

THE "OLD GLORY" IN OUR HEARTS

In the aftermath of September 11, nothing fuels national pride more than the innumerable public displays of the Stars and Stripes, affectionately known as "Old Glory." Though accounts of that name's origin indicate a blend of fact and legend, the story is inspiring.

So with credit to the Nashville (Tenn.) Public Library and numerous Internet sources, here's yet another collage of the roots of Old Glory:

Born in Salem, Mass., in 1803 William Driver ran away to become a cabin boy at age 14. By 21 he had earned his master's papers--and the right to command a ship. For his twenty-first birthday, his mother presented him a flag made by her and friends which he ran up the rig of his first vessel and exclaimed, "We'll call her 'Old Glory,' boys!"

When his wife died in 1837, Captain Driver moved with his three children to Nashville to be near his brother's family. He took his treasured flag with him, and Old Glory became familiar to most residents there. During the Civil War, Driver remained a Unionist, and Confederate soldiers repeatedly tried to locate and destroy Old Glory, his powerful symbol of loyalty to the Union. They never found a trace.

Then on February 25th, 1862, Union forces captured Nashville and raised the American flag over the capital. It was a rather small ensign, and folks immediately began asking Captain Driver if Old Glory still existed. Happy to have Union soldiers with him this time, Driver went home and began ripping at the seams of his bedcovers. As the stitches holding the quilt-top to the batting unraveled, onlookers peered inside and saw it: the original 24-starred "Old Glory"!

Captain Driver returned with the soldiers--and the flag--to the capitol. Though nearing 60, he climbed the tower and replaced the smaller banner with his treasure. The Sixth Ohio Regiment cheered and saluted--and later adopted the nickname "Old Glory" as their own.

Buried in the Old Nashville City Cemetery, Captain Driver's grave is one of only two places (some say three) in the United States where the American flag is permitted by act of congress to fly twenty-four hours a day. Old Glory's final disposition is uncertain, ranging from "eaten by a mule" to "displayed in the Smithsonian."

As the Confederate's sought to demoralize their enemies by destroying Captain Driver's flag, terrorists would do the same to us. But rank upon rank of flags now sprouting, it seems, from every home are but feeble representations of other Old Glories firmly planted deep within our hearts.

For in the depths of soul no terrorist bomb can touch still wave the Star-Spangled Banner of Fort McHenry, the Stars and Stripes over Iwo Jima, and the NYC firemen's splendid flag amidst the Twin Towers' rubble.

And once the "seams of the covers of our hearts" are torn away, terrorism can peer in upon the infinitely formidable foe Old Glory truly represents: a love of God and country that won't be suppressed or denied.