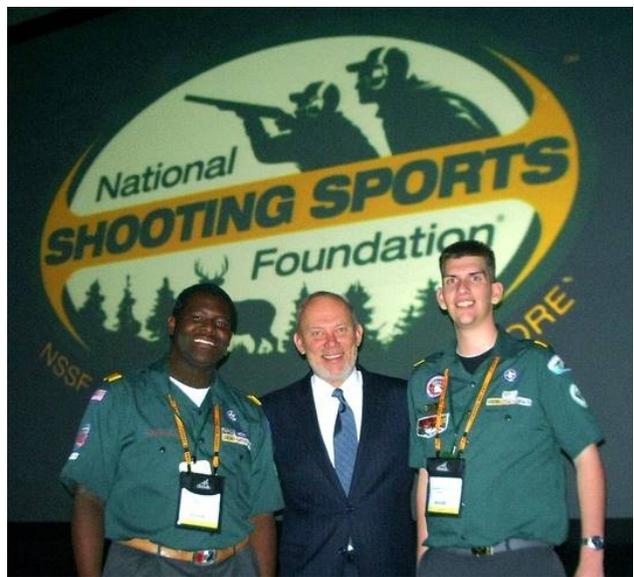


28th Annual National Shooting Sports Foundation SHOT Show

Written By: Brian Casper, Western Region President

Every year the National Shooting Sports Foundation hosts the shooting sports industry's largest convention known as the Shooting, Hunting and Outdoor Trade (SHOT) Show. Every year Bill Evans (Associate Venturing Director) and Larry Cunningham (National Outdoor Committee) attend this show in support of Venturing. They also invite two national officers and this year they invited me (Brian Casper, Western Region President) and Paul Lee (Central Region President). Also attending this event representing Venturing was retired scouting professional Richard Gritt. Through a sponsorship for the National Rifle Association (NRA) Paul and I were able to attend this event.

This year the SHOT Show was held in Las Vegas, Nevada at the Las Vegas Convention Center and the five of us spend four days in this incredible city. As you may know, Venturing has a strong relationship with the shooting sports industry; mainly because of the unique opportunities Venturing creates, specifically shooting handguns and hunting. The purpose of the trip was two fold; first to thank many of our existing sponsors and supports and second, to work on creating new partnerships with companies.



Central Region Venturing President Paul Lee,
President of the National Shooting Sports Foundation, and
Western Region Venturing President Brian Casper

There is only one word to describe this show: HUGE! Here are just a few stats describing the size of this event: 615,000 net square feet of exhibit space (the equivalent of 15 football fields), attendees from all 50 states and over 75 countries, 13 miles of aisle carpet, 4 million pounds of freight on the show floor, and if you personally visited everyone of the 1,800 exhibitors at the show, you would only have 72 seconds to spend with each one of them. My initial impression was it would be just a gun show for shooting sports and hunting, but it was so much more than that. It featured everything from air soft guns to law enforcement assault rifles, everything you would ever need while hunting or camping, to police hand cuffs to bullet proof vests. TASER International, the makers of the taser gun, were even allowing people to be shot with the taser so they could experience the feeling of 50,000 volts. I thought about doing it but decided I would wait until I was in the police academy. It featured complete equipment for paintball and everything that someone in the shooting and camping industry would want. If they make it, it was there. There was no way that we could possibly see everything!

During our time there we met with many of our current supporters including the National Shooting Sports Foundation (NSSF) and the National Rifle Association (NRA). Paul and I had the honor of meeting the NSSF President, Doug Painter, and the 1st Vice-President of the NRA, John Sigler. We also met a soldier who received the Medal of Honor in the Vietnam along with the co-founder of Gerber Knife Company.

Every night we did something different in the city. We arrived on Wednesday night and after meeting up with our advisors at the hotel we went out to dinner. Paul and I had never had sushi so we all went to a Japanese restaurant. Since both of us are going to Japan in March we thought this would be a great place to learn about this new food. By the end of the meal we had eaten tuna, salmon, crab, shrimp, natto, uni (sea urchin) and green tea ice cream. The next night (Thursday) Paul and I were invited to attend the NSSF Annual State of the Industry dinner held at the Las Vegas Hilton. During this dinner, country singer superstar Lee Ann Womack performed for the crowd. Paul and I managed to work our way up to the stage and end up with five feet of Lee Ann Womack during most of her show. We even held got to shake her hand at the end of the show.

Friday night was our night that we had no responsibilities so Paul and I decided to go and visit the world famous Las Vegas Strip. We started the evening by go to the Stratosphere Hotel and Casino and rode the world's highest thrill ride, the Big Shot. The top of the Stratosphere Tower is around 1000 feet from the ground and the Big Shot launches you another 200 feet into the air overlooking the Las Vegas Strip. We did the ride right at sunset and it was one of the most incredible views you could get of Las Vegas. From there we had dinner with a local Venturer from Las Vegas Area Council, who I happened to meet while I attended the council's first Venturing event last October, the Ultimate Venturing Challenge. After this we decided that we wanted to walk as much of the Strip as we could that night and go into every major hotel and casino. We started at Treasure Island and walked south and visited every major hotel down to New York New York, which was about two miles south of Treasure Island. We decided to call it a night and finish the rest the next night. So on Saturday night, which was our last night in Vegas, we started at New York New York and visited the five hotels at the southern end of the strip and then walked back up the Strip to do souvenir shopping and catch a cab back to the hotel.

During the SHOT Show we met a lot of really nice people, all of which believe in the scouting movement. We had Eagle Scouts constantly coming up to us and telling us that they have fond memories of scouting and thanked us for our service to the organization. We were both blown away how many people there were once involved in Scouting, and especially how many are still involved in the organization. It was great to meet so many Scouters at a non scouting event. Paul and I had an extremely great time and we were honored to be able to represent Venturing, and the Boy Scouts of America, at a place were people truly believe scouting is a great organization.