



"Our Lives, Our Fortunes, Our Sacred Honor"

This is a paraphrased article that I found on the internet and which I presented in my July issue of my Newsletter CLIMBING THE MOUNTAIN. It contains little known facts and data that help us to appreciate our United States of America with a new and different perspective.

Congress got to work, promptly taking up an emergency measure about which there was discussion but no dissension. Then Congress transformed itself into a committee of the whole. The Declaration of Independence was read aloud once more, and debate resumed. Though Jefferson was the best writer of all of them, he had been somewhat verbose. Congress hacked the excess away. Jefferson groaned as they continued what he later called "their depredations." "Inherent and inalienable rights" came out "certain unalienable rights," and to this day no one knows who suggested the elegant change. A total of 86 alterations were made and almost 500 words eliminated. After three days of wrangling, the document was put to a vote. Here in this hall Patrick Henry had once thundered: "I am no longer a Virginian, sir, but an American." But today the loud, sometimes bitter argument stilled, and without fanfare the vote was taken from north to south by colonies, as was the custom. On July 4, 1776, the Declaration of Independence was adopted.

What kind of men were the 56 signers and who committed an act of treason against the crown? The names Franklin, Adams, Hancock and Jefferson are familiar as household words. Most of us, however, know nothing of the other signers. What happened to them? You may be surprised at the names not there: George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, and Patrick Henry who were all elsewhere

Ben Franklin was the only really old man, eighteen were under 40; three were in their 20s, almost half were judges and lawyers, eleven were merchants, nine were landowners and farmers, and the remaining were doctors, ministers, and politicians. With only a few exceptions, these were men of substantial property. All but two had families; the vast majority were men of education and standing in their communities that had economic

security as few men had in the 18th Century. Each had more to lose from revolution than to gain by it. The very rich John Hancock already had a price of 500 pounds on his head. He signed in enormous letters so that his Majesty could now read his name without glasses and could now double the reward. Ben Franklin wryly noted: "Indeed we must all hang together; otherwise we shall most assuredly hang separately." Fat Benjamin Harrison of Virginia told tiny Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts: "With me it will all be over in a minute, but you, you will be dancing on air an hour after I am gone."

These men knew what they risked. The penalty for treason was death by hanging. A great British fleet was already anchored in New York Harbor. They were sober men. There were no dreamy-eyed intellectuals or draft card burners here. It was equality with the mother country they desired. It was taxation with representation they sought. They were all conservatives, yet they rebelled. It was principle, not property, that brought these men to Philadelphia. Two of them became presidents of the United States, seven became state governors, one died in office as vice president and several would go on to become U.S. Senators. One founded the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad in 1828. One, Francis Hopkinson from Philadelphia, was the only real poet, musician and philosopher of the signers. It was he, not Betsy Ross, who designed the United States flag.

Richard Henry Lee of Virginia had introduced the resolution to adopt the Declaration of Independence in June of 1776. He was prophetic in his concluding remarks: "Why then sir, why do we longer delay? Why still deliberate? Let this happy day give birth to an American Republic. Let her arise not to devastate and to conquer but to reestablish the reign of peace and law. The eyes of Europe are fixed upon us. She demands of us a living example of freedom that may exhibit a contrast in the felicity of the citizen to the ever-increasing tyranny which desolates her polluted shores. She invites us to prepare an asylum where the unhappy may find solace, and the persecuted repost. If we are not this day wanting in our duty, the names of the American Legislatures of 1776 will be placed by posterity at the side of all of those whose memory has been and ever will be dear to virtuous men and good citizens."

Though it was formally adopted July 4, it was not until July 8 that two of the states authorized their delegates to sign, and it was not until August 2 that the signers met at Philadelphia to actually put their names to the Declaration. One man declared: "My hand trembles, but my heart does not." The British marked down every member of Congress suspected of having put his name to treason. All of them became objects of vicious manhunts, some were taken and some had narrow escapes. All who had property or families suffered. Francis Lewis of New York had his home plundered and estates destroyed and Mrs. Lewis was captured and treated with brutality, dying after her release from the effects of her abuse. Another delegate, William Floyd escaped with his wife and children to Connecticut, where they lived without income for seven years and came home to devastated ruin.

Philips Livingstone had all his holdings confiscated and his family driven out of their home. He died in 1778 still working in Congress for the cause. Louis Morris, saw all his timber, crops, and livestock taken and was barred from his home and family for seven

years. John Hart of New Jersey risked his life returning home to see his dying wife with soldiers, who had laid ruin to his property, riding after him only to escape into the woods. He slept in caves and finally, emaciated by hardship, he snuck back home to find that his wife had already been buried, and his 13 children taken away. He never saw them again.

Dr. John Witherspoon, president of the now Princeton University had British troops billeted in the college. They burned the finest college library in the country. Judge Richard Stockton, of New Jersey, had rushed back to his estate to evacuate his wife and children. Although they found refuge with friends, a Tory sympathizer betrayed them and he was pulled from bed and brutally beaten, thrown into a common jail and starved. After Congress arranged for his parole and he was released when he could no longer harm the British cause because of poor health, he returned home to find his estate looted. He died before seeing the triumph of the Revolution. His family lived off charity.

Robert Morris, from Philadelphia, consistently met Washington's appeals for money. He made and raised arms and provisions making it possible for Washington to cross the Delaware at Trenton. He lost 150 ships at sea which bled his fortune and credit. George Clymer, from Pennsylvania, escaped with his family but their property was completely destroyed by the British in the Germantown and Brandywine campaigns. Dr. Benjamin Rush, of Pennsylvania, was forced to flee to Maryland and had several narrow escapes. John Martin, a Tory previous to the debate who, when he came out for independence, was ostracized by relatives and friends which many believed ultimately killed him. His last words were: "Tell them that they will live to see the hour when they shall acknowledge it to have been the most glorious service that I have ever rendered to my country."

William Ellery from Rhode Island saw his home burned to the ground while Thomas Lynch, Jr. from South Carolina, had his health broken from privation and exposures while serving as a company commander in the military. When his doctors ordered him to seek a cure in the West Indies he and his young bride were drowned at sea. Edward Rutledge, Arthur Middleton, and Thomas Heyward, Jr. were taken by the British in the siege of Charleston. They were made prisoners of war to and later exchanged with the British having completely devastated their large landholdings and estates.

Thomas Nelson of Virginia was commander of the Virginia military forces. With British General Charles Cornwallis in Yorktown, fire from 70 heavy American guns began to destroy Yorktown. Cornwallis moved their headquarters into Nelson's palatial home. While the Americans were making a shambles of the town, Governor Nelson's house remained untouched. Turning in rage to the American gunners he asked, "Why do you spare my home?" They replied, "Sir, out of respect to you." He cried, "Give me the cannon!" and fired on his own home. But his sacrifice was not quite over. He had raised \$2 million for the Revolutionary cause by pledging his own estates. When the loans came due, Congress refused to honor them, his property was forfeited, and he died, impoverished at age 50.

Of those who signed the Declaration of Independence, 9 died of wounds or hardships, 5 were captured and imprisoned with brutal treatment, several lost wives, sons or entire

families, 2 wives were brutalized; all victims of manhunts and 12 had their homes completely burned, 17 lost everything yet not one defected or went back on his pledged word. Their honor and the nation they sacrificed so much to create are still intact. Finally, the New Jersey signer, Abraham Clark had his two sons captured and sent to a notorious prison where 11,000 American captives died. The younger sons were treated with special brutality because of their father. One was put in solitary and given no food. With the war almost won, no one could have blamed Clark for acceding to the British offer of his sons' lives in exchange for his recanting and coming out for the King and Parliament. With utter despair and anguish in his soul, his response must reach out to each one of us down through 200 years with his answer: "No."

These words "and for the support of this Declaration with a firm reliance on the protection of divine providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor" must remain in our hearts today. I suggest that each of you take the time this month to read through the text of the Declaration, one of the most noble and beautiful political documents in human history. There are no more profound words than this: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." These words signify our freedom, tested by blood, and watered with tears. It is our legacy and driving force. - Rush Limbaugh III

A Brief Biographical Sketch

After an over 40 year career as a professional psychotherapist and Director of The Sports Stress Clinic in Amherst, NY, Charles Bonasera came to Florida and decided to use the benefits of his previous professional experiences in his new roles of Consultant in Life Management and Business Coaching as well as his expertise as a Motivational Speaker. He once again became involved with athletes in different sports training them with his techniques to help them develop and maintain focus as well as staying in their zone. Much of his training methods are derived from the CD collection he developed under the heading of WIN-WIN SECRETS as the President of Personal Identity Controls. This collection consists of thirty-six programs dealing with vital issues in the management of stress.

Another role that he adopted to add to his professional career was that of Author. Early in the 1980's he wrote Guide to a Life Management Process which he has re-written as a workbook to successfully help people manage their stress which includes his own Working Model. As a result in his interest in golf and realizing that it was essentially a "mind game", he wrote The Mental Side of Golf which can benefit the beginner as well as professionals playing the game of golf.

He then compiled over five-hundred sayings that he had developed in the course of his professional career as stimuli to help people change patterns in their lives entitled How to Stay Well and Live Life to the Fullest. This was followed by a book documenting

case studies around disruptive life patterns including ways to change them under the name of How in the Hell Did This Happen to Me? Both his personal involvement in sports as a participant, coach, manager and in his role in officiating, inspired him to write a primer for parents and coaches entitled The Legend of Little League.

Charles invites you to view his website at www.charlesmbonasera.com as well as to write with your comments and questions to his e-mail address (charles@charlesmbonasera.com). He would also be very happy to communicate with his readers by telephone should they desire. His professional motto is “seeking alternative methods to happiness” and wishes those touched by his words to practice the three secrets to a happy life: “enjoy life and enjoy it thoroughly ... develop and maintain a sense of humor ... bring as much love into your life as possible.