

## HONOR FLIGHT

*By Karl Milde*

In recent years, ten of our veteran residents have gone on a day-long “Honor Flight” to visit the military memorials in Washington, D.C. (see below photo). Each of these heroes was accompanied by a “guardian” who cared for their physical well-being. They were also asked to choose a younger family member or friend with whom they could share this special day and stories of their experiences in the military.

The photo below was taken during the June 18 Wednesday Ten-a-Men meeting. At the left is Mary Edwards, the Hudson Valley Honor Flight (HVHF) Veteran Coordinator; on the right is her husband Chester, nicknamed “Chet,” an HVHF Board member and a Vietnam Combat Veteran. This non-profit organization supports the entire cost for each veteran for breakfast, lunch, and dinner plus the not-inconsiderable cost of transportation to and from, and around, our Nation’s Capital.

Two years ago, Chet and Mary Edwards gave a presentation at Ten-a-Men. I’d never heard of Honor Flights (a nationwide effort) and didn’t expect to be “blown away.” The presentation was mind blowing and more. I learned that the day starts and ends at Westchester County Airport (HPN), from 6 am to 8 pm, a long day during which vivid memories of the veterans’ years of service to our Country many decades ago are revisited. The troop of one hundred and fifty or so veterans and their guardians from each flight visit the World War II Memorial, the Korean and Vietnam Memorials, and Arlington National Cemetery, with a private appointment for a Changing of the Guard ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier there. At the breakfast, lunch, and dinner, the veterans are honored by

speeches and offered the opportunity to speak to their brethren about their favorite parts of the Honor Flight experience.

Having learned this and being a veteran also, I sent in an application, naming my son, Jason, as my guardian. Mary acknowledged receipt and said she would get in touch when a space freed up. She told me there was a waiting list.

I didn't hear from Mary for almost two years and, to be honest, I completely forgot about it. Then out of the blue last March, she called and said there was an opening in May.

As terrible luck would have it, my guardian Jason suffered an injury that barred him from placing his foot on the ground for eight weeks. I told Mary I couldn't go. She said I'd have priority for the next Honor Flight.

In May of 2026, Jason and I will meet Mary at HPN in the early morning hours to have breakfast and board a chartered airliner bound for our Nation's Capital. I'm really, *really* looking forward to this trip.