

October 24, 2011

To the family of American Airlines,

There are few corporations that go to such great lengths to support the service members of our armed forces and the families they leave behind. The work you are doing on their behalf is noble in the truest sense of the word.

Your sponsorship of Phil Taylor, The Fallen Soldiers Project, Wounded Warriors and the magic of Sky Ball does more for the service members and their families than one could possibly imagine.

This past weekend at Sky Ball, I had the privilege of witnessing first-hand the cathartic effects of your works on two families who have lost loved ones in combat. Two families, two different wars, one lost four years ago, the other, four decades earlier in similar circumstances; yet the spirit of the moment, the flood of emotions, and the healing effects were just as powerful for both families.

The brother of Hospital Corpsman Gary Norman Young, who perished on Feb 7, 1969, had lost both his brothers to the Viet Nam conflict. He commented that he never felt that anyone outside his family and friends truly cared about the loss of his siblings; this weekend, he earned that simply was not true.

He also discovered during the event that there was a part of him that never properly healed; that is until the unveiling of his brother's portrait. The wound he had concealed for four decades was laid bare as a host of emotions rushed to the surface when he peered into his brother's eyes; it is a painting that spans time and bridges death. For the first time since he lost his brother Gary, the numbness that had taken hold was replaced by a sense of peace.

For the family of Captain Jennifer J. Harris, you can actually see the power of the moment and the effect captured on film in her Aunt Linda's physical reaction during the unveiling on stage. She commented that the event had

rejuvenated both her and Tony, that they were immersed in compassion the entire weekend.

I cannot be certain how a major corporation manages to inculcate such concern, compassion, and sense of family in their members, but American Airlines has achieved this and so much more. I suspect the source of this wellspring may have come from your suffering the very first losses of the war that began on September 11th, 2001. If that is the case, you have managed to turn something dark and sinister into something pure and noble. The Snowball Express, the Fallen Soldiers project, your support to The Wounded Warrior project, Ride for Recovery, the Gary Sinise foundation, The Medal of Honor Society, and Sky Ball reflect the character of American Airlines.

Sky Ball was both magnificent and humbling. To all the members of the American Airlines family who volunteered to make this special weekend possible, you have my heartfelt gratitude. Knowing that our families will be taken care of should we fall, provides an incredible source of strength as we go in harms way.

God Bless the American Airlines Family and Thank You for all that you do.

Semper Fidelis,

Sean C. Killeen
Colonel USMC

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