

Chapter XLVI

Surrender

August 16, 1945 – September 4, 1945

All through the night, planes from the the Reprisal and the Bon Homme Richard kept watch over the Third Fleet. The next day while the rest of the nation was celebrating the end of the war, aboard the Reprisal twenty three shipmates were buried at sea. Thirty one others had been injured and five were unaccounted for and were presumed dead. All the result of the attack that occurred after the enemy had surrendered.

The newspaper headlines and the radio commentary back home barely mentioned the incident. There was nothing more than as a side note that the attack had taken place, without any details. It certainly didn't detract from the celebrating. On the other hand, the men of the Reprisal were hardly in a celebratory mood. For them, the war was still a very real thing.

The sad thing is that the entire incident could have been avoided, had the crews of all of the ships in the task force remained vigilant, as ordered. At Admiral Halsey's request, the radar operator aboard the Reprisal was relieved of duty and put on report. It was only a token punishment, for the the radar operators aboard the other ships also failed to pick up the contact in time to redirect the combat air patrol in time to intercept the incoming raid. The fault also rested with those at their battle stations and those standing watch who were not paying attention to their duties. As a result, men died and two ships were damaged, one seriously. Moral on the Reprisal was depressed. Aside from the funeral service, the work of being at sea continued. Flight operation continued around the clock. Routine patrols were the order of the day, but no combat missions.

On the 18th, Task Force 38.2 remained on station, but took a break from flight operations long enough to replenish. Moral improved when several bags of mail came aboard. That cheered everyone up, including Admiral Brason.

August 7, 1945

Dear Sheffield

It was good to get your last letter. I'm glad that all is well with you. From the sound of things, you'll be coming home soon. The buzz around Washington is that war will be over in a matter of days.

They say that it is because of the atomic bomb, as if being surrounded by the navy has nothing to do with it. If I were to venture a guess, the bomb is the big secret project that Harvey has been working on. After all the time he spent in the Southwest, which is where it was tested.

Regardless of what brings it about, it will soon all be over with. I hope that means that you'll soon be coming home. I'm sure it won't be immediately

as there will be some some details to work out. I'm sure you'll have to stick around to keep an eye on things for a while in case the whole deal falls apart.

I'm trying not to get my hopes up and I suppose I'll have to be content to wait several more weeks or even a few months. It's been more than nine months since I last saw you as it is. I guess I'll have to wait a little longer.

No, I can't wait another day. I'm about to burst with anxiety. If I could come to you, I would. Maybe I can volunteer to serve aboard a hospital ship over there, or something.

Now, that sounds like the ramblings of a desperate woman. But damn it, I am desperate to have you back. When you left, I was so afraid that you wouldn't be coming back to me. Now that it is so close to over, I'm not so worried. Unless that is, the talks fall apart and they refuse to surrender and unleash a last ditch desperate offensive. Or what if some elements of their military and the population in general refuse to lay down their arms and take matters into their own hands.

There I go, being a silly woman worrying about things that will probably never happen. I tend to do that you know. I really have to be careful not to let myself get carried away, especially not in a letter to you. Maybe I should tear it up and put on my "everything is going to be alright face" and start over.

We have always been open and honest with each other, and that is all I am doing. Why should I hide my feelings now.

Anyway, on to other things. I have been well. It has been a beautiful summer here in Washington. Now that we're moving into August, it's getting hot. You remember last summer. I still get together with Ruth Ann and take her to see the sights.

I think things with her and Joseph are getting serious. She has shared parts of the letters that she has received from him. I can see it in her eyes, the girl is madly in love with him. Wouldn't it be something if they were to get married; I mean with her being your niece and he is my cousin's son. That would be keeping it in the family, for sure. For her, I think being separated from him has helped her to separate the difference between the deep emotional love from the excitement of physical love.

I know all about being separated from the one that I love. We have been apart more than we have been together. Missing you has deepened the emotional love that I have for you. Brace yourself for when I do see you again, because I am prepared to demonstrate it with a lot of physical loving. (Wink, wink!) There

now, there's something for you to think about for when you do finally come home.

I haven't really got away all summer, at least not since Memorial Day. I haven't used much of my leave time recently, not since we went to Hawaii last summer. I'm saving it for when you come home. Ruth Ann and I are talking of going to Roanoke for Labor Day. Wouldn't it be terrific if you were home by then, but I'm not holding my breath. I haven't heard from anyone down there lately. I suppose I should call your mother and invite myself down for Labor Day. You know what? That's exactly what I'm going to do as soon as I close.

I think I've been pretty plain in telling you how much I love you. But let me tell you again. I love you, I love you, I love you.

Love, always,
Ramona.

Her letter brought a smile to his face and gave him something to take his mind of the day before yesterday and look forward to. What happened was part of the business of war.

August 8, 1945

At sea aboard the USS Reprisal off the coast of Japan

Dear Ramona

I just finished reading your letter. Thanks, it was just what I needed.

Yes, the war is over, but it wasn't for us. Your worries were justified. When we got the word, we recalled the planes that we had sent off on another mission. Everyone was celebrating and not paying attention when some enemy planes caught us by surprise. It was more than likely a rouge commander wanting to die with honor and his subordinates joined him. They died alright, but so did some of my men. We got hit by a kamikaze as did another ship in our task force. They lost a lot more men and had to retire for repairs.

Despite being hit, we are still on station, waiting for further orders. For now, I'm to maintain regular noncombat patrols but defend ourselves if necessary. My guess is that they'll keep us around for a while. An occupation force is being assembled and they'll need air cover while they take up positions in case there is any resistance. After that, we'll

just have to wait and see what they tell us.

You know, now that you mention it, I'll bet Harvey was somehow involved with the atomic bombs. If you ask me, they were completely unnecessary. They were ready to fold anyway with the pressure we were putting on them, not to mention the Army Air Force. I don't believe the planned invasion would have been necessary either. Either way, the main thing is that is over.

That is good news about Ruth Ann. From what you said, it wouldn't surprise me if they got married. I'm just glad that she is doing so well. You did for her what her mother never could have. You should be proud of yourself, I know I am.

In the last letter that I got from Walt and Sarah, it sounds like Emmaline and Bill Casper's boy are getting pretty serious too. I wouldn't be surprised if they got married too. Oh and by the way, they tell me that Murry and Maxine are expecting already. That was fast!

These kids sure grow up fast. I was thinking of Rustin the day before yesterday. It would have been his 18th birthday you know. He was well on his way to having his pilots license by his 17th birthday when he died. That lead me to think about Sandy. She would be approaching her 21st birthday coming up real soon. They were great kids, I sure do miss them.

In thinking of them, I can't help but feel some satisfaction that those who killed them and their mother have been dealt justice. It took long enough. I sometimes struggle with that, but my dad drilled it into me that "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord." I have tried to remember that.

I have really tried to keep my personal feelings separate from the reason that I have been fighting this war, especially while here in the Pacific. It was much easier while I was fighting the Germans. Perhaps in Gods wisdom, that is why I was kept in the Atlantic for so long.

I see so many men who will be going home from the war filled with hatred and it is going to make the rest of their lives very difficult. I predict that in the years to

come, they'll have troubled marriages and all sorts of problems. They came out here fresh and innocent and they'll go home bitter and hardened. I wish more of them could be like Morris Gover.

So, it sounds like I have something to look forward to when I come home. I must admit, I have fantasized about being with you myself. We'll have to do something about that. Between the two of us, we'll have to take some time off and get away somewhere. Maybe we can have a real honeymoon.

Once I get home, I'd like to see what my next assignment will be. I just might decide to call it good. Next June will be 25 years. I always used to think that I'd go for 30 but I'm not sure any more. What do you think? Since I haven't been actively flying, it's just hasn't been the same.

Don't get me wrong, my assignments since then have been really good for me. They have caused me to stretch in ways I wouldn't have thought possible. This ship has been very special to me. I'm glad that I have had another opportunity to serve with her. Way back when Freddy, Tomcat and I were flying together, I never dreamed of the things that have come my way since. Admiral Halsey is always pointing out to me how these things have just come my way when so many others outright campaign for them.

So lets see what the next several months bring and we'll take it from there. Maybe I can get back into the sky and fly for one of the airlines. I'd really like to know what you think. What would you like to do with the rest of our lives? The most important thing is that we are together. Hopefully forever, like we have talked about before.
Love Sheffield

For the next several days, it was pretty much wait and see. The fleet remained on standby off shore while the details were being worked out. In the mean time routine patrols continued to be the order of the day, and night for Sheffield's task force. No further attacks were instigated by the Japanese.

By the end of August, the pieces began to fall into place. On the 30th the occupation forces would begin arriving to take up positions which required air cover from the Third Fleet carriers, in the event that they encountered any opposition. The formal surrender was scheduled for September 2nd aboard Admiral

Halsey's flagship, the battleship Missouri. In addition, Sheffield received orders to take his task force to Pearl Harbor where the Reprisal was to undergo temporary repairs and upkeep and then transit the Panama Canal with the New York Navy Yard as her ultimate destination. They were going home!

A couple of days before the surrender, Sheffield was in his office when Ensign Gover transferred a call to him. He answered, "Admiral Brason, speaking." He never liked referring to himself by his rank.

The voice on the other end responded, "Sheffield. Bill Halsey here."

"Yes sir, Admiral. What can I do for you?"

"It's what I'm going to do for you, Sheffield. My staff was given a list of brass to invite to attend the surrender ceremony. I noticed that you weren't included."

"That doesn't surprise me sir. I am junior to most of the other flag officers."

"Yeah well, here's how I see it. You were there when this whole damn thing started when most of the rest had duties elsewhere. None of them lost their wife and kids to these bastards like you did, so I'm making a personal invitation to you to attend. You deserve it as much as anyone."

"Thank you sir. I don't know what to say."

"Just be aboard my flagship Sunday morning at oh eight hundred. I'll see you then."

"Yes sir, Admiral, I'll be there. Goodbye sir."

Later he received a call from Vice Admiral John Towers, who had relieved the very ill Admiral McCain, with further orders. The Bon Homme Richard was being detached from Carrier Division Seven and he was given the Light carriers Monterrey and Bataan in her place with instructions to get them to New York as well. The change was effective immediately and the two light carriers, with their day air groups, switched places with the Bon Homme Richard, which was assimilated into another task force.

On the evening of September 1st, Sheffield transferred his flag to the destroyer Southridge for the trip into Tokyo Bay leaving Admiral Hyde on the Missoula in command of the task force. The Southridge, which was part of his task force, was named or Commander Terrell Southridge, who had been Sheffield's executive when he was killed at the battle of Bear Island. It was after dark when the destroyer stood into Tokyo Bay and dropped anchor.

The light of day on Sunday morning revealed a shoreline much different than the one that he had visited in 1922. The destruction was evident everywhere he looked. Some buildings remained intact, others were scorched and damaged, while so many had been reduced to rubble.

After breakfast, he boarded a motor whaleboat for the short trip over to the Missouri. Many of the guests and dignitaries had already arrived, others were waiting to come aboard. Admiral Halsey, always a gracious host, greeted him, "Sheffield, it's good to see you again. I'm glad that you came."

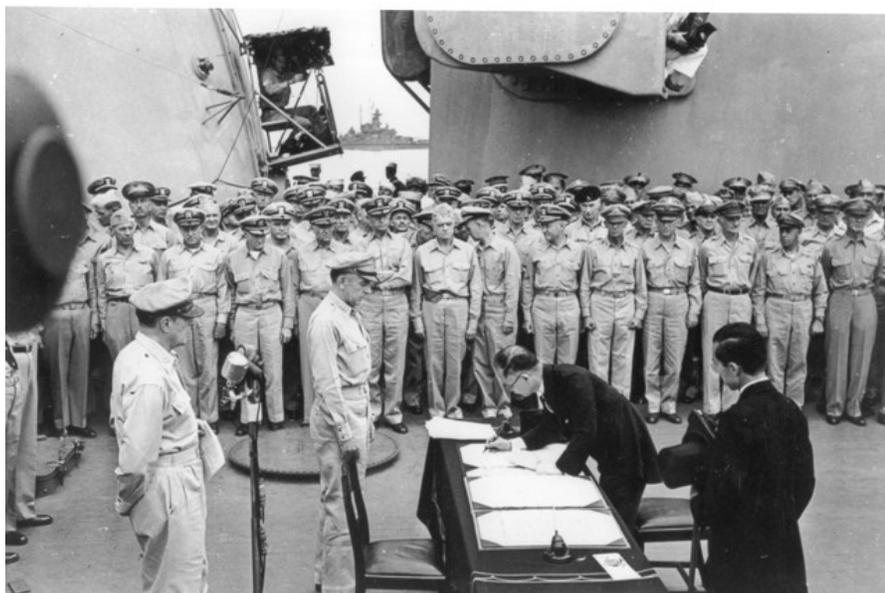
"It's good to see you too, sir. Thanks for the invitation."

“Not at all, You earned it. Feel free to mingle around. Perhaps you have some old friends here. I hope to see you later.”

Sheffield was shown the way to the officers assembly area while Admiral Halsey greeted the next flag officer to come aboard. He really didn't see anyone he knew well. He didn't see anyone else with with a cane, either. Admiral McCain stopped to shake his hand. He didn't look well at all. A little while later, Admiral Nimitz was piped aboard. A few minutes after that, General McArthur arrived with his staff.

The admirals and generals were called to attention as McArthur, Nimitz, and Halsey came on deck, ready to greet the Japanese delegation. Admiral Halsey noticed Sheffield standing back on the forth row and motioned for him to come up to the front row. Room was made for him as he took a place. The Japanese delegation came aboard and took their place and received their instructions. Those not in uniform were dressed in suits and top hats.

General McArthur, representing the United States, stepped up to the microphone behind the table that contained the surrender documents. He began by saying “We are gathered here, representatives of the major waring powers, to conclude a solemn agreement whereby peace may be restored.” He concluded by saying, “It is my earnest hope – indeed the hope of all mankind – that from this this solemn occasion a better world shall emerge out of the blood and carnage of the past, a world founded upon faith and understanding, a world dedicated to the dignity of man and the fulfillment of his most cherished wish for freedom, tolerance, and justice.”



Pointing to the chair on the opposite side of the table, he said, “I now invite the representatives of the Emperor of Japan and the Japanese government and the Japanese Imperial Headquarters to sign the instrument of surrender at the places indicated.”

Sheffield watched as the Foreign Minister, accompanied by his secretary, hobbled to the table with his cane and wooden leg. He lost is leg during an assassination

attempt in 1932. “At least I'm not the only one with a cane.” Sheffield thought to himself. Foreign Minister Shigemitsu removed his top hat and white gloves and when he sat down, he accidentally dropped his cane.

He seemed in a daze as he picked it up off the deck and handed it to his secretary.

He reached into his pocket for a pen as he fumbled with his hat and gloves. His secretary handed him one from the table. Next he seemed confused about where to sign the document. Sheffield sensed that others around him were becoming irritated and impatient. He glanced at Admiral Halsey who seemed to be turning red with anger, as if he was stalling. Sheffield on the other hand felt sorry for the gentleman. General McArthur's chief of staff pointed out where he was sign and affixed his signature on behalf of the Emperor and the Japanese government. Prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, his attempts to prevent or postpone the war angered the military and two days after the attack, he was sidelined by an appointment as ambassador to the Japanese sponsored government in China.

Next to sign was General Yoshijirō Umezu, Chief of the Imperial Japanese Army General Staff and a member of the Supreme War Council. He opposed surrender believing that the military should fight on, forcing the Allies to sustain such heavy losses in an invasion of Japan, that Japan could negotiate for peace under better terms. Emperor Hirohito had personally ordered him to sign the instrument of surrender on behalf of the armed forces as the Army's senior representative. Defiantly he stepped forward, refusing to sit down, and stiffly scrawled his signature on the two documents.

Lastly, General McArthur signed on behalf of the allied powers and Admiral Nimitz signed for the United States. Following his signature, representatives from allied nations signed on behalf of their governments.

General McArthur again stepped to the microphone. "Let us pray that peace be now restored to the world and that God will preserve it always. These proceedings are now closed." The entire ceremony lasted only eighteen minutes. At that moment, the sun came out from behind a cloud. As the surrender ceremonies concluded, 450 carrier planes from the Third Fleet, including planes from the Reprisal, flew over in massed formation. Danny Brason was also part of the fly over. A few minutes later, Army Air Force B-29 bombers flew by, including the Sweet Annie. This impressive display underscored the very power that had brought Japan to the peace table.

As those assembled began to break up and resume mingling, Sheffield heard a familiar voice calling his name. "Harvey. I should of known that you'd be here. You really get a round."

"I just can't seem to get a way from you, Sheffield. First you find me in Algiers and now here."

"So what brings you here, Harv."

"Oh I was just in the neighborhood working on little project representing my boss, General Arnold."

"I knew it! You had something to do with the atomic bombs, didn't you?"

"I don't know what you're talking about, Sheffield."

"Well if you ask me, you wasted your effort, we had things well under control. They would have given

up in a matter of time anyway.”

“I’m sure they would of. I look at this way, in the future no one will dare mess with us. Either way, its finally over, pal.”

“It’s been a long war alright. I can’t wait to get home.”

“I’ll beat you home. I’ll be back in Washington on Wednesday. Say is there anything you want me to pass along to Ramona?”

“Yeah there is. Do you have some paper in our satchel?”

“As a matter of fact I do.”

He opened it and retrieved a notepad and handed it to Sheffield.

Using the cover of the briefcase he wrote a quick letter to Ramona.

September 2, 1945

Aboard the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay

Dear Ramona

I just witnessed the signing of the surrender and guess who I ran into. She same one who delivered this letter.

Now that it’s all over, I’m coming home. We’ll be leaving here in a few days and are scheduled to arrive at Pearl Harbor on the 17th and will be there for about a week.

From there we’re bound for New York and will arrive sometime next month. I don’t know what my orders are after that. I’ll write more later, but I’ll be seeing you soon. I love you.

Love Sheffield

“Here,” Sheffield said, “give this to her for me, won’t you.”

“Sure thing, I’ll see to it”

“So Harv, what do you have going on for the rest of the day?”

“Well, I fly out at one thirty. I don’t have anything before that. The war’s over and there’s nothing to do.”

“We really can’t go a shore, why don’t you come with me over to the Southridge and I’ll have my steward fix us some lunch.”

“Now that sounds like a plan.”

By then, a lot of the crowd had thinned out. Most of the senior admirals and generals were having a

private gathering in the officers wardroom aboard the Missouri. Neither Sheffield nor Harvey were invited. They boarded the next available launch which took them over to the Southridge. They spent the rest of the morning visiting and catching up. At one point the subject turned to what to do next.

After lunch, Harvey boarded another launch which took him to the dock where a jeep took him to the Atsugi Airfield for the first leg of the flight that would eventually take him to Washington. Admiral Brason ordered the captain of the Southridge to take him back out to the Reprisal. By evening, he shifted his two star flag back to his flagship and the Southridge rejoined her squadron.

Ramona left work at five o'clock on Friday August 31st and went home to change her clothes and pack for the trip to Roanoke. At twenty after six, she arrived at Ruth Ann's apartment. She got off at six when the Capitol switchboard closed for the day. She just wore what she had on and already had her bag packed. Ramona had made up some sandwiches which they could eat on the way.

It was well after eleven when Ramona dropped Ruth Ann off at her parents home. A few minutes later, Ramona pulled into the Brason's driveway. The house was dark but the front door had been left unlocked for her. She quietly came in and went straight to Sheffield's old bedroom with her bag. She slipped out of her clothes and into her night gown and into bed.

It was after eight when she stirred the next morning. She could hear Emmett and Ellen out in the other room and got up and went out to greet them. They were family, it didn't matter that she was still in her nightgown. They had already had breakfast and Emmett was at the kitchen table reading the newspaper while Ellen was doing some dusting. She put down her feather duster and poured a cup of coffee for Ramona and put a couple of English muffins in the toaster. Emmett put down his paper while Ramona gave him a kiss on the cheek.

"Good morning," he greeted her. "I didn't hear you come in last night. What time did you get here?"

"Oh it was after eleven thirty."

"Well, it's good to have you." Ellen said. "I trust that you slept well."

"Oh yes. That is the most comfortable bed."

"I was just reading in the paper that President Truman will address the nation tonight about the surrender. We'll want to be sure to listen to it."

"I'm so glad it's finally over." Ramona said. "Now maybe Sheffield can come home soon."

"Well when he does, we'll be sure to have a big welcome home gathering for him." Ellen declared.

They visited while Ramona had breakfast. Then she took a nice relaxing bath.

By midmorning, other family members began arriving. Since Ramona and Ruth Ann and others had to travel back on Monday the celebration was on Saturday. Everyone was there except Sheffield and Danny.

Tim came down from New Jersey where he was still stationed, Emmaline brought Willie Casper and Danny's wife, Melissa and their two children came.

There was much rejoicing at this gathering of the Brason Family. The war was over and everyone would be coming home safe and sound. The only casualty in the family had been Emmaline's husband Seth. Tim was looking forward to being discharged in the next couple of months. He wanted to take his service as a radioman and combine it with some schooling from the GI Bill and go into radio broadcasting. Melissa shared the letter that she had just got from Danny that told of him becoming an ace. He had not mentioned any plans for after the war. Naturally, everyone was proud of him. Ramona surprised everybody when she mentioned that Sheffield was considering retiring from the Navy next summer after twenty five years.

The gathering lasted until late in the evening. Emmett insisted that everyone stick around to listen to the President's broadcast on the radio regarding the surrender. That was too late for Melissa's children, but Emmaline and her little girl, Carrie, stayed.

At ten o'clock, the broadcast began with the announcer introducing the President of the United States. President Truman oped his remarks with, "My fellow Americans, and the Supreme Allied Commander, General MacArthur, in Tokyo Bay:

"The thoughts and hopes of all America--indeed of all the civilized world--are centered tonight on the battleship Missouri. There on that small piece of American soil anchored in Tokyo Harbor the Japanese have just officially laid down their arms. They have signed terms of unconditional surrender.

"Four years ago, the thoughts and fears of the whole civilized world were centered on another piece of American soil--Pearl Harbor. The mighty threat to civilization which began there is now laid at rest. It was a long road to Tokyo--and a bloody one.

"We shall not forget Pearl Harbor.

"The Japanese militarists will not forget the U.S.S. Missouri."

He concluded with, "As President of the United States, I proclaim Sunday, September the second, nineteen forty five, to be V-J Day--the day of formal surrender by Japan. It is not yet the day for the formal proclamation of the end of the war nor of the cessation of hostilities. But it is a day which we Americans shall always remember as a day of retribution--as we remember that other day, the day of infamy.

"From this day we move forward. We move toward a new era of security at home. With the other United Nations we move toward a new and better world of cooperation, of peace and international good will and cooperation.

"God's help has brought us to this day of victory. With His help we will attain that peace and prosperity for ourselves and all the world in the years ahead."

Before letting anyone leave, Emmett had everyone keel down around the living room and he offered

a prayer of thanks to God that the war was over and that his family was safe. He prayed for the speedy return home of Sheffield and Danny. He prayed for the nation, he prayed for the Japanese, he prayed that peace would be lasting. When he was finished, there was was not a dry eye in the house.

The gathering resumed the next day with the Brasons in their usual seats for Sunday Services. The entire congregation exuded with the same sense of relief and gratitude that the Brasons felt. Walt's sermon was about peace. Not only the peace that had come at the end of the war, but peace of heart, being at peace with one another, and being at peace with God. It was very fitting sermon for the service that joyous day.

Ramona spent the rest of that day with Emmett and Ellen as after church, each family went their own way. On Monday, Labor Day, they stayed until noon before she and Ruth Ann got on the road for Washington.

The mood at the hospital on Tuesday was upbeat as the air of celebration continued. On Wednesday afternoon, she was surprised to see Harvey enter her office. She excitedly got up and ran into his arms. "Harvey, its so good to see you. No one knew where you were."

"I just got in this morning. After going home to see Marcella and Winny, I had to come see my favorite cousin. I have something for you." he handed her folded piece of paper.

Ramona unfolded it and began reading. She stopped at the date. "This was only three days ago. You saw him?"

"Uh huh."

"How is he?"

"He was just fine when I left him."

"Did he say when he'd be coming home?"

"Read on."

Ramona read the rest of the note and began sobbing. "He's coming come, he's coming home." She read it again and then her eyes light up and a big smile came across her face. She just had a brilliant idea.

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Vice Admiral John Towers actually relieved Vice Admiral John McCain, who was in ill health, as the commander of Task Force 38.

The destroyer USS Southridge is a fictional ship.

Carrier Division Seven was dissolved on August 19, 1945

The details of the surrender ceremony are from Bull Halsey by E.B. Potter with additional information about Foreign Minister Shigemitsu

The address by President Truman is an excerpt form his actual remarks.