

The Washington Peace Rally

Our trip to the Washington peace rally began as a humorous event, and slowly transformed into a powerful experience. We saw love, hate, fear, anxiety, and the strength of unity. We saw no violence.

The following is a chronological account of the trip's highlights, as experienced by two friends of peace:

April 24, 1971

Midnight - A bus loaded with 45 people left from the main school parking lot. Mr. Bus Driver immediately started flashing us nasty looks in that huge mirror that all bus drivers have.

1:48 - Chinese air vent torture. The driver intermittently opened and closed an air vent which sent sub-freezing air rushing past, (and through), our legs.

2:30 - We stopped for a 20 minute rest stop. Mr. Driver was annoyed when a few people stayed off the bus for 21 minutes. He bellowed, "This is not a meal stop," and "Don't you kids carry watches?"

4:30 - Arrival in D.C. We all thanked the driver and proceeded to walk around aimlessly.

4:31 - Joe and I found a Johnny-on-the-spot portable toilet. Ah!

5:50 - A crowd was now forming at the Washington Monument. An impressive sight was the hundreds of wine bottles in in the trash cans—it was a cold night!

6:28 - While strolling through the city, the capitalists hit us for expensive, watered-down coffee—\$.32 a cup. We sat on the corner of walk and don't walk street, drinking the high priced java.

6:45 - As we sat, two government-looking men in a government-looking car pulled up on don't walk street and began staring at us. Joe took their picture—they smiled and left.

8:07 - Back at the Washington Monument, an anti-war sing along was starting. It was being filmed and recorded by the news' media, who soon moved to cover a buck-buck game when the words became un-news-cast-able.

9:14 - We moved over to the Lincoln Memorial and began talking to a group of protesting soldiers from Fort Hood, , Texas. They told us of the anti-war effort in the military, which by necessity is mainly underground.

10:14 - The crowd (which had grown enormously since our arrival) began walking over to the Ellipse, which was the scheduled starting place for a march on the Capitol. A small group, apparently thinking that we were marching on the White House, commenced singing "We're off to see the wizard." (I guess they didn't realize that the wizard was in California and that's about 3000 miles of yellow brick road.)

Diary of a Mad Reporter

11:01 - From the Ellipse, we slowly started heading for the Capitol. The enthusiasm of the crowd became intense, yet with all its size and power it remained peaceful.

12:03 - Still marching. The temperature was getting hot, and about 20 people decided to cool off in a fountain. They were doing alright until one fellow cut his foot on a piece of glass, which prompted the others to decide that they were cool enough.

12:05 - I heard a tremendous cheer from the crowd, and saw everyone pointing to the National Gallery of Art Building. Someone had lowered the flag and raised it again upside-down. After being inverted for five minutes, someone else re-lowered it and re-raised it rightside-up. I heard a tremendous cheer from the crowd.

12:32 - The march ended on the lawn of the Capitol. People were everywhere-on statues, in trees, and of course on the ground. Everyone was waiting for the speeches to begin.

12:40 - A man's voice came over the public address system. He estimated the crowd at ¼ million, and 250,000 people clapped and cheered. It made an eerie, but beautiful sound.

1:06 - Someone in a Richard Nixon mask was giving obscene hand gestures to the demonstrators and

the NBC cameraman. n. He made it "perfectly clear" that he didn't like protestors and/or the press.

1:12 - Peter, Paul, and Mary sang "Blowin' in the Wind", and the massive crowd fell silent in a sea of peace signs. In my opinion this was the most moving and thought-provoking moment of the day.

1:39 - Coretta King spoke of racism, repression, and the war to a standing ovation.

2:50 - One of the leaders of Vietnam Veterans for Peace, John Kerry, told of the horrors of today's Vietnam, and as he did before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, called for Nixon to admit and rectify America's mistake.

4:10 - Joe and I had to leave the rally in order to catch the bus back to Monmouth. The bus wasn't scheduled to go until 5:30, but the driver threatened to leave all late comers behind. We believed him!

10:01 - Following an uneventful ride home (Mr. Bus Driver was agreeable this trip) we departed the bus hungrier, sleepier, dirtier, and wiser than we entered it 22 hours earlier.

10:02 - We found that the trouble we feared and didn't find in Washington had taken place at Monmouth's Jethro Tull concert...Peace.