



**Your on the  
Street Reporter**



**Uyless Black**

**America's Capital  
July 4<sup>th</sup> in our Nation's Capital**

## July 4<sup>th</sup> in our Nation's Capital

**July 4, 2005**

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. This week, your Reporter and relatives took-in some of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July festivities in the nation's Capital. We traveled into the District via the Metro, which I hope any of you who visit Washington will use. This transit system receives a lot of criticism in the local papers. I ride it occasionally and find it a fine way to get around the area. In addition, July 4<sup>th</sup> in Washington, DC is festive and fun.

### **Security and Secret Service: Gone.**

Unlike President Bush's January Inauguration parade, the Secret Service was not in attendance today. Nor were the thousands of security personnel who lined the streets in the earlier ceremony. Consequently, the crowds were not as large as in January, and we were able view the parade. I joke about this situation, but the security forces for Bush's parade were almost beyond belief. What a welcome relief it was to have some freedom of movement.

### **Bands and Marchers**

The first part of the parade was my favorite. The parade was led by small bands representing each of the services. Figure 1 shows two of these bands. Past duty persuaded me to highlight the U.S. Navy lads.



**Figure 1. Leading the parade.**



The participants of the parade vary from year to year. I've attended some ten July 4<sup>th</sup> parades in DC, and the military is always represented. But other groups make their appearances, too. One of the crowd favorites is shown in Figure 2, a Scottish bagpipe contingent.<sup>1</sup> Also, a wide assortment of high school and college bands make up the parade.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.july4thparade.com/slides/2007/slide7.html>.



Figure 2. Another popular group.

### Uncle Sam

The parade also featured several large balloon mannequins. Another crowd favorite was Uncle Sam, shown in Figure 3.

The most popular parade marcher was a man who followed an equestrian group---cleaning up after the horses. See Figure 4. I asked myself: “How does one go about getting a job shoveling horse shit? What would the interview be like?”

- Interviewer, “Look, this job is very important and your performance will be evaluated by thousands of on-lookers. What are your qualifications?”
- Interviewee, “Here, just look at my portfolio” [As interviewer reads the interviewee’s resume.]
- Interviewer, “As I suspected. Just like most resumes. Replete with bull shit.”
- Interviewee, “True. And therefore, this 4<sup>th</sup> of July job is right up my alley. The only difference is the animal involved.”
- Interviewer, “You’re hired!”

In performing his duties, the pooper scooper showed considerable flair. With each swish of his shovel and a deposit into the trash can, he raised his weapon to the crowd, as shown in Figure 4. In turn, the crowd burst-out into cheers and applause---more so than for any other parade participant, including the mannequins.



ure. Uncle Sam.



Today, street cleaning.  
Tomorrow, the world!

Figure 4. The most popular marcher.

The most puzzling parade participant was an old car and its riders (see Figure 5). The vehicle displayed no identifying posters; nothing to suggest it warranted an exalted position in the parade. Just four or five adults and kids waving tiny American flags. I suspected they made a wrong turn and ended up in the parade:

- Driver of old car, "Excuse me officer. I'm new in town. Can you direct me to the nearest parking lot?"
- Officer, "Certainly. Make a left turn at the traffic light."
- Driver, "Thanks," who then makes a right turn at the traffic light.
- Driver to his children, "Wow, kids! We're in the middle of the National 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade! Everyone wave your flags. Look official!"



Figure 5. The most puzzling participant.

### **The Famous People Show**

For this occasion, the National Mall is packed with people. Many come to see entertainment. Most of the day and the evening before the fireworks, well known singers, dancers, politicians, musicians, bands, and comedians provide amusement for the crowd. I rarely attend these festivities. Unless you arrive early in the morning, the place is so crowded the good viewing spots have been taken. For most of the attendees, the people on the stage resemble performing ants.

### **The Fireworks**

The fireworks displays, launched across the National Mall, are as spectacular as any I've seen.



**Figure 6. A spectacular view.**

With the nation's monuments serving as a background, they form Norman Rockwell images, as shown in Figure 6.<sup>2</sup>

As mentioned, I have been to many of these celebrations. But patriotism aside, I usually forsake staying at the Mall. The crowds on the Mall are stifling, especially if the day is sunny. Getting out of DC after the fireworks takes a long time. The highways out of the District are gridlocked, and the Metro cars become large sardine cans. Still, I recommend all citizens try to go to at least one July 4<sup>th</sup> on the National Mall.

Another option is to watch the fireworks from the Virginia side, next to the Potomac River. There you can use the Arlington National Cemetery Metro stop, which is not as congested as the stop in the District.

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

**Uncle Samette**

One more photo before I close this report. I snapped this picture of another Uncle Sam mannequin, although the term mannequin is not a fair description, because mannequin is defined as, "...a dummy for displaying clothes." She was certainly not a dummy and was gracious



**Figure 6. Uncle Samette**

enough to pose for this picture. My kind of patriot! She didn't take the matters at hand too seriously.

We did not stay for subsequent activities. We were (are) not as young as we were during those past times of spending hours at the National July 4<sup>th</sup> festivities.

Hedonism got the best of us, so we headed for a nearby air-conditioned café for some food and libation. Once again, we chose tapas at Jaleos on 7<sup>th</sup> Street---a fine restaurant.

That's about it for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade in our Nation's Capitol. I hope your Fourth was as pleasant and noneventful as mine.

Your on the Street Reporter