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## EP man documents life of WWII vet

By Karla

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If you go

**What:** Moving Pictures Film Festival – Minnesota’s Greatest Generation

**Where:** The Minnesota History Center, 345 W. Kellogg Blvd., St. Paul

**When:** Sunday, Oct. 21

**Cost:** Free with paid admission to the History Center (\$8 adults, free to MHS members)

\* More information is available at [www.mnhs.org](http://www.mnhs.org) [1] or 651-259-3000. The awards portion of the event will take place that evening from 7 to 9 p.m. There is an additional fee to attend.

### Be a part of Jorgensen’s next film

Jim Jorgensen is “champing at the bit” to begin work this winter on next year’s film entry for the Minnesota Historical Society’s Moving Pictures Film Festival – Minnesota’s Greatest Generation. He’s looking for interested subjects to be a part of the film. Additional information is available by contacting Jorgensen at 763-234-6492.

### Behind the lens

By Renee Stewart

With the Great Depression serving as a bleak backdrop around a rural slice of southern Minnesota farmland, it’s not hard to image a young Harry Hoffman dreaming of the world beyond his hometown.

Once his brothers enlisted in the military, one in the Army, the other opting for the Navy, Hoffman must have found the split in his world’s seam.

“He wanted to follow his older brothers. It was an adventurous proposition at the time,” observed Jim Jorgensen of Eden Prairie, who has documented Hoffman’s life in a film for the Minnesota Historical Society.

Since he was only 17 years old, Hoffman joined the Minnesota National Guard before joining the Navy as a gunner in the Philippines during World War II. Much of his time was spent transporting tanks, PT boats and supplies to various islands.

And the rest of his story is committed to film, a venue for others to get a glimpse into the life of one man, now 82 years old, who is part of a fading generation that so markedly drew the outline for this nation and the world.

For the second year, the Minnesota Historical Society is hosting its Moving Pictures Film Competition to tell the stories of Minnesota's Greatest Generation, people born between 1910 and 1929.

"This is the generation that came of age during the Depression and World War II, and the film project will help to preserve and explore the life and legacy of Minnesota's Greatest Generation," according to the Historical Society. "Film submissions, all 10-minutes or less in length, have been received from filmmakers with a wide range of ages and experience."

Jorgensen is a Web site designer with United Healthcare. He holds a bachelor's degree in communications from the University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire. His video experience comes from work at a few home shopping networks and freelance camera and directing exposure for summer festivals throughout the Midwest.

This is Jorgensen's first foray into a film competition, and his documentary list is relatively short. His other two works grew out of a men's group at St. Andrew Lutheran Church in Eden Prairie. For the last two Januarys, Jorgensen and a group of men have traveled down to New Orleans to help with recovery efforts after Hurricane Katrina. Jorgensen said he has documented both trips by highlighting the men's work and visiting with people they've met along the way.

Once Jorgensen discovered the Historical Society's competition, he became intrigued. Through his girlfriend's parents, who live in Austin, Minn., Jorgensen was able to meet Hoffman, who also resides in the town. It took some convincing to get Hoffman to agree to be filmed.

"He is the type of man who doesn't want the spotlight on him," Jorgensen explained.

Once the filmmaker was able to show that Hoffman's story would be part of a larger visual quilt, patching together the stories of other people of his generation, "He warmed up to it."

Using about an hour of digital film and cutaway black and white war images provided by the Historical Society, Hoffman molded a 10-minute piece for the competition.

The real motivation, Jorgensen said, is not the competition. He said it was a "real privilege" to meet and tell the story of Hoffman. He said the Historical Society's project is important to help other generations realize "what sacrifices these brave, young men made [so we] can enjoy the freedoms we have today."

The moment is now to capture that generation's memories on film before "they take their stories with them," Jorgensen added.

Hoffman will have another chance to enlighten others about this period in history. He intends to view, for the first time, Jorgensen's film during the upcoming Moving Pictures Film Festival on Oct. 21 at the History Center in St. Paul. Hopefully, he'll be able to gather with more of his peers and discuss their memories with each other and other attendees.

"It'd be wonderful if all those filmmakers could bring the people they highlighted in those films [to the event]," Jorgensen said.

It'd be more than wonderful.

It'd be memorable, educational and worth more than the price of admission.

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