

WAR MOVIES....

John Wilborn

Yesterday I was visiting with my neighbor Ben, who is much younger than I...He casually asked what was my favorite war movie and I thought for a moment before I mentioned a movie he had never heard of. Of course, I had to scratch to recall the actors and actresses names but I did fairly well. Told Ben of names and events about Korea he had never heard of---"what was the Korean War for, John"----I scratched for a reason for that, also. William Holden, Grace Kelley, Mickey Rooney and Fredric March were names of the character actors I could remember---only the Mick is still alive. Ben asked was the movie real or made up fiction---told him I didn't know...Went to Google to check and this is what I found out. Chief

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James A. Michener wrote the novel *The Bridges at Toko-Ri* from his experiences as a war correspondent with the Seventh Fleet in Korea, dispatching stories on life aboard the carriers Essex (CV 9) and Valley Forge (CV 45). The novel tells the story of a civilian attorney recalled to active duty as a reserve Naval Aviator who is shot down over hostile North Korea. The enlisted helicopter pilot and crewman who try to rescue him are also shot down, and all three end up in a ditch fighting for their lives. Following Michener's death in 1997, the Library of Congress released the notes and journals that he compiled during the war, revealing many of the real characters and events behind the scenes of the popular story.

Soon after his arrival aboard Valley Forge in January 1952, Michener witnessed what was to become the central theme for his book. Early on 8 February, Rear Admiral John Perry, Commander Carrier Division 1, and his staff were alerted to engage in a possible rescue attempt of an escaped prisoner of war (POW) pilot, Lieutenant (jg) Harry Ettinger of Composite Squadron (VC) 35, who had been shot down in December 1951. Friendly guerilla forces removed the ailing Ettinger from a POW camp and took him to the Wonsan area, where they contacted U.S. intelligence units for a possible rescue.

It was a routine job for Chief (AP) Duane Thorin and Petty Officer Ernest Crawford, who manned the duty HO3S-1 helicopter aboard Rochester (CA 124) 10

that morning. A member of the intelligence group replaced Crawford, and the HO3S-1 was loaded with supplies for delivery to agents on the ground. As Ettinger climbed aboard at the rendezvous point, the helicopter crashed. Meanwhile, the rescue combat air patrol (RESCAP) aircraft overhead were under heavy fire. Lt. John P. McKenna of VC-3 was fatally shot down in an F4U-5N Corsair, and four AD Skyraiders were forced to land due to battle damage. An HO3S-1 from Greer County (LST 799) was launched to try to reach Thorin, Ettinger and the crewman but was riddled with bullets. After two attempts, the stricken helicopter departed the scene, safely landing aboard St. Paul (CA 73).

An hour later, four AD-3s from Fighter Squadron (VF) 194 and two F4Us from VF-653 led by Lieutenant Commander Robert Schreiber, CO of VF-194, were scheduled to hit three railroad bridges on the Kowon-Yangdok-Samdong-ni rail line. Aerial reconnaissance photographs from F9F Panther photo planes showed that the targeted stone bridges lay in a deep valley with heavily defended guns atop surrounding hills, which required a hit-and-run attack.

A single coordinated dive-bombing attack was planned in which each AD would drop two or three 1,000-pound delay-fused bombs, and the F4Us would drop 250-pound bombs on the bridges. Only two of the three bridges were destroyed, so Schreiber called for a second attack, during which VF-194 pilot Ensign Marvin S. Broomhead's AD was hit in the engine. Too low to bail out, he landed the Skyraider wheels up on a small, snow-covered clearing atop a mountain. Moments before touching down a small arms bullet grazed his temple, causing him to crash-land, breaking both ankles and a vertebra. Pulling himself out of the cockpit, he crawled clear of the wreckage to watch his circling comrades who were anxiously calling for the rescue helicopters from Rochester and Greer County, which were not available.

The cruiser Manchester (CL 83), however, had an HO3S-1 that was used for shore gun spotting, but it was more than 100 miles away. Despite the distance, pilots Lt. Edward Moore and Marine Corps 1st Lt. Kenneth Henry answered the call and headed inland, finding Broomhead surrounded by enemy troops on the mountain top. Suddenly their helicopter sput-

(Continued on page 11)