

Dear friend of the Never Forgotten Honor Flight,

Getting ready for our annual board picnic at Mike and Margie Thompson's home, I ran across an old tee shirt of mine from my Army days. On it were emblazoned a set of jump wings and the word "Airborne." It reminded me that fifty years ago *right now* I was at the US Army Infantry Training Center and School at Fort Benning, Georgia, going through Airborne training, better known as "Jump School."

It seemed like a good idea at the time. I was in pretty good shape, and I saw opportunity in going to this three-week school to become a US paratrooper. I got a regulation military haircut before going down there, but knew one of my first stops at Ft Benning would be a barber shop, where I'd get my "Airborne haircut," skin on the sides and about a quarter inch of stubble on top. No turning back now!

Week One was "Ground Week," when we learned how to exit an airplane and how to land. We had plenty of practice jumping from the 34-foot tower (a mock-up of an airplane door you'd jump out of, hooked up to a cable that caught you after you fell 6 or 8 feet) and learning to land under various conditions. We learned how to execute a proper Parachute Landing Fall or PLF: feet and knees together, contacting the ground with our "five points of contact" in the correct order (balls of your feet, calf muscle, thigh muscle, butt muscle, pull-up muscle). *Of course, being an Army school, we joked that the five points of contact for a Marine PLF were two feet, two knees and a forehead!*



Week Two, "Tower Week," featured a 250-foot high tower that allowed us to experience a freefall and a landing with a real parachute. I'll never forget unhooking the safety cable when the apparatus stopped 244 feet up in the air, and then watching it spiral down to the ground. Then came the last 6 feet up, when we'd hit the top and be released. It took a couple of seconds of falling for the parachute to inflate – that may have been the biggest thrill of the whole Jump School experience!

Then came Week Three, "Jump Week," with its 0400am wakeups, PT on the tarmac, and "jumping out of perfectly good airplanes." And at the end of it, we felt invincible when one of the "Black Hats," the instructors we both feared and admired, pinned our jump wings on us for the first time!

It was a challenging school. I started with four roommates and ended with two. And I gained a world of experience.



It's been a while since I've told anyone about my experience at Jump School. It's not all that impressive, and most folks really aren't interested in hearing about it. And it occurs to me that a lot of our veterans are in the same place as me when they think back on their experiences in the military – maybe what they did wasn't all that impressive, and it seems nobody cares. But one of the greatest benefits of the Honor Flight experience is that it gets our veterans talking again about what they went through. And they get to talk about it with people who do care – fellow veterans and their guardians. And they return home to an airport full of people who care as well, who show up to give them the welcome home they didn't get the first time.

Thanks for all you do to make it possible to express our appreciation to these unsung heroes. Here's a look at what we've been able to accomplish together so far (the numbers reflect the way things are before our fall flights):

Veterans flown				Waiting to fly			
WWII	Korea	Vietnam	Total	WWII	Korea	Vietnam	Total
1,048	1,269	2,703	5,020	0	2	563	565

For the heroes,

Ken Moberg

President

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