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In 1944, the U.S. government feared the flood of returning World War II soldiers as much as it looked forward to peace. To avoid economic catastrophe, FDR, the American Legion, William Randolph Hearst, and others began crafting the Servicemens Readjustment Act of 1944. It would be the single most transformative bill of the twentieth century. Spun as the G.I. Bill of Rights, this program for vets included home loans, health care, educational funds, and career counseling. The effects were immediate and enduringthe suburbs, the middle class, Americas ever-increasing number of college graduates, the lunar landingall are tied to the G.I. Bill. The Greatest Generation would not exist without it: Norman Mailer, Bob Dole, John F. Kennedy, Paul Newman, Jimmy Carter, Clint Eastwood, and many others benefited from its provisions. Here are the stories of some of these men and women, how their lives changed because of the bill and how this country changed because of them.

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