



VIRGINIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Story of Virginia

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Personal History Relived: Photographs Give Voice to the Greatest Generation

Virginia Historical Society Features New Exhibit of Associated Press Images

Richmond, VA—*Memories of World War II: Photographs from the Archives of The Associated Press*—an exhibition opening at the Virginia Historical Society on Saturday, May 8, 2010—features 126 black-and-white photographic prints from all theaters of the war and the home front.

The Associated Press (AP) was the main source of news for thousands of newspapers in the United States and overseas during World War II. From the bombed out streets of London and the islands of the Pacific, to the Allied landings at Normandy and Japan's surrender aboard the USS *Missouri*, the AP brought to those at home the immense scope as well as the individual tragedies and challenges of the war that claimed millions of lives.

The photos in *Memories of World War II* were selected from the AP's collection of more than 100,000 World War II images taken by staff photographers and photographers of the U.S. armed forces. The collection includes pictures from archives in London, Paris, Frankfurt, and Tokyo, many of which have not been seen since the war.

“The photographs in this exhibition capture the World War II period perfectly and evoke powerful emotions about the achievements and sacrifice of Americans more than seven decades ago,” said Paul Levensgood, Virginia Historical Society President and CEO. “The Greatest Generation is notoriously silent about their war experiences. These images speak for the generation and give a voice to some of the lesser-known stories of that time period.”

In the exhibition, familiar scenes of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, along with British and American troops landing on the Normandy beaches on D-Day and marching through newly liberated Paris, are juxtaposed with photographs of actor James Stewart being inducted into the military, Nazi S.S. troops herding defiant Jews after the Warsaw Ghetto uprising of 1943, and Russian women laying flowers at the feet of four dead GIs who helped liberate them from a slave labor camp.

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Despite censorship that delayed the release of pictures and restricted caption information, wartime cameras recorded dramatic close-ups of power and pathos, and of the leaders and the lost. President Franklin Roosevelt, Soviet leader Josef Stalin, and British prime minister Winston Churchill sit for a group portrait at Tehran. King George VI and Queen Elizabeth clamber through London bomb rubble. Gen. Douglas MacArthur wades ashore in the Philippines. In Cherbourg, France, Army captain Earl Topley gazes at a German soldier sitting lifeless in a doorway. Dead Japanese soldiers lie half-buried in sand on a Guadalcanal beach. Dead U.S. Marines sprawl in the volcanic ash of Iwo Jima.

“As far as we know, all of the pictures were transmitted at some time on AP wires, but some probably have not been touched since the war,” said Charles Zoeller, curator of the exhibit and chief of the AP’s vast photo library. Founded in 1848, the AP is the world’s oldest and largest newsgathering organization, serving some 15,000 media outlets in more than 120 countries.

The photos are “personal history relived” for those who fought the war and millions more for whom it was “part of their lives,” former U.S. senator Bob Dole writes in the foreword to a companion book for the exhibition. “For many millions more, the postwar generations, who know the war only as distant history, these images will serve as the record of a shared and shaping era in our nation’s history.”

Dole adds that the pictures have greater impact for being in black and white. “The causes and objectives of the United States and our Allies in World War II were just that, black and white, good against evil.” Dole was severely wounded in Italy in 1945.

Retired CBS anchor Walter Cronkite praised the courage of journalists who shared danger with the troops saying, “Indeed, if there were no correspondents or photographers who went to war, what would the folks at home know ... what would future generations know?”

Memories of World War II opened to the public May 24, 2004, at Washington’s Union Station, a week before the National World War II Memorial was ceremonially christened on the Mall. The showing at the VHS is part of a national tour that began in 2005. The exhibition has traveled to more than twenty museums and will continue to travel through 2013. The tour was developed and managed by Smith Kramer Fine Art Services, an exhibition tour development company in Kansas City, Missouri.

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Memories of World War II: Photographs from the Archives of The Associated Press closes at the VHS on August 1, 2010. In conjunction with the exhibition, on July 22, 2010, the society will host a Banner Lecture by retired brigadier general and former army chief of military history John W. Mountcastle. Levengood will lead a gallery walk of the exhibition on May 26.

“Parents and grandparents should not miss this opportunity to bring their children and grandchildren to an exhibit that could help the younger generation learn more about a time in American history that changed what it meant to be an American,” said Levengood. “As the old saying goes, ‘a picture is worth a thousand words,’ and we do hope that the memories stirred by the images in this show lead to a conversation about the importance of preserving history.”

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For more than 182 years, the **Virginia Historical Society** (VHS) has been connecting people to America’s past through the unparalleled story of Virginia. The VHS—a history museum and research library—features award-winning exhibitions that are entertaining and educational for visitors of all ages. The Society is the only museum with all of Virginia’s history under one roof—all centuries, all regions, and all topics are covered. Although designated the Official State Historical Society, the VHS is a privately funded non-profit organization that relies on contributions from individuals, corporations, and foundations to sustain its operations. The VHS is located at 428 North Boulevard in Richmond’s Museum District. Admission is free. Museum hours are Monday–Saturday 10 a.m.–5 p.m. and Sunday 1 p.m.–5 p.m. Library hours are Monday–Saturday 10 a.m.–5 p.m. For more information, call (804) 358-4901, visit www.vahistorical.org, or find the VHS on Facebook and Twitter.

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