

The

SOWER



Spring—1942

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Dana College

Department of English

Spring 1942

<i>Sower</i>	NORMAN BANSEN	3
<i>Ma West</i>	ALVIN RUETER	4
<i>A Prayer</i>	MAE CHRISTENSEN	11
<i>Friendship</i>	VIOLET RASMUSSEN	12
<i>Rev. Raney</i>	HAROLD SORENSEN	13
<i>Study Evening</i>	HERBERT JEPPESEN	16
<i>Going To Omaha</i>	ARNOLD NIELSEN	17
<i>The American Church</i>	ALVIN RUETER	22
<i>Milton</i>	BOB HOGZETT	25
<i>Judas</i>	STANLEY CARLSEN	26
<i>Entreaty</i>	OTHILIA HAUGE	28
<i>Bataan Suicide</i>	TED REPSHOLDT	28
<i>Andante</i>	ELLEN HANSEN	29
<i>Return Passage</i>	NORMAN BANSEN	29
<i>Gardener</i>	ARNOLD NIELSEN	30
<i>Adam to Eve</i>	LUELLA NIELSEN	30
<i>Two Poems</i>	LOIS CARLSEN	31
<i>Two Poems</i>	LYLE PAULSEN	32
<i>Christmas Episodes</i>	TED REPSHOLDT	33
<i>Cow-Centered Youth</i>	NORMAN BANSEN	38
<i>On Milton's Hell</i>	NORMAN NIELSEN	41
<i>River Rats</i>	GROVER HANSEN	42
<i>The Captain's Worst Storm</i>	RONALD JENSEN	47
<i>Parable of Lent</i>	NORMAN BANSEN	51
<i>Old John</i>	GILBERT JENSEN	52
<i>Valley of the Eel River</i>	NORMAN BANSEN	56
<i>Night Ride</i>	ALVIN RUETER	60

FOREWORD

The publication of a magazine ought to be the result of a common need. That is why *The Sower* is appearing at Dana College this year. When, after active creative work, a group discovers that what they have been saying and writing seems to be worth remembering, and that there are other people around them who are writing stories and poems with imaginative intelligence, then it is natural that the best of these things should be collected into a magazine.

The creative writing class, using the agricultural symbol of the Missouri River Valley and the Midwest, chose to name this new publication *The Sower*. It is a spring publication, presenting the first creative works of a number of young students. Here, to carry the figure, is the seed of youth.

We, the members of the class and myself, wish that this magazine will represent beginnings: the beginning of an annual publication of student writing at Dana, the beginning of serious writing careers, and the beginning of an ideal.

And that ideal is that the youth of this college and this country might regularly have a printed chance to raise their voices, honestly and clearly, before an American public.

—Joseph Langland.

Sower

By NORMAN BANSEN

Sower of inland plains:
fling the whistling seed
against lusty spring winds;
thrusting it
into the humid earth-womb.

Sower of winged words:
rising before dawn,
swinging your arm over the world,
release your thought
into the lash and roar of winds,
send your seed singing
into the westering night.

Ma West

By ALVIN RUETER

I don't know whether to be glad or to feel sorry for her. There's not much else to do, I guess. She had always been..... queer, as long as I'd known her. When we were children, we were a little afraid of her, even though she seemed to like kids, and she always carried some horehound candy in her pocket for us. We had gotten to like horehound candy for some reason or other, even though sometimes the candy had been in her coat pocket for a long time, and it had gotten sticky, and threads and dirt would cling to it. But the thread always came loose after we had sucked on the candy a while.

I distinctly remember how she used to sit in church, always in the second pew, right under the pulpit, always; always in her white linen shawl and frayed, black overcoat; and always, if someone of us children were misbehaving during the church service, she would get up from her second-pew-under-the-pulpit-seat and march over to the misbehavior to give him her pinch on the cheek and thump on the head. Then it was quite likely that, after she had returned to her place, she would unfasten her shawl, spit on her hands, and smooth down her thin, straight, iron-gray hair, shiny with the use of leaf lard.

She was a great one to save things. She saved the used coffee grounds from church dinners and suppers, and she gathered up the dirty paper plates from church picnics, to be washed and stacked in boxes and put away somewhere in her big, white corner house. What she used them for, no one knows; I doubt if she used them for anything, just like all the old shoes, magazines, newspapers, match sticks, paper clips, and corks that she had

around the house. If someone would venture to make fun of her thriftiness, she would silence him with a look of reproach and the words, "It's a sinnnnnnn...to waste God's blessings."

I guess she was a Christian, but she had a sort of Christianity that had been amended by her imagination. She said that it was a "sinnnnnnn..." for a husband and wife to have more than two children, and she would make it her business to go to every newly married couple in the congregation and preach to them in her high, shrill voice and with her tiny eyes about the "true and narrow way of Christianity." She said it was a "sinnnnnnn..." for women to cut their hair. I wonder how she feels about that now, since I've heard that they've decided they'd better cut hers.

They say that she used to be real decent, and pretty too; and that she and her husband had such good times together. Their parents were wealthy, and both she and her husband had had a good education, "over in the old country." But both were disowned by their parents when they emigrated from the German settlement on the Volga, near Saratov, and came to the United States and settled in our hometown, Coralee, Iowa.

I suppose it all started when her husband took sick of tuberculosis. They hadn't been in this country long enough to have much money saved up, so she had to learn to make the pennies reach. She picked up a little cash now and then by cutting hair. I remember that my brothers and I used to hate to get our hair cut by her because she took so long; and our hair got so short by the time she got both sides and the back evened; and her hand-clipper wasn't so sharp, so sometimes she would pull the clippers away before it had cut altogether through a strand of hair. Then the hair would be caught in the machine, and we would get our hair yanked off instead of cut off.

I think she got started saving newspapers and magazines because her husband was such a great reader. She managed to skimp enough to keep up the subscription to the daily paper because her husband liked to go back through old issues when he ran out of something else to read. It got so that people used to go to her house whenever they wanted to settle an argument about how cold it was in the winter of '87, or how much corn was in the fall of '01, and she would look it up in her file of old papers.

I was in her house once, about five years after her husband died; she took me upstairs, and I saw how she had books set up

ALVIN RUETER

on the steps of the staircase, just as though each step was a bookshelf. There was only a narrow path up the steps for a person to walk on. And I saw the room where her husband had lain for those fourteen years. She had it filled with flowers and plants and wreaths. . . . in his memory, she said; he liked flowers so well. It made me scared, because people said that she had almost gone crazy when her husband died—he died in the hospital, where he had gone when he became sick of pneumonia. "They chilled him and killed him," she always sobbed, rather resentfully and accusingly. And because "they chilled him and killed him," she never did pay the hospital bill, and she hasn't yet.

Well, that was when she started to go to church regularly. I don't know whether it was anything the preacher said, or whether it just started by itself, but it seemed that it wasn't till then that she really went "savin'-crazy." Folks always wondered how she managed to keep alive, since she had no income, and she couldn't have had any cash savings, and the stuff she saved, most of it, was no earthly good. But she didn't have such a bad idea at that when she walked to her home in town from the country church a different way from what she had come so that she had more chance to pick up small sticks of wood for her stove.

People used to make fun of the "old furriner" with the white shawl, as she went walking on afternoons to visit some of her few friends. She didn't seem to mind this so much at first. But when we got into the World War, we could notice the effect upon her. Some "patriots," "red-blooded Americans," remembered that she was of German origin, and they noticed that her friends were also of German extraction. "Doesn't she go visiting every afternoon with those Huns, and don't they always talk German?" They decided that that woman should be watched, and that they'd better get some search warrants and go through her house for hoarded flour and sugar.

Ma West was ready for them when they came. She let them go all through the house, through the four rooms downstairs, the three rooms upstairs, and the attic; she led them out to her little "barn," where she kept the goat; they looked everywhere, above everything, under everything; and of course, they poked into all her old shoes, rags, paper bags, candle stubs, and ketchup bottles, but outside of these homely hoardings they found nothing. Then Ma took Mr. S. J. Wharton, the ring-leader, the arch-"patriot,"

Ma West

and she led him around to the front of the house and let him know what one of her old broomsticks could be used for.

Mr. S. J. Wharton, standing in his bank, then let the loiterers know that Ma West was the only one in town who hadn't bought any Government Bonds, and that he meant to see that this was changed.

Ma was ready for Wharton.

One night soon after that, lightning struck old Wharton's barn. From our house across the alley, we could see Mr. Wharton rushing back and forth into the fire, carrying out sacks. The next day, Mr. Wharton instructed the tobacco-chewers that there was "sabotage" connected with that fire somehow. He muttered something about tar and feathering, but seemed to dismiss the subject as he began to sit down.

Ma West quit going visiting so much. She soon quit it altogether, because it was clear that her friends didn't have very much of a welcome for Ma anymore: there was no use getting into trouble just because of her. So there wasn't much variety in the life of Mrs. West, except for her Sunday walks to the church, and her habit, now a hobby, of saving odds and ends. She also took to fixing the church hymnals as they began to break apart. Her gay gingham oranges, blues, reds, and pinks, pasted over the backs of the songbooks, contrasted nicely with the well-thumbed black of the hymnals. We were a little amused when she began the practice of picking up the stray "hankies" in the church, washing them, and then pinning each one onto the curtains in the "baby room," arranging them in a rather attractive, balanced design.

I have often since felt ashamed of the way we treated her, and of the way we talked about her, mostly about the way everyone avoided her. Some people did rather admire Ma West for her courage in standing-off old S. J., but even they wanted little to do with Ma since she had turned so queer after those war incidents, when it seemed that everyone was against her and some of the bigger-wigs were even enraged at her for no other reason than that she was a German and spoke a German dialect. But it was a wonder how Mrs. West supported herself, with no income, and only a garden and a goat for a restaurant.

I really don't know how she spent her time during those next years, since no one went to visit her, and she didn't stop after

ALVIN RUETER

church to talk to anyone except the children, for whom she always had her horehound candy. "How are you today, *Kinder*?" was her usual greeting.

But there were plenty of Women's Club Members who knew what Ma West was doing. The low-class loafers at the pool hall knew "Your darn tootin' well what she's up to," and those who hung around Mr. Wharton's bank, the more uppity-up, the better-class loafers, had pretty good notions about her too. From what I heard, the people in Coralee really didn't need to worry very much that Ma West wasn't doing anything, because she would have had to have been very busy to do all they said she did. But what they said most often, what seemed most reasonable to them and explained things most easily, was, "She's a witch." "Doesn't she set up till all hours of the night areadin' those fool books of her'n? I'll lay ten agin your one they're witch books, that's what they are."

We had often seen Ma West sitting at night at her kitchen window, reading by her kerosene lamp. But I knew she had plenty of books to read, since I'd once walked through her library on the staircase.

All this talk didn't mean much; the people really didn't seem to care much about Ma West anymore; she was just something to talk about when they had talked all they could about the crash of '29, 3.2 beer, and Mussolini. Even when Ma started her habit of going out every day and hunting and sorting through the trash piles in the alleys, they didn't seem to notice her so much. She kept this up summer and winter; someone said that it must be a part of her hobby, to put away at least something every day. I guess this habit was harmless, but still, some of the more sensible people got just a bit more shy of her now.

We have a hometown paper in Coralee, published by Mr. and Mrs. Jim Frink. The Frinks are nice people, I guess, but they always went a little bit "against our grain." They liked to brag about what a little fire and grit and journalism could do; they liked to point to the Town Hall they had finally gotten built for Coralee as a result of their twenty-five years of agitation for it.

Mrs. Frink was the founder of the "Society for *Doing* Worthy Projects for the Civic Betterment of Coralee, Iowa." She decided that Ma West was a Worthy Project and that something should be done about her. Mrs. Frink had her husband write editorials

Ma West

in the *Coralee Crosscut* about the "Disgrace to the City," the "Crying Calumny of Coralee," and the "Pitiable Plight of the Penniless."

We were surprised when people started bringing gifts to old Ma, spurred on by the SDWP, which organized its members into sewing circles to sew for Ma, and which also decided that each member should bring food to Ma West every second and fourth Saturday of the month. Poor Ma was overwhelmed when the SDWP women brought cakes, bread, jello, potato salad, pickles, and milk, and more yet, always so much that she couldn't possibly eat it all in two weeks, and most of it perishable so that it wouldn't keep more than one week. But it made the SDWP women feel good inside, I guess; in the meantime, my mother followed her custom of bringing useful things every day or so.

But even though so much was being done for her, Ma couldn't get out of the habit of picking through the trash-piles every day. Every day, the same. Everyone in Coralee was used to her, though and hardly gave her a thought; the SDWP women soon forgot about Ma too, likely becoming very much interested in some other as worthy a Worthy Project and sticking with that just about as long. And so it went on. The Frinks and the *Crosscut* pestered the community people for "some means of gaining culture and improving the minds of Coralee," so a number of people brought in the old books they didn't want, and they set them on some shelves in a little room in the Town Hall building and called it a library. The SDWP members took turns at being librarian. And then we had to read some more bragging about the "ginger of Journalism." I sometimes wonder why we don't quit taking the *Crosscut*, but I guess it's because everyone else has it, and it does print a lot of "Personals." Ma didn't pay much attention to all this; I wonder, sometimes, if she even took the paper anymore, or if she knew anything about the great plans they had drawn out for her.

I wouldn't have been surprised at all if Ma would have gone her way untroubled and forgotten the rest of her life, if it hadn't been for Mrs. Frink's good friend, Mr. Bossiter, from the neighboring town, Salthill. Salthill has only about 1000 people, but even so, they are about three times larger than Coralee, so they like to think they have quite a bit more than we do, and Mrs. Frink seems to think so too. Anyway, she spends a lot of her talking-

time in saying how such and such was in Salthill, and that's how it should be in Coralee.

The Frinks and Bossiters were together quite a bit, but generally, they were together in Salthill, not in Coralee. But Mrs. Bossiter did come to Coralee one late summer afternoon. Ma West was on her route, picking up odds and ends to deposit in her savings bank. Old Lady Bossiter noticed Ma and asked questions and said what a pity that Coralee should be disgraced in such a way; they would never allow such a thing in Salthill—they sent all such people to the Poor Farm, where they belonged.

So the *Crosscut* started ripping again; Ma West to the Poor Farm. Mr. Wharton rather liked this idea too, I guess; so he used his influence with his fellow-loafers. No one seemed to care much what was done to Ma, so no one protested when it was decided that she should go.

It was on the morning of Labor Day, so everyone had a rest, and everyone came to the corner of Fifth and Maple as soon as word got around. I was one of the first to be at her house when the county commissioners were standing on Ma's front porch, looking rather bewilderedly at the locked door. The crowd got larger.

"Too bad about Ma."

"Yeah."

"Funny duck, ain't she?"

"Yeah. Livin' alone's affected her, seems to me."

"Yup. Too bad."

"Funny, how people turn out for something like this."

"Yup. Sure is."

The commissioners went to the back and knocked—rather timidly, I thought. That was locked too.

"Hey Jerry—lookit the hornets' nest."

"Where?"

"Right up there on top the door, by the commissioner's head."

The county officials went around to the front and stood, nervously talking, nervously huddling together in their overcoats, chewing their cigars, completely licked by an old woman who wouldn't pay any attention to the county commissioners. They went to the back, and knocked, and stood. They went to the front, and knocked, and stood.

"Well, my stars, did you ever."

"Yes, I should say."

"Well, I'd say that their best bet 'd be to wait until she goes out to milk the goat tonight."

"Yes, but then, let's see—I do believe she keeps it in the basement now, during the fall and winter.

"She is a kind-hearted soul."

"Well, I've got some bread in the oven. It's too bad I have to miss it. You'd think those commissioners 'd get tired, but they seem so patient."

Right at 4:00, the back door opened; out came Ma in her old black overcoat, with her basket on her arm, white shawl on her head, smiling her usual smile, ready to go the way she went every day picking through her gold mines in the alleys. One of the commissioners stumbled over towards her, took off his hat, accepted the piece of horehound candy she held out to him, and said something. Ma looked at him, laughed, got into the back seat of the car, and sitting erectly, basket on her lap, she rode away, leaving us looking down the road.

A PRAYER

By MAE CHRISTENSEN

A prayer
is the true nature of a person
expressed in words of hope
and love.

Prayer
is the mirror of man's innermost thoughts
as they are reflected to God
in faith.

A prayer
is the very soul of man
which has broken its earthly bonds and soared
to heaven.

Friendship

By VIOLET RASMUSSEN

Friendship is the poetry of life. It lifts our interest up on a higher level than that of the ordinary self-centered mortal. It carries us from the prosy levels of mere drudgery and grind to the sunlit heights of culture and service.

The word friend comes from the Norse "Fraende", which means a kinsman or relative. Friendship then is kinship—not of blood, but of the heart. The mention of heart makes a person think of marriage. A clever Frenchman once said, "Marriage is two souls and one flesh, while friendship is two bodies and one soul." In other words friendship is the marriage of hearts.

Friendship is an outlet for emotions, because it doubles our joys and cuts our griefs in half. It helps understanding and gives us direct aid in the stress and struggles of life. Another fruit of friendship is the sharing of interests. Remember—A friend is another yourself.

Close friendships are formed chiefly in youth when our natures are warm and easily fused. So, be a friend and you will have a friend, or, give yourself in service, and others will give themselves to you in friendship. A man that was born blind was asked what he thought sunshine was like, and he answered, "Why, it must be something like friendship." I wish that we could all have such a beautiful conception of friendship.

Friendship does away with those fits of conceitedness and melancholy which mar the happiness and usefulness of so many young people. Lonely young people are often unbalanced in their sentiments, and measure themselves by their own standards, and the only way to remedy this fault is by friendship. Friendship balances us by revealing to us what we actually are, and thus we can find out what we are fitted for and so take up our life career.

Rev. Raney

By HAROLD SORENSEN

Suddenly, without warning, Sulphur Springs, Colorado, lay in front of us. We had just rounded one of the sharp curves in the mountain road, and now we were coasting down into a shallow valley. The altitude was still around nine thousand feet, and yet the snow-capped peaks stretched upwards. Below us the little town lay splattered over the valley. Over to our left and ahead of us lay the main part of town, which consisted of a small unpainted church, a filling station, and a nice clean-looking cafe. On the other side of town a low building snuggled close to the base of one of the mountainous spires. Immediately in front of it ran a swift stream which circled around to our right, and then disappeared to the north. The rest of the town consisted of about thirty houses—none of which stood close to one another.

When we, as a quartet, had written a request to Rev. Raney to sing in Sulphur Springs, a weary old letter came back to us written in a shaky and faltering handwriting. "I'm an old man," it read, "and I have no congregation. There's an old church in town which we can use, so please come. We'll be glad to have you."

Now as we stopped in front of the cafe, we were anxious to meet Rev. Raney. We went inside, and within a quarter of an hour the door opened slowly and an old man stepped in. He was about five feet nine inches tall, and in days past when his shoulders were not stooped he must have been majestically tall. His chin, cheekbones, and nose were sharply defined under the tightly drawn and wrinkled skin. His eyes were a shining brown, and excitement and joy radiated from them. Dusty, dark-brown hair could be seen under his hat. He wore an old black suit which from much wearing and little attention was quite wrinkled and

HAROLD SORENSEN

spotted. The hat, which was also black, and old, and soiled, was sitting squarely upon his head. However, these clothes on his sparse frame did not seem distracting. There was something else about the man more arresting than his dress.

"Ah-ah-a-are you the quartet, boys?" he asked in a high-pitched voice which had lost any strength which it might have had. He introduced himself as Rev. Raney, and we introduced ourselves. Then we shook hands, and the hand which he offered us was long and gaunt. The palms were hard and gnarled, and the fingers were stiff from hard usage. His grip was firm enough, however, to make us feel at home, and soon we were busy discussing the plans for the concert.

Throughout the ensuing conversation, he maintained an almost childlike enthusiasm. He had busied himself in his slow way for a long time in preparation for this evening, and now it seemed he had everything arranged. He assured us that he had spoken to everybody in town about the concert, and he was positive that there would be a nice group there.

Here the conversation lagged somewhat, and we became curious to know more about the man himself. Finally we asked him. He seemed surprised that we would want to know about him, but he was more than glad to tell us. He had been born in a mid-western city, and early in his life had decided to enter the ministry. He was of Norwegian parentage. This he said proudly. His seminary work had been completed at Augustana. Then—some-what strangely for a city born man—he had taken up work as an itinerant pioneer pastor in the Rockies.

In a slow moving, shaky voice he went on to tell us how he had traveled about these rock-strewn mountains on horseback leading his two pack mules, who faithfully trudged along under the weight of his personal belongings and his supplies. He carried his words of life from lumber camps to mining camps; to trading posts and to fur centers. Regardless of the weather this rugged preacher picked his way along the treacherous mountain trails. If an audience could be found, he would be there to preach to them. He knew how to get along among these rugged and hard men, for he also was well acquainted with a hard way of living. Meeting the men on their own grounds, he portrayed to them his Christian way of living.

The men and the elements had been ruthless in those days, and

they had beaten his brow until the skin of his face was tough and wrinkled. His back had been bowed, and finally he was forced to give up this work. It was hard for him to leave his task, but it was also natural for him to settle in this small town in the midst of the peaks of the Rocky mountains. Here he was happy even though he was forced to work hard for his keep.

By this time it was necessary to leave to get ready for our program, so we parted.

That evening when Rev. Raney appeared in the church, he looked as if he had brushed his clothes and tried to improve his appearance. When he introduced us, he seemed to straighten up, and a happy smile played upon his lips. As we watched him we couldn't help feeling a thrill within us to see this old man probably reliving his past—happy that he could speak once again to even this small crowd. Yet, his voice was not up to the task, and he could only say a few words before he choked—and then motioned us to take over.

Throughout our entire program he sat with bowed head silently listening. At the end it was almost beyond his strength to dismiss the audience. Then he came to us and begged us to come to where he lived for a little while. As it was away from town and it was necessary for us to get an early start the next day, it seemed impossible to us. Then when he told us he lived right on the way, we promised to stop the next morning to bid him good bye. The invitation was reiterated by a rough sharp-spoken woman, and we wondered if the old pastor lived with this toothless creature.

The next morning was very cold. We put on all the outer wraps we could find, bundled ourselves into our car, and drove westward out of Sulphur Springs. About seven miles out of town we recognized (from Rev. Raney's description) a little white house on the left side of the road. And, sure enough, there was the old man standing out in front patiently waiting for us. He waved at us, and we felt happy that we were stopping.

When we were out of the car, he seemed to be at a loss as to what to show us. His eagerness to entertain was all too apparent. The house we had recognized was very small and stood in the middle of a grassless field. All about were sunbleached antlers of deer. We asked about them, and he told us that every winter a large herd of deer wintered in that valley. A train whose track

was laid just across the road from where we stood killed many each year. These antlers were from some of these victims.

He then asked us to come inside, and we stepped into a small crowded room. It was only about eight feet by eight feet, and it was a picture of great poverty and disorder. In one corner was his bed which was heaped high with old coats and rags. Evidently these served as his blankets. Against the farthest wall was a small bookcase with a few of his books. Immediately in front of this was a large table which occupied fully a fourth of the room. It was littered with papers and an old table cloth. The only other piece of furniture was an old fashioned phonograph. It was one of the kind that is equipped with a long speaker which is flared out on the end. It was standing on a small table so that the open end of the speaker was just about head high. All was confusion and dirt in this little room, and we wondered how he could live in it.

When we got outside again, Rev. Raney urged us to stay for breakfast. The toothless woman whom we had met the night before came up swinging a milk pail. She also attempted to convince us to stay, but luckily enough we had just had breakfast, and so thy finally left us go.

After another round of handshakes and another husky, heartfelt "Thank you, boys" from Rev. Raney, we left. We kept looking back as we drove away, and our last glimpse of the old gentleman showed him still standing in front of that little white house holding his hand up in the air in a last final farewell.

STUDY EVENING

By HERBERT JEPPESEN

Study evening begins at seven,
or maybe not until eleven;
time flies here as everywhere,
or is it that we waste it here?

Going to Omaha

By ARNOLD NIELSEN

"Going to Omaha?"

"O.K., then, hop in. I'm going down three miles of there myself. I turn off by the church on the hill a little this side of town. But you'll easy get a ride from there. I pick up all the boys I see on the road if I got room. Some of them don't like to ride in an old car like this and I don't go too fast either, but I always get there, and a fellow can't be too choosy."

The 1928 green Chevrolet sputtered as it was jerked into second gear. The red-faced farmer leaned over, keeping his eyes still on the road and said helpfully, "Here, let me slam the door; it don't shut so easy anymore." He wheezed as he straightened up and got the car back on the right side.

"Ain't this a rough piece of road here? Me driving along here so much ahs just about loosened all the joints in the car cause I go here quite a little." He frowned as a new rattle developed somewhere in back. "My wife has relation up in Blair, so we visit there a couple times a month....You know it hasn't been only the last few years that this pavement has heaved and broke up. The old Missouri has been working back under the ground and the sand under here is full of water, and the big trucks have sunk the concrete down."

The motor missed fire so he reached and pulled the choke. "I just had new piston rings put in a year ago this summer and the whole outfit tightened up, but this river road has shook the day-lights out of it and it sure rattles here. Where it's smooth it ain't

ARNOLD NIELSEN

so bad." He paused. "I remember a couple of years ago this spring that the water was up here to the fence. The river had raised about a mile over its banks. You'd almost think it had a mind the way it moves around. One day you look at it and the next you see a new bend. All of a sudden a big hunk of bank dropped in and the bed changed. You see, as it goes around a corner, it eats and eats its way under the sand and then plop! in it falls. See that house over there? On the river bank? There used to be a whole farm there, but the river took it all, yes sir, that's all that's left of old Jim Fosley's farm. It all happened kinda funny like, too.

"Care for a cigarette? I got some papers here and you can roll one if you want. Oh, you don't smoke, eh? That's the boy. I wish I didn't." He filled his pipe from the sack of Bull Durham. "I told my boy if he left tobacco alone I'd give him a hundred bucks when he was 21, and I did. And that was more'n 17 years ago. He's working in North Platte now for the Standard Oil Company and doin' right well by himself. Kind of an Inspector."

He sucked hard to get the pipe started. "Just look how the farm house is falling over; I guess nobody's done nothing to it since Pete died. Old Jim had a mighty nice farm there once. He had a big barn and several hog houses right down there about where the middle of the river is now. When he first started there in the 80's, the river was a good half mile east of there, and nobody ever thought that his farm would go. He had just married and moved out here from Illinois. And him and his wife only got one kid—a boy. That youngster had a swell chance to make something, there was a house and pretty decent little farm, but you know how it goes, only child and all. He had everything under the sun, a car and all the money he wanted. Well, he got in bad company and tore around thinking he was the very devil himself. He took to drinking and there wasn't a week didn't go by but what he came home drunk."

He shook his head.

"In '91 when he was still a youngun, the old steamship, I think they called it *THE CHARLOT*, got sunk down the river from his place. It seems like it had a load of whisky and quicksilver and was acoming up to Sioux City with it. But down on one of those bends it hit a sand bar and as it turned, the wind caught it just right and over it went, whisky and all. I don't recall if anybody

Going To Omaha

drowned, but it was a pretty bad place to try to get the old ship back up, and since nobody had any other big boats to get it, it never got back up, and that whisky and quicksilver have been laying down there ever since."

He had lost himself in his story and let his pipe go out. "Well, Pete, that's Jim's boy, spent most his money after the old folks died, and he would just about pass out if he couldn't get his whisky every day. So he thought of all that good Scotch and how long it would last him if he could get it, and of all the money he could get out of the quicksilver, so he began to talk to all the old guys around here that could remember anything about it and he finally just had it figured out where it was. He thought he could see where the river had been moving further and further west toward his farm and he thought that he knew how much it moved each year and then so many feet over was where it was in '91. He got one of these here fellows with a willow witch, you know—the ones that locate water by holding a branch of a willow tree and then where it bends down, there's a good place to dig a well? He figured that if it would bend for water it ought to just about bust if there was whisky underneath. Anyhow, the fellow thought he found the place and all, because the stick flopped over a couple of times. He planned to dig down in the dirt, only he was too lazy to do it himself. His farm was about all weeds and he couldn't hardly get his two cows milked every day. He looked just like his old man, big and husky, but he didn't have no ambition at all. He would sit in the beer joints and tell of his big plans on how to get out the whisky. He was going to set 'em up for everybody—but you can't trust a guy like that."

He went on. "He tried to hire some laborers to come and dig, but everybody knew he didn't have no money so he couldn't even get some high school boys to come out. He tried enough. He kept thinking about this and he finally got the bank to promise to mortgage his farm for \$1000. For this he figured to have a boat to haul the stuff back up across the river and store it all in his place. He knew he couldn't lose because the quicksilver was worth at least \$10,000, and I've heard figures way up to \$50,000, but it seems kinda funny the company who lost it wouldn't have tried to get it if it was worth that much. Anyways he was all het about it and when everybody heard about the loan,

ARNOLD NIELSEN

they were glad to give him credit. They all liked him even if he was drunk most of the time." He chuckled. "By this time he had become one of the town's sights. 'There's old Pete drunk again,' the kids would say as he walked down Main Street.

"He was a great one for stories. He would set in the barber shops and tell stories one right after the other. And he was so serious. One day he was setting there while I was getting shaved and was telling about all the stuff that floated down the river past his place. 'Yesterday mornin', he said, 'I seen somethin' acomin' down the river and so I run out to see what it was and there was two men and a boy floatin' down in a cellar.' Everybody jumped up and somebody hollered, 'How's that?' And then he acted kinda mixed up and said, 'Well, it might not been a boy. I couldn't see him very plain.' He didn't think of nothing else, you see. He was quite a booze fighter, and after he got a couple of drinks in him he could really tell some whoppers.

"He was figuring, too, as he walked around and sat and watched games of poker and pool. He was figuring how he could find out exactly where the wreck was buried, and how he could get it. He had heard tell of these magnet outfits that show where metal is under the ground and he was going to send for one from Monkey Wards as soon as he got the loan. \$162.95 I heard one of them was. And then he was going to remodel his barn to hold all the bottles of fire water. He had great ideas. He ordered lumber sent out to his place from the lumber yard, and he got a carpenter to come out and fix big shelves. And then he got the bank to send for a motor boat for him so he could travel up and down the river which was now as far west as his farm. He got about a dozen young fellows all lined up to come out on a certain day and then he would show them just where he thought the whisky was. You could see his face light up when he was thinking of the stuff. He wouldn't let on where it was at all, cause he was afraid someone else might get ahead of him and drink it first."

He gave up trying to smoke his pipe and talk at the same time, so he knocked the ashes out of the window and put the pipe up by the windshield. "The bank finally said he could get his money in two weeks, and then he got drunk for a week. When he woke up he drove down to his farm and made his last minute plans. It was late in April and the spring rise wasn't due for about a

Going To Omaha

month. During the night as he was sitting up still figuring and drinking beer, he heard a rumble and a loud roar toward the east, and by the time he got to his window, his east twenty already was covered with water and his big barn was starting to tip over. He had forgot how the old Missouri eats and eats under and finally a big hunk of land goes down. Well, it finally ended that the bank wouldn't allow him any money on a loan because the farm wasn't a good risk. He was broke up about it, and it wasn't no more than a half year later that he got a heart attack and died, and he wasn't no more'n about 50. I guess the bank sold the motor boat he had ordered to somebody down in Omaha, and everybody forgot it all in a little while, but old Pete never got over it. Before that he usually sobered up a little on Sundays, but I never seen him walking straight from then until he died. It was kinda too bad, at that..."

He shook his head philosophically.

"See, here the road 'ain't so rough and the old car goes right along. Listen to the motor! I just had it overhauled and new piston rings put in a year ago this coming July."

He squinted as he looked out across the valley. "Yep, the old Missouri is a mighty long river, and I suppose there would be some pretty good stories about it if we could hear them from the guys that lived then...."

"Here's the road where I turn off. You'll get a ride pretty quick. I always pick up hitchhikers when I have room. We go along here quite a bit when we go to see my wife's relation in Blair."

He nodded vigorously at the "Thanks a lot!"

"You bet, that's all right. Glad to help you out. So long...."

"Here, I'll shut the door. You got to slam it hard, otherwise it won't catch hold."

The American Church

By ALVIN RUEYER

Does America really need the Church? You have your answer—perhaps it's the same as mine. Very possibly your opinions closely resemble those of a middle-aged, prosperous farmer, for whom I worked one summer, a Swede from the old country by the name of Hans Nelson. Several times he talked to me about religion, and these talks usually went something like this:

"Here's the way I look at it. Sure, I support the Church. I have looked at it from all the possible angles, and I am firmly convinced that the Church is absolutely a necessity in the community—for them that needs it. Let them go to Church to keep right. But there is some people who don't go to Church and behave just as good as anyone, and I respect them just as much, if they behave without the Church. But the Church is a wonderful thing to keep people right, and we need it, and that's why I support it."

Intuitively I feel that this barnyard philosopher is an indicator of the current of the present quite-common American concept of God, and the Church, and Christ. He is the classification card under which you and I can be filed, except perhaps that we don't support the Church. His, and ours, is the home and family which has lost its soul and become hollow and empty—where the children recklessly insult their parents and stand dangerously far out on the limbs of Evil on the Tree of Knowledge whittling away on the limbs of Good. His, and ours, is the home and family where the furnace of middle-aged love has no fire because it has been stoked with ashes. His, and ours, is the home where God is yawning back to his Heaven whenever He comes to visit. But Hans

The American Church

is a respectable, up-standing citizen of the United States. He never committed a crime—he's a jurymen who doesn't shirk his turn. He gives to the Red Cross and sees his name in the paper. He sends his boys to university and gives them a share in his livelihood when they come back. He buys his wife a refrigerator and has a maid come in to do the housework. He is the backbone of the nation.

Hans respects the Church but is quick to censure. "There are just as many good people outside the Church as there are in it." That's rockingchair wisdom. God is created in Man's image to him, not, Man is created in God's image. It's surprising how many people have mastered God—how many are able to tuck him into a trundle-bed at night—how many people have the ability to project themselves beyond the vast empire of the sun and integrate and synthesize and concentrate the universe so that it fits neatly into a corner of a human mind. And I suppose that is why many people in America sit in a chair or lie in bed Sundays, reading the funnies while they send the kids to Sunday School—a little religion is good for them—every kid should have a little—keeps 'em balanced—makes good American citizens outa 'em—guess I'll teach Bob and Margaret how to pray the Lord's Prayer sometime.

Hans has come a long way down the paths of Wisdom since he graduated from the Church—so far that I'm sure he must realize by now that he has gotten off on the wrong system of paths; he has become smug and passive, and he hasn't let the Church interfere in his life because he can't take the Church seriously—it is too willing to compromise evil, too willing to kow-tow to upstanding American citizens of good name and unquestioned respect; the Church has become a pathetic joke. "Mr. J. S. Jones gave \$100 towards the furnishing of the new game room in the Church Parlours; we are truly grateful to him, and we are sure that he will have his reward." Mr. Jones probably will hear about this pulpit announcement because some of the women will come to his store on Monday expressing their gratitude for his beneficence and wondering why Mr. Jones looks so tired today. The parson has been instructed by the Church Council to handle Mr. Jones delicately and not offend him by asking him to come to Church because he pays well. And thus, to avoid offense, there has evolved a new type of religion—modern Christianity—whose worship inheres in a political lecture or a book review: no won-

ALVIN RUETER

der the church buildings have only old women sitting in the back pews—only an old woman's dish is served—there is nothing for spiritual life to feed upon.

Religion is what man believes about God, not what God is. Hans Nelson's philosophy of life won't change God, neither will yours or mine. We are too insignificant to gain an intellectual concept of Him; we have light enough in the Bible, but our statements as scientists are all tentative. This is what America today needs to realize. God—and everyone is interested in Him, even the Atheists—is not tied down by Man, but He has revealed Himself—and everyone has seen Him. For the authority of this statement I refer to the experience of the reader, who, if he considers fairly, will acknowledge that this is true, at least in his own case. And our sermons and our philosophies of life and our actual lives need to be centered around God—the Father, the Christ, the Holy Spirit—all three. I feel sure that all those who have transcended the Christianity of their early lives wish to climb up to those altars again. They wish to go back to the kind of home which their Fathers and Mothers made, where there was companionship and a wholesome spirit—which they sometimes now get a scent of whenever they step into the home of a Christian friend. They would like to go back to the time when it was common for them to kneel.

Where is the road? To chart a course through the maelstrom of a religious America—can that be done by one man? Can one person rub out unwholesome views on life, take away the introverting emphasis on sex,—anticepticize the minds of twelve-year-olds, sixteen-year-olds, of twenty-five-year-olds? This is a job for Father and Mother, Husband and Wife, Mr. Jones and Hans Nelson. These are the people that regret that control of their children has passed out of their hands, and they hope that Sunday School, or perhaps, a military academy, will be able to iron out the wrinkles. Their pre-occupation with their vocations or their many avocations has turned them into veritable Babbitts, who suddenly wake up to find the heart of their family eaten up by sour acid. Oh, that these backbones of the nation had enough calcium in their vetrebrae to change the direction of their lives and to pull their children along with them!

It is difficult to approach the solution in a piece of writing of this kind, intended for the type of audience that I wish to reach.

I am faced with the same problem that hoodwinks the American pastor—how can I say this so that people will not be offended and quit listening? Since it is this attitude which is the fostering parent of our lukewarmness and spiritual sluggishness I put away all timidity and shout to the nation, "Get on your knees, America! Settle down from your mad rushing back and forth, and

"Be still, and know that I am God."

Daily prayer, with your family, and by yourself, is a good habit to cultivate. Why not economize on the time that you spend in searching here and yon for wisdom—read that new-looking, unthumbed Bible, that best-selling book of all time, that book that has changed the world, that can change you.

This is the road for America.

MILTON

By BOB HOGZETT

If Milton were to live and write today
Of present happenings, war, deceit, and crime,
His voice, by words, would these conditions flay...
His restless mind not circumscribed by time.
Herr Hitler would receive great condemnation;
Paul Goebbels burned in worded effigy,
The pope restored, accompanied by ovation;
For Mussolini....vengeful vagrancy.
All countries need a Lincoln or a Milton,
For those names are synonymous with deeds
Of great courage, or even greater action
To champion Christianity in need.
They recognized the seed of evil forces
And drove their moral engines at the sources.

Judas

By STANLEY CARLSEN

The Upper Room:

Twelve men—servants of the Light,
faces solemn, stern, gaze in wonder and awe
and with a sense of admiration up to Him.

Being told of his approaching death they are stunned with grief.
What is the significance of the gathering?

Twelve men circumscribed around a kindly looking man,
a man with a look of pureness, of gentleness and of kindness—
Yet with a great light of strength and power,
that light reflecting the very Godhead in Him.

What was his errand; what great and momentous
words were on the lips of this strange man?

The twelve cling close to Him
as a dark cloud passes over his countenance.

The man, upon whom all eyes are focused,
the thirteenth man—speaks:

Verily, verily, I say unto you that one of you shall betray me.

A moment of strange silence, then a disturbance is noticed
among the silent men. Perplexed and questioning eyes are seen.

What disturbance that memorable phrase caused in the very
heart and soul of these followers. Is it I? What have I committed?

Would I dare spurn his Name and throw his most worthy cause?
What unknown or unrighteous act have I or will I have done?

I know not my own self, Lord; help my ignorance.

Who would bear to scorn the Lamb and cause his blood to be spilt?

Judas

Silence! He speaks on: *Good were it for that man if he had not been born!*

That unworthy guilty servant, overpowered by Satan in his most devilish form, was bribed by earthly prize, the Devil himself being the instigator. Making a God of material things, he was content to betray his own master. The Devil puts wicked purposes into the hearts of men. A mere thirty shillings rather than following the Light, was the substance of Judas' shallow thought.

An innocent kiss—that usual token of affection, taking on a different form threw a change into the very life of earthly beings. A mere kiss, and He was thrown to unmerciful crucifixion on the Cross.

Christ Betrayed! Christ Crucified!

Judas saw himself and became the poor being of great mental and spiritual agony:

"What have I done? Oh, God, would that I were gone; would that I had not seen the light of this wicked earth.

Thirty shillings—Bah!

To bear to live on and on beneath the burden of this most sinful deed would not be within my shallow endurance.

This sinful soul has seen and done enough—I go—myself.

I would that I might make my own finish!"

Death—Condemnation.

Amid sin the shell of sinfulness and wickedness gradually thickens until—Until no axe of mind or body can split that shell.

God, that all mortals could pick through that shell of earthly desire,

and behold the Light.

Light shining in the darkness.

That shining light that makes for the full and enriched life.

Entreaty
OTHILIA HAUGE

Bataan Suicide
TED REPSHOLDT

ENTREATY

Lord in shame
I present the fruit
misshapen, shriveled,
few. minute. . . .
A rank disgrace
to Thy holy hand.
Neither regret
nor reprimand
can swell the yield
of my tangled life.
Husbandman, in love,
spare not Thy knife.

BATAAN SUICIDE

The sullen cannon's roar beat on my ear
As strident bugles called a last fare-well
To my companion at the front. Not fear
Of shells or wounds or foe made death a cell
To which he crept for safety in duress,
Not vaunting boasts of courage, strength, or power,
Nor longing for a prostitute's caress
Made him retreat from life that evening hour.
It was the numbing fear that always comes
With ceaseless fire, the spectre of despair,
Of shell-shocked veterans without their homes,
Of hospitals and patient nurses' care.
He thought, "O what's the use of all this Hell?"
Now bugles softly cry to him, "Fare-well."

Andante
ELLEN HANSEN

Return Passage
NORMAN BANSEN

ANDANTE

A symphony
Lifts me higher...higher...higher...
As if the length my mind can wander
Is unrestricted.
Its magnitude leaves an empty void
In my soul.
It leaves me breathless...
And thoughts wing to my Maker,
He who created all.
Does he bring these semblances of sound
Into accord?
Tears fill my eyes...
Thoughts of death assail me;
In heaven will these sounds have greater beauty?
My soul would burst
With the magnitude of it all.
Maker, attune my bold and wondering spirit
to its greater intensity.

RETURN PASSAGE

Escape they call it when men seek
to set their sails away from chaos of our time
to seek a saner life, to look elsewhere for peace.
Return I call it, for our course
has moved away from happy normal routes
into uncharted maelstroms churning through the world.
I seek my own return, a passage back
to days when moonlight brought no thought of death
hurled from pale-lighted skies.
Escape—Atlantis—call it what you will—
I'll chart my course to lead me back
to birthright freedom found on calmer coasts.

Gardener
ARNOLD NIELSEN

Adam to Eve
LUELLE NIELSEN

GARDENER

I dug a garden once,
and blisters on my hand
appeared; my winter face
was tanned.

I plant my seeds in rows
and wait for them to sprout;
I weed, and hope the roots
come out.

I water, watch; but breath
cannot begin below;
I'm sure that He will make
them grow.

ADAM TO EVE

When I, to ease my aching back and tired
Limbs, lean on my hoe and look at cool
Misty horizons as a welcome contrast
To thorns and weeds and sun-baked stony soil....
Thoughts of the long-gone pleasant days we lived
In sylvan Paradise torment and plague
My inmost soul. Then I blame you, Eve,
And rail against your weak submissiveness.
But when, at night, I find surcease and rest
From drudgery in your arms I know that I
Must love no matter what your faults may be;
And I thank God for you because I know
That I am only human, too, and Chance
Alone kept Satan first from tempting me.

Two Poems

By LOIS CARLSEN

A JOKE

It stung. It was as if
she had been dealt
a bitter, cruel blow.
She tried to smile, but felt
within her soul
the keenness of the blade
which pierced her through.
And then in agony she prayed
that God would give her strength
to brave their escapade.

They thought that it was such a joke!
How could they know
that it would pain and hurt her so?

NIGHT

I listen.
An owl hoots a monotonous refrain from his home
In the evergreen tree.
I look
And see the bare boughs of the willows
Bend with the breeze.
I stand in awe.
The quiet night thrills me with a feeling of the greatness
And glory of God.

It is night.
I praise my God for the grandeur and majesty of His
Manifestations to me.
All is still.

Two Poems

By LYLE PAULSEN

THE SUN ROLLED OVER

The sun rolled over and then got up
And raced across the sky;
But the farmer only swore
And stayed in bed, his work denied.

The housewife called him loud and long.
The farmer lingered, satisfied.
He swore again, this time at her
And stayed in bed, his love denied.

The sound of bells came floating in
From over the country side.
The farmer swore at church and God
And stayed in bed, his faith denied.

"And then the cock crew."

THOSE BELLS KEEP CALLING

Not like the wind that whistles through the pine,
Nor water dashing against some jutting rock,
But like the bleating sheep that seeks to find
Her lambs who break connection with the flock

Those bells are calling souls that are forlorn
That some, at least, might echo glad refrains
Just as the fragile lily is reborn
And freshened by the early morning rains.

Those bells! Oh, how they plead with us to go
In quiet answer to their lofty prayer,
So that our hearts with ringing joy may know
The secret that those bells have hidden there.

Christmas Episodes

By TED REPSHOLDT

6 o'clock.....

Swirling, dancing, whirling on the wings of a cold northeast wind, millions of tiny snowflakes tumbled out of a bleak, gray sky. They caught in the garments of the late Christmas shoppers, hurrying home with armfuls of gaily-wrapped bundles. The soft, powdery snow crunched and crackled under the tired feet of the weary clerks as they, too, hurried homeward. The persistent Salvation Army lassies tinkled their little bells; the chimes in the courthouse tower pealed forth the old, familiar Christmas hymns.

"May I help you? Yes, this is all we have left in perfumes. No, it won't be possible to make deliveries tonight. Do you like this type? It is rather exotic, isn't it? You'll take it? That'll be \$2.00. Thank you and Merry Christmas." Hour after hour, Frances Hoffman had repeated these sentences. As the six o'clock whistle blew she hurried to the coat-room, then pushed and shoved her way out to the street. Christmas was over for her with the last sales-slip marked to her credit. Now all that remained was to soak her swollen, blistered feet back to normalcy.

Fran managed to squeeze into the 46th Street car, stumbling over packages and umbrellas in the swaying aisle. "Oh-h-h," she sighed, leaning back in the stiff, straight seat. "Oh-h-h-h, I'm glad Christmas is over. Another day like today would kill me. Gee, I wonder if Mary is home," she said to herself as the car clattered across town. Fran lived with Mary Davis in a cheap two-room apartment.

"Forty-sixth and Washington!" the sonorous voice of the conductor rang in her ears. She started, grabbed her purse and packages, and stepped into the street. A few more steps and she was home. Wearily Fran trudged up the long flight of stairs to

TED REPSHOLDT

her apartment. Throwing her hat and coat on the couch, she hurried into the kitchen and filled a small basin with steaming water. Quickly stripping off shoes and silk hose, Fran plunged her swollen feet into the water. "Boy, what a relief!"

For a few minutes she sat idly wiggling her toes in the basin. Aching leg and back muscles began to tighten and become stiff and her eye-lids began to droop; Fran heard high heels clicking a merry tune as they clattered down the hall. The knob turned and Mary waltzed into the room. "Hi, Fran, how're the dogs? Still barking?" she chirped. Drawing closer to the bed, she looked at the feet, then said comfortingly, "Gee, kid, that's a shame. Now you won't be able to go to the big dance tonight. I don't suppose that you could dance."

"No, I'm not moving an inch from this bed," Fran decided.

"Dick had a date all arranged for you. He's smooth. Works in the shipping room at Carson's. Dick says he dances like a dream. I guess I'll have to call him or get another girl," Mary concluded.

Fran wiggled her toes, winced as she stepped on her feet, and then said, "Wait a minute, Mary! Maybe if I wear those old shoes, I could manage. I can sleep all morning. It'll be fun, won't it? Besides my feet don't hurt too much. Is he nice looking, a good dancer..."

8 o'clock...

The snow fell steadily, covering the spacious lawns of the residential districts with a coverlet of pure, white wool. The snow on the limbs of the spruce and pine trees reflected the myriad colors of the outside Christmas tree lights. Through the windows of many homes could be seen the last minute preparations for Christmas Eve—trimming the trees, decorating the windows with boughs of holly, and setting the family dinner tables. At various intervals the members of the family would steal upstairs to the many secret nooks and crannies, then slip down into the front room to place the presents, wrapped in white, green, red, or blue tissue paper, under the already over-burdened tree.

At the home of Frank Bethke, a punch-press operator at the Axle Company, the family had come to the table for the Christmas Eve dinner. The little group—mother, Jack, Allen, Louise, and grandpa—became silent as father Bethke began to pray: "Al-

Christmas Episodes

mighty and everlasting Father, we thank Thee for the gift of Thy Son on that Christmas Eve so many years ago. We thank Thee for the blessings provided for us at this table. Amen."

With the scraping of chairs and the rattling of silver, the Bethke family began to eat and drink in leisurely German fashion. After opening a small bottle of Rhine wine, imported from Germany and saved for such special occasions, father Bethke poured the Christmas glass of cheer for the family. The white linen cloth was laden with many tasty dishes of home-cooked food—goose, red cabbage, mashed potatoes, pickles, and aromatic stuffing. Finally, coffee and many different varieties of cookies completed the evening meal.

Then the excitement among the children began. Time simply would not go fast enough for them. They would hurry from their father to the mother, asking, "Dad, can't we see the tree now? Mother, aren't the dishes done yet? Can I wipe the silver? Hurry up, Louise, let's get done so we can open the packages! Gee, I hope I get that bicycle! Did you see that big package Dad brought home? I think mother will like our present, don't you, Jack?"

After the last dish was dry and the last spoon was put away, Mother Bethke announced that now they could go into the living-room. With loud "Ohs" and "Ahs," they saw the splendor of the gaily-trimmed tree for the first time—the large, glittering ornaments, the sparkling icicles, the shimmering lights, and the many large and small packages.

10 o'clock.....

Past drug-stores, office buildings, and gas stations—still gaily bedecked with Christmas trimmings—the snow drifted and eddied around the corners with the fretful gusts of wind. It scurried across the deserted streets to find a night's lodging place in doorways and alleys, against mail-boxes and light poles. The parked cars had fluffy caps of snow on their tops and fenders. The policemen vainly stamped their feet to keep them warm in cold, wet, woolen socks. Passers-by puffed great jets of steam like locomotives hurrying to their destinations. All over the city the snow hung like a thick, blinding, white fog.

Patrick O'Ryan, a cynical, hard-bitten columnist for the Daily News, headed north to Tony's place on Third and Broadway.

TED REPSHOLDT

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"No, I'm not moving an inch from this bed," Fran decided.

"Dick had a date all arranged for you. He's smooth. Works in the shipping room at Carson's. Dick says he dances like a dream. I guess I'll have to call him or get another girl," Mary concluded.

Fran wiggled her toes, winced as she stepped on her feet, and then said, "Wait a minute, Mary! Maybe if I wear those old shoes, I could manage. I can sleep all morning. It'll be fun, won't it? Besides my feet don't hurt too much. Is he nice looking, a good dancer..."

8 o'clock...

The snow fell steadily, covering the spacious lawns of the residential districts with a coverlet of pure, white wool. The snow on the limbs of the spruce and pine trees reflected the myriad colors of the outside Christmas tree lights. Through the windows of many homes could be seen the last minute preparations for Christmas Eve—trimming the trees, decorating the windows with boughs of holly, and setting the family dinner tables. At various intervals the members of the family would steal upstairs to the many secret nooks and crannies, then slip down into the front room to place the presents, wrapped in white, green, red, or blue tissue paper, under the already over-burdened tree.

At the home of Frank Bethke, a punch-press operator at the Axle Company, the family had come to the table for the Christmas Eve dinner. The little group—mother, Jack, Allen, Louise, and grandpa—became silent as father Bethke began to pray: "Al-

Christmas Episodes

mighty and everlasting Father, we thank Thee for the gift of Thy Son on that Christmas Eve so many years ago. We thank Thee for the blessings provided for us at this table. Amen."

With the scraping of chairs and the rattling of silver, the Bethke family began to eat and drink in leisurely German fashion. After opening a small bottle of Rhine wine, imported from Germany and saved for such special occasions, father Bethke poured the Christmas glass of cheer for the family. The white linen cloth was laden with many tasty dishes of home-cooked food—goose, red cabbage, mashed potatoes, pickles, and aromatic stuffing. Finally, coffee and many different varieties of cookies completed the evening meal.

Then the excitement among the children began. Time simply would not go fast enough for them. They would hurry from their father to the mother, asking, "Dad, can't we see the tree now? Mother, aren't the dishes done yet? Can I wipe the silver? Hurry up, Louise, let's get done so we can open the packages! Gee, I hope I get that bicycle! Did you see that big package Dad brought home? I think mother will like our present, don't you, Jack?"

After the last dish was dry and the last spoon was put away, Mother Bethke announced that now they could go into the living-room. With loud "Ohs" and "Ahs," they saw the splendor of the gaily-trimmed tree for the first time—the large, glittering ornaments, the sparkling icicles, the shimmering lights, and the many large and small packages.

10 o'clock.....

Past drug-stores, office buildings, and gas stations—still gaily bedecked with Christmas trimmings—the snow drifted and eddied around the corners with the fretful gusts of wind. It scurried across the deserted streets to find a night's lodging place in doorways and alleys, against mail-boxes and light poles. The parked cars had fluffy caps of snow on their tops and fenders. The policemen vainly stamped their feet to keep them warm in cold, wet, woolen socks. Passers-by puffed great jets of steam like locomotives hurrying to their destinations. All over the city the snow hung like a thick, blinding, white fog.

Patrick O'Ryan, a cynical, hard-bitten columnist for the Daily News, headed north to Tony's place on Third and Broadway.

TED REPSHOLDT

O'Ryan had just finished his annual Christmas column filled, because of the managing editor's insistence, with traditional "sentiment," as Pat called it. Fuming at his restrictions and railing at the orders of the editors, Pat, mostly by habit, intended to stop at Tony's for a nightcap. Tony Pastroli, you see, was the best Italian bartender in the city, mixing a special Tom and Jerry on Christmas for his regular customers.

The bar and restaurant were nearly empty, for only a few late diners remained after the early evening rush. As he opened the door, Pat stamped his feet, brushed the snow off his coat, and called out, "A merry Christmas, Tony!"

"Same to you, Mr. O'Ryan. What will it be tonight?"

"Tom and Jerry, I guess."

As the little Italian bartender quickly folded in the batter, rum, brandy, and hot water, with a little nutmeg sprinkled on top, he said to Pat, "Say, Mr. O'Ryan, isn't this a fine Christmas Eve? Rather hard on business, though, with the snow and everything."

"Yeah, Tony, most people like to see it snow at Christmas. Seem to think it adds something to the season. I've laughed many times at those hustling, bustling individuals—every single one of them filled with their own selfish concerns. Then, on the twenty-fifth of December, they pay a superficial respect to Christmas, go to church, contribute to poor relief, and send out a few cards. After a day of smug self-satisfaction they go back to their usual life. They say, 'Hell, let them damn relievers go out and find a job. They're too damn lazy to work, want everything given to them. Nobody ever gave me anything. I worked my way up.'"

"Yes, that's right, Mr. O'Ryan. I started out for myself, worked my way up, too. Nobody gave a damn for Tony Pastroli twenty years ago. Some of those W.P.A. bums come around looking for hand-outs. I just chase 'em away." Tony nodded affirmatively, punctuating his words with vigorous gestures.

"But try to write that in the papers, Tony, and see what happens. If people should read the truth about their Christmas observance, they'd stop their subscriptions, then the advertisers would howl, the managing editor would catch hell from the 'old man,' and I'd find myself hunting a new job. So we please public fancy and public ego by writing superficial slush about security, peace, and happiness."

"I guess you're right, Mr. O'Ryan. I never thought of it in

Christmas Episodes

that way. Perhaps we're too smug and self-satisfied." The little bartender, always anxious to protect his business and to keep steady customers, agreed with O'Ryan. Tony always figured that you "win an argument, lose a customer."

"Well, Tony, guess I've talked too much, but this damned hypocrisy really bothers me at times. You probably don't agree with me, but...By the way, How much was the drink? A quarter? O.K. Got to go now. G'night, Tony. See you Monday."

12 o'clock...

Softly, slowly, silently, the huge snowflakes filtered down, covering the city with a blanket of purest white. In groups of twos and threes and fours and fives, trudging through the deep drifts, the families of the city went to Christmas Eve services. From all parts of the city these small groups met at the hub of a great network of streets—the hub formed by the church. From the darkness of midnight they entered the great church, lighted by thousands of candles in massive candelabra. The tones of the mighty organ swelled with the joyful "Venite adoremus." The chorals of the choir rolled and echoed in the furthestmost recesses of the church...After the benediction, the pastor began to read the Christmas Gospel: "And there were shepherds in the same country abiding in the field, and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. . . ." A wondrous silence overcame the worshippers as they listened to the old Christmas story. The little beams of the candles at the altar, wavering in the slight air currents, cast flickering lights on the white marble crucifix. The sonorous voice of the pastor continued: "I bring you glad tidings of great joy which shall be to all people: for there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, And on earth, peace among men!'"

Cow-centered Youth

By NORMAN BANSEN

We didn't cut our milk teeth on cows. Not quite that! But living in a western dairy center, cows were the first specimen of fauna that made a real impression upon us. Babies out for an airing in the valley rarely miss the opportunity to gaze wide-eyed at some contented cow, be she Jersey, Guernsey, or Holstein, champing her jaws on a mouthful of clover and rye grass, expectantly waiting for the burp from the first stomach that will return the once-swallowed morsel for a second going over. Since babies today get their first acquaintance with zoology from *Bos Taurus*, I take it for granted that it was the same with my brother and me.

The earliest vivid reminiscence I have of cowdom is that of chasing Jerseys out of the two-hour evening pasture. I toddled along with Father on dark nights as the dusky hulks of cows ambled slowly through the pasture and snatched a few last tufts of grass; on reaching the gate to the night field they would stam-pede off into the darkness. I was so courageous on dark nights that I would stay all of four feet behind Father, but when the moon was out I would cling to him closely, for I had an unearthly horror of the moon, especially the full moon. At that early point in my life it held no romantic appeal for me. It was only an eerie object that might drop out of the sky at any moment. Father got the cows out anyway, though it must have been quite a task to trudge through the pasture with a frightened four-year-old dangle from the hammerstrap in his Levi-Strausses.

But those days of being a mere spectator soon merged into the years when cows meant work and when Stanley and I, seated on a one-legged milking stool, were learning the tedious art of milking. With twenty-four cows to milk, Father naturally had a milking machine. It was evidently a good one, for the salesman furnished a creamy orange and black metal sign, which was placed on the north barn door, proudly proclaiming to buyers, truckers, ministers, relatives, and guests that "We Use the DeLaval Milker."

Cow-centered Youth

Father had learned to milk when he came to California from Denmark and felt that his sons, though they needn't work as hard as he had and milk twenty cows at a sitting, should at least master the technique of milking a cow from beginning to end without aid from an electric milker. So he always managed to find a few cows that would "do better" if they were milked by hand. And we milked our two or three cows apiece morning and evening—that is if we didn't oversleep or come home from school too late or spend the whole afternoon fishing for bullheads in Salt River.

It may have been better for the cows, but I fear that Father's creamery check grew smaller after the two oldest sons began milking. Unfortunately the cows that would "do better" by hand quite often stood next to each other in the stanchions, giving us the opportunity to carry on milk wars. These battles raged furiously when I milked Blossom and Stanley milked Mable. I had the military advantage, for Stanley's back was turned to me and, anyway, Blossom produced a thicker stream of milk. It got to the point where we would crane our necks around the posterior end of the cows to keep an eye on each other and be prepared to defend ourselves from creamy overalls or stools that were veritable slushy pools of milk.

Since one of us would always be at a distinct disadvantage, we revised our plan of attack and signed a treaty of lactic law, providing that only squirts of milk were permissible when the other was walking by the cow being milked. The windows always stopped the squirts that fell short of the goal and were soon so splattered that only a hallowed stream of cathedral light entered the barn. Father held his peace until all the windows were milked dim and then announced, "Tomorrow Stanley and you will scrub the windows." So we spent that Saturday at the watering trough brushing and scraping the greasy accumulation of milk from the barn windows, and decided the fun wasn't worth it. Especially since all the other kids on Coppini Lane were fishing for bullheads.

Not a summer passed without guests on the farm. Mother's friend from Hayward and her family, cousins from Illinois, cousins from San Francisco all vacationed on our farm and proved to be delightfully gullible. We spent weeks playing tricks on them and then spent days of utter dejection and deep-felt sadness when they left again for the cities.

NORMAN BANSEN

Cousin Erla Mae had the probing mind of a scientist and was willing to be led into anything. Stanley told her the stock farm legend of the star on the cow's udder. She was aglow with excitement as she stooped to look at it. It was quite small, he assured her, as she leaned yet closer. She dashed away sputtering milk, blinded by milk, and deafened by milk. So Mother washed her.

There were rodeos in the pasture, the star vaqueros being the kids who rode bareback longest—on the yearling heifers. Major events in our neighborhood were the livestock shows, when the Lorenzen, Coppini, and Frame calves, rabbits, chickens, cats, dogs, and ducks would be hauled, led, and dragged down the lane by the "twelve and under" youth from the three surrounding ranches. Stanley and I made the blue and red paper ribbon prizes. Father was patient until we started to tear down fences in the calf pasture to use for stock pens.

I tolerated cows and their offspring during the summer, but when the winter rains and spring calves came, I lost all my forbearance. Heifer calves were always raised by the farmers in our valley and my spirit groaned with the arrival of each female calf, for it meant teaching them to drink from a bucket. However, I convinced Stanley that it was an enjoyable task, so he usually took over.

Now in teaching a new-born calf to drink, it is necessary to poke one's fingers halfway down the throat of the animal, and if said animal isn't momentarily temperamental it will start sucking. Then, quickly dunk calf head in bucket of milk. At this point the milk will run into calf's nose, animal will sneeze, milk and calf saliva will splash in instructor's face. But from here and on the procedure is comparatively simple, consisting merely of repeating the process some twelve to twenty-four times per calf per lesson. Only three or four lessons and mastery is achieved.

The valley flowed with mud and water during the winter months and the cows waded in it udder-deep with tails dragging. The tails brought about my utter disillusionment. It was a rare occasion when I wasn't talking or singing while milking. To be fourteen years old, to be singing "This Year's Crop of Kisses", to have an oozing cow's tail switched across my face and in my mouth just as I got to the line "here's to romance", was more than I could bear without inwardly saying words the minister

had condemned as sacrilegious and vulgar, pounding the ribs of the offending cow, and then feeling intensely penitent for having punished the poor, muddy animal.

Everything might have turned out alright if Stanley would have let me develop my budding musical and rhythmic talents, but he would howl with provocation when I bellowed "The Star-Spangled Banner" or "La Cucuracha" or "In The Sweet By and By" and stripped the milk into the pail to the same rhythm. The only song he never disapproved was "Home on the Range"—even when I made the sides of the pail ring in time with it—but then he always had a flair for cowboy music. And "Home on the Range" wore me out, so I decided upon a college education.

ON MILTON'S HELL

By NORMAN NIELSEN

More horrible than raging Vesuvian vomit,
Belching forth with waves of ruin, lies
This infernal region of Hell eternal; here
Is no redemption, grace or mercy shown,
No joy, or peaceful bliss, only anguish and despair.
The howling of countless, scorching, licking flames,
As they cruelly torment the souls of thousands damned,
Can scarce be heard above the screaming terror
Of those enchained. All around arise
Sulphuric odors, smoke and salted tears.
And from his lofty throne—where never yet
A ray of light doth reach or air doth stir
Save from his subterranean furnace—sits
The dreaded ruler of all this horrid vale.
And each time one, with cry of terrible anguish
Would move the hinges of the iron gate,
This huge Arch-Angel hurls him squirming anew
Writhing within the lake of liquid fire.
What hideous fiend or monster or rare brute
Could bear the heat of this tumultous sea,
This endless range of horror, stench and smoke?
Milton, the gods of Hell are living yet!

River Rats

By GROVER HANSEN

They were truly river rats. That is the most fitting description of the two men living in the weatherbeaten shack along the banks of the muddy Missouri.

I walked out to the River one Saturday, hoping to rent a row-boat. A fellow in town had recommended Mr. Axel Young as a likely prospect. This fellow could not give me an address to the place as there was none. Finding it was a hit-and-miss proposition. But following the meager description of the place I located it quite easily.

The river was low this day. If the river had been at its regular height the Young establishment would have rested about twenty-five feet from the river's edge. This day it lay back an extra fifteen feet. I should say "squatted", for the building, all twelve to fifteen square feet of it, squatted in an awkward position. It would not even be correct to say it stood, for not all of it was standing. The hut spread out in all the angles of the compass, weighed down by the elements of nature which had been at work for the past century or so.

If this frame, cardboard, and tarpaper structure had ever had a coat of paint there were no signs remaining to prove the fact. Time had wiped it bare. The boards were black and rotted from lack of adequate protection. The roof was a variety of colors like an old paint advertisement. A collection of divers patches served as a roof; most of them were faded by years of wind, rain and sun. The edges of the patches were curled up, giving the whole thing the appearance of an old pair of shoes which had been soaked in water and set by a hot stove to dry. Most amazing of all was the fact that all the windows were intact, though dirty.

River Rats

With a hop and a skip here, another hop and skip there, I managed to work my way across the front yard to the door. Everywhere about the ground lay boats and pieces of old boats. One old, red contraption, a replica of better fishing days, was lying along the north wall of the shanty. It had not been in the water for a decade, and the cracks where the boards should have joined together were wide enough to shove a fist through.

Several other small craft lay about the yard among boards and bits of rubbish. From the scraggly trees...typical of their surroundings...hung several old fish-nets and traps of a yellowish-gray hue.

In the doorway of the shack hung a structure which might have been a screen door at one time. The curled-up corners of the rusty, patched screen invited careless visitors to employ a little dexterity in entering. But the real interest lay inside the place.

Once inside, my interest was drawn immediately to Mr. Axel Young and his associate. It would have been almost impossible to surmise the age of either one of these gentlemen. They might have been fifty or eighty.

Axel Young evidently had not seen a bathtub for a good two months, for he looked like a chimney sweep. His room-mate probably had ducked his head in Old Muddy not less than a year ago.

Without doubt, Axel was the head of this little corporation; he did most of the talking. How that man did love to talk, too; he didn't need much prompting. Apparently these two had long ago worn out all channels of thought for conversation, and each was eager to talk to someone new, the occasional strangers who wandered past their dwelling. But Axel appeared to be the livelier of the two and got his words out while his friend was still wondering how to say what he was thinking.

By contrast, Axel was wearing a new suit of overalls and some fairly new shoes. How he managed to buy them is beyond me. There was no evidence that either of the two had any occupation other than sitting. Axel had small feet which tapered off from puffy ankles. His new shoes, ankle length, were tied about three-quarters of the way up, for the shoes would not stretch around his ankles. His overalls, big enough to allow for shrinkage, hung straight and stiff from his round stomach.

His partner—I did not find out his name; but I will call him Jake, as that seems to fit him—was a more intriguing though re-

GROVER HANSEN

volting person. My first impression of him was that he was an ex-rabbi, but I could see by his hands that he had led a hard life. He was a shrivelled figure of what had probably once been a big man. His skin, like that of Axel Young's, was wrinkled and weather-beaten from the life on the river. It, too, was brown and black, brown from the sun and wind, and black from the absence of soap. Pure lye would not have cleansed that skin.

His hair was grey-black, light and curly, and juttred out from the back of his head in a conelike fashion. His scalp, seen through his hair, was covered with a film of dirt and oil which ran, river-like, among his hairs. It was a question how far down his back the hair ran. He could have braided it without difficulty.

His clothing, or costume, was typical of his bodily appearance. He wore two pair of overalls; the top pair was solid grease. Under these he wore a heavy sweater-jacket, and under that a heavy sweater. Beneath all this he had a blue work shirt on top of heavy woolens. It was 84 degrees outside. Only a portion of the union suit was showing at the neck, but it was the same color as his skin, probably molded to it.

Both of these men slept in their clothes. When I knocked at the door I could see through the window that they were in bed. One minute later Young came to the door, and both were fully clothed as we have seen them.

On the table the supper dishes, unwashed from the night before, were stacked. They had been shoved back and covered with what had once been a sugar sack, now converted to a general towel. The kerosene stove, out of use for lack of fuel, was used as an odds and ends table. All cooking, evidently, was done on a short, pot-bellied stove of fifty years ago. Fuel for this must have been the pile of driftwood stacked behind the door. In each corner of the north wall stood a bed. One a double-bed, the other single. Both beds, greasy and rusty, must have been almost as old as the men. They were covered with oil-soaked blankets which had been quickly smoothed into a semi-orderly appearance when I knocked. On the single bed a small white dog, eating its first meal of the day. The platter was the bedspread.

The dog was called Spot. Jake claimed it was four years old. It looked twenty with its short thin legs and underslung belly looking like a worn-out hammock. Spot was evidently spoiled, but he was trained as two idle old men might train any dog. At

River Rats

a series of commands, first from Jake, then from Axel, Spot ran to the window to look for visitors. Jake gave the first command and Axel, not to be outdone, followed up with another. Each seemed to wish that we would understand that the dog's learning was his own accomplishment.

As the dog obeyed, a self-satisfied expression came over Jake's face. He leaned back, gathered his legs up under him, and tucked them out of sight like two pieces of rubber tubing.

When I asked to rent one of their boats they said that they had none. What little fishing they did they accomplished from the shore. Though they had been raised on the river they seemed to have acquired a fear of it rather than any familiarity. Their chief worry was the rise and fall of the river, for it behaved almost like an ocean tide. It wasn't until I actually saw this a week later that I gave their claims any credence. Jake said that was why, even if he had a boat, he would not rent it out.

"Once I rented a boat to a feller what didn't know much 'bout the river. He went out in't and wile he wus out in't the tide rose an' he couldn't git back an' I had my nets out an' by the time he got 'back an' by the time I got out there my nets wus gone. An' I took a loss that day and I sez to myself I won't rent out another boat an' by gum, I ain't. So that's howit iz an' so I couldn't rent ya a boat if'n I had it." Jake evidently was used to talking until he had said everything he thought.

Axel and Jake had a discussion then as to who might rent out a boat. "Didn't Orville Jones say he'd a boat ta rent?"

"Uh. He said, said suthin' about...he'ud never rent. Didn't b'lieve in ut."

"He said suthin' about sellin' it."

"How much would he ask for it?" I inquired. I knew I couldn't buy it, even if it were only ten dollars.

"Oh, he didn't want much; mebbe he'd let yuh have it for sixty-five or seventy bucks."

"Would there be any chance that I could sell the boat in June?"

"Well, now, ah...no, guess not."

"Uh huh," chimed in Jake, "no one ud buy ut."

"Is there anyone else that would rent a boat," I asked.

"Well, now, come to think of it," said Axel, "Frankie Hoffman down the river used to rent 'em. Course, Frankie's dead now, but there's another feller, Hansen or Christensen or some such there

GROVER HANSEN

now. He'ud mebbe rent ya one. If'n he still rents 'em. Frankie's been dead now a while, but his wife still got the place."

"How far down the river is Hoffman's?"

"Oh, lemme see now, 'bout seven, eight miles. Ya go down 'bout five or six and 'bout two or three east. If'n ya go to De Sota ...ya know where De Sota is, donche?...well, ya go there and they all know Frankie's place. Couldn't really tell ya myself. Ain't never been there. Not since Frankie come. Never really knew Frankie myself. Heerd of him. Wuz here afore Frankie come, some 100 years...or mebbe a bit closer to forty. But it's a long time, anyhow. Nuthin' there then. Few shacks. I think the guy there now's Christensen, or mebbe..."

Axel was just nicely started; but I interrupted, "Whose boat is that down by the river?"

"Out by the water? Oh, that 'un! Ya mean the battleship grey? Yep, that's a battleship grey. B'longs to gover'ment man. But he don't rent. Yep, that battleship grey is a government boat."

I remembered the boat, but not because it seemed to have any paint on it. The battleship grey was a close imitation of the weather-beaten grey of the shack. I was wanting to stay around and hear the tales these men could tell about Old Muddy, but the cabin was so stuffy and close that I rose to go. I glanced at the pot-bellied stove, the ancient iron beds, the cupboard and table, and the dresser covered with old and worn fishing junk. I was tempted to sit down again; but the warm spring day outside seemed so clean and desirable. Maybe some other warm day I might return. I took in the room with another glance, for I wanted to remember it, always. But next Saturday, if the weather is right, I'm going out to see Axel and Jake again.

The Captain's Worst Storm

By RONALD JENSEN

The passenger liner, Frederick VIII, a ship of twenty-thousand tons, plodded through the green, restless waves. It was headed for Copenhagen, bearing five-hundred fifty tourists, men of business, and diplomats.

The sun was shining and a fair breeze blew from the west... ideal sailing weather. Frederick had covered around twelve-hundred miles since she left Halifax, Nova Scotia. We spent the days lying in the sun, playing deck tennis, ping pong, or shuffle board. We were on our way to Denmark to meet all our uncles and aunts; and to top it off, Granddad had promised to buy all four of us bicycles.

The sun shone while the afternoon wore on pleasantly; Frederick plodded onward through those foaming-fresh waves. We thought it would just go on like this day after day, but sooner than we expected we were to experience quite a change in ocean temperament.—

At about eight o'clock the following morning everyone was roughly awakened by a violent jolt in the ship and the sound of crashing chinaware and loose furniture. The two large suitcases that we kept under the bunks were sliding from one side of the cabin to the other.

We were dressed in a hurry and ran up to the entrance to the first class deck. But upon reaching the door we saw a sign which read:

"It is forbidden for any passenger to go on deck without special permission from the chief steward,

Captain Pedersen."

Although they already knew, the passengers that were not seriously seasick gathered together in the lounge and continued to ask what was happening.

The ship lurched violently from side to side and everyone, including the crew, showed signs of fear. The fact was that the captain had ordered the ship to be "laid to", its bow turned into the wind in order that the sharp end might absorb the cruel blows of the waves. From the time we had awakened until that moment, the ship was turning and taking it on the side.

The chief steward was an old sailor, and knowing that his passengers must have been frightened, he came in and began talking. "The storm," he said, "followed the gulf-stream from the south. It finally caught up and hit us during the night. As you know," he went on, "the rear of a ship rounds off and has a protruding end which forms a shelf above the rudder, the most vital part of a ship. If an exceptionally large billow should hit us here it might force itself under the hollow and break off the steering mechanism. A large wave might, if made into a breaker by the recoil of the ship, land squarely on top and crack this shelf. Were this to happen we might as well get the lifeboats ready." Outside the waves pounded against the ship, a dull thunder, mixed with the creaking and straining of the wood.

"Now, however, we should be able to weather the storm. Each time an exceptionally large wave bears down on us oil is sprayed on it in order to soften it a little—"

Suddenly the whistle began blowing and the "Man all lifeboats" alarm went off. The steward was gone like a puff of air up on the bridge. We passengers were unable to move at first. Then everyone scrambled toward the doors leading to the decks, only to find them locked. The panic became greater. "Break them down!" someone cried, and several berserk individuals began beating the doors with their fists. Then the steward came back. "Open the doors. Can't you see, we're sinking?" Finally able to make himself heard the steward shouted: "It's all right. The engineer is only testing the whistle to see that it has not frozen up. He tried the alarms also, forgetting what fear it would cause you." It was like being lifted out of the water after coming up for the third time; but it didn't help.

After dinner...which no one had eaten...the hurricane was going as strong as ever. By this time we were, strange as that

The Captain's Worst Storm

may seem; getting used to it. Those fortunate individuals, including myself, who were not seasick, began to watch the storm. Previously, no one had looked at the sea, but curiosity finally overcame us, and we went to the inch-thick windows in the front lounge from which we could see the entire front end of the ship. At first glance everything looked supernatural and odd. We had never seen the sea like this previously. The bow seemed to be standing amidst some gray hills.—I still see that picture of unfathomable power in my mind. It was the bathtub and the nutshell. I was glad I was not down there for it looked as if it were constantly below water level, but still it was not being washed over by breakers; the waves were too compressed for that. The wind slashed the sea into a pattern of fury: the motion of the ship was as regular as clock work. Up, down, up—. No wave could possibly come from the side, the blast was so strong!

"Hey—hey! Look out or we'll sink," I shouted.—I had seen the "hole" between two huge billows. When the ship mounted the one it actually slid down its side into the gully. As she faced downward I had the illusion that the oncoming billow must be a thousand feet in height. In reality, I suppose it only could have been a hundred and fifty. It seemed to me as though we would sail right through it, but when the moment came, the bow, instead of submerging itself, began to rise rapidly and was soon sliding down another wave.

I got an idea of the velocity of the wind when a small wave of only twenty feet overlapped and was caught by the rapid ascent of the ship's nose. It was smashed into a wild spray and flung into the air. Only a second afterward it hit the windows like grape shot after traveling a distance of about one-hundred eighty feet.

High up in the "crow's nest" was the lookout. He was stationed in a small box on the formast with a pair of strong binoculars. I wondered how it felt to sway back and forth like that. The ship at times tilted so much that he had only water directly under him.

During the progress of the afternoon we experienced an exaggeration of the usual feeling of being able to float. This phenomenon, which seems unbelievable to a land-lubber came as a result of inertia. When one end of the ship began to heave violently upward, the opposite end naturally lowered. When this motion

RONALD JENSEN

stopped the inertia of the objects and persons on the elevating end made them about half as heavy as usual. On instances such as these, which lasted for five or six seconds, I jumped as high as six feet from a standstill with no over-exertion or effort. I found it extremely interesting to jump down a whole flight of steps at once. It created a most pleasant sensation of being as light as a feather. Of course, the opposite effect came as regularly, in which overweight was felt. I, being a boy of ten, was overjoyed by this sort of thing.

When night came the ship occupied exactly the same spot as before and was already delayed sixteen hours. Finally, each passenger decided to try to retire, and we followed suit.

In the cabin it was curious to watch the emergency lamp. It was a small piece of apparatus adjusted on the wall and so equipped that it would maintain a vertical position no matter what the position of the ship was. Its purpose was to hold a candle in case the lighting system should be harmed. When we entered the cabin the weighted end was situated for a few seconds in such a way that the lamp was practically horizontal with the cabin floor. That meant that the bottom of the sea was *over there and not down there*.

Physical and mental fatigue soon overcame us, and we fell asleep, rolling from one side to the other in our bunks.

Upon awakening the next morning at approximately eight o'clock we noticed that the ship was rolling even more than on the preceding day, but that the motions were longer and smoother. After dressing we inquired how things were, and were told that the storm was abating and that the ship had been turned and had resumed its course early that morning. It was now hitting from the rear, although with less intensity, causing increased rolling. On the other hand it pushed the old steamer ahead of it making it do ten extra knots per hour. All in all, the ship had been "layed to" for more than twenty-nine hours, a record for Frederick VIII even though she was more than twenty years old.

In Holte, Denmark, Granddad sat at the telephone calling the Scandinavian-American Line for information on Frederick VIII. He had heard over the radio that a hurricane with a radius of two-hundred miles was raging in the north Atlantic. My grandfather, Captain Rognald Gøtsche, was a retired sea-captain and

The Captain's Worst Storm — Parable of Lent

ex-commander of Frederick VIII. He was told by the information bureau that Frederick had been hit severely by the storm and was at present "laid to" and close to the storm center.

Grandfather wept as he continued calling and heard that there was no improvement. When he called the next day and heard that she was finally headed toward Denmark he sighed with relief. He had commanded ships for over forty years, but never had he "laid to" for more than nine hours at a time. He was glad that Frederick VIII had survived by some sort of miracle. He had heard that no other ship had gone through that area unscathed.

When the captain was once more able to mingle with his passengers, he informed us that never in all his days as a seaman had he experienced a worse storm. He also said that it had certainly proved to him, as at no other time, what a good job of building they had done on Frederick VIII.

When Frederick steamed into port three days late the largest crowd ever assembled on a Copenhagen wharf was there to meet her. The ship's band played "Der er et Yndigt Land" as she glided toward the dock, and a tumultous answering cheer rolled out upon the water.

PARABLE OF LENT

By NORMAN HANSEN

Some claim the pageantry of holy mass
Is indispensable.

Far more, to me, the April clouds that pass
Are comprehensible
And speak of God.

At Lent, cathedral incense rises, floods
The nave oppressively.

Outside gaunt arms of trees with life-filled buds
Portray recurrently
God's sacrifice.

Old John

By GILBERT JENSEN

I always felt kind-a sorry for old Granny Martin. She must-a been above sixty-five first I sees her. Sort of wrinkled all over she was; no more'n four'n a half feet in stockin' foot, I'd say. She lived just 'cross't from us when we got into town. Sort of a cross between a yeller an' a brown affair her house was, an' had a front porch as was wide open 'ceptin' some pillers that held up the roof. Some grape vines hung on the pillers. Her lazy boy, Olaf, use to hang 'round on a cot there when he was home, an' her big grey cat sometimes stretched hisself an' sunned hisself by the vines.

Her gal, Mrs. Seirs, was a kind-a fancy one, an' always so overly nice. She an' her man would come drivin' home to the old one 'bout once't a week or so, an' sort-a cheer up Granny. But I'd thought it kind-a funny they'd never take her home with them to stay. But they didn't, an' so the ol' one would work away as janitor of the school house, luggin' big pails full of coal out the cellar to all six rooms. Sometimes she'd get down in the dumps with all her work an' would kick some about her hard life. Seems the old grey cat was her only comforter, tho my ma use to cheer her some. But the old cat was purty dear to her, for she'd give 'im red salmin an' call the doctor soon as he'd be actin' queer. I always sort-a guessed it liked carin' for an' was plum queer jest for carin'. I never cared a hoot 'bout that big grey thing. He always acted sort-a proud like when I'd come 'round for to run some trips for Granny. That's how I knowed for sure that grey got red salmin, 'cause I'd buy it at the store. But I didn't care so much the cat got salmin, 'cept I thought Granny weren't doin' jest right by herself while's the old Tom got everythin' for nothin'. She'd always give me pennies when

Old John

I'd do somethin' for her, an' she'd get purty mad like if I didn't take 'em. Ma always use to tell us kids we shouldn't take anythin', but had to anyhow for to please the old one.

She was purty good 'bout givin'. Always, she use to have some stuff for us for Halloween when we'd come 'round to scare her; so we'd always go to her place first so she wouldn't have to set up all night a-waitin' for us. I think she always sort of liked to have someone talkin' to her, and mostly she'd brag 'bout her cat. John she called it. Some name. You might a-thought he was a disciple, too, the way she'd talk to 'im. Always talkin' to 'im like as if he'd savy. Maybe he did; I don't know. But it couldn't do a single trick; at least not whilets I was 'round. But she'd think he could, and would brag 'bout how her John had jumped over a stick. Course, I never argued 'bout it, and always acted like I b'lieved. She'd-a got mad if I hadn't.

Sometimes she'd get me to tag 'long to school and he'p her lift her coal buckets. I'd do it alright, specially, when she weren't a-feelin' too good. Plenty tough it was for a kid. I s'posed she'd liked to die a-pullin' that coal up the cellar. But she didn't for a while.

Must-a been old John's dyin' more'n anythin' that killed her. He'd been aillin' some. Once't she took him to a vet'nary an' had 'im checked over. I guess he pulled some teeth that time too. But John comes 'round ag'in, an' Granny gives 'im more salmin than ever. Then some of the boys got to tossin' stuff at John when he'd get a little ways from home. I didn't he'p. I hated John for his struttin', but I knowed Granny'd die if he got hurt. It sort-a made me glad like when Johnny Sommers hit it with his sling-shot though. Johnny didn't like that grey thing with his name a-hangin' on to it. I didn't blame him much. Bad 'nough to go a-stealin' a human's name, let alone a disciple's. Well, old John limped home, cryin' for bloody-murder. Old Granny hadn't got home from chorin' at school yet, but soon she comes, runnin' like thunder when she hears the old grey a-howlin'. I felt sorry-like to see she's upset; so I went 'round to the hind porch where she was a-lookin' over John. Soon as old John sees me he lets go a howl as if he'd like to die right then, and right away she gets so blumin' mad at me and runs me off the place. Ma went over to see her purty soon, but she wouldn't even see ma. Then ma come home an' really puts me 'cross't the barrel.

GILBERT JENSEN

Course, I wouldn't squeal on Johnny; so I gets it in the neck. Then Pa comes home, an' he gives me a-goin' over. But I wouldn't squeal a mite. Sure I got mad ag'in old John. S'pose you wouldn't? Every single wallop I took made a pound a hate for John, him a-cryin' like as if I'd hit him! Jest a lyin' old sneakin' cat. Should of named 'im Judas.

Well, Johnny and me sees the old vet'nary come out for to give John his goin' over. I s'pose the old one gave most her money to 'im. Me'n Johnny felt sorry over Granny bein' fool'd by the lyin' grey, a-wasten all her keep on salmin an' doctorin'. Her lazy Olaf had stopped to lay on her keep. Must-a hit gold or maybe his woman that he hitched did. Anyhow, he came 'round tootin' a big jallopy an' sportin' a red tie an' blue suit like he was president. But Granny didn't get richer by Olaf. S'pose she'd-a got a nurse for John if she had.

Well, John soon gets well ag'in. An' 'round his yard he'd come a-walkin' like some prince-a-whales. I guessed he knowed better'n goin' gallivanterin' more'n 'round his house. I s'pose red salmin done up in her own bowl was all could budge sech a lyin' sneaker. Me an' Johnny sort of got a hunch we'd like to scear some fear on the old boy. So one day Granny'd gone off for school, luggin' a rake. I guessed she'd set on rakin' leaves a while. She'd got by the bridge jest as Johnny an' me goes crawlin' on our bellies 'hind her woodshed. Then we sees the sneakin' liar chewin' salmin real proud like by a crack in the wall. Purty soon the sneakin' guy has his fill. So he sets to lickin' hisself all over, an' then goes steppin' up the track to his yeller-brown house an' gets inside by his hole. Purty quick he's snorin' loud, I guess; so Johnny crawls to his dish an' picks it up careful like by his hanky. No need a-lettin' the old boy sniff his touch. So we sets his dish with red salmin close't by the shed. Then we sits an' waits. Purty soon he comes a-struttin' out his hole. Then he yawns like, stretchin' hisself all over, an' goes to fill his belly some more. Man! was he s'prised when he sees his salmin gone. Liked to knocked 'im flat. But soon he's sniffin' an' gets wind of salmin. He'd-a sniffed that stuff by the north pole way he was sniffin'. So soon he come, real careful like at first. Purty soon he's eatin' fit to kill. First, I 'spected he'd hear our breathin' a-whistlin'. But not that old boy. Soon Johnny pokes me a mite, an' first I know—wham! Johnny smacked with his club. Man! did old John

Old John

jump! Not far though, jest up and 'round real dizzy like, more like a snake 'an a cat. Then we was busy tryin' to put the bag on 'im, but he was jumpin' so fast and dizzy like we kept-a missin'. Johnny let's 'im have another, but he didn't slow 'im much. But soon we got the sneakin' liar in the gunny bag an' hung on till old John wore hisself out some. Then we smacked 'im some more, feelin' 'round a bit for his head, an' then lettin' him have it. I guess purty soon all nine lives is knocked clean out. The bag was lookin' like a map with a lot of red countries. So we dumped old John out on his ear, an' kicked 'im some to see if he'd move. He was purty dead, I guess. His head was kind-a squashed, an' his eyes hung out like berries.

Then first I knowed I sees the rake a-comin' jest past the bridge. So like a light'nin' streak Johnny an' me rubs the gunny bag all over our tracks, an' then we beats it like thunder, runnin' in the grass. Purty soon we's hid down under our house all set for to watch a funeral. Man, did Granny bawl. Johnny an' me cries some jest by hearin' her. Ma goes by an' she comes home a-bawlin'. Then old Granny gets her fancy rug an' wraps John real careful like. When Pa comes home he goes over'n makes a fine box for John, an' puts 'im in, all dolled up in Granny's fancy rug. You'd-a-thunk old John had a soul with all the actin' up.

Next day Pa gets up real early an' digs a hole for Granny. An' ma comes home 'bout noon an' says Johnny an' me is to do some pallbearin'. S'pose you'd knocked me for a rool when she up an' says that. But Johnny an' me goes over dressed in Sunday best, winkin' some when no one looks. An' soon we was pallbearin' like real ones, wearin' some old fancy woman's socks for gloves. We tosses 'em in the hole like real ones too. Granny tries singin' some as the box is gettin covered, an' we he'ps some. Then me an' Johnny pitches in an' piles on dirt in a hurry, an' beats it. Granny hung 'round long after dark.

No more'n a month more Granny buckles up one day an' croaks too. She was old though, I guessed she couldn't get along much without the sneakin' grey. I guessed me an' Johnny sort of feels bad at what we'd done. So we tossed some wild flowers by the graves for a while. Maybe if she'd had old John to monkey with and baby she'd a-stuck it out longer. I was glad she didn't guess me an' Johnny knocked John off. Didn't think we was big enough. Well, guess we was, but he didn't have a soul.

The Valley of the Eel River

By NORMAN BANSEN

Just north of the point where California's coastline reaches into the sea to form Cape Mendocino, the mountains fall back from the coast some twelve miles and the sand dunes are broken by the mouth of the Eel River, which in pre-Columbian America had finished its work of wearing away the Coast Ranges, had settled into its leisurely summer bed. Only when the winter rains came did it rise to flood the coastal lowlands, to cut away soil from the delta islands.

The valley is shaped like a great horn of plenty, with its open end to the sea and its tip nestled among the sequoia covered Coast Ranges at Scotia, strange amalgamation of modern factory city and early lumber town, home of swarthy southern European immigrant and second generation American.

The Redwood Highway follows the curve of the horn of plenty, and the valley is seen stretching to the sand dunes and the Pacific beyond. To the south are the heights of Grizzly Bluff and fading into the haze of the northwestern horizon is a promontory, the site of the Table Bluff lighthouse, whose arc of light flashes through the valley nights.

On all sides except the west are the hills, some of them green pasture hills, brown during the summer and fall. Others are covered with second growth redwood among sawed-off stumps. Along the ocean the hills are clothed in pine and spruce, with plentiful underbrush of thimbleberry, ferns, mosses. Then there are the hills that have felt forest fires and now look like sea-worn derelicts. To the east the Coast Ranges rise to majestic heights, two tiers on hazy days, three tiers after the rains.

This is the Eel River Valley . . .

The Valley of The Eel River

When crops failed on Table Bluff, the early settlers, turning their eyes southward across the valley, noticed a sheltered glen between the mountains and saw what from the plateau looked like green pasture land. They forded the Eel, came to the emerald area, but found that it was not pasture land, but ferns, some of them eight feet tall, growing in rich moist soil. Between Francis and Williams Creeks they cleared the land, built their homes, and founded the village of Ferndale.

The Danish pioneers arrived, brought with them their knack for dairying and soon the area became one of the richest dairy sections of the West. Then followed a building boom in the Victorian manner. Each succeeding business house on Main Street was made a bit more ornate and elaborate than its predecessor. No ornamentation was too fantastic or lacy to be represented in the architecture of the period. But when the peak in dairy production was reached, the town settled down to a peaceful calm. With no main highway or railway connections, there was little incentive for growth other than the local industry which remained profitable but static. Today Ferndale presents a study in contrasts. Modern store fronts carry a weight of two or three stories of overhanging Victorian balconies and turrets with their pre-twentieth century embellishments.

Each year in August the town becomes alive with visitors. The six day Humboldt County Fair, oldest in the state, according to local boosters, bring to town the usual assortment of carnival guests. The chamber of commerce whips out the flags and banners—stars and stripes flying with bossy and clover—the latter being a huge unrampanant cow in a field of green. These banners of bovinity are given prominent positions down the center of Main Street. Nights during fair week are gala with street dancing, oil company sponsored fireworks, concessions on roped-off streets, hot dogs, housewives, farmers, food, flowers, livestock, drunks, jockeys.

* * * * *

Fields of fava beans brought grey-green blocks of color to the patchwork of the valley during the depression years when the dairymen began looking for lucrative sidelines. The Portuguese introduced the crop, which soon began an upward climb to popularity. Vegetable oil refineries offered high prices for the crop,

NORMAN BANSEN

but the farmers worked on the scheme with too much vigor; soon the market was glutted with a surplus of "Portugee beans" and the grey-green areas became less prominent.

A large proportion of the valley Portuguese hail from the Azores Islands and have brought with them a tradition that has retained its old world pomp. It is the Holy Ghost Celebration, held annually at Pentecost. Its origin dates back more than a century to a drought year in the Azores; the pineapple crop was doomed to failure if the dry spell was not broken. The islanders solemnly promised that if the Holy Ghost would send them moisture, they would celebrate each year a festival in His honor. Rain came, the crop was saved, and the Azoreans have remembered their promise.

A Saturday night dance opens the celebration, followed Sunday morning by a parade through Ferndale, with all Portuguese organizations in northwestern California participating. Two large bands are engaged for the parade of brown-eyed children, swarthy black-haired men, and hefty matrons, marching in solemn procession through the streets—solemn except for an occasional greeting directed to a friend in the sidelines by a toss of the head or a jerk of the arm. The procession moves down Ocean Avenue, turns and proceeds down Church Street to the grey Church of the Assumption. The procession halts as the queen and her attendants, robed in regal splendor, receive the blessing of the padre. This formality completed, the dark haired young queen enters the church, where the impressive coronation ceremony takes place.

Sunday dinner is served in the Portuguese hall, the feature attraction being blood soup. Then the afternoon diversions—dedicated, of course, to the Holy Ghost—bring the celebration to a close. The women gossip over their cards, watch their numerous progeny; the men hold a livestock auction, enjoy their cards, wine, and cigars; Portuguese youth spends the afternoon dancing. So ends a religious festival in post-puritan America.

* * * * *

Bill Russ, before he staked out his mountain claims of tens of thousands of acres, made certain that he had secured a goodly share of the Eel River lowlands. Brice Creek was on his property, and at the point where the stream flows out of the Coast Ranges and begins its slow movement across the valley he laid the foundations of Fern Cottage.

The Valley of The Eel River

The rambling grey mansion was a cottage in name only. Three large frame houses combined into one was no doubt the solution of the pioneer architect's mansion problem. Parvenus were rare—so were silver dollars—when Russ called upon the carpenter-architect for a mansion. With true pioneer initiative the work was begun on the three-in-one home. Bill had his large mansion, the Eel River Valley landmark, and the architect a rich reward for his apparently unnoticed ingenuity.

It is early morning; the last grey wisps of fog linger about the eaves, disappear into nothingness. The tall, ancestral elms drop their dark shadows on the lawns. Fern Cottage is quiet. Even fern-shaded Brice Creek moves more leisurely now than in the years when the Russ children crossed it going to classes in the one-room private school, now moss-covered, tottering. The aging women who live here are driven to church on Sundays by their chauffeur; their grandchildren spend a few days with them; a member of the family dies, lies in state in the mansion's somber death chamber, where life and gaiety are strangers. Days pass slowly, church, visits, deaths. Fern Cottage is no longer a gay, cheery mansion, its children are gone.

* * * * *

Bright gold light of the west shades into scarlet clouds of sunset, blends with the royal purple of the eastern sky that reaches beyond the forest covered tiers of the Coast Ranges. Rugged sea cliffs are beckoning the gulls, whirring high overhead in a race with the night.

Darkness reveals a crescent moon above the black hills to the west. A harsh, mechanical wail sounds from the town hall siren, inhabitants of the valley hang black paper over their windows, cars park along the road, lights dim in the village streets—the Valley of the Eel River is learning the lesson of air raid precautions in 1942.

Night Ride

By ALVIN RUETER

"Have you got room?"

"Sure."

I looked in the door and saw a couple in the front, and there was a couple in the back; the girl in back cleared a space as the girl in front opened the door.

"Going to Blair?"

"Yes."

"We're goin' there for the heckuvit. Hey, Mary, watch for that mailbox! Yah, Mary!"

"We're just gonna drive slow," explained the enormous person on my right. "Jojo, light me up a cigarette."

"Well, hold still—you're just like a kid that's just learning how to smoke—be careful, don't blow it out. Want one?"

"No thanks."

"Don't you smoke?"

"No."

"Aw, come on."

"Leave the guy alone, Jojo; he don't want any. Ain't that that mailbox, Moge?"

"No—boy oh boy, did Mary ever smack that thing last Saturday night—she whammed it over and split it up finer than a gnat's eyelash."

"Ain't that the one? They musta got it fixed up by now." The girl explained that Mary was driving, and that a wheel had come off. "Do you live in Omaha?"

"No, I live in Blair."

Moge was trying to tear off the government stamp from the

Night Ride

bottle. Mary took it over; she succeeded and also got the cap off, gave the bottle to Jojo.

"Give me some, Jojo. What kind is it, that same kind you had last time? . . . Oh, I don't like this as well as Red Horse."

"No, that was White Horse," Jojo corrected.

"Naw, it was Red Horse," insisted Mogeey.

"Well, anyway, it ain't as sweet as whatever kind of Horse it was."

Jojo held out the bottle to me: "Don't you want some?"

"No, thanks."

"Go ahead—this is good stuff—it won't hurt you."

"No, I'd better not."

"Leave the guy alone, Joe; he don't want any—throw this stub out the window before it burns my face. . . . Do you go to school in Blair?"

"Yes."

"Ya got some pretty girls in Blair?" came, ripping out from Jojo.

"Say listen, you big bum, you keep your eyes where they belong."

"Aw, can't I woo some a little?"

"You just better behave or I'll tie you down. Hey, Mogeey, does your Mom work at the tent works? Someone told me she did, but I never seen her; what's she look like?"

"Oh, she's real small, smaller than Mary—she works down in the basement—a supervisor, I guess."

"Oh boy, maybe I could get a job down there."

"Yeah, but boy oh boy, she's real partic'lar, ya can't make any mistakes in your cuttin' when ya workin' for her—she don't mind if ya work slow, but boy oh boy, ya gotta work more partic'lar than a gnat's eyebrow."

"Oh well, but I'm a floor girl—I wouldn't want to do any cuttin'. Well, you tell her to look up Bernadine Constance Bryant sometime, will you, when she's at the tent works—I work on the first floor. . . . Say Joe, can you lend me some overalls?"

"What? I got only two pairs myself."

"Well, gee whiz, mine's all ripped out on the back and on the knees, and I ain't got any money till the 25th. How much do you make, 20, 25, 35?"

"Well, say, about 20."

ALVIN RUETER

"Twenty-seven?"

"No, twenty. Eighteen, to be exact. Hey Mogey, slip me the bottle. Give some to Mary. Aw, c'mon Mary, have a sip;...will ya take some if I put my arms around ya?"

"Jojo!"

"Aw, can't I woo her a little?"

"Yah, if you don't behave, I'll woo you with strychnine."

"Aw, Bernie. Want some? Here, don't you want any?"

"You don't smoke, you don't drink, do you pet?"

"Huh?"

"I say, do you pet?...I'll bet this fellow don't think I'm very much of a lady, do you?"

"Sure, he don't, Bernie; you're some punkins. Say, I'll bet you 'n' Mary would sure like to know what me 'n' Mogey are goin' to do next Sunday."

"Where?"

"Listen, Mogey, don't you tell; whisper in my ear if you know."

"Lookout, Mogey, you're going in the ditch," Mary cautioned.

"Where a ya two goin', Jojo?"

"C'mon, Jojo...Tell us, Mogey."

"Boy oh Boy, I wouldn't do that for everything in the worl'."

"Boy, I'll say not. A motorcycle race is the last place in the worl' I'd want a girl to go to when I was racin'."

"Yeah, boy oh boy, I'll say. They wouldn't want to see anything like that."

"Why?" Bernadine Constance outdid her previous roars.

Jojo took up the challenge: "Well, when ya gotta bank them turns, ya hafta lean way over, and the least slip—Mogey, tell 'em how dangerous it is."

"Boy, it's dangerous."

"Yeah, and you know how it is—if ya got someone watchin' ya."

"You mean, then you can't keep your mind on the race?"

"No, but you know how it is. I *don't wantcha* to come and watch me in the race."

"Oh, please, please."

"Mogey, you wouldn't want her out there, would you?"

"Boy oh boy, she wouldn't a wanted to a been there when Bill Fisk crashed in Chesterville."

Night Ride

"Boy, I'll say not. Hey kid, don't ya want some?"

"No thanks."

"Go ahead—I haven't got rabies."

"Uh, no."

"I'm goin' to wham you on the head so you can't go next Sunday either."

"Listen, sis, just to show ya how dangerous it is, I'll let you ride with me sometime, and we'll go REAL slow around the turns, so's if we slip, we won't fall so far."

"O.K. Light me up another cigarette, will ya?"

"I'll give ya one, but I won't light it for ya. Have ya taken some yet, Mary?"

"No, I'd better not."

"Sure, g'wan, take some. Here. Me 'n' Mogeys are going to Illinois next week."

"Ya are?"

"Boy oh boy, is that gonna be some fun. Hey, how the heckami gonna get back, if you stay there and work?"

"Mary, slip me the bottle. Yep, I'm visiting my aunt."

"C'mon, Mary, take a little shot... it's not a goin' ta hurt ya—"

"I've got a headache."

"I'm not gonna stay more'na week, unless I get a job at the plant."

"Boy that'd be a fine mess if you stayed up there'ni couldn't get back."

"Well, jeeze, ya kin ride my ol' motorbike."

"Throw my cigarette out, will you, Jojo?"

Mary and Mogeys got in a word. "I'm going out to Oregon next week, I guess," Mary said.

"Ya are, ya finally decided to go?"

"Yes, I can get a job that pays \$20 a week out there."

"Well gee whiz, I'm goin' someplace too—I'm not gonna be the only damn one around here when everybody's gone."

"Ya say ya got a headache, Mary? Well, Mary, ol' dear, this old gin's just the stuff to clear up your ol' headache."

"Yeah, it'll do it quicker than a gnat's eyebrow."

"Yeah, C'mon, Mary, will ya, if I tickle your chin a little?"

"Hey, you big, dry-haired walrus, get away from her!"

A suspicious lull in the back seat, as it became more vacant. Mogeys and Mary were talking about Oregon. Jojo and Bernadine

ALVIN RUETER

were enjoying a silence that seemed to be caused by a mutual plugging up of each other's mouths.

Finally Bernadine opened up. "Why'd ya go to Omaha, if it's any of my business, to see a girl?" Another silence.

"Well how far is it to Blair? I'm so tired, Mogey,—won't we ever get there?"

"I ain't been there for a long time—how far is it from Omaha, buddy, about 25 miles?"

"Yes."

Jojo and Bernie fidgeted. There was another lull as the other corner filled up again. "Hey, bud, you don't mind my neckin' her, do ya?"

"Is that Blair?"

"Where d'ya wanna have us let ya off?"

"Oh, anywhere—I live on the west end."

"Hey, let's take the guy up to where he lives—we ain't got anything else to do."

"O.K., but ya gotta show me where Main Street is."

"Maybe ya can't find it—they roll the sidewalks up at 9:30."

"Jojo, don't talk like that about this guy's hometown—he can't help it."

"Gee, lookit all the cars."

"Sure—just think what it is—Saturday night. Every farmer's in town."

"Listen here, Joe, I lived on a farm once, and I'm proud of it."

"Aw, Bernie, I didn't mean it that way.... You stick with me and you won't hafta live on no farm."

"How long?"

"Well.... Hey, Mary, have ya tried it yet?"

"Yes, I tasted it."

"How'd'ya like it?"

"It was kinda good."

"Turn at the next corner."

"MOGEY, be careful—those dumb kids are walkin' all over the pavement."

"Well, gee whiz, don't they know where the sidewalk is?"

"I'd like to get out here."

"O.K. Stop the car, Mogey."

"Gee, wow, some babes!"

"JOJO!"

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