

War Era Story Project 2012

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When WW11 started, I was working as a microbiologist in the Christ Hospital Research Department, Cincinnati, Ohio. We had a contract with the Army to test compounds for antibacterial activity for possible use in war wounds. Of course, they wanted the results as soon as possible and we were working day and night to get the tests done. After we had worked 15-18 hours a day for about six weeks, the director would give us a week off. That was nice because we could go home out of town for a few days. There wasn't much social life anyway because most of the men were away in the war and the women didn't have much to do but work.

Since I was living in the hospital personnel building, my ration books were taken by the hospital. My mother would sometimes have extra coffee ration stamps, and she gave those to one of my friends. I remember that if you were in a store and saw a line forming you immediately joined it because it was probably for stockings and everyone needed those. The nylons were heavier then and would last for a considerable time before they got a run. My aunt had some sort of needle that she could use to catch a run and do it back up.

One of the special things I remember was the night they decided to have a test run in Cincinnati to see how well they could black out all the lights in the city in case we were ever bombed. There was a porch on the ninth floor of the hospital and several of us went there to watch as the lights went out all over the city. The city is composed of a number of ridges and when the lights were out we could see where each ridge was with the valleys between. I don't believe they ever did that again because there was little likelihood that Cincinnati would be bombed.

Mail from the soldiers was censored and letters from my cousin had frequent black mark-outs. The train station was always packed with soldiers being sent to another post. I went down to see my cousin when he was being sent from one place to another. The place was always packed and a number of trains were always coming and going. We needed to arrange where to meet so we could find each other.

During the war, the armed services had requisitioned all the penicillin and it was not available for civilian use. One of our doctors had a patient with very serious case of meningitis and contacted one of the workers making the penicillin that he knew and asked if he could get him some. He sent the doctor a test tube with the yellow-green liquid off the penicillin cultures, and the doctor went around the hospital pulling the tube out of his pocket and saying "Want to see penicillin?" However, it was too late and the patient died.

After the war when penicillin was released, manufacturers of such things as toothpaste, mouthwash, lotions and creams all put penicillin in their products to get rid of germs and, of course, since a number of people are allergic to it , they killed several people before they stopped doing such a silly thing.

In 1945 my mother in Columbus became ill and I bought a house in Cincinnati so I could bring her down with me. I didn't realize that it was an excellent time to buy a house because the next year when the war ended and all the GI's came home, everybody wanted a house and prices at least doubled. My husband-to-be came home from the Pacific Theater in 1946 and we were married and lived in that house. He died in 1997 and I am still living in the same house.