

## **An American Flag Tribute**

**“If Only I Could Speak”**

**by Emily Wheelbarger, 1992**

**(PWA '89, Hillsboro #24 and Past Grand Lecturer '90-'91)**

I wish I could speak to you, my children, and ask, “Why must you honor me only when protocol necessitates it?” and “Why must there be certain days to remind you of who I am, and of whom I represent?”

It used to be, in days past, that when the eyes of my nation looked upon me, tears of love filled their eyes, their chests swelled up with pride, and when I came into their presence, hats were removed, salutes were given, hands were placed over their hearts, and patriotism reigned free. Fathers imparted tales of heroism they themselves had either heard of or had witnessed in their own times of military service.

Perhaps it is time that I should impart to you the memories that are represented by the red, white, and blue of my banner.

I could paint you a picture of America’s battles with England, with Itself, Korea, Vietnam, the Middle East, and so many more.

Or you should hear, instead, the cries filling the sky from the young men and women who lay wounded or dying on the stark fields of battle.

Then again, I could let you see the pain in the eyes of the families who were forced to say goodbye to their loved ones at a graveside, while listening to a 21 gun salute as I covered their loved one within my folds. However, you might also be interested in trying to comprehend the years of frustration, stemming from the uncertainty of not knowing if your missing family member is alive, or if he or she perished in a long since ended battle.

Out of all these possibilities, I have decided to beseech thee to look upon me and to remember that I stand in HONOR and to the GLORY of all of your forefathers - a symbol of freedom. When you give the Pledge of Allegiance, I ask you to listen to what you are saying, to understand the words, and to then mean them.

When future battles do come to this great nation; pray for America’s youth who bravely fight for your rights. Pray for their futures, their families, but mostly, pray that America will NEVER see the day when I am made to retire and another banner of different colors and ideals is placed where I now proudly stand.