

Testimony for Senate Bill 832, "SPIRIT OF '45 DAY"

BEFORE the Senate Committee on Veterans and Military Affairs

April 18, 2013

Joy A Beebe, English War Bride

And Member of Greatest Generation

Good afternoon Chair Boquist and Members of the Senate Committee

I am Joy Beebe. Born and raised in England, I married an American soldier in 1945 who was stationed in my country in World War II. As a war bride, I came to the Salem/Keizer area and I have been a resident of Keizer since 1948.

I grew up on the outskirts of London in the 1940's, experiencing the Battle of Britain and the Blitz, followed by Hitler's Vengeance Weapons--the V1 and the V2. Many sleepless nights were spent either in the cupboard under the stairs or under our Morrison Shelter (a large table issued to families by the government to protect them in their homes). Many Londoners stayed night after night in the underground railway stations for safety or because their homes were bombed.

Surprisingly, the people of London never lost spirit. We always believed we would survive; Winston Churchill convinced us. His speeches were so encouraging although we always knew we were alone; Churchill did too. After the December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, America no longer wanted to wait and no longer thought they should keep the Isolationist policy. Young men rushed to sign up to keep the world free.

One summer evening, I was sent by my Government employer into the countryside of the south of England to help the Land Army girls harvest potatoes. Early evening there was a lot of noise coming from the main road. So several of us walked over to see what was happening; we were astounded! Hundreds and hundreds of American soldiers were marching down the road to Southampton in full uniform with their 'duffle bags' and rifles, singing and shouting. Officers were traveling in Jeeps and other soldiers in cars, tanks and large trucks with guns under tarps . . . a line that never seemed to end—it went on for hours. As it grew, light barrage balloons rose into the sky; hundreds of them covering the sky for miles. We watched for hours while this went on for solid two days. It was the 5th and 6th June 1944 ~ D DAY!! As far as I know, the potatoes may still be in the ground . . . we were watching history in the making!

When the Americans came into the battle, the tides turned. America had power and their men were enthused about what they were about to see and do. However, they did not realize what was ahead, just as we had not known what would fall from the skies for us. WAR IS SHOCKING. When they moved to face the enemy, they watched their buddies fall yet carried on with valor and determination. Though the road was long and difficult, they finally won with memories too sad to share.

WWII veterans deserve all the recognition they get; they were happy to come home to their families and to rebuild their lives and country. We must give them the honor they deserve—THE THANKS they richly deserved 60 years ago. Bless them. I came to America as a war bride and know that I too, should give them the praise they earned with hardship and horror they endured so that you and I may live in freedom.

