We Won WWII on the Home Front

"Every Little Bit Helps"

PAPER DRIVES during WWII would be announced in advance, and I could hardly wait.

A friend and I would take our wagon and go around asking neighbors for their old newspapers.

Some knew about it and didn't burn their papers, as people did then, but they had children, too, so we wouldn't get a lot. Our teacher said, "Every little bit helps toward the war effort."

When the sirens for air-raid practice went off, we were taught to go under our desks and cover our faces, or go to the basement if we had time. One little girl would start to cry, telling me, "I don't want to get blown up." I sort of liked it when the sirens went off because it was fun running to hide in the basement.

I think about those times whenever I hear a siren. If I pass a recycling place, I laugh and think about selling papers there.

—Fred M. Smith Jr., Niles, Ohio

"Coining" Their Requests

IN 1941, my sister and I were out on Highway 70 in Memphis, Tennessee when we noticed an Army convoy coming. I later found out that it was headed to Camp Forrest, Arkansas.

We stopped and started to wave and cheer at the soldiers—a thrill for an unmarried young lady who was eager to help lift the spirits of young GIs in some way.

I was surprised to be bombarded with quarters, over which were wrapped notes that included addresses and read, "Please write me." I took the notes home and was amazed that I had 42 of them. I wrote to

all 42 soldiers and mailed the letters the same day—introducing myself, telling of my hobbies and thanking them for their sacrifice.

A week later, I couldn't believe the mail I received. Every soldier had replied and thanked me, mentioning that they were all talking about how they all got mail from me the same day.

I got married in 1942 and wrote the soldiers about it. I guess they thought my husband would not approve, as all of the letters ceased, except those from one soldier. This soldier asked permission to keep writing, as he had no one, so my husband and I both wrote him, even after my husband was drafted.

Years later, I saw my old postman, who laughed and said I was to blame for his stooped shoulders. He told me I received more mail than anyone on his route at that time.

—Evelyn Hatley Billings, Franklin, Tennessee

Bonded Delivery

MY FIRST JOB after graduating from high school, in Syracuse, New York, in 1942, was at the office of Crouse-Hinds, a company manufacturing items for the war effort. Employees were encouraged to set up payroll deductions for the purchase of war bonds.

Two fellow office workers and I had the weekly pleasure of delivering the bonds throughout the facility. It was a long walk, but we ladies were a hit with our arms loaded with war bonds.

The caption under a picture I appeared in in our company publication said, "They deliver the bonds that help deliver the bombs right in der fuhrer's face…right in the fascists' factories… right on old Tojo's toes." We were "bearing good news to bond buyers…bad news to the Axis."

—Jessie Merrill Zimmerman, Chittenango, New York

Do You Soldiers Have a Hall Pass?

IN 1942, when I was 12 years old, we had a war bond drive at Columbia Grade School in south Seattle to purchase a jeep for the Army. Altogether, the students and parents raised enough money to buy two jeeps! We were so proud.

In a couple of weeks, the Army sent out two soldiers with a jeep so we could actually see one up close. They drove the jeep all over the school grounds and then, to our surprise, drove it up the school steps, through the wide doorway, down the hall and out the other side.

We could barely concentrate on our schoolwork the rest of the day.

—Bonnie Tucker, Lacey, Washington

Cheers to Patriotism!

MY FATHER, Roy Thomas, operator of Roy's Cafe at Fourth and Tatnall Streets in Wilmington, Delaware, had a unique idea to support a drive for "Aluminum for Defense" in late 1941. He offered one bottle of Gunther's "dry and beery" beer free for two pieces of aluminum.

The endeavor was highly successful, as evidenced by a photo showing his front display window full of household aluminum items in an article from the publication Gunther's News on Tap.

The article concluded, "Roy's Cafe has always been a modern and up-to-date establishment, enjoying a fine business, and its owner, Roy Thomas, is to be congratulated on his alertness and cooperation in this important matter of defense."

—Nina Ware, Miami, Florida

All for the "War Drive"

DURING THE Second World War, the chamber of commerce in my hometown of Wallaceburg, Ontario erected a depot booth for service personnel only at the corner of King and Murray Streets.

Since many soldiers traveled by train and the only service was 17 miles away, in Chatham, the expectation was for service personnel in the booth to be picked up by anyone driving to Chatham.

Of course, as kids, we'd often sit in the booth when it was unoccupied, pretending we were in the service, ready to hitch a ride.

I passed a "Buy Victory Bonds!" sign at the post office every day, since I had been assigned by my mother to pick up the mail from our box. As elementary students, we were also encouraged to bring our hard-earned quarters to school to buy victory stamps and fill our 16-stamp books to support the war drive.

—Alan Mann, Wallaceburg, Ontario