



The Patriot's Companion

Volume 1 – Issue 6

January 2011

Happy New Year!



Martin Luther King, Jr.
1/15/29 – 4/4/68

**112th Congress begins
January 5, 2011**

"Now, more than ever before, the people are responsible for the character of their Congress. If that body be ignorant, reckless, and corrupt, it is because the people tolerate ignorance, recklessness, and corruption. If it be intelligent, brave and pure, it is because the people demand these high qualities to represent them in the national legislature. . . If the next centennial does not find us a great nation . . . it will be because those who represent the enterprise, the culture, and the morality of the nation do not aid in controlling the political forces."

~ President James A. Garfield
at Centennial Celebration of America

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The Miracle at Valley Forge

By Susan Frickey, 9-12 Project Education Committee

By the time the soldiers retreated to Valley Forge for the winter of 1777, we had lost our capital of Philadelphia, the British had us on the run, our troops were exhausted, starving, sick and dejected.

The thousands of British, passing through an area, would strip it of food, cows, horses and whatever else they fancied. They would take over homes when they wanted rest and shelter, throwing the owners out or forcing them to cook and care for them.

Patriot families took to burning their crops to keep them out of the hands of the British troops, so everyone was hungry. The British, in retaliation, burned homes and barns to the ground. Whole towns were burnt to ashes, and people had to scrounge through the ashes of their lives for anything salvageable. With winter coming on, useable firewood was scarce, so even the townspeople had trouble staying warm.

Diseases were also spread by the passing armies and 10 times as many soldiers died of illness than in battle. In fact, during all 7 years of the American Revolution, a smallpox epidemic raged and more people died of smallpox than the war.

"Our constant companions were fatigue, hunger and cold," said Joseph Plumb Martin. The soldiers were supposed to receive a daily ration of bread, meat or fish, and vegetables, but there were long and frequent shortages. A piece of hard biscuit and a bit of salt pork seemed like a feast. As a special holiday treat, Continental Army troops were issued ¼ cup of rice and a tablespoon of vinegar.

Many soldiers had never been away from home before, so they were homesick, worried about their families, and tried to get along with total strangers from other states. Lots of fights broke out.

Washington wrote letter after letter to Congress begging for supplies for his suffering army, but Congress was too busy bickering and squabbling among themselves to come to the aid of the very army trying to protect them.

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Even during the best of times, the life of a Continental soldier was pretty brutal: long marches, disease, battle wounds, lack of decent medical care. Even worse was the constant hunger, and the search for something to eat. At times, the only food the soldiers had was what they “borrowed” from a farmer’s fields or hunted up in the woods.

Only miles away in Philadelphia, the British troops were housed comfortably in private homes. They enjoyed fine food, warm fires, fancy dress balls and the company of Philadelphia’s loyalist households.

The only thing that was plentiful at Valley Forge was trees and the first order of business was to build about 1,000 log huts for shelter. The enlisted men slept 12 to a hut. It took only 6 weeks to build all the huts. Washington set up headquarters in a two-story stone house nearby.

What isn't as commonly known is that a new, confident, professional American army was born at Valley Forge. A vigorous, systematic training regime transformed ragged amateur troops into a confident 18th century military organization capable of beating the Red Coats in the open field of battle. The Valley Forge miracle’s name was Baron Freidrich Wilhelm von Steuben.

On February 23, 1778, two strangers dressed in Prussian uniforms arrived at Valley Forge asking to see General George Washington. He spoke in German to the man with him who was serving as an interpreter. He said that he had a letter for Washington from Ben Franklin.

An aide told Washington about the two strangers. Washington sat forward in his chair.

"Benjamin Franklin sent him?"

"That's what he says."

"Are he or his interpreter armed?"

"No sir. Both in uniform, but no arms I can see."

"Bring them in and remain here until we know what this is about."

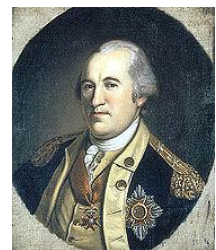
"Yes, sir."

The two men stood in front of his desk at full attention, heels together, chests thrust forward, chins drawn in tight. Washington stood and came to attention. They saluted and Washington motioned them to two chairs facing his desk.

"To what do I owe the pleasure of this visit?" Washington inquired.

The interpreter translated from German to English.

"I am Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben. I am a Prussian officer, trained in the army of Frederick the Great. I have come to offer my services to the American Continental Army. I am here on the advice of Benjamin Franklin, who is the American ambassador to France. I visited him in Paris and he gave me a letter and recommended I deliver it to you personally."



He took a letter out of his breast pocket and handed it to Washington.

Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben,
by [Charles Willson Peale](#)

Washington studied the signature on the brief letter to verify that it was authentic.

"Ambassador Franklin recommends you to me as an officer who may be of assistance to the Continental Army. Do I understand this correctly?"

"Yes, I would be honored."

"This letter from Ambassador Franklin states you were a German general. Is that true?"

"No sir. I was a captain, not a general."

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Washington smiled at what he instantly recognized as a classic Franklin exaggeration.

"What service do you feel you might render?"

"I can train the army, sir."

"Train the army?"

"Yes sir. Train the army."

Washington figured that Franklin must have seen something of value in the man or he wouldn't have sent him this far. He told von Steuben that he and his interpreter could take quarters in this house for a few days and he would give him a letter authorizing him to inspect the camp.

He told von Steuben, *"When you've finished report back to me with a plan that you think will improve this army. I will make a decision after I have considered your plan. Is that agreeable?"* "Ja!"

For two days von Steuben rode in a carriage, up and down the camp, one end to the other, stopping incessantly to study everything in sight and silently listening to the men while he watched their faces. He was back in Washington's office on the third day. The interpreter read from von Steuben's written report.

"I have never seen an army in the conditions I see here. Your men are starving. No food. Sick. No medicine. Freezing. Removing their own frozen toes with pocket knives. Most with no shoes. On picket duty at midnight barefooted, standing on a felt hat to keep their feet from freezing to the ground. Dressed in summer clothing. Living in quarters that allow the wind and snow to come through the walls. Muskets out of repair and no way to make them serviceable. Almost no ammunition, no gunpowder. No military bearing. A wagon passes through camp every morning picking up those who have died of starvation and freezing and sickness during the night — 600 of them every month.

"I have seen less than 20 men who understand the meaning of the term soldier. There is not an army in Europe that would remain in service under such conditions. They would simply pack their knapsacks, pick up their muskets, and go home. I do not — cannot — understand what is holding these men here."

Washington leaned back in his chair and asked,

"What do you propose you can do to assist us in our problems?"

"I can train them, sir. I can make soldiers of them. I cannot provide food, or medicine, or weapons, but I can make them into an army."

That's when Washington saw what Franklin had seen in this unusual man.

"What compensation will you expect for your services?"

"Nothing, until you approve of what I've done. Then we will agree on the compensation."

For one split second Washington stared in disbelief. Then he leaned forward.

"I will draft your commission today. You will begin at once. As for what is holding these men here, may I suggest it is the fact that they have had a taste of freedom, and they cannot let go of it."

The next morning von Stueben called a council of the officers in command of all twelve regiments of the American army. In addition to his own interpreter, he had an American interpreter standing next to him.

"Each of you will select 10 men from your regiment to report to me every morning at 8:00 on the drill field. I will train them, and then they will train each of your units."

The following morning, 120 men assembled on the drill field, some arriving as late as 20 minutes past 8:00. They stood in groups, muskets in hand, waiting while von Steuben paced, waiting for the late ones.

"You're late!" von Steuben announced in loud, clipped words. "You will be on time, or you will be punished. Now fall into rank and file."

(Continued on page 4)

Their lines were crooked and the men held their muskets in any way they wished.

"Your lives will depend on your muskets! You will treat them with respect. They belong on your right shoulder. Your lines are crooked. They will be straight. You will be one arm's length apart—exactly 28 inches. Or you will be punished."

The Americans stared in defiance while von Steuben marched up and down the lines, pushing one soldier backward, another forward, positioning them at the exact intervals he dictated, straightening their muskets on their shoulders, thrusting his nose within 6 inches of theirs as he barked his orders in German with the American interpreter giving an instant translation, white-faced, horrified at the mutiny he expected at any moment.

On the fourth day, the Americans were still showing their utter contempt for what they took as the sheer idiocy of intervals and heels together, toes pointed outward, chests out, chins in, lines perfectly formed. They were in this army to fight the British! That meant their real value lay in how well they could shoot and use the bayonet in battle. Intervals? Straight lines? On the battlefield? Who was this officious little German who strutted about, purveying such nonsense?

None of the Americans knew that every morning von Steuben was out of his bed at exactly three o'clock. He first dressed, drank a cup of scalding, strong black coffee, then sat at his desk, steadily writing a manual of arms.

On the fourth morning, when he saw the stubborn faces and eyes of the 120 men on the frozen drill field, von Steuben exploded. He ripped into them with a voice that stopped soldiers and officers 200 yards distant, cursing them with profanity that shook both interpreters to the core. For minutes he blasted away, shaking his fist, pacing back and forth in front of them, while they stared at him, stunned into shocked silence. When von Steuben finished he turned to his own interpreter.

"Tell them!" he exclaimed.

For a moment the interpreter stood in silence, then asked in a voice that croaked,

"Uh . . . sir . . . you want me to repeat everything you just said?"

"Ja! Ja! Every word. Exactly as I said it!"

The American interpreter peered pleadingly at the German interpreter. "Yes, sir," the German interpreter said and launched into a full translation of every word Von Steuben had said.

For the first ten seconds the Americans stood without moving a muscle, unable to believe the river of profanity that was flowing from the interpreter! After half a minute, one American ducked his head and grinned. After one full minute, three or four others were grinning. After three minutes, one of them chuckled out loud. Before the interpreter finished, most Americans were grinning and chuckling. In their lives, they had never heard such a torrent of profanity.

At the midpoint of the interpreter's tirade, Von Steuben was studying the demeanor of the Americans, puzzled at their grins and chuckles. Didn't they understand? Did they not realize they were being insulted in the strongest language he could deliver? When the interpreter concluded, Von Steuben ordered them into their rank and file lines, drilled them until noon, and returned to his quarters, deep in thought. It was after evening mess, while he was sitting in his chambers, still struggling to understand the American soldiers' response, when the words of General Washington came to his mind.

"As for what is holding these men here, may I suggest it is the fact they have had a taste of freedom, and they cannot let go of it."

(Continued on page 5)

It struck him with a force he had never felt before.

Of course! Of course! The Americans have learned to think for themselves! Not like the Europeans! The Americans are their own men! How could I have missed it? How could I have missed it?

He sat at his desk in the yellow light of the lamp, searching for the words that would make the lesson simple, and slowly they came.

In Europe, you tell a soldier to do a thing, and he will do it. In America, you tell a soldier to do a thing, and then you tell him why! And when he understands why, THEN he will do it!

He slept soundly that night and arose at 3:00 A.M. as usual. Dressed, he sipped at his steaming coffee and began correcting the manual of arms he had been working on each morning. At 8 o'clock he was on the drill field, waiting for the Americans to fall into rank and file. By ten minutes past the hour, they were there. He stood before them and spoke loudly.

"In battle, habit and discipline alone will save your lives. Habit and discipline are what you do without thinking—what you do because you have trained yourself to do it. When General Washington orders you to begin an attack at 8:00 A.M., he is depending on you to begin the attack at 8:00 A.M. for good reason. It could be that he has ordered his artillery to begin firing at precisely 8:00 A.M. to give you support, or it could be that he has ordered another regiment to begin a flanking maneuver on the enemy at exactly 8:00 A.M. You may not know the reason, but that is not your concern. Your concern is to attack at exactly 8:00 A.M., as ordered."

Von Steuben paused and for long moments peered into the faces of the men nearest him. For the first time he saw the question in their eyes, and could see their minds working, waiting. He continued.

"My orders are to prepare you for the battlefield. Prepare you to attack at exactly 8:00 A.M. if that is what your officers require. To teach you habits and discipline that will save your lives and the lives of the men next to you in battle. For that reason, I hope to teach you the habit of being where you are ordered to be, on time. Your orders are to be in rank and file on this drill field at 8:00 A.M. daily. Am I asking too much?"

For the first time, Von Steuben saw the dawn of understanding come into the eyes and faces of the Americans. Von Steuben went on.

"I have ordered you to be in rank and file, lines straight, at twenty-eight-inch intervals. The reason is this. As you move into battle, each of you must have sufficient room to move and turn, according to need. If you are crowded together, you cannot do that. Someday, straight lines and correct intervals will save you or the man next to you."

Again Von Steuben paused, then went on.

"May I now give you orders. Fall into rank and file at the proper interval."

They moved slowly, but when they finished, the 120 poorly clothed and disheveled men were in lines that were straight, at perfect intervals, heels together, muskets on their shoulders, chests out, chins in, eyes straight ahead. Wordlessly, Von Steuben walked up and down the lines, face aglow in the freezing morning air. For the first time, morning drill was very nearly flawless. Thoughtful men responded to orders without question.

At noon, after they were dismissed, the soldiers gathered into groups to return to their regiments.

(Continued on page 6)

One of them chuckled and said to the others, "You know that string of profanity we got from him yesterday?" The others nodded their heads, grinning, and he continued. "The longer I think about it, the more I admire it, Why, that profanity was so beautiful it ought to be in the Bible!

Throughout the winter months and into the spring, von Steuben spent endless hours drilling the men, disciplining them, teaching them battle tactics and use of weapons. The bond between him and the Continental Army became legendary. By the month of May, Von Steuben had picked up enough English to personally conduct the military drills. While the men were drilling, he marched with them, calling,

"Left, right, left, right, vun, doo, dree, foh."

Soon the entire command echoed him

"Left, right, left, right, vun, doo, dree, foh," and uncontained laughter rang over the drill field.

One of his greatest contributions to the American Revolution was training in the use of the bayonet. Americans had been mainly dependent on their ammunition to win battles. They used the bayonet mostly as a cooking skewer or tool rather than as a fighting instrument.

Another program developed by Steuben was camp sanitation. He established standards of sanitation and camp layout that would still be standard a century and a half later.

During his time at Valley Forge, von Steuben prepared *Regulation for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States*, commonly known as the "Blue Book."

Baron von Steuben served in the Continental army for the remainder of the Revolutionary War, rising to the rank of major general. He became an American citizen by act of the Pennsylvania legislature in March 1784. He settled in New York and remained in America for the rest of his life.

References:

"Unlikely Heroes," by Ron Carter,

Wikipedia website:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friedrich_Wilhelm_von_Steuben

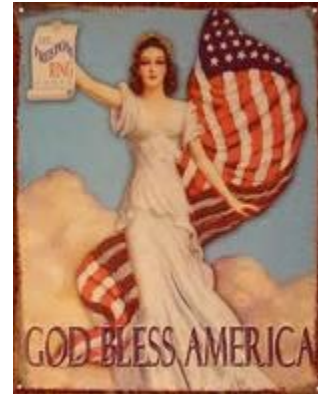
Wikipedia website: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valley_Forge

What Have We Learned in 2,065 Years?

"The budget should be balanced, the Treasury should be refilled, public debt should be reduced, the arrogance of officialdom should be tempered and controlled and the assistance to foreign lands should be curtailed lest Rome become bankrupt. People must again learn to work, instead of living on public assistance."

- Cicero , 55 BC

...evidently nothing.



FEATURED LOCAL BUSINESS

Feature Your Business

We will feature a local 9-12 business in each newsletter as a fund-raiser for our 9-12 group. Putting in a short advertisement for your business would cost a \$50 donation to 9-12 Project Idaho. We need your business card and a short blurb to tell us what you do in a way that makes us all want to rush over to your business!

For more information, please contact:

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Emergency Preparedness

What Would Noah Do?

, www.912project.com/preparedness



Among many Christians the phrase, “What Would Jesus Do?”; is a catchy way to prick consciences or even simply to resist temptation. It occurred to me while reading Genesis 6 recently that what we should be thinking about today is “What Would Noah Do?” If you remember from the story, Noah recognized and heeded God’s warning. He was able to save himself and his family and provide for their future. For the last 20 years, we have been watching the signs of the impending collapse of our society and economy, but few have responded.

In the 1990s we could clearly see the unsustainability of the growth of government financial commitments, first to welfare programs and later, in the Bush years, to a growth in defense related spending. The inevitability of dramatic increases in oil prices hasn’t influenced public policy or private sector development much, and we’ve now accepted oil prices that are dramatically higher than just a few years ago.

We are now maintaining an empire that stretches over 130 countries (that’s how many places we have a military presence), our national debt is exploding, the largest generation in the history of our country is on the verge of retirement with insufficient savings and our nation is being ravaged by cultural wars.

What makes things worse is that we could have seen this all coming and been prepared. Instead, our personal and government debt is as high as it has ever been. Imagine that... higher than it was during the Depression and the midst of World War II. We’ve come through a generation of abundance in almost every area of our lives, and we’ve failed to prepare properly.

To put things in perspective, just 12 years ago we spent \$300 billion a year on defense, today it’s over \$900 billion per year. A decade ago our national debt was \$5.4 trillion, today it is over \$12 trillion and is on pace to double within a decade if the administration doesn’t spend any more money.

That \$12 trillion doesn’t count Social Security or Medicare, by the way. The real number is closer to \$70 trillion. Over the last 50 years, the average savings rate per family was 6.5%. By 1997 it had dropped to 4%, and by 2005 it was 1%. This is what our rulers wanted, and by driving interest rates down, subsidizing high risk loans and giving deductions and tax advantages to certain corporations they kept the cost of fancy TVs and imported cars low, so Americans would spend instead of saving.

Baby boomers are on the verge of retiring in record numbers. Not surprisingly, they want a little something back after having paid so much into Social Security and Medicare all these years. Unfortunately, there’s nothing to give back, because it has all been spent already. There is no ‘trust’ or ‘lock box’ or anything but a pile of IOUs.

It’s clear our national leaders, governmental or private sector, have not prepared the country for this crisis. We as individuals have also had the opportunity to prepare. So I have some questions for you:

- Did you harvest the crops, fatten the livestock, cut the firewood, stockpile the propane, hoard ammunition and batten down your farmstead?
- Did you deepen your relationships with family and neighbors who would support you during a Crisis?
- Have you ‘played crisis’ by walking through all your plans, trying your food, testing your gear, finding out what works and what doesn’t so you can adjust your plans?

(Continued on page 8)



Road Hogs

"If I determined upon a walk up Main street, the chances were five hundred to one against my reaching the shady side without brushing by a snout fresh dripping," wrote Englishwoman Frances Trollope in 1832. She was complaining not of stray dogs, or nuzzling horses, but of Cincinnati's rooting hordes of free-roaming pigs.

People put up with the hordes because of the garbage that clogged the streets in early America – kitchen shops, viscera discarded from butchered animals, mounds of fly-flecked horse manure. In some cities dogs and goats were loosed to scavenge on the mess but none rivaled pigs – thousands of determined, snuffling, snorting trash disposals on four legs.

Pigs produced a fair amount of waste themselves. *"The stench"*, wheezed a visiting Oscar Wilde, *"made granite eyes weep."* There were reports of overturned carriages, knockdowns, maimings – even deaths.

Early efforts to restrict the pigs failed in part because the four-legged street sweepers were more efficient than the human variety. The poor also profited by supplementing their meager diet with fresh ham or sold the pigs to slaughterhouses.

In the wake of mid-century cholera scares and epidemics in several cities, local boards of health began to have voice over private interests, political corruption and hardened custom. Finally, public outcry drove authorities to provide water and work crews for public sanitation and created ordinances containing the scavenging livestock. By the 1860s, the pig patrols were out of business.

Allow me to use the metaphor of a blizzard on the way. There is no way to delay the blizzard, but you do not know the exact date of the arrival. Your neighbors are more concerned with Tiger Woods' affair, what will become of Jon and Kate, Oprah's new plans, and whether or not Obama should bow to every foreign leader. Most liberals are still worried about global warming while the Midwest and East are buried under record snowfalls and many 'conservatives' are content with watching a pre-programmed argument on Fox news.



During a time of crisis, virtues become extremely important. I'm talking about faith, trust, reliability, endurance, temperance, frugality and sacrifice. These are things you don't hear much about any more, even in Church (where only love and forgiveness are in vogue).

These virtues got our ancestors through a revolution, a civil war and the great depression. We're going to need to return to these virtues if we're going to survive the coming storm. We're also going to have to adapt to changing community norms, where possible, and if impossible, move. We must bond with others and build personal relationships across socio-economic, religious and ethnic backgrounds. It won't matter whether your neighbor is a Muslim or a Jew if he has firewood and you have food; you'll want to work out an exchange.

We'll have to prepare ourselves and our children for teamwork, because everything will be more difficult in the future. Look at how it is done in the third world today, where multiple generations live in a single household because it takes that many people to spread the work load around. If you don't have a family, you need to create one, and not online, but in your community. Other single people will need your skills and abilities.

Prepare yourself mentally and emotionally. Things may be, and probably will be, worse than whatever you've decided it will be. How will you respond to that? My kids are tired of me saying, "Hope for the best, but plan for the worst," but I'm going to keep saying it until I find something better to describe the attitude I believe we should all share.

We have had a time of plenty, and as a people we have failed to prepare. As of this moment, there is still time. Don't delay. If you can't build an ark, find someone who already has and arrange a trade with them. You're not going to make it alone in this crisis.

Related Link: 12 Simple Things You Can Start Doing...

<http://endoftheamericandream.com/archives/12-simple-things-you-can-start-doing-right-now-to-prepare-for-the-coming-financial-apocalypse>

History Quiz – Could you become a citizen? *Part 4 of 4*

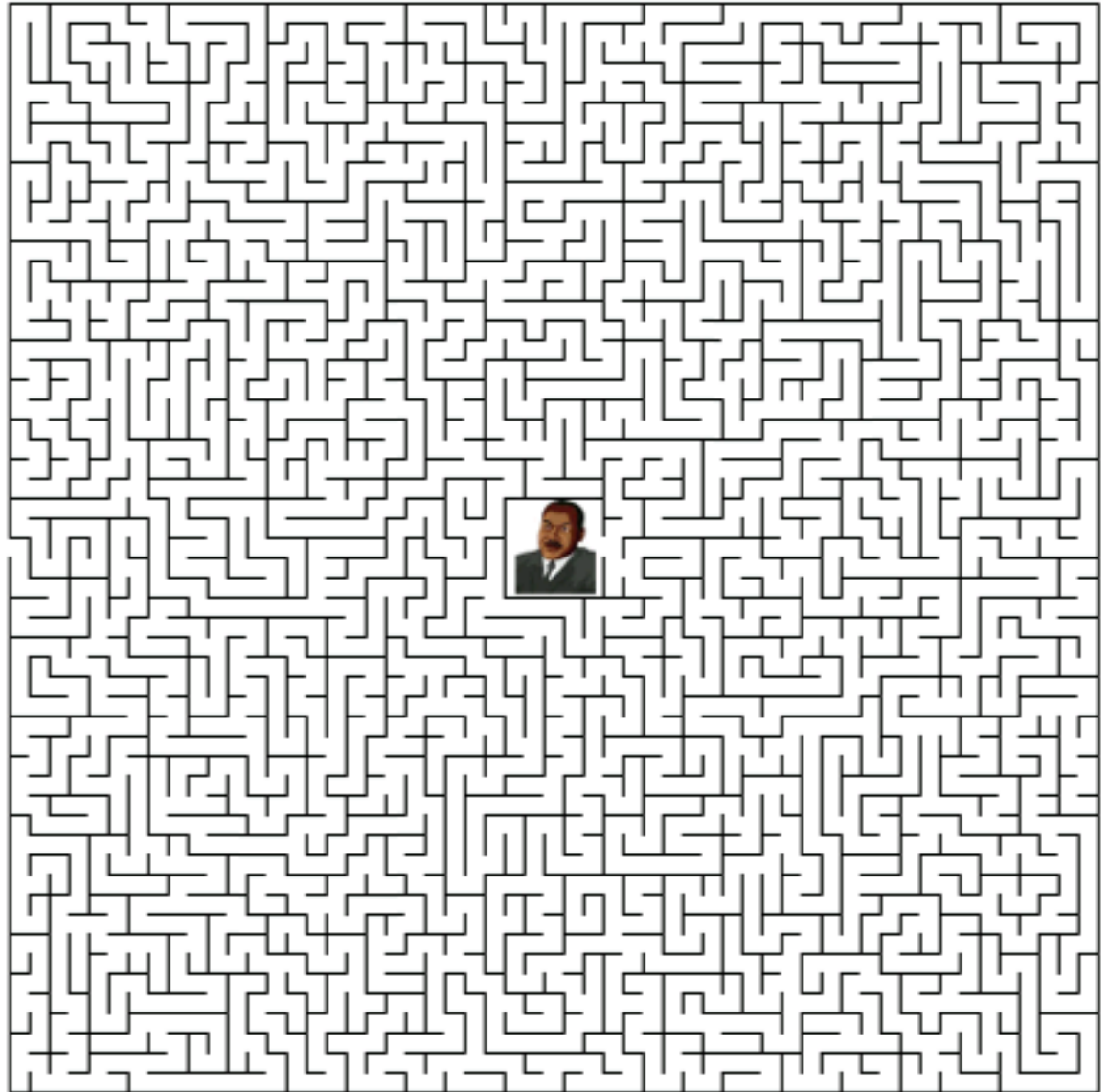
U.S. Citizenship Test - Part 4	
76. Name 3 rights of freedom guaranteed by the Bill of Rights.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The right of freedom of speech, press, religion, peaceable assembly, and requesting change of government. • The right to bear arms (the right to have weapons or own a gun, though subject to certain regulations). • The government may not quarter, or house, soldiers in the people's homes during peacetime without the people's consent. • The government may not search or take a person's property without a warrant. • A person may not be tried twice for the same crime and does not have to testify against him/herself. • A person charged with a crime still has some rights, such as the right to a trial and to have a lawyer. • The right to trial by jury in most cases. • Protects people against excessive or unreasonable fines or cruel and unusual punishment. • The people have rights other than those mentioned in the Constitution. • Any power not given to the federal government by the Constitution is a power of either the state or the people.
77. Who has the power to declare the war?	The Congress
78. What kind of government does the United States have?	Democracy (government answer); Republic (our answer as we discussed in the October newsletter)
79. Which President freed the slaves?	Abraham Lincoln
80. In what year was the Constitution written?	1787
81. What are the first 10 amendments to the Constitution called?	The Bill of Rights
82. Name one purpose of the United Nations?	For countries to discuss and try to resolve world problems, to provide economic aid to many countries.
83. Where does Congress meet?	In the Capitol in Washington, D.C.
84. Whose rights are guaranteed by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights?	Everyone (citizens and non-citizens) living in U.S.
85. What is the introduction to the Constitution called?	The Preamble
86. Name one benefit of being citizen of the United States.	Obtain federal government jobs, travel with U.S. passport, petition for close relatives to come to the U.S. to live.
87. What is the most important right granted to U.S. citizens?	The right to vote
88. What is the United States Capitol?	The place where Congress meets
89. What is the White House?	The President's official home
90. Where is the White House located?	Washington, D.C. (1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.)
91. What is the name of the President's official home?	The White House
92. Name the right guaranteed by the first amendment.	Freedom of: speech, press, religion, peaceable assembly, and requesting change of the government.
93. Who is the Commander in Chief of the U.S. military?	The President
94. Which President was the first Commander in Chief of the U.S. military?	George Washington
95. In what month do we vote for the President?	November
96. In what month is the new President inaugurated?	January
97. How many times may a Senator be re-elected?	There is no limit
98. How many times may a Congressman be re-elected?	There is no limit
99. What are the 2 major political parties in the U.S. today?	Democrat and Republican
100. How many states are there in the United States today?	Fifty (50)

Young Patriot's Corner – Maze

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Maze Worksheet

Directions: Help Dr. King make an exit.

EXIT



<http://www.teach-nology.com/worksheets/misc/mlk/maze/>

Young Patriots Corner – Bedtime Story

Martha Washington



When Martha married George Washington, she was a wealthy widow with 2 children.

At the age of 18, she married Daniel Custis who was wealthy, handsome and 20 years older than the pretty, 5 ft. Martha. When he died suddenly a few years later, she inherited a 17,000 acre plantation. She was 26.

Two years later she married the dashing young colonel in the Virginia militia by the name of George Washington. George soon became Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army, and consequently was gone from home for months at a time.

There was a close, happy relationship and Martha accompanied him to army camps whenever she could. When she couldn't get away from the plantation, they wrote to each other almost daily.

Few know this, but Martha was with George and the troops that bitter cold winter at Valley Forge.

On her way to Valley Forge, she instructed the driver of her carriage to leave the curtains open in the freezing morning air – she wanted to see the passing country and the soldiers. As they neared their destination, she was shocked at the sight of all the hollow-eyed, scarecrow, ill-clothed soldiers.

Frozen, half-decayed horse carcasses littered the campgrounds. When a wagon rolled past her with arms and legs hanging out, Martha turned to see the back of the wagon. Bodies of 14 men who had frozen to death during the previous night were stacked in the back of the wagon, fingers and toes black, frozen solid.

When she arrived at the home Washington was staying in and they finally got some undisturbed time, Martha said, "I've never seen men in such terrible living conditions."

George agreed and said "we lack everything on which an army depends: food, blankets, clothing, shoes, money, wagons, guns – everything."

Martha said, "What can I do?" George thought for a while and said, "Go out among the troops as you always do. You can do tremendous good just by being seen."

She asked "May I visit the hospital this afternoon?" George replied, "I will have Colonel Alexander Hamilton escort you."

First Colonel Hamilton took her to an old barn being used as a make-shift hospital because the general hospital was already filled to capacity. The barn was filled with makeshift cots placed in every conceivable place on the bare dirt floor. Underneath the cots were blankets where emaciated, delirious men lay, some with missing hands or feet or fingers and toes. Many had open sores on their bodies. The whole barn echoed with the sounds of human beings in agony. The stench of filthy bodies and decaying human flesh was overpowering.

The only source of heat in the barn was a wood stove at one end of the building, so the room was cold and rather dark.

Six nurses, harried and exhausted, moved among the cots, doing whatever they could to relieve the pain and suffering of the soldiers, offering whatever comfort they were able to.

A weary doctor came forward to greet Martha and Hamilton.

“Have these men enough food?” asked Martha. “Scarcely enough to keep them alive. Half would recover within days if we could feed them properly,” replied the doctor.

Hamilton and Martha took leave and traveled to the main hospital.

Upon arrival, they saw dead bodies being thrown into the back of a wagon. Martha’s eyes filled with tears as the wagon rumbled away.

Inside the main room, the odors of putrefied flesh, vomit and sounds of agony assaulted them. A nurse rushed up and said “You must leave! We have typhus and diphtheria in this room. Perhaps smallpox. You cannot stay!”

“I’m sorry,” said Martha, “I didn’t mean to interfere. I’m Martha Washington.” “What can I do to help?”

“Could you pray for us?”

“I already do, every day. Perhaps I could bring back some food?”

“OH!” said the nurse, “You don’t know what that would do for these men!”

Back in the coach, Hamilton sat in silence while Martha was deep in thought.

When she got back to the house, she said to her husband’ “Could I have your authority to request some food items be brought to the house?” “Certainly,” said George.

At noon the next day, soldiers carried six huge black kettles, lids tightly fastened, out of Martha’s kitchen and into a waiting wagon.

A short while later, they stopped at the makeshift barn/hospital and unloaded two of the kettles. The men wept when the lids were lifted and they smelled the rich steaming stew of venison, potatoes, carrots and turnips as it was ladled into bowls.

The wagon moved on to the main hospital, where the remaining 4 kettles were brought in. Tears streamed down cheeks and into beards as the injured, sick and starving men ate in grateful silence, raising their eyes to Martha in worshipful reverence as she walked among them, refilling bowls and helping trembling hands work with a spoon.

Martha Washington was revered almost as much as George by the Continental Army and a grateful young nation.

When the war was won and George retired to Mt. Vernon, he and Martha shared many days together in their quiet devotion to each other.

Being private people, once George died and Martha felt her death was nearing, she burned all the letters they had written to each other over the years, save two.

~ from *Unlikely Heroes* by Ron Carter, *The American Revolution: Hands on History Book*
www.ushistory.org, various internet research sites