

## But will you stand up for it?

When I was in high school, I was among the people nominated to attend Boys State, a week long camp held at a former army camp at the state capital. To get my spot, I had to deliver a speech about the American flag.

“Easy,” my adolescent brain thought. “I can do that in my sleep.”

Accordingly, I made little to no prep for my remarks.

I struggled with my remarks and made some comments about the flag being the symbol everyone could unite around. I got selected to attend Boys State and had a great time.

Flags are powerful symbols that have been in use for centuries. The colors and symbols rallied people to causes, ideals and even war. The American



From the  
Publisher's  
Desk  
Tom Stangl

flag went through numerous redesigns before the current format we all know and love.

State flags are a lesser known and, in my opinion, less appreciated “mini” versions of the national flag.

State flags were in the news recently as the Minnesota legislature approved a measure to redesign the state flag.

Minnesota and Wisconsin, like nearly half of the states in the nation, have state flags that are the state seal on a blue background. In my opinion, these flags are pretty unremarkable. I understand why these flags are used, but I think they do a great disservice to the unique places we call home.

I was reading a discussion about the redesign of the Minnesota state flag. Rep. Mike Freiberg was being interviewed by Minnesota Public Radio. “There are several principles that a good flag is supposed to have. It’s supposed to have meaningful symbolism — simple imagery that a child can draw, it’s distinguishable from a distance,” he said, adding “And our flag basically fails all of those principles.”

The same is true of the Wisconsin state flag.

Some in Minnesota have advocated for a visual representation of the state motto: *L’etoile du Nord*, which means in English “Star of the North.” A design being offered is a single star on a field of blue above rolling bands of white and green. Search for “North Star Flag” online and you will see it. I think it’s unique and striking. Much better than the current flag.

Of course as is the case with any change and anything involving government, there will be a great deal of debate and numerous hearings. Finding consensus has always been tricky business, it seems as if it grows harder each day.

I think Wisconsin should take a look at doing the same thing as Minnesota. The Wisconsin state motto is much more to the point: “Forward.” Perhaps something with water, land, forest and a badger would be appropriate.

What do you think?

As always, I welcome your comments. You can reach me by email at [tstangl@theameryfreepress.com](mailto:tstangl@theameryfreepress.com), telephone 715-268-8101 or write me at P.O. Box 424, Amery, WI, 54001.

Thanks for reading. I’ll keep in touch. Feel free to do the same.



## In the end, we all become stories

I have just returned from a five day “staycation” with family. I took last Wednesday-Friday off from the Free Press and had the weekend to equal five glorious days where I honestly focused on nothing but the people I love.

In my years at the Amery Free Press, there had maybe only been one other time when I took three consecutive days off from work and I guarantee you any other time I leave the office, is usually spent checking emails.

My whole life has been spent waiting for an epiphany, a manifestation of God’s presence, the kind of transcendent, magical experience that lets you see your place in the big picture and I assumed by pouring myself into work and the little and large news of Amery, I would find it.

While there have been times where it has absolutely ripped me to shreds, I have loved my job and refuse to hide my passion for it. There is a real magic in enthusiasm. It spells the difference between mediocrity and accomplishment.

After the last six months though, there was no doubt it was time to check out for a few days. My hubby and children were begging me to do it and my cousin Sean and his wife Ashley visiting from Ohio were the cherry on top of the sundae luring me away from my desk.

Wednesday, we spent the day pontooning on Bone Lake with my sisters and my husband’s brother Justin. It was day one of sun and self-reflection.

Surrounded by my family and the magical waters offered by Polk County’s lakes, it was the first time in a long time I really felt a huge weight lifted off of my shoulders.

Friday evening, I joined my hubby’s Godmother/Aunt Marj at Amery Ale Works to listen to the music of Rick Lombardo. If you ever want to spark sweetness in your soul, listen to the sounds of Rick, his son Kevin or grandson Austin. If you do not have a smile on your face—there is no hope for you.

Now—if you can listen to one (or all) of the Lombardo boys while drinking a beer with Kevin’s wife, meteorologist Leanne Lombardo, you have absolute perfection!

The next evening, I returned to Ale Works with my Ohio family and sitting there I felt so purely filled with joy. There’s that special magical place that exists when you forget everything else because you are laughing hysterically. It’s the only truly safe place and for me, it happened with my family at Ale Works. While looking up at the most beautiful blue sky, something dawned on me.

Amery Ale Works sits on the property that in the 1960s and 1970s was the Roberts Farm. It was the place Harold and Albertha raised their children: Paul, Mark, Marcia, Marie, Karen and Bruce.

It was also the place the neighbor kids down the road (the Siegerts: Lorraine, Sharon, Kevin and Colleen) spent many hours having farm shenanigans and making memories.

Our family connections with the Roberts still run deep. Mark Roberts still has a farm to the west, thus is now my neighbor down the road since Josh and I own the old Siegert property. Karen Roberts-Mollenhoff is my Godmother. Paul Robert’s daughter Dawn, will always be a cherished friend of mine and I know somewhere in the skies above, my uncle Kevin and Bruce Roberts are continuing their mischievousness and their mothers Albertha and Pat are still trying to keep them in line.

While sitting with my cousin Sean at Ale Works Saturday, I thought about the special times my mother Sharon and his father Kevin had on that very same land beneath our feet and I just knew there was some sort of magic in the property. There were people who loved us, who were looking down on us and making sure we all made time for each other and the things that truly mattered in life as it is just too darn short.

Canadian writer Charles de Lint once said (and I truly agree), “I do believe in an everyday sort of magic -- the inexplicable connectedness we sometimes experience with places, people; the eerie appropriateness of moments of synchronicity; the whispered voice, the hidden presence, when we think we’re alone.”

Blessed are they who see beautiful things in humble places, where other people see nothing. I have decided to slow down and notice more beautiful things.

I told you I have been waiting for an epiphany, and maybe I have finally found it. Believe in your heart that you’re meant to live a life full of passion, purpose, magic and miracles and that can only happen in a life filled with balance.

Although my life is spent writing stories about others, in the end, we all become stories and I want to be able to be the author of mine. I think it is time to change the storyline. Magic can be found in stolen moments. I have had many moments stolen from me over the past six months (actually six years) and it is amazing the amount of magic I found in five days.

Remember that it is never too late to rewrite your story.

Feel free to email me at [editor@theameryfreepress.com](mailto:editor@theameryfreepress.com), write me at P.O. Box 424, Amery WI, 54001 or I can be reached by phone at 715-268-8101.



Editor  
April Ziemer

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the Amery Free Press.

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OUR READERS!**