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Paratrooper, Part 1 - First Jump

Down from heaven comes eleven and there's H--- to pay below.

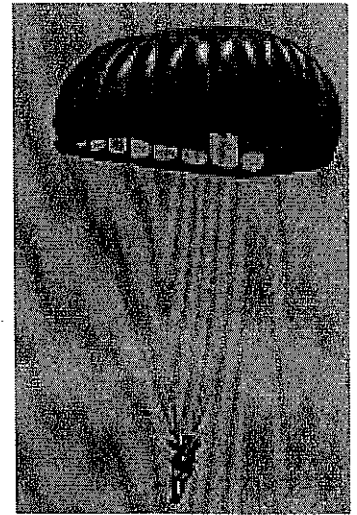
Shout "GERONIMO, GERONIMO!"

Hit the silk and check your canopy and take a look around.

The air is full of troopers set for battle on the ground.

It's a gory road to glory but we're ready, here we go.

Shout "GERONIMO, GERONIMO!"



~(WWII Paratrooper Jump Song by Lieutenant Colonel Byron Paige of 11th Airborne)

"Stand uuup! Hook uuup!" The shouted orders came from an odd figure on the floor of the noisy plane. The jump master lay just inside the open door. His goggled eyes peered back toward a line of figures in the shadows. Cold air roared past the opening behind him. Somehow, his barked commands cut through the noise.

Rob McCall stood first in the line of eleven men. He faced the open door, the cold wind blasting his face. He felt sweaty and sick. His hands shook. It was all he could do to stand under his bulky pack. He wondered how long his legs would hold him.

From the floor of the plane, the jump master yelled again. "Heequipment check!" Rob passed shaking hands over clips and buckles. "Soouund off!" the jump master bawled. "Number one-readaaye?"

Rob cleared his throat. "Ready," he squawked finally. It was the worst lie he had ever told. Dimly, he heard the same shaky squeak all the way down the line behind him.

"Stand in the door!" the relentless voice barked. It was the moment Rob had dreaded. He swallowed against the hot, heavy lump in his belly. He forced his wobbly legs to move. He stood at the roaring maw of the plane, inches from the jump master's head.

Rob curled his fingers around each side of the open door. He stared at the sky rushing past. Suddenly, he knew one thing for certain. "I can't do this!" he thought. In the same moment, the jump master's arm lifted. Rob felt a sharp thwack behind his knees. He tumbled into space.

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His hands clawed the sky, finding nothing to cling to. His lungs grabbed air, ready to scream out the panic in his body. Then, before the scream could come, he felt a firm tug. He heard the slap of air filling the silk bubble above his head. His 'chute had opened. He was gliding smoothly to earth.

Relief came over Rob like a warm blanket. Everything had happened just like it was supposed to. Above him, a perfect globe of white silk held him secure. It was as if he had hitched a ride on the coattails of a powerful angel. Suddenly, Rob felt wonderful. The scream in his chest came out as a shout of triumph. "Geronimo!" he yelled at the top of his lungs. He laughed. He'd done it!

In the plane above, the jump master was urging other fear-frozen bodies out into the blue. Hearing the faint shout from below, he smiled beneath his goggles. "Geronimo" was the paratrooper battle cry. The skinny McCall kid would be okay, he thought. A good trooper in the making.

That first jump would stick with Rob all his life. He'd been jarred and bruised by a messy landing that first day. Even that couldn't dim the kick of lofting through the sky on a silken sail. There had been several more jumps since then. Each one was a leap of faith. Every time, there was a moment his mind rebelled. Jump out of a perfectly good airplane at a thousand feet? Not on your life!

To control the fear, he "talked himself brave." "You don't want to look like a wimp," he told his panicky brain. "It worked the first time, it'll work again." Then, a step forward, and he was out and away. He'd feel the chute pop, and he'd be swaying in the breeze like a dandelion seed. He felt gleefully free, released from the bonds of space and time. Fear was forgotten.

With five jumps, each trooper won the right to wear the parachute patch on his jump suit. Rob and his buddies had passed the trial by fire. They were now paratroopers, the warriors who dropped from the sky. They were a part of 82nd Airborne, the "All-Americans."

Jump training was over now. It was time to remember they weren't in this for fun. The Nazi war machine plowed through Europe. In its wake was a black swath of human suffering. The nation of Japan had nearly swallowed the Pacific whole. Even America had been bitten by the ogre of war. Sunny Pearl Harbor lay smoldering. Japanese bombs had littered her bay with bodies and battleships.

It was a bitter time, a time to go to war. Nine months after his first jump, Rob's unit shipped out. Their first stop was Casablanca. To young men fresh from Main Street U.S.A., it was a strange and exotic land. But the troopers had little time to take in the sights. They trained night and day.

A few weeks later, planes rumbled through the midnight skies over Sicily. The men of Rob's unit jumped out into the inky sky. They plunged to earth behind Nazi lines.

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Questions

_____ 1. The man shouting orders from the floor of the plane was:

- A. The company commander
- B. Rob McCall
- C. The jump master
- D. The pilot

2. How did Rob feel as he got ready to jump? How do you know?

_____ 3. What happened first?

- A. Rob felt a tug.
- B. The jump master's arm lifted.
- C. Rob's lungs filled with air as he started to scream.
- D. Rob felt something hit him behind the knees.

4. Why did Rob yell "Geronimo!" after his parachute opened?

_____ 5. The jump master smiled when he heard Rob's shout because:

- A. He knew Rob was safe and was glad his first jump had gone well.
- B. He was mean and enjoyed making the men jump in spite of their fear.
- C. He was looking forward to the end of the day.
- D. He thought Rob was making a joke.

6. What was meant by the statement that each jump was a "leap of faith"?

_____ 7. The men were learning the skill of parachuting because:

- A. They would soon be dropped behind enemy lines on the battlefields of WWII.
- B. It was a good fitness exercise for soldiers.
- C. They would represent the military in parades and exhibitions.
- D. It was a fun sport.

8. Do you think it would be fun to parachute out of a plane? Why or why not?

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The Attack on Pearl Harbor

Most mornings on the island are calm. That morning, instead of waking up to the soothing sound of ocean waves, the terrible roar of Japanese fighter planes was my wake up call. It was December 7, 1941, and our nation's military was suddenly under attack.

For two hours Japanese planes bombed Pearl Harbor. In just two hours, more than two thousand people were killed. One thousand more were injured. Many of them were my fellow sailors and my friends.

The very next day, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt asked Congress to declare war on Japan. Up until this point, many Americans had conflicting opinions about World War II. Some felt that we should join the cause and fight against Germany and Japan. Many others, however, wanted us to stay on our safe soil. The attack on Pearl Harbor changed that. In an overwhelmingly positive vote, Congress agreed to declare war.

When I went to bed on Saturday night, December 6, I assumed that the next day would be just like any other Sunday in Hawaii. The attack on Pearl Harbor made this day anything but ordinary. It made it horrific and historical.

The Attack on Pearl Harbor

Questions

1. The attack on Pearl Harbor took place on Sunday, _____.

_____ 2. This passage is written in the _____ person.

- A. second
- B. third
- C. first

_____ 3. Who is the narrator in this article?

- A. a Japanese pilot
- B. the president
- C. a sailor
- D. a congressman

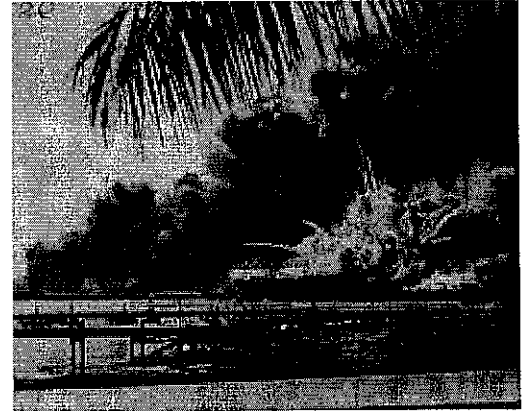
_____ 4. Choose the best title:

- A. Top Ten Tourist Spots in Hawaii
- B. Can You Hear the Ocean?
- C. Sneak Attack on a Sunday Morning
- D. Sail Away

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The Radar Readers

I will never forget December 7, 1941. What a horrific day! I was a private in the U.S. Army. I had an important job. I studied the radar screen and tracked American airplanes as they were flying. I was also on the lookout for enemy planes. I helped to protect our airspace. My shift was almost up that Sunday morning. I daydreamed about all that I could do with the rest of my day. I was lucky to be stationed in Hawaii. Not all soldiers had the luxury of spending a day off at the beach. That particular day I decided that the ocean was calling my name. A little fun in the sun was just what I needed to unwind and relax.



My fellow soldier and I packed up and prepared to leave the mobile radar station where we were working. I was moments away from being off duty. That's when I saw it. A huge blip appeared on the radar screen. It was a large group of airplanes. They were only 130 miles away from Oahu, and they were approaching the island quickly. I looked at the other private who was working with me. His eyes reflected my fear. We had to report this sighting. He grabbed the phone and tried to place the call, but there was no signal. He tried over and over again. Eventually, the call went through. We reached the lieutenant on duty and told him what we had seen. The lieutenant believed that the radar had picked up a flight of U.S. B-17 Flying Fortress bombers heading from California to Hawaii. For security reasons, he could not tell this to the radar operators. All he said was, "Well, don't worry about it."

Less than an hour later, I knew he had been wrong. The whole island did. At 7:55 a.m., hundreds of Japanese airplanes started attacking Pearl Harbor. In two hours they destroyed twenty-one ships, including eight huge battleships, and damaged and destroyed hundreds of airplanes. The attacks killed more than two thousand people and injured one thousand more. Japan's actions may have injured our naval station, but they strengthened our resolve. The next day, Congress agreed to declare war on Japan. America joined World War II, almost overnight. That Sunday morning is one I will never forget. Neither will millions of others around the world.

The Radar Readers

Questions

1. Why was the private fearful when he saw the large blip on the radar screen?

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- _____ 2. What is the tone of this article?
- A. optimistic
 - B. serious
 - C. silly
 - D. humorous
- _____ 3. Why did the soldier think he was lucky to be stationed at Pearl Harbor?
- A. Pearl Harbor was a great place to snow ski.
 - B. Unlike soldiers stationed elsewhere, he could go to the beach.
 - C. It was a cheap place to live.
 - D. He got lots of free pearls for his mom.
- _____ 4. **My fellow soldier and I packed up and prepared to leave the mobile radar station where we were working.** What does the word mobile mean in this sentence?
- A. a seaport in Alabama
 - B. a river in Alabama
 - C. capable of moving or being moved easily
 - D. a sculpture made up of suspended shapes that move

80, 96, 112, 128,

_____, 160

How many hundreds are in the number 150,000?

You have a playdate in 240 minutes. How many hours is that?

David bought 5 dozen cupcakes for a party. How many cupcakes did he buy?

Write the greatest possible 2-digit number without repeating any numbers.

How much greater is 180 than 44?

How many minutes are there from 6:00 p.m. until 7:30 p.m.?

Amy has 27 nickels. How much money is that?

B, G, _____, Q, V