

Good morning. It is truly an honor to be here with all of you to commemorate Spirit of '45 Day with Captain Jerry Yellin, an American hero who flew the last combat mission of World War II. Capt Yellin's wingman during that mission, Lieutenant Phil Schlambert did not return, and today, we join Captain Yellin in honoring his memory and his sacrifice.

Spirit of '45 day is a national day of recognition that was created seven years ago to honor America's Greatest Generation – the Generation that won World War II and then re-built the world. The Day is observed on the second weekend in August to coincide with the anniversary of August 14, 1945, the day that celebrations broke out around the world upon hearing the news that World War II was finally over. It was a day to celebrate peace and rebuilding – to recognize that a new day was emerging that required communities to turn a new page and start the process of creating a world that valued life and respect and new beginnings. Senator Susan Collins of Maine, whose father served in World War II, introduced Spirit of '45 day in 2010 and it passed unanimously. Communities throughout the USA are commemorating this day today.

Today we are so privileged to have Captain Yellin here to tell his story. I was honored to meet Captain Yellin more than a year ago during the National Memorial Day parade here in Washington, DC. After speaking with him, I realized that it was my generation's responsibility to make sure that the Spirit of '45 lives on. Shortly thereafter, I spoke to my inspirational mentor, Mr. Jamie Sawatzky, about creating an interactive experience for teens to learn directly from the Greatest Generation. For the last year, I have worked through my Girl Scout Gold Award project to preserve the wisdom of the Greatest Generation through a unique interactive experience called iWitnessed — > iRemember. iWitnessed, iRemember was designed to motivate teens to learn, appreciate, and remember the people, the skills, and the values that led to the Allied victory in World War II. It's not just about facts and dates. It's about values and skills – it's about what brought the Greatest Generation together. The Greatest Generation witnessed some of the most important events of modern time – whether on the homefront, on the front lines or while liberating Nazi concentration camps. These everyday American heroes were from all walks of American life. Like many of us here today, many of them were teenagers, but these teenagers, and millions of other

Americans, saved the world by knowing what was right, and doing what was right . . . together.

It is our job to remember, to learn from, and to be inspired by what these extraordinary people witnessed. As part of this national effort, my project and website has videos featuring more than a dozen World War II veterans, on-line virtual escape rooms, two service projects, and real-world interactive activities to encourage the Spirit of '45 to live on in the minds and hearts of today's teens. It is my hope that this program, which is being distributed to history teachers throughout the state of Virginia as well as through the VA World War II Mobile Museum, will help keep the Spirit of '45 alive.

Because our world still needs the Spirit of '45. We need to remember all those men and women who fought and won World War II. Our generation must be inspired by those who gave so much so we can be free. The values that propelled the Greatest Generation through tough times are values that we should identify with and ensure they are in the forefront of our minds. Values such as honesty, fairness, courage, strength, helpfulness, a sense of responsibility, patriotism – these are values that are as important today as they were in the 1940s. And in Scouting, indeed through our Girl Scout Law, we pledge to carry these values forward. It is our duty as scouts, it is our duty as Americans, it is our duty as members of the last generation to get a chance to meet and to interact with the Greatest Generation to remember and honor their spirit and sacrifice. The Spirit of 45 – we will remember and be inspired.

Thank you, Mr. Hegg, for asking us to be here today, and thank you, Mr. Yellin, for helping to save the world and for being here to share your experiences with us. You witnessed, we will remember.

- Madeleine LeBeau
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