



Apr-Jun 2017

# LI 202 AFA news

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Long Island Air Force Association – LIAFA

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## President's Message

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2017

#### Vietnam Medal Ceremonies:

#### Jun 10, 2017

LI State Veterans Home  
Stony Brook  
2:00 PM

#### Jul 20, 2017

Shootout for Soldiers at Town of  
Oyster Bay Field of Dreams  
Massapequa  
5:00 PM

#### Sep 9, 2017

Cradle of Aviation Museum  
Garden City  
11:00 AM

#### Nov 4, 2017

Museum of American Armor  
Bethpage  
11:30 AM

#### Annual Pearl Harbor Memorial Ceremony (Dropping of the Roses):

#### Dec. 7, 2017

American Airpower Museum  
Farmingdale  
10:30 AM

Memorial Day weekend is our opportunity to showcase our programs to the general public at the American Airpower Museum in Farmingdale. Saturday and Sunday, May 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, we will have a display at the museum in conjunction with the Bethpage Federal Credit Union's air show at Jones Beach. Levittown native Major Kevin Walsh will be flying plane #7 for the USAF Thunderbirds.

Every year since the museum's opening, the Long Island Air Force Association has supported the air show/display. We have been the only veteran's organization with a display at this show.

We are looking for volunteers to help with staffing the display for the two days, and talking to the public and our veterans about our programs. If you have a couple of hours to spare for the Memorial Day weekend, please contact me so we can schedule coverage for this great weekend. Republic Airport, where the American Airpower Museum is located, is the host airport for the aircraft in the air show, and you will be able to enjoy all the aircraft and displays.

In the following two months, we will also be presenting two Vietnam Medal Ceremonies—June 10<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 pm at the Long Island State Veterans Home in Stony Brook and July 20<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 pm in Massapequa at the Field of Dreams Sport Complex in conjunction with the Shootout for Soldiers, a 24-hour lacrosse tournament.

All are welcome to attend.

I hope to see you there!

Fred DiFabio, President

## LUKE FERLAND SELECTED AS TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Luke Ferland, a Technology teacher at Riverhead High School, was selected as our Teacher of the Year for 2017. Luke was an outstanding candidate who clearly demonstrated his passion for inspiring his students' interest in STEM subjects. (In today's high-tech world, the U.S. Air Force is always looking for recruits with a strong STEM background.)

Luke's enthusiasm for technology is manifested in his efforts to create new and relevant projects that employ modern-day cutting-edge technology in meaningful ways. During his three-year tenure at Riverhead High School, he has launched new programs like Design and Drawing, and the Robotics Club. He is clearly making a difference.

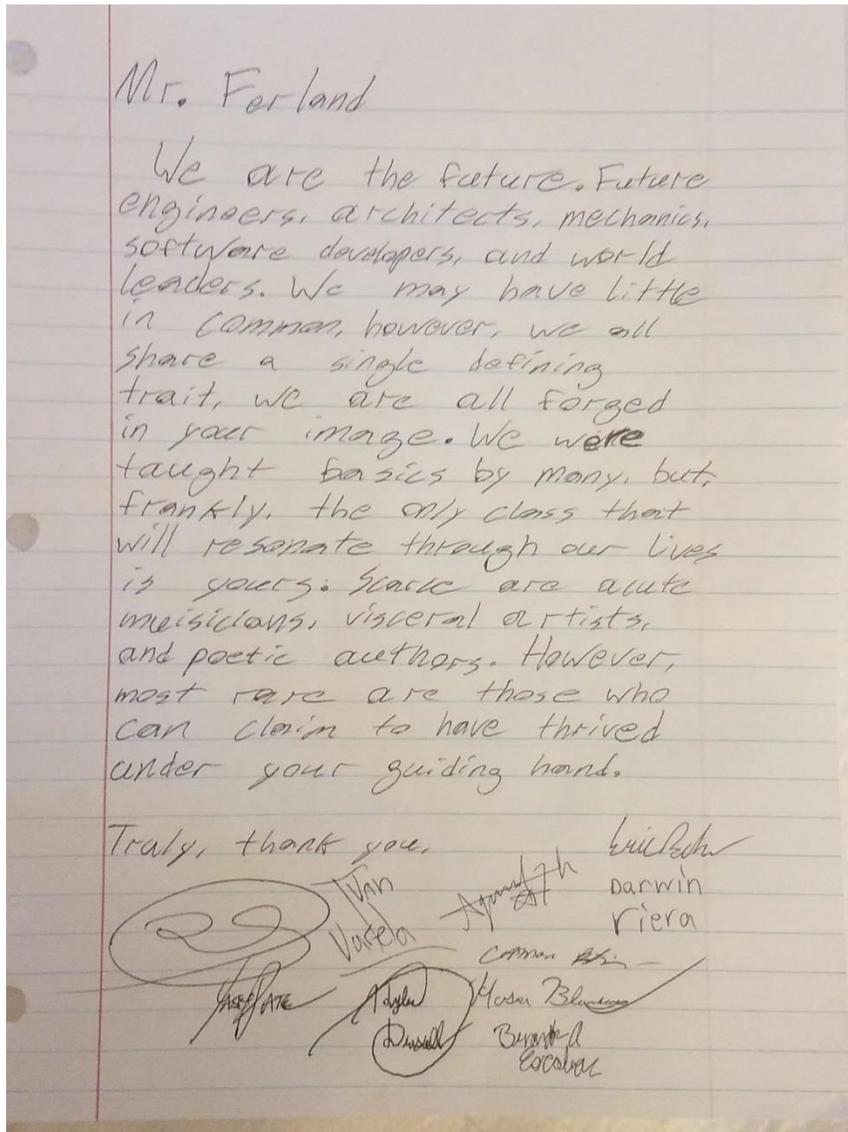
One of his proudest achievements was starting the Robotics program. He acquired a Northrop Grumman Foundation Grant and got his students their first robot. Since then they have grown from attending local competitions to winning the Southern New York State Championship Tournament to competing at the world championship in Kentucky this past April.

Another example is how he employs 3D printer technology in a meaningful way. Born out of this focus was the "Precision Engineered Pen Project", which melds together 3D printing, modern-day technology (3D design software) as well as industrial technology to create top quality and educational projects. One of his projects was so successful it was featured in American Woodtuner Journal this past December.

With a background in energy engineering before becoming a teacher, Luke is well aware of the need for imparting STEM skills to our kids in school. He doesn't consider educating our students as a job, but as a service he must provide to our students to keep America the greatest nation in the world. Well done, Luke, keep up the great work.



*LIIFA Teacher of the Year Luke Ferland (R) with his student robotics team*



Letter from students to teacher Luke Ferland

## FIFTEEN CEREMONIES AND GOING STRONG

Our Vietnam 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemorative Medal program has proven to be a huge success in many ways. To date we have sponsored 15 ceremonies with the latest one held at the Cradle of Aviation Museum on April 8, 2017. So far, we have awarded more than 450 commemorative medals to Vietnam veterans.

The Vietnam war was very unpopular with the American public and those serving in the armed services were not looked upon with the respect they certainly deserved. Vets typically did not return home to a hero's welcome; in fact, they were often scorned for their service to their country. The response to our efforts has been outstanding, and the vets and their families are truly honored to be recognized by our Association for their service 4 to 5 decades ago.

The ceremonies are always patriotic and emotional, and we plan on doing them as long as we continue to receive applications. Visit our webpage and Facebook site to get a better feel for our commitment to our veteran community. Check this newsletter for upcoming events and come out to witness first-hand this terrific ceremony. You'll be glad you did.

## Brothers for Life and Brothers-In-Arms

The LIAFA is immensely proud of all our medal recipients, yet it is unique when we get to recognize family members simultaneously as was the case at our February 18th Ceremony at the Cradle of Aviation. The Pesale brothers both served in Vietnam with the USAF—Joseph as a Sergeant with the 19th Tactical Air Support Squadron (Light) from Apr 1968 to May 1969 and Michael as a Staff Sergeant with the 374<sup>th</sup> OMS Squadron from Jun 1970 to Dec 1970. The pride they felt was evident as they received the recognition together as brothers for life and brothers-in-arms.

Oddly enough, two months later there was a repeat of this occurrence with brothers Daniel and John Burko receiving medals at the April 8 ceremony. Each served with the Army—Daniel as a SP4 with the 563<sup>rd</sup> Transportation Company from Jun 1967 to Jun 1968 and John as a SP5 with the 525<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Company from Feb 1970 to Jan 1971.

Below is a picture of the Burko brothers. Regrettably, we do not have a picture of the Pesale brothers. Thanks to Walter Geary for the photo.



*Daniel Burko (L in camo jacket); John Burko (R in next row back)*

## **Memorial Day Weekend Ceremonies**

### **New York Air Show at Jones Beach**

Saturday and Sunday, May 27 and 28, 12 PM–5 PM. USAF Thunderbirds demonstration team, US Army Golden Knights parachute team, American Airpower Museum warbirds and more. Free admission, but \$10 parking fee per car.

### **USMC and Navy Helicopter Landing**

Saturday, May 27, 10 AM–3 PM, Eisenhower Park in East Meadow (Kite Field 6A). Come see a demonstration by the US Navy Explosive Ordnance Disposal Team and Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron Five at 10 AM. Then the CH-53 Sea Stallion helicopters and AH-1W Cobras will perform an area sweep demonstration. 10 AM Navy landing and 12 PM Marine landing. Free.

### **UVO (United Veterans Organization) Memorial Day Ceremony**

Sunday, May 28, 10 AM–12 PM, Eisenhower Park in East Meadow (Veterans Memorial Plaza, Field 6). Free.

### **Long Island National Cemetery Memorial Day Ceremony**

Sunday, May 28, 1:30 PM at the Long Island National Cemetery, 2040 Wellwood Ave. in Farmingdale. Free.

LINCMO (Long Island National Cemetery Memorial Organization) is seeking donations to purchase patches and food for the people who will flag the graves for Memorial Day. Please make checks payable to "LINCMO" and write "Patches" on the memo line of your check.

Mail your check to Ken Cadieux, 121 Powell Ave., Rockville Centre, NY 11570-3035.

### **American Airpower Museum's Legends of Airpower 2017**

Saturday-Monday, May 26–29, 10 AM–5 PM at the American Airpower Museum at Republic Airport, 1230 New Highway in Farmingdale. See the legendary B-17 Flying Fortress, P-51 Mustang, SBD Dauntless Dive Bomber and many more. Admission: Adults–\$17, Seniors (65 and over) and veterans with proper ID–\$12, Children (5-12)–\$6.

## **SHOOTOUT FOR SOLDIERS LONG ISLAND**



The annual Shootout for Soldiers Long Island will take place on July 20-21, 2017 at the Town of Oyster Bay Field of Dreams. Both fields will have lacrosse matches continuously for 24 hours. The mission of the Shootout is to use lacrosse as a platform to support American veterans and foster community relations. Each year the event generates over \$100,000 for various national and local charities such as the Semper Fi Fund and the Gary Sinise Foundation.

For the second consecutive year, the Long Island Chapter of the Air Force Association will participate by conducting our 17<sup>th</sup> Vietnam Commemorative Medal ceremony on the lacrosse field at 5:00 PM. Come on out and support the cause; visit the Shootout webpage for details; ([shootoutforsoldiers.com](http://shootoutforsoldiers.com)).

## **New Museum in Veterans Tower at Eisenhower Park**

USMC Iwo Jima vet Angelo Ciotta is looking for vets' military memorabilia to place in the showcases. All items will be on loan; you will not be giving up ownership. If you have any mementos (medals, models, photos, patches, etc.) you would like to "donate", please contact Angelo at (347) 996-7793.

### **Taps**

It is with sad but grateful hearts that the LI Air Force Association joins with the Vietnam Veterans Community to announce that retired Air Force Colonel Leo Thorsness, 85, who was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions during a dogfight over North Vietnam and who later spent six years in the enemy prison camp known as the "Hanoi Hilton", died of leukemia on May 2nd at a hospital in Jacksonville, Florida.



During the Vietnam War, Col. Thorsness was one of only 13 members of the Air Force to receive the Medal of Honor, the military's highest award for valor. The award was not announced during the six years he was held in North Vietnam to keep his captors from inflicting additional torture on him and his fellow POWs. Col. Thorsness joined the Air Force in 1951 and was sent to Vietnam in 1966 as a member of a squadron known as the Wild Weasels, whose mission was to destroy surface-to-air missiles based in North Vietnam.