

The Day After

On the evening of 14 August 1945 President Harry S. Truman announced to America that Japan had surrendered. In a two-minute news conference he reported Japan's emperor had responded to Washington's demand to surrender through Switzerland, saying, "I deem this reply a full acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration which specifies the unconditional surrender of Japan." He further informed the nation that he had ordered Supreme Allied Commander General Douglas MacArthur to proceed to accept Japan's formal surrender within a few days. Radio Tokyo, however, was slow to announce the surrender to its own forces and then with uncertainty saying, "We have lost, but this is temporary." The Japanese air force in the Pacific was slow to respond and four hours after Truman's announcement he received a communiqué from Guam that Japanese aircraft was approaching the Third Fleet and was being shot down. Gradually, the battlefronts of the Pacific and Asia fell silent.

While cheers of jubilee resounded throughout the allied nations, cries of anguish were heard from the land of the Rising Sun. A number of top leaders committed hara-kiri to atone for their shame, following the example of war minister, Korechika Anami. America and its allies responded with a joyous shout of victory, releasing four years of penned up emotions. At last the world was entering a degree of peace it had not known since 1 September 1939 when Germany invaded Poland.

President Truman informed Americans that the nation's struggles were not over as it was faced "with the greatest task we ever have been faced..." Now the nation was faced with the reconversion from war to peace, and contends with the five million men that would be released from the army within the next twelve to sixteen months. In one stroke of the pen Reconversion Director John W. Snyder ended all manpower controls. The compulsory forty-eight work hour week was ended. Within in days all men over the age of twenty-six were made exempt from a draft that would certainly continue. The United States Navy alone cancelled \$6 million in contracts. Jobs were on the minds of everyone.

Throughout York County the people rejoiced. Streets in the business sections of York and Rock Hill were filled with celebrants congratulating each other. Some went to their churches to give thanks to Him who delivered them from war and death. Though a feeling of exuberance filled the people, many hearts contained a quiet sadness. The county had paid dearly for victory, giving more than 160 lives of its sons.

Truman declared a two-day holiday for government workers and Rock Hill Printing & Finishing gave its employees a twenty-four hour holiday with pay. The nation gladly received word that gas rationing was over. Rationing of gasoline began on the east coast in May 1942 and by the following December the entire nation was limited. Within an hour of the announcement a number of men rushed to a nearby filling stations for a tank full. One filling station attendant in Rock Hill was kept hustling "fillin' 'em up." Within a few years Americans were hitting the roads as Dinah Shore belted, "See the USA in your Chevrolet." Other items removed from rationing along with gasoline were canned fruits and vegetables, fuel oil and oil stoves, but meats, fats, oils, butter, sugar, shoes and tires continued to be rationed for some time.

Up to the end of the last day of the war, the people of York County worked diligently for the American cause. On the same day Japan surrendered a carload of waste paper was shipped from Rock Hill, the results of a paper drive conducted by the city's Chapter of War Dads, aided by Boy Scouts. The shortage of paper, however, would continue for some time due to the fact that little pulpwood was being cut due to an acute labor shortage. The government had the wisdom to promote the planting of pines for future needs of the nation for pulp. In South Carolina the timber business would rise to the state's third largest industry and in York County, it would become the number one industry for western York County.

A writer of an editorial in *The Evening Herald* wrote, "Out of all the sacrifice of human life, of materials and money, which we have made to win this great war, we want only one thing--a just and enduring peace. Complete worldwide peace, however, was not to be. Moscow claimed that the signing of a pact between the Soviet Union and the Chinese had brought peace in Asia. Yet, the Chinese Communists were marching to seize control of cities north of the Yellow river, including Peiping, Tientsin and Tsingtao. The day after the ending of World War II, the world stage was being set for a long, cold war, brush fire war in obscure countries, and fear of annihilation of the human race.