

Clintons hit the capital to hang out at the Mall



MEETING THE BIG GUY during a tour of Monticello in Virginia yesterday was essay-contest winner Nicholas Wical. Nicholas was one of six winners, and the Monticello appearance with Clinton was the prize. **AP**



HAVING THEIR CHICKEN: These two are among thousands who lined the Mall yesterday as festivities got under way for Bill Clinton's inauguration. **HARRY HAMBURG DAILY NEWS**

By **SUSAN MILLIGAN**
News Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — A triumphant Bill Clinton bused from the home of his hero Thomas Jefferson to his own new home in the nation's capital yesterday to kick off a five-day celebration of his inauguration as the nation's 42d President.

"Let us build an America where everyone has a place at the table and not a single child is left out," Clinton told a vast crowd at the "American Reunion" at the Lincoln Memorial, his first appearance in Washington yesterday.

"I ask you to reach out beyond the forces that divide us," Clinton told tens of thousands who gathered in the chilly weather for an hours-long free concert. "We are not enemies, but friends."

Clinton, his wife, Hillary, and daughter, Chelsea, and Vice President-elect Al Gore and his wife, Tipper, joined a superstar lineup of top entertainers, including Michael Jackson and Aretha Franklin, to sing "We Are the World."

The Clintons and the Gores then walked across Memorial Bridge to the gates of Arlington National Cemetery, where Clinton rang a replica of the Liberty Bell, which triggered a "Bells of Hope" ceremony that included synchronized bell-ringing across the country and even among U.S. forces in Somalia.

'Reunion' on the Mall

Yesterday's festivities began early with the "Reunion" on the Mall attended by thousands who packed tents offering musical performances, regional American food and crafts.

The all-day event was overshadowed by renewed U.S. attacks on Iraqi military targets — a foreign-policy crisis that Clinton seems destined to inherit — but the President-elect gamely kept to his activity-filled schedule — although characteristically about two hours late.

On the Mall, revelers wandered through what looked like a Disneyland for Democrats: ethnic foods from around the country; music by Little Feat, Michelle Shocked, Beausoleil — a progressive Cajun band — and others; Native American and other ethnic performances, and regional handicrafts.

Vendors sold Clinton-Gore buttons — although most of the denim-decked crowd

seemed to own them already — and T-shirts that proclaimed "I Was There."

Good luck, Chel

On one end of the Mall, children were invited to draw pictures and write messages — "Good Luck, Chelsea," one little girl scrawled — in colored chalk on a cement surface put down for the event.

Adults picked up the chalk, too, writing pleas for peace and drawing pictures of the Earth.

"We've waited a long time to be able to celebrate the election of a President we voted for," said Theresa O'Leary, a Brooklyn resident who traveled to Washington for the inauguration. "I hope it's going to be a good four years."

In the middle of the Mall was a huge mural — kind of America's public bathroom wall — where people wrote messages to Clinton and Gore.

"Bill, I want a job," one of the cards said. "Inhale" said another. Several writers were engaged in a back-and-forth over allowing gays in the military, which Clinton has pledged to do.

Can we all get along?

"All kinds of people should know how to get along," penned 8-year-old Zarina Farhana, a pupil at New York's Public School 230.

Clinton and Gore and their families arrived in Washington after a 121-mile bus trip from Charlottesville, Va. It was a reminder of the folksy campaign buscapades that helped Clinton win, and retraced the route of Thomas Jefferson 162 years ago.

The free concert at the Lincoln Memorial featured such top entertainers as Diana Ross, Luther Vandross, Michael Bolton, L.L. Cool J., Tony Bennett, Whoopi Goldberg, Kemy Rogers, Lauren Bacall and Jack Nicholson.

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