

Keep the Spirit of '45 Alive

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For Immediate Release

San Diego hosts “Spirit of ’45 Festival” honoring Greatest Generation on 68th Anniversary of End of WWII

Couples renew vows as part of celebrations in front of giant sculpture depicting “Times Square Kiss” in front of USS Midway

(San Diego, CA, August 13) A public celebration of the end of World War II and a call for a renewal of America’s spirit of national unity will take place at the 25 ft Seward Johnson sculpture that stands in San Diego’s “Greatest Generation Walk” beginning at **10 a.m. on Wednesday, August 14.**

The first annual “Spirit of ’45 Festival” will feature live 1940’s musical entertainment by the Singing Blue Stars and the San Diego Swing Club, WWII re-enactors, and WWII veterans who have been taken to Washington, DC by San Diego Honor Flight to visit the National World War II Memorial where a public ceremony was held on Sunday. The Festival concludes a week of events that have been taking place across America in hundreds of communities and during Major League Baseball games as part of National Spirit of ’45 Day, the annual day which honors the men and women of the World War II generation that was passed unanimously by Congress in 2010.

The San Diego event follows a media event that will be taking place earlier in the day in **Times Square** featuring **Jerry Yellin**, 89, the Army Air Corps pilot who flew the final combat mission of WWII on the day President Harry S. Truman announced that the war had ended on August 14, 1945, and **Gloria Bullard**, 87, woman who appears in the famous photo of a joyous sailor kissing a nurse in Times Square on that day.

The couple will pose for photos under a giant video screen in Times Square at noon on Wednesday that will show a display of photos of couples who were married during the war are being invited each year who sent in send their wedding photos to be included in a video collage

of the “Kiss” photo that is displayed on giant screens on Walgreens Times Square store each year on August 14 to officially conclude Spirit of ’45 Day

Appearing at the San Diego event will be **Jerry Coleman** of the San Diego Padres, who is a national spokesman for Spirit of ’45 Day and former San Diego mayoral candidate **Nathan Fletcher** who introduced Spirit of ’45 Day in the California legislature where it was unanimously approved in 2010.

Coleman flew more than 50 missions as a Marine pilot in the Pacific during WWII and then went on to help the New York Yankees win 7 pennants and 5 world championships as their star second baseman, before having his career put on hold to serve again in combat during the Korean War, the only Major League player to do so. Fletcher, now an executive at **QUALCOMM**, joined Coleman to kick off event held on the USS Midway in January 2010, to launch the national campaign that led to Spirit of ’45 Day becoming a nationally observed annual day of remembrance.

“I am counting on Nathan to help inspire the youth of our country to keep the Spirit of ’45 alive by getting involved in the helping to solve some of the tough problems that America faces today,” said Coleman. “They have the potential to be the ‘ordinary heroes’ of their generation through civic engagement, volunteerism and service to others.”

The number of WWII veterans and those who supported them on the Home Front during the war is dwindling, but the surviving members of the Greatest Generation are taking comfort that their achievements and legacy of service to their community and their country will endure now that there is an official day of remembrance.

“August 14, 1945 was the day the lights came back on across America and all over the world,” said **Stu Hedley**, who was at Pearl Harbor during the attack on December 7, 1941. “Spirit of ’45 Day reminds us of that very special time when Americans were all united and we worked together to make the world a better place. We need that Spirit again in our country”

The Festival will include a special ceremony during which couples who were married during and immediately after the war will renew their vows. The program will conclude with a wreath laying ceremony and a performance of “Taps,” which will officially signal the end of this year’s Spirit of ’45 Day observances for this year.

A national conference will be held in San Diego in February next year that will bring 100 organizations together to begin laying the groundwork for a nationwide celebration of the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII in August 2015.

“Spirit of '45 Day is a wonderful time for all Americans to come together to celebrate the achievements and values of the WWII generation, and to reflect on what made them great,” said **Linda Laurie** of Poway, who is the national events coordinator for “Keep the Spirit of '45 Alive!” a grassroots nonprofit initiative that is helping raise public awareness and participation in Spirit of '45 Day. “By remembering their courage, shared sacrifice, ‘can do’ attitude, sense of national unity and commitment to service, we can renew the same spirit of national unity that we need to meet the challenges of today and follow their example of helping to assure a better future for America’s children and their children's children.”

For more information about the Spirit of '45 Festival contact Linda Laurie at lsizzle@aol.com or (818) 513-8238