

WW II Treaty Signed

Rising Sun Set 21 Years Ago

By TOMMY DeFRANK

The weather was appropriate for the death of an empire.

Tokyo had been drenched by heavy rains most of the night, and the Japanese morn dawned gray and ominous.

It was September 2, 1945.

Stateside it was still September 1 — six years to the day since Adolf Hitler's legions poured into a helpless Poland, signaling the start of the bloodiest and costliest global conflict ever waged.

The Empire of Japan, two proud cities seared by atomic blasts, her wartime economy wrecked and crumbling after relentless daylight bombing raids, was finally calling it quits.

THE JAPANESE HAD agreed to surrender terms and begun demilitarization August 14, but the United States and Japan were still officially at war even as American warships lay anchored in Tokyo Bay.

Elements of the U. S. 8th Army and 11th Airborne Division were poised at the outskirts of the Japanese capital, impatiently awaiting orders to occupy the city.

Adm. William Halsey's 3rd Fleet backed up the ground forces, and additional ships were steaming toward Tokyo daily.

General officers and representatives from the Allied nations were also pouring in for signing of the surrender document, scheduled for September 2 aboard Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz' flagship, the battleship Missouri.

But even while final preparations for the surrender were being completed in Tokyo, a C-54 was fighting the clock 1400 miles away.

AS THE PLANE passed over Japanese-held Hong Kong, three Zeroes scrambled off a runway below.

"That really shook us up," recalls Col. John S. Fenton Jr., "but the fighters made no attempt to intercept."

Fenton was navigator on the C-54 that transported Gen. Hsu Yung-chang, official Chinese delegate to the surrender ceremonies.

He was attached to a special mission outfit of the 1304th Army Air Force headquartered at Calcutta. His squadron, which transported VIPs whenever the need arose, flew to Chungking to pick up Gen. Yung-chang's party, then proceeded to Tokyo via Manila and Iwo Jima, arriving only hours before surrender ceremonies were to begin.

Col. Fenton, who received an ornate Chinese vase from the general for his part in the flight, remembers that the return trip was uneventful.

BUT WHEN THE PLANE landed at Shanghai, still in Japanese hands, the nervous crew and passengers were greeted by a Japanese major in full battle dress.

"He had been graduated from the University of Southern California before the war and spoke perfect English," Fenton said, "and he seemed more interested in the football team that Southern Cal could field that autumn than in the fact that the war was over."

Fenton's crew, which also flew British Adm. Lord Louis Mountbatten to the Japanese surrender at Singapore September 6, had passed over the remains of Hiroshima enroute to Tokyo with the Chinese.

"I'd seen lots of bombed out places," he said, "but never anything so completely obliterated by one bomb as Hiroshima."

As the C-54 passed over Hiroshima Fenton remembers becoming uneasy over the chance of a possible incident by some never-say-die Japanese.

"We really just couldn't believe the war was over," he explains today.

SERGEANT ALAN CANTRELL had the same idea as he stood guard in front of Yokohama's Grand Hotel. He had seen a fanatical young Jap blow himself to bits a few days earlier to protest Gen. of the Army Douglas MacArthur's presence in the city, and Cantrell still feared an attempt would be made on the Supreme Allied Commander's life.

First sergeant of a crack company from the 11th Airborne Division chosen to serve as MacArthur's bodyguard, Cantrell had already sweated through one close call.

A trailer truck had lumbered onto the main runway at Atsugi Airfield and stopped, square in the path of MacArthur's approach, scant minutes before the general was to land.

"We were prepared to shoot the whole lot of them, but we found out just in time the truck had run out of gas," he recalls.

A guard unit pushed the stranded truck off the runway and MacArthur arrived without incident. He was escorted by truck convoy to Yokohama,

where he maintained his headquarters until the surrender document was signed.

"MacARTHUR WAS always very brief but very courteous, and many times he would chat with the men and thank us for taking such good care of him," says Cantrell. "He never showed outward signs of anything except complete confidence, and he never appeared to worry over his personal safety."

The bodyguard company accompanied MacArthur to the Missouri for the surrender, but remained aboard the destroyer Buchanan while the ceremonies were being conducted. Afterwards they escorted him back to Tokyo, where he established occupational headquarters.

The dynamic personality of the late MacArthur remains vivid to Cantrell, who was to see the general again during the Korean War.

"He was most definitely the commander-in-chief at all times, and that made our job much easier. The Orientals recognized firm, ironfisted rule, and MacArthur certainly provided that."

While the guard detail was fidgeting aboard the Buchanan, the Navy was also having its problems aboard the Missouri.

CAPT. STUART S. MURRAY, skipper of the Mighty Mo, feared the diehard Japanese might attempt a final belligerent gesture.

"We did not know whether that time might be chosen for a final kamikaze or other sneak attack, so the Missouri's antiaircraft batteries were fully manned and ready for immediate action," Murray recalls today.

The captain, Navy Inspector General before retiring as a full admiral 11 years ago, was also having difficulties with the press. Newsmen drew lots for positions and many were unhappy with their assignments. Some had to be kept in place forcefully.

"Two photographers tried to sneak up the ladder from the quarterdeck to the surrender deck to obtain closeups while the signing was in progress, but they were hauled back by the seat of their pants and dumped in place amid the chuckles of the others. Several other guests attempted to evade the assigned ship guards and go to other locations, but all were returned and took it good-naturedly."

Murray's most lingering recollection is the slowness of the Japanese delegation in reaching the surrender deck from their launch.

"I HAD ALLOWED several minutes for their walk, but they took such an unexpectedly long time the ceremonies were delayed in starting. Their snail's pace was slower than a funeral march."

It might well have been a funeral for the Japanese, led by Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu and Army Chief of Staff General Yoshijiro Umezu. Instructed to sign the surrender document as representatives of Emperor Hirohito, they boarded the Missouri as 4,000 general officers, crew members, press representatives and assorted others jammed every available inch of space to witness the last official action in World War II.

The 11 Japanese representatives stood facing the Allies on the surrender deck, situated on the ship's starboard. MacArthur appeared shortly before 9 a.m. and read an introductory statement.

"IT IS MY EARNEST hope and indeed the hope of all mankind that from this solemn occasion a better world shall emerge out of the blood and carnage of the past — a world founded upon faith and the fulfillment of his most cherished wish — for freedom, tolerance and justice," he said in part.

The sun broke through in time for the signing, answering the prayers of the horde of photographers. Shigemitsu, hopping about on his artificial leg with as much dignity as possible, signed for the Emperor. Umezu then signed for the Japanese armed forces. MacArthur was next to sign.

Charles Boatner, war correspondent for the Fort Worth Star-Telegram and now a top information official for the Department of the Interior, recalls that MacArthur's usual stolid bearing temporarily wavered before he signed.

"His hand began trembling with emotion as he began to sign. It was obvious to everyone there that he was making history and he must have known it," Boatner recalls.

BEFORE SIGNING, MacArthur asked Lt. Gens. Jonathan Wainwright and Arthur Percival to accompany him to the signing table.

Wainwright, the tall Texan MacArthur left in command at Corregidor when he left the Philippines, was gaunt and thin after his imprisonment in a Jap concentration camp since the island fell in 1942. Percival likewise was in poor condition after being taken prisoner when British forces under

(See WW II page 3)



THE END OF A DREAM
Gen. of the Army Douglas MacArthur, seated left, signs 1945. Lt. Gen. Jonathan Wainwright, left, and Lt. Gen. A. E. Percival stand behind MacArthur. aboard the battleship Missouri in Tokyo Harbor Sept. 2,

Firestone

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