

## Metal and Wood

by Dennis Bateman

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It is a rare person who does not attach some sort of value or emotion to some physical object or to an event. A home becomes more than a building. A statue of the Virgin Mary, a crucifix, a flag or a song, or even a photograph can stir emotions greater than the value of the material item.

I have a piece of paper showing I served in the military until I was discharged honorably. But, oh, the memories that piece of paper conjures up. The friends, the fun times. The bad times. The times when we were bound closer to strangers than to our own families and, in frightening chaos, our lives hung by a thread.

Many of our friends died far from home. Ask us about the feeling of "American soil" upon returning to the land we loved. Ask those returning soldiers about America.

Remember the old, faintly humorous band of American Legionnaires, wearing out-dated military uniforms straining at the buttons. But, God how proudly they marched. Grinning, waving to friends and families, and always, always "The Flag!" Ask them if the flag is mere cloth, I dare you.

See the elderly lady sitting in a lawn chair watching the fourth of July parade. Three flags carefully folded some forty years ago into triangles now rest in her lap - one for each lost son. Ask her if those flags are mere cloth, I dare you.

Look at the old man quietly crying, leaning against the Iwo Jima Memorial at Arlington Cemetery. As he turns to you, smiles with some embarrassment, and says in a choked whisper, "I was there." Ask him, "Is it just metal and clay?" Ask him. I dare you.

The Wall. My God, the Wall. See the young man lightly tracing the name of his father there inscribed. Ask him if its just rock. Ask him. I dare you.

My guns? They're of little real value compared to my family and my home. They are toys, or tools, or both. But what those guns represent to me is greater than all of us, greater than myself, my family, indeed greater than our entire generation. What could be of such value?

The freedom of man to live within civil, self-imposed limitations rather than under restrictions placed upon him by a ruler or a ruling class.

Imagine the daring, the bravery of a few men to declare they intended to create a new country, independent of the burden of their established Rulers!

Those men we call our forefathers were brilliant men. They could have maneuvered themselves into positions of influence within the structure of the times, but they did not. They struggled to free themselves from tyranny. They wrote the Declaration of Independence. And they backed up their words and ideals with metal and wood.

They knew the dangers of such dreams and actions. They knew it was a frightening and dangerous venture into the unknown when they dared reach beyond their grasp for a vision - for an ideal. But they dared to dedicate themselves to achieve Liberty and Freedom for their children, and their children's children, through the generations.

Imagine the dreams and yearnings of centuries finally being reduced to the written word. The Rights of "We the People!" instead of the "Powers of the Monarchy."

Our forefathers dared to create a new government - a new form of government. And they knew that any organization has, as its first and foremost goal, its continued existence. Second only to that it strives to increase its power. It plots, it devises, it maneuvers to achieve control over its environment - over its subjects.

Our Forefathers decided to make America different from any country, anywhere, at any time in the entire history of the entire world. This country, this new nation of immigrants, would be based upon the concept that people could rule themselves better than any single person or small group of persons could rule them.

Other countries have had outstanding documents with guarantees for its citizens - but the citizens have become enslaved. How, these great men pondered, can we ensure this new government will remain subject to the will of the People?

They wanted limits upon this new government. Therefore, our forefathers wrote limitations into the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. And one of those Rights was that metal and wood, as the final power of the people, would secure this country for the future generations.

Metal and wood were the means by which we won our freedom.

Metal and wood were the means by which we kept our freedom.

Metal and wood may be the means by which we regain our freedom.

Metal and wood are the final power of the people. Take away the metal and wood and the people become powerless - they can only beg, they supplicate for favors.

We are unique in our ability to rule ourselves but we are letting it slip away. Today we compromise. We try to appease man's insatiable appetite for power by throwing him bits of our freedoms. But the insatiable appetite for power can not be appeased. The freedoms we feed him only make us weaker and him stronger. We must conquer him and again ensure the "Blessings of Liberty" won for us by our forefathers.

We must be ready to use metal and wood again, for if we are ready, truly ready, we may be able to conquer the monster with words - for in its heart it is a coward. But if we continue to feed the monster our freedoms, we will become too weak to win, too weak even to fight, and we will become a conquered people. We will have sold ourselves and our future generations into servitude.

If words fail us, we will use metal and wood, we will regain what we have lost, we will achieve what we seek, we will guarantee the America of our forefathers for the future generations.

So you see, our guns are more than metal and wood. They are our heritage of freedom. They are the universally understood symbol that the government, no matter how big and strong it may be, answers to us! They are the tools we will use to prevent tyranny in the land of our forefathers and our children. So, ask me what my guns mean to me. Ask my children what our guns mean to them. Ask us. I dare you.