

Girard, Kansas

and

The Family of Everett and Myrtle Sneed
316 W. Forest

The War Years: 1941-45

Compiled by W. Ruth Sneed

The small prairie town of Girard, Kansas, was established in 1868 as the county seat of the newly formed Crawford County. It was given the name Girard by its founder, Dr. Strong, in honor of his home town in Pennsylvania.

In 1865, even before the establishment of the county, the Stevens grandparents of Myrtle Sneed had arrived from Illinois, living in the Cherokee Neutral Lands. The first winter was spent encamped down by Cow Creek, surrounded by the tall buffalo grass higher than a man's head. Soon a rude cabin was built. By 1869 Joseph Walter and Lovina Sutton Stevens had become land owners of 160 acres located east of the new settlement of Girard. Their property was purchased through the Office of Indian Affairs at a cost of \$280.

The Indian tribes moved on, and the area around was quickly settled by other pioneers. The close-by town flourished as businesses and dwellings were built. Girard boasted 140 buildings in 1870. The population of the county seat continued to increase until it had stabilized by the turn of the century. The enumeration of citizens remained constant and stood at 2,615 in 1941. There, in southeast Kansas, the citizens of Girard seemed far removed from the global conflict building up in Europe.

Like the rest of the United States, the Depression had a profound effect upon those living in Girard. The WPA (Works Projects Administration), part of Roosevelt's New Deal, provided millions of unskilled workers with jobs and income. The work projects included construction of public buildings and roads. Crawford County benefitted greatly as 557 miles of road, 32 miles of sidewalks, 31 new buildings, 21 bridges, and 5 new stadiums were constructed. Many other projects were instituted including the replacement of outdoor privies (2.3 million nationwide) with sanitary, "fly-tight" outhouses. In 1941 work on Girard streets continued with the resurfacing of Summit Street. Unemployment was still a critical problem, but the number of men working on the WPA began decreasing as more jobs gradually became available.

Everett Sneed owned three trucks, leasing them to the WPA. He and his sons, James and Clarence, drove the trucks. Everett drove the flat bed truck while the boys drove the other two, one of which was a dump truck. Part of their job was to haul commodities from Pittsburg to Girard. Another program, the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) was a public works relief program for unemployed, unmarried men, aged 18 to 25. Clarence enrolled in this program, working north of town where he ran a bulldozer, helping to dig Farlington Lake. One year many young boys from Crawford County were invited to go up to the CCC Camp, where they were served a

Thanksgiving feast, held in a military mess hall. Ed and Earl were picked up by an army truck with a canvas covering and transported to Farlington, along with others from Girard, for the big day.

It was a struggle, providing a living for eight children, but the Sneed family fared better than most and managed to survive the Great Depression.

Crawford County had become the residence of Everett and Myrtle Sneed after their return from a year's stay in Colorado in February 1932. Living south of town when Ed was born in April, they later moved to St. John's Street. During the war years, a bungalow with a big front porch at 316 W. Forest was their home. There was not much room for a garden, but they rented pasture from a neighbor to keep a cow. Their family began decreasing in size as the older children married and left home. James married Gertrude Clark, a girl from Foxtown on May 15, 1938. The next year, on December 9, 1939, Clarence married Lois Boggs from Farlington. Not to be outdone, Louise and Harold Augustine ran off to Lamar, tying the knot the very next day - December 10. (It took Harold about two weeks to tell his parents.) During 1940 three grandchildren arrived: Roland Sneed in April, Roberta Augustine in September, and Mildred Sneed in December. In 1941 those still living at home were Leroy (15), Wilma (14), Earl (11), Ed (9), and Edith (2).

With the coming of spring 1940, the country was still reeling from the Depression and continued to concentrate on economic recovery. Rather than focusing on fighting a global war, Kansans remained aloof, preferring a policy of isolationism, but all the while keeping their fingers crossed for peace. The whole nation was not psychologically, nor materially, ready for war, but the increasingly disturbing news forced them to wake up. President Roosevelt spoke to the American people concerning the danger of the Nazi menace during his Fireside Chats. There was a growing consciousness of the cataclysmic events in Europe as Germany continued to invade and conquer neighboring countries. The British disaster at Dunkirk was quickly followed by the fall of France. Yugoslavia and Greece surrendered to the Nazis, the Soviet Union was attacked and the bombing of London began. Where would they strike next? America watched and waited.

A CBS reporter stated in a radio address, "There is a growing realization that America is not properly prepared to defend this hemisphere." President Franklin D. Roosevelt asked Congress for more money for American defense; he addressed Congress in May of 1940, stating, "These are ominous days ---days whose swift and shocking developments force every neutral nation to look to its defenses in the light of new factors. The brutal force of modern offensive war has been loosed in all its

horror . . . the clear fact is that the American people must recast their thinking about national protection.”

Reflecting the mood of the country in 1940, Kate Smith sang Irving Berlin’s “God Bless America.” The song was an instant hit, striking a chord of patriotism in each and every one who heard it. It was agreed that all profits from the song would go to the Boy Scouts of America. “God Bless America” has become a classic.

In the event of total war, the government began setting up a series of agencies for national mobilization. The United States began in earnest to create a standing army through the creation of the Selective Service Act, the first peacetime draft in American history. Signed into law in 1940, it required men between the ages of 21 and 35 to register with local draft boards. (Later, when the U.S. actually entered World War II, all men aged 18 to 65 were required to register and those aged 18 to 45 were liable for military service.) The Girard paper of February 1941 gave additional classifications which included:

- I-A Fit for general military service
- III-A Man with dependents
- I-B Fit for limited military service
- IV-F Physically or otherwise unfit
- V Volunteer

Nine young men volunteered from Girard. The local newspaper gave them front page coverage. By the end of February, forty-eight trainees had left for Fort Leavenworth.

James, the oldest Sneed son, did not pass his physical because of a recent surgery for a broken bone in a foot. Later, when Leroy turned 18, he failed to pass because of flat feet.

The Lend-Lease Act was signed by President Roosevelt in March 1941. This legislation permitted the president to exchange, lease, lend, or otherwise dispose of, defense items to any government whom was deemed vital to the protection of the United States. This became a critical factor in the success of the Allies and linked with the American economic recovery. The same month, Girard residents were urged to buy “Baby Bonds,” a savings-type security that was available in small dollar denominations. A fore-runner of War Bonds, they were available through 1941, and were a part of a national effort to make America impregnable. Workers began signing up for defense training, and surveys were taken to find out the number of qualified workers for defense jobs. Kansans, 4,500 in number, listed their skills.

Life progressed with the 1941 graduation of high school seniors who were stepping out into an unknown future. The new addition to the Girard hospital was proudly

dedicated, and vacation Bible Schools were held by various churches. The county fair opened, but the weather dampened the spirits of those attending when rains on the first day forced the cancellation of the 4-H pageant. New books at the city library included *The Keys of the Kingdom* and Dr. Seuss's *To Think I Saw It on Mulberry Street*. The mine dumps produced an abundance of fine juicy blackberries. Thrifty housewives took advantage of this rare opportunity, sprinkling yellow powdered sulfur in their stockings to ward off ticks and other insects before heading out with their buckets. One energetic lady harvested 200 quarts. War seemed far away, yet the possibility was there, a nagging worry.

Across the United States, first-ever events in various venues were noted: General Mills introduced Cheerios, the Brooklyn Dodgers won their first pennant in 21 years, the Bulova watch company paid \$9 for the first ever network commercial, and the first convenience store (7-11) opened in Texas. An announcement informed everyone that the one-cent sales tax would go into effect on June 30, making the little zinc tokens called "mills" obsolete. And, from these beginning milestones, the country continued to advance.

It was announced that the design of new Kansas car tags for 1941 would be white with green luminous numbers and decorated with sunflowers. Soon, in an effort to save steel, only one metal car license - instead of the usual two - would be issued. Citizens were encouraged to turn in their old ones, for steel was needed to produce airplanes. By August, steel could no longer be sold unless it was for a government priority. It was expected that there would be a reduction in the number of mechanical ice boxes, washing machines, air conditioning machines, and other items in order to expedite defense orders.



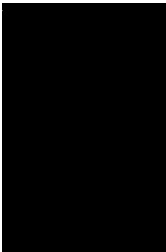
Production of motor cars was to be cut in half, and before long even that would come to a screeching halt. Only 132 cars for civilian use would be manufactured during the war years. Besides the shortage of steel, factories were re-tooling to make critical items for defense needs. For example, Ford Motor Company, who rolled the last civilian car off the assembly line in February of 1942, began manufacturing jeeps and long range B-24 Liberator bombers.

The cutting of automobile production would save glass and rubber as well as steel. In June the rationing of rubber, which was imported from other countries, was announced by the government. The amount going into civilian consumption was slashed for the use of auto tires, inner tubes, boots, garden hose, shoes, and 30,000 other consumer items.

The termination of U. S. trade with Japan followed Roosevelt's freezing of Japanese assets in July. Silk, badly needed for manufacturing parachutes and ammunition powder bags, was no longer available. Women made their silk stockings last as long as possible and guarded them carefully from getting runs. Silk stockings in new fall colors had recently been advertised at 69 cents a pair at the local 5 and 10 cent store, but by August hose was being rationed – only three pairs to the customer. Long waiting lines were formed as the women rushed to the stocking counters. When the stock in the stores was depleted and the ladies were unable to purchase replacements, they quickly improvised by painting their bare legs. A black line was penciled down the back of the leg in imitation of the seam of their silk counterparts. When drawn properly, it effectively stopped the query, "Are my seams straight?" Thicker cotton or rayon material was used, particularly in winter, though were not as attractive. A new, synthetic product called nylon was developed and was found to be an improvement over the imported silk. Like silk it was sheer, but much stronger. Rather than using it for ladies' hose, however, most of the nylon was diverted for use in making parachutes.

Each month saw more young men leaving for the armed services. In June there was a ceremony for those who had enlisted. The colors, the Girard High School band, and all ex-servicemen formed a line at the courthouse and marched to the Frisco station where eighteen men entrained for Fort Leavenworth. No more formal observances were held to see recruits off as numbers increased to over 200 each month; it became a common occurrence to see the young men boarding the train and leaving for unfamiliar places. A new recruit could expect to earn \$21 per month, increasing to \$30 after four months. Chief Petty Officers would receive \$126.

Girard had two locally owned grocery stores, Police Brothers and Roy's IGA. A new Karbe's store opened in August, giving the local businesses a little competition. They advertised 2 pounds of oleo for 25 cents, ground meat for 17 cents a pound, and bacon for 23 cents a pound. Another ad offered a year's subscription for the *Girard Press* for \$1.53, if paid in advance, or six months for 77 cents. In comparison to these prices, the minimum wage had been set at 25 cents an hour in 1938, but by this time it had risen to 30 cents.

 *With the coming of fall, school began. Ed and Earl gathered up their red Big Chief tablets and pencils, walked about a mile, and entered the big doors of Lowell School. Ed was in the third grade and Earl was in the sixth grade; Wilma and Bud enrolled in the upper classes. Three buses, one driven by Clarence, operated to bring in the rural pupils. With the addition of those students, the total enrollment of the Girard schools reached 630. (At some point, James also drove a school bus.)*

A new football field on the high school campus, a source of great excitement and pride, was completed and ready for the first game of the season. During the summer, teenager Wilma Sneed had often visited Zetl's Bakery with her friends. She caught the eye of Walter, who was employed

there, making ice cream. When school opened, Walter returned to the halls of Arma High School as a senior. All was as it should be in the schools of small Kansas towns.

December 7, 1941, was a day frozen in time for Americans as the tranquil Sunday afternoon was shattered by the news of the attack on Pearl Harbor. As word spread, neighbors hollered to other neighbors, "Turn on the radio!" After the first shock, citizens began worrying about the Girard boys who were in the navy stationed at Pearl Harbor and anxiously awaited news of their welfare. In startled disbelief, the lives of everyone changed forever as the nation began to mobilize for all-out war.

The Sneed family gathered around the big parlor radio and tuned in to KOAM, Pittsburg, to hear the news. Everett said, "Well, we've been expecting it!"

Without warning, swarms of Japanese war planes had bombed and strafed the United States naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Launched from six aircraft carriers, the 353 Japanese fighters, bombers, and torpedo planes came diving out of the clouds in two waves. U S airfields and port facilities were demolished with 188 planes destroyed.



Unwarned, the ships that anchored in the shallow bay were sitting ducks; four battleships were sunk and great damage was inflicted to other vessels. It became the greatest naval disaster in the history of the nation. There were 2,402 men killed and 1,282 wounded. The treachery of the Japanese intensified patriotism and strengthened the resolve of the American people.

Roosevelt spoke to Congress, "Yesterday, December 7, 1941 – a date which will live in infamy – the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan. . . . A state of war now exists between the United States and the Japanese Empire."

Three days later Germany and Italy declared war on the United States. America immediately responded by declaring war on those two Axis powers. The vote in the Senate was unanimous with both Democrats and Republicans agreeing to "adjoin politics" for the duration of the war and to focus on national defense. War would now be fought on two fronts - in Europe as well as the Pacific.

Many attended memorial services for Girard's first war victim, Clyde Lynch, who was reportedly killed in action at Pearl Harbor. A powder man on the USS Nevada, he had enlisted a year previously. Eight local soldiers, home on furlough, occupied seats near the front of the church, clad in their uniforms. Shortly a telegram was received telling that Clyde Lynch was safe, and the report was, thankfully, in error.

The parents of Walter Ragonese were Italian, having immigrated earlier in the century. They, however, were not bothered because they had become naturalized citizens.

Two laws were enacted during 1942 that would have a long-lasting effect on the American people. In February President Franklin Roosevelt instituted year-round Daylight Saving Time, called "War Time." Believed to maximize the use of sunlight and to save energy used by producing electricity, it was utilized nationwide until the end of the war. In October income tax was increased with a 5 percent tax on all income over \$624. A withholding system was created in which taxes were collected and sent in by employers. Treasury officials viewed this pay-as-you-go system as a means of more effectively seeing everyone paid their tax. The tax payment plan, wrapped in patriotism, was touted as a way of ensuring victory.

No more copper pennies would be coined after January 1, but instead would be made of steel, coated with zinc. Businesses around the square were asked to display more flags. Thirty-three persons completed the first class of first aid training. The Red Cross handbook was a best seller with over 8,000,000 copies purchased by the war's end. Preparations for unknown emergencies were being made.

Citizens of Girard went about their normal activities, doing their best to keep a calm exterior, even though the reporting of events in Europe created a constant undercurrent of uneasiness. The movies offered a means of escape into the fantasy world. After purchasing a large bag of popcorn, an usher would light the way to a seat, using a flashlight in the darkened theater. The main feature was preceded by newsreels, a cliff-hanger serial, and a cartoon. Popular movies included "How Green Was My Valley," "Citizen Kane," "Gone with the Wind," and "The Wizard of Oz." (The last two were filmed in Technicolor.) The radio, too, served as a means to forget everyday concerns. Families listened to "The Red Skelton Show," "Inter Sanctum", "The Great Gildersleeve," and "The Thin Man." Jack Benny, Edgar Bergman and Charlie McCarthy provided episodes of humor. Everyone got ready for a good laugh when Fibber Magee and Molly came on. As Fibber headed for his closet and began to open the door, listeners waited expectantly for the sound of a loud crash as everything spilled out, time and time again.

After the Secretary of War had authorized appropriations for the construction of the Kansas Ordnance Plant in 1939, the government purchased thousands of acres from local farmers. The construction of the Kansas Ordnance Plant began in 1941 and was completed in 1942. This facility was located three miles east of Parsons. It was one of the 77 government-owned, contractor-operated facilities producing munitions and armaments for the war effort. A second facility began after the War Department approved construction of a \$17,700,000 ammonia nitrate plant on Spring River near Baxter Springs, Kansas. Better known as the Jayhawk Ordnance Plant, ground

breaking ceremonies were held the day after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Three hundred seventy soldiers, guests of Pittsburg, were on hand to participate in the celebration. Both the Kansas and Jayhawk Ordinance plants would provide work for many still recovering from the Depression.

When the munitions plant at Parsons had been approved, the manager of the employment agency had been swamped. Labette County towns did not have housing for the influx of workers, so those desiring to work there must drive 35 to 40 miles. The distance from Girard was over 30 miles. Parsons invited other towns to share her prospective prosperity. The hourly wage scale there would be \$1.50 for carpenters, \$1.50 for bricklayers, and 60 cents for laborers.

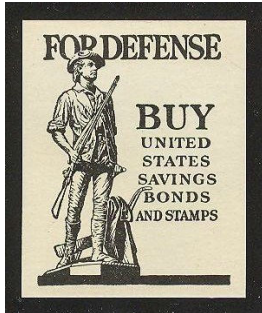
Everett Sneed was employed as a roofer, working on many of the buildings at the ordinance plant. After completing the work at Parsons, the roofing union sent him to Coffeyville, Pratt, Larned, and Arkansas City. Coming back to Girard, his '38 Ford truck was put to good use in earning an income; he also drove a bus hauling workers back and forth between Girard, Pittsburg, and Parsons. James also worked as a truck driver and in the defense plant.

One man, Gene Rhudy, applied for permission to operate a bus line from Girard to the Parsons Shell Loading Plant for those who were working there. The cost would be 50 cents for a round trip; tickets could be purchased at O'Reilly Drug Store. In April the bus transit expanded to haul 100 men, plus 40 more who were picked up between Girard and Parsons.

Other government plants in prospect for Southeast Kansas were a coke plant between Pittsburg and Mineral, an anhydrous ammonia plant, and a zinc roaster. The Chamber of Commerce sponsored a canvas of living quarters which might be available for use by employees at the government shell-filling plant to be erected southwest of McCune. An estimated 11,000 people were expected to move into the district because of the construction. Thousands of others would be at work in the plant until the end of the war. Airplane parts would be produced in Wichita, Lawrence, and Kansas City. B-25 bombers would come off assembly lines at the Fairfax plant in Kansas City. While America had begun building up for defense prior to December 7, it would not reach its full industrial war capacity until at least a full year after war had been declared.

The public debt was increasing rapidly due to defense spending. A Defense Savings Bonds program, or war bonds, was instituted so the general public could participate in the national defense in a unified manner. Girard responded generously to local bond drives, held periodically. Local citizens were chosen as chairmen, Roy Sauer being selected for the fourth drive. This drive was stimulated by a float sixty-two feet long that displayed every type of bomb made at the Parsons plant. A quota was established for each event, presenting a challenge for citizens to match. The results of the sixth war drive in Girard topped the quota of \$104,000 when \$165,466.50 in

bonds was purchased. At the end of the war, nationwide, a total of seven War Bond drives and one Victory Loan drive had resulted in \$156.9 billion worth of war bonds purchased by an estimated 85 million investors. It was projected, in 1944, that the national debt would reach \$300 million by the end of the war.



Small individual stamps, depicting the famous statue of the Minute Man, could be bought, pasted into little books, and when full, redeemed for an \$18.75 bond. The bond would be worth \$25 when mature. In January of 1942 all the school children in Girard received an album with a 10-cent stamp. These were a gift from H. E. Sauer, president of the 1st National Bank. The albums were presented to Supt. Ted R. Taylor who supervised the distribution. Mr. Sauer gave the stamps to the children in the hopes of encouraging them to buy more. About 650 books were distributed. With this motivational start, stamps continued to be sold every week in the schools.

Ed and Earl, buying one 10-cent stamp a week, pooled their savings at the end of the war and had enough to buy a young sow. (After the war, in March of 1947, the Sneed family moved to a farm up by Farlington.)

Many goods were unavailable regardless of price. At the beginning of the new year of 1942, in addition to that of automobiles, production of vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, radios, sewing machines, and phonographs ceased. Whatever was deemed nonessential was banned or curtailed. The long list included coat hangers, beer cans, and toothpaste tubes. The OPA barred the use of cellophane wrappers for certain products such as gift wrapping, Christmas bells, and sipping straws. Before the year ended, many other items such as fuel oil, stoves, bicycles, and typewriters were restricted. People were advised to save on matches. Making them smaller was being considered for if the size was reduced $\frac{1}{4}$ inch, it would save 7 million board feet of wood per year.

With an up-surge in prices of consumer goods, the government quickly instituted the Office of Price Administration (OPA), which had the power to freeze prices and wages, control rents, and institute rationing. In May of 1942, the OPA froze prices on practically all everyday goods, starting with sugar and coffee. The OPA issued each man, woman, or child in the nation War ration books with coupons to use when purchasing rationed items. In 1944 colored red and blue tokens made of heavy cardboard were distributed: blue ones to use for canned goods and red ones for meat, fish, and dairy products. Eight thousand Ration Boards were set up to oversee rationing.

Customs and standards of living changed when quotas were established for scarce supplies. The first non-food item rationed was rubber. The Japanese had seized plantations in Malaya and the Dutch East Indies that produced over ninety percent

of America's raw rubber. Civilians could keep five tires per vehicle, but had to turn in any extra. As tires became thin, a certificate could be issued for recapping. Still able to get gas for their vehicles, the editor of the Girard paper reported that many people were driving more, and faster, than usual to make use of gasoline before it became scarce. In December, rationing of gasoline went into effect. Drivers were allowed four gallons a week, only enough for necessary driving. Gasoline was advertised for 12 ½ cents a gallon.

Farmers were expected to produce more food, but with less manpower as workers left for the armed services. One way to increase crop yield was with better machinery. The U.S. government was now faced with a big decision – how to manufacture farming equipment in addition to producing items for war. All of the agricultural machine companies became heavily involved in providing crucial war equipment. Massey-Harris built the M24 and M5 tanks, aircraft wings, and truck bodies. John Deere built transmissions for the M3 tanks, aircraft parts, and ammunition. Case produced wings for B-26 bombers and hundreds of thousands of artillery shells. Allis-Chalmers produced steam turbines and propeller shafts for ships. Later they built the casings that housed the atomic bombs that were dropped on Japan. Production of farm machinery was drastically cut, but farmers, for the first time in a decade, had the funds to purchase any that became available. Quotas were established for gasoline and tires.

The slogan “Wheat will win the war” had real significance to Kansans. Under the Lend Lease program, wheat would be sent to France in addition to that needed by the armed forces. Farmers were asked to make their contribution to victory by meeting the goals assigned to the state for war time food production. Nature cooperated, and the both 1941 and 1942 crop years were the most prosperous in the state's agricultural history. The ideal climate and good soil conditions helped to produce bumper crops. However, agriculture faced a massive manpower crisis as mounting draft calls and enlistments drained the supply of workers. Farmers, lured by well-paying jobs in the war industries, left the farm. Frank Peak, for example, announced a farm sale as he had been appointed a guard at the ordinance plant. Nearly all the harvest was saved as thousands of volunteers from the YWCA and high school organizations, such as the High School Victory Corps offered helping hands. Older men, who had retired from farming, went into the fields. Women and girls who had never farmed before drove tractors and trucks. The wheat yield was so large, great numbers of box cars were needed. There was no place to put the surplus grain; it was stored in empty buildings or just on the ground. Each year as the need for laborers increased, volunteers would step up to harvest the nation's food supply.

*Now Jackson had his acorns
And Grant his precious rye;
Teddy had his poisoned beef—
Worse you couldn't buy.
The doughboy had his hardtack
Without the navy's jam,
But armies on their stomachs move
—
And this one moves on Spam.*

Kansas flour mills and meat packing plants worked at top speed. The dehydration of milk and eggs became important industries as they were needed for the zooming demands of the armed forces and the Lend Lease program. Milk, eggs, soups, and vegetables were all compressed and dehydrated before being packaged in cellophane. The end result was a maximum saving of space and weight; fewer trucks and ships were thus needed to transport food. Dehydrated eggs, when fed to the troops, were not popular. The rubbery-textured eggs were even more disliked when partnered with the processed pork shoulder and ham called Spam. GI's grumbled about the canned luncheon meat, mainly because it was always there, sometimes three times a day. Nutrition, not variety, was the key.

Adults felt the restriction of coffee and sugar. Fewer cups of coffee were drunk - and sugar was hard to find, even with ration stamps to equalize purchases. In place of sugar, the cooks soon found that corn syrup could be substituted in many recipes. Housewives across the country were encouraged to plant Victory Gardens to increase food supplies. For Southeast Kansans this was nothing new, as most farm families normally grew fruits and vegetables in their home gardens. Empty fruit jars were collected for those who needed more for home canning. Older pressure cookers, pulled out of storage, were tested for safety as new ones could not be purchased. The need was so great

that by 1943 the Girard Community Chest obtained a pressure cooker to be rented out for a small fee. Louie's Zero Lockers offered cold-storage lockers for rent so housewives could safely store their fruits and vegetables. The food was first quick frozen at ten degrees below zero and then stored at a steady temperature of zero to ten above. It was not as convenient as having canned food in the home, for one had to make a trip to the locker plant to retrieve the frozen meat, fruit or vegetables. Still, it was an effective and economical way to preserve food.

Recipes were altered to fit the ingredients on hand. One popular cake recipe did not have either milk or eggs in it.



World War II BOILED FRUIT CAKE

2 c. brown sugar	1 tsp. cloves
2 c. cold water	1 tsp. allspice
$\frac{3}{4}$ c. lard [shortening]	1 tsp. cinnamon
1 c. raisins	1 tsp. salt
1 c. nut meats	

Boil all together for five minutes. Let cool and add the following:

1 tsp. baking powder	
2 tsps. Soda in hot water	
4 c. flour	Bake one hour in slow oven.

In an effort to conserve cloth, the War Production Board issued sweeping restrictions on women's and girls' apparel. Fifteen percent of the yardage needed could be saved if dress hems and belts were limited to a width of two inches, and cuffs on sleeves were eliminated. Exempt from these guidelines were bridal gowns, maternity dresses, and vestments for religious orders. Slacks became enormously popular with women, especially those in the work force. Skirts rose several inches above the knee. Short coats, reaching only to the top of the thigh, became popular. With rubber curtailed, elastic became hard to find as did two-way stretch girdles. To compensate for the wool needed to make uniforms for the soldiers, "Victory Suits" for men sported slimmer trousers and narrower lapels. Cuffs on trousers were a thing of the past. There would be no manufacturing of two-pant suits and no vests for double-breasted suits. Production of "zoot suits" with their huge baggy trousers was banned, though few of these were found in small town Girard.

Nothing was wasted; with imagination many items could be put to a new use. Old wool coats were washed, ripped apart, and turned into new coats of smaller sizes. Suggestions for the use of men's old felt hats included using them for book covers, pin cushions, needle cases, or house slippers. All housewives became experts in finding uses for the material of the welcome cotton feed sacks. "Use It up, wear it out, make it do, or do without," became the motto of every homemaker.

Myrtle Sneed was no exception and used feed sacks for everything. She spent hours keeping her sewing machine humming in the production of dresses, shirts, underwear, curtains, dish towels, sheets, and pillow cases, as well as dark pink curtains with a matching day bed cover. When Everett hauled feed for Kelso Feeds in Pittsburg, he could buy nice sacks for 10 cents each. Any that had holes in them were given to him for free.

Myrtle Sneed frequently wrote poems that expressed her worries, her faith, or her desire to become a better person. Two in particular were written while the family lived on West Forest Street, "Thoughts," and "Light Out of Darkness." During the troublesome years of World War II, she must have

found comfort by expressing herself through poetry. She likely composed them "in her head" while going about her daily chores and seeing that her children were fed and clothed.

Light Out of Darkness

**Out of the stormy sea of life
Far from a peaceful shore,
My mind was so troubled and
weary,
My heart was aching sore.**

**Out of the darkness came a
light
Into my troubled heart,
Bringing joy and peace and
love
That from me will never part.**

**Christ was the light that came
to me
When my heart was so
burdened with care;
For I cried to him for help that
day,
And he healed my broken
heart there.**

-Myrtle Sneed
316 W. Forest
Girard, Kansas

Every Friday Myrtle would bake bread Neighbors loved her bread and would come down to buy a couple of loaves. The Harvey twins would almost fight to see who would get to carry the warm bread home

Signs of spring appeared - garden seeds for sale, seed potatoes being sold by the sack full, fishing tackle advertised by the stores, and restless students hoping school would soon be out. Along with recommendations to plant now and can later, came sugar rationing. Local grocers reported it was moving smoothly. In May a free movie at the Cozy theater, "You're in the Army Now," was shown at the annual Crawford County rural commencement. Girard High School graduated fifty-three seniors, several of whom would soon be leaving for service in the armed forces.



O'Reilly Drugstore, on the northwest corner of the square, celebrated its 27th anniversary in 1942 by holding a turtle race for boys and girls under fourteen. On the exciting day, the land turtles were taken to be registered. An identifying number was painted on their backs, and the turtles were then placed in several wash tubs. A large circle was painted on the north side of the square in front of Zettl's bakery. One at a time, each container of turtles was emptied in the center of the circle, the turtles were quickly checked to be sure they were on their feet, and then the race was on. The first one to find its way to the outside of the circle was determined to be the winner of that heat. All the terrapins who won their heats participated in a second and final race as the boys and girls cheered enthusiastically for their turtles. The 335 race participants were returned to their "owners" and lived to race another day. Prizes were awarded and everyone was given a treat of ice cream. O'Reilly's birthday celebration and turtle races continued each year. In 1943 there were 391 turtles competing, with war stamps given to the child with the speediest turtle. In

1944 there was an increase to 404 entries with ice cream cones given to the children. Turtle races continued many years, even past the turn of the century.

Each of the Sneed children had their turn sharing in the fun. When Ed and Earl were old enough to participate, they looked high and low for the most energetic turtles they could find, but were never successful in finding a speedy winner.

The Girard and vicinity fire station was designated as depository for metal, old rubber and rags during Salvage for Victory week. The schools closed from 10 to 12 on Monday so the pupils could assist in collecting the scrap. Everyone was urged to search out unwanted or discarded items. Girard was divided into four wards, headed by two business men and assisted by student street captains. An ad in the *Press* promoted the Junk Rally, stating that junk helped make guns, tanks, and ships for our fighting men. The salvage, piled at the northeast corner of the square contained useless metal, rubber, rags, old farm machinery, beds, and bed springs. "What the pile of junk lacked in beauty, it abundantly made up for in variety," stated the press. One observer said he had never seen so many bed springs in his life. One hundred fifty tons of scrap metal were collected. Girard was awarded a pennant for the flagpole in recognition of this tremendous effort, and the junk was sold for seven dollars a ton. When students were interviewed on the success of the scrap drive, they assured the questioner it was carried out to the fullest extent with practically everyone giving. Girls' hands got greasy and dirty, but cleaned up with soap and water.

The youth of Girard shared in the war effort as they energetically helped with the scrap drives, planted their own gardens, and raised chickens. Waste paper drives were held continually, with Boy Scouts usually doing the collecting. To organize the energies of students who wanted to join in the war effort, a high school Victory Corps was created during the summer. There was a badge and a uniform of sorts. Elementary students belonged to the Junior Red Cross. For the most part boys and girls were kept busy with parades, scrap drives, bond sales and calisthenics. For these activities, the high schools gave academic credit.

Little things counted up; even used toothpaste tubes and flattened cans were collected and turned in for their tin content. Crucial in building aircraft, tin was another commodity which had come mostly from the Far East. Old pots and pans were gathered up during drives for aluminum. One early drive, collected at the fire department, resulted in a total of fifty pounds. When news commentator Fulton J. Lewis, Jr. made an appeal for old keys, Girard High School collected two gallon jars full of the keys and sent them to him.

Housewives were urged to save their waste cooking fat. A small portion may have been withheld to make homemade soap, as soap appeared on the list of rationed items. Directions were given to put the used grease into a clean can, cover it, and rush it to a meat dealer. "It will help win the war!" .

Myrtle used her waste grease and mixed it with lye. After pouring the bubbling mixture into a crock and letting it harden, the soap could then be cut into bars. The lye soap, rather rough and strong, made fine laundry soap. She remembered the druggist's wife only washed dishes once a day in an effort to save soap.

The value of salvaging materials was driven home by the use of comparison. The amount of rubber salvaged from one old tire could provide 20 parachute troopers with boots or make 12 gas masks. A thousand old galoshes (overshoes) could provide all the rubber to make a medium-sized bomber. A light tank required 489 pounds of rubber – just the tracks alone consumed 317 pounds. Old radiators were used to make rifles. One old shovel helped make four hand grenades. One pound of fat was recycled into dynamite could be used to blow up a bridge and stop an invader.

MUNITIONS from KITCHENS

HOW MUCH IS A POUND OF FAT?



IT'S ENOUGH **GLYCERINE** TO FIRE FOUR 37 MILLIMETER ANTI-AIRCRAFT SHELLS & BRING DOWN A NAZI PLANE!

IT'S ENOUGH **GLYCERINE** TO SEND A SHELL SCREAMING TOWARD AN INVASION OBJECTIVE!



IT'S ENOUGH **DYNAMITE** TO BLOW UP A BRIDGE AND STOP AN INVADER!

IT'S **THREE CELLOPHANE BAGS** TO PROTECT THE GAS-MASKS OUR SOLDIERS CARRY!



IT'S 10 ROUNDS FROM A 50-CALIBRE AIRPLANE CANNON POINTED AT A JAP!



GET YOUR USED FAT INTO THE FIGHT! PUT IT IN ANY CLEAN CAN AND RUSH IT TO YOUR MEAT DEALER. IT WILL HELP WIN THE WAR!

The Chamber of Commerce decided to discontinue the August Sales Day for the duration. Businesses had contributed to prizes for a sales day twice a month with good attendance. To conserve rubber, it was cut down to once a month and then none. When it was county fair time, stores that were usually open only for half-days during this annual event, would be open all day so that patrons could shop and visit the fair in one trip.

Merchandise was getting scarce. When people complained, they were told, “Don’t you know there is a war on?” Sell and Sons on the west side of the square advertised new G. E. Radios for \$14.95 and up, Motorolas for \$19.95 and up, and 12-gauge shot gun shells for 98 cents a box. The Cozy offered a free pass to the movies during the month of September with the purchase of a \$25 Victory bond. The slogan “Give Till It Hurts” was promoted to increase the sales of bonds.

Service men and women were not forgotten. Letters to soldiers overseas were written on V-mail paper, special thin paper that could be written on and then folded to make the envelope. (“V” stood for victory.) Letters were censored and put on film before being sent overseas. A book drive for books to be sent to the army and navy through the American Red Cross was conducted by the Girard Public Library. In addition, one hundred books were collected by the Boy Scouts. The American Legion collected old 78 rpm phonograph records to be sent to the USO and exchanged for new ones, in arrangement with phonograph companies. Moms, wives, and sisters baked and packaged cookies and other goodies to be sent to their soldiers.

Fifty-one boxes were placed around the square for citizens to contribute cigarettes for the soldiers. The first shipment went directly overseas. Most people smoked cigarettes unaware of the danger to their health. When available, the favorite brands were Camels, Lucky Strikes, and Phillip Morris, though Viceroy (the first to come out with a filter tip) were cheaper. Movies of the 1940’s, almost without exception, showed the stars smoking cigarettes – it was *the* thing to do. The scarcity and expense of cigarettes caused many to roll their own, as loose tobacco was cheaper to buy. As the war went on, soldiers were issued free cigarettes, courtesy of the tobacco companies, and millions of nicotine-addicted GI’s returned home from the war.



Many in the Sneed family were smokers at some point in their lives: Everett, eight children and four of their spouses. Exceptions were Myrtle and four of the in-laws. Everett developed throat cancer, causing him to quit in 1957, but it was too late to stop the damage of emphysema. Ed stopped the same time as his dad. Clarence, Louise, Bud, Ruthie, Wilma, and Earl eventually needed supplemental oxygen. They paid dearly for smoking.

Clarence entered the Army Air Force, working as a mechanic. In for a total of seven years, he served part of that time under MacArthur in the Philippines. When the invading Japanese caused the American defense to collapse in 1941, MacArthur was forced to evacuate the Philippines, when leaving it, he said, "I shall return." It was not until October of 1944 that the general waded onto the beach to liberate the islands from Japan. While in the Philippines, Clarence was injured when hit by a falling object.

Steven Milton Smith was a pilot. One Sunday morning he buzzed his mother's home next to the Methodist church. This antic stopped all church services in town. In June it was reported that he had landed his plane somewhere in Australia after being hit by the Japanese. He had come out of a cloud and encountered a group of Japanese planes. Milton was shot through the arm, breaking the bone. He made a tourniquet from a rubber hose to stop the flow of blood and was able to land his plane without a crackup. The plane, riddled by bullets, looked like a sieve. In August he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for bravery in action, which is given for extraordinary heroism while engaged in military conflict with the enemy. Townspeople (who had previously panicked when he flew over Girard) were anxious to congratulate him on his rare accomplishment.

Worry about those in the service – be it sons, husbands, relatives, or friends - continued. Mr. and Mrs. Wm. McGrew of Girard had four sons serving in the US Army, all of whom had enlisted. Service flags with a red border surrounding a white rectangle with a blue star appeared in windows of homes, meaning some family member was in the armed forces. When the war dragged on and battles became more intense, a number of parents received the dreaded news, "The war department regrets to inform you that your son . . ." Gold stars began to replace the blue ones, signifying that a loved one had been killed.

The turning point in the war in the Pacific theater had finally come with the naval victory in the Battle of Midway in June of 1942. The Japanese fleet was turned back with heavy losses. In August, American forces attacked the enemy in the Solomon Islands. Moving from tropical island to island, the Allied forces conquered them, but sustained significant losses. While the most concentrated effort was put forth in the Pacific, U S and British troops landed in North Africa in November, and moved on from there into Sicily. Citizens of the United States broadened their horizons as unfamiliar names of countries and geographical points of which there had been no previous knowledge, now became part of everyone's vocabulary on a daily basis.

School started again in September with Ed in the fourth grade and Earl in the seventh grade. Sitting at their desks whiling away their time, all fourth grade boys could expertly draw airplanes. When outside and hearing a plane in the sky, they could look up and tell you what kind it was without referring to the handy identifying charts given out by businesses.



P38

A P-38, twin-fuselage fighter plane crashed into a hedge row west of Girard and killed the pilot. With such excitement close at home, there was no way the boys of the town could be contained from going out the two miles or so to look at it. Ed pedaled as hard as he could on his old bicycle to keep up with his older brothers and the other boys. The wreckage was put on a trailer truck and parked on the east side of the square for all to see before it was turned in for salvage.

Halloween in 1942 was designated “Official Rat Killing Day.” In the days of food shortages, an estimated 4 million rats were in Kansas. It would require \$8 million to feed them annually. There was no report on the success of this venture.

Thanks to the radio, everyone listened to battlefield updates, news reports from foreign shores, radio serials, patriotic programming, and defense tips for the home front. Radios were a life-line to the rest of the world. Citizens anxiously turned their radio dials, day after day, to hear the latest reports. Edward R. Murrow broadcast the news direct from London, even during the actual air raids. H. V. Kaltenborn was a news reporter whom everyone listened to each evening. Fulton Lewis, Jr. stressed human interest stories and always began his program with “Ah, yes, there’s good news tonight!”

The radio was used not only for news, but also was a major source of entertainment. “Soap-box operas” appealed to the romantic ladies, and all youngsters listened to “Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy,” a daily fifteen-minute program sponsored by General Mills. The Sneed boys hurried home from school and did their chores quickly so as to not miss a minute of the latest episode. Premiums that were tied in with the adventures of Jack and his friends were offered. If mom bought two boxes of Wheaties, one could get a Jack Armstrong Camp Lantern in exchange for an extra penny. Whether or not this advertising was an effective influence, Ed always ate

Wheaties, a habit which would continue for years. "The Lone Ranger" was a close second to Jack Armstrong. Another program, aimed at the younger set, was "Orphan Annie." By sending in the foil liner from a box of Ovaltine, for example, one could get an Orphan Annie decoder pin or a "secret society" magnifying glass - if parents could be convinced to buy the Ovaltine.

Radio had regular half-hour musical programs; among them were "The Voice of Firestone" and "The Telephone Hour." Wayne King ("The sweetest music this side of heaven!"), Guy Lombardo, Benny Goodman, and Glenn Miller were favorite bands that had their own programs. Bing Crosby was an old standby vocalist, but younger singers included Frank Sinatra and Dinah Shore. The latter two were often featured on "The Hit Parade," a weekly music show of top tunes, sponsored by Lucky Strike cigarettes. All teen-agers listened to hear which song made it to Number One. War songs such as "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition," "The White Cliffs of Dover," and "Coming in on a Wing and a Prayer" were played over and over again.

Girard had two movie theaters, the Fox was on the east side and the Cozy on the north side. All the young kids would go – if they could find a spare dime. Cowboy movies were commonly shown, but also films of the Three Stooges, Laurel and Hardy, the Little Rascals, Donald Duck, and Charlie Chaplain. Another hang out for the older kids was the ice cream and soda fountain operated by Bob Lamb. Wilma, like most teenagers, learned to jitter-bug, the latest dance craze.



"Rosie the Riveter" by Norman Rockwell

A shortage of workers continued, though many women had now become employed in jobs previously held by men. Women put on coveralls and went to work in factories or joined the armed forces and put on uniforms. The military organized women into the Women's Army Corps (WAC), WAVES, the Navy Nurse Corps and the Coast Guard; they were outfitted with special clothing, and, surprisingly, given equal pay. The Wichita Defense Factory placed ads for women, aged 18-40, to apply for work in those plants. "Rosie the Riveter" became the popular symbol for women who abandoned traditional female occupations to work in defense industries making munitions and implements of war.

Coal companies in Wyoming advertised for workers from Southeast Kansas; they would pay \$7.25 to \$8.80 for a seven-hour day. Dr. Schulte entered the army as a captain in the medical corps of the army, leaving Girard with one less doctor.

America became a mobile society. Civilians went where most needed, while service men and women were stationed throughout the United States and the world.

With fewer adults available to work, business places operated short-handed as best they could. Ed and Earl found work on Saturday at Roy's IGA Food Market. They earned \$2 (given to them in the form of two silver dollars) for a day that began at 8:00 in the morning and ended when the store closed around midnight. Onions and potatoes were put into 5-pound or 10-pound bags, and bulk cookies were put into smaller sacks. They helped the butcher put lard into trays and then wrapped the filled trays with white oiled paper. Grocery orders were selected and itemized after a clerk was given a list of items that were needed for the next week. The filled, brown paper bags of purchases were carried out and loaded in the waiting cars for the ladies. Knowing when the stores received a shipment of scarce items was an advantage of working in the grocery store.

When Earl was old enough to get his driver's learner permit, he began working for Police Brothers Grocery, driving their panel truck to deliver groceries.

Bud mowed the yard of a neighbor lady, who then turned the job over to Earl. Soon it became the responsibility of Ed to push the reel-type mower. When finished mowing the lawn, the worker receive twenty-five cents, a five-cent bottle of pop, and a cookie. Extra money was saved for school supplies and school clothes.

Ed, ten years old, would take his dad's 1890 Winchester rifle and go hunting rabbits with three or four neighbor boys. They hunted around the old Burnett Lake on the north edge of town. Ammunition was hard to get because of the war. However, the dad of one of the boys had extra short shells that fit the rifle. Marbles, arrowheads (found on grandparents' farm north of Jasper), or just about anything was traded for the shells. Ed's mom would help him clean the rabbits. A welcome addition to the dinner table, they were fried and served with biscuits and gravy. His mom said not to shoot squirrels as they were too hard to clean!

Back in June, federal and state authorities had urged residents to be prepared in case of "token" bombings by Axis nations who were smarting from recent losses. Outdoor decorative lights were forbidden. An attack by air, though highly unlikely, was feasible because of the presence of several war production plants in Southeast Kansas. The fire chief, Vernie Hackworth, issued a list of what to do in case of an air attack, and individuals were asked to become acquainted with first aid practices and methods of extinguishing incendiary bombs. As the first year of the war was coming to an end, Girard began practicing blackouts for twenty minutes, cooperating with other mid-western states. In one blackout only three lights were observed: two night lights and one lighted clock. One match was struck up on the

square, and one car was started. Perhaps the biggest result was sympathy with England, where such blackouts were every night occurrences.

Mr. Shideler summarized the year of 1942 in his “Around the Square” column on December 31. ”End of another year. At the beginning of this year, the US was in a bad way so far as winning a war was concerned . . . we are now in position to see that we can win the war by getting together and really putting forth an effort. . . . Locally we have seen many changes in personnel in the various establishments around the square. Most of these were due to army or navy service, but many were for work in defense plants or on plant construction. Girard has a right to be extremely proud of the boys who are in any of the armed services. . . . Girard boys are entering officer candidate schools and being graduated in such numbers that it is difficult to keep an accurate check. Also during the past year we have found that there are many articles of food, clothing, or luxuries that we can get along without and still not suffer too greatly. . . . Only recently have local people discovered that four gallon of gas per week will let one do a lot of necessary driving and have a little left for visiting a friend.”

The editor complained about the amount of red tape in filling out unnecessary forms and reports. He felt Girard could boast about the amount of war bonds and stamps it bought and in the amount of scrap it turned in. Continuing he said, “The new year dawns a little brighter. We are getting places with our war effort, both in actual battle and in production. We still face a sad year in that there will be losses on the battlefield – land, sea, air – but we know victory will be ours in a much shorter time than we had reason to hope for a year ago.”

1943

Though the editor gave the news a positive slant, the end of 1942 would be remembered as the most uncertain and perhaps darkest time of the war. The balance did not seem to be clear cut in either direction, but gradually changed as the American armies gained ground. The year of 1943 saw the end of the war in North Africa with the Allies moving northward into Sicily and, in September, invading southern Italy. On the other front, there were victories in the Pacific as the Japanese were forced to evacuate Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands.

Locally, the mailman was always met with expectant hope that letters would arrive from loved ones. The four Lofts brothers were stationed in widely scattered places, keeping their parents continually concerned. Gene, in the US Coast Guard, was at St. Augustine, Florida, Ralph was somewhere overseas, and Walter was at Camp Young, California. Meril was based in the Tank Destroyer training station at Camp Hood, Texas. Dr. J. C. Mays closed his dental office to join the US Army at Midland, Texas, as a First Lieutenant. Brig. Gen. Willis Hale, once a Girard boy, was recognized as a Midway hero. Edmund Rathke, hero of the ship *Marblehead* in

the southwest Pacific, visited with hometown friends when on leave. S. Sgt. Bennett, former clerk in the Girard Post Office, was in a German concentration camp, and Pvt. Arthur R. Roberts was a prisoner of war in Italy. Pvt. Wm. J. Black was awarded a silver star for gallantry in action during the Tunisian campaign in North Africa. Parents reported getting souvenirs such as French or German currency from their sons. Mrs. H. Hackenburg received two souvenir guns from her husband in Belgium. The German rifles were evidently ones captured from the enemy. In November the Christian Church held an Armistice Day Program and Honor Roll Call. The next of kin stood and told where their soldier was and when he or she was last heard from. The Methodist Church had an Armistice Day service as well. Friends and neighbors kept close tabs on Girard servicemen through the newspaper and the neighborhood grapevine.

Graduation at the high school proceeded as in years before, but there would be no centralized rural graduation because of transportation. The Christian Church scheduled a bond burning for June. The debt of \$25,000 had been incurred 16 years before when the building was erected and equipped. The annual Crawford County fair was held, but without a carnival. The farm equipment displays and school displays were viewed by a smaller than usual crowd because of gasoline rationing. It was announced at the fair that there would not be one held the next year, 1944, due to transportation and manpower situations. Hostilities overseas prevented a successful fair from being held. Scrap drives continued.

Boys around town invented their own entertainment. Bicycles would be turned into ones with "motors" by using a clothes pin to attach a piece of cardboard to the spokes of the wheels. This would make a sound like a motor. Two of Wilma's little brothers decided to test out a BB gun by setting up one of her dolls by the coal shed and using it as a target. When the boys would play ball, sometimes the ball would bounce into the neighbor's yard. She would confiscate it and that was the last seen of the ball. One day a basketball lit in the driveway and was grabbed up by the lady. Myrtle happened to see what had happened. She raised the window and shouted, "Grace, give that ball back to the boys. It wasn't on your property!" (However, on the positive side, the cranky neighbor lady did grow juicy grapes behind her coal shed!) It was probably a good thing that school would soon start – Ed in the fifth grade and Earl in the eighth.

Instead of working at the grocery store, Ed now found a job working for Beezley's Dairy, delivering milk door to door. His employer advised him to sign up for Social Security, saying, "That's really good insurance." Every other winter evening after school, buckets of coal were carried up a long, outdoor stairway to a lady's apartment; the ashes that had accumulated had to be carried back down.

In his “Around the Square” column, Mr. Shideler posed the question, “Does anyone ever keep count of the airplanes that fly over Girard at night? Being restless the other night we were awake quite often, and it seemed that always there was a plane overhead. It might have been the same one, but it made several trips.”

Science and technology increased improvements in fighting weapons. After capturing some bazookas in the North African campaign, the US was able to “reverse engineer” their own version. The recoilless rocket anti-tank weapons could be carried by the men and operated by two-man crews. The original issue bolt-action rifles that required manual reloading after each shot were replaced by newer semi-automatic rifles. Anti-tank weapons were developed that had powerful warheads, capable of destroying any tank. Reports such as these encouraged Girard readers in believing that the advanced weapons would help bring about a quicker end to the fighting.

By mid-year Roosevelt announced that submarine warfare was sufficiently under control – enough to warrant removal of restrictions on coffee from Brazil with rationing of that product possibly ending in August.

On the home front, the new year of 1943 continued to be a time of waiting – for good news . . . for bad news . . . for the war to be over . . . for rationing to end . . . for letters to arrive. Store shelves stood empty as goods such as facial tissues, cameras, and alarm clocks disappeared. Ration stamps were a necessary way of life for the purchase of many items. The ration lists became longer and included meats, sugar, coffee, cheese, almost all canned and frozen foods, gasoline, tires, inner tubes, and even shoes. Butcher shops closed for the day when the supply of meat ran out. At the end of March, the OPA added butter, fats, and oils to rationing. Butter was replaced by oleo (short for oleomargarine). In an effort to placate the dairy industry, it was mandated to be white in color like Crisco or lard so it would not be confused with the real thing. A packet of artificial yellow coloring was included with each pound of oleo; creaming the two together became one of the jobs assigned to youngsters of the family. One learned to make do or do without.

Most manufacturers had little or nothing to offer the consumer. What products they did have were snapped up whether or not it was advertised, but the companies did want their products to continue to be recognized and their brand identity kept in the forefront of future customers. Their ads were patriotic and told how they were helping win the war. Auto makers boasted of the tanks they produced and a typewriter company bragged about its armor-piercing shells. One notable wartime advertisement was put forth by Lucky Strike cigarettes. They proclaimed that “Lucky Strike has gone to war” when they changed their packaging from green to white. Supposedly there would be a shortage of green ink and would soon be rationed, but there was no shortage, the company just wanted to attract women smokers. War maps, given away frequently from companies like



Eversharp, kept citizens informed of the progress on the distant battle fronts. Patriotic themes for ads included Packard's "Ask the Man Who Flies One," referring to the planes they made rather than the automobile. Chevrolet touted "Volume Production for Victory," and GM put forth "Backing Up the Man at the Front." Dole pineapple asked, "Can you Pass a Mailbox with a Clear Conscience? To speed your letters and save valuable shipping space, use V-Mail." Ads of GE, looking ahead, stated they would answer any questions about television. There were 970 TV stations operating, just another example of GE research. Pepsi Cola advertised their large bottles of soda for five cents, with magazine ads proclaiming their product to be "Tops with War Workers" or "Tops with Home Makers."

The ads of local businesses issued warnings to consumers. "Get that Refrigerator Now! No more Radios Manufactured for the Duration of the War. Only a Few Heating Stoves Left!" This notice was from Girard Appliance Company on the southwest corner of the square, operated by Eugene Sauer and Virgil McDermid. A big notice from Samp Roper, Welding, headlined "Uncle Sam Says Repair Now!" And Veatch Music House said they would service all makes of radios. Items must be fixed or restored, as they were wearing out, the war years taking their toll.

The "Land of the Lost" club, made up of a few boys and girls who listened to the Saturday morning radio show of the same name, purchased a V-E Bond of \$18.75 and donated it to the public library's Board of Trustees. They had raised the money by collecting and selling waste paper and waste fats. Any future contributions to them would be sold and the money given to the library to buy new books. (The defense bond, found years later, had matured to its \$25 value but had not compiled any other interest.)

Ed, while not a member of this small group, enjoyed the use of the library. He would stop by the city library on the way home from Emerson school and get books to read. In another day or so, they would be returned and new ones (such as My Friend Flicka) checked out.

Eagerly read by civilians and soldiers alike were the columns written by Ernie Pyle who gave intimate, eyewitness accounts of the ordinary soldier. Humor was a safety valve and a morale-booster. The Sad Sack cartoons by Sgt. George Baker "told artfully and well the real story of this mainly draftee army, who didn't like what they were doing, but who were there because they had no choice, and told it, through humor." Bill Mauldin drew and wrote mainly about mud and infantry and about the misuse of privilege by officers and noncoms. Wherever American soldiers went, even the first ones to arrive, a picture of eyes and a nose with the message, "Kilroy was Here" would be found. Kilroy followed the GI's home after the war and frequently appeared on walls and rocks of public places. Boys and girls found this figure easy to draw and marked many a school text with it



Walt Ragonese, drafted, left for army training on November 17, 1943. His basic training was at Camp Blanding, Florida. During his basic training, he was shot in the shoulder. It was nine months before Wilma was able to see him again. There were many letters exchanged. By the war's end, a big blanket box was filled with them.

The end of 1943 brought more news from those serving their country. Staff Sgt. Joe Schrappel was missing in action. His parents received a medal for his five successful missions over Europe. He was a gunner on a Flying Fortress which was forced down somewhere in Europe. Two boys, Pfc. Roy Geier, Jr. and Pfc. Marvin Brees met in Australia. Both had participated in rough battles in New Guinea. Lt Ben Downey sent home souvenirs from his tank battalion in New Caledonia. His parents received a native club, grass skirt, woven grass bracelet and many seaside shells.

Christmas at the Sneed household was always a happy time. The three older grandchildren – Roland, Mildred, and Roberta - were three years old and kept things lively. Three more little babies – Harold Sneed born in September 1942, Richard Lee Sneed born in February 1943, and Bill Augustine born in August 1943 – added to the growing family. (A couple of months later, in February 1944, Dennis Clark (Jack) Sneed would arrive.) Everett and Myrtle always saw that every member of their large family had a present under the tree. That Christmas, Ed's present from his parents was a book, Bambi. His gift from a previous Christmas had been a toy, a little white ambulance made of metal.

1944

The American Red Cross had instituted a blood donor program early in the war, working diligently setting up an organizational plan and implementing improved methods for dealing with the blood collection services. The year 1944 saw a desperate increase for blood plasma as injuries on the battlefield increased in intensity. With the “Big Push” on for victory, blood was needed more than ever before. In response to the call for blood, thirty-three blood donors went up to Kansas City on the Girard school bus. Voluntary donors continued to make the trip on a regular basis. In June, the climactic battle of D-Day prompted citizens to overwhelm the Red Cross donor centers, all wanting to give blood. By the next year, a collection point was established at Pittsburg, eliminating the trip to Kansas City. That year a total of 222 pints of blood was given by Girard men and women.

A new fear appeared as parents watched polio epidemics sweep across the country. Little was known about the cause and no way was known on how to prevent it; polio most often attacked infants and children, damaging their nervous systems and causing paralysis. Worried moms and dads cautioned their children about going

swimming, believing polio might be spread in such an environment. Swimming pool attendance dropped dramatically. Warnings were posted to keep children away from crowds. Many of the American people were unaware that their president, Franklin D. Roosevelt, had been a victim of polio in 1921. (He was never photographed in his wheel chair.) There were five cases in the county in 1943 with one fatality. School openings were postponed until September 20 as a precaution, hoping to forestall any outbreak. The March of Dimes, a campaign to raise money for research a dime at a time, continued each year. In 1944 Girard once more opened its wallets to give \$254 in the polio drive.

Concern about polio took a back seat when five-year-old Edith Sneed became quite ill. Taken to the hospital, it was discovered she had a burst appendix. Things were touch-and-go for awhile. Her recovery took quite a lengthy time, as there was no penicillin or antibiotics at that time. When she returned home, a neighbor, Mr. Cunningham, presented her with a little hand-made wooden rocking chair.

Women joined the Red Cross and contributed their time and skills throughout the duration. One week the local Red Cross surgical dressing class completed 2,025 dressings, or sponges. Material for sewing and yarn for knitting had been furnished by the Red Cross since the beginning. There were sewing groups and knitting groups. Wherever there was a need they could fill, the ladies stepped up with their needles. Even after the ceasefire in 1945, the call went out for volunteer knitters for the relief of the Russian people who had been left destitute by German atrocities.

Troop trains, filled to capacity, crisscrossed the country, shuttling their passengers from camp to camp. The women of Girard joined with others from Crawford County and opened a canteen at the Kansas City Southern station in Pittsburg. On one Sunday in January, four ladies worked in the canteen at Pittsburg, meeting trainloads of soldiers. They brewed five pounds of coffee (one pound was donated by Katie Hollinger), and served twelve quarts of milk, sixteen cakes, 288 sandwiches, and one bushel of apples. A total of 344 servicemen enjoyed this welcome food, the cakes reminding them of their mom's cooking. In March Henry Viets, a banker with the 1st National Bank, went with his wife to help her serve cookies and coffee at the canteen in Pittsburg. He reported most of the soldiers on the troop train had not been off the train for twenty-four hours and were very appreciative of the refreshments. By the war's end, a similar canteen in nearby Neodesha, Kansas, had served over 200,000 men.

The beginning months of 1944 showed steady progress in Europe. The Allies (British, American, Canadian, and Free French troops), landed at Anzio, Italy, and began massive bombing of Germany. German troops surrendered in the Crimea, but still occupied Hungary.

The largest amphibious invasion in world history began early Tuesday morning, June 6, 1944, when the Allies began their assault on German-occupied Western

Europe. Under the supervision of Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, 150,000 fighting men departed from England and crossed the English Channel to establish a beachhead in France. At midnight, in advance of the invasion, 24,000 airmen had parachuted beyond the beaches of coastal Normandy and 13,000 bombs were dropped. At 6:30 in the morning 5,000 vessels, stretched as far as the eyes could see, began the amphibious landing of Allied infantry and armored divisions. By nightfall, more than 9,000 soldiers, dead or wounded, were strewn on the fifty-mile stretch of beaches. The names of the beaches - Omaha, Utah, Gold, Juno, and Sword - became household words. This massive operation, a decisive victory for the Allies, was named Operation Overlord, but became more famously known as D-Day.

At home, families clustered around the radio for the breaking news. An American journalist based in London made history with his broadcast from the deck of a ship at the start of the D-Day invasion. He described the black shadows of the ships with planes flying overhead. Through the broadcast, the sounds of heavy bombardment - bombs bursting, sirens wailing, and aircraft flying low - brought listeners directly to the front line.

That night FDR called the nation to their knees in prayer to invoke a divine blessing on the Allied armies. "Our sons, pride of our nation . . . lead them straight and true; give strength to their arms, stoutness to their hearts, and steadfastness to their faith."

An editorial in the *Girard Press* followed the next day. "The greatest military movement in all history was opened with the landing of the armies of the Allies on the coast of France. . . . The start has been successful. There is every reason to believe that the Allies under the command of Gen. Eisenhower are perfectly prepared for the task that lies ahead. In training, in equipment, in supplies, in coordinated support, in command, the Allies are ready for the supreme test of war. . . . Americans can hope for steady progress toward Berlin. . . . But victory, full and complete, is the goal. It alone promises security for the future. The men on the coast of France are determined to win. And they will!"

In the Pacific, Gen. Douglas MacArthur led the US in defeating the Japanese in a massive air battle in the Philippine Sea. The Japanese lost more than 400 planes and three carriers. The enemy on Saipan surrendered in July, and the US troops made an amphibious assault on the island of Guam. The Japanese navy became virtually powerless. B-29 bombers began the bombing campaign against mainland Japan in November.

Each month showed progress in Europe. In August, the Allies liberated Paris, in September they entered Germany, and in October they entered Greece, forcing it to surrender after German troops withdrew. In December, Germany began its last-ditch offensive with the start of the Battle of the Bulge.

Optimism ran high with all the progress overseas; the Girard Chamber of Commerce began thinking about the end of the war and started to plan for a postwar program.

A survey to ascertain the demand for labor and materials would be forthcoming. Government plans for demobilization would be a slow process. A point system would be used to determine the return to civilian life of servicemen. It would be based on length of service, overseas time, combat credit and the number of dependents. Plans were being made to observe V-Day, for "Victory in Europe is not far away!"

However, the war wasn't over. Raw materials in many areas were still needed. Among the adults, the earlier zeal for various drives ebbed; the people had searched in all corners and given what they had. Most of the scrap paper drives fell short of their quotas because the children couldn't do it all. The Girard school children went out into the fields and along roadways to gather milkweed pods. They received twenty cents per bag, but more importantly, the boys and girls knew it took about two onion bags full of the pods to make a life-saving vest. The soft, glossy floss of the milkweed pod would replace the use of the scarce kapok normally used in "Mae West" life jackets.

The 1944 presidential election brought forth fast and furious voting over the country, piling up a record total. Morning showers in Pittsburg failed to keep voters away. A. J. Cripe, baker of "Town Talk" bread in Pittsburg, won the race for Senator from Kansas. The Republicans maintained a monopoly in the statehouse, all eight electoral votes of Kansas went to Thomas E. Dewey., and an all GOP delegation was sent to Congress. In Crawford County, Dewey received 8,857 votes and Roosevelt had the lesser number of 8,182 votes. However, Girard counted 793 Democratic votes against 409 for the Republicans. Across the nation, Roosevelt garnered a large electoral vote for his fourth term.

This did not make Everett Sneed too happy as he was quite outspoken in his dislike for the policies of Roosevelt.

1945

The new year began with the sad news of the death of Cpl. Henry Bayless, Jr., a popular Girard boy. He was a flexible gunner in the army air corps. Cpl. Bayless was killed when the B-24 bomber exploded and burned eight miles west of Boise, Idaho, on a routine flight. The funeral was a large one attended by most people in town, including Ed. It was noted later in the year that Cpl. Bayless was the only soldier buried in the Girard cemetery, though twenty-four other bodies reposed elsewhere at that time.

Two Girard boys had been wounded in action. Max Schiffendecker, promoted to lieutenant on the battlefield, had fought in France, Belgium, and into Germany. Lieut. Winger was awarded a bronze star in France. Dean Christian was reported to be a prisoner of war in Germany. There was sad news at home, also. An aviator was killed in a crash near Farlington. Piloting a P-38 fighter, he was on a routine

training flight from his base at Coffeyville. The plane hit in a cornfield and bounced through a hedge. The body was thrown sixty feet from the accident.

More marriages in the Sneed family continued. Leroy (Bud) and Ruthie Wright were married on January 6, 1945.

On March 31, the preacher from Kincaid Baptist church made his way down to 316 West Forest Street where he performed the wedding ceremony for Wilma and Cpl. Walter Ragonese. James and Gertrude "stood up" with them. Wilma was seventeen and Walt was nineteen. Shortly after the wedding, Walt returned to his army base and Wilma stayed home until a place to live in Columbus, Georgia, could be located. After diligently searching for housing, Walt finally located a small room. Wilma then caught a train and joined Walt.

Activities during the month of January included the annual day of prayer sponsored by the Ministerial Alliance. Waste fats were still needed. A call to the high school would see that the Girl Reserves picked it up. And there were still drives going on. This time it was for clothing for war victims. Sauer's on the south side of the square advertised dresses for \$8.95, Firestone would recap tires for \$7 each, and the Girard Press subscription went up to \$2.00 a year. Weekly ads featured large boxes of soap powder – Duz or Oxydol for 23 cents or Super Suds 2/35 cents. A giant box of Wheaties was fifteen cents. People began seeing the light at the end of the long, dark tunnel.

The next month it was announced that Girard was assured of having a soybean mill with construction to start the next week. The plant was in operation by April, running twenty-four hours and processing 750 bushels of beans a day. Nine men were employed. Editor Shideler commented, "The new industry is a good thing for this vicinity, not only for the employment it affords, but also because of the encouragement it gives to the planting of soybeans by offering a good market." The acreage of soybeans planted had more than tripled in two years.

Planning for the postwar world began to take shape. Veterans' benefits for those who had served were seen principally as payment for services rendered. Roosevelt's proposals would offer opportunities for education, improve hospitalization and rehabilitation programs, and provide generous pensions for the disabled. These provisions for the readjustment of veterans to civilian life were called the GI Bill of Rights. The first GI Loan went to a Girard boy, Fred W. Downey. The loan was for the purchase of an attractive home in Topeka. Fred had been given a medical discharge from the army after four years of active service, most of the time in Newfoundland in the engineer corps. The GI Bill would allow returning soldiers the opportunity to prepare for better-paying, more interesting jobs. The end of the war seemed to be in sight as the Allies pressed on into Germany.

In April of 1945, during the beginning of Roosevelt's fourth term, there was increasing concern about his health which had become noticeably fragile. To rest and regain his strength, the president traveled to the "Little White House" in Warm Springs, Georgia. While sitting for a portrait, he suffered a massive cerebral hemorrhage that quickly ended his life on April 12. Network radio interrupted programming with a terse bulletin reporting the news. Black-bordered notices appeared in magazines and newspapers.

The editor of the *Pittsburg Sun*, F. W. Brinkerhoff, said, "It must be left to history to determine the lasting fame of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Time will make the decision. Partisanship stops at the water's edge, it has been said, with respect to patriotism. And now partisanship and all political animosities fade away under the flag of the nation as it floats at half-mast." Flags in Girard were flown at half-mast, and the children were dismissed from school as the nation mourned the passing of the 32nd president. Many thought the world couldn't exist after the death of Roosevelt.

Vice-president Harry S Truman, who was meeting with Speaker Sam Rayburn when the news came, now became in charge of a country still fighting the Second World War and in possession of a weapon with unknown and terrifying power. Truman, kept in the dark about this means of large scale destruction, was left with the difficult decision of whether or not to use the atomic bomb.

Earlier in the month, a committee working in Girard suggested contingency plans for V-E Day, or Victory in Europe. An orderly celebration was recommended because many homes are saddened and others are uneasy. The newspaper reported, "It is impossible to say what conditions will bring about V-E Day – whether it will be collapse, or disintegration, or something else. The indications now are that V-E and V-J Day, however, may not be coincident, but most forecasters predict V-E Day is nearest. Religious life is all important." The following guide lines were brought forth:

1. Religious ceremony at Kincaid Baptist Church at 8:p.m.
2. Schools kept going with suitable programs.
3. Additional police officials should not be needed, but provided as needed.
4. Taverns, etc. remain closed for 24 hours after notification.
5. Cooperation by all is necessary and requested.

In eager anticipation of peace, Girard's famous magnolia tree began blooming at 300 E. Prairie Ave., with indications for a beautiful presentation to follow. Girard residents have been visiting this tree when it is blooming for about half a century.

In March the Western Allies in Europe, under Gen. Omar Bradley and Gen. Montgomery, crossed the Rhine River and smashed through the heavily fortified Siegfried Line, opening the path to central Germany. The Russians moved into

Berlin from the opposite direction. After Hitler's death, Germany unconditionally surrendered. May 8, celebrated as Victory in Europe, or V-E Day, marked the end of the war on the European front.



Similar headlines were in the
Girard Press, May 10, 1945: “Victory in Europe!
Teamwork of United Nations Ends Long and Bitter Struggle
US Turns to Job in Pacific”

Girard celebrated V-E Day quietly “in a simple, but sensible and sincere way. Stores and offices were closed and in the evening a large audience assembled in the Baptist Church where Rev. C. T. Cotton of the Methodist church delivered an impressive discourse and prayers.” A notice was put out that rationing would continue, but in a more relaxed manner.

The Potsdam Declaration was issued by the Allied leaders on July 6, 1945. It called for an unconditional surrender by Japan and promised a peaceful government to result. If not accepted, it would bring a prompt and utter destruction. The Japanese government debated, but the United States heard nothing. On August 6, the *Enola Gay*, an American B-29 plane, dropped an atomic bomb on the city of Hiroshima, killing more than 70,000 people and destroying a five-square-mile expanse of the city. There was still no word from the Japanese. Three days later, a second bomb landed on Nagasaki, killing another 40,000. The following day, Emperor Hirohito accepted the terms for surrender. If the atomic bombs had not been used, it was estimated that over one million lives would have been lost by an invasion of Japan, the majority of which would have been United States soldiers.

President Harry S Truman announced Japan's surrender on August 14, but said that the proclamation of V-J Day must wait upon the formal signing of the surrender terms by Japan. Throughout the United States people celebrated.

All businesses were closed, but Walt and Wilma went out into the crowded streets of Columbus, Georgia, and rejoiced along with many other Fort Benning soldiers.

In Girard, Ed put on his hat with “V” for victory on the brim and whooped and hollered with the rest.



A formal
surrender
ceremony
held aboard
battleship
Missouri in

w a s
t h e
U S S
T o k y o

Bay on September 2, 1945, effectively ending World War II.

With big sighs of relief, families looked forward to purchasing the items that they had done without for several years. The War Production Board revoked 210 war-time controls, but 125 remained. Several billion dollars worth of war orders were cancelled. This resulted in a long list of commodities becoming available for civilian consumption. It was estimated that three and a half million radios would be offered for sale by the end of the year. Nylon and rayon stockings would soon become abundant for the ladies to purchase. Sheets, towels, and other linens would be plentiful in a month or so. Men's civilian clothing would be in short supply as returning service men would need them on their return to civilian life. Shoes were no longer on the ration list. Canned goods would no longer be rationed, but sugar would continue to be scarce for another year. Gasoline was off the list. More tires had been made available in June, but by September, the tire situation had become worse due to strikes in large tire plants.

Workers were still in short supply in 1945; help was needed in the harvest. Earl, fifteen years old, went to western Kansas to work in the wheat harvest, following in the footsteps of Bud, who had gone the year before. After working hard all summer, Earl returned home two inches taller and thirty pounds lighter. He bought a '34 Chevy with the wages he had saved.

In previous years Ed had earned a little money by selling the Saturday Evening Post. Barbershops were the best customers, but one had to be prompt as they became quite unhappy if the magazine was not delivered on time. Ed and Earl divided the mile-square city of Girard and distributed the Dollar Saver to everyone in town. The paper contained sales and coupons from the merchants of Girard. This route was continued until moving to Farlington in March of Ed's eighth grade.

Around the Girard square, Lamb's Firestone store sent out word that it had just received three electric mixers. Sell & Sons were back as G. E. dealers as they were before the war when G. E. shelved all consumer goods. Girard Appliance Co. announced that new Maytags were coming soon. In other good news, the community was glad to hear that Dr. Schulte would be released from service soon and would be coming home. He had been a medical officer since 1942. The town dentist would be coming back, too.

The new 1946 Chevrolet was on display at Girard Motor Co. Improvements had been made in appearance and utility over former models, though anything would look good! Stevens Motor Co. on the north side of the square said they would reserve a certain percentage of the new 1946 Fords for those buyers who had served in the armed forces. Business was booming and new shops opening – one for recapping and vulcanizing of tires, a new gas service station, and a new lumber yard.

December brought the year to an end with five to six inches of snowfall and temperatures ten below zero.



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After-thoughts

Ed was born on a farm south of Girard. Before long, his parents, Myrtle and Everett Sneed, rented a house in the western part of Girard; within a short time they moved to 204 St. John Street. They lived there for a couple of years before a home was purchased at 316 W. Forest (probably around 1938). The family lived there until Everett decided to try farming once again. With the end of the war, factories returned to the manufacturing of farming equipment. Tractors and other machinery then became available to farmers. The move to Farlington was made in March 1947.

James and Gertrude met at a box supper in a local school. Though neither one attended there, they enjoyed the social activity. (Both had dropped out of school after the eighth grade.) James and Gertrude attended dances at a large hall called the Grapevine. When calling to pick up his date, James got tired “sitting around waiting for her to finish ironing” before they could leave, so he asked to marry her.

A small diesel train made up of the engine and one or two cars operated from Kansas into Missouri, passing through Girard. Everett Sneed called it the “Doodle Bug.” Ed would catch it and ride to Walnut, Kansas, to visit Harold and Louise. After spending a few days, Louise would put him back on the train for Girard. One day before Ed entered school, he went with his mother to Joplin on the “Doodle-Bug.” One place visited was Chrisman’s Department Store, where Ed saw a parrot. It talked to him and said, “Hi, boy! Hi, boy!” This embarrassed Ed, and he always remembered the encounter. .

In 1940 the Stevens family had a big dinner with all of the family in attendance. Grandma Stevens gave Ed a little goose, the smallest one of the latest hatching. It became quite a pet and followed him everywhere. The goose grew and grew . . . until it became Thanksgiving dinner.

On hot summer days Ed, his older brothers, and their friends would ride their bicycles a mile east of Girard to a small creek to swim. The swimming hole was called “Pebble Bottom” for the small stones that covered the bottom.

One time a Piper cub plane landed in a farmer’s pasture to the west of town and offered rides. Ed and Earl (about 11 and 13) scrambled around to find fifty cents apiece for a short ride. The pilot took them up, one at a time, and circled over town for about fifteen minutes. Earl, going first, gave Ed the bravery to go, too.

