Hit the Deck

Robert Dugdale

The United States destroyer Henderson, DD645, was steaming toward Wonsan Harbor, which is located on the East coast of Korea. It was returning for more bombardment duty from a routine patrol at Hungnam, where it sank a North Korean san pan attempting to lay mines.

I, Bill Wilson, quartermaster third class of the United States Navy, had the visual communication watch on the bridge, along with quartermaster striker, Tom Anderson.

It was 5:30 a.m., and although we had been on watch for an hour and a half, neither of us was quite awake. “You hold a sweepdown and I’ll put on a pot of mud,” I said, as I started for the ladder.

The sea was calm, but the sky was overcast, and the barometer had been dropping—a good sign of a storm.

“We’re going to hit first when we get back in port?” Tom asked, as he dried out the swab.

“Oh, I don’t care. After forty days at sea I’ll be able to have a good time anywhere,” I replied.

“It’s good coffee you make,” marveled Tom. “How come you never drink the stuff?”

“Tell the Officer of the Deck it’s a half an hour before sunrise,” I reminded Tom. With only fifteen minutes before dawn alert, I wanted everyone to be prepared.

“Combat reports an unidentified plane, bearing zero six zero degree true, distance fifty miles,” Tom said, as he hurried out of the wheelhouse. “The skipper told the OOD to sound general quarters so it looks like trouble.”

The alarm sounded and within seconds the ship became alive with men running to their battle stations. “What’s the trouble?” asked first class quartermaster, Don Taylor, as he headed for the wheelhouse to take the helm.

“An unidentified boogie,” I answered, as I put on my life jacket and helmet.

All stations manned and ready,” came the report over the phone circuit. Phone talker, Jack Peterson, informed the captain along with a report from combat that the plane’s bearing was remaining constant, but the distance had closed to ten miles.

“Attention all hands,” came a report from the loud speaker. “The skipper told the OOD to sound general quarters so it looks like trouble.”

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“All stations manned and ready,” came the report over the phone circuit. Phone talker, Jack Peterson, informed the captain along with a report from combat that the plane’s bearing was remaining constant, but the distance had closed to ten miles.

“Attention all hands,” came a report from the loud speaker. “This is the captain. Combat reports an unidentified plane. The relative bearing is about three hundred and thirty degrees, distance ten miles. The plane commenced strafing, and as it pulled out of its dive, let go its bomb.

“Hit the deck,” I yelled, as I knocked Tom over with a flying tackle. “Sightseeing will get you nowhere in this league,” I warned him. Then came an explosion that shook the ship, but luck was with us, and the bomb hit about twenty-five yards off starboard beam.

“We got him,” yelled Tom, as he jumped to his feet. “Yes, but he came too close to please me,” I answered. “If it never happens again, it’ll be too soon.”

“All hands, secure from general quarters,” came a report over the loud speaker. “Let’s get some chow and hit the sack,” I said to Tom. “We’ve got the twelve to four watch this afternoon.”

“That’s all right with me,” he replied. “I can use a little relaxation.”

“Relaxation,” I thought. “How can you relax when up ahead lies Wonsan and there lies the enemy?”

It’s for the Birds

Nanci Golten

I don’t like birds.

The professional ornithologist is hard enough to understand, although I do give him his due credit. But I don’t comprehend the amateur or the true bird lover—the tree climber.

I appreciate the people who put food out of doors in snowy weather so that through the long bleak winter the air may be filled with the melodious songs of their grateful friends. I know many an invalid’s day is cheered watching the hungry guests at a window suet tray. I have been told that young children learn not to mistreat pets because at even more tender ages they have been instructed in the system of attracting birds to rustic feeding stations, purchased through courtesy of House Beautiful Mail Order Service, at the incredibly low price of twenty-nine ninety-five.
The advanced stage of tree climbing is evident in severe cases no longer able to tramp through the meadows looking for birds. They stand silently, in uncomfortable positions, rooted to a given spot, listening. These are the people who after years of bird watching are now capable of recognizing, by the song, the difference between a yellow breasted chat and a rose breasted gross-beak at one hundred fifty yards. Perseverance gradually increases this to the all-time high record of two hundred and fifteen yards. This is the goal of every tree climber as his arteries begin to harden.

Aside from myself, the only group of people I know who don't like birds are entomologists, who claim birds eat the insects. I now recognize it as a futile battle, so I don't fight tree climbers any longer. I'm considering learning taxidermy.

A Struggle for Existence

Jean Jose

The greatest struggle for existence that the human mind must encounter is not directly the preservation of living, moving life, but rather a more basic preserving of the ideas that are the very breath of life. Life is ideas. No conflict that ever has to be faced on earth is any harder fought than the battle to save an idea from obliteration and to raise it instead to a realization. The fierceness of the struggle results from the fact that the idea, by its actual nature, originates, "fives, fights to secure a permanent foothold, and either dies or is fulfilled within the boundaries of the human mind. Although expressions of thoughts are released constantly through word and action, the actual thought or idea must remain concentrated within the individual. Considering the millions of ideas that are formed, how few of them are ever realized. This would indicate that there is a variance of importance placed on those that are only those that are of the highest importance gain the attention necessary to even bring about an attempt to accomplish them through tireless actions.

The struggle for existence begins the moment an idea is born and continues more desperately as the idea increases in importance. This desperation for the existence and consequent realization grows out of fear. Once something or someone has become of great importance, a fear arises of losing that which we prize so highly. The most detrimental of all obstructions to the fulfillment of our ideas is time, the indestructible enemy of existence whether it be bodily or mental. Time brings with it stumbling blocks, sometimes so many that we are unable to raise ourselves again to the task of accomplishing our ideas. Consequently, the struggle of ideas for existence is most difficult because, in addition to being within us, the stumbling blocks are forever coming.