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## The War is Over — Conclusion

*"The war is over and we are truly thankful. Now as the din of battle fades, we pledge anew to the accomplishment in fact of an enduring peace...We join our fellow Americans in celebrating this righteous victory and promise to play our part in creating a bright and happy future...for our country and the world."*

Frank Seger, Editor  
*The Brighton Argus, August 22, 1945*

My mother, Anna Weber, and her sister, Emma Westin (who was asst. cashier of the Brighton State Bank and heard war and town news daily) chronicled much about those years in diaries that are now invaluable sources of information about both life on the home front and theaters of war. So too did Ray Carmack, the son of the owner of the Grand Theater (Brighton's chief air raid warden), killed heroically in a bombing raid over Germany in 1944 in preparation for D-Day. *"Heard today Ray Carmack is missing in action...married only recently...This is Brighton's first foreign case of sorrow,"* my aunt wrote on March 17, 1944. Years later Ray's widow, Mary (Hittlebaugh) Pelkey, obtained her husband's diary and graciously allowed it to be circulated for historical purposes. Longtime family friend Charles Smith chronicled much of the war, too, but in a different way. Stationed in Kweilin, China before its fall to the Japanese in 1944, "Chug" shot numerous Kodak pictures of civilians there as well as of his interaction with General Claire Chennault and the famed Flying Tigers. The more than one hundred pictures he took of Chinese friends and their families before atrocities were committed as Kweilin fell to the Japanese have become a treasure trove for historians.

Mom and her sister wrote extensively about life on the home front as well as how friends and family in service were faring. In reading their accounts one wonders how people were able to cope with so many challenges. Emma worked with the Red Cross, noting that in the basement of the Brighton State Bank volunteers wrapped a record 2000 bandages in one day! In one month there had been 247 blood donors in town, she wrote, and a bond drive at the bank for a few days in the

summer of 1943 and had netted sales of \$10,000 to \$12,000 in Series E bonds. Mom wrote about shortages of such things as sugar, gasoline, tires and meat and how many coupons were needed to purchase them. She also wrote about Dad's wartime activities. He was exempt from service because he was a farmer but it was imperative that he produce enough crops and raise enough livestock to maintain that status. He served on numerous war boards that informed neighboring farmers how much they were required to produce and as such was required to file frequent reports. He and a Green Oak neighbor also worked closely with the county's draft supervisor overseeing military service exemption requests.

Mom kept well informed on the progress of the war. She listened to the news and commentaries every day on WJR radio and read *Detroit Free Press* war correspondent Marjorie Avery's and editor John Knight's columns regularly. At a 1943 family get-together in Roseville she wrote in her diary *"We all made predictions about when the war would end...I said by my fortieth birthday (May, 1945!)"* Aunt Emma Westin referenced one of the most significant invasions in world history in a diary entry June 6, 1944: *"News of the (D-Day) invasion all day: she wrote, "the fire siren blew at ten o'clock for sixty seconds."* But with the elation of D-Day came dashed hopes. People used to a steady diet of disturbing news were disappointed that after the victory at Normandy no end in the fighting in Europe was in sight. Then as the winter of 1944-45 set in, Hitler began a surprise offensive known as the "Battle of the Bulge." The Allies prevailed but suffered huge casualties. Sadly a Brighton man paid the highest price. Frederick Singer, middle son of the town printer, Eric Singer, and his wife, Alva was killed March 15, shortly before Allied troops crossed the *Rhine* into Germany. A world away in that last year of the war, another Brighton area son, William Richmond, a Red Arrow Division scout, was killed crossing a God-forsaken ridge in the Philippines.

*(The above excerpt is from "Remembering Brighton: Still in Touch," Paul Weber's forthcoming sequel to his novel "Con Weber's Brighton: Portrait of Family, Church and Nation, 1832—1942.")*