***For Release Wednesday, July 5, 2023***

**Capitol View**

**Commentary by J.L. Schmidt**

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**Independence Day. The Fourth of July.**

It slipped in on an uneventful Tuesday this year, although many towns celebrated on Monday the Third just to give the holiday a long weekend type feel. Maybe it was a little bit easier to remember the true historic origins of the holiday this year, given the drought and all the caution about fireworks lighting up more than just the night sky.

July 4, 1776, was the day when the Continental Congress sought to take the upper hand in the relentless power struggle with the British monarchy over absolute control of the colonies. That’s when the Declaration of Independence was approved. In subsequent years it was celebrated with colorful parades, flag raising and barbecues.

I like what humorist Erma Bombeck said years ago: "You have to love a nation that celebrates its independence every July 4, not with a parade of guns, tanks, and [soldiers](https://www.thoughtco.com/quotations-for-holidays-4133224) who file by the White House in a show of strength and muscle, but with family picnics where kids throw Frisbees, the potato salad gets iffy, and the flies die from happiness. You may think you have overeaten, but it is patriotism."

**President Dwight D. Eisenhower waxed almost poetically when he said:**"Freedom has its life in the hearts, the actions, the spirit of men and so it must be daily earned and refreshed - else like a flower cut from its life-giving roots, it will wither and die."

Remember it was Eisenhower who had the vision to push for the Interstate highway system which now allows millions of Americans to zip off to celebrate with friends and families in other states, and pray all the way that road crews won’t be working on a holiday so the speed limit won’t be restricted.

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**Country singer Lee Greenwood sang that almost overworked popular anthem:**"And I'm proud to be an American, where at least I know I'm free. And I won't forget the men who died, who gave that right to me." In the chorus, these words: “Cause the flag still stands for freedom, and they can't take that away.”

What about the red, white, and blue? It still flies proudly on poles outside government buildings and schools. Many of us hang one from a pole at our homes to honor the occasion, not unlike Memorial Day and Veteran’s Day.

I remember the horror of the anti-Vietnam War protests where American flags were burned or stomped on or torn to shreds. Recent protests of a variety of social issues have featured the same disgusting activity.

It seems that America is now more concerned about the red (Republican) and the blue (Democrat) because it apparently matters to some which party you stand for. How about we stand for the independent spirit, which made us proud of the flag in the first place and truly represented our freedom and independence?

**Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey offered:**"We need an America with the wisdom of experience. But we must not let America grow old in spirit."

Let’s honor the tradition as we remember it without letting the nation’s spirit grow old. Parades, flags, fireworks, potato salad. Don’t wait until the next Independence Day to do it. Make up your own holiday if you need to. Just remember to keep the potato salad refrigerated or at least cool.

Above all, be wise.

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*J.L. Schmidt has been covering Nebraska government and politics since 1979. He has been a registered Independent for more than 20 years.*