



“The entire totality of our history is bound up in our flag,” said David Martin, who displays 70 historic U.S. flags in front of his home in Benjamin Hills.

## FLAGS

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“Our flag is what we make of it,” Martin said, before quoting Woodrow Wilson’s Flag Day speech in 1917, “It has no other character than that which we give it from generation to generation.”

“Those are not my words, but essentially true,” Martin said. “The entire totality of our history is bound up in our flag.”

On patriotic holidays such as today, Martin spends about an hour each day unfurling the flags and placing them in rows on his lawn. And each night, he takes them down. Martin said he and his wife moved from the College Hill neighborhood several years ago to a corner lot in west Wichita partly to better display the collection. He said he gets his flags from online stores and has even made some.

Besides displaying the flags in the front yard, Martin also shows them to different groups such as schools, libraries and neighborhood organizations.

The flags are arranged in chronological order from the oldest flags to fly over American soil to today’s official flag. Each pole is numbered and labeled with the name of the flag and when it was used.

Every flag tells a story about the U.S. and the people who carried them, Martin said.

The first flag, in the front of the house, is the royal standard of Spain. Next are the personal flag of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain and the flag of France.

Until 1737, flags that flew over the U.S. were of exploration and discovery, Martin said. That changed with the Bedford Flag.

Used by the Bedford, Mass., militia, the flag depicts a mailed arm holding a sword emerging from a cloud on a red background. A ribbon with the words “Vince Aut Morire” (Conquer or Die) surrounds the arm.

This flag is thought to have been carried by Minutemen into the opening battle of the Revolutionary War at Concord, Mass., in 1775.

“It wasn’t American in design, but American in its uses,” Martin said.

The Bedford flag and several others don’t seem related to the present American flag at all. Some feature rattlesnakes, a popular motif during the Revolutionary War, and others include the Union Jack.

Two flags have had a greater influence than others on the design of the first official U.S. flag.

One flag, the Sons of Liberty Banner, features 13 red and white horizontal stripes and



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was used during the Boston Tea Party.

The other flag, used by the Rhode Island Regiment, is white with a blue anchor and a banner with the word “hope.” It also features a blue field with 13 gold stars in the upper left corner.

Martin encourages visitors to wander through the flags. He keeps two binders with information on the flags for visitors to learn more.

Although he already has 70 flags, Martin said his collection is far from complete, and he intends to add more.

“There’s no such thing as a complete list of American flags; it just doesn’t exist,” Martin said.

Martin plans to continue displaying the flags until he is no longer physically able. Then, he’d like to donate the flags to a group that would continue to display them.

“They are a community asset,” Martin said. “I consider myself to be more of a curator for the collection.”

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## Fireworks safety not easy to do

BY JONATHAN BULLINGTON  
Chicago Tribune

CHICAGO – A fire chief’s demonstration of the dangers of fireworks became a teachable moment Tuesday morning when a canister tipped over and shot fireworks into a crowd, injuring a director of a fire safety group.

Laura Barros, assistant executive director of the Illinois Fire Safety Alliance, suffered a small burn on her left foot. Before heading off to the hospital, Barros said the episode illustrated how dangerous fireworks can be no matter who handles them. The incident happened during a news conference at alliance headquarters in Mount Prospect, about 20 miles northwest of Chicago.

At the tail end of the conference, Hillside Fire Chief Michael Kuryla demonstrated the power of legally purchased novelty fireworks by lighting a sparkler and then igniting two fireworks canisters placed on a wooden pallet in the parking lot.

Before a crowd of media, fire officials and alliance staff members, one of the canisters tipped over and shot fireworks into the crowd. Barros suffered a small burn on the top of her foot.

The crowd immediately rushed to her aid, pouring cold water on the burn and calling for an ambulance.

“It happened before I saw it,” Barros said. “It felt like a sharp pin, and then like a burn.”

Barros said the incident highlights how dangerous fireworks can be.

“This was as safe as you

could make it and it still happened,” she said, holding her foot up for photographers and television cameras. “My foot would have gone up (in flames) had it been a piece of wood or dry grass.”

“We did not mean to hurt anyone,” Kuryla said. “But it shows that, trained or untrained, (fireworks) are very dangerous.”

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