

“Two Stories”

by Mike Tucker *

Perhaps you are familiar with these stories – two inspiring stories that bear witness to the power of our choices and the value of integrity.

Story #1:

Many years ago, mafia boss Al Capone virtually owned Chicago. Capone wasn't famous for anything heroic. In fact, he was notorious for enmeshing the windy city in everything from bootlegged booze and prostitution to murder.

Capone had a lawyer nicknamed "Easy Eddie." Eddie was Capone's lawyer for a good reason: he was very good at what he did. Eddie's skill at legal maneuvering kept Big Al out of jail many, many times.

To show his appreciation, Capone paid Eddie very well. Not only was the money good, but Eddie also 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 whom he loved dearly. He saw to it that his young son had the finest clothes and a good education. Money was no object, and nothing was withheld from the boy as he grew up.

Despite his own involvement with organized crime, Eddie even tried to teach his son right from wrong. He wanted his son to be a better man than he was, yet he began to realize that 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 made a very difficult decision. He resolved to rectify his wrongs. He decided to go to the authorities and tell the truth about Al "Scarface" Capone, clean up his own tarnished name, and offer his son some semblance of integrity. To do this, he would have to testify against The Mob. He knew the cost would be immense, but he did it. He testified.

Within the year, Easy Eddie's life ended in a blaze of gunfire on a lonely Chicago street, much as he might have predicted. But in his mind, he had given his son the greatest gift he had to offer – a good name -- at the greatest price he could possibly 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 #2:

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

One day Butch's 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 the 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 out on their mission, and the fleet was all but defenseless. 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 the Japanese fighters from the American fleet.

Laying aside all thoughts of personal safety, he dove into the formation of Japanese planes. Wing-mounted 50 caliber's blazed as he charged in, attacking one surprised enemy 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, 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 events surrounding his return.

Film from the gun-mounted camera 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 his actions, Butch became the Navy's first Ace of World War II and the first Naval Aviator to win the Medal of Honor.

A year later, Butch was killed in aerial combat at the age of 29. His hometown 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, the next time you find yourself at O'Hare International, give some thought to visiting the memorial to Butch O'Hare, where his statue and his Medal of Honor are on display. It's located between Terminals 1 and 2.

SO WHAT DO THESE TWO STORIES HAVE TO DO WITH EACH OTHER?

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

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