

UNITED STATES ARMY RECRUITING SERVICE
No. 3, Second Series
SOLDIERS OF THE AIR

001.2
110.3

ANNCR: KOIN presents - - - - - Soldiers of the Air!

MUSIC: THEME "SECOND CONNECTICUT REGIMENT" (475) UP AND FADE INTO
BACKGROUND

ANNCR: This evening KOIN is pleased to cooperate with the United States Army recruiting Service in presenting Soldiers of the Air, one of a series of weekly broadcasts.

MUSIC: THEME UP AND OUT

ANNCR: Sergeant Bill Harris, with fifteen years of active service in the regular army exemplifies the military tradition of fine soldiering. In the Recruiting Service he is finding a new outlet for his special talents in dealing with young men and inspiring them to seek a career in military service. Every day furnishes him a new opportunity, and every day brings new young men to him -- but, (FADING) -- let's listen ----

SOUND TELEPHONE BELL

LAWRENCE: Army Recruiting Service. Sergeant Lawrence speaking.

VOICE: (FILTERED BY PHONE) Hello. Is Sergeant Harris on duty?

LAWRENCE: No, Sergeant Harris is not here. This is his day off.

VOICE: Know where I can find him?

LAWRENCE: Yes. You'll find him at Lake Oswego, swimming. Look on the high diving platform. He's crazy about diving.

VOICE: Thanks. (FADING) I'll find him.

SOUND: SPLASH OR SLAP OF WATER, WITH GAY CROWD VOICES: UP AND FADE
TO BACKGROUND

BILL: Go ahead and dive, young fellow. It's your turn.

HANK: Thanks, but I'm in no hurry.

BILL: But you've been waiting for ten minutes.

HANK: Yeh -- but --

BILL: Go on, dive! I've been off that board four times to your
one --

HANK: (BITTERLY) My one! That's a laugh.

BILL: What's so funny about it?

HANK: (DIFFIDENTLY) Oh, nothing, only --

BILL: (LAUGHING) Come on, fellow. Out with it.

HANK: (CONFIDENTIALLY) Do you honestly think I dived off this board,
this high one, twenty feet above the pool?

BILL: Sure. You were here when I first came up and I just
naturally supposed --

HANK: Well, mister --

BILL: Not mister. Sergeant Harris of the United States Army
Recruiting Service.

HANK: Well, Sergeant Harris, I'm a good swimmer but I haven't
dived off this board today. Not today or any other day!

BILL: Then what on earth are you doing up here?

HANK: I was just --

MAN'S VOICE: Hey, you guys, are you renting this diving board or just
roosting on it?

BILL: Sorry, old man, we just got to talking. We'll move back.
Come on -- What did you say your name is?

HANK: I didn't say but it's Hank Williams.

BILL: Well, come on Hank. We'll step back and let this fellow dive.

MAN'S VOICE: Thanks. (SHOUTING) Watch out there, Blinky! Here I come.

SOUND: SPLASH OF WATER

HANK: Gee! Wasn't that a pip of a dive? (WISTFULLY) Wish I could
soar through the air like that.

BILL: You can. Just walk out to the end of that diving board and, -- well, just fall off head first.

HANK: Sounds easy, doesn't it? But I mean more than that, Sergeant Harris. (APOLOGETICALLY) But how could you, a recruiting Sergeant for the regular army, be interested in a guy that is scared to death.

BILL: (ENCOURAGINGLY) Maybe I'd be more interested than you think. Most of us are scared at one time or another, but most of us get over it. Sometimes in just a split second we get over being scared. We beat the jinx and then --

HANK: And then?

BILL: Why then ---- Say, I remember the day I went up to the Recruiting Station to enlist. I was just a kid, probably no older than you --

HANK: I'm no kid, that's the worst of it. I'm twenty-five.

BILL: Well, I went up to the sergeant on duty, half scared to death, but chiefly scared, I guess, because I was afraid they wouldn't accept me.

HANK: I'm afraid of that too.

BILL: What do you mean too? Would you like to enlist?

HANK: (RESIGNEDLY) I might as well confess it. I want to get into the army more than anything on earth, but --

BILL: (LAUGHING) But what? You look pretty good to me, -- young, healthy, twenty-five years old, high school graduate --

HANK: Yes. And an honor student in science. But that was a long time ago. I graduated in 1934.

BILL: You aren't married, are you?

HANK: (BITTERLY) Don't make me laugh! No dame wants a guy that's scared to plunge off the high diving board.

BILL: (SERIOUSLY) Look here, Hank. I don't know exactly what the score is but it seems to me you take this thing too seriously. What's it all about?

HANK: (THOUGHTFULLY AS IF PUZZLING IT OUT) It's all so screwy. I remember just as well how it all started. I was just a little shaver. I was always crazy about kites and darts and stuff that floated on the air. I used to lie on my back and blow dandelion fluff up in the air just to watch it glide -- Gosh, Sergeant Harris, all my life I've wanted to glide like dandelion fluff, -- gentle, easy, (SLOWLY) effortless.

BILL: But what happened?

HANK: Well, one day I was playing by a swimming pool where my dad was swimming, I was throwing darts up in the air and they'd all float down and I'd throw them again. Then a gust of wind caught one and it fell on the high diving platform. I shinnied up the ladder to get it. Just as I got to the top and climbed on the platform I slipped somehow and blooie, down I went, twenty feet, head first into the pool.

BILL: And ever since you've been scared?

HANK: I told you it was screwy. But it's true. I've been scared to death of high places. And here I am, crazy to get into the army so I can qualify for aviation and the gliding Corps --

BILL: (LAUGHING) So that's it? You want to be a gliding expert?

HANK: Yes, I want to be a gliding expert. I've read everything I can find on the subject. I've made model gliders and experimented with the single and multiple-tow take offs and with the V and tandem formation --

BILL: Wait a minute -- You've got to be a plane pilot first. You aren't even off the ground yet.

HANK: (SADLY) That's right, and I guess it will take an accident of fate to get me off.

BILL: Fate plays some funny tricks sometimes, Hank. You never know when she's going to take a hand in your life. (PAUSE) Did you ever hear of Ted Bellak?

HANK: Hear of Ted Bellak? Say, he's my hero! He's the fellow that glided over Lake Michigan.

BILL: (SIGNIFICANTLY) Yes, he glided over the water, sort of like a long distance dive.

HANK: (NOT COMPREHENDING) Yes, and now he's an instructor at Frankfort, --- say, what was that you said?

BILL: (LAUGHING) Yes, at Frankfort. By the way, Hank, that's where the army pilotstake glider training, at the Frankfort-Lewis school of Soaring. They take a minimum of 25 hours of soaring and 10 hours of piloting towed gliders. But let's get back to Ted Bellak. Did you hear how fate made him famous?

HANK: Now you're just trying to make me think I've got a chance.

BILL: No. Honestly. Fate, or an accident of fate dispatched him on the glide over Lake Michigan that made him famous. You see, Bellack had been studying the air currents over the big lake. He knew they caused water craft as well as air craft a lot of worry and trouble. He believed that the best way to study the currents was to actually glide over the lake. He persuaded the Blue Hill Observatory of Harvard University to back him and built a glider that (FADING) he and his meteorologist, Vic Sandick, called the Dove of Peace.

SOUND: MUFFLED SURF AND BREAKERS SPLASHING

VIC: You know, Ted, you are just plain crazy to try soaring over the lake, but so long as you are determined to do it, I'm glad I'm having a hand in the experiment.

TED: I'll make it. You know (PROUDLY) the Dove of Peace is the finest glider in America.

VIC: Some dove, huh?

TED: Yes, and some equipment. That micro-aerograph Harvard Observatory sent is a honey.

VIC: How high will you have them tow you before you release and start gliding?

TED: Eighteen thousand feet ought to be high enough.

VIC: Better take an oxygen tank and mask, Ted.

TED: Sure, sure, I'll take everything. No use in taking chances.

VIC: Taking off from Sturgeon Bay, aren't you?

TED: That's right. Art will fly over. I'll take the ferry. I'll phone back to you for weather conditions and when you say O.K. -- that's (FADING) my signal for a take-off.

BILL: Somehow that commonplace expression O.K., stuck in Vic's mind. Next day he sat by the telephone waiting Ted's call, studying every item of data he has been able to assemble. The weather did not look so promising as he had hoped, and he worried while he waited. (FADING) Pretty soon the phone rang ----

SOUND: TELEPHONE BELL

VIC: Hello, hello, Ted?

TED: (FILTERED) Hi ther, Vic. How's everything?

VIC: Just a minute, Ted. I can't hear you.

TED: Can you hear me now? How's everything?

VIC: O.K.! I can hear you now.

TED: O.K.? O.K., That's all I want to know! Here I go. See you in an hour!

SOUND: RECEIVED CLICKED INTO PLACE

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SOUND: RECEIVED CLICKED INTO PLACE

VIC: (FRANTICALLY) Wait a minute! Hey, Ted! Hello! Hello. Ted, for heaven's sake. Wait ----

SOUND: RATTLE OF RECEIVER REPEATED SEVERAL TIMES

VIC: Operator! Operator! Hurry! It's Bellak, the glider. He must not go up to the 18,000 foot level! Stop him! There's a devil of a wind up there!

OPERATOR: I am calling your party. (FADING) I am calling your party.

BILL: But Ted Bellak wasn't killed. Vic never reached him on the phone, and optimistically Ted winged away into the blue expanse of sky, oblivious to danger. However, at thirteen thousand feet the upper air was so disconcertingly cold that before the tow plane had reached a dangerous altitidue, he decided to cut loose. After all, he figured that with the ordinary gliding ratic he would make it across the lake.

HANK: Yes, he might make it. The ordinary ratio is fourteen horizontal feet to one vertical.

BILL: So, he cut loose, far over the Wisconsin shore.

HANK: But he made it!

BILL: Sure, he made it. A safe landing and a record for over the water gliding. He tried to follow his tow plane across the lake but the air currents just below the storm belt pushed him south, and within a few minutes the pilot, Art, was out of sight.

HANK: But wasn't Bellak worried?

BILL: He said afterward that he wasn't. He declared that never before had he so much enjoyed a glide.

HANK: Was he far off his course when he landed?

BILL: No, he wasn't. It's funny, Hank, but his glide over the water was like I said, a sort of dive. He planned where he was going to land just as you plan where you will hit the water. Off you go, knowing absolutely that you'll land unhurt where you plan to. That's the way it was with Bellak. When he came in sight of the Michigan shore he discovered he was thirty miles off his course, close to the town of Manistee, so, like the skilled pilot he was, he manoevered his glider to take advantage of the air currents ----

HANK: I know! (ANIMATEDLY) You quit a sluggish current for a brisk one and off you go --- like dandelion fluff!

BILL: That's right. And in just fifty-six minutes from the time he took off Bellak landed at Frankfort. He had covered ninety miles, almost twice the distance across Lake Michigan.

HANK: Gosh, I'll bet Vic, the weather man, was glad to see him land.

BILL: He sure was. And so were two thousand other people who had gathered at Frankfort. Half an hour later Bellak went up again and stunted for the crowd.

HANK: (INCREDULOUSLY) But if it hadn't been for an accident of Fate, as you put it, Sergeant Harris, Bellak might not even have started on his glide.

BILL: That's right, Hank.

HANK: Oh well, (RESIGNEDLY) I suppose I'll never get off the ground. (BITTERLY) Up on this platform twenty feet above the water is about my speed ---

BILL: (SUDDENLY INSPIRED) Come on, Hank. Let's dive. I'm getting cold so long out of the water.

HANK: Gee, if I only dared --

BILL: Come on out on the diving board and watch me. It's easy. See, like this --

HANK: O.K., I'll come with you, but --- Hey! Look out!

BILL: Catch me! (WITH EXAGGERATED FRIGHT) I'm falling!

HANK: Hey! Let go! I'm falling too!

BILL: He-e-ey!

SOUND: SHARP SPLASH OF WATER, THEN CHOKING, MUFFLED GASPING, AND SLOSHING OF WATER FADING

BILL: Hank! Hank! Where are you?

HANK: (GASPING AND LAUGHING) Here I am, Sergeant Harris! Oh boy, here I am!

BILL: Are you all right?

HANK: Am I all right? I'm practically perfect. I dived, Sergeant Harris! I dived.

BILL: So you did.

HANK: (OBLIVIOUSLY) I'm going to do it again. Right off the high board. Come one, Sergeant Harris, (FADING) let's do it again!

BILL: I'd rather stay down here.

HANK: (OFF MIKE) Well, I'd rather be up here. Look out! Here I come!

SCUND: SHARP SPLASH OF WATER, THEN CHOKING AND GULPING TO FADE

HANK: How was that, Sergeant?

BILL: (SOLEMNLY) That was magnificent, Hank. Like a swan.

HANK: Swan -- beloney! It was like -- dandelion fluff!

BILL: So now -- what?

HANK: (WITH RISING ENTHUSIASM) So now I enlist in the regular United States Army. So now I learn to be a pilot. So now I get to be a glider like Ted Bellak. What time does the Recruiting office open in the morning?

BILL: Eight o'clock.

HANK: I'll be there. But now, excuse me, I got to go back up and dive. Gosh, it's wonderful, just floating through the air. I'll never forget that first plunge a few minutes ago.

(FADING) Did you see me, Sergeant Harris?

BILL: I can't say I did, exactly, Hank. I was having a little conference with fate.

MUSIC: THEME UP AND OUT

ANNCR: And so we leave Sergeant Bill Harris until next week at this same hour when KOIN will again cooperate with the United States Army Recruiting Service in presenting Soldiers of the Air. This program was written by the Oregon Writers' Project and produced by members of the Youth Theatre Guild. The cast included:

ANNCR: Listen in again at this same hour 10*15 P.M. next Monday
night and you will again hear ----

SOUND: TELEPHONE BELL

BILL: Army Recruiting Service! Sergeant Harris speaking!