morale (see Jones 28–29). The use of both approaches in war ads began well before Pearl Harbor. When sentiment—an appeal to the emotions rather than the intellect—came into play in ads, it ran the gamut from the tasteful and understated to the tasteless, overproduced, and maudlin. A fine example of the former type, created though not published prior to our entry into the war, is a Kodak ad in *Life* on December 15, 1941, in which, as was often the case, the artwork carried much of the ad’s sentimentality. Here (see fig. 2) in a living room decorated for Christmas, a soldier on leave stands with his mother, father, little sister, and the family dog. The caption reads, “Snapshots never meant so much as now.” The rest of the ad is a straightforward sales pitch for Kodak film, but the visual image of the importance photos have for family members in a time of national crisis makes the ad vivid and memorable.

Like sentiment in war ads, humor came in all shapes and sizes, from the sort that raised just a wry smile to the kind that elicited out-loud belly laughs. Wonderful in the quiet subtlety of its joke is an ad for Monel Water Heater Tanks in the *Post* on November 22, 1941, weeks before the United States entered the war. The artwork’s caption reads, in boldface, “**Portrait of Mrs. Whitlock’s New Water Heater Tank,**” but instead of what one would logically expect, the “portrait” is of a rather ominous-looking *military* tank rumbling over rocky terrain. The rest of the ad, like so many during the war itself, explains how defense priorities and production have caused not just shortages but the total unavailability of certain consumer products—like hot water heater tanks. The philosophy behind such advertising was that the more civilians understood *why* they couldn’t buy things they wanted or needed, the less they would grumble, a significant plus for home front morale. And if an ad could raise a smile, all the better.

In prewar ads, as in many more during the war itself, keeping up GI morale was often linked to folks on the home front buying certain products and sending them to the boys in stateside camps or overseas. With-



## Snapshots never meant so much as now

CHRISTMAS 1941 — you are safe, by now, but it will have special meaning. As the family comes together for this day of peace and plenty, every scene and episode will be more than ever important — precious things for snapshots to capture and keep, fresh as the day they happen.



The tender gift of all... A bright new Gift Package filled with Kodak Film — for every camera owner on your Christmas list. An invaluable gift — for bright and truly Christmas-making it will go to work. And through the day, and all the holiday season, this generous reserve supply of film will be on hand to keep the snapshot record. Get your gift packages of Kodak Film at your Kodak dealer's. Eastern Kodak Co., Rochester, N. Y.

*Give a Kodak...*

*Give Kodak Film*

SEE THE CHRISTMAS KODAKS AND BROWNIES AT YOUR KODAK DEALER'S

FIGURE 2. © Kodak 1941.



- [read Hidden Talents book](#)
- [download online WW1 at Sea \(Pocket Essential series\) online](#)
- [Nuclear Iran: The Birth of an Atomic State book](#)
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