

**I'll Be Seeing You: World War II Diary and Correspondence, Cpl.
Mary Elizabeth Osen, February 1943-September 1945**

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A Window on Main Street: Life above the Corner Drug Store, by Virgil Lagomarcino. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1995. xiii, 119 pp. Illustrations. \$10.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY TERRENCE J. LINDELL, WARTBURG COLLEGE

Virgil Lagomarcino, a dean emeritus at Iowa State University, takes readers back to his childhood, beginning when his father purchased a drugstore in Waverly, Iowa, and the family moved into the apartment above it. In a series of anecdotal essays sprinkled with literary and philosophical references, Lagomarcino sifts through his memories of institutions, events, and people in Waverly from the mid-1920s to the early 1940s. The principal settings for his observations about the life, character, and characters of small-town America include the drugstore where he worked as a fountaineer (known more commonly as a soda jerk), the apartment above the drugstore from which he watched the comings and goings of the community, Main Street, the Carnegie library, and the school.

Scholars of the period will find an occasional gem of social history here, but the work will appeal chiefly to individuals looking for an entertaining evening's reading. I grew up a generation later and a state away from Lagomarcino's Waverly, but these reminiscences strike a familiar chord. Lagomarcino has given us a humorous, insightful, and enjoyable view of life in small-town America in the decades leading up to the Second World War.

I'll Be Seeing You: World War II Diary and Correspondence, Cpl. Mary Elizabeth Osen, February 1943–September 1945, edited by Lynn Ethan Nielsen and Mary Taylor Nielsen. Parkersburg: Mid-Prairie Books, 1994. 143 pp. Illustrations. \$9.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY MARILYN E. HEGARTY, OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

I'll Be Seeing You, a collection of diary entries and letters, chronicles Mary Elizabeth Osen's experiences in the Women's Army Corps. Osen was born and raised on an Iowa farm, then became a schoolteacher before enlisting. She served both stateside and abroad. While stateside she filled her diary with reflections on training and assignments; after shipping out to New Guinea and the Philippines, she corresponded frequently with her large extended family. The editors, Osen's descendants, add chapter introductions that include biographical and historical information.

This book offers an interesting look at servicewomen's everyday lives, while simultaneously revealing the roots of Corporal Osen's

strengths and values—faith, family, and friends—in her Iowa community. “Characteristic of Midwest friendliness, Mary often looked up someone from home” (12). She wrote frequently about church services, as well as her jobs, new friends, fun times, and, with un-failing humor, of the vagaries of military life. “I was issued another pair of coverall trousers that would fit Dad. So I take a strap off a bag, draw it tight and get a gathered Dutchman breeches effect” (50).

Both academics and history buffs will find this book a useful and informative addition to World War II history. For readers who wonder why there has been such a spate of war stories recently, this volume provides answers. The war years left a lasting imprint on those who served, as well as on their families and friends; the legacy lives on. Many reasons for the current nostalgia emerge from the pages of Mary Elizabeth Osen’s writings. Her good humor, adaptability, and positive outlook in the face of hard times and difficult situations reflect the ethos of a different time and place.

Silent Friends: A Quaker Quilt, by Margaret Lacey. Urbana, IL: Storm-line Press, 1994. Reprint, Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1995. 108 pp. \$14.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY MARTHA PAXSON GRUNDY, CLEVELAND HEIGHTS, OHIO

These small fictional stories, like the patches of an heirloom quilt, stitch together the interlocking lives of three generations of the Carpenter family on their Iowa farm. The seemingly simple vignettes skillfully build a picture of rural Conservative Quakers. We first see the family’s farm and the Friends Meeting through the eyes of young Thomas, born in 1877. The stories are framed by the innocent ritual in which he and his brother bury a treasure to give something back to the land, and by his adult granddaughter’s ruminations on its meaning. In between we see William camping out in hopes of seeing a fox family and Caroline spending an idyllic summer with a baby raccoon. The stories lovingly tell of eccentric family and Friends. We glimpse Conservative Quaker culture in its reaction to a late nineteenth-century evangelist from the “other” branch of Friends, a revival meeting in the late 1930s, reactions to Quaker pacifism during World War II, and collegian Myra’s rebellion. Rachel, the wife and mother in the middle generation, expresses her pent-up anger as she lies dying, pointing to the psychological cost of Conservative Friends’ habitual silence.

Sometimes truth can be told most fully through fiction. Margaret Lacey grew up in this Iowa landscape among Conservative Friends, and she helps us understand the inner dynamics of the land and com-

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