



HONOR FLIGHT®

ROCHESTER NEWSLETTER

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Below are photos from Honor Flight Rochester Mission 45, which took place October 24-25, 2015 — closing out this year's flying season.



Latest News

“American Saint Nick” Dick Brookins’ story to be featured on PBS

Dick Brookins, for whom a tribute story was featured in our August 2015 newsletter, will have his story told to PBS audiences nationwide. Known popularly as the “American Saint Nick,” Brookins dressed as St. Nicholas to help bring a little holiday cheer to the battle-weary town of Wiltz, Luxemburg in late December of 1944, as he and fellow troops put on a party for the local children and townspeople. It was such a meaningful gesture that he is still remembered there to this day, where a statue of him stands in the town square to honor his service to the people of Wiltz.

“The American Saint Nick” will air on local PBS affiliate WXXI on December 7th at 9:00 p.m.



Brookins dressed as St. Nick in Wiltz, Luxemburg in December 1944 (left), and reenacting the event in (right) in 2015.

“Harmonica” Pete DuPre headed to Hawaii for Pearl Harbor anniversary

Well known musician and local Honor Flight Veteran, “Harmonica” Pete will be in Hawaii for the anniversary of the December 7th attack on Pearl Harbor. Pete will be with a group on the deck of the USS Missouri Memorial, the ship on which General Douglas MacArthur accepted Japan’s unconditional surrender on September 2, 1945—signaling the official end of the War.

The event will be aired during a special broadcast of “Fox NFL Sunday,” on the morning of December 6th during NFL pregame programming.

Veteran Bob Persichitti donates proceeds of book signing to Honor Flight Rochester

WWII Veteran Bob Persichitti, who flew on Honor Flight Rochester Mission 29, was highlighted in the February 2014 newsletter for his book “Building an American Life.” Bob recently held a book signing at the Maplewood Estates in Fairport, and he generously donated the proceeds of the event to Honor Flight Rochester.

His book can be found on Amazon.com. Below are photos of the author at the book signing.





Volunteer Spotlight: Dave Timmons

Dave Timmons found out about HFR through his father, Jack (*below*, with Dave), who had read about Honor Flight in his *American Legion* magazine. Jack is a WWII veteran who was stationed at Base Air Depot 2 (BAD2) in Warton, England, as an aircraft mechanic. BAD2 processed incoming aircraft from the U.S. and also repaired and customized planes.



Jack signed up to fly with us and was called for MI 2. However, he was sick so he postponed until MI 3, which was fortuitous because it took place over Fathers' Day weekend in 2009. Jack and his wife have three sons and a daughter, but since Dave is an EMT, the family deemed him most qualified to serve as Jack's guardian.

Jack and Dave had a wonderful time on their trip. Afterwards, Dave told co-founder Vince Hope, "HFR is a wonderful organization and I would like to be part of it." Vince followed up by sending him as a medical helper on a couple of missions and having Dave shadow him as flight leader.

Dave took lots of notes which became the HFR guide for flight leaders. He loves when the veterans say what "a well-oiled machine HFR is" and how "nothing ever goes wrong". He laughs and says "little do they know about the contingency plans, etc., that HFR has". For example, on a trip where Dave was part of the flight crew, one of his uncles traveled as a veteran and a younger uncle served as his guardian. Dave was enjoying a beer with his uncles when he saw flashing flights. He found out that an ambulance crew was working on one of our veterans, but fortunately the veteran was able to stay at the hotel. Dave became the veteran's roommate for the evening so that he could monitor his condition and ensure that everything was ok.

Dave has now traveled on 13 HFR flights, having also served as a solo guardian multiple times, as a bus leader, as flight leader, and as advance person. He says, "I will do anything I can to help." Dave has recently been appointed as Corporate Secretary for HFR, and he has also served on the Volunteer Resource Committee, conducted screening calls for the Health & Safety team, conducted numerous volunteer orientation sessions, and assisted with our

annual kickoffs.

In his day job, Dave is a Field Quality Leader

for Rockwell Automation, handling customer complaints which usually turn out to be incorrect usage by customers. He worked previously at Kodak for 33 years as an electrical engineer. Dave and his wife LeeAnn have been married for 38 years and live in Greece. In their spare time, they enjoy lots of camping and they have a small motor home that they use to visit their two grown daughters, Becky and Janet, who live in the Nashville area. Dave also spends a lot of time with his parents and siblings as they all live here.



Dave, thank you for all that you have done for HFR!

By Karen Zilora



Veteran Letter

Some of you may not know that on each of our Honor Flight Rochester missions, Veterans hear an announcement that many of them haven't heard in many years: "Mail Call!" Every veteran receives letters, written by area students, each personalized and addressed to that specific veteran. Many of them ask questions, and they welcome correspondence back from the veterans — return addresses are provided. When veteran Lewis Robert "Bob" Lash, received his stack of letters at mail call, he was immediately motivated to write back the students. He shared his letter, which is included below and on the following pages:

Thank you all for taking time to write to me for Honor Flight. I was so touched by your kind words and love for our country. I am going to try to answer some of your questions and tell you what it was like to be sent to war as a young man. It was the first time I had ever been outside the United States.

My name is Lewis Robert Lash (Bob). I am 86 years old and lived in Wolcott, NY when I was young. My mother died in a house fire when I was three and I had to live with my grandmother and then my aunt and uncle. I lived with my sister when I was a senior in high school. I worked at Kodak in Rochester before I was drafted into the Army. When I came back home from the war, I worked at Johnny's Radio Shop where I fixed radios and TVs. Then I married and settled down, right next to a school. When I was growing up, we had radio but no TV or computers or mobile phones. At our home, we had a telephone on a party line. Many people were on that line and when you picked up the receiver to make a call, you might hear someone talking to another person. Telephone wires were strung between telephone poles and ran to offices where telephone operators operated a switchboard. If you made a call from your home or business the signal traveled over the telephone wires to the operator's switchboard and she completed your call by connecting you to your party.

I was a Corporal in the Army during the Korean War from 1950-1952 in the 2nd division Signal Corps. My job was to install and maintain communication lines. In Korea the Army used hand crank telephones in the field with a signal that went through the wires to a switchboard and that was relayed to the field. We could have really used WiFi and smart phones! One night, I had to go up a telephone pole to repair a telephone line. When I came down, the man guarding me had been killed. The enemy could have killed me too, but God protected me.

The telephone poles were 8 to 10 miles away. I drove a jeep with a huge spool of wire on the back. We would unroll a length of wire on the ground. Sometimes we would return to find that the Korean women had cut off some wire for clotheslines. Then we had to splice the wires before we put them up on the poles.

Another time I was driving a jeep and some huge guns went off overhead and I couldn't hear for over 24 hours. We were moved to the front of the battlefield for 2 months at a time. There were search lights or beacons and they lit up the whole area at night with a hazy blue glow. Sometimes airplanes came overhead and bombed us. I always had to carry a rifle but, fortunately, never had to shoot anyone nor did I get wounded. When I got home after the war, if I heard an airplane or loud noise, especially at night, I froze in fear. Some veterans have such bad memories, called PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) that they needed treatment and understanding.

Korea was very mountainous and I did a lot of climbing. We always camped by a stream. There was a large tent nearby where the men showered. They drew water from the stream and heated it in large drums so we could have hot showers. When we were at the front, we had cans of sterno that we lit and held our helmets over the flame to heat water for washing and shaving. One time I grew a mustache. Our tents slept three men. The camp was guarded. We had kerosene stoves in our tent to keep us warm in the winter. We had canvas cots and wool blankets. We kept rat poison under our cots because the rats were as large as cats. The rat poison made the rats run around like they were drunk.

The weather in winter was very cold and snowy, like it is here. The summers were similar but Korea had monsoon rains. Then everything was bogged down in mud. In winter the Army gave us warm clothing and jackets and lighter clothing in summer. We had a duffle bag where we kept our clothing and possessions. Before we left, an organization called the Gideon's gave us small bibles with the New Testament. I still have mine. There were chaplains who led religious services and ministered to the men. I say men, because there were no women in our company. I still have my duffle bag in the attic with my Eisenhower uniform. My wife used my wool blanket to make snowsuits for our boys when they were little.

Veteran Letter continued

We had a mess tent where we ate meals. We had regular food there for the most part. We had powdered eggs which were a little green in color. We had corn flakes and oatmeal and for supper we had ham, chicken, beef and turkey and on holidays we had all the trimmings. The stories you have heard about K-P are true. I remember having to peel tons of potatoes for supper. When we went to the front, we had K-rations which were little cans of food: corn, beans, spaghetti and meat balls. We had a special can opener and cans of sterno for heat. When we were in the mess hall we had regular water. When we were at the front we had to add chlorine tablets to water from the streams to purify it. We loved getting boxes from home with home baked cookies and candies and letters. It went a long way to relieve our homesickness.

The Korean people were fleeing from the war too. Most of them were farmers but we didn't see many animals. They killed the livestock for food as they were starving. One day our Captain's dog was missing and he found out that a Korean family had it for dinner. Children were not afraid of us and would often beg for candy or our food. It was hard to see people who were hungry or suffering.

There were honey buckets which were holes in the ground where the people poured human waste. Sometimes the G.I.s would fall into one accidentally.

You never knew if you would live or die during the war. Our army was helped by soldiers from England, France and Ethiopia. The enemy north Chinese sent lots of troops and fighting was fierce. In the end, the South Koreans won the war, but there were many casualties on both sides. My brother-in-law was a Marine and gave his life in Korea. He is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

When I left for Korea we took a train to California where we got on a ship for Japan and arrived in Korea two weeks later. Every five or six months we were sent to Japan for rest and recovery (R&R). When I returned home after the war we went in reverse order. Now servicemen and women fly to their destinations. When I came home I was surprised at how my nieces and nephews had grown and how cars and clothing had changed. One thing that surprised me was that I never was sick or had one cold all the time I was in Korea.

It would be easy to hate the enemy, but they believed they were right, just as we thought we were right. In a way, nobody wins a war because it is a loss when anybody dies in battle. Over the years, I have made friends with the Korean people and one is my doctor whom I respect very much. His family lost much in the war too. I dream of a day when everyone can live in peace.

Our eldest son, John, joined the Army but thankfully never had to go to war. He was once based at Fort Knox, Kentucky where the gold is kept.

Our second son, Mark, served in the Navy for 23 years. He was in hydraulics (lifting helicopters to the top deck) where pilots in the Air Force went on maneuvers. When he was near Washington, DC, he managed the hotel on base and they sent him to San Diego to be a chef. He then served on the huge air carriers as a Chief Culinary Specialist where he was in charge of 250 cooks who fed over 5000 on the ship. His ships evacuated people in Liberia, Africa and saw police action in the Middle East. He has been everywhere in the world except the North and South Poles.

Our youngest son, Rob, is a high school math teacher (Venice High in FL) and he studied for his first class radio operator's license and installed a radio antenna on the school roof. He invited the fifth grade class to come to his classroom where they were able to communicate with the astronauts on the space shuttle. They asked questions about space suits, what they ate and one boy asked if birds could fly in space (they can't because they need gravity to navigate).

My wife is a nurse and tells of men and women who served in wars who still have nightmares. She says programs like Honor Flight allow people to dialogue about war, and honors and thanks those who have fought for freedom. She says those wounded in wars have helped the doctors and nurses understand the human body better and have advanced treatment and rehabilitation. The doctors and nurses who saw combat were every bit as wounded in mind and spirit as those wounded in body. Some of the monuments erected to honor them have given them recognition and comfort.

I want to tell you a true story about one of the youngest soldiers in the United States Navy. My wife was a nurse in a cardiac rehabilitation program and one of her patients had a twelve-year old son battling cancer. All he wanted to do was to grow up and join the Navy. His room was covered with posters of ships. But, he was losing his fight with cancer. My wife wrote to our son

Veteran Letter continued

who was then aboard the USS Saipan and asked for a poster of his ship. When he came home on leave, he had the poster and he was eager to meet this young man. They drove to the boy's home for a visit. There Mark was able to present the poster of the Saipan signed by over 2000 sailors on board. Mark fastened an alligator pin, the ship's mascot, on his pajamas. Mark gave him an official document making him an honorary member of the United States Navy. He then placed a sailor's hat on his bald head and was rewarded with weak smile. That boy died two weeks later, fighting the good fight. Children make good soldiers too.

I believe every person should try to give back to our nation, whether it is in the armed service or service to the country, like the Peace Corps or many of the humanitarian and volunteer organizations. It is also a way to further education, to travel, to learn about other cultures and to build a bridge to understanding.

The American Indian has a saying "Do not judge another until you have walked a mile in his moccasins." It is so true! We do not know what another person is experiencing or how much they hurt. It could be a scar on the inside as well as one outside. It is easy to judge and bully when someone is different. It is hard to stand up and be counted and to defend the vulnerable.

Your letters tell me that you are growing up to be honorable men and women, and that you will defend each other and our country. Your gift of understanding and gratitude touched my heart deeply and I am grateful that I was able to serve our country so that we could have the wonderful freedoms we have today.



Volunteer Updates: "How Can I Help?"

This is a fairly common question we get from our volunteers as well as the from the public. And what a great question to have! To answer simply, there are several ways you can help out Honor Flight Rochester! Here are some pointers on the best ways to help.

Help a veteran get signed up to fly:

Our most important mission is to give every veteran an opportunity to fly, and the only way we can do this is by getting them signed up. Veteran applications are available through our website at www.honorflightrochester.org (see graphic below). Paper applications are also made available at most events, as well as many American Legion and VFW posts, and town halls.



Help a guardian get signed up to fly, or volunteer as a guardian yourself:

Guardians are an important part of our mission, traveling with our veterans to make sure each and every one of them has a safe and enjoyable experience. Guardians are most often family members or friends of the veteran, or in a very few instances they may be volunteers. Signing up is the same for both: online form or printable applications are on the web. (see below)



Sign up for other volunteer events:

Another way to help is by volunteering your time: helping assemble veteran backpacks, staffing booths at events, or helping with send-off and welcome home at the airport, plus many other opportunities! It is important to note that EVERY volunteer must have an application submitted — this includes spouses or family members of existing volunteers, if they want to help out. You can find more information on our website, or by emailing: VolunteerHonorFlightROC@gmail.com



A Message from Rich

Fall is a very active season for Honor Flight Rochester including our three missions and more than two dozen outreach events. Veterans Day alone was particularly busy as on that one special day our volunteers covered a half a dozen venues representing Honor Flight. Thank you volunteers for making this happen.

This past October 17th the Thomas F. Healy Post 16 VFW recognized Honor Flight Rochester with their Community Service Award at their 100th anniversary celebration. I accepted this most gratifying award on behalf of all HFR volunteers and the veterans we have flown. The location was a packed house at Rick's Prime Rib with many dignitaries present. This award is a tribute to each of you who always put forth your best for our veterans. You have made Honor Flight Rochester a truly great organization. Thank you volunteers. (See photo of award).



Honor Flight is for all American veterans. From time to time I am asked the question, "Should veterans go on a mission if they did they not serve in combat?" My answer is always a resounding yes. All veterans regardless of if they were in harm's way or not are encouraged to take their Honor Flight. Overseas or stateside we welcome them all. Of course, veterans from the earliest eras travel first. While some veterans are modest about their service, just the fact they served is ample reason to go on their mission. Our current focus is to get more applications from those who served post World War II and prior to the Vietnam War. And, yes, we do not want to miss any able WWII veterans. Please help us get more applications. Our veterans are heroes to be celebrated.



In closing, please join me in thanking Maggie Brooks our County Executive who early on was at the forefront in supporting Honor Flight Rochester. At our most recent Welcome Home for Mission 45 we presented Maggie with a bouquet of flowers in appreciation for her magnificent support. We wish her good luck in her future endeavors. Thank you Maggie.

Best Regards,

Rich Stewart
President

**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.