



Left to right: Daniel G. Bandor, Franklin E "Gene" Bandor, Randolph L. "Randy" Bandor

Brothers ready to take Honor Flight

Will be joined by 2 sons on Washington trip

BRITTANY MISENCIK | For The Journal Gazette

Sunday, September 15, 2019 1:00 am

The average family would shy away from the promise of three-tiered bunk beds, food so bad it earned a less-than-appetizing nickname, or being called into work at 2 a.m.

And then there's the Bandor brothers. They credit their experiences in the Navy for shaping them into the men they are today.

This week, they will travel with the Northeast Indiana Honor Flight, a one day, all-expenses-paid trip for veterans to Washington, D.C. The group will leave on an American Airlines charter flight at 5:30 a.m. Wednesday from the Air National Guard Base at Fort Wayne International Airport.

Denis Covert, president of the Northeast Indiana Honor Flight chapter, will fly with all three living Bandor brothers on the journey.

Two sons of the Bandor brothers, who are also military veterans, will also take the trip to see the memorials for the branches they served in. After arriving at Reagan National Airport, the veterans will be honored with a police escort into the city.

Covert recognizes the rarity of five veterans from the same family being able to take the trip together, considering the wait list just for the northeast Indiana chapter has more than 1,000 names.

But Covert saw the close relationships within the family and made the decision for them to travel together.

Veterans are considered for Honor Flights depending on the time period they served or if they are terminally ill. World War II and terminally ill veterans are granted top priority, followed by Korean War and Vietnam War veterans.

Honor Flights are reliant on donations, along with volunteers.

Service

In the Bandor family, the youngest brother, Dan, is 82. He credits his military-rich family line as the inspiration for enlisting in the Navy at age 20.

"I was in between what I wanted to do," Dan said. "All my brothers went in, father in; ... they were a role model for me."

Dan, who lives in Fort Wayne, recalls sending his paychecks to his mother, whose health was failing, while other sailors would spend their money drinking while on leave.

Randy Bandor, 84, enlisted in the Navy during the Cold War to see the world. He trekked through the South Pacific, Hawaii, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Japan, South Korea and the Marshall Islands.

Coupled with the beauty of blue waters, Randy, a Fort Wayne resident, also came across the challenges of being on military territory during his time in the Navy.

On an off day, Randy and his fellow sailors traveled to a nearby island of the Marshall Islands. Only after playing in a game of baseball did the sailors come to realize that the large, green foliage on the island was contaminated with the toxic chemical compound Agent Orange.

Randy opted out of the game and made the choice to swim instead.

"I didn't play baseball; ... I just swam in the radiation water," he said. Many soldiers developed cancer from the chemical.

Surprisingly, that was not Randy's only close call.

During an interview, he shared other tales of survival, such as a seven-day typhoon at Christmastime that was so severe, sailors could not leave the bottom of the ship. The tossing of the ship prevented the men from even eating, as the uneasy rocking would toss the cooking supplies.

One night aboard the USS Orleck, the longest commissioned ship in the Navy, Randy found himself on watch the night a Russian submarine appeared on the radar over an atomic bomb proving ground. As he watched and waited on the mobile lights of the sonar, Randy was not given permission to leave his post until the submarine had left its territory. This, of course, meant staying on the cold floor beneath the sonar two consecutive nights.

"We would have sunk them if we had to," he said.

Finding love

The military life does not always prove conducive for forming romantic relationships, but Randy was able to find the woman who would become his wife only six days into a 30-day leave in San Diego in the summer of 1957.

Randy and Jan Bandor's relationship started with a blind date set up by a friend.

After a night at the movies, they spent the remaining 24 days together until Randy's departure but were married just six months after.

"We were together every day after I met her," Randy said, with a grin.

When their first baby came, health issues arose for Jan, who needed nine pints of blood.

At a time when blood was hard to come by, eight of Randy's Navy friends lined up to donate a pint each, the maximum limit at the time.

The two considered the gesture to be so sincere, Jan rewarded the men with a home-cooked meal: a rare commodity for Navy sailors.

Now, Jan and Randy Bandor have been married for 62 years and still occasionally vacation with the sailors from Randy's military term.

Randy recounts these moments that shaped his life, saying, "We grew up fast, we were on our own."

The leader

Fort Wayne resident Frank Bandor, 92, is the oldest of the living brothers. He's also the one the others look up to.

"I'm proud that they feel that way, we've always been a close-knit group," Frank said. "When we were together, nobody messed with us. I'll tell you that."

Based outside of Plymouth, England, while in the Navy, Frank witnessed bombings ranging from schools to rivers to hospitals.

Humble in his description of accomplishments, Frank has received the honor of laying the wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier upon visiting Arlington National Cemetery.

The Bandor brothers hope that on Veterans Day, Americans reflect on the sacrifices made for those who enjoy today's freedoms. Many of those who served sacrificed in the most trying of times with little recognition.

"They were never treated right," Randy Bandor said, weeping silently. "Sacrifices were made; lives were lost; ... they saved their country."

Fast facts

What: Honor Flight Northeast Indiana, 33rd flight to Washington, D.C.

When: Wednesday, September 18, 2019

Travelers include: A total of 87 veterans: 13 World War II veterans, 60 Korea veterans, eight Cold War veterans and six Vietnam veterans.

For perspective: To date 2,371 veterans have been transported to Washington by Honor Flight Northeast Indiana to reflect upon the memorials built in their honor.

https://journalgazette.net/news/local/20190915/brothers-ready-to-take-honor-flight?fbclid=IwAR2F5Z6ulkvhzYBzKK1btvldjeO62ghk5VMSk4dcLcKvd0_Tx5OLiNqu3Io

Note from: Michael Bandor I will be on the 18 Sep flight along with my Dad, 2 uncles and a cousin (all honorees). My brother, another cousin and a friend of my brother's will also be attending as one of the guardians.

33rd Honor Flight to take off Wednesday morning

Jacob Burbrink, September 17, 2019, 9:14 am

https://wpta21.com/news/top-stories/2019/09/17/33rd-honor-flight-to-take-off-wednesday-morning/?fbclid=IwAR3IceUWcSuUDgNgljbyFTVD3j4Hu09j6f4zNizgkOFDVT444zLY_CyN2o

FORT WAYNE, Ind. (WPTA21) – 87 veterans are getting ready to make the trip to Washington D.C. to visit the memorials honoring their service.

The next Honor Flight will take off September 18 from the 122nd Fighter Wing of the Indiana Air National Guard. Veterans from WWII, Korea, Vietnam and the Cold War will board the flight that morning. The community is invited to welcome them home around 9 pm that night at the Fort Wayne International Airport.

Among the veterans are two families. Korean War veteran Robert Barton will travel with his two veteran sons and a veteran daughter. The Bandor brothers, Franklin, Daniel and Randy, will also be on the flight.



Daniel's son Michael and Franklin's son John, also veterans, will join them on the flight.

So far, 2,371 veterans have been transported to Washington D.C. by Honor Flight Northeast Indiana to reflect on the memorials built in their honor.



Two generations of Bandor Veterans

Back left to right: Michael S Bandor (US Army, son of Daniel) & John A Bandor (US Navy, son of Franklin)

Front left to right: Daniel G Bandor, Franklin E Bandor & Randolph L Bandor (all US Navy)



Father & Son, both Veterans

Daniel G Bandor (US Navy) & Michael S Bandor (US Air Force)

Note: Dan's & Mike's service continue a family tradition. Dan's father, Michael James Bandor served in the US Army, Coastal Artillery after his immigration in 1891 from Hungary.