

REMEMBERING V-E DAY



May 8, 1945

The D-Day invasion of Normandy on June 6, 1944, represented the tip of the Allied spear in Germany's Western Front. Over the next eleven months, millions of tons of supplies, vehicles, and Allied soldiers poured onto the continent to join the fight against the Nazis. The last year of the war in Europe saw some of the hardest fighting in the ETO. Operation Market-Garden, the Hurtgen Forest, the Battle of the Bulge, the crossing of the Rhine River into Germany, and the final battles for Berlin and other German cities took enormous tolls in life and property.

The last German V-1 bomb hit a farm in Herfordshire, England, on March 27th, 1945. On April 30th, with the Soviet Army overrunning Berlin, Adolf Hitler committed suicide in his bunker. One week later Germany surrendered. The surrender was announced May 7th, 1945, officially ending the European phase of World War II. Allied leaders decided that May 8th would be celebrated as *Victory in Europe Day* (VE Day).

The news of Germany's defeat set off mass celebrations around the world. Many people gathered to dance in the streets. Overjoyed Russians jammed Red Square in Moscow to celebrate. The London crowds mobbed British Prime Minister Winston Churchill as he was traveling to Parliament to deliver his victory address. In France, Corporal William S. Dryer, US Air Force, wrote to his fiancé, *"The people went mad. Mad with laughter and mad with happiness, mad with anything and everything. All up and down the streets the cheering populace let it be known that Hitler was KAPUT..."* There was celebrating throughout the United States with the gathering of thousands in New York City's Times Square after hearing the news.

In Louisiana, Anne Relph recalled being on a train with her Grandmother *"and hearing bells ring as we went through little towns... I didn't know what was going on until the train stopped, and someone told us that the war in Europe had ended. There was rejoicing, sort of dancing in the street and church bells ringing in every little town we went through. In New Orleans, people were literally dancing in the streets. They were singing, dancing, jumping in and out of fountains...It was like Mardi Gras, and just this incredible sense of relief that part of our war, anyway, was finished..."*

Though the war in the Pacific was still being fought and the Japanese surrender would not come for almost another four months, there was no dampening of the spirits of the American people. They celebrated in the streets with the knowledge that with the victory in Europe this long war might actually be coming to an end.

