

Memories of World War II

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I remember World War II. I was a teen ager then but no one escaped the fears of that war. After Pearl Harbor, it was as if an umbrella of fear opened over our heads. Both Japan and Germany were winning a war that encompassed most of the world. It was only stubborn little England that kept Hitler's armies at bay. America was so unprepared to fight a war that some of the soldiers had to train with wooden replicas of guns. An uncle survived three submarine torpedoings. Two of my brothers were in the Navy. One was a fighter pilot and for three long years the ship of the other floated around the Pacific. Suicidal Kamikaze pilots targeted ships of the Pacific fleet. Also, the threat of submarines was always there but miraculously, his ship was on the edge of only one battle. Of course, all resources were for the armed forces first. There was never any question about that. We got what was left. I remember one pair of shoes I had that were literally made out of paper. They were pretty shoes but didn't last very long. There was rationing of canned goods, sugar, gas and tires, among other things. There were instant lines in the stores when the word got around that kleenex, nylons or toilet paper were available. And there was fear. We didn't feel safe even in the Midwest. The west coast had bomb-carrying balloons, launched by the Japanese, landing on the shores. German and Japanese submarines prowled the waters on both the east and west coasts. There were constant warnings not to say anything about what you might know of troop movements from a friend or relative. Posters on buses warned, "A slip of the lip might sink a ship." There were Fifth Columnists, undercover Nazi agents, who were going to destroy us from within. There were saboteurs in defense plants. We read reports of the battles in newspapers, saw names of local people killed in action and saw maps of ever changing battle lines. And finally, I remember the wonderful triumphs of VE Day and VJ Day and the fact that both brothers survived that war. Sadly, a friend was lost from the skies over Italy.

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