

commentary

from other pens...

A city's history drawn in maps

A map can chart the facts of the landscape: the course of the rivers and the shape of the hills. It can also project a vision of a city that never was but might be.

Washington's early mapmakers were clearly focused on the vision: a capital of dignified public buildings in a city of broad avenues radiating from a constellation of circles and squares and set like a gemstone between the prongs of two rivers, the Potomac and the Anacostia.

The story of how a compelling city vision was imagined and framed from a patchwork of forests, swamps and straggling farms is told by Washington landscape architect and urban designer Iris Miller in a new book, "Washington in Maps, 1606-2000," published by Rizzoli International. "The shaping of a city is an historic act, as indeed it was with Washington, District of Columbia," she writes. "Born of a profound utopian notion rooted in 18th century ideals, the nation and its federal city were envisioned as hallmarks of equality, justice and liberty."

Miller's book traces the mapping of Washington from its hand-drawn beginnings to satellite imagery. There are stops to admire the Macmillan Commission that rediscovered and reshaped the city's monumental core at the beginning of the 20th century and the organized squiggle of red, orange, blue, yellow and green lines that reflect the city's subway system.

The first map of the region was published in 1624 and based on the 1606 explorations of Capt. John Smith. Although it is emblazoned with the royal arms of England, it surveys land still very much Indian country.

There are five Indian villages marked along the stretch of the Potomac that became metropolitan Washington. Chief Powhatan sits in state in one corner. A "giant" Indian leans on his bow in another. A three-masted English sailing ship, a symbol of approaching change, cuts through "the Virginian Sea," near Chesapeake Bay.

A century and a quarter later, mathematics professor Joshua Fry and surveyor Peter Jefferson, father of future president Thomas Jefferson, published an accurate and detailed map westward from the Atlantic coast.

Such maps were consulted when Congress puzzled over where to locate a permanent federal capital to be freshly designed and built entirely apart from any established city.

The map that established Washington and continues to guide its course was drawn by Pierre Charles L'Enfant, the talented French-born veteran of the American Revolution commissioned by George Washington.

L'Enfant's map is now faded and worn and one of the treasures of the Library of Congress. It is, Miller writes, "majestic in design, comprehensive in magnitude" and wholly adapted to its site. Its widely spaced Capitol and President's House conform to the separation of powers dictated by the Constitution.

L'Enfant's sensitivity to the design of a city with intermingled neighborhoods and monumental spaces sprang from city planning ideas in his native France and the artistic training he received from his father, Pierre, a landscape artist and painter of European battlefields.

The book includes a never-exhibited, never-before-published drawing of two well-muscled wrestlers with intertwining arms for which the younger L'Enfant won a prize at the art school he attended in Paris. Miller says this artistic education, in an atmosphere of vibrant experimentation, explain the skill with which he laid out the design of Washington.

The map keeps his name alive. But maps were involved in L'Enfant's downfall. He was dismissed following a long squabble with the city's commissioners, in part over his failure to publish maps in a timely fashion so that city lots could be sold.

Mapping Washington was taken up by American surveyor Andrew Ellicott. Ellicott's maps, which deleted many of L'Enfant's refinements, were published across Europe, such was the interest in the enterprise.

L'Enfant's avenues still angle into his circles and squares. Their meetings enliven the urban scene. They give L'Enfant's city what Miller calls "a bit of chaos and surprise within a sense of order."

EDITOR'S NOTE—Lawrence L. Knutson has reported on Congress, the White House and Washington's history for 35 years.



Sharing a private moment



joan ryan

• commentary

I am outraged that the government wants to root through my e-mail and financial records, that my bank can share my personal information with other businesses, that authorities can eavesdrop on my phone messages.

Privacy is a treasured American principle. We should guard it zealously, a point I was just making to my friend Kitty on my cell phone during lunch. This was right before we discussed her yeast infection, which drew annoyed glances from my fellow diners. But Kitty needed info on symptoms and meds! What was I supposed to do — put her off until I left the restaurant? Kitty is just too fragile right now for anything resembling rejection.

She is still recovering from her appearance on "The Bachelor." She smiled and flirted like mad (her hot-tub make-out scene had to be edited for prime time!), only to be told by Mr. Wonderful that she wasn't "his type." And in front of millions of viewers!

It was almost as bad as the time on "The Montel Williams Show" when Kitty found out her sister was really her mother! Talk about a shock. But Montel was so sweet. He let her sob right on his designer suit until the commercial break.

The upshot was that Kitty got a book deal out of it: "My Mother, My Sister: A Memoir of a Confused Childhood." Kirkus Reviews said the book

"set a new standard in tell-all memoirs, leaving no intimate detail unexplored and unexploited." (Kitty says Melissa Gilbert is playing her in the Lifetime movie!)

As healing and cathartic as it was for Kitty to write about her neuroses and sexual hang-ups (including the now-famous CorningWare episode), the book definitely hampered her marriage prospects. And Kitty desperately wants a baby!

She has the birth all planned out. She wants to do something really "expressive," like those women she read about recently in the paper. Some women are hiring professional photographers to videotape the birth so they can show it to family and friends later. Another had her mother roll the placenta in paint to make "placenta prints," which she sent to all the relatives. What an inventive way to share the experience!

But first Kitty has to find a husband, of course. She had no luck with the personal ads. Nothing but

losers who spent the whole night talking endlessly about themselves. (Why do men need to tell you how much money they make, how high they scored a million years ago on their SATs and what went wrong with their first two marriages — all before you've finished your first cosmo?)

So Kitty has pinned her hopes on the Internet. She set up a camera in her living room and streams the video onto her own Web site. Prospective suitors can watch her doing stuff like watching "Survivor" and clipping her toenails (hey, this is real life, boys and girls). They can also read her medical, academic and work history and instant message her for further details. Keep your fingers crossed!

But getting back to those disturbing invasion-of-privacy issues, I'm almost angry enough to find out who my congressperson is. It is an outrage that the government believes it can just take my personal information. Talk about rude, not to mention inefficient.

Everyone knows there is only one polite and sure-fire way to gain access to all the most guarded and private information about an American citizen: Just ask.

Joan Ryan is a columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle. Send comments to her e-mail at joanryan@sfrchronicle.com

Food and fellowship still go hand in hand



pat schiefen

• postscript

In his cookbook "Woman Thou Art Loosed Cookbook Volume One" by T. D. Jakes a collection of recipes is presented that will encourage even the most novice chef to try something new. For centuries the kitchen has been the heart of the home for people to gather and share. This is still true despite the fast food phenomena. One change is that the kitchen is no longer just a woman's domain. Many men enjoy cooking as well.

Stir-Fried Wild Berries

5 long stem strawberries
1 cup blackberries
1 cup blueberries
1 cup raspberries
1 cup wine grapes
2 tablespoons brown sugar
1 tablespoon butter
1/2 cup fruit juice of choice
10 chocolate pogy sticks
Optional: 1 lemon and Plain or Vanilla Yogurt
Frost your dessert bowl or individual glasses in the freezer. Mix berries and grapes in a medium bowl and set aside. Over medium low heat melt the butter in a large saucepan. Add the brown sugar and stir until well dissolved. Add the berry mix and cook for 1 minute.

Pour in the juice slowly and cook for another minute. Spoon berries into dessert bowl or glasses and top with vanilla ice cream and 2 pogy sticks. Serves 5-6.

Variation: Instead of the ice cream zest and mince 1 lemon and fold into either plain or vanilla yogurt according to your taste.

Easy Fried Cabbage

1 head cabbage, shredded
1 small onion
1 clove garlic

1 bell pepper
4 slices bacon
1 tablespoon vinegar, optional
Cut bacon into small pieces and brown in a large skillet. Chop onion, garlic, and bell pepper. Add to the bacon mix and stir. Add cabbage and vinegar. Cover skillet and cook over low heat. Stir often until cabbage reaches desired tenderness. Serve with cornbread. Serves 6-8.

Louisiana Cajun Style Dirty Rice

1 - 2 pound ground beef
1 small onion
1/2 small green bell pepper
1 teaspoon oregano
1 tablespoon dry crushed red pepper
2 teaspoons garlic salt
1/2 cup parsley flakes
1 teaspoon black pepper
3 teaspoons Cajun seasoning
2 cups whole grain white rice
Dice onion and brown ground beef in a large skillet. Drain. Slice green pepper into thin strips and add to beef mix. Cook over medium heat and sprinkle in parsley flakes, black pepper, oregano, garlic salt, Cajun seasoning and crushed red pepper.

To 3 1/2 cups water add 2 rice. Bring to a boil. Stir occasionally to season evenly and to avoid sticking. As the water begins to cook off, lower the

heat and cover. Simmer for 15-20 minutes. Sprinkle 1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper over the top and serve. Serves 6-12.

Flan De Queso (Cream Cheese Custard)

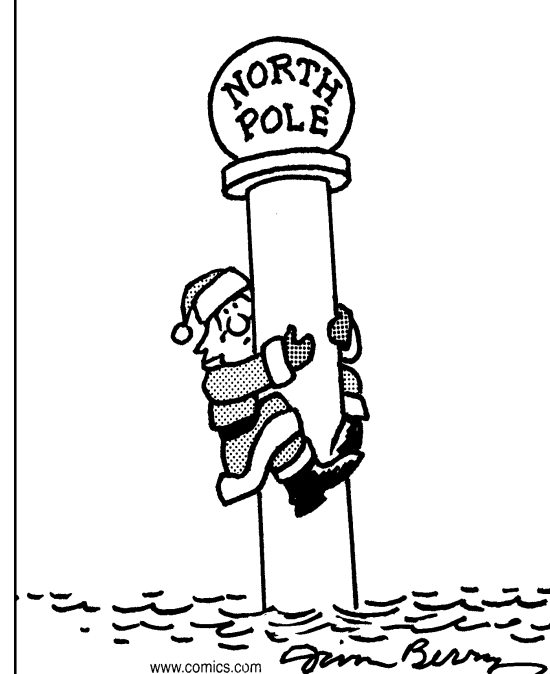
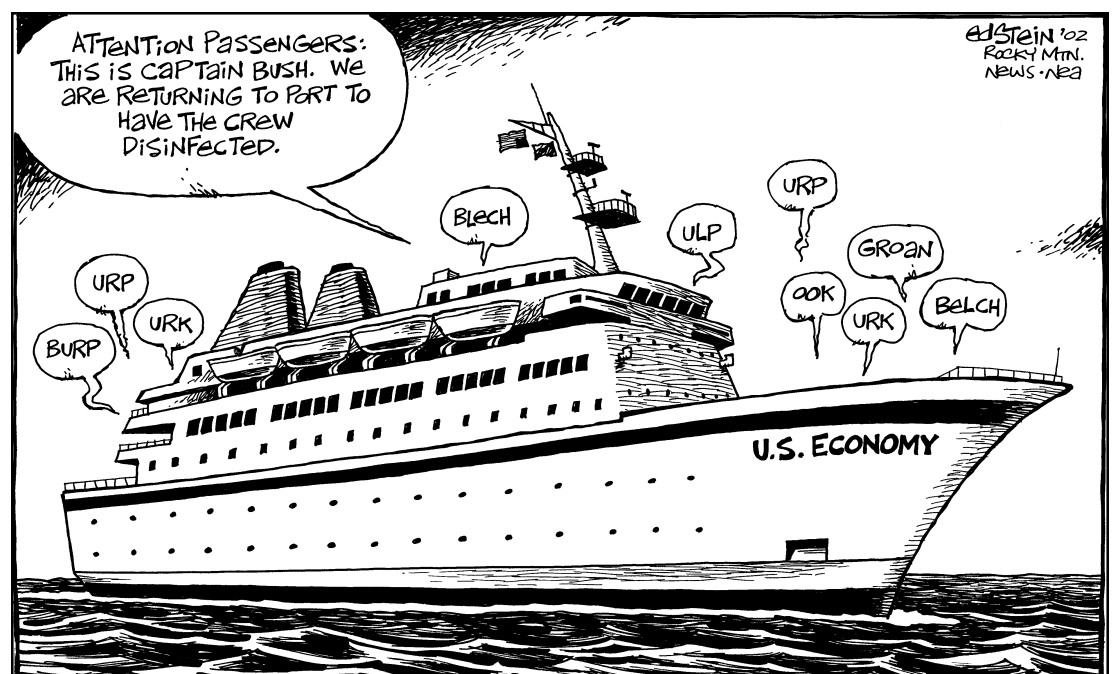
1 cup sugar
2 tablespoons water
1 (16 ounce) can condensed milk
1 (16 ounce) can evaporated milk
1 (16 ounce) can regular milk
5 eggs
1 (8 ounce) package cream cheese
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
1 tablespoon sugar and water in a small saucepan. Cook, stirring constantly until sugar is melted and browned with a caramel texture. Pour into a 3 quart microwave safe dish and set aside to cool.

Soften cream cheese in microwave for 2-3 minutes and set aside. Separate eggs and put yolks into a large mixing bowl. (Retain egg whites.) Combine egg yolks, condensed milk, evaporated milk, regular milk and vanilla. When these ingredients are well mixed, add cream cheese and blend. Beat egg whites until foamy and add. Blend for about 2 minutes and pour into cooled caramel dish. Cover dish and bake in the microwave for 18 minutes.

Remove from the microwave. Uncover. Let stand for 20-30 minutes. Put in the refrigerator for at least 1 to 1 1/2 hours before serving. To serve, place large plate over the dish and turn upside down so the flan falls on the plate. Cut and serve. Serves 10-12.

berry's world

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