

Patriotic homemaking: World War II and “The Homemaker’s Half-Hour”

by

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This is to certify that the master's thesis of

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, my mother Bette
and late father Richard, for their unending encouragement, support,
and reminders that anything is possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
CHAPTER ONE. RADIO AS A FORCE IN POLITICS	1
CHAPTER TWO. VICTORY ON THE HOMEFRONT	7
CHAPTER THREE PATRIOTS AT HOME	28
CHAPTER FOUR. ACTIVE WOMEN AT HOME AND AT WORK	50
APPENDIX ONE	54
REFERENCES CITED	55

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CHAPTER ONE: RADIO AS A FORCE IN POLITICS

“When President Roosevelt coined the famous phrase, ‘A day that will live in infamy,’...sixty-two million United States homes were listening.” Roosevelt’s speech became the rallying cry for American involvement in the war and through the radio waves; American citizens became unified in their distaste for fascism and their support for American servicemen.¹ During World War II, radio listener-ship became about more than hearing the latest stock prices and crop reports. The radio provided companionship to thousands of women when their husbands left for war. Miss Mary Collopy, leader of the Home Demonstration Agents of Wyoming said, “Ironing and mending are no longer drudgery since I have the radio.” Earl Page, state treasurer of Arkansas added, “through the radio, [woman] is brought in contact with cultural influences that are transforming her and her life.”² The radio provided a common agent for disseminating important war messages and by helping citizens deal with wartime politics and wartime living, the radio was a valuable asset to American patriotism during World War II.

Each weekday at 9:05 am over WOI Radio in Ames, Iowa, homemakers across the state of Iowa tuned in to hear the resonant advice and witty commentary of the “Homemaker’s Half-hour.” Hosted by Mrs. Martha Duncan (whose given name was Eleanor Wilkins), listening to “Half-hour” felt like listening to a grandmother’s best advice. Women across the state wrote in to express their appreciation of the show’s content with Martha. Listener Esther Sietmann Warner wrote, “I believe that home economics is...a point of view. It is an attitude. It promotes a lively curious-ness toward everything that makes the

¹ Kenneth Bartlett, “Social Impact of the Radio,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 250 (March 1947): 90.

² *Ibid.*, 23.

difference between existing and living.”³ In his annual report to Iowa State College, W.I. Griffith, station director commented, “The radio audience of a daylight station such as is WOI must necessarily depend on an audience of ladies during certain periods of the day. In order to be of service to women, the Homemaker’s Half-hour was established in the year 1925-1926”⁴ Originally hosted by Miss Margaret Haggard and Mrs. Zenobia Ness from 1925-1939, the “Homemaker’s Half-hour” provided the wisdom of home economics training, food and nutrition and applied arts to a wide and varied audience.

My research about the uses and impact of radio in the Second World War focused on the transcripts of the “Homemaker’s Half-Hour” from Iowa State College, magazine and newspaper articles and pamphlets from the period and current literature on the social impact of radio on the American citizenry. In his 1947 article, appropriately titled *Social Impact of the Radio*, Kenneth Bartlett of University College at Syracuse University asked the question, “How many [listeners] voluntarily expose themselves to the flood of words and music?” [that radio provides.]⁵ Especially in states such as Iowa, radio programs allowed rural homemakers access to a plethora of current and useful information to enhance their lives. Extension home-demonstration programs, which allowed some of the earliest access to rural Americans, utilized government “approved” information as a way to reach and teach rural men, women and children about the latest and greatest advances in the science and

³ Letter from Mrs. Esther Sietmann Warner to Martha Duncan, 1938, Iowa State University, WOI AM-FM Radio, Records, RS 05/06/03, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library.

⁴ W.I. Griffith, *Annual Report: Radio Activities of Broadcasting Station WOI Year Closing December 31, 1939*. Iowa State University, WOI AM-FM Radio, Records, RS 05/06/03, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 90-91

technology of homemaking.⁶ Many of these home-demonstration women, in addition to faculty and staff from Iowa State College appeared on the “Homemaker’s Half-Hour.” Combining their expertise, they explained the proper ways to can food, fix meals, keep a home and manage a family. According to Ruth Van Deman, home economics extension specialist, “[Farm women] are eager to feed their families according to the plans of nutrition specialists, but even despite all the excellent educational programs and demonstrations of the extension people, many of them are still in doubt as to what a well balanced diet and protective foods are.” Considering the influence of shows like the “Homemaker’s Half-Half,” radio programs should be regarded as highly influential institutions in the lives of farm families. Van Deman continued, “I also notice that a little cultural bit like a line from a poem or a reference to a character in literature brings me in response a request for more allusions of that kind.”⁷ Radio programs like the “Homemaker’s Half-hour” added joy, comfort and information to otherwise dreary days during the war. In their study of *Radio as an Agency of National Unity*, Lyman Bryson and Dorothy Rowden noted about radio information, “Radio may stimulate the diffusion of knowledge, but only if it has the ear of its audience. It is axiomatic of radio that programs must be entertaining, must occupy the attention of the listener, or the public will not listen.”⁸

Steve Craig, professor in the Department of Radio, Television and Film at the University of North Texas argued in his article on radio and modernizing rural life, that for

⁶ For additional information about the Cooperative Extension Home Economics Programs see: Edmund D.S. Brunner, *Rural America and the Extension Service: A History and Critique of Cooperative Home Economics Extension Service* (New York, New York: Bureau of Publications, Columbia University, 1949.)

⁷ Edmund D. S. Brunner, *Radio and the Farmer*, (New York, New York: Radio Institute of the Audible Arts.1935) 35.

⁸ Lymon Bryson and Dorothy Rowden, “Radio as an Agency of National Unity,” *Annals of the Academy of American Political and Social Science*, 244 (March 1946): 138.

many rural women, the radio provided an escape from the isolation of farm life. He stated, “Radio helped dispel rural isolation, it also served to convey and reinforce the notion of a single, American identity.”⁹ This common identity and patriotism, he argued, brought together farm families during World War II. In her book *Entitled to Power*, Katherine Jellison quotes M.L Wilson (1941) about the role of the farm homemaker in the war period, “The farm homemaker, with her husband, has an important job in the national-defense program- a part in raising certain foods for shipment overseas, in feeding her own family...in guiding children in the ways of self-reliance and democratic living.”¹⁰ Attending to their homes and families, rural homemakers became patriots during World War II. Their homes became agents of social change and their families became symbols of democracy. More than ever before, the political education of homemakers focused on democracy and patriotism.

In his article on the *Social Impact of Radio*, Bartlett observed, “After electrification had made the use of radios possible, the farmer’s interest in national affairs increased; farm life became more enjoyable for both young and old; cohesiveness of the farm family increased.”¹¹ Stephen Craig, however, claimed that urban and rural audiences listened to the same types of programs for similar reasons. “By the late 1930s,” he noted, “the networks were urging advertisers to think of rural listeners as part of a unified national audience who were becoming more like their urban counterparts, both in the programs they listened to and in the products they purchased.”¹² Radio programs like the “Homemaker’s Half-Hour” promoted this cohesion between rural and urban women by emphasizing similarities. Martha

⁹ Steve Craig, “The More they Listen, The More they Buy: Radio and the Modernizing of Rural America, 1930-1939”, *Agricultural History Journal*, 80:1 (Winter 2006): 2.

¹⁰ Katherine Jellison, *Entitled to Power: Farm Women and Technology 1913-1963*, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1993) 132.

¹¹ Bartlett, p. 92.

¹² Craig, 10.

Duncan and her guests promoted rural “modernization” through the information they shared. Crossing the information line from urban to rural listeners, the “Homemaker’s Half-hour” created a unique program that was popular with both audiences. Like many other homemaking programs around the nation, Duncan and her guests guided listeners through wartime restrictions and encouraged them to be independent and self-sufficient while their husbands were at war. When the soldiers returned home, however, Duncan and her guests encouraged women to step back into their traditional roles as wives and mothers not to limit themselves, but to support post-war economic prosperity.

Mary Neth, in *Preserving the Family Farm*, explained that, as farm families began to absorb new industrialist ideas, government funded programs promoted and created a modified country life. She explained, a “‘new agriculture’...can meet the needs of communities and the land more than simply the needs of production.”¹³ World War II created this unique opportunity to merge city with country life. Rural listeners across the country appreciated the advice of other rural families while urban listeners identified with advice from other urbanites. Even as far as promoting a woman’s place at home or at work, urban women and rural women, by the war’s end, emerged with the same goals. Homemakers and “independent women” both promoted a patriotic, nationalist spirit.

My thesis focuses the process by which rural homemakers, urban homemakers and working women began fighting for the cause of patriotism. Government restrictions during the war promoted the idea of patriotism through “victory on the home front” campaigns. Programs like the “Homemaker’s Half-hour” asked homemakers to step up to help the

¹³ Mary C. Neth, *Preserving the Family Farm* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995) 273.

soldiers and the nation by conserving food, reducing waste, and filling in for their husbands in the fields, factories and homes. After the war, veterans, their adjustments to home and making up for lost time (and opportunities) during the war created unforeseen conflicts among women and within families. Helping all central Iowa homemakers, the “Homemakers Half-hour” aided all women who supported the war. These women became “patriots” in their homes.

CHAPTER TWO: VICTORY ON THE HOMEFRONT

With the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, World War II became a way of life for Americans. The United States armed forces were not prepared for war. At the request of the President, preparations for war began immediately and became the duty of every American citizen and every American business. The day after the attack on Pearl Harbor, industrial production facilities across the nation converted their lines to meet the needs of war production. As historian George McJimsey noted in his biography of Franklin Roosevelt, “When the torpedoes and bombs were blasting into the Pacific Fleet, an administrative vacuum existed at the heart of American war production.”¹⁴

Meeting the needs of not only United States’ service men, but also the needs of the allied forces meant limitations and restrictions for United States citizens. Service requirements for the war took 15 million men out of the labor force and increased national production costs from \$42 billion in 1942, to \$110 billion by 1943. To combat inflation, President Roosevelt proposed and implemented an across-the-board plan of tax increases, price controls, and rationing procedures for the nation.¹⁵

As the country entered the Second World War however, many homemakers across the state of Iowa had experiences from the First World War and the Great Depression under their aprons to help them prepare for the changing economy and world structure. With nearly four decades of service to the Iowa homemaker, the Iowa Extension Service acted as an important information resource for women during the war. The goal of the extension service

¹⁴ George McJimsey, *The Presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt*, (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2000) 239.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 242

during the wartime was to keep “family life on an even keel under the stresses of wartime conditions- protecting children and maintaining health and emotional security.”¹⁶

During the war, the federal government looked to programs such as the Iowa Extension Service to spread the messages of the federal government to average families across the country. Reaching families with working mothers as well as families with homemakers, the Extension Service information attempted to ease the pain of wartime restrictions. Production and purchasing became extremely limited because of wartime requirements. Day-to-day aspects of home-life felt the first pinches of the wartime constrictions. Through the rationing program and alternative purchasing requirements, the federal government spread the message of, “Use it up, make do, or go without!”

Iowa homemakers were no exception to the wartime policies carried out throughout the country. “Extension home economists [from Iowa State College] helped with the nationwide share-the-meat campaign which preceded meat rationing and with later programs intended to help homemakers make adjustments to rationing and shortages of certain foods and equipment.”¹⁷ Through newspapers and the radio, the Iowa Extension Service offered advice and information “to help families maintain living standards while maintaining maximum contributions to the war effort.”¹⁸

In conjunction with national political action groups, the Home Economics Department of Iowa State College and its staff recognized and supported the work of the

¹⁶Ercel S. Eppright and Elizabeth S. Ferguson, *A Century of Home Economics at Iowa State University*, (Ames, IA: Iowa State University and the Home Economics Alumni Association. 1971), 245.

¹⁷ Ibid., 245

¹⁸ Ibid., 246. For more information on Agricultural Extension Services see: A.W. van den Ban and H.S. Hawkins, *Agricultural Extension* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Blackwell Science, 1985).

Iowa Extension Service by creating “The Homemaker’s Half-Hour” on WOI Radio.¹⁹ Hosted by Eleanor Wilkins (known on the radio as Martha Duncan) “The Homemaker’s Half-Hour” became the show that central Iowa homemakers could turn to for advice in establishing and maintaining a successful wartime home. Commenting on the university’s responsibility for educating the public about wartime adjustments, Frederick Redefer of the Progressive Education Association stated, “[citizens] must inform themselves about the ‘why,’ ‘what,’ and ‘how’ of price regulation...as a means to check the threat of an upward spiral in the cost of living.”²⁰ The Homemaker’s Half-Hour did this by offering “timely homemaking tips and...homespun commentary on everyday human pleasures and problems.”²¹

According to the assessor’s report of the Iowa Weather and Crop Bureau, approximately forty-five percent of Iowa farms had working radio sets in 1935.²² WOI Radio broadcast with five thousand watts of power, which allowed its signal to reach nearly two-thirds of the state.²³ The 1940 census reported that 614,286 women in the state of Iowa listed themselves as homemakers.²⁴ In a study of these Iowa homemakers commissioned by WOI Radio in 1940, respondents indicated that seventy-five percent of the available audience listened to radio homemaking programs daily.²⁵ Within the larger population, these women were radio listeners, according to the “1947 Iowa Radio Audience Survey” because nearly

¹⁹ For more information see: National Education Association, *Wartime Handbook for Education* (Washington D.C., 1943) 22, 57.

²⁰ Frederick L Redefer, *The School’s Role in Winning the War and the Peace* (New York, New York: Progressive Education Association War Pamphlet 1942) 1.

²¹ Eppright, 241.

²² For further information on radio listener-ship see Appendix 1.

²³ W.I. Griffith, *WOI Radio Twenty Year Plan*, (Iowa State College, 1935.) 14A. Iowa State University, WOI AM-FM Radio, Records, RS 05/06/03, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library.

²⁴ United States 16th Census: 1940. Population 2, Part 2:866. 1943.

²⁵ Alberta Curtis, *Listeners Appraise a College Radio Station: Station WOI, Iowa State College, Ames, Iowa*, (Washington D.C., Federal Radio Education Committee, 1940) 33.

ninety-six percent of Iowa homes in 1947 had radio sets in working condition.²⁶ These farm families bore the weight of wartime limitations in Iowa.²⁷

“The Homemaker’s Half-Hour” utilized research and information provided by the Home Economics Division of Iowa State College. In rallying support for the war, the United States government started intense promotions and propaganda initiatives to make the war effort personal for its citizens. From an episode of the show early in the war, Duncan discussed the topic of *Democracy at Home* with her guest, Elizabeth Powers, of the Home Management Department. Powers said, “Today we conceive of democracy as much more than an ideal state only –indeed, we conceive of it as a way of life.” As much as the war affected families with fathers, sons and husbands serving abroad, the government attempted to make sure that every American felt a sense of responsibility to the war effort. Powers continued, “Democracy builds character...provides the opportunity for the development of initiative...allows the person to develop better judgment...and this working together for the attainment of common goals strengthens the unity of the family and the nation.”²⁸ The government charged each family across the country with the duty of patriotism in the home. One extension pamphlet proclaimed, “The home can help win! [the war.] You, an Iowa rural girl can help win the war.”²⁹ Choices about what foods to eat became central to the war effort. Choices about what products to buy became essential for victory in Europe and Asia.

²⁶ Forest L. Whan, *The 1947 Iowa Radio Audience Survey*, Tenth Consecutive Annual Study of Radio Listening Habits in the State of Iowa (Des Moines, Iowa: Central Broadcasting Company, 1947) 6.

²⁷ For information on radio homemaking see: Leone Mabel Stringfellow, *Programs of Iowa Radio Stations as Sources of Homemaking Information*, Unpublished Thesis, Iowa State College, 1948.

²⁸ The Homemaker’s Half-hour, *Democracy Begins At Home*, in a February 7, 1941 broadcast with Elizabeth Powers of the Home Management Department, p 1-5. Iowa State University, WOI AM-FM Radio, Records, RS 05/06/03, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library.

²⁹ Agriculture Extension Service, *Join the 4-H Victory Army* (Ames, Iowa, Iowa State College, September 1943,) 3. Iowa State University, Cooperative Extension Service Records, RS 16/3/0/5, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library.

For American families, the government labeled everyday activities “patriotic.” In one pamphlet available to families the government suggested, “Many recognize that the achievement of war aims require a victory on the ‘home front’ as well as on the battlefield. The new social patterns and the social planning that are part of our war effort must not be abandoned when peace is declared.”³⁰

In helping Iowa homemakers, numerous studies indicate that the information provided by “The Homemaker’s Half-Hour” was timely and accurate.³¹ The tips and techniques shared during “The Homemaker’s Half-Hour” were based on the most current and innovative techniques in food and nutrition, child development, and home management available from the Iowa State College Home Economics laboratory. Martha Duncan and her guests explained the new rules for “patriotic” choices. They offered ideas about coping with wartime limitations and gave advice that made these changes accessible to the audience. These new “patriotic duties,” however, were not groundbreaking for Iowa families. Adapting to the war economy came easily for most Iowa homemakers.

During the war, Iowa families, as well as families across the nation, faced the task of wartime rationing of food. The Iowa family looked at rationing with an eye toward conservation. By making rationing a personal experience for citizens, the government brought the war home for every American. In her role as host, Martha Duncan and her guests provided cooking advice for central Iowa homemakers from 1936-1966. During World War II, however, ration point-friendly meals replaced basic meal planning broadcasts.

³⁰ Redefer, 1.

³¹ For further information see: Florence Davis, *Radio Homemaking Programs II: Comparison of Programs with Information Available Through Other Sources*, Unpublished thesis, Iowa State College, Ames, IA, 1939. Thelma Graves, *Radio Homemaking Programs I, “The Homemaker’s Half-Hour at Iowa State College as a Source of Information*, Unpublished thesis, Iowa State College, Ames, IA, 1939.

In her description of the adaptations that were necessary for mealtime rationing during the war, guest Marie Budolfson of the Iowa State Home Management Department explained the task for homemakers. She said, “Planning wisely our use of resources, particularly the wise planning of our time and energy in order to get the best out of life for every member of our family” is of great importance.³² “Get acquainted with the ration plan!” Budolfson proclaimed, “Finding replacement foods for high ration point items [can save you time and headache in the kitchen.]” With the assistance of “The Homemaker’s Half Hour,” Iowa homemakers learned new ways of creating the dishes that their families enjoyed.³³ Through proper planning, the farm wife could feed her family relatively normal meals and still comply with the ration guidelines.

Government press releases indicated that in order to win the war, meticulous planning in the wartime kitchen was necessary. Rationing in the United States began with rubber in February 1942. Further ration orders continued with sugar on May 4, 1942, fuel oil on October 12, 1942, coffee on November 21, 1942, gasoline on December 1, 1942, processed food on February 2, 1943, shoes on February 2, 1943, and meats and fats on March 29, 1943. Before the war’s end, many common kitchen and cooking products were severely limited. These were “the new ‘red-white-and-blue rules of eating’ as Mrs. Gerrit Smith of Pella, Iowa stated,” “we might just as well get used to rationing first as last. All of us ought to co-operate and try to get along the best we can. After all, we’re doing very little compared to

³² The Homemaker’s Half-hour, *The Effect of the War on the Homemaker’s Use of Time and Energy*, broadcast with Marie Budolfson of the Home Management Department, 1. Iowa State University, WOI AM-FM Radio, Records, RS 05/06/03, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library.

³³ Homemaker’s Half-hour, *Helping Solve the Time and Energy Problem Through Better Food Management*, in a broadcast with Marie Budolfson of the Home Management Department. Iowa State University, WOI AM-FM Radio, Records, RS 05/06/03, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library.

what the soldier boys are doing.”³⁴ As part of their patriotic duty, the challenges of rationing gave many Iowa farmwomen their first opportunity to help their “boys overseas.”³⁵

Before United States involvement in the war began to touch average families, the subject of rationing received very little attention by most Americans, including bureaucrats within the Office of Price Administration (OPA). Americans had seen the effects of rationing in Europe, but never considered its impact on the United States. In his book, *A Short History of the OPA*, Harvey Mansfield discussed the United States and rationing at the beginning of World War II. He wrote, “Americans thought of rationing primarily as a restraint on individual freedom rather than as a means of releasing the equivalent of added productive capacity for essential uses through the elimination of wasteful or unnecessary demand.” The OPA and supply agencies considered three factors when they made their decision to ration goods: the relative supply and demand of the product, if the product could be considered “essential” to society, and if it was administratively feasible to ration the product.³⁶

Government rules for rationing required “dividing up scarce goods fairly so that everyone can have his rightful share.” The government assigned ration points to products based upon their availability in the general market. In a broadcast with Duncan, Phyllis Gough of the Home Management department stated, “For goods which are imported, we simply do not have the shipping space. For commodities produced in the U.S., we have a

³⁴ L.L. Ossian. *The Homefronts of Iowa*, Unpublished dissertation, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa, 1998. p.201.

³⁵ For more information see: Harvey C Mansfield and Associates, *A Short History of the OPA* (Washington D.C., Office of Temporary Controls and the Office of Price Administration, 1947) 23-26.

³⁶ Mansfield, 143, 146-148.

different problem. The government needs them for our armed forces as well as our allies.”³⁷

The government issued each adult citizen forty-eight stamps per month. Homemakers collected stamps for each member of the family and when they did the shopping, pulled their ration stamps from the family allotment. The point value of foods and products available at the market, however, fluctuated such that careful planning was necessary throughout the war. When grocers expected a shipment of canned tomatoes, for example, their point value, which may have started at two points per can in January, slid to zero points per can by May.³⁸ To plan for the changes “List the point-rationed foods and the quantities you expect to buy for the week, jotting down the point value beside each item,” Jamie Holt suggested in one *New York Times Magazine* article. He continued, “Add up the points and compare the sum with your family’s point allowance for each week. If your total is less than the weekly budget, then obviously no changes are necessary. If it is more, you will have to modify your list.”³⁹

With the sugar rationing that began on May 4, 1942, the farm kitchen saw its first effects of the war effort. Bringing the news to her listeners, Duncan announced, “The supply of sugar available for consumption as food is definitely reduced this year. Present estimates are about 5,300,000 tons for 1942 as compared with nearly 8,000,000 in 1941.” In 1941, the allowance for “household” sugar (sugar used for non-commercial purposes and purchased at the grocery store) was forty-eight pounds per year. In addition, rationing allowed each individual to consume twenty-seven pounds of sugar through commercial products. Duncan commented, “This is a total of 75 lbs per person and is still in excess of 65 lbs per year which

³⁷ *Rationing in Wartime- The USA*, The Homemaker’s Half-hour, January 22, 1943, interview with Phyllis Gough, Department of Home Management. Iowa State University, WOI AM-FM Radio, Records, RS 05/06/03, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library.

³⁸ With the “clean shelf” policy implemented in 1943, the point values on processed foods, decreased throughout the year to make room for new shipments. Mansfield, 188.

³⁹ Jamie Holt, “The ABCs of Point Rationing,” *New York Times Magazine*, February 21, 1943. 22.

is liberal from a standpoint of good nutrition.”⁴⁰ With the “sugar book,” Ration Book No. 1, American women kept their family’s sugar intake low. Many foods that families commonly consumed (jams and jellies, cookies and other sweets) had to be limited because of government rationing.

Martha Duncan suggested several steps for saving the precious sugar. She said, “Use more fresh and canned fruits. Learn to eat grapefruit and drink fresh fruit juices without sugar.” Reductions in sugar allowances also made desserts less prevalent at dinner. “Use less pie, cake and other rich desserts.” Martha added, “Let sweet sandwiches take the place of cake.” Long-tested recipes were preferred over new “experiments” and it was important not to leave sugar in the bottom of coffee and teacups. New recipes for egg-less cakes and cookies and sugar-free or reduced sugar desserts were very popular. According to one recipe for egg-less “World War Cake,” one cup of molasses took the place of sugar.⁴¹

In addition to limiting desserts, Americans eliminated the common tradition of sugaring fruit. “Eat dried fruits instead of candy and use less sugar on cereals and dried fruits,” Martha said, “Make less jams and jelly. Use fruit juices for drinks instead and sweeten with honey.” By using sugar sparingly, homemakers and their families preserved supplies for the troops and aided the war effort.⁴²

The two most important questions homemakers asked of the new rationing system were; “What foods must I serve to insure adequate nutrition for my family?” and “Can I manage my ration points to secure good nutrition for my family?” Irene Bear from the

⁴⁰ The Homemaker’s Half-hour, *Sugar Shortages and Substitutes*, n.d., p. 1, Iowa State University, WOI AM-FM Radio, Records, RS 05/06/03, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library.

⁴¹ Ninus L. Hunt Auxiliary No. 2504, *The Victory Handbook for Health and Home Defense*, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Denison, Iowa, 1943, p. 43.

⁴² *Sugar Shortages and Substitutes*. p. 1-2.

Home Management Department joined Duncan to discuss nutrition and rationing in a July 9, 1943 broadcast. “Nutritionists rejoiced,” Duncan said, “that the scourge of war had brought to the foreground of national attention the importance of good nutrition.”⁴³

Regarding good nutrition, Bear mentioned a study conducted at the Home Management House of Temple University. The director of the department and four students proved that a family of five could survive on the rations available during 1943. Through the seven-day period of the study, the students planned meals according to the ration points available for the five girls. With sugar and coffee rationing in place, the group prepared the meals with current and upcoming rationing in mind. For the observation period, the study allowed eight pounds of meat, two and one-half pounds of cheese and fats, ten and one-half pounds of cereals, eighteen and one-fourth pounds of vegetables and twenty eggs. While each young woman consumed 2,200 calories per day, the study noted that the caloric intake for five females was not representative of what a true family of five would need. The addition of un-rationed goods easily brought the caloric content of the meals up to an adequate level for a family of five.⁴⁴

The authors stated that daily rationing did not limit the variety and quality of the meals a homemaker could serve her family. For example, a mother could serve her family a hot, healthy breakfast that included; orange juice, Ralston (hot cereal) cooked in milk, whole wheat bread with butter and milk. For lunch, the family enjoyed cheese sandwiches on whole wheat bread, apples, and a molasses cookie with milk. To finish the day, mother cooked an “Italian tradition” meal: spaghetti with meatballs, a tossed vegetable salad, bread

⁴³ The Homemaker’s Half-hour, *Managing Food Rationing to Secure Adequate Nutrition*, in a broadcast with Irene Bear of the Home Management Department, July 9, 1943. p. 1. Iowa State University, WOI AM-FM Radio, Records, RS 05/06/03, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library.

⁴⁴ The authors considered regular families to include a mother, father, two boys and one girl. *Ibid.*, 2-3.

with butter, coffee, and gelatin prune whip for dessert. The women of Temple University did not leave taste, flavors or traditions behind in their plans.

Special meals on Sunday surpassed the flavorful meals served throughout the week. On Sunday morning, the family arose to a breakfast of tomato juice, whole-wheat toast with butter and milk or coffee. The students reserved the bulk of Sunday's calories for the noon meal, served after church. With tasty pot roast of lamb, buttered broccoli, dried corn, carrot and cabbage Jell-O salad, bread with butter and coffee or milk, they proved that families could preserve Sunday traditions during the war. Still satisfied from lunch, the family enjoyed a small meal of waffles and syrup and fresh fruit served with a cup of coffee for dinner.⁴⁵

As advice to the homemaker, the authors of the Temple study concluded, "the average homemaker will doubtless be able to think of many other interesting food combinations which will bring the family the nutrients essential for physical well-being." Rationing still made many homemakers nervous, but the authors continued, "In the months ahead...we shall be faced with new and wholly unexpected food shortages. But the homemaker who plans wisely to use all varieties of food available, who uses her imagination to make interesting combinations to please her family...will come out of these hard days...a wiser woman."⁴⁶

With the changes that happened in the kitchen, saving time and energy was important to homemakers. "Efficiency! That's a big word," Marie Budolfson from the Home Management department stated. "Efficiency in homemaking simply means planning wisely

⁴⁵ Ibid., 3

⁴⁶ Ibid., 3-4

our use of resources, particularly the wise planning of our time and energy in order to get the best out of life for every member of our family.”⁴⁷ An efficient homemaker kept nutritious meals on the table for her family and at the same time, maintained a clean, well-organized home. One Extension service pamphlet for the 4-H “Victory Army” in 1943 applauded patriotism and hard work in the home. “Home efficiency” the pamphlet read, “...will lead to performance of home tasks with saving of valuable time, money and energy, with joy in work well done.”⁴⁸

Short cuts, offered as advice by Martha Duncan and her guests, were key to an efficient and useful home. She said, “A short-cut is any process, device, act, or thought which reduces or eliminates human energy or time input and by so doing does not reduce human satisfaction of the group.” Just as women were concerned with keeping their families well fed on a ration diet, the appearance and functionality of the home was also important during the war. Duncan continued, “Many homemakers reduce the time they were spending upon some activity in the home but many of them also reduced the happiness or satisfaction...of the family members.”⁴⁹

For most families, the kitchen was central to all activities in the home, and a well-maintained, smooth running kitchen was an essential element for any family. “The care and use of the kitchen fall under three different headings—care and use of equipment, storage of food and equipment, and the dishwashing area.” With an eye to care of finishes, proper

⁴⁷ The Homemaker’s Half-hour, *Helping Solve the Time and Energy Problem Through Better Food Management*, February 10, 1943, in a broadcast with Marie Budolfson of the Home Management Department, Iowa State University, WOI AM-FM Radio, Records, RS 05/06/03, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library.

⁴⁸ *Join the 4-H Victory Army*, 3.

⁴⁹ Homemaker’s Half-hour, *Short-cuts in the Care of the House*, in an April 2, 1943 broadcast with Ms. Gertrude Neff of the Home Management Department, Iowa State University, WOI AM-FM Radio, Records, RS 05/06/03, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library.

cleaning techniques, and safety, Gertrude Neff of the Home Management Department, offered helpful hints for cleaning the kitchen in her broadcast on April 9, 1943. Neff described the proper time and method for cleaning spills, efficiently using utensils and saving food. As Duncan explained, “The girls very often have learned some from their mothers....many of them have been discovered by trial and error [but] we....are always on the lookout for shortcuts.”⁵⁰

During a February 10, 1943 show, Marie Budolfson from the Home Management department returned to the “Homemaker’s Half-hour” to discuss efficiency in food management. She suggested that to be successful, “the homemaker needs to see all the steps in food management- that is, planning, buying, storage, preparation, and serving and each in relation to the other.” By “trying to prepare and include too many different foods into one dish,” she commented, many cooks were actually making ration cooking harder. “We can make use of the principle called ‘dovetailing’ to save much time and energy.”⁵¹

Ms. Budolfson’s principle of “dovetailing” suggested that homemakers should “make a whole series of several days’ meals rather than a single meal.” By purchasing food that is suitable for more than one meal, the homemaker had an easier time purchasing within her ration points and achieving her ultimate goal of feeding her family nutritious meals. Ms. Budolfson explained the principle with lima beans. “She [the homemaker] might buy two pounds of lima beans at a special price and cook them all at once—probably in the pressure cooker to save time.” Ms. Budolfson explained that by using the lima beans for more than one meal, the homemaker efficiently met the needs of her family. She continued, “The first

⁵⁰ Homemaker’s Half-hour, *Short-cuts in the Care of the Kitchen*, in an April 9, 1943 broadcast with Ms. Gertrude Neff of the Home Management Department, Iowa State University, WOI AM-FM Radio, Records, RS 05/06/03, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library.

⁵¹ *Helping Solve the Time and Energy Problem Through Better Food Management*, p. 5.

day she might serve lima bean loaf with tomato sauce...Two or three days later the remainder of the beans might be combined with corn to make succotash.” The homemaker who cooked the right amount of food for her family, Budolfson concluded, “saves time, energy and fuel.”⁵²

According to Budolfson, in addition to smart food preparation, proper food storage was necessary for homemakers. Refrigerators were a precious convenience during the war because of production limitations. “It may be a long time before we can replace them,” she said. “...We need to “respect” our materials, the materials are both the refrigerator and the foods we put in them.” Each homemaker had distinct problems to deal with when she planned her food preservation techniques. In his book on food storage, Dr. Walter A. Maclinn of Rutgers University discussed the food storage needs for families. He said, “Feeding the average family today is big business. In the course of a year, more than three tons of food is selected, paid for, and carried home to feed the average family of four.” Trips to the grocery store were limited because of food and fuel rationing and, Dr. Maclinn continued, “Most of this food is for ‘tomorrow’ and must be carefully handled if it is not to represent needless waste.”⁵³

The homemaker utilized creative applications for ordinary kitchen utensils and appliances to ensure this efficiency in her kitchen. A “soup pot,” as Budolfson advised, helped use up left over food. A homemaker started her “soup pot” when she placed a “covered jar or dish...[with]bits of left-over meats, vegetables, vegetable juices, rice and such materials for alternate uses in soup making” near her stove. A homemaker, Budolfson noted, needed to

⁵² Ibid. p. 3-4

⁵³ Dr. Walter A. Maclinn, *The Rutgers Food Saver*, (New Jersey: The Trustees of Rutgers College 1952) 6.

clean her vegetables before storing them in the refrigerator. “Cleaning your fresh vegetables before storing,” she said “...saves storage space which might have been taken up by withered parts or inedible leaves, stalks and stems.” In a final word on food management, Budolfson explained the push for a new nation-wide campaign. She stated that the new ‘Eat your Lettuce Campaign’ promoted good nutrition and food management practices by refusing to waste food. She said, “Leaving lettuce on a salad plate is no longer fashionable or patriotic nowadays. Decorated salads can cause needless waste of time and energy.”⁵⁴

Conserving time, energy and supplies affected on American life outside the kitchen. From clothing, to furniture, to home interiors, wartime restrictions limited the products available to homemakers. Military service requirements limited the supply of fabrics, rubber and metals that were available for civilian purchase. The United States government converted many of the factories for military use. Glass, fiber and textile production increased but the armed forces used all the raw materials and products from this industry. The average American soldier required two-hundred and fifty pounds of cotton equipment compared to the twenty-pound average for civilians. Government restrictions charged homemakers “with a responsibility to ‘buy only what you need and take care of what you have’.”

A homemaker’s family size, its members’ ages and interests, the family income, the seasons, personal standards, and the war all affected the patterns of home-life her family followed. In another broadcast with her friend Marie Budolfson from the Home Management department, Duncan evaluated responsibilities for homemakers outside the kitchen. Budolfson noted, “From the time she establishes her home until the time when her children are grown up and leave, a homemaker’s duties are constantly changing and requiring

⁵⁴ *Helping Solve the Time and Energy Problem Through Better Food Management*, p. 5-6.

different kinds of planning.” As with food rationing, changes in home production affected the homemaker’s view of the war. “Most homemakers realize that the outcome of the present war will depend very definitely on the kind of job that we as individuals and homemakers do.” Duncan said, “The standards we set and the choices we make can go a long way toward helping to win or lose this war.”⁵⁵ As homemakers and their homes became part of the ‘war industry,’ the look and contents of the home became part of the war effort. More so than with food rationing, limits on clothing, furniture and appliances altered the feel of the home. “We can waste a lot of time and energy worrying about the things we can’t get,” Budolfson projected, “instead, we might be happier trying to figure out a way to fix up what we have.”⁵⁶

Requirements for metals, fabrics, and structural elements limited furniture manufacturers during the war. Traditional spring-filled furniture such as sofas, loveseats and chairs went out of production during the war. Nora Workman of the Home Management department explained the *Home Furnishings Outlook* to Duncan. “Spring filled upholstered furniture,” she said, “[is] out of production because springs are made from steel needed for guns and tanks...[traditional furniture] has given way to so-called ‘victory furniture’.” The new ‘victory furniture,’ designed with a fill that could be replaced with a conventional spring after the war, was the only wartime furniture option. With many woolen fabrics in use for the war, manufacturers upholstered this new furniture with lighter weave, cotton fabrics that required specialized care and more time from the homemaker. “Proper seating on ‘victory

⁵⁵ Ibid., 3

⁵⁶ Ibid., 4

furniture' dictates." "Ease, not flop, into these new spring-less models," Workman continued.⁵⁷

The government's war production programs limited popular cotton fabrics not only for furniture manufacturing but for clothing production as well. Light weave fabrics that used few resources replaced heavy grain, sturdy fabrics such as twills.⁵⁸ With the goal of prolonging the wear of daily garments, homemakers expected each member of the family to participate in caring for their clothes. In her pamphlet *Longer Wear with Special Care*, Eleanor Sandstrom McKee, an Iowa State College home economics extension specialist asked, "Is the family wardrobe 'well-groomed'?" Special care procedures for clothing items, she mentioned, "count for much in the length of service and attractive appearance of clothing."⁵⁹ Small children, as well as adults took simple steps to preserve their shirts, pants and dresses. Ms. McKee noted, "The family as a group will need to analyze the skills and abilities of each member and assign jobs accordingly...this sharing of responsibilities releases mother for important war work and gives everyone a feeling of contributing to the war effort."⁶⁰

Patriotic dressing involved building a wardrobe of stylish and varied outfits around a few basic pieces. One Agriculture Extension Service brochure noted, the garments "should

⁴² The Homemaker's Half-hour, *Home Furnishing Outlook*, October 1943, in a broadcast with Nora Workman of the Home Management Department. Iowa State University, WOI AM-FM Radio, Records, RS 05/06/03, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library, p. 2.

⁴³ Ibid., 1.

⁵⁹ Eleanor Sandstrom McKee, *Longer Wear with Special Care* Pamphlet (Ames, Iowa: Agriculture Extension Service, Iowa State College, October 1942) Iowa State University, Iowa State University Cooperative Extension Service Records, RS 16/03/0/25, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library. 1

⁶⁰ Eleanor Sandstrom McKee, *Care and Repair of the Family Wardrobe* (Ames, Iowa: Agriculture Extension Service, Iowa State College, October 1942) Iowa State University, Iowa State University Cooperative Extension Service Records, RS 16/03/0/25, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library. 1

be appropriate to the individual, occasion, and season.”⁶¹ In response to wartime limits on clothing production, homemakers frequently chose to keep up with fashion by making new clothes at home rather than buy them from a store. Whether it was the money invested in an outfit or the time invested in making it, longevity of the basic wardrobe pieces was important. Ms. McKee’s pamphlet explained the basics of caring for clothing. To extend the life of garments, she advised, “Brush the garment immediately after wearing as dust injures material and settles into spots, making them difficult to remove [also,] hang each garment as it is taken off.” In addition to immediate care for clothing, she suggested that homemakers wash clothes less frequently, as to place less strain on the fabrics. “Air garments overnight before putting away and repair tears or worn places, replace fastenings and re-stitch ripped seams as soon as they occur.”⁶²

The war effort caused a shortage of fabric dyes as well as the restrictions on the quality of fabrics available. These restrictions dictated the uses of fabric dyes, dye quality, and color-fastness in washing. Later, in her assessment of the *Home Furnishings Outlook*, Workman continued, “A shortage of certain dyes has resulted in more white, pastel or black backgrounds with designs only in the strong colors.”⁶³ Special wartime instructions for laundering fabrics aided homemakers in caring for their garments. Government sponsored advice pamphlets recommended limited laundering to preserve fabrics and to conserve water, fuels and starch materials. “Before the amateur laundress plunges head-first into her new project, she will do well to see that the equipment is as modern and efficient as possible,” Mary Madison of the New York *Times Magazine* stated. Homemakers did the majority of

⁶¹ Agriculture Extension Service, *Wardrobe Accessory Recruits*, Iowa State College, January, 1943. 1

⁶² *Ibid.*, 1-2

⁶³ *Home Furnishing Outlook*, 1

washing during the war with wringer washing machines or by hand. Though they were not as common as washing machines, production of hand-crank dryers was also limited during the war due to military metal requirements. When doing laundry, it was important for homemakers to use labor saving devices such as wheeled laundry baskets and pole and pulley clothesline for efficiency on laundry day.⁶⁴

During the war, spending money on food, clothing, and household repairs, made budgeting especially important. In the *Family Income* broadcast, Ms. Gough suggested that each homemaker look into making simple home repairs on their own, without the need to call service men or buy new equipment. “You can’t buy a new washing machine, sewing machine, and even an iron is hard to get. I’ve heard of a plan of buying certificates for these articles which would be redeemable after the war,” she said, “but in the meantime, of course, you could put this money into [war] bonds.”⁶⁵

In addition to managing the home and food production for their families, women managed family finances during the war. To ease the burdens on tax day, the government implemented the ‘victory tax’ to ensure that all citizens paid federal income taxes during the period of decreased wages. The ‘victory tax’ was a five percent tax deducted from all salary checks for December 1942 work and later. This tax ensured that Americans in the highest tax brackets had enough money to pay their taxes at the end of the year. Tax documents dated 1944 or later instituted the tax for all Americans. Later in the *Family Income* broadcast with Phyllis Gough, Martha Duncan discussed how families should prepare for the increased tax burden. “Start saving now!” she again suggested, “buy treasury notes and war bonds”

⁶⁴ Mary Madison, *The Home in Wartime*, The New York Times Magazine, February 21, 1943. 29

⁶⁵ The Homemaker’s Half-hour, *Using Family Income in Wartime*, in a January 8, 1943 broadcast with Phyllis Gough of the Home Management Department, Iowa State University, WOI AM-FM Radio, Records, RS 05/06/03, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library p. 3.

with a simple ten percent per week deduction, or enroll in the Ruml plan for pay-as-you-go deductions to prepare for tax increases. Much like the ‘victory tax,’ the Ruml plan was a savings plan for paying taxes where families were allowed to set aside money in payroll deductions to pay their taxes later in the year. Early budgeting, as Gough suggested, was the way to help ease the wartime tax burden.⁶⁶

Budgeting, buying, producing and consuming encompassed the consumer culture that was central to the war effort on the home front. Government programs reorganized the ways in which American citizens lived their lives by instituting rules and regulations that governed choices within the home. Undermining a traditional sense of community, many of the programs administered during World War II focused on individuals within the country and their relationship to the federal government. With the motto, “Use it up, make do, or go without,” President Roosevelt designed his price control and rationing programs to benefit the nation as a whole. Many of his programs, however, were simply extensions of a lifestyle that already existed in the Midwest.

During the war years, radio homemaking programs like the “Homemaker’s Half-hour” espoused government sanctioned advice about homemaking. Just as before the war, many farmwomen took on the responsibilities of not only the business of the home, but also the business of the farm. Networks of kinships between mothers, daughters, sisters, and neighbors reinforced traditions of cooperation, frugality and efficiency amongst farmwomen since before the war.⁶⁷ Business advice pamphlets were commonly passed from one farm women to others through these networks of kinships women knew and trusted. Dealing with

⁶⁶ *Using the Family Income in Wartime*, 1-2

⁶⁷ Fannie Gannon, *Farm Business Affairs Women can Handle* Agricultural Extension Services, Iowa State College, October, 1942.

managing the farm, the pamphlets explained business in simplistic terms such as, “When paying bills, promptness in meeting business obligations is necessary for a family’s credit standing and for a good feeling in the community.” For money, the pamphlets said, “When handling money income, sales tickets showing weights, measures and prices per unit should be filed in a file at home.” They instructed women to use credit instruments wisely, not to forget the federal income taxes, and to take care of the livestock, outbuildings and household effects of the farm. Frannie Gannon of the Iowa State College Extension Service noted, “Women on farms are more genuinely business partners than are the wives of men in many businesses and professions.”⁶⁸

War de-mobilization ended the rationing programs and price fixing that dominated the home front during the war period. As G.I.s returned from the war front, husbands and fathers regained their position in the home and in business. Homemakers, however, maintained their roles and duties within the home. De-mobilization may have terminated direct government intervention in the lives of homemakers, but it did not eliminate the importance of a well managed home.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE: PATRIOTS AT HOME

Paulena Nickell of the Home Management Department editorialized on October 5, 1945, “You know as well as I that the Japanese thought we were ‘softies.’ They found to their sorrow, the ‘real us’ was of a very different caliber.”⁶⁹ Intricate, solid networks between homemakers and their family members abroad promoted morale during the war, assured the victory abroad and aided the adjustment to peacetime living. The “Homemaker’s Half-hour,” as well as government sponsored Extension Service programs and national magazines, advised Iowa homemakers about making smart spending decisions after the war and about re-integrating their soldiers back into their lives. Calling for “unity” and a common national “identity,” writers permeated these sources with messages of American culture in wartime and peacetime.

Veterans returning home expected to return to the families they left behind. Upon their return, soldiers found wives and families hardened by the separation of war. Women who chose to remain in the workforce and those who chose to return to traditional homemaking alike, found themselves publicly scrutinized for their decisions. Ultimately, however, women in both groups found that their concessions during wartime actually strengthened their patriotic ties to their home, family and nation.

Preparing for war, the exotic possibilities of overseas travel led many soldiers to marry before they left for war or during furloughs. Families created with these unions became motivation and life-blood for soldiers abroad. In their book *Domestic Relations*, Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg noted that in the immediate post-Pearl Harbor period alone,

⁶⁹ The Homemaker’s Half-hour, *Philosophy for Today’s Homemaker*, in a October 5, 1945 broadcast with Paulena Nickell of the Home Management Department, 5. Iowa State University, WOI AM-FM Radio, Records, RS 05/06/03, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library.

roughly one-thousand GIs and their brides were going to the altar every day.⁷⁰ For soldiers and their families, it was important to maintain regular contacts with their loved ones. The harsh realities of war led many soldiers to idealize their wives and families and long for the normalcy of home. Honorable discharge from service during World War II required that a soldier amass eighty-five service points for time served. For most soldiers, a service time of nearly two years was often required to obtain this number of points, so the possibility of coming home quickly seemed impossible.

Service men such as Joe Gurfein, who served on the European front, looked to letters from his wife Marion to make it through the most grueling stages of the war. Mrs. Gurfein reported news from home in an unusual manner. According to *Voices of War*, a Veteran's History Museum project, "Marion Gurfein, unlike her fellow correspondents was the publisher of a newspaper. It was called "The Goofein Journal," a monthly with a modest circulation of one copy." Mrs. Gurfein designed small "newspapers" on each side of a small card to cheer her husband. "She handwrote stories... and family tales...and [included] a photograph or two to remind Joe of how quickly their daughter Marjorie was growing up."⁷¹

Correspondence, especially between young couples like Joe and Marion, became essential for maintaining relationships during the war. Ms. Jean Lindeman of the Home Management Department joined Martha on January 1, 1945 to discuss what young couples should do to stay close. Lindeman said, "You've got to have letters full of day-to-day happenings to be able to understand that new experiences are constantly changing and so are these folks we haven't seen for so long." Many soldiers indicated that they enjoyed the

⁷⁰ Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, *Domestic Relations: A Social History of American Family Life*, (New York, New York, The Free Press, 1988) 154.

⁷¹ Tom Wiener, editor, *Voices of War: Stories from the Home Front and the Front Lines* (Washington D.C., Library of Congress Veteran's History Project, National Geographic Society, 2004) 226.

letters from home, which included discussions of problems with the children and information about difficult decisions the family was facing. Lindeman noted, “You have to hear about the troubles as well as the pleasant things to be able to understand the events that are changing that person while he [or she] is away from you.”⁷²

During the war, many women found difficulty adjusting to their home life and social lives without their service men. As advice to women who questioned appropriate social activities while their soldier was away, Lindeman offered this advice, “[The wife] is doing her husband no favor by sitting home every spare evening. She must have fun to remain the cheerful person he wants her to be...there are plenty of other war wives to go places with.”⁷³ In a 1951 study of Midwestern military families, Robert J. Havighurst of the University of Chicago, interviewed and analyzed sixty Midwest military families about their adjustment to war, and their readjustment to home-life upon their soldier’s return. Havighurst noted that free time available to women depended upon the number of children at home and their employment outside the home. The types of social activities available also depended on their social status. He found, “Among wives in the upper classes, the recreations most commonly mentioned were bridge, golf, bowling, and trips.” These women, he reported, generally traveled with church groups, “local women’s clubs or sorority chapters.”⁷⁴ Jessie Weifel of the Child Development department read from one *Time* magazine letter from a Minnesota homemaker explaining her situation:

⁷² The Home-maker’s Half-Hour, *What’s Ahead for the Very Young Couple*, in a conversation with Ms. Jean Lindeman of the Home Management Department, January 1, 1945, 2-4. Iowa State University, WOI AM-FM Radio, Records, RS 05/06/03, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 4

⁷⁴ Robert J. Havighurst, et al., *The American Veteran Back Home* (New York, New York, Longmans, Green and Company, 1951) 48.

Dear Sirs,

I'd like to tell you what 657 officers' wives are doing to fill the lonely hours. We have organized the Minneapolis Army Navy Officers' Wives Club. There are groups for bridge, skiing, skating, golf, discussion of current events, etc. In fact there's an activity for every night of the week if one has the stamina!

*Of over 657 of us, I don't know of one who is stepping out.*⁷⁵

The Midwest offered little entertainment for the army wives of lower ranking soldiers. Of the lower class women studied, Havighurst reported wives went "visiting," out to the movies, and sometimes roller-skating or bowling. One of the women in the study explained, "There's nothing for me to do except once in a while I do get out and go to the movies. But the rest of the time all I can do is listen to the radio or write letters and read."⁷⁶ Wiefel mentioned that many city libraries offered books on nearly every subject requested. By reading books, she advised, wives learned about "the country and the people which form such a large part of their husbands' experiences while they are separated from each other."⁷⁷

During this war separation, the institution of marriage and the evolution of divorce occupied the minds of many wives and service men. Anita Kezer of the Iowa State Sociology department joined Martha Duncan on October 18, 1945 to discuss war marriage. Duncan explained, "When we go back to the 1940 figures we see that for every one-thousand marriages, there were two hundred and twelve divorces that year. While this rate is increasing, we need to recognize that many of these divorces are...because of the increased

⁷⁵ The Homemaker's Half-hour, *While Waiting for Husband's return from Service*, in a conversation with Mrs. Jessie Wiefel of the Child Development Department, 2. Iowa State University, WOI AM-FM Radio, Records, RS 05/06/03, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library.

⁷⁶ Havighurst, 49

⁷⁷ *While Waiting for Husband's Return from Service*, 3

tensions of war.” Both wives and soldiers of war marriages dealt with the realities of separation during the war.⁷⁸

Mintz and Kellogg explained one of the problems of wartime separation, “The reality or suspicion of wartime adultery was a new and disturbing element in family life.” During the war, a sense of permissiveness became a dominating factor in American homes. Without father to help care for the children, mothers allowed fewer restrictions and limitations on their children to ease the pain of separation. Wives who entered the workforce also experienced this permissive culture. They met and formed relationships with many more men than were accessible to them before the war. They formed friendships and the occasional romantic attachment to the men at work. The increased social permissiveness dictated that, while adultery was morally reprehensible, extra-marital romantic attachments were justifiable in the war period. While most women did not step out on their husbands, some did. One of the most infamous accounts of wartime infidelity, Mintz and Kellogg noted, “involved a soldier from Chicago whose legs were amputated following a mine explosion. He returned from Germany to discover that his wife had left him for a forty-nine-year-old meat buyer she had met at work.”⁷⁹

A sexual double-standard existed between war wives and their husbands regarding adultery. Mintz and Kellogg described the marital situation of Shirley Hackett of Connecticut. She recalled many disputes between her and her mother-in-law regarding her husband’s infidelity. Her mother-in-law believed that, “‘it wasn’t healthy’ for soldiers ‘not to have sex’ while apart from their wives.” She recalled, however, a barrage of questions

⁷⁸ The Homemaker’s Half-hour, *Untitled discussion on marriage*, in a conversation with Anita Kezer of the Sociology department, 3. Iowa State University, WOI AM-FM Radio, Records, RS 05/06/03, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library.

⁷⁹ Mintz and Kellogg, 171

from her mother-in-law every time she went to the movies. Hackett noted, “All the time my husband was away, she watched me like a hawk [wanting to know my location and time of return.]”⁸⁰

Waiting for Daddy to return, Duncan advised her listeners, was Mommy’s time to show that she could “be emotionally competent [enough] to carry on a rich full life which will serve as an excellent example for her children.”⁸¹ Balancing her own needs with those of her children, mothers dealt with a complicated situation. These mothers attempted to explain the separation of war to their children. Many of these children, who barely knew their fathers before they left for service, experienced the most painful separation of war. While they may not remember much of the war today, the war greatly affected these children. In his book *Daddy’s Gone to War*, historian William M. Tuttle Jr. looked at the effect of the war on children. He said, “The Second World War was ‘a catalyst for patriotism. I suspect you will find that most of the kids who grew up in the 1940s were inoculated with a pretty fierce sense of patriotism.” Discussing how this patriotism affected children, he continued, “Considering the patriotic wartime atmosphere...it is [not] surprising that they [children] exhibit elements of collective identity.”⁸²

Tuttle remarked on the experience of young Nell Thomas, whose birthday fell on December 7, 1941. He explained, “The day was a bust for her. No one was interested in her birthday...only this thing at a place called ‘Pearl Harbor’.” Tuttle commented, “It did not take Nell long to realize that the war would quickly become the all-consuming concern of

⁸⁰ Ibid., 172

⁸¹ The Homemaker’s Half-hour, in a conversation with Ms. Mary Aldous of the Child Development Department, p. 4, Iowa State University, WOI AM-FM Radio, Records, RS 05/06/03, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library.

⁸² William M. Tuttle Jr., *Daddy’s Gone to War* (New York, New York, Oxford University Press, 1993) 243.

everyone.”⁸³ Commenting on the political socialization of children, Tuttle made note that psychologists Robert Hess and David Easton concluded: “Every piece of evidence indicates that the child’s political world begins to take shape well before he enters elementary school and that it undergoes the most rapid changed during those years.”⁸⁴ Forced to act as both mother and father with their husbands away at war, sociologists challenged women to enrich the lives of their children and themselves.

For homemakers who held the responsibility of acting as both mother and father during the war period, self-doubt about their abilities shrouded many of their actions. Their politics affected their children and the war affected their politics. Women who struggled with rearing children, running the home, and working for pay received much criticism for their maternal failings. Continuing her conversation Weifel, Duncan explained what the mother’s role should be in child rearing during the war. She said, “The mother must...try to enrich the child’s everyday experiences and not let them slip by just because daddy is not here.” Weifel suggested, “Children whose fathers are in the service often have very few...opportunities to enjoy the companionship of a man. Perhaps the mother could provide this companionship by inviting some family friends into the family circle.”⁸⁵ With concern about forming a “mother fixation,” Weifel warned that if children became too attached to mother while father is away, they might not accept him upon his return. Weifel concluded, “The children should be kept aware of the father’s place in the family and, above all, do not build him up into a hero role which he may not be able to live up to.”⁸⁶

⁸³ Ibid., 112

⁸⁴ Ibid., 113

⁸⁵ *While Wating for the Husband’s Return from Service*, 4

⁸⁶ Ibid., 5

Martha Anderson wrote into *Ladies Home Journal* in October 1945 to explain the situation in her war-home. She wrote, "I am trying to run a home with my husband in the Army. My budget never balances, my house is always upset and the children are never clean. I am twenty-four and feel at least forty-four."⁸⁷ Dorothy Disney, contributor for *Ladies Home Journal*, described Mrs. Anderson's situation, "Martha Anderson had a picture of how she and the children would look, what they would do and say, when Tom got back from the Army. When it happened...Pvt. Tom Anderson...found Martha collapsed in tears on the living-room sofa. Her life was a mess."⁸⁸ Like many other homemakers across the country, keeping her home together during the war left Mrs. Anderson exhausted and defeated. She felt that she let her husband down. She felt that she let her family down and she felt that she let her country down. While she did her best fighting the victory at home, it seemed as though it was not enough.

Government information sources assured homemakers that if they did their best to keep their families running while the men were away at war, they were loyal Americans and patriots. For women like Mrs. Anderson, failure to maintain a standard of perfection in her home made her feel like a failure. On March 15, 1945, Anita Kezer of the Sociology department joined Duncan again to discuss democracy and obedience. Duncan purported, "A pretty generally accepted view of the individual in a democracy is that of a person who can meet his own problems willingly and successfully...after deciding on a certain course of action, he can defend it and carry it...to completion."⁸⁹ If women who could not maintain

⁸⁷ Dorothy Cameron Disney, *The Housewife's Dilemma*, *Ladies Home Journal*, 63: (May 1946) 167.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 169

⁸⁹ The Homemaker's Half-hour, *Is Obedience Democratic?*, in a conversation with Anita Kezer of the Sociology Department, 1. Iowa State University, WOI AM-FM Radio, Records, RS 05/06/03, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library.

the perfect house and family on their own were not democratic, it would be impossible to win the “victory at home.” Kezer explained the situation of many homemakers, “to be democratic, obedience would have to be based on understanding, of the problem at hand, of each person’s viewpoint of it, of the different things that need to be looked at in terms of how everyone will be affected by the decision.” Therefore, a homemaker was patriotic and democratic if she met the needs of her family, no matter how imperfectly she accomplished her tasks.⁹⁰

While the homemaker and her family anxiously awaited Daddy’s return home, service men adapted and acclimated to their own environments as well. The government challenged service men to be patriots in their service during the war. Military leaders expected soldiers to follow every order perfectly and they expected soldiers to promote and maintain the morale of their fellow service men. For soldiers, the war brought opportunities to continue or expand their educational background. Ultimate loyalty to the country and to the causes of the war required a different, but very similar, obedience to the national expectations that homemakers were dealing with on the home front. Of the men who went away to war, many left for service without finishing any job training, or in some cases, even high school. The American public expected that their soldiers be the best trained and best equipped force fighting. To achieve obedience, patriotism, and loyalty, soldiers in every branch of the armed services received the opportunity to continue their education. Just as their wives learned about bookkeeping, farm management, and home economics from home extension specialists, service men engaged in professional training. By establishing the IE Division (information and education), Army Chief of Staff George Marshall reorganized the

⁹⁰ Ibid., 2-3

Army Special Services unit to make education and training a priority for soldiers serving abroad.

Due to concerns about increased literacy among soldiers, the IE directed correspondence courses for soldiers in addition to practical training regimens. These courses, which eventually evolved into the Biarritz Army University in Biarritz, France, included specialties such as agriculture, commerce, engineering, fine arts, journalism and the liberal arts and sciences.⁹¹ Studies of the time indicated that educated soldiers understood and supported the war more readily than their less educated counter-parts. Historian Christopher P. Loss of the University of Virginia noted, “The less educated [men] tended to be ‘stay at home’ types and less ‘internationally minded’ than their better-educated peers.”⁹² Thus, the scholarship of the time indicated that the more well educated a soldier could be, the better soldier he would turn into.

The atrocities of war and the impending victory in Europe, however, lead many soldiers to question their commitment to the war. From his study *The American Soldier*, social psychologist Samuel Stouffer observed, “It was not that the men were not patriotic...but simply that, once the winning of the war came to be viewed as certain, the felt need to subordinate individual concerns to the prosecution of the war was seriously impaired.”⁹³ Fatigued and lonely, the last few months of the war were the hardest for most soldiers to bear.

⁹¹ Christopher P. Loss, *The Most Wonderful Thing Has Happened to Me in the Army: Psychology, Citizenship and American Higher Education in World War II*, *Journal of American History* 92:3: (2006) 874-884.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 871

⁹³ Samuel Stouffer, et. al., *The American Soldier: Adjustment During Army Life Volume I* (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1949) 449.

Peace in Europe and Asia brought husbands and fathers home for good, but the idea of a peaceful world was foreign to many children of the war. War was the national solution to conflict and children who grew up in this environment held very different opinions about peace than adults. Discussing what peace meant to children of the war, Gertrude Chittenden of the Child Development Department joined Martha on April 5, 1945. Chittenden called upon mothers and fathers to explain to children “What a world without war is—and what their place in such a world is.”⁹⁴

Havighurst continued his study of Midwestern GIs and veterans into the post-war period. Small Midwest towns, as well as towns across the nation, welcomed service men with parties, events and parades. He stated, “By March, 1946, a majority of Midwest’s servicemen had come home.” Most spent their first night home swapping stories with immediate family members, but by the next day, they found themselves swamped with visitors. One veteran in the study recalled his homecoming, “The folks had everyone in for a big party...everyone was around and there was all the noise and excitement...after a while I just froze up.” Veterans reported immense pressure on themselves and their families to readjust to life at home...immediately.⁹⁵

As part of the centrally administered plan to end wartime mobilization, the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944 sought to return stability to the lives of soldiers who proudly served their country. Known as the G.I. Bill of Rights, the Readjustment Act brought forth the means by which service men could re-enter their lives. The United States government agreed to guarantee payment of \$500 per year to cover the cost of tuition, books,

⁹⁴ The Homemaker’s Half-hour, *Peace—What Does it Mean to Children Today?*, in a conversation with Mrs. Gertrude Chittenden of the Child Development Department, 1. Iowa State University, WOI AM-FM Radio, Records, RS 05/06/03, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 69-70

health services, and other fees at federally approved colleges and universities. In addition, each service man received \$50 per month for room and board or \$75 per month if he had one or more dependents. The G.I Bill also assured home loan guarantees of up to \$2000 for purchasing a new home. For many families, this type of government assistance and job training assured a smooth transition to peacetime. Support groups implemented nationwide efforts to ease the veteran's transition in the years following the war. Of course, Martha Duncan and The Homemaker's Half-hour did not forget about the veterans. During a January 1, 1945 broadcast, Jean Lindeman of the Home Management Department discussed the situation with Duncan. She noted, "For the veteran whose interests are not in education for a job, or who may already be trained, this [the G.I. Bill] is an opportunity to get his 'feet on the ground'." ⁹⁶

Under the plans of the Truman administration, questions regarding American involvement in rebuilding war-torn nations led the news headlines. Closer to home, the families of G.I's made adjustments of their own. Allowing "daddy" to re-enter their lives was a challenge for many children. Allowing "sweetie" to re-enter their lives was a challenge for many women. Dr. Reuben Hill, of the Sociology and Economics department of Iowa State College joined Duncan on February 15, 1945 to discuss *Adjustments of the Returning Father and His Family*. Dr. Hill noted, "[before entering the war] he [the father] was more than earner and supplier of good things to his wife and children. He was partner, friend and playmate."

⁹⁶ The Homemaker's Half-hour, *What's Ahead for the Very Young Couple?*, in a January 1, 1945 broadcast with Jean Lindeman of the Home Management Department, 5-6. Iowa State University, WOI AM-FM Radio, Records, RS 05/06/03, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library.

For many men, leaving behind their “family ways” for life in the army drastically altered their patterns of living. Idealized images of their wives and children helped many soldiers survive the harshest days on the battlefield. The war altered not only men’s roles in the family, but women’s roles, as well. “Man’s indispensability in the home,” Dr. Hill advised, “has been shaken as wives have mastered the jargon of the market place, ...learned how to fix light and plumbing fixtures, renew automobile licenses, meet insurance premiums, tax payments and other responsibilities...for which men have claimed special talent.”⁹⁷

Dr. Hill explained that, according to Dr. Benedek of the Chicago Institute of Psychoanalysis, “the wife’s new-found self sufficiency will prove a threat to the returning father.” Dr. Hill rebuked, “I am not too concerned about this problem.” He continued, “I know that many so-called self-sufficient wives actually long to be dependent again and that they will all too gladly resume upon reunion the role of wife and mother.”⁹⁸

Dr. Hill advised that family members “develop attitudes which will aid in the assimilation of the veteran back into the home.” Most veterans, upon return, looked at their families differently than they had before the war. For example, Dr. Hill described one situation, “Many fathers now returning are for a time confused and disoriented, baffled by such simple necessities as deciding what suit to wear and whether or not to go to church.” The strict discipline and rigors of life in the service left most veterans with a sense of uncertainty about their lives. Without this discipline in his homelife, Dr. Hill noted, families should expect fathers to be “restless and irritable.” He continued, “Literally nothing ever

⁹⁷ The Homemaker’s Half Hour, *Adjustments of the Returning Father and His Family*, in a February 15, 1945 conversation with Dr. Reuben Hill of the Economics and Sociology Departments, 1-3. Iowa State University, WOI AM-FM Radio, Records, RS 05/06/03, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 5-6

meets with the full approval of the man who dreamed of home as the opposite of everything hateful he endured in war.”⁹⁹

As advice to homemakers, Dr. Hill explained a report of the National Conference on Family Relations. Veterans, the report suggested, wanted to be “in on the planning” of homecoming parties. They wanted to know others were glad to see them home. They wanted to be included on family decisions and allowed to make choices about their personal time. The report further suggested that the best way to make a veteran feel “at home” upon his return, was to treat him as a person...not a veteran.¹⁰⁰

Gertrude Chittenden of the Child Development Department posited about peace time, “When our period of truce comes after this war, we must consider it a time for vigilance and hard work. We must campaign as we never campaigned before—work as we never worked before...for real peace...in the future.”¹⁰¹ In explaining the affects of the war on children, Chittenden explained the American commitment to peace, “There is no better place to start [building peace] than in our home communities. Probably almost every community—even in peaceful Iowa—has some characteristics that make it a potential source of the roots of war.” With growing poverty, lasting racial discrimination and intolerance throughout the nation and world, Chittenden preached addressing these issues in local communities. She continued, “The American people have realized that this war is their business—that their labor, their money, [and] their time are all needed. We must convince ourselves that this same thing is true in peace time.”¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Ibid., 7-8

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 8

¹⁰¹ *Peace-What Does it Mean to Children Today?*, 2

¹⁰² Ibid., 2-3

Once only the responsibility of women on the home front and men on the front lines, peaceful living and patriotism became the goals of every loyal American by the end of the war. Mrs. Chittenden explained to Duncan and her listeners that in order to ensure peaceful living, every American must be responsible for his or her actions. She said, “peace will come only when people believe in peaceful living...peace will come only if people are tolerant and open minded and free from prejudice...[and] each and every citizen must feel a responsibility for gaining and maintaining peace.”¹⁰³

In the post-war period, many Americans questioned their new roles as consumers and citizens in peacetime. What successful peacetime living meant for one person did not necessarily dictate what it meant for another. “Will you practice...the ‘art of thinking’ and be quite sincere in the choices you make or will you be swayed by Mrs. X and Mrs. Y?” Paulena Nickell of the Home Management Department questioned of listeners after the war. With the large sums of money many Americans were able to save during the war, the post-war population was looking to update their houses, fill out their meals, and make the most of the lessons in frugality they learned during the war.¹⁰⁴

Many listeners of the “Homemaker’s Half-hour” set up their first homes or modernized their homes after the war. Easy access to reliable information about post-war spending was not only vital to the American economy, but to the health and livelihood of the American population. Nickell commented on the state of affairs after the war, “I have emphasized the material plus the human value aspect of choice because by observation...a rather frightening importance is being placed...on the materials themselves.” She noted that,

¹⁰³ Ibid., 3

¹⁰⁴ The Homemaker’s Half-hour, *Philosophy for Today’s Homemaker*, in a conversation with Mrs. Paulena Nickell of the Home Management Department, 3. Iowa State University, WOI AM-FM Radio, Records, RS 05/06/03, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library.

rather than assessing what new materials would aid in a “better and more creative life,” many citizens focused on having as many new things as possible. In advice to Duncan’s listeners, Nickell advocated a “philosophical approach” with a “discriminating attitude” to modernization and purchasing after the war.¹⁰⁵

For “Mrs. GI,” organizing and updating her new or existing home was extremely important. Many families whose veterans took part in the GI bill allocations ended up living in small makeshift housing developments around colleges and universities. For the rural “Mrs. GI,” her farmhouse was tattered, worn and in great need of repair in the post-war period. In either situation, homemakers again faced the challenge of creating and maintaining a functional and supportive environment for their families.

Wartime production limitations affected much more than the consumer’s ability to purchase goods. They affected the ways American families lived their lives. After the war, the government attempted to ease the economic burdens that Americans faced. On May 11, 1945 the Office of Price Administration (OPA) set forth a policy to slowly return consumer goods back to the market at 1942 prices. Producers of living essentials, such as furniture, appliances, tires, bicycles and automobiles received production limitations early on in the war. Not only could they not produce these items, consumers could not buy them. By June 1945, with their return to the market, the retail prices of these living essentials was 1.7% higher than in June 1945 and climbing. Frightened by looming inflation and economic problems, the government again asked American homemakers to be patriotic by reducing their spending.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 4-5

¹⁰⁶ *Monthly Labor Review*, Cost of Living and Retail Prices, September 1945, 539-540.

According to a *Monthly Labor Review* report in June 1945, industry opposition to the OPA program for re-adjustment led to the creation of federal subsidy and employment programs. The report read, “The program for returning low-priced goods to civilian markets was modified...an increase in wage rates to compensate for the reduction in earnings... was under consideration.” The article also included information on the increasing cost of goods. “Increased ceilings were granted by the OPA for some products and others were exempted temporarily from price control. For some, subsidies were increased.”¹⁰⁷

Regulation W, instituted during the war, limited consumers’ credit purchasing power. It placed a time limit on how long accounts could be open, the size of the down payment and the period of installment payments. Regulation W regulated uncontrolled spending during the war but the government quickly eliminated it after the victory in Japan. The program termination forced homemakers in the post war period to learn again to live within their means. In her discussion with Duncan on *Peacetime Living*, Natalie Saari of the Isabel Bevier House noted, “If people go out spending unwisely and extravagantly we will just have to expect what we got after the last war; a period of almost ridiculously high prices followed by a severe depression.” She continued, “Now that the government regulations on buying are removed, each one of us will have to regulate our purchases...judging whether our need is greater than that of someone else.”¹⁰⁸

After the war, one of the first rooms that many homemakers chose to update was the kitchen. Homemakers hoping to have access to new makes and models of washing machines, refrigerators and other household equipment after the war got quite a shock when

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 541

¹⁰⁸ The Homemaker’s Half-hour, *The Homemaker’s Responsibility in the Postwar Economy*, in a August 31, 1945 discussion with Natalie Saari of the Isabel Bevier House, 3. Iowa State University, WOI AM-FM Radio, Records, RS 05/06/03, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library.

the new equipment looked just as it had before the war. Ms. Saari explained, “Many homemakers have equipment...which although not in perfect condition, with repair could serve a few more years. Young service men’s wives... [and] rural homemakers [have many needs] and they should be granted.”¹⁰⁹ An Iowa Agricultural Extension Service newspaper, the *Iowa Farm Special*, noted in a February 20, 1946 article, “You can’t take a house built for city life and plop it in the middle of a farm...the farm and the farm house are inseparable.” Purchasing specialty equipment for the farm home and the city home required special planning. In encouraging established homemakers to postpone their large purchases, Saari observed that homemakers helped create employment opportunities in the future of production.

Marie Budolfson and Naomi Shank of the Home Management Department, in updating their own homes, encouraged listeners to make a detailed list of the products and appliances they desired most for their homes. They told listeners to use this list, with or without prices and availability, as an outline, or plan, for modernizing after the war. Shank discussed equipping a rural home, “We begin by imagining ourselves walking in the back door of the house and into the kitchen. We stopped there long enough to list the large kitchen equipment and the kitchen linens in a column headed *kitchen*.” Shank continued by verbally walking listeners through the other rooms of the house. She imagined, “We proceeded to a dining room where we settled for a linoleum rug, a simple breakfast set, a cupboard for dishes, some ruffled curtains and dining linens and dished under the dining room column.” By organizing and prioritizing, Shank noted, “[The lists] make for more systematic shopping and assure the new homemaker that she won’t find herself running into

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 4-5

equipment snags those first few weeks in her new home.” With a home plan, Duncan added, “She won’t find her plan for mashed potatoes spoiled by lack of a potato masher.”¹¹⁰

Home products aside, after the victory in Japan and in Europe, many women questioned their purpose in the post-war world. Whether to re-enter the home after time in the workforce or to push for continued workplace rights, women faced the questions regarding patriotism in post-war America. Captain Dorothy Stratton of the Women’s Reserve of the U.S. Coast Guard explained, “There can be little doubt that the major interest of most women after the war...will be their homes and families. Those who fear that American young women will not want to marry and rear children surely do not know young women well.” She noted in her article to *Independent Woman* however, “the real danger seems to...be...the hundreds of thousands of women who have given their energies to...war...[and now] say... ‘I’ve done my job’.” Captain Stratton recalled a *Time* magazine study that found “the wives of soldiers and sailors want to get back to the kitchen.” The study continued, “They want a better, freer, easier world but they would leave the blueprinting of it to their husbands.”¹¹¹

According to Stratton, eleven million women in the United States worked before the war and thirteen million women would need to continue working to support their families in the postwar world. She explained, “By use of the term ‘need’ I do not imply financial need alone.” She continued, “People need to work as a means of releasing their creative energies.”

¹¹⁰ The Homemaker’s Half-hour, *Mrs. GI Plans to Equip Her New Home*, in a November 30, 1945 discussion with Mrs. Marie Budolfson and Ms. Naomi Shank of the Home Management Department, 2-3, 5-6. Iowa State University, WOI AM-FM Radio, Records, RS 05/06/03, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library.

¹¹¹ Dorothy C. Stratton, “Women after the War,” *Independent Woman*, (October 1945) 279.

“Identification with a group and contributing constructively to the lives around them,” Stratton posited, was essential “to be happy, useful human beings.”¹¹²

Lydia Swanson of the Child Development Department joined Duncan on October 15, 1945 to discuss the future of women in the workforce, as well as in homemaking. She explained, “In addition to having a feeling of importance, mother has had ‘money in her pocket’ so to speak, and therefore has been more independent.” Duncan, shocked by Swanson’s comment, responded, “Are you minimizing the important job of homemaking?” Swanson responded, “No, I’m merely making a plea for a very realistic facing of the situation.” Much like Stratton, Swanson advocated an efficient use of time and resources to create a successful United States economy after the war. Due to decreased production, limitations on available positions and the fate of the returning veteran, Swanson encouraged women “to consider the proposition of devoting full time to homemaking.” Swanson explained, “In our culture it is still father who is the bread winner. Returning to civilian life he will find competition for jobs difficult and may resent having mother, and women in general...holding down jobs.”¹¹³

Swanson’s response, quite contrary to “Homemaker’s Half-hour” advice promoting homemaking as a viable occupation shocked Duncan. Duncan retorted, “Be *just a homemaker*?” Defending her statement, Swanson explained, “It may be a valuable outcome of this war; the understanding that making a home for a family is no *one* person’s job, but a cooperative venture requiring participation by all family members.” No longer, according to Swanson, should the sexual division of labor, between outside work and work in the home,

¹¹² Ibid., 295

¹¹³ The Homemaker’s Half-hour, *Mother is a Full-Time Homemaker Now*, in a conversation with Ms. Lydia Swanson of the Child Development Department, 1. Iowa State University, WOI AM-FM Radio, Records, RS 05/06/03, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library.

disallow homemakers from sharing in family finance duties and business. Quite the opposite, Swanson suggested that listeners re-enter homemaking to allow their GIs an opportunity to participate, patriotically, in supporting the country. Even though they no longer fought for the “victory at home,” patriotic homemaking was important in community and social circles. Swanson concluded, “There is much to be done for the improvement of schools, recreation facilities, housing, health, care of the crippled, and neglected and dependent children.” She added, “Mother can now push out the walls of her home and [enjoy] a very satisfactory job.”¹¹⁴

Duncan once recalled to her listeners, “The very day after the Japanese surrender was made public...The question was, ‘Have you adjusted to peace time living?’” Peacetime living, for many Americans was about much more than consumerism. The war altered the roles of women in the home. Whether it was taking on the roles of mother and father, working outside the home for money, or managing the family accounts, large numbers of homemakers were unwilling or unable to return to the pre-war status quo after the fighting was over. Women who “push[ed] out” the walls of their homes came from both traditional family settings and those that required women to be wage earners. Contributors to magazines such as *Independent Woman* encouraged women to continue in the workplace while shows like the “Homemaker’s Half-hour” encouraged women to stay home. T. Swann Harding noted in *Independent Woman*, “When so many young housewives elect to leave their homes to accept outside employment, important adjustments have to be made in their living arrangements.” She continued, “Fundamental changes are certain to follow in attitudes towards family and the home...[and in] the nature of our educational, recreational

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 2,3,5

and...social institutions.”¹¹⁵ With very different strategies, homemakers and “independent women” identified with the same goal: a successful, prosperous, patriotic home and nation. Carol Engebretson of the Iowa State Home Management Department explained the worldwide purpose of homemaking in similar terms, “Good housekeeping has its counterpart in the art of government—public housekeeping. It is part of educated women’s responsibility...and opportunity to help make such goals realities.”¹¹⁶ Serving her home as well as her nation, homemaking in the post-war world continued to provide enrichment, education and fulfillment for women.

¹¹⁵ T. Swann Harding, “Looking Ahead to 1950” *Independent Woman*, January 1947, 21-22.

¹¹⁶ The Homemaker’s Half-Hour, *Home Management and World Service*, in a March 19, 1948 conversation with Carol Engebretson and Fannie Gannon of the Home Management Department, 1. Iowa State University, WOI AM-FM Radio, Records, RS 05/06/03, Special Collections Department, Iowa State University Library.

CHAPTER FOUR: ACTIVE WOMEN AT HOME AND AT WORK

In her book *Consumer Goes to War*, Dr. Caroline F. Ware observed about the purpose of war, “We are not fighting this war for the captains of industry, for the movie stars, for the big league baseball players or for the great cotton planters. We are fighting this war for John Q. Citizen and his wife and children.” World War II, and its affects at home, dramatically altered the way American citizens related to one another and to their country as a whole. Passive citizenship was no longer accepted. In order to consider themselves true Americans, and true patriots, women across the country altered their lives and changed their habits to support the country. Previously divided on the purpose of World War I, United States citizens in WWII banded together behind their GIs and threw their unending support behind the soldiers and the war effort. From victory gardens to rationing, letters from home to officers’ orders, and forgotten birthdays to cheerful welcome-homes, women, men and children adapted their lives to the new social structure of the war. Supporting the war effort by making sacrifices and adjustments to their daily lives made homemakers patriotic necessities to the “victory at home.”¹¹⁷

Democracy, according to Martha Duncan and her guests, began at home. Homemakers, vital to the success of patriotism and nationalism in wartime and peacetime, played an important role in supporting their country. Duncan said, “Democracy does begin at home—not only just giving lip service to it but actually creating and developing democratic relationships in all possible areas of family living. Carol Engbretson of the Home Management Department agreed, “As a citizen and as an influential force in our economy

¹¹⁷ Caroline F. Ware, *Consumer Goes to War* (New York, New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1942) 262.

women...make their greatest contribution...in the home.”¹¹⁸ Homemaking during the war forced women into non-traditional roles and encouraged them to make their mark on society.

This thesis employed information from radio transcripts as well as magazines and newspapers of the period to answer questions about patriotic homemaking. Radio, influencing the lives of every listener it reached, shaped the information that was available. “The audience of twenty million women has taken control of the daytime serial,” James Thurber explained in *The Soap Opera*, “The producers must give them what they want and demand.”¹¹⁹ What post-war homemakers wanted was information about how they [the homemaker] could support the national war effort and readjustments to peacetime. Using their newly acquired information, homemakers during World War II became patriotic for two reasons. First, United States culture accepted them as vital to the peace in Europe and the Pacific. Second, homemakers considered their actions and activities necessary. Planning a family budget, successfully feeding their families nutritious meals, keeping the peace in family squabbles and efficiently using resources became much more than daily life, they became important decisions that affected the outcome of the war and the continuation of peace. Historians and political scholars alike discussed the concept of patriotism, but by looking at one group of women who so greatly affected their families, their communities and their nation, it is possible to gain a greater understanding of the sacrifices US citizens made for the cause of peace.

After the war, controversies again swirled around a woman’s appropriate position in society. Was it in the home or should it be at work? Offered the opportunity to stay at home,

¹¹⁸ *Home Management and World Service*, 3

¹¹⁹ James Thurber, *The Soap Opera* Reprinted in: *Culture and Commitment 1929-1945*, edited by Warren Susman (New York, New York: George Braziller, Inc, 1973) 168.

continue working or receive a college education, most women in the late 1940s and early 1950s chose to make their lives around their husbands and families. Duncan noted about the importance of this choice, “Married women’s employment in the home contributes to the nation...since it makes possible higher income per capita of population.” As for working women, Fannie Gannon of the Home Management Department reminded listeners, “[Women’s] working away from home creates home employment for other groups of women and contributes to the trend toward cooperative homemaking within families and within communities.”¹²⁰

The unprecedented baby boom that occurred in the 1950s and declining divorce rates lent additional credence to the importance of the mother and homemaker in the family. Depicted in advertising, Jellison described one AT&T advertisement that ran in the 1950s. In the advertisement, Clara Schindler from Perryville, Missouri appeared in front of her telephone switchboard and in her garden. The advertisement read, “A farmer at heart [who] ‘knows her onions’ [in the garden] as well as at her telephone job.”¹²¹ Portraying the importance of working women as well as those who stayed home, Clara Schindler exemplified the contradictions in women’s social roles in the 1950s. Jellison explained the advertisement in a broader context, “As the decade [the 1950s] continued, *Bell* advertisements increasingly showed [farm] women in settings and situations that did not differ from those of urban women.”¹²² Thus, the lines between homemakers and so-called “independent women” blurred.

¹²⁰ *Home Management and World Service*, 3-4. Gannon noted that with the increased numbers of women working outside the home, homemakers had more opportunities to earn money stuffing envelopes and other jobs that could be done inside the home.

¹²¹ Jellison, 171

¹²² Jellison, 186

Mintz and Kellogg quoted singer Pat Boone as saying marriage became a “fifty-fifty deal.” Partnership in the post-war marriage did not necessarily mean equality.¹²³ In the late 1940s and early-1950s media depictions of family life portrayed the ideal of the “happy-homemaker.” Women like June Cleaver, of *Leave it to Beaver* appeared to be satisfied with simply caring for their homes and their families. For many women, this was a reality, but for others, participation in national political issues continued to be an attractive option. Employment outside the home and educational opportunities for women increased in the post-war years. By 1960, twenty-five percent of women held jobs for pay in addition to those who worked at home.¹²⁴ The choices women made about their families dictate that the patriotism and independence instilled in them during the war did not fade when the president declared peace. In addition, a larger discussion of women’s place in the home and her importance in the home environment continues today.

The question that remains is how these patriotic homemakers affected the women’s rights campaigns to come in the 1960s and 1970s. Were more women involved in politics after the war because of women’s’ involvement during the war or, did women’s’ experiences during the war make them embrace their traditional roles as homemaker and mother more deeply? If it is true that lingering influences of the war permeated later female activism, then the “victory at home” homemakers of World War II cast an even longer shadow than this thesis can begin to explain.

¹²³ Mintz and Kellogg, 186

¹²⁴ Mintz and Kellogg, 199

APPENDIX ONE

assessor's report as recorded Jan. 1, 1935 and supplied thru the courtesy of
Charles D. Reed, Director of the Iowa Weather and Crop Bureau.

-14A-

Summary for State
 Jan. 1, 1935 1935 over 1934 Jan. 1, 1934
 Total Radio sets on farms 12,848
 Total farms in State (3 acres or more) 251,177
 Percentage of farms having sets 5.12
 Average of 1 radio set to each 2.52 farms

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