

EDITORIAL & COMMENTARY



Black-crowned night heron in flight.

SCOTT LONGFIELD

IT'S YOUR TURN

Commentary

Churchill as a Role Model

By Sean Spurlock

With Father's Day recently past, fragments of warm TV commercials and Internet ads displaying present and involved fathers are still in mind. While some children do have these Hallmark dads, many kids feel the neglect and absence of their fathers. They might be surprised to find out that they have something in common with Sir Winston Churchill.

In reality, the past few decades have damaged the idea of fatherhood more than ever before. Many kids are, in effect, raising themselves and lack important figures modeling life to them. According to the U.S. Census Bureau and the National Fatherhood Initiative, one of every three children is raised without their father. This "fatherhood crisis" has left millions of children without reliable role models. Hopefully, the lesson of Winston Churchill's role model can inspire them to find a model or mentor of their own.

Randolph Churchill, Winston's father, was a top government official and a member of British high society. While alive, he neglected and was disappointed in Winston. Admittedly, Winston was a troubled child who struggled in school, but Randolph was uninvolved and often spoke harshly of his son. In 1893, on his third try, Winston finally passed the Royal Military College at Sandhurst entrance exam. According to the Churchill Centre, Randolph wrote Winston a letter saying that Winston was likely to "become a mere social wastrel, one of the hundreds of the public school failures, and you will degenerate into a shabby unhappy and futile existence." He included, "I no longer attach the slightest weight to anything you say about your own acquirements and exploits."

This is certainly not the type of letter history would expect the renowned British statesman to receive from his father.

According to William Manchester's "The Last Lion," Winston would later tell his son, who was home from school on holiday, "I have talked to you

more in this holiday than my father talked to me in his whole life."

Lord Randolph never further developed a relationship with his son and died at the age of 45. One of Winston's greatest regrets was that he never enjoyed a close relationship with his father. Winston thus found a strong role model in someone other than his father.

Young Winston was raised hearing of the exploits, greatness, and lore of his conquering forefather, one of England's greatest heroes, John Churchill. The Churchill line traced back 15 generations to John, who was a famed general and politician. Historians know him for his military exploits and because he never lost a battle. John Churchill's mightiest victory came in the strategic Battle of Blenheim in the War of Spanish Succession. The battle, which took place in Germany in 1704, was important because it repelled one of the greatest dangers yet faced by the Europeans, the vast and powerful armies of Louis XIV of France.

Louis, the "Sun King," had gained control of Spain, adding tremendous power to his empire. Britain, Belgium, Holland, and the Hapsburg Empire refused to allow this seismic shift in the balance of power. Louis' armies were highly successful at the outset of the war, and his final assault was to be on Bavaria, both to crush her and to convince the remaining German princes to join the French forces, which would ensure European domination for Louis.

John Churchill rode out from Flanders, marching his army more than 400 miles to the Danube, where he confronted the armies of Louis XIV. He ordered an unexpected attack and overwhelmed the superior French forces, in the process capturing the French commander and effectively destroying their entire army. Churchill saved the war and put an end to Louis' dreams of total European dominance.

According to Manchester in "The Last Lion," historians consider the victory at Blenheim to be one of the world's 10 most decisive battles.

Much like John, Winston would resolutely confront a daunting and superior continental European force and emerge the hero. After the Battle of Blenheim, Louis

XIV of France continued to fight but he never regained his power. After the Battle of Britain, Hitler continued to wage war, but once the lonely British Isles led by Winston had withstood the incessant bombing of "The Blitz," Hitler's dreams of domination wilted. Thanks to John Churchill's strategy in the early 1700s, Britain was preserved, and thanks to Winston Churchill's fighting spirit and soaring oratory, the nation was again saved in the 1940s.

Winston, who wrote a biography of John entitled "Marlborough: His Life and Times," often compared himself to the general, as a great man with a destiny to fulfill, which he did.

According to The Churchill Centre, Winston was a world-class polo player, a Member of Parliament for nearly 60 years, painted more than 500 canvases, wrote 44 books, helped develop the Royal Air Force, first implemented the tank in World War I, was president of the Board of Trade (1908-1910), the Home Secretary (1910-1911), the Minister of Munitions (1917-1919), the Secretary of State for War and Air (1919-1921), the Colonial Secretary (1921-1922), the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1924-1929), twice the First Lord of the Admiralty (1911-1915, 1939-1940), twice Prime Minister (1940-1945, 1951-1955) and he saved Western Civilization in the meantime.

Churchill was a rescuer of England and perhaps all of Western civilization. His moral and physical courage inspired an entire people to defy a dictator and in so doing, he changed the course of the entire world.

Churchill's accomplishments show that someone who was neglected and told by his father that he would be a failure and a waste was able to reach heights unfathomable. Winston's ability to find inspiration from John Churchill should be a model for children who, like Winston, don't have fathers as mentors or role models.

Winston is both the worthiest of role models and a model of someone who was able to find role models when his own father didn't act as one.

Sean Spurlock is a recent graduate of The King's College in New York City where he earned a degree in politics, philosophy and economics.

Do Your Part for National Clean Beaches Week

By Michele S. Byers

It's no coincidence that National Clean Beaches Week, July 1-7, falls during the first big vacation week of summer, when thousands of families are putting their toes in the sand and ocean.

As visitors flock to New Jersey's 127 miles of coastline, they'll find safe, clean beaches – and some of the nation's cleanest waters.

A new report by the Natural Resources Defense Council shows that New Jersey ranked third out of 30 coastal states in beach water quality in 2013, as measured by the amount of bacteria found in water samples. The report, called Testing the Waters, also named seven New Jersey beaches to its list of 35 American clean water "Superstars!"

New Jersey's sands are in great shape, thanks in part to legions of beach-loving volunteers.

Twice a year – in the spring and fall – the nonprofit Clean Ocean Action coordinates massive "Beach Sweeps" up and down the coast. Volunteers ranging from young children to senior citizens pick up thousands of pieces of litter and debris washed ashore by the sea, blown in by the wind or carelessly dropped

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by visitors.

In 2013, more than 325,000 pieces of litter were collected in the beach sweeps. Not surprisingly, the majority was plastics of various types.

Clean Ocean Action's "Dirty Dozen" list of worst offenders includes broken bits of plastic, bottle caps and lids, cigarette filters, food and candy wrappers, plastic straws and stirrers, foam pieces, lumber, plastic shopping bags, glass pieces, glass beverage bottles and cigar tips.

This stuff is not only ugly to look at, but the plastics can be lethal to fish, birds, dolphins, turtles, whales and other creatures living in and near the sea. Plastics don't biodegrade; they just break into smaller bits that can be mistaken for food – with tragic consequences.

Many of the items picked up in the 2013 sweeps may be attributable to Super Storm Sandy, which smashed apart hundreds of coastal homes and dispersed their contents far and wide. Broken furniture, kitchen appliances, windowpanes and construction materials all ended up on the beaches and in the water.

Kudos to Clean Ocean Action and the volunteers who sweep the beaches each spring and fall so the rest of us can enjoy clean sand and water all summer!

You can help our beaches and waters – and you don't have to wait for a scheduled sweep! Here are some simple things you can do:

- Leave only footsteps on the beach. If you carry it in, carry it back out with you.
- Don't use the beach as an ashtray. Never leave cigarette butts in the sand; they don't biodegrade and are toxic to marine animals.
- Teach your children (or other young people in your life) well. Walk along the beach with a bucket and pick up litter. It's a great lesson.
- If you're a fisherman, be sure to get rid of broken fishing line safely. Don't leave it where it can blow away and entangle wildlife.
- Use public restrooms to keep ocean and bay water sanitary.
- On or off the beach, do your part to reduce stormwater runoff pollution. Pick up pet wastes and don't over-fertilize your lawns and gardens. Pollutants washed by rain into local streams will eventually find their way to the ocean.
- If you spot anything unusual in the water – like an oil or garbage slick, red tide, fish kill, or entangled or injured animal – report it to lifeguards, beach patrols or police.
- Support land preservation efforts in watersheds that flow into the ocean and bays. Protected river and stream corridors mean cleaner ocean water!

To find out more about water quality at New Jersey's beaches – and the list of Superstar beaches – check out the "Testing the Waters" report at www.nrdc.org/water/oceans/tw/nj.asp. To learn more about Clean Ocean Action's beach sweeps, go to www.cleanoceanaction.org.

And for information about preserving New Jersey's land and natural resources, visit the New Jersey Conservation Foundation website at www.njconservation.org or contact me at info@njconservation.org.

Michele S. Byers is the executive director of the New Jersey Conservation Foundation.



COURTESY DORN'S CLASSIC IMAGES

Two River Moment

Summer is a great time for patriotic parades. This float from a 1940 parade on Broad Street, Red Bank, fits the bill. Happy Fourth of July!