

Wings and a Ring: Letters of War and Love from a WWII Pilot



Many Americans misunderstand the young men who fought in WWII. Contrary to popular myth, these men were not fighting machines—they were young, scared, and, in the end, incredibly mortal figures whose humanity proved the defining characteristic of their greatness. Rene Armstrong's book displays this humanity in full force. Her preservation and contextualization of J.R. Jones's letters intimately reveal the mind of a young citizen-soldier who was far from home and those he loved. Her contribution to the historical record is one that will be valued for generations. Lawrence J. Hickey, author and historian. I must say goodnight, darling. If you only knew how much your letters meant to me. I thought they'd never get here, but I knew it wasn't your fault. Here, I've written five pages, and on all of them, all I want to say is I love you and how I wish time would fly. I'll write again shortly. Always—I love you, J.R. When Rene Armstrong's husband found a box of 295 letters in a junk store, he had no idea the profound piece of history in his possession. Thus began a journey to discover who these two young people were who met on a blind date, communicating to each other over three years in the only way that this era could afford—through love letters that encompassed two continents. James Richard Jones and Helen Elnora Bartlett had a wartime romance whose voice was heard 58 years later, crying out to be listened to. Enhanced with official, now declassified government documents, the love story of J.R. and Elnora unfolds as he writes to the love of his life from the jungles of New Guinea. Held together by Wings and a Ring, their promise of tomorrow would have to survive a year of war.

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