



Small Worlds Around Us

By Lynn W. Watkins

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Termination Bolsters Waif With No Destination

It was a wide, long, sandy strip of artificial beach recently pumped up out of a salt water bay and staked off for building lots, called a "fill." During the summer, hundreds of shore birds gathered on the sand flat and, with their feet and breasts, scooped out shallow depressions in which eggs were laid.

The tides ebbed and flowed, the summer sun beat down, the eggs hatched, and a small army of baby shore birds—skimmers, sandpipers, terns and sandlings—were either resting in the home-depression or wandering over the sand fill.

By getting down on the sand flat, everything within our line of vision was thrown into relief against the water and the sky. And there, in silhouette, were the running forms of hundreds of tiny, baby shore birds, plainly visible against the background of the sky. If we stood up, the little moving forms disappeared. They were still there, but the few yards between us, and our added height, caused them to blend in with the sand and become almost invisible.

Large Marble

We concentrated our attention on a single little form. He was about the size of a large marble and about as round, but he was alive and had the will and the power and the desire to move. He was an off-yellow color, speckled with dark gray spots and each spot was about as large as a kernel of wheat. His body cleared the ground by a quarter of an inch. That was about the length of his legs. He hadn't been hatched over a couple of days at the most, but already he had left the cavity in the sand and was now wandering over the sand flat: a tiny little waif, adrift on an ocean of sand.

If he survived the pitfalls and many dangers of his sandy environment, he would grow to be a graceful black skimmer. A bird of the mud flats; he would be a winged creature as large as a sea gull and would skim the water at twilight, catching small fish with the elongated, lower bill.

He was very tiny and he was trying to get somewhere, but had not the slightest idea of where he was going or why he was on his way. He didn't run or walk, but progressed forward by a series of hops, with both legs taking off together and both landing together. He slightly resembled a small, fluffy marble rolling over a washboard, except the marble would have made a noise.

Tough Going

It was tough going for the little guy. We measured the length of his hops. He only made a bare half inch forward at every jump, but his progress was continued for several minutes at a time. What a tremendously big world was the sand flat! He could hardly cross it in a single day's time for every two or three feet he would collapse in a heap, exhausted.

But he was determined. After each rest he would roll onto his feet and once again begin his journey. He fell frequently. He just wasn't watching where he was going for his attention was centered on keeping his legs moving. He seemed to be trying to escape something, but he really didn't know what he was hopping away from—like so many of us, he was in a big hurry with no place to go.

With the last light from the setting sun, we could look across the sand flat and see dozens of these little waifs striving to live and trying to get somewhere. They were wanderers over vast spaces. When darkness came and blotted out the scene, we wondered if the tiny waifs had come to rest or were they still hurrying toward an unknown and unseen destination.

Pope Orders Laymen Admitted To Session

VATICAN CITY (UPI)—Pope Paul VI, following the "liberal" precedents of the late Pope John XXIII, Saturday ordered Roman Catholic laymen admitted to the Ecumenical Council as auditors at its secret sessions.

The pope also urged that the ancient doctrines of the church be explained in terms understandable to modern man. He named four cardinals as council moderators to run the sessions in his name when the meeting resumes Sept. 29.

EXPLOSION HURTS 7

BREA, Calif. (UPI)—An explosion in the Laveda Hot Springs hotel Saturday injured seven persons, including one whose legs required amputation, and buckled walls and floors in the sprawling resort's main building about 10 miles north of here, sheriff's deputies reported.

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