

"Everyone knows where *I* was on the day the war ended! Please share *your* memories, and help us "Keep the Spirit of '45 alive!"

*National Spokesperson Edith Shain
"The Nurse from the Times Square Kiss"*



On August 14, 1945, I was living in Aberdeen, Washington, with my sister Peggy, in the house that our parents had left us. Peggy's husband Chuck was in Germany, and my husband Sterling was in the Pacific with the Coast Guard.

Earlier in the war, I had worked as a "Rosie" at the Boeing aircraft plant, inspecting fusilage rings for the bombers being built. Our supervisors stressed how important it was that our boys had failure-proof equipment to keep them as safe as possible. Later, I taught grade school, replacing a teacher who had suffered a breakdown in front of her class when she learned that her son had been killed. I discovered that I had a talent for working with bright but emotionally distraught children, a career I pursued years later.

When we learned that Japan had surrendered, I remember how Peggy and I leaned forward to hear the announcement on the radio. We couldn't believe that the war was finally over, and that our husbands would soon be coming home. My son Stanley would see his father again and our family would be reunited at last.

Before Sterling arrived, I had a terrible shock when our minister came to tell me that Sterling's father had received a War Department telegram notifying him that his son had been killed. At first, I was staggered by the news, but as he talked, I realized that the minister had confused Sterling with his younger brother, Royce, who had been killed on Okinawa. My heart ached with conflicting feelings to be so relieved that it was Royce, and not my husband, who had lost his life.

When Sterling finally arrived, I was so excited, laughing and crying at the same time, that I couldn't open the screen door to let him in! I could hardly recognize him. He had lost so much weight and was sunburned a deep brown! I felt a sense of guilt that he was home, safe and unharmed when so many other had lost their lives or were forever scarred by the horrors of war.

Now, in the twilight of our lives, Sterling and I have an even deeper appreciation of how we were the lucky ones, who went on to have the joys of family, homes and careers. It is so important that people never forget how much was paid by those who gave their all for our country.

IRENE HEGG - Boise, Idaho

Do YOU remember August 14, 1945?
Tell us YOUR Story at www.spiritof45.org