

**W**HAT'S more American than asking questions?

As a young boy, I loved the American flag. I'd lead my younger sisters in patriotic parades up and down the sidewalk, waving the flag, blowing a whistle and reciting the Pledge of Allegiance over and over until my sisters begged me to let them go back to their Easy-Bake Oven.

I loved singing the national anthem. I won an essay contest on "What the Flag Means to Me." I decorated my bicycle with little American flags for a Fourth of July parade and won a prize for that too. I became an Eagle Scout and proudly promised to do my duty to God and my country. And every year I asked to be the one who planted the flag on the grave of my uncle, a paratrooper who was killed in World War II. I was taught to admire his sacrifice, and I hoped to grow up and do my part, as he had, to keep us free.

But, in high school, things changed. Nine boys from my school came back home from Vietnam in boxes. Draped over each coffin was the American flag. I knew that they also had made a sacrifice.

But their sacrifice wasn't for their country: They were sent to die by men who lied to them. Those men - presidents, senators, government officials - wrapped themselves in the flag too, hoping that their lies would never be questioned, never be discovered.

They wrapped themselves in the very flag that was placed on the coffins of my friends and neighbors. I stopped singing the national anthem at football games, and I stopped putting out the flag.

I realize now I never should have stopped.

For too long now we have abandoned our flag to those who see it as a symbol of war and dominance, as a way to crush dissent at

# The Patriot's Act

MICHAEL MOORE

And every year I asked to be the one who planted the flag on the grave of my uncle, a paratrooper who was killed in World War II. I was taught to admire his sacrifice, and I hoped to grow up and do my part, as he had, to keep us free.

