Greater Huntsville Section Salutes Military and Veterans

by
Ken Philippart
Images by Lisa Philippart

The Greater Huntsville Section saluted its military and veteran members during the month of November, leading up to Veterans Day.

The Section arranged a private tour of the US Veterans Memorial Museum in Huntsville for November 5 and invited Tennessee Valley Chapter 335 of the Air Force Association (AFA) to participate in honor of our veterans. AIAA/AFA members and guests included Section Chair Brandon Stiltner, Vice Chair Naveen Vetcha and his wife Sindu, Jason and Rachel Thrasher, Mike Pessin, Tony Miller, Ken and Lisa Philippart, Bob Jones and Joe Viviano.

The tour began with an overview of the museum. Opened by private collectors as a non-profit educational institution in 2001 right after 9/11, the museum has an extensive collection of 30 military vehicles including the Ford Pygmy, the oldest known surviving example of the vehicle that became the jeep. Along with other jeep models, the collection also contains a variety of military trucks, halftracks, tanks, watercraft and aircraft. Following the orientation, Rob Robley, a Korean War and Vietnam War veteran and retired US Army CW4, guided the group through the museum, explaining the significance of the exhibits while mixing in interesting personal anecdotes from his three decades of military service as an Explosive Ordnance Disposal specialist. Brandon presented Rob with the Greater Huntsville Section coin to thank him for the outstanding tour.
After the guided tour, the group wandered the museum on its own before traveling to the Jackson Center to participate in the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War event. The group visited the anniversary exhibits including AFA member Lt Col (ret) Zig Jastrebski’s Red River Rats Fighter Pilot Association display. For some of the younger AIAA members, this was the first time they had talked to a Vietnam War veteran and they were fascinated by Zig’s war stories. The event concluded with free lunch and the opportunity to meet and greet other veterans.

The following week, AFA South Central Region and Alabama State President Colonel (ret) Russ Lewey, spoke to AIAA at the Greater Huntsville Section’s monthly luncheon. Russ’ talk was titled, “Boeing B-52 Stratofortress: Half Century of Excellence.” AIAA invited Russ to speak in the month of November to recognize Veterans Day, the third year in a row that the Tennessee Valley Chapter has supported AIAA’s November lunch presentation. Russ’ multimedia presentation covered the long and illustrious history of the B-52 from its design and development to operations during the Cold War and into the 21st century along with his personal anecdotes about flying the BUFF. A lively question and answer session allowed AIAA members to gain more insight into military aviation and operations and helped broaden their perspectives on weapon system operations.

Greater Huntsville Section Vice Chair Naveen Vetcha presented Russ with the section’s challenge coin and thanked the Tennessee Valley Chapter of AFA for supporting the section’s veteran outreach and education activities.

Finally, Chair Brandon Stiltner culminated the section’s veteran recognition activities in November by acknowledging all of the section’s military and veteran members by name and branch of service in a personal email of thanks on Veterans Day.

The Greater Huntsville Section salutes our military and veteran members!

David Butler Air Force
Brig Gen Gary Connor Air Force
Katherine Crowe Air Force
Franklin Dement Air Force
Jay Ferreira  Army
L. Michael Freeman  Air Force
John Glynn  Air Force
Bradley Gudgel  Air Force
Maj Gen John Holly  Air Force
Richard Kramer  Army
Alexander Jehle  Army
Chuck LaMar  Air Force
John Lassiter  Air Force
Anthony Brent Marley  Air Force
David McDaniel  Air Force
Brian McDonald  Air Force
James McVoy  Army
William Nash  Army
Michael Naumcheff  Army
Bob Noblitt  Air Force
Greg Olsen  Air Force
Myron Pessin  Army
Ken Philippart  Air Force
Frank Powell  Army
Lethenaul Stanfield  Air Force
Caitlin R. Thorn  Army
Buzz Toth  Air Force
Eldon Triggs  Army
Richard Tuggle  Army
Phillip Young  Army
William Vaughan  Air Force
Otha “Skeet” Vaughn  Air Force
Neil Walker  Air Force
Dave Weeks  Air Force
James Wilbeck  Air Force
Phillip Young  Air Force