

## War Era Story Project 2012

Submitted by: C. Catherine Crowley  
Current home town: Centerville, Ohio  
Age: 76

It was 1943 and I was living with my mother in Chicago, happily sharing a room with her in the home of a Swedish family. I remember the air raid sirens and all the lights of Champlain Avenue going dark, and all of us being very quiet until the "all clear" was sounded. And as a little girl of seven, I was fascinated by the pretty flags with stars on them on some neighbor's windows. None of this alarmed my innocent self until the day that my mother told me I was going to live in a boarding school with the nuns, as she was taking a job in the war factory. And so, off I went for four years, war years, living with little girls who cried every night for their fathers, some of whom were killed or injured in that far-off war.

But we were little girls, lovingly sheltered by the sisters from the horrors of war in far off Europe. We never saw the news reels or heard of the news on the radio. I was blissfully unaware. And then one day, I received a letter from my mother telling me that Uncle Pete had been killed in France, riding in a jeep that hit a land mine... that is the story I remembered. And I remember every night all of us girls praying for the soldiers, many of whom were fathers of the little girls who shared my life with the nuns.

Then, one morning, Mother St. John rushed into the dining room while we girls were finishing breakfast, shouting "The war is over!" We clapped, some cried and we shouted, for most of us would now be going home. That is what the war meant to us, being away from our mothers and fathers for so long, while they were fighting the war on distant shores and the home front. Hooray, we thought!

After arriving home, when my mother took me to the grocery, I remember the ration stamps, which we used to buy food. But food was so scarce that the grocery shelves were almost bare, and to get a box of Jello was a treat. A bigger treat yet was when we would get some meat. But we were home, we girls, and we were happy, no matter what we had to eat.

The aftermath of World War II, was a time of scarcity, yet a time of happiness for most Americans. We were free! We were free to live and laugh and breathe a sigh of relief that our Blessed country was not in danger any more, and the horrors on far away shores were gone, too. In one way or another, each and every American, young and old, shared in that wartime experience. And some good things came out of it for us, mainly the music, which endures still. I am proud to be a child of the Forties. We will always remember.