

Never Forgotten Honor Flight

Five-year Reunion

"Your Favorite Memories of Never Forgotten Honor Flight Trip:"

Donald Washeb (Veteran): "How smooth everything went that day and **all the people that really care what we did for our country**. From the start of the day early morning until late evening everyone looked out for us and made sure we all had what we needed. The people that helped out were great. **My wife also enjoyed her day. It was nice she had something to do while I was away.**"

Ralph & Harriet Swanson (Veteran): "We have gone on many trips, but this was the trip of a lifetime! The ride over and back; the food was delicious; the camaraderie; the memorials, etc., etc. The wonderful guardian. Please extend our thanks to our guardian, to Bob/Mary and Brandon Weller. Give an extra round of applause to them from us. Thank you all."

Phyllis Ducklow (Veteran): "**My husband Robert passed away July 29, 2014. This was the last trip he took before he succumbed to cancer.** Because he never was in combat, he never felt he was entitled to any recognition for his two-year active duty in the Dental Corps. He stayed 28 years in the Army Reserve. This trip to Washington DC in 2013 **made him realize how important his job was** as a member of the support troops. A former combat soldier and career officer made him realize that. It was a marvelous experience for him, and he told every vet "Go!" if you can. I believe this trip was one of the highlights of his entire 30 years of service as an Army dentist. **Thank you, Never Forgotten Honor Flight, for the joy you gave him the last year of his life.**"

Chester Waller (Veteran): "**Chet Waller is deceased. He died January 28, 2013. His trip was one of the most rewarding experiences. He never ceased talking about it until the end. Thank you for making his day so wonderful.**"

Denise Horn (Guardian): "**My dad can't stop talking about the trip.** He said after we got home that night, "**Thanks for talking me into going.**" The greeting we received at the airport, and the number of people there, was unbelievable! All of you volunteers are the best! You have developed a very well-run organization. Every person we met was great and made the vets feel special. **I feel so blessed to have been able to go on the Honor Flight with my dad.** Thanks again for honoring the veterans for the last five years."

Harley Lous (Veteran): "The short time it took to fly there after takeoff, and **I got to visit my brother's grave. He has been in Arlington since 1960.** I've been to Arlington four times. The last time before this trip was 1999, to also visit my father and mother's grave at Arlington. It changed a lot. Everything was wonderful."

Lori Schlais (Guardian): "**My dad did not tell many people** he was going on the Honor Flight. So when mail call happened, **he assumed he would not receive mail.** Well, a classroom of children from my sister's Texas school sent notes, relatives wrote letters, friends from the senior center and my dad's "Young at Heart" church group wrote notes. He was overwhelmed by everyone's kind words."

Marilyn Baumann (Veteran): "**My husband passed away May 26, 2014. We talked about his trip a lot. He was buried in his Honor Flight shirt.**"

Ronald Hahn (Veteran): "The water cannon salutes from the firetrucks at Wausau Airport and at Reagan National in Washington DC. The changing of the guard at Arlington National Cemetery, and **the sergeant of the guard coming out to speak to us after the ceremony**. This is a rare occurrence from what I understand. And finally, **a very special gift given to me by Jan Wendtland** as a memorial of our flight."

Laura Schulte (Guardian): "The **welcome** for the veterans at **Dulles** – so incredible and wonderful! **Spending the day with my grandfather and his brother in DC**. Grandpa and Uncle Bill both **talked about it from that day until they died.**"

Bill Schulte (Guardian): "It was such an honor to escort a WWII veteran and hear his stories. I am a retired veteran and especially cherish these memories. We **continue our contact** at Christmas with my veteran and his wife."

Joseph Brayer (Veteran): "When getting off the plane, the first person to greet me was my niece, which I had not seen for 20 years. She brought me 4 dozen chocolate chip cookies that I passed around the bus, which was fun."

Kim Susens (Guardian): "Walking through the **crowd of children** at the WWII Memorial. They all shook the hands of each veteran and thanked them – it was very moving. The Army general that just happened to be at Reagan Airport while we were waiting to return to Wausau. He was so genuinely interested in the veterans' stories, and greeted each one of them. Being with my veteran all day. Hal was amazing. We had a lot of fun. Spending time with him was priceless – learning about his service and witnessing the emotion of all the veterans will forever be in my memory, especially at mail call. The welcome home and water cannon salutes – wow! Thank you very much for the opportunity."

Jim Amo (Guardian): "It was my wife's dream to **have her dad go** on the Old Glory Honor Flight. **Little did we know 3 months later she would be diagnosed with cancer and pass away before him** in February 2013. And her father passed away January of 2015. Her fulfilling her dream of seeing her father honored became much more important after her diagnosis."

Alan Hougum (Guardian): "My favorite memory of the NFHF trip was after landing in Washington DC and while we were **walking through the airport**, all of the people in the airport starting a slow and steady **applause** as the veterans went by. Few words were spoken, but it was a very moving experience to feel the gratitude and admiration those people wanted to express for veterans they had never met."

Francis Miles Van Slyke (Guardian): "I was guardian for Roger Fairbert of Marshfield and Cliff Beierl of Wisconsin Rapids on the flight Sep 19, 2011. These two gentlemen had not known each other before the flight, and **I enjoyed watching them become good friends** during the day of the trip. And...they got me home just fine."

Dave Mahler (Guardian): "My favorite memory was the **mail call** on the plane. Even though the guys were tired, it brought a spark back into their eyes. Everyone likes to be loved and encouraged. That was just the **right touch at the right time.**"

Curtis Cantrell (Guardian): "**As a veteran myself, spending this day with my grandfather** was the best memory that I'll cherish the rest of my life. And to see the respect given by all the people who were there visiting was awesome. It brought a tear to both of our eyes."

Ed Whitman (Guardian): "I was guardian for my father in law, Carl Dohr, on the Sep 19 2011 Honor Flight. **Carl passed away** on June 2, 2014. My favorite memories involve **Carl telling everyone that the Honor Flight was "the most awesome day of my life."** Our thanks to each of you for making it happen."

Kim Pittsley (Guardian): "One of the two vets I was sharing the day with had his son from California fly in as a **surprise and greet him** at our first stop. The son used the Metro system to meet up at each subsequent stop, and he and his father spent time visiting together at each memorial."

Evelyn McSherry (Guardian): "I was very touched by the reaction to **mail call** by all of the vets. So many of them **did not think they were worthy of the attention** – but they soon realized how much they were loved and appreciated."

LaMont Bonham (Guardian): "Wow – there are so many (highlights). Here are a few: the students lining up along the sidewalk at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Listening to the stories from all the veterans. Experiencing every emotion." (See **attachment**)

Scott Sybeldon (Guardian): "My favorite memory was **the look on my father's face** at the **welcome back reception**. I will never forget his smile as he walked through the crowd shaking people's hands. He **looked like a child at Christmas. My father passed 10/12/2014.**"

Milford (Hezzie) Leffel (Veteran): "The wonderful job that was done on our stay and meals at the hotel. The mail call. But the most memorable I think was **the reception when we arrived back at the airport** – seeing all the people, especially my grandkids and all the great grandkids."

Mel Schneeberg (Veteran): "1. The reception and applause we received at Washington's airport. 2. The overwhelming reception that we received when arriving home at CWA. 3. The Korean Memorial depicting my era in the military. An honor to serve. And what an honor to pay tribute to the 50,000+ men and women who gave their lives for our country. 4. The awestruck feeling I had with the total organized program that had been arranged for us. How can one forget all the volunteers that were involved with the program? 5. Mail call!! A letter from **an eighth-grader named Noah**. Our grandson Noah had died the previous June from wounds suffered in Afghanistan while serving with the US Army."

Walter Hibbard (Veteran): "The way we were treated **made me feel like we were the only guys that ever served** in the military – from the little cub scout that rushed out to greet us upon our arrival, to the absolutely mind-boggling welcome we received at the airport."

Albin Ostrowski (Veteran): "My **dad now suffers from dementia**, but if you bring up anything about the flight & trip, he **breaks into a smile**. When we asked him if he wanted to come to the reunion, he immediately said yes and just keeps on smiling. Thank you!"

Vernon Hohn (Veteran): "This was the **second most memorable day in my life**. The first was when I married Janet, my spouse for 55 years. We've had a very special marriage."

Frank Radigan (Veteran): "Landing in CWA and the first thing I saw when I came through the doors was my wife. She gave me a kiss and told me she loved me. We took a few more steps and she said, "This is your day." We walked a little further and there were our three daughters, with a sign, "Welcome back, Frank Radigan!" **It doesn't get any better**. Thanks to Mike Thompson and Jim Campbell. Thanks for a dream come true."

Ralph Ruplinger (Veteran): "Besides the wonderful experience and generosity of the donors, **Ralph's wife of 68 years**, whose wish to see him go, was able to see him leave and return that day, Sep 19, 2011. **Her illness took her one month to the day, on Oct 19, 2011.** Thank you to all who made this wonderful trip possible."

Rebecca VanZuiden (Guardian): "I enjoyed the **pre-dinner show**, watching the veterans sing along with the songs they remembered from the past, and seeing the smiles on their faces. It was also amazing to see the community, families, and friends welcome the veterans home."

Richard Higgins (Veteran): "The trip will never be forgotten. **I got to go with my brother. He was in WWII and I was in the Korean War.** We had a very good time. He passed away in February 2014. The best part of the trip was mail call on the plane. Everything was just super."

Robert John Gardner (Veteran): "1. **Welcome home** was quite emotional. 2. **"Thank you" from total strangers** touring memorials. Surprised me with their sincerity. 3. **Mail call** on the way home, especially from grade schools."

Ken Zierer (Guardian): "I had the honor of being guardian to my **grandfather**, who was a WWII vet at 96 years old. The one memory that really stands out for me is **the alarm went off at the airport** when Grandpa walked through. He was pulled off to the side and there he stood – no shoes, no belt, and more than a little confused, being patted down by airport security. It turned out that he had a **rosary** in his pocket that had been given to him by a priest right before he was shipped out to the South Pacific."

Steve Riggle (Guardian): "**My veteran gradually changing from being apprehensive** (primarily due to his physical condition) to **realizing he had all the help he needed**, and enjoying the day immensely. Mail call was very emotional/moving."

Terry Wadinski (Guardian): "When **children** at the Korea memorial stopped my father and asked to have a **picture** taken with them."

Kenneth Larson (Veteran): "**I'm a Korean vet, the "Forgotten Ones" – but not now!!** I enjoyed it, especially the Korea memorial. Kinda "spooky," the way it was in the field. Also the Unknown Soldiers. Also my guardian, Pamela Mootz. Also the Doc – made it a memorable trip, even in a wheelchair."

Russ Stahnke (Veteran): "The **wonderful sendoff and reception received at CWA.** The surprise **mail call** on the flight home."

Fabian Stachowiak (Veteran): "I never realized that I could be **treated like a king** by so many kind and generous people. I didn't know how many times I had tears in my eyes. Thank you from the bottom of my heart."

Connie Heidemann (Guardian): "My dad was nervous about flying. We were toward the back of the plane, not the first to unload. My dad started to grump at me as we walked off the plane. **People were applauding as we walked into the DC airport.** Suddenly a 4- or 5-year-old **little boy** ran out of the crowd, **shook his hand and saluted.** My dad's face changed immediately. Dad got a tear in his eye (unusual for him). The rest of the day he smiled at everyone, shook hands, and enjoyed every minute."

After getting home, he did a Veterans Day presentation at his grandchildren's school in the Town of Maine. He told them about all of the vets and how wonderful his trip was. Thank you to everyone."

Brandon Weller (Guardian): "The amazing **reception at the airport**. Hearing the people cheer in support. It truly was a "Hero's Reception" for the veterans!! Way humbled."

Clark Albers (Guardian): "The **emotional reception when we returned to CWA**. Tears in Dad's eyes. The ease of movement from place to place – so well planned!"

Stacey Ulrich (Guardian): "It was an honor to be **my grandfather's (Theodore Ulrich) guardian**. He was a Marine in the Korean Conflict. It was an honor to be in the presence of so many of our country's heroes during our trip on Sep 24, 2012. There are so many memories from that day that I hold dear – as **my grandfather passed away two months after our trip**. Thank you for all you have done and do for our heroes."

Cecil Leverton (Veteran): "The whole trip was wonderful. We were all **treated like important people, people of value**. And all the people to greet us when we came back – is almost unbelievable. Thank you."

Harold J. Green (Veteran): "Arlington Cemetery and talking to an **elementary class** that was there that day. Enjoyed visit with other veterans and **mail call** on the plane. Wonderful memories."

Virginia Keyzer (Guardian): "Louie Arps as my veteran! He was so excited about the whole adventure and was **still buzzing** with excitement **after a 19-hour day** filled with activities – **at 93 years old**."