



Chapter Two

WAR DRUMS

Proverbs 2: 9-11

Then you will understand what is right and just and fair---every good path

For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.

Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.



PRIDE AND ARROGANCE

As the winds of change had blown through the little town of Gueydan causing even the most discordant materials to dance in perfect harmony, one might mistakenly assume peace would automatically follow. Listening to the slight mummer of the town, the children at play and the delicious sounds of wildlife calling to each other, one day would expect to empty gracefully into the next.

However, when thoughts and emotions of man are present, perfect peace is but a superficial notion. Due to the requirement for wisdom and understanding to be present when reconciling differences of opinions, the yearning for unity among the human species seems but a passing fantasy. As events unfold, no matter the location on earth, when people try to avert the sharp tongues of war, the inner demons called pride and arrogance rear their ugly heads.

Examples of these human tendencies due to differing political persuasions could be found even in the small town of Gueydan, Louisiana. Two large white homes located within walking distance of each other, and owned by Dick Du Puis' future grandparents, Mr. Trahan and Judge O'Neill, had diametrically opposing views regarding the election of Louisiana's legendary populist, Huey P. Long. Long, described as being charismatic and immensely popular for his programs and willingness to take forceful action, was not without his detractors. His opponents accused him of displaying dictatorial tendencies for his near-total control of the state government. While enjoying the nick-name "Kingfish" because of his belief that every man should be a king, he also dwelt with pointing fingers due to strong-arm tactics used to accomplish his agenda. After a failed attempt at his impeachment, he

supposedly stated, "I used to get things done by saying please. Now, I dynamite-'em out of my path."

Consequently, this colorful political personality caused emotions to run high in the lives of the two men that lived in such close proximity of one another right in the heart of Gueydan. Since Richard 'Dick" O'Neill Du Puis' mother, Anita Marie Du Puis' parents had died leaving her an orphan, she was taken in by her mother's aunt who was married to Dick's future Grandfather Trahan; one of the occupants of the homes described above. Dick speaks with great animation about the personality of his Grandfather Trahan. Given his position in the community, he was not only familiar with, but deeply involved in, politics on a grand scale; supporting Huey P. Long with great enthusiasm. In fact, he was so dedicated to this belief that he became Long's Representative; a position that swayed the decisions of many voters. He truly believed Huey P. Long was a rising star and good for the people.

On the other hand, Joseph O'Neill Sr., (soon to be Dick's other grandfather), who lived in the large white house so near to the Trahan dwelling, was acutely aware of his neighbor's political convictions and took great offense to the situation. Furthermore, due to the fact that O'Neill was a highly respected Judge, as well as the town blacksmith, he was not about to alter his position on this matter. Using a voice of great authority, he stated clearly he would never support a candidate who lacked honor and integrity. Thus, it was these two opposing stands that caused the future grandfathers of the little grandson, Dick O'Neill Du Puis, yet to be born to become arch enemies; a well known fact all around the Gueydan area.

In addition to the two grown men being unable to respect the art of disagreeing agreeably, Joseph Gaston O'Neill Jr., Judge O'Neill's son, and Anita Marie Du Puis, the adopted daughter of Trahan, had stars in their eyes for one another. As often the case, the love bug respecting no one had bitten the two with such intensity that nothing could possibly stop their march to the altar. As a result, this courtship left many in the town scratching their heads wondering not only how two such opposites could possibly attract, but how the war drums between the two family members would cease in favor of happiness between their children.

Surprisingly, Anita Marie, Dick's mother, described as truly a gracious gentle southern lady with every fiber of her being, was welcomed with open arms by her father-in-law, Judge O'Neill. She was known to have small hips, a beautiful bust line and smooth supple olive skin that she carefully protected from the rays of the hot sun. In fact, due to her personal appearance, Dick stated she could have passed as being of Hispanic descent by those unfamiliar with her background. She could always be seen wearing a hat, long sleeves and gloves in order to keep her skin from tanning dark like hide. Lifting weights to keep her arms and bust firm was an unusual habit, but one performed on a regular basis. Not only was

Dick's mother's appearance pleasing to the eye, but had earned a reputation of showing compassion for her fellow man that matched her beauty.

On the other hand, Joseph Gaston O'Neill Jr. was as handsome as Anita Marie Du Puis was beautiful. Having been born with a light complexion along with dark wavy hair, he did not go unnoticed by the ladies. To accompany these good looks, he had developed a reputation of loving a good time. Thus, the best description for Joseph Gaston O'Neill Jr. would have been a "rogue". Even when just a little boy in school, he was known to have a mind of his own; a trait that is obvious to see simply by looking at his picture at the end of this chapter. In fact, a story circulated among the Gueydan residents regarding one of his Halloween capers. In order to pull it off, he secured two other friends to be his "partners in crime." Without disturbing the sleep of the town's occupants, they were all surprised the morning after Halloween to find a local's buggy setting on the roof of a building located on Main Street. Due to the prankster personality of Joseph Gaston O'Neill Jr. having been so well established, the locals were absolutely certain, had it been possible, the horse that pulled the buggy would have been there just for extra shock value. Thus, although he worshiped his wife, he simply had an eye for the ladies; a situation that always caused Dick tremendous anguish. The tears of sorrow he witnessed falling from his mother's eyes tore at his heart strings with such intensity that he became her protector forever.

Soon after the starry eyed couple married, and in good and perfect time, it was announced that a child was to be born. Not only was Richard "Dick" O'Neill Du Puis born in 1930, but on the same day when Huey P. Long won his election to office; a situation that would threaten war between the two grandfathers unless the peace pipe was smoked by all. Long's high opinion of himself, and gratitude toward Grandfather Trahan's hard work to get him elected, caused him to make an unbelievable offer to Dick's mother. He sent an important message to Grandfather Trahan that if his daughter would name her new born son, "Huey P. O'Neill", he would gift the proud family with an inscribed plaque in honor of the special occasion.

Consequently, if the Gueydan residents listened carefully, at this moment in time, they could have heard the O'Neill war drums pounding loudly for a call to arms. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCE WOULD A GRANDSON BELONGING TO THE HONORABLE JUDGE O'NEILL EVER BE NAMED AFTER HUEY P. LONG! In the Judge's mind, his grandson would be called Joseph Gaston O'Neill III. However, wisdom and discretion caused cool minds to prevail. Anita Marie Du Puis O'Neill, Dick's mother, who could have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her actions, declined the offer from Long and named her new born son, "Richard Harold O'Neill"; a decision that quieted the family war drums.



GOLDEN RULE DAYS -- One of our oldest school Scrapbook photos is this picture of the Fifth Grade Class at Gueydan in 1918. Those identified include (1st row, 1 to r) Corriane Rebalais, Mary Perry, Clarise Broussard, Olydia Monceaux, Ervin Broussard, the late Orey Woods, Gaston O'Neil; (2nd row) Ruth Linscombe, Minnie Spencer, Adam Hungerford, Charles Stickley, Dick Roe; (3rd row) The teacher, Mrs. Eva Francis; Dorothy Fisher, Lillie Guidry, Lucy Boudreaux, Hazard Broussard; (4th row) Nora Clark, Mildred White, Olita Hebert, Vicky Ducote; (5th row) the late Winnon Clark, twins Lydia and Lelia Guidry, the late Bula Lejeune, Fanny Hoffpauir and Hollis T. Gillentine.

Dick O'Neill Du Puis' father can be seen in the front row, far right. His personality stands out!



(Grandma Trahan)



(Grandpa Trahan)



(Grandpa O'Neill --Judge)



(Joseph Gaston O'Neill, Jr.)



(Anita Marie Du Puis O'Neill)



Huey P. Long (U.S. Senator and 40th Governor of Louisiana)