

Interview with EILEEN HUGHES about the home front during WWII

We had just finished dinner, and I think I was in the living room reading the paper. I heard my mother say, "Oh, dear God. They have bombed Pearl Harbor!" I said "What?" and she said "Pearl Harbor. That's Hawaii. Do you know how many troops we have over there?" and I said "No."

As we got involved in the war, I noticed that many of the movies I saw were geared towards the war, especially after Pearl Harbor. I liked the war movies because they always make it look like we were winning.

My brother quit high school to join the army. A lot of the boys did. A lot of the boys in my class didn't bother to graduate. There were very few boys left in my senior class when we graduated.

I myself was interested in joining the army from the time I was a very little girl. At that time, when I was growing up, the women's army was the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps, the WAAC. You could go in at 18 with parental signature. About the time I was entering my senior year of high school that was changed to 21. I was very angry because I really, really planned on going.

Instead, I did Civilian Defense. We spotted airplanes. We had to go to classes to be able to recognize them. I put in over 1,500 hours spotting planes. We had air raid drills and most of us volunteered and did messenger work. It was kind of scary..

As a young person, I went to a lot of USO dances on Saturday nights. That was volunteer and kind of fun. All of these men that were stationed around here were young boys, all away from home who couldn't always get home for the holidays..

There was much fear of bombing because of the submarines rumored to be floating around nearby

After graduating from high school, I went to work at the Naval Air Station at Quonset Point. There were many jobs up there. My mother was a school teacher, and I just walked right into once-and-a-half of what she was making. It was incredible. It was because of the war, there were good jobs for us then. It's an unfortunate thing, but the war brought prosperity.

Of course, then there was rationing. We were just beginning to get used to having a few things more when we got cut back. You couldn't get sugar, and often we'd have the tickets to get the meat, but it wasn't available. It was a hardship, but you learned to live with it. Some people found ways of getting around it, but we didn't do that. We just lived with it.

http://www.stg.brown.edu/projects/WWII_Women/Everybody%27sWar.html