

War Era Story Project 2012

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A Good Laugh Is What I Needed!

My memories of the home front during World War II do not include personal bravery or sacrifice. Oh, yes, we had to give up nylons for saggy rayon hosiery; also leather shoes, meat and gasoline were all rationed. But, the worst part of all was the lack of dates. I wrote to 13 boys in the service who very seldom had leaves, and some were my uncle's army mates whom he asked me to write to – and I never met them. Worrying over their safe return was the worst part of it all. I like to recall the few happy memories of those days of which the following is one:

I answered the door, being the only one at home that afternoon. There stood a lady, probably in her 40's (which seemed old to me at 18!). She was handing out pamphlets and talking about how her religious organization was against the war and predicting hell and damnation to those who supported it. Well, I had always been taught to respect my elders, but this was different! She was talking to a patriotic war plant office worker who had her two closest male relatives, uncles 20 and 28 years old, overseas in the Army and Navy.

I forgot the "respect for age" I was raised with and said LOUD and CLEAR: "I know a young man, a friend of my uncles, who belongs to your church and is a conscientious objector, yet I see him at dances, which you people disapprove of, and he has been drunk, which we all disapprove of! He does everything he wants, but hides behind his religion so he won't have to fight for his country."

"Name me that boy!" she shrieked. "Name me that boy!" I did. She turned red as a beet and waving her arms at a car parked half a block away, she shouted, "Jimmy, come here and listen to what this girl says about you!"

What a surprise! She was Jimmy's mother! Of course, I didn't know her, hadn't noticed the car, nor Jimmy. The driver and was as stunned as she. Of course, Jimmy didn't return to face me (he knew I lived there) and started his motor, prepared for a quick get-away when Mama got to him, still shouting and waving her arms! I'll never forget the sight of her; I laughed and laughed. Talk about luck: I would never have had the courage to confront her had I known who she was. I wish I could end this by saying Jimmy felt guilty and joined the Army. But no, that didn't happen. But I'll bet Mama kept him under lock and key at least until the end of the war!

I'm 86 years old now and remember the sight of her running down the road as if it was yesterday. And, I bet that they never forgot me!