

# HONOR FLIGHT SOUTH FLORIDA

## Highlights of the General Meeting - November 16, 2016

### OCTOBER 29 FLIGHT IN REVIEW:

Chairman Rick Asper called it a “phenomenal success.” He then detailed the flight day, pointing out some concerns and explaining some “audibles.” Guardians and volunteers were also encouraged to raise questions and concerns and offer suggestions. As always, the discussion was to see what can be improved for future flights.

Notable developments, Rick’s observations:

- For the first time, one of our veterans needed attention from paramedics at the end of the flight.
- There were short delays in both departures, as Eastern confirmed special arrangements for their flights to use Reagan National Airport.
- On future flights, staff will be more emphatic that we will board from the back of the plane to speed up the process.
- Because of a traffic jam of buses at Arlington National Cemetery, we made a brief stop at the Women’s Memorial at the Arlington gate. There was a consensus that the Women’s Memorial was a worthwhile stop and should be considered for future flights. It was also a good bathroom stop. There is a possibility of having lunch there on future flight days.
- Military temporarily moved a few fences at Iwo Jima Memorial to allow for traditional group photo. The extra fences were in place for the Marine Corps Marathon the next day.
- Buses made a quick loop around the Air Force Memorial on the way back to Reagan National.
- Return flight arrived a little late in Miami, but there were no signs that any of the crowd left early.
- Volunteer “ground crew” operations went well at early morning check-in and homecoming.
- Jim Naskrent thanked his photo assistants, saying that they had photographed all 78 veteran-guardian pairs in less than an hour. Overall, the photo team shot 4,732 photos during the day. Jim has mailed out the photo care packages to the veterans and guardians.

Questions, concerns, suggestions from guardians and volunteers:

- There was some discussion on whether veterans received enough attention while their guardians were checking in.
- Some veterans were dropped off several doors before the planned entrance point. A few Honor Chairs should be positioned to accommodate those veterans.
- Guardians praised the Washington-based military for their help. We are the only hub that relies on the military, allowing us to fly with less staff and more veterans. The 2017 plan is to expand to other military branches based in the Washington area. The Miami VFW plans to send certificates to each of the soldiers.
- Some veterans said they preferred something more than sandwiches for lunch.
- Thirteen Honor Chairs were damaged and will be repaired by Steve Shapiro’s staff.

**COUNTDOWN TO VIRTUAL HONOR FLIGHT:** We are less than three weeks away from our next Virtual Honor Flight. It’s scheduled for December 7, the 75th commemoration of Pearl Harbor, at South Plantation High School. The Virtual Flight is for veterans who can’t fly because of health concerns or other reasons. Veterans will be arriving at 4:30 for dinner and a presentation simulating the full Honor Flight experience. Students are busy polishing their 1940’s-era USO show and preparing mail call. Junior ROTC cadets will be serving as guardians.

If you know a World War II or Korean War veteran who can’t travel to Washington, invite and register them for the Virtual Flight -- <http://www.honorflightsouthflorida.org/VHF>.

Dinner seating is limited to Virtual Flight veterans and a guest. Volunteer drivers will eat in the cafeteria. Other volunteers are encouraged to come to the auditorium by 5:30 for the presentation. Veterans who have gone on Honor Flights are welcome to the auditorium presentation and can join the homecoming parade. It’s a fun night with all the excitement and emotion of an airport homecoming.

Volunteers soon will be notified of their veterans and driving assignments.

**BIG CHALLENGE:** Volunteers frequently ask: “How can I help?” Here’s an assignment for everyone -- help recruit World War II veterans. We only have a few dozen on our list. If you have a relative, neighbor, friend or a friend of a friend who’s a World War II veteran, help register them for a free flight. Korean War veterans also can register. Applications can be made on [www.honorflightsouthflorida.org](http://www.honorflightsouthflorida.org).

Our hub is one of the youngest. It was just three years ago when HFSF carried 18 veterans to Washington. We now have taken 612 overall. On three flights this year, we took more than 300, including our Vietnam veteran “Elite Guardians.” Plans are bigger for 2017 with four flights planned and a goal of flying more than 500 veterans. We again are planning a flight with “Elite Guardians” and an October jumbo-jet flight carrying 180-200 WWII veterans. Chairman Asper said his research shows that there are approximately 7,800 World War II veterans in Broward and Miami-Dade counties.

**2017 FLIGHT SCHEDULE:** April 8, May 20, September 9, October 28.

**BUCKET LIST:** One loyal volunteer walked into the meeting describing her first trip as a guardian. “It really does change your life,” she said. If you haven’t experienced it yet, add it to your bucket list.

**NEXT GENERAL MEETINGS:** November 30; January 11.

Happy Thanksgiving,  
Tom Christensen  
Volunteer coordinator

-- Tom Christensen, Volunteer coordinator