

## **Time for Law to Save Old Glory**

On March 28, a small group of veterans will assemble in the nation's capital in support of a constitutional amendment to protect their flag. These veterans are Medal of Honor recipients who have been here many times in their tireless struggle to recapture Old Glory, the symbol under which they gave so much of body and soul on America's battlefields.

Chances are you never heard of their battle for our flag, but if their names were Bob Kerrey or John Glenn or Paul Bucha, they would be heroes - media heroes - because they agree with the media. They are against the flag amendment. Interestingly, there are no media heroes in favor of the flag amendment.

Let's hear from some of the 90 percent living recipients who disagree with Messrs. Glenn, Kerrey and Bucha, whose heroism equals theirs and should allow them to be heard on this issue.

Wounded three times on Iwo Jima, George Whalen witnessed the raising of the flag on Mount Suribachi. It inspired him to rescue countless comrades while wounded. "The Stars and Stripes of our nation's flag is the symbol of our nation's values," he says. "It represents our loyalty, our patriotism and our love of country. The flag, in my mind, is a sacred emblem of our country's greatness, and is deserving of respect and protection above all the monuments in this country."

Walter Ehlers' brother was killed a few hundred yards from him when they both landed at Normandy. He later single-handedly took out an enemy patrol, two machine-gun crews and two mortar sections. "Our flag is the most respected emblem in the world," he says. "I am a strong supporter of a constitutional amendment to protect the flag. We have the best of everything: people, government, freedom and opportunities. And Old Glory is the symbol of all those things."

Gen. Ray Davis, a legendary Marine hero in Korea and the man most responsible for the Korean War Memorial, says: "The true wonder of Old Glory is the inspiration it has provided to all of America's patriots. You cannot deface any national monument, yet can deface the monument to all the great people and events of our nation's history: Old Glory. The time has come for Americans to stand up for the symbol that stands for everything we are."

Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf, not a Medal of Honor recipient but certainly every bit the hero John Glenn is, says: "I regard the legal protection of our flag as an absolute necessity and a matter of critical importance to our nation." He speaks for his troops: "Most of these great heroes share my view that there is no threat to any right or freedom in protecting the flag for which they fought. Perhaps as much as any American, they embrace the right to free speech. Indeed, they risked death to protect it. I do, however, see a very real threat in the defilement of our flag."

There are literally millions of American heroes who agree with these men and disagree with the media heroes. These military men know that military weakness guarantees war and defeat. Moral weakness guarantees the defeat of democracy. Burning the American flag is the sign of moral weakness in an individual. Legalized burning of the American flag is the sign of moral weakness

in America.

Military people pledge before the flag to protect and defend the Constitution from all enemies - foreign and domestic. Civilians do the same when they recite the Pledge of Allegiance to our flag. There is no viable foreign threat to our Constitution; the threat is domestic.

Our Constitution must never be distorted. The heroes quoted have participated in the defeat of foreign enemies to our Constitution. It is comforting to know these warriors are joined in the battle to recapture Old Glory. It is a reaffirmation of their oath as soldiers and their pledge as civilians to protect and to defend the Constitution from all enemies - foreign and, tragically, domestic.

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In response to the above article, which appeared in the Washington Times, columnist John Fales wrote:

Dear Gen. Brady:

What you failed to mention in your eloquent letter is the fact that you are also a hero, as you, too, are a distinguished Medal of Honor recipient.

In Justice John Paul Stevens' dissent in *Texas vs. Johnson* (491 U.S. 397, 1989), he writes: ". . . Sanctioning the public desecration of the flag will tarnish its value - both for those who cherish the ideas for which it waves and for those who desire to don the roles of martyrdom by burning it. That tarnish is not justified by the trivial burden on free expression occasioned by requiring that an available, alternative mode of expression - including uttering the words critical of the flag (see *Street vs. New York*) - be employed."

As a blinded Vietnam veteran, I can only hear Old Glory whispering in the wind as it proudly waves in front of my home. In my mind's eye I can still visualize our sacred symbol covering coffins of fellow Vietnam veterans and being ceremoniously handed to their grieving loved ones as the bugle echoes taps. And, in my heart, I know this flag unifies our country and symbolizes the blood that runs through the veins of our nation.

In James Clavell's novel, "The Children's Story," he describes the United States being taken over by a foreign power. In one vivid scene, Mr. Clavell describes the brainwashing of the children by their new state-appointed teacher. He portrays the teacher mentally manipulating the little ones, persuading them to cut up the American flag. "So the flag was cut up by the children and they were very proud that they each had a piece. But now the flagpole was bare and strange. And useless."