



**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

**America's Capital
A Return to the Nation's Capital**

Table of Contents

Report

One: Special Exhibits at the National Art Gallery

Two: Washington DC, A Walking Town

Three: Returning to Georgetown

Four: Former Combat Zones

Five: The Capitol Visitors Center

Six: Kennedy Center and Watergate

Seven: The Navy Yard and the Federal Reserve Board

A Return to the Nation's Capital **Report One: Special Exhibits at the National Art Gallery**

April 29 – May 4, 2012¹

This is Your on the Street Reporter, again walking the streets of our nation's capital. I'll be here for a few days to refresh the memories of my years spent in this area and to send you reports on these remembrances and on recent findings.

The goals are also to see an exhibit at the National Art Gallery, and to visit the capitol visitor center, a facility I have read much about, but have not yet seen.

It took my vast reporter staff (Reporterette, dog Milli, and your reporter) two days and one night to make the journey from Idaho to Washington, DC. Planes were late. On one flight out of Seattle, the pilot announced he was turning the craft around and returning to the airport. He let us know one of the doors to the plane was not sufficiently closed to allow the plane to ascend to its cruising altitude. Air pressure problems.

But we landed safely. He then informed us a spare part was needed that had to be flown-in from Spare Parts City. My staff and I headed for the nearest hotel. It would be a long time for the part to arrive. Spare Parts City is located in China, as are most of America's spare parts.

Rahm Emanuel Solos It

While waiting at a Chicago departure area to board a plane for Washington DC, I spotted the Chicago mayor Rahm Emanuel standing by himself across the corridor. He was using a pay phone. The incongruous view of the situation was striking: (a) Who uses a pay phone now-a-days? (b) Who in their right mind will travel alone if they are a famous politician?

Later, I relayed these thoughts to three Chicago citizens I had met on this trip. They responded that Mr. Emanuel often commutes by himself on the subway to and from work. I asked about the pay phone usage. They shrugged their shoulders. On Charlie Rose a few weeks ago, Emanuel said Chicago was facing an annual deficit of \$1.2 billion and that the city was facing the problem of finding money for unfunded pension liabilities. In regard to the pay phone, maybe Rahm was using it to call collect.

We boarded the plane. There sat Mayor Emanuel in first class, seat A1, chatting away on a cell phone. Despite the possibility that Chicago could go down the financial tubes, he was smiling. I thought of asking for an autograph, but the boarding crowd pushed me and my 49.999 pounds of carry-on luggage to the steerage class in the back of the plane.

¹ With the exception of Figure 3, the photos of the paintings in this report are sourced from Wikipedia; as is the quote from Picasso about his art, and a quote about his Guernica painting. I am told that serious journalists do not cite Wikipedia as a source for their plagiarism. Hence, my citations.

Another Visit to the National Art Gallery

I lived in the Washington DC area off-and-on from 1965 to 2002. While my residences were in nearby Virginia, I worked for many years in the District. Being a young, single male, I am happy to tell you I also played for many years in and around DC. Stories for another time as well as Report Six in this series.

For now, one goal was to revisit the National Art Gallery. Two exhibits held my interest: The Japanese bird, fish, and flower paintings by Ito Jakuchu (1716-1800) and the drawings of Picasso (1888-1973). Both exhibits were closing soon, The Jakuchu display was shutting down the coming weekend, so the airplane delay at Seattle was unsettling.

Ito Jakuchu

The Jakuchu exhibition is the first time these works have been shown outside Japan. During the life of this artist and for many years following his death, Japan was a closed society. Westerners did not know about this extraordinary man and his art. The specific paintings on the walls of the Gallery have been displayed only once in Japan. They resided initially in the Skokokuji Monastery in Kyoto, but were moved in 1889 to the Imperial Household. Like today, rank had its privileges in bygone days.

Some of my readers know from reading “Confessions of a Modern Art Luddite” that I am ignorant of the nuances of painting. But even luddites can appreciate and enjoy the finer things in life. I find works such as the Jakuchu paintings to be a tranquilizer to my hurried, urban soul. Looking at the details of the creations of this genius took me to another world, if only for an hour or so.

One cannot fully appreciate his silk screens unless they can be seen in-person. But a couple examples will help us to understand their beauty and his talent. The two paintings in Figure 1 convey a sense of the nature of his works. The painting on the left is appropriately named “Roosters.” The artist put a lot of roosters on his screens. His dad operated a grocery store. Maybe these models used by Mr. Jakuchu were later destined for his dad’s chopping block. The work on the right side of Figure 1 is titled, “Chrysanthemums by a Stream, with Rocks.”

In today’s art world these paintings might seem trite, even hackneyed. But if we look at other artists’ paintings made during Jakuchu’s life (1716-1800), none have the “stylistic vibrancy of his works.”² The paintings of those days are dull and drab. How many times did Stuart paint George Washington’s face? Some of Jakuchu’s works have a modern touch to them. One of his roosters, as it cock-a-doodles up to the sky, appears as an almost modern-day abstract image (I was not allowed to use this picture in this report).

² From an exhibit brochure.



Figure 1. Examples of Jakuchu’s works.

Imagine the talent it took to create these works on delicate silk. The technique uses stencils that transfer ink (or other materials chosen by the artist) onto silk. Once the pull across the plate was executed, there was no turning back. It was done.

One of the beauties of living (for me anyway) is to appreciate the beauty of the creations of those whose talents lie far off my horizon. As I walked through this exhibit, I was stunned by the delicacy and beauty of the paintings.

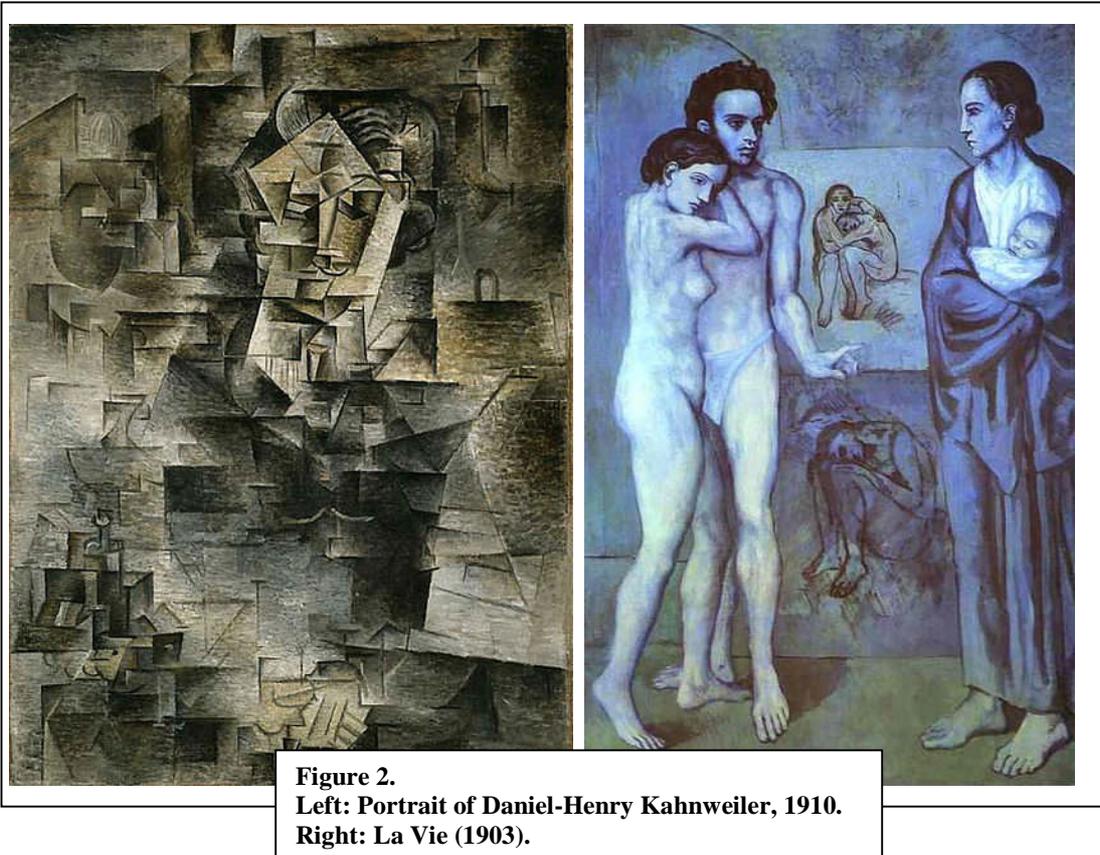
The artist was a serene man who embraced Zen and nature. I copied-down one of his thoughts about his work, “Flowers, birds, grasses, and insects each have their own innate spirit. Only after we have determined the true nature of this spirit by observation should painting begin.”

He made these thoughts known in 1755. They ring true today about living in general, at least for us dreamers and Zonker.

Picasso

I am an admirer of Picasso. I came to this realization as a latter-day adult, because I had not bothered to study this man and his art. I occasionally glanced at one of his paintings in a

magazine, such as the work on the left side of Figure 2. I turned the page thinking, “What on earth was this man thinking when he painted that picture? What was he smoking?”



My mentality was an example of the Ignorant, Therefore Doctrinaire Syndrome. Regarding Picasso, it came about when I was a young man living in Los Angeles. An acquaintance of my girl friend owned a piece of pottery created by Picasso. She treasured it beyond anything else she owned. I was not allowed to hold or even touch it. I looked at it for long time and concluded its artistic value was not much better than the pots I had seen made and sold by Native Americans sitting on the streets and highways around Albuquerque, New Mexico. I did not share this opinion with my girl friend’s friend.

A few years later, I came across an article about the early work of Picasso. The piece showed examples of his blue period, such as the picture shown on the right side of Figure 2. I was taken aback by the realization that this man was not always an abstract cubist (my bias showing again...and I now appreciate cubism). To say the least, he was immensely talented.

The final nail in my prejudiced, ignorant coffin about abstract art generally and Picasso specifically came about during a visit to Madrid, Spain, in the late 1990s. Holly and I visited the Reina Sofia museum. There, we saw his most famous work, *Guernica* (1937), as shown in

Figure 3. The museum allowed us to take non-flash photos, and I snapped shots of the portrait, one shown here.



Figure 3. *Guernica*, 1937.

This large canvas depicts the misery invoked on noncombatants by the Germans bombing Guernica during the Spanish Civil War. According to an art expert it, “shows the inhumanity, brutality and hopelessness of war.” Asked to explain its symbolism, Picasso said, “It isn’t up to the painter to define the symbols. Otherwise it would be better if he wrote them out in so many words. The public who look at the picture must interpret the symbols as they understand them.”

The Frick Collection, New York, and the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., co-organized this exhibition about the development of Picasso's drawings, “from the precocious academic exercises of his youth in the 1890s to the virtuoso classical works of the early 1920s. The presentation shows the artist's stylistic experiments and techniques in this period.”

The exhibit showed not only pencil drawings but works done with watercolor, chalk, charcoal, pastels, paper epingle (works with paper), and gouache (paint similar to watercolor, but modified to make it an opaque painting medium).

I was not allowed to take pictures of these works, but the Internet once again came to the rescue.³ Figure 4 shows two examples of Picasso’s drawings. These are rendered in pencil, ink, and watercolor.

³ Thanks to the Frick Gallery for placing these images online.

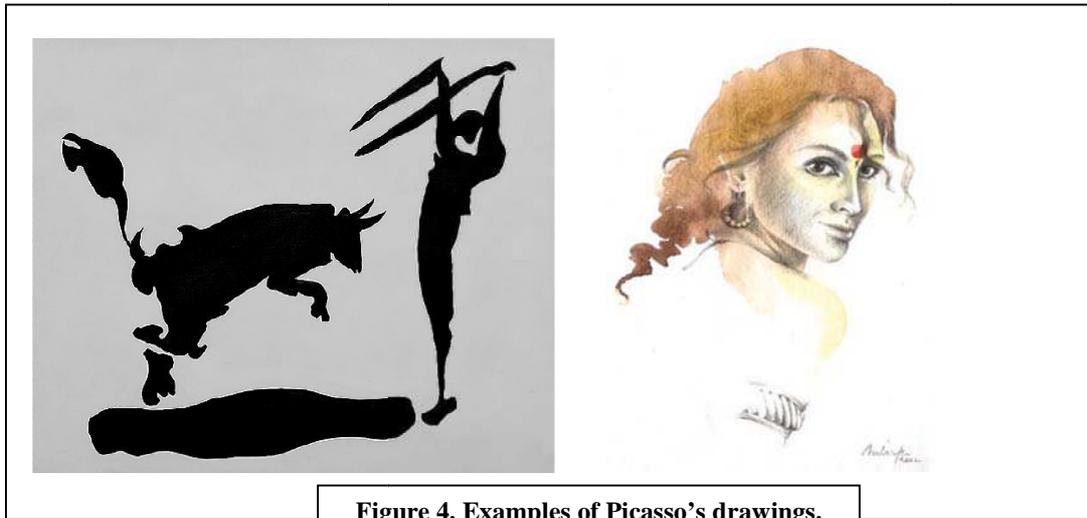


Figure 4. Examples of Picasso's drawings.

Brain Power

As I wandered in wonderment through these two exhibits, a thought occurred to me. How many mental calories was I burning while absorbing these works? In contrast, how many hours of watching prime time TV would I have to watch to equal the stimulations my mind received during these two to three hours at the National Art Gallery?

Leaving this museum, I was thankful our nation has the Smithsonian Institution on our land. Nineteen museums where we can go---free of charge---to see some of the finest art and historical artifacts that can be found anywhere on earth.

A Return to the Nation's Capital Report Two: Washington, DC, A Walking Town

April 29 – May 4, 2012

Unknown to many people, Washington, DC is one of the most attractive cities in the world for walking. If you like to walk, within an area of two miles you can come across about thirty-five museums, at least as many grand monuments, with a remarkable absence of the modern art experiment: graffiti.

Across the river is the National Cemetery at Arlington and the Iwo Jima Memorial. Down the way south a few miles is Mount Vernon. I am in the process of posting several reports on my blog about this part of America, so I will not belabor the subject. I hope you take a look at these essays. (Go to Blog.UylessBlack.com; scroll down to “America’s Capital.”)

For now, let’s take a short tour of some of the streets in this city. I say “short tour” because a book could be written about the subject.

The National Art Gallery is situated on Constitution Avenue, a main thoroughfare in DC. This street is lined with government buildings, such as the National Archives, the Federal Reserve, the Department of Justice, and the Canadian Embassy. Many of these buildings are old. Their designs reflect the tastes of the 1800s, although most of the buildings were constructed in the 20th century.

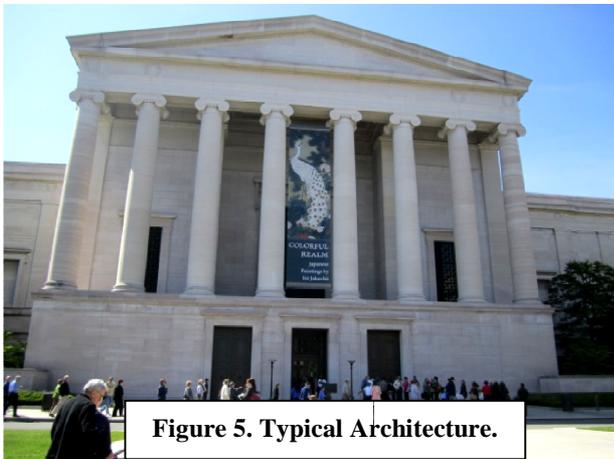


Figure 5. Typical Architecture.

A good example of the architecture in this part of town, especially the buildings lining Constitution Avenue, is the National Art Gallery, as seen in Figure 5. The large banner hanging between the center columns is advertising exhibits that are currently available to the public.

Washington is one of the few cities in the industrialized world that displays a low-level skyline:

The height of buildings in Washington is limited by the Height of Buildings Act. The original Act was passed by Congress in 1899 in response to the 1894 construction of the Cairo Hotel, which was taller than the majority of buildings in the city. The original act restricted the heights of any type of building in the capital city to be no higher than 110 feet, 90 feet for residential buildings. In 1910, Congress enacted a law raising the overall building height limit to 130 feet. The building sheriffs “measure a building from the sidewalk or curb to the start of the roof. Architectural embellishments, mechanical rooms, and common rooftop structures may be

exempted from the overall height limit, provided they are setback from the roof line.”⁴ One of the most attractive aspects of this city is its skyline. Figure 6 illustrates my point.⁵

A few decades ago Paris had the distinction for the most beautiful large city skyline in the world. No more. Paris let the developers gain the upper hand. As a former entrepreneur, I’m for development, but I know the entrepreneurial aspirations of many people---if unchecked---will eventually lead to a Thump Tower billboard populating the rooftop of the National Art Gallery. I mean no offence Donald Trump, who was chosen for this spoof, but capitalism does not take into account the elegance of a city skyline.

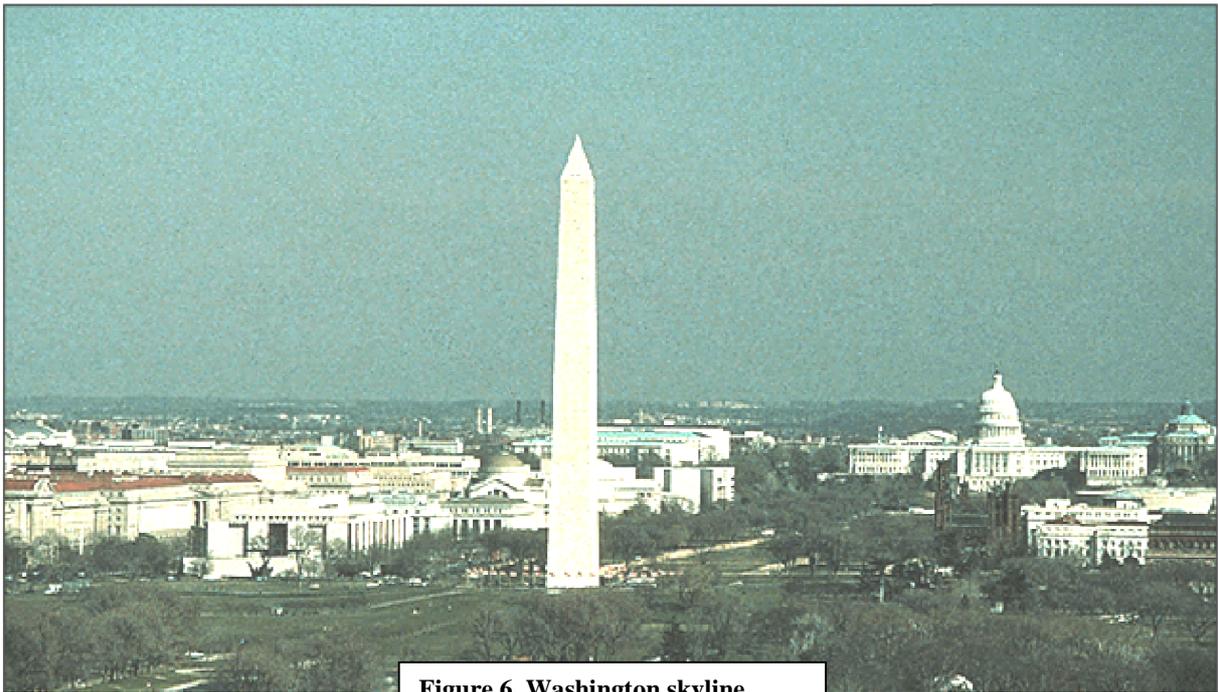


Figure 6. Washington skyline.

Take a Walk or Ride a Bike

When in DC, get out of your car. Make sure you walk the National Mall, parts of which are shown in Figure 7.⁶

⁴ “Washington, DC Buildings,” Wikipedia.

⁵ 1995 photo, Smithsonian Institution, <http://photo2.si.edu/aerialdc/aerialdc.html>.

⁶ “Memorial Day in Our Nation’s Capital,” report, Blog.Uyless Black.com.



Figure 7. The National Mall.

On this occasion, my staff and I rented a two person bicycle with a one person motor, as seen in the left photo of Figure 8. I am in the process of paying the fare. We are both happy because she (the cyclist) has offered to reduce the fee from \$25 to \$20. I am happy for the discount. She is also happy I helped her small body move the taxi up a steep hill that was just behind us, as seen in the right photo in Figure 8. Reporterette snapped this shot. For the life of me, I do not know why I am smiling. I was running up a steep hill two blocks in length.



Figure 8. The National Mall.

Truth is, I was smiling because we had been taking in some extraordinary sights. As she and I peddled and pushed the cab up 14th Street toward Rhode Island Avenue, we looked to our right down Pennsylvania Avenue to behold the sights shown in Figure 9.



Figure 9. Everyday views.

When I first came to this part of America, the sight of our nation's capitol took me aback. It left me in awe. As I grew accustomed to the area, as I commuted into and out of the District, I became accustomed to the monumental sights of our nation's buildings and monuments.

My return to the capital---however brief---rekindled my wonderment for what our capital offers to its citizens and the world.

A Return to the Nation's Capital Report Three: Returning to Georgetown

April 29 – May 4, 2012

Today my reporting staff (Reporter, Reporterette, and dog Milli) paid a call on Georgetown, the tony suburb located in west DC. Reporter Milli, a French Poodle, would be in her element.⁷

Georgetown was founded in 1751. It's older than the federal district of Washington by 40 years. "The site of this city was the farthest point upstream [on the Potomac River] to which oceangoing boats could navigate the Potomac River."⁸ It became a busy port, especially for the water transfer of tobacco from nearby farms to merchants in other parts of the world.

The area has changed from a busy commercial water port to a busy port for private water crafts and land-based consumers who have ample disposable income. During the 1960s and 70s, when I was making the rounds of Georgetown, it was a hotbed for beatniks, hippies, rock and roll clubs, liberated women, and reefer joints. Today, it has toned down, but the area still contains expensive boutiques and very expensive residences.



Figure 10. Still serving food.

When I first arrived in the DC area, the corner of M Street and Wisconsin was the locale for the Rive Gauche, one of the area's exclusive restaurants. On a modest Navy Lieutenant's salary, I dined there infrequently. Two meals with drinks cost more than a week or so of my salary.

The building that housed the Rive Gauche is still on M and Wisconsin. As seen in Figure 10, it is now a store for the Banana Republic. At least it still sells food...maybe only bananas.

Liver!...Where's the Onions? For my first meal at this elegant French restaurant, I chose calf's liver. I had not had this meal since I left New Mexico for the U.S. Navy in Asia, and later a Navy billet in DC (a duration of five years). I was salivating for liver and onions, smothered in brown gravy and cooked to near blackness. With red wine, of course. I knew the gourmet ropes.

A short while after I had placed my order, the meal was presented to me by a haughty waiter. Hidden under a fancy domed lid, smothered fried liver was awaiting my mouth and tongue. The

⁷ The French Poodle, debased with ill-cuttings of its hair by French effetes, was originally known as the German water dog. It was bred to be a superior water retriever of fallen game. My dog is only six pounds, so if I were to have her fetch some game, she would do it, but it might be restricted to minnows or canaries. Nonetheless, she's as game as they come, regardless of her size.

⁸ "Georgetown DC," Wikipedia.

waiter removed the lid; I beheld a (very small, but after all, it was French food) piece of pink meat. Pink! Not even cooked. There were no onions or brown gravy. My side dishes were a couple of tiny boiled potatoes and a few stalks of asparagus. What kind of meal was this?

Without pausing to consider that liver dishes in New Mexico differ from liver dishes in other parts of the (civilized) world, I immediately complained about the fact that the “liver is half raw and where’s the gravy?”

The silence of the waiter spoke volumes. With the looks on his face, I might just as well had mooned him. He then (with class) gently instructed me as to how liver was prepared in first world countries.

By the way, my date for that night was my first with a lovely woman I had meet the week before... and my last.

Back to the Streets of Georgetown and the Politics of Washington

Across M Street and down a half-block was the Crazy Horse Saloon, where I saw Fats Domino perform in the early 1970s. Across Wisconsin Avenue from the Rive was Nathan’s, a long time hangout of the Georgetown and Capitol Hill crowd. The First and Merchants Bank was on another corner of M and Wisconsin.

With the exception of the bank, all are gone. The Crazy Horse building is now an outlet for costume jewelry. As mentioned, the Banana Republic has replaced the Rive Gauche. A taxi driver and another Washington insider (a fine friend of mine) told me the owner of Nathan’s (a classy lady named Carole) inherited unmanageable tax problems from her deceased husband and had to close the place. Let’s let my friend---whom we will call our “Capital Reporter from Capitol Hill”--- tell us a bit about a typical Washington, DC set of events. Note my friend’s Democrat Party leanings:

Subsequently, to her credit, she has had a speakers program at various venues in Georgetown featuring some of Washington’s best to help her out from under. She wrote a really good book on her inherited IRS troubles and her innocent spouse defense... Ironically I have attended a few of her guest lectures and heard David Rubenstein, the Carlyle founder, and [Jack] Abramoff [who spent time in prison for some of his dealings⁹] the lobbyist who screwed the Indians while working with the republicans. He went to jail and now claims he is a changed man. He doesn’t make us Jews very proud. Remember when he wore the black hat on his way to court. His book sounded like trash but he was rather interesting chap as I am sure was Al Capone.

Jack is once again raking in the dollars by appearing on talk shows and acting as an advisor about graft and scams. As many of my readers know, your local congressperson, upon leaving Congress usually gains employment in one of two places: (1) the industry pertaining to the laws he or she crafted, (b) a K Street lobby firm that the person used to help “grease the skids” for upcoming legislation. Washington is an insider town.

⁹ <http://www.cbsnews.com>.

Anyway, about those closed businesses: What should I have expected? I've changed over the past years; so do towns. Still, I had so many pleasant times in Georgetown I was hoping to come across places that had weathered a few years. And I did, but it was not a business. The Old Stone House (on M Street) is still standing, as seen in Figure 11. It was built in 1765:¹⁰

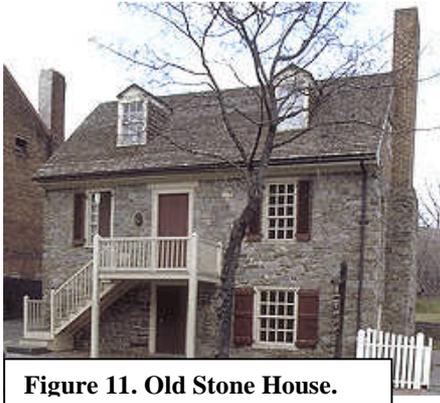


Figure 11. Old Stone House.

“...making it the oldest standing building in Washington, DC. The house was built by Christopher Layman, a cabinetmaker by trade, as both a residence and a shop. Layman who died shortly after constructing the house. It was sold to Cassandra Chew who added a wing to the rear of the house in 1767. M street (then called Bridge Street) was a main thoroughfare for road traffic from the Western frontier and paralleled the canal into Georgetown. The house has been used throughout its history as a residence or residence/shop, until it was purchased in 1953 by the U.S. Government.”

When I lived in the DC area, I passed by this building hundreds of times. Each time I glanced at it, I thought about how out of place it looked, lodged in between and among chic stores and shops. Its rugged appearance gives it an independent, robust countenance. If you want a break from the pervasive commerce of this part of Georgetown, this is the place to take it.

Nonetheless, the Old Stone House, owned by the Uncle Sam, offers neither food nor drink. But just across the street, I came across one of my old hang-outs, Mr. Smith's. It was still there and I could detect no difference in the place since I last paid a call in the 1980s. The bar was the same; so was the piano, tables and chairs, even the men's room in the basement.

Later, I met a friend at Mr. Smith's for dinner. We stayed around long enough to witness the evening clientele. Other than different attire, their appearances and behavior were identical to those of my buddies and me of the 1970s: Listening to great music at the piano bar and watching the front door for the highly unlikely appearance of a good looking lass. Just like the 1970s, Mr. Smith's night crowd had a disproportionate ratio of 90 percent males to 10 percent females.

My friend and I left Mr. Smith's wishing we were younger, but glad we were not members of that disproportionate crowd.

Back to this afternoon, Holly, Milli, and I took a walk up Wisconsin Avenue. I made a running commentary on most everything I saw. They patiently took it in. I talked of the two fine movie theaters that were located on Wisconsin near the M Street intersection. Of a great café that served only crepes---many varieties of them. They were also gone. The only remembrance was a broken-down marquee of the Georgetown Theater.

¹⁰ <http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/wash/dc17.htm>. Paragraph is paraphrased.

Martin's Tavern

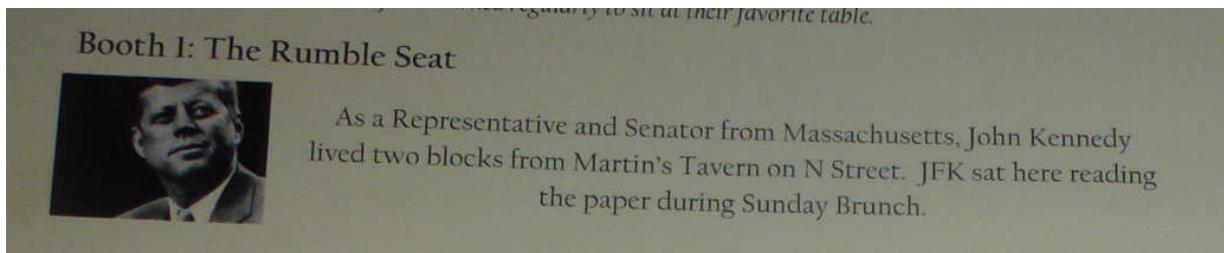


Figure 12. Martin's.

A few blocks north on Wisconsin Avenue, we had some luck. There stood Martin's Tavern, as seen in Figure 12. I had eaten at this fine and famous restaurant several times. Today, we shared mussels and a grilled steak salad. The mussels were done in a garlic-tomato based broth. I scooped-up the broth with bread just out of the oven. Delicious.

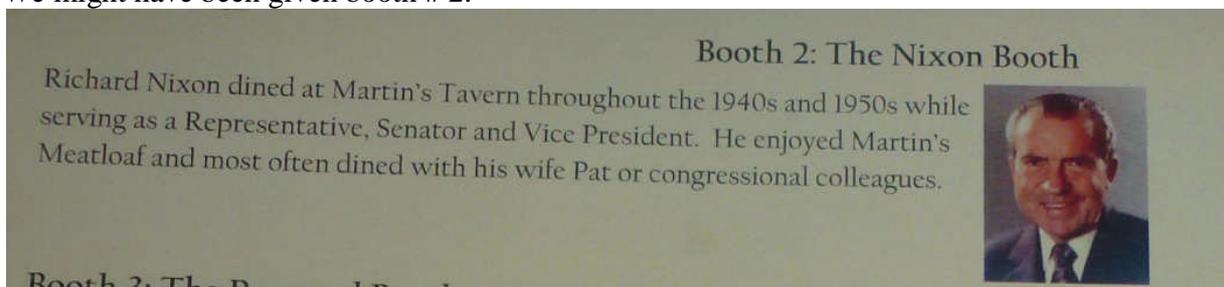
To Martin's: Thanks for staying around.

My staff and I were seated in booth # 5. I supposed it would suffice, but I would not have minded sitting in booth # 1, the hangout of JFK (as shown on Martin's handout of The Presidents' Favorite Tables):



Today, it is difficult to imagine a high level politician, even stalwart Rahm Emanuel---a brave, maybe naive soul---to venture into the public without some backup. Anyway, I was unable to learn if JFK's coffee was shared with Jackie and a Secret Service agent, or someone other than Jackie.

We might have been given booth # 2:



My friend, who was quoted above, would have refused to eat at table # 2. Listening to him skewer the republicans is an experience unto itself. Politically speaking, I am neutral: I find both national parties askew in their fixations on money and fund raising.

Moving away from politics, maybe booth # 3:

Booth 3: The Proposal Booth



JFK and Jackie frequently dined in Booth 3 at Martin's Tavern. Having returned from covering the coronation of Queen Elizabeth for the Washington Times Herald, Jacqueline Bouvier accepted John's proposal. The next day the Tavern was abuzz with staff and guests talking about that "nice young Kennedy congressman" proposing to his girlfriend in their favorite booth. It has been known as "The Proposal Booth" since that day.

"The buck stops here" at booth # 6:

Booth 6: The Truman Booth

Harry Truman, then Senator from Missouri, his wife Bess and his daughter Margaret often dined at Martin's while Margaret was attending George Washington University. Margaret Truman wrote 14 mystery novels set in Washington and many made mention of Martin's.



Or 24:

Booth 24: The LBJ Booth



As Senate Majority Leader, Lyndon Baines Johnson was one of the most powerful men in American politics. LBJ frequently dined with Speaker Sam Rayburn at Booth 24, using The Dugout's privacy to discuss pending legislation. According to LBJ biographer Robert A. Caro, Johnson, Rayburn and his assistant, Richard Bolling, often met at Booth 24 to discuss civil rights legislation.

We settled for booth # 5:

Booth 5: The Nondescript Booth

Nondescript patrons, not senators or presidents, dine at Martin's Tavern in Booth 5, an obscure part of the tavern, where they can see no one of importance and no one of importance can see them. There, they can distantly rub shoulders with the rich and famous, but at the same time, break the same kind of bread. Fame enough for the grassroots working class.



Truth in disclosure: Booth # 5 is one of the best in the house. And Martin's Tavern remains one of the best eating places in the city. As well, it remains; it continues to thrive. Unto itself, a testament to excellence.

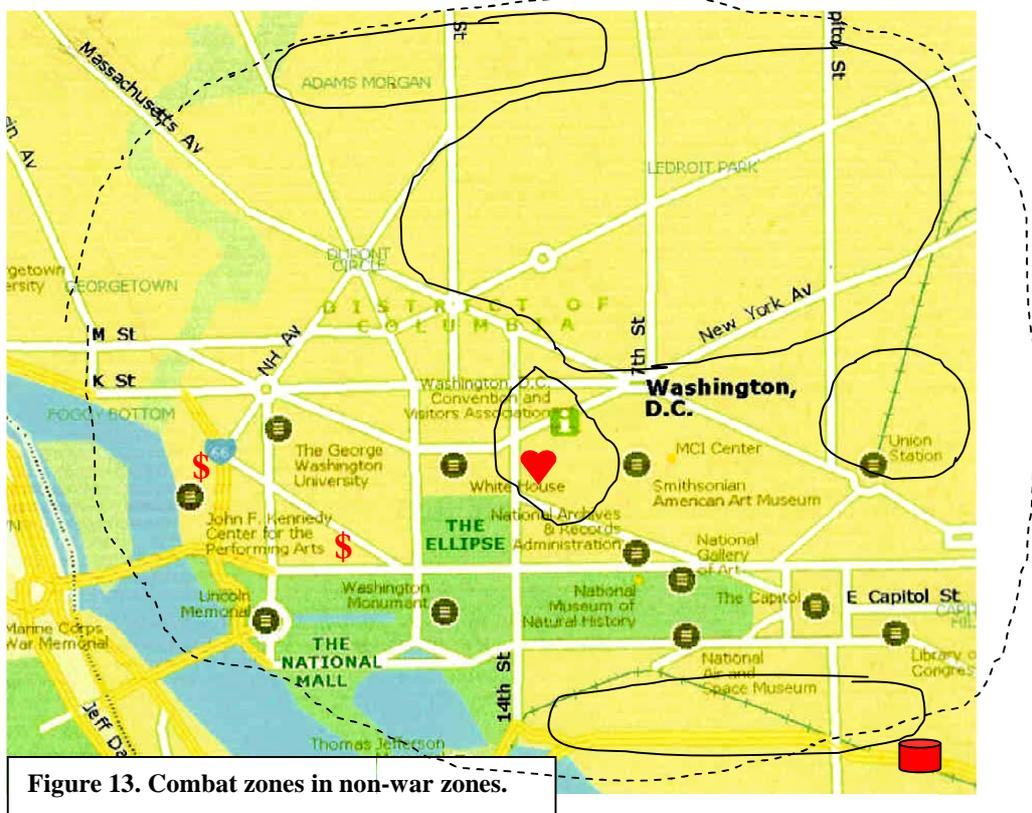
A Return to the Nation's Capital Report Four: Former Combat Zones

April 29 – May 4, 2012

Your on the Street Reporter has been walking---unmolested---on DC streets that twenty years ago were dangerous to traverse, especially at night. When I moved to this area in the spring of 1965, the circled areas in Figure 14 were areas of high crime rates, such as murder, drug-running, and prostitution. By the way, these circles have not been drawn from a concise demographical/crime study---just from my recollections and a less than steady, aging right hand. The dashed circle is described later.

Consider that a block from the White House on 14th Street several strip joints operated with red light prostitution as an understood and tacitly accepted part of business. I've noted this location in Figure 13 with a ♥ to convey the tender idea of tenderloin markets. But love for sale was not a stationary business at bars. Street walkers were as common as the streets they were walking. Johns from adjacent Virginia and Maryland drove their cars up and down 14th street, easily hooking onto hookers.

Within those circled areas, the crime rate was often the highest in the nation. Just a few blocks away from America's vaunted institutions that espoused the Rule of Law, a separate world existed with its own set of rules.



From the time I arrived in the DC area (1965) to the time I moved-away for keeps (2002), the culture in many neighborhoods within those circled areas was transformed from dangerous environs to safe havens for young professionals to live and play.

What happened to the murderers, robbers, and rapists? How did the desolate looking and desolate feeling street of Rhode Island Avenue come to look like the street in front of the hotel where we stayed? See Figure 14.



Figure 14. Gentrification.

Like many other cities in America, the less fortunate souls were pushed out by gentrification. More fortunate people returned to old, yet formerly elegant neighborhoods. Also, in DC, the creation of Metro (the subway system) makes it much easier for a professional to commute to work within the city; no longer relying on the massive, congested freeways for transport. Take another look at the map in Figure 13. Those circled areas almost surround the wealthy commercial areas. The residences were just too close to the commercial action to be ignored.

Our capital Capitol Reporter has these ideas to add about this process:

In DC the gay community was the first socioeconomic group to push eastward from DuPont Circle, and these pioneers were a bonanza for the real estate values. Not to generalize but I believe that most gay real estate investors and owners create value with their innate ability to "fix up" run down properties and make them show pieces. Go to Chelsea in New York and look at what a predominately gay area has become. The restaurants are booming as well as the other small shops primarily because they are gay owned and run. The heterosexual New Yorkers now flock to this area for fine dining and great shopping. Talk about having good taste---many gays do. After a while heterosexuals move in as the gays cash out and move into another frontier.

By the way, don't accuse your Reporter and Capitol Reporter as being gay bashers or for stereotyping gays. Capitol Reporter speaks the truth. When I was a landlord, I favored gay renters. So does my son now. Gay men tend to themselves, one another, and things around them better than most of their heterosexual counterparts.

One more observation from Capitol Reporter, “Also some immigrant communities [had] begun to assimilate, and they [brought] a culture and tradition that young professionals loved.”

The Wildman Cometh

Nonetheless, the neighborhood around our hotel had not entirely rid itself of peculiar people. As Holly, Milli, and I were exiting a drug store near our hotel, we were met by a disheveled man who had apparently inbided in his share of drugs---likely not from this drug store. Spotting Milli, he dropped down on his knees in a marriage proposal supplication. He then offered to marry Milli by shouting, “Please marry me, doggy! Please marry me! Marry me! I’ll be good!”

Milli was oblivious to the potential menace. She tried to jump onto the man, as she wagged her tail as if she were saying, “I do!” I had moved to within a few inches of Milli’s suitor to prevent any action toward elopement on his part.

All ended well. The man righted himself, and staggered off into parts of our capital’s netherworld. Most likely, to be pushed farther out of DC into the suburbs, where his presence will push suburbanites back to the city. A never ending gentrification cycle and circle. What happens to the wildman druggie? With Reagan’s America closing down scores of government funded shelters, he will likely find a soup kitchen and another canine suitor somewhere down the way.

Walk and Walk Some More

Don’t be concerned about running into crazies. There are no more of them in DC than there are in any other urban area in America. So, walk the city. It abounds with monuments, statues, museums, and art galleries. When I lived in this area, I often paid ad hoc calls on the National Mall. With few exceptions, I would come across exhibitions and demonstrations. The same goes for the block-size parks that are scattered around the area, shown in Figure 13 with the dashed circle.

While walking around on this trip to DC, I came across a meeting in one of these small parks. About twenty people were assembled behind the statue seen in Figure 15-a. I walked around the statue to listen-in. The woman in red attire was apparently a minister. I say apparently because she was preaching and proclaiming “Jesus,” “God,” and “halleluiah” to the assembled people. I turned on my video:

“Praise the Lord for this food and clothing!” (See the items on the step in the left side of Figure 15-b.) As she spotted me, “Sir, no photos please!

I put away my camera and listened to her instruct her flock as to how many items could be taken with them, all the while praising the Lord for the kind people who had donated the food and clothing for these poor individuals. I had just finished a fine meal and wine at a DC in-place. A block away from my feast, a queue of people was waiting to be handed-out canned goods and used clothes.

- I waited for her to finish her sermon/lecture. I then approached her. “Preacher, I admire you and your work. I know I couldn’t do it. I don’t have the stamina to deal with the problems you must face every day.”



- “God bless you, and thank you for your words. Would you....”
- “Now don’t try to save me, sister! I’m already saved. Got wet in a baptism when I was ten years old.”
- “Well, praise the Lord!”
- “I’ll say. ...Here’s a contribution for your cause.”
- I got a big hug and a “God bless you, brother!” I was in.
- “Thanks, sister, I can use all the help I can get.”

I left the group and returned to my staff. They were patiently waiting nearby, long since oblivious to my meanderings.

A Return to the Nation’s Capital Report Five: The Capitol Visitors Center

April 29 – May 4, 2012

One of the main reasons for returning to the Nation’s capital was to pay a call and report to you on the visitors center on Capitol Hill, recently constructed under the east side of the capitol. The construction is seen in the two photos in Figure 16.¹¹



Figure 16. Construction site of the capitol visitors' center.

I wish all America’s citizens could visit the nation’s capital and capitol. I wish it were considered a citizenry duty, akin to the Muslims self imposed obligation to visit Mecca. Once here, go first to this visitor’s center. Plan on spending a few hours here. Several permanent and temporary exhibits will acquaint you with the capitol and its history. You can also gain passes to see the Senate and House of Representatives chambers.

The main entrance hall of the visitor’s center is shown in the top two photos of Figure 17. On each side of this area are two registration desks. They are set up to service queues of people for touring selected (and very few) parts of the capitol. The tours do not take the tourists through the legislative chambers. You will need to find two desks located on the periphery of the entrance hall in order to obtain a pass to view these chambers from the visitor’s balconies.

The bottom left photo in Figure 17 shows the Senate chamber from the visitor’s balcony.¹² I was not allowed to take pictures, so this shot is sourced from the web site credited in footnote 11. The

¹¹ From website of visitors center for nation’s capitol and Wikipedia.

¹²http://search.aol.com/aol/imageDetails?s_it=imageDetails&q=Senate+Chamber+at+Capitol&v_t=keyword_rollover&b=image%3Fquery%3DSenate%2BChamber%2Bat%2BCapitol%26s_it%3Dkeyword_rollover%26oreq%3D08b

bottom right photo is a picture of the room beneath the dome, one that you can see on the group tour.

I suggest you contact your congressperson before you make the trip. This office will likely have passes available for private tours of both the capitol and the White House...depending on your political affiliation. Just joking, these offices grant passes without regard to your politics.

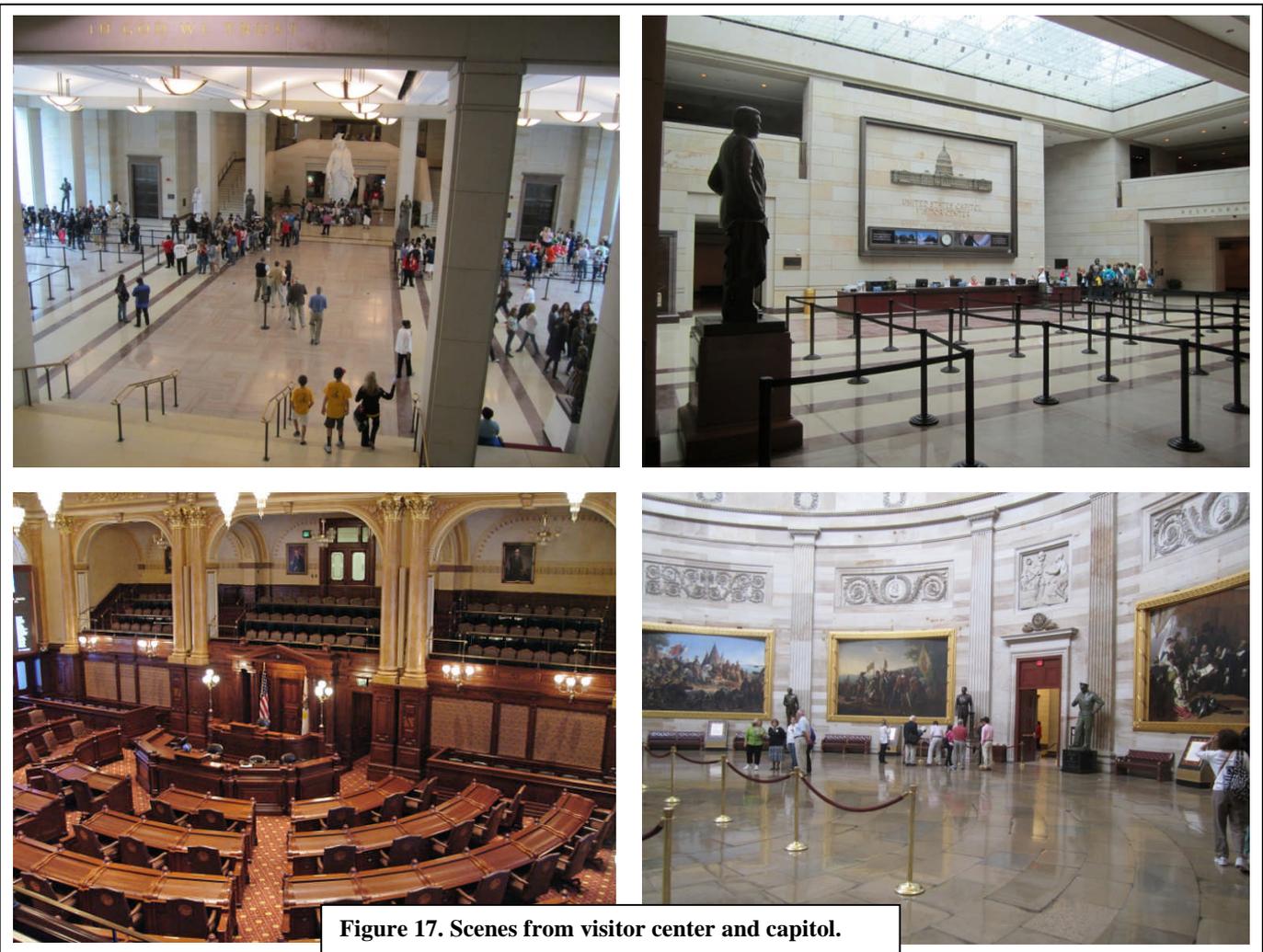
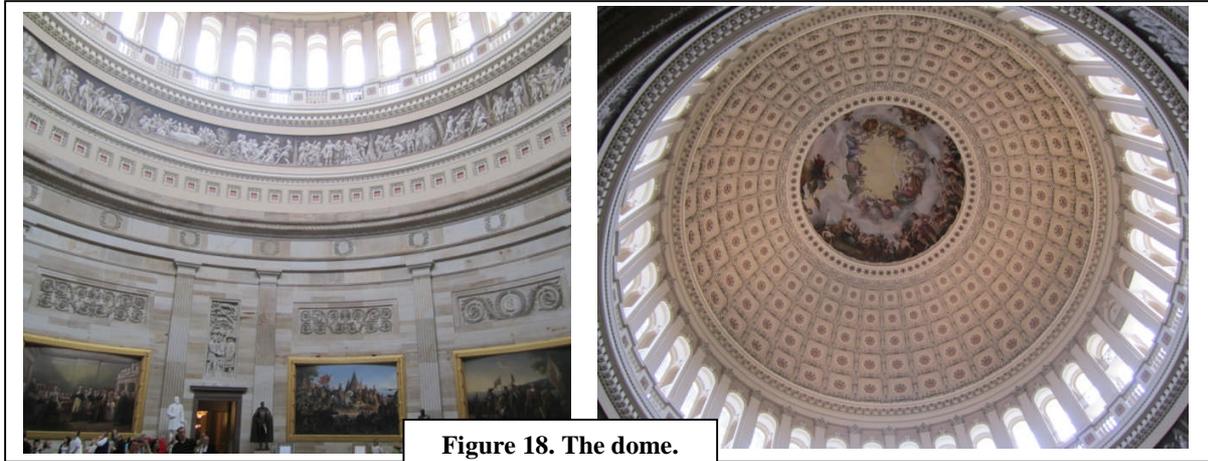


Figure 17. Scenes from visitor center and capitol.

Seeing the dome from inside is a treat, as shown in Figure 18. Finally, make sure you go through the diorama that is located in a large room next to the main atrium in the visitor’s center. It has several models showing the evolution of the capitol building, as well as the community on

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Capitol Hill that surrounds the capital. It's a treat, and like most of the exhibits in DC, it's free. Granted, you've already paid your admission with your taxes, so take advantage of your involuntary generosity.



Before I left this extraordinary city, I wanted to pay calls on the places where I worked. These short excursions are described in the final two reports in this series.

A Return to the Nation's Capital Report Six: Kennedy Center and Watergate

April 29 – May 4, 2012

While in DC---for the first time in several years---I focused my last day on revisiting places of past occupancy, locales of both work and pleasure. I paid calls on places where I was once employed, to remember and also to relate several of these fine remembrances to you.

First, here is a cautionary note about this report, as I know some of my readers are cautious people. I write about sex. I use no four-letter words, and my descriptions are actually rather sterile. Nonetheless, if you are uncomfortable with such descriptions, you might want to stop reading here. As you read about these accounts of my youth, I suspect you might also remember some days and nights...sometimes a bit reckless...of your younger times.

Kennedy Center

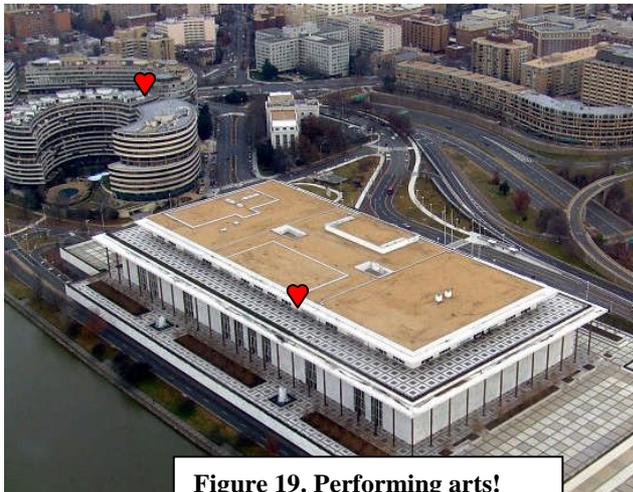


Figure 19. Performing arts!

They deal with my girl friend and I having sex (during the summer of 1972) in the Kennedy Center for Performing Arts, in a niche on the highest balcony row of the Opera stage. (Our version of a performing art.) As well, we also had sex in the Watergate office complex, on a floor below the site of the Watergate burglary (our version of a break-in). In Figure 19, I have marked with a ♥ the approximate locations of our epochal reunions. Just to clarify: We were inside these buildings, not on their roofs. We were adventuresome, but we were not exhibitionists.

At the onset of these stories, I wish to make clear that their revealings have nothing to do with macho recounts of my youthful prowess. My partner---a woman with whom I was totally smitten---was a willing and abetting partner in creating our small parcel of history to compliment the histories behind these famous locations.

My mate and I were not going about our activities with the intent of casting our lots into (obscure) history books. We had much more pleasant interests in mind. The past was the past. The future (the Kennedy Center) was under construction. We were into the present. Our motivations---viewed from an age-old prism of fanciful recollections---had much to do with two young people who were in love with each other and were also carefree. I like to think our behavior also had to do with two people who possessed a sense of humor, a flair for a bit of thrill-seeking, and a capacity for foolishness. But who of us does not want to possess some of these traits? We watch TV and go to the movies to experience such vicarious escapes.

Betty (not her real name and with whom I have lost contact) and I worked at the Federal Reserve Board. Its main offices were on Constitution Avenue---as seen by the dollar sign \$ in Figure 13). I've also placed another dollar sign in the general area of the Fed's offices in the Watergate complex.

We were working in temporary offices in the Watergate, waiting for a new building to accommodate the Fed's increasing number of employees, reflecting its growing influence in America's banking industry. The Fed needed more personnel to further assert its influence.

Betty and I were in different departments. Thus, there was no chance of any conflict of interest, so to speak. We were frequent car pool partners. After all, it made good sense to commute to work together after we had commuted the night before. Among other things, it saved on gas as well as the wear and tear of getting up early to look for our other car----which was often parked in a remote parking lot belonging to a far-flung bistro.

For a few weeks, while the Federal Reserve Board was moving some personnel away from its central office on Constitution Avenue to (overflow) office spaces at Watergate, the Board rented parking spaces in nearby Kennedy Center garages. These spaces are situated in the lower levels of the Kennedy Center. By mid-1971, the lower part of this building was nearly complete, sufficient to handle commuters' vehicles. The upper levels for the three major theaters, cafes, restaurants, etc. were mostly concrete profiles reflecting later installations of stages and seating tiers.

In those days, security was not a major concern for most of America's corridors of commerce. After a security guard allowed a Fed-ID'ed vehicle to gain entry into the Kennedy site, the entire building could be traversed. Of course, who would want to walk through a dusty, dirty construction site? Answer: Two curious young people.

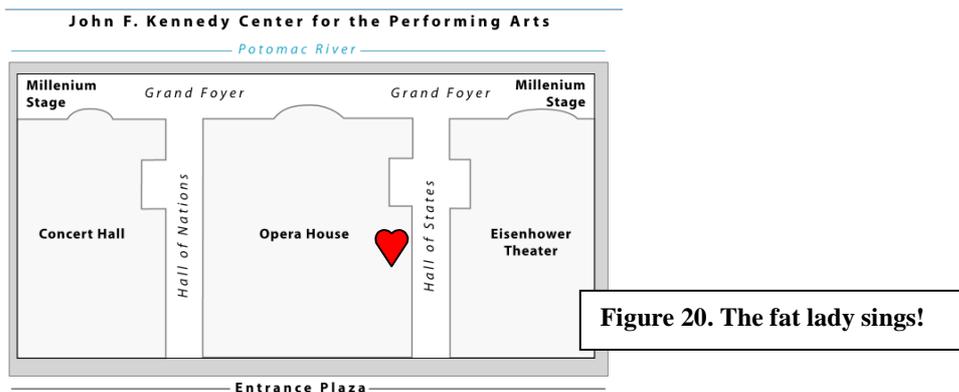
On one occasion, after leaving work late at the adjacent Watergate office building, we stopped-off at a bar in the Watergate Hotel. After a couple glasses of wine, we walked over to the nearby Kennedy Center to drive to our homes in Arlington, Virginia.

The Fed's designated parking spaces in the Kennedy Center were nearly empty. The place was quiet, almost abandoned (our paraphrased conversation follows):

– “Say, let's look around before we head for home.”

Betty and I had talked several times about the Kennedy Center's creation. Amazingly, it would be a rare place in DC (in our capital, if you can believe it) to house a major permanent place for supporting the performing arts. With the exception of National Place, Arena Stage, and the DAR Constitution Hall, Washington, DC in the early 1970s had little else to offer for live entertainment supporting major performances. Our excitement and anticipation to see big name entertainers was evident from our frequent talks about the JFK Center. But for now:

- “Yes! No one around. If a guard stops us, we could be Kennedy big wigs, looking over the construction. You’ve got a coat and tie. I’m in high heels.”
- “Betty, we don’t have hard hats.”
- “Well, I’ve got a map of the place. That makes us official,” as she pulled out a pathetic “blue print” taken from *The Washington Post*, not much more impressive than the image shown in Figure 20.



Nothing ventured, nothing gained. We walked up several flights of semi-finished concrete steps. Somehow we made it undetected to the near top of what was to be the Opera House, as seen in Figure 20. I’ve taken the liberty of inserting a ♥ in the approximate area where, with the romantic inclinations that come from two young, idealistic and adventuresome lovers, we made the scene.

We were ones who did not mind a bit of concrete dust on our clothes and bodies, ones who did a fine inauguration of the Kennedy Center for performing arts. Modesty aside, I thought our performance was worthy of a standing ovation.

As well, we quelled that old saying, “The opera isn’t over until the fat lady sings.” We finished-off the opera just fine. Betty was far from fat, and she was not one for singing. I shouted a bit, if for nothing else, to test the acoustics of the budding Opera House.

Watergate

One late afternoon during the summer of 1972, the two of us were working late. Betty was preparing a report for a special project dealing with a data processing system. I was writing code that would eventually become a computerized model to simulate the nation’s money supply. We needed a break.

Betty had finished her report before I had completed some of my tasks. Her office was located down the hall from mine, on the Watergate office building’s fifth floor. It was just below the Democratic National Headquarters, which was located on the sixth floor.

She came to my office (see yellow circles in Figure 21).No one was around. We made history. Okay, it was not as sensational as the history made in the floor just above our offices (the night

before!), as seen in the red circle in Figure 21 (c), the site of the Democrats' central offices. But then, personal history and political history often comingle. Just ask Bill Clinton.



Figure 21. Scenes from Watergate.

Within our discretions---which were sensitive to privacy---the joining of Betty and me---the expressions of our emotional and sexual bonds---placed no absolute restriction on where we might show our love and desire. Certainly, we did not disrobe indiscriminately. I offer this thought to my son and other younger adventurers: Take the road to sexual adventure and joy. Have fun. Don't take the act itself too seriously. Just take the consequences of the act very seriously.

Anyway, take a look at Figure 21 (b). It is the main entrance to the Watergate office building. The day after Betty and I had one of our meetings in my office, she had let me off in the morning at this entrance, so I could make it (late) to a meeting. She in turn drove the car to the Kennedy Center parking lot.

I now know the date of this experience: June 18, 1972, the day after the Watergate burglary. The steps you see in Figure 21 were covered with cops and news people. So was the adjoining lobby. I was momentarily detained, but was allowed to pass through after I showed my Federal Reserve Board identification card.

On the way up to the fifth floor in the elevator, I asked the passengers what was going on. No one knew. Shortly, after settling in my office, a fellow worker came by:

- “Someone broke into the DNC headquarters!”
- “Yeah, I saw the commotion downstairs. When was the break-in?”
- “Some time last night.”
- “Whew, I'm glad the cops and robbers didn't confuse the floors they visited.”
- “Why is that?”
- “Never mind.”

A Return to the Nation's Capital

Report Seven: The Navy Yard and the Federal Reserve Board

April 29 – May 4, 2012

When I first came to work in Washington, DC, I was a U.S. Navy Lieutenant, stationed first in North Virginia (for a later report), and later, at the Washington Navy Yard, noted in Figure 13, at the bottom of the figure with a disk icon. I use this symbol because I worked as a software programmer for the Naval Command Systems Support Activity, the principal Navy facility for developing computer based systems.



Figure 22. The Navy Yard.

The Yard is the oldest shore establishment of the U.S. Navy. It is located on the Anacostia River, as shown in Figure 22.¹³ Note the Capitol building in the upper left part of the figure.

The land was purchased by the federal government July 23, 1799, “and became the navy's largest shipbuilding and shipfitting facility, with 22 vessels constructed there, ranging from small 70-foot (21 m) gunboats to the 246-foot (75 m) steam frigate USS *Minnesota*. The USS *Constitution* came to the Yard in 1812 to refit and prepare for combat action. Following the War of 1812, the Washington Navy Yard never regained its prominence as a shipbuilding facility. The waters of the Anacostia River were too shallow to accommodate larger vessels, and the Yard was deemed too inaccessible to the open sea.”¹⁴

When I reported for duty in 1968, the Yard was composed mostly of administrative offices, a museum, a navy exchange, and an officer's club. For this report, I took a short tour of the facility. My former office building was still standing, next to a navy exchange (a PX). I went into the exchange to purchase a Vietnam campaign ribbon as a memento for my “I Love Me” wall at home:

- The clerk placed the ribbon on the counter, “ID please.”
- I pulled out my Idaho driver's license.
- “Military ID.”
- “I'm no longer in the military.”
- “Then I can't sell you the ribbon.”

¹³ “Washington Navy Yard,” Wikipedia.

¹⁴ Ibid.

- “Look, most men who served in Vietnam are no longer in the service, and don’t have a military ID to begin with. How can we buy this ribbon if we don’t have a military ID?”
- “Beats me. I just know I can’t sell it to you.”
- “Weird. Then I have to be a formally retired navy man with a retirement ID to buy the ribbon?
“Yep, or on active duty.”
- “Active duty! Do you know when the Vietnam War was fought?”
“Nope. Please step aside. And you are not allowed in this store.”

Why should I have been surprised? The encounter was the same treatment I received---while in possession of a military ID and in uniform---upon returning to the States from Vietnam in 1965.

As my own form of protest, I have included Figure 23 in this report. I recognize I am being contrary about this matter, as the Navy must have some means to control who uses its facilities. I also learned I can write to a special commercial outlet (likely supplied by a factory somewhere in China or Vietnam) and purchase a Vietnam combat service ribbon.

Nowadays, our warriors are accorded the highest respect. It’s water under the bridge, but I’m leaving Figure 23 in this essay, if for nothing else, its symbolism of America’s treatment of Vietnam War veterans.



Figure 23. Symbol of past times.

Figure 24. Federal Reserve Board.



My taxi tour took me by the original Federal Reserve Board building located on Constitution Avenue, and shown with the dollar sign in Figure 13. You have likely seen the Fed’s building in news media. Its front is shown in Figure 24. I spent many hours in this building, principally in meetings with my customers (Federal Reserve

economists) who used the software I developed for their analysis of the nation’s money supply. As mentioned, my office was located a few blocks down the way in the Watergate complex.

I also mentioned the Fed had another building constructed in the early 1970s to accommodate its growing staff. I was moved from the Watergate to this building, which was nicknamed the “annex.”

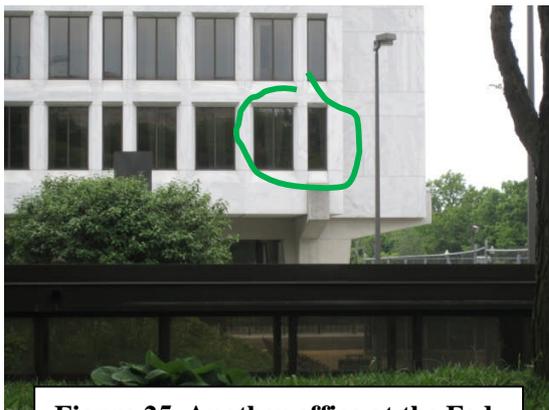


Figure 25. Another office at the Fed.

I will write about my times and experiences in this part of DC in later essays. For now, I had the taxi driver stop for a brief time so I could take some photos; one is shown in Figure 25. I have placed a green circle around the windows of my office.

Unlike my tales about the Kennedy Center and Watergate in Report Six, I do not have any exciting stories to tell you about this space. By the time I had settled into the annex, I was older and had settled down. Plus, my girl friend/ office mate had left the Fed, eventually to parts unknown.

During those times in DC, while in the Navy and at the Fed, I was in my late twenties and early thirties. I was not all that young, but when viewed from my aged platform today, I look upon those days as times of my youth. As I dwelled on the stories I’ve told you in these reports, an old saying came to mind, “Youth is a thing not to be proud of, but rather a thing to be grateful for.”