



Bishop's Independence Day Letter, 4<sup>th</sup> July 2018, Anno Domini

**B**UT *be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. <sup>23</sup> For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: <sup>24</sup> For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. <sup>25</sup> But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.* (James 1:21-25)

The American people have a blessed heritage in music. Someone has said, "Show me the music of a people and I will tell you their character." How true that statement, and how great the musical heritage of our Country. The music of my young life was predominantly of three kinds – classical hymns, military marches, and the folk songs like those of Stephen Foster. No, I am not 175 years old, but changes did not occur so rapidly in the foothills of the Blue Ridge as in other parts of the nation. I account the nature of those foothills to be a blessing and not a detriment.

I was born in 1943 during the midst of the great Second World War. Shortly after my coming, my father went into the service of the US Army. He was involved in a variety of combat operations, but the most profound, in his mind, was the Battle of the Ardennes Forest (Battle of the Bulge). Sometime in the Spring of 1945, I remember my mother and sister dancing all over the living room, shouting and singing, and throwing magazines against the ceiling. I remember the radio playing all kinds of marching music. I was not quite 2 years old, but I remember this distinctly because it was of such gravity to a toddler. My mother kept saying, "Daddy is coming home!" That music was so powerful and stimulating that it became a part of my favorite categories of music. I remember the Memorial Day, Independence Day, and Veterans Day parades following the World War that were so full of patriotic pride and punctuated by the martial music of John Philip Souza – songs such as Stars and Stripes Forever, Under the Double Eagle, The Thunderer, The Liberty Bell, Semper Fidelis (Marine Hymn), and the Army Caisson Song, plus 130 other Souza marches. I love these marches.

I remember, too, the classic old hymns of the church which were featured every morning on our radio stations. In those days, America was more reflective and appreciative of their past. The glorious struggle for Liberty was the proud heritage displayed in our Flag, Old Glory. We all, in those days, knew that America was different – that our freedoms were purchased at the high cost of the blood of our courageous

countrymen for us. We were the star in the heavens of the nations, and we knew it. The world knew it, too.

What has changed in America? The land is still the same geographic land of old. Our Constitution and form of government is still our center piece of the Republic. But something has changed. I believe it is the memory and morals of our people, and our sure knowledge of our security in the Sovereign of our Nation who is the Lord. Perhaps this 4<sup>th</sup> of July, each of us may reflect on the sacrifices which have purchased our liberties and privileges, and Stand at the Ready to continue the march of our Fathers to the Stars of Heaven depicted on our flag. Our National Cemeteries are the physical evidence of those sacrifices made for our Nation.

Perhaps we might remember to sing, God Bless America, and pray that we could merit such blessings once more.

Godspeed,



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