



A LIEFC member and the diversity of General Aviation  
**Long Island Early Fliers Club, Inc.**

November, December 2018 Newsletter

Editor: Fred Coste      Volume 3, Issue 6

**Editor's Note:**

The members of the Long Island Early Fliers Club are a diverse group. As a relative newcomer, I am often amazed, frequently honored and always humbled to learn about members of our organization and the impact they have had in the global concept of aviation.

Many of us have similar beginnings, starting with the love of flying. Later, we learn that aviation itself, is a life discipline that, for many, organizes our thinking and helps govern who we become and that which is achieved.

During the past few months, I have had the opportunity to get to know a very successful pilot, businessperson and member of the Early Fliers who has quietly had an impact on many, though most have not even heard his name.

Randall Davis and his brothers, Lee and Whitney are the sons of Lester and Jean Davis. They all learned to fly on the family farm in Coram. Many of us knew that farm as Coram Airpark. Randy and his brothers spent the money they earned while working on the farm on flying lessons and they learned to fly with one of the best, Tom Murphy, in his Cubs.

Randy is Vice President and General Counsel of Phoenix Air. He is also one of the company's most important pilots. Though we can't discuss everything Randy and this company is capable of, I'm pleased to tell you a little about this important company and Randall H. Davis.



# PHOENIX AIR

Phoenix Air Group, Inc. (“Phoenix Air”) was formed in the late 1970’s principally as an air cargo carrier for the automotive industry. Over the following 40-plus years, the company has evolved into one of the largest military contracting, air ambulance and is a world leader in providing electronic warfare training services to the military.

Headquartered in Cartersville, Georgia, the company also has offices and operating bases in four other states and Europe. Phoenix Air owns and operates more than 35 aircraft, and all flight crewmembers, maintenance and other support personnel are full-time employees.

The company currently holds more than 15 federal contracts with various government agencies. Phoenix Air is a “cleared facility” and half of its 270-plus employees hold U.S. Department of Defense security clearances. Its Operations Director has secure telephone connectivity (STE) to assist in discussing sensitive work for the U.S. Government.

The company currently operates Learjet 35/36 jets; Gulfstream G-I turbo props, G-II SP and G-II B jets, G-III jets, and Embraer EMB-120 turbo prop aircraft in various passenger/cargo/air ambulance configurations.

Phoenix Air also has a Special Missions Department that designs, develops and maintains a wide array of highly specialized electronic warfare equipment and related subsystems. Special Missions’ employees also crew these highly specialized aircraft acting as Electronic Warfare Officers and Mission Specialists in the field. Other company engineers and maintenance technicians modify aircraft and aircraft components to meet specific contract requirements.

Phoenix Air is the premier commercial contractor providing high-power electronic combat warfare and communications jamming and training to U.S. Navy carrier and expeditionary strike groups, and is prime contractor to the U.S. Navy AEGIS Program. The company is also a prime contractor to the U.S. DOD Ballistic Missile Defense Program, among others.



Randall H. Davis is Senior Vice President and General Counsel of Phoenix Air Group. He holds a law degree as well as an undergrad BA in Political Science. Before coming to Phoenix Air, Randy represented

various air carriers and manufacturers, insurance companies, including United States Aviation Underwriters, Global Aerospace, AIG Aviation, Inc., Delta, Continental and United Airlines as well as Piper Aircraft Corporation. His practice also included a concentration in the defense of FAA enforcement actions and transactions involving aircraft regulatory issues.

In addition to practicing law, Randy has been one of the pilots on Phoenix Air's Ebola missions in their Gulfstream IIIs. He made his first transoceanic flight while a sophomore in college when he delivered a Piper Twin Comanche from Boston to London. With that information as a backdrop, consider the scope and breadth of what the company does.

### **'SPECIAL MISSIONS'**

*Edited from: The Daily Beast*

*By: Elena Scotti and Abby Haglage*

**The American Ebola Rescue Plan Hinges on One Company. Meet Phoenix Air.**

They've transported dolphins, satellite parts, even wolves. Phoenix Air Group, a U.S. based air charter company, can fly anything.

Designed for "special missions," the privately owned company is capable of transporting precious cargo anywhere in the world. In the more than 40 years since the company's inception, "cargo" has had many meanings.

For air supplier Hughes Aircraft, it was crucial satellite pieces from Russia. For Australia, oil field explosives, for an American aquarium, penguins.



*A dolphin is prepared for transport.*



*A group of penguins awaits their flight to an aquarium in the United States*

Then came a call to pick up two stricken American health workers. This is how Phoenix became the U.S. government's go-to rescuer.



*Pilot Randy Davis with a group of his penguin passengers*

One summer day, Phoenix got a call from a new client, this one the most serious of all. It was the U.S. Department of State. The precious cargo: two American humanitarian workers with Ebola.

For the immediate future, the thousands of American troops, hundreds of nurses and doctors bravely fighting Ebola in West Africa, Phoenix is the only quick way home. Despite more than \$175 million allotted to the relief effort, the U.S. government's rescue plan hinges on one company. Meet the most important air courier you've never heard of.

Phoenix Air Group, Incorporated, was launched in the rolling hills of Georgia in the late 1970s by Mark Thompson, an Atlanta native and former U.S. Army pilot. After years of flying helicopter rescue missions during the Vietnam era, Thompson decided to create his own company—this one aimed at transporting anything to safety. With just two small

Beech 18s and a handful of employees, Phoenix was born.

Named for the mythological bird on his home city's seal, Thompson's company started small, earning a reputation as one of the few willing to transport heavy machinery by air. When the rise of foreign automakers caused an upheaval in the auto industry in the early 1980s, relocating auto parts between factories became big business. By 1984, the company had outgrown its Atlanta home, forcing Thompson to relocate to an airfield in Cartersville, Georgia, where Phoenix is based today.

Each mission is different. Sometimes the client is an international zoo, arriving with a massive dolphin tank and multiple experts to keep the animal calm during the trip to its new home. Other times it's a country such as Kazakhstan, in need of heavy machinery. Sometimes it's a film crew, transporting wolves to Siberia for a movie.

Over time, the clientele began to shift and their cargo needs evolved. Unusual requests were welcomed. "Phoenix Air is not just an air charter company," reads a bio on the company's website. "It's a company with a long tradition of finding solutions to client needs." The needs were beyond Thompson's wildest imagination. From expensive art to exotic animals to royalty, the requests kept coming. Soon the U.S. Department of Defense wanted in,

contracting Phoenix to provide electronic warfare training to three branches of the armed forces.

Today, with more than 270 employees and an estimated 35 aircraft, the company's laid-back Southern style persists. When a client needs to move something by air, Phoenix gets it done.

In 2005, the company got a call from a new, unexpected client: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The CDC, also an Atlanta-based institute, was looking for a way to ensure that employees working in dangerous regions where they were susceptible to lethal, contagious diseases could be rescued and flown safely home.

Together Phoenix and the CDC set out to solve the problem. With the help of engineers at the U.S. Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID), the CDC created what is called an "aeromedical biocontainment system" (ABCS) made up of two large plastic tents, an interior and outer, with room for one patient.



Using a HEPA-filtered ventilation system to maintain negative air pressure, the tent allows medics to employ heart and pulse monitors, as well as administer intravenous fluids. Medical professionals can enter the interior tent to check on the patient but must don personal protective equipment (PPE) to do so. Each time they exit the interior chamber, another medic must sanitize them, help them remove their PPE, and place it in a bag of materials to be burned.

Now that they had the isolation chamber, it was up to Phoenix to find a plane to carry it. As luck would have it, the Danish Air Force had just the aircraft.



*Phoenix Air partners close the deal on the purchase of a Gulfstream III from the Danish Air Force that had the ideal cargo door already installed.*

Known as the Gulfstream G1159A (or Gulfstream III), the plane had an unusually massive cargo door that would allow the company to load the ABCS on and off a

plane without putting the patient in danger. It was a perfect match.

With a rescue plan in place and a five-year, \$4.9 million contract between Phoenix and the CDC, the planes went into storage. In a 2007 article of *Auto Pilot* magazine, then-vice president and chief of operations Dent Thompson addressed apparent criticism of his company's "on-call contract" with the CDC. "Think about a fire truck at the local fire station in your neighborhood," Thompson told the magazine. "Fire trucks are there for emergencies, but 95% of the time they are waiting in the fire station for the emergency to occur. People might say money is being wasted to have that \$450K fire truck sit idle in the station, but if it's your house on fire, you'll be glad that truck is here."

That summer, the fire broke out. The two American humanitarian workers infected with Ebola in Liberia were fighting for their lives. They needed to be brought home immediately.

Randall Davis, who bills himself as the "flying lawyer," remembers the day well. "It was late July. We got a call from the State Department, someone who works on repatriation of Americans who are ill," he says. "They said, 'We've been talking to the CDC and we understand you've got these isolation chambers. Could you do it for Ebola?'"

In the months before the Ebola epidemic, Davis and his team were spending a great deal of time on a war readiness program with the DOD and NATO.



*Phoenix Air's aircraft equipped with electronic warfare equipment to "hide" the airplane during naval training missions.*

For this "electronic warfare," Phoenix was tasked with flying a sophisticated plane, hidden from radar, over something such as a Navy ship—to prepare for the real thing. "We get paid to be a state-of-the-art bad guy," says Davis. "It's like war games." But this time, the battle was real, and they had to change gears quickly for this new challenge.

While the Gulfstream III and ABCS, were both specifically designated as an air ambulance, it had yet to be used for the first time. The staff at Phoenix was experienced in transporting patients via air ambulance, both domestic and international. Davis and his team knew it wouldn't be easy, but they were ready. After weeks of training, the first mission

set out to retrieve Kent Brantly, an American doctor.

Two days after Brantly's evacuation to Atlanta, another team set out to transport nurse Nancy Writebol. This time, Davis was in the cockpit.

Just 30 feet from the chamber in which Writebol lay for the 16-hour flight, he could make out no more than a "form" through the plastic sheeting surrounding her tent. But the nurse, EMT, and doctor inside, he says, were heroic: "I can't give them enough credit. They are wonderful human beings. If you were stuck in a foreign country, you would love to have this group come and get you."



Writebol's flight would turn out to be a success, as have nearly all of the 15 Ebola

missions that Phoenix has performed thus far, with destinations ranging from Switzerland to France. Davis was also a part of the mission to transport the first person to be infected with Ebola in the United States, Nina Pham, from Dallas to a facility in Maryland. He was not with the Sierra Leonean doctor who was flown to Nebraska; the first of the 15 not to survive.



*The Aeromedical Biological Containment System is installed in a modified Gulfstream G-III aircraft PHOTO: REUTERS*

Despite intimate, long flights with Ebola patients, many of whom are very sick, no one at Phoenix has contracted the disease. "It shows if you know what you're doing, it can be done properly," Davis says.



As of now, Phoenix holds the keys to the only aircraft on the planet capable of ensuring 100 percent safety for those wishing to transport an Ebola victim out of West Africa. “We are it,” Davis says when I ask if the military has a plan for how to get an infected American service member out of Liberia. While Davis and others at Phoenix weren’t expecting to get that first call for Brantly (“It came out of nowhere”), they were prepared for it. “We can do this efficiently and we can do a good job,” he says.



*In Liberia, this conveyor was used to load an Ebola patient who was unable to walk. She was placed directly on the belt and brought up through the cargo door.*

In Davis’s mind, it’s the medical workers, not Phoenix, who deserve attention. “It’s nice to be able to help out in such a direct manner, but all we have to do is fly the plane,” he says. The heroic individuals Phoenix carries home and the ones who sit at their bedside during the flight play the most important role of all. “These medical workers are amazing, such selfless

people,” he says. “It’s about saving lives—and that’s what it should be about.”

### **Georgia executive jet carries accused Nazi war criminal back to Europe**

Aug 23, 2018 By: Bo Emerson,  
*The Atlanta Journal-Constitution (edited)*

As the vice president of Phoenix Air, an executive jet and air transport service, Randall H. Davis has ferried some unusual cargo around the world.

He’s brought weapon-grade nuclear material from Tripoli to Los Alamos. He’s carried live smallpox virus from Europe back to the U.S. He made a trip to Zagreb, Croatia, to pick up a planeload of Soviet-designed land mines. This week he made yet another strange trip.

Phoenix Air’s latest job was to ferry an accused Nazi war criminal living in the U.S. back to Europe.

On Monday Davis and his crew flew from their Cartersville headquarters to Teterboro Airport in New Jersey where they picked up a 95-year-old former Nazi labor camp guard, to fly him back to Germany where he will live the rest of his days.

During the 1940s Jakiw Palij worked as a guard at the Trawniki Labor Camp in what was then German-occupied Poland. The

camp was a slave-labor operation as well as a training facility for collaborators, most of them Ukrainian. Approximately 6,000 men, women and children, most of them Jews, were killed in a single day at Trawniki during a carefully-planned “final solution” procedure called Operation Harvest Festival.

When Palij made his way to the U.S. in 1949, he told immigration officials he worked on a farm and in a factory, never mentioning his role at Trawniki. The truth eventually caught up to him, and in 2003 his U.S. citizenship was revoked. He was ordered deported in 2004.



A photo (provided by the U.S. Department of Justice) shows Jakiw Palij in a U.S. visa photo from 1949. Palij, a former Nazi guard, lived a quiet life in New York City for decades, having lied on his U.S. immigration papers in 1949 about the type of work he did during World War II. On Tuesday he was deported to Germany, ending a 14-year battle to remove him from American soil. (U.S. Department of Justice via The New York Times)

Despite that order, Palij continued to live in a red-brick home in Queens, N.Y.,



unwittingly sold to him by a Holocaust survivor. This month, under pressure from President Donald Trump, Germany agreed to take Palij. (Neither Poland nor the Ukraine would accept Palij, a Polish national whose birthplace is now part of the Ukraine.)

To carry Palij to Germany, the U.S. government sought out Phoenix Air. The company flew Palij in the same Gulfstream jet it had used to evacuate an American doctor and nurse who had become infected with the Ebola virus during humanitarian work in Liberia in 2014.



“He seemed like a very frail, little old man,” said Davis, who was surprised that

Palij spoke no German, only Polish and some broken English. Davis' flight crew included a co-pilot, a doctor, a nurse, "a half-dozen security people and government people who were there to help make sure this person gets where he needs to go."

Davis, 64, flew his charge first to Canada for refueling, then to Düsseldorf, where the jet was greeted by about 25 security and medical personnel.

"My observation is he will spend the rest of his days in a German nursing home," said Davis. "It would surprise me if he was around even a year or two from now." German authorities told CNN it was unlikely that Palij would face retribution, since neither membership in the SS nor even training in the labor camp are considered "prosecutable" under contemporary German law.

### **Bringing Otto Warmbier home from North Korea**

In June of this year, Phoenix's Medical Director, Dr. Flueckiger volunteered for a very sensitive State Department mission – to fly into Pyongyang, North Korea on a Phoenix Air medical jet and remain overnight or longer to advocate for the release of college student Otto Warmbier. Warmbier was arrested while vacationing in North Korea in March 2016 and sentenced to 15 years of hard labor. Shortly after his incarceration in a

notorious Pyongyang prison, he fell into a non-responsive coma for unknown reasons.

Dr. Flueckiger and two U.S. State Department officials landed in Pyongyang on a Phoenix Air medical jet and remained there while the jet flew back to Japan to wait on their report. The trio met several times with a North Korean government medical committee and later the government court which convicted Warmbier 15 months earlier. They secured his release. After being taken onto the Phoenix Air medevac jet at Pyongyang Airport later that day, Warmbier was flown back to Ohio to his family where he died a week later.

Phoenix Air's dedicated employees continue to serve the U.S. Government and American citizens around the world under its State Department contract. "All of our employees are highly dedicated to the important work we have been given, and each day certainly brings new and complex challenges for all of us," explained Mark Thompson, President of Phoenix Air. "It's not only our employees, but their family members back home and our colleagues in the government supporting the complex missions we undertake."

It's for this type of work over the past three years that Phoenix Air was named the recipient of the U.S. Department of State's 2017 Small Business Prime Contractor of the Year Award.



United States  
Department of State

2017 SMALL BUSINESS PRIME CONTRACTOR  
OF THE YEAR AWARD

is presented to

*Phoenix Air Group*

*In recognition of exceptional customer commitment and innovation while providing the Bureau of Medical Services, Directorate of Operational Medicine with outstanding aviation services in complex and challenging environments.*

October 2017

*R. W. Tillerson*  
Secretary of State

**Amid all the interesting material collected about Randy and Phoenix Air Group, there were two items that I felt were worthy of special mention.**

**In the hours after the 9/11 terror attacks, the government contacted Phoenix Air to transport high level officials to Stewart Air National Guard Base in upstate New York. The jet that Randy was flying was very likely the only civilian aircraft in the sky that evening. They had a unique transponder code issued by the North American Air Defense Command for a non-military flight. Randy related that: “we would be flying along, and an unlit F-16 would rise up almost as an apparition in the night sky next to us, check us out, then slowly sink out of sight....”**



**The other is a particularly funny anecdote about getting refueled in Siberia. “After landing at Magadan, we were being refueled by a rickety old fuel truck as a light, dry snow started falling. Our “handler” came out and asked if we would like the de-icing team to come out. In the distance, we see a large woman with a broom coming out of a building. They hoist her up on the wing and she starts sweeping off the snow, smiling at us. That was the de-icing team!”**



**I had the pleasure of knowing Lester Davis and always admired his creativity. Over time, I’ve learned of the family’s long history on Long Island dating back to 1727 when Elijah Davis built his home in Coram. The Davis home became a tavern/Inn as well as the meeting hall for the Town of Brookhaven. Les and Jean were the last generation to live on the family farm and raise their three sons there.**

**Randy is proudly reminded of his Long Island roots each time he steps into one of Phoenix’s Gulfstream I’s. The area above the airstair bears the logo “Grumman**

Aircraft Engineering Corporation,” which also reads “Bethpage L.I., New York.” These airplanes were built from about 1959 to 1969 – the same time frame that Randy was learning to fly here on Long Island. Phoenix has the largest fleet of operational G-1’s in the air today.



From those humble beginnings Randy Davis has used his aviation background in support of the innocent and the helpless. He has quietly and humbly impacted the lives of many Americans and carried a message of global strength throughout the world.



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## L.I.E.F.C. News:

We were saddened to learn of the passing of Life Member William C. Nielsen on

September 29<sup>th</sup> after a brief illness. Bill was 96 years old.

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## Battleship Cove and Old Rhinebeck bus trip was a great time!

With 30 steadfastly determined members, the Early Fliers set sail for Battleship Cove at 05:45.....at least it seemed that way, due to the heavy rain that morning. We had an appreciation of that which Noah was up against!

The first stop was the Patrol Torpedo boat display which evoked a common comment of: “I never realized how big these are!” Considering carrying a crew of 14 on each boat, they couldn’t be too much smaller than the 73 feet allotted!





At the snack bar on the USS Massachusetts, some of our illustrious group sat contemplating their navels.



We soon moved to the larger ships moored in the Cove. They included the Destroyer, USS Joseph P. Kennedy, The Lionfish, a Balao class submarine and the battleship USS Massachusetts.

Our second day featured a visit to Old Rhinebeck Aerodrome.



*The Lionfish*

*The group gathers for the airshow after getting off the bus*



*USS Massachusetts*



Some of our Wednesday work crew hoped to see the Rhinebeck Bleriot fly, however because of windy conditions, only the tail

plane was lifted off the ground. There simply isn't enough rudder to keep the plane going straight down the runway, so in the interest of safety....and preserving history, we were happy just seeing her move on her own power.



We enjoyed seeing a Jenny take to the sky. It's been so long since we have seen our Jenny that is on loan to the Cradle of Aviation Museum, that several of us had forgotten how big it really is! The folks at Old Rhinebeck put on a great show!

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We are all wishing Pat Gallagher a speedy recovery from surgery on his carotid artery performed in mid-October. Pat spent a day in the hospital, and is home recovering. Pat sends his thanks for all the well wishes he has been receiving.

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**Welcome New Members:**

Bob Draffin, President of Bayport Civic Association

**LIEFC Holiday Party -**

has been scheduled for Sunday afternoon, December 9<sup>th</sup> from 1:00- 3:00 p.m. at the hangar. More details will follow in the next week or two.

Time to smile.....



**Happy Halloween!**

**Why wouldn't the skeleton cross the road?.....**

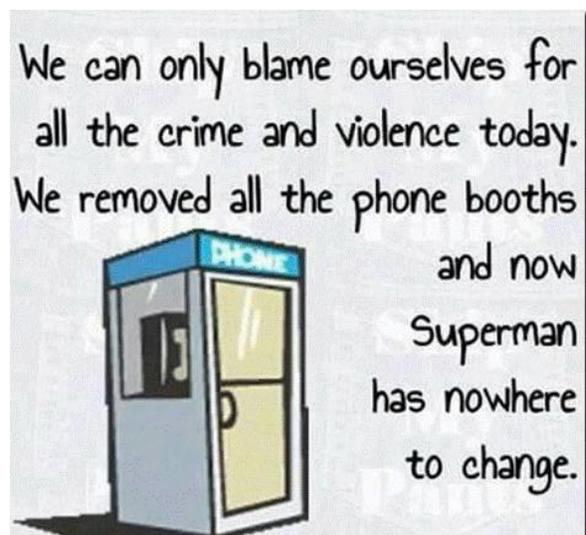
**He didn't have the guts!!  
(OK, you can groan....)**



A police officer called the station on his radio.  
"I have an interesting case here. An old lady  
shot her husband for stepping on the floor she  
just mopped."  
"Have you arrested the woman?"  
"Not yet. The floor's still wet."



Still won't let Rudy play reindeer  
games, huh?

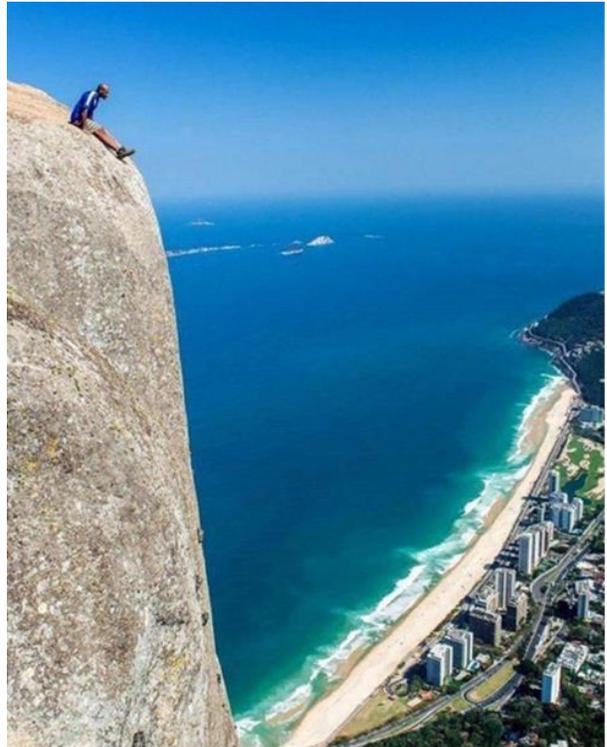




"Bad news, its curiosity"

***Click this link for your enjoyment:***

[www.youtube.com/embed/auSo1MyWf8g?rel=0](http://www.youtube.com/embed/auSo1MyWf8g?rel=0)



**Wonder what this clown hopes to see?**



**Should I tell him...**



**Or just see what happens.**



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I'm here to delete your  
cookies**

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**The LONG ISLAND**  
*Early Fliers Club*

Long Island Early Fliers Club, Inc. is a non-profit organization founded in 1956 and Chartered by the New York State Education Department. We are dedicated to aviation education and preserving Long Island's aviation heritage. Volunteers who want to help educate and preserve our history are always welcome. Annual Membership in our organization is \$35.00 for individuals; \$50.00 for families.

Donations of aviation memorabilia, aircraft and aircraft parts, aviation clothing, display quality models and items of historic significance are always welcome and greatly appreciated. Cash donations, as well as artifact donations are tax deductible. You may visit our facility at Bayport Aerodrome, Vitamin Drive, Bayport New York most Wednesdays between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. Appointments are necessary as airports are secure locations and can also be arranged at other times for your convenience. Contact us at: L.I.E.F.C., P.O. Box 43, Holbrook, NY, 11741 or call (631)-523-5407 (Fred Coste) or fax: 631-588-2147

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