

# EDITORIAL

## Raise the Flag

For certain special occasions, gifts are in order. So, frequently, faced with choosing a gift, we scratch our heads in puzzlement and wonder what gift is appropriate.

Might we suggest...a flag...an American flag?

Consider reasons you might give someone a flag. An initial consideration, of course: flying the flag is patriotic. Raising the flag provides any American an opportunity to show his or her feelings about our country, to display belief that this nation (for all its faults and for all the fault we find with it) is still the finest place in all the world. Most of us are deep-down glad we didn't happen to be born in some other country. On nice days, then, we are engulfed with good solid warm emotions when we run Old Glory up the pole. (In stormy weather, we don't fly the flag.)

We put out the flag after sunrise. We take it in at sunset. We observe a complex code of behavior in connection with its care and display. The code specifies when, where, how, and why... every circumstance is covered except who...anyone may hang out the flag.

For the man of the house, tending the flag is a particularly pleasant activity. Before he leaves home on sunshiny days, he runs up the flag. Seeing the breeze catch the colors and spread them against the sky makes a day's glad beginning. Bright red-and-white stripes and those 50 white stars against their navy blue field wave bravely. As the sun slips down the western sky, the man comes home to the flutter of welcome. He gathers its folds with reverence and brings the flag inside

for the night.

Raising and lowering the flag gives a man an opportunity to spend a few minutes each day contemplating his fortune...his American citizenship. The small ceremony doesn't take much time and requires only a minimum of effort, but in those moments of ritual, a man's respect for his country is renewed and in his heart he honors his country and its symbol, our flag.

What is this bit of bunting, this banner? No more than scraps of fabric, a number of bright-colored strips of cloth stitched to form a pattern? A tassel of golden threads, perhaps, and a couple of brass bound holes through which to run ropes? Yes, that's all it is, yet our flag signifies more. So much more.

The flag stands for our unity as a nation, for the joys that swell and warm our souls as we look at America, see her strengths (and, yes, her weaknesses, too, for there still remains room for improvement), feel the throbbing vitality of her cities and the quiet rhythms of her countryside as the seasons come and go.

And the flag stands for memories of those who lived and those who died for democracy, for freedoms, for rights as only Americans enjoy them. And the flag stands for our homes, wherever they may be, and the people...each so dear...who shelter beneath our roofs.

An American flag might be an ideal gift for some special person on some special occasion.