

## THE "MIGHTY MO," A RENDEZVOUS WITH HISTORY

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She was battleship gray not black like Commodore Perry's ships in 1853, and was the most powerful battleship afloat. She made her way into Tokyo Bay on a mission that would formally conclude the most disastrous war the world had ever experienced. She was the USS Missouri, the "Mighty Mo," flagship of Admiral William "Bull" Halsey of the U.S. Pacific Fleet.

### THE UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER OF THE EMPIRE OF JAPAN

The Potsdam Declaration by the Big Three on July 26, 1945, broadcast to Japan in its own language and released over the landscape by American bombers, pledged "prompt and utter destruction" unless Japan forever renounced militarism and the militarists, gave up its war criminals, withdrew from its overseas conquests since 1895, conceded human rights-and surrendered unconditionally. There was no reference to the throne but only a commitment to the introduction "of a peacefully inclined and responsible government" based on the free self determination of the Japanese people.

At a press conference on July 30th the Japanese ambiguous response, claimed by some was intended to mean the government would not comment "yet." The American translators, depending on one's research, interpreted this to mean there would be no comment "at all." The response by the Japanese of "mokusatsu," was taken to mean "ignore." "No comment" was a more accurate translation.

Whether it was a misconstrued adverbial nuance or not, World War II came to an end in a apocalyptic climax. On Monday, August 6, 1945, the B-29 bomber "Enola Gay" dropped the atomic bomb code-named "Little Boy" on Hiroshima, which totally flattened and charred the city. Japan had never known such total destruction or staggering death toll. On August 8th the Soviet Union declared war on the Empire of Japan and 80 divisions stormed into Manchuria. On August 9th the B-29 "Bock's Car" dropped the second atomic bomb code-named "Fat Boy," on the old port city of Nagasaki where the Dutch traders had first introduced Westerners to Japan. For the second time in three days another major Japanese city was destroyed, resulting in an appalling number of dead and dying people.

On August 14th Emperor Hirohito with the assistance of NHK technicians, recorded a peace announcement. To the Japanese, announcements from the throne are called the "Voice of the Crane," the imperial emblem and a bird that can be heard on high even when unseen.

At noon on August 15th, in a thin voice Hirohito gave the following speech: "We declared war on America and Britain out of our sincere desire to ensure Japan's self-preservation and the stabilization of East Asia, it being far from our thoughts to infringe upon the sovereignty of other nations or to embark upon territorial aggrandizement...the war situation has not developed necessarily to our advantage...We cannot but express the deepest sense of regret to our allied

nations of East Asia who have consistently cooperated with the Empire toward the emancipation of East Asia...Our Empire accepts the provisions of the Joint (Potsdam) Declaration..."

Author's comment: Even at such a critical time the Voice of the Crane was in denial regarding the role of Imperial Japan in the war, the tone of which hasn't changed very much since then. It was undoubtedly one of the most misrepresented non-committal declaration of surrender of all time.

With the endorsement of Clement Attlee, Stalin, and Chiang Kai-shek, President Truman appointed General Douglas MacArthur Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP). MacArthur subsequently told the Japanese to send him a delegation to discuss the upcoming ceremony of capitulation. They were instructed to use the password "Bataan." The significance of "Bataan" was not missed by the Japanese officials. They advised MacArthur's Headquarters that they preferred to use another password. A firm directive was sent by MacArthur repeating it must be "Bataan." Eventually a delegation departed on August 19th in two Mitsubishi (Betty) bombers painted white and marked with green crosses per MacArthur's instructions. A dozen U.S. aircraft intercepted them and the Japanese pilots signaled "Bataan." The American reply was "We are Bataan's watchdog, follow us."

The Japanese delegation was horrified when they were shown a draft of the surrender document. The Japanese version began with, "I Hirohito, Emperor of Japan" using the pronoun "watakushi" for "I." The emperor always referred to himself as "Chin" - the royal "we." The change was made by the Americans as requested.

All the arrangements were made and everything was in place for the momentous occasion. It was September 2, 1945, and the representatives of the Empire of Japan came aboard the USS Missouri to sign the instrument of surrender.

Overhead MacArthur's five-star flag, with Nimitz's five stars beside it floated beneath the American flag which had flown over the Capitol in Washington on December 7, 1941. Commodore Perry's flag was flown in from the Naval Academy at Annapolis and draped on a bulkhead. Painted on a steel bulkhead in full view of the Japanese delegation, were many miniature Rising Sun flags indicating the number of ships and submarines sunk and aircraft shot down by the Missouri.

At 9:00 a.m. after the Chaplain gave the invocation and the recorded playing of the Star Spangled Banner over the ship's public address system, MacArthur appeared and stepped directly up to the microphone. He was tieless, wearing an open shirt and unlike the other officers, he wore no medals. With a single sheet of paper before him MacArthur said: "We are gathered here, representative of the major warring powers, to conclude a solemn agreement whereby peace may be restored." It would he continued, "be inappropriate to discuss here different ideals and ideology or to meet in a spirit of distrust, malice or hatred. Instead, both the conquerors and the conquered must rise to that higher dignity which alone benefits the sacred purposes we are about to serve. It is my earnest hope and indeed the hope of all mankind that a better world shall emerge, one founded upon faith and understanding-a world dedicated to the dignity of man and the fulfillment of his most cherished wish-for freedom, tolerance and justice." At the end he said: "As Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, I announce it my firm purpose, in the tradition of the countries I represent, to proceed in the discharge of my responsibilities...while taking all dispositions to insure that the terms of surrender are fully, promptly, and faithfully complied with."

MacArthur's speech was without rancor or vengeance. It was a total surprise to the Japanese delegation who had expected the worst. The Japanese delegation was stunned by MacArthur's lack of vindictiveness, especially those who were associated, or familiar with Japan's actions following the surrender of the Philippines, Singapore and the horrors of Nanking.

Two copies of the surrender documents had been placed on a old mess table covered with green baize. One bound in leather for the Allies, and the other canvas bound for the Japanese. General MacArthur used five pens to sign his signature on the documents. He was followed by the British, Dutch, French, Chinese, Soviet Union, Australian and New Zealand delegates. MacArthur handed the first pen to Lieutenant General Jonathan M. Wainwright who had been left on Corregidor in 1942. He assumed command of the U.S. Armed Forces in the Philippines when MacArthur had been evacuated to Australia by order of President Roosevelt. Wainwright surrendered the Philippines in May 1942. The second pen went to Lieutenant General Arthur E. Percival who had surrendered Singapore on February 15, 1942. The third pen would go to West Point and the fourth to Annapolis. The last was an inexpensive red-barreled pen that belonged to his wife, which he used to sign the "Arthur" in his signature. She would save it for their son. The emaciated Wainwright and Percival who had been liberated from a POW camp in Mukden, Manchuria, had been flown in to Tokyo four days before the surrender ceremony on the Missouri.

Getting up from his chair at 9:25 a.m., MacArthur walked to the microphone and in a steely voice said, "These proceedings are now closed." As the Japanese delegation was being led away, he put his arm around Halsey's shoulders and said: "Bill where the hell are those airplanes?" At that precise moment a fleet of B-29s and Navy fighter aircraft came in from the South and roared across the sky overhead as they flew toward the mists hiding the sacred mountain of Fujiyama.

The signing of the instrument of capitulation by the representatives of the Empire of Japan and the Allied powers on the 01 veranda deck of the USS Missouri at 9:18 a.m. on September 2, 1945, officially ended World War II. A plate on her deck marks the spot where the documents of surrender were signed.

## SPEAKING OF PEACE

From the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor and the other military bases on the Island of Oahu in the then Territory of Hawaii by the Imperial Japanese Navy's First Carrier Strike Force on December 7, 1941, to the signing of the documents of surrender aboard the USS Missouri, Americans had fought gallantly around the globe, and had made great sacrifices in bringing about the final victory.

Having just completed the formal ceremony of surrender with the Japanese delegation, MacArthur intended to speak the first words of peace which he felt the Americans justly deserved. He returned to the microphone for a broadcast to the American people and said: "Today the guns are silent. A great tragedy has ended. A great victory has been won. The skies no longer rain death, the seas bear only commerce, men everywhere walk upright in the sunlight. The entire world is quietly at peace. The holy mission has been completed. And in reporting this to you, the people, I speak for thousands of silent lips, forever stilled among the jungles and the beaches and in the deep waters of the Pacific which marked the way." He went on to say: "Men since the beginning of time have sought peace, but military alliances, balance of power, leagues of nations, all in turn failed, leaving the only path to be by the crucible of war. Now we have had our last chance. If we do not devise some greater and more equitable system, Armageddon will be at our door. The problem basically is theological and involves a recrudescence and improvement of human character that will synchronize with our almost matchless advances in science, art, literature and all material and cultural developments of the past two thousand years. It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh."

"Nearly a century earlier Matthew Perry landed here to bring to Japan an era of enlightenment and progress, by lifting the veil of isolation to the friendship, trade, and commerce of the world.

But, alas, the knowledge thereby gained of Western science was forged into an instrument of oppression and human enslavement. Freedom of expression, freedom of action, even freedom of thought were denied through appeal to superstition, and through the application of force. We are committed to see that the Japanese people are liberated from this condition of slavery. The energy of the Japanese race, if properly directed, will enable expansion vertically rather than horizontally. If the talents of the race are turned into constructive channels, the country can lift itself from its present deplorable state to a position of dignity. To the Pacific basin has come the vista of a new emancipated world. Today freedom is on the offensive, democracy is on the march. Today in Asia as well as in Europe, unshackled peoples are tasting the full sweetness of liberty, the relief from fear. And so, my fellow countrymen, today I report to you that your sons and daughters have served you well and faithfully with the calm, deliberate, determined fighting spirit of the American soldier and sailor.....Their spiritual strength and power has brought us through to victory. They are homeward bound-take care of them."

#### THE USS MISSOURI, BB-63

1st Commanding Officer: Captain W.M. Callaghan

Keel Laid: January 6, 1941

Launched: January 29, 1944

Commissioned: June 11, 1944

Sponsor: Miss Margaret Truman

Design Crew Complement: 117 officers, 1804 enlisted, 2700 for  
War Service WW-II

Design Comments: Last Battleship to be completed by the  
United States Navy

#### Historical Highlights

Jan. 13, 1945, at West Caroline Islands; Feb. 16, 1945, with Task Force 58 and with the first air strikes on Japan since the Doolittle Raid of April 1942.

Feb. 19, 1945, invasion of Iwo Jima; March 14, 1945, with carrier raids on Japan; April 1, 1945, at Okinawa.

Was in carrier group that sank Japanese Battleship "Yamato" on April 7, 1945, which had the world's largest guns at 18.2".

April 11, 1945, hit by kamikaze near the main deck; July and August 1945, with carrier raids on the Japanese Home Islands.

Sept. 2, 1945, the formal surrender of the Empire of Japan took place on her 01 veranda deck from 0902 to 0930 hours.

March 25, 1949, the only United States Battleship in commission.

Jan. 17, 1950, ran aground 1.6 miles from Thimble Shoals Light; refloated on Feb. 1, 1950.

Sept. 14-March 19 1951, Korea; Oct. 25, 1952-Jan. 2, 1953 Korea; Feb. 1 1953-March 25, 1953 Korea.

Recommissioned July 1, 1986, to serve in Carrier and Battleship Command and Support Groups.

Served in Operation Desert Storm from Jan. 15 to Feb. 27, 1991.

#### Commendations

Three World War II Battle Stars, five for Korea, and served in Operation Desert Storm.

The USS Missouri has beyond any doubt, rightfully earned its designation as a registered national historic landmark. It is a fitting symbol of the American spirit.

Note: General MacArthur, Commodore Perry, and General Wainwright were Freemasons.