

## **West Virginian Takes a Wife**

Competition in societies and cultures has been a long tradition in the US. For example, the rivalries in football, basketball, and baseball between North and South Carolina, New York and California, Oklahoma and Texas, and Virginia and West Virginia are well known.

Put-downs and jokes by people in one region or group about people in another are common and tend to mask prejudices they may have for others. For example, Polish and Blonde jokes were common for many years, but because of political correctness, many of these types of jokes are becoming less acceptable. That's good in many ways because many people have been hurt by inconsiderate jesting, but it's also sad because there are so many good jokes that depend on ridiculing someone because of their background that aren't so hurtful.

For example, I wish to share a story I heard years ago about the relation between families in Virginia and West Virginia, although I run the risk of offending some of my readers. Fortunately, this story ends by turning the tables on the party with the greater bias.

The daughter of a Virginia landowner in the Shenandoah Valley approached her father one day and informed him, "Daddy, I've fallen in love with Clarence, a boy I met from West Virginia. I've been seeing him secretly for the past year and he's asked me to marry him. I'd like your permission to marry Clarence in the Spring. His family owns a large logging operation in the valley just across the mountains that he will inherit, and I'll be well taken care of."

Her father was horrified that his daughter would ask him to allow her to marry a West Virginian, no matter how wealthy he was or how good his family heritage. She begged and pleaded, but to no avail. He shouted at her, "No daughter of mine will ever marry a Clarence from West Virginia! Go to your room. I won't hear any more about this!"

The next morning the daughter didn't come down to breakfast. The Virginia land owner sent one of his servants to check on her, and he was informed that she'd run off during the night to marry that rascalion from West Virginia. He

immediately called his two sons to get mounted. They were going to track her down and bring her home before she could dishonor her family by marrying this Clarence fellow from West Virginia.

The father and his two sons rode all day until they came to the tunnel through the mountains separating Virginia and West Virginia, and suddenly he reined in his horse, took one look at the sign above the tunnel, and told his boys he'd changed his mind. They were going home. The two sons were dumbfounded but followed their father back home.

At breakfast the next morning, the oldest son asked his father why he'd changed his mind about rescuing their sister. He said, "I thought you said no daughter of yours would ever marry a West Virginian."

After a few moments the father replied, " boys, didn't you see that sign on the entrance to the tunnel to West Virginia? It said, 'Clearance 14 feet.' He's just too big for us to take on. "