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Boys' Choir returns after inaugural performance

*By Earle Lee Jr.
SPECIAL TO THE DEMOCRAT*

Tired, but triumphant, The Boys' Choir of Tallahassee returned to Tallahassee on Thursday night after an event-filled week in Washington, D.C., where they performed at the Florida Inaugural Ball and made other appearances. They left last Friday from their rehearsal hall in SouthWood.

The following are excerpts from a diary of the trip written by Director Earle Lee Jr.

Day 1 Jan. 16

9:30 a.m. : We departed Tallahassee for Greensboro, N.C. We arrived at the Fairfield Inn and Suites around midnight, checked into the hotel and went straight to bed. The first day of our Barack Obama Victory Celebration Journey was fantastic.

Day 2 Jan. 17

9 a.m. : We departed Greensboro for Baltimore. We stopped for lunch in Richmond, only to be greeted by the coldest temperature we faced thus far (15 degrees). We arrived in Baltimore. After dinner, we had rehearsal at the hotel and it turned into a mini performance. Everywhere we went, people are amazed at the discipline and musicality of the choir.

Day 3 Jan. 18

We went to worship service at Empowerment Temple Church in Baltimore, where we were greeted by the Governor of Maryland's secretary and church officials. People were amazed to see so many young men dressed in tuxedos going to church and they began taking pictures of the choir and filming them with their cameras. We then went inside the church, warmed up, prayed and entered the sanctuary, which was electrifying. Around 40 choir members went to the altar and gave their life to Christ.

Day 4 January 19

This has to be the most trying day thus far as it relates to our performance. We were scheduled to leave our hotel in Baltimore at 2:30 p.m. for our performance at the Florida Inaugural Ball, where we were to go on at 7:30 p.m., At 10:30 a.m., the logistics supervisor asked me to come to Washington without the choir to go over the set up for the performance, which meant I had to take the train to DC that took 1 ½ hours both ways. By the time I returned to the hotel it was 4:30 p.m., which meant we left the hotel at 5:15 p.m., and that's when it got interesting. Every street we went down we ran into police, either diverting traffic or putting up barricades. After going around the same block about 20 times and realizing that it was 8:30 p.m., we decided to jump off the buses in tuxedos and walk the remaining 10 blocks to the Corcoran Museum. We arrived at 9:15 p.m., went straight in the ballroom and the guys performed so well that they received two standing ovations. We were the hit of the ball.

Day 5 Jan. 20

We woke up around 9 a.m. I turned on the television to see a sea of about 2 million people in the Washington Mall. I became concerned about the safety of having 70 boys among the crowd, so I made a decision to have a private viewing of the swearing-in ceremony for the boys. It meant the world to me and it was a blessing for me to share that moment with my boys.

After the ceremony, we took the train to Capitol Hill for some sightseeing. We visited the Kennedy Center, the Lincoln Memorial, and the Washington Monument. During our tour, I received a call from the NAACP president. The organization was having its Inaugural Ball and heard we were in the neighborhood. He requested our presence to perform. I told him that we were not in our tuxedo uniforms and he said it didn't matter. We walked one mile to the ball and performed in front of a capacity crowd. I was never so proud of the choir. Once again, they showed that when an opportunity presents itself, you must make the most of it. The crowd was overwhelmed, and the boys received several standing ovations. At this time, I'm thanking God for giving me an opportunity to play a small part in the development of some of the most talented, disciplined young men in the world. What an experience we are having.

Day 6, Jan. 21

It is 12:45 a.m. and we are close to our hotel in Greensboro, N.C. The boys are asleep, so it gives me an opportunity to share with you a very special day we had at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center. We arrived around 12:30 p.m. and were greeted by two majors and their secretaries. As we entered the hospital, our hearts and patriotism grew by leaps and bounds. Just to be among such brave soldiers was truly the highlight of our trip. We opened our concert by paying special tribute to the victims of 9-11 and our brave men and women who serve in our military branches and those fallen in the war. It was great to see the boys' eyes light up as the soldiers shared their testimony with them. Several soldiers told us that they were honored that we would take time out of our schedule to come and personally tell them 'thank you' for keeping us safe. As we began to leave, we received another treat. We ran into former U.S. Sen. Bob Dole, who took time out to congratulate the boys' on their success. This performance made all of the headaches we went through worth it.
