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Long Distance High

Sports have been an important factor in developing the foundation of this book. In the mid '80s when I turned my attention from tennis to triathlons, I spent more time training, and most of it was spent alone. I found that I never have more clarity than when I am taking a long run, swimming or biking, when I experience what is called the *long-distance high*. That is when I "write" my best letters, do my best "arguing", and do my clearest thinking.

It was during these training sessions that my perspective began to take shape, and I began to believe that the single most important issue in this country is not any of the problems we hear about on the news every day, but rather that each of us, as citizens, is not living life for the greater good of all. We are not doing the small things that, when done on a day-to-day basis as the opportunities arise, keep issues (i.e. the cracks) from becoming so large, and thus ensure that the country will continue to be strong and free.

Formative Life Circumstances

My point of view had been shaped by a lifetime of instances - events that fashioned my perceptions of the world. As this book began to come together, I was struck by how these incidents had shaped my way of looking at what is required of us as fellow human beings to make daily life better for ourselves and others. These experiences taught me how life ought *not* to be, but it was years before my beliefs took shape and formed this book.

- **The Turtle**

It may have all started with my earliest, and perhaps most distressful, recollection. At the age of 4 or 5, I was playing with an older boy who lived at the end of my street. We were in the woods behind his house when we came across a large turtle. To my horror and sadness, he took a hatchet and proceeded to chop through its shell until it died. It was the first time I asked the question: *Why would someone do that?* — partner to the question *Does anybody care?*

- **The Pig**

The next life-shaping incident happened during spring festival while I was an undergraduate at Duke University. In addition to activities like chariot races and tugs of war, there was a contest in which members of each fraternity (intoxicated members is more accurate) tried to catch a greased pig.

During the contest, a few guys finally stopped the pig and then others piled on. When they got off, the pig couldn't walk — one of its legs had been broken. Amazingly many

thought it was funny! Finally someone got a pistol and shot the animal to put it out of its misery. Why would anybody do that? Does anybody *care*? Whenever I think of this incident, I try to remember if and when I spoke up. I may have, but I'm not sure and that bothers me.

- **Acid In Her Face**

In my late twenties, I moved to California. I watched with horror one particular newscast – the lead story was that of a 13 year girl who had acid thrown in her face when she opened the front door to her own home. That incident first triggered my thinking that we don't do enough, that we don't get involved, that we watch or hear about these types of incidents and say "Oh what a shame" but then we "turn the channel", at least figuratively.

- **Lizzie**

My grandmother, Lizzie, had always been special to me. As a youngster, my Dad and I would drive her from Pelham, New York, to her summer cottage in rustic Lyme, New Hampshire. As she grew older, she wasn't able to function well alone and it was decided to put her in a nursing home, the equivalent of taking her real life away.

While I occasionally saw her at the nursing home, she had never met my two daughters, Emily and Rachel. I wanted the girls to know Lizzie and vice versa. Many times I thought about taking them to see her, but never did. In late 1981, Lizzie died and I had failed to fulfill that dream, to allow my daughters to know their great grandmother. In her memory, I wrote a good-bye poem. Part of the poem summed up my feelings and the point of this.

"...My one regret is that Emily and Rachel you did not meet,
To bring them to you, that was my feat...."

The lesson, *seize the moment* to take advantage of opportunities when they present themselves or in 1990's talk, "*Just Do It*" really took hold of me then.

- **Ruffian and Foolish Pleasure**

In 1975, there were two great thoroughbred racehorses in the U.S. – *Ruffian* and *Foolish Pleasure*. *Ruffian*, a filly, had won the American Filly Triple Crown. *Foolish Pleasure*, a mare, had won the Kentucky Derby. On July 6th, there was a match race at Belmont, NY, between the two of them, to see who would be horse of the year.

At about the mile mark, *Ruffian* broke her ankle. She and her rider crumpled to the ground. I watched in disbelief as the other horse and its jockey continued without stopping to comfort *Ruffian* or her jockey. *What kind of society are we where winning and finishing are more important than comforting someone or an animal in pain?* *Ruffian* was later "put down" - a euphemism for an animal being killed humanely after an unsuccessful attempt at surgery.

For more information on Ruffian and Foolish Pleasure, check out www.thoroughbredchampions.com/gallery/ruffian1.htm which describes this match race and the attempt to save Ruffian's life.

Author's Note: After reading the above story, a reader sent me a note about the 100 yard dash at the [Special Olympics](#) in Seattle a few years back. The story was verified with Special Olympics Washington. [Enjoy it!](#)

- **Empty Ashtrays and Fast Food Trash**

An act that has always amazed and angered me is to see someone empty their ashtray in a parking lot. Seeing someone throw the remains of their fast food lunch out the window or seeing one of the millions of individuals who hold a smoked cigarette outside their window and just let it go invoke a similar reaction. The importance of responsibility in a society was developing in me, as was a deep frustration that no one ever says anything about it.

- **Triathlon Training and Trash**

In the summer of 1987, my family was on vacation on the coast of South Carolina. I was training to compete in a major triathlon and took long runs each day along what I had always remembered, as a child, to be beautiful pristine beaches. Rather than enjoy the warmth of the day or the sounds of the ocean, my thoughts were focused on the incredible variety of garbage that had been exposed as the tide receded. There was food and food wrappers, spent fireworks, diapers, toys, and other things I won't mention. *Who did people think would clean this up? Didn't they care about the appearance of the beach for others?*

From Speech to Web Book

Toastmasters Speech

Those perceptions began to crystallize when, in early 1987, I joined [Toastmasters](#), an organization that helps individuals develop speaking skills. The Toastmasters manual contains topics for ten brief speeches. As I began to work on speech number three, entitled "Something Emotional," I began to formulate my thoughts. Over and over the same words came to me, "Who will take care of this country? Where is the special interest group for America? Does anybody care? Who will love America?". This speech was so successful that I was asked to give it to other Toastmasters clubs as well as to a number of service organizations.

I always ended the speech quoting the now-famous section of the President Kennedy's 1961 inaugural address - "And so, my fellow Americans: Ask not what your country can do for you - ask what you can do for your country." I spoke of the Chinese proverb that says a journey of 1000 miles begins with a single step. I told the story of Candy Lightner who founded Mothers Against Drunk Driving ([MADD](#)) after her daughter was killed by a car driven by a drunken cannery worker. Yet the audience reaction was weak, as if they were thinking, *That's interesting, but what can I do?* I began thinking about simple actions that, when done by

each of us on a daily basis over a lifetime, would keep our democracy strong. By early 1988, I had developed a one page list of 35 actions called What One Person Can Do that I handed out after the speech.

First the Title

I also had begun thinking of how to expose this message to more people. I laid out a rough business plan for a not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting citizenship. While I considered names like *Americans For America* and *On Behalf of America*, I kept hearing the echo of *Who Will Love America?* which was to ultimately become this book's title. For a variety of reasons, the name of the non-profit became Good Citizen.

Patriotism vs. Citizenship

I have had some concerns that the "Love America" part of the title would construe a patriotic message rather than the intended message about what each of us, as one person, can do; and what is necessary to keep a democracy strong and thus a country free. The book is not about, flag waving or "love it or leave it". Neither are in my nature. The book is about who will care enough about the great things this country has to offer to do what is necessary to sustain them. For me, these reasons include that:

- the country is gorgeous and has incredible natural resources,
- we are a good people helping each other and others around the world in times of need,
- we are diverse which makes life interesting, and
- we are free - doing and becoming what we chose.

The book is about the responsibility part of freedom. The beliefs expressed in this book should not be viewed as conservative or liberal nor as Democratic or Republican - they are simply *American*. No political statements have been intended.

Then the Logo

Early on, I wrote the words "Who Will Love America?" with a heart replacing the word Love. But it never was just any heart - it was the country's heart. And that is where the idea came from to put a caricature of the flag inside the heart. And for me, it was always a broken heart not a whole one.

It was a flag-heart that had cracks in it and where the stars were falling out of it and turning to tears. It was at that point I realized the Cracked Flag-Heart logo would replace the word

"Love" in the title *Who Will*  *America?*

Then the Content

The book evolved slowly during the 1990s in between some life changes – the co-founding of The Information Technology Group, a Big 5 alternative management consulting group; the death of my mother; a divorce; and two girls in college. There was also some perfection-driven procrastination and uncertainty over the process of getting this book published.

As I began to think about the actions each of us needed to do to effective citizens, I realized that many of the actions had common characteristics and thus could be grouped into categories. For example, there are *citizen actions* that "remind us of our heritage" and those which "keep us involved in the democratic process". I ended up with [six categories](#) of *citizen actions*.

I also began to relate the actions to the Declaration of Independence where it says ".. that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. I realized that *citizen actions* are the sacrifices from our "pursuit of Happiness" necessary to ensure the country's "Life and Liberty" - or our existence and freedoms if you will.

And Finally a Web Book

In the later 1990s, I was struggling with how to finish the book. Do I send book proposals to publishers? Seek out a grant so I could take a year off while finishing the book? Continue to do what I can, when I can? There was no end in sight.

Then in early 1999, it happened suddenly. I just gave in to the message. I finally realized how important the message was to me and that these other issues like money, recognition, how and when to publish simply didn't matter. My small gift to the country would be to publish the book to the web, free of charge, to encourage citizens to take action. There really isn't an end to being a responsible citizen so I've structured the book to let others share their thoughts and stories related to the actions.

This book is about those actions; and about what you, *as one person*, can do to help repair the cracks and to live for the greater good of all.



Special Olympics 100 Yard Dash Story

This story says a lot - read on, and enjoy! They call some of these people "retarded"...

A few years ago, at the Seattle Special Olympics, nine contestants, all physically or mentally disabled, assembled at the starting line for the 100-yard dash.

At the gun, they all started out, not exactly in a dash, but with a relish to run the race to the finish and win. All, that is, except one little boy who stumbled on the asphalt, tumbled over a couple of times, and began to cry.

The other eight heard the boy cry. They slowed down and looked back. Then they all turned around and went back. Every one of them. One girl with Down's syndrome bent down and kissed him and said: "This will make it better." Then all nine linked arms and walked together to the finish line. Everyone in the stadium stood, and the cheering went on for several minutes.

People who were there are still telling the story. Why? Because deep down we all know this one thing: What matters in this life is more than winning for ourselves. What matters in this life is helping others win, even if it means slowing down and changing our course. Pass it on...we all need to change our hearts.

Author's Note: When I called Special Olympics Washington to confirm this story, their initial reaction was "Oh, that happens all the time."

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