

LAKOTA WEST HIGH SCHOOL

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC DEPARTMENT
8940 Union Centre Boulevard, West Chester, OH 45069
greg.snyder@lakotaonline.com (513)874-5699

Greg Snyder, Director of Bands

January, 2006

Hawaii! Now that certainly was a place I've always wanted to visit...with my beautiful wife, not a bunch of band kids! How could I keep track of all those kids for a week in Hawaii? The beach would get old after awhile I thought. Boy, was I wrong! After 25 years of teaching, and many band trips around the country, this Hawaii trip was, by far, the best marching band trip I've done.

Many components went into making this trip the best and most unbelievable adventure for our band. First, the organization of Gateway was amazing. From the familiarization trip the previous year, I knew this would be an unforgettable trip for our kids. Gateway had an itinerary worked out that was band friendly. Many activities to keep the kids on the move should be a priority for any band trip. From Pearl Harbor, The Polynesian Cultural Center, Dole Plantation, Hanauma Bay, the water park, and Diamond Head, all of the activities were well organized. The hotel accommodations were complete with shopping, a pool and the beach, within a short walk. Everyone I asked named a different activity as their favorite.


Our main focus of the trip was Pearl Harbor. We planned and performed our Fall Competition show named, "A Day in Infamy" which included Taps, American Patrol, Big Band tunes of the era, Verdi's Requiem (the attack), Navy Hymn and Battle Hymn of the Republic. We even brought a Pearl Harbor survivor in to talk, followed by an invitation to he and his wife to join us on the trip. The insights he provided proved priceless and this touchstone to history was very meaningful to most everyone on the trip. Our performance at Pearl Harbor and visiting the Arizona Memorial was certainly the highlight of the trip for this band director. To see kids crying as they walked over the Arizona, and then again as we performed our show at the battleship Missouri was very powerful. These are the moments the students will remember the rest of their lives.

We had a rather large group, 363 people in all, but the way we moved around the Island was flawless. Gateway had thought of every detail to make the trip awesome. Starting with all of the activities mentioned above, to great meals, and transportation. Even most of the bus drivers proved to be educational and entertaining with Hawaiian drivers giving us history lessons en route and telling interesting stories. Our Gateway girls were very professional and made sure every detail of the trip went as planned. The Samoan guys were also useful and complemented the trip with useful island information.

From an educational viewpoint, it far exceeded our expectations. Pearl Harbor was indeed amazing, but the educational impact of the Polynesian Cultural Center with the many island cultures and shows, and snorkeling at Hanauma Bay, was significant. Of course, the kids had a blast at the water park on Thanksgiving Day (I was skeptical, thinking a water park was too ordinary, but it was a perfect place to bring all the bands together and have a great Thanksgiving Day meal). Of course, we had plenty of time at the beach and pools. We stayed at the Hilton Hawaiian Village, the icing on the cake for our band. It sits right on the beach and has lots of shopping and beautiful rooms.

On our final evening, we participated in the Waikiki Holiday parade, which was the main reason for the entire trip. The crowd was tremendous and energetic. I've never seen so many people waving the *Hang Loose* sign! The island atmosphere and tiki torches along the evening parade route were a perfect ending to an amazing trip.

As I reflect back on this incredible week, I know I would repeat the event in a heartbeat. From now on, Gateway will be the only company my band travels with; their experience, expertise, caring, thoughtfulness, and attention to detail are second to none. The Hawaiian trip of 2005 will always be a great memory for all of us at Lakota West.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gregory L. Snyder". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Gregory L. Snyder
Director of Bands