

# PUSHING THE LIMIT:

## AMERICAN INDUSTRY DURING WORLD WAR II



The American home front during World War II is essentially a lesson in basic economics: as demand for war materiel skyrocketed, supply congruously followed suit—fueled by a workforce that previously had seen unemployment figures of 24.9 percent just eight years earlier. In the words of President Franklin D. Roosevelt: “Dr. New Deal was replaced by Dr. Win the War.”

The aircraft industry is prime example of this surge in national production: In May 1940, during the same week The Netherlands government surrendered to German forces and France was buckling under the threat of invasion, President Roosevelt went before Congress and requested an exponential increase in aircraft production. Just a year and a half earlier Roosevelt had asked that 3,000 additional aircraft be produced on the government’s dime. This time, he asked Congress to authorize funding for 50,000 warplanes.

The numbers are staggering. In 1939, just more than 2,000 aircraft were built in the United States. Only five years later, the aircraft industry reached its production peak, building more than 96,000 aircraft in a single year—more than the Soviet Union and Britain’s production combined. No amount of government-sponsored social programs could have instigated an economic surge of this magnitude.

Yet the irony remained that, while businessmen like Joe Keller prospered with the advent of government war contacts, hundreds of thousands of young American

men were perishing on the European and Pacific fronts. It was a dichotomy that was both unconscionable and unavoidable, given the desperate need for material and the inevitable profits earned from producing it.

As early as December 1941, spending on military preparedness had reached a stunning \$75 million a day. Over the next four years war material production continued to skyrocket: By 1945, the United States had produced more than 88,000 tanks, 257,000 artillery weapons, 2,679,000 machine guns, 2,382,000 military trucks and 324,000 warplanes. United States Steel Corp made more than 31 million kegs of nails and enough steel fencing to stretch from New York City to San Francisco.

Not only were factories asked to churn out material at an alarming rate—and it was considered the ultimate patriotic duty to do so—most also were switching from the products they’d previously produced and knew well (air

conditioners, washing machines and dryers, etc.) to complex tank and aircraft parts.

The automobile industry, for example, produced roughly three million cars in 1941. However, in the years following Pearl Harbor, fewer than 400 new vehicles were manufactured as the factories were retooled to produce tanks, aircraft and military trucks. The demand for planes was so high that pilots were known to sleep on cots outside the major plants, waiting to fly the planes away as they came off the production lines.

There is, however, an important distinction between a family-run business like Joe Keller’s and mega-corporations like U.S. Steel and General Motors. Given their massive production capabilities, government contracts disproportionately favored large corporations: 10 companies received 30 percent of the total \$240 billion spent on defense contracts during the war.



Aircrafts produced during World War II, by country

	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944	1945	TOTAL
US	2,141	6,086	19,433	47,836	85,898	96,318	46,001	303,713
Germany	8,295	10,826	12,401	15,409	24,807	40,593	7,540	119,871
Russia	10,382	10,565	15,735	25,436	34,900	40,300	20,900	158,218
UK	7,940	15,049	20,094	23,672	26,263	26,461	12,070	131,549
Japan	4,467	4,768	5,088	8,861	16,693	28,180	8,263	76,320
TOTAL	33,225	47,294	73,751	121,214	188,561	231,852	94,774	789,671



# WORLD WAR II:

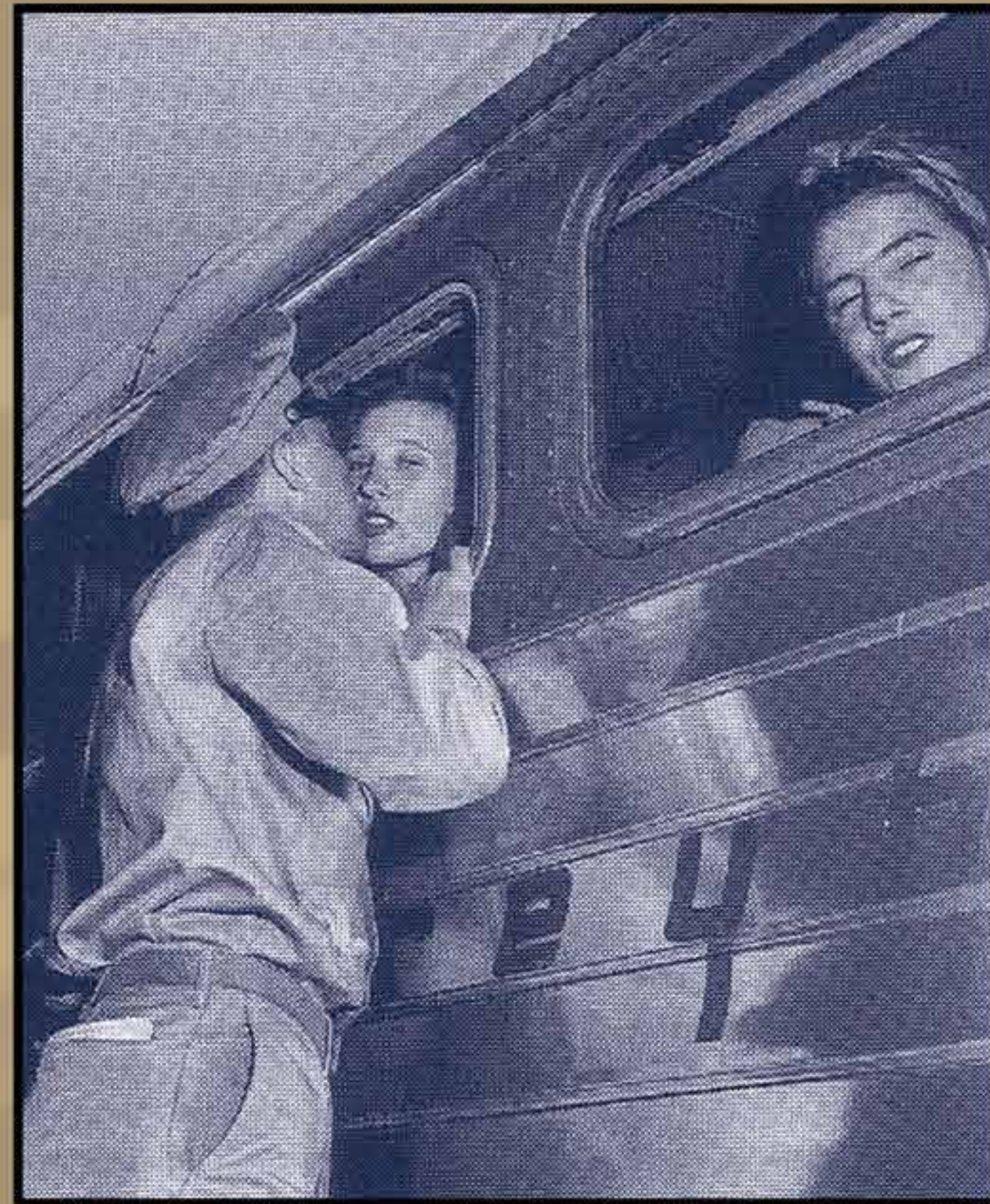
## THE DRAFTED AND THE MISSING

### MARINE THOUGHT MISSING SENDS MOTHER LETTER

Pvt. Eugene J. Fuller, an 18 year old marine who had been reported missing in action Sept. 4 by the war department, took time out from playing cards to write to his mother Oct. 8. The letter was received yesterday by his mother, Mrs. Lillie Fuller, 201 Dean Street, Woodstock. Her son said he had landed in the Solomon Islands in early August and was feeling fine. Pvt. Fuller has been in the marines since Jan. 29.



Pvt. Eugene J. Fuller



### Soldiers Missing in Action During World War II

U.S. Army	17,096
U.S. Army Air Forces	20,683
U.S. Marine Corps	3,119
U.S. Navy	32,636
Other	850
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>74,384</b>

In 1939, the Army had fewer than 200,000 men in uniform who could be sent overseas with proper training. As the threat of war loomed larger, Congress realized the government could not rely on volunteers and Uncle Sam posters to build a competitive army. So in September 1940, President Roosevelt signed the Selective Training and Service Act, the first peacetime draft in the country's history. The law required all men ages 21-35 to hand over their personal information to local draft boards, thereby submitting themselves to the national draft lottery. That age bracket later would be expanded to men ages 18-45 after the U.S. officially entered the war.

After the law was signed, more than 6,000 draft boards were promptly set up around the country. Families

waited with bated breath for Secretary of War Henry Stimson to reach into the lottery "war bowl" and pick out a capsule that would contain a single slip of paper with a number from 1 through 7,836 printed on it. The first number was drawn Oct. 29, 1940: 158, held by 6,175 men across the country.

By the war's end, more than 35 million men had registered with the Army, and 10 million had been drafted. The American death toll from World War II hovers just above one million, but almost 75,000 soldiers remain Missing in Action, the highest number from any American war. Roughly 20,000 served in the Army Air Force, and their planes crashed in inaccessible mountainous regions or into foreign waters.

### SURVIVORS' GUILT: COMING HOME AFTER WAR

To a certain degree, Chris Keller suffers from what later would be diagnosed as Survivor's Guilt, a psychological term originally coined in the 1960s to describe survivors of the Holocaust who felt they weren't entitled to happiness or wealth after the trauma of the concentration camps.

The arbitrary nature of war—the sheer incomprehensibility of why certain people die and others live—provides an unstable entry point back into society for most survivors.

In his introduction to the 2000 edition of *All My Sons*, British scholar Christopher Bigsby writes: "Chris feels guilty about his new happiness. In the war he led his men to their death. He is a survivor who feels the guilt of the survivor, a theme that Miller would return to in *After the Fall* (1964). Beyond that, he can see no connection between the sacrifices of war and the way of life it was supposedly fought to preserve."

Robert Jay Lifton, a psychiatrist who studied psychological disorders in World War II veterans, describes Survivor's Guilt this way: "It is the soldier-survivor's sense of having betrayed his buddies by letting them die while he stayed alive—at the same time feeling relieved and even joyous that it was he who survived. ... His pleasure in surviving becoming a further source of guilt. Essentially, the survivor is plagued by the question: how can I be thankful and guilty at the same time?"

This syndrome is accentuated in Chris' case: His brother died as well as his entire company. When we meet Chris at the beginning of Act I, he is making his first move since the war toward owning his much-tainted happiness—asking Ann to visit.



# ARTHUR MILLER:

“I think the tragic feeling is evoked in us when we are in the presence of a character who is ready to lay down his life, if need be, to secure one thing—his sense of personal dignity. From Orestes to Hamlet, Medea to Macbeth, the underlying struggle is that of the individual attempting to gain his ‘rightful’ position in his society.” —Arthur Miller

## HIS BODY OF WORK

### TIMELINE OF ARTHUR MILLER'S CAREER

1936—Miller writes his first play, *No Villain*, in a playwriting class at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He wins the university's prestigious Avery Hopwood Award for excellence in writing.

1938–1944—Miller joins the Federal Theater Project and begins to write radio plays, some of which are broadcast on CBS.

1944—*The Man Who Had All the Luck* opens on Broadway to disappointing reviews; it closes after four performances.

1945—Miller writes *Focus*, a novel about an anti-Semite who is mistaken for a Jew.

1947—*All My Sons*, directed by Elia Kazan, premieres on Broadway to rave reviews.

1949—The opening of *Death of a Salesman* solidifies Miller's place in the American theatrical and literary canons.

1949—Miller's now-famous essay *The Tragedy of the Common Man* is published in *The New York Times*.

1950—Miller again confronts themes of communal and social responsibility in his adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*, which opens at the Broadhurst Theater in New York.

1953—*The Crucible* opens on Broadway, sparking government suspicion about Miller's “un-American” lifestyle.

1955—*A View from the Bridge* opens on Broadway, introducing audiences to yet another tragic Miller character, Eddie Carbone.

1961—Miller writes the screenplay for *The Misfits*, based on his short story. The movie stars Clark Gable and Marilyn Monroe, Miller's then-wife.

1964—*After the Fall*, a play obviously inspired by Miller's failed marriage to Marilyn Monroe, opens on Broadway.

1967—*I Don't Need You Anymore*, a collection of Miller's short stories, is published.

1968—*The Price*, which boldly confronts the themes of materialism and class, opens on Broadway.

1969—*In Russia* is published, a book that Miller writes with his photographer wife Inge Morath, on their impressions of Russian culture during the Cold War.

1970—*Fame*, Miller's television play about a playwright troubled by his own success, is published. The play is broadcast on NBC eight years later.

1972—*The Creation of the World and Other Business*, a play inspired by the book of Genesis, is considered Miller's first commercial failure since *The Man Who Had All the Luck*.

1977—*In the Country*, a series of photographs by Morath with text written by Miller on their life in Roxbury, Connecticut, is published.

1980—*The American Clock* opens on Broadway, featuring characters loosely based on Miller's family.

1984—“*Salesman*” in *Beijing*, a book detailing the challenges and insights of directing a decidedly American play in a foreign country, is published.

1987—Miller's autobiography, *Timebends: A Life*, is published

1990—Miller writes the screenplay for *Everybody Wins*, a detective film. Although the film receives dreadful reviews, Miller's reputation is untarnished.

1994—*Broken Glass*, based on the Jewish pogrom in Nazi Germany, premieres at the Long Wharf Theatre in New Haven, Connecticut. It later wins the Tony Award for Best Play.

1996—Miller writes the screenplay for *The Crucible*.

2002—*Resurrection Blues*, Miller's biting comedy about religious dogma, premieres at The Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis.

2004—Miller's final play, *Finishing the Picture*, premieres at the Goodman Theatre just months before his death. The play is a dramatization of his time shooting the movie *The Misfits*, which starred his wife Marilyn Monroe.



Photos (top to bottom): Michael Gambon with Elizabeth Bell and Suzan Sylvester in the 1987 production of *A View from the Bridge* at the Cottesloe Theatre in London; TimeLine's 2001 production of Miller's *The Crucible*, recipient of a 2002 Non-Equity Jeff Award for Outstanding Production; Kevin Anderson, Brian Dennehy and Ted Koch in the 1997 production of *Death of a Salesman* at The Goodman Theatre. Photo credits (top and bottom): *Arthur Miller: A Playwright's Life and Works* by Enoch Brater. Photo (center): Lara Goetsch.

### THE TRAGIC HERO IN MILLER'S WORK

The Greek overtones in Miller's work have been the subject of countless high-school English essays and graduate dissertations. Whether it is Joe Keller in *All My Sons*, John Proctor in *The Crucible* or Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman*, Miller's uncompromising exploration of human mistakes and regret is at the core of his literary genius. These men, though unforgivable in their sins and failures, are as sympathetic as they are flawed.

In the Greek tragedies of Sophocles, Aeschylus and Euripides (and, later, in Shakespeare's tragedies), the tragic hero is marked by a fatal flaw—usually hubris or arrogance—that compels him to commit a grave and irrevocable error. The hero then descends into a journey marked by denial, suffering and isolation, only after which does he realize that death is the only possible course. Only with the tragic hero gone can moral order be restored; with that death, freedom comes for all other entangled characters.

However, drawing parallels between Miller's two most famous protagonists—Willy Loman and Joe Keller—is tricky business. Joe Keller is a pillar among men: beloved by the town in which he lives and the boss of a powerful business—a success by all measurable accounts. He is no Willy Loman, accustomed to failure and rejection. Though both men follow a similar trajectory and certainly share a similar end, Keller is more similar to the kings of Greek tragedy than his literary counterpart.