

commentary

from other pens...

Collection of capital quirks and curiosities

A capital that legislates, regulates, commemorates and memorializes eventually finds itself with a collection of quirks and curiosities.

Peppering the white-marble gravity of the monumental city, the oddities include the story of the Civil War general who ordered his amputated leg preserved for posterity at the Army medical museum. Or the more recent tale of the beavers who paddled up the Potomac and made their presence known by gnawing the city's famous cherry trees.

Or the monumental water fountain dedicated to "Temperance" that stood for decades in front of a bustling Pennsylvania Avenue liquor store.

Here is a list of some of Washington's less-familiar sights and stories:

- Gen. Douglas MacArthur, the imperious World War II commander who earned the Medal of Honor in World War I, left a legacy of ornamental flowerpots during an early tour of duty in the capital. For a few months in 1916, the young MacArthur was superintendent of the State, War and Navy Building next to the White House. He held the job just long enough to install rows of stone planters lining the steps.

- The cornerstone of the U.S. Capitol was laid by George Washington on Sept. 17, 1793, as cannon fired a 15-gun salute. That is about the last time anyone remembers seeing it. Decades of efforts to locate it have produced only frustration and a large stone said to be in about the right location. One vital piece of evidence remains missing — the engraved silver plate with which the cornerstone was marked.

- Henry Cogswell was a wealthy dentist from San Francisco. In the 1880s he endowed busy Pennsylvania Avenue with an open-sided temple topped by life-sized crane, the sort of bird that stands in running water on one long leg to wait for passing fish. The temple housed a fountain from which dolphins dispensed water to the thirsty. To make the point, the word "Temperance" was carved in capital letters on top.

The late NBC correspondent Bryson Rash, writing in "Footnote Washington," a book of capital lore, reported "these unusual and awkward structures spurred the movement across the country for city fine arts commissions to screen such gifts." Cogswell's temperance monument survives, engraved with his name. But the liquor store that served as a backdrop closed with the redevelopment of Pennsylvania Avenue.

- The furor began before the statue was unveiled. The sculptor had portrayed Gen. Winfield Scott, a hero of the war with Mexico, astride a mild-mannered mare instead of a macho stallion. Fervent protests were made. The bronze general now graces Scott Circle aboard a male horse.

- There may be nothing like it in the world, a collection of 43 portrait busts celebrating the importance of ranking second, not first. This assembly of former vice presidents from John Adams to Dan Quayle fill Senate niches, line hallways and inhabit odd corners. The collection is justified by the constitutional provision making the vice president the president of the Senate. The most recent addition is the bust of Spiro Agnew, Richard M. Nixon's first vice president, who resigned under a cloud in 1973. Still to come: a marble bust of former Vice President Al Gore and the current No. 2, Dick Cheney.

- The Union army won the Battle of Gettysburg, but Gen. Daniel Sickles lost his leg. A flamboyant sort, Sickles brought the amputated limb back to Washington and had it exhibited in the Army's medical museum. The loss of his leg was not Sickles' only brush with danger. He was tried for murder after he shot and killed his wife's lover. He was acquitted in the first successful use of the defense of temporary insanity.

- For more than 70 years a marble statue of Puck, the "shrewd and knavish sprite" from William Shakespeare's "A Midsummer's Night Dream," surveyed the Capitol grounds from its fountain outside the Folger Shakespeare Library. Then a skateboarder broke off Puck's upraised right hand. "Give Puck a hand," the Folger implored. Donors complied. Newly restored, the statue has been moved to safety inside. An outdoor replacement, cast in skateboard-resistant aluminum, proclaims the bard's message: "Lord, what fool's these mortals be."

EDITOR'S NOTE: Lawrence L. Knutson has reported on Congress, the White House and Washington's history for 34 years.



Be careful buying a manufactured home

Dear Attorney General Carla Stovall:
My husband and I are anxiously waiting for spring to arrive. We plan on purchasing a manufactured home and placing it on property that we own. We hope to have the process completed and to be in our new home sometime this summer. This has been a dream we have had for years, and we want to research the entire process thoroughly. Attorney General Stovall, what tips or suggestions can you give to aid us during this process?

Dear Kansas Consumer:
Buying a home is an exciting and often stressful process. As with any major purchase, I urge you to visit several businesses and gather information before signing a contract. Before you decide to buy a manufactured home, compare the cost of building a traditional home and weigh the advantages and disadvantages of both options. There are many different makes, models, and options to consider in regard to manufactured homes, and consumers should make a decision based on their current and future needs. How many bedrooms and bathrooms will you want in your home? Do you need a basement, or do you prefer a slab home? Fireplaces and large porches are extras that some families desire and others do not. When visiting with the salesperson, do not feel you need to make a decision on the spot. Take written material home and discuss with your family the type of home you prefer.

Be sure that all contracts, warranties, and floor



carla j. stovall

• consumer corner

plans are read and understood thoroughly prior to signing any paperwork and/or making a down payment. It is a good idea to take your time reading these materials and to read them away from the retailer's place of business.

Do not be taken in by deals that appear to have rigid time restraints. Think of all aspects of your future home. Who is responsible for the setup of the utilities? Will the home be equipped with appliances and/or heating and cooling? Also, be sure to request proof of insurance to cover moving the home to your property. Quite often disputes regarding the purchase of manufactured homes arise from promises that are made during the sales presentation but are forgotten after paperwork is signed. Request that all promises be put into writing and signed by the retailer prior to finishing the deal. This will help to keep communication lines clear long after the purchase agreement is signed.

Request information about the set up crew who will be responsible for putting your new home together. How many manufactured homes have they

put together? How long should you expect the set-up process to take? Who do you contact should you find a problem after they leave? Be sure to get the answers in writing.

Finally, when the long awaited moment has arrived and you are handed the keys to your new home, be sure that you do not rush the walk-through process, which includes inspecting the inside and the outside of the home. This is the time to document any concerns you may have such as trim not being in place, or doors or windows not opening and closing properly. Take your time. Document every concern you would like to have addressed on the walk-through sheet so that both you and the retailer have a guide to work from.

Remember, the best time to ask questions is prior to signing the purchase agreement, as the contract is binding at the time of the sale. An informed consumer is a smart consumer!

Attorney General Carla J. Stovall offers this public service to help you avoid becoming a victim of consumer fraud. Although some of the details have been changed, the cases appearing in this column are based on actual complaints. For further information or to file a complaint, please write Attorney General Carla J. Stovall, Consumer Protection Division, 120 SW 10th, 2nd Floor, Topeka, Kansas 66612, or call the toll-free Consumer Hotline, 1-800-432-2310. Leave your name, number and subject of your inquiry with the receptionist.

Death need not bring excessive sorrow

Writing obituaries, I have to think about death often.

Many of the obituaries I have written have only a morsel of the life the person led: their spouse's name, parents' names and a couple of organizations they were involved with. But some come with a long list of things a person has accomplished, things they enjoyed doing, what was most important to them and so forth, and after reading the information, I feel those people really enjoyed life and got the most out of it.

While family members and friends are greatly grieved by their deaths, I am only a little sad that their lives had to end but glad that they lived them well.

I have yet to handle an obituary for someone I was close to. Tremendous grief comes from the feeling of loss, and that loss hasn't occurred when the person who died was never a part of my life.

One reason I am not overly grieved by death is I know God's promises in the Bible will be fulfilled. One of those promises is found at John 11:25,26, which says, "Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He that exercises faith in me, even though he dies, will come to life; and everyone that is living and exercises faith in me will never die at all.'"



sharon corcoran

• use it or lose it

In this scripture, Jesus was speaking to Martha, whose brother Lazarus he had just resurrected. He was speaking of a future time when those who have died will be resurrected and those serving God will live eternally.

Psalm 37:29 says of this future time: "The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it."

But what good would that be if the earth continued with the problems we see today? Other promises in the Bible assure us that the problems we see today will be solved.

Revelation 21:3,4 says, "The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. And God himself will be with them. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away."

Psalm 37:10 assures us crime will be a thing of the past: "And just a little while longer, and the wicked one will be no more; and you will certainly give attention to his place, and he will not be."

While everyone will have to work, we will all be rewarded with the things we need rather than having to struggle to make ends meet. Isaiah 65:21 says, "And they will certainly build houses and have occupancy; and they will certainly plant vineyards and eat their fruitage."

And those living will be reunited with their loved ones who have died, for those who have died are in God's memory.

He will resurrect them as Jesus resurrected Lazarus and as He resurrected Jesus.

John 5:28, 29 says, "The hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who did good things to a resurrection of life."

It is this hope that keeps me from being overly grieved at death. While it is sad for anyone to die, I know is not the end for that person. It is that knowledge which gives me hope for the future. The apostle Paul says at 1 Thessalonians 4:13, "We do not want you to be ignorant concerning those who are sleeping in death; that you may not sorrow just as the rest also do who have no hope."

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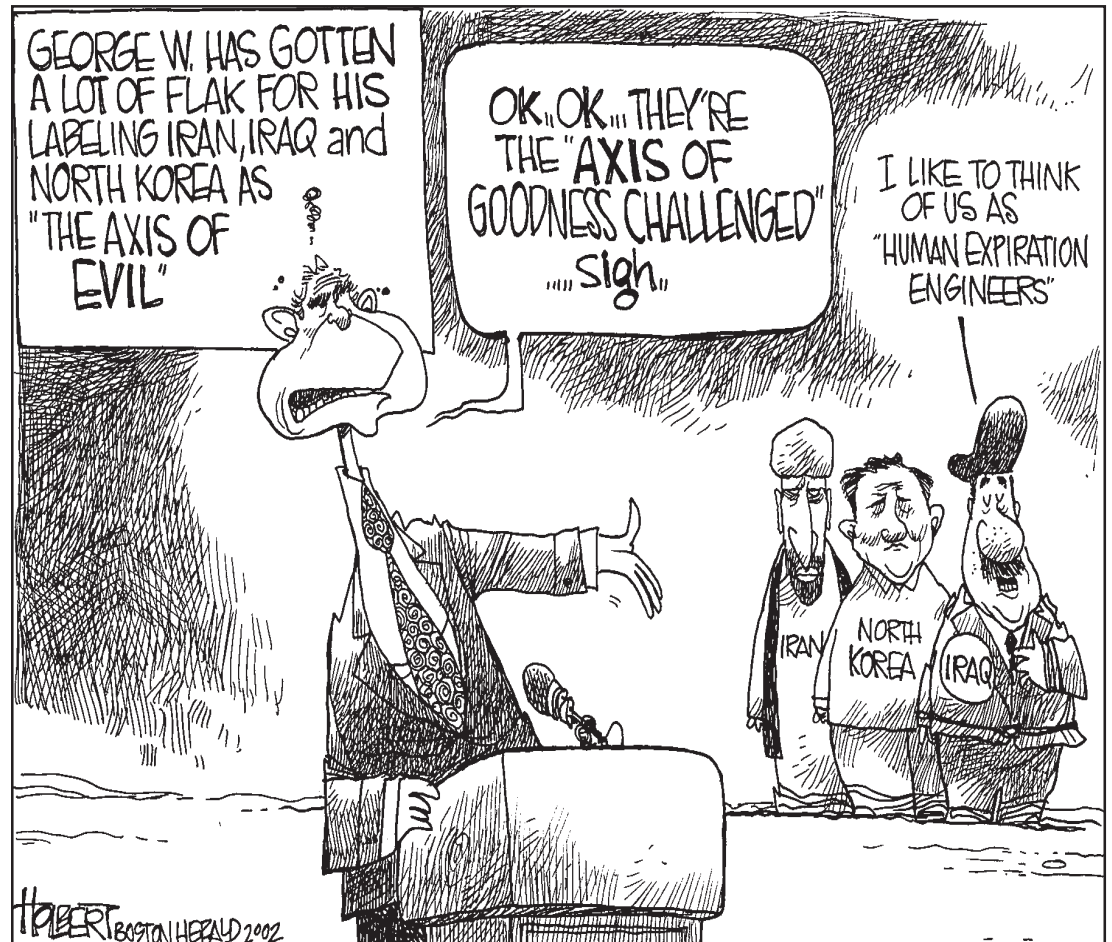
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