

INDEPENDENCE DAY

Sometimes I probably think too much, reflect on the past too much, and perhaps come out too hard on our country, our culture, where we have been, now and the future. And often I am convinced that we do not care enough about our days of remembrance, like Memorial Day, Veterans Day and Independence Day. So I decided to share some thoughts about the 4th of July then with Washington, Adams and Jefferson... and credit Professor John Ferling (of State University of West Georgia) for some. I am also glad that David McCullough resurrected John Adams. The thrust will be Adams and Jefferson but the shadow of Washington lurks.

Adams was the eldest son of a middling farmer in Braintree, Massachusetts, near Boston, who moonlighted in the winter as a shoemaker to make ends meet. Jefferson was the eldest son of a wealthy Virginia planter who owned thousands of acres and more than a hundred slaves and sat in the colonial legislature. Adams was raised in a strict Calvinist household where he was taught the virtue of subordinating the individual will to the greater good of the community and to respect authority figures. Jefferson was raised in the Anglican church but never hinted that it was important to him in his formative years. Both had supervised educational teaching and each attended college, Harvard for Adams and William and Mary for Jefferson...and became lawyers.

When London's new colonial policies initiated an American protest, Adams first played a minor role but purloined letters written by the Massachusetts Governor Hutchinson were printed and noted curtailing American liberties....which sparked more protest already brewing. Voices of Sam Adams and Patrick

Henry were strident in dissent. Jefferson in the Virginia House of Burgesses was concerned but often at work on Monticello. Adams became a leader, an orator, tough in argument and a break with England but not a revolution. Jefferson, trenchant of mind with words and ideas became the one, by acclimation to pen the Declaration of Independence...the die was cast.

...from mutual respect in revolution, the clash of egos and ideology began and first signs of schism between the close friends....when Adams was President and Jefferson VP(1796-1800)exacerbated by the hotly contested election of 1800 when Jefferson-Burr eked out a win over Adams-Pinckney. Simply it seem to rest on a Federalist(monarchical)role vs a Republican one where Jefferson was influenced by the French Revolution while an envoy there..... Adams worried about anarchy and dissent and Jefferson wanted a more open government of the common man....first moments of 'separation of church and state' as coined by Jefferson tended to decry religious belief in God...God or no God was alright for some....Hamilton played a spoiler/kingmaker role in the background which posed problems for each....to Jefferson 1800 brought in another Revolution, this one of ideas, and Adams disagreed..... Enigma of Burr, the tarnished relationship between Adams/Jefferson seemed the end of things....but yet!

A letter to Jefferson from Adams in 1810 reopened the story....leading to 150 exchanges....and America was better for it.. "Washington its sword, Adams its tongue, and Jefferson its pen who had written the cherished national creed"....possibly God in his wisdom and oversight planned that the two old patriots die on the same day in 1826 -50 yrs to the day on the 4th of July.