

# VENTURING MAGAZINE

## What I Learned on Summer Vacation by Paul Davis

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This article is about the 2012 Michigan International Camporee (MIC) that was held from Sunday, July 22, to Sunday, July 29, 2012.

I was at Detroit Metro airport and I was mad. I had come to pick up Grace, a member of the MIC International Service Team. Grace is from Kenya. Her plane had not arrived when it was supposed to yet the airline's arrival board continued to display "at the gate." After waiting in a long line to find out what had happened a rude airline representative told me "the boards are not accurate and I do not know when the flight will arrive." After waiting and stewing in my own juices for another hour I endured another long line to talk to a different representative. This time the person behind the counter was helpful and after a few minutes of querying her computer told me when and where I would find Grace.



Grace

With Grace and her luggage safely packed into the van we began the drive back to East Lansing. Grace was so excited to be in America, to be visiting friends, and to be on vacation from the worries and daily struggles she has in Kenya. Grace does not complain for she feels that she is blessed, but the struggles she faces every day would exhaust most Americans. When her husband died, leaving her with three children, she often had little to eat and many hungry mouths to feed. It just wasn't her own children, but Grace's generosity gave her the reputation as the person to go to, if you are hungry and need help. In a country with no social safety net, Grace performs that role in her village. There is no end to those in need and they find their way to Grace's small tin home. They leave with a full stomach and renewed hope.



Jonas

Jonas, from Ethiopia, had already arrived in Michigan and had spent a week home staying with us. He is one of the youngest scout commissioners in Ethiopia and like Grace had come to America to serve on the International Service Team at MIC. Both his parents are dead, so he is the breadwinner for his younger brother and sister. He struggles to provide for them. He worries about their schooling (the best schools are private and he must find tuition money). At an age when many Americans are enjoying college and travel he must find resources for rent, food and clothing. He also faces some "helping" agencies that are corrupt, siphoning away donor money in a thousand different ways. Every task is made harder by the lack of resources. For example, scout uniforms for many of his scouts, are an extreme luxury. Jonas has been trying to convince the international scouting organizations that a neckerchief can be enough of a uniform for a poor Ethiopian scout.

I learned from both Grace and Jonas how scouting is helping in Africa. In Ethiopia there are many homeless children. In order to survive they often have to resort to petty theft. Scouting offered through their schools helps to teach values and skills and works to prepare them for better futures. Jonas spent his time in Lansing trying to find much needed materials. There are no scout handbooks (except for one they created and photocopy) and no merit badges. They don't even have numbers for their troops, so we

paved through old badge bins at the scout shop for number patches that could be repurposed in Africa. I created a silkscreen shirt for the MIC media team and Jonas was anxious to learn how to silk screen. Not only will he use his new skills to produce scout shirts in Ethiopia, but also he hopes he can teach the skills to his young scouts so they may have a source of income.

MIC is a scouting event that is 100% volunteer led. Not one of the over 200 staff members were paid. In fact we had to pay for our own food. From the Physicians who staff the health center to the lifeguards who guard the waterfront, everyone is a volunteer. Most of us are also amateurs. We are doing MIC for the love of it. I led the Media team, but I am a retired Organizational Development Consultant. My media skills are limited. At MIC we learned new skills, we taught old skills, we did what needed to be done.

Sometimes, we seemed to fit the stereotype of amateurs. Things fell through the cracks. We didn't perform up to the expectations that I would have insisted on when I was working. But much more often, all the amateurs routinely did the impossible.



For example, our media team was able to get a front-page news article in the Lansing State Journal about MIC. (The National Order of the Arrow came to Lansing after MIC with 8,000 scouts and they were not able to get such great coverage). MIC was held during some of the hottest days of the summer and on the second day the well pump that supplies half of the water to the camp went out. Our volunteer Ranger crew had the pump back working almost instantly and they transported water to everyone during the two days the health department needed to do the required testing. The volunteer kitchen staff turned on a dime, and provided unplanned meals for hundreds of campers who

did not have water to cook. Volunteer amateurs did what no paid staff could or would have done.

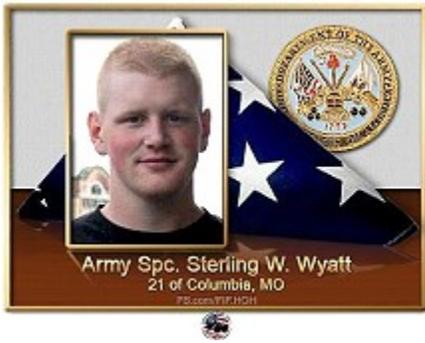
MIC is also unusual in that not one merit badge has been earned at any of the five MIC camporees. MIC has a different focus. Following Baden Powell's lead at the coming of age Jamboree in 1929, MIC is part of the world brotherhood of scouting peace movement. Its purpose is to help scouts from all over the world learn about other scouts, their cultures and their countries. Baden Powell had experienced the horrors of war and he believed that scouting could help prevent the next war.

Patrick, from Canada, 11 years old, was the youngest scout at MIC. He spent the better part of four years collecting cans and doing fundraising to earn his way to MIC. Working four out of his 11 years means he had spent a large portion of his young life working to come to MIC. Patrick not only earned his own way to camp, but when he found he had met his goal, and had earned more than he needed he offered to give it to others from his troop. Patrick taught us all that a scout is thrifty and kind.



Patrick

The symbol for MIC is a golden arrow. Each MIC ends with the hope Baden Powell expressed at the coming of age Jamboree. He wanted every scout to make a friend from another country, and to use scouting to help create world peace. Traditionally each MIC delegation received a gold wooden arrow, but for MIC 2012 we had hoped to be able to give every scout, leader and staff member a golden arrow pin. MIC operates on a shoestring budget, and there was no money to buy the pins.



Sterling Wyatt was an Eagle Scout from Columbia, Missouri. Shortly before MIC he was killed in Afghanistan by an IED while serving in the US army. His life of service and his death inspired a donation to MIC by one of the MIC staff from Missouri. The donation was used to buy every scout, leader and staff member at MIC 2012 a golden arrow pin. Every time I wear the pin, I think of the world brotherhood of scouting. I think of people like Jonas, and Grace who are trying to make the world a better place. I think of scouts like Patrick who inspire and teach us. I think of people like Sterling who died trying to make the world a better and safer place.

I think of Baden Powell, a veteran who hoped that scouting might become a movement for world peace. I hope that four years from now another group of scouts will come from all over the world to Michigan and I hope another small army of volunteer amateurs will come to serve at the 2016 Michigan International Camporee. I learned to have hope.

You can learn more about the Michigan International Camporee at [www.micamporee.org](http://www.micamporee.org) or [www.2012mic.org](http://www.2012mic.org).