

KEEPING THE SPIRIT OF '45 ALIVE!



ANNIVERSARY

8/14/1945 ~ 8/14/2015

AFA helps the nation commemorate the 70th anniversary of World War II's end.



By Shannon Aud

Jerry Yellin vividly remembers Aug. 14, 1945, the final day of World War II.

While returning to Iwo Jima with fellow pilots after flying his P-51 Mustang on a strafing mission over Tokyo that day, Yellin said, "I found out that my wingman was killed." Upon landing at Iwo Jima, he then learned that the war had ended just hours before, making his wingman, 1st Lt. Philip Schlamborg, one of the war's final casualties.

Now, nearly 70 years later, Yellin wants the nation to remember Schlamborg and all those who sacrificed so much to win the war. Yellin, an Air Force Association member who turns 91 in February, has been travelling across the country as national spokesman for Keep the Spirit of '45 Alive. This national grassroots collaboration comprises nonprofit organizations like AFA, businesses, communities, and individuals helping to honor and preserve the legacy of the Greatest Generation, the men and women who served in World War II, including those on the home front.

Since 2010, Keep the Spirit of '45 Alive has celebrated them with a commemorative Spirit of '45 Day across the country on the second Sunday of August each year. That day falls on or near the anniversary of the war's end. Also in 2010, Congress passed House Concurrent Resolution 226, supporting a national day of remembrance.

"We want to recapture the spirit of that generation and give a reminder of the fact that people today share DNA with those who achieved so much in 1945," said Warren C. Hegg, Keep the Spirit of '45 Alive's national supervisor. "This is the last chance to celebrate this spirit while there are still surviving men and women of this generation."

Among the Spirit of '45 Day activities are wreath-laying ceremonies, big-band swing dances, observances at professional sporting events, World War II aircraft flyovers, concerts, open houses at senior living communities, and "kiss-ins" to re-enact the famous victory kiss between a sailor and a nurse in New

York City's Times Square on Aug. 14, 1945. While the Spirit of '45 Day is in the spotlight, similar activities take place year-round.

August 14, 2015—a Friday—will mark the 70th anniversary of World War II's end and the start of a commemorative weekend of events. AFA is among the Keep the Spirit of '45 Alive partners drumming up awareness and support for the activities planned across the United States and overseas.

"The Air Force Association is very proud to support this commemoration lest we forget what this generation contributed to our freedom and the freedom of generations to come," said AFA President Craig R. McKinley.

Activities will include a continuous around-the-world wreath-laying ceremony that will start in military cemeteries in Asia and Europe and culminate in Hawaii.

To highlight airpower's pivotal role in the Allied victory, AFA, working with the Chennault Aviation Museum,

Commemorative Air Force, Experimental Aircraft Association War Birds of America, and others, is inviting owners of World War II vintage aircraft to participate in flyovers in more than 100 communities across the United States on the weekend of Aug. 14-16, 2015.

To celebrate the Army's legacy, Keep the Spirit of '45 Alive partners are coordinating a cross-country convoy of some 200 World War II military vehicles from Washington, D.C., to San Diego.

Among the events surrounding the naval component will be vintage World War II ships firing their guns and a swing dance aboard the decommissioned aircraft carrier USS *Midway* in San Diego harbor.

For more information, go to www.spiritof45.org. 

Shannon Aud is AFA's senior manager for field operations.



Photo by Linda Laurie

Keep the Spirit of '45 Alive sponsors meet-ups that give youngsters the opportunity to learn the stories of World War II veterans. Here, Girl Scout Jenna Briones interviews World War II pilot Saul Anshen in San Diego, Aug. 10, 2014.

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