

The Greatest Generation: A GI Comes Home to Build Up America

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General Information

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Description

NBC's Tom Brokaw profiles one World War II veteran who describes his part as a member of the Greatest Generation.

Keywords

World War II, Adolf Hitler, Nazi, Nazism, Greatest Generation, Gene Glick, Levittown, GI Bill, Housing, Suburbs

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CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE

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Transcript

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TOM BROKAW reporting:

World War II was over. American GIs were coming home. After successfully defeating the enemy, they were eager to begin building up America. Gene Glick was one of those GIs. He came home to Indianapolis and set out to build a business. Glick had the sights and sounds of war guiding him.

Mr. GENE GLICK: I was lying on my belly in about three or four inches of freezing water, shells landing all around. You're wondering any minute, are you going to be killed or maimed for life? I thought to myself 'Glick, if you ever get out of this alive and you think you got it tough in the future, think of November 11th, 1944.' And Tom, I'll tell you, it's like a guiding star.

BROKAW: For Glick, that promise paid off. In 1947, it inspired him to start a home building business that would become a huge success.

GLICK: We came back and had the opportunity to play some small part in one of the greatest building booms known to the history of man.

BROKAW: Glick built homes and apartment complexes in 12 states worth more than \$1 billion. Like many GIs, he became a self-made, wealthy man.

GLICK: The amount of wealth accumulated by my generation is going to result in the greatest transfer of wealth when we all meet our creator, ever. But I also firmly believe that there is nothing more rewarding to a human being than to make a success on your own.

BROKAW: But the success of his business would never overwhelm the lessons he learned in the war. There's something about being tested in combat and surviving it that is its own reward.

GLICK: You learn a lot about yourself. You learn about your resiliency. You learn about your ability to cope with conditions you never thought you could survive. I mean, there was a tremendous temptation when the shells would start coming in to say 'I've got to get the hell out of here.' And the thought flashes through your mind, what would you think of yourself later? I know I did. What if I ran? You knew in your heart that you didn't want to let yourself down, and to cut and run, you'd never forget.

