

Upfront

Professional sports are back. But watching ESPN now can feel more like attending a lecture at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government (Trust me: I went to quite a few) than relaxingly consuming Entertainment and Sports Programming (the E, S and P, in ESPN...the N stands for Network).

Would you argue about advanced mechanics theory without knowing the basic motion equation of Newtonian physics ($F=ma$)? Probably not. But, when it comes to political philosophy, it's ready-fire-aim for most of us.

What's the story behind the (American) flag and the (national) anthem, anyway? It's long, and complicated, with plenty of twists and turns. As we passionately advocate or oppose acts like kneeling before Old Glory or burning her, it might be useful to know some basic truths.

On June 14, 1777, the Continental Congress passed an act establishing an official flag for the new nation. "Resolved, that the flag of the United States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation." The flag has survived battles, inspired songs and evolved in response to the growth of the country it represents.

The origin of the first American flag is unknown. Some historians believe it was designed by New Jersey Congressman Francis Hopkinson and sewn by Philadelphia seamstress Betsy Ross. William Driver, a Massachusetts sea captain, had a really big flag – 170 square feet – that he nicknamed "Old Glory." The moniker stuck. Driver's flag survived several attempts to deface it during the Civil War. He convinced Tennessee authorities to fly his flag over their state house when the war ended. Between 1777 and 1960, Congress voted repeatedly to change the flag's shape, design and arrangement, to reflect the expanding republic.

Today, the flag consists of 13 horizontal stripes, seven red alternating with six white. The stripes represent the original 13 colonies and the stars represent the 50 states. Red symbolizes hardiness and valor; white

represents purity and innocence; and, blue signals vigilance, perseverance and justice. The flag is flown continuously, by proclamation or passed law, at Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine; Flag House Square in Baltimore; the U.S. Marine Corps Memorial; the Green at Lexington, Massachusetts; the White House; any U.S. customs ports of entry; and the National Memorial Arch in Valley Forge State Park.

Title 4 of the U.S. Code (a federal statute) outlines protocols for conduct while honoring the flag and normative behaviors for according it proper respect. In case you're thinking that such

standards are likely representative of quaint, archaic thinking, most of the codified law pertaining to the American flag dates between 1998 and the present day. Per Title 4, Code 9:

"...all persons present in uniform should render the military salute. Members of the Armed Forces and veterans who are present but not in uniform may render the military salute. All other persons present should face the flag and stand at attention with their right hand over the heart, or if applicable, remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Citizens of other countries present should stand at attention."

As affirmed by our founding documents and highest courts, federal laws apply to people living in the U.S. and its territories.

Title 4, Code 8 carries the title, "Respect for the Flag." The section begins with the elemental "No disrespect should be shown to the flag of the United States of America," and goes on to detail 11 subsections of directives, which include things you probably remember from grade school, like "never fly the flag upside-down, except to indicate distress," and "the flag should never touch the ground or the floor."

"The Star-Spangled Banner" began its odyssey as a poem written by Francis Scott Key on September 14, 1814, after the young lawyer witnessed British Royal Naval ships bombard Fort McHenry, near Baltimore. While the British assault was relentless, Key marveled at a large 15-stripes-and-15-stars flag that continued to fly over the fort, often backlit by exploding bombs and raging fires. Eventually, the poem was – ironically – set to the tune of a popular British song. In 1889, the U.S. Navy adopted the difficult-to-sing song for official use. By resolution in 1931, the U.S. Congress declared Key's melodically-adapted poem to be our "national anthem." Soon after, President Herbert Hoover signed item 301 in the federal law's U.S. Code 36, which, among other things, decrees and defines our "patriotic and national observances and ceremonies."

On August 28, 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr. stood in front of a giant stone Abraham Lincoln and proclaimed to the crowd assembled before him on the National Mall, "I have a dream." With Lincoln behind him, King was flanked on his left and right by two oversized and easily recognizable symbols, both roughly twice his height: A pair of American flags. A massive Lincoln and two really tall Stars-and-Stripes and a person of unexceptional size. Perhaps, the embedded message is that the ideal is grander than any man; daunting but aspirational, and rooted in good.

Until we unite around our shared symbols for the promise of a just society, we stand (or kneel) permanently divided by guilt and grievance. And grievance and guilt are not foundational; they both fade with time. Positive change depends upon hope. Hope requires humility, compassion and empathy, and these can be hard things to demonstrate; but, they are the true catalysts for personal and collective growth.



To contact The Skinnie with your ideas, responses, letters and more, email us at mail@theskinie.com

Walks on Wassaw has to leave The Landings. Or does it?



- Boat excursions to Wassaw National Wildlife Refuge for Landings residents and their guests. They may stroll the six-mile, oceanfront beach or hike or bike the 20 miles of trails through the dunes and maritime forests of this virgin barrier island.

- Discovery boat tours for The Landings Company. Some of the agents say our boat tours make the Landings irresistible to prospective clients and that we sell more property than any of them.

- Barrier island excursions and sailing on Ossabaw Sound for clients of Wilderness Southeast, a regional eco-tourism non-profit. Its executive director is a Landings resident who often serves as a guide on these excursions.

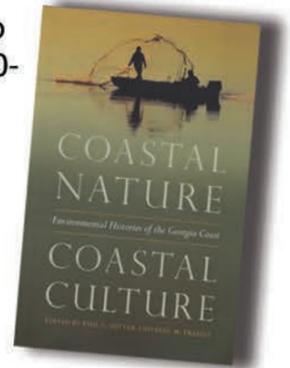
- Ferry service to Ossabaw Island State Heritage Preserve, a 26,000-acre undeveloped island with 10 miles of oceanfront beach.

- "Mother ship" for long-distance kayakers – warm up, use restroom, comfortably enjoy meal or beverage

WALKS ON WASSAW

is a charter business that operates from Delegal Marina. Because of long waiting lists of Landings residents who need dockspace, our boats must leave Delegal at the end of August.

Docking at Delegal Marina is the key to providing our services. On Georgia's 100-mile coastline there are only three bridges to the ocean. Delegal Marina is near the northernmost of the barrier islands. The first bridge to the south, at St. Simons Island, is 50 miles away and takes four hours to reach even on a fast boat.



That's where you may fit in.

Walks on Wassaw needs an owner who is a Landings resident. Ownership of Walks on Wassaw will not be a get-rich endeavor; more of a gentleman's retirement endeavor, although we averaged 23 trips in June and July. The present owner is conscientious and enthusiastic but perhaps not ambitious enough. Maybe you are.

You know you want to do this. You can probably do it for little more than you paid for your wife's SUV. Come on, man up. She'll get over it.

Contact Joel at WalksonWassaw@gmail.com

