



War Record: Dreams of a Stolen World

Mark Zaccaria '70

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Leo Zaccaria was a typical World War II veteran. He kept his memories—horrific combat, languishing in brutal German POW camps—to himself. Then, when Zaccaria was 84, his son Mark persuaded him to leave behind a record of his experiences.

In the first installment of four, Mark Zaccaria recreates his father's experiences in novel form, beginning with his childhood in East Boston. The detailed rendering of 1930s America includes the day-to-day life of a successful immigrant family and the backdrop of looming conflict with Germany and Japan. It's a realistic and unromanticized recollection, as some rush to marry before being "sucked into the vortex of war," and others sow wild oats.

"They were ready to go," Zaccaria writes. "There was no question that if the country needed them, they would serve. Before that time came, though, they felt there were some beers to be drunk and some women to be chased."

While this may seem a trivial note to serve as a precursor to the monumental conflict to come, Zaccaria is intent on recreating the time and place. In this first book he contrasts with careful authenticity a country where the American dream was being realized with the grim hopelessness of the POW camp in Berga, Germany.

The elder Zaccaria was fortunate to survive to tell the tale. Readers are fortunate that his son has made the effort to preserve a story that is at once about a single soldier and an entire generation.

—Gerry Boyle '78