COMPLETED MISSION REPORT

16 OCTOBER 2021

13 This service for Roy Joseph Settlemier while fairly straight forward was filled with moments to negotiate the road on. The event would be physically 6 blocks from Guy Rathbun Post 25, at Cowlitz Way Baptist Church, also in Kelso. The very reason the Post was the perfect place to gather before arrival at the church site. The church site is one of the better advantage spots to see an arriving Rolling Honor Guard. Arriving at the church the Road Captain Steve "Whacko" West met with all parties that would be involved. Meeting with the very accommodating Marine Corps Honor Guard first we laid out all of their duties. They seemed to be a bit taken by the fact that we had brought rifles. I kind of got the background story, as there for some reason been a bit of a mix up. I think the funeral home thought because Roy's DD-214 was not in hand there was to be no HONORS. I had proof perfect our HERO was a solid Marine with probably accolades to further enhance his time in the United States Marine Corps. Roy was a reservist however he was a Marine through and through. The HERO arrived with a four bike Rolling Honor Guard on the lead bike from the funeral home with several other vehicles in tow. I had the Rolling Honor Guard pull right in front of the church. The rest all parked and kept stirring around outside, unlike most times with a church or chapel settings, everyone usually moves inside the building. I think the actual firing of no rifles being fired must have spread to the family fairly quick. Now that we had included the rifles , as usual on our part every time, the friends and family chose to stay outside and watch the pageantry of just that. My first time in over 15 years of this happening to me. The Road Captain went into an explanation to all of them of what was going to happen. I also explained the symbolic reason for the different elements of what was about to happen. To include the rifles lofting prayers into the Heavens from every person that wanted their prayers and the prayers of others launched. I explained when all the elements were presented that Roy himself would be released from his full military obligation to his country by his fellow Veterans present to see him off to them for FELLOWSHIP and visitation. No one more knows the fellowship moments in a church than a well natured family that attends a Baptist Church. The Marine Corps Honor Guard was readied to start as many of the family members and friends gathered outside to witness the features of Military Honors that were about to literally explode in their faces. The flag presentation comes first, two Marines were given the sign to start and they started to unfold the flag. As soon as it popped open to a 45-degree tabletop tilt, Steve "Whacko" West gave the order to the rifle commander; "Commander of the Rifle Team you may present your HONORS" The Road Captain saluted the Rifle Team Commander, in turn the Rifle Team Commander lifted his Marine Corps Sabre to the hilt and eyes position and returned the salute with Sabre raised high. Salutes dropped slowly and deliberately. Gunnery Sergeant Bill Talley started with his commands to get the three volleys off in an erythematic manner. It was absolutely flawless as the crowd looked on. Donna Settlemier did not want to miss a thing. Her eyes were filled with tears when she arrived earlier. Her tears as the many others started to flow with the HONORS in full motion and presentation. The ceremony of bringing she and the family members from the funeral home had set the stage for the triumphant send off, and thus tears were shared by many. It is one of the most solemn moments and heartfelt moments in anyone's life to witness the pomp and ceremony that is involved and undertaken for Full Military Honors. I had asked the flag HONORS Marines to hold that flag until I could escort Donna Settlemier back to her seat, to remain open until I returned her in my arm back to her front row seat to see them fold the flag for her. These guys are the best of the best. I could have not have been prouder of their actions to make every accommodation for this widow of a Marine. It really tugged at my heart as I had Donna in escort on my arm back to her seat. What an HONOR. I fought back the tears as I returned to the back of the church and stood next to "Gunny". A 1ST MARDIV ASSOCIATION representative was first with presentations to the widow of our HERO after the flag was presented. He was very deliberate in every move he made. Gunnery Sergeant Talley was next with the rounds spent and his presentation. He too was very deliberate in everything he did. I (Steve "Whacko" West) was next with our presentation coin. I explained that the coin had been with me for some time and many Veterans had a chance to touch and hold the coin and pass their good thoughts and best wishes through prayer into this coin. I further explained that I would or could not control, or did I want to, but this coin had great power. Even though it is an inanimate object God allowed those good thoughts and prayers to reside within this coin. I do not control what God does and that I controlled nothing when it came to things like this, even if I could. "I let God flow through this coin and our prayers and good thoughts are strong in this coin. If you are having a moment of loss, remember to go grab that coin and hang on tight and you will feel the power of prayer cast into it for you and your family and friends...it is there, we are there in spirit with you". Donna was shaking her head up and down in agreement. That coin is the seal of God on this family for the moment and in the future. I told her Godspeed and God Bless but she wanted that coin to go to her oldest son who was sitting in the front row also. It was a spirit filled moment of HONOR to do just that. Now I was starting to well up as I stood and presented the coin physically to her oldest son with my left hand and shook his hand with my right. Working hands on this man, I felt the transfer of power move right into him as he looked down at the coin. After that I quarter turned to the flag on the lap of the younger son and saluted this HEROES folded flag. Everyone witnessed my tears at that moment as they streamed down my face. They witness the Spirit of a loving God in the room and the absolute respect and HONOR we hold for each other in a very special way. It never will hurt to show your emotions to the rest, as it is a moment of vulnerability that carries no shame, it carries a humble heart and a caring heart for all gathered. I smartly stepped back to Gunny's side and we exited together, in step. Mind you on a wooden floor. it sounds professional and it is the last thing they hear as we are leaving to recover the colors. I received not only texts from Donna Settlemier afterward of what a wonderful moment we captured for them to see and witness, but the huge heart all of you extended to this HERO and his caring family and friends. Karen also sent her best regards for her Uncle Roy. Trust me when I tell you that a family is so grateful for what you do, they really are. This family went way beyond the moment. It just kept coming from these two ladies and many more of them in passing with the squeezing of hands and the hugs that just come. Unless you are a Road Captain many of my fellow Patriots never understand fully what it is like to draw close to these families and become a very close knit, heartfelt, downright loved member of their clan at the time. I cannot express enough of my heartfelt thanks for the job you do my fellow Patriots. I am humbled to my core.