

FLATLANDERS IN VERMONT

Fred Tuttle

Vermont made national headlines in 1998 when a flatlander tried to run for Senate under the Republican Party, and lost. Jack McMullen, a one-year resident of Vermont, tried to win the Republican nomination to run against Senator Leahy for Senate. McMullen, the millionaire, lost to Fred Tuttle, then a 79 year old retired farmer. The farmer, with a 10th grade education and a spending budget of \$201, beat the Harvard educated McMullen, who spent \$475,000 on his campaign. In the often comical debates, McMullen was exposed as an outsider, a person who didn't know the state he was trying to win very well. Tuttle asked him in one debate how to pronounce the Vermont town of Calais. McMullen answered it by pronouncing it in the French way (cah-lay) instead of how Vermonters say it, (cah-las). It was clear McMullen didn't know the state. For what reason did Tuttle win? The simple fact that Tuttle is a native Vermonter, and McMullen a flatlander. McMullen tried to buy his way through the campaign, but Vermonters saw through his ideas. When voting time came, Tuttle won 55% of the primary vote, and putting the farmer into a Senatorial race. Tuttle's win sent a message nationwide, Vermonters would not be bought over by a flatlander, and would much rather have a retired farmer in the senate. Surprised by the win, Tuttle laughed and lamented he would never want to move to Washington, D.C. so he urged Vermonters to vote for Leahy. Tuttle's job was done, and he could go back to his farm.

Also see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fred_Tuttle and

<http://web.archive.org/web/20081002034033/http://www.vtonly.com/loressep8.htm> and

<http://www.newenglandfilm.com/news/archives/98october/fredtuttle.htm> (Fred knew how many tits a cow has!)

Literature

The literary field has been no exception to the field of flatlanders. Vermont-born authors have penned books on Vermont ways, and the ways of the flatlander. *Rage in the Hills*, by Daniel Neary Jr. is a passionate book filled with short stories about the fight between the natives and the outsiders of Vermont. Esther Leiper attempted to inform the flatlanders how to cook in a Vermont way with her book, *Flatlanders Guide to North Country Cooking*. These two books deal with flatlanders in specific, but countless other Vermont penned books deal with the subject in various ways.

What is the flatlander's take on Vermont? Do they think they are real Vermonters, or do they know the image and label that is bestowed upon them? One brave soul wrote her thoughts in a Vermont Magazine article in the Fall, 2002. Jessie Raymond attended Middlebury College, fell in love with a Vermont man, and settled here with him to start a family. In her article, she beautifully states:

Young and in love, I underestimated the implications that my being a flatlander would have on my decision to marry into a Vermont family. But soon, I learned that the word "flatlander" had nothing to do with the fact that I came from the less mountainous state of Massachusetts. Flatlanders are, in simplest terms, people who may live in Vermont but were not born here. They do not talk like Vermonters. They do not think like Vermonters. And, worst of all, their fumbling attempts to act like Vermonters—by wearing carefully ironed L.L. bean plaid shirts or misusing phrases like "Jeezum crow!"—invoke the ridicule of real Vermonters, who don't tolerate pretension among their own and sure as hell won't put up with it from some outsider.

Raymond is a flatlander who has realized her standing, accepted it, and respects Vermonters. Yes, she will probably receive jokes about it for the rest of her life, but at least the Vermonters will know she respects their heritage enough to claim she is not a Vermonter. As she put it, "I think now, having spent 17 years in this state, I know enough about Vermonters to know that I will never qualify as one.

VT Senate

Within local politics, the Vermont Senate in January 2001 deliberated on the topic of flatlanders. Dr. William Bloom had made significant contributions to the state, but unfortunately, he was born in New York. The Senate, wanting to bestow upon him an award, deliberated to see if he could become an honorary Vermonter. The Vermont Senate agreed to extend him the privilege of being an honorary Vermonter, but first released this statement:

Whereas, individuals who were born in the Green Mountain State are rightfully proud of their special status as native Vermonters, and Whereas, while a flatlander may reside in Vermont for nearly an entire lifetime, and make an indelible contribution to the quality of life in this state, a flatlander still has not earned the right to be called a native Vermonter

It is clear, that on all levels in Vermont, this subject is taken seriously, even in the Senate.

Flatlanders by Definition

Excerpt from: Journal of the Vermont Senate

Tuesday, January 9, 2001, J.R.S. 6

Joint Senate resolution of the following title was offered, read the first time and is as follows:

By Senator Crowley,

Joint resolution designating Dr. William H. Bloom as an honorary native Vermonter.

Whereas, individuals who were born in the Green Mountain State are rightfully proud of their special status as native Vermonters, and

Whereas, while a flatlander may reside in Vermont for nearly an entire lifetime, and make an indelible contribution to the quality of life in this state, a flatlander still has not earned the right to be called a native Vermonter, and

Whereas, although Dr. William Bloom did not actually enter this world within the geographic confines of Vermont, having been born at his parents' home in Granville, New York, he was, however, conceived in Poultney and, had it not been for a blizzard, would have been born at the Rutland Hospital, and

Whereas, Dr. Bloom, a prominent neurosurgeon, put pen to paper when he wrote of his life in the medical field in the book, "After All, It's Only Brain Surgery," and in his authorship of several poetry volumes, and

Whereas, Dr. Bloom renewed his ties to Vermont in October 2000 upon his appointment to the newly-formed Board of Visitors of Green Mountain College, and

Whereas, Dr. Bloom's lifelong love for Vermont, and the meteorological disturbance that prevented his birth in Rutland, as originally intended, are both persuasive reasons for awarding him status as an "honorary native Vermonter," now therefore be it

RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

That the General Assembly extends the status of "honorary native Vermonter" to Dr. William H. Bloom, and be it further

RESOLVED: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to Dr. William Bloom in Bayshore, New York.

Thereupon, in the discretion of the President, under Rule 51, the joint resolution was placed on the Calendar for action tomorrow.