

Program: Indianapolis Celebrates End of WWII (via Zoom)

Speaker: Dawn Mitchell, Photo Coordinator, Indy Star

Introduced by: Hank Wolfla

Attendance: 87 via Zoom

Scribe: Bill Dick

Editor: Ed Nitka

Also, this session was recorded and is freely available on the Sciencetech Club web site:

<http://www.sciencetechclub.org/zoom/473.mp4>. It can be shared with others.

Indianapolis Celebrates the End of WW II

You may know Dawn Mitchell from her frequent Sunday *Star* Retro Indy columns of historical interest to Hoosiers. On 26 July 2020, her article (page 10A) was about Jacob Miller (of Logansport) from the Civil War. Ms. Mitchell is a native of Greenwood; she graduated from Indiana Central College (now the University of Indianapolis) with a degree in Art. In 1986, she went to work for the Indianapolis *Star*, and she is still there. Currently, she is the Photo Coordinator, in addition to her weekly column. They are always human-interest stories that are done after exquisite research. Her writing style is one that draws the reader into the story.

Dawn's talk was highlighted by a series of about 30 slides of photos about the war. Indiana made many things for the WW II effort. Dawn showed a video of many women in industry, including at steel works and with large machines. Three million women worked in the war effort. They made hand saws and armor plating for tanks. They were known as "soldiers without guns." Girls would kiss the saw so that a soldier would see her lipstick overseas. There was rationing of gas, rubber, sugar, meat, etc. Victory gardens were very popular which allowed more canned vegetables and fruit to be shipped overseas. Canteens for service personnel were spread around Indy, sponsored by the USO. Dawn showed a photo of the Union Station Canteen with sailors getting food and drinks.

On 8 Dec 1941, The *Star's* headline read: "Jap Air Raiders Bomb Hawaii, Kill Hundreds." The *Indy News* stated that "Congress Votes War." Ernie Pyle was a Dana, IN native who traveled and walked with the troops. He wrote about the bad things that happen in war, which not everyone liked. One photo showed Pyle handing out cigarettes to some soldiers. The next photo showed him at his typewriter in Normandy. Pyle was killed by a Japanese sniper on the island of Shima, near Okinawa on 18 Aug 1945.

On 7 May 1945, the *Indy News* headline read: "War Ends in Europe." On 6 July 1945, Loews Theatre was showing "The Story of G.I. Joe." "PEACE" shouted the *Indy Star* on 15 Aug 1945. Rumors of the end of the war had been around for a few days and early celebrations occurred. Men in uniform were

celebrated. The Governor proclaimed a two-day holiday. Liquor stores were closed, and the Red Cross had stations around the city. People were seen swimming in the fountains on Monument Circle.

L.S. Ayres had a large "V" on the side of its building. William H. Block's department store had two gigantic U.S. flags on each street-facing side of its building. On 15 Aug 1945, the *Indy Star* headline said "War is Ended – Truman." Another edition had the word PEACE.

Photos showed some women dragging a Hitler dummy behind their car. Another showed a sailor holding a girl up in the air on the street. Crowds were everywhere. Kids marched down the street before the parade began. The official parade was held on 17 Aug 1945. 200,000 people were said to

be in attendance. A small African-American band marched down the street. People came from all over making noise with whistles, bells, dish pans, oil cans, and wash tubs. Men from the Order of the Purple Heart marched as did WACS from Camp Atterbury. Near the end of the parade, a large vehicle from the Kokomo American Legion can be seen.

Dawn's favorite photo (and mine) was one of about 10 kids marching as an impromptu band, with some holding flags, a few holding drums and one playing a flute. Great stuff.

Dawn's talk was very well received and the membership plans to have her speak again. She responded to viewer's questions at the end of the program. If you missed that opportunity, you may email your question to her at: Dawn.Mitchell@indystar.com. You can research many of her columns by looking online at Retro Indy and Dawn Mitchell.



Dawn Mitchell