

Immoral War Makes For Ugly July Fourth

July 2006

An email from my youngest arrived the morning after July 4th:

“I was thinking of you last night while lighting the fireworks for my friends. I always remember the fourth so vividly as a child: our tradition of going to the fireworks stand (spending too much money) and always having the best show on the block. I also remember the good old days of Old Sacramento on the third – we would pack up a dinner, find our spot on the lawn, us girls running around Old Sacramento before dark (the days when you did not have to worry too much about your children) and then as darkness hit, the show began. Thank you for the great memories of the fourth of July and always making it a great day!”

Let me tell you how nice it is to be remembered and thanked by one of your children, I should be so fortunate.

I inherited my love of the Fourth from my father. From my earliest years of recollection, I recall how much my father loved the celebration of Independence Day, especially the fireworks. Once he told me how fortunate he felt to have been born a citizen of the United States, a country that stood for freedom. Fireworks, he explained, were the symbol of our country’s desire to be free and it was important that the family celebrate even though I had to press my hands over my ears to muffle the sounds of the explosions. It was only natural then, when I had my own children, that I insisted upon fireworks to celebrate the Fourth.

Even now as empty nesters, Bonnie and I have traveled to Boston several years running to enjoy the Independence Day fireworks while visiting our daughter and her family. No, not the Boston Common fireworks, but the next town over, Needham

But this Fourth of 2006 was different. I did not celebrate, I was not interested in attending any fireworks display, I remained aloof – I'm sure it was because of the Iraq War. I was unwilling to allow any Independence Day celebration or the government's public relations talk of freedom gloss over the immorality of my country's war – a war that was unnecessary, a war that could have been avoided, a war that was predicated on falsehoods, a war waged by a Superpower because it could. And what was our president's holiday message to our country? – keep on killing, stay the course, bring honor to the 2540 American dead by slaying even more Iraqi people. Anyone who can tell right from wrong must consider adding our country to the president's list of countries who make up his simplistic axis of evil foreign policy.

I think of my father and his love of country. Would he have been so eager to celebrate the Fourth this year, as I was to avoid it? I hope not, but it might be so, I don't know.