

# The 1940s Survival Ideas for Now

Would you have survived WWII?  
Korean Conflict, Vietnam, Gulf War, wars still happen. Are you ready?

Some ideas may actually be better than what we do now, at least in terms of team work and cooperation.

## **1) had a victory garden**

Almost anything that could support our troops was shipped to them. We needed to be self reliant for our plant needs to help support them. Still a good idea though, in terms of nutrition and lack of pesticides, etc.

## **2) listened to big band music or played a bugle**

Each time period had it's own musical expression. 1890 was Rag Time, 1920 was jazz, 1940 was big band. All good!

## **3) drank powdered or canned milk**

For the troops. I learned to drink powdered milk in college as it was cheaper. Also keeps longer for emergency food.

## **4) used ration coupons**

I have seen them, but the last rationing I experienced was during the Arab Oil Embargo. No coupons, just long lines. Better to walk if you could.

## **5) used the GI bill to go to college or purchase a home**

This was true after the Korean conflict as well. How my father got a teaching credential and bought our first home at low interest. They fought for us remember. Many never came home.

## **6) gathered sea life to eat (red meat was rationed)**

Fish can be healthier, but red meat made a huge comeback after the war.

## **7) turned in metal items for the war effort**

Take a look around your home. We are the greatest hoarders of all time. Every gadget and item we see advertised become a must have. Till it gathers dust in a closet or garage. Maybe it is time to live simple again?

## **8) used steel pennies for a purchase (copper rationed)**

Even our 'metal' coins today are worth more for the belief that money is worth something than the actual metal content. Hmm . . .

## **9) waited in long lines for a gasoline ration of 3 gallons/wk**

Arab Oil Embargo again. Electric gets around this and can power your home during a blackout as well. Better yet are trains, busses and other mass transit.

## **10) speed limit of 35mph on highways**

The speed limit is 65 now, but you would be run over if you drove that slowly. People have to believe in a rule to be effective.

## **11) carpooled to save gas**

Also saves time in over crowded roads and parking lots. And you can talk to your team during the commute.

## **12) limited sugar intake to help war effort**

'Cavities' were almost unheard of till they brought sugar back from the New World. When our species was

starving and needed CALORIES NOW, it might have made us seek out high calorie food, but not so good now.

**13) used a used manual typewriter (new ones were rationed too)**

No spell correct, etc. PAIN, PAIN, PAIN, but many of us got through school using one for reports and assignment. It can be done. We are definitely spoiled now.

**14) received special permission to have penicillin used for an infection**

After the war(s) we got so used to access that we started demanding antibiotics for every discomfort. This has led to anti-biotic resistant bacteria (AB only good again bacterial infections).

**15) heard an air raid siren and hidden in a fallout shelter**

Being an OLD person, I had to do end of the world, atomic bomb, drills, in the first grade! Can't imagine real bombs going off all around me like in many countries right now.

**16) baked your own bread with rationed flour**

My mother baked four loaves a bread a week for our family (3 kids). Definitely spoiled. But the alternative was very cheap, almost all air, bread. Not really a choice.

**17) learned Morse code and used a shortwave radio**

My Uncle was into this (ham radio). I learned Morse code and a neighbor and I used to send messages back and forth across the street on a wire set up. An instructor I worked with could listen and understand the Teletype code. Digital has removed this need entirely.

**18) replaced a burned out tube in a radio**

On an early television or record player. Used to have a stand outside our grocery store where you could bring tubes to be tested. They had new ones of the same type ready to be bought. Many sound affectionadoes claim a vacuum tube amp is far superior to anything 'transistor'.

**19) used a black and white film camera and kept images in an album**

Go into your grandparents closet and you will still often find these albums of family images and vacation trips. Now digital all fits on a tiny chip. Not as tactile and can't be seen without a viewer. The 'old' print images can be viewed without any external device. I always developed my own B&W film, learned from my father, who recorded images of the Korean conflict.

**20) went to a segregated school and lived in a segregated neighborhood**

This is still very much a sore point for many. There is still a lot of advantage to being born to the right family/class. Not fair, but the way humans have been doing it since the beginning of civilization. Not so civilized is it?

**21) bought a house for less than \$3000 After WWII housing prices really went up.** Now a 'hut' size house in my town goes for over a million. Why are there so many homeless you ask? Really, you need to ask this? Greed and scarcity.

**22) been to a five and dime store for essentials**

We had a Woolworth in Pacific Grove. Now we have many 'dollar stores' built on the same principle adjusted for inflation.

**23) can only speak English**

200 different languages are spoken in Monterey County, 50% of the state of CA speaks/understands Spanish. Apply for any job and they will ask you if you speak Spanish. Besides making you smarter, more creative and easier to employ, it is the right thing to do!

**24) ever sent postcards or airmail letters**

Till the Internet and email, this was the cheapest way to communicate. Telephone and telegrams were out of reach (\$\$\$) for long distance unless it was an emergency.

**25) survived fighting in WWII and/or met a concentration camp survivor**

Not many WWII vets left. I have met concentration camp survivors. It was as bad as you have been told and worse than you can imagine.

**26) made scale models of enemy planes to identify on sight**

My father did this during WWII as a kid. I did one of the models myself later. Good idea to get everyone participating in the war effort, which at the time felt like an existential threat to life on earth.

**27) received a telegram telling of a war death**

The dreaded telegram was the military's way of informing family of a member's death. They are more dignified now by sending a actual person to your door, but it still hurts when it happend.

**28) had blackout shades on all windows**

Ships at sea, planes, spies, could all see where things were at night, IF lights were on. During a possible enemy incursion, even the lantern of our lighthouse was turned off (electric lamp), till the danger had passed. Not a good idea for the enemy to know where they actually are by using our 'aid to navigation' against us nor to make the lighthouse a possible target.

**29) driven a stick shift car with headlight shields**

A manual transmission is called an anti-millennial theft device. Ha-ha. Never had to use headlight shields, but I really do not like those super bright blue LED lights six feet off the ground in my rear view mirror either.

**30) known someone sent to an interment camp (Japanese descent)**

American citizens who lost home, possessions, livelihood, everything except what could be carried in a single suitcase. Not as bad as a gas chamber, but the suffering lasted longer, generations even. Why do we keep doing this?

**31) can read and write in full handwritten cursive script**

Old people secret writing. Schools are starting to teach it again, because, it really does help with essential hand-eye coordination and ultimately makes you smarter. Go figure.

**32) know military ranks on sight**

Essential back in the time period. Most, unless you know people in that branch of service would not know any longer.

**33) had polio, tuberculosis, mumps, measles, or chickenpox**

I personally experienced mumps, two kinds of measles and chickenpox. The last one was the worst. Itched like CRAZY. But you can only catch these once in a lifetime and usually survivable. Can't be a teacher if you ever test positive for TB. Polio usually makes you handicapped for life if it does not kill you.

**34) had a good paying job without a high school diploma**

This is a failing of our culture in my opinion. I have met some incredibly dumb PhDs and some very smart high school dropouts. I would rather have a competent HS dropout work on my car, electrical system, plumbing, etc. than anyone with a PhD. Very different skill sets, but still very valuable and should be compensated accordingly.

**35) known Nazi sympathizers, maybe in your own family**

It was not 100% pro allies even among our own citizens. There is an attraction to any leader who claims to have THE answers to all your pain, all your problems. Watch out.

### **36) used a fountain pen to do assignments for school**

I love fountain pens. Ball points are fine for recording information, but fountain pens are a pleasure to use. Refillable are the best, but messier. Choose cartridge for the same feel with less mess. Yeah, not good to exercise with. Keep it on your desk.

A lot of personal observations in this one. I was not alive in WWII, but a lot of relatives were and leftovers were still around when I was growing up. The closer to any given time period the more you can relate to it.

War is an admission of our failure to sort things out. Wars happen because groups of people feel left out or feel they should be the ones running the world. If we are ever to survive as a species, we need to learn how to get past this tendency. Soon please!

**NOTE:** Many people worked in the canneries in New Monterey. Unfortunately the local Italian immigrant population (US citizens) had their ships confiscated without any compensation, to help in this effort. IF the ships were returned after WWII, they were often damaged. My being limited to 36 questions has meant I could not include everything.