

Joe Dimaggio, baseball star from the N.Y. Yankees (top right) giving the V for Victory sign in 1942, when he went into the Army during a world that seemed unreal, but was real.

Millions of Americans poured into war plants and bases in 1942 and that quietly gave impetus to Hollywood films on the homefront. When America entered World War II, all the studios put their resources at the disposal of the country, because they knew time was of the essence. These were not the horse and buggy days of 1776. Danger lurked.

### **The Cartoon that won an Academy**

There is a difference in democracy and fascism. The Disney Studios, undaunted and unafraid, left the world of pure fantasy, entertainment and peace and became involved in fighting fascism, not with guns, but with a most remarkable avenue. Creativity.

One of the most imaginative group of artists from any industrialized nation in combat, came from the Disney Studios. *Der Fuehrer's Face*, was a great new animation in 1942, with a catchy melody written by Oliver Wallace. Donald Duck, in Nazi-occupied Europe, goes through a metamorphosis-dream as he is working for the Nazis, with rolling wheels, a merry-go-round of fantasy and creativity; it won an Academy Award for best Animated Short Subject. *Der Fuehrer's Face*, was released by Walt Disney and RKO Pictures.

Winner of an academy for the 1940 Technicolor *Fantasia*, the Disney Studios came back in 1942 with another gem, that even today, more than half a century later, is still recognized. *Der Fuehrer's Face*, the cartoon that won an Oscar for 1942, was done during the darkest hours of WW II the United States had ever faced. The Axis were running their victory laps and were at their height. Untold thousands were made to feel the whip of slave vs master, and the crematoriums in Europe were burning flesh with their hideous fires.

Many of the horrors of barbarism were not fully known then, and the avenue for victory was not yet stamped on history.

Everyone was still trying to figure out how to stop Nazism and their Axis partners, which were still steam rolling through history.

So, Disney and his staff put together a 7 min. 50 sec. min cartoon that poked fun at all three Axis. Upper right, the opening sequence, Disney copied one of the favorite styles that Fascism loved to attract and hook people with, a marching band. Marches and nationalism was a

## FOOD WILL WIN THE WAR

America had to deal with real or perceived hostile threats coast to coast. Soon after Pearl Harbor, a booklet, "When the Sirens Scream," was issued in North Dade County, Fl. Citizens were warned, in the event of a paratrooper attack, to lock their cars and immobilize them so as not to provide transportation for the enemy. In California, the State Attorney General had been inundated with letters from civilians asking if it was OK to shoot enemy paratroopers. It is said he replied it was legal. Fearing an attack to murder the President, MP guards were deployed around the White House grounds, along with anti-aircraft guns. It was rumored the White House, in order to show it was not afraid, did not do a blackout; actually, initially it lacked enough cloth to cover all windows, so they used shades of black sateen and black paint. This was not a rumor: anyone looking suspicious in Washington DC was promptly arrested. Gone were the days when people could walk in and ask to see the President, or, as in 1939, the incident when 2 teens strolled in, with no ID's, no escort, no appointment, until they found the President and his wife--all they wanted was an autograph. And, that was no rumor. Ah, yes, how to save the world...better start in your own backyard first.

The vast majority of cartoons came after 1942. Notables of 1942: *Blitz Wolf*, *Der Fuehrer's Face*, *Food Will Win The War*, *The New Spirit*, *Out of the Frying Pan and into the Firing Line*, and *Saludos Amigos*, in alphabetical order.

The Studios and animators were not afraid to use their most beloved characters. One of the most timely for 1942 was the cartoon presented by the Conservation Division of the War Production Board, called *Out of the Frying Pan and into the Firing Line*, a 3 minute, 18 sec. Walt Disney production. It starred Minnie Mouse and Pluto. They showed why bacon grease was important in winning the war. The audience was told that every year two billion pounds of waste kitchen fats were thrown away. These fats (bacon grease, frying fat and meat drippings) were not to be wasted but taken to the meat department of your local store. Stores had an insignia denoting which stores were collection points.

Minnie and Pluto showed how to strain the fats, pour it into a can and where to store and take it. Why were all these fats important?

They were needed for making glycerin, and glycerin made explosives.

Another cartoon made to show a purpose was *Food Will Win The War*, another Disney educational animation, and when I say educational, I am not kidding. Albeit the main theme was, "We are fighting the savage enemies of freedom," naturally, the way it was presented and completed during the first year of war shows the dedication and hard work--all without the benefit of computers. Remember, for at least half of 1942, war events were pretty bleak. Yet, here you have Disney showing the role U.S. farmers--far away from the war



fronts—played in winning the war. Disney’s writers, researchers and animators mobilized their brains on this one.

There was no need to cite government rules, policies and instructions. By just showing the mountains of numbers with pictures, the audience got the message—we had to keep up production. That was a central theme, whether you were in a factory or farm.

American farm acreage was, the narrator put it, greater than the combined areas of 14 countries (Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Spain, Portugal, France, Switzerland, Great Britain, Poland, Belgium, Czech-Slovakia [Slovakia declared its complete independence March 14, 1939], Holland, Yugoslavia, and Greece.)

This cartoon piece starts by momentarily showing you that people in other lands are in a worse situation than us.

Then comes the columns of milking machines, corn pickers, potato diggers, planting machines, regiments of tractors, combines and trucks. America had 30 billion pounds of potatoes, some two billion bushels of corn, 160 million bushels of soybeans, another billion, eight hundred million pounds of tomatoes, over 52 billion pounds of wheat, one hundred twenty-five billion pounds of milk, some fifty billion eggs were laid—enough to make a gigantic fried egg to cover-up all of the United States—plus some thirty billion pounds of meat and 100 million pigs. Of course you see a long line of marching pigs, four abreast, along a long, winding road, ready to go to war—or the cooking pan—for America.

They march with a trio of pigs, one a drummer, one

Instead of signing off at 1:15 a.m., radio stations around the country began providing radio programs for the “Swing Shift.” This idea was inaugurated by a program director at KNX of Los Angeles, a CBS local outlet, by late January.

An idea to promote war-bond activity, patriotism and also self-preservation in the face of rationing of paper, was hit upon by Paul MacNamara, the editor of *Cosmopolitan* and Hearst Corp. publicist. He was able to bring together a most imaginative group of artists, editors and advertising departments from about 500 U.S. magazines. In unprecedented fashion, it demonstrated an industrialized nation's togetherness in 1942. The campaign was called United We Stand and hit stride in July, with a flag-cover campaign. To the relief of the National Publishers Association (now the Magazine Publishers of America) there was no suppression of civilian publishing. It promoted patriotism, and the important role of keeping the nation informed. A wide range of trade magazines participated, from the famous like *Time* to *The Ring*, a boxing periodical. Billy Conn and Joe Lewis are on the cover.



holding the flag and one playing the fife with a bandana leading the pack. The only thing missing was an oinker looking like Washington, crossing the Delaware on a boat.

The total yearly aggregate of fruits, we are reminded, was enough to make enough dazzling juices—represented by a water reservoir of 6 fruit colored juices flowing out—to power Old Faithful for 4 months.

My two favorites of this 5 min., 39 sec cartoon are the wheat and canned vegetables animations. We're told that over 52 billion pounds of wheat were produced by the American farmer, that if turned into flour, would be enough to build several Egyptian pyramids of loaves—in fact, enough pyramids equal to the length of the Suez Canal, with each pyramid placed a mile apart.

Each war year, American farmers grew enough vegetables that, if they were all canned, so the narrator tells us, there would be enough to cover the Great Wall of China—over 1 billion bushels.

America in 1942 had 30 million farmers—before many were drafted. The American woman later went to the farms—but, that's reserved for another chapter. Despite the stresses of all the war years, and a few floods, they never faltered. There are too many examples of food and animation to write about, but the sub-theme was that, besides us, people worldwide were counting on U.S. agriculture and her U.S. transportation infrastructure to help defeat the enemies of freedom. These participants were, in the cartoon and in real life, unafraid to fill the holds of Victory ships.