Chamber Singers Serenade Cubans

By Cory Anderson & Paul Yoder
News Editor & Staff Writer

The trip included many interesting adventures for the students, such as seeing a Cuban baseball game, visiting the Cuban Revolution Museum and an art museum, and seeing the (Cuban) Ghettoes, but this describes the experiences the Chamber Singers faced on their trip to Cuba.

The trip was rough on many, the actual time spent in Cuba was three days. In the meantime he stayed in the airport on the island. While the trips to and from Cuba were rough on many, the actual time spent in Cuba was enjoyable, according to many members in the choir.

"We all had an incredible time. It's something we're not soon going to forget or stop talking about," said Junior Lisa Mast. "I can just walk up to anyone in the streets and say, 'Hey, how's it going?' versus here in the U.S.," said sophomore Jared Stoltzfus. "We had a heck of a lot of free time, which was very nice. I walked through the streets at four in the morning in the ghetto of the capital of the country. It's amazing how safe I felt."

"I enjoyed walking around Old Havana and going to the beach," said Sophomore Joanna Goins.

Anna Dintaman said, "The best part of the trip was my date with a really cute Cuban guy." All of the Chamber Singers have now finally arrived back in America, a bit tuckered out, but all of them with a story to tell.

"An American passport is like gold in Cuba," said Senior Rachel Bucher. "We spent the night in the airport port. In the meantime he stayed in the airport on the island. While the trips to and from Cuba were rough on many, the actual time spent in Cuba was enjoyable, according to many members in the choir."

Stutzman was therefore stuck in Cuba for a few more days. In the meantime he stayed with Nafziger. The trip home was quite long for a third of the Chamber Singers. Air Cubana overbooked the flight the group was going on so they had to split them up and send them to Nassau, Bahamas on three different flights. From there they were supposed to catch their connecting flight back to America, but the third group's plane was delayed in taking off from Cuba. Consequently, they missed their transfer flight in the Bahamas, but the airline company paid for the remaining Chamber Singers to stay in a hotel on the island.

After finally getting on a plane to leave Cuba, the plane had to return to Havana once more since a passenger on board was very sick which only made Hunsberger’s trip even longer. Senior Daniel Stutzman also ran into some problems. He started off being sick about the time the Chamber Singers were heading to the airport to leave Cuba. On top of this, Stutzman had his suitcase stolen which contained his passport. "An American passport is like gold in Cuba," said Senior Rachel Bucher.

"I made it to Havana and spent the night in the airport lying on cigarette butts," Hunsberger said.

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At the end of the forum, the audience split up into small groups to formulate statements about what they think "publicly advocate" means. This phrase has been a topic of debate ever since the Board of Trustees issued their statement in November, 2002.

Over spring break, a writers group compiled the small groups' statements into a more general list. They will continue to work with LiFT to come up with their own statement based on the ideas that were shared.

Ted Grimsrud added to her statement, saying that during the process of discernment we must hear from all sides. He believes that as members of the community we are "called to seek the truth and contribute our voices."

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Elroy Miller, a member of the LiFT and the Writers Group, said the general feeling they got from the group statements was that because EMU is a Christian school, there should be some guidelines – but people would like a safe place to discuss issues in a productive way.

No date is set yet for the release of the final draft of the Writers Group’s statement.

More information about the forum and other LiFT activities is available on the LiFT website at http://www.emu.edu/ltt.