

CHAPTER 9

MID 1900'S

THE WORLD WAR II ERA

Public opinion was against getting involved in another European war. World War I was still fresh in the minds of many Arkansans. In the late 1930's, Germany's dictator, Adolf Hitler, was taking over small helpless European countries. During the 1930's, he built a huge war machine in Germany. He used all these soldiers and equipment to conquer Czechoslovakia, Poland, France, Belgium, The Netherlands, and many other countries. None of the nations could resist the power of Hitler's evil empire. England was being bombed, and stood almost helpless against Germany.

On the other side of the world, Japan was a threat to peace. They had a warlike dictator and needed oil from countries controlled by England and the United States. Japan invaded China in 1937.

There were those in America who were very disturbed and felt that we should stop both Germany and Japan. Others, however, believed America should stay out of foreign wars. Anti-war speakers preaching isolationism said America should stay at home and let the rest of the world take care of its own problems.

In spite of all the speeches and protests, a few young men were being drafted into the army. In 1940, these men were called to take one year of training.

On December 7, 1941, everything changed. After that day, Arkansas and the rest of the world would never be the same. The Japanese launched a sneak attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. On that fateful day, they flew over the harbor early on Sunday morning, dropped bombs, and destroyed our ships, airplanes, soldiers, and sailors. Shocked Americans suddenly changed their minds about being in the war. On December 8, war was officially declared against both Japan and Germany.

America was without war machinery, guns, tanks, airplanes, and bombs. Only a few soldiers and sailors were in the military services. Millions of men and a few women either volunteered or were drafted for military service.

Arkansas became a site for new military bases and war factories. A munitions plant was constructed at Jacksonville. Pine Bluff became a site for a military arsenal. Other plants were built at El Dorado, Hope, Hot Springs, Malvern, and Little Rock. Two major army training camps, Camp Robinson near Little Rock and Camp Chaffee east of Ft. Smith, were constructed in a short period of time. Five Army Air Corp Training Centers also came to Arkansas.

Almost overnight, Arkansas changed from a state with high unemployment to a place begging for workers. By the middle of 1942, the Depression was just a memory. Most workers had more money than ever before. Farmers began to prosper. The lumber and mining industries began to sell more materials than they could produce.

Although the people now had money to spend, there were limited places to spend it. There were no new cars to buy because car factories were building military vehicles for the war effort. Almost no new houses were built since all the construction laborers were either in the military or working on war projects. Food was rationed. Gasoline and tires were rationed. Grocery stores had to have not only money for food, but also ration stamps. New tire permits were issued only to farmers and emergency people, such as doctors.

Farming was considered an essential industry because food and clothing were necessary for the war effort. Sometimes, farmers were exempt from the draft so they could grow food for the war. They were issued more gasoline to produce and haul food and cotton to market.

Probably the most destructive of all the elements of the war was the breakup of the family. When death came to a family, it was tragic news; especially the death of fathers with young children. When husbands and fathers were separated from their families for three and four year periods, terrible results often followed. The effects of this problem are still being felt many generations later. The faithful Christian wives who waited patiently

for their husbands and continued to rear godly children are among the unrecognized heroes of World War II.

Wartime scarcity brought benefits as well as hardships. High wages with few opportunities to spend money enabled many Arkansans to get out of debt and to even increase their savings. Bank deposits increased by 128% between 1940 and 1943.

Just as in the Depression when times were hard, rural Arkansans had an easier time in many ways than city dwellers. In the country, there was usually plenty of milk, eggs, and meat to eat. Even in small towns, people would plant big gardens that provided vegetables for the whole year. The government encouraged "victory gardens" to replace rationed food. By 1943, "victory gardens" supplied one third of the nation's fruits and vegetables.

Fervent prayer saturated Bible-believing church services. Almost every church member had friends and relatives on the battlefield. Many Christian families spent much time on their knees. As the war dragged on, prayers for the war to end became even more frequent.

On June 6, 1944 (D-Day), American, British, and Canadian troops landed on the coast of France and began an invasion to free Europe from Hitler's control. There were other soldiers involved also. Some of these were Australian troops and French underground troops. Many Arkansans were killed in the numerous battles across France, Belgium, Holland, and into Germany. Nazi Germany crumbled under the advance of American, British, and Russian troops.

Hitler committed suicide on April 30, 1945. Germany surrendered to the allies on May 7, and to the Russians on May 9 in 1945.

On the Japanese front, there were still many battles going on. The Japanese controlled numerous Pacific islands, and each of these cost precious lives to recapture. Japan ignored a warning on July 26, 1945, that heavier attacks on their home island would be forthcoming if they did not surrender.

On August 6, 1945, the United States dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. A second bomb was dropped August 9 on Nagasaki. The results were devastating. Japan formally surrendered to *U.S. Army General Douglas MacArthur on September 2, 1945.

World War II was over! God answered many prayers. America won a world war fighting on two fronts at opposite ends of the world. God does work in the affairs of men.

POST WAR ARKANSAS

Since Arkansans could not buy very much during the war because of shortages and rationing, they were anxious buyers of almost everything after the war. Cars, houses, food, appliances, almost anything was easy to sell. In fact, it was so easy that prices started to rise rapidly. New cars doubled in price.

The government stepped in with price controls. These were not effective. Customers simply paid "under the table" for merchandise they wanted. If they were not willing to pay this extra money, the customer was told that the store did not have the product. This was especially true for automobiles. For example, most new car dealers had long waiting lists for each new car that became available. If the list price was \$1,200, the customer usually had to pay a \$1,000 bonus for his name to move up the list. Eventually, price controls were stopped, and our free enterprise forces were allowed to flow without government intervention.

In 1945, the Arkansas legislature created the Resources and Development Commission. Both private and public organizations worked to attract industry to Arkansas. Cities and counties were encouraged to form their own organizations to attract industry. The goal was to balance Arkansas's agricultural base with some manufacturing. "Arkansas: Land of Opportunity" was a slogan developed after World War II.

* General Douglas MacArthur was born in Little Rock, Arkansas.

With many new workers on the scene, a new union organization came to Arkansas. The new force was called the Congress of Industrial Organizations (C.I.O.). This big labor union was becoming popular in Arkansas because it admitted unskilled workers. This popularity stirred a fear in the business community. Unions were becoming very powerful across America. They were making some unreasonable demands. The greed of the big railroad and mining corporations was now shifting to the unions. For example, railroads were forced to keep a fireman on trains even after the engines were changed to oil. There was no need for a fireman to shovel coal.

A right-to-work law was passed in Arkansas in 1947. This law has remained in effect, and has attracted some industry. Right-to-work laws limit the power of unions. These laws permit employers to hire non-union workers.

Veterans continued to be heroes for several years following World War II. Many were elected to political offices. In Hot Springs, a Marine veteran, Sidney McMath, led a crusade against a corrupt political machine in that county. He won not only that battle, but became Governor of Arkansas in 1948.

Other veterans were elected to the U.S. Congress. The public was generally in favor of rewarding those who had given so much during World War II. Therefore, many new laws favoring the veterans were enacted by the national lawmakers. One of the most popular was the so-called "GI Bill." (GI was a slang term given to soldiers during the war. It stood for Government Issue.) This new "GI Bill" paid the veterans a small salary to attend college. The payment was usually a little more than enough to pay for tuition and books. By living economically, even a married veteran could manage to complete college. This law was continued even during and after the Korean war. Some similar laws have been enacted since then.

In agriculture, tractors replaced the horse and mule as a source of power. By the 1950's, cotton-picking machines were beginning to replace hand labor. Chemical fertilizers and insecticides were greatly improved during the post war years. These new technical advances increased the crop yields. Antibiotics decreased animal death losses. Demand for all farm products caused prices to be good for almost ten years following the war. Even when prices declined, the increased production helped stabilize the farm economy.

Farmers in the hill country of the Ozarks and Ouachitas began to clear land and establish productive pasture lands. In northwest Arkansas, the poultry and egg production began to grow into big business.

RACIAL TROUBLE IN ARKANSAS

Racial tensions grew in the years following World War II. Demonstrations by Blacks and some whites demanded an end to Arkansas's segregation policies. Cultures are not changed overnight. The transition from a segregated society to an integrated society was very rapid, outwardly. Inwardly, the change still continues. That is, within each individual there are certain values which change very slowly. Children, both black and white, whose parents taught them to place different values according to race, tend to cling to those values even unto death.

For many years, Arkansas had a policy of "separate but equal schools." In the early 1950's, attorneys for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People argued that "separate but equal" not only did not exist, but was not adequate even if it did exist.. The attorneys contended that discrimination because of color was unconstitutional. In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Blacks. It called upon states to "speedily" desegregate.

The Ku Klux Klan enjoyed a resurgence of power during this period. Arkansas did not immediately comply with eliminating segregation. Governor Orval Faubus was pressured by segregationists to defy the court's ruling. A white citizens' council was organized to resist this rapid change of Arkansas society.

On September 2, 1957, Governor Faubus ordered the Arkansas National Guard and the State Troopers to prevent integration of Central High School in Little Rock. A rowdy crowd quickly gathered. Some feared a massive riot would take place. This gave President Eisenhower no choice but to intervene. He ordered a U. S. Army Airborne Division into Little Rock to take charge of the situation. Restoration of order did not end the crisis. Black students endured harassment and discourtesy, and racial problems still continue. It is only through Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, that racial tensions will completely end.



SIDE GLANCE

SUCCESS

Successful people are not necessarily rich. Neither are they necessarily poor. Success is determined by how much you diligently use the abilities and energies that God has given to you. Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver were two successful Black men of the 1800's. *John Johnson is a successful Black man of the late 1900's. John Johnson was born in Arkansas City in delta country. He describes his family as being "poor but happy."

John was born into a strong family and reared in a good community where every Black adult felt a responsibility to supervise and nurture every Black child. His community was one where every adult had the authority to "whip me, if I needed whipping, and to send me home for a second whipping from my mother..." Johnson's character was being trained for success. He describes his childhood as being one of "few toys, few clothes and a lot of love."

In 1942, Johnson founded his first magazine, *Negro Digest*, with \$500 he borrowed on his mother's furniture. He went on to create *Ebony* and *Jet* magazines, Fashion Fair Cosmetics, and Supreme Beauty Products. He also bought Supreme Life Insurance Company, where he had once worked as an office boy. By the 1980's, he was one of the wealthiest men in America.

Two Arkansans met at a meeting in the 1980's: John Johnson and Sam Walton (the founder of WalMart stores). These men discovered with surprise and delight that they had six things in common: They were both non-smokers, and non-drinkers; they each were born into poverty; both grew up in small, southern towns; and each one had loving parents who believed in strong discipline and frequently used the *rod.

* John H. Johnson, with Lerone Bennett, Jr., Succeeding Against the Odds (New York: Warner Books, 1989).

** Consider Proverbs 22:15 and 23:13.