

**GOLD STAR MOTHERS: PILGRIMAGE OF REMEMBRANCE
WILL-TV**

SCRIPT

VOICEOVER: IN EVERY WAR THERE IS LOSS.

WINIFRED LANCY: THE TELEGRAM IT SAID, "SORRY TO INFORM YOU YOUR SON HAS BEEN KILLED" AND IT TOLD THE DATE AND THE NAME. ALL I COULD SEE IN THAT WAS KILLED.

VO: FOR EVERY LOSS THERE IS SOMEONE LEFT BEHIND.

IRIS WALDEN: YOU NEVER, NEVER FORGET.

VO: THIS IS A STORY OF POLITICAL DEALS AND AMERICA'S COLOR BARRIER.

BARBARA RANSBY: THE GOVERNMENT WAS REALLY SYMOBLIZING IN SOME OF THE MOST PAINFUL WAYS THE DEVALUATION OF BLACK LIFE.

VO: THIS IS A STORY OF MOTHERS SAYING GOODBYE.

G. KURT PIEHLER: THERE WERE THESE MOTHERS WHO THOUGHT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO NOT ONLY INDIVIDUALLY REMEMBER THE SACRIFICES OF THEIR SONS AND DAUGHTERS BUT ALSO TO REMEMBER THEIR SACRIFICE ON BEHALF OF THE NATION.

VO: THIS PROGRAM WAS MADE POSSIBLE IN PART BY A GRANT FROM THE ILLINOIS HUMANITIES COUNCIL, THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES, THE ILLINOIS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, AND THE FRIENDS OF WILL.

VO: ON MAY 7, 1930, OVER TWO HUNDRED MOTHERS BEGAN A PILGRIMAGE TO THE GRAVES OF THEIR SONS.

REBECCA JO PLANT: I THINK TODAY WHEN WE HEAR ABOUT A SOLDIER LOSING HIS LIFE, THE FIRST THING WE THINK ABOUT IS, DOES HE HAVE CHILDREN? DID HE LEAVE BEHIND A WIFE? BUT AT THIS PARTICULAR TIME PEOPLE REALLY TENDED TO THINK FIRST AND FOREMOST ABOUT THE LOSS THAT THE MOTHER MUST SUFFER.

LISA M. BUDREAU: THE RHETORIC OF THE DAY WAS THAT A WOMAN'S GREATEST SERVICE UNTO THE NATION WAS THAT A ROLE OF MOTHERHOOD.

RANSBY: THE MOTHER FIGURE THEN SYMBOLIZED SOMETHING HEALTHLY AND SAFE AND INNOCENT, SOMETHING ALL-AMERICAN.

PIEHLER: THIS IS IN THE ERA WHERE THE GOVERNMENT ENCOURGES MOTHERS DAY.

VO: THE GOVERNMENT GAVE THEM A GOLD STAR IN HONOR OF THEIR SACRIFICE, BUT IT WAS NOT ENOUGH. THEY FOUGHT FOR THE RIGHTS TO SAY GOODBYE.

[MUSIC]

MARVIN FLETCHER: IN NO OTHER WAR DID WE TAKE THE SURVIVORS TO THE BATTLEFIELDS. SO IT TELLS US SOMETHING ABOUT AMERICAN RESPONSE TO WORLD WAR I. IT WAS A SIGNIFICANT EVENT IN AMERICAN LIFE, BUT IT WAS DIFFERENT. IT WAS SEEN AS A CRUSADE.

PIEHLER: WORLD WAR I WAS PROBABLY THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL WAR OF THE 20TH CENTURY. IT WAS REALLY MORE CONTROVERSIAL THAN VIETNAM.

BUDREAU: IT WAS A VERY ISOLATIONIST TIME IN AMERICAN HISTORY AND PEOPLE WERE VERY CONTENT TO JUST LIVE WITHIN OUR OWN BORDERS AND LEAVE EUROPE TO FIGHT ITS OWN WARS.

PIEHLER: MANY OF THOSE PROTESTING THE U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN WORLD WAR I WERE WOMEN. THEY WERE THE MOTHERS, WIVES, AND SISTERS OF THE MEN WHO WOULD BE DRAFTED. PRESIDENT WILSON REALIZED HE NEEDED TO GAIN THEIR SUPPORT IN ORDER TO RAISE A WARTIME ARMY.

PLANT: HE WAS VERY ANXIOUS TO CHECK THE KINDS OF SENTIMENTAL ATTACHMENTS THAT MOTHERS HAD TO THEIR SONS.

PIEHLER: THE PEACE MOVEMENT PARTICULARLY ARGUED THAT MOTHERS SHOULD NOT ALLOW THEIR SONS TO GO TO WAR.

[SONG]

“I DIDN’T RAISE MY BOY TO BE A SOLDIER. I BROUGHT HIM UP TO BE MY PRIDE AND JOY.”

PIEHLER: ONE OF THE BIG SONGS IS "I DID NOT RAISE MY BOY TO BE A SOLDIER." THE MOTHERS DON'T GIVE UP THEIR SONS TO BE WARRIORS. WHAT I THINK'S INTERESTING IS THAT THERE'S AN OPPOSITE VIEW OF THIS, IN THE NOTION THAT YES YOU DO RAISE YOUR SON TO BE A

SOLDIER AND THAT PART OF YOUR DUTY AND CITIZENSHIP IS IN FACT TO RAISE YOUR SON TO MAKE THAT SACRIFICE WILLINGLY.

VO: THE GOVERNMENT USED PROPAGANDA TO CONVINCED WOMEN IT WAS THEIR DUTY TO SUPPORT THE WAR.

PLANT: THEY TRIED TO MAKE A DIVISION BETWEEN GOOD AND BAD MOTHERS AND THE BAD MOTHERS WERE THE WOMEN WHO WERE SELFISH. THEY WERE OVERLY ATTACHED TO THEIR SON IN SUGGESTING THAT THEY EVADE THEIR DUTY TO THE NATION.

VO: BUT PROPAGANDA WAS NOT ENOUGH. WILSON WAS WILLING TO MAKE A DEAL. HE SAW THE OVERLAP BETWEEN LEADERS OF THE PEACE MOVEMENT AND LEADERS OF THE SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT. HE PROMISED TO ENDORSE A WOMEN'S RIGHT TO VOTE IF THE LEADERS SUPPORTED THE WAR.

RANSBY: WILSON'S STANCE IS OFTEN SEEN AS A KIND OF OPORTUNISTIC MOVE TO RALLY WOMEN'S SUPPORT, TO INVITE WOMEN TO BE FULL CITIZENS BUT AS A CONDITION OF THAT THEY BE WILLING TO SUPPORT WAR AND TO BE WILLING TO GIVE UP THEIR SONS IN A WAR EFFORT.

VO: SUFFRAGE LEADER CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT ACCEPTED WILSON'S OFFER.

PLANT: AND SHE DOES THIS IN A VERY STRATEGIC SENSE THAT THIS WAS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN TO SHOW THEIR LOYALTY TO THE NATION. THEN BE ABLE TO ASSERT THEIR RIGHTS.

VO: WITH THE SUPPORT OF WOMEN, WILSON OFFERED THE ALLIES AMERICA'S GREATEST RESOURCE – MEN.

[SONG]

“PACK YOUR LITTLE KIT. SHOW YOUR GRIT. DO YOUR BIT. YANKEES TO RIGHT FROM THE TOWN AND THE TANK. MAKE YOUR MOTHER PROUD OF YOU AND THE OLD RED, WHITE, AND BLUE.”

VO: BY 1918, OVER TWO MILLION MEN JOINED THE ARMED FORCES.

WILSON'S CALL TO JOIN THE CRUSADE SPREAD ACROSS THE COUNTRY TO THE SMALL LUMBER TOWN OF BEND, OREGON. AS THE MEN OF HIS HOMETOWN HEADED OFF TO WAR SEVENTEEN YEAR OLD PERCY STEVENS AND HE MADE UP HIS MIND TO JOIN THEM.

WILLIAM STEVENS PRINCE: PEOPLE WHO COULD ENLIST, WHO WERE HEALTHY ENOUGH TO SERVE, AND WHO DID NOT DO IT, WERE CALLED SLACKERS. AND PERCY SAID HE DIDN'T WANT TO BE A SLACKER-AND SO AT 18, NOT QUITE 18 YEARS OLD HE ENLISTED IN THE ARMY.

VO [PERCY STEVENS]: JANUARY 18, 1918, DEAR EVERYBODY, WELL HERE WE ARE COOPED UP IN THE BARRACKS WAITING FOR ORDERS TO LEAVE FOR SOME PLACE OR OTHER MAYBE FRANCE. YESTERDAY I TOOK OUT A \$10,000 INSURANCE POLICY. IF I CAST OFF IT WILL COME IN HANDY AT HOME. IF I GET DISABLED FOR GOOD THEN I'LL HAVE IT TO LIVE ON. WORTH MORE DEAD THAN ALIVE." PERCY STEVENS

VO: ONE WEEK LATER, PERCY STEVENS BOARDED A 2000-PASSENGER TROOP SHIP NAMED THE "TUSCANIA" AND HEADED ACROSS THE ATLANTIC.

ON THE FIFTH OF FEBRUARY, 1918 THE "TUSCANIA" NEARED THE COAST OF IRELAND. ON THE SANDY BOTTOM OF THE CHANNEL, ONE OF GERMANY'S NEWEST SUBMARINES THE UB77 TRACKED THE TROOPSHIP AFTER THE "TUSCANIA" WAS HIT, PERCY STEVENS WAITED TO BOARD A LIFE BOAT. HIS BUNK MATE ROSWELL BLAKE FOUND HIM ON DECK.

PRINCE: HE SAID HE WAS VERY CHEERFUL, AND NOT FRIGHTENED. HE WAS HOPEFUL THEN THAT HE HAD SURVIVED AND MADE IT TO SHORE SOMEHOW.

VO: BUT THOSE THAT MADE IT INTO THE LIFEBOATS WERE NOT THE LUCKY ONES. THE SOLDIERS STRUGGLED TO KEEP THE BOATS FROM FLIPPING THEM INTO THE FRIGID WINTER SEA.

PRINCE: WHEN THEIR LIFEBOATS CRASHED, THEY WERE THROWN INTO THE SEA AND WASHED UP ONTO THE ROCKS, AND WASHED OUT AND WASHED BACK IN AGAIN BACK AND FORTH, AND SOME OF THEM MANAGED TO CLING ONTO THE ROCKS. SO PERCY WAS NOT ONE OF THOSE LUCKY ONES; HE WAS DROWNED THERE, AND HIS BODY WAS WASHED UP ONTO THE SHORE.

VO: NEWS SPREAD ACROSS THE COUNTRY THAT THE FIRST AMERICAN TROOPSHIP HAD BEEN TORPEDOED. IN BEND, OREGON, PERCY'S MOTHER LAURA STEVENS WAITED FOR NEWS OF HER SON'S FATE. IT CAME ON VALENTINES DAY.

PRINCE: IT IS NOT SWEET AND BEAUTIFUL TO DIE FOR YOUR COUNTRY, NOT THE WAY SOME OF THE SOLDIERS DIED. DIED OF GAS FOR EXAMPLE AND BEING BLOWN TO BITS. SO PERCY DIDN'T HAVE THAT ATTITUDE EITHER, AND I DIDN'T HAVE THAT ATTITUDE EITHER, BUT I KNEW AS A

YOUNG MAN HE DID WHAT HE HAD TO DO, JUST AS MANY OF US DID IN ALL THE WARS WE EXPERIENCE.

VO: PERCY STEVENS WAS BURIED ALONGSIDE 35 OTHERS SHIPMATES ON THE SHORE OF THE BAY HE STRUGGLED TO REACH. THE SINKING OF THE "TUSCANIA" SHOCKED THE COUNTRY, BUT IT DID NOT QUELL WILSON'S CALL TO ACTION. THOUSANDS OF AMERICAN TROOPS ARRIVED IN EUROPE EVERY WEEK.

EDWARD M. COFFMAN: WHERE PEOPLE HAD NEVER BEEN TWENTY MILES BEYOND THEIR HOME, WHEN THEY WERE DRAFTED, AND THEN THEY GO TO EUROPE. GOOD NIGHT.

VO: EVEN THOUGH THE BOYS WERE FAR FROM HOME. GENERAL PERSHING WANTED THEM TO REMEMBER THEIR MOTHERS. HE ASKED HIS MEN TO WRITE TO MOM ON AMERICA'S NEWEST HOLIDAY - MOTHER'S DAY. THE YMCA DISTRIBUTED STATIONERY AND PENCILS SO THAT EVERY SOLDIER COULD FULFILL HIS REQUEST.

PLANT: IN CONSTANTLY REMINDING SOLDIERS OF THEIR MOTHERS, IT WAS THOUGHT THAT IT WOULD KEEP THEM FROM STRAYING FROM THE STRAIGHT AND NARROW. IT WOULD KEEP THEM AWAY FROM TEMPATION AND VICE.

VO: ONE OF THE NEW ARRIVALS IN EUROPE WAS 20 YEAR OLD, FRED ZIEGLER OF DURAND IL.

HE LEFT BEHIND HIS TWIN SISTERS AND HIS MOTHER LOUISE. SHE WAS NOW THE SOLE PROVIDER FOR HER FAMILY.

ED BLISS: I AM SURE SHE HAD VERY MIXED EMOTIONS ABOUT IT. YOU KNOW LOSING SOME OF THE INCOME THAT HE WAS HELPING WITH AND OF COURSE FEARS ABOUT WHETHER HE WOULD COME BACK OR NOT.

FRED BLISS: EVERYBODY WAS REAL HYPED UP. WE WERE AT WAR AND WE WERE GOING TO WIN THIS THING IN SIX, EIGHT MONTHS AND BE ALL OVER JUST IN ONE BIG ADVENTURE.

VO: BUT SOON AFTER THE SOLDIERS ARRIVED IN EUROPE, THEY LEARNED WHAT LIFE HAD BEEN LIKE FOR THE ALLIED FORCES FOR THE PAST THREE YEARS.

MITCHEL YOCKELSON: THEY'RE SENT TO THE FRONT AND THEY'RE IN THESE TRENCHES WHICH ARE MUDDY AND NASTY AND DIRTY. SANITARY CONDITIONS ARE NOT THE GREATEST. MEN ARE COMING DOWN WITH DISEASES. WORSE OFF, YOU ARE HEARING CONSTANT SHELLING FROM

THE ENEMY. YOU ARE HEARING SCREAMS OF MEN. YOU ARE BEING TOLD BY YOUR COMMANDING OFFICER THAT YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE TO LEAVE THESE TRENCHES AND RUN OVER THE TOP TOWARDS THE ENEMY THAT IS CONSTANTLY FIRING AT YOU.

VO: IN OCTOBER OF 1918, FRED ZIELGER FOUGHT IN ONE OF THE WARS HEAVIEST BATTLES. GENERAL PERSHING REMEMBERED THE MEUSE – ARGONNE CAMPAIGN INVOLVED THE HEAVIEST STRAIN ON THE ARMY AND ON ME.

FRED BLISS: I AM SURE THAT IT MUST HAVE REALLY OPENED HIS EYES AND MADE HIM THINK, HEY THIS IS REAL. THIS IS HERE AND THIS IS NOW.

ED BLISS: THE TONE OF HIS LETTERS CHANGED, TOO. THEN IT SEEMED LIKE HE WOULD MENTION MORE ABOUT THE FAMILY AND MISSING HIS FAMILY AND THE GIRLS AND HIS MOTHER.

VO [FRED ZIEGLER]: OCTOBER 3, 1918 MY DEAR SISTERS, I HAVE BEEN IN THE LINES 24 DAYS NOW AND NO RELIEF IN SIGHT. I HAVE JUST SHAVED TODAY FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 3 WEEKS AND BELIEVE ME I WAS A PRETTY GOOD LOOKING KID! YOU ASK IN EVERY LETTER WHEN THIS WAR WILL BE OVER. I DON'T KNOW. BUT WE ALL LIVE IN HOPE YOU KNOW. THE WAY I FIGURE IS THAT EVERY DAY WE SPEND OVER HERE IS ONE DAY NEARER HOME. LOT'S OF LOVE TO ALL, AS EVER YOUR BROTHER FRED M. ZIEGLER.

VO: ON OCTOBER 11, 1918 FRED ZIEGLER WAS HIT BY SHRAPNEL AND KILLED INSTANTLY. HE WAS ONE OF 25,000 AMERICANS WHO LOST THEIR LIVES IN THE MEUSE-ARGONNE CAMPAIGN.

CONSTANCE POTTER: I DON'T THINK PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES APPRECIATE THE DEVASTATION, THE NUMBER OF MEN WHO DIED IN WORLD WAR ONE.

COFFMAN: A HUNDRED AND TWENTY THOUSAND PEOPLE WERE KILLED OR WOUNDED IN A PERIOD OF SIX WEEKS. SO THAT WAS ABOUT TWENTY THOUSAND A WEEK.

VO: WORLD WAR I WAS THE FIRST TIME AMERICANS LOST SUCH A LARGE NUMBER OF MEN ON FOREIGN SOIL. THE MILITARY HAD MADE A PROMISE TO EVERY MAN WHO ENLISTED. BUT IT WAS A PROMISE THEY DID NOT KNOW HOW TO KEEP.

FLETCHER: THEY TOLD EVERY SOLDIER THAT IF THEY DIED OVERSEAS, THEY WOULD BRING THE BODIES HOME. SO THE SOLDIERS KNEW THEY WOULD NOT NECESSARILY BE BURIED IN A FOREIGN GRAVEYARD.

PIEHLER: AND THIS LEAD TO A HUGE MOVEMENT TO BRING THE WAR DEAD BACK IT WAS AN INTERESTING MOVEMENT BECAUSE IT INCLUDED PEOPLE YOU WOULD THINK THEY WANT THEIR LOVED ONES BACK. MOTHERS, FATHERS, WIDOWS. BUT IT ALSO INCLUDED FUNERAL DIRECTORS. FUNERAL DIRECTORS SAW THIS AS A BIG MONEY MAKING OPPORTUNITY.

VO: THE FUNERAL DIRECTORS ARGUED THAT THEY ONLY WANTED TO GIVE SOLACE TO THE FAMILIES OF THE SOLDIERS.

VO: AS PROFESSIONAL EXPERTS AND ARTISTS LET IT BY OUR PART TO BE ABLE TO BEAUTIFY OUR SOLDIER DEAD – THAT THE MOTHER, THE WIFE THE SISTER MAY LOOK UPON THE FACE OF HER LOVED ONE AND SAY “HOW BEAUTIFUL!” MRS. CUDDEBACK, NEW YORK STATE EMBALMERS ASSOCIATION.

PIEHLER: THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT GETS SCORES OF LETTERS FROM MOTHERS PARTICULARLY SAYING, “MY SON FOUGHT FOR HIS COUNTRY AND DIED. YOU OWE IT TO ME TO BRING HIM BACK HOME.”

BUDREAU: THE EMOTION IN THESE LETTERS IN THIS WRITTEN WORD IS INCREDIBLE.

[BUGLE SOUNDS]

VO: I WANT TO BRING MY HUSBAND HOME AS SOON AS PERMITTED. I WISH TO ATTEND TO THE WHOLE THING MYSELF AND NO ONE IN THE WORLD HAS MY PERMISSION TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT. NOTHING WILL BE DONE WITHOUT MY PERMISSION IN WRITING.” HELEN CONRAD, WINCHESTER VIRGINIA

VO: FORMER PRESIDENT TEDDY ROOSEVELT ADDED HIS VOICE TO THE NATIONAL DEBATE ON HOW BEST TO HONOR THE WAR DEAD. DURING THE WAR ALL THREE OF HIS SONS HAD SERVED THEIR COUNTRY. HIS YOUNGEST QUENTIN WAS AN AVIATOR.

ON JULY 14 1918, HE WAS SHOT DOWN OVER FRANCE. ROOSEVELT WAS DEVASTATED BY THE NEWS,

FLETCHER: ROOSEVELT WANTED HIS SON TO REMAIN OVERSEAS AND HE PLANNED TO BUILD A MEMORIAL AT THE SITE. TO THE PRESS HE PROCLAIMED “WHERE THE TREE FALLS, THERE LET IT LIE”.

YOCKELSON: THE FACT THAT ROOSEVELT WANTED TO KEEP HIS SON OVERSEAS AND HAVE A NICE MEMORIAL KIND OF PUSHED THE WAR DEPARTMENT, PERSHING IN GENERAL, IN THAT DIRECTION. TO BUILD PERMANENT CEMETARIES FOR ALL OF THE MEN. JUST NOT THOSE WHOSE FAMILIES COULD AFFORD TO CONTRIBUTE TO A NICE MEMORIAL.

VO: PERSHING WANTED THE GOVERNMENT TO BUILD PERMANENT AMERICAN CEMETERIES ON THE FIELDS OF BATTLE. HE STATED THEY SHOULD NOT BE DIVIDED BY REGIMENT OR RANK. INSTEAD HE WANTED IDENTICAL TOMBSTONES FOR ALL THE MEN.

FLETCHER: HE HAD LOOKED AT GETTYSBURG WHICH WAS CLUTTERED WITH MONUMENTS. AND HE SAID THIS IS THE WRONG KIND OF IMAGE. I WANT THEM TO BE SEEN AS BOTH VICTORIOUS AND AS COMRADES AND AS A SACRIFICE.

PIEHLER: THE CEMETARIES OVERSEAS WERE TO BE SYMBOLS OF AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT WITH THE WORLD, SYMBOLS OF AMERICAN PRIDE, REMINDERS TO THE FRENCH AND THE ENGLISH OF IN FACT OUR COMMITMENT TO EUROPE.

VO: FINALLY A COMPROMISE IS REACHED. ALL FAMILIES ARE OFFERED A CHOICE. THE BODY OF THEIR LOVED ONE COULD BE REPATRIATED TO THE UNITED STATES AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE OR THEY COULD LEAVE THE BODY IN EUROPE TO BE BURIED IN A NEW AMERICAN CEMETERY.

BUDREAU: IF THEY WERE LEFT OVERSEAS, NOT ONLY DID THEY SAVE THE GOVERNMENT MONEY, BUT THEY CONTRIBUTED TO A NATIONAL STATEMENT OF UNITY AND THAT WAS OF COURSE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT IN VIEW OF THE AMBIGUITY OF THE WAR AIMS. PEOPLE WERE WONDERING WHY DID MY SON DIE? BUT IF THEY WERE LEFT IN A DIGNIFIED STATE OVERSEAS IT INDICATED TO MOST PEOPLE THAT THE DEAD HAD NOT BEEN SACRIFICIED IN VAIN.

VO: THE NEWLY CREATED GRAVES REGISTRATION SERVICE WAS IN CHARGE OF DISINTERRING AND IDENTIFYING THOUSANDS OF WAR DEAD. MOST HAD BEEN QUICKLY BURIED IN SHALLOW GRAVES ON THE BATTLEFIELD.

AT THE SAME TIME THEY WERE PREPARING THE BODIES, THE GRAVES REGISTRATION SERVICE BEGAN BUILDING EIGHT NEW AMERICAN CEMETERIES IN FRANCE, BELGIUM AND GREAT BRITAIN.

BUDREAU: SO THEY NOT ONLY HAD THIS MASSIVE AMOUNT OF CASUALTIES TO LOOK AFTER BUT THEY HAD TO PERFORM DUTIES THAT

THEY JUST WEREN'T CAPABLE OF, THEY DIDN'T HAVE THE RESOURCES. THERE WERE STORIES OF PEOPLE GETTING THE WRONG BODIES, ONE MAN CAME HOME, HE LIVED IN TRENTON, NEW JERSEY. HE CAME HOME AND FOUND HIS SON'S COFFIN ON THE FRONT PORCH OF HIS HOUSE. HAD NO NOTICE THE BODY WAS BEING DELIVERED.

VO: AS STORIES BEGAN CIRCULATING ABOUT HOW THE REMAINS WERE BEING HANDLED, MANY FAMILIES RECONSIDERED THEIR CHOICE. IN THE END, OVER THIRTY THOUSAND MEN REMAINED OVERSEAS.

TWO OF THEM WERE PERCY STEVENS AND FRED ZIEGLER.

FLETCHER: I THINK THAT FAMILIES LEFT THEIR SON OR HUSBAND OVERSEAS BECAUSE OF WHAT PERSHING HIMSELF WAS SAYING. THEY WOULD STAY ON THE FIELDS OF BATTLE WHERE THEY HAD FALLEN IN THE CRUSADE.

POTTER: ANOTHER REASON THE WOMEN MIGHT HAVE ASKED THAT THE BODIES STAY OVERSEAS IS THAT IT SERVES AS A MEMORIAL OF AMERICAN PARTICIPATION IN THE WAR, AND LET THE EUROPEANS KNOW THAT THEIR SONS AND HUSBANDS HAD DIED TOO FOR THE WAR EFFORT.

BUDREAU: I DON'T THINK THAT THE MAJORITY OF AMERICAN FAMILIES SAW AS A NATIONAL BONDING STATEMENT AS THE GOVERNMENT DID. I THINK THEY REALLY FELT THAT THEIR SON IF GIVEN THE CHOICE, THAT THEIR HUSBAND WOULD PREFER TO LIE WITH HIS MATES WITH WHOM HE HAD SERVED WITH. IT WAS AS THOUGH THEY FOUGHT FOR THAT GROUND AND THIS IS WHERE THEY SHOULD LIE, GROUND THAT WAS AMERICAN. AND WHEN THEY CHOSE TO DO THIS, THEY HAD NO IDEA THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD OFFER THEM A PILGRIMAGE MORE THAN A DECADE LATER.

VO: AS AMERICA MOURNED ITS FALLEN SONS, IT ALSO REMEMBERED THEIR MOTHERS.

PLANT: THIS NOTION THAT IT'S THE MOTHER'S JOB TO RAISE HER SON TO BE A GOOD AMERICAN CITIZEN WAS JUST SOMETHING THAT WAS SO WIDELY ACCEPTED IN THE CULTURE, THAT WHEN A SON DIED, WHEN A YOUNG MAN WAS LOST IN WARTIME, PEOPLE'S THOUGHTS IMMEDIATELY WENT TO THE MOTHER.

VO: IN MAY 1918 THE GOVERNMENT CREATED A WAY TO OFFICIALLY ACKNOWLEDGE A MOTHERS SACRIFICE.

FLETCHER: EVERY FAMILY WHO HAD A SON IN THE MILITARY PUT A BLUE STAR IN THE WINDOW. THE WILSON ADMINISTRATION THOUGHT

ABOUT HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH IT IF A SON DIES. AND SO HE CAME UP WITH THE IDEA OF BASICALLY REPLACING A BLUE STAR ON A SERVICE FLAG WITH A GOLD STAR TO INDICATE THAT PERSON HAD DIED. AND SO SINCE THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE WHO WERE MOURNING WERE MOTHERS, THE TERM BECAME GOLD STAR MOTHER.

PIEHLER: THOSE WHO LOSE CHILDREN, PARTICULARLY MOTHERS, ONE OF THE THINGS THE GOVERNMENT DOESN'T WANT THEM TO DO IS HANG OUT THE TRADITIONAL BLACK CREPE, THE SYMBOL OF MOURNING. HOW DO YOU ACKNOWLEDGE SACRIFICE IN SERVICE, WELL YOU HANG A GOLD STAR. A VERY DELIBERATE CONSCIOUS EFFORT TO CHANGE MOURNING PRACTICES, SO THAT IN FACT IF YOU HAD TOO MUCH BLACK CREPE HANGING UP IN PEOPLE'S WINDOWS THIS WOULD DEPRESS PEOPLE. YOU REALLY NEED TO KEEP UP PUBLIC MORALE UP DURING WARTIME AND THE GOVERNMENT WAS VERY CONSCIOUS OF THIS.

VO: COMMUNITIES QUICKLY ADOPTED THE SYMBOL. WHEN PERCY STEVENS WAS LOST, HIS CO-WORKERS AT THE LUMBER MILL IN BEND, OREGON MADE A GOLD STAR AND PRESENTED IT TO HIS MOTHER.

LIKE LAURA STEVENS, THOUSANDS OF GOLD STAR MOTHERS HAD SONS BURIED IN THE NEW OVERSEAS CEMETERIES.

BUDREAU: THE WOMEN WHO CHOSE TO LEAVE THEIR SONS OR THEIR HUSBANDS OVERSEAS WERE ACTUALLY MAKING AN ADDITIONAL SACRIFICE TO THE NATION. IN THE SENSE THAT THEY DID NOT HAVE A GRAVE NEARBY NEAR THEIR HOME WHERE THEY COULD GO AND TEND AND THERE WASN'T THAT FINAL RESOLUTION THAT IS SO IMPORTANT IN THE GRIEVING PROCESS. THESE WOMEN HAD ABSOLUTELY NOTHING, JUST A GOVERNMENT LETTER SAYING THAT THEY WERE BEING BURIED OVERSEAS.

VO: UNITED BY THEIR COMMON LOSS THE MOTHERS OF THE FALLEN CAME TOGETHER TO FORM AN OFFICIAL ORGANIZATION.

PIEHLER: WHAT'S INTERESTING ABOUT THE ORGANIZING OF THE GOLD STAR MOTHERS IS IT CUTS BOTH WAYS FOR THE GOVERNMENT. PARTICULARLY AFTER THE ARMISTICE BECAUSE THESE ORGANIZED GROUPS OF PARENTS ASSERT THEIR RIGHTS.

[MUSIC]

VO: AS THE ARMISTICE WAS BEING SIGNED, GOLD STAR MOTHERS BEGAN LOBBYING ON CAPITOL HILL.

BUDREAU: I THINK THEY WERE REALIZING THEY WERE FLEXING THEIR MUSCLES AND REALIZING THAT THEY HAD A VOICE. THEY HAD THE VOTE, AND THEY HAD POLITICAL POWER.

PIEHLER: ONE OF THE THINGS THEY DEMAND POLITELY, BUT STILL DEMAND IS THAT THEY WANT A PILGRIMAGE TO FRANCE OR ENGLAND AND GO TO THE GRAVES OF THEIR LOVED ONES.

PLANT: MY SENSE IS THAT MANY OF THE LEADERS OF THE ORGANIZATION HAD ALREADY GONE TO EUROPE TO SEE THEIR SON'S GRAVES. THEY TENDED TO BE THE MORE PRIVILEGED. AND THEY FOUND IT PROFOUNDLY MEANINGFUL HEALING EXPERIENCE.

FLETCHER: THEY FELT THAT IT PROVIDED CLOSURE FOR THEM, AND THEY WANTED THE OPPORTUNITY FOR CLOSURE FOR THE OTHER WOMEN WHO THEMSELVES DIDN'T HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY. IT WAS LIKE A CRUSADE FOR THEM.

VO: "I WAS SO DISTRAUGHT OVER THE DEATH OF MY SON IN THE WAR THAT I LOST MY HEARING AND THOUGHT I WAS LOSING MY MIND. I AM SO THANKFUL I HAD THE FINANCIAL MEANS TO VISIT MY SON'S GRAVE. AND I FEEL CERTAIN IF YOU SEND OVER THE POOR MOTHERS WHO CANNOT AFFORD TO PAY THEIR OWN WAY, YOU WILL SAVE THE MINDS OF A GREAT MANY OF THEM," MRS. JENNIE WALSH

BUDREAU: IT'S INTERESTING THAT EVEN THE WOMEN WERE GAINING A GREAT DEAL OF POLITICAL POWER IN THE 1920S, THEY WERE STILL USING THE LANGUAGE OF THE VICTORIAN MOTHER HOOD TO ACHIEVE THEIR AIMS. IT'S VERY MANIPULATIVE, BUT AT THE SAME TIME THEY MANAGED TO WORK WITHIN THIS LANGUAGE TO ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS.

POTTER: THERE'S TESTIMONY THERE IS A REAL BOND BETWEEN A MOTHER AND HER SON. THE MOTHER COULD UNDERSTAND VISITING THE GRAVE, AND NO ONE ELSE COULD UNDERSTAND IT.

VO: "MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE – I WANT TO BEGIN BY TELLING YOU THAT YOU ARE ALL MEN AND YOU HAVE NOT AND CAN NOT FEEL THE WAY A MOTHER FEELS. IT IS A PART OF HER BODY THAT IS LYING OVER THERE. SHE SPENT 20 YEARS, ANYWAY, IN BRINGING UP THAT BOY. SHE GAVE HER TIME BOTH DAY AND NIGHT, AND NONE OF YOU CAN REALIZE WHAT A MOTHER'S LOSS IS". MRS. EFFIE VEDDER

VO: OVER THE NEXT DECADE THE BILL WAS REINTRODUCED SEVERAL TIMES, AS CONGRESS DEBATED WHO WOULD BE ELIGIBLE FOR THE TRIPS. SOME ARGUED THAT WIDOWS SHOULD ALSO BE INCLUDED. BUT MANY MOTHERS DID NOT AGREE.

PLANT: THEY SAID MANY OF THESE WIDOWS ARE NOT WORTHY. MANY OF THESE WIDOWS WOULD NOT HAVE MET THESE MEN IF IT HAD NOT BEEN FOR THE CONTINGENCIES OF CAMP LIFE. THEY HAD MARRIED ON THE FLY, AND THEY HAD NOT RAISED THE BOY, THEY WERE NOT TRULY DEVOTED TO THE BOY. AND THEN THEY SPOKE IN STRONG TERMS ABOUT “WE MOTHERS WE NEVER LET ANYONE TAKE THE PLACE OF THAT BOY.”

VO: THE BILL WAS REWRITTEN. IT NOW STIPULATED THAT ONLY WIDOWS WHO HAD NOT REMARRIED, WOULD BE ELIGIBLE.

PLANT: CONGRESS WAS ESSENTAILLY SAYING IS THAT WE WILL HONOR WOMEN’S SACRIFICES TO THE EXTENT THAT THEY HAD CONTINUED TO SUFFER.

VO: STILL, THE BILL’S PROGRESS WAS STALLED BECAUSE OF THE EXPENSE OF THE TRIP. IT WAS ESTIMATED THAT THE PILGRIMAGES WOULD COST THE GOVERNMENT 5 MILLIONS DOLLARS.

PLANT: FUNDING THE VA HOSPITALS THAT WERE REALLY IN DESPERATE NEED OF MORE RESOURCES AND PROVIDING THE KIND OF ASSISTANCE THAT YOU KNOW MEN WHO WERE NOT DEAD, BUT WERE BADLY INCAPACITATED, RESOURCES THAT THEY NEEDED, YOU KNOW IN RESTROSPECT MAYBE THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN THE PRIORITY. BUT IT WAS EASIER TO I SUPPOSE TO RALLY FORCES AROUND THE SENTIMENTAL DISPLAY.

VO: ALTHOUGH NO ONE CAME OUT AGAINST THE BILL, IT NEVER REACHED THE FLOOR FOR A VOTE.

PLANT: IT WAS PROBABLY A LOT MORE CRITICISM THAT DID NOT GET VOICED BECAUSE TO ATTACK, THE MOTHER FIGURE, THE PERSON WHO RAISED THE SONS WOULD HAVE BEEN SEEN ALMOST AS BLASPHEMY.

PIEHLER: IT’S A LOT LIKE VOTING AGIANST MOTHERHOOD AND APPLE PIE.

VO: THEN THE BILL GAINED A FORCEFUL ALLY WHEN IT WAS ENDORSED BY THE AMERICAN LEGION.

BUDREAU: THE AMERICAN LEGION IN 1927 WAS EXTREMELY POWERFUL. THEY HELD THEIR TENTH ANNIVERSARY CONVENTION IN PARIS. AND AT THIS TIME THERE WERE SEVEN HUNDRED THOUSAND VETERANS MEMBERS AND THREE HUNDRED THOUSAND WOMEN IN THEIR AUXILLARY. SO IT WAS QUITE AN IMPORTANT VOTE FOR THE REPUBLICAN ADMINSTRATION. IN FACT ONE MEMBER, THE AMERICAN

LEGIONS, WAS QUOTED AS SAYING, WE ARE THE GREATEST THING IN THE WORLD TODAY.

VO: FINALLY IN 1929, THE PILGRIMAGE BILL WAS SIGNED WITH THE POWER OF THE AMERICAN LEGION BEHIND IT. THROUGH THREE PRESIDENTIAL ADMINISTRATIONS THE MOTHERS NEVER GAVE UP.

[SONG]

VO: ON THE FOURTH OF JULY, 1932 LOUISE ZIEGLER AND HER DAUGHTER GRACE GOT ON THE TRAIN IN DURAND, IL AND BEGAN THEIR JOURNEY ON THE GOLD STAR PILGRIMAGE.

FRED BLISS: COMING FROM A SMALL VILLAGE, AND GETTING ON THE TRAIN, AND GETTING OFF OF IT, IN A PLACE LIKE NEW YORK MUST HAVE BEEN QUITE EYE OPENING.

ED BLISS: AND I THINK THAT GRACE DECDED THAT SHE HAD TO GO FOR HER MOTHER'S SAKE. SHE GOT THE MONEY TOGETHER SOMEHOW OR ANOTHER, BECAUSE I'M PRETTY SURE THAT MY GRANDMOTHER WOULD NOT HAVE GONE OTHERWISE. OR MAYBE SHE THOUGHT THAT COMING FROM SUCH A SMALL TOWN AND EVERYTHING THAT SHE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO FIT WITH THIS GROUP AND TO INTERMINGLE.

FLETCHER: THINK ABOUT IT. IF YOU ARE FIFTY OR SIXTY YEARS OLD, AND YOU ARE ASKED TO GO FOUR OR FIVE OR SIX THOUSAND MILES AWAY WITH A COMPETE GROUP OF STANGERS, COULD HAVE BEEN A VERY TERRIFYING EXPERIENCE, BUT THE ARMY MADE A REAL EFFORT TO HELP THE WOMEN.

VO: FROM 1930 TO 1933 OVER 6000 MOTHERS MADE THE JOURNEY TO THE OVERSEAS CEMETERIES. THE ARMY'S QUARTERMASTER CORPS ORGANIZED THE PILGRIMAGES. THE RESOURCES THAT HAD WAGED A WAR WOULD NOW BE USED TO BRING PEACE TO A GROUP OF ELDERLY WOMEN.

POTTER: COLONEL ELLIS, WHO ORGANIZED THE PARTIES, WROTE A VERY DETAILED REPORT, AND HE SAID THIS HAD NEVER BEEN DONE BEFORE, AND THE QUARTERMASTER HAD TO SERVE AS A HOTEL SERVICE, A STEAM-SHIP SERVICE, TRAVEL SERVICE, MEDICAL SERVICE. THE PLANNING IS AMAZING.

PIEHLER: THE GOVERNMENT DIDN'T TRY TO BE CHEAP ABOUT THIS. THE MINUTE THEY STEPPED ON THE TRAIN IN THEIR OWN TOWN, EVERYTHING WAS TAKEN CARE OF. EVEN THE TIPS.

VO: "MAMMA GOT HER TASTE OF REAL SERVICE. THE PORTER HUNG HER COAT ON A HANGER AND PUT A CUSHION UNDER HER FEET. I TOLD HER SHE WOULD HAVE TO GET USED TO SERVICE, BUT I DIDN'T REALIZE HOW MUCH TRUTH I SPOKE!" GRACE ZEIGLER

VO: THE FIRST TIME LOUISE ZIEGLER TRAVELED ACROSS THE OCEAN WAS WHEN SHE SAILED TO AMERICA FROM GERMANY AS A LITTLE GIRL.

BUDREAU: THE MAJORITY OF GOLD STAR MOTHERS WERE NOT THE ACTIVIST TYPES. THEY WERE YOUR AVERAGE ELDERLY MOTHER WHO HAD PROBABLY RAISED A LARGE FAMILY PROBABLY SECOND GENERATION, OR FIRST GENERATION IMMIGRANT. A LOT OF THE PILGRIMS COULDN'T SPEAK ENGLISH. I THINK THEY WERE JUST VERY GRATEFUL.

[SONG]

VO: LIKE LOUISE ZIEGLER, PERCY'S MOTHER LAURA STEVENS HAD IMMIGRATED TO AMERICA. SHE HAD SAILED FROM NORWAY AT THE AGE OF SEVEN. NOW AT THE AGE OF 70 SHE BOARDED THE TRAIN IN BEND, OREGON TO BEGIN HER JOURNEY BACK ACROSS THE OCEAN.

FLETCHER: SO HERE ARE MIDDLE-CLASS AND POOR PEOPLE, WHO ARE LEAVING THEIR HOME COMMUNITY. GOING TO NEW YORK, A BIG, BIG, CITY, SPENDING TWO OR THREE DAYS IN NEW YORK, BEING WINED AND DINED, TRAVELING ACROSS AN OCEAN FOR A WEEK GOING TO SEE PARIS, IT WAS LIKE THE END OF THE WORLD FOR ANY OF THEM.

VO: SINCE THE AVERAGE AGE OF THE MOTHERS WAS BETWEEN 61 AND 65. THE ARMY WAS CONCERNED THE STRESS OF TRAVELING WOULD BE TOO MUCH. THE ARMY TRIED TO KEEP THE WOMEN AT EASE, BUT THEY WEREN'T ALWAYS SUCCESSFUL.

FLETCHER: ONE WOMAN WHO SMOKED A PIPE-THIS DISTURBED HER BUNKMATES, ANOTHER WOMAN WASHED HER CLOTHES IN THE SINK-THIS ALSO DISTURBS THEM. SOME SNORE, DIDN'T GET ALONG WITH THIS. SOME DIDN'T GET ALONG WITH EACH OTHER. THE FACT THAT THERE WAS A LITTLE OF THIS RATHER SO MUCH OF THIS WAS ASTOUNDING.

VO: COLONEL ELLIS EVEN WANTED THE PILGRIMS TO FEEL AT HOME WHEN THEY WERE VISITING THE CEMETERIES.

BUDREAU: HE REALIZED THE VERY BASIC NEEDS SUCH AS TOILET FACILITIES WERE UNAVAILABLE, SO IN TYPICAL AMERICAN EFFICIENT FASHION, HE MADE SURE THAT WITHIN 90 DAYS, THERE WERE REST FACILITIES FOR THESE WOMEN. THERE WERE FIREPLACE, THEY WERE

SERVED TEA THERE. THEY HAD OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATIONS. THEY HAD A LOUNGE. ALL THE AMMENITIES THEY WOULD HAVE AT HOME PLUS A COUNTRY CLUB ATMOSPHERE AND THEY WERE BUILT ALL WITHIN NINETY DAYS.

VO: WHEN POSSIBLE, THE PILGRIMS WERE SERVED AMERICAN STYLE MEALS. BUT THEY ALSO EXPERIENCED EUROPEAN DINING.

VO: "AT DINNER THE FORKS WERE SO LARGE, THAT IN STATES WE PITCHED HAY WITH THAT KIND. WE HAD OMELETS, THICKENED PEA SOUP, VEAL AND POTATO SALAD. CHOCOLATE ICE CREAM, WAFFLES AND APRICOTS. IT COST ME NEARLY A DOLLAR." GRACE ZIEGLER

ED BLISS: GRACE DID MENTION TOO THAT BEING IN A GROUP WHERE EVERYBODY HAD HAD A LOSS I THINK HELPED TOO. EACH ONE KIND OF HELPED THE OTHERS.

PLANT: THE IDEA OF AMERICAN MOTHERS COMING TO EUROPE AND MEETING THE MOTHERS OF FRANCE. THIS WOULD IN SOME WAY DEMONSTRATE TO THE WORLD THE FUTILITY OF WAR. IT WAS ALSO PROMOTED AS ONE OF THE GOALS OF THE TRIP.

PIEHLER: WHAT'S STRIKING ABOUT THE GOLD STAR MOTHERS IS YOU HAVE ECONOMICALLY WOMEN WHO WOULD'VE DONE THIS, BUT ALSO WOMEN WHO NEVER IN THEIR WILDEST DREAMS. FARM WOMEN FROM KANSAS OR FACTORY WORKERS FROM MASSACHUSETTS WOULD GO ON THESE ALL EXPENSE PAID PILGRIMAGES. AND THAT FIT INTO THE RHETORIC OF WORLD WAR I, THOSE WHO SERVE THEIR COUNTRY, RELIGIOUS, CLASS DIFFERENCES DON'T MATTER IN THE END. THAT WE ALL SERVE AS AMERICANS AS ONE.

BUDREAU: HOWEVER WHEN YOU START TO PROBE BENEATH THE SUPERFICIAL APPEARANCE OF THE RECEPTIONS, THE BANDS UPON ARRIVAL, THE PARTIES, THE SPEECHES YOU BEGIN TO SEE ASPECTS OF OUR SOCIETY DURING THAT PERIOD THAT THE GOVERNMENT WASN'T SO EAGER TO ADVERTISE. FOR INSTANCE, ALL THE PILGRIMAGES WERE SEGREGATED.

FLETCHER: THEY JUST WROTE IN THE REGULATIONS A PARAGRAPH SAYING THAT THERE WOULD BE SEGREGATION. AND THEN THEY WERE ASTONISHED WHEN AFRICAN-AMERICANS SAID, "WAIT A MINUTE, WE FOUGHT IN THE WAR, WHY ARE WE BEING SEGREGATED?". HOOVER'S RESPONSE WAS "I DON'T KNOW!". AND HE TRIED TO WEASEL AROUND IT, BUT HE COULDN'T.

RANSBY: HE WAS A REFLECTION OF A LARGER CLIMATE IN THE SOCIETY COMING DOWN FROM THE GOVERNMENT BUT ALSO COMING UP FROM SENTIMENTS OF MILLIONS OF WHITE AMERICANS THAT DESEGREGATION, OR INTEGRATION WOULD HAVE BEEN UNNATURAL, IRONICALLY, UNAMERICAN.

VO: THE NAACP REACTED QUICKLY TO THE NEWS THAT THE PILGRIMAGES WOULD BE SEGREGATED. THEY ORGANIZED A PROTEST, ASKING THE AFRICAN AMERICAN MOTHERS TO BOYCOTT THE TRIPS.

FLETCHER: THIS PLACED THE MOTHERS IN A TERRIBLE DILEMMA, BECAUSE THEY COULD NEVER AFFORD TO GO TO FRANCE. IF THEY SAID YES, THEY WOULD BE SUPPORTING SEGREGATION, IF THEY SAID NO, THEY WOULD NEVER SEE THEIR HUSBANDS' OR SONS' GRAVES.

RANSBY: THEIR SONS HAD BEEN INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE WAR EFFORT THAT IS THEY DRAFTED MANY OF THEM. BUT THEY DID SO ON UNEQUAL CIRCUMSTANCES, UNDER HUMILIATING CIRCUMSTANCES, GIVING THEIR LIVES AND YET STILL NOT BEING ALLOWED THE FULL RANGE OF CITIZENSHIP.

VO: MANY OF THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN SOLDIERS WHO SERVED IN WW I WERE KEPT OUT OF COMBAT. INSTEAD THEY SERVED AS LABORERS, LOADING SHIPS AND BUILDING ROADS.

FLETCHER: IF YOU WANT TO SAY WHAT IS THE TYPICAL BLACK SOLDIER, IN WWI, HE WOULD NOT BE CARRYING A RIFLE, HE WOULD PROBABLY BE CARRYING A SHOVEL.

VO: MANY BLACK OFFICERS WERE ALSO SHUT OUT OF THE EUROPEAN CONFLICT. ONE OF THEM WAS CAPTAIN BENJAMIN DAVIS. HE WAS SENT TO THE PHILIPPINES WHILE WAR RAGED IN FRANCE.

FLETCHER: DAVIS WAS VERY FRUSTRATED BY HIS FAILURE TO GET TO EUROPE. HE SAID YOU THE ARMY IS DISCRIMINATING ME AS A BLACK MAN.

VO: THE FINAL DUTY OF THOUSANDS OF BLACK SOLDIERS IN WW I WAS TO BURY THEIR FALLEN COMRADES

BUDREAU: AND AS YOU CAN IMAGINE IT WAS GRUESOME BACK-BREAKING WORK. YOU HEAR TALES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN SOLDIERS SINGING PERHAPS AS AN ANODYNE FOR THE WORK THEY WERE DOING. TO MAKE IT FEEL MORE OF A SACRED DEED AND LESS OF A WORK THAT NO ONE ELSE WANTED TO DO.

VO: THE BLACK SOLDIERS LAID THOUSANDS OF MEN TO REST IN THE NEW AMERICAN CEMETERIES. BUT THEIR CONTRIBUTION WAS NEVER KNOWN TO THE GOLD STAR MOTHER PILGRIMS.

BUDREAU: IF IT HAD BECOME COMMON KNOWLEDGE THAT AFRICAN AMERICAN SOLDIERS WERE BURYING THEIR COMRADES OVERSEAS IT WOULD HAVE SEEMED TO REDUCE THE VALUE OF THE SACRIFICE OF THE AMERICAN DEAD.

RANSBY: CEMETARIES IN THE UNITED STATES SEEM TO BE FOR THE MOST PART SEGREGATED. IN EUROPE THE CEMETARIES WERE INTERRACIAL CEMETARIES. THAT IS NOT SOMETHING THAT THE GOVERNMENT WANTED TO ADVERTISE. THEY DIDN'T WANT TO OFFEND THE SENSIBILITIES OF WHITE AMERICANS IN THIS COUNTRY WHO HAD COME TO ACCEPT SEGREGATION AS NORMAL AND NATURAL

VO: AS THE MILITARY PLANNED THE PILGRIMAGES, THEY DECIDED THAT THE BLACK MOTHERS WOULD TRAVEL ON SMALLER, SECOND CLASS VESSELS.

FLETCHER: IF THEY TOOK A FIRST-CLASS VESSEL AND PUT ALL THE BLACK WOMEN ON IT, IT SEEMED TO COST AN INORDINATE AMOUNT OF MONEY. AND THE REASON WAS BECAUSE THE SHIPPING LINES SAID, ONCE THE BLACK WOMEN WENT TO FRANCE ON A SHIP, THEY WOULD HAVE TO TAKE THE VESSEL OUT OF COMMISSION FOR THE REST OF THE YEAR, STRIP IT BARE, THROW ALL THE LINENS AWAY, AND REDO THE WHOLE VESSEL, BASICALLY THAT NO WHITE PEOPLE WOULD GO ON A SHIP IN WHICH BLACK PEOPLE HAD GONE ON.

VO: OF THE 219 AFRICAN-AMERICAN MOTHERS AND WIDOWS WHO WERE ELIGIBLE TO GO TO EUROPE, 55 DECLINED THE INVITATION. THE WOMEN WHO WERE GOING NEEDED AN OFFICER TO ESCORT THEM . COLONEL BENJAMIN DAVIS WAS NOW THE ARMY'S HIGHEST RANKING BLACK OFFICER. HE ASKED FOR THE POSITION. AT THE TIME HE WAS STATIONED IN TUSKEGEE ALABAMA.

FLETCHER: SO TO GET OUT OF THE SOUTH TO BE ABLE TO GO TO EUROPE TO TAKE HIS FAMILY TO EUROPE WAS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY. ON THE OTHER HAND HE HAD TO GO ON A SEGREGATED PILGRIMAGE. HE BALANCED THE TWO OF THEM AND REALLY THOUGHT THE OPPORTUNITY TO GO OUTWEIGHTED THE DILEMMA OF GOING IN SEGREGATION.

POTTER: YOU COULD BE YOURSELF; YOU WERE NOT VIEWED AS BLACK IN PARIS. YOU COULD BE YOU.

VO: THE FREEDOMS ENJOYED BY AFRICAN-AMERICANS IN FRANCE WERE SO GREAT THAT MANY BLACK GIs STAYED AFTER THE WAR. ONE OF THESE VETERANS WAS SINGER AND BAND LEADER NOBLE SISSLE. HE LATER FOUND FAME ON BROADWAY WITH HIS PARTNER EUBIE BLAKE. HIS BAND WAS ON HAND TO GREET THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN GOLD STAR MOTHERS AS THEY ARRIVED IN PARIS.

PIEHLER: HE BLUNTLY TELLS HIM THAT I KNOW YOU CAME UNDER JIM CROW SEGREGATION, BUT ON THE OTHER HAND I KNOW YOUR SONS WOULD HAVE WANTED YOU TO COME. IT WAS THEIR WAY OF SAYING YOU DID THE RIGHT THING.

VO: JAZZ AGE PARIS ALSO IMPRESSED COLONEL DAVIS. HE DECIDED JOSEPHINE BAKER'S PERFORMANCE COULD NOT BE MISSED. TO THE SURPRISE OF HIS DAUGHTER, ELNORA, HE DECIDED TO TAKE HIS ENTIRE FAMILY TO SEE MS. BAKER PERFORM, INCLUDING HIS 80 YEAR OLD MOTHER.

FLETCHER: AND ELNORA COMMENTED, 'DOES HER GRANDMOTHER REALLY WANT TO GO SEE THIS WOMAN WHO'S DANCING HALF-NAKED?' AND THE GRANDMOTHER SAID 'SURE! I'M GOING TO GO, AND THIS WAS AN EXCITING EVENT. SO THIS WAS PART OF THE LIFE IN PARIS FOR THEM. AND IT WAS SO DIFFERENT THAN THE LIFE IN THE SOUTH, IT REALLY STRUCK THEM. I WOULD ASSUME IT STRUCK THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN THE SAME WAY.

RANSBY: THE GOLD STAR MOTHERS REALLY SAW A CONTRAST WHEN THEY TRAVELED TO EUROPE. THEY COULD EAT IN RESTAURANTS AND DIDN'T HAVE TO TAKE THEIR MEALS OUT AND EAT THEM IN THE CAR, OR EAT THEM IN THE BACK, AS WOULD BE A COMMON PRACTICE IN THE SOUTH IN THE UNITED STATES. THEY DIDN'T HAVE TO LOOK FOR WHITE ONLY SIGNS OR COLORED SIGNS IN ORDER TO NAVIGATE PUBLIC SPACE. AND SO THERE WAS A SENSE OF SEEING NEW POSSIBILITIES AND SEEING THE ANGER THAT EXISTED IN THE RESTAURANTS AND RESTRAINTS THAT EXISTED IN THIS COUNTRY.

VO: IN THE 1932 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN THE SEGREGATED PILGRIMAGES WERE USED AGAINST HOOVER. BLACK VOTERS WHO HAD LONG VOTED REPUBLICAN, THE PARTY OF LINCOLN, TURNED THEIR ALLEGIANCE TO THE DEMOCRATS. MANY WOULD NEVER TURN BACK.

EIGHT YEARS LATER, BENJAMIN DAVIS BECAME THE FIRST AFRICAN-AMERICAN GENERAL IN THE US ARMY.

BUT MORE CONTROVERSY FOLLOWED THE PILGRIMAGES.

JUST SIX MONTHS AFTER THE PILGRIMAGE LEGISLATION WAS PASSED, THE STOCK MARKET CRASH PLUNGED THE COUNTRY INTO DEPRESSION.

PLANT: WHEN ONE THIRD OF THE NATION WAS OUT OF WORK, AND WHEN PEOPLE WERE CLEARLY GOING HUNGRY, IT WASN'T FITTING FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO BE CHAUFFERING THE WOMEN AROUND IN A WAY THAT WAS CLEARLY DESIGNED TO TREAT THEM AS VIPS.

VO: IN THE SUMMER OF 1932, AS THE ZIEGLERS AND THE OTHER PILGRIMS ENJOYED THE SIGHTS OF EUROPE, THERE WAS TROUBLE AT HOME.

SOME 22,000 VETERANS CONVERGED ON THE NATION'S CAPITAL. THEY SET UP CAMP IN SHANTIES ACROSS THE ANACOSTIA RIVER. THEY WERE CALLED "THE BONUS ARMY".

PLANT: THEY GATHERED TOGETHER AS THIS TYPE OF RAG TAG ARMY IN WASHINGTON D.C. TRYING TO DEMAND EARLY PAYMENT OF THE BONUS THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD OWE THEM IN ABOUT TEN YEARS. SO HERE YOU HAVE THE VERY MEN WHO HAD FOUGHT ALONG SIDE THE SONS OF THESE WOMEN AND THEIR DEMANDS FOR COMPENSATION FROM THE STATE ARE BEING IGNORED ENTIRELY, BEING FORCEABLY DENIED WHEREAS THE WOMEN OVERSEAS ARE STILL BEING PAMPERED AND TREATED WITH THIS KIND OF LUXURY TOUR.

VO: CONGRESS REJECTED GIVING THE MEN BONUSES, BUT THE BONUS ARMY REFUSED TO LEAVE. MANY HAD NO HOMES OR JOBS TO RETURN TO.

ON JULY 28, 1932, DOUGLAS MACARTHUR ORDERED HIS ARMY TO USE BAYONETS AND TEAR GAS TO DRIVE THE VETERANS OUT OF WASHINGTON. HIS TROOPS THEN SET FIRE TO THEIR ENCAMPMENT.

IT WOULD BE THE LAST BATTLE FOR THE VETERANS OF THE GREAT WAR.

BUT THE PILGRIMS KNEW NOTHING OF THE EVENTS IN WASHINGTON. IN PARIS THEIR SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES CONTINUED SMOOTHLY.

AS THEY BOARDED BUSES TO TAKE THEM TO THE CEMETERIES, IT WAS THEIR FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE, WHICH ONLY A DECADE EARLIER HAD BEEN CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE.

POTTER: THERE WAS CENSORSHIP OF THE AMERICAN PRESS DURING THE WAR. AND ANY PICTURES THAT WERE PARTICULARLY GRIZZLY, OR SHOWED THE WAR IN A NEGATIVE LIGHT WERE NOT SHOWN, SO FOR MANY OF THESE WOMEN, IT MUST HAVE BEEN QUITE A SURPRISE.

VO: "MY SON DIED IN FRANCE IN 1918. IN 1931 WHEN I WAS 79 YEARS OLD I SAILED TO FRANCE TO VISIT HIS GRAVE. MY BOY RESTS IN A BEAUTIFULLY KEPT CEMETERY. BUT HOW SAD TO SEE THE PEOPLE TOILING TO RECLAIM THEIR FIELDS AND THE HEAPS OF LEADEN MISSILES BESIDE THE ROADS AND THE BROKEN STUMPS AND SHELL TORN BUILDINGS. MY MOST TREASURED MEMENTO OF MY JOURNEY IS A SMALL WEATHER STAINED FLAG THAT WAS PLACED ON MY BOY'S GRAVE." MRS. MARGARET COWGILL

VO: THE ARMY EXPECTED THE VISITS TO THE GRAVES TO BE EMOTIONALLY DEVASTATING FOR THE WOMEN. BUT OUT OF THOUSANDS OF PILGRIMS, ONLY ONE MOTHER NEEDED MEDICAL ATTENTION AT THE CEMETERY.

BUDREAU: YOU WOULD THINK THAT THE SIGHT OF ALL THESE CROSSES AND TO TRAVEL ACROSS THE TERRAIN WHERE THEIR LOVED ONES HAD SPENT THEIR LAST HOURS OF THEIR LIFE WOULD HAVE TRIGGERED SOME EMOTION, AND YET WE SEE NO EVIDENCE OF GRIEF OF TEARS AT GRAVE VISITS AND I THINK PART OF THIS IS ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE MILITARY'S DOWNPLAY OF HYSTERIA. THEY WERE FULLY PREPARED FOR THE WOMEN TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR INTENSE EMOTIONS. THEY WERE QUITE AFRAID OF THIS.

VO: WIDOWS, WHO HAD BARELY BEEN INCLUDED IN THE TRIPS SEEMED TO SUFFER THE MOST. ONE ESCORT OFFICER REMEMBERED THEY "BROUGHT OUT OLD LETTERS FROM "SOMEWHERE IN FRANCE" AND QUIETLY SAT AT THEIR TOMBSTONES AND RELIVED ROMANTIC MOMENTS".

BUDREAU: WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT IT THE MOTHERS ACTUALLY HAD MORE TIME TO SPEND WITH THEIR SONS, WHERE OFTEN TIMES, WIDOWS MAY HAVE BEEN MARRIED FOR SOMETIMES LESS THAN A YEAR. THEY HAD HAD NO TIME AT ALL BEFORE THEIR HUSBANDS DEPARTED FOR OVERSEAS.

VO: OUTSIDE OF LONDON AT THE BROOKWOOD CEMETERY, LAURA STEVENS GLANCED AT THE CARD IN HER HAND TO LOCATE BLOCK A, ROW 4, GRAVE 14. AT LAST SHE FINDS THE WHITE MARBLE CROSS AT THE GRAVE OF HER SON PERCY. LATER SHE WROTE IN THE GUEST BOOK,

"A MOST BEAUTIFUL SPOT FOR OUR DEAR ONES LAID AWAY BRINGS US COMFORT AND HAPPINESS"

PRINCE: WHEN GRANNY CAME BACK FROM HER TRIP, SHE WAS VERY HAPPY SHE'D GONE. ALL THE MOTHERS WERE I THINK HAPPY THEY'D

GONE. ...THEY COULD LIVE WITH THEIR SORROW NOW, AS THEY COULD NOT BEFORE THEY WENT OVER.

ED BLISS: I KNOW THAT GRACE HAD MENTIONED THAT AFTER GRANDMA HAD GOTTEN BACK, GRANDMA SEEMED MORE SETTLED. SHE HAD BEEN THERE AND SHE HAD SEEN THE GRAVE. I DON'T KNOW SHE WAS JUST MORE AT EASE, AT PEACE.

VO: ON JULY 19, 1932, LOUISE AND GRACE ZIEGLER ARRIVED AT THE LARGEST OF THE NEW AMERICAN CEMETERIES THE MEUSE-ARGONNE. AMONG THE FOURTEEN THOUSAND GRAVES THEY SEARCHED FOR A PRIVATE FROM DURAND, ILLINOIS.

ED BLISS: WHEN YOU FIRST GO TO THAT CEMETERY AND YOU SEE ALL OF THESE CROSSES PROBABLY SEEM OVERWHELMING, BUT AT THE SAME TIME, WE ARE NOT GOING THROUGH IT ALONE.

VO: FOURTEEN YEARS AFTER THE DEATH OF FRED ZIEGLER, HIS MOTHER AND SISTER FINALLY SAID GOODBYE.

FRED BLISS: IT WAS AN AWAKENING FOR BOTH OF THEM, SAYING THIS IS IT. THIS IS WHERE HE LAYS, AND NOW WE KNOW FOR SURE.

POTTER: I THINK MANY OF THE WOMEN WERE VERY GLAD TO SEE WHERE THEIR SONS OR HUSBANDS WERE BURIED. THEY COULD SEE THE CEMETERY WAS WELL TAKEN CARE OF THERE WAS A HEAD STONE, AND THEY KNEW WHERE THEY WERE.

FLETCHER: YOU GET A REAL SENSE THAT THIS WAS A SACRIFICE WHICH WAS WORTH IT.

COFFMAN: WHEN YOU GO TO THESE WORLD WAR I CEMETERIES, IT IS A PILGRIMAGE, IN A SENSE YOU ARE IN THEIR PRESENCE WHEN YOU'RE THERE.

VO: IN 1933, THE FINAL GROUP OF GOLD STAR PILGRIMS RETURNED HOME, ALTHOUGH THE TRIPS HAD BEGAN IN MUCH FANFARE, IN THE END, THEY WERE BARELY MENTIONED IN THE PRESS.

BUDREAU: I THINK PEOPLE WERE JUST ANXIOUS TO MOVE ON AND IT WAS TOO LITTLE TOO LATE AND TOO FAR.

PLANT: THE CLIMATE WAS THE DEPRESSION AND THE FOCUS WAS ON THE ECONOMIC DEMANDS. SO MANY OF THE DEMANDS WERE ON THE GOVERNMENT AT THAT TIME WERE VIEWED WITH SUSPECT.

VO: CRITICISM OF THE GOLD STAR PILGRIMS BEGAN TO SURFACE. ONE OF THE WORST PROTRAYALS OF THE PIGRIMAGE APPEARED IN THE NEW MEN'S MAGAZINE ESQUIRE.

PLANT: IT DEPICTS THE GOLD STAR MOTHERS AS COWS. AND IT SUGGESTS THAT THESE OLD WOMEN WERE THESE COW LIKE CREATURES, WHO WERE BOTH IGNORANT, BLINDLY PATRIOTIC, WERE IN FACT REVELING IN THE DEATHS OF THEIR SONS. IT INDICATES THERE IS THIS KIND OF HOSTILITY RISING TOWARDS MATERNAL FIGURES. THIS TENDENCY TO ASSOCIATE MOTHERHOOD WITH CIVIC DUTIES, THAT'S BROKEN. I THINK IT'S BROKEN BECAUSE PEOPLE IN NEW WAYS HAVE COME TO SENSE THAT THERE'S A DANGER IN MIXING THESE REALMS.

I SUPPOSE IT REALLY HAS SOMETING TO DO WITH THE WAYS THAT FAMILIAR RHETORIC WAS APPROPRIATED BY NAZI GERMANY IN WHICH MOTHERS WERE GIVEN MEDALS FOR SACRIFICING THIER SONS FOR THE FACIST CAUSE.

VO: AS AMERICA ENTERED THE SECOND WORLD WAR ANOTHER SYMBOL WAS USED TO MOTIVATE THE MEN.

PLANT: WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT WORLD WAR II THE IMAGE THAT YOU THINK ABOUT IS THE PIN UP GIRL. THE PIN UP GIRL WAS REALLY AN IMAGE FOR THE SOLDERS THAT SYMBOLIZED WHAT THEY WERE FIGHTING FOR.

VO: AFTER WORLD WAR II, AMERICA AGAIN BUILT OVERSEAS CEMETERIES FOR THE FALLEN, BUT THERE ARE TOO MANY CASUALITIES TO TAKE THE MOTHERS ON A PILGRIMAGE.

PIEHLER: WHAT I THINK AN IMPORTANT POINT TO OBSERVE IS THAT BOTH THE KOREAN AND VIETNAM THEY DECIDED NOT TO USE THE OVERSEAS CEMETERIES. THAT SAYS A LOT ABOUT OUR SYMBOLIC COMMITMENT TO THOSE STRUGGLES, THEIR ROLE IN THE AMERICAN PSYCHE.

VO: SOUTH CAROLINA, ONE MOTHER, ONE DEAD.

TODAY AMERICAN GOLD STAR MOTHERS STILL UNITE THE MOTHERS OF THE FALLEN. ONCE A YEAR THEY GATHER FOR THEIR CONVENTION AND MEMORIAL SERVICE.

LANCY: THERE'S A FEELING BETWEEN US. WE ALL KNOW WHAT IT IS .

VO: MOST OF TODAY'S MEMBERS LOST A SON OR DAUGHTER IN VIETNAM. MANY VOLUNTEER IN VA HOSPITALS HELPING VETERANS WHO RETURNED FROM THAT WAR.

VO: THEY REALIZE THAT MANY PEOPLE OUTSIDE THE ORGANIZATION DO NOT KNOW WHAT A GOLD STAR MOTHER IS. THIS WAS CLEAR TO IRIS WALDEN WHEN SHE MARCHED IN AN ARMED FORCES DAY PARADE. AFTERWARDS, SHE WAS APPROACHED BY A BYSTANDER.

IRIS WALDEN: SHE CAME UP TO US AFTERWARDS AND SAID OH YOU LADIES LOOK SO BEAUTIFUL IN WHITE. SAID, HOW CAN I BE A MEMBER OF THIS ORGANIZATION? AND I SAID, YOU DO NOT WANT TO BE A MEMBER OF THIS ORGANIZATION. SHE SAID, WHY NOT. I SAID THIS IS AN ORGANIZATION OF MOTHERS WHO HAVE LOST A SON OR DAUGHTER IN WAR. SO MANY PEOPLE DO NOT REALIZE WHAT GOLD STAR MOTHER IS.

VO: TODAY'S GOLD STAR MOTHERS ARE ALSO MAKING PILGRIMAGES. VIETNAM VETERANS OF THE NATIONAL DUSTERS, QUADS, AND SEARCHLIGHTS ASSOCIATION STARTED A PROGRAM CALLED OPERATION GOLD STAR. IT SPONSORS MOTHERS WHO WANT TO GO TO VIETNAM.

EACH VISITS THE SIGHTS WHERE HER SON WAS KILLED.

THERESA DAVIS: IT KIND OF GIVES YOU A WHOLE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE BECAUSE THERE ARE SO MANY THINGS THAT YOU WONDER. BECAUSE YOU SEE PICTURES OF ALL OF THESE MUDDY RIVERS OF THEM CROSSING THROUGH AND EVERYTHING. AND IT WAS JUST COMFORTING TO BE THERE AND SEE WHERE HE WAS.

VALERIE MAY: I AM GLAD THAT OUR YOUNG MEN WERE WILLING TO DO IT. I'M SORRY THEY GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR IT, BUT I'M GLAD THEY DID IT. WE WEREN'T ABLE TO BE THERE FOR OUR SONS. SO IT JUST HELPED TO GO THERE AND KNOW YOU WERE BREATHING NOT THE SAME AIR AT LEAST WHERE HE WAS.

MARY WHEELER: I ALWAYS FELT THAT HE WAS GOING TO KNOCK ON THE DOOR AND HE WAS GOING TO COME IN AND I WAS GOING TO PUT MY ARMS AROUND HIM, AND HE'D BE THERE. THE TRIP TO VIETNAM HELPED ME REALIZE THAT'S NOT GOING TO HAPPEN.

VIETNAM VETERAN: YOU'VE WALKED WHERE YOUR SON HAS WALKED. NOT MANY MOTHERS CAN SAY THAT.

BUT I'LL TELL YOU FOR YOUR SON. WELCOME HOME.

PIEHLER: WAR IS A VERY UGLY THING. AMERICANS ARE ALWAYS WILLING TO FIGHT, BUT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT, AMERICA HAS REALIZED THAT WAR HAS REAL LOSS. THIS IS ONE OF THE POSSIBLE LEGACIES THAT THE GOLD STAR MOTHERS REALIZE.

WHEELER: THEY MUST HAVE FELT THE SAME WAY WE DO. THEY WANTED TO KNOW WHERE THEIR CHILDREN WERE. WHAT THEIR CHILDREN FOUGHT AND DIED FOR. WAS IT WORTH IT? WELL IT'S NEVER GOING TO BE WORTH THEIR LIFE.

WALDEN: AND OF COURSE WE WILL BE GLAD WHEN THERE WILL BE NO MORE GOLD STAR MOTHERS THAT WILL BE A WONDERFUL THING. I DON'T THINK POSSIBLY, AS LONG AS WE ARE ON THIS EARTH, THAT WILL EVER HAPPEN. AND I DON'T CARE HOW MANY YEARS IT HAS BEEN, YOU NEVER NEVER FORGET.

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