

## Department of Maryland Patriotic Instructor Message for June 2010

Brothers,

With the advent of June many of us will begin thinking of summer activities and family vacations at the beach or lake front. Others of us, who are fathers, will be looking forward to the 20th of June and the joy of being remembered in a special way by our children. However few of us will give more than a passing thought to the 14th of June and the significance that it holds. Undoubtedly we will put out flags in honor of the birthday of our nation's most potent symbol "Old Glory" but is flying the flag on our home enough to demonstrate our fidelity. For our Civil War ancestors the answer would be a resounding no, they understood more than anyone the importance of The "Old Flag" as a symbol of both patriotism and pride. Only reverent ceremony and homage would do for them as they sought to instruct the next generation of citizenry. The following quote from a speech by Colonel W.H. Gibson of the 49th Ohio Voluntary Regiment to a gathering immediately after the war defines the solemnity of the occasion "*You have come here tonight to hear me, not because I have been on the field of carnage and battle and witnessed the slaughter of my fellow men. You have come because I have brought home again the soiled and battle-worn banner which you gave me eighteen months ago, which has since waved over bloody and hard fought fields.*" Clearly cloth and tread had become the personification of American resolve to preserve the Union in the minds of our forefathers. Proof exists that years later, as the 19th century was drawing to a close, the "Old Flag" still wielded power and promoted intense feeling in our society. During a ceremony, to place the regimental flags of Iowa's Civil War units in the rotunda of the State House, Iowa's LIEUT.-GOV. Dungun gave a speech in which he said "*The sight of these dear old flags stirs your souls to their very depths. They awaken afresh in your memories the thrilling scenes of a third of a century ago. You feel again the depths of that emotion which stirred the hearts of all loyal citizens to realize the danger which threatened the union, and awakened in your hearts the patriotic resolve to swear anew allegiance to the old flag and to offer your services, and your lives, if need be, to preserve the union bequeathed to us by the fathers of the republic.*" Yes the past provides us great examples of how the flag was cherished and manhood was measured in devotion and dedication to the principles for which the flag stood.

The patriotic beliefs of the Civil War generation influenced the creation of an American identity as the United States emerged from the nineteenth century and began to ascend to importance in the twentieth century. Love of country and patriotism were values to be respected and instilled in society. An example of this influence can be seen when in 1916 President Woodrow Wilson, a Virginian, issued the first Flag Day proclamation, declaring June 14th as a day to be set aside to honor the flag. In 1917 President Wilson gave a second speech on June 14th in which he observed that the flag "*has no other character than that which we give it from generation to generation. The choices are ours.*" Wilson is telling us that we define what the flag means, to the United States, to the rest of the world. We give the flag its meaning and purpose. There then is the challenge to our generation. We have our answer to the question posed at the opening of this letter. Simply hanging a flag on the house will not suffice. We must participate in defining the meaning of the flag, for our posterity, and accept the task of renewing the belief that loving the flag is a noble activity, worthy of being passed on to our children and

their children, as it was passed down to us. I would ask that every brother in the Maryland Department take a moment, on June 14th, to talk to his children and his grand children about his own personal feelings of loyalty and fidelity to the principles he holds dear. We are the torch bearers but we must practice passing that torch if we are to win the race

## Epilogue

As for the history behind the choice of June 14th, that date was fixed by an Act of Congress when on June 14th 1777 Congress unanimously passed a resolution, introduced by John Adams, that the flag of the United States be thirteen stripes, alternating red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new Constellation." In 1949 Congress officially designated Flag Day a national holiday.

### **Please consider the following poem as something you might use to celebrate flag day:**

I am the flag of the United States of America.

I was born on June 14, 1777, in Philadelphia.

There the Continental Congress adopted my stars and stripes as the national flag.

My thirteen stripes alternating red and white, with a union of thirteen white stars in a field of blue, represented a new constellation, a new nation dedicated to the personal and religious liberty of mankind.

Today fifty stars signal from my union, one for each of the fifty sovereign states in the greatest constitutional republic the world has ever known.

My colors symbolize the patriotic ideals and spiritual qualities of the citizens of my country.

My red stripes proclaim the fearless courage and integrity of American men and boys and the self-sacrifice and devotion of American mothers and daughters.

My white stripes stand for liberty and equality for all.

My blue is the blue of heaven, loyalty, and faith.

I represent these eternal principles: liberty, justice, and humanity.

I embody American freedom: freedom of speech, religion, assembly, the press, and the sanctity of the home.

I typify that indomitable spirit of determination brought to my land by Christopher Columbus and by all my forefathers - the Pilgrims, Puritans, settlers at James town and Plymouth.

I am as old as my nation.

I am a living symbol of my nation's law: the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights.

I voice Abraham Lincoln's philosophy: "A government of the people, by the people, for the people."

I stand guard over my nation's schools, the seedbed of good citizenship and true patriotism.

I am displayed in every schoolroom throughout my nation; every schoolyard has a flag pole for my display.

Daily thousands upon thousands of boys and girls pledge their allegiance to me and my country.

I have my own law—Public Law 829, "The Flag Code" - which definitely states my correct use and display for all occasions and situations.

I have my special day, Flag Day. June 14 is set aside to honor my birth.

Americans, I am the sacred emblem of your country. I symbolize your birthright, your heritage of liberty purchased with blood and sorrow.

I am your title deed of freedom, which is yours to enjoy and hold in trust for posterity.

If you fail to keep this sacred trust inviolate, if I am nullified and destroyed, you and your children will become slaves to dictators and despots.

Eternal vigilance is your price of freedom.

As you see me silhouetted against the peaceful skies of my country, remind yourself that I am the flag of your country, that I stand for what you are - no more, no less.

Guard me well, lest your freedom perish from the earth.

Dedicate your lives to those principles for which I stand: "One nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

I was created in freedom. I made my first appearance in a battle for human liberty.

God grant that I may spend eternity in my "land of the free and the home of the brave" and that I shall ever be known as "Old Glory," the flag of the United States of America.