

A Portrait Of a Man Who Knew War's Face

By TED LOOS

FORTY-NINE years ago today, Robert Capa stepped on a land mine in Vietnam while covering that country's war against France, becoming the first American war correspondent to die there.

Capa was only 40, but he had already become one of the world's top war photojournalists. His coverage of the Spanish Civil War produced "The Falling Soldier," the image of a Spanish Loyalist militiaman collapsing into death, which, despite debatable claims that it was staged, still ranks among the indelible images of the 20th century.

During World War II, Capa risked his life many times, even parachuting into the Rhine Valley with G.I.'s, and got close to the action with his lightweight Leica camera. He was the only photographer to capture the first wave of the Allied landing at Omaha Beach.

"Capa largely invented the way photojournalists look at war today," said Anne Makepeace, who wrote, produced and directed "Robert Capa: In Love and War," an "American Masters" documentary that is to have its premiere on Wednesday night at 9:30 on WNET and other PBS stations.

"Before him war photography was about generals and the glory of battle," Ms. Makepeace said. "Capa really showed the human costs of war."

For all of Capa's significance as an artist — his Life magazine work is legendary — his personal life was just as compelling.

Handsome and dashing, he loved to gamble and party, and he spoke a multi-language hybrid that a friend, the writer Irwin Shaw, called Capanese, the product of a Hungarian upbringing and many travels.

In the 1940's he had a romance with Ingrid Bergman, whom he photographed on the set of Alfred Hitchcock's "Notorious," and it is thought

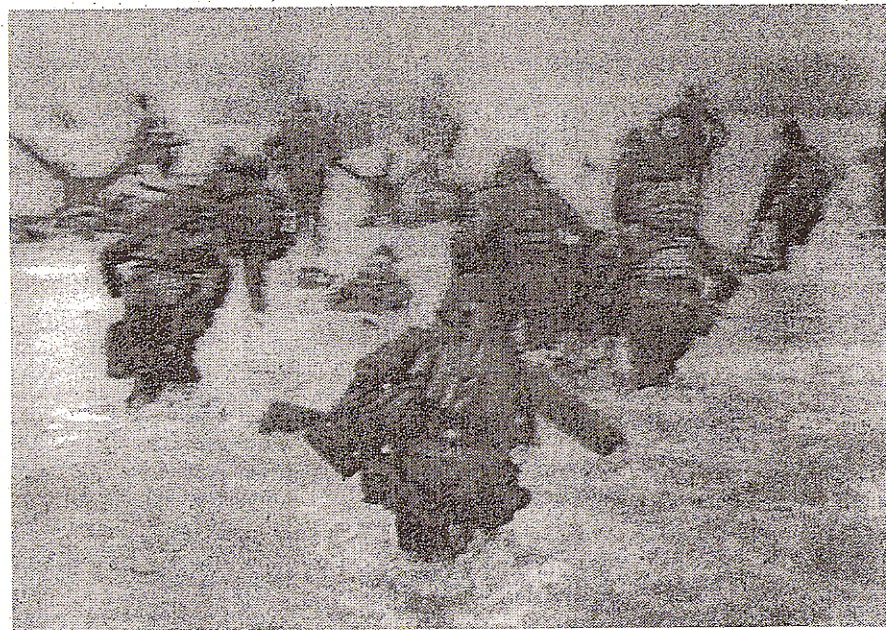
ROBERT CAPA: IN LOVE AND WAR

Wednesday at 9:30 P.M. on WNET

On the cover: Robert Capa in 1936.



Photograph of Robert Capa from David E. Scherman. All others by Robert Capa, courtesy Cornell Capa



that Hitchcock based his 1954 film "Rear Window" on their affair.

Naturally filmmakers have been interested in Capa's story, but the rights are controlled by his brother, Cornell, who is dedicated to preserving Capa's legacy.

"Ever since my brother died, I wanted to make a documentary," said Mr. Capa, 85. "But I did not want a Hollywood-style movie."

Mr. Capa had a distinguished photojournalism career of his own at Life and became the founding director of the International Center of Photography in 1974.

"Cornell went with us because he wanted his brother's work to be the centerpiece, and he didn't want the life to

overshadow it," said Susan Lacy, the executive producer of "American Masters."

Once the rights were secured, Ms. Lacy tapped Ms. Makepeace, a longtime friend and collaborator whose first "American Masters" film, about the photographer Edward Curtis, was shown in 2001.

"At the beginning I only knew what the average person did — his war photographs — but not his life," Ms. Makepeace said. "You cannot find a more amazing story than that of Robert Capa."

Born Endre Friedmann to a family of Jewish tailors in Budapest, Capa was politically active from an early age, and at 17 left Hungary, where he had pro-

