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# Free Enterprise Has Real Meaning for This American Citizen

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Of The Morning Call Staff

Some day many American families will live in 130-odd homes in a section north of Northampton known as Cherryville Road Heights and they will have back-yard cookouts and go swimming on the Fourth of July, come in celebrating America's Independence Day just like everybody else across the land.



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And in the spring primaries and the November general elections, many of them will vote. And some of them won't bother. It is optional, anyway. What they probably won't realize is that their way of living there is a result of one man's story in which no one had the option not to vote and there was no choice of one party or candidate over the other.

Like many another successful American businessman, Louis Tepes of Coplay was elected president of his Rotary Club two weeks ago.

Like many another successful businessman, he pays his personal and business taxes promptly. And like many another successful businessman he voices his desires, his likes and dislikes, to his representatives in government when the occasion demands it.

Seven years ago, Louis Tepes was not a United States citizen. He became naturalized in 1955. But he has worn his citizenship as comfortably as an old shoe, freely using its privileges ("I voted as soon as I became a citizen"), its opportunities (he has built business buildings, churches and homes in his contracting business), and its responsibilities.

Louis Tepes was born in Rohitsch, Yugoslavia, near Hume, a little over 44 years ago. At 16, he was learning masonry; at the start of World War II he was a journeyman with a background in building engineering and the title of master builder.

A master builder in Europe is allowed to design and execute buildings up to five stories in height. Anything higher requires an engineer. At 28, Louis went into business for himself in Austria, but it was after the war and there was no free enterprise.

Louis lived in Austria in 1942 after Germany had annexed it to the Third Reich and he found himself a German citizen until

May 1945, when he returned Yugoslavia with his bride, the former Margaret Stranzl, an attractive Austrian girl.

**Concentration Camp**  
His welcome home was a commitment to a concentration camp for six weeks until, in August 1945, he was released under a general amnesty.

"They wanted to lock me up again in September," he says as simply as if he were talking under a ticket for overtime parking. "But I was informed in good time that it would be better if I could find a place to get away to."

"When I was released from the concentration camp, I had to sign a paper saying I would never work against the 'Democratic Republic of Yugoslavia.'"

"That was like signing everything away. I was speaking out against one-party elections. They definitely knew that during the war I was in the underground against the Nazis but had never been a Communist."

"I was promised many things in (Yugoslavia) if I would be a tool of the Communists. I did not agree. I decided to leave everything and go. We had one boy, a year and a half old."

The second was just about due. Louis Tepes Jr., who was the 1½-year-old, is 17 now, will be 18 in November and is preparing to enter Philadelphia's Peirce School of Business Administration this fall.

Joseph, who was "just about due," was born in Austria, where Louis Sr. and Margaret had fled with Louis Jr. in September 1945. Joseph is 16 now.

Louis Sr., 31, was born in the United States about a year before his father went into the contracting business for himself.

Four years after their 1945 arrival back in Austria, Louis and Margaret Tepes and their two small sons were on a boat bound for the United States.

On Oct. 4, 1949, they arrived in Coplay, where they stayed at the home of a distant relative, John Slangi of 48 N. 7th St.

**First: Learning**  
"It was my definite intention to go into business," Louis Sr. says.

But a lot of the processes were different in the United States. He promptly set out to learn them.

Louis worked with L. P. & Sons, Bricklot from 1949 to sometime in 1950, with Frank Latterschmidt, a general contractor, for several more months; and then with Clarence B. Haney, until 1952, to learn masonry. And then the time had come.

For his first job as an independent contractor, he designed a building for Kleckner & Sons, the appliance dealers on the 7th Street Pike.

"It was satisfactory and approved, and I got also the job of building it," Louis says. "After that I got numerous jobs."

**'Competent' Job**  
Louis Tepes feels he is doing a competent job. Last week he got a letter concerning the new South Presbyterian Church in Easton, which he completed three years ago. It read in part:

"We hope that you are as pleased as we are with the completed construction. The long months of devoted labor have surely resulted in a building worthy to be called Temple of God. Your superior craftsmanship and devotion to detail have made for the congregation a true house of Prayer."

Louis Tepes is also an active figure in the Blasco Lumber Co., a group of 12 builders who organized their own building supply company in 1961, at Weaverville, N. C. The letters in the name "Blasco" stand for Builders Lumber & Supply Co., but that name had already been taken by a similar group elsewhere in the state, so Tepes' group settled for "Blasco."

Louis has built about 200 structures since he first went into business in the United States. As he did when he first became a United States citizen, he still votes in all elections. But an old spectre of one-partyism still dogs him. He is a registered Republican and one of the things on which Coplay's reputation is based is its overwhelming Democratic registrations.

"Only, now we can talk 'ultra party' and have no fear of concentration camps," Louis laughs.

**'Fully Satisfied'**  
More seriously, Louis Tepes sits behind his big paneled desk in his carpeted office and reflects: "We are fully satisfied and we feel this (country) is our home. And we feel prepared to do anything possible to work with society for this country."

"If I would spend only eight hours a day working, would I think I would become a successful businessman?" Louis asks himself. And then he answers: "There is opportunity if you struggle."

Over his shoulder, on the wall of his office, hangs a plan of a building development labeled "Cherryville Road Heights." It is the plan for the 130 lots which Louis Tepes is developing, his next step in business.

And many families living there some day will have July 4 cookouts and be able to vote or neglect to vote, with impunity, because Louis Tepes doesn't like a one-party government — and said so.

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