

The Ballad of Connis O. Brown

One of our own members, Breckenridge "Breck" Daughtrey, a former Brown "protégé" and currently the City Clerk for Norfolk, penned a ballad of his then mentor and boss nearly 24 years ago. Here's a closer look from an "insider's perspective" on the man behind the name.



The Ballad of Connis O. Brown

A story is told how on a sunny spring day,
In the mid-70s, from up Maryland way,
There came a man to the Old Dominion,
With a razor sharp wit and a keen opinion.
He faced his new challenge with anticipation,
Aware that the program required dedication.
Soon Local Records gained statewide acclaim
And the one man responsible - Connis Brown is his name.

His constituency group, circuit court clerks and the rest,
Held hidebound ideas about which way was best.
Despite their sharp arguments on deed books and plats,
He consistently punctured them all pancake flat.
Security filming and procedural recording,
Ideologies he preached that soon had them hoarding
Scarce budget dollars to buy newfangled machines
To replace a tradition with change some called obscene.

Brown fought hard and well for a program he cherished
Without which the Commonwealth's records could perish.
He campaigned and battled against unscrupulous vendors
Who treated the users as would up-the-river senders.
The threats of law suits, the wails of raw deal
Were deflected with a shield of intellectual steel.
Unimpeachable integrity and indomitable will,
Were lessons he constantly sought to instill.

Of the very few things to cause his displeasure,
Were functional incompetence and work-subsidized leisure.
The management style he deemed to be best,
Stressed self-motivation tempered with zest.
"The program," he'd exclaim "will never succeed.
By office-chair sitting, taking root like a weed.
Get on the road! Hit the key and hot spots!
Pressing the flesh beats phone calls by long shots."

We will now take some time to remember and boast
On some of the stunts Brown is known for the most.
How in '76 on one hot summer's day
He hoodwinked old Richard George's records away.
And everyone remembers when young Peter Brown
Confessed, bathed in sweat from his toe to his crown,
That his beloved had unexpectedly come for the day
And to please make no cracks about his womanizing ways.

Still, the funniest yarn to ever be spun
Involved another bald headed son of a gun,
Who came to the Archives with a wondrous vision
Of how he would take total charge with precision.
His goal was to flat-file, to index, and reference,
To halt acquisitions, and show no departmental deference.
But petulant Paul was to soon get the hint
As the stacks began to bulge and floor joists got bent.

Our story will now change gears if it can
To examine the wild driving of car and of van.
It was surely a laugh to watch Brown's face pale
When Daredevil Dick gunned the motor to set sail.
Flat out hard running and foot to the floor
With interstate speed of seventy or more.
Brown would buckle his seat belt and hold on real tight
As Harrington squealed out the lot day and night.

Well folks, there you have it, the tale is now closed
Of Connis O. Brown, most of his deeds now exposed.
A man who did come to the Old Dominion
With razor-sharp wit and a keen opinion.
His young protégés will forever carry in their hearts
A goodly portion of the philosophy he tried to impart.
Patience, intellect, and a bit of cunning win the game
And the man who did teach this, Connis Brown is his name.

Breckenridge "Breck" Daughtrey
July 1984