

April 25, 1976—a great day for the American Flag

I don't remember the incident myself, but my wife does—since she is from Illinois and her family tracked everything the Chicago Cubs ever did. April 25 was a routine game that day and year, speaking from the perspective of baseball. But from the perspective of one who loves our country and loves our flag, the incident was one of uncommon patriotism and wonderful love of the United States of America.

The game was between the Chicago Cubs and the Los Angeles Dodgers, played at Dodger Stadium. Rick Monday, then 30 years old and playing center field for the Cubs, saw something happening that had become altogether too common and disgraceful.



Two men jumped down from the stadium seats onto the turf in the outfield. The *USA Today* quotes announcer Vin Scully whose voice is heard on the tape: “Wait a minute, there’s an animal loose. Two of them!” The “animals” were protesters William Thomas, then 36, and his 11-year-old son. They were carrying an American flag which they doused in lighter fluid and attempted twice to ignite with a matches.

That’s when Rick Monday, the fleet-footed Cub’s center fielder took action. Running toward the two would-be flag burners, he snatched the American Flag before it could be desecrated and rescued this important symbol of American democracy and freedom.



Baseball Hall of Fame manager Tommy Lasorda said of Monday’s good work, “It was the greatest heroic act that’s ever happened on a baseball field.” The crowd, recovering themselves when they finally grasped what had just happened, stood cheering and then singing—yes singing—*God Bless America*.

One man’s boldness turned the perfidious act of two protesters into a great day for Americans who love our land, from the common man to the war hero (who are not infrequently, by the way, one and the same). Be sure to read the *USA Today*’s article on this incident in today’s (April 25, 2006) edition.

It reminds me of another day, June 7, 1999, when at the graduation ceremony for Northern High School in Calvert County, Maryland, one man defied court authority and began praying The Lord’s Prayer. It was Pastor Douglas Myers who dared defy Caesar and interrupt the moment of silence which the school officials, based on the advice of the American Civil Liberties Union, had substituted for the usual prayer. Nearly everyone in the audience joined in, including County Commissioner President Linda Kelley, who later was quoted as saying, “*This is a churchgoing community, and no one in Annapolis or Washington, D.C., is going to tell us when and where we can pray.*”

One bold person can make turn the tide of apathy and wrong. One man or woman standing for the right can turn an ordinary ball game, or an ordinary graduation ceremony into something rather glorious. Let's speak boldly for the right—It just makes good sense.