

"Writing the truth  
as I see it;  
trying not to  
offend  
those who will  
disagree."

# The truth as I see it™

Idaho Common Sense™



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## What do we see in our flag?

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A high school social studies teacher took a unique approach to teaching her classes the value of being an American. She had all the student desks removed from her classroom. And, as each period's class arrived, shocked there were no desks, she said to them, "I want you to have a desk, but before you can have one you have to tell me how you earned the right to sit at one of these desks."

None of her students could correctly answer the question. Neither could I. So, what have we done to earn the right to sit at one of those desks? Maybe this is a good question to think about this Fourth of July while watching parades, going to family picnics, and celebrating with fireworks.

This reminds me of a photo I have of the flag passing by in a Fourth of July parade. The only person standing is an aged veteran lifting himself out of his wheelchair. What brought him out of that chair? What put those tears in his eyes? What made him go to war? What did he see in our flag others do not?

I remember a veteran I met last year. He served in Vietnam, volunteering, not drafted. He came home from the war but without his legs. He painfully remembered being treated rudely because he served in Vietnam, waiting many years before hearing a thank you from a fellow American. I had to ask. If he had it to do over again,

knowing what would happen, what would he do? Almost before I finished the question he said, "I would volunteer again; this is my country." What made him volunteer? What does he see in our flag others do not?

On the anniversary of D-Day I watched an interview with one of the surviving Rangers who scaled the cliffs at Normandy, a medic. He said as soon as he stepped off the landing craft, he started caring for the wounded who were piling up on the beach under the incessant enemy fire. There were too many injured, too few medics.

The interviewer asked him if he considered staying on the beach, caring for the injured, rather than going up the cliffs where he knew that more likely than not he would die. He matter-of-factly said he had to go up the cliffs. They were his men and if he did not go he would embarrass himself. What does he see in our flag others do not?

Not too long ago, I received an email from another veteran, a retired dairy farmer. Still very much in love with his country, he wrote, "I cherished the opportunity to make decisions as to how to run my business," adding, "I'm glad I had the freedom to succeed or fail." I doubt he ever experienced 8-hour days, overtime or minimum wage.

He finished with, "I am a WWII veteran who fought to

insure a free country for my children and grandchildren. I only hope my efforts were not in vain." What does he see in our flag others do not?

And the teacher's question? At the end of the day she opened the door to her classroom and in walked 27 United States veterans, all in uniform, each carrying a student desk.

The teacher looked at the students and explained, "You didn't earn the right to sit at these desks. These heroes did it for you. They placed the desks here for you. Now, it's up to you to sit in them. It is your responsibility to learn, to be good students, to be good citizens. They paid the price so that you could have the freedom to get an education. I encourage you to never forget it."

What should we see in our flag others do not?