



STUDENT COUNCIL MEMBERS from Decatur Community High School who enjoyed a trip to Washington as guests of John and Heidi (Martinson) Lesinski, are shown (top to bottom) Dick and Suzanne Ahlberg, sponsors; Ryan Ruf, Lindsay Fortin, Abby Ream, Rena Unger, Sarah Olson, Quintin Cundiff, Mrs. Lesinski and U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran. Ryan Ruf (upper right) crawled through a mockup of a termite hole at the Museum of Natural History.



Students enjoy Washington visit

By SARAH OLSON

To most students, spring break means shopping, sleeping, or skiing. For a select six from Oberlin, this year's spring break brought a trip to Washington.

Heidi Lesinski, a Decatur Community High School alumnae, and her husband John give this trip to six Student Council members each year instead of giving a scholarship. This was the second trip by Oberlin students.

The four council officers have first chance at the trip, and then anyone else can apply for the remaining spots by writing a few short essays. The six who attended this year were seniors Ryan Ruf, Lindsay Fortin, Sarah Olson and Quintin Cundiff, and juniors Abby Ream and Rena Unger. Sponsors were Dick and Suzanne Ahlberg, since Mr. Ahlberg is the government teacher.

We left Oberlin around noon on Friday, March 23, and headed to Ozawkie to stay with Suzanne's sister, Mary. After stopping at a mall, we watched some basketball, played Pictionary, and stayed up way too late. Our flight was at 8:50 a.m. the next morning, so it was a short night.

Saturday, we all made it through security and onto the plane just fine. When we arrived in Baltimore, Heidi and John were waiting for us at the luggage claim. Once we all found our bags, we loaded up in their vehicles and headed for Mutthaven, their home in Great Falls, Va. After a tour and time to settle in a bit, we all got dressed up and headed to Alexandria, Va., to meet with Col. Delbert Townsend, another generous alumnus.

We toured Gadsby's Museum. This museum is actually two 18th-century taverns put together. We learned about the differences in architecture and style there. Then we had time to walk around Old Alexandria and go to the Potomac River. We all met back at Gadsby's Tavern for dinner.

After an excellent meal, a man came out, played a lute and spoke as if we were in colonial America. He had never heard of Kansas since it didn't become a state until 1861. He was entertaining and interesting.

Then we headed back to Washington to visit memorials. We saw the Jefferson, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and Iwo Jima memorials that evening. Seeing them at night was impressive. John Lesinski is a Marine, so going to the Iwo Jima Memorial with him gave it an added dimension.

Sunday, we spent the morning at Mount Vernon, George Washington's home. The weather was wonderful the whole trip, so being outside was no problem. We went to the Hard Rock Café in D.C. for lunch and then went to Ford's Theatre, where President Lincoln was shot, to see the musical "1776."

I will never, ever forget that night's dinner as long as I live. John and Heidi decided we needed to get some culture while in the city, so they took us to a Moroccan restaurant. It was in a shady part of town, so we had to knock on the door to get in. They led us to our seats, low

couches around two low round tables. We all tried to be optimistic, but it was not like anyplace we'd been before.

Our server came and washed our hands, gave us towels, informed us we'd be eating with our hands and told us the menu. It was a set seven-course meal. The first was veggies, eggplant, carrots, and some green vegetables. We tried it, but weren't too sure about the place still. Next came a flaky pastry filled with eggs, almonds, chicken, cinnamon, and sugar. It was an interesting combination, not bad at all. The meal got better from there: rotisserie chicken, beef kabobs and lamb, and couscous, a really small pasta, like rice, with raisins and veggies on it.

We got a spoon for this course, and for the most part, we all picked the raisins out. The last two courses were a basket of fruit and nuts and baklava, a dessert made out of paper-thin layers of pastry, chopped nuts, and honey, and a specially flavored tea. As if the food weren't enough culture for us Kansans, after the meal there was a belly dancer. She could move parts of her body many of us didn't know could be moved, and she had a great sense of rhythm.

After this culture dose, we went to the Lincoln, Vietnam, and Korean memorials.

"I really liked the war memorials," said Quintin. "It gave us a chance to see that freedom really isn't free."

Monday, we were supposed to go to the State Department, but due to the war we couldn't. Because John had to work, we all learned how to use the Metro, Washington's subway. We went to the Air and Space Museum, Library of Congress, National Cathedral and National Zoo. We visited the zoo at closing time, so most of the animals had been put inside already.

"The National Cathedral was really beautiful," Rena said. "The trip was a good experience and I'd like to go back some day."

We spent Monday evening at Mutthaven playing basketball, hot tubbing, shooting pool, watching television and kicking back.

Tuesday was Lindsay's birthday, so when she came down for breakfast, she had a croissant with a chocolate capitol dome on top for a candle. First of all, we went to Arlington National Cemetery. Suzanne's aunt was buried there last summer, so she and Mr. Ahlberg went to find her grave while the rest of us went and saw President John F. Kennedy's grave, then we met up for the changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

"Going to Arlington Cemetery was one of my favorite parts of the trip," said Lindsay. "The changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknowns is something that everyone should experience. It was very emotional to be there, especially in this time of war. The place was respected by everyone who was there. John F. Kennedy's tomb and Robert E. Lee's house were also interesting to see."

After Arlington we rode the

Metro to the Holocaust Museum.

"I really liked the Holocaust Museum," said Abby. "It was so neat how everyone was so quiet and more respectful than in other museums."

When we were nearly finished there, we all had to go to the basement because someone left a bag at security and they had to be very careful. It turned out to be a false alarm, so we went on to the Pentagon. We were surprised at being allowed to go because of the increased security, but we were glad we could.

Heidi thought our tour was shorter than the normal ones, but we still were in the building. When we were in the courtyard in the center, at "ground zero," a plane flew over and our guide stopped and watched it. He told us there wasn't supposed to be a plane over the Pentagon then, because they had changed the flight path. It was kind of scary for a minute.

John met us at the Pentagon and took Lindsay to Great Falls in their Porsche for her birthday. We met them at the actual waterfalls, and Ryan threw a rock across the river after several unsuccessful attempts. Then we went back to Mutthaven for the evening.

Wednesday was our Capitol day. We met Rep. Jerry Moran on the House steps for a picture. While we were there, I saw a girl I know from Logan there on a school trip also. What a small world! Then we went in and got to be on the house floor with Congressman Moran while he talked about his job. A guide from Sen. Sam Brownback's office met us and gave us a tour. Then we went to meet with Sen. Pat Roberts and Sen. Brownback, but the senators were in a vote-o-rama, so we didn't get to see them, just their staff members.

After lunch, we headed back to the Smithsonian section of town. We went to the American History and Natural History museums, as well as the National Gallery of Art. By that time it was sprinkling, but we made the walk to the White House anyway. It was blocked off for quite a ways, so we really couldn't see it. On our way back to Mutthaven, we spent some time at a mall.

Thursday was our return day, but that didn't mean we stopped being tourists. On the way to the airport, we stopped at Fort McHenry in Baltimore. This was where Francis Scott Key wrote "The Star-Spangled Banner." We got to lower the night flag and raise the next day's flag. After gaining a sense of patriotism, we went to the airport and waited for our flight.

Our final adventure occurred four miles south of Oberlin when we blew a tire. Abby got out her video camera to provide light for Ryan to change it. Most of us called our parents, so we had quite the gathering on the side of the highway.

I will never forget this trip. John and Heidi were so wonderful to all of us. Staying in Washington with people from the area was really nice — we had freedom to be more flexible than if we were on a tour.



STANDING IN LINE, Dick Ahlberg (above) joined the line a bronze depression-era figures at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial while Quintin Cundiff (below) was ready for the Revolutionary War at Mount Vernon.

— Photos by Sarah Olson

