

War Era Story Project 2012

Submitted by: Carole M. Lanning

Current home town: Fostoria

Age: 77

The following is a true story that I wrote so my children and grandchildren could see how things were. I wrote myself as "Sarah," because it was easier to write that way.

When the Troop Train Stopped In Fostoria

Sarah was eight years old and didn't understand much about the war, which was all anyone ever talked about. She did know there was a shortage of a lot of things, like sugar for Kool-Aid, and that it was important to save things like the string and tin foil that was kept in rolls in a kitchen drawer. Meat was a rare treat. She liked to go out and pick milkweed because the army used them for something – she thought it was for life jackets. She decided to take a sack to the field beside her house and picked milkweed until the sack was full. When she took it into the house, her mom was busy at the kitchen table, cutting flowered feed sacks into pieces to make new dresses.

She set the sack of pods down and noticed a trickle of water coming from under the icebox and thought, *Oh no! Too late again!* She picked up some rags to wipe up the water and eased the water pan out to keep from spilling any more than necessary. It was so full, it slopped over and she had to dip the overflow out. She carried the pan outside, dumped it and put it back before too much more ice could melt down. She cleaned up the mess and checked to see how much ice was left, then put the ice card in the window so the iceman would see it and stop on his next round.

Sarah asked her mother if she could color the oleo this time, but her sister had already done that, so she went out to climb a tree. She liked to sit up on the limb to look around at the neighborhood from her high perch. She heard a train coming on the track that ran behind her house. As it neared and slowed for a stop, she saw it was a troop train. She hurried down from her tree seat and ran in to tell her sisters a troop train was stopping. They all ran out to wave. One of the soldiers asked if there was a chance that they had a beer in the house. Her little sister said there were a few bottles left from a meeting her dad had last night. The soldier said he would buy it. Her sister ran in the house and ran back out with the beer. She handed it to the soldier, who gave her money. All the soldiers started throwing money out, and the girls were picking it up, and running back to the house, until the beer was gone.

A soldier standing on the back step of the train said to her older sister, "You look like the kid sister I left back home." He reached down and swung her up and gave her a hug, and set her back down. A soldier wearing a large chef's hat poked his head out a window and asked the girls if they would like to have some ham for supper. Knowing meat was rationed and a real treat, they all said "yes." He said to wait just a minute, and pulled his head back from the window. In a couple of minutes, he stood out on the back step with the other soldier and handed down a box full of ham. He said, "You take this in and tell

your mamma we already had ham twice today, and we want you to have this. The girls were so excited they repeated “thank you, thank you,” and took the box of ham and went running towards the house as the whistle blew and the train started slowly moving out.

They turned and waved as the soldiers waved to them and the train pulled out of sight.