

## A Symbol and an Icon

In today's electronically-driven world we have more than just phones to communicate with each other. Managing the flood of electronic communication is an increasingly challenging task. We have cell phones, laptops, and tiny hand-held devices with things like voicemail, email, instant messaging, micro-blogging, and status updates on sites like Facebook and Twitter. There are all kinds of 'apps' to work with, and we use I-Phone's, I-Pad's, Blackberry's, Droids, and other odd sounding but seemingly quite necessary devices that help us work smarter, and stay in touch with each other. Likewise, because computers are such an integral part of our lives, the word 'symbol' has been replaced with a new word....'icon'.

A 'symbol' usually represents something strong, recognizable, well thought of.....and yes, even loved. In today's world of computers and instant messaging the 'icon' takes you to another place, a different link or program on your pc, laptop, or cell phone. But, 'symbol' and 'icon' *can* have similar meanings, and in this instance I can make the tie between these two words.

Our American flag is a 'symbol'...one that we all understand. It has deep meaning...it's something we grew up with, strong and very recognizable. But, our flag is also an 'icon' in the true sense of the word. When you look at our flag it too, can 'take you to another place'...perhaps a trip back to your childhood and the home town parade on Memorial Day, a July 4th family celebration, or remembering Veterans Day. Perhaps it's the memory of that old Marine Veteran who lived down the street from you who used to share stories of his service to the kids in the neighborhood, or reciting the pledge to our flag in school every morning. When I was growing up we were also allowed to read the Bible out loud and pray before class began...my, how times have changed! But we all have vivid memories of how the flag was a part of our lives growing up. Our flag represents something that is indeed well loved.

But our 'icon' has been maligned for a quite a long time by many people around the world, and now sadly even by some of our own citizens. Sometimes we, as a people, lose sight of what that icon represents, and why we should honor it, and pledge allegiance to it. Our uncaring government and the sometimes ungrateful civilian populace should all take note. In spite of everything many brave soldiers, sailors, and airmen did to defend the U.S. and many other Countries, we have politicians in Washington who run around apologizing to other governments for U.S. actions. If it weren't for the United States Military, there would be NO United States of America!

This flag in its original form carried our troops into Valley Forge in a bitterly cold winter to help establish one of the greatest countries in written history. On a ship in Baltimore Harbor in 1812 Francis Scott Key was awake during the assault on Ft. McHenry. In the early morning, as mist and smoke from the battle filled the sky, he was overjoyed when he saw 'This Old Flag', tattered but flying bravely in the morning light signifying that we were indeed, still in charge.

Roughly 2% of the population, an estimated 620,000 men, lost their lives in the line of duty during our Civil War, and this flag was there and eventually reunified our nation. The image of Old Glory being raised atop Mt. Suribachi on Iwo Jima during WWII was captured on film and that image is still fresh in our minds today.

Fast forward to the 21<sup>st</sup> century as we are fighting a different kind of war...one with terrorists, whose only goal is to eliminate the U.S. and everything we stand for. But our 'icon' is right there in the thick of it, standing proud.

So, be proud of this nation; remember the emblem, symbol, and icon of this great nation with honor and dignity, and always be mindful of those who served and paid the ultimate price to help keep our country free.

To maintain the American way of life, and pass it on to those generations that follow is the responsibility of every loyal American. I'm sure we all know someone who has served in our Armed Forces, or perhaps one who is helping to secure your freedom right now. So, I ask that in honor of those who have served, and those still serving, please remember them in your prayers, and the next time you encounter a Veteran....take a moment...shake their hand and sincerely thank them for their service to our country. Thank them for protecting your freedoms.....and your 'icon'.



***'The Winding Staircase – A path to improving yourself in Masonry'***

***Tuckahoe Lodge No. 347***

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