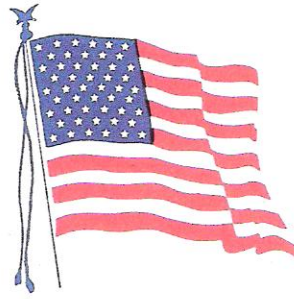


SPiRiT  
OF '76



## Remember Me?

**H**ello – remember me? I'm your flag. Some folks call me Old Glory, others call me the Stars and Stripes, the Ensign, or just ... the flag. But whatever they call me, I am your flag. And, as I proudly state, The Flag of the United States of America.

Something has been bothering me lately. I was wondering if I might talk it over with you. It's about you and me.

I remember sometime ago (I think it was Memorial Day, or was it the 4th of July) when people lined up on both sides of the street to watch a parade. When your father saw me coming along, waving in the breeze, he took his hat off and held it against his left shoulder. His hand was directly over his heart. Remember?

And you. I remember you! Standing there – straight as a soldier. You didn't have a hat on, but you gave the correct salute. They taught you in school to place your hand over your heart. Remember your little Sister? Not to be outdone, she was saluting the same as you. I was proud, very proud, as I came down that street. Oh, Yes, there were some Servicemen there, standing at attention, giving the military salute. Ladies as well as men, civilians as well as military, paid me respect ... reverence.

Now, if I sound a bit conceited ... well ... I have a right to. I represent the finest country in the world – The United States of America. More than one aggressive nation has tried to haul me down, only to feel the fury of this freedom loving country. Many of you had to go overseas to defend me. A lot more blood has been shed since those patriotic parades of long ago and I've had a few stars added since you were a boy, but I'm still the same ole flag.

Dad is gone now ... and the hometown has a new look. The last time I came down your street, I noticed that some of the old landmarks had given way to a number of new buildings and homes. Yessir, the old town sure has changed. I guess I have too, 'cause I don't feel as proud as I did back then.

I see youngsters running and shouting through the streets, college boys and girls disrupting our campuses, people selling hot dogs and beer while our National Anthem is played ... everything from apathy to riots. They don't seem to know – or care – who I am. Not too long ago, I saw a man take his hat off when I came by ... he looked around, didn't see anybody else with their's off ... so he quickly put his back on.

Now – when I come down your street, you just stand there with your hands in your pockets. Occasionally, you give me a small glance and then look away. When I think of all the places I've been ... Normandy, Guadalcanal; Iwo Jima; Battle of the Bulge; Korea; and now, Vietnam; I wonder – what's happened? I'm still the same ole flag.

How can I be expected to fly high and proud from buildings and homes when within them, there is no thought, love, or respect for me? Whatever happened to patriotism? Your patriotism? Have you forgotten what I stand for? Have you forgotten all the battlefields where men fought and died to keep this nation free? When you salute me, you salute them. Take a look at the Memorial Honor Rolls sometime. Look at the names of those who never came back. Some of them were friends or relatives of yours ... maybe even went to school with you. That's what you're saluting – NOT ME!

Well, it won't be long before I come down your street again. So, when you see me, stand straight, and place your hand over your heart. Do this because I represent you. You'll see me wave back, my salute to you ...