

WAR AND REMEMBRANCE

“Yesterday when we were young” as the song goes” must have crossed our minds as we gathered at the Fort Whiting Armory in Mobile, Alabama on Saturday, the 29th of August for our orientation pertaining to the Honor Flight (South Alabama)trip scheduled for the 16th of September to Washington D.C. We are the second group honored by the Mobile Area Veterans Day Commission. The purpose: to thank us for our WWII service. Men and women veterans remembered.

Under the guise of Dr. Barry Lee Booth, Guardian/Veteran Director and his exceptional team we were photographed, given a ditty bag full of goodies, camera, a small flag, notepad, kleenex, a soft, patriotic colored pillow, among other items. A WWII cap depicting representative ribbons, and a T-shirt emblazoned with the Honor Flight logo, and a written reminder: “If you can read this in English, then thank a WWII Veteran before its too late”. And we were told to wear our decorations.

A vital part of the orientation was meeting our guardians who will accompany us, provide assistance in many different ways. An excellent presentation told us our itinerary which emphasized visiting the WWII Memorial (the Jewel of the Mall), and other memorials (Lincoln, Korea and Vietnam and the Iwo Jima monument of those raising the flag on Mt. Suribachi.).

Of the sixteen million who served in WWII some 400,000 died; we see the 4000 sculpted stars each depicting 100 Americans killed in combat. Part of our gifts was the pictorial beauty of the WWII Memorial in book form with an introduction by Senator Bob Dole, wounded in Italy as an infantry lieutenant, and Chairman of the Memorial program.

Then to Arlington Cemetary where the fallen lie in repose but the rituals go on: the laying of a wreath, the changing of the guard at the Tombs of Unknown. ...performed by the Army’s Third Infantry Regiment.

To this writer it is a homecoming for me as I served with the 3rd Infantry Regiment in 1955/6 and recall the many full-honor and special funerals under our responsibility. It was the time when the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier became Tombs to honor those of our many wars. Army's oldest regiment dates its service to the Revolutionary War.

Recently, Dr Booth reminded of the climax of the long day when we return to Mobile Regional Airport, approximately 7:00 p.m. for a short celebration and parade. The public has been invited to attend.

I know I speak for all of us when we thank those who have prepared us for this trip and this honor, and the chance to salute those who have fallen and remember with pride our service and the opportunity to again humbly attest to duty, honor and country.

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