

## TWO TRIPS

02-10-2014 By Harry Zirkelbach

For every person born, life has been unique, a journey of unexpected moments, no signposts or road map, begun naked, dumb, alone, dependent on loving hands.

Then, adding days, being clothed, the history of mankind,  
destined to be born and die alone.

No matter the triviality of life, the writer can pick and choose incidents seemingly humdrum, burnish with careful words, paint any moment as breathtaking to those reliving that fragment, have the reader wishing they had been alongside the story teller. Each week, those in WVG Writing Group are challenged to make those in this room feel that they had stood beside the narrator, revel in that yesterday moment.

Consider these two individuals. You may remember this one.

He was U.S. Navy Lieutenant Commander Edward (Butch) O'Hare. We follow him as a fighter pilot assigned to the aircraft Carrier Lexington in the South Pacific. On a February 20 1942 mission west of Rabaul, the Lexington was continuously attacked by land based Japanese bombers, beginning at 10:45. Undamaged by waves of bomber attacks, at 16:49 Lexington's radar detected another "V" formation 12 miles out. O'Hare and wingman Dufiho, the only F3F pilots remaining on the carrier, were launched to intervene. They would arrive 3,000 feet above the attacking 8 Betty Bombers. In the attack, Dufiho's guns jammed, and only O'Hare fired on the attackers. He was credited with destroying five of the Bombers, the others dispersing, causing no damage to the Lexington.

LCDR O'Hare was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor by President Roosevelt, the first Navy Aviator so honored.

Nine months later, the night of November 26, 1943 Japanese Betty Bombers were attacking a Navy Task Force on the Marianas Islands. O'Hare led the defenders, was shot down. No trace of the aircraft or O'Hare's body was found.  
He was 29 years old.

When you visit Chicago's O'Hare Airport, dedicated by President Kennedy in 1963, look for the young "Butch" O'Hare's statue, the Medal of Honor, located between terminal 1 and 2.

The other individual was known as Easy Eddie, Al Capone's lawyer. Capone, seemingly untouchable for antics in murder, bootlegging, prostitution, was kept out

of jail, somewhat because Easy Eddie's skillful maneuvering. For these services Capone provided Easy Eddie with the good life of the Chicago mob.

Eddie had a son he loved, withheld nothing from him, even teaching him right from wrong. From this concern for his son, Easy Eddie later chose to go to the authorities, tell the truth about "Scarface" Capone. And so he did testify. He helped provide information that sent Capone to prison in 1931, and eventually to Alcatraz.

In the year after Capone's conviction, an unknown gunman shot and killed Easy Eddie on a Chicago Street. He had given his son the greatest gift he had to offer.

These men, dying violently yet honorably, were father and son, Easy Eddie O'Hare the lawyer with a late developing conscience, and his son Edward Henry (Butch) O'Hare, WW II's Naval aviator extraordinary



Edward O'Hare, interviewed at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, March 26, 1942.