War Year Memories:

By Members of Alberta Women's Institutes

2006

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Preface!

By Phyllis Kosik, President
Alberta Women's Institutes

When Ontario began their search for War Stories, many members from Alberta who used to live in Ontario, sent entries, but had their entries returned. The Alberta Women's Institutes Council talked it over and decided to gather War Stories from our Province. Many of the members who went through the War years have passed away already. Those whose stories are here in this book, have had varied experiences from being in the countries that were directly involved in the war, others, saw war as an inconvenience, or an opportunity for work in the plants here in Canada, during the War years.

All have their own viewpoint. There are NONE that are wrong stories. We asked for their experiences. That is what we got. We thank each and everyone who sent us their stories.

It won't be very many years until all of the people who lived in those years will be gone, and their stories with them. We are pleased with each and every entry in this book. They are in no particular order.

They ALL make interesting reading! **ENJOY!**

Recollections of War Time

By Edna Richards, Coburn W.I.

I have many recollections of Wartime! I grew up on a farm south west of Bowden and because there were air force training stations at both Bowden and Penhold, it was not uncommon to see the yellow and black (Tiger Moths) planes in the air over our farm. We had a small hill at the back of our house and these young air force trainees would often just skim over the brow of the hill, making themselves very visible at the controls!

Many times as I rode home from school on my horse, I would hear of or see where one had crashed in a bluff of trees. Sometimes they were able to go to the nearest farm and phone for help, other times the wreckage and bodies had to be guarded until recovered. (I just read recently that at the Penhold S.F.T.S. between 1941 and 1944, thirty-four British, Canadian, Australian and New Zealand men were buried in the Red Deer and Innisfail cemeteries.)

During this same period of time, if you drove to Red Deer you could be sure that there would be a number of airmen walking down the highway, hoping for a "lift to Red Deer". My Dad, being English, could never pass by an "R.A.F. lad" if he had any room at all!

One of my Dad's sisters in England, in a desperate moment, had written asking if their four children could come to Canada until the war was over. We had a fairly small house but a kind neighbour agreed to help out by taking two of them. However, in the meantime, the ship "Athena" sailing for Canada with mostly children as passengers was sunk. My aunt and uncle soon made the decision to improve their bomb shelter and keep their children with

them. In the letter that followed, they stated that they would all come to visit at a later date when it wouldn't be a "mercy trip." They never did! I have often thought what a difference this could have made to both our lives and theirs!

My late husband was in the Air Force and was stationed in Goose Bay, Labrador for some time. I believe it was considered overseas at that time and was a refueling point for American planes as well. If I remember correctly, he received $2.00 a day for pay and his Mother cautioned him to be sure "to put some away for a rainy day."

During this time, I experienced the varied emotions that go with having a boyfriend a long way from home and only around when home "on leave."

I recall seeing trains called "troop trains" go through our town (Olds) moving servicemen on new postings.

Sometime after the war, my husband's Air Force "great coat" was bundled up with a number of other articles and sent away to be made into blankets. (A common practice in those days.)

Two of my high school girlfriends moved to England when they married English servicemen. One had a happy experience, but the other was never accepted by her English in-laws.

At least two ladies in our area had garden parties where they entertained groups of airmen from Bowden.

Many of the stories told by "English War Brides" and I recall when I was hospitalized in Edmonton in 1952, being in a ward shared with a war bride still having difficulty with her nerves. Every time she heard a plane fly over the

hospital, she relived her wartime fears!

Every Remembrance Day I particularly think of one brilliant young man who was our High School Student Union President and voted "most likely to succeed" in our Year Book. He went overseas in the Army and unfortunately like many others, never returned.

I worked in a grocery store one summer during the war and so dealt daily with the ration books used when buying butter, sugar, tea and coffee. My family found the rationed sugar to be the biggest hardship as many people made their own butter and tea and coffee didn't pose too big a problem.

I have many memories associated with wartime. I hope you enjoyed these.

A Relationship With War

By Betty Milne, Duffield W.I.

War is defined as "fighting carried on by armed forces between nations or parts of a nation." That precisely describes my personal conception of war, from a child in 1939 when World War II was declared to the present Iraq war.

War has aroused many emotions in me. As a four year old when W.W.II started, my earliest memories related to war are being shushed by my parents as they listened intently to the radio news. I remember at bedtime being so afraid we may not have a family when we awoke next morning. Mom would carefully explain that we should be safe as we were far from the battles. At that time, geography wasn't too clear to me so distances were not understood. Mom's concerns were not to be minimized as she had family in England. She also had two brothers in the navy and one in the air force. I recall the excitement when these uncles came to visit....so handsome in their uniforms!

A list of men from our community, who had been killed or wounded during W.W. I, was carved on the front of the pulpit at our church. A favorite uncle, Louis Lent was on the wounded list.

Our nearby neighbours had a son who was a pilot. I recall the sadness in our close-knit community when the sad news came and spread through the district.

I remember the feelings of urgency as I watched Mom and the W.I. ladies knit socks and make ditty bags containing articles for the servicemen overseas.

My father joined the reserve army. I recall him going to Sarcee, a training area near Calgary. It seemed far away in my child mind. The uniform had to be perfectly pressed, the boots shined just so; all that paraphernalia was intriguing to a child.

May 8, 1945, V.E. Day; a parent came to our school to let us know. I believe we shared a worldwide excitement in our own way at our one room school.

I remember the horror of the news of the August 6, 1945 bomb drop on Hiroshima, killing 92,000, then Nagasaki on August 9, 1945 with 40,000 deaths. The terrible effects of these attacks were to be suffered for decades.

But, September 2, 1945, V.J. Day, the day the world celebrated the end of W.W. II. Now began the years of reconstruction of people's lives, cities and countries devastated by war.

My father-in-law was a W.W. II vet, having spent three years in England. This left its mark on the family. His wife and family faced loneliness and fear in the years of his absence from home.

History shows humanity does not learn from the residual everyday ugliness of war. As technology advanced we were blessed with television and the visual records of war, Korea, Viet Nam and Iraq to name a few.

In later years war has continued to have an influence on me. My oldest son had a fascination for the military. He joined the reserve army at 17 years of age. He was in Communications. He traveled whenever possible including tours of duty in Germany, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iraq and Bosnia. He was a member of the U.N. Peacekeepers who

were awarded a joint Nobel Peace Prize in 1998. As a parent, I had feelings of pride mixed with fear and anxiety. Even Peacekeepers suffered loss of members.

The 21st century has given us visual records of war unimagined in my childhood. These visual horrors brought to our living rooms are frightening. More scary is the possibility we are becoming hardened and not too effected by these images.

As an adult I continue to have many emotions aroused by war, fear for family, compassion for children and adult victims, anger at leaders who justify war, thankfulness to the men and women who join the military world to keep us safe, and hope that we learn to appreciate our Peace

For Home and Country.

Such Was Our World

By Marie Plazier, Peace River W.I.

What was the most surprising thing to me, as a thirteen year old, was that the morning of May 10, 1940 was such an ordinary, beautiful sunny morning! Yes, there was distant rumbling, and yes, there came a feeling of fear and unease into the atmosphere. But the word "WAR" had a whole different connotation in my mind than this sunny morning in May! We got an order to evacuate at 7am and before noon on that lovely morning our lives were turned topsy-turvy. All of us children were told to pack a bag with a change of clothing, toothbrush and comb, nightclothes and some sandwiches – not more than we could carry ourselves – and off we were – walking to where? We did not know just then. It became an awfully long and dusty day.

My father was promoted to group leader of a rather large neighbourhood. About 160 people, adults and children, were to follow his direction. But to where Pa was to get instructions as we proceeded.

We lived in the very center of the Netherlands, south of what was then called the Zuiderzee. This was 1940. The dirty thirties had left most of us country folk very strapped for finances. Having a family of thirteen, my parents knew grinding poverty. My father had been unemployed at times. When he found employment at our local castle as one of the gardeners, the lady of the manor sometimes ordered her cook to prepare a very strengthening soup for my mother and sent it home with my father. What an incredibly delicious aroma came from that soup! And what a lift it must have given my mother, as our diet consisted mainly of spuds and vegetables. There was no social network in place at that time to give assistance to such families. Luckily there were some

charitable organizations. One, called "Dorcas", made and distributed clothing. We were on their list and so received new or made-over clothing occasionally.

On that long dusty day, May 10, we were to walk the country roads, keeping to a south-southeasterly direction until nearly dark – about 10pm. We came to a camping center, which could house 200 people, so we nearly filled it. It was, and still is, located in the beautiful area near Putten, and is called "De Instuif", loosely translated as "Sand Blows In". We spent over a week at this camping center, where father and other leaders had organized cooks and the wherewithal to feed nearly 200 people. I slept on a top bunk with a fifteen year old who was already interested in boys. My seventeen year old brother came in the dark to kiss her goodnight. There was some necking over the edge of the bunk. My fifteen year old brother discovered this was going on and one evening he beat Peter to the spot and was busy hugging the girl when Peter arrived. There was a bit of a hassle that time!

The Netherlands fought Hitler's army for five days, and then the Germans bombed away the whole center of Rotterdam. Our leaders capitulated – the war was over. But the invaders did not leave. A provisional government was set up under General Winkelman for a short space of time. Her Majesty Queen Wilhelmina took her government to England. Hitler appointed General Seys Inquart as head of state for Nederland, who was to remain in that position until Germany capitulated five years later.

This evacuation was for people and animals. All the area livestock were driven to a very large pasture one hour's walking distance from where we ended up. The cows were milked only once a day, and daily milk needs only were taken to the evacuees and the rest flowed on the ground.

When our family returned from evacuation, our cattle and pigs were returned also. Our big goats had roamed around the place, except our sweet kid goat. It took a whole week before she returned. One sunny morning we saw her little head looking right inside the kitchen and heard her plaintive "be beh".

School became very difficult. The German army took over for many weeks. We got some books and lessons and studied in the church or other buildings. But as far as our daily lives at home went, things fell back into routine. It was nearly a year later that restrictions began to be felt. Hitler had had such good plans for his neighbours, as he put it. Because we were such a friendly lot, and many of us Dutch were blond and blue-eyed, he would take us all in as "Pure Aryans". And he made the big-hearted decision that all our boys could be sent home and were not to be imprisoned as POWs. Thus we could all work towards his wonderful Third Reich: Dream on Adolph!

Well, in spite of Hitler's attempt at sweet-talking us, sabotage started immediately. Indicative of the nazis displeasure, all soldiers who had fought during the May 10 – 15 battles had to register and report to the authorities, to be taken to work camps in Germany. Of course, NONE went, and all went underground. So did most of our 17 – 24 year olds who were ordered to work in Germany's war factories. (One of our cousins reported, went to Germany and alas, never returned.) As well, all young lads 15 to 17 years old needed to report so that classes could be set up to indoctrinate them for "Hitler Youth". As our family had one son in each of these categories, one may realize that we became an anxiety-ridden family! One brother had two near misses: there were razzias throughout, at unexpected times. Twice he was just out of the searched area and was saved

from deportation. A razzia consisted of bayonet carrying soldiers, walking at arms-length from one another, combing the country, through buildings, houses, sheds, chicken coops and haystacks. My mother had to watch when they stuck bayonets into our haystack! One son of our neighbour's family sat in a nearby slough and breathed through a long sturdy reed. He contracted pneumonia and succumbed to it; even his burial had to be unannounced. So was our world!

Jews were first prevented from traveling. All public buildings had a "No Jews Allowed" sign. They had to wear a yellow star proclaiming "Jew". There followed a period when Jewish families were "relocated". To where, no one knew at the time. As time went on and conditions became more repressive, many Jewish people went into hiding. This was a dangerous situation: hosts and guests might be executed on the spot if detected. This was still the case in 1945 in the closing days of the war. An advance contingent of the Canadian Army was dug in all around us. We were so delighted in our rural neighbourhood, and to help celebrate seeing the Allies, the Jews hiding with us came out and joined us. Then, suddenly the Canadians were recalled to headquarters in Apeldoorn. It was not time for freedom yet. The Germans flooded over us again and captured a few of the hapless Jews. They had to literally "drop their drawers" to show their circumcision and were shot in front of their families. Such desperately sad situations!

On one of my return visits to my homeland, a brother-in-law took me to the "hidden village" right within a forest 40 km. from our home. The story has come out from many Jews and others who lived there in hiding, and many others who lived in surrounding towns who provided them with food and water. There was a very brave dentist who had rigged up a peddling machine on a bike for drilling and visited with them to attend to people's teeth. The shelters

were partially underground and marvelously camouflaged between tall trees and thorny bushes. Yes, there are three graves there, of unfortunate people who were found and executed. It is by very hard work and great desperation that almost all of the undergrounders made it out alive, some experiencing very harrowing "nearly caughts". A young couple refused to be circumspect, insisted to go into the nearby town, and so hazarded the safety of all ... they were eliminated by our underground. Yes, such was our world!

My teenage years were all war years. Born in 1927, I was 13 in April of 1940 and turned 18 in 1945. There was little of teenage life to enjoy! Food became gradually poorer as far as our family was concerned. I cannot say that I was starved, but I certainly had to leave the table not being filled. I have seen dozens of people on hands and knees groping through the soil of a harvested potato field, bagging spuds as small as fingertips. These fields were "rented" from the farmers. All production was being shipped to Germany – trainloads of produce, covered by Red Cross flags. Our secret intelligence beamed such information to the Allied intelligence and these trains were then shot or bombed. What came over our nazi regulated newscasts, and as headlines blazoned in the newspapers: "Allied Air Force does not honour Red Cross!"

Our herds and yard animals were all registered. There was a virtual army of inspectors, coming around every two weeks, counting every animal. This was of course to prevent folks from butchering and selling meat on the black market. Cousins of mine engaged in this practice even though it carried concentration camp sentencing. One of my uncles was in Camp Oss for two months. He came away from that experience such an angry man that I was shocked to hear him telling us what he'd do if he got his hands on the cruel men that ran that facility. He, not being a serious criminal, was on

"mild" physical punishment. This meant pushing a wheelbarrow loaded with gravel. Doesn't sound too bad? However, he was to work in bare feet in wooden shoes, with gravel in the shoes! He also showed his lacerated back from beatings from when he slowed down!

Our farmers did sneaky tricks to "free" a 200 pound pig for butchering. They would have a bunch of sows farrowing some weeks after one another. Then, farmer Jansen would take the biggest piglet of the latest litter, and pass it on to the two weeks older litter. The biggest of that litter was then moved up to the next, and so on, until a "ready to eat" group was reached, and one of the last big ones was then butchered. All one has to do for momma sow to accept a stranger is to take a handful of straw tainted with coal oil, and rub the whole litter. No mother pig would then reject such a newcomer. I translated a little ditty telling of such an enterprise:

Jan boy went confessing to the local priest.
Said the father priest,
"You tell me of your sins, tell me even the least."
Jan boy whispered softly "Please don't tell on me."
Said the quiet lad, "We killed the biggest pig.
We hardly had the heart,
But don't tell Seys Inquart."

One of my sisters and I went to attempt to buy bag of wheat or rye. We needed to bike some four or five hours east to get into the grain growing area. It was a rather unnerving day. We found ourselves among the very hungry folks who had already been on the roads for many days, coming from Rotterdam and The Hague, Amsterdam and Utrecht. There were also air fights overhead – Allied and German fighters having shoot-outs. So one had to be on the lookout, and sometimes crawl into a ditch to prevent being shot from above. We actually came back with some grain and turnips

to help Mother feed the large group at home.

At that time half of our family, myself included, were hired out and were living with other families. Three brothers were in hiding, and none of us knew their locations. So at home, there were eight of our own family, and five elderly adults who had been evacuated from Zandervoort and The Hague and housed with us. Many people had evacuated from the west coast because the Nazis expected an English invasion from that direction.

I was hired out to the dairy farmer-burgomaster, along the way to Amersfoort. Because of living there I did find myself along a very dangerous part of that highway, sometimes biking, sometimes walking...or crawling! At the dairy farm, where I was a milkmaid, we had to deliver a certain quota to the processing dairy plant. We kept as much milk back as we dared, and daily there was a stream of starving people whishing to buy a liter or half-liter of milk. We also sneaked some cream and churned butter for our own use. I was behind a camouflaged area in the barn to do this, and luckily was never caught.

My boss was German-appointed Burgomaster (Mayor) of our village. Luckily he was with me one day when I did not have my ID with me. So immediately a gun was on me! Fortunately boss Jan was able to persuade them I was not a criminal! However, he was not able to stop them from requisitioning my bike! They took it and I had to walk. Twice a bicycle was taken from me in this way. No redress whatever. From fall 1944 to May 1945, many farmers were ordered to come with wagon and horse(s) to a gathering place, and were told to walk home. Horse(s) and wagon requisitioned – poor guys!

There were still distribution coupons – rationing for

food – given out, but very little foodstuff was available in the last year of war. How my mother managed to still get (limited) tasty meals on our table, I will never know. My two youngest brothers set up a bird trap and caught sparrows, then prepared them, fried in an enameled dish, over a small coal-oil burner for their after school snack. Yum! Yum!

My place of work, the dairy farm, was located near an important highway junction. The railroad runs through that farm also. This made for frequent bombings and for shootings. We each learned to carry a safety stick at all times to hold in our mouths during bombings. The need for such a stick became clear after the death of a 19-year-old friend who had been working in a field next to the railway. A bombing nearby on a train killed him. Although he showed no bodily injury, apparently his lungs burst. There was a trace of blood from his mouth. Had his mouth been open, he might have lived; so we were told. I know of no scientific explanation.

A direct bomb hit one day left a neighbour's house as a deep crater. Our neighbour had been at her sewing machine. Nothing could be found of herself or her machine. It is unbelievable that matter can be so totally pulverized! All of us, boss Jan, his wife, three sons, the hired man and myself had dived onto the floor, next to the walls, with our personal safety sticks in our mouths. Most of the windows were shattered. It was very scary. But a strange thing came over us. Herman, the hired man stood up and dusted himself off and said, " I clearly felt that "lack of air" rushing along my pant legs." Well that was a very good description of that phenomenon which is perhaps exclusive to bombings. So, picture the scene: Here we are all with a stubby stick in our mouths, getting up from the floor and staring at one another after that god-awful jolt. All flooded with relief at being alive, no one hurt, not even injured, and the someone pipes

up with anything funny at all. There was laughter, hilarious laughter from sheer relief at being alive. Yes, we all cried, laughing!

Actually, on the dairy farm there was a bit more food available: milk, grain, garden produce. The lady, Mrs. R. had concocted a big loaf of rye, soft wheat, and cornmeal. This I had to take to the town bakery, as we had no fuel to heat our oven for baking. There I went, the dough protectively wrapped in tea cloths and tied down on the package carrier of my bike. My place of work was about 5 km from my home, and our village lay somewhere in the middle. Thus I was to leave that dough to be baked, carry on to my home for a visit, return, pick up the baked loaf and be back by milking time. This routine I had gone through several times before. This time, the baker's wife was outside the bakery, and engaged me in conversation about the awful situations, mentioned the latest deaths by either bombing or other violence. She also invited me to have a look at their shelter. As she said, "It is the very best in town." I was not eager to take time for that, as I wished to get home. The harbinger of trouble appeared overhead: a reconnaissance plane, which beamed information regarding found situations. Allied intelligence would intercept such information, and shooting or bombing usually followed, which it did on that day in late April 1945. So Mrs. Stolp said to me, "Now you HAVE to come into the shelter, child. It is not safe to be outside." I did not heed her warning but started running away towards my home, using a tall hedge of poplars as camouflage. I got home, out of breath, but happy to be there for a short visit with my family. Imagine the shock I received when, within 15 minutes, we were told that all five people that went into Baker Stolp's shelter were killed by a direct bomb hit! They were Mr. and Mrs. Stolp, their daughter Maria, her fiancé Dirk Jacobson, and the hired girl Tina Hendriksen. Well, I shook for the rest of the day. I actually crawled into my

parents' bed and worried not about any cows that needed milking! The thought that I had been urged to go into Stolp's "Safe Shelter", had refused, and thus was saved from sure death was overwhelming! Amongst the other scary and close calls that I have experienced this was certainly the most soul jerking one. I have relived that moment untold times in my life since. The wonder of it will not fade, no matter how long I may live, and my thought and prayer of thankfulness will ever remain with me.

Taking a 50 year leap forward now, to the summer of 1995, a follow up to this life-altering experience took place. I attended a family reunion in Holland with a daughter and three granddaughters. We visited the cemetery where my husband's and my parents' and most of my relatives lie buried. There is also the mass grave of the Stolp family. Several of my sisters and a brother were with us also, so I took special time to retell the story surrounding the incident that had resulted in those war casualties being buried there, and how, but for a moment's decision, I may have been one of them. As the reader will appreciate, we all stood there as a subdued group! Then the youngest of our company, eight-year-old Anastasia Maria observed, "Oma, if you had gone into that shelter, none of us would be standing here today." (Out of the mouth of Babes comes forth the truth!) Her few words lifted our spirits to one of happy laughter, appreciation of life and joy of living!

Sadly, our underground resistance people sometimes had to carry out executions of our own people. One man of our acquaintance was shot as he came from his field, and a list of people in hiding was taken from his body. He intended to take this list to the authorities, who would have gone to gather these folks for exportation to the concentration camps and death.

Often, there were dogfights in the sky, of Allied against German fighter planes. As we were becoming more war-wise, we would carry on with what we were doing; only when one saw such a fighter dive towards us would one drop to the ground hide either behind a natural hedge, or into a nearby dry ditch. If a plane got into a dive from directly above, there'd be no danger of being hit, so one would carry on with whatever needed doing. Remember, fieldwork needed doing.

In the fall of 1944, underground fighters intercepted a jeep with two German officers. It was leaked out that they carried a list of soldier's names (who fought German invaders in May 1940). The officers were shot dead. The sad reprisals were not long in coming. All the families (about 600) of the nearby town of Putten (the place we had been evacuated to in May 1940) were rounded up and packed into the two main churches at the town square. Then the men were separated and, marched to the railroad station and ordered to board the train. And then transported to camps near Hamburg in Germany. The churches with women and children were to be torched that evening! Thankfully, someone interceded ... they were sent home. Instead, some forty homes were set ablaze. I will never forget the awful glow in the sky that night. We lived less than 30 km from Putten, which was later called "The Town of Widows." Less than a dozen of those wretched men came home alive; all but ten or so perished in those camps.

The Putten abomination happened September 5, 1944, and that fall many razzias were carried out. Thousands of our men were routed out of hiding and transported to Germany. I read in a Dutch article that in total, by the spring of 1945, 150,000 men were sent across our east border. Most of the razzias took place after Crazy Tuesday, the 5th of September, 1944. There was another horrific incident in

Amersfoort where nine people were randomly shot (in reprisal for something which I have forgotten). The bodies were not allowed to be retrieved until three days later.

The Allied's "Operation Market Garden" did not manage to cross the big rivers at Arnhem or Nijegen, which left all of the country north of there as one big jail. That winter '44-'45 has ever since been called "Hunger Winter". The big cities where most people were concentrated were left without electricity of food, and our railway system was laid still by a total strike. Seys Inquart's government brought in railroad workers from Germany, but it was a haphazard arrangement for the last half-year of the war. Of the 4 million city dwellers of the west coast many householders sent "food seekers" out.

With bikes, little buggies, baby carriers, people walked across the country. It was a despairing spectacle. Those food gatherers were mostly mothers and ten to fourteen-year-old children, because most men were in hiding.

My place of work doled out as much milk as we possibly dared hold back from the authorities. However, we were registered with Red Cross to provide overnight shelter for these struggling folks. Night after night our haystacks and haylofts were filled with these stragglers. One set of them, a boy and girl, 10 and 12 years old, were sick and starved. We had to hold them over for a few days and shared some of our food. Their story was that at home, Rotterdam, there was no food. They had gone to the German camp to find cores of cabbage and whatever else edible was to be grabbed out of the garbage. One can only imagine what it was for those parents to send young ones amongst the unimaginable dangers on foot! Some of the folks would

show up again at our place on their way back, and actually they'd then have a few bags of grain and perhaps some vegetables.

I vividly remember that a father with two teenage daughters over-nighted. They pushed a handcart. Two would push, and one would rest on the cart so that the trek was less arduous. It was a full two weeks later the "daughters" stopped in on the way back; no handcart, no father, no food. Their sad tale was that they had found food, but the father got sick on the way back, and he died. They covered the body (along with the food) on the cart to take home for burial. During one of their overnight stays in someone's hayloft, the cart was stolen, and their father's dead body was also gone! That's what they had to tell mother at home. So much sadness and so much fear, also because the sisters were actually brother and sister. The lad had curly hair covered with a bandana and he dressed like his sister, in a dress. He was 17 years old, and was to have registered for Hitler Youth, and thus was "in hiding".

As a whole, we became a totally terrified people, much like another individual that showed himself after one of those razzias. He had blackened himself in our coal bin, and then crawled as well as he could between the lumps of coal. He had seen the beam of light from the soldier's flashlight! Then he had stayed in that bin overnight, and came out still shivering violently as he asked if he might wash himself at our water pump and be on his way.

Our home city of Amersfoort became best known during the last two years of the war as "Camp Amersfoort". That Dutch military camp became a German concentration camp, peopled mostly by men who had been dodging government orders. They were put to work building trenches

and dugouts in our general area, because the nazis were still expecting a main force to come from across the English Camp Amersfoort to go to work. Being poorly fed, suffering diarrhea and other ailments, often one would collapse along the way. Our farm then became a drop-in for one or two of these casualties, who would spend the day inside our summer living space. The guarding officer would have a comparatively soft duty day watching over these sick men, and escorting them back to camp at the end of the day when the procession of forced labourers returned. I'm sure some of the "faintings" were faked. An officer guarding those men might be a conscripted Pole or Russian, or a partly disabled soldier.

I wish to relate a humourous incident. One such Polish guy called Joseph S. was most happy with things unfolding in his life. We visited with him and commiserated with him. He much appreciated the fact that we were willing to spend a bit of time with him. One day he asked me to help him set up a sentence in Dutch so that he could properly say "Thank You" to boss Jan. Well, I helped him to say a "not complimentary" line to Jan. I made sure I was not close by when he did so the next morning. Well, you guessed it, Jan saw through that immediately! The following morning Joseph proudly said in Dutch, "Maria, that was not nice of you." Well, now we were Even-Steven!

I remember those Polish fellows, pressed into service for an army and a regime that they detested so vehemently. And they were ordered to be as ruthless in dealing with the prisoners as the nazis were. Talk about being between the devil and Hitler himself. Those poor guys!

The truth of the matter is that those situations often bring out either the very best or the very worst in mankind. I

have also seen that, of one family, one son did join the Dutch resistance and fight the nazis, while another son did "turncoat" and joined the army of the oppressor. He went to fight the Russians in Stalingrad, where he died in action. I knew the grieving parents. The Mother kept a bouquet of her garden flowers next to his portrait.

During the last weeks of World War II, as the writings was on the wall for Hitler's army, the hunger was taking its toll north of the rivers. As people turned to eating tulip bulbs, some pictures appeared in our only remaining newspaper of tulips growing out of people's ears and other apertures. This was not funny, but the nazi propaganda was "if you cannot follow our rules, eat your tulips." This kind of sarcasm was shown also for our Royals, the House of Orange, when Princess Juliana gave birth to Princess Marguerite while she and her children lived in Ottawa. That piece of information went something like this: "The third daughter of that well fed breeding bull from Lippe Biesterfelt lies in her excessively adorned cradle in the safety of Ottawa." It of course also held that the German-led government was much disgusted with Prince Bernhard, who was German born, but was now totally Orange-minded, Citizen and Soldier were functions he carried out very conscientiously. He became a much loved and sought out military man in the Netherlands Army, and was assigned to the personal safety of Queen Wilhelmina.

Our readers will also recall that in this country, our Dutch-Canadian boys were asked to volunteer for action against Germany, and also that their military unit was named after Princess Irene, The Princess Irene Brigade. We were so proud of them when the breakthrough came to deliver Holland from oppression! My husband's cousin, John P. van Tamelen was one of them. I remember so well meeting him in May 1945. He and his English war-bride lived and died

here in Peace River, Alberta.

I believe my recollections will need to wind up with several traumatic happenings during the last two weeks of that horrific time.

The Allied forces drew nearer, now actually coming into Holland from an easterly direction. They had circumvented the large rivers and bridges that had thwarted them during Operation Market Garden. So they were partly across the German border pushing across our eastern border, crossing through the province of Overijssel and then crossing the River Ijssel, into the province of Gelderland. This, the last offensive was on the "Veluwe", a somewhat hilly and sandy region in the center of Holland. Every one has heard of Apeldoorn? There it was that the Allied forces were located for a week or more. There was panic amongst the nazi forces. They became very short tempered and trigger-happy. They booted us out of our house and set up nazi headquarters in our very home.

They took our blankets, drapes, and cushions out to their trenches. It was terribly scary and dangerous to even milk the 40 cows and tend other animals. We had to stay with our neighbours, but it was so unsafe at night that we spent nights in trenches camouflaged in the orchard. These trenches were quickly dug, ten meters long, two wide and barely two meters deep. Our soil was very soggy and there would be water two meters down. Poles were put across the top, covered with straw, and then piled with soil. The lot of us could have easily been buried alive during heavy bombing and fighting!

My employer's wife, Mrs. R., suffered from claustrophobia. She had a dreadful time. We were crowded with 40 people in that deep, damp trench, we had to beg her

to keep from wailing loudly. When the faint little light from a carbide lamp flickered out due to a bomb exploding very close, she went berserk and had to be restrained. Benches of earth had been left, and covered with hay and straw, so that we could at least take turns to stretch out. Much prayer went up, I can assure the reader, every time we heard a bomber get into a bomb-unloading dive! Heavy tree limbs fell over the whole thing so that the men had to extricate us in the morning.

Herman, one of the fellows, wished to go and see his girlfriend. My family lived in that direction also, so we went on the road during a lull in the fighting. He biked and I could ride on the baggage rack. For about two km we made good time, and then we had to jump into a ditch. Canadian gun carriers appeared and from the German bunker they were shot at. We were between the two! Talk about fear and trembling! The gun carriers moved on, and we crawled across a few fields and had a repeat skirmish overhead. Miraculously, we survived that too, but we did not retrieve the bike. Then, crossing the main street we dodged grenade pieces, glowing red. One farmer had cut a big opening in his haystack. We were invited in and spent an hour trembling in there. That's when I actually saw a Canadian soldier taking an awfully big jump and was missed being torn up by a big fiery red-hot grenade section. The hay caught on fire as well. Luckily the men managed to extinguish it. Those two miles took us 4 ½ hours to travel, but I did get home that night.

But more was to come, and that came the next day, as I had to go back to my place of work. By then there were Canadians all around us, and we thought that matters were as good as settled.

Would you know that on my walk back I ran into

German soldiers? They jumped out at me from behind a hedge. They asked me for my ID of course. Then I told them that I changed my mind and wished not to go any further but wanted to turn back. Not so...at gunpoint I was ordered to carry on. Keep going! So I found myself again at the farm behind the line of fighting at the side of that detested nazi army! That was a terrific disappointment. Why, oh why did I always have that strong feeling of having to go back to the job? There were four people very capable of milking cows! I might have stayed back with my family! However, I have been very fortunate, and apparently it was not my time to expire!

I related earlier that we were once under the impression that freedom had arrived, when in truth, it had been only an advance force of the Canadian Army, which retreated again to the main Allied force at Apeldoorn. Well, several of the Allied lads who had dug themselves in around my parents' neighbourhood (not far from the woods where Germans were dug in) visited with us civilians, as we had these extra folks with us who were better educated and between them knew English and French. So, some evenings, we had Canadian soldiers in our house, very happy to converse with Dutch families.

One of those lads, Mark Whitney, was from Saskatchewan, just outside the border at Lloydminster. He and I went for walks and talked as best we could. He helped my father with some chores, and even delivered our cow of twins. He knew cattle! He also loved playing ball with my brothers. By some weird coincidence, we connected again 51 years later! Then we finally filled in some of the questions we could not handle in 1945!

The very sad thing of that time in late April of 1945 was that one of the soldiers, William Strang, got killed in

action very close to our family home. The older fellows told us about it... they were sure sad about losing that comrade. He was buried in a temporary grave. Today you may read the inscription on the marker, "Here died Pte. Wm. Strang, 1904-45. We honour his memory as one of our "Canadian Liberators." His remains were moved to the large military cemetery at Nijmegen.

As my wind-up to this collection of my personal wartime experiences, I feel compelled to pay tribute to the eleven million people who perished in the gas chambers of the Holocaust. Half of them were Jews, and the other half were other "undesirables" such as dissidents, gypsies, and many who simply refused to follow the nazi ideology. Who would have believed that Germany, a country leading in many of the sciences, including physics, biology, and medicine, and in music and theology would have sprouted Nazism? And that under that regime some 11 million people would be eliminated? One and a half million of them were children. I wish to dedicate these thoughts to the fathers to whom I meted out a half liter of milk before they were relocated; to the beautiful children that came with them and whom we never saw again.

The following is taken from *Erika: Poems of the Holocaust, by William Heyen.*

From Belsen a crate of gold teeth,
From Dachau a mountain of shoes,
From Auschwitz a skin lampshade.
Who killed the Jews?
Not I, cries the typist,
Not I, cries the engineer,
Not I, cries Adolf Eichmann,
Not I, cries Albert Speer.
My friend Fritz Nova lost his father –
A petty official had to choose.
My friend Lou Abrahms lost his brother.
Who killed the Jews?

David Nova swallowed gas,
Hyman Abrahms was beaten and starved.
Some men signed their papers,
And some stood guard,
And some herded them in,
And some dropped the pellets,
And some spread the ashes,

And some hosed the walls,
And some planted the Wheat,
And some poured the steel,
And some cleared the rails,
And some raised the cattle.
Some smelled the smoke,
Some just heard the news.
Were they Germans? Were they nazis?
Were they human? Who killed the Jews?
The stars will remember the gold,
The sun will remember the shoes,
The moon will remember the skin,
But who killed the Jews?

My axiom to our young people is this: It is unfathomable, but--alas, we know it is true. If you believe it cannot happen again, to us, or to our civilization, or in this part of the world, you live in a fool's paradise. Snap out of it! Keep your ears and eyes open! Be vigilant!

The Halifax Explosion

By Ellen MacDonald, Darwell W.I.

I must have been five that year, yet I remember it as if it were yesterday. It was a beautiful sunshiny day in early December, with a nip of frost in the air. My older brother and sister had gone off to school and the "four musketeers": my sister Edith, our two cousins Mary and Marge and myself were playing "church" in the parlor. We were inseparable pals; we spent our days playing at our house or theirs, but always together.

This day we were in our parlor. Mary, because she was the eldest, was usually the leader. In later years she became a missionary and went to South Africa; perhaps she already had the call, since she had us in church that morning.

Our service was cut short by a tremendous, shattering boom that rattled the windows alarmingly. I was facing the window and thinking back I remember having the impression of something flashing by with the speed of lightning.

Wide-eyed and scared, we pushed open the sliding doors and flew out to the yard where Mother was hanging clothes on the clothesline.

"What is it? What is it? What happened?" we all demanded crowding close to her. Mother could see we were badly frightened and tried to reassure us, at the same time feeling pretty anxious herself.

"We'll go to the telephone," she said and we followed her across the lawn to Aunt Ardie's house where the phone was. Aunt Ardie was already at the phone in the

front hall and I can remember us sitting on the stair steps and hanging over the banister while we waited for news of what happened.

The phone lines were buzzing. Aunt Ardie had a party line and everyone was of the same mind. It was the year 1917 and the war in Europe was still raging, perhaps somehow, someway, it had come to Canada.

My sister and brother, Jean and Stewart, were already at school by this time; the bell had already rung for nine o'clock classes. The children had gone in leaving the outside door open; one of the older boys was sent to close it. At that precise moment, the shattering blast was felt. Stewart recalls that the window rattled and the building shook; some of the children thought that Raymond had banged the door with such an amazing force that it caused the shaking. The teacher though, must have thought differently, for she went to the window to look for aircraft.

Stewart said it wasn't until recess that someone driving a horse and buggy stopped to tell them the news. I can't remember how long we waited, but the news when it came was shocking to our elders. Two ships had collided in Halifax Harbor. Two ships loaded with ammunition, destined for overseas, had collided in the harbor! The resulting fire ignited the ammunition, which went off like a million firecrackers. Many people had been drawn to the waterfront to watch the ship's fire; they didn't have a chance when the explosion occurred. A good portion of Halifax had been leveled, and many people killed and injured by collapsing homes and flying glass.

I don't think that at five I grasped the awfulness of the situation. I felt relief that it wasn't something that could hurt us. It was my Dad leaving to go to Halifax to help with

the clean-up and the rebuilding that shook me. The weather turned cold and snow fell all night, adding to the misery of the homeless and the job of looking for survivors in the fallen and broken homes.

Then one night, several days after Dad had gone to Halifax, we heard the news that Dad had found two children under a stove in one of the blasted houses. How excited we became, for we were sure Dad would bring them home with him! He only had six of his own and another on the way, though I didn't know about the seventh then.

Many parents became childless and many children were orphaned in that awful holocaust. There were parents looking for children and children looking for parents all winter long. I remember how disappointed I was when Dad came home on the weekend without the children he had found. Mother and Dad explained that we had a good-sized family of our own and that these two children might still find their parents. Dad worked there most of the winter, repairing and building.

Years later while teaching in a rural school at Jewett, Alberta, I met Mrs. Sandy Wournell, also a survivor of that explosion. She told me of her experience. She was partially dressed, her corset on, and sitting in the bathroom of her father's home; the bathroom door was shut. When she came to, after the blast, she found herself outside the bathroom on the stairs, stripped of her clothes, but physically unhurt. What it did to her nerves, though, was something else.

Looking back on that childhood experience, I remember how sure we were that war had come to Canada. Young as we were, we were afraid. What happened was probably more devastating to women and children than what was happening overseas. It was a sobering thought.

The War

By Florence Blair, Trochu

The B's with their two eldest children – about 6 or 7 years old, went to Scotland in the summer of 1939. There were rumblings of war, but they figured they would depend on Chamberlain to keep the peace. They had a good visit and were on their way home, on the liner Athenia, when a German torpedo hit the boat. Mrs. B. was putting the children to sleep in their cabin, and the room quickly filled with cold water. Luckily, she could swim and tucking a child under her arms, made her way to the deck. She and the children were quickly put in a lifeboat and to her surprise and relief, her husband was also on the same lifeboat. War was declared immediately after. The reason I was concerned with this, is because they lived in our town, and I was an admirer of Mrs. B., as she was a lovely singer. The children played with my nephew and niece, so I knew the too.

Shortly, one by one the young men started leaving the community to join the army, air force or navy. Of my five brothers, only one passed the physical test. He joined up and was sent overseas, but returned unharmed. It was an anxious time for my parents. One neighbour had four sons. They all joined up, fought the war and came home.

We had a mixed group of nationalities in our school, but I do not think any of us shunned the German children. One girl had a free-for-all fight with a young Russian, but that was not war related. It was just a fight that ended up with her toque being thrown in a mud puddle. A couple of my classmates were very patriotic as their father had been gassed in World War I, and they had an intense hatred of the enemy.

Like all families were had our rationing. It did not matter for the butter, eggs or meat, as we had that on the farm. One neighbour had brought a hundred pound sack of sugar the day before rationing was announced. She religiously allowed her family their ration from that sack of sugar. My mother was a wonder at managing with what we were allowed. She even made rhubarb pies! My Dad would remark that there was lots of sugar. My mother said "Fine, I will give each person their ration and at the end of the week the one with the most sugar will get a cake!" Mother and I gave up using our ration so she could do some baking. My nephew and niece were staying with us at the time, and had a contest to see who could use less sugar. My dad blissfully spooned sugar into his tea and coffee and on his porridge. At the end of the week, Dad's portion was all used up, but the two little ones had barely touched their cups of sugar. So my mother was able to make them their cake and some ice cream too!!!

We did very little real suffering during the war, but it was a relief to have it come to an end. We didn't celebrate V-E Day as we had attended a funeral for one of the brothers that had died on the "home front".

The Union Jack To The Maple Leaf War Bride

By Joyce Bogard, Friend of Shady Cove W.I.

Just a brief outline of my meeting with my husband to be, a handsome young Canadian, Maurice J. Bogard. My good friend, who was married to Canadian soldier from Winnipeg, had just had a little daughter, and we were celebrating her arrival at a small get-together, when in walked three soldiers from the Camp nearby. They joined our party, and at the end of the evening, I was escorted home by this nice young man.

We continued seeing one another for the next year, and then he was sent to Aldesholt in Surrey. It wasn't long before he was on his way to Europe, and D-Day had taken place, two months before. We wrote to one another for the next five months, and then he came home on leave, and he asked me to marry him, and we became engaged. We decided to get married on his next leave, which was to be in April, but all leaves were cancelled. The arrangements I'd made, had to be delayed until May 7th 1945. The big day arrived, and we were married at Burnham Parish Church, and when we came out of the church into the warm sunshine, we were told the war was over in Europe, and V-E Day was celebrated on May 8th. I was the last girl to be married in my area, as war was now declared over in Europe. He was now my Sergeant Major.

After a week's honeymoon in London, he returned to Europe and I didn't see him again until November, which was only a short leave. Then in January 1940, he returned to Canada. He found work with the City of Edmonton, with the Edmonton Transit System, as a streetcar mechanic.

I had to go to Sackville House in London for a

medical, and information for my passage to Canada. My papers for my voyage to Canada came, and we had to report to a hotel in London, where we stayed for two days. It was really the first time I'd been away from my family. On March 29th, we left the hotel and in private motor coaches, were taken to Waterloo Station, where we boarded a special train for Southampton. There were a great number of us girls, but no children on this trip. All our papers, etc, were checked and we finally boarded the ship, which was a French boat named the "Ile-de France". My family had traveled down to Southampton to see us leave. At six o'clock that evening, the boat started to leave, and streamers were thrown off the boat to the people below, for them to hold the other end. The Military Band played "Auld Lang Syne", as we moved away. I'll never forget it, watching the folks on the dock getting smaller and smaller, and still hearing the band, bidding us all a farewell. There were 5,000 brides on board, as well as three thousand troops. I know there were a lot of tears shed that evening. We were young, and didn't have any idea what Canada would be like.

We were on "A" Deck, and there were twenty girls in our large cabin. There were bunk beds and I was lucky enough to have the bottom bed. We were going to be six days at sea, and on the second day it became rough. Some of the girls were seasick, but I was fortunate enough to stay okay. We only got two meals a day, breakfast and supper, but when some of the girls complained, we were allowed to make sandwiches, after we'd had our breakfast, and take them to the cabin, to eat for our lunch, as our next meal wasn't until seven o'clock in the evening. There was always something to keep us entertained or walk around the deck, and chat to other girls. The M.P.'s on board kept a good watch on things.

We arrived in Halifax, Pier 21, about 6 pm, April 4th,

and were given a big welcome. There were Army personnel to help us with luggage, so we were well looked after, and at 11 pm we got aboard a special War-brides Train that was to take us across Canada on the Canadian National Railway. We were told our trip to Edmonton would take five days.

Our first stop on the train, that I remember, was a small place called Newcastle in New Brunswick, where one of our Scottish ladies got off the train. She was so excited, that she had her hat on backwards, her husband was there to greet her. Another incident I remember, was when we came into Fredericton, we were allowed to get off the train and stretch our legs. It was 4 o'clock in the afternoon. The Red Cross ladies were there to give us apples and oranges, and answer any questions we had. While we were there a young lady ran down the length of the platform, where the train had stopped, asking if any of the girls were from Guildford. We asked the Red Cross ladies why she was there, and they said she was very homesick, and she met every train that came in with War-brides. I have often thought about her, it was quite sad really.

We passed by many beautiful lakes in Ontario and then on to the wide-open Prairies. When we arrived at Winnipeg, we stayed over night on a siding track. The reason for this was a lot of the brides had got off the train along the journey and so the train was now half empty. The officials decided to hook us up with the Trans-Can Train, for the rest of the trip going west. The food was good that we got on the train, a lot better than what we'd had in England, while war was on. The Red Cross did marvelous work to make our arrival pleasant.

It was a long journey, and we were glad when we arrived in Edmonton on the 10th of April, 1946. My husband and his Mother were there to meet me, and the sun was

shining even though it was only about 7:00 am. We drove out to the house, and I remember how strange it was to be on the other side of the road to what we were use to. I also thought the wood sidewalks were quite different. The house was small but it was warm and cozy.

We had two daughters, Janet was born February 27th, 1947, and Pauline arrived December 20th, 1948. The house was too small to raise a family in, so in 1951, we were lucky enough to get a Wartime house, where we lived for 28 years. Our daughters have given us seven lovely grandchildren, six boys and one girl. Some of them are now married, and we have two great-grandchildren.

I love Canada, it is now my home, and I've made many wonderful friends over the years. But once in a while, there is a little longing to see the green fields of England. I only have one sister left now, so the visiting isn't very often. I'm happy to be a Canadian and the folks in England come and visit me. I belong to the Alberta War-Brides Association, who meet once a month for lunch and a meeting. We can have a good talk on things in general. Only one sad thing, as years go by, there are less of us around. How fast time flies by!

"Bless them all!"

Ajax, Ontario, War Plant, 1944

By Pat (Woollard) Scott, Duffield W.I.

I came from a farming background north of Wabamun, having twin brothers Ed and Fred Woollard and sisters Marguerite (Woollard) Alberton and Lois (Woollard) Gibbons. My parents were Ed and Freda Woollard. I attended the Sylvan School –12 pupils on Lac Ste Anne Trail –then Rexboro –30 pupils –all grades up to nine –walking or biking in nice weather—mud roads were the bane of our existence. Herd Law was not in existence, so cattle pastured wherever they chose to go – then walk home in the mud – you try to ride a bike on that after it dried!! We walked across "A" Lake and Whitewood Lake in winter. They have since been drained and mined for coal. Whitewood was close to Rexboro School so skating was our entertainment at noon in winter—swimming in summer – a nice couple –the Smiths allowed us to use their sandy beach.

When it came to High School, 1941, I stayed with my aunt and uncle, Roy and Joan Lent, walking or biking to Duffield, 4 miles, with 16 pupils grades 7 to 10, The old Madson house was our renovated one room school. The next year it was on to Edmonton Technical School –corner of 107 Ave. and 101 St. – this was 1942 – Grade 12. After school some of the rooms were used for the war effort, making I don't know what! After that I worked at the Administration Building in Edmonton, just north of the Legislative Buildings.

At that time many American troops were passing through Edmonton to work on building the Alaska Highway. This is a poem on a plaque my son Ron brought home when he drove a truck up there in the 1970's.

"ALASKA HIGHWAY"

Winding in and winding out
Fills my mind with serious doubt
As to whether the lout
Who built this route
Was going to hell or coming out."

It was built very crooked in case Japanese tried to land planes; they had taken over islands in the Allusions off Alaska.

This was war time so, in the summer, teachers were hired to work in war plants. My sister Marguerite and her friend, Olga Twasiuk decided to go with them to Ajax, Ontario...east of Toronto. That was the year 1944. Since Marg didn't want to come home in September, she persuaded me to go down for the winter. Ontario climate is damp along the lake, so I was always cold. Transportation by train, was paid for by the government. Accomodation was in dormitories and dining room in another building.

In 1941, farmland near Pickering, Ontario became the site of the Defense Industries Ltd. (D.I.L.), a vast shell filling plant which, before 1945 filled 40,000,000 shells, employing over 9,000 people. It had its own water and sewage treatment plant, school population over 600, 30 miles of railroads, 30 miles of roads, streets, steam plant, hospital, hotel and even its own newspaper, "The Commando." This was said to be the largest Defense Plant at that time in the world.

There was a housing site north of Highway 401. 640 single family dwellings on a former farm site: as I remember seeing a big house and stone barn. There was a recreation center, bowling alley and dance floor. One of the entertainers while I was there was Tommy Hunter, who is still in show business and was recently in Edmonton, Alberta.

The plant was named Ajax after H.M.S. Ajax. In 1974, the village of Pickering and town of Ajax amalgamated.

The most railroad sheds and warehouses where shell and incendiary bombs were stored for shipment overseas, were each an acre or more in size. On production lines, floors were all made of hardwood, and we wore rubber-soled shoes with hard toes to cut down on a spark setting something off.

The plant consisted of five lines and Cap and Detonator, all buildings about one mile from the main gate. Everyone was issued a pass for identification. We worked in buildings that contained a cafeteria and washrooms. I worked on Line 2. There they filled 25 pound shells, which were put in waxed cardboard containers and taped. We heard soldiers had a hard time getting them out of the containers at the battlefront. Also incendiary bombs were filled with cordite – a very explosive substance. I worked on the fuses putting luting on the threads to keep out moisture.

Transportation down the lines for the workers was "Cattle Cars", big trucks hauling trailer with seats down the sides. Food was rationed, but we got lots to eat, turned in our ration coupons. I saved enough sugar to bring home to make my wedding cake in June, 1945.

We were issued blue coverall uniforms with D.I.L. on the pocket. Hair had to be tied up with a bandana. Our wages per month were $80.00 plus board and room.

It was quite safe to thumb rides…four of us went to Ottawa…one gentleman picked us and offered us Jersey Milk chocolate bars … they had been near moth balls so weren't very tasty. At Brockville, we slept on benches in

the railroad station. Numerous trips to Toronto ... toured Casa Loma in Toronto ...their horse barns. He insisted we return by train ...I remember the old coaches with gaslights.

In 1945, war was declared over and the plant was closed. The University of Toronto leased much of the D.I.L. plant to accommodate engineering students. War machines were moved out and most destroyed for safety reasons... and buildings were converted to classrooms and laboratories. Students lived in residence. 1949 was the last year of the University of Toronto, Ajax Division, some 7,000 students had received basic training.

At that time, the building of the 401 highway was started but not at today's standards, just a two-way highway.

In 1997, my cousin Betty Milne and I went to a Women's Institutes Convention in Hamilton, Ontario, then on a planned bus tour of southern Ontario. My daughters Audrey and Wendy went with us. We stopped at Sarnia where the first oil well was drilled, Uncle Tom's Cabin and Grove site, Point Pelee, the most southern point of Canada (it's in line with California) and toured Welland Canal. My daughters Audrey and Wendy went with us. We stayed at a cousin's in Grimsby, Ontario. They took us to Ajax, what an eye opener—from small defense plant to Big City of over 50,000 people. Found some of the houses in the housing site north of the 401 ....still being occupied by families of original owners....also some of the buildings and storage sheds on one of the Lines. Along Lake Ontario are parks and grassy areas ... we had not been allowed down there while working at the plant. The Whitby Nuclear Plant is along Lake Ontario close to Ajax.

I met the Mayor of Ajax and had my picture taken with him. He also gave me a history of Ajax and two tapes

made to celebrate the 50th year home-coming, June 1991 for those who worked at the plant. I would so have liked to obtain a copy of a book "Ajax, the War Years" ... written by Ken Smith, who worked there during the opening of the plant and years after, but I couldn't.

Just to finish my story, we returned home by train on June 1, 1945. It took 2 ½ days, now we can fly it in 3 ½ hours and married Jack Scott at my home June 30th, 1945, moved to his farm north of Duffield where I've lived for the last 60 years. (Jack passed away in 1992.) I've just celebrated my 80th birthday.

My Impression of the War (WW II)

By Daphne Admussen, Westbrook W.I.

I was only a small girl when my mother took us to England in 1938, but I do have some impressions of the two years we spent there.

For part of the first year we lived in our grandparents' home in London, with frequent trips to the park where we watched Punch and Judy puppet shows and licked on halfpenny ice cream cones, or watched the coal barges going down the canals to the river, but by the next year the war was much more in evidence.

British soldiers were being drilled on the streets, I think it was the Home Guard, there were planes flying in formation, bombers on their way to Europe on bombing missions. We had a refugee couple from Hungary living in our home and we moved to a different house that had an air raid shelter in the back yard and was further out in the suburbs of Watford. The bombing blitz of London had begun and there were air raid sirens frequently wailing in the night.

I remember the panic I felt when my mother mentioned that we children may have to come back to Canada on our own as they were trying to get the children out of London. Many British children were sent to Canada as well as out to farms in England for safety. However, my mother learned that all Canadian women and children could be repatriated and the government would pay for their passage back to Canada, so she was able to return with us.

The journey back stands out the most in my memory. We were on a passenger liner in a convoy of battleships, destroyers and other ships being sent back to Canada for

repairs. The sights of the waves washing over the destroyers especially stays in my memory, which brings to mind the seasickness we all suffered. Our convoy had an air escort part of the way until we were past the danger zone around England, which was subject to German torpedoes, and air attacks. As well as civilians, the liner carried wounded soldiers who helped look after many children aboard. Also on board was gold bullion sent from England to Canada for safekeeping. The drills we were put through were the worst as there would be sirens wailing and we had to put on life jackets not knowing if it was real attack or not.

The passenger liner that left England two weeks later was attacked and sunk by German torpedoes and the street we lived on was bombed shortly after, so we were very fortunate to have arrived safely back in Canada.

My Memories of WW II

By Doris (Hillman) Campbell, Burdett W.I.

It was the first week of my high school that Britain went to war with Germany and on my 15th birthday, September 10th, that Canada joined in.

I worried that I may not be able to complete my schooling. Because we had no television at that time, we were spared the sights of destruction, we could only imagine.

I remember the rationing of sugar, coffee, gas, alcohol and cigarettes. We were a big family of 9 so our ration books were adequate. The alcohol and cigarette rations were given or traded to people who used them.

My oldest brother was drafted to take basic training in the army, which was a six to eight week stint. Due to being on the farm and the need for his help there he did not have to join the forces.

After my high school, I started my nurses' training, the war was getting uglier and I decided when I graduated that I would join the Air Force as a nursing sister. I figured this is one way I could help however the war was over before I graduated.

Our home was about 20 miles from the air base, Penhold, Alberta. We had many training planes fly by. My mother and us kids would go out and wave at them. One day a parcel was dropped with the name of the pilot. He was immediately contacted and invited out for dinner. He did come out a few times. I did not meet him as I was in Nurses' training. However, a close bond was formed as my family heard from him when he went back to England and two of

my younger sisters visited with him and his family in England in the 1980's.

While in nurses' training we would be invited to help entertain the boys in uniform. Some were very far from home. It was usually held at the large Penley's Dance Hall in downtown Calgary. There were service men there from Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and of course, Canada. I met two very nice gentlemen that I corresponded with after they went overseas.

The day peace was declared, I remember the great holler that went up in the diet kitchen of the hospital where I was training.

There were many beautiful songs written during those years and also many good memories.

While I was nursing in Innisfail, I met my husband Wyman Campbell. He was an ex RCAF Pilot. The day war broke out he started his Air Engineers career at S.A.I.T. After a year, he along with eleven others from the course came to do maintenance in Lethbridge at No. 5 Elementary Flying Training School. Later that year they moved to High River. He joined the Air Force in 1942 for pilot's training. When that was completed, he applied to go overseas to fly missions but that was not what they had planned for him. He was sent for instructor's training and then he instructed the young fellows to be pilots until the war ended.

Wartime Sparked My Interest

By Charmaine Wood, Irvine W.I.

My lifelong interest in military things began when I was five years old. I had no military background; I am a rancher's daughter. My father didn't go to war. My mother had several brothers and sisters in the military but I was too young during the war years to know about it.

During the winter of 1944-45, when I was five years old, we unaccustomedly lived in town, and many things about our situation were new and memorable. But one of my most vivid memories is a radio program to which my parents listened regularly, and I listened as faithfully as they did. It was entitled "L for Lanky" and was about the wartime adventures of the crew of a Lancaster Bomber. It was unusually solemn entertainment fare for a five year old but I ate it up.

I remember seeing in a magazine a picture of a wounded soldier, which haunted me for years. I cut out pictures of military figures and stuck them to a frosted window, which, I sadly found, ruined them. These are among my earliest memories.

My sister and I as children had soldier and sailor dolls, stuffed cloth ones, named Billy and Bobby, we took to bed in place of teddy bears. We also had military type paper dolls, men and women. Later, we had a well-used set of plastic soldier "action figures", not "G.I. Joe," just ordinary Joes, along with their vehicles, and with our cousins we played "war." My most used figure was a man in a blue uniform and a gas mask.

I don't remember many true-life war stories from my

military relatives, except the time when Mom's sister was bombed out of bed during the London Blitz, but having soldiers and airmen in the family was a normal part of life.

For many years I had wanted to work for National Defense, and while living in Halifax I did, briefly, and found it uninspiring. But one aspect of Halifax life, which I greatly enjoyed, was the sights and sounds of the Navy's pervasive presence.

Even now, the nearly CFB Suffield has a certain fascination. I also collect books on World War II and gladly watch its movies.

Somehow I never considered joining the military myself (I never had the health for it, anyway.) But my keen interest in military things has continued through the years. And it all started in that long-ago wartime when I was five years old.

Personal Memories of the 1939-1945 Second World War

By B.I. Farr, Jackson W.I.

I was just eleven years old when Mr. Clement Atlee announced on the 3rd of September 1939 at 11:15 a.m. that Great Britain was at war against Germany and the Hitler regime. It didn't seem possible on such a beautiful, sunny day, but I remember how both my mother and father became very silent and pensive, obviously thinking of what the future may hold, and in my fathers thoughts, I am sure, he was thinking of the first World War when he was in the trenches in France.

It wasn't long before radical changes took place. Everyone was issued a gas mask which was to be carried everywhere. All buildings were to have their windows covered with heavy material so that no lights were to be seen. Food was rationed and there were no luxury goods on offer. Even clothes and material for making them was rationed. My personal hate was margarine, which in those days, had a dreadful taste, so my mother allowed me to have two ounces a week to manage for myself!

I remember during an air raid, my beautiful little budgie bird became sick and was having fits. We were wondering how to help him, when the air raid warning went and almost immediately a string of incendiary bombs fell along our street. Since my father was an 'air raid warden' he went outside with other neighbours to extinguish the fires and after all the commotion, we looked to my budgie that had unfortunately, died.

Almost immediately, at the beginning of the war, my school closed down because of the danger from the bombs.

Classes were carried out in our homes in small groups where the teacher would spend a half-day with each group and assign large amounts of homework to last a week. This arrangement lasted a year after which we (my year, anyway) dispersed to various schools for higher education. My school was an all girls' school and rather a long way from home, but fortunately, my parents thought they needed a different house, which turned out to be closer. During this period, I spent a good deal of time in the bomb shelters, both day and night – not a pleasant past-time and looking back on it, makes me wonder how we ever learned as much as we did. Most summer holidays were spent in the country, helping the war effort, i.e. picking potatoes or fruit and living in army huts, but they did give us pocket money!

While I was at one of these camps, a bomb blasted all the windows out of our house, but fortunately, everyone happened to be out. Towards the end of the war, doodlebugs and rockets also hammered us. These were catapulted from the north coast of France and were particularly terrifying because they came without warning.

In May of 1945, I remember going to Trafalgar Square to join the joyful celebration of the European victory and the wonderful feeling of release from a period of headache and terror.

There are so many things about the war that I remember, that it is difficult to pinpoint the so-called highlights, but I'll never forget the food and clothing rationing, the scarcity of any luxuries, the bombing and damages, the hardships of everyday life, but most of all, I'll never forget the patriotism and camaraderie, the pulling together of a small nation against adversity.

Nellie Davies

As dictated to Noreen Olson, Jackson W.I.

September 1939 when war was declared, I was on holiday on the south coast of England. I had just finished three years of my four years of nurses' training. We got a phone call to return immediately.

The next year was very busy with final exams to get our S.R.N. (State Registered Nurse) and often working dealing with the people injured in the bombing raids. In 1941, I went to the isolation hospital for a year of work and study to become an R.F.N. (Registered Fever Nurse). I didn't realize then how soon I would be called on to use this special qualification. Early in 1943, I joined the British Army Nursing Service. Our title was Queen Alexandra Imperial Military Nursing Service, affectionately known as Q.A.'S.

After a short time in England, we had orders to move again. We did not know where we were going only that it was a place where we would wear the tropical uniform we had acquired.

This was no pleasant cruise. After a few days we sailed past Gibraltar into the Mediterranean. The war in North Africa was over so we sailed along the coast. I watched the coastline and thought if we were torpedoes I could swim that far. We sailed to Port Said and down the Suez Canal to Suez where we landed before the ship continued on to India. There were about twenty nurses and after a short stay in Cairo we were sent to different hospitals in the area.

My final destination was at No. 1 British Military Hospital at El Qantara, quite close to the Suez Canal. At El

doctors. Tents held 25 patients each. We had a maximum of 1000 patients. They were all members of the Allied Troops but we were never told or knew how many were in the area.

At the head of each row of tents was a wooden building, one being the Operating Room. Our living quarters were also in tents. We had four to a tent. The one I was assigned to, had a card table in the middle. I thought it very strange as each of the legs was in a little tin containing paraffin. I was told that this was to prevent ants from crawling onto the table if any food or chocolate was left there. Our chief recreation was swimming in the Suez Canal (from one continent to another). During the summer months everyone slept under a mosquito net. Night duty was no joy; imagine going around with a coal oil hurricane lamp trying to check on patients.

It was while I was at No. 1 that we had an outbreak of smallpox and I was sent to work at the isolation hospital. This is the only time I have ever worn slacks on duty. We also wore long sleeved shirts, our hair covered and wore a mask. I think all the patients could see were our eyes.

In 1944 my friends Margaret and Hilda and I got leave together. We decided to visit Palestine. The army trucks were going back and forth so we hitched a ride on one. After many miles of desert, it was great to see greenery again. On Via Dolarosa arriving in Jerusalem, we went to the hostel run by the Y.W.C.A. (Young Women's Christian Association). The ladies there were very helpful and arranged for a guide to take us around. We visited so many places we heard about in Sunday School. We walked the ViaDalarosa (The Way of the Cross) and the Wailing Wall. It was it was also arranged for us to take a bus down from Jerusalem to Jerico (no we did not fall among the thieves) but we did stop briefly at the Inn of the Good Samaritan.

Another day we took a bus to Nazareth and stayed a couple of days at the home of the retired matron of the hospital. She made us very welcome and got a friend to show us around. She had done her nurses' training in the city where I trained although not in the same hospital. While in Palestine I was able to have a swim in the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee. The days passed quickly, it seemed in no time we were headed back to our hospital in Egypt.

Early in 1945 another move, this time to Tobruk in North Africa. The hospital was near the train terminal and the once a week train was quite an event. We were just a small unit of twenty-five nurses and we were the only women in the area.

We treated many P.O.W.'s as a number of Italian and German prisoners were held there. What a relief when we heard that the war in Europe was over. But it wasn't goodbye for many of us. We had signed up for the emergency and it wasn't over.

Once again, I was working on the isolation ward. I received a piece of music written by a patient as a thank you and signed by the others and a 1946 Easter Card from the patients. Soon it was time to return to civilian life and in June 1946, I was on the ship and homeward bound.

Nellie Davies (nee Beatson) was born February 28th, 1912 in Sheffield, England. Nellie emigrated to Canada in 1948, working in Kenora, Ontario. She moved to Alberta in 1949 and became a Public Health Nurse in Breton and Youngstown. In 1950, she accepted a staff position at Didsbury Hospital where she met an injured farmer. Nellie married and moved to the Garfield community. Nellie joined the Jackson W.I. in December 1953 and is a life and charter member of the branch.

Affects of World War II On Our Family

By Betty Welter, Grand Prairie W.I.

Both my parents were in World War I, my father with the Canadian Engineers and my mother in the clerical division of the Air Force in England. My father was wounded in France, sent back to England to recuperate where he meet my mother. The romance continued and dad returned to Alberta in 1919. His previous job with the C.P.R. on an irrigation project in the Bassano area was waiting for him. Mother came out to Calgary in 1920 where they were married. I arrived the following year and guess could be classed as a product of World War I.

We moved to the Grande Prairie area in 1928 to a new farm and onto a homestead in 1932. Yes, the depression was certainly with us; no markets or reasonable prices for any farm products. Jobs were very scarce and dozens of men were riding the rails begging for work and food. Europe was in trouble. Hitler was gaining strength and simply walking over one small country after the other. My parents were very concerned, as I remember their discussions and trying to surmise the outcome.

Mother passed away very suddenly in 1938. This changed our household drastically. Correspondence courses were discontinued as I tried to take over her duties. My sister continued on in high school and my little brother in grade one.

War was declared in September of 1939 and what a dark gloomy outlook. Boys were joining up all over and suddenly there was far more work available for men and women. Why do we have to have half the world at war to improve our economy and have a market for our products?

My father did not want us girls to think about enlisting in the women's divisions. He wouldn't say "why", but we decided he had seen too much from twenty years previous. Local activities suddenly changed or were on hold. Now everything was centered around the war effort. The Monkman Pass was gaining strength. Many small communities were sponsoring a great variety of money raising events for it. We also had a very active, growing Horticultural Society with several large successful shows to their credit. These were just two community events shelved for several years unfortunately.

I enrolled in a two-year home economics course at the Vermilion School of Agriculture in 1939. Male enrollment even affected then and more so in 1940 with recruitment groups everywhere.

We used to have a brief news report before the main feature at the theatre: always interesting. These were "censored" very quickly; hence what we saw today had probably happened several weeks ago. TV wasn't available here then. Even the radio news and papers were strictly edited. Safety feature for any possible spy activity, we were told.

Civilians soon noticed various goods in ever decreasing amounts in the grocery and hardware stores, lumber yards, etc. Everything directed to the war effort, was the answer. This was really the beginning of recycling as some metals were in short supply and plastic was in its infancy. Our drug stores had large glass bowls by the till for people to drop their empty toothpaste and shaving cream tubes in for the aluminum. I wonder what our current health inspectors would say about the above activity today? Chocolate, raisins, currants, nuts, ladies' stockings (mostly rayon then), photo film, car tires and repairs were a few

items that were almost non-existent in our area.

Grande Prairie was chosen as an army training center early on, with many H-huts, a drill hall, an officers' mess and guardhouse, built south of 96 Avenue. These buildings were completed very quickly and we soon had several hundred soldiers in training in the area. Some of these men were married and wanted their families to join them. Consequently, living quarter of any size, condition or quality was in high demand.

Now everyone had a food stamp ration book, children included, for meat, sugar, butter, tea, coffee and preserves. Car owners had a similar book for gasoline stamps. All adult civilians were issued a registration card and number which we had to carry at all times and be prepared to present same when requested.

Jitney dances started up in the old Capitol Theatre, about where the Avenue Hotel is now. Tickets sold at the door – 10 dances for $1.00. We had live bands several nights a week with huge crowds of all these lads in various uniforms in our midst. Different church groups took turns to provide some type of refreshments. Yes, they were on rations too and willing to share. The barracks guardhouse had strict curfew rules, hence the tickets. Some boys only stayed for three or four dances and then back to camp. Huge dances were held in the army drill hall on special occasions.

At our college in 1940, rationing was more evident every day. Students had difficulty getting raw materials for projects; e.g. leather for harness making, metals in the blacksmith area, lumber, paint, varnish, knitting wool, yard goods and paper products. Just before our graduation in 1941 we were told our college was to become a training center for the C.W.A.C.'s for western Canada. Before we left we had to

take down and pack up all the large previous grad class photos. Many of the reference books in the library were also packed away. All these were stored in a separate building. We were all rather sad, as this was temporarily the end of the agricultural classes in our college.

Many boys plus a few girls from our class enlisted that spring. I can well remember the first issue of our little alumni paper later in '41 with a framed block bordered announcement listing several of our fellow students who had paid the supreme sacrifice. Yes, why do we have to have wars?

Now that Japan was involved, the Alaska Highway became very important and was simply bulldozed through the area. Large American Truck Convoys loaded with provisions and equipment were everywhere. Crossing the Smoky was still by ferry or on the ice. Many convoys were held up on the east bank waiting for the weather to co-operate. There was great activity at the airport as runways had to be upgraded to accommodate much larger planes. We had American Signalmen, Airmen, Soldiers and numerous groups of road building personnel in our midst almost overnight.

We used to have two passenger trains a week from Edmonton to Dawson Creek, plus freight trains as needed. Now we had a passenger train every day with oodles of servicemen en route to the end of the steel and then on by truck convoy to wherever needed. Truckloads and trainloads of road building equipment were going through town daily. Yes, it was certainly a hive of activity in this part of the world for several years.

A phone line was also being put through by an American division along the railway during a very severe

winter. Many of these boys working in this area were from Mississippi and Louisiana and probably had never even seen snow. They had big heavy white snowsuits, with hoods. Those poor boys nearly perished working outdoors all day and could hardly move in the cold. Their black faces and white teeth were a real contrast to their white hoods.

Later that summer, I was asked to cook at our 40 bed hospital. We also had to cope with rationing, but had a bit of reserve of many staples. With careful menu planning one could provide healthy meals for patients and staff. The biggest problem was keeping the latter as they were always coming and going and difficult to keep trained personnel anywhere. Don't forget it was wartime and we had a very transient population.

We had one young tray girl a few minutes late for her 5:oo p.m. shift only to tell us she had been married during her hours off. She was leaving town with her young husband the next day. Yes, her shift was complete and we never saw her again and I often wondered how she was and where she was.

We occasionally had some uniformed personnel in the hospital for surgery, broken bones or severe burns. One young tray girl came running into the kitchen to announce we had a general as a patient. This we doubted as Grande Prairie didn't have too many such men here at that time. Later on, his name arrived down on the diet chart as Gnr Brown; mystery solved and she really got teased.

About 30 of the staff lived in the Nurses Home, close to the hospital. This was a very popular spot for so many lads in uniform to visit and pick up a date.

Now all the ladies were knitting for someone in the

services if and when yarn was available. There was a great demand for "woolies" for boys in the navy. The Atlantic could be brutally cold especially during the winter. We took our knitting everywhere – to all types of meetings, while traveling, visiting and did have good results.

Mail service was very slow and delayed especially from overseas. Many letters were opened for censoring. Rationing in Britain was far stricter than ours and we were asked to send care parcels frequently. Tea, sugar, canned salmon, cheese, cookies and fruitcake were favorites. These parcels could take three months to arrive. "Care" parcels to the boys in uniform were a gamble as they may be moved during this long transit time. Sometimes, they followed the soldiers to their new posting. Some were also "returned to sender, couldn't be located". We were asked to pay "return postage" and many were refused as the contents were probably spoiled by that time.

In the winter of 1944, I was also planning my wedding in August. This was a very small simple affair with just my father and brother present. Now for a dress, as yard goods were very scarce in all categories. One had to work with what was available. Some nylon was coming on the market, cotton, rayon and wool the standbys. I sent out to Woodwards with a brief description of what I would like as to colour, price, etc. They sent me a dress length of an aqua blue crepe with a small black and white design. So I made my dress, managed to get a white hat but no white shoes anywhere.

Also during that spring, Jack was building a very small house for us to live in. Quite a circus to get nails, lumber, shingles, window, doors, hinges to even begin. To find any furniture was almost impossible, stores were empty.

After our morning ceremony at the minister's house we went camping for a week by the Wapiti River. Gas was very scarce, also tires and any type of car repairs one might need for an old Durant Coupe. Ten miles from our wee house was about the limit.

Urgency of training soldiers was decreasing. Our barracks closed early in '44, staff transferred and no more trainees. The buildings all empty with a caretaker in charge.

Our school district got permission to use two of the H-huts to open a dormitory for country students to attend high school in town. I was hired as cook to feed these young people; and now to organize a kitchen. One hut became the girls' dorm; the officers' mess housed the boys in the south wings. North wing became the dining hall and we occupied the H-bar and tiny kitchen. There were two large galvanized tub sinks in same, a small old refrigerator, a badly abused cast iron coal cook stove with small oven and no thermometer on the door. This building had been empty for several months and the mice had almost taken over, so their elimination was the first task.

The school district had purchased six dozen full settings of heavy hotel-weight dishes from the Medalta Pottery Co. in Medicine Hat, plus the same amount in cutlery. Now to find something to cook in. Yes, hardware stores still were very empty. Wholesale houses and storekeepers were very helpful to me and the dorm. We certainly got priority if and when something arrived that we needed. We did eventually buy four 7 quart canners to cook in, a roaster, two cake pans, ten pie plates and one cookie sheet to feed 60 people. I also used some of my own utensils and wedding presents. Today, it's hard to believe that such things as washing machines, mix masters, eggbeaters, toasters, can openers, brooms, mops, etc. were almost non-

existent in 1944. We had battleship linoleum on the floor, someone gave us a broom, and we what a relief for us all. The school year ended, my duties ran into July with stock-taking and packing up. I received a nice thank you from the school district stating the first year was a success. They would like me to apply again come September but at a much reduced rate. My wages were $130.00 for a 30-day month and our board and room. Needless to say, I did not even consider re-applying.

I have attempted to state how the war affected my life in general . V. J. Day in August was SO welcome!

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Becoming A Woman In Wartime

By Vera Chambers, Darwell W.I.

In September 1939, I was thirteen and a half years old, just starting grade ten, a shy, small-statured country mouse of a girl. I traveled five miles on one of the earliest school bus routes in the Muskoka District to attend Port Carling Continuation School. There, eight grades of Primary and four grades of High School were all taught in one building of four classrooms, a big hallway, the principal's office and an indoor washroom. This was a real advancement in modern technology from the outhouses of the one room schoolhouse I had attended where our water supply was a bucket of lake water.

The school year had just begun when on the CBC radio, a deep and resonant voice solemnly announced, "We are at War!' The voice was that of a very young Lorne Green who, years later starred as "Pa" on the TV western series, "Bonanza".

Over the next couple of years we started to see war-related changes in our area. A former TB Sanitarium just outside of Gravenhurst was converted to a German Air Force Officers' Prisoner of War Camp. I remember when they rioted because they wanted bread, not 'cake'. They wanted the unleavened bread to which they were more accustomed.

About the same time, Little Norway was established near Bracebridge, where the Muskoka Airport is now located. Free Norwegians who had escaped when Germany overran their country, lived there and trained as flyers. It was a usual sight to see them flying their small training planes under the power line between the poles. They were Handsome, blond, blue-eyed daredevils; men with nothing to

lose. Many didn't know if their families were alive or dead, so they threw themselves into training to fight the oppressors.

We were aware of the changes happening in our part of the world, but war wasn't really affecting us, yet. I had many responsibilities at home such as cooking, dishes, and caring for younger siblings but, although I was past thirteen and in High School, unlike girls of that age today. I was a child. What did war mean to me? All I saw was marching bands, neat uniforms and adults discussing world affairs. My life changed little. I continued in school, working my holidays at the summer resort, Elgin House, where my father was employed.

In June of 1942, I graduated Grade XI. I had such big dreams! I wanted desperately to become a chemical engineer. Most girls of the time didn't even go to University, let alone in an engineering course, but I was determined to try. Although money was scarce and I was barely sixteen, my father insisted that I should continue on to Grade XIII, equivalent to first year of university. The war had not yet really touched me.

The area where my family lived did not have a school that offered Grade XIII. My older sister's husband was employed at the Nobel Munitions Plant and they lived in a small house in Parry Sound, so I went to live with them and attended Parry Sound High School. In late November of that year, my parents and two younger brothers moved to Orillia, Ontario where my father was employed at Fahralloy Steel as a maintenance man. Orillia was a large town and their schools offered Grade XIII, so I rejoined my parents in Orillia where I attended Orillia Collegiate. I had always been an "A" student and I continued to do well.

In late spring of 1943, my mother (who suffered from Asthma) was hospitalized with plural pneumonia. We were living in a strange town with few friends and no relatives nearby. My youngest brother was in his first year of school with different hours than the thirteen year old, so someone had to be at home. My father worked long hours. Due to so many men being overseas, there was such a shortage of workers that women had finally been accepted as 'almost' equal in the work force. It was wonderful that women were working in so many areas, welding, transport flying, farming, equipment operators, etc., but it meant that there were no women available for domestic work. As a result, I stayed out of school to take over the household duties. In a way, this was the first time the war really affected me personally.

I intended to go back to write my finals, but the school authorities decreed that I had missed too many classes and would not allow me to write the exams. The time had come to get a job. My father suggested I apply at Fahralloy Steel, where he worked, to train as a metallurgical analyst. I was hired and at seventeen, started my life in the workforce. We were paid thirty cents an hour for ten hour days, six days a week. I had a 17 block walk to and from work. We wore coveralls and a kerchief tied over our heads like Aunt Jemima (NO hair could show). There was no cafeteria, so I carried a lunch with a thermos of tea. My training started immediately. It was decided by management that I should first learn all operations in the foundry before going into the laboratory. I learned to make cores and molds, to mix sand and oil for molds, to break molds away from castings and how to fire the molds in large gas-fired kilns. I learned how to charge an electric furnace to produce certain types of steel, how to line ladles for carrying molten metal from the furnace to the casting area and how to weld (both oxy-acetylene and arc). I became adept at polishing castings and packing them

for shipment. Then, finally, I learned how to take and prepare samples for analysis. At long last I moved into the lab! What a disappointment! For several weeks I was charged with cleaning glassware ten hours a day. Eventually, however, I was trained and did the final testing.

About that time, a small tuck shop was opened where we could buy coffee, tea, pop, chocolate bars, etc. One day, while waiting I line to make a purchase, a new employee picked up a large, air-powered molding ram. As he asked, "What's this thing?" he started it up and it bounced off my left foot, breaking the big toe. This was my only broken bone until a car accident fifty years later. After one winter, my parents returned to their home in Muskoka where my father again worked for Elgin House. I continued to work at Fahralloy and moved to a boarding house in Orillia. It cost me $5.00 per week, and that was with a private sleeping room. Had I shared a room, it would have been $4.00 per week. The meals were excellent and food was always available for shift workers. This was my first experience of really being on my own.

In late May I was injured. A crane load slipped and dropped a piece of steel, hitting me a glancing blow on the side of my head and shoulder. I was off work nearly a month, spending this time with my parents. Two sisters were also at our parents' home, one recuperating from major surgery and another, although married with two children, was working at Elgin House for the summer to help her husband buy them a home. I remember there was some special movie (Mrs. Minerva, I believe) playing in Bracebridge, about 25 miles away. So, we three sisters borrowed Dad's car to go to it. Because of war restrictions, no new tires were available for private vehicles, so the rubber was in bad condition. Dad warned us, but we wanted to see the movie, and like most youth, felt invincible. We

had three flats before we got home! Back then, of course, a flat involved jacking up the car, taking off the wheel, removing the tire from the rim, patching the tube, putting it all back together, hand-pumping the tube full of air and replacing the wheel on the car. We made it home just in time for my sister to go to work. The war was affecting me but was still more a bother than a personal issue. Around this time my oldest brother was conscripted for active duty in the army. Previously, he had been deferred because, as a stationary engineer, the job he was doing was considered essential service. He had, in fact, tried to enlist but was refused. Now he was needed more in the army than at home. My brother-in-law had been conscripted some months earlier and many of my schoolmates had gone overseas. Now I was seeing my family upset and inconvenienced by the war, but still hadn't really experienced any of the horror.

With my brother-in-law away, my oldest sister was left living in the country with a small son and a car, which she couldn't drive. Many times while I was still living in Orillia, I hitchhiked to where she lived near Uffington to drive her and her son to spend some time with our parents. Then I would drive her home, in her car, and hitchhike back to Orillia. It was a different, safer world back then. I was not afraid to hitch a ride and people were not afraid to offer one. My life changed when I returned to work at Fahralloy after my injury. I found, a psychological problem no doubt, that I could no longer work in the foundry. The smell that was, or maybe still is, peculiar to foundries caused me sever headaches. Doctors advised me to try a different kind of work, preferably in the open air. I left with regret, as I had been learning metallurgy, a step on my goal to engineering.

Some friends who had a fruit farm near Beamsville on the Niagara Peninsula offered me a job on their farm and I took it. I had never seen peaches, cherries, pears, grapes,

etc. growing, but I learned to pick and pack them. I suffered greatly from the itch caused from peach fuzz, but it didn't affect my appetite for them. They are still a favorite fruit. Whenever possible, fruit and vegetables were delivered to canning factories. I believe a lot of this went overseas.

Sometimes, my duties included driving the three-ton truck north to Orillia with a load of fresh fruit. Sometimes I stayed at the farm caring for their two young daughters while my employers, took the overnight delivery trip. My injury was soon forgotten in good fun, hard work, fresh air and abundance of good food. There were a couple of teenagers like myself working on a nearby farm and we got together whenever work would allow. We worked long hours for little pay, but like teenagers through time, we always found some devilment to pursue. One episode, where we did suffer some justice, stands out in my mind. Our neighbour was a bachelor. He had a foreign accent and we, in our proud ignorance, thought it was entertaining to poke fun at him. He told everyone around that, if he ever caught anyone on his property after dark, he kept a salt-loaded shotgun ready to dissuade trespassers. This man grew watermelons and one very large, luscious looking one developed right before our eyes, just over the fence. Although we could pick watermelons with immunity on our home farms, we decided to steal this forbidden fruit. One dark night, the three of us climbed the fence and, with difficulty, severed the melon from its vine. Just then, the farm door opened and light spewed out, outlining the irate farmer. My friends, being wise, fled, but I, being stubborn, paused to pick up the melon and take it with me. It was heavy! I was nearly over the fence when he fired his promised charge of salt. The watermelon took most of it. Whether it was because of it being forbidden fruit or the added salt, that was the best watermelon I have ever eaten. Some of that salt also peppered that part of my anatomy exposed as I climbed the

fence and I found sitting to be very uncomfortable for some time.

Because of wartime rationing, gasoline was restricted to necessary transport, such as the farm vehicles. To insure that this gasoline was used only for the farm vehicles, it was dyed purple, and it was a punishable offense to use in private cars. My young friends and I soon discovered that, if left undisturbed in the storage tank for about a week, the purple dye would settle to the bottom and, if careful, one could siphon off ordinary, coloured gas for our vehicles. Since tires were also rationed, we couldn't go far anyway, but we really felt we were smart...putting one over on authority.

My brother, my brother-in-law and most of the young men I had gone to school with were overseas. I worried and I wrote letters. I was a long way from home for a seventeen year old and got home as often as possible. My mother's health was not good, probably made worse by worry about her two mavericks, my brother overseas and me on my own. The war was becoming real to me.

When the fruit season was over, I found a lab technician job in another foundry, McKinnon Industries in St. Catherines. A relative of my former employers worked at McKinnon and lived in Port Dalhousie on Lake Ontario. I accepted their invitation to board with them.

The job was interesting. McKinnons was a subsidiary of General Motors, producing cylinder blocks, brake drums, axle housings, etc. for army vehicles. All production of civilian vehicles had stopped. The materials produced here were made from malleable and gray irons as opposed to the various steels I had worked with at Fahralloy Steel but the types of tests were similar so it didn't take me long to learn and 2 am to 1 am. There was no smoking in the labs, so smokers had to leave the lab and go to an anteroom to have a

the procedures. There were 12-16 technicians employed there and we were split into overlapping shifts, 6 am to 6 pm cigarette. Since I was the only non-smoker, I found myself doing tests that weren't mine while my co-workers went out for a smoke. I tried going to the anteroom for a break and just sitting, but was told I couldn't do that ... so I smoked. It got me a rest period and an addiction that is still with me.

While working the late shift on night, I witnessed the most horrendous accident I have ever seen. Around midnight every night, the cupola bottom was dropped, allowing slag from that day's heats of metals to be dropped into a pit of sand. Generally this was a routine carried out without problems but to further insure safety, a red line was painted on everything, floors, walls, ceilings, permanent equipment, etc., at a safe distance from the cupola. When a whistle blew all employees, except two asbestos-clad workers in charge of the actual job, were to go beyond that safety line. One night, after weeks of no problems, there was a hang-up in the cupola, an excess of molten metal and wet sand in the pit, causing the hot metal to spill out on the floor. An employee who had carelessly ignored the whistle was caught in the flow. I shall never forget the sounds of his screams as he died. However, this was wartime and production had to continue. I was back the next day to take samples of the metal being smelted for the next run of molds.

All of us young people caught up in the frantic war effort lived for the day, as the future seemed so uncertain. Perhaps we had none. We had missed out on our teen years. One day we were school kids (and not as worldly or knowledgeable as children of today) and the next day, it seemed, we were forced into responsible adulthood. We danced. We sang. We played. We drank. We lived for today. The world was changing and our lives with it. Young women worked in jobs along side men, wore pants, smoked,

traveled, partied, lived away from their parents' homes before marriage, met strangers without proper introductions, made friends quickly, and dated without the restrictions of pre-war values. I suppose one could say we lived dangerously, by that is some of what the war did to my generation.

I met a young machinist when I was 18 and he was 23. We were in love, married, and continued our life of fun and self-gratification. In November of 1944, when I had to leave my job due to pregnancy, reality hit with a thump. We couldn't cope with the responsibility marriage and approaching parenthood, so we separated and I returned to my parents' home in Muskoka. Our daughter was born in January 1945. When she was two months old, with help from my mother, I took a job in a country general store operated by friends of the family. Wartime rationing restricted purchase of sugar, things containing sugar, tea, coffee, meat, butter, gasoline, oil, corn syrup, honey and even evaporated milk. I had to get special ration coupons on a doctor's prescription to buy evaporated milk for my daughter's formula. I still have what remained of ration stamps in the last ration book issued before the end of the war.

This small store was also the local post office where the mail came in twice a week. I remember one mother whose two sons were overseas who walked more than three miles each way to mail letters to her sons. As she walked, she knitted. These many warm socks, mitts, scarves and even sweaters were regularly sent to her boys overseas or to the Red Cross or Salvation Army for comfort of others' sons. I cried for her when both her sons returned before Christmas in 1945. My brother, brother-in-law and at least 90% of my friends from childhood, who had served this country, returned to Canada and to their families physically the same, but carrying psychological scars for life. Boys when they

left, were men when they returned.

The most adverse effects of the war on my life came after peace had been declared. I was a single mother and needed to earn a living for my daughter and I. When I applied for an advertised position with a chemical company as a laboratory technician, I was refused the job in favour of a young single male, with no technical training, who had been in uniform for about six months, but never left Canada. Because of the war, all my training and experience was in this field. I had worked with potent acids and other corrosive substances without benefit of rubber gloves (not available) in a foundry with no hard hat, no steel toed boots and no hearing protectors. The only employment for which I was trained was no longer available for a mere woman now that the heroes were home. I struggled to find transportation to even look for work, as people in uniform were given preference. I believed that servicemen should be given chances to get their life back in order. I certainly honored them for what they had done, but I resented their perks. Just because they wore a uniform, did their need to go somewhere supercede the need of a citizen looking for work? Had that six-month soldier done more for this country than I and the multitude of other women who had trained hard, worked long hours and supplied the men? Had we not done our duty, not done our share to support the war effort?

My pride in being a first generation Canadian will always be slightly tarnished as a result. I don't know how my life might have turned out had war not happened. In general, it's been a good life. Divorced and remarried, with six sons to join my daughter, I moved to Alberta in 1972. Widowed now, I enjoy my five surviving children, twelve grandchildren and four great grandchildren. I worked all my life at various jobs, including analyst, sports camp operator, licensed hunting and fishing guide, camp cook, bookkeeper, security guard, oil camp supervisor and teaching English to

new Canadians until retirement five years ago at age 73. I pray my children and theirs will not see another war. However, as we read and hear the news, it appears we didn't learn a thing in those terrible years.

On The Home Front

By Winnie Hammerlindl,
Drayton Valley W.I.

My family lived on a farm, during the Dirty Thirties, a mile south of Alsask, Saskatchewan. We saw drought, grasshoppers, dust storms, and no money. It was called the dustbowl of Saskatchewan.

Suddenly, things changed. Adolf Hitler, leader of Germany had his armies invade and take over Poland. Immediately Britain and France declared was on Germany and Canada followed suit.

The war lasted from 1939 to 1945. During that time my four brothers enlisted, my two sisters' husbands also joined the forces. My husband joined, but after several day marches, he landed in the hospital with his flat feet so swollen he was sent home.

Those on the Home Front did what they could for the war effort. Civilians enrolled in a military force drilled and trained for defense, ready in case of an emergency in their hometown.

I was a schoolteacher at this time. Each morning, when school started, the pupils would tell what news they had heard about the war. Once a month, the events of the month were written on paper and a newspaper run off on the gelatin mimeographed cookie sheet. The paper contained world news and also local events. The pupils sold the papers for 10 cents each, and the money went to the Red Cross and if a Serviceman came home on leave, he would come to the school and tell of his war activities.

Awards and gifts were given in the form of war stamps valued at 25 cents each. At Christmas or on birthdays, you could give cards with a stamp and on the card was printed, "a gift of a war saves stamp". Adults bought victory bonds, which were a way of lending money to the government for the war effort. Community Clubs and Churches raised money by many activities such as raffles, plays, suppers, dances, sales and the proceeds sent to the Red Cross to help them in their war work.

Women spent hours knitting socks, scarves, mitts and sweaters for the men in the services. Quilts, baby clothes, blankets and used clothing were sent to Europe for families in need. Bags of toiletries were made up and sent also, every family sent parcels of food to their servicemen and their relatives in Europe. Hard to believe cigarettes were top priority on the want list.

My husband and I ran a store. Food was scarce so rationing was necessary. The government gave everyone food coupons. People would bring their stamps to the store and with cash and the coupon could buy such items as sugar, meat, tea, coffee and butter. These items could not be bought without a coupon. No one's name was on a coupon, so there was much bartering to get unused coupons. Other foods were in short supply, such as canned vegetables, canned meats and fish, soups, jams, canned fruit, nuts, chocolate and candy to name a few. The storekeepers would get small shipments and the storekeeper's job was to ration them out to his customers. Not a pleasant job. Many customers were not happy with their allotment.

To set off the lack of food, people were asked to grow a victory garden. City people suffered more than country people, as city people didn't have meat, chickens, eggs and milk found on the farm. To keep the price down,

the government passed and Act, called the Wage and Price Contract and stores were inspected regularly to see if the law was adhered to.

Gasoline was rationed and you needed coupons to buy gas, so many coupons per month, set by the government. As farmers needed more gas than other people, farm gas was coloured purple, called Purple Gas. The police were always checking the car gas tanks, and anyone who was using it off the farm was fined.

All metals were in great demand. Every bit of scrap iron was picked up and sent down East to be used in the war factories. People saved foil, toothpaste tubes, and any copper or tin. These could be sold for a few dollars. Other things great in demand were fat, bones, rags and rubber.

Every adult who could give them blood was expected to do so, as blood was needed on the war front badly.

The government demanded that everyone be registered. You carried your registration card with you always. In 1940, the government introduced the family allowance. Five dollars a month was given to each child in the family. When a child dropped out of school, the allowance was cut off.

Workers were scarce. The able-bodied men and women were off to fight in the war, and many other young people went east to work in the War facilities, providing ammunition, tanks and whatever else needed for the war effort.

All available buildings were used and others built to train the men for the military. In the school summer holidays, I went to the Saskatchewan University to work in

the kitchen, cooking for the Air Force Trainees. My sister worked there all year round.

People were furiously patriotic. The neighbours who were of German or Italian decent, were hated by many, as Germany and Italy were our enemy.

The Japanese were not trusted. Many of the men from these families fought and died FOR us.

After the war was over, and the men and women returned home, Canada gave them money to live on, land to farm, or money to go into business or a chance to further their education. Many factories came back to the west to enter into a new life. War brides came to join their husbands. The war was over.

We thought we could go back to the old way of life, but that was not possible. New medical cures, new labour saving devices, new ideas, and a stranger love of country. A sadness of death and more freedom wanted by women. The war had changed us.

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