A UK War bride

Peggy Jammaer

wwii

## life at home

I was 16 years old when War with Germany was declared in 1939. What a shock that was to all of us when they announced on the radio that we were now at war with Hitler. Our whole lives were to change drastically. Winston Churchill was very cherished by all of us. His encouragement and will to win was great help to all of us.

 “*We Shall Never Surrender*”

As each country in Europe was captured and it was getting closer to us – we were hoping America would come to our aid as we were fast losing too many brave men.

My generation will never forget when the first Americans came to our aid and will always be grateful to them leaving their beloved country to help us out. I am happy to contribute to the memory of these generous brave men who risked our lives for us.

I volunteered for Nurses Training and was eventually sent to a British Military Hospital just before D Day to help with the casualties.

One evening after a very busy day a friend and I went for a walk to get some fresh air. As we were walking and talking we looked up and saw two American Officers on top of a hill looking “lost”. They spotted us and asked where they were. (During the war in the country villages all signpost were turned around in case of an expected invasion). We told them how to get where they were going and the really good looking one asked if he could see me again.

That’s how I met the “Love of my Life” and we were married 63 years. He was a paratrooper officer with the 82nd Airborne Division under General Gavin and has seen a great deal of combat.

My father had served in the British Army 21 years and was a Sergeant Major. He was Acting Regimental Sergeant Major at his time of retirement. He already had four children and felt he would be spending too much time away from his wife and children which wasn’t fair to Mom, so he retired and they were able to live together in a house in Grimsby Lincs., England.

My father worked with Corporation Electricity Co. In the daytime and taught physical education to the local police on two evenings per week and to a group of ladies once per week. He took my sister and I with him to show the ladies how to do the exercises. (We loved it).

My father volunteered to serve in the army to help train the young men who would need some training. He received a reply telling him he was too old for this. Later a captain with whom he had served and knew him well, came across a list of names and he saw Dad’s name and was furious when he realized he had been turned down. He insisted that they get in touch with him and ask him to help the young men being called up to combat with very little training. This Sergeant Major was just what they needed.

Unfortunately my father was very ill with pneumonia and the only medicines they gave at this time were sulfur drugs which Dad was allergic to. Shortly after he died, penicillin “*the wonder drug”* was discovered; too late for our Dear Father. He had volunteered to watch on roof tops for any dangers occurring and caught a very bad cold which led to pleurisy and pneumonia.

My father’s death was so sad and my mother was lost without him. We were now a family of 11 children (6 boys and 5 girls). I was the sixth child – 17 years old- 3 boys older and 2 girls older, 3 boys younger and 2 girls younger. My eldest brother Charles was 27 and took control of finances for the family. He was a master welder and would not be called to serve in the armed forces because of his welding skills.

We had several bombings in town, but we were fortunate to keep our home intact. What we did have were incendiary bombs which had to be smothered quickly before exploding. The sirens would start and we would dash for shelter- ours was in our back garden. In the wintertime it was awfully hard to leave a warm bed to go into a cold shelter, but we were reasonably safe there!

What I particularly remember is how kind people were to each other. Always ready to help when needed. When I was in nurse’s training class, we had several bad air raids. I was on night duty- serving alone one night and two of my friends who had worked all day came over to see if I needed any help (very good friends).

The war continued and with the help of the Americans we won the war after six years of hard times. As I said before, I shall never forget how much we owed to our American friends. “*We must never forget*.”

