

# ***THE BEACON***

*May 22, 2008*

## **Blue Angels to use Republic Airport as base for Memorial Day weekend air show**



As part of the Memorial Day weekend air show slated for Jones Beach, Republic Airport, Farmingdale, will be hosting the United States Navy's precision demonstration team, the Blue Angels. The first F-18 of this world famous team will touch down at Republic on Wednesday, May 21st with the rest of the aircraft arriving Thursday, May 22nd and departing Sunday, May 25th. Their activities are expected to produce an unusual amount of jet noise as their aircraft are military-rated Hornets with the capability of using afterburners.

The Blue Angels will perform over Jones Beach as featured aircraft in the Bethpage Federal Credit Union Air Show that honors our active duty servicemen and women and our nation's veterans.

Children should be informed of the aircrafts' arrival and purpose so they are not startled by their flight into the region, the jet noise they produce or their anticipated flights to and from the south shore of Long Island.

During their stay, the Blue Angels will be based at Republic Airport, located off Route 110. The public may view the F-18 aircraft from the airport terminal. Other military aircraft, including a B-17, will be based at the American Airpower Museum at Republic Airport adjacent to New Highway.

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### Weekend air show a homecoming for Angels' pilot

BY MARTIN C. EVANS

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When he was just a kid growing up in Lindenhurst, his father would take Kevin Mannix to the south gate at Republic Airport, where they would watch planes take off and land.

It thrilled young Kevin to see things fly.

Yesterday, the Navy captain flew into that same airport at the controls of an F/A-18 Hornet, commander of the Navy's Blue Angels.

The nation's best-known precision flight team arrived on Long Island for this weekend's Bethpage Federal Credit Union New York Air Show at Jones Beach.

"It's pretty emotional flying in front of my hometown," said Mannix, who flew over his old Daniel Street elementary school and the house where he grew up before landing at Republic in Farmingdale.

The Navy is expecting as many as 500,000 to attend the two-day air show, which begins at 10 a.m. tomorrow at Jones Beach State Park. Admission is free beyond an \$8 parking fee.

In jets that can reach 1,200 mph and fly in formations that bring their wing tips within feet of each other, the team will perform choreographed aerial stunts along the shore.

Navy officials say the stunt team is an important recruiting tool. Critics have labeled the exercises a costly glorification of the military. And in April 2007, a Navy Blue Angels jet crashed at a South Carolina air show, killing its pilot.

"It's important for the American people to see what their military is capable of," said Mannix, who flew 20 missions in 1991 during Operation Desert Storm.

Mannix said this year, the Blue Angels will perform its newest maneuver, called a "delta breakout," in which the formation will hurtle directly at the audience before breaking out in several directions.

Mannix lettered in lacrosse and golf at Lindenhurst High School before graduating in 1981. Now a resident of Pensacola, Fla., Mannix said he looks forward to eating local pizza and bagels, and playing a round at "Bethpage Black," where Tiger Woods won the U.S. Open in 2002.

For the 22-year pilot, who finished college the year "Top Gun" was released, tomorrow's air show will be his first ever in New York.

"It's like a homecoming for me," Mannix said, "like a dream come true."

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C O M M E N T A R Y

# A salute and a thank you to those who served

When the military jets arrive at Republic Airport for the annual Memorial Day air show over Jones Beach, I am always stunned at the handful of calls the airport office gets from some who say the noise disturbs them.

I suspect so did the sound of two towers collapsing in lower Manhattan.

Perhaps so, too, does the sound of taps being played at nearby Pinelawn National Cemetery.

The aircraft that will base at Republic Airport and its American Airpower Museum during Memorial Day weekend represent an American military that is committed to the defense of our freedoms against a foe that firebombs students in their schools because women were being given an education. These aircraft, and the Americans who fly them, are engaged in a war against an enemy who would stone to death an individual because he is gay.

In their eyes, you and I are targets worthy of extinction. If our enemies return to New York they will seek to make considerable noise as they detonate weapons designed to terrorize and destroy. Some of these terrorists

will find it amusing, and a sign of our profound ignorance of the threat, that some of us are complaining about the noise of fighters whose sister ships track down and destroy their co-conspirators.

For those of you who do understand that those aircraft help maintain a vigil in the War on Terror, I would urge you to attend the air show at Jones Beach this year. As they arrive overhead in a burst of sound, welcome the Blue Angels with a round of applause. They won't be able to hear it, but these pilots will know it's a sign of the bond that must exist

between civilian and warrior if a democracy is to survive.

Can't get to the beach? Long Island has the largest concentration of veterans in the United States. They are a largely invisible but potentially potent political force that rarely mobilizes to make their collective voice heard. This Memorial Day weekend we should make it a point to offer sincere thanks to the Vietnam veteran who lives two doors down. We should stop and shake the hand of that elderly guy you see at the dry cleaners who wears a campaign hat marked, "Korea." Take your grand-

child to the exhibits at the American Airpower Museum and see a flight of World War II fighters roar overhead so that a new generation understands that Americans their age were asked to fly, fight and die in those things so that they could grow up in a nation where freedom of religion, speech and thought is alive and well.

Or have we become a nation so remote to the sacrifices required to protect our future that we now view as intrusive jet fighters flying tribute to our soldiers, sailors and airmen? Have we become so blind to the insidious War on Terror that we remain resentful about being inconvenienced by 9/11 funeral processions that closed our streets? Have we lost our national will, our collective strength and our yearning to be a free nation committed to the principles upon which we are founded? I don't believe it for a minute, but our enemies hope so.

This Memorial Day weekend, walk among the silent rows of countless graves that line the paths at Pinelawn and Calverton National Cemeteries, and listen for the distant sound of tribute in the air. If you won't say thank you, their fellow Americans in uniform will.

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