



## Courage Of Conviction

By Roger Bell



Recently I had the opportunity to travel east and make a whirlwind history tour of Monticello (Thomas Jefferson's home), Colonial Williamsburg, Jamestown, and Washington, D.C. I was impressed by what I saw and learned about our past.

A visit to their monuments in Washington reminded me that men like Jefferson and Lincoln faced tremendous problems in their lifetimes yet risked everything to deal with those problems firmly, without reservation and with eloquence.

In Williamsburg, I could practically hear that hot-head Patrick Henry speak out with his radical voice. He seemingly had no fear of reprisals from the omnipotent English crown.

At Monticello, I saw evidence of Jefferson's interest in architecture, horticulture, music and art. He had plenty of interests to pursue on top of his little mountain without risking it all by speaking out against injustice.

At Jamestown, I saw the site of the first permanent English settlement in this country. The original colonists chose the Jamestown site in 1607 because they could keep their ships in

the deep water harbor there, ever ready to serve as an escape route back to England. What they hadn't counted on was the problems associated with such a site — 90% of the original colonists died the first year. The governor of the colony recorded in his journal that he felt many of their problems at Jamestown were due to the lack of good water for many of the wells produced only brackish water.

This message is not intended as a history lesson, however. We can all learn from our past though. Our problems today may yet plague us the way they did Jamestown. We, too, want the security of having our escape ships awaiting us in deep water in case of problems. Everyone wants a guarantee and who isn't afraid of a lawsuit these days?

But as the colonists at Jamestown soon learned, such a safety valve can have too big a price tag. They recognized their mistake and moved the colonial capitol upriver to higher ground at Williamsburg in 1699.

Today, we need more Thomas Jeffersons and Abe Lincolns and Patrick Henrys — people of conviction and

courage. Have **you** given serious consideration to how you think we should handle our environmental concerns? Are you too afraid of stepping on someone's toes to speak out with conviction? Are you attending our annual business meetings and speaking your views on where our association is headed? Do you back-bite and bicker instead of confronting a problem by directly addressing the person who can rectify the situation?

Of course, most of us don't have the eloquence of a Thomas Jefferson or Patrick Henry, but we can have the conviction and determination of the Williamsburg colonist — willing to leave the safety of our ships to move up the river and speak out against that which we consider wrong. We need to be more visible, more vocal as an association and as citizens. The risks involved outweigh the disaster that will certainly befall us if we sit back and let the government bureaucracy do it all for us. Likewise, our association needs input from its members in order to chart the proper course for us to take.

Thomas Jefferson and his friends will surely be on our side should we be willing to speak out and again declare our independence — from indifference.

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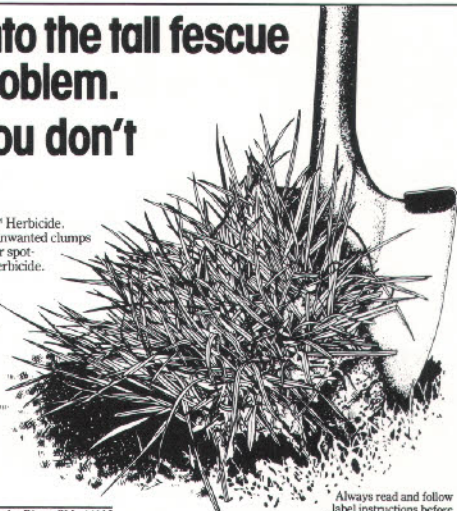
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