

Before the advent of modern highways—which came late to the State of West Virginia, and which are still coming—it took a special determination to make one's way into our mountain fastnesses.

A child of war, West Virginia has the somewhat dubious honor of hosting the first major land battle of the Revolutionary War, at Point Pleasant, as well as the last skirmish of that war, at Fort Henry in Wheeling, in 1782.

Now, this information I came upon in a history of West Virginia, written by a West Virginian.

West Virginia gained her statehood during the Civil War, and her hills are dotted with battlefields from that conflict. Many historians, in fact, consider the clash at Philippi between Union Colonel Benjamin F. Kelly and his First Virginia Provisional Regiment and the forces under Confederate Colonel George A. Porterfield on the morning of June 3, 1861, to be the first land battle of the Civil War. So, from these violent beginnings, West Virginia has come a long way in just 137 years to host an international peace conference earlier this year in Shepherdstown.

West Virginia has come a long way, as well, from her early days as a resource-rich provider of building-block essentials like coal, and chemicals, and timber to a diversified economy of old staples and leading-edge, information-age high technology. And West Virginia has come a long way from being a quiet backwater region of narrow, winding, gravel and dirt roads that kept people isolated and insular to a State traversed by modern, safe, business-attracting highways.

I have seen these changes happen. I can remember the old dirt roads, the old gravel roads. I can remember when there were only 4 miles of divided four-lane highways in my State. And I can remember prior to that. When I was in the State legislature, in 1947, West Virginia only had 4 miles of divided four-lane highways.

Let me say that again. In 1947—53 years ago—when I was in the West Virginia Legislature, West Virginia only had 4 miles of divided four-lane highways.

It is much different now. West Virginia has at least between 900 and 1,000 miles of four-lane divided highways. Now there are some people who would like to see us go back to the time when we only had 4 miles of divided four-lane

highways. In some ways I would like to go back to that time, too. But certainly I do not want to go back to that circumstance.

West Virginia has blossomed as she has matured, reaching out gracefully to the future while preserving and honoring the rich history of her past.

As a State, West Virginia is aging, and her population is aging, as well. West Virginia boasts the oldest median age in the Nation. I like to think that this statistic, in part, proves that West Virginia is as attractive a place in which to retire as are some of the more steamy States in the Nation. Of course, West Virginia's bracing climate, with its breathtaking seasonal changes, may be responsible for keeping West Virginia's elders active long after retirement. There is always a garden to plant, or leaves to rake, or simply beautiful walks to take, activities that keep the joints—joints of the arms and legs—agile and the mind busy. Age, and the wisdom that can only be accumulated with experience, is respected in the Mountaineer state. Just two weeks ago, the State hosted the first-ever United Nations International Conference on Rural Aging, taking its place at the forefront of efforts to keep the 60 percent of seniors around the world who live in rural areas healthy, active, and independent.

Yet despite all the changes, one thing has remained constant in West Virginia; namely, the down to earth, faith-in-God values of her people. We have no hesitancy in using that word and not using it in vain. There is a tendency these days to kind of put the lid on using the word "God." No, don't use his name; don't use God's name. I am against using his name in vain. I can't say that I have not done that in my time, but I am very much opposed to that. But I am not opposed to using God's name in schools and anywhere else. I am for that. I will have no hesitancy to do it myself, no hesitancy whatsoever.

West Virginians are taught to honor their mother and father and to do what is right, even if that is not the easiest path. In West Virginia, we try to live by the Golden Rule, and always remember to give thanks to the Creator for the many blessings he has bestowed upon us. We ought to go back and read the Mayflower Compact and see how those men and women felt about God. In a time when society is focused on

speed and instant gratification, West Virginians know the value of taking time to enjoy the beauty around them. Those values, which have survived for 137 years, I expect will be around for another 137, at least.

So, at age 137, the 137th birthday, West Virginia is a youngster on the geologic time scale and just entering her middle age on the political scale. In terms of her population's age, well, let us be polite and say only that she is "of a certain age," still at least a few steps way from becoming a grand dame. All that I will say is, she certainly is grand!

West Virginia, how I love you!
Every streamlet, shrub and stone,
Even the clouds that flit above you
Always seem to be my own.
Your steep hillsides clad in grandeur,
Always rugged, bold and free,
Sing with ever swelling chorus:
Montani, Semper, Liberi!

Always free! The little streamlets,
As they glide and race along,
Join their music to the anthem
And the zephyrs swell the song.

Always free! The mountain torrent
In its haste to reach the sea,
Shouts its challenge to the hillsides
And the echo answers "FREE!"

Always free! Repeat the river
In a deeper, fuller tone
And the West wind in the treetops
Adds a chorus all its own.

Always Free! The crashing thunder
Madly flung from hill to hill,
In a wild reverberation
Adds a mighty, ringing thrill.

Always free! The Bob White whistles
And the whippoorwill replies,
Always free! The robin twitters
As the sunset gilds the skies.

Perched upon the tallest timber,
Far above the sheltered lea,
There the eagle screams defiance
To a hostile world: "I'm free!"

And two million happy people,
Hearts attuned in holy glee,
Add the hallelujah chorus:
"Mountaineers are always free!"

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 9:30 A.M.
TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until the hour of 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday, June 21, 2000.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 7:16 p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, June 21, 2000, at 9:30 a.m.