

War Era Story Project 2012

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Age: Not given

I was born in 1938. I am one of the luckiest humans ever to live on planet earth! I grew up in the USA after the great depression of the 1930s, but during WW II. As a child, I had no concept of the war going on around the world, so this national upheaval hardly affected me at all. My father was a fireman at home and I had no brothers possibly being killed overseas. I only knew that we were not allowed to waste anything. If food went on your plate, you ate it, especially precious meat, butter and sugar. I assumed the vegetable garden in our side yard was something my Mom simply enjoyed doing. Later I learned that many things were rationed. I was always being told “the kids in Europe are starving.” In kindergarten, we brought pennies to buy war bonds, but I did not understand the concept.

I slowly became aware that thousands of men in an older generation that I would come to admire so much had been dying like flies during my childhood, on my behalf. I eventually understood why we grade school kids had used our wagons to collect newspapers for a “paper drive” and why my Mom’s aunts had saved balls of tin foil and string. Everything was for the war effort. I faintly remember sitting out on our screened-in porch during a blackout, and also remember my grandfather wearing a white metal helmet one night as he walked the neighborhood for Civil Defense.

TV was not available then and nobody I knew had ever seen one. We got our news over a radio that took about 20 seconds to warm-up. (Today we wait for our computers to boot-up.) If you went to a movie, you got to see MovieTone newsreels or United News that showed actual, filmed battle scenes from the war that may have been only a week or two old. I did not hear of anybody complaining that our military edited information coming from a battle. We did hear that “loose lips sink ships.” I don’t recall ever hearing about any information being leaked to the press as happens today, but I was very young.

Nobody my age seemed surprised that some guys in our Nevada desert were the first humans on Earth to secretly develop an atom bomb that ended the war with Japan early, using 1940s technology. Now we know that there were huge secret factories in many locations around the USA devoted to building our atom bombs. Today, countries still struggle to develop an atom bomb. I guess we all just expected that generation to perform miracles and continue doing whatever was necessary to ensure our safety. Try doing anything like that today without a computer, and then try to keep it a secret!

I did not know that President Franklin Roosevelt was in a wheelchair. He died in 1945. I learned about his wheelchair about 25 years later. There are almost no pictures of him in a wheelchair. Our US media were very patriotic in those days. Imagine that happening today.