

VENTURING MAGAZINE

Fencing at Ohio State by Kayin Crook

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Our Crew's trip to Ohio was our first road trip (with the current generation of fencers), and it was unforgettable. We not only met a Russian 3 time Olympic gold medalist and 10 time World Champion, we also visited the U.S. Air Force's museum at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton Ohio. We competed in a fencing competition at Ohio State University, and fought against fencers from all over the country, and some that had been trained by the master himself, Mister Vladimir Nazlymov.



The O.S.U. fencing gym was huge. They had at least nine strips per each half of the gym, and all the scoring machines were high up hanging from the ceiling. The cords went from the fencers up to the machines, so they never got in the way. They even had spare scoring machines all over the wall near one of the exits. It was so much more efficient than anything I've seen in my relatively short fencing career. And none of it got in the way of anything else you might be doing in the gym; the design was so well thought out and integrated, unlike our practice facility. I was like a kid in a candy store throughout the whole trip. None of us from Crew 1826 earned medals, but all of us learned an

immense amount in that short period. I even received my fencing nickname "Sleeping Tiger" from Mr. Nazlymov that day. It really was an honor to be advised by such a great fencer. The only issue I really had was that I forgot one of my swords there. Afterwards, we went to a local restaurant for dinner, then went back to the hotel, packed most of our stuff and swam in the pool before going to sleep.

The next day we went to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base to visit the Air Force Museum. The museum in Ohio is larger than the Aviation section in the Smithsonian in Washington D.C. It had everything from a life-size replica of the Wright brothers' glider to space rockets and actual capsules that had been recovered after they had landed in the ocean. There was a trainer version of the suicide planes the Japanese used in WWII (basically, this version had landing gear, in case you were wondering), Enola Gay (the plane the U.S. used to drop the fat man atomic bomb on Hiroshima), and plenty of other WWII relics. There were also old Mustangs, a B2 bomber, a peculiar 18-cylinder barrel shaped engine, a few autogiros, and my personal favorite: an A-10 Thunderbolt (A.K.A. the Warthog). It gets its nickname from the fact that for some reason pretty much anyone in the Air Force will tell you that it is one of the ugliest, if not the ugliest airplane the U.S. has ever used. I think it's beautiful, it's a plane that excels at killing tanks, but maybe that's just me. We also saw an APC (Armored Personnel Carrier) or two, which was really cool. We got up close and personal with an F-22 as well. This was interesting because the F-22 is currently the world's best fighter plane, and will be for another twenty years or so.



Most of our party decided to start home after we were finished touring the main building, but my dad, Pearce (our Advisor and fencing instructor) and I decided to go on and visit the presidential/experimental hangar. The presidential/experimental hangar contains all of the experimental planes, presidential planes (Air Force Ones), and pretty much anything that didn't fit in the main building. All shuttles from the main building to the hangar that day had already gone, so the only reason we were allowed through the gate was because of my dad's military I.D., thank goodness for that. We saw all kinds of things from the retired Air Force Ones to old experimental planes such as the retired Darkstar UAV or the huge, legendary supersonic Valkyrie bomber. The reason the Valkyrie is so acclaimed is due to the fact that there is only one left: the other one exploded after the plane tailing it during testing was blown into it when the Valkyrie activated its afterburners. The engines were that powerful. We also saw another plane that looked like the Blackbird spy plane, the X-15, which currently holds the record for the fastest speed achieved by a manned aircraft. Some of the planes did not have all of the information, or very little information on the plaques. The info was probably still to highly classified for civilians to be allowed access. Walking around and seeing the inside of the presidents' private planes was really cool, and so was seeing all the planes that you'd see nowhere else. There were so many planes there, if you had the fuel and enough willing aviators, you could put on your own airshow with all of them, or start your own Air Force, but I have a feeling the real Air Force wouldn't like that very much. After we left the building, we started the long drive home. It was really an amazing trip, and I'm thankful that Pearce has spent so much time thinking out these trips for us. It's an experience I'll not soon forget.