

Sept 23, 2013

Dick,

Thanks for your note. The trip is something I will always remember. Your group is to be commended for the organization of the many details and the many hours spent volunteering.

Am enclosing a copy of the letter from the Lakeland Times. Sent the same letter to the Daily Herald and was told that it would appear in the paper the first part of last week. It still hasn't appeared.

Am enclosing a check for all the things your organization does for veterans and to help for future flights.

Gene Battist

P.S. Give my thanks to all the office staff at your office.

Letters To The E

Thanking the Honor Flight program

To the Editor:

I was fortunate enough to participate in the Sept. 9 Honor Flight to Washington, D.C. It was a great, unforgettable experience.

This project is made available by the contributions of many volunteers and financial supporters. The trip is packed into one very long day and organized to the ninth degree. This is a short rundown of the people who make this project a rewarding experience for all who participate.

Many volunteers assist in every imaginable way. Some give up their weekend. Others get up very early in the morning to perform their assigned duties. I would describe them as devoted and passionate.

The project is led by a board of directors who freely give of their time and talents. Their efforts show in the way trips are organized.

Men and women volunteer as guardians for the veterans. I counted 32 wheelchairs veterans on this trip. These guardians assist in getting people on and off the plane, on and off the tour buses, and push the wheelchairs around the various memorials we visited. How do you describe people who pay \$500 for the privilege to volunteer? Medical personnel also accompany every flight and I understand some of them have made 13 flights.

We were all surprised with a military-style mail call organized by our spouses or friends, without our knowledge, on the return trip from Washington, D.C. Along with cards and letters from friends and relatives, handmade cards and letters from children were included.

The welcome home at the airport was overwhelming to say the least. I was totally unprepared for it. This is something a person has to experience firsthand. You can view short TV articles on newscasts but it does not prepare you for the emotional experience of when you walk through the throng of people that come to say thanks and shake your hand. Many tourists who were complete strangers also thanked us, as well as airport personnel, in Washington, D.C. I always felt that we were not welcomed home after returning from Korea. I no longer feel that way.

I wish to thank the Honor Flight program for this opportunity. It is supported by contributions from many different sources. If anyone who reads this letter is considering a donation to a worthy cause where anything donated goes to the project and not administrative costs, this project is it. My wife and I will certainly make a donation.

**Eugene Battist
Harshaw**