

Back From The Road To D.C. 2018

Where to start!! On Sunday, April 29th, 57 - 8th graders and 39 chaperones met at the Middle School to get ready to head out on our very educational journey to our Nation's Capital. Envelopes were stuffed and waiting for chaperones to pick them up from the tables and last minute instructions were given along with hugs and kisses to those that stayed behind. 1:00 P.M. saw 2 buses loaded and pulling out from the school on our 20th trip to Washington D.C. Mr. Lindert was the head chaperone on bus # 1 and Miss Allen was the head chaperone on bus #2. As you read on you'll understand why I clarified which bus I was on. (Miss Allen)

After a few rest stops, movies played, drivers changed and a little bit of sleep, Monday morning saw us pulling into Valley Forge Park to pick up our guides for a two hour Encampment Tour of the Battlefields around King of Prussia, PA (yes, that really is the name of the town where Valley Forge is located) and the surrounding area. Our tour guide was very informative and had the kids get off the bus to check out different monuments and visit historic sites around the park. Then after a quick stop at the Visitors center it was off to Philadelphia to have lunch at the Philly Gourmet Steaks Café and a walking tour of the city and a visit to Independence Hall to see the Liberty Bell and learn about it. The Liberty Bell was first heard in 1753 atop the Pennsylvania State House in Philadelphia. Its inscription (which reads "Proclaim Liberty throughout All the land unto the Inhabitants Thereof." was prophetic, for it was in this city that colonial representatives took some of the earliest steps toward independence from Great Britain. The Liberty Bell cracked long ago, but as an icon of freedom its voice has never been stilled. Did you know that the Liberty Bell's crack is a reminder that liberty is imperfect? The Liberty Bell was first heard in 1753 atop the Pennsylvania State House in Philadelphia. That is just a little information we learned while doing our tour in Philadelphia and the area around Independence Hall. Now this is where our journey gets interesting for the riders of bus number 2 (first bus we were on). While touring Independence Hall our bus driver called and said that he was having issues with our bus but a mechanic was on the way and hopefully it would be fixed by the time we got done....but needless to say that didn't happen. The mechanic couldn't figure out what was wrong and so the bus company was looking for a bus to take us into Washington D.C. that evening. That's when we started getting "the good news...bad news" phone calls from/to the bus driver. The other bus (#2 for our trip) took us to sit on our 'broken down' bus which could idle with the air on but wouldn't move faster than 20 MPH and then he went back to Independence Hall and picked up the other group and our box dinners to bring to us to eat while bus 1 traveled to D.C. and we waited to see about our new bus. First it was, the good news is.....we've found a bus, the bad news is they can't find a driver. After 2 hours it was, the good news is.... they found a driver but he can't be there for at least another two hours. After waiting about 5 hours, walking along a pier by the Delaware River, watching a tug boat bring in a ship and seeing all the lights across the water at sunset in New Jersey and visiting a Historic site that we just happened upon, different bus #3, arrived to take us to our hotel in Oxon Hill, MD. After switching over all of our belongings and our passengers, we were finally on the way to our hotel! A tired group of students and chaperones finally arrived at our hotel about 1:00 A.M. on Tuesday morning. Mr. Lindert and Mr. Kath were waiting for us when our bus finally pulled up to the hotel with room keys in hand to give out to people and carts to help unload everything off the bus.

After a VERY short night, Tuesday morning saw us loading.....different bus #4, heading in to meet our guide at Arlington National Cemetery. After a visit to the 'Tomb of the Unknowns' to watch the changing of the guard and walking around the cemetery to visit different grave sites we were off to visit Iwo-Jima. The road around

Iwo-Jima was under construction so we couldn't drive around the circle to get the effect of the illusion of the flag being raised while our eyes were glued to the statue.

Next we were off to Mount Vernon to visit where George and Martha Washington lived. Our tour guide gave a brief explanation about our first president's life and the many things he did. Visiting the mansion, seeing the farm buildings and fields, visiting the Washington Tomb, seeing the Slave Memorial and Burial ground, walking through the gardens and listening to "Martha" tell about her life as the wife of our first president, visiting the museum and watching films about Washington crossing the Potomac as we got snowed on just like Washington and his troops did and feeling the chairs rock when the cannons were shot was an amazing thing. Visiting the blacksmith shop, slave quarters and other outbuildings were some of the many things we saw while at Mount Vernon. But too soon it was time to get back on the bus and head back to Washington D.C. for our dinner at Union Station and then head to the Martin Luther King Memorial to start our "Washington by night" tour. Our guide talked to us about MLK and the many things he did as we walked through his memorial. Besides MLK's leading role in the African-American civil rights movement in the United States, Dr. King was also a tireless advocate for the nation's working class and the oppressed around the world. Next it was onto the FDR Memorial to see all of the statues and read all of his famous sayings that were located around the memorial. Finally we walked along the Potomac Tidal Basin to bring us to the Jefferson Memorial where we could watch the planes fly over the Potomac River to land at Reagan International Airport.

Wednesday morning (still on different bus #4) saw us meeting the guides at the WWII Memorial. Probably the most memorable thing that we saw there were the 4,000 stars on the Memorial's Freedom Wall to commemorate the more than 400,000 Americans who gave their lives during WWII. From there we walked to the Vietnam and Korean Memorials to honor our Veterans from those wars. "Freedom Is Not Free." These four words on the wall of the Korean War Veterans Memorial reflect the sentiments of men and women who served in the Korean War – as well as those who fought and sacrificed to preserve democracy throughout our nation's history. I always wondered where that saying came from and now I know. As we always do, we did a rubbing of some of the local veterans who were killed in the Vietnam War from 'The Wall'. As I was looking up the name of the son of one of our towns Gold Star moms I realized that it had been 50 years to the day that her son had died. We did two rubbings of his name to give to cousins that still live in our area. (The Gold Star mom has passed) I thought 'How ironic it was that we were there on the exact day of the 50th anniversary of his passing to do rubbings from the wall.' Next it was off to visit the Lincoln Memorial and to pour a little water on the step (you can read the inscription better when it is darker) where MLK gave his "I Have a Dream" speech. The afternoon saw us at the Capital Visitors center for a tour of the Capital, over to the White House to get pictures in front of it, (we aren't allowed very close) visiting the Library of Congress, a quick walk through of The Supreme Court Building (In session so we couldn't go in to watch the Court), walking through Daniel's Story at the Holocaust Museum and driving by the Washington Monument (getting repairs made to the elevator). Dinner at the Ronald Reagan Trade Center where they were having a 'Black Tie' event so we had to go around to a different area to get to the food court and then on to the Metro!! What a different form of transportation this is to us folks from Pardeeville! After explaining how to purchase a SmartCard, the students put their money into the machine and pressed lots of buttons to get just the right ticket and then off to the train platform we all went looking for the correct colored train line (orange or blue) to arrive at our station. We did it a little bit different this year again and rode the train all the way to the Pentagon to visit the Memorial (after a little detour off and on at Rosslyn). After visiting the memorial we headed back to the hotel

to write out our postcards thanking individuals and businesses for helping to make it possible for our visit to Washington D.C. and the surrounding areas. Good news...our bus was fixed and the driver and our original bus would meet us at the hotel.

Thursday morning saw us riding into D.C. on our original bus to have our group picture taken in front of the Capital. After that it was to the Smithsonian (did I remember to tell you that the Air and Space Museum no longer has a McDonald's in it so we had to quick find a different place to eat?) to walk around the different museums until it was time to walk over to the Ford Theatre for a walk through the museum and a talk by a National Park Ranger about President Lincoln and what went on at the Theatre on the fateful night of April 14th, 1865. During the Ranger presentation we got a phone call from our bus driver and you guessed it...our bus was out of commission again but they had another bus coming to pick us up when we were done at the Smithsonian. After walking to the National Archives and viewing the original Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights we were ready to head back to our hotel for the final night. Usually 3 of the Smithsonian have extended hours but not this day so we waited for our driver to pick us up. Mr. Lindert called his driver to come and pick us up early so when he got there he took Miss Allen's bus group along with a couple of Mr. Lindert's kids back to the hotel but while on the way we found out that what would have been Miss Allen's group 5th different bus, had an accident on the way to pick us up. Could it get any worse for Miss Allen's group? Back at the hotel we set up for a pizza party for supper and then sent everyone back to their rooms to pack for an early Friday morning exit. Miss Allen's bus loaded everything on...yep... different bus #5, to head to Gettysburg to pick up our guides and tour the Battlefields and the surrounding area. Back to the visitors center to go to the theater and watch a film called "The New Birth of Freedom" and then into the cyclorama to view the sound and light show of the 377-foot painting of Pickett's Charge. This is a circular picture that surrounds you as you stand in the middle and hear and see the battle as it is going on. After getting our box lunches it was on to our surprise for our students.

Earlier we had bagged up a 'little hint' to give our students as to what our surprise would be. For their dessert we handed everyone a bag and in that bag was...Hershey kisses. We were headed to Hershey, Pennsylvania to visit Chocolate World and have a step on guide to ride our bus and take us around to tell us about the town and about the Hershey factory. After making our own large Hershey Candy Bar and decorating it and riding in trolley cars to see how the factory is run we got our supper and gifts to take home and walked out to get on...you guessed it...bus # 6. (a brand new bus that we were "The first" to ride) Of course we had to transfer all of our stuff from bus #5 onto bus #6 before we could leave. But you know our word that we always say we have for this trip is "FLEXIBLE" but 6 different buses? That's having to be really flexible. Worrying about the kids, their behavior, their well being, their health and not losing any one is stressful enough but then to have to worry about our bus too? I was glad when it was finally time to head home and call it a day.

After a few rest stops, movies played, drivers changed and a little bit of sleep we pulled into Pardeeville just as the 10th annual Bulldog Stomp Run/Walk was getting ready to start. They waited for us to get to the Middle School and then they started the race. What an ending to our 20th anniversary to Washington D.C.!!

I want to Thank all of the chaperones for the great job you did watching out for our students and making this an enjoyable trip for all of us. I joke about 'not losing a student yet' and you are the reason I can say this. I'd like to especially thank Mr. Lindert and Joan Killoran for all the help they did with the pizza making and helping to get ready for this trip.

Thank You to all of our community members and families for allowing us to go on this trip and for all your support in our fund raising efforts.

To all of our 8th Grade Ambassadors and chaperones, you made me proud to say we were from Pardeeville, Wisconsin!!!

Miss Allen