

August 15, 1945: The 75th Anniversary of V-J Day

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On August 14, 1945, at 7:00 p.m., President Harry S. Truman summoned reporters to the White House for a special announcement. He read a statement from the Emperor of Japan which announced in part, “The unconditional surrender of Japan.” Three years, eight months, and seven days after Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, WWII was finally over!

V-J Day (short for Victory in Japan Day) came at a steep price. The United States counted some 418,500 military and civilian deaths during the war. Worldwide, that number neared 60 million! For just a moment, in August 1945, a war-weary world set aside mourning to celebrate the end of WWII. People poured into the streets and church bells rang out. President Truman declared a two-day holiday, and on August 15th, the United States celebrated V-J Day.



The Associated Press copyright Alfred Eisenstaedt/Life Magazine. When a sailor kissed a nurse in New York's Times Square on V-J Day — Aug. 14, 1945 — Alfred Eisenstaedt snapped this photo, capturing a nation's exuberance and a delivering a defining moment in photojournalism.

In New York City, thousands flocked to Time Square. Alfred Eisenstaedt, a photographer for *Life* magazine, pulled out his camera to capture the exuberance of the crowd. His iconic shot of a sailor kissing a nurse captured a defining moment in history.



In Tinley Park, Illinois, Mildred Pritza recalled hearing the news, “We cried, we hugged. Bells were ringing. Everyone went outside and everyone was hugging... There was real cohesiveness in the nation with everyone working for a shared goal.” The country was united in spirit and purpose and V-J day was a celebration of shared sacrifice. Pritza, who had never worked before the war, recalled her job building crankshafts for airplanes for \$1.09 an hour. With her husband in the Navy and a new baby to care for, she did what was necessary. In Plainfield, New Jersey, police officer Cornelius Coffey was assigned traffic patrol and said the city had the worst traffic jam he’d ever seen as everyone came out to celebrate. He chose to ignore the 10 p.m. wartime curfew for youngsters that night. News of the Japanese surrender came at 4:00 p.m. PST in Spokane, Washington. The *Spokesman-Review* reported that crowds spilled into the streets, and at first there was a stunned silence. “Then automobile horns began to blow. In a few moments, their blasts became a solid wave of sound in downtown streets. Their noise drowned out the shouting and even the noise of the siren atop city hall. A storm of confetti swirled down from windows of high buildings as office workers gave vent to their joy.”



On the island of Oahu, the bells in Kawaiaha‘o church pealed, bringing a flashback memory to many who heard the same bells ring out a warning on December 7, 1941. The roof of the *Honolulu Advertiser* building was crowded that December morning in 1941, as dazed and stricken citizens watched black smoke rise from the distance. Now 1,347 days later, the same rooftop was filled with people tossing shredded paper to the street below in celebration. Do you remember V-J Day? Have you heard V-J Day stories shared in your family? To read more about the end of WWII and to see more stories on V-J Day, search Newspapers.com today!

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