By Byron DeLear

“Mr. Kushner, will you sign my Russian flag?” asked the activist posing as reporter. Ryan Clayton thrust the tricolor at White House Senior Advisor Jared Kushner who had just finished an appearance before the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee. “Sign my Russian flag, please, sign my Russian flag!” Clayton urged. Kushner, nonplussed, smiled and ignored the effort. A gaggle of photographers and news reporters captured the encounter. Months earlier, Clayton and Jason Charter had tricked an unsuspecting crowd into eagerly waving hundreds of Russian flags with “TRUMP” emblazoned in gold lettering at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC). The story went viral and made national news. As vexillologists, and from a social science perspective, these political flag stunts are a worthy topic for examination, and fascinating to unpack in terms of their conception, deployment, and impact. We do not assign any partisan value to this exploration but rather in these instances seek to understand the use of flags to influence public opinion and be vehicles for socio-political expression.

Why Russian flags and Trump?

Former FBI Director Robert Mueller, well-respected by leaders from both parties, is carrying out an investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election as well as possible collusion between the Russians and the Trump campaign. There are also several ongoing bipartisan congressional investigations into Russian meddling in our electoral system. Although U.S.
Recently I have had the superb experience of working with two communities in producing new city flags. I have not taken part in these efforts as NAVA’s president, but rather as a vexillologist who, like many NAVA members, enjoys flag design.

Over the years, I have found pleasure in designing and in having a part designing various flags, and know the satisfaction of seeing a flag flying or displayed, which I have had a part in creating. However, I have had special reasons for being part of the flag design efforts for the city of Elk Ridge in Utah and Pocatello, the seat of Bannock County in Idaho. Elk Ridge is a new community in an adjacent county to my home, and it has been my pleasure to join with these delightful neighbors. Although Pocatello is a three hundred mile round trip from my home, my family’s roots run deep in Bannock County. Associating with talented and knowledgeable committee members in Pocatello has been a joy. Both city flags have been well publicized, and I can report that the design efforts have been eminently successful.

For half a century, NAVA has supported using “best practices” in designing flags. Given that our members do not always agree on vexillogical matters, NAVA—as an Association—does not promote any flag or flag design projects. NAVA does provide a platform for these issues to be discussed and debated. These discussions take place, amicably, at our annual meets and are the subjects of presentations. Over the years, NAVA has produced many publications giving valuable advice on the details of designing new flags, the “Joint Commission’s Report on the Guiding Principles on Flag Design” being the most recent. Authored by experienced members of NAVA and Britain’s Flag Institute, this document provides excellent advice for serious flag designers.

These prized flag design experiences have given me pause to ponder the broader subject of flag design. It is more than appraising the visual impact of flags, but takes into account the sources, history and meaning of the flags that are adopted and used. A few examples illustrate this approach.

Resulting from decades of research, Henry W. Moeller, a long time NAVA member, has recently published an Ebook entitled The Thirteen-Star American Flag: Origin of a Symbol, which goes deeper into the design of the United States flag than simply describing the banner’s design elements. Marc Leepson, himself a recognized author about America’s flags, noted: “This book is by far, the most complete and accurate resource on how the Stars and Stripes came to be.”

An attendee at NAVA 51 this coming October, Xing Fei, will travel all the way from the People’s Republic of China to present
Greetings fellow vexillologists!

In our last issue of NAVA News, I previewed this issue’s cover story about activists Ryan Clayton and Jason Charter’s U.S. “vexi-political” flag pranks using a modified Russian tricolor for their design. The red, white, and blue Russian national flags were altered to include the name “TRUMP” emblazoned in gold through the blue middle stripe. In America, this form of protest flag is steeped in the richest traditions of the revolutionary era when English colonists flew British Union Jacks with words like “Liberty” or “Union” emblazoned on them; or earlier, New York colonists placing anti-Catholic slogans such as, “George III Rex and the Defender of the Liberties of America. No Popery,” on British Ensigns. Our in-depth cover story of the Russian flag ruse features an interview with Clayton explaining step-by-step how he and Charter came up with the idea and then successfully executed the stunt at the Conservative Political Action Conference held in Maryland in early 2017. The story went viral at a time when the topic of Russian interference in the U.S. elections was intensifying. Taking a deeper dive into the planning and execution of this action, from a vexillography perspective, has great value because it preserves for history what the protagonists’ motives and methods were—something we don’t have for earlier flag histories, one notable example being the design and adoption of the American Grand Union flag, circa 1775-76. The Russian flag ruse story also makes for fascinating “vexi-news” because it operates at the intersection of several interests that make-up our Association: vexillography, the art and practice of designing flags; flag manufacturing and retail (albeit in this instance, amateur manufacturing); politics and social activism; and vexillology in general, exploring multi-layered meanings embedded in flags and symbols, their evolving narratives and connections to past and present culture.

Although the method and means for the creation of these various flags of protest and petition are wildly different—screen printing with gold lettering on Chinese-made Russian flags in 2017 versus handmade and sewn flags from the 18th century—the durability of the role flags play with regard to issues of identity remains constant. As vehicles for social and political expression, flags are unparalleled; they embody our deepest held beliefs and passions and are intrinsically intertwined in the discourse of human civilization.

Byron DeLear
Editor-in-Chief, navanews@nava.org

the Spanish Conquest included Aztec glyphs that are interpreted to spell out Tenochtitlan, the pre-Columbian name for Mexico City in the Aztec writing system. Symbols clearly visible in the flag’s design had simply not been seen or understood. These examples illustrate that just as vexillology is composed of many aspects, flag design is likewise made up of many aspects. Flag design is not just “skin deep.”
intelligence agencies have concluded with high probability the interference occurred, there are many who think the story is wildly exaggerated and a so-called “nothing burger.”

The controversy has also been a topic of increasing public scrutiny—much more so with Democrats and Independents—and to a lesser extent, Republicans, the party of the President. With its daily twists, turns, and revelations, the Russian story has provided a venue for Clayton’s series of clever, “vexi-political” pranks to play out; and due to the ravenous media appetite gobbling up anything Russian, his stunts have become tasty fodder for national news.

Flags have often been used in bold and creative ways to make political statements. Leading vexillologist, Scot Guenter, relates the recent Russian flag ruses to another political prank conducted by (as Guenter describes) “a master at using both guerrilla theater and symbolic warfare to make a point.” That man was Abbie Hoffman, one of the Chicago Seven; and in Flag Tattoos: Markers of Class & Sexuality, Guenter tells the story.

Hoffman in his autobiography, “recounts the fracas that occurred in October 1968 as he was on route to testify for the second day before the House Un-American Activities Committee regarding Yippie activities at the Democratic Convention in Chicago. You might recall, that day he was the first person arrested for breaking the first U.S. federal law against flag desecration, also passed in 1968. Police grabbed him for daring to wear a U.S. flag shirt as he entered the building to testify. Here’s the delicious part—as the shirt was ripped off in the scuffle that ensued, and he was dragged away, Hoffman’s back revealed a body-painted image of a different flag. As he tells it:

The next day I stood before the judge, [still] bare to the waist. The tattered shirt lay on the prosecutor’s table in a box marked Exhibit A. “You owe me fourteen ninety-five for that shirt,” I mentioned. Bail was set at three thousand dollars. “Get out of here with that Viet Cong flag. How dare you?” the judge intoned. “Cuban your honor,” I corrected.

Hoffman was a master at using both guerrilla theater and symbolic warfare to make a point, and he knew well the media coverage that would ensue. Realizing the American flag shirt would no doubt be forcibly removed, he painted into his skin the flag of Cuba. A powerful and direct insult to the government arresting him, it was at the same time a dynamic assertion of his rights to think and believe as an individual under the U.S. Constitution.”

Stunts with flags have a long history including false-flag naval actions when a ship preparing for military engagement hoists a flag other than its battle ensign as a *ruse de guerre*, or literally, a “ruse of war.” The modern meaning of the term “false-flag” has now expanded to include any form of deceptive action in which the true identity of the protagonist is concealed in some fashion. The Russian flag actions from 2017 could be considered a form of *ruse de guerre* in the sense of being an action intended to deceive an opponent, albeit political not military. What’s interesting about Clayton’s CPAC prank, is how the flags were *used in collaboration with others* to complete the intended political statement. The clever flag prank assumed the trappings of political performance art by commandeering an unsuspecting crowd as the action’s essential lynchpin—and it relied on herd mentality to do so.

“Symbols can be multilayered in meaning,” stated Guenter. “And although the [CPAC] crowd thought, ‘Red, White, and Blue: okay, this is fine, I’ll proudly wave it and cheer’—once they are told they are waving the flag of Russia, it takes on a different meaning, and others seeing them wave those flags, and connecting them with the flags, get quite a laugh. This is funny because of the triple entendre, and those who recognize the flag of Russia and know who CPAC are get the joke instantly.”

**Anatomy of a “Vexi-Political” Prank—1000 Russian Trump Flags**

Sometimes flags can drift off into the background and go unnoticed. Sometimes they can be seen to be so commonplace and ubiquitous that, to some, become part of the backdrop, like drapery on architecture. Now these are sacrilegious notions to vexillologists whose attention is almost certain to be captured by the appearance of any flag—but regardless, for the general public, sometimes flags are taken for granted. This unconscious, unsuspecting acceptance of flags may have been the key for Russian red, white, and blue Trump flags to be distributed successfully to unwitting
CPAC attendees. As the “tricolor Trumps” began to spread and wave around the hall, social media and Twitter enabled the story to go viral which led to news headlines such as, “Liberal Activists’ Prank Had Some at CPAC Waving Russian ‘Trump’ Flags,” or “CPAC Crowd Duped Into Waving Russian Flags During Trump Speech.” In an interview with Ryan Clayton, one of the lead organizers of the action, he explains the genesis of the project and how a nearly impossible prank became reality.

**Question: How did you come up with this idea?**

**Ryan Clayton:** These flags started when me and a friend were working on getting people to go to the [congressional] town halls to talk to the Democrats about having a backbone against Trump; and to the Republicans to tell them to stand-up against Trump. So, it’s like two or three in morning and we’re putting this big map together around the entire country—my buddy looks at me and he’s like, “You wanna go hand out Russian flags at CPAC?”—and I’m like, “yes, yes I do.” And then I said, “Even better, let's get 'TRUMP' written on them in gold, you know, like Trump would... obviously, right? That's what Trump would do. So, we looked at the Russian flag and its perfectly red, white, and blue, and that's immediately when I knew that this was going to work, because, you know, we didn't just get American flags and put “TRUMP” on American flags because that would be disrespectful. So, we just get another red, white, and blue flag—it just happens to be Russian—we put “TRUMP” on it and we hand it out to all these conservatives at the Conservative Political Action Conference, and they loved them, honestly. They were very excited to get free memorabilia, and we handed them out like candy; they were really grateful. When CPAC organizers came around to take them away, people were like, “no, I wanna keep mine!”—it was great.

**Q: You said this was really difficult to do. How hard was it?**

**RC:** It was an almost impossible prank to pull off. You know, we have this idea at the beginning of the week, and Trump is going to be at CPAC on Friday morning, and so we have this idea on Monday morning at 2 a.m. So, if you think about it, you've got to get all the flags; you've got to get them all printed; you've got to get them to dry; you've got to figure out how to get into the conference; you've got to get to the main conference area where Trump is giving his speech, on the main day of his speech—all of these things were literally, kind of impossible.

So, I call up a friend who has a flag company, and I'm like, “Hey, can you get us these flags in time?” And he said, “Well, we can’t get them mounted on sticks, what we can do is send you sheets of flags, and you can cut them up and mount them on sticks yourselves. We can get those to you in two days.” And I said, “Hmmm, let me see”—and we're talking about four bucks ($4) a flag at this point. And for a thousand flags, you know, that’s a lot of money…and we didn’t know and so we let a day pass. By Tuesday, during the day, I’m online getting Amazon ads with Russian flags because I’ve been searching for them, right? And I see one that says: “a dollar a flag.” And I’m like, “wow, a dollar a flag, let’s do it.”

I call up the place and I say, “How many of these things do you got?” And they tell me close to a thousand. So, I say, “How much if I buy all of them?” And they're like, “let me check.” So, they knocked the price down to 70 cents a flag. So now we're totally game-on.
I get these flags ordered and they send them overnight—I still have no idea how I’m going to get “TRUMP” printed on them—I’m thinking do you get stencils? Do we have a stencil-making party where we have people use gold Sharpies and color on them, you know? I had no idea how we’re going to do it. So, I’m calling up screen printers and asking, “Hey, can you screen print this?” And I find a guy who says he can do the screen printing job and turn it around in two days and have it dry in time. But then he asks me, “Are they [the flags] still on the sticks?” And I said, “Yeah, they’re still on sticks.” And he said, “Okay, we’re going to have to take them off the sticks, and print them, and then put them back on the sticks after they dry, right?” So, I get the flags and not only are they mounted on the sticks, they’re all individually wrapped in plastic—each flag. So, I thought, oh no, what are we going to do now?

So, I’m calling around and calling around and I finally find this studio, and I text this woman who owns this studio—an art studio. And I say: “Hey, I’d love to use the studio to do a project I have to get done in 48 hours, mind if I come in today?” She responds, “Do I know you?” (laughs) So, I said, “No, I’m like a new client…” So, she calls me and asks, “Well, what is this for? What do you need to do?” I kind of explain what we need to do, confidentially, you know, we’ve got to put something on a flag, we’ve got to print on a flag. And she says [again], “Well, what is this for? What are you doing?” But she was an art gallery owner in [Washington] DC, so I figure I’m probably safe, right? That this lady is probably like totally on our team. So, I tell her, “You have to be very confidential, we’re not telling anyone about this, I’m literally not telling anyone who is not directly involved because of Op Sec [“Operational Security”], but I’m going to tell you, and trust you, and you have to be confidential with it.” So, I tell her, “We’re going to put ‘TRUMP’ on Russian flags and hand them out at CPAC.” And she goes, “So, this is for the resistance, right?” And I’m like, “Yes, this is definitely the resistance.” And she says, “Alright, I’ll come in on my day off for that.”

Before Clayton had assembled all the ingredients for his ad hoc, art studio flag-assembly line, he needed to find a certain kind of “goo”—as he termed it—to allow for the gold-colored ink to stick to the vinyl material of the flags. For a while, the only source identified was on the West Coast, but at the last minute, the “goo” was found from a more local source. With the help from a few volunteers, Clayton and team laid out the flags; took them out of their plastic wrappers; removed them from the sticks; mixed the goo and ink; and printed “TRUMP”; let the flags dry;—and so on. With 1000 flags in hand, they now needed to find a way to smuggle their contraband into CPAC.

Q: How did you guys get a duffle bag full of 1000 Russian Trump flags into CPAC?

RC: I wake up that morning at 7 o’clock in the morning, and I think the [Trump] speech is in the afternoon. And I find out it’s at 10 a.m., Trump’s speech is this morning, so I’m like “oh, my God, it’s this morning!” So, now we have to get everybody together really quick, we have to get out of the house, and get all the other people to come over to us, and by the time we got everybody there it’s around 9 o’clock. So, we drive to CPAC which is south of DC in Maryland and its almost 10, it’s like 9:45 a.m. by the time we get there. We run in, we go to registration, and this lady has to let us in the front doors—

Q: How are you registered for this conference?

RC:—we’re getting there, we’re getting there… (laughs). By the way, we’re bundling all the flags while we’re on the road. We get to the front door, and the lady asks, “Are you registered for the conference?”—and we’re like, “Oh, yeah, yeah, we’re going register and pay when we get in.” And she says, “Well, you have to register before you go in.” And I thought, oh no, this is the ten minutes we’re going to lose and we’re not going to make it.
So, I say, “Can I least go to the bathroom really quick?” And she’s like, “It’s okay you guys, you can come on in.” And so there it is, the universe winks at us once again.

We get into the front doors of the conference, we go up to registration—I take the bags of flags we have, we have them in permanent grocery bags—and go and take a batch of them through security just to see if they’ll let me in with the flags. But I try to get into the conference and they ask, “Do you have a badge?” And I don’t have my badge yet because someone else is at registration getting our badges. So, we’re waiting at security for the guy with the badges to come through security, he gets the badges—it takes forever—it’s 9:55 a.m., and the speech is at 10 a.m. And he tries to come through with the flags and they won’t let him. They won’t let him come through with flags. So, I’m like, “ditch the flags, give the flags to somebody else,”

just come through, give me the badge, you know, get through. So, he gives the flags to somebody else that’s there with us, he comes through security, gives me my badge, and at this point we’re at Secret Service lock down. The whole building is on Secret Service lock down because Trump is in the house and he’s going toward the stage. Which means they close every door and they will not let anybody in or out. So, even if you were the Chief of Staff, like Reince Priebus, or Steve Bannon, and you said, “No, no, no, no, I’m really important, let me in.” The Secret Service would say, “No, it doesn’t matter who you are, we are in Secret Service lock-down. Nobody comes in or out.” The only person who can come in or out is Donald Trump. It is locked down—the most highly secured space in the United States at that moment.

So, we’re like, “Crap, what are we going to do?” But to me, I’m not going to let any impediment get in our way. What I know, is that I used to be a [food] server, right? I used to wait tables, you know, things like that. I know there’s always a service entrance—every place in the world has a service entrance. I walk around and I see all the doors that are closed, we walk all the way around to the other side of this very big hall, and I hear a ‘click’—and I’m like (snaps his fingers) that’s the service entrance! I hear the click of the door. So, somebody is going in and out, so I just walk to where I hear that sound, I grab the door handle, and it opens. And we walk in and it’s the back, the ‘not-pretty’ part of the hotel with concrete walls, all the service personal walking around in tuxes, and a few Secret Service agents, and a few really important people, and we just walk back there, and walk into the conference. And we’re in, man. We’re totally in with our flags. 

So, we get in and we’re in the standing room only section and the media is in front of us. What we know we need to do is get between where the media risers are and where the podium is so that the media sees the flags, right?—as Trump comes on and talks. But we’re in the back section, we’re behind the media. That’s not going to work, right?

We find a hole in the media risers in the fence that they set up, and we just walk through the hole without skipping a beat, me and Jason, and we enter the media section. But we’re stopped by a Trump staffer who tells us, “The media has to stay in the media section.” So, we’re stuck, so close, and yet so far…it’s over…And I’m like, “No, let’s go.” I just look at Jason and say come with me.

We walk back out into the service exit. Walk two doors down. And I just walk through the service area. I open the door, there’s a Secret Service agent staring me in the face. He looks at my badge, and
I go, “hey,” and I just walk in. So now we are in the place where Trump is about to speak within minutes. We have the flags. Without skipping a beat, I point to Jason and say go down here and hand out the flags in this direction, and I’m going to go to this section and hand out the flags. We start handing out all the flags and we go through all of them, a few hundred flags [which is what we had with us]. People are loving them. You know what I mean? People are like grabbing for them, and people were like really excited to get them… "Take them and pass them down, take them and pass them down."

By the time I get done handing them all out, though, one guy’s like, “These are Russian flags!” He said, “what are you doing, give me those, give me those…” I said, “Look, man, I’m just a volunteer handing out these flags, I’m just with the campaign.” And he said, “What campaign are you with?” And I said, “Well, who are you with?” He said, “I work for CPAC.” And I thought, ah, this is not good. So, they begin collecting all the flags as we stand on the side of the hall. They get the whole section to stand and then announce to them: “If you’re waving a flag, you will be removed from the center.”

Clayton and Charter continued to hand out Russian flags that day as news of the action began to spread. But the conference staff became increasingly aware of what was going on. Eventually, they were asked to leave the premises, but in the end, no one was arrested, and some would say the finest traditions of civil disobedience and the First Amendment were exemplified by their actions. The story had gone viral by that time and was eventually carried by many main-stream news outlets.

As students of flags, their use, design, propagation, it’s important not to take any biased, partisan approach toward the examination of a “vexi-political” prank such as the Russian flag ruses of 2017. It’s important to note here that there is a wide divide among opinions held by Americans concerning the Russian interference into our elections and the investigations currently looking into the matter. Some consider the Russian story to be sensationalist and made up of “fake news,” but nevertheless, the controversy—whether made of real crimes or just “made-up”—has inspired one of the most clever and creative uses of flags as political performance art in recent memory.

*Special thanks to Scot Guenter for his always perceptive scholarship and to Ryan Clayton for helping to tell his story to NAVA News.*
FLAG HUMOR
Excerpts from a website image gallery titled “American Flag Humor.” Posted by Philip Van der Vossen on 14 June 2017, Flag Day.
http://humor.gunaxin.com/american-flag-humor/122862
An Enormous Free Flying U.S. Flag

By John Hartvigsen

JUNE 1, 2017 Yesterday afternoon I returned to the office after viewing an enormous U.S. flag that Colonial Flag Company is making. It measures an impressive 78 feet wide by 153 feet in length. This flag had to be laid out so the ends could be correctly trimmed before the seamstresses could hem it. While it may seem questionable to lay a flag out on the floor, it is necessary for large flags. Mary Pickersgill had to stretch out the historic 30 by 42 foot Star Spangled Banner on a brewery’s malt house floor. Not having a malt house, Colonial Flag lays out huge flags on a much cleaner convention center floor. A table large enough to hold such an enormous flag would be more like the floor of a huge stage, and such a table does not exist.

Making large U.S. flags has a long tradition in Utah. Pioneers made flags large enough to be labeled “mammoth flags.” In 1896, an enormous 45-star U.S. flag was made to celebrate Utah’s entry into the American Union. Measuring 74 by 132 feet, it was so large that it was often hung covering the south outside wall of the Salt Lake LDS temple.

A huge flag measuring 60 by 90 feet flies from the towers of New York’s George Washington Bridge. Although the George Washington Bridge flag has been described as the largest free-flying U.S. flag, the new enormous flag is larger, and it will fly the flag hanging freely from a cable stretched horizontally between the two sides of a canyon east of Pleasant Grove, Utah. Made for an organization named Follow the Flag, this is not their first display of large flags. Pictures showing an earlier display of a big flag in the canyon can be seen at: http://followtheflag.org/gallery—showing how the new enormous flag will be flown.

In addition to taking a few pictures, I helped to complete placing the flag in the bag. Such experiences bring joy to my vexillologist’s heart.

Superlatives are difficult; however, having inspected the flag, I can verify that the quality is super. Certainly, I look forward to seeing the enormous flag unfurled and flying free from July 2nd to the 10th above the floor of the canyon of Utah’s Wasatch Range. Indeed, I will follow this flag.
Flag Research Quarterly JUNE / JUIN 2017 No. 13 has been sent to membership. It includes two great articles:

1. Branding the Nations: A Graphic Designer Looks at Flags and Marketing by Michael Green


Also distributed to NAVA members was Issue no. 234 of “The Flag Bulletin” honoring the late Dr. Whitney Smith who named and created the study of vexillology, founded NAVA, and co-founded FIAV.

NAVA Update: Flag Research Quarterly 14

Flag Research Quarterly AUGUST / AOÛT 2017 No. 14 is in publication design. Three articles will be included:

1. The Flags of Courland by Wim Schuurman

2. From Flying Flags to Museum Flags: A Case Study in Using Minimally Invasive Preservation Techniques to Allow Maximum Flexibility in Display and Interpretation by Catarina Florio

3. The Aztec Heritage of the Mexican Flag by John Hartvigsen

Mission to Honor:
Boy Places Flags at Veterans’ Graves

11-year-old Preston Sharp has placed 25,000 U.S. flags at graves in Northern California

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (KCRA-Lisa Gonzales News Anchor/Reporter)—Preston Sharp, an 11-year-old from Redding, is making it his mission to ensure every veteran’s grave in Northern California has an American flag and flowers to honor veterans for the sacrifice they paid for our freedom.

Preston’s latest stop on his journey was Wednesday at the Historic City Cemetery in Sacramento, where he placed 2,000 flags for veterans.

It all began for Preston when he went to visit his the grave of his grandfather, who is a U.S. Navy veteran.

“I thought there was going to be flags on all the veterans’ grave sites, and there wasn’t,” Preston said. “So I got frustrated and so I wanted to put flags and flowers on veterans’ grave sites.”

And that’s just what he did -- starting at home in Redding. It wasn’t long before the seeds of his idea sprouted.

“It really came to me that what they did, they gave their lives to us,” Preston said.

His project turned into an ambitious endeavor of adding American flags and flowers at veterans’ graves up and down Northern California, and inspiring others to follow in his footsteps.

“Veterans give a lot to this country, often their lives, years of service,” volunteer James Walsh said.

For some people, Preston’s mission hits close to home.

“I have a son that has served seven tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, a daughter that serves, a son-in-law, a daughter-in-law that’s in the Marine Corps,” volunteer Tammy Phifer said. “This is something to do to honor them and keep their memories alive for future generations to know what was sacrificed for freedoms.”

So far, Preston has put flags and flowers at more than 25,000 graves at cemeteries from Redding to Sacramento.

“I’m not going to stop until I can’t bend down anymore,” Preston said.
1,000 U.S. Flags for Memorial Day 2017

The Glendale, California Sunrise Rotary Club made arrangements with Forest Lawn Cemetery to post a display of 1,000 U.S. flags in commemoration of Memorial Day. The 1 min. video chip shows this event beautifully. Click on the image below or go to: https://vimeo.com/219069340

This is one of 26 flag displays posted around the U.S. currently that I have been able to help coordinate through the Colonial Flag Foundation. More are planned for later in the year. I hope you will enjoy this clip.

John Hartvigsen

NAVA 51 Annual Meeting & 50th Anniversary Celebration • Boston • 13–15 October 2017

Join us where NAVA was first organized in 1967—historic downtown Boston. It is our hope that this “going back to where it all started” will inspire us to come together and renew the camaraderie that should be at the center of our scientific yet joyful occupation, at the same time as it helps us come to terms with the recent passing of our irreplaceable founder, Dr. Whitney Smith.


Come to Boston from October 13–15, 2017 to enjoy the talks from fellow NAVA members while we celebrate NAVA’s 50th anniversary. And don’t forget to leave time to explore historic Boston.
REPRINT OF 3 JUNE 2017 SEMAPHORE #33

Dear fellow NAVA members,

There have been many reminders that 2017 is the North American Vexillological Association’s 50th anniversary year. October’s Golden Anniversary Meeting in Boston gives us opportunity to celebrate in style where NAVA began. While October 13th through the 15th are certainly days central to the celebration of NAVA’s founding, June 3rd and 4th are the exact anniversary dates of NAVA’s birth.

Half a century ago, twenty individuals sharing an abiding interest in flags met in Boston to organize the North American Vexillological Association. Whitney Smith noted that, “It would be open to everyone interested in any kind of flags: there would be room for hobbyists, scholars, publishers, flag manufacturers, and others.”

Although having an emphasis on the scholarly study of flags, Whitney Smith reminisced further:

Fellowship was to be an important part of our Association with ample chances to meet informally, to talk, to exchange ideas, show off collections, give the latest news, ask questions, trade (or even sell) items.

The founders of NAVA had conversed by phone and by mail, but many had not had the opportunity to meet in person. They gathered happily. NAVA Annual Meetings, then and now, provided the opportunity to interact with others who appreciate and understand the wonders of vexillology. For those interested in flags, it is often a rare experience.

For those unable to attend annual meetings, we still have the opportunity to converse through phone conversations and today, email. This enables us to meet new friends and strengthen our friendships with fellow NAVA members.

Some of my most valued friendships have been formed through my participation as a NAVA member. My life would be much poorer without the experiences and friendships NAVA has afforded me.

Celebrate our Golden Jubilee by increasing the fellowship and good will that is the foundation of the great things that NAVA has accomplished in its first fifty years. Camaraderie is the sure foundation upon which the North American Vexillological Association will achieve continued success. Our shared interest in flags and our appreciation of one another’s contributions are the keys to NAVA’s future.

Happy Birthday NAVA!

Sincerely,

John Hartvigsen
President
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ATTENTION ALL HANDS!

NAVA News depends on content from our Association membership and with every member submission NAVA News becomes better. We look forward to receiving your vexillological articles, personal stories, or other vexi-news. Photos of your personal favorite flags, local sightings of interesting flag displays, flag humor, and flag-oriented images and illustrations will all be very much appreciated! To submit an item for publication, please contact Byron DeLear at navanews@nava.org