

Humor Me

By Ronald P. Culberson

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“A Brief Embellished History of Virginia, Part II”

The following is the second of two columns and represents an edited version of Ron’s comments at the 2007 Herndon Chamber of Commerce Awards Gala.

In Part I of our brief history of Virginia we learned about the uppity British settlers nesting in Jamestown after a failed attempt on Roanoke Island in North Carolina. They named our fair state after a so-called fair virgin queen and promptly made themselves at home by chasing the native Indians out West. Then...

In 1619, almost a decade after the settlers, uh, settled, the Virginia Company in London sent 90 single women as potential wives for the male colonists and to help populate the settlement. Never before or since have new visitors to any land been greeted with more “excitement.” And therein was the origin of the phrase “Virginia is for Lovers.”

The second significant event in 1619 was the arrival of the first slaves from Africa who were brought to the New World by two English privateers. Now I don’t want to pass judgment here, but I will. It seems that these early settlers were quite full of themselves and had little regard for others. Not only did they run the Indians off their property, they “stole” people from another continent. Thank goodness the Virginia legislature realized the missteps of the past and expressed their profound regret for these actions.....last month. While it’s 400 years after the fact, it’s better than 500 years – the wheels of government and all.

Over the next 100 years England retained control of the new colony and as is wont to happen when men in tight britches and powdered wigs are put in charge, the British and Virginia leaders clashed. England was in great debt and placed a tax on sugar in the New World. With the help of well-loved colonist Elizabeth Crocker (known to friends and family as Betty), Patrick Henry vehemently opposed the Sugar Act. He was accused of treason and in a famous speech said, “If this be treason, make the most of it.” Interestingly in that same speech, he raised a cup of coffee and allegedly said, “If this be unsweetened, I’ll make the most of it.” His tongue-in-cheek example of colonial humor was in reference to a claim that the colonists could not live without sugar by British Noble, Lord *Star of Bucks* County. Patrick Henry’s comment got a grandé laugh.

The British continued to annoy the colonists because, as we’ve seen, the British can be a rather uptight bunch and so in 1775, the colonists grew tired of constantly reminding them that there was a hard “c” in *shedule* and began a long overdue rebellion. The Continental Congress appointed George Washington to lead the American forces and

he immediately declared war on Great Britain because they were amassing great stores of weapons of *slight and mildly offensive* destruction on our soil.

On May 15, 1776, The Fifth Virginia Convention declared Virginia free from England's rule after easily kicking some well-dressed British arse. Virginia was finally declared a free and independent state except, of course, for the African slaves who would have to wait until the mid 1960's to enjoy that privilege. Of course I'm sure the state regrets that as well.

Patrick Henry was elected the first Governor and Thomas Jefferson followed. By 1790, the territories of Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois had broken off from Virginia. In addition, a negotiation between Maryland and Virginia created the District of Columbia which would soon become the Nation's Capital.....for mediocre professional sports teams.

In 1861, Virginia seceded from the Union over slavery and economic issues. A number of important Civil War battles were waged in Virginia on the famous battlefields of Manassas, Fredericksburg and Appomattox. Of course it was really a most *uncivil* war – one which true Southerners still fight today. On street corners, outside general stores and inside prisons throughout the South, you can still get a taste of that famous rebel whine, "Lee surrendered. I didn't."

In 1870, West Virginia formally split from Virginia. And while the loss of land was a disappointment, the IQ of Virginia rose significantly after the split. OK, let me say that I formally "regret" that comment. That should fix it.

From 1870 on, the state experienced the Reconstruction, the New South, World Wars and a Depression. Then things really looked up when on December 28, 1960, in Johnston Memorial Hospital in the Southwestern Virginia town of Abingdon, a funny, humble and reasonably good looking columnist was born. The rest, as they say, is history.

Until next time, just humor me.

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Ron Culberson, MSW, CSP, CPAE is a speaker, humorist, and author of four books including Do it Well. Make it Fun. The Key to Success in Life, Death, and Almost Everything in Between. His mission is to change the workplace culture so that organizations are more productive and staff are more content. He shows people how to have more FUN while preserving the integrity of the work they do and the lives they lead. For more information, visit www.RonCulberson.com.