

“Freedom Isn’t Free”

I hope your morning started just like mine. The colors of the sky were pink and blue. The sun would soon rise and I would notice a few birds and a small baby rabbit in my back yard. I would also enjoy the beautiful flowers blooming in the garden. Some time on this day I would walk through the garden and enjoy these flowers up close. The drizzle of rain would not hinder me but I would also find enjoyable things to do in the house until the drizzle stopped. I would drive into town on this day to run errands and then return home. In my comings and goings an amazing thing would happen that most people do not notice. My trip into town would be uneventful. There would be no sniper trying to shoot me in my car. There would be no band of people trying to intrude into my space and violently stop me from doing my errands. I would see no bloodshed because of people wanting to show violence toward me or my town. In fact, my day would be filled with calm and peace for the most part and I would totally enjoy that peacefulness that we take for granted too often.

I am reminded of a story about a politician in Washington D.C. It was the evening of a national election and he wanted to show his two daughters something that he thought amazing. As the election returns had all come in and a new president had been declared, he bundled up the two young girls and put them in his car. He told them he had something amazing that he wanted to show them. (and visions of ice cream, food or something they would never be allowed to have that late at night probably jumped through their minds. And they might have thought... this is just what dad wants to do for us. Something important and not political) Dad drove to Pennsylvania Avenue and stopped his car and spoke to his daughters who were in the back seat. His words were something like this. “Girls. Tonight we elected a President of the United States of America. Look ahead and you can see the White House. Look carefully. There is no military, no people carrying guns and shooting at each other. This is a peaceful transition of power and that is how it works in a democracy. This is the United States of America.” As much as this amazed the father, he turned around to see the delight of this experience on his daughters’ faces and he saw them asleep. The hour was late and they should be in bed. Think about it for a while. I have remembered this story for many years and it is still wonderful to me. We can go about our daily business and even have a change in the political power structure of this nation and we can do so in the peace and safety that this nation offers to all of its citizens.

Peace and safety. Good fortune and not so good fortune at times. Sunny days and rainy days we face all the time and then comes the cold of winter but still peace and safety as well as the freedoms to come and go as we please. And how so easy it is to take this all for granted.

My father would tell the story of his days during World War II. He joined the army, went through the training, boarded a ship in the Carolinas and was a member of an anti-aircraft group in England. I once asked him to tell me about the things that upset him most during the war. His reply was always the same. Each time he spoke of this there would be tears in his eyes. The two things that broke his heart during this period of his life were to see children in London go through garbage in the hopes of finding something

to eat and the second event that would always cause him great emotional pain was when they, soldiers in a war, would find American paratroopers hanging in trees and never allowed to touch the ground by the enemy.

As a nation we find ourselves too often looking at the negative and not the simple pleasures, the peace and security we have, the freedom to come and go as we please, or the many times we stop just to enjoy the beauty of the day. When and if you get to this point in your life you are probably going to wonder about all these wonderful things that we have access to. Please don't make the mistake of thinking that you accomplished it all by yourself. All these beautiful things that we enjoy were paid for and most of us had to contribute very little if anything at all. They were paid for by the supreme sacrifice of men and women who saw the need to train, fight and too often die fighting an enemy so each of our mornings can be filled with peace and security. This fantastic daily freedom that we experience in the United States of America well, it isn't free at all. In fact, our daily freedoms and our eternal freedom both cost the same. Someone had to die for us.

Standing on a hillside
Where the river meets the sea
White crosses without number
Line the fields of peace

And each one a silent witness
Staring back at me
Every cross a story
Of another place in time
Where young men thought it worthy
To give their life for mine
And for the sake of honor
Left their dreams behind

And for the price they paid
I'm forever in their debt
Their memory will not die
'Cause I will not forget

I will stand and hold my head up high
I will dedicate my life
To the glory of the ones who had to die
I will live, live what I believe
If for no one else but me
I will remember
That freedom's never free

It was on another hillside
Outside the city gates

The battle lines were drawn
As soldiers took their place

The Father watched in silence
As a cross was raised
With freedom drawing closer
He took His final breath
He drank our cup of guilt
And took the sting from death

Heaven's Finest Soldier
clothed in human flesh
And for the price He paid
I'm forever in His debt
The cross will never die
'Cause I will not forget

I will stand and hold my head up high
I will dedicate my life
To the glory of the One who had to die
I will live, live what I believe
If for no one else but me
To remember that
Freedom's Never Free

I will walk free
I will stay free
I will live free
I will die free!

Lyrics to ...
"Freedom's never free"

Richard Hurt, retired classroom teacher