

## The War and I from 1941 *by Gerry Biram*

I was a sophomore at the University of Wyoming on December 7, 1941 when Pearl Harbor was attacked. On Monday, December 8, we had a rare all school required assembly in the Auditorium of the Liberal Arts College. At that time we were told of the draft that would take place immediately which would affect many of the young men then on campus. We were on a quarter system of time which meant that the first quarter would end by Christmas break. We knew that many of our classmates would not return after the holiday.

And so it was that when we returned it was a different campus. Classes were smaller and familiar faces gone. Dates were few and far between. If there was a dance mix on a Friday evening as was the custom, the girls danced with the girls. Because we were so far inland, it seemed that we were rather insulated from many of the real effects of the war. There was no defense industry near us. Unless one was a really close friend of a draftee, we just missed their presence. Rationing effected everyone but we did not ever go without our needs being met.

Things changed on our campus a great deal in 1943 as the University had been selected to train engineers on a fast track for filling needed mechanical, electrical, and chemical positions in the armed services. Our campus had an immediate influx of 300 young men and more came later. The quiet social life of the past year was gone. We had a USO in a building down town which was open afternoons and early evenings. The juke box dance mixes formerly held once a week on campus occurred nightly. There was early curfew evenings except on Friday and Saturday so there was plenty of time to study. So part of my last two years in college were really busy and fun.

By the time I graduated in 1944, most of the engineers were gone. I was interested in finding a teaching position. But even when I was gone from home only rationing had any effect on my life. And for a last thought, because cigarettes were rationed, I chose to smoke so I would not miss out on my share of any of the rationed goods. I did not quit until 18 years later.