

A Weekend of Change

Krysta Kavanaugh, 29 May 2025, 578 words, page 1

In high school, I decided I was going to be a US Senator. That was around 1966. A little early for that thought. No one suggested it to me. I just chose it. I also decided I couldn't get married because it was impossible to do justice to both. I wonder how I came up with that, though it could be true.

But two days after graduation, I got married. The why of that is another story—and no I wasn't pregnant. Bye, bye Senate.

But it didn't stop my patriotism and interest in politics. There was much patriotic memorabilia around our home.

In 1970, after the Kent State massacre and other civil unrest, SIU (Southern Illinois University) was having a bus go to DC for a peace march.

I decided to go as it was inexpensive. I wasn't going for the peace march. I was going to visit all the museums and get a patriotic fix. I was excited!

But all the museums and buildings were closed. I was crushed.

Then I had nothing to do...but talk to and participate with people for the peace march.

I found out there was a lot of goodwill, cheer, and integrity.

I was having whole different conversations with people than my usual and my horizons were broadened.

At one point I couldn't find my sweater and went looking for it. A couple hours after I'd taken it off and left it somewhere, it was still there. I was astounded.

Later I was in front of the White House, separated from a cop by the fence. We were having a friendly conversation. Then another

cop came rushing up and shouted that paint had been thrown on the steps of the treasury building (big difference from the acting out today) and all cops had to get ready for more trouble and violence.

The friendly cop I had been talking to put on his helmet, got out his gun, and became very alert. I was shocked. This man who I'd been having an easy conversation with could shoot me.

Then a few minutes later some guy in the crowd came up to me and said excitedly, "Isn't this great?!" I asked, "What, the peace march?" He replied, "No, the violence." I walked away.

I realized how easy it would be to incite a riot and I wasn't going to be a part of it. It was planned to stir violence. But not by the Peace people.

At the end of the whole weekend, I was by the Washington Monument. While it soared in the air, the ground was completely blanketed with litter.

I started picking it up. Others joined me. I'm not sure how many people helped or how long it took, but we cleaned up the whole area. It looked great.

I felt the camaraderie, the good intentions, the action. It was rewarding and filling.

I don't remember too many more specifics—55 years later—that would say why that time changed my life. I just know it did.

In hindsight, I went a republican (albeit an Eisenhower, or even Nixon, republican) as my family was republican and left a democrat. I wouldn't have put those terms on it then. I was "just" experiencing the profound impact it had on me. But my worldview changed. And that has stayed with me ever since. Now I advocate for those beliefs.

