

NOTE: The patriotic message delivered in both July 3rd Sunday services was taken from an article, published in the July 2011 issue of *Masonry*—the official magazine of the Mason Contractors Association of America: My regular column is titled “Full Contact Project Management”, where I have been focusing on the lessons displayed in our country by some of our most famous leaders. The June issue, for instance, commemorated the D-Day landing. It’s a good series—if I do say so myself!

Several members of the congregation have asked for the text of the July message, and that appears below. A copy of the actual magazine article can be found by doing an online search for the following:
Full Contact Project Management July 2011

4th of July & the Founding Fathers

by Gary Micheloni

In 1776...our Founding Fathers forged a brand, new concept: **“the law is king”**. We forget that, prior to our Declaration, the world had only known, **“the king is law”**. Think how our property rights, freedom of speech and of religion and of the press, all spring from that—previously unheard of—concept! It used to be: **whatever the king says, you gotta do!**

The King of England didn’t much care for this idea that there were **God-given** rights -- that no one should usurp. When these men actually signed the Declaration, pledging to each other “...their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor”, these were not idle words.

Several years ago, the late, Paul Harvey, wrote the following...

Americans, you know the 56 men who signed our Declaration of Independence that first 4th of July—you know they were risking everything, don’t you? Because if they won the war with the British, there would be years of hardship as a struggling nation. If they lost they would face a hangman’s noose. And yet there where it says, “We herewith pledge, our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor,” they did sign. But did you know that they paid the price?

When Carter Braxton of Virginia signed the Declaration of Independence, he was a wealthy planter and trader. But thereafter he saw his ships swept from the seas, and to pay his debts, he lost his home and all of his property. He died in rags.

Thomas Lynch, Jr., who signed that pledge, was a third generation rice grower and aristocrat—a large plantation owner—but after he signed his health failed. With his wife he set out for France to regain his failing health. Their ship never got to France; he was never heard from again.

Thomas McKean of Delaware was so harassed by the enemy that he was forced to move his family five times in five months. He served in Congress without pay, his family in poverty and in hiding.

Vandals looted the properties of Ellery and Clymer and Hall and Gwinett and Walton and Heyward and Rutledge and Middleton. And Thomas Nelson, Jr. of Virginia raised two million dollars on his own signature to provision our allies, the French fleet. After the War he

personally paid back the loans, wiping out his entire estate; he was never reimbursed by his government. And in the final battle for Yorktown, he, Nelson, urged General Washington to fire on his (Nelson's) own home, then occupied by Cornwallis. And he died bankrupt. Thomas Nelson, Jr. had pledged his life, his fortune, and his sacred honor.

The Hessians seized the home of Francis Hopkinson of New Jersey. Francis Lewis had his home and everything destroyed, his wife imprisoned—she died within a few months. Richard Stockton, who signed the Declaration of Independence, pledging his life and his fortune, was captured and mistreated, and his health broken to the extent that he died at 51. And his estate was pillaged.

Thomas Heyward, Jr. was captured when Charleston fell. John Hart was driven from his wife's bedside while she was dying; their thirteen children fled in all directions for their lives. His fields and gristmill were laid waste. For more than a year he lived in forests and caves and returned home after the War to find his wife dead, his children gone, his properties gone. He died a few weeks later of exhaustion and a broken heart.

Lewis Morris saw his land destroyed, his family scattered. Philip Livingston died within a few months of hardships of the War.

John Hancock, history remembers best, due to a quirk of fate—that great sweeping signature attesting to his vanity, towers over the others. One of the wealthiest men in New England, he stood outside Boston one terrible night of the War and said, "Burn Boston, though it makes John Hancock a beggar, if the public good requires it." He, too, lived up to the pledge.

Of the 56 signers of the Declaration, few were long to survive. Five were captured by the British and tortured before they died. Twelve had their homes—from Rhode Island to Charleston—sacked and looted, occupied by the enemy or burned. Two of them lost their sons in the Army; one had two sons captured. Nine of the 56 died in the War from its hardships or from its more merciful bullets. I don't know what impression you'd had of these men who met that hot summer in Philadelphia, but I think it's important this July 4, that we remember this about them: they were not poor men, they were not wild-eyed pirates. These were men of means, these were rich men, most of them, who enjoyed much ease and luxury in personal living. Not hungry men—prosperous men, wealthy land owners, substantially secure in their prosperity. But they considered liberty—this is as much I shall say of it—they had learned that liberty is so much more important than security, that they pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor. And they fulfilled their pledge—they paid the price, and freedom was born.