The Blessings of Liberty

John Adams once said, "a Constitution of Government once changed from Freedom can never be restored. Liberty, once lost, is lost forever." The character of a nation is found in those individuals whose commitment to securing the blessings of liberty is a lifelong calling. It is a story of people…we, the people…

Thirty-nine men ranging in age from 26 to 81 signed their names upon the Constitution of the United States. One of these men, Daniel Carroll, was one of just four men who signed the Constitution and its precursor, the Articles of Confederation. Carroll hailed from a prominent Colonial family whose motto was "Strong in Faith and War." The motto proved true, for his family was strongly devoted to the Revolutionary cause. His cousin Charles signed the Declaration of Independence, and his brother John gained notoriety as the first Catholic bishop in the United States.

He might have entered a political career early in life, except for the Maryland laws that prohibited a Catholic from holding public office. When the Maryland Constitution overturned those laws in 1776, Carroll was soon elected to the Maryland legislature.

Like Gouveneur Morris, he was a strong nationalist who supported a central government. Perhaps his greatest contribution to American history was his insistence at the Constitutional Convention that the President should not be elected "by the legislature" but "by the people." He struck a blow for religious freedom when he signed his name to the Constitution, one of only two Catholics to do so.

Another of the convention delegates, Hugh Williamson, did not have career aspirations as a politician. He was originally licensed as a Presbyterian minister in Connecticut, but his health forced him to abandon that calling. Instead, he took a job as a mathematics professor at the College of Philadelphia, now called the University of Pennsylvania. From there, Williamson decided to become a doctor and went abroad to study before returning to Philadelphia to begin his private practice.

In 1777, Williamson tried to join the Continental Army as a physician, but there was not an opening for him. So the doctor took matters into his own hands, deciding the best way to help the rebels was to get medical supplies from the West Indies to the colonies through the British blockade. When the Americans suffered defeat to British General Cornwallis in South Carolina, Williamson volunteered to travel behind enemy lines to care for the wounded American soldiers. A smallpox epidemic threatened the camp during his two-month stay, but because Cornwallis heeded the advice of Dr. Williamson, the disease was warded off and both the American and British lives were saved. The doctor was later called upon once more to serve the military. He educated soldiers on the importance of sanitation and diet, and during the war skirmishes in the swamps of South Carolina, he kept his unit virtually disease free.

By his actions, Williamson earned the respect of military personnel and his neighbors and was elected to public office. He was "a useful member" at the Constitutional Convention according to a fellow attendee, Thomas Jefferson, and was one of three physicians to help draft the Constitution.

Another of the physicians was James McHenry, who hailed from Maryland before moving to Philadelphia to study medicine. McHenry served as surgeon for the 5th

Pennsylvania battalion during the Revolutionary War. He was captured by the British at Fort Washington, New York and was held for over a year. After his release, he became secretary to George Washington at Valley Forge before joining the Marquis de Lafayette's staff. He served in the Maryland Senate before becoming a delegate to the Constitutional Convention, and after his service there, and like predecessor Henry Knox, he rose to the office of Secretary of War and served under Presidents Washington and Adams.

Perhaps his greatest legacy was not in his own personal achievements, but rather in an unlikely contribution to America's history. A fort was constructed in Baltimore, Maryland to defend the harbor from a British attack. It was named Fort McHenry in the Secretary's honor. The only time the fort was attacked was during the Battle of Baltimore as part of the War of 1812, a war that James McHenry opposed. Coincidentally, McHenry's own son served at the fort and actually participated in the Battle of Baltimore.

The Americans were able to hold off the British during the attack. A Washington lawyer named Francis Scott Key witnessed the event, and was so inspired by the sight of the American flag flying over the fort at dawn, that he composed a poem titled "The Defense of Fort McHenry. We know this poem today as "The Star Spangled Banner," which is America's national anthem.

As for Fort McHenry, the location became a military prison during the Civil War for Confederates and sympathizers. Ironically, Key's grandson was one of the fort's detainees, a strange twist on the story that began with a signer of the Constitution and his namesake landmark.

Over a century ago General George Armstrong Custer predicted that Native Americans "will be talked about as a noble race who once existed and have passed away." Today, there are approximately fifteen million Americans who are either Native Americans or can trace their roots to Native Americans. While General Custer was mistaken about the passing away of the Native people, he was quite correct in recognizing their nobility.

Jeanne Marie Brightfire Stophlet (North American Indian Council):

Tecumseh was the leader of the Shawnee people. He was a great chief. He was important to our people because he fought for unity among the people.

Believed to have been born in 1768, Tecumseh and other Shawnee leaders such as Blue Jacket fought to preserve their territory from white settlers. When Blue Jacket died in 1810, Tecumseh rose to leadership and became Chief of the Shawnee. Believing that no treaty would protect Native American land, Tecumseh sought to unify all the Indian tribes from the Gulf of Mexico to the Great Lakes.

Tecumseh understood that to be a good leader and coexist with the white settlers, he had to further his education and learn their language and ways.

Jeanne Marie Brightfire Stophlet:

Tecumseh was one of the chiefs in the early times of the 1700's, when you think about the fact that he learned literature, he learned the history of the people, and

he had Rebecca Gallaway, who was a teacher, and he sought to be instructed. Even though among many Native American Indian people he was considered a very highly profitable person, and that he didn't need to learn anything, he had everything built within him, but he sought the teachings.

The governor of the Indian Territory, William Henry Harrison, called a council at Fort Wayne, Indiana, asking various Chiefs to sign a treaty that effectively gave away three million acres of land for little payment. Tecumseh opposed the treaty as unfair to native people, believing that God had given the land to the American Indians. On November 7, 1811, Harrison moved against Tecumseh to take the land by force in what became known as the Battle of Tippecanoe. This battle seriously damaged Tecumseh's dream of a unified Indian confederacy of nations.

When the war of 1812 arose, Tecumseh and his warriors joined the British army in an attempt to retake Indian Territory, and were successful in causing American General William Hull to surrender Detroit. In 1813, William Henry Harrison, now a general, took command of the Army of the Northwest and led an attack into Canada, crushing the British forces at the Battle of the Thames. Tecumseh was killed during this battle. Some eyewitness reports claim that Colonel Richard M. Johnson, who later became vice-president of the United States under President Martin Van Buren, shot Tecumseh. Although the chief's body was never found, his death at this battle is not disputed.

Jeanne Marie Brightfire Stophlet:

When he knew his time was coming, and Tecumseh's life was going to be over, what did he choose to do? He took off that brilliant military uniform that made people look at him and say, "Oh he's a great leader," and he put on the clothing of his people. So that when it was his time to go to the Creator and end that circle of life, he went back as the first people.

Tecumseh is remembered in American history as a great leader, who first sought peace in the attempt to bring unity. His commitment to the spirit of liberty is without question. Many places in America bear his name. Civil War General William Tecumseh Sherman was named after him, the "William" only being added years later by his foster parents. And hundreds of books, both fiction and historical, tell the story of Tecumseh.

Another Native American who gave of himself to better others was Samson Occom. In 1740, at the age of seventeen, Samson was exposed to Christianity through the Great Awakening and the preaching of men such as Jonathan Edwards and Methodist George Whitefield. Soon after his personal spiritual awakening, Occom began to study theology and was ordained as a Presbyterian minister. Concerned about Native American people, he became a missionary in New England.

Like Tecumseh, Occom was concerned about education. He not only wanted a better education for himself, but for his people, especially children and young adults.

Jeanne Marie Brightfire Stophlet (interview):

And so he stepped beyond the doorstep. He reached out to children in Indian schools. He reached out to see if they were being properly educated.

Along with Rev. Eleazar Wheelock, Occom raised money for the Indian Charity School. His preaching and fundraising efforts secured 12,000 pounds, 300 of which came from King George III. The sum, rather large for its day, was used as noted by the Connecticut Historical Society, to establish what was to become Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. In 1773, Occom made plans to set aside land for Native American habitation. However, these plans were interrupted with the onset of the Revolutionary War. The land eventually became home to the Brothertown Indian Nation.

Although Samson and his wife Mary had ten children of their own, they always found time to help and work with children.

Jeanne Marie Brightfire Stophlet:

And if you think of anyone who has touched your life and you say, "there but for the grace of God go I," then you can remember that this man reached out the hundreds and hundreds of children throughout the region and said, "I'm going to take time for you. I have time for my wife, I have time for my ten children, but I also have time for youth."

By all accounts, Occom was an outstanding speaker, an effective fundraiser, an inspiration to those around him, and a committed minister. Yet, his church denomination

paid him much less than white ministers who did far less. Nevertheless, Occom was not hindered because his dedication was to people, not personal profit.

> Jeanne Marie Brightfire Stophlet (interview):
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> He opened his home, he opened his church, he stopped on the roadside, he was never ever too busy to stop and talk to anyone. And his whole goal in life was to see that it would be a better place for people to live, and that no one would feel that they were unwanted.

Occom was one of the first Native Americans to publish works in English. He wrote a short autobiography titled, "A Short Narrative of My Life" as well as an account of the manners and the customs of the Montauk Indians, which can be found in the Massachusetts Historical Society, and several hymns. Occom died on July 14, 1792 and is buried in the former town of Brothertown, which is now Deansboro, New York. The United States during World War II named one of its liberty ships the U.S.S. Samson Occom in his honor.

Native Americans have honorably endured injustice throughout our nation's history. So have other minority groups including Asian-Americans, who suffered many attacks on their liberty, including those of detainment in concentration camps during the Second World War.

Anti-Japanese sentiment swept through the West in the months following the attack on Pearl Harbor. By February of 1942, support for the evacuation of all persons of Japanese ancestry was at its zenith.

Manzanar was the first camp to receive detainees. Acclaimed nature photographer Ansel Adams once said that, "Sometimes I do get to places just when God's ready to have somebody click the shutter." Ansel Adams is one of a handful of photographers to capture everyday life at Manzanar by combining his love of landscape photography with an incredible eye for people. His work was unique because it was the first to convey the spirit of hope and perseverance that defined the Japanese people in the face of tremendous difficulty. Adams' photos, along with a narrative essay of his experiences at the camp, were published in a book titled *Born Free and Equal*.

Internment Camp Prison Guard:

> Some people thought the Japanese didn't have it so bad. They had schools, churches, hospitals, even a YMCA and a golf course. But what they didn't have was freedom. If I was in their shoes, yeah, I'd have been bitter. But they never were. I still remember that first summer when it came time to plant the crops in that dry, dusty desert soil. I mean, no one believed those crops would grow…except for the workers, who tended to the soil every day as if their life depended on that orchard. And you know they produced a bumper crop? Enough to feed the entire camps and the other camps too! And from that time on, I didn't hate the Japanese anymore. I realized they were just like me, enough to make the best of the hand life dealt them.

One of the detainees profiled in Adams' book was American citizen Michael Koichi Yonemitsu, who served as an x-ray technician in the Manzanar hospital. His vision of the future included "a better understanding of all people to erase racial prejudice and a move toward greater religious tolerances." Michael's brother Robert heroically served in the military unit drafted from the ranks of interred Japanese known as the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. The regiment endured heavy casualties and was nicknamed the Christmas tree regiment for its many decorations, including 10,000 Purple Hearts and 18,000 decorations for valor in service. One soldier stated, "We were fighting for the rights of all Japanese-Americans. We set out to break every record in the army. If we failed, it would reflect discredit on all Japanese Americans. We could not let this happen."

Michael and Robert's father, Francis Yonemitsu, was born in Japan, which prohibited him from becoming a citizen. He yearned to see the government solve all the problems of racial equality and clung to his Catholic faith during the internment. Concerning his faith, Mr. Yonemitsu said, "Religion is valuable and we should attempt to further religion. Faith should be the guiding factor in our lives."

The evacuation tested not only the Japanese interred at Manzanar, but the character of the entire nation as well. As Ansel Adams wrote in the conclusion to *Born Free and Equal*, "We go through the conventional gestures of patriotism, discuss the constitution with casual conviction, contradict our principles with the distortions of race prejudice and class distinctions, and otherwise escape the implications of our civilization…Only when our foundations are shaken, our lives distorted by some great catastrophe, do we become aware of the potentials of our system and our government."

Sometimes the struggle for the blessings of liberty is found in individual freedoms, in achieving what lies beyond what an ordinary person can do. *Heroes of Ohio* author Rick Sowash tells the story of a farmer's wife and grandmother who achieved more than her family or friends, maybe even herself, ever thought was possible.

It was 1955. Emma Gatewood was sitting on a couch in her shabby little living room in the shabby little farmhouse where she lived and she was reading a magazine. You might say Emma Gatewood didn't have much of a life. She had cleaned other people's houses for years, trying to make enough money to get by. The farm had never paid. The soil wasn't very good down on the West Virginia border. Still, she'd raised her kids. They were grown and gone. Emma was divorced, living alone, reading this magazine. National Geographic Magazine, full of pictures and articles about far off places that she would never visit, when she came upon an article about a trail in the woods, only about this wide but 2,100 miles long, a trail across the top of the Appalachian mountains from Georgia to Maine. That's why they call this trail the Appalachian Trail.

And that day, Emma Gatewood had an idea. She thought, "I'll hike it. The whole trail. From Georgia to Maine, and I won't stop, except to sleep. And at the end of the hike, I'm going to stand up there, and I'm going to sing America the Beautiful." Well, now you've got to understand a couple things: Emma Gatewood had never been hiking or camping a day in her life. She knew nothing about living in the woods. Also, she was sixty-eight years old. 1955, only about a dozen people had ever hiked the whole

Appalachian Trail, and they were all men. No woman had ever tried such a thing. Still, she'd made up her mind to give it a shot.

She got together the things that she thought she might need into a canvas sack, carrying it over her shoulder. She put a couple of baby bottles for water, some raisins and peanuts for food, she went to the bank and got out what money that she had so she could buy more groceries at grocery stores along the Trail. That's what her plan was. She brought along a jackknife and a book of matches and a first aid kit, took a blanket, and cut it in half longways. You don't need to carry a whole blanket. It's summertime, she figured. She brought along a shower curtain to put over herself when it rained. Wearing tennis shoes and men's trousers and a flannel shirt, she got on a bus and she went down to Georgia. Took the first steps up that first mountain, the first steps of a 2100-mile hike.

And right away, she loved it. Oh, the air was fresh, the ferns were growing green on the forest floor. The yellow light was coming down through the leaves. Birds singing. Oh, she got tired. Sure, I mean you get tired hiking up a mountain. She sat down and she rested, and then when she was rested, she got up and she kept on hiking. When nighttime came, she spread out her shower curtain and went to sleep on the forest floor, her tummy full of raisins and peanuts. Now, she made mistakes. Probably you've already figured out one of her mistakes. There are no grocery stores along the Appalachian Trail. You're in the middle of the woods. If you want groceries, you have to go down into the valleys below. She went down and found a grocery store and bought her groceries and came back up the mountain, but it was a long climb and after a couple times doing that, she said, "That's not for me." And she began to beg food from other hikers, or if she

could find a house or a cabin, she'd knock on the door. "Wouldn't they please give her a sandwich?" She'd offer to pay, and they could see she was a nice lady, and they didn't usually take her money. And they gave her a sandwich and she kept on marching north, learning as she went.

Now, she knew about animals out in the woods, some of them at least from the farm: skunks, give 'em their space, snakes, same thing, raccoons, rabbits, deer. But what do you do when a big black bear is sitting in the middle of the trail? It wasn't hurting anything but she couldn't get around it. There was a cliff on this side, a dropoff on the other side. She waited and she waited but she didn't have all summer. Finally, she became impatient. I'm not saying it was the smartest thing to do, but she went up as close as she dared she thought she might go to that bear, and then she waved her stick as fast and hard as she could and she yelled out, "Scoot, bear!" And the bear scooted. Off it went, opposite direction, and Grandma Gatewood kept on hiking. Day after day, making her way north.

When she came halfway on the trail to Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, for once the trail comes right down to the main street of the town. Guess what? There were reporters waiting to talk to her. They'd heard about this Grandma out hiking the trail. This was news in 1955. Back in those days, women were not encouraged to go off and have adventures like this, especially not Grandmas. They were expected to stay at home, but Emma was out doing a big and wonderful thing, and they wrote the stories about this grandma out hiking the Appalachian Trail.

Well, she went up on into New England, and crossed over the border into Maine in October. Maybe you're thinking, "Oh, that'll be beautiful. Beautiful Maine in

October. The leaves changing red, orange and yellow. Wrong. She had made a big mistake. A mistake could not be corrected, not this one. She had come into Maine in October, which is like, well, the dead of winter up in the mountains. I'm talkin' snow. I'm talkin' ice on the rocks. She fell down and had to get herself up and keep on going. She had to push through the snow. She only had a hundred and fifty more miles to go. She could have quit, she could have given up, gone back home, and maybe come back in the spring and finish the hike. She would have still hiked the whole trail. But she had made up her mind to hike this trail straight on through without stopping except to sleep.

And so she tried to think what to do. She begged and borrowed clothes and she could keep warm as long as she was moving all day long, hiking. But what do you do at night? No warm and cozy cabin to go to. She built a fire, and she heated flat rocks in the fire. She laid down those flat rocks on the forest floor with a cushion of dead leaves and she curled up with her half a blanket and all of her clothes on, sleeping as best she could on a bed of hot rocks. Sometimes, she had to build the fire again, three, four times a night. But she would not give up, and that is why the day finally came when Emma Gatewood, first woman to hike the whole Appalachian Trail straight on through without stopping except to sleep, she found herself on the top of that last mountain up in Maine. And she stood there, just like she had planned, the wind blowing in her grey hair, and she sang. She sang America the Beautiful. She had done it. She had made the hike, 2100 miles through fourteen states. She had come five million footsteps, 146 days of hiking without stopping, except to sleep.

And that would be a great ending for the story, except it's not quite the ending, because a year later Emma Gatewood hiked the whole trail a second time, becoming the

first person, male or female, ever to do that. And then, she went out and hiked the Oregon trail from Saint Louis to the Pacific Ocean and came back and hiked the Appalachian Trail a third time when she was seventy-five years old. She saw sunny days and she saw rainy days, when she sang hymns to keep her courage up. That's what she said: she sang hymns to keep up her courage. And she saw snowy days as well, and through it all, kept her courage, kept her determination, becoming a hiking hero: Emma Gatewood.

Judge Learned Hand said in a speech on May 21, 1944, that, "I often wonder whether we do not rest our hopes too much upon constitutions, upon laws, and upon courts…Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it." His words ring true, for liberty lives on in the hearts and the lives of men and women of diverse races and backgrounds who have overcome trials and adversity to shape our national character and destiny. Because of them, and many more like them across our great nation, the blessings of liberty will endure throughout the ages.