

Handling Global Terrorism

In 1936, while political unrest was developing and spreading in Europe, the war first came to Fennville in person of the 124th Illinois Field Artillery which arrived, horses, guns and regimental band on special trains at the Fennville Depot.

The occasion was a series of war games that spread over a good share of the Midwest. After war was declared the “enemy” army captured Chicago and came north a motorized detachment reaching Fennville at dawn. The skies filled with a squadron of bombing and pursuit planes and “fighting” became general along the entire front with troops in Fennville, many bivouacked at the high school and in tent villages in surrounding farms, Pearl and Bravo, joining in.

The town teemed with soldiers. Military police were assigned to, and billeted in, the village hall. Cigar stores, ice cream parlors and other shops did a land office business and the post office was swamped with military mail.

LaVerne’s MOTHER was born, Lois Sheckler. Her father, Linn Sheckler was raised in Union County, Pennsylvania. His family moved to St. Joseph County, Michigan around 1900 where he soon married Ada Snyder who gave him 5 children but died giving birth to the 5th. Mom, Lois, was the 4th child, born March 21, 1916. In 1921, Linn remarried to Ethel Barnett Lickley. They had one child, Linn Jr., being mom’s half brother and making 5 Sheckler off spring.

At the age of 19, LaVerne’s mother married Herman Bouwman of Grand Rapids, Michigan. He was born several months later on March 23, 1935 in Allegan, Michigan. His sister Jean was also born in Allegan, on Oct. 14, 1936. LaVerne’s father was given a good opportunity to work for the county during these years but he also had some very bad habits and was in and out of jail. In 1939 LaVerne’s grandparents had just finished building a house on Hutchins Lake. About the same time, his mother picked Jean and himself up and moved to a house down front by the lake. This was his 1st connection with the word Hutchins. Lois was carrying a third child, Arleen, who was born at the lake on Oct. 3, 1939. Then she divorced. Yup, she became a single mom, raising 3 kids. Well the grandparents helped a lot.

At the lake, times were good and bad. One time Lois burned LaVerne’s pants on the oil heater in the living room. LaVerne cut his knee on a beer bottle in the lake. He got mad and threw his wind up train in the lake. But just look how happy they were in the snow by the lake. Soon Lois had to go to work so they moved to a house in Fennville on Walter St. She started working at the Canning factory.



Jean and LaVerne

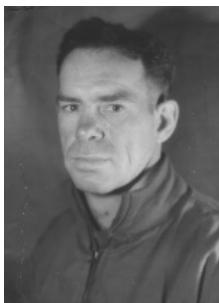
The house was maybe 400 feet from the railroad and every time a train, powered by steam engines, rumbled by they thought there was an earthquake. Later they moved to an apartment next to the Baptist church. It was easier for Lois to get to work, get a baby sitter and have LaVerne start in kindergarten.

Lois wanted to make more money so she, picked the three kids up and moved to Kellogsville, a suburb on the south edge of Grand Rapids. Here she worked for “Frost’s” and made latches. She rode the bus to work. This is where LaVerne started the first grade and Jean went to kindergarten. This house was very small and the outside was dried up and unpainted. LaVerne remembers the baby sitter always wore horse riding britches. He received another body injury here when he fell from a tree by the railroad tracks and cut his left hand thumb area, with a broken bottle again.

WWII When the United States officially joined the war in December of 1941, following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Fennville quickly responded. The Dec. 12, 1941, newspaper reported:

“The patriotism and the intensity of feeling with which the people of Fennville received the news of the outbreak of the war with Japan were exemplified in the jump sales of Defense Bonds here. In the first three days of the week approximately \$15,000 of Defense Bonds were subscribed bring the total sales to \$23,550. . . Serve your Country! Buy Defense Bonds! Buy Now!”

FOUR DIFFERENT FAMILIES are described in writing this story, displaying how they were involved this war. One family lost a son. The Army, Air force, Navy, Farm and Factories are acknowledged here.



Irwin F. Hutchins
Class of 1934
Was working for Blood Bros. in Allegan

He reported to Fort Benning, Georgia for training.



Richard Bale
Class of 1937

He enlisted in the Army in Jan. of 1941 As the U.S. was Getting involved



Linn Jr. Sheckler
Class of 1941

He reported to Great Lakes Training Center He became a Radioman



Albert Crane
Class of 1935

The draft board Required him to Stay home and Grow Fruit for the cause.

SERVICEMEN reported in from all corners of the globe. Fennville boys hastened to sign-up for the armed services and the folks left back home began a series of drives to help the war effort, and grinded themselves for the inevitable shortages. In 1944 three Fennville men were reported missing in Germany and the whole town was relieved in May of 1944 to get a short letter from one stating, “I am a prisoner of war. Not injured to speak of, do not worry, I’ll carry on and be OK.”

THE RUBINSTEIN CLUB headed a drive to collect musical instruments “to be used in hospitals for rehabilitation purposes,” and their effort yielded harmonicas, assorted wind instruments and a grand piano. Other clubs of the town knit socks, made laundry bags and surgical dressings for use by veteran’s hospitals.