

Business aviation people away from the airport

Above and Beyond

SUSAN FRIEDENBERG LEADS A VERY BUSY life teaching and mentoring corporate cabin attendants and is well known in business aviation. But in 2009, when she posted a Memorial Day tribute to her father, World War II vet Bernard Friedenber, on the NBAA bulletin board, she had no idea that she would set in motion a chain of events that would evoke such a dramatic demonstration of the generosity of the business aviation community.



Susan Friedenber with Vineland resident Rick Toler.

Bernie Friedenber spent the entire day of June 6, 1944, on Omaha Beach, then went on to survive a total of four years of combat, when you add in his time in North Africa and Sicily, winning two Silver Stars in the process. The former Army medic wrote about his experiences in *Of Being Numerous: World War II as I Saw It*, all the proceeds from which he donates to a community college. He, along with numerous other Jewish military veterans at his local post, sells poppies to support a residence for retired warriors in Vineland, N.J., and at the time Susan wrote about him, the place needed some sprucing up.

Ron Freswick is the chief pilot for Williams-Sonoma, and he happened to read Susan's Memorial Day tribute to her dad. Fuzzy, as everyone calls Freswick, is a 20-year U.S. Air Force veteran himself, and he telephoned Susan and learned more about her dad's efforts on behalf of the veterans' home, about the lack of state funding, how the Jewish vets built a TV room and, with the funds they raised, provided the residents with some of their basic needs. Freswick knew his company had a small warehouse in New Jersey and that the company holds periodic sample sales. He talked to a Williams-Sonoma logistics exec named Dean Miller and posed the idea of sending some furnishings to the vets. Miller called a colleague, an ex-Marine named Steve Anderson, who said he'd go take a look. Anderson's verdict: "This is really a worthwhile effort," as Freswick recalls it.



Ron "Fuzzy" Freswick, aviation director for the Williams-Sonoma, Inc. flight department.

On the Monday before Veteran's Day 2009, three trucks pulled up to the veteran's residence with a load of furniture. A week later, during a trip into Teterboro, Freswick drove down and met Susan and her dad for the first time. He got a look at all the new furniture — and more: "I got to meet the people who live there," he recalls. "All veterans, some World War II, some Vietnam, one or two from Desert Storm, and I spoke to everyone I met in the cafeteria, the hallways. It was very emotional for me. What struck me most was these guys were really thankful for what Williams-Sonoma had done. Not one of them was complaining, just happy and proud to be of service to their country. Almost every one had a cap or jacket with his unit patches. They were just awesome."

Two months ago, Anderson paid another visit to reconnoiter, and this time the trucks showed up with kitchen utensils and housewares. Susan calls it "Extreme Makeover: Injured and Homeless Vets Edition" and says she is "totally overwhelmed by Fuzzy's commitment to see this through and the generosity of Williams-Sonoma." As for Freswick, he says, "It's a source of pride for me that I work for a company that cares." **George C. Larson**