World War II through the eyes of Manitowoc's homefront youth. December 2000

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World War II Through the Eyes of Manitowoc's Homefront Youth.

There is an old saying "children should be seen and not heard." This seems to describe the situation of America's youth during World War II. One can look through scrapbooks and see the faces of these young people. However, one has no idea what these young people were thinking or how they made sense of their world. To date, little historical record is available of the American youth's perspective during World War II.

My research includes fourteen oral histories of men and women who were between the ages of eight to eighteen during the Second World War. 1941-1945 Wisconsin Department of Defense records proved helpful in gaining a perspective of how bond drives, scrap drives and Victory Gardens were promoted in Wisconsin. These records were helpful in determining the level of propaganda used to promote the war effort.

During the interviews, these fourteen individuals expressed in their own words what it was like growing up during World War II. They reminisce about their personal life, community life, and popular culture. The voices of Manitowoc's youth of World War II were heard as they recall the changes brought about in their lives and their society because of the war. The Second World War did affect America's youth economically, socially, and psychologically.

This was a very emotional and uncertain time for America's youth as they watched family members, friends and neighbors go off to war. Fears and anxieties only deepened with air raid drills and blackouts. Many believed Manitowoc was a prime target for enemy bombing raids. However, this sense of danger and hatred of the enemy tended to bond the members of the community. Regardless of ethnic background or socioeconomic status, citizens worked together in war bond drives, salvage drives, and rationing. It was a cooperative rather than an independent spirit. It was Manitowoc Shipyards and other war industry that stimulated the local economy. The pride in Manitowoc's submarines only helped to unite the people. During the war, Manitowoc was described as a "boom" town.

Manitowoc, Wisconsin's 1940 population of 24, 404 was composed primarily by individuals of German, Norwegian, Polish or Bohemian descent.[1] Manitowoc, also known as the "Clipper City," was a shipbuilding and shipping center. The largest aluminum ware plant in the world, the Aluminum Goods Manufacturing Company, was also located in Manitowoc. In 1940, Manitowoc County had 3,893 farms, and was the leader in Wisconsin's cheese production.[2]

During the Great Depression, however, workers and farmers struggled to survive the economic crisis. The decreasing orders for ships and for industrial goods resulted in

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[1] U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940: Population*, II, 665.

[2] U.S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940: Agriculture*, II, 904

layoffs at the shipyards and the aluminum factories. Throughout Wisconsin there was a decrease in farm income from $440 million to $200 million between 1929 and 1933.[3] As a result, many farmers left the farm and moved to Manitowoc. The New Deal programs brought relief to many county residents.

World War II brought about important changes in Manitowoc. Farmers across Manitowoc county responded to the war needs by increasing their production, and industries geared up to meet the wartime orders. Instead of manufacturing pots and pans, the Aluminum Goods Manufacturing Company produced canteens and other utensils used by the military. The Navy Department, through its Bureau of Ships, contracted with the Manitowoc Shipbuilding Company for the construction of ten submarines. This contract was later expanded, and a total of twenty-eight submarines were completed before the end of the war.

Manitowoc's war industry not only created jobs for the local people, but individuals came "from as far away as Minnesota and Northern Michigan to find employment."[4] Naval crews also came to Manitowoc for training on the submarines. In cooperation with the Division of Defense Housing, the Manitowoc Shipyards constructed 600 housing units in a new subdivision named Custerdale to accommodate the shipyard employees.

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[3] Paul V. *Glad, History of Wisconsin, A New Era and Depression, 1914-1940*, Vol. 5 (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1990), 25.

[4] Dean Brasser, "The Effects of World War II on Manitowoc," *Manitowoc County Historical Society Newsletter*, 1980, 2.

During the war years, Manitowoc was described as a "boom town." The Great Depression was over, with the war industry economic recovery was underway. The people of Manitowoc had a renewed belief in America as a land of opportunity.

Franklin D. Roosevelt defined World War II as a war of "moral order for all men everywhere." This war was fought to protect the Four Freedoms: "freedom from want, freedom from fear, freedom of belief, freedom of expression."[5] Roosevelt emphasizes this in his first fireside chat to the nation following the Declaration of War with Japan. Roosevelt points out that the United States is in the war to "maintain our right to live among our world neighbors in freedom and in common decency, without fear of assault."[6] He adds, "We must face the fact that modern warfare as conducted in the Nazi manner is a dirty business. We don't like it--we didn't want to get in it--but we are in it and we're going to fight it with everything we've got." He beckons "every citizen, in every walk of life" [to] share the responsibility . . . the whole future of this Nation--depends upon the manner in which each and every one of us fulfills his obligation to our country."[7]

Historian John Morton Blum points out that in Europe during World War II, the impact of invasion or of continual attack produced "spontaneous feelings of

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[5] John Morton Blum, *V was for Victory: Politics and American Culture During World War II* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 6.

[6] "We Are Going to Win the War and We Are Going to Win the Peace That Follows"--Fireside Chat to the Nation Following the Declaration of War with Japan," *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt: The Call to Battle Stations, 1941*, Volume 10, Samuel I. Roseman, Comp. (New York: Russell and Russell, 1950; 1969): 522.

[7] "We Are Going to Win the War and We Are Going to Win the Peace That Follows"--Fireside Chat to the Nation Following the Declaration of War with Japan," *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt: The Call to Battle Stations, 1941*, Volume 10, Samuel I. Roseman, Comp. (New York: Russell and Russell, 1950; 1969): 529.

engagement." He writes, "A sense of common sacrifice, common mission, common suffering imbued besieged Leningrad and London in the time of the blitz, and spread beyond those cities through their national hinterlands."[8] However, for Americans on the homefront, World War II was four years of a foreign war. Blum contends that the United States was "fighting this war on imagination alone."[9]

The American government felt that it needed to elicit a larger effort than spontaneity provided from the American homefront. To make the country "war minded," federal agencies and private institutions utilized techniques earlier developed by national advertising agencies. Blum claims that the advertisers exploited the dominant sentiments of the culture. The marketing specialists "traded upon basic human desires: upon appeals to sex, envy, and anxiety."[10] Propaganda was used to promote the war effort.

The American government did all it could to channel civilian energies into war-related tasks. Every American citizen was made to feel a part of it, whether they were in the service, or an adult, or a child. Families became fighting units on the home front by conserving food, salvaging vital materials, buying war bonds, and refusing to spread rumors. Americans were reminded to do so through community and educational agencies, media, entertainment. The theme of radio programs and movies constantly reminded young Americans that the United State was the best in the world. It was America's duty to fight to preserve democracy.[11]

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[8] Blum, 15.
[9] Blum, 16.
[10] Blum, 19.
[11] Anna W. M. Wolf, "The Home Front in Wartime," *Journal of Educational Sociology* 16 (Dec. 1942), 205.

Opponents of propaganda viewed it as "tainted information" and felt that the war should be portrayed to the public "with [a] more simple and forthright description and . . less lofty principles." Proponents of propaganda believed if "forthright facts" were revealed, the facts would "depress Americans to the point of suicide."[12] To win this war, propaganda seemed "indispensable in maintaining civilian and military morale."[13]

The impact of the war on Manitowoc's youth is varied. Those who had no family members or friends in the military viewed the war years as personally uneventful. One homefront girl said she participated in the war bond and salvage drives but confesses, "I'm not sure my life is much different than it would have been without the war."[14]

For others it was a very somber time. It was a period of worry and sadness. Loved ones were away at war. Children faced challenges on the homefront because their home environment was often stressful. Many children claimed that their fathers struggled with the fact that the family farm had been lost during the depression. Many of these men considered themselves failures, and became depressed. "My dad did find a job at the shipyards, and we welcomed the income," comments a homefront girl. She adds, "Dad worked long hours, and when he was home, he was usually sleeping. We always had to be so quiet . . . things were sure different than they were on the farm."[15] A homefront teenager agreed that her dad could not get over the fact that the family farm was gone. "My dad was depressed and couldn't hold a job. My mother also became

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[12] Blum, 28

[13] Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* (New York: Free Press, 1987), 48.

[14] Lola Klusmeyer, interview by Barbara Broehm, 18 November 2000.

[15] Susan Dick, interview by Barbara Broehm, 26 October 2000.

seriously ill during this time." As a result, this teenager juggled caring for ill parents, going to school, and running the household. Through the National Youth Administration (NYA) she found a job. "I took classes at the vocational school, and I got a job at a transportation company. I replaced a guy who had gone into the service . . .I was only sixteen at the time." She said that if it weren't for the war, she would never had gotten the job. "My job sure helped out my family financially."[16] Overall, these individuals feel that they had to grow up too fast and lost years that should have been happy and carefree.

Another group of homefront boys and girls remember the war as a time of rewarding adventures. "I feel guilty saying this," reflects a homefront boy, "but those years were probably the best years of my life!" Manitowoc was a "booming" place during the war with the war industry. People had jobs and finally some money to spend. He adds, "With military personnel stationed in town, Manitowoc was included on the entertainment circuit. Performers like Tommy Dorsey, Glenn Miller, and Lawrence Welk all came to Manitowoc." [17]

Regardless of different backgrounds and personal dilemmas, all agree that the attack of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 united Americans in a common cause. Men and women who were children then, remember precisely where they were and what they were doing when they heard the news about the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor. For many, time stopped at that moment in what psychologists call "flashbulb memory:" the

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[16] Louise Zigmund, interview by Barbara Broehm, 12 November 2000.
[17] Howard Wilsman, interview by Barbara Broehm., 19 November 2000.

freeze-framing of an exceptionally emotional event down to the most incidental detail.[18] December 7, 1941 is one of those dates.

Most recall December 7, 1941 starting out much like any other Sunday. Many attended church in the morning and went about their afternoon routine which often included listening to the radio. A Manitowoc homefont teenager said he had just gotten home, turned on the radio and the announcement came on. "I really couldn't believe my ears," he admits, "then I began thinking. . .depending upon how long this war lasts, I may have to go fight."[19] An eleven-year-old remembers that he was listening to the Chicago Bears-Chicago Cardinals football game when the announcement of the Japanese attack came over the radio. "The first thing I did," he said, "was to get a map and figure out where Pearl Harbor was!"[20] Karl, a sixteen-year-old, was in Milwaukee visiting relatives. "It was about 3:30 in the afternoon when we heard the announcement. I can still remember the words of my uncle as if it were yesterday. He said, 'We'll have those Japs bombed out of the sea in one week!'"[21] Harlan was sledding on the corner lot of 14th and Monroe Streets in Two Rivers. Next door to this lot was a tavern. "All of a sudden," he said, "there was all this shouting coming from bar. Us kids ran to the tavern and stuck our heads in the door to find out what happened. It was then I heard the words, 'the Japs bombed Pearl Harbor!' If an army recruiter had been there, all those guys would have signed up!"[22] Susan was listening to *Hit Parade*. "After the announcement of the

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[18] William M. Tuttle, Jr., *Daddy's Gone to War* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1993), 3.
[19] Arthur Nickels, interview by Barbara Broehm, 26 October 2000.
[20] Howard Wilsman, interview by Barbara Broehm.
[21] Karl Kappelman, interview by Barbara Broehm, 20 November 2000.
[22] Harlan Demsien, interview by Barbara Broehm, 11 November 2000.

Japanese attack, my brother, who was a newspaper carrier, jumped up and said, 'I have to get down to the Herald-Times, I'm sure that there is going to be a special edition.'"[23]

By 5:00 PM, newspaper boys were out calling, "Extra, extra." "This was a very rare thing for the local newspaper to put out an extra," comments a 1941 Manitowoc Lincoln High School junior. The headlines read, "Japs War on US" and the front page included a map of the Pacific war zone.[24] "This special edition was four pages. It was four pages so it would be easier to run off . . .the first two pages were war news and they took two pages from the previous day's comics and classified ads just to fill space." [25]

"This news personally affected my life immediately," says Karl. "My first cousin was in the naval airforce in the Philippines. At the time we had no idea if he survived the attack or not." Karl said that this really hit his grandpa hard. "Grandpa would sit in front of the radio all day long and listen to Gabriel Heatter and other commentators. He would often respond, 'I don't like the way this war is going.'" His grandpa died on December 21, 1941, and family believed he died worrying about his grandson. "It wasn't until February 1942 that my family was notified that my Cousin Bob had been shot and killed with the first wave of planes on December 7, 1941." [26] The war really hit home for me," comments Howard, "when blue stars appeared in the windows of houses in my neighborhood . . . it was really sad when those blue stars were replaced by a gold star."[27]

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[23] Susan Dick, interview by Barbara Broehm.

[24] *Manitowoc Herald-Times,* 7 December 1941, 1.

[25] Marge Miley, interview by Steve Kolman in *Wisconsin Women During World War II, Oral History Project*, Collection MS 844, Box 4, Folder 16, 4.

[26] Karl Kappelman, interview by Barbara Broehm.

[27] Howard Schmill, interview by Barbara Broehm, 20 November 2000.

Bea recalls the funeral of a young soldier from her congregation. "His funeral was a very touching experience for me. He was the first person I knew who was killed in the war." The children of the congregation sang for the funeral service. Bea describes, "we sang the hymn "Be Still My Soul," and every time hear that hymn, I still think of that young soldier."[28]

The practice air-raid and blackout drills also made the war seem more of a reality. "I can remember hearing the warning siren blast . . . then we had to turn out all lights, lock all doors, and keep drapes and blinds closed. We took this very seriously since the submarines were built here."[29] Many felt that the shipbuilding along with the other war industry, made Manitowoc a prime target for enemy bombing raids. "Because of the shipyards, we felt strongly that the Japanese could attack us. We believed that they would attack Sault St. Marie first, and then come down and attack Manitowoc."[30] Walter Koepke, a Manitowoc councilman during the war, said that at one point the people of Manitowoc were so concerned about being attacked, the city council passed a resolution asking for interceptor planes and anti-aircraft guns to safeguard Manitowoc citizens. Koepke said that the request was denied.[31]

War industry did have an affect on the community of Manitowoc. Not only did the shipyards and manufacturing plants provide jobs, but the community took a sense of pride in the war products produced to support the war effort. "My mother worked at the

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[28] Bea Buss, interview by Barbara Broehm, 13 November 2000.
[29] Howard Schmill, interview by Barbara Broehm.
[30] Susan Dick, interview by Barbara Broehm.
[31] Walter Koepke, interview by Dean Brasser, 17 May, 1970, in Dean Brasser, "Effects of World War II on Manitowoc," *Manitowoc County Historical Society Newsletter*, 1980.

Aluminum Goods . . .she operated a punch press that made aluminum canteens . . . I was a latchkey kid . . .my mom always left a list of things for me to do before she got home from work."[32] Harlan said his dad, a tool and die maker, worked long hours. "We lived only three blocks from the machine shop . . . so I would take lunch to my dad. While he ate his lunch, he would show me his tools and describe what he was working on. I took great pride in the fact he was making things our soldiers could use in the war." [33]

The largest war industry in Manitowoc was the Manitowoc Shipyards. The shipbuilding company regularly hired 500 workers. During the war, however, it was estimated that 12,000 people moved into the community, and between 4,000 to 5,000 people came into the city daily from outside communities.[34] Special busses were operated on three shifts to bring workers from Sheboygan, Appleton, and Green Bay.[35] "We lived in Newton during the war," comments Howard, "I can remember those busses buzzing by our house. Five to six busses from Sheboygan would pass our house every morning and night."[36] Karl said that several of his neighbors worked at the shipyards and also continued farming. He adds, "At the end of the war, my neighbor said he wished the war would have lasted one more year . . .then he would have his farm paid off! This man had no close relatives in the service." He recalls another neighbor: "My neighborman would bring home stainless steel nuts from work in his lunch bucket. He would smooth

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[32] Harlan Demsien, interview by Barbara Broehm.

[33] Harlan Demsien, interview by Barbara Broehm.

[34] *Citizens Service Corps Reports [November 1943]* in Wisconsin State Council of Defense, Box 1, Folder 2. University of Wisconsin-Green Bay Area Research Center, 3.

[35] William T. Nelson, *Fresh Water Submarines: The Manitowoc Story* (Manitowoc: Haeffner Printing, 1986), 37.

[36] Howard Schmill, interview by Barbara Broehm.

off the edges and make rings for us kids. . . all the neighbor kids had one!"[37] Will recalls that his dad worked as a guard at the shipyards. "In fact," he said, "my dad was actually commissioned into the Coast Guard. This gave him more authority as a guard, and it was necessary to maintain very strict security."[38] The background of each employee was always thoroughly checked, and some workers were released as a result of these searches. To enter or leave the shipyards, each employee had to wear an identification button with his picture. No visitors were allowed, and lookout towers on the docks were constantly manned by guards who kept watch for people who might sneak into the yards from across the river. Secret service agents were always present at the yards.[39]

"My brother and sister-in-law met at the shipyards . . . they were both welders."[40] During the war, 500 to 600 women were employed and trained as machinists and welders.[41] However, no African-Americans were included in Manitowoc's war industry. "Negroes never had a chance to get a footing here," laments a homefront teenager. "If a Negro was spotted in town, the police shipped him back to Chicago or Milwaukee. The owners of the Shipyards and the Aluminum Goods saw to that."[42]

Naval crews were also stationed in Manitowoc and would train on the submarines for approximately six months. A homefront teenager comments that with so many guys from her class in the service, some girls dated the sailors. She said, "I worked at the

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[37] Karl Kappelman, interview by Barbara Broehm.
[38] Howard Wilsman, interview by Barbara Broehm.
[39] Dean Brasser, "The Effects of World War II on Manitowoc," *Manitowoc County Historical Society Newsletter*, 1980, 2.
[40] Howard Wilsman, interview by Barbara Broehm
[41] Nelson, 36.
[42] Arthur Nickels, interview by Barbara Broehm.

Strand Theater and we got alot of business from the submarine sailors. They would come and bring their girl friends . . . I think the admission price in those days was 44 cents."[43] "I worked at J. C. Penney's after school," comments Audrey. "Ater leaving work one day I can remember seeing young girls all lined up on the bridge and looking so sad. The sailors they had become friendly with were leaving . . . oh well, there would always be another crew coming to Manitowoc!"[44]

The submarine launchings were a big event for Manitowoc. On April 30, 1942, the 1500-ton submarine, was launched. It was the first major Navy vessel built on the Great Lakes and was launched sideways into a basin of Lake Michigan. Rear Admiral William T. Nelson writes, "The city was in a festive mood with flags flying from homes and buildings and buntings draped across the streets and over doorways." He adds, "Two hours before the scheduled launching time, the streets were clogged with automobiles and pedestrians searching for a good spot from which to observe the launch."[45] Present for the event was the Governor of Wisconsin, Julius Heil, a delegation from the Navy Department from Washington DC and the Great Lakes Naval Training Center. At 11:49 AM, the shipyard band, the Submariners, began playing the "star Spangled Banner," Mr. Armin Pitz, vice-president of the shipyards, turned the master valve that automatically cut the ropes holding the *Peto*. Mrs. Lofquist, wife of Captain E. A. Lofquist who represented the Commandant of the Ninth Naval District, broke the traditional bottle of champagne on the bow and proclaimed, "I christen thee *Peto*." The band struck up

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[43] Marge Miley, interview by Steve Kolman, 6.
[44] Audrey Nickels, interview by Barbara Broehm, 26 October 2000.
[45] Nelson, 37.

"Anchors Aweigh," and the boat slid down the ways and dropped off into the water with a tremendous splash. [46]

"My dad was an employee of the shipyards so the family was allowed to watch the launching from the parking lot across the river."[47] "I can recall," says a twelve-year-old homefront boy, "the gigantic splash . . . the wave from the launching was so huge that we got wet sitting on the opposite bank."[48] Harlan adds, "A mighty cheer rose from the crowd as the submarine hit the water . . . whistles were blowing throughout the Yards. It was a proud day for Manitowoc."[49]

This event was featured in the May 18, 1942 edition of *Life* magazine: "Sub Hits water Sideways in Navy's First Major Launching on Great Lakes."[50] "It wasn't until my dad saw the article in *Life* magazine that he realized the significance of the event," comments Karl. He adds, "People came from a thousand miles away to see the event, and my family lived only seven miles away! After the magazine article my dad took us to the launches. They were always at 12 Noon, and we were always amazed how far people traveled to see the submarines."[51]

The launching of the *Peto* was also shown on newsreels to millions of Americans across the United States. Without television, newsreels were "our view of the war," noted Betty.[52] In black and white, the children saw scenes from air, land and sea battles.

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[46] Nelson, 45-46.
[47] Shirley Schmill, interview by Barbara Broehm, 20 November 2000.
[48] Howard Schmill, interview by Barbara Broehm.
[49] Harlan Demsien, interview by Barbara Broehm.
[50] "Sub Hits Water Sideways in Navy's First Major Launching on Great Lakes," *Life* 18 May, 1942, 21.
[51] Karl Kappelman, interview by Barbara Broehm.
[52] Betty Wilsman, interview by Barbara Broehm, 19 November, 2000.

During the war, three-fourths of the newsreels showed military or naval hostilities or war-related activities. The government, however, influenced what was released. Much of the combat footage was shot by professionals trained by the March of Time, Fox Movietone, and Hearst's News of the Day. Early in the war, there was strict government censorship of both the newsreels and the combat photographs in *Life* magazine. It was a year before the government released footage of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Fearing that civilian morale was flagging, the government later allowed the release of films and photographs of "atrocities that would shock the people in an effort to redouble their commitment to the war effort."[53]

"I went to the movies to see the news reels," commented a homefront boy, "I found them fascinating. I liked seeing the shooting . . . the tanks and the planes. . .it made me wish I were old enough so I could join the army!"[54] A young homefront girl commented, "You know I'd see the newsreels and it did not seem real . . . it seemed so far away."[55]

Of course, the homefront children paid their dime to see not only the newsreels but two full-length features, the previews, and several cartoons. The children saw westerns and musicals as well as war movies. According to the Hollywood Writers Mobilization for Defense, "The wartime function of the movies is to build morale, and morale is . . . education . . . inspiration . . . confidence." Every motion picture did not

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[53] Raymond Fielding, *The American Newsreel, 1911-1967* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), 288-95.

[54] Harlan Demsien, interview by Barbara Broehm.

[55] Betty Wilsman, interview by Barbara Broehm.

have to be about the war or have a war background, but it did mean that every picture, romantic or dramatic or funny, would "involve a consciousness of war."[56] For example Myrna Loy could "spend her afternoon at a Red Cross class" just as easily as she could "spend it playing bridge." Bob Hope could do a routine about the rubber shortage just as easily as he could fall into a swimming pool."[57] Susan describes the musicals, of World War II as "absolutely marvelous." She adds, "Usually there would be a woman whose husband was in the service . . .she would get the notice that he is missing in action. At the end of the movie, her husband would show up. I tell you, there would not be a dry eye in the theater."[58]

The movies often portrayed the Japanese as "bloodthirsty savages who operate outside the bounds of civilized warfare."[59] Universal Studio's, *Menance of the Rising Sun*, featured a huge Japanese figure with blood dripping from its buck-toothed fangs. This creature swatted American planes from mid-air and crushed American ships at sea.[60] Even Tarzan enlisted for the Allies. In the movie, *Tarzan Triumphs*, the Germans were so despicable that even the animals turned against them.[61]

A ten-year-old homefront boy reveals that he found the war movies "exciting with all the machine guns and bombs." He adds, "After the movies, the neighborhood kids

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[56] Blum, 25.
[57] Blum, 25.
[58] Susan Dick, interview by Barbara Broehm.
[59] Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits, and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies*, (New York: Free Press, 1987), 79.
[60] Koppes, 60.
[61] Koppes, 61.

would try to re-enact what we saw in the movies. I lived next to a swamp, and the setting made a perfect battlefield . . . we were out to get those Japs."[62]

Many young boys in Manitowoc shopped the army surplus store. Harlan stated, "We couldn't afford real helmets so we bought the helmet liners . . .this was the same thing the soldiers used under their steel helmets!" He said that the neighborhood boys would put on these helmet liners, grab their BB guns and go out in the swamp and pretend they were in the South Pacific fighting the war. He adds, "the in-thing was to carry a ped-o-meter, and of course everyone had a code-o-graph ring."[63]

Captain Midnight's code-o-graph ring was used for decoding messages from the Secret Squadron. Captain Midnight fought with the Allied forces in the air, on the sea, and on land throughout the world. J. Fred MacDonald, author of *Don't Touch that Dial!"* claims that American children fought World War II in front of their radio sets. "To take them into the thick of the battle, there were the likes of Don Winslow of the Navy . . . a Naval aviator who bombed ships, attacked Nazis, and hated Japanese. Hop Harrigan was a 'big brother' image to youngsters . . . he was an American warrior to the core."[64]

"I never missed *Captain Midnight*," said a homefront boy. He adds, Captain Midnight was constantly chasing down Nazi spies, and I got my Code-o-graph as a premium offer through Wheaties cereal."[65]

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[62] Harlan Demsien, interview by Barbara Broehm.
[63] Harlan Demsien, Interview by Barbara Broehm.
[64] J. Fred MacDonald, *Don't Touch That Dial! Radio Programming in American Life, 1920-1960* (Chicago, Nelson-Hall, 1976), 69.
[65] Karl Kappelman, interview by Barbara Broehm.

Radio programs played such an important part in the life of the homefront children that almost sixty years later they can still recall the exact time these radio programs were aired. Karl recalls that after school he and his brother would hurry out to the barn to feed the animals so they would be back in the house by 5 PM to listen to Jack Armstrong. He states, "The radio was in the living room, and we were forbidden to eat in that room . . . my brother and I would have the radio blaring so we could listen to the radio program in the kitchen." His goal was to get his dad interested in *Captain Midnight*. He explains, "If Dad started listening to the show, we knew we would be able to hear the whole show!" He said that sometimes his dad went along with their scheme, but at 6:15 PM sharp his dad would say, "'We have to get going,' and off to the barn we'd go to finish chores."[66]

To keep radio writers abreast of the latest policy decisions, the Office of War Information (OWI) three times each month provided pamphlets explaining governmental programs. This way writers were equipped with the latest official information which would insure exactness and compatibility with the war effort. The comedy program *Fibber McGee and Molly Show* often dealt with the political issue of the war. Throughout the war years its writer, Don Quinn, integrated into the scripts topical issues such as women factory workers, war bond rallies, gas rationing, war sons, air raid wardens and knitting clothes for soldiers. Mac Donald claims that "this type of relevant

[66] Karl Kappelman, interview by Barbara Broehm.

comedy not only aided national morale, but it often explained governmental goals in understandable and succinct terms."[67]

Juvenile listeners were implored by these shows to fight the enemy by collecting scrap metal, used fats, tin, rubber, and newspapers. There was also an encouragement to buy war Bonds, and plant Victory gardens.

"V FOR VICTORY" became the motto of everyone in America. Throughout Manitowoc there were Victory banners and a huge "V" was displayed on the Aluminum Goods Building.[68] When young Americans purchased war bonds or participated in the salvage drives, their intent was not to curb inflation. Americans bought war bonds to "help a member of the family in the armed serves and to preserve the American way of life".[69]

The principal scrap materials collected were: rubber, rags, fats and greases, tin, and scrap iron and steel. The Wisconsin Salvage Committee of the War Production Board constantly reminded the youth how important the scrap drives were. For example the collection of a pair of roller skates, two door hinges, one door lock, one old spade, one trash burner and one trash basket could supple metal for one 30 caliber machine gun. Ten pounds of window weight could supply iron for a 3-inch 75 mm shell.[70] "By

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[67] MacDonald, 109.
[68] Marge Miley, interview by Steve Kolman, 45.
[69] Blum, 20.
[70] *Salvage [1941-1942]* in Wisconsin State Council of Defense, Box 7, Folder 3, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay Area Research Center, 141, 225.

collecting scrap metal, I really felt I was doing something to help win the war," commented a ten-year-old homefront girl.[71]

Collection points for scrap was any place displaying the official salvage depot banner. These places were usually local filling stations, automobile dealers, tire shops, or implement dealers.[72] "A huge junk yard was also located on the 1300 block of Franklin Street, and I dreaded walking past that place!" recalls a 1943 Lincoln graduate.[73] Lincoln High School students often helped in the city-wide scrap drives. "Dozens of block chairmen called at homes to solicit scrap. Some of the money raised by the students was used by Lincoln's war service projects."[74]

The War Production Board directed several nationwide salvage campaigns. The week of April 25, 1942 was declared "Mac Arthur Week." One radio spot went like this: "Boys and Girls: Wear your MacArthur button this week and collect scrap iron for making guns, planes, tanks for our soldiers. Your button identifies you as a salvage collector. Win $25 savings bond for collecting the most."[75] The public was informed that the tin was used for such things as bushings for airplane motors and machine gun mounts. Tin was also required for the linings for food cans needed by our troops. The remaining portion of the tin can, after the tin is removed, is used for scrap iron.[76] "I can

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[71] Bea Buss, interview by Barbara Broehm.

[72] *Salvage [1941-1942]* in Wisconsin State Council of Defense, Box 7, Folder 3, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay Area Research Center, 141

[73] Louise Zigmund, interview by Barbara Broehm.

[74] Lorraine Schuette, ed., *Flambeau*, Thirty-three Yearbook, Lincoln High School, Manitowoc, WI.

[75] *Salvage [1941-1942]* in Wisconsin State Council of Defense, Box 7, Folder 3, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay Area Research Center, 49.

[76] *Salvage [1941-1942]* in Wisconsin State Council of Defense, Box 7, Folder 3, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay Area Research Center, 224.

remember washing out the tin cans, removing the labels, cutting out both ends, then flattening the can," recalls a homefront boy. "In fact, I still do it!"[77] "It was during World War II, another recalls, "the trolley tracks from North Eighth Street were removed and recycled."[78] The old cannons from the Evergreen Cemetery were also removed and used for scrap.[79]

Wisconsin farmers were encouraged to participate in the "Scrap Harvest." Richard S. Falk, the Wisconsin State Chairman of 'Scrap Harvest' campaign, asked farmers to "comb every acre of their farms for scrap iron, steel, rubber." "Knowing the Badgers as I do, Falk added, "I feel each one will gather in scrap until his place is as clean as a whistle. . .the scrap will be used in the manufacture of the thousand-and-one things needed by Wisconsin boys fighting on land, sea, and in the air."[80] Local newspapers encouraged farm kids to become "special detectives" by finding articles hidden in "high weeds or underneath water." A hint to the special detectives: "If there's a road running by your place, the ditches along it may well hold things fallen from automobiles or wagons. Look here, look there; look everywhere; show the grown-ups all the 'clues' to waste you can find--to be turned into guns and jeeps for our fighters."[81]

A Manitowoc County homefront teenager recalls, "I was a member of Future Farmers of America, and we did have a huge scrap iron drive at Mishicot High School.

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[77] Don Buss, interview by Barbara Broehm.
[78] Susan Dick, interview by Barbara Broehm.
[79] Harlan Demsien, interview by Barbara Broehm.
[80] *Salvage [1941-1942]* in Wisconsin State Council of Defense, Box 7, Folder 3, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay Area Research Center, 167.
[81] *Salvage [1941-1942]* in Wisconsin State Council of Defense, Box 7, Folder 3, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay Area Research Center, 169.

We went around and found broken or discarded parts of tractors, cultivators, hayracks, plows, harrows, hoes, rakes, shovels, even horseshoe nails," says Karl. He admitted that sometimes they didn't know how to remove the wooden handles from the old rakes, hoes, and shovels, "we hooked an old rake or shovel behind the pick-up and drag the rake till it fell apart." When the drive ended, the scrap pile was "about a half acre wide and 20 ft high.[82] Falk assured the youths that the scrap would be sent to factories and melted down to make airplane motors, knives for commandos, and other fighting equipment.[83]

The Victory garden program was probably the most popular of all the civilian war effort tasks. At its peak there were approximately 20,000,000 Victory gardens in the United States, 40 percent of all the vegetables grown in the country.[84] "Everyone in Manitowoc had a Victory Garden," commented one homefront girl who grew up in Manitowoc.[85] Victory Gardens were planted to provide fresh vegetables for their families, and the extra vegetables were canned for winter use. "My parents had a garden plot behind their house and also rented another garden plot on the northwest side of town. Our whole family would go and work on this plot after Dad got home from work."[86] "Our garden plot in town included strawberries and raspberries. . .on the other plot we grew alot of potatoes," said Louise.[87] "Our whole backyard was garden," commented a homefront boy. "We had little grass and few flowers. . . I hated weeding! Do you know

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[82] Karl Kappelman, interview by Barbara Broehm.

[83] *Salvage [1941-1942]* in Wisconsin State Council of Defense, Box 7, Folder 3, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay Area Research Center, 167.

[84] Richard R. Lingemen, *Don't You Know There's A War On? The American Home Front, 1941-1945* (New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1979), 251.

[85] Susan Dick, interview by Barbara Broehm.

[86] Bea Buss, interview by Barbara Broehm.

[87] Louise Zigmund, interview by Barbara Broehm.

any ten-year-old boy who wants to spend a summer evening weeding vegetables? We also grew such things as Swiss chard and kohlrabi because of the seed shortage."[88] Susan remarked, "Even Mrs. Oscar Ritcher had a Victory Garden behind her house, and she's one of the wealthiest individuals in Manitowoc!" She emphasizes, "There was such a unity of spirit for the war effort. . . By growing our own vegetables more food was available for our troops."[89]

Another form of children's homefront involvement was government rationing. In January 1942 President Roosevelt signed an act establishing the Office of Price Administration (OPA). Later that year, the OPA issued the first war ration books providing coupons for sugar, then coffee and gasoline. The OPA instituted point rationing in early 1943, with meat, fats and oils, butter, cheese, and processed foods. Later it added shoes. Local rationing boards set quota, allocating coupons for each family.

The superintendent of Schools in Manitowoc was the overall chairman for rationing, recalls a Manitowoc teenager. "Those of us who were seniors at Lincoln went out to the different places where rationing books were issued and we were the issuing agents of the ration books." We did this for the Spring semester for one Social Studies class, and people were to declare the amount of canned goods and sugar they had on hand. The agents were suppose to rip out the corresponding number of stamps from the

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[88] Harlan Demsien, interview by Barbara Broehm.
[89] Susan Dick, interview by Barbara Broehm.

ration book. She adds, "Of course, we never did know if people were really declaring what they had at home or not. It was interesting!"[90]

Most took pride in "making do." For many children, these shortages were merely continuations of the Depression shortages. "Getting along with less was something I already knew," commented a homefront sixteen-year-old girl. Her parents were both in poor health, and she was responsible for making meals and keeping the house in order. "The corner grocer has very kind to my family. He knew we were having tough times, and he often let me get groceries and pay for them later. I'll never forget his kindness."[91]

Many of the homefront children have fond memories of rationing. "My dad had a real sweet tooth . . . every Saturday morning I stood in line for hours at Ramminger's Bakery on South 10th Street to get a cake for my dad . . . I was usually able to bring one home to him."[92] Marge laughs as she recalls how brides had to give their ration books to the bakeries making their wedding cakes. She says, "Without the extra sugar rations, there wouldn't be enough sugar to frost the wedding cake."[93] Another remembers mixing the yellow pellet into the oleomargarine to give it color. She recalls, "It always seemed to taste better if it were yellow."[94] "Of course there were no silk stockings during the war," claims a homefront teenager, "nylons also became impossible to come by so we used leg make-up and would draw the seam line up the back of our legs. . . you know all

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[90] Marge Miley, interview by Steve Kolman, 6.
[91] Louise Zigmund, interview by Barbara Broehm.
[92] Shirley Schmill, interview by Barbara Broehm.
[93] Marge Miley, interview by Steve Kolman, 7.
[94] Lola Klusmeyer, interview by Barbara Broehm.

stockings had seams in those days."[95] If the word got out that a store would be getting a shipment of stockings, women would stand in line for hours in hopes to get just one pair!"[96] Bea reflects, "I think rationing will remain with those of my generation for the rest of our lives."[97]

There was also a shortage of farm help during the war. During the war, Manitowoc Country farmers increased their production of hay, oats, wheat rye, and corn. Local canneries accelerated their production of peas, with 3,780 acres converted to pea growing by 1944.[98] However, with so many young men off fighting the war, farmers had difficulty finding enough workers to harvest the crops. A twelve-year-old homefront boy worked for Lakeside Packing. "I lifted big crates of peas, put them on the scales to weigh . . then the trucks would haul the peas to the canning factory." He laughs, "You know after the war . . they wouldn't let me work. . . I wasn't old enough, I had to be sixteen . . . yet during the war I could work there when I was only twelve!"[99] Another homefront boys claims that they had German POWs come out to their farm and help harvest crops. Since his dad could speak German he would converse with the prisoners. He said, "One day my dad asked the prisoners what they were going to eat for lunch. They showed him a lard sandwich. "My dad threw the sandwich on the ground . . .our dog came and sniffed it, but he wouldn't even eat it!" Then, he said his dad invited these German

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[95] Audrey Nickels, interview by Barbara Broehm.
[96] Betty Wilsman, interview by Barbara Broehm.
[97] Bea Buss, interview by Barbara Broehm.
[98] Ellen Langill, *Manitowoc County: A Beacon on the Lakeshore* (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Publishing Group: 1999), 115.
[99] Howard Schmill, interview by Barbara Broehm.

prisoners into our house to eat. Hesitantly the prisoners agreed. "Boy, did those guys eat," he said, "and they were so appreciative."[100]

"When the word got out that we had German POWs working on the farm, the neighbor boy came by and asked if he could take a look at them." Karl laughs, "About twenty minutes later the neighbor boy came back and looked so disappointed. He said, 'They look just like us!' From listening to radio programs, he imagined all Germans would be like Hitler with mustaches and hair parted down the middle!"[101]

According to most comic strips and radio programs, Americans could win battles alone. Allies were not necessary and the enemy was a pushover.[102] In reality, this was not the case. The first six months after Pearl Harbor were disastrous. The Japanese captured Guam, Wake Island, the Philippines, Hong Kong, and Malaya. In Europe, the Allied cause was hardly more encouraging. The Axis victories in the Pacific, Russia, and Africa made it clear that the war would be long and costly.

The United States military was concerned. Not only were they suffering from heavy losses of soldiers, but found that the new recruits were often "soft and flabby" and "deficient in mathematics and basic sciences."[103] "When the minimum draft age was twenty, there was time for training following the completion of high school," says John W. Studebaker, U.S. commissioner of Education He points out that "preinduction

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[100] Karl Kappelman, interview by Barbara Broehm.
[101] Karl Kappelman, interview by Barbara Broehm.
[102] Blum, 37.
[103] U.S., Congress, Senate, *A Bill To Provide for the Preparation of High-School Students for Wartime Service*, S. 875, 78th Cong., 1st sess., 1943, 7.

training between the ages of 16 and 18 is of paramount importance."[104] As a result, the High School Victory Corp was established in August 1942.

The High School Victory Corp was a national volunteer organization designed to mobilize high-school youth. Its sponsor was the United States Office of Education working in conjunction with the Departments of War, Navy, and Civil Aeronautics. Henry L. Stinson, Secretary of War, explains that the Victory Corp emphasizes "mastery of fundamental subjects--physical training, special studies, and other activities that can properly be a part of any school's program--will enable the boys and girls to serve more usefully after graduation, both in the war effort directly and indirectly in other related pursuits."[105]

Manitowoc Lincoln High School was active in the Victory Corp. Physical education classes now met four times a week and focused on formal calisthenics and body-building exercises. Boys were encouraged to take physics. Pre-flight classes for pre-induction students were very popular. A number of high school girls attended special classes at the Vocational school to prepare for war industry jobs. Marge recalls, "When I was a senior, a bunch of us took a course at night over at the vocational school. We were going to be inspectors in a defense plant . . . two of the girls did become inspectors . . . I went to work for the newspaper."[106]

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[104] U.S., Congress, Senate, *A Bill To Provide for the Preparation of High-School Students for Wartime Service*, S. 875, 78th Cong., 1st sess., 1943, 7.

[105] U.S. Department of Defense, *High-School Victory Corps* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1943.

[106] Marge Miley, interview by Steve Kolman, 11.

A 1943-high school junior recalls the strenuous physical education classes. "I thought I was a strong, healthy farm kid, but after PE class I was always sore. I guess I was using different muscles. Anyway, I hated that class!"[107] Art comments that he was in good physical condition in high school. He played football and participated in track, and liked the new emphasis on physical education. He said, "I enlisted when I was seventeen. Guys wanted to go to war . . . we were true 'red, white, and blue'. . ."[108]

In Lincoln's 1943 graduation class, "out of 430 students, 45 were in the service by the time we graduated," recalls a 1943 graduate. "These boys received their diplomas either by mail or their mothers came and got them for them." She explains, "If the guys went in the military, they got their diploma if they completed their course requirements or not. Some of them went in right after the first semester. They were so anxious to go at that time. Big thing . . .travel and excitement." For some of them it was a little too exciting." [109]

However, things were not always exciting for Manitowoc during the war. The Manitowoc Defense Council notified Colonial George Howill, Wisconsin Council of Defense, that Manitowoc was feeling the pressure of the war. Due to the large number of people coming to Manitowoc for employment, the city struggled with juvenile delinquency, housing, transportation, and welfare problems.[110]

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[107] Karl Kappelman, interview by Barbara Broehm.
[108] Arthur Nickels, interview by Barbara Broehm.
[109] Marge Miley, interview by Steve Kolman, 4.
[110] *Citizen Service Corps: Reports [1943-1944]* in Wisconsin State Council of Defense, Box 1, Folder 2, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay Area Research Center, 2.

The people also had difficulty staying focused on the war. Not everyone had a relative in combat, and few could remain as enthusiastic about the seventh bond drive as they were about the first. As the initial wave of patriotic emotion passed and victory grew more certain, people became more focused on personal concerns. America was ready for the war to end.

Manitowoc greeted VJ with great enthusiasm. The August 15, 1945 Manitowoc Herald-Times headlines read "World in New Era of Peace." Within minutes after the 6 PM announcement from Washington D.C., thousands of people jammed Manitowoc's downtown streets. According to an article in the Manitowoc Herald-Times: "Factory whistles and boat sirens boomed out. Church bells rang. People ran from their homes firing guns. Some even shot off fireworks left over from the Fourth of July."[111] Sailors and soldiers led impromptu parades up and down the streets. Young women kissed them until their faces were smeared with lipstick. Bands playing war tunes marched through the town. Some World War I veterans played Bohemian music as youngster polkaed in the street.[112]

"I was there with my family," said Howard, "we parked by the North Eighth Street Bridge. We sat on top of the car and watched the people." Howard adds that his family's joy soon turned to sadness. He said, "We heard on the radio that the *Indianapolis* had been sunk. My cousin Melvin was on, the that battleship. Out of 1200

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[111] "City and County Celebrates Over Ending of War," *Manitowoc Herald-Times* 15 August, 1945, 1.

[112] "City and County Celebrates Over Ending of War," *Manitowoc Herald-Times* 15 August, 1945, 1.

men only 300 survived and my cousin was one of them. For five days he floated out at sea before being rescued."[113]

"It isn't until now," Howard notes, "that Melvin is willing to talk about the war . . some of the situations he faced were horrifying." Howard adds, "On the homefront, we knew very little of what was going on. We didn't understand the atomic bomb, we knew nothing of the Holocaust and very little of the Japanese internment going on in this country."[114] Art comments, "It took me years to get over my feelings toward the Japanese . . .we were trained to hate them."[115]

On the other hand, homefront children warmly recall the patriotism and national unity. "No matter what our personal problems were, the war brought us together . . .there was a sense of unity. We had a goal--victory." Susan adds, "I also lived during the depression, and the war pulled us out of that. After the war, my parents were able to buy a house. Before the war, this was only something they could dream of."[116]

"I can't forget those young men who fought for our country," comments Lorraine. "Two of my very dear friends were killed in World War II, and I will never forget them." She adds, "World War II was a special time in history . . .and we have never been quite the same since."[117]

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[113] Howard Schmill, interview by Barbara Broehm.
[114] Howard Schmill, interview by Barbara Broehm.
[115] Arthur Nickels, interview by Barbara Broehm.
[116] Susan Dick, interview by Barbara Broehm.
[117] Lorraine Schuette, interview by Barbara, 22 November, 2000.

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