

Entertaining was done at home (or on parents' farms) and in crowds. Every car was filled, with smaller girls sitting on boys' laps. We even enjoyed houseparties at the summer homes of parents. How they fed our hordes with food rationing, I can't fathom. But we always had fun and never stopped eating.

We visited friends and relatives in neighboring towns via train and bus accompanied by live chickens, drunk soldiers and whatever.

We never, never thought of fear of robbery, molestation (no one ever tried to pick me up) but we were deprived of going downtown on Saturday in daylight to movies and Candyland or Kleeman's for lunch because Camp Forrest soldiers were in the streets.

Morals: It was "suggestive" if a girl rode on a boy's shoulders in the BMCC swimming pool in a game of "Man o'War".

Today, 1979, on the heels of Roots, I wonder what went thru the mind of a certain black Pullman porter when several Nashville belles and I boarded the night train to Chicago to attend the winter carnival at SJMA. Our parents put us on the train with sixteen suitcases, and boxes made for coffin palls (courtesy Joy's Florists) containing our bouffant net evening dresses and crenolin petticoats. These six girls, boxes, and sixteen suitcases had to get taxis to change stations in Chicago vying with all the sailors at Great Lakes and soldiers from Ft. Sheridan, Ill. to board another train northward. Since all working males were in the service, Red Caps were at a premium; taxis and drives disreputable.

But undaunted at 16, we boarded Car L-14 of L&N's nightly pullman to Chicago. When my father saw that the president of Fisk University had the upper berth above mine, he rose to unknown statue of his 5'10" frame and summarily "crossed the palm" of the uniformed porter with a hastily drawn \$5 bill with the admonition "take care of my little girl."

Today, I cringe at the thought. But at that time, there was no integration except on train or interstate buses.

The Belle Meade Theatre, built in 1940, became the outer limits of our Saturday daytime world. There was no Green Hills Shopping Center Hillsboro High sat in a wilderness of wooded hills (a la the mural on its stage). Bellevue was rural country and so was Brentwood.

FOCUS-WORLD WAR II PRE TV YEARS

Dec. 7, 1941—

Coming home from church that Sunday Dr D.F. Fleming, political scientist at V.U., was on his weekly WSM radio program and told of the attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese at dawn. During lunch we listened to H.V. Kattenborn etc. Then later at the Saturday meeting at Alice and Deanie Hart's home on 24th Ave. South, we clustered on the floor around the Philco oval radio as we planned our Christmas formal dance. The world was shocked and we planned on. Few of our fathers and brothers would go to war. Again, we were protected from the strife of life.

Our teenage kin became narrowed to car pools for school and church, material shortage for clothes. Mrs. Rippetoe, a seamstress of note, ordered net, lace and taffeta from St. Louis for our formals which were inspired by MGM musical extravaganza we saw at the Knickerbocker,

Loews, and Paramount. (Betty Grable was queen there.)

The high school sororities were recruited for all patriotic functions—ushering at fund-raising Galas for Bundles for Britain, War Bond rallies at Belle Meade Theatre, manning a Red Cross Booth on Church and Capitol Blvd. for Red Cross Blood donors Saturdays.

Dates—the boys said \$1 had to cover it. Two could go to a movie and stop at Candyland on West End, but an insurance executive told you to only eat crackers and water. A chocolate drift at 25¢ broke the budget. At Hettie Ray's the minimum charge was 50¢ per, and you ate potato chips and cokes all night to use it up, so you could dance to the jukebox.

Snow holidays we never knew. If we had had snowy winters, Mary Louise Zanone Flautt would have been evicted from the hook-up—for that hill driveway (unpaved) was out of this world. But we had no snow, and we took Bob to MBA first (a thrill for all five girls) so all went well.

Really, in retrospect, Archie Bunker's WWII was a very leveling influence on "our crowd". For the most part—we were one car families (our children will laugh). It took planning, public transportation and car pools, but we really missed nothing. We even had a truck route to get our trunks hauled to Union Station to go off to camp in the summers—via train.

I guess it's like Johnny Carson says, "We were poor, and didn't know it." That is from a "worldly" viewpoint, but oh, such genuine fun! Such Memories! We bought three records (Glen Miller) for \$1 (33½¢) at Mu Sound in Hillsboro Village and played them over the phone to each other.

So our teenagers had no corner on telephonitis, hookups, and blowing cigarette smoke out bathroom windows. We frantically tried to keep the midnight curfew imposed on us by our parents—not the police. We had no "curfew" notes—we were grounded by loving parents in "home" court.

Economically, I was appalled when I tried to enroll my first born in my church kindergarten

10 years after my graduation from Ward-Belmont Preparatory School (Miss Annie Allison's finishing school for young ladies), and found that due to post-war prosperity the tuition was the same in dollars.

My hope for our children, and our legacy to future generations is we can bestow the warmth of fast friendships and admiration over the years—across neighborhoods, church denominations, schools, social organizations, athletics and avocation groups we knew and enjoyed.

If only we have instilled in future generations the love, support, protection and caring for all that we knew—prior to college years.

It was a "great life", and still is—Thank God! For gratefully, he spared us to live on and write this epic.

The one blot on our glorious high school years was the loss of Hearn Bradley, Jr., and Charles Moss, Jr. in the navy and Bill Wilkerson, Jr. and Lawson Hut-ton, Jr., in the army.

Week Ends 1940-1944

by Frances Johnston Earthman

There was always something happening somewhere. Before dating, as such actually started, the girls would have spend-the-night parties which would usually attract one or two groups of boys. "Spending the night" continued thru the senior year in high school—always after big dances and often with no excuse at all.

Movies—There were about seven movie houses in Nashville: The Paramount, Knickerbocker (now SuperX on 7th), Loews and the Princess. The Paramount had a live stage show before each movie that started with an organ rising from the floor under a spotlight and being played very loudly. There were two new beautiful neighborhood theaters, the Belle Meade and Melrose. Each theater changed shows every Thursday so there was a choice of new movies each weekend. This was what most of us did most of the weekends.

There were a couple of other

movies on Fifth Ave. (the Rex and the Fifth Ave.) that showed mostly westerns and I can't remember even going there. Movies were not rated as the Hayes office was the very strick insor of Hollywood. Rhett Butler's "Damn" in Gaea With The Wind caused great controversy. Blasphemy, a scene of a married couple seated on the same bed, and violence were not allowed. Children could safely attend any movie and were encouraged to by Popeye clubs, etc. every Saturday morning. Just before or after picking up a date on a weekend night many boys "checked into" Moons to see where everyone was going. Often it was to:

Hettie Rays—on top of nine mile hill where the Wessex Towers now stand. A two-story open frame building that was later completed by a dance pavillion across the driveway. You went there only with a date (for girls, that is) and for 50¢ minimum could spend the evening dancing to the nichelodeon and ordering soft drinks. Still never know how it was accomplished but "Miss Hettie" and her husband only allowed "respectable young people" to come in and quietly ousted anyone undesirable and misbehaving. This place was ideal—up in the tree tops with a beautiful view, tables on the balcony that could be boarded up for winter, rough wood construction that spilled cokes couldn't hurt, dim lights and soft music. The place was affordable and you usually knew almost everyone there. Because of no air conditioner or heat it was a better summer place than winter.

Dances: Each sorority and fraternity had a fall dance to introduce the freshman and a spring dance to honor the officers which "took up" a great many weekends. S.A.P. club was the exception and they had one ball at Christmas. Most were held at B.M.C.C. On arrival, everyone (about 40 members, the invited guests, which were the officers of the other sororities and fraternities plus one "elected" guest of each group) spoke to the chaperones (parents of members and dates) who lined the walls of

the club. Each couple spoke to each chaperone. This was followed by the Grand March with New Francis Craig's orchestra playing "A Pretty Girl is Like a Melody". The officers wore tails and their dates carried huge bouquets. The lights were dimmed for the "no break" where each girl danced with her date for one whole dance. After that the lights went up and the stags broke in—for the rest of the evening. Incidentally, the boys, before leaving home, were instructed to "break-in" on daughters of family friends, etc.

Drinking: No one did! The drinking age was 21 and if the boys did drink in high school, it was never on a date.

Cigarettes: Unfortunately yes. The hazards were not known. This was a "big thing" to do at spend-the-night parties. We all believed that the parents were unaware.

In retrospect, perhaps high school was easier for us because of the size of Nashville. Fraternities and sororities had about 40-50 members, so that you easily knew everyone in your own, and at least by sight in all of the others. There was a war, but it didn't touch most of our lives until later. Gas rationing was no severe problem. Perhaps our parents did without in order for us to use the family car more often. No one owned one of their own, but Jane Elam. There was tragedy—Charlie Moss' accident at Sewanee and a couple of fatal automobile accidents. A few years later every one's life was changed by the War—marriages suddenly arranged by leaves, boys and husband overseas, the "missing in action" and death telegrams delivered by Western Union.

Ours was an age of innocence—maybe the last generation that lasted thru high school and into college. Through World War II we were so confident in ourselves, our parents and our country, if mistakes were made, they were just that and therefore forgiven. There were personal hurts and real tragedies, but there were few questions and no doubt.

