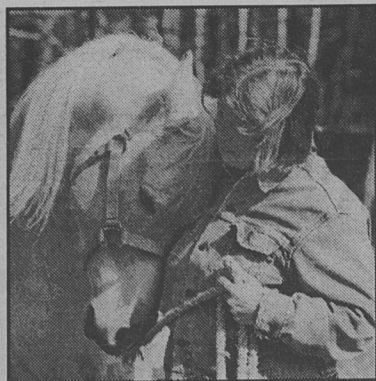


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Bark o' the Banshee

By Pat Robinson

Freedom's Just Another Word

out loud. I am very certain that each of us sees the validity of a chosen statement.

I have a horse flag, a rainbow flag, and a United States of America flag and each one means a great deal to me; all for very different reasons. The horse flag was a gift from my former mother-in-law, Mrs. Robinson. Thanks, Eleanor, for always remembering me. The rainbow flag is up so all people caught in a sexual identity struggle know there is a safe haven here.

The Rhode Island Medical Society has adopted a resolution that the policy of exclusion by the Boy Scouts of America contributes to higher numbers of suicide in homosexual youth. Maybe the Boy Scouts should consider a name change to the Boy Scouts of Some Americans. I hope no young person ever considers suicide as an option over being gay in my community again. The flag that rests in its holder on the highest point is the Stars and Stripes. I am sure my dad (deceased USAF) is as proud me as he was of this country and the flag.

Oh the squabbles we have had over flags in this country. Pres. Bush the first dealt with super patriots that wanted to make defacing or defaming our flag a crime. WE, the citizens, have the right to do just those things, if we choose. Some of our southern states have made or considered changes in flags due to the reminder of slavery that the Confederate one lends itself to. Nothing will change the history behind the flag, but the future can be changed.

Ours is not a perfect country, we know well what needs to be made better, if not perfect. But, let's look at some other places; like Egypt. Sixty people were caught and arrested for being at a gay wedding. Five of the detainees were released because they came from other countries, but the remaining fifty-five were questioned and could each face five years in jail for attending. And in Scotland, the former primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church, Richard Holloway, has got himself in a pile of poop. He chose gay rights activist Peter Tachell as a "Christ figure" and is getting trounced for his opinion. Patriarch Teoctist of Romania slammed homosexuality from the pulpit during an Easter Sunday Mass. I wonder what the bunny left in his basket on that Easter. Guards surrounded the newly appointed Catholic Archbishop George Pell as about 40 gay

protesters were prevented from entering St. Patrick's Cathedral on Easter Sunday. Seems, Archbishop Pell refuses to give holy communion to gays. I bet Jesus and Mary Magdalene are shaking their heads in disgust.

In Namibia, President Sam Nujoma, horrified at reports of the Amsterdam gay weddings, said homosexuality should be kept firmly in Europe. Furthermore, gays trying to enter Namibia through the country's international airport at Windhoek will be deported. For starters, how will the authorities know who is gay? And maybe the country should openly inform gays that their vacation money is not welcome in Namibia.

So let's look at some positives that are happening right here. In Manchester, N.H. a gay prom was held at a local hotel for high school students from Maine, N.H., and Mass. A DJ provided the music for an enthusiastic audience of same-sex couples dancing under rainbow decorations and with adult chaperones present. My friend Lee, a park ranger at Mt. Monadnock, told me her daughter attended her prom with her then girl-friend. No one cared, no one bothered them, and they enjoyed the dance just like all the other attendees did. In Ferndale, Washington, the students attending their prom elected lesbian senior Krystal Bennett as Prom King. After posing for photos with the also female Prom Queen, Miss Bennett danced for the rest of the evening with her girlfriend.

Hip hip hooray! Equality does work and leave it to young people to show us just how to do it.

Texas has given a lot to the country. The most executions, the Presidents Bush; and finally the Texas Senate passed the James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Bill. I wonder how the ten senators that voted against sleep nights.

Mr. Lincoln must be a tad amazed that his state, Illinois, has chosen to guard unconventional lifestyles; specifically motorcyclists. Huh? It passed unanimously.

No, we the United States of America still have a long way to go, but these little victories are the real symbols of freedom. Those that hold us back cannot begin to imagine what suffering we still have in this country. It's hard to see when you wear blinders 24/7.

At least, that's how the song goes. Sorry though, freedom is not just another word. It is the right in our constitution that allows us our own opinion. That said, at about 7:45 pm on May 19, my partner and I were verbally harassed by some young men. It's their right to an opinion, but not to threatening us with their car. That is illegal in the state of New Hampshire. The New Ipswich P.D. are investigating.

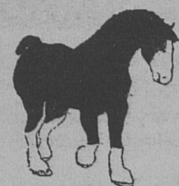
As I made the turn onto Turnpike Rd., my eyes caught a flag moving in the wind as two young men struggled to attach the pole to the mail box. In my review mirror, I recognized the symbol. It is not one we see often here; a Confederate flag was waving in the spring breeze.

I hurried to the post office and drove to the driveway where the two young men were working. I wanted to know: why this flag? Introductions were made, hands were shaken and I asked. Innocently enough, they said they only put it up to see what the reactions would be and added that a few cars had beeped in the affirmative. Seems the family was originally from the south, and their dad had never allowed it to be put up, because he felt it would be poorly received. Well, dad promptly took it down when he got home, ending the social experiment.

This little gesture had been noticed by many and had caused considerable conversation around town. As I stood outside the New Ipswich Market with some friends, it was pointed out that I have three flags on my house. I reminded everyone of the store in Jaffrey back in 1989 that had Nazi memorabilia in the window. As we spoke, four Harley full dressers pulled up. All the riders had official Harley leather accouterments all over them and the bikes. Every single car and truck parked had something identifying on them. My personal favorite is the I'm a FAG stickers that say: Fans Against Gordon. I laugh out loud every time I see those. Pray tell, what were "they" thinking?

So what is the validity of all these symbols and why do we insist on them? Because this is the United States of America and we can. We fly flags, wear outlandish clothes, and put any message we want on our vehicles. We can disagree with each other and our government

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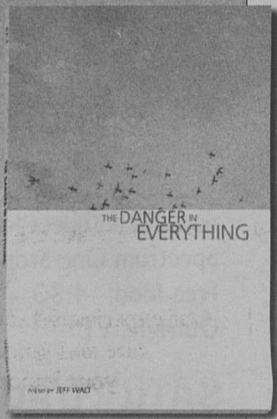
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