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INVESTOR'S BUSINESS DAILY

Martin Anderson: Reagan's Renaissance Idea Man For Liberty

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When I was growing up the draft was an ugly rite of passage for young men. But when I turned 18 no "Uncle Sam wants you" notice arrived in the mail.

America had shifted to a volunteer military. At the time I didn't know who to thank for the freedom to choose my future. But I later met the man responsible while attending Stanford Law School.

Martin Carl Anderson, who died a few days ago, then was in residence at the Hoover Institution. I thought our encounter was happenstance, but years later Anderson told me that he had been reading my articles in the Stanford Daily and elsewhere and wanted to meet me.

Anderson left to set up the Reagan operation in March 1979. As I approached graduation he asked me to join the campaign. My adventure continued on to the White House.

Anderson was a stellar example of an intellectual able to translate detailed academic research into policy ammunition. In 1965 he married Annelise Graebner, who became a significant policy advocate in her own right and joined Anderson in many of his later writing projects.

Anderson received his doctorate in 1962. Five years later he began advising Richard Nixon, ending up as a special assistant to President Nixon before joining the Hoover Institution in 1971.

Anderson had many interests, but one overriding philosophy: He believed in individual liberty. He joined Ronald Reagan and went on to advise George H.W. Bush, Pete Wilson and Bob Dole.

Anderson began his policy career with an explosive attack on urban renewal, through which slums would be cleared and new communities created. No surprise, the effort was extraordinarily

expensive and socially destructive. In 1967 the MIT Press published "The Federal Bulldozer: A Critical Analysis of Urban Renewal, 1949-1962."

Anderson was a draftee who turned his intellect and energy to ending conscription. He seamlessly joined policy research and political maneuver, selling Nixon on the virtues of a volunteer military.

Anderson left the Nixon administration before its ugly implosion, but returned to government with President Reagan to address the All Volunteer Force's deficiencies, an effort in which I was involved as his assistant.

However, Anderson's most important work for Reagan was shaping the economic agenda, particularly finding a way mold a consistent economic program amid sometimes bitter arguments over tax and budget policy.

Although Anderson was loyal to those he served — he never published a kiss-and-tell memoir — he did not let personalities get in the way of principle. He never spoke ill of Nixon despite the latter's destructive denouement.

However, when Nixon proposed essentially a negative income tax in the guise of the Family Assistance Plan, Anderson brought his accustomed skills into opposition. In 1978 Hoover published Anderson's "Welfare: The Political Economy of Welfare Reform in the United States."

Anderson's most important work after leaving the Reagan administration was explaining and amplifying Reagan's legacy. In 1988 Anderson published "Revolution: The Reagan Legacy," a wonderfully readable account of what Reagan's success and presidency meant. In 2001 Anderson and his wife Annelise joined historian Kiron K. Skinner to produce Reagan, "In His Own Hand: The Writings of Ronald Reagan that Reveal His Revolutionary Vision for America."

Like most everyone in or seeking high political office, Reagan employed ghost-writers on occasion. But Reagan always touched up, and sometimes heavily edited, the work of others. Moreover, the Andersons found a treasure trove of the articles and scripts in Reagan's own hand. The latter wrote the vast majority his material from start to finish. Two years later the two Andersons along with Skinner released "Reagan: A Life in Letters," revealing fascinating glimpses of the former president's life through the letters he wrote.

Even more significant was "Reagan's Secret War: The Untold Story of his Fight to Save the World from Nuclear Disaster," written by both Andersons. They explored declassified documents which demonstrated Reagan's determination to eliminate the threat of nuclear war. Reagan abhorred what he called the Evil Empire for all the right reasons, but was determined to avoid war and worked with Mikhail Gorbachev to end the Cold War.

Although Anderson operated at the pinnacle of the American political system, he was an ideas man uncomfortable with typical bureaucratic infighting. He got out of the Nixon administration early and left the Reagan administration after little more than a year. After that he concentrated on offering advice as an outsider.

In recent years Marty, as I will always know him, and I only talked occasionally, and not nearly enough. But he fought the good fight until the end. We are all better off because of his manifold efforts. Marty, RIP.

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