

The Virginia NEWS LETTER

In Mills Godwin's Legacy, Lessons for Today's Virginians

..... By Gerald L. Baliles

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This newsletter is adapted from Mr. Baliles' keynote address this month at the inaugural session of The Governors' Project, sponsored by the Center for Government Studies and the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia. The Governors' Project is designed to bring a historical perspective to the lives of modern Virginia governors.



..... Gerald L. Baliles

What a collection of notables we have within this room, all gathered to reflect upon one of the great figures of our Commonwealth's political history, Mills E. Godwin Jr.

I am not here as an historian. I like to read history, but I am not a disinterested observer. So, I bring to this podium a point of view — a public service point of view — and that point of view has many, many good things to say about Mills Godwin, including the forgotten fact that Governor Godwin, then a Republican Governor, publicly endorsed me, a Democrat, in my campaign against an incumbent member of the House of Delegates, Mr. Howard H. Carwile. It cemented a working personal friendship that has lasted for years.

Indeed, I have so many good things to say about our honoree that I must borrow a little story from Norfolk newspaperman Guy Friddell's book-length interview with former Governor Colgate Darden. In it, Governor Darden recalls hearing Mills honor former Governor Bill Tuck in South Boston one day.



Godwin was the bridge between Virginia's past and its present.

Governor Godwin's words were so impressive in their praise of Bill Tuck that, afterwards, Governor Darden says he was confused for a moment about the relative position of Tuck and Thomas Jefferson.

But then, Colgate Darden says, "I realized that [Godwin] had moved [Tuck] substantially and safely ahead of Jefferson but that was all right, because clearly Governor Godwin had sensed the audience and the occasion."

So, tonight, as I put Governor Godwin shoulder to shoulder with Virginia's most influential political figures, you will understand that I, too, understand the audience and the occasion.

But I also think that history will bear out my estimation of him.

To put it simply, in the 20th Century, Mills E. Godwin turned Virginia toward the future. He made all the difference in the world to this state's development, its culture and the aspirations of its people.

When measured in terms of Virginia's vitality and strength, whether one is talking about economic development, education, transportation or just simply the quality of our lives, Mills E. Godwin was the bridge between an honest, but static past and an open and promising future.

He helped move us from a political system that was, let us say, somewhat restrained, to a dynamic, robust two-party competition.

Obviously, we can discuss whether this was such a hot development for the Virginia Democratic Party but, generally speaking, political competition is a good thing.

Actually, Mills Godwin ushered in coalition politics in Virginia. His 1965 gubernatorial campaign was nothing short of amazing. If you want to find out, just ask my good friend, former Governor Linwood Holton. It was Linwood who pointed out, at the time — and I'm quoting here — that candidate Godwin had somehow managed "to send [former State Sen.] Armistead Boothe to Arlington to proclaim him a liberal in the finest tradition of the Great Society while dispatching Bill Tuck to Danville to attest that Mills was a true conservative in the tradition of Harry Byrd Sr.

Describing his political philosophy, Governor Godwin says that "I try to be a realist and also an advocate for responsible progress." That simple and humble statement is laden with meaning.

First, to be a realist in politics is to find an endless number of reasons to stay in the office and close the curtains. The forces of inertia are deeply entrenched and have been around from the beginning.

Even in Virginia, despite our celebrated role

in the formation of the nation, we only ratified the U.S. Constitution by a 10-vote margin. The vote to secede did a bit better, passing by a 35-vote margin. And I am still waiting for the other half of my transportation package to be embraced!

There is always a substantial constituency for "standing pat."

Or throwing it in reverse.

Some observers say that political reality endures now ... only the techniques have changed, so that now we see people rhetorically embracing "progress" while promoting policies that take us in the opposite direction. But I will leave that alone; one should never start an argument while in the presence of Mr. Jefferson's spirit.

Remember, however, the other part of what Governor Godwin wrote, the part about being "an advocate for responsible progress." What that implies is that progress *is* responsible — it is the thing to do — that advocacy for forward movement is more than a choice, it is a duty.

And it was a duty that Governor Godwin relished.

It is true that, by the mid-Sixties, a critical mass had sufficiently developed to make broad political action feasible. But it took a highly developed set of political skills to negotiate the rocks and shoals that can easily wreck political enterprise in Virginia.

And it also took one other important thing: conviction. You never doubted Governor Godwin's resolve. He knew that the time had come to act and he refused to let the moment escape.

You can find the evidence of this in many places: in the legislation he promoted, the people he employed, the choices he made. But you also find it, in ringing, stirring cadences, in the words he spoke. No one wielded the English language with more skill, more dexterity, or more force than Mills Godwin.

On the day of his first inaugural in 1966, he proclaimed that, "Virginia is of the South but the South is also of the nation. The Commonwealth we love will always be Virginia, but Virginia, too, is of the nation and it is by the nation's standards that we are now called upon to judge her."

He acknowledged that it is a common political mistake to try to do too much, but he said he would rather be "accused of having too much faith in the people of Virginia, rather than too little."

Like Daniel in the lion's den, he met the issue of taxes head-on. He told the members of the General Assembly that: "Your only true guide is to put above all else what is right, what is fair, what is equitable, what will meet the present and the future needs of Virginia."

What a refreshing thought.

It is ironic, but telling, that the sales tax successfully advanced by Governor Godwin in 1966 encountered more resistance in the legislature than within the public at large. Virginia's citizens not only accepted the necessity of new revenue, but later that same year embraced the first general bond issue in this century. Again, Governor Godwin went to the people, made his case on the logic of the proposition, and won broad support.

In fact, he marshaled his talents in so many areas, and in pursuit of so many objectives, that the end result represents one of the most productive and far reaching administrations in Virginia's history.

The doubling of support for public education, the new backing for kindergartens, libraries, research — not to mention a more than 100-percent increase in funding for colleges and universities.

The community college system, which Governor Godwin often calls his proudest achievement, ensured that more Virginians of every station in life would have an open door to higher education.

The list goes on: new roads, upgraded mental health hospitals, better port facilities, improved state parks, a renewed emphasis on economic development, including the first overseas state trade office for any state in the nation.

In today's political environment, such an activist agenda just might be criticized. But in reality, he ushered in a period of public investment in Virginia that would last a quarter of a century — a period that would place the Commonwealth in the vanguard of the effort to restore American competitiveness and attract new people and new businesses to Virginia.

And if that was not enough, for good measure, Governor Godwin led a charge on the state constitution, and secured the first broad-based revisions since the 1901-02 Constitutional Convention.

All these achievements, and the politics behind them, have been the subject of discussions as part of the Governors' Project. But one thing I think needs to be emphasized. Over the years, I have often heard Governor Godwin reflect on his tenure in office. And invariably he describes his accomplishments as part of a larger whole. He always cites how vital and necessary it was that his predecessor, Governor Albertis Harrison, set the table, so to speak.

Likewise, he has not been exactly shy about arguing for a sustained commitment by his successors. I recall in the early 1980s, during the recession, when Governor Godwin appeared before the

annual Virginia Municipal League meeting and made it quite clear that he was concerned. He did not want us, even in a time of stress, to lose sight of the larger picture, that the investments of the '60s and '70s must not be compromised in the '80s and '90s.

And just three years ago, he joined Governor Holton and me in signing the "Three Governors' Letter" to the General Assembly opposing the proposal to take millions of dollars from the budgets of our colleges and universities to pay for a tax cut.

So, while in office, Governor Godwin was the man of the moment — but he did not live *just* for the moment.

He knew how to get things done, but he also knew that no one four-year administration does it alone, that it takes a continuing effort to build a great Commonwealth.

In fact, I cannot think of a single proposal or political initiative by Governor Godwin that could be fairly construed as an effort to win a short-term political gain. Mills Godwin did not act in the cause of the next election. He acted in the cause of the next generation. He helped forge a governing consensus in Virginia to which I heartily subscribe: that economic growth is a good thing but that you cannot get there by wishes alone. It takes money. It takes a sustained commitment to education, to transportation, to the culture in which we live.

At a time when politics, both within and outside of Virginia, seems driven more by style than substance, more fixated on slogans and studies than persuasion and progress, the example that Governor Godwin set while in office, and continues to set, should be celebrated and honored.

Of course, when Governor Godwin left office in January, 1970, he doubtless intended his first term to be his last. That was the Virginia tradition.

But then Armageddon arrived. These days we associate Armageddon with movies about flaming meteors hurtling toward Earth. But, in 1973, in some quarters, Armageddon was the late Henry Howell hurtling toward the governor's office.

The 1973 gubernatorial race was memorable, hard-fought and narrowly won by Governor Godwin. But this time, I am pained to say, he entered office not as a Democrat, but as a Republican.

The second term was different than the first. Governor Godwin experienced a political phenomenon to which I was also introduced: the unforeseen. Circumstance can be a hard taskmaster.

I don't know what is worse: Telling Virginia's watermen they can't fish or telling VMI's loyalists to admit women. I have tried both.

Godwin "could take the moment and make the future."

At any rate, Governor Godwin confronted a variety of challenges: the Kepone poisons in the waters, the problems of corrections, the dimming lights of the energy crisis and, though his management skills were put to the test, he prevailed, including the passage of another multi-million dollar bond issue, this one for education, museums and the arts, recreation and parks, mental health and ports. Virginia was fortunate, indeed, to have such an experienced and capable man at the helm of Virginia's government.

When he left office for the second and last time, Virginia knew that here was a political leader who could take the moment and make the future.

By necessity, I have abbreviated Governor Godwin's singular career. Others may take this element ... or that fact ... and see things differently. Which only raises the question: How do we best evaluate a governor's performance?

Style counts for something. And Mills Godwin certainly looked the part, right out of central casting. And that voice. In full flower, Mills could make the phone book compelling.

It did not hurt that he also had a lifetime companion in Katherine, who set the standard at the Governor's Mansion for dignity, grace and charm.

But, as I suggested earlier, in the long run it's how you deal with the long run that counts. That is where the difference is made.

In public service it is important to find the balance between what *is* and what *ought* to be — but we must lean toward the latter. And while Virginia is conservative by nature, it is also pragmatic by experience.

If the logic and need are there, with leadership the action will be supported. Conservatism does not require paralysis. One need not study things *ad infinitum*. One need not flinch in face of a growing state's growing needs, especially in such critical areas as education, transportation, and mental health.

Governor Godwin proved it.

And he also showed that there *is* a Virginia, a distinct polity, with a distinguished, proud history. Not perfect, by any stretch, but always rich with possibilities—possibilities that only become realities when skilled leaders do the right things.

The following story makes the point.

On an Israeli *kibbutz* an old man was working in a field. "What are you doing?" asked a young man.

"I'm planting a tree," replied the old man.

"But why do you bother?" the young man asked. "It will take 50 years for the tree to grow to full size and you won't be here to enjoy the shade."

"Fifty years?" said the old man. "Then I'd better hurry."

Governor Godwin was a man in a hurry — and he planted a lot of trees. He showed all of us that a crucial function of government is to plant trees today that will benefit women and men for years and decades to come.

In sum, Governor Godwin honored Mr. Jefferson's admonition that life belongs to the living, that each generation of Virginians must accept its responsibility to the next, to do more, not less — to plant trees — and be always willing to invest faith both in providence and the public.

This is what Mills Godwin did and he deserves our enduring gratitude. ●

Certain issues of the Virginia Newsletter are now available in the publications section of the Cooper Center's Web site: www.virginia.edu/~cpserv/

Vol. 74, No. 6 July 1998

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The Virginia NEWS LETTER (ISSN 0042-0271) is published ten times a year by the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, University of Virginia, 918 Emmet Street North, Suite 300, Charlottesville, Virginia 22903-4832; 804 982-5704 (TDD:804 982-HEAR).

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Periodical postage paid at Charlottesville, Virginia.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, 918 Emmet Street North, Suite 300, Charlottesville, Virginia 22903-4832.

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THE VIRGINIA NEWS LETTER



WELDON COOPER
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ENTERED AS
PERIODICAL
Charlottesville, Virginia

The Legacy Faction is a Faction in Totally Accurate Battle Simulator. The Legacy faction contains many Units that previously only existed in the Alpha versions of TABS, as well as a few early in-development units that never appeared in previous releases. From the strongest Units to one use weapons, the Legacy Faction has a wide variety of units. It's very similar to the Secret Faction, as you have to unlock the units to unlock the faction and campaign. The weakest and oldest unit, the Peasant, is People driving fast down on Legacy Way is a common occurrence. One reason this happens is because the speed limit is not marked in this neighborhood. There is a bus stop where children wait on the bus at the entrance of this neighborhood; children also ride their bikes in this neighborhood's streets, and many people walk their dogs along the streets. Speeding drivers put these people at risk; speeders also are very noisy. They can be heard speeding down the street in people's homes. This petition is for the city of Milledgeville to lay down 2 rumble strips (one near the intersection o My years growing up in Mill Valley and attending the schools there were full of fun and enlightenment. I started Kindergarten at Old Mill School. That was back in 1948. Mrs. Eileen Schroeder was the teacher in Kindergarten. After Old Mill, I attended Alto School. We took the school bus over in the morning and rode back in the afternoon. Most of the time songs were being sung. Alto was very crowded, as I remember, because we had a lot of kids there. I remember Mrs. Schroeder, my Kindergarten teacher, had decided to start an orchestra at Alto including all the students from the seventh and eighth grades. She taught me to play the cello and I played for graduation.