



Hello! Remember Me? I'm your flag. Some folks call me 'Old Glory,' others call me 'Star and Stripes,' 'The Ensign,' or just... 'the flag.'

But whatever they call me, I am *your* flag, and I proudly represent *you*, the people of the United States.

But something has been bothering me lately. I was wondering if I might share it with you.

I remember some years ago, I think it was Memorial Day, or maybe it was the 4th of July. People were impatiently lined up on both sides of the street, listening for the first notes of a marching band. When your father spied me approaching, waving in the breeze at the head of the parade, he immediately removed his hat and held it

on his shoulder so that his right hand was directly over his heart.

And you...I remember you! Standing there straight as a soldier, just like your daddy. You didn't have a hat, but you were giving the correct salute. And your little sister, seeing what you were doing, did the same. Yet this wasn't new to you; from your earliest days in school, each morning you and your classmates respectfully recited the Pledge of Allegiance in front of me, hand over heart.

There were others at the parade that day—servicemen and women, active and retired, standing at attention...rigid fingers snapping to their foreheads. Young and old, hushed and reverent as I passed by.

Now if I sound a bit conceited...well, I have a right to be. I represent the finest country in the world. More than one hostile nation has tried to destroy me and what I embody, only to feel the fury of this freedom-loving country in return.

Your dad is gone now. The old home town has changed. I guess I have as well, because I don't feel as proud as I used to.

Now when I come down the street, bored people just stand there, hands in pockets, hats on heads. Too many give me a glance and a shrug, their noisy children running around waiting for the 'good stuff' to begin. Folks just don't seem to know or care who I am.

What happened?

How can I be expected to fly high and proud from buildings and homes when within them, there is no thought, love or respect for me? Is it a sin to be patriotic anymore? Have people forgotten what I stand for? Have they forgotten the countless battlefields where men and women fought and died to keep this nation free? That's whom you are saluting, not me!

Well, it won't be long before I come down your street again. So, next time you see me, stand straight, keep silent, and place your hand over your heart. Do this because you acknowledge that I represent you. Then I will know that you still remember who I am, and you will see me wave back—my proud salute to you.

(I have seen this piece in various forms on the Internet, and because I couldn't discover the original author, I took the liberty to give it my own twist. —Tori Brewer)

***Freedom is never given; it is won. To all of America's veterans and members of the US Armed Forces:
This Independence Day we salute you and thank you for your service to America.***

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