

Siuslaw News
P.O. Box 10
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Opinion

The First Amendment
Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

"I never considered a difference of opinion in politics, in religion, in philosophy, as cause for withdrawing from a friend." —Thomas Jefferson (1800)

The history of Elks' Flag Day Service

(Editor's Note: Viewpoint submissions on this and other topics are always welcome as part of our goal to encourage community discussion and exchange of perspectives.)

It is to be expected that an organization dedicated to patriotic service should seek to promote a proper knowledge of — and respect for — the American Flag and all that it represents.

The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks has done this in many ways. Perhaps the most effective of its prescribed activities is the Flag Day Service.

Each Subordinate Lodge is required to conduct this service annually June 14, the anniversary of the birth of the American Flag.

The idea of a Flag Day Service was first suggested to our Order by the then Grand Exalted Ruler at the 1907 Grand Lodge Session in Philadelphia. Of the dates submitted for consideration at that time, June 14 was adopted by the session and was called 'Elks Flag Day.'

The following year, in Dallas, the Grand Lodge approved a ritual for the Flag Day ceremony.

The 1911 Grand Lodge Session at Atlantic City made the observance of Flag Day mandatory for Subordinate Lodges by the adoption of Section 229

GUEST VIEWPOINT By Bruce Smith Florence Elks Exalted Ruler

of the Statutes:

"It shall be the duty of each Subordinate Lodge to hold the service known as 'Flag Day Services' at the time and in the manner prescribed by the ritual of the Order."

Later on — at the Grand Lodge Session in Atlantic City in 1930 — there was added to this statute an amendment, reading:

"The Grand Exalted Ruler may, in exceptional cases and for good cause, grant a dispensation for a different day or to any two or more Lodges to hold such services jointly."

It was not until Aug. 3, 1949, that the President of the United States signed Public Law 203, designating June 14 as Flag Day.

Thus our Order was not only the first fraternal organization to celebrate Flag Day, but had made this ceremony mandatory long years before the date on which the observance became a nation-wide practice by legal decree.

The ritual for the occasion is an elaborate one and it is quite generally conducted as a public ceremonial. It is designed to be informative as well as inspirational; and the colorful pageantry provided lends itself admirably to the achievement of these objectives.

It was President Harry S. Truman who signed the Flag Day bill into law on Aug. 3, 1949, who was himself an Elk.

The Elks will be having a Flag Day Service tomorrow, June 14, beginning at 10 a.m. and it is open to the public.

HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN FLAG

According to popular legend, the first American flag was made by Betsy Ross, a Philadelphia seamstress who was acquainted with George Washington, leader of the Continental Army, and other influential Philadelphians.

In May 1776, as the legend goes, General Washington and two representatives from the Continental Congress visited Ross at her upholstery shop and showed her a rough design of the flag. Although Washington initially favored using a star with six points, Ross advocated for a five-pointed star, which could be cut with just one quick snip of the scissors, and the gentlemen were won over.

Historians have never been able to verify this version of events, although it is known that Ross made flags for the navy of Pennsylvania. The story of Washington's visit to the flagmaker became popular about the time of the country's first centennial, after William Canby, a grandson of Ross, told about her role in shaping U.S. history in a speech given at the Philadelphia Historical Society in March 1870.

What is known is that the first unofficial national flag, called the Grand Union Flag or the Continental Colours, was raised at the behest of General Washington near his headquarters outside Boston, Mass., on Jan. 1, 1776.



The flag had 13 alternating red and white horizontal stripes and the British Union Flag (a predecessor of the Union Jack) in the canton. Another early flag had a rattlesnake and the motto "Don't Tread on Me."

The first official national flag, also known as the Stars and Stripes, was approved by the Continental Congress on June 14, 1777.

The blue canton contained 13 stars, representing the original 13 colonies, but the layout varied. Although nobody knows for sure who designed the flag, it may have been Continental Congress member Francis Hopkinson.

After Vermont and Kentucky were admitted to the Union in 1791 and 1792, respectively, two more stars and two more stripes were added in 1795. This 15-star, 15-stripe flag was the "star-spangled banner" that inspired lawyer Francis Scott Key to write the poem that later became the U.S. national anthem.

In 1818, after five more states had gained admittance, Congress passed legislation fixing the number of stripes at 13 and requiring that the number of stars equal the number of states.

The last new star, bringing the total to 50, was added on July 4, 1960, after Hawaii became a state.

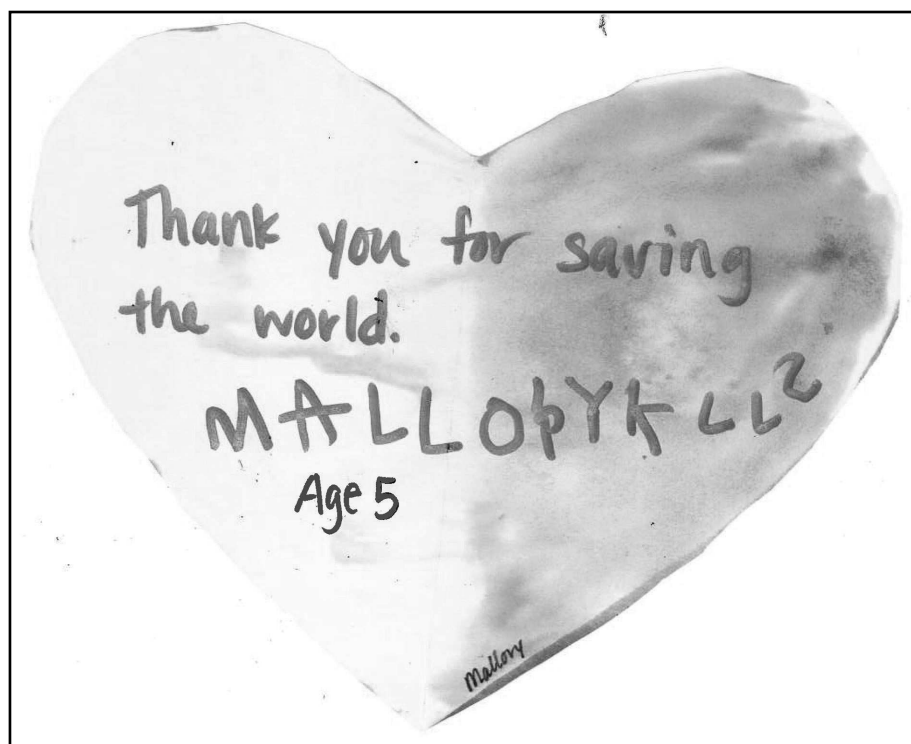
Patriotic appreciation for veterans

Last week, this handmade card was found by U.S. Army veteran Lawrence Ferguson while cleaning around Veteran's Memorial Park in Florence's Old Town District.

The card, made by a 5-year-old known only as Mallory, had been placed under a rock to keep it from blowing away. Concerned it would be damaged by weather, Ferguson brought the card to Patriot Place in Old Town.

"He was very moved by it and felt it was something that would mean a lot for other veterans to see," said MJ Flowerday of Patriot Place, which plans to frame the card and hang it inside. "I'm sure those who gave their all for our country are looking down with gratitude to this special child.

"It's so heartwarming."



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Siuslaw News

Published every Wednesday and Saturday at 148 Maple St. in Florence, Lane County, Oregon. A member of the National Newspaper Association and Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association. Periodicals postage paid at Florence, Ore. Postmaster, send address changes to: Siuslaw News, P.O. Box 10, Florence, OR 97439; phone 541-997-3441; fax 541-997-7979. All press releases may be sent to PressReleases@TheSiuslawNews.com.

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DEADLINES:

Wednesday Issue—General news, Monday noon; Budgets, four days prior to publication; Regular classified ads, Monday 1 p.m.; Display ads, Monday noon; Boxed and display classified ads, Friday 5 p.m.

Saturday Issue—General news, Thursday noon; Budgets, two days prior to publication; Regular classified ads, Thursday 1 p.m.; Display ads, Thursday noon; Boxed and display classified ads, Wednesday 5 p.m. Soundings, Tuesday 5 p.m.

NEWSPAPER SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

In Lane County — 1-year subscription, \$76; 6-month in-county, \$52; 10-weeks subscription, \$23; Out of Lane County — 1-year subscription, \$99; 6-month out-of-county, \$65; 10-weeks subscription, \$29; Out of State — 1-year subscription, \$125; E-Edition Online Only (Anywhere) — 1-year subscription, \$71.

Mail subscription includes E-Edition.
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The Siuslaw News welcomes letters to the editor as part of a community discussion of issues on the local, state and national level.

Emailed letters are preferred. Handwritten or typed letters must be signed. All letters need to include full name, address and phone number; only name and city will be printed. Letters should be limited to about 300 words. Letters are subject to editing for length, grammar and clarity. Publication of any letter is not guaranteed and depends on space available and the volume of letters received.

Letters that are anonymous, libelous, argumentative, sarcastic or contain accusations that are unsourced or documented will not be published.

Letters containing poetry or from outside the Siuslaw News readership area will only be published at the discretion of the editor.

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Election-related letters must address pertinent or timely issues of interest to our readers at-large.

Letters must 1) Not be a part of letter-writing campaigns on behalf of (or by) candidates; 2) Ensure any information about a candidate is accurate, fair and not from second-hand knowledge or hearsay; and 3) explain the reasons to support candidates based on personal experience and perspective rather than partisanism and campaign-style rhetoric.

Candidates themselves may not use the letters to the editor column to outline their views and platforms or to ask for votes; this constitutes paid political advertising.

As with all letters and advertising content, the newspaper, at the sole discretion of the publisher, general manager and editor, reserves the right to reject any letter that doesn't follow the above criteria.

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