

Greetings from Ontario, Canada.

Congratulations to the St. Thomas Gun Club and CTA rep Jim Wood for hosting a very well organized and successful Canadian (ATA) championship tournament in late June – in spite of inclement weather that threatened at times to cause havoc.

I feel obliged to address an issue that involves all of us from time to time when participating in another country or hosting events where people from other countries are competing.

During major tournaments with both American and Canadian participants it is customary for a US Club to fly the Canadian flag and play the Canadian National Anthem and for a Canadian club to fly the US flag and play the American National Anthem. This is common place in professional sport as well. The expectation is that everyone remove their hats and stand at attention during the playing of both national anthems.

There have been rare breaches of this convention from time to time over the 30+ years that I have been involved in trapshooting. Within the past six months, however, I have had several incidents reported to me where individuals have been observed doing things that on their face portray a lack of respect for the playing of the national anthem of another country. On investigation/follow-up most of these incidents can be attributed to errors in judgment, extenuating circumstances (eg emergency) or just plain failure to pay attention to what was taking place. But unfortunately on occasion, the perpetrator(s) actually intended disrespect. A delegate reported to me that he had to deal with such a deliberate incident of disrespect recently and did so very quickly and decisively. You can expect that I will not tolerate any disrespect by Ontario shooters of the flag and anthem of our friends to the south or any other sovereign nation for that matter. I am confident virtually every Ontario shooter supports me on this position.

I probably would not have devoted article space to this issue had I not recently observed a flagrant breach of protocol myself at a major tournament. To my amazement, during the playing of the Canadian anthem, three middle aged men wearing hats sauntered through the clubhouse and into an adjoining hallway. I waited until the conclusion of the Canadian anthem and the American anthem and could find none of them. I suspect they were visitors and not even trapshooters. Had I found them I would have attempted to determine why the apparent disrespect/insult. Sometimes, believe it or not some people are simply uninformed and while meaning no disrespect have no clue what is expected of them.

It all starts with educating people. But when you observe an apparent breach, are you inclined to say and do nothing or are you prepared to intervene and have a little chat with the perpetrator(s)?

I personally believe that it is helpful for some people to have at least a basic knowledge of the facts and circumstances that led to the creation of another country's flag and or anthem. Do Canadians know that the "Star-Spangled Banner" was a product of the War of 1812? This was 55 years before Canada became a sovereign nation (in 1867) and 36 years after the US attained its independence (in 1776). Upper Canada was a colony of Great Britain. The US and Britain were at war (again) but this time the battlefields were on both sides of the US/Canada border. There were many such battles fought in Ontario and many more were fought throughout the east

coast of the US including in and around Washington D.C. On August 19, 1814 the British entered Chesapeake Bay and by the evening of August 24<sup>th</sup> the British had invaded and captured Washington. They set fire to the Capitol and the White House - the flames visible 40 miles away in Baltimore.

Baltimore (then a population of 40,000) was next on the British attack list and the Americans prepared for the onslaught on Fort McHenry located at the entrance to the Baltimore harbour. At 7:00 a.m. on September 13, 1814, the British bombardment of Fort McHenry began and continued for 25 hours with the British firing rockets across the sky. Francis Scott Key (born August 1, 1779 in western Maryland, and who by 1805 had established a law practice in the Georgetown section of Washington DC), watched this battle with extreme apprehension. Washington had already fallen. It was critical to hold Baltimore. He knew that as long as the shelling continued that Fort McHenry had not surrendered. It was a long and tortuous night. In the predawn darkness Key waited for the sight that would ease his anxiety. And finally, when dawn finally broke - he was overjoyed to see General Armistead's great flag blowing in the breeze - a huge 30 x 42' flag with 15 stars and eight red and seven white stripes - waving in the breeze. It appears the British judged Baltimore too costly a prize and retreated. Key was inspired to write a poem describing the experience. The poem was promptly published and put to the music of an old English song. Both the new song and the flag became known as the "Star-Spangled Banner". Congress eventually named it as the US national anthem in 1931. And the original flag that was waving proudly in the breeze over Fort McHenry so many years ago? - it has its home at the Smithsonian Institution's Museum of American History.

So now you know the story behind the words and the music. It is an inspiring story for which Americans are and should be proud. We Canadians too often trivialize the War of 1812 as the war in which we (or more precisely our colonial overseers) beat the Yanks. While it is true that the American invasionary forces were repelled at the decisive battle of Queenston Heights and General Brock who lost his life in that battle was forever immortalized, the British forces didn't win Baltimore. Nor did the American flag fall.

While we have as one may expect our differences from time to time as two sovereign nations, Canadians couldn't have a better neighbour and vice versa. Our respective forefathers fought shoulder to shoulder (and many died) in numerous global conflicts. Both of our nations embrace the attributes and responsibilities of freedom and democracy. It takes but a moment to stand at attention during the playing of two national anthems. Celebrate them both. Next month - for the primary benefit of our US friends, I will give some history on the Canadian flag and national anthem.

Paul Shaw  
ATA Delegate for Ontario