Q125 – What is Independence Day?

DOUGLAS GINSBURG, Federal Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals, D.C. Circuit:
We celebrate Independence Day on the fourth of July, a holiday to mark our declaration of independence from Britain. Nearly half the members of the United Nations have a founding document that can be called a declaration of independence – inspired by ours: the first.

Declaring independence in 1776 was bold enough. To win independence – from the world's mightiest empire – we had to fight for it.
The main American force – the Continental Army – was young. Typical age between 15 and 30. Army life was hard, harsh, and dull. Poor diet, spotty supplies, endless drill, and brutal discipline. For every soldier who died in battle, disease killed nine more. Poor sanitation killed the most. A soldier's wool uniform was hot in summer and never warm enough in winter. The soldier carried about 45 pounds of gear. Ammunition, blanket, cup, bowl, spoon. Plus a heavy musket. The musket was slow to load and barely accurate at fifty yards. The Continental soldier was really a glorified spear carrier.
Standard tactics called for lining up in an open field, firing a volley or two, then charging the enemy and deciding the battle with the bayonet. The British bayonet charge terrified the early Continentals – partly because they didn't have bayonets of their own. After learning European tactics and acquiring European muskets, the Continentals could stand toe to toe with the British … and go on to win the war for independence.
The next time you celebrate Independence Day on July 4th, remember those who made it possible.