

Beacon Hill Byline by Mary Rogeness

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Taking a break from Boston

August is a slow month at the State House. Legislative sessions continue to take place twice a week for routine business, but most members schedule our own time off without worrying that we will miss important business. While we spend more time with our constituents, there is also time for summer travel. The Speaker and the Senate President planned a trip to Israel, and I arranged a visit to Washington, D.C.

A visit to the nation's capital should be an ordinary event in a politician's life, but this summer's trip was special. My husband and I invited Ariel, our 13-year-old granddaughter, to accompany us. Her presence prompted us to see the city with the eyes of first-time visitors as we introduced her to the sights of Washington. Here are the highlights of the trip.

To a visitor, the best part of Washington is the panorama of a low-rise city dedicated to the environmentally clean task of government and the tourist friendly task of showing it off.

For my husband and me, the best part of the trip was the prospect of time alone with our grandchild. She had a great time seeing the sights, and we had a great time watching her. We started with two pre-arranged tours and a list of "must see" highlights, and followed up by adding stops at attractions of opportunity.

After a long day of driving, we spent the next day enjoying the Smithsonian Museum of American History. At Ariel's request we located Judy Garland's ruby slippers, encased for all to see. At my request, we spent time in the History of War exhibit, where we focused on the Revolutionary War. I had just finished reading "1776," and wanted to see items connected with that historic time.

Then came the Washington Monument, the obelisk that grows to its massive size as you walk nearer to the base. Unfortunately for us, we had not mastered the knowledge of ticket-procurement, so we could not take the trip to the top of the monument. But we were able to take the long stroll along the reflecting pool, past the new World War II Memorial and on to the Lincoln Memorial.

We scheduled our Capitol tour long before leaving home, and that tour, provided to constituents by members of Congress, made Ariel feel like a very important person.

Our trip covered the Vietnam Memorial and Holocaust Memorial Museum, Ford's Theater and the Natural History Museum, so it must sound like we wore out our feet and patience. However, we had a variety of activities and the good fortune of a mild August weekend, so a good time was had by all.

Most of us have been to Washington, as residents, students, parents or kids, but it is worth a refresher course. If you have not seen the city for a while, I recommend a return trip. As Ariel said in her note to me, "It was so cool!"