

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE  
Shawna McDermott, Ph.D.

# 1941 (1979)

Steven Spielberg

## Contents (Overview-Synopsis-Characters-Character Analysis-Themes-Scenes)

### OVERVIEW

*Auteur* Stephen Spielberg's work spans many genres. While he is most famous for blockbuster films such as *Jaws* (1975), *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* (1982), and *Jurassic Park* (1993), each of which has a firm foothold in horror and science fiction, his filmography also reveals a deep commitment to asking questions about history and humanity. Spielberg's diverse collection of work has been widely recognized as pioneering, frequently engaging with unexplored themes and techniques that have earned Spielberg a reputation as an innovator and a master artist. He has been awarded three Academy Awards, the AFI Life Achievement Award, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom. His films have likewise collectively placed him at the top of the list of the most profitable film directors in history.

*Film* While Spielberg had previously engaged in the realm of drama, horror, and science fiction, *1941* is his first comedy and his first turn towards historical fiction. For this film, Spielberg chose a talented cast of comedic actors, including *Saturday Night Live* favorites Dan Aykroyd and John Belushi to carry the humor of the film. For the plot, Spielberg took inspiration from the West Coast panic regarding a potential Japanese submarine assault in the days after the Pearl Harbor attack on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941. While Spielberg directed, the film was written by Robert Zemeckis and Bob Gale.

*Background* *1941* is a comedic reinterpretation of several historical events in that year and soon after, including the Great Los Angeles Air Raid, the placing of an anti-aircraft gun on a civilian lawn, and what has become known as the Zoot Suit Riots. While Spielberg and the writing team worked hard to lighten the tone of these events, and indeed removed any suggestion of the racial conflict that sparked the Zoot Suit Riots, *1941* provides insight into a unique moment in American history. *1941* is one of Spielberg's less successful films in terms of profits and critical reviews. However, it does maintain several of Spielberg's signature themes, including chaotic crowd shots, the presence of mischievous and capable child characters, and chase scenes.

### SYNOPSIS

In the days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, a Japanese submarine appears in the water off the coast of California. Seeking to attack and further weaken the American spirit, they set their sights on the destruction of Hollywood. However, the flimsy German-made submarine's compass breaks, and the Japanese struggle to locate the city. With that as the background plot, the film focuses on the stories of Wally, Wild Billy, Birkhead, and Ward Douglas. Wally, a talented dancer, intends to take his girlfriend, Betty Douglas, to the jitterbug dance competition that evening. However, he faces obstacles to this goal throughout the film, including the fact that he is not a military official and that Sitarski, his enemy, attempts to steal Betty away from him. Betty's father, Ward Douglas, receives the delivery of an anti-aircraft gun in the yard of his ocean-front home that is well-placed for a counter-attack against any Japanese forces that might appear on the Santa Monica coast.

Wally and Betty attend the USO dance, but as a fight breaks out between the Navy and the Army an air raid is announced and the streets go black. The air raid is accidentally caused by Birkhead, a captain in the Air Force, who flies an unidentified plane over Los Angeles in an attempt to seduce Donna, who is only aroused while she's in an airplane. Wild Bill, a rogue pilot from the US Air Force, attacks Birkhead's plane, causing it to crash into the La Brea tar pits. Wild Bill flies beyond the city and notices the Japanese sub in Los Angeles waters at the same moment that Douglas and his family do. Both attack the submarine at the

same moment that the Japanese attack Ocean Side Amusement Park, thinking it is an industrial site. Both the Japanese and the Americans declare victory and the Japanese go home, taking Wild Bill them. The Douglas home and Ocean Park are destroyed.

## MAJOR CHARACTERS

*Wild Bill Kelso* A rogue pilot  
*Loomis Birkhead* A captain in the Air Force  
*Wally Stephens* A waiter and talented dancer  
*Ward Douglas* A father and Santa Monica homeowner

## CHARACTER ANALYSIS

### **Wild Bill Kelso**

Wild Bill is a member of the US Air Force who flies a distinctive Curtiss P-40 Warhawk with a shark's face painted on the front. Erratic and unpredictable, Wild Bill is extremely dedicated to fighting the Japanese forces, though his methods of doing so result in more destruction to American property than to Japanese.

*Dedicated* – Separated from his squad in the skies above San Francisco, Wild Bill believes that the city has fallen. His journey in the film is a journey south, desperate to defeat the Japanese and save the rest of California before it can be attacked. Although he is frequently ridiculous in the film, his dedication to protecting America from Japanese invasion cannot be faulted.

*Reckless* – Although he is dedicated, Wild Bill's reckless and haphazard methods of flying and warfare result in a great deal of destruction. For instance, he lands his plane on a California highway to refuel and accidentally blows up the filling station on his way out. Then, when he identifies what he thinks is a Japanese plane above Los Angeles, he opens gunfire at will and destroys a great deal of Los Angeles property.

### **Loomis Birkhead**

Birkhead is an Air Force captain who, unlike Wild Bill, does not take his job very seriously. Although he has achieved the rank of captain, he has spent very little time in the air, a fact that becomes inconvenient when he desperately begins to pursue Donna, who will only kiss a man if he's flying a plane.

*Focused* – Birkhead's story in the film is a singular pursuit of the beautiful Donna. He continually ignores the Japanese threat and his orders, instead focusing on finding and flying a plane so that he can get Donna into the air. While Birkhead is successful in this mission, his single-minded focus results in the Great Los Angeles Air Raid and a great deal of destruction to the city.

*Roguish* – Always pursuing his own pleasures, Birkhead has no trouble lying or avoiding his duties to reach the goals of his pursuits. However, he is handsome and charming, which allows him to get away with it. For instance, he lies to Donna regarding his ability to fly and his knowledge of planes, taking her up not in a bomber as she originally requests but instead in a rickety little plane in which she almost dies. However, they end up together at the end of the film, suggesting that his lies and deceit do not matter in the end.

### **Wally Stephens**

A waiter who is a talented dancer at heart, Wally cares most about getting to the USO to participate in the dance competition. He also cares a great deal about his girlfriend, Betty, who nearly leaves Wally for his enemy, Sitarski. However, Betty comes back to Wally at the end of the film when he joins the military.

*Eager* – From the start of the film Wally is shown dancing even as he washes plates and serves dishes to the customers of the diner at which he works. He is always eager to dance and to see his girlfriend. While these are his singular pursuits at the start of the film, he turns just as eagerly to war towards the end when he joins the military.

*Talented* – While he is merely a waiter and Betty's father does not approve of their dating, Wally proves himself to be a very talented dancer during the USO dance competition. Although he is pursued throughout

the competition by Sitarski, Wally turns their fight into a dance move at every turn, catching the eye of the judges, who offer him a seven-year contract in Hollywood.

### **Ward Douglas**

A family man who lives on the Santa Monica coast, Ward is the father of several children, including Betty. Early in the film the US military shows up with a gigantic anti-warcraft gun and places it on his front lawn, telling him explicitly *not* to use it. At the end of the film, Douglas uses the gun to attempt to shoot at the Japanese submarine off the coast. He does not hit it, but still declares victory as the submarine moves away and his house collapses.

*Fatherly* - Douglas's largest role in the film is as a father to his passel of mischievous boys and to the beautiful Betty, who is pursued by many men. Douglas maintains a beautiful home and forbids Betty from seeing Wally, as he believes Betty is too good for him. Douglas's wife nags him about letting their sons explore the gigantic gun on their lawn, but he dismisses her, saying they are just being boys.

*Patriotic* – At the end of the film Douglas gives an impassioned speech about how Americans must band together on the eve of war, making what sacrifices are necessary to defeat their mutual enemies. As he talks, the characters within the film embrace, embodying his message. Douglas ends the speech by nailing a Christmas wreath to his door. He smiles even as his house collapses.

### **THEMES**

**War** While it is a comedy, *1941* is a film that reflects upon the mental state of Americans on the brink of the Second World War. The film takes care to include references to several historical occurrences, including the Great Los Angeles Air Raid. In placing these real-life events in an absurd context, the film allows viewers to consider how unreal and bizarre it must have felt to be alive at this moment in history. A vivid example of this is the placing of an anti-aircraft gun on a civilian lawn. While the Douglas family makes absurd use of the gun, destroying their home in a failed attempt to sink an enemy submarine, the film points fingers at the actual absurdity of the military choice to place such a lethal weapon on private land. While these events of World War II are frequently understudied or forgotten, *1941* demonstrates that this was the moment for many Americans when the war came to their front doors.

**Sexuality** In addition to laughing at history, *1941* likewise laughs at human sexuality, especially in the relationship between Birkhead and Donna. Unlike other war dramas, including those later directed by Spielberg, there is nothing truly romantic in Birkhead's relationship with the plane-obsessed Donna. Instead, his pursuit of her is singularly sexual. Under the impression that Donna will only sleep with him if she's in the sky, Birkhead goes to great lengths to steal a plane. The plane he eventually does take is rickety and shot at by American troops that do not recognize it as their own. Even though Donna and Birkhead eventually crash in the La Brea tar pits, they kiss at the end of their story, suggesting that Birkhead's dangerous pursuit and the destruction caused by it were well worth the cost. In denying the romantic story of sweethearts at home and their longing for soldiers at war, *1941* allows its viewers to consider that perhaps war and human sexuality are not all sweeping romance and are sometimes, instead, more about lust.

**Japan** *1941* includes a complicated portrayal of Japanese people and culture. Although it was made more than three decades after the Second World War, the film firmly portrays Japanese people as foolish enemies. While the Japanese characters in this film cleverly identify Hollywood as the "heart" of American culture, their tools, their submarine, and their knowledge are too faulty to get them there until the final moments of the film. When they do get there, they misidentify a theme park as an industrial site. After destroying the Ferris wheel, they declare victory and go home. Instead of being portrayed as formidable foes, the Japanese in this film are portrayed as obsessed with Hollywood and as declaring victory when they've only destroyed a single amusement park. Granted, Spielberg portrays Americans as likewise flawed, but his depiction of Japanese culture is not flattering.

**Fear** While the majority of *1941* deals with the absurd, the very real fear that Americans on the West Coast felt after the bombing of Pearl Harbor is the one thing that comes across vividly within this film. Although most of the young Americans in the film are distracted by questions of sex, relationships, and wanting to go to the USO for a dance, each of the characters in the film is anxious about a potential

Japanese attack on the coast. The most fearful character in the film is also the most reckless – Wild Bill. Although he boldly flies across California seeking to destroy any Japanese troops that encroach on American shores, it is his extreme fear that they have already attacked San Francisco that drives him forward with so much force. As with all other serious issues within the film, Wild Bill's fear-driven actions are treated with a great deal of humor as he stumbles around and shouts about the encroaching Japanese troops.

**Humor** Regarding the choice to use humor to temper the serious historical events that *1941* addresses, Spielberg later said that the film probably should have been shot as a drama instead of a comedy to focus more completely on human emotions, such as fear, that truly captured the nation at this moment in time. In turning aside from the emotions that people probably were feeling at this moment, *1941* throws all of its characters into the realm of the absurd, filming over-the-top pratfalls and destruction to make the audience laugh. This film in many ways reflects on humor as a coping mechanism, using laughter to lighten the memory of such a stressful time. Although Spielberg himself was not alive in 1941, many of the viewers of the film at the moment of its release would have remembered the way it felt to live through this moment. In choosing to make a humorous film, Spielberg perhaps invites his audience to laugh at the memory instead of asking them to remember their fear.

**Patriotism** Although *1941* does its fair share of laughing at the American military, along with everything else in the story, it is still a very patriotic film. There are several rousing speeches throughout the film by people in uniform encouraging Americans not to turn on each other in the face of war, but instead to turn on the real enemy: the Japanese. These speeches without fail rally the American people and allow them to band together. Perhaps the most patriotic example within the film is the character of Wally. The film opens with Wally as a waiter who is excited to get to the USO dance competition that evening. Although he is berated immediately by Sitarski for not being in uniform, Wally says he just wants to dance. However, Wally is inspired when Sergeant Tree asks him to bring ammunition over to the tank during the air raid and Wally turns down a seven-year contract as a Hollywood dancer to join his brothers in arms. While the contract is much more lucrative and speaks to Wally's talent for dancing, his girlfriend and those around him celebrate his patriotic decision to give it up to go to war.

**Chaos** Although the chaos of *1941* is well-managed by the editing team, it is still a film that has a large cast of characters whose stories interweave and sometimes abruptly end without a satisfying conclusion. For instance, Will Bill simply ends the story on the submarine happily agreeing to go to Japan with the people he spent the film trying to destroy. The film as a whole is frequently confusing and disjointed. While several critics have marked the film's chaotic nature as negative, the chaos that Spielberg works into the film can also be understood as reflecting its historical moment. In the days and weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Americans were likely working to manage the anxiety and chaos that came with the instability of war on the horizon. In the film as in life, people frantically stumble around, attempting to prepare against events that may or may not come to pass. Although Spielberg uses comedy to temper the anxiety of this chaos, the wacky and unpredictable nature of the film is perhaps the aspect that best captures the experience of living in Los Angeles at this moment in time.

## SCENES

**Pearl Harbor** Words begin to scroll up the screen, informing the viewer of the Japanese attack on the United States Naval Base at Pearl Harbor in 1941. The text then describes the paranoia that gripped the population that lived on the West Coast of the United States, in which military and ordinary citizens prepared to defend their homes. An image of a beach appears, labeled 'The Northern California Coast,' with a mountain in the distance. A car pulls down the road, driving onto the beach.



**Polar Bear Club** A woman in a long white robe exits the car. The back of her robe reads "Polar Bear Club." She runs alone down to the beach and into the water, dropping her robe on the way. She swims into the water and the music from *Jaws* plays. Instead of a shark attack, though, a submarine with a Japanese flag on the side rises from the water, lifting the naked woman high into the air as she clings to a metal mast.



**First Sighting** Men in military uniforms begin to climb out onto the deck of the submarine. A German officer urges a Japanese officer to turn back, but the Japanese officer refuses. They discuss the difficulty of destroying ships in the Los Angeles harbor and comment that the only thing worth destroying in Los Angeles is Hollywood because destroying Hollywood will destroy the American fighting spirit. The Japanese officer orders his men to set a course for Los Angeles and sends the submarine back down.



**Hollywood** A low-ranking Japanese military official looks up. He beams when sees the woman clinging to the metal mast above him. He shouts "Hollywood!" She screams and looks down at him. The man is pulled inside the submarine and slapped for keeping the door open so long that water begins to spill in. The submarine continues to lower and the woman swims away.





### **Kitchen Work**

The scene cuts to two young men working in the kitchen of a diner, cooking and washing dishes. The two dance to swing music as they work, tossing the dishes across the room to each other in time with the music. Outside the kitchen, a group of military personnel in green jackets talk and eat breakfast. One of the kitchen workers, whom his friend calls Wally, brings some plates out, still dancing. One of the seated men asks him if he's got ants in his pants. Wally says he just likes dancing and the man at the table, whom a companion calls Sitarski, presses him, asking why he's not in uniform when there's a war on. One of the seated men trips Wally and food goes flying. Wally apologizes but chaos erupts, resulting in a great mess of food being spilled. The man at the center of the military group, whom Sitarski calls Sergeant Tree, breaks up the fight, saying he doesn't like seeing Americans fighting Americans. The military men leave. An old man comes out of the kitchen and forcibly cleans icing off a boy's face. He tells Wally and his friend that they have to work tonight, but they protest, saying that tonight is the jitterbug contest. The old man says he has to work and Wally's friend says, "Pop, he can't work. He's gotta dance."



**War Nerves** The scene cuts to a small military plane landing on a highway next to a small town. The locals peer curiously at the plane. The pilot pulls up to a gas station and climbs out of the cockpit, directing the service attendant to “fill ‘er up.” Confused, the attendant asks “Where?” The pilot storms into the attached store and begins to tell the people inside that the Japanese have attacked San Francisco. A man eating spaghetti corrects him, saying that San Francisco was not attacked and that the false news story is just a case of “war nerves.”



**Fire** The pilot asks where they heard about “war nerves,” and when the man with the spaghetti indicates the radio, the pilot pulls out a gun and shoots the radio. Outside, the attendant shouts and the plane begins to roll away from the filling station by itself. The pilot runs outside. Gasoline spills all over the ground. The pilot shouts, “Stop that plane!” and shoots his gun into the air. Sparks from the shot ignite the gasoline and the gas station explodes as the pilot chases his plane.





**Beautiful Donna** Two high-ranking military personnel ride in a car with their new secretary. They mutter that California is descending into madness. They arrive at a military base where more reporters are eagerly waiting. A young captain referred to as Birkhead admires the new secretary from afar, telling his friend that she is a “goddess” and that her name is Donna Stratton. He says she “has a thing for planes.” Donna admires a B17 bomber and whistles, moving towards it. As she walks, Birkhead tells his friend that Donna has never kissed a man on the ground – she only lets men touch her when she’s in a plane.

**Meeting Again** Birkhead approaches Donna and asks her out to dinner. Donna laughs at him until he brings up airplanes and begins to detail the benefits of the B17, all of which are sexual innuendos. Donna pretends to be intrigued, leading Birkhead on until her face suddenly falls and she tells him she doesn’t like him. Her tune begins to change, though, when he says he’s been to flight school and lies to her, saying he can fly the B17.



**In Flight** The pilot who destroyed the gas station flies through a canyon, pressing a map open so wide that he cannot see where he is going. He sighs that he is lost and the plane wavers dangerously. He pulls up sharply just before hitting a wall of the canyon. He pulls a bottle of coke from his jacket. When he can’t open it, he smashes it and pours the contents into his mouth, spitting out half. He flips the plane in the air, shouting with reckless joy.

**The Cockpit** Donna laughs in the cockpit with Birkhead. He attempts to seduce her by walking her through a simulated flight. Donna’s eyes are closed and she holds the controls of the airplane in her hands while Birkhead shakes her chair, narrating events as if she’s making the plane take off. Donna’s simulation affects the people outside who are working on the plane – she turns the wheel sharply to the side and a flap opens on the wing, making a man fall to the ground. Birkhead and Donna are caught and Donna sighs, saying it was no good anyway – she needs to be up in the air to feel attracted to him.



**No Bombs Dropped** Donna's boss gives a press conference. Birkhead pressures Donna to stay in the cockpit and kiss him, but she punches him and tells him to stay away. When Birkhead falls back from the punch, he hits a red lever that drops a bomb. The bomb falls from the plane and rolls towards the press conference, just as Donna's boss promises that no bombs will be dropped in California. People run screaming from the bomb, which explodes into the stands where the press was sitting. A man runs up, saying "I think we've located Captain Birkhead, sir."



**Wally** The scene cuts to a white house on the beach labeled "The Douglas Home" in Santa Monica. Swing music plays inside. Two young women climb out of a red car and head inside. The taller of the women, whom her friend calls Betty, says she doesn't want to go dancing because she misses her boyfriend, Wally. Her friend dismisses her, saying Wally is nothing. Suddenly, Betty is grabbed and pulled into a garage. She gasps "Wally?" and then laughs. Wally begins to dance with her, but Betty tells him that her father will kill him if he finds him here.





**Dad Problems** Betty's friend comes into the garage and says that Wally can't come to the dance tonight because he's not in the military. Wally's girlfriend gasps and says her father is coming. A man comes out of the house holding a shotgun. Betty's friend laughs while Betty directs Wally to escape out the garage door, which is locked. The girls go out the front door as Betty's father pushes past them into the garage, looking for paint. The camera pans up to reveal Wally hiding in the rafters.



**Disruptions to the Home** The girls run across the lawn, watched by a group of children dressed as cowboys and Indians. The girls accidentally fall into a deep pit dug by the children, who laugh with glee. A woman inside the house vacuums and pulls a gun out of the couch cushion. Outside, the boys see something moving towards them and shout, "Look what we're getting!" Inside, the woman holds the gun by her fingertips and says "I will not have guns in this house!" Suddenly, the barrel of a 40mm gun breaks through her front door, making her shriek in surprise.



**Anti-Aircraft Gun** Sergeant Tree peeks in after the gun, apologizing. He yells at his men to get the gun sorted as Betty and her friend attempt to climb out of the pit. Betty's father, Mr. Douglas, comes forward and the military unit informs him that because of the home's strategic position on the coast, they will be installing an anti-aircraft defense battery. Mrs. Douglass says no as Satarski lifts Betty from the pit and says "Hello, hello, hello." When she demands that he put her down, he agrees and drops her back into the pit.



**Confrontation** The daughter climbs out of the pit and follows Satarski into the garage. Wally watches from above as Satarski introduces himself to her by his nickname, Stretch. Meanwhile, the children play on the giant gun while the military team teaches Mr. Douglas how to not fire the gun, which in essence teaches him to fire the gun. Satarski asks the girl to the dance and Wally falls out of the ceiling, saying "Betty, don't listen to that jerk!" Satarski recognizes Wally as the dancing waiter with whom he got into a fight that morning. Betty's father bursts into the garage, and Wally is carried off the property by the soldiers. He promises Betty he will be outside the dance hall at 8:00 that night.





**New Plans** Inside the submarine, a worker reports that the compass is not functioning properly. Other parts of the submarine break and the Japanese officer asks the German officer what is wrong with the submarine the Germans sold them. The German contends that it is not the submarine that's the problem—it's the crew—and suggests they return home. The Japanese officer refuses. The Japanese officer orders his men to go on shore and find Hollywood. \



**Attack** A man drives down the road singing and drinking. Japanese soldiers swarm the beach and sneak towards the road. Suddenly, the man who was driving is on the deck of the Japanese submarine being forced below. Inside the submarine, the Japanese commander asks the man where Hollywood is. The man replies, "Right here!" When the commander stares at him, he introduces himself as "Hollace Wood." When the commander shows him a map, Hollace finally understands what he is asking but refuses to tell them anything. The men bring in various items from Hollace's car which are confusing to the Japanese, including a large radio, a lucky rabbit's foot, a pen knife, and a Cracker Jacks.

**Compass** The Japanese are very excited to find a compass as the prize in the Cracker Jacks. However, Hollace leaps forward and snatches it out of their hands, swallowing it. He chokes on it and the Japanese punch him, trying to force Hollace to cough it up. When that doesn't work, they threaten him with a knife and then pour brown liquid over him as a form of torture.





**Civil Defense**

Two men are sent to the top of the Ferris wheel at the end of the Ocean Park amusement pier, next to the Douglas home. They are instructed to keep watch over the ocean for signs of the enemy. One of the men is very afraid of heights and the other is an annoying ventriloquist. Their commander tells them that he will come back to relieve them at the end of their shift. They are given a phone number to call if they see anything.

**Escape**

Hollace is trapped in a bathroom with several enemy men who point bayonets at him, demanding that he go to the bathroom and produce the compass. Hollace says he needs privacy to go to the bathroom and the troops leave. Hollace begins to shout as if in pain and then drops his boots in the toilet with a splash. When the troops break in, thinking he has produced the compass, Hollace shouts and drops on them from the ceiling. He escapes, locking the troops in the bathroom and dashing through the submarine, climbing out as he shouts "God bless America!" The submarine sinks beneath the waves.



**Hollywood** Donna and her boss arrive at the USO dance, escorted by Birkhead, who tried to seduce Donna and whose face is red where Donna punched him earlier. A man arrives on a motorcycle with news of an imminent attack. Donna's boss dismisses it, but Birkhead uses the opportunity to suggest to his superior that they should rally a lot of airplanes to counter the threat. Donna, hearing about the airplanes, gets very excited. Birkhead gets permission to go and Donna leaves with him.



**The USO** Betty arrives at the dance where Satarski and Wally fight over her. Inside, a swing band plays, and girls dance with servicemen. Wally, who cannot get in, cries outside. Several men try to dance with Betty, but Satarski gets in their way. He pulls Betty onto the dancefloor and her friend stares after Satarski, saying, "That's the man for me."



**Split Scenes** In the movie theatre, Donna's boss watches *Dumbo* and becomes very emotional. Back at the dance, Betty and Satarski dance and he whips her around violently. She screams for Wally. Wally tries desperately to get in and climbs to the roof. A man inside the USO announces that the jitterbug contest is about to begin. He announces that a talent scout will be the judge and that the first prize is a seven-year contract at RKO Pictures.

**The Contest** Wally drops a shell from the roof of the building and knocks out the sailor below. Wally then steals the sailor's uniform. Satarski tries to pull Betty out of the building and she begs other military members to dance with her to get her away from Satarski. At the last moment, Wally breaks through the door and grabs Betty from Satarski, pulling her onto the dance floor and entering the jitterbug contest. A chase scene begins, with Satarski chasing Wally and Betty's friend chasing Satarski, trying to get him to dance with her.



**Fight** Wally dances with Betty and the judge admires his moves. Even when Satarski interrupts, trying to hit him, Wally turns his evasions into dance moves, flipping through the air and off the wall. At the last note of the song, Wally spins across the room and turns right into Satarski's fist. He's punched again by the man whose uniform he stole. A fight breaks out across the room with the navy pitted against the army. Satarski is taken down and Wally passes out on the floor while Betty escapes. She takes her friend with her, though the friend calls, "I love you, Stretch!" over her shoulder.





**First Sight** Donna and Birkhead arrive at a base that looks abandoned. When Birkhead gets out of the car and says hello, men with guns pop up, shooting at the ground by his feet. When he identifies himself, he is interrogated to ensure he is American and then accepted. The colonel in charge is dismayed to learn that Birkhead is alone, saying he needs more than just one man. Birkhead ignores his pleas, asking if he has any planes at the base he could show to Donna. The colonel reveals that he has one plane. Donna is very excited to see it. Birkhead convinces the colonel to let him take the plane up, saying he will be looking for Japanese troops.



**Pandemonium** The fight continues at the USO and both Wally and Satarski lie on the floor, knocked out. Donna's boss continues to watch *Dumbo* in the movie theatre, his mouth moving along with the words that the characters speak. A man comes inside to tell him about the fight, but he dismisses it, continuing to watch the movie.



**Flight** – Birkhead and Donna get in the plane, which is very rickety. Birkhead shouts out the window that there's no radio in the plane, and the colonel waves him off, saying that he'll let the command center know he's in the air. After accidentally spinning in circles and knocking over the radio tower, Birkhead takes off. The fallen tower prevents the colonel from letting the command center know that Birkhead and Donna are in the air. A plane suddenly lands and the pilot stumbles out of the cockpit, revealing that it is the erratic pilot who blew up the gas station.



**Wild Bill** – The erratic pilot identifies himself as Captain Wild Bill. He reports that he's been tracking the potential Japanese invasion. The colonel lets Bill know that they've been tracking the Japanese to Pomona and the soldiers give Bill coffee. Bill asks where Pomona is before climbing back into his plane. As he takes off the colonel says he wants to hear his guns and Wild Bill shoots them off, laughing wildly and destroying the air station. The soldiers on the ground send him off into the air in a salute of gunfire.



**She Loves Planes** In the plane with Birkhead, Donna takes down her hair and moves closer to him, kissing his ear. Birkhead concentrates on flying over a reservoir. People guarding the reservoir see him and report him to a chaotic aircraft command station, who mark the plane as a yellow alert. The scene cuts to the USO, where chaos reigns in the streets as soldiers and sailors continue to brawl. A tank is loosed upon the streets and finally quells the fight when Sergeant Tree climbs out of the tank and shoots a gun over everyone's head.



**Alarm** – Betty returns to the USO, searching for Wally. The entire place is wrecked, though the band continues to play. Outside of the USO, Sergeant Tree gives a rousing pep talk encouraging everyone to remember that they're all Americans and that the Japanese are the enemies. In the command room, those in charge decide to move Los Angeles to red alert. An alarm sounds outside the USO and everyone begins to scatter, heading to their battle stations. Inside the movie theatre, Betty's boss rolls his eyes at the interruption to his movie.



**Invasion** – Mr. Douglas spies the Japanese sub off the coast of Santa Monica and shouts that it's an invasion. The Japanese see him too. The lights go out in Los Angeles and Betty's boss orders the men to "hold the block." Birkhead and Donna kiss in the airplane, heading for Hollywood. Searchlights fill the sky. Wild Bill pursues Birkhead's plane and starts to shoot at it. The two planes fly dangerously low over Hollywood, Bill's plane continuing to shoot.



**Black Skies** Anti-aircraft guns positioned on buildings begin to shoot at both planes. Explosions fill the sky and Donna climbs to the front of the plane, starting to fly it. Birkhead flips around in the back of the plane and Donna tells him to "quit fooling around." While the building lights have all turned off, there are many Christmas lights still on. Sergeant Tree declares that they must turn off all the Christmas lights so the city can go black. Inside the USO, the judge of the dance competition pulls Wally off the floor and says he's the best dancer he's ever seen. They offer him the contract, but he shouts, "Where's Betty?" and runs outside, grabbing an army coat on the way. Outside, Tree begins to shoot out all of the lights. He asks Wally for help with some ammunition. A look of wonder comes onto Wally's face as he hands the bullets to Tree.

**The Lights** – Sergeant Tree gets hit on the head and his team panics as he loses consciousness. He grabs Wally by the collar and tells him “knock out those lights, kid,” before passing out. Wally takes charge and the others follow because he is wearing a sergeant’s coat. In the air, Wild Bill continues to chase Birkhead and Donna, declaring “this is war” and shooting more. Birkhead’s plane catches on fire and they’re forced to land in the La Brea Tar Pits. People on the ground continue to shoot at Bill. He flies away from Hollywood.

**The Big Gun** – At the Douglas house, the police do not respond to Mrs. Douglas’s pleas for help regarding the submarine they can see from their back yard, and Mr. Douglas decides to use the gun the army gave him. His children agree with enthusiasm. The men on the Ferris wheel likewise see the submarine, but no one answers the phone when they call and then they drop it. Wild Bill sees the submarine as he flies over Santa Monica and the Japanese realize that they’ve been spotted. They begin to prepare their guns. Bill flies low over the Ocean Park pier and, thinking he’s a Japanese flier, the men in the Ferris wheel shoot at him. His plane catches on fire.



**Get the Girl** – Satarski, continuing to chase Betty, finds her hiding under a car. She tries to escape but he grabs her, kissing her against a car as she screams for Wally. Wally orders the tank to move towards Betty. When the tank hits the car, Betty runs away and Wally confronts Satarski, hitting him in the face with a string of ammunition. Satarski falls back, unconscious, into Betty’s friend’s waiting arms. Betty continues to flee but Wally chases after her, scooping her up into his arms and kissing her on top of the tank.



**Crash** Wild Bill's flaming plane streaks towards the streets of Hollywood and everyone screams. He crashes into the main square in front of the USO. He jumps out of his plane and, thinking he's in the sky, releases his parachute though he is on the ground. A gigantic Santa statue falls on him. Wally rushes to help and Bill insists that Wally must stop the submarine. Wally directs the tank to the beach and they drive quickly past Donna's boss. The judge of the dance competition, Satarski, and then Betty's friend chase behind it.



**Plane Down** Donna's boss confronts Bill about the plane crash and Bill takes credit for the plane that went down in the La Brea Tar Pits. When the military official doubts him, Bill steals a motorcycle and drives away shouting. In Santa Monica, Douglas orders his children to help him prepare the gun. The man in charge of the Ferris wheel, visiting the Douglas family, suddenly remembers the men he left in it. He sends one of the Douglas children to go let them down. Mr. Douglas points the gun at the submarine in the water, but the house is in the way.





**To Santa Monica** Satarski waits desperately by the side of the road and Betty's friend bares her leg to stop a driver, which turns out to be Wild Bill. Satarski begs Bill for help and Bill invites him to get into the motorcycle's side car. Betty's friend climbs in with them. They head for Santa Monica. The tank, likewise headed for Santa Monica, accidentally crashes through a paint factory, destroying it. On the submarine, the German officer attempts to take control of the submarine but he is thrown off the side.



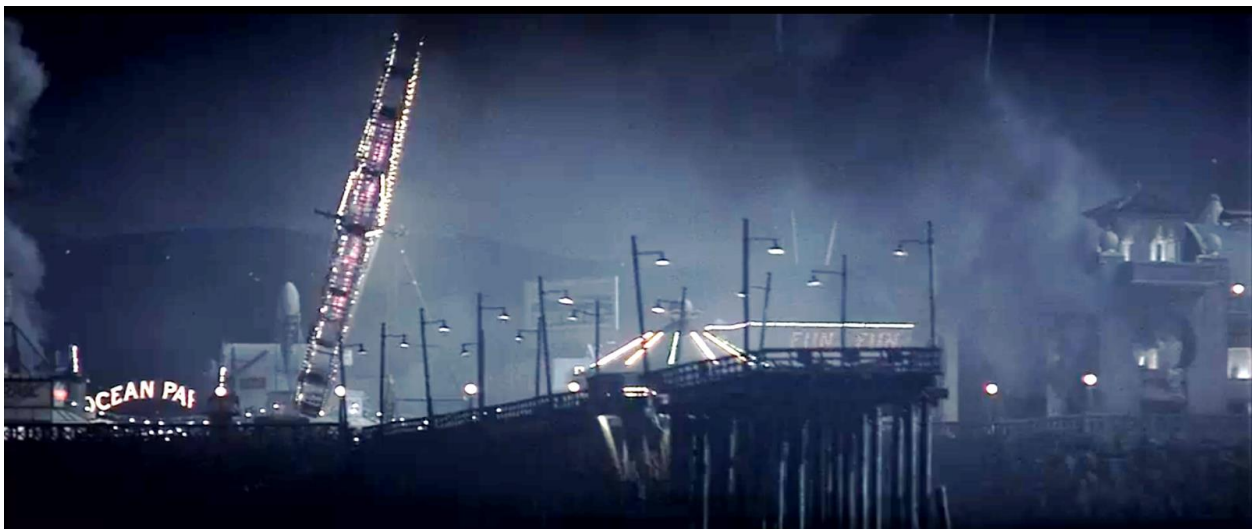
**Shooting the Gun** Mr. Douglas prepares to shoot the gun through the house as Mrs. Douglas desperately moves her possessions out of the way. Douglas presses the foot trigger and a huge shell fires through the house, barely missing the sub. Douglas is blown back into his garage with the recoil. He orders his family to wheel the gun back out so he can try again. Satarski and Bill fight on the motorcycle and Bill detaches the sidecar, sending Satarski and Betty's friend careening through a warehouse district where they land amidst dozens of eggs.



**Second Shot** The Douglas child arrives at the Ferris wheel and tells the men on top that he's there to help them down. He asks which lever he is supposed to pull, but the men don't know. Douglas miscalculates the amount of force it will take to move the gun back into position and the gun goes smashing through the house. Men on the submarine prepare their own gun for a counterattack. Douglas shoots and the shot, as well as the recoil, nearly destroys the house.



**Ocean Park** – The Douglas child stares at the switches inside the Ocean Park amusement park and flips the one that turns on all of the park's many lights. The Japanese focus on the lights and one man shouts "Hollywood!" The top-ranking Japanese official says, "Fire at that industrial structure!" and they shoot towards the Ferris wheel. The Ferris wheel begins to spin out of control and breaks free, starting to roll down the pier. It sinks into the ocean and the Japanese celebrate.



**Arrival in Santa Monica** The tank arrives at Ocean Park. Wally lets Betty out of the tank and tells her to wait for him. The submarine, damaged by the shot from the Douglas house but not destroyed, prepares to fire its torpedoes. The tank moves steadily along the pier towards the water and Bill, on his motorcycle, suddenly flies by them, shouting "Geronimo!" and launching off the end of the pier into the water. The tank, at the end of the pier, fires a single shot. The pier starts to collapse beneath it.



**Torpedo** The Japanese shoot a torpedo towards Ocean Park and the pier collapses, taking everyone in the tank with it. The Japanese officer declares that they have inflicted heavy damages on the American military and will return home. Wild Bill pulls himself up onto the submarine. The Americans who swim in the water salute Bill as the submarine goes down. Bill climbs into the submarine at the last moment and commands the sailor to take him to Tokyo with them.



**The Light of Day** The sun rises over Los Angeles. Douglas moves around his destroyed home, rearranging his belongings, while all of the army men sleep on beds that have been carried outside. Donna's boss arrives and asks Sergeant Tree what happened. The sergeant reports the events of the evening. Mr. Douglas gives a speech about how the group came together in the "true spirit of America" and holds up a wreath, saying he'll hang it as a symbol that the enemy cannot ruin their spirit or their Christmas. As he attaches it to his door, the entire house pulls away and collapses into the ocean. Betty and Wally kiss as Donna's boss walks away, sighing that it's going to be a long war.

