

Opinion / Editorial

Thoughts on America’s 250th Independence Day

By Bill Connor

I have been thinking about this momentous 250th anniversary of Independence Day these past few days and what it means to me. In pondering what has made America exceptional, I have come to two main conclusions: 1. We were founded as a uniquely Christian nation with God as the source of our rights. The Declaration of Independence boldly declares that all men are “endowed by their creator with unalienable rights...” God is first in America. 2. We Americans habitually take initiative to get things done without waiting for government. This habit of freedom and initiative is why Americans settled the continent and grew the greatest economy in the world during its first century. I had a unique experience of seeing

these two prongs of American exceptionalism play out during a unique situation in Afghanistan, 2007-2008. This experience is the best anecdote I could muster about our 250th birthday in terms of American exceptionalism. During my 2007-2008 deployment to Southern Afghanistan, I was first assigned as Regional Joint Operations Officer then Commander of the advisory effort in Helmand Province. Our advisory teams operated within the battlespace of various NATO nations controlling the provinces making up the Southern Region. The British were in Helmand, the Canadians in Kandahar, the Dutch in Uruzgan, and Romanians in Qalat. This was unique, in that US forces were usually the majority military force with elements of other NATO nations attached. This unique situation allowed me to draw comparisons with



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the other nations. I will always honor our NATO brothers in arms and I appreciate our joint coalition efforts to fight the Taliban. Still, on this 250th Anniversary I must write about the exceptionalism of Americans there.

First, background: Due to the surge in Iraq in early 2007, those of us units deploying to Afghanistan were at 50% strength for the missions. We trained for months at Ft. Riley, Kansas, to advise solely the Afghan National Army. Just before deploying, however, we experience a major change in mission: We were to take over the Afghan police train/advise mission at the same time as the Afghan National Army mission. The reason for the new mission was the Afghan police were being slaughtered by the Taliban. This mission change meant we would be vastly understrength in covering the two missions and same level of troops and resources. Additionally, as we were the first to take this mission, we had no real guidance of how to establish it during a violent Taliban spring/summer offensive. Things could not have been more challenging getting off the aircraft in Kandahar as the Taliban were attacking police throughout the region

Despite all the challenges, American exceptionalism kicked in and we accomplished the mission. The American command and teams quickly adapted, showing the same ingenuity, initiative, and “can-do” spirit that characterized American troops in the Revolution. The America advisory teams, during a violent and active period and operating within foreign coalition nation AOs throughout the region, put the new mission together. Provincial Headquarters and police advisory teams established themselves under fire. With little guidance, teams found resources to secure and sustain themselves by working with Afghan and NATO coalition forces. Compared with other coalition forces, Americans showed more initiative in coping with these unique circumstances. Americans did not have to wait for guidance, but made things happen and developed supporting missions. Americans, as a rule, were far more religious than the other European troops. They relied on their faith in God when leaving the wire. Every mission I was involved downrange always included prayers in Jesus’ name for the respective convoy group before leaving the wire. Even the Muslim interpreters with the teams joined these voluntary prayer groups.

Coalition forces generally showed a more restrictive “big government” outlook in terms of operating outside strict control. Americans have traditionally not looked to government first to fix problems that could be fixed otherwise. Throughout American history we have quickly formed voluntary groups and accomplished major projects on our own. This is without

Family & Marriage

Generational Changes



Roger Rollins,
Family and Marriage Coalition

“A generation which ignores history has no past — and no future.” – Robert A. Heinlein

“These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” – Bible (Deuteronomy 6:6-7)

The world around us seems to be changing daily. This includes not only technology, which is obvious, but lifestyles, political and religious affiliations, and the ways we relate to one another. As a member of an older generation, I watch the world go by, sometimes with wonderment, and often confusion. Some members of my generation may live in communities insulated from what’s happening around them. However, with all the various real-time information sources, it’s hard to be totally ignorant of the changes taking place in the world today. Over a period of about 100 years, the changes between generations have been significant.

A generation is a group of people who were born roughly around the same time. This group tends to share experiences with and be influenced by similar technology, popular culture, historical events, and more. Jessica Sager, Entertainment and Lifestyle Writer, has written an article describing the various generations.

The Greatest Generation (born approximately 1901–1927), also known as the G.I. Generation, lived through the Great Depression, fought in World War II and are lauded for their abilities to adapt and thrive in crisis and are celebrated for leaving the world better than they found it.

The Silent Generation (born ap-

proximately 1928–1945), were born during periods of war, and were described as “fatalistic” and practical, and generally opposed to war. They longed for a secure job and quiet, idyllic life. The Baby Boomers (born approximately 1946–1964), were known for their post-World War II optimism, and were largely shaped by the Cold War and Vietnam War. They popularized the “live to work” lifestyle.

Generation X, (born approximately 1965–1980), have one of the highest rates of divorced parents. They are more focused on work-life balance than their workaholic Boomer parents because they were often “latch-key kids.”

Millennials (born approximately 1981–1996), have lived through wars, social unrest, and family turmoil. Time labeled them the “me me generation.” Generation Z (born approximately 1997–2009), more social media-savvy than their millennial peers, are more aware of social justice and political issues, largely due to their heavy social media use.

Generation Alpha (born approximately 2010–2024), are defined by the digital age. This group has never known a time before the social media landscape as we know it.

Generation Beta (born approximately 2025–2039), will face a rapidly changing world that’s dominated by artificial intelligence, virtual reality and quantum computing. Their response to this environment is yet to be seen.

In their teenage years, church attendance was as follows: Baby Boomers: 71%; Gen X: 64%; Millennials: 58%; Gen Z: 52%. Perhaps not surprising, 61% of Gen Zers report feeling isolated and lonely during their teenage years compared to 36% of Baby Boomers.

It is easy to get overwhelmed by numerous studies and their result-

ing statistics, many of which seem to conflict at times. On the one hand, Gen Z reports being “more connected” to friends than millennials, but those connections are often digital instead of face to face, hence lacking deeper meaning. Recent studies indicate that this current younger generation is becoming aware of the dangers of social media, and recently of AI (artificial intelligence). There is also an increasing interest in religion, or some “higher power.” Perhaps an important lesson to learn here is that the different generations have much they can learn from each other. Rather than cancelling others because they have different views than we, peaceful dialogues between the different generations could be very beneficial.

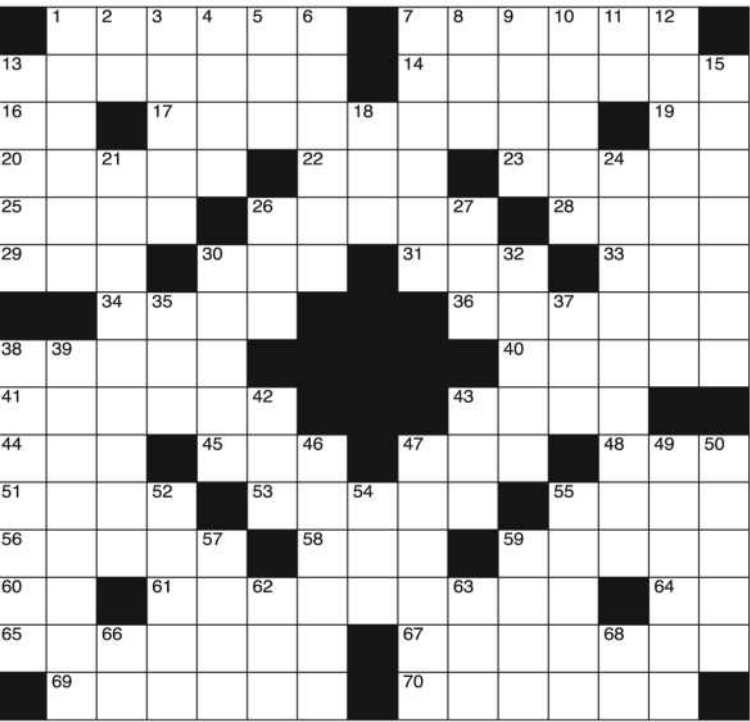
This peaceful dialogue should start within the family, our neighborhoods, and our churches. God is the same, but the world isn’t. If someone sees life differently, don’t cancel them; listen to them and discuss differences in openness and peace.

Family and Marriage Coalition of Aiken (FAMCO) was created to provide resources for you to succeed in your marriage and families. Roger Rollins, Executive Director, FAMCO, 803-640-4689. Let us know how we can help.



the necessity of government planning or involvement, as government has always remained small compared with Europe. US troops in Southern Afghanistan showed the same spirit of initiative we honor the American Patriot farmers with in taking on the British Empire. We took losses during that time in Afghanistan, including two husband/fathers I will never forget killed in action during the first months there. Despite losses, the mission was a success. In my own province of Helmand, we were able to help the British forces in a number of ways through initiative. For example, we helped put an Afghan Border Police Battalion on the southern UK front lines to turn the tide there. So many other examples.

My experience with our American heroes in Southern Afghanistan showed a microcosm of American exceptionalism. We Americans traditionally look to God first and put our faith in Him over government. This has fostered the initiative to accomplish seemingly impossible goals. Our reliance on God over government has given us the courage to take risks. It explains why Americans were first in air flight and first to the moon, among others. May we continue the next 250 years with the same exceptionalism and may God Bless America!



CLUES ACROSS

1. Mended
7. Hymns
13. Commercial transport of goods
14. Poked holes in the ground
16. They precede C
17. Branch of knowledge concerned with wealth
19. Larry and Curly’s pal
20. Injured
22. Popular type of dance
23. Moon crater
25. American state
26. Places to lock valuables
28. Stalk that supports the capsule
29. Keyboard key
30. ‘___’ death do us part
31. A type of cage
33. A place to sleep
34. Annual music awards show
36. Made over
38. Hard, stony substance
40. Incantations
41. Long-legged, wading bird
43. Breathe noisily
44. Congressman
45. Rip off
47. Golf score
48. Popular pickup truck
51. Where infants sleep
53. Music term
55. Small opening in a surface
56. Musical term meaning “very”
58. Soviet Socialist Republic
59. Treats with powder
60. Email subject line feature
61. A British lawyer
64. Expression of laughter
65. Farmer’s calendar
67. Seeds used as food
69. Eurasian shrubs
70. Periods of inactivity

CLUES DOWN

1. Hard things to kick
2. Collective of countries
3. Letter of Hebrew alphabet
4. One-time Alabama running back
Eddie
5. One’s sense of self-esteem
6. Of the teeth
7. Treat with care
8. Type of whale
9. Curved structure
10. Emits coherent radiation
11. One of the Gospels (abbr.)
12. Smallest interval in western music
13. Netherlands seat of government
15. Gives to charitably
18. Lout
21. Pastas
24. Release from restrictions
26. Female sibling
27. Title of respect
30. Silver coins
32. Region in India
35. Partner to cheese
37. Dark or dusky
38. Pacific Northwest tree
39. Exaggerate
42. Toddler
43. Touch lightly
46. Fundamentals
47. Jeopardies
49. Curved structures
50. Isolated, flat-topped hills
52. Forming the bottom layer
54. Reciprocal of sine
55. Genus of Old World birds
57. New York college
59. Cloak
62. Kawhi Leonard’s team (abbr.)
63. Vietnamese offensive
66. “The Great Lakes State”
68. “___, myself and I”



SUDOKU

	7	2				1		
5							6	
3						5	8	7
6				3	4		1	
				8		2		
		9	1					6
		5			1			
	4	7						
	2		8		9			

Level: Intermediate

Here’s How It Works:
Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

7	4	9	6	5	8	3	2	1
1	5	6	3	2	9	7	4	8
8	2	8	1	7	4	7	5	9
9	4	8	5	7	1	6	3	2
5	3	2	9	8	6	4	1	7
6	1	7	4	3	2	8	5	9
7	8	9	2	1	4	7	9	6
2	9	4	7	6	3	1	8	5
3	6	1	9	8	5	6	3	2

ANSWER: