

commentary

from other pens...

Marble memorial gives city a soft touch

The dome of the Jefferson Memorial is the pearl on the capital's horizon, a gently rising sphere of white marble that softens the hard edges of a political city.

The setting on a shelf facing the Tidal Basin is luminous and serene, even during the annual human invasion prompted by the blossoming of the thousands of Yoshino cherry trees that have made the site a floral landmark for 90 years.

Long sought by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jefferson's memorial is on a line of sight with the White House in a quintet of major structures that define the ceremonial heart of the city. With the Washington Monument at the intersection on the National Mall, the others are the Capitol and the Lincoln Memorial.

Former President Clinton has said he could walk out onto the Truman Balcony from the White House family quarters, raise a pair of powerful binoculars and find himself looking directly into Jefferson's eyes.

Those vigilant eyes are part of sculptor Rudolph Evans' 16-foot bronze statue of Jefferson in a fur-collared greatcoat. The statue stands beneath the circular dome, surrounded by the Jefferson quotations that make the memorial a shrine of words and ideas as much as personality.

These include the sentence Roosevelt quoted at the memorial's dedication on April 13, 1942, the 200th anniversary of Jefferson's birth: "I have sworn on the altar of God, eternal hostility to every form of tyranny over the mind of man."

The Jefferson Memorial was one of the last works of John Russell Pope. He designed the National Archives and the National Gallery of Art. In its clarity and simplicity it honors Jefferson's own architectural tastes and his admiration of the Pantheon, the domed and colonnaded temple to all the Roman gods erected by the Emperor Hadrian and still standing after nearly 1,900 years.

Jefferson used the Pantheon form for the University of Virginia's library and for the dome at Monticello, his home near Charlottesville, Va.

Michael Graves, who won the 2001 gold medal of the American Institute of Architects and was lauded for his innovative design of the scaffolding used during renovations on the Washington Monument, places the Jefferson Memorial among his favorite works, in company with the city of Rome and Jefferson's design for the University of Virginia.

Graves calls the memorial "equal to the Pantheon in its greatness." No major Washington monument has been constructed without dispute and pain, and the site, style and size of this one were all questioned.

Contemporary architects took the first swing, calling the design a throwback to a dead past.

"A cadaver," "a pompous pile," "a senile sham," "an imitation of imperial Rome" and "Jefferson's muffin," were some of the words hurled at it.

The greatest fuss was made by a group of women who feared construction of the memorial would mean the destruction of the city's beloved cherry trees. They chained themselves to the trees, vowing to protect them against all comers. The protest subsided after it was pointed out that while 171 of the 1,700 existing trees would be moved or destroyed, 1,000 more would be planted.

The debate had a political facet. Roosevelt had long wanted a memorial in the capital to Jefferson, who was a founder of the Democratic Party as well as a champion of liberty. FDR took a personal interest, speaking not only at the 1943 dedication but at the groundbreaking ceremony in 1938 and the laying of the cornerstone in 1939.

The outcome of World War II was still uncertain in the spring of 1943 when Roosevelt appeared at the memorial for the third time and enlisted Jefferson in the struggle.

"He proved that the seeming eclipse of liberty can well become the dawn of more liberty," the president said. "Those who fight the tyranny of our own time will come to learn that old lesson."

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

THE NEW CHURCH...

STAHLER
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Computer crashing — need mechanic

My computer at work crashes about once a day. Every day, no exceptions.

You'd think every once in a while it would give me time off for good behavior. I always say good morning to it when I come in the office in the morning. I try not to treat it too roughly, and I always turn it off properly when I'm ready to go at the end of the day — after saying goodbye, and thanking it for all its hard work.

It doesn't do any good. The dumb thing still freezes up on me, or the mouse will quit moving, or some other thing.

And of course it doesn't die during the afternoon, when it's a little slower in the newsroom. Nope. It wants to break down when I'm five minutes after deadline with 10 minutes left to go.

Maybe it's not just the computer, maybe it has something to do with me. Every once in a while I have to use one of the other computers in the office, and they seem to have a higher chance of freezing up when I'm sitting at the desk than anybody else. They'll be fine for a week, but the minute I sit behind them — boom!

Some mornings when I'm trying to get my section of the paper out on time, the office can sit back and watch me bounce from desk to desk, freezing up one computer after another. I might think it was



**doug
stephens**

• wisdom from babes

funny if it happened to someone else. Heck, ten minutes after I'm done I might sit back and laugh about it. But while I'm in the midst of it, there's nothing I'd like to do more than get a really big sledgehammer and three minutes alone with a computer in an enclosed room. Padded walls optional.

What seems amazing to me is that no one gets really concerned when a computer freezes up for no reason. Just restart it, everyone says. If my car died suddenly once a day while I was driving down Main, I wouldn't just shrug my shoulders and turn the key; I'd want to find out what the problem was.

Why is the standard so much lower for computers than it is for cars, or even vacuum cleaners? If Hoovers just stopped working whenever they were wanted, people would stop buying them, and the company would either have to fix the glitch, or go under.

Computer people tell me that it's not the

manufacturer's fault. Software isn't always compatible with other software. Different kinds of attached hardware can interfere with the operation, and a billion other things can conspire to shut down a faultless computer.

I'm not sure I buy it. If I go out and buy an air filter for my car, it doesn't matter which brand I buy, that filter should work. If I'm not paying attention, I might buy the wrong size, sure, but if it doesn't fit, I'll notice. I don't have to worry about the air filter interfering with my muffler, or the fuel pump conflicting with the axle.

I'm guessing that the smart guy who comes up with a computer which doesn't stall is going to be the next Rockefeller-Gates.

I can see it. Future school children won't learn about the "early pioneers" of computer technology. Bill who? Steve Jobs — who's that guy? IBM — isn't that a telephone company? I mean, most kids today think the Model-T was the first car.

Instead they'll learn about Tony, the auto mechanic from Brooklyn, who applied the principle that a machine which doesn't work properly, doesn't work at all. The man who made a computer which actually runs like it's supposed to.

They'll probably make him emperor or something. At least put up a shrine.

Night and day



**red
green**

• north of forty

I'd like to offer an observation about mixed marriages — a morning person should never marry a night person. Believe me, conflicting shifts is the hardest part of any union. The difference between day people and night people is like ... well, like night and day. At the crack of dawn, the morning person is bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, while the night person is bleary-eyed and bushy-tongued. But, in the wee hours, Missus Merry Morning has lapsed into deep hibernation on the couch and is snoring so loudly, Mr. Night Owl can barely hear his infomercials. Burning the collective candle at both ends can put a strain on any marriage, and sadly, no amount of coffee can change a day person into a night person or vice versa. The only way to save one of these unnatural unions is to concentrate on the afternoon, the only quality time where nobody's tired or cranky. So, I say get together for a romantic candlelight lunch, slap on that song "Afternoon Delight" and let your biorhythms do the rest.

DVD OR NOT DVD

I picked up one of those DVD players on sale a few weeks ago and the picture quality is amazing — there are nose hairs out there I'd never seen before. Now, they make a big deal out of the "interactive menus," but I was working under the impression that all menus were interactive, like when you go into a restaurant and point to where it says "steak," it shows up a little later and then you eat it. Now that's interactive. OK, the steak may come with things I don't want, like vegetables, but so does the DVD. Like, say, the outtakes. These are scenes of guys who make upwards of the gross

national product of Malaysia messing up their lines. When I'm getting paid to do a job, I don't videotape myself making mistakes and then charge people to watch. Then there's the one I really can't figure out: the deleted scenes. We all know these things were cut out for a reason. I don't really need to see the Godfather slow-dancing with a lawn jockey, even if it does help explain the whole horse head thing. I'll tell you the kind of extras I'd like to see — good acting, better stories and more movies where the plot revolves around a riding mower.

TARGET PRACTICE

When it comes to advertising, middle-aged men are becoming a larger and larger target, both individually and as a group. When you see any of the following features, you can be sure the products are aimed at guys like us:

- Relaxed fit
- Wrinkle-free
- Ultra-light
- Foolproof
- Non-flammable
- Guaranteed for life

FOREVER YOUNG

Just last week, I was in the drugstore picking up some deodorant — you know the kind, strong

enough for a man and made for one, too. All of a sudden, this mannequin in a lab coat comes to life from behind the makeup counter and says to me, "Excuse me sir, but would you like to try a sample of Adonis, a new skin treatment specifically formulated to meet a man's unique moisture needs?" I'm like, "Miss, you have no idea what my unique moisture needs are." Long story short, I end up dropping 35 bucks on a shot glass-size bottle of margarine-colored goo and feeling like a world-class chump. On my way out, I look back and see another guy with a desperate look in his eye getting the same pitch and reaching for his wallet. Why are we falling for this stuff? Just so that when we're 90 people will say, "Gee, you don't look a day over 85!" Maybe, but I'll tell you what, the goo really works. Now, my storm door hinges squeak with a youthful confidence they never had before.

Quote of the Day: "Some men are born with humility. Some achieve humility. Others have it thrust upon them." — Red Green

Red Green is the star of "The Red Green Show," a television series seen in the U.S. on PBS and in Canada on the CBC Network, and the author of "The Red Green Book" and "Red Green Talks Cars: A Love Story." Watch for the feature film Red Green's 'Duct Tape Forever' at a theater near you.

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MAY WARD OFF
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