

Pennsylvania Avenue Choristers

White House Performances - 1984

Late in November 1984, Fr. Joe Witmer, our package show chairman, received a phone call for the Harmonizers to sing at the Annual Christmas Reception of the White House Correspondents Association. There was no lack of volunteers, but the event could only accommodate 21 men. 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, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016. After a private meeting, President and Mrs. Obama posed with the selected singers for a Presidential portrait photograph that appeared on the cover of *The Harmonizer* magazine.



Supreme Court Performances - 1989

In late May 1989, the Harmonizers performed for the first time before the Historical Society of the Supreme Court of the United States at a banquet held in the Great Hall of the Supreme Court building. The audience included Chief Justice Rehnquist and Justices Scalia, Brennan, and Kennedy along with 300 lawyers, judges, and scholars. They gave us a thrilling reception by listening attentively, applauding, standing, and (believe it or not) singing along with us. The chorus was the only non-military group to entertain at this dinner during its 14-year history. We received two standing ovations—the first time that even a single lawyer had risen to cheer the entertainment. The first time we sang was in the 1989 contest year and we took this as a good omen. Our Gold Medal years were 1986, 1989, 1995, and 1998. Our Supreme Court performance years were 1989, 1990, 1995, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2009, and 2011.

Harmonious Tagline # 1. 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.”*

Harmonious Tagline # 2. Supreme Court Associate Justice William Joseph “Bill” Brennan, Jr. has been called the most influential Justice of the 20th Century. The son of Irish immigrants, Justice Brennan was observed singing “Danny Boy” along with the Harmonizers during their May 1989 performance at the Supreme Court Historical Society dinner. The 7th longest-serving Justice of the Supreme Court, Justice Brennan retired in July 1990 after 34 years on the bench.