

The Genius of Juan Bautista de Anza

13 Heroic Strategies for Today's People of Ambition

BY PATRICIA NELSON LIMERICK

JUAN BAUTISTA DE ANZA is not a household name, but I wish he were. Why did celebrity status and name recognition come to some figures in Western American history, and not to others? A biography of a figure like Meriwether Lewis can become a fixture on bestseller lists. As a book trying for comparable popularity, a biography of Juan Bautista de Anza would seem defeated before it started, with no way to appeal to nationalistic pride or even to basic name recognition.

My own sense of defeat in these matters settled in a few years ago. I was flying to Durango, Colorado, and I was looking at a *New York Times Book Review*. On the inside front page, there was a prominently featured advertisement for a book, called *Heart of the West*, by a woman named Penelope Williamson. The ad featured a lurid Western sunset as background, and these words at the top: "Wild, Raw, and Beautiful." At the bottom, the ad gave a summary of the book: "Nothing had prepared this New England bride for the harsh realities of the frontier. Nothing could prepare her for a love beyond reason." And then, very portentously, at the bottom, stood the words: "Montana Was Not the Only Frontier."

When I got to Durango and met with some students at Fort Lewis College, I showed them the ad for Penelope Williamson's book. Then I asked them to assess the proportion of influence here: on a scale of 100, how much influence over popular thinking would they assign to Penelope Williamson's image of the West, and how much influence would they assign to Patricia Nelson Limerick's image of the West?

The students gave 98 points to Penelope Williamson, and two points to me. Then, under a little pressure, they admitted that they only gave me the two points in order to be polite and kind.

After that trip to Durango, life has been a lot more restful. For years, I had struggled away, insisting in every possible forum that the real stories of the West were much more compelling than the stories cooked up to meet the desires of those who love the Western myth. I actually believed, for quite a long time, that Western fact could hold its own against Western myth. Thus, there was something very restful, something really quite soothing, about recognizing, facing up, and submitting to defeat.

BUT EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE a fit of nostalgia for the old campaign flares up. What would happen if I decided to give the Western popularizers a run for their money and make a case, pitched to the ever more frenetic marketing concerns of mainstream publishers, for the life of Juan Bautista de Anza as thrilling, blockbuster material?

What sort of ad could we design for such a book? There is certainly nothing lacking in the available scenery. We could have a shot of the haunting landscape of New Mexican mesas, of towering mountains in the Southern Rockies, or life-threatening stretches of deserts west of the Colorado River. But how do we word this ad? Honesty would probably require, in the place of "Wild, Raw, and Beautiful," something closer to "Well Organized, Effective, and Disciplined." And, in contrast to "Nothing had prepared the New England bride for the realities of the frontier. Nothing had prepared her for a love beyond reason," we would have to say, "Everything had prepared the colonial office holder for the realities of the frontier. Everything had prepared him for promotions beyond his original rank."

And then there is the final line, counterpart to "Montana Was Not the Only Frontier": "The Settlement at

Colorado Central usually helps arrange an Anza Day in late August in Poncha Springs, to commemorate when Juan Bautista de Anza camped there during his 1779 campaign; his journal is the first known written account of the northern San Luis Valley, Poncha Pass, and the upper Arkansas Valley.

In 1997, the Anza Day speaker was Patricia Nelson Limerick, professor of history at the University of Colorado and the author of many works; her best-known is *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West*.

This is essentially the speech she gave then, and as an essay, it will appear in her book, *Something in the Soil: Field Testing the New Western History*, to be published next March by W.W. Norton & Co.

There's a reason that there's no Poncha Anza Day this year: The Fourth Annual World Anza Conference will be held just over the pass in the San Luis Valley on August 26-29, and history buffs will be able to hear from historians and scholars there. For the Conference schedule, please see the Agenda on page 42.

San Francisco Was Not the Only Achievement.”

Certainly the characteristics disqualifying Anza from celebrity status are considerable. First of all, he was working for the wrong empire, the empire that worked its way northward instead of westward, the empire whose descendants did not take part in the writing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776 nor in the writing of the United States history until quite recently.

And then there is the problem of Anza's timing. Leading an overland party to found San Francisco was one thing; having the poor luck to do this in 1776 was another. When it comes to paying attention to events that occurred away from the eastern seaboard, in the 1770s and 1780s, most American historians will claim that they have a prior engagement. The American Revolution holds on to the limelight.

With the revolt of the British Atlantic colonies in full swing during Anza's peak period of activity, it is very hard for him to escape from the narrative framework, "Meanwhile, as these consequential and world changing events unfolded on the East Coast, off in the middle

of nowhere some other things of dramatically less importance were going on." On the days when the circus is in town, it is very hard for even very interesting performers in another show to drum up an audience.

ANOTHER FACTOR may outweigh the others in reducing Anza's name recognition value, and that factor we might call an excess of good sense. Too much good sense can be a tremendous handicap when it comes to achieving fame. Examples like John C. Frémont or George Armstrong Custer persuade me of this point. For Frémont and Custer, good sense was never in surplus. They specialized in pushing their luck, and in bragging, or, sometimes, having others brag for them about how well their gambles paid off.

Anza played the game in another way entirely, using careful preparations, discipline, and steadiness to reduce risk. In his expeditions, Frémont led small parties of men along trails that others had pretty much explored and laid out. In taking colonists to California, Anza led a big horseback party including children and

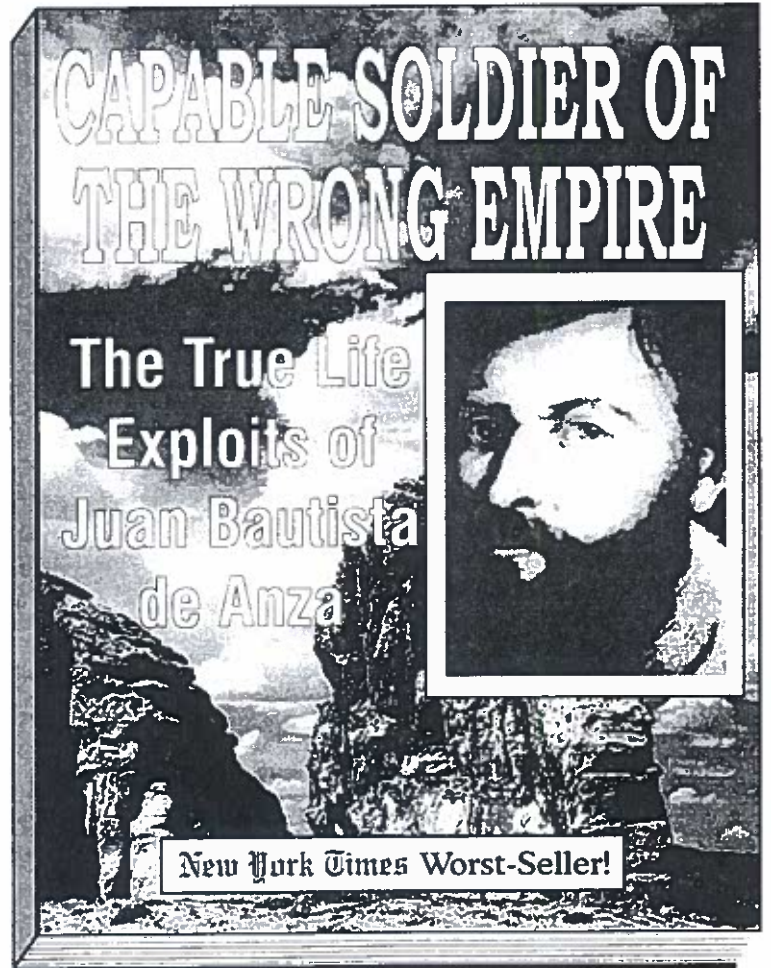
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women — pregnant women, at that. Despite the considerable difference in the scale of the burden of leadership resting upon them, it was Frémont who huffed and puffed about what a courageous and daring enterprise he had embarked on, while Anza just did the job.

Anza was certainly not shy about reporting his achievements to Spanish officials, but the tone of his reports is entirely different from the tone of Frémont's reports, with almost nothing to match Frémont's self-dramatization. While this is a difference in temperament, it is also a difference in audience. Frémont had to court the American public and Congress, while Anza had to solicit support and approval and funding from a much more limited and clearly defined chain of officials and authorities.

CAN WE GENERALIZE that those who are short on good sense have a proportionately greater ability to woo Congress? It is certainly verifiable that individuals playing to Congress and the American public often generate the kinds of documents that also play well to posterity and to historians. So poor Anza, he never got the chance to write a properly self-dramatizing report to the United States Congress.

If we were looking at this contrast between Anza and Frémont, and trying to distill from it advice to ambitious young people, then one item of advice would have to be this: "Brag. Be the first to pat your own back. When it comes to making your reputation, actual achievement is only a small part of the package, while saying, 'Hey, look at me — ' is a much bigger part."

At this moment, one hopes — probably safely — that young people are not attending to this line of thought. In this instance, watching TV or listening to rap music or renting videos might well pose less of a threat of corruption to their values than paying attention to the lessons of history. If young people pay attention to the lessons of history, as they seem to be presented by the comparison between the life strategies of Juan Bautista de Anza and John C. Frémont, then we are all at terrible risk.

In my line of work, if students were to take the Frémont lesson seriously, they will take to handing in brief, perfunctory papers that barely meet the requirements set out in the assignment, but attached to each of these minimal papers will be long, vivid, dramatic statements about how hard it was to write this paper, how much daring and courage had to be brought to bear on this assignment, and how demanding and strenuous was the journey to the library.

If history really does offer lessons, is there any reason to think that those lessons would be worth learning? Is there any reason to think that learning the lessons of history would make us a better, more ethical, more civilized people?

In "The Story of the Bad Little Boy," Mark Twain mocks the usual Sunday School books that tell about the doings of little boys who do bad things and get immediate and appropriate penalties for their misdeeds. Jim, Twain's bad little boy, does everything

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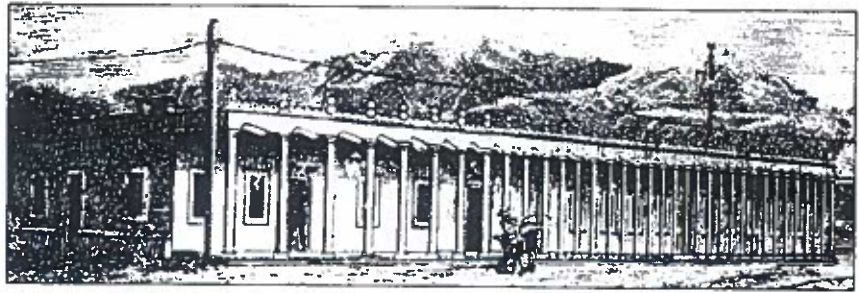
"Once he climbed up in Farmer Acorn's apple trees to steal apples, and the limb didn't break, and he didn't fall and break his arm, and get torn by the farmer's great dog, and then languish on a sickbed for weeks, and repent and become good. Oh, no; he stole as many apples as he wanted and came down all right; and he was all ready for the dog, too, and knocked him endways with a brick when he came to tear him. It was very strange nothing like it had ever happened in those mild little books with marbled backs..."

Jim's whole life worked out that way: "he grew up and married, and raised a large family, and brained them all with an ax one night, and got wealthy by all manner of cheating and rascality; and now he is the infernalesst wickedest scoundrel in his native village, and he is universally respected, and belongs to the legislature."¹

History matches Twain's tales with plenty of stories of virtue punished and vice rewarded, with good will and hard work producing frustration and a sense of wasted effort.

THUS, THE MYSTERY AND ANOMALY of the life of Juan Bautista de Anza: his is a story in which there is, more often than not, a match between will and outcome, between deciding to do something and getting it done. In truth, it is quietly hypnotizing to see somebody decide and act, promise and deliver, intend and achieve, in such a regular and reliable way.

Anza wanted to join the Spanish military and rise in the ranks, and he did. Anza wanted to show his courage and skill as a warrior against the Apache people, and he did. Anza wanted to find an overland trail from Sonora to coastal California, and he did. Anza wanted to transport a party of colonists safely to settle in California, and he did. Anza wanted to play a key part in the organizing and uniting of the northern borderlands, and he did. Anza wanted to be an effective governor of New Mexico, and he was. Anza wanted to



give the Comanches a clear, resistance breaking military defeat, and he did. Anza wanted to end decades of destructive and draining warfare between the Spanish and the Comanches, as well as between the Utes and the Comanches, and he did. Anza wanted to reduce the distrust of the Comanches, a distrust triggered by Spanish cheating and corruption at trade fairs, and he did. Many, many times, when Anza willed himself to do something, he did it.²

No wonder a few of the men who outranked him in the imperial bureaucracy did everything they could to ruin him.

It gets even more striking when we look to see how a number of his achievements proved difficult, or even impossible, for his successors to maintain. The revolt of the Yumas in 1781 shut down Anza's overland route to California. The network of alliances and diplomacy that Anza knit together in New Mexico began to fray soon after his departure, breaking down entirely by the time that revolution in the Spanish colonies drew attention and money away from the borderlands. It didn't take long at all for that familiar split between will and achievement to reassert itself after Anza's departure.

It is important, in order to get ourselves to the maximum state of recognition of Anza's distinctive story, to remember what a horrible job this office of colony governor was. As governor, you stood in the center, trying to find some harmony in the conflicting agendas of soldiers, settlers, missionaries, traders, and leaders and followers in various conquered and converted tribes, as well as leaders and followers in various unconquered and unconverted tribes. As governor, you were placed, as well, at the intersection where colonial ambition and colonial disappointment collided with

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each other, and the person who got the blame for that collision, more often than not, was the governor. Through all this, people placed thousands of miles from you, people sitting secure in offices in Mexico City or Spain were setting your goals, writing your orders, and evaluating your performance.

Field work, or direct personal observation, of the dilemmas of colonial governors might seem hard to come by. And yet, nearly ten years ago, some adventurous students persuaded me to try a classroom exercise that deepened my understanding of the dilemmas of the governor, even as it deepened my own reluctance ever to try such a classroom experiment again.

THE STUDENTS CONVINCED ME that we should devote one class period to playing a game they had created, called The Conquest Game. To simplify a very complicated scenario, the desks in the middle of the room were North America, and they were quite fully occupied by native people. Starting from the four corners of the room were four empires, Spanish, French, English, and Russian. Each empire had a certain percentage of settlers, traders, soldiers, and missionaries, presided over by a governor. Each governor began the game with strict instructions from his empire, telling him to keep control of his colony.

The game began in quiet chaos, chaos that grew louder. Missionaries attempted to convert Natives, and, often enough, to seize their desks in the process. Settlers took desks from Natives, and then demanded that soldiers come protect the Settlers and drive the Natives from the area. Perhaps most memorably, the Traders went to work; since the students had persuaded me that alcohol was a trade good of unquestionable historic significance, the Traders wielded the little bottles of liquor more often wielded by flight attendants. To my surprise and sorrow, despite this being a 10 a.m. class, Natives, Traders, and Settlers and, for all I know, Missionaries, began testing the trade goods.

The governors, meanwhile, still had their orders to keep the colony under control. They tried; they designed policies, they issued orders, they set out prohibitions, and none of their colonists paid an ounce of attention.

Mercifully, this was only a fifty-minute class. The Conquest Game came to a much valued halt. The legacy of conquest, this time, proved to be a room that we barely had time to clean up before the next, much more satisfactorily subdued and conquered class arrived, no doubt puzzled to find trash cans rich with the material culture of trade good containers. I had begun with a pretty good appreciation of the difficulty of a colonial governor's job, but the Conquest Game deepened my appreciation considerably. Anza, I can say with even greater certainty now, had a very tough job.

As remarkably as Anza rose to the challenges of that job, as persistently as he applied determination to challenges, it is still not clear to me that the historical lessons of his life are lessons that we would necessarily like to see widely adopted in our society. To show what I mean, let me call to your attention an example of the drawing of historical lessons, a quite extraordinary book, published in 1993, by Emmett C. Murphy with Michael Snell, called *The Genius of Sitting Bull: 13 Heroic Strategies for Today's Business Leader*. This book takes stories from Sitting Bull's life, and draws from them applications for today's business world. Here are the basic terms of the analogy:

The historic Battle of the Little Bighorn took place on June 25, 1876. It represented the most ignominious defeat ever suffered by American armed forces. Today, more than 100 years later, America's economic and social forces have come dangerously close to a similar humiliation.³

Does this make sense? If it was Sitting Bull who inflicted that ignominious defeat in 1876, then, by analogy, would not the application of Sitting Bull's strategies serve the goal of defeating the United States once again? This apparent contradiction does not trouble the authors, nor should it. It is a fundamental aspect of the romanticizing of Western history, that you simply dissolve context and encounter Sitting Bull, not as a person engaged in serious warfare against the United States, but as an abstract, courageous, inspirational figure from the colorful Western past.

So Sitting Bull's life story teaches us various business lessons. First, lessons of preparation: create commitment; build trust; increase power; live the experience of your people; be a healer; communicate on many

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levels. Take the fuller working out of that last item: "An extensive network of scouts and continuing intertribal contact give the Sioux minute by minute intelligence on Bluecoat activity." Here is the direct statement of the lessons (a passage which also offers the occasion to wonder why academics, and not inspirational business writers, carry so much of the blame for awful writing): "Multilevel communication comprises the first of two pivotal strategies that transform the potential energy assembled through the mobilization process into laser like projections of force."⁴

Next, there are the Sitting Bull lessons of implementation: think strategically; respect your competition; redefine the rules of battle, know the terrain; and my favorite of them all, rightsize your forces; welcome crisis; and measure the results.

Even a brief glance at *The Genius of Sitting Bull* can make the academic historian giddy with possibilities unexplored, with options never imagined. Thus, I present *The Genius of Juan Bautista de Anza: 13 Heroic Strategies for Today's People of Ambition*. These heroic strategies, however, carry a kind of surgeon's general warning. Some of these lessons may be dangerous; some may be morally unhealthy; some may be strategies that deliver effectiveness at a cost we choose not to pay. Others, however, are so rosy and heartwarming that they are ready for adoption by service clubs. Remember, I am simply drawing the lessons, not advocating them.



ANZA LESSON #1

Keep your private life private. No one needs to know about your inner struggles to live with the loss of your father at an early age, or about your relationships with your wife, who must have some pretty strong feelings about, for instance, your habits of travel.

Biographers tell us that Anza's father was killed by Apaches in 1739, when Anza himself was four years old, and biographers tell us that Anza married a woman named Ana Maria Serrano. That's about all that biographers know of those matters. Of course, it is possible to take these thin and straitened facts, and speculate

about them. Anza believed that his principal Comanche enemy, Cuerno Verde, was driven by rage and resentment over the fact that the Spanish had killed his father.

Anyone who wanted to, could say that Anza's lifetime hostility to the Apaches, killers of his own father, must have given him a certain emotional kinship to Cuerno Verde, the man whose death he engineered. But Anza's historical lesson for us is this: people can and probably will speculate about your private and emotional life, but you are under no obligation to supply them with material for those speculations. Contemporary American leaders might profit by following Anza's example. Dare to be dull.

ANZA LESSON #2

If you are going to whine, do so in private, and not for the public record. If you set out from Santa Fé in August, heading north, and the weather is unseasonable, and you encounter cold and rain and even snow, you can note this in your report, but that is it.⁵ If this weather makes you feel miserable, keep that to yourself. Maybe a refusal to whine will reduce the drama of your adventures and lessen their appeal to future filmmakers, but the dignity you preserve, by not complaining, will remain impressive for centuries afterward.

ANZA LESSON #3

Accept the fact that you have to work with people you have every good reason to dislike. On the trip, with the settlers to California, Anza had in his company one of the great pills of Western America, Padre Pedro Font. Padre Font was enormously gifted at complaining. When the settlers and soldiers celebrated the success of their journey, Padre Font condemned them for their inappropriate and far too secular festivity.

Just reading Padre Font, more than two centuries later, can make you want to kill him. But there is the striking fact: on a long, draining journey, Anza did not kill Padre Font, or even show much irritation with him. Thus, with this historical lesson in mind, we are empowered to go to work on Monday, look around our workplace, turn our attention to the coworker who most directly seems to be channeling the spirit of Padre Font, and say to ourselves, "Well, I guess I can put up with him."

ANZA LESSON #4

Find a way to shift rapidly between independence and deference to authority, even when this means showing loyalty and submission to people you have never laid eyes on.

Anza could take charge in the situations in which he was on his own, and yet he could also, in other situations, perform all the proper gestures of deference, submission, and subordination, as required by the Spanish hierarchy. This was, remember, a man whose family had lived for at least three generations in the northern borderlands. And yet Anza seemed perfectly comfortable, talking about the King and recognizing and invoking the King's authority, even though the distance from Spain to Sonora was beyond imagination.

This fourth lesson, then, boils down to this: accept the fact that you are positioned toward the bottom of a hierarchy of authority, a hierarchy that will, nonetheless, from time to time, demand acts of great independence and self-reliance from you, and sometimes punish you for your success in those occasions of independence.

ANZA LESSON #5

When you have a dedicated enemy higher up in the hierarchy, you are best advised to place your hopes in fate. In 1783, an unpleasant fellow named Felipe de Neve became the Commandante General of the Provincias Internas, or Anza's boss. Neve, as historian Elizabeth John put it, "launched a systematic campaign to oust Anza from the governorship of New Mexico and to wreck his career." Other members of the hierarchy tried to fight Neve, but Neve had the balance of power and influence. Where, then, was Anza's remedy?

As Elizabeth John explains, "Luckily for Anza, Neve died in the summer of 1784," and was replaced by a man who supported and admired Anza and tried to undo the damage Neve had done to him.⁶ As we saw before, finding lessons in history is very tricky and the results are not always particularly nice. But here is the lesson from the Anza/Neve conflict: If you have a boss who unreasonably stands in your way and works to undermine you, be patient. A fellow with a temperament like that has probably made a mess of his cardio-



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vascular system, and relief may be on the way.

ANZA LESSON #6

If you are persuaded that killing is necessary, then kill without regret. When, in 1779, Anza traveled into what is now the state of Colorado, his mission was to invade Comanche territory to strike a military blow that would demoralize the Comanches and eliminate Cuerno Verde, the chief who had led his people on many raids into Spanish territory and killed many Spaniards and Pueblo Indians. In the battle at Greenhorn Mountain, Anza and his men killed Cuerno Verde, as well as his eldest son, the heir to his command, his four leading captains, and his shaman, along with ten more warriors. One Spanish soldier was lightly wounded.

While Anza is very appropriately known as a maker of peace, it is also true that he was an effective and spirited maker of war. Continuing in the vein of morally unsettling historical lessons, #6 seems to be this: Don't kill people if you don't have to, but if you are convinced that you have to, then kill them wholeheartedly.

ANZA LESSON #7

Believe that people can make an instant switch from the status of enemies to the status of allies. Believe, in other words, that bitter memories from the past do not need to set the tone of the present and the future. After the 1779 victory over Cuerno Verde, Anza shifted his attention to peacemaking with the Comanches. In 1786, he took part in the negotiation of the famous treaty establishing peace between the Spanish and the Comanches.

When we remember how bitter relations had been between these two groups, when we think of all the raids, murders, and captivities, Anza's ability to believe that a peace treaty was possible appears astonishing. At one point in the treaty negotiations, a Comanche leader expressed the hope for the "entire and mutual forgetfulness of the aggravations and hostilities committed on the part of both [sides] and in the very long period of war."⁷ Reading that hope with Iraq or Kosovo or Rwanda on the mind, or, for that matter, reading it with a sense of the ethnic resentments that are ongoing in American life, one's inclination is to say, "Dream on."

But Anza and a significant number of the Comanches believed that this "forgetfulness" was possible, and as a vindication of that belief, delegations of Comanches were soon traveling amicably among Spanish settlements, settlements that they had very recently been attacking and raiding.

ANZA LESSON #8

If you can, get involved in appointing the other group's leader. Play as much of a role as you can selecting the counterpart with whom you will have to deal. Here is a very useful lesson, full of applications for current times. One of the elements of Anza's success in negotiating a peace and in maintaining a peace was the role he played in identifying, supporting, and validating the Comanche leader who would be most coop-

erative in dealings with the Spanish. Because of Ecuera-aca's "talents, natural ascendancy, affection for our government and customs, docility, obedience, disinterestedness, and other estimable qualities," Anza explained to his superiors, he was "the most appropriate instrument that we could desire for the new arrangement of peace, not only to assure the continuance of peace, but also to subject the warlike Comanche nation to the dominion of the king."⁸

So Anza encouraged the Comanches to take Ecuera-aca as their principal leader, and he gave Ecuera-aca everything he could in the way of prestige and rank. Thus, the lesson: it is a lot easier to negotiate productively with your enemies if you get to play a part in picking their leader.

ANZA LESSON #9

Participate in rituals gladly and willingly. One of the ways in which Anza bucked up Ecuera-aca's standing was to lend him Anza's own ceremonial cane, or staff, of office. On many other occasions, Anza comfortably and wholeheartedly took part in rituals and ceremonies, whether they were Spanish or Indian in design. When the peace treaty was finally arrived at, Anza gave Ecuera-aca a banner and a saber, and stood by graciously while the Comanches engaged in their ritual of peace, digging a hole and then ceremoniously filling up the hole, thus burying the war.

Perhaps most strikingly, Anza, like Bill Clinton (though this may be their only similarity), was a hugger. Anza embraced Ecuera-aca; and on one remarkable occasion, in the midst of the peace negotiations, Anza hugged and was hugged by two hundred Comanche men, in succession.

Think about this. It is fairly time-consuming to shake hands with two hundred people, but think about hugging two hundred men, in a row, and men representing quite a different culture from your own. Just as striking, when Anza presided over a peace agreement between the Comanches and the Utes, the two sets of leaders acknowledged and celebrated this agreement by exchanging their clothes.⁹

There is a ritual worth contemplating: if the Democrats and Republicans had to begin each session of Congress by finding a counterpart and exchanging clothes, wouldn't that have a remarkable impact albeit an impact that is hard to anticipate on their conduct thereafter? Anza gives us a very clear lesson here: when offered the chance to back up your political acts with ritual and ceremony, take it.

ANZA LESSON #10

In the same spirit as Lesson #9, do not skimp on presents. In Anza's diplomacy, the use of gifts was very important. His superiors in the hierarchy usually recognized this, and made appropriate allocations. Government spending, in this case, was clearly justified and necessary. The lesson here seems very clear, if also difficult to apply in our times: presents make peace possible.

ANZA LESSON #11

Don't cheat at trade. Any short-term advantage you gain will be more than offset by long term penalties. One of Anza's greatest contributions to the creation of peace between the Spanish and the Comanches came from his willingness to take seriously Comanche complaints about cheating at the trade fairs. Anza listened and, to the best of his ability, acted, trying to raise some prices for the Indians' benefit, and trying to persuade the Spanish that the anger that they created by cheating put them at great risk.

Indeed, Comanche contentment with the improvement in trading conditions was crucial to the maintenance of the peace. The lesson: Recognize that cheating in commerce works against the cheaters own self interest.

ANZA LESSON #12

Here we return to lessons of a less uplifting nature. If you make peace with one group, do so in order to

make war more effectively against another group. The desire to create conditions under which the Spanish and the Comanche could combine in their fight against the Apache was fundamental to the motives driving Anza.

Everyone involved understood this: the goal of a Comanche/Spanish peace was a more effective and devastating collaborative war against the Apache. Anza was ahead of many other Europeans and Euro-Americans in anticipating the problems that could result from alliances like this: "the governor presented printed cottons and a red badge for each one, to distinguish them in any affair, and avoid all error if they should become mixed in an affray with the enemies."¹⁰

How — or if — Lesson #12 can be transformed into a positive and uplifting instruction, a building block for a better tomorrow, is a puzzle I leave for others with greater ability to search out the best in human nature.

ANZA LESSON #13

Take advantage of situations where your side does not have the strength of numbers. Surely one of the great advantages that Anza had, in negotiating the Comanche peace, is that the Spanish empire was modest in its population growth. He could make a peace with the Comanches because there was little, virtually nothing, in the way of settler pressure to occupy Comanche lands.

He could not make a peace with the Apaches, because Spanish settlers were scattered all over Apache territory. So, while many smug Anglos have observed that the Spanish empire was sadly handicapped by its shortage of a colonizing population, Anza's example reminds us that, for certain purposes, a shortage of a colonizing population is quite an advantage, permitting a flexibility and effectiveness in diplomacy that a booming settler population would destroy in an instant.

On some occasions, sparse population is a wonderful state of affairs. In other words, there are other ways to measure the success of an empire, other ways besides the measures by which guppies and rabbits do so well.

By the standard set by this last lesson, Anza did not fare so poorly over the passage of time. George Washington and Abraham Lincoln have Presidents' Day; millions may take holidays on Presidents' Day, but hardly any of them can now identify the exact dates of Washington's or Lincoln's births. It is even less likely that many in those millions can speak, concretely, accurately and with detail, about the achievements of Washington and Lincoln.

SO HERE, if you make a determined escape from the tyranny of numbers, is the conclusion you reach: Anza Day in Poncha Springs, Colorado, does not have a lot of observers, but it has quality observers. Anza Day has participants who actually know a lot about the person whose memory they are ceremonially tending.¹¹

Shift from quantitative measures to qualitative measures, and Anza carries the day.

Notes

1. Charles Neider, editor, *The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), 619.

2. Biographical information on Anza can be found in Herbert E. Bolton, editor, *Anza's California Expeditions*, 5 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1930); Herbert E. Bolton, *Outpost of Empire: The Story of the Founding of San Francisco* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1931); Elizabeth A. H. John, *Storms Brewed in Other Men's Worlds: The Confrontation of Indians, Spanish, and French in the Southwest, 1540-1795* (College Station: Texas A & M Press, 1975); Alfred Barnaby Thomas, editor and translator, *Forgotten Frontiers: A Study of the Spanish Indian Policy of Don Juan Bautista de Anza, Governor of New Mexico, 1777-1787* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1932).

3. Emmett C. Murphy with Michael Snell, *The Genius of Sitting Bull: 13 Heroic Strategies for Today's Business Leader* (Englewood, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1993), xxi.

4. *Ibid.*, 119 and 122.

5. Consider Anza's understated observation from his diary: "On this day frost and cold as though it were the months appropriate to this weather." Thomas, *Forgotten Frontiers*, 125.

6. John, *Storms Brewed in Other Mens Worlds*, 609-610.

7. Thomas, *Forgotten Frontiers*, 303-304.

8. *Ibid.*, 317.

9. *Ibid.*, 301-305.

10. *Ibid.*, 317.

11. In addition to Poncha Springs Anza Day, a group of Anza enthusiasts, registering higher in quality than in quantity, hold an annual conference, alternating between Mexican and United States locations.