

Feb March 12, 1999

Dear Bruce

The enclosed is from the Feb. 15, 1999
St. Petersburg Times Pages 1A and 4-A
I hope you and Prof. Splaine can use this
in the future -

Sincerely -

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

CLEARWATER, FLA

33763 - 3208

S. Amerpre

Washington

from 1A

pean continent.

Finally, the British Parliament enacted the Gregorian calendar to catch up with everybody else. It erased that lag by having Wednesday, Sept. 2, 1752, followed by Thursday, Sept. 14, 1752.

This resulted in tacking another 11 days onto the birth dates of all people born between 1700 and 1752. For George Washington, who had been born on Feb. 11, the shift made his birthday Feb. 22. Also, because he was born between Jan. 1 and March 24, his birth year was changed from 1731 to 1732. Now, historians sometimes write his date of birth as Feb. 11/22, 1731/32.

The men and women of Washington's generation all had two birthdays, and sometimes they celebrated one, sometimes the other. Washington was known to celebrate both, one with the public and one with his family.

In 1885, President Chester Arthur signed a joint resolution calling for five federal holidays for the nation and setting Feb. 22 as Washington's official birthday.

That worked until 1968, when Congress moved the celebration to the third Monday in February (whatever the date would be) as several other holidays were moved to Mondays. This assured Americans, especially federal workers, of longer weekends at those times.

Somehow, though, the impression got about that Congress had made it a generic "Presidents Day," combining Washington's birthday with President Abraham Lincoln's birthday into a single federal holiday.

As passed, Public Law 90-363 plainly sets Washington's birthday as the third Monday in the month. Lincoln did not get a holiday.

It didn't. It was proposed in the original draft of the holidays act, but that didn't pass because Congress felt a holiday honoring all presidents would diminish Washington's special place in history. As passed, Public Law 90-363 plainly sets Washington's birthday as the third Monday in the month. Lincoln did not get a holiday. Neither did the other presidents.

But Congress, in its wisdom, forgot.

Today, members issue grandiloquent statements on Presidents Day. Sometimes presidents do, too. Current calendars also carefully note the non-existent Presidents Day.

To the eyes of patriots of old, this would be worse than a shame. In 1898, the *Evening Star* of Washington, D.C., was editorializing, "Washington's Birthday . . . is more than a mere holiday; it is of equal suggestiveness and value with Independence Day."

Well before that, at the beginning of the Civil War, President James Buchanan orated, "When the birthday of Washington shall be forgotten, liberty will have perished from the Earth."

The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, caretakers of Washington's mansion in Mount Vernon, Va., along with many of his prized possessions and his reputation as well, isn't making a fuss about the confusion over what is actually, officially, Washington's birthday.

As spokeswoman Sally McDonough explains, "It's the calendar people and Congress who are confused. We don't make a big deal about it, as people expect us to, because we're afraid that then Congress will change it and actually make it an innocuous Presidents Day. We don't trust those guys."



American Airlines passengers Jeffery De La Cruz, left, and Ronnie Billa, both of the Philippines, are delayed Sunday at Miami International Airport.

Pilots return; delays continue

contempt of court. He said the fine could be in the millions of dollars.

Whitemon said well under 1,000 pilots were out sick Sunday, as about 40 pilots per hour called to take themselves off of the sick list.

Meanwhile, the union insisted it had done all it could to get the pilots back on the job.

"We're taking his order seriously," union president Rich LaVoy said Sunday.

More than half a million travelers have been left at the gate because of a dispute about how quickly American should integrate Reno Air pilots into its own pay scale. Negotiations are scheduled to restart this afternoon.

Despite the continued cancellations, the nation's airports were calmer Sunday with many passengers prepared for delays.

Jim Rectanwald, an American Airlines mechanic, was among hundreds of passengers at Miami International Airport still trying to get home.

"My boss told me I'd better find a way back one way or another," said Rectanwald, who was mulling whether to buy a ticket on a Delta flight.

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Times files

George Washington, born Feb. 11, 1731, now called Feb. 22, 1732.

Happy birthday, George: This day is yours alone

■ Officially, this is not "Presidents Day," but it's all a bit confusing: Just look at the dates of Washington's birth.

Scripps Howard News Service

Perhaps it is only fitting that the father of our country, unlike ordinary mortals, had three birthdays.

Yes, George Washington was born on Feb. 11, 1731. Then, when he was 20 years old, he became born on Feb. 22,

1732. Much later, when he would have been 236 and, also, 237 years old, his official birthday was fixed as the third Monday in February and forget about the date.

This is why Monday, Feb. 15, is really Washington's official birthday, even though nobody seems to know it. That's also why it is not, actually, Presidents Day — a holiday that does not officially exist, even though calendars, Congress, some recent presidents and some historians don't know that either.

Blame it on the British.

Until the 16th century, months and

years were measured throughout Europe by the Julian calendar. It worked well, but each year it ran a few minutes long. Over time, that added up. So, in 1582, Pope Gregory VIII fixed the error. He cut 10 days from October and he decreed there would be an extra day every four years (leap year).

But the British refused to go along. For 170 years, they kept to the old Julian calendar, and they kept their American colonists on it, too — until Britain was fully 11 days behind its foes on the Euro-

Please see **WASHINGTON** 4A

A note to readers

U.S. financial markets, government offices and banks will be closed today in observance of Washington's Birthday. International markets will be open.



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