



## ***Florida Sea Base 2014- Troop 725***

Pictured from left to right: Ray Marquardt, Jason Marquardt, Kyle LaHucik, Ian Fannin (Seabase crew captain), Nick Cioffi, Adam Ray, Jeff Sneideraitis, Alex Garcia.

### **Day 1- December 25, 2014**

**T**wo years of planning finally came down to this one week. Excitement, anticipation were understatement as the seven of us prepared for our long-awaited trip to Florida Sea Base, one of the three high adventure programs of Boy Scouts in the United States. We would embark on a seven day journey in the Keys Adventure program, one of the only programs at Sea Base that offers involvement in all activities of the Florida Keys- snorkeling, sailing, fishing, island time, waterboarding (stand-up paddle boarding), swimming, kayaking, visiting Key West, and the Bahia Honda State Park.

After meeting at the Marquardt household at 7:30 am on Christmas day, we took pictures as a

group with our luggage and backpacks showing indication of our readiness to leave the cold weather of Chicago and head down south for the warm, beautiful climate of Florida. We joked around and everyone said Merry Christmas and our goodbyes before heading to the airport.

Mr. and Mrs. Garcia, and Mr. Ray, volunteered their time to drive us to O'Hare airport on Christmas morning. Upon our arrival at terminal three, we jumped out of the vans and walked to the Spirit Airlines

gate. Mr. Marquardt took out of all our boarding passes and everyone took out their ID's for the checked baggage and security check-ins. Surprisingly, one of our seven was searched, patted down, in the security line—Jason Marquardt.

After a slow walkthrough of the airport and a few stops in the shops of O'Hare, we sat down at our gate and relaxed in anticipation of an exhausting, fun-filled journey. Mr. Marquardt gave us a glimpse into the itinerary of our trip, and he also prepared us for what he expected of us. He even noted that he wanted to be involved in everything—"I'm one of you guys this week, so whatever you guys are doing, I am doing it right along with you."

I jokingly said that we would swim to Cuba, and within a matter of seconds, Mr. Marquardt replied, "Well then so am I."

Already, we were anxious, yearning to get to Sea Base, the Brinton Environmental Center.

Our Spirit Airlines flight 219 left the runway of O'Hare at 11:25 am. With a packed plane ride, we felt comfortable knowing that our journey was finally moving toward the south. Some of us listened to music, read books, or glimpsed through stories in magazines. Or, if you were Jeff Sneideraitis, you talked about physics or some odd academic trivia.

2:00 pm arrived, and we were now in Atlanta, Georgia. Within four hours, our crew had traveled through the two busiest airports in America, one the busiest as far as number of people—O'Hare—and the other one the busiest as far as number of arriving and departing flights—Hartsfield Jackson Atlanta International Airport.

For the first hour of our five hour journey at Hartsfield, we walked around the spacious airport. Our first objective... food. Since the flight attendants aboard flight 219 did not provide us with drinks, snacks, or any other free service, we decided that food was the important task at the current moment. Mr. Marquardt led us through the terminal, looking for any restaurants to eat at. After we reached the last gate, a dead end, we decided to turn around and walk downstairs. An hour later, we agreed upon Chipotle. Jeff decided one taco was enough because he thought that it cost \$7.90 for one taco. Spoiler alert: that is the price for three tacos. Let's just say he would be getting more food from another restaurant during the five hour layover.

We found a cozy, cushioned area to sit at to eat. For the next four hours, we sat there eating, reading, and relaxing. Some of our crew walked around the airport for a few hours. An hour before we boarded flight 403 to Fort Lauderdale, Florida, a girl sitting across from us joined our table after noticing our Boy Scout uniforms. She would be the first of many that came up to us throughout our trip asking about our journey to Sea Base. She mentioned that her friends were in Boy Scouts, and she was even wearing a Leave-No-Trace shirt. Perhaps she was a venture crew member?

Five hours went by, and we boarded flight 403. Florida was within two hours of our sights. At 8:45, we arrived in Fort Lauderdale/Hollywood, Florida. We gathered our luggage and walked outside to seventy degree temperatures at 9 in the evening, something that we knew was an impossible occurrence back at home. Our thirty minute wait for the hotel bus was put to rest by two nice hotel rooms at the Comfort Suites of Fort Lauderdale.

We unpacked our gear, and some of the crew went swimming in the hotel's pool... outside. But, the weather was perfect for a night swim. Jason tried out his GoPro, a waterproof camera that shoots stunningly clear photos and videos underwater and above water.

Before we went swimming, we ordered two pizzas to feed our hunger. At 11:30 pm, an hour and forty-five minutes after ordering, our pizza finally arrived. By this point, we weren't as hungry because it was almost bedtime, but we still finished two whole pizzas.

## **Day 2- December 26, 2014**

A hot continental breakfast got us ready to go on our second day of travel.

Davis Tours arrived at our hotel around 8:30 am. A nice coach bus awaited us, but it came with bad news as well—another two troops would be sharing the bus with us, something that was not written in the contract. This would be a small bump in the reoccurring troubles with Davis Tours.

At 9:00 am, we left the Comfort Suites and headed toward another hotel in the area to pick up another troop. After picking up one troop, we headed for the Miami International Airport, where we would pick up another troop. The third troop strolled out of the baggage claim area in red hats, reminding our crew of the troop from Naperville, Troop 81. Fortunately, it was not the Naperville troop.

Four hours later, we stopped at a McDonald's for lunch. An hour later, we arrived at the main Sea Base to drop off the first two troops. Our bus driver missed the sign clearly pointing to the entrance of the Sea Base center, but keep in mind that he was wearing headphones and was not paying attention to his driving.

Five minutes of driving in the wrong direction finally was corrected and we made it into the Sea Base parking lot. The other two troops exited the bus, ready for their week of scuba diving and fishing. Our troop remained on the bus for another hour as we headed toward the southern base of Sea Base—the Brinton

Environmental Center on Summerland Key. The journey out of the parking lot was the first step in getting to the Brinton Center; our bus driver backed out onto the highway, thankfully no traffic hit us.

At 3:15 pm, we arrived at the Brinton Center. We unloaded our luggage and stepped into the basement of the Galley (top center). We set our gear on the tables and gathered around in a circle with a worker from Sea Base, his name, Eric Rasliche, a strong German name.

He explained that our crew's captain had not arrived yet as he was still driving down from Tennessee. And our crew's mate would not be with us for the week because of his grandmother's declining health. Thus, we simply introduced our names and got through the basics before our captain would arrive.

We introduced ourselves in a grand way—we announced our name, our age, rank, and one condiment that we would want to squirt out of our belly button. Nick- BBQ sauce; Kyle- Sweet Baby Ray's; Mr. Marquardt- Mustard; Adam- Hot Sauce; Alex- Tobasco sauce; Jason- Honey Mustard; Jeff- Tobasco sauce.

Eric guided us on a tour of the base. He showed us the pergola where we would be meeting every morning for breakfast and our daily activities. He showed us where the showers were and the location of the game area (Ping-Pong and life-size Jenga).

Then, he took us to Bunker #1 of two (left building of bottom center picture). Each bunker was two stories, with four rooms on top, and

showers and storage on the first floor. In Bunker #1, we stayed in the spacious room, the Shark Shack (middle center). For the next week, we would have this room to ourselves because the winter week of Sea Base includes a limited number of participating crews, juxtaposed to the stark number of troops in the summer programs.

Eric led us to the snorkel room under our room, where we collected our snorkel gear for the week (mask, breathing tube, fins, and a mesh bag).

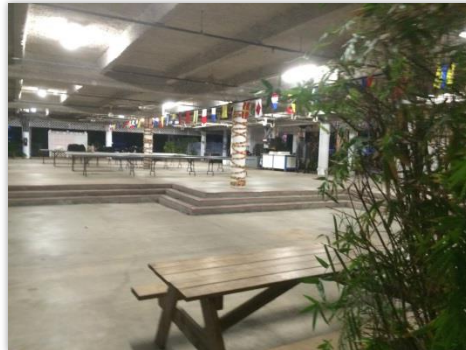
We then dived right into the week of nonstop activities with our swim test and snorkel practice. Without any doubts, our crew easily passed the 100-yard, four length swim test, 75 yards of any forward stroke, followed by 25 yards of the back stroke, ending with a few seconds of floating on your back.

Next came the best part, we got to try out our snorkel gear. There were no problems with our snorkel gear as we learned the steps in safe snorkeling.

Here are the signals used in snorkeling:

1. Fist on top of head- Are you okay, diver? OR... Yes, I am okay.
2. Field goal posts- come closer to the boat.
3. Three blasts of the air horn- come back to the boat immediately.
4. Captain waving his arms toward himself- come back to the boat at your own pace.

After a successful run through of our snorkel gear, we prepared for our first dinner at Sea Base. Before each meal, all the Sea Base crews



(only four during the winter's lone session) gather around the

flag pole for the raising or lowering of the flags. After calls, one of the Sea Base captains/mates will announce the activities for the day and will involve the crews in a sing-along or repeat-after-me song. Once that is all said and done, our crews stood on the prayer pad surrounding the flag pole and said the Sea Base prayer in unison (bottom left).

After a hearty meal of potatoes, cake, bread, salad, and some beef, all crews gathered and went to the newly built prayer hut where the captains and mates performed an opening ceremony of skits and informational talks. We learned of the local history of the Keys, the history of Florida Sea Base (FSB) and the local ecology.

Following their wonderful skits, including one in which all scouts reenacted the actions of an aquatic ecosystem, we gathered in the galley (the building where the kitchen and offices are located).

While in the galley, we were blessed to be presented with the world's best ever PowerPoint presentation.

The first presenter was Ian. Little to our knowledge, this funny, easy-going man would end up being our captain later that night as we were introduced to him. He presented the creatures, the animals, and the environment of FSB's private island, Big Munson Island, with humor. Instantly, he caught our attention.



### Sea Base Prayer:

*Bless the creatures of the sea/ Bless this person I call me/ Bless the Keys, You make so grand/ Bless the sun that warms the land/ Bless the fellowship we feel/ As we gather for this meal/ Amen*

captain, Ian Fannin, that funny man (bottom center).

Right off the bat, he realized that we were a quiet crew. As we walked toward one of the storage areas to collect our dry bags for the following day, he encouraged our group to speak up. He wanted to get to know our crew.

He mentioned that it would be essential for our crew to communicate because of our lack of a crew mate. Thus, he began cracking jokes to lighten up the mood. Perhaps some of the jokes should not be mentioned. Anyways, we began speaking up, and he immediately realized that our group was here for a reason—to get the most out of everything and to take part in any activities possible.

After getting our dry bags for the next day's island camping, Ian went over the safety rules of the fishing boat that we would be on for the entire following day.

### Day 3- December 27, 2014

We instantly realized that the food provided at Sea Base was far better than the food of Owasippe. Thus, the second day at Sea Base began with a filling breakfast.

Once we were in our swim suits, we loaded the fishing boat, a Dusky, with four 5-gallon jugs of drinking water for the island camping, and, of course, we brought along the infamous Spidey (bottom right).



By 9:30 pm, the presentation was over, and now it was time to meet our

We headed out of FSB's marina, under the US Highway 1 bridge, and into the Gulf of Mexico, where the water was calmer that morning. Three hours of slow fishing went by, only a few snappers had been caught, and we decided to break up the monotony by eating lunch.

Through the course of the morning, some of us learned how to fish in new techniques, how to kneel and pee of the edge of the bow of a boat, and how to attract fish to a boat by throwing chum into the water.

Ian noticed our boredom; we were catching small fish, nothing that would provide a good meal for us that night on the island. Thus, he provided us with an option—either risk it and fish in the seven foot waves of the Atlantic Ocean side of the bridge, or continue fishing in the calm waters of the Gulf.

We were at Sea Base for high adventure, for things we had never done before, so we did something we had never done before—we chose Ian's first option.

We risked it on the seven foot waves and we were met with a pleasant surprise, we got to hit the high waves and blast through the open waters. As our bodies jumped and jerked up and down on the seats of the bow, we were excited to be part of an adventure strongly contrasting the normality of the slow morning of fishing. Mr. Marquardt, and all of us, were experiencing something of high adventure status (top center).



### **Captain Ian's Lingo:**

*-Timmy (broadly refers to someone when they make a mistake)*

*-You can sleep when you're dead  
Timmy (when you aren't involving yourself in this once-in-a-lifetime activity then you are wasting your time and his time)*

*-You buy 'em books, you buy 'em books and all they ever do is chew on them covers*

*-Knowledge is power*

*-Hip, hip, HOORAY*

*-I just get your goat because I know where you tied it*

*-It's your adventure*



Halfway through our wavy journey, Ian decided that we would let out a fishing line from the back of the boat as we cruised the open waters, an activity known as trolling. Within thirty minutes, we had a large fish tugging on our line. Alex Garcia was called to the back of the boat, where he reeled in the line, and he successfully caught a Spanish mackerel, the largest catch of the day. With the largest catch of the day, Alex was awarded three dollars from each of us, a token of our appreciation because this fish would be part of our dinner for the night on Big Munson.

Approaching the sunset, we travelled to Big Munson Island, and we parked the boat about a football field length away from the shore to avoid the shallow bottom (bottom center).

Walking out of the boat, we realized that a fishing rod was missing. Ian came to the assumption that it flew out of one of the holders on the side of the roof during our bumpy ride. Ian would later tell his boss, a \$1,000 rod had been lost. Remember, it's a high adventure trip.

After sliding our feet across the bottom of the water to avoid the threat of stepping on a sting ray, we made it to shore of FSB's private island. Immediately, we spotted the island's Key Deer, Steve and Steve.

We saw three of them, but Ian warned us that if we saw three then we were hallucinating. That's just a way for the captains and mate of FSB to remind scouts and leaders to drink water, one of the three components of survival at FSB—swater, shoes, and sunscreen.

Our campsite had already been prepared for us—four tents, a table, a cabinet with food and cleaning supplies, a garbage bin, and a cleaning station. Ian told us to put away our gear and join him on a tour of the east side of the 111-acre island. As he took us along the shore, he pointed out plants worth noting. One of which was a red mangrove, a plant that can split open and used as a toothbrush. It works!

The sun began sinking, and on our way back to the campsite, nestled in the forest along the shore, we picked up trash that washes up to the island. The trash comes from nearby islands, the Keys, the Bahamas, and even Cuba. Havana is only 120 miles away, according to the signs at the Brinton Center.

Next up was dinner. We prepared the Spanish Mackerel, cooked it, and enjoyed the taste of our crew's catch. We aided the fish with some green beans and mac-and-cheese, four boxes of it were devoured within five minutes.

That night, Alex, Jason, Adam, Nick, and I slept atop the kayak rack, a 25-foot tower that overlooks the island and the surrounding waters. Due to its environmental preservation status, Big Munson Island is not allowed to have a permanent structure, thus it is just a kayak rack.

Without any cushiony sleeping pads, our bodies were sore the next morning as we rose to see the sunrise.

## Day 4- December 28, 2014

The sunrise provided a perfect, majestic start to our fourth day.

We woke Ian and cooked breakfast, some pancakes and fruit. Jeff's status as a chef was challenged by Ian, both of whom tried outdoing the other by not burning the pancakes. Let's just say they both had a fair share of slightly burnt pancakes.

Unfortunately, the batteries of Jason's GoPro and mine were both dead, so we have no photos

of island day. However, we have great memories of this day.

After breakfast, Ian took us on a tour of the west side of the island. During our travels on this side, Ian took us through three ecosystems within the span of fifteen seconds. This is one of a few places on earth where this is possible.

On our way through the island's salt flats, we spotted a cleared, circular area surrounded by rocks. This is the island's helicopter landing pad, which is tested twice a year by the Coast Guard for safety regulations to ensure that it is safe to land in an emergency situation.

We proceeded past the salt flats and into a slightly forested area, where we saw the world's former third largest buttonwood tree, it lost its status after lightning struck it in 1981, but it has barely rotten because of its strength.

Our tour of the island ended, and we had time to spare before our kayak ride through the Mangrove Maze. Mr. Marquardt, Jason, Alex, and I went back to the east side of the island to do further exploring. Along the way, Mr. Marquardt spotted a pair of Styrofoam buoys, a treasure that Mrs. Marquardt enjoys collecting.

Jason braved the treacherous mangrove as he made his way into the water, inching his way toward the buoys. After he could no longer walk on the roots, he stepped into the knee-deep waters. Mud, water, and gook covered

Jason's legs, but for a good cause. Mrs. Marquardt would become two buoys richer by the end of the catch.

We ate white chicken and fruit for lunch, packed up our gear, and headed toward the kayak rack to begin our tour of the island's waterways.

We got into four kayaks, two in each. As soon as our kayaks graced the water, Ian told us that we would be finding our own way through the maze. Once someone thought they found the narrow entrance into the maze, Ian insisted that they yell "MUNSON." If they were correct, they

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*Ian took us through three ecosystems  
within the span of fifteen seconds.  
This is one of a few places on earth  
where this is possible.*

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would be notified. Luckily, I was in the same kayak as Ian—I didn't worry about getting lost. The small opening in the middle of the island, where our Mangrove Maze adventure began, can be seen in the left center picture (photo courtesy of Seabase.org).

Halfway through our troubles in the maze, we found a wide opening, which led us to a channel that split Big Munson from the neighboring island, Little Palm Island. This island hosts a luxurious resort that costs upwards of \$800 a night and \$400 per foot of your parked boat.

We took a swim through this channel, and some of us were tempted to fulfill one of the tasks of the FSB Triple Crown, which consists of 1) peeing, 2) pooping and 3) puking in the water. Unfortunately, only one of those tasks was fulfilled by us. But Ian claims to have done number two in the channel in front of the millionaire guests previously in his times as a captain.



Two hours, and many frustrating minutes later, we made it back to the campsite.

We took our gear and shuffled back out to the boat, a hundred yards offshore.

Upon our arrival back at the Brinton Center, we unloaded our gear, cleaned the boat, and headed straight for dinner.

During dinner, Ian surprised us with something we were anxious to do, waterboarding. He told us to stay in our swim suits after dinner because we would be waterboarding from the marina, under the bridge, and into the Gulf of Mexico side (right center).

Our hour long waterboarding experience was a thrill. It took us through the pitch black night and over the clear waters of the Gulf. On the way back to the marina, Jason spotted a small shark. Ian paddled in his kayak for safety measures, and he let us free to adventure into whatever areas we wished to explore.

Personally, I felt this to be one of the most relaxing activities of the trip, but it was also one of my favorites.

## **Day 5- December 29, 2014**

Sailing day arrived.

This was expected to be one of the prime activities of the trip, and it lived up to those expectations.

One of Ian's fellow captains drove us out to Munson Rock, where our sailboat was anchored. We boarded the racing sailboat and prepared for



an adventure.

The forecast for this day called for some windy conditions. Perfect. We were going to be sailing through some rough waters.

Ian began our journey as the captain, but within an hour, Alex was taking the helms and guiding us through the choppy waters.

Alex lived up to the quote, "a smooth sea never made a skillful sailor."

He took us past the seven knot barrier, something that Ian proudly stated only the captains and FSB workers are capable of doing.

Soon enough, Alex was dipping the bottom rails of the sailboat into the waters, and we were experiencing some jaw-dropping moments (bottom center).

Without a mate, our crew was relied upon to take care of the minute tasks required to keep the sailboat running smoothly, or as our crew was doing, running it fast through the wind and strong currents (second from top, center).

Ian was impressed with Alex's capabilities and the rest of our crew's responsiveness when he needed something done. But, he also enjoyed calling us Timmy whenever we made a mistake. He claims that calling a person Timmy softens the blow and adds humor because of its generality, its common name. Ian's humor is seen in the second from bottom photo.

Next up at the helms was Jeff (top center). He too took our sailboat to the edge of the waters, dipping the bottom rails into the ocean. Soon enough, Ian dubbed Alex and Jeff the "danger twins" because of their high-risk sail techniques and because of their close bond as friends.

Around eleven o'clock, our crew made it to Looe Key, the



third most dived site in the world.

We encountered close sightings of jellyfish as we jumped into the coveted reef. Thankfully nobody was stung, or else a friend would have to pee on the stung person to cure the sting.

Everyone was able to explore the underwater beauty of this reef.

Lunch on the sailboat followed, along with some seasickness by Alex and Jason.

Jason lunged over the side of the sailboat and puked, relieving himself of the seasickness that was getting to him, and he instantly declared, "I feel a thousand times better already."

Our sailing adventure ended on a less risky note as we made it back to Munson Rock, but it was still an adventure as we navigated our way past Aids Monkey island, an island used to test aids on monkeys back in the early 80's. This testing was met by fear and outrage from the Florida Keys

people, thus it was shut down after only two years in operation.

Once again, we arrived back at the Brinton Center just in time for dinner.



*Smooth seas never made a skillful sailor.*





This evening's agenda called for a night snorkel. After dinner, we boarded the catamaran boat, *BSA Scoutmaster II* (pictured in the background of top center photo).

After our stroll through the Atlantic Ocean, the captain realized that the visibility of the water was zero, thus we decided to turn the snorkel (night snorkel) into an elongated night boat ride.

## Day 6- December 30, 2014

Key West day arrived within what seemed to be a fast week. Only two days left to treasure this special week.

After a morning of waterboarding with the other crews, we loaded into the van and headed 23 miles to Key West.

Along the way, we stopped at a little-known site, a bat tower. Built in the early 1900's, the tower was supposed to be a shelter and home for bats that were imported into the Keys, but not one bat has ever lived in the tower during its one-hundred plus years of existence.

We made it to Key West within an hour and our first stop was the beach and park (top right) connected to Fort Taylor, a fort that took part in the Civil War, now serving as a historical (Ian prefers the term hysterical) landmark. While at the park, we ate lunch, following our tour of the fort (top left).



After our hot dog, hamburger lunch, we drove to the southernmost point in the continental United States to take our picture in front of the infamous sewer pipe (bottom right). This spot is falsely titled, but it is close to the actual southernmost tip.

We roamed through the streets of Key West in the van, which took us to a secret entrance leading into the Mallory Square, the famous site of sunset street performances. We decided this would be our meeting place come sunset.

We drove to the next point on our trip, Mile 0.

According to Ian, the sign declaring this special location is the most stealed, most sought after, sign in America. Thus, we deemed it necessary to take our picture in front of it (bottom left).

Our crew split up around 2:00 pm to venture through the streets and shops of this storied town.

At five o'clock, we met back up at Mallory Square to watch performers juggle fire, balance on objects, play the guitar and violin, and the most enticising of all, the man who speaks to cats (center).

The cat whisperer, a man stuck in the 60's (according to Ian), entertained us, but he creeped us out, so we began our venture down the streets of Key West to find a place to sit down and eat.



We agreed upon Harpoon Harry's, a small, uncrowded restaurant near the wharf.

After a tasty meal, we headed toward the towering Christmas tree decorated in buoys and other nautical treasures. Right across the street from the tree was the famous Key Lime pie bakery. We indulged in the delicious pie and headed down the streets of Key West toward the van to conclude Key West day.

## Day 7- December 31, 2014

After an action packed week, we were ready to slow down the pace with a day of snorkeling and swimming. First on the list was snorkeling. We took the *BSA Scoutmaster II* back out of the FSB Marina to pick up the Out Island Adventure crews on Big Munson Island. These scouts had slept on the island the entire week, and they were ready to get away from it and snorkel in Looe Key (top center).

Our captain took us out to Looe Key, but this time we hit the other side of the reef, the side with little to no jellyfish.

With no jellyfish to worry about, all of us were free sailing as we ventured through the beautiful,



stunning reefs. We explored the reefs and were amazed to see a six foot long shark, hundreds of yellow-tailed fish, and various other sea creatures. After a good hour of snorkeling (seen in the picture to the left), we came back into the boat, upon the command of the captains and mates, and we ate a tasty, warm lunch-- pulled pork sandwiches.

During our lunch, we spotted a grouper nearing the edge of the boat. Some of us jumped in the

ocean to get close to this 200 pound fish. This small moment was a perfect representation of our journey—there was something interesting, something new to see and do everywhere we were.

After dropping off the other crews from New Jersey, we took the boat back to FSB, where we unloaded, cleaned the boat, and boarded the van to go to Bahia (Bah-EE-ah) Honda State Park.

While at the state park, we walked on the old bridge linking the Keys to Key West. This narrow bridge has eroded over time, and parts have broken off (as seen in the picture below).



Ian then took us through the gravel pathways of the state park, pointing out the sea grape plant, one of only two plants in the United States that can be shipped through the USPS.

We ventured toward the opposite end of the state park, where we walked along the beach and dropped our gear in a little nest of trees (seen



below) to snorkel, swim, and relax in the sand. Two fun hours were spent in the ocean, and we packed our gear back up and headed back to base, but after a quick stop at Piggly Wiggly for some deserts for New Year's Eve.

When we got back to the Brinton Center, we changed into our Hawaiiin shirts because it was Luau time. We gathered around the flag pole, lowered the flags, said the FSB prayer, and then took part in campwide games.

First up was a FSB version of tug-the-rope. Two people opposed each other at a time, each standing on a box on opposite ends of the beach volleyball court. Whoever fell off the box, or let go of the rope first, lost.

Next up was a game where everyone linked arms and ran around a trash bin in the center, trying to avoid the inevitable action of touching the trash bin. If you touched it, you were out, or if two people's arms disconnected, they were out.

To end the activities, we played the limbo, but before each walk under the limbo, you had to perform a sea creature pose and the captains/mates had to guess the animal.

After a tasty dinner of chicken, mahi mahi, cake with pudding frosting, and salad, each group split up to discuss their FSB experience with their captain and mate.

Ian took us into the bottom of our sailboat. For almost two hours, we discussed the bushes, thorns, and roses of our trip. In other words, each of us described what we thought could be improved upon, what we thought was our favorite part, and what we took out of the trip (skillfully and mentally).

All of us had little complains, mainly aimed toward the bus company, but there was nothing bad about the trip. The only thorn we could think of was a better transition on the first day between Eric and Ian.

Our roses were numerous. We enjoyed the entire experience. Every part shined through in our memories and every part was amazing.

Each of us gained insight into activities we had never before been comfortable or even familiar with—sailing, snorkeling, waterboarding, kayaking, even fishing.

Ian wrapped it up by thanking our crew for making his week worthwhile. Coming into the week, he wasn't sure how things would turn out because this was only the second time in FSB history (its been in existence since 1981), that a crew has worked solely with a captain, and not a mate, for the entire week. But, he said that we made him feel like he was part of something special. He even noted that what we did on fishing day and the sailing day were unbelievable because only captains and FSB workers were capable of hitting seven knots and fishing in seven foot waves, until we arrived. He thanked us for cooperating on every little detail to make the week run smoothly.

And we were all glad that we didn't have a mate because it gave us more responsibilities and more experience with the little things that make a sailboat run, a fishing boat operate, etc.

After our long talk, we went back to Shark Shack to prepare for our Luau skit. With little preparation, we were able to pull off a good skit that highlighted our week at camp. Anytime Ian did something wrong, he reminded us to blame it on our captain Eric Rasliche (not our actual captain), a strong German name (spoiler: Eric is Canadian, eh!).

Our New Year's Eve ended with a celebration of the new year, at 10:00 pm (as seen below).



## Day 8- January 1, 2015

We woke up for an early breakfast and packed away our gear to prepare for our 8:00 bus ride back to the Fort Lauderdale Airport.

After eating a quick breakfast, we had time to spare, so we decided to end our trip at FSB by bridge fishing. Unfortunately, we didn't catch anything.

By 8:15, the bus still hadn't arrived. Come 9:00am, we still sat in the basement of the Galley, waiting.

Mr. Marquardt finally got ahold of the owner of Davis Tours. He claimed that we weren't scheduled for the day, but then he backtracked and said that another bus company was contracted to pick us up and they never did, neither did they contact us to tell us that they would not be

showing up. Jim Davis went on to say that his own company's bus was broken down and that they had no way of transporting us to Fort Lauderdale.

The Brinton Center leader, Scott, saved the day by allowing Ian to take one of the FSB vans to drive us back to the airport.

Thank you, Ian.

We headed out around 10:30am and were on our way home to the cold weather of Chicago. Like always, Ian was cracking jokes and making the journey fun even when that meant driving on the highway for more than three hours.

We stopped at a delicious hamburger joint for lunch, then we stopped at the Sawgrass Recreational Area to go on an airboat ride through the Florida Everglades (top center).

On our thirty minute ride, we witnessed the presence of an American Alligator (bottom left). Our captain (bottom right) put us in a showdown with the alligator as he described his ten-year knowledge of this creature; he is a zoologist who loves working with alligators.

We took a look around the Sawgrass Recreational Area after the boat ride. Each of us held a baby alligator; we saw captive leopards, Florida panthers, tortoises and even snakes.

Unfortunately, Ian had to drive us another thirty minutes to the airport. It was time to leave our new friend, but we were all ready—somewhat—to go back home.

After saying goodbye to our captain—our admiral, Ian—we went through security and sat down in the airport for the next five hours awaiting our flight home.

Once again, we encountered a scout family at the airport. We met a teenage scout from Galena, who went to Seabase with his father and troop the previous summer. They knew of Grant's Pilgrimage and were delighted to hear about Adam's, Nick's, and my Eagle projects.

At 1:30 the next morning, our plane touched down at O'Hare.

Thank you to everyone for making this the best scouting trip of my career!

Yours in scouting,

Kyle LaHucik

