Education Support

American Dance

My New York Trip

By Kristen Pine, a member of the McNeil High School Majestics, in Austin, Texas

Bright lights, huge city, thousands of people littering every street corner, what more could you ask for in a vacation? Okay so it's not everybody's idea of paradise. Most probably imagine caramel beaches, clear turquoise waters lapping gently at their feet, and the glorious sensation of a gleaming sun warming the face. Well me, I would definitely go for a romp on that fantasy island, yet that's the thing about fantasies, they aren't real.

So, I went for the next best thing, crime, purse snatchers, high rises, tourist shops with naked people pens, and more yellow cars than a person should ever see in a lifetime. I went with my drill team, the McNeil Majestics, to New York City. Three nights and four days of pure chaperoned fun, and I had a fabulous time. Did I ever doubt it?

Can you imagine sixty plus people "moseying" down a New York Boulevard wearing identical green and blue jackets with Majestics embroidered across the back for all to see. I've never heard so many complaints of strangers accosting us as we made our way around the city. My personal favorite came from a man who decided to give us a lesson on being a good tourist. All we had to do was go around annoying real "New Yorkers" as much as possible and we would become experts. He was clearly using a roundabout way to say "Move it, freaks! You're in my way!"

On the flip side the trip was unbelievable as a cluster of teenage girls got to see and do things that most grown adults only dream about. We danced at Alvin Ailey and Steps on Broadway, saw Fosse on Broadway, which fueled my obsession for live theater, and received a grand tour of the old history of New York. New York has always been an

exciting city in my eyes, and I'm not the only one who thinks so, for I heard more languages in this city than I did on my European tour!

Arriving at Ellis Island in the freezing cold I stepped from the ferry, shielded my eyes and leaned far back so I could get my first close look at the Statue of Liberty. What history I thought! My ancestors and so many others came through this way and this huge, green statue was the first thing they saw of America, the land of the free.

I felt their excitement as my eyes feasted on a symbol that foreign travelers saw as a new beginning for their dreams. Pushing through the crowds (we were learning), we got in line to climb the 342 steps that led to the top. Where was the elevator?

I climbed those stairs nonetheless and went through alternating bouts of terror that my legs would crumble and warp, that the tiny spiral staircase would crash down at any second, and that the three cute foreign guys ahead of us would think I was a wimp for wanting to bail out after thirty steps. I said I was a dancer, not He-man.

Of course I can't leave out the dancing with the masters in their studios. Now I am definitely not a master dancer, but I love the art and respect all who have this gift. Nothing else blends gorgeous music, expert costuming and moves that tantalize the soul and convey deep-rooted emotion than dance. I took classes from instructors that have built their lives doing this and it was amazing to see them perform. They actually took the time to teach a lowly high school girl who tried out for the drill team with no dance experience, but came away with a love and appreciation for dance.

My favorite time was spent striding down the gilded hallways of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Culture and history can be found in every crevice of this building. In the Metropolitan Museum of Art I can reach out and touch the past as if it were happening right before my wildly attentive eyes. I can stand courageously in the thick of the grittiest throng of nightmares and dreams as they surround me like a deep whirlpool. I can experience every magnificent moment in history as if it occurred for me alone. This is why I love museums and why I consider the Met to be one of the finest treasures of all time.

Lost in these never-ending hallways filled with mysteries that only the secret and silent walls of the past can know is the best place to linger in my opinion. The ancient remnants of people who saw terrifying, amazing, and crucial moments in our world's

history call out to the *modern day* views, craving to tell their stories and doing so with the treasures they've left behind. Can you hear their whispers?

I became lost in awe and envy as I stood silently in a room filled with walls of steel in the Arms and Armor section of the Met. I stared at iron blades that had taken the lives of so many during the blood stained centuries. I could almost hear the metal clanking together as two knights fought to the earth on a battlefield soaked with their blood, filling my nostrils with its metallic scent. I could see these valiant warriors leaping over the silent bodies of their fallen comrades, praying to be the victor over the other. Who wouldn't lose their mind in this place, it's all things beautiful, tragic, priceless and gone.

Sisterhood, friendship, and laughter, were all part of this magical trip that our director, Mrs. Denise Cochran, led us on, and I'm so thankful she did. I'll never forget it and the experience made me want to do so much more. Eating in style, sleeping with crowds, traveling by bus on roads that really weren't wide enough. Hailing a cab driven by a psycho with a death wish and pretending to shop on Fifth Avenue were some of the funnier moments of the trip, and I know that graduating this year and leaving friends that have been my constant companions for four years will be very hard. I'll never forget my trip or the people who traveled with me. They will live forever in the remembrances of my mind and soul.