

The Sea of Green

By Connie J. Schlosberg ©

As I drive west towards the majestic Rocky Mountains along the flight line, a steel gray jumbo military airplane's propellers are whirling and about a dozen or so camouflaged airmen are lined up getting ready to board. The sun is still rising as I park my Land Rover in the lot by the radio tower. All heads turn towards me as I get out of my vehicle and walk towards the airplane. I can't help but wonder if they notice the Deadhead stickers on my bumper or the "All is One – Save the Planet" slogan on my pocketbook. There are butterflies in my stomach as I join the other guests invited to give these airmen a send off before they depart for Iraq.

I'm here at Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado. Home of conservative stoicism and sense of duty and the pride of "Service before Self." The cold chill of the morning matches their stoned chiseled faces. I give a big cheerleader-style "*Hello*," but no one responds. I always thought send offs were to give well wishes to loved ones. Instead I felt that I had just arrived for a funeral. Nothing here resembles the landscape - both physically and philosophically - of being raised in Long Island, New York, by a freethinking gregarious family.

The military families keep to themselves. Rarely do they congregate with outsiders. Since I've traveled the globe and lived in various places aside from New York, I thought this would create a synergy between us. I'm not so sure that it has. Even though they relocate every two to three years to both local and exotic places, it didn't make them world citizens. A lot of them didn't take a piece of the new places' cultures with them.

They may be well traveled but you will never know it. They still spend their lives as if they never left the towns that they grew up in.