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I remember the last time I saw my mother--it was the summer of 1939. I had been accepted to attend the US Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland and was getting ready to leave my home in Tulare, California to report in for my plebe year. I knew my mother was dying of cancer at the time. I remember walking into the room in which she lay bedridden to say good-bye. We both made it very casual--there was no outward showing of emotion. I left the room and walked out to the front door where my father was waiting to take me to the train station. As I reached the front door, I had the feeling that this was not the way I wanted to leave her--on such a casual note. So I went back to her room and as I opened the door, I saw her crying. As I went to her side, I burst into tears too. We sat there in each other's arms, motionless, for what seemed like hours. Then she broke the silence by making me promise that I would not come home for her funeral as the time away from my studies--particularly in my plebe year--would be too disruptive. I promised to abide by her wish, kissed her and departed. Ten weeks later word came to me at the Academy that she had passed away. It was truly the most traumatic experience of my life at that point. Although this was not the first time tragedy had struck my family (I had lost a younger brother to tubercular meningitis seven years earlier), the close relationship I enjoyed with my mother made her death particularly difficult to

accept. For the first time I could remember, my life seemed to be without meaning or purpose. It would take the better part of a world war for me to regain that sense of purpose.

In the late evening hours of October 24th, 1944, a Japanese naval force under the command of Vice Admiral S. Nishimura, comprised of two battleships, one heavy cruiser and four destroyers, attempted to make its way through the Surigao Strait, under cover of darkness, and into Leyte Gulf to attack US amphibious shipping conducting landings off the coast there. The Japanese force was no match for the elements of the US Seventh Fleet--consisting of six battleships, eight cruisers and four destroyer divisions--which awaited their arrival. However, two of those destroyer divisions--one to which my ship, the USS ROBINSON, was attached--were ordered to proceed down the Strait to initiate contact with the Japanese force and to take the enemy battleships under torpedo attack. Such an order was formidable, to say the least, in view of the fact that we would have to close to within 9,000 yards of the big battleships to achieve any accuracy with our torpedoes, while the main batteries on the enemy ships had a ^{Much closer} range of about ~~10,000~~ yards. At 0300 on the morning of October 25th, the Japanese force was sighted and our destroyer division was ordered to move in at flank speed to intercept. We withheld fire

from our own gun batteries so as not to disclose our positions. As we closed to within 10,000 yards, however, we were detected and the Japanese battleships opened up with their main batteries. From the bridge of our ship we observed their first salvo sail overhead and their second salvo fall short. As we waited for the third salvo to hit us, we heard a tremendous explosion and saw the horizon light up. Our torpedoes, which had been launched just minutes before, had found their marks on the Japanese battleships. Simultaneously with our torpedo attack, our own battleships opened up on the now illuminated enemy targets, forcing the Japanese to shift their fire from our destroyers-- which had already delivered their deadly punch--to the American battleships-- which had yet to deliver theirs. The order then came for the destroyers to break off contact. Miraculously, we had escaped without taking a single hit. Afterwards, we discovered that every man on our ship had been praying in anticipation of that final enemy salvo.

As one looks back on experiences spanning over six decades, it is difficult to focus in on a particular point in time or specific experience which caused one to direct his life in a certain direction. However, I believe the two experiences related above--moreso than any others--caused me to undergo a re-examination of my direction and goals in life.

My decision to attend a service academy was, for the most part, an economic one. Despite the fact that both my parents were medical practitioners, their mutual compassion for their fellow man more times than not resulted--due to the Depression era economy--in their failure to charge for services rendered. I saw the academy as an opportunity to obtain a good education inexpensively while fulfilling an obligation to my country as well. My intentions at the time I reported in, however, were merely to complete my obligated service and then apply to medical school. But the events related above were to change all that.

My mother was a warm, compassionate and understanding woman. Perhaps the fact that she had never known her real parents--she had been orphaned at a very early age--provided her with an insight into the need to show love and compassion for one's fellow man that most people fail to grasp. She instilled those same beliefs in her children. It was difficult for those children to understand why a person who had given so much to others was taken during the prime of her life, after a slow and painful demise. Her death had left me bitter. The goals I had set to serve my fellow man in the field of medicine no longer seemed so important to me. That long term goal was soon replaced by a short term one that required I only do now that which I needed to get me through until tomorrow.

Despite my graduation from the Academy and my immediate departure for the war in the Pacific, I was still an embittered man that October morning in 1944 as the Japanese battleships were engaged in the Surigao Straits. The events of that day, however, impacted on me as significantly as they did on the Japanese Navy.

As is the tendency any time one "cheats" death, a great deal of soul-searching occurs in which one attempts to philosophize why one life has been spared while another has not. Recognizing the fact that we are all put here for a purpose, I did not attempt to rationalize why I was to be given more time to achieve my purpose in life, for such a rationalization defies logic. But I did come to accept the fact that we are only in this world for a limited period of time to achieve our individual goals and, therefore, must devote our fullest efforts to reaching them within that little time we have been given to do so.

It was in this vein then, in the days following the Battle of Surigao Strait, that I came to focus upon the fundamental beliefs which had taken root during the first quarter century of my life and upon which I have attempted to build during my subsequent years. Simply stated, those principles are threefold--compassion for one's fellow man, service to one's country, and peace through strength--all of which, I believe, are inter-related. It took the horrors of

a world war to finally cause those principles to blossom into career-oriented goals.

With the destruction of the German and Japanese war machines in 1945, the Free World democracies were able to reflect upon how the tragedies of that world war were permitted to happen. Those tragedies happened despite good faith efforts of well-intentioned Free World statesmen to negotiate an enduring peace with their counterparts in governments which represented totally different ideologies. They had happened despite the execution of arms limitation agreements and treaties with those governments which, one Free World statesman rationalized, assured us of peace in our time. They had happened because the leaders of Free World states had rationalized that the leaders of non-democratic states, like them, ultimately preferred peace to war. But, in a closed society, it is not difficult for a totalitarian government to hide its true intentions. While holding out the olive branch of peace in one hand, those governments secretly plotted the demise of the Free World nations with the other. The unwillingness of the democratic States to confront the realities of the totalitarian expansionism in Europe and the Pacific and, instead, to pursue a less confrontational policy of appeasement was perceived by those governments as a lack of resolve and commitment to the basic principles of freedom that the democracies represented.

We were lucky in World War II--for despite the deterioration of American armed forces prior to the outbreak of war on December 7, 1941 due largely to

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decreased defense budgets encouraged by peace movements, unilateral compliance with arms limitation agreements, and a policy of noninvolvement by the US in the wars engulfing Europe and the Pacific--the dedication and resolve of the American people to persevere freedom at any cost was sufficient to retrieve victory from the jaws of defeat. The concern Japanese Admiral Yamamoto expressed shortly after launching his surprise attack on US naval forces at Pearl Harbor--that Japan may have only awakened a "sleeping tiger"--would prove to be a valid one.

The lesson to be learned by the events leading up to the war were clear-- never again should Free World states rely on preserving peace through good faith intentions and written agreements alone, for in the final equation real peace can only be maintained when it is perceived that such states have sufficient strength and resolve to deter would-be aggressors from violating the sovereign right of all nations to self-determination.

It was compassion for humanity and the preservation of a democratic world order that caused the international community to rise up in an effort to purge itself of member states who proved to be unwilling to abide by that order. It was a compassion shared by millions of Americans who, collectively, enabled this country to serve as the guardian of democracy during that war. It was a compassion which I too shared and a role in which I was proud to serve.

In the years of euphoria that followed the defeat of Germany and Japan, the lessons to be learned from that war had soon been forgotten. Five short years later, countries with ideologies different from those of Free World states again initiated aggression, without warning, against a peaceful nation as there was a perception that Free World defenses and resolve had deteriorated. It became evident during the course of the Korean conflict, however, that, absent a direct threat or attack on the US itself, there would be little public support for a war being fought to preserve another country's freedom. This sad reality came to light over two decades later as South Vietnam fell to invading North Vietnamese forces in April, 1974. Due to Communist successes in protracting that war in SE Asia, the American people lost sight of their country's role as the guardian of democracy. And while America suffered through its identity crisis, South Vietnam lost its freedom.

Since the fall of Saigon, America has been reluctant to resume her guardian role. As a result, we are today locked in a peacetime struggle with a nation which has demonstrated no such reluctance in making good on its promise to achieve "world domination." Today, the threat to Free World security posed by that nation--the Soviet Union--is greater than it has ever been before. And while the lessons

of maintaining real peace appear once again to have been lost on good intentioned Free World statesmen who seek to negotiate "peace in our time", Soviet leaders have learned their history lessons well. Moscow recognizes that all it need do now to achieve its goal of world domination is to demonstrate patience and avoid a direct threat to Free World's interests. For by working indirectly-- through the use of surrogates such as Cuba and Syria, through the support and encouragement of terrorist activities, and through the manipulation of peace movements--Free World citizens remain ambivalent in the absence of a perceived "direct" threat to their interests.

I have attempted during the course of a thirty-two year naval career and my subsequent years as a civilian to address this increasing threat to world peace and freedom that I fear is more prevalent today than at any other time in our history. I have sought to stimulate an awareness among the public that such a threat need not be a direct one to Free World interests--for there is sufficient danger in the indirect threat as well. The seemingly innocent revolutions in Cuba and China and Nicaragua all erupted under the guise of increased rights for the population. Yet in each instance the end result was the emergence of a Communist system which even further denied those rights to its people.

A former architect of US foreign policy--Henry Kissinger--who perhaps understood better than anyone the true nature of Soviet intentions concerning the world order, outlined for me over a decade ago his thoughts on the future of the ^{struggle} ~~strength~~ between the Soviet Union and the US. It was his belief that this country has passed its historic high point like so many earlier civilizations--that the US was sliding downhill and could not be roused by political challenges. His job, therefore, was to persuade the Russians to give us the best deal we could get, recognizing that historical forces favored them. He said he realized in the light of history, he will be recognized as one of those who negotiated terms favorable to the Soviets but that the American people have only themselves to blame because they lack the stamina to stay the course against the Russians who are "Sparta to our Athens."