



HONOR FLIGHT Rochester Newsletter

VOLUME 4 ISSUE 1

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IN THIS EDITION:

TRIBUTE TO
KATHLEEN
DIETZ

VETERAN
PROFILE

Bob Persichitti

UPCOMING
EVENTS

Volunteer
Kickoff

Prime Time
Brass Benefit
Concert

Speakers
Bureau &
Ground Events

RICH'S
COLUMN



Latest News

Sally Sackett has been presented with HFR's "Volunteer of the Year" Award. Sally leads our Health & Safety Team, and was profiled in our October 2011 Newsletter.

John Burns has been presented with a book signed by many volunteers in appreciation of his efforts during the past year.

Dates have been set for the upcoming Geneseo Air Show in July (see page 4). We will need lots of volunteers on hand, so please mark your calendar now if you would like to help out.

HFR raised enough funds on ROC the Day in December to send five veterans to DC! Last year, we raised enough to send three. Many thanks to our contributors!

The invitations to our annual Volunteer Kickoff were e-mailed via SurveyMonkey earlier this week. For more information, please see page 4.



Tribute to Kathleen Dietz

Kathleen Dietz (we called her KD) was one of the first people to join HFR's original band of nine. She showed up at one of the first meetings and immediately volunteered for the Flight Nurse position. The Flight Nurse did a lot of things. She went over the vet applications marking them Green, Yellow or Red, based on the medical info they supplied. She then proceeded to call each vet to see if their conditions had changed since they applied, then they were re-classified if necessary. She would make recommendations to the team as to who should go now, and who could/should wait for a later flight. She put together our medical protocols regarding the items we should bring on flights and what our response should be should one of our vets (heaven forbid) have an episode on a flight. She established what treatments should be performed, who to call, who stays with the vet until their family could arrive, etc., and much of what she put together is still being used by our nurses today.

KD had a huge heart and was determined to make sure that all of our vets got to go to DC, and that they experienced the best and safest trip we could offer. She went on three of the first flights (I believe), and loved to spend time sitting and talking to the vets. She was known for her unique method of veteran bus dismount. She would stand at the top of the bus steps and grab the back of the vet's belt with a death grip and hold on tight until they were safely stepping onto the pavement. They used to grumble, but she would say "if you stumble, either I hold you back or we go to the bottom together", this would usually get a laugh from the vet, and no more resistance. The time she spent in the bar with the vets on Saturday night was her favorite. The stories and jokes told (the more colorful the better) would often elicit KD's patented laugh that was guaranteed to turn every head in the bar. A couple of our vets fell for KD (it was easy to do) and one sent her cards and flowers for several weeks after his flight. On one flight she and Meghan Backus (former reporter from TV-8) roomed together at the hotel. When they first got into their room KD sat on the edge of her bed only to have the frame collapse leaving her and the mattress/box spring combo on the floor. When the front desk person showed up to evaluate the situation it was clear that he believed KD had been participating in some bedroom gymnastics with someone which caused the collapse. This just made her laugh and gave her one more story for the vets in the bar that night. She touched a thousand lives, and that includes a couple hundred HFR vets who were the beneficiaries of her care and attention.

Her cancer beat up her body, but never dented her spirit or her effervescent personality. She kept her sense of humor right to the end, and made sure that everyone else was OK, she was sure she'd be fine. She was a nurse, so she knew from very early on in her treatment what her odds were, but she kept her spirit and determination through everything. I hope, when my time comes, that I can live up to the standard of class and determination that she set. We'll miss our friend, but a huge part of her lives on in our hearts.

Jeff & Kim Gould

"She saw life in a slightly brighter light, and from a different angle."

Peter Dietz (her son)

***"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.***



Veteran Memories—Robert (Bob) Persichitti



WWII veteran Bob Persichitti, who served as a radio man aboard the U.S.S. *Eldorado*, always wondered about the two Navajos who were in the radio shack with him. The men were top-secret Marine “Code Talkers” who communicated with comrades onshore. Not only could the Code Talkers encode, transmit, and decode messages much faster than using traditional methods, the Japanese were not able to break the Navajo code (they did break the codes used by the Army and Air Corps). Bob was pleased to meet one of the Navajo Code Talkers in Victor several years ago.

Bob shared some of his wartime experiences at the banquet during his Mission 29 trip last June. The *Eldorado* was the flagship for Vice Admiral R.K. Turner, Commander of Amphibious Forces in the Pacific. From 19 February to 9 March, 1945, the *Eldorado* lay off Iwo Jima, in a position Bob somberly

says “was more fortunate than for the Marines there”. He was a witness to the U.S. flag being raised on the island—both times. Later, during thirty days at Okinawa, they were attacked by two kamikazes, one of which hit the nearby U.S.S. *New Mexico* and killed 54 of her men. Bob and the *Eldorado* then went to the Philippines to prepare for the ground invasion of Japan that thankfully never happened. The *Eldorado* went back to Hawaii, dropped off the Admiral, and headed back to the states.

Bob was discharged on 11 November 1945 in Sampson, NY, and headed back home to Pennsylvania. He wasn’t happy with the opportunities there, so he went to live with one of his brothers in East Rochester. There, Bob finally had the chance to do what he always wanted to do: become a carpenter. He began as an apprentice for Stewart & Bennett, Inc., and worked for several other contractors and on his own over the years.



While working as a carpenter, Bob participated in a Rochester-based SUNY Oswego night school program and obtained his teaching degree. He taught at Edison Tech for 16 years, developing a carpentry curriculum that is still used by some BOCES today. Bob retired from the RCSD in 1981. He returned to carpentry work for a couple of years, but retired for good in 1983 after he and his wife, Elgina, decided to travel. In 1987, they purchased a home in Sun City West, AZ, where Bob still spends his winters, playing golf and doing lots of woodworking. Sadly, Bob lost Elgina almost two years ago.



Bob says he probably would not have gotten to Washington to see the WWII Memorial if not for Honor Flight Rochester. He was very impressed by the memorial and was particularly touched by the 4,200 gold stars, each of which represents 100 men who sacrificed their lives for our freedom. Bob also loved “mail call” and has been able to meet some of the students who wrote him letters.

Bob had a great time on his trip and made a lot of friends. He says that our volunteers “were there for us all the way from boarding in Rochester through to getting us back home safely”. He also added, “I keep you all in my prayers everyday and hope that you can continue for a long time.” Since his trip, Bob has kept close to our group by participating in the arrivals of new missions, in golf tournaments where possible, and in other events.



Upcoming Events

2014 Volunteer Kickoff

Thursday, March 6
Fairport VFW

300 Macedon Center Road (Rte 31F)

Doors open at 6 pm

We will have a light supper of pasta with homemade sauce, meatballs, salad, garlic bread, coffee/tea, and dessert.

Please watch for the SurveyMonkey and respond to confirm your attendance!

SAVE THE DATE

Annual Prime Time Brass
Benefit Concert for HFR
Saturday, August 16th
Nazareth College Arts Center

Upcoming Talks & Ground Events

- Jan 29 Heathwood Assisted Living
- Feb 4 Greece Public Library
- Feb 5 Leroy Rotary Club
- Feb 12 HFR Night at Leroy Girls' Basketball
- Feb 14 HFR Night at Leroy Boys' Basketball
- Mar 5 Livingston County T.R.I.A.D.
- Mar 8 Vets Day at Monroe Comm. Hosp.
- Apr 27 Hidden Valley All-American Picnic
- May 25 Irondequoit Memorial Day Parade
- May 26 Fairport Memorial Day Parade
- Jun 7-8 Fairport Canal days
- Jul 11-14 Geneseo Air Show

2014 Spring Flying Schedule



Apr 5/6	Mission 33
May 17/18	Mission 34
Jun 14/15	Mission 35
Jun 28/29	Mission 36

Letters from Veteran Families



"A little note with a 'Big Thank You' for my interesting, entertaining, enjoyable, and heart-warming experience on Mission 31.

My compliments to all for the most precise and well-managed tour I have ever been a part of. Your reception at the Rochester Airport brought out many tearful eyes.

Congratulations again and continue the good work."

GOD BLESS OUR TROOPS, AND GOD BLESS AMERICA.



A Message from Rich

Honor Flight Rochester is entering our sixth year! By the end of 2014 we will have fulfilled 40 missions and transported 1800 veterans to visit the memorials recognizing their heroic service. In many ways it seems like just yesterday that Honor Flight Rochester began. The initial excitement has not subsided and in fact continues to grow. Since the onset our volunteer counts are heading towards 2500 considering that a guardian travels with each veteran. When the families of veterans are included HFR has touched well over 10,000 people. Honor Flight is deeply embedded in the Rochester community.



In this coming flight season, we expect to see the number of Korean War veterans increase significantly. Of course we will continue to reach out to World War II vets to make the trip. Eventually we expect that Vietnam Veterans will populate our missions. Our volunteer staff is tireless in showing our appreciation. Our veterans deserve this memorable experience that pays tribute to their valiant service. They are truly heroes. Each successive HFR mission builds upon what we learned on the previous trips. One common thread among all of us is that we consider it a privilege to celebrate our veterans.

To make each mission run smoothly requires a core of volunteers to be involved year around; for instance participating in fund raising, speaking engagements or getting ready for the flying season. Our volunteers are key.

Please watch your email for an invitation to our annual Volunteer Kickoff which will be held on March 6th at the Fairport VFW. As always this is an opportunity to become familiar with the many ways to be involved.

I thank you for your enthusiasm and support. The efforts of our volunteers have got us to where we are today. 2014 will be a busy year and I look forward to our next mission on the weekend of April 5th.

Rich Stewart
President

Have a question, comment, or something to share?

DROP US A LINE!

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Thank
a
Veteran!