



NEWSLETTER

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VETERAN SALUTE RICHARD LUCAS

BY CHARLES DeROLLER

Richard Lucas intended to celebrate his 100th birthday with the Honor Flight Rochester journey to Washington D.C. After all, why not wait? He'd served during the Second World War, Korean War, and Vietnam War, and has been retired since 1966. What better way to celebrate a centennial birthday and decades of military service? However, Lucas relented, and joined Honor Flight Rochester Mission 69 in October 2019, age 98. M69 was the final HFR trip before COVID-19 temporarily suspended HFR travel, so clearly his decision was fortuitous.

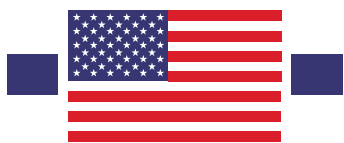
Lucas's service began in 1942, drafted into the US Army Air Corps (predecessor of the US Air Force). Previously the Army hadn't wanted Lucas, but USAAC, according to him "couldn't be picky about a guy with three fingers missing and needed the people."

During WWII, Lucas began as ground crew on aircraft, and later served as an aircraft mechanics instructor in England and Scotland. Of this, Lucas relates that he was unable to obtain the instructor position until he proved that he could shoot a gun- and indeed he could! In fact, aside from his leadership role,



Lucas flew around Great Britain and even Africa to compete High Power Rifle, Small Bore Rifle, and Pistol competitions. Not bad for a guy missing three fingers! He recalls "I never told anyone that my luggage was full of rifles, pistols, and ammunition. They probably would have had a fit."

Lucas continued to serve as an aircraft mechanic and instructor. During the Korean War he was based at Seymour Johnson AFB, and, as he says, "Never got to Korea." With the advent of the jet age, it was an



**WE LEAVE NO
VETERAN BEHIND**

incredible time to be an aircraft mechanic. Please see supporting photos of two iconic planes from Richard's era; an F86 Sabre (the first swept-wing U.S. fighter) and a B-29 Superfortress (the predecessor of the B-52).

During the Vietnam War, Lucas was based for eight years at Sheppard AFB in Texas. His most memorable experience there was bureaucracy, "I couldn't order one nut, I had to order a whole box." Not wanting to be wasteful, Lucas would "change out that same nut on all the aircraft."

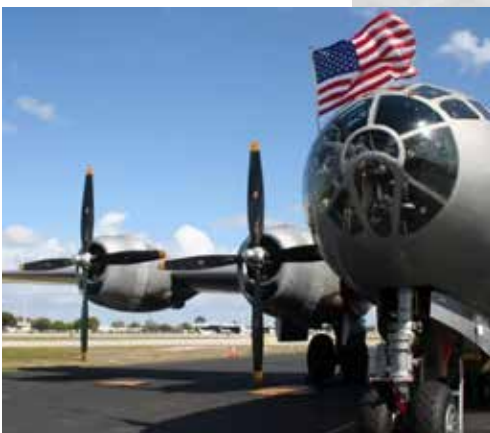
A most memorable event to Lucas was a hangar fire at Scott Field, during which USAF personnel pulled full fuel drums- by hand- from the burning hangar to prevent the fire spreading. He says "You'd be surprised what you can do when you have to." Or maybe it was jumping up and down on bomb bay doors, sans parachute, to get an aircraft's wheels down.

Lucas retired from Andrews AFB in 1966. Following that, he proceeded to flip houses. And today, at age 98, Lucas is currently working on a plan to rent his homes to handicapped GIs.

Of Honor Flight Rochester Mission 69, Lucas praised the organization and volunteers with "It was great... I was treated like a king- front of the aircraft, and first off!" His message about HFR to the Greater Rochester community is touching: "I appreciated an opportunity to visit the memorials, I knew some of those places. HFR did a great job, all the way to being greeted by family and volunteers upon returning home."

Indeed, Mr. Lucas. After serving for 24 years during three wars, you deserve it, and HFR and our sponsors are proud to have provided the opportunity for you to visit the national memorials in the Capital. Best wishes for your upcoming 100th birthday!

Two iconic planes from Richard's era; an F86 Sabre (the first swept-wing U.S. fighter) and a B-29 Superfortress (the predecessor of the B-52)



LAP ROBES FOR VETERANS

On Sunday afternoons of Mission weekends the concluding recognition for our returning flown veterans is the presentation of their Lap Robes. Each handcrafted quilted blanket is insignia specific identifying branch of service. These are generously provided by Lap Robes for Veterans, a nonprofit organization.

Nancy Van Apeldoorn is the founder who believes that Lap Robes are a way to say:
“Thank you for your service... it lets veterans know they are loved and someone other than family is thinking about them.”

Nancy and her 50 volunteers have produced 10,000 lap robes over the last thirteen years. Each Lap Robe costs about \$35 to make and given for free to veterans. So every returning Honor Flight Mission benefits from an in-kind contribution of about \$1800. Thank you to Nancy and her team! Contact information is on Facebook at Lap Robes for Veterans.



HONOR FLIGHT ROCHESTER LAWN SIGN INITIATIVE

The 2020 suspension of Honor Flight Missions due to Covid-19 will continue at least through April 2021; it could be longer.

However, Honor Flight Rochester remains Mission Ready and is eager to resume full operations once the safety of our Veterans and Volunteers is no longer in doubt. Veterans on our fly lists have shown admirable patience awaiting their "trip of a lifetime," considering the delays and uncertainties of this COVID pandemic.

Until we take to the skies again, Honor Flight Rochester visibly recognized our wait-listed Veterans by placing a patriotic lawn sign at their residence declaring, "Honor Flight Rochester Salutes this Veteran with a future Honor Flight." This lawn sign initiative emphasizes that the greater Rochester community and our country have not forgotten their great sacrifice and service for us. Indeed, we will deploy about 150 Honor Flight Rochester Volunteers to complete this Mission.

Sign delivery to the Veterans' residences started the weekend of November 7th and concluded by noon on Veterans Day. Honor Flight Rochester volunteers fully complied with all Covid-19 precautions and social distancing.

Over 200 photos of our veterans who are waiting to fly on their Honor Flight trip with their lawn signs are now available on our Shutterfly page! Thank you for your service!

<https://honorflightrochester.shutterfly.com/honorflightevents/>





Wishing you a very
Happy Holiday
and a
Happy New Year!

PRESIDENT'S NOTE

COVID SURGE DELAYS REACTIVATION PLANS

Maybe by coincidence two weeks after Halloween festivities, the majority of Monroe County was soon designated as yellow zone amid increases in Covid-19 cases. Going into the indoor winter season virus infection rates are projected to grow. This is a setback for HFR reactivation plans. Honor Flight Rochester is eager to resume normal activities when it is safe for our veterans and volunteers.

Just before the yellow zone announcement, HFR conducted a very successful Lawn Sign Initiative. Please join me in thanking 145 volunteers who delivered 974 signs to our Fly List Veterans awaiting their turn to travel. Many family members of volunteers helped. An oft heard comment was, "I was so honored to get the sign today and look forward to my future flight."

While HFR continues in pause mode many staffing decisions are pushed into the future. However, the suspension of flights has allowed more attention for an important back-of-the-house project work summarily referred to as streamlining. Our original combination of manual and automated systems are getting a full rework.

HFR is Mission Ready and we will take to the skies again. However I cannot yet predict a specific date. The vaccine will be very important. In the meantime I encourage all veterans and volunteers to likewise be Mission Ready. A very critical next step for everyone is to have Real ID that is a TSA requirement beginning October 1, 2021.

Thank you volunteers. And as a reminder HFR Facebook offers a way to stay in touch, for instance, by viewing our "Why We Do What We Do" photo series.

Better days will come. We are Mission Ready.

Thanks,

Rich Stewart

President & CEO



SPREAD THE WORD!

Real ID Effective October 1, 2021

Compliance required to pass through TSA checkpoints by all Veterans, Guardians, Flight Crew and Gate Side volunteers.