

## War Era Story Project 2012

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Current home town: Wapakoneta, Ohio

Age: 71

I was born March 7, 1941 in Lima, Ohio. This verifies that I lived during that era. I was not very old, but I remember the fiber tokens. I believe that they were for meat, coffee, etc. I wasn't too old, but I remember some things. My mom would send me to the store for free meat bones for the dog. But I can't remember old Butch, my dog, getting any bones before my mom cooked them for seasoning for soup.

We lived between two railroads: the B&O and the Nickel Plate Road. We used to pick up coal along the railroad for cooking and heating. We did not have electric until 1954-1955. The B&O railroad was 80 ft. from our home. The Nickel Plate Road was 180 ft. from our house. If it wasn't for the railroads, we would have frozen to death in the winter.

My mother managed a restaurant and cooked. My dad was an interior and exterior decorator and worked when he could. We did not have the gas to ride around for joy riding. If we went anywhere, we had an "important" reason. My mother and father had seven-eighths of an acre other than where the house was, and my mother's flower bed was there. There would be something planted that you could eat. When I was not in school and my dad did not have a job lined up, we would go fishing at the river. If the fish weren't biting we would go what we called "junking." We would collect scrap metal at the farm dumps along the rivers. We never went home empty handed. We would have fish for supper or junk to sell to buy something to eat.

I can remember complete trains of flat cars passing by with army tanks, military trucks and large wood crates painted army green and stamped "U.S. Government." I can remember all this, but at my age then, I did not know what it meant. Watermelons were hauled in cattle cars. Sometimes we would find ten or fifteen melons left in the cars. It was nothing to see twenty, thirty people riding the rails back then. They would come to the house wanting something to eat. My mom made homemade jelly. If we had some bread, I would give them jelly bread sandwiches or a half of a watermelon.

We had a pump house with a long handle pump in it. The pump house was covered with lilacs and was cool inside. Dad had a 1935 Oldsmobile four-door. On the weekend during potato-digging time, we would go to McGuffey, Ohio. The owner of the potato fields would let people pick up potatoes after the digger went through. We would get there at daylight and it would be dark when we left. One burlap bag on each front fender and three or four on the top, tied down. We would put bags in the back seat, and loose potatoes also. This was all black marshland. Mom, Dad and I would all be blacker than the ace of spades. It was worse if the wind was blowing.

The man that owned the grocery store butchered his own meat and saved me some big bones for my dog. The dog got the bones after we made soup off of them and the word enjoyment was not in our vocabulary, it was all work.

There used to be a junk yard up in the field south of our house. We had no neighbors within three thousand feet of our home. There were three things we did not waste: time, energy and food. I would dig rivet heads made of iron up in that field. They would come out of the ground the size of a large walnut. They were encrusted with rust. Hit them with a hammer, and you would get a piece of iron the size of a nickel. When I got a five gallon bucket full, my dad would give me a quarter. He would sell them and get fifty cents.

We had a two-story house. Mom or Dad got so they could not climb stairs anymore. My sister's husband, my dad and I took the second story off, saved the lumber and straightened the nails, and made a ranch type home out of the old home. When we tore the roof off, it was sheeted with big wide boards. Under the old roof was a painting of the emblem of the Great Northern Pacific Railroad: a large white mountain goat standing on a mountain ridge. It did not cost a penny to do what we built.

It was a hard life but we really did not know that there was any other life to live. Later on things got better, but I never forgot what a hard life was and appreciate what I have now.