

## THE FLAG AND RED SKELTON

While celebrations of one kind or another to honor the *Star Spangled Banner* first began in 1777 in the United States, it was not until Aug. 3, 1949, that President Harry Truman signed an Act of Congress designating June 14 of each year as National Flag Day. It is appropriate to set aside time on our country's calendar to consider the significance of our national banner.

The late Red Skelton was one of my all-time favorite entertainers. He had a gift for making people laugh, but also to stir their emotions deeply by his talent. As a schoolboy, Red Skelton had a teacher who explained the words and meaning of the *Pledge of Allegiance* to his class. Skelton later wrote down, and eventually recorded, his recollection of this lecture. Every time I heard Skelton recite it, I listened quietly and intently. Here it is, followed by an observation of his own:

- *I – Me; an individual; a committee of one.*
- **Pledge** – *Dedicate all of my worldly goods to give without self-pity.*
- **Allegiance** – *My love and my devotion.*
- **To the Flag** – *Our standard; Old Glory; a symbol of freedom.*
- **United** – *That means that we have all come together.*
- **States** – *Individual communities that have united into 48 great states. Forty-eight individual communities with pride and dignity and purpose. All divided with imaginary boundaries, yet united to a common purpose, and that is love for country.*
- **And to the Republic** – *Republic: a state in which sovereign power is invested in representatives chosen by the people to govern. And government is the people; and it's from the people to the leaders, not from the leaders to the people.*
- **For which it stands, One Nation** – *One nation: meaning, so blessed by God.*
- **Indivisible** – *Incapable of being divided.*
- **With Liberty** – *Which is freedom; the right of power to live one's own life, without threats, fear or some sort of retaliation.*
- **And Justice** – *The principle, or qualities, of dealing fairly with others.*
- **For All** – *For all, which means, boys and girls, it's as much your country as it is mine.*

*Since I was a small boy, two states have been added to our country, and two words have been added to the Pledge of Allegiance: **Under God**. Wouldn't it be a pity if someone said that is a prayer, and that would be eliminated from schools, too?*

Well, Red, you may have been a prophet, because the *Pledge* has been labeled as religious, and the effort has been made to take it out of our schools.

Let us hope – and pray – that such a move never succeeds.

--Beecher Hunter