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THE STUFF AMERICANS ARE MADE OF

by Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr.

Member, Senate Military Affairs Committee



SGT. WILLIAM H. BARRY OF MASSACHUSETTS
BEING INTERVIEWED BY LODGE

If asked to say what most impressed me on my recent trip to the war theater, my answer would be: the heroic qualities displayed by our American boys. My most lasting impressions were gained in the field and in the hospitals around the globe. It is there that one sees the kind of boy America produces.

For instance, I saw one boy in Tunisia who had just been encased in a plaster cast reaching up to the chin. His back was broken. Steel clamps had been anchored in the skull to exert traction on the spinal column. Doctors said he would have to lie that way for six months—and then his recovery was by no means certain. But he still responded with a joke.

I saw another boy there, his face burned almost beyond recognition. A victim of this horrible gasoline war, he could not control his eyelids and a nurse had to lift them for him. His mouth was no more than a hole in a mass of seared skin. But when I greeted him, out of that hole came the strong voice of courage.

Let me tell you about Lieutenant Miller, a boy from Alabama, who was washed up on a South Sea beach when his ship exploded. He thought he was going to die. With what remaining strength he could muster, he gave his equipment to his comrades, thinking they would need it to escape. And then he lay down to die.

HE BECOMES A ONE-MAN ARMY

That night it rained. Next morning he still clung to life and drank some of the rain water that had gathered in some big leaves. He discovered he could hold it on his stomach and concluded he was not going to die. Stripping a Japanese corpse nearby, he armed himself with a pistol and hand grenades and dragged himself to a thicket where he made a primitive camp for himself. He destroyed with grenades a Jap party sent to get him and then replenished his supply from the new corpses.

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SENATOR LODGE VISITS WOUNDED SOLDIER AT GENERAL HOSPITAL, AUSTRALIA

Forty-two days later, our forces found him on the island. He had lived a nightmarish Robinson Crusoe existence. But he declined to leave the place until he had turned over to Naval Intelligence the documents and weapons he had taken from the enemy.

That's the kind of boy I think of. That's the kind of stuff I mean.

And then I think of Lieutenant Jack Kennedy, whose father, Joe Kennedy, was our ambassador to England. His PT boat was halved by a destroyer. For 18 hours young Kennedy and his crew floated on what was left of the hull, until they reached a small South Pacific island.

Every night that young man swam out into the shark-filled channel on a life preserver, signalling with a flashlight all through the night to attract the attention of an American boat. After more than a week of such brave conduct, he and his crew were rescued.

I think of the Pennsylvania lad I saw at Port Moresby. He had been wounded at 3 o'clock only the afternoon before. His side was a mass of gunshot wounds and his right eye was gone. The loss of an eye would have prostrated an ordinary man both in mind and body. But not this young man. When I spoke to him, his voice came back as strong as mine. "The thing that bothers me," he said, "is that they probably won't let me fly any more."

ALONE IN A BOAT WITH A CORPSE

When I speak of the stuff Americans are made of, I think of Lionel Pelletier, a Fall River boy from my own state. His seaplane foundered and the crew escaped in a rubber lifeboat. When he was rescued, the other seven members of the crew had died. And he was found with one dead body—too weak to throw it overboard. He survived because he had exercised a laudable degree of self-discipline and self-control. When I saw him in a hospital in Iceland I was astonished at his poise and self-control.

I think of the "stuff" displayed by an Army doctor, Colonel Flickinger of California, when he went to the rescue of a group of newspapermen whose plane had crashed in Burma. Several of the newsmen had been injured. Colonel Flickinger and two Medical Corps enlisted men flew over the spot where the other plane had crashed and then parachuted down to minister to the injured.

Finally, when I think of Americans, I cannot forget Bernt Balchen. He set out in a seaplane to search for the crew of another plane that had been forced down on the Greenland ice cap. Bernt Balchen finally located the marooned crew in a remote spot. He soon learned he would have to rescue them immediately if their lives were to be saved. There was no time to return to base for assistance. It had to be a one-man job.

In a slight depression in the ice cap the ice had melted just enough to form a thin film of

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water. If he could land without himself crashing, he would be lucky. And if he were lucky in landing, could he take off again from such a small area of melted ice?

He landed skillfully and gently on that water and then kept circling his plane on the surface. For he knew his pontoons would freeze in the slush that underlay the water, if he stopped for a moment.

The men were too weak to help themselves. So each time he circled past them, he pulled one of them into the plane. It was only extraordinary strength, buttressed by unexcelled valor, that enabled him to perform the feat of pulling them one by one into the plane while it was in motion. When the last one had been lugged over the side, he took off and returned to base with his precious cargo.

WHAT CAUSES AMERICAN BRAVERY?

Yes, all these boys showed the stuff Americans are made of—the boy with the broken back and the boy with the seared face in Tunisia; Lieutenant Miller; Lieutenant Kennedy and the boy from Port Moresby in the South Seas; Lionel Pelletier and Bernt Balchen in the Arctic; and many, many more.

People have asked: "How do you explain such bravery?"

Those boys do not die with any slogans on their lips, as do the Japs and Nazis. They are free men who do not need any infusion of political oratory.

They fight and die so superbly for something much deeper than catchwords. Their courage springs from individual self-respect; and it can occur only in a country where the individual is the master of his Government. It is far more powerful than any urge instilled by propaganda.

About the Author, Senator Lodge

This report by Senator Lodge, 34, Republican, of Massachusetts, is the result of his observations during the recent globe-girdling tour by five Senators. Their military reports became the subject of considerable controversy, but there can be no controversy over Lodge's story of our heroic fighters.

