

An Open Letter to Yankee Doodle

I feel it necessary to inform readers that this was not originally intended as an open letter. It seems that after many years out of the spotlight, the current address of Yankee Doodle (as well as any contact information regarding a manager/agent) is unavailable. After learning that “Yankee Doodle” is the official state song of Connecticut, I did scour the white pages, but only found a Greg J. Doodle in residence near Waterbury. Thus, an open letter.

Dear Mr. Doodle,

Let me state plainly that it pains me to write this letter. Any truly upstanding American citizen would not have the need to do so. But in my righteous teenage days I did, in fact, ignore the generations before me. Those generations that had helped build this amazing country, generations that sang your song reverently and with fervor. In that time, I had strayed from the path, Mr. Doodle, and I'm not proud to say it. Put simply, I refused to sing your praises. I thought you a fool, a hack, a lout, a beef-witted barnacle encrusted on the backbone of American idealism. But now, in my adulthood, it has become clear to me that I was wrong. My adolescent beliefs were warped and goatish. I know now that you are steadfast and true and still paving the way for America's future. This letter is my penance. You are and always have been a good man, Yankee Doodle.

You should know that in my childhood, long before my days of rebellion, I had only adoration for you. Many of my friends did as well. In fact, yours was the most coveted role in our kindergarten music recital; there was not a single child who did not want the part. Three merciless rounds of auditions left us lumpish, cranky and in need of a snack. Mrs. Klingler even considered letting us all do it in unison (due to an unruly hair-pulling incident), but realized that twenty-two children all “a-riding on a pony” at once would have been a bit out of hand. I'm proud to say that my audition was superb and thus, I was the one cast. This performance, one of the happiest moments of my life, came at the time when I most revered you. I remember miming a very large feather, and bespicing my gestural motion with a flourish that could only imply “America is unmatched!” before

adorning my invisible hat. But children grow up, Yankee, and it was only a few years later that I began to question your intentions with that feather. According to the ballad you “stuck [it] in [your] hat and called it macaroni.” Macaroni?! This seemed absurd to me. What did it mean, Yankee!?

First, I questioned your use of a food product, “Did he not consider our rising obesity rates here in the USA?!” Even if I somehow had decided to rename that feather with a food product as you did, I would have chosen something a little more American! Hot dog or hamburger come to mind, or perhaps settling with non-GMO corn-on-the-cob if looking for a healthier option. Not macaroni. The choice was to me not only un-American, it was distinctly anti-American (at the time in the eighth grade I was learning Italy’s part in WWII). I hadn’t been that worked up since Terry Schiavo. “What on earth about the feather reminded him of macaroni?!” I had to ask myself. Was it shaped like pasta? Fusilli never has the length, Farfalle obviously resembles somewhat more of a bowtie and Lasagna is just flat out too wide (no pun intended). Sure, a few grouped strands of ribboned Linguine could have a desired “feathered” effect, but any bird-brain would agree it in no way resembles the tubular (and often tiny) Macaroni!

Furthermore, it made no sense to me that you would stick a feather on your head at all. What were Native Americans supposed to think? In their culture I’m sure that’s some sort of call to attack! Not to say all Native Americans are violent, I quite like the ones who make the turquoise jewelry. I am a person who is very accepting of different colors and creeds. The things we did to them were sometimes very wrong, and I believe they deserve the casinos. I even think African-Americans should get in on some casino action for the slavery mishap – do you see the sort of spirals that my contemplation of the feather would get me into, Yankee?! I would get worked up to the point of exhaustion, only to go to bed, toss and turn, and ponder it further. I found the only way I could sooth myself was to convince myself you had at least used an American Bald Eagle’s feather.

Lastly, there was the pony. America is home to a wide array of fine equine specimens. Yet you chose a pony! From the Missouri Fox Trotter to the Narragansett Pacer, many are more suited for a patriot to ride. Paul Revere rode a Florida Cracker Horse, Jefferson a Tennessee Walker, and John Adams an American Creme. You, on the other hand, Mr. Doodle, were a pony boy.

It was not until earlier this year, while starring in my college's production of the restoration comedy *Marriage à la Mode* that I realized the errors of my simple-mindedness. The costume designer, while making some alterations to my cravat, offhandedly mentioned that she loved dressing men in "macaroni fashion." My stomach heaved and I took a pin to the nape of my neck. Were years of contempt and contemplation all due to my own ignorance?! I promptly made my way to the library to research the topic further. It was in a large book of fine drawings that the facts were laid out before me. The intricate outfits! The lights and the little pants! The wigs! And everything bejeweled. I realized that Yankee Doodle was not some treasonous, pasta-obsessed lunatic bent on undermining the American dream. You were just a man who cared about the cut of his vest and the tailoring of his pantaloons! A Yankee Doodle *dandy*.

That's fine by me, Yankee. As I said, I am very accepting. Though I do have to ask (since I know it was first legal in Connecticut in 2008), is Greg J. Doodle of Waterbury by chance your husband? Not that it much matters, it's just I suppose don't want another ten years of misunderstanding you, Yankee. I feel like such a boob for forsaking you the first time.

Please forgive my errant ways. And congratulations, if it's true about Greg! The feather looks fabulous.

Warmly,

An Understanding and Open-Minded Individual