

CHAT ROOM



IRV VAHRATIAN

Voyage gets bumpy start post Sept. 11

Roxanne and I planned our 50th anniversary trip in April 2001 — a cruise on the Queen Elizabeth II to London, a few days in London and then back to Farmington. We were to leave New York on Sept. 16 at 2 p.m. and arrive in Southampton, England, on Sept. 22, spend three and a half days in London and then return home on Sept. 25.

We were shocked on Sept. 11 at what happened in New York and really did not want to go on the cruise. But the trip was not cancelled, so we went. It took us 17 hours to board the ship on Sept. 16 because of airport delays, and being re-routed from New York to Boston by bus to meet the ship.

When we called Cunard Lines to arrange luggage pickup from our home to the ship, we first heard the ship might not be allowed to dock in New York Harbor. And they had cancelled the luggage check-in service because of security. They would have alternate plans.

Many delays

It took us over four hours to clear Detroit Metropolitan Airport that day. Our son dropped us off at 8:50 a.m. We finally got off the runway at 11:45. A great deal of that time was spent in line. Then we landed in New York a little late. There was a Cunard representative at the airport to meet with people coming from different parts of the country. They took us to the Statler Hotel in New York for four hours. Then we got on buses. We were assigned to Bus 16, which was the last to leave. The bus ride from New York to Boston took about 4 hours 15 minutes. Now it was around 10 p.m. or beyond. Then we were met with another long line at the ship, because there had been a bomb threat on the ship. Dogs were sniffing and there were military people there, too. I'd made arrangements for a wheelchair for Roxanne. It helped. We learned to be patient and recognized the problems involved.

We finally got on board at midnight. It was a long day. The Cunard people had left champagne in our room. But the ice in the bucket had melted. We were supposed to board at 2:30. So we drank warm champagne. We hadn't eaten all day. Despite the late hour, they had a room available with food. I ate two pounds of shrimp. We got to bed at 3 a.m. The ship left Boston at 5:30 a.m.

Crossing the Atlantic, it took us a day to recover from the tough start. But it's an old stately ship. We enjoyed it. We were just a little disappointed. There was supposed to be an opera theme on this cruise. But none of the participants were able to get on the ship. Singers from Spain, Italy and the U.S. couldn't get there because of security problems. So we had magicians instead. That meant we spent more time in the library and casino. Finally we got to Southampton. Surprisingly, the water was not rough. There was no rain.

Welcoming British

The six day trip started poorly, but after a day or two, we enjoyed the trip, particularly the elegant dining. The bus ride from docking at Southampton to London took two hours and 16 minutes. It was an opportunity to see the countryside. Our hotel was near Kensington Palace and the gardens. Just beautiful. We took a tour the next morning and saw a lot of things in London — the Tower of London and Big Ben. It had been more than 50 years since I'd been there during the war. The British were marvelous to us because we were Americans. They are very supportive of our president and their Prime Minister Tony Blair. The atmosphere was polite and generous.

We spent a few hours in Herrod's Department Store, Westminster Abbey. We saw "Mama Mia". It was a nice upbeat show. We also went to some nice offbeat restaurants and pubs.

Coming home on British Airways, we had to enter the plane on the tar-

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Stars & Stripes

City salutes veterans with renewed patriotism

Over 360 people attended the 5th annual Stars & Stripes gala, a Veteran's Day recognition program, at the Costick Activities Center on Friday.

By MARY RODRIQUE
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"You are our heroes as we face these difficult times. You are the example that keeps us going forward," Mary DiManno, senior adult supervisor, told veterans assembled for the annual Stars & Stripes gala at the Costick Activities Center in Farmington Hills on Friday.

The fifth annual Veteran's Day recognition program was especially heartfelt this year because of the tragic events of Sept. 11. Red, white and blue helium-filled balloons and small American flags decorated each table. Guests wore an array of red, white and blue sweaters to tie to flag pins. Some of the veterans came in their old military uniform, or some part thereof, such as a hat or a jacket.

The Harrison High School marching band played a rousing mix of patriotic music after an ROTC color guard from Carroll High School carried in the flag. Harrison senior Samantha Stockford led the singing of the national anthem.

Some 364 people attended the noon-time program and lunch sponsored by American House Retirement Residence in conjunction with the Farmington Hills Senior Adult division. Farmington Mayor William Hartsock said, "We are all soldiers in this different kind of war. The targets are our will and determination. We must fight against irrational fear."

He urged everyone to write letters to friends, visit family and "go out and enjoy yourselves."

"Our faith, family, friends and freedom will be here a year from now. The victory will be a return to our ordinary way of life."

Farmington Hills Mayor Nancy Bates said, "I did not fully appreciate the depths of veterans' patriotism until Sept. 11. We now have more of a sense of what the veterans knew all along."

There was a moment of silence for

veterans who have died and another moment to reflect on the current military operation under way in Afghanistan.

About 100 veterans representing the Army, Air Force, Navy, Marines, Army Nurse Corps, Air Corps, Coast Guard and National Guard, primarily from World War II and the Korean War era but also a few younger vets including State Rep. Andrew Raczkowski (R-Farmington) who served in the Army stateside in the '60s, were recognized. Each veteran received a scroll and a pin from the city, as well as a standing ovation.



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BARKER



Celebration: Above Hugh Ferguson still fits into his Army Air Corp uniform, vintage World War II. Each veteran was called to the stage to receive a pin and a scroll from city officials. At left, Betty Weingarden and Al Weiner dance the afternoon away. The 5th annual Stars & Stripes gala included a lunch, a formal program and entertainment.

Nailco CEO makes Dreams come true

By MARY RODRIQUE
STAFF WRITER

Think a fashion show featuring real figures and all ages, from kids to grandmas. Add wonderful food, a children's magical ballet performance and



a silent auction and you have the ingredients for the first annual Dreams, a fund-raiser for the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center.

Sponsored by The Nailco Group, Dreams is planned for 1-5 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 2, at the Royal Oak Music Theater. Ticket prices range from \$75 to \$125.

Dreams is the brainchild of Larry Gaynor, The Nailco Group's chief executive officer and president.

"We came up with the theme, the venue and the date," said Gaynor, who resides over the Farmington Hills based wholesale distributor of beauty products to salons and spas worldwide.

"Dreams stands for dreams come true." Over the past nine years, Gaynor, his wife and Nailco vice president Teresa Gaynor, and the company's 250 employees have become big supporters of the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center, across town from Nailco's Haggerty Road headquarters at the corner of 12 Mile and Inkster roads.

Center on the radio. Dick Puritan was talking about the Garden Party, the annual spring fund-raiser for the center. We bought tickets," said Gaynor, who lives in West Bloomfield with his wife and three sons.

Major donor

That was 1992. Since then, The Nailco Group has become a major contributor to the center which provides an array of social services to more than 1,000 families in crisis in southeast Michigan annually. Last year, it was the center's biggest contributor, raising over \$80,000 for programs and services.

"The fall fund-raiser called ArtShare at its peak raised \$70,000," said Gaynor. "We hope to double that amount."

ArtShare was shelved when corporate sponsor Ford Motor Co. pulled out earlier this year. Thus the center was left with no fall fund-raiser and a projected cut in funding allocations from the state.

Real fashions

"The fashion show is going to be a multi-generational thing, from kids to teens to 20s, 30s, boomers and seniors," said Gaynor. "Salon clients will be models, with some local celebrity models mixed in."

Featured clothing will be from a dozen stores ranging from Mark Koller in Birmingham to Van Couture of Royal Oak. Featured salons are Bianchi's, Clinton Township; Boeci,



Sterling Heights; Figaro, Birmingham; Gina Agosta and No. VI salons in Novi; and Palazzolo in Royal Oak. Ballerinas are from the Pointe Academy of Dance in Rochester.

WJBK Fox-2 television personality Huel Perkins will be master of ceremonies.

The silent auction will feature over 50 items ranging from original artworks to a VIP package for four to the Freedom Festival Marshall Field fireworks display on the Detroit River. There will also be a Nieman Marcus beauty basket (retail value \$500), various sports memorabilia and salon and spa packages.

"The programs they offer, the environment, the new learning center, the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center is a great place," said Gaynor.

Over half of his 250 employees have already purchased tickets to Dreams. Although there will be some tickets at the door, advance purchase is preferred.

For ticket information, call The Nailco Group at (248) 347-7700, Ext. 407 or the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center at (248) 626-7627.

Nailco CEO: Larry Gaynor at company headquarters in Farmington Hills.

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