

War Era Story Project 2012

Submitted by: Gale and Angel Lumbatis

Current home town: Lewisville, Ohio

Age: 73 and 71

Back at Home: Families Support U.S. War Efforts

Written by Gwynn (Lumbatis) Stewart about Gale Lumbatis (age 73) and Angel Lumbatis (age 71)

As the decade of the 1940s began, life in small towns across rural southeast Ohio was still tough. Gale Lumbatis was born in September 1938 in Lewisville, Ohio, and his wife of 52 years, Angel (Brown) Lumbatis, was born in November 1940 in Rush Run, Ohio.

This is the story of Gale and Angel and their fathers, who, as America entered World War II, were deferred from war service for critical work efforts “back home.” One father, Jacob Ward “Bodie” Lumbatis, was deferred to go west from Ohio as a diesel mechanic with a construction contractor building air bases. Bodie married his wife Beulah in 1936. Angel’s father, Paul Brown, was war deferred to continue his critical work as a coal miner in southeastern Ohio. Paul had married Norma in 1939.

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, for protection and for testing of new aviation technologies, America worked to build air bases. Both families remember black outs and practice drills in case of air attacks on America. They also remember seeing squadrons of airplanes cross the skies.

Gale remembers moving to Kansas and Missouri as a small boy with his father to build air bases. Bodie worked for W.L. Johnson, a contractor, who was secured to support the building of bases like Lockbourne Army Airfield near Columbus, Ohio, (later renamed Rickenbacker). The facility was originally opened in June 1942 as a World War II pilot training airfield. From Columbus, Bodie moved his family to Kansas, and then Missouri to build airfields.



Construction crews at the start of building Lockbourne Air Base in Ohio - March 1942



Beginning construction at Knobnoster, Missouri, air base.



The airplane was one of the first to land at the Knobnoster, Missouri, airfield.

Life in small-town Ohio during the 1940s was filled with a sense of community – neighbors helping neighbors and supporting the war effort. Angel mostly remembers that supporting the war effort on the home front included many men and women working hard to keep the boys on the front equipped. “I remember we used to hunt milkweed plants and take the cotton-like material out of their pods as it was used for insulation in vests for pilots,” said Angel. “We all had Victory Gardens where we grew vegetables and shared virtually everything to prevent buying canned goods as much as possible.”

Heeding the “do with less, so they’ll have enough” slogans, the government rationed food, gas and even clothing during that time. Americans learned to utilize what they had during rationing time. Angel remembers her father hunting and fishing to support their family. An especially fond favorite meal for her was her grandmother’s rabbit pot pie (as meats were widely rationed). Her mother baked bread and worked hard without modern luxuries like indoor plumbing or electric appliances.

“After the war, we finally got a refrigerator. We were on the list for years,” Angel added. To keep food cool during the war, they would store items in buckets down in their well. “We always had three buckets down in the well, one for water, one for storing milk and another for other food.”

Angel remembers the war “ration” books. Her mother used to trade with her aunts. “We’d trade our extra shoe coupons with my Aunt Dean for her gas and sugar coupons because she didn’t have a car but had four children who needed shoes,” added Angel. “Mom would use the extra sugar in her canning of peaches, cherries and other fruit. When we couldn’t get sugar, she would use corn syrup.” To this day, Angel prefers corn syrup on her pancakes rather than maple, because that is all she had as a child.

For Angel, the church was a focal point for family life. They attended Rush Run Methodist Church. During the summer, they spent time at “camp meetings” at the Hollow Rock campgrounds. Her mother and grandmother were active in the Ladies’ Aide Society and were avid seamstresses sewing clothing, quilts and more. They used materials gathered from anywhere including cloth flour sacks.

Angel’s father was a coal miner in the Ohio Valley at the outset of the war. When the miners went on strike in 1944, he went to work for the steel mill in Yorkville, Ohio, as an Ashman in the boiler house. Angel’s Aunt Isabelle also went to work in the steel mill while her husband was away at war serving in the Military Police.

Metals and other items were carefully recycled during the war. Angel recalls saving aluminum cans and a man would “come up the Run” to get them. She lived near Rayland along the Ohio River on Rush Run. After the war, Gale remembers, he and his brothers got cap guns that were metal, not plastic.

Gale and Angel married in 1960 and had six children. The life lessons they learned “back at home,” during the war doing their part to conserve, to save and to support the war efforts, were certainly important to raising their family. Gale’s life profession was a diesel mechanic and Angel’s was as a stay-at-home mother and part-time seamstress. She sewed countless dresses for her four daughters. Together, they continued to raise gardens and preserve fruits and vegetables, make homemade grape juice and much more. They also supplemented their food budget with game hunting and fishing.

Gale and Angel always encouraged education. As first generation college students, all of their six children attended some college, with five earning bachelor’s degrees and one earning a master’s degree. An ever-present faith in God and His hand of providence were also important elements to their ever-growing family that now includes ten grandchildren.