

FROM ONE HILL TO ANOTHER

Corvallis, Montana

September 2018

Let's Celebrate Our Constitution and Our Citizenship

United We Stand, Divided We Fall!

By Gary and Joan Carlson

September 17th, 2018 is the 231st anniversary of the signing of our magnificent U.S. Constitution!

From the song titled "I am an American" that was featured in the New York World's Fair in 1939, President FDR proclaimed a special day called "I am an American Day." On February 29, 1952, Congress moved the "I am an American Day" observation to September 17, and renamed it "Citizenship Day." The 17th of September 1787 was the date 44 of the founding fathers met for the official signing of the United States Constitution.

Citizenship Day was renamed "Constitution Day and Citizenship Day" in 2004 by an amendment to a bill by Senator Robert Byrd of West

Virginia. Byrd's amendment also required that all government funded schools and federal agencies provide educational programs regarding the U.S. Constitution on that day throughout America. (Brief history updated on August 3, 2018 by Robert Longley)

As Americans approach this anniversary, it is important to look back to the years 1770 - 1787 and reflect upon the mood, attitude, and political environment in which the early Americans were living. The colonists were facing a critical relationship with Great Britain. Some colonists wanted to remain loyal to the powerful British Empire, while others wanted to separate but continue to remain in good standing with Britain. But others wanted a complete break from Britain and establish a new nation. Tensions were high. Great Britain wanted to maintain control over the colonies because they intended to benefit from any trade they would develop between America and other countries.

The 1700's also brought about a religious transformation to

the New World. It is known as "The Great Awakening" and had a significant effect upon setting the stage for the colonies' Independence. Without the spirit of unity between the colonists, their clergy, and their political leaders, independence might, very well, have fallen short.

One very prominent Christian leader and evangelist was George Whitefield. When he came to the New World for the last time in 1770, even the Episcopal churches welcomed him. Denominational barriers prevalent in earlier days no longer seemed to matter in America. But the sense of unity that had pervaded the colonies had nothing to do with religious complacency, quite the contrary. The true spirit of Christ had dissolved sectarian differences. America considered itself to be a nation of Christians, pure and simple, as Whitefield noted with satisfaction. "Pulpits, hearts, and affections," he said, were opened to him and any preacher of whatever denomination who had a true Christian message to share. There was no longer serious discord among the various sects as was common

in Europe. America still yearned for the comfort and assurances found in the Christian faith. "Congregations are larger than ever," Whitefield noted. The crowds who came to hear him were especially huge. "His popularity exceeded all that I ever knew," reported a New England pastor. During this period, Whitefield observed, "Never was the Word received with greater eagerness than it is now." (Ref: [Faith and Freedom](#), by Benjamin Hart, Pages 226-227.)

"Works?...Works? A man gets to Heaven by works? I would sooner think of climbing to the moon on a rope of sand," Whitefield told an immense gathering at Exeter, on September 29, 1770. He spoke for two hours that afternoon, and then collapsed from exhaustion. The next day George Whitefield breathed his last less than five years before an anonymous colonist fired the "shot heard round the world." ([Faith and Freedom](#) by Hart, P. 226)

"The religious clergy plus other leaders like James Otis of the 1700's inspired colonial



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leaders like Samuel Adams to help mobilize the "Sons of Liberty" (also "Daughters of Liberty"), which were to become the central organizing vehicle for the American Revolution. They organized churches as well as other colonists." (Ref: Faith and Freedom by Hart, P. 247)

To help organize the colonists, Samuel Adams and James Otis asked John Dickinson to compose an "American Freedom Song." They felt this would help to motivate the people and was to be the song at colonial demonstrations. The words to the "Freedom Song" were as follows:

*Come join hand in hand,
brave Americans all;
And rouse your bold hearts
at fair Liberty's call.
No tyrannous acts shall
suppress your just claim;
Or stain with dishonor
America's name.*

*(Chorus)
In freedom we're born and
in freedom we'll live
Our purses are ready,
Steady, Friends, steady
Not as slaves, but as
freemen our money we'll give.
Then join in hand to hand
brave Americans all;
By uniting we stand, by
dividing we fall.
To die we can bear, but to
serve we disdain.
For shame is to freemen
more dreadful than pain.*

It seems reasonable to conclude that there was a strong connection between the years of the "Great Awakening" by religious leaders and the birth of America's Independence. Could we have gained our independence if it did not begin with a great Christian re-awakening? That

is a good question, but it did help the colonists become more unified than ever, because of their strong belief in Christianity, which was apparent in 1776. Should this cause us to ponder a question for Americans today? If we truly want to solve our current problems like illegal immigration, out of control drug abuse, violence in our cities, a breakdown of the family... and the list goes on...perhaps we need to get our act together and reevaluate our priorities. We need to unite once again in America under the banners that have sustained us in the past and should unite us now..."In God We Trust"... "E Pluribus Unum" (Out of many, One.) We were then and should be now "One nation under God." Will it take another revolution, World War, 9/11 or natural disaster to bring us together again? Do we only look to government to protect and sustain us? Do we expect our local leaders in schools, churches, and government to seek the solutions to our community problems, or, like the colonist, should we look to a higher authority to influence our destiny?

We certainly have it easier than the colonists did in the 1700's. Americans have been blessed beyond measure. Every American generation has had it better than the one before, but perhaps, that is part of our problem. Prosperity has spoiled us. Almost every day the news reports give us examples of a divided, rather than, a united people. This division is sometimes even hateful with one group vehemently opposed to the other. Election results are no longer accepted and the American standard of

peaceful change from one party to another is no longer the norm, which has been a hallmark of the American system.

As we reflect upon the leaders of the thirteen colonies and the unity they demonstrated to support the challenges of establishing a new nation, who can we look to as the respected leaders in our communities today? Do government officials at state, city and county levels work together? Do various church leaders work with one another like those who combined efforts with George Whitefield? Is good solid leadership even discussed or sought after?

When the winds of war were already blowing in Europe, the song "I am an American" was featured at the World's Fair in New York. If you have never heard it, please look it up. If possible play it for yourself, and your family. Then, stop, say a prayer and thank God for the fact that you live in America. Thank God for our Declaration of independence, the U.S. Constitution and the freedom we enjoy in the United States of America.

As we commemorate the signing of our U.S. Constitution on this September 17th, let us unite as one voice regarding the simple but profound idea of who we are. We are Americans...out of many one, living freely in *One Nation under God!*

God bless,

Gary and Joan



FYI:

Gary Carlson, Publisher of the **White Hat Express***, is a former Reagan Administration Political Appointee, a retired US Marine Corps Officer, and a former candidate for both the US Senate and the House of Representatives. He also teaches Political Science and the US Constitution at the Community College level.

Joan Carlson, **White Hat Express** Editor, has worked on Capitol Hill in three offices, testified before the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, is a freelance writer, and currently owns **Outreach Enterprises**, a desktop publishing and promotional services business in Montana.

Both Carlsons have held GOP positions and have been involved in Republican Party activities in four states; California, Minnesota, Montana and Virginia.

The term "**White Hat**" originates from Vietnam where Gary was a member of the 26th Marines, and the good guys were referred to as "**White Hats**".

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