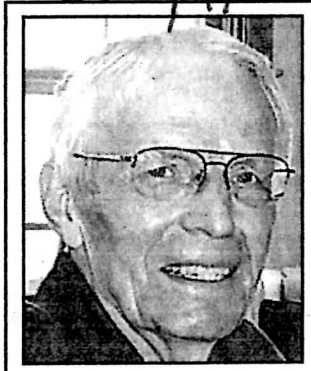


Washburn During The War Years —The Home Front -1

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The people on the "home front" participated in the war effort through the rationing program, employment at the Du Pont explosives plant, civil defense, the Red Cross, war bond purchases, scrap drives, and in other ways. The rationing program was mandatory for everyone, while the other opportunities for participation depended on volunteers and included only a relatively small number of people.

The federal rationing program was intended to insure the equitable distribution of food, clothing, gasoline and other scarce commodities. Without rationing the prices of scarce commodities would have been bid steadily upward, creating an inflationary spiral, while those with insufficient means would not have been able to buy them. The federal Office of Price Administration had overall national responsibility for the rationing program, which was administered by volunteer boards at the local level. Automobile tires were the first item to be rationed, beginning in January 1942. As other commodities were added to the ration list—gasoline, fuels, footwear, food including sugar, coffee, processed foods, meats, fats, and canned foods, and a few other commodities—the rationing board expanded with additional volunteers and a small clerical staff, becoming the county War Price and Rationing Board. The board carried an enormous workload of decision making and paperwork.



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The successful operation of the rationing program depended on consumers and those in the supply chain, without whose cooperation the entire system of regulations and paperwork would have collapsed. The mechanisms for carrying out rationing at the consumer level included ration books, stamps and coupons, and certificates, referred to as "rationing currency." Every consumer (including children) received a ration book distributed through the schools, where teachers registered people and distributed the books. The stamps in the books were used to purchase food, sugar, coffee, and shoes. Separate stamps were issued for different amounts of gasoline and fuel oil, depending on need. Certificates were issued to a limited number of eligible persons for a single purchase of tires, automobiles, stoves, or rubber footwear. The rationing process extended from consumers to retailers, wholesalers, and manufacturers and other producers through the "flowback" of accumulated

stamps, so that the production and distribution of commodities could be matched to the levels of demand for those commodities in different areas of the nation.

The work force at the Du Pont plant began to contribute to the war effort over two years before the nation entered the war through the production of explosives for the defense preparedness program and for Allied governments. About 208 million pounds of TNT and 102 million pounds of commercial explosives were produced during the war, compared to 130 million pounds and 90 million pounds, respectively, during World War I. Eighteen million pounds of TNT blocks were also produced during World War II. Peak employment during World War II was about 600 men and women, compared to about 6,000 during World War I, so the substantially larger output during the second war was achieved with about one-tenth the number employed during the first war.

In October 1942 the Barksdale Works was awarded the Army-Navy E for its "fine record in the production of war equipment." The award was presented at a "most impressive and colorful ceremony" held at the Ashland High School gymnasium on December 1st, attended by 1,300 employees and their families. The plant received the award again in July 1943, February 1944, October 1944, and May 1945, each additional award signified by a white star on the

"E" pennant that was flown from the flagstaff at the main gate of the plant.

The production achievements for which the Barksdale Works received the five Army-Navy "E" awards were the result of the hard work of the men and women of the plant work force. The plant management formed several labor-management committees to expedite operations, including a transportation committee and a production drive committee. A monthly plant newsletter, the "Barksdale News," was published from July 1940 to May 1950. Included in each issue were articles about safety, information on personnel actions, personal notes, anecdotes, plus jokes and cartoons. To transport workers to the plant from Washburn, where all but a small part of the workforce lived, the DeMars Chevrolet Company operated three 41 passenger buses, which made 14 trips a day. A ticket for 42 one-way rides cost \$5.00.

A guard force was established in 1940 to protect the plant against sabotage and other attempts to disrupt production. The guards were trained by the army, swore oaths as auxiliary military policemen, and wore military-style uniforms. Guard towers were erected along the eight-foot fence that surrounded the plant, which was regularly patrolled. There were no incidents of attempted sabotage or penetration into the plant grounds, although guards occasionally had "close encounters" with the local wildlife.