

Every Little Bit Helps

By L. Ruth Scott #24364

During most of World War II, I was a high school student in a small town and a farmer's daughter. Radios, newspapers, magazines and movie houses promoted all the things the citizenship should be doing for the war effort: join a military service, grow a victory garden, buy US savings bonds, volunteer at the USO, write to the servicemen and women.

From that list my only option was to write to those in service. So, that became my gift to the war effort. Letters and V-mails were sent to nearly everyone I knew, and any letter I received was answered. What an education was gained keeping track of all those faraway places that those letters came from—many places I had never heard of before.

During my senior year in school, a recruiter from the U.S. government visited the school and asked girls to sign up to work for the government to “replace a serviceman working in an office, so he could carry a gun.”

I ended up working for the Pacific Overseas Air Transport Service Command in Oakland, California, and living at the YWCA on Lake Merritt. The war ended while I was there, and soon the phone calls started coming into the “Y” for me.

As those men who served the armed forces in the Pacific area started returning home through the port of San Francisco, they were anxious to see someone they knew.

Some had not been stateside for four years. Living in the “Y” made it easy to find other girls to come with my friends and their buddies for a day of sight-seeing or an evening of bowling, paddling on the lake, talking in the YWCA lounge or attending a movie.

We visited Berkeley campus, Golden Gate Park, rode the cable cars in San Francisco, went to the beach and were at times invited to attend a party given at a rented facility. These parties were put together by a group who had served together, maybe aboard a ship or at a station on one of the Pacific Islands, celebrating their homecoming.

As soon as released at their point of entry to the United States, these men headed east, usually on a train, to their families. Some have never crossed my

path again, and some from the old neighborhood I see often. Some are no longer with us. Recently, while cleaning out the attic after my mother's death, I shed a few tears as I found some of those old letters.