

## New From the Pups: TRAVEL BUDDIES PROGRAM

In order to support our Veterans and encourage their attendance at the Reunions, we would like for Pups to consider volunteering to be "Travel Buddies" for those Veterans in their area who might like to have someone assist them in making the journey to and from the reunion. Although many Veterans have adult children attending, not all do. Also, many adult children who attend the reunion with or without their own parents could be a great help to other Veterans and their spouses if they were connected as buddies.

The Travel Buddy program makes the travel to the reunion fun and it actually extends the good connection of our annual meeting to the planning of the trip and to the trip itself. In all respects it is a win-win experience!

It would fill the need for some Veterans who have the interest and the resources to attend but may be a bit reluctant because of the effort and energy it can take to make a long journey alone with many connections. A "Travel Buddy" can help ease the challenge by doing some or all of the following:

1. Assist in the planning of the trip by helping the Veteran (and/or spouse). A Travel Buddy can search for the best deals online and book the flights for the Veteran, Veteran's spouse and the Travel Buddy at the same time. The Travel Buddy can request special services such as wheelchair assistance if required. The Buddy could make sure to get the seating that is most appropriate for the particular needs of the Veteran and spouse.
2. Assist in coordinating land connections on both ends of the trip.
3. Assist in handling luggage. It might be a good idea to ship the suitcases by FedEx ahead of time and have them waiting at the hotel.
4. Assist in mobility at the airport by getting airport services for the "golf cart" or wheelchair to take the Veteran who requires some assistance. This takes a bit of effort to locate the service and flag it down. It would be easy for most Pups but may be a bit difficult for some Veterans.

5. Making sure the TSA gives VIP treatment with a short line for the "disabled".

One of the Committee members, Andy Lane, performed this service for a Veteran and his wife at the Lombard reunion. He found it a real joy to assist in making attendance feasible for a Veteran who had some mobility challenges. Without exception, the airport personnel, the airline attendants and the TSA were extremely pleased to be able to make themselves accommodating and helpful to the Veterans

The services are all out there, but a Pup-advocate could make everything a bit easier.

\*\*So we are encouraging both Veterans and Pups to check the box on the Registration form if you are able to be a Travel Buddy to a Veteran in your area or if you are a Veteran who would like a Travel Buddy. Also, many of you in your local groups could connect people as well.

We think this is great idea and service worth considering. Let us know what you think!