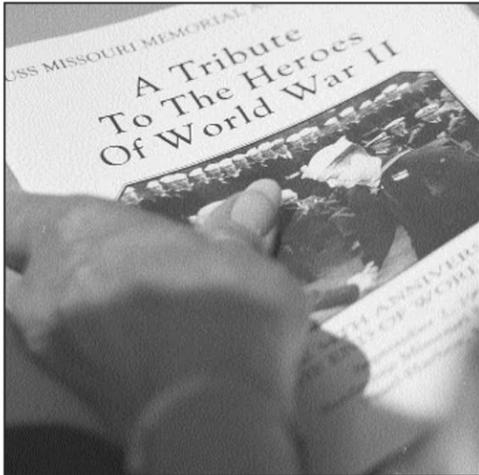
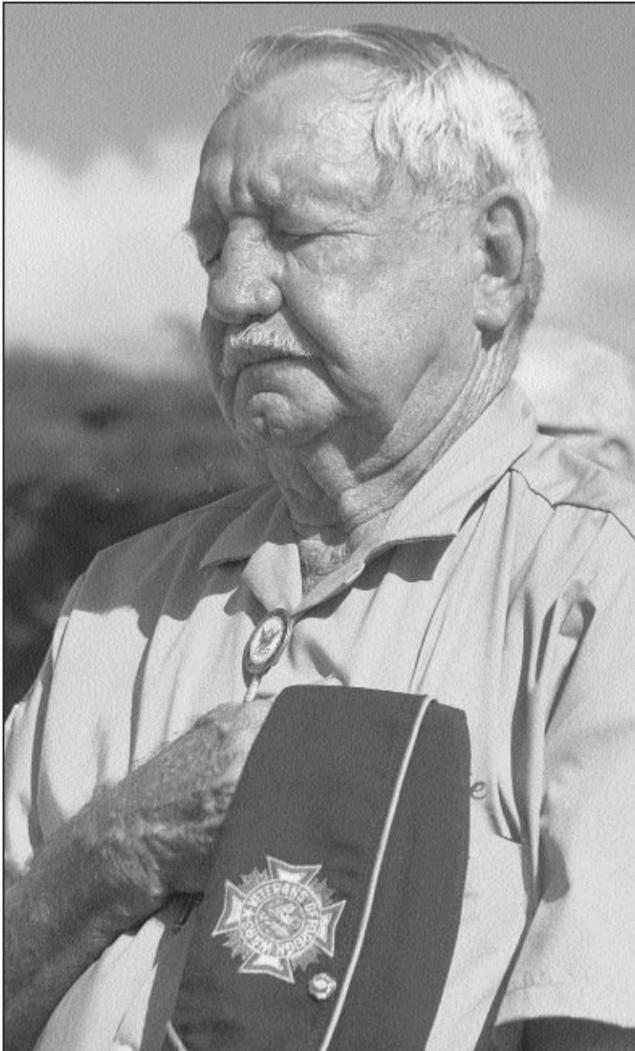


FLEET FOCUS

VJ Day remembered . . .



(Top left) Senator Daniel Inouye pauses during his remembrance speech at the foot of the Mighty Mo. (Top right) A Marine Corps honor detail renders a 21-gun salute at the ceremony. (Above) A witness to the commemoration holds a program showing some of the heroes of the war in the Pacific.



(Above) A World War II veteran covers his heart in salute and closes his eyes in remembrance. (Below) Speakers and more than one hundred people attending the ceremony sat at the foot of USS Missouri, the battleship aboard which the Instrument of Surrender was signed by the Japanese, ending World War II - 'VJ Day.'

'VJ Day' ceremony held at Missouri Memorial

By PH2 Chad McNeeley
HNN STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

In the shadows of the Battleship Missouri, the heroes of World War II were honored as the "Greatest Generation" during a ceremony marking the 54th anniversary of the end of the war.

Speaker Vice Admiral (retired) Robert Kihune, President of the Missouri Memorial Association hailed the veterans and their families as the "heroes of World War II, who made it possible for us to have the freedoms that we enjoy today."

Naval Station Chaplain, Cmdr. Luther Alexander, used the same daily prayer as his invocation that was used by Chaplain Richard Faulk on Sept. 2, 1945, as a prelude the surrender ceremony onboard the USS Missouri.

Dedicating to "peace among the nations, remembering another Sabbath day, that was desecrated by the beginning of this brutal war" and remembering those "who had paid the cost of our victory and our peace. On this day of surrender we turn hopefully from war to peace, from destroying to building from killing to saving."

During the course of the ceremony the speakers gave accounts of different aspects of the war, beginning with Richard Fiske, who was a Marine Corps bugler stationed onboard the USS West Virginia (BB-48).

On the morning of December 7, 1941 he witnessed the attack on Pearl Harbor from his ship, moored just 50 feet in front of the USS Arizona (BB-39).

He remembered the devastation that he saw as the Arizona took a bomb from a Japanese plane in the ammunition magazine, destroying the ship.

He recognized the "real heroes were not the ones who lived, but the ones who gave up their short lives before they knew what was going on."

Senator Daniel Inouye gave time to remember the casualties of all sides of the war. "We gather, not with sounds of celebration, but to remember and to thank. We all know that many in America do not remember that any of this happened."

Keynote speaker, Medal of Honor recipient Robert Bush was a medical corpsman during the Battle of Okinawa. Bush was cited for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving as a medical corpsman, in action against the Japanese forces on Okinawa in May of 1945.

Bush was administering blood to a Marine officer when the enemy launched a counter attack. After repelling the attack Bush refused medical treatment for his own critical wounds until his patient had been evacuated. He collapsed after attempting to walk to the battle aid station.

In speaking of the future Bush said, "As we continue into the 21st century and look at worldwide efforts for peace, let us remember that freedom is not guaranteed. It is vital that the American military maintain well trained personnel, develop higher technologies and sustain a readiness posture."

He also remembered the valiant efforts of his fellow servicemen and said, "We should never forget the grit and determination with which they fought. Nor should we forget the blood they shed, the pain they suffered in their quest to protect and defend our country."

The ceremony concluded with the recorded remarks of General Douglas MacArthur, that were given after the surrender ceremony onboard Missouri marking the end of World War II.

"Let us pray that peace be now restored and to the world and that God preserve it always. These proceedings are now closed."



Photos by PH2 Chad McNeeley