

THE GENERAL'S

# spectacles



*"I find that I have grown not only gray but blind in the service of my country."* —GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON

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*Change the names and years and you might think it was your organization in 2009*

## I Found the Lost Colony

You may know the story. In the late 1580s a handful of British colonists in Roanoke, North Carolina vanished. Disappeared. All that was found were three letters carved on a nearby tree: C-R-O. No one knew for certain what it meant.

I know. At least I'm 99% convinced that I know after reading Giles Milton's fabulous book, *Big Chief Elizabeth*. It's one of the best books I've ever read. I won't spoil the ending for you. Suffice to say, I think Milton has solved the mystery of Roanoke.



The 1500s

I will, however, add this: the only thing less understood (until now) than the fate of Roanoke colony is the rich insight that the story holds for leadership in the 21st century. An experience more than 420 years ago shows the deep impact that different leaders have on followers, their goals and aspirations, and the results they finally achieve.

Every leader involved in the Roanoke story had a different style and set of capacities. Walter Raleigh, Elizabeth II, John White, Richard Grenville, Ralph Lane and a half-dozen others were unique as leaders. Each leader affected the course of events for better or worse. Each one left a telltale mark on the story of Roanoke.

I've written more about the leadership implications of Roanoke in my review of Milton's book *Big Chief Elizabeth*. You'll find it on my website in the section My Writings, specifically the page entitled On My Library Bookshelf. Hope you have time to glance at it. All the best, Dan. •

FALL 2009  
VOLUME 1  
EDITION 5

A HISTORICAL SOLUTIONS PUBLICATION

Booker T. Washington

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His name ought to be a household word for every leader today

### A Leader Too Often Ignored



**There are things you should know about** an oft-ignored leader in American history. I'm referring to Booker T. Washington. Spend a moment with me now and learn a little more about this truly remarkable American leader.

First, he was born a slave in 1856.

He gained freedom in Virginia after the Civil War. Convinced of the power of learning, he walked 500 miles to enroll in a

black school, the Hampden Institute. He graduated, and stayed on at Hampden as teacher and then as principal. He later founded Tuskegee Institute in Alabama and launched a national movement to educate blacks in vocational and life skills. From the 1880s until his death in he was a nationally known champion of educational reform, civil rights, and social commentary. An amazing record.

The 1800s

But to me, great as these things are, one of the most compelling aspects of his leadership occurred not long after his birth. As a young child, Booker made his own name, literally. He chose his own last name—Washington—in honor of George Washington. And he added "T" for his middle name, which stood for Taliaferro, the last name of his white, biological father. Before ever gaining public fame as an adult, he chose to identify and define himself positively, upwardly, and forwardly. A bold statement.

Can you point to a time when you defined yourself? How did you decide? And has your decision withstood the test of time? •

### A New History

then

**I'd like you to think about** a new way of history.

I've heard it said frequently that we shouldn't use the present to look at the past. Keep them separate. Don't let the former taint, corrupt, or distort the latter.

The 2000s

OK, I know we can find plenty of examples where people warp history to fit or make a current-day point.

But I think it's a huge mistake to leave it at that. This is my proposition: the primary purpose of the past is to inform the present and future. Therefore, all three tenses of time must blend, connect, and interact. Using history should help us discover choices, decisions, reasons,

*The line between then and now does not exist*



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insights, ideas, and inspiration that would otherwise be absent from our current lives. If you build a wall between time before and time ahead you've relegated history to recording and chronicling the dead. Thus misused, the history becomes a death sentence. I seek to immerse the present and future in the past, smashing the walls between then and now and next. From immersion comes refreshed perspective and an enhanced ability to analyze, plan, adapt, innovate, and achieve. I want to restore history to its rightful place in your life. Thus unchained, the past becomes a resource. This is what I value. This is what I've build a calling around. This is what I pledge to do for you and the people near you. •

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# A Life of Goodwill

## My Second Book

**My second book is published** and available for purchase. The title is *A Life of Goodwill: Three Leaders and Their Impact on an Organization*. It can be found at various online book websites, including [www.authorhouse.com](http://www.authorhouse.com). Type in the title to locate it.

The book is about Goodwill Industries of Central Indiana. I think you'll be very surprised by what you read. Allow me to explain.

*An organization's history is rich with lessons for business and leadership right now*

First, this Goodwill is one of the largest and most influential Goodwills in the nation. Also, it has had only three CEOs since 1934. These two facts make the topic a worthy one.

I think you'll appreciate the nature, style, and theme of the book. I've written it as a story, almost a mystery in which the organization never quite knows that its success is assured (i.e. real life). You'll travel along with the perspective of the three CEOs—Howard Lytle, Alan McNeil, and James McClelland. At the end of each

chapter I've offered a "Leadership Table" in which I place the CEOs' experiences in the context of your own life as a leader.

Your comments and feedback are very important to me. If you read *A Life of Goodwill*, please contact me and let me know how it struck you. You can learn more about my thoughts on the book, post-publication, by visiting my website and clicking into My Writings. Look for "Blog: Dan's Newest Book." •

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