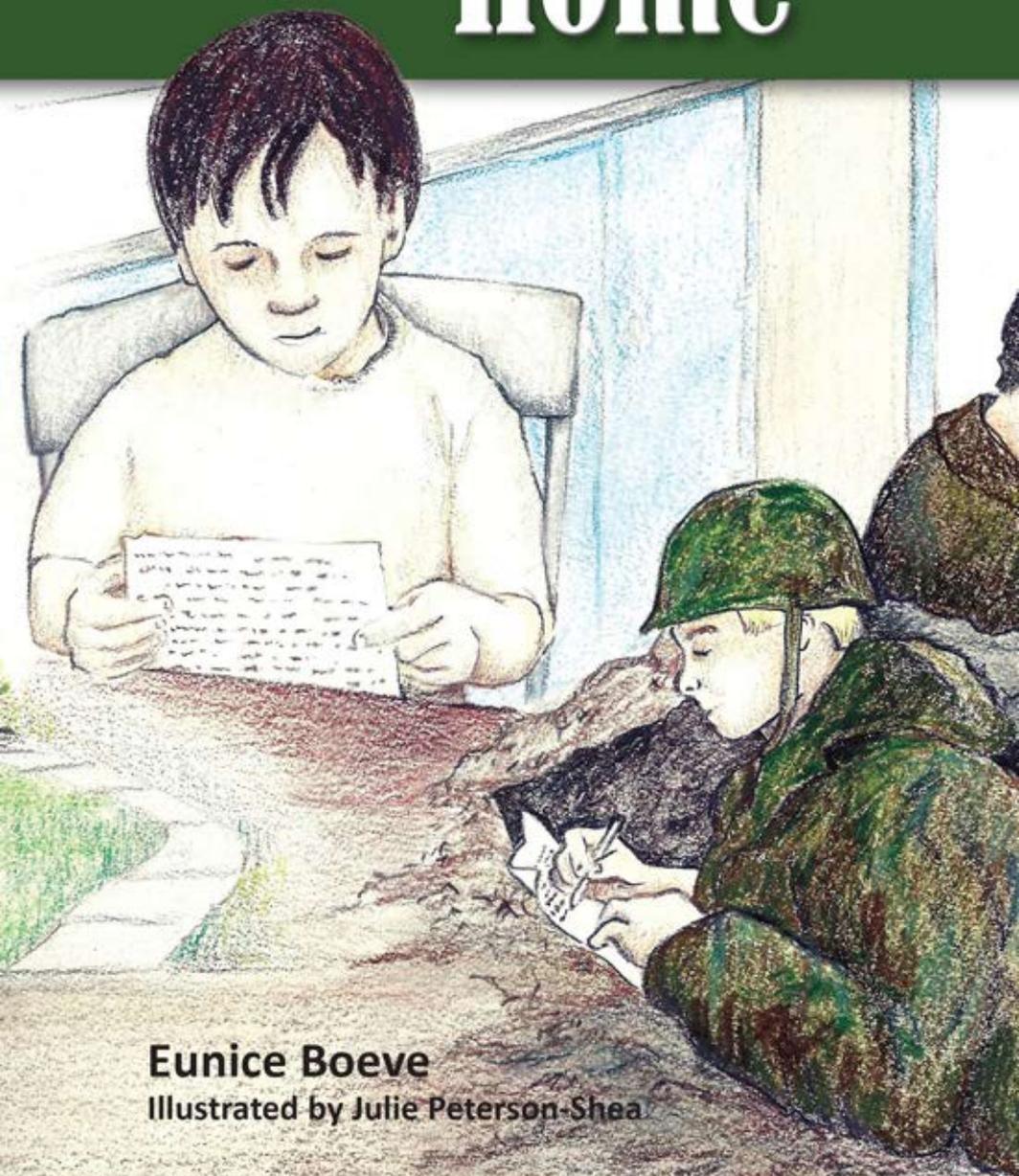


Wishing You Home



Eunice Boeve

Illustrated by Julie Peterson-Shea

WISHING
YOU HOME

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Written by

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Rowe Publishing

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DEDICATION

*To all those who served in WWII
and to their loved ones who
waited at home*

PREFACE

Dear Reader,

Often at the beginning of a book, the author writes a *preface*. The preface helps explain or gives background information for the story. This story, *Wishing You Home*, takes place during the Second World War in the last year of the war (1945) and the year following (1946) when the soldiers have come home from fighting the Germans in Europe and the Japanese in Japan and the Pacific islands. All wars bring death and destruction to the people involved, whether they are soldiers or the civilians who live in the war zones. And when there is death and destruction and heartbreak and pain, there is also anger and fear and despair.

Authors often use words in stories they would not use otherwise, but are words that fit the time period and place in which they've set their stories. But they are not words we should use today. Some words used in the past are hateful words, just as some words used today are hateful words. In this story America is at war with Germany and Japan, and our soldiers are dying, or losing limbs, or suffering brain injuries, or emotional trauma, as are the soldiers in our enemies' armies. Those enemies called Americans bad names, just as we Americans called them bad names.

During the Revolutionary War, the thirteen colonies that would become the start of America, fought with England and undoubtedly some pretty bad names were flung around then. During the Civil War, we Americans fought and maimed and killed other Americans, and we called each other names. In those wars and in all the wars before and in all the wars since and any wars to come, death and fear and anger and grief and physical and emotional pain will be suffered by those involved. And it matters not our race, our religion, or our politics. When death and destruction, pain and fear, grief and hopelessness are inflicted upon us, we will (not always, but usually) speak of those trying to harm us in hateful, angry terms.

In this story, some call the Japanese, low down, stinking, rotten Japs and the Germans, stinking, dirty Nazi Krauts, or words similar as those were some of the words used during those war years.

I hope you enjoy the story.

Eunice Boeve

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CHAPTER ONE
FEAR HITS HOME



Bobby Benton, Jr. ran home from school and burst through the kitchen door.

His mother stood at the sink, staring out the window. She turned quickly. He saw the handkerchief clutched in her hand, the tears in her eyes. “Oh, Bobby!” she said.

Cold fear washed over him. He knew what she was going to tell him, but he said the words anyway.

“Tommy’s uncle was waiting after school, Mom. Tommy ran over to his car and he got in and they left.

Tommy didn't even look back at me." He swallowed, squeezed his eyes tight to block his tears, and added, "Mary Larson's grandpa came for her the day her father was killed in France."

"I know, Bobby," his mother said. "They got a telegram today. Tommy's daddy isn't ever coming home."

"He... He was... was," Bobby stammered, unable to form the word *killed*.

"Yes, in Germany."

Bobby stared at her, the word, *killed*, even unuttered, a living thing inside his head, bouncing, bouncing like a rubber ball. A sick dizzy feeling washed over him, and hot tears spurted from his eyes. For this he knew, *if Tommy's dad was dead then his could be too*. His mother held out her arms, and on stiff, wooden-like legs he staggered into them.

His dad and Tommy's had been best friends ever since they were boys. As close as brothers, when they returned from the war, they planned to buy the hardware store where his dad had worked for as long as Bobby could remember. They were going to call it Benton and Hill Hardware. They had even talked about him and Tommy maybe joining the business someday, and then they'd add & Sons to the name.

His dad and Tommy's had joined up together, leaving on the same train. Bobby carried the picture of the day they left in his head, even though it was a long time ago and he'd been just seven. An early spring day, he remembered, the wind rolling

the clouds across a blue sky, the air chilled, his dad's warm embrace, his words, "Take care of Mom and Sis." And he remembered his dad and Tommy's leaning out of the train windows, waving as the train rolled down the tracks, so the last they saw of them, were their hands, waving goodbye.

He'd felt all puffed up and proud of his dad for going off to fight the enemy. Only a second grader then, not too much older than Ruthie, he'd not been afraid for his dad. No, to him his dad was as strong as iron and like the sun, always there. It had not dawned on him that anything could happen to his dad. But he'd been just a little kid then. In the third grade, Roy Ward's dad had been killed, and Susan Cochran's had come home with both legs gone. And now Tommy's dad was never coming home. He clung to his mother and cried for Tommy, for Tommy's dad, and the cold awful fear that his own dad might already be gone.

His mother and Tommy's mother had always shared their letters, so, in a way, it was like getting two letters, instead of just one. His dad's letters now nearly filled the shoebox his mother kept in the end table beside her bed. There would be no more letters from Tommy's dad. He wondered if Mrs. Hill kept their letters in a shoebox too.

Although they never mentioned the fighting in their letters, he and Tommy imagined their dads fighting side by side, bullets flying through the air, the Germans falling like the stack of dominoes his dad so carefully set up on a table. Then, with one

little flick of his finger, he'd watch them fall, each falling on the one behind, until they all lay flat.

They liked to play war, he and Tommy and their friends, belly crawling along the ground, then raising up to lob imaginary grenades or fire their stick rifles. They played their war games along the banks of Potters creek, where bushes and trees offered hiding places, for despite it's name, there were few trees in Elmwood, Kansas.

Some of the boys had brothers, and dads, and uncles fighting the Japanese. Others, like his and Tommy's father were fighting in Germany. So they traded off, sometimes shooting at and sometimes pretending to be the cowardly, rotten, stinking, mean Nazi Krauts and other times the lowdown, dirty, cowardly Japs. (*Note from author: See the Preface before this chapter to understand the use of such names.*)

Bobby only vaguely remembered that day in December, 1941, four years ago. His parents had listened in horror to the news coming over the radio that Japanese planes had bombed American ships at a place called Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. But the grownups sure remembered. They said that attack on the American ships was an open declaration of war. President Roosevelt called it "A day that will live in infamy." Now, in this spring of 1945, Bobby was ten-years-old and America had been at war for over three years with both Japan and Germany. His dad and

Tommy's dad were fighting in Germany. Bobby's cousin, Joe, Jr., had been sent to fight the Japanese.

Bobby sat beside his mother at the funeral for Tommy's daddy. But not in their usual church pews, for Tommy's aunts and uncles, cousins, and grandparents took up the middle two rows. Bobby remembered his great grandmother's funeral, the only funeral he'd ever been to. She had been in a coffin. There was no coffin for Tommy's daddy, only a wreath of flowers and the American flag. Tommy's daddy had died on the battlefield, far away in Germany, hit by a mortar shell, they said, and all that had come back to his family were his dog tags.

Bobby's cousin, Donald, had heard the men sitting around at his dad's filling station talking about Tommy's daddy. Donald's dad, Joe Benton, was Bobby's uncle, his dad's older brother. He was too old to go to war, but his son, Joe, Jr., was fighting somewhere in the Japanese held islands in the Pacific. Uncle Joe hated those lousy, Japs for fighting his son and he hated the dirty Krauts for fighting his brother, and he hated that he was too old to go there and help them fight. Bobby knew his mom would wash his mouth out with soap, if she heard him using those cuss words Uncle Joe used. But he said them anyway, under his breath, for he, too, hated those dirty, rotten Nazi Krauts and those stinking mean, cowardly Japs.

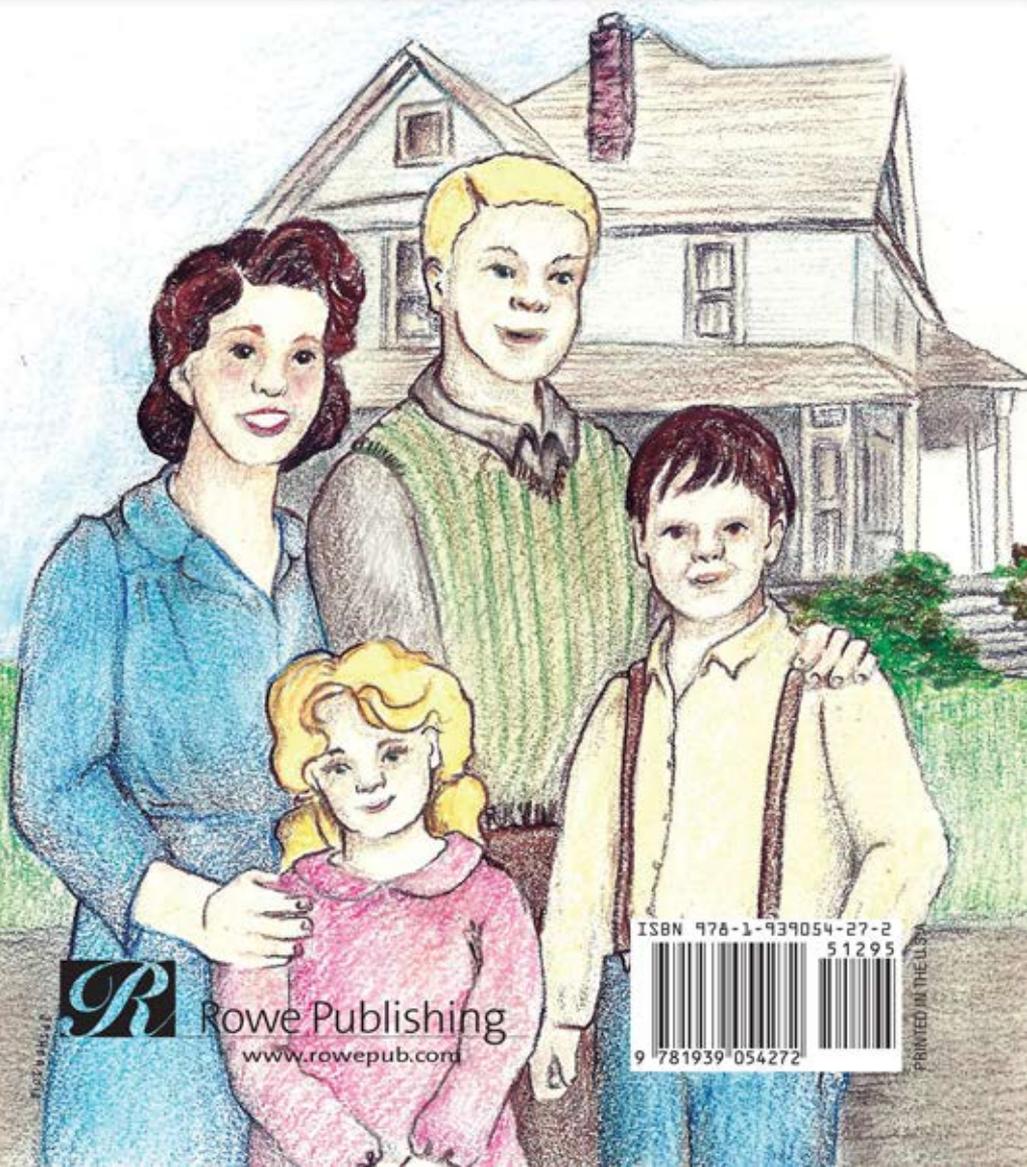
Bobby was glad his little sister, Ruthie, had stayed with Uncle Keith and Aunt Ellen and their cousins on the farm. Ruthie was only four and too little to go to

the memorial service for Tommy's dad. Ruthie knew that their daddy had to be gone for a long, long time. She didn't know about war. Mom didn't even want her to know that Tommy's daddy was dead.

Every night when Mom tucked Ruthie into bed, she'd hold Daddy's picture out so Ruthie could kiss the glass over his face, although she probably didn't remember him, as he had been gone nearly all the four years of her life.

Sometimes Bobby crept into the room, when no one was there, and pressed his lips over the cold glass. Then he'd recite the prayer, he always said, "Please God, save my daddy. Please, God, let him come home."

How do you make a banana split? The answer? Step on it. That is one of the jokes ten-year-old Bobby Benson and his dad, fighting in Germany in this last year of WWII, send in their letters. *Wishing You Home* begins with the news that Bobby's best friend's dad has been killed in the war. Bobby's fear for his own dad's safety increases.



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