

Memorable trip

Last week six Waverly High School students had front row seats during two of the most historic events in recent memory: the inauguration of a new president and, equally inspiring, the release of the Iranian hostages.

This columnist asked her 18-year-old daughter, Kelly, to record some impressions of her five-day trip to Washington, D.C. The tour, which included Mr. and Mrs. Donald Fuller of Chillicothe, was arranged by Jim Murray and Greg Hopkins, Waverly Republicans.

"We were many strangers when we boarded the chartered bus Saturday in Waverly, but printed biographies helped us become acquainted on the 12-hour trip during which we often discussed the hostages.

"Our introduction to five days of continual Capital excitement was the chilly night stops at the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials before checking into the Park Central Hotel, about two blocks from the White House.

Sunday, we had a taste of just how busy we were to be. After a smorgasbord we attended the champagne soft drinks for the kids unveiling of the Reagan likeness at the National Historical and Biblical Wax Museum. A side-splitting melodrama, "Deadwood Dick," at the Gateway Dinner Theater was followed by a complete change of pace when our group had a private evening tour of "The Search for Alexander" loan exhibit at the National Gallery of Art. We marveled at the intricacies of the gold and bronze artifacts and the lifelike facial expressions from an age which was primitive compared to our modern technologies.

"Monday morning, Jan. 19, we were at Arlington Cemetery on the 174th birthday of Robert E. Lee whose home, the Custis-Lee Mansion, is on the grounds. We were lucky enough to witness the impressive changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. We spent the rest of the day trying to take in as many of the Smithsonian Institution buildings as feet and time permitted. My previous experience with the Metro proved helpful in cutting down on our Washington travel time.

"We piled out at 7:30 a.m. Tuesday for the Big Day. After a private Inaugural Day Prayer Breakfast in the imposing Yellowstone Room of the Hyatt Regency, we went to Congressman Bob McEwen's office to pick up our inauguration tickets.

"Anyone who saw the ceremony on TV knows we were only pipsqueaks of humanity in front of the Capitol where I'd heard the Adolph Band in concert in June. It was quite a change. We couldn't see much but heads, but the P.A. system was efficient and we really had a sense of taking part in history.

"When the crowd dispersed, we moved at a snail's pace with thousands toward the Treasury Building where we had a block of reserved seat bleachers. Five of us teenagers who belong to Waverly Explorer Post 76 were tickled to see fellow Boy and Girl Scouts seating guests and distributing our individual flags. I don't suppose I'll ever have better parade seats...front row center.

"An Ohio State cheerleader and fraternity brother of President Reagan, Mark Welman, kept attention focused on our group as he led us and others across the street in cheers and songs.

"President Reagan who was beaming looks so much younger in person than on TV, we thought, and Mrs. Reagan was very chic in her bright suit which had helped us pick them out in the inauguration crowd. It was a thrill to see the Reagans and Bushes so close up about 20 feet away and they acknowledged our special cheers.

"In the parade, the fellows especially liked the pretty girls on the World's Fair float. The twin-trailer Mormon Tabernacle Choir, Iron Eyes Cody (the crying Indian), equestrian entries and precision marching of the armed service and musical units were beyond description.

"During the parade, some of our group heard in their transistors the report that the hostages had cleared Iran, but in the other excitement, it didn't really sink in.

"If anything could have surpassed the daytime events, it was Tuesday night. Every bell for miles around pealed for the hostages, the White House Christmas tree was turned on and we went for a look and there were fireworks set off simultaneously from the White House, Washington Monument and Capitol. It was like three Chillicothe bicentennial fireworks displays at one time.

"By the time we arrived home late Wednesday, the 18 near strangers had become friends. We younger ones probably do not yet fully appreciate the importance of the coinciding events last Tuesday, but they are becoming more meaningful each day that passes."

Items for this column may be mailed to the columnist, in care of this newspaper, 50 W. Main St., Chillicothe 4901.

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