

Nicest Thing Anyone Has Done for Me

Fire!

I WAS ASLEEP on the downstairs sofa, in March of 1943, recovering from strep throat, when I awoke to crackling sounds and a bright glow in the room.

There was a fire behind the heater!

Screaming “Fire! Fire!” and wrapped in a quilt, I ran to my parents’ bedroom only to find it empty. I next woke my two sisters, Vivian, 14, and Adele, 8, and we all ran to the front door and struggled before getting it open.

We rushed into the cold March air in Longview, Washington, clad only in our pajamas, barefoot and dragging the quilt I had with me. We headed for our neighbors’ farm down the road.

We didn’t know at the time that our parents were in the barn attending a newborn calf. By the time they saw the fire, it was already burning through the windows, and they feared we were trapped.

Adele saw them and rushed back to tell them we were safe.

It was very early the next morning, Sunday, when we arrived at my grandfather’s large farmhouse.

It was the worst of times, as our country was struggling with rationing, plus the use of shoe stamps.

What were we to wear to school Monday?

Sunday afternoon, a miracle happened. The Salvation Army arrived with an assortment of coats, dresses and shoes for all of us, all in the right sizes.

Over the years, my father frequently mentioned how grateful we were to The Salvation Army when its people helped us in a time of need and asked nothing in return.

To this day, I'm grateful and donate all I can.

And I still have that quilt. It was made by my grandmother in the 1890s.
—Dorothy Brown, San Diego, California

Stamp of Approval

IN THE FALL and early winter of 1943, I was a young sailor assigned to the Navy radio/signal school at The University of Chicago, barracked at Burton-Judson Court.

On evenings when I was off duty, I'd take a streetcar west on 63rd Street to go roller-skating at a rink that, I believe, was on Halsted Street. I'd rent a pair of clamp-on skates and go round and round.

A real cute girl and I started to team up at the times that the floor was reserved for pairs, and we began to get fairly good.

Every so often, she'd tell me that I should buy a pair of shoe skates, and I always told her that I didn't have any shoe stamps that wartime rationing required.

One evening, we met at the rink as usual, and she took me to the rental room and told me to try on a pair of shoe skates. I thought this was ridiculous, but I did as she asked.

She handed the attendant a shoe stamp and I paid for the skates, and off we went onto the skating floor. The new skates definitely improved my skating techniques.

When I graduated from radio school, I was sent to Little Creek, Virginia, then the Pacific Theater.

I never saw or heard from the young lady again, but I have always remembered the kindness of a young girl to a sailor.

—Arthur Robinson, Sun City, Arizona