

everything. He was a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful human being. One of my best friends in the whole world.¹⁴⁶

The 1930s also saw increased support of organized activities for children and youth by private groups such as the Catholic Youth Organization, which sponsored sports and social programs for children in Butte's Catholic schools, and the Knights of Columbus, which sponsored boys' boxing and basketball leagues.

By 1939 Butte's population was 49,000, significantly lower than in 1930, but the community looked to the future with pride.¹⁴⁷ As a 1939 Butte economic survey noted, Butte had a high literacy rate and high enrollment in both public and Catholic schools. Ninety percent of Butte households had radios by 1939, and Superman, Jack Benny, Bob Hope, and The Shadow were weekly visitors in nearly every home.¹⁴⁸ The city itself had experienced a makeover, with nearly four million federal dollars invested in community development projects, including seven parks with playing fields, baseball diamonds, and tennis courts.¹⁴⁹

Coming of Age in Wartime

Butte residents entered the 1940s with a renewed sense of hope. The realities of war in Europe seemed distant from lives in Butte even as they enhanced the market for copper. Although some WPA projects, such as the sewing rooms, continued until the early 1940s, residents were coming to believe that the hard years were behind them. Butte was getting back on its feet and ready to celebrate. Thousands of Butte residents turned out for the annual Fourth of July parade in 1941, where they witnessed the first float ever entered by the Meaderville Fire Department.¹⁵⁰ Butte's YMCA had become a weekly gathering place for children throughout the city, who bravely crossed the borders of their familiar neighborhoods and traipsed across town to take part in bowling leagues, swimming lessons, and boxing matches.¹⁵¹

Life for many young people in Butte changed profoundly after December 7, 1941. Shirley Trevena recalled that day:

I can remember where I was when Pearl Harbor happened. My dad took us all out in the car to get a Christmas tree, and we heard the news that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. All of us kids started crying. We were all crying in the back seat. It was too weird to believe that we were attacked and that we were at war. I think it was a real hard time, and it was a real patriotic time. I think it was different from so many of the wars we have had since then because you got a real strong

sense of your country and your loyalty and patriotism. I think even though it was very bad, it was very good. People knew that they were working making things for the war, and you knew that you had to sacrifice. You didn't have all the things you usually had, and they were a sacrifice for your country. It lasted a long time. I think I was in the eighth grade when the war started. Before that, you are not too much aware of what's happening in the world, and then you realize that you are watching history being made. And my dad did very well after that war started. The economy was booming, and all the people that were brought in to work the mines, that was a big boost to our city. It was a bad way to get it, but it was a boost.¹⁵²

World War II disrupted family life across the country as 16 million men and women joined the military.¹⁵³ Fifty-seven thousand Montana men and women served in World War II, nearly 10 percent of the state's population.¹⁵⁴ Over 2,400 Butte mine workers served in the armed forces during the course of the war; another 3,500 contributed to the war effort through their work in the mines.¹⁵⁵ Given the need for copper as a strategic metal, miners were exempt from military service.¹⁵⁶ As articles in the *Copper Commando*, the official newspaper of the Victory-Labor Management committees of the Butte, Anaconda, and Great Falls mining and smelting operations, described, war "has an insatiable appetite for copper."¹⁵⁷ Six hundred pounds of copper went into the construction of a single tank. One ton of copper was required for every P-38 fighter plane, and the army's Signal Corps needed five thousand tons of copper per month for radio, telegraph, and telephone equipment. The Medical Department required an additional 375,000 pounds of copper each month.¹⁵⁸ Miners gave their all to meet the overwhelming demand for copper. However, as part of wartime policy, miners' wages were frozen. When the Miners' Union protested, members were criticized for their lack of patriotism.¹⁵⁹

Wartime created opportunities for young people to serve their country and assert their independence. John Mazzola was in high school when the United States entered World War II.

The Second World War came along, and the four of us [John and his brothers] went in the service. My brother Tony was drafted in 1941. He went to the Solomon Islands, New Guinea, the Philippines, Okinawa, and all that. . . . The day after Pearl Harbor, my other two brothers, Joe and Sam, went up to the recruiting at the old post office, and they enlisted. I tried to enlist, but I was only sixteen. They got in separate

lines, and one went in the navy and one in the army. That was it. So, the recruiting guy said you have to wait until you're seventeen, and even then you have to have your mother and dad's permission to join.

I went to Butte High School. I was supposed to graduate. In those days, the high school had two classes; they'd graduate in January and in June. I was supposed to graduate in '43, but in February of '43 I got patriotic. I thought, well, this war is going to be over. I want to help my brothers, and I want to help my country, too. So I became seventeen, and I went up and enlisted.¹⁶⁰



During World War II, children of all ages were expected to contribute to national defense efforts. Butte kids searched neighborhood yards, alleys, and empty lots, looking for all kinds of scrap iron, steel, copper, and rubber. This group of "scrap detectives" posed with their finds in October 1942.

Children of all ages were expected to contribute to national defense. As the 1943 publication *Your Children in Wartime* instructed the nation's youngsters, "You are enlisted for the duration of the war as citizen soldiers. This is a total war, nobody is left out, and that counts you in, of course."¹⁶¹ Butte children joined in the nationwide war effort by both selling and buying war bonds and Victory Stamps. The bonds provided funding for military operations in wartime and yielded 2.9 percent interest after ten years. Stamps could be purchased for as little as ten cents each as a means of saving toward a bond. Children could buy the stamps and paste them in a savings booklet until they saved the \$18.75 needed to purchase a \$25.00 bond. Some war bonds posters featured characters such as Mickey Mouse, Captain Marvel Junior, and Popeye encouraging American youngsters to fulfill their patriotic duty.¹⁶²

Little red wagons were put into military service as children gathered and hauled scrap metal for drives being coordinated nationwide. As Edward Jursnich remembered:

The whole community participated in combing and scouring the neighborhood yards, alleys, and empty lots, looking for all kinds of scrap iron, steel, copper, and rubber. The East Side contributed to a huge scrap pile at least thirty feet high and probably just as wide on the upper playground east of Atlantic Street. . . . All the junk eventually was hauled away

for recycling and used in the manufacture of guns, tanks, warships, and airplanes in the war against Germany and Japan. There were special paper, copper, and rubber drives to support the war effort. My mother saved cooking grease, which was used in the manufacture of munitions.¹⁶³

Wartime rationing also became fixed in childhood memories, and images of war permeated children's play and preoccupations, as Shirley Trevena and Kay Antonetti recalled:

During the war, we were on ration coupons—sugar, coffee, nylon stockings, gas. And my dad brought some meat home, and it was very good-looking hamburger, rich and red. Anyway, he cooked it that night. And then he let out a big “neigh.” It was horsemeat.

I remember the butter. You couldn't get [real] butter. My mother had to mix the oleo. You'd put a little tablet pill in it. It was like a pound of butter, only it looked like lard. That's probably what it was. And there was a little yellow-red pill, and you'd put that in and stir it and stir it until it would turn yellow. Everybody ate it. . . .

We used to play that we were army nurses, and the bikes were our ambulances. And we had a hospital set up in our garage. And, oh, my God, we'd ring the sirens and go get the patients and just have a wonderful time.

I wanted to join the [Cadet Nurses Corps], the young girls who wanted to be nurses, but I was too young for that, so I wrote letters. I wrote tons of letters. I thought I wrote to everybody in the country. Some of my dad's customers went into the war. I had their addresses, and I wrote to them while they were overseas.¹⁶⁴

Shirley Trevena and Kay Antonetti were among the many Butte girls who dreamed of becoming nurses. Girls played with Army Nurse paper dolls, imagined heroic missions, and watched their older sisters join the Cadet Nurses Corps, a federally sponsored program begun in 1942. A national campaign touted the importance—and glamour—of the job. The St. James School of Nursing, which was established by the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth in conjunction with St. James Hospital in 1906, became a key site for training Montana women. The program in Butte graduated an average of twenty to twenty-five nurses a year between 1942 and 1949, and it contributed 140 nurses to the Corps.¹⁶⁵



A joint committee of Anaconda Company employees and mining union members launched a newspaper, the *Copper Commando*, in 1942 to promote the role of copper and copper-mining operations in the war effort. The *Copper Commando* also recognized family-level contributions in Platter Chatter, a column of household tips and low-cost recipes to help homemakers respond to wartime shortages. This photograph of Joan Glynn and her children accompanied one of the columns.

The Anaconda Company Victory Labor-Management committees enthusiastically promoted the key role of miners and their families in waging the war. Weekly flyers, distributed to miners with their paychecks, encouraged them to participate in war-bond drives. Nearly every *Copper Commando* issue featured photos of children doing their patriotic duties as well—saluting the flag, emulating a sailor in pint-size navy attire, or putting coins in their “war savings stamp” piggy banks. Mothers and children were sometimes featured together alongside articles offering meal-planning ideas that dealt with the challenges of war-time food rationing.

The entire November 24, 1944, issue of the *Copper Commando* was dedicated to the McQueen Addition, a Butte neighborhood populated almost in its entirety by mining families. While giving a brief nod to the neighborhood’s strong immigrant roots, the article insisted that the residents were “all Americans.” The children were described as bright, cheerful, clean-cut, nice-looking, and respectful youngsters. McQueen as a whole was praised for both its sense of community pride and its dedication to those in the armed forces:

McQueen does not forget its own. The people have pulled together all during the war to keep the community ship-shape. No one in McQueen has forgotten that their sons and brothers and friends must come back to a better McQueen than they left. Probably that accounts for the number of folks you see fixing gardens, trimming lawns, painting fences, and doing the general tidying up that is the pleasure and privilege of the American homeowner.¹⁶⁶

Postwar Promises and Problems

Butte families joined the nation in celebrating the end of the war on August 14, 1945.¹⁶⁷ Word of Japan's surrender reached Butte about 5:00 P.M. on August 14. "Immediately car horns were honking, people were shouting, and the roar of the crowd in Uptown Butte was near deafening. Tears of joy were streaming down many faces."¹⁶⁸ As Kay Antonetti recounted, "On VJ-Day everybody was out in the streets, you know, with confetti and horns honking and horns like for New Year's Eve, and everybody happy—just like you see in the pictures, with everybody hugging each other and dancing and just a wonderful time."¹⁶⁹ Bill Hitchcock and Oakie O'Connor were juniors in high school at the time. Bill celebrated at a street dance in Uptown Butte that lasted until the wee hours. Oakie headed to Meaderville where, he recalled, "I think I got four hundred kisses that night. People were the happiest I'd ever seen them."¹⁷⁰

But postwar promises of prosperity were short-lived in Butte as men returned to the mines only to find fewer jobs and frozen wages. A brief but violent strike in April 1946 polarized the community. News accounts lambasted the impropriety of women's involvement in the strike and the troubles caused by "young hoodlums" as they joined men in the streets to support the strike and expose scab laborers. Headlines in the April 15 *Montana Standard* blared: "Mobs wreck dozen Butte homes. Pictures reveal wanton destruction. More than ten homes wrecked by apparently organized gangs of terrorists reveal the unparalleled destruction when mobs roamed the streets of Butte and vicinity Saturday night and early Sunday. Orgy uncontrolled in wild night of terror, lawlessness. Boy wounded. Houses wrecked and hacked by roving bands of hoodlums. Windows broken, furniture tossed out."¹⁷¹

The violence that accompanied the 1946 strike is firmly fixed in local memory and recounted with a mix of bravado and shame. Several homes of salaried employees of the mines were damaged. With the men working "behind the fence," it was once again women and children who suffered the brunt of the attacks. According to news reports,