

LARRY LITTLE | Signs of hope in butterflies and bungalows

• By [Larry Little](#)

• Posted May 2, 2012 at 12:44 p.m.

• For me, last Saturday afternoon in Olympia and Sunday afternoon in Seabeck were like a calm eye in the midst of our turbulent hurricane-like times.

It's easy to focus on the chaos, from murder on our Kitsap streets to an apparent abduction of a 6-year-old from her home in Tucson, from violence in a bunker in North Bend to the pending assault on our mental health from an over \$2 billion presidential campaign in full swing. And of course, the Seattle May Day riots.

Yet I wish everyone — from the most cynical of our friends in Seattle to the brave, blind Chinese dissident in Beijing — could have seen and benefited from what I saw last weekend.

Perhaps for many of us, the dominant mental image of our capital city of Olympia is of partisan political bickering backed by entrenched bureaucracy. Although it might be tested once again very soon at the polls, it is virtually political dogma in this state that long gone are the days of relative balance and harmony during the tenures of Republican governors in "public service" together with Democratic senators.

Yet an event on Saturday spurred my optimism.

Walking into the center of Olympia, we came upon blocked-off streets and a large crowd of all ages. A wagon appeared with lots of sidewalk chalk of various colors. Encouraged by seeing dozens of children drawing beautiful chalk circles on the pavement, then flowers, then butterflies and even multicolored dragons, I added a sun to what my wife and daughter had drawn.

Then came folks dressed as animals and plants of all sorts, parading down the street. First came the dinosaurs, then the spiders led the snails, who led the guy with stilts. He was a praying mantis. The lions, tigers and bears followed.

Then came the dancing butterflies — lots of them.

A little girl with wings was just in front of me. Her eyes were wide and her smile was broad. Others her age were dancing in the parade. She may well have been the younger sister of a girl that I read about who said on a previous parade day years ago, "I had fun coloring and dancing like a butterfly."

Even one very young girl was in a basket in a wagon wearing a brown-flared hat. She was being pulled by a snake charmer. Every now and then she would pop up looking very much like a cobra ready to dance ... or strike.

I have seen many parades — college parades while perched on my dad's back, to parades of protest during the Vietnam War era, to walking our oldest son in a stroller 40 years ago in the Macy's Parade down Fifth Avenue in New York, to Armed Forces Day parades in Bremerton watching another son playing trumpet in the Olympic High marching band, to parades with us firing ancient rifles in the air as we arrived in

a remote village in Africa.

But last Saturday's parade was different.

It seemed like all Olympia turned out for this "Procession of the Species Celebration" parade. Smiles and laughter were everywhere. I observed no overt politicization of the event, and nobody that I saw disrupted. It seemed that for one afternoon, thousands of people joined for a common celebration, no sponsorships, virtually no agenda.

For me and my vivid political imagination, it was as if Sen. Rick Santorum, the author of "It Takes a Family," and Sen. Hilary Clinton, the author of "It Takes a Village," two likely opponents in the 2016 election — if President Obama is re-elected — were walking down the parade route arm and arm.

Why? Because for such a parade it really does take strong marriages, strong families and strong "villages."

Is sensing broad optimism from such a parade simply wishful thinking, or are there dim signs of emerging communities throughout the country that say "enough" to the hyper-partisanship and negativity?

Sunday afternoon offered another optimistic community moment.

As many of us Kitsap residents well know, for over 100 years the Seabeck Conference Center has provided a beautiful campus setting for groups. Their dedication is to the "moral, social and spiritual well-being of its guests and staff by

providing a setting conducive to education, renewal, and character development."

The C. Keith Birkenfeld Memorial Trust Fund, on whose board I serve, gave Seabeck a large challenge grant to build two new guesthouses and install an outdoor amphitheater. On Sunday, I had the pleasure of attending their dedication. Keith would be pleased with the two new guesthouses named Salal and Hucklebrrry.

The spirit of community among the more than 100 guests on Sunday was contagious. It was noted that for many years, hundreds of folks young and old had enjoyed, "conversation, reflection and hearty laughter," amid the tranquil setting of Seabeck.

We need more such community spirit and initiative shown so vividly to me in that parade in Olympia and in that dedication at Seabeck.

© 2012 Kitsap Sun. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Read

more: <http://www.kitsapsun.com/news/2012/may/02/larry-little-signs-of-hope-in-butterflies-and/#ixzz1xWFmhT63>