

2021 October Patriotic Instruction

Brothers,

As Patriotic Instructor, one of my goals has been to focus on ways in which we can spread the word of our Order out to the public, that is, what some would say, would be my go-to pitch, the old fast ball. Well, another part of my job as the Patriotic Instructor is to bring up the importance of certain items that are symbolic for one reason or another in our love of country, this would be the curveball to my fastball so to speak. All good pitchers have 3-4 pitches to work with, just like the SUVCW must focus on Patriotic themes in our day-to-day life, some that might not be so obvious, these would be your slider or change-up. Well, this month's instruction isn't about how to educate, or the history of a symbol, but how we interact with Patriotic themes, for those of you keeping track, I'm throwing a knuckle ball here. One thing that I have always been taught is that these symbols, and what they represent, deserve our utmost respect. How when a flag is supported by a color bearer and passes by you, you place your hand over your heart. When you hear the Pledge of Allegiance is said, you do the same. These are all things that show how important these symbols are to us.

There has been something that for years, to steal a somewhat Rhode Island phrase, really grinds my gears, as it pertains to this. What has always been a pet peeve of mine is when I am at an event where a patriotic song, that is not the National Anthem is played, and people are rendering the same honors for that song as they do the National Anthem or doing more so for those other songs than the Anthem. Now this might sound a little petty if you will, but it is important for the Star Spangled Banner to get these honors alone. This idea was really driven home to me when on a recent trip to Fenway Park when my oldest son asked why I wasn't putting my hand on my heart during "God Bless America", and it got me thinking on how we are going to teach the importance on to our kids.

You might be asking yourself why? Why is this so important that this song alone gets this respect? Patriotic songs are good to help raise morale and pride in country. This is true, but only one of these songs earns, and deserves the utmost respect, that being our National Anthem, the "Star Spangled Banner". To give other songs this respect, in my eyes, diminishes how important the Anthem is. It is a song that was written during the War of 1812 during the bombardment of Fort McHenry. Its author, Francis Scott Key was a lawyer who went aboard British ships to negotiate the release of an American civilian that was imprisoned by the British, was held captive during the bombardment. On the morning of 14 Sep 1814, at the end of the 25-hour bombardment, the American flag was still flying over Ft. McHenry and the United States had held the British army and navy at bay, he penned a poem called "Defense of Fort McHenry". This poem was quickly put to a melody and renamed the Star Spangle Banner.¹ This song encompasses the resolve and spirit of not just the American fighting man, but every American.

All the above facts are well known and taught when I was growing up and in elementary school. One fact that is not as well known as those is that the Star Spangled Banner was a fan favorite in the North during the Civil War. Not only was it a fan favorite, but it was used by both the abolition movement before the war, and Veterans organizations after the war,² including the GAR. The 80 words of the Anthem that are commonly sung before sporting events or important events inspire us, and

¹ [Fort McHenry Battle Facts and Summary | American Battlefield Trust \(battlefields.org\)](https://battlefields.org/fort-mchenry-battle-facts-and-summary)

² [National Anthem - Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine \(U.S. National Park Service\) \(nps.gov\)](https://www.nps.gov/learn/visit/visit-details.cfm/fort-mchenry-national-monument-and-historic-shrine)

remind us that no matter what during the darkest of nights, that flag will keep waving. It inspired those who came before us to do amazing things for this country, and it will inspire those who come after us to do the same. "It was waved over our cradles. Let us make the high resolve that, unchanged and unstained as it came from the hands of our fathers, it shall wave over our graves."³ This is why, to me, no other song should be given the same honors as The Star Spangled Banner.

Although it has only been the Official National Anthem of the United States of America for the past 90 years, the Anthem was inspiring Americans long before to have love of country and to do whatever it took to protect us as well as better the nation. In fact, the first time the Anthem was played during a professional sporting event was on 5 Sep 1918 during Game 1 of the World Series between the Boston Red Sox and the Chicago Cubs because of the U.S. involvement in WWI and a sign of support for those at war.⁴ Side note for the baseball historians among us, the game was ironically played at Comiskey Park not Wrigley Field for its larger seating capacity, Babe Ruth was the starting pitcher for the Red Sox and...the most astonishing...a 9 inning game was played in less than 2 hours, 1 hour and 50 minutes to be exact.⁵ Okay tangent over, back to our regularly scheduled program, in the 90 years since, it has inspired us all to do better, and to become better people, which in turn, turns us into better Americans. I know that this is a little different compared to my normal instructions, but sometimes, an off speed pitch is necessary to keep the hitter off balance. (I won't apologize for my abundance of baseball references, its playoff time in America's Pastime.)

In Fraternity, Charity and Loyalty,

Br. Ben Frail, PDC

National Patriotic Instructor

³ "Rituals and Ceremonies of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, 2019 Edition" Pg. 10

⁴ [National Anthem - Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine \(U.S. National Park Service\) \(nps.gov\)](#)

⁵ [1918 World Series Game 1, Boston Red Sox at Chicago Cubs, September 5, 1918 | Baseball-Reference.com](#)