

The War Years

By Missy Cox Jones

Pearl Harbor was bombed on December 7, 1941. All at once, our lives were changed. I would have been eleven years old in 1941, and a student at Gustine School. We lived in the country, and didn't have electricity. However, we did have a battery operated radio, and listened to the news casts. Also, we had newspapers and I remember we cut out the regular articles by "Ernie Pyle". If you are not familiar with him, I suggest you go to the internet and do a search. Or better yet, go to the Comanche Public Library for information on him. He was a syndicated news columnist, and had a regular column in papers all across America. He was a newsman for the soldiers, sailors, army air corps and the marines. Not much information about General this or that, but he wrote about the soldiers in the foxholes, on the front lines, the pilots and ground crews, hospital doctors and nurses working near the front lines, and the sailors and merchant marine sailors who were manning ships on every ocean. He was a plain Joe, and these were the people that he knew about, and he told their stories.

Families all across America was listening to the radio, and trying to follow their sons and family members on maps of countries that were unheard of before the war.

My brother Wilburn was called up for induction, but, due to his being crippled from infantile paralysis, was placed on a list that excluded him from active service. And, my brother-in-law, Alton Mercer was also excluded from serving in the armed forces because he was an active farmer. Even with wartime, farmers were needed to grow food for our people, and for hungry people all over the world.

Keith Johnson, husband of Winnie Mae Hall Johnson, graduated from Gustine High School in May of 1942, after the Pearl Harbor bombing in December, 1941. Winnie Mae very graciously donated his high school annual for 1942 from Gustine High School to the Comanche Historical Museum. The day after the graduation from Gustine, every boy from the graduating class enlisted in the armed services. Many young boys at that time lied about their age, or else had to have their parents sign for them.

Though we didn't have a son or brother in the service, we had dear friends and neighbors who were called up, or volunteered to serve. Our close neighbors, the John Adcock family, saw their son, Weldon Adcock, join the marines. Weldon was among the first troops landing on the island of Iwo Jima. Our very good friends, the Nichols family in West Texas, who my parents met probably in 1926 or 1927, had sons and sons-in-laws to join the service. Their oldest son, Leo Nichols would write to us from "Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri". Their youngest son, Jimmy also served in the U. S. Army in Europe.

During the war years, mail would be censored from service men and women writing back home. The government wanted no mention of where they were at, or what they were doing. This information would have helped the enemy. Jimmy wrote back to his Daddy that he had seen some beautiful Belgian horses. Now, the censor must have thought that

this was a kind of horse, And he let this pass, but in fact, Jimmy was telling his family that he was in Belgium.

Leo was pretty much of a rounder. The Nichols family lived out in the country, and one night, after dark, there was a knock at their door and Mr. Nichols opened the door and stepped out on the porch. There was a soldier standing there, and asked if he could spend the night. Mr. Nichols, being a great man that he was, said "Come on in, son. I've got boys in the army and I hope someone will offer them a bed if they need one". When Leo came in, his Daddy was so surprised. He thought that Leo had gone AWOL, and Leo had to show him his pass, to prove that he was home and not AWOL.

When I was going to school at Gustine, our bus driver during this time was Jim Striplin. He was a fine man, and his son, Gyle was a 2nd Lieutenant in the army air corps. He was the pilot of a B-24 Liberator bomber and was one of nine airmen who were killed when the bomber exploded and crashed, fifteen miles west of the airfield, near Alamogordo, New Mexico on March 5, 1943. He is buried at Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, Texas