



# MONUMENTS, MUSEUMS AND MORE

WILKES ALUMNUS PROMOTES  
POSITIVE IMAGE OF WASHINGTON,  
D.C., TO WORLDWIDE AUDIENCE

By Helen Kaiser

**W**HEN MORE THAN 1.8 million people from all walks of life flocked to Washington, D.C., for President Barack Obama's inauguration in January, it was a spectacle unsurpassed in our nation's history.

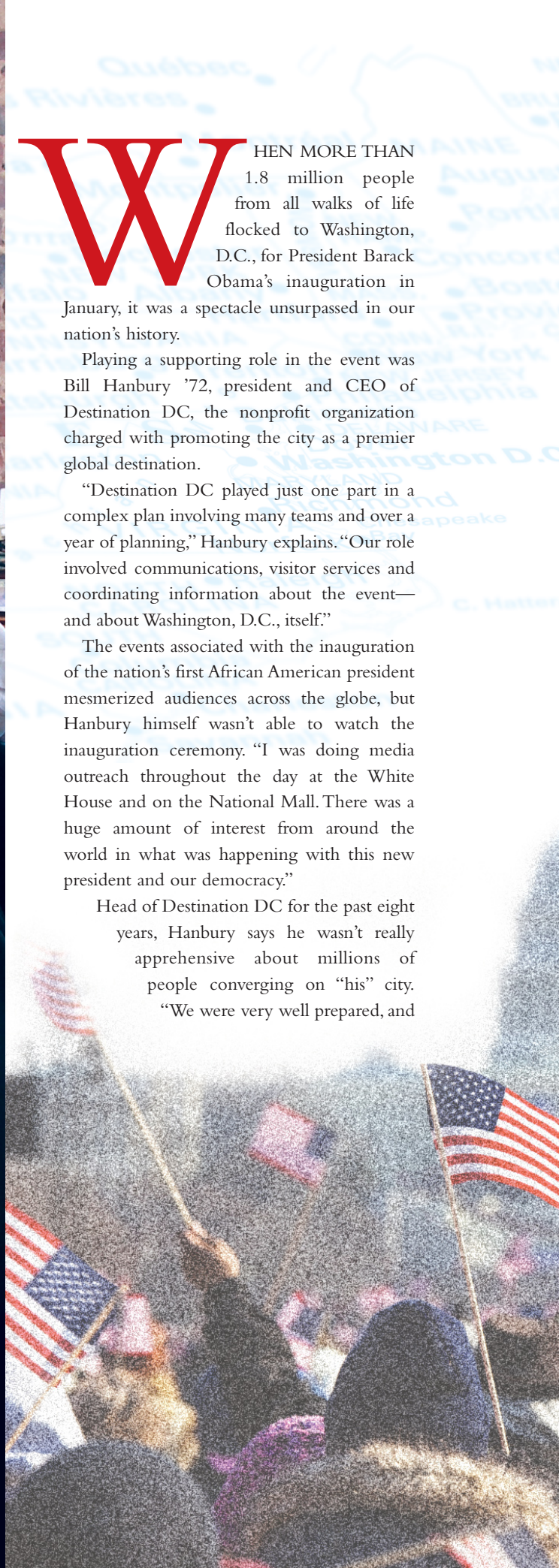
Playing a supporting role in the event was Bill Hanbury '72, president and CEO of Destination DC, the nonprofit organization charged with promoting the city as a premier global destination.

"Destination DC played just one part in a complex plan involving many teams and over a year of planning," Hanbury explains. "Our role involved communications, visitor services and coordinating information about the event—and about Washington, D.C., itself."

The events associated with the inauguration of the nation's first African American president mesmerized audiences across the globe, but Hanbury himself wasn't able to watch the inauguration ceremony. "I was doing media outreach throughout the day at the White House and on the National Mall. There was a huge amount of interest from around the world in what was happening with this new president and our democracy."

Head of Destination DC for the past eight years, Hanbury says he wasn't really apprehensive about millions of people converging on "his" city.

"We were very well prepared, and



I was confident we had the experience, expertise and planning savvy to pull it off.”

The pomp and pageantry over the four-day period was not without its glitches. For instance, some ticket holders complained that crowd management logistics were confusing and the sheer number of people involved prevented them from getting to their designated locations to view the ceremony.

“There were some unhappy people, but, by most people’s estimation, it was an outstanding success that played to a huge global audience,” Hanbury says, characterizing it as perhaps the most watched event in history.

“ (The inauguration) was an OUTSTANDING success that played to a huge GLOBAL AUDIENCE ”

He says Washington has been able to capitalize on a unique moment in time. Worldwide, people are looking to a charismatic new president for solutions; and this heightens interest in Washington, D.C., itself. The timing is perfect, because the city has experienced a renaissance over the past 10 to 15 years.

The nation’s capital has always been known for the memorials, monuments and museums seen as backdrops on newscasts, the tourism executive says. Now, however, there is more.

“We have re-created downtown, and there is a gentrification due to people moving back into the district. It’s a hip, trendy, cosmopolitan city now — on a global par with London, Rome, Berlin, Paris and Tokyo,” he asserts.

Richard Spigler, president of the Carlyle Suites and Savoy Suites hotels, serves as chairman of the 96-member Hotel Association of Washington, D.C., and on the board of Destination DC. He says many in the local tourism industry had long-time dreams of the city becoming a world-class destination, and Hanbury was instrumental in making it happen.

“He believed in it from the first day he came here,” Spigler says. Just after the 9/11 tragedy, Hanbury “seized

**William A. Hanbury, Washington, D.C.**

**B.A., History 1972**

**Master’s Degree in Public Administration, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 1989**

**Career:** Spent much of his life promoting cities such as Syracuse, Buffalo and Milwaukee before becoming president and CEO of Destination DC.

**Notable:** Helped the nation’s capital host millions of visitors for the historic inauguration of President Barack Obama.

**Favorite Wilkes Memory:** Being associated with an extraordinary group of athletes and men (the Golden Horde) who won 32 football games in a row.

leadership of the city’s marketing efforts and created partnerships that had not happened before; and then it was full-steam ahead.”

With 55 full-time and an additional 175 part-time employees, Destination DC has a \$15 million annual budget to market the district as a premier special events destination. In 2007, about 16.2 million visitors stayed overnight, spending \$5.5 billion and generating \$954 million in federal and municipal tax revenues.

Looking back, Hanbury says he obtained a great education from professors at his alma mater — and from his mentor, football coach Rollie Schmidt. Hanbury was a member of the Golden Horde, the collective Wilkes football teams that were undefeated from 1965-69.

“There was a lot of inspiration to do your best and to be the best. I still carry that with me today,” he says.

Hanbury played offensive guard for the Colonels and after graduation played a few exhibition seasons for the pros — the Buffalo Bills and the World Football League’s Memphis Southmen. He then taught history and coached high school football in his native Syracuse, N.Y.

His career path forked when he accepted a job with the Syracuse Chamber of Commerce. This led to other positions with tourism offices in Hilton Head, S.C.; Buffalo, N.Y.; Flint, Mich.; and Milwaukee, Wis. Hanbury will leave Destination DC to become president and CEO of the United Way of the Capital Area effective July 1.

It’s fun being at “the epicenter of communities,” he says. “You have a chance to really make an impact on an area’s economic development.”

## Vacationing this summer?

Within a day’s drive for more than 25 percent of the nation’s population, D.C. is a doable destination.

Visit [www.washington.org](http://www.washington.org) for more information.

Bill Hanbury’s don’t-miss recommendation: the National Mall and Memorial Parks with the hallowed World War II Memorial and other sights meaningful to Americans and citizens around the world. “You’ve got to come here to touch it, see it, and feel the inspiration.”

Opposite page: Hanbury oversees a budget of \$15 million annually to promote D.C. as a premier special events destination.