

Volusia Honor Air

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Flight was an unforgettable gift for WWII vets

On Sept. 25, Volusia Honor Air flew more than 100 World War II veterans from Daytona Beach International Airport to Washington D.C. to view the World War II Memorial and other memorials in the city. This trip was sponsored and paid for by the businessmen and women of Volusia County, who devoted their time and money to say "thank you" to the aging World War II veterans. This trip was completely free to the men and women veterans on the trip. The veterans who went on this flight were from all theaters of the war, and helped put an end to one of the most devastating periods in modern history. Some took part in the D-Day invasion of Normandy as well as the battles in the Pacific.

I was honored to be selected as one of the veterans to go on this trip. Each veteran was assigned a chaperone to accompany them, usually one chaperone for each two veterans. When we departed Daytona Beach early Saturday morning, we were greeted at the airport by well-wishers, fed a wonderful breakfast, given an honor salute by law enforcement officers as well as a water-cannon salute by the airport fire department as our plane was taxiing out for takeoff.

Upon arriving in Washington, we boarded four buses and were given a police escort everywhere we went in Washington. After viewing the World War II memorial, the veterans were treated to lunch at the Library of Congress, hosted by U.S. Rep. Suzanne Kosmas and U.S. Rep. John Mica.

When we entered the terminal at Reagan National Airport in Washington for our trip home, we were again greeted by well-wishers. At our departure gate, loud band music from the 1940s played and the veterans were encouraged to jitter-bug to the music by the well-wishers. Many of us did, and I was one of them. Each chaperone assigned to a veteran contacted a family member and suggested they write a short note of thanks to the veterans for their service. The notes were collected and delivered to each of the veterans on their flight home. I received letters from my family as well as letters from schoolchildren, thanking me for my service.

Never in my entire life have I ever felt as honored, and I owe it all to the men and women of Volusia Honor Air. I proudly salute these people for a job well done.

WILLIAM DREWES

Port Orange



Rex Ames, left, who served in the Army in the Pacific, and Dr. Paul Lack, also an Army veteran, prepare to lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns in Washington, D.C., Saturday, assisted by one of the Tomb's ceremonial guards.