



The Thayer Hotel at West Point Announces the Return of the Iranian Hostages

West Point, New York - The Thayer Hotel at West Point is honored to announce that it will welcome back several of the former American hostages held in Iran to celebrate the 30th anniversary of their release from captivity January 20, 1981. Thirty years ago America was held hostage by radical Islamic terrorists as 66 of its diplomats were taken by force by radical protesters and then the Iranian government after the siege of the US Embassy in Iran. While 14 of the hostages were released at various stages, 52 Americans were held prisoner for 444 days. Eight servicemen died attempting to rescue the hostages in a mission called Operation Eagle Claw in April 1980 when two aircraft collided in the Iranian Desert. The 52 hostages were finally released on January 20, 1981. The Thayer Hotel at West Point was chosen as the place to receive them on behalf of a grateful nation.

The released hostages were flown from Tehran to Germany and then to Stewart Army Airfield in New York. They traveled by bus to West Point and stayed for three days at the historic Thayer Hotel. From the Thayer Hotel they continued their homecoming journey by flying to Andrews Air Force Base in order to be welcomed home at The White House. It has been thirty years since their release from captivity and twelve are now deceased.

The Thayer Hotel has invited the former hostages to celebrate their anniversary and at least fifteen will be attending with their families, while several have had to decline due to health reasons. The Thayer will be hosting the return anniversary celebration for the 40 remaining hostages and their families for the weekend of January 20-23rd. The event will start on January 20, marking the exact date of their release thirty years earlier, with the former hostages and their families spending a relaxing weekend at the Thayer Hotel at West Point.

The attached testimony given in 1981 from former hostage Bill Daugherty tells the story of this seminal event in American history and the events surrounding the return to America:

"The reception in America is still difficult for me to describe. It could not have been any warmer or more memorable. I was-and remain so today-immensely grateful for the homecoming our fellow Americans showered on us. We landed at

Stewart Airport near Newburgh, New York, and, after having cheerful and tearful reunions with our families, we boarded buses for the ride to West Point, where we were to have a sheltered two days with our families before going to Washington for our official welcome home. It took more than two hours to cover the 18 miles from the airport to West Point; the way was lined with well-wishers who carried all types of signs expressing their happiness to see us back and their feelings toward the Iranians who had held us captive.

We loved each and every one of those posters. Around every turn, there were still more people waiting, with more signs and posters. There were masses of American flags and yellow ribbons everywhere. From the buses, we all waved until our arms grew tired, and then we waved some more. All of us were deeply touched by this parade. The US Army and the entire staff at West Point were as caring, giving, and gracious as the Air Force personnel had been at the hospital in Wiesbaden. I was always amazed at the number of people in both institutions who would thank us for coming to be with them. But we were the ones who were really grateful, and we were extremely proud to have met all those who were involved in some way with our care.

About an hour before dinner that first night at West Point's historic Thayer Hotel, I was making the rounds of the hotel lobby and meeting room, looking at more pictures and letters sent by area grade-school children, surrounded as always by yards of yellow ribbon. I wish I had had the foresight to have collected these on our departure and ensured that they ended up somewhere where the public could see them. To me, these works of hundreds of young Americans were priceless.

If the West Point faculty and staff were wonderful to us, they almost paled in comparison to the welcome we received from the Corps of Cadets. During the second day, we and our families were invited by the Corps to dinner that night in the cadet dining hall. Although I found out later that many cadets expected a low turnout (anticipating that we would want to spend time alone with the families), almost all of us did accept. And of all the heartwarming and exciting events we experienced, this dinner with the Corps ranks at the top.

As our buses neared the front of the dining hall we could a distant roar, almost like thunder, intruding into the quiet of the evening. The closer we got, the louder the roar. By the time we stepped out of the buses, it had become deafening. The din, coming from inside the dining hall, was our greeting from the Corps. Walking into the building we witnessed the most extraordinary spectacle, as cadets of all ranks and classes were cheering and yelling at the top of their lungs, many standing on their chairs while creating this mind-numbing noise. This welcome home was the most touching of all to me, and it was all I could do to hold back the tears. I do remember being seated at a large table with perhaps 10 cadets, including several of the first women to enter the Academy, and being so pleased to be with these young

Americans and future leaders. I do not think I have ever met a more impressive, motivated, and intelligent group of people. Today, I cannot adequately relate the pride I felt in being an American while in the company of these outstanding men and women."

During
Iranian radicals
storm the US
Embassy Tehran
November 4, 1979
taking all Americans
present hostage.



Hostage takers burn
an American flag
over the wall of the
US Embassy



Americans hostages are blindfolded and led through public displays.



A daring rescue mission launched from the USS Nimitz April 24, 1980 is attempted.



A C-130 and Sea Stallion helicopter crash in the desert of Iran, killing eight US servicemen after the mission was aborted due to mechanical failure.



The eight servicemen killed in the rescue attempt at Desert One April 25, 1980.



Americans at the Air Force Base in Weisbaden, Germany welcome the hostages to Germany after their release January 20, 1981.



A display at Stewart Army Airfield in Newburgh New York welcomes the hostages home January 25, 1981.



Hostages touch down on American soil after 444 days of captivity January 25, 1981.



Children's decorations mentioned in Bill Daugherty's testimony are adorned throughout the Thayer Hotel.



Throughout the Thayer Hotel decorations are placed after being sent from children across America.



Crowds of well wishing Americans line the streets from Newburgh to West Point to welcome home the hostages.



Buses filled with 52 free Americans and their families enter Thayer Gate at West Point January 25, 1981.



The hostages are taken by bus from the Thayer Hotel to dinner at the cadet mess hall.



Crowds of cheering cadets, many of them the first female cadets at West Point, greet the returning heroes.

