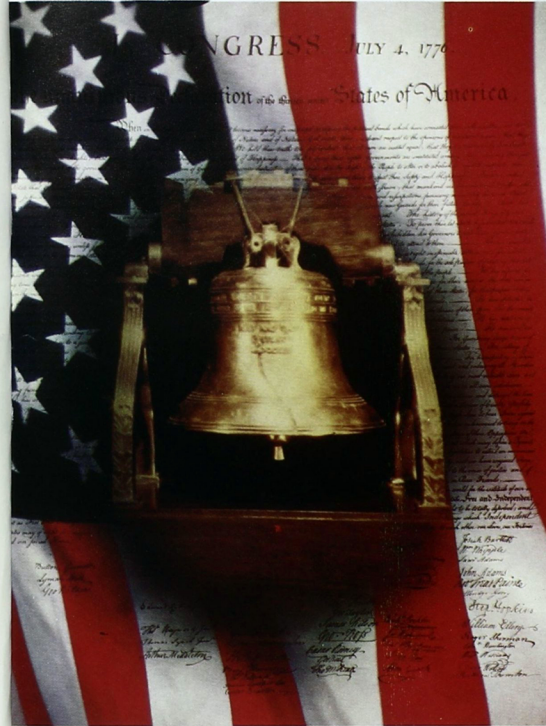


“I Am the Nation . . .”



I was born on July 4, 1776, and the Declaration of Independence is my birth certificate. The bloodline of the world runs in my veins, because I offered freedom to the oppressed. I am many things, and many people. I am the Nation.

I am 200 million people, living souls and the ghosts of millions who have lived and died for me.

I am Nathan Hale and Paul Revere. I stood at Lexington and fired the shot heard around the world. I am Washington, Jefferson and Patrick Henry. I am John Paul Jones, the Green Mountain Boys and Davy Crockett. I am Lee and Grant, and Abe Lincoln.

I remember the Alamo, the Maine and Pearl Harbor. When Freedom called, I answered and stayed until it was over, over there. I left my heroic dead in Flanders Fields, on the Rock of Corregidor, and the Black steppes of Korea.

I am the Brooklyn Bridge, the wheat lands of Kansas, the granite hills of Vermont, the potato fields of Wisconsin. I am the coalfields of the Virginias and Pennsylvania, the fertile lands of the Mid-west, The Golden Gate and the Grand Canyon. I am Independence Hall, the Monitor and the Merrimac.

I am big! I sprawl from the Atlantic to the Pacific, three million square miles throbbing with industry. I am more than five million farms. I am forest, field, mountain, desert. I am quiet villages and cities that never sleep.

You can look at me and see Ben Franklin walking down the streets of Philadelphia with his breadloaf under his arm. You can see Betsy Ross with her needle. You can see the lights of Christmas, and hear the strains of Auld Lang Syne as the calendar turns.

I am Babe Ruth and the World Series. I am 169,000 schools and colleges, and 250,000 churches where my people worship God as they like best. I am a ballot dropping in a box, the roar of a crowd at the stadium, and the voice of a choir in a cathedral. I am an editorial in a newspaper and a letter to a congressman.

I am Eli Whitney and Stephen Foster. I am Thomas Edison, Albert Einstein and Billy Graham. I am Horace Greeley, Will Rogers and the Wright Brothers. I am George Washington Carver, Daniel Webster and Jonas Salk.

I am Longfellow, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Walt Whitman and Tom Paine. I am Phillip Brooks, Billy Sunday and Bishop Quayle.

Yes, I am the Nation, and these are the things I am. I was conceived in Freedom and, God willing, in Freedom I will spend the rest of my days.

May I possess always the integrity, the courage, and the strength to keep myself unshackled, to remain a citadel of freedom and a beacon of hope to the world. This is my wish, my goal, and my prayer on this my birthday, two-hundred years after I was born.

Author Unknown

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