HONOR FLIGHT
MISSION LOG

Honor Flight Syracuse (HFS) Mission #: 001; Date: 06-Oct-12

Joint Task Force: SKAN-1

WW-II Veteran: Benoit, Chester; Callsigns: “Chet” & “Airborne!”
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0445: Pick-up at Chet’s residence. Upon arrival it was duly noted that Chet was standing at attention on his front porch. Prior to vehicle being parked, he rapidly descends steps and boards the vehicle in the heavy rain. Thereby denying his escort officer any opportunity to deploy an umbrella, carry his duffle or even open the passenger door.

0500: Ground Transport American Legion Post-239. Chet boards Laker Limo and is introduced to AM Mission Ground Transport & Force Protection Operations Chief: Bob Holloway, (Marine Corps veteran, served as a sniper in Vietnam). The three remaining Joint Task Force SKAN-1 mission mates (Marshall Skiff, Jack Gregory, and Scoop Baker) arrive with their escort officers. All hands are briefed on the AM & PM transport missions to/from the aerodrome. RHolloway orders all-hands to buckle-up, then safes and secures his Marine Corps Designated Marksman Rifle (“DMR”). Bob then drives in accordance with standard tactical Force Protection procedures proscribed for Defense Department VIPs.

0550: Arrival at SYR aerodrome. All hands arrive aerodrome and disembark Laker Limo with hearty thanks to Bob. When escort officer asks to carry Chet’s bag, Chet states: “I’ll carry my own duffle-bag, thank-you.” HFS volunteer ground cadre escort Chet to the HFS HQ sign-in desk. His credentials are checked/verified by HFS HQ, and Chet signs for the following standard issue mission items:
- Coffee, 8 oz., 1 each; Donut, Dunkins, 1 each.
- HFS Veteran Shirt, red, 1 each; HFS name tag & lanyard, 1 each.
- Civilian-type Honor Flight backpack, red, 1 each.
- Roundtrip ticket, American Airlines, to/from Reagan National Airport, DC, Seat 16A - (ticket is stamped “Priority Access//BRICKBAT//”), 1 each.
0615: Line-up for Airport Security Inspection. Chet gets in the security line, shows his credentials and flight ticket. From his personal duffle, he removes his Corcoran Army Paratrooper jumpboots (issued to him in 1943), brown, highly polished, 2 each, and places them in the bin. Chet proceeds through the X-ray scanner, and quietly submits to both a back-side and front-side pat-down by an Airport Security officer. He is cleared through security without further incident.

0645: Mission #1 Team Assembles at Gate-11. Chet assembles at the Gate with twenty-six (26) other Honor Flight veterans and their guardians. Chet and his SKAN mates meet the top-notch team of “blue-shirts” - HFS Squad Leaders including Mike Gasapo, Mission# Team Lead. Mike is a retired Marine, having served in Iraq & Afghanistan and is now Vice President of SRC, the major corporate sponsor for Honor Flight Syracuse.

[Shown above right-to-left are: Mike Gasapo, Mission# Team Leader, Marshall Skiff, “Scoop” Baker, and Chet Benoit]
0700: Ready Paratroopers! Chets takes a seat in the waiting area, and begins to lace up his highly polished jumpboots using a special paratrooper technique. Chet states that both this technique and his laces (made from WWII parachute material), were “unauthorized” by the United States Army. He also states that during the war, the tailoring of your uniform was also “unauthorized.” He then states, “But we did it anyway.” Chet then blouses his pant legs and states he is now ready to go and says “Paratroopers don’t appear in public without their boots on.” Once again, Chet states: “I’ll carry my own duffle-bag, thank-you.” Note: At this point, Chet’s escort officer begins to wonder if there is a parachute in his bag.

[Chet uses special Paratrooper technique to lace-up his 1943 issued jump-boots]

0715: Boarding the Aircraft to DC. American Airlines (who donated the charter flight), announces that Mission#1 is now ready to board the airplane. Chet is greeted at the gangway by Congresswoman Ann Marie Buerkle. After his photo is taken with the Congresswoman, Chet states: “I’m glad she was here, but my wife won’t be, she’s a Democrat.”

Insert photo of Chet w/ Congressman Buerkle here (from Chet’s Kodak camera)

0720: On-Board Pre-Flight Briefings. Chet then proceeds on-board and meets the American Airlines crew who all volunteered to be part of Mission#1, (on their personal time). One of the crew is Flight
Attendant Aria, a former Army nurse and veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan. Chet shows Aria his Million Mile Club American Airlines Intergalactic Titanium frequent flyer card. Aria is impressed, but she still announces during the safety briefing, that for obvious reasons, Paratroopers are not allowed to fly in the exit row seats. Chet dutifully takes his window seat four rows back from the exit row.

0745: Take-off from Syracuse. Aircraft commander and American Airlines Chief Pilot, announces that we’re ready to take-off for the short flight to Reagan National Aerodrome in DC. The forecast calls for sunshine, near 80-degrees. As the airplane begins to roll toward the run-way, we observe the Hancock Field Fire Department firing flares in salute to the Honor Flight. We go wheels-up and shortly afterward, all hands are served a nice breakfast. After breakfast, Flight Attendant Aria announces today is Vet Bud Daley’s birthday. All hands sing a rousing Happy Birthday to Bud. During the flight, Chet reminisces about paratrooper training stating: “Aircraft doors are for jumping out of,” and “In jump school, there was no rank among paratroopers, all rank insignia were removed during training. We trained by jumping into sawdust pits, (and no spitting into the pits was allowed).”
0845: Landing at Reagan Aerodrome. Touch down is perfect and the weather in DC is good. As the aircraft taxis into the gate, the Reagan Aerodrome Fire Department salutes the Veterans with an honorary water-cannon hose-down from fire trucks positioned on both sides of the plane. Chet recalls how during the war, at airbases in Australia, Army Air Corps personnel would hose down aircraft with insect repellant.
0915: Disembarking at Reagan Aerodrome. Upon arrival at the gate, the HFS HQ “blue-shirts” get off first to assist Vets in deplaning. Chet dons his Paratrooper cap and disembarks the plane. As we enter the Reagan terminal, a huge crowd of active duty military personnel, families and civilian travelers is there to loudly greet the Mission#1 cadre. A musician, native to Syracuse – wearing his “Go Orange” shirt, plays a rousing march on the French Horn. As we assemble in the waiting area, Chet is greeted by Chief Warrant Officer (CW05) “Sandy” Sandbakken, who is a Paratrooper. Sandy has been in the US Army since 1974, and he immediately inspects Chet’s boots. Sandy and Chet talk about “Airborne!” stuff, (generally incomprehensible by personnel not wearing jumpwings). Sandy informs us that he will be one of our guides for today’s operations in DC. We know we’re in good hands. When escort officer again asks to carry Chet’s bag, Chet emphatically states: “I’ll carry my own duffle-bag, thank-you.”
0945: Boarding the Bus to DC Memorials. The Mission#1 cadre exits the airport building and assembles curbside to board the luxury tour buses which have been arranged to transport the Honor Flight to the war memorials. Chet's SKAN mission mate, Jack Gregory, gets to ride shot-gun with the US Navy Commander on our bus.

1010: Arrival at the World War II Memorial. The Honor Flight tours this beautiful memorial to their comrades.
1030: Kilroy was here at the WW-II Memorial.

1040: At the Reflecting Pool, Facing Lincoln Memorial.
1050: WW-II Memorial Inscription.

1100: Meeting Senator & Elizabeth Dole. Sandy informs us that Senator Dole is there greeting Vets and families every Saturday.
1130: Korean War Memorial. Chet remarks that the rifle carried by one of the soldiers reminds him of his paratroopers rifle, “except ours had a folding stock.”

1145: Airborne! Drop and Give Me Ten! As we were traversing back from the Korean War Memorial, CW05 Sandy yells out “Airborne! Drop and give me ten!” Chet immediately starts to assume the position to push the earth. Escort officer (Air Force puke) submits formal substitutionary waiver request to perform Airborne pushups on Chet’s behalf. Request is granted with no deviation from fist down Airborne tradition. HFS nurses arrive minutes later to administer pain medication to escort officer. Chet then reminisces: “We had three positions as paratroopers: Attention, Parade-rest, and Push-ups!”
1315: Arlington National Cemetery Tomb of the Unknowns

1430: Iwo Jima Memorial:
1730: **Flight Home to Syracuse – “Mail Call!”** After boarding the return flight home, the HFS Team Lead calls out loudly in his Marine command voice: “Mail Call!” Chet receives a bundle of awesome letters from school children thanking him for his service. Some letters refer to the interservice rivalry between Army & Navy. Chet reminisces about playing football at during the war: “Paratroopers were generally small guys, our team wasn’t as big as the other base teams. But we kicked their butts anyway!”

1930: **Welcome Home Ceremony at Syracuse Airport.** An American Legion Riders Honor Guard was stationed at the gate when we got off the plane. Chet was personally thanked by an Airborne Vietnam veteran and his wife. All hands were warmly welcomed home by a large crowd of family, friends, well-wishers and dignitaries. The Syracuse University ROTC Honor Guard presented the colors, and the Royal Scottish Bagpipes played a rousing warrior’s reel. The local newstation provided a news report on TV that evening, which can be see on-line at: [http://www.9wsyr.com/mediacenter/local.aspx?videoId=3787429&navCatId=20694](http://www.9wsyr.com/mediacenter/local.aspx?videoId=3787429&navCatId=20694)

2015: **Welcome Home Reception at the SKAN American Legion, Post-239.** A flag waving crowd of Family, Legionaires, Sons of the American Legion, Ladies Auxiallary, Boy Scouts and friends welcomed the SKAN Task Force home. The Post Commander presented each with an embroidered Post ball cap.