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The announcement of Japan's surrender was coupled with news of more American casualties.

Photograph courtesy of USF Special Collections.

V-J DAY CELEBRATIONS IN THE TAMPA BAY AREA

EDITORS' NOTE: At exactly 7 p.m. on Tuesday, August 14, 1945, President Harry S. Truman announced in a radio broadcast that the Japanese government had surrendered unconditionally. The news was timed for simultaneous announcements in the Allied capitals of Washington, London, and Moscow. Across America people celebrated the end of World War II in every conceivable manner. After more than three and a half years of war, Americans let loose in a joyous burst of relief. Celebrations in the cities and towns around Tampa Bay mirrored those in other parts of the country, and they are captured in the following excerpts from local newspapers.

SURRENDER TOUCHES OFF WILD CELEBRATION IN CITY

Last night was a night St. Petersburg will long remember. As the official news that the Japs had surrendered came over the radio promptly at 7 o'clock, even before *Times* extras with big red

headlines hit the streets a few minutes later, a howling, screaming, hysterical mob descended upon Central Avenue. At first, it was a few racing cars, mingling the toots of their horns with the whistles and church bells and wail of the city's sirens in individual proclamation of victory. As the minutes went on they gained steadily in numbers until they were lined up four abreast all the way from Ninth Street to the waterfront.

Before police took hold, traffic jams developed at downtown corners. The din of horns grew in a gigantic, deafening crescendo. Most drivers honked as they drove, literally "sitting" on the horn ring. A variety of noises soon joined the swelling chorus of victory. Whistles shrilled, firecrackers popped, cannons boomed on the waterfront. Street cars clanged. Cars backfired. Kids beat a tattoo on the metal tops of cars. No one seemed to be able to make enough noise. Ten minutes after the show began, Central Avenue was a bedlam. Most effective contribution to the noise making was made by the ACL's Tamiami Champion, outbound, entering into a whistle-cord pulling competition with the Havana Special on First Avenue South with a series of deep-toned hoots.

Within half an hour downtown corners were packed to a point where passage was almost impossible, the mystery of where they all came from exceeded only by the mystery of how they got there so soon. Service men from all branches were much in evidence in the crowds that jammed the sidewalks. They grinned, embraced each other, shouted themselves hoarse, obviously glad that the war was over. There were old people and young people, invalids in wheelchairs and babies in buggies, octogenarians and bobby soxers. Apparently, the whole town had turned out to witness the spectacle, and all were waving flags, blowing horns, beating pans together, swinging clackers, doing their darndest to add to the clamor. The tumult grew as the evening wore on. Impromptu parades formed and marched down the avenue, stopping traffic. One, led by a pretty girl beating two pie pans together, was quickly joined by sailors and soldiers, some with their families, some with girl friends, some even with babes in arms. One crowd of teenage boys formed a serpentine and wove in and out among the traffic, each holding the shirrtail of the boy in front.

It was all like one gigantic vaudeville show. A tour down Central Avenue revealed many startling, even hair-raising sights. One driver, in a black sedan, came tearing down the wrong side of the street and had to be extricated by service men. Another, red haired and red faced, who had evidently been imbibing too freely, leaned out a car window almost to his shins, exhibiting the extra's headlines with a silly grin on his face. A large sign appeared high up on the Rutland building at Fourth and Central: "Hurrah for V-J Day." Riding majestically straight through the center of the maelstrom, his pet rooster perched perkily on the back of the seat, drove "Santa Claus, Indiana," known to all St. Petersburg as one of its colorful characters.

In the harbor, the announcement of peace was greeted by a cannonade and flairs from ships at anchor. Two Piper Cubs did barrel rolls overhead. As the sun set over Tampa bay and ribbons of light sparked from army and navy boats, the Cubs flashed on night lights and continued their high jinks.

At the Veteran's administration hospital at Bay Pines, the news was received solemnly, with a full realization of what it meant to mankind. Crippled soldiers of this war smiled wanly and

looked upward, saying “Thank God, some poor devil won’t have to go through what I did.” Older veterans, those of World War I and the Spanish-American war, quietly discussed how the wars in which they saw action ended. They were happy, but a silent reverence was more than noticeable.

The Don Ce-Sar hospital and its patients probably were the principal celebrants when the news of victory was announced. Emotions were mixed with dumb-foundedness, hilarity and silence. Most of the men were in the auditorium when the news came, viewing the movie, “The Woman in Green.” Less than 30 seconds after the surrender was made public, officials of the public relations office burst in the auditorium and shouted the good news. Soldiers desiring passes were immediately given permission to come into St. Petersburg and help the city with its celebrating. Others, remaining at the Don, were entertained by Bomb-a-Deers, who arrived at the hospital in time for the celebration. Men milled around radios, catching all the latest developments. “Look!” shouted one, “I’m so happy I got goose flesh on my arms.” A former infantryman attached to the 15th air force, Pvt. Louis T. Boyles of Anderson, S.C., had a grim look in his eye when he said, “Nobody who was not out there can really say what the news means. The main thing is that now no more of our guys have to die.”

St. Petersburg Times, August 15, 1945

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HOW NEWS OF SURRENDER STRUCK MAN ON STREET

Interviewed at random on downtown streets as news of Japanese surrender was received, local residents almost unanimously responded with expressions of gratitude and thanksgiving for the end of the war.

Mrs. C.P. Keeter, 525 Seventh Avenue South: “It means I can have that new house we’ve been waiting to build all these years. My husband has just been discharged from the Maritime service and will return to Gainesville and resume civilian life.”

George F. Hargreaves, 555 Fourth Avenue North: “I believe it is going to result in a lot of people being out of work and necessitate a lot of readjustments. It will bring back three of my nephews in service.”

Fred T. Sumner, real estate dealer, 651 Central Avenue. “I have been in the real estate business here 35 years and I anticipate a resumption in that business such as St. Petersburg has never seen. Peace is going to bring real prosperity to this community.”

John Henry, 425 Fifth Avenue North: “I’m a little afraid to believe it. The country faces a big job now. The peace will be hard to get going.”

Mrs. Mary Faitz, 4001 Fortieth Avenue North: “I shall just keep on working, peace or war. I am employed at Bay Pines hospital and my life will be just about the same.”

Miss Mae Lorimer, 618 Thirtieth Avenue South: “Peace will mean to many of us the safe return of our loved ones, among them my brother, who is in Saipan.”

Mrs. Joseph D. Slaughter, 2447 Burlington Avenue North: "Peace means so many things to me. My husband served with the army air force and was injured in this country. We are now waiting to go back to Philadelphia. I am glad it is all over and we can look ahead once more."

St. Petersburg Times, August 15, 1945

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V-J DAY CELEBRATIONS OKEH – PROVIDED THEY
ARE WITHIN REASON

"Let them celebrate."

This in three words sums up the attitude expressed last night at City Hall [in St. Petersburg] by Mayor George S. Patterson and City Manager Carleton F. Sharpe, both of whom confirmed the report that there were to be no restrictions on the public so long as its celebrations, of whatever sort, stayed within the bounds of reason and did not threaten property and public safety. Prior to word that Gov. C. I dwell would decree a 24-hour closing of bars and liquor stores, the city manager, was resting on conferences held some time ago with operators and dealers by former Chief of Police E.D. Vaughn, in which it was decided that the dispensers of wet goods would handle their own problem. The probability was that proprietors would have closed voluntarily-both on behalf of the public and in self protection.

"If the people want to celebrate, let them celebrate," said Sharpe. "They've waited long enough for the big day. So long as they keep in bounds and protect property – so long as it's just good, clean fun – there will be no irksome restraints. That has already been covered in orders to the police department. But along with the fun we should, and no doubt will, find time to give thanks reverently. And when the rejoicing is over, let's all get right back to work, because there may be a hard time coming as we face the next few months of getting back onto a peace economy."

St. Petersburg Times, August 15, 1945

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WAR'S END NOTHING NEW TO MRS. KRAIKER; SHE'S
SEEN THEM ALL SINCE 1865

To most people it is the end of "the" war. But when Mrs. Carrie Kraiker, 1720 First Avenue South, speaks of "the" war, she may mean Civil, Spanish-American, World Wars I or II. She will be 90, August 22. She has two grandsons in service, one in the army and one in the navy and she muses proudly that one of her granddaughters "married a soldier on crutches." Living alone with her dog, "Brindle," doing all her work, even to washing and ironing, her mind bright and her memories vivid, Mrs. Kraiker, who says she's a "damn Yankee," has resided in St. Petersburg about 30 years.

As a child, she says, she shook hands with President and Mrs. Lincoln when they attended a Philadelphia fair, given in Logan Square, for the benefit of soldiers of the Civil War. She went

with her father November 19, 1863 to hear Lincoln's Gettysburg address. The next time she saw him was when he lay on a black-draped catafalque in Independence Hall whence his body was taken en route to burial in Illinois. The wounds of the soldiers of the Civil War were stopped with lint she and other children of Philadelphia plucked from the sugarbags of her father's confectionary business, she said. When, as she says, General Lee, "that gentleman of the south," surrendered his sword to "stubborn Grant," Philadelphia fell to its knees and gave thanks. There was no shouting, she said. "There was no celebration. I can remember the day clearly. It was not jubilation. It was thanksgiving. And groping back through her memories 80 years, Mrs. Kraiker raised the tune of "Marching Through Georgia," and sang it through.

St. Petersburg Times, August 15, 1945

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BIGGEST CROWD HERE DOWNTOWN NO MISHAPS

Thousands of persons from all parts of north Pinellas congregated on [Clearwater's] Cleveland Street last night to celebrate the victory. It was the biggest crowd ever assembled downtown but in spite of the traffic there were no accidents except in one instance where a drunk driver damaged his own car. Police Chief John Swift said the evening passed without any trouble. Policemen were stationed at each corner downtown to control the traffic. The traffic lights were operated throughout the evening.

Central fire station got news of the Jap surrender at 7 o'clock and started blowing the electric fire siren. It continued blowing at intervals until after 11 o'clock. Between 7 and 8 o'clock the fire chief allowed soldiers and other celebrants to blow the whistle. Soldiers often were stopped on the street to be kissed by girls and older women. At the corner of Garden and Cleveland four quarts of liquor started circulating among a small group of servicemen. Within a short time one of the soldiers was in the middle of the street directing traffic. Police escorted him to safety. At the height of the celebration Fire Chief Luke B. Martin received a call from a woman asking him to stop blowing the fire siren. "We're trying to hold a prayer meeting and the whistles and other noise are so loud that we can't hear the preacher pray," the woman said. Two other persons called up to request that the noise be stopped.

The attitude of the average soldier was expressed by the sergeant in charge of military police in Clearwater. Said the sergeant: "We're not sure when we'll get out of the army but we know that no one will be shooting at us any more."

Clearwater Sun, August 15, 1945

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VICTORY!

This is victory. We celebrate it. We shake our neighbor's hand and slap him on the back in brotherly happy fashion. We put a flag in the window. We mark down a date forever to be remembered – August fourteenth, 1945.



Parading with American and Cuban Flags, children celebrate V-J Day in Tampa's Ybor City.

Photograph courtesy of *Tampa Tribune*.

But there is something else to be remembered. From every town in this country young men in uniform went forth to battle. You might say that from this part of Florida a certain number of young men went out to defend this part of Florida – to defend the United States – to defend the Allied people of the world. To defend us. Fifty of them will never come back to this beautiful place where once they went to school, played ball, sailed boats, went hunting and swimming together. Fifty of them. They were the hostages that we people of northern Pinellas County gave to War. For them there is no day of victory – August fourteenth, 1945. For those who loved them, there is no gladness on this day. Only the bitterness of loss. There is only one thing we who lived to see the victory they gave us, can do for them. We can see to it so long as we shall live that there shall be no more wars upon this planet.

Clearwater Sun, August 15, 1945

HILARITY MARKS OFFICIAL WORD OF END OF WAR

Bradenton paid hilarious tribute to peace last evening, following President Truman's announcement at 7 o'clock that the Japs had accepted the terms submitted by the Allies on Aug. 11. It wasn't long after the announcement before the siren and Big Ben were blasting the air, and hundreds of automobiles, many loaded to capacity by happy riders, toured the downtown section, blasting their horns and many cheering and singing. A group of boys rode about the city on

bicycles to which were tied tin cans or metal buckets which as they dragged over the streets, made a resounding racket. By 8:30 the streets in the business section were filled with people and the cars at some points were so numerous as to create temporary traffic jams.

City Council had gone into session at 7:30 but for the first half hour the din was so terrific that little could be accomplished. Particularly trying to the Council and audience was the power-light whistle, known as Big Ben. It blew and blew long after the city siren had ceased its din. Superintendent Jim Newman of the Power Company, attending the session was asked to stop the whistle, police reporting that a large number of prominent local people were at the plant, each taking his turn a sounding Big Ben. By some means or other the whistle was stopped about 8 o'clock. But throughout the long session of Council which continued until 11:30 members were disturbed by the numerous and varied types of street sounds.

Bradenton Herald, August 15, 1945

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LAKELAND COMES TO LIFE IN NOISY CELEBRATION AS ANNOUNCEMENT OF PEACE IS RECEIVED HERE

Lakeland came to life with horn-blowing and lusty cheering last night as official news of the Japanese surrender was announced at 7:07 p.m. by Mayor William Cade with repeated blasts on the city's deep-toned light plant whistle. Crowds gathered quickly on downtown streets and congregated at corners. Cars, most of them with horns going full blast, rapidly filled the streets and in a matter of minutes an impromptu motorcade was making a merry-go-round of the business section. Faces were wreathed in smiles. A pretty girl in a big car stopped long enough to shake her clenched hands aloft in a victory salute to the crowd.

But aside from the noisy horn-blowing, first demonstrations were restrained. Comments from pedestrians along the sidewalks were almost philosophic in their calm. "Well this is it!" was the comment most frequently heard....

Long after the victory whistle had blown cars with horns going full blast were still piling into the whirlpool of downtown traffic. Good-natured policemen with smiles on their faces materialized at intersections to keep traffic rolling but at first made no effort to curb the horn-blowing. An excited elderly man on a downtown corner had a round box of cigars and was passing them out at random. A hilarious passenger in one car thrust out a bottle of beer to the occupant of a car going in the other direction. It was promptly accepted.

Lakeland Ledger, August 15, 1945

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PLANT CITYANS CELEBRATE PEACE

Plant City welcomed the news of Japan's surrender Tuesday night with jubilation, gaiety and noise. Shortly after the news was flashed across the world at seven o'clock, the din and the noise started. The air raid siren, silent for so many months, blew lustily; the fire whistle tooted and



In Ybor City, V-J Day touched off widespread rejoicing.

Photograph courtesy of *Tampa Tribune*.

snorted. Excited Plant Cityans dashed out of the picture shows with broad grins on their faces to watch the celebration. Almost immediately, the downtown section was crowded with people and the streets full of cars, all tooting horns. Little knots of soldiers with their girls gathered on street corners with smiles as bright as shiny brass buttons.

Plant City Courier, August 17, 1945

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WAR'S END BRINGS 'A HOT TIME IN THE OLD TOWN' TO TAMPANS

Tampa awoke, although slowly to a new life today with a light heart-and a heavy head. After three years and nine months, "it" finally came – the end of the war – and Tampa did its full share of celebrating. Most of the city was closed up tight today and there were few who weren't glad of that. Most Tampans needed at least a day to recuperate, and most of them will get another holiday tomorrow.

By 7:30 o'clock last night, a half hour after the announcement, downtown Tampa, Ybor City and West Tampa was a mass of milling, yelling crowds and honking automobiles. And the tempo along Franklin St. did not slow down until the early hours this morning. Police Chief Eddings, who has had a lot of experience counting Gasparilla crowds, estimated last night's peak Franklin St. population at 60,000 to 70,000. When someone finally was located to blow it, the Tampa

Electric Co. whistle used for special Tampa celebration for years and since the war began only for air raid drill signals, gave the celebration “that real old fashioned touch” some Tampan felt.

Although all liquor outlets were closed for a 24-hour period, quart bottles looked like standard equipment for at least half of the celebraters. Some even came supplied with glasses and offered free drinks to every passer-by. City Police, falling in with the spirit of the occasion, made only five arrests, however. Four of those were released on bond. Service men and civilians joined in the wild demonstration of their joy. In front of one department store, a group of Army Air Force officers and gunners joined in a chorus of America. Some officers saluted enlisted men and in front of a drug store a private, first class, offered a major a drink-and the offer was accepted. Bootblacks, Negro and white, gave free shines to every service man who would stop long enough to have the job done.

Young and old joined in the kissing contests. Acquaintance was not necessary although some girls insisted on kissing only sailors and some service men preferred blondes. On one corner, a woman with snow white hair kissed every service man who came by. A snake dance wriggled its way down the middle of Franklin St., where automobiles packed with riders and strung with anything that would make noise tried to make their way through the muddle. Floating down from upper stories, scraps of newspaper and swirls of toilet paper covered the crowd.

Tampa Daily Times, August 15, 1945.

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SURRENDER SIDELIGHTS

Girls beating on pie tins, sifters, pots, tin cans...A little Negro boy pulling a red wagon filled with two crumpled garbage cans while other boys followed alongside, beating on the can with stick and other tin cans...The Tampa-to-Port Tampa City train blowing its whistle frantically all the way down the line...Soldiers and sailors democratically sharing the fenders of the same car exchanging white caps and overseas hats...A fire burning in the center of Twiggs St. just off Franklin St. with soldiers, sailors and civilians detaching themselves from the streaming crowd long enough to add fuel to the blaze and snake-dance around it...The drizzly rain which no one noticed.

Tampa Daily Times, August 15, 1945