

How Green

RUSSELL FOSTER

Eons ago when the government was donating an existence to me as payment for a few negligible risks, I lounged about and zig-zagged the Atlantic six or eight times aboard a tired old Liberty ship named in honor of Buffalo Bill Cody. Now Bill may have been a smooth-riding, fast-shooting pioneer—not so his namesake. She couldn't push ten knots burning mattresses; nevertheless, she attracted the elite.

These elite included the Finnish, gruff Captain Skold (whom I affectionately called "grandpa"), my buddy, Mardie, the second mate, and, of course, me. We three formed an inseparable triumvirate which unassisted could, I'm sure, have sailed that five hundred and fifty feet of scrap through any of the seven seas. General Eisenhower, however, sent us an assistant who desired to learn much from our scintillating company. This junior member was Richard Lewellen Lloyd, who lived as a parasite guest among us for a month.

All of us were extremely anxious to be interviewed by this august personage and used as source material for his next book; Mardie and I locked ourselves in the radio shack, and the Captain spoke Finnish. Lt. Lloyd (Lt. by courtesy of Parliament and a previous Welsh title) was gathering data for a book about an American "melting-pot" crew aboard a fast-built, slow-moving Liberty ship thrown together by Kaiser.

Our first cook was Chinese, the second cook was Welsh, the third cook was Negroid, the baker was German, one deck-hand was Portugese, another was Korean, the captain was Finnish, the first mate was Scotch and I was from Indiana. There we all were—the gentleman author of "How Green Was My Valley" and we American

mongrels.

I had struggled aboard ship before our second sailing, dragging an extremely heavy suitcase behind me. Stealing silently up the precipitous ladders, I had stowed it away in the darkest recesses of the radio shack. Frequently Mardie would give me the word, and the two of us would slip into the shack, lock the door, bolt the porthole, stuff paper into every crevice, quietly slide the suitcase from its hiding place and play our classical records on a not very reliable, home-constructed device that would omit half a movement of my favorite symphony if the ship rolled a bit. The crew preferred "boogie."

One night as I sat idly sketching and Mardie transferred us from the second record of "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" to the third, an insistent rap startled us out of the second movement. Was it one of the crew come to pilfer our needles or some other dastardly deed which would render our phonograph impotent? No, it was merely Lt. Lloyd. We invited him to bring us a pot of tea and some fresh cakes (the English appreciate these little courtesies, you know) and asked him to sit down—even listen if he liked.

To make conversation I asked him if he had noticed any similarity in pattern between a phrase in the "Apprentice" and a passage from Beethoven's "Ninth." He was adamant; there was no possible similarity; I must be demented. His withering glare removed the top layer of paint as it mentally noted every unadorned feature of our weary little radio shack. In time his eye fell on my poor attempt at a portrait of the Captain (the portrait now hangs in the New York Yacht Club); his eyes fell on the

portrait and ran down the edges. In a condescending manner he confided in us.

"When I was young and foolish," he admitted, "I thought that art was a great field in culture. I studied in Vienna for a while, but then I discovered music; it offered more. The theatre next attracted my talents, and I was very successful there.

It was quite a while before I understood that these so-called attempts at culture were just stepping stones to the acme, writing. Writing is everything. Art is just the beginning."

Mardie asked him if he had ever had anything published; he left; I pulled out my typewriter.

The Price Of Victory

LEE LOVELL

It was early in the fourth round; I measured it by the four swallows of whisky taken from the half empty pint of "Old Grandad" nestling against the palm of my left hand. The whisky produced a warm sensation that loosened my tongue, causing me to yell as did the rest of the wild beasts around me. Urged on by the mastery of alcohol, all the savageness of primitive man overshadowed the culture of civilization; and I felt the supremacy of the conqueror ruthlessly beating his victim. Each of his blows became my own; each smack of his fist slamming into soft flesh created a thrill. "Kill him," I yelled. "Kill him!"

Hysterically I lifted the bottle to my lips and with a quick jerk tilted my head backwards. For a second the arena lights glared into my eyes. The whisky seemed to draw my mouth. It slid across the top of my tongue and burned the tenderness of my throat before adding more fuel to the increasing fire in my belly. I screwed the cap tight and for a moment stared through the glass at the quivering liquid inside. Within its dark depths I saw the Roman Coliseum, the betrayal of Jesus and the swastika of Germany. Somewhat shaken I once more became aware of the people around me. I noticed the expressions, the sheer delight that reflected in their faces at the brutality occurring before them. I saw eyes that smoldered dangerously, mouths

that twitched at the sight of blood and expressions of sweet happiness as pain was felt.

A young woman in front of me leaped to her feet. "Look! Look!" she screamed. "His teeth, they're loose!" The manner in which she placed both hands to the side of her face and stared reminded me of a buddy I once knew. It was just after a hot piece of shrapnel had disemboweled him. The body twitched and jerked, but not the face; it remained the same. With a curse the woman's companion pulled her back down into the seat. "Naw, that's the mouth piece," he muttered. At the same time he glanced around and smiled. I nodded.

Leaning forward I placed my hands against the hard chair back. It shifted as my weight was applied. A smacking noise drew my attention once again towards the ring. Momentarily the beaten fighter rocked on his feet from the force of the punch, then slid to one knee. Stubbornly he clung to the conscious world before falling sideways to the canvas. His mouth piece, which was protruding from the corner of his mouth, rolled across the floor and stopped at the feet of his conqueror. A red blotch on the right cheek bone of the prone fighter turned a soft blue color as the winner's hand was raised into the smoke filled air. Somehow the sweetness of the life-saver I had placed in my mouth turned bitter.