

WASHINGTON DC. MARCHEN 1991

The Washington DC trip is certainly the single most significant activity of the Marchen summer - nothing is as eagerly anticipated by the campers, nothing takes longer to plan by the staff, and nothing has a 'recovery period' quite like the transition back to camp life after the trip.

In order to understand what the Washington trip is to both campers and staff, we must look at it in three stages:

- ① the planning,
- ② the trip itself,
- ③ the final analysis.

① PLANNING THE TRIP

Planning the trip took about 3 weeks total.

In the initial stages, the staff (we were lucky to have three native Washingtonians plan the trip) brainstormed about possible members of Congress to meet with, as well as which Jewish groups we should meet with. These appointments must be booked far in advance, so they take first priority. (The only "fun" activity that was planned in the early stages was the Quizes Game). In brainstorming, we referred to old Washington trip plans to see who previous Marchen groups met with - hence, John Lewis and Joe Lieberman. We also used our own connections in the DC area at places like AIPAC and Arnold & Porter.

Most of the planning involves making phone calls upon phone calls upon phone calls. Some days, you could be making calls for several hours straight. But, you must be persistent, and check, and re-check plans, dates, times, and locations.

You must be flexible in your schedule, allowing plenty of time for the group to get from one place to another.

We also used connections in the Washington area to line up where we stayed and where we showered. Were it not for our connections, in fact, our job would have been much harder.

Finally, we used our connections in the DC area to plan our fun activities such as meals at 2 campers' and one counselor's houses.

There were also several things for which we did not need any connections — meals in which we spent free time, the movie at the Air & Space Museum, the Marine Band Concert.

[Though you certainly don't need connections to plan this trip, it made our lives a lot easier to deal with people we knew.]

Another element of our planning stage was the budget — KNOW YOUR LIMITS! What can stretch and what cannot. We were blessed with a good amount of leeway.

One last part of the planning stage is talking it up with the campers — get them psyched! Tell them about the people with whom you are meeting, and the places you will be seeing. It worked for us!

② THE TRIP

Accommodations: Beth El was a perfect facility to use ^{no more green} - the floor was comfortable, we were able to use the kitchen and social hall, and the Executive Director is very accommodating and helpful. The location of the synagogue was also perfect - we generally got to our first meeting in 35-45 minutes. One drawback was that we could not shower at the place where we stayed. We showered at the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School ^{no people through!} this worked out fine, though some of the showers were broken.

Monday -

- We left camp exactly on time.
- We stopped twice on the trip, setting us back c. 1 1/2 hours off schedule. Therefore, the ride took c. 9 1/2 hours in total. The campers entertained themselves - they did not need any organized pulot to keep them busy.
- Because we took longer than we expected to travel to Washington, we could not make it to the NVJCC. We improvised and went to a park close to the campers' home where we had dinner (it was excellent - a hot ^{casual} meal).
- Do not plan something for the afternoon of arrival. The trip time is unpredictable. Plan for the evening.

Tuesday

- Introduction to DC at Lincoln Memorial

The speakers should focus more on Washington DC, not what it is like to be a lobbyist. Also, the campers should

have at least half an hour to walk around the Lincoln Memorial/
Vietnam Veterans Memorial area. We were rushed.

- John Lewis' Office — Congress

The staff was very accommodating. They even provided us cokes and peanuts as a snack on a very hot day. They showed us a video on the Congressman's life, then we went to meet him briefly. After we met him, we watched the House in session from the gallery. Though it would have been nice if Congressman Lewis was able to spend more time with us, it still worked out extremely well.

- Arnold and Porter

The office was also very accommodating with cold drinks and a comfortable air-conditioned room. Nancy Barham, who spoke on Soviet Jewry resettlement, was interesting but too long-winded. She also brought a Soviet friend who spoke to us, but was difficult to understand and spoke for too long. We hardly covered Pro Bono law, which was supposed to be part of the A+P program because the Soviet Jewry segment took too much time. That was a little disappointing.

- Georgetown

We allotted a perfect amount of free time: c. 4:30-6:00. The campers went off on their own and had a fantastic time. The only drawback was that we planned free time in an area where the kids could have pigged out, right before going to dinner. Luckily, everyone had a big appetite though for dinner at my house. —deli; the kids were psyched.

- For our pilot crew, we rented a movie — Good Call!
The staff had a meeting while the kids watched the movie; it worked out perfectly.

Wednesday

- AIPAC

The presentation by Julie Benjamin was not spectacular. She was hardly engaging — she did not really inspire anyone to go out and lobby. She did not make it seem that lobbying pays off. AIPAC is a group that Machon should meet — only with a better presentation.

- Bill Green's Office — Congress

Congressman Green took time to speak to the group personally. He divided the edah in half, and spoke to each section for about 10 minutes each. He was interesting and answered a lot of questions. However, he concentrated on some of his more random projects, rather than ~~the~~ Jewish issues, as we had hoped. He's a great man to meet with — only specify beforehand that he should focus on Jewish issues when addressing the kids.

- Air & Space Museum

The movie that we saw was good, but it limited us to only being able to see the Air & Space Museum. We spent way too much time there. Though the movie was good, it was not worth missing the rest of the Smithsonian. I would have preferred a couple of hours of free time on the Mall to see whichever museum you choose. It was a waste at the Air & Space.

- Joe Lieberman Photo Opportunity

Senator Lieberman was very nice. In a surprise move, he spoke to the campers and fielded questions. The only problem was that we had a failure of communication on where we were supposed to meet. We had to wait around for the senator for awhile.

- Post office Pavilion

BAD IDEA! There's nothing to do there but eat. Definitely go to Union Station instead - there are lots of food places, lots of stores, and even an 8-screen movie theater. It's awesome.

- Marine Band on Capitol Steps/Lawn

Great idea for open house time to meet family and friends. Have a snack there for the kids though, so that they have something to occupy their time, rather than only listen to the band. Afterward, we drove around the monuments at night. The kids really liked that.

Thursday

- Holocaust Memorial Commission

The presentation was fantastic, though the presenter did not seem like an expert. He was lousy at answering questions. When the museum opens, it will be a must see for Machon fans.

- AAETJ

Cancelled. And we didn't miss it at all. The kids were tired, the Holocaust presentation was fairly long, and we'd already done so much kinnud. No one looked forward to another speaker.

-Harbor Place, Baltimore

A great place with hundreds of shops in the area and plenty of places to eat cold dairy. Also, there's paddle boating and the famous Aquarium (a lot of kids boated). Two hours was a perfect amount of time.

Afterward, we very much enjoyed dinner at a camper's house.

-Orides Game

The game was extremely boring, and the campers got very fidgety. It is a tradition to go to a baseball game on a camp trip, and sometimes they can be good, but ours was not.

The return bus ride went fine - we arrived back at camp at c. 5:00 camp time. The kids slept most of the way.

NOTE: We were exactly on time to everything, which made the trip run 100% smoothly

③ THE FINAL ANALYSIS

For several reasons, the Washington trip stands out as the single most significant part of our Machon summer.

As one of my close friends once said, "you get to know someone when you live with them, but you truly get to know someone when you travel with them." This axiom certainly applies to our Washington trip. It was during this week that a true bond between all the campers in theedah was established and strengthened. Our staff also looks at that week as the time when each staff member got to know each camper in the edah on a more personal level. Our staff had a similar bonding experience with each other - we all had a fantastic time on the trip, working together.

The other tremendously important effect of the Washington trip on the campus is that it helped foster some feelings of individualism and responsibility. We gave the campus a lot of free time on their own in different parts of the city, trusting them to be able to be responsible for themselves. They handled this very well, never abusing their freedom. (Though we had some difficulty getting them back into the camp program, without as much freedom, the freedom that they had in DC was very important to them).

From an educational standpoint, the trip was very successful. All of our meetings were very informative, especially regarding the political process in Washington, and seemed to captivate the campus attention. We also had an excellent balance between educational and recreational activities.

All in all, then, the Washington trip was a tremendous success.

Monday

- Ditch doing something in afternoon of arrival - trip time is unpredictable
- Excellent - dinner at campus house

Tuesday

- Intro to DC the place, more than what it's like to work as a lobbyist
- Spend more time in Capitol Hill/Vietnam Vet area - that was rushed
- John Lewis - perfect
- Arnold + Porter - good
- Nancy Barber + guest - interesting but too long-winded; not enough time to get into Pro Bono law.
- Georgetown - perfect amount of time allotted c. 4:30-6:00
- Dinner - great
- good call on setting a movie

Wednesday

- ALPAC was good but presentation was not engaging enough at all - not really inspiring to go out and lobby
- Congressman Green - great, personal interaction has kind of random though.
- The movie at Air + Space was good but not worth waiting time only at Air + Space - Pref. free time to hit the whole Smithsonian.
- Senator Lieberman photo op. - good, he even spoke with us, but we waited around for him for too long. Also, failure of communication on the meeting place.

- Post office Pavilion - Bad IDEA

much pref. Union Station.

- Navine Band - good idea for open house time

maybe we should have had a picnic there, or at least a ^{good} snack to keep the kids psyched.

Thursday

- Holocaust Memorial - great presentation, though the guy was lousy at answering questions

- A&J - cancelled, and we didn't miss it

- Harbor Place - great

- Orioles Game - boring, but tradition