



# HONOR FLIGHT Newsletter

Rochester

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 6

DECEMBER 2013

## IN THIS EDITION:

MISSION 32

TRIBUTE TO  
WOODY

LATEST NEWS

New HFR  
President

Penfield  
Veterans'  
Seminar

LATEST  
EVENTS

VOLUNTEER  
SPOTLIGHT

Larry Strassner

UPCOMING  
EVENTS

2014 Flying  
Schedule

Speakers Bureau

PRESIDENT'S  
COLUMN

## Mission 32 - Oct 19/20

Mission 32 ended the 2013 flying season for HFR. HFR has now flown a total of 1,492 vets!

A "Buffalo Soldier" from the 25th Infantry Division with his guardian (right).



A group of 12 WWII vets from Penn Yan traveled together as part of Mission 32. Photo courtesy of *The Evening Tribune* (Hornell).

## Tribute to Col. Edwin “Woody” Mench

It is challenging to think of a time more appropriate than Veterans Day weekend for our President and Chairman Colonel Edwin “Woody” Mench to have been called home and welcomed into God’s eternal embrace. Woody was a good man, who touched each of us with his kindness. He was a great family man who served others selflessly, with honor and distinction, every day of his life.

One could not chat with Woody without hearing a fun story about his family members’ lives and achievements. His family’s love for him was reflected in how his wife Marion cared for him, particularly during the last year of his life. Marion was so good to him that Woody referred to her as Saint Marion. A very worthy title.

Woody was a man of faith as well. He served on the St. Louis Church’s Parish Council. He helped guide the Church and strengthen its congregation. He was well known and respected by the clergy, the church staff, and the members of the congregation.

And we all know that he was a wonderful community servant. Woody served his community, state, and nation for 31 years in the Air Force and AF Reserve. He attained the rank of Colonel and assumed the responsibilities of leading his entire unit as its Group Commander. He was a leader and excelled in the Air Force, which is not surprising considering that one of the Air Force’s core values is “service before self.”

After retiring from military service, he continued his civilian employment with Xerox. But he also continued serving military members and veterans. He was a long-time member of the Military Officers Association of America (“MOAA”) and served as its New York State President, representing military members’ and veterans’ interests before the state and federal government. Military men and women could not ask for a greater friend serving them and advocating for their needs.

Of course, we all know that Woody was a founder and leader of our beloved Honor Flight Rochester. We know what he did for our organization, the veterans, and all of us. He helped our organization’s taxi and takeoff be straight and smooth; and helped bring us to cruising altitude—wings level. The entire time he had on his trademark grin.

The last day I saw him, he displayed the same level of enthusiasm and passion for Honor Flight as he did when we first started this organization. He loved Honor Flight, the veterans, and everyone involved with HFR. All of us are better for having known him and I know that we will continue our mission serving others as well as Woody did.

Woody – thank you for everything. You will always be with us.

Peter J. Glennon  
Co-Founder and Director  
Honor Flight Rochester, Inc.



*“A veteran is someone who at one point in his life wrote a blank check payable to The United States of America for an amount up to and including his life.”*  
*Gene Castagnetti, Director of the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific.*

# Latest News

## HFR Names New President

The Honor Flight Rochester board of directors has named Richard “Rich” Stewart as president of Honor Flight Rochester (HFR). He is the fourth president of HFR. He has been a member of the HFR board since 2010 and has been involved since the inaugural HFR mission in 2008.



Rich Stewart

“My father, aunt and uncle were World War II veterans who passed away long before the World War II Memorial was built. They never got to see it. I wish they could have. Participating in Honor Flight Rochester is a way for me to say thank you to all the veterans for all they did so many years ago,” Stewart said.

“Rich is a long-time volunteer and is very knowledgeable of the population that we serve, and an experienced executive who can only assist in making our great organization that much better,” said HFR board member Peter J. Glennon, Esq.

Stewart retired from Legacy Senior Communities as an executive director. He also held management positions with Motorola, Aramark and Genesee Hospital. The Princeton, NJ native earned a B.S. degree from Cornell University and a MBA from New York University. He and his wife Lin met when they both attended Cornell University. The Stewarts reside in Penfield, NY. They have two daughters, both Cornell University graduates. Before settling in Penfield, the Stewarts lived in New York City, Chicago, Phoenix and in the Hudson Valley region of New York State.

In addition to volunteering with HFR, he is also an active volunteer with the Cornell Club of Rochester-director at large and Penfield Chamber of Commerce - board of directors. Previously, he served as president of the Brighton Kiwanis Club.

## HFR Participates in Seminar for Veterans



The Penfield Recreation Department and the Penfield American Legion Post sponsored a seminar for veterans on November 7th. The seminar included a lunchtime presentation by HFR.

Many thanks to all of our volunteers and veterans who participated. Photos courtesy of the Penfield Recreation Department.



*“We can't all be heroes, because somebody has to sit on the curb and applaud when they go by.”*

# Latest Events



Here are some of the participants in the 3rd Annual Stars & Stripes VeteRun which took place on Veterans' Day and raised funds to benefit HFR. Thanks to the numerous participants, to our volunteers, and to the vets who helped with this event!



Greece Post #468 sponsored "Elvis" Night to Benefit HFR.



Army veteran C. Richard Bauer traveled on a TLC (Their Last Chance) Mission in October. HFR provided a guardian for his trip as well as a special sendoff and welcome home. Here he is greeted by fellow Vietnam War veterans from the Patriot Guard Riders. Thanks to all who participated!



Veterans Jack Foy and C. P. Maloney participated in a Veterans' Day program at Martha Brown Middle School in Fairport (left). Here is Jack with one of the students (right).



USA: Home of the Free...Because of the Brave!





## Volunteer Spotlight: Larry Strassner

Larry Strassner is a Marine Corps and Vietnam War veteran who leads HFR's Speakers' Bureau which provides speakers who talk about HFR to various civic organizations. While many HFR presentations are arranged through word of mouth, any requests made through our website go directly to Larry. Please contact him if you are interested in participating in Speakers' Bureau, but note that all speakers must have flown on an HFR mission.

Larry's hero, his dad Howard (Howie), passed away in April just shy of his 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday. Howie was a combat medic during WWII and was a veteran of the Battle of the Bulge. He was also a crooner who performed in a lot of shows during the war and sang professionally after the war. Howie also volunteered as an EMT with the Victor-Farmington Ambulance for 30 years. Larry and Howie traveled on an Honor Flight mission in 2010 (photo above right). Larry also served as a guardian for his father-in-law, Bill Korper (below left), and for Keith Baker (bottom), and was our assistant leader for Mission 29.



Larry found out about Honor Flight from his friend Mike General, and saw first-hand what an emotional and rewarding experience it is. When Mike stepped out of the Speakers' Bureau leadership role, he asked Larry to step in. He says, "God blesses me with so many wonderful volunteers that I have had the privilege to meet." Larry is also excited about his inclusion in the leadership team. His favorite part of volunteering for Honor Flight is "going on the missions and talking to the vets at Send-offs and Welcome Homes" and he adds "Being part of this organization is a reward in itself!" Following Mike's lead, Larry has recruited a couple of volunteers, including his friend Dave Cosman.

Larry served in the active duty Marines for four years and two years inactive reserves as an aircraft avionics technician. During the war in Vietnam, he also volunteered to fly as a gunner with the Army's "Black Cats" choppers (Hueys), including one that was shot out of the sky, where he received his second Purple Heart. The first was a direct hit on his "hooch" from a 122 mm rocket and resulted in losing both knee caps as he passed through the wall. Larry fondly remembers two Bob Hope shows ('67-'68 & '68-'69) during his time in Vietnam, and as a front row spectator at one of them, met Ann-Margret. He was fortunate enough to also meet Raquel Welch the following year. Larry was stationed at various locations on both U.S. coasts, and after his discharge, returned to Rochester where he had grown up in the "Dutchtown" neighborhood. Larry began working at GM Rochester Products, joining his father and great uncle Max before him—all together, there was at least one Strassner at the facility for nearly 100 consecutive years! He also attended RIT part-time while working, earning degrees in both mechanical and electrical engineering.

Now retired, Larry is working harder than he ever did before. For the past 14 years, Larry has built theater sets—the big stuff including flying systems—for plays and musicals by Greece Athena high school and middle school students, Artists Unlimited, RAPA, and Arcadia students. "It's almost non-stop work for four months at a time, but I love the kids and am awed by their talent," Larry says. He even met his second wife, Julie, years before while working in set construction at Blackfriars. Their daughter lives and works in this area and seems to have inherited Grandpa Howie's singing talent. Larry's two older daughters live in Huntsville, AL and Nashville, TN, respectively. He also has two grandsons and two granddaughters.

Many, many thanks to Larry for his service to our country and to HFR!



# Upcoming Events

The annual ROC the Day fundraiser will be held on December 11th.

On-line donations can be for any amount, and funds designated for **Honor Flight Rochester** will come directly to us.

Please help spread the word to your friends and families. Thanks!

[www.ROCtheDay.org](http://www.ROCtheDay.org)



## Save the Date!

2014 Volunteer Kickoff

Thursday, March 6

6 pm at the Fairport VFW

## Upcoming Talks & Ground Events

- Dec 3 Dansville Rotary Club
- Dec 5 Newark Rotary Club
- Dec 11 ROC The Day
- Jan 13 The Village at Unity
- Feb 4 Greece Public Library
- Mar 5 Livingston County T.R.I.A.D.

HFR veteran Mason Fitch's 504th Bomb Group from WWII recently held its annual reunion in Washington, DC, with nine veterans in attendance. Mason is second from the right in the back row of this photo (right).

The 504th flew B-29 missions over Japan from North Field on the Mariana Island of Tinian. North Field was the largest air base in the world at that time.

As part of their four day reunion, they visited the Air and Space Museum where the Enola Gay B-29 is exhibited, and held a memorial service for their fallen comrades.



# 2014 Flying Schedule



Apr 5/6 Mission 33

May 17/18 Mission 34

## Letters from Veteran Families



Here's a recent letter that we received from a vet:

*"I am humbly appreciative for all that HFR volunteers and others do in recognition of our service.*

*Also, the selection of Rich Stewart as the next president is an excellent choice. He is someone I regard as having a heart like "Woody" in the mission of Honor Flight Rochester."*

## A Message from Rich

Since its inception in 2008, Honor Flight Rochester has had excellent leadership. The co-founders were Woody Mench, Peter Glennon, Vince Hope, Jeff and Kim Gould, and Kathleen and Pat Wall. Their vision and collaboration set the stage for a spectacularly successful initial five years. The program became fully developed with continuous refinements along the way. It is my hope to follow their footsteps and carry on the program they put forth. HFR's future is bright.

Honor Flight Rochester is all about the veterans. This is their trip to visit and reflect at their monuments with their contemporaries. Our veterans are truly heroes. For the rest of us it is a perfect opportunity to express our gratitude for the sacrifices they made to insure our freedoms. On my first trip as a guardian, Fred Krahenbuhl was my veteran and we met Senator Bob Dole (photo at right). This was an absolutely special moment to cherish.



Our enthusiastic volunteers have a willingness that has no bounds. On mission weekends, nearly one hundred volunteers participate and some are at the airport before 4 a.m. on Saturday morning.

This team untiringly exudes camaraderie, humility and genuine care for each vet. The volunteers' efforts are greatly appreciated. We often receive glowing comments about them.

After 32 missions, we continue to strive so that each veteran will have the best experience possible. I thank all of you for what you do and look forward to Mission 33 in the spring. I am personally honored and humbled to be selected president of Honor Flight Rochester.

Rich

Have a question, comment, or something to share?

**DROP US A LINE!**

**[VolunteerHonorFlightROC@gmail.com](mailto:VolunteerHonorFlightROC@gmail.com)**

Thank  
a  
Veteran!