

WORLD WAR 11 HONOR TOUR  
"THE GREATEST GENERATION"  
April 15 - 18, 2010

New London's Linkin Center held a send off program organized by the New London Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7641 and World War 11 Honor Tour Organization from Muscatine for 27 World War 11 veterans who were leaving Thursday, April 15 for Washington D.C. At the conclusion of the program, a bagpipe player played "Amazing Grace." The center was filled with family and friends who were there for support and to watch the send off. The veterans then went outside where they were greeted by the New London marching band. Several hundred students were holding signs along the street that was lined with American flags. Five privately owned planes swooped over the crowd in salute of our veterans.

The veterans, who came from southeast Iowa and beyond, along with 2 wives, 3 children, 7 attendants, Pam Ramer, our tour escort, and Dr. Don, boarded our charter bus at 3:00 p.m. for Chicago. The bus was escorted out of town by the New London and Des Moines County Sheriff, along with a motorcycle escort. The Sheriff Department departed at Gulfport, while the motorcycles went to Monmouth, Ill. They signed off and a group of 8 motorcyclists, with flags on their cycles, proceeded to escort the bus to east of the Galvia turn off on Interstate 80. They signed off and 5-6 cycles escorted us to Highway 39, which goes north to Rockford, where the escorts ended. We continued staying on Interstate 80. We had almost 3 hours of cycle escorts. We ate our evening meal at 6:30 in Morris at R Place Restaurant. We stayed at Sleep Inn at Chicago Midway.

Friday, April 16, 2010

We got up at 4:00 a.m. today. We left our hotel at 5:30 for Chicago Midway Airport. We had a police escort from the hotel to the airport. At the airport, military personnel pushed the wheelchair veterans through the airport to our gate lobby area. We flew out of Chicago on Southwest Airlines at 7:30 a.m. We reached an altitude of 37,000 feet and a speed of 500 M.P.H. At take off, we went through patches of clouds. When the altitude was reached, a window view showed a thick layer of clouds along with small patches of clearing.

While on the plane, the stewardess honored the veterans with a speech of acknowledgment. Upon landing 1 ½ hours later, the plane was sprayed with water as an honor and appreciation for the veterans. We got off the plane at Washington D.C. Dulles Airport. As the veterans entered the airport, adults and children lined the hall and gave thanks, clapped and shook their hands thanking them for their service. While waiting for a tour bus outside, we saw flags at half mask honoring the coal miners who were killed in their mine a few days ago.

We went to the SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTE OF NATIONAL AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM in Chantilly, Virginia. We had our lunch there. We saw many W.W. 11 airplanes including the Enola Gay, Lockheed SR - 71 Blackbird, the Space Shuttle Enterprise and Horter HO 111f (1933) - a plane with a cockpit you laid in.

Our next stop was at ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY. We saw the changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknowns. For the utmost respect for the performances, no gum chewing is allowed. The soldiers' precise and somber sentry represents the nation's respect for the thousands of slain American soldiers who remain unidentified.

We visited the Space Shuttle Challenger (1986), the Space Shuttle Columbia (2003) and

the Iran Rescue Mission Memorials. They are clustered together. We drove past the Arlington House and many other sections of the cemetery of 600 acres with 330,000 burials. About 20-30 funerals a day, Monday thru Friday occur, mostly W.W. 11 veterans. We went to the Iwo Jima Memorial. This monument captures the image of five Marines and a Navy Corpsman raising the American Flag. A group picture was taken here.

We ate a buffet evening meal in Arlington, Virginia and went to the Mariotts Tysons Corner Hotel in Vienna, Virginia.

Saturday, April 17, 2010

We got up at 6:00 a.m. We had a nice breakfast. Our first stop was the WORLD WAR 11 MEMORIAL. This 7.4 acre memorial was built to honor the 16 million who served in the Armed Forces of the U.S. during World War 11, the more than 400,000 who died and the millions who supported the war effort at home. It was dedicated on Memorial Day in 2004. A postage stamp was issued when this memorial was dedicated.

This memorial is a monument to the spirit, sacrifice and commitment of American people to the common defense of the nation and to the broader cause of peace and freedom from tyranny throughout the world. With a well defined purpose, a fund raising campaign brought in \$197 million in cash and pledges from private contributions. Only \$16 million was provided by the Federal Government. There are 24 bas-relief sculptures recalling scenes of America at war. The Freedom Wall's 4,000 gold stars commemorate the more than 400,000 Americans who gave their lives in the war. The pool of still water by the stars symbolizes death. Many other features were designed to make the memorial complete. Our veterans were greatly received by the visitors with thanks and appreciation of their service to our country. Our veterans, through a generous donation, gave flags on sticks to the visitors at this memorial. A group picture with Lt. Gen. Loren M. Reno, deputy chief of staff for Logistics, Installations and Mission Support at the U.S. Air Force Headquarters in Washington, D.C., completed a special visit to this memorial.

We visited the KOREAN WAR MONUMENT. It contained a field of nineteen oversized stainless steel life like soldiers in this site. It left an impressive image of a realistic memorial.

We saw the VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL. The Vietnam Wall is a simple design from black granite. Maya Lin, a Yale art student at the time, was the winner of the contest of over 1,400 entries. Since the memorial was put between the Jefferson and Lincoln Memorials, it could not interfere with them. Her unique design has the 58,000 soldiers listed by battle, starting at the top of the center of the wall, working toward the right as the battles of death occurred. It then starts at the left end of the wall and ends at the bottom of the center. Visitors leave items at the wall, which at the end of the day, are categorized and put in storage. Flowers are given to nursing homes. The Vietnam Memorial expanded to include a statue sculpted of 3 men of somber faces that serve as a realistic counterpart to the wall. In 1993, the Vietnam Women's Memorial was built to honor the female soldiers who aided in the war.

Our next stop was at the NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE MARINE CORPS in Triangle, Virginia. We had lunch at the Mess Hall. At the Leatherneck Gallery, they had life like scenes of battles across the Pacific Theater. One of the scenes was a Higgins boat landing on the beach at Iwo Jima. A wounded soldier was lying beside his M1 Garand rifle. This semiautomatic, rapid-firing, .30-caliber rifle was the standard infantry weapon of the U.S. Army in W.W. 11. This is the same rifle that Grandpa Jim Benedict carried in the war in Italy. They have several stations with exhibits on W.W. 11, Korean War, Vietnam War, 911 and many more. Future

expansion is in the planning now.

Our evening meal was with J. R.'s Stockyard. They served an exceptional meal of salmon, grilled chicken and steak. Many comments were heard that the steak was the best they have had in years. When we arrived at our hotel, we went to a banquet room where Pam Ramer, our tour escort from Muscatine, and her attendants passed out an American Flag to each veteran. They received 2 certificates. One certificate thanked them for their dedicated military service to their country that was signed by Senator Tom Harkin. Another certificate certified that the flag was flown over the United States Capitol.

Sunday, April 18, 2010

After breakfast we went to the WHITE HOUSE at the rear entry and walked through Lafayette Park. At the center of the park is a grand statue of President Andrew Jackson. It has cannons that Jackson acquired during the War of 1812. The veterans had a group picture taken at the fence of the White House. Visitors in the area also took pictures of the group.

Our next stop was at the UNITED STATES CAPITOL. Another group picture was taken on the lawn. We toured the WASHINGTON NAVY YARD. It had a very complete history of Navy Operations including Antarctica. In the water was the Display Ship Barry.

We left for Dulles Airport. We flew out about 3:00 p.m. After we got into the Chicago Midway Airport and toward the entrance of the terminal, a long line of greeters formed a 2 sided row giving us a pathway. They thanked the veterans for their service and shook their hands. There could have been 300 or more people there showing support. They exited through a group of honor bearing flag attendants. It was a very overwhelming experience.

We left Chicago with a police escort and about 18 motorcycles in procession. They took turns stopping traffic at the intersections until we reached 355 where they exited. We had a sack lunch on the bus made by the Muscatine American Legion Auxiliary. At the junction of the Carman Road and Highway 34, motorcyclists escorted us to New London where a police car escorted us into town. We were greeted by Jim Marshall, an organizer for the tour, as we stepped from the bus. Our families were glad to see our happy faces.

Patricia Neal

### Summary

I thought the World War 11 Honor Tour was so well put together that every veteran had an extremely happy trip. The crowds at New London, Chicago and Washington D.C. were breath taking and brought tears to my eyes. The World War 11 Memorial is very touching to every veteran that visits there. The Arlington Cemetery is unbelievable. The Korean and Vietnam Memorials were very interesting. Our food and lodging was superb. Many thanks to everyone that got this tour together and made the veterans proud and happy!

James Benedict

When the World War 11 Memorial became reality because of the \$197 million in private

donations to build it, the "Greatest Generation" was blessed. Sixty years later, the support and honor for our veterans is overwhelming. Donations to send a W.W.11 veteran on a free honor tour of Washington D.C., is beyond anything imaginable. Even young children are honored to share their time with our veterans. These tours are possible because of all the volunteer support and planning to make these trips possible. Visitors to Washington D.C. were excited to also get a picture of our veteran group photos and a snapshot of a veteran with their family. Memories forever!

Patricia Neal