

# Restrictions resulting from war etched into memories

For baby boomers, the rationing of World War II has no reality outside of what they read in history textbooks. For those who lived through the war, the restrictions were very real.

Monroe Countians probably did not need to be reminded of what they could and could not do during those war years, but the *Bloomington Star Courier* performed a public service by publishing a column called "The Community at War." It was "in cooperation with the Office of War Information," which was, of course, in Washington, D.C.

There were the inevitable rationing coupons, one issued for each member of the family for use at the grocery store. Another book had gasoline coupons.

First in the newspaper's column for Dec. 10, 1943, was "Ration Reminder." Here are a few excerpts. "Gasoline — In 17 East Coast states A-8 coupons are good through Feb. 8. In states outside the East Coast area A-9 coupons are good through January 21."

One obvious reason why gas was rationed was because an immense quantity was needed to fuel military vehicles on the war fronts. Travel was also limited to save tires, also necessary for the troops.



## LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

The *Star Courier* column gives a clear picture of what amounts were allowed. As far as sugar was concerned, a single stamp was good for five pounds, expected to last through the middle of January. Meats and fats were also rationed, represented, appropriately enough, by brown stamps.

"Processed foods" referred to canned goods. Readers of the newspaper could easily decipher what the regulations meant. "Green stamps A, B, and C in book four, good through December 20, Green stamps D, E, and F in book four, good through January 20."

Rationing of shoes freed up leather for Army boots. It also conserved the natural resources necessary in the production of shoes. Shoes to match every change of clothes definitely was not possible.

Farmers were not exempt from regula-

tion. According to the newspaper, "Farmers are required to file decorations of estimated 1943 income and victory tax and make a payment by December 15. Farmers who elected to make declarations September 15 when most other persons made them, will need only to make an installment payment December 15." Farmers who did not already know it, also learned from reading the special column that the effective date of the cattle price stabilization program had been changed.

There was good news for meat-lovers in December, 1943. The *Star Courier* explained civilians would get the most available meat since the rationing began the previous March and added, "Many pork cuts remain at the reduced value set by the OPA (Office of Price Administration) in Mid-November, and point values of lamb, mutton, and all veal remain unchanged."

There were some exemptions from the draft for farm workers, but they could not change jobs without keeping the authorities informed of their whereabouts. More specifically, the *Star Courier* warned, "A farm worker who fails to keep his local selective service board informed of a change of address or

occupation may be reclassified or possibly be inducted into the armed forces."

There were a couple of other items in the column, both referring to food items. Frozen California freestone peaches, Concord grapes, apples and blackberries were going up from  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 3 cents a pound. The *Star Courier* passed along the rationale behind the increase. "According to the OPA, these increases will allow the processors to pass increased raw material costs on to the ultimate consumer."

Housewives were going to discover that the cost of jams, preserves and jellies made from apples, apple products and frozen grapes was going to rise, also. In general, prices were frozen to keep producers from charging too much, and the public from hoarding food at the expense of others.

There was certainly grumbling from time to time about the rationing, and, yes, there was a black market operating wherever there were unscrupulous people who cared more about themselves than their country.

Speaking as one of those who lived through it, we had enough to eat, shoes that lasted, and we also discovered that we could walk farther than we thought.

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