

World War II, in Iowa and Beyond

The

PALIMPSEST

Volume 76, Number 4

IOWA'S POPULAR HISTORY MAGAZINE

Winter 1995 \$4.50



DESIGN BY JES BY IOWA ART PROGRAM WPA

KEEP 'EM ROLLING!

SHSI (DES MOINES)



Harold Griffith, a farmer near Audubon, Iowa, surveys his hogs, which the September 2, 1942 *Des Moines Register and Tribune* called "a sizeable contribution to the food-for-victory program." "Since Pearl Harbor," the newspaper added, "he has marketed nearly 200,000 pounds of pork." This *Palimpsest* explores the variety of ways that World War II touched human lives, in Iowa and beyond.



The Meaning of the Palimpsest

In early times a palimpsest (PAL' /imp/ sest) was a parchment or other material from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete, and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the record of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA (SHSI) is the historical division of the Department of Cultural Affairs of the State of Iowa. The Society operates from two centers, Des Moines and Iowa City. A museum, a research library, state archives, special collections, community programming, historic preservation, and membership programs are located at 600 E. Locust, Des Moines, Iowa 50319, phone (515) 281-5111. Publications, research library, and special collections are located at 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240, phone (319) 335-3916. The Society operates several historic sites across the state.

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Ginalie Swaim, Editor

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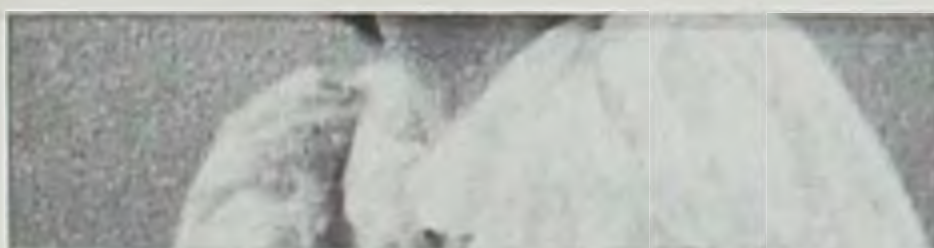
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A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF HISTORY



"Your Dutch friend" 152

FRONT COVER: As world war loomed, artists in the Work Projects Administration created propaganda posters. This one, created by the WPA's Iowa Art Program, was probably not widely distributed beyond Iowa. It symbolizes the armed forces and industry working together to crush Hitler. (SHSI)

Inside—



SHSI (DES MOINES)

Harold Griffith, a farmer near Audubon, Iowa, is shown in a photograph from September 2, 1942. This *Palimpsest* explores the variety of ways that World War II touched human lives, in Iowa and beyond.



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Ginalie Swaim, Editor

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Exciting news from your editor

An Old Friend with a New Name

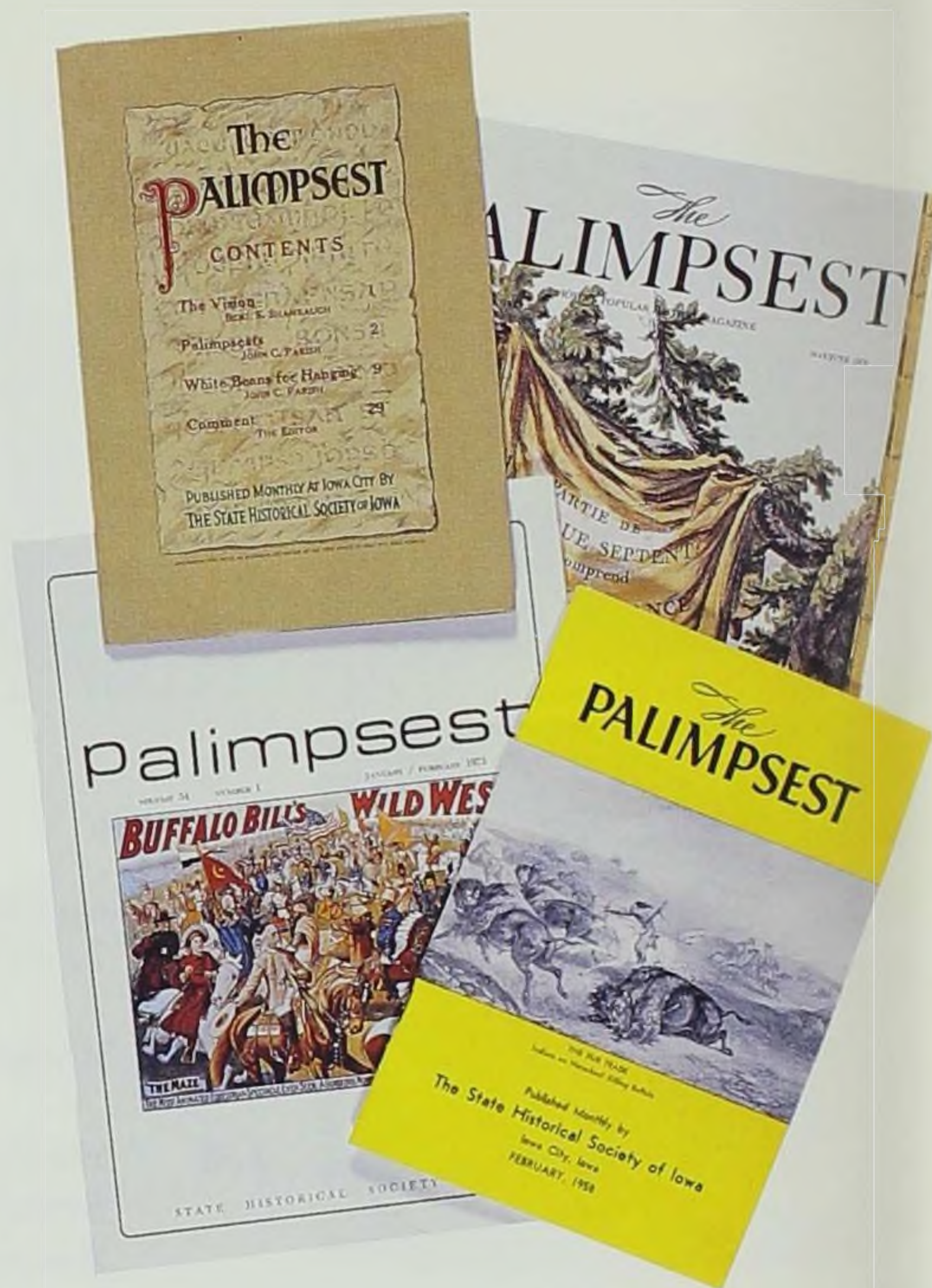
Recently a reader wrote to us: "I always avoided your magazine because I didn't know what a palimpsest was or how to pronounce the word (I still don't know how!). But then I received a gift subscription to the magazine and was delighted to discover it's about Iowa history. I'll bet there are many others like me who would enjoy the magazine if they weren't scared off by its strange name."

This is a story all too familiar to me. As editor of the magazine, I'm naturally interested in reaching as wide an audience as possible. It's frustrating to know that the name on the cover of the magazine may alienate people before they have a chance to discover what's inside.

So it is with great excitement—and a few tears—that I announce that the magazine you hold in your hands will be rechristened in 1996. For seventy-six years it has borne the intriguing and unique name *The Palimpsest*. Starting with the spring 1996 issue, our new name will be *Iowa Heritage Illustrated*. (We're following the standard publishing custom of naming a magazine what it is, and we think it has a nice lilt, too.) Our bigger size, about 8x11, will allow more variety in design and layout and more economical use of paper.

This won't be the first change, as you can see from a few sample covers shown here. Since 1920, it has grown from roughly 5x7 inches to 7x10. The design of the nameplate has changed four times. Illustrations have increased from none at all, to an insert of black-and-white plates, to today's color images of photos, artifacts, and documents. The cover has changed from a small brown cover, to a glossy solid-color cover with a small black-and-white photo, to our current showcase covers with full-size color photography.

The growing visual richness of the magazine reflects basic truths about the past—



that history is more than words, and that it isn't black and white. We are reminded, too, that history isn't just for people who recognize unusual words like "palimpsest." Therefore, after long study, we have decided the magazine needs a new, friendlier name.

"Why change the name now, after seventy-six years?" you ask. "It's a venerable and unusual title. What's more, I finally know how to pronounce it."

I agree that the word "palimpsest," once learned, "trips along softly on the tongue this way" (as Meredith Willson says of "Gary, Indiana"). But, oh! to master that word "palimpsest."

We've taken to heart what many of you, our loyal readers, have told us—in your letters, survey responses, and phone calls with research questions or subscription orders. For nine years I've listened to our readers and researchers and writers puzzle over the word. I've provided it in awkward pauses in a conversation, modeled it when I sensed the speaker was deliberately skirting it. With

foot-high flashcards, one per syllable, I've coached a busload of history enthusiasts on how to pronounce the name. And still people stumble over it, or ask, "Now, what does it mean again?"

Our reasons for changing the name are threefold. First, people who don't know *The Palimpsest* won't get a feel for the magazine from the name alone. As one reader advised some time ago: "Change the name to reflect Iowa history—nobody knows what it's about."

Second, people have a hard time pronouncing the name. "Even college graduates slur over it," another reader confessed. "I haven't found an ordinary person who could pronounce the name." Another remarked, "If you can't pronounce it, it is hard to sell it!"

Perhaps most important, for the magazine to keep bringing Iowa history to more people, it needs a name more people can understand. "I realize the historical significance of the name," a reader commented, "but perhaps another name might attract more subscribers." Even American writer Gore Vidal, whose autobiography was just published, in a 1994 interview remarked about those memoirs: "They're entitled *Palimpsest*—a word nobody will know."

Many of our readers and writers and editors (including me) cherish the name and its long tradition. Some appreciate the title because history, like a palimpsest, has multiple layers. "It is probably the only unique name in the world repertoire of magazines," one reader wrote. Another thought the name "gives it distinction." I agree, and I want you to know that this has not been an easy or quick decision. My colleagues and I at the State Historical Society of Iowa have struggled with this issue for years.

We have become convinced that we must

focus less on our affection and respect for the word "palimpsest," and more on our greater goal (and official mandate) of reaching ever wider audiences with the fascinating story of Iowa's past. A clearer title will also help you share your enthusiasm for the magazine with your friends who don't yet subscribe. (Can it be that there are curious, thoughtful people who don't yet subscribe? Let's bring them on board!) What's more, a clearer name will bring more researchers to the magazine's solid research, and more classroom teachers and students to its accessible information.

In the premiere *Palimpsest* in July 1920, founder Benjamin Shambaugh explained the magazine's aim: "that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished." We are now taking another step forward in this tradition by replacing a

title on the cover that unfortunately has been to many a locked door with a secret password. We are changing it to a name that will be a wide-open door with a welcome sign.

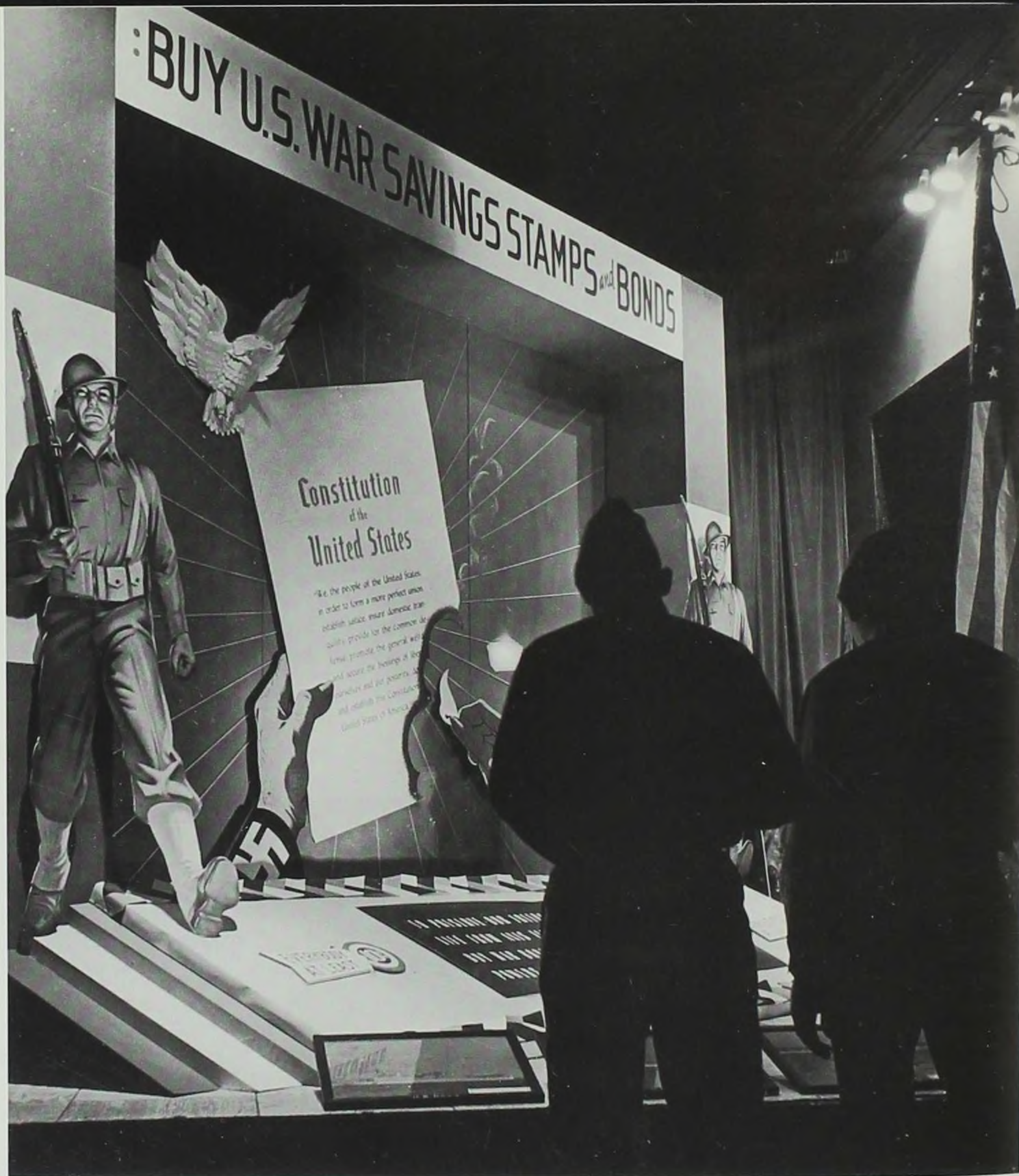
What will not change is our commitment to bringing you four issues a year chockfull of compelling Iowa history. In fact, we're planning exciting new ways of presenting

more stories and photos in every issue.

Over the decades of *The Palimpsest's* existence, we have been heartened by your loyalty to the magazine and to the cause of disseminating Iowa history. Thank you. As we enter Iowa's 150th year of statehood, we want to count on your ongoing support for the magazine and its revitalized mission. And for those of you have especially cherished the name *The Palimpsest*, please give the new title—*Iowa Heritage Illustrated*—a try. I think you'll soon find that this is a change for the better. Look at it as an old friend with a new name.

—The Editor

I've listened to our readers and researchers and writers puzzle over the word. I've provided it in awkward pauses in a conversation, or when I sensed the speaker was deliberately skirting it.



SHS1 (DES MOINES); J. W. BALDWIN, PHOTOGRAPHER

World War II, in Iowa and Beyond

Two Iowa girls send pen pal letters to two sisters named Margot and Anne Frank in Amsterdam, and then wait for a response. Women from the Clinton

area scrub locomotives and operate roundhouses. A governor's assistant scrambles to fill draft boards. A young man with a passion for planes enters air corps flight school

in California, while beyond Iowa, another soldier ships out to Marseilles. Somewhere in the Pacific Theater, a combat correspondent from Iowa scans headlines of FDR's

Left: Two soldiers are silhouetted before a window display promoting war stamps and bonds in Younkers department store in Des Moines, September 1942. The world war raging beyond Iowa reached deep within the state as well, affecting Iowans in thousands of subtle and significant ways.

re-election. In Germany, a young Jewish girl feigns saluting Hitler.

These stories appear in this *Palimpsest*, which is devoted entirely to World War II in Iowa and beyond—a fitting topic as we move beyond the fifty-year anniversary of the war's end. Although *The Palimpsest* generally publishes only Iowa history, we expanded our criteria for selecting articles this time. It isn't easy to stay within the state's borders when exploring a historical "event" of the magnitude of a world war. Because of the war, Iowans were leaving their home state to serve in the armed forces, reading about distant places in the Pacific, sending relief packages to Russia, rolling bandages for the wounded in Africa, raising food for the world. And newcomers were entering Iowa—as refugees, as prisoners-of-war, as defense-plant workers, as enlistees in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps at Fort Des Moines.

We can look at a world war historically on an enormous scale—of entire nations allied for victory, of massive troops timed for invasions, of industries and work forces converted for defense. But we can also look at a war on an individual scale. Millions of

individuals experienced World War II in subtle or life-changing ways. Likewise, millions of individuals affected the war in slight or substantial ways. The connections and stories are endless, and they are all meaningful.

We encourage you to reflect upon and record your own connection to World War II, either as someone who lived through that period or as a descendant of the World War II generation. Sit down with a tape recorder or a typewriter or a tablet. Settle back with a friend or relative, from your generation or another, and talk about the war. And don't stop with the war's end in 1945. Some of our authors in this issue reflect on the war's influence on their personal ideologies. What was the war's lasting effect on you—on how you have lived, and how you have viewed the world?

We're grateful to many for their contributions to this issue.

Our thanks to an Iowa teacher, Shelby Myers-Verhage, who was eager to explore Anne Frank's Iowa connection. Thanks to University of Iowa history professor David Schoenbaum, who alerted us to two compelling manuscripts, by Alan Spitzer and Tamara Schoenbaum, about the war beyond Iowa's borders. Thanks to my co-workers at the State Historical of Iowa, particularly Ellen Sulser and Vicki Schipul, who helped gather photos docu-

menting wartime Iowa for this issue.

We are also grateful to several people who have realized that history is composed of the individual stories of ordinary people, sometimes caught up in extraordinary events. The families of Iowa soldiers Robert Harwood Shannon and John R. Reilly recently donated war-related scrapbooks to the State Historical Society of Iowa. Relatives of teacher Birdie Mathews have donated her voluminous diaries. Only months before he died, John D. Zug donated photos and memoirs of his journalism career. These new collections are featured in this issue. Over time, historians will begin to study how the individual stories of Shannon, Reilly, Mathews, and Zug expand our understanding of the war.

Our mandate at the State Historical Society of Iowa is to gather, preserve, interpret, and disseminate the history of Iowa for the public and for posterity. We disseminate that history through our collections, publications, and museum exhibits (such as "Working for Victory: World War II and the Home Front"; details on inside back cover). But we need your help. After you've read the compelling stories in this issue, please read "Help Us Save the Stories" on the inside back cover to find out how you can help preserve Iowa's past.

—The Editor

Monitoring Hitler Stories and Selecting Draft Boards

Excerpts from John D. Zug's Memoirs

John Zug's observations about the coming world war were based on wide experience: as the Iowa-Nebraska manager of the International News Service (INS), as the governor's assistant, and as Iowa news manager of the Iowa Daily Press Association. In October 1945 Zug (front row, left) represented the Des Moines Register and Tribune on a tour of industry reconversions with the National Association of Manufacturers. Note the war bond message on the plane. Next page: Zug's ration books. Zug was also Des Moines Register city editor (1953-1969). In 1994 he donated his papers to the State Historical Society of Iowa. He died in March 1995. —The Editor

World War II Ahead

At the INS [International News Service] office in Des Moines, we opened the telegraph wire to the subscribing Iowa daily papers at 7 a.m. every day except Sunday. The first stories would be from the

national INS wire and soon the Iowa wire would become a mixture of national, international, and Iowa stories. I could not help noticing that many 7 a.m. stories were about Hitler's Nazis (short for the National Socialist Party). Adolf Hitler achieved power in January of 1933, and he never made any secret of his determination to arm Germany and go to war.

INS often reported speeches by Hitler, and it was not unusual when I arrived at the INS office at 6:45 a.m. to check the national wire and find an exclusive story by Kingsbury Smith or some other INS writer who had interviewed Hitler. Hitler would state that soldiers in his rapidly growing army were carrying wooden sticks, but that he was stepping up the production of guns and the troops would have them soon. He would tell of massive production of tanks, warplanes, submarines, and ships, and commit himself to warfare des-

igned to "right the wrongs that had been done to Germany" as a result of World War I (known then as the World War).

After seeing such stories from time to time, we asked if anybody was taking this news to President Roosevelt. The INS Chicago bureau people asked New York and relayed to us that these correspondents had been to the White House. They said the problem in the United States and in other countries, such as England and France, was that the leaders did not believe Hitler, that his boasts were so outrageous that they could not be taken at face value. We in Des Moines wondered whether the Hearst-tainted INS messengers were also disbelieved, as a replay of the shoot-the-messenger philosophy.

We often also opened the Iowa wire with the latest news on Mussolini's war in Ethiopia. The timing was perfect for our use, as darkness was

SHSI (IOWA CITY)



beginning in Ethiopia as we were opening our wire at 7 a.m. Iowa time. But no one in authority in the big powers ever took Mussolini very seriously, either.

Leaders of other nations, including the United States, France and Britain, seemed unworried about Hitler in the 1930s. In 1939, with Hitler's invasion of Poland, they became warlike, but by that time Hitler was way ahead in military build-up. . . .

On Sundays in the 1930s I would go horseback riding with Emery Ruby. Sometimes we went to Fort Des Moines, on the south side of the city. We rented privately owned horses, but we saw many barns and many government horses. Military men, such as reserves, exercised the U.S. horses by riding the trails or in polo games on the vast field. These riders honestly felt that these horses would be needed in the event of war, to pull the materials of war to the troops who would be fighting it (in the trenches, no doubt). There were government horses in similar forts all over the nation, "proving" the readiness of the United States to do battle if needed. No one was shouting that the horses were, even then, obsolete for warfare.

The World War II Draft

The draft took effect in 1940, a year and a half before Pearl Harbor. . . . [As assistant to Iowa governor George A. Wilson] I was in the midst of getting a draft board selected for each of Iowa's 99 counties. Nobody had planned it that

way. What happened was this:

The governor of each state was to name the county draft boards with the approval of President Franklin Roosevelt. Taking a page out of the World War I experience, Wilson asked the generals and colonels of the Iowa National Guard to develop the list. Taking a page from the same experience, they chose draft boards that included elected county officials. There was an obvious reason not to do this, but no one had thought of it—not even [Governor] Wilson, until he saw the list.

"That was a wartime draft," he told them. "This is a peacetime draft. You can't put elected officials on these boards. They should not have to take the heat."

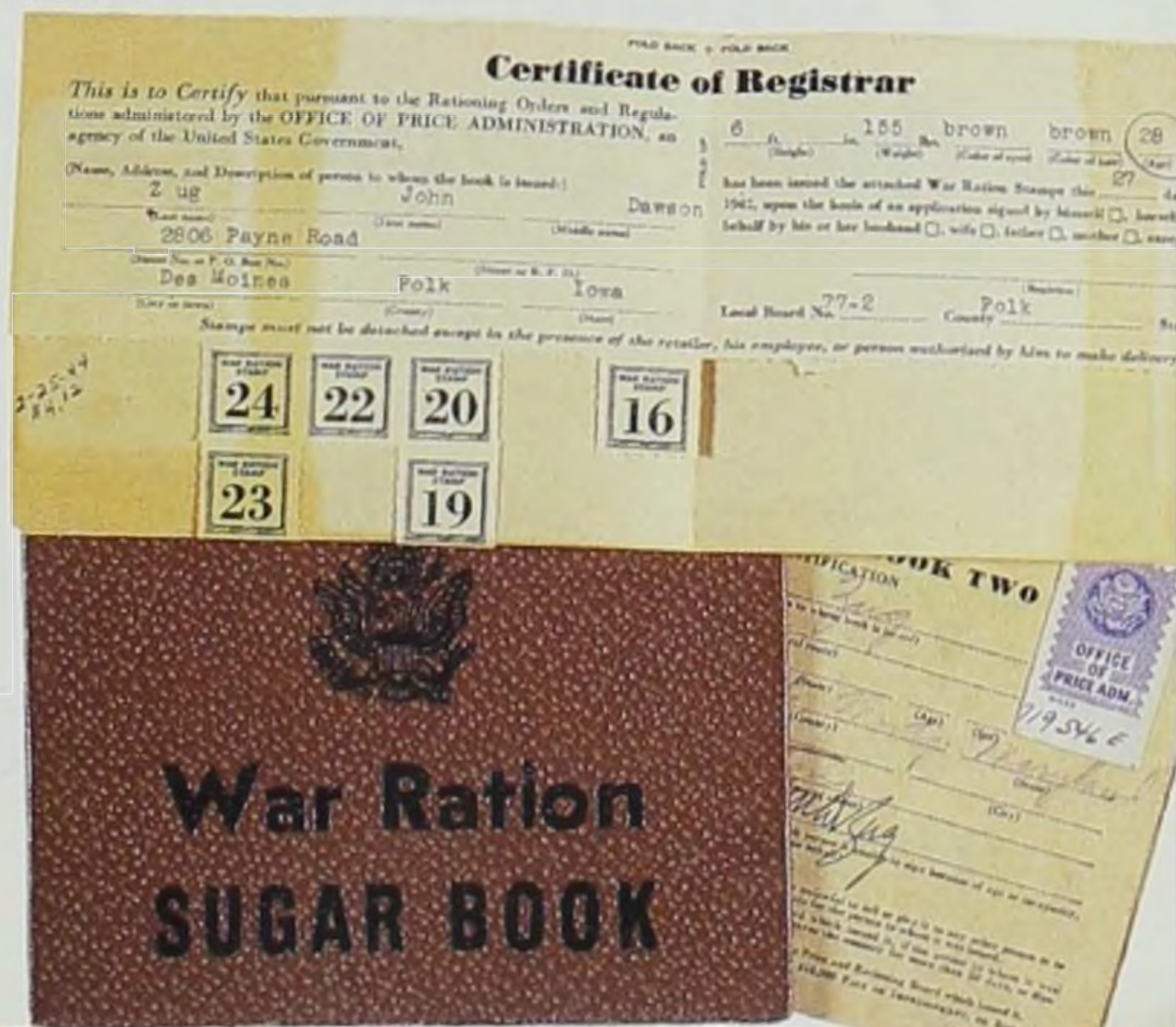
Time was running short. The way to get changes made in a hurry was to put the job in the hands of one person. I was chosen. To get away from the office, the governor had me take a room at the Savery Hotel and I spent each day there, phoning people in each county, including those who had helped the generals find local leaders willing to serve as draft board members. My instructions from the governor were that each board of five members would include at least one World War I veteran, a union man in each urban county, and a farmer in each

rural county. Each board was to be 3 and 2 politically if possible.

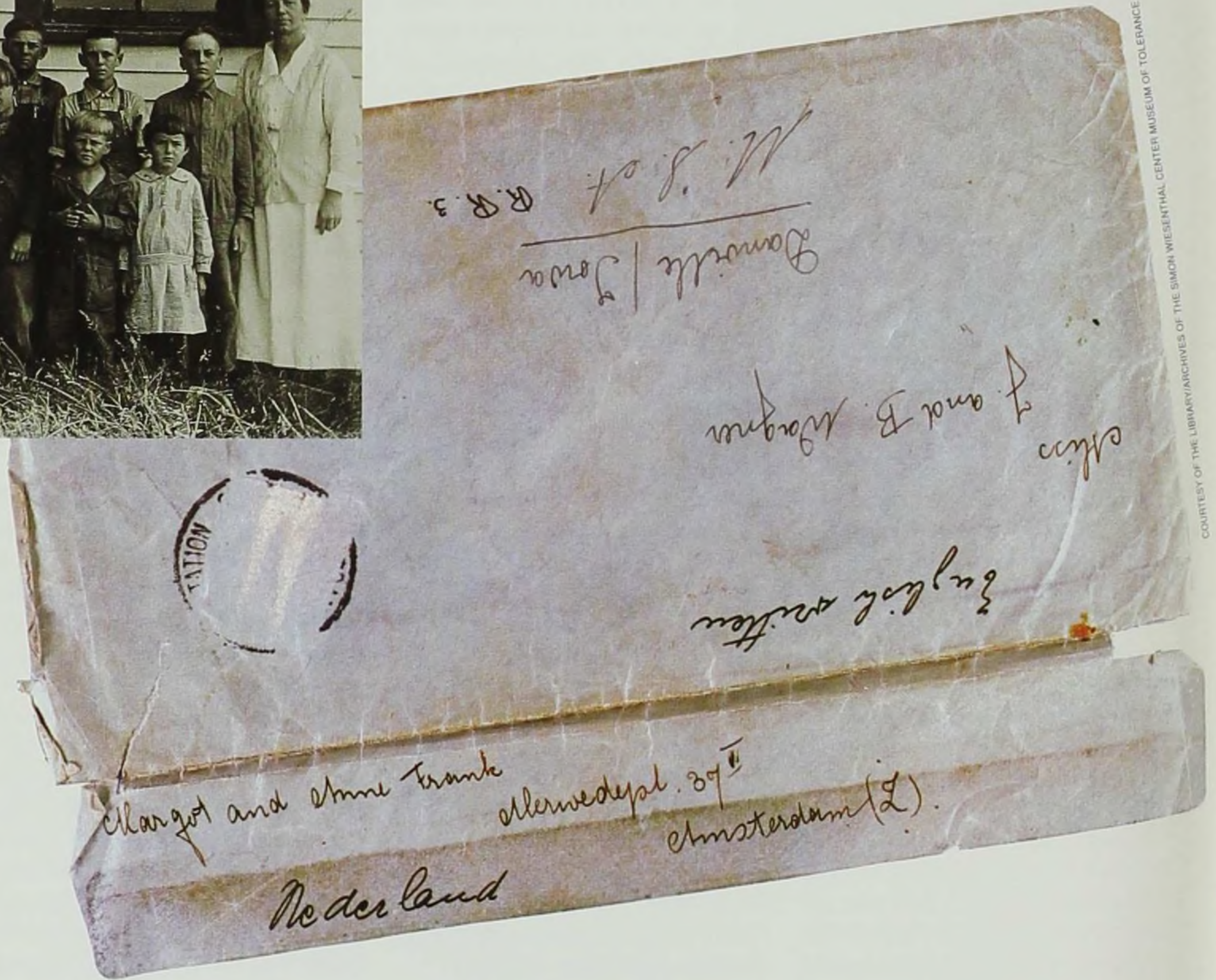
About a week and a half later, I was able to present the governor with a revised list. His guidelines had been followed in each of the 99 counties. In addition, I was able to assure him that each person on the list had agreed to serve, and that each person whose name was removed from the initial list had been informed of the reasons and had agreed with the changes that were being made.

This was not the end. Both the governor and the President approved the list, but among nearly 500 draft board members, there were more vacancies than had been expected, and I was asked to handle the filling of these vacancies. Resignations had nothing to do with the draft. One member would die; another would have major surgery; another would enter the armed forces; another would move out of the county, etc. It was a rare day when I was not trying to fill at least one vacancy. □

SHSI (IOWA CITY)



COURTESY CYRENE WAGNER



COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY ARCHIVES OF THE SIMON WIESENTHAL CENTER MUSEUM OF TOLERANCE

Postmarked from Amsterdam— Anne Frank and her Iowa Pen Pal

by Shelby Myers-Verhage

As World War II loomed over Europe, an innovative Iowa educator was bringing the situation home to her students. One spring day in 1940, the seventh- and eighth-grade teacher at the Danville Community School in Des Moines

County offered her students the chance to correspond with pen pals overseas. One of her students, Juanita Wagner, drew the name of a ten-year-old girl in the Netherlands—Anne Frank.

The name “Anne Frank” resonates for us

Opposite: Inset, Birdie Mathews with pupils, 1923. Envelope contained letters from Anne and Margot Frank sent to Danville, Iowa, in 1940, in a pen-pal exchange orchestrated by Mathews.

today because of the diary the young Jewish girl kept while in hiding from the Nazis during World War II. First published nearly fifty years ago, the diary is the story of an ordinary teenage girl facing extraordinary circumstances. She details in her diary the usual adolescent fears about growing up, falling in love, and being misunderstood by her parents. Yet she also writes as a Jew hiding from the Nazis as the war raged outside. Readers of the diary all over the world have come to see her as a heroine of the war because, in spite of all she suffered, she still felt that people were inherently "good at heart." Her words have touched generations of people who continue to struggle to understand the complexities of a world war in human terms. Few people realize, however, that long before *The Diary of a Young Girl* became legendary, a few pages of Anne Frank's thoughts came to Danville, Iowa, in the spring of 1940.

This brief connection between Amsterdam and Danville was because of the work of Birdie Mathews to bring those worlds together. By 1940, Mathews was a veteran teacher. She had been teaching since age eighteen, having begun her career at the nearby Plank Road rural school, where she taught grades kindergarten through eighth until she was past forty. About 1921, she moved to the Danville Community School, where she taught seventh and eighth grades. Over two decades at a country school, where she had taught a wide range of curriculum and varying ages and levels of students, no doubt made her a seasoned teacher. But Mathews had accumulated other experiences as well, overcoming the professional isolation that particularly plagued rural and small-town teachers.

These teachers had few opportunities to interact with colleagues outside of their buildings. Even help from the Iowa State Department of Education seemed distant; only local administrators could make requests for its limited materials. In an effort to bring new teaching practices and ideas to rural teach-

ers, the State University of Iowa and other colleges brought traveling workshops, called Tri-County Institutes, to regional locations each fall. Similar to today's in-service days, the institutes met for a half- or whole-day session of speakers and workshops. The institutes minimized the isolation of rural teachers and furthered their professional growth.

Birdie Mathews most likely participated in some of these sessions, since they were often required of all staff. Yet she also spent summers studying at Iowa State Teachers College in Cedar Falls and Colorado State University, as well as at Columbia University in New York, where, according to her 1935 diary, she took three courses—"Education and Nationalism," "Modern Trends in Classroom Practices," and "Character and Personality Testing." Few teachers had the time, resources, or incentive for this level of professional education.

"Miss Birdie," as her students called her, acquired more teaching resources through travel. She was even a bit of a local celebrity when she sent home lengthy letters to the *Danville Enterprise* detailing her 1914 trip to Europe. Her letters became front-page news, and her travel experiences became classroom lesson plans. Her students remember fondly the afternoons when they would gather around Mathews to hear her adventures. Opening their eyes to the world beyond, she frequently sent postcards to her students from her travels overseas and across the country, and it is believed that on one of these trips she acquired the names of potential pen pals for her students.

Because pen-pal writing as a classroom practice was still fairly rare at this time, only creative teachers such as Birdie Mathews would have set up situations in which their students could learn firsthand about the world. Some Danville students wrote to other children in the United States, but many, including Juanita Wagner, chose to write to overseas pen pals.

In her introductory letter in the spring of 1940, Juanita, age ten, wrote about Iowa, her mother (a teacher), sister Betty Ann, and life

COURTESY BETTY ANN WAGNER



Juanita Wagner, 1941

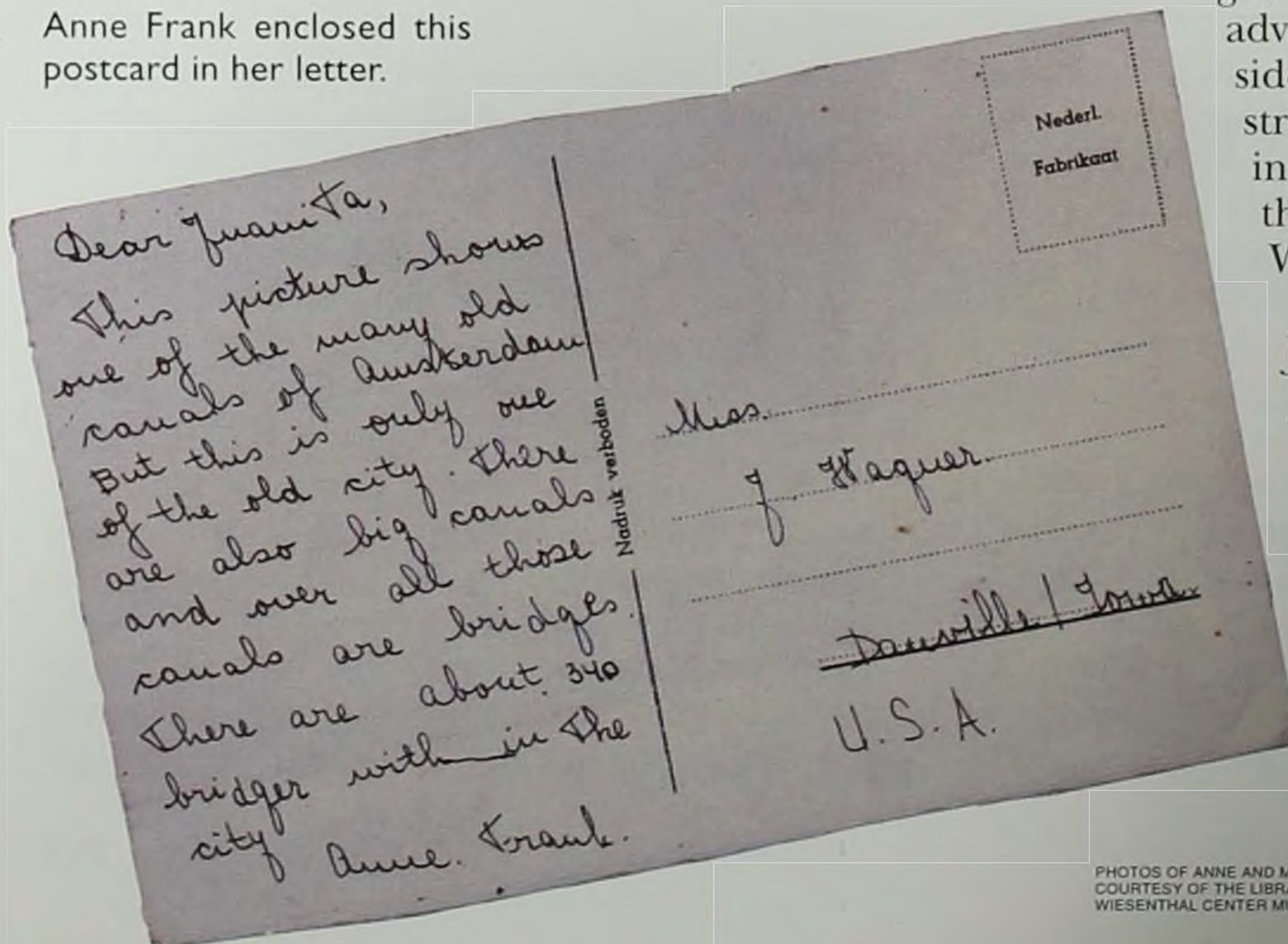
on their farm and in nearby Danville. She sealed the letter and sent it to Anne Frank's home address in Amsterdam.

In a few weeks Juanita received not one, but two overseas letters. Anne had written back to Juanita, and Anne's sister Margot, age fourteen, had written a letter to Betty Ann, Juanita's fourteen-year-old sister. "It was such a special joy as a child to have the experience of receiving a letter from overseas from a foreign country and new pen pal," Betty Ann Wagner later recalled. "In those days we had no TV, little radio, and maybe a newspaper once or twice a week. Living on a farm with so little communication could be very dull except for all the good books from the library."

The Frank sisters' letters from Amsterdam were dated April 27th and 29th and were written in ink on light blue stationery. Anne and Margot had enclosed their school pictures. The letters were in English, but experts believe that the Frank sisters probably first composed the letters in Dutch and then copied them over in English after their father, Otto Frank, translated them.

In her letter, Anne told of her family, her Montessori school, and Amsterdam. She

Anne Frank enclosed this postcard in her letter.



must have pulled out a map of the United States because she wrote, "On the map I looked again and found the name Burlington." Enclosing a postcard of Amsterdam, she mentioned her hobby of "picture-card" collecting: "I have already about 800."

Anne made no mention of the political situation in Europe. Her sister, Margot, however,

COURTESY BETTY ANN WAGNER



Betty Ann Wagner, 1943

wrote Betty Ann that "we often listen to the radio as times are very exciting, having a frontier with Germany and being a small country we never feel safe." Referring to their two cousins in Switzerland, Margot remarked, "We have to travel through Germany which we cannot do or through

Belgium and France and in that we cannot either. It is war and no visas are given."

"Needless to say, we were both thrilled to have established communications with a foreign friend, and we both wrote again immediately," Betty Ann recalled years later. The Wagner sisters anxiously awaited a second reply postmarked "Amsterdam." But no reply came. Although they did not know that the Frank family was Jewish and therefore in

grave danger as the Third Reich advanced, Betty Ann did consider that mail might be restricted or censored. Wondering what had happened to their new Dutch pen pals, the Wagner sisters waited.

Anne's April 29th letter to Juanita had been written just three weeks after Germany had invaded Denmark and Norway—that spring had proved to be a successful one for the Nazi campaign in northern Europe. On May 10, eleven days after Anne wrote her letter, the

PHOTOS OF ANNE AND MARGOT FRANK AND POSTCARD: COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY/ARCHIVES OF THE SIMON WIESENTHAL CENTER MUSEUM OF TOLERANCE

Dutch surrendered to the Nazis.

At first, little seemed changed in the Netherlands except for the presence of soldiers on



Margot Frank. The Frank sisters enclosed this photo and Anne's (right) in their letters to the Wagners.

the streets. Yet Jews slowly began to feel the effects of the Third Reich. By October 1940, Otto Frank as a Jew would be required to register his business. By June 1941, when Anne Frank would be turning twelve, Jews would be forced to carry identity cards stamped with the letter "J." In the fall of 1941, Anne and Margot, like other Jewish children in Holland, would have to attend a separate school.

Europe's volatile situation seemed far removed from the world of Juanita and Betty Ann Wagner, where students thought of the war in Europe as they thought of ancient history, that is, as hardly relevant. Yet gradually, the war became more of a reality for the Wagner sisters, their teacher Birdie Mathews, and other

southeastern Iowans. Scattered articles about the war in Europe began to appear in the *Burlington Hawkeye Gazette* and *Des Moines County News*. In 1940, a war munitions plant was built between Danville and nearby Middletown. The munitions plant was somewhat controversial: on the one hand it brought new jobs to the local economy; on the other, it took almost a dozen family farms in the area. Temporary housing was constructed for people moving to the area for the jobs. Draft notices began arriving. On Fridays, "Current Events Day," students in Birdie Mathews's class and other classrooms discussed articles and radio broadcasts about the war in Europe.

Suddenly in December 1941, the bombing of Pearl Harbor catapulted the United States—and Danville, Iowa—into the war.



Anne Frank, before May 1940

Worried that something had happened to Anne and Margot, Betty Ann and Juanita Wagner still waited for a reply as winter dragged on. No letters came.

By the spring of 1942, in Anne and Margot Frank's world across the Atlantic, Jews were now forced to wear the yellow star of David on all of their clothing and were forbidden to use public transport. Soon many other restrictions came. Anne would write

SHSI (DES MOINES)



Trailers purchased by the Federal Farm Security Administration to house ordnance plant workers in Burlington were one sign that the war that was engulfing the Frank family and other Europeans was beginning to affect Iowans

in her diary: "Jews must hand in their bicycles . . . must be indoors from eight o'clock in the evening until six o'clock in the morning; Jews are forbidden to visit Theaters, cinemas and other places of entertainment." Anne was just entering adolescence, and such restrictions surely affected her budding social life. Later she would record in her diary her friend's comment that "you're scared to do anything because it may be forbidden."

When the Frank family received an arrest notice for Margot, they were scared enough to go into hiding on July 6, 1942. Otto Frank planted clues around their apartment to suggest the family had fled to Switzerland. Their hiding place was the rear part of the building where Otto Frank had his business in the heart of Amsterdam. The door to the "Secret

Annex," as Anne called it, was hidden behind a bookcase in one of the offices.

A business acquaintance, Hermann van Pels, and his wife and son, Peter, also joined them. A few months later a Jewish dentist, Fritz Pfeffer, also moved into the annex (making a total of eight people hiding in four small rooms and a watercloset). Four of Otto Frank's coworkers knew about the annex above their offices; they supplied the families with food and news of the outside world. Although her letter writing to Danville had long since ended, Anne wrote faithfully in her diary.

On August 4, 1944, while Danville residents were reading about the Polish underground and the Nazis' flight from Florence in the *Burlington Hawkeye Gazette*, German po-

Ten-year-old Anne Frank writes to Juanita Wagner in Iowa: "I

Dear Juanita, I Amsterdam 29
April Monday.
I did receive your letter and want
to answer you as quick as pos-
sible. Margot and myself are the
only children in our house. Our
grandma is living with us. My
father has an office and mother
is busy at home. I have not far
from school and I am sitting in
the fifth class. We have no
hour-classes we may do what we
prefer, of course we must get to a
certain goal. Your mother will
certainly know this system, it is
called Montessori. We have little
work at home.
On the map I looked again and
found the name Burlington. I did
ask a girl friend of mine if
she would like to communicate
with one of your friends. She
wants to do it with a girl a-
bout my age not with a
boy.

I shall write her address under-
neath. Did you yourself write the
letter I received from you, or did
your mother do it? I include
a post-card from Amsterdam
and shall continue to do that
collecting picture-cards I have
already about 800. A child I used
to be at school with went to
New-York and she did with a
letter to our class some time
ago. In case you and Betty get
a photo do send a copy as
I am curious to know how
you look. My birthday is the
12th of June. Kindly let me
know yours. Perhaps one of
your friends will write
first to my girl friend,
for she also cannot write
English but her father or
mother will translate the
letter.

PHOTOS OF LETTER, COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY/ARCHIVES OF THE SIMON WIESENTHAL CENTER MUSEUM OF TOLERANCE

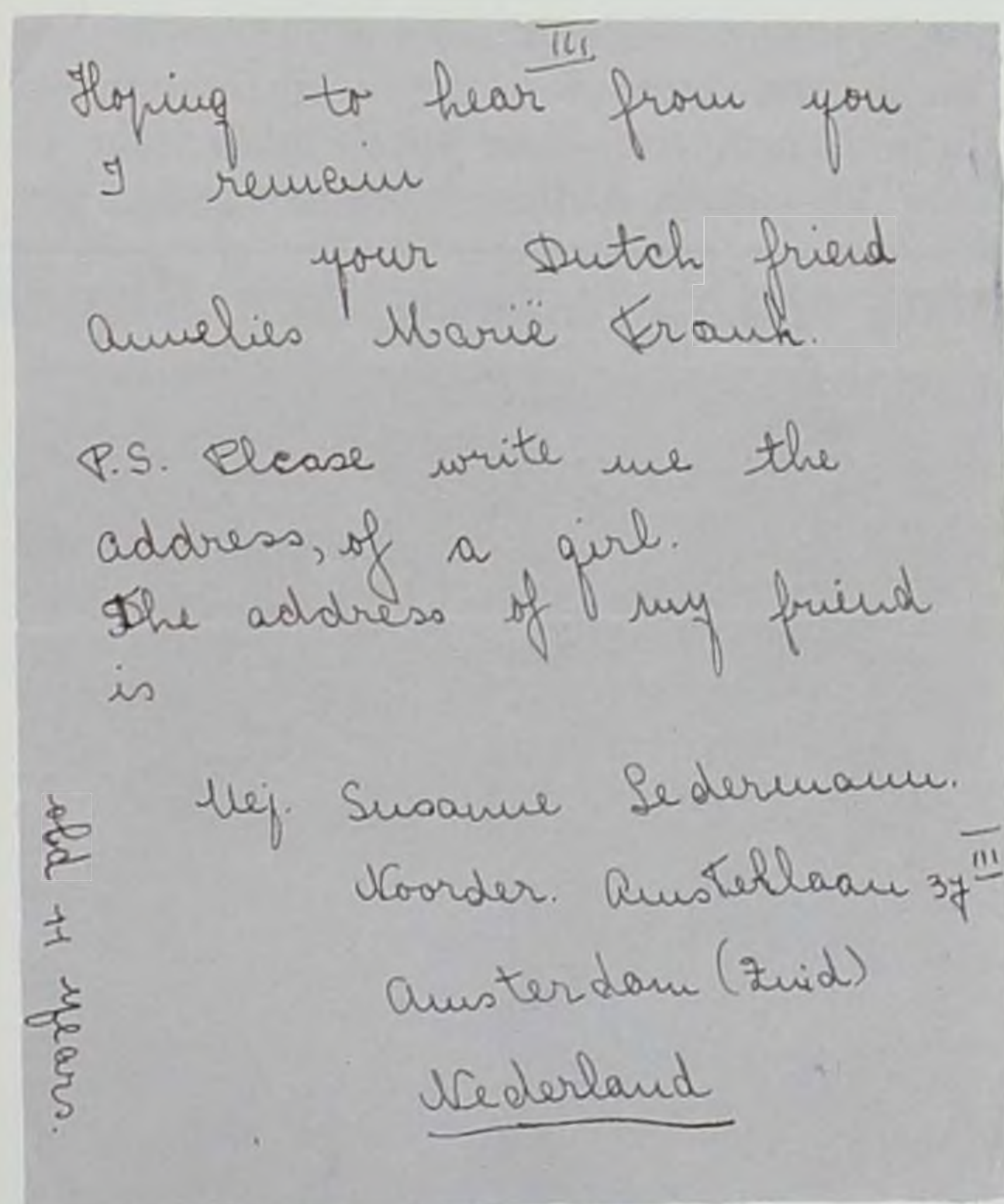
lice entered the secret annex and arrested the Frank and van Pels families and Fritz Pfeffer. Within a month, they were transported by train with many other Dutch Jews to Auschwitz, the death camp in Poland. The men and women were separated, but Anne and Margot were allowed to stay with their mother until October 1944, when the sisters were transferred to Bergen-Belsen. Their mother died in January 1945.

At Bergen-Belsen, conditions were atrocious, food was scarce, and thousands were dying from disease. Anne discovered an old school friend in another section of the camp; the two girls talked through the barbed wire separating them. As winter ended, typhus swept through the camp. Margot became ill first and died in March 1945. A few days later,

just weeks before the British liberated the camp, sixteen-year-old Anne died.

After the war was over, Betty Ann Wagner was teaching in a country school in eastern Illinois. Still curious about the Dutch pen pals, she wrote again to Anne's address in Amsterdam. A few months later, she received a long, handwritten letter from Otto Frank. He told about the family hiding, of Anne's experiences in the "secret annex," and how Anne had died in a concentration camp. This was the first time Wagner learned that Anne had been Jewish. "When I received the letter I shed tears," Wagner recalled, "and the next day took it with me to school and read Otto Frank's letter to my students. I wanted them

"Hoping to hear from you I remain your Dutch friend. . . ."



Experts believe this is the only surviving letter written by Anne Frank in English. The three-page letter is transcribed on the right.

Amsterdam 29 April Monday

Dear Juanita,

I did receive your letter and want to answer you as quick as possible. Margot and myself are the only children in our house. Our grandma is living with us. My father has an office and mother is busy at home. I have not far from school and I am sitting in the fifth class. We have no hour-classes we may do what we prefer, of course we must get to a certain goal. Your mother will certainly know this system, it is called Montessori. We have little work at home.

On the map I looked again and found the name Burlington. I did ask a girl friend of mine if she would like to communicate with one of your friends. She wants to do it with a girl about my age not with a boy.

I shall write her address underneath. Did you yourself write the letter I received from you, or did your mother do it? I include a post-card from Amsterdam and shall continue to do that collecting picture-cards I have already about 800. A child I used to be at school with went to New-York and she did with [*sic*] a letter to our class some time ago. In case you and Betty get a photo do send a copy as I am curious to know how you look. My birthday is the 12th of June. Kindly let me know yours. Perhaps one of your friends wil [*sic*] write first to my girl friend, for she also cannot write English but her father or mother will translate the letter.

Hoping to hear from you I remain your Dutch friend Annelies Marie Frank.

P.S. Please write me the address of a girl. [Anne ends with the name and Amsterdam address of her own friend, Susanne Ledermann.]

to realize how fortunate they were to be in America during World War II."

By 1956, Wagner had settled in California and was driving home from work one day when she heard a review on the radio of a new Broadway play called *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Thinking it might be the same Anne Frank, she rushed to order a copy of the play. As soon as it arrived she realized it was indeed her sister's pen pal; a photo similar to the one from Anne appeared on the cover.

Although Otto Frank's letter had been misplaced during one of the Wagner family's frequent moves, Betty Ann had carefully kept Anne and Margot's letters safe. In the late 1980s the letters became part of the collections of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, where they are now on display.

And what of Birdie Mathews, the small-town teacher who by a combination of innovative teaching and pure chance briefly connected the Wagner sisters and the Frank sisters? "Miss Birdie" had retired the year the war ended,

having built a local reputation as a devoted teacher who never hesitated to create special opportunities for her students. Years earlier, she had started what she considered the county's first drivers' education program: during recesses, she taught farm boys how to drive her car. The trade-off was that now that they knew how to drive and could borrow Mathews's car, they had to keep coming to school despite seasonal demands of farm work. When the Great Depression hit in the 1930s, Mathews had refused her salary so that fuel could be bought to keep the school heated and open. She often organized class picnics and wiener roasts at a park or her home. One former student recalled when "Miss Birdie" took her to a state spelling contest and an overnight stay at the University of Iowa—a truly exciting trip for a youngster from Danville, population 309 in 1940.

Because Danville was a small community and Mathews came from a large family, she taught many of her nieces and nephews; they often remarked that she was tougher on them than on the other pupils in an effort to avoid favoritism. Although revered by her stu-

Thirteen-year-old Margot Frank writes to Betty Ann Wagner:

COURTESY OF THE LIBRARY/ARCHIVES OF THE SIMON WIESENTHAL CENTER MUSEUM OF TOLERANCE

Amsterdam 27th April 1940. Released under
by Simon Wiesenthal

Dear Betty Ann,
I have only received your letters about a week ago and had no time to answer a right away. It is Sunday today, so I can take the time to write. During the week I am very busy as I have to work for school at home every day.

Our school begins at 9 a.m. till noon then I go home by my bicycle (if the weather is bad I go by bus and stay at school) and return for the class beginning at half past one, we then have class until three o'clock. Wednesday and Saturday afternoon we are free and use our time to play tennis and to read. In the winter we play hockey or go skating if it is cold enough. This year it was unusually cold and all the canals were frozen, today is the first really spring day, the sun shining bright and warm. Generally we have a lot of rain.

In summer we have a two months holiday, then a fortnight at Christmas and so on Easter. Whitsuntide only four days.

We often listen to the radio as times are very exciting, having a frontier with Germany and being a small country we never feel safe. In our class most of the children communicate with one or the other so I do not know children who would want to take up correspondence. I only have two cousins, both living at Basel, Switzerland. For Americans ideas this is not far but for us it is.

We have to travel through Germany which we cannot do or through Belgium and France and in that we cannot either. It is war and no visas are given.

We live in a five room flat attached to the only skyscraper of the city being twelve stories high! Amsterdam has about 200,000 inhabitants. We are near the sea-shore but we miss hills and woods. Everything being flat and a great part of the country lying below sea-level, therefore the name Netherlands.

Father is going to business in the morning and returns about 5 p.m.; mother is busy at home. My grand-mother is living with us and we rented one room to a lady.

Now I think I have told you quite a lot and I am expecting your answer.

With kindest regards
your friend
Margot Frank

P.S. Many thanks for Juanita's letter as Anne is writing to her I need not write myself.
Margot.

dents, she was known as a strong disciplinarian. One former student recalled her response to a particularly obnoxious boy: "Miss Birdie took him in the hallway and shook him until his shirt buttons popped off."

After her retirement in 1945, Mathews's sense of exacting detail and organization translated easily into her long-time love of needlework and gardening. A meticulous gardener, she believed that "flowers do something for a person—brightens up a home." Every year she shared her abundant vegetable crops with friends and relatives, and she continued to volunteer at the Danville Congregational Church, where she and her family had deep roots. She remained involved in the lives of her many nieces and nephews. With more time to travel, she took several trips to sunny locations during long Iowa winters. She had always kept travel diaries. Now retired, she took more care to keep her day-to-day diaries current. As the years progressed, Mathews traveled less, yet she continued an active correspondence with friends and former students. She died in 1974, at age ninety-four.

Today, Betty Ann and Juanita Wagner continue to tell their story about their brief connection to Margot and Anne Frank, aware that even the most ordinary person can be a part of extraordinary situations. Against a backdrop of an approaching world war, three human impulses briefly connected: "Miss Birdie" Mathews's vision to broaden her students' world view; Juanita Wagner's desire for an overseas pen pal; and Anne Frank's eagerness to respond as "your Dutch friend," as she signed her letter. As a result, a few letters were exchanged and a few friendships sprouted one spring a half-century ago, when Amsterdam came postmarked to Iowa.

In early July 1942, when Anne's family decided to go into hiding, Anne wrote in her diary about packing hurriedly: "The first thing I put in was this diary, then hair curlers, handkerchiefs, schoolbooks, a comb, old letters; I put in the craziest things with the idea that we were going into hiding, but I'm not sorry, memories mean more to me than dresses." Could some of the "old letters" she packed have been postmarked "Danville, Iowa"? □

Times are very exciting, having a frontier with Germany. . . ."

Amsterdam 27th April 1940.

Dear Betty Ann,

I have only received your letters about a week ago and had no time to answer right away. It is Sunday today, so I can take the time to write. During the week I am very busy as I have to work for school at home every day.

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We live in a five room flat attached to the only skyscraper of the city being twelve storeys high. Amsterdam has about 200000 inhabitants. We are near the sea-shore but we miss hills and woods. Every thing being flat and a great part of the country lying below sea-level; therefore the name Netherland.

Father is going to business in the morning and returns about 8 p.m.; Mother is busy at home. My grandmother is living with us and we rented one room to a lady.

Now I think I have told you quite a lot and I am expecting your answer.

With kindest regards your friend.

Margot Betti Frank.

P.S. Many thanks for Juanita's letter as Anne is writing to her I need not write myself. Margot.

The Diaries of Anne Frank and Birdie Mathews

by Shelby Myers-Verhage

While sightseeing in Washington, D.C. in August 1941, Birdie Mathews wrote in her travel diary that she had seen the Magna Carta, "which has been sent here from England for safe keeping during the bombing." In Amsterdam, far closer to the bombing, Anne Frank had not even begun her diary yet. She would receive it as a birthday gift from her father the next June.

Frank's diary would be short but intense and emotionally honest. Mathews's diary would be at first kept sporadically (during her travels), but then almost daily as she detailed her life in Danville, Iowa, as a retired teacher. Each diarist wrote about what was important to her. Each diary—as all diaries do—gives a unique view of the world.

Yet the Anne Frank diary that became known around the world was not exactly the same diary in which Anne first wrote. There are actually

three versions. She began her cloth-bound diary on her thirteenth birthday, June 12, 1942. She wrote about the war (the families in hiding listened to the wireless daily) and her everyday experiences with those in the secret annex. She wrote mostly for herself, using the diary as a place where she could be alone and express her feelings.

On March 28, 1944, Anne heard a radio broadcast requesting letters and diaries detailing individual wartime experiences. She began to consider writing her experiences as a book, calling it *het Achterhuis* ("the house behind" or "secret annex"). That May she began in earnest to rework her original diary for publication, recopying the entries onto loose-leaf paper, adding and editing selections, changing the names of some of the people in the annex. She edited her entries through March 29, 1944.

At the time of her arrest

on August 4, 1944, Anne's original diary and her revision were left behind. Otto Frank's co-worker Miep Gies gathered them up to save for Anne. When Anne's death was confirmed, Gies gave them to Otto, who had not read his daughter's diary before this.

Otto Frank soon began to translate excerpts into German to send to his mother in Switzerland. At first he translated portions for family and friends only, but after excerpts were shared with the publishing community, the diary soon became a work for a larger audience. A publisher worked closely with Otto Frank in editing the diary, selecting largely from his excerpts. (Otto did not wish passages about Anne's difficulties with her mother and certain intimate entries to appear.) This version was published in the Netherlands in 1947 and in the United States in 1952. All three versions of

NOTE ON SOURCES FOR PAGES 152-161

Besides the various editions of the Anne Frank diary mentioned in the preceding articles, the biographies *Anne Frank* (1985) by Lina Tridenti; *Anne Frank: Beyond the Diary* (1992) by Ruud van der Rol and Rian Verhoeven; and *The Last Seven Months of Anne Frank* by Willy Lindwer (1991) were useful. The Frank sisters' correspondence to the Wagner sisters is at the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles. See the *Los Angeles Times* (July 24, 1988) for a comment from Cornelius Suijk, international director of the Anne Frank Foundation in Amsterdam. Regarding Birdie Mathews, the author interviewed or corresponded with Mathews's relatives and former students (Bob Dodds, Bonnie Jane Hayward, Don Kellar, Vivian Kellar, Don Mathews, Cyrene Wagner, Vera Mathews, and Roger and Caroline Parrott). Betty Ann Wagner was particularly helpful. Marjorie Fitzsimmons loaned correspondence from Mathews. John Haefner, professor emeritus, University of Iowa, provided background on schooling practices in Iowa prior to World War II. Local sources include the *Burlington Hawkeye* and *Des Moines County News*, Jan.-June 1940, and *The History of the Danville Community* (1966) by James I. Garrels and David R. Gerdes. The Birdie Mathews Papers, now in the State Historical Society of Iowa collections (Iowa City), includes Nancy Bauer's 1967 *Burlington Hawkeye* interview, other clippings, teaching mementos, and postcards. Annotations to these articles are in *The Palimpsest* production files.

the diary now appear together in *The Diary of Anne Frank: The Critical Edition* (1989). An unabridged version of the 1952 diary was also recently published.

Birdie Mathews, the teacher who arranged the pen-pal exchange for Anne Frank and Juanita Wagner, also was a devoted diarist. Her diaries, recently donated to the State Historical Society of Iowa by Vivian and Don Kellar (Birdie Mathews's grandnephew) begin with travel diaries kept during her frequent trips and her post-retirement winters in Florida and California. Each entry was carefully handwritten on loose-leaf or plain typing paper, or in composition books or unused teacher record books.

Once retired, Mathews devoted even more time to her diaries, writing nearly every day until her death at age ninety-four in 1974. She detailed her everyday activities and daily regimens with great

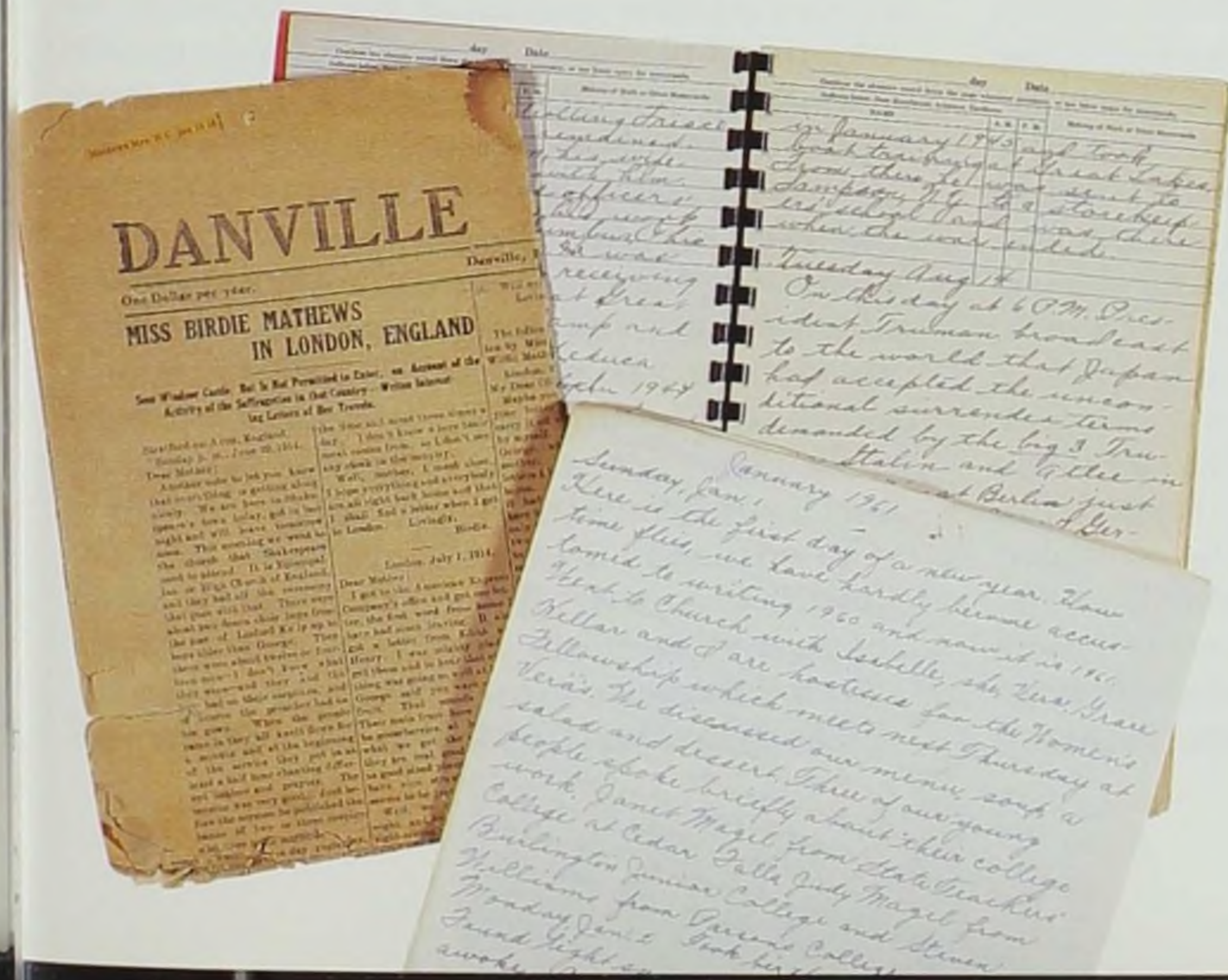
care. For example, an entry from October 15, 1967, reads: "Rainy all day. The chili supper scheduled for tomorrow night called off on account of the flu epidemic." In an entry from February 22, 1959, she wrote, "Washington's 228th birthday. Cold. The Gerdes boys came with their snow plow and shovel and cleaned the snow from my walks. Paid them \$1.25." At times her topics expanded to world events. On July 19, 1950, the eve of the Korean War, she noted: "Listened to President Truman's message tonight. Sounds exactly like Dec. 1941. Must we go through all that again? God forbid."

Mathews seldom recorded deeply personal perspectives, although some of her earlier travel diaries include a few poems and reflections on her travels. Although lacking the emotional impact or historical significance of Anne Frank's adolescent diary kept while hiding from the Nazis, the Birdie Mathews diaries

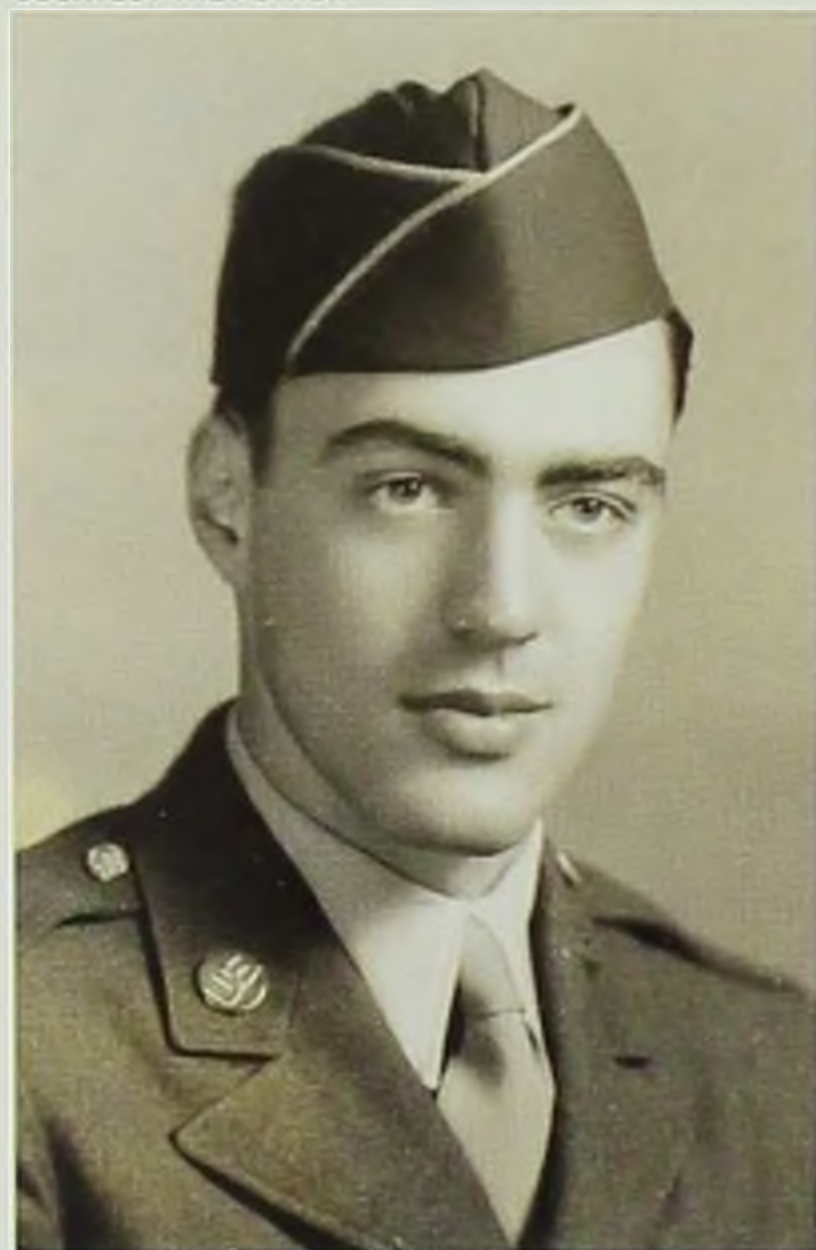
give us a glimpse into the orderly life of a rural Iowa teacher who tried to broaden her students' and community's world view by sharing her experiences. The portrait that emerges from the Mathews diaries is of a career school teacher who organized her life as she did her diary pages—with clarity and detail.

"Iowans are fortunate to have rediscovered the story of Birdie Mathews, as it serves as a strong reminder of the role Iowans can play in world affairs," remarked Mary Bennett, audiovisual archivist at the State Historical Society of Iowa (Iowa City), where the Mathews diaries are now housed. "Rather than remain complacent and uninvolved, this school teacher took an active interest in events across the globe. She encouraged her students to look outside of their relatively secure lives in Iowa in order to gain insights about the turmoil faced by people like Anne Frank. Her diaries and writings are significant because they document her worldly attitude and the experiences she gained while traveling abroad. It is fortuitous that her family preserved these research materials for future generations, so we can gain a new perspective on how World War II impacted Iowans." □

Left: Selections from the Birdie Mathews papers: her letters from Europe published in the local newspaper; diary entries for 1945 in a teacher's planning book; and loose-leaf pages of her 1961 diary.



COURTESY THE AUTHOR



Wartime photo of the author

A Historian's Memory of the Second World War

by Alan B. Spitzer

I want to testify to a past in which I participated but a past beyond immediate recall. I cannot reconstruct the fresh impressions of a nineteen-year-old private first class just off the line in the winter of 1944, but can only deliver the reminiscences of a retired history professor who has thought, read, and taught about that past, inevitably transforming fading memories into reflection.

For example, in 1943 when I enlisted at age eighteen it seemed natural, virtually self-evident, that "everyone," that is, all healthy young males, would go—that there would certainly be no class distinctions to shield the sons of the wealthy and influential. As in the First World War, when the sons of the European elites had served in the trenches as second lieutenants and died in greater proportion to their numbers than did the classic cannon fodder from the farms and the slums, so too in World War II, in the United States, privileged status encouraged service. The sons of the president served, George Bush went, Jack Kennedy concealed physical disabilities and pulled strings to be accepted into an especially dangerous branch of the service. "4F," the designation of someone with a physical disability exempting him from service, was a term of opprobrium. In one of

the lousy films featuring cameo appearances by many Hollywood stars—we reached the cinematic nadir during the war—Bette Davis sang, "They're either too young or too old, they're either too grey or too grassy green, what's good is in the Army, what's left will never harm me."

What would not have occurred to me then, but is apparent to hindsight now, is that those attitudes were historically contingent, the product of a long process of social integration in the modern state where nationalism had become the dominant ideology. As late as the Civil War one could buy a substitute to take one's place; the majority of Yale graduates, I believe, never served in the Union forces during those years. One hundred years later, once again, during the Vietnam War social class separated those who served from those who did not, this time thanks to educational deferments. In the late 1960s when my older son was about ten and I was telling him about *my* war, he asked, "Why didn't you go to Canada?" He was too young to know that anachronism was the ultimate historical sin. I pointed out that in those days you went to Canada to join the Royal Canadian Air Force if you couldn't wait until the United States entered the war.

The path that I took into the service was



In Iowa City, cadets at the University of Iowa navy pre-flight school learn nomenclature on an older navy training plane flown in from Pensacola, Florida.

not quite typical but does provide a small example of the unanticipated consequences of the wartime wedding of a more-or-less democratic society and a vast military bureaucracy. I enlisted under the impression that I would be assigned to the Army Specialized Training Program—ASTP. The standard book on ASTP is entitled *Scholars in Foxholes*, and that's what we turned out to be all right. The conception, organization, brief life, and abrupt liquidation of that program perfectly exemplified what we enlisted men thought the army was all about—SNAFU, TARFU, and FUBAR—you can fill in the acronyms.

ASTP had been invented in response to the decision to lower the draft age from twenty to eighteen. The idea was, or the official version was, that the need for technically

skilled and trained personnel no longer available in the shrinking civilian pool might be met by inducting young men with a relatively high IQ, giving them basic training, and sending them back to college in military units. Another motive was to keep colleges and universities afloat. This was certainly how it was seen by the leaders in higher education who were lobbying desperately for a life belt and clutched at this imperfect alternative.

During my basic training—thirteen weeks of infantry basic in the midsummer of 1943 at Fort McClellan, Alabama—I was sustained by the prospect of marching onto some campus with a student body almost totally populated by what we called “co-eds” in those days. As it turned out they sent me to the Citadel, the military college in Charleston, South

Carolina (recently in the news for its ferocious resistance to the insertion of even one woman into the student body) whose students, we were proudly informed, had fired the first shot in the Civil War, against Fort Sumter.

At the Citadel we took introductory courses in an engineering curriculum conducted by the college faculty, but we were under military discipline in units commanded by army officers, marching to class but still on campus instead of in camps. Most of us fell into quasi military/academic step with a sort of self-ironic ambivalence. Sporting the ASTP shoulder patch (the Lamp of Knowledge transfixed by the Sword of Valor, a.k.a. "the flaming piss-pot") we marched to the tune of "Take down your service flag, Mother, your son's in the ASTP."

The army would soon liberate us from the necessity to satirize ourselves. The irony of our selection as a sort of intellectual elite was anticipated by the fate of people who flunked out of the program. As I recall, most of them were sent to the Signal Corps or the Cooks

and Bakers School, whereas the future of the successful students would be the infantry.

The Army Ground Forces had never liked the idea of ASTP. "With 300,000 men short, we are asked to send men to college," summed up their response. It was bad enough that the Army Air Corps was already creaming off recruits of higher intellectual caliber, and that the army, and especially the infantry, got the rest. Aside from the understandable practical concern of the Ground Forces as the casualties mounted, there were hints of resentment at a sort of tacit elitism, sparing the best and brightest from the risks of the real war.

By 1943, some 150,000 young enlistees had been transferred or inducted into ASTP programs—not a large percentage of the roughly twelve million Americans eventually under arms but, by an uncanny coincidence, just about equivalent to the number of fighting men the Ground Forces absolutely had to have at the beginning of 1944. Either all but 30,000 trainees would have to be withdrawn from ASTP or it would be necessary to dis-

band ten infantry divisions and assorted other units to feed replacements into units in the field. No question as to the result. The ASTPers, initially recruited as an intellectually promising cadre of potential officers, non-coms and technical specialists, became infantry privates almost overnight—so, to die in disproportion to their numbers.

The army had vaguely assured us that we were the

At Fort Des Moines, stacks of uniforms fill shelves built as a Work Projects Administration. Photographed just after Pearl Harbor, on December 10, 1941.



SHSI (IOWA CITY)



SHS1 (DES MOINES)

In Iowa, soldiers play checkers and piano at the U.S.O. on 5th and Mulberry in Des Moines, in September 1942.

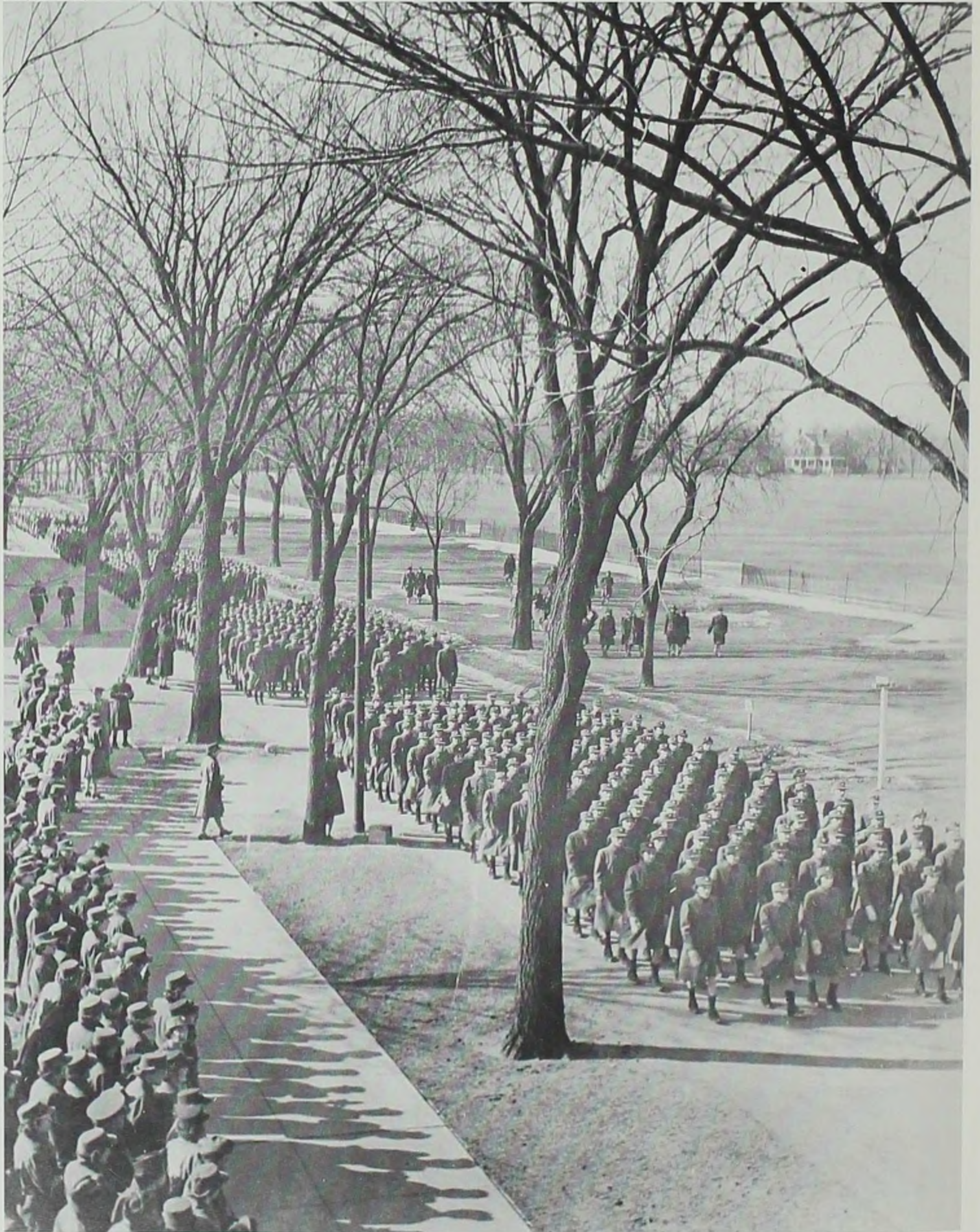
types “expected to assume the responsibilities of non-commissioned officers and skilled technicians.” This was not what the non-coms in place expected. Many of the stateside divisions had functioned as training units sending out replacements to the depleted combat divisions. The ASTPers, former Air Corps cadets, and men culled out of the Army Service Forces fleshed out companies already staffed by a cadre of non-commissioned officers. We came in as cannon fodder, and we would eventually describe those vague assurances of a rosy military future in the language we learned from the non-coms.

I was posted to the 100th Division at Fort Bragg and trained there from mid-March un-

til late September when the division was sent overseas. My company fielded that ethnic mix celebrated in the movies, then and now, as the finest example of our great American melting pot—without African Americans in those days. We fought to save the world for democracy in an army organized on racist lines. My only experience of integration was in army hospitals where it was apparently possible to mix so-called races without any problems.

In another way the composition of my company did not represent a cross section of the country or the army. This was because many of the enlisted men had been combed out of more-or-less privileged units to meet

SHSI (DES MOINES)



At Fort Des Moines, site of the first training center for the new Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, WAACs parade in review for Eleanor Roosevelt and Oveta Culp Hobby, WAAC director (circa 1943).

the insatiable demand for replacements. We were, on the average, younger, better educated, and more middle class or potentially middle class than the profile of most infantry companies. There was, I imagine, a higher quotient of youthful idealism. Not that we affected the boy-scout enthusiasm of the rush to the colors in 1917, and we were appropriately sardonic about the media tripe that characterized the home front—"Lucky Strike green has gone to war," or, "We are fighting for the right to boo the Dodgers," and so forth. Still, eighteen- and nineteen-year-old boys faced that great experience with a certain innocence. I recall one rainy night in the ASTP basic training company, when we gathered in groups in the company street between the barracks to sing our respective college songs—hardly aware, incidentally, of the effect this might have had on our non-coms who had not enjoyed our opportunities.

In the company at Fort Bragg, we were subjected to a certain number of cracks about "college boys" and "ABCDers," mostly from our first sergeant, a Depression-era professional soldier from South Carolina whom I hated with a purity undiluted by a cultural super-ego or liberal guilt. When it came to the point, he was all soldier. Although his rank indicated a place in the company command post out of direct action, he waded into enemy fire on our first day in combat and had part of his nose shot off.

By and large, in our company at least, we got along with our non-coms. The officers varied but our company commander is revered to this day by those who attend the annual reunions of Company A of the 397th Infantry. Recently, in calculating relative ages I realized that the man whose calm authority we accepted without question was then aged twenty-six.

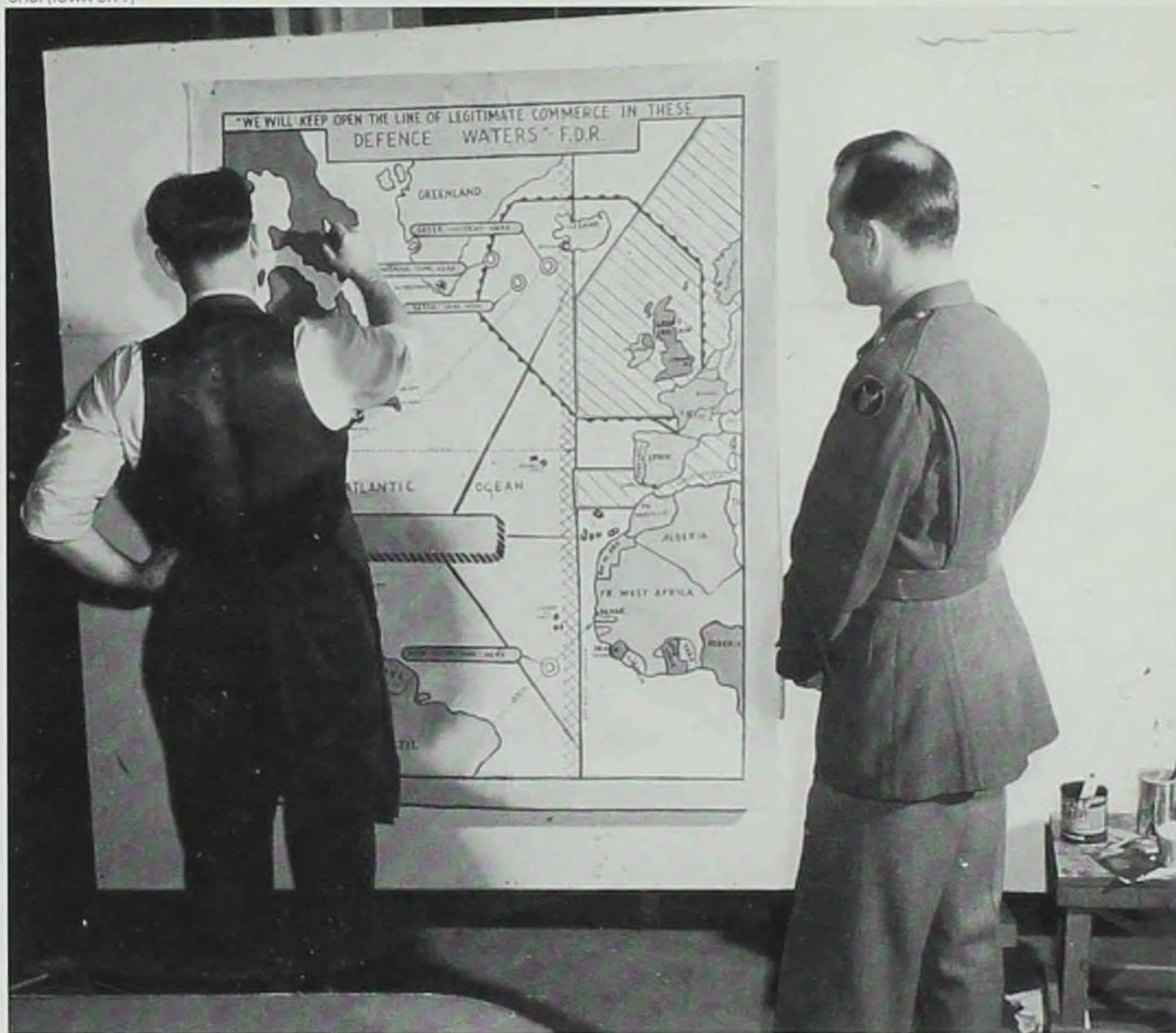
The organization, training, weaponry, and tactics of an infantry company still owed a great deal to the experiences of the First World War. A veteran of 1918 would have recognized the hand grenade, a version of the British Mills bomb; the Browning Automatic Rifle, the one fully

automatic weapon assigned to each twelve-man squad; and the light machine guns and sixty-millimeter mortars carried by the weapons platoon. We were still equipped with bayonets (although as early as the Civil War only a small percentage of wounds had been inflicted with edged weapons) and were still put through bayonet drill that probably dated from the early eighteenth century, designed to inculcate a latent ferocity to be tapped on appropriate occasions. There is a cartoon by Bill Mauldin, the great cartoonist of the war, or any war, in which one grizzled "dog-face" says to his buddy, "I'll be dawgoned! Did you know this can opener fits on the end of a rifle?"

The major weapons innovation at the company level was the M1—the Garand rifle—a superb semiautomatic weapon. Recently I was surprised to read that General Patton believed that with the firepower of the M1 the best offensive tactic was a steady advance in line while pinning down the enemy with continuous fire on the move. This is to return to the tactical principles of the Battle of the Somme in 1916, which cost the English 60,000 casualties on the first day, and reflects, I think, the distrust of citizen-soldiers who would presumably be reluctant to move forward once they had gone to ground under fire. Fortunately we were not trained according to those principles but learned to hit the ground and advance by short rushes under covering fire.

There was some concern that the ex-students suddenly funneled into infantry divisions would be insufficiently trained for combat. Most commentators have concluded that thanks to physical vigor and relatively high intelligence this was not the case. Many of us had undergone thirteen weeks of infantry basic and an additional six months of training with the division before we were shipped out. A crucial element here, emphasized in studies of combat morale, is that we were together long enough to establish comradeship and unit identity.

I will permit myself one anecdote from the period at Fort Bragg, one that strikes a postmodernist note, illustrating how art creates life. The people in Public Relations, a



In Iowa, WPA artists help create defense posters and maps.

service that had become a major branch of the armed forces, regularly planted stories about specific units in the media. Ours, the 100th Division, was featured in *Look* magazine, a poor man's version of *Life* magazine, where we were described as the Singing Century Division, particularly addicted to music—which was news to us. A couple of weeks after that publication, our company received an issue of ocarinas, the small terra cotta wind instruments often called “sweet potatoes.” I spent a day in a target pit holding up silhouette targets for machine-gun practice with a clarinetist who in the course of that day taught me to play “Carry Me Back to Old Virginny” on one of those ocarinas—thus transforming *Look* magazine's fiction into fact.

We were shipped out in late September, east across the Atlantic, in that oddly peaceful limbo of life in a convoy, through the straits of Gibraltar to clamber down the rope

nets off the ships when they docked at Marseilles. That great port had been secured in the supplementary invasion of southern France in August 1944 over the anguished objections of the British, who deplored the withdrawal of troops from the Italian campaign, and the frustration of Churchill's fantasy of a thrust into the “soft underbelly” of Nazi Europe.

We camped outside of the city for a week or so. There, one experience illuminated for me one of the salient principles of warfare, especially in the twentieth century—the primacy of logistics. Details had been assigned to night shifts un-

loading supplies at the Marseilles docks. When some men from my company came back with “souvenirs” liberated from crates dropped from an appropriate height—canned turkey and canned peaches slated for some high echelon officers' mess—my buddies and I volunteered to help expedite the flow of supplies. Despite “the best laid plans” we were soon put to work unloading ammunition instead.

After a bit I drifted away from that assignment to visit the chow lines of other companies' details. As I wandered through that immense cavern of materiel on the Marseilles docks, it occurred to me that we were certain of victory. A friend of mine who served in the South Pacific came to the same conclusion when he saw the mountains of abandoned equipment rusting on islands all across that vast expanse.

As Paul Fussell does in his debunking book *Wartime*, one can expose examples of cosmic incompetence in American military leadership, and of the superiority of our enemies in

tactics, training, discipline, and certain weapons systems. For example, German tanks, and their all-purpose artillery piece, the "88," took a terrible toll of our forces. However, war between modern industrial societies demands the production of goods on a vast scale—and not only production but the planning, organization, and rational distribution of what was produced. At this, no one could match us. Indeed, when they attacked Pearl Harbor, the Japanese solved our problem of excess industrial capacity for almost two generations.

We pulled out of Marseilles in rainy fall weather and were trucked north along the Rhone River on roads littered with the wreckage of German equipment, to positions held by the Seventh Army in the southern sector of the Allied line which, as in the First World War, stretched from Switzerland to the sea. There we faced the line the Germans had reformed just in time to avert the collapse of their West Front armies in August and September, weeks that framed an immense tragedy of lost opportunities.

The 100th Division went into action in the Vosges Mountains—old mountains like the Appalachians—wooded, cold, and wet in that November of 1944. My brief experience of less than a month in combat scarcely made me an authority on the conduct of the war, but I came away with some observations that speak to certain general phenomena.

In that first month in the mountains, we were fighting an old-fashioned sort of war. Once we had dropped off of the trucks, we moved on foot no faster than any infantrymen ever had in those hills, from the Roman legions to the American soldiers who had walked the same ground in the First World War. We traveled light. Unlike the troops who drowned under the weight of full-field packs in the waters off of Omaha Beach we carried almost nothing. At first, no more than our weapons, a spoon stuck in our boots, and a canteen and canteen cup, which also served as a bowl, hoping that the supply sergeant would jeep up something to cover us at night. After awhile, most of us improvised some

motley collection of necessities—a blanket roll across the shoulder, no different than those carried by soldiers in the Civil War, and something in which to carry a couple of boxes of K-rations, cigarettes, and candy.

While I was with the company we were involved in what might be called minor or light engagements. One or another company in the battalion would move forward into a brief fire-fight where the Germans waited, having laid out fields of fire, registered mortars with professional precision on narrow roads and intersections, and scattered mines and booby traps on the roads, in the forest, and in the towns, inflicting a quota of casualties before pulling back. There was some shelling, but no murderous barrages or mass attacks. Yet the erosion of personnel, measured by the excess proportion of rations to company strength—you could pick your favorite tinned meal from the stack of extra K-rations—rapidly opened large gaps in the company's table of organization.

In part the replacement crisis in the fall of 1944, when a country of 150 million with some 12 million men under arms could scarcely keep 89 divisions up to strength, reflected the large proportion of American soldiers in the "tail" (the non-combatant services) compared to those doing the fighting. Other armies, especially the Russian, did with a lot less behind in order to have more up front. And the overwhelming percentage of casualties were taken in infantry line companies. Even in divisions where combat infantry constituted 67 percent of division strength, they would suffer some 92 percent of the casualties. So our company suffered that inexorable accumulation of killed, wounded, and gone sick in these first few weeks. And this, as I said, in a series of light skirmishes. I became one of those casualties, wounded by mine shrapnel on the fifth of December.

After I left the company things became far more serious as the division was launched into the bitter winter campaign for the old fortified center of Bitche, an almost impregnable strongpoint on the Maginot Line. I got some sense of what that was like from a letter, in-

credibly, still in my hands, written by a nineteen-year-old platoon sergeant with whom I have renewed a friendship after forty years, since his retirement as managing editor of the *Denver Post*. This is a passage from the letter he wrote to me in January 1945:

"They really went down fast after you left, Spitz. You know about Paul; I was one of the first to reach him. I thought at first that he was still alive, but no soap. A couple of days earlier Smitty, Thomson and Atkinson went down 1-2-3 right beside me as we walked up a hill. At and Thomson are o.k., but Smitty didn't make the grade. Where Paul got it we were subjected to the worst shellfire since we started—they used everything on us, mortars, 88's, and even a damned flak-wagon. We refer to that hill as 88th Avenue now."

The "Paul" killed in that action was Paul Spurgeon, a boy from Illinois, my tentmate. Like me, he had been a company runner until he was promoted to communications sergeant shortly before his death. The citation for his posthumous Silver Star reads as follows: "Sergeant Paul K. Spurgeon, on 13 December 1944, after his company secured its objective, was faced on three sides with a counterattack. With the men low on ammunition, he exposed himself going from foxhole to foxhole distributing ammunition until mortally wounded. The company was enabled to repel the enemy counterattack by this gallant act."

I still have a heart-rending letter from Paul's mother—"Our loss is only one in a million," she writes, "but I must say the wound is *deep*." The letter goes on and on as if she couldn't bear to sever even one tenuous link with her son.

I didn't intend here a celebration of one death in war, one American hero, in the manner that so often serves the facile self-praising superpatriotism that is the very stuff of political demagoguery in this country. But I wanted to evoke the poignancy of all of those truncated lives, those lives that were never lived, lost not only in the service of this country, not only in battle—the unrecorded lives cut off, not by natural forces, epi-

demics, floods, or earthquakes, but by the malevolent ingenuity through which humans have slaughtered one another (and continue to slaughter one another) by the millions throughout the course of the wretched century that began in 1914.

One cannot know how those lives abridged by war might have been lived. Paul Spurgeon is now a remote memory for me, viewed dimly back through the decades as if through a veil of early snowfall in the Vosges; a boy from a church-going midwestern family who advanced his queen too early in our games of chess, who was educating himself by reading *The Wealth of Nations* on his bunk, who leaned out of our ranks on that first night as we moved up out of Marseilles to bark "*bon nuit*" to a startled Frenchman. I can only imagine what his life might have become. But I *can* know what was denied him by death at the age of nineteen—for example, the challenge of return to college, the joys of love and sex, the fulfillment and the pressure of a career, the comradeship and tensions of marriage, the rewards and anxieties of parenthood, all of the pleasures of a healthy body, and inevitably the decline of that body into decrepitude and death—but death at some later date.

To begin with, not to survive was not to know that grand moment, for those not crippled in combat, of coming home from the wars. In contrast to the awareness of the permanent psychic scars left by the terrible ambiguities of the war in Vietnam, there was little public assumption of long-term consequences of war-related trauma. Not that the deep emotional wounds inflicted by the horrors of our war were ignored, but they were expected to heal. You were supposed to get on with life.

There was, however, a brief indeterminate period, a happy hiatus between discharge from the service and getting on with our lives, when we were still in uniform perhaps, or in a new sports jacket, in its lapel the discharge button (embossed with an eagle—"the ruptured duck") that disappeared after the first "You still wear your merit badges, buddy?" So, for awhile, we were thought of and identified ourselves as veterans, and were



Iowa signs of the GI Bill: Hawkeye Trailer Village in 1947 (above) at the University of Iowa comprised 128 trailers and communal wash houses and showers for married veterans and their families. Below: Veteran Glen Mathisen of Royal, Iowa, was a student at Buena Vista College in Storm Lake in 1947—and “Dad” to son Larry Michael.

allowed a certain space in which to redesign our futures. The cataclysmic experience of the war had so sharply severed familiar continuities that “before the war” referred not only to an earlier stage in our lives but to a radically different self-identity, or so it seemed to those who were still too young to have been robbed of a vital segment of their mature lives by three or four years away from job and family. Though we laughed at the number in that forgotten musical comedy *Call Me Mister* that began, “When he went into the army he was a jerk,” and concluded, “and when he got out of the army he was still a jerk,” we believed that we had been given a clean slate.

We began to write on that slate, still in the shadow of the war, still identified as veterans for some purposes. Among the purposes I can speak to out of personal experience were the undertaking or resumption of higher education and the attempt to relate the role as a veteran to a citizen’s role.

For veterans, higher education meant the GI Bill, which financed the costs of college for anyone a college would admit. That was a great time to go back to school, for the thou-

SHSI (DES MOINES)



sands who wouldn’t have gone at all if it hadn’t been for the bill, and for the many others who enjoyed a certain autonomy because our parents had been freed from the financial burden of seeing us through. The cohorts of student veterans are generally remembered fondly by their professors as eager to learn, consequential in their studies, and not inclined to see college as an agreeable interlude between high school and the real world. Many of us were married and would



In post-war Iowa, scenes like this 1942 photo of WAACs striding under a war-bond banner over Sixth and Locust streets in Des Moines would be replaced by scenes of veterans returning from Europe and the Pacific.

retain a brief postwar coherence in “veteran’s housing,” often in abandoned military installations—vacant barracks or Quonset huts. There are probably people reading this who started out in the rows of Quonsets that once lined university campuses and who remember those arctic Iowa nights when the baby’s blanket might freeze to the metal wall of the Quonset.

I can’t resist reference to the GI Bill without grinding an axe. The bill was a triumphant example of single-payer education. Because those students had gone to war it was not only politically, but economically possible to subvent mass education out of the national budget. As with the subsequent National Defense Education Act, or even President Eisenhower’s National System of Defense in Interstate Highways Act, large public expendi-

tures for the common good, and even the violation of the sacred principles of the free market, were legitimated by the evocation of past and future wars.

The attempt to relate the veteran’s identity to a citizen’s role was experienced by me as a member of the American Veteran’s Committee (AVC), a veteran’s organization conceived as a liberal alternative to the American Legion or the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Our motto was “Citizens First, Veterans Second.” Most of us were idealistic political neophytes who found ourselves on a new battlefield whose chosen weapon was *Roberts’ Rules of Order*, where ferocious, dialectical combat was joined between the leftists of various stripes, including communists; fellow-travelers; those who believed there should be no enemies on the Left and who would join the Progressive

Party that supported the 1948 presidential candidacy of Henry A. Wallace; and their antagonists—the anti-communists liberals who rallied to the ADA (the Americans for Democratic Action). I occupied a middle splinter. The duel in the American Veteran's Committee was a marginal example of the worldwide conflicts on the political Left under the factional imperatives of the Cold War. In the United States the most significant locus of that struggle was probably in organized labor. To think of that now is to recognize how far to the right the political spectrum has shifted.

Memory has become a chic historical topic. Historians who deal with memory as a collective phenomenon should take care to distinguish one variety from another. My reminiscences about the war comprise a testimony drawn from immediate experience—a “living memory”—but colored now by all of the other accounts I have heard and histories I have read. I have also realized that particular memories are fixed in the telling and retelling. It is now impossible for me to summon up any event from a past that had such a deep effect on me but that has not already been fixed in my memory by earlier accounts to others or to myself.

Many of you will have a memory of the war-time years. Others of you will have a memory once removed—a memory of the testimony of survivors. Not too long from now there will be no one left to convey these living memories. And some time after that, the recipients of these memories will also pass. But what historians call “collective memories” will persist in various forms—in popular myths, generally received opinions, fictionalized accounts (as in Hollywood films), and in the claims to authority of academic histories. These are not clearly separable in the public mind but interpenetrate to shape popular conceptions of significant pasts.

I have had a professional interest in the subject of so-called historical generations—age cohorts separately identified because their historical location seemed in some way to set them apart from their predecessors

and successors. There are different ways to characterize such generations; one way is to identify them as cohorts marked by the stamp of a defining experience, identified, for example, as the Depression generation or the Vietnam War generation. The experience that left a defining imprint on me was not so much participation in World War II itself, as growing up in an era in which fascism seemed to go from strength to strength, so that the horrors of modern war seemed an acceptable price to pay in order to beat back the threat, not only to any democratic political order, but to simple decency in daily life.

Of course, not every American of my age was affected that way. The pioneering essay on historical generations by the sociologist Karl Mannheim distinguishes segments of the same age-cohort as “generation-units” that responded variously to similar experiences. To many of those in my “generation-unit”—let us say apprentice intellectuals who took politics seriously—the decisive trauma would be Stalinism and the threat of the post-war expansion of the Soviet system. Others, like myself, have probably been more concerned with the internal, rather than the external threat to democracy. I never believed that there was the remotest chance for anything like a communist takeover in this country or even the advent of the diluted milk-and-water social-democracy of Sweden, or England under a Labor government; and I was probably more fearful that we would sell our political soul to the Cold War than that world communism would win it.

Historians agree on very little except, perhaps, on the contingency of human destinies. However similar, things are never quite the same. I did not, and do not, believe that we were, or are, threatened by some sort of fascism on the Italian or German model of the 1930s, or even something that might be labeled neo-fascism. Still, for us old liberals, in times of extreme political alienation when nothing seems to work, the demagogues who spring up to peddle the politics of hatred, above all, race hatred, remind us that there are still battles to be fought—that the war for a democratic and humane political and social order is never finally won. □



Women on the Home Front: The Iowa WIPeEs

by Jacqueline Smetak

Rosie the Riveter," the glamorous factory girl introduced in 1942 as a part of a federal campaign to encourage women to apply for defense jobs and to encourage employers to hire them, has long been a familiar icon of the Second World War [see above]. Less familiar, however, are the real life "Rosies," the women who overcame prejudice and their own doubts to contribute to the war effort, an effort that required both a massive increase in industrial production and radical changes in how things were produced and who produced them.

In Iowa, some of the real life "Rosies" were the women shown in the following images taken by Allison-Lighthall Photographers of Chicago, Illinois, for the Chicago and North Western Railway. Eight of the seventeen photos were published in the *Clinton Herald* May 18, 1943; all seventeen are now in the collections of the State Historical Society of Iowa.

The North Western hired women to work as WIPeEs, or engine wipers, to clean and service their locomotives in Boone, Council





Marcella Kees, one of the Clinton WIPes, gives a locomotive a bath—a job, according to the *Clinton Herald*, “far different from the chore of washing out a few things at home.” In order to make women doing such heavy work seem “natural,” traditionally male jobs held by women were often described in feminized terms.



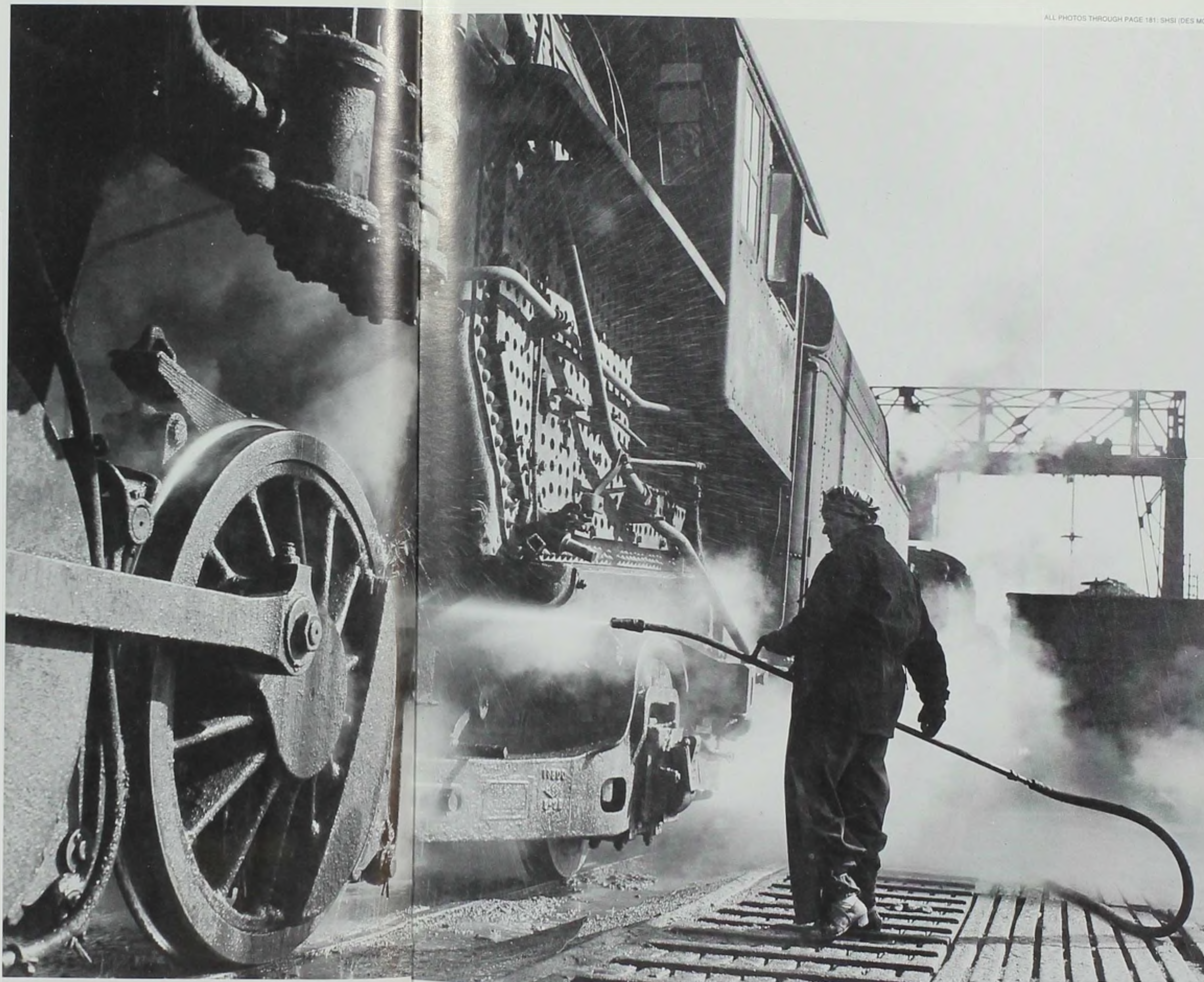
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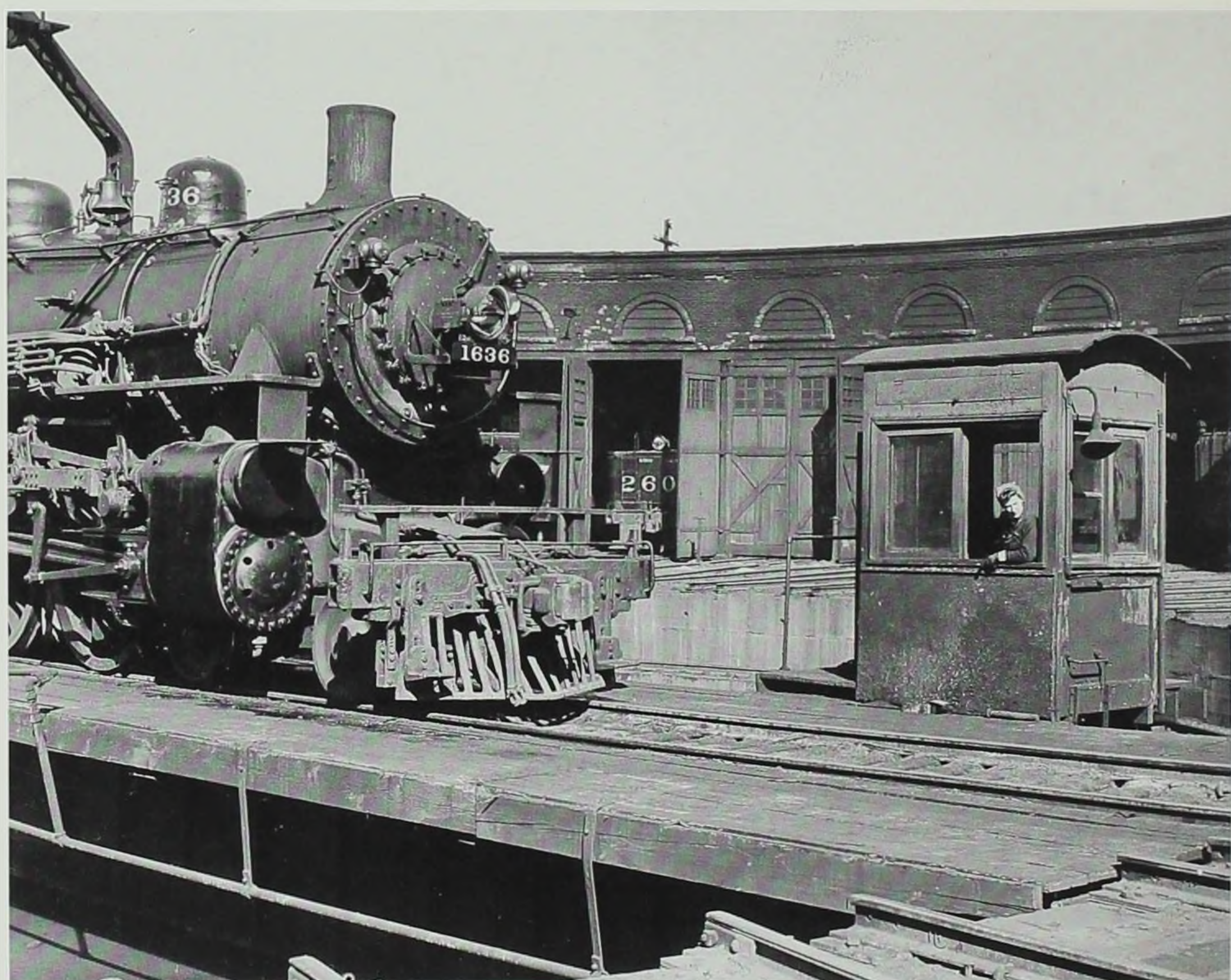
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ALL PHOTOS THROUGH PAGE 181: SHS (DES MOINES)



Edith Bennis (in window on right) had run a beauty parlor and her father's eighty-acre farm; now in 1943 she is running the turntable at the Clinton roundhouse while her husband works on an army construction project in Alaska. Women were often depicted as temporarily "stepping in" on the home front for their husbands and sweethearts away at the battlefield. However, according to historian Shema Gluck, by 1944, although one out of three female defense workers had been a full time homemaker before the war, only one in ten was actually married to a service man.

Bluffs, and Clinton, Iowa, as well as Chicago and Proviso, Illinois, and Green Bay, Milwaukee, and Madison, Wisconsin.

There were eleven and a half million women in the U. S. work force in 1940, most of them employed in low-paid, traditionally female jobs in light industry, domestic work, or the service sector. The overwhelming majority worked only out of grinding economic necessity largely because of the widely held opinion that women, particularly married women, shouldn't be working and thus tak-

ing scarce jobs away from men. In rural Iowa where manufacturing and professional jobs were scarce, women generally worked beside their husbands, brothers, or fathers on the farm, in small businesses, or took on short-term seasonal work for a little extra money.

By 1941, the war in Europe had changed all of that. Within a matter of months the nation went from chronically high levels of unemployment—20 percent in 1938; 14.6 percent in 1940—to sudden and severe labor shortages, most alarmingly in crucial de-

Thelma Cuvage, right, screens sand that will be used to add friction to the locomotive's driver wheels. Her husband also contributed to the war effort by working in a defense plant in Savannah, Illinois, about twenty miles north of Clinton. "The WIPes," the *Clinton Herald* explained, "are the feminine engine wipers, who for the first time since World War I, have invaded the shops and roundhouses of the North Western railroad."



Anna Weseman cleans the cab of a Class H locomotive. "At first we did not know how they'd take to the job," remarked labor foreman W.J. Whalen about the WIPes. "But the women soon convinced us that they look at all those dusty locomotives in the same way they do the job at a big, dirty house." The Class H locomotives were the "largest of the Iron Horses in service on the Northwestern Line."





Marcella Kees [or Martin?] shovels wet sand into a dryer. "The sand will be used in locomotives to add friction to driver wheels," the *Herald* reported. "The job is one of many formerly held by men and now handled by women."

fense-related industries. Industry and government responded to the need for more workers by hiring massive numbers of the previously excluded. In Iowa, the number of people employed in manufacturing nearly doubled from 64,773 in 1939 to 112,490 in 1947.

In the summer of 1941, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 forbidding racial discrimination in defense industries, perhaps the first effective civil rights order since the Fourteenth Amendment. Many states suspended child labor laws—by 1943 over three million children, aged twelve to seventeen, were employed in war work—and in some areas, vagrants were arrested and those with usable skills were offered amnesty if they'd go to work.

But the most significant addition to the de-

fense work force were the six million women who donned coveralls and bandannas to do a man's job as well as any man. Iowa women were no exception as they stepped into tough jobs, replacing, as the *Clinton [Iowa] Herald* stated it, "their male predecessors who have gone to war or into higher-paying war plants." The Chicago and North Western's railroad yard at Clinton averaged about twelve trains a day, with seventeen women employed as WIPes "greeting the grimy locomotives" as they came off the line: "They [the women] swarm over the steel giants and give them a bath of live steam and hot water under pressure," the *Herald* reported.

WIPes worked a full eight-hour shift and then went home to their second job. This from the *Clinton Herald*: "The fact that she has four children did not keep Mrs. Ralph O.



Edith Bennis, a former beauty operator, stands on top of a locomotive to service the sand dome. A year later, in anticipation of the end of the war, newspaper articles would focus on the problems of juvenile delinquency supposedly caused by women abandoning their children in order to work, and the need to find jobs for GIs who, it was assumed, would be coming home soon.

"Lunch time—and time for feminine gossip for women laborers in the North Western railroad shops where the fair sex has taken over on the labor gang," the *Herald* reported. W.J. Whalen, labor foreman in charge of the crew, spoke highly of the women: "They do the job with care and thoroughness that is difficult for a man to equal." From left to right: Marcella Kees, Bonnie Smith, Libby Seematter, Irene Brecher, Thelma Cuvage, Katherine Anderson, Emily Atzen, Viola Sievers, Dorothy Lucke, Marcella Hart, and Anna Weseman.

Weaver . . . from joining the WIPes. Two of Mrs. Weaver's children were old enough to take care of the youngsters each day until Mr. Weaver, who is employed at the Clinton Bridge Works, had time to slip on an apron and get the supper going, while his wife worked the 4 p.m., to midnight shift."

But not to fear. Mrs. Weaver's sister came to live with them, joined the WIPes, and signed up for the 8 a.m., to 4 p.m. shift, "so Mr. Weaver no longer will have to worry about the culinary end of this all-out for Victory business."

Women worked tough jobs in spite of discrimination, unequal pay, notions about what they could and could not do, the difficulties of taking care of children and a house in the days before modern household appliances were common, a lack of help and child care, and the frustrations of chronic shortages and long lines at the grocery store. In a very real sense these women—of all ages, races, creeds, and colors—helped spell the difference between victory and defeat. □

NOTE ON SOURCES

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Coming of Age Under Hitler, Truman, and Stalin

by Tamara Holtermann Schoenbaum

Extraordinary public events affect the lives even of ordinary people. In the twenty-one years between my birth and the death of Stalin, I endured World War II and German National Socialism, I experienced American capitalism, and I was tempted by communism. Pacifism also claimed my attention, but I hesitate to rank it with the other three. Since ideologies, for all the energy they generate, warp the mind, distort the truth, and obscure the distinction between right and wrong, I learned to distrust all of them in the end.

My experiences were neither spectacular nor even typical. It was my great good fortune that they included neither deportation nor violent death personally witnessed. However, they did include attempts from various directions to win my allegiance and bend my mind. I grew up among Germans temporarily intoxicated with power, reckless, even murderous, who inflicted and suffered terrible destruction. In 1945, when World War II ended, I was thirteen years old. Greater than the deprivations of which I suffered a small share, greater, too, than my memories of terror, was my appetite for enduring ideas and beliefs. Though I actively began my blind and unguided search upon reaching adolescence, ideas and ideologies had been in the air I breathed long before that.

I was born in Aachen in 1932, one year be-



The author and her family, 1942: From left, Tamara, Aurelia, Waldo (in back), and Jan Holtermann.

fore Hitler came to power. My hometown was, and still is, within walking distance to the German border with Belgium and the Netherlands. Before World War II, it was a middle-sized city with a predominantly Catholic population. The city boasted a history of almost twelve hundred years and a special link to Charlemagne. Because of this and its proximity to four other countries, many regarded this city, and it certainly regarded itself, as a cultural hub and the heart of western Europe.

My father came from a north-German Protestant family. He had wanted to become an architect. Instead, he inherited a wholesale business and reluctantly made it his own. To compensate for his unhappiness with an occupation he had not chosen, he kept company with artists, musicians, and literary people, many of whom fashionably leaned to the left. Most of his close friends believed that everyone should vote for the Communists, in order to keep the Nazis out of government, and they turned each other's first names into Russified diminutives of endearment, a testimony to their belief that the heirs of the Russian revolution represented their only hope for mankind. Waldo became Vaninka, Ida became Idasha, Wilhelm became Villushu.

My mother was born in Poland in 1906 as the seventeenth child of Jewish parents. As

the family grew and prospered, it became progressively assimilated, until its roots were almost severed, religious practices were shed, and not much Jewish identity was left, except in the eyes of those who hated Jews. By the time my mother left Poland, in 1926, her only brother and many of her sisters had died, most of them in childhood epidemics. Of the four surviving sisters, one went to America, one to Germany, and two perished later in Auschwitz.

There was a basic difference of civic disposition between my parents, of which I was dimly aware as a child. I never heard my father say anything political, at least not until I was virtually grown up. In the presence of children, he would discuss neither politics nor money. Behind the discreet curtain of bourgeois respectability, personal lives in my father's family were not exemplary. Still, my father was a law-abiding citizen. In contrast,

my mother, having grown up in Poland under Russian dominance, firmly believed and would often say, that laws were there to be transgressed. The only laws she seemed to know were unjust laws. Her keen survival instincts and a great compassion for the down-trodden persuaded her not to leave politics to the politicians.

When Hitler's regime began to close in on us, this difference between my parents became quite apparent. My father was subjected to increasing pressure from his relatives and business associates, all active Nazis, who urged him to abandon his Jewish wife. I became aware of this because we suddenly stopped seeing these relatives and sharing festive occasions with them. My father was quite scared, but inclined to keep quiet and wait for the nightmare to pass. In contrast, my mother was alert, adept at beguiling the Nazi functionaries she despised, and pre-

COURTESY THE AUTHOR



The author's hometown, Aachen, Germany, after an air raid in July 1941. Aachen is within walking distance of the border with Belgium and the Netherlands, and was briefly the home of another Jewish girl—Anne Frank—when she and her family lived with her grandmother in 1933.

pared to fight for her life and her family, not with weapons or underground activity, but with charm, ruse, and deception. Occasionally, she did dangerous things: she voiced opinions or helped people she was not supposed to help.

In 1940, when I was eight, my mother invited me to her bed to tell me, under the blanket, that the people in power, that is, the Nazis, were all common, and not so common, criminals. She said that I should remember this whenever I heard or read their propaganda, I should minimally cooperate in school, and I should never tell anyone what I heard or observed at home. I wondered indiscreetly what my father's political position might be, were he not married to my mother, but basically, I was a good girl. I did cooperate, and I did not tell anyone what my mother had said.

SHSI (DES MOINES)



Iowa children like ten-year-old LeRoy Powers experienced the war far differently than European children. Powers (from Emmetsburg) was champion of Iowa's rural school milkweed pod collection contest. His teacher, Ella Mae Bruck of Osgood, shares in the honors at the statehouse, 1945. Powers collected 150 bushels, to be used as a wartime substitute for water-resistant kapok fiber in life preservers.

Cooperating with the Nazi regime meant holding up my right arm during the frequent public singing of two consecutive anthems. Whenever I could, I nonetheless rested my aching arm on the shoulder of a child in front of me. Cooperation meant participating in marches and other outdoor activities, or waiting for hours on roadsides for Nazi dignitaries to drive by, and feigning enthusiasm when they did. My parents acquired a framed photograph of Hitler and stashed it behind a tall row of art books. Cooperation meant whisking out the Hitler portrait from behind the books and hanging it on a designated nail, whenever a certain inquisitive Nazi official in uniform came to visit. Cooperation meant not regaling my classmates with the political jokes I heard at home. (My father, a witty and whimsical man, never told political jokes, but my parents' friends did not hesitate.) It was not easy to keep a mental distance from the world outside my home. Even though I felt honored by my mother's trust, and the thought of denouncing her therefore never crossed my mind, I was afraid of betraying my family inadvertently. I remember my inner conflict and the constraints on my behavior on the day when Hitler was almost assassinated, and on many other occasions when the enthusiasm of my classmates clashed with the truth I had learned at home.

Nazi propaganda depicted Jews as subhumans, and hateful propaganda, with hideous caricatures of Jews, was posted in all public places. It was always present on the radio, in speeches, on the lips of our teachers. My mother decided not to tell me about our Jewish identity. Rather than allowing people around us to define me as an outcast, and possibly as subhuman, she decided to have me live like other children of my age. She let me be inducted, with other ten-year-olds, into an organization for aspiring Hitler youth; she also let me join my Catholic friends in church whenever I felt like it. I enjoyed the folk songs we sang with the youth group, the solemn music I heard in church,

and I learned a lot about the many ways of winning children over to a political or religious cause.

Not until the war was over did my mother tell me about being Jewish. In the mid- and late thirties, before the borders were closed, my mother and I had traveled to Poland several times to visit her sisters. It was easy to avoid the issue of Jewishness; I was still a small child then, and neither my mother nor her sisters were practicing Jews. My aunt kept me amused by treating me to rides in horse-drawn taxi carriages, while my mother, as she told me much later, assembled false testimony and photographs to help her construct the story that cut her Jewish family tree in half and hence would later save us.

My mother's original name was Rajzel Florenstein. When she was born, her mother was fifty-four years old, or so it was remembered in the family. This remarkable circumstance became the basis on which my mother rewrote a part of her history. She claimed that her mother was not that woman of fifty-four, but a non-Jewish maid. She produced a statement from two Poles, one Catholic and one Protestant, addressed to no one in particular, but tailored to fit my mother's needs, in which these "witnesses" claimed, in 1936, that on his deathbed in 1931, my grandfather had made a confession to them: he had had an illicit affair with a household maid, who later disappeared, leaving the baby with the real father, his wife, and his sixteen other children. In this statement, my grandmother's age at the time of my mother's birth was quoted as fifty-seven, which made child-bearing even less plausible. Since no one in the early 1940s had heard of a menopause accident at fifty-four, let alone fifty-seven, resulting in a healthy baby, the story seemed credible to the authorities.

Nonetheless, we were summoned to the Office of Racial Affairs in Berlin, where photographs and measurements of our skulls, noses, ears, and feet supposedly tested my mother's allegations. I remember the journey, but did not understand its purpose. The Nazis cultivated a dubious kind of biological anthropology with simplistic and extreme stereotypes of Jewish physical appearance. Since

we did not look Jewish to them, we passed the test. My mother was rubber-stamped as "half-Jewish." This, and being married to a non-Jewish German citizen, saved my mother from deportation to a death camp. My brother and I were now considered "quarter-Jews," and that saved him and me. None of us had to wear yellow stars, but when we saw people in the street who did, my mother always whispered to me her outrage and compassion. Apparently there were many people who knew the real truth about us, because they had come to know my mother long before she reconstructed her past, but they looked the other way and did not talk.

I experienced the war much as did other German children. In September 1939, when it began, we were in a health spa where I was being treated for bedwetting. A heavy sense of doom descended on us. My mother loved Poland, and Germany was now at war with it. I also remember the invasion of France, Belgium, and the Netherlands in 1940. Many airplanes suddenly roared overhead in the night. My father was in Belgium on business and detained for a while. As each successive declaration of war was announced over the radio with loud fanfares, I concluded from the reactions of my parents and their friends, that Hitler had gone mad, but that no one was able to stop him.

My father was drafted in 1942, but since he was already forty years old, he was only sent to occupied France to collect food for his unit. He hated being a German soldier. When a French resistance fighter shot through his right hand as he was holding a helmet full of

COURTESY THE AUTHOR



This profile of Tamara Holtermann (the author as a child) was photographed for the Nazis' Office of Racial Affairs to determine if she fit their physical stereotypes of Jews.

eggs on his lap, he was almost grateful. But the war was far from over. My father's hand was repaired, though never well enough for him to pull a trigger, and he was sent back. He was captured in 1945, almost starved to death in a prisoner-of-war camp on the Rhine, and was released, too weak to walk, but glad to have survived.

My school days were frequently interrupted by air-raid alarms, and I spent many days and wakeful nights in public air-raid shelters. In the spring of 1944, when the front advanced from the west, the government sent all the children of my school to Malmedy, a small town in occupied Belgium. I was billeted with the family of a poor and ignorant but loyal Nazi who had already lost two sons in the war. His wife wept and prayed often and was very good to me.

In May 1944, the house in which my family had lived was destroyed by bombs. I returned the next morning from my temporary quarters in Belgium on a scheduled home visit and stood before a heap of rubble. A corset dangled eerily from my favorite chestnut tree; piano wires hung over the foundation. I wondered where my mother and my little brother might be. A guard discovered me, told me angrily of unexploded bombs, and sent me to the nearest shelter. There, I found neighbors sitting in candle-lit semi-darkness, waiting. There was no water. Behind a bedsheet strung across a doorframe, there was a tall heap of human excrement. A baby, covered with sores, scabs, and flies, lay in a carriage in the sun, naked and alone. My mother, who would sometimes spend the night across the border in occupied Belgium to get some sleep, had escaped the bombing and found me several days later.

When the battle on the western front became audible, my hometown was evacuated. We fled east, to a small town in Westphalia where my father's hand was being repaired. The hospital where we found my father had previously been an insane asylum, but the Nazis had quietly done away with its residents. We came to live with the families of the hospital orderlies, who whispered dark things about the fate of their former patients. This was all that anyone in this small commu-

nity seemed to know of Nazi depravity, but it was enough to turn these good people against Hitler's regime and keep us safe among them. My mother sent me out to watch for surprise visitors; then she covered the radio with a blanket and listened to British and Russian broadcasts, an offense punishable by death. She was consumed by one desire: to outfox and outlive the Nazi regime.

There were many young Russian, Ukrainian, and Polish men and women in the area, who had been deported to Germany as slave laborers. My mother often talked to them and tried to help them, ignoring all risks. Sometimes, she took me along. As the front drew near, these people ran away and banded together in the woods to wait for their liberators. Some twenty of them were caught and summarily executed by the SS. (Later, this became known as the Warstein Massacre.) I remember the horror on the faces of those who found out. The war was almost over before even my Jewish mother knew anything about these or any other Nazi atrocities.

We were liberated in April 1945. Together with many other people, we had taken refuge in a cave-like shelter, where the air was so thin that candles would not burn and oxygen bottles had to be brought in. My mother fainted and had to be carried out, just in time to greet the first American soldier. For another month, we lived in terror of being reconquered by what was left of the German army. When peace was finally proclaimed on May 8, I did not trust it, and even when it became reality, there was much reason to be grateful, but no cause for celebration, for many more of the horrors of the war were brought home to us then.

We returned to Aachen later that year. It took us a week to travel some one hundred miles by train. Germany was in ruins, and everyone was on the move. One price of war had been the rationing of food. The price of peace, ironically, was an almost total lack of food, and a shortage of everything else. The older people remembered starvation after the First World War and taught us about all the unlikely things one can eat. We ate

nettles, which grew everywhere as a weed; they burned our fingers but tasted as good as spinach. We made gourmet meals with huge turnips ordinarily fed to pigs. When school resumed in 1946, the "Quaker soup" dished out in the morning, a heavy mass of oatmeal, milk, and chocolate, was for many children the only meal for the day. Again, I was luckier than most. My mother found employment as an interpreter for the United Nations Relief & Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) in nearby Cologne. She came home with food on weekends. I also remember the peanut butter, cans of corned beef, and pajamas in garish colors that came in packages from my aunt in New Jersey.

As people carved out of the rubble a makeshift place to live and plucked weeds from the rubble for food, there was plenty of food for the mind. Though people were hungry and cold, they displayed great ingenuity for finding and exchanging things to read, especially books that had been banned or burned. Every book that appeared under license from the Allied occupation forces seemed desig-

BOTH PHOTOS: SHSI (DES MOINES)



Iowans joined relief efforts by sending a variety of materials to war-torn Europe. Above: Jerry S. Engman of Des Moines donates his brother's raccoon coat to Russian war relief, March 1943. Below: Members of the First Church of the Open Bible in Des Moines prepare packages for British relief, about 1940.



SHSI (DES MOINES)



In Ottumwa, Iowa, far from battlefields, this young patient at St. Joseph Hospital is helped by a smiling nurse's aide, assigned to relieve registered nurses for more critical, wartime nursing tasks.

Below: Children in Page County, Iowa, witness machine-gun demonstrations by Lawrence Nash and Vernon Davids, soldiers from the prisoner-of-war camp in Clarinda.

SHSI (IOWA CITY); ORIGINAL OWNED BY RUTH S. WATKINS



nated to help Germans find a way out of their bewilderment and give back to them what their government for twelve years had thought unfit for them to read. This, incidentally, is how I came across the *Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx, a treatise that was to become my gospel of social justice.

Cultural activity was unusually intense. There were plays and concerts, even though there were few places left that could serve as auditoriums. There were religious revivals, though many places of worship had been destroyed. People gathered in small groups to talk about twelve-tone music or the latest books of German writers scattered abroad. Actors held readings of poetry that focused on timeless subjects, but especially on the evils of war. Some of these poems had been written during or after World War I. They tended to treat war like the bubonic plague, something visited by God on innocent mankind. Newspapers and periodicals agonized about the recent past and explored the possibilities of democracy. Hans Werner Richter speaks of these first postwar years as "the beautiful, lean, hopeful years," and this is how I remember them. It was an exciting time to be alive.

When World War II ended in 1945, my parents thought that there would soon be another war, this time between the United States and the Soviet Union. They wanted to leave Europe and go to America, where my mother's only remaining sister lived. This was not easy, since millions of other people, most of whom had no other place to go, wanted to do the same. It took us four years to get our visas. By the time these were issued, in late 1949, a currency reform and the Marshall Plan had already paved the way to serious economic recovery in Germany.

I was now almost eighteen, and I did not want to leave. I was attached to my school and a few close friends. I admired my violin teacher. Except for jazz, nothing that filtered through about America seemed attractive to me, be it the popular music, the chewing-

gum culture, or more important things like American support for the corrupt old order in China. When my aunt wrote from New Jersey that "the best things in life are your family, your friends, and the American dollar," my heart sank. Capitalism introduced itself to me, and its face was ugly. However, three more years had to pass before I was legally of age. I had no choice but to follow my family to America.

In November 1949, we arrived in New Jersey on a semi-cargo steamer. My aunt invited us to a welcome dinner at her house in West Orange, a wealthy suburb of New York. A black couple in white smocks and gloves waited on us. No one introduced us, and they never spoke a word in our presence. When we were finally alone that night, in the overheated apartment my aunt had rented for us, I wept. I wanted no part of such ostentatious wealth and the class distinctions that went with it. In good times, my parents, too, had had a maid, but she was like a member of the family. She would eat and laugh with us and was never asked to wait on us in uniform.

When I earned a scholarship to a nearby college, my life took a brighter turn. I discovered the wonders of American libraries, I was invited to play chamber music with interesting adults, and I found a cohort, namely refugees and other young alienated students. Still, negative impressions prevailed. The radio station WQXR told us many times a day that New York was "a city of opportunity, where nearly eight million people live in peace and harmony and enjoy the benefits of democracy." Even though New York was probably a better place then than it is now, I found it hostile and segregated and the radio message an act of wishful thinking or even deceit. I saw only white Americans in white-collar positions, and blacks doing menial work. Opportunity and the benefits of democracy seemed illusory for some kinds of people.

The various jobs I held as a student introduced me to the general populace and to racism American style. A middle-class white woman for whom I cleaned house told me that she would never hire a black woman for this job, because she would have to allow her to use the toilet in her house. Others sug-



A groom in military uniform smiles as his new wife signs the marriage license—one of the happier scenes in the war's aftermath. Other scenes were less joyous: families searching for missing relatives, veterans suffering from trauma and wounds, and individuals everywhere trying to make sense of a war that had lasted far too long.

gested that I avoid working for Jews. This puzzled me. Had not Americans, both white and black, fought to defeat Hitler and racism? As a summer waitress in New Hampshire, I met open hostility from my superior because she knew that I was from Germany and believed that all Germans were Nazis. I knew that things were not as simple as that, but I found no words to demolish such prejudice.

I know now that America really is a country of opportunity, that its society is wonderfully diverse, basically decent, and that it has great civic and cultural vitality.

This was probably also true in the early fifties, but my perspective was limited by my age and social environment. I see and understand many things better now. But at that time, in New Jersey, American society to me seemed frivolous, irresponsibly wasteful, and rather smug and bigoted. I found it hard to accept the noisy tyranny of business interests, the shallowness and complacency of my young peers, the racism, and the fully automatic, self-righteous anticommunism. To me, these were serious flaws, but I had not come with great expectations, and so I did not look very hard for any saving grace. Unlike those fellow students of mine who had fled from Soviet

Communist occupation, well aware of what it would do to their freedom and well-being, I did not have to like America; I could always return to liberated western Europe. And so, when America failed to persuade me of its superiority, I did just that.

I returned in early 1952, at age twenty, after I had saved enough money for a ticket on an ocean liner. However, the country to which I returned had changed in my absence. Germans now wanted nothing so much as to be normal again, which to them meant being well fed and well dressed, and to forget the past. They had turned their attention to making money and rebuilding their lives. New research and documentation came out about the horrors that Germans had inflicted on Jews and other Europeans. Many Germans responded to this information with stories about their own suffering. It was undeniable that Germans had suffered. Twelve million East Germans had been displaced by annexation; almost all Germans had endured terror, devastation, privation, the loss of family and friends. Yet, in the one-upmanship that people displayed in the accounts of their suffering, the question of how all this had begun was usually overlooked, and that seemed to me in poor taste.

I had learned in America that it was important to read a newspaper regularly, and I began to think more seriously about politics and ideology. Pacifism was immensely appealing. I wanted an enduring peace in the world more than anything else, but I knew that without American, British, and Russian willingness to fight against Hitler, I, too, would eventually have been declared an enemy of the German state, with consequences by then well known.

Several of my friends were communists. Like them, I believed that communism, at least in the abstract, had a better grip on social justice than the capitalism I knew, but I resented the ideological rigor that was demanded of me. My bourgeois background and my interest in religion were often held against me and constituted permanent grounds for suspicion.

The ideological posture of the West German Christian Democrats then in power

bothered me, too. If there was to be any hope of seeing Germany united again, and of keeping the Cold War from catching fire, it seemed to me that one should at least keep an open mind about the Soviet Union and not form a military alliance against it.

In 1953 I was invited to Bucharest as a sympathizer and potential convert to communism. This was my first visit behind the Iron Curtain. I witnessed much privilege and little social justice there. Despite Rumania's great wealth of natural resources, all Rumanians I saw looked harried and poor, and all the shops were empty. Despite the proclaimed brotherhood of socialist republics, Rumanians were not permitted to travel anywhere, not even within the boundaries of their own country. When a young physician recklessly confessed to me his hope for another war, which he saw as the only instrument of relief from communist repression, I began to realize that the communist road to social justice was too long and rather ugly.

Later that year, I spent some time in Paris and discovered the great writer Albert Camus. I learned that it is possible to pursue social justice, and even a moderate form of socialism, without having to tolerate intimidation and repression. I learned that it is possible to be truthful to oneself and others, without sacrificing humanitarian ideals. Communism had lost its seductive appeal for me, long before I came to read about the horrors of the Soviet model under Stalin. I was now twenty-one and, by German law, old enough to vote. For reasons of luck, instinct, or precocious skepticism, none of the ideologies of my time had won my unreserved allegiance. The war had sharpened my sense of bigotry, deceit, and inhumanity perpetrated in the name of a cause. That year, I understood that I could only accept a system that would allow me to think for myself. That system would be strong, yet vulnerable, carefully conceived, yet untidy in its application. In return for respecting my humanity, it would require vigilance and hard work, but never unconditional surrender. □



Two Iowa Soldiers, Two Individual Stories

A world war comprises millions of individual stories. Many are lost as memories fade. Some—often of famous individuals—are preserved in published volumes. Others are tenderly saved in family records. A thick scrapbook with black covers tells one of those individual stories—the brief life and tragic death of Robert (“Bob”) Harwood Shannon, as viewed by his parents who compiled the scrapbook.

Like many a scrapbook, this one begins with a birth announcement and charming boyhood photos of Shannon with his siblings. Soon we see his high school graduation announcement from Washington, Iowa; a fraternity photo; and a 1941 private pilot’s license. We turn a page and suddenly Shannon is in uniform as an air corps cadet in California, posed casually with new buddies or proudly with his family back home. Another page has more pictures of laughing young men in uniform, but the captions are sober-

ing: “Bob (‘Ox’) Johnson, Denison, Iowa, killed in Africa while flying in formation with Bomber Group.” “Roy Oleson, Cedar Falls, Iowa, Killed in Pacific Area.”

On another page, a clipping quotes a letter from another Washington soldier, John C. Jackson: “Will you please convey my thanks to Bob Shannon for helping chase the Germans up here in Tunisia. . . . There’s only one thing down here that reminds me of home and that is that on some days it sounds like an old 4th of July in Washington.”

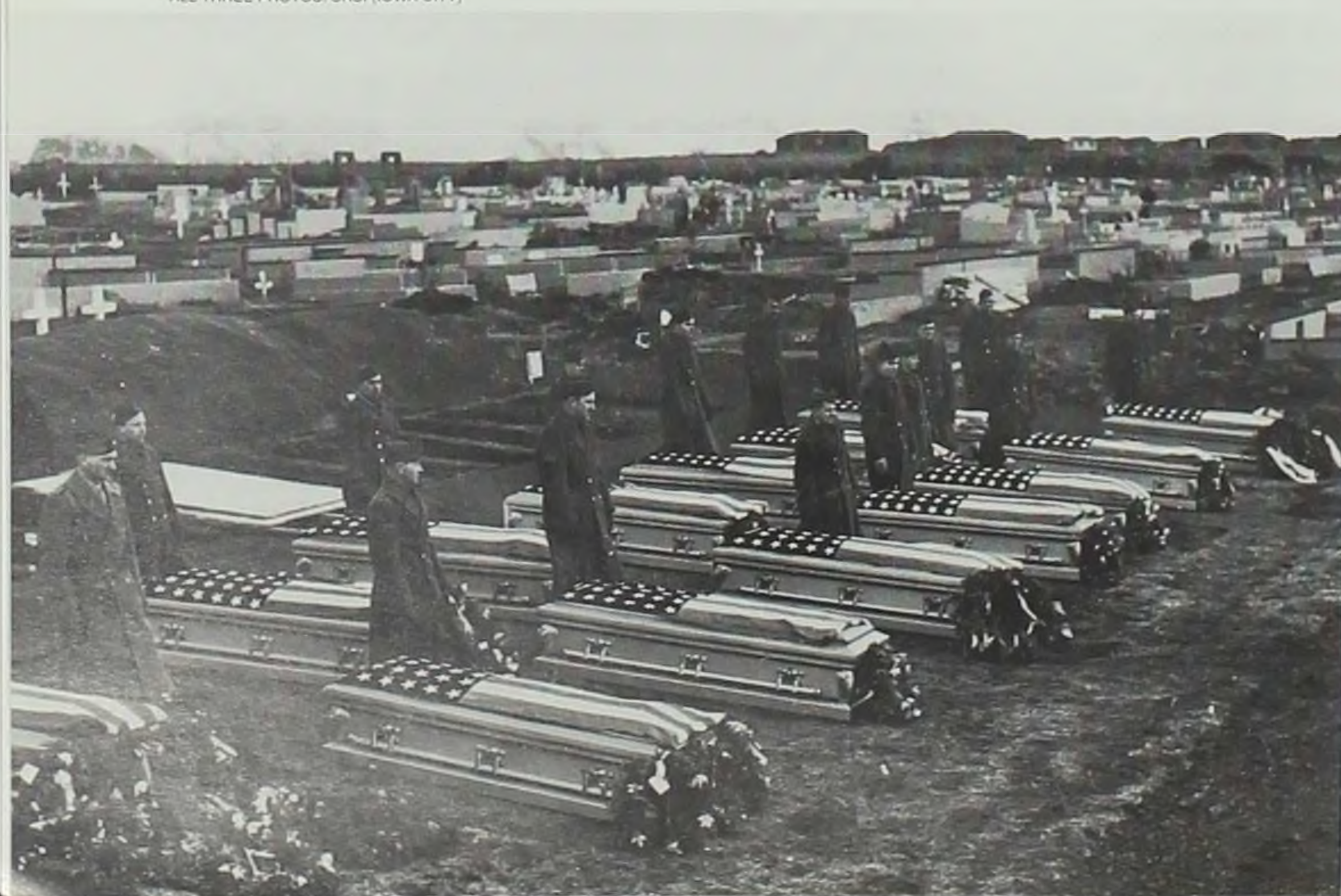
As we leaf through the scrapbook, we see photos of planes, distant shots of them lined up on an airfield or in the air, or disquieting close-ups of flak marks. Official letters of citations and awards are pasted in neatly, telling us that Shannon is building his reputation as a pilot.

Only occasionally do we glimpse the home front: “Why does it have to take something like a World War to let you know how much

you appreciate these brave lads who are risking their lives, their all, for the cause of freedom?” Shannon’s brother, William, asks in a column in the family’s newspaper, the *Washington Evening Journal*, on April 1, 1943.

A scrapbook compiled as a family tribute to Robert Shannon (top left) documents his life, from childhood in Washington, Iowa, to his experiences in the army air corps, to a solemn military funeral in Iceland.

ALL THREE PHOTOS: SHS (IOWA CITY)



The question isn't answered, but pasted onto the next page is the dreaded telegram, and then the cruel headlines: "Bob Shannon in Crash With General Andrews."

Fourteen men died on May 3, 1943, when their plane crashed in bad weather in a remote area of Iceland. On board was Bob Shannon, and also the commanding general of the European Theater of Operations, U.S. Army Lieut. Gen. Frank M. Andrews. The crash made national headlines, and the following pages are filled with dramatic Army Signal Corps photos of the military funeral and burial in Reykjavik. One of the simple wooden crosses bears the name "Robert H. Shannon."

The first half of the scrapbook is devoted to Shannon's life; the second half documents the aftermath of the crash—through local and national clippings; Shannon's father's interview with the single survivor; lists of the 714 "communications" received by the family as condolences. As the grieving shifts, we begin to see Shannon's legacy emerge: news of the Washington, Iowa, YMCA modernizing its community room as a memorial to him; a handful of local donations in his name to the National Jewish Hospital in Denver from people in his hometown; a photo of another little boy (the son of Bob's close friend) whose middle name is "Shannon."

But perhaps the greatest legacy is this "memory book" itself, compiled by Shannon's family and recently donated to the State Historical Society of Iowa so that Shannon's story can be available for the public, for researchers, and for posterity. In a final few pages of tributes, someone named Bye Patterson Laffer of Ft. Dodge remarked about Robert Shannon: "He has written history." The scrapbook and its permanent home at the State Historical Society ensure that.

Another recent donation to the State Historical Society is a scrapbook documenting the Pacific Theater from the perspective of Staff Sergeant John R. Reilly of Hampton, Iowa. Reilly



From the Reilly scrapbook: Reilly holds headlines of Roosevelt's 1944 re-election ("Again, Again, & Again").

was a U.S. Marine Corps "combat correspondent." "These correspondents are young and tried reporters, eager to fight as well as to write, who have been selected from the newspapers, news services and radio stations over the nations," a 1942 clipping explains. "They are true Leathernecks, and for them the portable typewriter is an auxiliary and special weapon." Most of these "fighter-reporters" completed eight weeks of "training and hardening" at Fort Parris and then two weeks of policy and procedures training in Washington, D.C.

The scrapbook is filled with newspaper clippings and photos of Guam, Saipan, Tinian, and Reilly's later work in bond drives. His detailed account of the First Marine Brigade taking Orote Peninsula records the danger step by step: "Our platoon followed tank three. We watched the trees for snipers; we watched for fire lanes and pillboxes. We were clawing at the vitals of enemy opposition."

The Shannon and Reilly scrapbooks represent small collections in the State Historical Society of Iowa. Yet their portrayal of individual lives and ordinary communities caught up in World War II helps fill in the details and develop broad pictures of an extraordinary time in world history.

—The Editor

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compiled by Jacqueline Smetak

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WORLD WAR II: THE HOME FRONT

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LETTERS FROM READERS

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Lynn Alan Peterson
5804 Central, Kansas City, MO 64113

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**"We're going to do our part
... and we'll win because
we're on God's side"**

On June 25, 1942, the *Iowa Bystander* published a photo of this poster, announcing to its African-American readers that "Joe Louis, now Corp. Joseph Louis Barrow, U.S.A. is the heroic figure in a new war poster which the Office of Facts and Figures in Washington is distributing throughout the nation. Pvt. Barrow has been promoted to Corporal since this poster has been released." On the front, one of the few World War II posters created by the WPA's Iowa Art Program. In recognition of the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II, this entire *Palimpsest* looks at the war through the experiences of several individuals, in Iowa and beyond Iowa.