

Irish cheer in Harrisburg

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Once a year comes a day that brings people together to celebrate their heritage, wear their best green clothes, and announce the arrival of spring. Known as a day for not just those of Irish heritage, but all cultural backgrounds, St. Patrick's Day is a worldwide celebration full of festivities, parades, and parties. While some may suggest that March 17 is a drinker's holiday (some would suggest every holiday is a drinker's holiday!), it is much more. It is a celebration of heritage and history in remembrance of St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland.

Harrisburg celebrated St. Patrick's Day by holding its sixth annual St. Patrick's Day Parade on March 19th. According to the parade organizers, its intention is to "...reflect the Irish contribution to the history of Central Pennsylvania and this nation in areas of government, law enforcement, fire service,

education, health, and the military." The parade typically involves over 10,000 participants, including spectators and community leaders, who observe and honor the Irish heritage." The parade committee members go the extra mile to make sure the parade involves and benefits the entire central Pennsylvania community.

The Harrisburg St. Patrick's Day Parade is held every year on either the Saturday before or following St. Patrick's Day. The parade showcases various organizations, businesses, and bands from the Central Pennsylvania area, as well as several out-of-state clubs. Parade participants are divided into four groups, with each group named after one of the provinces of Ireland: Leinster, Munster, Connacht and Ulster. This year's parade route took participants past the Capitol and Strawberry Square to Second Street, through the heart of downtown Harrisburg, and back up North Street to the Capitol Building.

This year's parade included the

musical stylings of the famous Mummers, best known for their participation in Philadelphia's New Year Parade. Also included were several Irish Dance clubs, four high school bands, local news stations, several bagpipe bands, Elvis, historic fire trucks, classic cars, and much more. The most prominent guests at the parade were the Honorary Grand Marshalls, Pennsylvania Governor Edward G. Rendell and his wife, US 3rd Circuit Court of Appeal Judge Marjorie Rendell, who joined Harrisburg Mayor Steven Reed on the dais.

The parade provides great publicity for the city of Harrisburg while adding a substantial boost to the city's economy. An illustrative case in point is that every pub and restaurant in the general proximity of the parade route was filled wall-to-wall with people, from two hours before the parade started to many hours after it ended. However, the parade benefit is far more than a simple economic boost. It is about bringing together people of all ethnic backgrounds to have a



Photo by Jim Dougherty/Capital Times

Holiday revelers flaunt their green and Irish garb in downtown Harrisburg during the annual Harrisburg St. Patrick's Day Parade.

good time and enjoy themselves, while celebrating their heritage. After all, everyone is Irish on St. Patrick's Day.

Next year, celebrate the Irish in you and see the Harrisburg St. Patrick's Day Parade. It is sure to

be bigger and better, even though the 2005 Harrisburg St. Patrick's Day Parade will be hard to beat. Better yet, let's demonstrate our Penn State pride while we celebrate our heritage and participate in the 2006 parade;

our Penn State Blue and White will blend very nicely with Irish green.

Check out the Harrisburg St. Patrick's Day Parade website at: www.harrisburgirishparade.com.

Spring break, marine corps style

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While most of the student body was at the beach or putting in overtime during spring break (going to sleep in warm beds), the Marines from Echo Company, 2nd Battalion, 25th Marines were taking part in Operation Battle Griffin (going to sleep in cold sleeping bags).

Formerly the largest cold-weather, Cold War training operation, Battle Griffin remains a large, multi-national training operation. Participating nations include the neutral Swiss, Sweden, Norway, France, and a slue of other allies.

For all the conspiracy theorists, do not worry, this in no way coincides with any rumors about attacking North Korea or a possible future overthrow of "The Director," in all of his Marxist directorial glory...

We mustered on February 23, packing and repacking as the gear list was updated (repeatedly) and loaded our gear onto the buses. Then we were off to the airport and onto a plane with a stop in Ireland (no consumption of Guinness or any extra "liquid courage" was allowed). We landed late, at night in the Trondheim Airport in Norway. Afterwards, we went to an empty plane hangar, staged our gear, and hit the rack for an hour or two before waking up and nearly breaking our tailbones and knees (there was a few inches of ice on the deck) for chow the next morning.

While Marine Corps chow halls lack "quantity," "taste," "service," and "atmosphere;" the Norwegians suffered from the same disorder, but albeit at a far smaller level. They had selection. Salami three times is a better "selection" than so-called "Yakasushi," or whatever they call it on base...

After a day and a half of acclimatization, we were off to the field for a three-day training operation. I was detached from my platoon and assigned to Scout Skiers; we were all motivated, expert skiers (sic!) and volunteers, ready to train harder and longer than the rest. While the rest of the company was running embark and debark training with the Norwegian Battle Vehicles, we Scout Skiers were skiing. When they were digging in their positions, we were skiing. Or sleeping...

After the three days, we returned

to the hangar to prepare our gear for the nine-day stretch that lay ahead of us. After a scenic, two-hour drive to link up with the rest of the Battalion, Scout Skiers detached from the company and attached with Headquarters and Support, linking up with the Scout Sniper Platoon. With no mission for us just yet, we climbed in our tents and bags and enjoyed the 17 degree temperature. After that, it was continuous chow, hydration, and movement to stay warm. In other words, we skied

proved our tactical proficiency and fitness was far above any other fighting unit in the world (of course).

After two days of administrative duties in the hangar, Norwegian salami on rye, and gear packing (this time only one list was distributed), the Marines of E Company went on liberty in the city of Trondheim, Norway.

Trondheim is a millennia-old city, and is also the original seat for the Norwegian kingdom and capital city. King (also Saint)



The Marines from Echo Company went on liberty in the Norway's capital city, Trondheim, and experienced below 20-degree temperatures and Norwegian beer.

up and down a mountain.

The large-scale operation thundered northward, up to approximately 50 miles from the Arctic Circle. While there, we were patrolling and combing gaps in our line, acting as the eyes and ears of the 1st line of defense by searching for enemy scouts, troops, and vehicles attempting to attack our command. Riots control and peacekeeping, while engaging insurgents and guerilla units in a cold weather environment was some good training. We enjoyed a motivating steady downpour of rain until the end of operations. Echo Company, as usual, was the tip of the spear, one step above the rest and ten steps ahead of them... Some things never change...

Battle Griffin went well for the Marine units there. As usual, we



Photos courtesy of Marko Primorac

The Marines enjoyed a Rosenberg/Malmo soccer game in Norway. Rosenberg won 2-1.

Olav founded it in 997 on the river Nidelva. It is a very modern, neat, orderly, somewhat pricey, but extremely friendly metropolis. The various cafes served excellent cappuccinos and lattes; although, to my outrage, the "Scottish Bar" did not have any Scottish ale's, but English ones (William Wallace must be turning in his grave).

Over all, the Norwegian beer was alright (a little lighter than I expected for northern Europeans); but, since I was breaking my New Year's resolution anyway, I returned to my life-blood, Guinness.

Marines were all over, and they engaged in the usual duties and activities of "cultural emissaries" of the U.S. We loser married and or de facto married Marines went on a cultural tour (instead of consuming exorbitant amounts of alcohol), taking pictures of the sights and sounds of Norway's third largest city. We hunted down the Harley shop to buy romantic gifts for our ladies, and then went to the Rosenberg (Trondheim) - Malmö (Stockholm) soccer game. Rosenberg won 2-1, and the three Malmö fans that showed had to take their 75 foot sign down in shame. Then we ball-and-chain Marines went to an Irish bar to cap of the visit. Trondheim was a great city, and Norway was a great country to visit. As I told my "Mountain Buddies" in the pizzeria while consuming brew and pizza in the stadium, "If this is socialism, then I like it."

After the signature physical altercation before disembarking, the buses returned to the hangar at about 3:30, we slept a few hours, loaded gear on buses, got on them, loaded the planes (I believe the carrier was "Duct Tape Airlines"), and flew home. That makes country 16 for me; twenty-something for Sergeant Nink... You really can't beat a paid vacation (with yelling).

On a serious note, it is our duty as Americans to step up to the plate and take some initiative; maybe not the initiative to join the military like we did, but to give a hand when it is needed.



Marko Primorac (third from the left) relaxes with his "Mountain Buddies" while they enjoy pizza, brew and lighthearted political commentary.