

Mike Thompson, Co-Chair  
Jim Campbell, Co-Chair  
Never Forgotten Honor Flight  
P.O. Box 5056  
Wausau, WI 54402-5056

Dear Sirs:

I was one of the two women Marines on the Monday, October 4, 2010 Never Forgotten Flight. I have long wanted to express my gratitude which is beyond measure to you, the Board and to the people of Wausau and our surrounding neighbors who were present when we took off and arrived back in Wausau that same evening. The send off and return reception was just awesome. I know I struggled mightily to make it through the crowd with all the hugs, and well wishes.

The trip was wonderful! Every need was met, every detail was covered, and I know every veteran was cared for and looked after. What we saw was magnificent. The Memorial is also a tribute to the artists, designers, engineers and the many talents needed to build such Memorials. There was so much to see. Even the guards at the Arlington Memorial scraped their heels making a new noise in order to recognize the presence of these veterans, even though they could not speak to us.

The volunteers at the pre-flight dinner which was beautifully arranged, was really great and gave us a glimpse of what to expect on the trip. Meeting our guardian's was such a nice touch.

My thanks also go to those of you who saw this need, gathered your friends together and made it happen. If I am an example of a WWII veteran, I was discharged, came home, got a job and went on with my life. I never really knew closure. I have talked more about my experience in the past couple of years than the many, many years in between. I never got out of bed on the Tuesday following our trip and spent the day sobbing my heart out. I had a chance to grieve over the many names I had casually posted DIA, KIA, MIA as the records came back from the South Pacific and even seeing the island names on the Marine Memorial had turned the faucet on. All of this emotion, stored up for these many years that I hadn't even known was there.

I do know that older people, of which I am one, do not do well in big places, busy thoroughfares, loud noises or lots of confusion. Yet here we were, all in a big place, driven on crowded streets, lots of people around us, but the travelers showed no stress, no tension, and I think it was made easy due to the many volunteers that stepped forward. Good humor was also plentiful and it helped so much.

The goals were set high, the solutions to meeting the goals were worked out in masterful detail, and the results were superior. God bless these veterans for giving up a little independence by accepting the offer of the trip and thanks and blessing on the great and many volunteers for time and treasure which made it all possible.

Sincerely,

Ruth Edie Hawks  
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P.S. Even though most of this letter was written the week we returned, it had been held so that our daughter could apply as a guardian. We finally got it all together. She is aware that she is low on a very long list.