



historically speaking

THE WAY IT WAS

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Welcome to Summer!

Our guest speaker for the June meeting was Mark Battel of Battel's Sugar Bush Pure Maple Syrup. Mark began by telling the history of his family. Family members have been producing maple syrup since 1882. He explained how the business progressed through the years. Mark and his wife, Diane, are the fourth generation to continue producing the maple syrup. Battel also explained how his family is involved including his son Bob and his wife, Sue.

The maple syrup season begins in early Spring running from the first of March to the first of April. 450 trees are tapped and about 150 to 160 gallons of syrup is processed in a season.

Battel's Sugar Bush is located east and north of Cass City on Daus road. Syrup is sold from the home during the season and an open house is held the third Saturday in March when the public can purchase maple syrup products.

The Sugar Bush has welcomed field trips for schools, cub scouts, and 4H groups. Thank you Mark.

We all enjoyed our annual strawberry and ice cream social. A big thank you to those that provided the delicious food.

I Remember When (WWII Years)

I remember when there were air plane spotters during daylight hours in an observation cupola over Wood's Drug Store (the cupola since been removed). I assumed they were looking for enemy planes, but today's knowledge would tell you any enemy plane reaching Cass City at that time was impossible. The spotter assignments were organized by the churches and consisted mostly of women during working hours. Many of the men had been drafted or had work schedules. I remember as a lad being up there one time to help my aunt, Pauline MacArthur, look for planes. I don't remember what we would do if we saw one.



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I also remember that we had black-outs on certain nights when all lights in town were to be turned off so the town

couldn't be seen from the air if enemy planes came during the night. This was even more of an impossibility than being bombed during the daytime. Maybe it just made people feel that they were being a part of the war effort.

I don't know if Cass City was different from other towns except that maybe there was concern for the protection our major industry—the Nestles Milk Plant. Condensing and canning milk was a convenient way to preserve, stock pile and transport it in the days before refrigeration and other processes.



I remember when many of the consumer goods were rationed by the government, and rationing stamps were issued to limit, but fairly

permit the people to purchase their needed goods—especially those goods also needed to support the troops. Despite this cooperative effort to distribute limited resources to where they were needed most, there were many cases where people would hoard sugar, flour and other commodities for fear that they wouldn't have enough for themselves. I also remember that some of the war time goods (such as candy bars) lacked the better ingredients to make them taste as good as before.

I remember when oleo was introduced and it was white in color because the dairy industry complained if it was colored the same as butter. The solution was to have oleo come in sealed plastic bags with a capsule of coloring attached inside. The consumer would then have to pop open the capsule and knead it into the oleo by squeezing the bag until the whole bag was evenly colored yellow. It was funny how the yellow oleo tasted so much better than the white.

I remember when we could get into the Saturday movie matinees free by bringing some sort of scrap for the war effort such as something made of iron to the theatre. The movies were all in black and white including a short newsreel, "The Eyes and Ears of the World", which usually included news of the war. They also always showed one or two cartoons such as Popeye or Loony Tunes. The main feature was often a western with Johnny Mac Brown or Hopalong Cassidy. You might often



see the cowboys chasing Indians around the same bend or clump of trees several times, or you might even see an Indian wearing a wrist watch.

I remember some of the war time music such as "The Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy of Company B" and "When Johnny Comes Marching Home Again" (actually a Civil War Song), and "Over There" (Over there, Over there, Send the word, Send the word over there. The Yanks are coming, The Yanks are coming, and they won't be back until it's over over there"). These songs and others were heard often on the radio, the main source of news and entertainment. In the morning before school we would listen to "Happy Hank" and after school "The Lone Ranger" and "Jack Armstrong". At night we would listen to "Fibber McGee and Molly" or turn off the lights and listen (behind the squeaking door) to "*Inner Sanctum*".



I remember when the patriotic thing to do with any money that you could afford was to buy savings bonds to support our troops. They were also probably the safest and best investment for the average person to save for the future at that time. Uncle Sam posters were displayed pointing personally and directly at you. The same picture was used to support the draft saying "Uncle Sam Want's You!" Most all able bodied men of an age category who weren't occupied in strategic jobs were drafted into the service.



I remember the importance of the radio and newspapers for news of the war. Most every home in town received at least one newspaper—The Bay City Times, The Saginaw News, The Port Huron Times Herald, The Detroit News or the Detroit Free Press. Jobs pedaling these papers made important work for many of us boys in town. There was no instant 24 hour news and television like there is today. The magazines Life and The Saturday Evening Post were also important sources of information. People would be awaiting every day to hear the six o'clock news on the radio which might last 15 to 30 minutes.



I remember when the declarations came down that the war had ended—VE Day (Victory in Europe—May 8, 1945), and VJ Day (Victory in Japan August 5, 1945). All the church bells were ringing and people came out and fired their shot guns into the air, and lit fire crackers if they had any. Those were days of celebration with the expectation of the return home of many husbands, fathers and sons, and in some cases wives, mothers and daughters, but there was also the loss of those who did not return. Being only a young lad at the time it is hard to know the real significance and trials of that time like my parents and other adults endured. It is appropriate that we continue to remember those trials and especially remember those who fought the war on our behalf as we just did on Memorial Day.

