



Palm Beach Fellowship of Christians & Jews 2019 Essay and Creative Arts Competition

Essay Award - Grade 8

Bryce Weisser, The Benjamin School

Hope

“Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all the darkness.” - Sir Desmond Tutu

When I was presented with this project, exploring the topic of HOPE, and after reading the quotes of inspiring authors and world leaders, I didn't feel as if my own life had (thankfully) had a lot of bad times in it where I would hope for the light to take me out of the darkness. Hoping for a new season of my favorite show on Netflix or hoping to be picked for the A Team for soccer is about as deep as it had ever gotten for me. However, even though I personally have not had dramatic life experiences the topic did remind me of the story of my Great Grandad Albert Greaves.

Recently my mom had shown me his Royal Navy Diary from 1943 and I learned about his World War II experiences where HOPE had saved his life. My Great Grandparents were from Glasgow, Scotland and were childhood sweethearts. They married in 1938 and just a couple of years later, my Great Grandad was called up for military service with the Royal Navy to fight the Germans in World War II. He served on British Aircraft carriers, prime targets for Nazi planes. Excerpts from his diary detail some of the attacks, the near attacks and the way the Royal Air Force planes would chase off the German JU 88 Fighter Planes or the Focke Wolfe Bombers. What was noticeable in his diary was the greater number of entries that were dedicated to (in his own words, “his darling wife”), my Great Grandmother, Nel, than those of the dangerous events at sea. His focus was always on the love of his life and that every time his ship set sail, his biggest hope was to come back to her.

In 1941, his ship had come under heavy attack by German Dive Bombers, damaging large parts of the ship, killing dozens of British soldiers and leaving those not killed, wounded and stranded at sea. My Great Grandad was one of those men. My mom told me about how he pulled himself on to anything that would float and waited to be rescued, never losing hope that he would survive and live another day to be with his darling wife. It was this hope that kept him alive. He was either going to give up hope and go to heaven with many other soldiers, or he was going to persevere through the cold waters and make it home. It would be nearly two days before he and several others were rescued at which time, he fell unconscious for another two days.

Meanwhile, back in Scotland, my Great Grandmother Nel received a telegram, informing her that her husband's ship was bombed and he was “missing in action, presumed dead.” During World War II, the Royal Navy lost over 50,000 personnel and 820 were missing in action. Nel hoped and prayed the fighting would stop, that people would find more love than hatred in their hearts and that her husband and everyone else's husbands or sons or fathers would be safe and return home. Reunited shortly after that, they would often talk about how hope was the only thing that had given them the strength to get them through these terrible times. Hope had saved them from giving up.

I hope I never have to go through anything like this to show me what darkness is like but I do understand the value of having hope when everything else seems so bad. I am inspired by the human spirit, by the power of hope and that when we have hope, we can rescue ourselves, overcome anything and reunite with love.