

## ENTERING THE WORLD

I am enjoying the book "Growing Up" by Russell Baker immensely. Reading it brings back so many memories of situations and products that I can specifically place in my childhood time frame.

I grew up in a small town of 5,000 in New Jersey, that consisted of primarily working middle class, homeowners, intact, black families. They were 95% of the town. Our town was like a cocoon. Everything we needed was at our fingertips. One Supermarket, one Butcher, one post-office, one fire department, one clothing variety store, one school, one policeman, one restaurant, one hot-dog fast food, one mobile fish-man, one mobile vegetable-man, one milk man. There were two taverns, one at each end of the town; however, the young only heard about them, and did not dare to go in or near such uncouth places.

My first exposure to what was happening in the world entered my life at the age of eight. As usual, a routine that we did every Sunday evening, my Father and I were in the living room. He was reading the newspaper, and I loved the funnies. The radio was on and suddenly an announcement was made that Japan had bombed Pearl Harbor. My Father immediately said to me "We are going to war." At the time, I really didn't understand the full meaning of war, and it didn't trouble me; however, after war was declared for the United States, air raid blasts and the neighborhood women (including my mother) started going to work in the ammunition factories. I realized this war is serious. In school, we also had air-raid drills as well as fire-drills. Also, the teacher would ask us weekly for pennies or a nickel to donate to the Red Cross, or buy a cup of coffee for the troops. We students felt as though we were doing our part to help in the war. Soon I was aware that a vacated small building was used for a social gathering place for the troops. I knew that it was being utilized, but I didn't know where these soldiers were from. There were no military bases near us, and of course we were too young to be interested in going there.

Russell's book really brought to my remembrance information about World War 11 that I hadn't thought of in years, and I didn't realize until lately that I remembered so much. I have many more memories, but they are too lengthy for this page. In closing, although our small town had been a cocoon, the cocoon has been opened, never to turn back to its exclusiveness.

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