"There is No Substitute for Victory" - Remembrances of World War II

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“There is No Substitute for Victory” ~ Remembrances of World War II

Based on interviews conducted by
Western Michigan University
College of Health and Human Services
Gerontology Students
Janet S. Hahn, Ph. D., Editor
Cover photo by Patrick Kane, The Progress-Index, Petersburg, VA

“...there is no substitute for victory”
~ General Douglas MacArthur
Students at Western Michigan University have a passion for connecting with the community, other students, and future leaders. One population of students especially feels the importance to connect with, learn from, and serve our aging community. These students have decided to focus some of their studies on making a difference. In the spring of 2013 students enrolled in a gerontology course in Western Michigan University’s College of Human and Health Services titled “Issues in Aging: Service Learning.” One aspect of the course was getting outside the classroom and taking a hands-on approach to learning and making a difference. Using interview, this class conducted a study to educate themselves about the experiences of many in the current elderly population. The two main objectives were to help the students be better prepared to work with an older population, and to achieve a better understanding of generational differences between the current youth culture and the youth culture that existed during WWII. The interviews conducted by the students were open-ended; most were in person with individuals who volunteered to be interviewed. The subjects were recruited through word of mouth, and via direct requests to senior housing administrators, the Kalamazoo Air Zoo, and other organizations. More than 150 individuals were interviewed, and many of their stories and memories are shared in this book.

We would like to thank Earlie Washington Ph.D., dean of WMU College of Health and Human Services, as well as Barbara Rider; Ph. D., Fred Sammons; Ellen Page-Robin, Ph.D.; Air Zoo of Kalamazoo; Friendship Village; Heritage Community of Kalamazoo; Park Village Pines; Jeana Brown; Lisa Fall; and the other students of the GRN 3500 spring 2013 class (Natalie Amicarelli, Meredith Escamilla, Grant Garber, Crystal Georgia, Sarah Goodenow, Anisa Hicks, Kimberly Kucharski, Stephanie Lay, Allison Lenkart, Kari Marx, Janet McCarty, Desirae McDaniel, Elizabeth Osburn-Marshall, Christina Paul, Courtney Reber, Christina Riley, Jillian Rivait, Heather Sheldon, John Sintich, and Bethany VanOosten). And lastly we would like to thank Janet Hahn, Ph.D., whose passion for the aging community has been brought to life now in so many of us at Western Michigan University.

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Forward

The WMU students who registered for the Spring 2013 Issues in Aging: Service Learning Course did not know they would soon learn from people who lived through World War II. Over the course of the semester, students moved from discomfort when calling strangers for interviews to expressing passion for finding the best ways to share the stories and lessons learned. Students strengthened their communication and planning skills and focused on learning more about an earlier generation. Students were moved by the memories of deep sacrifices and loss. They were amazed by the frugal lifestyle required during the World War II Era, and were honored to peek into the early lives of those who had served our country in the military and on the home front.

Most of the students were taking this course as a requirement for the minor in gerontology. They had already committed to studying aging and learning more about late life. The opportunity to speak with many older individuals about their younger years deepened their understanding of those who lived through World War II. As the course instructor, I appreciated the energy and sharing among students as they developed the interview questions and shared the results of their interviews. The students worked as a group to develop the book title and chapter headings. The final product was developed by two students in the course who graduated with a minor in gerontology in April 2013. Lisa Fall volunteered her time to organize the interview results and Jeana Brown compiled the final book draft as a graduate assistant in the WMU Center for Gerontology.

I would like to thank Dr. Ellen Page-Robin and Dr. Barbara Rider for approaching me with their idea for this book. In the early 1980s they helped develop a book of recipes from the Great Depression and suggested a similar book for our current gerontology students. They realized the value for students of learning from those who sacrificed during World War II.

Most importantly, I would like to thank the people who were interviewed by WMU students for this project. You opened your hearts to help students learn. We know we learned only snippets of your experiences while living through World War II, and are grateful for all that you shared.

Janet S. Hahn, Ph.D.
Western Michigan University Center for Gerontology
Kalamazoo Central High School Scrap Metal Pile from Class of 1943
(Westnedge Ave. between Vine and Dutton)
Students collected metal for war efforts
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THE BRAVE ONES WHO PROTECTED HOME

World War II map showing the location of various Army Corps bases, Naval yards, and Marine Corps stations, including the general Corps areas for the Eastern half of the United States.
A German 88 missile and shell

Tent in Benika Island, 1944
My family and I were a part of the “sky watchers.” We watched for planes at night. My family collected cans for the metal too… *Max Dulittle*

I went to work at an Army Air Base. They wanted me to take the civil service exam. I passed it and started working for them doing skilled office work. I worked for the government. They assigned me to a male officer and I worked directly with him. We did casualties lists and notifying parents. My friends were all gone; my brothers were in the service. One of my brothers was in Iwo-Jima and so was my husband. They were 100 yards from each other at one point and didn’t even know it. They never thought they were going to make it home in one piece…*Anonymous*

Everyone wanted to serve in the war. No one wanted to serve in the Infantry; everyone wanted to get into the Navy or Air Force. Everyone waited for their number to come up so they could serve. 18-45 year olds had to register for the draft. When push came to shove, you just had to serve because it was your duty to do so…. *Bob Buehrer*

We used to have a stove in the kitchen and every time I’d hear an airplane, I’d crawl under the stove. Blackouts were scary as hell. I didn’t know if they were German or Japanese planes. Scariest part, Japanese bombing—thought we were going to get invaded. Germany just seemed so far; - Japan was just off the Hawaii coastline…*RO*

Our lives didn’t change a whole lot due to the war and we were very blessed. We had a car, a house, a colorful childhood and we had plenty. In fact, my mom fed many people because of a huge garden that we planted. Other families in the community drew together and they became closer…. *Mrs. Whitten*
My uncle Earl was in the Army in the Pacific fighting the Japanese. My father was in France fighting the Germans. My mother worked in the war factory in Detroit. At the time I was living with my mother and grandmother. I was having a difficult time because I had a very good relationship with my father and I missed him so much. He ended up being killed in the war and I had to deal with the death of my father, which was very difficult at my age.....  

Jeanne Haverland

I was a nursing student at Borgess Hospital, so I stayed busy with schoolwork. The hospital overlooked a cemetery and I remember seeing the young men about to go off to war picking plots and it made me sad. I also saw many trucks bringing in bodies to be buried.... Sandy Heathcoat

My father was a Chicago police officer who worked downtown. He rode a blind horse named Barney, and my favorite childhood memory was every Saturday my father would take me to the stable and let me ride his horse for a few hours. He said having a blind horse was the best because the horse would never get spooked walking around downtown because he couldn’t see anything. My dad, being a cop, would come home with a lot of insight about what was going on in the war. Most of the people on my block would come over to our house to hear what my dad had heard about the war.... Sylvia

I was for the war, because of the way the Germans wanted to take over the whole world and putting people in concentration camps. That was something that we couldn’t have. The war, we had to win and beat them. They were strong and Japan came in. They thought that they would break us apart because we would be fighting two different wars. The United States was really strong, so we were able to overtake both and it was good. My opinion has not changed. I still think that we should have a strong military so that we don’t have to fight wars to win but it will stop people from trying to do anything to the United States...Anonymous
I was in eighth grade when the war started and I remember hearing about Hitler marching into Poland on the radio that my dad always left on. During the summer I worked in a restaurant as a waitress; my boss received permission to hire Japanese Americans that were sent to California when the war started......

*Helen Fandel*

I worked in Kalamazoo as a secretary while Harry, my husband fought in the Army. Throughout the 2 ½ year span that Harry fought in the Army, he was based in Africa, Italy, and Austria. Harry was in the 91st Division under General Clark. At one point, he avoided a sniper by only a few inches. Harry told me a story concerning the Leaning Tower of Pisa. A soldier said, “Take the tower, and leave the town.” Another U.S. soldier said to him, “No, save the tower and take the town.” This conversation is the reason that the building is still standing to this day......

*Betty Selner*

My brother served in the war in the South Pacific as an Army engineer and helped build bridges. We used to joke about the movie, “The Bridge on the River Kwai.”......

*Anonymous*

My role at home was to help cook and build air raid shelters. The government gave everyone the supplies to build these shelters, and everyone in the neighborhood would help. When the sirens would sound you had to take cover in these shelters. I remember always wanting to watch the bomber planes. My dad would grab my blouse and pull me back inside......

*Elsie*

We had to do blackout drills at home. Families had blackout curtains so that no light could shine into their homes. Guards went around during drills and made sure the homes didn’t have any light coming out of them; if they did the guards would knock and let them know......

*Anonymous*
I went to school but my entire life was based around the war effort. We kids would gather up tin cans from the curb and toothpaste tubes to bring to school in order to help with the war effort. In class we would knit 12 by 12 squares to make blankets for the soldiers. The Red Cross would provide the yarn for us children. I just remember knitting all the time in class. I had a cousin on an aircraft carrier. He was actually my favorite cousin. He was a gunner on an airplane. Kamikazes killed him and all of his men right before they were about to take off from the carrier. He was only 23 years old when he died. I remember my mother screaming so loud when she received the news about him being killed at sea. He was buried at sea in a mass burial with all of his crew mates. You can read his name on a wall in the Philippines. I also had another cousin in the Marines but he came home as soon as the war was over.... Carol Smith

Living outside the United States most of my childhood, I was somewhat numb to the Western culture because I had seen citizens being treated worse in China.... Gary

During the war I was working in Mishawaka, Ind. at Ball Band, which was a rubber plant. They made gas tanks and fuel tanks for planes …Rose

My husband was an expert in cigarette paper. Lieutenant in the Army but stayed behind because he was in work that was vital to the war.... Helen

In my little town of Vicksburg we had black out drills just in case the Japs ever came our way. We were not even allowed to have cigarettes lit….Anonymous

My sister’s husband was in the war. He was a staff sergeant for five years. He had a hard time getting a job after leaving the service because he had post-traumatic stress disorder, which was sad because he was only in his 20s. My husband’s number was #17, but his number never got pulled so he never got drafted….Anonymous

I worked for Waukesha Motor Co. during the war. I started June 1940 at $60 a month and when I quit in September 1945, I was making $105 a month. I was the first one in my business class to get a job after graduation, and very glad to get it….Elvi Schroeder
We were constantly hiding from the Germans, who would come into our town and take anything and everything we had. They would take our animals, food, and even open barrels of wine to fill their jugs up. You just couldn’t stop them. One of my aunts had a farm in the mountains that we would go and hide out at while the Germans were around. Life for our family was OK, because we had a place to go, and knew people for food. Life for everyone else around me was miserable. The Germans actually burned down the town close to Agnone (Italy) called Capracotta. Two weeks after that, the town between Cocracotta and Agnone, called St. Angelo was also burned to the ground by the Germans. The towns were completely destroyed and left many people, including my relatives Antonia and Rose, without anything at all. That is when Agnone became a town for all the refugees. The same SS soldiers that burnt down the other towns were on their way to Agnone. My father was among the men who stood gun in hand ready to open fire at the two German soldiers coming across the bridge with their cans of gasoline ready to burn my town down next. My father, along with a few others, aimed and kept shooting at the German soldiers, and finally killed them. He was a hero that day, and those few men saved Agnone from being destroyed. .... Nicola

I lived in Detroit, close to the river; we used to have bombing practices. It would’ve been easy to attack Detroit; we could have a blackout and they could still see the river and know it was Detroit. Tanks and vehicles were made there. We had blackouts from 8-9 p.m., where we had to stay away from the windows…Anonymous

Flag from Taiwan during WWII

My brother was drafted February of 1943 into the Army. He went to Europe. He drove a jeep in the parade of liberation for Paris. He then served in the Battle of the Bulge. We were told that most of his platoon was wiped out. We went two months before we knew if he had made it out alive. We found out by him sending us a letter. J.A.S.
While in college, I didn’t keep up real well. I was too involved in classes and friends. My husband, now deceased, was a little older and he graduated before I even went to K-College. But I got to know him after the war. He was in the Navy on a destroyer in the South Pacific where he was involved in island hopping, but his destroyer stayed out away from the island. For four years many long stretches of just ocean. Every time they did something when they crossed the equator, for first-timers they would do silly stuff. The tropical weather, he said he was just sweating and always wet; it was common to develop rashes. His destroyer was attacked by a Kamikaze and damaged very badly and killed a couple hundred, but it didn’t sink. It could limp back to port for repairs. In the explosion a radio man got thrown up towards the ceiling and he was cut up pretty badly; he got a Purple Heart out of it...Anonymous

My middle brother was in the Navy and assigned to a destroyer called The Plunkett. He was at sea and served three to four years. He enlisted in the Navy because he was soon to be drafted for the Army and didn’t want to be in the Army. He was gone all of the three to four years serving in the European countries and Northern Africa. His destroyer escorted troop ships back and forth across the Atlantic Ocean. My eldest of three brothers was married, but was in war related industry because he worked for a power company which helped with the war effort...Anonymous

When I was 17 years old they were recruiting women to go to Washington, D.C., to work for the government because the men were being sent to the war. The women came from all over the country. They actually came to my high school to recruit us. My friend and I both decided to go. So I went to be a civilian employee for the Air Force, filling out paper work, and my friend worked for the Navy. We had to look at the photos of the killed civilians and record them. It was a tough job, but I loved working there and being so involved...Anonymous

I worked for a hairpin factory, but due to the metal being needed for ammunitions, I moved to a factory for making insulation for Army housing. ...ELP
Lots of things were rationed, including sugar and butter. At Christmas, our mother would take all of our coupons and make fudge. I remember putting three pieces aside for my older sister Fran; my mother told my brother and me to save them. We would sneak up and slice off tiny slivers and corners. I wonder if Frances ever knew... John Dunn
You would buy a book for bonds at the post office; you would turn it in and you would receive your bonds. This would be the equivalent of a coupon for today’s standards. You would purchase 10-cent stamps at a time and green stamps would be used for groceries and for coupons as well.... *Harriet Buehrer*

There was a lot of rationing. We had coupons to get the things we needed, but we could only have a certain amount. I remember that my grandma would give us her gas coupons so that we could take a family trip somewhere. We also had coupons for butter and sugar, but those were only used when we really needed them. Cooking and canning became a little difficult. We didn’t always have everything we needed to do both of those, but we did our best. We saved a lot of things, like nylon. We used to cut up our nylons and use them as stuffing for our pillows. It was nice; it was like it was brand new.... *Marianne*

I recall in school that we would go around town and collect metal for the troops... *L.M.*

My mother would have to send our family back in Sweden coffee because “they always kept their coffee pot on” They were not able to get coffee in Sweden because of the war... *Donna Sorensen*

I remember during the war that the government would ration gasoline; a person was only allowed to fill up their car with a certain amount only because of work. A person had to register their car with the government and they would get a certain amount of stamps for gas, but only once a month. Sugar was also rationed and we were only allowed to take so many pounds per person. This was also allowed monthly. I remember that bread was very hard to come by, and I would wait at the grocery store to pick it up once a month. Because the war was using a lot of rubber, tires were very scarce and expensive. I remember that my mother decided to send her son some cookies and I helped her wrap each cookie individually. We sent the whole dozen to him while he was serving in Italy, and I remember that Fred wrote a letter stating he shared the cookies with his troop as well.... *Doris Buehrer*

Farm wagons were converted to rubber tires, but rubber was rationed and good. Strong tires were not available. So we became experts at patching inner tubes and changing tires. To meet the war effort we piled all the old farm machines in the town center. The result was a big sacrifice for farmers because they had no spare parts to fix their old machines... *Fred Sammons*
Rationing coupons

Everything changed because of the war! Rationing was a huge part of the war, but since I was serving in the war nothing was limited to the workers. I was able to send a letter without paying for anything. I didn't make much money, but received $50 a month plus benefits... Betty

The ration book was a pain. The formula I made took sugar and evaporated milk. Sugar was rationed so we had to go to the board to get extra sugar for the baby formula. We couldn't get shoes, sewed all children's clothes, and bought a lot of things from a catalog because there wasn't enough gas to go get clothes... Helen Levy

Gas was rationed. Cars were put on blocks because they couldn't afford the gas. There was a lot more walking. They got most of their food from food stamps. They saved tin cans to make ammunition. Draft was started. People used to put flags in their window for their family who served. Gold stars meant they had passed in war. There were dark-outs where everyone had a curfew so that when planes flew over they wouldn't know where the town was. Women went to work in place of the men. They made things like airplanes and tanks. Rosy the Riveter came about. Pantyhose were used to make parachutes and it was hard to get wool... Carol Reichard

We had gas, shoe, meat, and sugar rationing. We all had these ration books, and at college, some student apparently paid in pigs, or pork! We had pork day in and out. I didn't go home until Thanksgiving, where my mother had a big pork roast she spent all her rations on! I don't know how many pairs of shoes she could buy, one or two a year. You could buy high heels, but it'd be one of three pairs. You had to think about how you spent your ration coupons... Anonymous
Teachers were expected to close down school and do all the registering for rationing stamps at the school. East Coast was more immediately involved because they were more affected by rationing of food than the Midwest. Midwest had more farms so they didn’t need all their meat. . . . Anonymous

Sugar, gas, nylon, and toothpaste were all rationed. Every member of the family had their own rationing books and they would use the ration stamps at the grocery store. My family did not have a lot of money, so we did not use all our stamps. We gave away the stamps to other aunts and uncles who could use them. . . . Anonymous

We had a small weekly newspaper in Wisconsin and our father had a press card so we had plenty of gas, but nowhere to go. We also had sugar rationing; my brother, sister, and I had separate sugar bowls. I swear to this day by brother stole some of my sugar. . . . Barbara Rider

I remember scrap drives and collecting milk weed to fill life jackets. Cities that collected the most scrap metal had cities named for them. The USS Oshkosh was one. . . . Don Burnham

My mother, father, brother, and two sisters lived in my house during the war. I was the oldest of all my siblings. My family tried to be as productive as we could when it came to doing our part for the war back at home. We rationed a lot. My father used to save gas stamps so we could go visit our grandparents. My mother took me to my aunt’s frequently to preserve and harvest food in cans. . . . Mary

Certificate to show authenticity of ration coupon
I graduated from State High and went to Western Michigan University in the fall of 1941. I met my husband-to-be in October. He was drafted in January 1942. Our courtship was mostly courtesy of the U.S. mail. We were married in December of 1944. We were married 67 years, so I guess that’s one good thing you can say about the U.S. mail!... Margaret Mary Tanner
“Ever hear of V-mail?” You wrote your letter, and somehow it got smaller. This was for easier delivery to save room on the ships for more important things. I was able to keep my spirits up by writing back and forth to my girlfriend, who would later become my wife...Bob Camfield

I wrote to my parents once a week. It was mandatory because we had mail call. But all of the mail was censored. All of the mail would be blacked out if it said anything about where someone was or what they were doing. There were things you couldn’t tell the public. The morale was pretty low on the bases. And they believed the saying “loose lips sink ships.”...Max Dulittle

I wrote letters to communicate with loved ones. I began writing letters to a boy, because his mother had asked me too. I agreed to write him, but told his mother that he has to write me first. He did write me. We began a relationship, and married once he returned home from serving in the war...Anonymous

We never knew where our loved ones were. We were not allowed to know. We had to wait for the letters to be delivered. My husband was in the USS Wasp when it sunk in the Pacific, and I had to wait to hear if he was OK...Anonymous

I talked to my brother through the mail. We were able to send them out and receive some back. I remember the letters coming in from the South Pacific from my brother being censored. When they censored them, they didn’t just take a pencil and scratch away what my brother wrote; they took a knife and cut out what they didn’t want to be told to the family...Anonymous

Being in Atlantic City during school breaks I got to personally interact with soldiers and found out updates through them....Heidi

I wrote letters to my brother. One of my passions was writing, so at times I would send letters with small drawings included or some of my modeling pictures to soldiers to give them hope and happiness...Anonymous

When I went missing in action as a prisoner of war, my family was sent a telegram from a major who was head of aircraft in Italy, saying that I was a courageous and brave individual, but I was missing in action....Lawrence
The Navy had something called the V-mail. It was tissue format and I could write short little messages to my brother. My brother’s ship was bombed on the coast of Italy and my family got a message from the American Red Cross saying, “I’m well and safe. Please don’t worry” from my brother. ...Anonymous

We heard details of the war from the radio and newspaper. The newspaper was delivered every day. My family did not have electricity, so we would use a charged car battery and hook it up to the radio. However, our time listening was limited. The radio did not give out details and the broadcasts were very vague...Anonymous

My husband and I had made up a code before he left so that he could communicate more things to me in the letters. I knew where he was basically the whole time. I had gotten enough letters to make me feel comfortable and know that he was all right. The only time I ever got really scared was during the Lingayen Gulf Invasion because there were 88 air attacks. ...Anonymous

We made wristlets, gloves, mittens, and chest warmers for soldiers. We would travel to the Red Cross in Hastings that provided yarn. I wrote letters to the soldiers and got some responses...Glennice Hock
OUR TROOPS

Troops showing a boat they built and snapping a picture before hunting
I was in the Air Force, enrolled, and was not drafted. Part of my job was when the planes would fly in and the pilot would write a report, if there was anything wrong with the instruments, I would be the one to fix them......Bob Camfield

Two brothers, both were Marines. They were both sergeants. Back then the military just wanted you to pop bullets in everyone. You didn’t really have much of a title other than kill people. My brothers would have nightmares and I would have to sit with them and calm them at night. I would go into my brothers’ room and they would be sleeping muttering stuff like “The ship’s going over!” And they would also scream like they were watching their good friends go overboard. It was very hard to watch them go through those nightmares...Anonymous

My brother served in the war. Fred was a private first class. He was based in Kansas Cavalry and also operated a tank. He also received his basic training in Chicago at Fort Riley. He was then shipped to Europe to serve and when the Germans and Italians surrendered in 1945, Fred was sent back to the U.S....Bob Buehrer

My brother Cleatis was drafted into the Navy. He was the only son of my mother’s children. My half-brothers from my father’s first marriage were too old to be drafted. My boyfriend was also serving in the war at that time; he was in the Marines...Anonymous

I served in the Navy in WWII. I helped operate and drive the USS North Carolina. It was a rewarding and terrifying experience since I was 18 when I was drafted into the war. It was a very scary experience seeing as I knew I might die any second, but I’m glad I wasn’t in full on battling and shooting. I felt safer on the boat...Anonymous

A soldier on the beach in June 1942
I enlisted in Naval Aviation and went to the Great Lakes Center where I learned military procedures but never finished boot camp. I was then stationed at Pensacola at Corpus Christi Naval Station. There, all the Navy aviators were trained. About 1,200 per month came through. I worked on biplanes as a mechanic and then became a crew chief. I was stationed in Barbers Point Naval Air Station in Oahu. They did not have any hangers or anything to work in, so we worked in the sun without a shirt. Now I am suffering from skin cancer.... *Ward Hart*

I went to Army basic training in 1943. I was in a special forces training, so instead of being there for 13 weeks, I was there for 18 weeks. I then volunteered to be a glider troop, but was injured in two training accidents to the point where I was deemed unable to serve in combat. Due to my injuries in training, I never left the country. For the bulk of the war I was stationed at Camp Campbell in Kentucky.... *Larry*

My oldest brother, who was a year older than me, was a radio gunner and was shot down and captured. He was a prisoner of war (POW) for 2 ½ years. He was released after the war ended. Because he was captured, I decided to join the war. My cousin was also in the war and was a nurse. I also had a male cousin who was a pilot in the war. He was flying right before my brother was captured. He was circling his plane around to protect the other U.S. soldiers who were fighting below, including my brother. I never found out about this until years after the war was over.... *Betty*

I was one of 13 children. Two of my brothers joined the Army. One brother was in the Battle of the Bulge and the other was in Normandy. My other brother was a part of an engineering corps that helped build bridges.... *Anonymous*
I took my freedom for granted because I thought the U.S. was undefeatable and we would come out of the war with a clean streak. But instead, many people died in WWII. I believed in the people of this country, but I didn’t always believe in the leaders of this country. I was so happy when the war had ended and I was finally able to go home and see my wife and family. The war was definitely an experience that I would never want to relive, but it did teach me many things about life that I will hold on to forever. ....Lewis Keiser

I served in the U.S. Marine Corps. I was still in high school when they pulled my number in the draft because I was older. Because I was in good health too….Max Dulittle

I was a squad leader when we left on the Queen Elizabeth (ship) and landed in Scotland. From there, we were shuttled on a train to Liverpool, England. Then, we were shipped to Lattara, France. There, I was the squad leader of the 100th Infantry and fought as a section sergeant over machine guns. We fought our way up to the border line of the Siegfried Line. The Siegfried Line was the line built by the Germans with forts and tank defense. “Blinked my eyes and the guns were firing.” The wall had ‘pill boxes’ that the Germans would hide in to shoot the American soldiers. “Nothing seemed to break that wall, so we lined up cannons and finally broke a hole in the wall.”

I went to flight school for 12 months to learn how to fly. I did my basic training in Montgomery, AL. My basic flying training was held in Greenwood, MS. I was assigned to fly a twin- engine B-24 twin tail bomber. I was in a crew of 10 men. All of us were 20 years old. We flew from a base in Colorado all the way to southern Italy. One of my tail gunners was actually sent home because his mother called in and reported that he was under the age of 18. My crew and I did 30 bombing missions in Italy…

Paul
Battle ship and a “Flying Tiger”

Biggest let down in my life, almost four years and I came home to what? No job or girlfriend. Was nothing when I came home, but when I was at war I was a sergeant.... William Koetje
When I started second grade I was put into a room with other kids, not my first grade classmates. I still do not why I was held back, no one ever told me and I did not ask. As it turned out, the boys a year ahead of me got drafted into the war...

Fred Sammons
My sister worked at an Army air base. Her job was to help make scopes for the military’s guns. I would help her out, and I didn’t like working on the scopes because I knew they were going to be used to kill people. One brother was drafted, the other enlisted. They both survived but were gone years at a time. We never thought they would make it home alive. You tend to understand the war a little more when you are right in the middle of it. You had to be what you had to be, and that was a soldier. I didn’t want to be a soldier, so I wasn’t. I never believed in war and I still don’t...Anonymous

My family felt very empty, like everyone else whose sons and husbands were sent off to the war. It was a very sad and lonely time. I was graduating high school and we couldn’t get class rings or class pictures because of the war....Betty Schneider

I remember when Pearl Harbor was bombed. I was across the street building an igloo. I remember because there was a big snow storm two days before and there was two to three feet of snow. I remembered my mother calling across the street, “We are at war!”...Anonymous
My husband Ralph had a heart condition, he couldn’t serve. He got some kind of medal, whatever it was. He got it for rescuing civilians during the attack. I think it was a Purple Heart. Only one to serve was my brother-in-law. He was the oldest; he was the one who had to go. He was in the Medical Corps. He and my sister had a one year old and he was in the Philippines for three years and never got to come home. The 1 year-old would cry and cry. I remember he sent pictures to my sister and she got them developed and sent them back and he sold them -$3,000 he made. I don’t know what they were of, soldiers I suppose. He was originally from West Virginia, where he worked in the oil field. Apparently they took good care of the men who were in the service. He returned there after he came back. He came home from the service with malaria, but he recovered from it. Everyone that was left at home took on all the responsibilities. And the sad part, - women never got the respect that we deserved and yet we did everything. The war certainly made us grow up a lot quicker than we needed to.”...Anonymous

Love letter with artwork

We weren’t really exposed to the war as much, not like the people in Europe where the battles were going on right in the hometowns. We almost had it “good” compared to what they were experiencing over in Europe. Of course nothing is “good” about war, but we were not seeing here in the United States like what the people in Europe were experiencing.... M.K.H.
Oh yeah, nobody had a date, or a boyfriend! It was very different. We got close with the other women and did a lot of things together. And girls aren’t friendly, we’re competitors. At Kalamazoo College one semester there were 300 women on campus. All the men were gone, so unless something was wrong they were in the service. There were only six men on campus, three Japanese American men. First generation Japanese were sent to concentration camps, picked up by the government. We’re embarrassed of it now; no trial, nothing, just took them. They sorted all the bright fellows and the college-age men were sent to some schools. As I remember, one of my friends married one of them. It was a good marriage. We had a basketball team and all men had to play. We had the shortest team. Also, we had a mini chapel service and the gospel music director knew we liked a certain song and would play it for us frequently because we would yell one of the parts, “God send us men!” We enjoyed that. We would only sing that part and shout it out!...Anonymous

One of my brothers served in the war in Australia. His job was filling up the airplanes on the Azuki, Japan airbase. He was there for over nine months. He traveled through two typhoons and a hurricane on the way to Japan. He was based 150 miles from where the atomic bomb was dropped. ...LD Ballman

Daily accounts from soldier
OUR BRAVE MEN AND WOMEN

Portrait of soldier and other family
“Some would say our commander was a slave driver, but that was just his job.” The men worked from 8 a.m.-6 p.m. then again from 7-10 p.m., only having a half day off on Sundays! I worked on instruments for planes. I was in Australia. The planes would land and I would modify them for the conditions by taking off the ice melters and such.... *Bob Camfield*

We trained all the time. The Marines did a lot of drills. My sergeant was very hard on the 40 people in the platoon because he had already been in the war, but was taken out because he caught malaria. He wasn’t going to let any of the men he trained not be prepared for war. He knew what really happened and he wanted his men to know what to expect. I was sent to Parris Island, NC for boot camp for 12 weeks. Then I had 10 days back at home. Then they sent me to Camp Lejeune in North Carolina for jungle training, then to San Diego, Calif., to train in the hills. ..... *Max Dulittle*

*WWII soldier*

My parents were terrified when I went off to the war and so was my fiancé. I proposed before I went off to war so that I knew she would wait for me. We are still married to this day. I love this woman to death; she is my everything. It was a good thing that I came back in one piece. My parents were so happy to see me come home and start my family...*Anonymous*

I was in the Navy, stationed at Great Lakes for boot camp. Then I went to stations in Boston, Rhode Island, and Ft. Pierce for amphibious training, then on to Norfolk, Hawaii, and the USS Queens. I had two cousins that both served in the Battle of the Bulge and were both wounded...*Anonymous*
I was a fitness instructor in the Navy, a chief petty officer. I graduated from Miami of Ohio, and when I was a senior, there were Navy preflight students at Miami University and I was assigned as their physical instructor. So that’s how I got into physical fitness when I got into the Navy after I graduated, because I already worked for the Navy. At the end of the war, we went to Korea, then China. There was one time, after the Philippines battle, we had to go back to Hawaii because something was wrong with our ship. The second time, between Iwo Jima and Okinawa, we could go back to the island and go to shore and drink beer and play softball. Then we went to Korea, mostly to take soldiers, to China to liberate China. Sent to Korea first, to pick up soldiers, this was at the end of the war, to liberate the Chinese from Japan. So that’s how I got to go to China.... George G. Dales

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Kalamazoo men selected for training

I was first lieutenant and a nurse in the psychiatric ward in England. The guards in the ward were very protective and did not let anyone harm me. The Germans were very in line and respectful, but the Italians and Americans were more rowdy. ... Sally

I served in the Army and was standing on the beach when General MacArthur returned to the Philippines. It was really nice because the Philippines helped us fight the Japanese.... J.M.
I took a passenger train to Chicago where I went to Great Lakes Naval Station for boot camp. I remember hitchhiking home to Battle Creek at some point during boot camp to see my family. After completing basic training, I took a train to San Diego to go to corpsman school. After finishing corpsman training, I was shipped to Jacksonville, Florida where I worked in a hospital. After that, I was sent to Parris Island, NC, where I was assigned to a dental lab. Over time, I received several promotions and made it to petty officer, third class..... Victor van Fleet

I was in the Navy and was assigned to Sacramento, Calif., where I communicated secret information about certain ships coming through San Francisco and why they were passing through. I was a secret correspondent for 2 ½ years and was in charge of keeping classified information under wraps so it was not relayed to the enemy. ..... Betty

I was in the Navy on the business end. I stayed down in the hole and did things like maintaining supplies... Carl Nelson

I served in the Army Air Corps and I had basic training at Keesler Airbase. I then went to Sheppard Field, Texas and became a drill instructor of 78 men. Then I traveled to Scott Airbase, IL, and while I was close, I hitchhiked home and got married. Then I went to March Field, CA, for a while and then to Greensboro, NC, where I was discharged in November 1945.... Dale Loker

I was in the Military Police in the Army. All five of my brothers served. There was a day room; I would listen in the morning to the broadcast about the changes in the war. I would change the strings on the map to know where we were at all times. This was part of my job. I also saw Lucille Ball and Bob Hope... U.M.

I was drafted into the Army in September 1941 and was in California on December 7, 1941. I was sent up to Washington State and served in the Coast Artillery Corps until I transferred to the Air Corps and received my pilot wings in June, 1944. I went to Italy in January 1945 and flew 15 bombing missions with the 15th Air Force as a B-17 pilot. I finished my final year of college on the GI Bill, graduating in 1946...Phil Schroeder
I was in the Air Force, in the 96th Bomb Squadron. As a prisoner of war, daily activities were limited. Many of the soldiers who were being treated with me were very intelligent and knew how to build just about anything. We would trade cigarettes to Germans in exchange for random parts and odd and ends that would help in building useful tools. Someone had even built a radio. Since my legs were broken, I had them crudely bandaged, but I used it to my advantage. When the Germans inspected the prisoners for items that they should not have, I hid my items in my bandages because I knew they wouldn’t look there.... Lawrence

I served in a non-combat 13th Air Force service unit. I had a safe, uneventful experience during WWII. I worked on a service crew, and we fixed up any trucks that would come through during the four years I was there. I was sent to a few places, including Fiji and the Philippines. I had a weapon but no ammunition! I serviced truck engines the entire time I was overseas. I had very good living quarters and the food was always good.... Jack

I served in the U.S. 5th Army. I drove a 6x6 “truck and duck” on three invasions of Sicily, Italy, and Anzio.....HJP

I was a Navy sailor and served for three years. My brother and I were getting ready to go see a movie when the government brought my draft papers. I thought my brother would be drafted, but it was only me. I worked on electronic transmitters so they worked for the Navy. This included sonars, radars, and radios. ....John H. Furbacher
I served in the Air Force in the U.S. in Mississippi, New Mexico, and South Dakota and then England. I worked in headquarters in Attlebridge, England for 1 ½ years. I worked with heavy bombers who flew B-24s and B-17s, the Flying Fortress. A group would head to Germany and bomb, and then fly back. It would be about a six to seven hour round trip. The planes had four officers and six enlisted who did the bombing...Anonymous

I wasn’t really concerned about the war. I was a young guy who tried to have fun and stay alive. We went over the ocean in the Queen Elizabeth. It took about five days to Scotland then we took a train to England where we were stationed. When we got there I saw an English boy coming into the base. He was hiding behind a small building watching us. His name was Albert Becket. He and I became good friends. He came by the base every day. One day he came with fresh eggs which were hard to come by. He tried to give them to me. I said I was thankful but he should take them back home to eat with his family. I remember when we were leaving we all hopped into the back of a truck and before we left I spotted him in the background and I could tell he was crying. Years later my son and I took a trip to England and we found Albert. ...John Vandenbos

I served in the U.S. Navy. I was sent overseas to Russell Islands and Guadalcanal. These were all islands with no people. The first place was a coconut plantation. We cut down trees for platforms for our tents. In Guam, we built everything on airplanes and put together “drop tanks.” They would drop down and cause fires....Norbert Cramer

I was in the Navy. I was in the waters on a ship for most of my enlistment, by Boston, Mass., with 13,000 men. I sat off the coast of Jamaica for a few months. Our ship did end up by Japan during war time, which was scary....Donn

V-mail to a New Yorker
Two soldiers show their gun mastery

I was stationed in Guadalcanal. Natives didn’t wear shoes. They called me “Peroxide Joe” because my hair was blond/white. The natives had never seen anyone like me. Nobody wore clothes. Headhunters were on the island across from me, so no one went to that island without being armed. There were hundreds of acres of coconut tree plantations. The British had developed the island before the war and they planted the trees…. Lawrence Dluge

I was trained in England. I served in France, Belgium, Holland, and Germany. I was a combat engineer during the war and would “clear the way”; this being I moved anything that was in the way. They didn’t have any cooks, but the food was good; they had cans that were served to everyone. “They always had cigarettes too.” “We also had clothes on all the time because sometimes you would be called to duty in the middle of the night.”… Howard Shelp

I was in the Army Nurse Corps, which is the oldest woman’s corps. I needed to sign up since I was a nurse with the American Red Cross…. Margaret

I was in the U.S. Coast Guard. I was active in the Kellogg Navy, and I was sworn in in Chicago. I went to Clear Lake for boot camp for six weeks. I opened a ship service store at the Kellogg Estate, which I managed while I was stationed at boot camp. The store was then decommissioned in 1943. I sailed on the USS Groton, where we would monitor weather balloons. When the USS Groton was first put out to sea, the German boats were still sailing in the North Atlantic where we were…Anonymous
Prized possessions shared by Theresa Duncan

Memorial hat of George Dales
I was glad to be back. I did feel bad that I came back before men who had it worse off because they saw combat as I did not. I got to marry the woman who had waited six years for me, and came back home with $4,000 dollars I had saved up. My uncle built a house for me, and after all the bills for that were paid, I only had a dollar and a half left to my name...Anonymous

Women in the labor force. “They could find a job anywhere.” It was more acceptable for women to work after the huge need for them while the men were away...Bob Camfield

At the end of the war my dad didn’t have to work as many hours - no war, no tanks, or at least not as many. And we could buy bread again but it wasn’t sliced and it came with yellow food coloring so it didn’t have to be white. During the war food was rationed, tires couldn’t be used and gas was limited if at all; staple items like sugar and stamps were all rationed. My dad worked at a defense plant so he got extra gas and tires. I remember bubblegum was 19 cents, and me and my buddies would each get a piece for the week to chew! Wrap it up in plastic to save it...RO

We had just gotten out of the Depression so everybody got to work. Everybody was working or in the service. So I think the economy changed as a whole nation and we became an industrial powerhouse. Our style of living changed dramatically from what it was before the war. People were able to buy. My dad never thought that he would be able to afford a car, but here I was just out of the service and I bought a brand new car. A lot of things changed...Anonymous
I learned to appreciate. Part of it is from reading, but also some of the experiences we had to learn from such as the food being very little and making your clothes out of nothing. But it helped me to understand people and life in general, the sacrifices, even though at the time I didn’t realize the great sacrifice. But I realize it now and I appreciate that. … *Marion Kotz*

My mother did not want her son serving in the war, so she hid his birth certificate. When my brother, Fred was of age to serve, my mother couldn’t remember where she actually hid the birth certificate! Eventually, we did end up finding the birth certificate, but she hid it so well we couldn’t find it at first... *Doris Buehrer*

I was working at Penney’s in downtown Kalamazoo and as soon as the war was over, a couple co-workers and I went outside and everyone was screaming and celebrating. So we knew the war had ended… *Anonymous*

Coming back home was fine at first for me. I was sent to Percy Jones Army Hospital in Battle Creek to recover from my wounds properly. I went to a community college as well as Albion College before I received a job at RCA as an electronics technician. However, I did suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder for quite a long period of my life after the war. My wife noticed that I was exhibiting these kinds of symptoms, and after a while I was put on medication, which did help…. *Lawrence*

*Remembrance flag for Camp Hulen*
I was 15 years old when the Japs bombed. I remember very sharply in two years I was in. I wasn’t even 18 years old yet. There were even boys who were 15 that were serving; they had high pitched voices and everything. By the end of the war, everyone’s lives were altered. We had to go home and learn to adjust again...Anonymous

I tried to understand all that was happening during the war. “You can’t help what you can’t help.” I was transferred to Dearborn, Mich., to set up a base there. It was there I met my future wife at a USO event, where I was working the projector and sound stage. I invited her up to watch the show from the booth, and from there I asked her on a date. When I finished in the service I married my wife in 1948 and went to school at Washington University in St. Louis, MO, for engineering. When I finished school I went back to Dearborn to be with my wife. I went to work for Ford Motor Company and did troubleshooting for them. I worked there for 45 years and had three patents. I was hopeful and am grateful for the Navy and all the opportunities it provided for me. Without it, I would not have met my wife, had school provided for me, and would not have worked for Ford. Nothing is more important than an education....John H. Furbacher
Prized possessions from Donald Cubbison
PATRIOTISM
REPLIES TO THE QUESTION, "WHAT DOES PATRIOTISM MEAN TO YOU?"

You love your country or you don't. You need to do what you can to defend it, pick up your arms, and show up. Pick up arms and show up.... Bob Buehrer

Government used patriotism to their advantage. When the USS Houston was sunk by the Japs, the Texans went nuts and enlisted in the service to get revenge.... Ward Hart

I’d say 99% of the country was 100% supportive of the war. It was an extremely patriotic time. Nowadays, patriotism is dramatically inferior to what it was during WWII.... Larry

People were always talking about the war. I remember looking in everyone’s window to see if they had a gold flag that meant they lost a soldier.... Donna Sorensen

The war was justified and President Roosevelt did the right thing to support his country.... Heidi

Patriotism means having pride in your country and being proud in service men and the sacrifices they were making for our country.... Carol Reichard

I am an American citizen, and I believe in my country and I would stand up for it as much as I could. I’m praying for it right now, all the time... Anonymous

Patriotism was very high during the war. Not like it is today. Veterans should be supported to the fullest after putting their lives on the line for this country.... Jack Weimeister

Patriotism is important in all of our lives. If you don’t believe in your government, you shouldn’t be living here... C.E.D.

Patriotism is everything we have. The opportunities we have are free and up to you to do. The Navy allowed me to get an education and have my own life and I am fortunate in that way... John H. Furbacher

Everyone knew what our job was. We were told to do it and we did. Everyone was very positive, and supportive of what we had to do... Norbert Cramer

Feeling right and doing what needed to be done to win the war. Patriotism was higher than it is now. People now don’t have the full feeling of patriotism. People would easily put themselves at risk back then; more than today. Patriotism today is not politically correct... Anonymous
To me, patriotism means doing anything you can to help your country. Whether it’s saving stamps or rationing, whatever you can do to make something easier for your country is patriotic... *Mary*

Patriotism is unity within the country. I believe that it takes everyone together to be patriotic. When everyone is working together to achieve something, that’s patriotism... *Anonymous*

Bring the country together. We didn’t have to worry about church affiliation; we were all in this together. We had sacrifices at home but we all made it through... *Anonymous*

*US Navy Flag*

Patriotism is caring about your country and government and wanting to be a part of it. I think it is very important to be a part of your government. It is very important to vote when there are elections. Even if you don’t agree with your loved ones, you need to have your own opinion. For example, my husband and I never agreed on elections, but once you get in that voting box you can vote for whoever you want... *Anonymous*

Patriotism was strong. We were fighting the bad guys. WWII had an honest purpose, as opposed to wars following WWII. It wasn’t hard to support the purpose of WWII. Hitler simply had to be stopped... *Paul*
Rest in Peace

Father of Jeanne Haverland

Four friends of Sandy

Two cousins of Betty Slener

Cousin of Carol Smith

Cousin and Brother-in-law of Heidi

Brother of James VanderRoest

And to all of those brave men and women who were not named....we thank you!
STORIES TOLD FROM MEN AND WOMEN AROUND THE WORLD DURING WORLD WAR II
William “Bill” Saunders was born in 1932 on the east side of Michigan in the city of Detroit. His mother was born in Marine City and was three-quarters French. His father was originally from Berlin, Germany, and immigrated to the United States with his family in 1911. Bill’s father and his family lived in a German neighborhood in Detroit after immigrating. Bill’s father’s name was originally “Schenk,” but he changed it to Saunders in 1942, due to the prejudice against Germans. Bill’s uncle Karl also changed his name to “Sanders”. Bill’s father wanted to learn to fly, but the government would not let him. It also would not let him travel to Canada. Many places of business dropped their German identities during the war. Bill’s grandmother, who worked concessions at Belle Isle, faced prejudice as well. Once, she had a person hold a poster up to her face, pointing at her and saying, “This is you.” The poster showed a German soldier with a baby on his bayonet. In the late 1930’s, Bill and his father were traveling past a park in Detroit and saw a demonstration by a German-American Nazi organization. Bill remembers that they were wearing Nazi uniforms.

Bill remembers one time that a German POW escaped from Canada and was hiding upstairs over a Detroit bar. The government came and detained everyone in the bar for questioning. For a while, Bill’s father worked for the Detroit police department. But with his German theatre background and his ability to drop his accent, he quit and worked as a radio voice actor. Of course, when the story needed a German bad guy, Bill’s father regained his accent! Bill remembers seeing German POWs working on sugar beet farms around his town. Since regular refined sugar was not available due to rationing, sugar was made from the sugar beets. He wasn’t sure where the POWs were kept, but figured they were trucked in for the harvest. When Bill was pheasant hunting with his father, his dad would stop to talk to the POWs in German. He never got into trouble for it, even though there were guards nearby.

South of Marine City was Selfridge Army Air Station, and south of that was Grosse Isle Naval Air Station. Bill remembers airplanes flying out of the two bases to a practice area on Lake Huron. This was a restricted area, where the pilots practiced strafing and bombing runs. He sometimes saw planes pulling target socks for the pilots. He would watch them fly up the St. Clair River to the restricted area when he was fishing. The pilots sometimes flew their planes barely 50 feet above the water!
As a teenager, Bill worked in a boat shop. After rationing started, if they ran out of a particular item, Bill would row the mile across the river to Canada to get what they needed. Bill remembers there always being some kind of drive going on, for scrap metal, rubber, etc. He remembers his father’s car had an “A” gas stamp on it.

People got their news from listening to the radio, reading the newspapers, and watching the newsreels at the movies. People voted in elections based on their values along with what they read in the newspapers. The war brought people together with a common goal, and that mitigated any political differences. He remembers that everyone in town was part of the war effort. The USOs would have parties for the soldiers and sailors home on leave. The local girls would go to dance with them. It seemed like every other house had a blue star flag hanging in the window. A blue star flag indicated that someone in the house was away serving in the military. If a gold star flag was hanging in the window, it meant that someone had died in the military.
Unidentified Young Soldier
Retold by Stephanie Lay

He joined the military, with his wife’s brother when he was 19 years old. They both joined the Army Air Corps; he was a sergeant. He did his basic training in Atlantic City, where the Air Force training camp was. He was later moved to Missouri for Signal Corps School and then to the 930th Signal Corps in Florida. He didn’t want to be there so he put in a re-assignment application and about a month later he was transferred to the Air Force. He worked teletype machines, generators, and switchboards. He didn’t get in any hand-to-hand combat but they had trouble with the Japanese where he was located. It was nerve-wracking being in the military because of the air raids, he said. “You had to sleep with your ears open and your eyes shut.” He said that every time they heard a bomb, he and his buddies would joke and say, “Well that one didn’t have our name on it.” They had to have some humor or they wouldn’t have been able to stay sane.

He was married during the war and had his first child a year after they were married. But he didn’t even know the baby had been born until he was 2 weeks old! He remembers clearly what it was like when the war ended. Everyone was whooping and yelling and celebrating. They all had an idea that the war was about to end; they had already packed up their things because they were supposed to move closer to the front. They expected, after the first A-bomb that Japanese would give up, but then the second one was dropped. After that, all their orders were cancelled and the war was over.

When he got back the government gave him $300 and he was sent on his way. It wasn’t until the early 80s that he got any good help from the VA. He had been going to the VA before, but they didn’t do much for him. After he got home he would jump when he heard a noise or jump out of bed at a noise in the night. He told me that at one point his friend at work threw a fire cracker and it scared the hell out of him. So he went up and said, “Don’t you ever throw one of those again, you hear?” Then about a half hour later his friend threw one again. He grabbed the guy by the neck and told him if he ever did it again that he would kill him. That was how he was hardwired; he had it drilled into his head that that was the reaction to a loud noise.

After the war he took advantage of the GI Bill. He took some classes and then took a job as an electrician for a company, where he retired after 50 years.
Joe the Overseas Explorer
Retold by Lisa Fall

Joe was in high school when Pearl Harbor occurred on December 7, 1941. While he was in high school, the Army Air Corps came to the school and gave a qualifying test to the juniors and seniors. Only three people qualified - two juniors and one senior. One of them was Joe. Joe’s senior year of high school was spent at Michigan State University at an Army Specialized Training Program. He and the others lived on campus and wore uniforms. His schooling was heavy in science, math, and aircraft training. During the war, Joe remembers that his father had a Model A car with a B ration sticker for gas. In his neighborhood during the war, there were more people serving as enlisted personnel than officers. Everyone got their news from the radio, newspapers, and newsreels at the movies. No one spoke out against the war. Everyone did their part for the war effort.

After high school graduation, Joe was sent to Shepherd Field at Wichita Falls, Texas, for basic training. After basic training, the generals called all the volunteer enlistees to a hanger one Sunday and announced that the military decided they did not need any more pilots because the war was winding down. So they reclassified Joe and some of his buddies and sent them to Las Vegas for B-29 gunnery training. While stationed in Las Vegas, Joe and some buddies went to a casino where they saw Ann Miller gambling. Jimmy Durante bought them drinks at the casino. After only six weeks there, the military shut down the school and reclassified everyone again. At that point, Joe was sent to Amarillo, Texas for B-29 aircraft mechanic school.

Part way through training in Texas, the military offered the men a one-year overseas enlistment. Joe and several buddies decided to see some of the world and signed up. They traveled to Europe on the USS George Washington. It carried 6,000 troops overseas on Joe’s trip. It took 10 days to cross the Atlantic. Joe volunteered for the choir to sing on the way over. He was stationed at an air base about 30 kilometers outside of Munich, Germany, near a town named Fürstenfeldbruck. He arrived in Germany in December 1944. By then, most of the fighting had stopped. When he got there, he discovered that there were no B-29 aircraft assigned there. So he was reclassified as a medic. The base had a big dispensary. The medics took the sick and injured to Munich twice a day. Fortunately, there were more sick soldiers than injured at the time. The base dispensary only treated soldiers, not civilians. There were doctors and dentists on staff. The doctors and dentists tended to be in their late 20’s and early 30’s, so
everyone else stationed there was a kid compared to them. There was only one American female stationed at the dispensary.

One time while in Munich, Joe saw an American G.I. knock a German civilian off the street, treating him poorly. Joe was very embarrassed by his behavior. One day at lunch, he ran into a cousin that he didn’t even know was stationed there. Joe remembers getting letters from home and sending them home, and he felt that the mail wasn’t too slow given the war. He remembers that they were always training while on duty.

Joe’s duty assignment allowed him plenty of opportunities for leave (time off). On one leave, he was able to travel to Ireland to visit family from his mother’s side. On other leaves, he traveled to Paris and Vienna. While in Paris, he ran into a grade school friend. In Vienna, he got to see the Viennese opera perform “La Boheme”. At one point, Joe was attached to a headquarters company. There, an American officer of Italian descent was assigned Joe as a driver to take him to Rome to see the sites. Whenever he wanted to go back, he would call on Joe to be his driver. Joe had a high school buddy whose uncle was a captain in the Swiss Guard, the men who guard the Vatican and the Pope. Joe got a personal tour of the Vatican from him.

On the way back from leave, he was in London waiting to cross the English Channel with other military personnel. Only 150 were allowed to cross the Channel every day. While waiting, everyone heard the announcement that the war was over. It was V-J Day! Victory over Japan! This was August 14, 1945. Joe made sure he was near the back of the crowd so he was not part of the 150 sent across that day. That way, he was able to stay in London for the celebrations. While in London, a USO volunteer taught Joe how to play chess. Unfortunately, he also had his ration pack stolen, with the cigarettes, toiletries, and C-rations in it.
When the war began, my brother was in high school and my sister was preschool age. My father was a farmer and my mother was a busy farm wife. My dad had 160 acres, milked about six cows, owned a tractor, and kept a horse for small jobs like plowing the garden. He also served in township government. My mother did the housekeeping and gardening, raised chickens, and split the wood for the heating and cooking stoves. She was often called on to spearhead fundraisers during the war for groups like the Red Cross, USO, War Bonds, etc.

During high school, my brother Rolland played baseball and was the “class jester.” His class created the title for him because it was so fitting. He was anxious to join his friends at Willow Run building bombers. However, our father insisted that he stay home until the hay was harvested. Wages were high at the factory in Willow Run (which was not yet a city). He did go there to work from July 1942 to January 1943 after he graduated. That January he was drafted into the Army. My little sister, Harlene, played war-games with a neighbor boy. They were always equal rank to each other, whether privates or generals. They wore World War I steel helmets and cartridge belts over their shoulders.

Rolland was inducted into the U.S. Army in January 1943. His training was at Fort Custer in Battle Creek; Camp San Luis Obispo in California; Camp Rucker in Alabama, with mountain maneuvers in Tennessee; and Camp Bittner in North Carolina. He was promoted to private first class while he was in Alabama. His training was as a machine gunner. Because of rotting teeth, his teeth were pulled while he was in training in Alabama. He was later fitted with dentures, just before he was to leave by train from North Carolina for his one and only furlough. He had a very sore mouth by the time he got home. He went back to North Carolina, again by train, in February, 1944. He was briefly in New York before shipping out for England.

Rolland was in Southwest England until July 1944. He had no chance to visit a relative in the London area. He crossed the English Channel and landed at Omaha Beach on July 7, 1944. He wrote one letter from France, a V-mail, and commented that “Dad’s old outfit is on our left.” He meant the 29th Division. He commented that the guys coming onto Omaha Beach must have had it rough. Despite his training as a machine-gunner, he was issued only a rifle for his few days in the Normandy hedgerows. They were assaulted by 88 mm cannon fire.
Later one of his friends wrote that while they were under that fire, Rolland said, “If they don’t stop that pretty soon, I might get mad!” Those were probably his last words. He died on July 14, 1944. They know that he was carried to a first aid station by one of his Army friends.
My father was a naval officer in the Finnish Navy. I was raised by my maternal grandmother. My mother died of TB in 1930 when I was 2 years old. Finland is a very small country. We had a voluntary national guard. I joined at age 13 so we would attend meetings. As a little child I learned about first aid. The summer of 1942 I served as a messenger boy in the army. Records were transferred by hand, so I carried messages by bicycle from hospital to hospital and military units and to military units. We were in school; it was a great adventure.

We had frequent bombing raids in my city, but it wasn’t terribly exciting in terms of things you read now. For instance, in a February 1944 bombing, we had lost all our windows. It was remarkable how everything was planned. No more than 12 hours later they were boarded back up. People were prepared; amazes me how prepared adults were. Hence then during the war we were not affected more than others. People were already prepared. We also had bomb shelters.

I was about 15 or 16 when the war ended. During the war, Finland had taken a great number of Russian prisoners. The well-behaved Russian prisoners were farm laborers, and they worked on Finnish farms. When the war ended I was commanded to be a guard on a train car with Russian prisoners, we collected from the farms. So, I am going on 16. They had food; I had none. I had a rifle and I must have fallen asleep. A Russian prisoner handed me my weapon. He fed me. I came to realize they were human beings; nice human beings who sang and danced and said how wonderful life would be when they could go home.

I was told afterwards that none of them went home. Every Russian prisoner was sent to Siberia where they were most likely shot. People, who were guilty, “against” Russia, were sent to Siberia labor camps, and mostly starved to death. Those things go on, but, individual people are individual people. There is a basic element of human kindness in all, and I believe I witnessed that in the Russian prisoners.
Doris fell in love with flying in high school. She remembers a civics teacher giving her class an assignment about whether or not the Air Force should be its own branch of the military. Part of the class represented the Senate and part represented the House of Representatives. Doris and her friend Paul successfully argued that it should be on its own.

After high school, Doris went to college at University of California Berkeley and earned her teaching certificate after five years. One of her friends from Berkeley had her own airplane. Doris spent every weekend at the airport. Since she still loved flying and wanted to learn, she began taking flying lessons. It took her about a year to get her pilot’s license. They really did not fly much during the winter.

Doris then heard about a woman named Jacqueline Cochran, who had created a group of civilian women pilots. They were the WASP—the Women Air Force Service Pilots. The purpose of the WASPs was to help free up male pilots for overseas duty. To apply, you had to be between 21 and 35 years old, have a pilot’s license, and have at least 500 hours of flying time. The owner of the airport, where Doris and her friend flew, had heard of the WASP and was very generous in giving them flying hours at a reduced rate.

After getting her pilot’s license, Doris wrote to Jacqueline Cochran and applied to the WASP. More than 20,000 women applied and only 2,000 were accepted over the course of the WASP’s existence. Only 1,056 women earned their wings. Doris remembers going to Los Angeles for an interview with Jacqueline Cochran and getting her application accepted.

In August 1942, Doris travelled to Sweetwater, Texas, to begin her training. Her class designation was 44-W-1. The women had ground school, learned celestial navigation and physics, and did physical training. After about six months of training, she graduated in February. During training, Doris became friends with Dorothy Dodd (now Epstein), who was from Kalamazoo. One of the first planes she flew in was the AT-6 Texan. It had a 450- horsepower engine, non-retractable gears, and was a chore to do a maneuver in.

After graduation Doris had to report to Maxwell Field in Alabama for her first assignment. WASP pilots were never sent anywhere alone. They were always in pairs, at least, for safety. Doris was paired up with Dorothy. Frequently, Doris and Dorothy were the only women on a base, in addition to any nurses stationed there. After finishing their assignment at Maxwell Field, Doris and Dorothy were transferred to George Field in Illinois. After George Field, they were assigned to Turner Field in Georgia.
Most of the time, Doris was an engineering test pilot. She would take the planes up to test them out after they had been worked on in the repair shops before any male students or pilots took them up. She flew a lot of UC-78 planes (utility cargo). She also flew B-25s. One time she got to be a co-pilot on a four-engine bomber. Another time she was the first pilot on a C-47, also known as a DC-3. Her friend Dorothy once got to be the co-pilot on a B-17 Flying Fortress bomber.

Besides being test pilots, WASP pilots also flew airplanes from factories to military bases and during training exercises for male pilots, including towing targets behind their planes for target practice with live ammunition. During the existence of the WASPs, 38 women were killed as a result of accidents or crashes. As far as Doris knows, no WASP ever flew from the United States to England. Also at the time, the United States had a P-63 airplane lend/lease program with Russia. The P-63 was the last prop fighter. WASP pilots would fly the planes to Idaho. From there, Russian women would fly them home to Russia.

(Left to Right: Dorothy Dodd Epstein, Hellen Skjersaa Hansen, Doris Burmester Nathan, and Elizabeth Chadwick Dressler with a B-25 airplane)
Pennsylvania Memories
Told by Fred Sammons

I grew up in Pennsylvania on a farm. My family would listen to the radio during the noon hour on Saturdays. We could get a clear signal from WGN in Chicago. Everett Mitchell would start off his farm report with the phrase, “It’s a beautiful day in Chicago.” During the war years the government made him stop using the phrase as it might let the enemy know about the weather in Chicago. I cannot recall that adverse weather ever made him change the phrase. But when I lived in Chicago and we got a 31-inch snow storm, it was indeed not a beautiful day in Chicago!
May 11, 1942
Dearest Carl.

Darling you’ve made me the happiest and the most excited girl in the whole world. I’ll answer your proposal with a great big “yes.” It was a shock to me and the surprise was great. Oh darling, I’m still so excited and mixed up. It seems that only yesterday I was living on dreams and now that the greatest dream of all has come to pass, I’m in a little mixed up heaven all my own.

There are so many things to discuss and so many hurried plans to make. I hardly know where to start....

Darling, I still must admit I’m pretty much in a muddle. I’ve thought so much on this that though the real thing was a surprise and shock to me, I knew my answer right away! For all along I’ve weighed it over in my mind so carefully. It is going to be hard for us when it comes time to part, yet darling, we’ll have our memories to fall back on. We’ll have learned to love and appreciate the other so much it will give us something to hang on to that we wouldn’t have, were we to live separately and have that terrible longing feeling in our hearts. Carl, I feel much better having you go away when I know you’re really mine- there will be that tie that binds. I don’t want you to think I’ve made up my mind in a hurry and my decision is based on pure emotion. It wasn’t. I’ve considered everything, darling, and I believe it is the best thing to do.

It’s terribly hard for me to write tonight. I want to say so much, yet I’m so lost for words. I’m sure after a good rest, I’ll feel much more like myself.

I would appreciate anything you could suggest in the planning of our marriage. I would love to have it the 29th but that seems impossible all the way around. Tell me anything you can honey. Things are going to have to be done in such a hurry. I want you so badly to talk things over. I’m not at all satisfied with this letter, but I just cannot say what is in my heart or on my mind tonight.
I too am trying to reason sanely and keep from being emotional. It’s so hard, but I’m sure Carl we’re doing the best thing. Let me know any particulars as soon as possible.

Goodnight sweetheart. I am going to bed and right to sleep without thinking much of my good news of the day. I’ll sleep better and I’m sure after some rest I’ll feel much better.

All my sincerest love
   Dorothy

P.S. Darling if you don’t mind I would like you to send the ring here. It may lose a little of the thrill but it most certainly will mean everything to me.

Still more love
   D.M.
After the war, my husband and I went back to Western Michigan University to finish our degrees. At that time he could enroll in three years at WMU plus one year at UM and get an engineering degree from WMU. We got $115 per month from the GI Bill, but hamburger was 3 pounds for $1, so we got along. I got to be pretty creative with hamburger... Margaret Mary Tanner
Fried Salmon Patties

2 (16 oz.) cans salmon
1 large onion, diced
1 large green pepper
2 eggs
1 tsp. cayenne pepper
1 tsp. black pepper
1 tsp. salt to taste
½ tsp. hot sauce
1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
1 cup bread crumbs
½ tsp. dry mustard
Vegetable oil

Saute onions and chopped green peppers until tender. Drain salmon. In large mixing bowl combine all ingredients except oil; mix well. It may be necessary to add more stuffing mix until the correct consistency to make patties. Form into patties. (At this point, if you have the time, place the patties in refrigerator covered for about an hour; this is helpful but not a must.) Heat about ¼ inch of oil in frying pan, add patties and fry to a golden brown. Serve warm. About 5 servings if patties are 3 inches+ in diameter and about ½ inch thick.
Jello, Cottage Cheese, and Pineapple Salad

120 miniature marshmallows
1 pkg. lime Jello
1 (No. 2) can crushed pineapple
1 cup salad dressing (Miracle Whip)
1 lb. cottage cheese

To one package of Jello, add 1 cup of hot water, stirring until dissolved; add ½ cup cold water and marshmallows. Stir until thick and syrupy. Set aside to cool. Drain pineapple well; add salad dressing. Mix in cottage cheese. When Jello has sufficiently cooled, mix with pineapple, cottage cheese and salad dressing and refrigerate until firm.

Creamed Peas and Onions

4 tbsp. butter
4 tbsp. all-purpose flour
1 ½ cups of milk
1 (16 oz. can) of peas and onions
Salt and pepper to taste

In a large skillet over low heat, stir together the butter and flour. Cook until flour is evenly coated.
Over medium heat, stir in approximately ½ cup of milk at a time until thick.
Add (drained) peas and onions and cook until hot.
Season with salt and pepper

Perfect Mashed Potatoes

3 large russet potatoes, peeled and cut in half length wise
¼ cup butter
½ cup whole milk
Salt and pepper to taste

Place the potatoes into a large pot and cover with salted water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to medium-low, cover, and simmer until tender, 20 to 25 minutes. Drain, and return the potatoes to the pot. Turn heat to high, and allow the potatoes to dry for about 30 seconds. Turn off the heat. Mash the potatoes with a potato masher twice around the pot, then add the butter and milk. Continue to mash until smooth and fluffy. Whip in the salt and pepper until evenly distributed, about 15 seconds.
Mommy’s Secret Peach Pie

7 cups fresh peaches
½ lemon, juiced
1 cup white sugar
½ cup brown sugar
¼ cup flour
½ tsp. almond extract
¼ nutmeg
5 tbsp. butter, divided
Make pie crust for top and bottom
1 egg

Pre heat oven to 425 degrees
Roll one half of the pie dough out to fit the bottom of your pie pan, allowing a 1 inch over hang and place in the refrigerator until ready to use. In a large sauce pan, add peaches, lemon juice, sugars, flour, and stir until coated. Bring fruit mixture to a low boil. Reduce heat to low and cook until fruit is just slightly tender. Remove from heat. Stir in almond extract, nutmeg and three tbsp. of butter. Allow to cool slightly. Remove pie pan from refrigerator and fill with cooled mixture. Dot the top of the fruit with the pieces of the remaining two tbsp. of butter. Roll out a second crust and decorate the pie with a lattice top or any special way you would like. Decoratively crimp the edges. In a small bowl, beat the egg together with 1 tbsp. of water. Brush the top of your pie with the egg wash. Bake for 10 minutes then lower the heat to 350 degrees for an additional 30 minutes or until top is golden brown and the fruit is bubbly. Cool before slicing and serving with “Hand Churned Vanilla Bean Ice Cream” or go to the store and get vanilla ice cream and a cup of fresh brewed coffee.

Yum Yum Cake (shared by Karen Jaegersen Kunze)

1 cup brown sugar
2 tbsp. margarine
1 tsp. salt
½ tsp. cloves
1 tsp. cinnamon
½ tsp. nutmeg
2 cups water
2 cups raisins
1 tsp. baking soda
2 cups flour

Boil all ingredients except baking soda and flour for five minutes from time of boil. Cool. Add baking soda dissolved in a small pot of hot water. Add flour and stir until well blended. Pour into heavily greased and floured 8 inch pan. Bake at 325 degrees for 45 minutes.
Recipes from Betty Ongley’s Mother

Peanut Butter Cookies

1 cup butter
1 cup peanut butter
1 cup white sugar
1 cup brown sugar
1 tsp. vanilla
3 eggs
2 cups flour
1 tsp. baking soda

Mix all ingredients and form into small balls; cookies will spread when baked. Bake 10-12 minutes at about 350 degrees.

Stewed Fresh Tomatoes

2 lbs tomatoes, peeled
2 T butter or oleo
4 green onions, chopped
1 ½ t. sugar
1 t garlic salt
¼ t. pepper.

Cut tomatoes in wedges. In large skillet cook onions in hot oleo 1 minute. Add rest of ingredients and cook about 10 minutes.

Blue Ribbon Meat Loaf

1 lb Ground Beef
¼ c. chopped onions
¼ c. chopped green pepper
1/3 c. raw oatmeal
1 t salt
¼ c. milk
1 T worcesthire sauce

Form into loaf. Place on rack in shallow pan. Top with bacon strips. Bake 1 hour at 375 degrees.
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THE WHITE HOUSE