

CHAPTER V

It is Sunday afternoon, December 7, 1941, and I am returning from the church. I have straightened up the church and checked to see if it is warm enough for the evening services. As I walk down the alley towards home, one of my friends comes out of his house and asks if I have heard the news. I tell him that I have not and ask why. "The Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor."

"Where is that?"

"I don't know. Dad is on the ham radio now, trying to find out."

I run home and tell my folks to turn on the radio. We listen until bedtime to the news, most of which is just a repeat from before. But the part that makes the situation more tense is the announcement that all military personnel are to report to their duty stations immediately. We learn that Pearl Harbor is a U. S. Naval Base in the Hawaiian Islands and that there is severe damage.

The next morning I go to school and everyone is talking about what happened the day before. They make an announcement that we will be going into the auditorium shortly before ten o'clock. to listen to the President's speech.

We file into the auditorium and everyone is real quiet. No talking now. On the stage, the superintendent has placed his large cabinet radio from home. The President comes on the air and makes his famous speech: "Sunday, December Seventh, 1941, a day that will live

in infamy.” He outlines the attack on our forces and asks Congress to declare war on Japan. After it is over, we file out to go back to our classrooms. I am the last one in line and the superintendent, Mr. Hart, falls in behind me. He says to me, “After today, your life will never be the same.” He is a veteran of World War and he knows how much change this will make. Later in the day, Japan, Germany and Italy, declare war on the United States. And on December Eighth, the United States declares war on Germany and Italy.

The government has been urging farmers to plant less wheat and produce more milk and eggs, but with the outbreak of war, they urge them to raise as much food as they can. This is a change from the policy of just a few years ago, when farmers were paid not to raise food.

The American Legion runs ads urging the farmers and others to gather up their old iron and turn it in. The Agricultural Department even sends out notice that they will help the farmers get their scrap iron to market. Some of the smaller steel mills are running out of material and industry is needing all of the steel that can be produced. The Boy Scouts are collecting scrap paper and are even offering to buy it, but no one charges for it. Everyone is glad to donate for the war effort and what little profit is made on the sale should go to the Scouts. There is a side benefit to the scrap paper drive. The drug stores give the Scouts their scrap paper, including the unsold magazines, which have the top of the covers removed. Included are many comic books. We read these as we sort out the different types of paper. Once in awhile, an adult magazine is included. They are considered to be very racy. We gather and sell paper for about three years and we barely cover expenses, but hopefully it helps the war effort.

After Pearl Harbor, censorship is extremely tight. About two weeks after the attack, the War Department sends out notices to a large number of families. Clifford Hill and Loren Beaman, Jr., are listed as missing. Shortly after receiving their notice, the Beaman family receives a letter written by Loren and dated December 11, 1941. Their hopes rise but of course the question remains, is the date correct.

Shortly after that, they receive notice that he has been found and is okay. The Hill family is not so lucky. Their next telegram confirms the death of Clifford. The war has come to Hennessey for sure.

The attack spurs enlistments and the papers are full of the names of those who have volunteered to serve. Two of my friends who are only a couple of years older than I am volunteer for the Army Air Corp and leave for training camp. The American Legion agrees to provide assistance in filling out papers for those wanting to enlist. A drive is held to obtain books to send to the many camps, so that the boys will have something to read. There are drop off points set up for the "victory books." The Red Cross is raising money to aid in their services to the boys. Many of the members of the Red Cross are meeting to knit and sew articles to be included in the kits that the service men are given at camp. The ages for registration are extended to include all of those from twenty to forty-five and more and more men are being called up to serve.

In church on communion Sunday, they read a list of those in the service and as each name is read, someone comes forward and takes communion in honor of that person.

The Boy Scouts are planning to go to camp. Asbury Smith has been our scoutmaster for nearly a year now, but during the time we were without a leader, the number of scouts dropped and we only have eight scouts who will go to camp. Charles and I are the oldest, so we are delegated to get the camp ready. We go to Mr. Smith and start making plans. We ask who is going to do the cooking? Mr. Smith immediately tells us that we are and not only that, but we will have to make up all the menus, determine the cost and purchase the food. We have never done anything like this before, and some of our meals are not very elaborate, but they are things we know how to cook and do not cost much. We make arrangements to camp at Boiling Springs State Park near Woodward. We arrange for transportation and nine of us go to camp; Mr. Smith and eight boys.

This is the best camp we have ever had. The park is nearly deserted because of the war and we have the run of the place. We have games and work on passing scout requirements. Every boy there is able to advance or pass requirements for at least one merit badge. I am able to pass the swimming requirement for my first class badge and another boy and I go on a fifteen-mile hike to satisfy another requirement. We hike from the camp into Woodward and back. The shoes that I usually wear are slick, so I put on my tennis shoes for the hike. By the time we get to Woodward, I have blisters on my feet and walk the last half of the hike barefoot. I just do not have proper equipment, partly because I do not know what is required, and partly because I cannot afford to buy what I should have.

It is a tradition that on Wednesday evening during scout camp, that the drug stores take turns bringing ice cream to camp as a treat for the boys. This year, it is Dinkler Drug's turn. On Wednesday evening we wait and wait, but no one shows up, so most of the boys go to sleep. Charles and I are still up, planning for the next day's activities when finally George Dinkler arrives bringing two-and-one-half gallons of strawberry ice cream. We try to wake up the other boys, but they are so sound asleep, we cannot get them awake. This is the first time in our lives that Charles and I have had all the ice cream we can eat. And for some reason, we do not get sick. After we get back, Mr. Smith leaves and we are without a scoutmaster again.

The home front is starting to feel the war more. Tires are now rationed and the names of those who have been approved by the rationing committee, for a new tire or tube, are printed in the paper, setting out what they are allowed to purchase. This leads to speculation by the public on which of these people really should be entitled to a new tire. To take advantage of sunlight, all clocks are ordered to be moved ahead one hour. This is called "war time." Most places honor this and move their clocks ahead, but the nearby Town of Lacey, made up mostly of farmers, never does change its clocks. For

the rest of the war, notice of every meeting has to specify if it is war time or standard time.

Preparation is made for the rationing of sugar. Ration books are given to the students at school to take home to their parents. Those without children in school are asked to go to the city hall and get their books. A drive for rubber is held. The service stations are authorized to pay two cents a pound for the rubber. If you do not want the money, it will be used for some charity. We Boy Scouts go door to door collecting rubber for the drive. The county holds air raid maneuvers to be ready in case we are attacked. Those included in the draft are given notice of their number. My older brother Don, is number 815, one of the higher numbers.

There are tragedies too. One of the planes from the flying school at Enid crashes west of Waukomis, killing one and injuring the other. A farmer living west of Hennessey receives his draft notice. He appeals the induction and his appeal is denied. He goes home and takes a gun and kills himself. He leaves a wife and young child. Another man living near Hennessey, receives his notice of induction. He is unable to read and write, and does not really understand what is happening, but is so upset, that he takes a shotgun and tries to kill himself, his wife grabs the gun but it fires blowing off his arm. We get news that Bataan has fallen after a heroic stand. It is a long time after the surrender that we find out how really horrible it has been. Most of the news from overseas has not been good. Our forces are putting up a brave fight, but with few supplies, all they can do is to try to delay the enemy until we are strong enough to go on the offensive. The draft ages are extended from eighteen to sixty-five.

CHAPTER VI

The war has moved much closer to home. My older brother Don, enlists in the army. He is sent to Fort Sill for induction and then is sent to Camp Roberts, California, for his basic training. He will be there for the next thirteen weeks.

When Don leaves, I get to inherit his bedroom. For the first time in our lives, my younger brother, Tommy, and I have a bed all to ourselves. I not only inherit Don's room, but I also get his .22 rifle. It is an old Winchester, octagon barrel, hammer, pump. It has been shot so much that the barrel is shot out and you can drop a shell in the barrel and it will go all the way to the rim. It is .22 short only, but is so loose that you can also shoot longs or long rifle shells by using it single shot. I love to shoot it, even though it is almost impossible to hit anything with it. I sometimes lay back and pretend that I am shooting at Japanese dive bombers with it.

Tommy is in the band now. I am sure that he has much more to offer the band than I did. He plays a horn and can even make music with it. At least, he can probably stay in step better.

On the home front, the local news paper, The Hennessey Clipper, now has a column called "Follow the Flag," which has items of news about local boys in the service and often prints some of their letters to home. To start with, there are only a few small items, but in just a few months, it grows to two or three columns and spills over from

the front page to the back page of the paper. The local furniture store hangs the hat of one of the boys, who has joined the service, on a nail on the wall of the store and tells him he can have it back, when he comes safely home. Soon others have their hats there and the collection grows as more and more boys leave home. Sugar rationing is joined by coffee, tea and cocoa. The choice of drinks is being shortened. Some people buy lemon drops to dissolve in their ice tea to sweeten it some and give it a lemon taste. I feel that it is a poor substitute for sugar and lemon. My mother has for a long time made me hot cocoa for breakfast every morning, but I have to cut back on the number of times that I can have it. Gas rationing is instituted next and it proves to be probably the hardest, of the different items rationed, for the people to accept. The shortage of gasoline is not that great, but since almost all rubber shipments to the United States have been halted, it is done to save tires. Also along with that, a national speed limit of thirty-five miles an hour is ordered.

The supply of items for sale in the hardware stores has dwindled to almost nothing. The owners are glad to have my dad leave to go work in the war effort. Dad gets a job working to help build the Enid Flying School, where they train pilots. He only works a short time when he has a disagreement with the foreman. Dad is one of the easiest persons in the world to get along with, so I suspect he is right when he says that the man is a tyrant. Dad tells him that he is going to quit and the man is furious and threatens to have Dad blacklisted from anything to do with defense. Dad leaves and within an hour he has a job working in a machine shop, a part of Stearman Aeronautics, making parts for planes. He and two other men who work there car pool from Hennessey, going back and forth at thirty-five miles an hour.

Not long after Dad goes to work in Enid, our old alarm clock gives out. Dad goes looking for one to replace it. The only thing he can find is a war time replacement. The works are metal, but the housing is made of pressed paper and wood. When the alarm goes off, it sounds

like a giant woodpecker pecking on the house. No worry about not hearing it; it raises you out of bed.

I am old enough now to get a driver's license, but I have no opportunity because the car must be saved for Dad to go back and forth to work. It must last until the end of the war. I am limited to walking or riding my bicycle. Most of the time, I just walk. Some of the boys have access to cars but joy riding is frowned on. The farm kids usually have some form of transportation and the supply of tractor gas is often raided to provide them a way to have a date. For the rest of us, a girl must be willing to walk if she wants to go out. Since the only entertainment, other than church and school activities, is the local movie theater, it does not entail a lot of walking. I am a little taller now, still the shortest boy in the class, but I am now taller than some of the girls. One of the girls either decides that I am tall enough so that she will not get laughed at or takes pity on me, but she agrees to go to the movie with me. We go out three or four times to the movies. Nothing romantic here, more like going out with your cousin. Our class has been together for so long, that we have all become very good friends. Not only are we together all day in school, but most of our social events are with the same people.

In school, I enroll in shop class. It is almost a joke. There are no mechanical tools at all. Only a few old hand tools. There are a few saws that are so dull that it takes forever to cut a board; a drill brace, but only a few odd size dull bits. It does have one sharp countersink bit. A couple of old planes that need sharpening. I am sure that the teacher wonders what he has done to get here. There is no money to buy anything. All of we boys (girls are taking home economics) pick out some small project. I choose to make a foot stool. Good lumber is very hard to find and expensive. I am able to get enough lumber for my project, but it is not quality material. I do the best I can with the tools we have, but the result is a stool that works much better than it looks. We still have a lot of time left in the year when our projects are finished, so one of the boys asks if we could work on

model airplanes. At first the teacher refuses permission, but when he takes a look around and begins to try to think of something to keep us busy, he gives the O.K. This is not hard for me because I am already working on a model at home and just take parts to school to work on. I make several of these models from balsa wood and tissue paper and hang them from a wire stretched across my bedroom. A light breeze will make them fly around.

At the end of his basic training, Don comes home on ten-day leave before going on to his next assignment which is Infantry Officers Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia. It is good to see him. He seems much older now and stands straighter. The ten days goes by fast and he is gone again.

And once again war hits close to home, when the family of seventeen-year-old George Iven get a telegram from the Navy Department saying that he died in action and was buried at sea. Not much to show for a boy who had only been in the Navy a few weeks. The news now includes a few victories and they are heralded with much fanfare, but all in all, we are still losing ground on both fronts. In Africa, Allied Forces move back and forth against the Germans and Italians. The Germans advance across Russia and most of the rest of Europe is already under German control. In the Pacific, the United States has a few successes in naval engagements but Japan continues to capture more and more territory. The United States stages a surprise raid on Tokyo, by B-25 bombers, led by Colonel Doolittle, but at the same time, the British surrender Singapore.

For years, my mother has made candy at Christmas time and even sold some to help cover the expense of all that she gives away. With sugar rationing, it does not look like we will have any this year. She goes to the grocery store to get the usual groceries and one of the clerks asks if she is making candy this year. She tells them that without sugar, she is not going to make very much. When she gets home and unpacks, she finds a couple of five pound sacks of sugar in the bottom of her sacks.

More of my friends, who are only a year or two older than I am, are enlisting in the service. When they come home after basic training, they are excited about what they have been doing and eager to get to their duty station. Local boys are scattered all over the world. I am anxious to get in the service and be a part of that. No use thinking of that now because you have to have your parents' consent to enlist if you are under twenty-one and there is no way that my parents will consent before I graduate from high school.

I go out for football again this year. I am a little taller and weigh about twenty pounds more. Still I am the smallest one on the team. I get to play very little and we never win a game this year. However, I am awarded a letter in football.

CHAPTER VII

The war is a little more than a year old for the Americans. Congress passes the five percent "Victory Tax" on wages. For the first time, employers will have to withhold tax from wages. The law provides that after the war, a portion of this tax will be refunded. For the first time in their lives, many people will have to file an income tax return. The newspapers run articles showing how to fill out a tax return.

Word is received that another Hennessey boy, Ernest Huffman, has been killed in the southwest Pacific. And Ernest Havlik, from Bison, is listed as missing in North Africa.

The Christian Church pastor agrees to become scoutmaster and the Scouts are reorganized with twenty-eight boys enrolled. I am elected patrol leader. We no sooner get reorganized, when the pastor leaves and the organization folds up again. I stay active as best I can. I pay my dues to the Council and work on my merit badges. The merit badge requirement books are in the school library, so I have access to them and when I have completed the requirements, I go to one of the former committeemen to have him sign off for me. I hitchhike to Enid and present my paper work to the District office and then receive my merit badge by mail. It is not easy, but I am able to get enough merit badges to be eligible for my Star rank. No presentation awards banquet for this one, I receive it by mail. I work on my Life

rank, but am not able to complete it because the required merit badges take more equipment and instruction than I can get on my own.

Canned goods and shoes are now rationed. Keeping track of the number of coupons, necessary to buy food stuffs is a nightmare. Checking out at the grocery store requires doing it twice: once for the money and the second time for the ration stamps. One thing that helps is that the stores do not have near as many products available as they did before.

A couple of student pilots from the Enid Flying School have fun diving at a straw stack in a field east of town. As they fly over it, the straw flies up in the air and scatters over the field. The farmer watches and waves at the planes. When the pilots land back at the base, the commanding officer is waiting for them. It seems that the farmer was not only waving, but he was writing down their numbers. It takes several days, with rakes and pitchforks for the boys to get the straw stack put back together.

My brother Don comes home from Fort Benning, a brand new second lieutenant. While he is home, he marries Catherine "Cappy" Edwards. This is the first time I have ever been to a wedding. He is spending his honeymoon at Enid, and we see very little of him. When his leave is over, he leaves his wife at Enid for the time being and goes to his next assignment at Florence, Arizona. There is a large prisoner of war camp there, housing Italians and Germans captured in North Africa. Don is made range officer and is responsible for keeping the guards proficient with their arms. The duty is not hard and they have prisoners to take care of all of the menial tasks. Most of the prisoners to start with are Italians and they are glad to be in the United States. Most of them work in the valley around Florence, working in the fields helping the farmers. Don makes friends of a lot of them and they are glad to go help him take care of the ranges.

When summer comes, I get a job working at the local Ford dealership. My dad has talked to the owner and asked him if I can do some work there and learn how to be a parts man. He puts me to work

dusting the parts and parts bins. It is about the most boring job that I have ever had. It is not long before I am going out into the repair shop and working on brakes and other things that do not take much skill. My dad does not like it when he hears this. He says that the reason that he wanted me to learn about parts was so I would not have to work with my hands. After about two weeks, I get an offer to go work on a farm. I jump at it. The car dealer is not too happy at me leaving, but I tell him that I want to get out into the country. Dad figures that it will be better for me to be running a tractor than working in a repair shop, so he does not object.

When I arrive at the farm, I am as green as green can be. I have never even driven a car. First thing they do is to put me on a tractor to bring a plow a half mile around to the other side of the section. I get almost a quarter of a mile and just short of the corner, when the hitch comes loose and I lose the plow. When the plow comes loose, the trip rope on the lift for the plow is still tied to the tractor, so it trips the plow and the plow shears hit the road. I find reverse and back up to try to hitch the plow up again. It takes me several times to get close to the hitch. I cannot see the hitch when I am on the tractor. I back a ways, get down to look and then back up some more. When I get close, I find that I cannot lift the tongue of the plow. After several tries, I get it hitched up again. When I start forward again, the plow is plowing the road. I pull the trip rope, and the plow comes out of the ground and then dives right back in. The second time I pull it, the plow stays up and I am able to go the rest of the way to where they are waiting for the tractor and plow. They want to know what took me so long and I tell them about my experiences. The road will remain rough until the next time the county grader comes by.

The farmer is unable to hire regular farm laborers so he has four of us high school boys from town out here. He tries to get what help he can out of us. I think that he earns all that he gets. We get three dollars a day, plus three meals and a cot on the screened in porch. The meals are probably the best part of it. For breakfast, we have homemade

sausage, eggs fried in the grease, homemade bread or biscuits, gravy and all the milk we want. For dinner, it's fried chicken or chicken fried steak or pork chops with mashed potatoes and gravy, home canned green beans or fresh peas and carrots. Pie for desert and fruit jars full of ice tea. Supper is often roast beef or pork, vegetables, pie or cake and more ice tea.

My next job at the farm is to drive the tractor and pull the binder, while we harvest the oats. I take off and am doing fine until I reach the first corner. The tractor is an old tractor on steel wheels. When I turn the corner, I can't get the steering wheel to go back the other way and we go around in a circle. I finally get it turned and we start cutting again. I look back at the guy sitting on the binder tying the bundles and he is laughing so hard he has to hold on to the binder to keep from falling off. After awhile, I find that I have to stand to the side of the steering wheel in order to have enough strength to turn the wheel.

My next experience on the farm is probably the worst. They show me how to hitch up two giant work horses. They then hitch them to the hay rake and tell me to start raking the alfalfa. I am scared to death of these gentle giants and they know it. I am able to drive them because they know what needs to be done better than I do. I never have to use them again and that is okay with me.

In less than two weeks, I am driving a tractor and pulling a large combine cutting wheat. When we work during the harvest, we work from dawn until after dark or until the wheat gets too tough to cut. In the afternoon, we get a snack to carry us through. After supper, it does not take long for us to get to sleep. After everything is cut, it comes time to plow. For this, we get two dollars a day. But knowing how boys are, he announces that he will dock us a quarter every time he finds us off of the tractor playing around. That means that we can't get off and chase those rabbits that get caught in the furrows. While plowing, we do not start until after the sun is up and we quit about dark. It's hot, dirty and dangerous work. We have to fight to keep from going

to sleep. Fall asleep and you will fall off under the plow. I work there until school starts.

When school starts, I get a job working at the Safeway store. There are four of us boys working on Saturday. We go to work at seven in the morning and work until close to midnight. We sack groceries and carry them out to the cars and when we are not doing that, we have to stock shelves and candle eggs. You are expected to move with a gait somewhere between a walk and a run. If you slow up, the assistant manager will put his shoe to your butt. For this we receive seventeen cents an hour.

I go out for football again. We have a new coach and he seems to know what he is doing. For the first time, we get real instruction on how to play. I get to play in the first two games and we win them. This is exciting since we had not won a game the year before. The third game, I do not get to play and the game ends in a tie.

The boy that was assistant produce man at Safeway leaves when his folks move to another town. I am surprised when I am asked to take his place. It means that I will have to give up football and I hate that, but that is not really a factor. What does matter, is that not only will I get more hours of work, but I get a raise to twenty cents an hour. I need the money more than I need football. I go to work every morning at seven and work until eight-thirty when I leave for school. At three, I go back to work and work until six-thirty. On Saturdays I work the same hours as the others. Now that I am an important employee, I have to wear khaki pants, dress shirt and tie, with my official apron over that. I also get to carry a large curved banana knife, which is sharpened razor sharp by the butcher. With my dressy clothes, all the kids in school know what my job is.

CHAPTER VIII

Ernest Havlik from Bison, who is serving as a tank driver in North Africa and was listed as missing, is now listed as being a prisoner of war in Germany. The parents of Ernest Huffman who was killed in the Southwest Pacific, receive his Purple Heart medal. J. Ernest Trojan who was listed as missing over Germany is now listed as a prisoner of war in Germany. Southeast of town, a twin engine bomber crashes, but the pilot bails out and lands not far from his burning plane.

The flyers at the Enid Flying School have put out a request for rags to be used in the maintenance of the airplanes. The Lions Club sponsors a rag drive and we Boy Scouts go door to door and collect them.

War Dads are organized. They are men who have some relative in the service. Their object is to do anything to help those in the service and to aid in the war effort. They gather scrap iron and the proceeds are sent to supply cigarettes to those overseas. Later, the War Moms is organized. You can tell where they live because if they have a child in the service a little flag with a blue star is in their window. If their child is overseas a silver star, and for those poor mothers who have lost a son, a gold star.

We receive a letter from Don saying that he is not at the prison camp right now. He is setting up another smaller camp Northwest of Tucson. He has with him fourteen enlisted men and twenty-five Italian prisoners. Every one of the Italians is a skilled worker. Their

job is to construct facilities for five hundred prisoners and one hundred twenty guards. When completed and occupied, the prisoners sent there will work on a twenty-five-thousand-acre ranch.

With fall approaching, notice is given that gas ration stamps are not to be used to purchase gas to go hunting or to football games. It causes wonder at just how they think that people can get there. This is one regulation that is frequently violated.

We are seniors now and school is more fun than it has ever been before. Maybe it is because we know that in a few short weeks, we will be breaking up and spreading out over the world. We work on the senior play and instead of being work, it is a lot of fun. And instead of sitting in the audience with a girl for the first time, I will be on the stage. I have a different girl now. She is a couple of years younger than I am and works at the library in the evenings. I go by and pick her up after the library closes and walk her home or sometimes we go to the movie and see the last part of it. It is nothing serious, but she does like to kiss and she will even let me cop a feel once in awhile, just to keep me happy.

I am really busy now. Work at the grocery store and school take six days of the week. Sunday mornings are for church. Sunday afternoons are for doing projects for school and after that, my time is free. Sometimes we still get a chance to go to the creek and play on Sunday afternoon. It is easy to see that we are already drifting apart more. I am named Junior Lion and get to attend Lions Club for lunch one day. Being named Junior Lion is another one of those rites of passage. I know all of the men in the Lions Club and it makes me feel older to be able to meet with them.

January, 1944, my brother Don is home on leave. He is on his way to Camp Swift, Texas, to be part of the newly formed One Hundred Second Infantry "Ozark" Division. He will help organize it and train the men as they are assigned to the division. We have an idea what this will mean, but no one says anything about it.

March 27, 1944, my eighteenth birthday. I get on the bus and ride to Kingfisher where the draft board office is located. I fill out the necessary paperwork and am given a registration identification card. I then return home on the bus. I think that is probably the most interesting birthday present I ever received. And it does give me an excuse to skip school and work for a day.

It seems now that almost every week the paper lists someone who has been wounded or killed. Most of those killed are from nearby towns. The letters from those in the service come from even more different places. The tone of most of them is the same. They are not allowed to write what they would like to and what they can write about is boring. But they all request letters from home. There is nothing more valuable than that.

I hitchhike to Enid and go to the recruiting office to see what my options are. It is a wasted trip, because if I enlist, I have to go in immediately, but since I am in the last semester of high school, they will not draft me until I graduate. I want to get that diploma and just as well because I know that my parents are not about to give their permission for me to enlist before that. Since my dad goes back and forth to Enid every day, I can hitchhike up there and then go to where he works and get a ride home.

It is time for the social event of the year, the Junior-Senior Banquet. Every one of both classes will be there and the sophomore girls will do the serving. Somehow, they get enough ration points to put together a very nice meal. There are a lot of jokes told on the seniors and it is a nice evening. This is no prom. No dancing. After the dinner, a few of the families throw a party for the kids and they dance there. I am not invited to any of them, but it is ok, because I have a long day at work the next day.

A few days later, I get very ill and vomit for a couple of days. They figure that I have stomach flu. The doctor comes and says that she thinks that I have had a gall bladder attack. After a few days, I am able

to go again. I remain in not the best of health, but I still keep up my busy schedule.

I receive notice from the draft board that I am to report for a physical on May 1, 1944. I catch the bus that morning to Kingfisher and go to the board office for my paperwork. They give me tickets for the bus and a meal ticket for lunch. I catch another bus to Oklahoma City and report to the building where they give physicals. They go over my paperwork and hand me a small bag, with a string on it to go around my neck. I go into another room and take off everything, put it in a locker and put my valuables and the key to the locker in the little bag. I feel funny with nothing on but the little bag. I have been naked a lot of times with other boys, but this is different. I feel so vulnerable and, well, naked.

I start moving from room to room as they check me over. I have never really had a physical before. Oh, I had to go to the doctor before I went out for football, but he just listened to my heart, had me move around and that was it. This time they listen to my heart, take my blood pressure. In the next room, they open my mouth and check my teeth and throat, nose and ears. The next room, they stick me with a needle and take my blood and send me off to pee in a bottle. Next room, they have me move around and jump up and down and walk across the room and back. Then the doctor has me walk over to where he is sitting and he tells me to turn my head and cough. I know why he has me turn my head, because if I knew what he was going to do, I would have jumped back. Then he has me turn around and bend over. If I had known what he was going to do that time, I am sure I would have jumped back. The last room has a doctor sitting at a desk and, he calls me and has me stand before him at the desk. He takes a quick look and reaches over and picks up a stamp and slams it down on my papers, leaving a big 1A. I am accepted for service.

A few days later, I get a new registration card listing my 1A status. On May 15, I get notice to report for induction on June 15.

The next couple of weeks go by fast and then it is time for final exams. If you are a senior and have at least a C average, you do not have to take the exams. That means that we have a couple of days off. The last day of school, three of us, Nathan Armstrong, Charles and I grab our fishing tackle, Nathan buys a six pack of beer (he looks at least twenty-one.) and we head to Skeleton Creek. We each have a couple of beers, my first. We don't catch any fish, but have a great afternoon, just taking it easy.

May 19, 1944. School is over and we seniors go to Baccalaureate and then Commencement. It is both joyful and sad. The girls are all crying. I am glad to get my diploma. The next couple of weeks I try to get all of my loose ends taken care of, including going to Scout camp.

When I get back from camp, I take care of some of the things I need to do before I go to the army. I give the old Winchester to an old friend to use as parts for his. I almost immediately regret it, but tell myself that I will get another when the war is over. I write thank-you notes for the graduation gifts I have received. My uncle sends me money to buy a watch. I hitchhike to Enid and find a small jewelry store right off of the square. I look over the watches and pick out one that looks good and is in my price range. I ask the old man in the store if the watch is guaranteed. He replies that he personally guarantees it. I make my purchase, walk around looking at the different stores and then walk a few blocks to the place where Dad has parked the car and wait for him to go home.

June 6, 1944, and the radio is spreading the news. The Allies have landed in France. There are heavy casualties and the results of the operation are unknown yet. Troops in Italy have taken Rome, but the news is over shadowed by the invasion. It is hard to keep up with the news because of the many places we have never heard of before. I only have a few days before I go.