

## Other Views

# Honoring our historic heritage

BY JACK LEVINE

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This Independence Day, I'm reminded of having the honor to hear historian David McCullough speak with passion and persuasion.

The two-time Pulitzer Prize winner, who turns 78 on July 7, is the author of numerous books, including "1776," "John Adams" and "Truman." He captivated his audience with keen insights and compelling messages about the vital link we all have to our individual and collective past.

Among McCullough's key points were a "declaration of dependence" on the lessons we must learn from those who preceded us.

"Everything we have in our culture, all cultures, is the result of someone leading the way for us, paving the path to an uncertain but inevitable future. By documenting the thoughts, deeds and determination of people who preceded us, we learn how to become the people we need to be."

McCullough spoke eloquently about the importance of writing as an exercise in higher thought. He shared his perception that for lack of frequent and substantive writing, we are not reaching our full intellectual potential in our personal, family and community lives.

McCullough decried the retreat from the arts in our educational institutions and expressed his sincere concern that our cultural heritage cannot withstand a generation of neglect, for it may never be recaptured.

The messages resonated deeply as I advocate for creative approaches to bridge the generations. The wisdom of our elders, their treasury of experience and the connection they hold to life's lessons are among our most valued assets as family members and a society.

We are the only species that can know our past and plan for our future. What an awesome gift. Please consider these suggestions, rooted in McCullough's message.

- ◆ Keep a journal, writing perceptions, observations and creative thoughts, with entries at least a few times per week. This routine will reward us with new ideas and create opportunities to contemplate new activities.

- ◆ Share family history with loved ones by creating a remembrances album highlighting the names and key reflections on those who preceded us. Sharing special stories will give the younger generation the gift of recollection and belonging. Our family uses the free site [www.Geni.com](http://www.Geni.com) to build our family tree.

- ◆ Write letters and cards to family and friends whom we rarely see. While email is convenient, an actual handwritten letter is a rare and cherished gift of personal contact across the miles.

- ◆ Schedule trips to historic sites and learn about the era, the events and the significance of the place. Honor those whose bravery in battle helped assure our freedoms.

- ◆ Visit museums and absorb the various artistic and cultural offerings on display to nurture an appreciation for the diversity that is human creation.

- ◆ Advocate for a cause by expressing your opinion to elected officials who represent us.

- ◆ Thank teachers for their dedication, and support quality education by advocating a curriculum that spans all of the arts, civic and cultural subjects our children need to be truly educated.

- ◆ Read more literature, poetry and history, and give children the tools they need to better use their time in activities that stimulate their brains and build healthier bodies.

- ◆ Visit with a neighbor, if just for a few minutes, to offer a friendly word and share a sense of connection and community.

- ◆ Dedicate yourself to be a positive force for others — and the rewards will be bountiful.

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