



Oct-Dec 2017

LI 202 AFA news

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CALENDAR OF LIAFA EVENTS 2018

Vietnam Medal Ceremonies:

Sat, Jan 20, 2018

Cradle of Aviation
Garden City
11:00 AM

Sat, Apr 21, 2018

LI State Veterans Home
Stony Brook
2:00 PM

Sat, Jun 2, 2018

Museum of American Armor
Bethpage
11:30 AM

Thu, Jul 12, 2018

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

(See additional Vietnam ceremonies on page 2)

Memorial Day Weekend:

Sat & Sun, May 27-28, 2018

American Airpower Museum
Farmingdale
Table Display - All Day

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

Fri, Dec. 7, 2018

American Airpower Museum
Farmingdale
10:30 AM

President's Message

The Long Island Air Force Association has had a great year, as we presented **seven** 50th Vietnam Anniversary Commemorative Medal Ceremonies. To date we have presented over 600 medals to Long Island Vietnam veterans.

Our Pearl Harbor ceremony, the *Dropping of the Roses*, was a great success with a record-breaking attendance and many news media reporting on the ceremony.

The new year 2018 will see a very aggressive and challenging schedule.

We would like to thank all our supporting organizations and sponsors who make these programs possible; it takes about 100 people to present this type of program to the public so a special thanks to all who partner with us—the GEICO Skytypers, US Coast Guard Auxiliary Band, Vietnam Veterans of America #82, VFW Post 5940, Plainview, Civil Air Patrol Squadron #8, US Navy Operations Center, Patriot Guard Riders, American Legion Riders Post 1244, Rolling Thunder #6 and all the volunteers who are willing to pitch in to help.

Needless to say, without our sponsors, none of this would be possible. Our thanks go to the Shootout for Soldiers, Telephonics, Long Island State Veterans Home, National Defense Industrial Association, Atlantic Aviation, Gold Coast Bank, VVA 82, VFW 5942, Retliff and the many others that also support these programs.

We wish all a blessed holiday season, and a great and wonderful New Year.

See everyone next year.

Other Upcoming Events and Meetings

Tuesday, December 19, 2017, 6:30 PM to 9 PM—Veteran Peer Night at Veteran Activity Center, 2184 Pond Road, Ronkonkoma. Hosted by Boots on the Ground NY **every Tuesday**. Some weeks the group may go to outside activities, bowling, movies, adventure park, etc. so please check event each week, or call the VAC and leave a message at (631) 615-2200. No paperwork, no fees, no membership, completely confidential.

Any Veteran or Service Member who needs help with Christmas—Tuesday night, December 19th you can come down to the VAC from 7 PM till 9 PM to pick up what you need. There will also be chow that night and refreshments. If you need a Christmas Tree, please let us know ASAP, and we will have one for you. Send an email to frankb@bootsonthegroundny.com or leave a message at (631) 615-2200. All requests are confidential.

Thursday, December 21, 2017, 6 PM to 8 PM—Female Veteran Peer Night (female vets only) at Veteran Activity Center, 2184 Pond Road, Ronkonkoma. Hosted by Boots on the Ground NY **every Thursday**. Some weeks the group may go to outside activities, bowling, movies, adventure park, etc. so please check event each week, or call the VAC and leave a message at (631) 615-2200. No paperwork, no fees, no membership, completely confidential.

Thursday, December 21, 2017, 12 PM to 3:30 PM—Nassau County Veterans Service Agency and Texas Roadhouse present a free veterans holiday luncheon at Texas Roadhouse, 2571 Hempstead Turnpike, East Meadow. All veterans must RSVP by phone to (516) 572-6530, and must bring a veteran's ID card or DD-214 for entry to the luncheon.

Saturday, January 20, 2018, 10 AM to 3 PM—Food Pantry Drive and Care Package Supply collection at Veteran Activity Center (VAC), 2184 Pond Road, Ronkonkoma. Hosted by Boots on the Ground NY on the **third Saturday of each month**.

Additional Vietnam Medal Ceremonies—September 22, 2018 at 11:00 AM at the Cradle of Aviation, Garden City and November 3, 2018 at 11:30 AM at the Museum of American Armor in Bethpage.

76th Pearl Harbor Memorial (Dropping of the Roses) on December 7, 2017

We were honored to welcome Pearl Harbor survivor 99-year-old Seymour Blutt (of the 11th Bombardment Group, Army Air Corps, Hickam Field) and his daughter Lisa as well as Pearl Harbor survivor widows Betty DuBrul, Rosemary Halleran and Joyce Tupper. Also in attendance was Dolores Chiappone, daughter of Michael Montelione, a Pearl Harbor survivor who passed away in 2014, and Gerard and Bonnie Barbosa, children of Gerard Barbosa, a Pearl Harbor survivor who passed away in 2017.

After the colors were retired and the indoor ceremony ended around noontime, 77 roses (76 red roses, with 1 white rose for 9/11) were presented to the pilots of the GEICO Skytypers, who then departed to drop the roses over the Statue of Liberty at 12:55 PM to mark the exact time of the Pearl Harbor attack.

Some pictures from the event are on the following pages.



Crowd in hangar



Coast Guard Auxiliary Band



Seymour Bluff, Pearl Harbor survivor (seated) with Sgt at Arms Paul Massi, USMC and Ken Nevor, LIAFA VP for Communications/Media



L to R in review line: Fred Di Fabio, LIAFA President; Maj Gen (Ret) Anthony Kropp; Col (Ret) Bill Stratemeier, LIAFA Treasurer; CMDR Julie Schmidt, Commander, USN Operational Support Center; Lt Col Paul Salas, 106th Rescue Wing (ANG) Inspector General; Lt Col Brian McNamara, Chaplain, 106th Rescue Wing (ANG). In plane: Jim Record (pilot) and Joe Daly (backseater).

Thank You, LIAFA

At the most recent Vietnam medal ceremony held at the Museum of American Armor in Bethpage on November 4, Steven Latus (VP and your humble editor) and Ray Donnelly (VP Corporate Development) were each awarded an engraved medal of merit from the Air Force Association “for distinguished service to the Air Force Association during 2017”. We were both surprised and grateful for the recognition, and on behalf of myself and Ray, we wish to thank all those who thought our efforts worthy of this honor.

World War II Combat Pilot’s Remains Returned After 72 Years Missing

Shared from WCBS New York website – story reported on November 30, 2017; photo is in public domain:

RONKONKOMA, N.Y. (CBSNewYork) — There was a homecoming more than years overdue on Long Island Thursday.



1LT Robert L. Mains, US Army Air Forces

As CBS2's Dick Brennan reported, the remains of a World War II pilot killed in combat, who had been considered missing in action, have been returned. The pilot's family and the military never gave up on bringing the remains home.

At MacArthur Airport on Long Island, a full military honor guard escorted the remains of Lt. Robert Mains. The pilot was shot down and killed while on a bombing mission over Germany in 1945, just one month before World War II ended.

At the airport, Mains' daughter, Barbara O'Brien, stood transfixed as the casket was carried to a hearse. She had been born just hours before her father was deployed overseas.

"He held me for one day, and then he had to go off to war," O'Brien said.

For the last 72 years, O'Brien only had photos to remind her of the father she never really knew. That was until she received a call two months ago from Pentagon investigators researching tens of thousands of missing in action cases.

They had successfully matched some bones discovered in a German field to the O'Brien family's DNA.

"I feel so blessed of all these men," O'Brien said. "They found my father."

O'Brien's husband, James, is a Vietnam veteran. He joined his wife on the airport tarmac for the emotional ceremony and was left greatly impressed.

"We felt we were embraced by the nation; that they had this type of care for our fallen heroes to bring them back to the honor they deserve," James O'Brien said.

Barbara O'Brien said she will forever remember when she approached her father's casket.

"I was feeling so emotional. This is my father coming down to me. They tell us to live in the moment. I was in that moment," she said. "I ran over. I just threw my arms on there and I said, 'Dad, you've come home to me.' It was very important to me."

O'Brien said the homecoming is all the more special because it comes on her husband's birthday – symbolically joining together the family members who had long cherished Mains' bravery and ultimate sacrifice.

On Saturday morning, Mains' remains will be buried with full military honors at the Calverton National Cemetery on Long Island.

Silencing the Arctic Mammoth

By Air Force Capt. Christopher Arnold, 301st Intelligence Squadron / Published May 23, 2016

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — For half a century, the "Elephant Cage" has cast a shadow over the Alaska landscape, silently collecting and finding the direction of communications signals, guarding against adversary threats and intentions. The intelligence collected informed our nation's and allied decision makers, from presidents to warfighters. In later years it fulfilled a crucial role aiding in navigation and direction-finding for civilian and military search and rescue missions. After five decades of service, this symbol of intelligence operations is being retired.

The AN/FLR-9 (commonly pronounced Flare-9) is a large circular antenna array affectionately referred to as the "Elephant Cage" because of its massive 40-acre footprint and 120-foot tower height. Its design was based on the German Wullenweber antenna. During World War II, German naval technicians in a secret research and development program designed and built the original antenna. Following the war, the original structure was destroyed according to terms negotiated under the Potsdam Conference, and a secondary system was disassembled and brought back to the U.S. for an in-depth engineering analysis.

Built in 1966 at the height of the Cold War at what is now Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, the antenna is the last of eight systems which originally comprised a worldwide network. Each system could intercept and directionally locate high-frequency radio transmissions up to 4,000 nautical miles away. Over time, these structures succumbed to many different fates.

Three were dismantled as a result of base closures: Ramasun Station, Thailand in 1975; San Vito Air Station, Italy in 1993; and Royal Air Force Chicksands, England in 1997.

Another at Karamursel Air Station, Turkey, was demolished following a conflict over foreign aid to Greece in 1977. The array at Clark Air Base in the Philippines was irrevocably damaged by the eruption of Mount Pinatubo in 1991 and subsequently converted to a covered amphitheater. Most recently, Misawa Air Base, Japan, deactivated their AN/FLR-9 in 2012 and demolished it in 2015.

Initially maintained and operated by the United States Air Force Security Service, and locally by the 6981st Electronic Security Squadron, today the operation and maintenance of the AN/FLR-9 is executed by the men and women of the 373d Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Group and a cadre of trained civilians.

This month that will all change, when the last of these mammoth structures is scheduled to be deactivated and powered down for the first time in 50 years.

"The development and diverse geographical deployment of these systems was a noteworthy intelligence achievement for the period," said Air Force Col. Suzanne Streeter, 373d Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Group commander. "Advances in technology, along with the high cost of maintenance and availability of replacement parts, have shifted the AN/FLR-9 antennas across the Air Force from an operational capability to historic monuments."

Though upgraded over the years, it is a testimony to the engineering and workmanship of the antenna that many parts are still original and have never been repaired or replaced. The antenna array is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. There is already interest in preserving the site, similar to the Nike Missile Site on Site Summit near JBER's eastern edge.

"I've been fortunate to have three tours flying fighters at Elmendorf, and I've seen a lot of changes since my first sortie here in 1994, including the runway orientation," said Air Force Col. Charles Corcoran, 3rd Wing commander. "One thing that never changed was the 'elephant cage.' Whether sighting it from long distance on a beautiful clear day in Alaska, or catching a glimpse of it after breaking out of the clouds on an instrument approach, a pilot always knew he was home as soon as the 'elephant cage' was visible."

Efforts are currently underway to explore the conservation of the antenna to honor its 50 years of service.



Photo by Joel Cooke

A large circular antenna array, the AN/FLR-9, or Flare-9, at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson was built in 1966 during the height of the Cold War. The facility is commonly referred to as the "Elephant Cage" due to its large 40-acre footprint. JBER's Flare-9 antenna will be officially shut down for the first time in 50 years on 25 May 2016. (Courtesy photo)

[Editor's note: I have a piece of the wire from the dismantled FLR-9 from San Vito Air Station, Italy mounted on a plaque and hanging on my office wall at home. I was stationed there 1970-1972.]

Happy Holidays from the Long Island Air Force Association!

