(Left) Marshall Shadburne, Munfordville, stands in the WWII Memorial in Washington D.C. with his son, David Shadburne, Winchester. Shadburne, who served during WWII, traveled with other veterans to Washington D.C. on the 2012 Honor Flight sponsored by Farmers RECC and Kentucky's Touchstone Energy Cooperatives.

It was one of the most emotionally rewarding days of their lives.

That's what World War veterans said about their Oct. 6 Honor Flight to Washington, D.C., which was sponsored by Farmers RECC and Kentucky's Touchstone Energy Cooperatives.

Farmers RECC and 15 other Kentucky electric cooperatives joined with the Bluegrass Chapter of the Honor Flight Network to take 25 veterans, free of charge, to visit the World War II Memorial, the Korean War Veterans Memorial and the Iwo Jima Monument.

Farmers RECC sponsored local veteran Marshall Shadburne on the trip. Shadburne, 84 from Munfordville, served in the Army during World War II.

As the veterans arrived at the Louisville International Airport at 6 a.m. Saturday, they were greeted by the warm smiles of electric co-op volunteers and other grateful citizens.

Immediately upon their arrival at Baltimore International Airport, the veterans received a heroes' welcome from a crowd of well-wishers, including cadets from the U.S. Naval Academy. The

veterans traveled from Baltimore to Washington aboard a chartered bus, while a police escort cleared the way through heavy traffic and took them to the World War II Memorial. There they met former Sen. Bob Dole, R-Kansas, and his wife, Elizabeth.

“I’ll never forget that day,” said Shadburne, the veteran sponsored by Farmers RECC. “I had heard about the World War II Memorial, but seeing it in person was really something different.”

As the day progressed, their stories poured out.

Two Kentucky veterans had a special connection to the Iwo Jima Monument.

John Robbins, 87, of Lexington, served aboard a Navy landing craft during the battle. He said hundreds of American ships in the harbor sounded their horns when they saw the Marines raising the American flag on Mount Suribachi.

“Everyone cheered,” he said. “It was like the Fourth of July.”

The Iwo Jima monument was sculpted from the iconic photo taken during the battle by Associated Press photographer Joe Rosenthal. Rosenthal came aboard Robbins’ landing craft prior to taking the photo.

Hundreds of family, co-op employees and patriotic Americans waved flags and greeted the veterans after they landed in Louisville.

We all owe these veterans a profound debt. Farmers RECC is honored to have had the opportunity to say, in one small way, “thank you.”

“As Will Rogers once said, ‘We can’t all be heroes. Some of us have to stand on the curb and clap as they go by,’” said Caralyne Wright, Director Member and Public Communications at Farmers RECC. “That’s what we’re doing to honor these veterans.”