

# NORTH PLAINS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

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## TRIPPIN' IN D.C.

BY DAVID YOUNG

When my parents first told me that I would be going to Washington, D.C., I was a little skeptical. I wasn't sure what to expect or whom I would meet. After the first day, though, I knew I was going to have a blast.

On day one of my trip, I had a nice long ride down to Dallas with Bill and Leann Carson. They made the trip very enjoyable. We stopped in Wichita Falls and had a steak for lunch. They always made sure I was very comfortable. I slept the rest of the way until we arrived at the Sheraton in Dallas. I became acquainted with a few of the other Youth Tour participants and went up to my hotel room. This is when I met one of my roommates, who would also become one of my very good friends. His name was Chris, and he was a big boy from Hereford. We sat in the room and talked for a while. We decided to take a swim and I met many more people and then finally got acquainted with everyone at the orientation dinner that evening. After this first day, I knew it was going to be a good trip.

The second day of the trip started out with a bang. We awoke at 4:30 a.m. so we could leave the hotel at 5:00. It was pretty funny seeing everyone with his or her morning faces. We made the flight to Washington and then proceeded to the National Zoo. They had a lot of different animals here, and the whole event was pretty interesting. Trevor, a friend I had met earlier that day, and I went around stating useless facts about the animals (we actually got all of our information from various signs posted around the exhibits) to the other participants. Most thought we were quite intelligent. It was funny to see them whenever they found out we were just joking around.

After the zoo, we went to the National Cathedral. This giant church was just breathtaking, and in my opinion, was probably the most beautiful building that we visited. We went on a guided tour and learned different things about the cathedral. The most fascinating things were the stained-glass windows. Each window depicted a scene of progression in time. It was so incredible to hear what each one meant. After we finished touring the National Cathedral, we made our way to Union Station for dinner. We then went to our hotel, the Hyatt at Crystal City, hung out for a while and then called it a night.

The next day we woke up at 6:30 and made our way to the White House. We were only allowed through one wing of the White House, but it was still a good experience. We learned a lot about certain rooms and saw some pretty interesting things. After that we went to the Arlington National Cemetery. This was a very moving experience. The gravestones were like a rolling sea that went on forever. It is unbelievable how many people have died for our country. It makes me proud to be an American. At the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the Texas Youth Tour delegation performed a wreath-laying ceremony in honor of the unknown soldiers who have died for our country. It was a very cool experience. After the cemetery, we went to the Pentagon City Mall. This is one of the biggest malls I have ever been to. We ate and hung out there for a little while

and then made our way back to the hotel.

On Day 4 we awoke early again. We headed off to Mount Vernon, but made a stop along the way. We had a devotional that was led by several of the participants. This was on Father's Day, and many stories were told that were very moving. We sang songs and had a prayer circle. I enjoyed the devotional thoroughly. After it was over, we continued on to Mount Vernon, the home of George Washington. We got to see almost all of his house, where he ate, where he died, and where he is buried. It was so beautiful there, too. It is on the bank of the Potomac River and everything is so well kept. We then returned to the hotel where we rested for a bit.

That evening we went on a Potomac boat cruise. What an enjoyable experience! There were three different floors with music and dancing on two of them. We were mixed with some other states, so we got to meet a lot more people. It was very crowded but the atmosphere was great. It was funny because all of the other states wanted to listen to hip hop music, but of course we Texans wanted to listen to our country. We met in the middle though and had a great time anyway.

On Day 5 we attended Rural Youth Day. All of the states went to a big conference room and we listened to two speakers. They were both very good and very inspirational. They had a good message with good intentions. After that we went to Ford's Theatre and the Petersen House. We got to see where President Lincoln was shot and where he died. It was very cool. I also went over to the ESPN Zone and looked at that restaurant. It was awesome. They had the best arcade I have ever seen. They had TVs everywhere (and I mean everywhere). I was kind of disappointed when I had to leave there, but we had things to do.

We continued on to the Lincoln Memorial and the war memorials. It was so awesome to finally see these in person. I had seen them so many times on TV and in magazines, but it was nothing compared to experiencing them firsthand. It was cool to just wander around in wonder of these amazing memorials. I entered the Lincoln Memorial and was just in awe of the great statue of the extraordinary man. I walked over to the Vietnam Memorial and walked past the great wall of names. There were so many of them, it was just unbelievable. I then strolled over to the World War II Memorial. There was a choir singing there, which was pretty cool. After that I went to the Korean War Memorial. This was my favorite one because it was so real. There were statues of many soldiers hiking during a time of war. It was a splendid experience. We then headed back to the hotel after a dinner at the Old Post Office. We hung out at the hotel until it was time to go to our rooms.

On the sixth day we got dressed up because we were going to the Capitol. We split up into groups according to our Congressional districts. Our congressman is Mac Thornberry, and we were scheduled to meet him later that day. So our group went to check out the Supreme Court and Library of



Youth Tour participants at the World War II Memorial.



The North Plains EC Youth Tour representatives outside the White House.



Melissa Barth and David Young on the steps of the U.S. Capitol.

Congress. They were both very impressive buildings. The cool thing about the Supreme Court is that I am doing a research paper on it in my summer government class. It was awesome to be able to experience what I was writing about. We then went to meet Congressman Thornberry, but he was unavailable. We did, however, get to see him from a distance later when we were on our tour of the Capitol building. He was down on the floor voting on a certain issue. The Capitol building was beautiful. There is amazing architecture throughout the great building. It was just a great occasion.

After the Capitol we went to the Sunset Parade at Iwo Jima. The parade itself was pretty good, with its marching band and the guards' drill team, but I found the statue there to be the most admirable object. I took several pictures of it because it was so engrossing. We then went back to the hotel and got ready for one more day in Washington, D.C.

We got up early again and went on our way. We first visited the Jefferson Memorial. It is a beautiful structure, but I found the next memorial to be more interesting. The Roosevelt Memorial was really cool, because it was like a little park. It has beautiful fountains and statues everywhere. It shows the major accomplishments of FDR. We then moved on to the Smithsonian Museums. I went to several of the museums, but my favorite place that day was the National Archives. This is where the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution are. I just found it flabbergasting that our Founding Fathers composed these articles over 200 years ago and I was within 1 foot of them. I tried to take pictures but they didn't

really turn out.

That evening we had our NRECA dinner and dance. It was fun just goofing around and having a good time. We danced until we couldn't dance anymore. When the night came to a close, nobody wanted it to end. But that was it, and it was time to go back to Texas.

The next day we flew back to Dallas. Now I've talked about visiting the memorials and the White House and the Capitol, which were all great, but the best part of the trip were the times I shared with all of my new friends. And that night in Dallas was probably the last time that we would be together, so it was a pretty sad night. We hung out, watched the San Antonio Spurs beat the Detroit Pistons in Game 7, swam and danced. This was the night that no one wanted to end. We had grown close to many people, and now we would be going our separate ways. By the next morning, I think everyone was ready to go home, but no one was ready to leave his or her new friends. We said our goodbyes, and there were plenty. It took me about an hour to say all of mine, because I had made so many new friends. We promised to keep in touch, and we have. I've probably talked to about 10 of my friends from the youth tour since we left Dallas. It's awesome to keep in touch with each other, and hopefully I'll see some of them again some day. I am so thankful that I got the opportunity to go on this trip, because it was literally one of the best times of my life. I want to say thanks to my parents, Craig and Cindy Young, and I want to say thanks to North Plains for making this opportunity possible.

## 'THANK YOU FOR THE TIME OF MY LIFE'

BY MELISSA BARTH

Anyone who has ever visited Washington, D.C., can tell you that our nation's capital is unbelievable. Add in a group of 100 kids (all who are leaders of some sort), a bunch of fun sponsors, and a week of the hottest spots in the city, and what do you have? Simple—the Texas Electric Cooperatives annual trip to D.C. This year, I was fortunate enough to be one of North Plains Electric's recipients of the trip.

During the week we toured all of the monuments, had dances, and went to the Smithsonian museums. This alone could keep a person busy in Washington, D.C., for a month, but we also met our Congressmen, went to Mt. Vernon and Arlington Cemetery, and attended Rural Electric Cooperatives

Day, where we heard two inspirational speakers—both were great! In one short week, we saw the majority of D.C., and had a blast doing it!

There is no way to describe a favorite part of the trip—it was all great, from the plane flights to waking up at 4:30, to the boat cruise on the Potomac River. This trip was fantastic, without a doubt. I cannot begin to tell you how fortunate I feel for having had the chance to go on this trip. I saw great sights, met new friends, and saw what our government is like—something that fascinates me completely. North Plains Electric, thank you so much for giving me this opportunity. Thank you for the time of my life!