

## DVD Review: For Veterans Day, 'The 95th' Honors World War II Soldiers

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on November 9, 2009 - 6:57pm

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CHICAGO – As Veterans Day approaches on November 11th, the generation that fought in World War 2 are dying off with each passing day. "The 95th: The Iron Men of Metz" profiles those few good men left, so that they can tell their story.



DVD Rating: **4.0/5.0**

The 95th refers to the 95th Infantry Division, a World War Two army sector that was under the command of General George S. Patton. Their assignment? Bring down the German stronghold of Metz, a heavily fortified city in the northeast region of France. Their eventual liberation of the city, fraught with heavy casualties, earned them the nickname "The Iron Men of Metz" and the "Bravest of the Brave."



WWII-era Uniform with the 95th Infantry Division Insignia  
*Photo credit: SoldiersandSailors.us*

Four veterans of the division – Steve Finik, Nick Fusco, Chuck Wood and Paul Madden – tell their stories throughout the documentary, adding personal recollections to the broader scope of footage depicting their march into the heavily fortified German occupied city of Metz, and their orders to take it by force.

What was captivating about the stories was the surprising perspective that each veteran revealed. The film starts out with the flat assertion by

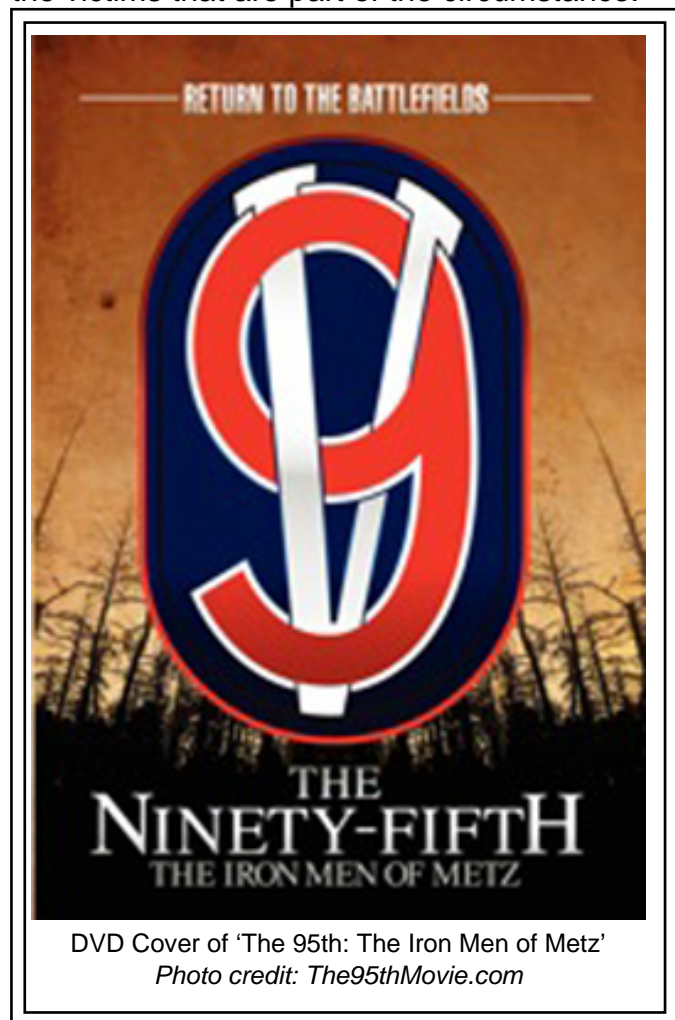


Steve Finik that “war is just senseless,” and that the killing is “just not right,” and this was the supposed “Good War.” Phrases like “legal killing” and “there is the right way, and then the army way” are peppered throughout the reminiscences and adds a dash of real grit to what-did-you-do-in-the-war-daddy type of recollection.

There was also a nice reminder that in the time of war during the era, the guys that went over there weren’t necessarily the gung-ho types. Nick Fusco was in the engineering corp and couldn’t imagine himself as a killing element. His story of fraternizing with the German girls was telling because (as he said) he will willing to risk it for a little break in the action.

Giving these men the opportunity to tell their stories, some for the first time, gives a viewpoint on the strange alchemy of putting 18-year old neophytes, slapping a green uniform on each, outfitting them with a weapon and telling them to “take that town.” Chuck Wood was most elementary about the reflections of war, choosing when he first came home not to talk about it because, there was no one who could understand without having gone through it. He also hoped that he hadn’t killed anyone, but he wasn’t sure.

It was those pragmatic vulnerabilities that were most poignant in the re-telling, for it reflects an honesty about both the purpose of a war and the victims that are part of the circumstance.



Director Davidson Cole gives the documentary a nice balance between the interviews and archival photos/film of World War II. With more time passing and more veterans doing the same, it is good to put some context to that grainy black and white film that often represents the entire war. The filmmakers found rare footage of training, equipment examples and actual Metz newsreel sequences to fortify the look back by the surviving veterans.

Music from the era seemingly covered all the emotions of the era. Besides using standards such as “This is the Army, Mr. Jones” and the Big Band Swing, chestnuts like “Der Fuehrer’s Face” and “Dear Mom” gave in to a sense of time and place, with a context that evoked feeling as well as nostalgia.

The film climaxes with the four men traveling back to France, participating in the 55th anniversary of the Metz liberation in 1999. Like the rest of the film, it is a honest recitation of the hellish conditions they had to face, with a poignant scene in a cemetery with its infinite rows of white crosses that adds to the sense of enormous loss. Chuck Wood even remembered that one of those crosses owed him 10 bucks.

Its easy to forget, after almost three generations removed, that over 416,000 military deaths occurred during World War 2. The 95th Infantry Division itself suffered over 10,000 casualties during the conflict. This documentary honors the survivors in old age, but at the same time acknowledges the sacrifice of those who didn’t get the privilege to age.

“We gave hell, and we took hell...If you’re gonna fight be the winner, don’t be the loser, because then you’ve got big trouble. You lost a lot of men and you gained nothing.” veteran Steve Finik of the 95th Infantry, in a DVD extra interview.

*“The 95th: The Iron Men of Metz” is available on DVD and features interviews with Steve Finik, Nick Fusco, Chuck Wood and Paul Madden, directed by Davidson Cole. DVD extras include archival footage, a tour of Metz and additional interviews. [Click here for more information.](#) [17]*



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