

Safety vs. freedom; look to Memorial Day

In 1759, Benjamin Franklin wrote, "Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety."

Mirroring Europe, and for that matter much of the world, our nation is facing an insidious and potentially unstoppable glacial movement toward sacrificing freedoms witlessly and willfully in exchange for a perception of greater safety. In so doing, we lose both and more.

Franklin understood man's need to be free is irrepressible and that men who are not free are not men at all, merely dependent, enfeebled shadows by whatever hand. He knew that the freedom to be and do stupid things was safer, on measure of all of what man does, than the stupidity of cowering, seeking cover or decaying under a nanny state. For this, an infant nation warred against its motherland and America was born.

Look around. When we ignore the rule of law and give rights to those who have not earned them or try to steal them, we diminish and in time lose them. When we cast stones instead of ballots, we cheapen the notion of liberty mistaking it for libel.

When we empower those who govern us more, we grow powerless to govern our own lives and craft greatness into our nation's history. Entitlement rather than earning becomes the modus operandi of cultivated dependency, resulting in the decay of a con-



Kevin Ryan

stitutional republic.

America is flagging under the weight of each new promise that the voodoo we do to ourselves somehow ensures our safety. It does not and we are ensnaring the safety of our freedom. Without those freedoms held safe, creativity falls, productivity wanes and compassion dwindles.

On the eve of Memorial Day, where we honor those who died in military service, let's renew our understanding of Franklin.

Pilgrims set their sails for freedom, said prayers for good fortune and embarked on a more than two-month treacherous journey, casting safety into their wake. More than half did not survive a year.

As assuredly as those waves of heroes kept reaching our shores, the pulse of pilgrim pride beats at the heart of American exceptionalism. It is the rhythm in the reason and rhyme of this republic and when it grows faint, we must fear.

A different rhythm grows in our classrooms, congressional halls and the highest chambers of the land. Whether it is falling graduation rates, porous borders intentionally kept agape, health care insurance reform we cannot afford whose scope is frightening or silly pseudoscience touting anthropomorphic global warming we cannot abate relabeled as an insane scheme to fashion energy independence, the measured beat of America is down and decrescendo.

Our grand conductor not only willingly leads this once noble band of brothers into disassembly of the beautiful symphony of freedoms this nation composed, but enjoins guest impresarios from border nations to wave their baton at a choir of confidants daring to sit silent.

Instead of sleepily counting sheep, or acting like one, perhaps some evening before retiring we might count the stars on old glory. Perhaps we might remember each of those 13 stripes as a ribbon of freedom hard won by countrymen ensuring the safety of our freedoms.

Never surrender freedom for safety; it is a devil's deal, commerce of fools. This Memorial Day, indeed every day, pray for a moment of quivering lip and misty eyes as you remember you are an American because other Americans died for you.

This Memorial Day, take a few minutes to measure the beats of your heart. Imagine each pulse as the bullet or shrapnel of evil that felled one who died so you would be free. Imagine each wave of your blood as the rush of valor in those who gave their last full measure, for you.

Because their heart stopped, yours and the heart of our nation continue.

Never surrender. Never forget.

Dr. Kevin Ryan is a retired colonel, physician, musician and author who lives in Fairfield. Reach him at ryan_k@comcast.net.