

HONOR FLIGHT SOUTH FLORIDA

Highlights of the General Meeting - September 30, 2017

Only a few more hours and our Honor Flight will be taking off with 23 World War II veterans and 49 Korean War veterans, each accompanied by a Vietnam veteran as an Elite Guardian.

MOMENT OF SILENCE: Chairman Rick Asper offered a moving tribute to Pete Bouvier, a loyal volunteer and Vietnam veteran, who passed on Sept. 12. Pete was the first Vietnam veteran to fly with our hub. As approved by Honor Flight, veterans can move up earlier and go on a flight ahead of their time if they are very ill. Rick said Pete "talked about that day for the rest of his life." Pete and Nancy Bouvier were two of our first and most dedicated volunteers, planning fundraisers, participating in parades and numerous other events. Nancy has asked that Pete be remembered with donations to Honor Flight South Florida.

PLATOON 92317: That's the official name for our 72 Elite Guardians flying on 9-23-17. This is a very unique flight with the bonding of three military generations. We are the only hub to have Vietnam veterans serving as the full corps of guardians on a flight. Bev Engler and Mercy Iglesias, the veterans and guardians coordinators, had a major task with many changes to the flight roster because of the postponement and with little time and reduced Internet and phone access in the days following the hurricane. Thomas "Stormy" Matteo, who received six Purple Hearts, will again serve as ambassador for the Vietnam veterans.

SATURDAY'S ITINERARY: We're two weeks later than scheduled, but ready for the same itinerary as was planned before the September 9 flight was postponed because of Hurricane Irma. Flight 1941 will depart Fort Lauderdale at 6:15 a.m. for Baltimore-Washington International. The schedule for the day is very tight and busy. Chairman Asper advised all guardians and staff to pay close attention to the times on the itinerary. The four buses will head directly to Arlington National Cemetery for the Changing of the Guard, and then on to the World War II and Korean War memorials and the Vietnam Wall before returning to BWI and on to FLL for the big homecoming celebration. Thirty soldiers from Fort Meade will be assisting again. This has become such a popular day for the active-duty troops that many have participated several times and there is a competition to see who will get to join us this time. If you're not on the flight, but want to feel like you are, check our Facebook page for photos and updates. There will also be updates through the day on 93.1 FM. There will be a Flags of Our Heroes presentation for World War II veteran Don Songer.

HOMECOMING: This is a night you won't want to miss. With so many veterans, this homecoming is likely to be the most exciting, emotional ever. There's still time to invite your friends. It's a great night for families and the veterans always enjoy see-

ing all the children. There will be entertainment while waiting for Flight 1945, which is scheduled to arrive at Terminal 2 at 8:30. Several flyers to print or post on social media are attached. For more information, go to www.honorflightsouthflorida.org/homecoming/.

GROUND CREWS: "Yellow shirt" volunteers are scheduled to arrive at 4 a.m. at FLL Terminal 2. As always, the goal is to make the veterans as comfortable as possible while keeping the boarding process moving. At night, volunteers should arrive at 6:30 to hang posters, set up the parade route and greet all our supporters. And remember after the parade, there is still plenty of work -- cleaning up the terminal and assisting at the curb until the last veteran is picked up. Volunteer assignments have been sent out. Parking will be provided for volunteers scheduled to work. Take a ticket as you enter the Palm Garage. **DO NOT** drive through the SunPass lane. You will **NOT** be reimbursed for a SunPass charge.

HONOR FLIGHT GALA POSTPONED: Fundraising chairman Stan Bostic said the military gala, which had been scheduled for October 14, has been postponed until spring. Stan said that Hurricane Irma interrupted the momentum building for the gala. He will be announcing the new date soon. He said that all the scheduled entertainers and speakers plan to participate on the new date. In the meantime, some have said they plan to donate to Honor Flight. So while the gala is on hold for right now, there's still a need for everyone to keep trying to find sponsors and auction items. "It's very important," Stan said. "We need the funds from this gala or our treasury will be depleted." Our flight plans for 2018 will rely primarily on the success of the gala.

OCTOBER 28 FLIGHT?: Chairman Asper said that the Honor Flight board will be meeting soon after Saturday's flight to determine whether we will have another flight on October 28.

-- Tom Christensen, Volunteer coordinator