



The President's Perspective



The Land of Opportunity

On this Independence Day, I trust that you are taking some quality time to reflect on all that we have as Americans. Truly, this is the "land of opportunity." Two brief incidents, one older, one current, will help illustrate just how blessed we are to live in this nation.

Catalin Dima immigrated to America in 1996. A native of Romania, Catalin bought into the whole package of all that America is and has to offer. He chose to live in Queens, New York, marry, father three children, and become a big rig truck driver. After becoming a legal resident in 2001, he joined the Army Reserve in response to the September 11 attacks. "I tried talking him out of it, because I was afraid, but there was no talking him out of it," says his wife Florika Dima. "He just had to do it." While deployed in Iraq last October, Dima, 36, took the oath of allegiance administered by Eduardo Aguirre Jr. the outgoing head of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. In a fit of joy, he shouted "USA, USA," as he left the ceremony. Six weeks later, the day he was promoted to sergeant, he was killed in a mortar attack near Baghdad. Aguirre says, "he died as he would have liked to have died: a U.S. citizen and an officer in the U.S. Army. Dima got a START for him and his family, as so many have down through the years, here in America. Countless thousands of immigrants have had the same opportunity as Dima because the U.S. is, indeed, the "land of opportunity." The sad thing is, many times immigrants appreciate this country more than we who were born here.

Eddie O'Hare was involved with the Chicago crime scene, overseeing the horse track operations for Al Capone. The only thing Eddie loved more than the affluent lifestyle, that being a Capone employee afforded him, was his son Butch. Because he desired a better life for his son, he turned states evidence, worked a deal with the FBI, and became an informant. Within weeks of providing information on Capone, Eddie was gunned down on the streets of Chicago, an obvious retaliation for his actions. The only thing Eddie had asked for, in return for his information and his life, was that his son, Butch, be allowed to attend the United States Military Academy at West Point. True to their promise, the authorities allowed Butch to enter West Point. All they would do is get him in. From there, he would have to make it own his own. Seizing his opportunity for a SECOND CHANCE, a chance at success that his dad never had, Butch O'Hare graduated with honors. Upon graduation, he entered WWII, becoming a fighter ace and shooting down at least five enemy aircraft while defending the USS Lexington. For his heroic acts, he was awarded the Bronze Star. Years later, O'Hare International Airport in Chicago was named after their favorite son, Butch, the son of a mobster.

Whether it's the opportunity for a START, or the opportunity for a SECOND CHANCE, the United States of America is a country unprecedented in opportunity. Maybe the next time you hear a "talking head" criticizing this great nation, or a neighbor bemoaning the fact that we are currently in a war, realize that "opportunity" is the offspring of freedom and that freedom always has a price tag. Those who defend us, both here and abroad, are paying the bill for us to enjoy the wonderful life we have. While not perfect, the good Ole USA is the best nation under God's blue sky, and she is DEFINITELY worth defending.

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