

# JIMI HENDRIX AND THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER AT FT. MCHENRY'S NEW VISITOR CENTER



*ABOVE: Detail of the We The People Biodiesel Artcar by Dr. Bob Hieronimus: Jimi Hendrix over the Stars and Stripes; to the right of Hendrix's figure is a representation of "Light" the Woodstock 1969 Bus, photographed by AP at Woodstock, spreading its image by the media throughout the globe.*

**BY**  
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Photo: Daniel Bedell



Drs. Bob and Zohara Hieronimus were excited to read that Ft. McHenry is paying as much attention to Jimi Hendrix as they have lately. The Hieronimus's involvement with the home of the "Star Spangled Banner" has been a long and joyous one over the past four decades. From being invited to participate in certified ghost hunts at

Baltimore Sun, March 5, 2011

# MARYLAND VOICES

## EDITORIAL NOTEBOOK

# O, say can you hear?

Fort McHenry exhibit includes everything from the Marine Corps Band to Jimi Hendrix, showing there's as much diversity in our anthem as there is in the nation

**T**ouch a screen at the new Fort McHenry Visitor and Education Center and the sounds of "The Star-Spangled Banner," eight different versions, spring forth.

Some feature singers who belt out the words, "the land of the free." Others are instrumentals, some jazzy, some martial, and two more are waiting in the wings.

To make it to Fort McHenry, these performances had to be serious and timely. "We ruled out any goofy versions," said Fort Superintendent Gay Vietzke, "or ones where the artists were simply seeking publicity." (She did not name names, but renditions by Roseanne Barr and, more recently, Christina Aguilera come to mind.) Our anthem, like our flag, has served as a rallying point for citizens, Ms. Vietzke said, and the changing times are echoed in the exhibit's changing tunes.

After listening to these assorted anthems, a visitor comes away reminded that we are a polyglot nation, capable of offering an anthem for almost any taste.

Historians can punch up "To Anacreon In Heaven," the drinking song that provided the melody for Francis Scott Key's lyrics. Mr. Key's "cover" to this old song is quite an improvement. Civil War buffs can summon the anthem played during the conflict by the 1st Brigade Band, although a more stirring number is the military march version played by U.S. Marine Corps Band circa 1953. A cappella singers can compare their efforts to those of the Diamond Four, whose 1898 rendition sounds authentically scratchy.

The jazziest performance, one that zipped right along, is one by Duke Ellington, recorded after World War II. It is similar to the way the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra plays the anthem: with brio.

You can't start a major sporting event in America until you have sung "the home of the brave," and Whitney Houston's soaring version of the anthem, accompanied by the Florida Orchestra, at the 1991 Super Bowl is the strongest vocal performance in the exhibit. She has some pipes.

The rights to another notable sporting anthem, Marvin Gaye's soulful rendition sung before the 1983 NBA All Star Game, are being tracked down. Fort McHenry officials hope to have that version playing at the birthplace of the National Anthem in the coming weeks. Also on hold pending rights approval



LLOYD FOX/BALTIMORE SUN

A new visitors center opened at Fort McHenry this week, including varied renditions of "The Star-Spangled Banner."

is the bluegrass version of the anthem played by Bela Fleck and The Flecktones.

**There are a couple alternative anthems in the exhibit. One is Jimi Hendrix's memorable, nearly four-minute performance at Woodstock in 1969, in which he made his electric guitar sound like the bombs bursting in air. Another is a slower, haunting, 1993 alternative rock version by Red House Painters.**

Missing from this exhibit is the hometown version, one in which Baltimoreans emphasize the "O" while singing, "Oh say does that star spangled banner yet wave." Some think the "O-ing" of the anthem is a sacrilege. But not Vince Vaise, the bubbly park ranger who serves as chief of interpretation at Fort McHenry. He regards it as an exclusive, well-earned right of the natives.

"Only Baltimoreans have the right to sing the 'O' in the anthem," he reasons, "because if it wasn't for the citizens of Baltimore protecting the city from the British, there wouldn't be a national anthem."

—Rob Kasper

*There are a couple alternative anthems in the exhibit. One is Jimi Hendrix's memorable, nearly four-minute performance at Woodstock in 1969, in which he made his electric guitar sound like the bombs bursting in air.*

Ft. McHenry in the 1970s, to being invited as a Guest Speaker for the National Flag Day Celebrations, the Hieronimuses have always held a special place in their hearts for Ft. McHenry National Park. It is the location of Dr. Bob's first interview with Oprah Winfrey, there to review his exhibit of historical Baltimore and Maryland watercolors on display in 1982. And now the *We The People Biodiesel Artcar* has another thing in common with Ft. McHenry with both paying homage to the legendary Jimi Hendrix. Hendrix's famous performance of the "Star Spangled Banner" at Woodstock is now part of an audio display at the Visitor and Education Center. Few realize that the genius of Jimi Hendrix and his enduring love for America and its symbols were at the center of his consciousness. Jimi Hendrix knew all about America's eye in the triangle and pyramid in 1968 when Dan Brown was still a child.

# Crowds flock to the fort

Fort McHenry visitor center has new interactive exhibits, 'Star-Spangled Banner' draft

By Jessica Anderson  
THE BALTIMORE SUN

Warm temperatures and clear skies brought weekend crowds to the new \$15 million visitor center at Fort McHenry, temporary home to an original draft of "The Star-Spangled Banner."

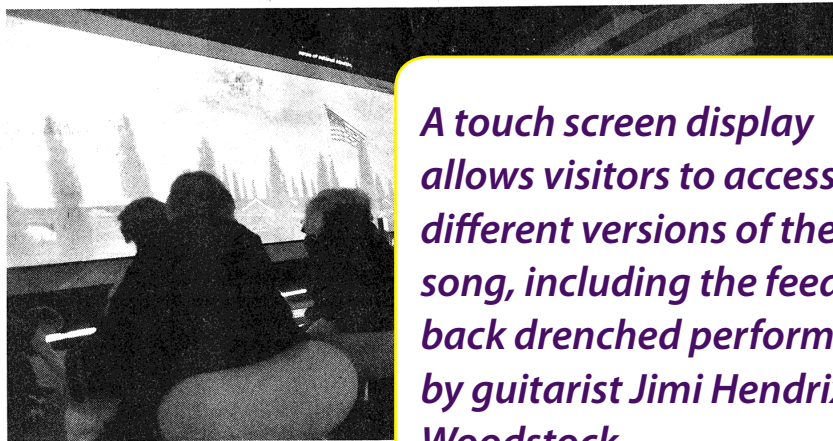
Among the popular new attractions are the draft of the poem by Francis Scott Key that became the national anthem, on loan from the Maryland Historical Society until June 14, Flag Day.

A new film, which uses graphics and re-enactments to show viewers about the War of 1812, Baltimore's role in it and how Key came to write the first few lines of the national anthem, is another upgrade that proved popular among visitors.

At the end of the film, the screen rises slowly to reveal a glass wall that provides a sweeping view of the fort with the American flag flying in the center while a recording of the Navy Men's Choir performing the national anthem plays.

"When they show the fort [in the film] and then the screen goes up — it's just like living his history," said Tim Toth, who visited the fort on Saturday with his 12-year-old daughter Katie. "I'm just amazed at that. I'm so glad they kept that."

The exhibit space is divided into three galleries, each of which focuses on a different subject: The causes of the War of 1812, the moment when Key was inspired to write "The Star-Spangled Banner," and how the anthem and flag together became



A crowd gathers to watch a film at the new

powerful symbols of "the spirit of the American people."

A large timeline shows visitors when the anthem has been used throughout history, including a picture of Michael Phelps, who sang the anthem at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing.

A touch-screen display allows visitors to access 10 different versions of the song, including the feedback-drenched performance by guitarist Jimi Hendrix at Woodstock, and another sung by Whitney Houston.

"Everyone likes it now because it's more interactive, more modern," said Danielle Taylor, a ranger at the national monument and historic shrine.

She said the draft of "The Star-Spangled Banner" has been popular, with several visitors asking why it isn't kept there —

*A touch screen display allows visitors to access 10 different versions of the song, including the feedback drenched performance by guitarist Jimi Hendrix at Woodstock...*

near where it was inspired.

Taylor, who is also a teacher, said the larger facility is better for hosting larger school groups. "It's more engaging to children in the 21st century," she said. "More in their iPod mentality."

The new Fort McHenry Visitor and Education Center, which was designed to accommodate 150,000 visitors a year, replaced the original built in 1964. The original center was demolished in December.

Aricka Hawkins came with her husband and three children from their home in Prince George's County.

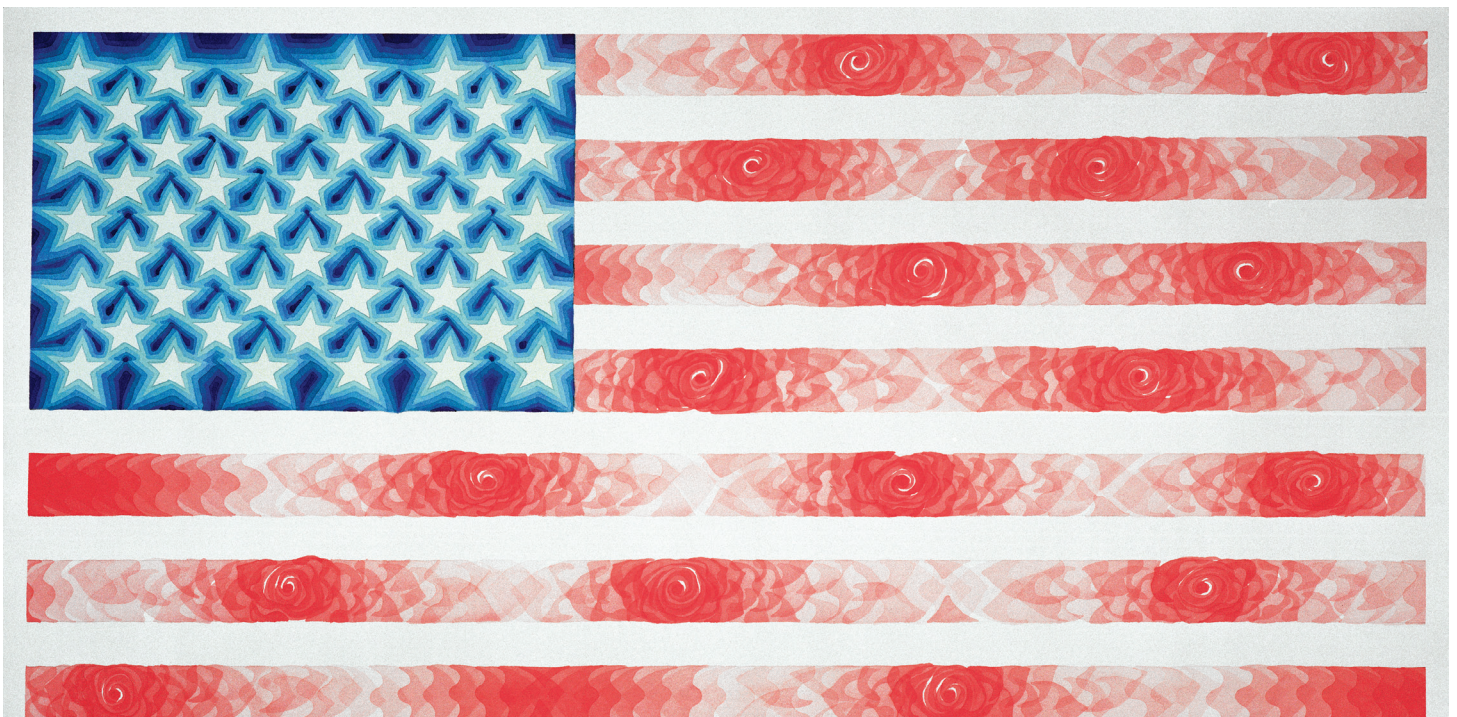
"There were no sporting events this weekend, and we needed something to do," she said. "It's a great facility. It's more than just a history book. It really puts us in that time," she said.

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*"Ft. McHenry", watercolor pen and ink by Dr. Bob Hieronimus, 1980*



*An American Beauty  
1987, watercolor, 31"x 48"*

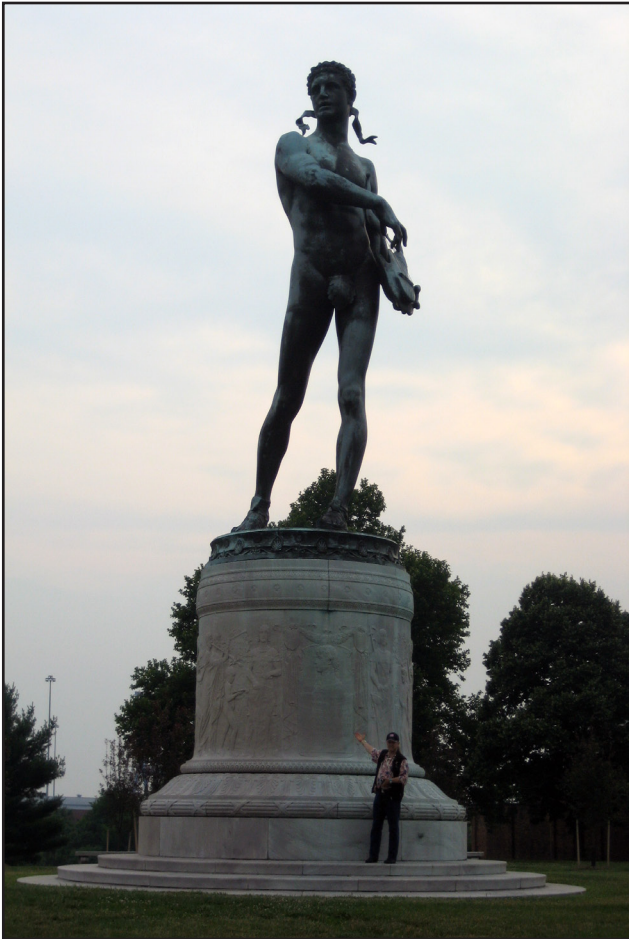




*The Quest for America's Pyramid, 1982.*

*In this painting, commissioned for a film proposal on America's Great Seal, the 5-pointed-star-shaped Fort McHenry is seen on the lower half. Ft. McHenry, home and inspiration of "The Star Spangled Banner," is a good place in Baltimore to experience palpable spiritual energy.*





*Orpheus, the divine musician who unites wisdom and love, and the muse of Francis Scott Key and Ft. McHenry. See a tiny Dr. Bob standing at the base during a visit in 2006.*



*Dr. Bob at the 1982 Ft. McHenry exhibit of Hieronimus folio watercolor series of historic Maryland, as he was being interviewed by Oprah Winfrey (when she was with WJZ-TV).*



*Zoh and Bob Hieronimus took this photo during one of several ghost hunts at the notoriously haunted Ft. McHenry in the 1980s.*





*Dr. Bob with George and Martha Washington impersonators and the Founding Fathers Biodiesel Artcar in 2007 on Flag Day at Ft. McHenry.*



*Flag Day 2007 at Ft. McHenry with a Francis Scott Key impersonator and Dr. Bob with the Founding Fathers Biodiesel Artcar.*





*Dr. Bob with two park ranger friends at the Ft. McHenry 2007 Flag Day celebration and exhibit of Dr. Bob's "American Beauty" painting.*



*Dr. Zohara Hieronimus showing off her amazing biceps during a pause at Ft. McHenry's National Flag Day Ceremony, 1999.*





*Dr. Zohara in the crowd as she's speaking to the National Flag Day Ceremony, 1999.*



*Dr. Zohara and other speakers saying the Pledge of Allegiance at the Ft. McHenry Flag Day Ceremony, 1999.*



*Dr. Zohara at the podium with a young friend at the Ft. McHenry National Flag Day Ceremony, 1999.*





*Ft. McHenry National Flag Day Ceremony where Zoh Hieronimus was a guest speaker in 1999, posing with the Ben Franklin impersonator.*



*Ft. McHenry National Flag Day Ceremony where Zoh Hieronimus was a guest speaker in 1999, posing with the Abe Lincoln impersonator.*





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*Dr. Bob Hieronimus and Janie Hendrix (sister of Jimi Hendrix) in front of the We The People Biodiesel Artcar before the Experience Hendrix concert in 2010. See the portrait of Jimi Hendrix on the car between them.*



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*LEFT: Dr. Bob and Billy Cox hanging outside the Hippodrome by the We The People Biodiesel Artcar before the Baltimore performance of Experience Hendrix. Meeting Jimi Hendrix in the U.S. Army, Billy Cox was the bassist for the Band of Gypsies and the Jimi Hendrix Experience on the 1970 tour.*





Photo: Daniel Bedell

*Dr. Zohara M. Hieronimus and Dr. Bob Hieronimus, 2010. Planting the seeds for the transformational age since 1966, they are actively pursuing those goals through their radio programs, books, and websites.*



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