

Does “That” America Remain?

I recently attended a junior college screening of a newly released music video, “Never Surrender-Never Forget” which recalls World War II America against the backdrop of one of that era’s most beautiful songs and the mythical context of a living Winston Churchill reflecting on the U.S., now versus then. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kUpUGmnLSyw&feature=channeltonideaf>) Viewer emotions ranged from tearful epiphany to perplex.

Reminiscent of Dr. O’Hanlon’s peer pressured eight year old daughter Virginia questioning the New York Sun in 1897 about Santa Claus, two twenty-somethings sincerely asked the video’s producer; “Is there really “that” America anymore?”

In responding to Virginia, Francis Pharcellus Church, a former American Civil War correspondent who witnessed bloody trauma and divisive transformative national change, rose above the seeming simplicity of an innocent girl’s puzzlement. Famously avoiding mediocrity in his answer he illuminated for the ages the rich heart and hearth warming issues at the question’s core as he explained, “Yes Virginia, there is a Santa Claus”

This is the gist of what the music video producer told his two young audience members a week ago.

Yes, there is still an America and it is exceptional in ways all nations could and should be. America can still conduct symphonies of the sweetest strains where the minds of free men in irrepressible rhythms pulse towards remarkable invention and productivity, assured of the fruits of their labors.

America is still the republic which can, through competition, private ownership and free enterprise, incubate magnificent technologies if she remains vigilant to avoid her addiction to them. America will remain the magnificent opus of founding fathers inspired by a heavenly conductor as long as she is careful to never enfeeble her young through easily gained entitlement or entrap and ensnare her electorate through regulations and rules gone awry.

Yes, with all her missteps and worldly disappointments, America is still dedicated to the notion that this is a land of laws and limits the governed place upon their government; demanding service before self, integrity and excellence from those in public office.

America is at war again. Assaulted by terrorists from without and draconian transformation from within, she may lose her way. Her debt is staggering and she grows fat in her belly and leaner in her liberties and learning. She must, as

Thomas Jefferson said, “regulate (her) own pursuits of industry and improvement not taking from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned”

Yes, America remains as long as her virtue comes from her governed who, as George Washington said, “In their love of liberty, their habits of industry and their practice of morality will find the stronghold of national and individual happiness.”

Yes, America remains as long as, “We exalt the courage of our children and encourage their contempt for meanness and abhorrence of injustice and inhumanity” and, as John Adams continued, “... (Educate and instruct)... (Her) children ...in the principles of freedom”

Franklin assured us there would be an America as long as, “its people never surrender essential liberty to purchase temporary safety as in doing so... (They) deserve neither.” Lincoln opined America remains as long as governments do not ...”persist in the delusion that some permanent safe solution for the inequities of the present lie in governments doing for (people) what (people) could and should do for themselves”

Concluding, the music video producer suggested that in this Christmas season of promise and birth amidst all the noise and haste, the days of “that America” are as numbered as votes cast by an engaged informed electorate and her fall or rise will be measured by each millimeter of rule placed in the hands of the government vs. the governed.

Is there “that America”? Yes, as long as there are stars of every stripe willing to work to keep it so.

*Kevin Ryan is a retired Colonel,
physician, musician and author who
lives in Fairfield. Reach him at
ryan_k@comcast.net.*