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Editor's Notebook

The Lone Ranger's Creed

by Michael KryzaneK



When I was growing up in the 1950s I spent my Saturday mornings watching the Lone Ranger and his trusted Indian sidekick Tonto bring justice and the American way to the wild west. As a young, impressionable boy, I thought that the Lone Ranger with his white hat, his horse Silver and his white handled guns symbolized all that was good and right in the world. The fact that the Lone Ranger hid behind a mask made him a man of mystery, and his daily ride into the sunset to the *William Tell Overture* got my blood pumping. Within thirty minutes the Lone Ranger always got his man. I couldn't wait until next week to see my hero fight the bad guys.

Although the Lone Ranger was an invention of television, Clayton Moore, who portrayed the masked man, was a real life gentleman who believed in the importance of using television heroes to fight for what is good and right. Long after the Lone Ranger went off the air, Clayton Moore continued traveling around the country keeping his hero alive and educating a new generation of young people on the values that the masked man stood for. Clayton Moore called these values the Lone Ranger's creed of conduct. This hero of the old west believed that all men were created equal, that every one of us should use our God-given gifts to the maximum, that government of the people, by the people and for the people was the best creation of man, and that we must give back to the earth what we take from it. These simple nuggets of good and right were brought into the show as a teaching a lesson on Saturday mornings, and of course I absorbed every nugget.

Today a hero like the Lone Ranger would be laughed off the screen by television executives and ignored by young boys as kind of corny. The world is no longer defined as white vs. black, good vs. evil, but is rather filled with every shade of gray. Masked men in white hats fighting to bring bad guys to justice just don't make it anymore as we are bombarded with the tormented, the tainted and the tattooed hero who navigates the moral morass of post-modern society. And unlike Clayton Moore, today's anti-hero has no creed, other than surviving to fight another day with a beautiful blond in tow and millions of dollars in his Swiss bank account. Television heroes don't teach the new

generation of impressionable youths about their ability to make this a better world, or the importance of friendship, or that there are undeniable truths to believe in.

The excuse that is often foisted on us by those who promote the anti-hero is that the 1950s of the Lone Ranger was a much simpler time where people actually thought in terms of absolutes. Those days are gone; so say the new philosophers of nihilism. That may be so but as an old-fashioned kind of guy I ask, what's so out of date with the Lone Ranger's creed of conduct? What's so out of date about friendship, equality, democracy, concern for the planet and belief in fundamental truths? It seems that what we see and hear on television, the movies, video games and music is a complete human and value void. There is no attempt to elevate us to new heights, no celebration of goodness, no attempt to teach about what is right with the world, while condemning what is bad. It's all a mish mash of gray without value and stripped of those old stand bys, faith, hope and charity.

We seem content to live our lives without much of a moral compass. We take pride in being non-judgmental and leaving people to control their own lives. What we do see in the way of a creed is usually some ranting of a fundamentalist whose ideal of morality is fire and brimstone and who has no idea what it is to be human, what it is to live in a free society, and what needs to be done in order to live together in peace and harmony.

Clayton Moore died a few years ago and his creed, the Lone Ranger's creed, is now pretty much forgotten. Sometimes if I am lucky I might catch a rerun of the masked man on one of these oldies cable channels. But I don't have to see the Lone Ranger to know that he influenced my life with some simple truths and some basic human dignity. Thanks masked man. As the Lone Ranger would say as he rode off into the sunset: "Hi Ho Silver Away!"

—Michael KryzaneK is Editor of the Bridgewater Review