

AFTERWORD

by Kathryn D. Wriston

When Walter died of pancreatic cancer in 2005, he was described in many articles as a towering figure in American finance, and justly so. Walter was with Citibank for thirty-eight years and was chief executive officer for seventeen of those years. He was an innovator and in many ways an entrepreneur, someone willing to take a risk and venture into new areas when others were reluctant to do so. Under his leadership, Citibank developed such financial innovations as the negotiable certificate of deposit and the automated teller machine, which have become essential parts of our everyday lives, and it rapidly expanded the credit card business. The number of branches and services offered to businesses and consumers was greatly increased, both domestically and overseas. Although Walter made the bank's ultimate goal profitability rather than asset growth (which was the goal of most of its competitors), under his leadership, Citibank's assets grew 761 percent, from \$17,497 billion to \$150,586 billion, a remarkable increase.

Walter was a man of great character and integrity, a believer in elemental fairness. He was a champion of women and

minorities in banking and in management. He was known to say, with regard to women in management, “Women have half the brains in the world—why wouldn’t you use them?” He was enormously proud of Citibank and Citibankers around the world, and he was a believer in teamwork and in giving credit where and to whom due. He was intensely loyal—to his family, his friends, and the bank. He had a great sense of humor, a dry wit. At his retirement dinner from the bank, the centerpieces were festooned with knitting needles to remind us all of his rapier wit—as if we needed reminding!

A person of enormous energy and creativity, Walter was blessed with a vision of what might be, versus just being satisfied with what was, and with the dynamism and drive to get to where he was headed. He was a person who could see what something or someone might become, and he worked hard to make that happen. He was a believer in human freedom and dignity and the connection between individual freedom, free markets, and personal and economic progress.

Walter was an intellectual, although he never thought of himself as such. He was a thinker who was most at home in the realm of ideas. He was a voracious reader of everything from biographies and autobiographies—particularly of seminal figures in American and European history such as George Washington, John Adams, and Alexander Hamilton and modern-day figures such as Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher—to books on history, economics, political philosophy, business, and technology. These volumes filled the libraries of his home and office, and he used them to research his articles and speeches. He also had a lighter side, which was reflected in the mystery stories, westerns, and popular fiction

he read and in his love of music, particularly the big bands, Louis Armstrong, and Ella Fitzgerald.

Walter loved to write and to speak. He did so throughout his career and particularly after he retired from the bank in 1984. He was an early user of computers and the Internet and from the start saw their implications for progress and human liberty. His first book, *Risk and Other Four-Letter Words*, was published in 1986. His focus on technology and its implications was reflected in subsequent speeches and articles as well as in his second book, *The Twilight of Sovereignty: How the Information Revolution Is Transforming Our World*, which was published in 1992. In that book, he focused on the availability of uncensored information on a global scale and its implications for political, social, and business institutions—indeed, for sovereignty itself. He coined the phrase “the information revolution,” and his statement “Information about money has become almost as important as money itself” is engraved on a wall of the New York Library of Science, Industry, and Business. He saw information technology as a beneficial virus, one that would promote human liberty, which, to him, was the quintessential human value.

As a financial and business person, Walter also foresaw the challenge to economic statistics, whether national, international, or corporate, that would result from the information revolution in that most of its most significant impacts are not now measured or recorded. Moreover, they are not incorporated into governmental fiscal and monetary planning on a national or international level. Current measures largely reflect the manufacturing and industrial economy that replaced the farm economy many years ago. Walter pointed out that the

information/network economy applies knowledge stemming from the free and global flow of information to create value. However, the measurement itself, how to measure it, and who should establish the measures are being hotly debated as I write this. The fact that in the United States we are now experimenting with adding a measure of the value of research and development to the measurement of our gross national product is an important development that would greatly please him.

As detailed in “Notes to the Reader,” Walter had prepared a manuscript reflecting the views he set forth in several of his speeches and articles from 1992, following the publication of *The Twilight of Sovereignty*, until mid-2000. The last chapter of that unpublished manuscript was on measurement. He set the manuscript aside in mid-2000 to focus more of his writing and speaking on the measurement issues that stemmed from the information revolution and the increasing importance of technology globally.

After Walter’s death, as I looked through his later articles and speeches and noted their focus on measurement, I thought that what Walter would have done, had he not been stricken with cancer, would be to complete and publish the manuscript. I conferred with the other members of our family and the vote was unanimous that we do just that. Hence this book, which is being published posthumously.

This is an important book in that it carries forward Walter’s views on the impact of technology globally, including the measurement issues that are now being debated. Walter was known as a thinker and innovator, someone who in many ways was ahead of his time. I think this book is another example of that.

I would like to thank our friend George P. Shultz for the thoughtful and excellent foreword he has written for inclusion in this book, as well as for the “Notes to the Reader” and footnotes he added. George and Walter were longtime friends. They met when George was serving in the Office of Management and Budget in the Nixon administration and Walter had recently become chairman and CEO of Citicorp and Citibank. They loved to discuss and debate the issues of the times and spent many interesting hours in many locations doing just that. I know that Walter would be very pleased with George’s willingness to write the foreword and with the foreword itself as well as with his efforts on “Notes to the Reader” and the footnotes, and I thank him on behalf of Walter and the entire Wriston family.

I would also like to thank Charles O. Prince, chairman and CEO of Citigroup, and his colleagues, Michael E. Schlein and Nicholas Balamaci, for their invaluable assistance to me since Walter’s death. Their patience and encouragement with this book is something that I will never forget, nor will I ever forget Chuck Prince’s kindness to me. I know that I speak for each member of the Wriston family in expressing gratitude to them all. I am also grateful to Stephen W. Bosworth, dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy; to Anne Sauer, the director of Archives at Tufts University; to Roger Hertog, Lawrence Mone, and Walter’s many friends and colleagues at the Manhattan Institute; and to Thomas Bartos and Kurt Willett at Citigroup for their assistance and support.

I want to thank John McCarty, who has skillfully edited both Walter’s original unpublished manuscript and his subsequent speeches and articles that have been added to complete

this book. I am also grateful to David R. Henderson, who subsequently edited Walter's book, and Susan Southworth for her work in preparing the manuscript for publication. I know that I speak for Walter, too, in expressing my appreciation for the extraordinary efforts and support of all of these individuals.

Kathryn D. Wriston
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