



## **History**

In the summer of 2009, Grant Thompson of Mooresville, Indiana, arranged a flight for his wife's Great Uncle Marvin, a WWII veteran and survivor of the Battle of the Bulge to see the newly constructed World War II Memorial. It was a life-changing event for the Thompson family, and Grant and his wife Tammy decided that this experience must be shared with as many Indiana based veterans as possible. Over the next year they searched for other Veterans to share this experience but sadly they are getting hard to find.

Starting in a very similar, small way the Honor Flight Network was founded in 2005 by a doctor from Ohio. The first flight consisted of six small planes carrying 12 Veterans to DC. At the end of the 2011 flying season, the network includes 114 hubs across the country and has flown over 85,000 Veterans to DC at no charge to them. Indy Honor Flight is proud to be one of the newest hubs in this wonderful organization.

After putting my name on a waiting list, I receiving a phone call that I was to be going in the September flight. I received these “marching orders”.



*Honoring the brave men & women who fought for our freedom.*

## Veterans' Marching Orders

We are honored that you are joining us on **Monday, September 10, 2012** for your Honor Flight! This is your day to celebrate with your fellow Veterans!

We will have a **“Meet and Greet” Sunday, September 9<sup>th</sup>** from 2 to 5pm (dinner at 4:00pm) at the Indiana National Guard 38<sup>th</sup> Division Armory located just off of I-70 and Holt at 3912 West Minnesota Street. You may bring a guest to this event.

**Then, on Monday, Sept. 10<sup>th</sup> you are due back at the Armory at 5:30am.** Volunteers will be stationed outside with wheelchairs if needed to help you to the check-in area. You will receive an Indy Honor Flight shirt to wear on the trip. The only Veterans who do not have to wear this shirt are those wearing military uniforms.

Please dress comfortably as this will be a long day. Your Guardian should be in touch a day or two prior and have an idea on the weather in the area. Neither you nor your guardian can check luggage. We will provide you with a small bag to hold personal items.

Here is a list of items that you should bring with you for your Honor Flight:

- **A valid, Government ID card is required (Driver's License, State ID, or Passport) – You will not be able to get on the plane without it!**
- Medications and testing supplies for 2 days (just to be safe) insulin, needles, etc.!!
- Sunglasses, a hat or cap, comfortable shoes and perhaps a rain jacket.
- Something to show that you served in WWII, such as your old uniform (or a replica), your old unit insignia, or a ball cap that identifies you as a WWII Veteran
- Camera - in order to take lots of photos, which can later be shared for all to enjoy.

**Please do not bring any of the following:**

- Pocket or Swiss Army knives, lighters, nail clippers, pocket change, or money.

It was a beautiful Sunday afternoon when Paul and I arrived at the 38<sup>th</sup> Infantry National Guard Armory, on West Minnesota Street, Indianapolis.



It was about 2:15 when we gathered for an event to help all us vets get acquainted. Excitement was building, and to my delight Paige Wages met us at the end of the concrete walkway leading inside as we arrived. Paige was to be my chaperone.

We walked in to a large room full of people, and formed a line in front of a table where volunteers gave us our bus and team assignment. They gave us a bag of items including one of those throw away cameras to take on the trip, which was nice, along with our INDY HONOR FLIGHT t-shirts.



Paul and I found a table and began getting acquainted with others. Volunteers began milling around and introducing themselves, with Paige at my side. She is a full time member of the Guard and stationed there.



I enjoyed talking to several vets; most were wearing WWII type hats and that made it easy to strike up a conversation. One volunteer came by and said that she had “done her homework” and knew I had been on an Army newspaper in the service, and was interested in hearing more about it. She was an RN and had volunteered her services for our tour. I recognized four men whom I knew from the WWII Military Roundtable. Lots of pictures and videos were being taken among the happy visitors.

They had a nice ceremony which highlighted a Gold Star display and included songs sang by one of the Guardsmen, for all branches of the service. Around four they served us a meal, and we spent the rest of the time of mixing and gayety, before we left around five.



Gold Star Mothers Display



The Empty Chair



Organizer Grant Thompson addressed his guests.

The next morning, Monday the 10<sup>th</sup> of September, my son Paul drove me there about 5:30 at the Armory as requested. Paige was soon at my side making sure I was attended to. She even brought me a plate of scrambled eggs for my breakfast knowing that the other food was questionable for my diet.

It was soon daybreak and we loaded on busses to the Indianapolis Airport. I made the mistake of not taking a wheelchair and was exhausted by the time I had hiked to the plane. We went through security rather easily.

They had a chartered plane for us and as such had to wait awhile before taking off. When we were airborne the crowd cheered. We were a happy expectant group off on a very nice excursion to DC. I enjoyed looking out the window at the clouds below us, as we were at about 35,000 feet.



In a little over an hour we landed at the Baltimore-Washington Airport, about 40 miles from DC. A retired Army General met us as we exited the plane, as well as airline hosts in the terminal.



Just inside the terminal there were four Navy Officers who greeted us and thanked us for our service. That was unexpected and very special.

The winding trip in the tour bus to DC was nice. Sitting up high it was nice seeing how people traveled on highways in that area and watching the green scenery pass before our eyes.

It was about noon when we arrived at the memorial and I called my wife Jeane to let her and Paul know that I was there safely.



From that time on Paige pushed me in a wheelchair, when with few exceptions I gave her a break. My age was telling on me. It was perfect weather there in DC with a blue sky with a few puffy clouds drifting by. Paige and I went to a few spots and took several pictures. Others had fanned out and were all having a great and slow paced visit. Many had other vets pictures taken with each other. Other visitors at these monuments mingled with us and we enjoyed their company too. Paige was keeping her eyes on me. We were having a great time.

Another chaperone came up to me and said he had visited my Deadeye website that I had recommended at the meeting on Sunday.

This classic WWII monument and tribute to us vets is about 100 yards wide, with flowing pools of waters and massive columns with large brass wreaths on both sides. It was classic display of granite architecture four years in the making.

We gathered on the plaza for a group picture.



Walden, Jessen and I are all getting ready for them.

They served lunch on the bus and I had two sandwiches I had stashed; having made them ahead of time at home for the occasion,

As it should be imagined it was a real logistic issue dealing with seventy nine vets, their chaperones and all those wheelchairs. But they had teams of energetic volunteers who had assignments, and although time consuming went very well. Of course all of us old codgers were patient.

We boarded the busses and made other stops at the Korean Monument and Viet Nam wall. We arrived at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in time for the changing of the guard; which was one of the highlights.

We were pushed into place at the side and away from the tomb to watch it all happen, making sure that the vets were in front and would have a good view. We were all respectfully quiet and spoke only in whispers. A spiffy army soldier in his dress blues was walking a slow pace with rifle at “right shoulder”, making an exact 180 degree turn at the end, pausing first for the mandatory twenty-one seconds.

At the appointed time the next soldier appeared at the opposite end of the runway and began pacing towards the other; meeting in the center. Each then executed mirror movements of 90 degrees, clicking their heels with both ending facing the tomb. The ceremony was replete with the strict and proper and extensive examination of the rifle and bayonet.

Appearing from the opposite side of the plaza were the members of the Indy Honor Flight being escorted to present the wreath. Leading was my good friend Master Sergeant Stanley Pelozza, 94 years old and in full uniform. The soldiers respectfully placed the wreath at the tomb and our members stood behind them. Sergeant Pelozza was a little wobbly and had trouble standing up with his cane. Chaperones viewed the ceremony from stairs directly across.



Looking towards soldier



Chaperones on stairs.



Vets watching ceremony



Here is another view



Rifle exam



Veterans being escorted



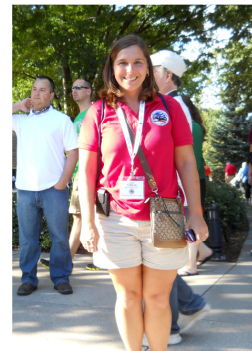
Carrying the wreath



Indy Honor Flight wreath



Three lady Veterans



RN Judith Velikan



Several miscellaneous pictures follow.



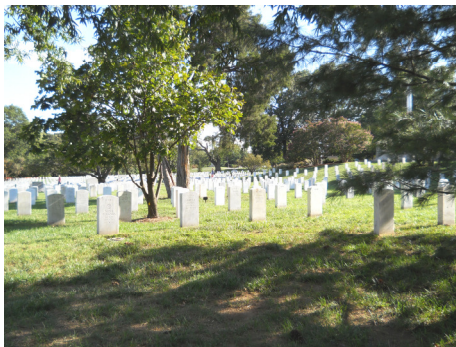
The great Korean Monument Pictures



Buddy Archer and me



taking a shot



Passing view through Arlington



More of Arlington



A Viet Nam sculpture



Empty Boots and cap at Viet Nam Wall

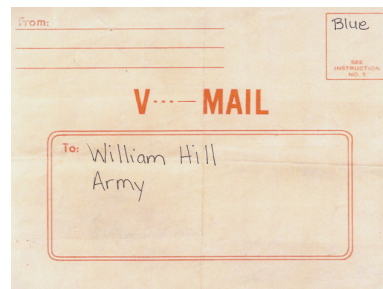
It was too soon to leave but time was up. Everyone who had to use facilities was advised, and we slowly loaded up on the busses. They handed us our evening box meals. Mine was nicely gluten-free by request. With Paige by my side we were soon traveling back to the Baltimore-Washington Airport wending our way through the nice summer foliage that lined the highways.

Paige had been pushing me a lot in the wheel chair over these last hours, never wavering, and graciously pushed me anywhere I wanted to go. I asked her if she had ever considered what she would be doing sixty years from now, as that was about the differences in our ages.

We shared the trip with laughs. When I talked to Jeane on the phone I suddenly handed it to Paige to talk. It was awkward for her, but she managed. We exchanged ideas of what she could have said to Jeane then, and the best one was: “You say you have been married to him how long?”

We were a chartered flight and had to wait our turn on the tarmac. I had a window seat with Paige on my left and watched jet after jet whiz by coming in on the next lane over, before ours turned and made takeoff. The crowd cheered our swift ascent and we flew back home to Indianapolis.

One of the chaperones appeared in front of us and sang a timely song, and hostesses traveled down the aisle and brought us drinks and snacks. We were asked what we would like most from home when we were away, and to our surprise and delight they had mail for us from home. Believe that? They called out our names and handed back our packets of letters.



I opened my pack and happily found at least sixty five cards and letters of well wishes from my close relatives, family friends, and children expressing their personal feelings and our country’s gratitude. I opened them one by one and shared them with Paige sitting on my left. I read hers out loud and slowly turned to her and squeezed her hand.

I was touched by the effort, planning and volunteers it took to pull this off. There were hundreds of people in central Indiana writing personal letters and passing them on to each veteran on this trip; which is truly amazing.

We were soon in the Indianapolis airport and loaded on the busses back to the National Guard Armory. It was about 11:00 pm when we arrived. I was in the last bus; the blue group, and noticed a lot of cars in the parking lot, and was really delighted at what came next.

Rows of people who had waited for over an hour were on each side of the walkway greeted us with smiles, cheers and large American flags. I went over and shook one man's hand that had a Coast Guard flag and thanked him, and to "remember the deadeyes" while pointing to my hat.

They handed my poster size picture to Paige who followed me in, and I was instructed to wait my turn. I walked forward among cheers and smiles of hundreds of people waving flags while Paige held up my picture in back. Paul took a video of the activities, and I thanked Paige and we soon left.



Paige, Jeane and me



2'3' poster



Paige at Armory

The American people do appreciate its veterans and especially those of us in the “Greatest Generation.” Of all the recent wars and engagements it is true that it was the 16,000,000 members of the armed forces in WWII that preserved freedom for our country, from the worst sort of consequences that we could have endured.

Make no mistake, we were called to duty and responded; yes we did serve, but not for the glory. We have graciously accepted any honors extended; not feeling as heroes in any respect, and always knowing and feeling that the only true heroes were the ones who never made it back. Look at the picture in the beginning of this narrative at the memorial to those in the Gold Star display; also that sad empty chair. They tell it all.

\*\*\*\*

I felt this outpouring of honor and respect deserved an answer. So the following morning I proceeded to answer all those letters and cards with my personal thanks; I was full of gratitude. It was a reciprocal sort of thing that welled within me.

I made a quick one page synopsis of my experience and sent every person an email of my gratitude and to others who would value it. I sent personal notes of thanks for each one of those I had addresses.

From those letters and emails came back responses. I have kept all those and the cards, letters and emails and will put them in a large scrapbook along with this narrative for others to see at their leisure.

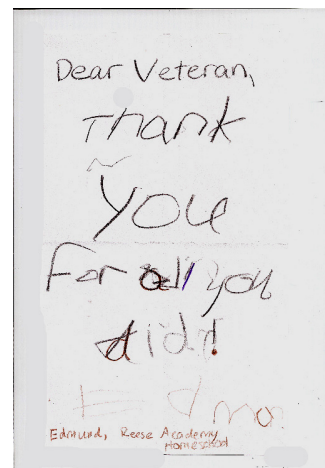
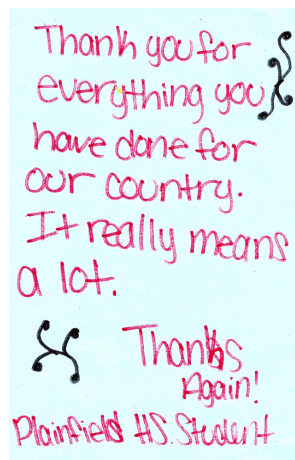
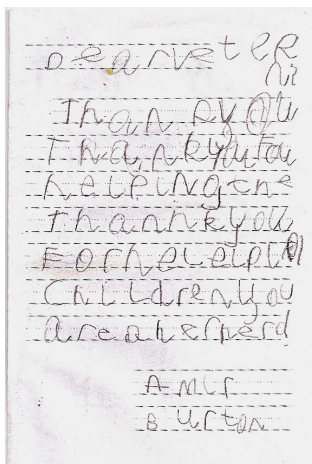
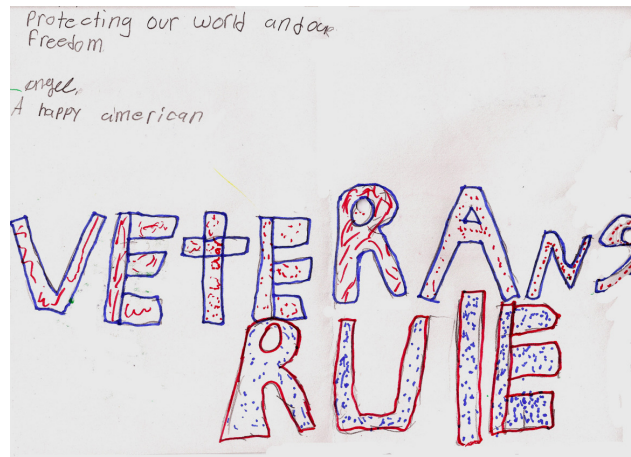
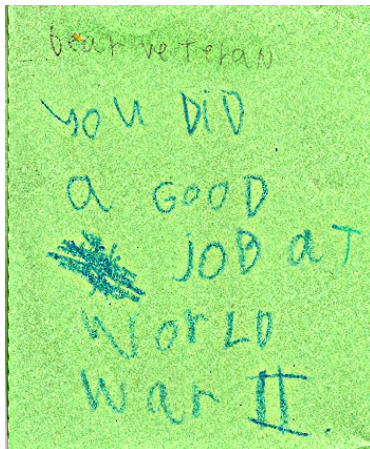
I make note about the man with the flag who I met on the way into the Armory. He responded with an email saying he had visited my website and then knew why he should ‘remember the Deadeyes’. As it turns out that he, Corey Davis, was there with a lot of his buddies from the local Patriot Guard Riders group who lined the entrance that evening.

Here are two more pictures of interest taken in DC.



WWII Icon Kilroy carved in stone. WWII Sailor Kissing on Times Square

I would like to share with you some of the beautiful cards I received from the children in central Indiana





*Honoring the brave men & women who fought for our freedom.*

## Mission Accomplished!

It's been almost a month since our flight to Washington DC and what an incredible trip we had! The phone calls and letters keep coming in and let me be the first to tell you that I am humbled beyond words to have simply been a part of this program. I did not act alone, there were many people who helped to make this happen and of course none of it would have been possible were it not for God's will, presence and direction.

The trip went so well and so many have now heard of it that we are currently working on IHF2. The veteran applications as well as volunteers have been pouring in since our return! Many of you have sent donations in and rest assured that they will go directly toward the next flight, one of many we plan to take in 2013!

You can expect a small package from us within the next 3-4 weeks with a couple more keepsakes from your day at our Nation's Capital including a contact list of those on the trip. If you know of any other Vets who should make this trip... send them my way!

It was my honor to spend the day with our countries greatest asset, the American Veteran.

Yours in service,

Grant Thompson,

Director, Indy Honor Flight

The World War II Memorial honors the service of sixteen million members of the Armed Forces of the United States of America, the support of countless millions on the home front, and the ultimate sacrifice of 405,399 Americans. On May 29, 2004, a four-day "grand reunion" of veterans on the National Mall culminated in the dedication of this tribute to the legacy of "The Greatest Generation."

Granite, bronze, and water elements harmoniously blend with the lawns, trees, and shrubbery of the surrounding landscape. Here, the spirit of the L'Enfant Plan for the City of Washington lives on through successful integration of a memorial into the openness of the National Mall. Great vistas endure toward the Washington Monument, Thomas Jefferson Memorial, and Lincoln Memorial.

The twenty-four bronze bas-relief panels that flank the Ceremonial Entrance offer glimpses into the human experience at home and at war. They breathe new life into familiar black and white photographs or newsreels—especially, when a visiting veteran describes one of the scenes. The memorial also features areas where veterans' recollections come flooding back, triggered by the sight of dozens of battle names and military campaign designations carved into stone. A wall of 4,048 Gold Stars silently pays solemn tribute to the sacrifice of more than 405,000 American lives.

Fifty-six granite columns, split between two half-circles framing the rebuilt Rainbow Pool with its celebratory fountains, symbolize the unprecedented wartime unity among the forty-eight states, seven federal territories, and the District of Columbia. Bronze ropes tie the columns together, while bronze oak and wheat wreaths respectively represent the nation's industrial and agricultural strengths. Two 43-foot tall pavilions proclaim American victory on the Atlantic and Pacific fronts—on land, at sea, and in the air. Several hidden treasures appear as well, such as the famous "Kilroy was here" graffiti familiar to every veteran of the Second World War.

Visitors to the memorial are encouraged to search The World War II Registry, a computerized database honoring Americans who helped win the war, either overseas or on the home front. The National Park Service staff offers assistance to those wishing to update the list with additional names or information.

The National Park Service offers daily tours of the memorial every hour on the hour, from 10:00 a.m. until 11:00 p.m. In addition, Park Rangers offer several extended, in-depth walking and bicycle tours that include the World War II Memorial. The memorial is open daily from 9:00 a.m. until 11:45 p.m.; it is closed on December 25 and for annual events surrounding the National Independence Day Celebration.

The WWII Memorial can be found at: <http://www.nps.gov/nwwm/index.htm>

The Indy Honor Flight can be found at: <http://indyhonorflight.org/>.

The Indiana National Guard can be found at <http://www.in.ng.mil/>.

The Patriot Guard Riders can be found at: <http://www.inpatriotguard.org/>.

The 96<sup>th</sup> Division Deadeyes can be found at: [www.rememberthedeadeyes.com](http://www.rememberthedeadeyes.com).

By William R Hill, WWII Vet with the Deadeyes. [wrjhill@comcast.net](mailto:wrjhill@comcast.net)

# Scrapbook Cover





