

Once upon a time, Americans pulled together

by David Wilson, June 20, 2017

In the early 1970s, when I was not yet a teenager, I remember my grandfather saying something about what it was like during World War II.

He said, “I don’t know if people today would pull together like they did back then.”

And I think he was right.

The grandfather I speak of was on my mother’s side of the family, and he was born in 1917. He grew up on a farm and spent all of his life as an Arkansas farmer and with the modest income that goes along with it.

But he knew a whole lot about life. He farmed during America’s Great Depression and during World War II.

If Americans hadn’t worked together during those times, it would have been devastating for the country.

And if Americans hadn’t worked together during those times, my grandfather would have known it.

After all, he was there. He knew what it was like to live in rural Arkansas and to work hard and to hope for good news from the war front. And he knew what it was like to pray that the Lord would lead America to victory over her enemies—enemies who, if they had their way—would rule over other nations in tyranny.

My grandfather was not drafted in the military to directly help in the fight. He said that during that time, if you farmed a certain number of acres that Uncle Sam wanted you to keep farming. Food and cotton were both important in the war effort.

But when I think back to the 1970s and how my grandfather said he didn’t think Americans would work together to do what was necessary in a time of war, it makes me wonder about things today.

I mean, if Americans didn’t have the moral fiber necessary to pull together and work for the good of the country more than 40 years ago, we have to ask if American citizens could get the job done today.

I remember well when the first President George Bush launched the invasion of Kuwait on January 17, 1991. American forces, along with 35 other nations, began bombing Iraqi positions in Kuwait. Iraq had seized the country of Kuwait in August of 1990 and that act of aggression was met with an almost worldwide condemnation.

America responded with great patriotic zeal, leading a United Nations coalition to victory in Operation Desert Storm in The Persian Gulf War.

Americans put differences aside to do whatever was required, and in some small way, for just a while, they were replicating what Americans had done in the 1940s.

A decade later, when the terrorists attacked New York City and the Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001, the citizens of the United States again became united in their resolve.

In the days following that attack, Americans seemed to have a deep sense of kinship, realizing that a common enemy had to be vanquished.

President George W. Bush, often unfairly criticized today, was at the time a source of inspiration for America as she prepared to take the fight to terrorists the world over.

It was a very patriotic time in the 1940s during World War II.

It was a very patriotic time in 1991 during the Gulf War.

And it was a very patriotic time in 2001 in the days immediately following the Sept. 11 attacks.

But in 2017, even with Independence Day approaching, I’m not sure we can say that it is a very patriotic time like it was then.

In fact, I am inclined to wonder aloud, like my grandfather once did, about whether or not people would pull together in the event of a real crisis.

No one can claim America is united today, and thank goodness terrorists aren’t exactly at our doorstep. But God help us if we can’t get over our divisions and our differences when the chips are really down and the country needs us to all stand strong.

The United States remains a great nation and is a beautiful place to live. But she needs her people to be cordial, courteous, and charitable to each other; to show respect rather than hostility; to rise above bitterness; and to live in harmony.

And America needs its citizens to have high ideals, great character, deep commitment, and an abiding resolve.

I’m not sure we have that today but it would be best if we did. And it would be an ideal present for the nation on its 241st birthday.

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