

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1904

August 6, 2015

Bobby O. Bell
Superintendent, Henri Chapelle American Cemetery
159 Rue du Memorial Americain
B-4852 Hombourg
Belgium

Dear Friends:

On August 14, 1945, World War II came to an end. The great victory our armed forces achieved was greeted throughout America and around the world with joyous celebration and solemn reflection.

Seven decades later, that "Spirit of '45" remains strong. On the 70th anniversary of freedom's triumph, we come together to honor the heroes of all those years ago. From the islands of the Pacific, across America, and to the battlefields of Europe, the beneficiaries of that courage and sacrifice gather today to pay our respects and express our gratitude.

More than 405,000 Americans made the ultimate sacrifice during World War II. More than 170,000 lie at rest in cemeteries abroad or in graves at sea. They will never be forgotten. Their selfless commitment to the highest aspirations of mankind inspires us today and will for generations to come.

In 2010, I was honored to sponsor a Resolution in the United States Senate supporting the observance of "Spirit of '45 Day." It was an even greater honor to join in that effort with my two late colleagues, Senator Daniel Inouye and Senator Frank Lautenberg, the last two World War II veterans to serve in the Senate. They served freedom's cause with valor and they served our nation with distinction.

The "Spirit of '45" goes beyond courage in battle. It includes America's commitment to restore nations shattered by conflict, whether friend or foe, and to advance the cause of liberty and peace around the world. It describes the civic engagement, volunteerism, and service to community and country that is the hallmark of the Greatest Generation.

I am fortunate to be a daughter of that generation. My father, Donald Collins, fought in the Battle of the Bulge and received two Purple Hearts and the Bronze Star. Then he came home, gratefully, modestly, and with solemn memories of comrades who did not come home.

One of my earliest childhood memories is going with my father to the Memorial Day parade in our hometown of Caribou, Maine. He hoisted me high above his head and from the

best vantage point along the route – my father’s shoulders – I saw hats go off and hands go over hearts as Caribou paid its respects to our flag and honored our veterans.

From the strong shoulders of those like him who defended our freedom, we learn about commitment, service, and patriotism. We learn that the burden of service must be borne willingly, that challenges must be met and threats must be confronted. It is because of the quiet courage of those we honor today that we take those lessons to heart and resolve to pass them on to the generations to come. That is the “Spirit of ’45.” It is the spirit that guided our nation and the world through its darkest days and that lights our way into the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Susan M. Collins". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Susan M. Collins
United States Senator