

January 31, 1994

C-Span
400 N. Capital Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear C-Span:

I am a regular viewer and have been enjoying traveling by television with the C-Span bus. I especially enjoy glimpses of what parts of the country look like.

I live in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania--known as "The Christmas City," and would like to suggest that your bus visit Bethlehem, either during the month of August or at Christmas time. There would be a great deal of interest to fill your frames, and there would be other benefits.

During the last two weeks of August, we have an outdoor festival called Musikfest. It features free musical and art events staged all over the downtown area, and it attracts more than 400,000 visitors. We sometimes have train car museums from the Smithsonian Institution in Washington that the public tours as part of the festival, and the C-Span bus could be such an exhibit. This is not a small event, and it is an interesting one for varied reasons. The talent ranges from professional musicians to local amateurs who provide continuous musical programming from morning until night. Most of those doing the work are community volunteers. One part of the festival features an immense tent sheltering a band brought from Germany or Austria playing "oom pah" type polka music. People are dancing the Polka and other ethnic dances, including one led by a costumed "Chicken" called the "Chicken Dance." Other tents feature musicians from all over the world. There is American and classical music.

This is truly a pageant because, as you know from history, Pennsylvania was settled by Germans, and the Germans come out of the woodwork to attend this event. There is dancing and much revelry, but it is not lewd. Also, the Spanish community plays a part in this festival. Of course, there are the rest of us, too.

Bethlehem, in the tradition of the Moravians who settled it, is a musical city. We are famous for our Bach Festival, which is featured at Christmas time on most of the national networks. We also have the Celtic festival here during the year, and the Drum Festival. So, there is all kinds of music, foods, activities.

The backdrop to all of this is an historic one. The buildings of downtown Bethlehem could be described as this country's earliest pre-fabs. They were brought over to this country, piece by piece and reassembled during Colonial times. Here you will find one of the earliest religious communities with a distinct communal-type organization--the hospital used in the Revolutionary war, the first water works, a tannery. The buildings are made of stone. There are quite a few "living museums" demonstrating how America lived in the 18th Century.

In addition, the festival features an opening parade and closing fireworks attended by thousands. I think you would find a better event to cover than even the 4th of July event on the Washington Mall. There is a lot more going on here. I might also add that Binney & Smith, the company that makes Crayola Crayons, is located in Easton, PA--a neighboring city. A large number of children's events are held at Musikfest, with Binney & Smith as the center. (Easton, incidentally, was one of the few places where the Declaration of Independence was signed.)

If you came at Christmas-time, you would likewise see a pageant laid out in our city. You would find the downtown museums with costumed folks acting out their traditional customs. You would find the Star of Bethlehem on the Mountain. (It is 13 feet high). The city is decorated in white light and can be photographed from the top of the mountain for a beautiful view. There is a live Christmas Pageant, and, this year, an outdoor German market featuring all sorts of crafts people. The Moravians, for example, make a special type of star and candle holder that is an interesting custom. They wrap around beeswax candles that are used in their Christmas services.

Inside one of the buildings of Moravian Academy there is a map-like Cresche that tells the Christmas Story in much the same way that the map in Gettysburg acts out the Civil War.

There are candlelight bus tours going all over the city ,led by guides dressed in monk-style garb. And, they are interesting tours. They tell of the Moravians who came to this country to avoid religious persecution, They arrived in Bethlehem on Christmas Eve--having brought everything with them to establish a community. They named their commercial community Bethlehem and their agricultural community Nazareth. A Bethlehem guide could hop the C-Span bus and take your viewers on a tour of one of this country's earliest settlements.

There are house tours where visitors can go inside and see original colonial structures, which , in the German tradition of taking good care of things, are still in good condition.

Of course, there is the Central Moravian Church, which is like the Vatican to the Moravians. Also, I am sure that a tour of Bethlehem Steel could be arranged for C-Span, if you asked. I think your viewers would be fascinated by what goes on here, and interested in the community spirit that brings it all together. I also think our visitors and residents would learn a lot from the C-Span bus. If I am not mistaken, we in the Lehigh Valley were either the first, or among the first to have cable television.

Finally, we have seven colleges in this area, with an abundance of experts that you could query about just about anything. You might even want to stage one of your programs from here. We have a wonderful public television station with equipment so up-to-date that the networks borrow it all the time. Or, one or more of your programs, themselves could be live from one of the stages of Musikfest.

I hope you'll consider bringing the C-Span bus to Bethlehem. You can contact the Musikfest Association in Bethlehem to make arrangements to become a part of Musikfest, or you could call Historic Bethlehem. If I could be of assistance, I would be happy to do so.

Sincerely,

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[REDACTED]

Bethlehem, PA 18017

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