



Jul-Sep 2017

LI 202 AFA news

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President's Message

A well-deserved thank you.

The Long Island Air Force Association has completed 18 Vietnam Medal Ceremonies since April 2015. This is an unbelievable accomplishment, considering the amount of work it takes to organize, locate the veterans, schedule the ceremonies, invite guest speakers, and find venues. This also requires getting all the support teams to put these ceremonies together—organizations like the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Band, the 106th Rescue Wing, the Color Guards, VVA Chapter 82, VFW Post 5942, Civil Air Patrol, Patriot Guard Riders, American Legion Riders, our elected officials plus all the people who support our medal ceremonies.

It takes close to 100 people to support each ceremony, and we can't forget all the people who are part of the organizations whose locations we use, like the Cradle of Aviation, American Airpower Museum, American Armor Museum, Long Island State Veterans Home, and the high schools, which allow us to use their facilities.

There is one other key group I'd like to mention—sponsors, without whom the 600-plus medals would never have been presented and the honor to our Vietnam Veterans would never have been possible.

So, special thanks are due to the Shoot Out for Soldiers, Telephonics Corp., DJJ Technologies, Retliff Testing Labs, VVA Chapter 82, VFW Post 5942 in Plainview, Long Island State Veterans Home, Gold Coast Bank, and Addapt for their outstanding support.

We have two more scheduled ceremonies this year—the November 4th Vietnam Medal Ceremony and the December 7th Pearl Harbor Memorial Ceremony (The Dropping of the Roses).

The Long Island Air Force Association's leadership would like to thank all our supporters who have made these ceremonies so successful in honoring our veterans.

(continued on next page)

CALENDAR OF LIAFA EVENTS 2017

Vietnam Medal Ceremonies:

Saturday, Nov 4, 2017

Museum of American Armor
Bethpage
11:30 AM

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

Thursday, Dec. 7, 2017

American Airpower Museum
Farmingdale
10:30 AM

(President's Message—continued from prior page)

We would like to invite all our members to join us at these upcoming events. We know that some of you may be unable to attend, but if you would like to help, you may donate to the chapter and support these programs.

Donations can be sent to:

Long Island Air Force Association
Fred Di Fabio, President
67 Pacific Dunes Court
Medford, NY 11763



As was also the case last year, sunny skies prevailed as the annual Shootout for Soldiers Long Island took place on July 20th – 21st at the Town of Oyster Bay Field of Dreams in Massapequa. Three fields each had Lacrosse matches running continuously for 24 hours. The mission of the Shootout is to use Lacrosse as a platform to support American veterans and foster good community relations. Originally started in 2012 by a group of high school students at the Boys' Latin School in Baltimore, the event rapidly expanded over the next few years to 12 cities across the country by 2017. This year the Long Island event alone generated over \$150,000 for various national and local charities such as the Semper Fi Fund and the Gary Sinise Foundation (and the LIAFA).

The Long Island Chapter of the Air Force Association participated by conducting our 17th Vietnam Commemorative Medal ceremony on the Lacrosse field at 5:00 PM on July 20. Colonel Michael Bank, Jr., Commander of the 106th ANG Rescue Wing, presented the medals to 20 recipients, including two that were awarded to Carlo Campolettano, USMC and Jack Schroeder, US Army, members of the Long Island Lacrosse community. A special presentation was also made to the Allstate Agents of Long Island for their generous donation of \$14,000 to the Shootout.

Among those in attendance were State Senator John Brooks, Town of Oyster Bay Supervisor Joseph Saladino and AFA Northeast Regional President Maxine Rauch.



Two players at the Shootout



AFA table at the Shootout



LIAFA President Fred Di Fabio presenting certificate to Robert Zabbia of the Allstate Agents of Long Island in recognition of their \$14,000 donation to the Shootout



From left to right: [Shootout Co-Chair Harry Jacobs, Gary Sinise Foundation rep Charlie Gressett, Shootout for Soldiers Executive Director Tyler Steinhardt and Shootout Co-Chair Mike Nelson]

Other Upcoming Events

Friday, September 29 at 10 AM—Stand-Down at Northport VA Medical Center, Gym (Building 89).

Sunday, November 5 at 10 AM—United Veterans Organization Veterans Day Ceremony at Eisenhower Park, Veterans Memorial Plaza, Field 6. For more information, contact Frank Colon at (516) 435-7066.

Sunday, November 5 at 1:30 PM—Long Island National Cemetery Veterans Day Ceremony at the Long Island National Cemetery, 2040 Wellwood Avenue in Farmingdale. For more information, contact Frank Colon at (516) 435-7066.

Tuesday, November 21 from 10 AM to 2 PM—Nassau County Veterans Service Agency's Winter Stand-Down at Freeport Armory, 63 Babylon Turnpike in Freeport (near Meadowbrook Parkway). For more information, contact Ralph Esposito at (516) 572-6565.

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.

The Facts About the Walls of Honor in Eisenhower Park (excerpted from the Nassau County American Legion webpage)

The Nassau County Veterans Monument Fund Inc. is a private organization. It is not a part of Nassau County government and has no affiliation with any government agency.

The "Walls of Honor" are Honor Walls, not memorial walls. There are more living honorees than those who have passed. The walls are open to all those who have served our great country throughout time. A \$100 donation is needed for each name, whether they served during wartime or peacetime. It is open to all, no matter where they live, and it is open to those who are serving now. If you want more than one name on the wall together, they must be mailed in together.

For applications, call (516) 804-5802 or see the download instructions below.

The application for the Walls of Honor can be opened / downloaded from the following 2 pages:

<http://www.nassaulegion.org/walls%20of%20honor.pdf>

<http://www.nassaulegion.org/walls%20of%20honor%20page%202.pdf>

Send donations to:

The Nassau County Veterans Monument Fund Inc., PO Box 7911, Hicksville NY 11802-7911

Taps



It is with great sadness that we announce that Pearl Harbor veteran (Navy) **Gerard Barbosa** of East Meadow passed away peacefully on September 15 at the age of 93.

On June 27 World War II submariner **Joe Librizzi** of Oceanside passed away at age 90. He was stationed on the USS Balao, whose primary mission was rescuing pilots who had been downed off the coast of Japan.

Air Force veteran and Patriot Guard Rider **Frank J. Byrnes** passed away in late August. Frank was a Ride Captain for many of our Vietnam medal ceremonies.

Shared from dailymail.com, story by Sarah Oliver:

'This is wizard!' 100-year-old woman who flew Spitfires during the Second World War celebrates her centenary by getting behind the controls again

- Mary Ellis was in a select gang of female pilots who flew during World War II
- She has now celebrated her 100th birthday by flying a plane over West Sussex
- Mrs Ellis flew next to one of the Spitfires she was in more than 70 years ago

By [Sarah Oliver For The Mail On Sunday](#)

PUBLISHED: 09:03 +11:00, 5 February 2017 | **UPDATED:** 10:00 +11:00, 5 February 2017

Tearing through the skies above the South Coast, two Spitfires evoke powerful memories of Britain's wartime resilience.

But this stirring image holds a further poignancy – for in the cockpit of the lead aircraft sits Mary Ellis, celebrating her 100th birthday by recreating her time as one of the 'Ata-girls', the select gang of female pilots who flew Britain's fighters during the war.

And over her shoulder is one of the actual Spitfires she flew during her 1,000 flights as a First Officer with the Air Transport Auxiliary.

'Wizard, this is wizard!' yelled the delighted centenarian through her intercom.

Mary was handed the controls of the 275mph twin-seater as it swooped over West Sussex. After about 15 minutes, she turned for home, and told her co-pilot Matt Jones: 'Goodwood on the nose, you have control...'. Then she settled back to enjoy the ride back to base.



Mary Ellis (pictured during her time as an Air Transport Auxiliary pilot in WW2) has celebrated her 100th birthday

Earlier, Mary watched in delight as Spitfire MV154 took its place beside her in an extraordinary airborne tribute. It was a plane she had delivered to RAF Brize Norton from Southampton on September 15, 1944, and it hides a sentimental secret. For at the end of the 25-minute wartime flight, she signed the cockpit, scrawling her maiden name Wilkins and the initials ATA.



Mary Ellis (circled) was handed the controls of the 275mph twin-seater as it swooped over West Sussex

She hoped her tag might be spotted by a handsome pilot and lead to a wartime romance – although the impulsive act, a career one-off, didn't bag her a boyfriend.

Mary, originally from Oxfordshire, had her first flying lesson in 1938, and flew for pleasure until 1941 when she heard a BBC radio appeal for women pilots to join the auxiliary service and so release male pilots for combat duty.

Speaking at a surprise birthday party on Thursday, Mary said: 'The war was a challenge and one had to do something about it. I went on and on until I flew everything. I love the Spitfire – it's my favourite aircraft, it's everyone's favourite, it's the symbol of freedom.'

For four years she ferried warplanes from factories to frontline squadrons. The 166 women of the ATA – about one in eight of the total – have been dubbed 'The Female Few', echoing Winston Churchill's description of the RAF airmen who fought in the Battle of Britain.



Mrs Ellis looked back over her left shoulder and glanced at the aircraft she once flew

Mary was usually found at the joystick of a Spitfire or a Hurricane but ultimately flew more than 50 types of aircraft, logging 1,100 hours of flight, much to the astonishment of some colleagues.

As she sat on the airfield ready to deliver her first Spitfire, the mechanic standing on the wing asked how many of them she'd flown. When she said it was her first, he was so startled he fell right off. The largest aircraft she flew solo was the Wellington bomber. After landing at an East Anglian airfield, Mary was greeted by the ground crew who asked where the pilot was. 'I'm the pilot,' she said. They insisted on searching the aircraft before they believed her.

It was dangerous work. Mary was sometimes ordered to move combat-damaged planes that were not officially fit to fly, but had to be taken for repairs. She crash-landed twice and was shot at once.



Mrs Ellis toasted a glass of champagne with co-pilot Matt Jones, managing director of Boulton Flight Academy

Fourteen of her fellow ATA female flyers lost their lives, including aviation pioneer Amy Johnson.

Mary – who to this day needs no spectacles, nor a walking stick – was one of the last six women serving in the ATA when it disbanded after the war. She remained a private pilot and then became managing director of Sandown Airport on the Isle of Wight. She married Don Ellis, a fellow pilot, in 1961, but was widowed in 2009. Matt Jones, who flies Spitfires for Goodwood-based Boulton Flight Academy, reunited Mary with MV154 after first meeting her in 2015. He conspired with the plane's current owner, pilot Maxi Gainza, to bring it to the UK from its base in Bremgarten, Germany.

He said: 'I gave Mary control of our Spitfire. I wasn't sure where we were but Mary was very clear. She pointed us towards Thorney Island, up through the Witterings, flew on to Selsey Bill and then Bognor Regis, never losing a foot of altitude.'

'She showed me precisely how she was able to deliver all those aircraft with just a map, a compass and a stopwatch. I was utterly humbled by a superior aviator who also happens to be 60 years my senior!'