

The Home Front



River City Memoirs VI

THE HOME FRONT

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VI

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SOUTH WOOD COUNTY HISTORICAL CORP.
Pamela Walker, Director

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River City Memoirs VI

THE HOME FRONT

*To my mother
Arlene "Sally" Engel
1920-1999*

—River City in the Twentieth Century—
Selected from the
Wisconsin Rapids *Daily Tribune* 1986-1998

Dave Engel

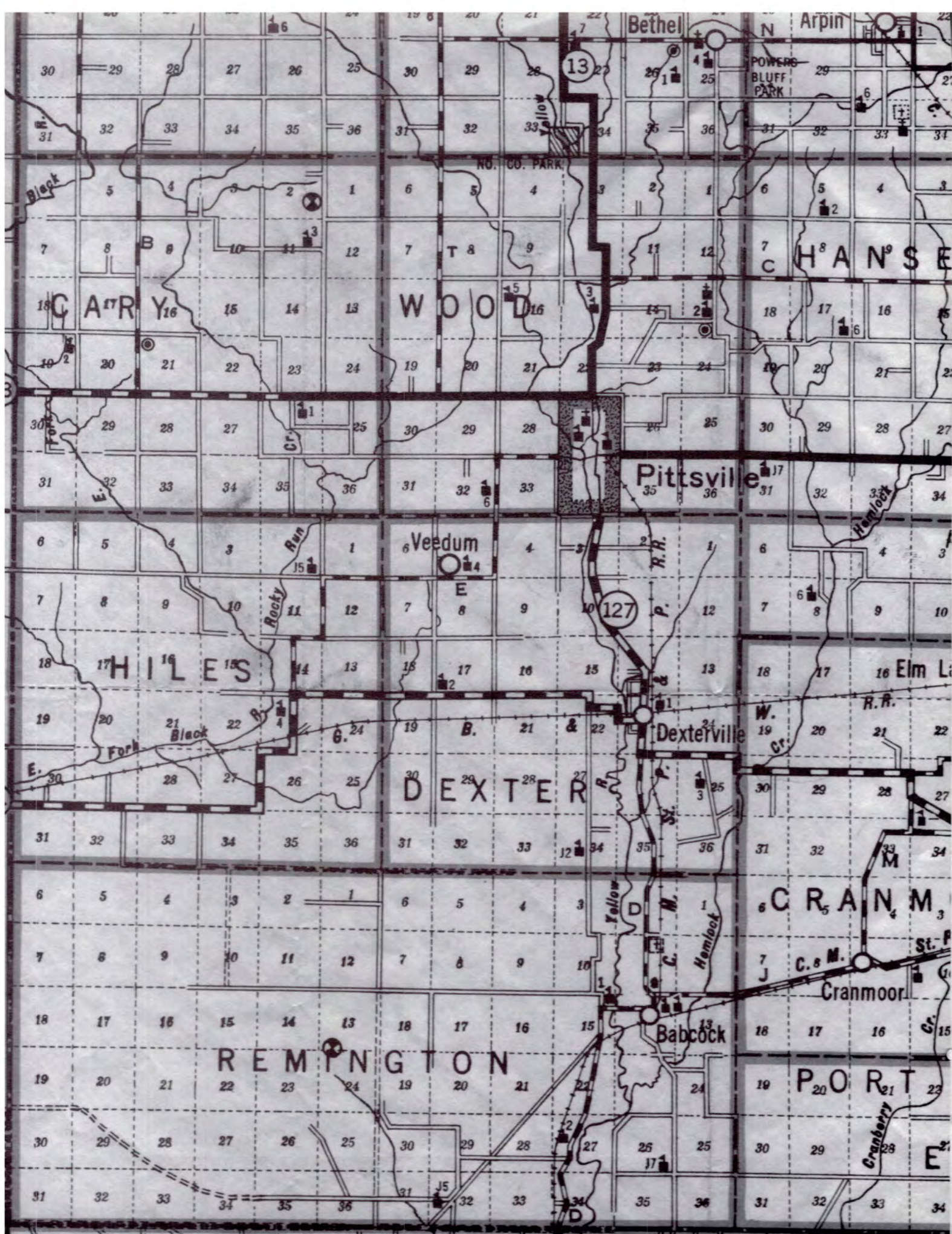
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Wood County 1939

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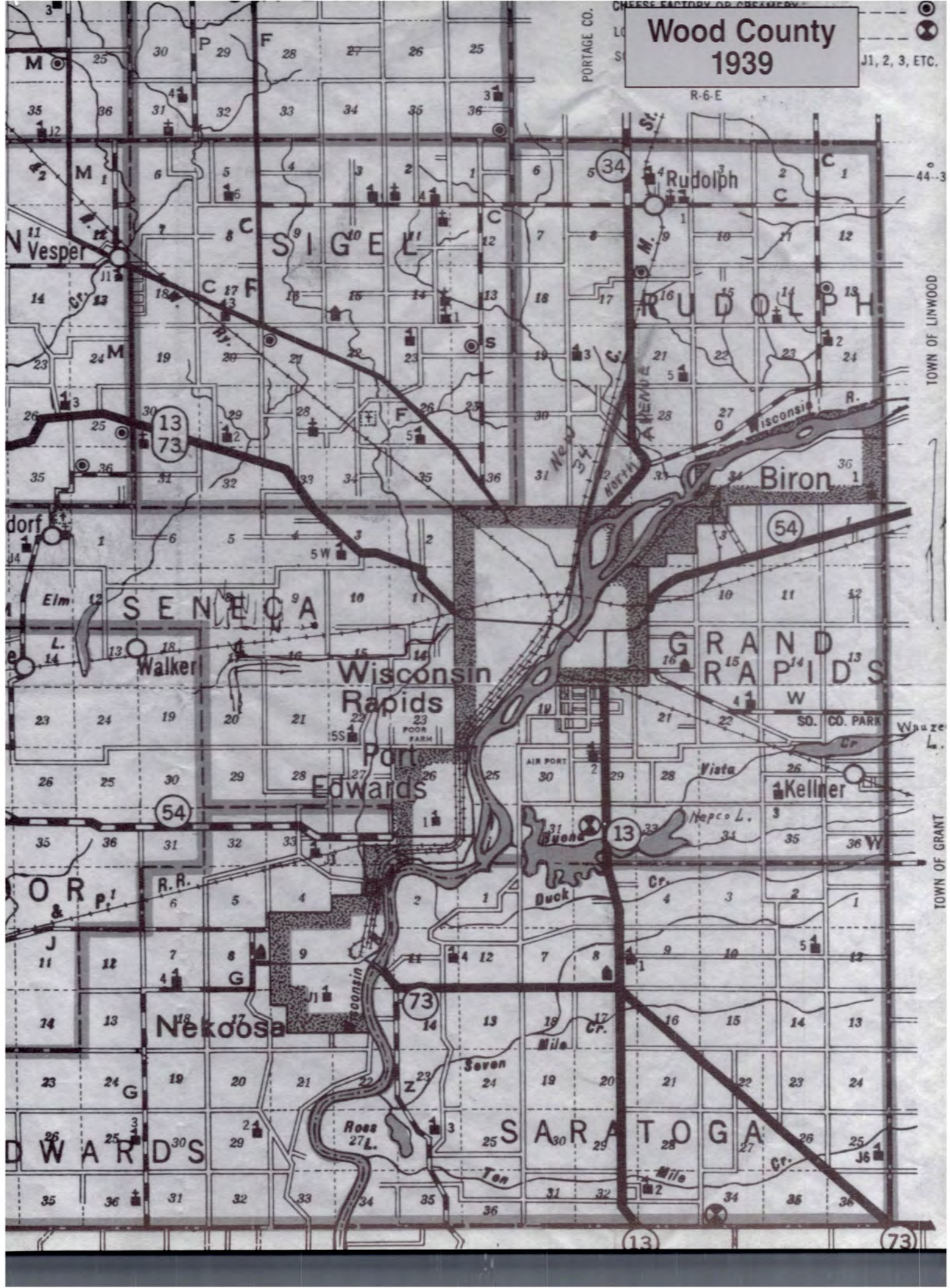
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PORTAGE CO.

CHEESE FACTORY AT NEWARK

TOWN OF LINWOOD

TOWN OF GRANT





Cannon at Legion Park, near the Consolidated Dam in Wisconsin Rapids, was dedicated as a memorial May 30, 1922. It is believed to have served again, in World War II—as scrap metal.

World War II

The Home Front

For Americans, the most important event of the 20th Century was the world-wide war against Germany and Japan. As the 50th anniversary of the European blitzkrieg arrived in 1989, a series commenced in the *Daily Tribune* that sampled events "50 Years Ago." This set of *River City Memoirs* would continue until "war's end" in 1996.

Some struggled with danger and despair in exotic locales, while those here contributed the most heroic efforts of their lives, with, for the most part, willing sacrifice and devotion.

While *Daily Tribune* banner headlines in August 1940 announced German air strikes against England, a few miles southwest of Wisconsin Rapids accumulated the largest troop concentration here since 1918.

Some 65,000 soldiers met for training in an area between Necedah, Sparta, Black River Falls and Rapids. Of those, 7,000 men of the 5th Division of U.S. Second Army convoyed toward Wisconsin Rapids in 1,200 vehicles.

Slightly more permanent was the 113th Observation Squadron of the Indiana National Guard air unit, which made Tri-City Airport its war games headquarters.

In August 1940, support for war seemed to be growing, at least for "preparedness." Congress passed bills calling up the National Guard for training and for peacetime conscription.

Worldwide, after one year of war, 800,000 soldiers had died and 3 million had been wounded, mainly in the French and Polish armies. About 8 million Europeans had been left homeless. Since Hitler invaded Poland, 800 vessels had gone down at sea at a loss of approximately 7,000 lives.

In the United States, spending for the Army and Navy stepped up six-fold. A two-ocean navy was planned. And J. Edgar Hoover's FBI set out to fingerprint the nearly 4 million aliens here.

At home in Wisconsin: U.S. Senate candidate for the Republican nomination, Glenn Frank, 52, was killed in an automobile accident on the eve of election.

It was the first campaign for public office by Frank, former president of the University of Wisconsin. George W. Mead of Wisconsin Rapids, for many years a friend of Frank and a member of the UW Board of Regents while Frank was president, paid tribute to a "splendid citizen, a noble character and a forceful thinker."

Escaped from the Central State Hospital for the criminally insane: John Magnuson, 62, found guilty March 31, 1923, of the December 27, 1922, "Christmas bomb" slaying of a town of

Marshfield woman. Magnuson had served in the Waupun penitentiary until 1933, when he was pronounced insane and transferred to the hospital facility.

Upon his escape, Magnuson left a note saying he believed he had worked for the state for 17 years and deserved a vacation. "I'll return in the fall, if nothing happens," he wrote.

The opening of the 1940 school year in Wisconsin Rapids-area schools was delayed after five cases of infantile paralysis were reported in the city and four in Grand Rapids.

The planned sewage treatment plant was completed and dedicated in a program on the grounds. Presiding: former city attorney Herbert A. Bunde. Principal speaker: Rapids Mayor William T. Nobles. Music was by the Wisconsin Rapids city band, under director E.A. Lambert.

A new radio station had been licensed to William F. Huffman, publisher of the *Daily Tribune*. Operated on 1310 kilocycles, the call letters WFHR combined the initials of the owner. The transmitter would be at a site on the Nash marshland on Bonow Avenue, with studios at 143 West Grand Avenue on the second floor of the Nash building.

A scream in the night, a blood-spattered patch of grass and brush, and a woman's soiled, torn, blood-stained apron—elements of a Sand Hill mystery that confronted the Wood County sheriff's office.

The "grim evidence" was found a few feet from Pepper Avenue, between Sampson and Lincoln streets, by Mrs. George Casper.

There were no reports of missing or injured people, said Undersheriff Cliff Bluett.

A resident of the vicinity informed the sheriff that couples commonly parked on Pepper Avenue, and the heavy woods provided cover for frequent "petting parties."

One neighborhood woman said, "There's an awful lot of screaming and hollering goes on around here, and I guess I wouldn't be surprised at anything that did happen."

November 1940

FIRST CASUALTY

As the Green Bay Packers opened their home season against the Kenosha Pro Gridders in an exhibition game, the Wisconsin Rapids Lincoln High School football team beat Nekoosa, 21-0, at Witter Field to win the mythical Tri-City title.

Although the 956 students at Lincoln high represented a record number, all city schools combined enrolled 2,656 students, down about 50 since 1939, perhaps because of the infantile paralysis outbreak that discouraged parents from sending children that first week.

The four parochial grade schools enrolled 828, including 475 at SS Peter & Paul, 95 at St. Lawrence, 148 at East Side Lutheran, and 110 at West Side Lutheran. The public grade schools distributed a slightly higher enrollment of 872 among Edison, Emerson, Howe, Irving, Lowell and Lincoln schools.

Meanwhile, on a Friday night in September, out past the sometimes unruly Sand Hill in the town of Grand Rapids, the Two Mile School flower-and-garden show attracted a large crowd. A program featured a tap dance by Lela Mae Warren and a clarinet solo by Richard Corey. Among winners for arranging bouquets was a youthful David Rucinski.

As the school year and sports seasons proceeded more-or-less normally, the war, then primarily between Germany and England, expanded its influence.

A contract was bid for 10 submarines to be built at Manitowoc, and a boom in marriage licenses was experienced as the prospect of conscription crept closer. In mid-September, Battery E, 120th Field Artillery (the Wisconsin Rapids National Guard unit) was called to comprise part of the 32nd Division as 99 men took their oaths in front of a downtown Wisconsin Rapids building and headed for Camp Beauregard, Louisiana.

The first casualty of the mobilization came with the October 22 death of Private Donald G. Henry, son of Mr.

and Mrs. George Henry, Route 3, Wisconsin Rapids, killed when his motorcycle was struck by a vehicle driven by an intoxicated driver near Ripley, Tennessee. "Entire organization shrouded in sorrow," read the telegram from commanding officer Capt. C.J. Severance. The body arrived by Hiawatha train for burial, with military honors, in Calvary Cemetery.

Military conscription, "the draft," was signed September 16 by President Roosevelt. A month later, Wood County enrolled 5,274 draft-eligible men, including 1,533 from Wisconsin Rapids and 310 from Nekoosa.

Draft-registration cards were shuffled, so the first number for the draft lottery could be drawn at random. The local winner was Florian Marcel Ashenberg, a 24-year-old employee of Prentiss Wabers Products Co.

Men from the district flocked to the Wood County Courthouse to find their names on typed lists posted by the draft board, a scene that was repeated throughout the nation.

An improvement project for the Tri-City Airport was approved by the Civil Aeronautics Administration, one of 3,800 such projects nationally. The CAA also started a student-flier training program at the Nepco-Tri-City field, the second group to study aeronautics there.

Joining a dozen students from Central State Teachers College at Stevens Point and five young Rapids men (Gustave Binnebose, Delbert Gumm, Ray Grandkoski, John McCutcheon and Robert Dernback) the first woman to take the CAA course, Jean Roberts.

On October 2, a contract was announced for a new National Guard Armory to be built by the city on Second Avenue South, across from the tourist park, as a memorial to those who saw service in World War I.

Unrelated to the war, work was to be started on a warming house for skaters at Witter Athletic Field. The cost would be covered entirely by a gift from Isaac P. Witter.

Among the election contests of 1940 was a race for the state Senate, pitting M.R. Laird of Marshfield against Max Leopold, a Progressive from Arpin.

Also brought to *Tribune* readers was the story of a shaving mug once owned by Eben M. Rexford, author of "Silver Threads Among the Gold." The mug, in 1940, belonged to Art Forstner, a Rapids barber who had a shop from 1911-16 in Shiocton in which Rexford used to sit and write his songs and stories. In those days, every man had his own shaving mug on a shelf in the barber shop, said the *Tribune* and Eben left his to Forstner as a souvenir.

At the end of October, a column began in the newspaper, by the "Spam Man," who had started paying \$2 bills to those he met at random around town for their opinion of Spam "the Hormel miracle meat of 101 uses."

"You people of Wisconsin Rapids certainly were ready for us, and many people here have already received \$2," said the Spam Man in his opening column.

The Spam Man simply says, "Do you use Spam, ma'am?" And, if you do, to prove it, "Do you have with you the Spam key with the metal strip?"

Only then can you offer an "opinion."

The first winner was Mrs. Arthur Leverance, in front of her Washington Street home when the Spam Man came along.

"Certainly, I use Spam," Mrs. Leverance said, and she showed the Spam Man the Spam key. "Spam is always handy to have when company drops in."

The next winner was E.A. Lambert, who produced a key and received \$2 for his opinion, "I like Spam for lunch, hot or cold."

And Mrs. George Heiland, who offered, along with her Spam key: "I like Spam for its delicious flavor."

December 1940

THE SPAM MAN

The Spam Man was still hanging around Rapids in November 1940, wanting to pay each Spam fan \$2 for a quote. "Spambled eggs are my favorite," said Mrs. Geo. Cotterill. "My husband insists on carrying Spam with him on hunting trips."

The Spam Man probably helped the new Johnny's Bar and Grill on east Highway 54 and Cal's Bowling and Bar at 8th Street and Airport Avenue.

He may have listened to radio station WFHR's formal debut November 5, featuring the music of the Castillians, Mrs. Gertrude Kellogg and Red Blanchard, followed by a night-long broadcast of election returns.

In the Presidential contest, Franklin Roosevelt won a sweeping victory over Wendell Willkie for an unprecedented third term.

On November 11, a winter storm swept into the Midwest on the heels of a 60-mph gale that left broken trees, smashed windows, demolished signs, uprooted telephone poles and a "general scene of havoc." The temperature plummeted from 54 to 9 degrees overnight. Among the 150 or so victims were duck hunters caught without shelter and sailors lost on the Great Lakes.

Warren "Red" Sullivan of Lincoln High School joined Elroy Hirsch of Wausau on the all-conference football team. Later, Hirsch, at center, helped Wausau defeat Rapids, 28-25, at basketball.

On December 3, the University of Wisconsin basketball team outclassed Ripon College, 39-20, in a game played before 3,000 fans at Lincoln Fieldhouse. The Ripon Redmen, led by Rapids natives Jim Rember and Ken Miller, scored only three field goals in the game.

A tie with the Cleveland Rams, at the same time the Chicago Bears beat the Chicago Cardinals, left the Packers in second place in the NFL Western Division despite veteran end Don Hutson's league-leading scoring production.

In the playoff, the Bears routed the Washington Redskins, 73-0.

On December 8, Bob Reeves won a cross-country ski competition at Bull's Eye Country Club. John Ritchay topped the juniors, and Ingmar Ingmarson, the alumni division. Two female entries

were Mrs. G.K. Dickerman and Mrs. Henry Baldwin.

Former intercollegiate champion boxer from the University of Wisconsin, Woodrow "Woody" P. Swancutt of Rapids, reported to Sikeston, Missouri, for training as a flyer. "Woody" hoped to return to school as a second lieutenant in the Air Corps Reserve in 1942 for another year of boxing "if things are more peaceful," he said.

In late November, the county's first young men to report for Army induction boarded the Hiawatha train for Wausau: Harry Miller, 23, and Donald Pepper, 25.

According to the *Tribune*, they "figured that they would be called eventually and saw shrewdly that a few breaks might come their way now that might not show up for later batches of selectees."

Miller wanted to get into heavy artillery while Pepper had his eye on the signal corps.

On November 29, the Christmas shopping season opened downtown with the simultaneous lighting of street decorations and display windows, accompanied by music from the LHS band, under Roger Hornig's direction.

A "Merry Christmas" greeting was erected on Grand Avenue, at the Birch Street cutoff, taking the place of a cross that had for many years shone from the top of the standpipe on the Lincoln High School campus. The new sign came with a warning from Chief of Police R.J. Exner: No throwing snowballs at the decoration, please.

Production volume was 30 percent higher at Harvard Clothes here than in 1939 because of a contract for the manufacture of army overcoats.

By contrast, in his year-end statement to the *Tribune*, George W. Mead, president of Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co., said: "Our progress (in 1940) has been entirely normal as our business is in no way influenced by the defense program of the national government. We are a normal industrial community and, as such, we have never suffered from the same influences

which bring the extremes to communities elsewhere."

January 1941

IF YOU WERE HARRY HOPKINS

Saturday, January 4, 1941:

If you were in Britain's desert army, you were running the Italians out of Libya.

If you were Harry Hopkins, you were preparing to leave for London as the U.S. president's personal representative.

If you were James Porter of Pittsburgh, you were sitting in jail for threatening to harm Betty Grable, the actress.

If you were Tom Harmon, the University of Michigan's renowned halfback, you were awaiting results of your Warner Brothers screen test.

If you were David Rowland, you were with the Boy Scouts from the Congregational Church's Troop 72 on a ski hike to Bull's Eye Country Club.

If you were eating at Whitrock's pharmacy, you were having fried chicken, with biscuit or dressing, at a cost of 50 cents.

If you went to a movie, you saw Bette Davis in "The Letter" at the Wisconsin Theatre, Gary Cooper in Cecil B. DeMille's "North West Mounted Police" at the Rapids, and the Dead End Kids in "You're Not So Tough" at the Palace.

If you were William Obermeier, you were looking for "fox horses" to buy. If you were William Helke, you needed a farm hand who was a "good milker." If you were Lloyd Franzon, you needed a housekeeper.

If you were a gal with a problem figure, you might have been out at Mary Vadnais' to be analyzed for a Spencer corset.

If you were J.A. Torresani, you were getting your high school hockey team ready to open their 1941 campaign.

If you were C.C. Knudsen, J. Bissig, Hugh Simmons, M. Nilles, E. Philleo, W. Foote, H.A. Bunde, A.A. Ritchay, C.F. Kruger, L.J. Barrette, H. Sampson, Dr. J. Looze or many others, you were playing schafskopf at the Elks lodge.

If you were a bowler, you were at Cal's new place or Lloyd's alleys.

If you had nothing else to do, you were home listening to radio station WFHR's Dancing Party that evening.

If you were ski jumpers Ole Arneson, Fritz Bender or Gunnar Rebne, you placed in Wisconsin tournaments.

If you were a census-taker, you found that Wisconsin Rapids showed the second-largest percentage increase among Wisconsin cities during the previous decade, from 8,726 to 11,416, a gain of 30.8 percent.

If you were R.S. Wiltout at Prentiss-Wabers, you started production on a new line of kerosene stoves to replace the company's gasoline stoves.

If you liked boxing, you joined crowds of more than 1,000 at Lincoln Fieldhouse to watch the Golden Glove tournaments. If you were Eddie Sawaska, Norman Stone, Carl Kuehl, Bob Kurz, Don Ellis, Gilmore Layton, William Sickles or Flossy Gust, you were among those who boxed there.

If you were one particular volunteer in South Wood County's quota who reported to the Milwaukee induction center, you flunked your physical because of your lower denture and had to return to work as a cook at the Hotel Witter.

If you were a guy named Bob Feller, you received the richest contract given a baseball pitcher for the 1941 season: a guaranteed \$30,000, plus another \$10,000 for endorsing products, making radio appearances "and whatnot."

If you were Elroy Hirsch, you were out beating up on Rapids teams again, this time in basketball, leading Wausau to a 31-17 triumph in your last game.

If you were a tavern operator on Highway 13 in the town of Saratoga, you paid a fine of \$100 for selling liquor to minors.

If you were Gus Giese, you walked from your house out by Nepco Lake in chilling temperatures and a strong wind to make a donation to the Riverview Hospital fund drive.

Only a single divorce was granted in January, said divorce counsel A.J. Crowns and Wood County Judge Frank W. Calkins. If you were married, you stayed married.

March 1941

RIVERVIEW

Volunteers from Wood county continue to depart for physical exams, including city attorney Harold Billmeyer, 32.

The American Legion Auxiliary met here to organize emergency volunteer service, including air-raid precautionary services and emergency disaster relief.

Wisconsin Rapids merchants decided to change the one night per week that they were open from Saturday to Friday, following the lead of Stevens Point, Wausau and other cities.

Plans for the enlargement and modernization of Riverview Hospital following a successful fund-raising campaign, was announced by George W. Mead, president of the hospital association. Construction of a three-floor addition designed by Childs and Smith, Chicago, was expected to be under way within two months. The 77-bed institution would be completed by the following January. Childs & Smith had also designed the Lincoln High School and First National Bank buildings here.

The hospital addition was made possible largely through the efforts of Mead and Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co. of which Mead was president.

Through the cooperation of the Cotton Mattress Administration, Wood County Extension Services and others, rural residents had begun making mattresses at village and town halls from surplus cotton provided from federal stockpiles.

Already, 55 mattresses had been fabricated in Arpin. More than 2,000 mattresses had been applied for by 1,500 farm families who had to meet certain financial guidelines to be considered.

Walter Hemp was in charge of the annual Lincoln High School intramural exhibition involving 50 boxers at the Fieldhouse. Referee Henry Jacobson was joined by judges J.A. Torresani and Lloyd Nell. Winners: Lawrence Jackan, Al Honkomp, Marvin Erickson, Gerry

Rosekrans, John Matthews, Jim Fahrner, Richard Minta, Robert McCain, Robert Zeaman, Bob Reeves.

Red Raiders, led by Walt Wood, Russ Davis and Vet Holmes, defeated Waupaca, Stevens Point and Nekoosa to gain a berth in WIAA state tournament at Madison, where they beat Antigo but lost the quarterfinals to Two Rivers, the eventual state champions.

The Wisconsin Badgers victory over Washington State in the NCAA finals at Kansas City gave them 20 wins and three defeats for the most successful season in Badger history.

June 1941

BASE RATE

The United States, while supplying the allied forces against Germany and Italy, was not at war in the spring and early summer of 1941. German troops had conquered Greece and made the first major airborne invasion in history, wiping out most of the British forces on the island of Crete.

A new theater of war had opened in the oil kingdom of Iraq, reputed site of the garden of Eden. "The Iraq nation will not submit to humiliations inflicted by a foreign power," Iraqi premier Rashid Ali Al Gailani was quoted as saying of the "sacred struggle."

Perhaps the most important event of the period took place on June 22, when Germany invaded Russia, its erstwhile ally.

In the United States, labor unrest was considered by many a threat to national defense. Locally, following negotiations with A.F.L. unions, Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co., in May, granted an increase of 5 cents per hour for all hourly workers. The new base rate was 63 cents per hour. A vacation plan called for a week's vacation after two years' service.

With the coming of spring, Consolidated began a new construction project. After nearly four decades, the 1903 crib-and-rock spillway section of its dam would be replaced by a 1,000 foot concrete and steel gate.

Accompanying the *Tribune's* dam story was an account of the first pulp

mill on the Wisconsin, built in 1881, when Charles A. Spencer and Walter E. Mack of Indiana purchased the 1866 Reuben C. Lyon shingle and lath mill.

On Memorial Day, 1941, a bronze sculpture by Leonard Crunelle, Chicago, was placed on the Forest Hill cemetery lot of Consolidated President George W. Mead as a memorial to Ruth Witter Mead, his wife, who had died August 24, 1939. Entitled "Onward," the draped figure of a woman with right hand outstretched and left hand holding the classical lamp of life rested on the polished granite prow of a ship breasting the waves of time. Mead, Crunelle said, had wanted a memorial that suggested inspiration instead of finality and would create, with appropriate feeling, the flow of life and lift from death its dread.

In 1931, Mead had supported the building of the Lincoln Fieldhouse (now at East Junior High) here. Ten years later, it was well-used. The April Home Show's final sessions in the booth-lined "auditorium" drew more than 1,000 spectators, including Mrs. Henry Ebsen, who won a Maytag washer. The stage show featured magicians, jugglers, and a contortionist called Wallace the Frog Man.

Also staged in the Fieldhouse was the Wisconsin Rapids invitational track meet, including eight of the best prep track-and-field squads in the state, and an exhibition by four track stars from Big Ten Schools. Some of the athletes Lincoln coach J.A. Torresani chose to compete for the sixth-finishing Red Raiders were: Jim Cortier, Carl Knudson, Walt Wood, Vet Holmes, Lawrence Kaja, John Mathews, Dick Galganski, Ronnie Malcolm, Jim Retzlaff, Jim Gazeley, Bob Reeves, John Lutz and Fred Galles.

In early June, 264 grade-school graduates from rural and state-graded schools received their eighth-grade diplomas in the Fieldhouse. Later that month, many of their parents awaited the arrival at the same building of Glenn Miller's big band.

In the spring of 1941, workers were in the process of moving a white frame structure on Third Street South that had been the first hospital in the community

and, following the construction of the 1917 brick hospital, the obstetrical and service department. It was being moved in order to make room for a new addition to be opened later that year.

On Second Avenue South, the new Memorial Armory was dedicated. It would house Battery E, 12th Field Artillery, 32nd Division of the National Guard and would also serve as a public building.

Battery E had been organized 20 years previous but its origin dated back to World War I when it was Troop G of the 1st Wisconsin Cavalry. Having been mustered into active service the previous October, Battery E had been transferred from Camp Beauregard to Camp Livingston, both in Louisiana.

The previous armory on First Street North had burned November 14, 1938. The 32-year-old building, long used as an amusement hall, had been known in the years before the National Guard took it over, as the "roller rink."

August 1941

PREPAREDNESS

In the interest of preparedness, state Sen. M.R. Laird and Wisconsin Rapids Mayor William T. Nobles dedicated the new armory on July 4 as a crowd of 600 watched in the tourist park across Second Avenue South.

Although the United States had not entered the war, a collection drive was put into action to relieve the shortage of aluminum. Boy Scouts and others helped fill bins with kettles, pots, pans, covers and a variety of nondescript utensils that could be converted into new kettles, pots, pans, covers and nondescript utensils, so the higher-grade aluminum could go to defense industries.

As military recruiting and the selective service lottery continued, a tall man with fencing scars on his left cheek boarded a train bound from Nekoosa to Milwaukee: Rudolf Karl Wilhelm Weiler. A 34-year-old native of Germany, Weiler had been a member of the Nazi Party and an engineer in the German army. He said he was a friend

of Hitler's former deputy, Rudolf Hess. Rather than deny his former affiliations, Weiler had given a speech at the Elks lodge, where he passed around his credentials. Because he did not want to be labeled a spy, he tried to enlist in the U.S. Army but was rejected by the Milwaukee selective service induction board after a physical examination.

A resident of the United States since 1937 and a research chemist at the Nekoosa mill of Nekoosa-Edwards since 1939, he had been trained in pulp and paper technology in Germany.

A Witter Hotel employee was found at 2 a.m. lying on Mrs. Nels Johnson's lawn with the foot of his broken leg stuck in the 2-foot iron fence. At first, foul play was suspected, but authorities determined the man had broken his leg when he caught it in the fence and fell over into the Johnson yard.

Crime evidently led to the suicide of a 36-year-old employee of the local water and light department who hung himself in the Waushara County Jail. He had been arrested while attempting to flee from a side entrance to the Wautoma Mercantile store after a suspected burglary.

In Milladore's business district, four Main Street buildings burned: the Brey hotel and tavern, Worzella general store, Blenker tavern and Seavers garage. Total damage was estimated at \$50,000.

After the Wisconsin Rapids White Sox and pitcher Max Patkin defeated the Appleton Papermakers in a State contest at Witter Field, an enraged crowd of 500 surrounded the three umpires as they were escorted from the playing field by police.

Later that summer, the largest crowd ever to witness a game of baseball in Wisconsin Rapids saw the Sox defeat the Oshkosh Braves at the "Consolidated Day" game. Most of the 3,062 got in free.

Others in search of entertainment gathered at the Roberson Players tent theater on Third Avenue North, the 21st consecutive year the players had appeared in this city.

In mid-July, new park facilities opened to the public with a county

board frolic at the South Wood County Park's Lake Wazeecha "south" or "red" beach near Kellner. The ball diamond, swimming beach and dock were to be officially used for the first time.

Consolidated Water Power and Paper Co. announced it would build a dam and hydroelectric plant at Knowlton, the power to be tied into a Wisconsin Public Service line. A new 7,200-acre lake would require moving Highway 51, often closed because of high water.

The Knowlton project had been conceived in 1925 when Consolidated engineers William F. Thiel and Tom Utegaard discovered the power site and the company began purchase of river bottom and adjacent land. Priority ratings from Washington were expected to allow speedy construction of the dam despite wartime shortages.

With a national shortage of silk stockings, one columnist advised purchasing special leg make-up in the color of hosiery or chipping in with friends for a sun lamp. Or perhaps, she said, trying a new product that had come on the market: a thin covering for the sole of the foot only. With this clever sock, you could go barelegged without going barefoot.

December 1941

PEARL HARBOR

Approaching the weekend that included the Sunday, December 7, 1941, bombing of Pearl Harbor, Wisconsin Rapids was more concerned with the arrival of Santa Claus than Japanese bombers.

On Saturday, December 6, Santa did come to town, riding a fire truck and throwing candy kisses "like the conqueror he is," according to the *Tribune*.

The newspaper playfully noted the snarled traffic, hundreds of screaming, big-eyed children and mothers neglecting their Saturday baking.

A new recreation center opened in Port Edwards. An old storage building belonging to Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co. now contained four bowling alleys

and a soda fountain. A flashing neon light announced "The Paper Inn."

As Lake DuBay was being created, cranberry grower, professor and archeologist Philleo Nash was involved in a project underwritten by Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co., builders of the project.

Conversations between Consolidated Vice President Stanton Mead and Nash had resulted in a company gift to the University of Wisconsin to finance a survey of the flowage basin. For the study, Nash was joined by Winslow Walker, formerly of the Smithsonian Institute.

Although three sites of archaeological interest were found, investigation focused on a plowed field on the east bank of the Wisconsin River above the "big bend." Here, workmen spooned away dirt that, for years, had hidden all that remained of the log cabin of Jean Baptiste DuBay, whose legacy was to be perpetuated in the name of the flowage.

The site had been identified by DuBay's 75-year-old daughter as her childhood home.

In and around the foundation of the burned cabin were found cartridges, pipe stems, scythes, glass, old coins, bits of crockery, eroded ax bits, wrought-iron nails and a doll.

The remains of a peltry house (trading post) were believed to be nearby. Also found in the vicinity were numerous Indian mounds.

In Port Edwards, construction of a new Catholic church had begun. The \$35,000 stone English Gothic structure at the north end of the village was to be named St. Alexander's.

"You likely may have wondered why the good Lord created Adams County in the first place," declared county board members and political leaders to whoever was listening "but now we all know it was for the location of this plant."

The "plant" apparently was a gunpowder business planned for the Merrimac area in Sauk County. If the Sauk people did not want the \$65 million facility, a telegram to President Roosevelt stated that Adams County would be glad to take it.

December 1941

THE ART OF WALKING

It had become a daily ritual—the burial, just before sunset, of the first U.S. war victims. As a result of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor December 7, 1941, said the *Daily Tribune*, more than 2,500 soldiers had died. At the side of green hills overlooking the Pacific, their graves adorned with poinsettias plucked from Honolulu's gardens, the dead would remain until they could be reburied to their rightful homes.

Back in Wisconsin, reports of state and Wood County casualties began to arrive almost immediately, although information often was incomplete or inaccurate.

Wisconsin Rapids was thought likely to be chosen with Madison, Eau Claire, Fond du lac and Milwaukee as one of five Wisconsin cities to be named by Gov. Julius P. Heil as key centers of the state's defense structure. Fire wardens, fire watchers, auxiliary police and auxiliary firemen were registered at defense head-quarters in the Building and Loan Association location in the Flatiron Building.

The South-County Defense Council (Wisconsin Rapids Mayor William T. Nobles, Norbert M. Daly, Ed Krohn, Romeo Villeneuve, W.R. Moll) named Guy O. Babcock, Dan McKercher and Leslie Plenke to a tire-rationing board.

Sale of new passenger cars and trucks was prohibited under government orders mobilizing the entire American automobile industry for war production only. Drastic quotas reduced by about 90 per cent the number of new tires and inner tubes available for sale to citizens. Wood County was allotted 27 passenger-car tires and 54 truck-and-bus tires. Tire rationing was, as a side effect, expected to revive the "art of walking."

Tri-City athletes competed in 116 events of major importance, according to High School Coach J.A. Torresani. He said the intrusion of selective service into the ranks of sportsmen had

brought a sudden accent on youth to sports.

The depression of the 1930s had been coming to a close even before the declaration of war. On Christmas Eve, it was noted that the relief and WPA load was the lowest in the eight-year history of the Wood County Welfare Department. The November total of 500 compared to 1,457 in 1934.

To add to Christmas cheer, 250 baskets packed with food, clothing and toys were distributed to families in Wisconsin Rapids, Port Edwards, Nekoosa and Biron.

County births for 1941 would break all records, more than 50 per cent above the total in 1940.

The landmark Johnson Hill store downtown would be ready for any newcomers, with a new downstairs grocery and food-service department moved from the first floor. The partly self-service section was part of an overall modernization project that included a complete pneumatic tube carrier system and fluorescent lighting.

The 1903-built rock and timber spillway section of the Consolidated dam was ripped out in December, replaced by a new concrete wall and gates.

War production already was important to the Nekoosa Foundry & Machine Works Inc. Nekoosa Foundry President M.J. Power said he expected the next year to bring disappointments and sorrow to many. But, from an employment point of view, there was good news: More jobs than ever.

February 1942

VICTORY GARDEN

Among the reports coming to Wisconsin Rapids after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was that of Ervin Miller, a member of the Willamette University football team and former Lincoln High School athlete.

Miller said he had been eating breakfast at a hotel in Honolulu with his team from the Salem, Oregon, college on December 7, when he and the others

saw columns of water spouting from the ocean. The incident was passed off as whales frolicking.

About an hour later, the sound of anti-aircraft fire also was ignored. Only when he heard a battleship had been sunk did Miller realize the attack was for real. Almost immediately, Miller and his teammates were issued rifles and ammunition, and assigned to guard a U.S. Engineers base.

While Wood County residents read Miller's account in the late winter of 1942, they also considered their own preparations for war. A Madison professor had urged 4-H members to manage one 1,000 square-foot "victory garden" each in order to free farmers for other projects.

Others in the community already had pitched in to the war effort. The local American Red Cross enjoyed "cheerful, bustling confusion" at its headquarters downtown in the Wood Block.

It was "packing day." Ready to go were 475 units of refugees' clothing, knitted and sewed by volunteers, the fifth such shipment to leave Wisconsin Rapids since the start of the Red Cross war refugee program.

According to the *Tribune*, the first war measure to reach into every home was the adoption of "war time" at 2 a.m. February 8, as clocks were set forward an hour. Though most that erred in setting or not setting their clocks came in late, one employee of the street commission arrived for work an hour early. He had advanced his time all right, but he also advanced the hand on the alarm.

The man hadn't stayed up too late watching the 1942 Central Wisconsin Golden Gloves tournament scheduled for the Lincoln Fieldhouse. The bouts were canceled for lack of sufficient entries, caused by induction of prospects into the military, by increased employment elsewhere and by the closing of nearby Civilian Conservation Corps camps.

The Rapids high school basketball team faced one of its "oldest and most bitter" rivals at the Fieldhouse: the Alexander High Papermakers of

Nekoosa, dedicated opponents since the erection of their school building.

The game turned out to be a 37-13 rout in favor of Lincoln, which held Nekoosa to four field goals (one in the second half).

In January, without the benefit of a single practice session because of the scarcity of ice on the Witter Field rink, the Wisconsin Rapids city hockey team traveled to Rhinelander for the opening game in the Vacationland hockey league.

Local ski jumper Ingvar "Ole" Arneson was credited with playing a large part in the Tri-Norse Ski Club's sponsorship, at Dyracuse Mound, of one of the largest junior combined ski meets "ever to be held."

Another local athlete, Bob Ellis, was boxing successfully for the University of Wisconsin team.

Pursuit of another kind of outdoor sport aroused controversy when, in February, Mark Catlin of the Wisconsin Conservation Commission, in a letter to Wallace Grange, called Grange's Sandhill Game Farm near Babcock a "deer trap." Catlin said Grange's license was issued in 1938, when 30 deer were counted in the enclosure. In three years, 500 deer had been killed in the area, leaving an estimated 322 present in 1941.

Calling Catlin's remarks slanderous, Grange said, "We will go to bat against any bunch of politicians in the state, and it will be a pleasure to do so."

A proposal to cut the representation on the Wisconsin Rapids Common Council from two per ward to one was supported by Alderman William Gleue, who argued that having two aldermen in each ward was like "having two mayors, or two of any other kind of city official." The council voted February 3 not to submit the proposal to the voters in an April referendum.

The Wood County Board briefly explored the possibility of purchasing what was then the Nepco Tri-City Airport. One county board member left the meeting to call Nepco President John Alexander for his opinion. It was

believed the airport could be had for \$28,500.

Due to the threat of wartime sabotage, state authorities had issued an order requiring 24-hour guarding of open flying fields. Tri-City was the only approved airplane repair station in the state outside of regular airline stopping places.

The question that had caused the board's deliberations was a practical one: who should pay for the guards?

It was concluded that the city and town of Grand Rapids each would provide one guard, and the airport a third for 24-hour service.

"A couple of years ago," Rapids Mayor William T. Nobles said, "the county board saw fit to buy right-of-way to build a direct road to the airport and put in a good road that led nowhere except to the airport. If that was done in peacetime, then it appears the airport is worth guarding in war time."

A flag debate was settled between Charles Hagerstrom Post 9 of the American Legion and the Women's Relief Corps of Wisconsin Rapids. Each had wanted custody of the flag that had, for at least 60 years, waved over the Grand Army of the Republic Post 22 as the latter veterans of the Civil War "trode solemnly" in parades.

A signed agreement gave the flag to the Women's Relief Corps but guaranteed the Legionnaires permission to carry it in the annual Memorial Day parade.

It was reported that former resident Alvin Streblow, 39, was among 51 civilian employees of the U.S. Navy captured in Japanese assaults on Pacific island outposts in the two months previous. He was believed to have been taken on Wake Island.

The death of the first local soldier during U.S. participation in World War II also was reported. Julius Rude Jr., 20, had been aboard the WWI-era destroyer Truxtun off Newfoundland as fierce seas pounded it to pieces.

May 1942

THE DRAFT

Bob Newman wanted to go. The Biron resident wrote a letter to President Roosevelt in 1942, saying he wanted to enlist in the United States Army and fight for his country. Bob's generous offer was understandably rejected; he was only 14 years old.

On the other hand, Ted Williams did not want to go. The 23-year-old Boston Red Sox baseball player, whose draft availability had been deferred among controversy, said all he wanted was to play the 1942 season, that he needed the money to support his mother.

"Furthermore, I'll pay about \$17,000 income tax," the recipient of a \$30,000 salary told reporters, "so it isn't as though I won't be doing something to help."

Locally, the war had taken at least six former "stars" playing for the Class D Wisconsin Rapids White Sox of the Wisconsin State League.

Many Rapids-area men volunteered for service in advance of being called for the draft.

Ed "Strangler" Lewis seemed more than willing to sign up. The former world heavyweight wrestling champion was the first Nekoosa man to register at the American Legion hall in the general registration of all men 45-63 years of age. Lewis had only a remote chance of ever being called.

Only nine of 32 selectees for the second March quota of the south Wood County district were accepted for induction. The others failed their physical exams, some for the second time.

Arch Davis, 26, WFHR announcer and sportscaster since November 1940, enlisted in the U.S. Air Corps. Davis, formerly of Adams-Friendship, had come to Wisconsin Rapids in 1940 as staff artist for the *Daily Tribune*.

Another former resident of Wisconsin Rapids and Lincoln High School graduate was Col. Joseph A. Holly. In March 1942, Holly headed the test and engine section of the armed force board at Fort Knox, Kentucky.

Frederick "Fritz" Marin, 35, a former resident of Wisconsin Rapids and member of the 1923 LHS championship football squad, died aboard the U.S.

Destroyer Pope which sunk March 1 in the battle of Java. Marin had been in the Navy about 15 years.

Later reported missing since March 1 was Arthur John Giese, 32, son of Charles A. Giese, 2410 3rd St. S. He was believed to have been lost in the same naval engagement as Marin.

John Butler Ayer, Milwaukee, who had trained at the Tri-City airport three years previous while attached to CCC Camp Petenwell, was reported missing since April 15.

Second Lt. Richard G. Rosebush, 26, son of F.H. Rosebush, Port Edwards, was killed in the crash of an Army plane in Colorado, the second Wood County man to die in wartime service. Rosebush, a 1932 LHS graduate, had enlisted in June 1941 and was commissioned as a flight instructor. His father was employment manager of the Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co.

Robert J. Ryan, 25, son of Mr. and Mrs. M.J. Ryan, Wisconsin Rapids, was thought by the month of May to have been taken prisoner in the Philippines by the Japanese.

Registration of war ration books began in early May. This was considered the largest general registration of human beings ever conducted.

The first volunteer to report to the blood-typing center in the former A&P store on West Grand Avenue was Stanton W. Mead.

In the April election, Mayor William T. Nobles was re-elected to a fifth term over L.L. Bender, 1,519 to 1,499. John Jeffrey Jr. defeated William J. Conway for the office of city attorney. Jeffrey had been acting city attorney in the absence of Harold D. Billmeyer, who was in wartime military service.

Here, as elsewhere, citizens were asked by President Roosevelt to consider renaming the war in an effort to signify a theme. Roosevelt's choice, "Survival War," received the support of only 7 percent of respondents who were also polled. The most preferred alternative, or new name, was "War for World Freedom."

Other suggestions along the lines of what Roosevelt wanted were "War of Freedom," "War against Oppression,"

"War to Save Humanity," "Right Against Might," "Fight for Right ... All-Out War," "Four Freedoms War," "War of the Ages," "War to Save Civilization," "Total War," "The People's War," "War Against Tyrants," "Anti-Nazi War" and "The Last War."

Less flattering choices were proposed, such as "The Meddler's War," "Franklin's Folly," "Rich Man's War," "The Devil's War," "War of Greed" and "The Great Massacre."

In the end, people liked best the terms they already were using and would continue to use: "The Second World War" or "World War II."

November 1942 WAR BONDS

It was 50 years ago that John Kennedy announced his candidacy for the Democratic nomination as representative to Congress. Besides emphasizing his support for President Roosevelt's war efforts, Kennedy said the Wisconsin cheese industry needed a man who knew what it meant to sell and market cheese, which he had done for 15 years; he was also a member of the Wisconsin Rapids Fire and Police Commission.

During the fall of 1942, out in Grand Rapids, there were rumblings among the town board, the Two Mile School District, the Wisconsin Rapids Common Council and the Wisconsin Rapids School District as consolidation of the schools was considered.

The Wisconsin Rapids City Council rejected a proposed ordinance making the pedestrian crossing at Grand Avenue and Second Street illegal to cross except when the walk light was on, "the only intersection so controlled."

Three brothers and sisters, ages 11, 8 and 7, drowned below the Consolidated dam. They had been left untended at the family's 1st Street North house for almost a week. The father of the victims worked at Badger Ordnance in the Baraboo hills.

Hollywood stars Edward Arnold and Frances Dee appeared at a War Bond Rally at Witter Field. According to county chairman of war bond sales C.F. Kruger, \$130,000 was pledged as part of the "stars over America" program.

The death of Witter Field's major sponsor, Isaac Phelps Witter, was reported Sept. 9. The *Daily Tribune* termed Witter a leading citizen, banker, state senator, business man and philanthropist.

Witter, active with the T. B. Scott Library, J.D. Witter traveling library, Wisconsin Rapids Board of Education, Witter Vocational School and St. John the Evangelist Episcopal Church, willed \$96,000 of his \$1 million estate to public and religious purposes, including \$25,000 to Witter Field, considered a memorial to a "lifetime of work in which civic improvement, church work and fraternal activities had claimed a large share of his time and money."

Paper manufactured by Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co., of which Witter had been a major stockholder, was being tested as a base for a plastic material that would equal aluminum in strength. On August 8, 1942, Isaac P. Witter's brother-in-law and company president, George Mead, said the product had been successfully employed in experiments by the Forest Products Laboratory, Madison.

McDonnell Aircraft Corp. had begun experimental production of airplane parts from the material, which could be molded or shaped like plywood, was resistant to moisture, stable at high and low temperatures and resistant to denting. When pierced by bullets, it did not splinter, tear or "flower" out.

At Memorial armory, 63 men of the Tri-Cities, some veterans of the first World War, were sworn in as members of the newly organized local company of the Wisconsin State Guard.

Movie stars Jimmy Stewart and Clark Gable enlisted in the U.S. Army and Lt. Joseph McCarthy, 34, Wisconsin's youngest circuit court judge, presided briefly in Milwaukee's municipal court while in uniform and on his way to U.S. Marine Corps training.

A September *Tribune* described a crowd of 1,500 gathered at our depot: "The poignancy of a soldier's parting made kin hundreds of south Wood County people Monday afternoon at the Milwaukee Road depot as the district's August selective service quota boarded the Hiawatha bound for Fort Sheridan's recruit reception center in Illinois." The 90 men sent to the army were ages 20 to 45 and included August Tomat, 44, who had served in the German army at age 18.

In another *Daily Tribune* story, Capt. Woodrow P. Swancutt received attention as assistant operations officer. The former Wisconsin Rapids resident had been national intercollegiate boxing champion in 1939 and 1940, while at the University of Wisconsin.

As a local tribute, tall V's bearing the names of the Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co. employees (137 male and one female) serving in the armed forces and auxiliaries were erected on the lawns of the company's mills.

The roll call of casualties:

Charles A. Hladileck Jr., 22, Vesper, reported missing in the crash of a Navy plane in the Atlantic.

Staff Sgt. Willard Frost Rath, 22, of the U.S. Army Air Corps and former member of the Wisconsin Rapids National Guard battery, killed in California when his pursuit plane collided with another plane. He had grown up in Almond.

Pvt. Elmer Putzier, 25, son of Mr. and Mrs. William Putzier, Wisconsin Rapids, of the U.S. Army Air Corps, dead in the crash of a bomber near Chadron, Nebraska. Putzier's was counted the third death among Tri-City members of the armed forces since the war began. Putzier had been en route to Rapid City, S.D., where he had been mistakenly sent.

In December, reported missing in action in Africa, Pfc. Clarence Arndt, 25, son of Mr. and Mrs. William Arndt, Route 5.

Pvt. Ivan Sadowska, Marshfield, also was missing in Africa. His father, Gust, was a former Wood County sheriff.

January 1943 ECONOMY

South Wood County changed from a prosperous, peacetime community of factories and farms to a bustling sector of the home front in the greatest war of history—that fateful year, 1942. That's how the *Daily Tribune* of December 24, 1942, viewed the year that was almost over.

Although the Wisconsin Rapids area was not chosen as the site of a military camp, nor were its major industries converted to the manufacture of war weapons, the community and people met the shock of the shift to wartime economy in scores of ways, said the *Tribune*.

Out of the cities, hamlets and farms streamed hundreds of men, and some women, into the armed forces. Women took the places of men in many types of work. Wives and mothers assumed head-of-family roles, filling in for husbands and fathers "for the duration."

The South Wood County Community War Chest was established to take care of the community's obligations to the United Service Organizations, to army and navy relief, to agencies caring for the homeless in devastated allied countries and to other, local purposes.

Citizens responded to scrap drives. Red Cross projects involved making garments for refugees and soldier kits as well as assisting in outfitting Camp McCoy's new hospital sun and recreation rooms.

Rationing of rubber, petroleum, sugar and coffee and a civil defense program organized shortly after Pearl Harbor continued. Women organized into the block plan to rally the public behind the war effort.

For local industries, business was excellent.

The war production board granted high priority ratings to Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co. to put its new plastics department into operation. Work already had started on an addition

to the Ahdawagam Paper Products Co. building, where the plastic production would be centered during the war.

The year also marked what was then the all-time peak in Consolidated's production of paper and pulp in tons and dollar sales, attributed to the acceptance by many leading magazines of coated papers developed from 1931 to 1937.

A second major manufacturer converted to the manufacture of war materials. Prentiss Wabers Products Co.'s employment reached an "all-time" high to take care of government contracts, according to a statement by R.S. Wiltout. He noted that the hiring of women by the company was a wartime departure from normal policy. Of 585 Prentiss Wabers employees working around the clock, seven days a week, 150 were unmarried women.

More than 50,000 army uniform coats were produced at Harvard Clothes Inc. of Wisconsin Rapids, which had converted the entire factory to the defense effort. Overall production doubled though that of civilian clothing diminished.

The Wisconsin Gas Co. experienced a record year, said Lee H. Barker, president. The demand to supply gas-service equipment exceeded the ability to supply it, largely because of wartime freeze orders.

Wood County Register of Deeds Henry Ebbe said there was yet another all-time record—for number of births, eclipsing the number the previous year, which also was an all-time high, by 34 percent. He also said that population shifts into the armed forces and war industry caused a lot more work for the office, such as copying birth certificates and answering telephone calls.

Not to be outdone, the Wisconsin Rapids Post Office had the biggest year it ever had, according to Postmaster Joe Wheir.

The local office of the U.S. Employment Service placed 2,948 people, an increase of 35.9 percent over the previous year. The majority went to defense jobs from Panama and Alaska to Manitowoc, Madison, Merrimac and Camp McCoy. The job service,

federalized earlier that year, ran out of potential laborers and was unable to fill a number of non-essential employer orders.

The American Legion's local Charles Hagerstrom post, recently moved into its new home in Memorial armory, reached its "all-time high" of 283 members.

Fortunately, not everything increased by leaps and bounds. General relief and aid to dependent children ("welfare") were down considerably, as well as circuit and county court judgments, which declined by more than 60 percent, reflecting a general decline in litigation, said the *Tribune*.

The number of traffic accidents fell, reported R. J. Exner, Wisconsin Rapids chief of police. That was fortunate because war-related duties had increased while several officers had been called to the armed forces.

County-wide crime also showed a marked decrease, attributed to the improved economic condition.

However, only nine homes were built in Wisconsin Rapids, according to Building Inspector A.J. Hanneman, for the now-familiar reasons: shortages of and restrictions on materials and labor. It was the first year in many that at least 100 new homes were not built here.

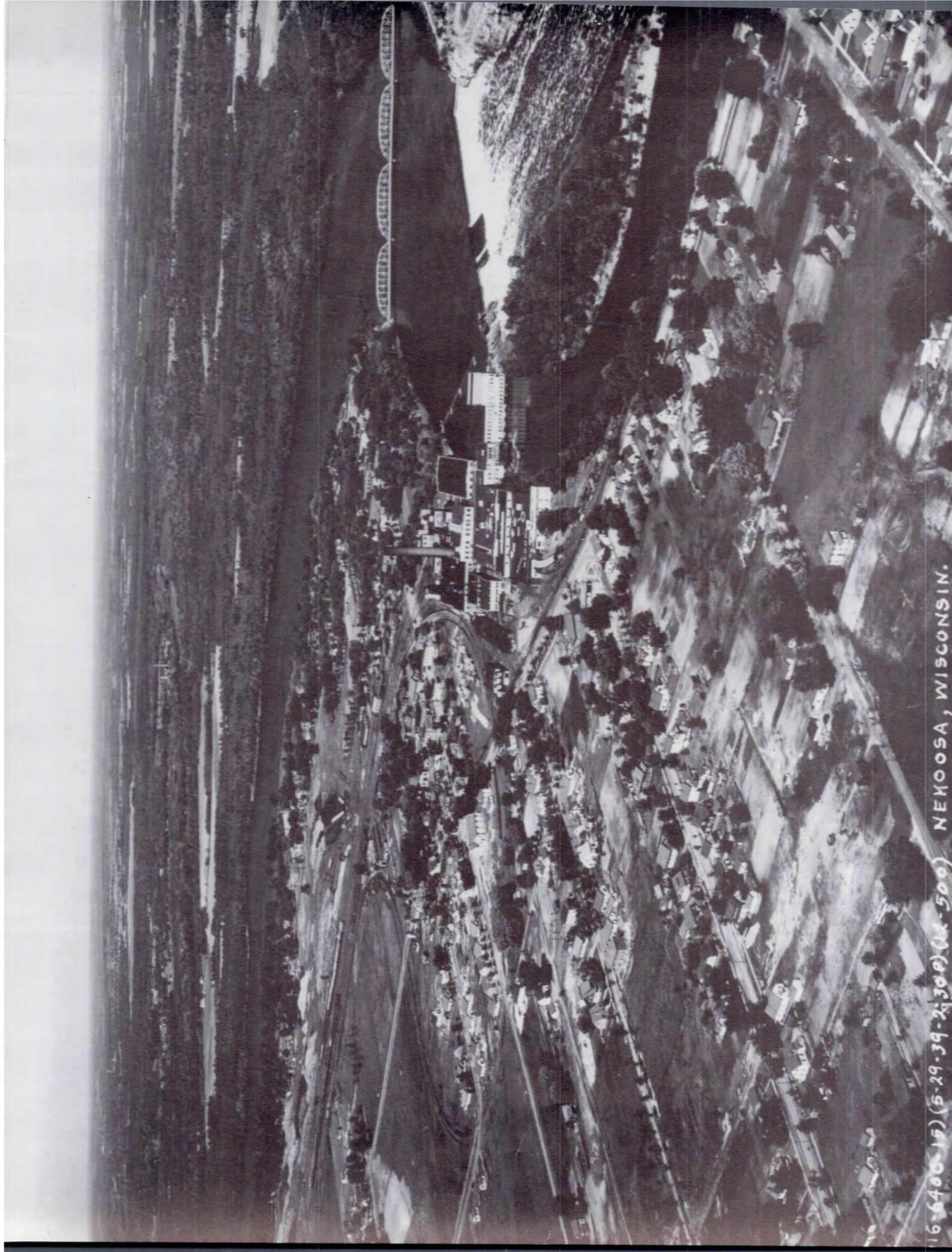
City projects were sharply curtailed, said City Engineer Carl A. Cajanus. Work on roads virtually ceased.

The WPA, which had provided employment through federal make-work projects, was discontinued here. There were hardly enough men left in the city who qualified for the program.

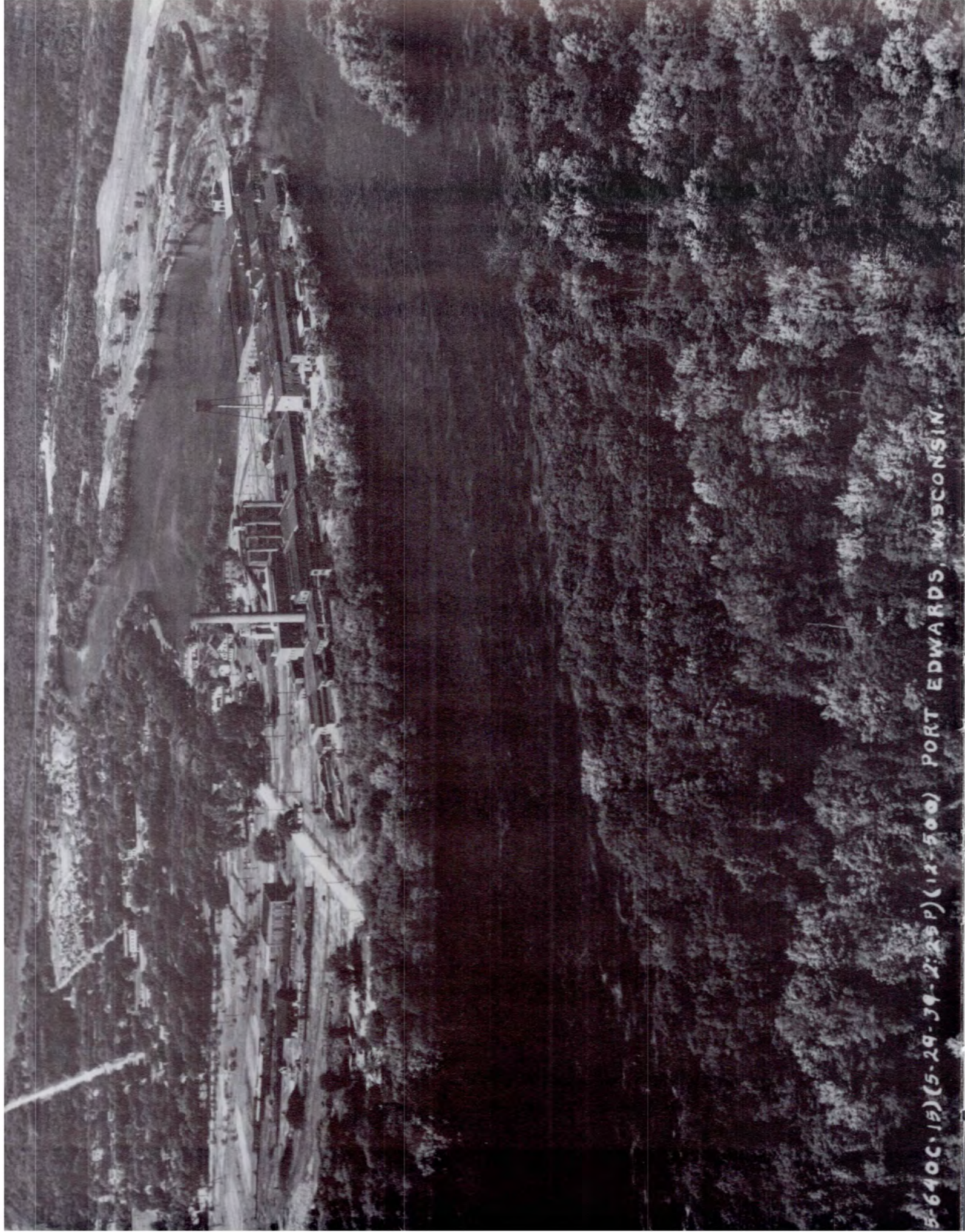
Nekoosa-Edwards Light & Power expansion was curtailed as workers were kept busy trimming trees. The first woman meter reader was hired, replacing a man who had entered the armed forces.

More than 1,400 books collected at the T.B. Scott Public Library through the Victory Book campaign for members of the military were delivered to Milwaukee by Gross Brothers Transport Co. without charge.

As 1942 drew to a close, the world-wide war's effects in Wisconsin Rapids definitely had reached an all-time high.



16-6400-15) (5-29-39-2:300) (U-500) NEKOOSA, WISCONSIN.



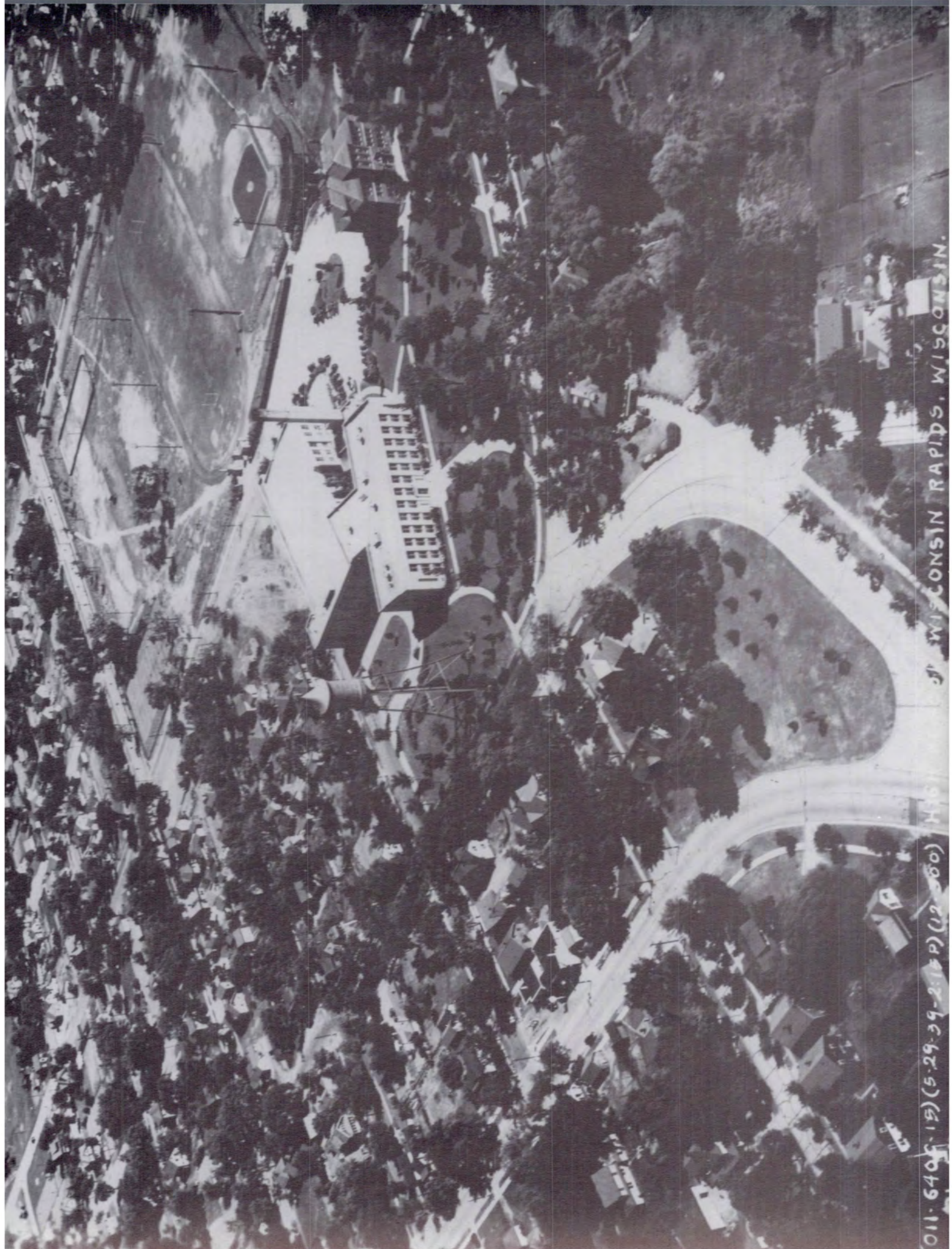
5-640C.15) (5-29-39-2:25P) (12-500) PORT EDWARDS, WISCONSIN.



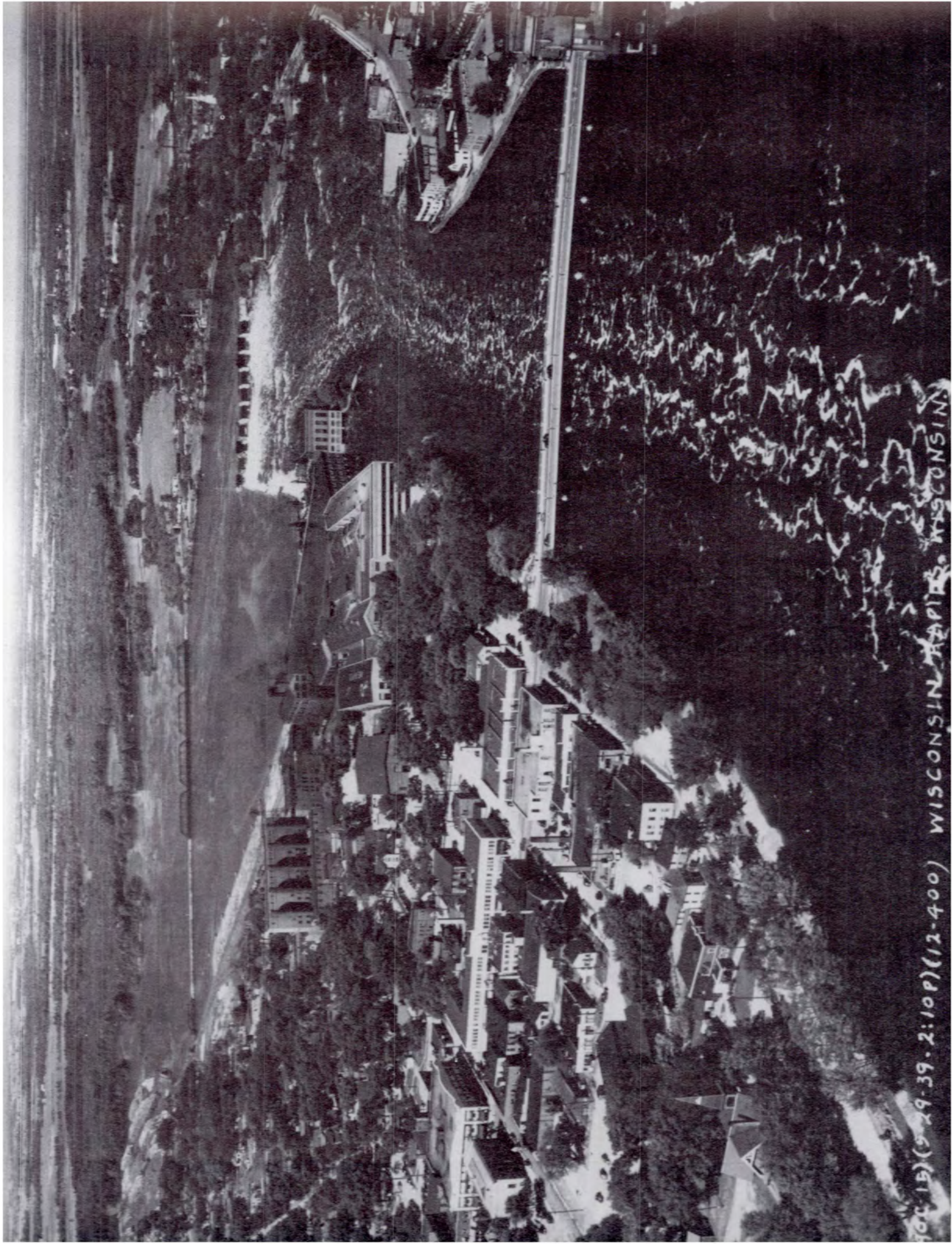
019-640C-15) 29-30 2-3-5 (Ch. 5-3) ME 00-1 TAB CITY ALABAMA



2-640C-15) (5-29-34.2:20P) (12-700) WISCONSIN RAPIDS, WISCONSIN.



011-6402-15 (5-29-39-2:15 P) (12-500) HIGH SCHOOL WISCONSIN RAPIDS, WISCONSIN.



100-15) (5-29-39. 2:10 P) (12-400) WISCONSIN RAPIDS, WISCONSIN

June 1943

BLOCK PLAN

As 1943 began, it was evident we had been saved. It was just a matter of time before our side would win World War II. Russia was counterattacking; America and its allies were on the offensive in Africa, Europe and the Pacific.

The cost was high. War manpower commissioner Paul V. McNutt said that by the end of the year, 10 out every 14 able-bodied men between 18 and 38 would be in the armed forces. Many were killed or missing in action.

Early in 1943, Bruce Bender, 27, a former Lincoln High School athlete and Prentiss Wabers employee, met his death while serving with the U.S. Navy hospital unit in the Solomon Islands.

In February came the death of flight officer Frank H. Giese, 21, of the U.S. Army Air Force, in an accident believed to be at Will Rogers Field, Oklahoma.

Among those entering the Army were Pvt. William F. Huffman Jr., 18, at Camp Grant, Ill. The University of Wisconsin ROTC student was the son of the *Daily Tribune* owner, who had enlisted at the same camp 25 years previous after a stint as reporter for the *Rockford Republic* newspaper.

On the home front, rationing, price controls, wage stabilization and "zooming" taxes would continue for some time.

The first tin can collections in the South Wood County district began January 16. Householders removed labels, cleaned and flattened the cans, and placed them in curbside containers.

Locally, the Block Plan enrolled 400 women in seven south Wood County communities under general chairman Mrs. Franz Rosebush, Port Edwards, and Mrs. Henry Baldwin, Wisconsin Rapids city chairman. The purpose was to provide educational programs and link housewives in a home-front "army." In late May, a war shrine was dedicated at the Wisconsin Rapids Episcopal Church to allow prayers for

the country, for those in service and for peace.

The many men pressed into the military left job openings. "Women, invading the armed forces, the machine shops and forges, the legislative halls and laboratories, took another former domain of mere man this spring when women employees were added to the field force at Griffith State Nursery here," said the *Tribune*. Nursery Superintendent Bill Brener reported that the 45 women then employed slightly outnumbered the men.

In the Adams County peat country, Plainfield's Henry L. Woodward was planting 140 acres of carrots, 100 acres of onions, 400 acres of potatoes, 130 acres of corn, feed crops for 250 cattle and 40 acres of latex-bearing Russian dandelions.

This vast project was made possible by 50 dark-skinned Jamaicans with English accents who had arrived in May and were paid a minimum of \$3 per 12-hour day.

Zoot-suited youths rioted in Los Angeles and a juvenile theft ring was broken in Rapids by Chief of Police R.J. Exner. A favorite activity had been to steal cars for joy rides while the owners attended movies, returning the vehicles before the show was over.

Another set of high school students admitted thefts and vandalism at Lake Wazeecha to Wood County Sheriff Henry Becker.

A fall-caused broken hip had proved fatal to Ben Hansen, 82, whose work both as private citizen and city employee was instrumental in the establishment of a Wisconsin Rapids riverbank park system. Hansen, who had lived here since 1880 at 410 1st Avenue South, was a member of the city park board until his death.

When Amos J. Hasbrouck died in April, he was, at age 82, the oldest native-born resident of Wisconsin Rapids. The former vice president of Prentiss Wabers belonged to a family who arrived in 1849 and made its name through a livery business.

Tommy Pitts, a sales manager for Swift and Co., St. Paul, was in town, recalling his boyhood days. The

lumberman grandfather of Thomas E. Pitts, Thomas W. Pitts, founded Pittsville. Tommy's father, Perl B. Pitts, still active and nearing his 73rd birthday at the time of the article, had established the old *Yellow River Pilot* newspaper, which became the Pittsville Record.

Tommy said that the first time he visited Grand Rapids was also the first time he wore shoes. On that July 4 visit in 1908 or 1909, a one-armed balloonist fell into the Wisconsin River and drowned.

In June 1943, the municipal ski slide on 7th Street North was condemned by the city council. For some years, neighbors had complained about children on the scaffold during summer months.

As June came to an end, Prentiss Wabers Product Co. signed a new contract with the war department, in excess of \$1 million, for manufacture of fuses for anti-tank mines. The contract was the largest yet received by the company, which also made bomb detonators and cooking units. The 570 employees already were working around the clock to keep up with the unusual demands of world war.

October 1943

BLACKOUT

Children, do you know where your grandparents were—50 years ago?

"Striking with quiet but efficient coordination Friday night, two squads of city police led in person by chief of police R.J. Exner, invaded eight taverns here last night to check up on suspected juveniles," wrote the *Daily Tribune* in the summer of 1943.

No arrests were made, but police took the names of 34 underage patrons, including 13 in one west-side tavern.

In mid-August 1943, Chief Exner found a much more tranquil situation before him as he stood high atop the roof of the Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co. sulphite mill and looked out over a town that was almost totally darkened. A civil defense blackout had shut off almost every light throughout the area.

Mr. and Mrs. John Blonien, Rudolph, were notified by the war department telegram that their son, Pvt. Elmer F. Blonien, had perished in a Japanese prison camp in the Philippines. Pvt. Blonien had served with a medical detachment of the 192nd tank battalion, sent to the Philippines in November 1941, less than a month before the outbreak of war in the Pacific. He had been listed as missing after the fall of Bataan. Blonien's sister, Lillian, was postmistress at Rudolph.

Other women were involved in new work circumstances for the gender at the time. About 25 female laborers, working as railroad track hands on the 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. shift in the Rapids area, told the *Tribune* they liked the work: "It makes us feel that we're doing our part in this war effort."

In the same must-do spirit, boys and girls were photographed at the Wallace Grange farm, Babcock, picking beans.

According to the account, they had "saved" much of the county bean crop for the Pittsville Canning Co.

"Beans for the Army, beans for the Navy, for war workers and for civilians in this land and among our allies," phrased the *Tribune*.

Mrs. Wallace Grange joined "the battle of food production" by sending 8,000 chickens to market. Her action was considered a newsworthy exercise in patriotism because the scarcity of materials had raised labor costs to a point where little or no profit could be made from the fowl.

In August 1943, a squad of six men from the Army Air Force training command at Tomah arrived at Tri-City airport to set up tents for a larger detachment of Air Force students. Tri-City would be used as a fairly permanent training base, according to Tech Sgt. H.G. Collman, in charge of the squad.

The tent city would occupy the space southeast of the hangar, which had been used in pre-war training exercises, by the Army Air Corps and National Guard. Sgt. Collman, a Nebraskan, said Wisconsin Rapids was the friendliest community he had ever been in.

Frances Whiting might testify to that. As editor of *Cosmopolitan* magazine, she visited Wisconsin Rapids to learn what the people in the Midwest really thought about national and international problems.

Meanwhile, Maj. W.D. Swancutt piloted the plane that brought Vice Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, newly appointed chief of the southwest Asian war theater, to Washington, D.C., from Quebec. "Woody" Swancutt, assistant operations officer at Boling Field, Washington, a former Wisconsin Rapids resident, had been the winner of the national intercollegiate 155-pound boxing championship in 1939 and 1940, while a member of the University of Wisconsin team.

Another young athlete of 50 years ago who could have "gone places," according to a news item, was put in charge of the Port Edwards Boys' Club for the summer. His name was Dale Rheel, and he was considered one of the top athletes in the state.

During the school year, Rheel was athletic director at Stanley High School. At both Platteville High School and Platteville Teachers College, he had excelled in football, basketball and baseball, earning eight letters in college. An article about Rheel humorously, mentioned another prospective athlete on his way up: Rheel's son, David, 15 months old.

January 1944 PRAYERS

On New Year's Eve, 1943, in the dark midnight of world war, they came one by one.

They came to enter the little chapel at the Church of St. John the Evangelist, across from the post office.

Perhaps to light a candle. To scribble a name on the register: I will never forget you, dear one.

To kneel and pray and hope.

Hope for those alive who might return some day.

Desperate hope for those already dead but not known to be.

Only prayers for those whose wives and parents received war department

telegrams in November and December 1943.

Prayers for Pfc. Clarence E. Arndt, son of Mr. and Mrs. William Arndt, Route 5, missing in action since his ship was sunk in the invasion of northwest Africa, now listed as dead.

Prayers for Roger J. Arendt, 24, son of Mr. and Mrs. John M. Arendt of Port Edwards, reported killed in action. On November 17, 1942, Arendt was flying in a bomber from England to North Africa, when the plane developed engine trouble and went down in the Bay of Biscay.

Prayers for Carl Mittelsteadt, 26, son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Mittelsteadt, and Gordon Firth, 17, gunner's mate second class, son of Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Firth, Route 1. Both were stationed aboard an escort aircraft carrier the navy department reported sunk by a Japanese submarine off the Gilbert islands.

Prayers for staff Sgt. Charles L. Neinfeldt, army air corps, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Neinfeldt, Route 5, missing in action since November 15, when his B-24 bomber crashed in Latin American waters. An observation plane sighted open parachutes, a life vest, a capsized life raft and no sign of survivors.

Prayers for Lt. Commander Thomas Utegaard of Wisconsin Rapids, who died at the navy hospital in Brooklyn, N.Y., where he had been a patient since May, suffering from an unnamed fatal illness. Utegaard, public works officer at the navy port of Bayonne, New Jersey, had also served in World War I. He had been a civil engineer at Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co. since 1920.

To pray for her husband, Nick, Betty Huebl went into the chapel from time to time. Like other local "war widows" seen walking baby buggies together on Grand Avenue, Betty could not know where in the war Nick was that night.

The St. John's Episcopal chapel was dedicated on Memorial Day 1943 by the Rev. James M. Johnson, St. John's rector, as a war shrine for the use of people of all faiths who found "the

burden of war worries heavy upon their hearts." The chapel, facing Grand Avenue, was open 24 hours a day.

A December 24 article by Mrs. Wm. F. Huffman described another of Wisconsin Rapids' wartime activities, the Servicemen's Center in the parish house of the same St. John's. The center, sponsored by the Canteen Corps of the South Wood County Red Cross chapter, was meant for returning service men and for students of the army air force technical school at Tri-City airport.

The Biron War Service Club upriver was designed to help young people of Biron serving in the armed forces of the United States. Christmas presents were sent to soldiers, along with a publication called "Biron News."

Meanwhile, "Wisconsin Rapids' most noted soldier," Brigadier Gen. Joseph A. Holly, was "genial host" to W.F. Huffman, *Tribune* publisher, at a Fort Knox, Kentucky, war conference. Holly, a Lincoln High School graduate whose 1915 Ahdawagam yearbook portrait was labeled "Kaiser," directed the technical college of the Armored Command.

At home, the Ahdawagam Paper Products Co. was awarded the Army Ordnance banner as a subcontractor in the manufacture of war materials, according to Frank R. Walsh, general manager.

Walsh said 1943 sales would be 30 percent greater than in 1942, mainly of overseas boxes and special containers for shipping ammunition, field ranges, generators, radar equipment, walkie-talkie pieces and other essential war products.

An end of year report by Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co. described intensive experimental work for a new product, "Consoweld," approved to replace scarce metals in plane and glider construction.

Remember Jevons Zalinsky? Jevons, dapper Iowa salesman of 13 aliases and king of fools, on May 8, 1938, drove an automobile that caused the death of three persons in another car.

Charged with manslaughter, Zalinsky broke out of the Wood County Jail, robbed a schoolhouse in Wausau, was arrested in Ohio, returned here for trial, and was sentenced to five years in Waupun state prison.

Jevons, on the eve of New Year's 1944, said his prayers in the Indianapolis jail on a charge of armed burglary; considering him a habitual criminal, police hoped to put him away for a long time.

June 1944

MISSING IN ACTION

In the early months of 1944, *Daily Tribune* reports of war casualties increased as U.S. bombers pounded Europe.

On January 4, Tech Sgt. Norman Casey, Nekoosa, a Flying Fortress radio operator based in England, was missing in action. Ten days later, the *Tribune* designated him a German prisoner of war.

February 12: The *Tribune* reported Staff Sgt. Norman J. Schilter, Vesper, tail gunner on a B-24 Liberator bomber, killed on a raid over Germany.

March 18: Lt. Ralph Gjertsen, Wisconsin Rapids, a navigator bombardier, missing in action in the Italian Theater.

April 19: Pfc. Charles Houston, Wisconsin Rapids, infantryman, missing in Italy.

April 19: Sgt. Lawrence E. Jepson, Wisconsin Rapids, prisoner of war in Germany since the previous July, awarded the Silver Star for gallantry prior to his capture.

April 21: Lt. LaVerne David, Wisconsin Rapids, pilot of Liberator B-24 bomber, missing in the central Pacific.

April 22: Lt. Arthur J. Crowns, Nekoosa, bombardier, missing over Austria.

May 22: Lt. Douglas S. Rezin, Cranmoor, co-pilot of a B-24 Liberator bomber, missing over Italy.

May 23: Staff Sgt. Robert R. Robinson, Wisconsin Rapids, tail

gunner on a B-17 bomber, missing over Germany.

May 25: Staff Sgt. William L. Keepers, whose wife lived in Wisconsin Rapids, tail gunner on B-24 Liberator bomber, missing over Italy.

Home on a 20-day furlough, Staff Sgt. Arthur Winn, air corps weather observer, described hardships in the Aleutians living out of doors with no tent during almost continuous drizzle and occasional strafing by Japanese planes.

Pilot Maj. Art Williams, formerly of Auburndale, was credited with the discovery of the source of the Orinoco River, changing the border of Brazil and Venezuela. In his honor, the Brazilian government named a mountain, "Pico Maj. Art Williams."

Not every local boy was helping. A discharged soldier, formerly of Wisconsin Rapids, was sentenced to life imprisonment in South Dakota. While traveling on a freight train, according to the conviction, he had killed another traveler and thrown him out of the train.

At Camp Anza, California, Lt. Beauford G. Swancutt was convicted by a military tribunal for the murder of four victims: his girlfriend, another woman, a soldier and a police officer.

Swancutt, a dark, handsome, lady's man, whose family previously lived in Wisconsin Rapids, had been employed by the Rapids Ford agency in 1938. His weaknesses, acquaintances here said, were whiskey and women. Swancutt's brother was Maj. Woodrow "Woody" Swancutt.

Meanwhile, a funeral service was held in Plainfield for Henry Gein, 42, who was believed to have died of a heart attack while trying to protect his farm from a grass fire. The unmarried Gein lived on a farm in the Roche-a-Cri community with his brother, Edward, and their mother, Mrs. George Gein.

The son of a pioneer Wisconsin Rapids family was killed, March 21, when a car driven by Dr. Francis J. Pomainville, 42, crashed into a tree in front of the F.G. Kilp residence in Port Edwards.

On March 31, at the 8th Street and North Western Railroad crossing, 17-year-old Myrtle Hamann was killed when the car in which she was riding struck a train during a blinding snowstorm.

On April 15, Nepco mill employees ended a short strike at the Port Edwards mill. They had suspended work because of an altercation with company officials over the choice of a foreman in their department.

Also in April, Nekoosa, with what was by far the smallest enrollment in the league, dropped out of Wisconsin Valley football competition for 1944.

A state regional planning report suggested two alternative sites for airports to be built after the war: the then-existing Tri-City airport location and an undeveloped site a mile west of Kellner.

A joint Marshfield, Wisconsin Rapids and Stevens Point airport was considered a bad idea. It was believed each city needed its own airport and a centrally-located airport would be too distant.

Republican presidential primary candidate Wendell L. Willkie, on March 28, spoke at the Fieldhouse to a crowd of about 4,300. "Nobody could miss the pleased twinkle in the eye of George W. Mead, one of the two Willkie-pledged convention delegates in this district, as he rose to speak and realized suddenly what a large crowd had come to hear the man who carried the Mead endorsement, and, while here, was a guest in the Mead home," said the *Tribune*.

Nearly 100 persons had met the Willkies at Mead's Belle Isle after the Fieldhouse program. The Willkies left after breakfast—in a snowstorm.

Despite the hoopla, Willkie, the 1940 standard-bearer, failed to win a single delegate vote in the April 4 primary and withdrew, leaving the field open to Thomas E. Dewey.

The nation and the world waited expectantly for "D-Day." Along with soldiers, also awaited armies of editors, reporters and writers, poised for the expected invasion of Europe.

September 1944 ROSIE THE REWINDER

Here in Wood County in 1944, there was no loud rejoicing, said the *Daily Tribune*.

The invasion of Europe was not an occasion for hilarity, for bawdy tavern humor or merrymaking.

Rather, it was a day of quiet reserve, a day of prayer, a purposeful day. "In restaurants in Wisconsin Rapids early today the conversation was, if anything, more quiet than usual. Along quiet streets people slipped into the doors of churches unostentatiously. Workmen clenched their dinner pails a little more tightly, walked with firmer tread, as they hastened to their tasks."

The summer reading club at the T.B. Scott Library followed the theme "Farm for Victory."

There were said to be more than 3,000 professional "players" in service, including Joe Di Maggio, Ted Williams, Phil Rizzuto, Johnny Mize, Enos Slaughter and Walt Judnich.

The labor shortage had brought 45 women to shift work at Consolidated's Rapids division, mostly as cutter and rewinder operators. The finishing room increased women's employment from 25 to 50.

Workers from the Barbados were brought by the war food administration to harvest crops, replacing the Jamaicans of the previous year. The *Tribune* reported that a Barbados islander, stabbed another islander, at a cranberry marsh east of Biron.

Windows of downtown stores displayed products of local industries.

At Wisconsin Rapids Furniture: Nekoosa Foundry-made drag links, covers, trunnion brackets and other submarine parts; valves for destroyer-escorts; and castings for Preway field stoves.

At Nash Hardware: Preway-made M-1937 field range fire unit; M-14 primer detonator; M-16 primer detonator; and the anti-tank mine fuse.

At Woolworth's: Ahdawagam Paper Products-made cartons and shipping containers for batteries used by signal corps; tubes to protect shells; boxes for shipping repair parts for tanks and guns; and boxes for food, ammunition and supplies.

At Johnson & Hill: Consolidated-made *Life* magazine; and raincoats from Harvard Clothes Inc.

At J.C. Penney: Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co. wrappings for bandages.

At Bennett's Appliance Store: Sampson Canning Co. foods.

Employees of Sampson had received a letter from Cornelius Manning, stationed in Italy, written on a label from a large can of Sampson's "Heart of Wisconsin" green beans. Manning, who had worked at Sampson's previous to his military service, had found the can in a mess hall.

In Vesper, the Western Condensary was producing milk sugar used in production of penicillin, the "new wonder drug."

In early summer, Lt. Arch Davis, a Friendship product, former WFHR sports announcer and staff artist for the *Daily Tribune* 1940-42, wrote to the *Tribune* to describe his bombing missions over Italy, Austria and Hungary. He said flak recently had blown 20 holes in his plane.

On August 8, Davis was reported interned in Europe by the enemy.

Battle deaths of servicemen:

First Lt. George W. Schumann, 27, son of Mr. and Mrs. Herman Schumann of Nekoosa, killed while piloting a B-24 Liberator bomber over Germany, reported on April 18.

Pfc. Robert Kahoun, son of Mr. and Mrs. J.R. Kahoun, Biron, a paratrooper in France, on June 19.

Pvt. Robert Lamb, son of Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Lamb, 341 Franklin St., infantry, during invasion of Saipan Island, on June 25.

Pfc. Erwin L. Weinbauer, 23, son of Mr. and Mrs. E.J. Weinbauer, 1141 Oak St., killed on Saipan, July 11.

Sgt. Leroy F. Hesse, son of Mrs. Henry Hesse, 1931 Apricot St., in the Pacific, probably at Saipan.

Capt. Leroy A. Ruder, son of Mr. and Mrs. Albert S. Ruder, Nekoosa, a P-51 Mustang fighter pilot, killed in Europe.

Pvt. Philip Dittmann, son of Mr. and Mrs. H.P. Dittmann, 611 10th Ave. S., in New Guinea, August 2.

Sgt. Jack H. Matthews, son of Mr. and Mrs. Russell Matthews, at Afua, New Guinea, August 2.

Meanwhile, Lt. Beauford Swancutt hung himself with a bed sheet in the Army's Letterman Hospital in San Francisco. Convicted of murdering his sweetheart, her friend, his commanding officer and a policeman in a shooting spree the previous March, the former Rapids resident had been sentenced to death by an Army court martial.

February 1945

THE THREAT OF DEATH

In late 1944, Germany was down but not out and Japan continued to resist defeat.

From August to October, 1944, the following casualties were listed in the *Tribune*:

Pfc. Donald E. Brehm, son of Mr. William Brehm, killed in Corsica.

Flight officer Ulrick F. Shaurette, son of Mrs. Albert Shearier, missing in action.

S/Sgt. Carroll J. Wolcott, son of Mr. and Mrs. Floyd Wolcott, killed in France.

Pfc. Dale Staeger, son of Mr. and Mrs. L.W. Staeger, Nekoosa, killed in France.

Sgt. James A. Watson, son of Mr. and Mrs. Jeffers, killed in France.

Lt. Donald J. Wiederhoeft, killed in North Carolina.

Sgt. Bernard Buehler, son of Mrs. John Buehler Sr., killed in Italy.

Letters had arrived from three prisoners of war in Germany:

Staff Sgt. Robert Robinson, son of Mrs. George B. Robinson, 2nd Lt. Ronald Wiperman, son of Mr. and Mrs. L.C. Wiperman and Lt. Arthur J. Crowns, son of Mr. and Mrs. A.J. Crowns.

Not every story from overseas related misfortune.

Correspondence came from "Honey Child" a 13th Army Air Force Liberator with 75 combat missions, co-piloted by Lt. David Zellmer, of Wisconsin Rapids, who had more than 40 over-water missions.

Zellmer's father was principal of the Wood County Normal school. The aviator was a former ballet dancer with Martha Graham.

"To me music as an emotional field is a step above acting," Zellmer told reporters. "Dancing is a step above music. Flying is a step above dancing."

"The threat of death merely lightens everything, makes the sky bluer, the target sharper, the clouds more beautiful."

Further honors were bestowed upon Brig. Gen. Joseph A. Holly, a former Wisconsin Rapids high school student who rose to national prominence as an armored weapon expert and was awarded the Legion of Merit citation.

Holly had been head of the test and engine section of the Armored Force Board at Fort Knox, Ky.

Back home, the 140 workers of Harvard Clothes Inc., left their jobs, claiming that Harvard, a subsidiary of L.L. Rosenthal company of Chicago, had refused to pay the minimum war labor wage of 50 cents per hour.

Harvard created officers short coats and army overcoats.

Housewives and farmers were busy at the community canning center, many putting up food to be sent overseas.

From August to October, 19,000 cans of food were prepared, including chicken, olives, peanut butter, cake potato chips and cookies.

Some of the "catsup" was recognized as bourbon. One lady canned and sent to her overseas son his gold wristwatch. At the same time, school children of Wood County, armed with empty sacks, gathered milkweed to be used as filling

for life jackets and aviators' suits. Tri-city churches joined a nationwide drive to collect old clothing and articles for "desolate civilians" of the liberated areas in Europe.

The author of the *Tribune's* local "Up The Street And Back" column spoke about the reopening of the Palace theater, reminiscing about a previous opening of the same theater. "Kidlike, we spent most of our time with heads bent back watching those stars blinking on the dark blue ceiling and the miraculous clouds which seemed to float across the sky."

In October, youngsters celebrated the Lincoln High School homecoming. "They swarmed downtown from Witter field, jammed Grand Avenue with their colorful snake dance and blocked traffic for several minutes."

The columnist mentioned "signs along the highway" as Wisconsin Rapids people, returned from the Green Bay Packer football game at Green Bay, stopped at roadside stands to load up with "Shiocton cabbage, New London apples, Waupaca melons and potatoes, Black Creek squash and pumpkins."

Something interesting was happening near the hospital.

"That concrete foundation being constructed on Hill Street has aroused the curiosity of many passers by who wondered just who was building a new house on this particular property."

In an experiment by Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co., both house and garage would be made entirely of a new plastic material.

Nekoosa heavyweight champion wrestler Ed "Strangler" Lewis was visiting the area. In 54 years, Lewis said, he had flown 1.5 million miles, crossed the Atlantic 20 times and appeared in 6,200 wrestling matches.

Several nights in Nekoosa, there was quite a stir as most of the dogs in the city barked and howled through the night "like the full cry of the hunt." People thought of death, ghosts, Halloween and death riding the moonlight.

Coach John Ostrum explained. Coming from a movie at 9 p.m., he saw

two red foxes circling Alexander high school with a pack of dogs in close pursuit.

As Halloween passed, little damage was seen beyond the uprooting of sign posts and soaped windows. "Up our street, and it may have been true up yours also, there were dozens of small fry making the rounds of all homes, some costumed, and all doing a rushing business collecting fruit, candy, cookies and oftentimes money. Some of the small sheeted figures could hardly manipulate the pumpkins they carried but appeared to be immensely thrilled at this Halloween business."

Mrs. Henry Baldwin contributed a story she wrote about meeting presidential candidate New York Gov. Thomas E. Dewey in a small room on the 7th floor of the Pfister Hotel with 75 other campaign workers.

"Meeting great people always overwhelms me for no matter how many times I am told 'they are just ordinary people like you that have, made good' I know that all the breaks in the world would never make me great in any line whatsoever, and I do admire those that have special talents and have used them to the enjoyment or the betterment of the world.

"I can't understand why I was invited to such an important luncheon with state chairmen of this, of that, and the national committee chairmen unless it be that Wood county is a very important county in our state."

February 1945

THE AMERICAN LEGION

In late 1944, the American Legion memorialized 34 deceased servicemen with a service at the Lincoln High School music room.

As the war entered its last stages, U.S. sacrifices increased. Some of the names appeared in the *Daily Tribune* during the last months of 1944:

Seaman Second Class Victor F. Baldwin, son of Mr. and Mrs. Louis F. Baldwin, killed in the Pacific.

Pvt. Harold J. Brown, son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Brown, killed in action.

Navy man George Brown, brother of Harold, killed in the Pacific.

Reported missing in action in the Pacific: aviation machinist Gordon Galloway, son of Mrs. Cora Galloway.

Pfc. Paul Risley, grandson of Mrs. Clara Odell, dead in Belgium.

Cpl. Frederick A. Severt, son of Mrs. Lorraine M. Severt, killed in a plane crash in California.

Pvt. Neil A. Fahrner, glider infantry, son of Mr. and Mrs. George M. Fahrner, killed in Holland.

Sailor Louis W. Arpin, son of Mr. A.L. Arpin, missing in action.

Sgt. Dale Damitz, son of Mr. and Mrs. George Damitz, killed on Leyte island.

Infantry Pvt. Ernest A. Kronstedt, son of Mrs. Marie Kronstedt, killed in Germany.

Pvt. Joseph J. White, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ulysses White, killed in France.

Cpl. Francis W. Primeau, son of Mrs. Edgar Sawin, killed in France.

T/5 Alvin Jacoby, son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Jacoby, killed in Holland.

Seaman 2/c Gordon A. Firth, son of Mr. and Mrs. Alfred S. Firth, missing in action in the Pacific.

1st Lt. Charles Ellis Jr., son of Charles Ellis Sr., killed in Germany.

1st Lt. Donald A. Ellis, brother of Charles, taken prisoner by the Germans.

John A. Flick, son of, Mr. and Mrs. William Flick, killed in France.

Pvt. Kenneth Whitney, son of Mrs. Katherine Whitney, missing in Germany.

Mrs. Stanley Vadnais was told that her son, navy fire controlman third class Orin Vadnais, was missing in action off the Philippines. Yet Vadnais returned home for Christmas, having survived the sinking of his destroyer.

Sgt. Marvin Nordstrum son of Mr. and Mrs. Lee Nordstrum, described his experience in Rome. "The most interesting part was when I had an

audience with the Holy Father. He blessed a cross I bought in Rome and I kissed his ring."

The pope asked Nordstrum where he was from.

"Wisconsin."

"Milwaukee?" asked the pope.

"No, the central part of the state."

"Is it Stevens Point?"

"No, it's Wisconsin Rapids."

Pfc. Louis Glick, a Rapids native, while in the signal corps on an island in the southwest Pacific, operated a novel concession. Glick rented out a Japanese machine gun, ammunition and a "Nip" battle flag to fellow GIs as a prop for photos. Glick & Co. also benefited on payday by loaning the battle flag to merchants who copied the flags for sale to gullible newcomers.

Home on furlough, Lt. Arch Davis, former WFHR sports announcer and *Tribune* sports writer and staff artist, had made good his escape from an internment camp in Europe. Davis had parachuted from a doomed B-24 bomber, "Jack Pine Joe," named after the well-known north woods character featured in a Milwaukee newspaper.

Landing in neutral territory, Davis, interned for two months, escaped and reached his old headquarters in Italy.

Ed "Strangler" Lewis, the famous wrestler, had been touring army camps, teaching wrestling and judo. He said the average weight of a "Jap" soldier was 122 and that of an American was 165.

In the November 7 election, Democrat Franklin Delano Roosevelt, was elected over Thomas Dewey, despite Wood County's strong Dewey vote. The city of Wisconsin Rapids was evenly divided.

"The Republican tempest which blew Wisconsin out of the national Democrat column for the first time since 1928 also piled an overwhelming GOP majority into the Legislature for Gov. Walter S. Goodland and his re-elected state government," noted the *Tribune*.

Fashionwise, a photo four Sinatra-crazed Lincoln High School girls in two fashions of the day: Bobby socks, short skirts and long sweaters or fluffy angora socks, rolled up slacks and drooping flannel shirts.

John Magnuson, 66, central figure in a celebrated Wisconsin Rapids murder case, was seized in Chicago after escaping from Central State Hospital for the insane at Waupun about four years previous. He had been serving a life term for the "Christmas bomb" slaying of Mrs. J.A. Chapman, December 27, 1922.

District attorney Theodore Brazeau's treatment of the 1923 Magnuson trial served as a pattern for the conviction of Bruno Hauptman in the Lindbergh kidnapping case.

Robert Noel, 22, who had slugged Rapids police chief R.S. Payne in 1939, causing Payne's death, and who escaped from a Waupun prison farm in October, had been recaptured at Tucumcari, N.M., in a stolen automobile.

A 23-year-old former Rapids resident was one of two women charged with kidnapping a 3-year-old boy from a Milwaukee department store. She told detectives that she and another woman absconded with the tot because of "motherly instincts."

Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co. and the Ahdawagam Paper Products Co. donated land along the East Bank to the city for park purposes. There was to be "more to come," said company attorney Theodore Brazeau, as George W. Mead's post-war reconstruction plans, previously on hold, were revealed.

Consolidated also purchased the Commercial Hotel, "one of the most unsightly structures in downtown Wisconsin Rapids" from Mrs. Henrietta Eckardt, owner of the Wisconsin Rapids theaters.

The old hotel had been used as an annex for the courthouse welfare agencies but was vacated when the Rowland building on the east side was remodeled. Intentions were to tear down the Commercial building.

By the end of the year, deeds to the Witter Hotel and Eagles club properties were given to the city by Consolidated. The transactions were part of large-scale riverfront beautification project

that would determine the character of the downtown.

March 1945 WILDCAT JARS

The first game was not so good.

In January 1945, before 3,200 fans in the Lincoln High School Fieldhouse, the unbeaten Stevens Point Panthers whipped Wisconsin Rapids, 38-28.

For Lincoln's Don Murgatroyd, Jack Gill, Bob Mader, Bill Passineau and Darl Marvin, it was the second loss in five conference games.

The next Point game was better for Rapids fans. On February 3, playing before 2,500, the largest crowd ever at a basketball game in Point, Lincoln handed the defending champions a 32-20 setback.

Nevertheless, at season's end, Point stood atop the Wisconsin Valley Conference with one loss. Rapids was second, with two losses; Nekoosa and Tomahawk finished at the bottom.

The third Rapids/Point game was excellent. In the regional tournament, March 3, before a crowd of 4,500, "staging one of the most magnificent comebacks ever seen at the Lincoln field house," Rapids beat Point, 47-41.

But at state, something unexpected happened.

On March 16, despite 19 points from Mader, Rapids lost, 50-48, to a "dream team" from the Oconto County crossroads community of Lena.

Rapids finished the season at 20-3. Lena lost to Madison West in the tournament finals.

News around town in the early months of 1945 included the Johnson and Hill department store donation of \$2,500 to the city for a west-side ball diamond on the "Bender property," fronting 17th Avenue.

Monsignor William Reding, SS. Peter & Paul Parish priest for 38 years, observed his 80th birthday. The Luxembourg (Europe) native had built churches at Spring Valley, Colby and Abbotsford before coming to Rapids. Here, Reding said, he had performed 1,000 weddings, 4,000 baptisms and 20,000 Masses.

Consolidated was busy renovating the old Commercial Hotel on First Avenue South. The extra rooms were needed to house new workers filling vacancies as farmer-papermakers went home for spring planting.

A letter to Governor Goodland gave Wood County prominent and unwelcome mention for the large number of "pull ticket jars" and slot machines in local taverns and clubs. It wasn't long before two squads of Rapids police, under the direction of Chief R.J. Exner, made a swift series of raids on local taverns, confiscating 25 jars in 28 establishments.

Wood County Sheriff Henry J. Becker reported Wood County clear of gambling devices, having checked the 100 or so rural taverns.

Two methods of operating jars were described: a \$7.50 a bag of tickets sponsored by some local organization, or "wildcat jars" costing about \$1.50, in which the proprietor put in as many "winners" as he wanted.

Production and distribution of slot machines, pinball machines and other "similar devices designed to separate the public from its dollars" was called "big business" by the *Daily Tribune*.

As the military draft extended its reach, a movement began, forcing those physically deferred to work in defense-related industry.

"William J. Conway, 35, of 850 Gardner Street, Wisconsin Rapids city attorney, is the first 'work-or-fight' casualty reported in the state," said the *Tribune*. Conway had closed his law office to work in the new plastics division of Consolidated. While cleaning a machine, three fingers of his hand were crushed between two rolls.

Another area native hadn't lost much weight and still looked like he would be a formidable customer in the ring, said the *Tribune* of Cpl. Hank Duda. "Hammerin' Hank" had toppled opponent after opponent in Golden Gloves tournaments at Lincoln Fieldhouse. After his 1940 enlistment, the 23-year-old had been light-heavyweight champion of the 32nd Division of the National Guard.

A *Tribune* story described the scene as a large group of draftees left for Milwaukee.

"Many a tear was shed by anxious wives and parents. As the buses rolled away, little tots were held high by their mothers so that 'dad' could catch a last fleeting glimpse of his loved ones before answering the call of Uncle Sam."

Mothers, wives, brothers and children understood that "Dad" might never come back. They had read the casualties in the *Daily Tribune* for January, February and March 1945:

1st Lt. Charles Ellis, son of Charles Ellis Sr., killed in Germany.

Sgt. John N. Simon, son of Mr. and Mrs. Carl F. Simon, killed in Luxembourg.

T/Sgt. Russell H. Reimer, son of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Reimer, killed in Italy.

Pfc. Delbert K. Tuxhorn, son of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Tuxhorn, missing in Germany.

QM/Sgt. Verner A. Wilson, son of Mrs. Bert Sparks, killed on Saipan.

Staff Sgt. Edwin Regan, son of Mr. and Mrs. John Regan, killed in the Philippines.

Pvt. Arnold J. Neises, husband of Martha Neises, killed in the Philippines.

Pvt. Virgil I. Lamb, husband of Ethel Lamb, killed in Belgium.

Sgt. John Corey, son of Mrs. S.G. Corey, killed in France.

Sgt. Keith Warner, son of Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Warner, killed in Belgium.

Pfc. Lee F. McAllister, son of Frank McAllister, killed in Germany.

Pfc. Clifford Cooper, husband of Regina Cooper, killed in France.

Pfc. Donald V. Holz, son of Mrs. Jessie Holz, killed in the Pacific.

S/Sgt. Edwin E. Glorvigen, son of Mrs. Lester Odell, missing in action over Germany.

Pfc. Charles K. LaBrot, husband of Lena LaBrot, killed in Luxembourg.

Cpl. John Arnold Krehnke, son of Mr. and Mrs. J.W. Krehnke, missing in the Pacific.

2nd Lt. George M. Mathews, son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Mathews, killed in France.

Sgt. Charles Fitzgerald, son of Mr. and Mrs. John A. Fitzgerald, killed on Iwo Jima.

2nd Lt. John P. Tomsyck, son of Mr. and Mrs. Nick Tomsyck, missing over Germany.

At the local bus stop, wives and mothers brushed at tears they tried bravely to hold back.

Yes, a son or a daddy was going off to war.

May 1945

NATATORIUM

On Easter Sunday, Mrs. Lida Edwards Alexander died at her Elm Court residence in Port Edwards. Her father, John Edwards Jr., and her grandfather, John Edwards, had established the town carrying their name by erecting a sawmill at "Frenchtown" on the Wisconsin River.

Lida, the only child in her family to reach maturity, married California banker Lewis Miller Alexander in 1890, when Alexander became a partner in John Edwards Manufacturing Co. Alexander and Edwards built the Port Edwards paper mill in 1896.

Heiress Lida left assets of \$500,000, the bulk of which went to her son, John E. Alexander, the only immediate survivor. Two former employees, Amelia K. Chapell, Beloit, and Louise Britton, Nekoosa, received smaller amounts.

Mrs. Alexander directed that the old Edwards homestead be preserved as Edwards-Alexander public memorial park. Facilities to be built could relate to health, recreation, hospital or library. No public dances were to be held nor were alcoholic beverages to be sold.

An April 18, John Alexander, president of Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co. revealed plans for a \$100,000 "natatorium" or indoor swimming pool. A sketch by Childs and Smith, architects of Chicago, was presented. The natatorium would be accompanied by a large social hall with two fireplaces, tables for ping pong, checkers, chess and a canteen for refreshments. For outdoor sports, the Edwards-Alexander park would include tennis courts, a softball diamond, playground, ice skating rink and croquet court.

Also on Easter, Rt. Rev. Msgr. William Reding, pastor of the SS Peter and Paul Catholic church for 38 years, resigned. The 80-year-old priest was in obvious ill health.

Middle-aged Ed "Strangler" Lewis, was featured attraction at a wrestling show at Lincoln field house, where the Strangler also demonstrated judo, jujitsu and commando tactics. Lewis had wrestled over 6,200 matches in his career and had defended his world title 3,000 times, according to the April 2 *Tribune*.

Carl Klandrud was relieved of his football coaching duties at Lincoln High School, though he would continue as a teacher and as basketball coach. Klandrud's record as football coach since 1932 at LHS had been 32-38-11 in conference play. In the previous two seasons, his team had won one game while losing ten.

In April, acting on instructions from district attorney Hugh W. Goggins, city police raided 26 grocery and confectionery stores on a Tuesday afternoon and arrested Royal Bean, William Turbin, and Clarence Reiland. All three pleaded guilty to having gambling devices on their premises. The offending slots were penny gum machines that occasionally paid out a blue marble, giving the player five cents in trade, considered an illegal incentive.

An election was held in early April but only 847 voters cared, which was more than the 806 who had voted two years earlier. The only contest involved two seats on the board of education, which Wm. F. Thiele and Alfred Rember retained, leaving Harry Klappa the third man out.

A major real estate transaction was announced April 10, when Charles F. Kruger purchased the Siewert "business block" from Mrs. Otto H. Siewert. The former "Lyons block" had been acquired by the late Otto Siewert 25 years previously. It housed Church's drug store, LeRay's dress shop and Consumers Market.

August 1945

THE BIG PARADE

The prisoners ranged in age from 17 to 42, mostly "younger fellows." The leader was a 17-year-old who read, wrote and spoke-English. The work was hard, and the prisoners were under guard, said the *Tribune*. They slept in the hangar in single cots and in two-tiered bunks. Both prisoners and guards ate in a mess hall. The prisoners did the cooking and baking.

Most of the prisoners had been captured early in the early-war African campaign. Some were members of the Africa Korps under Rommel. Others had been captured in Normandy, Belgium and Germany as late as March 25. All were from the infantry or armored corps.

The German POWs seemed pleased with the surrender of Germany, according to the *Tribune*. Camp officials had experienced no trouble and anticipated none. Just in case, a solitary confinement hut was being built.

A chapter in Wood County history came to an end when Bethel Academy, near Arpin, announced it would relocate on a modern campus near Columbus in Columbia County.

The Bethel institution had been founded in 1899 on 200 acres of land given by the Lyman Lumber Co., with the provision that the conference sell 800 surrounding acres of wild land to Seventh Day Adventist settlers.

The academy consisted of an administration building, in which high school vocational and religious classes were conducted, a dairy, girls' and boys' dormitories, a recreational building and teachers' homes. At the beginning of the previous year, Bethel had 104 students.

In Nekoosa, 280 Holy Name Society members attended a Communion rally and breakfast at Sacred Heart Catholic Church to offer gratitude in prayer for victory and peace. Principal speaker at the rally was Judge Joseph McCarthy, Appleton, who gave a talk on peacetime conscription. "Compulsory military training in peacetime is the worst conceivable way of obtaining a strong military force," McCarthy declared. "You can't make Greek gods out of 15-year-old youths."

The baby was born August 12, 1945. Shortly after the announcement, they threw a heck of a party. Doors flew open all around town; 15,000 townspeople converged, and Grand Avenue filled with cars. Drivers jubilantly honked horns and waved.

The spontaneous outburst of noisemaking was interrupted by worship in various churches before the celebration carried on with a nighttime parade. A hastily assembled procession strutted before the most joyous crowd ever to throng downtown Rapids. Tavern keepers reported a land-office business; outside, bottles passed freely from hand to hand.

The parade included the high school band, a drum corps, the usual "banana band," Company F of the Wisconsin State Guard, veterans organizations and auxiliaries, Boy and Girl Scouts, labor organizations and anybody else who wanted to join. It began at the West Grand railroad depot at 10 p.m. and moved down the avenue. Rows of onlookers were banked so deep the marchers compressed into close ranks and followed a crooked path.

Those who stayed home to listen to the radio quickly jammed the Wood County Telephone Co. switchboards with the good news.

In Riverview Hospital, the child could hear some of the fuss. His name was David, after Michelangelo's statue, and Donald, after his father, who had come from Manitowoc to work for Garber plumbing and welding supplies.

Why was this little boy so important?

Some day, he was going to create history. Without him, "River City" would not exist.

The hit of the big demonstration was Fred Bushnell, chief clerk of the war price-and-ration board, who rode a beautiful horse. Behind him hobbled "Hirohito" in black spectacles and Japanese garb. With a push broom, the emperor accomplished "a chore which in the eyes of the onlookers was a welcome sight and expressed their mutual feelings," namely sweeping up

the horse manure. Following the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan had surrendered; the war was over.

On August 7, it was reported that 24-year-old Major Richard Bong, the Poplar, Wis., farm boy who had become America's aerial ace of aces, lay dead, the victim of a jet P-80 Shooting Star explosion in Burbank, Calif. In 500 combat hours, Bong had downed 40 Japanese planes while emerging unscathed.

The *Tribune* reported that Stanley H. Shugart, 22, son of Mr. and Mrs. Lewis G. Shugart, died, at least in part, because of heart failure, while swimming at the south beach at Lake Wazeecha, the second such death of the season. Shugart had been discharged from the Marines after serving two months. His father was manager of the local F.W. Woolworth store.

The *Tribune* reported that Alfred Hornigold was going to Madison to meet his younger brother, Thomas, an English aviator whom he had not seen in 33 years. Alfred had left England as a young boy.

Phil Manders, new Lincoln High School football coach, expected to lead the Red Raiders to a resurgence in grid fortunes. Manders was the brother of "Automatic Jack" Manders, a Minnesota all-American and 10-year Chicago Bear—considered the most accurate place-kicker in the history of football, having converted 103 out of 104 extra points.

Besides Jack, there was brother Pug Manders, playing with the Brooklyn Dodgers and named all-pro fullback, not to mention Francis, Frank, Burt and Glen, all football players.

Phil, a 29-year-old South Dakota native, was an athlete himself, having played professional football with the Des Moines Comets, the Chicago Cardinals and Milwaukee Chiefs.

While the rest of the country looked forward to happy postwar activities, in a small room back at Riverview Hospital, the baby wailed. He was going to do a lot of that for the rest of that epic year, 1945.

According to register of deeds Henry Ebbe, Alfred Noieux had, in 1866, built a hotel on the Church's site. Noieux, legend said, would appear on the streets in outlandish costume. He especially delighted in his annual New Year's day appearance wearing a straw hat and walking barefooted through ice and snow.

At Riverview Hospital, a dying 14-year-old Saratoga boy said he had poured kerosene into a coal stove; the resulting explosion and flash fire killed his three brothers.

With the war in Europe in its last phases, a plan was set up to bring clothing, bedding and shoes to the community canning center on West Grand Avenue to be shipped abroad for war victims.

As the U.S. and its allies advanced across former German-held territory, Russia attacked from the east. The process freed prisoners of war from "diabolical Nazi prisons" and revealed the extent to Jews and other slave laborers had been gassed and cremated at murder factories such as Auschwitz.

Local soldiers continued to perish: Pvt. Quentin J. Yager, 23, killed in Germany; S/Sgt. Edward H. Webb, 20, missing over Germany; Pvt. Howard "Sammy" Crowns, 26, killed in the Philippines; T/5 Joe K. Goodrich, 25, killed on Luzon, Philippines.

On April 12, 63-year-old president Franklin Delano Roosevelt died suddenly at Warm Springs, Ga., of a cerebral hemorrhage. He was succeeded by Vice President Harry S. Truman.

The American Cancer Society noted that, since Pearl Harbor, cancer had taken three times as many American lives as war and seemed to be on the increase. It was believed that every cancer passed through a state when it was curable either by surgery or radiation. The cause was not known.

June 1945

POW

As American troops and their allies swept across Europe in the spring of

1945, millions of Nazi victims were freed. Among the liberated were soldiers from the Wisconsin Rapids area:

Pfc. Delbert K. Tuxhorn, a prisoner of Germany since December 16, 1944.

Warrant officer Douglas Chiswell, RCAF, shot down in Holland, March 5, 1943, freed from Stalag 13D, a German prison camp.

Second Lt. Ronald A. Wiperman, a pilot missing in action in France since D-Day, freed from a prison camp at Moosburg, Germany.

Sgt. Lawrence E. Jepson, captured in Sicily in 1943, who, upon being released from a prison camp in Germany, said: "This is the day for which I have been waiting for so long."

S/Sgt. Edwin E. Glorvigen, aviator.

Pfc. Russell Gaetke.

Charles J. Dalton.

And others. Almost all reported having been treated savagely.

Among those who did not survive:

Sgt. Earl Breese, 33, Port Edwards, killed in Italy.

Pvt. Leland "Eldon" Cleveland, 21, killed on Okinawa.

Pfc. Albert Quimby, 30, killed on Luzon.

Sgt. Howard W. Pagels, 23, killed on Luzon.

S/Sgt. Raymond E. Toelle, 21, missing over Tokyo.

The May 7 Wisconsin Rapids *Daily Tribune* announced that the greatest war in history had ended with the unconditional surrender of Germany at General Eisenhower's headquarters in France. The European war had claimed 40 million killed, wounded or captured in less than six years.

Back in the heartland, under a setting of cloudy, threatening skies, Wisconsin Rapids, along with the rest of the world, learned of the news for which it had bled, sweat, toiled, and waited.

In a brief flurry of excitement, the town siren sounded, whistles blew and church bells rang. Employees flocked to front steps, faces appeared in the windows and radios blared, reported the *Tribune*.

But it didn't seem right to celebrate much more enthusiastically than that. Special church services and ceremonies at schools were fairly solemn. It wasn't over. Too many American boys were yet to die in the other war, the struggle in the Pacific against the Japanese.

On May 7, the *Tribune* noted that, among those who had served as technical advisors to the government, was Philleo Nash, 35, whose father lived at 1020 Oak Street. Nash had been granted a leave of absence in 1941 from the University of Toronto, where he was engaged as a professor of anthropology, to accept a position as special assistant to the director of the domestic branch of the Office of War Information, Washington, D.C.

Working with the OWI, Nash had charge of enemy reports evaluation, minority groups, rumors and rumor control. Later, he became a special consultant to the American Council on Race Relations, Chicago.

A local media personality with a connection to the Military was Cpl. Donald F. "Red" Blanchard. Formerly a radio musician and entertainer with WFHR, Blanchard now was a member of the all-Army show, "Stars and Gipes."

The former staff artist of radio station WLS in Chicago specialized in guitar playing and barnyard humor. Jack Benny called him "the best natural comedian since Will Rogers."

In a move that offered much fodder for future historians, a "branch" prisoner of war camp was opened at the Tri-City Airport on May 6. Due to restrictions on war news, there had been no advance notice.

The facility would provide seasonal labor for agricultural work and food processing. The first details of the 150-man contingent were sent to cranberry marshes.

Ten days later, camp officials felt the need to argue that prisoners were not being "coddled" but were handled in strict accordance with the Geneva Convention. A tour by the *Tribune* showed the Germans "making a contribution" to the local economy by helping to overcome the shortage of seasonal field workers.



"Carrying On"

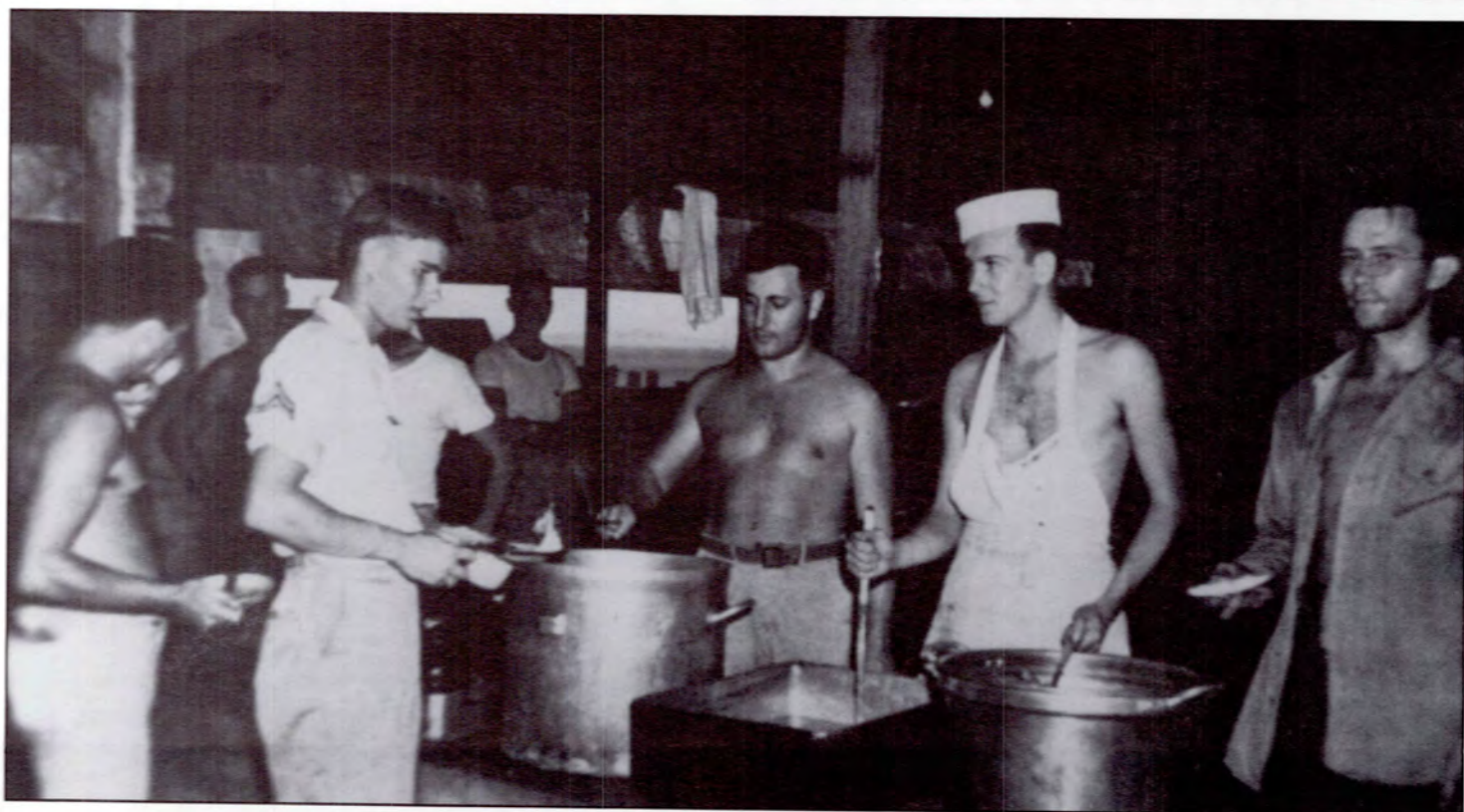
1. 2nd Lt. Gordon Miller
2. Corp. Frank Giese
3. 2nd Lt. LeVerne David
4. Pvt. Bill Bogs
5. Ensign Gus Binnebose
6. Pvt. Harold Gillard
7. Pvt. Richard Franson
8. Sgt. Leonard Verjinski
9. Pfc. Ray Speltz
10. Staff Sgt. Paul Fleming
11. Sgt. Leon David
12. Pfc. Victor Meinberg
13. Pfc. Robert Kubisiak
14. Corp. James Hanneman
15. Sgt. Vernon Hesse
16. Sgt. Osmond Peterson
17. Pfc. Lloyd Burt
18. Julius Rude, U.S.N.
19. Corp. Walter Knox
20. Bob Breed, U.S.N.
21. Pvt. Kenneth Berggren
22. Pvt. Lawrence Tomsyck
23. Corp. George Mathews

Ahdawagam
1942



Above: WWII scrap collection at Cranmoor School. From left. Rear: Marjorie Smith, Celia Bennett, Jo Ann Wirtz, (?) Topping, Carol Smith, Doris Wirtz, Ruth Wirtz, (?), (?). Center: (?), Charlotte Ward. Front: Inez Damme, (?). (RCM)

Below: Okinawa, August 25, 1945. Pete the Lip, Swiger, Doc Bernel, Yours Truly, Jack, Jr. (Ed Barten)



TORTURE FARM

After the Japanese surrender August 14, 1945, came published reports, probably edited or expurgated, about mistreatment local soldiers had received in enemy prisoner of war camps.

S/Sgt. Raymond Toelle, 21, son of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Toelle, Wisconsin Rapids, had been a tail gunner on a B-29 during the end-of-war bombing of Japan. Shot down May 29, 1945, over Tokyo, he spent the last month of the war at the Ofuna "torture farm," near Yokohama. "Now that the war with Japan is over and some folks are being lulled into thinking that those little people aren't such bad Joes after all," said the *Tribune* when the aviator arrived home in November, "here are a few notes on the 'enforced vacation' which Toelle spent in Japan."

In wooden barracks, the prisoners slept alone in small rooms on straw mats rife with lice and vermin. Rice, tea and seaweed soup were standard fare, three times a day, supplemented occasionally by potato peelings and marigold soup. Privileges were dispensed perversely. The camp was filthy with flies, and the prisoners had to kill 100 to receive one cigarette.

Because a prisoner left a book in the open when he went in to eat, 50 men were questioned. With no confession forthcoming, the guards made the entire group stand in a crouched position facing the sun. Anyone who started to pass out was kicked until he revived. After all still refused to divulge any information, the guards set the prisoners to "work." If they didn't kill 1,300 flies, there would be no food the next day.

Each morning, the roughness of treatment by guards proved a good gauge of how hard Japan had been hit the night before by B-29s.

After the Japanese surrender, and the emperor's speech that ordered decent treatment, nothing was too good for the prisoners. The guards brought out fresh meat, fish, milk and other delicacies. Afternoon walks were permitted, and townspeople invited prisoners in for meals.

Another inmate of a Japanese camp was Marine Cpl. Chester Jakubzak, 27, son of Mrs. Milhaline Jakubzak of Port Edwards. "Yes, it's every bit as bad as you've heard it is," he told the *Tribune*. Jakubzak had barely escaped the "Bataan death march" before his capture at Corregidor in May 1942 and transport to Camp No. 3, a two-day march from Manila. Companions who fell out of line were bayoneted and left to die.

While at Camp 3, four prisoners found they had brothers at nearby Camp 1 and set out to visit them. Captured, they were tied up and left in the hot sun for 48 hours before being taken back to camp and shot in front of the other prisoners.

If anyone else attempted to "escape," he and the nine men who slept next to him would receive the same treatment.

"You may be sure," Jakubzak said, "that we watched our nine closest neighbors from then on!"

After three or four months, the prisoners were taken by ship to Japan, packed so closely they had to eat and sleep standing up. Many died from mistreatment or dysentery and were cast into the sea.

At Osaka, they were put in a large prison camp to work 12 hours a day breaking up pig iron for a steel factory. With nothing to eat but a little rice, many were stricken with dysentery and beriberi. The only meat was garnered on snake hunts, unless you counted roasted grasshoppers favored by some natives. Failure to work up to par brought 20 lashes. Some prisoners were stretched on ladders, feet just out of reach of the ground, so lack of circulation caused arms and legs to turn black. The "culprit," when released, would die from the sudden rush of blood to the heart.

After three winters at Osaka, only 156 of the original 412 survived to be transported to Kyushu Island at the south of Japan. There, they worked in dangerous coal mines.

When the Allied bombing of Japan began, prisoners gloried in the sight of B-29s flying over.

On September 15, the men were freed and taken to Nagasaki, where Jakubzak saw the area that had been devastated

by the atomic bomb. "Nothing remained except a few stone walls," he said.

Details of a somewhat less traumatic life in a German prison camp were described in the journal of Lt. Lyman A. Beeman Jr., formerly of Wisconsin Rapids. Beeman had been captured on a strafing mission along the Danube. Parachuting into the main street of a Slovak village, he was accosted by several civilians with rifles and Tommy guns. They turned him in at the German headquarters.

While being questioned, the officer who led him through the building, "a tall, spare Prussian with close-cropped hair," noticed Beeman had his hands in his pockets and yelled something in German. Beeman took his hands out of his pockets and was struck in the jaw.

On December 4, 1944, he was shipped to the prison camp at Barth. "The food situation is serious," he wrote, surviving on our regular one-sixth loaf of bread per person per day, plus some jam and a bucket of stew for 24 people."

The prisoners received Red Cross packets, read books, played cards, talked, boxed and took part in a glee club. They were aware of the progress of American, British and Russian armies. In April, the war was considered nearly at an end, and the food situation improved.

"Took a few turns skipping rope (calisthenics), and working an arm exerciser," Beeman wrote. "At least I don't black out any more when I stand up. Food makes quite a difference in ambition."

"About five o'clock this morning, a big shouting in the barracks woke us up to our first free morning," Beeman said in the final entry of the initial journal. "The Jerry pulled out last night at 10:30."

Later, he wrote that when the Russians arrived May 2 and ordered the Americans to tear down their fence, the place went wild. Wearing uniforms retrieved from the camp warehouse, Beeman and friends went into town to watch the Russians enjoy what he called "their systematic looting." The war, it seemed, ended differently for each soldier.

BURMA ROAD

There is a day to die

In 1942, the Japanese conquest of Burma cut the only Allied ground route to China. To help reopen the Burma Road, a special U.S. combat team, known as "Merrill's Marauders," arrived in February 1944.

Bernard Janskovich, now of Wisconsin Rapids, enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1942 at his hometown of Saginaw, Michigan, and later became a battalion scout for General Merrill.

This is part of his story, told in his words:

About 40 miles from Bombay, India, they showed me the map and said, "Lead 'em out." So, I took off, and they came behind.

I didn't know where I was going. I never heard of Burma before I went there.

At first, we didn't know anything about jungle fighting. We didn't have any carbines, no artillery, and we didn't have tanks. The only thing we had was mules for ammunition.

The Japs drove us like a herd of cattle. We walked 2,000 miles in 23 days. We went all night long and all day long into China.

Then, the Army give us all new equipment and we came back and took that land.

Going into Myitkyina, we were on one side of the strip; the Japs were on the other. We'd gain about 15 feet, then the Japs would drive us back. That's how we fought until some more guys came in, and we got Myitkyina.

The first American killed was Jim Landis. After we won the battle, we made a clearing along the Irrawaddy and called it Camp Landis.

I was battalion scout. We'd get together, and the officers, General Merrill, General Stilwell, Captain Robinson and Lieutenant Young, would show me on a map where we were going next.

I'd walk about 400 yards ahead of the rest. The Japs wouldn't shoot at a scout and give away their position. They ain't worrying about you. They want the guys behind you.

They called me "Pappy" or "Sag" for Saginaw. Ever see the movie, "Merrill's Marauders?" Peter Brown, the actor, he played the battalion scout, and that was me. He was called "Pappy" and "Sag" in the movie.

Sometimes, when we'd come to a village, the natives would run out and greet us. They'd give us fruit. But you could see them sneak through the jungles while we're in the village.

We'd get down three or four miles, and hell would break loose. The Japs had an ambush set up for us.

The Kachins and the Gurkhas were the native people. When we were going down toward Myitkyina, the Kachin chief's son fell into the Irrawaddy River.

I went and dragged him out. Now, I'm a blood brother of the Kachins.

Next time I went on patrol by myself, I heard a noise, turned around, and there were Kachins, standing and grinning at me. They wouldn't let me go alone after that.

On the Burma Road, you're in the clouds, and you start down the other side, and there's a village. We'd get in the brush and sleep or, if we weren't in the brush, we were walking down the Irrawaddy with water up to here.

You'd go to bed at night covered with your poncho, and the cobras would crawl under to keep warm. You would see them sunning themselves along the river.

We moved a lot at night. You could hear tigers and elephants blowing their trunks, and monkeys chattering all over the place.

We sat down to eat, and the monkeys come out. We had this hardtack that we dipped in coffee. A monkey came up and grabbed it, sat on my lap, putting his paws out. He wanted some more.

The natives showed us how to live off the land. We ate what they did: monkey meat, wild rice, lots of bananas, the heart of the banana stalk, lizards, snakes

roasted in banana leaves. The Army would drop food to us but, by the time we got to it, the Japanese had it. We traded with the natives.

For one Atabrine pill, they'd give us a chicken. Once in a while, we'd have goat meat.

The Air Force dropped a menu for Thanksgiving, with turkey and everything, but, when Thanksgiving come, I was eating a monkey.

Another Thanksgiving, they took us for a rest to Calcutta. General Stilwell said we were gonna eat.

"Get that truck over there," he says, and he got food for us. He walks in the officers quarters and took all the beer cases. He says to some of the enlisted men, "You and you and you are cooks."

I was laughing like hell. He says, "What are you laughing at? You're the mess sergeant."

I was up all night, preparing the Thanksgiving meal: making bread, raising buns, making "punkin" pie and roasting turkey.

My mother had taught us boys and my sisters how to cook. "It'll never hurt you," she said.

The Air Force offered me a job as a cook for the officers. I said, "No way. I'm waiting for that little piece of paper, so I can get out of here."

My first leave didn't come for six months. For something to do. We just sat there and talked. You would get an old newspaper and read it and read it and read it.

You would read your mail over and over. If a letter was written in January, you'd probably get it in June.

After I got out of the hospital, I come out. I get on a Piper Cub. I figured I'm going home. Where do I land?

Back in Myitkyina, in my old outfit. They were sending guys back home with 95 points, and I had 215. I was in 24 battles in Burma and China.

When we were done fighting in Burma, we went into Calcutta, and we were going to go home.

Lord Louis Mountbatten come out and pinned a medal on me. Then, he told me, in a nice way, we were "essential." We were going to China to train Chiang Kaishek's army.

We volunteered, they told us, but nobody had opened their mouth.

I was with Chiang Kaishek and his wife. I was supposed to guard them, but he'd grab a gun and go right in the front line, and lead the men.

He was a good guy. He could speak English. His wife could speak English good.

One time, I told him I'd rather be home than setting over here.

He just laughed at me. He patted me on the back and laughed.

Part Two

"Take that rifle off your shoulder." I told my second scout. "We got all the Japs."

About that time, I looked over and saw three guys standing together. I waved at them and started going and it dawned on me. I turned around and started shooting.

They were Japs. I shot the three of them and went and crawled under a little bridge. The chaplain came up.

"You think that's gonna save you," he said. "Look, that bridge is made of bamboo." I just went to pieces, lying under that bridge, crying and everything. "That's the first person I ever shot in my life," I told the chaplain.

"You're alive and he's not," the chaplain said. "Forget about him. Always watch out for your own life and your friends."

When we first came into one valley, the Japanese were cooking rice down in the bottom. General Merrill gave the order to attack and we came out of there like Indians in a movie. You didn't put your gun up to your shoulder and squeeze. You shot from the waist, screaming all the way.

That's the first time I ever saw Japanese run. They dropped everything. We'd go by and put our hand in and scoop up a handful of rice and eat it.

About three months before the war ended, we had to go in the hills and free some guys who were trapped up there. Me and Challis Branch were going up the hill. He was my best friend; he watched me and I watched him.

We got near to the bottom and hell broke loose. I heard him say, "Oh Lord, save us."

He was shot all the way down the front. He was killed outright. I carried him up the hill with bullets hitting at my heels.

I cried with Challis in my arms. Cried and cried all night.

We had a guy with us who had signed a contract with the Cincinnati Reds. We got in a battle in a little village in northern Burma. A couple shells landed pretty close to him.

Next morning, he was on his hands and knees in the grass, eating with the mule. He had a gun and he was gonna kill us if we took that grass.

I was going up a hill by myself. They said, "Nips to the left of you. Nips to the right of you." I hit a great big foxhole and spun around.

There was a Japanese soldier with a gun pointed at me.

As I'm trying to shoot him, the clip to my Tommy gun drops on the ground. I couldn't do nothing. I looks at him and he ain't shootin'.

It's funny now but it wasn't then.

Somebody had pinned him to the bunker with a broken-off bayonet.

You could trust a Gurkha. I seen a Gurkha, he was standing behind a black palm. All at once he took that Gurkha knife, drew it and got that Jap right there.

It was a sentry so I went and got our outfit. We caused as much trouble and killed as many as we could and that was it till we got pinned down.

So many of us were sick with everything. They kept us fighting until it got too bad and then sent us to the hospital.

After a little recuperation, they sent us back to combat. That's when the guys were ready to revolt.

The army promised and promised we'd go home. We knew they were just stringing us along.

When I got sent to the hospital, I was standing talking to Robinson and that's all I remember. They hauled me out and sent me to the 125th station hospital in Calcutta.

I had malaria, dengue fever, typhus and everything you could think of. And I was shot up with shrapnel. I woke up packed in ice. I had a 107-degree fever.

In the hospital, I'd get so hungry I could eat the table. The nurse would bring me the food. I'd look out the window and all these poor Hindus. I'd hand 'em the food. The nurse caught me and strapped down my arms and I got fed. She laid an old horse pistol on my chest.

"You're going to eat or else."

I called her "Simon Legree."

We were most afraid of walking into a trap that was mined. Or of being taken prisoner. I seen some of their prisoners, nothing but skin and bones, all bloated up, bones sticking out all over, eyes sunk in.

I captured one soldier, a colonel.

Walking one night, I saw a light—here's one going to the can.

I walked up behind him, took the machine gun and hit him, "Bam!"

I tied him up and dragged him out.

The Kachins took him and I never seen him again.

Till this day, I can't tell how Tokyo Rose knew our outfit. She knew our officers' names and everything; Stilwell, Merrill, Young, Robinson. One time, she said our whole outfit got wiped out. We were sitting and eating. We sat there and laughed.

"Maybe I'm next," you keep on thinking that every time you hear a gunshot. "Is that me? Is my name on that?"

Of 3,000 Americans that went into Burma, 300 came out.

How did I survive? It just wasn't my time to go.

You figure, well, you made it last night, maybe I'll make it today. Maybe I'll make it the next day.

I used to tell the guys there was a day set for me to die and there was nothing in the world going to save me from that.