



HONOR FLIGHT®

ROCHESTER NEWSLETTER

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Tom Hope Receives Congressional Gold Medal

HFR veteran Thomas W. Hope, who was profiled in our December 2014 newsletter, and Rochester native Thomas W. Johnson were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal to honor their contributions to the country during WWII. The Gold Medal is the highest civilian honor given by the U.S. government.

The ceremony was held on February 3rd in the Capitol. Both men were members of the First Special Service Force which was assembled in 1942 with soldiers from both the U.S. and Canada and was the predecessor to today's special forces units. The 1,800 soldier unit accounted for 12,000 German casualties and captured 7,000 prisoners and was nicknamed the "Black Devils" by the Nazis. They were also known as the "Devils Brigade" and inspired the film of the same name.

Only about 75 members of the unit are still living, including Tom Hope, who attended the ceremony along with his three sons. News 8 quoted Tom "I was honored. As I look back now, the early part of the years after the war no one thanked us the way they do now. Even the kids do." The widow and children of Thomas Johnson attended the ceremony as well.

Many HFR veterans and volunteers gathered at the Rochester airport to greet Tom when he returned from DC.

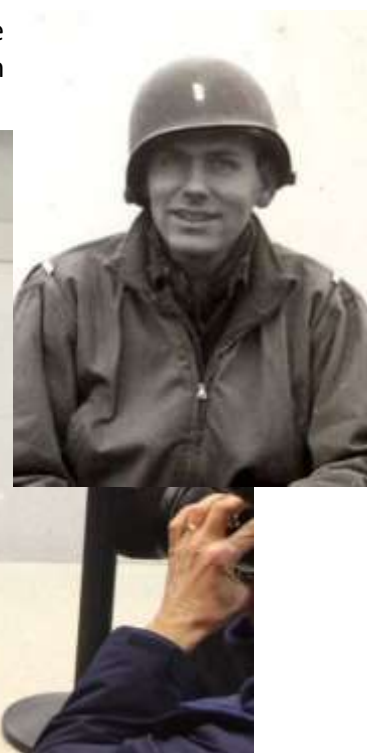


Photo by Frank Vavrick

Latest News

Gates—Chili Hike for Heroes Benefits Honor Flight Rochester

On Saturday March 21st, Gates-Chili Middle School hosted the Gates-Chili Hike for Heroes. Held annually, for the past 9 years this event has been conducted to benefit local veteran's organizations. This is the third consecutive year the Hike for Heroes has raised money for Honor Flight Rochester, this year raising enough to help us take 14 more of our veterans to Washington DC to see their memorials.

HFR Volunteer John Peckham attended the event and took the photos shown below. John had a great time at the event, and had the following to say of the Hike for Heroes:

"In my images, I tried to capture the energy and exuberance demonstrated by the students participating in the event. It seemed to me that students, veterans and Honor Flight Rochester Volunteers all had a wonderful time ... It's inspiring that in a time where folks are so busy getting to whatever the next athletic/social/family event might be, that these young people dedicated so much time and effort to help make this a successful event. It's great to see our younger generation meet, appreciate and hear about history from men and women who participated in it."





Veteran Memories—George Haines

George Haines feels very blessed to have survived two years of active combat without a scratch and adds “The man upstairs hasn’t closed the book on me”. George joined the Army when he was 17—his mother had to sign for him—and served for a total of three years, two of which were active duty. He traveled down the Mississippi River and then through the Panama Canal on his way to the Pacific Theater. His 34th Battalion was attached to the 24th Infantry Division and his first combat was on New Guinea. He was originally assigned to a bazooka but preferred being a scout (he rotated between first and second), and was once behind enemy lines for a couple of days. After New Guinea, the 34th fought on the Coral Islands and then led the assault on Leyte where they fought for 75 continuous days. George and his battalion also fought at Mindoro and Mindanao. After the war, George was stationed in Japan during the occupation. After his service, George drove a truck for Kodak for 35 years, mostly around Monroe County. He loved his job so much that he declined a promotion, and was proud to be number one on Kodak’s entry clearance list when he retired.



George traveled on HFR Mission 30 in September of 2013 with his grandson Matt as his guardian (*above*). He has many fond memories of their trip including meeting many HFR volunteers, missing the group photo at the WWII Memorial because he was busy reading every inscription there, being interviewed as he was leaving the Memorial (Laurie Palmer found the video on Facebook and put it on a DVD for him), and ironically, waiting for his grandson to rest up after a long walk near the Lincoln, Korea, and Viet Nam Memorials. His favorite memory of his trip was receiving 5 letters from students during “Mail Call” and he answered every one of those letters.



George says that he fell in love with all of it during his trip and afterwards he told himself “You have time to give and you’re capable of doing it!” Unsure of how to get started, he went to the next Homecoming to greet returning veterans and then submitted a volunteer application. George says he “can’t do enough” and is “willing to go anywhere”, so it was much easier to find photos of George volunteering with HFR than of his trip with us! George works at both Departures and Homecomings

and attends many Ground and Speakers Bureau Events. Here are photos of him at the sendoff of *Whiskey 7* on its return to Normandy (*above left*), at the Hobart Football Game last October (*right*), and at the Stars & Stripes VeteRun in November where he gave his homemade flags to volunteers (*below*).



George has a special fondness for nurses and is somewhat infamous for having stopped the Irondequoit 4th of July Parade to hug and kiss a WWII nurse who



was watching the parade. HFR later presented a WWII Memorial book to her (see article in the October 2014 newsletter).

When he is not busy helping HFR, George works three days a week in the Emergency Room at Park Ridge Hospital for which he received Lifespan’s “Volunteer of the Year” Award for Monroe County in 2014. Not one to sit idle, George multitasks at home, using a pedal exerciser while he makes his flags and watches tv.

Volunteer Kickoff!

Last month, Honor Flight Rochester hosted another successful Volunteer Kickoff. The annual event, which serves as an intro to our Spring flying season as well as provide volunteers with information about the various opportunities to help throughout the organization. It is also a social event for the volunteers and HFR leadership team and committee chairs to introduce themselves and be able to put faces to the names of the many great people we have working with us.



Many thanks to all of the people who helped make this an enjoyable event for all who attended: A big thank you to the Greece Legion Post for the use of their facility, the Victor Legacy (Anna Alger and Dan Peck) who provided the cheese & crackers, as well as veggie and fruit trays, and to Sandy Malec, Jean Kelly, and Karen Zilora who made the other hors d'oeuvres. And also a big thanks to Special T Cakes and Desserts for their donation of the cake and other desserts.



Upcoming Events

SAVE THE DATE!

VICTOR GOLF TOURNAMENT

VICTOR HILLS GOLF COURSE
(South Course)

SUNDAY May 24, 2015

I SUPPORT HONOR FLIGHT ROCHESTER AMERICAN VETERANS

\$90.00 per person

Registration 9:00-10:00 am

Flag Raising 10:05 am

Shotgun Start - Scramble 10:30 am

Outside Grill Open All Day 10-4 pm

Picnic Style Buffet 4:00 pm

Closing Ceremonies 5:15 pm

Hole in One Contests
Putting Contests
Raffles
Door Prizes
Place Prizes
50-50 Raffle
Longest Drive & more!

Find Us on Facebook:
Victor Merchants Group Honor Flight
Rochester Golf Tournament

For More Information:
Jack Dianetti - 924-0700 - jrdianetti@aol.com
Tim Maher - 924-5118 - tmaher@rochester.rr.com
Mike Guinan - 924-3565 - mguinan@rochester.rr.com

Upcoming Talks & Ground Events

- Apr 25 Knighthawks Lacrosse Military night
- May 16 Greece Kiwanis Pancake Breakfast
- May 23 Patriotic Pianofest Benefit Concert
- May 24 Victor Hills Golf Tourney for HFR
- May 24 Irondequoit Memorial Day Parade
- May 25 Fairport Memorial Day Parade
- Jun 6-7 Fairport Canal Days
- Jul 18 Braemar Golf Tourney for HFR
- Aug 16 PTB Benefit Concert for HFR
- Sept 8 BOMA Golf Tourney

2015 Flying Schedule



May 2/3	Mission 40
May 30/31	Mission 41
June 20/21	Mission 42
Sept 12/13	Mission 43
Sept 26-27	Mission 44
Oct 24/25	Mission 45

Greece Kiwanis Pancake Breakfast for HFR

Saturday, May 16th from 9 to 11:30 am

Barnard Restaurant & Party House

360 Maiden Lane

\$6/person or 4/\$20 in advance

\$8/person or 4/\$25 at the door (under 3 Free)

Call Jon or Bonnie at 227-0680 for tix or info

Letters from Veterans & Their Families



First of all, I want to thank everyone who is involved with Honor Flight. You do a magnificent job of seeing to every need of the veterans. It was a well planned trip that took several volunteers to see that us veterans were well taken care of. Between the welcome at the Rochester airport, the flight to Baltimore, the bus trip to Washington, the time spent at the memorials will never be forgotten, along with the warm welcome at the Rochester airport on our arrival back home.

Thank you and God Bless,
Rocco M.

A Message from Rich

The excitement of the flying season is upon us. This year we have scheduled six missions with three in the Spring and three in the Fall. Our first will be Mission #40 and will take place on the weekend of May 2nd & 3rd. In many ways the 2015 missions will mirror the previous flights and be the culmination of what we have learned. Simply stated we want more veterans to have the best possible experience on their Honor Flight.



As you may know, Honor Flight Rochester continues to be very active with outreach into the community. Much of this is done through our Speakers Bureau and Events programs. Our Speakers Bureau is well known and welcomes the opportunity to tell the Honor Flight story at civic organizations meetings, senior citizen homes, and similar venues where there is an interest in veterans. Almost every speaking engagement generates applications for veterans, guardians and volunteers. Depending on the audience, we frequently receive donations. Speakers Bureau engagements take place year round.

Another effective outreach is our involvement with Events hosted by others for the benefit of HFR. So far this year we have participated with our presence at the Hike for Heroes at the Gates Chili Middle School on March 21st and the Rochester Home and Garden Show at the Convention Center on March 21st & 22nd. These events are greatly appreciated and generated significant funding to send our veterans to Washington, D.C. Between now and September we look forward to more than a dozen of these types of events which include air shows, golf tournaments, runs/hikes, plays, concerts, trade shows, fairs, social gatherings and more. Please be on the lookout in our newsletter, website and Facebook for their dates. Most are open to the public and I encourage your attendance. I hope to see you at some of our upcoming events including the Knighthawks Lacrosse Military Appreciation Night on April 25th at the Blue Cross Arena and the Pianofest on May 23rd at the Kodak Center for the Performing Arts where hundreds of Rochester piano students with dozens of pianos on stage will perform an all patriotic concert. This is a first time event and sponsored by the Rochester Piano Teachers' Guild. If you know of an event or speaking engagement which would be right for Honor Flight, please contact Larry Strassner, Coordinator for Events and Speakers Bureau, through our website.

Also, this past February once again we participated in the Honor Flight Network Summit in Baltimore. Representing the Rochester hub were John Burns, Vice President of Operations, Frank Vavrck, Secretary/Treasurer, Larry Strassner Speakers Bureau/Events and myself. In total there were 347 attendees. This was a weekend of teambuilding and mentorship with seminars and presentations. Our Rochester reputation is such that other hubs seek us out for our advice on how to do things right. Presently there are 133 hubs covering 42 states. Since 2005, a total of 133,817 veterans have taken their Honor Flight. Of this 1807 were from the Rochester hub.

Finally I would like to mention our wonderful Volunteer Kick-Off on March 25th at the American Legion Post 468 in Greece. Our intent that evening was to provide information on our volunteer opportunities. The Kick-Off did this very well.

Thank you for all you do.

Rich Stewart

Have a question, comment, or something to share?

DROP US A LINE!

VolunteerHonorFlightROC@gmail.com

Thank a
Veteran!

This newsletter is brought to you by the Volunteer Resource Committee.