

## Musical Island Boys in San Diego, January 15-18, 2007

The Boys arrived at LAX at 2 PM on Sunday, January 14, where they were met by Russ Squires of Westminster Chorus. Russ ferried them to a marathon coaching session with Mark Hale, the director of the Masters of Harmony and lead of Michigan Jake. They then partied with members of Westminster Chorus. On Monday, they were treated to a visit to Disneyland courtesy of members of The Perfect Gentlemen, and accompanied by their La Jolla/San Diego host, Paul Girard, baritone in Pacific Coast Harmony (PCH) and Smooth Sailing' quartet.

Paul housed the Boys at his home in San Diego to simplify the whirlwind round of visits to 9 schools in the next three days. A total of 750 students in San Diego County were exposed to barbershop, most for the first time. The Boys also performed on a Youth In Harmony show with PCH and Sun Harbor Chorus, along with three barbershop quartets from Poway High School under the tutelage of Nancy Gray. These groups are coached by Mike Lawton, baritone of Revival (1998 gold medalists). The Boys were also welcomed resoundingly at a Masters of Harmony rehearsal on Wednesday night in the LA area..

The school visits were as varied as the population of San Diego County, inner city and suburban, middle schools to high school, including a magnet School for the Creative and Performing Arts. At one school, they found four Samoan-Americans and invited them to demonstrate the tag, which they did marvelously. At another school, where some boys had arrived at the end of the presentation, one girl ran up to say, "You just missed the GREATEST thing!"

Clinicians, who accompanied the Boys to the schools and explained the basics of barbershop, included Kim Hulbert, director of PCH and San Diego Chorus of Sweet Adelines (SDSA), Kathleen Hansen, director of Sun Harbor Chorus and assistant director of SDSA, Mike Lawton, Royce Ferguson, tenor of Revival and director of Westminster Chorus, and John Hulbert, director of Palomar-Pacific Music Men. The visits had been planned and scripted, but the scripts became check-lists as the free-wheeling interaction with and questions from the students were allowed to dictate what came next. And anyone who has seen the Boys in an audience situation knows they are quick on their feet, poised and eloquent. The gratitude that they expressed was not merely for the free trip (which they paid for with a very heavy schedule), but more for the experience and growth that barbershop has provided them. They are wonderful ambassadors for New Zealand and barbershop.