

RALLY FOR AMERICA COUNTERS ANTI-WAR DEMONSTRATIONS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

The national media has extensively covered the anti-war rallies that have taken place across our country and the world, but aside from local coverage, there has been barely a peep about these events which the Chicago Tribune has admitted served as a “loud rebuttal to the more numerous but generally smaller anti-war rallies.”

Our Spring Break had been entirely uneventful, so my friends Jim, Bob, and I decided to fight back against the vocal minority who were against the war with Iraq by attending Glenn Beck’s Rally for America in Philadelphia (or technically, Valley Forge). I got up early (although later than I would have for church), and finally headed out at 10:00 for the 1 p.m. rally. It is a good thing we left so early because God apparently did not like the fact that we skipped church to attend the rally.

I picked up Jimbo and Bob and we hit the turnpike leaving our Lehigh Valley homes due south. The directions that were given at Glenn Beck’s website were not exactly the greatest ever (probably from MapQuest). As a result we went by the exit that we were supposed to go down (in fact, I’m not sure we ever figured out exactly what exit the directions were talking about). We got on I-95 with our goal of circling back around to I-76. We managed to somehow make a huge circle around Philadelphia in the process.

We finally righted our path (kind of) through some ad-libbed directions from Jim. However, we again missed an exit because the highway we were looking for apparently was not connected to the highway we were on. We turned around, and of course our exit wasn’t on the other side of the road, necessitating another u-turn.

At long last we made it to Valley Forge. You would think that this would be the end of our troubles. Alas, it wasn’t. We drove around the park a bit and finally just decided to walk in a random direction following some other people we saw with flags. Unfortunately, they were just as lost as we were. We made it to some sort of a memorial arch and took some time to gather ourselves because we saw no sign of any rally. After almost following a group of people across a field, we allied ourselves with another group of people who said they were following *us*. (We figured someone would be as I was carrying a 3 x 5 foot flag with me).

We ended up getting directions from a local and hitchhiking with our new friends in the back of someone's pick up truck. Driving down we realized our plight of having to walk this entire way back. Many of the others that had to walk asked us if we had any more room. Sadly we didn't, but we were dropped off by the gates of the Freedom Foundation feeling a little bad for the people who drove us because they actually had to find a parking space somewhere. We, on the other hand, were in! We parted with our new friends and found a place with a semi-visible view on the left side.

It technically was a "pro-America" rally, not a "pro-war" rally, but it was clear what side of the debate this crowd was on. Signs included, "Free Iraq," "Glenn Beck – Real American Hero," (a take on Glenn's "Real American A-holes" segment) "Freedom's not free," signs in support of our troops and President Bush, in memory of the victims of the September 11 attacks, and our personal favorite, "I'm French. I'm sorry!"

We got there just as a police officer was singing Lee Greenwood's "Proud to be an American." There were several speakers from the local talk radio station as well as an ex-Marine who is also a contributor to Fox News Channel. Finally, Glenn Beck came as the event's main speaker. He gave an inspirational speech about his belief in the "Norman Rockwell America." Interspersed between chants of "U-S-A! U-S-A!," he spoke of the greatness of our nation (he Desert Storm as an example of our troops restoring our faith in them, but also restoring their faith in us after their shoddy treatment following Vietnam) and encouraged us to pray for President Bush (in a discussion with President Bush's father, George H. W. Bush said that his son could literally feel the prayers Americans were saying for him, but he could also feel when they stopped after the memories of 9/11 started to fade).

The event ended with the singing of "America the Beautiful" and the waving of many flags. The crowd then dispersed and we began our VERY long trek back to the car. I'm not sure exactly how long the walk took, but it was definitely longer than the trip down to the rally. Unfortunately, none of us had actually paid attention to the way that we drove down so we weren't even sure which way to go at points, all the while we were trying to dodge the endless piles of rabbit droppings.

At long last, our flag-toting heroes (that's us) found their way back to the arch. Then we walked for ANOTHER fifteen minutes to get to the car.

We took a brief pit stop once in the car to eat an apple and then began the drive home (which included yet ANOTHER wrong turn by yours truly, and Jimbo being hit on by a high school sophomore in Taco Bell).

Despite all the mishaps, it was well worth the journey to see ten thousand plus gather in favor of our President, our military, and our country as we were on the brink of war. It was definitely refreshing to see “real” Americans with flags still flying on virtually every house in my own neighborhood instead somewhat hostile atmosphere at Penn State.