

War Era Story Project 2012

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Current home town: Not given

Age: 72 and 77

Below are two young girls' remembrances of WWII, including their Father's influential marks in that history. We lived in South Euclid, Ohio during this time. Chicken was the major "meat" available during this period due to rationing of beef and other meat. Our Grandmother, Martha Gilmore, lived on the next street along with my mother's sister, Gertrude Gilmore LaMont and our cousin Darlene. Grandma raised chickens. We – my mother, Marguerite Gilmore Wilkey, my sister and I – would go over to Grandma's house almost daily. Since I was so young, I do not remember if we got eggs or chicken, but it would be logical that we got both. My sister does not like chicken to this day.

The incident I remember the best was collecting milk weed pods. The fluff was to be used in life jackets. The source of Kapok was in Japanese hands and therefore unavailable to the U.S.A. Jane thinks the Red Cross accepted the milk weed pods from us.

Our father, John Wilkey worked at Graphite Bronze as a chemist and metallurgist during the war. On Monday after the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the declaration of war by Roosevelt, he and his best friend went down to enlist. They were sent home, being told their jobs at Graphite were considered to be a critical industry. Our father did develop the blood test that was used to detect lead in the blood of the workers. They had to be tested once a week.

Our father was gone from home a great deal. He was working on the rebuilding of the Niagara Electric Generating Plant. This one was being built on the heights. The original one was built down on the river. It had been destroyed by a rock fall from the heights. In addition to his trips to the East, he also would travel by train to Detroit to work on production problems in the manufacturing of war vehicles, principle tanks. Because of my father's employment and work at Graphite, he was given a C ration card for gas. This meant we had unlimited gas for the car. Our mother would not let my father use the car except for necessities because we were the only family in the neighborhood that had a C ration card.

Because I was so young, I was home much of the war years. When my mother would turn on the radio to hear the news at noon, I thought the sun went in. I am sure I was reflecting her emotional state upon hearing the war news. It was many years before I would tune in to the noon news.

Several other events that we recall:

- The Paper/Rag Man came around the neighborhood with his horse-drawn cart, as did the Milk man and bakeries. You notified the bakery driver by placing a large star card in the front window.
- If illness struck, the doctor came to the house. If the illness was one of the "childhood illnesses" a quarantine sign was nailed to the door of the house. Everyone was required to stay in. No going to work or any place else until the incubation period had passed so no one else got sick.