

One Nation Under God

BY BEN LA BREE (ADAPTED)

I. BRAVERY HONORED BY A FOE

In a rifle-pit, on the brow of a hill near Fredericksburg, were a number of Confederate soldiers who had exhausted their ammunition in the vain attempt to check the advancing column of Hooker's finely equipped and disciplined army which was crossing the river. To the relief of these few came the brigade in double-quick time. But no sooner were the soldiers entrenched than the firing on the opposite side of the river became terrific.

A heavy mist obscured the scene. The Federal soldiers poured a merciless fire into the trenches. Soon many Confederates fell, and the agonized cries of the wounded who lay there calling for water, smote the hearts of their helpless comrades.

“Water! Water!” But there was none to give, the canteens were-empty.

“Boys,” exclaimed Nathan Cunningham, a lad of eighteen, the color-bearer for his regiment, “I can't stand this any more. They want water, and water they must have. So let me have a few canteens and I'll go for some.”

Carefully laying the colors, which he had borne on many a field, in a trench, he seized some canteens, and, leaping into the mist, was soon out of sight.

Shortly after this the firing ceased for a while, and an order came for the men to fall back to the main line.

As the Confederates were retreating they met Nathan Cunningham, his canteens full of water, hurrying to relieve the thirst of the wounded men in the trenches. He glanced over the passing column and saw that the faded flag, which he had carried so long, was not there. The men in their haste to obey orders HAD FORGOTTEN OR OVERLOOKED THE COLORS.

Quickly the lad sped to the trenches, intent now not only on giving water to his comrades, but on rescuing the flag and so to save the honor of his regiment.

His mission of mercy was soon accomplished. The wounded men drank freely. The lad then found and seized his colors, and turned to rejoin his regiment. Scarcely had he gone three paces when a company of Federal soldiers appeared ascending the hill.

“Halt and surrender,” came the stern command, and a hundred rifles were leveled at the boy's breast. “NEVER! while I hold the colors,” was his firm reply.

The morning sun, piercing with a lurid glare the dense mist, showed the lad proudly standing with his head thrown back and his flag grasped in his hand, while his unprotected breast was exposed to the fire of his foe.

A moment's pause. Then the Federal officer gave his command:--

“Back with your pieces, men, don't shoot that brave boy.”

And Nathan Cunningham, with colors flying over his head, passed on and joined his regiment. His comrades in arms still tell with pride of his brave deed and of the generous act of a foe. **TEXT:**

Ps 33:12

12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD: and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance. KJV

The Pledge of Allegiance

- I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands. One nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

INDEPENDENCE DAY

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE BY WASHINGTON IRVING

While danger was gathering round New York, and its inhabitants were in mute suspense and fearful anticipations, the General Congress at Philadelphia was discussing, with closed doors, what John Adams pronounced: ``The greatest question ever debated in America, and as great as ever was or will be debated among men." The result was, a resolution passed unanimously on the 2nd of July; ``that these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States."

``The 2nd of July," adds the same patriot statesman, ``will be the most memorable epoch in the history of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to Almighty God. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forth forevermore."

The glorious event has, indeed, given rise to an annual jubilee; but not on the day designated by Adams. The **FOURTH** of July is the day of national rejoicing, for on that day the ``Declaration of Independence," that solemn and sublime document, was adopted.

Tradition gives a dramatic effect to its announcement. It was known to be under

discussion, but the closed doors of Congress excluded the populace. They awaited, in throngs, an appointed signal. In the steeple of the State House was a bell, imported twenty-three years previously from London by the Provincial Assembly of Pennsylvania. It bore the portentous text from Scripture: ``Proclaim Liberty throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof." A joyous peal from that bell gave notice that the bill had been passed. It was the knell of British domination.

The Declaration of Independence - of the 13 United States of America We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

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Some things are not recognizably wrong until you have spent time with the Lord.

Isa 6:5 Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. KJV

Phil 2:15

15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; KJV

Phil 2:14-16

14 In everything you do, stay away from complaining and arguing 15 so that no one can speak a word of blame against you. You are to live clean, innocent lives as children of God in a dark world full of people who are crooked and stubborn. Shine out among them like beacon lights, 16 holding out to them the Word of Life. TLB

Resolve To Finish

Luke 9:62

62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. KJV

Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty.

--John F. Kennedy Inaugural Address Washington, D.C. January 20, 1961

It is in vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry, Peace, Peace--but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!

--Patrick Henry March 23, 1775

I have wondered at times what the Ten Commandments would have looked like if Moses had run them through the U.S. Congress.

-- Ronald Reagan

Freedom is a fragile thing and is never more than one generation away from extinction. It is not ours by inheritance; it must be fought for and defended constantly by each generation, for it comes only once to a people. Those who have known freedom, and then lost it, have never known it again.

-- Ronald Reagan

The United States remains the last best hope for a mankind plagued by tyranny and deprivation. America is no stronger than its people - and that means you and me. Well, I believe in you, and I believe that if we work together then one day we will say, "We fought the good fight. We finished the race. We kept the faith." And to our children and our children's children we can say, "We did all that could be done in the brief time that was given to us here on earth -- Ronald Reagan

"We establish no religion in this country, nor will we ever. We command no worship. We mandate no belief. But we poison our society when we remove its theological underpinnings. We court corruption when we leave it bereft of belief.

All are free to believe or not believe; all are free to practice a faith or not. But those who believe must be free to speak of and act on their belief, to apply moral teaching to public questions.

I submit to you that the tolerant society is open to and encouraging of all religions. And this does not weaken us; it strengthens us, it makes us strong. You know, if we look back through history to all those great civilizations, those great nations that rose up to even world dominance and then deteriorated, declined, and fell, we find they all had one thing in common. One of the significant forerunners of their fall was their turning away from their God or gods.

Without God, there is no virtue, because there's no prompting of the conscience. Without God, we're mired in the

material, that flat world that tells us only what the senses perceive. Without God, there is a coarsening of the society.

material, that flat world that tells us only what the senses perceive. Without God, there is a coarsening of the society. And without God, democracy will not and cannot long endure. If we ever forget that we're one nation under God, then we will be a nation gone under. If I could just make a personal statement of my own -- in these 3 1/2 years I have understood and known better than ever before the words of Lincoln, when he said that he would be the greatest fool on this footstool called Earth if he ever thought that for one moment he could perform the duties of that office without help from One who is stronger than all.

There are no such things as limits to growth, because there are no limits on the human capacity for intelligence, imagination and wonder.

-- Ronald Reagan

(from an address to the University of South Carolina, Columbia, September 20, 1983)

I thank you, thank you for inviting us here today. Thank you for your kindness and your patience. **May God keep you, and may we, all of us, keep God."**

-- Ronald Reagan

Remarks at an Ecumenical Prayer Breakfast in Dallas, Texas

America will never be destroyed from the outside. If we falter and lose our freedoms, it will be because we destroyed ourselves.

--Abraham Lincoln