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## On Being a Virginian

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**On Being A  
Virginian**

Myralin Trayer  
Essay  
First Place

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*Could Heaven with its  
gold paved streets be  
more delightful to  
the eye or the heart  
than the beautiful  
Virginia?*

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Feelings of nationalism have long been recognized as being strong moving forces in the behavior of human beings. Feelings of identity with a particular country have perhaps been the deciding factor in more than one battle, when feelings of soldiers for their native land would not permit them to be defeated. All nationalism, however, is not inspired by countries. In my case, at least, I was made to feel that feeling of pride for my native state. You see, I am a Virginian. No matter where I may live, no matter how long I am away, still I am forever a Virginian!

I was taught from infancy that there was no place on earth that could compare to Virginia. People who were not native to the state but who had moved there were looked upon with respect because of the good sense they had shown.

In my early school years all students studied Virginia History. It seems now that we studied it every year. This seemed right and proper. After all, there was so much to be learned about the state which was the site of the first American colony. I assumed that children in other states studied Virginia History too; and when I found out that they did not necessarily do so—that they in fact studied histories of their own states—I was full of wonder. I imagined that their history books could only be small pamphlets when compared to the healthy tomes containing the history of Virginia. What had actually happened in the other states, after all? To be perfectly fair, I supposed there must have been two or three things of note that occurred in a few other states. I remembered the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia, and I knew that Philadelphia was not in Virginia (Although I guessed that the residents of Philadelphia secretly wished that it were.) I remembered stories about Lexington and Concord and the Battle of Bunker Hill in Massachusetts, but I knew they only happened there because that was where George Washington (a native Virginian) happened to be at the moment. I had been taught that gold was discovered in California, but to me that seemed so far away, so remote and wild, so barbaric, that it might have been a foreign country. All the states between Virginia and California I saw as merely filler: utilitarian, but uneventful.

As a young child I remember being told that Virginia was represented by the very first star on the flag. That seemed only logical to me. Jamestown in 1607 certainly preceded Plymouth in 1620. When I was older and someone else told me that Delaware was the first state in the newly formed Union, I was astonished. I was even appalled. Blasphemy! I had always been taught that ladies never fight, but I was ready at that point to abandon being a lady to defend the rightful place of my state as the FIRST!

What other state could claim a Jamestown? A Yorktown? A Williamsburg? A Pocahontas or Powhatan? A George Washington? A Thomas Jefferson? A Robert E. Lee? The list seemed endless, almost as if every important person who ever lived chose Virginia as the place he wanted to be born. I supposed there were important people and places in

other states, but to me they seemed a fluke, an accident of nature. Sometimes these unexplainable things happen: for instance, I once knew of a boy with one blue eye and one brown eye. Surely Andrew Jackson came from Tennessee just as accidentally as that boy's eyes got mixed up.

Could there be a state in the Union as beautiful as the Old Dominion? I was sure there could not be. In fact, to this day I hold that belief. The Shenandoah Valley is a masterpiece of God's artistry. The flowing rolling hills, rich with verdure, delight the beauty-hungry eye. The mountains are there, not the harsh, rocky outcroppings seen in the west, but majestic, imposing, and graceful. Rivers, green and alive with fish, are abundant. Could Heaven with its gold paved streets be more delightful to the eye or the heart than the beautiful Virginia?

What is it in the human awareness that turns us back? Why do our hearts hearken to Home? Though not understood, yet it is so. Though I have been away from Virginia for many years now, still I am a Virginian! And I lift my voice and my heart in song: "Carry me back to old Virginnny . . . to old Virginnny, the place where I was born."□