

**Heroes You
May Not Know**

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To the dedicated, inspiring people who let nothing
stand in the way of progress and social justice

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Introduction

I published *Heroes: Inspiration For All Ages* in January 2014, available only as an ebook. You can download it free from my web site. There are a few other offerings there. Before beginning that book, I made a list of amazing people and kept adding to it. After finishing *Heroes*, I found that there were a few individuals that I left out. The people in this book are some of them. As you might guess, there were still some heroes left for another book, so don't rule that out.

Like the previous book, *Heroes You May Not Know* has eight chapters and about three men or women in each. I use the word *about* because a chapter may mention four or more heroes, rather than a mere three. For example, chapter six has at least five, while chapter four includes dozens, even though all are not named. In this book, there are businessmen included, such as J. L. Wilkinson, who was the only white owner of a team in the Negro Leagues. I also considered him as an athlete, which I'll get into shortly. J. L. had teams of all races but his African American teams consistently beat white teams from the major leagues. Wilkinson was a great man, treating his players with dignity – others too, I'm sure. He also was responsible for the night baseball with his system of portable lights.

Jackie Robinson was the first black player in Major League baseball, joining the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947, thanks to Branch Rickey. Not only a great player on the diamond, he excelled in football, track and basketball. He had to put up with jeers because of the color of his skin, and the taunts didn't stop in 1947. He was booed and yelled at by spectators in the stands as well as by some players in the opposing team's dugout. By accepting it and excelling on the diamond, Robinson did a great deal for others that came after him in the sport.

Roberto Clemento came from Puerto Rico and he too was a great baseball player. When he joined the Pittsburgh Pirates, they were at the bottom of the league. He changed that with his hitting and play on defense. Talented as he was, he also helped those in need, giving to others when he could. When the earthquake demolished Nicaragua in late 1972, he pitched in to help the victims of the disaster.

Cassius Clay, Jr. changed his name to Muhammad Ali and was one the greatest boxers, ever. Consistently winning in the ring, he even predicted in which round the fight would end with his victory. He was right many times. He's included because of an event outside sports. He refused to be drafted and go to fight in Vietnam. As a result, he lost his title and didn't box for four years. Eventually, the newspaper headlined his victory in an 8-0 decision, which you can read about in chapter 3.

If you've seen the 1981 movie, *Chariots of Fire*, you know who Eric Liddell was. If you missed the flick, he was a great runner, specializing in the 100-, 200- and 400-meter events. He won Olympic medals and was the first Scot to do so. What the motion picture doesn't show is what he did after his running days waned – he still ran and won races, just not as many as previously. As a missionary in China, he followed in his parents' footsteps. Unfortunately, he was in China during the time of the invasion of the country by the Japanese.

Wilkinson, whom I mentioned earlier, was a baseball player but an injury to his wrist ended his possibilities of becoming a great pitcher. Instead, he went into management. It's something I never did and never cared to do, but J. L. set an example of what businesses should be. Sadly, not enough bosses knew about him and what he accomplished. In my first book on work, one of the chapter titles is *Boss spelled backwards is double SOB*.

The names of two other phenomenal businessmen are David Bronner and Benjamin Montgomery. David continued the family soap production in the way his grandfather and father did. They created safe, environmentally friendly soaps while paying the workers what they deserved. David continues doing this while his company keeps recording profits. He's also a troublemaker, who just tries to make the planet better. No one can argue with that.

Montgomery lived in the nineteenth century and was a slave who became a plantation owner. He favored labor rights and community, helping those who needed work to find it while paying them a truly decent wage. He believed in civil rights, treating his staff the way servants and slaves on other plantations in the south should have been dealt with.

This book talks of many individuals who may have been artists, but I've only included one: Marian Anderson. With her

brilliant contralto voice, her family's poverty couldn't provide her with singing lessons, but fortunately others helped. She was the recipient of discrimination throughout her life, even being turned down to perform in Washington, DC, at Central High School and Constitution Hall. Both the Board of Education and Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) rejected her. Instead she sang at the Lincoln Memorial on Easter Sunday, April 9, 1939, before 75,000 people.

Hector Garcia was a doctor who went to war. At first he hoped to be a medical doctor there, but instead became an officer in the infantry. Later they took advantage of his degree. The Armed Services may be a bit slow. As a physician, he served all the people, especially the poor, relating to them better than white doctors did. If someone couldn't pay him for his services, he didn't demand it of them. A strong civil rights activist, he had one addiction: working too much. Fortunately, his wife was very understanding.

Ida Tarbell was a journalist, and you couldn't find a better one. Ida wrote for *McClure's*, joining other muckrakers such as Lincoln Steffens and Ray Stannard Baker. She took on the *criminal corporations* – if I'm not mistaken those two words are a pleonasm. Tarbell went after the oil companies, specifically John D. Rockefeller, exposing his monopoly schemes that crowded out other companies. Tarbell grew up in western Pennsylvania, so she and her family knew a great deal about oil.

Daisy Bates was a civil rights worker who was responsible for the integration of Central High in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1957. Nine students volunteered and they had great support from teachers, parents, friends, Daisy and her spouse, Lucious Christopher Bates, who also served the cause. Unfortunately, there was much opposition to the black students entry into the school, as the Little Rock Nine suffered from the racism of students and adults. The school was integrated, but it took time and was very difficult for many people.

The three women, Sylvia McLaughlin, Kay Kerr and Esther Gulick, were housewives living in San Francisco in the middle of the twentieth century. They saw what was happening to the Bay, which was being used as a landfill. They took action and though they had great support from their husbands – professors with

connections – they and others saved the Bay. Their initiative was the beginning of the earth movement, which set an example for all nations and continues today.

John Wesley Powell and Aldo Leopold were two other environmentalists born in the nineteenth century. John lost an arm in the Civil War, but that didn't stop him from exploring the Colorado River. Aldo lived out west and saw the need to preserve the beauty of nature, rather than exploit it. The two were of like mind – both naturalists.

Despite all the civil rights activists already mentioned, there were others. A. Philip Randolph advocated for the rights of the workers, especially the Sleeping Car porters. George Pullman created the luxury car as well as the town of Pullman, Illinois, and hired African Americans to serve the people traveling in luxury. At the same time, the black workers on the train were paid as little as possible. Randolph helped change that, but his struggle and that of the porters was a difficult one as the Pullman people stalled and stalled, before finally settling.

Ella Baker was another civil rights leader. Her mother envisioned her being a teacher and though Ella never was trained for it, she did a great deal of teaching while leading others. She was a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Congress of Industrial Organization (CIO) and more than three-dozen other organizations.

Paul Kagame is one of the politicians I selected. He led Rwanda through extremely difficult times. Before coming to power, the Tutsi and Hutu were engaged in genocide. The conflict may have been over, but another could have been brewing. Encouraging forgiveness and even being almost a dictator, he brought the country to a semblance of order. You don't find many today, but he is truly one good politician.

Another was William Wilberforce of Great Britain. He started out in Parliament and kept advancing. While on a journey, his faith was questioned and he thought he might have chosen the wrong profession. Instead he put them together and worked for the people. He is largely responsible for ending the slave trade in England and leading the way for other nations to follow.

Robert La Follette was a lawyer who became a politician. He was also a Republican. That sounds like three strikes against him, but he was progressive. Don't forget that Lincoln was also of the same party as well as a lawyer. La Follette wouldn't defend the guilty and spent hours on cases. He continued that process once he joined the Congress. He always fought for what was right and represented the people. He stood up against monopolies, corporations, the trusts, anti-Semitism, the Ku Klux Klan, World War I, the League of Nations and racial discrimination.

Barbara Jordan came from Texas and served in both the Texas Senate and U. S. House of Representatives. She was a civil rights leader and didn't avoid a good party, especially a fine barbeque. She was an outstanding speaker and the first African American woman to deliver the keynote address at a convention of the Democrats. For her unselfish service she received many honors including the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Many of these heroes were leaders, writers, teachers and humanitarians. I've already mentioned Liddell and Wilberforce and their religious quests, but there are three more in that class: St. Thérèse Martin (the Little Flower), Pope Francis and Jerzy Popiełuszko. Martin suffered the loss of her mom when she was four and it deeply affected her. As a child, she wanted to be a Carmelite nun and she was accepted when she turned fifteen. Those at the abbey made her wait until after Easter and once she entered there, many of the religious treated her very badly. She accepted it and only lived to be 24. She had been sickly and conditions at the nunnery could have been better. After her death, miraculous events occurred, resulting in her sainthood.

Pope Francis hasn't been the Bishop of Rome very long, but already his life, influence and acceptance have made a presence. He has always believed in mercy, simplicity and forgiveness. The way he has and continues to live has impressed many people around the globe.

Fr. Jerzy Popiełuszko was small of stature and frail throughout his life, but he became a priest and was assigned to St. Stanislaw Kostka Church in Warsaw in the early 1980s. This was the time of Lech Walesa and the *Solidarność* movement. In fact, he became the priest of Solidarity and a labor leader. As expected, he

had a great following. When he said Masses at Kostka, not only was the church filled, crowds were massive outside.

All these inspiring people that I read about and write about in *Heroes You May Not Know* amazed me. One seemed to outshine the other, but they were just doing what was and is right. A few are still living and continue to impress. Now I'm working on a book about four legged heroes with the tentative title, *Smart People? Smarter Animals*. The title should tell you what it's about. As I said, my list of humans still has quite a few more heroes.

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1. Dietrich, Jorge and Jackie

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was born in February 1906 in what is now Wrocław, Poland, into a prestigious family. His father Karl was a neurologist and psychiatrist while his mother, Paula von Hase, a teacher. He was one of eight children including a twin sister, Sabine and Karl, Jr., a physicist who did some atom splitting with Albert Einstein and Max Planck. Dietrich's father valued education but emphasized that thinking logically trumped IQ, always emphasizing that his children should be convincing in their statements. Also of importance was action to follow what one preached, away from hypocrisy. These thoughts applied to religion as well as science.

The Bonhoeffers supplemented their lives with the arts: music, poems, travel and opera. Dietrich had musical talent, composing while he was very young and blessed with the ability to sight-read music. Saturday night was traditionally music night in the family home. Other than this, Dietrich was a typical youth, not one to avoid the occasional fight, but engaging in athletics. He was raised as a Lutheran. The Bonhoeffer family was Christian even though not always participating in church services. Though the head of the family may have been an agnostic, his wife read from the Bible and raised the children as Christians, of which Karl, Sr. approved.

Dietrich was eight when World War I began, with all three of his older brothers joining in the fight. The family was by no means nationalists but signed up out of patriotic duty. Brother Walter was called to the front line in 1917. Shortly after that he was killed in battle. This affected the family deeply, especially Dietrich and his mother, who may have had a nervous breakdown. At the age of thirteen, Dietrich decided on a career in theology. His father and siblings would have preferred a different choice for the lad, but Dietrich was not to be deterred. He was following relatives on his mom's side of the family. On turning seventeen, he entered Tübingen University.

Dietrich was in Rome on Palm Sunday when he visited Saint Peter's Basilica. By this time, he had attended many Catholic services, but here he witnessed people of various faiths and races celebrating the Eucharist. He envisioned the church as eternal and universal, which had no membership restrictions based on culture or race. Returning from Rome, he left school in Tübingen and enrolled in Berlin University. He obtained his PhD at the age of twenty-one and soon felt his calling in the church. Since he couldn't be ordained for a few years, he became an assistant vicar in Barcelona and followed this by traveling to the United States, studying at Union Theological Seminary in New York.

After meeting Frank Fisher, Dietrich joined Frank at Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem one Sunday. At the time it was the largest church in the country and Bonhoeffer was transfixed. Pastor Adam Clayton Powell, Sr. engaged the people, urging them to bring Jesus into their lives, caring for the poor and following the example that Christ had given 2000 years before. Dietrich was so inspired that he went back to the Harlem church many more times, even teaching Sunday school. At this point, Bonhoeffer integrated his social and political action. While in New York, on Easter Sunday of 1931, he couldn't get into any Protestant church. Instead he heard Rabbi Stephen Wise preach, but not in a synagogue. The place was Carnegie Hall since those attending couldn't fit into any temple that day.

Dietrich was greatly affected by his time in the states, going back to Germany in the summer of 1931. His friends saw his transformation. Bonhoeffer's faith had increased and his heart had been modified for the better. He taught theology at the University of Berlin, calling the Bible the *Word of God*. The experience was real, spiritual, intellectual and personal. In 1930, Nazis were without power in Germany, but they soon were close to the top in influence. Their strength grew every day and Dietrich spoke out against them. He insisted, *For German Christians, there can be only one savior, and that savior is Jesus Christ*. This upset many people, who thought of Hitler as the one who would lead the nation out of its troubles. Bonhoeffer was one of the few who brought up the danger of Hitler and the Nazis.

In January 1933, Hitler became chancellor of Germany. Two days later Dietrich gave a speech tearing apart the Führer and

his principles. When World War I ended, it resulted in widespread unemployment, bread lines and political squabbling. Many figured that Hitler could change this, but he wasn't really a leader, only someone who could mislead the masses. On this, Bonhoeffer concentrated his talks. Dietrich realized that though Adolf claimed to be a Christian – that was merely for show – so he did what Christians were meant to do by being *a voice for the voiceless*. Here he meant the Jews. Dietrich offered that Jesus was the *man for others* and following Him was a way of standing up for every man's dignity even if he was different.

In 1935, Bonhoeffer was the leader of an illegal seminary in the Confessing Church, an offshoot of the official Nazi Church. Training seminarians to be not only Lutherans but also Disciples of Christ, he passed on to them devotion and meditation on the Scriptures. Many thought of this time as the Golden Age of Bonhoeffer. The Gestapo shut down the school, but Dietrich continued his work any way he could underground. Eventually the Nazis stopped even this. They also took great effort to halt the liberties of all Germans, especially Jews and Christians.

Despite this and the many restrictions facing Dietrich, he persisted, doing so with great caution. In the late 1930s, war drums began beating, with Hitler leading the way. It was one of nationalist aggression. Bonhoeffer was torn because of it: he couldn't become a conscientious objector nor could he take a stand in public against it since it would lead to trouble for other members of the Confessing Church. He prayed for guidance and considered heading to America to avoid the dilemma. However, once ship bound, his conscience overruled his feelings. He was only in the states for a few weeks when he went back to Germany. His associates asked what he was doing there and he apologized that he had made a mistake. Still, he was not sure of what he would do.

Matters were complicated because the family Bonhoeffer was involved in action against the Führer for years, placing Dietrich in even more danger on his return. This *conspiracy* – maybe this isn't the right word – started in the early 1930s and involved many of the elite. For various reasons, many other Germans didn't feel the same way as this group. Some felt the danger shadowing them while others bought right into what Adolf was promoting.

Dietrich felt a need to react and stop the Führer and his Nazi movement. He always felt that a Christian had to stand up for anyone being persecuted. Here, his action went right in line with his thinking and beliefs. The family member involved the most was his sister, Christel, through her husband, Hans von Dohnanyi, who was high up in German intelligence. Belonging to the Abwehr, which worked on behalf of the Third Reich, Dohnanyi placed Bonhoeffer there, but as a spy against Hitler. Dietrich became a double agent. One of his missions was to spread the word about the efforts to halt Hitler to Sweden, Switzerland and other countries opposed to the Führer. No matter how large the movement, help would never be refused. The best friend of Dietrich, Eberhard Bethge, stated that he had gone from *confession to conspiracy*. There was no turning back.

Bonhoeffer wasn't allowed to publish, but continued with his writing. *Ethics*, the large opus he was working on, wasn't done but would be published later. Being human, in 1942, at the home of Ruth von Kleist-Retzow, he became aware of her eighteen-year old daughter, Maria. In the spring of 1943, they were engaged. Maria's father and her closest brother died in the war and Dietrich provided pastoral support to Ruth. She wasn't happy with the couple at first but then came around to accept Bonhoeffer. Not long after this, he was arrested at the home of Karl and Paula. Dietrich was apprehended for attempting to help the Jews. The forces of evil were not yet aware of his part in the conspiracy since the Nazis didn't know of it. Hitler's men did have an eye on Hans, Dietrich and others, though. Phones were tapped and it wasn't for beer, German or otherwise.

Bonhoeffer wound up in Tegel prison in Berlin, less than ten miles from where he lived. It wasn't as bad as the Gestapo prison, so he was treated all right. There he wrote his *Letters and Papers from Prison* and some poems, including, "Who Am I?" Despite the conditions, many reported that he found peace, joy and comfort at this time. He had hopes of being released, but fifteen months after his arrest, the Valkyrie plot began. It didn't succeed but the Third Reich then knew of the conspiracy. Dietrich was transferred to the dreaded Gestapo prison in the fall of 1944 with its high security.

At this point, the war was winding down, with many Germans knowing of the futility of the Nazi cause. The Allied bombing of Berlin in February of 1945 forced Hitler's men to move prisoners from Gestapo prison elsewhere. Bonhoeffer wound up in the Buchenwald concentration camp. Hitler directed his execution by hanging on April 9, 1945.

After his death, many felt that losing his life was tragic and the world would have been better served had he lived. However, his efforts helped end the Third Reich, as he was a huge part of the group out to halt the Führer, which eventually came about. Dying at 39, he was a great hero to many people, regardless of race, culture or creed. Dietrich preached discipleship and faith, with concern for all men. To him, the religion one practiced was of little concern as he attended Protestant, Catholic and Jewish services. He talked but then followed with actions that matched his words and beliefs. In addition to the books already mentioned, some of the other books he wrote include *Act And Being*, *Temptation*, *The Communion Of Saints* and *God Is In The Manger: Reflections On Advent And Christmas*. You can find numerous books about him including the 2013 book by Eric Mataxas, *7 Men And The Secret Of Their Greatness*. This book also says a few words about Jackie Robinson, Eric Liddell and William Wilberforce, which you can read in pages that follow.

Jorge Bergoglio

Jorge Mario Bergoglio was born on December 17, 1936, in Buenos Aires to Mario Bergoglio, originally from Marshe, Italy, and Regina Sivoni. Mario was a hard working accountant who had a degree when he arrived in Argentina. Unfortunately, they didn't accept it so he did the factory gig. Since he couldn't write, his pay was less than the other workers. His wife was a homemaker. Jorge's siblings include Oscar, Marta, Alberto and Maria Elena. They lived in a small house having a large kitchen. We'll come back to that later. When Jorge was thirteen, he went to his grandmother's house during the day – she and her husband lived close by. He returned in the evening, learning Piedmontese in the process.

Back home, Mario spoke Castillian to the children and talked of Italy, so they would not forget their homeland. Jorge played cards, including *briscola*, and occasionally joined his dad when the latter played basketball. The arts were instilled in Jorge and his siblings by Marshe, who treasured opera. She also knew how to cook and insisted that the five offspring learn to do the same. Mario died of a heart attack when Jorge was a teenager. Maria Elena related that her father had always been joyful and that Jorge followed in the same vein. The family was a happy one. Sunday involved going to Mass followed by extravagant lunches, some as long as seven courses. Dinner wasn't necessary. Marshe produced delicious chicken, cappelletti and ragú risotto piemontese. She learned fast and well because frying an egg was no easy task for her when she and Mario first married.

The family wasn't rich, but they never went without the basics. Nothing was thrown out, but Jorge's dad wouldn't allow the same meal the next day. I'm sure that Marshe was very creative with the leftovers. Much repair was done on clothing and then reused. The son who would become a priest developed frugal tastes, except when it came to food. Jorge played soccer and at twelve had a girlfriend, Amalia – sort of. She considered him a gentleman and related the words he said to her, *If you don't marry me, I'm going to be a priest.*

After finishing primary school, his father insisted that he needed to find work while attending secondary school. He labored

in a sock factory, did cleaning and administrative tasks, while studying accounting. In his fourth year, he learned food chemistry and worked in a lab. His classes lasted until eight in the evening, but he was appreciative of his dad's directive.

While Jorge was in the lab, his boss there was Esther Balestrino de Carteaga, a commie sympathizer. One day he finished his work quite quickly and brought the results to her. She was surprised and asked if he had done all the verifications, which he hadn't. She then said, *you have to do things right*, It was a reminder which stayed with him. He admired her and saw Esther as a great individual.

Bergoglio was seventeen and about to celebrate a spring holiday, *Student Day*. The day was September 21 – don't forget this was in the Southern hemisphere. There was a girl in one of his groups to whom he was attracted. A picnic had been planned and he went to San José de Flores church first. There he met a priest who brought spirituality to Jorge. The latter made his confession to the padre and Bergoglio realized he had a vocation. He decided not to join his friends for *Student Day*. That experience changed his life so much that he didn't propose to the girl that day at the picnic.

He wouldn't start seminary right away. That would take four years. He stayed at work in the lab, completing school and realized that he wasn't quite ready, even though he knew his fate. He just wasn't concentrating on religion and needed to settle his unrest. He read *Nuestra palabra y proposito*, a Communist Party publication, but never joined the group. He became ill with a lung infection before entering the seminary, being diagnosed with pneumonia. This was overcome, but not before a part of his lung was removed.

He recovered and while in the hospital was visited by Sister Dolores, who told him, *keep imitating Jesus*. This inspired him as he realized that suffering can be virtuous. It wasn't removed but it became significant. Jorge would eventually say, *what a person who is suffering needs is to know that there is someone with him, who wishes him well, who respects his silence and prays that God may enter into this space that is sheer solitude*. Sister Dolores was the one who worked with him before he made his First Communion.

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