

I was asked to represent all of the members of the ARRT-R in presenting to Dr. Harry Ward a small token of our respect and admiration for his work in the study of the American Revolution. I am very appreciative for this opportunity and hope I can adequately convey to Harry all that he means to us in these few moments allotted to me.

As we pondered gift selection ideas, trying to find something that would, in some way, symbolize Harry's area of interest, suddenly the distant sound of a bell reverberated in my head. It might have only been the bell telling me that my just micro-waved Healthy Choice entrée was ready, but I prefer to think of it as some divine intervention inspiring me to suggest a miniature of the Liberty Bell as the gift. Everyone thought the idea was perfect for Harry and so the gift I have in my hand came into being. Where is it again? Bill, did I give you the gift? If anyone sees a small white box, please get it up here to me. Thanks.

Knowing Harry's interest in history and historical accuracy (learned the hard way when I shared the story of George Washington's introduction of Santa Claus to the troops at Valley Forge as a morale booster), I set about to research the little known history of the Liberty Bell. Wikipedia, my main source of truth, was invaluable in tracking down the illustrious beginnings of this symbol of our nation's belief in liberty--hence, why we call it the Liberty Bell.

Did you know, Harry, that Dolly Madison loved ice cream so much that she invented it and set up shop in several colonial malls around Philadelphia to sell to the public? Of course you knew that, but did you know that when she began to notice lagging sales at the malls, she outfitted several ox carts so that she could sell ice cream on the streets, bringing it right to where her customers lived? Maybe you knew that too, but did you know that she decided to call her traveling ice cream business "The Good Humor Man" after her favorite nickname for her husband, James? That's all true.

Now, everyone knows what a fan of Rocky Road and Pistachio ice cream Ben Franklin was and that he would sit on his porch every night waiting for The Good Humor Man's Ox Cart to come by. He was never quite sure when it would arrive at his home, being that often it would get bogged down at Independence Hall selling to the representatives there, so Ben suggested to Dolly that she attach a large and loud bell to the ox cart so that everyone could hear it coming and be ready when it made a stop near their home. Dolly loved this idea and immediately sent to Istanbul to have a bell cast that would be in keeping with her ice cream carts. When she received this bell she realized that although it was capable of being heard throughout the streets of Philadelphia and on certain nights as far away as Gettysburg, it was a bit heavy and required the addition of two more oxen for each cart just to pull the bell. This cut into the profits and made the whole endeavor seemed doomed to fail. Never one to waste ("waste not, want not" you know), Dolly asked her dear friend Ben Franklin to talk to his buddy Alexander Graham Bell about using this oversized bell for a trademark in his new business but he rejected it, saying it would not be a ring tone that would be popular with his customers. So Ben, in a kind gesture and on the heels of narrowly losing to his colleagues in the Great Eagle-Turkey Debates, said that he could perhaps sell the idea of using this large bell as a symbol of our newly found nation instead and that Dolly could then use the proceeds from this sale to buy smaller versions of the bell for her carts. And so came to pass the adoption of that great symbol, our Liberty Bell. And so also came to pass the tinkly little bells most of us knew as kids that were affixed to the Good Humor trucks that roamed our neighborhood streets on summer evenings.

And that, Harry, is a quick lesson in American history that I am sure you did not know.

Anyway, enough of this scholarly ostentation. Harry, thank you for your many contributions to understanding the early history of our nation. And thank you for never giving up on the idea to send out postcards to our members alerting them to our meetings in spite of all that newfangled mess called the internet or some such.

Present the gift to Harry. Ring the bell and note that the sound this bell makes is a very pleasant 'tinkle.' End by saying: And remember, Harry, whenever you tinkle at your desk from now on, please think of all of us in the ARRT-R with great fondness.

Arthur Wm. Ritter