



Jamie (standing left) had her photo taken at the Einstein Memorial Statue with the other tour participants sponsored by Graham County Electric Cooperative. They include Kara Bryce, chaperone Tiffany Woods, chaperone Clint Woods (seated) and Ethan McRae (above).

A Washington Youth Tour Experience:

They Have Faith In Us

By Jamie Claridge

My face was glued to the window and I could hardly keep my mouth from opening as big as my eyes when Brian, our bus driver, drove us into Washington, D.C. I was there for a week of unforgettable experiences, provided by Graham County Electric Cooperative as part of the annual Youth Tour. Electric cooperatives from all over America send students to the Capitol to learn about government and cooperatives while visiting a kaleidoscope of famous sights.

In the Archives, we got to see for ourselves the documents whose inspired words led America to become the powerful and free country that she is. While visiting memorials, we had the opportunity to pay tribute to some of those men who penned and made possible the promises providing hope to the millions of people who have benefited from their moving words. Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, George Washington and others whose extraordinary lives and dedication helped shape our nation.

Forever emblazoned in my mind will be the picture of a small boy in a suit, crying over a flag-draped coffin. The loved one he lost joined the ranks of soldiers laid to rest between rows of headstones eternally standing at attention in Arlington National Cemetery. They provide a powerful reminder of the immense sacrifice required of extraordinary men and women to preserve the freedom we enjoy.

On Father's Day, we traveled to Mt. Vernon, the home of the father of our country. The melody of birds singing and wind rustling the leaves of majestic trees bridged the chasm of time, providing a unique insight into the life of George Washington. It was easy to imagine him riding a horse through the extensive grounds and I realized that behind the incredible leader who accomplished the impossible, was a normal man who served his country by stepping up to do what was required of him.

It was then that I realized why the Electric Co-ops take the time and the money each year to send a bunch of high-school students to Washington, D.C. They believe in us. They have faith we will experience these places and feelings, learn from them, and return home better prepared to live our lives serving our country, states, towns, and families. They trust that we,

like those who have gone before, will step up as leaders to uphold the liberty we as citizens of the United States of America have inherited.