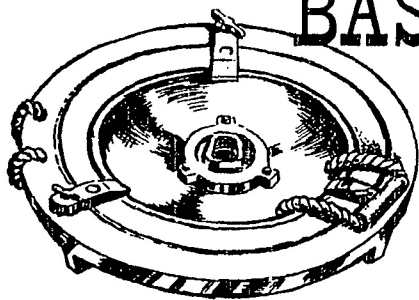




BASEPLATE

Mc GURK



How the Ale & Quail Club decided that wars—hot or cold—
are pretty much the same in the end

“HOSE-NOSE,” TEX SAID LOOKING ME STRAIGHT IN THE eyeballs, “Your proposed speed run sounds just peachy! But I can’t take off right now—don’t you know there’s a war on!”

“Hoidy toity and a piddily pat!” I chortled. “I’ve got news for you, big daddy! Peace reigns throughout the domain. In fact, if you’d tune up your ear pans, you’d probably be able to hear the voice of the turtle. Come on, let’s hit that Washington routine with all those lovely government girlies.”

“Sit down, Baseplate, quit wiggling your tail and desist from clomping those paddle feet around the room,” said old picklepuss. “You’re not designed for such antics in the first place. And in the second place, if I may speak frankly, when such a mood seizes you, I’m reminded of that screwy idea you conned us into at Basic School.”

“You mean the time we swiped that Air Group’s battle flag at our class reception and were going to fly it from the control tower at Bolling?” Dusty chuckled.

“Listen, gents,” Tex said, ignoring Dusty’s question and letting us know something was really bugging him, “I’m serious. I really think that we’re in a war and too damn few people realize it.”

“Who’s at war?” Johnny Johnson asked as he walked into the room and flopped on my rack. “The only one I’ve been able to find is the ‘Cold’ one and I’m getting bored with it. You got a better one, Skinny?”

“Well look what the cat dragged in,” Tex said sarcastically, “my cup floweth over and all that jazz! Why don’t you clowns shove off so I can meditate?”

Johnny, Dusty, and I looked at each other sheepishly and knocked off the fol-de-rol.

“As I figure it, Tex,” Dusty said calmly, “you’re not quite satisfied with what we’re doing toward winning the Cold War?”

“Friends,” Tex said in a tired voice, “I’ve been reading up on this deal. In the first place you can’t even find *one* definition for the so called ‘Cold War.’ The economists look upon it as chiefly economic warfare, and the political scientists as political warfare. Then there are those who claim that it’s primarily a contest for mens’ minds—they can’t agree whether it’s ideological or psychological warfare.”

“Crazy!” Johnny murmured and ducked a shower clopper.

“Wait a minute, Johnny,” Dusty frowned, “Tex has something here. Let’s at least have the Ale and Quail Club agree on what is meant by ‘Cold War’—how’s this for a start?”

“Cold War is considered to be a *new* kind of warfare. Let’s not get trapped into believing it’s just a new name for something that has happened before in history.”

“Right!” Johnny said enthusiastically. “This *new* kind of warfare is caused by new technologies, new values, new national aspirations, and many other factors sharing one thing in common—they’re new—20th century new!”

“I see it!” Even I had the bug. “In this warfare, intelligence is gathered, objectives are seized or defended, reserves are committed, and casualties have and will occur. Why hasn’t anyone told me this before?”

“Territories have been, and will be, won or lost,” Dusty broke in. “New allies are sought and old ones are strengthened. Why, for crying out loud, we really are at war! I’ve never recognized it as such!” He ended on a note of dismay.

“Well,” Tex said somberly, “whether recognized or not, we’re staking our national existence on its outcome, so we’d better get humping!”

US & MC