AWESOME

Thomas Jefferson

0. Thomas Jefferson - Story Preface

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Image of Thomas Jefferson's portrait by Gilbert Stuart, in 1821, maintained at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

Whenever you do a thing, act as if all the world were watching.

Thomas Jefferson

If he ran for President today - in this "sound-bite" culture - <u>Thomas Jefferson</u> would likely get pummeled. It was his voice - more likely than not - which made him intensely dislike public speaking. Not made for the television age, it was high-pitched. In addition, he spoke with a lisp.

Jefferson despised giving speeches so much that <u>he sent</u> his "State of the Union" addresses to Congress. (That was, incidentally, a practice continued by all subsequent presidents until <u>Woodrow Wilson</u>.)

Known for his strong intellect, Tom Jefferson - the student - often studied fifteen hours a day. It was hard to keep him away from his books. <u>John Page</u> - future governor of Virginia and Jefferson's close friend at college - said Tom would rather "fly to his studies" than spend time with his friends.

Reflecting on Jefferson's broad-based knowledge, President Kennedy once welcomed a group of forty-nine Nobel laureates to the White House with these-words:

I think this is the most extraordinary collection of talent, of human knowledge, that has ever been gathered at the White House, with the possible exception of when Thomas Jefferson dined alone. (Address to Nobel Laureates, Dinner for Nobel Prize Winners of the Western Hemisphere, 29 April 1962.)

Who was this "silent member" of Congress whose Declaration of Independence voiced the loudest words king and parliament had yet heard from their American colonies? Let's take a virtual journey, to a small mountain in Virginia, where we'll meet the man and examine his writings.

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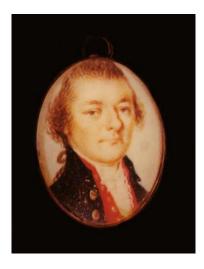
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Thomas Jefferson

<u>Thomas Jefferson</u> Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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John Page

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BEGINNINGS of REVOLUTION

Thomas Jefferson built his home, Monticello, in this area of Charlottesville, Virginia. Although he later founded the University of Virginia, it was not-yet built when Tom and Patty Jefferson moved to Monticello. This view, circa 1856, depicts the general "lay of the land" of Monticello and its surrounding areas. Image online, courtesy Library of Congress. As concerns about British intentions for the colonies increased, Rhode Islanders burned a British ship (the Gaspée) which had enforced unpopular trade regulations against the colonies. Communication about such events, for people living in a three-mile-an-hour world, was not so simple. Several leading Virginians thought it wise to form Committees of Correspondence.

Much lies behind this rather innocuous title. These committees - it was hoped - would form a network, monitoring British activities, assessing the legitimacy of British-imposed laws and sharing information as needed.

Tom Jefferson wrote the resolution, on Committees of Correspondence, which Virginia's House of Burgesses put to a vote in March of 1773. Dabney Carr gave the speech which endorsed the plan. After the resolutions passed, twenty-nine-year-old Carr was one of ten men appointed to the colonies' first such committee.

Two months after his speech, however, Dabney developed a serious fever and died in <u>Charlottesville</u>, the <u>town closest</u> to Tom and Patty's home. The unexpected tragedy happened just three weeks after the birth of his sixth child.

Keeping a promise made to his best friend, Jefferson decided <u>where</u> to place <u>Monticello's</u> <u>cemetery</u>. Dabney's grave was the first of <u>many</u> which are now at the top of Tom's Mountain.

About seven months after Carr's death, colonials pretending to be Mohawks boarded British ships in Boston Harbor. They had one objective in mind: Relieve the vessels of all tea. Successful in their mission, they <u>dumped</u> 342 containers of tea into the sea. The colonies were inching closer to full-fledged rebellion.

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Thomas Jefferson

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