Humboldt County’s Participation in World War II

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The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and the subsequent U.S. declaration of war on December 8, left the nation stunned. With the war came the recognition that life would be indelibly changed. Few could comprehend or speculate how drastically the lifestyles of the American citizenry would change. It can now be said with some assurance that no one was left unaffected by the Second World War. This paper seeks to show not only how the war affected the residents’ daily lives in and around Humboldt County, California, but how certain events in Humboldt County were relevant nationally.

The bombing of Pearl Harbor left the residents of Humboldt County, as with all communities along the California coast, in a state of shock and fear. It is of immeasurable psychological impact that the Japanese attack came as an undeclared act of aggression. The American people viewed the act as infinitely more sinister and cowardly than they might have otherwise. A nation willing to attack before declaring war would have no qualms with invading the continental United States and inflicting atrocity upon its civilian populace. Moreover, if the Japanese were able to breach the defenses at Pearl and subsequently sink six battleships and several destroyers and cruisers, smash three hundred planes and inflict casualties in excess of three thousand trained military men,¹ what was to stop them from invading the 1300 miles of virtually defenseless mainland coastline from San Diego to Seattle?

¹Brands, p. 153.
The American people's realization that the United States was vulnerable sharply contrasted a prior belief in "Fortress America." Preceding the assault on Pearl Harbor, the United States sold themselves the false belief that, surrounded by a moat of vast oceans, they were invulnerable from assault by totalitarian regimes. The smug Fortress America mentality, the belief that the United States lands were impervious to outside assault, was smashed by the Japanese offensive of December 7, 1941.

The people of Humboldt County, like many coastal communities, were compelled to mobilize to protect themselves from enemy attack. On December 12, 1941, the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors, at the request of the U.S. Office of Civil Defense, established by unanimous vote the Humboldt County Defense Council (HCDC). Under the guidelines of Humboldt County Ordinance 204, the council was made up of Sheriff A.A. Ross, District Attorney J.R. Scott, County Supervisor G.L. Cole, representatives from each of Humboldt County's incorporated cities, and Chairman Clarence E. Tabor.\(^2\) The HCDC concerned itself primarily with air raid defense, fire protection, evacuation planning and emergency medical services.

Probably because the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor by air, the HCDC made air raid defense its number one priority. By December 11, 1941, Dayton Murray, the head of the air observation section of HCDC, announced that fifty-five observation posts were being "manned" twenty-four hours a day, seven 

\(^2\) Labrie, p. 5.
days a week. HCDC equipped these observation posts to determine the approach of any airplanes, their speed, number of aircraft and direction. Telephones were installed with direct contact to the Fourth Interceptor Command in San Francisco.

In addition to the county initiatives, Arcata and Eureka also created their own defense councils which were responsible for disseminating information to residents, recruiting block captains and air wardens, and conducting civil defense and first aid workshops. The Arcata council had nineteen volunteers of its 1,900 residents, including Humboldt State College President Arthur Gist and Arcata Mayor Allen Ham.

Civil defense initiatives affected Humboldt County residents' lives at the most minute level. In homes, residents blackened windows with blackout paper and heavy drapes, dimmed lights, and stored shovels and buckets of dry sand indoors in case of bombing raids. On the road, ordinances required automobiles to use only two lights with less than 250 candlepower apiece, shielded so they were invisible from above. Hence, automobiles travelling at night used only their parking lights and travelled under the war-imposed speed limit of thirty-five miles per hour.

Though most residents were more than willing to incorporate precautions into their lives, there was also government pressure. Block captains enforced

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3Humboldt Standard, December 11, 1941.

4Arcata Union, February 20, 1942.
blackout ordinances in Arcata and Eureka and imposed stiff penalties of up to $500 fines and six months in jail on violators. Civil Defense officials swore in fire wardens. In the event of a blackout, they checked the lumber company teepee burners to ensure no light escaped and then stood by in case of incendiary bombing.⁵

Another civil defense issue of the time was enemy alien control, one of few homefront ignominies during the war. Federal mandate initially required all non-citizens of German, Japanese or Italian origin to register with their local sheriff. Subsequently, the federal government ordered these aliens to relinquish all firearms, radios and cameras.⁶ Shortly thereafter aliens' movements were restricted such that they were required to give one week's notice and a letter of intent to the U.S. Attorney General. Additionally, they were curfewed between 9:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. Finally, the aliens were prohibited in all area west of U.S. 101 from Redwood Creek to the Little River and from Mad River to the Eel River.⁷

Italians made up the bulk of the "enemy aliens" in Humboldt County. In Arcata the law restricted them from crossing west of G Street. In Eureka a predominantly Italian neighborhood was forced to move because the residents resided in the prohibited zone.

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⁵Interview with Glen Nash, March 22, 1996.

⁶Humboldt Times, December 28, 1941.

⁷Labrie, p. 20.
Whereas Americans’ concerns and fears about saboteurs among the "enemy aliens" were misplaced, their fears about possible enemy attack from the air and sea were not. The Japanese had the capability to attack the United States, and they exercised it. After attempts to locate American carriers in the vicinity of Hawaii proved fruitless, the Imperial Japanese Navy dispatched nine I-class submarines to the Pacific coast with orders to shell coastal cities and attack merchant vessels. In addition to a 45 caliber main gun and torpedoes, some of these I-class submarines carried two-man mini-submarines attached with heavy clamps.

The Japanese equipped other submarines with Yokosuka E-14Y-1 aircraft in the bow. This plane is also known as the erector set, because it could be assembled and disassembled with relative ease for stowage in the bow of the submarine. The plane, which had a range of 550 miles and could top out at 153 miles per hour, packed two 170 pound incendiary bombs and a small machine gun.

At 10:06 p.m., Wednesday, December 17, the threat of a sea attack materialized. The General Petroleum Tanker S.S. Emidio left Seattle en route to Ventura, California, with a crew of thirty-six men. The skipper, Captain James A. Farrow, expected a routine trip. And so it was for the first two days of the voyage. According to the second mate, however, at some point during

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8Webber, p. 14.
9Ibid.
the third night (Dec. 19-20) Captain Farrow received a report from the authorities that another tanker had been attacked by a Japanese submarine off the Columbia River in northern Oregon. If Farrow were given such information, he neglected to inform his officers or record the incident in the ship's log. Hence, the ship's crew believed all was well.\textsuperscript{10}

On the morning of the 20th, the crew conducted itself as usual. The weather was uncommonly mild for the season and several of the crew were performing routine maintenance, chipping and painting rusted surfaces. The officers took turns on watch that morning, beginning with John A. Stepkins (Second Mate), and followed by Joseph C. Chambers (Chief Mate), Charles A. Pollard (Third Mate), and, again, Mr. Stepkins, in that order.\textsuperscript{11}

The officers navigated the ship and tried to get a visual bearing on the Blunt's Reef Light-ship, a floating lighthouse about six miles off Cape Mendocino. Although the light-ship was not yet visible, Stepkins (by then the officer on watch) spotted a speck on the horizon to the north of where the light-ship would be. Stepkins believed the speck to be either a fishing vessel or a friendly submarine. The crew sounded no alarms as they were accustomed to seeing friendly submarines off the coast in the months preceding the outbreak of the war.

An hour and fifteen minutes later, at 1:10 p.m., Stepkins confirmed that

\textsuperscript{10}Stepkins, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{11}Log, S.S. Emidio, December 20, 1941.
the object was a submarine and reported it in the log. Captain Farrow, once notified, ordered the life-boats to be readied. He also ordered the ship change course to head in the opposite direction. Farrow believed the submarine to be unfriendly but made no attempt to send a radio message for assistance.12

In fact, the submarine was the Japanese Imperial Navy's I-17, commanded by Commander Kuzo Nishino.13 As the Emidio changed course so, too, did the I-17. The Emidio made full speed and tried in vain to outrun the I-17. When the I-17 was about 1/4 mile away from the Emidio, the Japanese stopped their engines and positioned I-17 at a right angle to the merchant vessel.

At 1:45 p.m. Kuzo's men began firing their 14 cm gun at the Emidio. The Emidio zigzagged in the water in a futile attempt to evade the sub. The I-17's first round overshot the Emidio and was immediately followed by a second shell which struck a life-boat davit, sending the boat and davit into the sea. Shrapnel from the shell shattered the windows of the chart room and pilot house and struck the radio antenna, but no crewmen were injured. Simultaneously, the radioman on board, William S. Foote, sent a call for help to the Blunts Reef Lightship.14

The radioman at the lightship lost communication with the Emidio but

12Stepkins, p. 3.
13Webber, p. 16.
14Log, S.S. Emidio, December 20, 1941.
not before realizing the Emidio's predicament. Consequently, Blunts Reef relayed the message to the Army, which sent two Air Corps bombers to render aid. The crew of the Emidio, still ignorant of the help en route, tried to surrender to the Japanese submarine by hoisting a white bedspread while simultaneously preparing to abandon ship. The Japanese responded by firing another shell at the Emidio. Suddenly, at 2:15 p.m. an American bomber arrived and the I-17 dove.  

The Emidio crew, believing they were now saved, went back to their stations. The Third Assistant to the Engineer B. Winters, Fireman Kenneth K. Kimes and an oiler were in the engine room talking about their adventure. Unbeknownst to the three men, the I-17 was still lurking and had fired a torpedo at the Emidio. The torpedo exploded against the engine room bulkhead and killed Winters and Kimes. The oiler suffered broken ribs and lacerations. The cold sea water caused the boiler to explode and the engine room filled with steam. This forced the oiler to dive beneath the water and swim through a ventilator shaft to safety.  

The crew again received orders to abandon ship at 2:45 p.m. In a freak accident one of the lifeboats' davits gave way, plunging R.W. Pennington, Stuart S. McGillivray and Frederic W. Potts into the water. These men were lost at sea and presumably drowned. The remaining thirty-one crewmen

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15Ibid.

16Firstenburg, November 17, 1984.
managed to set out in life boats for the lightship. They arrived at the lightship at 4:30 a.m. on the 21st of December, 1941. Shortly thereafter, a rescue vessel carried the crew to Eureka.

The crew went ashore the next day at the Eureka Naval Station Manila as members of the national press corps anxiously awaited the big scoop. Among the reporters was a well-known local man named Laurence W. "Scoop" Beal, who worked for the Humboldt Standard newspaper. After Beal and the other journalists interviewed and photographed the Emidio survivors, Commander Harry Shawk of the Humboldt Navy Section Base asked that no information be released until he could obtain official Navy clearance. He then allowed Beal to leave and submit his stories and photographs to the national wire services and the local paper. In this way Beal netted the biggest "scoop" of his life, as his story and photographs were published in newspapers throughout the United States.

As the Emidio floated derelict toward Crescent City, news of the submarine attack hit the streets of Eureka, causing considerable fear and outrage. The Emidio was the first vessel successfully attacked by the Japanese off the Pacific coast, but by Christmas Eve eight vessels had been attacked. The tension among local residents was unbearable. Fishing vessels were temporarily restricted from leaving their ports and civilian flights were

17Humboldt Historian, July-August 1984.

18Humboldt Standard, December 25, 1941.
grounded for the duration of the war. Humboldt County was in a state of siege and soon thereafter experienced substantial military occupation by American military personnel.

The U.S. had no intentions of being caught unprepared again as had happened at Pearl Harbor. The coastline required security. However, manpower was desperately needed elsewhere so the U.S. Navy delegated 3700 miles of coastline to the Coast Guard for patrol. In August 1942 the Coast Guard dispatched 250 men to begin beach patrols in Humboldt County, thereby establishing Company C of the Twelfth Regiment, USCG.

Company C began patrolling the beach from 6:30 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. The Coast Guard dropped the sentries off from a dump truck and charged them with patrolling the beaches on foot. If a sentry saw something unusual, he was to run to the nearest phone (no easy task in 1942) and call it in to headquarters. Their mission was to detect saboteurs, spot submarines, and report unusual incidents to higher authority. They did not have the ability to repel an invasion: In fact, due to wartime shortages Company C initially had no rifles, no radios and limited vehicles.

The Coast Guard placed fake cannon on the beach near the Samoa School. They fashioned the cannon from redwood logs draped in the back with gunny sacks. The only real cannon was a 105 mm artillery piece south of the

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19 Interview with Bill Anderson, March 21, 1996.

20 Ty Tyson video, 1996.
school. One night Samoa residents were startled awake by twelve loud explosions from the cannon. Residents were told the cannon was fired in response to a fishing boat's running lights not being extinguished.\textsuperscript{21}

Eventually, the Coast Guard appropriated horses and tack from the virtually obsolete Army Remount Service. The requisition was sent to Humboldt County's skeptical but grateful men of Company C who preferred riding to running to the nearest phone. The arrangement worked well for the coasties and they gamely endured chides of "horse marine."

Ultimately, the Coast Guard was supplied with Springfield rifles (World War I models), trucks, jeeps and troop transports. The Coastguardsmen strung phone line from the Mattole River to Trinidad to facilitate communication. Outposts were established at Samoa, Fairhaven, Clam Beach, Christiansen Ranch, Table Bluff, Davis Creek and Centerville Beach, with lookouts between Centerville and Cape Mendocino. Coasties with guard dogs manned areas with terrain inaccessible to horse patrols.\textsuperscript{22}

In addition to the Coast Guard beach patrols, the Army Air Corps equipped planes with depth charges and stationed them in the area. More interesting, however, was the Army's B-71 farmhouse two miles north of the Humboldt-Del Norte County border, at the mouth of the Klamath River. The Army built this farmhouse with gabled roofs, dormers and wood shingle over

\textsuperscript{21}McCormick, p. 70.

\textsuperscript{22}Ty Tyson video, 1996.
concrete block. From the sea or air the farmhouse station was unobtrusive and convincing. Yet it housed some forty men and advanced radar equipment and was armed with two M1 .50 caliber machineguns. Military Policemen with guard dogs controlled access to the area. The farmhouse still stands today and is in the National Register of Historic Places.

The U.S. Navy also had a significant presence in Humboldt County. The Navy established Lighter Than Air (LTA or blimp) bases at Lompoc and Moffet Field, California and Tillamook, Oregon, to patrol the coast and escort military and merchant vessels. Additionally, the Navy stationed two crews at the McKinleyville Air Station. These airmen flew aboard the Early ETA from 1942 until the end of the war.

The LTAs could travel at 100 knots per hour downwind, but in a strong headwind would make no forward progress. The "car" of the LTA measured approximately 8' x 10' and held six depth charges, two M1 .50 caliber machine guns, two thousand gallons of fuel and a crew of eight to ten airmen who would sometimes patrol for days at a time, particularly while convoying floating drydocks from Eureka to the Hawaiian Islands.

Eureka resident Simon Beattie was transferred to the Early ETA in 1943 after serving in Okinawa. While on a patrol in Trinidad Bay, Beattie and his fellow crewmen came in contact with what may have been a Japanese submarine:

"I picked up a strong mag [magnetic] contact up at Trinidad
Head and we dropped quite a few depth charges on it. One of the first things I asked for were the known whereabouts of any old shipwrecks in that area. . . first I asked for known whereabouts of any subs, if we had any of our subs in that area. They reported back negative so we went ahead and dropped our stuff on it. It never surfaced but there were people at Samoa who said that stuff had washed up there on the north jetty. After I had dropped the depth charges, I was ordered to proceed to Moffet Field and fill in on the details. 

"By the time I got back, it had died down. But the people up at Trinidad, Glen Saunders and other people who stood on the beach there and watched us, said that they could smell diesel fuel at night but they didn't know where it was coming from. Because [the submarine] would resurface at night and charge its batteries, see."

Beattie also said that on numerous occasions the Early ETA crew found footprints coming out of the sea on Trinidad Cove. Civilians were not allowed on the beach during wartime so these prints caused some concern and speculation.

For obvious reasons, blackouts in coastal areas were serious business, not only in the home but also out of doors: The Navy gave orders to LTA crews to shoot out the lights of any fishing boat or automobile not observing the blackout conditions. Because of blackout ordinances, most businesses closed at dusk.

Nevertheless, Eureka was a good town for military men on liberty. Simon Beattie and Ty Tyson both commented that it was the best. War spirit ran high in Humboldt County and the civilian population was very accommodating to men in uniform. GIs found it easy to get rides and local residents often invited

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23Sy Beattie interview, March 20, 1996.
the men to dinner in private homes.

As with most military men, Humboldt County GIs spent considerable liberty time drinking and flirting with the local women. The crew of the LTA was reprimanded by their commanding officer after Eureka High School and Humboldt State College registered complaints. At issue was the crew's "raids" on the schools. Several of the men had girlfriends attending class, and those who did not were open to starting courtships. They made low passes overhead, dragging their heavy tiedown cables on the roofs while revving the engines to impress the girls.24

As usual, there was considerable interservice rivalry among the military men in Humboldt County. Occasionally, drunken soldiers, sailors and airmen brawled with one another and with private citizens. The Orick bars were particularly rough because many of the loggers weren't as sympathetic to the would-be heroes as other townsfolk:

"It was kind of rough to get over there on weekends. Those guys would come out of the woods and then you'd really have some competition. Boy, those guys didn't care for anybody and they were looking for a good time. They would fight with cork boots on and kick you in the head and its a wonder some of the people even lived through it, really. So we would kind of stay out of town because we could compete with the Coast Guard or anybody else but we couldn't compete with cork boots to the head."25

The military presence in Humboldt County that came with World War II

24Ibid.
25Ibid.
remained for years to come. The Coast Guard remains to this day. It is likely that the strong military presence during the war was a factor in the apparent conservatism the region experienced throughout the ensuing years. In general, communities with military installations are more conservative and supportive of the federal government. Clearly, there are distinct exceptions to this in Humboldt County, particularly in Arcata and Garberville.

During the war civilians in Humboldt County became active participants in the fight to beat the Axis powers. They sacrificed many comforts in the home and workplace. Shortages and rationing demanded continued restraint of residents who had done without since 1929 as a result of the Great Depression.

Until 1942 few had money to spend, whereas, during the war money was plentiful. Total civilian income increased by 114% from 1939 to 1943, but, because of scarcity of goods, retail sales increased a mere 3.5% during the same period. Because residents had money to spend and nothing to buy, many chose to invest in war bonds, which were essential in funding the war effort. Students at Humboldt State College had several bond drives and "bought" at least two jeeps for the military. Bond drives in workplaces were common and were often publicized in local periodicals.

Laborors easily found work in Humboldt County during the war as

26California Blue Book, 1946.

27Lumberjack, June 2, 1943.
several local facilities and enterprises produced war supplies. In the workplace, employees pulled longer shifts and worked more strenuously to increase outputs and beat the Axis. Businesses that had only one skeleton crewed shift a few months prior couldn’t hire enough employees to meet production demands. Thus, the forty-eight hour week was born.

The war tied residents living in a remote and isolated part of Northern California to the rest of the nation. The area’s central economic base suddenly became important on a national scale. The timber industry provided needed wood for production of defense plants, aircraft hangers and munitions crates as best it could with manpower shortages. Nationally, the industry was half a billion board feet behind in filling orders by May 11, 1945. This was because lumbermen were typically very healthy. Ergo, the lumber industry was hard hit by the selective service.28

Other local industries contributed to the war effort as well. Arrow Mill of Eureka made wooden separators for submarine and jeep battery cells. California Barrel Company in Arcata made munitions crates. Eureka whalers comprised the only whalery in the nation, hunting scarce meat and providing fat for the production of glycerine, a chemical used in the making of black powdered explosives.29

The Chicago Bridge & Iron Company was the most visible enterprise in


29Humboldt Times, July 15, 1943.
Humboldt County during World War II. CB&I employed 3,300 people at its peak, 800 of them women. In all, about 8,000 worked for CB&I at one time or another. CB&I came to Humboldt County in 1942 because there was still a considerable wealth of two scarce and essential elements for production; labor and housing (Though the number of laborers in Humboldt County didn't explode as in other regions of California, the population did increase considerably: In 1940 the population was 45,812, compared to 51,900 in 1946 for an 11.5% increase.\textsuperscript{30}).

The CB&I yard built yard floating docks (YFDs) which were floating dry docks for use in patching up damaged ships. The original government contract called for two YFDs to be completed in eighteen months. CB&I finished the first YFD five months ahead of production schedule, which prompted the Navy to expand the contract. By the end of the war CB&I had produced six complete YFD's and fourteen sections for a total of $50 million worth of production.\textsuperscript{31}

The Navy decided to tow the first completed dock from the Humboldt Bay in inclement weather because of pressing need in the South Pacific campaign. The moorings gave and the dock drifted derelict in the bay but was retrieved undamaged. The commanders insisted on continuing and the dock ran aground and broke up at Point Bolinas, near the Golden Gate Bridge.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{30} California Blue Book, 1950.
\textsuperscript{31} Humboldt Times, December 10, 1950.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
While some businesses experienced great wartime profits, other local businesses were hard pressed by the war. The federal government shut down the sale of new automobiles in February of 1942. Two months prior they limited new tire sales to filling top defense orders. The War Board and the Office of Price Administration prohibited Harper Motors, Sacchi Motors, Isaacson Motors and all other dealerships from selling new cars to the public without prior approval. Dealers had to rely solely on used car sales and automotive maintenance for business. Harvey Harper managed to make a deal with a dealership in San Francisco that bought his inventory at a very reasonable price. Harper said his dealership had so little traffic in the showroom that he allowed the Red Cross to use part of the building as a contribution to the war effort.\textsuperscript{33}

In March 1942 the U.S. Office of Price Administration issued ration books to local residents. Sugar sales were rationed to half a pound per family member per week. Meat became scarce, as did any metal or rubber products. New clothing was severely limited, also.

Housewives saved cooking fats from which munitions makers could extract glycerine, and turned them in to the local butcher. Households conserved metal, rubber and newspapers and treated them as precious. Victory gardens sprang up to ease the incredible strain placed upon the American farmer, who grew crops not only for his own family, but also for the

\textsuperscript{33}Interview with Harvey Harper, April 18, 1996.
rest of America and all the Allies. The number of Humboldt County farms increased from 2,065 to 2,506 and their output increased from $4,185,000 in 1939 to $11,362,943 for a gain of 172%.  

In spite of the deaths of local men in combat, increased demand for productivity, longer and more strenuous work conditions, and a scarcity of many foods, including complex sugars and protein-rich meats, the death rate decreased and the birth rate increased in Humboldt County. The reasons for this phenomenon are open to speculation but one possible answer is that the war led to a deeper concern and awareness of health issues among Humboldt County residents. The newspapers emphasized practically daily the importance of all citizens' efforts to monitor their health. Without healthy citizens at home to supply the war effort, the allies would fall. Thus, many residents felt that their country urgently depended upon their good health.

Residents also experienced severe restrictions upon their leisure activities during the war. Local ordinances forbade beach access by civilians. Recreational travel by automobile was virtually impossible because of tire and gas rationing and blackout ordinances. Bowling, movie-going and drinking were viable options. Additionally, some of the women attended to military personnel at USO- and Humboldt State College-sponsored dances.

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34 California Blue Book, 1946, p. 518.


36 Interview with Glen Nash, March 21, 1996.
Humboldt State College also contended with many wartime difficulties. Since before its inception in 1913 Humboldt State Normal School administrators wrangled with state legislators to justify the expense of a school in the middle of nowhere with low enrollment.\textsuperscript{37} Before the outbreak of war the school had been renamed Humboldt State College and still had a meager student body which peaked at 481 in 1940, split evenly between men and women.\textsuperscript{38}

When the war started male students were either drafted or volunteered for military service. Some coeds followed their beaus, choosing to await their loved-ones’ return from overseas in the towns that skirted military training facilities. Others left school to earn high wages in the defense industry. By 1943 Humboldt State College enrollment dropped to a mere 176 students, with only two men left in the senior class of 1943.

Homer Balabanis was vice-president and a teacher at the time and was called to work in Washington, D.C. for the Office of Price Administration:

"As the enrollment went down, the faculty found themselves in the position with fewer and fewer students to educate. And so they began enlisting in the Army, too. So there was only a very nucleus of students and faculty that stayed behind . . . So [the school position] was from a point of view of financial difficulties, from a point of view of surviving. As

\textsuperscript{37}Davies, p. 152.

\textsuperscript{38}Coleman's Balabanis Interview, 1985.
the enrollment went down people said, 'Why maintain an institution up there?"'39

Balabanis returned to the college after the war.

All school activities in the evenings were cancelled and classes schedules were started an hour earlier to permit students time to get home before blackout.40 In January 1943, the Associated Student Body set a record of three presidents in one semester: Fred Slack took Tom Hansen's place after Hansen joined the army.41 The annual Sadie Hopkins Dance and senior ball were cancelled in 1943 because there were not enough men.42 Six hundred former Humboldt State men were in active service by this time43.

Those few who were left on campus were required to participate in the V-1 and V-5 commando courses. These courses were rigid physical fitness and training classes which ran the participants through obstacle courses and taught marksmanship, among other things. The goal of the commando courses was to prepare men for possible future military service.

President Arthur Gist corresponded with almost all Humboldt State men in the armed services. He is credited with the return of many of the veterans

39Ibid.

40Humboldt Standard, December 11, 1941, p. 11.

41Lumberjack, January 14, 1942.

42Lumberjack, June 2, 1943.

43Ibid.
and their buddies to the college after the war. Likewise, the Humboldt News Letter began publication on December 29, 1943. This publication was sent to the school's men overseas at two-week intervals for two years.

Gist is also credited with establishing the observation post on top of Founders Hall, which was later moved to the top of the co-op, the former center of campus social life. Because of the threat of Japanese attack, the community suggested that Founders Hall be camouflaged. Gist was a member of the Arcata Defense Council and concurred. He requested financial assistance from Sacramento and paint finally arrived for the job in 1944, after the threat of air invasion had virtually ceased. The building was painted olive drab and remained so until 1948 when funds were again appropriated for new paint.

Toward the end of the war, the U.S. Congress passed the G.I. Bill, making it possible for veterans to buy homes and go to college with government subsidy. This caused post-war school enrollment to rise to an unprecedented 650.\(^{44}\) The school continued to grow and, as enrollments increased to 751 in 1949, the requests to close the isolated school diminished.\(^{45}\)

In summation, the Second World War caused immeasurable change in Humboldt County. Like the United States, Humboldt County could no longer remain isolationist and provincial. Nor could residents deny their own ability to overcome tremendous hardships.

\(^{44}\)Davies, p. 151.

\(^{45}\)Tanner, p. 59.
Coastguardsman Ty Tyson summed up the era with these words:

"It was all a very nostalgic period in our lives . . . It was possibly the first time for a young person to be away from his home for a long period of time. We were meeting new challenges, meeting new people. Men and women of all ages wanted to serve in some way, whether it be in the military, the ship yards, the defense plants, helping out at the USO, most any way that you could help out during the war effort.

"It was indubitably the foremost time in our country's history that everyone pulled together for a common cause. I myself felt a little guilty sometimes knowing that some of my friends had sacrificed their lives or been wounded. I came out of it pretty scot-free. But the thing was we did what we were asked to do and we did it honorably. That's all you can ask of anyone."46

46Ty Tyson video, 1996.
Appendix

Illustrations and Photographs
Because of the threat of air attacks on Humboldt County, households were "strongly encouraged" to post Civil Defense placards in their windows. The placards indicated to air and fire wardens that the home was adequately prepared in case of incendiary bombing raids. (courtesy of Clarke Museum, Eureka)
Not only the government but the community expected everyone to do their part for the war effort. This pamphlet informed civilians about such things as saving animal fats, paper, rubber and metal and conserving human and natural resources in order to defeat the enemy.
This checklist was used by air, fire and block wardens. Many residents expressed feeling they were under siege (courtesy of the Clarke Museum)
Initially, training for wardens was limited. Gradually, Civil Defense personnel cross-trained one another. Washington sent pamphlets and guidelines, and regional leaders were assigned Civil Defense posts. (pamphlets courtesy of Clarke Museum, Eureka)
Flash cards such as these were used to train Humboldt County spotters, air wardens and other civil defense personnel on the various types of aircraft, both friend and foe. Contrary to current popular belief, the North Coast was rightfully cautious with regard to enemy aircraft. The Japanese B-1 submarines which operated off the Humboldt coastline were equipped with the GLEN-type aircraft. This two-man airplane was launched from the bow of the sub and was equipped with a small machine gun and could carry two 170-pound bombs. It was similar in appearance to the craft in the top-left corner. The GLEN, however, had floats instead of wheels for landing gear.
The General Petroleum Tanker Emidio was attacked off the Cape Mendocino coast, the first ship to be torpedoed by the Japanese on the Pacific Coast. Five of her crew were killed. Here, she sits aground in the harbor of Crescent City. (photo courtesy of Humboldt State University Library archives)
This is an LTA on escort duty with Navy ships. The LTAs were ever watchful for enemy submarines. (courtesy of Sy Beattie)
Eureka resident Sy Beattie reacquaints himself in this LTA during a reunion in Florida. He was a crewman on the LTA "Early ETA," which flew out of what is now the Arcata Airport. Beattie was transferred to the North Coast after less appealing duty in the Pacific theater. Here, while on liberty, he met his future wife in a bowling alley. Beattie is one of the many veterans who relocated here after the war. (photo courtesy of Sy Beattie)
This is Trinidad Head. The Dark X marks the spot where Sy Beattie and his fellow crewmen dropped depth charges on a suspected Japanese enemy submarine. (photo courtesy of Sy Beattie)
Crew of the LTA, Minnie the Miner, ca. 1943. (Courtesy of Sy Beattie)
A Battleship in a ten-section (ABBD)

Floating drydocks such as this one were built at Chicago Bridge and Iron Company (CB&I) in Eureka. The docks were used to repair naval vessels damaged in Pacific battles.

Early ETA crew at the Air Station in McKinleyville, ca. 1943. The airship is partially visible in the left background. (courtesy of Sy Beattie)
A Navy Airman from the McKinleyville Air Station poses in front of the Eureka USO. By all accounts Humboldt County residents were very accommodating to the military men stationed here.
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