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The do's and don'ts of flying the flag

For years now you've been meaning to get a Canadian flag for the cottage or the stern of the boat. Now you've brought it, what do you do with it?

The care and feeding of a flag depends a lot on how it figures in a country's national consciousness, says University of Toronto history Professor Desmond Morton. It can merely be a symbol, or it can assume a much deeper significance, a revered totem around which to rally.

The British largely adopt the first attitude, and the Union Jack graces everything from cookie tins to tea towels to t-shirts. But in Costa Rica, unless you're a government official or a president of the republic, you're not allowed to display the national colors except on festival days. That way, the dignity of the emblem is preserved.

The United States, with its flag codes and laws, is also very strict about the handling and mishandling of the Stars and Stripes. Respect for the flag has been encouraged ever since the American Civil War, as a means of pumping up patriotism, Prof. Morton said. "To have them (Americans) worship the flag is to persuade them to do the otherwise unthinkable" - kill and be killed in battle.

A law passed by Congress in 1968 declares that a person can be fined up to \$1,000 and/or imprisoned up to a year for publicly mutilating Old Glory, a law prompted by Vietnam War protests which saw people burn the flag, throw blood on it and sew it into the seats of their jeans.

"We have never had that", explains Prof. Morton, because a

"love affair has never quite developed" between the Maple Leaf and the Canadian people. While it's widely recognized abroad, for some at home "it's still the Pearson pennant" - adopted in 1964 with the Liberal colors of red and white.

In essence, Canada's approach to its flag lands some place between Britain's flag-as-pop-culture to the semiworship of the United States.

Cottage owners with a Canadian flag are expected to follow some traditions about hanging it. To get it up a flag pole, says Prof. Morton, you just "hook it up, keep it off the ground, and haul away." It should be hoisted quickly, to show it off, and lowered slowly, out of respect for the dead.

A brochure issued by the Secretary of State states that it's not wrong to let the flag spend the night at the top of the pole, provided it's on land. For merchant vessels and pleasure craft, the colors should be "hoisted at 0800 hours and lowered at sunset."

In times of war, flying one national flag higher than another is a sign of victory; in peacetime, it's an insult. If flown together, both country's colors should be about the same size, flown from separate staffs of the same height. The Canadian colors should have the place of honor on the left of the spectators. In a grouping of three flags, the Maple Leaf should take the place of honor in the middle; if there are more than that, the Canadian colors should be placed on the left, or at both ends if there is a long line of flags. If it is impossible to raise or lower the flags at the same time, the Maple Leaf

should be hoisted first and lowered last.

On board ship, the regulations are a little different, depending on where you're mooring or whom you're passing. The national colors should generally be displayed at the stern and hoisted on entering or leaving any foreign port. They may be worn by foreign boats when in a Canadian port as a "courtesy flag," usually on the foremast.

Should you pass a foreign vessel on your travels, the flag should be lowered until the ship has done the same, and then rehoisted, a convenient update of the old custom of lowering the topsails.

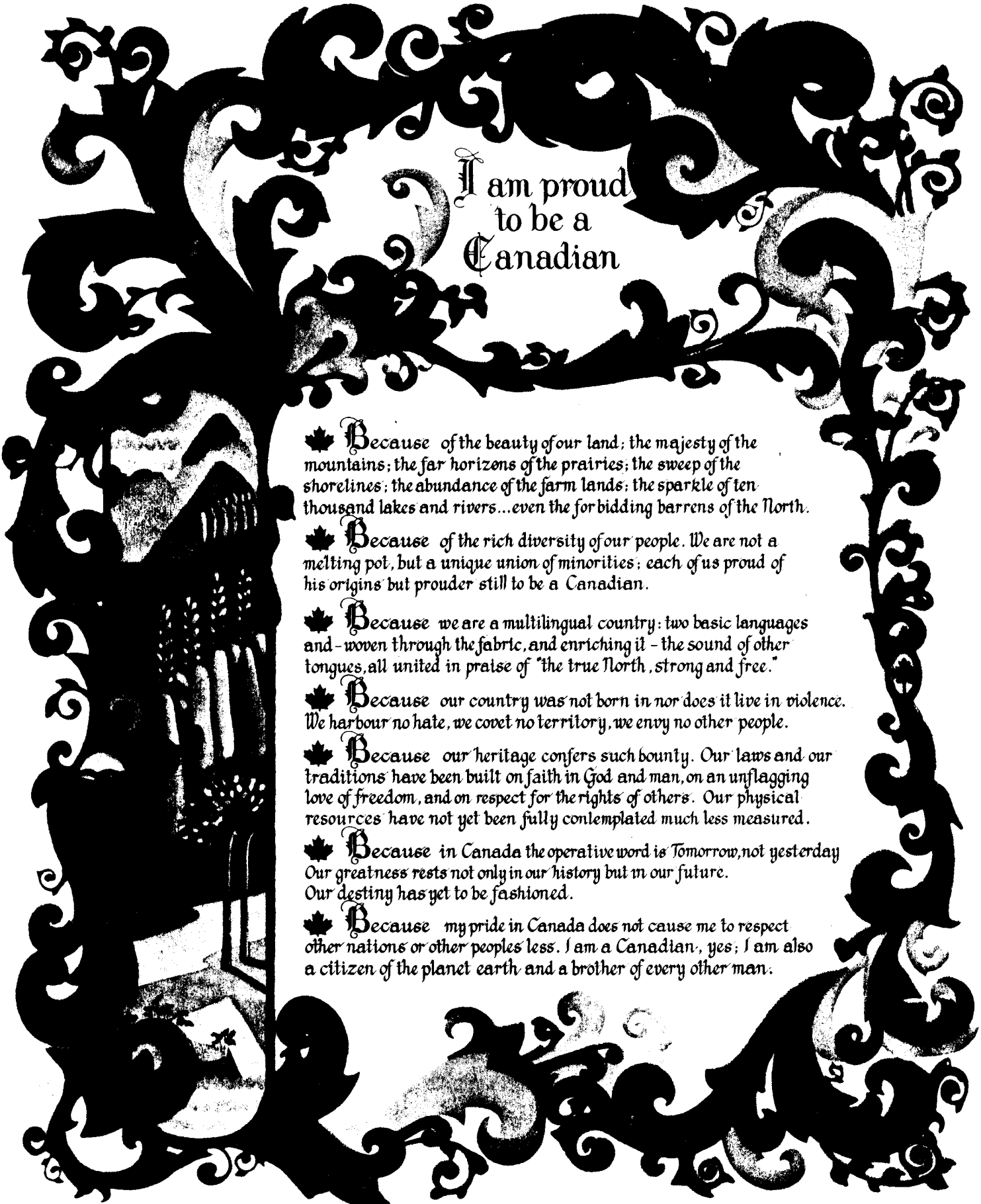
The rules for flying the flag at half-mast - as a sign of mourning or political protest - apply on both land and sea; before it is put at the halfway mark, it must first touch the masthead. The flag atop the Peace Tower of Parliament is lowered at a death of a member of the Royal Family, the present or a former governor-general, the present or former prime minister, a lieutenant-governor, a Canadian Privy Councillor, a Senator or a member of Parliament.

Once it becomes tattered or faded, the Canadian flag should be burned (in private) "to prevent it from being used as a duster or to clean off your boots," as Prof. Morton put it.

Flying a flag upside-down can be read as a sign of mourning, of protest or of distress, but a problem some nations must address is that their flags turned upside-down resemble those of other countries; horizontal red, white and green lines could thus denote either a proud Hungarian or a distressed Iranian.

Finally, if you have a flag but not a flagpole, it's acceptable to hang the Maple Leaf vertically from a wall - as long as the upper part of the leaf faces the left and the stem faces right.

Written by Rita Feutl (Globe and Mail on Aug. 29, 1984)



I am proud
to be a
Canadian

Because of the beauty of our land; the majesty of the mountains; the far horizons of the prairies; the sweep of the shorelines; the abundance of the farm lands; the sparkle of ten thousand lakes and rivers...even the forbidding barrens of the North.

Because of the rich diversity of our people. We are not a melting pot, but a unique union of minorities; each of us proud of his origins but prouder still to be a Canadian.

Because we are a multilingual country; two basic languages and -woven through the fabric, and enriching it - the sound of other tongues, all united in praise of "the true North, strong and free."

Because our country was not born in nor does it live in violence. We harbour no hate, we covet no territory, we envy no other people.

Because our heritage confers such bounty. Our laws and our traditions have been built on faith in God and man, on an unflagging love of freedom, and on respect for the rights of others. Our physical resources have not yet been fully contemplated much less measured.

Because in Canada the operative word is Tomorrow, not yesterday. Our greatness rests not only in our history but in our future. Our destiny has yet to be fashioned.

Because my pride in Canada does not cause me to respect other nations or other peoples less. I am a Canadian, yes; I am also a citizen of the planet earth and a brother of every other man.