

"Take The Bad With the Good"
By Marjorie Gallun

(472 words)

We lived near Buffalo, New York where I graduated from high school in 1940. Because of the depression, most everyone had been on welfare. Unemployment was high. I had always planned on going to college and being a teacher, but now I would have to find a job.

I tried without success until I heard that Spencer Lens Corporation was hiring, only if you had a relative working there. Spencer Lens Corporation manufactured lenses for cameras, binoculars, and the like. The problem was that I did not know anyone that worked there. My minister told me he knew a member of my church who could help me. That was the beginning of some rather unpleasant experiences.

My job was cleaning, polishing, and inspecting very tiny lenses barely larger than the head of a straight pin. I had to pick them up one by one with a tweezer! I cleaned them in a cleaning fluid, put them on a lathe for polishing, and inspected them. I worked eight hours a day, five days a week and made twelve dollars a week. (That twelve dollars sounded so good to me at the time because my dad was working for fifteen dollars a week as a night watchman!) However, I was told that I had to complete my quota in a given time period or my pay would be docked!

A very short time later, war was declared. Everyone was transferred to American Optical Company, a new business in a new building created specifically for the war effort making gun sites, periscopes, and other