

## “Inauguration Coverage”

*Live Commercial Appeal staff reports from Monday.*

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### Postcards to Memphis

WASHINGTON - Dozens of Mid-Southerners bound for the inauguration of Barack Obama agreed to file reports to The Commercial Appeal from various activities in the Nation's Capital.

These "citizen journalists" will be filing throughout the festivities via email, texting and old-fashioned telephone.

-Kenneth Whalum Jr. of Keeping It Real Ministries continues to be the Memphian in the know. Staying at The Mayflower, Whalum has been privy to the comings and goings of the families of President-elect Barack Obama and Vice President-elect Joe Biden. On Monday, Whalum reported: "Just rode (the) elevator with Obama's paternal grandmother and cousins from Kenya...very sweet people. " During the ride someone let it slip that the president-elect would be coming to the hotel to visit his grandmother Monday evening.

Whalum's son, Kenneth III, plays saxophone for the likes of P. Diddy, Jay Z and Maxwell. On Sunday night, he "hung until the wee hours at Lucacris' concert with Nelly, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Keisha Knight Pulliam."

-Nika Jackson, who campaigned for Obama is staying "in a wonderful row house in the city with a volunteer leader from Chattanooga and another from New York City." Jackson got a bed. "One of the perks of rooming with guys- they give you the best spot." She e-mailed that the three -- a political version of 'Real World' -- had been "reminiscing all morning about how amazing this journey has been and how it has changed our lives. The three of us are as different as can be yet through our common desire for change we met and will hopefully remain connected for many years to come. "

-Wayne Ray of Bartlett is attending the inauguration with People to People. The Harding Academy teacher has been seeing the sights with some of the 200-plus students in the program. Ray emailed that the group had heard President Eisenhower's granddaughter Mary Eisenhower speak. She "remembered how he wanted to achieve world peace through understanding of one another. She thought he would have been pleased with this inauguration," Ray wrote.

—Carolyn McAtee Cerbin

## **Watching at Memphis restaurants**

Folks who work Downtown or in Midtown Memphis have a couple of options when it comes to watching the inauguration on Tuesday. Here's what's going on:

-McEwen's on Monroe, 120 Monroe (527-7085) opens at 10:15 a.m. so folks can start watching early. The inauguration and Barack Obama's speech will be broadcast.

-At The Majestic Grille, 145 South Main (522-8555), doors open at 10 a.m. and lunch service starts at 10:30 a.m. You can watch coverage on the 18-foot big screen and on two high-definition TVs. Chef Patrick Reilly is preparing gumbo in addition to the regular menu. Call ahead; it's filling up and you take your chances if you show up without a reservation.

-In Midtown, Noodle Doodle Do at 965 S. Cooper (272-0808) and The Beauty Shop, 966 S. Cooper (272-7111), both open at 10 a.m. and will have TVs broadcasting the ceremony. Specials include an "Obama Rama" roll, "Melting Pot" pho and Sake-Bamas at Noodle Doodle Do. The Beauty Shop will offer the Demo-Crat martini, made with fresh Hawaiian pineapple and vanilla-infused vodka. Festivities continue through 4 p.m.

—*Jennifer Biggs*

## **On MLK Day, two profess amazement at Inauguration of Obama**

It was purely by happenstance that Shirley Murphy and Rodney McDowell landed next to one another in seats 31B and 31C on the flight from Atlanta to Washington's Ronald Reagan National Airport.

Turned out that Murphy had grown up in Augusta, Ga., and that McDowell had grown up in Atlanta -- places suffused with black culture going back centuries -- but they are now both living in the Northwest. As African-Americans, they said they definitely stand out in populations that are predominantly white.

McDowell is a Church of God in Christ pastor of Beautiful Zion Church in Cheyenne, Wyo., and Murphy is a just-retired honors English teacher at Idaho Falls (Id.) High School.

McDowell, who said Memphis is almost like a second home since he visits twice every year, had gotten a ticket from his state's Republican senator, Mike Enzi, and planned to stay with an old friend. Murphy, whose daughter lives in D.C., said she waited so late to decide to come that she had not requested a ticket she is sure she could have gotten.

"I tell people I'm all bruised up from kicking myself so much," said Murphy, whose son Yo Murphy played receiver for the St. Louis Rams with former University of Memphis star Isaac Bruce.

Both McDowell and Murphy professed amazement -- and excitement -- that the inauguration of a black American is at hand. Murphy spent much of her flight monitoring CNN's coverage of Martin Luther King Jr. Day and told McDowell that she loved to teach King to her mostly-white students because of the power and impact of his words.

"I do not at all regret retiring," she said, "but I know teachers must be relishing this opportunity to get their students interested and engaged in something so important."

—Zack McMillin

### **Buses hitting bad weather en route to inauguration**

HUNT VALLEY, MD. -- Charter buses traveling from the Mid-South to the inauguration festivities in and around Washington are encountering perilous weather conditions. The national weather service issued a Winter Weather Advisory earlier today. One to two inches of snow and freezing temperatures are expected across the Washington area.

"This will cause slippery and potentially dangerous travel," the alert warned. "Be prepared for slippery roads and limited visibilities."

Combined, inauguration trip coordinators Sharen Rooks, Rev. Bill Adkins, Rev. Regina Osei and Shirley McGee Shack have 11 buses traveling to the area. Of the 11, only three have made it to their destination as of 1 p.m. (CST) today.

Rooks' party of about 100 people with Cross Country Tours is headed to a hotel in Dover, Del. They ran into snow at about 6 a.m. this morning in Bristol, Tenn.

"We didn't have to pull over, but when we got to Bristol it was snowing so we stopped and ate at the Cracker Barrel and utilized a lot of time there. About two-and-a-half hours," said Rooks.

She is hoping the group will arrive to its hotel in Dover before 3 p.m. CST.

Adkins and his wife, Linda, arrived in Washington earlier by plane, but about 115 of his parishioners from Greater Imani Christian Church are traveling to the area on two buses. The delegation includes a film crew from Dan Rather Reports that is documenting the journey. The bus riders expect to check into their hotel in Frederick, Md., around 4 p.m. CST.

Osei and her party of 150 people include three busloads, some car drivers and some plane riders. The trip was arranged by Osei's company EZ4U Travel & Tours and the delegation checked into its hotel in Hagerstown, Md., on Sunday. Some of the group ventured out to the free concert at the Lincoln Memorial on Sunday.

"We're just having a ball," said Osei.

Six With snowflakes the size of feathers floating from the sky, trip coordinator Shirley McGee Shack sat in a hotel lobby earlier today waiting for about 150 Mid-Southerners to join her in Hunt Valley, Md. In all, her trip includes 205 people, divided on four buses. They all pulled off from a Collierville parking lot together Sunday afternoon, but their paths to the Baltimore-area differed.

Bus No. 1, with about 50 people, arrived to check-in at the Embassy Suites hotel at 8:30 a.m. CST today, just in time to enjoy the hotel's complimentary breakfast buffet.

Bus No. 2 drove to Washington before checking into the hotel. Many on that bus were awarded tickets to Barack Obama's swearing-in ceremony and they rushed to pick them up in Washington before congressional offices close today.

Buses No. 3 and 4, however, had a stroke of misfortune. "They've run into weather," said Shack. "They did pull over."

The estimated time of arrival for those two buses is uncertain. The winter weather advisory remains in effect until 9 p.m. (CST) tonight.

*-Cathryn Stout*



PHOTO BY NIKKI BOERTMAN,  
COMMERCIAL APPEAL  
Mildred Cook is one of 205 Mid-Southerners traveling with a bus group to attend the presidential inauguration of Barack Obama.

### **205 take buses to Inauguration**

HUNT VALLEY, MD. -- Mildred Cook brought a pillow and blanket for her bus ride from Collierville to Hunt Valley, but "I didn't get to get any sleep," she admitted.

Cook, in her sixties, is one of 205 Mid-Southerners traveling with a bus group to attend the presidential inauguration of Barack Obama. Her bus left from Collierville at 4:30 p.m. CST on Sunday. After pit stops in Cookeville, Tenn., Bristol, Tenn. and Harrisburg, Va., her bus arrived to the Baltimore-area at 9:30 a.m. EST.

So, how does one pass the time on a 16-hour bus ride? "I was watching movies all night long," she said. On the bus' TVs she watched two movies by filmmaker Tyler Perry, followed by "No Good Deed," "Cadillac Records" and "Dream Girls."

Cook made the trip with her loved ones Karen Sanders and Vanessa Burns. Others on her bus included Memphis City Councilwoman Wanda Halbert and local NAACP director Johnnie Turner.

The trip arrangements were handled by Memphis entrepreneur Shirley McGee Shack, Crown Bus Tours in Bartlett and Trust God And Never Doubt (T.G.A.N.D.) Tours in South Memphis. The prices of the bus ride, souvenir Obama calendar and two-night accommodation in the Embassy Suites hotel was about \$500.

"I've always wanted to go to an inauguration, but this time the price was right," said Cook.

— *Cathryn Stout*