

“You’d think humanity would have learned from World War II” (12)

The Bethlehem Gadfly Memorial Day May 27, 2019

(12th in a series of posts on Memorial Day)

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Gadfly:

At today’s Memorial Day Service I met 94-year-old Henry “Hank” Kudzik. Hank was a submariner who served on the *Gar* and *Nautilus*. He fought at the Battle of Midway. What an honor for me, as my late father also served in the U.S. Navy in the Pacific Theater of World War II. My dad, who was a Machinist Mate 3rd Class, operated the tail gun on a PB4Y2 patrol bomber, and he would have been 95 in August. That’s right around Hank’s age. According to the US Department of Veteran’s Affairs, as of September 2018 only 496,777 World War II veterans were alive at that point in time, many fewer today, I’m sure. A total of 16,112,566 Americans served in our armed forces in that War. About 415,000 died, many still MIA. My father told me enough so that I would know what war was like. He witnessed Okinawan civilians being driven at bayonet point to jump off of cliffs and commit suicide. There was nothing he could do from his vantage point in the sky. He was on Tinian when the *Enola Gay* took off on its historic mission, and related that they knew something was up because one plane, a B-29, sat on the tarmac by itself and was

surrounded by barbed wire and many MPs. He told me that when they saw the first recon shots and film from Hiroshima, nobody could believe that one weapon had done that much damage. He also related how swift justice could be meted out on other American servicemen when they stole from their own, and how someone caught trying to poison the water supply on a Pacific Island was handled.

War is hell. It's vicious, unyielding, devastating, and traumatic. You'd think humanity would have learned from World War II. We haven't.

Dana