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## CHAPTER 1

### The Spirit of America

**The Spirit of Fair Play** - Every American boy and girl learns on the playground the true spirit of America, which is nothing else than fair play; fair play for every one, big and little, neither bullies nor cheats allowed. You can sum up the whole object of American Government by saying that it seeks to give every American, man or woman, boy or girl, rich or poor, an equal chance. Every boy and girl in America wishes to win, to succeed, to become great and famous. There is more ambition in America than any other country in the world. That is because every boy and girl has a better chance in America than in any other country in the world. Our country is far from perfect; we have our faults and injustices; as has every country. There are cheats and bullies in business as well as play. But we try to keep the game of life fair and we have succeeded by God's grace in making America the land of opportunity.

The poorest boy can become President. Ronald Reagan, who worked as a radio operator as a young man, lived to become a famous President. Every position, every success, stands open for each boy to try to win. Every girl can learn as much as she can and enter any business or work that appeals to her. Mr. Ray Kroc, who started out working as a soda fountain attendant in his uncle's drugstore in Chicago at the age of fourteen, eventually became the founder of the world famous McDonald's restaurant chain. He is but one of hundreds of Americans who have won their way to the highest success, because they had the freedom to pursue their dreams.

Now it is fair play, and only fair play, that makes this possible; that gives this chance to rich and poor alike. As in games, so in work we try our hardest to win, to succeed. But we play fair. We obey the rules. We give every boy and girl a fair start. We put bullies and cheats out of the game, and we aim to give every one an equal chance to succeed. That is the spirit of America. No one is a true American who does not try to live up to this standard of fairness.

There is no room for king or noble or any favored class in this free country. Every American is as good as his brains and character and manners, and no better.

#### **\*Five Reasons for America's Success**

Today in our affluent society, we are enjoying so much of the fruits of this great system of ours that most of us forget just how and why we have become so prosperous. How is it that six percent of the world's population can produce almost one-half of the world's wealth? How could the American people in the short span of five generations, have changed an undeveloped wilderness continent into the tremendously rich and powerful nation that we now take for granted?

First, our founding fathers wrote the Constitution, the greatest document to govern people that the world has even seen. Living and working under our

Constitution and Bill of Rights, Americans created the most successful major society in all human history—and they did it all without government aid . . . .

*It was built on these five principles:*

1. We had a *belief in God*—and this religious background made us reliable and dependable with one another.
2. We had *limited government*—and this limited our national expenses and gave us surplus capital for tools and a good living standard.
3. We had *individual freedom*—every man could work at what he wanted.
4. We had *incentive*—which was simply the right to keep the fruits of our labor.
5. We had *competition*—the thing that makes businessman and employee alike serve his fellow man well.

The thinking of earlier leaders molded our American heritage. For example, Patrick Henry said, "If my family has freedom, and I have not given them one shilling, they would be rich. If they would not have freedom, and I have given them the whole world, they would be poor."

Thomas Jefferson put it more simply, "As government advances, freedom gives way." He was echoed much later by Woodrow Wilson—"Liberty has never come from government. The history of liberty is the history of limitation of governmental power, not the increase of it."

America became a place where the common man could be uncommon; where a man could become whatever his energy, his intellect, and his manhood could make him. This was the challenge, the hope, and the American heritage that touched and inspired hearts everywhere.

That freedom which our founding fathers gained for us is the cornerstone upon which this nation is built. We, in America, have been able to deliver in unbelievable abundance what Marxism, collectivism, Socialism, and fascism can only promise. But freedom rests, and always will, on *individual responsibility, courage, and faith*. It was exactly these qualities which have made the United States the most prosperous nation the world has ever known.

What truly concerns me is that for two centuries, because of the individual strength of each citizen, we guarded and nurtured our hard-won freedom. Gradually, though, as we have become more prosperous, we have also become less willing to shoulder individual responsibilities. More and more, we have government do what the individual should do. Either we will again assume the responsibility required by freedom or that light will go out in America. And if it does, it will go out all over the world. If the wealth, luxury and leisure that our system has brought us make us smug and complacent, willing to load our responsibilities on our government, we will lose—and deserve to lose—all these fruits of freedom.

*\*Five Reasons for America's Success*, written by Walter Knott of Knott's Berry Farms.

## Questions on the Text

1. What is the spirit of America?
2. What is the object of our government?
3. Why is there no nobility in America?
4. List five reasons why the United States is successful.

