

1940s Slang

Here are just a few examples of slang used in the 1940s, both in the war and in civilian life.

Ack-ack: anti-aircraft fire: or, anti-aircraft gun

Alligator: swing fans: or, swing dancers

Bathtub: motorcycle sidecar

Buck: of the lowest rank - as in *buck private*, *buck sergeant*

Butter bar: a new Second Lieutenant - from the color and shape of the insignia

BYT: bright young thing

Cheesy: cheap

Cook with gas: to do something right - as in the phrase, *now you're cooking with gas*

Dead hooper: poor dancer

Dear John letter: letter from a wife or girlfriend breaking the news that a relationship is over

Ding: short for Ding Hao - which is Chinese for "OK"

Dogface: soldier - more specifically an infantryman

Doin' a Rommel: successfully carrying out a nearly impossible mission

Doll dizzy: girl crazy

Ducky shincracker: a good dancer

Eager beaver: enthusiastic helper

Fade: leave

Flat-hatting: military pilot flying lower than regulations allow - said to come from an incident when a pedestrian's new hat was crushed by the wheel of a low flying plane

Flip your wig: to lose control

Gas: a good time: or, something that was really funny

GI: government issue - which is a term for a soldier

Got your boots on: to understand what's happening

Hen fruit: eggs

Hep cat: male swing music lover: or, dancer

Hep kitten: female swing music lover: or, dancer

Hi sugar, are you rationed?: Are you going steady?

Hincty: (*hink-tee*) snobby

Hubba hubba: in a hurry: or, to move

Jeep: just enough education to pass: or, general purpose vehicle - GP

Killer-diller: positive: or, good stuff

Mae West: a life jacket

Mickey Mouse boots: term for the early-issue, lined combat boots

Motorized freckles: insects

North Dakota rice: hot cereal

On a wing & a prayer: hopeful, but not likely to succeed - from a song based on the words spoken by the pilot of a damaged aircraft

Pineapple: hand grenade - especially to describe the Mk 2 hand grenade

Rug cutters: dancers

Scene: situation

Shave tail: a brand new 2nd Lieutenant - from the days of mule skinnners in the Army. An untrained mule was dangerous so its tail was shaved to identify it.

Sheila: a girl: or, girlfriend

Short snorter: bill of currency (like a dollar bill), that an enlisted person would have signed by people met during service - said to have started in the 1920s and was widespread in WWII

Skinny: the naked truth - as in *getting the skinny on something*

Soitently: (*soi-tent-lee*) sure

Sparky: radio operator

Stompers: shoes

Striders: trousers

Threads: clothes

Togged to the bricks: dressed in one's best clothes

What's buzzin', cousin?: How's it going?

Whistling Death: what the Japanese came to call Corsair fighters because of the distinctive sound they made, especially USMC ace Gregory "Pappy" Boyington's fighter