

## War Era Story Project 2012

Submitted by: Ouida Mae Peacock

Current home town: Greenville, Ohio

Age: 88

The great depression was over, so they said, but nothing had changed. We were all suffering and we country people were better off than people in the cities. We, a family of seven children and Grandpa, lived in his big house on a farm. Later, when Grandpa lost the farm and everything, he moved in with his son and we were homeless. My other grandpa also lost his farm and had to move. He had a big tobacco farm and children age eight and older helped with the year-round crop. We found a house but when rent was due, we had to move. During some of the time, my father was out trying to get work. My aunt and uncle gave us three rooms in their big house, so we moved to town. My last sibling was born in one of those rooms.

In 1940, local boys were rushing to sign up for service. Some lied about their age to get in. They only thought of having a job and a little money. Also, they claimed it was their duty.

Our three rooms were crowded for 10 people. Seventeen of us used one bathroom, but it was a luxury for us, as it was the first we ever had indoor plumbing. Later, my folks found an empty cottage down the road on Stillwater River. We were able to move in. It was pitiful, but we had a roof over our heads. We carried water up 30 steps from a spring for all our needs. The cottage was old, damp and musty, and later we found bed bugs. So, soon we moved again into a house in town, not knowing how we would pay the rent at the end of the month.

My mother, bless her heart, went to the grocery in town and told him she was going to try baking in her home and wondered if she could charge all she needed and settle up after she sold her homemade breads and sticky buns. She got orders from some of the church people and neighbors and, by word of mouth, the business grew and she was able to pay the grocery bill and the rent. My dad was getting a few houses to paint in the town now also.

Later, about 1940, we were offered an old house, rent free, if we milked the four or five cows by hand twice a day. So we moved again. My brother enlisted in the Marines and soon he was in heavy fighting in the Pacific area.

I took Home Economics through junior high and high school, thinking all I wanted to do was marry my high school sweetheart and be the best wife and mother ever. I enjoyed making my clothes and cooking very much. So, my big project my senior year was challenging. I collected 50 sugar sacks from friends and relatives and re-decorated my room. Now, this took lots of work, but when finished, I made a bed spread and draperies, and covered orange crates for a dressing table. I made bias tape from lavender material and covered all the seams, and then used lavender to cover the orange crates. I was proud and I made an A.

This also was the year I saw the first big billboards: "Become a nurse: Join the Nurse Cadet Corp." I was so excited thinking there was an opportunity for becoming an RN. I applied, but because I didn't take science courses in school I had to take one year of college. So, that summer I worked in a war plant using a drill press and winding armatures for war planes, saving my money for college. I was accepted at a college in Indiana, and they gave me a job of cleaning bathrooms in the girl's dormitory for the rest of my tuition. So I got the sciences I needed and was accepted into training to be a Navy nurse. I left in August of 1943. I entered Springfield City Hospital. The next month, my future husband, Lloyd, left for the Army Air Corp, and another brother left as a Marine and ended up in South Pacific also.

The day after Lloyd's 20th birthday on his eighth mission with over 100 other B-17s in a bombing mission on a ball bearing plant in Munich, Germany, they flew into heavy flack from all directions. Many planes went down in the North Sea and many lives were lost. Lloyd lost his crew but somehow he survived by removing all his equipment and clothes (except his shorts, which he used to flag the search planes) and treading water for 45 minutes or more. This exercise kept his circulation going, but he remembers nothing after a British P.T. boat picked him up. He spent 2 or 3 months in a London hospital.

He was discharged in 1945, over a year before I graduated, and I was then released from my commitment. In 1946, he lived with his folks and returned to his old job. He made it to Springfield, Dayton or Cincinnati, wherever I was, on his weekends. I affiliated at Children's Hospital in Cincinnati during the polio epidemic, and then at Dayton Mental Hospital in Dayton. Many in my class went on as 2nd lieutenants in the Navy, but I was ready to start housekeeping with my husband so I returned and got my job. We rented the old bank building, which had very high ceilings, but was made into rooms by seven partitions. We paid \$16 a month and lived there two years. We saved enough for a down payment on our first house.

By this time, we had started our family. We both worked. I started the evening meal and, when he got home, I left. He was so good with the children – a wonderful husband and father. Our family was so precious for us and we spent so much outdoor time with them through the years. All vacation time was spent camping all over the USA, and we enjoyed all the beauty of God's creation.

I'm 88 years old, still in good health and living in a large retirement community with assisted living and extended care facility. My husband had a stroke at 63 years old, leaving him with right side paralysis and expensive aphasia. He lived and enjoyed 19 years, most of it in Florida, before coming back to Ohio where I've lived for nine years. He lived here five years before he passed. I have three wonderful children, seven grandchildren and 12 great grandchildren.

It was, and still is, a wonderful life.