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While in Lincoln to cheer on the Huskers earlier this month, Russ wanted to seize the opportunity to watch the U.S. Navy's Blue Angels flight demonstration team during an airshow the next day. We've had the fortune of connecting with Miss America on various occasions and we would be part of a delegation with her at the Nebraska National Guard tent.

I'll have to admit that I questioned whether we should really plan to stay the whole day as we had to trek across the state to get home that night. Russ insisted.

Well it didn't take long to confirm that his intuitions of a great day were absolutely right!! Also gathering at our tent were Governor Heineman and U.S. Senator Ben Nelson. I about fell over when Ben Nelson called me by name. Wow! That's impressive, especially now that he's on a national level, that he connects names with Nebraska faces.

As it turned out, both gentlemen were there to speak at a 9/11 tribute to kick off the Guardians of Freedom Airshow. The tribute was well planned and very meaningful. I was especially touched as they read the names of Nebraska Army National Guard soldiers who have died while serving in active duty since the 9/11 tragedy a decade ago. A bell chimed after each name.

As was emphasized, Americans continue to stand strong. Although tragedy has broken many hearts and affected our country, it hasn't stopped us from celebrating freedom and living life to the fullest.

Military planes were on hand for viewing with air force personnel available to answer questions. Climbing aboard the fueling plane brought back memories of being a guest on a military trip to Texas when we could sit at the back of the plane to watch other jets connect and refuel in the air. Amazing!

More than 175,000 people gathered on the airport grounds with thousands more watching from parking lots and other locations around the city. I read that 150,000 people also gathered the day before in the two-day event. All the demonstrations were amazing, but the Blue Angels truly were incredible. They certainly have faith in each other as a slight mistake could mean the end for all the pilots involved.

In the four-plane diamond formation, a pilot sits in the cockpit less than two feet from another plane's wing. How could a pilot even get away with one sneeze or a cough at that moment? Not allowed! Thinking that was beyond amazing, they did the diamond formation again, this time upside down. Oh my!!

Later two planes appeared to be heading straight for each other and within an instant, each flipped to its side and passed the other.

It takes far more dedicated people than the pilots for it all to happen. Communication is essential.

Emotions from the day involved sadness when reflecting on the 9/11 reality, sparks of joy when greeting friends and meeting more people, intrigue when speaking to members of the Nebraska Air National Guard and learning how their commitment fits into their family life, amazement as I witnessed unfathomable plane demonstrations by military professionals as well as civilians yet

fear as my mind would wander as to what could happen, pride in Nebraskans as I watched Miss America greet young and old with unending enthusiasm and heard the kudos expressed by the airshow emcee about the Nebraska woman pilot whose bubbly personality has created popular and respected connections across the country.

Probably topping the list was feeling pride for my country. God Bless America!!