

The Lincoln Memorial

The first vacation Brent and I took was about a year after we were married. We still had very limited funds, but we saved and planned for a quick trip to Washington DC, the National Aquarium in Baltimore and then finally to the beach. We were to be gone for 3 days and 2 nights.

We were country bumpkins. The traffic in Washington DC was terrible. We wanted to see the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial, and surrounding historical attractions. We visited the Washington Monument. Since it was our first vacation, I wanted to buy a souvenir. Someone was selling T-shirts. Perfect. I bought two. One, I remember very clearly. It had a picture of the earth and LOVE was written under it. I was quite happy. They were a bargain. Now, I had something to remember my trip that was also useful. The shirts were put in a small bag so that they were easy to carry. The car was parked far away, so we continued our sightseeing with our new purchases.

Next, we walked to the Lincoln Memorial. The tourists that we were, we wanted a picture of everything. Brent had the camera. This was back in the days before cell phones. He took a very nice picture of me sitting on the steps of the memorial. We continued our explorations and stood looking with wonder at the giant statue of President Lincoln. We continued our day and finally, with tired feet, made our way back to the car.

Problem! I did not have my purse with me! Problem! I had all our money with me in my purse. Problem! The keys to the car were also in my purse. I started to go into panic mode. We had no money, no way to start our car, and it was at the end of our day. Places would be closing soon. Then we would be stuck in DC at night! I felt so stupid, like a simple tourist who must have unknowingly fallen into a thief's trap.

Brent and I retraced our steps in hopes that we could at least find my purse. Without digging too much, we looked in trash cans. We were hopeful that someone would've taken just my wallet. We hoped that they may have ditched my purse and that we would be able to recover the keys to the car. Maybe, if we were lucky, I might even get my driver's license back. I did not have any credit cards or banking cards... just cash. I figured that the cash was long gone.

As we were making our way back to the Lincoln Memorial, we saw a man riding a bike. My first impression was that he looked homeless. He approached us and asked if I had lost my purse. For a moment, I was speechless. "Yes," I replied. He said that he saw it on the steps of the memorial and gave it to the people in the office that is inside the memorial. He found my purse on the steps to the memorial?!? Did I pick up my bag of souvenirs and think that I had all my belongings because I was used to carrying one thing and was still carrying one thing? Ouch! Was this all my fault? Double ouch! I was so shocked and so thankful. I asked if we could take his picture. I didn't want to forget this nice man who had saved my purse! He seemed surprised and a bit awkward at my enthusiasm, but he gave me a giant smile. To this day, I can't look at that picture without smiling.

With a click of the camera and a quick "Thank you!" we ran off to the memorial, hoping to reach the little office before it closed. We found the office. I think I got the words, "I lost my..." from my mouth and the person in the office handed me my purse. There was no claiming process. They simply knew it was mine and handed it over. (In hindsight, they probably saw my Driver's License and recognized me.) I was so relieved. I walked away before stopping to look in my purse.

Not one thing was missing from my purse. As we walked back to the car at dusk, I was very grateful to be leaving DC and also very humbled. I think I had some angels working double time, thinking "Oh Ty..." We continued on our trip with no other potentially catastrophic happenings.

