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Frank Chodorov: Man of Honor

By BEN MOREELL

I HAVE long held that a valid measure of the significance of a man's life, for good or for evil, is the size of the vacuum created by his passing.

Measured by this standard, the life of Frank Chodorov was one of major significance to the survival of our free Republic and the happiness of our people. The evidence is indisputable. Perhaps most conclusive are the many memorials to him, spoken and written, by persons of intellectual distinction. But most impressive are the evidences I have noted over the past twenty years of the growing influence of his teachings in important areas of our social structure.

His books of essays are a worthy monument to his memory. But that monument would be incomplete without having joined to it his great achievement, the establishment of "The Intercollegiate Society of Individualists" which, as I recall it, stemmed from an essay first published in *Human Events*, about 1951, under the title, "For Our Children's Children — A Fifty Year Project." In that essay, Frank showed what must be done to excise the evil which had been planted in our body politic a half-century before by the "Intercollegiate Socialist Society."

The "Intercollegiate Society of Individualists," whose name has recently been changed to the "Intercollegiate Studies Institute," was organized in 1952. Since then, it has profoundly affected the lives of countless college students, as well as those of many of their elders. And it becomes more effective every year.

Since I first met Frank some twenty years ago, when we quickly became fast friends, I have often wondered what attracted this arch individualist to a man who had spent by far the better part of his mature life in an organization whose imperative demand is conformity. I believe I found the answer, at least in part, in the following statement culled from Frank's introduction to his book, "The Rise And Fall of Society":

"It is an odd circumstance of history that the questing spirit is never

obliterated . . . Social and political pressures may compel the intellectually curious to put on an appearance of conformity — since one must live in one's environment — but actual conformity is impossible in a mind of that kind. It must ask 'why' even of itself."

One might ask, then, what attracted me to Frank?

At first, it was the brilliance of his mind. But brilliance is not a solid

foundation for enduring admiration and devoted friendship. Aside from his brilliance, Frank had certain qualities which had the effect of a powerful magnet in attracting kindred spirits to him.

He was the very soul of intellectual integrity. He wrote and spoke without rancor, but with the courage of a lion. He was constantly and relentlessly on the prowl in search of truth. Above all, his individualism was disciplined by his charitable understanding of his fellow-man. He viewed the world's prejudices more in sorrow than in anger from the sanctuary of his own unswerving individualism. He seemed to be telling us that only the self-disciplined individualist can be truly tolerant because, in forming his judgments of a man's worth, he makes due allowances for differences stemming from race, creed, economic and social status, national origin, culture, political allegiance, language, customs, and prejudices.

I never discussed the matter with Frank but judging from his masterful essay "How a Jew Came to God," I am sure he would subscribe to this thesis, advanced by Professor Hayek: "A liberal order has arisen only in countries in which, in ancient Greece and Rome no less than in modern Britain, justice was conceived as something to be discovered by the efforts of judges or scholars and not as determined by the arbitrary will of any authority."

After my first lengthy conversation with Frank, many years ago, I recalled a passage from *Hamlet*, the admonitions given by Polonius to his son:

*"This above all: To thine own self
be true,
And it must follow, as the night
the day,
Thou canst not then be false to
any man."*

And, as we parted, I said to myself: "Shakespeare must have had Frank Chodorov in mind when he wrote that. There goes an honest man."

THE BAD AND THE GOOD

By HENRY HAZLITT

I AM honored to be among those who pay tribute to the memory of Frank Chodorov. But better and briefer than anything I could write are two quotations from William Graham Sumner that I am sure would have delighted Frank, and which he perhaps knew.

The first:

When I was a young man, I read many novels . . . in which the badness of a bad man is represented, not as his fault, but as the fault of society. Now, as society consists of the bad men plus the good men, and as the object of this declaration was to show that the badness of the bad men was not the fault of the bad men, it remains that the badness of the bad men must be the fault of the good men. No doubt, it is far more consoling to the bad men than even to their friends to reach the point of this demonstration.

And second:

On the theories of the social philosophers . . . we should get a new maxim of judicious living: Poverty is the best policy. If you do not get wealth, it will be the duty of other people to support you.