

For Honor, For Country: Northville Marine Mom's Musings

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Following deployment from USMC Camp LeJeune, Jacksonville, NC, the 2nd Combat Logistics Battalion flew to Bangor, Maine. Bangor is not a tourist resort. But for military personnel, it's the closest thing to home. Smiling people are cheering as they deplane, waiting with hugs and handshakes. None of the Bangor cheering squad knows any of the passengers.

Young, old, boy and girl scouts, veterans, grandparents, housewives and business men line the walls of the Bangor Airport. Military units in transit from bases all over the world stop in Bangor. They are each greeted enthusiastically with cell phones, computers, hot food and fresh baked goods.

The Bangor Airport website says, "Bangor International Airport is our nation's main departure and arrival point for troops serving our country around the world. Troops are given heart-felt welcomes and goodbyes at Bangor, by a steadfast group of Troop Greeters and others. The "original" Troop Greeters began greeting the troops returning from Operation Desert Storm. The Troop Greeters at the Bangor International Airport come in at all hours of the day or night to welcome soldiers home from Iraq and Afghanistan." For Honor.

If you visit www.themaintroopgreeters.org, there are letters from soldiers and marines. Master Sgt. D. Carmen, United States Division-North, Public Affairs wrote, "To the wonderful people in Maine who greeted these fabulous soldiers - thank you so very much. We are extremely proud of our son and all of our soldiers. It's fabulous to know there are great people in Maine that 'go the extra mile' for our soldiers, too. Thank you again! God Bless You All!"

Natalie R, a military wife, wrote, "My husband passed through Maine just today, Feb. 19, 2011, on his way to Afghanistan. When he called me from Maine, although it was a very short chat, he sounded happy. I'm sure I have you to thank! I've seen & heard about the love & care you give to our troops coming back & going. Wow, THANK YOU SO MUCH! Thank you again & may God continue to bless you as you do His work to love our beloved troops. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

My new screen saver came from www.ourstopinmaine.smugmug.com. The 35,500 people of Bangor make sure to post a picture of every armed forces person they greet. Their website says, "Day or night, rain or shine, it is our commitment to welcome each troop home from war and give a proper send off to each of the young men and women heading overseas. We accomplish this by being here to offer free cell phones to call a loved one, a snack to keep them going, and handshakes to let them know we care.

Since we began greeting flights in May of 2003, the Maine Troop Greeters have greeted over 5600 flights with more than 1,156,000 service members and 288 military dogs. And it is our pledge that as long as there are U.S. armed forces serving overseas we will be here to greet them." For Country.

An anonymous writer said, "First, it's not quite right to make a female Lieutenant Colonel cry in public!! :) Your greeters were so amazing and genuine and they touched each and every one of us coming off that plane."

My nephew, USMC Corporal Jacob House, Ret. of Midland, Michigan, said, "It was amazing, it was such a pleasant surprise, they were applauding and cheering. It was very emotional." February 5, 2009, when Jake stopped in Maine, after 14 travel hours returning from Iraq, his parents were ecstatic to see his photo.

The Bangor Troop Greeters say, "To all our troops and their families; As a measure of our appreciation of your sacrifices we are honored to provide pictures from Bangor International Airport (BIA). We are a 'Nana and Gramp' operation assisted by a small, dedicated group of volunteers, limited in what we are able to do."

I beg to differ. What they did for my family when they greeted my son, Joe, is indescribable. The pictures they have given me will forever be a part of our lives. Hearing his voice, before he left the country, priceless. For Honor. For Country - I thank you.