

War Era Story Project 2012

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Current home town: Xenia
Age: 75

A Kid Remembers the Home Front In Cincinnati, Ohio During WWII (1941-1946)

Our family moved to Cincinnati in February 1941, when I was just turning four years old. My sister had been born less than a month before. We rented homes the first two years, then bought ten acres north of town in 1943. Dad started work for Crosley Corporation and Mom was a housewife.

Van Zant Road (now Galbraith), just east of Hamilton Avenue, was our first residence. Houses continued a few blocks more to the east, then it was country. We had one auto, an Oldsmobile, that we kept for the duration. Dad carpooled downtown. I don't remember much except home deliveries of milk, coal and ice (probably bread too).

Mom and Dad shot guns at paper targets for a hobby; mostly pistol, but some 22 caliber rifles, too. Years later Dad told me that they were shooting Sunday morning when Pearl Harbor was attacked. I knew nothing. Crosley was busy making radio sets for the Signal Corps.

After a year, we moved to the Finneytown area, just east of Galbraith and Winton roads. There was a farmhouse between us and the corner and we had two acres for a victory garden. My parents continued shooting; one gun range being downhill from the Winton Road water reservoir.



My first inkling of something out of the ordinary happening was when three young ladies stayed with us for a week or so. They worked somewhere in the Cincinnati area. One had a pin whose catch had broken; she gave it to me. It's a red plastic replica of an airplane with a white bomb attached by chain. The bomb reads "Remember Pearl Harbor."

I remember blackout practice for air raids. Mom would turn out all the lights and we would sit quietly in the house until a warden came by with an all clear. Dad took several train trips for business. We would drive down Winton Road, and along the trolley tracks at Forest Grove Cemetery to the Winton Place station. After parking in the little lot, we would stand on the low platforms waiting for his

scheduled train's arrival. Meanwhile, dark green troop trains trundled by, their steam locomotives smoking and soldiers hanging out the car windows. Dad's Pullman was usually tacked on the end: the coaches full of more soldiers.

Living on a plateau above the Ohio valley brought an unusual experience for me. One summer evening after Dad's work two men drove into our driveway with an army staff car. They were going to do some radio testing for Crosley. I got to ride along. We went north towards Greenhills. Later, Dad told me that we had been stopped after dark by the local police and had some explaining to do.



Our third residence was north of Mt. Healthy, on Struble Road: Ten acres of woods, large garden and orchard backed up to Lake Gloria on Pippin Road. I started school here. A two-room building further down Pippin Road was my assigned school, but I would have to walk a block to catch the school bus. My parents decided instead to send me to Colerain Township, whose bus passed our driveway. Colerain had twelve busses; eleven orange 36-passenger Chevrolet models, plus an older yellow one (called "cheese box").

Mom and Dad continued shooting at Wilmo (Mt. Healthy), behind a hospital at Galbraith and Reading Roads, and with the Indian Hill Rangers. The latter had a swinging suspension bridge across a stony little creek between parking lot and the firing line. Dad reloaded his own 38-caliber ammunition using molded lead bullets and DuPont Bullseye gun powder. He also used black powder from Kings Mills.

Business trips from here usually took us down Colerain Avenue to the downtown Art Deco Union Terminal railroad station. The big half dome ticket room with its tile mosaics was awesome and the train waiting concourse seemed to go on and on forever. Military uniforms were everywhere. But, what I liked best was visiting the lighted water display fountain outside before our return home after dark.

One time, my grandmother took my sister and me downtown on the streetcar line. Where we got on I don't know, but we went down the Mount Adams incline. What a sight! Another time, I remember

walking in Fountain Square and passing a big ship. Years later, I found a picture of it in a Museum Center publication about the WW-2 era in Cincinnati. It was a mock-up to promote the sale of War Bonds.



Mom had to use ration stamps to purchase groceries; of course a garden, honey bees and chickens helped. But red and blue tokens were needed to get beef, butter and cheese at a meat market on Colerain near Blue Rock Road. There was a grass air strip near there,

along the road leading to my school. The auto speed limit was 35 mph to save rationed gasoline and

wear and tear on rubber tires. Dad's carpooling allowed us to sometimes take Sunday drives. We would go north on Colerain, past the farm market at Kemper Road and stop for ice cream in Ross, then through Shandon to Okeana and the C&O railroad depot. Soon double heading steam locomotives would come into view, pulling a long freight train uphill towards Indiana. It passed us at a walking pace, throwing cinders and smoke. Jumping into the car, we would race it to the next crossroad. After watching the entire train go by, we would head home. At other times we would picnic in Mt. Airy Forest.

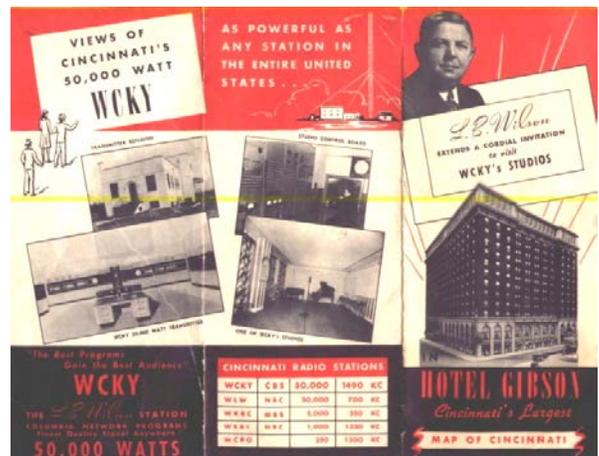
Metal toys were hard to come by, as were rubber autos, but cardboard sets and wooden toys were plentiful. I loved to assemble those cardboard sets, which wore out quickly. The solid wood toys have lasted to this day!



I remember visiting the five and dime store in Mount Healthy and seeing gold and silver stars on little pieces of red, white or blue cloth. Mom told me that one color of star was placed in the window of a home to show that a son was in the military and serving his country; another color signified one lost in action. I didn't really understand death at the time (nor why a 10 cent item would cost 11 cents – due to the added penny sales tax).

A favorite time during weekdays was 5 to 6 PM (maybe 4 to 5) during which I listened to WSAI radio * shows. First was Hop Harrigan and his side kick Tank

Tinker brought to kids by some cereal company. Then Jack Armstrong (Wheaties), followed by Captain Midnight (Ovaltine) and Tom Mix (Shredded Ralston). My parents listened to the evening news, which was boring to me. Cereal premiums from boxes (Kellogg's Pep wood airplanes) or toys requested by mail were always fun to play with.

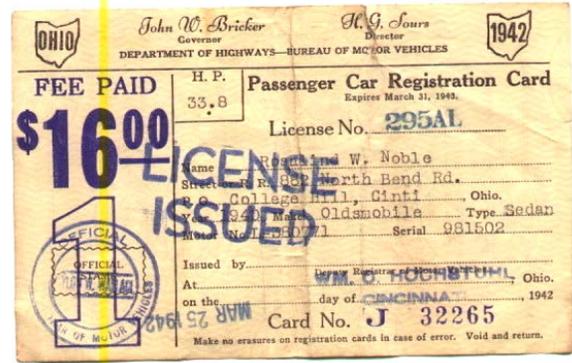


When the war ended in 1945, military radio production was shut down at Crosley, so Dad got a civilian job at Wright-Patterson AFB. He commuted to Dayton on Sunday nights and returned home each Friday evening until another residence could be found. On Thanksgiving weekend in 1946 our family moved out of the Cincinnati area.

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Rip on plow horse at Uncle's farm



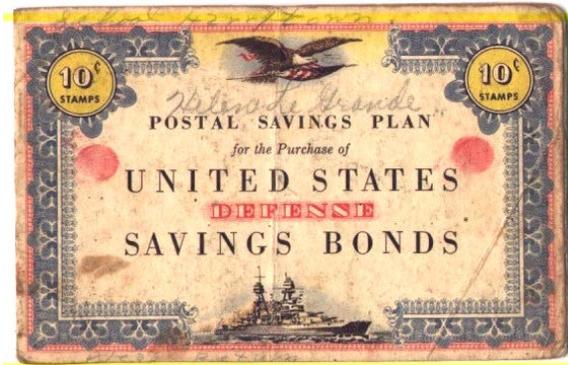
1942 auto registration card



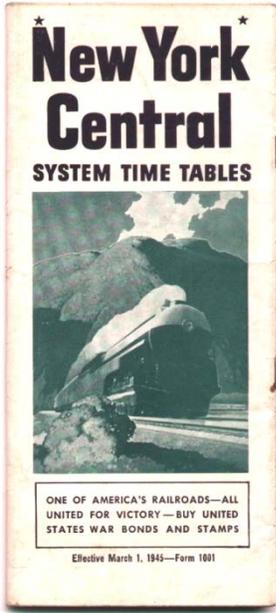
Crosley BC654A Signal Corps radio



Sales tax stamps



1941 savings bonds folder



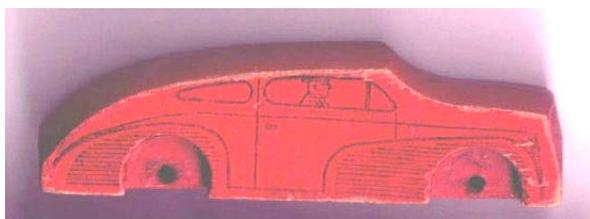
1945 train times



Wooden cereal box airplane kit



Cardboard set to assemble



Wood toy auto missing wheels



Kellogg's Pep cereal box pins



Small comic books promoting War Bonds