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PATRIOTS VS. POLITICIANS

Who now will pledge life, fortune and sacred honor? By Tom DeWeese

Many of the younger generation must be truly bewildered over the emotions older Americans display when expressing love, devotion, respect and reverence for our country. A tear in the eye for a patriotic song...a hand over the heart as the national anthem plays...a salute to the flag as it passes in a parade. Why would we older folks do that?

What frame of reference could younger Americans possibly have? Patriotism, nationalism—even American citizenship are taboo in today's school curriculum. Globalism, diversity, and political correctness trump real history, sound economics, and science. Com-

munist is just another economic system. The Founding Fathers are simply old, dead slave-owning white guys. The U.N.'s Declaration on Human Rights trumps the Declaration of Independence.

Perhaps if today's young people could learn some of the history that causes the older generation to feel such powerful emotions, they might understand why ordinary Americans from our founding knew that there were principles worth sacrificing or even dying for.

Here are three little-known examples from separate eras of our nation's history which demonstrate how we as a nation once

stood proud, ready to defend ideals to the death if necessary. These clearly show that the tear in an eye or the hand over a heart expressed by the older generation isn't just for a flag or a song.

Thomas Nelson Jr.

Educated in England and elected to the House of Burgesses in 1761, Thomas Nelson Jr. loved everything British and was proud to be a British subject. That is until King George III imposed the hated Stamp Act on the American colonies and Nelson became a dedicated opponent. He believed he had rights to his own hard-earned

money and it was wrong to impose the tax in which he had virtually no say in the matter. Such was the foundation of the American Revolution.

Soon Nelson was elected to represent Virginia in the Continental Congress where he became one of 56 men to sign the Declaration of Independence. By adding his name to the bottom of the document he pledged his life, fortune and sacred honor. Thomas Nelson Jr. backed up that pledge by becoming a brigadier general in George Washington's army. But he did more than just fight. He used his own fortune to help Washington fund the army. His money helped make payrolls for the men who needed it for their families back home.

Finally, in the war's last battle, Nelson found himself commanding troops outside his own hometown of Yorktown. As Washington laid siege to the British-held town, Nelson watched as a cannon battery continually missed an important target. It was British Gen. Cornwallis' command post. Nelson inquired of the troops why they weren't shooting at the house. "Because," they said, "it's your house." Nelson said, "Give me the torch." He then fired the first cannon aimed at his own home and gave the order for the other cannon to fire at the target as well. The house was destroyed. Not long after, Cornwallis surrendered and the United States was born.

For his service, Nelson died a pauper as his health and fortune were wrecked by the war. He made the sacrifice because he believed freedom was more important than comfort and material wealth.

Francis Scott Key

Most young people today think of the Star Spangled Banner as simply a hard song to sing before sporting events. To them, its curious words about bombs bursting in air and flags flying just sound like a Fourth of July party. Where's the beer? Play ball.

But the words mean much more. The song's lyrics are actually a testimony to sacrifice, death and courage. Francis Scott Key personally witnessed the events described in the song and wrote what he saw as it was happening.

Key was an attorney during the War of 1812. Again the United States was at war with Great Britain. In the 20 years since their surrender at Yorktown, the British had continually harassed American ships on the high seas. Americans seeking trade with

Europe faced blockades by the British, who dominated the seas with their massive fleet. The British claimed the right to take sailors off their enemy's vessels and make them serve against their will on British ships. Finally, the Americans had had enough. So the U.S. Government declared war on the British, again.

It didn't go well for Americans. The British used their vast sea power to attack the United States. Eventually, with little resistance, the British ransacked the capital city and burned buildings, including the White House. As Americans were forced to flee, the British fleet set its sights on the next target, Baltimore. It was meant to be the final victory before reestablishing Americans as British subjects.

Meanwhile, as ships wreaked havoc from the sea, British troops were on the ground in countless towns and villages, arresting American citizens and putting them in makeshift jails or on prison ships. Enter lawyer, author and amateur poet Francis Scott Key. The local people enlisted Key to help free the prisoners who were now being held in the bowels of a prison ship in Baltimore harbor. Key was allowed on the ship and taken to the prison hold. There he found the ship packed with American prisoners. Key met with the British admiral to negotiate a prisoner exchange in hopes of freeing all of the Americans.

As the two men met on the deck of the ship, the admiral pointed down the bay where Key saw hundreds of British ships sailing toward them. "That," said the admiral, "is the entire British fleet. It is coming here to take Fort McHenry." Its fall would assure the final British victory and the end of the United States.

The bombardment began at dusk in a deafening roar of cannon fire from a hundred ships which stayed outside the range of Fort McHenry's guns. Waving from the fort was a large American flag. As night began to fall, the bombs from the British fleet burst through the air. The last thing anyone could see in the twilight's last gleaming was the flag defiantly flying over the fort. No matter how many bombs seemed to hit the flag, it continued to fly.

In the morning the guns stopped. In the dawn's early light all saw that the flag

still flew and the fort remained in American hands. As the fleet sailed away, according to some reports, Key rushed to the fort and there he saw what had happened. The flagpole had been hit numerous times and around the base of the flag were numerous bodies of American soldiers and citizens. Throughout the night, it is said, they had sacrificed themselves to keep the flag waving. As the flagpole splintered from direct hits, men rushed out and held up the flag, becoming human flagpoles. One by one, as each was cut down by the bombs bursting in air, another rushed out to take his place.

The nation survived and America became a shining symbol as the land of the

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free. The men of Fort McHenry proved it was also the home of the brave.

William Barret Travis

In the winter and early spring of 1836, war raged throughout what is now the state of Texas. Mexico, led by Gen. Santa Anna, wanted to control the territory. The Texans wanted to be free of his murderous rule.

Santa Anna began a march on San Antonio with more than 1,000 troops to smash resistance. About 189 Texans under the command of William Barret Travis rushed into a mission called the Alamo. Soon they were surrounded.

Over the following two weeks, the Mexican forces strengthened to over 2,000. Finally, as it became apparent that no large group of reinforcements would be able to come to their aid, Travis called a meeting of the men and told them they were free to leave and save themselves. He took out his sword and drew a line in the sand. He said, "If you choose to stay, cross that line." To a man they crossed, determined to stay and fight Santa Anna's tyranny.

After constant bombardment from Mexican guns, the men inside the Alamo heard a certain bugle signal. It was the command to Santa Anna's troops to charge and take no prisoners. The men in the Alamo fought to the last man.

One hundred and eighty-nine Texans

died that day. The Alamo had fallen, but their courage allowed Texas Gen. Sam Houston the time he needed to raise an army and meet Santa Anna only 46 days later. As Houston's men charged, they shouted, "Remember the Alamo." The battle lasted only 18 minutes. Gen. Santa Anna was finished and Texas had won its independence, because 189 heroes had offered their lives in a belief that preserving freedom was more important than living life under tyranny.

Making Sense Of It All

American history is full of stories of such heroism in the name of preserving freedom. They were called patriots and they didn't sacrifice to build the power of government or to enrich the pockets of a select power elite or to promote one group over another. They did it so they could live their lives in peace, unencumbered and left alone.

Today, our young people are taught in government classrooms that these ideals are old-fashioned, quaint and, in many cases, just plain wrong. Patriotism is racism, we're told by modern scholars. Property ownership is selfish, a social injustice. Children are taught that our free society is the root of the

Earth's destruction and must be dismantled through a tightly controlled, organized global village.

Politicians

Yesterday's patriots have been replaced by too many politicians who pander to special interests as they fill their pockets with money in exchange for deals, privilege and power. America today is guilty of the very same kind of "nation building" we fought King George to end.

Today, instead of statesmen who serve our country out of love and loyalty for its ideals, we have professional politicians seeking a lifelong government career. Each step is calculated. Will it sound good to a certain voter block? Will it make me look good on television? Can I get a leg up on my opponent if I propose this? Instead of addressing real issues, political campaigns have become little more than an exercise in character assassination of opponents.

Such politicians could never be trusted on the front lines next to the heroes of the Alamo or Thomas Nelson Jr. None would ever inspire a single lyric by Francis Scott Key. And they are not worthy of being elected to lead the country these heroes helped create.

Patriots

However, there are still patriots fighting the desperate battle to preserve our freedoms. Some are just citizens who see a wrong and take local action to stop it. They show up at city council and county commission meetings to express their opposition to policies that affect property and taxes and quality of life. They work tirelessly, producing materials and working in political campaigns to elect the right kind of leaders.

Some of the best, to name just a tiny few, include Sheriff Richard Mack, who covers the nation teaching county sheriffs that they're the first line of defense against an oppressive central government. KrisAnne Hall, who travels over 265 days a year to teach Americans the power and justice of the Constitution. And ranch families like the Hages, Hammonds and Bundys personally facing government tyranny, yet fighting on.

One of the most effective in elected office, standing against the massive growth and corruption of local government, is Maryland Commissioner Richard Rothschild. Even as he stands alone, attacked and labeled, he never wavers in defending the principles of freedom. Like Travis on the wall, he refuses to back down.

In the state Legislature of Washington stands Rep. Matt Shea. In one of the most liberal states in the Union, Shea has organized a Freedom Team of legislators to fight for limited government and the ideals of freedom. He is succeeding against great odds.

Shea would order the destruction of his own home if it meant one American would be free. Richard Rothschild would stand on that wall of the Alamo to the last. He already has in our modern-day fight. And KrisAnne Hall would sing the glory of the heroes of Fort McHenry. She does it every day.

As your children seek to understand why we older folks get a tear in our eyes and a swell of pride in our hearts as we hear the songs and see the flags flying—symbols of the incredible sacrifice so many suffered just to defend our freedom—they need look no further than these heroes. Patriots still exist among us and they are still fighting the same tyranny as our Founders, and for the same reasons. ■

Tom DeWeese is one of those patriots fighting for our freedoms. He is president of the American Policy Center and a leading advocate of private property rights. He is the author of the new book, "Property Rights Matter." Check www.americanpolicy.org and support him.

Go West

The Risk

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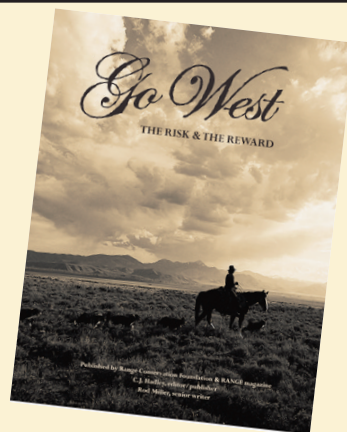
fatigue. Pack for accidents. Expect endless plains, insurmountable mountains, dreadful deserts. Prepare to die.

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