

War Era Story Project 2012

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Age: 80

World War 2 Memories

My dad couldn't go to serve in this war 'cause he was between,
Between the ages of service.

He served at the end of World War 1 in that war's team,
So our family became this war's effort machine.

We were living in a suburb of Boston Mass. -Melrose Mass. It was 1941 and I was a 10 year old girl in the 5th grade. I remember blackouts that our community practiced. All shades were pulled and there couldn't be a sliver of light in case that little light might cause an attack by the enemy. We were, after all, living practically on the shore of the Atlantic Ocean. Even as young as I was, I had heard rumors of enemy submarines right off our coast. To make sure everybody complied, a neighborhood civilian walked the darkened streets wearing his credentials so each neighborhood was covered.

We children were allowed to go to the neighboring town to see the double feature movie for 10 cents. The theater was packed with hundreds of kids anxious to see what happened in the weekly serial film to the super hero. Last week, he had fallen from the skyscraper and couldn't possibly survive this time. For 10 cents, we had a double feature movie, two cartoons, the serial short film and a news reel telling about the latest war news. In the evening shows, our parents would get a china plate to add to the collected set for the home.

But what I will never forget about our Saturday matinee was when the lights dimmed, all those kids voices dimmed too, the movement of kids stopped and all the kids stood up. In an absolutely quiet theatre, our wonderful American flag waved on the big screen, we knew to place our right hand over our heart and in unison recited the Pledge of Allegiance to that beautiful flag with the screen voice leading us. We stood like soldiers, remaining standing as we sang our national anthem. Next came the newsreel about the war and we took our seats waiting for an opportunity to cheer for our men in uniform at any indication the war was going our way.

We kids were very involved with the war effort in school and at home. At school we had paper drives, we collected tin-foil, and we saved string. Any tin cans (squashed flat) were saved for the war. We brought our dimes to buy a sticker to place in our war bond books. When they were filled, we would add the book to others to be able eventually to buy the War Bond from the bank. Everyone wanted to do their part.

At home, my parents were rationed on gas, on meat, coffee and all other unnecessary things we could do without so that our "boys" fighting the war would have what they needed to win the war.

About half way through that fifth grade year, our class found out that our teacher would be leaving us to join the WACS – Woman’s Army Core Service. Our class wasn’t an easy class for her to teach and I was one of her problem students. I was seated in the back of the room to keep the distraction at a minimum. When we found out she was leaving, I took up a secret money collection to buy her a going-away present. The classmates brought extra dimes to class on stamp day to contribute to her gift, and when the time was drawing near for her departure, my mother and I took the collection to the dime store. The amount collected covered the cost of a small sewing kit she certainly could use in her travels. I wrapped it up in homemade patriotic paper I made and my mother gave me some material from her sewing basket to make a bow. On the day our teacher was to spend her last day with her wayward fifth grade class, I snuck up to place the gift on her desk while she was writing on the blackboard. Without turning around she knew I was out of my seat (teachers have eyes in the back of their heads) and she began a too familiar scolding to one of her problem students who had given her grief most of her fifth grade teaching.

The kids were giggling by the time she got herself turned around and I was back in my seat when she spied the gift on her desk. She took one look and burst out crying and covering her face ran out of the room. Our class was stunned and we became quiet for once. We sat there quietly until she returned. She came back to our room with the Principal (who was also the six grade teacher) and between them they said all the right things to our class. Our teacher loved the sewing kit she said and every time she used it she would think of us (I can’t think but with joy knowing she didn’t have to deal with us anymore). She had escaped the rest of the school year with the fifth grade class. In fact, she probably joined the WACS not only to do her duty for our country but it was an excellent excuse for departure.

By the time the war was over in 1945, our family had moved to Cleveland Ohio. We celebrated with the rest of our fellow patriots all over the United States of America. By now, I was going into High School and there was another war looming ahead for our country and would affect some of my classmates in the graduating class of 1950. But that’s another war!