



HARRY DEVLIN

## The Price Is Not too Great

A FEW DAYS before Christmas, in 1776, the tattered regiments of Washington's army were called out to hear the reading of a pamphlet by one of their fellow soldiers. He had written it on a drumhead, by the light of a campfire, during the retreat across New Jersey. Now the regiments were encamped on the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware River, without shelter, half-starved, some shoeless, all clothed in rags against the bitter winter. It was a beaten, dispirited army that stood listening to the words of Thomas Paine:

These are the times that try men's souls; the summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: 'Tis dearness only that gives everything its value. Heaven knows how to set a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as Freedom should not be highly rated.

Those are the opening sentences of Paine's *The American Crisis*. They are worth reading

and believing in another winter of discouragement. For they remind us that outnumbered American forces have had to retreat at other times in our history. They remind us that the present crisis is not the first that the American people have faced, and perhaps not even the greatest.

The crisis that Paine wrote about and lived through and helped so greatly to resolve was as different from this one as the world of 1776 is different from today's. Yet the stake was the same, and the odds against winning it were long and discouraging. The states which had declared their independence had yet to win it. The central government was feeble and full of dissension. Its money was almost worthless. The army lacked everything needed to win a war, including disciplined soldiers. The Americans, on short-term enlistment, faced a superior, experienced, well-equipped force. Many of them deserted or went over to the enemy. The English held the city of New York, Long Island and most of New Jersey. The country was divided and demoralized, and the formidable fifth column of Tories was almost as much of a threat to independence as the British and Hessian troops.

Yet, in the face of those odds, Washington led his soldiers—Thomas Paine among them—

across the ice-choked Delaware on that Christmas night of 1776 in the first successful "D-day invasion" of our history. And some historians say that many of those soldiers, as they crossed the river and marched in a blizzard toward Trenton, were repeating Paine's words: "These are the times that try men's souls."

Certainly his words are as apt today as when they were written. And if their author were on earth now, we don't think he would write them any differently. Freedom still bears a dear and proper price, and tyranny has never been easily conquered, whether it takes the form of George III and an army of musketeers or Stalin with a stockpile of atomic bombs.

The people of the United States have lately gone through another period of sunshine patriotism. It is now ended. The winter of reality is upon us. Our government has recognized the magnitude of the present crisis and has taken some necessary steps to deal with it. They are steps which will affect the lives of all of us. They will try our souls and our resolution and our strength. They will cost more lives. But that is the price of freedom.

## Heroism Knows No Color

THIS IS ONLY ONE of the many stories of brave men that have come out of the Korean war. It is a story which prompted the commander of the carrier *Leyte* to say, "There has been no finer act of unselfish heroism in military history."

On December 4th Ensign Jesse Brown, a pilot attached to the *Leyte*, was shot down in enemy territory near the Chosin Reservoir. Lieutenant (jg) Thomas J. Hudner saw him hit and radioed the information to the commander of the mission. The commander went off to call for a rescue helicopter, while the lieutenant circled the downed plane. He saw that it was burning and that the pilot, though alive, was obviously injured. He also saw, from footprints in the snow, that the plane was circled by enemy troops.

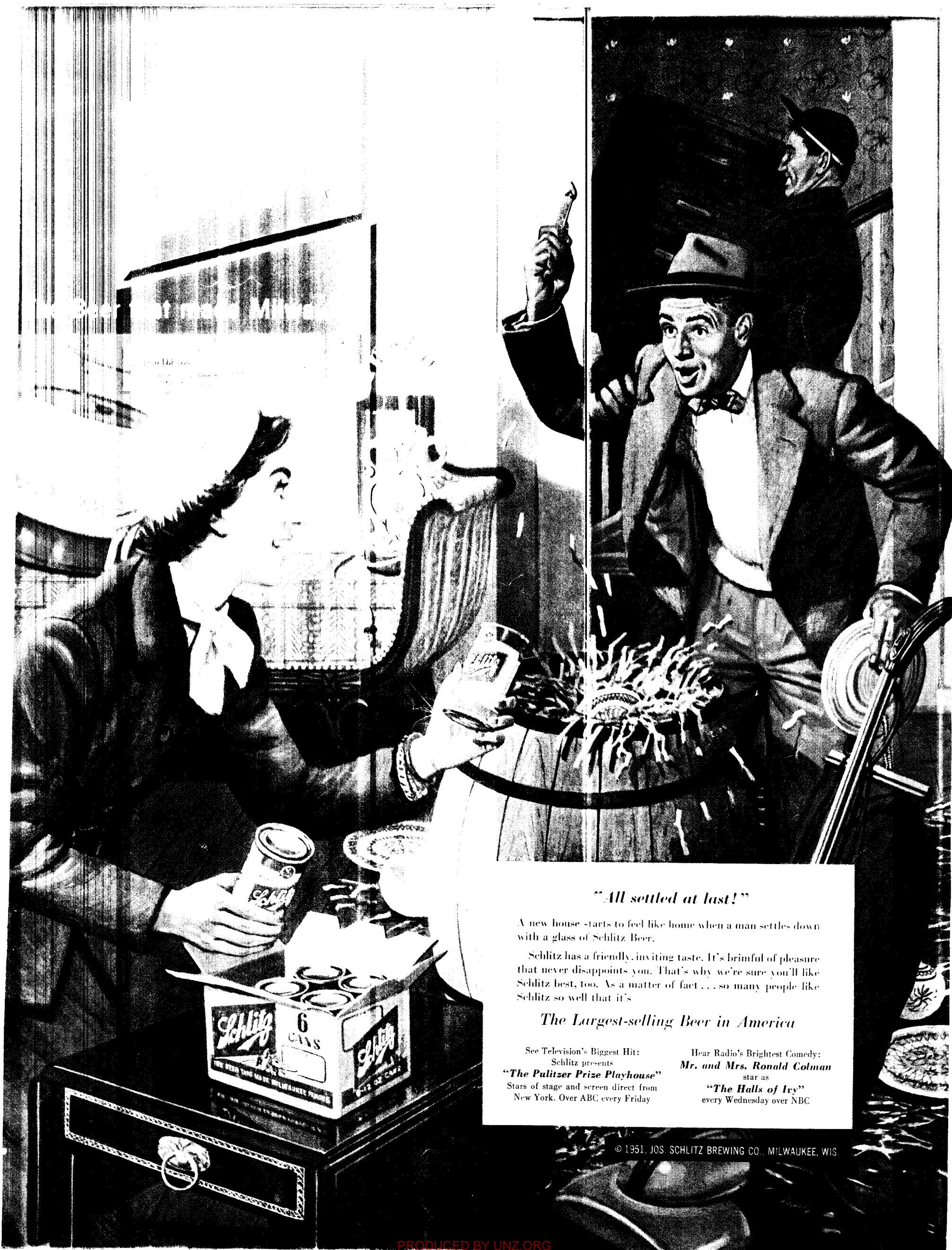
Lieutenant Hudner knew that Ensign Brown would die unless he got immediate help. He knew what his own fate might be if he tried to help him. Yet he set his plane down in the same field and ran to the injured man. The canopy of the burning plane would not open, so the lieutenant called his commander and told him to get fire extinguishers and an ax aboard the helicopter. Then he returned and began packing the fuselage of the wrecked plane with snow to keep the flames away from Ensign Brown.

The helicopter arrived a few minutes later. But Ensign Brown died before the rescuers could get him out of the plane. That is the end of the story, but there is a postscript.

Ensign Brown was a Negro—the first Negro naval aviator and the first Negro officer in the Navy to lose his life in any war.

The matter of his color does not add to or detract from the heroism of a man who was ready, without hesitation, to lay down his life for a friend. But the story of Ensign Brown is another spike in the propaganda guns of the Kremlin, of misguided Americans like Paul Robeson, and of those who believe and spread a vicious, distorted, generalized story of racial discrimination in America. We do not intend to generalize in turn. There is discrimination, of course. But there is also kindness, good sense and a hatred of bigotry which are typical of America, too, and which reach their ultimate expression in the story above.





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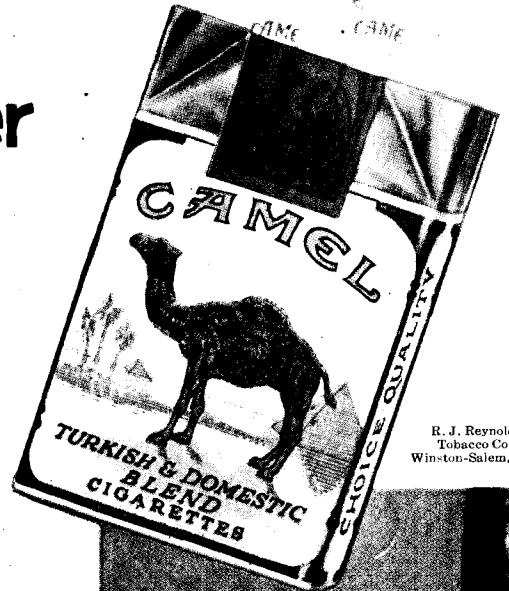


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