

# Chapter 15

## Wars and Baby Boomers

### Chapter Preview

#### TERMS

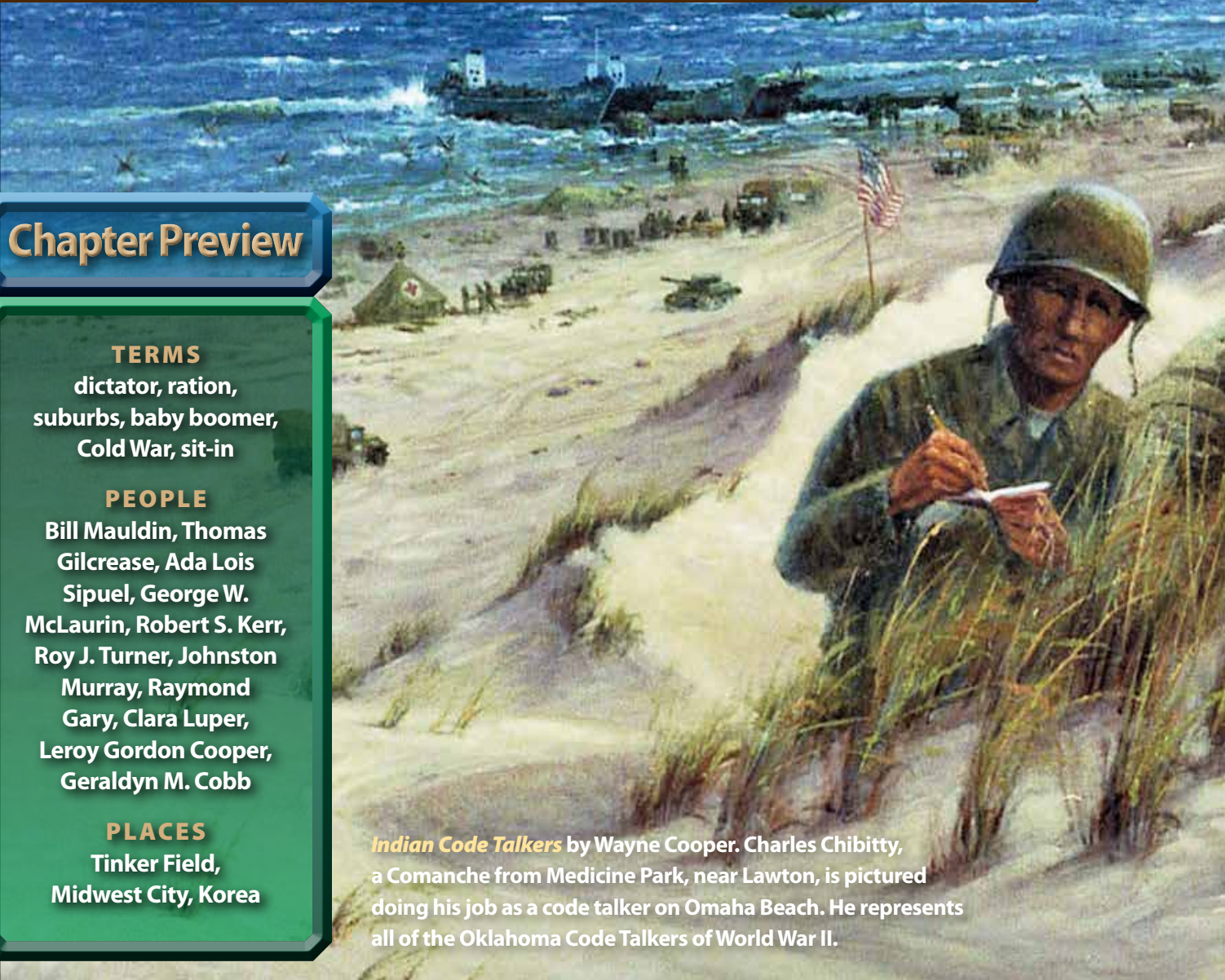
dictator, ration, suburbs, baby boomer, Cold War, sit-in

#### PEOPLE

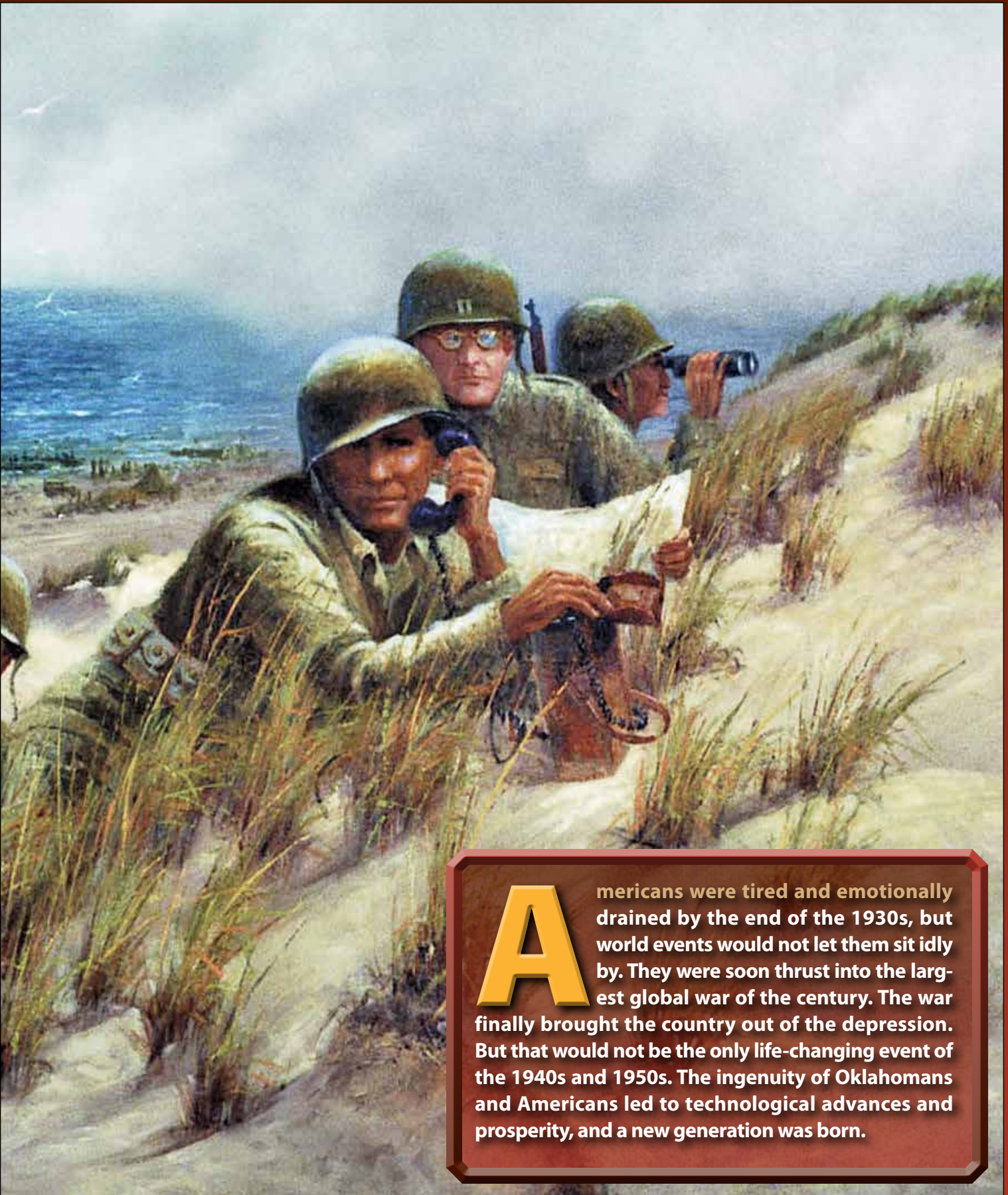
Bill Mauldin, Thomas Gilcrease, Ada Lois Sipuel, George W. McLaurin, Robert S. Kerr, Roy J. Turner, Johnston Murray, Raymond Gary, Clara Luper, Leroy Gordon Cooper, Geraldyn M. Cobb

#### PLACES

Tinker Field, Midwest City, Korea



*Indian Code Talkers* by Wayne Cooper. Charles Chibitty, a Comanche from Medicine Park, near Lawton, is pictured doing his job as a code talker on Omaha Beach. He represents all of the Oklahoma Code Talkers of World War II.



**A**mericans were tired and emotionally drained by the end of the 1930s, but world events would not let them sit idly by. They were soon thrust into the largest global war of the century. The war finally brought the country out of the depression. But that would not be the only life-changing event of the 1940s and 1950s. The ingenuity of Oklahomans and Americans led to technological advances and prosperity, and a new generation was born.

# Signs of the Times

## POPULATION

The world population in 1950 was 2,556,517,137. The U.S. population was 151,325,798. Sixty-four percent of the U.S. population was urban, and 36 percent was rural.

## HOW PEOPLE LIVED

Families worked and played together at parks and lakes and family-themed entertainment areas like the new Disneyland. The highway system was expanded and improved to move people around more quickly. Men wore gray flannel suits, women wore dresses with fitted waists, and kids dressed in blue jeans, poodle skirts, and saddle shoes.

## TELEVISION

Only five thousand black-and-white TVs were in American homes at the end of World War II; by 1951, that number had risen to 17 million. Some early programs included *Original Amateur Hour*, *Texaco Theater*, *Kukla, Fran & Ollie*, and *The Howdy Doody Show*.

## THEATER, FILM

The disillusionment of the war years was evident in Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie* (1945) and *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947). Walt Disney provided animated features such as *Dumbo* (1941) and *Bambi* (1942). Disney also produced cartoons for the government: *Donald Gets Drafted*, *Out of the Frying Pan into the Firing Line*, and *Der Fuehrer's Face*.

## ENTERTAINMENT

Richard Fenton Outcalt's "The Yellow Kid" is credited with being the first comic book in 1896. Some four hundred superheroes based on the Superman model were born in the 1930s and 1940s. The magazine format of the comic book was created in the 1940s.

## FOOD

New foods and recipes of the period included M&M's, Cheerios, smoothies, ranch dressing, Jolly Ranchers, California onion dip, Chex mix, Rice Krispies treats, and marshmallow Peeps.

## Figure 16 Timeline: 1940–1960



<p><b>1942</b> Tinker Field opened; German POWs arrived at Alva</p>	<p><b>1943</b> Boise City accidentally bombed</p>	<p><b>1948</b> <i>Sipuel</i> Supreme Court decision</p>	<p><b>1949</b> WKY-TV and KOTV began broadcasting; Gilcrease Museum opened</p>	<p><b>1950</b> <i>McLaurin</i> Supreme Court decision Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation founded</p>	<p><b>1953</b> Turner Turnpike opened</p>	<p><b>1955</b> Cowboy Hall of Fame established</p>	<p><b>1958</b> Clara Luper led sit-in at Katz Drug Store in Oklahoma City</p>
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1940

1945

1950

1955

1960

**1939**  
World War II started in Europe

**1941**  
Japan attacked Pearl Harbor;  
United States entered World War II

**1945**  
World War II ended

**1950**  
North Korea invaded South  
Korea; Korean War began

**1953**  
Korean War ended  
with ceasefire

**1957**  
USSR launched  
*Sputnik I*

# Section 1

## World War II

### As you read, look for

- the events that led to World War II,
- the contributions made by Oklahomans to the war effort, and
- vocabulary terms **dictator** and **ration**.



**Benito Mussolini was the first fascist dictator in Europe, taking control of the government of Italy in 1922.**

**Articles in Oklahoma newspapers in the late 1930s** and early 1940s were not only about dust storms and the economy. Headlines increasingly featured turbulent international events. The relatively small countries of Japan, Germany, and Italy, each led by a **dictator** (a ruler with complete control), believed the best way to get out of the Great Depression was to expand their borders and gain new resources. The dictators skillfully convinced their citizens that the best defense against communism was to make their countries larger.

### Tensions Increase in Asia and Europe

Japan was an island nation that lacked the basic raw materials it needed to become a world power. It looked outward for those raw materials. In 1931, Japan invaded Manchuria, a province of China, an act that was protested by the United States and some European countries. Ignoring the protest, Japan continued its invasion toward the central provinces of China.

Adolf Hitler and his Nazi Party gained control of Germany in 1933. Hitler's plan included making Germany strong again by freeing the country of "undesirables," regaining lost territory, and conquering new territory. Hitler blamed most of Germany's problems on the Jewish people, and he began the atrocious (extremely evil), systematic act against humanity of exterminating millions of Jews and others. Surrounded by weaker countries, Hitler invaded Rhineland (the buffer zone between Germany and France) in 1936 and moved into Austria in 1938.



Under Benito Mussolini, Italy also saw 1936 as the time to make its move for new territory by invading Ethiopia, an independent country in northeast Africa. Soon after 1936, Germany and Italy formed an alliance to support right-wing (conservative) Spanish General Francisco Franco in his revolt against the politically left-wing republican Spain. The Spanish Civil War was a testing ground for Germany's and Italy's weapons and tactics.

Hitler and the Soviet Union made a secret pact in which they agreed to not attack each other. A week later, September 1, 1939, German troops invaded Poland. Germany ignored Great Britain's demand to stop that invasion. Country by country, Germany and Italy continued occupying nations. Great Britain and France fought to halt the aggression, but on June 14, 1940, Germany captured Paris, and France was split into two zones. German air raids on Great Britain began on August 8, 1940, but the Royal Air Force fought back and on September 17, Hitler postponed the invasion of Great Britain.

### War Engulfs the United States

The United States was still smarting from being stuck with a big part of the expense of World War I, and it was only beginning to see hope after the Great Depression. Most Americans wanted no part of

**Adolf Hitler came to power talking of German superiority and a return to strong family values and morality. In a quest for power, he tried to unite all Germanic people. His invasion of neighboring countries led to World War II.**

**Taken by a Japanese pilot, the upper photo shows Battleship Row in the distance as his plane makes its approach. The explosion in the center is a torpedo striking the USS *Oklahoma*. In the lower photo, the USS *Arizona* burns after the attack. The *Arizona* lost the most men with 1,177 killed. The *Oklahoma* was second, with 429 dead.**

the trouble brewing overseas, and Congress passed several neutrality laws in the mid-1930s. President Roosevelt watched with alarm as the aggressors continued taking over countries, and he realized that U.S. involvement was inevitable. Congress removed the ban on arms shipments overseas in September 1939, and the United States began rebuilding its army and navy. The first peacetime military draft was initiated in September 1940.

Germany took on another mighty foe when it ignored the earlier agreement and targeted the Soviet Union in June 1941. Hitler's troops were finally turned back December 5, 1941, just outside of Moscow. The United States sent weapons and supplies to both Great Britain and the Soviet Union in an effort to halt Germany. In September, merchant ships with war supplies were escorted by American ships to Great Britain; in October, a German submarine sank the *Reuben James*, an American ship.

To try to slow Japan's aggressions, the United States reduced its oil exports, but the effort failed. Japan joined Germany and Italy as the *Axis Powers*. Negotiations between the United States and Japan halted. Japan's new premier General Hideki Tojo believed that no nation could stop Japan's rise to power.



Shortly after dawn on December 7, 1941, over 180 Japanese planes attacked the U.S. naval base in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The surprise attack destroyed 12 American warships and 188 aircraft, killed 2,403 American servicemen and 68 civilians, and wounded 1,200. Hit by four torpedoes, the USS *Oklahoma* was one of the first battleships sunk, and 429 men onboard were killed.

A stunned nation heard a saddened, but determined President Roosevelt call December 7 “a date which will live in infamy.” On December 8, 1941, the United States declared war against Japan. Three days later, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States. The United States joined the *Allied Powers* of the United Kingdom, France, Poland, Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands, the Soviet Union, China, and Brazil.

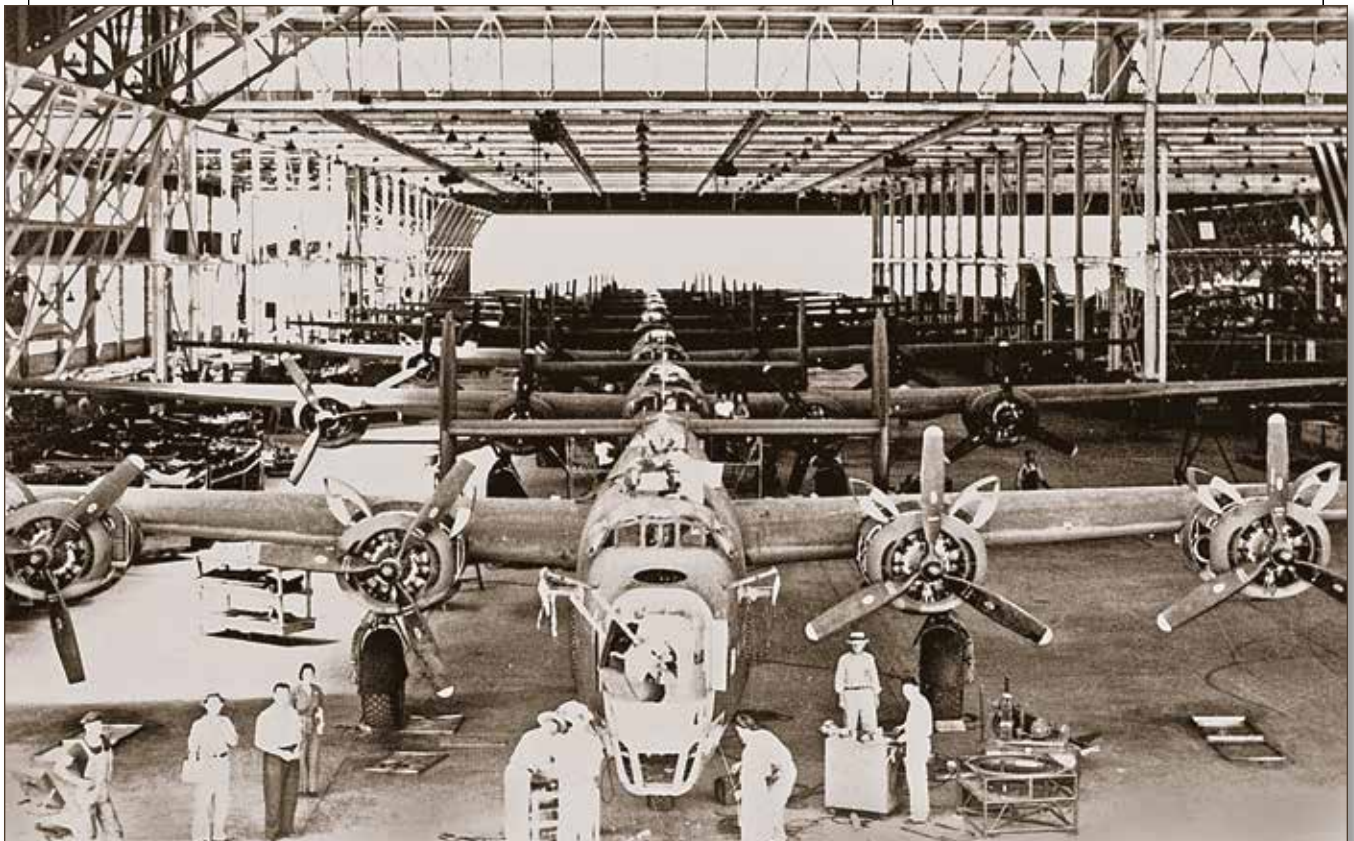
### A Nation Mobilizes

Although Americans were split in their views of the war, efforts across the country had geared up for possible war. In 1940, the War Department began looking for sites for arms and ammunition plants, defense plants, military training centers, and supply and maintenance depots. The central part of the country was found to be especially suitable, and Oklahoma’s location, climate, and workforce were seen as ideal. On April 8, 1941, Oklahoma City had received a contract for a supply and maintenance depot, and Tinker Field was opened in 1942. The depot

## Something Extra!

The first casualty list released by the War Department after the bombing of Pearl Harbor included the name of Robert H. Markley of Nardin, Oklahoma. Markley was a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army Air Corps.

**Tinker Air Force Base** opened near Oklahoma City and served as the largest air materiel depot in the world. Bombers were also repaired at Tinker.





## Something Extra!

The Enid facility was renamed Enid Air Force Base in 1948. In 1949, it was renamed Vance Air Force Base for local World War II hero Lieutenant Colonel Leon Robert Vance Jr.

**African American soldiers of the 349th Field Artillery Regiment straddle the barrel and carriage of a large artillery piece at Fort Sill in the early 1940s.**

was named after Clarence Leonard Tinker, the first American Indian in the U.S. Army to reach the rank of major general. Douglas Aircraft built military airplanes at both its Tinker and Tulsa plants. Midwest City, founded by W. P. Atkinson, was developed to provide a complete community for the people stationed at Tinker.

### Oklahoma Military Facilities

In addition to Tinker Field, more than eighty military facilities were built or approved in Oklahoma between 1941 and 1943. An infantry training center, later named Camp Gruber, was built in the Cookson Hills of eastern Oklahoma near Braggs. The nearby Hatbox Field defense facility at Muskogee was used to move troops in and out by air. Almost forty-five thousand troops were trained at Camp Gruber, which employed four thousand civilians. Enid leased land to the government in 1941 for \$1 a year for a pilot training field that was known as the Air Corps Basic Flying School.

The Army Air Corps took control of Will Rogers Field in Oklahoma City in 1941. The Army Air Corps' Frederick Field, the Clinton Naval Air Station at Burns Flat, and Altus Army Air Field were all established in 1942. Okmulgee, Vinita, and Stillwater were locations of glider schools.

Navy facilities located at Norman included an air station, hospital, and training schools. Electricity, radio, and Oriental language training schools were held at Stillwater, and an air gunners' school was located at Purcell. Other naval facilities were at Durant, Shawnee, and McAlester, and a large ammunitions depot was built at McAlester in 1943.



Oklahoma and several other states hosted British flying schools. The contract flying schools were located at Miami, Ponca City, and Tulsa. Fifteen Royal Air Force students died while training at the Miami school, and one flyer was killed training at Tulsa.

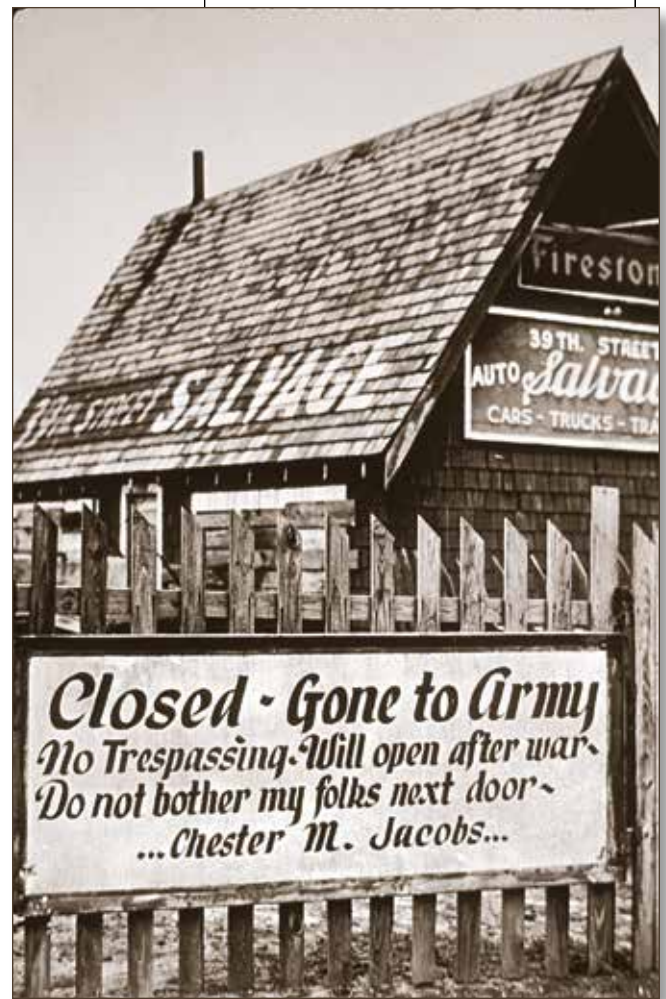
Boise City in the Panhandle was bombed by accident during the war. A training flight crew based at Dalhart Army Base in Texas mistook streetlights around the courthouse in Boise City for their target, which was actually fifty miles further south. Six practice bombs were dropped on the sleeping town at 12:30 a.m., July 5, 1943. Luckily, no one was injured.

### Oklahomans in the War

“Closed—Gone to Army, No Trespassing—Will open after war.” Almost 200,000 Oklahomans enlisted in the armed forces, and another 300,000 were drafted. Nationwide, 16,112,566 Americans served in the Army, Navy, Marines, and Coast Guard. Thousands of women volunteered for the Army and Navy Nurse Corps, Women’s Army Corps (WAC), the Navy’s Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES), the Marine Corps Women’s Reserve, the U.S. Coast Guard Women’s Reserve (SPARS), Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP), Red Cross, United Service Organizations (USO), and Civil Air Patrol.

Oklahomans served in all branches of the military, and most served with people from all parts of the country. Some units were more regional, such as the 45th Infantry Division of the National Guard. The division was formed soon after World War I with men from Oklahoma, Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona. It was one of the first four National Guard divisions called to duty in World War II. Called “the Thunderbirds,” the division saw heavy fighting in Europe, and over twenty thousand men in the 45th lost their lives. Some troops from the 157th Infantry Regiment of the 45th helped liberate the Dachau concentration camp in Germany. Eight members of the Thunderbirds received the nation’s highest honor for bravery, the Medal of Honor. General George S. Patton called the 45th “one of the best, if not the best, division in the history of American arms.”

Bill Mauldin of New Mexico joined the Thunderbirds in 1940, and he soon became the cartoonist for the *45th Division News*. Mauldin created two average soldiers who appeared in his “Willie and Joe” cartoons. The cartoons provided brief moments of humor amidst the grim realities of war. Mauldin became a cartoonist for *Stars and Stripes* in 1944; in 1945, he won the Pulitzer Prize for his wartime cartoons.



**This sign on the fence of an Oklahoma City business indicates the willingness of all Americans to go to war to protect freedom.**

## Something Extra!

When referring to Adolf Hitler, Comanche Indian Code Talkers used the code phrase *posah-tai-vo*, which meant “crazy white man.” The Indians did not have a word for “bomber,” so to refer to a bomber airplane they used the phrase for pregnant airplane.

Many Oklahomans were a part of the 90th Infantry Division, which was activated in 1917 primarily with Texas and Oklahoma soldiers. The division’s first insignia was “T-O,” representing Texas and Oklahoma. As soldiers from other states joined, the patch’s meaning was changed to “Tough ‘Ombres.” The 90th was involved in several major campaigns, including the landing on Utah Beach at Normandy and the Battle of the Bulge. Monuments at Lake Texoma honoring the soldiers of the 90th who had died in battle were moved in 2001 to Camp Travis near San Antonio, Texas, where the division was formed.

### World War II Code Talkers

The success of the Native American code talkers in World War I led to their use in World War II. Different groups of Indians were used in both major theaters (areas) of the war. Members of the Navajo tribe used their native language in the Pacific Theater for the Army and Marines. Comanche Indians assigned to the 4th Signal Company of the Army’s 4th Infantry Division in the European Theater used their unwritten language for transmitting and receiving messages. Both languages baffled the enemy, and the codes remained unbroken.

Members of several other Native American tribes were also code talkers. They included Cherokee, Choctaw, Cheyenne, Muscogee Creek, Kiowa, Osage, Pawnee, Seminole, Sac and Fox, Sioux, Mohawk, Chippewa, Oneida, Menominee, and Hopi.

### Oklahoma Camps

The surprise attack by Japan caused an immediate concern and fear of Americans who were of Japanese, German, or Italian descent. Many Japanese Americans, especially on the West Coast, were quickly rounded up and moved to “relocation centers” for the duration of the war. Three relocation centers were located in Oklahoma—at Fort Sill, McAlester, and Stringtown.

Many of the Allies’ prisoners of war were shipped to American POW camps, over thirty of which were located in Oklahoma. One of the larger camps was at Alva. The first German POWs arrived in July 1942 by truck; later groups came by train. By February 1945, there were almost five thousand men confined at Alva. Only one prisoner was shot and killed while trying to escape from the Alva camp. The Post Cemetery at Fort Reno contains the graves of sixty-six German and Italian POWs who died while in camp and two Germans who died in an Oklahoma alien internment camp. After the war, the remaining POWs were shipped home.



**Those at home were encouraged to buy war bonds to finance the war efforts. This war bond drive took place in Tulsa.**

## The Homefront

To keep the homefront strong, Americans who weren't in the military filled the work positions of those who went overseas. Women went to work in the factories and plants, and they came to be called "Rosies" for Rosie the Riveter, the character in a famous World War II poster. (A *rivet* is a metal bolt or pin.) Farmers and ranchers who had survived the drought were called on to produce more livestock and crops. Families once again planted "victory gardens" to raise their own vegetables. Food, clothing, petroleum, and other items were **rationed**, that is, the supply of certain items was limited. People needed ration stamps to purchase the items. Schools and organizations held drives to collect everything from scrap metal to gum wrappers to money. Patriotic posters to buy savings bonds and promote the war effort were everywhere, and newsreels brought pictures of the battles to local theater screens.

## The War Ends

On June 6, 1944 (D-Day), the Allies began a massive, bloody counterattack on the Axis Powers on the beaches of Normandy, France. Twelve nations supplied almost three million troops in the campaign that lasted over two months and ended with the liberation of Paris on August 25. The Allied march across Europe ended with the fall of Berlin in April 1945. Hitler committed suicide on April 30, 1945, and Germany's surrender was accepted on May 8 (V-E Day).



**Above:** Posters urged women to join the war effort. **Below:** Some 4,000 ships, 11,000 planes, and 176,000 soldiers took part in the D-Day invasion of the Normandy beaches in an action called Operation Overlord.



**Right:** A U.S. navy corpsman helps a wounded Marine on Guam. Japan captured Guam in 1942; the Allies were not able to retake the island until 1944.

**Below:** In August 1945, the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were destroyed by atomic bombs in an attempt by the United States to end the war quickly.



The war in the Pacific Theater was equally brutal. Troops battled for islands as the Allies methodically worked their way across the Pacific Ocean toward the Japanese mainland. At the same time, some of America's top scientists were working on the secret Manhattan Project. On July 16, 1945, President Harry Truman received word that scientists had perfected the atomic bomb. Fearing a tremendous loss of Allied troops in an invasion of Japan, Truman called for Japan to surrender unconditionally or face total destruction. Japan ignored the warning; on August 6, 1945, the crew of the *Enola Gay* dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, a major supply and logistics base for the Japanese military. An estimated 60,000 people were killed, but Japan still refused to surrender. A second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, a shipbuilding center, on August 9, killing an estimated 40,000 people that day. The Japanese finally surrendered on August 15, and the official surrender papers were signed on September 2, 1945.

The war was over, but the numbers were staggering. Worldwide, some 62 million people died as a result of the war, including military, civilians, and the millions who died during the Holocaust (the name given to the slaughter of Europeans, especially Jews, by the Nazis). About 6,500 Oklahomans died, and another 11,000 were wounded in the war. Thirteen Oklahomans were awarded the Medal of Honor, the highest U.S. military award.

### It's Your Turn

1. Why did Japan feel the need to expand its territory?
2. How did women serve in the military in World War II?
3. Who were the "Thunderbirds"?

# Spotlight



**On March 31, 1943, Broadway was introduced to a new concept when Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II created the musical play *Oklahoma!* Strong characters, action, and excellent music and lyrics were intertwined to create a surprise hit on opening night. The show wasn't sold out the first night, because the cast was largely unknown. The rave reviews, however, resulted in many sold-out performances during its record-setting run of 2,212 shows. The wartime audiences embraced the all-American show. The production was adapted into a highly successful musical film in 1955. The play was revived on Broadway in New York in 2002. Some 600 to 900 requests are made annually to stage the show.**

The musical was based on the play *Green Grow the Lilacs*, written by Claremore native Lynn Riggs in 1931.

**The original company of the 1943 production of *Oklahoma!* poses with the "surrey with the fringe on top." Pictured from left to right: Lee Dixon, Celeste Holm, Alfred Drake, Joan Roberts, Joseph Buloff, and Betty Garde.**

Riggs wrote twenty-nine plays, several of which were based on the life he knew growing up in Indian Territory and Oklahoma. Hammerstein once wrote, "Mr. Riggs' play is the wellspring of almost all that is good in *Oklahoma!* I kept many of the lines of the original play without making any changes in them at all for the simple reason that they could not be improved on. . . . Lynn Riggs and *Green Grow the Lilacs* are the very soul of *Oklahoma!*" The title song gave our state one of the most recognizable state songs.

## Section 2

# Social Change

### As you read, look for

- the social changes that occurred after World War II, and
- vocabulary terms **suburbs** and **baby boomer**.

**During the 1950s, cars became more than just a means of transportation. They became status symbols.**

**Oklahomans joined millions of other Americans in shouting for joy** when excited radio announcers said, “We interrupt this program to tell you the war is over!” Church and school bells were rung, car horns were honked, people hugged strangers, shouted, danced, and sang. The revelry went on for hours.

World War II created tremendous social change in America. Many people returned to their homes, but others found new homes in different parts of the country and the world. Whether they were in the



military or civilians, many people saw places and met people they would not otherwise have seen and met. New skills were learned, and new technology was developed. At the same time, a national movement was just beginning to extend full civil rights to African Americans. That movement brought challenges to Oklahoma's segregation laws.

## Postwar Society

Life on the farm would never be the same. Oklahoma's population in 1940 was 2,336,434, which was about 60,000 less than in 1930. Seventy-two percent of Oklahomans lived in rural areas. When the 1950 census numbers came out, Oklahoma's population had decreased even more to 2,233,351. And for the first time, the majority of the population—51 percent—lived in urban areas.

People found jobs in urban areas with steady hours and incomes and conveniences that had not yet come to many rural areas. Their livelihood in town didn't depend on the weather to the extent that it did on a farm. Tractors and new machinery meant that farms needed fewer people to run them.

Before the war was over, President Roosevelt signed the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, better known as the GI Bill of Rights. The GI Bill provided veterans with funds for education and training; home, farm, or business loans; unemployment pay; and job search assistance. About eight million veterans took advantage of the education program. Barracks from military bases were often moved to colleges to house students. About five thousand residents formed Veterans Village, a community with a mayor, grocery store, and fire station at Oklahoma State University.

The urban growth demanded new houses. Developers built entire blocks of houses at a time on the edge of cities, and the American phenomenon of **suburbs** was born. The Spartan Aircraft Company in Tulsa, owned by billionaire J. Paul Getty, produced airplanes and parts during the war. With the housing shortage after the war, Spartan turned to building travel trailers using an aircraft design. The mobile homes provided fast and inexpensive housing throughout the country.

The number of children born in postwar America created a tremendous increase in population that continues to impact our country today. Between 1946 and 1964, about 78 million children were born in the United States, and 963,272 were born in Oklahoma. As the

## Something Extra!

The term "GI" originally stood for "galvanized iron." Today it is used for "government issue" items for the military. It is also often used to refer to a member of the armed forces.



**Because of the growing number of families with young children, the state began to set aside increased amounts for education. A kindergarten class, like this one in 1957, might not have been available to Oklahomans a decade earlier.**





**baby boomers** have progressed through the years, their impact has been reflected in the stages of life—from baby products to educational institutions to jobs and retirement. School enrollment, kindergarten through 12th grade, in Oklahoma swelled to a high of 629,000 in 1970 due to the baby boomers.

Although the state population was growing, the number of school districts declined. In 1914, when schools were within walking distance of every student, Oklahoma had 5,889 school districts. Many smaller schools consolidated (joined together into one school) because of a decreasing rural population, improved transportation, and efforts to cut expenses. Between 1947 and 1965, almost 3,300 schools were annexed or consolidated; by 1967, the state had 1,160 districts. The number of school districts dropped to 615 by 1987 and to 524 in 2011. Schools are often the center of small towns, and closing a school greatly affects a community; sometimes, it is the final blow to a dwindling town.

Several major medical breakthroughs improved the quality of life in America. The production of penicillin, called a medical miracle, was increased in the early 1940s to treat wounded soldiers for the biggest wartime killer—infection. Jonas Salk discovered a vaccine for polio, a dreaded disease that left thousands of people, often children, dead, paralyzed, or crippled. Twenty thousand cases of polio were reported in the United States in 1952, and many parents refused to let their children go to movies or to public swimming pools for fear of catching the disease. Eradication of smallpox was begun in the late 1950s. Oklahoma joined the effort to improve healthcare, and the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation was founded in 1950.



## Popular Entertainment

Just as radio had impacted an earlier generation, television moved into the mainstream of American life in the 1950s. Discoveries that led to television date from the late 1800s, but further twentieth-century advancements were interrupted by World War II.

After the war, production resumed, and by 1954, half of American households had a black-and-white television. That number jumped to 90 percent by 1962. Oklahoma City's WKY-TV, Channel 4, began broadcasting in June 1949; Tulsa's KOTV, Channel 6, was on the air in October 1949. WKY began broadcasting 15 hours a week, but expanded to 40 hours in 1950. Oklahoma was the first state to provide by law a statewide educational television network in 1953. KETA/Channel 13 began operating in Oklahoma City in 1956; in Tulsa, it was KOED/Channel 11.

Popular music was changed forever when a new style of music called rock-and-roll began to emerge in the 1950s. The new musical style was gaining popularity when Elvis Presley's records hit the airwaves in the mid-1950s. One of Presley's early hits, "Heartbreak Hotel," was co-written by Mae Boren Axton, the daughter of an Oklahoma tenant farmer. In the early 1970s, Presley recorded "Never Been to Spain," written by Axton's son, Hoyt, who was also a well-known musician. The invention of the pocket-sized transistor radio in the 1950s coincided with the "new" rock-and-roll music. The first transistor radios, priced at \$50, were too expensive for many people, but, by the 1960s, the price had dropped and teenagers were in control of their music. Oklahoma City's KOMA radio station switched to a rock-and-roll format in the late 1950s. With its powerful 50,000-watt signal, it could be heard throughout the western United States during the overnight hours.

Oilman Thomas Gilcrease opened a gallery for his art collection on his Tulsa estate in 1949. Today, over ten thousand paintings, drawings, prints, and sculptures are showcased in the world-class Gilcrease Museum. An idea to honor western heritage resulted in establishing the Cowboy Hall of Fame in 1955 in Oklahoma City. Nine galleries and other features provide a spectacular view of our heritage in what is now called the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum.

Legends were being created on the baseball fields with Commerce's Mickey Mantle, Bethany's Allie Reynolds, and Warren Spahn, the left-handed pitcher with a great winning record. National dynasties were built in Oklahoma college-level sports. Henry Iba's basketball teams at Oklahoma State University won national championships in 1945 and 1946. Football coach Bud Wilkinson established unprecedented streaks of 21 and 47 wins between 1948 and 1958 at the University of Oklahoma.

## Prosperity

In 1956, the Federal Aid Highway Act established an interstate highway system that crisscrossed America. The highway system connected major American cities, and it also provided long stretches of pavement that could be used for emergency landing strips in the event of another war. Nationally, the system has 46,508 miles of highways, 932 of which are in Oklahoma. Our state had already begun its own road improvement project with the opening of the Turner Turnpike in 1953.



**Above:** In 1956, Elvis Presley's first national number one hit, "Heartbreak Hotel," was co-written by Oklahoma's Mae Axton. **Opposite page, above:** Bud Wilkinson made Oklahoma and football synonymous. In the seventeen years he coached at the University of Oklahoma, his teams won three national championships. **Opposite page, below:** New York Yankees slugger Mickey Mantle, from Commerce, was the most famous and popular baseball player of his generation. This portrait hangs in the State Capitol.



**The Eufaula Dam, built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, was completed in 1964.**

## Something Extra!

Water from Lake Lugert was carried through redwood pipes for use in irrigation by area farms and on to the city of Altus for drinking water.

The era of economic prosperity created more leisure time. Drive-in movie theaters popped up around the state and nation. The popularity of automobiles also led to a new restaurant concept of eating in the car and being served by a carhop. One of the first drive-in restaurants got its start in Shawnee as the Top Hat, but the name was soon changed to Sonic. The name reflected the space age that was just beginning.

Amusement parks and state parks also boomed in the 1950s. Frontier City, Springlake, and Wedgewood amusement parks opened in Oklahoma City, while Skyline and Bell's entertained Tulsans. Thirty new state parks were added in the 1950s and 1960s, as leisure time and attendance increased.

Another boom was seen in the area of building dams and lakes for flood control, drinking water reservoirs, irrigation, and recreation. An early dam was built at Lake Lugert in southwestern Oklahoma in 1927. A new dam was built at Lake Lugert in 1947. Oklahoma's largest lake—Eufaula—is the result of Eufaula Dam, on which construction began in 1956. The first flood

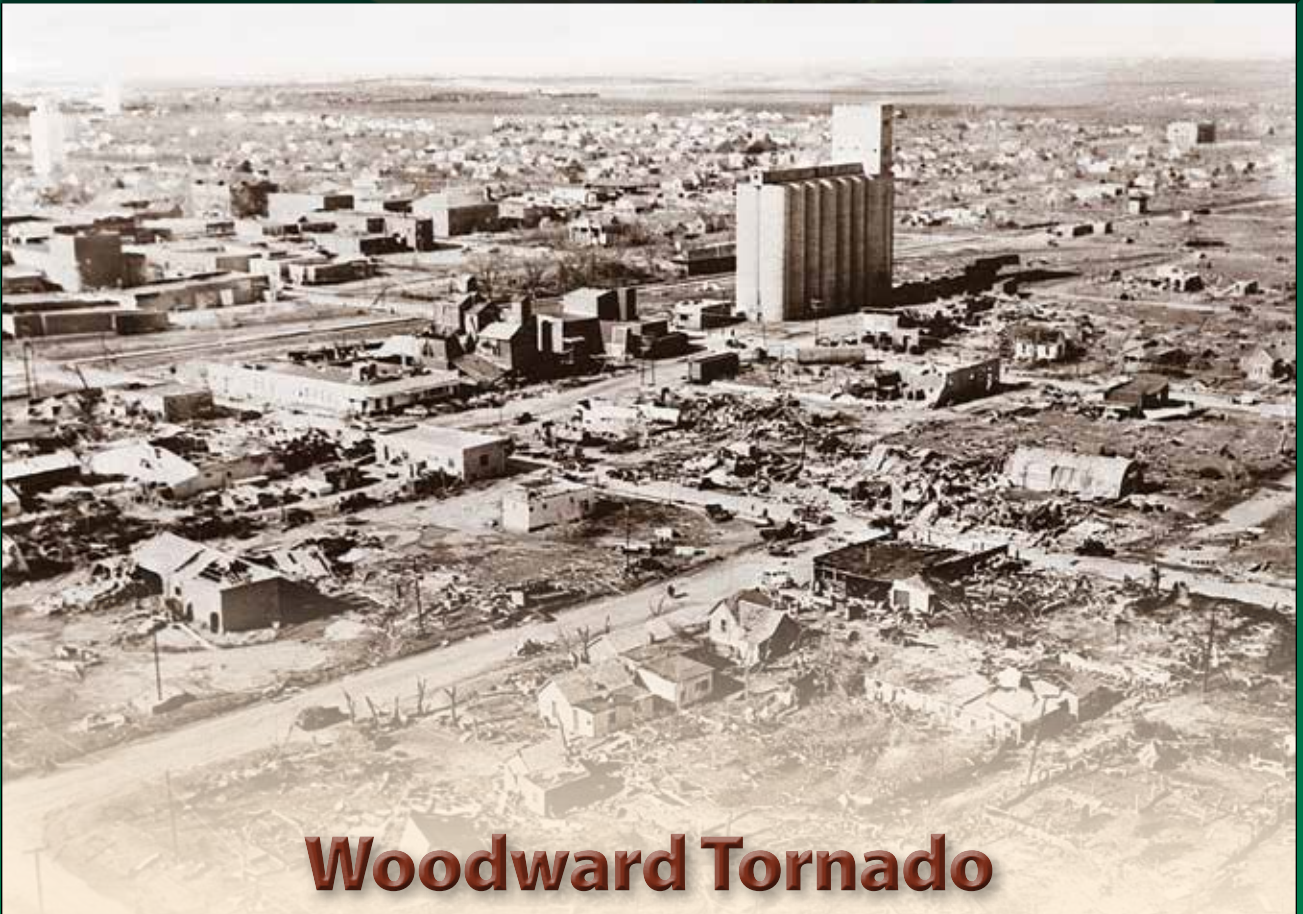
prevention dam on the Washita River was built at Cloud Creek in Washita County in 1948, an event that was attended by 10,000 people. The Pensacola Dam, built in 1940, was Oklahoma's first hydroelectric dam. It also created the Grand Lake O' the Cherokees.

Wicked weather threatened some of this prosperity. Both the 1940s and 1950s had record-setting weather, but the 1940s generally saw more rainfall. Drought returned to the state in the 1950s, with 1950-1956 recorded as the driest seven-year period in the century; the average annual rainfall during that period was only 28.51 inches. Heavy rain and flooding in 1957 ended the drought. Tornadoes were responsible for many deaths and a great deal of property damage. In the 1940s, tornadoes killed at least 322 people in Pryor, Oklahoma City, Okfuskee County, Antlers, Muskogee, Lenna, and Woodward. The April 9, 1947, F5 tornado in Woodward still stands as the deadliest in the state. In the latter half of the 1950s, several large tornado outbreaks also occurred.

A major step in weather forecasting was taken in 1948. On March 25, 1948, Air Force Captain Robert C. Miller and Major Ernest J. Fawbush correctly predicted that the conditions in the atmosphere indicated that a tornado could develop at Tinker Air Force Base. A tornado roared through Tinker that evening, but the early warning prevented anyone from being killed.

Most Oklahoma earthquakes are small and go unnoticed. Four of our strongest earthquakes ever measured occurred in the 1950s and '60s—from 4.0 to 5.5 magnitude. The first documented earthquake was in 1882. The strongest earthquake ever recorded occurred Nov. 6, 2011.

# Environmental Challenges



## Woodward Tornado

**The deadliest tornado to hit Oklahoma occurred on** Wednesday, April 9, 1947, in the northwestern part of the state. The tornado outbreak had already destroyed two towns and numerous farms in the Texas Panhandle before it entered Oklahoma's Ellis County. There it killed eight people while destroying sixty farms. The tornadoes stayed on the ground continuously for one hundred miles. A nationwide telephone strike and crackling radio reception prevented any warning from reaching Woodward. At 8:42 p.m., the tornado struck the southwest part of Woodward, and it cut a 1.8-mile-wide path to the northeast side of town.

By 9 p.m., rescue crews were frantically searching for survivors under the piles of rubble from homes and businesses. Broken gas lines caused fires, adding

**The Woodward tornado destroyed 100 city blocks on the west and north sides of town.**

to the confusion and horror. Emergency phone lines and the Oklahoma Highway Patrol soon summoned aid. The Woodward hospital and funeral home filled quickly, and many of the injured were transported by car, train, and plane to the nearest available facility. At least 108 people were killed in Woodward County, for a total of 116 killed by the tornadoes in the state that day. Three of the dead children were never identified, and one child reported to have survived was never reunited with her family. An estimated 1,000 people were injured, and over 1,000 homes and businesses were destroyed.



**Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher, in 1946, was the first black admitted, under court order, to the OU Law School. In this painting by Mike Wimmer, she is consulting with her attorneys Amos T. Hall (left) and Thurgood Marshall.**

## Segregation Laws Challenged

After World War II, voices in the black community began to be raised over segregation. The first challenges came at the higher education level. In January 1946, Ada Lois Sipuel of Chickasha, a black honor graduate of Langston University, applied for admission to the University of Oklahoma School of Law. Due to state segregation laws, Sipuel was denied admission to the law school, and she started legal action. Thurgood Marshall (later a justice of the U.S. Supreme Court) assisted Sipuel and her attorney Amos T. Hall.

Although defeated in lower courts, the case was taken to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ordered the state to provide an equal education for blacks. A Langston University School of Law was set up at the State Capitol, but Sipuel refused to enroll in the makeshift school. Legal efforts continued, and, in 1950, the Supreme Court ruled, in *Sipuel v. Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma*, that black students must be permitted to attend previously white schools.

In 1948, George W. McLaurin was admitted to the OU graduate school, but he was required to sit in a small side room during class lectures. McLaurin sued the Oklahoma Board of Regents and, in 1950, the Supreme Court ruled, in *McLaurin v. Oklahoma Board of Regents for Higher Education*, that black students must be treated the same as white students and that the schools could not be segregated.

In 1949, Nancy Randolph Davis was allowed to enroll in summer classes at Oklahoma A&M College, even though it was illegal for blacks and whites to be in the same classroom. Davis was relegated to the back of the room and to a hallway, until other students demanded she be treated equally.

### It's Your Turn

1. What was the effect of the GI Bill?
2. What was the first television station in Oklahoma?
3. Why did Ada Lois Sipuel take Oklahoma to court in 1946?

## Section 3

# The Postwar Period

### As you read, look for

- the international tensions after World War II,
- early steps taken toward desegregation, and
- vocabulary terms **Cold War** and **sit-in**.

**Oklahoma's first native-born governor** was Robert S. Kerr, who served during the war years from 1942 to 1946. In 1948, Kerr was elected to serve in the U.S. Senate, a seat he held until he died in January 1963. One of his lasting legacies is the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System.

Roy J. Turner succeeded Kerr as governor. During his term, the repair and construction of many buildings on college campuses and other public institutions took place. In addition, construction of the turnpike between Oklahoma City and Tulsa was begun, and the highway was named for Turner.

### The Cold War

The two world military powers that emerged after World War II were the United States and the Soviet Union. Although they had fought on the same side during the war, their political differences distinctly separated them. Without the commonality of war, the cultural and political differences between the two widened even more. The power struggle between the two came to be called the **Cold War**, and it would last through four decades.

The United States was determined to prevent the Soviet Union's communist government from expanding to other countries.

The divided nation of Korea became ground zero for the struggle against communism in 1950, when communist North Korea invaded



**In 1948, Robert S. Kerr was elected to the U.S. Senate after serving as Oklahoma's governor during World War II.**

## Something Extra!

The struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union was called a “cold” war because it was fought mainly with words and diplomacy.



**Top:** The Korean War Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., honors the 300,000 Americans who served in that war. **Below:** The first challenge Raymond Gary faced in 1954 as governor was the requirement to integrate public schools, which he accomplished peacefully.

noncommunist South Korea. The Korean conflict, called a “police action” by President Truman rather than a war, lasted three years. A cease-fire was signed on July 27, 1953, ending the fighting. An estimated 400,000 American troops joined a million others under the command of the United Nations in the Korean conflict. Several Oklahoma military units were deployed, including the 45th Division. About 450 Oklahomans died while serving in Korea.

Fear of a nuclear war with the Soviet Union created a great deal of anxiety in America in the 1950s. Many homeowners across the country installed bomb shelters, similar to storm cellars. Schoolchildren were taught to “duck and cover” under their desks in the event of a bomb strike, and airplane spotters watched the skies for any suspicious activity. People learned to live with the threat and went about their daily activities. For children, the daily activities included many of the new toys—Hula Hoops, Mr. Potato Head, Legos, coonskin caps, space age robots, Matchbox cars, Howdy Doody puppets, and Barbie dolls. In television shows, the “good guys” always won.

### Political Leaders

Johnston Murray took office as Oklahoma’s governor at the early part of the communist scare. At that time, all officials and employees of state government had to take an oath of loyalty to the United States and Oklahoma. Women’s rights took a step forward during Murray’s term, when women were permitted to serve on juries.

New roads and segregation were two of the issues before the next governor, Raymond Gary. More toll roads were approved, and plans called for three branches of the new interstate highway system—the

# Oklahoma Profiles

## Carl Albert

**Born in a mining camp near McAlester** in 1908, Carl B. Albert rose to one of the top positions in the United States as Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. Albert graduated from the University of Oklahoma in 1931 and Oxford University three years later. He practiced law until joining the armed forces in 1941. When he returned to Oklahoma after the war, Albert ran as a Democrat for Oklahoma's U.S. Congressional Third District, which is in the southeastern part of the state.

For three decades, Albert worked tirelessly on Oklahoma's behalf. He worked his way up the leadership ladder in the House and became the 46th Speaker in 1971. Albert was Speaker during one of the most turbulent periods in America, facing the issues of Vietnam, segregation, the economy, an energy crisis, and Watergate. When Vice President Spiro Agnew suddenly resigned in 1973, Albert became the next person in line to become president should Richard M. Nixon have left office.

Small in stature, the "little giant from Little Dixie," resigned as Speaker in 1976 and returned to McAlester. A lasting legacy in his name is The Carl Albert Center for Congressional Research and Studies at OU.



**Carl Albert** (left) speaks with Secretary of State Cyrus Vance. Albert served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1947 to 1976. From 1971 to 1976, he was the Speaker of the House.





**Clara Luper** started the civil rights movement in Oklahoma with a sit-in at the Katz Drug Store in Oklahoma City in 1958.

east-west I-40, north-south I-35, and north-east-southwest I-44. Gary's administration worked with the legislature to abolish segregation laws. The Oklahoma State Regents called for desegregation in 1954.

Even with some laws changed, it took years to improve the status of blacks in Oklahoma. History teacher Clara Luper vowed to fight segregation, and she led one of the first **sit-ins** in the United States. (A sit-in occurs when a group of people enter a public facility and refuse to leave until they are recognized or their demands are met.) In August 1958, Luper and twelve members of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) Youth Council went into Katz Drug Store in Oklahoma City, sat at the lunch counter, and ordered drinks. They were refused service at first, but the nonviolent sit-ins continued until the drug store eventually desegregated its lunch counter and those in four other states. Luper participated in many demonstrations at cafeterias, churches, and amusement parks; marches; boycotts; and voter registration drives. She was arrested twenty-six times in her fight to end discrimination in the state.

Prohibition was repealed under the administration of Governor J. Howard Edmondson in 1959. Oklahoma's Bone-Dry Law, passed in 1917, was often contested, and enforcement was sporadic. The question barely passed with a vote of 386,845 to 314,830. The bill provided that liquor could be sold in licensed retail liquor stores that were controlled by the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board.

### The Space Age Dawns

The rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union evolved into the Space Age. The United States planned to launch an artificial satellite to map Earth's surface during a cycle of high solar activity in 1957-1958. Americans were caught by surprise when the Soviet Union launched *Sputnik I* on October 4, 1957, and the United States feared the Soviet technology could lead to nuclear warfare. The U.S. Defense Department immediately began work on the *Explorer* satellite project, which was launched January 31, 1958.

In July 1958, Congress passed the National Aeronautics and Space Act, which created NASA. Project Mercury was NASA's first man-in-



space program. Seven military test pilots were chosen by a rigorous process to be the first human voyagers into space, and they were called *astronauts*. One of the first seven astronauts was Air Force Captain Leroy Gordon Cooper Jr. of Shawnee. Cooper piloted *Faith 7*, the last and longest of the Mercury missions, May 15, 1963.

The first American female to successfully complete the screening process for NASA's *Mercury 13* program in 1959 was Oklahoma's Geraldyn M. "Jerrie" Cobb. Although women had made great strides, the social climate in the late 1950s did not allow women to fly military jet fighter planes, and that rule was later added to the screening process, which caused the end of the *Mercury 13* program. Cobb learned to fly when she was twelve. As a commercial pilot in the 1950s, Cobb set several world altitude and speed records. After NASA dropped the *Mercury 13* program, she flew humanitarian aid missions in South America.

**Jerrie Cobb** was inducted into the Oklahoma Aviation and Space Hall of Fame in 1990.

## Something Extra!

Dan D. Dynamo, superintendent of the Space Science Center and friend of Bazark the Robot, was created by Danny Williams in 1953 for WKY-TV's children's programming. In the 1960s, Williams played various characters on the popular "Foreman Scotty Show."

## It's Your Turn

1. What two major world powers were involved in the Cold War?
2. Who was Clara Luper?
3. What was *Sputnik I*?

# Chapter Review

## Chapter Summary

- The state of Oklahoma, and the rest of the country, would not come out of the depression until World War II.
- The actions of Germany, Italy, and Japan led to World War II. The United States was neutral at first but finally entered the war in 1941, when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor.
- Oklahomans made significant contributions to the war effort. Oklahoma's 45th Infantry Division of the National Guard, known as the Thunderbirds, played a major role in the war. Native American code talkers assisted in transmitting and receiving messages that baffled the enemy.
- The role of women in society began to change as many joined the military or went to work in factories and defense plants
- The war in Europe ended with the surrender of Germany in May 1945. The war in the Pacific did not end until August 1945, after the United States bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan.
- Many returning service men and women took advantage of the GI Bill of Rights, which provided veterans with education and training and other benefits.
- The postwar rise in population was attributed to the baby boom.
- Television, music, and sports changed popular culture.
- Oklahoma's higher education segregation laws were challenged, and the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that black students must be treated the same as white students.
- The Cold War with the communists grew warmer with the Korean conflict in the 1950s.
- Oklahoma's segregation laws were challenged by a black teacher, Clara Luper, who led one of the first sit-ins in the United

States at Katz Drug Store in Oklahoma City.

- Many Oklahomans participated in the dawning of the Space Age, including Gordon Cooper and Jerrie Cobb.

## Vocabulary

Using a computer and the list of vocabulary terms, create a 3-4 page newspaper. Name the paper and write stories with appropriate headlines. The first half of the project should cover news and vocabulary of the World War II era. The second half should cover stories and vocabulary of the postwar period. (Note: The symbol \* beside a word indicates that it is a post-World War II term.)

1. Allied Powers
2. Axis Powers
3. baby boomer\*
4. carhop\*
5. code talkers
6. Cold War\*
7. concentration camp
8. eradication\*
9. GI Bill of Rights\*
10. Holocaust
11. interstate highway system\*
12. Manhattan Project
13. "police action"\*
14. polio\*
15. POW camps
16. relocation centers
17. sit-in\*
18. surrender
19. "undesirables"
20. victory gardens

## Understanding the Facts

1. What event brought the United States out of the Great Depression?

2. What led the United States to finally enter World War II?
3. What were Oklahoma's two famous fighting divisions? What were their nicknames?
4. What led to the surrender of Japan in 1945?
5. What was one of Robert S. Kerr's lasting legacies?
6. Who was Leroy Gordon Cooper?

### Developing Critical Thinking

1. Why did Japan, Germany, and Italy think they needed to expand their borders, and what happened when they did?
2. Describe the impact of the baby boomers on society and the economy.
3. What does the term *Cold War* mean, and how does it apply to the post-World War II years? Why do you think people were so concerned about communism at this time?

### Applying Your Skills

1. On a map of Oklahoma, identify where the military installations mentioned in the chapter were located and label them. Which military

installation was closest to where you live? What was the purpose of the installation? Check your library and find out more details about it.

2. Broken Arrow is an example of one of the new suburban areas that developed in Oklahoma during the 1950s. Make a two-column chart with columns on the advantages and disadvantages of suburban living. List at least three things in each column.

### Exploring Technology

1. Find pictures on the Internet of airplanes that were manufactured, modified, or repaired during World War II. How do they differ from the planes produced today? How do they compare in speed? size? capabilities?
2. Sonic Industries and McDonald's are both franchises. A *franchise* is a business that has the right to market a company's products or services in a certain area. What are some of the franchises in your area? Find out how franchises work. What do people pay for them? What do they get in return for their investment?

## Building Skills

## Reading News Articles

**Newspapers are a good way for citizens to keep** informed on a wide range of topics—local, national, or international. First, however, you must distinguish a news article from an editorial. Editorials mix facts and opinions and give a newspaper's or a writer's opinion on an issue or an event. A news article does not include opinion.

Newspaper articles usually follow a standard format. The *headline* is written in large, bold type with just a few key words. Its purpose is to capture the "heart" of the story and make you want to learn more. The size of the headline type often indicates the story's importance. The *byline* indicates who wrote the story, either an individual or a news service. The *dateline* includes the city and date where the story was filed. The *lead* is the first sentence of the article—the most important. It summarizes the main idea of the article and should tell you the five W's: *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *why*. The *body* contains a more detailed account

of the basic facts. The body often contains quotations and background facts. As you read through the body of the article, you will find fewer important details.

Look at any daily newspaper and select one of the major stories on the front page. Answer the following questions:

1. From reading just the headline, can you tell why the editors chose to put the article on the front page?
2. Who wrote the story, and where was it filed?
3. What are the *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *why* of the story?
4. After reading the article, do you think the headline accurately represented the information in the article?

Reread this chapter and choose an issue on which to write a news article. Write the article first, then the headline.