

"September 2, 1945, aboard a battleship named for our great state, the Foreign Minister of Japan signed the Instrument of Surrender in front of Supreme Commander for the Allies, General Douglas MacArthur and dignitaries from other Allied nations. The short ceremony in Tokyo Bay marked the formal end of World War II.

Just a few months ago, Americans remembered the heroism of World War II soldiers who obtained victory for the Allies in Europe. Now, we can reflect on the 65th anniversary of the end of World War II in the Pacific, thanks to the Americans who fought on land, sea and air to stop the aggression of imperialist Japan.

Members of the Greatest Generation remember a world engulfed in war, not just in Europe and the Pacific, but also in North Africa, China, Burma and India. And of course World War II reached our own shores at Pearl Harbor and through the radio reports, letters home, and war efforts in every American household.

The lessons of the Greatest Generation are so much more than this, but they are also about shared sacrifice. They remind us of what can happen when evil takes root in the world and is allowed to grow, and they remind us of what is possible when we put aside our own interests for our nation's interests in stopping the spread of that evil to cause the suffering of others.

All these lessons from the Greatest Generations are best learned firsthand. We can't learn them from a battleship as well as we can learn them from the personal stories, quiet conversations, and firsthand remembrances we get from Americans who lived through World War II. The people in your family who carry that knowledge with them are treasures, and their memories are priceless to us and to our nation.

If you haven't recorded an interview with the World War II veteran in your family or in your neighborhood, if you haven't sat down to hear their story, if you haven't written down their words for your local paper - it's not too late. There is still time to save this part of our history for future generations.

Though we all hope the world is never challenged again in the way World War II forced us to fight for our peace, prosperity and freedom... we all know it may be, some day. If that day arrives and we have lost the courage and conviction, the patriotism and pride, the sense of shared sacrifice that we learned from the Greatest Generation, then that battle will be all the more difficult to win.

So learn those lessons well today, and at the feet of the Americans who lived them. Then practice, in our Southern Missouri communities, all those virtues that make our nation great and its proud people so resilient.

The USS Missouri went on from its duty in World War II to serve in Korea and in the Gulf War, bearing the name of our state. She is still afloat today, as a museum ship on Battleship Row in Pearl Harbor, and the Missouri is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It's a great

honor for a part of our American history named for Missouri, and it is a great reminder of the honorable service of American patriots during World War II."