

'You Have Become Someone Else'

By David H. Hackworth

COOLANGATTA, Australia—America, what has happened to thee? Once you were morally impeccable and staunchly proud; a model republic with your citizens having unbounded power; a symbol of freedom, the hope of the downtrodden and a shelter for the world's poor and oppressed; one nation under God where free men lived in equality, peace and justice; a country not divided by hate and weakened by your citizens' apathy. Your streets were safe and rivers clean and the sky over you was pure and blue; and your mighty Constitution was a document that protected your citizens and served as a torch that illuminated bigotry and slavery in the world's dark lands.

What happened? Why have thousands of talented Americans left your shores to settle in distant lands? Why have millions of your good conscientious citizens slipped away from you and copped out in that apathetic twilight land of the Silent Majority? Why have so many of your precious youth lost faith in you and become disenchanting nomads?

Is it because you have become someone else? Is it because you have strayed from the path that your founders hacked with bare hands out of granite? Is it because you no longer have a purpose? Is it because you are now so powerful you have little respect for those lands less strong? Is it because you have become a bully who flexes his military muscles or jingles his purse at the nations that will not fall in line with your selfish programs? Is it because bumbling bureaucracies manage you rather than your citizens govern you? Is it because you have placed your foreign policy in hands of intellectuals who talk in riddles about balance of power, high risk U.S. involvement, and Cold War strategy?

America, I love you. I have repeatedly risked my life fighting your battles. I carry the heavy burden of being responsible for the death of many of your youth lost during the last two decades of sorrowful adventures. I once believed that you were all the good things inscribed in marble in your capital. But I no longer have that unrequited faith. I am one of your disillusioned sons. I believe you



Marshall Arisman

have misplaced the virtues that made you a symbol of freedom.

I am ashamed of your military adventures. I am disgusted by your support of foreign dictators who oppress their people. I am disillusioned by your willingness to compromise your principles for the sake of expediency. I am filled with despair that you conducted the most massive bombing in world history on a small Asian nation at Christmas time as part of an insane war that ripped you asunder.

Liberty and freedom no longer seem part of you. Electronic snooping devices invade your homes. Your journalists are imprisoned for refusing to divulge their sources. A major political headquarters is ransacked and bugged by its opposition with hardly a murmur from your citizens. Sham trials have occurred to silence your dissenters and make a mockery out of your judicial system. Your citizens who loudly disagree with your ventures are maligned by your cunning character assassins, incarcerated on trumped-up charges, and cruelly set upon by your governmental agencies.

Your citizens seem to have lost much of their personal liberty and privacy.

Yes, America, you have had great leaders to guide you out of the wilderness. Men whose wisdom, vision, courage and humility made you once the richest, most powerful and respected nation in the world. But the difference between today and yesterday is that those leaders who made you great also carefully listened to your citizens and then you had a government of the people, by the people and for the people. Leaders were selected because of their ability and because they could be trusted to follow the will of the people.

God bless you, America, I hope that you can get it all together so you will again be known as the land of the free and the home of the brave. So goodbye, America. I have followed the westward quest of my ancestors who many years ago left the British Isles in search of liberty, justice and freedom. I have found these qualities alive in Australia, a young vigorous country that holds these principles

high and is very much like you were, America, before you shrugged.

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