

# Hyde Park History

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## HYDE PARK AT THE BEGINNING OF WORLD WAR II: CAMPUS REMINISCENCES

By Yaffa Claire Draznin

Every memoir is inevitably a Rashomon narrative, more revealing of the teller's perspective than of history as it really happened. This recollection of the experiences my husband Julius and I had as students on the Chicago campus is no exception. Admittedly it only covers about three years, from early 1941 until August 1944—and is selective, with no discussion of faculty activity (about which we knew nothing) nor administration plans for the new B.A. plan, nor activities in the greater Hyde Park community. No matter: this is our story.

**1941.** We came on the campus separately. Julius drifted onto the campus in early 1941, having attended Wright Junior College for a year and subsequently joining the American Friends Service Committee in its work camps throughout the Midwest. He hung around, as he tells it, seeking out guys he knew from Tuley High, and at some point decided to become a student himself. After passing the entrance exam but with literally no money at the time, he got his education by the "low cost" method permitted then, by enrolling for as many courses as he could afford and studying independently (following the syllabus without actually attending classes), taking only the final exam that determined his grade. (He was finally admitted for both undergraduate and graduate courses in January 1942.)

Since he had helped start cooperatives among field workers and sharecroppers while with the Friends, he looked for, and joined, the men's housing co-op at 52nd and Ellis. My introduction to the U. of C. in early '41 was more conventional. I came to Chicago as a transfer student from the University of Wisconsin and went directly into the political science division, while taking up residence in a university-owned and tightly supervised off-campus facility for female students in the 5800 block of Drexel.

It was an ominous time, those months before Pearl Harbor, although it's hard now to fully recapture the urgency and anxiety that laced our lives then. The horrendous news from Europe, now totally overrun by the Germans, had us glued to our radios deep into the night, and we woke each morning to broadcasts from London, ➤