Reeling from Japan’s attack in Hawaii, Americans every day had to read grim headlines and learn odd new geography every hour by radio. In those far-away Philippine Islands that inspired George Ade’s merry musical *Sultan of Sulu* so long ago, the capital city Manila fell to invading Japanese. There were horrible atrocity stories. “Jap” troops landed in the Netherlands East Indies. Singapore surrendered to Japan. Bataan surrendered. Japan occupied Corregidor.

Within weeks after Pearl Harbor, Purdue cut back operations to three sixteen-week semesters, no vacations, and no final exams. President Elliott took up talks in Washington, D. C., with a subcommittee of the National Resources Planning Board. Elliott told students in a Hall of Music address that they were in a Purdue Training Center: where they should prepare for “some meaningful job of war” (Topping, 238).

In June the Purdue Trustees granted Elliott leave of absence. He left for Washington to lead a division of the War Manpower Commission. His task was to coordinate civilian training in all U.S. colleges. In Elliott’s absence the Purdue Trustees turned leadership over to a committee of four:

- Vice President and Executive Dean Frank Hockema.
- Vice President and Treasurer R. B. Stewart.
Purdue enrollment bounced around in wartime. In 1939-1940, 8,373 had attended. The number dropped by more than 200 for 1940-1941, because the military draft had begun taking men. In 1942, enrollment rose again.

Stewart had been helping draw up a national contract for teaching and housing men in what the Navy called its “V12” program. Promising future commanders were being selected for V12 pre-commissioning training and technical education. Purdue also began teaching Navy electricians’ mates.

Purdue’s Athletic Director and Football Coach Mal Elward resigned on February 19, 1942 to join the Navy. A week later Purdue named Guy “Red” Mackey Athletic Director, and promoted Assistant Coach Elmer Burnham to Head Football Coach.

Mackey had played end on Jimmy Phelan’s powerful teams and had won honorable mention All-American honors in 1929. Mackey stabilized the job of athletic director. The ill-fated Noble Kizer, interrupted and aggravated by illness, had directed Purdue sports from 1931 to 1936 and again in 1938-1939. Sports publicist Robert E. “Bob” Woodworth had worked the job on an “acting” basis in 1937. President Elliott also did so during 1940 after Kizer’s death. Then Elward took the job. Now Mackey would be Purdue’s “AD” for nearly thirty years.

A new Purdue Aeronautics Corporation (PAC), allied with and modeled after the Ross-Ade and the Purdue Research foundations, began operating in 1942. PAC’s mission was to develop aeronautical engineering and make better use of the Purdue Airport. The airport runway now stretched across even more of the acres Ross
had given in 1931. Purdue began talking to the Navy and Marines about training aircraft pilots.

When Ross Gear stockholders met in March 1942, they received a good report about all the pre-war “defense” business done in 1941. Prospects now were rising for more. Because of the good field record of ruggedness and performance of the Ross company’s steering gears, the U.S. government, by 1942, was specifying them in orders ranging from the little general-purpose car designated GP and nicknamed “Jeep,” to huge machines that retrieved damaged tanks in battle zones, and for sixty-eight vehicle models in between.

Another piece of good news for Dave Ross was that Rostone was heading for an $18,000 profit for 1942, but Ross never would know that. In July 1942, in his seventy-first year, Ross seemed unusually fretful one day. He was planning to host a meeting of the Board of Governors of the National Farm Chemurgic Council. He had persuaded the Governors to meet at Purdue. He would welcome them at dinner on July 16. At the end of a day, he turned all the plans over to his secretary and drove out to The Hills. A few hours later, a stroke dropped him. The stroke resulted in hemiplegia, from which he never recovered (Kelly, Ross, 175-176). Hemiplegia brings severe paralysis to a vertical half of one’s body. This attack rendered Ross bedridden without the power of speech or use of one arm or leg. Offers of help came from far and wide but to no real effect.

When Whit Burnett published *This Is My Best* with Dial Press, New York City, in 1942, George Ade selected for his choice “The Joy of Single Blessedness” together with an explanation of why he chose the piece.
On September 24, the motion picture star Dorothy Lamour performed in Ross-Ade Stadium. Lamour stood in as the headliner for glamorous dancer-actress Rita Hayworth who was ill. The occasion was an outdoor rally to sell U.S. War Bonds. Such star-filled entertainment, by this time, was becoming common in America. About 20,000 patriotic people braved the chilly night air to find stadium seats for the variety show. Before the night had ended, they had purchased or pledged to buy more than half a million dollars’ worth of bonds.

In October, the West Lafayette public school system, already using the new West Lafayette High School, changed the name of Meridian Field, its Meridian Avenue venue for football games and track meets, to “Leslie Field.” The change honored the late Harry Leslie. Leslie had finished classes in what had passed for a “high school” in the 1890s. An accredited West Lafayette High School had opened in the 1899-1900 academic year.

At a meeting on November 2, while their co-founder and leader dreamed away in silent, paralyzed misery, the Ross Gear Directors again weighed the pros and cons of a pension plan. The U.S. Internal Revenue Service had ruled that employees having more than five years’ service needed to be included in a company plan. In a letter to stockholders the Ross Gear Directors explained the situation. In response the holders of nearly two-thirds of the company’s 144,000 shares of stock supported the pension plan. The majority authorized the company to contract with Aetna Life Insurance Company to set up and run the plan.
In December, a new national war-bond sale campaign, promoted as the First War Loan, commenced. There were a few rays of hope for America now in the war news and more reasons to invest in bonds. Months ago carrier-based aircraft in a daring attack had bombed Tokyo, the capital of Japan, and the geography lessons continued. The Allies won the Battle of Coral Sea. Japan captured Corregidor. The Battle of Midway ended Japan’s expansion eastward. Invading U.S. Marines were fighting on Guadalcanal. Allied forces landed in North Africa.