



Ice cream stop was a real treat

Captain Sundae owner stunned by presidential visit

By [ROBERT GOLD](#)

The middle-aged man motioned Karen Van Dam to the side window at Captain Sundae.

Van Dam, who owns the Douglas Avenue ice cream shop with her husband Tom, recognized the customer -- he'd stopped in for a treat a less than an hour earlier on Monday.

But this time, the man didn't want to order ice cream. He wanted to tell her the president of the United States would be coming to her shop.

Van Dam could tell no one but her husband.

And before any visit by Bush, the spot had to be scoped out.

With a quick motion, several Secret Service officers crossed Douglas to her store.

"And I saw these blue suits everywhere," Van Dam said.

They checked out everything, looking through the shop's freezers to customers and onlookers waiting for President Bush's motorcade to pass by.

And before she knew it, George W. Bush stopped in for an ice cream sundae before his campaign rally at the Ottawa County Fairgrounds.

"I was shaking for an hour," Van Dam said about the chance to meet Bush.

Posing for pictures with customers and people waiting for the motorcade, Bush stayed for about 10 minutes.

Park Township resident Jerry Cooper had dropped off his wife, Gayle, at the fairgrounds but then decided to stop at Captain Sundae to watch the motorcade pass by. He ended up shaking Bush's hand.

"I didn't know I would get that close of a glimpse," he said.

After taking pictures with the crowd, Bush went up to the Captain Sundae ordering window and asked what was good.

Van Dam suggested the "Tommy Turtle," the shop's signature sundae of vanilla ice cream, hot fudge, hot caramel, butter pecans, whipped cream and cherries.

While she tried to give him the \$2.50 sundae for free, Van Dam said the president told them he was legally obligated to pay for it.

So, when he pulled out his wallet and gave them a \$10 bill, Van Dam decided to charge him 25 cents. Bush gave Van Dam and cashier Nicole Prince a two dollar tip, which they split.

Prince said she will quickly frame her dollar from the president.

"I can't wait to tell my friends at Hope," said Prince, a 19 year-old sophomore at Hope College.

When Prince heard last week that Bush was speaking in Holland, she hoped to go. She and her friends even joked about shaking his hand, but she knew she had to go to work.

In the end, she got a handshake, a dollar and a picture with Bush.

"I was going anyway to vote for Bush," she said. "But meeting him was a bonus."

While Bush was there for only about 10 minutes, Van Dam said it was a lasting memory.

"It was amazing," she said.

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