

**I sat in my seat of the Boeing 767 waiting for everyone to hurry and stow their carry-ons and grab a seat so we could start what I was sure to be a long , uneventful flight home. With the huge capacity and slow moving people taking their time to stuff luggage far too big for the overhead and never paying much attention to holding up the growing line behind them, I simply shook my head knowing that this flight was not starting out very well.**

**I was anxious to get home to see my loved ones so I was focused on "my" issues and just felt like standing up and yelling for some of these clowns to get their act together. I knew I couldn't say a word so I just thumbed thru the "Sky Mall" magazine from the seat pocket in front of me. You know it's really getting rough when you resort to the over priced, useless sky mall crap to break the monotony.**

**With everyone finally seated, we just sat there with the cabin door open and no one in any hurry to get us going although we were well past the scheduled take off time. No wonder the airline industry is in trouble, I told myself. Just then, the attendant came on the intercom to inform us all that we were being delayed. The entire plane let out a collective groan. She resumed speaking to say "We are holding the aircraft for some very special people who are on their way to the plane and the delay shouldn't be more than 5 minutes. The word came after waiting six times as long as we were promised that "I" was finally going to be on my way home. Why the hoopla over "these" folks?**

**I was expecting some celebrity or sport figure to be the reason for the hold up.....Just get their butts**

**in a seat and lets hit the gas I thought.**

**The attendant came back on the speaker to announce in a loud and excited voice that we were being joined by several U. S. Marines returning home from Iraq!!! Just as they walked on board, the entire plane erupted into applause. The men were a bit taken by surprise by the 340 people cheering for them as they searched for their seats. They were having their hands shook and touched by almost everyone who was within an arm's distance of them as they passed down the aisle. One elderly woman kissed the hand of one of the Marines as he passed by her. The applause, whistles and cheering didn't stop for a long time. When we were finally airborne, "I" was not the only civilian checking his conscience as to the delays in "me" getting home, finding my easy chair, a cold beverage and the remote in my hand.**

**These men had done for all of us and I had been complaining silently about "me" and "my" issues. I took for granted the everyday freedoms I enjoy and the conveniences of the American way of life I took for granted. Others paid the price for my ability to moan and complain about a few minutes delay to "me" those Heroes going home to their loved ones.**

**I attempted to get my selfish outlook back in order and minutes before we landed I suggested to the attendant that she announce over the speaker a request for everyone to remain in their seats until our hero's were allowed to gather their things and be first off the plane. The cheers and applause continued until the last Marine stepped off and we all rose to go about our too often taken for granted everyday freedoms..... I felt**

**proud of them. I felt it an honor and a privilege to be among the first to welcome them home and say Thank You for a job well done. I vowed that I will never forget that flight nor the lesson learned. I can't say it enough, THANK YOU to those Veterans and active servicemen and women who may read this and a prayer for those who cannot because they are no longer with us.**

**GOD BLESS AMERICA! WELCOME HOME!  
AND THANKS FOR A JOB WELL DONE !!!!!**