

*Jr. Hi School*

*Air 4/6/12*

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment,

After leaving elementary school in Nineteen Thirty Nine, I entered Eureka Junior High School, located in what now is the main building of the Eureka Senior High School. It was quite exciting to be able to move from classroom to classroom at the end of each school period. That was quite a difference from sitting in one classroom all day with the same teacher. The first two years were interesting but uneventful until Sunday, December Seventh, Nineteen Forty One. I was home, out in the back yard, probably splitting firewood, when my sister appeared on the back porch and gave me the news of the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Although aware of the War in Europe, as a fourteen year old, I did not know of the impending threats to our country so I, among others was not ready for such bad news. The following Monday, the student body was called to a school assembly in the auditorium, where we listened to President Roosevelt's national broadcast declaring war with Japan. I can still remember where I was sitting during that speech so many years ago. From that day on, everything changed both at school and at home. We now had blackouts and brownouts, food and gas rationing, air raid wardens and air raid drills. At school, we had air raid drills and were instructed in how to approach and extinguish fires from incendiary bombs. We learned of the very high temperatures generated when magnesium burns and to never try to douse a magnesium fire with water. There were buckets of sand, along with shovels, located in the school hallways for that purpose. I volunteered as an Air Raid messenger. During city air raid drills, I would report, with my bicycle to Air Raid headquarters and wait for instructions. I remember this one night, I was standing by and was instructed to take a written message to Firehouse Number Five, located on the corner of Sonoma and California Streets next to my old alma mater, the Washington Elementary School which had been turned into a military post with a lookout on the roof with views of Humboldt Bay and the sea coast.. Supposedly communications were out. I jumped on my bike and rode hard. With a blackout in place, not a light was to be seen. I arrived completely out of breath and handed the message to the man in charge. The message contained instructions for the fire company to respond to a make believe structure fire located in the vicinity of Utah and McCullens Avenue. The man in charge read the message to the assembled fire fighters. Someone said "Where in the hell is that?" Nobody knew how to get to the location so they sent me back to headquarters with a note to that effect. So much for that response! Those were exciting and scary times for a schoolboy.

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