

War Era Story Project 2012

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Current home town: Youngstown, Ohio

Age: 81

My WW II

On March 2, 1941, while attending the fourth grade at Columbia Street Elementary School in Salem, Ohio, I celebrated my tenth birthday. I, like many of my friends, sold The *Youngstown Vindicator* daily and Sunday newspapers. At the time, I was too young to have a regular paper route, so we sold our papers on the streets and in business places throughout Salem.

Early in the morning while my family and I were still asleep there came a BANG, BANG, "HEY JOE WAKE UP." My father went to the front door of our home while we other family members followed. There was my boss, Cecil, from the *Vindicator* shouting for me to take these papers; he was dropping them on the porch. "Take them up and down the neighborhood, yelling 'EXTRA! EXTRA! JAPS BOMB PEARL HARBOR.'" Before I could speak he was running to his car then drove off.

Each day we would pick up ten papers to sell; in the bundle that Cecil dropped off, there were 25 papers. I thought to myself, *I'll never be able to sell that many papers in one day.* I did what Cecil told me to, I walked about three blocks and sold all the papers in no time at all. The daily sold for three cents and we made one cent. The Sunday sold for ten cents and we made three cents.

On that day I did not fully know or understand the scope of what was about to happen, but as time went by our lives became engulfed with what it meant, and by the life changes it brought. Immediately many of the young men were in uniform. A few months later it seemed like Salem was a military base; there were men and women in uniform from all branches of the military.

My aunt Nellie moved in with us. She and my mother worked opposite shifts at the same factory, so that one of them would be at home with my older brother and two young sisters. My dad was a welder and worked in the factory too.

It seemed that everything we needed to buy was rationed – that is if there was any available. One thing about rationing that upset my dad was for shoes. It seems he had to use some of my sister's ration stamps to buy me shoes because I wore them out so quickly. He had to re-sole my shoes very often, and rub lanolin on them for waterproofing.

At school, they periodically held different scrap drives for certain needed commodities, like paper, cardboard, metal or rubber. We school kids would cover the neighborhood like hungry ants devouring every such material for the War Drive. During one of the metal scrap drives, we cleaned the neighborhood of every piece of metal that was not tied down, and then some. If an item was nailed, screwed or bolted, we boys found a way to get it in the pile. The metal was piled on the playground and made a very good size mountain of metal. It was then that we noticed some neighbor men looking

through the pile and asking if any of us had seen or taken certain metal items missing from their yards that they did not consider scrap.

In the center of town was a large display memorial listing the names of all the local men and women serving in the military, their branch of service and those that were wounded or killed in action. We made daily trips to see what changes were made to the board. My brother Mickey graduated from Salem High School in June 1944, he and many of his classmates were in the service by the end of the month. By December, some of his classmates were back home having been wounded in action that quickly.

In 1945, I was working as a drug store soda jerk when we heard on the radio about the dropping of a secret type of super bomb. Everyone stopped what they were doing to crowd around the radio to listen to the details and the amount of damage the bomb caused. We all speculated on whether that would help end the war sooner. We all hoped it would. Later, we learned it was called the atomic bomb.

These are but a few of the many tales I lived during World War Two.