

THE FLAG SPEAKS

In a time of tension over how our nation should feel about our Flag we feel the comments by R.W. Bro J D Krell are especially appropriate! R. W. Bro. Krell is a member of Oxford Lodge #165, Versailles, Connecticut He is also D.D.G.M. of district 8-A in Connecticut. Bro Krell retired from the U.S. Navy with the rank of Captain. Editor

My Friends, today we gather as patriots, to remember, each in his own way, the memories of comrades, of loved ones, perhaps of battles, but most of all, of the Flag we love.

Since the days of chivalry men have been led into battle by their Flag, and if, during the turmoil of battle the bearer of the Flag was slain and fell, the one nearest took up the colors and carried them forward. Many a faint heart has been strengthened, many a shaky hand steadied, many a trembling resolve restored by the sight of those brave and bright colors floating ahead. In the moment of imminent disaster, the Flag became the rallying point for the new charge that won the day.

President Wilson once said, "This Flag which we honor, and under which we serve, is the emblem of our unity, our power, our thought and purpose as a nation. It floats in majestic silence above the people; and yet, though silent, it speaks to us--it speaks to us of the past and of the men and women who went before us, and the record they wrote upon it."

Yes, and it speaks to US of the present, and what we do here today, and of the future, and of things yet to be written. It challenges us to seek even nobler goals and higher ideals. It leads us into the future as securely and as bravely as ever it led us into battle. lift up your eyes, see its inspiring folds, and follow our Flag into a glorious future.

Let the Flag speak for itself: "I am the Flag of the United States of America. I was conceived in the dreams of Liberty and in the hopes of Freedom. I was designed by the hands of Betsy Ross, and her sewing basket was my cradle. I was adopted by the Continental Congress in 1777, and proclaimed the National Emblem of a Nation newly born on this continent, fighting valiantly for survival, and destined to bring forth to all mankind a new concept of Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness, which would become a shining example to the rest of the world. "I have been many places and have seen many things. I have witnessed every event of American history. I saw the signal that started the midnight ride of Paul Revere, I was there when they fired the shot heard around the world, and I mourned as the first patriots fell in my cause. I was there in the late twilight, at Fort McHenry, and inspired Francis Scott Key to write the immortal 'Star Spangled Banner,' now our national anthem.

"I saw Molly Pitcher take the cannon swab from the hands of her dead husband and help carry on the fight for Freedom. I felt the biting cold at Valley Forge, and gave warmth and comfort to General Washington and his tired and hungry Continental Army. I rode with Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys, and I witnessed the victory at Yorktown .

"I was flown above the decks of "Old Ironsides," and from the masts of the "Yankee" and the "China Clippers." I blazed the trail with Daniel Boone and Davey Crockett. I led the settlers

coming west, and I crossed Death Valley in a covered wagon. I was at Bull Run, Antietam, Chickamauga, Gettysburg and Appomatox. I was carried through the Halls of Montezuma and to the shores of Tripoli by the United States Marines. Once I fell to the ground at Custer's Last Stand, and there were no living hands left to pick me up. I galloped up the slopes of San Juan Hill with Teddy Roosevelt and his Roughriders. I stayed with the boys until it was "Over, over there," and was with them on the battlefields of the Marne, Chateau-Thierry, St. Mihiel and the Argonne Forest. I was raised by five brave men during the "hell" of Iwo Jima. I waved farewell to the Immortal Chaplains who went down with their ship and to honored glory, still tending to the needs of those around them. I was at Inchon, Porkchop Hill and the Yalu River, I saw the Tet Offensive and I rode the waters of the Mekong. I saw many of the youths and manhood of our Nation fall. They had given their last full measure of devotion. The war was over for them forever. But I kept my lonely vigil over their graves and stayed to watch the Poppies Grow Amid the Crosses, Row on Row, that marked their places: in Flanders Field, in Normandy, in the sands of the deserts of Africa, in the jungles of the Islands of the Pacific, in the stark hills of Korea and the choking jungles of Asia, and yes, even the unmarked graves under the restless oceans of the world.

"I am many things to many people. I am an inseparable link in the chain that binds men to God and Country: each link welded in the fires of Purity by the Sacred Hands of God Himself. And because I am on the side of God, the godless would destroy me, but they dare not, because I am protected by the might of the Nation, watching and waiting to crush anything that could harm me.

"To some, I am yesterday, today and tomorrow. I have several names. I am called the "Red, White and Blue," "The Star Spangled Banner," "The Stars and Stripes, but I am most commonly known by a nickname given me by an old Sea Captain, who called me "Old Glory."

"I have not changed much in my more than two hundred years. I still have my original Thirteen Stripes, but as each State came into the Union, a new Star was proudly added to the Constellation of my Blue Field. It started with thirteen stars, and now there are fifty.

"Many more things I would like to tell you, but there is not time. But I do want to see you again. I'm easy to find. I am everywhere. I am with all Americans, everywhere, regardless of their race creed or religion. I am in the homes of the poor, in the mansions of the rich. I am in Independence Hall, I am with the Declaration of Independence and with the Liberty Bell. I am in the White House with the President, in all the Churches, Cathedrals and Synagogues; in the councils of Boy and Girl Scouts of America, and in all the Schools of the Land.

"I drape the caskets of our nations heroes, borne to their last resting place; the caskets of Presidents, Generals, Admirals, humble Privates and Seamen and the Unknown Soldiers. Wherever Free Men gather, wherever there is Justice, Equality, Faith, Hope, Charity, Truth or Brotherly love, there too, am I. There I will always be, for I am the "Stars and Stripes Forever."

"I AM OLD GLORY"

(Let the Flag speak for itself adapted from "Building the Flag" by the National Sojourners Inc.)
THAT RAGGED OLD FLAG

I walked through a County Court House square On a park bench an old man was sitting there. I said, "Your old Court House is kinda run down." He said, "No, it will do for our little town." I said, "Your old flag pole is leaning a little bit. And that's a ragged old Flag you've got hanging on it." He said, "Have a seat," and I sat down. "Is this the first time you've been to our little town?" I said, "I think it is." "Well," he said, "I don't like to brag.

But we're kinda proud of that ragged old Flag. You see, we got a little hole in that Flag there, When Washington took it across the Delaware. And, it got powder burns, the night Francis Scott Key Sat watching it, writing 'Oh, Say Can You See.' And, it got a bad rip at New Orleans When Packingham and Jackson took it on the scene.

And, it almost fell at the Alamo beside the Texas Flag, But she waved on through. She got cut with a sword at Chancellorsville, And she got cut again at Shiloh Hill.

There was Robert E. Lee, Beauregard and Bragg, The south wind blew hard on that ragged old Flag. On Flander's Field in World War One She got a big hole from a Bertha gun. She turned blood red in World War Two, And she hung limp and low a time or two. She was in Korea and Vietnam, She went where she was sent by her Uncle Sam. She waved from our ships upon the briny foam, Now they've about quit waving her back here at home. In our good land here she's been abused; She's been burned, dishonored, denied, refused. And the government for which she stands Is scandalized throughout the land. She's getting threadbare and she's wearing thin, But, she's in good shape for the shape she's in. Because she's been through the fire before, I believe she can take a whole lot more. So we raise her up every morning, and we take her down every night, We don't let her touch the ground, and we fold her up right. On second thought, I do like to brag Because I'm mighty proud of that Ragged Old Flag."

(From the May-June 1989 issue of "The Sojourner.") TRIBUTE TO THE AMERICAN FLAG

(Presented by Miss Nichole Sivigny at the 187th Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of Minnesota, March 30, 1990)

"Remember me?

Some people call me Old Glory, others call me the Star Spangled Banner. But what ever they call me, I am your Flag. The Flag of the United States of America.

Something has been bothering me, so I thought I might talk it over with you.

I remember some time ago, people lined up on both sides of the street to watch the parade, and naturally I was always there, proudly waving in the breeze. When your daddy saw me coming, he immediately removed his hat and placed it over his heart, remember? And you, I remember you standing there, straight as a soldier. You didn't have a hat but you were giving the right salute. Remember your little sister, not to be outdone, she was saluting the same as you, with her hand over her heart, remember?

What happened? I'm still the same old Flag. Oh, a few more stars have been added since you were a boy, and a lot more blood has been shed since the parades of long ago. But I don't feel as proud as I

used to. When I come down your street you just stand there with your hands in your pockets. I may get a small glance, but then you look away. I see the children running around and shouting. They don't seem to know who I am. I saw one man take off his hat and look around. He didn't see anyone else with his hat off, so he quickly put it back on.

Is it a sin to be patriotic anymore? Have you forgotten what I stand for and where I've been? Anzio, Normandy, Omaha Beach, Guadalcanal, Korea and Vietnam. Take a look at the names on the Memorial Honor Roll sometime. Look at the names of those who never came back in order to keep this Republic free. One Nation Under God. When you were saluting me you were actually saluting them.

Well, it won't be long until I'll be coming down your street again, so when you see me, stand straight, place your right hand over your heart. I'll salute you by waving back, and I'll know that you remembered."

(This tribute was also published in the May-June 1989 issue of "The Sojourner."