

## The 2009 Inaugural... *continued from Page 1*

Colt Cadets being one of only three actively competing youth corps in the country) may typically be made up of younger members, such as middle school and high school students, as well as college freshmen. The Colt Cadets numbered approximately 80 members during the 2008 season and competed in Iowa, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Oklahoma and Nebraska, traveling over 20 days throughout the two-month season.

That's where I come in. Being a "doer" and not a "sitter," riding along with nothing to do is difficult for me, and having a pretty decent driving record and a fair amount of experience with bigger machinery, I spent a week or so getting my CDL to operate and carry passengers on a tour bus. As a school teacher who has summers off, now I could go along when Jay had a competition, could donate some time to the corps, and would always be guaranteed a seat on the bus.

The former band director at Springfield High School, Scott Weber, got Jay and Eric interested in the Colts a few years before, as he was a Colts alumni. Jay would go up to the December audition camps, as did my daughter, Kimberly, and although they were not selected for membership at that time, they would get a wonderful weekend of expert instruction by some of the best staff around. But last year, Jay made the commitment to travel to Dubuque and see what the Colt Cadets were all about and immediately found a home. After that first rehearsal last February, he thought that the Cadets may be able to use another contra player, so we brought Eric with us the next weekend. In the spring, we were bringing John along as well. They never had so much fun working as hard as they could, and they did it all summer long.

It's hard to describe what a positive and dynamic shift has taken place in my son's life as a result of that first trip to Dubuque. He has had and continues to have wonderful and talented band directors in his high school program, but the level of intensity, constant and progressive rehearsal and direct instruction he receives in the Cadets has shot his learning curve straight in the air. And it's not just musical skills and field expertise and endurance building; he has learned how to take the very best parts of himself and turn them over to something bigger than he is – just like all the other members do – and blend it into a collective unit that functions as one; to work hard and do what is best for the corps. He, as do the others, take each opportunity to honor and respect the instruction which has been given to them by some of the most talented educators I have ever seen, and they give everything they have to their students, day after day, week after week. They give up their summers and travel to Iowa from all parts of the country, and they teach and teach and write and rewrite, and get up and do it all over again all summer, if not all year long.

And even though my intention was to just go along, drive the bus and spend some time watching my son, corps life has had a profound effect on my life as well. Corpsmen, instructors, parents and volunteers – we all eat and sleep corps. We can't wait for the season to start, and cry when it's over, even for just a few months. Our lives show vacant spots that were filled all summer by people we only met in the spring. A year ago, I counted my close friends on one hand. Now, I have three or four times that number to count, and I

count them as my closest and dearest friends as well.

Back to my story. During the Colts and Colt Cadets annual banquet in November, Executive Director, Greg Orwoll announced that the Colts had been nominated to take part in the 2009 Presidential Inauguration parade on January 20th, 2009. As the corps never comes up against problems, just inconveniences (per Orwoll and Colt Cadets director, Vickie Schaffer), getting everyone to call and/or write their national legislators for support to secure their selection would be just as easy as raising the estimated 60 thousand dollars it would cost to get the corps out to D.C. (not sure how yet), housed (who knows where) and fed (who knows what but it will be good!) and back. Also included in that estimate would be at least two dozen new performance flags and color guard uniforms for this special occasion (neither of which had been designed yet. Did I mention this was LATE in November?)

And just as he predicted, the Colts were selected to represent Iowa and now the challenges of pulling this off are right in front of us; raise the money, design, gather materials and sew new flags and uniforms, select the corps, (made up of current Colts, recent age-out members from 2008, past alums, and Colt Cadets if possible), line up transportation and drivers, get the uniform company on standby to fit new members after gathering the volunteers needed to fit and alter those uniforms, find a place to stay and rehearse, figure out food for 200 + people...

Greg Orwoll, Peter Hansen, and Nic Champagne created and submitted the nomination papers, Senator Harkin helped secure the housing at Gallaudet, and Pam Rypkema, our contact person at Gallaudet coordinated everything for us there and set up the permissions needed in the first place and ironed out all of the housing details. Per information supplied by Greg Orwoll, Peter Hansen is a Colts dad and board member from Lawrence, Kansas. His wife is on temporary contract with a Senator in DC. In his visits to DC, he located Gallaudet University as an ideal location, and made contact with the school's administration on a couple of personal visits and got things set up for us. Nic Champagne the videographer, is a Colts alum, aging out in 2001 as drum major, and is a professional videographer and media consultant working at Indiana University in Bloomington. He came along as a volunteer. His twin brother, Tim, marched baritone in the parade.

It didn't happen by magic, but it sure seemed like it did. But that's just like this corps – they always manage to make the majority of the hard work look simple and seamless. And the challenges were met by a hard working executive staff, plus many companies and private individuals that supported the effort financially. It was all coming together. Now we just needed to get everyone approved by the Secret Service by the deadline.

Then, the armed forces people decided that the numbers needed to be cut down, so a new selection criteria was put into place for the members who would march as there were well over the numbers of applicants to the maximum marching number allowed. With that in place and the selections made, even though the Cadets like Jay and Eric and some of the alumni would not likely march in the parade, many decided to take this opportunity and go along and support the corps anyway they

could. And so we did.

On Saturday, January 17th, under the watchful eyes of local news media personnel that would be riding along with us, we pulled out of Dubuque on our way to Washington, D.C.

Five Colts tour busses, one chartered bus, one of the Colts tractor-trailers, two 15-seat vans and a full compliment of corps members, staff, seamstresses, cooks, three shifts of drivers, and additional members, alumni, press and friends headed south toward Maquoketa on our way in time to make Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. early the next evening. I should mention, everyone with the exception of yearly staff, were volunteers, giving up vacation days and racking up unpaid leave just to be able to take part in this once-in-a-lifetime, off-season tour.

The schedule for a drum corps, whether going out on their regular tour or making a special off-season event like this, can be mind-numbing. I would akin it to a well organized and highly talented runaway train. Either get aboard and hang on, or get out of the way, because once it starts into motion, it fuels itself with an unending power source of energy and talent that's hungry to learn more, do more, and create perfection whenever and wherever possible. Period.

It takes great leadership to accomplish any one of these things, but the Colts' leadership team does it all at one time with calculated precision, unending teamwork spirit, and unflappable devotion to its members. They make the plan and then call on those who can help make it all possible – an unbelievable tour de force of fellow educators, writers, instructors, caption heads and staff members, and tech personnel who congregate in Dubuque, Iowa every year in early summer, and in this case, mid January.

Then the support groups are notified and called to action. Corps cooks, seamstresses, drivers and other volunteers get their assignments and get to work. Taking care of the corps is the main function of this vast group of dedicated individuals and they help keep this train running at full speed.

Our schedule was as follows (minimized, of course):

Saturday 10:00 AM: Drivers and other volunteers get all vehicles checked and fueled and down to the Colt Center.

12:30 PM: The Corps arrive, check out instruments, stage their luggage, and head into their first sectional rehearsal.

2:30 PM: Meeting of the corps, travelers and volunteers with Greg and Mike while the drivers go into their meetings to get their final assignments. It will take three shifts of drivers to get the corps caravan to D.C. by the next evening.

3:00 PM: We hit the road a bit after three, 237 tour members in all, with more to pick up on the way or to meet us in D.C.

5:15 PM: Rest stop.

7:45 PM: Arrive in Bloomington, Illinois truck stop to pick up more members and to feed the corps.

Sunday, 12:30 AM: Arrive in Indianapolis truck stop to meet with the bus that went to the airport to pick up more corps members, to fuel all vehicles and to switch drivers.

5:15 AM: Arrive in Columbus, Ohio truck stop for rest stop and to fuel.

8:00 AM: Arrive at next truck stop to serve breakfast and to change drivers.

11:45 AM: Arrive at the Somerset, Pennsylvania truck stop to fuel and serve lunch.

3:00 PM: Arrive in Hagerstown, Pennsylvania for the last rest stop prior to entering D.C.

5:30 PM: Arrive at Gallaudet University and commence unloading and settling in - setting up sleeping headquarters and a quick shower.

6:00 PM: Everyone attends the orientation meeting while the drivers are taken to their quarters and get settled.

7:30 PM: The corps begins sectional rehearsals while the spectators and off-duty volunteers have some free time.

10:30 PM: The corps is served their evening snack and has some free time to shower or get their sleeping gear ready prior to the call of lights out.

Of course, the schedule didn't quite hold up as we had hoped. We ran into foul weather and slick roads shortly after reaching Peoria, Illinois which slowed us down. We lost time at one or two stops due to some slight logistic snafus, and we had a bus give it up completely along a busy stretch of road somewhere in Pennsylvania. No problem and no worries; as Greg and Vickie state, "We don't have problems – we only have inconveniences," and with that same spirit, everyone pitched in to get the gear from the "wounded" bus unloaded and reloaded on other vehicles; and those who had an empty seat beside them on the remaining busses happily welcomed their new passengers. We were back on the road in no time without any hand-wringing or fussing about falling behind. We arrived in D.C. a couple of hours late, but all were safe and sound, no worse for wear, and just as happy to be along as they were before we left. This is the way of the Colts and Colt Cadets; following the charge born out of positive energy that spreads like wildfire, rekindled and fanned to spread warmth and good cheer whenever it is needed.

Monday held a similar schedule for the corps, but those of us who had free time, it was an opportunity to do a little site seeing in the D.C. area. Since Jay and Eric were not going to march, the three of us grabbed up Paul Dement, a parent and bus driver from Dubuque to serve as a tour guide, and off we went. Since I got turned around somewhere in Pennsylvania (I think) and sort of lost my sense of direction which I never got back after coming into the city after dark, I felt a leader was in order, and as Paul had driven the Colt Cadets out here to a competition a few years prior, he seemed like a likely candidate to help us see a couple of sites.

D.C. was little what I expected it to be. We've all seen pictures and newscasts of the Mall, Lincoln Memorial, Capitol and Smithsonian. I envisioned a vast panorama, wide open and grand in size and scope. Somewhere in my mind, I envisioned the nation's capital to be bigger than most cities I've been to, being the center of our government and all. But it really isn't.

The District of Columbia is a metropolitan area with a population of about 600,000 though it expands to about a million during the commuter work week. The Washington metropolitan area, where D.C. is located, has a little over five million residents.

The National Mall is in the heart of the city and is approximately 20 city blocks in length. It is anchored from the West by the Lincoln Memorial and the Capitol from the East. Between the two are the Constitutional Gardens where the Vietnam Memorial, the World War II Memorial and the Washington Monument hold residence. The White House faces

into the Mall from the North, facing the Washington Memorial, and the Smithsonian buildings flank both sides of the Mall along Constitution and Independence Avenues. It is certainly a grand and expansive space, but also seems to have more of a city intimacy than I had expected, and though many sites were a ways apart, walking from one to the other was a pleasant stroll.

The Smithsonian Museum is a system of buildings that are so extensive and comprehensive that you couldn't see all of them in a month of Sundays. You can see everything from the Hope Diamond at the Museum of Natural History, to Oscar the Grouch at National Museum of American History. While we visited stuffed bison, water buffalo and assembled dinosaurs, a few of our fellow Colt travelers spent their time crashing the space shuttle flight simulator at the Air and Space Museum.

We got to walk on the parade path just short of the presidential viewing stand and greeted and visited with many of the 2500 Iowa National Guard members assigned to this area of the city. (It helps when you are wearing an Iowa Hawkeye coat!)

We also found those that chose to use the influx of visitors and the changing of our national administration to show their displeasure of a plethora of issues from foreign policy to the economy, to the unethical treatment of prisoners.

The city was bright and shiny and ready to greet its visitors, but I was also reminded as we drove through the city that it also is an area that suffers in stark dichotomy, from impoverished peoples whose neighborhoods are either ripe for urban renewal and the social displacement that goes with it, to unemployment and vacant store fronts, evident separation of socioeconomic classes, which are seen within a stone's throw of the Capitol Hill District with it beautifully refurbished row houses and brownstones. Those that keep the city humming, keep the government running with food, hotel, laundry, convention and transportation service supports don't live in those grand homes; they may not be able to afford to live within the District at all. Grand as it is, the District echoes the struggles of cities and urban areas all over our country, and work to solve those same issues that we do at home.

"It was a once in a lifetime experience for everyone involved" commented a travel-wary Greg Orwoll, who has just returned from DCI meetings in Indianapolis. Greg took a quick break in the midst of preparing for this weekend's Colts auditions camp to tell me what the trip meant to him. "To be there at the largest, and some would say, the most important Inauguration in American history, and to actually be a part of it was something that will be a lifetime memory for everyone. And for our organization, it was a tremendous opportunity to represent Dubuque and all of Iowa, plus all 45 years of the Colts on a world stage like this was. The logistics of the travel, meals, uniforms, funding, music and rehearsals were challenging, with little time to pull it all together. The trip out was remarkable. With six buses, two vans, a 24 foot truck and a semi, in blowing snow, then ice, then slush, and finally a bus problem along the way where we had to transfer luggage and people to the extra seats, and still arriving within 90 minutes of our schedule was quite an accomplishment. All in all, it went off with-

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