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Notes: August 15, 1945, the war was over and people celebrated. First-person accounts of reactions and celebrations of Nebraskans.

URL of Article: [http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/history/full-text/1991\\_War\\_07\\_Victory.pdf](http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/history/full-text/1991_War_07_Victory.pdf)

Photos: Dancing in the streets of Omaha; V is for Victory; JuicEE Pineapple Drink

# VICTORY!



*Dancing in the streets of Omaha on VJ Day. (Courtesy Bostwick-Frohardt Collection owned by KMTV and on permanent loan to Western Heritage Museum, Omaha)*

***“What a time to be alive!”***

**Jeanette Meyer Davis**

We all hated to fly those last few missions because nobody wants to get shot down when peace might be the next day. I happened to be on rest leave in Rome when V-E day came along and of course there was [a] wild celebration. I was happy to be a part of it. It's hard to realize just what kind of a feeling it was. You thought now you had a future, whereas before you weren't really sure if you did or not.

**Clarence Mitchell, Jr.**

The months were going by. We were just lying in our cells with no food, starving to death. The interrogations more or less quit coming, but they used to take us out and beat us again, make us stand up and put our hands over our head and leave them there and you can only do that for so long and then they become like lead weights. Then August 15 [1945] they woke us up early and put blindfolds on us and gave us a big rice ball instead of a small one to eat and it wasn't three or four days old like the others. They put us in trucks and drove us between Yokohama and Tokyo to a place called Camp Omori, which was a prison camp . . . .

Then August 29 the [U.S.] navy came ashore and they liberated us. They took us to a hospital ship right in the bay for a couple of days. In the distance we watched the battleship *Missouri*, [and] we could see them climbing the steps to sign the peace treaty.

**Norman Sellz**

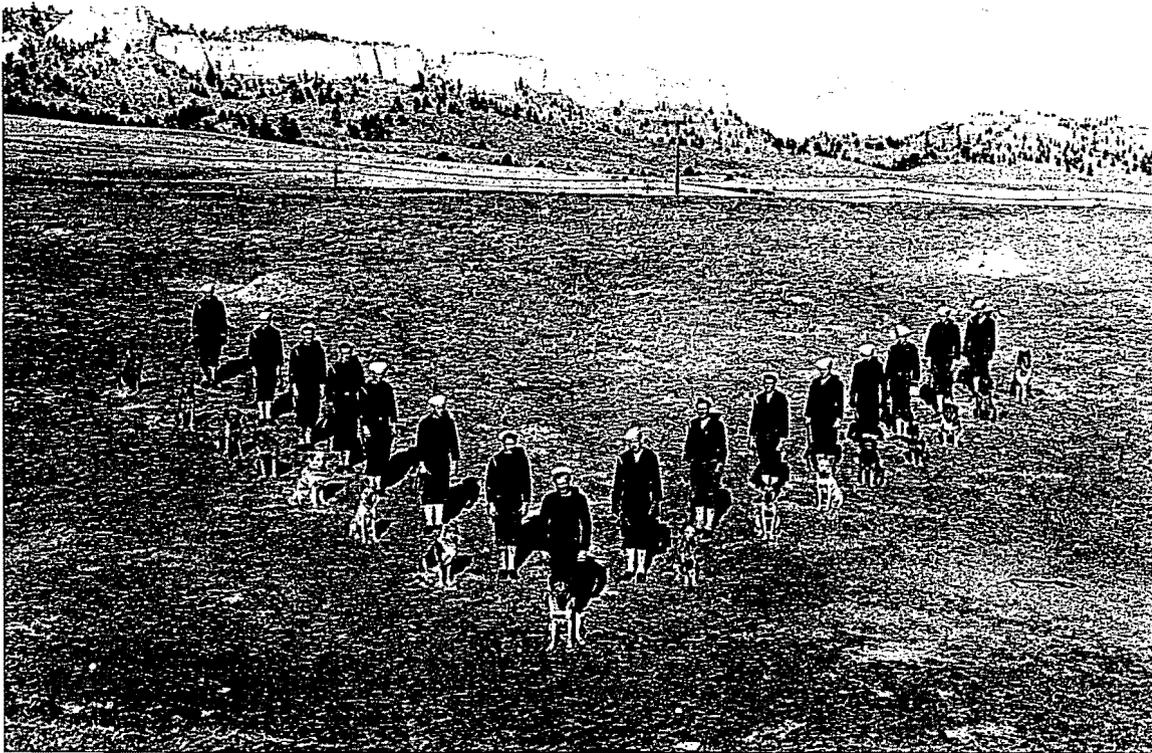
Oh, we were so excited. There were people all over the streets, filling the street, and you just wanted to be out. Betty was the most aggressive of all the girls — and they stayed in a university house. She was going to the university [of Nebraska]. The lady's name was Mrs. Rundell and Mrs. Rundell . . . ran a tight house. She had to, I suppose, but we didn't think so. Betty said, "Well I'll write the note and put it on the bulletin board. We demand a late night!" Mrs. Rundell wrote back, "A war has been fought because of words like 'demand.' There will be no late night."

**Sylvia Iwanski Chalupsky**

## V IS FOR VICTORY

Throughout the war, Nebraskans were constantly bombarded with propagandistic images, which were supposed to keep morale high. The V for Victory image was one of the most powerful. It began in 1940 when a Belgian refugee, Victor de Laveleye, made shortwave radio broadcasts from London to his country. He suggested that Belgians mark the letter V for *Victorie* in public

places to show their defiance of the German occupation. The V symbol caught on because of its versatility: in Dutch the V stood for *Vryheid* (freedom); in Serbian for *Vitestvo* (heroism); in Czech for *Vitezstvi* (victory). However, Germany also adopted the symbol, declaring that V stood for *Viktoria* — the German word for victory.



*Coast guard personnel from the Fort Robinson war dog training center form a "V for Victory."  
(NSHS-R659-4321)*

We were in Germany [on V-E Day] and I took my fishing pole and went up into the mountains for about two days fishing. I didn't realize how nerved up I was . . . I didn't want to talk or even see anybody. A bunch of them got to drinking and having a good time, but I just took my fishing pole and went up into the mountains.

**Tom Sherman**

V-J Day was totally different for me. We had some tin pie pans which we beat to make noise as we watched people walk down Farnam Street to the downtown district of Omaha. We had been expecting peace because the two atom bombs had been dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki a few days before.

**Frederick Walters, Omaha**

Grade school student

[I]t was summer — August 15 — and the word came about six o'clock in the evening. Everybody went downtown. It was just absolute insanity. The police were powerless. They couldn't do anything, they weren't trying to do anything. Everybody was jolly, jolly . . . .

Here's 20,000 guys out at the [Lincoln] air base [who] suddenly realize they aren't going to get shot after all. So they were downtown and we were downtown. O Street from 10th to 18th was solid people . . . . They just kept milling around and then they'd do what they called a conga line. Then they would trade ties with the GIs. Then you'd trade hats, if you had one, with the GIs. Everybody kissed everybody. It got a little rough. We weren't quite old enough, and we backed out of some of it. There was no breaking of windows or anything like that. For the most part it was just good humored, "let's all celebrate." I was downtown until after midnight watching all of this. We realized that we were seeing something that wasn't going to happen again. It never did either.

**Barc Bayley**

There was a lot of laughing and smiles at that time — just the relief of that for just a few minutes and then things quieted down, but the war wasn't over . . . . We continued under wartime situations, watches and sonar and radar and all of that, for either one month or two months because the Japanese had no idea where their submarines were or if they had submarines . . . . There was no reason to relax and then get torpedoed after the thing was over.

**F. Lowell DeVasure**

## What Did You Do in the War?

Omaha was wild, just wild . . . . Dancing in the streets. Sixteenth Street was cut off from all traffic. There were throngs of people embracing and crying and screaming and drinking! Good heavens, it was a celebration, and what a time to be alive. What a glorious time!

**Jeanette Meyer Davis, Howells**  
U.S. Army Nurse Corps

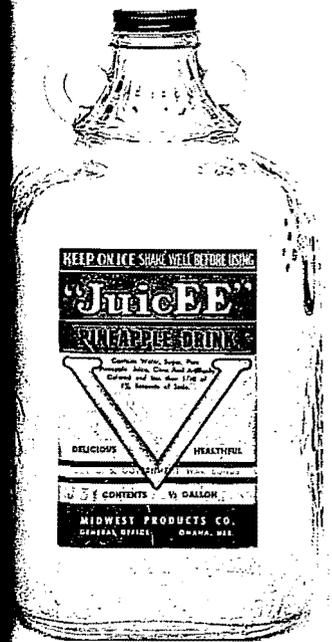
[Y]ou never saw so many hardened, seasoned, old battle veterans crying in your life. They just cried and cried for happiness, knowing that we would be saved that barbarous, bloody invasion of Japan.

**K. Roy Bailey**

[On] V-J Day, we were having a picnic in the [Columbus] park — our family. The cars kept coming through the park, and they were yelling something and honking their horns. And after this kept up two or three times [we thought], “What is going on?” So Dad finally went down, out into the road, and stopped them . . . and they told him the war was over. At first you couldn’t believe it. “The war is over. Are you sure?” So we got into the car, and we went downtown then to see if this was really official. Even now I tear up at the thought. “It’s over, it’s over.”

But then I expected . . . having never gone through this before, [I] expected, “The war’s over. Good. We’ll all go home. Throw down your guns and just jump on the train or the car or start walking or whatever and go home.” When we got downtown I wanted to go back later that evening to see the guys get off the train . . . and they had to explain, “No, no, it’s not that simple.” It’s a long time before you really start seeing people come home.

**Rose Marie Murphy Christensen**



(NSHS Collections - R. Bruhn Photo)