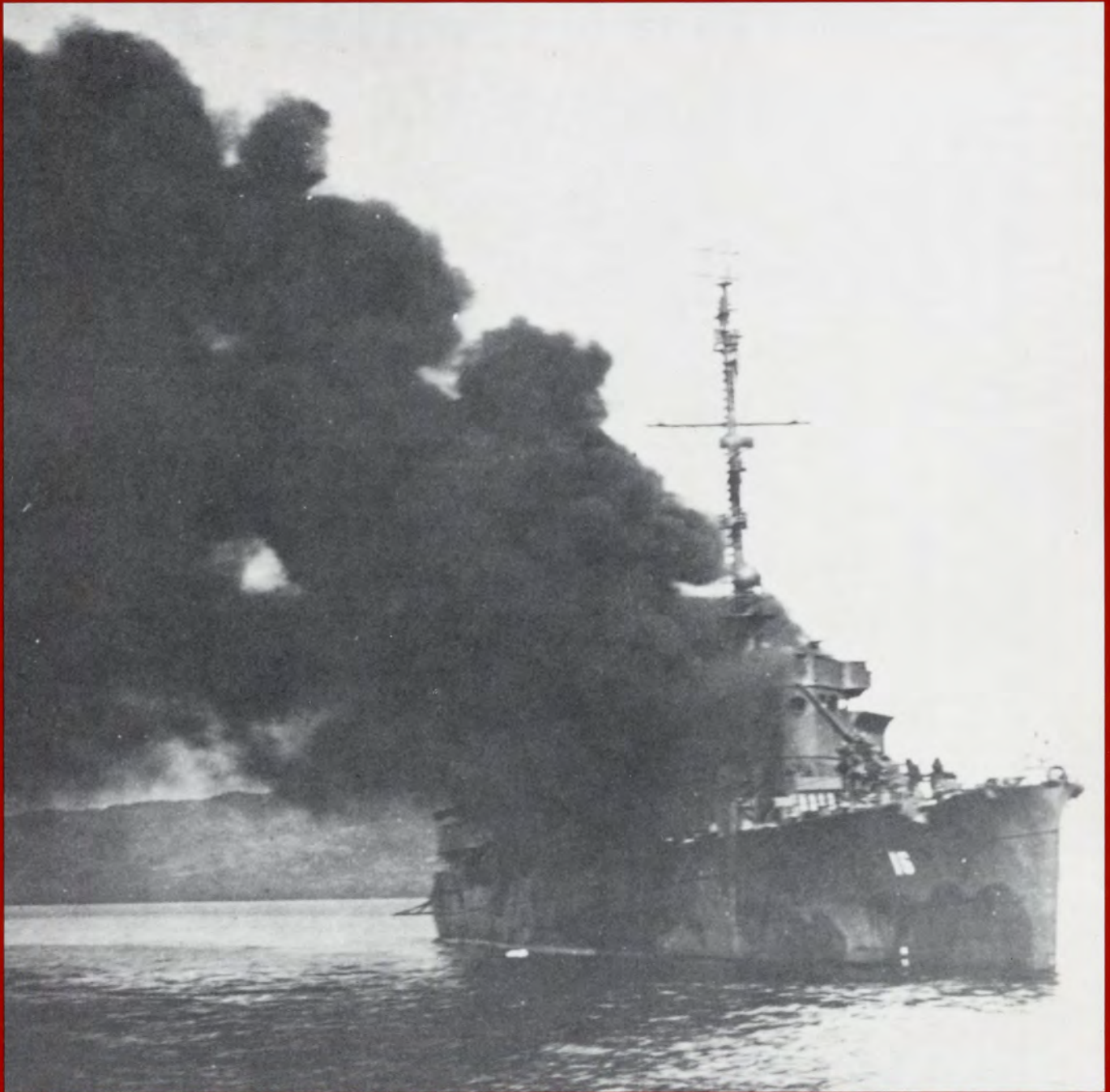


RAMSEY COUNTY

# History

A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

Winter, 1991  
Volume 26, Number 4



*The death of the U.S.S. Ward. The destroyer whose crew made up almost entirely of St. Paul men fired America's first shot of World War II, was sunk by gunfire three years to the day after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. See the article beginning on page 4 about the ship and her crew.*

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**Acknowledgements:** Photographs on the front cover and with the article on the U.S.S. *Ward* are from *USS Ward Fires First Shot WWII* by Arnold S. Lott and Robert F. Sumrall, published in 1983 by The First Shot Naval Veterans, St. Paul, and from *Flush Decks & Four Pipes* by John D. Allen, published in 1965 by the Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, Maryland. Photographs on pages 12, 13 and 17 were loaned to *Ramsey County History* by the author, Hilda Rachuy. Photographs on pages 20, 22 (William West and Samuel Smith), 25, 26, 27, 29 and the back cover are from the files of Family Service of Greater Saint Paul. Photographs on pages 3, 15, 19, 22 (James Jackson), 30 and 31 are from the audio-visual collections of the Minnesota Historical Society.

# RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 26, Number 4 Winter, 1991

## CONTENTS

- 3 Letters
- 4 St. Paul's First Shot Naval Veterans  
The U.S.S. *Ward* and the Attack on Pearl Harbor  
*Jane McClure*
- 12 Help, Housing 'Almost Impossible to Find'  
A Single Mother and World War II  
*Hilda Rachuy*
- 18 100 Years of Helping People—  
Family Service and Its Legacy of Leadership  
*Thomas J. Kelley*
- 30 Books, Etc.  
*Daniel John Hoisington*
- 31 What's Historic About This Site?  
St. Paul's Union Depot

Publication of *Ramsey County History* is supported in part by a gift from Clara M. Claussen and Frieda H. Claussen in memory of Henry H. Cowie, Jr.

## A Message from the Editorial Board

Fifty years ago this month the United States joined the global conflict known as World War II. This issue of *Ramsey County History* focuses on that momentous event with Jane McClure's article about the St. Paul men who served on the U.S.S. *Ward*, which fired the first shot at the Japanese. While men like the sailors of the *Ward* fought the enemy overseas, others, such as Hilda Rachuy, battled different adversaries—hunger, hardship, and poverty—as a single mother with two small children at home in St. Paul. Her article is a first-person account of that truly difficult side of the war. Lastly, Tom Kelley gives us new awareness and insight into Family Service of Greater Saint Paul, a 100-year-old social service organization developed to help those like Hilda Rachuy who need institutional support and comfort in their daily struggle to hold a family together.

—John M. Lindley, chairman, Editorial Board

## *Help, Housing 'Almost Impossible to Find'*

# A Single Mother and World War II

### *Hilda Rachuy*

**M**uch has been written of the hardships, misery and tragedies of the Second World War from the viewpoint of the servicemen. I would like to record something of what it was like for those who lived through that unhappy time back home in the United States. I was a single mother with two small children, earning a living and trying to find care for them at a time when both help and housing were almost impossible to find.

On December 7, 1941, I was working as an accounts clerk and secretary for the federal government's Immigration and Naturalization Service in St. Paul, having been transferred from Washington, D.C., a year earlier. My son, Dean, was three years old and my daughter, Doretta, was four. We lived on University Avenue, the main artery between the two cities, where streetcars clanged past noisily, traveling both ways down the middle of the wide avenue. We had the lower half of an old two-story house and were fortunate to have a fairly large enclosed yard where the children could play. I also had a basement; the furnace was coal-fired—by me.

Besides the lack of money, my main problem during the war was finding a way to care for my children while I was at work. There were no licensed daycare homes. If there was a city or county agency that might have helped, I was unaware of it and I was too naive to even think of inquiring. Any woman who wished to work could do so at the munitions plant in New Brighton, at much higher wages than I could pay. My family lived in northern Minnesota; I had no one close to turn to in an emergency. Most of the young women I was able to hire periodically were anything but satisfactory.

When I first went to Washington in Au-



*Hilda Rachuy in 1943.*

gust, 1939, to take a civil service examination, Dean was eleven months old and took his first step while I was packing my suitcase. My mother, who lived in Bemidji, was to care for the children until I could send for them, but I soon realized that two lively youngsters were a handful for her. In the meantime, my sister, Martha, had married and she and her husband took them.

When I was transferred to St. Paul in the fall of 1940, housing already was tight. The best I could find was a makeshift furnished apartment at 1852 Marshall Avenue where I shared a bathroom with the landlady and a couple who rented two rooms and shared the kitchen. The bathroom was off my rooms and traffic was heavy. My sister, Dorothy, brought the children down to me. Since she was to care for my two and her own child while her husband took a job in the city, we definitely needed more space.

I advertised for a larger, furnished apartment. I was shown just what I had in mind on Laurel Avenue, with enough

room and fully furnished. The rent was reasonable. The landlord took me to the basement to show me the new washing machine that went with the apartment.

When we moved our few belongings in a few days later, we found the apartment bare. No furniture of any kind. I had beds for the children, but no stove, table, chairs or extra beds. A woman in another apartment told me the furniture we'd been shown belonged to the people who had just moved out. The landlord arrived with an oil stove and a beat-up table. He said he would be back as soon as he could locate other furniture—from secondhand and junk shops, apparently.

We stayed two more days before we could find another apartment. He refused to return my down payment—half a month's rent. I took him to court, but couldn't enforce the judgment against him without another court procedure. More expense and time lost from work. That was when I should have learned that, when something is too good to be true, it isn't.

My sister and her family found another small apartment, and I found a young woman to come in during the day. One day I asked her to bake a cake for the children. No box mixes then. That evening, no cake.

"You don't have a big enough bowl to mix it in," she told me. I bought a larger bowl. The next evening, no cake.

"You don't have the right size pan," she said. I bought another cake pan. Still no cake.

"You don't have the right size bowl for beating the eggs," she said. I baked the cake myself. Two weeks later, she left, but while she was with me, the children couldn't be outside during the day, as she wouldn't go out with them. I took them for walks each evening to use up some of their energy.

Then I hired a married woman. The children told me that as soon as I left in the

morning, her husband came for breakfast, stayed for lunch, took a nap and left just before I came home. This was a man, a neighbor said, who a few years earlier had stood on the ledge of a high building threatening to jump unless someone gave him a job. A crowd gathered, the police came and someone offered him a job. I asked her not to have him there. The next morning she told me her husband wouldn't let her work for me anymore.

When spring came, I was able to rent the downstairs of an old house at 1099 Gorman Avenue in West St. Paul. It was the last house on the street. Beyond us was a pasture with horses on the hillside and down by the fence. Every evening I took the children over to talk to the horses. On the Fourth of July, we sat on the hillside and watched the fireworks way off somewhere. The horses rested nearby.

The house was built on a lot partially dug out of a sandhill. Back of the lot was a steep sandbank, making a lovely sandbox, which kept the children occupied for hours at a time. It was a nice country atmosphere, and I would like to have stayed, but landlord decided to move back to the house. We had not been told it was available only for the summer.

I then rented a lovely house on South Robert Street, also in West St. Paul, with five bedrooms, a finished basement and a modern kitchen. My brother, Jack, who was working in the cities, joined us. With his board and room, this worked fine—until the cold weather came. I soon realized that the coal bill would just about equal my monthly income.

The landlord offered to sell me the house for \$3,000. Properly insulated, it now must be worth many times that. However, it was then that we moved to an apartment at 813½ University Avenue and Florence, our jewel, joined us.

When Jack and I went to look at the apartment, the electricity was off. As I groped down a dark hallway, I found what I thought was a closet opposite the bathroom. I stepped in, encountered empty air and rolled down a stairway sideways. Jack came running in the darkness. I couldn't get up. He picked me up and set me on my feet. Other than black-and-blue spots and some stiffness, I was unharmed.

My sister sent me Florence, a young



*Doretta and Dean Rache as children in St. Paul in 1943.*

woman with poor eyesight and a heart of gold. We agreed that she would stay with me over the winter and would give reasonable notice when she decided to leave. That winter was a peaceful oasis during those troubled and stressful years. Florence was good with the children and they loved her. She played with them, took them for walks, told them stories, taught them nursery rhymes and songs and made things interesting and alive for them while I was absent.

I had been much too involved with my own problems to take much interest in world affairs. I took no newspaper and we owned no radio. So when Jack called me on Sunday evening, December 7, 1941, to tell me we were at war and had been at war for hours, I knew nothing about it. I decided it was time to invest in a small radio. The children were avid listeners. Red Skelton and his "mean widdo kid," as the children called the program, was a favorite. I had to hurry through the dishes to sit with them on the couch as they laughed delightedly at a youngster getting away with naughtiness.

After Florence left for a better job, my sister sent me a succession of young women. Each stopped first at the New Brighton plant to apply for work, then left me as soon as the call came to report for work—usually within a week or two. I, of course, had paid their fares to the Twin Cities.

When each left suddenly, I would have to go, sometimes early in the morning, from neighbor to neighbor, none of whom I knew well, to try to find someone who would take the children into her home for the day, or until I could arrange for their care. Often, one would be kind enough to do this, but if I could find no one, I would have to stay home from work. My office, of course, knew of my problems. I was the only single woman there who had small children to care for—a rarity at that time.

One woman agreed to take them daily, and asked for their ration books to buy food for their noon meal. At that time, canned food, sugar, shoes, gasoline and other items all were rationed. Three days later she told me she could not care for them any longer. When I next bought groceries, I found that every coupon for that month had been removed from their books. This left me with just my own ration coupons for the three of us for the rest of the month. Shortly after this, my mother arrived to take the children back to Bemidji with her.

In the spring of 1942, I was transferred to our central office in Philadelphia. My sister and her husband came from Bemidji to stay with the children while he worked in the city. I didn't return to St. Paul until late fall, but in the meantime, my sister gave Dean a party on his fourth birthday in September. I sent him a telegram. When it

was read to him, he asked for it. He looked it over carefully, folded it and put it in his pocket. He carried it with him after that, taking it out every now and then, looking at it, folding it up carefully and returning it to his pocket. He was still carrying it when I returned. I like to think that looking at the telegram brought his mother closer to him.

After I returned to St. Paul, I again hired young women to come in, but the problem of care for the children continued. Then I heard of a place that was furnishing room and board for servicemen's families and providing child care during the day if the wives worked. I arranged for an interview and took a streetcar to the suburbs. The woman asked my salary, then set the price for the three of us, leaving me car fare, a small amount for noon lunches, and very little for clothes and other necessities for me and the children.

I was told that the mothers were expected to take turns caring for all the children in the evenings. As we were talking, I could hear the ruckus of children protesting being put to bed somewhere upstairs. I knew I didn't want my children's voices added to the clamor, and I didn't want to be the one trying to deal with it, so I left.

In the spring, I found an elderly couple who seemed happy to take the children but wanted them fulltime, since they lived far out in the suburbs. I could visit and spend weekends, if I wished. This seemed to be a Godsend; they seemed to be such lovely grandparent types. I hadn't yet learned that when something is too good to be true, it isn't.

The children had been there a week and everything appeared to be fine, except that Dean was lonesome and wanted to go home with me. Then I discovered that his back was painfully blistered from sunburn and no ointment had been applied to relieve the pain or soften the burned skin. I stayed over the weekend to nurse him and became aware of other things.

Both the woman and her husband were very fond of Doretta, who was better able to adjust to strangers, but Dean's crying for his mother annoyed the woman and she showed this in subtle ways in her care of him. Doretta also told me a few things which, added to my own observation and the fact that his back had not been taken

care of, convinced me that I had to get them out of there. I took them home, called my mother, and sent them to her in Bemidji.

While the children were gone, I answered a newspaper ad by a middle-aged couple who wanted to care for children in their home. They lived a few blocks off University Avenue. There was no streetcar transfer point within walking distance, which meant double fares to take them to the home in the morning and pick them up after work. The house wasn't very clean, the woman looked worn out, and the man, who apparently was unemployed or retired, appeared sickly. Not an ideal situation, but a possibility if nothing else turned up.

The war brought prices up and there were no cost-of-living raises at that time. Advancement for women was practically non-existent in our agency. Promotion was by civil service examination. I took the examinations that were offered until I learned that when the other women laughed at me, saying "A woman can take the examination, but a man gets the job," they knew from experience what they were talking about. So any additional expense, such as doubled streetcar fares, was difficult to work into an already strained budget.

I heard of an organization that helped place children in foster homes. I inquired and explained my situation. The woman there told me they had no home open at the time, but suggested that to avoid the double streetcar fare, I let the children walk by themselves the few blocks to the home I had in mind.

"Let them cross that busy street by themselves? They could be killed," I exclaimed in amazement.

"Well, that would solve your problem, wouldn't it?" she responded.

"I am trying to find care for them; I am not trying to get them killed!" I blurted out angrily.

"Oh, I was just joking," she laughed.

She asked the name and address of the couple who wanted to care for the children. When she checked them through her card file, she found that they had been turned down for foster care because the husband had tuberculosis.

Before school opened that fall, I was able to get the children into the Walker

Day Nursery on Seventh Street. It meant getting up at 5 a.m. and, since I'm not a morning person, this wasn't easy. I would stumble into the small kitchen to heat the coffee left from the night before. While it was heating, I would sit at the table, head on my arms and fall into a half sleep. Then drink the warmed-over brew, get the furnace going, get dressed and get the children up.

I had a musical powder box which, when the lid was lifted, played "Oh, how I hate to get up in the morning; oh, how I would love to stay in bed." I aroused them each morning with this. I still have that music box and remember those sleepy mornings every time I see it.

I found it easier and faster to dress them myself, and I had a little table in the bathroom that I would sit them on. One morning in my hurry, I forgot to place a towel on the top before setting Doretta on it as I pulled off her pajamas.

"Ooooh, Mama!" she exclaimed as her bottom touched the cold metal top. "Did you forget my seat was barefooted?"

After a hurried breakfast and the furnace cared for, we caught the streetcar about 6:30 a.m., transferred to another streetcar and walked to the Nursery. We had to wait in line to have the children's throats checked by the stern-faced woman in charge. After that, I had to walk several blocks to catch a streetcar to my office in the Post Office building on Kellogg and Robert streets.

If a child's throat was the least bit red, the child was not admitted to the Nursery. That meant taking both children home and trying to find someone else to care for them, or staying home myself. One morning I knew Dean had a slightly red throat, but I absolutely had to be at the office. I put the children in the check-in line and made my escape, knowing they wouldn't dare put him out in the street. I didn't accept any phone calls that day.

When I picked them up that evening, I was prepared for a tongue-lashing from the supervisor. I wouldn't have minded that. What I did mind was finding my son alone in a room, standing in a crib in his underware, his face red and swollen from crying. He sobbed out that he had been in the crib all day and hardly anyone had been in to see him. That was when the supervi-

sor got a tongue-lashing from his mother. I was amazed that I was allowed to bring the children back to the Nursery.

There was a rule that every child, regardless of age or the weather, had to be out-of-doors a full hour every day. Both of my children were big and lively enough to keep moving around, but I saw toddlers so young they had to hang onto the sides of the playpen to keep on their feet, out there in the cold, tears rolling down their red cheeks. The young aides told me how unhappy it made them to see the little ones out like that. It made me think, no wonder they often had red throats.

Snowsuits with hoods for children, so common now, were just beginning to come into fashion and were very practical. I bought brother and sister suits in different sizes for my two. They loved to get out and romp in the snow. In the evenings, I took them for walks. There was a little White Castle hamburger shop down the street where hamburgers were five cents each. We would walk down, have a hamburger, and it would be the highlight of their day.

The snowbanks on University Avenue were high that winter. The children loved to climb to the top and slide down. One evening they were at the very top, above my head, along a stretch where there were no houses. A patrol car came, slowed down and nearly stopped. I nervously tried to think if there was a law that children should not climb on snowbanks along the streets. The police looked up at the children, down at me, up at the children, down at me again and drove on, apparently satisfied that they were being supervised. I sighed with relief.

When we got back from these outings, the children were perfectly willing to put on pajamas and get into bed. Then I would have a few hours to do the ironing, mend their clothes, write letters or read a bit. I enjoyed these quiet evenings, with the children safely sleeping, and I would hate to end them by going to bed.

After the United States entered the war, many things we were used to were no longer available. Alarm clocks were among the first casualties. I had a perfectly good Big Ben alarm clock a few years old, but to be sure it would remain dependable for the duration, I took it to a jeweler to be cleaned and oiled. When I got it back, the

alarm didn't work. Whether they passed off a different clock on me, or removed a part to repair another, I don't know—I was told this was being done.

When "war-time clocks" became available, I reluctantly bought one. These were clocks encased in pressed black paper instead of metal. I hated mine. Every time I looked at it, I'd get angry over the loss of

they could call him Daddy.

"Sure," he said. "Call me Daddy Jack."

This seemed harmless and cute and made the children happy. Then one evening I was buying groceries at the neighborhood store and told the grocer my brother would be over to carry home the bag of potatoes.

"Oh, is that your brother?" he asked



*Downtown St. Paul as it looked in 1941 when Hilda Rachuy worked for the federal government in the Post Office building. This is Kellogg Boulevard and Minnesota Street. St. Paul Dispatch-Pioneer Press photo.*

my reliable Big Ben.

During the war, we worked Saturday mornings, in addition to our forty-hour week. This was on overtime, so no one complained; it gave us a little added income. We were paid on Saturday morning and I cashed my check on the way home. One Saturday afternoon, a woman came to my door.

"Did you know that your little girl is handing out money to passersby?" she asked, holding out several bills to me.

I checked my purse and found all my money missing. I rushed out to where Doretta was standing by the gate, holding bills in her hand, waiting for another passerby. The bills she had and those the woman had handed me didn't add up to the full amount of my check, so we searched around and found the rest blown among the bushes along the fence. How thankful I was that the first recipient of my daughter's generosity was an honest person.

My brother, Jack, often came over on his days off and sometimes stayed overnight. The children were thrilled to have the attention of an adult male, and he was very fond of them. Doretta asked him if

with a knowing smirk. "I heard the children call him Daddy." I started to explain, but seeing the knowing expression on his face, I realized it wasn't worth it. Jack was highly amused when I told him he had ruined my reputation.

The children and I often went home to Bemidji for holidays. They loved riding the train. It left St. Paul in the evening and stopped for what seemed a long time in Minneapolis and at innumerable little stations along the way north. Always the whistle blew, the engine chugged and wheezed and there were loud explosions of steam.

I packed a lunch and we would scarcely get past the Minneapolis depot before they were asking, "Are we almost there? Isn't it time for our lunch yet?" They loved it all until they fell asleep. We would arrive in Bemidji in the early morning.

The rush to get to the station on time; waiting in the busy waiting room; people hurrying past off the train that had just arrived and greeting those waiting for them; the announcement over the microphone to board; waiting in line to go down the ramp; choosing a seat; the switching, starting and

stopping on the way to Minneapolis; the long wait there and then eventually pulling out of the station, knowing we were on our way; the mournful wail of the whistle floating back on the night air – all full of excitement and anticipation. This is something children miss out on now. Neither the automobile nor the airplane can offer anything to compare with it.

With the young men expecting to be drafted, the sales of automobiles fell off. To bring sales up, and perhaps to help servicemen, automobile payments were suspended while a man was in service. On the basis of this, Jack bought a better car. He was told he needed a co-signer who had a permanent job, that this was just a formality, and payments would be suspended in the event that he went into service.

Jack enlisted in the Navy the morning after the attack on Pearl Harbor. I notified the car dealer and asked that payments be stopped. I was told that, as co-signer, I would have to keep up the payments or the car would be repossessed. I had to make two more payments before I managed to sell the car.

There were other hardships. Our ration coupons allowed one pair of shoes a year for each person. No allowance was made for the fact that children's feet grow, and they wear shoes out faster than do adults. We had to take a child's worn-out shoes in and fill out forms, and if we could make a good case, a special coupon would be issued for a new pair.

I used my own coupons, plus those of my mother and my step-father, to buy shoes for the children, and still had to go several times to request additional coupons to keep their feet properly shod. This, of course, required taking time away from work.

We eventually moved into a small apartment. It had one large room, a small kitchen, a dining room and a bath. The large room had a pull-down bed and a daybed fit nicely into the dining area. This was in another large old house that had been broken up into apartments. The landlady, whose husband was away working on the Alaskan highway, and her children lived on the lower floor, across the hall from us. Upstairs there were four or five servicemen's wives, some with children and one who was expecting.

Most of the women upstairs worked, but one stayed with the children during the day. When I had to keep one of mine home, they were able to stay up there, or in our own rooms with the door open so the landlady could keep an eye on them and see that they had lunch and a nap. This "helping out" was always done cheerfully, and no pay ever was accepted. I also was free of the care of a furnace.

Apartments in these old homes often had fireplaces. We had one. One evening, I scrounged up a few pieces of wood from the alley and built a fire. Suddenly, the rooms were full of smoke. Then I learned that the chimney wasn't safe to use because it had been plugged up to keep out the cold air. We had to remove the burning wood and open the doors.

Doretta was now attending school and was taken with other children from the Nursery to the school, then escorted back to the Nursery. I do have much to be thankful for to the Walker Day Nursery. Life finally had settled into a routine, but we still had hectic early hours.

A short time after I left the University Avenue apartment, I remembered that I had left about \$10 worth of coal in the bin in the basement. I went back to see if I could collect for it from the new tenants, two elderly, pleasant women.

"Why! We paid the landlord for that!" they told me. "He said he had paid you for it. Well! We will just ask him for our money back!" And they gave me the \$10 with no argument.

Near the end of 1943, a man who was working in our office in Grand Forks, North Dakota, was drafted. The officer in charge of the Grand Forks office asked if I would like a transfer. I knew it would be easier to manage with the children in a smaller city, and I would be closer to Bemidji and my family. I requested the transfer.

In Grand Forks, I was able to rent an upstairs three-room apartment. The landlady, who lived on the first floor, was willing to look after Dean, along with her two small girls, during the day, and Doretta when she was not in school. The school was nearby. During the summers, the children went home to stay with my mother or my sister.

When the war ended in 1945, I learned that the house was owned by a serviceman

who was returning and needed the downstairs for his family. My landlord and his family planned to move upstairs, into my three rooms. My children and I were to get out.

There wasn't a house or an apartment for rent in town within my price range. With the return of servicemen and their families, the housing shortage became even more acute. Home owners were fixing up garages, basements and attics to take advantage of the situation. Complaints about the condition of some of the makeshift arrangements reached city government and new ordinances were passed.

I saw an ad for a one-room efficiency apartment and I rushed over. It was in a basement, not quite completed. I asked where the bathroom was, and was told it would be installed in a few days and the apartment would be available within a week. I made a down payment. When it was ready, I found that only a toilet had been installed and it was beside the kitchen sink with no enclosure of any kind.

"But this is against the city ordinance," I told the landlord. Without a word, he pulled out his billfold and handed back my down payment. I had to take the children out of school and send them to my sister in Bemidji, but this was only a temporary solution. I rented a small bedroom for myself from a friend and stored my furniture in her basement. When the serviceman I had replaced in the Grand Forks office returned, I was transferred to Fargo. Again, no place to bring the children. Then I heard with relief of the Lutheran Children's Home. I called, hoping to place my children there until I could make other arrangements. I explained my situation.

"Since your children do have a mother, we won't be able to help you," I was told. "Now, if something should happen to you, and they had neither a father nor a mother, we could take them into our Children's Home."

"Are you suggesting that I commit suicide," I asked incredulously.

"Well, then we could give the children a home," she replied.

Again, I heard, "Oh, I was just joking," when I told her angrily that children need a mother as well as a home.

I've often wondered, when reading of a young mother who had taken her own life,

if she had been given some such "joking" solution to a very desperate situation. I was desperate at times, but I had my family to fall back on. What of the desperate, distraught mother with absolutely no one to turn to for help? Today there are social services and licensed daycare, but daycare is too expensive for many women. For single, working mothers, the situation remains critical, even without the added problems and anxieties of a war.

By the time school started that fall, I was able to rent a two-room, makeshift, upstairs apartment on the outskirts of Moorhead. There was a cistern for water in the basement, I was told. After I moved in, I learned the water in the cistern was for the use of the landlord's family only. We had a path out to a little outhouse in the back and lugged all our water from a service station more than a quarter of a mile away. The children had a long way to walk to school along busy Highway 10, as we were just beyond the required distance for school busing.

On a Saturday afternoon just before Easter in 1947, I had taken the children to see "Pinocchio" in a Fargo theater. It was a mild, sunny day. When we came out of the theater, the streets were covered with several inches of snow. It was snowing hard, and a strong wind was whipping the snow down the street. I soon realized we were engulfed in a North Dakota blizzard. None of us was dressed for the sudden change in the weather.

We rode the bus into Moorhead and walked many blocks to the service station where we had left the sled so we could haul home a large can of water. We still had more than a quarter of a mile to go, pulling the sled with the heavy can of water through the snow, now six inches deep.

I pulled the sled; Dean and Doretta balanced the can of water and pushed. After only a short time, although we seemed to have made little progress, I had to stop. The wind was biting cold and had increased in velocity, now that we were out in the open on the highway. The wet snow stuck to our faces and was piling up ahead as we dragged the sled along. Visibility was poor. We couldn't see houses we knew were nearby. There were no visible tracks and no traffic. We seemed to be alone, lost on a prairie, nothing in sight. I realized I

## Snapshots

*Hilda Rachuy and her children were living at 813 1/2 University Avenue when these snapshots of the children on the back steps and Dean with his trike were taken in the summer of 1942. Both 813 1/2 University and the house behind it are still there.*



was utterly exhausted. The words, "We aren't going to make it," crossed my mind.

I looked back at the children, who were watching me closely. Suddenly Dean, a sturdy youngster, came around the sled and took the rope out of my hand, saying, "Let me pull, Mama; you push. I'm used to it." We started out again and finally made it to the house.

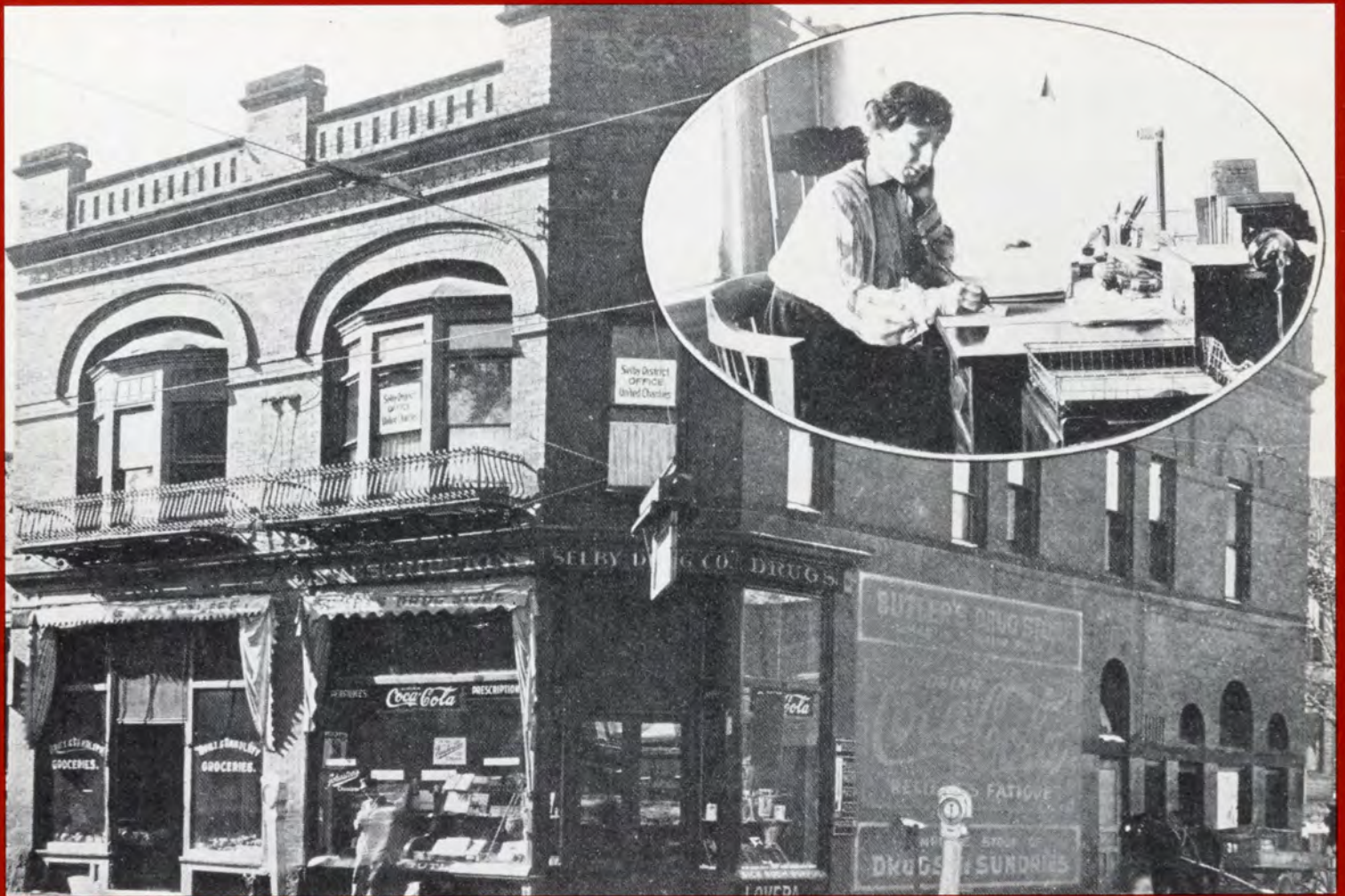
The next fall, I was able to make a down payment on a small house in what was then the small town of West Fargo. I cashed in the war bonds I had accumulated through payroll deductions during the war years. While we had been living in cramped apartments, I had to continually hush the children to avoid annoying others. "When the war is over, we will have our own house, and then you can yell as loud as you want to," I would tell them.

When we moved into our first real home for the first time, they went from room to room, upstairs, downstairs and to the basement, yelling at the top of their lungs. I'm sure the neighbors wondered what kind of people they were going to have to put up with, but it was a fitting end to years of makeshift homes. The children soon were part of the school and made many friends. I looked out the window one evening and counted twenty-one bicycles parked on our lawn. We had our own home. The war was finally over.

I think our struggles during the war years drew us closer together, made us stronger persons and more appreciative of our home, once we got it, and of the kind people who helped us along the way. We found that honest, helpful, good people outnumbered those who were otherwise. If I could have my way, I would gladly go back and relive those days when the children were small and I had them with me.

*Hilda Rachuy now lives in Bemidji. She retired from government service in 1965, earned a college degree and worked for five years for the County Nursing Service, then as an insurance adjuster, before retiring again. She edits North County History, a small book of memories of early Bemidji area residents which she publishes annually. Dean and Doretta grew up, married, formed families of their own. Doretta lives in Bellevue, Washington. Dean died in 1973 in an on-the-job accident.*





*Family Service of Greater Saint Paul is marking a century of service to the community. It is an outgrowth of earlier charitable organizations, such as the United Charities, whose Selby District Office is shown here. It was located at 624 Selby Avenue from 1916 to 1919. An article tracing Family Service's history begins on page 18.*

**R.C.H.S.**  
 RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Published by the Ramsey County Historical Society  
 323 Landmark Center  
 75 West Fifth Street  
 Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102

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