

October 16, 1997

Comments on W.W.II for Sarah

The war brought on a cause, a sense of purpose and a single goal for the US--"Beat the Axis"--the Germans and especially the "Japs."

People did what ever was required for the "war effort." There were ration stamps for those things that were imported or were in scarce supply because of the need of the military. In Hawaii there was only gasoline rationing. If you had an "A" card on your windshield, you got the minimum per month. "B" and "C" were for those who needed more. We had a "C" card because Grandfather Craig was doctor. Trucks had a "T" card. On the mainland, there were ration coupons for sugar, butter, shoes, and a host of other items.

People saved fat and turned it in to the butcher shops. It was then processed and turned into the stuff explosives are made of. Scrap metal was turned in so that it could be made into tanks and ships-- the weapons of war.

Posters were all around telling of the evil of the enemy and the cartoon characters on these posters in newspapers, comic books, and movies were insulting of the enemy. We were reminded through this media that "a slip of the lip would sink a ship." Don't tell anyone about military troop movements.--Letters were censored so that no one would write about sensitive information that could be passed on to the enemy.

Songs like "Johnny Got a Zero" told of a young man who used to get zeros on tests in school, but how he became a pilot and now shot down a Japanese 'Zero' aircraft. "Coming in on a Wing and a Prayer" told of a returning damaged aircraft in a bombing run. Songs telling of lovers getting together after the war were common. "White Cliffs of Dover"--"When the Lights Go On Again All Over the World" were just a couple of the many.

The lights going on was just a reminder that blackouts were common in coastal cities and all of Hawaii and Europe. A lighted city at night gave planes the perfect map for dropping bombs. When the lights go on again was reference to the war finally ending.

As a child in Hawaii we had special ID cards as did all civilians which were complete with finger prints and dates of vaccinations and a note that we had been issued a gas mask. We carried gas masks for about 2 years not knowing whether the Japanese might return. W.W.I brought out the infamous mustard and phosgene gasses that were so horrible in their effect on soldiers and civilians alike. No one wanted a repeat of that experience.

Bomb shelters complete with water, rations, and porta-potties were in all large buildings. Open playgrounds and parks had above ground shelters with benches and protected entrances. Our school also had open zigzag trenches.

Back yards and other open areas were turned into "victory gardens" so foods would not have to be shipped, taking up valuable cargo space from military goods. Also we could be self-sufficient and were were helping the war effort.

School kids sold War Bonds door to door. An \$18.75 bond would yield \$25. The government needed money for the cost of the war. Our school (K-12) outfitted a military hospital with beds and later we bought a fighter aircraft named "The Redhead" after one of the high school girls who was an outstanding student (and a friend of your Dad's Aunt Marilyn.)

We had a cause, a purpose, a goal to win the war. That thought was foremost in anything you did. The movies depicted the enemy as the bad guys and of course we always won. Families were split up. Fathers, husbands, and brothers were away fighting the enemy. In the windows were little banners with a blue star for each member of the family in the military. If

there was a death, that star was gold. --There was a large group of women who were "Gold Star Mothers."

Women worked in factories for the first time and took over the typical male jobs and showed the world that they could do almost anything. "Rosie the Riveter" became the name for all of those able women.

Following the war in the papers and radio (NO TV!) made everyone aware of the names of remote islands in the South Pacific and the villages in Europe. It was an education at a terrible cost.

Someone wearing a uniform could be assured of getting a ride when hitchhiking. The citizenry went out of their way to help "the boys in uniform." Churches opened their doors and there were meals and activities to help take away the experiences of war and the homesickness. At our home we always had waffles, fruit salad, and fresh milk every Sunday evening during those war years. The military did not serve waffles, very little fresh fruit, and the milk was either canned or powdered. So we always had a bunch after the church afternoon activities and as the word got out, friends of those who came. (Your Dad's Aunt Myra met her husband at our home when he came for supper!) Grandma Craig from time to time wrote to the mothers of these young men to assure that they were well, and perhaps she would give a hint as to where their son was headed as they made their way across the "Pacific Theater."

Everyone was involved with the war--- it was on everyone's mind, and it consumed every day activities like the plague. People went on with daily activities and they laughed and cried, went to school or to the job, but it was always with you. It was emotional. Patriotism flourished. The flag was special. It was a symbol of all freedom stood for. When my friends and I would go to the Saturday movie (10¢) the first thing you did was to stand because up on the screen was the waving flag and we sang the Star Spangled Banner. Maybe it was all too simplistic, but the world was at war. The Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor, a place that most people had never heard of. It would never happen again for we were a people united to a cause. To win.