

# First crowds line up at airport for glimpse of first lady



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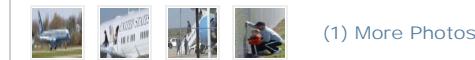
By DENNIS MAGEE, dennis.magee@wfcourier.com | Posted: Saturday, May 7, 2011 2:59 pm | (0)

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The plane carrying first lady Michelle Obama landed in Waterloo at about 9:40 a.m. Saturday, May 7, 2011. About two dozen people turned out to watch. (DENNIS MAGEE / Courier Region Editor)



Afghanistan at the moment.

As they waited at the airport, the couple pondered the significance of small aircraft coming and going, a military helicopter circling overhead and just what the first lady's airplane is called, Air Force One?

For the record, the call sign for an aircraft carrying a member of the president's family can be Executive One Foxtrot, according to the Federal Aviation Administration.

For some, the brilliant blue and white airplane was a draw almost as compelling as the president's wife.

Jason Strub of Cedar Falls took his son, Carver, 1, to watch the jet land and taxi to the terminal.

"He loves airplanes. We just thought we'd come out and see what we could see," Strub said.

Strub teaches social studies at the middle school in Janesville, so he was also interested in Mrs. Obama's visit.

"We've been talking about it in class," he said.

Josh Heinicke of Waterloo is an air traffic controller but did not have to work Saturday. He was in the parking lot with his wife, Amanda; daughters Brooke, 8, and Cheyenne, 5; and niece, Lexi, 12. In part, he wanted to see the aircraft.

"We don't get the big airplanes here," Heinicke said.

Brooke enjoyed being part of a historic event, though at first wasn't quite sure who Michelle Obama is. She knew exactly who Barack Obama is.

"They only learn about the presidents," her father said.

Amanda Heinicke thought the first lady's appearance was something of a once-in-a-lifetime event. She has been involved in presidential happenings before, though.

As a high school student in Pickerington, Ohio, Amanda Heinicke was a member of the marching band color guard. The musicians played and she twirled flags for former President George Herbert Walker

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Kristen Counsell, 18, of Cedar Falls, volunteered outside the UNI-Dome for a chance to see Mrs. Obama. She directed foot traffic, suggesting guests move through security at less congested doors.

For a time, hundreds of people were lined up from the dome's northeast entrance down the nearby hilly staircase and across PE Center Drive.

"The first hour and a half there was absolutely no one here, but then everyone started showing up," Counsell said.

She also tried to speed the process, advising those with electronic equipment to be prepared.

"The biggest question was about cell phones and camera. I told them to have them on. 'On? Yes, on,'" Counsell said.

Authorities wanted to make sure the devices were what they appeared to be.

According to Counsell, all of the spectators followed directions and were patient with the process.

"Everyone was nice and good and cooperative," she said.

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