

*Photo courtesy of MacDonald Hays*

# THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF ROBERT WELCH

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■ ROBERT WELCH was fond of saying that all that would be needed to rescue the Republic and totally defeat Communism would be somehow to get people to tell the truth. The deluge of distortions, misrepresentations, and outright falsehoods concerning the nature and goals of The John Birch Society and the character and beliefs of its founder, the late

Robert Welch, suggested why he thought so.

By pursuing the truth about Communism and its secret allies, Mr. Welch stepped too often on the toes of the powerful to be ignored. As a result, Robert Welch became one of the most maligned individuals in American history. The vast disparity between the man and the image con-

**Robert Welch never slowed his frenetic pace. His long working hours and dedication to achieving his goal were major factors in his leadership of the Society. Not a spellbinding speaker, he nevertheless captivated audiences around the country with a quiet power rooted in sincerity and integrity and courage.**

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cocted by his enemies provides a remarkable study on the extent of contemporary ideological prejudice and the power of the magnified lie.

While the original source of the lies about Robert Welch was the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and its directors, most of his attackers were merely uninformed people misled by the cooperating "Liberal" media.

Of course, Mr. Welch's many friends saw him in a different light. The late E. Merrill Root, who knew him well, wrote of Robert Welch's character in the following terms: "There does not at first seem to be a flair, a personal magnetism, a something that reaches out and grasps you. It is a quiet power. It affirms and insists, through convictions, through an amazing knowledge, through a goodness and integrity that seem almost to be tangible. It is not oratory. He is not a spell-binder. He writes clearly, often brilliantly or eloquently; he writes better than he speaks. Yet, somehow, something fundamental in the mind and the man, a grasp of things as they are, a sincerity and integrity flow out of him and into his audience. His power lies in his goodness and his truth. I have felt this. I have seen this, and I bear sober witness to it.

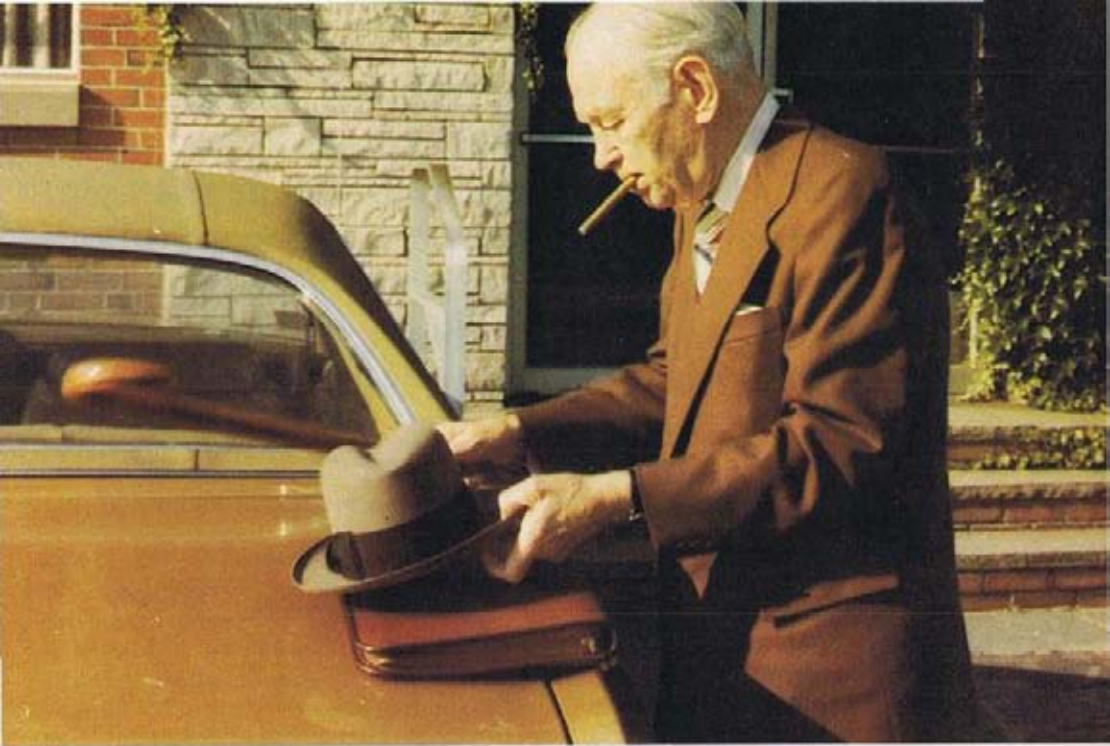
"And no one can know him, under

the weight of the world and the stress of his enemies, without reverence of his courage. Strong, I would say — stubborn, his enemies might say — in his conviction, his knowledge, his passionate desire to serve and save his country, he dares the cost and faces the danger fearlessly."

What is the truth about Robert Welch? That question cannot be answered without reviewing the man's background in search of those qualities of character which contributed to his leadership.

We begin this survey by examining young Robert's early education in North Carolina. The *Los Angeles Times*, in its January 8, 1985, obituary, stated that Robert Welch was "not particularly well-educated in rural schools." That is ludicrous. He was in fact a product of home schooling by his mother. And to conclude from the tone of the *Times* piece that young Robert was an uneducated hick would miss the mark by a light year. For Lina Welch did a much better job of educating her son than did public schools even then. Welch biographer G. Edward Griffin describes this early learning and how Robert Welch's mother encouraged his abilities in mathematics, classical languages, and history. Griffin writes of a typical afternoon in the life of five-year-old Robert Welch:





**Robert Welch was a brilliant, warm, witty, and charming man of great learning and noble character. His considerable duties at the helm of the Society did not prevent him from enjoying a good conversation with friends, taking the time to encourage young Conservatives, or pursuing serious historical scholarship.**

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"... His mother accompanied him to the huge davenport-like frame swing on the south porch of the house, had him sit down comfortably beside her, and commenced his arithmetic lesson for the day. Next, opening another and slightly larger book, she began then and there to introduce him to the fascinating realm and undeviating logic of algebra. And already the world had become a very happy and interesting place again.

"Mrs. Welch, the former Lina Verona James, had been a teacher in a small country school near Edenton, North Carolina. She was a graduate of Murfreesboro College and also of North Carolina Normal, now known as the Woman's College of the Greater University of North Carolina. She firmly believed that five years of age was not a bit too young to learn such basic subjects.

"But Robert's response to this early training must have amazed even her. Reading lessons began at the age of two, and before his third birthday he was reading children's books entirely on his own. He started math shortly afterward and found it very much to his liking. He knew his multiplication tables by the time he was four. He had become proficient in elementary algebra at the age of six. At seven, he began the study of Latin." (*The Life And Words Of Robert Welch*,

American Media, Thousand Oaks, California, 1975)

Not that he was allowed totally to neglect chores around the farm. Ed Griffin reports: "In later years he did almost every kind of work there was to be found on a farm — at least enough to find out what farm life was supposed to be. For a few days at long intervals over the next several years, he plowed the cotton, tilled the corn, bundled and shocked the wheat, even broke fresh ground walking behind a double team and plow. But his father's farm was large and prosperous. His father early had taken the lead among the farmers of his township in purchasing suitable models of the farm machinery which at that time was being developed so rapidly all over the United States. (Which is why Robert helped to shock wheat only on those rare occasions when the 'binder' was broken down.) There was usually ample hired help which made it possible for Robert, with the careful guidance of his mother, to pursue ideas rather than crops. And pursue he did."

When Robert Welch reached the age of seven his mother decided to send him to the public school near the village of Woodville. This was mainly done in order that the boy might have the experience of being with other children. The seven-year-old prodigy





walked to the one-room school each day, carrying his lunch in a pail. Biographer Griffin says this:

"... The teacher was a Miss Wood, and it was her unenviable task to teach all subjects to all students at all grade levels. Miss Wood, unlike Robert's mother, had never been beyond high school, a high school education being all that was required in those days. So when it came time to teach algebra to Trim Wilson, her one eighteen-year-old pupil, it developed that she knew very little more about the subject than he did. For young Robert, however, it was old hat, and for the next six months seven-year-old Master Welch assumed the task of teaching algebra to both his classmate and his teacher.

"That was the only year Robert attended formal grade school. His mother realized that already he was far ahead of anything he could learn in class, and she resumed her personal tutoring in earnest. Her assignments and standards were, by common measurement, difficult and demanding, but she was determined to challenge this child to the full extent of his amazing intellectual capacity."

At the tender age of seven, Robert Welch read on his own initiative all nine volumes of Ridpath's monumental *History Of The World*. It was from this experience that he developed his life-long appreciation of history as being the result of a series of human choices and purposive actions, a chain of cause-and-effect relationships rather than an accumulation of chance events or metaphysically predestined developments. He learned to look behind surface events for the hidden human motivations and planning and interests which contributed to what happens in the world.

And what were the lessons about the world which young Welch learned

from his reading? For a better understanding of the ideas which helped shape young Robert's thinking, let us examine some of the conclusions drawn by author John Clark Ridpath, LL.D., in the final chapter of the ninth volume of his history, first published in America before the turn of the century. Among other observations, Ridpath wrote:

"The first and most general truth in history is that *men ought to be free*. If happiness is the end of the human race, then freedom is its condition. And this freedom is not to be a kind of half-escape from thralldom and tyranny, but ample and absolute. The emancipation, in order to be emancipation at all, must be complete. To the historian it must ever appear strange that men have been so distrustful of this central principle in the philosophy of human history. It is an astonishing fact that the major part of the energies of mankind have been expended in precisely the opposite way—in the enslavement rather than the liberation of the race." (*History Of The World*, The Jones Brothers Publishing Company, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1907, Volume IX, Page 487)

The struggle of freedom against tyranny was an issue with which Robert Welch was early acquainted. His devotion to the study of history comes into focus when seen through the lens of this fundamental theme. The cause of human liberty would remain a guiding principle for Welch throughout his life; without this passion, he would never have begun this magazine or founded The John Birch Society.

Another of Ridpath's summary observations was this: "One of the greatest enemies of freedom, and therefore of the progress and happiness of our race, is *over-organization*. Mankind has been organized to

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## ROBERT WELCH

death. The social, political, and ecclesiastical forms which have been instituted have become so hard and cold and obdurate that the life, the emotion, the soul within has been well-nigh extinguished." The context of John Clark Ridpath's remarks clearly indicates that it is central planning and especially political direction of human affairs which most repelled him. And he was writing during a period at which we now look back wistfully as among the freest in our nation's history! One can almost hear the mature Robert Welch making his own comparisons and calling for "more individual responsibility" and less control by central institutions.

Perhaps even more significant are these words of warning by Ridpath:

"Closely allied with this overwrought organization of society is the pernicious *theory of paternalism* — that delusive, medieval doctrine, which proposes to effect the social and individual elevation of man by 'protecting,' and therefore subduing, him. The theory is that man is a sort of half-infant, half-imbecile — a hybrid of child and devil — who must be led along and guarded as one would lead and guard a foolish and impertinent barbarian. It is believed and taught that men seek not their own best interests; that they are the natural enemies and destroyers of their own peace; that human energy, when liberated and no longer guided by the factitious machinery of society and the State, either slides rapidly backward into barbarism, or rushes forward only to stumble and fall headlong by its own audacity. Therefore, society must be a good mistress, a garrulous old nurse to her children! She must take care of them; teach

them what to do; lead them by the swaddling bands; coax them into some feeble and well-regulated activity; feed them on her insipid porridge with the antiquated spoons of her superstition. The State must govern and repress. The State must strengthen her apparatus, improve her machine. She must put her subjects down; she must keep them down. She must teach them to be tame and tractable; to go at her will; to rise, to halt, to sit, to sleep, to wake at her bidding; to be humble and meek. And all this with the belief that men so subordinated and put down can be, should be, ought to be, great and happy! They are so well cared for, so happily governed.

"On the contrary, if history has proved — does prove — any one thing, it is this: Man when least governed is greatest. When his heart, his brain, his limbs are unbound, he straightway begins to flourish, to triumph, to be glorious. Then, indeed, he sends up the green and blossoming trees of his ambition. Then, indeed, he flings out both hands to grasp the skyland and the stars. Then, indeed, he feels no longer a need for the mastery of society; no longer a want of some guardian and intermeddling State to inspire and direct his energies. He grows in freedom. His philanthropy expands; his nature rises to a noble stature; he springs forward to grasp the grand substance, the shadow of which he has seen in his dreams. He is happy. He feels himself released from the domination of an artificial scheme which has been used for long ages for the subjection of his fathers and himself. What men want, what they need, what they hunger for, what they will one day have the courage to demand and take, is less organic government — not more; a freer manhood and fewer shackles; a more cordial liberty; a lighter fetter



of form, and a more spontaneous virtue." (Ridpath, Pages 488-489)

Where is the contemporary historian who writes with such force and grace? And note that here, again, was another major theme in the life and writings of Robert Welch; namely, the need for *less government* over our private affairs and market relationships. The proper function of the law and its political agencies of enforcement is *not* to protect men from themselves or their own mistakes, but to protect men from the forceful violations of other men. More than half a century later, Mr. Welch would frequently quote Herbert Spencer as stating: "The ultimate effect of shielding men from the effects of folly is to fill the world with fools." He would also lament that "the increasing quantity of government, in all nations, has constituted the greatest tragedy of the Twentieth Century."

These and other crucial ideas, drawn by a seven-year-old boy from Ridpath at an age when contemporary youth can barely read at all, were the engine that would drive the thinking and efforts of this future activist in the cause of less government and more individual responsibility.

### **A Prodigy And A Problem**

Before looking at Robert Welch's business career and later scholarship, we must note some aspects of his personality during his later schooling and formal training in institutions of higher education. For these are also important to even the barest understanding of the mature Welch.

When Robert was ten years old his mother decided that he was prepared to enter a high school. But the closest was some ten miles away, too far to walk every day. Since it took an hour and a half to make the journey by horse and buggy, young Welch would

have to stay at a local hotel, at least during the week. Another difficulty faced and overcome by Lina Welch was convincing the school authorities to admit one so young. As Griffin relates, "Mr. Simmons, the high school principal, was not at all sure that a child only ten years old could successfully handle the curriculum. But after much insistence from Mrs. Welch, he consented at last to test the child to determine for himself the level of his academic achievement. One can only imagine the gradual change in Mr. Simmons' attitude from one of condescending amusement to that of shocked astonishment as Master Welch recited flawlessly in the fields of mathematics, English, Latin, and history. The result was that young Robert was placed immediately into the third year or junior class of high school, age ten or not!"

After being graduated from high school, Robert entered the University of North Carolina at the age of twelve. He would later claim with typical self-effacing humor: "Partly because I had been admitted to college while entirely too young, and partly because of a natural aptitude for the role, I was probably the most insufferable little squirt that ever tried to associate with his elders."

At first he did well. His freshman year was marked with smooth going and good grades. But, beginning in the second year, adolescence took hold and he began missing classes and neglecting assignments. His grades began to drop. In fact, the rebellious youngster was nearly expelled. In those days all students at the university were required to attend chapel every Sunday. Not only had Robert been cutting classes, but he had been missing chapel without an excuse. If that wasn't horrible enough, he was observed *playing tennis* on Sunday. So obvious a prefer-





At the tender age of seven Robert Welch read on his own initiative all nine volumes of Ridpath's *History Of The World*. After graduation from high school at the age of twelve (l), and the University of North Carolina at sixteen, Robert entered Annapolis (r) where after two years he ranked fourth in a class of nearly one thousand.

ence for tennis over vespers on the Lord's Day was considered indefensible.

One of the diversions which caused Welch to cut classes, when he was not playing tennis or reading French poetry, was the game of chess. His usual opponent was his Latin teacher, Professor Henry. On several occasions, both student and instructor would cut a late-morning class in order to resolve a contest on the chess board. This love of chess, at which he was a brilliant player, lasted all of his life.

Robert had become increasingly bored with the second-year regimen of college and, free spirit that he was, wanted to explore the fascinating aspects of the intellectual world as he became interested in them. It was not that he was lazy — far from it! — but he was driven by intellectual curiosity and an individualism that refused to be smoothly programmed by an academic (or any other kind of) establishment.

This nonconformity sprang not so much from crude stubbornness but

from the Welch intellectual independence, a trait which helped to make him a natural leader. He could not take truth as a dogma announced by guru or priest; knowledge must be acquired from study, experience, and disciplined thinking. He maintained that no area or field should be closed to human inquiry, and he placed nothing and no one above his own judgment. He was, of course, an adolescent.

Then there were the battles young Robert had with some of his professors. This was especially true in his philosophy class. Master Welch's philosophy instructor at North Carolina was Professor Horace Williams, widely respected and frequently praised by students, faculty, and the community as an authentic intellectual. Welch was not impressed. This professor, like so many of today's modish intellectuals, was one who played with words and symbols as if they had no reference to anything real. Truth, in this view, becomes an arbitrary convention — or even a subjective whim. For example, Professor



Williams would ask the class how much were three times three; when the students answered that they were nine, he responded: "Are they, really? Why couldn't we make it two, or seven, or anything else we want?" Then he went on to explain to his puzzled pupils that numbers are merely concepts; they do not represent or stand for anything real or absolute; they exist only in our minds. And since numbers, according to this instructor, are only ideas created by men, we can make them mean anything we want. If man decides that three times three equal two (instead of nine), and if everyone agrees to accept that concept, then three times three do indeed equal two!

Other students, hanging on every brilliant word, sat in stunned reverence. But, in the back of the room, a boy was slouched down behind his desk holding up a notepad on which he had printed in very large letters: H-O-G-W-A-S-H. Whenever he could catch the eye of a classmate near him, Master Welch would hold up his pad. Unfortunately, he held it up just a second too long and caught the unappreciative eye of Professor Williams. Again, the maverick collegian had gotten himself into trouble.

This is a telling story from Welch's university days because it demonstrates that the boy took ideas seriously and had enough courage to stick his neck out for what he knew was correct. He received his lowest grade, barely passing, in that philosophy class, a fact of which he was always proud. In a rational world, the crackpot nominalist professor would have been flunked. For labels do not alter reality. Recalling the incident many years later, Mr. Welch said he wished he could have proved to "that egghead" that, while it is possible to change the *names* of numbers, this does not change the reality or idea.

"What we *call* 'three' multiplied by what we *call* 'three' equals what we *call* 'nine.' You can change the names, but you don't change the reality."

Despite his arguments with his philosophy professor, his tennis, chess, and other private pursuits, Master Welch was graduated from the University of North Carolina at the age of sixteen. In spite of all his infractions and neglect of classes and assignments, he stood in the top third of his graduating class. The year was 1916.

War was declared in April 1917 and Robert Welch entered the U.S. Naval Academy, undoubtedly the only boy who ever went to Annapolis at the age of seventeen with a college degree. There he learned discipline while excelling academically. He became popular with his classmates at the Academy — partly because he was able to tutor some of them in languages and math. He earned the nickname "Savvy," an appellation which stuck to him during his entire stay at Annapolis.

Young Robert was careful this time to avoid breaking the rules. His father had warned him to keep his demerits low. And this fatherly advice was well-heeded, for at the end of his plebe year Midshipman Welch had accumulated only seven demerits, the least of anyone in his class. This was no small feat considering that a plebe could be given demerits for almost any reason.

Within a year the World War had come to a close and, with that, Midshipman Welch was no longer enthusiastic about accepting the fierce discipline of a Navy career. After two years at the Academy, ranking fourth in his class of nearly one thousand of the nation's brightest and best, Robert Welch resigned.

Robert now became involved in writing, especially composing poetry.



Love of poetry remained with him for the rest of his life and served as an outlet for his sensitivity, his creativity, and his humor. At the age of nineteen, he became a columnist for the *Norfolk Ledger Dispatch*, writing "Headline Jingles" — weekly news summaries written in verse. He was also editor and publisher of *The Smile*, which consisted of his own humorous rhyme.

But young Welch was increasingly concerned about financial security and determined to establish a profitable business that would in time afford the leisure to pursue his scholarly interests. In the autumn of 1919 he went to Boston and entered Harvard Law School as a step toward his planned career in business. To help pay his bills, much of his time was taken up in tutoring other students. And he was soon courting a beautiful, musically accomplished, and very bright Wellesley girl named Marian Probert. Robert now found himself, once again, arguing with his professors. Or at least one in particular — Professor Felix Frankfurter, who in Welch's third year at Harvard (1921), was teaching a course in labor law. Frankfurter both then and later made it a policy to identify and recruit students likely to be helpful to those who shared his radical views. Alger Hiss, for instance, served as clerk to Frankfurter when he sat on the Supreme Court. But Professor Frankfurter also had a keen eye for bright students likely to oppose his revolutionary notions.

Felix Frankfurter based all his lectures on the Marxist notion of class conflict — the premise that labor and management belong to two unalterably opposing classes with irreconcilable differences; that these classes are virtually always at war with each other, and that what benefits one is, by and large, detrimental to the

other. No doubt many students were powerfully influenced by this important academic, but there was one young man from North Carolina who recognized H-O-G-W-A-S-H when he heard it. The classes consisted of about three hundred students, but Robert Welch frequently rose to challenge Frankfurter, suggesting another view which his classmates might consider. The Griffin biography reports that "Robert knew enough about history by then to believe the whole theory to be a lie and a fraud; and clearly so in the United States of the 1920's. Citing facts and figures, chapter and verse, he would stand up in the audience and prove that, in 1921, this class concept simply wasn't valid in this country and probably wasn't really true even in Europe. Every single lecture found Robert jumping to his feet for rebuttal against some fallacy in logic or error in premise."

But enough is enough, and by the middle of his third year Robert Welch could stomach Frankfurter no more. He dropped out of his classes and set out as planned, to make his fortune in business.

### **The School Of Experience**

Robert Welch married Marian in the beautiful Wellesley College Chapel on December 2, 1922. With less than \$100 in borrowed capital, he had founded the Oxford Candy Company and with his bride as his chief assistant set to work to become a business success. With a great deal of hard work, persistence, and the help of his younger brother James, who soon joined the firm, Welch's candy business began first to succeed and then to prosper. By late 1925 he had over sixty employees, including two or three excellent fulltime salesmen. And by the spring of 1926 the business was soaring with the advent of



Welch's "Sugar Daddy," an uncoated caramel on a stick protected by a double wrapper.

This caramel sucker sold for only five cents, the same as other candy bars of the time. But most of the other products generally experienced decreased sales during summer months when the heat would melt them into a gooey mess. The Welch-devised Sugar Daddy had a special heavy-cream base that made it "stand up" during the warmest of summer months.

Soon the company had about 160 employees and was making a profit of over a thousand dollars a week on a total business volume of more than a million dollars a year. That was a great deal of money in the mid-1920s. As Griffin observes, "It had been just four years from the time when this young man, without either capital or experience, had rejected the leftist doctrines of Harvard Law School and ventured to start a manufacturing business from scratch. Through incredible work and sheer determination, he had established himself as a rising young entrepreneur with an impeccable reputation and seemingly boundless prospects for the future."

But hard times lay ahead. The next decade brought the Great Depression and a series of business reverses for the young Welch family (now with two children). Adversity, however, can be even more important to personal growth than periods of success. Robert Welch learned many valuable lessons about business from making mistakes.

Meanwhile, Robert's brother James had gone into business for himself and was doing quite well. When James offered Robert a position with the James O. Welch Company in 1935, Robert accepted and joined the firm as its chief of sales.

Again, Robert Welch proved to be an outstanding success. In 1935, when he joined James's candy company, it had a sales volume of \$200,000 a year. By 1956 this had grown to \$20 million, making the Welch Company one of the most successful and respected names in the industry.

G. Edward Griffin writes: "Robert Welch's ultimate success in the business world was impressive. In addition to a distinguished career as vice president in charge of sales and advertising for the James O. Welch Company and of its subsidiary sales corporations in Atlanta, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Houston, Seattle, and Los Angeles, he also became a member of the Belmont school committee, a director of a local bank, a member of the Boston Chamber of Commerce, a member of the board of directors of the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce, a national councilor of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and served as treasurer and member of the board of directors of the United Prison Association (a Massachusetts charity). During World War II he served on both the twelve-man OPA (Office of Price Administration) board and the WPB (War Production Board) to represent the entire candy industry."

Of course, Welch's presence on the O.P.A. and the W.P.B. did not mean that he ever endorsed price controls or Socialism. He was opposed to political rationing, and his voice was a minority on those bodies. He would later write that his first book, *The Road To Salesmanship*,\* "was written for those who liked salesmen better than ration clerks; who preferred the philosophy of abundance, and what we frequently call 'the free enterprise

\*Published in 1941 by the Ronald Press and still available in the paperbound 1967 reprint edition at \$2.00, postage paid, from American Opinion, Belmont, Massachusetts 02178.



system,' even though they neither understood the system itself nor their own very important part in making it work."

The candy industry showed its confidence in Welch by voting him vice president and director of the National Confectioners Association. During the war years he served as chairman of the N.C.A.'s Washington committee, and in that capacity led the fight against international cartelization of sugar. In 1947 he was honored by *Candy Industry* magazine with its annual Kettle Award, the "Oscar" of the industry.

By 1950 Robert Welch had been named to the board of the National Association of Manufacturers, serving three years, including three years as regional vice president and three on the N.A.M. executive committee. In addition he was chairman of that powerful and prestigious group's Education Committee. His many friends included the nation's leading industrialists and Free Market economists.

But there was still little time for leisure. Mr. Welch had early developed the habit of working long hours, throwing himself completely into whatever task was before him. His work habits and dedication to achieving his goals remained with him to the last and were certainly major factors in his leadership of The John Birch Society. Welch displayed astonishing energy, endurance, and indefatigability well into his eighties. He seldom saw a work day with fewer than sixteen hours.

It was during his years in the candy business that Robert Welch gained so much knowledge and experience in setting up field organizations — skills which he applied brilliantly when he organized The John Birch Society, an anti-Communist crusade which quickly became a nationwide

body of men and women working to defend Americanism and to defeat the schemes of Communism and Big Government. He knew our country intimately. During those many years as head of the sales organization of the James O. Welch Company he would go out to ride for a week at a time with all of the company's salesmen in every state in the Union. He had been in every American city and most of the towns and hamlets at least twice. He knew and loved America as few men ever have.

Robert Welch never slowed his frenetic pace. He never considered success in the financial and business worlds as anything other than a means to buy the time to pursue the world of scholarship and travel the globe. As he consumed one book after another, his personal library grew until it eventually comprised some five thousand volumes — most of which Welch had actually read! He returned to his old love, mathematics. He became engrossed in such problems as Fermat's Last Theorem, at one time spending almost all his spare time for an entire year working on it. He took a profound intellectual joy in mathematics, savoring the abstract beauty of numbers and geometric forms. He indulged his other major passion, reading and writing poetry. Among his favorite poets were John Keats, Rudyard Kipling, Alfred Lord Tennyson, and his friend Alfred Noyes. Among the most cherished volumes in his library were Stevenson's *Home Book Of Verse* and the *Home Book Of Modern Verse*, gifts of his wife Marian.

If he had not needed to worry about making a living, or had been born an heir to great wealth, Robert Welch might well have been a mathematics professor or a professional poet. He produced a great deal of poetry, many short stories, and a number of enter-



taining and scholarly books. In 1940, for example, he began work on *Lost Island*, a novel which featured an advanced society of ants as a means of providing a cutting satire against the collectivism of the New Deal, even predicting that Roosevelt would maneuver the United States into a world war. The attack on Pearl Harbor intervened and the manuscript was never published.

Another, which he did eventually publish, was entitled *The Romance Of Education* (Western Islands, Boston, \$8.00 postpaid). After thirty years of lying dormant, the manuscript was published in 1973 at the insistence of friends. This remarkable work reveals Robert Welch's own joy in the pursuit of knowledge. It discusses the nature and reasons for self-education, focusing on mathematics, history, language, and poetry. One chapter consists of an annotated list of one hundred of Welch's favorite books. In it he gives a brief review for each, starting with Cervantes' *Don Quixote* and ending with Oswald Spengler's *The Decline Of The West*. No one interested in pursuing a liberal education should fail to read *The Romance Of Education*. The distinguished American poet E. Merrill Root was certainly correct when he wrote that Robert Welch lives "inwardly on a high plateau of ideas, of ideals (based on reality), of values and meanings."

At the same time, Mr. Welch had a hearty sense of humor. Biographer G. Edward Griffin tells us: "His jokes are always clean, usually corny, and always funny. He loves puns; like the one about Santa Claus's helper elf named Rudolph." It seemed, alas, that Rudolph had joined the Communist Party. But in spite of that he was still Santa's weatherman and a good one, too. When Santa told Mrs. Claus that Rudolph predicted rain for

Christmas Eve, she objected that he must be mistaken, for it always snows on Christmas. To which Santa replied, "Rudolph, the Red, knows rain, dear!"

As every salesman knows, wit and humor are important in bonding friendships. But they are also important to leadership, and are vital to organizational morale. Ed Griffin gives us another example of this in Robert Welch:

"There is an amusing story told by Mrs. Sproul, Mr. Welch's secretary, of an incident that occurred during his trip to Turkey, an incident that certainly shows the camaraderie that existed between him and those who worked closely with him. While in Turkey he had hired one of the guides to write a letter to Mrs. Sproul and Mr. Robert Daugherty, his Assistant Sales Manager at that time. The letter read: 'Have decided to establish a branch factory in Istanbul. Please ship 3,000 Sugar Daddies at once and begin plans for factory construction.' But the letter was written in the ancient Turkish script. And since there were only a few people even in Turkey who could read the script anymore, Welch was reasonably sure that the letter would 'hold them for a while' at the office, and would give him an excuse when he returned to pretend to be upset with them for not following instructions.

"When the letter was received, sure enough, no one in the Boston area could decipher it; not at the universities, nor at the Berlitz School of Languages, nor any place else. But a few days later Bob Daugherty took it with him on a business trip to New York and stopped in at the offices of the Consul General of Turkey, where the embarrassed staff could not read it either. The Consul General himself, however, finally was able to make the translation. When Robert arrived at



Manila, in the Philippines, he was astonished to find awaiting him a letter from his staff which read, 'Received your letter from Istanbul. Shipped the 3,000 Sugar Daddies as requested. Plans nearing completion for construction. All expenses have been charged to your account. Awaiting further instructions!' This was typical of the kind of good-natured kidding that Robert Welch has always enjoyed with his friends and staff."

I was myself present for another Robert Welch joke that reflects his humor and style. It occurred in 1975 at a large John Birch Society dinner at the Ambassador Hotel in San Francisco. I had introduced AMERICAN OPINION Managing Editor Scott Stanley, who had given the major speech of the evening on America's China policy and had enjoyed a well-earned standing ovation. Bas Gladioux, our host of the evening, then stepped to the microphone and announced that the distinguished Stanford professor, Chet Berlow, was present in the audience and would now deliver a critique of Stanley's speech. As the audience gasped at such effrontery, Scott laughed heartily and said to me, "I don't know what kind of prank Bas is up to, Gary, but if Robert Welch finds out that he is using Mr. Welch's joke pseudonym, Chet Berlow, there will be fireworks."

At this point a strange character at a back table got up and walked stiffly toward the dais. Both Scott and I recognized him immediately from his walk and were in hysterics by the time Robert Welch had reached the microphone, taken off a false mustache and wig, and revealed his identity to the audience. He had been in San Francisco on other business, had the disguise prepared by a theatrical professional, and attended the dinner as an unrecognized guest.

"Do you know much about The John Birch Society?" a dinner companion had asked him.

"A little," he had replied from under his mustache, his eyes twinkling.

In a room in which an unadorned Robert Welch would have been as quickly recognized as Bill Buckley at a quiche party at Yale, he had fooled us all. How we *do* miss the pleasure of his company.

### **Principles Lead The Way**

Robert Welch was a brilliant, warm, witty, and sometimes charming man of considerable learning and noble character. He knew that without the guidance of fundamental principles to define goals, direction, and appropriate means for achieving proper ends, pragmatic expediency leads nowhere. Mr. Welch had a deep appreciation for the fact that good ends cannot be achieved by wrong means. For instance, a familiar theme of his frequent admonitions to the members of The John Birch Society was the proper way of combating the enemy:

"There are all kinds of methods of opposing the Communist conspiracy which seeks to enslave us. One is by political action. We insist, and all historical experience supports our insistence, that such political opposition is of no avail unless it is supported by a sufficiently widespread understanding of the strategy, the tactics, and the purposes of the conspiracy."

But even knowledge of the nature of our enemies is itself not enough. If one of the crucial rules of warfare is to Know Your Enemy, another is to Know Thyself. Robert Welch also insisted: "What we are *for* must be more important than what we are *against*." Unless we know what we stand for — our own goals and principles, and have appropriate methods for achiev-



ing them — we will be insular, brittle, reactionary, and constantly on the defensive. We must know our own case — politically, economically, and philosophically — to be able to articulate the positive alternative that we hold up for the world.

And we would do well to remember that at the core of Mr. Welch's political philosophy is the concept of private ownership and individual rights. As biographer Griffin put it, doubtless at the insistence of Mr. Welch himself, "Robert Welch is a firm believer in the sanctity of property rights. He wouldn't dream of taking even a paperclip without the prior permission of its owner." He considered this to be basic to any society which can be called civilized.

In a speech called "My Concept Of Freedom," written in 1964 as an opening statement for a public debate with Socialist leader Norman Thomas, Robert Welch described his ideal government, a republic constitutionally restricted to a policy of *laissez faire*, as follows:

"I want for our country enough laws to restrain me from injuring others, so that these laws will also restrain others from injuring me. I want enough government, with enough constitutional safeguards, so that this necessary minimum of laws will be applied equitably to everybody, and will be binding on the rulers as well as on those ruled. Beyond that I want neither laws nor government to be imposed on our people as a means or with the excuse of protect-

ing us from catching cold, or of seeing that we raise the right kind of crops, or of forcing us to live in the right kind of houses or neighborhoods, or of compelling us to save money or to spend it, or of telling us when and whether we can pray. I do not want government or laws designed for any other form of welfarism or paternalism, based on the premise that government knows best and can run our lives for us better than we can run them ourselves. And my concept of freedom, and of its overwhelming importance, is implicit in these aspirations and ideals."

I do not know of a better statement on the appropriate role of government. And Mr. Welch deeply believed every word of it. Far better, he organized and educated hundreds of thousands of the best men and women in America to believe it too.

If it were not for Robert Welch, this magazine would not exist and you would not be reading this article; I would never have written my book *None Dare Call It Conspiracy* or any of the others. Neither you nor I would have been drawn into this whole battle against the sinister forces of collectivism had it not been for the efforts of some good American, armed with pamphlets from The John Birch Society, books from Western Islands, and reprints from AMERICAN OPINION. For this we can thank the character, organization, and leadership of one man. Rest well, Robert Welch, and may God keep you . . . until we meet again. ■ ■

## FROM ROBERT WELCH

- The struggle between good and evil has been continuous throughout man's known history.
- My America is being made over into a carbon copy of thousands of despotisms that have gone before.
- Trying to live in "peaceful coexistence" with the Communists is only a lingering and painful form of suicide.
- Every dollar you or your friends spend for goods produced by Communist slaves is helping their cruel masters in plans to enslave your children.