

# VENTURING MAGAZINE

The 2015 Crossroads of America Scout Band Tour

November 2015



What an honor: thousands applied but only 23 units were selected to march in the National Independence Day Parade in Washington, DC, on July 4, 2015. The Crossroads of America Scout Band, Venturing Crew 559, Indianapolis, Indiana, was one of these units. Needless to say, the excitement was unbelievable! Two other Scout groups joined us for the parade; one from Virginia, the other from Texas. The parade was the last day of Tour—we had to wait all week for the big event. What a finale!

Getting to that point in time required a lot of preparation and practice, practice, practice since the announcement last year. It was imperative for our music to be as perfect as possible. Our equipment truck and bus were only allowed in certain areas creating logistical challenges. The Independence Day Parade was only a small part of the Crossroads of America Scout Band 2015 Tour celebrating the end of three wars: the Civil War in 1865, 150 years; World War II in 1945, 70 years; and the Vietnam War in 1975, 40 years. Playing appropriate music was of utmost importance but playing it well was the most important thing of all. We played historical songs relating to Colonial America, Civil War, World War I, World War II, Vietnam, Golf War, Desert Storm, and "Let There Be Peace" was to be the finale.

During the eternal wait to the Parade, we made several visits and played concerts.

The most famous battle of the Civil War was fought in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, not as a place of military importance but as a place of easy access and entrapment. Many bodies were buried where they fell on the battleground. They are still discovering skeletal remains to this date. As remains are



found, they are given proper burial at the Gettysburg National Cemetery. Some say the grounds are haunted by unsettled souls. None of us were bothered by ghostly beings during the evening tours—thank goodness.

It is a beautiful area. We climbed a look-out tower. The scenery alone was breath-taking let alone the 130+ steps to get there!

After walking on the actual battle fields and watching an animated 360 degree, bigger-than-life mural of the battle, we were really feeling a part of this history. We played a concert which included Civil War battle songs at the Visitors Center. Afterwards we all gathered for a group photo with Abe Lincoln. In the gift shop the youth were acting out what they had on their minds. Demonstrated here is a bit of sibling rivalry —sister against brother rather than brother against brother!



We visited the Willis House where Lincoln wrote his famous Gettysburg Address. We were in the same room where he wrote his speech, where he ate, and where he slept. And each room had been restored to the way they would have been in those days. It served many purposes including morgue and graves registration. We were a part of the ceremonies of the Vietnam Moving Wall Veterans Memorial when it was here in Indianapolis last spring and the honored guest speaker was Congressional Medal of Honor Recipient Sammy L. Davis. Near the Willis House, we discovered a brick in his honor among a group of bricks honoring the Congressional Medal of Honor Society.

Another spot we had been anxiously waiting to visit was the Fairfield Inn established in 1757. It is one of America's oldest continually operating inns beginning before America became America. It has served as a mansion, a hospital, a morgue, an escape route, and more. As you would expect, this building has been added on to numerous times and has settled in numerous directions. Climbing the stairways, and there were plenty of them, was next to impossible sloping multiple directions at the same time. And stairs going every direction were perfect for the unknown. Like the Battleground, the Inn also claims to be haunted. The manager confirmed there are unexplained happenings. A couple of African-American teenagers are connected to the history of the Inn who are blamed for the unexplained mischievous



happenings. The Inn is blessed annually to protect the living against the ghosts. The blessing marking is written on the rafter of the dining room. We were entertained by a magician with tricks of the era after dinner. Amazing what they could do even then.



You wouldn't think visiting a farm would be exciting but this one was! President Dwight D. Eisenhower used a farm in Gettysburg as a get-away retreat for his family as well as local and foreign dignitaries. The house itself is a typical farm house although a little larger and a little fancier than normal. Mrs. Eisenhower was very protective of the stairway wallpaper! That's right! The wallpaper! You see, the State Seal of each state is imprinted on the specially designed wallpaper. The Eisenhower farm did not have an area to play a concert so we played at the Adams County Winery.

As is typical of most any Scouting outdoor event, the skies will open up and try to drown us. Last year we were on the fantail of the USS Alabama in the middle of a concert when we were hit by a rainwall. This year we were in the middle of a concert at the Winery when we heard the command "Protect your music and instruments!" Severe storms had been in the area so we were fortunate that we were only hit by the edge of the storm. Geocaching continued to be a popular activity for each and every stop not only rest stops but tour stops and rain delays as well. A rather large box was found at the Winery. Interesting what people had left: everything from a doll to a camera adding to the theory that one man's junk is another man's treasure.



Dulles Airport is the current home of the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum. We saw the Concord, Space Shuttle, space capsules, and just about everything that had anything to do with aerospace. Flight simulators tested the fighter pilot skills of our members. Some were flying up side down - right after lunch!



We had hoped to tour the White House but our request was not granted so... as Plan B we toured Washington's many museums and monuments. Since our group was so large, we broke up into several smaller groups. Between all the smaller groups, we must have visited every museum and monument in the area. We found a monument dedicated to Boy Scouts!



"The two symbolical figures represent the sum of the great ideals of past civilizations, developed through the centuries and now at best as delivered by American manhood and womanhood to the present generation. The Boy Scout, aware of his fellowship with Scouts around the world, and symbolic of all Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, and Explorers striding into the future, represents their hope that all that is fine in our nation's past will continue to live in future generations. The male figure symbolizes love of country, citizenship, patriotism, loyalty, honor, integrity, courage, clean living, and physical development. The female figure symbolizes the spiritual qualities of good citizenship—enlightenment with the light of faith, love of God, high ideals, liberty, freedom, democracy, love of humanity lighting the way."

Our concert at the World War II Veterans' Memorial was another very special event. A beautiful monument honors both the Atlantic and Pacific forces with pillars representing each



state. Mr. Kilroy was a shipyard inspector and his "mark" became part of history from World War II through Vietnam. His mark is here somewhere. It was a perfect day for an outdoor concert—not



too hot, not too cold with a gentle breeze blowing the flags ever so gently and peacefully. It was a meant-to-be concert for sure. We had a strict time limitation. Special songs were played from the World War II era. Playing at this Memorial was like playing on hallowed ground as adults and youth alike could relate to tales told by their parents or grandparents. We later learned that we had provided background music for a live TV news interview.



We, too, made the news! An intern reporter from Indiana was following the Fourth of July activities, heard of our participation, and made contact with us. She was busy interviewing at the World War II Veterans Memorial, the Marine Barracks, and while we were waiting for the Parade "step-off." The youth member she chose to interview on the air explained the friendship bond of music he felt within the Scout Band. It was totally unexpected—we didn't even pay him 25 cents for his favorable comments!

We watched a performance by the Marine Silent Drill Team and Band—it was quite an inspiration for our youth members. I was surprised to learn that the reserved seats were - outside - bleachers! And guess what! It rained! Again! And since most of us thought it was an indoor performance, well, you can probably guess where most of our raingear was. Not in our pockets but on the bus! Fortunately, the intern reporter could not get her camera wet so she was provided with a big umbrella that protected several of us. It was wet and it was chilly but it was an outstanding performance. They obviously practice till they can do their routines in their sleep. It was dark before the performance was over. After the performance we were given a ride to the special parking lot in a special Marine bus! We felt special!

The Arlington National Cemetery conducts an average of 30 military funerals on a daily basis so silence and respect is of utmost importance. No horseplay here. We saw John F. Kennedy's grave and memorial as well as Robert, Ed, and Joseph Kennedy's sites. We saw the changing of the Guard of the Tomb of the Unknown. A 30 minute detail requires six hours of preparation—wow! Silence is not only expected but demanded. Everything has to be perfect. I cannot imagine preparing a uniform for six hours! As we were approaching the Tomb, we were stopped momentarily. Puzzling. The barracks for these soldiers is underground at the site of the Tomb of the Unknown and the on-coming duty officer was coming out of the barracks. So stiff and sober. His steps were very deliberate. He did not walk or even march. It was a special step with squared corners, one foot in front of the other, very deliberate. Perfect uniform, perfect weapon, perfect stepping.





Free time? There wasn't much on this trip! There's always a few minutes of down time when "a kid can be a kid." Like the more intense version of Rock/Paper/Scissors, waving at passers-by to get them to wave back (and they did!), and the time they found a very inviting patch of grass—there's nothing more relaxing for a Hoosier than a nice, soft, patch of green grass. In the evenings, it was Magic for the youth and Euchre for the adults.



The long awaited Saturday, the Fourth of July, Parade Day, it finally came. Forecasters had been predicting rain during the parade—and why not after all it was a Boy Scout outing wasn't it? Uniforming was strict so we purchased identical souvenir ponchos which just happened to fit perfectly in our cargo pants pockets. All lined up and the skies were getting darker and darker by the minute. At one point in the staging area we were near the old Smithsonian Museum Air and Space Museum which is now called The Castle. The parade route was only a mile. Once the parade starts there's no stopping allowed. "Every step has a new audience" was the theory of

the parade officials. Continuous playing, continuous marching — EASY! After all, the 500 Parade of Bands is 2½ miles and this is only one mile. We would march a few yards and stop. March a few more yards and stop again. Each time the parade stopped we marched in place which looks to be much easier and restful. But it works a different set of muscles and since we were not moving, neither was the air. It was like working out in a closet—air need air. We were without casualty fortunately, although some of the adults had their doubts at times. Pedometers read three miles of steps for a one mile parade.



Uniforms attract attention even when they don't look like uniforms. Countless people asked what all the camouflaged shirts were for. One night in the motel we were talking to a couple visiting DC for the Independence Day activities. It turned out their grandson, who was also there



visiting, played clarinet, was in a Boy Scout Troop in Michigan. We found a spare clarinet, put him in a Band uniform, and he marched with us.

Good news: no casualties, no rain until after we got on the bus headed for lunch at Union Station. And look—shadows!

An operating train station for lunch—that was different. What a selection of vendors—it was hard to decide and boy, were we hungry! One vendor routinely served ketchup on a plate resembling "Mr. Bill."



Our Committee Chair/Tour Director is nicknamed "Mr. Bill" (only because his name is Bill) and this year he shared a DVD of Mr. Bill cartoons to enlighten the youth (and some of the adults) on this playdough character on TV's Saturday Night Live back in the late 1960's (guesstimate). The first 15 minutes of Mr. Bill's head falling off and screeching "Oh, no Mr. Bill" was pretty funny but after the first hour ... well, that DVD somehow was lost. The memories lingered and someone found a "Mr. Bill" coffee mug at a souvenir shop.

Ensuring no one is left behind is a humongous task especially with a group of this size. This responsibility was given to our Crew President (assisted by his other officers) who would stand outside and count noses as they entered the bus. Most of the time we had 43 passengers plus the driver plus the 2 in the equipment truck but sometimes we had the 43 plus the driver plus 4 more plus the 2 in the equipment truck. Try as we did, we could not mess up his counting. His only mistake was not counting himself on occasion! And how long does it take to load 47 passengers? FOREVER!



Each of the youth members had their own responsibilities, as well as the adults, during the trip. Responsibilities included setting up stands and chairs for concerts, music distribution/collection, loading/unloading the truck, baggage loading/unloading, bus cleanup supervision, scribe, and census bureau. They all did a superb job.

Next year we'll be heading West possibly including Springfield, Illinois, to visit Lincoln's home clear to his face at Mt. Rushmore—maybe—time permitting. The last time we played at Mt. Rushmore in July we wore sweatshirts under our uniforms. We are looking forward to "Head(ing) West Young Man."

Article provided by: Carol Wiker, Unit Commissioner