

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY THE AUTHOR

A wartime childhood often included watching older siblings leave for the service, as it did in the Kooi family. On horseback, six of the eleven Kooi children: Verna Mae, Milly, Irene (author of article), Elmer, Stan, and Glenn. Home on leave: siblings Clarence and Gladys Kooi. Ray Kooi and his mother, Ida Kooi. Wedding of Gladys Kooi and George Gritter, with sisters Milly and Irene.

A Child's Memory of World War II

by Irene Kooi Chadwick

Somewhere on the road between our farm and Hospers, Iowa, a big billboard towered high above us as we drove to town. The man's furrowed face on the billboard was overshadowed by his tall hat banded with stars. He pointed his long finger down at us: "Uncle Sam Wants You."

In the years when I was a child on our Sioux County farm, four of my older siblings answered his summons, and when the war ended, another sibling did. No longer were we all seated around the kitchen table at breakfast, dinner, and supper, we eleven children impatiently waiting for Pa's long opening prayer, and for Mother's coaching the youngest of us to say as fast as we could "Lord bless this food for Jesus' sake Amen." World War II ended the secure, protected farm life we had led, circumscribed by family, church, and Christian school. Strict rules had always isolated us. No dancing, gambling, or watching movies, and no wearing of makeup or revealing clothes. No mixing with the outside world—in other words, with "heathens," because the Bible said, "Ye are in the world but not of the world." Books and magazines were church approved. Our music came almost entirely from our singing of songs found in the *Psalter Hymnal* or *The Golden Book of Favorite Songs*, accompanied by a piano or organ, or a cappella. Pa read a chapter from the Bible to us after every meal. Twice every Sunday we went to church, and on Wednesday

to catechism. Social life revolved around programs at church or school, visits with relatives on their farms, the occasional wedding and rare funeral, always at church.

Our religion was Christian Reformed, and many other farm families in the northwest corner of Iowa were like us, from Dutch-immigrant stock and the Netherlands Hervormd (Dutch Reformed) church in the Old Country. My mother was Ida Sybesma and only eight when she emigrated from Friesland, a province in north-eastern Netherlands. She had learned English right away. My pa, Fred Kooi, was second-generation Dutch; his grandfather had emigrated from Groningen, the province next to Friesland on the North Sea. However, we never heard our parents speak the Dutch and Friesian languages except on rare occasions when they did not want us to overhear them. Mother occasionally sprinkled her English with Dutch. As my oldest sister, Gladys, says, "As salt on food gives it seasoning, so the Dutch words gave a rich ethnic flavoring to her speech. It took years before we kids knew which words were Dutch."

One link to the outside world was our family's radio, a bulky floor console. Heavy brown fabric covered the speaker, and a crocheted doily graced the top of the varnished wood cabinet. After dinner at noon, or supper at six, Pa would draw the wooden rocker up close to the radio, lower his head to the speaker, and turn the dial back and forth, trying to tune in the Sioux City sta-

tion. Frequent static on the airwaves meant that this tuning took awhile. Some nights, Pa could barely hear a faint voice weaving in and out. Then he would turn the radio off and go to bed or read the *Sioux Center News*.

Pa liked to listen to hog prices, market and weather reports, and the news—also to President Roosevelt's fireside chats and some of the political programs. Mother, however, was pretty much apolitical. Her realm encompassed the traditional role of Dutch immigrant women: *kinderen, keuken, kirk* (children, kitchen, church). When questioned about voting, Mother would tell us that she did not care to vote. When pressed, she coyly replied, "Oh, I think Pa can do that for me."

Naturally, all eleven of us children were fascinated with the radio. Raymond, the oldest, was especially eager to tune in. Our parents, however, would not let him listen very often and not at all to programs such as *Fiber McGee & Molly*, *The Jack Benny Show*, and *The Charlie McCarthy Show*. Usually, all eleven of us went upstairs to bed at dark, because our day started before dawn, when the older boys rose to milk the cows and the older girls lit the fire in the cookstove for breakfast. But sometimes at night, without being seen, Ray sneaked back downstairs and into the front room, found a place out of the way, and listened to the radio. In this way he had heard parts of the 1936 political conventions, including FDR's stirring acceptance speech. As he grew bolder, Ray would listen to the radio on the sly anytime he could get away with it, so that eventually he heard all kinds of programs. Entranced, he decided to become a radio announcer.

"Clearly no one who was not Dutch could pronounce, much less spell, the name 'Kooi,'" reasoned Ray. "No announcer could be expected to say 'Good evening, here is Raymond Kooi with the eight o'clock news.'" So he decided he would change his name from Raymond Kenneth Kooi to Kenneth Raymond. At night, in the boys' bedroom upstairs, he would practice on his next-older brothers to get the hang of auditioning. His youngest brothers had long ago gone to sleep. For newscasts he started with, "Good evening, this is Kenneth Raymond with the latest developments in the world. Tonight in Washington . . ." Then he would make up news stories. His brothers listened raptly. When they grew tired of the news, he would invent other programs to hold their attention.

Pete asked Ray, "Do you want to be an entertainer?"

"Oh, no," said Ray, "I want to do the interviews of the man on the street." For him, radio was serious; it must inform people. Raised by a strict, no-nonsense father, he was all business.

News of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor came

by way of our radio after Sunday dinner on December 7, 1941, the day after Ray turned twenty. I had just turned five a few days earlier and was playing on the floor with the other little kids. We had taken dried corncobs from the wood box and were lining them up to make roads, farms, and houses. Tractors and dolls littered the landscape. Pa was sitting in the rocker, his strong body slumped toward the radio, his fingers adjusting the knobs. Suddenly he cocked both ears forward and cupped them with his hands. He leaned closer to tune in a news bulletin. Half turning his body, he lifted his left hand to quiet us down.

But the straining urgency coming through the static had already lowered the volume of our commotion. The radio crackled and the voice of the newscaster grew louder, becoming fixed in my mind as an incomprehensible danger. The alarm sounding brought an early end to the sheltered life of the thirteen of us on the farm.

Ray was now driving to his first year of community college classes in Sheldon, and, without telling the folks, he bought a radio in town for his and Clarence's bedroom, plus a second-hand typewriter. When Ray's draft number came up in the spring of 1943, he researched his options and decided to apply to the Navy V-12 Officers Training Program. Ray passed the written and physical exams and the interview and was one of the 70,000 select young men accepted—only 22 percent of the total applicants. At the end of June 1943 he prepared to take a train across the breadth of Iowa. He was bound for Davenport and St. Ambrose College, one of the 131 U.S. undergraduate schools that were training sites for the Navy's V-12 program.

When Ray leaves, he is eager to go. He is the only one of us who does not notice that everything is unnaturally quiet. Not a single farm machine is running. Even the chickens are not scratching in the farmyard. In the house no fire crackles in the cookstove, no radio is on. No kid is running lickety-split across the kitchen linoleum, through the wash porch, and out through the screen door before the spring bangs it back, shut tight.

In the kitchen doorway, Mother embraces Ray and says something too soft for us to hear. Pa is already sitting in the gray Chevy, anxious to get Ray to the train on time, nervous about the war. We watch a cloud of dust spiral up behind the car as they leave the driveway and go down the center of the road toward Sheldon, seven miles away. Ray is the first of five to leave for military service. Already we little kids miss him.

To make room for the men in the V-12 program, St. Ambrose College moved faculty and civilian students

out of two residence halls. These dorms were now considered "ships." Floors and walls were called decks and bulkheads; windows became ports; restrooms, heads. The recruits' day began with reveille at 0530 or 0600, followed by calisthenics, room inspection, chow, a march to classes, and so on, continuing throughout the day and ending with taps. Letters went out from the commanding officer and college president to proud parents, congratulating them on the selection of their sons for officer training and urging them to write frequently, with encouragement and support.

As in other U.S. cities during the war, Davenport's civilian population helped young men in uniform who often were away from home for the first time. The Masonic orders, American Legion, USO, and other local groups organized parties, dances, open houses, and concerts for the V-12s, besides the dances the men held on their own. The women of the First Presbyterian Church repaired their clothing for free. Citizens gave soldiers on the streets rides here and there. When the boys in uniform appeared at church on Sunday, they often were invited into homes for Sunday dinner. Before the war, the St. Ambrose student body had been largely Catholic, but now, of the nearly 300 V-12 trainees the college received, only 20 percent were Catholic.

"Is there a Christian Reformed church there?" Mother surely asked Ray, expecting him, of course, to attend our church and then spend the day in a Christian Reformed Service Home. These homes, established near U.S. training camps during the war years, provided to servicemen and servicewomen the continuity of familiar religious ways and family traditions, and the opportunity to meet their own kind of young people, and, in due course, marry in the church.

Perhaps there was not a Christian Reformed church in Davenport. In any event, Ray visited a local church one Sunday and afterwards was asked by one of the families, the Van Walterops, to come to their home. They invited him again and again, after Sunday church, or to concerts. The boy in the family was fourteen and played the bassoon. Two older sisters were about Ray's age. The younger played the oboe, and Ray played the piano. As time went on, the two of them often played music together. Ray had found a piano teacher at St. Ambrose. He practiced Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, then performed it with the Davenport Symphony Orchestra.

The family life he was now experiencing was easy-going, friendly, and casual, an atmosphere he most likely welcomed after the strict, work-centered, religious tone of the farm. Now in this open climate, his natural expansiveness and curiosity flourished. The Van Walterops became his new friends, and when he went on leave

from later postings, he returned to Davenport to visit them. He met their relatives and shared snapshots of his family with them. His letters and visits with the Van Walterops gave us views of another world than the farm.

"Where's Davenport?" I demand of my mother.

She looks wistful, distance in her eyes. "Oh, across the state, a little below Des Moines, to the south, and then east some."

"How far?"

"Maybe a couple hundred miles or a little more, I'm not real sure, honey. Now you go run outside. Go *play*."

"When will he come back?"

"I don't know."

"Is he going off to fight?"

"Well," says one of the other little kids, "he's only going to a school for officers, not off to the war."

"What's that?"

"Dummy, it's a college," is the swift comeback.

"He's at this place, training to be an officer in the navy," adds a bigger kid.

"What's that mean?"

Our chatter showed challenge and bravado as we tried to ward off fear, hold up our spirits, and buy assurance that the oldest of our big brothers would not be in danger. Back and forth we went, questioning, trying to understand what was happening to the small world we inhabited.

Four months after Ray left, the next older brother left. When Clarence joined the Army Air Force in October of 1943, he was sent to Amarillo, Texas, for three months, and then to Drake University in Des Moines for three months of training as an aviation cadet. One day an officer walked into the classroom and said, "You're finished. This class will be gunners." Training stopped immediately. Clarence's heart was set on becoming a pilot.

On the farm, our little ears perk up whenever a letter comes from one of the brothers, especially when we see Mother read a letter alone and save it in a special place.

Night comes, and weary, we trudge up the stairs to bed. Even with the windows open, it is hot. To get some air we frequently drag our mattresses out the window to the roof over the front porch, while Mother's warnings ring in our ears. "You could fall through that roof, you know, it's so thin." Underfoot it feels rickety and sticky, and I jump up and down trying to keep the soles of my bare feet from sticking to the hot tar roof.

"C'mon, don't be such a cry baby."

"But Mother said . . ."

"Shuddup or she'll hear you." And then, placating, "See? It's already cooler. Just lay down and go to sleep."

I lie down and huddle into a ball, expecting to fall through the roof any minute. When I uncoil to look up, the sky is blazing with a billion stars. No cricket is singing and not a single bullfrog is croaking his deeply sonorous, territorial grunts.

"See that? You see that?" Elmer whispers into my ear, interrupting my thoughts. "Look!" He points at the Milky Way.

"Where? I don't see anything."

"Look quick! There goes a shooting star!"

Sure enough, I do see one falling, diving. "How do you know that isn't an enemy airplane?"

"Ah, c'mon."

My eyelids squeeze shut as I pivot my head into the pillow and fall into sleep. In the nightmare that jolts me awake, a bomber flames toward earth. The night has turned cool. Shivering, I tiptoe inside where it's warm.

From the mailbox on the corner come letters from the two older brothers away from home. When the letter from Ray arrives, Mother is in the kitchen. She wipes off her glasses with a corner of her apron and slowly opens the envelope. Her voice carries an edge of expectation mixed with apprehension.

"Well, I think I'll sit down to read this."

We wait while she reads.

Looking up, she says, "Well, he's going home for Sunday dinner with a family that has a Dutch name, but they belong to a different church. They have a boy and a girl, an older girl too."

She turns toward a window and her eyes catch the light. Something sparkles. "Well, well. Ray says that we are invited to a review of the naval cadets on the parade ground. He says the Van Walterop family has a room where we could stay." Her eyes fix on some distant object. "Well, I don't know."

The idea of Mother going away feels like a heavy bag of flour settling slowly. Rays of sunlight sift through her hair, down through her slight body seated in the wooden rocker. Gravity surrounds her like an aura; its halo sparks, its earthiness is solid and irrefutable.

"Will you go?"

"Well, maybe..." She pauses. "We'll have to see about that." She gets up to do something. We run off to play.

When the day comes for Mother to take the train to Davenport, she puts on her Sunday dress, straightens the seams on the backs of her legs, and ties the laces of her black shoes. I watch her take down from the closet shelf her black purse with the shiny clasp. She brushes off her hat and settles it firmly above the bun at the nape of her neck. I love to watch her position the long hatpin

just so, pushing it deeply into the hat, through her hair, and out the other side.

"How do you know where to push the pin so it won't go through your head?"

She smiles and pats me on the head. "It's pretty easy, Snooky. Here, look, you see?" She stops, hands me a hatpin, pushes another hatpin through the hat into her hair, and then looks down at me. "I'll be back in a couple of days."

I hand back the other hatpin, remembering the unnatural quiet in the kitchen when Mother had embraced Ray good-bye while Pa waited in the car, anxious to get him to the train. Ray has not come back. Mother is busy now and doesn't notice me standing there, waiting, hoping she will not go.

Times are tense beyond childish understandings. The outside world we are glimpsing seems far away and foreign to us, and so our inside world holds onto the familiar. We girls endlessly crochet edges around neat squares of cloth—dresser scarves, doilies, and hankies. Although Mother's crochet hook could deftly connect the fine threads of variegated colors with the crisp ironed edges, our limited skills lead more often towards loops and snags. Then my Aunt Mattie's face and voice come into view. Gently she takes the hankie and crochet hook I hold out to her. "*Och Heiden, kleine kind,*" she frowns, "what a mess!"

While playing on the front porch, I watch a car approaching from far away. I race to the gate, swing out on it, then run to the driveway. Pa spins the Chevy off the road and into our yard. The car stops. Mother lets herself out. She looks different, but I can't figure out how. We little ones crowd around, hugging her knees, stopping her from moving toward the front porch. Our questions come tumbling out all at once.

"What about the train ride? What did you do?"

"What are they like?"

"What does Ray do there?"

"When is he coming home?"

As she makes her way toward the house we step back. In turn, she hugs each one of us.

"Sure nice to be home again. Let's go inside first, then I'll tell you all about it." In the front room she puts her purse down on the dining-room table, removes her gloves, and smiles. She reaches up and slowly pulls out the hatpins, one by one.

She pauses, then looks up. "Well, they aren't like us, but they are good people. The mother is such a kind of..." In the pause, her eyes go far away. "Well, a jolly sort of woman, nice and round. The boy plays a..."

well . . . it's like a horn, and the girl plays an oboe."

"What's that?"

"Well, you know, a pipe that sounds like a bird."

"Does Ray like her?"

"Oh," Mother demurs, her voice growing softer, "I don't know about that."

"The father is a nice man," she continues. "He works in town somewhere, I believe, and they have a nice house. The church was so strange, not at all like what we're used to."

"What kind of church?"

"It's called Community Christian Church or something like that. Nothing like ours at all, but it's good Ray has a place to go to church on Sundays. We don't have a Christian Reformed church in Davenport."

"What's Davenport like?"

"Something like Sheldon, maybe bigger, and Ray lives in a big dormitory at the college." Her voice grows anxious. "He's in training for something secret. He couldn't say what. You know we must not talk about what our boys in the service are doing."

Her tone changes gears. "My, you should have seen how good those boys look in their uniforms, especially on the parade ground. My, that was really something to see, something special."

"What did you do on the train?"

"Oh, look out the window," she smiles. "It was so nice and green, so nice and quiet." Her voice has grown soft and wistful, but it quickly switches. "Run outdoors and play now."

Our oldest sister, Gladys, enlisted in the WAVES the next February, in 1944, when she was twenty. I was now six and in second grade in nearby Hospers. Gladys was sent to New York for six weeks of boot camp at Hunter College in the Bronx, then to Bethesda Hospital in Maryland for nurses training, then to a military hospital in San Diego. She attended services and events at the Christian Reformed Service Home in San Diego, where she met a sailor and fell in love. She sent us letters—and also dresses. She missed sewing for her little sisters, bathing and mothering us.

Rationing was in effect, but some of it had little impact on our already frugal household. The wartime limit of three pairs of shoes a year, for instance, was not that important. We were used to getting two new pairs of shoes in late August of each year—one pair for school and the other for Sunday. By the next June, when we had outgrown them, we could go barefoot except on Sundays; for that day a pair of hand-me-down shoes might fit. Thrift had been a way of life on the farm, and

we were used to "making it do, wearing it out, making it last, or doing without."

As the war wore on, more things were rationed, including gasoline and sugar. At the beginning of each week, Mother would measure out our individual half-cup rations of sugar and pour them into jam jars, each lid labeled with one of our names. On Saturday, what was left in the jars was combined and used to make a cake or cookies or maybe fudge. As time went on, many common things could not be found anywhere. Posters everywhere exhorted us to buy U.S. savings bonds. Pa kept ours in a strongbox, reminding us that we each owned a \$5 war bond: "Now, isn't that something?"

In July 1944 Ray left St. Ambrose College and continued his naval training on the East Coast. Eventually he would be posted to Newport, Rhode Island, as a crew member of the USS *Columbus* for its shake-down cruise. This involved months of going to sea to test every single facet of the cruiser, and then coming back into the nearest port to correct anything wrong. While the ship was in dry dock, the crew had long shore leaves. Ray used his free time to build a radio with a friend.

In December 1944, Clarence went to Sudbury, England, as part of the Eighth Army Air Force, known as "The Mighty Eighth." From numerous airfields in the south and east of England, Boeing B-17s were carrying the air war to Germany, bombing heavily defended targets while dodging flak and enemy fighters. The Mighty Eighth steadily pounded Germany's great industrial web. B-17 Flying Fortresses were America's main strategic weapon in Europe. Able to withstand severe damage, the "Fort" commanded great respect and was fast becoming an American legend.

Clarence was assigned to fly weekly missions as a ball-turret gunner, crouched in a vulnerable plastic bubble under the belly of the B-17 as it flew over Germany. Pitted against some of the most experienced fighter pilots in the world, B-17 crews sustained heavy losses. More than 47,000 crew members either died or were taken as prisoners in daylight raids over Germany. Most of the men were barely into their twenties. Clarence was nineteen.

On hot afternoons we little kids would walk the half-mile on the dirt road to the mailbox on the corner, hoping to find a three-cent postcard or a letter from Ray, Clarence, or Gladys. In the kitchen, Mother would read each precious letter while we hung around her skirts, waiting.

She wipes her hands on her homemade apron and then wipes the dirt from her glasses. She pauses a moment, maybe to pray, before taking the letter handed to her. The unsettled silence in that pause makes us want

to run, but we are as quiet as barn mice, whose habits of evasion we know so well. She stands still, riveted to the thin piece of paper she holds.

In unaccustomed quiet, we read her face and are rewarded when her eyes glance up with a smile. Relieved, we dance out the screen door, letting it bang behind us as we run to our playhouses in the grove. In a tumble of emotions, we are happy, afraid, proud little kids.

The front window of our farmhouse frames a red, white, and blue service banner with three blue stars—for Ray, Clarence, and Gladys. These gold-fringed banners hang in nearly every front window of the farmhouses we pass as we drive to church every Sunday. The number of blue stars tells how many sons and daughters in each family are serving our country. Mother explains that a gold star means someone had died while serving our country.

When we drive by the window where a blue star has been replaced with a gold one, Mother's eyes grow somber and she confides how fortunate our congregation has been so far: "And you know, in our church, only one Gold Star Mother."

Clarence flew twenty-eight combat missions over Germany before he returned to the States. He arrived home on Mother's birthday, September 6, 1945, but she was no longer there. The previous June she had been carried off the farm in an ambulance, ill with tuberculosis, and taken to Bethesda Sanatorium in Denver for treatment. It was thought that the air in this mile-high city could help cure tuberculosis.

Gladys was still serving in the WAVES as a nurse's aide in a San Diego military hospital. A friend she had met while she was in boot camp had been her pen pal ever since. She wrote Gladys in September, describing the celebration in New York City. "Can you imagine the excitement and dither on V-J Day! The crowds, the bits of paper flying here, there, everywhere! Cars and taxis scooting past, decorated with red white and blue flags! A big pasteboard box tumbled out of a window above, nearly knockin' out my permanent wave! And we had a circus, too, no less. One especially excitable gentleman mounted a window ledge, held on with one hand, and with the other, adjusted his Hitlerian moustache. Then, gravely, amidst the excited cheers of the throngs, he stretched forth his hand in stiff 'Heil!' fashion. We craned our necks to read the news atop the Time building. It was all too good to be true. Strangers thumped strangers on the back, and oh—everyone was so happy! Why you couldn't have torn me away from the city that night! New York surely goes for things in a big way."

Back home on the farm, though, the war did not seem to be over. Mother was far away in a hospital and very sick, and Pa was worried. Ray was still on the USS *Columbus* in the Pacific and would be for several months. (He was discharged on July 1, 1946.) My third-oldest brother, Pete, joined the army and left in December of 1945 for Japan. He was gone for two years. The next brother, Stan, was not yet old enough to go, but he joined the marines after the war. We little kids overheard banter, songs, and swear words about the different branches of the armed services from our older siblings.

Gladys was going to marry George Gritter, the sailor she had met in the Christian Reformed Service Home in San Diego. The couple planned to live near his family in Grand Rapids, Michigan, far from northwest Iowa where all the large families of Koois and Sybesmas lived and farmed. Since Mother still was not well enough to come home, the wedding took place in the chapel of the sanatorium. Pa drove some of us to Denver for this, the first wedding in our family, in April of 1946.

Mother had to stay at Bethesda Sanatorium for another year. Although she came home briefly for a trial visit, she was not able to resume the hard life of a farm wife and the mother of several growing children. And so in June 1947, Pa sold the farm and we moved away—away from our twelve uncles and twelve aunts and over a hundred cousins—away from the Iowa farm to the big city of Denver. After two years in the sanatorium, Mother now left against medical advice to come live with us. Her tuberculosis was arrested—but not cured.

On the long drive to Denver in our gray Chevrolet, Pa sang the chorus of "There's a Long, Long Trail," a song he remembered from his military service in France during World War I: "There's a long, long night of waiting / Until my dreams all come true / Till the day when I'll be going down / That long, long trail with you."

For our family, the war was finally over. ❖

Irene Kooi Chadwick is an author living in California. This article (copyright Irene Kooi Chadwick) is adapted from a chapter of her Iowa Images: Dutch Immigrant History Illustrated (forthcoming in September 2004 from Pie Plant Press; see www.iowa-images.com). She was born tenth of twelve children in their Sioux County, Iowa, farmhouse. Her four sisters contributed their voices to this memoir.

NOTE ON SOURCES

Secondary sources used include Edward Jablonski, *Flying Fortress: The Illustrated Biography of the B-17s and the Men Who Flew Them* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1965); and James G. Schneider, *The Navy V-12 Program: Leadership for a Lifetime* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987, 2nd ed., 1993). The letter describing V-J Day was from Abbey Hengeveld in New Jersey to Gladys Kooi in California.

SHSI (DES MOINES): L. H. DAVIS COLLECTION



Purchasing a war stamp was the only admission for these children at a Saturday morning movie in Hampton (November 1942). Newsreels about the war splashed combat footage on the screen, especially later in the war, when the government feared civilian morale was falling.

January 1944: Des Moines soldier George Reagen, on far right, flanks a "doorway of a shell-battered house in Venafro, Italy.... The Germans are no sooner out of an Italian village," the caption reads, "than M.P.s are in, maintaining law and order, directing traffic and keeping the situation in hand."

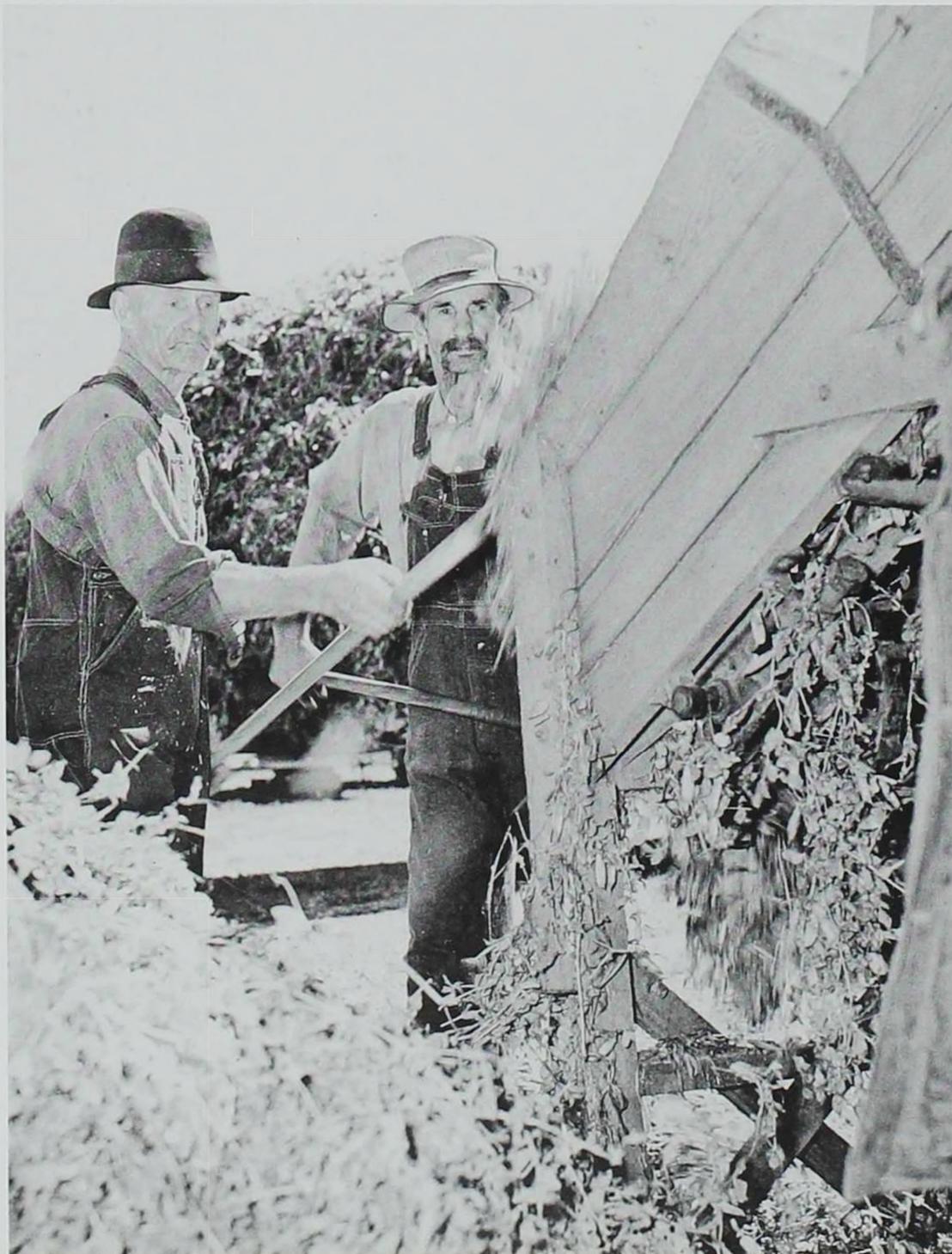
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Above: Factory workers at the Pittsburgh-Des Moines Steel Company take a break from their defense jobs to hear Warrant Officer James D. Fox recount his experiences in the South Pacific with the Coast Guard (April 1943).

Left: Helping ease labor shortages in agricultural work, Charles Worthen, a 70-year-old tile layer, and Tom Heathman, 65, painter and blacksmith, pitch peas into a viner at the Iowa Canning Company in Vinton (June 1944).

Opposite: Ava Weisert, a widow with six sons in the service, punches her time card at the Iowa Canning Company (June 1944).



SHSI (DES MOINES): DES MOINES REGISTER AND TRIBUNE