



Special to The Inquirer / ROGER BARONE

A different look at a presidential visit

An island of gratitude in a sea of complaints

Freelance photographer Roger Barone covers a lot of news events in and around Philadelphia, everything from rock concerts to official visits by foreign heads of state. Occasionally he finds some gentle irony in the mood of the day and the mood of the people he's photographing. Such was the case during President Bush's campaign stop at Congress Hall next to Independence Hall to lambaste the current Congress during an address to the Federalist Society on Friday, a day, Barone said, that was marked by sour grumbling from just about everyone he encountered who turned out for the presidential visit.

Everyone, that is, but one.

"Bush complained about Congress," Barone began.

"Act Up complained about the President.

"College Republicans for Bush complained about Act Up.

"Demonstrators complained about Arlen Specter.

"Labor unions and carpenters complained about unemployment.

"An Associated Press photographer complained about the poor lighting in Congress Hall.

"A Reuters photographer complained about the White House press pool taking his camera position.

"Motorists complained about congested traffic.

"Pedestrians complained about having the police barricades blocking their paths.

"Park rangers complained about the cold temperatures at their outdoor posts.

"Street vendors complained about lost sales.

"Undercover policemen or Secret Service agents complained about cold coffee.

"Sanitation workers complained about recleaning areas that were covered with litter moments after cleaning them the first time.

"Passersby complained about the overtime pay and expenses incurred while protecting the President.

"Yes, it was a day full of complaints all right, but, through it all, one man seemed to be thankful for the position he was in."

That man is Joseph Cicippio (above right), the Norristown native who learned the hard way during the five years and 83 days he was held hostage in Lebanon for the crime of being an American that the one thing so many of us take for granted — freedom, including the freedom to complain — is worth all the struggle.

Freedom is what the struggle is all about.

By CLARK DeLEON

