

The Crucible



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PREFACE

THE CRUCIBLE is offered by the English Club of the Lock Haven State Teachers College to the students and to all others who may derive pleasure from it. The publication contains outstanding stories, sketches and poems written by students during the past year.

The editor wishes to thank any who have contributed in any way to THE CRUCIBLE. Special acknowledgement is due Mr. E. B. Hills, faculty adviser, for his aid which has contributed greatly to the success of this year's publication.

Harold E. Stine,
Editor.

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Only Two Hands

JOE HUTNYAN

1943. During the past year he has been president of the Student Cooperative Council and participated in varsity basketball. Joe is a member of the "College Times" staff and has contributed numerous amusing selections to the "TIMES." He served in the navy during the war.

Father gave my hand another fervent shake. I walked over to mother, who pressed me to her bosom.

"Charles," she said affectionately, "it's so good to have you home again, dear. But heavenly day, I'm worried. You don't look a bit well. Your face is the color of a dried lemon and you have a shady circle under each eye. Is College that hard?"

"Mom, I have enlisted in the Army of the home front," I answered as modestly as I knew how. "I'm not only purchasing the most precious commodity in the world, education, but also I'm hastening Tojo's and Adolf's downfall."

"Maybe you've been working too hard," Pop spoke up. "I remember you sayin' something in your letters about helping the war effort. When you first walked in the door and I saw how skinny you were I thought, 'What the hell's he doin' fightin' on Guadalcanal?'"

"It's not quite that bad, Dad," I laughed. "Let me tell you about it."

"It was the heavy clanging of Merton's alarm clock that shook off the slumber the morning after I arrived at Ivyland College.

"Hit the deck, little man," my roommate's voice came through the fog that usually surrounds my mind at the hour of 7:00 A. M. Today's the big day—you're goin' job hunting. Better get your clothes on and hop down to breakfast."

We washed, dressed, quickly disposed of our coffee and toast in the dining room, and boarded the bus for Little Pearl, a small town just outside Ivyland. Here we walked into the employment office of the Electro Company and I made known to the clerk behind the table that I was eager for employment. After filling out a small stack of information blanks I was handed a slip and directed to a Doctor for a physical. Faithful Merton was at my side through it all. He watched, with infinite concern, the medic's stethoscope as it scouted around my chest. His face twisted in agony every time the Doctor banged my boney frame with his two fingers. After the exam, he held the upper part of my B. V. D's while I wiggled back in. A bosom-buddy, this Mert, nothing less.

After having been meticulously investigated, and with a white slip of paper showing the M. D.'s findings, I reported back to the office. The hiring agent glanced at the report and shook his head.

"Sorry, fellah," he told me, "you flunked. Not a darn thing the matter with yuh. No flat feet, not even a speck of heart murmur. No chance of even developin' anything. Too bad! You don't look it, maybe, but you're as healthy as an ox. If we give you a job here, you'd be drafted before you could ever do us any good."

"But I just have to get a job," I said desperately. "I'm trying to work my way through college, and right now I'm down to twelve dollars and some cents."

"Yeh," Mert chimed in, "the kid won't even be able to eat. How would you like to have something like that on your conscience. Surely you can find something for him to do, at least until the draft board grabs him."

"Too bad you're so healthy, but that's the breaks. I'd like to help yuh, kid, but no plant around here would give you a job, as close to the draft board as you are. That's the way it is, though. Some of us fight in the Army and others here at home makin' the weapons."

He stood up and leaned in the direction of my right ear. "I got a hernia," he whispered.

It's a good thing the word *defeat* didn't occupy a prominent position in my roommate Merton's vocabulary or I might never have found employment. He had a friend whose brother was nicely situated between the second and fourth vice-president in a union called the American Brotherhood of Electric Workers.

"Nothing outstanding because of your status, but nevertheless a job," I was told, several hours later, by one of Electro's bigger wigs. Mert had talked himself into getting me hired.

Precisely one afternoon later, about 3:30, I appeared with the rest of the Swing Shift.

"Report to Units," the orders read, and off I went to begin my career as a most important cog in the Nation's war machine.

"I'm Duncavage, from Open Pitt, Pa." My overseer was short, squatty and fairly youthful. I assumed that his body was infested with some deadly virus that had met the draft board's disapproval, for how else could he rate such an important position?

"Call me Bill," he said. We pressed hands. "This is your machine, Number One-thirteen. It's known as a—well, we're not allowed to tell you what it's called, but it makes an important part of a—No, I'd better not give that out, either. Anyway, you'd better wear glasses because you'll work largely with a material called—just get glasses. By the way, anything I tell yuh is confidential and shouldn't be mentioned outside the plant. Spies, you know."

Mentally I resolved to avoid all accent-bearing dark-eyed sirens that might perchance wander into Danny's milk bar on Fourth Street.

In spite of the obscurity that shrouded Units Machine Number One-thirteen, I wasn't present five minutes before I became convinced that it was nothing less than a secret weapon. It was composed of a large wheel that moved six inches at regular intervals. My task was to open a slot, take out a what-ever-it-was and place it in a can to my left. I then reached with my right hand and pulled out another from a tray that rested in a table to my right. This was placed in the vacant slot and promptly closed. Childishly simple. And just think, I had three whole seconds to complete the procedure. Fourteen flames were arranged in a circle around the wheel, their purpose being to temper the metal object contained in the slots.

For two weeks I sweated, strained and, in general, played nursemaid to this robot which made loud gasping noises and showered me with its hot kerosene-smelling breath. During this period I was cursed with the most inconvenient habit of reaching in the wrong direction, using the wrong hand at the wrong time. I was tempted on many occasions to plead with the head man for another position. I wanted to tell him that I was physically incapacitated for this job; it was noticeable—even to him, I hoped—that I had only two hands. I also had a suggestion: affect the appropriate clearance with the Union and find an unemployed Octopus.

Then I began to notice that I was undergoing a change. When I stood on a scale, it registered slowly and seemingly with reluctance. People began allowing me to go ahead of them in the cafeteria line. The look of compassion in their eyes embarrassed me. Several mornings Merton's alarm clock, an instrument that would make a trip-hammer sound like a lullaby, couldn't even cut through my slumber. I began to sense that the ping pong balls in the Social Room were getting heavier.

One evening, after a particularly trying shift, I was all ready to call it quits. Then I thought of the boys chasing Rommel in the scorching desert sands of Africa. I remembered the others lying in the mud and filth of the Solomons.

My shoulders became erect. I walked with dignity to the water fountain where I swallowed two salt tablets, then turned proudly, took two steps, and fell down a flight of stairs.

"You poor dear!" Mother's voice was tender and her eyes were shiny.

"No—Mom—No!" I jumped to my feet. "Don't waste your sympathy on something like this. These are difficult times. It's my duty. Besides, aren't I a strong, young, virile American, reared in the coal fields? Do you think that a little hard work will ever get the best of a Duncavage? Look at me! Mom! Pop! Do I look like I haven't been able to stand up under the strain, I ask you now?"

Mother looked at father. Father looked at Mother.

"Call a doctor," father said.

Just To Scare Them

ANDREW L. HUGAR

Andrew L. Hugar graduated from Clearfield High School in 1942. During the war he served with the U. S. A. A. F.

From the railroad bridge we could look down into the blue water flecked with froth from the sluice. There was a cool rooty smell mingling with the odor of tar and creosote from the ties. He sat on one of the rails, still hot from the late afternoon sun, picking at the dried worm on his hook. We could see trout passively swimming beneath the spots of foam, and at sporadic intervals, one breaking water, flipping and showing his split tail. He said, "That's full of fish down there, but I always quit when I hit the bridge."

The sudden lassitude in his voice made me stop tying the fly to my line.

"See them bushes over there by the kidney-shaped rocks. I stood there one night till 'bout one o'clock in the morning. The water in my hip boots was gittin' cold. The doctor had been there before that. I knowed there wasn't any hope when he kneeled down beside the biggest boy. He was a good doctor. Was used to things like that. He said, 'Don't give up hope—keep workin'.' Guess he didn't want anyone to break down right off.

"Guess maybe I heard it first—the little girl—sounded like a wet whimpering pup. She was 'bout twelve—sister of the biggest boy. I almost told them then. Thought I could take it, but her bawlin' and not stoppin' made my throat tighten up and I jest couldn't talk. Someone else musta heard her and felt 'bout as bad as I did. It was a man—maybe their dad. Couldn't see him behind them willows. He sounded like a hound does when you kick him. A man cryin' really takes the heart outa me. Guess maybe the tears rolled off my nose too.

"I wanted to tell them then, but I knowed tellin' them wouldn't help matters any. All I could do was to watch. I didn't feel like watchin' and yet I couldn't go and leave. Thought they would ask me more about how it happened, but the section gang did most of the talkin', and I let them. It was mighty hard on me listenin' and watchin' like that. Maybe it was a good thing I couldn't see too good. The fire made their bodies show big long shadows over there on the cliff. Once, 'bout twelve thirty, the fire was blotted out all together when they unfolded the blankets to wrap the bodies in. One of the women kept bendin' over and straightenin' up and rubbin' her hands. Kept sayin', 'Are ya sure?' After awhile someone pulled her away."

Flys crawled across the blue veins on his hands, probing with their proboscises for the bits of fish slime. The stinging bite of the horse fly on his neck did not seem to bother him, and its body grew fat and purple with his blood. He smacked his thin lips together as I watched him. Beads of sweat appeared on his forehead and slid into his bushy eyebrows. His eyes stared down into the pool. A water snake slid off a grey log and, with its head high, left a

widening v in the still water as it made its way across the creek.

"Who were the boys?" I asked. For a long time I thought he was not going to reply.

"I never fish there no more. Used to fish there a lot till it happened. Guess maybe I fish too much to suit some folks around here. I don't work too study—jest in the woods once in awhile. Trap mostly. I'm fishing' or trappin' and I don't git to know folks too good. Most of them work on the railroad pretty hard all day and go to bed early. Folks don't come to visit around my place back of the swamp, and I don't bother them.

"Well, that summer I was standin' on the rock shelf over there coaxin' a big brookie out of them roots. I like to fish when the weather's good. Sometimes I take it pretty serious. . . and I did that evenin'. It was a mighty warm, still evenin'. . . jest right for dry flies. I could see that ol' brookie swimmin' around, and I was aimin' to git him. Between him and the sun that was shinin' hot and low through them spruces over there, they was makin' me sweat marbles.

"They might of been there for some time before I heard them. I heard a loud splash and then a giggle and another splash. The fish I was watchin' shot back under them roots like a black bullet. It made me mad. . . them scarin' the fish like that. I never did like the biggest boy. . . thought he was a little smart aleck. Maybe he wasn't, but I blamed it on him when my best coon dog, a good silent trailer, was shot. He was always shootin' around with a twenty-two. I hollered at them, 'Why don't you kids swim above the splashway?' Well, you know how kids are. . . takin' delight in tormentin' someone. Well, they kept raisin' Cain in that water, and I was gittin' madder and madder. They kept it up and I said, 'Gwan outta there before I come up and kick your heels.' They jest laughed and started throwin' rocks down around me. . . great big ones. They sunk off in that eddie and made leaves raise and rile the water up."

He sucked in his breath and pulled his battered hat over his eyes even though the sun had set. His ruddy face became tan in the dusk. Wisps of fog began to rise off the water and creep through the laurel bushes. A whip-poor-will began its insistent nocturnal call. Again I asked the question. "Who were the boys?" I heard the distant whistle of a locomotive and was afraid the train would be along before he could finish his story.

A shudder ran through his body, and it seemed to make his voice rise and change key. "It was dusk, and then ya think ya see things in one place when they're in another. And I was too mad. I picked up a big flat rock and throwed it — jest to scare them. So help me God! The biggest boy was in the water. Jest before it got to him, it hit the water, but it didn't stop. It speeded up and shot low across the water. It hit him right in the head. He didn't never move after that. The little fella dived after him. He swam like a dog but not as good. I runned upstream and waded in up to my arms, but I

couldn't reach 'em with my pole. The little fella musta got a cramp or scared or something. They went down fast. I runned up here and went up the tracks to see if I could ketch the tunnel watcher. When I got to the water tower I found the section crew. They was jest finishin' some work on the sidin'. Thought I was pretty lucky findin' an emergency crew like that. Some of them runned back with me. We could see the water still movin' their arms, but they was down in them roots. Section gang thought I found them when I was fishin' and didn't ask me much.

"They started to work on them. Said, 'You can bring 'em to if ya work long enough.' One of them musta went for their folks, 'cause 'bout ten they came and stood around. Once they got all excited. Thought they could feel the littlest one's pulse. Doctor got here 'bout eleven. He had a drive twenty miles and I guess he was out when they first called. As I said, he told them not to give up, but 'bout twelve he shook his head and they quit workin'. Somebody took the folks home and I watched them start with the bodies up to the pike. Then I snuck off through the brush."

The faint ticking of the rails had grown loud. The train was bearing down upon us howling and screeching. I pulled him off the track and the hot breath of the engine rushed past us. The black sooty smoke hung above us, and over the roar of the rumbling wheels. I heard him say, with his eyes still fixed upon the pool:

"They was jest neighbor boys, but I hope they have forgive me.. for not tellin' their folks. For everything."

I Have More Time To Think About It Now

ROBERT WEAVER, JR.

Robert Weaver, Jr., of Loganton, graduated from Sugar Valley Vocational High School in 1942. He served as an aerial gunner with the Eighth A. F. in England during the war. Mr. Weaver is editor of the COLLEGE TIMES.

A pale, yellow shaft of light leaps through the open door of Operations building, slicing the inky blackness of an English pre-dawn. The soft swish of footsteps through the ankle-deep grass draws nearer to the tiny Nissen hut where life within still lies deep in the sombre realm of sleep. The door is thrust open and a light switch is thrown, flooding the cluttered little interior in a blazing light, illuminating the faces of sleeping men. A voice still tinged with the thickness of sleep drones forth, breaking the enchanted spell of dreamy slumber: "Hit the deck, boys, the big birds fly today." Then the owner of the voice opens the door once again and fades into the darkness outside. Curses and threats meant for him fill the stagnant atmosphere of stale tobacco smoke and acid smell of half-empty whiskey bottles hidden away in secluded spots, away from the prying eyes of inspection officers. Men crawl

gingerly from sagging army cots, still cursing and threatening. "Man can't get his damn sleep anymore," grumbles one who had just returned two hours before from a two-day pass in London. Back from lots of Scotch and those obliging Piccadilly Commandos. This guy could probably use more sleep but war waits for no man.

I have been aware of this pre-dawn scene. Lying awake in the corner on my cot, I had heard Private Trumbell slam the door of Operations building and seconds later I heard him rattle the latch on our door. Happened like this every morning. Wasn't Private Trumbell's fault we have to leave the sack so early. Somehow I feel sorry for the poor guy — everyone cursing him — even me. I'm sure I can always detect a note of sympathy and understanding in his early morning call. That is his job.

I'm dressed now and waiting for the other boys, trying to appear unconcerned at their good-natured banterings of "Eager beaver" and "He wants to be first in the chow-line." I zip my flight-jacket and step out into the chilly dawn that has now replaced that oppressive darkness. Kinda cold this morning. I shiver in my fleece-lined jacket. Behind me I hear a "Damn these English mornings. Don't these Limies have anything that's any good?" I can detect the subtle humor lurking behind those rather pointed words.

Out on the ramp a powerful engine, choking and protesting against the gripping cold, suddenly roars into life. Its deep roar reaches a climax of almost ear-shattering proportions. Another and another engine coughs into life, filling the air with their deep-throated challenges. Keen-minded and nimble-fingered mechanics nurse these, their charges, as carefully as a young mother would her first born. The dawn breaks in the far eastern sky and now as I walk slowly toward the mess-hall I can see the owners of these mighty voices— huge flying fortresses squatting clumsily in their camouflaged revetments. How impenetrable, how invincible they look right now. But then I check myself bitterly. How about Charlie and the boys yesterday? They didn't come back from the raid over Cologne. No, these babies can't be invincible. Dismissing the thought, I continue on my way.

As I enter the open doorway of the mess-hall, a half-sickening smell of fried eggs, bread toasted to a crisp, and the greasy smell of mechanics' dirty overalls assails my nostrils. Seated around tables in the dimly-lit stone interior, ground-crews and flyers eat their morning meal in strange, almost forboding silence. Hardly any questions asked — seldom an answer given. Each man is busy with his own thoughts because that is the way he wants it to be. Taking a seat by the rickety old pot-bellied stove that blazes away in merry defiance of the cold outside, I too eat without saying a word . . . thinking of home, of the girl I haven't seen for two years, and the raid that must surely come. Memories, some sweet and some bitter, run rampant.

Breakfast over, briefing-room next. A truck picks us up outside the mess-hall and, after a two minute ride over a rough and undulating use-worn road, finally deposits its living cargo before a large, squalid, weather-beaten building. I flick my pass before the sleepy looking noncom in charge of the door and elbow my way into the tension-packed room.

Once inside, that strange silence that prevailed back in the mess-hall has given way to an incoherent babbling of many fused voices. Tension mounts as a young flight lieutenant traces a zigzag course across a huge map of Festung Europa. So this is to be today's mission? I note the many red flak markers that dot the vicinity of Merseberg and shrink inwardly. So this is the place for today? I still haven't forgotten last week's raid on that same place. There was hell to pay. And now again? I try to forget last week, paying attention to the serious-minded captain of S-2 as he explains the flight plan to be followed— flak free alleys that are to be our course, and opposition to be expected. My thoughts suddenly revolt against this man, resplendent in his tailored uniform, serious-looking face and smooth voice. Why must I go out and tangle with those damn Germans while you sit back here in the comparative safety of a heavily guarded English airdrome? You with all your shining brass and smooth ways. . . . Why don't you go out and fight? I can't help hearing the voice of one next to me as he whispers to another: "See that captain? Has three hundred combat hours. Flew a Mustang. Yeah, and he has the Purple Heart, too." Suddenly, I feel very much ashamed; I listen more attentively.

Briefing over, I head for the door, paying no attention to the chaplain standing there. Funny thing, but I never can escape that feeling of guilt and neglect that arises every time I pass this man, my eyes cast in an opposite direction. Maybe it's because I'm afraid. Afraid that if I would stop I would only be admitting my fear . . . my despair. No, I feel that it's better this way. The chaplain again goes unheeded.

Now we head for the planes, stopping on our way at the supply room to pick up our flying suits, parachutes, and helmets. The man in charge of supply — we call him Happy — he's really a nice guy. Understanding "Joe". He flew too, until he lost an arm. Had a chance to go home but elected to stay and "see things to the end." Crazy bastard, I thought. Catch me missin' up on a chance to go home. But I forgot about the arm. Maybe that's why Happy wants to stay. Anyway, Happy, you're a good "Joe". Happy gives me the "thumbs up" sign as I leave for the plane.

Out on the ramp "Larrupin' Lou" (that's the name of our fort) eagerly laps up the life-giving fluid as a nursing mechanic, ear strained to catch any defect in the thunderous ovation of the four mighty power plants, pours on the high octane. Satisfied, he cuts the engines and climbs down to help us load our equipment. The crew starts to gather. There's Bill, our radio man. What he doesn't know about radio isn't worth knowing. Still, I can't understand this guy Bill. Admits he is an atheist and that he likes this flyin'; but last week over Merseberg I caught a glimpse of his face through the open doors of the bomb-bay. Sure looked scared to me. And there are Heck and Swede, the two pilots. Don't make them any better. Gave me the devil last week for "sir-ing" them. I was glad, too — it was hard for me to "sir" someone younger than I. Yeah, they're really nice guys. Glad to be in their crew.

I check the bombs hanging from the racks. Everything in order. I make my way to the tail of the ship where Dave has already taken his position. Dave's our tail-gunner, only nineteen, but he really knows how to handle those stingers. I wish he wouldn't get so scared, though, when things get a little rough. Hard on the morale of the crew. Heck asked him if he wanted a flak-leave but the kid refused. Promised even to stay awake while forming if Heck would let him fly steady. I check Dave's oxygen supply and crawl up into the waist position where Larry and Rabbit, newly-arrived, are readying their waist positions. Guns in place and clamped, oxygen lines connected and intercom cords untangled. Larry and Rabbit are the "papas" of the crew — both married and have children. I feel sorry for these two — they should be at home with their families. I know I'd hate to be in their shoes. They have so much to lose if . . . I dismiss the thought immediately and walk out to meet Herby, our flight engineer — my favorite on the crew.

Herby's a Southerner — hails from back in Mississippi. Serious-minded chap, always talking about his girl, Martha. Says he's going to marry her just as soon as he gets back. I hope he gets back. (I curse myself for allowing my thoughts to run so freely). Sure, Herby will marry the girl. Won't be long, either. I leave Herby and crawl up the narrow cat-walk to the nose compartment where Ken, our navigator, is going over his charts. Another serious-minded fellow, this Ken. Says he's going to college when he gets back. Wants me to go along to Ohio University. Haven't promised him that I will as yet. I may get around to it sometime. I take my position in the little swivel seat behind the nose guns and check the bombing apparatus a last time. Everything in perfect order. Now to wait for the green light from the tower — our signal to take off.

Minutes later the green light winks from its lofty perch on top of the control tower. Again that deafening roar as, once more, engines whir, catch and roar into life. From their revetments scattered throughout the field, gaunt-grey forts nose their way clumsily to the take-off end of the runway. In single file they approach the take-off point, engines protesting vainly against tightened brakes. Now the first plane has swung wide onto the strip, nose headed into the wind. Its power plants roar into a mighty crescendo as brakes are released and the first fort, slowly gathering momentum, races down the strip and lifts gracefully into the rapidly clearing sky. Number one airborne. I'm tense now as "Lou" sidles onto the strip, pauses momentarily, and then, with a terrific blast of unleashed horse-power, struggles to get underway. I watch the air-speed indicator as we roar down the concrete runway. Seventy, eighty — and at ninety miles an hour I can feel the earth drop away beneath. I relax now as we skim low over the still-sleeping country-side, slowly gaining altitude. Behind us, number three fort takes to the air, and then number four. The field is soon cleared.

Forming turns out rather well this morning. Usually happens that we have a straggler or two and then we have to fly around in a circle until they catch up. By now we have formed into a compact group, "Larrupin' Lou"

being tucked away deep in Number Four position. Up in the cockpit Heck and Swede are arguing about a blonde. Both say they have a date with the same girl tonight. Optimistic guys. Suppose they don't get back? Then what about the blonde? I'm aware of the strange silence that grips Herby and the rest of the boys. Maybe they're thinking about last week — the place where we're going today. I try hard to forget about it and ask Herby what Martha had to say in her last letter. My only answer, a blunt "Oh, not too much." I don't try again. Herby wants to be alone.

Below us, the broken English coastline fades to the rear as we drone out over the channel. A steamer, the black smoke rolling from its funnel, steams majestically up-channel, leaving an ever-widening path of white-capped water in its wake. We climb steadily to get above the dark forboding cloud bank that is rapidly approaching. As we reach the summit, level off, and wing onward toward the continent, the full beauty-lending glory of an early morning sun bathes us in its shimmering splendor. Its rays bring out the beauty of all they touch—even the threatening cloud bank now resembles a huge billowy bed of cotton. Everything looks peaceful . . . serene. Again those memories flood back. Home, the girl, the gang at the pool-room, the guys who didn't have to go to war. Lucky guys, I thought, somewhat bitterly. I suppose they were out having a good time last night in some fancy night club, probably Marty's, while I had to content myself with drinking bitters in that damned dirty, greasy Naffi. Yeah, and they're probably sound asleep right now . . . nothing to worry about. They ought to be in my shoes. Herby's voice, empty and mechanical, rings in my ears: "Okay, fellas, on with the oxygen masks. Ten thousand feet." I slip the cold rubber face-piece into place and take a few whiffs of the life-giving air. Wonder what I'd do if a chunk of flak would cut my oxygen line. Wonder what the fellows back home would do?

I can't see the ground anymore — we're above a solid cloud bank. The cold has become bitter now and I plug in my heated suit, waiting for the warmth, unpleasant in its proximity, to steal over me. Everything inside the ship — the guns, the sight cradle, the bombing apparatus — they have all turned white with frost. I don my goggles and call for an oxygen check, noticing the tremor in Dave's voice as he checks in and the contrast in Bill's booming voice as his "Radio . . . roger" blasts in my ears. I wonder about that guy's being an atheist. Larry checks in for Rabbit, who is having trouble with his mask-mike, and the cool indifferent voice of Herby is the last to signify that all is well. I settle back in my seat, scanning the endless boundaries of an azure sky.

Off to the left tiny specks suddenly materialize into P-51's as our fighter escort moves rapidly to overtake the cumbersome slow moving forts. I envy those fighter pilots. Always wanted to be one myself. So much safer flying those babies than these box-cars. Haven't seen one of them get hit by flak yet. Yeah, those guys have it easy compared with us. "Gunner today . . . goner tomorrow." It's no joke now. I watch a Mustang wheel over into a power-dive and scream earthward. Down it plunged into a fleeting cloud

bank and then as suddenly powered heaven-ward, prop chewing the thin air. Man, what a honey! Everything wrapped up in a piece of shining metal — power, grace and beauty. Heck's voice cracks over the intercom, breaking the flow of thoughts: "Enemy aircraft in vicinity." I flip my gun switch and watch more carefully, hoping those Mustangs don't get too far ahead. I hear the muffled report of Dave's stingers as he checks his guns. Through the navigation port I can see the muzzles of Herby's twin fifties swinging ceaselessly. No, the damned Kraut won't sneak up on Herby. Still, I'm scared.

Should be on the bomb-run soon . . . been flying for hours. I watch the lead plane and call for an oxygen check. Everyone on his toes and roger. Good! I don't take my eyes off the lead plane until its bomb-bay doors swing open. Beginning of the bomb-run! I flip the bomb-bay door switch and above the roar of Lou's typhooning blades I can hear the whir that signifies the doors are opening. Bill, back in the radio room verifies: "Bomb-bay doors open." Good guy, that Bill . . . always on the ball. I snap my flak suit in place and make sure my parachute is within easy reach. Supposed to be wear-it but can't get used to the damn thing. Gets in my way. I can feel the unpleasant, rocking motion as Heck slips the big ship into evasive action to throw off the flak batteries that must be below. But why don't they open up? Don't they know there are only two minutes till "bombs away"? I check with the pilot on air-speed and make a last minute correction of the bombing panel. For a moment I think of that chaplain back at the base. Maybe I should have talked with him before I left. Too late now, though. I'll see him next time if . . . We're almost over the target.

Out in front a squadron of planes roars out of a cloud bank and bears down on us. 190's! Overhead I hear the chatter of Herby's fifties spewing out their leaden death. I watch his tracers fall beneath the lead plane and then I'm firing too . . . cussing my luck when the Swastika-marked ship hurls by within easy range, my tracers falling short of their intended mark. You damn Nazi! I watch with satisfaction as a Mustang plummets down from above, guns ablaze. The Focke-Wulf falls off into a lazy spin, black smoke pouring from beneath its engine cowling. One down! I search the sky for more enemy planes. Out ahead the flak-bursts mushroom into terrible black puffs. So we're almost there! Our evasive action has stopped now . . . we're on a steady keel for our bomb-run. I watch the lead plane again, trying to shut from view those bursts of flak that now surround us. This is it — last week all over again! I tear my view away from a fort ahead whose wing tanks are now hopelessly ablaze. God! What an awful sight. In a desperate move I throw the bomb switch to "salvo" as the lead plane releases its load. Larrupin! Lou leaps like a startled rabbit as the bombs fall away below in a long deadly arc and Bill echoes my words: "Bombs away!" Frantically I seek for the bomb-bay door switch, find and close. Again the evasive action, more violent now as Heck slips the big plane to the left, now diving, now skidding to the right. Again that flak, almost unbearable now. I cower deeper in the shallow comfort of my flak-suit, waiting . . . hoping. I almost scream as a

three-gun burst catches two Mustangs off our left wing. Nothing remains but two rapidly mushrooming clouds of black smoke. Dave, back in the tail, checks in. His voice is strangely calm.

It's a long way back now but we made it through — that's all that matters. We've dropped down to ten thousand feet. Much nicer flying down here. It's not so rough and, besides, we don't have to wear those oxygen masks any longer. I'm tired now . . . very tired. Wish I could sleep. I can hear Herby over the intercom. He's humming the soft strains of a Mississippi folk-song. I'm not sure but I think he calls it "When The Curtains of Night Are Pinned Back By The Stars." Goes something like this:

"When the Curtains of Night
Are Pinned back by the Stars
And the Beautiful Moon Sweeps the sky,
I'll remember you,
Love,
In my Dreams."

I think it's very pretty, especially the way Herby sings it. Swede's at the controls now and Rabbit and Larry are talking about their two little boys. I'd like to meet their families sometime and tell them all about their dads. But most of all I want to meet Martha. Hope Herby and she make a good match. Was just back to see Dave. He's busy digging out a piece of flak that lodged in the bulkhead. He didn't say anything, just looked relieved. On the way forward I stopped in with Bill. We tuned in on a German propaganda station. Couldn't understand a word they said but we listened anyway. Bill, he's still the same guy — still cocky and self assured. Says he hopes we go back again tomorrow.

Back in the nose again, alone with my thoughts. The gang back home — wonder what they're doing now? Probably down at Benny's on the corner, shooting pool. They're a good bunch of guys, though (I have more time to think about it now). Joe, for instance. Isn't his fault he isn't in this fightin'. That automobile accident last summer really did him up. And Corky . . . too bad about him. Sure glad I don't have a bad ticker like the doctor says Corky has. Yeah, they're a good bunch of guys. And that Captain — the guy who briefed us this morning. Going to look him up when I get back. Seems like a nice fella. Poor devil . . . too bad about that Purple Heart. Same goes for Happy. Suppose he'll be out waiting for us when we land. I like the way his face lights up when we crawl out all in one piece. I can't forget Happy now as the white cliffs of Dover loom in the distance, majestic and defiant against the choppy waters that forever beat against the chalky sides. Yeah, it's too damn bad about Happy's arm.

Something the Matter with Your Heart, Maybe?

TED ARDARY

Ted Ardary graduated from Cooper Township High School in 1943. He served two and a half years in the Navy.

Barney and Lennie came across each other in the road in front of the A & P. Barney had come out of the store and Lennie was on his way home from the afternoon mail. Barney had seen Lennie only once since he had got out of the Army and that was only for a second.

"Hi, Lennie. Going up the road?"

"Yea. You going up? I'll walk you up," Lennie said.

"Well, Lennie, how did you like the Army?" Barney took a good look at the Army pants, shirt and shoes that Lennie had on. It was a look of disapproval.

"Fine. Wish I could have stayed in till the war ends."

"What did they kick you out for?"

"Oh — bad heart," turning his tallow-colored face away from Barney and looking up at the restaurant they were passing.

"Why'd they take you in the first place?"

"I — I guess they overlooked it."

"C'mon, tell me the truth," Barney jokingly said.

"That is the truth." Lennie was becoming irritated. His fingers began to twitch.

"Yea. Everybody knows what was the matter." Lennie stumbled over a rock, regained his stride. Barney went on talking. "What was the matter? Couldn't you take it?"

"Sure, I could take it. It's just like I told you. I have a bad heart." That was the best Lennie could do in trying to make Barney believe him.

They rounded a corner and a gust of wind blew Barney's little white hat onto the ground. A little white sailor's hat that he had bought in the five-and-ten.

"You Army guys never had any trouble with hats like sailors do, did you?" The corners of his mouth curled up in a grin as he said that.

"No."

"What's the matter, Lennie? Don't you like to talk about the Army? I thought the only guys that didn't like to talk about the Army were those guys that came back from overseas. You were only away a couple months. Guess you just couldn't take it." His eyes gleamed. He smiled, showing his yellow teeth. A smile that was as sardonic as the things he had just said.

"Oh, shut up," Lennie said in his high-pitched voice.

"When you going to get a job, Lennie — or aren't you going to look for work now that you have a — bad heart?"

"Don't worry, I'll get a job."

"Where?" Barney snapped.

"Oh — I can get my old job back."

"Yea, but carrying water on a section gang will be bad on your heart."

"I wasn't carrying water. I was tamping ties."

"Well, tamping ties will be hard on your heart. I don't think they'll take you back with a — bad heart, shall we say?"

"That's none of your damn business. Why don't you let me alone? You're always picking on me. Pick on somebody else," Lennie said bitterly, his skinny arms picking up the twitch that his fingers had started. He looked defiantly at Barney, his bulging, bloodshot eyes grotesquely framed by high cheekbones.

"There you go again. Can't take it." Barney was up to his old tricks, ribbing Lennie. He never ribbed anybody except Lennie. He couldn't. Didn't know how. He was afraid to pick on someone who could hand it back.

"I can take it as good as you can. Why aren't you in the Army?"

"Why, I'm essential to the war effort."

"Yea, driving a coal truck and shootin' pool."

"They're both essential to the war effort, young man. Guess carrying water on the section gang wasn't."

"That's probably because my family hasn't any pull anywhere."

"Keep quiet about my family. They have nothing to do with it."

Barney lost his composure for a few seconds, then quickly regained it. "Speaking of family, remember, Lennie, before your brother Bob went in the Army, you were telling him that you'd get in as soon as you were eighteen. Yea — remember when you said, 'I'll meet you on the battlefield, Bob.'" Barney laughed. "Heard a lot of things like that just before you left. The great Lennie."

"Shut up before I poke you one," Lennie said, forgetting his punitive force as compared with Barney's. Tears were coming in his eyes.

"I — the great Lennie. Me and my brother Bob, we'll lick 'em. Just wait and see." Barney's mouth curled at the corners again. He was enjoying himself.

"Draft-dodger," Lennie suddenly screamed, his eyes glaring.

"Don't call me a draft-dodger."

"That's what you are. Lots of people say so."

"I didn't make a fool of myself like you did."

"I tried, anyway. That's more than you did."

"What happened, Lennie? Thought you were going to win the war. Something the matter with your heart, maybe?"

"Shut up, or I'll hit you with a gooney," Lennie said picking up a stone.

"No, you won't. I'll kick the hell out of you if you throw that."

Lennie raised his arm too late. Barney rushed him and pinned his arms to his sides. Lennie cursed. Then tears began to run down through the hollows in his cheeks. The sobs he tried to hide grew in violence. Barney laughed and dug his knuckles into Lennie's ribs. Lennie dropped the stone.

"Go on, you dumb weakling! Run home to your mommy now like the Army sent you back to her," Barney said as he let Lennie go. Lennie did run a little. Barney laughed loudly.

"Go ahead and laugh. I'll get you yet," Lennie called back over his shoulder. Anger welled up in him afresh and a kind of last-ditch courage took hold of him. "I'll get you yet," he called again in his thin high voice.

Lennie opened the door of the kitchen, walked in and slowly closed it behind him, pushed a small dirty rug against the crack between the door and the stoop. He heard his mother pedaling an old-fashioned sewing machine upstairs. He went into the living room, picked up a jacket and sweater from the sofa, dropped them on the floor and lay down. He had slept about an hour when his mother awakened him.

"Get as well get up and eat, Lennie."

"Ok, mom." He got up, walked out to the kitchen and sat down at the table still littered with dishes from dinner.

"Well, get yourself a plate. There's stew on the stove. No point in fixing anything. The old man'll probably come home drunk tonight. It's payday."

"Ok."

"Any mail?"

"Nope."

"See anybody down the road?"

"Only Barney Lingstrom. We walked part way home together."

"Well, don't let him get hold of you like his father did your old man. Keepin' him drunk half the time so he'll work for next to nothin'. As soon as the war is over, he'll fire him. Then you and Bob'll have to — I suppose you'll go down the road again tonight."

"Might as well. Nothing doing around here. I'll probably shoot a little pool with the fellows."

Lennie finished eating, got up, got his sweater and started for the door.

"If you see your old man, tell him to get home," his mother said.

"Ok, mom."

As he went down over the hill, there was a purposefulness in his gangling stride that seemed to betoken interest in something more important than a game of pool.

Lennie climbed up the stairs to the pool hall, walked through the restaurant to the back room, where the pool tables were set up.

"Hi," he said to Tom, the policeman who was walking his beat with a cue stick.

"Hello, Lennie. Come down right after supper, didn't you?" Tom said with a gentle voice that was not in keeping to his size.

"How about a game of French when you guys get finished with that game?" Lennie said.

"Ok. Eight ball in the corner," Tom said. He missed.

Lennie had to wait a few minutes before the eight ball went into the pocket, finishing the game. Tom racked up the balls. Lennie grabbed a cue

stick and started chalking the tip. They played two games. Lennie lost both. It seemed funny to see a policeman shooting pool with his uniform on. They didn't need a cop in this town, anyway.

They were shooting at the twelve-ball when Barney walked in.

"Hi, fellas," he said.

An assortment of grunts was his reply. Lennie's shot. He missed the twelve-ball completely. He felt himself tightening up the second Barney spoke.

"How about getting into the game?"

"Ok, soon as we finish," Tom said.

"I'm going home after this game," the third player said.

Barney kept quiet for the rest of this game.

"Rack 'em up," Tom hollered to the owner. Lennie paid him. The balls were racked and the game started. A few shots and Lennie was behind.

"You said you and your brother could lick the Huns, Lennie. You ought to be able to beat us at pool," Barney said.

Lennie said nothing. Barney and Tom shot.

"Sure pushing that stick won't be too hard on your heart, Lennie?"

"Oh — shut up."

"Imagine Bob will have a pretty rough time out there on the battlefield by himself."

"Let the kid alone," Tom said. Barney grinned a bit. "I'm only kidding him, Tom," Barney said. "You know it's bad when a guy's heart is so bad he can't get a job as water boy on a section gang."

They each shot a few more times. Some other fellows wandered in.

"Yep, the war will last twice as long with only Bob out there."

"Shut up," Lennie squeaked at Barney.

"C'mon, show us you can take it."

Lennie spoke almost under his breath, so only Barney could hear: "Don't worry, I can take it, ya damned draft-dodger." His eyes met Barney's and Barney accepted the dare.

"Nope, just can't take it, just can't take it," he said in a loud voice.

"Ya draft-dodger!" screamed Lennie. His voice broke in a kind of comic desperation.

"Don't call me a draft-dodger!" Barney's face reddened. Being called a draft-dodger in front of the fellows by that scroungy Lennie!

"I'll call ya anything I want."

"Ya'll get your face beat in."

"Why don't you two guys shut up? Stop ribbing him, Barney. Show him your classification card. Not much sense in hollerin' like you two are," some guy that was watching them said.

"Yea, let's see your classification card — or don't you have any?" Lennie pulled out his wallet, opened it and flashed the card in Barney's face. "See, this is what they look like."

"Why aren't you with your brother? The great Lennie. Bad heart, hell — you're just crazy or too damn dumb to be in the Army," Barney said.

"Afraid to show your card," Lennie shouted.

The other fellows sided in with Lennie. "Show him your card and shut up."

"I don't have to show it to anybody," Barney said.

"How about me?" Tom said, not knowing rightly how to use the authority his uniform gave him. "Let's see it, and you two guys stop fighting."

Barney's face changed and his whole manner with it. "I — a — I forgot it up at the house."

"Well, let's take a walk up. Think maybe we could use some air."

A few other guys jumped in the game as Tom and Barney walked out. Lennie got out of the game. He was shaking too much. "Guess maybe it is good to have a cop around sometimes," some guy said. "Bet Barney is hitting the ceiling now," another said.

In a few minutes Tom came back in followed closely by Barney. Everyone turned towards them with surprise. There had not been time for them to go to Barney's and back. Tom went over to the phone on the wall and Barney kept close behind him. "What the hell?" some one said. The game was not resumed.

"Philipsburg police," Tom said and waited. Then, "Tom Stiver speaking — at Grassflat. Say, how about coming down for a guy I have here and hold him for me?" A pause. "No registration or classification. No. No, he says he never registered anywhere."

One of the fellows looked at Lennie and winked. Lennie was still shaking.

Hawaiian Interlude

WILLIAM L. GATES

William L. Gates, graduated from Williamsport High School in 1941. During the war, Mr. Gates served four years in the U. S. Coast Guard in both the Atlantic and Pacific Theatres.

I was sent from Honolulu to Hawaii on a buoy tender called the KICK-APOO. How it got that name I'll never know. It was about a fifteen-hour voyage, and we arrived off Upolu Point about midnight. We rolled lazily in the swells until dawn, then the captain launched a dinghy and put me ashore with the supplies.

Mahukona consisted of a stone dock and two frame cottages that flanked a dusty road. The road ran back into lush, verdant hills. There was a sweet, syrupy fragrance in the air, a mingling of flowers and sugar cane. There wasn't anyone around, so I sat on a crate of oranges and smoked a cigarette.

I wasn't there long before a drab weapons-carrier rattled down the road and onto the dock. The driver thrust his blonde head out of the window.

"Hi yuh, Chief," he said.

"Hi yourself. You from Upolu?"

"Yep. Told to pick you up. I'll just throw these supplies in the back."

We loaded the supplies, and I got in with him. He put the carrier in gear, and we lurched off. It was nice country. The road cut through long, sweeping fields of pale-green sugar cane. In the distance the hills lengthened into towering mountains that gleamed under the bright sun.

"That mountain there," he said, "Mauna Kea, almost fourteen thousand feet high. Big, huh?"

"Yeah, it sure is."

"There's another one to the south, Mauna Loa. You can't see it from here because of the clouds. Clouds usually hang around its summit." He paused, then went on, "It's a good place for a rest, this island. We have about twenty-five men at the radio station. Nobody does much, stand your watches is about all. Better than being on a ship down where the metal's flying, eh, Chief?"

"Yeah," I said. "That's the reason they sent me over here—for a rest. I was at sea for a year."

"There isn't much to do around here. You can get a drink in the village, Hawi, where they have the sugar refinery, and there is a picture theatre where they show movies a year old. Most of the time, though, you just relax and take it easy. It's a lazy life. After a while you get so you don't care whether you do anything or not. Just take it easy."

I saw the main antenna rising above the cane, and in a few minutes we drove up to the gate in the barbed-wire fence. An indifferent looking sentry dressed in dungarees and a white hat opened the gate for us.

"The C. O. is in that hut," the driver said, and he pointed to one in a row of five Quonset huts.

I alighted and went in. A Lieutenant (j. g.) sat at an oak desk. He was apathetically looking at some reports.

"Oh, hello, Chief," he greeted me. "I have your records. You can bunk in the next hut. You don't have to stand radio watches unless you want to. You probably will, though. Time hangs heavy on your hands after a while."

He took some sheets from a locker and gave them to me.

"For your bunk," he said.

I took the sheets and my bag and went over into the next hut. There were about eight double-decked bunks lined up in the hut. Men lay asleep on some of them. Two men were sitting at a large oak table at the front of the hut playing checkers. One of them got up and offered me his hand.

"I'm Wikes," he said, "and this is Whittier." He pointed to his comrade.

"Hello," said Whittier. Then he shouted, "Hey, you guys, the new chief is here!"

The men tumbled out of their bunks and I shook hands all around. Then

the men all crawled back into their bunks.

I put my sheets on an empty bunk and sat on the edge of it.

"May as well lie down, Chief," Wikes said. "There isn't much else to do around here."

"Here comes the mail!" Whittier cried.

The men all jumped out of their bunks and crowded to the front of the hut. The truck driver threw a mail sack in the door. The men rapidly sorted their letters and retired to their bunks to read them.

"J. C.," said Wikes holding up a letter and a photograph, "just look at my kids. I won't know 'em when I get back."

He exhibited the photograph to the annoyance of Whittier who was trying to read his own mail. Receiving no recognition from his friend, Wikes showed the picture to me. You could see how proud he was of his kids.

"This one resembles you, Wikie," I lied.

"Do you think so?"

"No question about it," I said.

He swelled visibly, and carefully put the photograph back in the envelope. He turned to Whittier, who was looking rather happy about something.

"What are you glowing about?" he asked.

"My girl still loves me," said Whittier. "Come on, let's finish this game."

Wikes sat down and they continued their checker game.

"Great game, checkers," Wikes said.

"Yeah, great to pass the time."

"Yeah," said Whittier, "I'm going to get the little woman and settle down after the war—over in Jersey. Get away from the city and the hubbub. I've been knocking around too long. When a man gets to be thirty-four, he begins to think about those things."

Whittier mused for several minutes over a move. He ran his hand through his thinning, grayish hair. "Yeah, two sharing all the trials and tribulations of married life, that's for me."

"You sound as if you read that in a book somewhere," said Wikes. "You ought to watch your moves."

Wikes rapidly jumped four of Whittier's men. "That's all."

"Well, I'll be..." Whittier sputtered.

The chow bell rang.

"Come on for chow," said Wikes.

The men all leaped from their bunks and rushed out the door. I followed behind. The cook's hut was next door. I went in and seated myself with the others at the long table.

The meal was a good one of fresh beef from a ranch in the hills, canned vegetables and fruits, and lots of coffee in big pottery mugs. I was introduced to the rest of the men who had been on watch. A fellow named Kit Carson who had been in the Italian invasion told about the Italians.

"The Italians eat chow on deck on big silver platters—spaghetti most of the time. Boy, they really like their spaghetti. They don't care much

about anything else. They walk off the ship anytime they feel like it—don't salute anybody. They go down on the dock, throw their clothes down, souse some water on them from a bucket, jump on 'em, beat 'em with a peg—they're washed. Ha! Ha!" He laughed uproariously. "Remember that cruiser down in New York, the RICHELIEU? It tried to sneak out and go back to the Nazis."

"Lot of phoney deals in the war," said a fellow named Millman.

"You never knew what was what," said Kit. "Take the Limeys, for instance. They are always sneaking around. They had subs as large as the Germans. A Limey sub came into New York one time over three hundred feet long."

"That's almost as long as a D. D.," said a Motor Mac named Mac.

"They had a big secret sub base at Loch Loam," Kit continued. "What a beautiful place! Green grass in the valleys and the mountains with snow on their tops all year around. I can see now where they got that song, '... You take the high road, and I'll take the low road...'—that's right, Scotland is high and low, up and down. They have good trains over there—two deckers, y'know. Just like an observation car. We could ride around and have a lot of fun. Limey gals were standing in line at the theatres to see Harry James. He really sends them with his horn. Before every show, everyone stands up for the national anthem. Their radio system is good, too. BBC has no advertising. I wish our radios were like that. No more maudlin advertisements... No women were allowed in the pubs in Liverpool. I think London was the only place where they allowed women in the pubs—The joints in Scotland were almost like those in the states. All the scotch you could drink. Boy, was that good! The streets there are all cobbled. You'd see the American generals riding around in their big, shiny Caddies."

The subject seemed to change abruptly to actors. A fellow from Los Angeles, Lynch, claimed to know Esther Williams.

"Yeah, Esther was a friend of mine once."

"Nuts," said a fellow named Silverling.

"What's this?" asked Sabre, a MotorMac. "Lynch claiming to know Esther Williams. Ho! Ho! Ho!"

"Smart guy," said Lynch. "We used to swim together."

"Get that," said Sabre. "They swam together."

"In a dream, maybe," said Kit Carson.

"Anyone can be an actor," said Sabre. "They pick up a big handsome bum, give him a dictionary to read, and he's in."

"Why don't you become an actor then?" asked Lynch.

"I would, except that I'm not handsome."

"Ha! Look at him. Green with envy."

"All I envy those movie stars is the hundred grand they make a year," Sabre said. "Anyway, I just want to go home."

"The war's just over three days, and you want to go home," said Kit.

"I suppose the rest of us want to stay in this Hawaiian paradise."

"This is better than lying around a receiving station," said Silverling. "We can't go home yet, so let's just take it easy."

They all began to sing a song about taking it easy. I went out and walked down to the beach. The water was curling whitely over the reefs, and in close it was gurgling and swishing in the crevices of the lava rocks. The moon flitted in and out of the vertiginous clouds, and the ocean was alternately shining and dark. I sat there on the rocks for a long time. I knew that it wouldn't be long now until I could go back, back to whatever I wanted to go back to....

The Wayfarer On The Stairway

EILEEN CHARTON

Eileen Charton graduated from Mill Hall High School. During the war she was employed in defense work at the Sylvania Electric Products Company in Mill Hall.

"My shoestrings are untied again," I lamented half to myself and half to the thin rails in the bannister which were rapidly removing themselves to the rear of me. I came to anchor on the top step, tied my shoestrings and caught my breath. At that precise moment, there on the top of those stairs, the revelation came. It came and stood staring defiantly at me. "You always run up the stairs," it announced. I hastened guiltily off the top step before it began chanting with the seventeen steps behind it, "It's true, it's true, it's true." I could not deny it. I did always run up the stairs. That there were times when I was in no hurry whatever had no bearing on the phenomenon. Always, as soon as I approached the stairs, I ran. When I reached the top I walked again. The discovery put me in a state of perplexity. What was the psychological reason for this strange behavior on the stairs? Was it a neurotic tendency? I tried to find the hidden explanation for this strange behaviorism. Maybe I unconsciously ran to make up for lost time since the stairway, being diagonal, took a comparatively long time to walk for all the distance it covered horizontally. Maybe I had a suppressed fear of stairways and so would always try to put them behind me as soon as possible. Maybe it was the gratification of one of the human drives. Psychologists report that little idiosyncrasies like this are observed before paranoia or something sets in. What strange malady was running-up-the-stairs a lead-up to? Or a symptom of?

I concentrated strenuously on stairways so that whenever I approached one I always thought to grip the bannister and restrain myself. I felt like a bird with its wings pinned down. But still sometimes I would forget and go

Betty's Wedding

OLGA HORLACHER

Olga Horlacher came to Lock Haven to work at Piper Aircraft Company during the war. She is a member of the COLLEGE TIMES Staff.

Betty's wedding. The church is like this for her. The rows all packed full. People still crowding in. No somber-dressed congregation stepping quietly in to attend service, but a gathering of clan, of friends and acquaintances and relatives, in party-best. All with one common look, with expectancy—warm smiles—grasp of excitement, giving their thoughts voice in whispered comment, low babbling, backward glances.

Then the ominous stillness. And the first chord of the wedding march—Low—Very clear—.

The maid of honor—me, looking at the long line of empty aisle, waiting. Must step into the aisle—now. Slowly. Bouquet in firm grip. Step by step—in time to the wedding march. The altar, richly decorated with palms, far ahead. At once the desperate wish to rush past the clarity of the well-known faces.

Behind me, Betty, in white satin, white veil, small white fear, hand over Pop's arm. Pop in a new brown suit and tie that have grown him a new seriousness—Pop who argued to wear his old grey suit, one of his everyday office ties.

Now together at the altar. A solemn stand in anemic church light. Betty with Clifford. An impressive bride—lifted face lighted with its innocent beauty. Clifford complacent but with an attentiveness touched with tenderness. Quiet and beauty now—the simplicity of the uniting ceremony. The movie-version end—a kiss.

Outside on the church steps, Boy Scouts forming two lines, standing in self-conscious salute. Troop honoring Clifford—scoutmaster. The crowd outside in groups, with rice to pelt. Betty and Clifford rush through the rice, the confetti, the camera flashes.

In the car again, horn-blowing through all the streets. Henry, a seaman on furlough, now remarking his reluctance to go back to the guest-filled house. Just for a passing remark, I suggest, "Well, we could take a run up to the airport." The car turns at the next corner. "But I wasn't serious, Henry. We can't go up to the field. Not during a wedding. Not dressed like this. And flowers—Silly. It's silly. I think they'll miss us, Henry!"

"Not in that crowd. All those people!"

Out on the country road. Wonder what the instructor will think. A coronet of rosebuds and long gown. Coming out to fly?

The field as usual. The instructor over by the planes. Wind sock down. A cub landing. "I guess we'd better not stay, Henry—The punch will be gone—." I want to hurry back to Betty. It's her wedding day. I want to share Betty's wedding day. Stay close to each other as long as we can. That's

flying up the stairs. The day I had to recite poetry to my English instructor on the third floor of the library, the affect was "I must go—gasp—down to the—gasp—seas again, To the lonely—gasp—sea and the sky."

I decided to approach the problem scientifically. I knew the first thing to do was to observe other people. I began observing other people. I discovered that one of my instructors always ran up the stairs with his mouth open. I saw a red-haired sophomore boy in the library dash up the stairs to the stacks, leisurely select a book, dash down, and then walk with great dignity over the marble floor to the librarian's desk. I saw a girl go running up the steps with a great smile spreading over her face as if she were anticipating a mouth-watering reward when she got to the top. I saw countless people running up the stairs. Other people did it too!

I allowed myself a comforting sigh of relief before I delved into the psychology books. These books enlightened me on the technique for studying olfactory sensitivity, and showed me diagrams demonstrating the movements of a woman's eye while watching a man, but apparently no one in the intellectual world had given any thought to running up the stairs.

Finally I began being friendly with a psychologist. When I thought we had established a sufficiently intimate rapport, I asked what she thought caused people to run up the stairs. "It is nothing but pure exuberance," she informed me. I was glad to learn that I exhibited exuberance. Sometimes I had thought of myself as being a little dead. "You can always tell how old a person is by the way he goes up the stairs," my friend went on. Then why was it that some gray-headed persons I had seen went sprinting up the stairs in a manner that put my feeble haste to shame? Perhaps it could be accredited to the old saying, "You are only as old as you feel."

In my observations I was discovering that the people who did not run up the stairs had other equally strange stairway behavior. One night on my way downstairs I met a girl with her left and right foot resting respectively on the eighth and eleventh steps. Her head was dangling over the bannister. "Are you ill?" I asked her. "No," she assured me, "I just don't know whether to go up or down."

I observed that certain individuals always burst into song when they approached the stairway. I saw a girl take the stairs to the tune of "Put Duz in Your Washing Machine. Makes Your Clothes So Nice and Clean." Then I saw a fellow do "Come with Me, My Little Gypsy Sweetheart" with gestures. I noticed that some people found the stairways very conducive to thinking. This type of person developed a very meditative attitude as soon as he put a foot on the first step. With his face skyward and a far-off look in his eyes, he took each step slowly and deliberately. I wondered if he so timed his ascent that the solution to his problem always came simultaneously with the last step on the stairs. Then there was the person who always traveled the stairway in the manner that suggested that he bore a heavy burden on his back. And the person who cautiously considered each step as if it were covered with ice. And the tipsy person who employed all-fours to man the steps to the porch of his bungalow.

As for me, I'll take running-up-the-stairs.

how it has always been: Two kids, sensitive, and understanding each other's tremendous feeling to experiences that shaped our lives.

Back home again. People scattered all over the lawn. Uncle Jyp in the screened porch, tapping beer. In the house, Elaine, very important and very grown-up. Mom, with happy pride, with greyed head, but face of a young girl. Pop, yet unchanged to old clothes, in a small conversation of small humor. Betty the center of a large group, accepting good wishes. Missing silently the only relative who was unable to attend, wishing aloud that Grandfather could have come, too.

A loud horn blows outside. Shortly afterwards, a figure walks up the steps to the front door. Elaine cries out, "Grandfather's here!" Grandfather stands still in the doorway. Betty sees him and lets out a hysterical scream. And rushes to him, throwing her arms around his neck. "Oh, Grandpop!"

A moment later, she turns away and shielding her face, flees quickly to the stairway. In white satin wedding gown, sits down on the steps, sobbing wildly, choking aloud, completely hysterical. The emotion from Grandpop's arrival floods out. What are the people thinking? But on Mom, too, tears begin. Elaine starts crying, and I choke and choke to make my tears stay down. Pop begins to comfort Mom and Betty, and Grandfather assists with good-natured sly ribbing. It doesn't take long before things get back to normal again, with the women folk all consoled. Clifford now stays close to Betty, moved by the perspective of the awkward incident. He has learned early. Betty's heart is very soft.

Everything turns to happy merriness. Lasts until Betty and Clifford leave for their train. The guests stay on— All the most distantly related of relatives, the good, and not so good, getting gayer and louder, but for Mom and Pop, things are quiet now. The kids have left.

Hunting: Is It Sport?

LEONARD E. RITCHEY

Leonard E. Ritchey graduated from Altoona High School in 1939. He is a pre-ministerial student at L. H. S. T. C. and is, at present, preaching each week to four congregations in Centre County. After completing his studies at Lock Haven, Mr. Ritchey plans to attend a theological seminary. During the war he served with the Eighth A. F. in England.

In the last days of October in the year of our Lord 1947, eight hundred thousand men waited almost breathlessly, certainly anxiously, for last-minute word from Governor Duff. One week earlier he had invoked a twenty-year-old law to ban all hunting and fishing in the State of Pennsylvania—because of the danger of forest fires in powder-dry woodlands.

These eight hundred thousand men, ages from twelve to eighty or more, had been looking forward to this day for eleven months. On No-

vember first, if Governor Duff gave the go-ahead, at 9:00 A. M., at least seventy-five per cent of them would be walking into field and woodlot in search of "small game." The state game laws identify such denizens of the woodland as cottontail rabbits, grey squirrels, ruffed grouse, ring-neck pheasants (cock), various species of wild ducks, wild turkeys, wood cocks, jacksnipe and wild geese, as "small game." Raccoons, groundhogs, and opossums fall into the same category. Tomorrow a similar number, armed with high-powered rifles will converge on the areas of the state arbitrarily designated as "deer country". These weapons will shoot a mile or more with sufficient power to kill a deer, a bear or perhaps a man.

What strange pre-historic impulse remains in man to cause him to desire to kill? It is not really so difficult to walk into the woodlands with a repeating shotgun or rifle, raise it to shoulder and shoot; a grey squirrel weighing a few ounces pitted against several hundred fine shot in a pattern the size of a newspaper sheet. Considering that the squirrel cannot shoot back, is it sport, or is it not? A hunter myself, . . . I pose this interesting question.

I can understand a polo game. It is plain that the thrill of speeding, twisting ponies awakes the plainsman or Indian in us; and it can easily be seen that nature itself leans to the keen competition aroused by the sight of the opponents' goal.

A baseball game, with the consummate skill of the pitching and fielding, is a lovely thing to watch. It thrills one's very bones to see the "horsehide" soar into the stands, and the roar of approbation is gratifying to fan and players alike.

To sit in a sifting snow and see with watering eyes the local hero "crash" (football players always "crash") through center for a touchdown seems to fulfill some physiological need for thousands of spectators. Perhaps it is what a psychologist would call a "glory transfer," or in lay language shall we say that the spectator places himself in helmet and spikes (mentally of course) and races (also mentally) over the goal, thus deriving pleasure both from watching the game and from playing each position vicariously? I have watched people wince when a player was hit hard; I have seen many arms go back to pass, and eyes looking anxiously for an opening in the line—all vicarious experiences.

We all have thrilled to the precision of an ace in tennis play-offs, or swayed in bubbling excitement and admiration as the pilots slid around the pylon at the air-races. All these things have their redeeming graces, to wit: healthful exercise, expertness, and proficiency. Yet none of them is so brutal and crude as shooting a near-defenseless woodland creature.

I have hunted for years, with varying success. While it is often a great deal of work to get in position for a shot, particularly at deer or bear, it is disappointingly easy to kill when the moment comes. A few days ago, while trudging up hill, the young fellow on my left shouted, "Grouse coming, Leonard?" I swung my shot gun to "ready," thumbing the hammer

back as the gun swung to my shoulder. The bird was about fifty yards away and gaining speed and altitude. I squeezed the trigger, and the ruffed grouse fell with a broken wing. Similarly a year ago, I waited, bored, on watch for deer. A young buck broke through the ring of woods a hundred yards away and stopped to stand regally and scan the landscape before making a dash for safety across the highway. I was carrying a sixteen-gauge shotgun with rifled slugs. It was surprisingly simple to aim twelve or fourteen inches above his shoulder and send the one-ounce ball into the shoulder joint, smashing it and immobilizing although not killing the deer. Too simple, as a matter of truth. We divided it and another deer among fourteen of us and each got his share—as some one has said, about one meat ball!

Financially it is all utterly ridiculous! An expenditure of perhaps fifty or sixty dollars for a rifle, half that for a cheap shotgun, ten dollars for ammunition, twenty-five for clothing, and several for gasoline, plus whatever time off work it seems advisable to use. A total outlay of one hundred and fifty dollars will permit several years of hunting. The absolute probable maximum is perhaps seventy pounds of game; therefore the meat would cost about two dollars a pound! This is unquestionably a bit high in price even in these inflationary times.

Recreation? Oh, sure! What price an aching back, neuralgia and stiff limbs, to say nothing of frostbitten fingers, noses and toes!

To take a more serious tack, what are the moral ramifications of this lust to kill? Is it an out-moded attempt to retain the manly qualities of an outdoor man, or is it an inner, crueler urge to prove one's manhood, even as Neanderthal man clubbed a sabre-tooth to death to prove his prowess?

There seems to be no practical excuse for this barbarian-like custom. There is also no obvious recreational value, except the doubtful one of "getting away from it all."

Did the God of Genesis provide for man the privilege of dominion, for him to exercise wanton slaughter? Or are we foolish to apply moral codes to animals? The S. P. C. A. would not agree, and our society accepts the Society as a needed although maligned organization. If, then, as we have seen, present day codes demand protection of domestic animals, why not apply the idea completely?

What would you say to a thirty-day open season on house cats or perhaps pekinese dogs?

On the other hand, is our squeamishness of kind or degree? How about banning butterfly collecting and trout fishing? Or why not a drive to prevent cruelty to earthworms? A drive aimed against using them as bait? Is our moral responsibility then dictated or conditioned by the ladder of evolution, or does it apply to the first rung as well as to the top ones? As in euthanasia, who is the impartial judge as to what constitutes cruelty and what does not carry that social (therefore artificial) stigma?

Is man man's own judge? You see, do you not, that if terms are dictated by kind (animal life), inclusive term, or life itself, (an even more inclusive term than there is extreme difficulty of differentiation. If, on the other hand, terms are dictated by degree, the identical problem arises—where shall we draw the line?

Be careful that no snap decision is made, for if you have allowed science to convince you that man is a product of evolution, then euthanasia is an easy, even logical step, and you who say that it is silly to be sentimental about animals must of necessity agree that sentiment is foolish with regard to man also!

The title of this essay asks whether it is sport to kill for fun. If the answer is "yes," then the son of Benito Mussolini is not to be condemned for his glee at bombing helpless civilians. What? I am wrong? It was you who said that man is an animal elevated to the top of the ladder of evolution by chance!

We have reached no definite conclusion, nor did we mean to. We have not sufficient time to spend on a conclusion, for tomorrow is the first day of deer season, and I want to go hunting.

Employment

HAROLD E. STINE

Harold E. Stine graduated in absentia from Altoona High School in 1944. During the war he served in the Pacific theatre with the U. S. Marine Corps

It was a late summer day, a day in early September, to be precise; one of those hot, humid days, one of those lazy, stuffy days on which one has but little ambition to pursue any very active course of bodily activity.

It so happened that on the afternoon of this particular day I was reclining most contentedly upon a very comfortable hammock in a cozy corner of my Aunt Rachael's rock garden, which is situated in our back yard. I was slowly sipping an ice-cold glass of lemonade and meditating profoundly upon the first chapter of my forthcoming book, *Memoirs*.

The whistle down at the moth ball factory announced the hour, 4:00 p. m., quitting time for the first shift. The whistle was low pitched, it seemed to moan in the afternoon air. It sounded, I thought, like my Uncle Reuben yawning in the morning.

I swallowed the remaining drops of lemonade and placed the glass on the table beside the hammock. I stretched myself and yawned.

"Oooo hummm . . . four o'clock, time to knock off. Thought four would never come . . . I'm dead."

My mind turned from my writing to my brother James and Uncle Reuben who work at the moth ball factory.

"Poor unimaginative souls," I sighed sympathetically. "How can they stand the daily drudgery in that old treadmill down by the river, especially on these hot summer days?"

My thoughts returned to myself. I remembered the fact that I was always inactive and sluggish on these stuffy, humid days of summer. Work at such a time is impossible. I dismissed the thought that the icy cold days of winter seem to have a similar effect upon me.

"Weather," I thought, "has a most unusual effect upon me."

I wondered when I should be able to complete my memoirs. The summer had passed so rapidly, and the weather had been so stifling. Also there had been so many interruptions.

"Bloody, wretched interruptions," I cursed softly. "I've been out of the service since May . . . and here it is, September, and I'm still on the first chapter of *Memoirs*. Oh wretched interruptions! Every Wednesday I must go down to the 52-20 club and get those old unemployment compensation checks. Then that day James made me work for the gas company. Oh, bloody interruptions!"

In the course of reviewing my unfortunate circumstances I was graciously relieved of my troubles by the soothing effects of peaceful slumber. I was dreaming I was spending the winter months in Florida when I was awakened by a loud voice.

"Get up, Fordyce, damn it! Get up, you lazy bum!"

It was my brother, James, addressing me.

"Oh, good afternoon, James," I said yawning. "You're home early today."

"Home early, my eye! It's five o'clock. Get up and let someone else lie down. You've been in the hammock all summer."

"Lie down here? . . . on this hammock? . . . you, James? . . . with those slimey working clothes on? . . . certainly not."

At this point uncle Reuben came up in his working clothes.

"My Gawd," he sneered, "is he still flopped down on that damned hammock?"

"Yeh," continued my brother, "just look at the lazy good-for-nothing loafer. He's been here all afternoon while we were out working to feed him."

"Just this afternoon?" asked uncle Reuben sarcastically, "and just where, pray tell, was our literary marvel this morning? Seeking employment?"

"No," snarled James, "he was in bed all morning."

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," I said, . . . "Please . . ."

"Why the hell don't you go out and get a job, boy?" asked uncle Reuben.

"My dear Uncle," I retorted nonchalantly, "I happen to be quite independent and self-sufficient without milling with the herd in pursuit of shockingly undignified tasks. I am, as you know, drawing my readjustment allowance from the federal government."

"Yeh," sneered James, "twenty dollars a week. You spend thirty in

that silly pin-ball machine down at O'houlahan's."

"Come come, James, you're only jealous because I find it so convenient to go about as a leisurely gentleman."

"Leisurely gentleman, hell," said uncle Reuben. "You mean leisurely sponge. Jim and I have been feeding you all summer. Why don't you get out and work?"

"Yeh," continued James, "You eat like a hog being fattened for market."

"You'll notice, James," I retorted, "that I remain quite slender in spite of my healthy appetite. That's because . . ."

". . . That's because everything you eat turns to hot air," interrupted uncle Reuben.

My sister, Barbara Anne, entered the scene apparently looking for something. Barbara Anne is a tall, rather attractive, dark-haired girl with long eye lashes. She was seventeen in July . . . typical teen-age brat.

"Fordyce," she chimed, "did you take my writing paper out of my dresser?"

"Certainly not . . . don't be ridiculous . . . What would I want with your silly old writing paper?"

"Fordyce, you did so! . . . Look . . . here it is under your notebook on the table . . . and . . . oh, Uncle Reuben . . . look! . . . Fordyce has drawn butterflies and bumblebees all over my new pink stationery!"

I was getting ready to say something back to her when I noticed Aunt Rachael looking at some green things around the rocks in her rock garden.

"My chrysanthemums! Oh . . . oh . . . my chrysanthemums! Fordyce, you've tramped all over my poor little baby chrysanthemums! Oh, Fordyce, you brute! I told you to be careful and not to walk on the chrysanthemums."

"Those old things by the rocks there?" I queried. "I thought they were weeds."

"Weeds! Fordyce! . . . and Oh . . . oh . . . look . . . look . . . Elizabeth . . . Elizabeth . . . come here quick . . . Fordyce has pulled all the petals off the roses!"

My mother, Elizabeth Barrett Smythe, came to my rescue.

"What's going on out here?" she asked. "Fordyce, what are they doing to you, dear?"

"Elizabeth!" screamed Aunt Rachael. "Elizabeth, look what Fordyce has done to the flowers!"

"Mother," said James, "make him get up off the hammock so I can lie down awhile."

"Lizzy, damn it," complained uncle Reuben, "I'm getting tired working to feed this lazy nut here."

"Oh, Mom," wailed Barbara Anne, "Look at my nice stationery . . . Fordyce drew all over it . . . Look!"

"Get away! All of you!" shouted Mother, "Get away and let the poor boy alone! You should be ashamed of yourselves. After all the poor dear's been through he deserves to rest once in awhile."

"Once in awhile," sneered uncle Reuben. "Once in awhile would be all right, but he never does anything around here. I was in the last war and I . . ."

"Oh, Reuben, be quiet," said Mother. "Fordyce, what would you like Mother to get you for supper?"

"No, Mother," I replied softly trying not to show my deep emotion, "don't bother fixing much for me, Mother . . . I'll go . . . I won't bother you anymore . . . I . . ."

"There . . . there, Dear. Don't be upset. You can stay here as long as you wish and don't pay any attention to what everyone says."

"No," I said, "I'll go . . . I'll go out into the world and make a place for myself. I won't live off the tax payer's money. I won't take their dirty old compensation checks. I'll show all of you . . . I'll make a place for myself in this world!"

"Don't tell me you're finally going to get a job?" said James.

"Yes, James," I replied, "I'm returning to my position with the Schneeville Natural Gas Company."

Two days later at an early hour I arose vigorously, performed my deep breathing and muscle stretching exercises on the front porch, consumed a hearty breakfast and, bidding my mother a cheery farewell, departed for the South Side, where I was to read gas meters in the homes.

It was a glorious morning. The red sun was glimmering through the haze on the mountains to the East, and I could see the moth ball factory down by the river and the men hurrying to work in the crisp morning air.

"Ah!" I exclaimed, "It's great to be alive on such a morning as this. Great to be alive to pursue a worthwhile profession in life."

There was a new spring in my step, a certain confident tilt to my head, and I could sense that there was a definite determined set to my square, masculine jaw. I experienced a new feeling of usefulness to the world. The feeling thrilled me, but I was sobered by the responsibility.

"Just think," I mused gravely, "just think how things would be in Schneeville if there were no one to read the gas meters!"

Throwing back my broad shoulders, expanding my muscular chest and holding my head high, I sang lustily and exuberantly into the still morning.

"Oh what a beautiful morning! —Oh what a beautiful day!"

"I've got the wonderful feeling . . . Everything's going my way!"

Momentarily I stopped singing, got up off the sidewalk and onto my feet, rubbing the lump that was rising on my head. I looked down at the shoe lying on the sidewalk, and then up to the window above from whence the shoe had come. A man's face beamed in the open window. It was the beaming face of Mr. Jackson, the man who lives down the street from my place.

"Good morning, Mr. Jackson," I said cheerily, "Nice morning."

"Shut up, you silly nit wit. Some people around here are trying to sleep."

I soon found myself in the south side of town.

"Well, here's where I start. Here's 300 South Pine."

Mounting the steps to the back porch, I could hear through the screen door the good housewife singing in the kitchen and preparing the morning meal. The aroma of coffee and frying eggs and bacon stimulated my olfactory nerve. I rapped on the door.

"Who's there?" asked the woman.

"Gas!" I exclaimed in a bass voice.

"Who?"

"Gas!" I repeated in my deep bass baritone voice.

"I don't want any today," said the housewife.

"I'm not selling it," I replied. "I'm here to check the meter."

"Oh, come on in . . . here, wait till I unlatch the door."

"Thank you," I said as I entered the kitchen. Walking through the dining room and into the parlor, I began to ascend the stairs to the second floor.

"Where are you going?" asked the lady.

"To check the meter."

"The meter's in the cellar."

"Oh."

After checking the meter I bid the good housewife good day and continued on my way.

"Strange house," I thought, "gas meter in the cellar."

I rapped on the door of the next house. "Gas!" I bellowed.

"Come in," said the woman in the kitchen.

I entered, "Beautiful morning, Ma'am," I smiled.

"It certainly is. Say . . . mister . . . why are you going upstairs? The meter's in the cellar."

I was becoming a trifle impatient. "This is the second place now. Just like the place next door."

In the dim cellar way my foot groped for a step, failed to find one, and I bounded down the steps and landed in a coal bucket. I heard a voice calling from the kitchen:

"You'd better watch that top step; it's a little tricky."

"Thank you," I replied, "I noticed that."

The house next door was quiet. No one seemed to be up. I rapped loudly on the door. "Gas!" I yelled.

A man's voice sounded from the upstairs window.

"Come on in; the door's open."

I entered and ascended the stairs to the second floor. In the hallway I met the man who had called to me from the window. He seemed surprised as he stood there in his B. V. D's staring at me.

"What are you doing up here?" he hissed.

"Gas!" I bellowed.

"Shut up, you simple idiot. The meter's in the cellar."

"Excuse me, Sir," I said. Then the obvious fact dawned upon me. It seemed strange that one of my unusual intelligence should have entertained

a false notion for such a long period. "How absurd of me!" I thought. "Why, of course, all the gas meters in this block are in the basement."

In the kitchen of the next house I heard a woman talking. She was yelling something to someone upstairs. It didn't make sense to me.

"I don't know where he is," said the voice. "He's been out all night. Probably drunk somewhere. Wait till I get my hands on him . . ."

I knocked on the door. "Gas!"

"Here he comes now," I heard the woman say. "Elwood, get in here this minute!"

"My name is Fordyce," I yelled through the closed door. "Gas!"

"Elwood, get in here this minute, you drunken fool, before the neighbors start complaining again."

I opened the door and entered the kitchen to encounter a rather rustic-looking woman clad only in a few scanty and unmentionable articles of clothing.

"Elwood," she growled, "where have you been all night?"

"Excuse me, Ma'am," I said timidly, "but I'm not Elwood, I'm the gas man."

She screamed and threw a table cloth over her body. I decided to leave and check the meter in this house later. As I leaped the hedge into the adjoining back yard, I heard her screaming for the police.

Regaining my composure, I rapped on the door of the next house. A very friendly-looking woman answered the door.

"Yes?" she asked.

"Gas!" I bellowed.

"Oh . . . oh yes, come in. I've been waiting for you."

"You have?" I sighed. "Sorry I kept you waiting, but really, don't you think this is a bit sudden. . .?"

She hit me on the head with a milk bottle and poured a percolator of hot coffee over me.

"Don't get fresh," she snarled. "I want you to fix the gas pipes in the cellar. The gas isn't coming through as it should. It's hard to cook."

"I'm not the plumber," I replied as I lay at her feet. "I'm the meter checker."

"Get down there and fix that pipe before I scald you with this water on the stove."

For a half hour I worked with a maze of pipes in the basement. The connections seemed quite complicated. "The plumber who was here before probably got the pipes mixed," I mused. "I'll have to straighten them out." I made a few connections. Then I called up to the lady.

"O.K., turn on the gas," I yelled.

I waited for a reply. None came.

"What's the matter?" I inquired. "How is it?"

"Nothing comes out. The stove won't turn on."

"All right, turn it off again. I'll have it in a minute."

I went back to the maze of pipes. Then I heard the lady scream in the kitchen.

"Oh! . . . Oh! . . ." she screamed. "Turn it off! Turn it off!"

"What's wrong?" I bellowed.

"The water's spraying out of the stove and the gas is coming out of the water spigots!"

"Well, turn off the spigots!" I yelled. "I'll have it fixed in a jiffy. I know what's wrong now."

I made a few more connections with the pipes.

"O. K. . . now," I said. "Turn on the water."

"That's fine," she yelled back. "The water's running again."

I went back up into the kitchen and saw that the lady had resumed her friendly countenance once more.

"That's fine," she smiled. "You're somewhat of a jack-of-all-trades, aren't you?"

"Well," I replied modestly, "somewhat."

As I was mounting the back steps of the next house, I heard a loud explosion in the kitchen I had just left. Looking back, I saw smoke pouring out the door. Then the friendly-looking woman came rushing out swinging a large stick. I know not exactly what it was, but something suddenly occurred to me. I had the strangest feeling that the friendly-looking woman was searching for me. I approached her politely.

"Excuse me, Madame," I said, "but are you, by any chance, looking for me?"

I dodged as the stick moved quickly in the direction of my head. I raced down the alley with the friendly-looking woman chasing me and swinging the large stick. Utilizing a portion of my dormant athletic prowess, I vaulted over a high board fence into someone's back yard. A huge mongrel was running toward me as if to say:

"Welcome, comrade. I haven't eaten a man for three days."

I struck out in a new direction with the hound and the lady on my heels. Soon I found myself in a locality that seemed familiar.

"This is the house where I didn't check the meter this morning. Too bad I can't check it, now that I'm passing by."

"There he is!" screamed the lady in the house. "He's the man who entered my house a half hour ago. Sieze him, officer!"

I raced down South Pine Street with the lady, the dog and the cop chasing me. In the middle of the South Side bridge, I leaped into the Schneevil river and swam over to the bank by the moth ball factory. I hid in the bushes by the factory while I regained my breath.

"Whew . . . that was close," I said to myself. "Smythe, you really become involved in some predicaments in life, but I really have to hand it to you . . . you can really run."

It was a late summer day, a day in early September, to be precise, one of those hot, humid days, one of those lazy, stuffy days on which one has but little ambition to pursue any active course of bodily activity. I was relaxing most comfortably upon a very comfortable hammock, slowly sipping a glass of cool lemonade and meditating profoundly upon the first chapter of my forthcoming book, *The Exploits of Fordyce Smythe*. The whistle down at the moth ball factory announced the hour, 4:00 p. m., quitting time for the first shift.

I swallowed the remaining drops of lemonade and placed the glass on the table beside the hammock.

"Ooo hummm four o'clock time to knock off. Thought four o'clock would never come I'm dead. I'd better doze off now. James and Reuben will be home soon and they'll both want to lie down here. Wonder what they'll have to say about me quitting that job today."

Sonnet

MARY LOUISE STEVENS

Mary Louise Stevens graduated from Lock Haven High School in 1946. She is assistant Editor of the COLLEGE TIMES.

Tonight the moon-washed world lies soft and still.
Lights from a nearby home paint on dark ground
Rich mellow squares. I hear a sleepy trill,
Then close the door. The family clocks are wound,
And now I sit before the fire, and let
Its dancing hands caress my face and hair.
Gaily advancing, the leaping fire has met
The dark and forced it backward from its lair.
Somewhere this night a child sobs low in pain;
A woman moans; a man's prayer is a curse
At hope now dead. Somewhere they wait in vain.
Beauty owns not the power to disperse
The things I found in my small world tonight—
A soothing, lulling calm. . . . a fire's warm light.

Dark And Light

COLEMAN LIVINGSTON

Coleman Livingston graduated from Jersey Shore High School in 1942. He served three years in Special Services of the U. S. Army.

A young stream is born
Thundering heavy music:
Music because it is part of a pattern,
Because it is a cycle like seasons,
Part of a universal mode. . . .
Then shriek the vultures,
The only chorale to desert death,
In answer to the mother's song,
Lonely, austere, and mournful —
Accomplished antiphony.

Sea Threnody

PHILIP E. HARBACH

Philip E. Harbach graduated from Sugar Valley Vocational High School in 1944. During the war he served in the Navy Amphibious Forces in the Pacific.

The movement of night water chides my sleep;
The answers of high gulls rebuke my brain;
The tide's incessant accusations weep
Within the current of a sigh; the strain
Of surf against the somber shore recalls
Such time, such knowledge of my reeling past.
Suppressed negations facing death-bound walls,
While sea beats stubborn rocks, loud blast on blast.
I see along exploited coasts dismayed,
Maimed fugitives; they too, like me, possessed
No knowledge of their souls. I stand betrayed
With those whom error's ignorance assessed.
The world condemns us for rejected pains
And seas of destiny revile its gains.

Awakening

EILEEN CHARTON

"What did you find as you walked in the wood?"

"Oh, flowers and bushes and berries and
On the ground, needles where a tall pine stood.
Breezes fresh but gentle, skies clear and blue,
Branches yet wet with drops of morning dew."

"And what did you find in the wood today?"

"A blue anemone, a maple leaf,
A pebble with ribbons of white and gray,
Beryl moss snuffing up afternoon sun,
A nest of brown starling had just begun."

"And what did you find in the wood this time?"

"Pine cones in the night like palsied old men,
Locust leaves performing a pantomime,
Contrast of moonlight on water opaque,
A tear being shed for sheer beauty's sake."

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