



ON BROTHERLY LOVE

by
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(This article appeared in *THE SCROLL* of Phi Delta Theta in the fall 1995 issue)

In Italy, for thirty years under the Borgias, they had warfare, terror, murder, bloodshed. They produced Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and the Renaissance. In Switzerland, they had brotherly love; five hundred years of democracy and peace, and what did they produce? The cuckoo clock, Orson Wells as Harry Lime in THE THIRD MAN

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This passage would have had special irony for a sailor who gallantly served in the Pacific during World War II. He had given his very essence to the meaning of Harry Lime's brotherly love while seeing his country rise to a great apex of military and industrial might.

He was Vice Admiral John S. McCain, a heavily decorated sailor who commanded Task Force 38, up to that time, the world's most powerful carrier force. With Fleet Admiral William F. Halsey in overall command, McCain and the massive armada steamed into Sagami Bay on August 27, 1945, and dropped anchor. That was that. The shooting had stopped and they swung quietly for six days with negotiators planning the ceremony.

It was overcast on September 2, 1945, when "Slew" McCain, as he was called, climbed into his Admiral's gig and went to the battleship U.S.S. *Missouri* (BB 63) to

watch the Japanese surrender. Hundreds of Generals, Admirals and lesser rankings from all the allied nations, lined the “*Big Mo’s*” rails or climbed on her massive sixteen inch gun turret and even into her tops to watch. All the stars were there: MacArthur, Nimitz, Halsey, everyone. They even flew in the emaciated General Jonathan Wainwright, a POW who surrendered Corregidor in 1942, along with the equally emaciated Lieutenant General Sir Arthur Percival, and a POW who surrendered Singapore the same year.

First they met for coffee in the *Missouri’s* flag cabin where Halsey cracked jokes and MacArthur reminisced in his stentorian basso, “It’s grand having so many of my sidekicks meeting here at the end of the road.”

Soon the Japanese representatives were summoned, and they gathered on the battleship’s 01 deck where the Star Spangled Banner was played. McCain’s chest drew to a familiar tightness he’d had recently, but this time it felt good, thank God. MacArthur ran the ceremony like a well-oiled five inch mount and just before ordering the signatures, said: “It is my earnest hope, indeed the hope of all mankind; that from this solemn occasion a better world shall emerge out of the blood and carnage of the past, a world founded upon faith and understanding, a world dedicated to the dignity of man and the fulfillment of his most cherished wish for freedom, tolerance and justice.”

The Instrument of Surrender was signed; hundreds of U.S. Navy and Army planes flew over signaling a fervent exodus of millions from the armed services into a troubled peace. Not the kind of peace, as it turned out, that MacArthur hoped for. The next day, Slew McCain was sent home by Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz. He arrived in Coronado, California on September 5, 1945. The day after that, Vice Admiral John S. McCain died of a heart attack. His weight had fallen to 100 pounds and he’d given his all along with millions of Americans and untold millions of Allies who threw everything into the fight. Together, they curtailed civilization’s most hideous lunge toward world hegemony with fifty-four million casualties along the way. When it was done, a worn out Slew McCain was unable to enjoy the spoils like watching a movie produced four years later, reflecting on Harry Lime’s cuckoo clock.

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What if McCain had turned to his aide and said on September 5, 1945, “Look. There it is. Safe and sound.” They peer out the window as their four-engined PB2Y flies over California’s coast where beneath, San Diego Bay glistens in the clear morning sun. McCain’s eyes grow moist and he prattles on with a lopsided grin. “By God we did it! I’d sure like to see this place fifty years from now.”

So what happens if Slew McCain gets his wish? How does he feel when he suddenly finds himself walking down Coronado’s Orange Avenue on September 5, 1995? Coronado is still a quaint village; but to McCain, only a few buildings are

recognizable and everything is weird, including those oval-shaped cars that whoosh about. He's disoriented but is reluctant to ask questions of people who brush past quickly, sometime rudely.

Where's the fire?

McCain decides to save time and lifts a copy of the San Diego Union off a park bench. His eyes sweep the front page and his brow furrows when he reads headlines about a place called Bosnia. *Bosnia*? Isn't that some damn Balkan state Tito was supposed to lasso in?

Next to the Bosnia article is one about the arrest (what's a bust?) of a Mexican drug lord now living in La Jolla and that the U.S. will seize his assets valued at over \$200 million. A Mexican drug what? Slew McCain used to be able to see into Mexico, from the Coronado Hotel. He looks up now. The hills behind Tijuana are obscured by something called smog.

In frustration, Slew McCain dabs at his eyes with a handkerchief trying to figure out how many Grumman F6F Hellcats the drug lord's \$200 million would buy. McCain decides to go over his paper systematically by reading left to right just like he was taught in school back in at the University of Mississippi and later, the U.S. Naval Academy. Therefore, he first concentrates on the left hand column and reads the entire article. With the first paragraph McCain's eyes bulge; the second paragraph sends his jaw toward the pavement and by the third, he feels tightness in his chest, just like when he died fifty years ago.

The article describes a recent poll showing nearly half of American citizens believe the United States won't exist in a hundred years. Can you believe this? Half of these people! McCain looks around for someone to throttle. But for the moment, the sidewalk is empty and Slew's teeth grate and he mutters under his breath. Have they given up? Doesn't anyone remember what we fought for?

McCain jerks his head to the sky as a pair of F-14D Tomcats screech overhead, their wings pinned back making them seem like parched, grey diamonds. The lead Tomcat peels left into a tight bank, drops flaps and gear, bleeds speed and runs its wings forward to head into his downwind for the approach to North Island Naval Air Station. The wingman is good and sticks to the lead as if on a fifty-foot tether. McCain looks at the newspaper again, then watches the Tomcats jink onto final.

Show offs. McCain became a naval aviator at the age of fifty-two, and many times barnstormed over this very town with his buddies. He smiles to himself remembering his fellow aviators were in their early twenties but accepted "the old man" and made him feel like a kid. Saturday nights at the Coronado hotel were lovely this time of year.

What's wrong with these damned people? With something as marvelous as those flying whatchamacallits up there to protect them why can't they buck up? Do they

just want to lay down and die? They call themselves Americans?

McCain drops his paper in the trash barrel and shuffles toward San Diego Bay. Passersby seem normal enough, more facial hair on the men maybe, but everyone appears well-fed and well-dressed. Except maybe for those two kids over there wearing baggy pants cut-off below the knees. Too bad their folks make them do that. McCain smiles, remembering that when he was five his parents made him wear knickers. But he looks again at the people bustling about. In spite of a few frowns, McCain sees many smiles and decides these people are basically alright.

The United States gone? In a hundred years? Would I have done what I did knowing that the United States of America wouldn't exist as we know it? And what about the others who fought in World War II? In Europe and the Pacific? What about those who didn't come back. What would they think of the way Americans are throwing away their marvelous legacy? All the hundreds of thousands of unselfish acts of bravery for naught?

In particular, one young fellow comes to mind. He was a beanpole ensign named Jack Ingold who graduated from the University of Oregon, went into flight training and quickly found himself in the South Pacific flying an F4F Wildcat with Fighting Squadron VF-28. On July 13, 1943, eighteen Japanese dive bombers and ten escorting Zeros were getting ready to jump three damaged U.S. destroyers limping to safety from a battle the night before. At 13,000 feet, Ingold and three other Wildcats tore into those twenty-eight enemy planes. In panic, the dive-bombers jettisoned their bombs and bolted, letting the American destroyers run for safety. But the Zeros stuck around. Ingold bagged one Zero then saw his skipper, Lieutenant Tavernetti, jumped by another. Ingold deliberately flew in to divert this Zero's fire. He suffered the consequences as other Zeros pummeled his Wildcat with cannon and machine gun fire. It wasn't long before Ingold's controls were shot away and his Wildcat engulfed in flames and on its way down. Tavernetti and the other two didn't see a parachute; Ingold's Wildcat smacked the water and sank. The Zeros broke and ran after the dive bombers and the fight was over.

Tavernetti led the other two back to base where they reported Ingold's death. Then came the worst part: Inventory of Ingold's personal gear. They opened Ingold's locker, tallied everything, packaged it and sent it on its way. Tavernetti wrote the letter. He'd done it before and it wasn't easy. Each word, each paragraph tore him apart as sure as the twenty-millimeter cannon shells that ripped into Jack Ingold's body. Nobody ever got used to those things. Especially this time, since it was Ingold who saved Tavernetti's life.

But Ingold's buddies didn't realize he was unscathed by the Zero's cannon fire. The controls were shot away, he rode the plane down and just in time pulled back on the stick and more or less pancaked in. The Wildcat sank within ten seconds. It all

happened fast. Ingold was underwater when, with a mighty effort, he forced the canopy open, kicked away his parachute and popped to the surface.

The Wildcat was gone, but the water still roiled as Ingold gulped air thinking he'd made it. In amazement he looked around, seeing Japanese sailors in every direction. These men were off a cruiser sunk by the American task force last night. As if on cue, they started to swim toward him.

Just then, one of the American destroyers nosed its way in. For fear of enemy submarines, the tin can didn't stop but steamed by at slow speed as sailors threw lines, her fo'c'sle crew yelling, "grab it, damnit."

Ensign Ernest "Jack" Ingold, Jr. barely out of flight training caught that line on July 13, 1943 and was pulled to safety. Except for minor bruises, he was unscathed. Later the destroyer handed Jack over to a PT boat and he was returned to duty and an emotional reunion with his squadron.

McCain remembered what Ingold's buddies said about Jack after his return. You say God's arm was around him, we say it sure squeezed him tight.

McCain shakes his head and suddenly realizes what bothers him. He had enjoyed brotherly love in his college days, so much so that he almost took it for granted. But later, in the navy, the essentials of those bonds and the sacrifices one made to preserve them became dearer as his career moved from challenge to challenge. And as he looked back over his life, he knew those bonds were the most important things to him. After all, wasn't that what World War II was all about? Love and respect for one another? Isn't that what they fought and died for? Isn't that what MacArthur was talking about?

He sniffs the air and looks around. Coronado, after fifty years, is a more beautiful place he decides. And as bad as that damned bridge looks over San Diego Bay, it's far better than the cantankerous ferry service that used to trudge back and forth. They've done a nice job here. And they're basically good people.

Slew McCain, a man whose navy career spanned forty years, who once commanded thousands of officers and men, making life and death decisions through hundreds of crisis, realizes he has a new task. As ludicrous as it sounds, someone has to rekindle the spirit of brotherly love in those who have lost faith in America.

First, he wonders if Americans today know about cuckoo clocks. He finds an antique store and decides to go inside and ask.

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