



The Value of Reputation: Good or Bad

What do we mean when we speak of the reputation of a person? What generally is meant is a summation of what other people think of that person. By one's attitudes, actions and manner of life, his or her reputation is shaped by what others see in those patterns of life.



Looking at the historical event of the American Revolution, it is easy for people to cite numerous individuals associated with that struggle for freedom and independence. We think of them by good reputations! We can study the list of 56 brave men who signed the Declaration of Independence. They ranged from age 26 (Edward Rutledge) to 70 (Benjamin Franklin), and included two future U.S. Presidents, John Adams and

Thomas Jefferson. By the way, Benjamin Franklin is the only signer of all three significant documents that freed the colonies from British rule: The *Declaration of Independence*, the *Treaty of Paris* (peace between the colonies, England and France), and the *United States Constitution*. Only one other American had a greater favorable reputation than did Benjamin Franklin, General George Washington, who became the first President of the United States.

You may know that George is my 27th cousin, six times removed! Unfortunately Benjamin is not related to me, though I dearly wish he were!

Heroes of the American Revolution with outstanding reputations are memorialized in multitudes of statues, monuments and various other arrangements of special public recognition all across the nation, and, in particular, around Washington, D.C. One cannot think of Washington D.C. without glimpsing in their minds two of those greatest of iconic monuments, the Washington Monument at one end of that vast reflection pond, with the Abraham Lincoln Memorial at the other end. We are awash with remembrances of people with good reputations

Mount Rushmore is that majestic monument carved into a mountainside in the Black Hills of South Dakota. It features 60-foot tall head sculptures of four U. S. Presidents. They symbolize (1) the father of our country, (2) the governance of our nation, (3) the bringing together into unity of our nation and (4) the strength of our nation, becoming known as a world power that carried a big stick! They are George Washington, my 6th cousin, 27 times removed; Thomas Jefferson, my 28th cousin, five times removed; Abraham Lincoln, my 30th cousin, three times removed; and Theodore (Teddy) Roosevelt, who is the fifth cousin to my half-eighth cousin.

However, recall in your minds the publically known figures of bad reputation whose values are so depreciated in your thinking that it would be out of place to recall much good about them! Recall the fairly local scoundrels in Texas and environs, Bonnie & Clyde. I worked with an older lady in my career, whose younger brother was regularly intimidated and beat up by Clyde when the boys were grammar school age! Think of elected officials who fell from grace, because of an indiscretion or an illegal act. The same occurs when you think of a man of the cloth, or of some evangelist. Ah! The shame of it all, you say!

The American Revolution was not without figures of unfavorable reputation. Surprisingly, many of the people we associate with bad reputations actually had some surprisingly good and favorable records prior to the earning of those bad reputations. Let me tell you about one man in the American Revolution. For the time being, I'll just call him Benjamin, and reveal his real name later.

Benjamin was born in Connecticut before 1750. He is the great grand nephew of Freelove Arnold, the wife of Edward Pelham. Edward is the son of Herbert Pelham and his second wife, Eliza Beth Bosvile. Herbert Pelham, who was the first Treasurer of Harvard College, is my 24th cousin, nine times removed. Herbert also is the 11th cousin, once removed of Edward Southworth, the first husband of my seventh great grandmother, Alice Carpenter, on my father's side of the family, which descends from her second marriage with Plymouth Colony Governor William Bradford. William and Alice are my 7th great grandparents. Southworth is my 25th cousin, eight times removed. Alice is my ninth great grand aunt well as a seventh grandparent. Herbert Pelham is the second great grand nephew of English King Henry VIII (through the King's marriage to Anne Boleyn). Herbert is the third great grandson of Thomas

Boleyn, the father-in-law of King Henry VIII. Herbert is the 11th cousin, 14 times removed to my son-in-law, Steve Westmoreland.

Benjamin was a general in the Continental Army during the American Revolution. Benjamin had distinguished himself as a hero of the revolution early in the war through acts of cunning and bravery at Fort Ticonderoga in 1775, and at the Battle of Saratoga in 1777. Benjamin strongly opposed the decision by the Continental Congress to form an alliance with France, having experienced a bitter defeat at the hands of the French and their Indian allies during the French and Indian War (1754-1763).

Disaffected due to grievances with the Continental Congress and the military, suffering from mounting personal debt, and facing corruption charges filed by the Pennsylvania civil authorities, Benjamin also faced pressure at home from his young second wife, a British Loyalist. In 1780, he formulated his scheme. If successful, this would have given British forces control of the Hudson River Valley, and split the colonies in half. This Benjamin's name really was **Benedict Arnold**, and he was plotting to surrender the American fort at West Point, New York to the British. The plot was thwarted, but Benjamin managed to flee

to England, where he was rewarded with a commission as a Brigadier General in the British Army, along with a reduced award of £6,000 sterling (because the plot failed).

In the United States, Benedict Arnold's name is synonymous with treason. He has the worst reputation of all the American Revolutionary people, and just from one act of treason!

Now, the unfortunate aspect is to admit that, under the Theory of Relativity, Benedict Arnold is a relative of mine, as illustrated above through the family of Harvard's first Treasurer, Herbert Pelham. Even to this day, I sometimes wonder about those Harvard people!

Proverbs 22 New International Version (NIV)

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1

*A good name is more desirable than great riches;
to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.*

2

*Rich and poor have this in common:
The Lord is the Maker of them all.*

3

*The prudent see danger and take refuge,
but the simple keep going and pay the penalty.*

4

*Humility is the fear of the Lord;
its wages are riches and honor and life.*

5

*In the paths of the wicked are snares and pitfalls,
but those who would preserve their life stay far from them.*

6

*Start children off on the way they should go,
and even when they are old they will not turn from it.*

7

*The rich rule over the poor,
and the borrower is slave to the lender.*

8

*Whoever sows injustice reaps calamity,
and the rod they wield in fury will be broken.*

9

*The generous will themselves be blessed,
for they share their food with the poor.*

10

*Drive out the mocker, and out goes strife;
quarrels and insults are ended.*

11

*One who loves a pure heart and who speaks with grace
will have the king for a friend.*

12

*The eyes of the Lord keep watch over knowledge,
but he frustrates the words of the unfaithful.*

13

*The sluggard says, "There's a lion outside!
I'll be killed in the public square!"*

14

*The mouth of an adulterous woman is a deep pit;
a man who is under the Lord's wrath falls into it.*

15

*Folly is bound up in the heart of a child,
but the rod of discipline will drive it far away.*

16

*One who oppresses the poor to increase his wealth
and one who gives gifts to the rich—both come to
poverty.*

*Writing for the preservation
Of history and humor*



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