

Two Great True Stories – Both Are True

Posted by Bob Young

STORY NUMBER ONE

Many years ago, Al Capone virtually owned Chicago. He 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" whose skill at legal maneuvering kept Big Al out of jail for a long time.

To show his appreciation, Capone paid him very well. 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's one soft spot was his son, whom he loved dearly. Eddie saw to it that the boy had clothes, cars, and a good education. Nothing was withheld. Price was no object. And, despite his involvement with organized crime, 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 decided to rectify wrongs he had done by going to the authorities and telling the truth about Al "Scarface" Capone in order to clean up his 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 great, but he did testify. 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 which 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 NUMBER TWO

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

On 20 February 1942 his entire squadron was sent on a mission. After he was airborne, he looked at his fuel gauge and realized 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 toward the American fleet. The American fighters were gone on a sortie, 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 them from the 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, diving 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 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. For that action Butch became the Navy's first Ace of W.W.II, and the first Naval Aviator to win the Congressional Medal of Honor.

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, Chicago's O'Hare Airport bears his name, a tribute to the courage of this great man. So the next time you find yourself at O'Hare International, give some thought to visiting Butch's memorial, which displays his statue and his Medal of Honor. 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.