

The Honor Flight Program

BY: DALE LEMBKE

I do my fair share of volunteer work and I have to tell you this is the single most gratifying work I've been involved in. To see literally hundreds of people at a time greet and thank these World War II Vets is incredible, very moving. Mostly in their late 80's or early 90's, these Veterans "touch" a whole lot of people in a very positive and significant way.

The idea is to transport America's WWII Veterans to Washington, D.C. to visit those memorials dedicated to honor their service and sacrifices

People need to remember these Men and Women and perhaps learn from the past. Several are still very active, but you have to keep in mind that at their age many of them don't do very much anymore and this is a huge deal for them. It's not too far off the mark to say that many of our elderly (generally) are shelved and all but forgotten in many cases. They don't get a lot of visitors and hardly ever travel. This is their time to shine. Believe me they are very thankful and respectful for this opportunity.



We had an incredible time and laughed so much. There were lots of tears, too. I still keep in touch with a few of them.

The national website is honorflight.org and I encourage you to view it to get a better understanding of this amazing program designed to transport our WWII Vets to Washington D.C. and be honored for their service. We now have 5 "hubs" in Oregon, so if you know of a WWII Vet or would like to volunteer as a guide, please go to honorflighttooregon.org

for more info. In 2011 there were over 18,000 veterans from around the US that made the trip. The local Men's Axillary VFW donated directly to the Oregon Chapter, and you can do the same. It's a great cause.

In our group there were 26 WWII veterans, of which only two were women, all from Oregon. The volunteers numbered about one for every two veterans to assist in their travel needs. We were in Washington DC for three days touring the memorials from a chartered bus. The volunteers pay for their own airfare, but the hotel rooms are provided as are the meals. I believe Delta and Southwest Airlines donate/coordinate the air travel for the veterans.

If you ever get the chance to be a part of this effort I highly recommend it. I am thinking of going again in June as a volunteer helper.



Dale Lembke is a Tualatin resident and volunteers in many local organizations including the Men's Auxiliary VFW and coordinates the annual Regatta Run each fall to honor his late son by generating funds to donate to the Corporal Matthew Lembke Scholarship.



Staff Sgt. Leroy Petry, US Army – Congressional Medal of Honor Recipient (had recently received this honor) greeting the vets



Returning home at Portland International Airport.



Arlington National Cemetery



Representative from Congressman Greg Walden's office recognizing their efforts and presenting a plaque to the group.



PDX airport – welcome home to the vets. Spraying the incoming plane. I've never seen this before. It's a holdover from a long time ago.