

# WHITE HOUSE ANNOUNCES THE WAR IS OVER

## Russians Sport 93 Miles Ahead, Invade Jehol

As Defense Plan  
Planned in Landing  
On Sakhalin Island

MOSCOW, Aug. 14.—(AP)—The Soviet Union today announced that it had landed 15,000 troops on Sakhalin Island, the largest island in the Sea of Japan, and that it had advanced 93 miles into the Japanese mainland.

## Japan Radio Says Showered People Washed Palace

Emperor's Visit  
To Fall In; Imperial  
Residence Evacuated

TOKYO, Aug. 14.—(AP)—The Japanese government today announced that the emperor and his family had fled to the interior of the country, and that the imperial palace had been evacuated.



## MacArthur to Receive Surrender of Japanese

President Truman announced at 7 o'clock tonight that the war with Japan is over.

Gen. Douglas MacArthur, he said, has been designated to receive the Japanese surrender, and Allied commanders in the Far East have been ordered to cease hostilities.

The President—just three years, eight months and seven days after the Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor—announced the end of the war and declared a two-day holiday of celebration for the American people.

The President also announced that reductions in the annual income tax would be reduced from 30,000 to 10,000 a month immediately. Only those men under 28 will be drafted for the reduced quota.

Government employees will have tomorrow and Thursday off under a proclamation issued by Mr. Truman as he announced the end of the war.

As was previously announced, the proclamation of V-J Day will mark the formal ending of the war against the Japanese.

Front page headlines on August 14, 1945, announcing the end of the war. [FACSIMILE: THE EVENING STAR (WASHINGTON, D.C.)]

# *Prologue*

## Washington, D.C., 1945

Joy and optimism were in the air. Germany had capitulated three months before, and on August 14, 1945, Japan had surrendered and accepted the terms of the Potsdam Agreement. People the world over celebrated wildly, while some were quietly relieved they or their loved ones would no longer be in harm's way. One American soldier in the Philippines—who would have faced the Japanese in the forthcoming invasion of the Japanese homeland—was heard to say, “So it’s over. Well! I think I’ll go sit under that tree.”

At the time, I lived in Washington, D.C., with my mother Norma and sister Valerie. I was 14, and they were 39 and 13 respectively (Chart 1). My father Wilber, an army artillery officer, was not with us nor had we seen him for nearly three years. (Charts and Maps follow this Prologue.)

On October 1, 1942, Wilber’s division—the 43rd Infantry, a New England outfit (Chart 2)—had shipped out to the Western Pacific where it had fought through three sustained phases of intense combat. Wilber had been wounded twice but had soldiered on, and was honored with several medals. When the atom bomb brought the war to a close, he was a lieutenant colonel and regimental commander of the 172nd Infantry Regiment, the famed Green Mountain Boys of Vermont. If the war had continued, he and they would have crossed the beaches of Kyushu, Japan, under fire on November 1, 1945. All had wondered whether they would have survived that bloodbath, and many would not have.

With the war’s end, plans changed, and the 43rd Division was sent into Japan, near Tokyo, as an occupation force. Two weeks after arriving in Japan, the division received orders to return to the United States. I was sitting in a study hall in high school when the school’s newscast, read daily

## CITIZEN SOLDIER



*Lt. Col. Wilber E. Bradt on board the USS General Pope on the day of his return to San Francisco, October 8, 1945, after three full years overseas. He was the senior army officer on board the ship.* [PHOTO: BRK00012315\_24A CROPPED; SAN FRANCISCO NEWS-CALL BULLETIN, COURTESY BANCROFT LIBRARY, UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY]

## Prologue

by a student, announced that the 43rd Infantry Division was being shipped home—an item of little direct interest to any other student in that Washington, D.C. school, I would think. But I knew it meant my father would be coming home, and I let out a little “whoop,” but nothing more; I did not want to make a scene. The teacher raised her head to look at me curiously and then returned to her work.

My sister Valerie remembers it as a bright, hopeful time; her daddy was coming home at last. Our lives would be happier, even joyous, with him back in our midst. We did not go to the West Coast to meet his ship, on which he was the senior army officer, but a news photographer did and captured him on board the ship in a happy, smiling, perhaps even laughing moment.

Wilber reached our Washington, D.C., home in mid-October to a festive family-only homecoming; he seemed to Valerie and me to be the same daddy we had known so well before. To clear up some seemingly minor issues before separating from the service, he was assigned to the hospital at nearby Fort Meade, Maryland, and would return home weekends. We were becoming accustomed to being a family of four again, when there came a day that was to be—and remains—imprinted on our hearts and minds till the end of our days. Here is my story of that day from my recollected youthful perspective.

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*It is a bright December Saturday morning in 1945 at our Alton Place home in northwest Washington, D.C. I am a lanky 14-year-old boy and I'm off to a downtown violin lesson. My sister Valerie, age 13, accompanies me; she has a dance lesson, also downtown. We leave the house and wave goodbye to our parents. Our father Wilber has recently returned—just six weeks earlier—from three years of overseas duty with the army. Our mother Norma is busy with household chores. We walk the few blocks to Tenley Circle where we catch the trolley with the new streamlined cars that have finally replaced the classic turn-of-the-last-century cars.*

*My violin teacher, Jan Tomasov, is the concertmaster of the National Symphony Orchestra. My talent and level of accomplishment do not merit such a teacher, but Mother reaches high for her two children. I have been studying with Mr. Tomasov for the last few months. He is a conscientious and demanding teacher with a stern demeanor and is not given to easy praise. At the lesson, I am challenged by new material and incur his occasional displeasure.*

*After the lesson I head for home, again on the number 30 Wisconsin Avenue trolley to Tenley Circle followed by the walk down Ablemarle and 44th Streets.*

## CITIZEN SOLDIER

*At our front door, I encounter my Aunt Josephine and Uncle Paul, my father's brother. They live across town on First Street, NW; I know them well and have enjoyed extended visits at their home during two school vacations while Dad was overseas. They abruptly tell me I should go to our church (St. Columba's Episcopal) and see the minister because he has something to tell me. And I should do this straight away.*

*Puzzled but obedient, I go to the back of the house and grab my bike. It's a one-speed, coaster-brake affair with balloon tires, assembled of miscellaneous parts in a Hattiesburg, Mississippi, bicycle shop during our 1942 summer residence near our father's army camp. I walk it out of our back yard into the alley behind the house and bicycle the several blocks and up the final hill to St. Columba's, not a little apprehensive as I pedal those final difficult strokes.*

*The minister whom I know well through our youth group activities ushers me into his study and asks me to sit down. With little preliminary, he says, "I am sorry to tell you this, but your father is dead."*

*An accident, he says. I am stunned. I learn little more from him about the circumstances. My father had been in apparent good health, though that day he had had a reoccurrence of malarial symptoms and had decided not to report to*

*I was 15 in the summer of 1946, and here, I was leaving the back yard of our Alton Place home just as I had done on December 1, 1945, on my way to see the minister who would tell me my father was dead. My right pants leg is rolled up to keep it from getting caught in the chain.*

[PHOTO: BRADT FAMILY]



Prologue

*the Fort Meade Army Hospital where he was being treated for other seemingly minor ailments.*

*Deeply shaken, I go out to the street and get on my bicycle for the downhill ride home. My usual skill and agility fail me as I start down the steep grade. I almost lose control, but don't. In a few minutes I am home.*

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The details of what transpired upon my arrival at the house have faded from my memory. In the subsequent days, we managed to get through the military funeral and burial in Arlington National Cemetery on a dreary rainy day. We were given welcome support by a young half-brother of Mother's, Stonewall Sparlin, a navy medical corpsman who was attending the navy diving school in Washington. (He had served with the Marine Raiders in the Solomons during the war.) He had not realized we had moved to Washington nor had we known he was there. He read of our loss in the Sunday newspaper and promptly contacted us and gave us much needed support in the following days and months.

My violin teacher, upon reading of my father's death and realizing that it had actually occurred before my lesson, called to offer his condolences and to assure himself that I had not known of it during the lesson. When I told him I could not continue lessons, in part because of money, he generously offered lessons at no cost. I demurred, preferring not to continue under his stern critical teaching. I did not resume violin study until college, three years later. I would be a much better fiddler today had I continued with him, I am sure. I am surprised that Mother did not object to my decision, but she was facing much larger issues.

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My sister Valerie recalls that day, "The Day Daddy Died":

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND, 2009

*It was a big day. The plan was for me to go downtown with my brother, a year older, for a dance lesson for me and some other appointment for him, but I would come home on the trolley by myself, from Georgetown to Tenley Circle.*

*I had made it almost home that day, walking from the trolley stop on Wisconsin Avenue down to Alton Place. When I passed the neighbors two doors from our house, they stopped me and insisted I come in for lunch. I did not want to because it was the first day of my first menstrual period and I was afraid to have an "accident."*

## CITIZEN SOLDIER

*(Mother had taught me that it was a natural process, but I was still afraid.) They insisted I stay for lunch and even blocked my way, so I gave in and went into their dining room for lunch.*

*Their three daughters stared at me the whole time. I was uncomfortable, but I did not know what to say to them. Then the rector of St. Columba's Episcopal Church came to the house and I was told to meet him in the living room. He ordered me to sit down.*

*I did not trust him because he had stood passively by weeks earlier when the boys were tickling me on the floor in the church parish hall and I was almost hysterical. In that small living room, I sensed that something was wrong. He said, "Sit down." I said, "No." He repeated, "Sit down." I said, "No" again. He said, "Okay, your daddy is dead."*

*I felt a sort of dead anger. I walked out of that house and went down the sidewalk to our house onto the porch and into the dining room to find my mother sitting in a chair crying. There were police and military investigators throughout the small frame building. I asked her what happened. She said there was "a terrible accident." My brother arrived and he was told to go see the minister. He left on his bike for what I knew would be up the long hill to another message of death.*

*I walked into the kitchen and picked up a paper bag, went upstairs and stuffed my nightgown and a toothbrush into it, walked out and went to Mary Ann Frankenhauser's house. We were not friends, but I did not know where else to go. I said nothing to anyone and stayed there at least a week. I guess her mother called mine and left me alone.*

*I did not go to the funeral at Arlington National Cemetery. My brother went in the heavy rain with my mother, helping her to accept the folded American flag. I felt terrible about that.*

*Our daddy had come home after three years overseas and was now gone. I did not know why. I was left in a bleak, dry, empty space that turned into anger. I was driven to get a degree from Columbia University, which led to an extensive career in journalism. The anger finally dissipated, but never my regret for losing those years with my father.*

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I am Hale Van Dorn Bradt, 83 years of age in 2014 and namesake of my grandfather F. Hale Bradt; we pronounce our name closer to "brought," than "brat." I am a retired physicist and professor, and a resident of Salem, Massachusetts, with a wife and two grown daughters. In June of 2012, I made a month-long solo automobile trip of 4700 miles to the Midwest to visit relatives long neglected or never before met. I saw members of my father's

## Fatal Shooting of Colonel, Pacific Hero, Probed by Army

Officer Is Found  
Dead in Basement  
Trophy Room

Washington police and Coroner A. Magruder MacDonald are awaiting completion of an Army investigation of the circumstances surrounding the gunshot death of Lt. Col. Wilber E. Bradt, 45, Pacific war hero and former college professor, who was found in a weapon-filled basement trophy room at his home yesterday morning with a gaping wound in his chest.

Walter Reed Hospital authorities, who assumed charge of the investigation immediately after a neighbor found the often-decorated officer's body in the Bradt home at 4421 Alton place N.W., are expected to conduct an autopsy today. Meanwhile, Walter Reed officials have re-



LT. COL. WILBER E. BRADT.

*Wilber's death announced in the Washington, D.C., Sunday Star of December 2, 1945, page A6. [SOURCE: WASHINGTON (D.C.) STAR]*

family (the Bradts), my mother's (the Sparlins), and my stepfather's (the Bourjailys). This trip and those families provided me substantial resolution to the dramatic story of my family during World War II, a story that I have spent many years uncovering, and a story that taught me much about my parents and the America of their times.

My search began on the evening of my 50th birthday, December 7, 1980 (Pearl Harbor day!), with a discussion I had with my middle sister, Abigail, then 37, about her uncertain paternity. I was driving her and her husband Tom back from our house in Belmont, Massachusetts, where we had had a small dinner celebration, to their hotel in Cambridge.

The topic was whether Abigail was the daughter of my father, Wilber Bradt, a former university professor and a much decorated army officer who

## CITIZEN SOLDIER

had died in 1945, or of Monte Bourjaily, a prominent journalist whom my mother Norma had married in 1947. Abby had been born in 1943, and Monte had subsequently adopted her and given her the Bourjaily name. We knew both men were candidates for the paternal honor, but neither of us knew which one it was. Abigail and I approach our histories from different perspectives, and our discussions could become a little warm. She “felt like a Bradt,” and I felt the circumstances favored her being a Bourjaily. However, as on previous occasions, this conversation played out with no resolution. Then, a new thought occurred to me, and I said, “Well, perhaps you really don’t want to know, and that is OK too.” And, perhaps I did not want to know either. Facing the possibility that your mother had been an adulteress was daunting. We parted at the hotel on that uncertain note.

Upon returning home, I immediately went looking for dated letters from Wilber, my father, that might clarify his whereabouts at the time of Abigail’s conception. I knew he wrote many letters to the family during the war and that maybe I had some of them. I rummaged in the old basement file cabinet where I always threw stuff that related to family. Indeed, I found a large manila envelope with about a dozen letters from my father to me. During the war, Mother had gathered them and sent them in that envelope to the *Atlantic Monthly*, which was holding a contest for the best letters written by a serviceman to his children. Our dad’s letters did not make the cut and were returned. Decades later she found the same manila envelope in one of her many file folders and sent it with its contents to me. I put it in that basement cabinet and promptly forgot about it.

So, there I was, on the evening of my birthday in 1980, sitting on the cement floor of the unfinished basement reading my father’s hand-written letters. The dates and places of their writing shed no light on Abby’s paternity, but I found them to be well written, informative, beautifully descriptive, humorous, and self-consciously fatherly. They were also riveting and some brought tears to my eyes. I knew he had written home from overseas profusely and I remembered some of the contents, but I had not appreciated the quality of his writing. I knew, then and there, that I had to find more of them. I had long been interested in the Pacific campaigns of World War II and had collected histories and books about them, but had never delved deeply into the details of my father’s involvement. The possibility of retrieving a mother lode of his correspondence that could shed light on his experiences greatly excited me. Abigail’s paternity, in that context, became a secondary issue for me.

## Prologue

I met Abigail and Tom the next day and described for them the impact on me of Wilber's letters, along with my eagerness to seek out more of them with the aim of learning his entire wartime story. In doing so, I said, I could plausibly discover the truth about Abby's parentage. "Would you mind?" I asked. She responded, "After our conversation last night in the car, Tom and I went to the hotel's rotating sky bar and talked for at least two hours. We realized that you were right, I really didn't want to know, but . . . yet again, I did." She then gave me her blessing, saying: "Do what you have to do."

That was the launch of my search for people, places, and letters.

I eventually found some 700 highly literate, descriptive letters my father had written during his wartime service. To fill out the story, I interviewed family members, as well as his academic and military associates in the U.S. and elsewhere. I spent one afternoon with a Japanese former colonel who had fought directly opposite my father in the Solomon Islands, ferreted out documents and photographs from the National Archives in Washington and elsewhere, and visited the Pacific areas where Wilber had served: New Zealand, the Solomon Islands, Luzon in the Philippines, and Japan. Much of this I did in the early 1980s. More recently I have delved into letters written by my father's parents and his sister Mary that reveal their profound influences on his life. In recent years, I have found additional fresh material on the Internet.

In all this, I uncovered a fresh and unique view of the Pacific war as experienced by an observant and committed U.S. Army participant, as well as a complex story of an American family during the war. It is time that I shared the story with a wider audience. As my sister Valerie put it, "You must do this, Hale; it is everyone's story." I am motivated to do this by a compulsion to know my parents as real people and also because I alone, at this time, can provide the military and family backstories.

U.S. [close up]

I have chosen to let Wilber and others tell much of the story in their own words, through their letters. They capture, better than I could, the tenor of the times. Theirs is a story of America in the early 20th century, transporting us from the Midwest to the Northwest, and the Northeast to the southern states of Florida and Mississippi, before taking us on an epic three-year tour of the Pacific with its 11 ocean voyages and three phases of combat. Finally, it is the detailed account of my search for the story, including my visits to the Pacific locations where Wilber had been.

Of the approximately 400,000 words in Wilber's extant letters, roughly 150,000 of those words appear in the three volumes of this work. In all they are a remarkably complete record of the Pacific War in both its technical and

## CITIZEN SOLDIER

human aspects. My editing of the letters consisted of omitting letters in their entirety (with no indication) and excising portions of others (always with ellipses). My only modifications to the letters were occasional added punctuation, bracketed clarifications, and a few corrected misspellings and adjusted paragraph breaks. For the most part, however, the inconsistencies of Wilber's impromptu writing, including his casual use of dashes, were left untouched. The remarkable overall clarity and drama of Wilber's writing made unnecessary large scale editing, other than the aforementioned deletions. The work also includes letters by relatives and associates that shed light on the characters and activities of Wilber and Norma.

Wilber consistently dated his letters and, when permitted by censorship rules, gave his location. He wrote often of censorable events, but would delay mailing those letters until it was allowed, typically a month after the action. He clearly was writing for the historical record! Sadly, few of my mother's extensive letters to Wilber survive, but her thoughts and concerns are reflected in his responses. I, as narrator herein, fill in events that Wilber could not or chose not to tell. I also help ground the reader in the local context, the wider events of the war, the activities of our family at home in the United States, and finally my (as Wilber's son) take on the issues at hand. Any material appearing in square brackets [like these] is mine alone.

I relate the story in three phases, or books, that cover the entire Pacific War, including its precursors and aftermath, through the eyes of the participants. Infrequent abbreviated references in brackets provide a sense of my sources, which are more fully described in the bibliography. Photographs of places and people and facsimiles of documents are interspersed throughout the text but frequently referenced material (maps and charts) are placed together following this prologue.

As children we called our parents Daddy and Mommy and later Mom; unfortunately, there was little "later" for my father, although we used Dad on occasion during his life. As narrator of his story, I have chosen for the most part to step back and refer to both parents by their given names, Wilber and Norma.

For me—and hopefully for my readers—Wilber is the hero of this narrative, and Norma is the heroine.