

## Awesome School Desks

09-12-2016 by Harry Zirkelbach  
Stars and Sun Date 34542

This array of desks is in a neat semi-circle. No seat removed from the principal by more than four rows. Some, relocated every two years. Each is over-sized. Designed by Tom Complain, 1819. The original 34 still in use. Children would be challenged to sit at them and work, they are that large. But recognized by any who attended school in these United States, 1800s, early 1900s. Their ample ink-well complex, holding writing implements. This furniture, the envy of every child; a great desk. And here, the envy of every politician seeking the Senate since the founding of these United States.

Sixteen hundred have had the honor of being a Senator of these United States. There have been one hundred Senators, two from each state, since 1961, with the admission of Alaska Jan 3, and Hawaii Aug 31, 1959.

As is said of politicians, the Democrats sit at the Left, Republicans Right of the President of the Senate, the U.S. Vice President. The number right and left reflecting the Senate Control from the last, even-year, election. Seats are not moved; the center moves. That's correct; no Republican is left of Center and vice versa. Independents - yes there are some; those individuals are asked to choose either party, sit with their chosen friends.

Exception: Wayne Morris left the Republican party, refused to sit with either, was given a "center" position.

Since 1900 it has been the honored tradition for individuals occupying any desk, to inscribe their name inside the desk. Those knife carvings; a litany of Senators.

Both parties, seating hints of seniority, the newly elected back row, outside, by the date sworn in.

And so it was, early 1962, my brother-in-law, Administrative Aide to Colorado's Junior Senator, John Carroll. Our family is visiting Washington for a week. I'm his afternoon guest at the Senate. First I watch from the gallery; the Senate cares for business of the day.



The Senate adjourned that day after 6:00 pm. I am allowed onto the Senate floor. A treasured hour. Look at some "Left-desk" signatures; see not all former residents were great carvers! Still those names, our history, impressive. Visit the Vice-Presidents' area; am encouraged by my friend of years, to make a motion to adjourn for the day; accepted without objection, as is the custom.

Later we return to the empty gallery. More tales.

My brother-in-law also promised me a show, great theatre. The controller of the event, the Senate Electrician. Two hours after the final gavel, he begins dimming the lighting of the amphitheater, bank after bank, an accelerating sunset, just as beautiful, changed nightly, as this historic building is put to bed in ever diminishing artificial light. Theatre of the absurd. Many nights, no audience. But this night, two buddies of WWII Navy, now wed to sisters, non-blood closeness the remainder of days. This night, silent witnesses to a mime-show of unbelievable beauty, memory etched. At the tax payers expense. This nightly show for too few, as work for the Senate, ultra demanding of every employee, all rush for home while the light lasts.

Washington's District of Columbia tends to be monumental.  
Yet there exists those small, honored moments, known to the observant.  
One, my brother-in-law, a workaholic, long time friend of all who made the Senate their second home too.

Now I lower my voice, fade to silence,  
in the growing light of this day,  
and your company.