

LOIS MARIE

When the war started, help was needed at the factories. The pay was much better also. Lois was hired by the "Hayes Company" so we had to move closer in town, away from this house in Kellogsville.



LOIS was a "WE CAN DO IT" Single Mom Making Parachutes for the Hayes Company

The real bad thing LaVerne remembers here was when she told us we were going to move, his big mouth told the babysitter who left on the spot. That is the first time he remembers his mom crying very hard while laying across her bed.

Moving to Burton Heights was when LaVerne went into the second grade. The house was a block north of his Aunt Blanch's, daughter to Linn Sheckler's 2nd wife. She also worked for the factories but in the office. Then her daughter Elaine, being 16, could also work in the factory. Elaine glued fabric to glider wings.

This house in Burton Heights had its events also. The babysitter burned the toast all the time. A half block away was a cookie factory that made wafer cookies and threw the broken squares out a back window. Guess who had a feast there. Across Division Ave., from the factory was the theatre where they saw the movie Bambi.

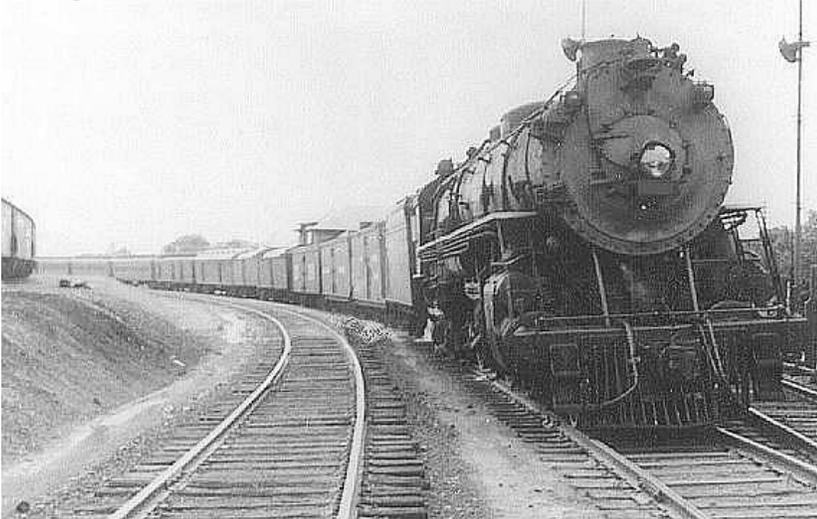
At the Hayes Company Lois was making parachutes. She had to sew the large sections of heavy nylon cloth together using five rows of stitches. Changing jobs within the factory she had to place dimples in sheets of aluminum ready for wings. The dimples formed a recess for the rivets to set in, allowing air to move smoothly over the wings.

Every body rode the bus to work. Lois had trouble making ends meet so they moved in with Blanch, her house was big. LaVerne has two bad memories for the Burton Heights School.

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The teacher wouldn't let him go to the bathroom so he wet his pants. Another time, on the way home one day he stumbled on a curb and broke his left arm. He is left handed so he had to write with his right hand. This helped him in the future because he played sports right handed.

A short time later, their Aunt Blanch and all of the Bouwman's moved to the suburb of Wyoming. This was about the time Blanch split up with her husband. Living with two families made it easy for Lois. LaVerne's cousin Elaine was a built-in baby sitter. In Wyoming, he had another accident, playing in the garage attic, barefoot. It had a finished ceiling and he stepped between the rafters and went straight down onto the car's license plate which in those days stuck out on a bumper with sharp edges. He has a three inch scar from that, on the instep of his right foot.



Two times, LaVerne rode the train back to Fennville to visit his grand parents during the summer months. Jean would go to Aunt Edith and Uncle Franks, north of Bloomingdale. Edith was Ethel Sheckler's sister. The train would always be an early morning milk train because it was cheaper.

It stopped at every depot that existed along the way, and that was six or eight. The everyday freight deliveries were made then, being more important than passengers on that train. He also remembers being picked up at the Union Depot in Grand Rapids by his cousin Neil with his girlfriend Alice, using his big work truck he was driving at the time. Alice lived just a short distance from them in Wyoming. He remembers where she lived because there was a store on the corner of her street where they purchased candy. He always had a crush on her.

In 1943, LaVerne and his sister Arleen moved back to Fennville to live with their grand parents. Three was too many kids so their sister Carolyn moved to live with Aunt Edie and Uncle Frank. Lois had to stay in Grand Rapids because the war was still on. She moved in with her friend Jessica Mackie who also worked at Hayes.. After the war, Lois moved to Fennville and lived with Keith and Bee Hutchins.

While living at the lake, LaVerne at times would be playing with his classmates in town around the canning factory. Early in 1945 he remembered seeing soldiers carrying guns by the railroad box cars. The soldiers were guarding German War Prisoners.

There was emergency farm labor program at this time and the prisoners helped solve the problem. Other programs, such as the "Victory Farm Volunteers" utilized youngsters aged 11 to 14 to weed onions, pick beans and harvest cherries and paid them \$3.65 an hour.

On May 19, 1944, it was reported that work was underway to convert a Depression-era National Youth Administration camp on Lake Allegan into a compound for 250 POWs who would arrive the next day from Fort Custer. Very little preparations were made, just airing out, adding food stores and a little barbed wire. That was it.