# Alberto deMarco 1914-1975

Dear Donald & Guido,

While I'll be more personally expressing my affection & concern for you on this occasion of the 30th anniversay of your dear father's death by hit-&-run driver, I'm taking the occassion to address this open letter to you in the form of a Thinksheet memorializing your undersung father's life & thought. He expressed to you that in his opinion I was the best friend he ever had, & I've been dilatory about paying written tribute to a friend & faithful Christian theologian.

The impulse to write now? I'm sending you all the remaining of your father's papers still in my possession, including most of his letters to me & carbons of my replies to him. (I just finished rereading them all. What a feast of love-joy-peace!)

1 The first eight words of this Thinksheet's first line (1) constitute the title of a book of mine, copies of which I'm sending to you, & (2) express about humanity a conviction your father's life models: as his flesh flowed throughout the lengths of the two World Wars &, in Germany, their deeply tragic aftermaths, his spirit faithfully reached up & out to God--up in devotion & hope, out in Christian witness of word & deed to the local & the universal neighbor.

2 While for an 88-year-old I've a factually & emotionally accurate memory, it's personal & therefore "interested" (in the sense of not impersonal-objective, not "disinterested"). I'm eager to hear from you at any points where you know I'm (factually) wrong or think me misperceiving of the man whom I have the disadvantage of never having been the son of, & you two the disadvantage of never having been the best friend of. (I sorrow that you were never man to man with your father, who died before you became men--you were 18, Guido; you, Donald, 13.)

3 After "doing" colleges in England & California, Al enrolled in '41 to do a doctorate (PhD) in the University of Chicago, intending thereafter to be an Adventist scholar & preacher in Germany (but soon decided to go for U.S. citizenship). He was full of life, zeal for learning (& always pumping me, as I was near my fourth earned degree in religion, the ThD), verbal freedom, joy, German-"pietist" devoutness, always leaning toward laughter. Verbal freedom? Trouble! He was a contrarian, loving to take the other side, or (as we say in America) to speak up for the underdog. He'd had Hiterjugend (Hitler-Youth) training, & (disastrously, for his freedom) would even say a good word for Hitler when he heard the Führer demonized (NOTE: As early as 1941, only those who'd taken MEIN KAMPF seriously were aware of Hitler's demonic potential beyond his expansionist successes.) Disastrously: the U.S.Government soon seized him as an "Enemy Alien," & imprisoned him as a POW for almost four years.

A few quick notes on his imprisonment: (1) I was the only defendant at his trial, & the judge rebuked me for standing up for an enemy alien who defended Hitler, had German & Italian funds in Swiss banks (as typically had Axis spies in America), & exhibited "Nazi morals" in his sexual behavior. I had gathered materials in his defense, including a letter from Ernest Cadman Colwell, dean of the U. of Chicago Divinity School; & his case for release was strong until a husband asked the Government not to release him, as Al would re-seduce his wife. I knew well all the parties in this tragedy. Your father had nothing to do with that woman until she told him she was in divorce proceedings, & her husband had already announced the name of the next woman he intended to marry. A jilted wife can be a major menace to unmarried men, & in taking up with her your father was more stupid than sinful. (2) Al was surprised at the good treatment he got as a POW. Good food & clothing, freedom to study & play (tennis, e.g.), respectful treatment by guards--everywhere except in Wisconsin, where he'd chosen to go to work as a railroad section-hand (in hope of improving his chances for release). I'm sending photos of his last full day in America (one of him taken by me, & other taken of us by my wife Loree); excellent physical condition, 160 pounds. (Returning to starving Germany, he soon lost 40 pounds). (3) The Government kept all his possessions, & I helped see that they were returned to him--his violin being the most cherished.

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12.22.05, Guido's Birthday

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4 Oh yes, his beloved violin. We all sorrow that, in yourmother Christa's poverty after your father's death, it was irretrievably lost in barter. During many a Sunday evening worship in Woodlawn Baptist Church (a few blocks from the U. of Chicago) where I as assistant pastor was in charge, he soulfully & with high musical competence improvised on his violin. Music: his first theological-seminary teaching post in Germany had him teaching (in German, of course) these courses in the first term: Musical Theory, Hebrew History, Greek, Latin, French, English! (He had, though you were too young to have appreciated it, an A+ intelligence, including creativity.) (Languages: I should add that in detention camp, he worked hard on Italian so he could correspond with his father in that language.)

4 Several years after returning to Germany, your father married Christa Gallasch, whose father, when Magdeburg chief-of-police, saved 40,000 Jews by personally, through many nights, creating false passports to Holland. When Himmler discovered the fraud, your grandmother said to her husband "Now you die for Christ." But he didn't: Himmler, a schoolmate of his, sent him off to police a small village. I obtained the services of an eminent author, who was willing to go to Germany & research the story of this "righteous gentile" (as the Jews call Jew-saving gentiles in the Nazi period), but I could not persuade your mother to cooperate. The story still needs telling. Donald, you're a writer: have you written it? I'm sending all I know, from your mother's full report to Loree & me in Rome. (By the time I secured the services of that author, your 86-year-old grandmother was too senile to be a reliable source of information.) (Only days after your father's death, your mother asked me for evidence of his incarceration in the U.S.--which I immediately sent, & on the basis of which she got a life pension ["Rente"] from the government.)

5 I heartily agree with a newspaper obituary (herewith) that your father was "friendly and worthy of love," "a blessed religion-teacher." I would add easy to love (as, your mother said, his students found) because of his eagerness to express love of God & of humanity. I was, he said, his brother (though we companioned together as fellow-students less than two years), with whom he had the joy of feeling free to say anything that might come to mind without fear of rejection. When I think of him & the conversational freedom we had (Loree heard it only once, & called it "dancing with words"), Shakespeare's Sonnet 116 sometimes comes to mind: "Let me not to the marriage of true minds / Admit impediments. Love is not love which / alters when it alteration finds."

6 Your father's central interest in religion was sustained throughout his life, & your mother's own deep faith also appears in the (undated) letter she wrote to us in response to our "12 Oct 75" (22 days after your father's death): "during the last months of his life, he was extremely interested in God's Kingdom under the ruler, Jesus Christ....It is the only hope for the world."

7 Doubtless you have material I sent to you earlier, including "My personal religion" (Dec.7/43), in which he says I helped him move from "contortionist literalism" to "liberal conservatism." Brilliantly, he went on many journeys of heart & mind, always checking back with me for resonances in classical (orthodox) & heretical Christian thought--but, I'm convinced, even without me, he would have found his way back to the biblical-theological Great Tradition. He steadily found God also in "the creation of ever new beauty" in the world & in his own life. Though always attracted to philosophy, one "really finds God only in contact with living experience and in living....The spirituality of Jesus is the key to God....God as revealed in the verily risen Christ." / In "The Meanings of Eternal Life," he briefly wandered into biologism, the belief that human hope is biological only (so eternal life is a quality of life before death) (but wrote 2 June 49 "I fully agree" with all my criticisms). Again briefly (as in "The Asssuredly Real"), he tried limiting "knowledge" to "science" but saw the impossibility. His will to discover & do God's will time & again rescues him from ideological-intellectual traps. / In my 11 Aug 76 letter to your mother, I said that your father--before & after being for four years a POW (Prisoner of War)--was always "constantly at work on inner business." That was a gift (Gabe) & assignment (Aufgabe) God gave him. He was grateful for the gift, & faithful to the assignment. May you, his sons, know your gifts & use them to the glory of God & the good of humanity & the good earth. Willis Elliott