
Country Philosopher

You've gotta have heart

BY AMOS ARTHUR
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Most of us live our lives in an atmosphere of uncomplicated tranquility. It is only seldom that destiny allows us to see within ourselves so that we may take a look at that dormant ingredient called courage.

I have never for a moment doubted my courage. If fate has decreed that in my lifetime there has been no call to incorporate it in any action...still... it does not dim the certainty that I possess it in abundance.

I have Walter Mitty dreams that show clearly how brave I am in time of emergency. Picture, if you will, a sinking boat. The seas are tempest tossed and my wife is going down for the third time. I swim through the rough waters and bring my wife safely to shore. I have shown great courage. Greater than you think because I can't swim a stroke.

It is World War Three. The Russians have landed at La Plata and the county commissioners have called for a volunteer to give his life in stopping the enemy. Others run and hide in a cabbage patch or stick their heads in the sand. But Amos Arthur Holmes throws out his chest, grabs his dic-

tionary, and says, "I am sorry that I have but one life to give to Charles County."

And baby...that's courage.

But in reality, without the dreams, there is that small doubt that pricks the conscious whereby a man wonders if, in a crucial test, he will emerge with honor or be branded with the stigma of cowardice.

Last week that crucial test caught up with me and proved (without the shadow of a doubt) the value of my manhood.

I went to visit a friend of mine in Washington who is an executive sort in one of the better banks. When I arrived, the lobby of the bank was filled with people. Lines were formed before each teller so I stood in the corner waiting for my friend to notice me.

And then, like a clap of thunder, a voice boomed through the bank.

"OK! THIS IS A HOLDUP!
EVERYBODY STAND PERFECTLY STILL."

I glanced toward the door and saw this man. His face was covered with a stocking mask and he held the ugliest, meanest looking shotgun you have ever laid eyes on. The bandit leaped over the counter and started scooping up the money. It was then that I

started to plan my action.

I decided that this thief must be stopped. There are many things in this world that I am lenient on, but I have always had a deep aversion toward those who take things that don't belong to them. My personal philosophy has always been that you don't gain happiness by making some other person unhappy. And I am quite sure that losing a vast sum of money would make somebody in that bank unhappy.

I looked around the bank hoping to see other men who would help me when I attempted to thwart this robbery. I didn't see one person with courage, the starch, that would be needed. Nobody likes to die. Nobody likes to be shattered with the murderous force of a shotgun blast.

No, I would have to do it myself. I would have to prove to the world that law and order could never be erased as long as there were courageous citizens to preserve it.

I would make my move when the bandit jumped over the counter. He would have the bag of money in one hand and the shotgun in the other and there would be a split second there when I could jump him.

This was the moment.

I didn't care anything about



rewards. It was meaningless to me that people would gather to talk about the valor of Amos Arthur Holmes. No, I would do this because of justice and my fine sense of duty.

The bandit leaped over the counter. He held the bag of money tightly in his left hand and the shotgun in his right hand. Could I do it? Could I drum up the courage to tackle this thief?

The bandit tripped coming over the counter and the shotgun went off accidentally. The noise was like the roar of a million cannons. I fell to the floor, shaking and whimpering, and only when some old lady helped me to my feet and told me the bandit had gone.

Driving home, I put this experience in the back of my mind. I started dreaming again. The boat was sinking and my wife was bobbing around in a tempest tossed sea. I swam through the rough waters and brought my wife safely to shore. I disregarded entirely the fact that I couldn't swim.

By golly...that's courage.