GONE BUT NOT
FORGOTTEN
THE ENDS OF WARS AND
OTHER REMEMBRANCES

*Lifescapes* is a program designed for seniors to write their life stories. Over eighty individual books and group anthologies have been published since the project began in 2000. Books created by the project are available to view on our website: [www.lifescapesmemoirs.net](http://www.lifescapesmemoirs.net).

Each year members meet from September through April, reading and discussing literature and sharing their own stories, with publication of the annual anthology in May.

Since 2005 marked the 60th anniversary of WWII, it was agreed that the annual Lifescapes anthology topic should be “The End of War.” This elicited a diverse group of memoirs from people who had been in wars or who had been affected in various ways by them. Personal wars could also be addressed, with ones self or involving others. These writings are stirring, poignant and reveal great depth of character in the people involved. They will hopefully provoke some thoughtful understanding and ideas about the nature of wars and their resolution.

We hope you will enjoy this collection.
This book was created as part of Lifescapes: Senior Writing Program, a cooperative project of the Washoe County Library System, University of Nevada English Department, ElderCollege, and Nevada Humanities.

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LIFESCAPES

Joy Gifford

Lifesapes is a unique class that allows participants to share experience beyond the surface, beyond the everyday mask of shallow interactions. In Lifesapes we who started as strangers are able to write our innermost thoughts on paper, writing memories and thoughts that may have lain dormant for years and then read aloud as others in the group listen attentively. Sometimes these thoughts are humorous, sometimes sad or tragic, sometimes a slice of life, always compelling. This process allows us for brief moments to glimpse into the souls of the reader and experience our commonality, the gift of oneness. Hearing the stories read out loud broadens our scope as we grasp the material that is being shared and are stimulated to delve deeper into our own memories.

Everyone has stories bottled up inside and Lifesapes gives us the tools to bring these stories to the surface to be published or merely set aside for our children and grandchildren. Whether to strive for publication or not is moot. What is important is the experience of writing and sharing, the interaction with the group and the satisfaction of the experience.

November 25, 2005

During the great depression, Joy Gifford entered the world at White Pine County Hospital in Ely, NV. As an adult, Joy lived in the San Francisco Bay area for many years and often wondered if a little girl from a mining camp in the west could find happiness in such a cosmopolitan area. In time, Joy learned happiness is a state of mind, not of geography.
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Surely one of the most chaotic experiences I observed in my lifetime was the period immediately following the Second World War, when I was a young boy of thirteen. When my brothers returned from serving in the Armed Forces, there were a lot of problems. First of all, there was a critical housing shortage. For two brothers, John and Joe who were married, this was difficult. Joe and his wife struggled but finally found an apartment. John and his wife had a baby boy and eventually rented rooms in my parents’ home. My brother Kelly, who was single, simply moved in with us. Relationships between some members of the family were strained. Some of my sisters didn’t get along with my sisters-in-law. Also, my Mother didn’t care much for John’s wife, Helen. The proximity of living quarters definitely contributed to that tension.

All of my brothers were hell-bent on catching up on lost time. John was a practicing attorney when he entered the service and was most anxious to resume law practice. Joe was an Engineering graduate and was determined to be a
millionaire before the age of forty. He got a job as an engineer during the day and worked at home in the evenings on various ideas he had. Kelly was perhaps the most anxious of all the brothers. Unlike John and Joe, he didn't have a college degree and immediately enrolled at the University of Minnesota after being discharged from the Army. He worked at a part time job while attending school in addition to competing for the university boxing team. On top of all this, he attempted to maintain an active social life by going bar hopping at night with his childhood buddy. The result of all this was failure. He simply tried to bite off more than he could chew. His grades suffered and he didn't do well in boxing because he didn't train hard enough. Eventually all of my brothers became successful. John developed a flourishing law practice. Joe and Kelly started an engineering company in California that prospered.

Sometimes I think about what things would be like if there hadn't been a War, if the boys never left to serve in the Armed Forces but simply remained in civilian life. Would they have had the same drive to advance their careers? Would there have been this compulsive need to "catch up"? I really don't know. Conventional wisdom tells us that military service can be a life-changing experience. I think this would be most likely for those servicemen who performed in combat. Kelly, who served in the Medical Corps in Europe, was the only brother who had been in a combat zone. Like a lot of World War II veterans, none of my brothers talked a lot about their military service. I think they were all just too focused on reentering civilian life.

I wonder about the effect of being from a big family had on all of this. There were nine children, five sisters and four brothers, born about two years apart except for me, eight years younger than my youngest sister. Like everything, a big family has its pros and cons. I think it promotes independence and consideration of others. It can be a source of family pride. Paradoxically, I think it can also promote self-centeredness. Because so many of your siblings are striving to make their way in the world, you tend to focus on what progress YOU’RE making and not necessarily paying that much attention to the others. Of course there's also sibling rivalry which can become more intense the bigger the family. In our family, because of personality differences, there were often arguments going on. Not all the time, of course. When we would get together to socialize, we would usually have a good time but you just never knew when something was going to happen. A lot of us were real touchy.

Being of Lebanese descent, maybe our ethnic ancestry contributed to this attitude. Like a lot of other ethnic groups in those days, you could say more attention was paid to the boys then the girls. My Dad, for example, felt that as long as the girls married a good husband that was fine. But as far as education was concerned, that was primarily for the boys. I think that even at that time,
some of the girls resented that they didn’t have the same opportunity. The focus which all of my brothers placed on catching up on their careers may have resulted in some of my sisters feeling ignored. They felt that my brothers, particularly John and Joe, may have a college education but really didn’t know much about woman. Two of my sisters, Betty and Joan, were especially combative with the boys, particularly John and Joe. Joan in particular felt "put down" by the boys. The cramped conditions and difficulties after the War exacerbated these feelings.

I had four brothers-in-law. None of them served in the armed forces during the War. One was too old and had children but I was never really sure about the others. There didn't appear to be any resentment of them by my brothers, at least overtly. Again, my brothers were so preoccupied with their respective careers that I really don’t think they thought much about it.

As a young boy, I never really understood why my brothers were so preoccupied in catching up on their careers. Sure, I thought it’s only right that they should want to make up for the time they lost while in service, but they seemed to exclude almost everything else while doing so. I was especially disappointed that they didn’t pay more attention to me. Not that they ignored me. Joe and John would every so often ask me how my grades were going. Periodically, all three would measure my height and felt sure I would reach six feet, (none of them were over 5' 9"). I didn’t. I was anxious to socialize with them and was resentful that Joe and John spent so much time with their wives and Kelly spent so much time with his buddy, Al.

More than anything though, I was confused about how abruptly life changed. During the War, the safety of my brothers was always on our minds. We would pray for the end of the War and their safe return. After all of them came back safe and sound, we didn’t seem to spend that much time being grateful. To the contrary, everyone seemed to forget about the dangers experienced by the servicemen and the constraints on those on the home front. It seemed that all of the suppressed needs and desires during the War exploded after the War ended. Food that was previously scarce was consumed with a passion. Cars, whose production was halted during the War, were in huge demand. To help satisfy demand, some new cars even had wooden bumpers! (I guess because there wasn't enough steel to meet the demand). During the War, gasoline was rationed and driving was very limited. After the War, everyone wanted to drive everywhere. Nightclubs and all sorts of entertainment flourished. There seemed to be a collective desire to forget the war years and move on.

I just couldn’t understand a lot of this. Oh yes, it was great to be able to do things and eat food that we couldn’t get during the War but why didn’t we
reflect more on what happened? Although my brothers didn't want to talk much about the War, what was more surprising was that members of my family didn't seem that interested in asking them questions about the War. Perhaps the experience of living during the War for both those in the Military as well as civilians was so disturbing they just wanted to remove it from their memories. For me it was different. I had a lot of questions. How tough were the German and Jap soldiers? Did they really hate us like we hated them? What was their equipment like compared to ours? Were European girls pretty? My brother Kelly did bring home some souvenirs which I found fascinating. Included were a German Army helmet, a bayonet and a sword. Occasionally I would ask Kelly questions and we would discuss his experiences briefly.

After a few years, I too lost interest in the War and like so many others became preoccupied with my own interests. As I grew into the teen years and entered high school, World War II seemed a distant past. We were now in the Cold War. Our former enemies like Germany and Japan became our friends and our former ally Russia became our enemy. The world got “topsy turvy.” Everyone was afraid of the consequences of the Atomic Bomb and whether or not Russia would get one. They did. "The Iron Curtain" became a common phrase after Churchill coined it in a speech at Fulton College in Missouri. The Berlin Air Lift became a symbol of the West’s response to the Soviet Union after they placed an embargo on shipments to Berlin. It was a strange and different time. Were we at war or not?

Then, incredibly, it was War again. The month I graduated from high school North Korea invaded South Korea. Unfortunately, Kelly was in the Army Reserve and got called up for active duty. He was in the Army again! After serving one year in Korea, he returned home safe once more. As for me, I received a student deferment from the War because I went on to attend college. The euphoria which took place immediately after World War II dissipated when the Cold War began. We never experienced such euphoria again.

Will there always be a "catch up" mentality of members of the armed forces returning home? I suppose so. But I don't think it will ever be the same as after the end of World War II. Unlike that period, there doesn't seem to be a sense of finality to things. After the Second World War, most people thought the world would now be peaceful and all they needed to be concerned about was getting on with their lives. As the First World War proved not to be the War to end all Wars, the Second World War also failed in ending all wars. Since then there has been a continuation of all types of wars up to and including our present War on Terrorism. The "Catch Up" mentality of returning veterans today is tempered by the necessity of always having to be prepared for another unexpected crisis anywhere in the world.
As I mentioned before, would the "catch up" mentality still prevail in my brothers even without the interruption in their lives? Perhaps the excessive desire to focus on their careers was always there and was simply accentuated by the return from service. Maybe I would have felt neglected even if they had never been away and had remained home during the time I was growing up. The only thing I’m sure of is the impression I had as a youth during that period and how I wished it had been different.

Ron Abdo was born in 1932 in Minneapolis, MN, the youngest of nine children. His parents immigrated to the United States in 1909 from Lebanon. Shortly after graduating from college, he moved to California. After retirement he and his wife moved to Reno in 2002.
WHEN HOWARD CAME

Ken Adams

It actually happened to me once when I was young: I learned something of value; something worthwhile. This was not something that happened with regularity. It was very much a “sometimes” sort of thing that only happened when circumstance and happenstance and all the world’s events conspired around me and the wind was from the west and the moon was in its proper phase. Then I could travel beyond long division, decimals and dead Presidents; I could go past subjects and verbs and spelling MASSACHUSETTS; I could move through memorization to the land of learning about something that counted, that really mattered. I made that voyage of learning and awareness the summer of 1945, the August I turned eleven and the War ended and Howard, my cousin, came to live with us.

Howard was coming and I could barely contain myself! Howard, my cousin: the soldier, the hero, the battle casualty, the prisoner-of-war was coming to live with us and I was going to find out all about the war and the battles and being shot and held captive by the cruel and vicious Nazis. Howard was coming, and only weeks after his release from an army hospital and discharge from active duty. He was coming to start classes at the University of Nevada so that he could finish work on a degree, interrupted by the war. He was going to live with us because according to my folks, things were “too tough” on everyone back in Nebraska where he had lived and gone to school. Did I understand and would I help out by not being a pest and bothering Howard? Of course I didn’t understand and of course promising not to be a nuisance was the easiest thing in the world for me to do. How could I be a pest, when all I wanted to do was ask Howard a few questions about the war? How could that be a bother? The war was the war, that’s just the way it was. There’d been a war somewhere every year I’d been alive: in China, Manchuria, Ethiopia, Spain, Poland---then all over the whole world. What could be wrong with my finding out as much about it as I could, especially when it was so far, far away? Movies, newreels, magazines, newspapers and the radio were all about the war, so what could be so bad or such a bother?

Howard came, finally, in early August. He arrived on the 2nd or 3rd and I remember how I thought it would be so neat to have him with us on the 4th, my
birthday. I made sure my Battle of the Bulge field maps were pinned on the bedroom wall, even though the war in Europe was over. I wanted to find out for sure if it had been near Malmedy or Saint Vith that my cousin had been wounded and captured, so I mounted the maps where the light was best, even though it meant taking down Okinawa and one of the small Home Islands of Japan maps I’d put up to get ready for the invasion. I raided my unit insignia collection and made a special assortment of Battle of the Bulge unit patches. I couldn’t wait to show off this special shrine!

Dad and Mom brought Howard home from the train station, and when he got out of the car, I thought they’d picked up the wrong person by mistake. The stooped, gaunt old-looking man could not possibly have been my cousin. His movements were slow and his walking was hesitant and jerky. He was, to me, beyond thin, nearly skeletal. His face seemed almost shrunken, his hair was thin and wispy and his eyes seemed to have receded into his skull, where they looked out as if from black tunnels. No, this was not the cousin who had been part of our family that summer before the war. This had to be a stranger, not Howard; but then he smiled and I knew I’d been mistaken. It really was my cousin. Dad grabbed a large suitcase from the trunk and we all went into the house, where everything I’d planned so carefully just seemed to fall apart. Howard was tired from the trip and completely ignored the maps and didn’t seem to even care about the insignia. I admit I was over persistent in my attempts to steer the conversation towards the war, but I was being treated as if I weren’t even there. I met the silence and the changed subjects with still more questions about the war, asked in a still louder voice. The results with Howard were the same, but my Dad got that funny jaw-grinding look and before I knew it I was propelled down the hall and into my room. Dad shut the door, way beyond firmly, and we had yet another of our “meetings of the board” where as was the rule, Dad talked and I listened. Yes, I remembered our talk; and Yes, I remembered my promise; and No, there was nothing wrong with my hearing; and No, I would not mention the war ever again.

I stuck to my promise for the next couple of days, until my cousin started having his nightmares. He and my brother shared a room in the basement and the bad dream commotion was loud enough to awaken me upstairs. Gary, my brother, told me that he’d calm Howard down and then they’d talk until they went back to sleep. I was afraid I might be missing out on some good war stories, but Gary said no. They talked about grown-up stuff I wouldn’t understand, like good and bad and right and wrong and “man’s inhumanity to man,” whatever that meant. My brother was right. I didn’t understand, even after I looked up inhumanity in the dictionary. I was more confused than ever. How could inhumanity ever be good or right? I figured that maybe Howard was confused,
too, since Gary said the nightmares were probably due to having so much bad war stuff bottled up inside. I decided right then to help out by prompting my cousin to share the bad experiences he’d had with me. He could get them off his chest and out of his mind and maybe be able to sleep at night. All I had to do was not directly disobey my parents or otherwise act in any inhumane way. I didn’t say one word to anyone, about the war or anything. I simply deployed my entire army of toy soldiers and hardware of war down the basement stairs in what I imagined to be the proper formations for a German Panzer division making a lightning assault through allied lines, similar to what actually happened in the Ardennes in Belgium the previous December. I deployed my troops and waited in the darkness of the laundry room near the bottom of the stairs.

It wasn’t a long wait. Howard arrived home with my folks. He’d been downtown buying a swimsuit to wear to my belated birthday party. We’d go Sunday afternoon when the store was closed and we’d have a picnic and a cake and everything. The whole family had to talk him into going swimming, and I had to practically beg him before he finally agreed. Now he was back, coming down the basement stairs, new swimsuit in hand. I waited until he was halfway down the stairs before I unleashed my Panzer units. Honoring my solemn promises to my parents, I didn’t say one word about the war. I simply opened up with everything I had: all of my division’s firepower firing for effect. It’s completely true that I alone was the source of every one of the battle sounds, from the artillery to the huge cannons of the Tiger and Panther tanks, to the machine guns and rifles of the infantry support troops. Well rehearsed during countless hours of playing at war and well studied, absorbing countless hours of war movies and newsreels and staring at thousands upon thousands of stark black and white combat photos in news magazines, I must have been effective, because Howard became a casualty as he stumbled and fell down the bottom two steps. He got up, too slowly I thought, and ignoring my queries as to his condition, limped into his room. The door slammed with such force that pictures fell from the wall. I was terrified, and ran upstairs as fast as I could. I waited, hoping somehow to hear Howard coming up the stairs, but there was only an awful silence that remained unbroken for ten or so terrifying minutes. I hadn’t told my folks what had happened and I had this image of my cousin, somehow badly injured, prone and bleeding on the concrete floor. I knew I had to do something, but didn’t know what. At that moment, before I could do anything that might have made matters worse, a loud animal-like roar issued from the basement depths:

“Kenny! Damn it, get down here! Now!” It was my cousin, apparently all right, exercising a command presence with such volume as to cause me to pound back down the stairs to the bedroom.
All but saluting, I entered the basement bedroom and saw something I was not expecting, but will never forget. Howard stood there in his new swimsuit, baring to me for the first time the horrifying ravages of war on a human body. I stood there, gape-jawed and staring, as a bare and withered arm snaked out with amazing speed and a claw-like hand grabbed me. “Take a look! Take a good look, because this is what war does to you! This is what war is all about!” I was crying, but I did as I was told and what I saw I will long remember. I looked at the pitiful remains of a shoulder and the skeletal arm that held me, an arm that would never be able to raise as high as its shattered socket. I looked at the effects of metal projectiles impacting on human flesh. I saw a body that was no longer complete. It was missing great chunks from everywhere: roast-like, steak-like, cutlet-like gobs of Howard’s body, from his shoulder down to his ankles, were simply gone. God help me, I was put in mind of a mostly-eaten drumstick. There were scars, scars everywhere, from neck to feet. There were scars with different shades of coloration, from a red-pinkish salmon color to an oyster shade of fish-belly white and the texture was like sausage casings, smooth and shiny over whatever lay beneath. As he relaxed his grip on my arm, Howard looked in my eyes and said, with deep feeling:

“Remember, Kenny, war is a place you don’t want to go.”

I had just learned that war is very real and very much about real people, not movie stars in war movies. Images on a screen or on a page can reflect reality but they cannot be reality. They are simply not the same, even to a just turned eleven year old. I learned this lesson on August 6, 1945. I remember the date because it is the day the Atom Bomb fell on Hiroshima, Japan. Three days later, Nagasaki would be A bombed and six days after that, Japan would surrender, finally ending World War II.

Ken Adams is a native Nevadan, born in Tonopah. He spent his early years in Las Vegas and Reno and writes of boyhood recollections of, wistfully, learning and growing. It is his fervent hope that this wonderful process of involved awareness will continue for the rest of his life and, further, that he’ll get better at it as time goes by.
May 1944 – Five years after we first met at Purdue University in Indiana, Ed Albrecht and I were married on Treasure Island in the Navy Chapel, near San Francisco, California. Our marriage began in the middle of World War II. I was doing war work at the Maritime Commission in San Francisco and Ed had just returned from his first deployment as a Naval Officer aboard the aircraft carriers flying the F4U – Corsair, a fighter plane. We were to spend the next six months together as a new squadron was being formed to continue the fight against Japan in the Pacific theatre.

In November 1944, the squadron was sent from Alameda, California to Fallon, Nevada to do some final training. At the time Fallon was very small and we would see on the street corners groups of Indians sitting on benches up against the buildings soaking up the Nevada sun. We found lodging in what was called a Motor Court. Our friends, Emm and Dick, had a trailer in the court. They had an oven but no bathroom. We, Ed and I, had a cabin with a bathroom. The four of us shared the facilities and we cooked our first Thanksgiving turkey that November of 1944. Soon it was time to return to Alameda, as the squadron was ready to deploy. Also at this time I had become pregnant and we were both thrilled to know that we were starting our family. Ed’s parents flew to Alameda from Brooklyn, New York and his parents and I said our sad good-byes as Ed returned to the war zone. The three of us left the West Coast and drove our little red Ford coupe back to Brooklyn to await the arrival of THE baby. The ability to conduct an everyday existence seemed almost impossible with the stress of not knowing what was happening to Ed and the fear that the continuing strife would never end. The news of the war came only through the news media. The few letters I received were heavily censored so I knew only that he was in an arena where fighting was continuing to take place.

August 1945 – The news came of the surrender of the Japanese. Ed told me later that he was sitting in his aircraft ready for another sortie over Japan when the strike was called off. He said he had a feeling if he had flown that day, he might not have returned from that flight. Meanwhile on June 2, 1945 our first child was born. Ed had received the news through the Red Cross and was looking forward to seeing his new daughter, Lynn Carol. Lynn was six months
old when her Dad saw her for the first time. His homecoming was a joy to all of us who had prayed and hoped for his safe return.

Carol Albrecht was born in Lafayette, IN. She married a Naval Officer who spent 27 years as a naval flyer. She has two daughters, one in San Jose, CA and the other in Port Townsend, WA. She moved to Reno in 1999 from Pensacola, FL, where she and her husband had retired. It was when her husband was stationed in the Philippines that she took up Oriental Brush painting, a class she currently teaches at ElderCollege. Art has always been her passion and her love; she has taught at Special Arts of Nevada as well as the Silver Connection at St. Mary’s. Carol is moving this year to Port Townsend, WA, to be near her daughter and family.
ARRESTED AT THE BORDER

Janice Corbelli

My friend and I had planned a nice weekend in Dresden. He hadn’t been out of Eastern Europe for over four years due to his Bulgarian citizenship. Visas were required for him to enter all Western European countries and his applications were always denied. In April, 2001, the law was changed and visas are now no longer required, but this is no guarantee that they are free to cross the borders. Some may enter and some are turned back. I have a U.S. passport.

We decided to take a chance, expecting that if they refused him entry we would simply turn around and go back to Prague, where we were living at the time. Well dressed in suit and tie with shined shoes and a short haircut, influence of a 5-year military academy training, he was presentable. Not an average backpacking traveler.

“Come with me!” the grim-faced German border control officer demanded after checking his passport and entering data into the computer. “You must get off the train.” Quickly I grabbed my things and stumbled off behind them. He told me I was free to go but my friend was under arrest. We entered a cold, drab railway station police office. All of our questions were cut short. Cold and rude they refused to give us any idea how long he would be held or what could be done. When my friend asked them to please tell us where I could wait in comfort for him, they also refused to say and told me I had to leave immediately. They kept repeating only, “He’s arrested!”

As I waited at the bottom of the stairs in the cold, it began to rain. The place (where were we anyway?) was deserted. Stark and cold, the dismal place accentuated my mood. What should I do, how could I help, were they beating him? Intimidating and humiliating him? They seemed the epitome of heartless WWII Nazis, triggering a stereotypical American mentality from the past. I wanted to boycott Germany and never go there again. Questions raced through my mind. What about human rights? Who could I call for help? Should I call a lawyer? I waited and worried. How long should I wait? As long as necessary.
Occasionally they came down, crossing the corridor, ignoring me. Finally I approached them and asked if they could please give him a small written message. Again they refused, telling me nothing. I was worried, angry, enraged.

Later, after a few hours, he was released. He told me he had been stripped naked and searched. They went through his bags, filled out a lot of bureaucratic forms which he was forced to sign and then locked him in a room. Maintaining his dignity with mental discipline, he spent the time doing exercises and planning what he would do if they kept him longer. He would have refused food and water, and even resorted to self-inflicting wounds. You see, the damage on the inside is so great that extreme and bizarre actions can result.

Why was he treated so harshly? Because more than 4 years ago he entered their country illegally and was caught and sent back. Now the borders are open yet they still have the right to refuse him entry, but why was he arrested? This was an open, honest intention to visit for one night, not hidden or illegal. How many years must a man be punished for his mistake? On the surface he understands that they must control immigration but inside he is damaged once again by rejection, hostility and prejudice, from a cold world that not only will not help but also takes pleasure in inflicting punishment. Where is compassion for a decent, law-abiding, hard-working man whose only error in judgment many years ago was a result of struggling to survive?
On Sunday, December 7, 1941, my mother, father, older and younger brothers and I went to Sunday evening dinner at my Grandfather’s, as we had done every Sunday since my Grandmother died the year before. My father’s younger sister, Auntie Bee, lived with Grandpa, and a friend of hers called and announced the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. So began the war years in Connersville, Indiana.

Connersville was a small town of about 12,000 souls in 1941 with an assortment of small industries, mostly furniture, pressure blowers, refrigeration and automotive parts. Within months of the attack on Pearl Harbor, nearly all these small businesses had been converted to the manufacture of war materiel. My father, who owned and operated the Connersville Mirror and Glass Works, secured a War Department contract as well. My father was 33 years old at the outset of World War II, with three children. Our “war” was a home-front affair. My memories of those years were mostly happy ones, peppered occasionally by sobering moments.

Mother would clean our living and dining rooms every Wednesday. That part of the house was then dubbed “Japanese Territory” and we never so much as put a toe there until the weekend. My brothers and I were allowed to play in the vacant lot at the end of the alley that ran alongside our house. The vacant lot abutted the railroad bank and we dug a very elaborate system of foxholes where we would hide and pop up screaming and yelling at the troop trains as they passed above us. We were often rewarded with a bombardment of Wrigley’s spearmint chewing gum and tootsie rolls from the soldiers and sailors. We worked extremely hard at making our foxholes livable, lining them with newspapers and stocking them with goodies such as kool-aid and the wonderful almond macaroons and chocolate drop cookies my mother made for us. We had two great aunts and great uncles, plus my grandfather and two aunts and an uncle, who shared their ration stamps with our family. We always seemed to have enough sugar to make those sweet treats we all loved so much. My great aunt Mary and her husband, “dearie” Mike, had always had a huge garden in their back yard. During the war years, Mother would walk with the three of us
from 11th Street to great aunt Mary’s on 3rd Street, with baby Charlie in one wagon and the other empty, to work in the family’s shared victory garden. On the way home, my older brother John and I would take turns pulling the wagon filled with corn, tomatoes, potatoes, rhubarb, onions, peaches, apples and grapes. We canned and preserved all summer (loved watching the grape juice oozing out of the cheesecloth hanging above the sink for that delicious jelly!) so we could “store up” for the winter months. My father built a cold storage area in our basement. We had chickens in our back yard (as did my grandfather) so we were amply provided with eggs and our Sunday dinners. On Christmas Day, 1943, one of my father’s customers, who had no cash to pay for services rendered, brought three goats as payment. My father quickly made a covered wagon for the four of us to ride in, and Billy, Nanny and Gruffy provided hours of hilarious transportation for us. And of course, Nanny helped a great deal with our milk supply. We even built a special foxhole for the goats – for their own protection, of course – which they hated.

My mother had three brothers serving in the Army, Army Air Corps and Navy respectively. My Uncle Joe, who had a law degree from Indiana University, was with the Judge Advocate’s office and never left the States. Uncle Dan was training as a pilot, crashed somewhere in Texas, and spent most of the war years in hospital rehabilitation. Uncle John, my mother’s oldest brother, had graduated from Annapolis and served in World War I. He was in the Pacific during World War II and commanded the battleship Tennessee during the assault on Iwo Jima. Uncle John was a prolific letter-writer and even though his letters were somewhat censored, we heard from him regularly, to my mother’s great relief. The picture of us in our sailor suits was taken to be sent to him. Because of the gas shortages, and all the black out restrictions, we weren’t able to visit my mother’s mother in southern Indiana during the war years at all. She worried and prayed for her mother and her brother constantly and somehow they became the focus of our war.

Because our last name was Heineman, a distinctly German name, we made quite a distinction between the Nazis and the Germans, but we were merciless about the hated “Japs.” There was only once that I remember being called “Heinie” during the war – I gave our tormentor a bloody nose while my brothers watched in horror! My father had a map in his office, detailing the Pacific and European theaters. When my older brother and I would go to the
shop to help pack the pieces of shatter-proof glass Dad was sending to the War Department for tanks, submarine periscopes, and other armored vehicles, we would help Dad move the Allied pin-flags around so we could see where our military forces were advancing or retreating. And without fail, Dad would look at us fondly and remind us to pray for the children, the real victims of any war.

It seems to me that both John and I went to sleep every night praying for children being bombed, starving to death, being imprisoned, orphaned, or some other horrid occurrence. We would then talk about the war while we carefully wrapped heavy paper around the pieces of beveled glass, packed straw tightly around each piece, and sat on the wooden cartons while Dad nailed them shut.

Since we lived in such a small town, we were quite aware of the families whose sons, husbands, brothers or uncles were serving overseas. We knew and felt our parents’ sadness on the nights they left us with an aunt or uncle or grandpa while they made themselves available to a grieving family. I felt, from the ages of four to eight, that this was a “good war” and everyone in our country was united in the effort. How amazed I was to discover, during the years following, that there were actually people who disagreed with the war – the famous Charles Lindberg, for instance! Inconceivable to me at the time.

I helped my older brother deliver the Connersville News-Examiner’s special edition the day in April, 1945, when Franklin Roosevelt died, crying my eyes out, even though John kept saying to me that I was embarrassing him. When my father, listening to Edward R. Murrow (Dad was an avid radio fan), told us all that the war in Europe was finally over, my mother’s first question was whether we could get enough gas to visit her mother in Washington, Indiana. The VE Day celebration in Connersville consisted of the high school band (Connersville had the first high school marching band in the country, 1906!) marching up and down ten blocks of Central Avenue and all the bars staying open all night – that, much to my mother’s disgust! “They should be in Church, praying that the Japanese surrender now,” she told us all as she herded us back home.

With a bit of gas help from our relatives, we were able to take that long-awaited trip to my grandmother’s in southern Indiana in early August 1945. We were already in bed when we were awakened by firecrackers, horns honking, and people running around my grandmother’s neighborhood. The Japanese had surrendered! My teenaged cousins next door had come to the house to make the announcement. They were going downtown to join in the celebration and my older brother and I begged Mother to let us go too. She wouldn’t give in, but did agree to drive us herself. We slowly circumvented the four blocks that made up the core of Washington, Indiana, and hung out the car windows shouting and waving flags. The war was finally over for us.
How innocent I was then! The end of war. My parents thought the Marshall Plan was incredible; a few years later, we cheered the Berlin Airlift; and a mere two years later, we were at war in Korea. The end of war or the inexorable continuation of local, regional and global conflict?

When I joined the Peace Corps in 1961, I believed in the concept that “hands across the sea” could result in many nations understanding and appreciating each other. I believed that we could diplomatically and compassionately work out differences in this world, if only we tried.

Now, 45 years later, these beliefs are difficult to sustain.

Margo Daniels was a Peace Corps Volunteer, 1961-1963, a public librarian for 25 years, and an avid anti-war activist. She and her husband moved from Northern Virginia to Reno in 1998. They have three wonderful children and six incredible grandchildren.
THE JOY OF WAR

Esther Early

---they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.

Isaiah 2:4

War has been a recurrent aspect of human life throughout its history. One has to wonder why something so abhorred and feared has apparently become an inherent condition. Peace and loving kindness to others is always an overwhelming theme playing in the background of the crashing sounds and screams of war. Why hasn’t the desire for peace conquered war itself? One reason may be that we humans seem to only feel wholly alive during the extremes of experience. Encounters with danger wholly arouse our senses and we react with more speed and endurance than would have seemed possible. Likewise, with joyful events we are filled with heightened pleasure and even a sense of euphoria. In between these events we plod along, following the paths set before us; sometimes bored, sometimes longing for the excitement and drama that stimulate our senses and give more meaning to our lives. We love athletic contests and the conquests of the market place, but nothing seems to be as popular as war.

For those of us who lived through WWII as young people, we seemed to be existing between life and death, even in our dreams and nightmares. We were on emotional highs of pride in our country and our soldiers, as well as the fear and horror of what was happening on the battlefields. These things were never totally out of our minds, even when we were laughing, dancing, and working in many ways to support our troops and the other loved ones who served in so many ways.

I was a sophomore in high school when Pearl Harbor was bombed and war was subsequently declared by the United States on the Axis Powers. This was an all-out world war, pitting brother against brother and country against country. Horrible atrocities were committed wounding the soldiers and citizens of the countries involved, and as a result, families were also scarred in emotional
as well as physical ways. All sides worked up to an hysteria of grief and desperation. Psychic wounds as well as physical wounds were inflicted and the results can still be found in mental illnesses and bodily disabilities everywhere in the world. These have been compounded through the wars which have followed, though war itself has often been more clinical, with less physical contact between the warriors and their enemies, including civilians.

Having lived nearly seventy years since the declaration of war following Pearl Harbor, I can more clearly understand the history of what preceded and followed that event. We were as much involved in self-preservation as the citizens of a beleaguered city-state of olden days. We saw in the news, in the papers, and in the movies what happened to people when enemy soldiers moved in, torturing, raping, and pillaging, so we all threw every effort into supporting our troops and winning the war. The issues of victory and defeat pervaded almost every moment of our lives. It seems that when we humans are engaged in battle of any kind, from football matches to shooting wars, we are most fully alive, savoring the essence of life and its many expressions. In defeat we feel crushed and hopeless. We also must suffer the humiliation of being dominated by those we have fought. The dire consequences of lost wars are all too evident.

V-E Day came and went, and we all felt a surge of hope that WWII was coming to an end. We knew there was still terrible fighting going on in the Pacific and we worried about the many thousands of soldiers and prisoners of war whose lives were in jeopardy. Then the atomic bombs were dropped on Japan, and on August 14, 1945 it was announced that the Japanese had accepted unconditional surrender.

I vividly remember when V-J Day was proclaimed. I was attending the University of Nevada and all of us had been totally involved in the world events as they were related to us. When we heard the wonderful news it seemed that everything and everyone erupted into an explosion of joy. The release of fear and the triumph of victory carried us all into a great celebration. We hurried to the center of Reno where everyone seemed to be yelling, singing, crying, hugging each other, and dancing. The service men had thrown away their caps, loosened their collars and were wearing civilian ties, most of them waving drinks in the air and chugging them down. They were kissing the girls and women and we all laughed and kissed them back. One young soldier threw me over his shoulder and started walking toward Douglas Alley. I grabbed onto one of the steel supports of the Reno arch on Virginia Street and held on so tightly that he just walked out from under me. He didn’t even seem aware of what was happening, except that he was very happy.

And so were we all. Happiness ruled that day and many days to follow.
But humanity seems to be suffering from a bi-polar disorder. Too soon the high of victory was followed by the lows of threatened conflict from the cold war, to the regional wars of Viet-Nam, Korea, and on and on. When will it stop?

Esther Early is a native Nevadan, born in Contact, Nevada, which is now a ghost town. She has three children, enjoys travel, writing and her volunteer work in the community. She believes that the creativity of Lifescapes members adds depth and understanding to our lives.
I was seventeen and a teenage senior in high school in Rawlins, Wyoming in 1962. This is the story of how I avoided being drafted into the Viet Nam War. My world was very small and very simple. It consisted of Spruce Street, the main drag; Jay’s Drive In, the local teenage hangout; my parents’ home; my best friend’s parents’ home; the homes of parents of girls I wanted to date; a water tower a short way from town, the local necking spot if you were lucky enough to get a girl to go with you there; and Rawlins High school, where I went to look at girls with my best friend Marvin.

There was a little cloud on the horizon: on the TV screen, the dreaded 6:00 p.m. news. The segments about Viet Nam always seemed to be filmed in an unpleasant green color. I would never sit and watch it, but I was aware of it. I was waiting to ask Dad for a few dollars to use for gas to ride around. I knew better than to interrupt him when he was learning about the day’s war episodes. I stood and watched U.S. soldiers working with a large gun, aiming it toward an unseen enemy. The next scene was a soldier being carried to a helicopter. You could see he was badly wounded. This was not part of my world. It was unbelievable. I was so relieved when Snap, Crackle and Pop jumped onto the screen. I asked Dad for the money. He said, “It’s a good thing you are going to college Roberty Bob (his special nickname for me).” I was terrified because I hadn’t studied much in high school. In fact I had often bragged to Marvin that I would get out of the place without learning one single fact. Could I make it in college or would I flunk out and be sent to face Viet Nam snipers with knives in their teeth running out of the jungle to slash me? I had a nightmarish view of the war, a view I had gained from movies and television. To get my mind off Viet Nam I drove over to Sharon Coates’ house to see if she would go get a coke with me. Her brother Jim was home for the weekend and he chased me out of their yard. What a strange boy. I was only planning to take Sharon for a coke. The next day he called and apologized to me. The reason I mentioned this little event was I married Sharon six years later – not such a little event – and Jim became my brother-in-law.
To escape being a casualty in Viet Nam, my world expanded to Denver where I enrolled at Denver University in the fall of 1962. Everyone was so sophisticated. They didn’t have just one main street or one hang out or one high school. The place was crowded. I got registered, bought books, and attended my first class, Freshman English. There were about thirty students in rows with a podium in front. A little lady dressed all in purple came in, set some books and papers on a table, went to the board and wrote, “Mrs. Blumberg.” For one brief moment my high school attitude emerged. In my mind I said, “Blumberg, Plumberg. She’s a purple plum.” I chuckled to myself. She began passing papers to the head of each row. She talked briefly about the papers, reading lists, assignments and due dates. She then gave us an introduction to the class. I couldn’t think straight. I tried to copy down all she said because I didn’t know how to take notes. It made no sense, but her final statement did. She paused and emphatically said, “Do your work.” Then she left.

I was scared enough to get busy as soon as I got back to the dorm. I read the assigned play for the next day. I didn’t understand it. I read it in parts with voices, trying to make it like the real play. It helped a little. I spent the rest of the day with the play except for a dinner break. I went to bed sure I would never make it through this class. The next morning Mrs. Blumberg began. She talked a little about drama and then began asking questions, pointing to different students. I was frozen with fear wishing I could disappear. After about four questions that people couldn’t answer, Mrs. Blumberg quit talking. She stood there silently for what seemed an hour. People were squirming. She said, “Raise your hand if you have read the play all the way through.” I couldn’t believe only one girl and myself raised our hands. Mrs. Blumberg said in a firm calm voice, “Everyone else leave and come back when you are prepared with the day’s assignment.” That was it. The room cleared in silent confusion. Lynn, the other obedient student, and myself were summoned to the front. Mrs. Blumberg turned a desk backward so she could face us and we sat in a triangle. Her voice was now warmer. She asked the same questions she had asked the class. Lynn had excellent answers. I could tell by Mrs. Blumberg’s smile and comments. My answers were not quite as good, but then Mrs. Blumberg would get me to elaborate or picture a different perspective, and soon she even smiled at a few of my answers. The hour ended so quickly. It was fun discussing the play. She stood up and went behind the podium. She resumed her serious demeanor and told us to do our work. Any familiarity Lynn and I had begun to feel disappeared. I smiled at Lynn when we were out in the hall and she smiled back. We had both successfully begun college. Mrs. Blumberg in one day prepared me better for college than four years of high school. I did fine all through college. My fear of Viet Nam remained, but I added new feelings to the fear. I learned about
Ghandi and history and politics. I became a Pacifist. I would never raise a hand to another human being. This belief has stayed with me always.

After college I returned to Rawlins to teach elementary school. I no longer cruised on the main street or hung out at Jay’s Drive In. But, as I said earlier, I married Sharon Coates. In a year we had a baby girl, Misha, the light of both of our lives. It seemed, without doing it on purpose, I escaped the draft for three reasons and they all happened in this order: I was a teacher, then a husband and then a father. The local draft board didn’t draft you if you had any of these three.

Here is a part of my story that I feel unsure about. I noticed that inductees listed in the Rawlins Daily Times always seemed to be Mexican. I got the feeling since I wasn’t Mexican I was deferred. Could the draft board have prejudiced members? There was a prejudice against Mexicans in Rawlins at the time. More than likely what happened was that the Mexican young men didn’t have resources to go to college and enlisted because of various reasons. But I still worried that I was given preferential treatment. Even though I was a Pacifist, I didn’t want someone else doing my share in anything.

The military needed more young men; and, to try to keep things fair, the lottery was initiated. I had to go into the local office at the Post Office to talk to the clerk. It seemed my number was not too far away, and I would have to go to Denver for a pre-inductee mental and physical exam. The clerk assured me it was just a formality because I was deferred because of my family and job. I told him to add conscientious objector. He gave me a condescending look and told me it was too late to say that. Conscientious objectors had to identify themselves when they first registered; otherwise, the military assumed you were lying because you didn’t want to serve.

The trip to Denver was so miserable I hate to even describe it. I went on the Greyhound bus with five other local men, one I had known a little in high school, Tracy Wormald. We sat together. We decided we would write all incorrect answers on the multiple-choice test. Tracy explained this was futile, the government knew lots of young men tried this. I kidded saying the army must be filled with lots of idiots. We next talked about saying we were homosexual. I tried to impress him with a falsetto voice saying, “What are you doing later, Big Boy?” He said that they would never believe that because we were both married. I hoped for a medical deferment, but I didn’t have any evidence from a specialist telling about my serious asthma as a child that I had pretty much outgrown. Tracy showed me a document, which he called his “way out ticket.” The paper explained that Tracy had been hit by an arrow as a child and had some peripheral vision damage. He was right. He failed the physical. I passed and went home discouraged, tired of the Viet Nam War always lurking in the back of my mind.
Sharon and I decided we would move to Canada if I got my draft notice, but somehow the whole issue just kind of disappeared. I got a teaching job in Missoula, Montana. We moved and I didn’t even tell the draft board. A while later the Viet Nam War was over.

One summer I was visiting Washington D.C. My sister who lived there had left me on the great mall to spend the day. When I came to the Viet Nam Memorial Wall I got an eerie feeling. This was my war that I worked so hard to avoid. I remember hearing that David Lucas, a pleasant quiet boy from my graduating class, had died in Viet Nam. I found his name on a laminated booklet containing the thousands of names engraved in the wall. I found his section and row and number. When I saw his name etched there, tears ran from my eyes.

Robert Eaton is a retired elementary school teacher who moved to Reno in July, 2005. He enjoys riding his bike and writing short stories. He has three grandchildren who were born on July 15, July 16 and July 17, but in different years.
It is amazing to me how much I remember about World War II because I was seven years old when V-J Day arrived in 1945. At that age I did not read the newspaper, but did listen to the radio when my folks turned it on. My other source of war news was the news reel that preceded the serial and the movie at the show house.

The war affected me in many ways, perhaps mostly in what we ate. We had a Victory Garden as we lived in the country and had lots of available ground. The soil in Sierra Valley was dark and fertile and grew wonderful rows of corn, potatoes, carrots, radishes, onions, lettuce and parsley. We had many apple and plum trees. My mother canned and froze everything she could. She even made mince meat when my father bagged a deer. Her mince meat pies were so good even a little girl liked them – especially with the warm rum sauce she made to spoon over each piece of pie.

Our daily diet was routine - there was not much variety to it. Lots of boiled meat was eaten with lots of salt, pepper and ketchup. The water in which it was cooked was made into a not very tasty soup which we spiked with more ketchup and sometimes crushed soda crackers. Of course, the butcher shop did not have all of the cuts of meat that today’s meat counters display. Our meat was always accompanied with potatoes or noodles.

I remember my mother had ration books and tokens with which to purchase needed items. And of course she patched my Dad’s work clothes and darned the holes in our socks, and in her own nylon hosiery. One of my grandmothers knitted socks by the dozen for the Red Cross. Everyone saved tin cans to be recycled for the war effort. Many of the younger women of our town went to work at Clover Valley Lumber Co. They filled positions mostly in the planing mill and the box factory because the men had joined the military.

The war reached into my elementary school where we brought our dimes and quarters to buy Liberty stamps. It was on Fridays that our teacher collected our coins and we called it “Bank Day.” Everyone bought a dime stamp and a few
even had a quarter which really was a lot of money to first and second graders in my small home town where the industry was a lumber mill and ranches.

As the military touched every family, it triple touched mine. My father’s brother George was 29 years old and unmarried when the war began so he joined the Navy to defend his country. Uncle George served in the South Pacific. He sent home a coconut which his widowed mother kept on a table in her living room as long as she lived. Upon my Uncle’s death the family could not find his purple heart. A cousin told me he did not value the award because as he saw it, “He had only done what was right.”

Cousin Bob was also in the Navy – “In the thick of it.” He saw very awful things of which he would not speak when he returned from the war. Though he was never wounded, he face was terribly pocked and marred from the battles he had experienced.

My older brother Roy was in high school in December 1941. The other boys in his class left school to join the armed services. Because my brother was an outstanding student he was counseled to graduate and go to R.O.T.C. training, which he did. He and a girl named Jackie were the entire graduating class in June of 1943. During the time he was at U.C. Berkeley he would sometimes get leave to come home. He hitch hiked both ways and was always picked up immediately.

Roy’s friend Maurice went into the Army and served in Burma. When he wanted to call his parents, he would call our house because we had a phone. Telephones were hard to get in those years and his parents did not have one. His calls usually came in the middle of the night. My Dad would get dressed and go the block and a half to bring Maurice’s parents to talk to their only child. They were so happy and grateful after these calls from their son.

Another family in our valley had two children, both sons in the Army Air Corps. When one son was killed in action, the other son was released to come home. The second son had a last mission to fly and he was shot down flying it. We all shared in the parent’s grief.

It is easy for me to relive the day we heard the war was over. There was great joy in our small town. People came out of their houses to share the good news with each other. The lumber mill blew and blew the whistle they used to call their employees to work. The town’s fire siren added to the celebration. Guns were shot into the air. My mother and I, standing in our back yard by the gate to the alley, rang the cow bell that hung on that gate. There was JOY in the air and we hugged each other.

Sharon has wonderful memories of growing up, marrying, and raising her family in Sierra Valley. She is a resident of Sparks now days and enjoys the Lifescapes experience.
AN AMERICAN WAR HERO

Jeanne Fowler

Richard Leach has been a good friend of my husband’s (until his death two years ago) and mine for 28 years. I asked him to write a short story of his World War II experience for the Lifescapes Anthology. This is a brief story of a young man named Richard Sutton Leach when he entered the service of his country in World War II.

RICHARD SUTTON LEACH

(My story World War II)
I was working at Du Pont Paint Company in South San Francisco on Pearl Harbor Day, December 7, 1941, when the Japanese bombed Hawaii. The very next day, December 8, 1941, I went to San Francisco to enlist in the service along with hundreds of other young men. There were long lines at all of the different service counters and they could take only so many a day. I tried the U.S. Navy first and they had their quota for the day, tried the Marines next, same story, but was accepted at the U.S. Army Air Force window.

I was sent to Texas for my basic training and due to previous military training in Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) and Civilian Military Training Corps (CMTC), I was promoted right away to Corporal. I took my tests and was sent to Denver, Colorado for gunnery training. By April 1942 I was on the ocean heading to England aboard the Queen Mary. There were 5,000 troops and it took us 10 days to cross the Atlantic to England. The Germans had put a $100,000.00 reward to any of their subs that could sink us. Our aircraft did not escort us.

We landed at Glasgow, Scotland, at the Firth of Clyde, and then were transported by troop train to Bedford, England, where we lived in tents until our Quonset huts were built. By that time I had been promoted to Sergeant. We waited for our planes to be flown over by ferry pilots from the USA. We began training for bombing missions. Our targets were submarine pens in St. Nazare, France. Other missions were over Germany. I flew 26 missions in all between May of 1942 and September of 1944. It was an exciting but terrible time as many of my close friends were killed. All I can say is the bombings were tragic, but we accomplished the destruction of the “Hitler” reign over Germany.

There were many experiences in the time that I spent in England, both in the air and on land, and I want to remember the good experiences as well as the bad. Our base was about 60 miles from London and my off time was spent there. The English love to dance and since I loved to dance I was accepted right away. They have beautiful dance halls there – just to name one, Covent Gardens in Piccadilly Circus. I spent my leaves there and sightseeing.

I returned to the United States in the winter of 1944 aboard the Mauritania, sister ship to the Lusitania, which was subsequently sunk. We disembarked in Halifax, Nova Scotia and a tragic accident happened. My best friend, Harry Smith, slipped on the icy gangplank when disembarking, fell overboard and was killed, crushed between the ship and the dock. We had flown all our missions together. I miss him to this day.

I applied for pilot training upon my return but was turned down due to a fractured skull, which happened when I was a child. I reenlisted in the Air Corps and was at that time a Master Sergeant. I returned to California and left the service in March of 1947 due to family problems.
I am now 83 years of age and retired. I remarried 43 years ago and I brought my three children and my wonderful wife brought two children to the marriage whom we raised until all married. We now have eleven grandchildren and six great grandchildren.

I wanted to share Richard’s story for the anthology because it is such a remarkable experience during 1942, 1943 and 1944, when all sea and ground operations depended crucially on air power. In 1942, we here at home experienced rationing of shoes, some foods, meat, coffee and sugar, but what hurt the most was gasoline rationing. Other fuels were doled out according to ration stamps with A, B, or C stickers on car windshields. Our Japanese-American friends disappeared from the schoolroom and neighborhoods, herded into detention camps. American women flocked to factories and offices to fill the jobs left by their husbands and brothers who were fighting the war.

This truly was “The Greatest Generation” who fought this great struggle and won.

Jeanne Fowler was born in San Mateo, CA, in a family of four with one older sister. Following high school, she graduated from the College of San Mateo, studying art history, art and interior design. After raising their three children, Jeanne and her husband James decided they would retire to the Reno area. Jeanne has lived in Spanish Springs for 14 years. James truly loved his time in Nevada and passed away much too soon in 2003.
MY THREE BROTHERS

Tina Gadsden

JIM Three of my brothers were in service during the “Big War WW II.” The oldest, Jim, was stationed in Schofield Barracks when the Japanese dropped bombs on Wheeler Field adjacent to Schofield. Jim said he was so scared he could have crawled into a helmet and if there had been a wave of infantry behind the bombers, the Islands would have fallen.

My brother was shipped out to the Solomon Islands where he met the enemy face to face. The ruthless enemy knew neither compassion nor mercy in war. Had it not been for the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki near the end of the war, Jim felt that he would not have survived. He received a Bronze Star for valor on the Island of Vella Lavella. We learned about other medals he received after he came home from the war.

He did stop over to visit me in Stockton, California. We celebrated his return as my husband was home from Germany.

FRANK JR. Brother Frank, Jr. was in the Navy and on board the aircraft carrier USS Franklin off the coast of Japan when Japanese suicide bombers dropped two 500 pound bombs on the ship. Frank had been in the Navy four years.

The ship was in an earlier battle of Leyte Gulf and was hit amidships by a kamikaze. Its crew worked furiously to get the resulting blaze under control.

The crew called the Carrier “Big Ben.” It was one of the most decorated ships in the Navy.

The Navy Department informed my Dad that Frank, Jr. was missing in action; that they had searched the waters around the battle; and they later declared him dead.

The Franklin was called ‘The ship that wouldn’t die.” No ship had suffered such damage and remained afloat. It limped back to the United States.

In a book the Chaplain on board of Franklin wrote after the war, he said, “When I die I hope to go to Heaven and I expect to meet those boys.” The Chaplain, Joseph O’Callohan was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. He comforted the wounded and dying and he led men into the flaming interior of the ship where they jettisoned shells and wet down ammunition. The crew saved the crippled Franklin.

RAY My brother Ray was a Marine and served proudly in the South Pacific also. He returned home without any noticeable wounds. Such a difficult time it must have been for my Dad. He had to have wondered if any of the boys would get to come home.
Tina Gadsden: There are some of my children who will tell you that my journey from Virginia to California was in a covered wagon; In reality, it was a Greyhound Bus.
The Mexican Revolution began in the early years of the 20th Century, about 1910. It came about because most of the wealth and power of the country was in the hands of a small minority and the rest of the population lived in abject poverty with little or no political power. Even though elections were held and a constitution approved in 1917, fighting continued for several more years, with Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata leading large groups of guerillas harassing government troops and destroying and burning down many large haciendas and ranchos. More details can be found on the Internet at MEXonline.com.

It was during the last days of this time, when Revolutionaries began to gain the upper hand, thousands sweeping down out of the hills attacking the haciendas and ranchos, that a young man, named Filberto Cardenas, emerged in the state of Michocan, in the central region of Mexico. He was a peasant (peon) employed by a rich landowner to protect the hacienda. During quiet periods he oversaw the activities of other peons in the business of the estate in their daily tasks of caring for the livestock and harvesting crops.

However, when the guerillas were in the neighborhood, Filberto wore his other hat as defensive organizer. He distributed weapons and posted his men where they were needed, directing reinforcements into the heat of the battle. As his skill and experience grew, so did his reputation both among landowners and the revolutionaries. His employer began to loan him out to the other landowners, to train leaders among their people. He became so well known that the guerillas began to seek him out, telling their soldiers to find “the one with the good gun.”

Sometimes when the walls of the hacienda were breached, Filberto had to hide in the fields of sugar cane. The guerillas would find his house and threaten and beat his wife Otilia and their 4 children, trying to make them tell where Filberto was hiding.

Eventually the revolution came to an end and Filberto and his family had to flee. He sent Otilia and the children, Jesus, Antonio, Maria and Roberto to Otilia’s brother, Benjamin, in Baja California. Benjamin then helped them gain refugee status and cross over into the United States.
Filberto remained in Mexico for nine months and then made his way to the U.S. border and the Rio Grande River. The family, by this time, had settled in the small lumbering community of Merced Falls, California. Filberto joined them and began to work in the lumberyard and mill. Eventually six more children were born and they gained moderate prosperity with the help of the older kids, gathering whatever they could find in the countryside, from mushrooms to firewood. Sometimes they even shot song birds with a small BB gun, so there could be some meat in the beans and rice tacos. Filberto made wine for the community, which the children did not like at all, since they had to get in the barrel and stomp out the juice. They had been barefoot all summer, with cuts and bruises on their feet. That made for a lively stomp!

In the early years, the successful Mexican ruling party sent assassins to the Merced Falls area, looking for Filberto. There were three assassins sent over a period of time and Filberto dispatched them all.

When the older children were about 9 to 11 years old, the local school board found them and started a whole new school with all the kids in the refugee community. That is when they began to learn English and something of the world outside their small town.

Several years later, one of the sons, Tony, went back with some American friends to the area of Central Mexico where he was born. Not knowing what reception he might receive, he gave his god-father’s name, Manuel Gonzales. He had candy and cigarettes to distribute to the village people; very welcome items, coming from “Norte Americana.” Some of the older people looked at him askance. “Do you know Filberto Cardenas? You look a lot like him.” Of course, he did look like his Father; and was about the same age as when they had last seen him. “Boy, if we ever catch him, or any of his relations....!”

Needless to say, Tony didn’t waste any time distributing his “goodies” and hitting the trail out of there!

The family continued to prosper with the usual ups and downs of any family, with “Papa Cardenas” at the head. They eventually gained U.S. citizenship and moved to Vallejo, CA when the lumber mill ceased operation. Mama and Papa Cardenas both lived into their nineties to see their surviving children (three died in infancy) grow and prosper, giving them many grandchildren and great grandchildren.
Kay Greene, native of Oregon, moved around a lot in her professional life, first in Oregon, then California and now Nevada, where she intends to stay put. She graduated from Linfield College in Oregon and has a masters degree from the University of Oregon. Her professional life went in several directions, first a Group Counselor at a Juvenile Hall, then School Librarian, and the last 25 years as a Purchasing Manager for schools in California and Nevada. Since retiring she has found some new things to do with her time; first learning to quilt and then writing about her life and family. Lifescapes is great fun and thinking of new things to write about is exciting. Even better is listening to the stories of others in the group.
I was too young to participate militarily in World War II. But that still does not eliminate me from reporting some experiences and tales that I had, and heard, following WWII and the Korean War.

I had one more year of high school to finish after World War II and the military draft was still in effect. The draft ended with all the boys who were born before June 30, 1945, still having to go into the service. I missed conscription by 17 days. The boys in my high school class that did go into the service were discharged in less than two years and they became eligible for the GI Bill of Rights. This, perhaps, was a bit of misfortune being born 17 days past the cutoff date.

A classmate, Donal Lane, joined the Merchant Marine when he was fourteen and traveled the Pacific Ocean in cargo ships. Jimmy Kyle, across the street, also dropped out of school to join the Marines when he was sixteen, and was later killed on Iwo Jima. There were only twenty-one students in my Carson City, NV, high school graduating class in 1946, from an initial thirty at the beginning of the war, with the boys joining the various services as they qualified.

Sidney Mason, another classmate, joined the Navy right after high school graduation and earned a fleet appointment to the Naval Academy. He made the Navy his career and the last I heard of him he was a captain of a submarine with a rank of Commander. His accomplishment was wonderful, because as a Washo Indian Sidney would never have received the appointment from one of our Nevada congressmen.

I am sure that Mom and Daddy discussed many times how to keep me home and not to join the services in spite of all of the recruiting pressure that the Armed Services and the other agencies were doing.

I was working at the south end of Lake Tahoe, Calif., at Young’s Bijou grocery store when VE and VJ days came about. There was little celebration in that subdued area of Lake Tahoe at the end of the war as compared to the metropolitan cities.
And the Lights Came on Again!

During the war there was continual fright over the potential that Japanese warships and airplanes were just beyond the horizon and were ready to pounce upon the mainland like they did to Pearl Harbor so blackouts became the regular exercise.

Even though Nevada was over two hundred miles from the West Coast it was believed that the city lights in western Nevada would create a silhouette of the buildings in San Francisco and the other coastal cities. The gambling casinos and restaurants had to dim or reduce the volume of their outdoor neon lighting. The tops of the street lights were painted black and each home had to have blackout curtains over all of the windows that could be pulled to not let any light escape. “Brownout” was the catch phrase in wartime Nevada.

But the negative to a young man over the war’s end was the closure of the bars and casinos to the teenagers. I began drinking alcohol at the age of fourteen at the Waldorf Club in downtown Reno quaffing Sierra or Tahoe beer. I, and my companions, were never challenged about our age and we were never challenged about playing the slot machines, craps or black-jack. But immediately after V-J Day, we youngsters were then barred from the saloons and casinos. Peacetime put a crimp on our partying.

The most immediate thing we noticed after the war was over was the return of regular octane to gasoline. Wow, did the cars ever zip up the hills and no more motor knocking! And we could buy tires for the automobiles without going to the Ration Board for a permit!

Rationing was over! No longer did we have to worry if we had enough red and blue stamps and tokens to buy our groceries. Gas stamps limiting how much gasoline for our cars also disappeared. Unlimited coffee became available that was not adulterated with chicory. And we fellows could now buy real Levi’s!

Methyl anti-freeze for the cars became obtainable so that we did not have to continue to use alcohol anti-freeze that would easily evaporate or boil away. It had become easier to drain the radiators and motor blocks of water each night rather than trust the poor quality anti-freeze.

Lady’s silk stockings were virtually unheard of (rayon and nylon were invented during the war) and when silk stockings were available, there would be a big scramble at the store, who would then limit the amount they would sell to a customer. A very common method the ladies used was to paint their legs with a stain and then pencil in a seam up the back of the leg in lieu of the actual stockings. After the war seamless nylon stockings became the new vogue.
The GI bill

When the boys were released from the military, those that were employed prior to being drafted had the guarantee of returning to their original job. This created some unemployment, primarily for women, who had filled the vacant wartime jobs. Perhaps the major change in society caused by the war was the new role women played in the labor market. During the war, some women went into the Armed Services, but a lot of women entered the labor market fulfilling secretarial roles and performing manual labor as described in the song, “Rosie the Riveter.” Needless to say, a lot of women did not leave the post-war job market to become homemakers as they were known prior to the war.

Someone smarter than I will need to study the impact of the GI Bill, offering free education to the returning GI. Most of the ex-servicemen who were working prior to the war returned to their jobs, but those who graduated from high school during the war years and went directly into the service went on to college that was paid for by the GI Bill. This helped reduce the unemployment roles. Plus the effect of, four or five years later, having college-educated professional people coming into the work force, in a ratio much higher than the college graduation rates of the pre-war times, had to make a major impact upon society.

There was also an interim “52-20” Club for the returning GI’s looking for work. The government gave the returned unemployed ex-serviceman $20 a week for 52 weeks. The GI Bill also gave the returning serviceman advantages over the non-military job seeker. This affected me the last time I worked at the State Printing Office. Lester Groth, Jr., returned from a tour in the Navy, and even though this was in the early 1950’s, he still had his job guaranteed by the GI Bill and since I had the least seniority I was released. The government also subsidized employers to hire untrained people into specialized jobs, as well as giving “preferred” hiring to the returned military serviceman. It did make it difficult for the non-serviceman to find gainful employment.

The combination of all the values of the GI Bill created a transition from war time to peace time without any major recession or unemployment. I believe if it wasn’t for the education part of the GI Bill there could have been a disastrous recession.

When the GI’s returned home, most with a new “war bride” and a young family, housing became critical. The GI Bill also provided an easy loan program for new housing.
The Atomic Bomb Era Begins

And then there were the atomic bombs. When Hiroshima and Nagasaki were bombed by the new weapon, we did not really know what an atomic bomb was. We had heard of the Manhattan Project as being a top-secret project, but had no idea what it was. We thought it was unusual that something named Manhattan was not in New York State but in Washington, New Mexico and Tennessee.

Our friend, La Verne McConnell, was in the Infantry stationed in the Philippines, preparing to invade Japan when the bombs ended the war. He is a firm believer that those bombs saved thousands of lives, both Japanese and Allied. It had to have been a hard decision for President Truman to unleash the bomb, but overall I believe it did save thousands more lives than it took. I’m sorry, Japan.

Morris Jeppson, six years older than I, was the Ordinance officer on the Enola Gay, the airplane that dropped the bomb on Hiroshima. He armed the first atomic bomb. The Jeppson’s were one of the earliest of LDS families in Carson City and Morris was a teenager when I was a rug rat. The sad thing about Morris is that he became an alcoholic and never returned to his family’s Church activities nor was he consistently employed. War and the atomic bomb created a terrible negative impact upon his life.

I like to believe that perhaps my wife, Elaine, and I have seen more effects of atomic explosions than most people. We were newlyweds living in Carson City when the United States started testing atomic bombs in the southern Nevada desert. While we never did see the ground-zero blast itself, we did see the light of the explosions, felt the shock waves and heard the thundering of the explosions.

The explosions were almost always announced in the press and they would be predawn. First there would be the bright flash that would light up our bedroom similar to a camera flash bulb, but there would be no shadows as the light was so diffused from bouncing off the clouds and mountains getting to us. A few minutes later we would see our bedroom curtains shudder as the shock wave traveled across the state. Finally, if the wind was blowing right, we could hear the distant thunder of the explosion.

We were never threatened by the radioactivity carried by the winds that traveled to the East and created damage to eastern Nevada and western Utah.
Some Stories Told

I joined the National Guard in 1947 when it was reactivated and was a fulltime employee assigned to the Adjutant General’s office in Carson City, NV. While serving in the National Guard’s headquarters I was privileged to see combat footage of Major Jack LaGrange’s flights over Holland. He flew over 50 missions from England strafing that area in his pursuit plane. (P-51) When he pulled the trigger on his guns it also activated a camera to record what he was shooting. I saw the tracer bullets hit barges, tugboats and warehouses and his plane zooming 100 to 400 mph under real low bridges in that tulip land. What a hot dog of a pilot!

I worked with Darrel Fentress who told stories of his flights as a gunner in a B-17 bomber over Germany. Darrel reported that when the German pursuit planes would come after them, his flight would group real close together to create a tight gun platform to protect themselves. And when the pursuit planes would suddenly disappear they would know that they were entering an area where they would be shot at with anti-aircraft guns. Then their flight would disperse widely making them individual targets rather than a group target thus making it a safer flight. Still there were high casualties and he figured himself real fortunate to return whole.

Darrel also reported that the B-17s flew so high and did not have any protection from the cold that they had to wear heavy two-piece wool flight suits and boots. In order to relieve themselves while on the 8 to 10 hour flights, in minus zero temperatures while flying near 30,000 feet, they urinated into condoms and “bombed” the Germans with urine.

While not a World War II story, my good friend Hardy Mathiesen, serving in the Korean War, told the following and it must be typical of all wars. I don’t recall the figures, so what I use is just an example.

I also don’t know whether Hardy was an Infantryman or with the Military Police, but apparently the Army had captured about 500 Korean soldiers. They called in the capture to the Military Police in the rear lines who replied: “We have room for 250.”

250 Korean prisoners of war arrived at the prisoner’s camp behind the lines. You will have to figure out what happened to the rest.
Some stories yet to be told

Perhaps someone reading this will research and reveal to the public war stories that have not been released. While serving with the National Guard, and in the Adjutant General’s office in the Late 1940’s, I heard of these two terrible losses that the Allies had.

Blimey Beach. Prior to the invasion of the European continent a rehearsal invasion was held somewhere in England. It was a disaster! Thousands of GI’s were drowned in the practice invasion, at least to my knowledge, and it has never been told to the public. Apparently the Higgin’s boats that carried the personnel were not designed for the heavy surf they encountered plus the exercise was done in poor weather. Also it was told that German submarines were out there in the Channel picking off the waiting troop ships. Where Blimey Beach was specifically, I do not know, other than it was in England.

Another was the killing of Allied prisoners of war by our submarines! Apparently, towards the end of the war, Japan was withdrawing prisoners of war from the Philippine Islands and various other Pacific islands to Japan to be used as slave labor. Japanese freighters were jammed-packed with prisoners when our submarines, not knowing of their precious cargo, sank them.

I heard that there were at least three of these freighters sunk, and a high possibility of several more. In one of the freighters there were at least 750 prisoners of which several were able to swim to the shore of a Philippine Island and were rescued by natives and eventually returned to the Allies.

This report was by Laverne McConnell, who was an infantryman stationed in the Philippines at the end of the war. I heard similar stories by returned GI’s at the Adjutant General’s office, as well.

And the weirdest of all World War II stories . . . the reports of cannibalism and giants of a Solomon Island.

Perhaps it was Guadalcanal but I am not sure. The American invading forces had planned to invade this particular beach and had expected 50% casualties. But when the invasion took place there were no Japanese!

What they found was a race of people eight to ten feet tall who were cannibals that apparently dined on the Japanese in their area! That’s a weird one that you almost need a grain of salt to believe, but I heard it several times; a fun story to end with.
Monte Haines: Don’t name your children funny names. Thellwyn Montague Haines was born in 1928 in San Francisco, CA. Call me “Monte.”

Monte Haines is about as native Nevadan as you can get, moving to Wadsworth at the age of two weeks. He was raised in Fernley and Carson City until marrying Elaine, when Reno became his home. Newspaper production management was his lifelong career working in plants in Carson City, Garnerville, Lake Tahoe, Winnemucca, Sparks and Reno. He retired after 27 years service with Gannett Newspapers Inc, serving as Vice President and Production Director in newspapers in Ohio and Colorado as well as being on the launch team for USA Today. In his spare time Monte has served nearly 50 years in various Boy Scout positions as well as writing his personal history.

Monte has been Elaine’s first husband of 57 years, enjoying five children and 12 grandchildren.
Flying to Okinawa, then to Vietnam, taking the polar route from Travis Air Force base through Anchorage, Alaska during the week after Christmas, 1966, the Boeing held hundreds of boys taking their second plane ride, the first having been from the Midwest to California.

Outside the windows, aurora borealis flared in the black sky over the Pacific, looking like eye shadow and mascara running down the faces of mothers and girlfriends left behind: having kissed Becky in Kansas for, perhaps, the last time, the boys lay sleeping. Their Army uniform collars didn’t fit tightly around their necks, so they looked like choir boys, shaved heads leaning left and right, mouths open as if silently singing to the background of a weeping sky, dreaming in their last sound sleep for at least one year.

Their flight to Da Nang landed on a smooth little jungle runway with an emerald green meadow to the left of the tarmac and a line of men waiting to greet them and to catch the bags of oranges, apples, and bananas not eaten on the flight and thrown from the plane as a treat from “home” by stewardi in three-piece teal blue wool uniforms the Flying Tiger Airlines contract required its hired girls to wear, even though they were damp in no time once the doors were open and the plane’s cabin filled with humidity and strange wet smells from the jungle terrain.

Sometimes gunfire could be heard in the distance which gave everyone goose bumps.

Some of the flights home to LAX were deadhead flights with most of the plane’s seats removed so a few dozen coffins could fit where the seats had been; some jump seats were left where stewardi could sit on the long, sad flight home. Other stews sat cross-legged on the cold steel floor. No one ever sat on the coffins.

California TV news stations routinely showed huge crowds protesting the war. The identical film footage on TV in Okinawa included comments by men in medal-covered uniforms who called the marchers traitors but made no mention
of dissent as a tool to strengthen democracy which the boys and field nurses were dying to protect.

As the Tet offensive escalated in the spring of 1967, the boys whose tours had been completed came home. Their necks fairly bulged in collars now tight from a stressful combination of fears and physical labor in the swampy spring rains. Bombings had destroyed most of the dike system which had been the agricultural method for centuries of containing food crops for the Vietnamese people, so mud, foot rot mosquito and leech bites had become the norm, forcing the boys to become men.

On their flight to Vietnam, each had one canteen. Some practiced drinking tepid airplane water from them. On their flight home, most had two canteens: one filled with Koolaid, the other with booze. Medals filled their empty aluminum food trays, to be discarded in the skinny trash bins compacted by the width of a stew’s beige pump uniform shoe to make room for more garbage. Long-time stews wore medals front and back on their orange cotton in-flight uniforms. Many soldiers could not be convinced to keep their purple hearts and other ribbons to show families and children to come; instead, they gave them away.

The boys who had turned nineteen in ’Nam certainly weren’t “green” any longer. One officer, wearing duplicate medals on his shirt so that when his jacket was off he could still be known by his brass, said “his boys” would “give what for” to the war protesters; “after all, that’s what I trained them to do -- kill the enemy.”

Many of the returning soldiers wanted to kiss the soil of the USA, others wanted “to punch a male hippie in the nose” and nearly all the unmarried ones wanted “to sleep with as many flower children hippie girls” as possible. Their laughing voices were lower and rougher than the year before, and most didn’t sleep on the long flight east over the Pacific Ocean. Nearly all the soldiers now smoked cigarettes. None of them looked like choir boys anymore.

That spring of 1967, thousands of monarch butterflies, on their annual flight from Canada to Mexico, were blown out to sea by a fierce westerly storm and drowned, or so the news reported. The parallel of orange and black fragile lives wrecked and boys in olive drab flying west to be maimed and killed couldn’t be avoided.

As for the runway at Da Nang, by March it had been bombed so often that the pilots had to land with great care to avoid losing a wheel or landing strut, and take-off took thread-the-needle skill, too.
The brilliantly beautiful meadow to the left of the runway had become a field of bomb holes, its green obliterated by gouts of rich earth and demolished. At least for the March days of 1967, the spring meadow had been killed.

*Katharine Hale, a 44-year resident of Reno, has held 22 jobs, including teacher, landlady and civilian flight stewardess to Vietnam in 1966-67. She is a co-founding mother of Citizen Alert, and enjoys photographing, reading, thinking, and writing.*
THE HIDEOUS WAR

Joan Hallahan

My Mother, sister and I had gone downtown to do some shopping. We were walking out of a restaurant when I saw the headlines “WAR!” It was December 7th, 1941. The war was no different for me than for other kids my age. We bought war bonds and stamps in the classroom. I was very patriotic and cried when we sang God Bless America. The rationing and the Nucoa with the little yellow packets are still vividly imprinted in my brain.

My brother, Bob, was sixteen in 1944. He wanted to join the service. He went into the Merchant Marines and served for two years and then joined the Army Air Corps. My mother was anxious and upset all the time – with good reason.

My Mother worked in the shipyards and we had a victory garden. We never owned a car so we didn’t have to worry about gas and tires. I learned to ride the bus at an early age. I was pretty much on my own even as a small child.

August 14th, 1945, “VJ Day” was a day forever etched in my memory. The War was over. That meant one thing to me. The most important event in my thirteen-year-old life up until that time was the fact that my brother was overseas somewhere and now he would be coming home.

We were living on the east side of the Morrison Bridge in Portland, Oregon. My mother had leased a restaurant and we were living in an apartment in a crummy part of town. When we heard the news my mother kept the restaurant open until all the food was gone. She fixed bacon and eggs until she ran out of eggs. My mother and my aunt Hattie decided to walk across the bridge and go downtown. My cousin Geraldine was two years older than me and she talked me into losing our mothers and walking downtown by ourselves. I don’t know if you are old enough to remember, but maybe you have heard the stories. The city was full of servicemen. Well, I was kissed many times. And, for a girl who had never been kissed it was a very scary experience.

My brother stayed in the service for twenty-five years. He was promoted to Provost Marshall. He went to Korea, but not to Vietnam. He was such a patriotic man. He was very emotional and would tear up easily.
He was stationed in Germany for several years. He met his wife there and they were married in 1950. They moved back to the states in 1978 and lived in Portland, Oregon.

![Brother Bob on leave, 1946, in his Army Air Corps uniform in our back yard in Oregon.](image)

My cousin Don told me a few stories about the War and most of them were not pretty. He often said, “Most of what happened is too painful to talk about.” He was also a young man when he went into the service. He was in the Infantry in a division that was called “The Big Red One.” He was in Germany fighting when he got word that his only brother had been killed in action. Jack was a paratrooper. When Don got the news he was devastated. He took a machine gun and single handedly wiped out several machine gun nests. He was awarded the Bronze Star.

Don committed suicide this year (2005). He was 87 years old. He was pretty messed up from the things that happened to him in the service. He once told me a story about being in a German town, where the Germans were searching for soldiers. He stopped an old woman from giving their position away. While he was holding her she started to shout to the Germans. He had to slit her throat. I don’t think he ever got over that. He had nightmares and bad dreams the rest of his life. He told stories about being so cold and wet – about wearing wet socks and no dry place to lie down. Oh, that there would never be another war!

Joan Hallahan moved to Reno in 1963. She has four grown children, eight grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. She worked as a 21 dealer for many years and retired as a front office person in the medical field. She is busy in the Senior Theater and is a volunteer with S.A.F.E. – Special Advocate for Elders.
A PRACTICAL SOLUTION

Beverly Harvey

It is naïve to assume we will ever have an end to wars, barring wise and compassionate aliens descending and taking over the running of our planet. This is true as long as we have greed and self-interest driving business and governments; rather than the welfare of people and the planet (and just how much is *enough*, Mr. President, Mr. CEO?). Then, there is the factor of human inability to keep the testosterone under control, not to mention the misguided “patriotism” that sanctions sending people off to war. There is always a hidden agenda ramping up the urge to war; not necessarily in the best interests of the people, no matter how much spin is put on it. So, I say if we are determined to have it, let’s make it worth our while.

In the first place, it is not right to send our young people off to fight wars. They have a lot of life ahead of them, and they should not be unjustly deprived of it. Society is burdened not only by the loss of our young people, but by the loss of their ability to raise their families, which society must then assume. We need all the young people we can save to work and provide our senior citizens with social security.

Speaking of social security, there is a question about whether it will survive as a safety net. This is exacerbated by the ever-increasing trend in our society toward living on credit and not worrying about saving for retirement. After all, we would have social security and pensions (remember those) to fall back on.

Therefore, I propose that we send off senior citizens, beginning with those in congress who sanction a war, to do battle. Think, what glory awaits us in our later years! We can go out as heroes, instead of descending into our dotage unheralded and unappreciated. I envision a mechanized army, of course, where tanks and armored vehicles haul us into battle much as the chargers of old. Even those in wheelchairs could do their stint. I’m sure Lockheed of North American could be pressed into service to develop the latest in armored chairs, perhaps with Tommy guns or larger armament built in. You could say that would send us out with a bang!

As anyone can plainly see, there will not be enough money to go around soon, so we would not only be heroic in battle, but saviors of our economy as
well. Think what our young people could do with the money saved from not having to pay for so much social security and health care benefits. No more worrying about what to do with Aunt Tillie or Mom or Uncle Dud—instead they can build shrines to honor the sacrifices we made for our children. No more sad, odiferous nursing homes, but a chance to go out in glory, flags flying. I believe we should begin now with the current crop of retirees. By the time the baby boomers come along, since they are the ones who will break the bank, so to speak, we can be in full-fledged power as the army of can-do seniors. Those of us who are already in the senior category, of course, can be “grandfathered” in (no pun intended).

Just visualize it—the old folks proudly marching (or limping, as the case may be) off to war, with the children cheering from the sidelines. “You go Momma,” or “Give it to them for us, Granddad.” And the children worrying about their elders for a change. The attrition rate may be larger than that of the current army, since it is harder for seniors to get out of the way of harm. Then again, we are more wily. The arrival of the Baby Boomers will soon swell the ranks again.

Once they see the sacrifices we are making for their welfare, they’ll realize what a great generation we are. We’ve already had the Greatest Generation. Make way for the Really Beat Generation.

Beverly Harvey was born and raised in Buffalo, New York. After marrying her first husband she moved from New York to New Mexico, Georgia, Kansas and to Nevada. They lived in Germany for a year and Ireland for four months. She raised three children and earned a Master’s Degree in Clinical Psychology from Wichita State University, and a Doctorate in Clinical Hypnotherapy from the American Institute of Hypnotherapy in Irvine, CA. She has worked as a Marriage and Family Counselor and an Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselor. Divorced after 25 years, she has remarried and they have a total of 7 children and 11 grandchildren; 6 grandchildren on her side and 5 grandchildren on her husband’s side.
THE DAY MRS. EDRINGTON JUMPED
AUGUST 14, 1945

Ed Irvin

I had never seen Mrs. Edrington jump. For that matter, I had never seen her walk rapidly nor drive fast. She always drove under the speed limit in her 1937 Plymouth. She was a moderately overweight, fifty-ish woman of southern Mississippi roots, always proper, never flustered, and punctual to the second. Life had given her some miscues, taking away her husband, denying her a share of the family fortune, and moving her into a modest bungalow. And now here she was, working for the City of Alhambra, California, School District in charge of rebinding high school text books in chemistry, history, algebra, etc. I was one of three summer employees and I’ll say this: she certainly knew the bookbinder’s trade and I learned it well that summer in 1945. In spite of her comedown she maintained that air of class of a southern woman – always wearing a dress and jewelry, hair done up in a neat bun, and carrying a lace handkerchief tucked in at the neckline of her blouse. She also had eyes in the back of her head and would tolerate no foolishness from her workers. We called her “Mrs. E.” and she seemed to like that.

I say I had never seen her jump and you can see why. But August 14, 1945, was different. Dr. Maurice Stokesbury, the Assistant Superintendent of Schools, burst into our workroom at 10:14 A.M. and announced excitedly that Japan had surrendered! The war was over! And Mrs. Edrington jumped! She also clapped her hands. And she laughed – something of a rarity. So Louie McClellan and I joined in the fun, running around the room between stacks of books. Dr. Stokesbury went on to say he was closing the building and we had the rest of the day off. Yippee! Mrs. E. fairly skipped out of the room. She had a daughter engaged to a Navy man.

I remember going outside to the bicycle rack. Car horns were honking on Garfield Avenue. People were shouting. Strangers were waltzing. So I thought, “How shall I celebrate this great day?” The answer was easy. I peddled to Jones
Donut Shop on West Main and ordered a chocolate donut and coke. Just the thing for a 15-yr old’s complexion, right?

When I got home, my mother was on the telephone with her sister in Denver, alternately crying and laughing. Her sister had lost a son, a Captain in the Marines, in the Pacific and the whole family felt the loss.

Soon my father came home. His office had closed, too. He carried a copy of the Los Angeles Herald Express newspaper with “EXTRA” emblazoned over the screaming headline, “JAPAN SURRENDERS.” The four of us piled into our Oldsmobile, pulled into traffic on Main Street, windows down, cheering and whistling with the crowds. Dad honked the horn.

Formal surrender papers were signed on September 2 which was designated the official V-J Day. The air waves were filled with patriotic music and victory songs. One of my favorites was, “Leave the Dishes in the Sink, Ma,” by Spike Jones and His City Slickers. The words in one place said,

- Leave the dishes in the sink, Ma,
- Leave the dishes in the sink;
- The pots and pans will have to wait,
- Tonight we’re gonna celebrate;
- Leave the dishes in the sink!

So we did. But I can’t imagine Mrs. Edrington leaving hers in disarray. One jump was her limit.

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*Ed Irvin has lived in Reno since 1974, coming here from Clarement, California, to be the pastor of First Baptist Church. He served there eighteen years. Born in 1920, a native of Colorado, he has lived in Pennsylvania, Nebraska, and Arizona. He is in the fifty-fifth year of marriage to Diane (nee Tompkins). They have four children and three grandchildren. His hobbies are photography and fly fishing. Ed was an Adjunct Professor in the University of Nevada Medical School for five years and earned a Distinguished Alumni Award from his college, The University of Redlands.*
AUGUST 15, 1945

Andrew Ivanov

On August 15, 1945 I was on the Shanghai’s Bund working with the master mechanic on one of the Shanghai Custom’s boats. It was our sixth day of changing piston rings; adjusting and replacing fuel lines and injection valves and giving a general tune-up to the diesel engines on a few of these fast sea-going boats. The Japanese marines were in charge of the Custom’s boats and there were about ten of these boats docked to the Custom’s House piers. The marines were loading a big lot of unmarked boxes into the aft-hatches of these fast boats. It struck me funny that the Japanese Department of Motor Vehicles Repair gave Serge and me extra monthly rations of beans and rice just to go for a week on the Whampoo River and work on the boats.

Serge Martov was a whiz mechanic. He made those engines sing in no time when he was sober. The Japanese Military Chiefs were impressed with Serge Martov’s work for the past two years and they trusted him implicitly, even though they couldn’t communicate with him in English, French or Japanese. He spoke only Russian. It seems to me that Serge communicated with the Chiefs on their drunken binges quite well, when he was drinking them all under the table. Sake or Lo-Tu (Chinese rice wine), Vodka was his favorite, but any alcohol including wood-alcohol or even after shave lotion was never refused.

I was fourteen when I was assigned to Serge as an apprentice. The Chiefs knew that I was multi-lingual including the Japanese and they told me that I was fortunate to study under this super-whiz mechanic. From then on any communications, assignments, requests were going through me to Serge and back to the Chiefs. He was their “Ace in the Hole.”

It was one of the special assignments, where we were issued papers and I.D. tags to leave our sequestered area of the JDMV Automobile Repair Shop and to report to the Putung Marine Detachment for the Shanghai Customs House. When the officer on duty looked at our papers and pryingly asked me what we were doing in this area, I told him that if he just called this telephone number everything would be clear and we would be able to get on with the assignment. As he was talking on the phone, he sprang into attention, his attitude completely changed, his language became turgid military responses, bowing and thanking his superiors for the information. From that moment on we were escorted to the
boat, fed in the mess-hall and transported to our destination. After storing our meager gear we were shown which boats were in need of repair and we were left alone to work on the diesels.

This was my third time with the diesels, the smell of oil and grease never bothered me, as a matter of fact I liked it. Serge was a good instructor, he showed me once how to do something, then a short cut and then a double check. He never checked my work after that, all he would ask is, “Is it ready.” It worked every time he anticipated it to work.

It was on the third day after work, Serge and the Marines in the mess hall started a drinking party. I don’t know how late the party went on, since I excused myself when the party just started. To me these parties were mostly boring times, since I had to translate some stupid statements and being tired and sober my only venue of escape was to fall asleep at the table. One thing that Serge was adamant about was he never allowed me to drink any alcohol, no matter how others were trying to ply me with drinks. I never resented his concern for me in drinking alcohol, in fact I appreciated it.

The next morning I got up early and went to the mess hall. Serge was passed out in the mess hall and so were the Marines. I didn’t bother to wake them up. I made myself a fast meal and left the mess hall.

In the engine room I was putting finishing touches on one of the diesels we were working on. To try it out I started the engine and it began working. So I decided to take the boat for a spin on the river. I went to the bridge and started all four engines from the bridge. They all worked. Then I dropped the mooring fore and aft off the pier and jumped aboard. I eased the boat slowly from its sloop and took the heading towards Wu-sung at the mouth of Yangtse River.

It was a beautiful Sunday morning on the Wampoo River. A few sampans and junk were heading up the river. The Bund looked very majestic in the morning sun. It was hard to believe that war was being waged a few hundred miles away. No one questioned a Custom Patrol boat flying the Japanese Navy Sun-burst flag speeding towards the open sea.

I was making a u-turn when one of the engines began to cough, so I shut off all the power and left the idle on. In the engine room I discovered that the engine which was coughing wasn’t the one we were working on. After a few minutes I found that the injection valve was loose from its rubber hose and squirting the oil all over. Immediately clamping the hose I corrected the problem.

As I was finishing the clean up, the drunks emerged onto the deck, Serge was up and was poking his head into the engine room, asking what was going on. I told him that I took the boat for a trial run. That everything was going fine until this right rear engine began to cough, but now it was running smoothly. The Marines with their hangovers didn’t know where they were and they were
worried, since the coxswain and the captain were ashore. They were really
surprised to find out that it was I, who took them and the boat out for a ride.
Serge was surprised too. He wasn’t sure how to take it and he didn’t know that I
had it in me to take such a daring step.

When I finished the clean up, I invited them to the bridge and showed
them how easy it was to captain the ship and took them back to the pier.

As I was pulling in the Captain and coxswain were there waiting, both of
them weren’t too happy with my act. I explained to them that it was a repair run
and told them about the other engine. They were impressed with the engine
room and decided to take another trial spin. The Marines disembarked; they
weren’t anxious for another ride, they weren’t the sailors.

In my snooping for rags to clean the engine room I came across unmarked
stored boxes. I pried one of them open and discovered stacks of Japanese Yen
bank notes, Chinese silver dollars and three oz. gold bars. I helped myself to
some and stashed them into my knapsack. I felt that since they were stealing
these monies from China I would steal from them. So it wouldn’t be noticeable I
only took ten gold bars and ten silver dollars. There were about forty boxes
stashed in this compartment. What struck me as odd was that it wasn’t the
regular hatch where I saw them loading from the Custom House. I think it was
the private stash of either the Captain or coxswain.

Two days later, Tuesday, August 14, we were transferred to another boat
with two ailing engines. As we were working in the engine room we could hear
the marines stomping on the deck above us loading the unmarked boxes.
Suddenly the heavy footed traffic stopped and quietness came upon us. It was
about 10 a.m. The radio, which was blasting some blurry music only moments
ago, ceased completely and a voice came on. I came up from the engine room
and saw all the Marines on our boat as well as on others standing attentively
listening to the radio. The radio-man was announcing to all Japanese to stand by,
that his highness the emperor was going to speak. The emperor came on and
announced that, “the war with the United States is over. The Japanese no longer
have to fight and must put down their weapons.”

There was an interesting reaction from the listening Marines. They were
dumbfounded by the broadcast. Not a sound was made. Then, from one of them
a barking order to return to work was given and they silently began to continue
loading.

I immediately went down to the engine room and told the news to Serge.
He sat down, looked at me and said, “Who said that?”

“Hirohito. That’s who!” I exclaimed. “It will be in tomorrow’s papers.”
Then I said, “What are they going to do with all this money?”
“What money?” Serge asked.
“What do you think they are carrying in those boxes?” I said.
“How do you know it’s money?” he asked.
“They just dropped one box and some of the money flew out and fell overboard and now they are fishing it out?” I told him.
“I just happened to be out there when the box was dropped, and the Marines and I were all stuffing the money in our pockets. Here, you can have some of mine.” I said. I gave him a wad of the Japanese Yen and some CRB (Chinese Reserve Bank notes).
When the box was dropped only one Marine and I were riffling the box for the gold, the other three Marines were busy grabbing the CRB’s and Japanese Yen. I don’t know how the other Marine knew about the gold and sliver, but both of us knew what we were after. I looked at him and he looked at me and said, “We live today and die tomorrow!”
“Yes, that is right. And we won’t be hungry, cold or unhappy.” I said. We both left the box, before the others returned.
Later, when we emerged from the engine room all the evidence of the accident was gone. One of the Marines came to me and handed a wad of CRB’s to me and one to Serge.
“Thank you for your help. Tell your Papa-san to buy more sake and celebrate.” He said.
That evening we left the Customs House boats and were driven to our concession.

Andrew was born in China, and during WWII sequestered in French Concession under Petain’s government.
FLYING HIGH

Bette Jensen

As I stood there looking out over that endless expanse of barren ground, I thought to myself that without a doubt it had to be the most desolate place in all the United States. I couldn’t believe my eyes, and to think I had asked to be stationed there. The bus driver heard me mumbling and seemed to enjoy adding to my despair by saying, “Lady, you ain’t seen nuthin’ yet. Wait until you’ve spent a summer here, then you’ll have somethin’ to bitch about.” With that remark, I decided to unload my gear and let him go on his miserable way. For some reason, he had a chip on his shoulder; the ride with him from the train station had amounted to only a few grunts on his part in response to my attempt at conversation.

Grumpy, my name for him by then, continued to be at odds with his duty for the day by watching me as I struggled with unloading my full duffle bag and the few hangovers I had from what I was regarding as, at that time, the good ole civilian days. He sat behind the steering wheel of the khaki green army bus looking off into space until I finished removing all my gear. Then, he closed the bus door and drove away without saying a word. I stood there for a few seconds wishing I was home, all the while knowing I was far from it in more ways than one. Then I started to make a slow 360 degree turn while taking a good look at where I would probably be stationed for the duration of the war. What I saw before me was another good reason for hoping the war would end soon.

It was October 1944 and I had just completed six weeks basic training at Fort DesMoines, Iowa. From there, I had ridden trains and buses until I landed at Mojave, California which was, at that time, a sleepy stop in the road about 75 miles north of Los Angeles, my home. Grumpy, whom I never saw again, met me in Mojave and from there delivered me to the WAC compound at the 421st Air Force Base, better known by one word, Muroc. Today it is called Edwards Air Force Base, which among other notable claims to fame, is the alternative landing pad for the space shuttle.

The WAC area was located at the center of Base activity and fenced to not only set it off from the PX, Headquarters Offices, etc., but fenced to supposedly to deter an occasional horny GI from trying to make a night visit into one of our barracks. At least that was the way we liked to tell the story. In all probability,
our rare visitor was some drunk who had lost his way, or drunk enough to take on a dare to enter one of our unguarded barracks. Our night visitor usually entered through a back door to approach some gal in her bunk. She would then scream, and with that he would take off on the double. No one was ever caught, nor did we care. Such simply went with the territory, and we knew we had safety in numbers.

Overall the WAC compound consisted of four wind-sandblasted, olive drab barracks, a like appearing mess hall, recreation room and company office building. The Base itself, as far as the eye could see, which was to the horizon, was flat and made of dirt with an occasional building visible here or there. There were no plants. There was no water. The only contrast in color and texture to the olive drab buildings and the tan dirt was the seemingly endless cracked, white lake bed, The Dry Lake, that was to one day become identified with the Base’s reputation for the unbelievable in flight research. As I stood there alone looking out at that forbidding land, I wanted to cry, but I didn’t.

In fact, I didn’t cry for about a year and that was when I received orders to leave Muroc and report for duty at the Fort Lewis Washington Separation Center. By then the war was over. The GI’s were going home, and I was to be a part of the effort to make that possible. There would be no flying high on my new assignment. Over the months, that hell hole on the desert and much of what it represented had provided me with a lifestyle that was definitely out of the mainstream. I had changed my mind. I wanted to stay at Muroc for the duration, the weather notwithstanding.

The bus driver was right. Summers at Muroc, which lasted about nine months of the year, were something to bitch about. There wasn’t a day during the time I was stationed there that I wasn’t at odds with the weather. It was miserable. The wind never quit blowing. The dust never quit flying. In fact, we lived in a dust bowl. It permeated every aspect of our being.

Then there was the sun, the hot desert sun in a sky that had no clouds for us to crawl under for protection. Everything, everyone and everyplace was hot, not sweaty hot because it was too dry to sweat even though we did sweat, just hot, hot, hot. Air conditioning never found us. While on duty, we drank water and sucked ice cubes that kept us from dehydrating, but never quenched our thirst. Off duty we drank 3point2 beer (3.2), which did quench our thirst, but had some side effects.

Of course, there had to be a reason, we kept telling ourselves, for why the Government founded an air base in such an isolated spot with such unwieldy weather, and there was. That area of the Mojave Desert had the best flying weather in the United States. Enter a special detachment of GI’s from the
Aberdeen Maryland Proving Grounds to do their kind of research which had to
do with flying high and dropping bombs.

There were forty-eight men and two women in the Aberdeen group.
Smitty (Vi Smith) and Deb were assigned to Barracks IV where I bunked. Smitty
and I became lifelong friends on day one of her arrival. The group’s mission was
to fly their B-17’s to approximately 25,000 feet over the Mojave Desert and drop
dud bombs. Once they had dropped all the bombs on a given mission and
landed, the ground crew would take off in Jeeps to the designated area on the
desert and look for all the duds that had been dropped. One by one as they
found them, they would take instrument readings on the bomb’s location using
the North Star, Polaris, which is the last star in the handle of the Small Dipper.
Their readings would tell them where, when and how the bombs had fallen to
the ground from the bombay of the airplane.

Smitty was the highest ranking non-com in their group and as such was,
among other things, the radio operator on the flights. I don’t recall if she offered
or I asked if I could join them on a mission. However it came about, the result
was that she obtained an “ok” from their commanding officer and the big day for
me soon arrived.

I was a B-17 fan because I had worked for Boeing Aircraft at their Renton,
Washington plant as an expediter on the B-29. My stint with Boeing was the
most exciting and rewarding job I had during the war years, hence my loyalty to
their products and slogan: “If Built by Boeing, It’s Bound to be Good.” In
retrospect, I would now say that my job there was the best job I ever had. It was
an example of the unique opportunities women had in the workplace during the
war with equal pay, and lost as soon as the war ended. Interestingly, in the early
1940’s Boeing was telling us that the B-29 was going to end the war. By 1944, the
military was giving us the same information.

Flight day finally arrived. Our first stop on that very early morning was
the Mess Hall for breakfast and a carry out lunch. From there we jumped into
Smitty’s Jeep and headed for the supply depot to check out our necessary flight
gear. Then we drove to the plane which the pilots had ready for take-off as soon
as the crew gave them the okay. The dud bombs were to be dropped from 25,000
feet where the air was thin and cold, so we had to wear flight suits and oxygen
masks from the ground up. Other items were gloves and a parachute, of course.
There were no creature comforts for any of the crew anywhere in that B-17.
However, there were some structural modifications built into the plane for their
special kind of missions; namely for the pilots, bombardiers and radio operator.
A bench like row of seats with seat belts lined one side of the fuselage for the rest
of the crew, and me. Smitty and the pilots were the only ones busy until we
reached our max altitude. Then the bombardiers went into action. I didn’t really understand all that was taking place, but I was having the thrill of a lifetime.

A week or two later, I was hanging out in the barracks waiting for chow time when Smitty came rushing through the back door calling out my name. I had never seen her so excited. “Guess what?”

“What?”

“We’ve been assigned a B-29 for our missions and we flew it today. It’s unbelievable. You’ve got to go on a mission with us.”

“Great, I’m ready. When do we go?”

“We go to 35,000 feet, she continued”

“Wait a minute,” I replied. “That’s too high for me. I’m not sure I want to do that.”

“You’ve got to, you’ll be sorry if you don’t.”

“That’s awfully high, Smitty. I’ll have to think about it.”

That’s when she said all she needed to say to convince me. “Look at it this way, very few people have flown to 35,000 feet, and you will be among the few who have.”

With that, all I could say was, “When do we go?”

Once again we went into action to make it possible for me to go with them. Come the day of the flight, we checked out the same gear again and headed for the plane. The difference was that in the B-29 we didn’t have to wear the flight suit, the oxygen mask or the gloves because the fuselage was heated and pressurized. In fact, it was so posh compared to the B-17 that we likened our flight in the B-29 in the air, to that of the Rolls-Royce on the ground.

I had almost forgotten about my altitude squeamishness because of the newness and uniqueness of the plane and the excitement of the crew. Then I felt us leveling off and I knew we were at 35,000 and would soon be circling over the target area to drop the dud bombs. Did I look out the window? Of course I did. In fact, I had been checking the earth below from time to time as we ascended into that thin, cold air. I thought the earth appeared a little farther away, a little smaller at that higher altitude. But the space in between us and the ground was just that, space, at either altitude. Be it 25,000 or 35,000 feet, if something happened to us up there and we couldn’t rapidly descend and level out and prepare to make a jump, there would be nothing to worry about. The reality was the real danger in the flight was the take-off and landing.

A few weeks later, most of the Aberdeen group received their discharge and I was on my way to Fort Lewis where I spent a few months before I had my orders for separation from the service. Smitty and I kept in contact over the years until she passed on.
Just as we had been told, the B-29 did end the war, however, very few people knew how that was going to happen. That included the crews in Wendover, Utah who were in B-29 flight training for the eventual atomic bombing of Japan. There were only 3500 of the B-29 Superfortress built, and they were not put into service until near the end of the war. In contrast, our other two heavy-duty bombers saw active duty during most of WWII. There were approximately 13,000 of the B-17 Flying Fortress and 18,000 of the B-24 Liberator used in bombing the European and African and Asian theaters of war over the many years of combat. Yet, the B-29 garnered most of the glory because of its phenomenal two-day participation in the ending of World War II.

Bette Jensen, born in Illinois with a present-day family of two children, a son-in-law and a daughter-in-law and one grandchild, has lived in Reno for the last 27 years. All in that order, almost. She has a completed memoir, “Murky Waters,” on file with the ElderCollege Lifescapes Program.
In 1943 she had fallen in love with her first boyfriend. She was only eighteen years old. Kissing him had awakened deep feelings inside her she had never experienced before. He asked her to marry him the same time his best friend asked his girl to marry. They had received identical diamond engagement rings. She had dropped out of nursing school and followed him to his basic training camp. She was in love.

After the wedding his best friend whispered to her, “If he really didn’t want to marry you, he will never let you know.”

Their son was born just before he went overseas to fight in Europe in World War II. The son was nearly a year old when the war ended. She was so excited to have him come home, for him to hold her in her arms and kiss her again and again.

His train was due in town the very night the war was over. She walked the street with all the others who cheered and shouted with joy because the war was over. She met every train that arrived. He was not on any of them.

At six the next morning she had to leave. She showered and dressed for work. All day long her thoughts were on him and his homecoming. She came home from work and took care of their son.

Then she heard an old truck coming. It was a familiar sound. It sounded like his father’s old truck and it was. Her husband and his best friend came into the house. He didn’t pay much attention to their son, but asked her to come with them to his best friend’s house.

This wasn’t what she had wanted or expected. She had dreamed and hoped to be alone with him.

At the friend’s home she sat down and held her son. Both men left in the truck and were gone all evening.

It was the end of her dreams. Had he ever really loved her at all? Was it true he hadn’t wanted to marry her? Was this how she would know?

The war had ended. Had the romance also ended?
Lenore was married for 45 years before they were divorced. They had five children. The marriage became like a tree, stable but unstable, the branches growing farther and farther apart. She refused to give up on the marriage until he developed dementia from diabetes and became violent. When she was 32 she went back to school and got a Diploma RN, a Bachelors in Nursing, and later got a Master’s in Counseling at the age of 69. Her National Counseling License is good until she turns 85 when she will get it renewed. Now, after fifty years, Lenore is married to her high school sweetheart and has moved back to Nevada. She is currently doing volunteer work in the local school district, has been a volunteer chaplain at a local hospital, and has worked on the Crisis Call Line. Her belief is that if you live in a community you should give back to that community in a positive way. She has 20 grandchildren and 20 great grandchildren and loves to read.
Harold Mijanovich was in the Navy, stationed in Pearl Harbor in 1941, when the Japanese decided America was a threat and tried to cripple our navy. Harold survived that “day of infamy,” but he had many friends who did not. He fought in the first American battle of the war, and the last battle of the South Pacific. He earned two purple hearts in these battles. He wore his scars proudly, but the medals he hung on his living room wall, along with other citations and war mementos.
I was a war baby. I was born during the last year of World War II. My father had been in the Naval ROTC during college, but he escaped military service because there was a shortage of ships after Pearl Harbor. Then, after graduation, his employment in the oil industry, searching for oil reserves, was considered vital. I was the third baby in the family, the second to be born during the war. Our family was living in Colorado at the time, but mother traveled back to California with her two small children so that Grandma could help out when I arrived on the scene.

Harold was a tall handsome young sailor. He saw many battles. In the midst of the war, in 1944, Harold’s ship came back to homeport in Oakland, California, for repairs. There he proposed to my Aunt Rose, who was working at the port. Such an attractive hero in uniform! Such desperate uncertain times! Time was precious. Love helped to dispel fear and provide an impetus for living. When Rose agreed they could not wait, Harold called the Catholic priest to make an appointment to meet with him and arrange the ceremony before he had to ship out again. My mother, in a very pregnant state, went with her sister and fiancé to see the priest. Harold, ever the gentleman, took mother’s arm when she got out of the car and helped her to the rectory door. When the priest saw them coming, he quickly opened the door and said, “Come in my children!” Obviously the usual time for premarital conference would have to be shortened in this case, his tone implied. The priest was so relieved to find that mother was not the bride. Harold continued to retell and laugh over this story every time I visited him.

Shortly after the war he made a trip to Washington D.C. to testify before a Senate committee on what planes the Japanese used to sink our fleet. He knew what he saw, but certain Senators were convinced he was confused and had to be wrong. Only later did the Japanese admit that they had the technology he witnessed and testified to. He was proud of being vindicated at last.

He joined a Pearl Harbor Survivor’s group in the San Francisco Bay Area. They met periodically and he traveled to Hawaii twice with them for reunions. The war had been a turning point in his life. It had defined him, in some ways. It was important to never forget.

Our family moved from Colorado to Texas when I was five years old. Rose and my mother were very close. Our families tried to visit each other every other year. That was hard in the early years because of the distance between California and Texas. Texas was a long way from home, but it was where the oil was. Harold didn’t talk much about the war during those visits, but there was always a military bearing and a no-nonsense attitude that made you remember his war conditioning. He seemed very intense about his opinions, especially
political ones, which affected the security of our country and the pride which people showed toward the flag.

In the 1960’s, I was attending the University of California in Berkeley, a campus where “radicals” were protesting the current involvement of our country in the Viet Nam War, fighting a war where our enemies looked just like our allies, a war we couldn’t win. I was too young to understand World War II and the Korean War, but I was tuned in now, because my brother was a medic in uniform. This war hit close to home. My generation was splintered. Some joined the military willingly, trusting the President’s judgment about this being a worthy war. Some were drafted unwillingly, feeling some sense of duty and/or feeling helpless to do otherwise. Others forsook all – family, dreams, pride – and escaped to Canada, knowing the war was unjustified and not worth dying for.

Uncle Harold was now a Lieutenant in the Oakland Police Force. He was shocked by the protests going on in Berkeley. He called it a “nest of commies and radicals.” He was shocked that students would be willing to break the law to get their protests heard. There was an undeclared war between the police and the protestors. We students saw it as pure harassment. I was cited for jaywalking on my way to class one morning, and was so incensed at being singled out for something so trivial that I was ready to go to jail to rail against such action. But I couldn’t say these things to Harold. There was no discussion possible about such things. His military discipline and unquestioning loyalty to country were undiminished after twenty-five years.

My cousin Annie, his oldest child, married a naval pilot, which made Duncan the perfect son-in-law. Duncan was assigned to secret surveillance missions and thus could not talk about them afterwards. He also could not give Annie much notice when he had to leave on one of these missions. But all of us could feel proud of a military which was so vigilant and could not be caught off-guard again.

My younger brother, Steve, was married in the 1970’s, to Hisae Ishii from Japan, in Madison Square Garden, along with 2999 other couples. This was part of Reverend Sun Mung Moon’s plan to foster world peace. By marrying couples from different countries, cultures would be wed also, producing children who would overcome the cultural barriers of their grandparents. Could this work? Steve did not have my parents’ blessing in this marriage. It was an arranged marriage, common in Asia, unheard of in America. The family had been estranged from him. His involvement in this controversial church amounted to brainwashing, we thought, and our arguments against it had no effect. He lived with his bride in New York. His three children were born there. Before the birth
of his first child, he decided it was time to bring Hisae for a visit and tried to fulfill the rest of Rev. Moon’s vision. He came home to present her to Mother and Dad, but unfortunately chose a time when Uncle Harold and Aunt Rose were visiting them. As Steve and Hisae were walking up the driveway, they passed behind Harold’s green Cadillac with the license plate holder that read “Pearl Harbor Survivor.” This was not an auspicious beginning to mending cultural differences. The vision would have to wait. It was a very emotional homecoming. Our opinionated outspoken Uncle Harold was uncharacteristically silent through most of it.

Interestingly enough, Hisae told us many years later that her Japanese education about World War II failed to mention Japan’s role in bringing the United States into the war. She thought that Pearl Harbor was a defensive battle for her country.

In retrospect I see that Steve and Hisae are still battling World War II, fighting the cultural differences and prejudices which erupted in that conflict. They don’t wear uniforms or earn medals, but, like Harold, the war defines their lives and focuses their ideals. Their weapons are different, their defenses are different, but they are peace-seekers all, sure that their cause is worth living and/or dying for.

Harold had one more big battle to fight. The enemy this time was cancer. Ironically he eventually died of a form of lung cancer caused by breathing asbestos fibers from his navy destroyer’s engine room. Our own navy accomplished what the Japanese could not, killing this courageous and patriotic man. My Aunt Rose kept his war memorabilia hanging in her living room as long as she lived. It seemed to be the most important aspect of Harold’s spirit which was left behind.

_Sue Kennedy – retired computer systems engineer, business manager, and commie radical. Shaped as an adult in the 60’s. Still being shaped as an adult. Aspiring writer. Soon to be an aspiring artist. Grateful to live in a land of opportunity, diversity, and free expression._
As they moved into the street to pass a Marine and his lady walking arm and arm, another Marine lunged out of a parked car and shot the woman in the forehead. In a blur of action other passersby wrestled the shooter to the ground. While their wives stood frozen, two corpsmen moved directly to the fallen woman and knelt on either side of her. Almost as one they rose, grabbed their wives and headed away from the scene murmuring, “...she was dead before she hit the ground.”

It was two a.m. as the Model A sedan sped across a nearly empty San Francisco/Oakland Bay Bridge. The two teenage sailors, both Hospital Corpsmen 3rd class and their even younger teen age wives were uncharacteristically subdued after a night in San Francisco with a double feature movie and a crab feast on Fisherman’s Wharf. Leaving the restaurant they were laughing and talking excitedly about the rarity of both sailors being on week-end liberty and they had enough money among them for a night on the town. And, they had the whole next day to recover before they returned to their separate bases and the wives to keeping clean the cramped apartment carved out of an old house in Oakland.

Don and Rosalie Dorsey, and Pete Moose and I were those teens and we were sharing that apartment in the old house on 35th street in Oakland. Pete was on temporary duty on Treasure Island and Don was stationed at the Oakland Naval Hospital. The car belonged to Rosalie and Don. Both the boys were on port and starboard liberty, home every other night and every other week end, and were seldom home at the same time.

Rosalie was shocked and devastated by the shooting and our trip back to Oakland was punctuated by her soft sobs. I guess my recent three years experience working as a nurse’s aide on an admit ward at Los Angeles County Hospital had hardened me to a degree. I wasn’t as upset as Rosalie, and I did my best to comfort her.

We were more than halfway across the Bridge when someone noticed that the Bay was full of slowly moving ships going north to the passage out of the Bay under the Golden Gate Bridge. One of the boys commented it didn’t seem
smart of the Navy to have what seemed to be a major part of the Western Fleet in San Francisco Bay at the same time. It was months later and we had all been dispersed to other locations before any of us put together that this was the Naval Task Force that presaged the end of the War.

We couldn’t afford to buy a newspaper, but we checked the ones at the newsstands and at my Aunt Opal’s in San Leandro. We never saw in the newspapers or heard a word on the radio about the shooting incident we had witnessed in San Francisco.

Within a week of that fateful night, Pete had received orders that he would be sent to the Pacific from his temporary duty at Treasure Island and while we were not looking forward to the unknown, we kept our focus on our good fortune that we had had almost two months together and I was reasonably sure I was pregnant. Romantically, we reasoned that if he had to be overseas, away for a very long time, or killed, I would have our baby to remember him by. Since Don could also be transferred any time and Rosalie would go back to her parents’ home, I decided to go home now rather than wait for that eventuality and made a bus reservation for August 16th to return home to Southern California.

Pete returned to the base early the morning of August 14th, and I did not expect to see him again or even know where he would be. Later that day Rosalie and I were doing usual household chores when the music station we listened to interrupted its broadcast to announce that the Japanese had surrendered and the end of WWII was declared.

Don was able to leave his base and came to pick up Rosalie and me and we went to my Aunt Opal’s. A spontaneous parade of cars had formed on the main thoroughfare. After dropping us off and picking up my young cousin, Pete, to ride with him, Don joined the parade. As we watched we saw them pass by with someone unknown driving and Don on the top of the car with a huge school bell clanging for joy. People were shouting and literally jumping up and down as a hastily formed group of boy scouts carrying American Flags paraded by. After hours of standing and shouting the parade died away and we returned to Oakland. Later we learned that Pete had been sent into San Francisco and placed on top of an ambulance with a mounted machine gun to discourage the crowds in the streets from trying to commandeer the vehicle as they patrolled for people needing assistance.

The next day I packed my few belongings in a suitcase and small box and caught the bus to San Leandro where I spent the night with Aunt Opal. She took me to the Greyhound Bus station the next afternoon and I left on my next journey and adventure.
Sherl Landers-Thorman, a native of Los Angeles, California, has lived in Northern Nevada, Guam, San Diego and for the longest period of time, in the town of Tustin, in Orange County, California. After retiring from a very satisfactory career as Personnel Director of the Tustin Unified School District, she moved to Reno in 2000, immediately joined Lifescapes and settled in very happily as a Renoite. Mother of two, stepmother of two more, grandmother of eight, and great grandmother of two, she ponders how the four oldest children suddenly became middle-age people.
THE END CAME
1945 AND THEREAFTER

Julie Ley

It was the summer of 1945 – August! I had decided to go to summer school so that I could graduate from high school in three and a half years. I took Physics, Physiology and Typing. Typing was for my benefit so that I could type my term papers; Physics and Physiology were for my science major. Summer school was held at Mission High School in San Francisco and I took the Bolinas bus (they were all greyhound buses in those days) to the city and a streetcar to the school. I was not cut out to be a typist and got a “D.” I also got a “D” in Physics, but then the teacher felt that girls had no place in his class and he didn’t help us at all. The two of us girls in the class did the best we could under the circumstances; we were frustrated but what could we do? When I took the second semester of Physics at my high school I got a “B” (I only had one “C” in Algebra; otherwise I got “A’s” and “B’s” in all my math and science courses plus that one “D” in Physics in summer school).

It was almost the end of summer school and I caught the bus home. We always waited then, in Sausalito, for the Samson Street bus but this day it was late. News of the war ending had delayed the buses due to all the celebrations starting. I felt fortunate to be out of the city; it was no place for a teen-ager just then and besides, my parents would have panicked if I hadn’t made it home. There was news of drunkenness in the papers the next morning.

Well I graduated from high school in January 1946 and started Junior College that spring. It was strange to be waiting in line with all the Vets who were taking advantage of the GI Bill, enacted to provide help for the Vets to obtain a college education. They were good classmates because they were more mature and buckled down to their studying. Some felt they were so old at 24 years. I can’t say that I felt that way about them.

My father had decided not to go to Alaska anymore, not only because he was 64 at the time but also because the company moved to Seattle, Washington. He did keep on working until he was 75 when he retired from the American Can Company. He had gone to Alaska every year since 1920 to work in the salmon canneries.
Postwar times made it possible to travel and Mother took advantage of this and took us camping every year, leaving Dad at home to take care of the livestock. He no longer had the “wanderlust” – only going to Minnesota once to visit his brother.

The war ending also made it possible for us to get our first refrigerator and then in 1950 a gas line was laid in our area and we switched to a gas stove and water heater. (No more wood or electric stove in the kitchen.) We never did get central heating, just a panel ray in the living room. Eventually we got a used 1948 Chevy, but I can’t remember the year we bought that car.

The Bay area had changed with the influx of shipyard workers and service personnel. A new city was formed in Marin at the foot of Waldo Grade called Marin City. With the closing of the shipyards, businesses were formed in the area. Also a model of the San Francisco Bay was built denoting the ebb and flow of the tides and streams entering the Bay. Marinites saw to it that we retained much open space. The Golden Gate National Seashore took over Forts Barry, Baker and Cronkite, as well as the Presidio and some of the Marin Coastline, and further north, Point Reyes National Seashore. Marin also has Muir Woods National Monument and several state and county parks.

Julie Ley – High School Graduation – January 1946

CELEBRATING THE END OF WORLD WAR II

Jonathan Otis

In the summer of 1945, Japan surrendered. I was at Norris Baronian’s house with Bill Benner and we were helping Norris build his ’32 Ford roadster. It was meant for drag racing so it had no fenders or top and was powered by a Mercury V-8 engine, which was too large to be encased under a hood. Besides, the big dual carburetors and heads were chromed for the maximum visual effect and it would be a crime to hide them. Norris, at seventeen, was a year older than Bill and me. He had been working on cars long before he could drive and we considered him to be a real expert. Our assisting him mainly involved handing him wrenches and asking lots of questions.

Norris’ dad came out to the garage and said, “Japan has surrendered – the war is over.”

We gathered around the radio to hear the details and learned there was going to be a large celebration in Hollywood. Bill said he was sure he could borrow his dad’s car; we agreed to meet at seven that evening and drive the short distance to Hollywood Boulevard. It was still quite light when we got there but people were already gathering. There were a great many servicemen in the throng and they were being kissed and hugged by the girls and congratulated by the men. As it grew dark, the crowd had grown so large that it had spilled out onto the street. It seemed as though everyone had a bottle of some kind of alcohol, which was passed from person to person. It was a boisterous but happy crowd with lots of shouting and singing. There were some cars on the street but they couldn’t move and no one seemed to care. Even the big red interurban trolley cars that traveled down Hollywood Blvd had been forced to halt. The crowd was so thick you even had a hard time walking. The booze took more and more effect, and the girls were kissing old men and teenagers.

Around midnight Bill said, “We have to start looking for my car.” We were both quite tipsy but we were sure we had parked the car down near Sunset and Vine. We became confused about the exact location and wandered around for at least a half hour before we found it.
I asked Bill, “Are you sure you are sober enough to drive?” and he assured me he was. All our walking had certainly helped. He was quite concerned that his dad would be angry about the late hour and his drinking. As it turned out, his parents were at a neighbor’s house and never knew when we got back. The next day, I tried to relive the celebration but to my regret, much of my recollection was fuzzy and jumbled.

Jon Otis was born in Texarkana, Texas, and moved to Los Angeles in 1944. He has lived in Reno since 1987 and has been happily married to Bobbie for forty-nine years.
HARVEY
A STORY OF WORLD WAR I

Jonathan Otis

Harvey was bitterly cold. He had been lying in the half frozen mud for almost an hour. Every time he would raise his head, the German machine gun nest would spot the movement and open fire. He was sure he was going to die like so many of the doughboys who had been cut down in this no-man’s land.

Not five feet away, two bodies were draped over coils of barbed wire. He didn’t know how long they had been there but the overpowering stench of decaying flesh filled the air.

It had stopped raining which was good in a way because his buddies in the trenches might be able to let the water subside naturally. The storm had caused the water to rise above the duckboard planking and the men had been standing in water for hours causing trench foot. Circulation slowed and eventually stopped, resulting in numerous amputations of toes and feet.

But with the cleansing rain gone, the putrid smells of rotting bodies, mixed with the lingering odor of mustard and phosgene gases, made Harvey feel extremely nauseous.

There was a glow on the horizon caused from hundreds of cannons trading volleys with the enemy. Occasionally, a star shell would explode in the sky, lighting up the battlefield and turning the landscape into an eerie black and white scene like a vivid but haunting photograph. Before the light faded, Harvey could see numerous phantom-like figures hanging over the coils of barbed wire.

All alone, lying in this muck, Harvey tried to understand how he had been put in this terrifying predicament. He had joined the army in September 1917, because he did not want his older brother, Bill, to get all the glory in the family. Thinking back, he realized he was nothing like Bill. Harvey was very quiet and loved painting in oil, for the most part, but dabbled with water colors, just to experiment.

He was slender, almost a frail six feet tall, and towered above Bill his older brother, who was stocky and robust. And of course, Bill was an officer in the
field artillery and soon went to France when the United States declared war on Germany.

Harvey had a quasi-hero worship of his big brother who had excelled at Brown University in both sports and academics and there was no question that their father favored Bill.

Papa was an autocratic and demanding tyrant who ran the family like they were employees in his company. It was obvious that Bill was being schooled to take over the business, which focused on gold and silver refining and trading. But Harvey could rely on his mother to protect him from Papa and nurture his artistic talents.

However, when Woodrow Wilson had gone back on his word and let the war hawks in Congress push him into declaring war, Harvey, in a burst of patriotism and in envy of Bill, marched off to fight the hated Huns. In basic training he did poorly in handling weapons. His sergeants viewed him with contempt; he thought. Just leave me alone. In spite of shooting his rifle poorly and not throwing hand grenades very far, he was determined to complete his training. The army was desperate for bodies and he soon found himself aboard a troop transport ship, heading for France. It was generally an uneventful trip but near the end of the voyage, a German U Boat launched torpedoes at his ship and others in the convoy. Harvey had been on deck, leaning on the railing and had seen a torpedo trail coming right at him. Most of his buddies scattered like rabbits to the other side of the ship. Harvey just stood there and watched the torpedo as it barely missed. His pals viewed him with new esteem and asked why he just stood there.

Harvey said nonchalantly, “Oh, I knew it wasn’t going to hit us – no need to run.” Many years later, Harvey confessed that he was petrified and his legs were frozen and locked in place.

Harvey lay in the mud as he thought about the past and he wondered if he would have any future at all. He was only twenty-nine years old and his sheltered and soft life had not prepared him for this horrifying ordeal.

Only a few hours ago he had been sitting in a trench eating cold beans from a can when a particularly vicious sergeant approached him and said, “Private Otis, I have an important mission for you.”

The sergeant smiled wickedly, “The Captain wants some wires cut and since I couldn’t find any volunteers, you’re elected.”

“Why me?” asked Harvey angrily. He believed he was always being harassed by this particular sergeant.
The sergeant’s eyes blazed as he spoke in a firm voice, choosing his words carefully but emphatically, “Are you refusing a direct order? If you are, I can have you shot.”

Harvey didn’t know if that was a bluff but decided he wouldn’t run the risk of a refusal.

“Well, what exactly do you want me to do?” he asked through clenched teeth.

The sergeant gave him a pair of heavy-duty wire cutters and said, “We may decide to attack at dawn and it is your job to cut the barbed wires in front of this sector. The entire battalion is involved and our company will lead the charge. When you go over the top you’ll have to leave your rifle, it will be too cumbersome.”

The sergeant produced a .45 caliber automatic pistol encased in a holster and said, “Attach this to your web belt opposite your canteen. This will leave your hands free to do the cutting.

Harvey had taken the weapon along with some heavy leather gloves and steeled himself for the mission. He edged over to a fellow peering through a periscope, and asked, “See anything out there?”

“Nope, it’s as quiet as a graveyard.”

Harvey cringed at the morbid humor but climbed up onto a firing step that enabled him to scan no-man’s land. The sun was just setting when he pulled himself over the top of the trench. He crawled, crab-like, for about fifty yards and reached his objective and started cutting wires. Suddenly, there was a great deal of shouting coming from the German trenches about seventy feet away. Harvey couldn’t understand the words but from the tone of the voices he knew that he had been spotted. He rapidly scurried to a small indentation in the earth and tried to catch his breath. Harvey was horrified as the Germans sprayed the air above his head with a ceiling of bullets. Harvey tried to think. He had never known how hard it was to concentrate when you are terrified. Soon the guns fell silent, but any raising of his head and they would start up again.

Harvey remembered the sergeant saying that his company might be attacking today. If they did, that would be his salvation; if not, he would be doomed and would be buried in potter’s field with so many others.

He was getting extremely cold, laying there for what seemed like an eternity but it had only been a little over an hour when he heard some commands being barked from the American trenches. Almost immediately, hundreds of mortar shells began exploding in and around the German trenches. “My company is starting their attack, maybe I have a chance.”

Sure enough, it was happening. He could make out hundreds of shadowy figures pouring out of the American trenches. Soon they were on him and then
past. The battle raged furiously but after a few minutes the Germans retreated from their trenches.

Harvey was filled with self-loathing. “I thought I would be brave but I feel like a coward. How can I be heroic if I’m always paralyzed with fear? I hate this stinking war with all its blood and misery. It seems that I’ve been cold and wet and terrified ever since I’ve been in France.”

He was still afraid to stand up and started crawling back to his trench. He tumbled into it and lay there for a few minutes when a regimental officer approached him and asked, “Why aren’t you with your outfit soldier? They went over the top twenty minutes ago?”

Harvey could only say, “I cut the wires. I cut the wires.” He kept repeating the words over and over.

The officer looked puzzled, “Where’s your rifle?” He demanded.

Another officer appeared and said, “I think he’s the one that was sent out to cut the barbed wire. He didn’t take a rifle, only a sidearm.”

Both officers saw that only a canteen was attached to Harvey’s web belt.

“Where’s your pistol soldier?” The first officer asked in a stern voice.

Harvey stared at his belt for at least a full minute and then said, “Oh, I remember now. It got in the way so I left it out there.”

Both officers stared at him in disbelief, “You threw away your weapon? Are you nuts! You had no defense if you would have run into a German.”

Harvey droned on in a monotone but with an odd kind of logic, “I had to cut the wires and you see I still have my cutters. I still have my cutters.” He held the cutters, almost like a pistol, for the officers to see.

The officers suspected that Harvey was having a mental break down. They had seen it before and had also talked to some French officers who had been at war since 1914 and they affirmed that mental confusion, like this, was not uncommon.

Harvey was sent to a medical aid station deep in the trenches where a doctor questioned him at length and filed a report recommending that Harvey be sent to a hospital in the rear for a rest.

Once there, psychiatrists questioned and observed him at length. They determined that he was not faking. He stayed in the hospital for a little over a month but with no improvement.

Harvey was returned to the States in the spring of 1918 and received a medical discharge. The phrase cited on his separation papers was, “Mental break down: shellshock.”

Harvey was my uncle. My father, William (Bill), was his older brother. Harvey returned from France severely damaged – not physically, but mentally. In those days they called it, “shellshock,” rather than, “battle fatigue,”
or some other euphemistic term. He was emotionally disturbed and when he returned to civilian life, he was not able to hold a responsible job. He never married and lived with his sister, Millicent Otis, my aunt. She eventually found a job for him, mowing the lawns in a Providence, Rhode Island cemetery. He died in 1944, at the age of fifty-six.
When my old man came home from the war in Europe, it was the greatest day of my life. It really was the greatest of the great. How happy I felt about seeing my beloved dad again. Oh, boy. But I can’t remember at all the day of his homecoming.

I do remember however all the months, the trips and the billets my mom, dad and I shared after he enlisted as we traveled from Boston, Massachusetts, to Texarkana, Texas, from one Army base to another. I was one unhappy tyke when he left for overseas. At thirty-two years of age, Dad was an old man in U.S. Army terms and I was only four. I was seven years old when he returned.

As Dad settled into civilian life after his years overseas, he told many anecdotes. One of my favorites – and one of my dad’s, too, I guess, for he told it more than once – went like this. Dad was a captain in ordnance. His job was to rush materiel and ammunition by the Red Ball Express to the troops fighting the German army. One wintry day, some time after D-day, he sat in the lead jeep of a convoy. It wasn’t moving. Snow had been coming down for a few hours. Nothing moved except the silent snow falling on the jeep and trucks. Several inches had accumulated on the ground.

“Captain, where do you suppose the road is?” asked my dad’s driver.

“No jokes, sergeant. We have to move this gear to the front,” Dad responded as he turned to look back at the dozens of trucks stopped behind his jeep.

“Yes, sir, but where’s the road?” Sergeant Jackson said, taking advantage of their stop to shake a Lucky Strike out of its green pack. It had come in a carton of cigarettes that had been part of a package from home. The brownies that had also been included with the smokes disappeared in a hurry even though they’d been a little stale.

“Thanks, Sergeant, I’d enjoy one of those,” my dad said as he helped himself to one of the sergeant’s cigarettes and pointed to his right. “See those
telephone poles there? The road runs alongside them. There’s your road, Sergeant. Let’s go.”

Jackson spun the Jeep’s steering wheel to the right and charged off at convoy speed, staying close to the line of poles and keeping it to his right. The line of trucks followed. Hours passed. Snow stopped falling. The coverage of snow on the ground became thinner as the convoy trundled east and a bit north. From time to time, the convoy stopped for a break, a meal, a drink, a smoke and what all. During the last break before reaching their destination, the drivers spent some time just staring at the ground and scuffing at the snow with the toes of their combat boots. Soon they all mounted up and headed out once again. A half hour passed.

“Hey look, captain, look, over there,” the sergeant said, pointing frantically past the line of poles, “See that?”

“See what?” said my dad in a sleepy, muffled voice as he unbuttoned the high collar of his woolen overcoat so he could turn his head to look in the direction indicated by Jackson. Dad didn’t like his mid-convoy naps to be disturbed.

“Over there,” repeated the sergeant with added significance, “See?”

“That is a road, Sergeant.”

“Yes, sir. A road, sir. On the other side of the telegraph poles. We’ve been driving across fields all day, not on a road, sir.” The sergeant was beginning to sound a little grumpy. “No wonder it was so damn bumpy. Sir.”

“Indeed, Sergeant. Get on the damn road, Sergeant. That’s an order,” my dad snapped, as he rebuttoned his woolen overcoat.

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After his command arrived safely at the forward supply depot, Dad’s men off-loaded the equipment from the trucks into a couple of warehouses in a small Belgian town near Belgium’s border with the Netherlands. After their work, the men hit the mess hall and then the sack. They were well rested on the morrow. They didn’t have to pack items for the return trip until the next day. They had a free day.

“Jackson,” my dad called out as he spotted his sergeant with his head under the hood of the Jeep.

“Yes, sir,” the sergeant shouted as he came to attention, walloping his head on the hood of the Jeep.

“Jackson.”

“Yes, sir.”
“Your head’s bleeding, Sergeant. Go to the aid station and have it stopped.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Then get back here on the double.”

“Yes, sir,” said the sergeant and he marched off to the aid station.

An hour later, Jackson with his head bandaged was back at the impromptu motor pool, looking for my dad. The sergeant found the captain in the temporary ordnance department office with his feet resting on the desk as he snoozed, leaning back in the desk chair.

“Sir,” snapped the sergeant.

“‘Ten hut,” bellowed my dad as he essayed to remove his feet from the desk and put them on the floor. But lifting his legs only caused the chair to slip forward and tumble backward, depositing him on his back, legs in the air.

“Sir,” repeated Jackson as he hustled forward to rescue his captain. The sergeant stifled a laugh and a grin, having had his revenge for his banged-up head. “O Captain! My Captain,” he mimicked, as he leaned down to give my dad a hand up but Jackson burst out laughing at his use of Whitman’s words. The men clasped hands and my old man, laughing heartily himself by now, pulled the mirth-weakened sergeant to the floor. There they lay, laughing and snorting like schoolboys.

“Are you boys, er, gentlemen, all right?” came a female voice from the office’s doorway.

The unfamiliar voice surprised the prone sergeant and captain. They leapt to their feet and found the voice belonged to a WAC colonel.

“Yes, sir, ma’am,” the men chorused.

“What were you men doing?” asked the colonel as she returned their salute.

“Laughing, sir, ma’am.”

“Make up your minds.”

“Ma’am. Boys will be boys.”

“You took the words right out of my mouth. Are you Captain Parks?”

“Yes, ma’am. Captain Parks. Ordnance.”

“Colonel Saunders,” the WAC officer replied, “General Eisenhower sent me over to thank you for bringing those supplies here so quickly yesterday. At ease, by the way.”

“Ma’am.”

“And for opening a new road.”

“Ma’am.”

“You’re free today, I understand. Would you like to take a look around?”

“Yes, Colonel,” my dad answered.
“Sir?” Jackson spoke.
“Yes, Sergeant,” Dad said.
“I was just coming to get you, sir, to suggest the same thing.”
“Well, there you are, Colonel,” said my dad, appraising the colonel’s trim figure in her tailored uniform. A lovely lass, he thought, what a treat. “My jeep or yours?” he said, gallantly.
“Yours will be fine, Captain,” Saunders said, giving the old man a gracious smile.

The trio left the warehouse, the men’s knees appearing to be a little wobbly. They mounted the jeep with the sergeant driving under the colonel’s direction. My dad was perched in the back seat.

They were just starting out into the country when the colonel ordered Jackson to stop at an auberge. The three went inside to warm themselves at the fireplace. Saunders gave the innkeeper her order for a picnic basket in perfect French.

Using the same language, my dad spoke, “Isn’t it a bit chilly for a picnic, Colonel?” The sergeant shrugged and nodded.
“I suppose,” Colonel Saunders answered in French, “But it will give us a chance to watch the enemy’s lines while we eat.”
“D’accord,” said my old man.

Picnic basket in hand, the sergeant returned to the jeep with his charges. The basket found its perch beside my dad. Off they headed on a dirt road into the countryside with its fields and hedges. Some of the hedges reached well over twenty feet in height and were too thick to penetrate even with a tank. Suddenly, Jackson jerked the steering wheel to his right, throwing the jeep, his passengers and himself into the roadside ditch just as they heard an airplane engine’s roar and the chatter of the plane’s machine guns close overhead. Odors of gun powder, dust, and airplane exhaust stirred fear and anger in the fighter plane’s would-be victims.

“Hedge-hopping bastard,” my dad said, lying on his back in the ditch and watching the ME 109 Messerschmidt’s tail depart.
“Are you all right, Captain?” came the colonel’s voice.
“Damn right. Where are you? Where’s Jackson?”
“Over here,” came Saunders’ voice from somewhere in the tall grass overgrowing the ditch.

Dad struggled to his feet and then, dizzy, he dropped to his knees and crawled toward the sound. He found his sergeant with the bandage gone from the wound gained in his morning bout with the hood of the Jeep. The bleeding had started anew. Blood was dripping onto the colonel’s uniform as she lay spread-eagled on her back under the unconscious sergeant.
“He’ll never believe this,” my dad said as he checked his sergeant for broken bones and especially an injured neck.

“Will he come back?” asked the colonel.

“Who?” Dad said.

“The fighter plane.”

“I doubt it. Let’s wake up Jackson. Are you okay?”

“He’s pretty heavy,” She said, gasping a little.

“Jackson. Hey, Jackson. Jake, wake up,” my dad called. No response. He unhooked his canteen from his belt, opened it and splashed some water on the sergeant’s face. His eyes snapped open, he turned his head left and right, and, being a young man and a gentleman, he leapt to his feet, apologizing to the colonel. Then, he hopped about in the tall grass on one foot.

“My ankle’s hurt. Here, let me help you, Colonel,” said Jackson, hopping back toward the woman as she sat up, struggling with her hiked-up skirt. She extended a hand to each banged-up soldier. My dad, still kneeling, levered her up by her hand and elbow. Sergeant Jackson just pulled her up and paid for it when his injured ankle felt his weight again. The colonel stood, brushing herself off.


“Let me show you,” the sergeant said. By this time, my dad’s dizziness had passed and the three helped one another up the ditch’s slope to the road. Their picnic lunch was strewn from one side of the road to the other – and then they saw it, the track of bullet holes left by the machine guns of the enemy aircraft. The Jeep’s tracks paralleled the track of bullet holes laced across the road diagonally.

“Jesus,” said my dad.

“Holy mackerel,” said Jackson.

The colonel’s eyes rolled up in her head and she swayed against my father. He held her up and her eyes fluttered open.

“Holy mackerel indeed, Sergeant, you saved our lives,” she said.

“Happy to do it, ma’am.”

“Jackson, can you get the radio phone from the Jeep? Can you get the Jeep out of the ditch?” his captain asked.

The sergeant started hopping toward the ditch.

“No, no,” my dad said, “Forget it. That’s an order. I’ll do it.” But the colonel was already starting the Jeep’s engine. The vehicle was on a thirty-degree slope. Nevertheless, she shifted into four-wheel drive and low range, backed the Jeep down into the bottom of the ditch and then eased the Jeep forward before turning the wheel slightly and slowly powering it up the bank and onto the road.
The men had gathered up the spilled food, gawking at the bullet holes as they did so, bullet holes that would have been in them if not for Jackson’s quick reaction.

The colonel drove the Jeep to where the men waited with the basket.
“Where to?” my dad said as he took his seat in back again.
“I guess we’ve seen enough of the enemy today,” said the colonel, “How about we return to the auberge to eat this food?”
“Fine with us,” the captain and the sergeant said.
“I probably didn’t need low range to get out of that ditch. By the way,” Saunders said, “Not a word of this back at HQ.” Any secrecy would depend on the colonel changing her clothes before anyone at headquarters spotted the mud and blood stains on her uniform.

Another of Dad’s stories concerned a veterans’ meeting he’d attended shortly after his homecoming. Many vets filled an auditorium. World War II had been for many of these men a difficult time. They wanted compensation in some form beyond the low pay they’d received for the efforts they’d made and the hardships they’d suffered. One former GI after another topped earlier speakers with their gripes and hard-luck stories. The atmosphere grew thick with self-pity. A large man sitting behind my dad apparently could listen to this recitation of woes no longer.

“Damn it,” the big man said, rising to his feet in the last row of the hall so that he towered over the others, “We’ve had the adventure of a lifetime, experiences we’d never have had and never will have again. Let’s quit the bellyachin’.”

The assembled veterans fell silent. Soon the hall was empty. No more bellyachin’.

Joe Parks has been a part of Lifescapes for three years and looks forward to many more with this fine writing group. His “life story” has some 30,000 words so far and he has many more to write.
A SLIGHT OF HAND

Sally Quade

My school residence, the scene of my difficulties, sat across the street from the UCLA Campus, one in a long line of sorority houses. Westwood Village and the Pacific Ocean lay west and the San Fernando Valley directly east.

One night a call came announcing a visitor for both me and my friend Jane. As the two of us bounced down the stairs headed for the foyer, we sighted the two jokers, my friend Jim and Jane’s friend Bozer, our past, now rejected boyfriends. We ran toward the kitchen, yelling for the house mother. The two guys followed, picking us up bodily, as we struggled, yelling for help. “You can’t do this, Let us go,” we said as they ran down the stairs and put us in their car.” “Oh yes, we can,” they laughed, “We’re goin’ to the Valley to a real house and have a real party,” Jim said, and guffawed. “You’ll love it. Hah, hah.”

At first there was a deep silence as Jim turned the car east. Then the boys began to talk about a vacated house, as we crossed several miles of valley floor and entered a residential area beneath the Sierra Madre Mountains. They boys described the house: “It’s perfect for a party. No parents. Lots of rooms. Plenty of booze.” Jane and I winced.

In the quiet moments that followed, I recalled an incident, an event more troubling than this that had led me to fear Jim and his buddies. Jim had kidnapped me once not long ago, carrying me bodily from my house to his car and them to a motel in Westwood where he parked in the driveway. “Bozer is here,” he said, “We’re gonna have a party. I’ll be right back.” He walked 30 feet away and into a motel room.

I looked at the dash. He’d left the key in the ignition. I looked at the motel room. A light. No motion. No Jim. Then I started the engine, backed carefully out of the driveway and drove for home, afraid of getting lost, finally parking in front of our house. I gave the keys to our house mother with instructions to return them to Jim when he arrived. That was some months ago. I hadn’t heard from him.

Now here I was, again Jim’s captive, going to a house party full of drunk fraternity guys, I thought, trapped. I was scared. I had little idea of how to solve this problem. No purse. No money. Maybe, Jane and I could walk home, I
thought. She’s a great hiker. A mountaineer. First we’ll disappear, then hide in the shrubs and then walk. About fifteen miles. We can do it. We can do fifteen miles in an evening on flat ground. I could see us arriving at the house, safe, the sun rising, our sisters cheering.

In reality we were still going the other way toward the party house. We slowed down and stopped, gazing at a water-stained, ramshackle, house. A three story dwelling, its upstairs dark, the downstairs dim. As we entered, the smell of rotting wood, a musty, dank odor enveloped us. A raw light globe was hanging over a wide table in the middle of the room. At that moment the boys started opening doors. Finding the rooms occupied and dimly lit, they went on to the next room, and disappeared within.

A tall fellow walked by me and stopped, backed up and shook my hand. I recognized him. “Remember me? I’m Allen, you read my palm last semester in student Union.” I did remember. He turned to his buddies, “This is the girl who reads palms. Get her to read yours.” Raising his voice he yelled, “Get her to read your palms, you guys, over there. Start making some sense out of your senseless lives, you damn FOOLS, FOOLS,” he yelled. They laughed. Some came over to the table. I had my first customer.

For a long moment, I left the musty room and remembered my father looking at palm after palm, inviting me to join him. We were sitting on the sofa in our living room at a party with friends. His subjects were pleased that someone knew such nice things about them and was reporting it all to anyone who cared to listen. I remember he had warned me not to report tragedy or defects or bad news, but to offer encouragement, always. Find the essence, the positive core then build on it, he had said.

Allen, the basketball player and my support, joined me, moving the table under a bright light in the middle of the parlor and yelled, “Whose first?” He was looking and acting like my benefactor. “Our friend reads palms. Over here,” he said. I had left looking for Jane going through several dark and alcohol permeated rooms, with no success.

I returned to the table, where I met my first customer, an amiable looking fellow, who came forward, found a chair near the light and sat down.

“Let me see, Duncan,” I said, and took both his hands in mine. “This is your heart line, there is the line of intellect, and this is the mound of Venus, of love. I studied his hands, looking at texture, color, shape and placement of lines. “The line of the heart shows constancy and intensity. You have a girlfriend to whom you are committed. Your friends are your friends for life. You are conservative in your taste and you are orderly in your thinking. You like to have a plan and work the plan. You would be interested in mathematics and engineering.” I heard a chuckle and murmurs of assent. I continued. “You like
facts. I hope you find a field that measures its product. You can manage details joyfully.” A glimpse at his clothes told me he was neat, careful and color aware. “You have a special feeling for color that you may or may not know about, but this will help you in life. Some people see little more than black and white. But not you. You see many shades. You also know how people feel.”

A couple of guys left and came back with their buddy, Simmons. Some were standing by and grabbed others passing to listen, as a group slowly formed around the table.

Simmons hand was large and strong. I noticed that he moved with ease and purpose, sitting comfortably in the chair beside me. I looked at his muscular palm, long fingered, with its high color mounds. The lines, the muscles spoke: well developed, strained, bulging, hard, and warm and calloused.

“You’re an athlete, inborn, practiced, with perfect coordination, and enormous strength. Your intelligence makes you a particularly valuable player,” I said. I pointed to his headline, which was a deep gash across his palm. The mound of Venus, Goddess of Love, just below his thumb, was full and soft, his lifeline strong. “You will have a long and happy life. I see that your mind likes a broad view. You like history, human history. Your hand says you are interested in people and the course of human events. You could be a student of history. You are wondering if you want to teach history, or write. Your verbal skills are outstanding and pull you in another direction,” I said pointing to his thumb and index finger, “though I haven’t heard you speak. You are in love with detail. You can capitalize on your talents, if you stay close to the main idea, the main event.”

His buddies, surrounding the table, were applauding, cheering. I noticed that Jane was part of the crowd. She had survived and was clapping, waving at me. More sleepy heads emerged from the dark, lining up to have their palms read.

I continued reading palms searching for good will, sympathy for mankind, personal ambition, and attributes. And found them. Allen read my mind as he ushered more and more barely sober subjects in my direction. He whispered, “I would gladly have taken you home hours ago, but I only have my bicycle here.”

Just before dawn, the party began to break up. Jim and Bozer, without comment, returned Jane and me, silently and safely to our UCLA home.

Sally Quade, née Armstrong, was born January 8, 1927 in Long Beach, California. She went to the University of California, Berkeley and to the Sorbonne, France and took graduate work at UNR and became a psychotherapist. Sally also received a BA in Art and double masters in Counseling Psychology and Special Education. First she worked in Special Education. Later she worked with gifted children. She also has three gifted children: One is a drama teacher; one is a building contractor; and one is a professor of Geology at the University of Arizona.
COMING HOME

Lois Chestnut Sorgen

A misplaced box of family photos
  Turning brown and frayed
  Uncovered a forgotten soldier -
  A remembrance long-delayed.

Families grew, and memories faded
  Each thread that held him close.
Innocent hearts could not know
  The hell on earth that stole a lovely rose.

Company A, 5th Machine Gun Battalion,
  For its worth, could not preserve
The blood and screams of tens of thousands
  Of fighting American soldiers and Marines.
At last the uncovered treasure of a box
   Has circled near a century of loss.
The 1918 Battle of Marne – The Great War –
   The ancestor never known -- the cemetery cross –

All this relived as research lent and brought to bear
Moments of regret that no one mourned a life so spent.
Dear Albert, your flag of honor will forever wave,
   A symbol of the price you paid and the life you gave.

Dear Uncle Albert,

   Discovering this compelling scene of my grandmother standing so bravely
to mourn and honor her beloved son beside the others who proudly offered their
hearts and grief, I found myself searching for any bits of family knowledge that
might introduce me to a man I had never met but now wanted to know.

   My father, I figure, was younger than you by six years – only twenty
when you were killed. He never really talked about you to anyone because, as
was the custom of those who were left behind, they thought a part of them also
had not survived. They just accepted fate and carried on. You would be proud
of Dad that he kept the farm that was to be both of yours when you returned
from the war. The Depression was a challenge to him and your mother, but they
managed to keep the family inheritance intact. You can rest assured that your
mother was always loved and cared for by Dad and your brother and sisters.

   They had but a small glimpse of your life as a soldier. From the time you
enlisted at Fort Dix for training on September 27, 1917 and left for France in
February, 1918, there was no news except for the letter you wrote from the
transport ship. My cousin has that letter which you sent to our grandmother.
How your mother must have delighted to read of your enthusiastic description
of the lavish dinner that you described was provided on board to all the
enlistees. She undoubtedly treasured the printed menu you included, which
must have given her comfort knowing that in some small way you were thought
of and cared for.

   How abruptly you had to adjust to the heartless surroundings that
awaited you. You suffered from a loneliness that I cannot imagine. So protected
and loved had you been. Now there was bitter cold and wet. Trenches you dug
were filled with knee-deep water and a mud they say was so caked and frozen
on the men that fingers and toes dropped to feed the emboldened rats who
scoured and fed upon any weakness they could find. A stench of hundreds of rotating dead horses and countrymen and miles of treacherous barbed wire looked like nothing you could have imagined on the farm. Flies and vermin that plagued your bodies must have seemed as if they erupted from the bowels of an earth gone mad. And so it had.

You’d be so crushed to know that all you fought for was another preamble of wars to come. In fact, we called the next one World War II, and it was fought in some of the same regions you defended when you were there. The allies and enemies changed names; Japan and Italy were now our enemies along with Germany. We seemed to learn little as to why we were there again. There your brother, William, lost his son, Jack, who joined you in glory. He was as handsome as you, and I remember him in his uniform. To me as a young girl my older cousin was so charming. After that, other gruesome conflicts erupted every few years. Unfamiliar Korea and Vietnam became familiar names and places where we sent our brave. The intense cold or heat and the bloodshed never changed. Seems we never learned, and even today as I write this, our young men and women are doing something in far-off lands that we at home really don’t comprehend . . . or sense the motives or rewards.

The important thing I want you to know is that you were so appreciated. You are a hero to me and to all those who knew you. In that far-off land when your Hotchkiss machine gun on its frail tripod could no longer protect you or complete its mission at that fierce battle on the Marne in October, 1918, you found solace in a makeshift hospital.

There God called you home, and took your breath and the suffering and fear away. After the peace that settled upon you, it probably wouldn’t matter to you that the Germans signed the Armistice just a month later on November 11, 1918.

With this irony, the family was left to adjust and remember. I’m proud to have had this chance to know of you.

With love for who you were,
Your niece,
Lois Chestnut Sorgen
November 11, 2005

P.S. You probably already knew this, but your younger brother, Samuel, was not only a good son and brother, but also the best father a girl like me could ever have.
Lois Sorgen: I love words. They are free and absolutely necessary for us to enjoy our universe. What a way to travel, to introduce ourselves to our fellow man. When placed properly they elevate our lives to a new height.
TRAMP, TRAMP, TRAMP

Joyce Starling

I was born in 1938 to parents who were part of large farming families located outside Topeka, Kansas. Together mother and daddy had sixteen siblings. During the second World War my father left Kansas for California and a job in the shipyards. Soon after, my mother and I traveled by train to join him in San Francisco. The train was very crowded and we met lots of American soldiers who were very sweet to my mother and I, and they always seemed to have candy and chewing gum to share. I supposed they missed their own little blonde girls.

In San Francisco my parents were away from the farm for the first time in their lives, and because they had not made any friends yet, they spent a lot of time at the movies. Having a movie theater down the street was a real novelty to transplanted Kansas farm kids. Since that sibling pool of sixteen potential babysitters back in Kansas wasn’t available any more, they had to take me to the movies with them. I’m told that I looked forward to these outings, but rarely saw any part of the actual movie because I fell asleep during or shortly after the newsreel.

In those days, theaters presented Movie Tone newsreels before the feature. The newsreels always included footages of marching enemy soldiers. These soldiers seemed very different from the soldiers on the train. Something about the goose-stepping soldiers and the ominous tone of the announcer must have stayed with me. I didn’t know exactly what it meant to be a Nazi soldier, but it seemed to involve evil and people being forced to leave their homes - scary stuff for a four year old.

During this period, when I fell asleep in my own bed at home, with my ear pressed against my cupped hand, I was sure I could hear Nazi soldiers marching in the streets of San Francisco below our apartment. Sometimes I would struggle to swim up out of that thick pre-sleep state so I could tell my daddy, “The soldiers are coming!” My parents would try to explain away the sound and tell me I was just having a bad dream, but they couldn’t fool me. I knew what I knew. The soldiers were coming and I alone heard the tramp, tramp, tramp of their boots.
It was years before I understood that the sound of the boots was really my own heartbeat.

Joyce Starling was born in Topeka, KS, and moved to the East Bay in California at the age of three. She has four children and moved to Nevada because her youngest daughter and two youngest grandchildren were located here. She loves drama, museums, ElderCollege and needlework.
What are you doing?” I asked into the darkness. It was the middle of the night. Mary’s answer washed over me like a bucket of dread.

“I don’t think he’s dead, he’s probably just kidding us, and I’m going to find out.” I was behind her moving slowly past my parent’s door. I could reach out in the darkness and touch my fear, my blanket clutched around me to protect me against the night.

Down the stairs and we were in the hallway with the street light shining and the sound of the wind and large leaves pressed against the window like bats. Then the curtains to the parlor were in front of us closed like a movie show and I knew beyond that was my living room now holding our brother. My stomach lurched at the oppressive smell of too many flowers stuffed into one room.

That afternoon the two soldiers had waited out here and I had plunged into the curtains only to see my mom, naked from the waist up, sitting on the fluffed up chair, the Doctor over her, the red ring of red sores around her back, “Herpes” from all the stress, and her broken leg she had gotten, being hit by a car as she walked up to church the day before. My mom was weeping into a large white handkerchief and seeing me she waived it like a flag of surrender. I stepped back out of the curtain as if from some play I did not like, back from the two soldiers that now were being ushered out onto the porch. Aunt Margaret took hold of my hand and led me into the kitchen, closing the door. And the adults were entertaining us, telling us that they would let us bring our dog in and for us to tell them again the tricks we had taught him, and did I want another piece of chocolate cake, and tell us the name of your teacher, and did we like school, and what was it we liked. And I knew then that my mom was not going to be there for us, that these people would not be telling us to go upstairs and play like they usually did. They were going to try to make us think things were going grand, and really they were with all the potato salad and pumpkin pies and my aunts cleaning the house, one using plastic gloves to wash the dishes so her nails stayed shiny red. And during this time the black hearse was being unloaded, and the thump thump of the foot steps and my aunt with the fox fur around her neck bending down to let me touch it, as she said, “God needed
your brother in heaven and that’s where he is now, a better place.” But it seemed like my mom needed him here, and this wasn’t such a bad place, with the chocolate cake and our dog who knew how to crawl on the floor, and all the sandwiches that the neighbors had brought.

“Oh, only the good die young” she said. And I thought, “What was I, chopped liver?” And I looked up to the ceiling wondering if my brother could see us and then my aunt held my hand and opened the kitchen door and the soldiers were bringing in the coffin, bigger than my brother with the flag hanging over it. And my aunt said I should be proud and to stand up straight. It seemed that my brother was here and not in heaven. They rested his box on the metal and by now my mom had been given the “shot,” and her mouth was straight and her face dry as she sat in the big plush chair, her casted leg up on the pillows like something dropped there and not even a part of her. And the man with the black suit approached the coffin and raised up the lid. I saw the softest silk, lovely padding lining the cover and the whole box, and my brother there smiling, his eyes closed and his fingers, the finger that my sister said had moved. And that is how Mary knew it was a trick and how she would prove it and why we had to go now in the middle of the night. When we got to the curtain I reached deep for my courage, but it wasn’t there, so I gathered my blanket and retreated to the steps, with Mary parting the curtains and whispering loud, “You’re such a baby, and you’re just crying for attention, because we didn’t even know our brother, he had lived in the city.” But even sitting on the wood step I knew by Mary’s voice that she was scared too, and that she was trembling.

I lowered my head into my hands and then she was back.

“I poked him hard, real hard, and he didn’t move. So I guess he’s dead.”

The next day the curtains were opened and people came all day to kneel at the tiny wood prie-dieu in front of the coffin and bring more food. We had three hams, and stacks of rye bread, and more questions on what do you want to be when you grow up and “maybe you can be a nurse and help the boys overseas.” On the third day we were given wool dresses, the likes of which we had never seen, and our cousins’ good hand-me-down coats. But the rain had started and we had to put on galoshes that made us look good on top but like country people on the bottom, spoiled our whole picture of us. And there we were in the church and then the cemetery, which seemed to be hilly pasture. My dress was itching and I wondered if there would be cake left after my Uncle Bill had arrived and seemed to eat all the good stuff, and if we could stay home from school again tomorrow. The guns went off, filling the air and my ears like cotton, sitting there with my brother who was there in heaven, too. And I wanted to go home and get out of the rain and go back to school and come home to my mom baking a raspberry cake, and the smell of pork chops; not heavy flowers and
telling me to hang up my coat, and not having any cast on her leg or the tears in her eyes.

Helen Stevens left New York in 1967 to go to the University of Hawaii. She got married there and started her family. Her degrees are in science and nursing with a minor in English. She always wanted to write and enjoys writing her memories of New York and sharing them with her sister, who never left New York.
Knock Knock

Julie C. Sulahria

Conflicted inside. Park my anti-Prius!

Knock on doors east of UNR--Move On--Knock on more doors. I am making a difference by encouraging people to vote, encouraging Kerry supporters to vote--to be counted by standing up for themselves in Nevada. I carry hope with every tenuous knock as it takes all my courage to go door to door.

I signed up for an activity I actually hated; every knock constituted an act of courage, my own personal local battlefield. I had been a princess in my tower of inaction, insouciance, nurturing my personal black holes with consumption of energy-grabbing products. My salve took us to war!

More doors, more puzzled looks, more short scripts--Am I invading their party, their sense of peace?

One night my score was ten for and ten against. I went straight to Macy’s looking for my balm. Then, three days before the November 2nd, 2004 election, the Berkeley Californian’s crossed the mountain to parallel our effort in the streets of Reno. It was bliss. On all sides we agreed and blanketed neighborhoods once more with our knocking, script and questioning eyes toward the student apartment quarters, the families, the halfway house, the Good Fellows Hall, the Hispanics and the dread-locked skinny guru whacking weeds. Did I just imagine him?

The day arrives--I wait. At the precinct all my voters enter to make their mark. The count was mounting. The glory is in our reach--our difference, our patriotism pinnacled!

Polls close. Exuberance falters. Reality reasserts itself.

I didn’t regain spirit for holidaying, for my birthday, for writing friends--under all the snow that winter--my bulbs of courage withered.
Postscript:

Discouraged and frantic about the Bush administration’s war and conservative-issues policy, I ventured into the territory of going door to door for the grassroots Move On organization. For the first time since I moved to Reno in 1972, I hoped to elect a President that I wanted and voted into office. I felt I could not live with myself if I did not work for change. This time, war forced me into the streets for my belief in peace.

Julie Sulahria - Born in Iowa, Julie moved to California’s Redwood forests, then to Nevada in 1972 for graduate school. She married Bashir, focused her work in city, historic district and transportation planning for 20 years before retiring to a life of art, book groups, writing and card design, giving Nevada Museum of Art tours, traveling, family and friends.
M. Bashir Sulahria

Fazal lives in Rurkee, a tiny village in rural Western Punjab. The small hamlet supports one hundred adobe mud houses. This flat and fertile valley enjoys four distinct seasons and a year long growing season as the summers are hot and mild winters barely dip below freezing. Seasonal rains along with wells provide sumptuous irrigation making the vast plains rich in agriculture. Cash crops of wheat, corn, sugar cane and vegetables grow naturally. Farmers work hard yet enjoy their simple life. Fazal owns the one shop located at the edge of the village. He keeps it well stocked with provisions and merchandise meeting every villager’s demand. Like his ancestors before him, he lives here with his family.

One sunny spring morning in 1964 when he opens the shop door, a creeping military convoy surprises him. An officer in a Jeep leads two armored vehicles and two trucks loaded with soldiers. The young officer wears an olive drab felt beret and carries a leather swagger stick in one hand while clutching the hand grip on the roll bar as his driver negotiates the rutted narrow dirt road running through the green wheat fields. Fazal immediately straddles his bicycle to catch up to the officer, waving at him, motioning him to stop and forcing a polite smile. The officer orders his driver to stop, puts his hand out and whips his swagger stick that instantly halts all the vehicles behind him.

“ I am sorry to bother you, Sir. I am curious about why and where the soldiers are going with guns and all?” inquires Fazal confidently, yet politely.

“We are moving to the Indian-Pakistani border with orders to use any means necessary to repel possible attacks by Indian armed forces,” asserts the officer.

“Why will India attack us?” questions Fazal.

“I am a soldier. I just follow orders. India attacked Pakistani held Kashmir and a fierce battle rages between the forces high in the mountains. We must defend our border in case India opens a front here.”

“Thank you and good luck,” declares Fazal when patting the officer’s shoulder.

“You might want to spread the word that Rurkee may be evacuated,” warns the young officer looking deep into Fazal’s eyes. He gently taps his
authority stick on the driver’s shoulder signaling him to drive off. The engine roars and the Jeep jerks forward as the rest of the convoy follows. Fazal shakes his head in disbelief and stands motionless gripping his bike as the camouflaged vehicles are swallowed up into their own dust.

For a moment he flashes back seventeen years ago to 1947 when he saw the horrors of partition. The subcontinent was divided into India and Pakistan, splitting the Punjab region and its inhabitants. Out of fear, people moved or were forced to flee across the newly created border. The separation was horrendous. Loss of life and property was immeasurable; misery ensued. Communal, religious and ethnic riots erupted. Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs who lived in peace and harmony for centuries turned against each other, unleashing a cycle of hate and violence of historic proportions. The dark side of humanity overwhelmed the good. Hatred spiraled out of control resulting in a million deaths. And that was not war, just a peacetime transfer of humanity.

“ What will happen if real war breaks out? Death and destruction of unimaginable proportions!” Fazal trembled and answered his own question.

A week later Rurkee evacuates. The villagers hear border skirmishes may lead to a full-fledged war. They have twenty-four hours to leave. Fazal assembles his family and a few possessions on his bicycle, riding and walking to Sialkot, a small city twenty miles away at a presumably a safe distance. The war is over in two weeks India and Pakistan agree to a cease-fire and send the Kashmir issue to the United Nations. Fazal comes back to his small adobe house and shop. They are in ruins. Devastated, yet determined, he starts his life all over again. He is not bitter but thankful that he and his family are alive. He knows hundreds perhaps thousands were killed in the Kashmir dispute.

Fazal decides to keep himself informed. He monitors the geo-political situation between the two countries, especially along the border that is only five miles from his doorstep. He realizes that India and Pakistan, once so similar, are arch enemies over the territory of Kashmir. He knew the British ended their colonial rule after WWII in the subcontinent by dividing it into two countries; the Hindu dominated India and Muslim Pakistan. Kashmiris were given a choice to join either country. Against the wishes of the majority Muslim population, the Hindu ruler opted to join India. Pakistan attacked Kashmir claiming that the people of Kashmir have the right of self-determination. That was 1948 and the first war between the two countries.

Fazal taught himself to read and study geography. He proudly showed others the location of Kashmir. He shared the knowledge with his neighbors: India’s accession of Kashmir in 1947 and the position line separating Indian and Pakistani held territories. He kept up with current topics and events. He knew that from international pressure both countries agreed to let the United Nations
resolve the dispute. He knew the resolution number and kept abreast of occasional debates and discussions dealing with the just and equitable solution of the Kashmir problem. He rebuilt his house and life in the ancestral village that he loved. He was hopeful for no more war and bloodshed. Sooner or later just like his village elders, the nations of the world would successfully resolve the clash.

Now, it is 1971. The United Nations has still not found a solution for disputed Kashmir. Unrest and turmoil graze Pakistan once more. Unrest and uncertainty simmer under the surface. Overpopulation, underdevelopment, social and economic inequality cause dire poverty and an ever widening chasm between the rich and poor. Corrupt political monopolies by a handful of feudal families and rich industrialists consume the country like termites yet constantly and wrongly blame old colonial rule rather than self-examination.

It is summer of 1971. General elections are held. East Pakistan wins the majority. The West Pakistan political machinery refuses to hand power over to the duly elected Bengalis and then declares Martial Law sending in troops to put down the legitimate protest. The protest and riots lead to civil war. East Pakistan decides to secede. India joins Bengal helping them win their freedom while serving their political self-interest. A smaller and weaker Pakistan will make India a dominant power in the region. Pakistan takes this as an act of aggression. War breaks out in Kashmir and Indian and Pakistani forces are fighting just six miles from Fazal’s home. The Indian infantry with armored vehicles and tanks cross the border and head to Rurkee at a dangerous speed. There is panic, confusion and chaos. Fazal is among the throngs of people escaping westward as refugees. One more time he is dragging his bike loaded with few family belongings and his wife in tow heading to Sialkot. He flees his home because of a conflict he neither understands nor has any control over.

His daughter welcomes them to her tiny two-room house where she lives with her husband and two children, a boy of ten and a girl of six. He is shaken but not scared. He hopes that like last time in 1964, the war will be short and he can return home quickly. He has faith in the United Nations and is confident that the matter will be solved peacefully. Every chance he gets he tells his family and anybody who listens that the United Nations will stop this and make the two rivals solve the Kashmir issue without bloodshed.

Fazal cannot sit still. He likes to keep busy and not burden his daughter. His son-in-law makes a living hawking vegetables in the city. He shadows him from morning to night. They go to the market and buy vegetables that are seasonally available: potatoes, cauliflower, carrots, mustard greens, onions, turnip greens, green onions and stacks of cilantro. Fazal arranges the vegetables on the cart and helps selling them in the narrow bazaar lanes. He hears talk that
India attacks innocent people while the Pakistani army has been careful not to hurt civilians. The talk of war is everywhere. Some read the newspaper while others tune to the state run radio. The state-controlled media tells about brave Pakistani soldiers repelling the enemy aggression and gaining ground on both fronts. The gunfire can be heard from miles away and Pakistani Air Force jets can be seen buzzing overhead.

Fazal’s ten-year-old grandson had Sundays off from school. One Sunday, he convinced his father and grandfather that he too help at the market. Altogether, they merrily push the vegetable cart when they hear a thunderous noise. They look up and see two jets disappearing into the blue sky leaving the sonic boom behind.

“They are going the wrong way,” yells the grandson.

Their eyes fix on the horizon waiting for the Pakistani Pilots to come back and head towards India. The two jets reappear and come toward them fast and low. But they are not Pakistani jets. They are Indian fighter planes. A series of explosions shake the ground. Fazal lays in the street with jagged pieces of shrapnel in his right leg and stomach. Semiconscious, he opens his eyes half way to look around. He lies in a pool of blood. He did not think that he had that much blood in him. Suddenly and shockingly he realizes his grandson and son-in-law lay motionless next to him. Their blood joins his. He hears people screaming. Scores are dead and wounded. Some houses are ablaze and spew out foul smoke. Death and destruction surrounds him. He sees lights flashing and hears ambulance howling sirens. In terrible pain, he musters all his strength to lift himself up but his wounded and exhausted body slumps to the ground.

A day later he opens his eyes in a hospital. Sitting next to him, his daughter holds his hand. She talks to him. He is numb and does not speak a word. Shrapnel removed, wounds dressed, his daughter brings home his morphine infused body. He lays on a charpai (cot) still not talking. Two days later as his daughter stands watch over him, he has trouble breathing. She pleads to him with teary eyes, ”Please father, say something!”

“Where is your husband and my grandson?” says Fazal in a barely audible whisper.

“They are both dead.” murmurs his daughter choking on the tears streaming down from her eyes.

“What happened to the United Nations?” Fazal takes his last breath.

“What is the United Nations?” she screams, falling over her father’s warm but lifeless body.

Two years later I traveled to Pakistan from the United States of America. I went to Sialkot to visit my uncle Fazal’s family and grave. I contacted the only
local newspaper Nawai Waqat (Sounds of Time) and managed to buy an archived copy of the paper dated June 25, 1971. The headline read, “INDIA ATTACKS CIVILIANS--THIRTY-NINE DEAD AND SCORES WOUNDED.” I wrote in the margin. Uncle Fazal died a few days later, a casualty of war; a war that was not his war.”

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_Bashir Sulahria - Born in Pakistan, Bashir earned a B.A. forestry degree and moved to Reno, attending UNR on a scholarship leading to a Ph.D. in Hydrology. He worked for the Pakistan Forest Service, State of Nevada and BLM, retiring in 2000. He lives with his wife, Julie and son Taj and likes to work out, travel and maintain the xeriscape, along with writing and spending time with his extended family._
THE END OF WW II
AUGUST 14, 1945

Donal R. Turner

We were aboard our ship the USS Manchineel, a submarine net-tender, anchored in the harbor at Kwajalein in the Marshall Islands. We had done our part in the Pacific, South Pacific and Asiatic Pacific. I remember, I was standing on deck just forward of the 3-inch gun tub when a voice came over the P.A. system announcing the Japanese had surrendered. We were excited and wondering what to expect next.

I had enough points to qualify for my honorable discharge, but how was I going to get home? My skipper explained to me that I had two choices, I could go on the Island and take my turn returning home with the army and marines, or I could stay aboard until the ship received orders to return home. Not knowing when or what that would be, I chose to stay with my ship providing I could continue my duties just as they had been.

We received orders to dispose of the submarine and torpedo nets, which we did by cutting holes in the buoys and filling them with water and sinking them. Our next destination was Pearl Harbor where we towed barges loaded with tools, supplies and vehicles out to sea. The vehicles that would run were run off the end of the barge. We dumped the rest of the cargo overboard.

Our next destination was San Francisco. You can imagine our delight and excitement. Arriving on the West Coast we came in with the fog directly under the familiar Golden Gate Bridge. As we approached Alcatraz Island there was a large banner with the words, “Welcome Home.”
Some of us got liberty the first day. The scariest part of that was trying to cross Market Street with the traffic and all the noise. After being transported to Shoemaker, California, I found myself in a room with about 50 other service men. An officer called out names. Finally he and I were the only ones left in the room. He held up the only papers left and said, “I hope these are yours.” “Me too,” I stated.

I took those papers along with my sea bag and walked down the road to the highway to hitch hike home. I was standing there all alone and I was alive. I remembered the 20-year-old men and women who had given their lives. They would not get married, have children and live their life as I would.

I have out-lived my life expectancy and hope I have contributed something in their behalf.

God Bless America and Thank You.

Former Boatswain Mate
U.S. Navy
Donal R. Turner

Donal Russell Turner was born in Morgantown, WV in 1921. He migrated to Reno, NV in 1931 the year gambling became legal. By that time the Great Depression was in full swing. His stepfather worked at the Riverside Hotel for one dollar a day. Donal discovered that if he rode his bicycle out to the tiny Reno Airport they would pay him 25¢ to chase the cows off the runway. He built his first house at the age of 15, attended school in Reno and Sparks and attended Reno Business College. He enlisted in the US Navy September 24, 1942, serving in WWII in the American Theatre; the Pacific, South Pacific and Asiatic Pacific. He was honorably discharged Thanksgiving Day, November 22, 1945. Donal went to work under the GI Bill as a carpenter. He was instrumental in helping to build 1700 homes in Reno and Sparks. Following that he became an insurance agent for Pacific Mutual Life. In the later part of the 1960’s he went into the upholstering business owning his own business and raising nine children, and along with that buying and selling considerable real estate. Donal now finds himself in the year 2006 at the age of 85 outliving life’s expectancy with several health problems. He has begun to think the extended warranty on his life is going to expire before long. In the meantime, he is enjoying the life that God has given him and the beauty of the State of Nevada.
THE END OF WAR
AND OTHER OXYMORONS

Vickie Vera

Isaiah 2:4, or Nephi 2 12:4 (in the Book of Mormon)

And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people;
And they shall beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning hooks—nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.

I used to wonder why the Bible said, “blessed are the peacemakers,” yet God would allow His followers to smite other armies that did not follow the word of God, even if this included women and children. One time I posed this question to someone at church, and the way they explained it made somewhat sense, but I can’t say that I still accept it. His explanation was thus, that when you kill your enemy, the women and children will still hate you, and keep following in the same ways, even if their men folk are dead, and they will hold on to the thought of revenge. Until the above prophecy is fulfilled there will never be an end to war.

I was born in 1949, so I missed WWI and WWII, but the Vietnam War was in full swing when I was in high school from 1963 to 1967. Besides hating, with a passion, the constant news reports and visuals from the war zone, I had no connection to the war until the year 1966 or perhaps 1967 when I learned a boy I knew had been sent to Vietnam, and died maybe a month, or less, after arriving there. I thought, for what? So his name could be inscribed on some piece of black marble at a Memorial.

He was a large, jovial kid with red hair, and freckled-face, was on the varsity football team, and his girlfriend was the head cheerleader. He had so much life to live, dreams to dream, etc., but went to war just to come home in a body bag. I detest war just because it is a senseless act, and obviously nothing is learned from it since mankind keeps repeating it over and over. I say mankind, but I really mean “man.” If woman is brought into the equation, it is generally by association. If a man had to carry a baby for 9 months inside his body, and then
go through the birthing process, he might have a better appreciation of the value of a human life, and not be so anxious to end one. Nothing is ever accomplished from war that couldn’t be settled over meetings and compromise to benefit both parties, except death, destruction, waste of lives, and tremendous sadness. War is nothing but a bid for power and territory, and is usually prompted by greed, lies, and corruption, and it is innocent people who suffer. If the leaders of the countries had to do the fighting themselves, I daresay there wouldn’t be many wars. Think of all the lives lost in the Civil War supposedly to free the slaves, but in 1955 or 1958 Rosa Parks had to assert her rights to sit on a bus where she wanted to, instead of giving up her seat to a white man. Our own founding Father of the Constitution, Thomas Jefferson, knew in his heart slavery was wrong but couldn’t give up his 120 plus slaves, so what does that say for society? He made it sound noble, that they would be helpless without him, and all the while he’s forming the Bill of Rights.

It seems that the only real thing we’ve taken from war is how to build bigger and more devastating weapons. It only takes one bullet to kill someone, yet we have to devise ways to blow their legs, arms, heads off; to incinerate them into ash; poison them; blind them; maim them and the list goes on and on. Every culture has come up with their own particular forms of torture, bamboo shoots under the nails, sleep depravation, mind games, and other physical forms I don’t even want to think about.

When I was in the 7th or 8th grade we lived in Great Falls, Montana. My Father had been a pilot in SAC (Strategic Air Command) in the U.S.A.F., but was training in missiles. I remember during the Cuban Missile Crisis the Air Force had a red phone installed in my parents’ bedroom, and I was told that under no circumstances was I to touch it. Years later my parents told me that the phone was so in the event of war, and if the first in command is unable to deliver the message to have an atomic bomb released, my father would have been second in command. Even at a young age I thought to myself that something seemed peculiar as we had a family assigned to move in with us, into the duplex, and my parents were instructed to stockpile supplies, get the basement ready with water, blankets, candles, or whatever needed to survive in a nuclear attack. I know regular citizens were building bomb shelters, but I wondered if the general public knew how close to war we came, and were told to be preparing the same way my parents were. I’ve often wondered about that.

Now we are involved in another war and I can’t see for what. All the dangers and fear tactics fed to the public seem to have all been lies by a government that keeps using the word “intelligence,” our intelligence was wrong. I say, what intelligence? They all seem like a bunch of bumbling clowns who keep running around bumping into each other, but not accomplishing
much, except still more loss of innocent lives. I’ve heard theories from different sources that the Vietnam War was started just to introduce drugs into the American culture to boost the economy???. When you think about it there really were no drugs to speak of before Vietnam, but now drugs are rampant, and the government (the good old U.S.A.) makes money off of all the arrests, drug busts they make. Someone else told me years ago that wars begin whenever there is an economic crisis. Go to war, hire people to make weapons, recruit young people, and make promises to them on how the government will educate them, but the promises are rarely kept, and the others come home in body bags so no need to do anything for them. The funeral directors and casket makers get rich. The manufacturers make a ton of loot selling some box of 12 pencils that would be 59 cents at K-Mart, but the military pays $24.95 for it, and then they probably raise citizens taxes to cover the $24.36 over charge the government had to pay, so yeah, war is big business. I recently saw a bumper sticker I really like:

Peace—that would shock and awe me!

Vickie Vera started out wanting to be an artist but discovered her love of writing just a few years ago and now can’t concentrate on artwork. If there is something on her mind, especially social issues that she just has to speak out on, she writes comments to newspapers and magazines, or just writes in her journals. Vickie is the mother of six and her family is truly her greatest joy. She misses the fact that her own ancestors did not keep any journals to pass down, so their whole lives seem to be a mystery. She wants to write her life history and what she can remember of relatives’ lives to pass on to her own children and for generations to come. Vickie was born in Honolulu, HI, in 1949, and even though she has lived in Nevada some 34 years, she considers California to be her true home.
My father, 1st Lt. Manuel E. Hewett, when he was a U.S. Air Force pilot.
The “War to End All Wars,” WWII did just that on August 14, 1945. I can’t recall if WWI was the first “War to End All Wars” or not.

In 1943 my parents moved from Oakland, California to 166 acres of redwoods and an old orchard in Northern California, twenty miles from Fort Bragg. The north coast was cool and foggy that August and I was fifteen. I lived with my parents and a sister that was four years younger and a brother that was eight years younger. My father worked at a lumber mill and stayed at the mill during the week, coming home on the weekends. We had no idea that the war had ended until he came home with the news.

And, what wonderful news that was! We had two cousins who were in the Navy and serving during the war, but they were stationed at Oak Knoll Naval Hospital in Oakland, California. Not that their service was any less admirable, but they were time zones away from the actual war. No, our biggest complaint about the war was the rationing of sugar and shoes. We couldn’t make fudge. Leather and rubber were rationed so the shoes I wore had soles made from rope about ¾ “ in diameter, sewn together tightly and attached to the top part of the shoe. These were not too bad when it was a dry day, but when it rained, which it did a lot, the soles absorbed the water and I “squashed” for quite a while until the water worked its way out.

Sixty years have passed and three more wars have been fought. Looking back, I can’t help but feel guilty; I wanted dry feet and fudge. I never thought about the thousands of people who wanted nothing more than to have their loved ones come home safe and sound; and the thousands of loved ones who didn’t come home. There were gold stars in those family’s windows and we had fudge and leather soles on our shoes. I thank the Lord every day that a gold star did not grace our window.
Billie Walker was born in Tucson, Arizona on July 11, 1930 when her parents were on their way from Montana to Alameda, California where her father had a job promised. She lived in the Bay Area until age 13 when the family moved to Westport, California. The house was in a clearing of Redwood trees four miles from “town” with no electricity or indoor plumbing.
SHE ALSO SERVES

Betty Waltenspiel

As a high school student in 1941, I knew that when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor our country would change and war would be here. Not having any brothers and the fact that my father who had served in the Army in World War I, was too old to be affected meant a distance from ordinary worries about family members in danger. Not only my father’s age but the fact that he was living in Portland, Oregon, which was practically on the other side of the planet in my mind. I was safe in Reno. There were two servicemen with whom I corresponded regularly who were involved in the struggles in Europe. They were stationed in Italy and returned to Reno unscathed. The only other servicemen I became friendly with were here at the University getting trained to become officers in the Air Force or the Army. Their assignments to overseas duty always seemed months away. And as soon as their classes were finished they left the campus. I was busy with my own life and didn’t worry too much about them. The University itself was different. There were only a few young men on the campus who were civilians. They were the 4F designation mostly because of obvious physical disabilities. I personally was never frightened by thoughts of being invaded or injured.

There was a shortage of secretaries in Washington, D.C. and after graduation I had traveled there as part of my Greyhound Bus ride to see more of the United States. My dear friend, Bobbie, suggested I could live there with her and her parents in Chevy Chase, MD, and so I struggled with secretarial duties for several months in the Foreign Service Institute in the Foggy Bottom section of Washington, D.C. The only man I really worried about, who lived in Washington, I lost track of him when I moved back to Reno. I wasn’t able to follow his experiences and only found out many years later that he’d been killed as a pilot in the first wave of troops to invade France. I had no feeling of hatred for Germans or Japanese that I remember. In my own isolated little world I guess I thought most of them were as removed from the real terrors and sadness of war as I was. The war in Iraq does seem very real to me and I feel definite anxiety about the safety of the troops stationed there. This is due to the fact that the television news brings pictures of what they are going through right into my
living room. Newsreels that I saw in the 1940’s when I went to the movies never seemed that immediate or terrifying.

Taking the place of a man in my job as stock clerk at the First National Bank from 1943 to 1947, I didn’t think of as a patriotic duty, it was just a job. My mother and I lived with meat rationing and didn’t find it oppressive. We had never been used to an extravagant life style anyway. Being without a car or even a driver’s license, gas rationing was never an issue. However, with the shortage of engineers in war plants, I took engineering classes at the University thinking if I moved to Los Angeles I might possibly fit in as an engineering trainee thereby getting a job that would enable me to provide more bountifully for my mother. Later people asked me how I was able to enroll in engineering classes as there weren’t any females enrolled there. I told them I just got into line and signed up for the classes I wanted. I had the requirements needed from high school and no one felt I was important enough to make a fuss over. In 1945 the war mercifully came to an end and the war plant workers were not needed. I left the engineering classes to the men who were more readily accepted in them. My analytic geometry professor put it pretty succinctly. He asked me why I didn’t go enroll in home economics classes where I belonged. John Milton wrote a poem, “On His Blindness.” In it he says, “They also serve who only stand and wait.” That pretty well covers my contribution to World War II.

Betty Zang Waltenspiel & Louise Wogan Doyle
Betty Waltenspiel: Betty Zang came to Reno with her mother as unfounded as you can imagine. Reno made room for us. I worked, graduated from the University of Nevada, Reno, and married George Waltenspiel. Reno has been good to us and I love it.
August of 1945 was the end of my big war. Those of us who participated in World War II's ending celebration in towns and cities across the United States found it a party to remember. The air was thick with jubilation. It felt like a fluffy multicolored cloud enfolding everyone who was out in the neighborhood or on the city streets. Cries of “We won,” and “It’s over,” were punctuated by waves, hugs, and kisses to everyone in sight.

The victory was ours. Husbands, fathers, brothers, sons, uncles, daughters, sisters, mothers, aunts and cousins came home.

Home to rebuild,
Home to start over,
Home to continue education,
HOME

All returning veterans were awarded an Honorable Service Medal about an inch and a half in diameter. It was a gilt brass wreath with a flying eagle inside. It was to be worn as a lapel pin on civilian clothes or because of the extreme clothing shortage on a military uniform up to 30 days after discharge. With their usual cheek veterans named it the “ruptured duck.” Not long after it was issued and worn a few times the medals were put in their boxes in dresser drawers. As the years passed they were shoved further and further to the back until they lay forgotten.

Those whose physical and mental wounds healed became the leaders of local and national governments. Their public service record was honorable and long remembered. Others went quietly about continuing useful productive lives for the benefit of themselves, their families and the community. Those with debilitating mental and physical scars had challenges that lasted a lifetime. My own family was an example of this.

Cousin Cleve was the first in our family to arrive. He served as a gunner in the South Pacific theatre and as a result of the horrific noise of the big guns he was deaf for life. He adapted to this and got a job as a baker with Welch’s Bakery. Not to long after he had this job he married. Subsequently, he and his family moved to Los Angeles for a better paying union wage job.
Uncle Smitty returned as a veteran of World War I and II. He came back to start over. He and a business partner founded a construction company that built Ross Hall at UNR, and made additions to St. Mary’s Hospital and Sierra Pacific Power Company as well as numerous other construction jobs around the Reno Area.

Cousin John with his wife started the war by being bombed at Schofield Barracks in Honolulu during the Pearl Harbor attack. He was immediately sent to the European theatre where he served for the duration. He returned to the States with ulcers. These healed and he continued his education by finishing college and law school. He completed his career as a distinguished District Court Judge.

My father was a casualty of the war. His mental injuries, whatever they were, destroyed the rest of his life. He was a medic and pharmacist, his pre war occupation, stationed at the big Naval Hospital in Honolulu. Had we invaded Japan, he would have been a corpsman with the first troops to hit the beaches. These orders were almost a suicide mission as corpsmen were unarmed and easy targets.

He returned home and became a sales representative for Wyeth, a large pharmaceutical company. This job took him away from home almost as much as the war. I had become used to him not being around so that was normal. However, his alcohol addiction caused his life to disintegrate. Over time he lost the love and respect of all his family and friends.

But wars were not over; five years later we were at it again. This time we were involved in the Korean conflict. Some World War II veterans went back to this engagement. Later my classmates served in Korea along the 38th parallel to ensure treaty compliance. The subsequent military conflicts from then to the present have been more divisive to this nation than the beginning or end of World War II. We all celebrate the end of different military conflicts in different ways. Unfortunately the only thing about any “war” ending is that it won’t be long until we get involved in some other military adventure.
BATTLING
THE GRIM REAPER

Deanna Yardic

He is the ultimate adversary. He always wins. The weapons in his arsenal are seemingly unlimited. The earliest humans fell prey to his blows with little or no resistance. Lack of knowledge made easy acceptance of death a necessity. But soon even those primitive people began finding ways to fight back. Potions made from wild plants and shamans casting spells were some of the earliest weapons tried against the reaper.

The reaper is wily. As preventative and cures are discovered for existing diseases, he invents new scourges to rain upon mankind or creates mutant strains of the old ones resistant to current medications. Taking advantage wherever he can, he is able to persuade some people to cooperate with him. With blatant disregard for their own well being they smoke tobacco, drink alcohol to excess or fill their bodies with harmful illegal drugs. The reaper smiles. He knows he has hoodwinked those individuals into being harvested before their natural time. He targets the young before their judgment is fully mature. Drive fast he says. You don’t need seat belts he whispers in their ears. Ski out of bounds, surf in shark infested waters, have unsafe sex. Every year tactics such as these ensure another early crop for him.

I’ve watched friends and family wage war with the dark denizen of death. Each fought the battle in their own individual way.

Franny, the mother of my friend Trudy, fought for more time. Time to see her only daughter married. Time to experience the joy of being a grandmother. She was a gentle soul but she fought with steely determination seeking every known medical treatment both traditional and alternative. Side affects be damned. She endured them all in her quest for more precious days.

The reaper had drawn an insidious arrow from his quiver for Franny. The one marked leukemia. It dealt not one harsh single blow but ate away at her day after day, stealing her strength, trying to suck the joy from her life.

I have so many unanswered questions. When and how and why do some people accept that they are facing an unbeatable foe? This acceptance seems to
give them peace of mind. They settle their affairs, say the things they need to say to family and friends and wait calmly for the reaper’s knock upon their door. Others seem to rage against the reaper until the very end leaving this world as reluctantly as they once entered it.

Franny’s beginning acceptance was plain to see in the early months of winter. She was almost ready but not quite. She wanted one last Christmas with Trudy, a gaudy Christmas she said. All of their traditional decorations came out of the attic and new ones were added to the display. Franny and Trudy had a special cache of money they called the secret money. Each time Franny questioned Trudy about the secret money, Trudy reassured her, whether true or not, that there was still plenty in their cache. After each such reply Franny would enlist the help of yet another friend to shop for yet another gift for Trudy. The tree could barely stand under the weight of the ornaments. The stack of presents grew and grew. Trudy bought as many things for Franny as Franny did for her knowing those gifts would likely never be used. They did indeed have an unabashedly gaudy Christmas.

Franny died in her sleep while napping on the sofa on December 27th. I think she opened the door to the reaper with welcoming arms. His battle with Franny had lasted less than a year.

The reaper faced a more formidable foe in my father-in-law. He was one of those who never surrendered, repeatedly forcing the reaper into a truce. No doubt the reaper had chuckled and rubbed his hands in glee when George as a young man concocted potent home brew and drank it in copious quantities. But after a few years of that, George inexplicably quit drinking altogether causing the reaper to retreat. Then, aha, said the reaper, tobacco will do the trick. George quit smoking cold turkey at age 50 when he was told he had emphysema and his lungs remained strong. The reaper gnashed his teeth. I need an accident, he said. I’m tired of waiting for this guy. George’s leg was nearly severed while he worked. An infection set in and laid him low but he shook his mighty fist in the reapers face and, battered but not broken, George made a full recovery racking up another victory against the reaper.

The reaper loses battles but never the war. He could see great cunning would be required to bring down this mighty man. Searching for a weakness, he said to himself, “Here is a man who loves to eat above all else.” He drew a diabetes arrow. Its tip further inflamed an already insatiable appetite. Now George was no longer fully focused on the war. He was unwittingly cooperating with the reaper. In spite of total disregard at having diabetes, taking his medication only when his wife insisted, never staying on his diet and suffering from and surviving episodes of ragingly high blood sugar, George continued on. The reaper became ever more impatient. He flew into a rage, inflicted George
with bladder cancer, stole his eyesight and his mind.

When George had lost all knowledge including any awareness of the firefight raging within his body, his wife picked up the banner. Yes, she said, he will have surgery, twice. He will have chemotherapy. He will not die. The doctors said just a few more weeks but George lived on for many more months. Nurses and caregivers began to say, “It’s a shame his heart and lungs are still so strong,” for to all outward appearances George was now just a husk, a blind unthinking body to be cared for and still his life force went on. His wife came to believe he was invincible.

At last the reaper, as enraged as he ever was, came not to knock upon the door of George’s home where he feared he’d be refused entrance once again but to sit upon George’s chest with the full force of his deadly weight squeezing out every last breath.

Franny, George and every other person who fights the reaper and loses, has an end of war story to tell. We are not privileged to read or hear these tales. Those oral histories are dictated only to celestial scribes. Are the myriad stars scattered across the dark night sky the punctuation marks in their writings?

More unanswered questions: Why is the reaper able to conquer some in their infancy, some even before birth while others, seemingly no more worthy live into extreme old age? Are we each given a greater or lesser amount of the warrior qualities needed to stave off the reaper? In the battles of every war some perform heroically; indeed seem to glory in the conflict while others desert. The vast majority fall into some middle ground. They fight to the limits of their personal abilities only because circumstances say they must.

Perhaps we’ll learn the answers to all of these questions when the time comes for us to write our final end of war story. We’ll dip our pens into the molten gold of the sun or the cool silvery ink of the moon and add our collective stories to the vast storehouse of knowledge swirling through the universe.

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Deanna Yardic was born in Athens, Ohio December 7, 1939. She has lived in 9 of the U.S. states. She is the mother of two adult sons and the grandmother of three young adult grandchildren. When her nest became empty in the late 1970’s, she put the skills she had learned as a mother to good use cooking for Head Start centers and an Oregon boy’s ranch. Since then she has seen several family members and friends including her husband of 48 years through the final days of their lives.
November 22, 1963: This is a date that will live in the memory of all Americans who were older than two or three at the time. We will remember exactly what we were doing when we heard those words, “The President is dead.” The President is dead. Our president is dead? I was walking across the campus of a midwestern university on my way home from class when I ran into a friend from my dorm. “The President is dead,” she said. The words shocked me and I responded, “I don’t think that is funny.” Then I could see by the look on her face she wasn’t kidding. The president is dead. The president is dead? Those words ring out in my mind today and I still have the same sick feeling in the pit of my stomach. I ran back to the dorm and joined the mob of students crowded around the single black and white television in the lobby. For the next four or five days no one got very far away from that television set, that fount of information that would tell us what happened, what we could do.

We watched history unfold before our very eyes as we saw Walter Cronkite take off his black horned rimmed glasses, check the clock on the wall, and holding back a tear declare the precise moment that the President of the United States, John F. Kennedy, had died in Parkland Hospital in Dallas, Texas. The only sound to be heard in that room packed with college students was the occasional sob. The President is dead. Oh my God, the President is dead.

We had such hope and promise for this new president. He challenged us to new heights. We really felt that he needed us to help him make this a better world. We believed. In his inaugural address, he said:

Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans—born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage—and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which this nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world.
He was talking about us; we are the generation that will change the world. He was talking about me. And now the President is dead.

President Kennedy defined what it meant to be an American. And we identified and we cheered. We felt good about ourselves. We were proud to be Americans.

He continued:

What does it mean to be an American? Upon us destiny has lavished special favors of liberty and opportunity—and it therefore has demanded of us special efforts, particularly in times such as these. It requires each one of us to be a little more decent, alert, intelligent, compassionate and resolute in our daily lives—that we exercise our civic duties, whether paying taxes or electing presidents, with extra pride and care—that we use our freedom of choice to pursue our own destiny in a manner that advances the national destiny, in the work we produce, the subjects we study, the positions we seek, the languages we learn, the complaints we voice, the leaders we follow, the inconveniences we endure. Every American must take far more seriously than he has in the past his responsibility for achieving and maintaining a democratic society of a truly model kind, worthy to be the champion of freedom throughout the world.

This man, this young president born of privilege did not reach the highest office in the free world without a struggle. He was Catholic in a time when America had never elected a Catholic to the presidency. People were afraid he would show allegiance to the pope in Rome instead of to the United States constitution. There were many prejudices in America at the time. Religion was just one of many. He was young. We were accustomed to having much older men as our leaders. And what had he done to deserve the presidency, this young, unknown senator from Massachusetts? He made political history by running in every primary just to get his name out in front of the public. Presidential candidates did not campaign in the primaries in those days. But this man needed to become known by the American people. John Kennedy said: “Nobody is going to hand me the nomination. When the time is ripe, I’ll have to work for it. If I were governor of a large state, Protestant and fifty-five, I could sit back and let it come to me.”
His hard work paid off. He rolled into the Democratic convention in Los Angeles and won on the first ballot. He immediately invited the powerful Senate Minority leader, Lyndon Johnson to join him on the ticket. And to everyone’s surprise, including his advisor and brother, Bobby Kennedy, the powerful leader accepted the invitation. Kennedy needed a strong ticket to win the election. He would be opposing Vice-President Richard Nixon a strong, well-known, and qualified candidate; who, of course, was not Catholic.

Kennedy squeaked by and won the election by 113,057 votes out of the 68,832,778 cast. Not exactly a landslide, but it made his election even more special to the young liberals. With such a close election, there were comments about the validity of the results. Kennedy’s wealthy father, Joe, Sr. helped secure the election for the new president in a variety of ways. Who knows how honest they were. Kennedy himself was quoted as saying, “I got a wire from my father that said, “Dear Jack. Don’t buy one vote more than necessary. I’ll be damned if I’ll pay for a landslide.” Kennedy had a sense of humor and loved sparring with the press. They loved him in return. No president had ever been so open and willing to respond to the press corps. They loved him so much that they kept his “little secrets” private. Stories of his active sex life never appeared in the news while he was alive. It was many, many years later before all those tales were made public.

The new president established the Peace Corps. He challenged young people to give two years of their lives to help others around the world. Young college kids flocked to join up. They taught natives in Africa how to build mud stoves so they would stop burning down their villages while cooking on open fires. They went to exotic islands and worked with impoverished people teaching them how to grow food and dig wells. They improved health and sanitary conditions around the world. The world is a better place because of the Peace Corps. And America is a better place because she sent the flowers of her youth to help needy countries around the world.

Kennedy challenged our scientific community to put a man on the moon before the end of the decade, to beat Russia in the “race to space.” This was at a time when our NASA rockets were crashing and burning with regularity. One of America’s proudest moments came when we landed a man on the moon, the only country to ever do this. Our president was dead; he didn’t live to see it. He planted the seed, he challenged us to reach for the moon and we did it.

The nation and the world stayed glued to their television sets as we watched the new President, Lyndon Baines Johnson, take the oath of office on Air Force I with Jackie Kennedy still in her pink bloodstained suit standing by his side. We still did not know if this assassination was the action of one man or a
conspiracy. We did not know what to expect next. We watched the plane land in Washington, D.C. and the body of the fallen leader taken away in a hearse.

Then to our shock we watched accused assassin Lee Harvey Oswald murdered on live television in the Dallas police station. Now three funerals were being arranged. One for the president, one for Officer Tippit, a Dallas police officer who was killed by Oswald when he was trying to escape, and the third for the now murdered Lee Harvey Oswald.

We watched as a proud, regal Jacqueline Kennedy led her daughter into the rotunda of the capitol where the President lay in state. They knelt at the flag-draped coffin and said a prayer with Caroline’s little, white-gloved hand reaching out to touch her daddy’s coffin one more time.

At the funeral, we watched as the caisson, followed by the riderless horse with boots set backward in the stirrups, carried the body to the church and then to the cemetery. And all the time the drums were pounding, pounding, pounding the incessant funeral dirge. Mrs. John F. Kennedy secured a place in the hearts of the nation that day as she chose to walk from the White House to St. Matthew’s Cathedral head held high, eyes straight ahead between her brothers-in-law, Attorney General Robert Kennedy and Senator Edward Kennedy. When the family emerged from the church, Mrs. Kennedy was holding her children’s hands. John John stood at attention and saluted his father’s coffin. The nation sobbed. The president is dead.

We watched as the body was buried in Arlington National Cemetery and Mrs. Kennedy, with the help of the president’s brothers, lit the eternal flame on his grave. We watched as leaders of the world, presidents, kings, and queens came to pay their last respects. The President is dead.

It has been decades since the assassination and history has begun to judge John Fitzgerald Kennedy’s presidency. And it is not always complimentary. He was president for a thousand days and he inspired a nation to reach for new heights. That is not a bad legacy for anyone to leave.

Patricia Zimmerman is a transplanted Midwesterner who retired to Nevada in 1990. She loves the Silver State and its sapphire blue skies. Her greatest joy is her volunteer work especially teaching adults to read, write, and speak English. Pat was an eighteen year-old coed at Western Illinois University when President Kennedy was assassinated.