

"Writing the truth
as I see it;
trying not to
offend
those who will
disagree."

The truth as I see it™

Idaho Common Sense™



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Thank you Chance Phelps

June 1, 2009

Are we too complacent, not realizing the price of our freedom? I watched a movie about the cost of this freedom.

In fact, I watched the movie four times, each time with tears. The movie is a simple look at the price of our freedom, a simple reminder of what we have, a simple thank you.

A world away, a day in Iraq, a suicide vehicle, a convoy attacked, a long drive in the middle of the night, a knock on the door, and an "I'm sorry to inform you."

A Marine is packed in ice for the trip home, draped with the American flag while stateside, a Marine colonel sits quietly in the dark, reading the day's reports. The colonel sees his family every night. He has been at war, but not this war. He should have been there. He is a Marine. But, what can he do? He volunteers to escort the young Marine private home to his family.

A Marine is coming home. A team prepares the Marine, gently cleansing him, saying thank you with their care. A sergeant presents the Marine to the colonel saying, "It's been my privilege to care for him, Sir." He is ready for the trip home.

The young man who drives the colonel and his Marine to the airport says he volunteered for these trips because "he just wanted to do something" to help.

At the airport, the Marine is unloaded from the hearse, the colonel offering one of the many slow, perfect salutes showing respect to the Marine. The ticket agent understands the colonel's mission, upgrading him to first class, and thanking him for his service. Another slow, perfect salute when the Marine is loaded on the plane with baggage handlers, hats over their hearts, offering their respect. The flight attendant also understands, gently and tearfully placing a cross in the colonel's hand, saying "I want you to have this."

They have an overnight layover at an airport in the Midwest with a hotel room awaiting the colonel; but this is his Marine, his responsibility. He stays with his Marine, sleeping in a chair in the airport storage hanger.

The next day he continues the journey, the plane's captain asking the passengers to honor the Marine by remaining seated while the colonel leaves the plane. With tears in their eyes, passengers silently watch the colonel yet again offer the slow, perfect salute as the Marine is unloaded from the plane.

Now, the long drive through the Wyoming countryside from the airport to the Marine's hometown. As they travel, several cars pass them and realize the honor of what is happening. A caravan of cars forms with headlights on, escorting the escort and his Marine.

Arriving at the church, the colonel asks to check his Marine's uniform. He is gently reminded the Marine will not be viewed because of his injuries. The colonel understands, but insists on seeing his Marine to make sure he is "squared away."

Tears of pride run down the colonel's face as he is presented with a Marine in uniform; every seam ironed, every pleat perfect, every medal in order, his brass belt buckle polished to a high sheen. The Marine is "squared away." Those preparing the body knew he would not be viewed, yet he was perfect -- the final honor, the final show of respect, the final thank you for our freedom.

The escort completed his mission. He brought the Marine home. He brought the boy home. He brought the son home. The colonel and the private touched the lives of the people they encountered on their journey. Those people are a bit more appreciative of their freedom and more understanding of the price of that freedom.

Maybe each of us needs the privilege of being an escort, allowed the honor of "Taking Chance" home. Thank you Chance Phelps and all the Chance Phelps who died for us, and all the Chance Phelps who live in harm's way for us. They are our freedom.