

Detroit families did their part in World War II

BY SR. PATRICIA MCCARTY

This seems to be the year when everyone is interested in one of the major events of this century: World War II. The films, "Saving Private Ryan," "The Thin Red Line" and Tom Brokaw's "The Greatest Generation" pay tribute to the men and women who fought that war and those who kept the home fires burning.

When the war began, I was 6 and lived on Balfour near Whittier on the east side of Detroit. I recall being with my parents and grandparents and brother Billy when the announcement was made that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor and we were at war. That was Dec. 7, 1941; and by December 1943, my uncles (John, Vince, Jim, Ed and Bob McCarty; and Dave, Ervin and Bud Brinker) would be in the armed services. Oh, how we supported them with letters, care packages, Christmas packages and prayers! When one of my uncles came home on furlough, there were precious visits and exciting news from overseas!

But the war affected us here at home, too. I remember collecting bottles and cans and fat to help with the war effort. These were taken to Al's Butcher Shop next to Wayland Drugs on Whittier near McKinney. And there were shortages, too. Gas was rationed, and my mother used rationing stamps for food.

Each Saturday, my brother and his friends went to the corner field on Balfour and Whittier to build a foxhole and pretend they were the heroes that we all felt our soldiers



The McCarty and Brinker families in 1943. Pat, 8, is in front between brother Billy, 5, and Grandma and Grandma Brinker. That's Uncle Dave Brinker in uniform.

were. We loved the patriotic holidays, too, especially Decoration Day, the Fourth of July and Labor Day. We neighborhood kids always had a parade on those days.

At family gatherings, we loved it when Aunt Jean played the piano so we could sing all the patriotic songs: "Over There," "You're a Grand Old Flag," "Anchors Away," "I'll be Seeing You." Years later when I was teaching eighth grade in Des Moines, Iowa, and played the piano for school plays, I would wonder aloud with the drama teacher why the children did not seem to have the energy and passion to put into this patriotic music. She reminded me that, back during World War II, we thought that was the war to end all wars. We know now there really is no end to war. Today, our gratitude still goes to our parents' generation who fought the good fight and gave their all for us!

Sr. Patricia McCarty, formerly director of development for Adrian Dominican Sisters, is on a yearlong sabbatical and living in Fraser.

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