

How I Became a Patriot

By Roger L. Simon

I must be a “Patriot” because I am swamped with emails addressing me as such daily.

Okay, kidding.



An American flag waves in Huntington Beach, Calif., on July 3, 2024. (John Fredricks/The Epoch Times)

That’s because I, at least once, gave 20 bucks to a cause someone deemed patriotic and have paid the price in my cluttered inbox ever since, as so many others have. My text message inbox has been equally deluged. Weren’t these supposed to be conveniences?

Well, forget that.

Long before the internet worked its way into our brains, I regarded patriotism somewhat skeptically. As a child of the

sixties, it was cool to be an internationalist. I must have been a globalist before the term was popularized. I thought the UN was the bee's knees and went to Europe as much as my finances and time would allow.

I was supported by what I thought were wise men. After all, according to his amanuensis James Boswell, the great Dr. Samuel Johnson opined, "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel." (Even to this day I can see that sometimes it is.)

Moreover, as an eager young writer I was aware of John Osborne's play "A Patriot for Me." The title was based on a quotation putatively from Emperor Franz Joseph, who said in response to being told someone was a patriot, "Is he a patriot for me?" (I saw a lot of that around and still do.)

And yet, as I grew older and .02 percent wiser, I changed. I started reading things like "The Federalist Papers" not to pass a test, as I had the first time, but really to explore the thinking of those who wrote it. At the same time, I looked around at the world with a slightly more practiced eye.

Eventually, I became patriotic, and these days, I am as patriotic as it gets, even though some things that happen in my country make me want to tear my hair out. Fortunately, I'm bald.

Some time ago I began to think what had been called "Old Europe" really is old, and not in a good way. Yes, the architecture and the paintings and the music are still there, but the decay is palpable. They had squandered their part of Western Civilization.

Maybe, just maybe, they are currently beginning to wake up.

The greatest hope for humanity, crazy as it often seems, still resides in the U. S. of A.

If not here, where?

Now here's a story of how I started to realize my patriotism. In the 1980s I was on a "cultural exchange" tour of the Soviet Union with an international group of crime writers. Those tours, as you probably know, were heavily managed by Soviet authorities.

Along the way, I was asked to be on a panel discussion about which I don't remember much. But I do recall during the question period a craggy old fellow, with medals all over his chest in the Russian style befitting the veteran of who knows how many wars, hoisting himself to his feet and asking, through an interpreter, "We all love and respect our General Secretary Gorbachev. How can you say the same of your president Ronald Reagan?"

I didn't immediately know how to answer. In those days, my feelings about President Reagan were ambivalent (not now). Finally, I said, "My country is a democracy, and I get to choose. I voted for the other candidate. But now I support Mr. Reagan to do the best job possible."

There was an uncomfortable murmur from the audience as I was translated.

Given what we have been going through lately, that seems like an optimistic statement, but I still believe it.

Today, writing on the eve of the Fourth of July 2024, I could easily become skeptical of patriotism again. I am trying not to.

We are at each other's throats as never in my lifetime. We hear shouts on all sides that democracy is in jeopardy. These claims are almost entirely propaganda for malign purposes. They must be rigorously exposed and opposed to preserve our constitutional republic.

That is our job after the fireworks and barbecues are over. But it is also our job to do so with good humor and optimism.

Dr. Norman Vincent Peale's "[The Power of Positive Thinking](#)" might seem as corny as all get-out at this point, but that doesn't mean it's not true.

Toward the end of being of good humor, my wife, screenwriter Sheryl Longin (she co-wrote the comedy "Dick"), and I are going to be starting a Substack of our own later this summer under the rubric "[American Refugees](#)," after my latest book. We plan on making some of it funny (some of it obviously not). Hopefully, some of you will find it worth a look. More soon.

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