

"Think it's a Red?" Tom asked, as he scanned the starboard bow.

"It must be," I replied. "Or he would have identified himself by now. I'm sure glad we've got that blanket up there," referring to the overcast. "He'll have to come in low, and these gunners aren't the type that miss. Not when the clips are down."

Then from mount one came, "Plane three hundred and fifty degrees relative, position angle ten, closing fast." Mounts one and two opened fire, and we watched the flack getting closer, but none hit. 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 looked up just in time to see mounts three, four, and five open fire. Flack was bursting all around the plane, and for a couple of seconds it looked as if he might get away, but after months of training, the gunners weren't going to let their first bird get away. What followed looked like the Fourth of July. The next instant the plane burst into flames and plunged into the sea.

"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.

But I do not understand the tree climbing urge.

A tree climber, when in good form, rises at four in the morning to be on his way before the birds begin winging about in search of insects and undernourished field mice. Bleary eyed, he starts the day cooking a mammoth breakfast to sustain his energies while tracking down a tufted titmouse when the titmouse has better judgment than to be out tracking down the tree climber. He wears boots weighing twelve and a half pounds each and a coat so heavy it knocks over small furniture as it is tossed around casually while binoculars and field guides are located. Rarely is he awake enough to see what he is doing, so he drops cartons of eggs and pitchers of fruit juice while trying to kick shut the refrigerator door. A tree climber also makes more noise putting the skillet on the stove than a navy cook. The final affront to a sleeping household is to leave everything as is: "I didn't clean up the kitchen—'fraid the noise would wake you."

Tree climbers never drive their own cars. They are always picked up by other tree climbers whose cars, perhaps not really as dilapidated as they appear, have suffered the ravages of swamp and prairie. Tree climbers are never waiting for these free rides. They must always be honked for. If it is Sunday, tree climbers never leave the funny papers for the family but take them along to read in the car, together with the magazine section and the sporting pages. They wrap sandwiches in the society sections.

To be good, tree-climbing territory must be well stocked with poison ivy and berry bushes. Thorn trees are not to be overlooked in hunting the ideal place since it is against the rules of the game ever to be comfortable. There should be a plentiful supply of strong vines, close to the ground, well covered and hidden, which prove handy contrivances for tripping the novice.

At the drop of a mating call, someone speaking in a stage whisper begins the rumor that there is a downy woodpecker close by. Immediately the speaker is the center of attention as all follow the direction of his arm indicating the white oak over there—second branch from the bottom, out near the end, and hidden in that clump of dead leaves. Up go field glasses and out come pencils and record sheets. Everyone seems capable of seeing the bird, and through field glasses, too. This is no place for the uninitiated. All are satisfied with the hunt except one frustrated little man who voices his opinion that it wasn't a downy woodpecker but a red-headed woodpecker. His binoculars are the best that Abercrombie and Fitch list in their Spring Catalogue.

Understanding, wiser heads calm down the party with suggestions of hot coffee. This is a fine idea except that the rugged naturalists have brought along neither cream nor sugar for the sissies in the crowd, and the coffee is too hot to drink from tin cups. By the time it has cooled enough to swallow, everyone is gathering himself together, anxious to be off because there seems to be a barn owl in that hickory tree.

The advanced stage of tree climbing is evident in severe cases no longer able to traipse 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, lives, 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 thoughts; 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 consequential 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.