Tamara Hall

Montana State University

Bozeman, Montana

TO ACCEPT THE TRUTH

America, land of the free, home of the brave, with justice and liberty for all...a free country...a happy country...a perfect country... perfect???? With racial disorders, campus riots and water pollution turning our streams and laskes so muddy that soon we will have to sing, "From the mountains to the valleys, to the oceans wide with dirt and bscteria." With these problems and more how can any American allow himself to become so disallusioned as to consider America perfect? I am an American. I am proud to be an American and would gladly fight to keep her ideals alive--but this does not make me blind to her faults. America is not infallible and its leaders are not gods. The American people must accept this fact because when they do then and only then will we be close to open-minded criticism and improvement of our country. We cannot solve America's problems until we admit their existence, and once we have admitted their existence, each and every citizen must realize that the presence of problems and faults do not make our country and less of a country.

On November 21, 1963, one of the most respected and well liked presidents of our times was shot down at the beginning of an energetic and vigorous career to help his country. John F. Kennedy was a good president because he cared about America. He is also proof that the public tries to avoid all of the truth. According to Newsweek, March 22, 1965, in an article appropriately entitled " The Ideal Man",it was stated that the youth of today have set J.F.K. up as their hero because he was a perfect president. He has done no wrong in the eyes of many and as one youth stated in this article, I'm afraid we've set him up as a martyre, he was such an ideal man." Kennedy was a sincere presi-

dent but he was

dent, but he was not perfect. He made mistakes and made use of practical politics. In a discussion between Walter Cronkite and Chet Huntley on the Mike Douglas show it was brought out that Kennedy briefed the press before a press conference on questions he would like them to ask and those who refused were not permitted to join the next one. By studying films of Kennedy's conferences it has also been discovered that he had a lady decoy at each of them. When he was asked an embarrassing question or one he could not answer, she was signaled and she changed the discussion immediately. According to the Encycopedia International, volume 10, 1968, Kennedy avoided giving his opinion of domestic affairs for fear of loosing public prestige. If I continued to tell you of his politics and of his mistakes how many of you would become mad and begin to defend him. Perhaps some of you are made already, but why should you be? Kennedy was a man and men make mistakes. He died for our country but that does not make his faults and errors non-existent. If we could accept him for the man he was and what he tried to be than our countries historians would not have to wait long years to tell of his mistakes. They could tell them now and we could learn not to repeat them. For as John Dryden said, "Errors like straws upon the water flow. Those who want pearls must dive below."

The reason it is hard for Americans to realize their country's imperfections is because of the way they are educated in patriotism. Children are taught at an early age to love their country. By the time they leave the first grade they know the Pledge Of Allegiance and at least five patriotic songs. This is good but they are also taught only the great accomplishments of the leaders of the past. They are not told of the errors that yesterdays leaders made. As a result, when they enter college

or become aware of the country around them they have the preconceived belief that our leaders can run out country like a ship on smooth water. They feel that is a storm should approach, our leaders will of course guide us calmly and confidently home. Suddenly they become aware of large waves of doubt and dispute between the leaders. They see other countries trying to destroy us, as an unforseen iceberg approaches without warning. As the boat is thrown from side to side because of panic aboard, he finds himself suddenly seasick. Much as a child who has just learned there is no Santa Claus the young American is faced with his disallusionment. He reacts with anger--after all, if leaders in the past could run a country smoothly and perfectly, why can't those of the present. To tell him was wrong about the past leaders will make him rebel more because it is hard to spoil ones dreams but it is even harder to tell him his dreams were false to begin with.

The solution to this problem is to teach him in grade school that although George Washington did not lie about the cherry tree, he did make mistakes. Teach him that although Abraham Lincoln would walk a mile to return a penny, he helped the negroes in the civil war more out of force than by choice. Teach the children to be proud of American not only for what she has accomplished but also for what she has tried to accomplish. Teach them that it is better to have tried and failed then never to have tried at all. For as Tolstoi said, "Errors are the force that bind men together."

Ones love for his country is much like ones lobe for his spouse. A wife learns to realize her husbands faults and she learns to love him even more for these faults, that she can understand and help him cope with. Americans must learn to accept their country's faults and make the improvement of these faults something to strive for. Afterall, the

country that is perfect in everyway can only go one way and that is down. What anxieties we suffer when we constantly fear her falling of her pedestal. Every citizen must realize that to love America means to love all of her...the streams of blue, the slums of black...the aroma of wet grass, the air of wet smut...the fire of freedom, the fear of inflation... the loyalty of the leaders, the loneliness of the poor. She has her goods and she has her bads, but only our recognizing these bads will ever turn them to goods. So open your eyes and your minds and see her for what she is. America is a humane country, composed of millions of loyal humans. It has been said, "To error is human, to forgive divine." Let us add another line--"To accept and improve, that is American!!!"

Tamara Hall
Montana State University
Bozeman, Montana

MILLERS FALLS
EZERASE
COTTON CONTENT