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Nuts to 1966

By Nathan Ziprin

No one will mourn its passing. There have been times when tearing the last leaf from the calendar was a ritual in sadness. But there will be neither sadness nor nostalgic regret when this span goes the way of all time.

When the year unfolded itself twelve months ago, there was hope in the hearts of men everywhere that it would mark the end of the wars that have been plaguing the world and herald the beginning of an era of peace that would bring tranquility to all tables.

Instead, the year saw the flames of war fanning out ominously, threatening to engulf us in combat and erase forever the pattern that man has been weaving for himself since the beginning of time.

Not alone was the year marred by disharmony and bickering among nations, but by lack of wisdom, shallow thinking and a leadership that seemingly thrived on magnifying tension only because it was lacking in constructive talent.

True enough, the madness that is the atom bomb did not descend upon us in nineteen sixty six, though there have been times when it seemed the powers controlling the destiny of the world were perilously close to decision. Human nerves, however, were frayed and on the breaking point almost ceaselessly throughout the year, and wherever there were hearths there were also wrathful winds.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of our day has been the failure of emergence of a leadership capable of taming the madness around us and our fears.

Instead of forthrightness in the chancelleries of the world, there has been deception and where vision was the need there has been instead blurring and blunder and blatant babble to the very edge of the pitfall.

The world is in deep trouble as the year comes to a close, yet there is no need for surrendering to fear.

Man's greatest genius over the ages has been his ability to meet and counter every visible crisis. Because we have not yet sung our last ode there is hope we will yet find the key to undoing the crisis that is upon the world now. Otherwise we must ready for the fate of extinction.

If we do not weaken in our striving for survival, for preservation of heritage and faith and values, the story of the coming could have a more exhilarating ending.

Above all there is the hope that man will not risk undoing creation if only because he has still a tale to tell.

the Jew, or who endures indeed, but only to serve as a reminder of us to God's graciousness in inviting us into the household of the Christian faith."

Looking about us now in every large American community to see how Jewish-Christian dialogue is going, we can find obvious gains, but the sharp disappointment persists over the final 1965 decision of Church authorities pointedly to deal with the "Christ-killer" charge. (Had Pope John lived to have his way and had Cardinal Bea and other Church stalwarts been able to hold off Arab church politicians and other influential reactionaries at the Vatican Council sessions, the text suggested in 1964 would not have been abandoned. That 1964 pronouncement read: "May they (all) never present the Jewish people as one rejected, cursed, or guilty of deicide." But by the time the blue pencils had gone through it in 1965, it read: "Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this follows from the Holy Scriptures.")

Nevertheless, one of the gains emanating from the Vatican Council's issuance of declarations on the Jews and on religious freedom is the creation of a much more relaxed atmosphere for discussion. At the Religious Education Association assembly referred to above, Rabbi Eugene Borowitz, professor of Jewish education at Hebrew Union College was quoted as observing that the "animosity of Jews towards Catholics was not increasing, but only that for the first time Jews feel free to say what they are thinking."

There are other advances, too. Protestants and Catholics are learning considerably these days about the origin, beauty, and significance of Jewish holy days; the strands of history partially responsible for the ghettoization of Jewish life are being sorted out and better appraised; the importance of religious freedom is emphasized in the discussions; the ways are being found for concentrating the diverse religious forces of the community on the sharp and persistent political, economic, and social problems proliferating in the secular city.

I still keep and hope to keep for a long time the front page of a copy of the New York Journal-American (now a merger partner) for October 28, 1965. A two-decker, eight column banner headline of that paper reads: "The Pope Decrees Innocence of Jews." The headline undoubtedly thrilled and pleased thousands. It dismayed me as it must have depressed other thousands. Why should we need Pope Paul to spring us from the jail of Christian opinion, stitched into the Gospel according to John and threaded all the way through the murderous Crusades to the cur-

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TELL TALES

"One Man Plus The Truth Constitutes A Majority"

BY JACK TELL



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an interview with his biographer Cy Rice, concluded just days before Nick entered Mt. Sinai hospital for the last time, Nick said he was left \$700,000 by a godfather, which he ran into millions via a bookmaking operation in Canada. He once lost \$1.6 million in a dice game and on another occasion spent seven days in one sitting of a poker game.

Although Nick was a wrong bettor, he was the rightest guy this writer ever knew. What attracted us to Nick, was not his reputation as a gambler. We'd known most of the big ones through the years. It was the logic of word and deed he displayed. Everything about Nick the Greek was the epitome of sound reasoning. Distortion of the facts or even harmless exaggeration were foreign to his philosophy. When he related a story, he was precise in informing us whether it was previously printed, and the true version. The truth about his colorful career, which we've followed for about 40 years, turned out to be even stranger than the fabricated fiction that popped up after pass-through word of mouth from a number of persons.

After being present in a number of Eastern spots when Nick was in action, whether it was Sammy Shield's downtown N.Y. emporium or the game of Fat the Butch in Harlem, or Ben Marden's Riviera across the George Washington Bridge, or Lefty Clark's operation at the Chicago Club in Saratoga, or with Mike Best's crowd in a leased Miami Beach home, we never failed to marvel at Nick's composure no matter how high the tension mounted. While most big gamblers were wrong bettors there were businessmen who liked to gamble big, who favored taking the odds, like theatrical producer George White and subway builder Sam Rosoff.

Nick told us the biggest bet he ever made was laying \$240,000 to \$120,000 against a ten, which came up the hard way -- two fives. Nick lost the bet, but he proved it was not the money involved that mattered most. It was the probability of winning that was in his favor. After all, he said, money was only a tangeable commodity that came and left. The odds remained constant.

On e incident Nick told us in confidence, may now be published. It concerned gambler Arnold Rothstein, who was shot in a room at the Park Central Hotel. Rothstein, traditionally refused to name his assailant up to his death within hours at the Polyclinic Hospital. Rothstein knew he was going to his finish at the meeting in the room, Nick knew it also, but Nick had found a solution to the financial problem, that would have saved Rothstein's life. On that fateful evening Nick waited for Rothstein at Lindy's to tell Arnold the good news. They met usually at seven. At six Nick stepped into the Mark Hellinger Theatre, next to Lindy's. At six thirty Rothstein showed up, ahead of time, waited a few moments and then went on to his death. At six, forty-five, Nick emerged from the theatre and found out that Rothstein had been there and left. Nick was frantic. He did not know where the meeting was being held. As he was phoning to find out, he heard the siren of the ambulance on its way to the hospital. Nick knew he was too late.

Nick's favorite story, which we've told previously, concerned Ava Gardner at the Last Frontier in Las Vegas. Nick was in his room when he received a call that Miss Gardner was waiting for him in the lobby. In his haste to dress he put on one tan and one black shoe. Nick was lucky that night. He won several thousand. Later on, dancing with the movie star, the unmatched shoes were noted and the other guests started to buzz. The hotel's press agent sent the item on to Ed Sullivan, who ran it in his daily column in the N.Y. Daily News. The next day horseplayers on the Aqueduct special to the race track, were wearing one brown and one black shoe. Nick's reflection of this circumstance was a classic. It proves, he commented, that gamblers have two pairs of shoes.

Nick once informed us that he had never worked for a gambling establishment, nor did he ever shill for one. This disproves an opinion that had developed after sight-seers noticed him favoring one casino or another. Nick's presence meant thousands in extra business from the yokels. But of recent years, Nick was about to take the plunge.

We'd never seen him as excited as when he told us he was interested in becoming one of the owners of the Tally Ho gambling. The Tally Ho, now the plush Milton Prell's Aladdin, was built as a deluxe, non-gambling resort establishment on the Strip. When the original plans proved unproductive, Nick headed a group of Texas financiers who contemplated posting a multi-million dollar bankroll. It was to be the swankiest gambling casino ever contemplated outmatching even Monte Carlo, with French croupiers and

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Editorial

A New Year Hope

As the new year 1967 makes its debut, the prayers of all must be for a little of the peace about which so much is talked about.

Some ascribe the continuous wars in which the world seems forever immersed to the biological nature of man. We are told that man is essentially a combative creature, that the jungle is still in him and he in it and that the hopes for any lasting peace are therefore Utopian. Perhaps there is something in this hypothesis. The scientists of course are best qualified to make such judgments, but as an ordinary layman looks about the world, what he sees points to other factors.

Man may be combative by nature, yet most people do not prefer war.

The fact is that war is so unpopular that even the most democratic governments have been forced to resort to compulsion, to the draft, in order to raise armies.

The people everywhere want peace and if they have it not, the fault is not with them. Involvement in war is rarely if ever the peoples' choice.

Nearly three thousand years ago the Hebrew prophet Isaiah gave expression to the hopes of world peace. He looked forward to the time when the swords would be turned into ploughshares. Today these sage words are engraved on the walls of the United Nations, greeting the delegates as they convene in deliberation, but the words of the ancient prophet apparently have not sunk into their souls.

What better wish can one make on the coming of the new year than that the words of the Hebrew prophet take on deeper reality in the hearts of all men and in the councils of nations.

Religious Differences

By Robert Segal

We are indebted to Catholic Features Cooperative for an excellent summary of a recent session of the interdenominational Religious Education Association dealing with "The Economic Revolution and Religious Education." Therein, it becomes apparent that acceptance of religious differences continues to pose a burning challenge for even the best-intentioned of the army of ecumenical conversationalists.

The new chairman of the board of the Religious Education Association is the distinguished Catholic publisher, Philip Scharper, editor-in-chief of Sheed and Ward. In the course of the session here referred to, he took pains to deplore the assumption and criticism some of the defects in the Vatican Council's highly controversial declaration regarding the Jews. He noted that in that statement "there seems to be a muted not nonetheless significant theme: the suggestion that, in the religious history of western man, the Jew is to be found as an obdurate fact, who has either with characteristic perverseness, refused to die to corroborate our theology of

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