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Editorial

Can There Any Good Thing Come Out of Hollywood?

Back in 1980 when it appeared a fellow by the name of Ronald Reagan might win the nomination as the Republican candidate in the upcoming presidential elections, we had a visitor from California: a brother from the state where Reagan had served as governor.

About all I knew about Reagan was that he was from Hollywood and that he was divorced. This wasn't a lot, but enough to know that if elected, the future of the United States of America would be on a fault bigger than the one that is supposed to swallow up San Francisco some fateful day. Sure that the brother from California would be able give me the low-down on Ronald Reagan, I broached the subject.

I found out real quick-like that not only was this brother politically unsound, but possibly spiritually as well. Enthusiastically he told me what a great man Ronald Reagan was, what a great president he would make...

Ronald Reagan became the 40th president of the United States. His photogenic face in newspapers and magazines was hard to dislike. So okay, I would like his face, but the rest of him would have to go. It seemed a fair compromise.

Ronald Reagan wasn't president all that long before I found myself liking more than his face (and I released the brother from California from his spiritual dungeon).

The stereotypical US President is tall (six foot plus), intelligent (IQ higher than that of most mortals), decisive (prepared to give the order that will launch nuclear warheads deep into enemy territory if the need arises), distinctive (In a lineup of world leaders, it is he who occupies center stage) and charismatic (smile with those who smile and get all sad-faced with the sad-faced).

President Reagan was tall, distinctive and charismatic. President Reagan was not an intellectual giant, nor was he decisive...

Tall. No getting around that one. He was tall. That's the long and long of it.

Distinctive. Distinctiveness was a trait carefully cultivated by Reagan. When meeting

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a foreign dignitary, he preferred to be photographed descending steps, smiling widely and extending his hand to greet his visitor from an elevated position. He had a natural ability to charm and come out on top almost in any situation.

Charismatic. Doubtlessly Hollywood helped mold this part of Reagan's personality. Once when addressing a lady's society, he strode to the podium with a prepared speech in hand. And then he stopped, as mesmerized by what he was seeing. Tossing his speech to the floor, he said, "Ladies, that speech doesn't begin to do justice to this fine audience." He then spoke "extemporaneously"—following the outline of the speech placed on the podium by one of his assistants before the meeting began. In a word, Reagan knew how to charm his listeners.

Intelligent. If a man's IQ was reflected in his stature, Kennedy and Clinton would have been something like 6 foot 7. Reagan would have been 5 foot 7... maybe 8. Not to worry. If stature would indicate common sense, instead of IQ, it is very possible that the tall might have become short, and the short tall. Reagan was bored with detail. Indeed, it appears he had difficulty assimilating facts and filing them away in his mental hard disk.

Decisive. Possibly because of his difficulty in mentally cataloging facts, Reagan preferred to be surrounded by men whom he trusted absolutely, and let them make the routine decisions. On more complex decisions he requested his aides to reduce the subject to its lowest common denominator, get it down to recipe card size that he could study. He would then make his decision.

Conviction. President Reagan was a man of strong convictions. That may seem to be a direct contradiction of his indecisiveness. It isn't. On broad issues, especially moral issues, he had bedrock convictions that no one, not his closest aides, nor Nancy herself, could shake. It was this quality that saved—and almost destroyed—his presidency. It was this quality that enabled him to change the course of world events.

Ronald Reagan was born approximately three years before the advent of World War I, also known as The Great War and The War to End All Wars. His growing up years were doubtlessly permeated with the intense feelings of families still grieving the loss of loved ones overseas and the vision of veterans with missing limbs. He knew war was terrible.

Reagan enlisted in the Army on April 29, 1937 and was ordered to active duty on April 18, 1942. His nearsightedness precluded overseas service. He was assigned to public relations and then to the First Motion Picture Unit, in which he promoted the war cause in patriotic films. In 1941 he was elected to the board of directors of the Screen Actors Guild in Hollywood, eventually becoming the president.

Reagan's participation in the war effort as an actor may seem inglorious when compared with units overseas in actual combat. Yet it was a time that had a profound effect on his thinking and political concepts. Hollywood, and especially the Screen Actors Guild, was massively infiltrated by communists. His aversion for communism was so intense that he was called upon to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee. Reagan knew that movies tainted by communism would eventually mean a nation corrupted by communism.

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War breeds strange bedfellows and World War II was no exception. Adolph Hitler, a megalomaniac derelict, who survived in soup kitchens for a period of his life, and later in prison as a political agitator, bludgeoned his way to the German chancellorship. He then embarked on the apocalyptic mission of destroying not only Jews, but eventually hundreds of millions of non-Aryans whom he saw as obstacles to his frenzied obsession to create a new world order ruled by his vaunted Third Reich.

Once Hitler had shed himself of the restrictive shackles of the Versailles Treaty imposed on Germany as a condition to end World War I, his Panzer units and blitzkrieg shocked the world, as well as military leaders, with their ferocity and total insensitivity to human life. It soon became evident that Hitler's lust for power would not be satiated by overrunning neighboring countries. Europe, including England, was only phase one in a much broader plan. Inebriated by success, Germany opened a two-front war by attacking the Soviet Union. Thus communist Russia, under Josef Stalin, became a major player in the war.

At this point Great Britain, as well as other European nations, were already committed to the war. When the United States, Canada and other free-world nations entered the war, democracy and communism joined hands to combat the Axis powers of German Nazism under Hitler and Italian fascism under Mussolini.

The Allied powers, represented by Great Britain's Churchill, America's Roosevelt and Russia's Stalin were strange bedfellows indeed, that can best be described as a marriage of convenience, totally bereft of mutual feelings of kindredship or confidence. As the balance of the war tipped in favor of the Allies, relations between the powers of democracy and communism became increasingly strained. Berlin, seen as the ultimate, albeit strictly symbolic, trophy of the war, became the object of an intense race by democratic armies from the west and Soviet armies from the east.

(It is interesting to note that General Eisenhower, as Supreme Commander of the democratic forces, decided to hold his armies back and cede to the Soviets the symbolic victory of first setting foot on what was considered the heart of Nazism. Historians have criticized the Supreme Commander for this decision. Eisenhower's reasoning was simple. When military strategists told him what kind of casualties to expect for a symbolic victory, he decided that a non-strategic victory was not worth the loss of life of possibly hundreds of thousands of young soldiers. Over 300 thousand Russian soldiers lost their lives in the final 41 kilometers in their assault on Berlin.)

Thus, before the end of World War II, and while yet allies, the Cold War between democracy and communism began. The victors no longer needed each other to defeat a common enemy, so why pretend? When Reagan's voice began to be heard some decades later, he did not pretend. He was an outspoken critic of the Soviet Union and communism.

When Reagan became president on January 20, 1981, he was known as a hardliner, with zero tolerance for communism. He was fully aware of the satanic nature of Stalin, in some ways more inhuman and cruel than that of Hitler. Among his innumerable atrocities, Hitler was not guilty of systematically killing his own countrymen—other than the Jews, of course. Stalin was. He eliminated millions of his most noble and able

citizens. In fact, Stalin saw anyone with the ability to think clearly and courage to act as a threat to his own political survival. And thus, the dreaded midnight knock. Millions of them. Reagan hated this and all that communism stood for—or against.

On January 29, 1981, a mere ten days after his first inauguration, President Reagan gave his views of détente at a news conference. To the dismay of his aides, he said exactly what he thought and felt, and not what was politically correct.

Well, so far détente's been a one way-street that the Soviet Union has used to pursue its own aims. I don't have to think of an answer as to what I think their intentions are; they have repeated it. I know of no leader of the Soviet Union since the revolution, and including the present leadership, that has not more than once repeated in the various Communist congresses they hold that their goal must be the promotion of world revolution and a one-world Socialist or Communist state, whichever word you want to use.

Now, as long as they do that, and as long as they, at the same time, have openly and publically declared that the only morality they recognize is what will further their cause, meaning they reserve unto themselves the right to commit any crime, to lie, to cheat, to attain that, and that is moral, not immoral, and we operate on a different set of standards, I think that when you do business with them, even at a détente, you keep that in mind.

(In typical Reagan fashion, as he and his aides were returning to the oval office, he turned to his national security adviser and said, “Say Dick, they do lie and cheat, don't they?” “Yes sir” was the quick reply.)

There was no doubt: Reagan was anti-Communist and anti-Soviet. He wasn't about to get caught up in unilateral détente.

On June 8, 1982, in his first visit to Europe as president, in an address to the British members of Parliament at Westminster, he again made himself clear when he said “the march of freedom and democracy, which will leave Marxism-Leninism on the ash heap of history.”

And then on March 8, 1983, while speaking to the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida, Reagan said that the arms race was not some “gigantic misunderstanding [but] a struggle between right and wrong and good and evil.” And then carefully choosing his words—words that rated high on the Richter scale with aftershocks that would be heard round the world—he branded the Soviet Union “an evil empire.”

In a scene that would frequently repeat itself in his presidency, he was criticized by both his aides and wife Nancy. Undeterred, he said that those words were uttered “with malice aforethought...I wanted to let [Soviet leader Yuri] Andropov know that we recognized the Soviets for what they were.” In other words, he said what he did because that is exactly what he meant to say. It was no slip of tongue.

That was Ronald Reagan at his best.

Even before the “evil empire” speech, Reagan had been issuing directives aimed at undermining Soviet power and world expansionism. Two weeks later, after shaking the world, the president announced an entirely new and unorthodox approach to the Soviet threat: “The Strategic Defense Initiative, was a proposal for a system that would

shoot down incoming missiles and thus protect the United States from a missile attack.” SDI, nicknamed Star Wars, by opponents, was a radical departure from MAD—mutual assured destruction—which assumed that neither side would be crazy enough to start a suicidal nuclear war.

SDI was ingenious, to put it mildly. Before the emphasis had been on a strong offense. Now—at least theoretically—the war could be won with a strong defense. And without this defense—again theoretically—the war would be lost. In a word, once the war began, all Soviet missiles would be shot down, while a good share of the US missiles would reach their mark.

So why couldn’t the Soviets build their own defensive shield? That is exactly where we see the ingenuity of the project. The shield was very, very costly and the Soviet Union was teetering on bankruptcy. To have adopted countermeasures would have shoved them over the brink.

In many ways, Reagan was an atypical politician. In fact, his modus operandi almost defies description. One of his principal consultants on the Soviet Union was a woman called Suzanne Massie. She was not a State Department official nor Soviet scholar. She was a writer and author who traveled extensively in the Soviet Union. When National Security Adviser Robert C. McFarlane brought her into the Oval Office on January 17, 1984 to give Reagan an informal report on a recent trip to the Soviet Union, she and the president established an immediate rapport. What appealed to the president was the informality of her views. Contrary to presidential advisers who usually are stooped under the weight of PhDs and honorary titles, all with a personal agenda they wish to impress on their boss, Massie was down to earth. She reported what she saw and heard, and more important, what she “felt.”

Many of the visits to the White House took place in the family quarters, often in the presence of only the president and Nancy. It is calculated that Massie met with the president at least 20 times during his tenure in office. He practically memorized her historical work *Land of the Firebird: The Beauty of Old Russia*. Almost all of his high level cabinet members saw Massie with great reserve, if not open hostility. Nancy was at best, merely tolerant. Ever the communicator, Reagan used Massie extensively as a courier to exchange verbal messages with high level Soviet officials.

It appears that Massie’s greatest contribution was to show Reagan the need to distinguish between the Russian government and the Russian people. Communism was to be hated; the people—victims—were to be loved. She said that in Moscow and Leningrad the people talked of the Russians as *we* or *us*, and of the Soviets as *they* or *them*. This was language Reagan understood. It set the stage for what would later be seen as an inexplicable incongruity in his presidency.

It should be pointed out that while there was a close friendship between Reagan and Massie, it was never more than that. In fact, as Nancy herself would point out, people could get only so close to her husband. She said, “There’s a wall around him. He lets me come closer than anyone else, but there are times when even I feel that barrier.”

In the fall of 1985, when Reagan was preparing for his first summit with Gorbachev, he seemed disinterested. As top CIA agents, including director William Casey, gave

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him the low-down on strategy, geopolitics, the Politburo, and every imaginable aspect of Soviet life, he was visibly unimpressed—until an analyst named Kay Oliver began talking about daily life, alcoholism, corruption and revival or religion. Everything changed. As time went on, not only did he never miss an opportunity to talk religion to Gorbachev; he made opportunities. He wanted to see and feel the Russian soul. He became excited when twice Gorbachev used God's name and once quoted a scripture, wondering if he could possibly be a secret believer. When Gorbachev used the term God Bless at a subsequent summit meeting, Reagan asked his then National Security Adviser, Collin Powell, if that could possibly be an expression of his religious belief, Powell poured cold water on the idea. "Don't see this as an expression of religious faith. It is almost idiomatic. He's not ready to get down on his knees for you."

Reagan was determined to handle diplomacy his own way and on his own terms. He went so far as to reject classical terms like *tête-à-tête*, insisting on *one-to-one* to describe talks with his Soviet counterpart. His first summit with Gorbachev was by no means a roaring success. Yet these two statesmen learned to know each other personally and take each other's pulse.

In subsequent meetings with Gorbachev, Reagan showed his usual intolerance for detail. What never did wane, however, was his sense of humor. In fact, he often seemed to dig into his bottomless bag of jokes in apparent effort to stall serious talk. In the middle of talks involving armaments and international conflicts, Reagan would suddenly remember a joke which he felt was more important than the talks at hand.

As Reagan's presidency progressed, he increasingly saw the Berlin Wall as emblematic of all the suffering and unspeakable horrors of communism. Instinctively he believed that so long as that wall stood, there would be no deliverance for the hundreds of millions enslaved by an ungodly system. And so was born his dream to stand before that very wall, to denounce its existence, and demand that its perpetrators tear it down.

When Reagan's aides first learned of his intentions they were dismayed. When told that he would direct his remarks to none other than Gorbachev himself, they were aghast. Together they counseled and plotted to purge his mind of such thoughts. Speech writers attempted to contemporize his speech, to take the bite out, but when the final draft was handed to the president, just as he wanted it, he held a masterpiece in his hands, hardly able to wait to read it to the world.

On July 12, 1987, President Reagan landed at the Tempelhof Airport in West Berlin. During his five-hour visit he made the speech that shook the wall. Minutes before he began, a reporter asked the president if he believed the wall would ever be torn down. Reagan prophetically replied, "Well, Jericho didn't last forever." moments later, with the wall as his backdrop, he began his speech. In impeccable cadence, he declaimed:

Behind me stands a wall that encircles the free sectors of this city, part of a vast system of barriers that divides the entire continent of Europe. From the Baltic, south, those barriers cut across Germany like a gash of barbed wire, concrete, dog runs and guardtowers...

Today I say: As long as this gate is closed, as long as this scar of a wall is permitted to stand, it is not the German question alone that remains open, but the question of freedom for all mankind...

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*Where four decades ago there was rubble, today in West Berlin there is the greatest industrial output of any city in Germany—busy office blocks, fine homes and apartments, proud avenues, and the spreading lawns of park land. Where a city's culture seemed to have been destroyed, today there are two great universities, orchestras and an opera, countless theaters and museums. Where there was want, today there is abundance—food, clothing, automobiles, the wonderful goods of the *ku'damm*. From devastation, from utter ruin, you Berliners have, in freedom, rebuilt a city that once again ranks as one of the greatest on Earth...*

In the 1950's, Khrushchev predicted: "We will bury you." But in the West today, we see a free world that has achieved a level of prosperity and well-being unprecedented in all human history. In the Communist world we see failure, technological backwardness, declining standards of health, even want of the most basic kind—too little food. Even today, the Soviet Union cannot feed itself. After these four generations, then, there stands before the entire world one great and inescapable conclusion: Freedom leads to prosperity. Freedom replaces the ancient hatred among nations with comity and peace. Freedom is the victor.

And now the Soviets themselves, in a limited way, may be coming to understand the importance of freedom...

*There is one sign the Soviets could make that would be unmistakable, that would advance dramatically the cause of freedom and peace. General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization: **Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!** [Bold type is mine.]*

Even though diplomatic circles in the United States tended to downplay Reagan's speech, recently declassified documents show that his words struck a raw nerve in top Soviet officials. And in spite of Pravda, the official Communist newspaper, launching into one of its traditional tirades on the evils of capitalism, the seed had been sown. The wall began causing discomfort at all levels of officialdom.

Since Reagan did not feel bound to follow conventional reasoning or logic, he was free to instinctively change course according to his gut feelings, which, after all, carried more weight with him than the learned counsel of all his aides—and Nancy, for that matter. This infuriated not a few and brought him strong criticism from both former President Nixon and Secretary of State Kissinger. In a word, they were all afraid that Reagan had mortally offended Gorbachev and thus run down the drain the possibility of any kind of easing of tensions with the Soviet Union.

They were wrong. Having shown his talons, Reagan increasingly began fluttering his wings as a dove of peace, bewildering everyone. Gorbachev reciprocated.

In an October, 1986 Reagan-Gorbachev summit in Reykjavik, Iceland, these two men began for the first time discussing the possibility of the total elimination of nuclear weapons. While this was entirely rhetorical, resulting in no signed agreements, it gave each leader the opportunity to size up the other.

On February 28, 1987, Gorbachev suddenly made some concessions on missiles in Europe and requested a summit at the earliest possible date. Why did he do this?

At best, the answer to this is arguable. We have reason to believe that both Reagan and Gorbachev understood that unless the Soviet Union drastically cut

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military spending and began investing in infrastructure, the evitable outcome would be national bankruptcy. Gorbachev saw in Reagan a man with whom he could do business. And the reverse was true. With this tacit understanding, both men went to work.

Reagan's position was savagely attacked by leading American statesmen, ironically, by exactly those who a few short years earlier had been proponents of détente. Their basic argument was that Gorbachev was not seeking change, only advantages, that Reagan was foolhardily handing over on a silver platter. Undeterred, the president pressed on.

His greatest ally was the decrepit state of Soviet finances. Understanding that widespread alcoholism was threatening the very existence of his country, Gorbachev launched a vigorous anti-alcohol campaign, which, while saving the nation, helped bankrupt the economy by drastically reducing revenues from taxes charged on alcoholic beverages.

And then, on April 26, 1986, Chernobyl blew up, forcing the government to spend billions in cleanup costs. The only possible hope of survival was to cut military spending. It was exactly this that Reagan was proposing. In 1986, before the Reykjavik summit, Gorbachev told his aide, Anatoly Chernyaev, that they could not afford to be drawn into an escalating arms race. "We will lose, because right now we are already at the end of our tether." What Reagan had to offer was actually the lifesaver for a nation sinking into insolvency.

Increasingly, Reagan and Gorbachev were on the same wavelength. In a private meeting with the Soviet Secretary General, United States Secretary of State, George Schultz, set forth the idea of what today is known as globalization. Ten years later, in his memoirs, Gorbachev referred to his meeting with Schultz as a "milestone." In a speech to the Politburo, he said, "The world is interconnected, interdependent." The point had been made. And taken.

It was in 1987, that in a sense, the Berlin wall began to crumble. Until then, a mere 100,000 special permits for East Germans to visit the West had been issued annually. That number now rose to an astonishing 867,000 permits.

Space does not permit to relate the details of what followed. But the facts are there: On November 9, 1989, (20 years ago) the Berlin wall fell. The two Germans were reunited. The Soviet Union imploded. Capitalism, albeit not with the same freedom as in the West, is now a reality in Russia and the surrounding republics. And democracy, while almost unrecognizable by western standards, has definitely awarded a much greater freedom to a people born under communism.

So where does the man from Hollywood fit into all this? A categorical answer to this question would be an open confession of dangerous political naiveté. Rather than to fall into this trap, let's indulge in a few generalities that we believe can be substantiated by Old Testament history:

There is a saying that every people have the leaders they deserve. This was vividly true in Israel. When the people were faithful, they were blessed with godly leaders. When they were wayward, they had to endure corrupt leaders. It could be suggested that the reverse was true, that leaders molded their subjects after their own image. Yes,

in the case of a people at ease in Zion this could very easily be the case. We doubt, however, that God sent corrupt leaders to a fervent people, who eventually lead them astray.

In the case of the Soviet Union, an immense empire, and other communist dominated nations, the suffering was intense, especially for the Christians. The terrible midnight knocks, the gulags of Siberia, the total disregard for human life and dignity, created a situation far worse than what the children of Israel suffered in Egypt. Without a doubt, those whose religious beliefs had not been smothered by the official religion of these nations—atheism—prayed fervently. And God saw fit to bring deliverance.

An interesting Bible Study could be held on all the unlikely men and women that God raised up to both punish and deliver peoples in the time of Israel. The same is true today. And thus we ask: Was Ronald Reagan such a man?

Very possibly. Not only did the Iron Curtain fall and the Soviet Union implode, but communism as an ideology was dealt a mortal blow. (Yes, we know, China continues as a communist nation. Today it is a system so “corrupted” by capitalism that life is certainly much more tolerable than in the days of Maoism. How much of this can be attributed to: “Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!”?)

And so, what tidbit of wisdom do we toss out before the curtain falls?

That the political observer should, above all, have a good dose of humility and understand that when God places someone in power He knows what He is doing. And before making a lot of predictions, ask: *Can there any good thing come out of Hollywood?* ▲

Life in Brazil

We Become Brazilians

Some of us have lived in Brazil for over 40 years. And if in 40 years Brazil hasn't become our home—truly our home—then...well, years ago when medical facilities weren't up to snuff in Brasília, a joke making the rounds was that the best doctor in Brasília was Dr. Varig. Varig, we explain, was an airline with regular flights to São Paulo, where medical facilities were state-of-the-art. Anyway, if after 40 years I still don't feel at home in Brazil, a good airline would be an excellent solution for me too.

My wife and I do feel at home where we live, as do others who have moved to Brazil. And so, some three years ago, a number of us got the necessary documents to apply for Brazilian citizenship. Approximately two years later we all got an official letter asking us for an update of most of the documents we had already given them. The letter made it clear that if within 60 days they had received nothing, the applications would go to the dead file.

We were in the States at the time. When we got back the 60-day period was about up, so Faith and I went to the Federal Police in Jataí, where we had originally made application. This was on a Friday and we were told that we had until Monday to

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come up with a letter requesting an extension so that we could supply them with the necessary documents. I told the officials that we would return to the Colony and tell all the interested parties so that on Monday we could all return with the letters. Then, on impulse, I asked, "Are you sure that Monday is the deadline?" The man checked and almost shouted, "No! Today is the last day!"

This was about three o'clock in the afternoon and we had to have the letter in the post office by five o'clock. The officer quickly helped us make up the letter and pay a fine in order to keep things going. We got to the post office just before closing time. Unfortunately, for the rest of the group there was no possible way to get their letters in the mail.

Several months later at work I got up one day and walked out of the back door to get a bit of fresh air. Looking out toward the cemetery I saw an older man and a girl in her 20s looking at the gravestones. I walked out to see who they were. From a distance the man began gesturing and greeting me as though I was a long-lost friend.

It turned out he had a farm out beyond the Colony and had showed it to his daughter. Now he introduced her and said she was a political scientist. I found out she worked for a federal congressman in Brasília. Suddenly I remembered the problems we were having with our naturalization and decided to tell her about it. She said she would gladly see what she could do about it. We went to my office and she typed up a quick power-of-attorney to represent Faith and me in the Ministry of Justice, where naturalization processes are handled.

Alessandra Garnica Lugato and her lawyer friend, Rodrigo Souza Fagundes, didn't waste any time. They had a federal congressman write up a letter requesting that we be granted citizenship. The results were almost immediate. All the demands for additional documents were dropped and instead of being in the dead file, we were on top of the stack.

Faith's naturalization was soon approved and published in the Congressional Record. Mine hit a snag. It happens my Dad's name was Ruben D Becker. The officials in the Ministry of Justice wanted to know what the "D" stood for. They said abbreviations in a name were not accepted. Rodrigo wrote up a letter explaining that my dad's middle name was David, which accounted for the "D". They didn't buy it. They wanted a document from the American Consulate that would prove what dad's name was. So we went to Brasília and got the document. They still weren't happy. So finally I had my brother in the US send me a copy of Dad's birth certificate, of his passport and his death certificate. This worked. On March 3 my case was published in the Congressional Record as concluded.

Now the Federal Justice department in Rio Verde, our local town, had to be notified. This took about three months. They set a date to give me my naturalization certificate, which was in approximately 30 days.

The day set for the ceremony finally arrived. We went to the Federal Courthouse and after a short wait were ushered into the judge's chambers. We had invited three close friends to be present as witnesses. There was also a Chilean, married to a Brazilian lawyer, who was getting citizenship. The ceremony was actually quite simple. I was asked to read the following statement:

Eu, Charles David Becker, renuncio à minha nacionalidade de origem e assumo o compromisso de bem cumprir os deveres de cidadão brasileiro previstos na Constituição e leis do Brasil, e de não exercer nenhuma atividade nociva aos interesses nacionais.

(I, Charles David Becker, renounce my [North American] nationality and assume the responsibility of keeping the obligations of a Brazilian citizen as set forth in the Constitution and laws of Brazil and to not exert any activities harmful to national interest.)

The judge then pronounced me a Brazilian citizen and added, “I want you to understand that if you do anything harmful to national security, your citizenship will be revoked and you will be deported.”

Fair enough, but deported to where after I renounced my North American citizenship? Anyway, the judge knew perfectly well that for me to lose my US citizenship, American officials had to cancel my passport, which they never do. So, yes, I could be deported. In the meantime, I have dual citizenship.

Possibly some 20 years ago, a young Brazilian, possibly 25 years old, married to the adopted daughter of an American missionary couple, came to my house for a short visit. He was an outstanding young man. We soon were discussing religion and I was positively amazed at how we saw things exactly alike as we drifted from one doctrine to another. At one point in the conversation I mentioned that we did need to be careful to keep our life pure so that we wouldn't lose our salvation.

The young man smiled at me gently, and with utmost respect corrected me. He said, “Yes, we may commit sin, but we will never lose our salvation.” He then went on to say that Judas died a saved man, people who commit crimes who have once been saved will not lose their salvation, and indeed, Christians who take on an alternative life style continue saved.

I wish that young man could have been present when I became a Brazilian. Contrary to someone who is a Brazilian by birth and cannot be deported, I, an adopted Brazilian, can not only lose my citizenship, but lose my right to remain in the country. This is so true spiritually. Through disobedience we too can lose our celestial citizenship and be deported from God's kingdom. ▲

Readers Contribuite

I Pray You Enough

Recently, I overheard a mother and daughter in their last moments together at the airport. They had announced the departure. Standing near the security gate, they hugged, and the mother said, ‘I love you, and I pray you enough.’

The daughter replied, ‘Mom, our life together has been more than enough. Your love is all I ever needed. I pray you enough, too, Mom.’

They kissed, and the daughter left. The mother walked over to the window where I was seated. Standing there, I could see she wanted and needed to cry. I tried not to intrude on her privacy, but she welcomed me in by asking, ‘Did you ever say good-bye to someone knowing it would be forever?’

‘Yes, I have,’ I replied... ‘Forgive me for asking, but why is this a forever good-bye?’

‘Well...I’m not as young as I once was, she lives so far away & has her own busy life. I have some challenges ahead, and the reality is—her next trip back will be for my funeral,’ she said.

‘When you were saying good-bye, I heard you say, ‘I pray you enough.’ May I ask what that means?’

She began to smile. ‘That’s a prayer that has been handed down from other generations. My parents used to say it to everyone.’ She paused a moment and looked up as if trying to remember it in detail, and she smiled even more. ‘When we said, ‘I pray you enough,’ we wanted the other person to have a life filled with just enough good things to sustain them.’

Then, turning toward me, she shared the following as if she were reciting it from memory.

I pray you enough sun to keep your attitude bright no matter how gray the day may appear.

I pray you enough rain to appreciate the sun even more.

I pray you enough happiness to keep your spirit alive and everlasting.

I pray you enough pain so that even the smallest of joys in life may appear bigger.

I pray you enough gain to satisfy your wanting.

I pray you enough loss to appreciate all that you possess.

I pray you enough hellos to get you through the final good-bye.

Then, she began to cry, and walked away.

They say, it takes a minute to find a special person, an hour to appreciate them, a day to love them, but an entire life to forget them. ▲

How O’Hare Airport Got Its Name

[Story one]

Many years ago, Al Capone virtually owned Chicago. Capone wasn’t famous for anything heroic. He was notorious for enmeshing the windy city in everything from bootlegged booze and prostitution to murder.

Capone had a lawyer nicknamed ‘Easy Eddie.’ He was Capone’s lawyer for a good reason. Eddie was very good! In fact, Eddie’s skill at legal maneuvering kept Big Al out of jail for a long time.

To show his appreciation, Capone paid him very well. Not only was the money big, but also, Eddie got special dividends. For instance, he and his family occupied a fenced-in mansion with live-in help and all of the conveniences of the day. The estate was so large that it filled an entire Chicago City block.

Eddie lived the high life of the Chicago mob and gave little consideration to the atrocity that went on around him.

Eddie did have one soft spot, however. He had a son that he loved dearly. Eddie saw to it that his young son had clothes, cars, and a good education. Nothing was withheld. Price was no object. And, despite his involvement with organized crime,

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Eddie even tried to teach him right from wrong.. Eddie wanted his son to be a better man than he was.

Yet, with all his wealth and influence, there were two things he couldn't give his son; he couldn't pass on a good name or a good example.

One day, Easy Eddie reached a difficult decision. Easy Eddie wanted to rectify wrongs he had done..

He decided he would go to the authorities and tell the truth about Al 'Scarface' Capone, clean up his tarnished name, and offer his son some semblance of integrity. To do this, he would have to testify against the mob, and he knew that the cost would be great... So, he testified.

Within the year, Easy Eddie's life ended in a blaze of gunfire on a lonely Chicago Street

But in his eyes, he had given his son the greatest gift he had to offer, at the greatest price he could ever pay. Police removed from his pockets a rosary, a crucifix, a religious medallion, and a poem clipped from a magazine.

The poem read:

*The clock of life is wound but once,
and no man has the power
To tell just when the hands will stop
At late or early hour.
Now is the only time you own.
Live, love, toil with a will.
Place no faith in time.
For the clock may soon be still.*

[Story Two]

World War II produced many heroes. One such man was Lieutenant Commander Butch O'Hare. He was a fighter pilot assigned to the aircraft carrier Lexington in the South Pacific.

One day his entire squadron was sent on a mission. After he was airborne, he looked at his fuel gauge and realized that someone had forgotten to top off his fuel tank.

He would not have enough fuel to complete his mission and get back to his ship. His flight leader told him to return to the carrier. Reluctantly, he dropped out of formation and headed back to the fleet.

As he was returning to the mother ship he saw something that turned his blood cold: a squadron of Japanese aircraft was speeding its way toward the American fleet.

The American fighters were gone on a sortie, and the fleet was all but defenceless. He couldn't reach his squadron and bring them back in time to save the fleet. Nor could he warn the fleet of the approaching danger.

There was only one thing to do. He must somehow divert them from the fleet. Laying aside all thoughts of personal safety, he dove into the formation of Japanese planes..

Wing-mounted 50 calibre's blazed as he charged in, attacking one surprised enemy

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plane and then another Butch wove in and out of the now broken formation and fired at as many planes as possible until all his ammunition was finally spent.

Undaunted, he continued the assault. He dove at the planes, trying to clip a wing or tail in hopes of damaging as many enemy planes as possible and rendering them unfit to fly. Finally, the exasperated Japanese squadron took off in another direction.

Deeply relieved, Butch O'Hare and his tattered fighter limped back to the carrier. Upon arrival, he reported in and related the event surrounding his return.

The film from the gun-camera mounted on his plane told the tale. It showed the extent of Butch's daring attempt to protect his fleet. He had, in fact, destroyed five enemy aircraft. This took place on February 20, 1942 ,

And for that action Butch became the Navy's first Ace of WWII, And the first Naval Aviator to win the Congressional Medal of Honour.

A year later Butch was killed in aerial combat at the age of 29. His home town would not allow the memory of this WW II hero to fade, and today, O'Hare Airport in Chicago is named in tribute to the courage of this great man.

So what do these two stories have to do with each other?

Butch O'Hare was 'Easy Eddie's' son. ▲