

**Troop 49 – The Pathfinders**  
**Sandy Hook National Park**  
October 3-4, 2009

**Sandy Hook Trip Report - The Weather Gods Were With Us!**

We left OLPH at 8:15 for Sandy Hook, and after searching for the campsite, set up camp - tarp, tents, etc. and had lunch by Noon. After a photo shoot at a Nike Missile we headed north. Thanks to Mike Kozak, who had a contact in the Coast Guard Reserve, we were treated to a 2-hour tour of the Sandy Hook Coast Guard Station (which is closed to the public), courtesy of Petty Officer Johnny Church, former full-time and current Reservist. He is also the creator of a fantastic mural in the base cafeteria which explained and illustrated the origins and history of the Coast Guard.

Among the things we learned was the CG serves our nations coastlines with a staff of 38,000+ service people. To put it in perspective, the NYPD alone has 50,000 officers! Their responsibilities include combating the drug trade, terrorism, sea search and rescues, and also assist other countries to effectively deploy their own guard. We learned a significant symbol of respect and why one removes any headwear in the cafeteria: In prior wars, the eating area served as a hospital, with patients being operated on the very tables people ate at. Unfortunately, many died right there in the service of their country, so the removal of headwear shows respect for those who died.

Petty Officer Church took us through the base, showed us the command station, and then to the dock where we were given a tour of the boat used to perform search and rescues, among many other tasks. It was amazing to hear him describe the challenge of navigating a boat in the face of huge waves which could topple the boat, smash windows and cause huge damage. The scouts were captivated (as we were all) listening to P.O. Church talk about his experiences serving our country. It was very reassuring to know what capable service people we have serving our country 24x7.

After the amazing tour, we headed off to Battery Pottery which housed a pair of steam-powered guns which fired on enemy ships approaching NY harbor. There, the heavens broke and rain poured down for about 40 minutes. We waited it out (thanks to a kind National Park Service attendant), and headed for the light house, and History Museum. The light house staff was its customary "accommodating self", advising us it was closed (even though it wasn't closing time) and that they had shut the register for the day, so we couldn't go in the shop. The History Museum was quite interesting, and from there (SIC suffers harmless but humiliating spill after being unable to navigate a street curb) we hurried south to make the SH Visitor Center before *it* closed.

We spent a good half-hour there, the staff being kind enough to keep it open as the Scouts checked out the various exhibits and purchase some souvenirs. Some of us ventured out to the beach and were able to catch some what seemed like a last-gasp of summer, with sun shining, light breeze, surf sound, and that ocean mist smell.

Then back to camp to relax, change into dry clothes (me), enjoy some appetizers, and wait for ASM Dan "Emeril" Fern to cook and serve up his mouth-watering chicken chili (And we were not disappointed). He did give due credit to his wife Karen, for the delicious dessert of brownies and rice krispie treats. The scouts explored the area - There was a Cub Scout pack and another troop sharing camps nearby and the scouts were able to visit with some of them. There was also a full-moon, which almost eliminated the need for a flashlight to get around camp, it was so bright.

All were turned in by 11:00, and in the morning, after breakfast (Thank you ASM Jeyabalan Jeyabalan), we broke camp and departed Sandy Hook by 9:15.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jim Folkerts  
10/4/2009