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MY VIEW

Wichitans also shine light in darkness

BY BOB HAMRICK

I have heard stories told by the Allied soldiers who freed prisoners from Nazi concentration camps at the end of World War II. No matter what words they used to describe the horror, they all asked the same question: How is it possible that human beings could do this?



Hamrick

Watching Dennis Rader's sentencing hearing, I asked, too: How could this man, how could

any man, do the things we now know he did? Are human beings really capable of that?

The sickening answer is yes. Yes times 10. Yes times 6 million. There is within us the potential for depravity and cruelty beyond imagination.

Wednesday afternoon, though, I saw potential's other side. Balbir Mathur walked into my office.

Some 20 years ago, Balbir left a lucrative career as a management consultant, determined to help feed the world. Trees for Life, the organization he founded and headquartered in Wichita, has helped millions of the world's most malnourished tap into renewable, sustainable food

resources. It has saved lives.

Now, Balbir is determined to cover that world in books. He believes that a library can and must be built in every town, every village in every country on Earth.

"Imagine, Bob," he explains as his dream catches hold, "every one of us can be the next Andrew Carnegie. We can put a book into the hands of every child. We can change the world!"

Yes, we can. We have that potential. Because just as our species is capable of unspeakable wrongs, so are we capable of unimaginable good. We can feed people, we can open minds, we can do better.

Like soldiers haunted decades later by ghostly memories of living skeletons, Wichita will long carry the images of 10 victims, grieving families and the stench of what one man was capable of. It is right to remember this darkness. But we should never forget the hundreds of Balbirs in our lives who shine light in so many dark places. They are living proof of the potential of human goodness who fervently believe in our capacity for goodness. I pray we choose to prove them right.

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