

I AM YOUR FLAG

Some people call me Old Glory, others call me the Star-Spangled Banner, but whatever 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, because you see, it is about you and me.

I remember some time ago people lined up on both sides of the street to watch the parade and, naturally, I was leading every parade, proudly waving in the breeze. When your daddy saw me coming, he immediately removed his hat and placed it against his left shoulder so that his hand was directly over his heart – remember?

What happened? I'm still the same old flag. Oh, I have a few more stars since you were a boy and a lot more blood has been shed since those parades of long ago.

But now I don't feel as proud as I used to. When I come down your street and you just stand there with your hands in your pockets, I may get a small glance and then you look away. Then I see children running around and shouting – they don't seem to know who I am.

I saw a man take his hat off, then look around. He didn't see anybody else with their hats off, so he quickly put it back on. And what about that night at the ball game, when they played the "Star-Spangled Banner" and I waved so proudly in the breeze, but nobody bothered to sing?

Oh, they stood up, all right, as sort of a mild patriotic gesture, but then they talked among themselves about the game and weather, but they did not sing. I felt hurt.

Is it a sin to be patriotic? Have you forgotten what I stand for and where I have been? Anzio, Guadalcanal, Korea, and Vietnam. Take a look at the memorial honor rolls sometime – names of those who never came back – who gave their lives to keep this republic free.

One nation, under God. When you salute me, you are saluting them.

I may not be coming down your street for a long time, as it seems that patriotic parades are a thing of the past. But when I do, will you do me a big favor?

Stand up straight, place your right hand over your heart, and if they play the “Star-Spangled Banner,” sing out loud and clear. I will salute you by waving back.

Show me you remember.

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➤ Author Unknown