

The Unsung Hero's Lament

by Lt. L.W.Coquillette, Class 43-4-J

They sat in state, the heroes in the vaulted Halls of Fame,
In proud and scornful silence, for each had made his name,
On fields of storied battle, on many a bloody sea,
Though forged in fire, or carved in mire, each deed in history.

There was little Davy Crockett, and the martyr Nathan Hale,
And the rebel line that fell in Shenandoah's bloody vale,
There was Grant, who knew brief glory, but died another way,
And others known to Time alone, but each had had his day.

There was on each haunted visage, a deep forbidding gloom,
And every gaze upon a stranger who had shambled in the room.
In his left hand was a check list, in his right an R.B.I.,
His face was worn, his clothes were torn, his flight cap was awry.

The first to speak was Caesar, by virtue of his age,
And the finger that he pointed was trembling with his rage.
"What right have ye brash youngster, with these gallant men of yore?"
And the man replied, though not with pride, "I flew a B-24."

"It was out on the plains of Kansas, in the land that God forgot,
Where the winter winds are piercing, and the summer suns are hot.
We were young and brave and hopeful, fresh from ten days leave,
Though somehow we knew and the feeling grew, that they were really our last reprieves,

For there's a sort of maniac madness in the supercharger's whine,
As you hear the ice-cubes tinkling in the turbo balance line.
And the runway strips are narrow, but the snowbanks they are wide;
While the crash trucks say, in a mournful way, that you're on your final ride.

The nose gear rocks and tumbles, for it's held with baling wire,
And the wings are filled with thermite to make a hotter fire.
The camouflage is peeling off, it lends an added luster,
While the pitot head is filled with lead to help the load adjuster.

The bomb bay doors are rusted and they close with a ghastly shriek,
And the plexiglas is smeared with some forgotten oil leak.
The oleo struts are twisted, the wheels are not quite round,
And the bulkheads thin (Ford builds with tin), admit the slightest sound.

You taxi out on the runway, 'mid the groans of the tortured gear,
And you feel the check-rider's practiced teeth, gnawing your tender rear.
The co-pilot dozing on the right, in a liquor laden coma,
Mingles his breath, like the kiss of death, with the putt-putt's foul aroma.

So it's off in the overcast yonder, though number one is missing,
And the hydraulic fluid escaping, sets up a gentle hissing.
The compass dial is spinning in a way that broods no stopping,
And row by row, the fuses blow with an intermittent popping.

It was named "LIBERATOR" by a low and twisted mind,
But men who come to Liberal, no freedom ever find.
There is no hope, no sunny ray, to dry their tears of sorrow,
For those who land and still can stand, fly the damn things tomorrow."

The stranger's voice was silent, a tear shone in his eye,
And from all his honored audience arose a vasty sigh.
Great Caesar rose up to him with pity on his face,
And bowing low, he turned to show the stranger to his place.

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