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Like the waters and rivers, history flows everywhere in Washington, D.C.



Beltrami Electric chose me to join the representatives from other Minnesota cooperatives on a Youth Tour to our capital. I received the gift of experiencing this history myself. On our first morning, before the heat seeped into the city, a guide showed us the monuments, the ones to Vietnam, the Korean War, Lincoln, Martin Luther King and Roosevelt. Vietnam first, a black gash into the smooth lawn of the Mall. At the Korean Monument, statues waded through juniper rice patties, wet and cold but fighting on. Lincoln's was the greatest, though, like he was. Just a man, sitting there, worry on his shoulders, but peace in his eyes, like he knew it would all be right, sometime.

We bussed out to Mount Vernon the next day. Washington's home looked a bit small in today's conception of a mansion, and lonely, when you looked at all the elegant furniture as you passed through. A woman posing as the president's cook reminded me how much living went on there once, though. She spun us a story, laughing, about Washington's granddaughter and her love for mush cakes. Fields and gardens surrounded the mansion, neatly kept up, though perhaps no longer by colored slaves.

In the afternoon, we cruised along the Potomac, with an important building sometimes to the starboard side or port. The naval research laboratory. The Pentagon. The Kennedy Center, tall marble with trees growing on the balcony. We later watched the Sound of Music there. Watergate, the curvy-building scene of the scandal I'd heard confusing bits of all my life.

Other afternoons, we went to museums, lots of museums. At the Smithsonian Art Gallery there were paintings, of course, famous ones. I skipped by them half bewildered – Vincent Van Gough, Claude Monet, medieval frescos – but we were on a time schedule. A friend and I ate at the Sculpture Garden's café, casually ordering spinach-artichoke pasta, baked in a ceramic dish. There was a Natural History Museum too, full of stuffed animals (non-plush) and pretty stones. The Holocaust Museum made me think the most, though. It's hard to realize what depths of brutality humans are capable of.

Wednesday, we went to the Capitol. Our Minnesota senators and several congressmen, including Rick Nolan and Collin Peterson, spoke to our group. Afterwards, Representative Nolan's interns took us on a tour of the capitol. We slipped into a session of the senate, with occasional "Aye" votes breaking the galleries' silence and the senators' low talk. We saw the White House, but from across the street – security guards strung out the yellow tape just as we walked by. Our coordinator Gayle took our pictures in front of the Supreme Court building.

It's hard to give a picture of the capital in just a few words, though. There's so much more color, more experiences I didn't have room to share. Really, it was you, the members of Beltrami Electric, who sent me. Thank you a lot. - **Mara Cobb**

