

One Life to Lose  
By Grace Silverstein

Was that a sound? Were those footsteps coming towards him?

Twenty-one year old Nathan Hale slipped behind a tree. The ominous marching of the British patrol got closer and closer. Nathan stood with bated breath, praying as he crouched in the darkness on that night of September 21<sup>st</sup>, 1776. He couldn't afford to be caught now! His mission had been successful, so far. General Washington had sent him into New York City as a spy, to return to the American camp in a week. He was to gather information about British General William Howe's plans. Nathan had gathered all the information General Washington would need and hidden it in his boots. He only had to safely cross the river and reenter the American lines to complete the mission.

Nathan let out his breath quietly as the patrol passed the tree.

*I have only a little farther to go. Just across the river, and I'll be safe.*

He crept stealthily down to the next tree, and the next, careful to stay away from patrols. At the last tree before the river, Nathan stopped and scanned the waters for the American boat that was to take him across.

There! A boat was coming closer to shore, the only sound a barely perceptible lap of waves against its sides. Nathan waited a moment longer, then stepped out from behind the tree and hailed the boat. It immediately changed its course and came toward shore right in front of him.

Right before it landed, Nathan's smile disappeared from his face. Was that a British flag on the flagpole? As the ship came into better view, he was sure. He had just hailed an English frigate! His mission was endangered.

He turned around and tried to flee, but the soldiers on board captured him. They searched his person from top to bottom and found the papers in his boots. That sealed his fate. Nathan was taken back to New York City and sent before General Howe. Not much time elapsed before he was sentenced to hang the next day, without a trial.

On the morning of September 22, 1776, Nathan Hale was hanged in an orchard in New York City. His famous last words resound throughout history: "I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country."

Are we willing to die for what we know is right? Could we sacrifice ourselves for the good of our country so willingly? Nathan Hale's act showed bravery, patriotism, determination and a spirit of self-sacrifice. Acts such as Nathan's characterize the War for Independence, showing how far Americans today have come from the founding fathers' faith and loyalty. His behavior demonstrates that one can show Christian bravery in every area of life, not just in Christian ministry, which he originally planned to enter. Nathan Hale, hanged for spying on English forces at the young age of twenty-one, set an example that Americans today should take to heart and exemplify.