

Well-expressed
observations earn
Grand Ridge senior a
national title at speech
competition

Words to win by Jeremy Branch's speech

“Washington . . . Jefferson . . . Lincoln . . . perhaps even Roosevelt — each a great leader, each served his country in a certain city. Each used that city as his stage to shape and direct the future of this great nation. That city we now know as our capitol, home of the world's most powerful government, the city of Washington D.C.

It was truly an honor for me to be selected to participate in the Washington Youth tour 2000, then to be selected as Florida's representative to the Youth Leadership Council. It was more than I could ever dream of.

The tour came at a pivotal time, both for the nation and for myself. As a young man, I am faced with decisions that will direct my adult life. The tour proved important to me because it reaffirmed my interest in American government. At the same time, our country is in the threshold of the new millennium filled with challenges and opportunities. I must say that, without a doubt, my trip symbolized all this and much more.

My new friends and I found much to enjoy as we also learned much. Mark Twain once said “What we learn with pleasure, we never forget.” I think that we can all relate to that statement. As we toured, we came face to face with the text of our history books and, at the same time, we witnessed the reality of the present. I discovered that Washington is not only a repository for the accomplishments of the past, but it also provides us with an up-close and personal view of the problems facing urban America.

But then, Washington, D.C., like that America it represents, is not simple. In essence, America, by its nature and design, is both diverse and complex.

Perhaps the most fascinating thing about Washington, D.C., is the city seems to celebrate its own diversity. A town of the powerful and the powerless, the top official of our nation, and some of America's most impoverished Americans. A town of the federal worker and of the tourist; lawmakers and lawbreakers. This blatant diversity truly reflects America's own.

For a country boy like myself, some of the street scenes were pretty amazing and definitely unforgettable! But what made the strongest impression on me was this: As we walked through the U.S. Capitol and the Smithsonian, the problems outside on the street did not go away, but just like the rest of America, we did not let the presence of problems hinder our optimism, or rob our attention from the national symbols of heritage that we were viewing.

August
2000 *CLF*



Grand Ridge
senior Jeremy
Branch wins
national award

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Meet District 1's
Ellis Nichols

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What did I say to begin with? We are on the threshold of a new millennium. We must go forward with glory of our past, the faith and hard work of our forefathers, and those core values that we hold dear. In conclusion, I feel as though we should take what we have learned from the Youth Tour and let it directly influence our future. If that is done, we should have a future just as bright and vibrant as the city of Washington, D.C. 

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