

## Alexandria Harmonizers 70th Anniversary Throwback Thursdays

### No. 19 – 1984 Take Care of This House

#### White House Performances

Late in November 1984, **Fr. Joe Witmer**, our package show chairman, received a phone call from the White House. The event was the Annual Christmas Reception of the White House Correspondents Association. The Harmonizers were invited to sing, but the event could only accommodate 21 men; there was no lack of volunteers. The chapter music leadership devised the fairest approach it could to select the representatives. After singing, the men were invited to meet **President and Mrs. Reagan**. It was a memorable evening for the singers and even those disappointed by not being chosen were proud of the visibility this performance brought to the chapter.



We were invited again to perform at the White House in 1996 for **President Clinton**. A small contingent of 23 singers, plus **Scott Werner**, performed two programs, first in the East Room and later in the East Appointment location, a kind of hallway, where people were congregating, visiting and meeting each other. This

location proved to be a better spot for the chorus' presentation. Because Secret Service limited such groups to 25, **Geri Geis** became our photographer and one of her photos appeared in the *Journal Newspapers*.

In more recent times, thanks to the diligent efforts of our package show chairman, **Bruce Lauther**, we were able to sing five more times at the White House holiday parties (2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016). After many of these performances, the chapter receives a Presidential portrait photograph. After a private meeting in 2012, **President and Mrs. Obama** posed with the 25 selected singers and Music Director **Joe Cerutti**. The photograph appeared on the cover of *The Harmonizer* magazine, July/August 2013 edition, with a story of the Alexandria Harmonizers' "Renaissance" by **Scipio Garling**.

Our proximity to the Nation's Capital often affords the chorus similar "Presidential" opportunities. In January 1977, the Harmonizers received a thank you note from **President Carter** after appearing in the "Inaugural Music at the Museums" program at the Smithsonian. The Harmonizers performed at five of the Kennedy Center Honors Galas with the President and First Lady seated in the Presidential Box of the Opera House with the Honorees.  
Harmonious Tagline:

At the 2001 Kennedy Center Honors, Metropolitan Opera diva Renee Fleming finished the show with a gorgeous rendition of "Take Care of This House" from Lerner and Bernstein's *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue*.

*"Take Care Of This House, keep it from harm, if bandits break in sound the alarm,  
Care for this house,*

*shine it by hand, and keep it so clean, the glow can be seen all over the land.*

*Be careful at night, check all the doors, if someone makes off with a dream, the  
dream will be yours.*

*TAKE CARE OF THIS HOUSE be always on call, for this house is the home of us  
all."*