

## **David Gomez**

You invited us to write about our school memories and what I think of is how I made so many unforgettable memories from the TAKS Trips. It is hard to choose only one.

There are two, however, that stand out from all the other memories.

The first one is from when I was on an American Airlines plane, just a few minutes from landing in Hawaii. I looked out the window and the sun was just about to set. The Pacific Ocean looked dark blue and then orange where it met the horizon, just at the sky. I was able to see an island that had thousands of tiny lights. These lights were from cars, houses, and businesses. It was beautiful scenery!

The second memory is from the trip to Canada. I remember that the hotel we stayed in was so big, they it had a water park inside it. I got to my room, which was really fancy. Then I opened the curtain and I saw the Niagara Falls. It was lit up (decorated) with green, red, and purple lights. It is undoubtedly a place to which I want to again travel; sometime soon.

**Era:** Tornillo ISD Job: 2002 - 2012

**Relationship:** Our TAKS Trip Program was Paul's method of rewarding students who performed well on the standardized test regimen of Texas. The school district covered all costs of these trips; except for meals. As you can quickly ascertain, when reading stories from Tornillo students, these trips were profoundly influential as to their perception of their school experience.

After a few years, Paul established a higher level of trip options, for those who achieved a, "Commended" status on all sections of their test. Different grade levels had differing numbers of sections. However, grades 8, 10, and 11 had a four section test. A Commended score on ALL four sections qualified a student to pick from a trip to Hawaii – or, to New York, Boston, and Niagara Falls.

David was a terrific student. Coming from a family of modest means, Paul and Marla paid David's "deposit" (refunded) money on several occasions. He was so gifted, academically, that he actually qualified for BOTH, "4-Commended" trips; traveling to both Hawaii and New York.

He is also the 2015 recipient of the annual Paul & Marla Vranish scholarship.

Truly, he was a terrific kid, now a Sailor, who we follow on Facebook.