

Troop 49 – The Pathfinders

Inner Harbor, Coast Guard Cutter Taney

January 9-10, 2010

In the face of weekend of single digit temperatures and wind, and after ASM Dan Fern ensured all uniform requirements were met, 21 scouts and parents from Troop 49 departed OLPH at 8:15 am for Baltimore. Part of the group stopped at the Walt Whitman Service Area on the Turnpike as planned, and others bypassed it for the next one on the way. We all ended up at Pier V in Baltimore at approximately noon. Paul Zakrzewski, son Mike and Tyler Rigoli arrived early, Paul having taken the red-eye in from a business trip and headed straight to Baltimore from the airport.

After eating our bag lunches in the rather chilly parking garage, we split into 2 groups: one going to the National Aquarium right on the pier, and the others to the Sports Legend Museum at Camden Yards, home field of the Baltimore Orioles baseball team. The Sports Museum is located in the building which formerly housed the Camden Yards railroad stop for the B&O railroad. It had a cool mockup of the inside of a passenger train, and there was much baseball memorabilia on display.

This building also had a few parts in U.S. history - it was where President Lincoln lay in state for 1 day and also where the first casualty of the Civil War occurred. Lincoln also was "kept" there prior to his inauguration, as there was believed to be an assassination plot at the time. The young scouts with us sat on the very bench where Lincoln once sat. The scouts also enjoyed trying on real sports uniforms of the Maryland teams and "recording" broadcasts of a baseball game. Those who went to the aquarium enjoyed the various exhibits there. A few did comment it was a bit expensive.

The groups reconvened at the Aquarium before boarding and viewing the 3 Historic Ships - the lighthouse ship Chesapeake; submarine Torsk, and the US Sloop-of-War Constellation, an old-time wooden ship. The Constellation also provided the opportunity to view a cannon firing which the scouts enjoyed immensely (especially the tour guide barking commands at some of their parents who assisted). This was of particular interest given how the tour guide explained the many challenges faced by the brave sailors manning the ship and the number of cannons on it. The ship had 4 levels (each colder than the next) which housed the various functions of the ship (storage, sleeping, cooking, etc.) including a private bath for the captain!

At 4:30 we observed a brave group of Cub Scouts and families preparing to board the Constellation for their stay over. Given the frigid temps, we did not envy them!

We arrived at the Taney at 5pm and our tour guide Earl advised us on the itinerary for our stay. We were then led below (It was very toasty) the ship to our sleeping quarters, scouts chose their berth by order of rank. They had some interesting displays, photos, document, uniforms and artifacts throughout the ship detailing the ship's adventures and missions. We observed a poster of the same type of boat we toured while in Sandy Hook in October. The Taney was christened in 1936 and saw active service until 1986. There was a TV playing some old Super 8 movie film taken onboard in the 1970's.

Among the activities the Scouts enjoyed were: Tour of the ship's equipment and artillery, navigation, communication methods such as semaphore (remember the signal flags?) and Morse code, a scavenger

hunt, taking down the ship's flag, and an exciting damage control exercise. The exercise consisted of using only 3 or 4 pieces of wood (4x4's) to secure a hatch in a area that was flooding. Earl would render a scout or two "injured" and a replacement had to jump in. ASMs Fern and Dishian also gave it a go, to their credit.

These events kept the scouts busy almost until bedtime. They were conducted before and after dinner, which consisted of pizza and string beans (ever had that combo? Luckily some Dads had a few snacks to share), with ice cream sandwiches/Italian ice for dessert. The ASMs played cards and talked in the mess area during the scouts' activities. Lights were out at 10:30 and the scouts quieted down rather quickly and went to sleep.

Reveille occurred at 06:00, followed by breakfast of scrambled eggs, bacon, cereal, juice and coffee (adults). Keeping true to its culinary form, there was no ketchup on board the ship. Probably a first for many kids, a meal with no ketchup :-). After breakfast we were treated to a visit of the engine room, which is off limits to daily visitors. It was extremely impressive, seeing the massive and intricate workings of the ship below us.

Back on deck, we took a group photo, visited the ship's gift shop, and disembarked (after giving Earl a group hug) at 09:15, heading for the Aberdeen Proving Grounds and Army Ordnance Museum, a 45 minute drive from Baltimore. This place serves as a military museum of many tanks and big guns (arranged in a huge field) and equipment captured by our nations' forces while at war. It was amazing getting to close to the (some of it huge!) equipment some only see in movies. NOTE: The museum is moving to Fort Lee, Virginia (not New Jersey) in 2011. At approximately noon, the last of us left for home, headed for the nearest fast food stop on the way.

Respectfully submitted,
January 10, 2010
Jim Folkerts, ASM