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# Mentors Margaret Thatcher and Mother Teresa Remembered: 'Tough Cookies With Tender Spirits!'

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My relationship with Margaret Thatcher began in 1989, thanks to meeting Mother Teresa. These pioneering leaders with a "tough and tender" entrepreneurial spirit inspired creation of The Noel Foundation "Life" Award. Sharing a common vision, to serve a cause greater than oneself and help other women and their families struggling throughout the world, embracing a shared mission: freedom and peace.

It is a humbling gift of grace to dream to meet someone you admire as a role model and then for them to actually become your real life mentor. Since a teenager I was in awe of two remarkable leaders for their ability to inspire others for the good of humanity: Mother Teresa and Margaret Thatcher. Unexpectedly being invited on separate occasions to share "tea, biscuits and tidbits of good counsel" with a Prime Minister and a Saint was an amazing grace.

It was first "business and charity," then "politics and charity" which brought us together and I submit that these vibrant vocations with virtue intertwined are relevant today. There will always be detractors or naysayers when discussing the accomplishments of Margaret Thatcher or even Mother Teresa. Interesting to note, attackers are called "devil's advocates." I would respond with, "that says it all; who do you desire to be influenced by?"



The recent passing of Lady Margaret Thatcher moved me to share some salient lessons from these two mentors. Maternal wisdom, interior strength and heartfelt external acts flowed from Margaret Thatcher and Mother Teresa during the special occasions we shared. During "one on one" times and at the awesome multi-generational visits when our son Nicholas or our daughter Shannon was included, valuable life lessons of faith, courage and compassion were taught by these exemplar mentors, world champions of hope.

In 1988 at a Young Presidents Organization (YPO) Summit in New Delhi, the uncommon embrace of Mother Teresa had a profound effect. Her angelic touch and stirring words remain indelible in my heart. Later visiting her in Calcutta she proclaimed, "What you can do I cannot do, what I can do you cannot do, but together we can do something beautiful for God." Her poignant message was to us all and her example was the catalyst for establishing a charitable foundation in 1989 to help those most in need. And concurrently to honor women making a difference for a better world while funding in their names projects for women and families in developing countries and inner cities.

With this mission, I flew to London to meet the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Margaret Thatcher. Arriving at 10 Downing Street by London Taxi, with the "pro-Maggie" cabby singing her praises all the way, was memorable. But so was my eager anticipation of meeting the person I looked up to as the most inspirational political leader in the world. Prime Minister Thatcher was an "up-close and personal" role model far beyond my wildest dreams. She carried an imposing professional presence, strikingly statesman-like, with refined femininity. If it weren't for the fact that we wore similar strands of pearls, which broke the ice of the moment with a warm greeting complimenting each other as we shook hands, I would not have been able to speak.

It was the Prime Minister's tender "woman to woman" approach that helped me to relax and allowed us to comfortably enjoy "a spot of afternoon tea." The scones were secondary to devouring her unparalleled buffet of knowledge discussing world events. Her keen perspective seemed to pour out faster and smoother than even the Darjeeling. During our treasured encounters over the years, Lady Thatcher's "pearls of wisdom" were flowing from her exceptional brain and

entrepreneurial spirit, outranking the "pearls of beauty" surrounding her lovely neck and elegant attire. And what a formidable voice she possessed, with dramatic timing and perfect elocution!

Surprised and humbled in 1997 by the urging of Nancy Reagan and Merv Griffin to run for political office, it seemed prudent to ask two inspiring mentors for advice. Mother Teresa said, "You should, but don't forget the poor!" Lady Thatcher then recommended, "Be involved at all levels of communities, speak out for what you believe and do not forget the media!"

During their lifetime of notably 87 years each, both women shared more than the same initials. Margaret Thatcher and Mother Teresa imparted life-long leadership lessons if one is simply humble enough to take note and follow their sage guidance and hard-working example, irrespective of gender or party affiliation. Spirit of purpose radiated from these two great leaders, catapulted upon the controversial world stage of politics and religion. These subjects are taboo to discuss if one desires to avoid confrontation. These leaders, however, exhibited the courage, compassion and compunction to confront burning issues affecting the future of humanity.



From promoting "life to liberty" they maintained the intestinal fortitude ingredients to be tough cookies with a tender center. Their recipe for success requires virtues with focus and support. They both stayed close to their Creator and to the

main man in their life. For the prime minister her loyal husband Denis was her rock and for the saint, it was her crucified spouse Jesus that kept her going. Arguably, every great woman needs a great man by her side and vice versa.

These two great mentors were delivered to this world with incomparable "grace and grit." One was compared to "iron," a strong element and mineral vital for sustaining life. "Iron" brings oxygen to the heart. That was the calling of Margaret Thatcher. She deserves credit for helping to alleviate failed economic and social methodologies and for advancing freedom and security globally.

One could say that this singular great woman came at the perfect time in history to influence and compliment the mission of three great men, Ronald Reagan, Mikhail Gorbachev and Pope John Paul II. Prime Minister Thatcher said of President Gorbachev, "I like Mr. Gorbachev. We can do business together." Inspiring President Reagan to proclaim, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" One could assert, her inspired instinct emboldened President Reagan's determination leading to the demise of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the restoration of one Germany uniting families and changing world history for the better. Good teamwork! John Paul II laid the groundwork by inspiring the Solidarity Movement in Poland in 1980 and others followed. Perhaps Almighty God, the Head Chef from above, was preparing a "baker's dozen" to satisfy the hunger for "sweet freedom."

The other great mentor and tough cookie, Mother Teresa, worked tirelessly simply dressed in a soft "cotton" sari. She was cultivated to serve "the poorest of the poor." These distinct substances of "iron and cotton" are durable and long-lasting, resembling their legacies. Margaret Thatcher dubbed "Iron Lady" and "the best man in Europe" was actually quite feminine in person, perfectly manicured. Mother Teresa, called "Saint of the Gutters," exuded gentle firmness and holiness. Her pearls were rosary beads named "Job's Tears," which she held constantly in her worn hands.

Both women had firm handshakes, purpose-driven strides and sad eyes. Like there was not enough time to fulfill all that needed to be done in this world, or perhaps concerned that their hard to acquire wisdom would be ignored, resulting in more dangerous days ahead. These two dedicated women touched the lives of innumerable people and bequeathed a legacy way beyond their brief earthly sojourn. Their "tough and tender" spirit endures as a gift of grace to be passed on to future generations of leaders.

The youth now have an opportunity to carry on the "free market revolution" of Lady Thatcher as they become successful business entrepreneurs and participants in the political arena. These inspired youth can also join the "revolution of love" by following Mother Teresa as they give back and help the poor. At the Calcutta funeral of Mother Teresa in 1997, being a media spokesperson there allowed me the blessed opportunity to proclaim her work would grow through her co-workers and the proliferation of Missionaries of Charity worldwide.

On October 1, 1990, with UNIFEM, we honored Prime Minister Thatcher at the United Nations at "A Celebration of International Leadership." Barbara Walters was Mistress of Ceremonies. David Rockefeller introduced his friend Margaret Thatcher to the distinguished audience of diplomats, heads of state and business people from all political persuasions. U.N. Secretary Perez de Cuellar presented the first Noel Foundation "Life" Awards. Prime Minister Thatcher accepted by remarking someday she hoped for a woman president of the great United States.

Perhaps a virtuous entrepreneurial leader like Margaret Thatcher and Mother Teresa combined is just what the Head Chef may prepare. That would mean a tough cookie, with a tender center, and the power of the Holy Spirit!

Aloha Lady Thatcher. Thank you for your friendship, service and eternal wisdom!