

A Salute to 'The Makers of Our Flag'

The world has become a terribly complicated place. When I was very young, and life seemed so simple and carefree, my dad instilled in me just how fortunate I was to live in America. He taught me to learn about and respect our flag and those who served in our military....and what they had done to make it possible for me to speak, think, and worship as I pleased. At that young age the buzz word was 'Communism', and we knew nothing of the phrase 'terrorist cell'.

A lot has happened over the six decades that has begun to chip away at that 'carefree' look at life, and our freedoms; we've had to become more aware of our surroundings. We have to be more careful, and yes, sadly, even more suspicious of those around us. I believe it's now more important than ever that *everyday*, we prayerfully acknowledge the sacrifices made in the name of freedom by our military men and women. So, I offer to each and every veteran here tonight, a sincere 'thank you' for your service to our country. You have helped make this emblem of our country what it is today, not only to us in this room, but to others around the world. But veterans are not the only ones required to make our flag what it is today. It also requires deep, stirring, and heartfelt feelings of reverence, respect and awe in the hearts of all of our citizens.

What a magnificent banner of red and white and blue! Here you stand in quiet grandeur, a bit of cloth and bright splashes of color that conceal great devotion and uncommon valor etched within each fold. Whenever I see you, you draw my gaze, and as if I'm in a dream my thoughts touch on events from our 235 years of history. Vivid scenes from our past flash across my mind like a slide show of photographs on a computer screen.

I see - those devoted and farsighted patriots who carefully laid the foundation stones for our republic; who in Boston Harbor brought the kettle to a boil and brewed a giant cup of tea - then, in the dark of night, held a silent winking light high in a church spire above the river. I can almost hear the muffled oars, and the men on horseback racing across the countryside desperately trying to rouse the citizens against the garrisons of invading Redcoats. At Lexington and Concord, men fought as never before, then as General Washington and his beleaguered men survived the terrible hardships of a long, bitterly cold winter at Valley Forge, and on to Yorktown where our Independence victory was gained.

And still more...I see a young man, held captive on a British ship. In the early morning hours, following a night-long battle he peered over the railing of the ship and saw you, tattered and 'Star-Spangled', but still flying proudly above a battered fort; and there your song was born. I see you masqueraded as a single star as you took the watch over a lonely Texas mission as brave men fought and died for freedom at the Alamo. Of course, you were there leading the Roughriders as they conquered San Juan Hill—and you dug in with our 'Doughboys' in the trenches of the fog shrouded French battlefields as they fought and tipped the scales toward victory 'Over There'.

As tears well up in my eyes I can see that quiet Sunday morning that turned into a horrible day of infamy when a treacherous 'Rising Sun' erupted from the sky and took the lives of over 2400 brave men who never had the chance to raise a hand in your defense. It seems beyond the bounds of reason that you could have survived that dreadful attack; and yet, you staggered on and slowly gained your strength as battles were fought, one after another. And yes, your day of glory came when we stepped on the sands of Iwo Jima and, as high on a mountain top five Marines and a Navy Corpsman proudly raised your colors.

There are lots of history's pages that stir memories of our flag. I recall your travels to foreign lands; to the mountainous terrain of Korea, through the dense jungles and rice paddy's of Vietnam, on to the hot, shifting sands of Iraq, then to the rugged terrain, hidden caves and harsh climate of Afghanistan as we once again assist others who seek real freedom from tyranny and oppression. In the midst of all these actions our flag is there as a symbol, an icon...a beacon.

These are the strong threads of your tapestry; each one speaks volumes of the real 'Makers of our Flag' whose lives are the stuff of story and legend. But, these aren't all the threads that make up this flag, not even most of them, because the poor and the weary that come home to us are also 'Makers of our Flag'. They grow our crops – and build our economy and commerce - teach our children - bring God's Word to us...they protect and serve, and enforce our laws...doing all the things that must be done to make our country great, and keep it free. These too, are truly 'Makers of our Flag'!

Tonight, I offer my tribute to this gallant ensign, it still stirs my heart when I'm in its presence and excites my deepest feelings when I hear its anthem. So, in this small way, but with all my heart, I offer this tribute of respect to each of you for doing your part in 'The Making of our Flag!'

Please stand, and join me, as together we pledge our allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.



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