

" YOU NEVER SAID YOU WERE PERFECT, YOU ONLY SAID YOU WERE FREE.

I THANK YOU FOR TRYING SO HARD TO KEEP IT THAT WAY FOR ME."

These lines came from a song I wrote for America's bicentennial back in 1976.

As we celebrate another year of being the melting pot of the world, I thought it'd be nice if I shared with you what I think about when I think about this country of ours.

When the oppressed cram into boats to get away from their broken homelands, it's America that their hearts always pointed to.

You can see the greatness of America when you go to the library. There are rows of biographies about people who come from humble, often times awful backgrounds, and become great achievers and valuable contributors to our world. Most countries cannot offer you those stories.

The homeless family in Mississippi has as much say in which our next leaders will be as the affluent family in Beverly Hills.

A country where dreamers are still encouraged to take their best shot.

A country where a baby girl is not closed down and rendered a second class citizen, but can reach for her stars, wherever they may shine.

Where freedom is sacred... even to those who would abuse it.

Where belief in God can be freely expressed, no matter how far off the beaten path it may be.

America... A country that has been bruised so many times but continues to keep growing and moving forward.

I was a teenager during the 60's. This was a time when America threw up. We were protesting wars, burning our draft cards, flags and cities, shooting our President, Senators and Civil Rights leaders, smoking pot, promoting free sex and generally challenging everything that the "Leave-It-To-Beaver" generation worked so hard to preserve. Ah, the 60's... America at it's worst... and America at it's best. That's what I like about this country. We go through some pretty awful times that would devastate other countries. But in America, these trying times always seem to make us all the stronger.

We didn't survive the Civil War, we came out stronger because of it. We didn't survive the gangster days of prohibition, we came out stronger because of it. We didn't survive the 60's, we came out stronger because of it. And you can be certain that America will not just survive the environmental issues that we face today, but it will lead the way in helping the world come out better because of it.

Sure, as a writer I could write volumes on the many infractions that this country stumbles through. I could write a column about what is wrong with this country and have enough material to keep the column in ink for a long, long time.

But the truth of the matter is that all the flag burners, protesters, fanatic groups and odd-balls do not condemn this country nearly as much as they reflect what is good about this country.... why those boats full of oppressed people still point to the shores of America for more than 200 years. They call it freedom for ALL.

Yes America, you never did say that you were perfect... you only told us that you were free. I really am thankful that you've worked so hard to keep it just that way for someone like me. Happy Birthday.

Just A Thought