

THAT RAGGED OLD FLAG

Sunday is Flag Day, a time for all Americans to celebrate and show respect for our national banner. The week of June 14 is also designated as National Flag Week, when U.S. citizens are encouraged to fly and pay special tribute to the flag.

Our flag is representative of our independence and unity as a country – “one nation, under God, indivisible.” It has a proud and glorious history. Many people have died protecting it, and many others have spilled their blood to preserve the freedoms that it stands for.

One of the best tributes to Old Glory came from country music legend Johnny Cash, who wrote and performed the song, Ragged Old Flag. Here it is:

I walked through a county courthouse square ... On a park bench, an old man was sitting there ... I said, “Your old courthouse is kinda run down” ... He said, “No, it will do for our little town” ... I said, “Your old flagpole has leaned a little bit ... And that’s a ragged old flag you got hanging on it” ... He said, “Have a seat,” and I sat down ... “Is this the first time you’ve been to our little town?” ... I said, “I think it is.”

He said, “I don’t like to brag ... But we’re kinda proud of tha t ragged old flag ... You see, we got a little hole in that flag there ... When Washington took it across the Delaware ... It got powder burned the night Francis Scott Key ... Sat watching it, writing, ‘Oh, say can you see’ ...It got a rip in New Orleans ... With Packingham and Jackson tugging at its seams ... And it almost fell at the Alamo ... Beside the Texas flag, but she waved on, though ... She got cut with a sword in Chancellorsville ... And she got cut again at Shiloh Hill ... There was Robert E. Lee, Beauregard and Bragg ... And the south wind blew hard on that ragged old flag.

“On Flanders Field in World War I ... She got a big hole from a Bertha Gun ... She turned blood-red in World War II ... She hung limp and low by the time it was through ... She was in Korea and Vietnam ... She went where she was sent by her Uncle Sam ... She waved from our ships upon the briny foam ... And now they’ve about quit waving her back here at home ... In her own good land she’s been abused ... She’s been burned, dishonored, denied and refused ... And the very government for which she stands ... Is scandalized throughout the land.

“And she’s getting threadbare and wearing thin ... But she’s in good shape for the shape she’s in ...’Cause she’s been through the fire before ... And I believe she can take a whole lot more ... So we raise her up every morning, take her down every night ... We don’t let her touch the ground, and we fold her up right ... On second thought, I do like to brag ... ‘Cause I’m mighty proud ... Of that ragged old flag.”

Johnny Cash was inspired, I believe, to pen those words. As the old man suggested, we all ought to be proud of our flag – today, Sunday and every day.