

The Constitution, and particularly its amendment known as the Bill of Rights, was written to guarantee to the American people Life, Liberty and Pursuit of Happiness. The Star Spangled Banner was written to affirm and to glorify those identical principles.

It did not require an Act of Congress to make the Star Spangled Banner our national anthem. The song did that for itself. From time to time there have been attempts to belittle the aesthetic values of the Star Spangled Banner; attempts to substitute some other composition. All such efforts have been failures, and the reason is not far to seek.

Literature and music are only great when they are memorable; and they are memorable when they have the common touch, the democratic appeal. The words of Francis Scott Key express what the average American feels for his Country, and has been feeling for at least a century and a quarter. There is something in the rhythm of this poem that answers the throb of our national heart-beat. There is something in the imagery of the language that throws shafts of light to illuminate the temple of our liberties.

And today, alas, there are other lights. The sky is red with them—the bonfires of war and destruction. If those terrifying flames serve no other purpose, at least they do bring out in relief the solid structure which we call American Democracy. The flag—is still there! But let us make sure it continues to fly as a guarantee of our rights and of our liberties.

Let us remember that all human beings are apt to take for granted the very things by which they live. Until we are hungry, we never really appreciate the necessity and the value of food. Until we are lonely, we seldom give friendship its full value. We are not likely to stop and thank God for the air we breathe until we hear that children overseas are wearing gas masks.

Food—friendship—air—the things by which men live. And another of these things is human liberty.

Let's not take that for granted either—least of all on this particular anniversary of the Star Spangled Banner. In this Country, thank Heaven, we have never known the want of freedom. For us, and for the many generations before us, it has been as commonplace as food and friendship and air. We would laugh if someone suggested that any American official would undertake to send to a concentration camp anyone who expressed opposition to his theories. We wouldn't believe it if we heard that every editorial in our daily paper, every broadcast from our radio, had passed through government censorship. No, we're so used to being a free people that we seldom stop to count our blessings. The bursting bombs and glaring rockets in the European sky should show us this, if nothing else—that the possession of human liberty is not only precious, it is also precarious. The price of liberty is eternal vigilance.

We Marylanders, proud of the exploits of young Wells and McComas and their fellow defenders of the City—grateful to the gallant lads who manned the guns at historic Fort McHenry so successfully that when the dawn of September 14th broke, "the Flag was still there"—we have been content to mark the recurring anniversaries of these important events quietly, feeling perhaps that the rest of the nation has other observances to require their attention.

Under the conditions that exist in the world today, however, it seems to me peculiarly right and proper that America as a nation should take part in the observance of the holiday that we Marylanders have always guarded so