

End of WWII and New Monument Honors Vets



By Dr. R. Pletsch

September 2nd, 1945 was an historic moment as WWII officially ended. The Allies with General Douglas MacArthur representing President Truman accepted Japan's surrender aboard the USS Missouri. The ceremony took less than a half hour for a war that lasted from 1939 to 1945. Except for a few isolated areas, the combat ended a couple of weeks earlier.

The Emperor of Japan announced on radio to his people that on August 14, 1945 he had surrendered to the Allies. This was against the wishes of his military. This most destructive war in history had seen an estimated 70 - 85 million deaths. These included military and civilians. But the destruction was so complete that many were not able to formulate official records because many official buildings were destroyed.

Some of the notable number of deaths: The Soviet Union had between 20 and 27 million, Japan lost 2.6 to 3.1 million. The United States had lost 419,000 mostly military. Civilian deaths due to famine, disease, and bombings was considered to be 50% in some countries. Also the Nazi Holocaust killed about 11 million of which 6 million were Jews.

The controversy over the use of the atomic bombs in Japan needs a critical look. The bombing of Hiroshima on August 6th caused the death of 140,000 people. Then on August 9th in Nagasaki, around 80,000, this figure includes people that died weeks and months later due to atomic radiation by the end of 1945.

The US had larger air raids on Japan before the atomic bomb was completed. They bombed 66 cities with incendiary bombs. Three cities were mainly constructed of paper and wood so it was firestorms that killed between 350,000 and 500,000. It showed the Japanese were ready to fight to the end.

During this period, the Allies were assembling in Australia to invade Japan and after the no-surrender policy in places like Iwo Jima and Okinawa, the Pentagon reported losses up to 1 million Americans in that invasion. Many Americans who had orders to go from Germany to Australia had orders changed when on August 15th, Emperor Hirohito overruled his military and ordered surrender.

During the War Crimes trial, military leadership was charged with attacking numerous countries without a declaration of war, large scale massacres, rapes and using about 200,000 Chinese as "comfort women" for the Japanese military. They were also charged with using citizens for experiments with biological and chemical weapons. This included poisoning the water of at least 11 villages as an experiment in Southeast Asia. They are responsible for the purge of ethnic Chinese in Malaya and Singapore along with massacres at Sook Chang and Manjing. The list is too long to continue, but it gives you the idea. Many of the military leaders committed suicide after the war.

Now in honor to all American Veterans, the USAA Insurance Company has built a monument containing all 41 million who have served in the American Armed Forces from the Revolution to the present. It is a digital double-sided display designed to resemble the American flag. The displays are 18 feet tall by 108 feet long. It is located near the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC. The monument is on the internet. Check to see your loved ones. The internet shows if we missed one of your loved ones, There is a method to have the change and added to the monument. This monument started on July 28th and ends on Veterans Day November 12, 2026.