



**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

**America's Capital
Library of Congress**

The Library of Congress the Capitol Grounds Report One

May 11, 2006

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. Today, the locale for our report is the Library of Congress. This extraordinary storehouse of information provides support to members of Congress. It supplies them with documentation to assist their writing laws on pork barrels, gerrymandering, earmarks, and campaign rules---all designed to ensure they are never voted out of office.

Today I had another reporter accompany me on my sleuthing treks. I took in tow another person who, in the same mold as your Reporter, has a lot of time on his hands. For example, he likes watching reruns of *Leave it to Beaver* on the TVLand channel. He's fond of wildlife and I continue to inform him he is not going to see any real beavers on the show. But he is stubborn and old age has not helped his reasoning skills.

Just putting you on. He spends his spare time watching reruns of the *Lawrence Welk Show*. Have you seen any of these programs? They're so bad they're good. I wonder why Lawrence was never able to snare Pat Boone for his program? Have you listened to Pat sing rock-and-roll? I recall his interpretation of Fats Domino's, "Ain't that a Shame," and I thought it was a shame Pat was being paid for singing. Even worse, listen to Mr. Boone sing Little Richard's "Tutti Frutti." It will give you the willies.

Anyway, my new reporting partner is a loyal reader of Your on the Street Reporter reports. Therefore, I am giving him print in this segment. A couple of biographical notes are pertinent to this report: He is a graduate of Annapolis and a retired U.S. Navy Officer (submarines). He is to the right of Attila the Hun on the Red/Blue Spectrum.

Of course, private sources should be kept confidential, so for this report, his name is Reporter Junior. But in keeping with my high journalistic standards of protecting sources, his real name can be found in the Alexandria, Virginia, phone book: See Hughes, Alan.

Getting there is Half the Fun

The easiest way to travel to the Library of Congress is to ride the Metro to the Capitol South stop, turn right at the exit, go across the street, and get lost. (See Figure 1). Our map of the Library seemed straight-forward enough, but we were confused about its location. With our extensive Navy navigational training, finding a building a few hundred feet away should have been an easy task. But we were no longer sharp, focused junior officers standing on the ship's bridge guiding our vessel out of harm's way. We were dull, imprecise, Social Security seniors, not much more capable than Jack Lemon and Walter Matteau of *Grumpy Old Men*.

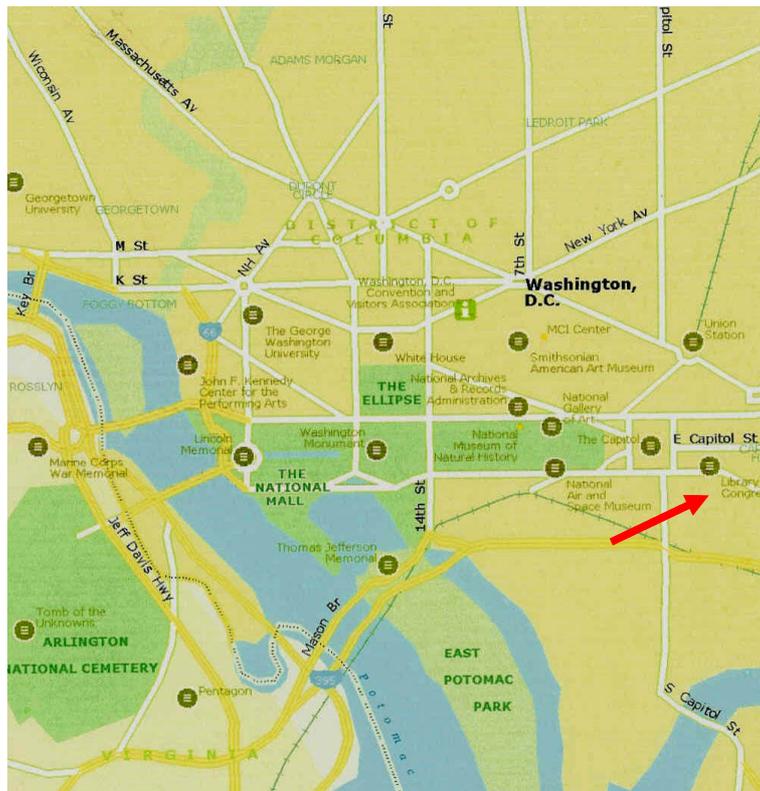


Figure 1. Location of the National Library of Congress.

Reporter Junior suggested a solution to our problem. Referring to the map I had printed from the Library Web page, he offered, "You've got the map upside down." No wonder we had misplaced ourselves. We were walking south when we should have been walking north. I started to reply, *Cool your jets, We were trained to navigate on water, not land.*

Besides, why was this submariner scumbag trying to tell a surface sailor how to navigate? We were in a line-of-sight situation here, not exactly the strong point of a person who worked underwater most of his career.

The Capitol Landscape Architect¹

While Reporter Junior and I debated the correct route to the Library, a gentleman who was walking by us enquired, "Gentlemen, may I help you find something?" We must have appeared to be confused.

It turns out this man knew the Capitol area like the back of his hand. He volunteered to walk us to the main building of the Library. During this jaunt, he discovered we were retirees and were spending time getting to know this part of the Capital. He was dressed in shirt-and-tie, and bore little resemblance to a tour guide.

We asked him why he was in the area. He replied he was a landscaper. He did not say he was a landscape *artist*, or a landscape *architect*. Just a landscaper, maybe similar to the guy who mows

¹ Conversation is paraphrased. I took notes after the conversation took place.

your lawn each week. I had recently read the book *Blink*. Therefore, I sensed, by analyzing his chin, that he was more than a lawn mower. Granted, as suggested by the author of *Blink*, I should have read his forehead, but he had a hat on. So, the chin-read was an on-the-spot adjustment.

I gave up. His chin offered no clue to anything more about him, so we asked him what landscapes he landscaped, "Capitol Hill."

Impressive. If he were a lawn mower, he had to have a very big machine, like one of those monsters you see being pulled behind big trucks, filled with immigrants who work for fees so paltry that even panhandlers won't accept. That's why they panhandle. They make more money by panhandling than by mowing lawns or flipping burgers.

Want another solution to America's ills? Raise the minimum wage, therefore encouraging panhandlers to leave their street corner, walk into the nearest McDonald's and apply for a job. Dream on.

Anyway, we exchanged business cards. I presented him with my "Your on the Street Reporter" card and he gave us his "Landscape Architect of the Capitol" card, accompanied with the name Matthew Evans. (Reporter Junior had not yet had his reporter card printed, as this was his first assignment.)

Very impressive. The word *Architect* was singular, as in *the Architect*, not one of many Architects. We asked,

- "You're in charge of the landscape of the entire Capitol grounds?"
- Mr. Evans, "Yes."
- I looked at the surrounding landscape, marveling at its beauty. I asked, "Are you an employee of the National Park Service?"
- Mr. Evans, "No, we are not part of the Park Service. We are part of Congress and the Office of the Architect of the Capitol."
- Reporter, "Mr. Evans, you have created a really beautiful place for everyone who comes here. I've walked around the Capitol Building and the views are all different...because of the landscape," As seen by the photos I took in this area today (see Figure 2):
- Mr. Evans, "Thank you."
- Reporter, "Say, do you mind if I take your picture next to some of your work?"
- Mr. Evans, "Well, I'm scheduled for a meeting....but sure, go ahead," as the three of us placed Mr. Evans and Reporter Junior next to one of his trees, shown in Figure 3



Figure 2. Landscaping in the Capitol, and around the Capitol (A small sample).

I wrote down the name of this kind of tree, but I can't read my notes on this item. Do you know? Send in your answer. The winners will be awarded free passes to the Library of Congress. (Mr. Evans and members of his family are not allowed to participate in this contest.)



Figure 3. The Landscape Architect (to the right) of the Capitol and Reporter Junior.

After the photo was taken, we bade farewell to each other. We thanked him for his kindness. He replied (reconstructed with help from Junior), "Each day, I look for someone around here to help. I look for disoriented sightseers. (He had us tagged). I see if they need help. They're easy to spot; the workers around here walk with a purpose."

He added that by this gesture, he believed he was giving something back to the people. A (very senior) government employee practiced a philosophy we do not encounter very much in our government (and our government workers are orders of magnitude more accommodating than those in many countries.). I am stereotyping here, but I have worked with government bureaucracies, and I can't recall running into this sort of behavior very much.

He left our company with this parting comment, "You made my day."

No, Mr. Evans, you made our day.

And we finally arrived at the fanciful, elegant Library of Congress.

Your on the Street Reporter

The Library of Congress Report Two

May 11, 2006

Thanks to Mr. Evans, Reporter Junior and I successfully entered the entrance to the main building of the Library of Congress. This institution charges no admission to its exhibits, which is why I am awarding free passes for anyone who can identify the type of tree shown in Figure 3.

Established by Congress in 1800, the main building of the Library is named after Thomas Jefferson. (See Figure 4.) After the British set fire to the Capital Building in 1814 (where the small library was located), he donated his personal collection of books to the Library. Donated, in the sense that Congress appropriated \$23,950 for Jefferson's 6,487 books.²



Figure 4. The Thomas Jefferson Building.

Jefferson feared his collection might not be acceptable because many books did not deal with law or the subject of legislatures. But he believed all subjects were important in a library of the American Congress and his conviction became a guiding principle for the collecting policies of the Library of Congress.

Later, Ainsworth Rand Spofford, the Librarian of Congress from 1864 to 1897, applied Jefferson's philosophy and built the Library into the grand institution it is today. Spofford was partially responsible for the passing of the copyright law of 1870. The law required all copyright applicants to send to the Library two copies of their work. As a result, thousands of items were sent to the Library, forcing the eventual construction of more buildings, as well as the invention of microfiche---a technology that renders readable hard copy into unreadable film.

Reporter and Reporter Junior encountered a problem as we passed through security to the Thomas Jefferson Building. In spite of the free admission, we were not admitted. Junior had in

² "The Thomas Jefferson Building," a pamphlet published by The Library of Congress, April 2005.

his possession a 1 1/2 inch pin knife. Consequently, security turned us away. Junior was not happy about this situation, but I was relieved security let us off the hook and didn't wrestle Al to the ground to disarm him. But what could we do now? Where could we go? Given Reporter Junior's heavily-armed condition, we were certain no Capitol Hill institution would grant us admission.

We had made a long trek in our quest for knowledge. All the way from Virginia, two miles away, across a state line and a river. I was tempted to ask Alan to toss the knife into a trash can, but the knife was his affair, not mine. And I was partially at fault with this situation, because I had not indoctrinated Reporter Junior into *Reporter 101* training. A major rule, cited in this guide is: *Do Not Carry Weapons of Mass or Less-Than-Mass Destruction through Security Gates.*

We left the Thomas Jefferson Building. Al decided to hide his knife somewhere in the area, visit the Library, and then retrieve it when we had finished our work. Reporter,

- "Good idea. How about that clump of grass over there...or behind that bush?"
- After all, Matthew Evans, Landscape Architect of the Capitol, would be happy to once again help two hapless tourists.
- Reporter Junior, "Naw. I'll put it here," as he placed his weapon of awesome proportion on a window sill.
- Reporter, "That won't work! It's not hidden."
- Reporter Junior, "So much the better. No one will see it, because it's too obvious."

Al must have thought he was still underwater in a submarine. *OK, I thought, it's your knife.*

Later, Al and I were talking about this incident and how we would like to get our hands on Osama bin Laden. We talked of how 9/11 had changed so many freedoms and conveniences that Americans used to take for granted. We spoke of why liberties we have taken for granted (private phone numbers, private email addresses, no cameras in toilet stalls, the sanctity of our naked feet at airports) had been suspended until the War on Terror was won---which will be for a very long time; say, never.

- And we talked about why he was so committed to holding-on to a stupid pin knife. He answered, "Because it has the name 'Hughes' on it."
- Reporter, "Cool! A personalized pin knife. I'm impressed. No wonder you didn't want to give it up."
- Reporter Junior, "Well, the 'Hughes' is 'Howard Hughes' of the Hughes Company. Not 'Al Hughes'."

Equally cool. A non-personalized, personalized pin knife. I thought, *If he had told me earlier, I wouldn't have helped him hide the damned thing.* But to each his own. In my younger days, I wore shirt pins with the name "Black" on them. I still have two pins in my possession that inform the viewer how formidable I am, "Black Power!" And, "Black is Beautiful!" Go for it Alan. Keep that pin knife. If any of Howard's relatives come around looking for *their* pin knife, tell them to shove off.

Another Grand Building

In my Shirley MacLain reincarnated life, if I become the quarterback for a winning Super Bowl team, and a reporter asks me where I am going for vacation, I'm not going to say, "Disneyworld." My response will be, "I'm going to the Library of Congress."

If you visit this institution, you will understand my response. For example, consider the Great Hall of the Thomas Jefferson Building, shown in Figure 5 (as a collage of three photos). Here is a short excerpt from a Library pamphlet.³

The ceiling, 75 feet above the marble floor, is decorated with stained glass skylights supported by elaborately paneled beams finished in aluminum leaf. In the center of the marble floor is a large brass inlay shaped like a sun, on which are inscribed the four cardinal points of the compass.Two grand staircases that display the work of sculptor Philip Martiny flank the Great Hall. Upon the newel post at the base of the railing of each staircase stands an unnamed, larger-than-life bronze female figure holding aloft a torch.



Figure 5. The Great Hall.

The interior described in this write-up is a small sample of the grandeur of this building. And we've yet to describe its contents.

You can use the Library

During conversations with people about the Library of Congress, I gained the impression many folks think the institution is available only to Congress people and their staffs. Anyone who is

³ Ibid., 4-5.

older than high-school age can use most of the Library's 22 reading rooms. When I began writing about computer networks in the 1980s, I visited the Library to conduct research, and I discovered admittance to parts of the place required nothing more than obtaining a reader identification card. Today, you may secure your card by visiting Room LM-140 in the Madison Building.

I've since discovered most of my research material is available on the Internet, especially the papers from the Internet Activities Board (IAB). And interesting twist: I use the Internet to conduct research on the Internet.

The library has several rotating exhibits available to the public. In one room alone, Al and I took in: a display of original Charles Dickens' writings; Audubon paintings; Ben Franklin's original *Poor Richard's Almanac* writings, and a quote from one of his letters, "Leaders who little know, little grow."; a movie showing selected shots of Fred Astaire dancing; some John Philips Sousa horns; a Gutenberg Bible, and other displays I failed to record in my notes.

The Library of Congress is not only a library, it is a reflection of America. Our nation's capital is an amazing place. Within walking distance from the Library are the Smithsonian, the National Archives, the Capitol, the Supreme Court, the National Arboretum, and scores of statues, monuments, and memorials. Why go to Disneyworld? The exhibits in Washington, DC are fun and free.

What! My Treasured Works are not in the Building?

During our visit to the Library, we passed by a computer kiosk. The machine was programmed to access the catalog of works stored and registered with the Library of Congress. I asked Reporter Junior if we might pause and search for any of my books that might be housed here. I knew our surfing would yield results, because each of my books had a Library of Congress ID number printed in a front page.

Sure enough, the screen scrolled up forty-seven titles by Uyless Black. Forty-seven? I am not very good with numbers, but I am sure I wrote only thirty-five books. Could someone have the same name as I? How many Uyless Blacks could there possibly be in this world who wrote instant-sleeping-pill tomes?

- Reporter to Reporter Junior, "Something's wrong. Too many entries."
- Reporter Junior, "Scroll down and look at the titles. See if they're yours. Maybe they're listing second editions."
- I gave Al's suggestion a thought and replied, "Nope. Too much trouble." Those days were behind me. I had lost any curiosity about my old work. Besides, the Library of Congress Gift Shop was just around the corner.

Before leaving the kiosk and entering the gift shop, we noticed each entry for my books contained information about how the book was stored. I was happy to learn my books were recorded in hard copy, electronic images, and microfiche. I thought of venturing into the book stacks and checking them out...until I read that the hard copies were stored, "Off Site." What! I was sure people had formed queues at the librarian's desk, demanding to read a book on the

significance to life of an Internet router. Let it go, Uyless. It's history. Your future lies ahead, just around the corner, in curio shops.

The Library of Congress Curio/Gift Shop and Library

We spent a few minutes in the Bric-a-Brac Shop. Yes, the shop sold T-shirts, and yes, your reporter resisted, no purchases. My favorite knick-knack was a whiskey jigger with a small statue of Thomas Jefferson attached to its side, accompanied with one of his most-famous quotes, "I cannot live without whiskey."

Just joking. T.J. actually said, "I cannot live without books." That is, until his plantation at Monticello ran into financial difficulties and he "donated" his collection of books to the Library of Congress for a few grand, which proved his claim, "I cannot live without books," because shortly after he became bookless, he died.

Your on the Street Reporter

The Library of Congress Report Three

May 11, 2006

Reporter Junior and I wanted to spend more time at the Library of Congress, but we became hungry for food, and consequently, we were no longer hungry for knowledge. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs kicked-in. We headed out of the Thomas Jefferson Building; first, to fetch Al's depersonalized, personalized knife; second, to find an eatery.

If you are near the Capitol South Metro stop, try the Le Bon for lunch. The sandwich shop was recommended by Mr. Evans, whom we encountered while eating a delicious turkey club. After the meal, we took a walk along the west side of the Capitol. There, at the east end of the National Mall, we came upon three sculptures: two depicting Civil War soldiers in combat, the other of General Ulysses S. Grant. Figure 6 provides a view of these works of art.



Figure 6. Civil War sculptures.

In the early days of my education, my teachers told me Grant was an inept man, a heavy drinker who commanded the Union Army to victory because of the imbalance of forces between the North and the South. After learning more about Grant and his relationship with President Lincoln, I came to opposite conclusions. He was a competent man, his drinking did not affect his performance in the Civil War, and his generalship was instrumental to the Union's victory. No question, the North wore-down the South. But previous Union generals possessed the same overwhelming firepower and could not defeat the rebels.

I have come to admire U.S. Grant. One reason is that most people, upon seeing my moniker, think my first name is Ulysses. Like Al's Hughes pin knife and his affinity for things named Hughes, I identify with Ulysses. ...Just kidding about the name, but not about my admiration for Grant. He was a man of keen intelligence and high integrity. I cannot recommend a better military autobiography than *The Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant* (1885-1886).

Grant is the object of parody by some critics because, until the Civil War started, he was a model for failure. For his first forty years:⁴

- He graduated from West Point 21st in a class of 39.
- Later, stationed in California, he tried moonlighting for extra money to bring his family west. All these attempts (farming, woodcutting, selling ice, dealing in livestock) were failures.
- He took to drinking, quarreled with his commander, and was forced to resign from the Army.
- He returned home where his in-laws helped his family and him settle on a farm. He failed to make a profit. He was forced to pawn his watch and chain to buy his family Christmas presents.
- Grant then accepted a partnership in a real estate and rent collection firm in St. Louis, but this business did not work out.
- For a month, he held a job in the St. Louis customhouse, but he lost it when the collector died.

The Civil War started, Grant re-upped, and four years later, he was recognized as one of the ablest military leaders in American history.

My early career fiascos remind me of Grant and his problems:⁵ I was a lousy bill collector, an incompetent soda jerk, an inept dog catcher, and an uninspired summons server. For Pete's sake, I was fired from a lifeguard job, which required little more than staring at half-naked females. If someone had forecasted my future based on my job performances in my youth, the predictions would not have been rosy.

Grant went on to become a respected, often revered hero to many folks in this country. But like Sherman, he is not liked by some people who still have strong feelings about the Civil War. I am fond of most of the generals on both sides of the battle (McClellan is an exception to this statement). By the way, I am not suggesting my career in anyway can be equated with this great man. I am asking some of my readers to re-think the stereotype associated with Grant.

Another Demonstration on the Mall

Our last story for this Report is about a demonstration Reporter Junior and I came across as we walked toward the Metro Smithsonian stop. Nearby was an odd display: Hundreds of pairs of boots and shoes, as seen in Figure 7. We learned each pair of footwear represented a military or civilian death from the Iraq War. I was curious about the logistical aspects of this undertaking, so I approached one of the people handing out flyers.

⁴ "U.S. Grant," Microsoft Encarta, 2006. 1993-2005, Microsoft Corporation.

⁵ I held jobs in these "professions."



Figure 7. The Eyes Wide Open Protest.

- Reporter, "What's going on?" (I took notes during the interview.)
- Person handing out flyers, "We are honoring the dead who were killed in the Iraq War."
- Reporter, "How did you come into possession of their boots and shoes?"
- Person, "Oh, they're symbolic only. I don't know where they came from."
- Reporter, "I notice each pair of the boots has a name plate tied to the boot. I assume the name identifies the casualty?"
- Person, "Yes."
- Reporter, "Did you get permission from the deceased person's family to exhibit the name?"
- Person, "No, but if someone wants a relative's name removed, they can inform us, and we remove it."
- Reporter, "Oh? How is a mom...say...in Muleshoe, Texas, a woman who maybe supported her son's participation in the war, ever going to know his name is being used in your protest?"
- Honor Demonstrator, "This is not a protest; we are honoring the dead."
- Reporter, "Fine. I respect that idea. But look at the sign to your right (see Figure 8), its message conveys an anti-war protest. It seems to me the footwear display is an anti-war demonstration."
- Honor Demonstrator and Protester, "Yes, it's both."

I failed to understand why they were reluctant to use the words protest or demonstration. Other groups on the Mall were not so shy. Reporter Junior offered no opinion about this matter---a rare occurrence for a submariner.

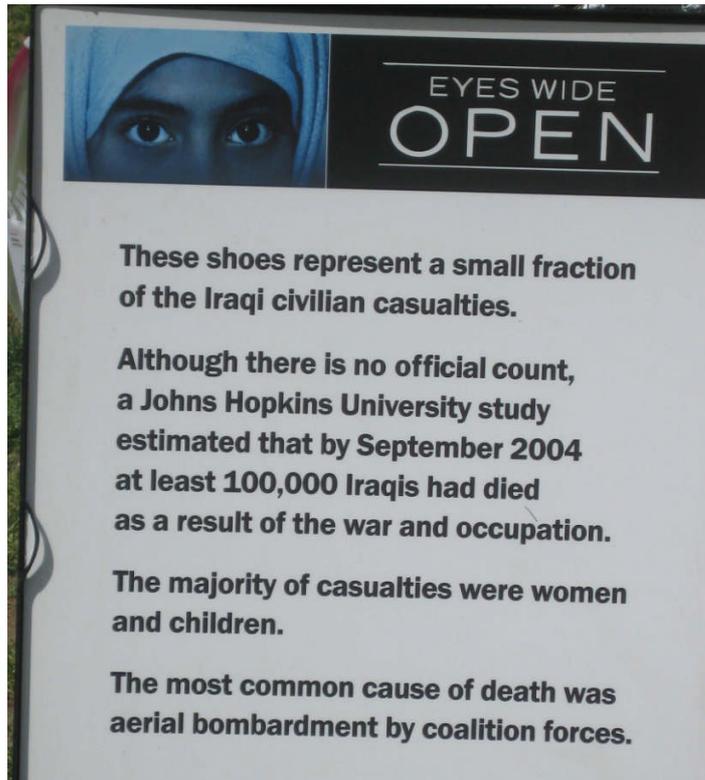


Figure 8. A sign honoring....protesting....?

The woman told me the honor ceremony/demonstration/protest had traveled to several cities. Columbus, Ohio, was next on the itinerary. She was not a permanent member of the assemblage. She was a visitor to DC and decided to volunteer her time today for her cause. Whatever our views on her cause, at least she was doing something in which she believed.

But she never answered my question about the hypothetical mother in Texas, whose very personal "data" was likely being used without her knowledge. Not to mention, this mother's (most likely) disapproval of her son's name being used to protest a cause in which he believed.

It's another example of data mining. Data mining is not just *looking* for data. It is also *using* data. The NSA does it. These people do it, too. And I'll bet my next Irish Coffee your approval or disapproval of these two data mining operations is correlated closely with your position on the Red/Blue Spectrum.

Thanks for reading this report. It was long and we managed to step on just about everyone's toes. We even managed to see a part of the Library of Congress.

Your on the Street Reporter