



“Easy Eddie” and “Butch”

Chicago is a great city. Built on the shore of Lake Michigan, it has incredible shopping on the “Magnificent Mile”, world-class restaurants famous for their steaks, and that Midwestern attitude of warmth and hospitality. For a huge city it is remarkably clean and a fun place to visit, with all the major sports franchises – the signature ones being Michael Jordan and the six-time world champion Chicago Bulls, former Clemson star Refrigerator Perry, and the NFL World Champion “Da Bears.” And don’t forget the defending champion White Sox and Cubs.

Chicago has not always been so nice.

At one time Chicago was a rough-and-tumble tough place, dangerous by any standards with organized crime and Al Capone calling the shots, forging a national reputation for ruthless corruption.

This is a tale of two people whose lives paralleled, and how one was sucked into the murky waters of organized crime while the other became a national hero. With Memorial Day just past there might be an interesting lesson of leadership intertwined.

One of our subjects was Eddie, who moved from St. Louis to Chicago. He was a tremendous father who did anything and everything for his children. He was an attorney, made a lot of money, lived in a huge house with a grand lifestyle. The bad news is that he gained all this as Al Capone’s attorney and partner in crime. He was extremely smart, well-connected and used his intellect and contacts to keep one of the most notorious criminals of his day out of jail.

The other subject of this tale, Butch, was born in 1913. He was a good student who grew up in Chicago, attended the best schools and had aspirations of attending the Naval Academy. Butch finally got an appointment and graduated from Annapolis in 1937. He then proceeded to flight school and was flying fighters in San Diego, CA. He was happily married to a beautiful young woman and had an infant daughter. The day after Pearl Harbor (December 8, 1941), the 28-year-old lieutenant was sent to fly in one of the most dangerous combat zones in history: the South Pacific.

About this time, Eddie was having second thoughts about his association with Al Capone. The Feds were getting close and Eddie was getting nervous. He knew that if Al Capone went down, he might go down with him. Eddie conspired with the Feds, turned informant and was the primary reason Al Capone went to prison for 11 years, nine of which were in Alcatraz.

On the other hand, Butch was flying off the USS Lexington. One day as he was returning to the ship in his single engine Grumman Hellcat fighter near the Gilbert Islands, he spotted nine Japanese bombers heading towards his carrier. His wingman’s gun jammed, leaving him as the only line of defense for 2,000 men on the Lexington, a virtual sitting duck for the Japanese. Alone, he flew into the bombers, shooting them down one at a time. He got five confirmed kills, and three more were killed by other pilots who arrived late to the scene. The last plane was never seen again.

Butch was designated as the U.S. Navy’s “First Ace” of World War II. President Roosevelt said his performance was “one of the most daring, if not the most daring single action in the history of combat

aviation.” Butch was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

In 1939 Easy Eddie was driving on Ogden Street. Near the intersection of Ogden and Rockwell a car pulled up and opened fire. Multiple shotgun slugs killed him instantly. The killers were never found. It is commonly thought this was payback on orders from Al Capone. In Eddie’s pocket was a poem that 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.*

Also found in his pocket were a rosary, crucifix, and religious medallion. Go figure!

In 1943 on a night fighter mission near Tarawa, Butch was shot down, his body was never recovered. In 1949, over 200,000 Chicagoans turned out for the renaming of the airport from Orchard Depot, as it was then known, to O’Hare International Airport in memory of Navy Lt. Cmdr. Edward Henry “Butch” O’Hare.

The Dad who raised Butch O’Hare, who provided him with a great education, who infused in him a sense of unparalleled morality and patriotism, who was the man who loved his family above all else, was “Easy Eddie” Edward J. O’Hare, informant, partner of Al Capone, and big-time mob member.

The Leadership Challenge

- Do we as parents take too much credit for our children’s successes and too much blame for their shortcomings?
- How much influence do we really have over our children’s outcome?
- Is it ever too late to go back and undo some of the things we did as a parent?
- If you could go back and do one thing over for your children, what would it be?
- Do we get “points” for doing a little better job with our grandchildren?
- How do you think Easy Eddie justified leading two lives?
- Are we totally consistent in our values at work vs. home? If not, why not?

I encourage your response to these thoughts. farlgroup@aol.com

Have a great day!

Please forward this on or send us the e-mail addresses of co-workers, friends or family members who might enjoy a monthly leadership thought.