

Chapter Three:

The Instigator

In the Fall of 1942, students filed into Mr. Mulder's eighth grade Civics classroom at South High School, unaware that an event that would go down in school history was about to be initiated by none other than Arthur Blackport, one of the quietest students in the room.

Arthur took his seat in the back row next to his friend Mel Hartger as Mr. Mulder passed out the latest issue of *My Weekly Reader, The Junior Newspaper*. The entire class was to read the issue together and discuss each article.

On this day, Mr. Mulder began by pointing to the blackboard where he had written the numbers of military guns, ships and planes needed in 1943 to help the fighting soldiers. He referenced a chart found in a 1942 issue of *My Weekly Reader* that called for the production of thirty-five thousand anti-aircraft guns, seventy-five thousand tanks and one hundred and twenty-five thousand planes. "If all the needed airplanes were stored in the same airport at the same time," Mr. Mulder read, "the airport alone would have to be over 250 miles long."ⁱ

Manufacturing all this equipment would take millions and millions of dollars. "Everyone has to do his part," Mr. Mulder said, as he passed out the new copies of *My Weekly Reader*.

Featured on the cover of the new issue was an article about the "Buy a Bomber" campaign. Cities, businesses, organizations, even schools could contribute to the purchase of individual aircraft by selling War Bonds and War Loan Stamps, the article proclaimed. Once purchased, the plane would be named by the group, and flown into a local airport for a dedication ceremony.

Shouts of disbelief were heard as everyone started talking at once.

“Quiet down. Let’s continue,” Mr. Mulder said as he turned back to the newspaper at hand.

The amount of War Bonds sold determined the type of aircraft purchased; seventy-five thousand dollars bought a pursuit fighter or a tiny liaison plane converted for medivac duties. One hundred ten thousand dollars, funded a twin engine B-25, and for selling three hundred thousand dollars of War Bonds, a B-24 or B-17 Flying Fortress could be purchased.ⁱⁱ

Excitement that had been mounting ceased after Mr. Mulder read the cost of each aircraft. Silence permeated the room. Then, from the back row a hand shot up. It was Arthur Blackport, never-raise-your-hand, Arthur.

“Mr. Mulder,” he said, “why don’t we do that?”ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱ “America Shows What It Can Do,” My Weekly Reader: The Junior Newspaper, Vol. 20, February 16 – 20, 1942, No. 22.

ⁱⁱ Bowden, Ray, “Nose Art Themes, War Bond Aircraft”
<http://www.usaaf-noseart.co.uk/theme.php?theme=6&code=404R#.Wa4VvIViko>

ⁱⁱⁱ Blackport, Arthur, Interviewed by Sandra Warren, February 1, 2013.