

Corsicana

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JULY 2017

NOW

The Mission Continues

These Navarro County veterans do one more tour with honor

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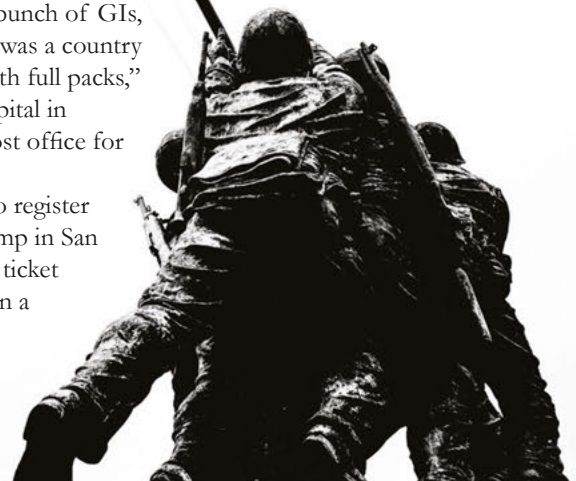
Throughout this nation's history, U.S. military service during wartime has been the best of times and the worst of times for America's young men and women. For Corsicana residents and WWII veterans, Joe Hambrick, (U.S. Army) and Charlie Washburn, (U.S. Navy), the memories of their military lives flooded back when they traveled to Washington, D.C., as guests of Honor Flight DFW. Bob Schell, a resident of Richland Chambers Lake since 2016, is a board member of the organization. "Flight #33 will take off next month, and we're always looking for more veterans to take on our flights, so they can experience the WWII Memorial and other capital sites," Bob explained.

THE MISSION CONTINUES

— By Virginia Riddle

Joe served as an Army PFC from March 1944-October 1945. A native of Frost, he had hunted all his life, so he trained at Fort Hood as a rifleman. "We had fun. Wherever you have a bunch of GIs, it's fun. I was shipped overseas to the South of France as part of the 79th Infantry. I was a country boy who'd never seen the ocean until we had to climb the ladders on the *Enterprise* with full packs," Joe recalled. He earned his Purple Heart and spent 11 months in a body cast in a hospital in France. After the war, Joe moved to Corsicana, raised his family and worked at the post office for 27 years.

Charlie, a Corsicana native and graduate of Corsicana High School, was required to register for the draft when he turned 18. "I became a selective volunteer and went to boot camp in San Diego, California," he remembered. He bought his high school sweetheart a one-way ticket to see him, and they married in San Diego. Trained as a radioman, Charlie saw duty on a troop cargo ship in Hawaii, Guam and as part of the Battle of Okinawa. "We shot a Japanese kamikaze plane down while under fire most every night. We got no sleep.





Audie Murphy is our nation's most decorated soldier, earning an unparalleled 28 medals, including three from France and one from Belgium. Murphy had been wounded three times during the war.



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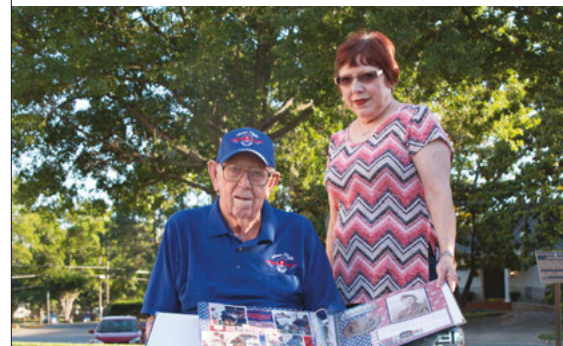
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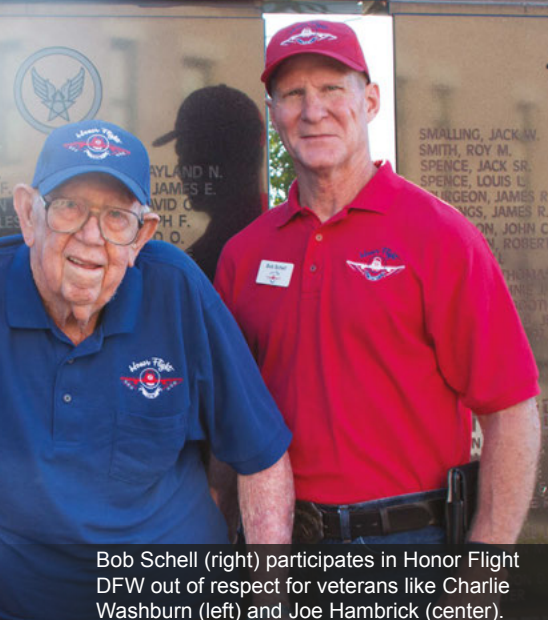


Joe Hambrick and his caregiver, Kathy Robinson, look through his album.

We were on duty 24/7," he said. After the atomic bomb was dropped on Japan, his and other ships gathered in Manila Bay, Philippines. "I had never seen so many ships in my life! Later, we sailed to Cambodia and transferred Chinese Nationalist troops in China. In all, Charlie served two years and two months and achieved the rank of Radioman 3rd Class. Back in Corsicana, he enrolled in Navarro College and worked for F.W. Woolworth Company and Magnolia Petroleum Company in Corsicana before going into business for himself. He then worked for Mobil in Saudi Arabia for three years before retiring and returning to Corsicana.

The Honor Flight Network was conceived by Earl Morse, a physician's assistant and retired Air Force captain who was treating vets at a Department of Veterans Affairs clinic in Ohio. The WWII Memorial had been completed in 2004, but so many of the WWII vets he treated would never see it. Something had to be done, so the first flight occurred in 2005. Since then, over 127 hubs and chapters have been created in 41 states.

Each honor flight consists of about 40



Bob Schell (right) participates in Honor Flight DFW out of respect for veterans like Charlie Washburn (left) and Joe Hambrick (center).

veterans, their personal guardians and a medical team — in all, about 100 people. “We fly commercial, so other passengers get to experience mail call on the return trip. We’re a rowdy bunch,” Bob revealed. The trip is completely free for vets, but all volunteers pay their own way except for the medical team. Since 2015, Southwest Airlines, which “substantially reduces” ticket prices, has been the official carrier. “Each flight costs about \$50,000,” Bob said. All flights have a grand send-off and welcome home celebration.

Jonell Kirk, Joe’s daughter, was contacted by Bob when he was provided a list of WWII vets by the American Legion. After speaking with Bob, she nominated her dad for the trip. Karen Stewart was Joe’s guardian on his flight in May 2016 on Flight #30. “She was there all the time and was a very nice lady,” Joe said. “The trip was great! The memorial was most impressive. We went to Audie Murphy’s grave in Arlington National Cemetery, where we also saw the changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the Iwo Jima Memorial. That night, the Air Force jazz band, The Airmen of Note, played ’40s music, and here came the girls saying, ‘May I have this dance?’ Some 95-year-old men were dancing! I got 119 cards and letters from kids during mail call. My church, Northside Baptist, sent a busload to Love Field to welcome us back,” Joe said.

Charlie was on Flight #31 during September 2016, and Malcolm, Charlie’s son, was his guardian. “The send-off was all, ‘Rah, rah!’” Charlie remembered. “The White House and the WWII Memorial were so impressive. The

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Malcolm Washburn (right) was his father's guardian during Flight #31.

memorial is built into a great setting with a fountain." Charlie's tour included all of Joe's landmarks and more.

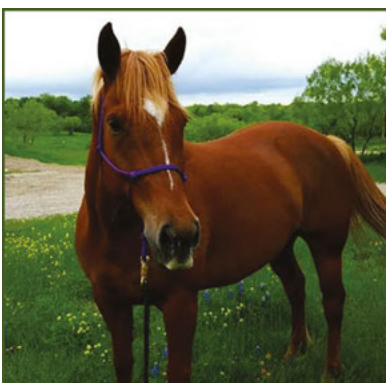
As wonderful as the trip is, the honor isn't over upon the veteran's return. "We have a reunion at Love Field's Frontiers of Flight Museum. Our albums are passed out. Everything was 'on the top shelf,'" Charlie said.

Bob became involved with the program after hearing a speaker at his former Rotary Club in Lewisville, Texas. A native of Omaha, Nebraska, Bob had a student deferment during the Vietnam War. "Nam was over, and the draft was gone by the time I graduated," he said. While a Dallas attorney, he first became involved as a guardian and now, since retiring, he passionately seeks WWII veterans who wish to make the trip. "We also have started the Ground Mission Program for WWII, Korean and Vietnam veterans who can't go to D.C. We're giving them a virtual flight and providing them with an album," he said.

Both Joe and Charlie enjoy living independently, with some help, in Corsicana. Charlie's legally blind, so another son, Calvin, moved back to Corsicana following the passing of Charlie's second wife, Martha.

"Since Flight #1, over 1,360 veterans have flown to see their memorials in Washington, D.C. In 2016, Honor Flight DFW provided flights to 160 veterans — 51 WWII, 79 Korean War — accompanied by 160 guardians and 70 medical/trip leaders. "But there are many more who need to go, and time is growing short," Bob said. "We're starting to offer flights to Korean War veterans and have already flown several Vietnam War veterans to see their memorials. We'll fly vets while we can."

Editor's Note: For more information, email Bob at tex.admiral@gmail.com or visit <http://www.honorflightdfw.org/>. NOW



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