

SEPTEMBER 7, 1945

YANK

THE ARMY WEEKLY



WASHINGTON This capital city, over which the Japs boasted they would raise their flag within a year after the attack on Pearl Harbor, relaxed its worn nerves and celebrated the winning of the war with a screaming, drinking, paper-tearing, free-kissing demonstration which combined all the features of New Year's Eve and Mardi Gras.

Fraternization among officers and enlisted men was the order of the night in this usually dignified stronghold of brass, where seemingly every second person in uniform is adorned with bars, leaves, eagles or stars. Every girl was fair game, and rank was no obstacle. A buck sergeant and a corporal chased two WAC captains into the doorway of a shop on F Street and kissed their superiors soundly, despite giggled orders to the contrary.

Two Navy officers who warmly invited a victory kiss from a redheaded Wave ensign in the hallway of the Willard Hotel did not make out as well, but their confusion was covered by a 40-year-old, rather liquefied, bald-headed gentleman who chose that moment to try to slide, no hands, down the Willard's banister. He made it halfway.

The number of bottles which were passed freely among strangers would have startled anyone who has ever paid \$50 for a quart of the stuff in such far-off places as New Georgia. One officer, standing in the middle of Pennsylvania Avenue outside the White House, waved a fifth of rye at arm's length, repeatedly inviting passers-by to "have a drink on the European Theater of Operations."

A T/Sgt. rounded off his night's excitement by shinnying up a light pole in front of the White House and leading the crowd in song, beating time with a small American flag. He concentrated on corny numbers like "Keep the Home Fires Burning" and "Home on the Range," and between songs he led yells of "We Want Harry!" But the President did not repeat his early-evening appearance. There were many officials in Washington that night who were too busy with the new problems of peace to celebrate the end of the war.

Not everyone on the streets was demonstrative, either. "I can't get that jubilant," said a T-5 thoughtfully. "You'd be surprised how many didn't get drunk tonight. I didn't."

And a middle-aged white-haired man with a Scottist burr remarked sadly, "You know, soldier, it's a nice celebration, but I lost two sons—two sons. It might be a joke to some, but . . ."

And the middle-aged man shook his head and walked slowly away.

—Sgt. BARRETT MCGURN

OldMagazineArticles.com