



The Wonder Springs Chronicle

20 April 2011; Volume 13, Number 16

The Wonder Springs Chronicle

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No Skin In The Game II

Nobody likes me. Everyone hates me! I guess I'm not going to eat any worms, because I tried that once, along time ago, and decided I won't do that again.

Individualism is the prime common grace gift of God. Whether we pause to make this distinction or not, from the creation, the cognitive separation between humans and the rest of the life on this planet is understood and taken for granted.

Some weeks ago, in the context of this Godly understanding, I introduced the reasoning that the demarcation of difference between the twentieth century and the twenty-first, is historically going to be measured by the end of the Industrial Age and the rise of the Individual Age.

I began last week's column with a discussion of how I might quantify President Obama's leadership ability, especially within the context of Wednesday's debt reduction speech. To summarize, I would say I was overly optimistic

when I said that he had the leadership skills of an Army Security Agency Private First Class.

After Obama's college lecture, I still find myself in the two out of three majority of Americans that still believe the country is headed in the wrong direction. While there were words that the country must come together politically, he quickly headed into the boondocks of twentieth century Collective Elitism when he pontificated that the United States only became a great nation when it enacted Johnson's Great Society social measures, Medicare and Medicaid.

As you will see as we continue this week, I contend that it was the decade of the 1960s, with these centerpieces of social engineering, coupled with the Vietnam war; was indeed the beginning of the now accelerating decline of American greatness. However, as we look this week at the Greatest Generation, we see the triumph of individual determination over the atheistic collective progressive elitism, that



attempted to aggressively rule the world in the first half of the twentieth century.

From my point of view, how could the president of the United States be so unsophisticated to believe that government sponsored social engineering be the highest and best hope for mankind? It kind of makes you want to listen to Donald Trump when he says something to the effect, "Where was Barack Obama and what did he do, and didn't do, for the first forty years of his life, and why has he spent millions of dollars in legal fees to protect those still hidden years?"

Much more to the salient point, in his speech the President used words to describe America's rugged individualism. However there seems to be nothing in Barack Obama's life, that we know of, which would lead us to believe that he has any true experience with that American individualism. In contrast, his whole life seems to be nothing but indoctrination in the ills and shortcomings of individualism, in contrast with the virtues of the collective good. As we have pointed out many times, this is the distinction between the Russian Revolution and Ayn Rand in redux.

I contend that the 1960s were the zenith of American exceptionalism and I plan on spending the rest of this article demonstrating that reality. That is not to say that providing a social safety net to some or all of the country's citizens is not a worthwhile goal. However it was just that the political elitist class and also the American public, who were never willing to personally put any skin in the game to achieve these goals. Neither were they willing to really pay for either the military expenditures or the social transfer payments.

The metaphor is now popular about "kicking the can down the road." This half-century of kicking and the road has now come to a cliff. A financial bridge to nowhere or walking off the cliff are not viable solutions. Still there are those stuck in the Industrial Revolution days singing, "Sunshine, lollipops, and rainbows will soon be back." Just like the President, they believe in the power of word-faith radical progressivism.

We have called those who were born from a century ago until such time they would be old enough to participate in World War II: "The Greatest Generation." It was this generation that

made America great, because like no other, from their birth until they finally reached adult maturity in the 1960s, they had nothing but skin in the game.

Warren Buffet, who gave us this "skin in the game quotation," was not a member of the Greatest Generation, but being born in 1930, he was just old enough to understand the deep commitment of these men and women and take their lessons to heart.

We the Baby Boomers, took the prosperity of the fruits of the Greatest Generation as a given, and we have squandered their heritage and their legacy. To be honest it wasn't all our fault, because both of my parents in various ways, times, and places, sometimes gave me some slack because they didn't want me to go through what they had to go through growing up.

On my dad's side of the family both his older brother and he were 4-F for the draft in World War II. They both had serious heart murmurs, even though they both played football in college. It was thought the cause of the murmurs was rheumatic fever they had as children, but with the discovery of my congenital heart valve defect eight years ago, that opens another door, but we need not go there.

On my mom's side of the family all three sons and one son-in-law saw significant war action. The oldest son saw the most action in Italy and in the Pacific; he ended up a drunk and died before his time. How much of that might have been related to what we now define as post-traumatic stress disorder we will never truly know.

What we do know is this uncle, along with a soon to be son-in-law needed time basically clearing land and draining wetlands to put their life back in some type of acceptable social order. My mom's youngest brother was one of the original liberators of the Dachau concentration camp. I tried to get him to talk about that experience but he was definitely unwilling to go there again. Later on he stated that Dachau is a partition in his mind that he has chosen to keep sealed in this life.

When we talk of the Greatest Generation it is almost exclusively about the war sacrifice of the soldiers who saved the world for democracy by defeating the Nazis and the Japanese. This however neglects the contribution of the rest of the generation which had their lives committed to skin in the game, because they had no choice, both men and women. For those models

I will describe two excellent examples of that time, my father and mother.

Before I begin however I must comment that the human personality is such, that things we don't want to talk about are generally what we are either unable or unwilling to show to others; they are our individually perceived flaws in either our character or personality traits. The general response when these difficult situations are encountered is that we have a standard answer, often offered in false prideful arrogance, and if pushed beyond that point the subject is politely or impolitely changed.

This response is what routinely happens with the President of the United States when questioned about the details of the first forty years of his life. Yet in the spin of Donald Trump, we are to believe that even Obama's first book; "Dreams From My Father" had a ghostwriter, perhaps Bill Ayers.

My mother was not exempt from this denial and switch plan either. When I asked about her life during the Great Depression, her response was, "I remember all I ever got for Christmas was an orange. The younger kids got the presents, because they always needed something. That is why I always want you to have lots of presents."

When I was a child she never really got the fact that as a kid and later as an adult I have always been much more into quality than quantity. Now I am beginning to understand that my focus was probably true because everything else in my life was so secure, I had the gift to look at things in a different light than she had in her childhood.

My mother was born in 1919. In 1929 when she was just ten years old, with four younger siblings, the world that she trusted, fell into the Great Depression. At that time the family lived in Summit Valley along the Addy – Gifford Road, which ran over the mountains between the Colville Valley and the Columbia River. It was called Summit Valley because it was near the summit.

At about 2800 feet, in the best of times that alone would mean a much shorter growing season compared with most of the surrounding lower elevations. I can only remember one trip to the place when I was very young. The house was unpainted and seemed even then dark and cold. I got to briefly ride an old horse named Duke. There

is a photo of me sitting on Duke, so that part is true.

The place was about thirteen miles to Addy, about twenty to Chewelah, and about twenty-five to Colville. In the language still appropriate to today, it was best described as a stump ranch, where the only thing that grew and prospered well were tree stumps.

My mother and her youngest sister both stayed in Chewelah during their high school days. We were always told that the reason for this was they took care of someone and that room allowed them to be in town to socialize and be with their friends.

Because of the current economic conditions within rural America, the statement was probably factually true, but when my mom stayed in town, there were probably at least six extra servings of some type of food available to the rest of the family. So taking care of some old person in Chewelah, with a warm and cozy room to yourself, having virtually all the food you wanted, looks today as more of a God send — and we need not talk about the hardships, because that would mean that you had more skin in the game than you would like.

What is surely true is once the war began the boys went off to war. My mom's younger sister took over my mother's family position in Chewelah and the parents stayed in Summit Valley until after the war was over. They then too moved to Chewelah and never again ventured into that very trying skin in the game opportunity.

My dad was born in 1912 so he graduated from high school just as the Great Depression was starting. About all he ever talked specifically about that time was both he and his brother worked for the Civilian Conservation Corps, which meant that their dad was out of work during that time. My dad and his brother also worked their way through college during the depression; the first of the Bannons to ever get so educated.

My mother was intelligent and quite gifted in many ways. In rural America, progressivism has never provided any opportunity for gifted women to do anything but be a mother and work at odd jobs, meaning strange, but she did her best. To this day I say she never had the opportunity to go to college, but she was granted an honorary PhD in Worry. I believe part of that worry stemmed from the understanding of the nature of this life, knowing there were some things

you could do to make a difference, but lacking any tangible resources to even begin that adventure.

My dad was brawny enough that none of his students ever gave him any lip; the real tuff guys always had his respect. He was my elementary school principal for eight years when we lived in Reardan and the four high school years at Kettle Falls. As I grew and learned of his truly amazing people skills he told me that he had only one management principle and that was to always support your staff even when they were wrong.

What I knew, but never was able to put into proper perspective until quite recently, was that support really included the whole student body of the school. While I knew of some heated debates he had with some of the teachers and staff, probably the major reason he moved seven times during his thirty-three year education career had more to do with lousy parents who really were not parents in the truest sense. Fighting outside, essentially small town political battles, was not part of his skin in the game plan.

Even though he died in 1974 I still know a large number of former students that say, "Your dad did more for me than I ever got from my dad." They then launch into personal stories of the support they were given when my dad reached out to them in their time of need, and there was no help coming from the home or other support mechanisms.

While he never discussed this as such, he inherently realized that there is a significant difference between power and authority. Authority comes from the top down; power comes from the bottom up. This is nothing less than the common imperative application of the Christian indicative of the Gospel.

That is also the reason the Greatest Generation won World War II in a little under four years. They all had skin in the game for their whole lives, but it wasn't until the 1960s until they finally achieved a prosperous and secure United States of America.

The legacy they attempted to pass on to the Baby Boomers, who began to come of age during that decade was that, "We put our skin in the game to achieve a future so that you would not have to go through what we went through."

It has taken the Baby Boomers almost a half a century to mortgage this destiny with a search for personal peace and affluence, through totally material kitsch, fiat money, fiat social programs, and a hopeful dream of continual sunshine, lollipops and rainbows.

Now the bills are truly becoming due, both the material Collective Elitists and their fellow Laissez Faire Scoundrels are still living an atheistic worldview adapted from the Russian Revolution.

The first part of a three-part movie rendition of libertarian Ayn Rand's "Atlas Shrugged" opened last Friday, our normal tax day. Ayn Rand was an atheist you know. In vivid contrast the United States of America was as secular republic formed upon the natural laws and common grace of the God of the Hebrew and the Christian Bible.

That truly means that Atlas can shrug, dance around the May Pole, huff and puff about the virtues of capitalism based on greed, but before you cash in what remains of your conscience and morality you should read, "Was Ayn Rand Right?" and article from the Christian Research Journal, and also found under our Resources Tab.

Keeping within my desire to eat no more worms and historic Christian tradition — Mahatma Gandhi was also a Hindu.

Following this brief tribute to the Greatest Generation, who through their personal struggles and their skin in the game, created the United States of America as the standard of human potentiality, next week we begin to see how we slowly wantonly brought about the decay of their inherited cultural stasis. We accomplished the grand entropy by doing more than we could afford, without the thought of personal and cultural responsibility, or an even more disgusting term: sacrifice.

All three qualities made up the essence of skin in the game of the Greatest Generation!