

Born In 1944

by Lynne Belluscio

I guess I can't deny that I was born in 1944, since Virginia Kropf made mention of my age about 10 times in the recent article in *The Batavia Daily*. I'm not sure if turning 70 means anything. I know at Rotary, it will cost me \$7 and I will have the pleasure of hearing "Home, Home on the Range," (instead of Happy Birthday) sung off key.

Getting beyond my birthday is like pulling the band-aide off. I'm not sure if "celebrating" is quite the right word. Others turning 70 this year are George Lucas, Danny DeVito, Michael Douglas, Gladys Knight, Diana Ross and Sam Elliott. (I'd be willing to celebrate with Sam Elliott.)

Popular songs in 1944 included "Don't Fence Me In" and "Straighten Up and Fly Right" both of which I adhere to. There were many songs written in 1944, "New York, New York," "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas," "Act-cent-u ate The Positive," "Sentimental Journey", and "All of a Sudden, My Heart Sings." Aaron Copeland wrote "Appalachian Spring" in 1944.

"The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet" debuted on radio. Tennessee Williams' play, "The Glass Menagerie" debuted in Chicago and "I Remember Mama" premiered in New York City. Movies included "Arsenic and Old Lace," "Going My Way," "Meet Me in St Louis," and "National Velvet." (not that I was old enough to see them).

World War II was still raging in Europe and the Pacific. General Eisenhower commanded the invasion of Europe on D-Day in June. In September, the Battle of Arnhem took place (recorded in the movie ("The Bridge Too Far") I visited Arnhem a few years ago during a museum conference. In December, the Battle of the Bulge raged. I remember talking with Ange Bell about his experiences during that battle. The Germans began gassing people at Auschwitz. In 1944, Ann Frank and her family were arrested and sent to a concentration camp. Paris was liberated in August.

The first open heart surgery was performed at John Hopkins

University in 1944 as well as the first "blue baby" surgery. Penicillin became the medical wonder of the year against infections. The first eye bank was opened. IBM presented its first large-scale computer, known as the Mark I to Harvard University. It was more than 50 feet long, eight feet high and weighed 5 tons.

Using electromechanical relays, it could add, multiply and divide.

President Roosevelt announced his plans to run for a fourth term and in November, he handily beat New York State Republican Governor, Thomas Dewey, who had run on a platform to repeal Roosevelt's "New Deal." New York State experienced a major 5.8, earthquake in September 1944, centered in Messena, near the Canadian border. According to the *LeRoy Gazette*, folks in LeRoy felt the earthquake. In September a major hurricane came up the east coast doing major damage and killing 360 people. It became known as the "Great Atlantic Hurricane." The Green Bay Packers won the NFL championship, and the St. Louis Cardinals won the World Series. (I have always been a Cardinal's fan.)

Meanwhile in LeRoy the LeRoy Village Board began discussion about a police retirement fund and a Teen Canteen. The basketball team was undefeated. The Olmsted family offered to donate their home and property on East Main Street for a park, but the offer was declined. Parents were protesting the hard, cold cement floor in the kindergarten room at school, saying it was not healthy for the little kids to sit or play on the floor. The Bette Shop opened at 28 Main Street and the Wiss Hotel was leased to Margaret Waterstreet.

Crops were threatened by a hard dry summer and drought. And in the history repeats itself category: the Village was trying to figure out what the State Department of Transportation was



going to do with Routes 5 and 19. Apparently the State was supposed to assume maintenance and control of Routes 5 and 19, but they would not say what that involved. The topic for the graduation address was "Juvenile Delinquency" which might indicate what was on a lot of people's mind in LeRoy. The School Budget for 1944 was \$138,932. Students were asked to pick milkweed pods that could be used for stuffing in life preservers.

The Village had undertaken a sewage system survey and was concerned that the winter sidewalk snow plowing outlook was not good -- In December, LeRoy

had a one-day 2-foot snow fall. There were a number of fires in 1944, including the destruction of the North East Laundry building on West Main. People living on Lake Street protested the noise from the new playground near St. Joseph's Church. The noise was so loud it kept people up at night and disturbed the serenity of their neighborhood. It was suggested to move the playground to Mill Street.

Of course, having been born in 1944, I don't remember any of this. I believe in the old adage "The past is a guidepost, not a hitching post."

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