

Editorially Speaking

Adrift on a Bubble

BY F/L J. M. BELANGER

"Five days without food or water. Five days, the three of us crowded together in a space not much bigger than the inside of a bath-tub. Five days with no sleep by night, and a pitiless torture by day, all day long, as the sun's burning rays hit viciously into our hides and boiled out the remaining moisture. Five days of turning our suffering skins, like basting fowl, to baths of stinging water. Five days—and how many days ahead?—of nothing to keep us alive but the sinew that was now wasting from our bones."*

There were yet to be twenty-nine days of such abject misery ahead for these three men of the U.S. Air Arm. Out scouting over a portion of the Southern Pacific, they had lost contact with their carrier and, their fuel exhausted, had landed their aircraft on the sea. In the minute before the plane foundered, they managed to save the eight by four feet rubber raft but not the rations, water, charts or instruments which were part of the equipment. During thirty-four long days and thirty-four longer nights their only refuge from death would be the inflated raft—a "wind-blown, sea-drenched bubble."

It was on the morning of this fifth day that our three lads realized how utterly they were lost on the vast sea, and that they ceased to scan the sky in the vain hope of being discovered by a scouting plane from their own carrier. But they had youth with its easy optimism and fertile imagination—youth with its love of life and dreams unfulfilled. How they succeeded without the aid of instruments, rudder or means of propulsion to sail their craft in the general direction of convoy lines or known islands makes interesting reading and we can understand that a superficial critic inclined to the sensationalism of journalism could write. "Then comes the final, the memorable, the supreme remark: 'I resent anyone's saying we drifted'."**

We share Mr. Christopher Morley's admiration for Pilot Dixon's knowledge of navigation, for his skill and ingenuity. With him we marvel at the fortitude of these men, their endurance and their physical strength. But that final remark is but the reaction of legitimate professional pride. It applies to the personal qualities of but one or at the most three men.

No, Mr. Morley, that is not "the memorable, the supreme remark." In the story of their adventure as told by Pilot Dixon there is an admission—I was about to write, "a confession"—which is more remarkable than any other statement, for it reflects on and describes the whole present generation. No more are we concerned with three men whom the fortunes of war have cast adrift on a pitiless ocean in the most precarious circumstances. No more do we see them on their floating bubble, curtailing their own movements to the measure of bare necessity and pathetically repairing every appearance of wear lest the thin fabric give way to the pressure of the air within or the pounding of the waves outside.

"Before evening (of that 5th day)", says Pilot Dixon, "the three of us were sitting dejectedly silent. Then Gene made a suggestion. 'It might be a good idea', he said, not meeting our eyes, 'to say a prayer.' We discussed this seriously. We found that we had all been reared in some religious atmosphere, but that we had all drifted away."

So! it required five days of moral agony and physical suffering before these men thought of enlisting the aid of the only One who could rescue them from death! And were these men? They would then have invoked or tried to propitiate some kind of super-natural spirit as all savages do. Perhaps they were atheists—if it is possible for anyone sincerely to hold the philosophy of atheism. We should then understand that they had not recourse to the Maker and Ruler of the heavens, the earth and the sea. But no! They were all three professed Christians, that is followers of Christ, the Son of God.

They had all been brought up with religious convictions. They had attended religious service and Sunday School rather regularly for a certain number of years. At times they were present at the Sunday services held on board the aircraft-carrier to which they hoped to return. Yet five whole days elapsed before their minds turned to God, the God in Whom they still believed. He, alone could send the refreshing rains wherewith to allay their burning thirst and lead towards them the favourable winds which would drive their raft to some friendly haven. But their faith was without vigour; their minds could not rise spontaneously above the material elements of Nature to attain the spiritual Force which directs them. Well may they say that they had drifted away!

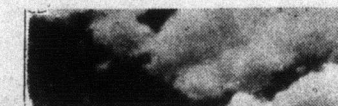
Need I say more? Would it not be insulting to the intelligence of my readers to point out how illogical becomes "the memorable, the supreme remark" in the light of such a confession? The success of sailing a raft to within a few hundred miles of one's objective pales into insignificance when one has to admit that the more fragile bubble of one's life has been left to drift aimlessly for years,—a sad derelict under the colourful appearances of youth, health and intelligence, deprived of rudder and sails, in dire peril of being pounded to pieces at any moment. The case of Dixon, Aldrich and Patula is not an isolated one. It is the sad story of the whole present generation in the democratic Nations.

Our enemies had also drifted for a time, but they have finally improvised sails and a rudder for their craft and for the last two score years they have sailed it towards a definite goal. They have a faith. That their faith rests on a myth and is directed towards an unnatural goal is beside the point. Whatever their faith and their aims, one thing is certain: they are not drifting. They know whereof they are fighting. In their estimation the sacrifices they are making of property, of comfort, of life are warranted by the values at stake.

How is it with us? How many of those who are willing to die in our cause have a clear idea of its underlying principles? We are not fighting only to kill Huns and Japs. That would be more inhuman than anything they have done. Kill we must, but not for killing's sake. It is a means to a higher end. Do I hear the words: democracy, freedom? Abstract words these and, therefore, vague unless they are well defined! Are they well defined in our minds? Think about it! We may help you to do it later.

*The Raft, by Robert Trumbull, Henry Holt & Co., New York.
**Mr. Christopher Morley.

Maintenance Wing



Servicing Squadron

For the past few months as everyone knows, the Maintenance system on this station has undergone a major reorganization. As a result, we have what is known as Central Maintenance.

Under this system, Maintenance has taken the form of a wing. The Chief Technical Officer is the head of the wing comprising three Squadrons, namely, Headquarters, Maintenance and Servicing.

In this article it is hoped to give the reader a picture and understanding of the work and organization of Servicing Squadron.

Servicing Squadron, as the name implies, is an organization to service all flying aircraft on the hangar line. On the hangar line there are eight flights, each having an allotment of aircraft, the type and number being determined by the extent and nature of the flying done by each. Each flight is given a "handling party," headed by a Junior N.C.O. It is the duty of these "Handling Parties" to see that these aircraft are efficiently serviced during the day's flying, records pertaining to the aircraft kept, and to assure that their hangar is kept in good condition at all times. Each group of four Junior N.C.O.'s is under the direct control of a Sergeant, who in turn is supervised and assisted by a Flight Sergeant.

One section of Servicing Squadron only known to this station is Servicing Pool. This is a small group of qualified mechanics under the charge of a Sergeant, whose duty it is to take care of all the minor unserviceabilities on the hangar line. These men form a mobile crew which travels from hangar to hangar making minor repairs to aircraft as the need arises. Besides this one function, the Servicing Pool care for stored or visiting aircraft, carry out numerous modifications, special inspections, and routine daily inspections on night flying aircraft. In brief, this crew are the link between Maintenance and Servicing Squadrons and do a great deal toward maintaining a high standard of serviceability.

The control of the whole system is effected from Servicing Squadron Headquarters, which is situated at the approximate centre of the Hangar line. By a system of boards, such as one would see in a brokerage office, a complete record of all the aircraft and flight personnel on the Hangar line is kept. From the aircraft charts, it is possible at a glance to determine how many aircraft are on the station, the location of each, and the number of aircraft in each flight. On these boards you also find the number of hours each aircraft has on the airframe and aero engine, what inspections have been carried out, the number of hours to the next inspection, the condition of aircraft instruments and any information pertaining to special equipment installed. The charts for personnel

show the strength of the squadron, where the men are situated, their trade, rank and grouping, and also information as to their duty watch and annual leave. From the board which is checked daily, it is possible to keep an even number of men in each Handling Party making replacements where necessary to compensate for sickness or leave. This office is truly the nerve centre of the squadron. It is from here that the efforts of each of the Handling Parties are combined and from here our combined effort is interlocked with that of the remainder of the wing.

The success of any organization lies in its ability to coordinate efforts of its many parts toward the one goal. Our goal is to keep the greatest number of serviceable aircraft in each flight and to assist the Training Wing in giving the students the most possible flying hours. This we have done at all times, though suffering many growing pains; and we shall continue to do so, as long as the spirit, now prevalent among our men, remains.

—F/S GATES, Senior N.C.O.
in Servicing Squadron.

We Answer "No!"

We must be brave!
No sacrifice can be too great
To ward the swift impending fate
Our land to save!

Tho' tyrants rail
And press their long-prepared war
On sea and land, both near and far,
They can but fail!

O foolish boast
That aryan blood shall rule the world,
The swastika to be unfurled
On every coast!

Shall pagan might,
The cruel hand of Jap and Hun,
Destroy the progress long begun
Toward heaven's light?

We answer "NO!"
Our cause is just and shall prevail;
Through carnage, blood and fire, and hail—
We answer "NO!"

—Byron A. Barlow.
FROM WINGS-OVER-SEAS.