

First, let me thank the homeowner's association for inviting us to hold this ceremony again this year. It is an honor to be asked to do this.

The United States celebrates Flag Day on June 14. This day observes the adoption of the "Stars and Stripes" as the official flag of the United States.

On this day, Americans are reminded about the history of their beloved national symbol, which they see as a symbol of the freedom they enjoy every day.

Unfortunately, many people do not know the true meanings behind our Flag. They see the flag, but do not pause to consider the sacrifices that have been made that allow it to fly.

The American flag is a symbol of freedom, liberty and human rights. It is a symbol of our home and all that we believe in. A symbol men rally behind, whether on our shores or foreign shores. Some hold the flag as something sacred, others have a moderate reverence for it.

Ever since 1777, men and women have fought and died defending our flag and our nation. These men and women were willing to step forward. They believed in the meaning of the flag and what it stood for. They realized that not everyone would agree. As a philosopher once said, "I do not agree with what you have to say, but I'll defend to the death your right to say it."

Today, there will be many speeches across our nation about the Flag and its meaning. As I thought about what I would say here in this gathering, I began to think of it from a different point of view. I realized it wasn't important what I would say as a Commander of an American Legion Post. It wasn't important what a politician says in one of his yearly speeches. What is important is what our Flag would say if it could talk. So let me lend my voice to echo the words that our Flag might say.

I am the Flag

by Ruth Apperson Rous

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.

Thank you, and God Bless the United States of America