

The Writing of the Star Spangled Banner

There was a lawyer once named Francis Scott Key. He penned a song-I know you've heard it. It's called the National Anthem. It is our song as Americans.

However, we go to a ball game and we sing the words of the song and it floats over our mind and our lips and we don't realize what we are singing.

Let me tell you a story. The United States were at war with the British. They had destroyed our capitol-Washington DC-burned the White House and sent our President running away.

Francis Scott Key was a young lawyer in Baltimore. He had been hired to negotiate the release of Dr. Beames, a prominent citizen and others.

The colonies were engaged in vicious conflict with the mother country Britain. Because of this conflict and the protractiveness of it, they had accumulated prisoners on both sides. The American colonies had prisoners and the British had prisoners and the American Government initiated a trade. They went to the British and said, let us negotiate for the release of these prisoners. They said, we want to send a man out to discuss this with you.

They were holding the American Prisoners in boats about a thousand yards off shore. They said that they wanted to send a man by the name of Francis Scott Key. He will come out and negotiate to see if we can make a mutual exchange.

On the appointed day in a row boat, he went out to negotiated with the British officials and reach a conclusion that men could be exchanged on a one to one basis.

Francis Scott Key, jubilant with the fact that he had been successful, went down below in the board where he found cargo hold full of humanity-men.

And he said, "Men, I have news for you tonight. You are free". He said that tonight he had negotiated successfully their return to the colonies. He told them that they will be taken out; out of this boat and out of your chains.

As he went back up, on board, to arrange for the passage to the shore, the admiral came and said, " We will still honor our commitment to release these men, but it will only be academic after tonight. It won't matter."

Francis Scott Key asked him what he meant. He said, " Mr. Key, tonight we have laid an ultimatum upon the Colonies!"

"Your people will either capitulate and lay down the colors of that flag that you think so much of-Or do you see that Fort right over there-Fort McHenry. We are going to remove it from the face of the earth.

He said, "How are you going to do that?"

He said if you will scan the horizon of the sea and as he looked he saw hundreds of little dots. That is the entire British War Fleet. All the gunpowder and all of the armament is being called up to demolish that fort. In a matter of two and a half hours, it will be in striking distance. The war will be over and the men will be free anyway

Key said, "You can't shell that fort. He said that's a large fort. It is full of women and children. It is predominantly a military fort.

"Don't worry about it.", he said, "we left them a way out. Do you see that big flag up the rampart? We have told them if they would lower the flag, the shelling would stop immediately and we know that they have surrendered and you will now be under british rule."

Francis Scott Key went down below and told the men what was about to happen, and they asked how many ships? He said that there were hundreds. As the ship got closer, Francis Scott key went back up on top and said, "Men, I will

shout down what is going on as we watch.”

As twilight began to fall and as the haze hung over the ocean as it does at sunset-

Suddenly

the British war fleet started to unleash-

BOOM!!!

He said the sound was deafening. There were so many guns that there was no release. He said it was absolutely impossible to talk or hear. The sky, although dark was suddenly lit.

The admiral came and said to Key, that his people were insane. He wondered what’s the matter with them. Don’t they know that this is an impossible situation?

Francis Scott Key said he remembered what George Washington had said. He said that is what sets the American Christian apart from all other people in the world is he will die on his feet before he will live on his knees.

The admiral reported that they have now instructed all guns to focus on the rampart to take that flag down.

From down below-all he could hear was the men/prisoners saying was, “Tell us where the flag is! What have they done with the flag? Is the flag still flying over the rampart? Tell Us!

One hour; Two hours; Three Hours; into the shelling. Every time the bomb would explode it would be close to the flag. They could see the flat in the illuminated red glare of the bomb.

Francis Scott Key would report to the men. It’s still up. It’s not down. It’s still flying. A cheer would come from below-

The admiral said we don't understand something. Our recognizance tells us that the flag has been hit directly again, and again, and again, and it is still flying. We don't understand how.

Now we are about to bring every gun for the next three hours on that point. Francis Scott Key said the barrage was unmerciful. All he could hear was the men down below praying the prayer-" God keep that flag flying where we last saw it!

Sunrise came. He said there was a heavy mist hanging over the land. But the rampart was tall enough-there stood the flag, completely nondescript in shreds. the flag pole itself was at a crazy angle, but the flag was still at the top.

Francis Scott Key went to shore to Fort Henry to see what had happened. He found that the flag pole and the flag had repetitive direct hits. When the pole had fallen, but men, fathers who knew what is meant for that flag to be on the ground, although knowing that the British guns were trained on it, walked over and held it up until they were killed. Their bodies were removed and others took their place.

Francis Scott Key said that what held the flag that that peculiar angle were patriot bodies. He penned the song, "O say can you see, By the dawns early light, What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming. For the rockets red glare gave proof through the night, that our flag was still there. Oh say does that Star Spangled banner-yet fly and wave over the land of the free and the home of the brave.