

A Daughter on a Mission, Bizav to the Rescue

by Nigel Moll

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WWII vet Bernard I. Friedenberg travels to the WWII Museum in New Orleans in a CJ4 donated through the Veterans Airlift Command.

The ranks of the Greatest Generation, who fought and won World War II, are thin now, and some stout hearts in the business aviation community seized an opportunity last month to recognize the courage of a D-Day survivor.

On May 17 Susan Friedenberg, well known in bizav for the passion she brings to her professional role in corporate flight attendant training and her more personal cheerleading for veterans, posted her family's predicament on NBAA's Air Mail forum: "I am calling in a huge favor. My father, Bernie, is 94. He has survived two strokes and three falls in the past two years. He also survived WWII and is recognized as one of the most decorated men in New Jersey for his war record. He fought his way across Europe for four years. A medic in the 1st Battalion, 16th Regiment, U.S. Infantry Division, he was on Omaha Beach in the fourth wave of guys at the age of 22 off the boat, onto the beach, and got his first Purple Heart that day as well as a Silver Star. He is the bravest man I have ever known and has fought his way back from being very ill to just being frail and in a wheelchair. He has COPD and nightmares, still to this day.

"I received a call yesterday from the WWII Museum in New Orleans, and they wish to commemorate my Dad at a ceremony on June 6, the 72nd anniversary of the D-Day invasion. I badly want Dad to be there, but there is no way we can take him and my 89-year-old Mom on the airlines with their aide. His immune system is compromised and, simply put, we just can't chance him in that germ-infested environment.

"I am trying desperately to see if there is anyone out there who would donate a mid-range aircraft to take us from Atlantic City Airport to New Orleans on June 5 and, on the 7, from New Orleans back to Atlantic City. It would be my Mom and me and Dad and his aide. I am desperate for him to have this acknowledgement. He so deserves it."

Within minutes, offers of donations began popping up on the forum ("I would certainly donate to such an awesome cause"... "Count me in"... "Same here. I can't offer an airplane but would be happy to contribute"... "I can contribute happily. We all owe your Dad and his generation and all other veterans"). Susan guessed a charter would cost \$40,000 but some respondents said it could cost half that. The pledges kept coming, and support kept snowballing. On May 24 the Veterans Airlift Command (VAC) called Susan with the news that it would be dispatching a Citation CJ4 (owned and flown by Jerald "Jed" Molleston of Houston) for the round trip. VAC provides free air transportation to post-9/11 combat wounded and their families for medical and other compassionate purposes through a national network of volunteer aircraft owners and pilots. The organization made an exception for WWII vet Friedenberg, and Susan asked those who had pledged financial support for a charter to donate the money instead to VAC.

In the end, Sgt. Bernard I. Friedenberg received an Honor Guard at Atlantic City Airport (Brian Curtis of Venture Jets suggested the idea and NJ State Senator Jim Whalen made it happen) and another Honor Guard at New Orleans Lakefront (initiated by Dick Bares, manager of flight operations for a construction company in Denver). FBOs at each airport waived fees, and Air Culinaire donated catering for the flight home from Lakefront. All in all, a call to action resoundingly well answered.

<http://www.ainonline.com/aviation-news/business-aviation/2016-06-20/daughter-mission-bizav-rescue>

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