

HONOR FLIGHT

24 WWII veterans assembled at the Senior Center in Wickham Park at 4 AM on 9/25/2011. Along with our escorts and staff we boarded a bus for transport to the Orlando airport. We were escorted by four Brevard County Sheriff officers motorcycles with flashing blue lights and approximately 12 members of a Marine Corps motorcycle group.

From the entrance at the airport to the entrance at the gate to embark on our trip to Washington DC there were nothing but cheering and clapping of hands by the arriving and departing people in the airport. A bag breakfast was served on the plane. We landed at the Baltimore international Airport where we boarded a bus for Washington. The identical cheering and clapping of the passengers at the Baltimore airport was the same as we experience in Orlando.

After a fairly long bus trip we arrived at Arlington National Cemetery to witness the Changing of the Guard. I had witnessed this many years ago but the ritual, and the ceremony involved in the changing of the guard was still very impressive. There will be a video of the trip which includes the Changing of the Guard in about a month and I will share this with anyone who wants to see it.

Our next stop was supposed to be the Iwo Jima Memorial however the 50th reunion of the Peace Corps volunteers had this street blocked so we went to the WWII Memorial for our next stop. Any veteran of a service of any era should make this a must on the list of things to do in their lifetime. As with most Memorial's the WWII Memorial was extremely impressive with its Atlantic arch and Pacific arch, the Bias Reliefs around the entire perimeter of the Memorial, the various plaques on the walls and copies of speeches by historical figures engraved in marble or brass plaques blew my mind.

Reluctantly, we boarded the bus again for the scheduled Iwo Jima Memorial and got there with no problems. Any Marine who has not seen this Memorial should drop whatever they're doing and go there now. Even though I was Navy and served on submarines I think the Iwo Jima Memorial, as small as it is, was the most impressive one that we saw.

We again boarded the bus for the trip to the Baltimore airport and a hot dinner. Again, it Baltimore that passengers in the terminal welcomed us with clapping and cheering. We again boarded a Southwest airlines plane for the trip to Orlando and our return to our homes.

That basically covers roughly a 20 hour day for a group of old World War II veterans. There were two veterans on this trip that needed much more help than the rest. I was one of them and I had absolutely no difficulty in the entire trip. There are nurses, a doctor, and each veteran has a companion they are responsible for from start to finish. The HONOR FLIGHT organization is to be commended for a trouble

free, and well organized operation. I would recommend that any WWII veteran or any veteran who is terminal to contact the organization and schedule a trip for themselves. I have included some copies of the application and if more are needed they can be copied. I also have well over 200 photos taken during this trip and if anyone would like to see them let me know and I will burn a disc for them.

I also want to thank DAV 123 for their generous donation a year ago this month when I was first scheduled for the trip.

Leo A. Carter