

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment,

Last weekend, Fifty Two World War Two and Korean War Veterans, including three ladies, were flown to Washington D.C. to visit the National World War Two Memorial and The Korean War Veterans Memorial. This expense paid trip was organized by "North Coast Honor Flight" and funded by you, the wonderful citizens of Humboldt. The veterans were accompanied by twenty guardians who volunteered their time to look after and give assistance to the Honorees during the journey. Numerous people deserve thanks for making the trip an overwhelming success but I must limit the names in this short commentary. Four names need to be mentioned because of their complete dedication to this project. They are; Kathryn Burleson who founded the local Honor Flight program, Steve Justus who directed the trip, Mary Barber who worked day and night on the logistics and Greg Gardiner who tirelessly arranged and scheduled the many events that took place on the trip. When scheduling a trip such as this, long in distance and short on time, involving seventy two people, the leaders must be dedicated and able to react to unsuspected changes. The four names just mentioned have met the challenges over and above their call to duty. I must add that the guardians gave their all to insure that the Veteran's experience would be a memorable one. Some words used by the Veterans to describe the trip were "perfect", "fantastic" and "wonderful". Other memorials visited during the trip were: The U.S. Navy, The Vietnam Veterans, Lincoln Memorial, U.S. Air Force, The Marine Corps, Women in Military Service for America and the impressive Changing of the Guard at the Tomb of the Unknowns which included the receiving of a memorial wreath from North Coast Honor Flight. In addition there were dinners hosted by Elks clubs in Woodland, California and in Virginia. The Veterans were met with standing ovations from the public and by avenues of flags, held by members of the "Patriot Guard Riders" at airports in Sacramento, Denver and Virginia's Dulles airport plus a next morning motor cycle escort to D.C. Assistance, direction and sweet treats were provided at the airports by local "Honor Flight" organizations. Visitors to the monuments approached veterans and personally thanked them for their service. On the flight home, each veteran was given a large envelope labeled "Letters from Home". Inside were letters of thanks from local school children plus personal letters from the veteran's family members. The airplane was quiet and many a silent tear rolled down a weathered cheek. On the way home, members of the Willits American Legion offered food and drink for those that could stop. The ultimate was the reception through the avenue of American flags at Adorni Center with friends and family waiting. How do I know this? I was one of the veterans. I want to thank everyone who has been involved in making this such an overwhelming experience. God Bless all of you.

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