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SONS OF UNION VETERANS OF THE CIVIL WAR

CITIZENSHIP DAY Sept 2009

As a nation, we pause on July 4 to celebrate our freedom. On November 11 and on May 30, we pause to give thanks to those who have helped preserve that freedom. Many communities celebrate these occasions with parades, music, speeches and other activities that keep alive in our public conscience the high price of freedom and the sacrifices that have been necessary to preserve it. But, Citizenship Day, September 17, often slips by unnoticed.

For those familiar with the Civil War, September 17th, often brings to mind the year 1862, and the famous Battle of Antietam. The war was not going very well for the Union. President Lincoln saw the victory at the little village of Sharpsburg, Maryland along Antietam Creek as an opportunity to issue the Emancipation Proclamation. This changed the focus of the war from the simple policy of preservation of the Union to a crusade to emancipate the slaves.

It was exactly seventy-five years before the Battle of Antietam on September 17, 1787, that thirty-nine men meeting in Philadelphia signed the proposed Constitution for the United States of America and sent it to the thirteen independent states for ratification.

George Washington represented his home state of Virginia and served as President of the Constitutional Convention that changed the course of our history. Many of our citizens can name heroes associated with the Civil War, and many of the other wars that our nation has been involved in. Yet, very few people can name even one of the signers of the Constitution.

The struggle to write the Constitution was a fierce one, and the battle to get nine of the thirteen states to ratify the Constitution was no easy feat. Approval was far from certain. While several states ratified the Constitution unanimously, others were deeply divided, and the votes were very close in some states.

Little Delaware, the smallest in population, was first to ratify the Constitution on December 7, 1787 with a unanimous vote. But, it wasn't until June 21, 1788 when New Hampshire ratified the Constitution with a vote of 57 to 46 that the necessary nine states had given approval and the Constitution went into effect.

When the Constitution went into effect, Virginia, North Carolina, New York and Rhode Island still had not approved it. Virginia ratified it on June 26, 1788 with a vote of 89 to 79. New York ratified it on July 26, 1788 by a vote of 30 to 27.

North Carolina did not ratify the Constitution until November 21, 1789. George Washington had been serving the new nation as President for several months; since April 30, 1789. Rhode Island held out until the very end, and did not ratify the Constitution until May 29, 1790 - more than two years after the constitutional government had been put together.

We all know Abraham Lincoln fought the Civil War to preserve the Union of States. But, it was thirty-nine delegates meeting in Philadelphia in the summer of 1787 who wrote in the Preamble to the Constitution the phrase "We the People" that allows us the privilege of calling ourselves "Americans"

In 1952 the United States Congress authorized the President to issue an annual proclamation designating September 17th every year as Citizenship Day in commemoration of the signing of the

Constitution. In 1955 the Daughters of the American Revolution proposed devoting an entire week to the Constitution by extending the period of observance beyond September 17.

A second Congressional resolution, approved August 2, 1955, authorized the designation of the week beginning September 17th of each year as Constitution Week. Now the President issues a single proclamation each year, designating September 17th as Citizenship Day and the period beginning September 17 and ending September 23 as Constitution Week.

Holidays and other special days http://suvvw.org/ftp/PI_handbook.pdf
National, Federal and Special holidays – Days the Flag should be Flown

Patriot Day – September 11 First observed September 11, 2002

On September 11, 2001, four commercial airlines were hijacked by Islamic terrorists and members of the Al Qaeda terrorist network. Each of these airliners was given specific high profile targets in the United States and each airliner was complimented by five or six Al Qaeda hijackers. Rather than fill the airplanes with explosives, each flight was selected because of its large fuel tanks and long, transcontinental flight plans departing from the east coast and heading west.

The first two airliners hit New York City's World Trade Center towers just as the workday began. As the world watched the first tower burn, the second airliner hit the second tower. Debris and flames were everywhere as civilians raced to escape the disaster and firefighters and police raced towards the towers to try to save more lives. Unbelievably, within a couple of hours, both towers and surrounding structures collapsed like deadly accordions to the ground creating a seven story tall pile of rubble. The third hijacked aircraft collided into the Pentagon in northern Virginia killing many more civilians and military personnel.

Unlike the three others, the fourth aircraft wasn't hijacked until sometime later when the flight was over eastern Ohio. This critical delay in hijacking allowed passengers to gather information (mainly via cellular phone calls) and formulate a plan. With the horrific news of the other three suicide missions, the passengers apparently seized the hijackers ultimately bringing down the plane in a fireball in rural western Pennsylvania. Although we don't really know what happened, one passenger was overheard saying "Let's Roll" just before the plane crashed. These brave passengers possibly saved thousands more of American lives through their selfless, courageous retaliation.

All told, almost 3,000 innocent people, from over sixty different nations, of all colors, creeds, and religions, were killed. This unexpected attack by a clandestine enemy is the worst "wartime" attack on American soil in history, even more so than Pearl Harbor. In memory of the brave firefighters, police officers, office workers, rescue workers, airline employees, and passengers, President George W. Bush signed this holiday into the public record on December 18, 2001. In connection with the signing of this legislation, Americans are encouraged to fly their flags at half-mast and engage in a moment of silence. We should also remember the survivors of this attack, not only those who were present but also the family and friends of those lost. 26

Citizenship Day – September 17 First observed September 17, 1952

The purpose of this holiday is to honor both, native-born and naturalized foreign-born citizens. In 1939, Randolph Hearst gave the day national prominence through his chain of daily newspapers when a movement to recognize new citizens began. In 1940, Congress designated the third Sunday in May as "I am an American Day". Many cities continue to observe this holiday. On February 29, 1952, President

Harry S. Truman signed a bill establishing September 17 as Citizenship Day, replacing the May observance and moving the date to the one on which the U.S. Constitution was signed in 1787.

The intent of the bill was to give recognition to those who had become American Citizens during the preceding year. The celebrations include pageantry and speeches to impress Americans with the privileges and responsibilities of U.S. citizenship. Citizenship Day focuses on the rights and responsibilities of U.S. citizens, both native-born and naturalized.

The choice of September 17 for this observance commemorates the events of September 17, 1787 when the United States Constitution was signed by delegates from 12 states at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This day celebrates the Supreme Law of the Land as the oldest working Constitution in the world.

National POW/MIA Recognition Day – Third Friday in September

Until July 18, 1979, no commemoration was held to honor America's POW/MIAs, those returned and those still missing and unaccounted for from our nation's wars. That first year, resolutions were passed in the Congress and the national ceremony was held at the National Cathedral, Washington, D.C. The Missing Man formation was flown by the 1st Tactical Squadron, Langley AFB, Virginia. The Veterans Administration published a poster including only the letters "POW/MIA" and that format was continued until 1982, when a black and white drawing of a POW in harsh captivity was used to convey the urgency of situation and the priority that President Ronald Reagan assigned to achieving the fullest possible accounting for Americans still missing from the Vietnam War.

National POW/MIA Recognition Day legislation was introduced yearly, until 1995 when it was deemed by Congress that legislation designating special commemorative days would no longer be considered by Congress. The President now signs a proclamation each year. In the early years, the date was routinely set in close proximity to the League's annual meetings. In the mid-1980's, the American Ex-POWs decided that they wished to see the date established as April 9th, the date during World War II when the largest number of Americans were captured. As a result, legislation urged by the American Ex-POWs was passed covering two years, July 20, 1984 and April 9, 1985, as the commemoration dates.

The 1984 National POW/MIA Recognition Day ceremony was held at the White House, hosted by President Ronald Reagan. At that most impressive ceremony, the Reagan Administration balanced the focus to honor all returned POWs and renew national commitment to accounting as fully as possible for those still missing. Perhaps the most impressive Missing Man formation ever flown was that year, up the Ellipse and over the White House. Unfortunately, the 1985 ceremony was canceled due to inclement weather, a concern that had been expressed when the April 9th date was proposed.

Subsequently, in an effort to accommodate all returned POWs and all Americans still missing and unaccounted for from all wars, the National League of Families proposed the third Friday in September, a date not associated with any particular war and not in conjunction with any organization's national convention. Most National POW/MIA Recognition Day ceremonies have been held at the Pentagon. On September 19, 1986, however, the national ceremony was held on the steps on the U.S. Capitol facing the Mall, again concluding with a flight in Missing Man formation.

National POW/MIA Recognition Day Ceremonies are now held throughout the nation and around the world on military installations, ships at sea, state capitols, at schools, churches, national veteran and civic organizations, police and fire departments, fire stations, etc. The League's POW/MIA flag is flown, and the focus is to ensure that America remembers its responsibility to stand behind those who serve our nation and do everything possible to account for those who do not return.