

The Mercury Literary Issue

Glenville State College — Spring 1966

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A Thing Of Steel

By ELSIE BOLOGH

A big blue Oldsmobile cut sharply from the swift flow of the Lakeshore Drive traffic and turned down the graveled incline toward the lake, slowing its speed as it came. It was not unobserved in its progress. A big grin spread over the face of Jake Slimbarski as he straightened from the rowboat he was painting, and paint brush in hand, stepped out in front of the car as its driver nosed it into a parking space before Slimbarski's Lake Erie Boat Sales and Rental. A loud blast from the horn sent Jake back to the sidewalk in mock fright.

"Look, you big lumox," roared the young man at the wheel, a broad smile belying the tone of his voice, "you trying to break into the insurance racket, too?"

"Hiya, Kid," Jake shifted the load of chewing tobacco from one stubby cheek to the other and came to meet Ned Reimer as he got out of his car. "Where ya been so long?"

"I'm a working man trying to make an honest living," Ned ducked the feint from the big paw, "—not like some I know, out trying to fleece the public."

The good-natured banter continued. It was obvious that Jake enjoyed the young man. He had seen him off and on over the years, from boy to man, and had watched him learn to be at home on the treacherous waters of Lake Erie.

"They biting today, Jake?" Ned nodded toward the lake.

"Too late in the day for the morning run, Kid."

Well, maybe some of them came late for breakfast," Ned returned. "I think I'll go out for a while and see. What leaky excuse are you going to charge me a week's wages for? How about that one?" He pointed to a blue and white twelve footer tied up at the dock.

"Not if ya brought yer own horse. Too light, I'd be fishin' ya out the minute ya started the thing!" Jake waved his hand toward a larger one farther on. "Ya'll need somethin' more like that. Ya know that, Boy. Ned bait?"

"Do you mean to say that you have some minnows that'll live until I get them out there?"

"I always got good minners," Jake pretended insult. "Gimme yer bucket and I'll show ya." He took the minnow pail that Ned got from the car trunk and ambled over to the big bait tanks in the shade of the weathered building. With a quick dip of a landing net, he drew into the sunlight a mass of squirming, flipping, silvery minnows and transferred a quantity to the waiting pail. Handing

it to Ned, he wiped his wet hand across his already dirty and wrinkled cotton trousers.

"Better go out with me, Jake," Ned offered, knowing in advance Jake's reply. "They stink!"

Ned took the big Evinrude from the trunk of his car and carried it to the boat. The muscles of his broad shoulders and arms strained against his shirt as he lowered the motor into position and secured it to the stern. Another trip transferred a tackle box and a fiberglass casting rod to the boat along with a red thermos jug of coffee. He started the motor, and Jake flipped the mooring rope to him.

Jake yelled above the roar of the engine, the hint of concern in his voice genuine. "Now, you go outa here right! Don't go sloshin' the water around, knockin' my boats all over!"

Ned laughed and waved to Jake. He eased the boat out of the boatyards into the main channel, but once cleared, he opened the throttle wider and sliced out across the open gray-green waters of Lake Erie. He steered clear of the other boaters and moved, in a long, wide arc, far out beyond the light-house and back to the leeward side of the rocky breakwall. Dropping the motor back into a low cruising speed, he searched for a spot to his liking. It was not far from the craggy underwater ledge that he finally dropped anchor and leisurely began setting his fishing gear. When the cast was made and the butt of the pole secured in the seat bar, Ned drew a cigarette from his shirt pocket and lit it.

For much longer than it took him to smoke his cigarette, Ned lay on his stomach in the bottom of the boat, his forearms folded on the life-jacket. He was, for a time, simply observant of what lay within the scope of his blue eyes, the length and sprawl of the city curving around the sun-sparkled lake; from the modern brick, stone, and glass residences up toward Beaver Creek and the Vermillion River at one end back down to the smoking steel plants, his eyes roamed. He watched a big ore carrier from Canada ease its way into the far off dock, and the giant unloading machinery move into place.

The sun, its heat intensified by the reflection of the lake, burned through his shirt, and Ned straightened to remove it. Then, rolling over onto his back and piloting his head against the jacket, he pulled his cap down over his face in defense against the direct rays of the sun. A black

and silver locket gleamed against his sun-browned chest, and his hand came up to enclose it.

Ned had been a popular boy, and he was a popular man—a regular guy. He had not been unhappy, but neither had he been happy. He could recall no great reach of emotion on either plain, and because his mind was such that he could no longer endure the void within himself, he had come out that day for a final bit of introspection. As the waves lapped at the sides of the small craft, moving it in a gentle, lulling sway, Ned's mind reached back through the years for a missed clue.

His psyche had suffered no traumatic experience; he smiled wryly as he recalled his sessions with Dr. Kopche a few years back when he had submitted to that good man's probes. He had always had enough money, enough friends, enough clothes,—in fact, he had done what all the other young men he had grown up with had done. Sometimes, he thought, maybe a few more things. Yet, life had seemed to have more meaning for them. Why? The last seventeen years of Ned's life had been an almost relentless search for that answer.

Always an avid reader, Ned had become even moreso. He had

studied the philosophers and had spent long hours discussing their provocative ideas with his college professor, Dr. Berberley. Then he had turned to religion and had become an authority on all the major faiths of the world; yet, the answer he sought remained locked from him.

"Marriage, man," one by one his friends had proclaimed, "that's the life!" And finally Ned thought that it might be. He had not been in love with Janie, but she had been handy. Come to think of it, she had always been around. So he married Janie.

At first married life had been comfortable, even amusing. After Ned had bought the new house in Oberlin's fashionable Shipherd Circle, Janie had settled into her new life like a child with a new toy. He hadn't minded the parties too much at first nor Janie's insatiable spending sprees. Then they began to quarrel. Janie had not been able to discuss ideas; money and things were her conquests, and she had been resistant to any controls over either.

One morning Ned had remarked across the breakfast table that he was not going to work that morning; he was, in fact, never going to design another airplane as long as he lived. He had gone

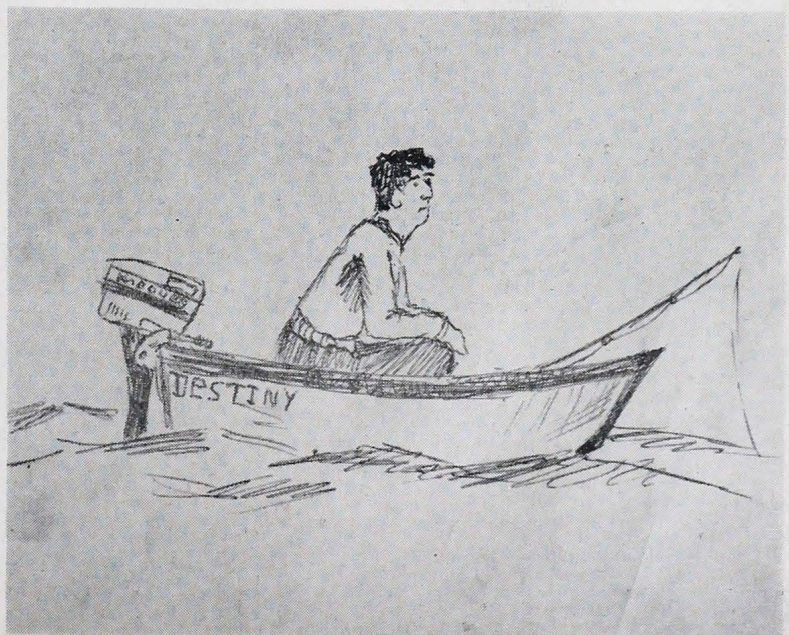
on to inform Janie that he was going to become a plumber.

"A plumber?" Janie had dropped her jellied toast onto her plate and had stared at him in horror.

So it had been, What had really sliced the cake, Ned remembered, was that he had insisted that they live on a plumber's wages. That had meant a period of very low pay during the necessary apprenticeship, and Janie had balked like a mule. His family, her family, and all their acquaintances had, in their consternation, argued with him. They had sold their big house and had moved into a neat little frame house on the outskirts of town, and one by one their erstwhile playmates had dropped them.

Ned had gotten pleasure from the physical exertion. It had been a relief to come home at night tired and unable to question himself. But Janie had stuck. Unhappy and resentful as she had been, he had had to hand it to her.

When the apprenticeship was over, Ned had gone on to night school to study steam-fitting. He had been good at his work, and now as he looked back at the city, he reflected that much of his (Continued on Page 6)



Umbrellas

Umbrellas

create twos
and sometimes threes, but

Nylon

shuts out people,
flowers
and the sky, and

Stays of steel

are hard and stiff
and cold.

—Robert Newton Cooper



Owed to Glenville College

(The Land of the Midnight Sun)

And further, by these, my son,
be admonished; of making
many books there is no
end and much study is
a weariness of the flesh.

(Ecclesiastes 12:12)

Glenville College, Beacon of Light,
Lights burning all the night,
Men of toil, women who care,
Anxious looks, dubious stares,
Sackcloth sorrow, lamenting woe,
We're unprepared! Three chapters to go!
Quick—more coffee! What was that?
(Burning eyes), Oh, we've got that pat!
Another page, another line,
Faster! Faster! Not much time!
Dawn is coming and so's the test.
Oh, for only an hour's rest!
My last cigarette, that's the pack!
Oh, if I'd only left one back!
I'm getting sleepy—let me rest!
Oh, don't remind me of that test!
Wake me up in five minutes flat.
That was the fastest two hours that passed.
I'm not licked yet, there is still hope
That he'll be sick, Oh, what a dope
I am to not have read—
All that time—and I in bed!
The clock has struck, I'm a minute late!
Grab that pen and rush in haste!
He isn't coming!—Oh! There he is!
Full of mirth, and joy, and whiz!
Oh! Here's the test—Horror what a sight!
That surely wasn't in that book last night?
Where's his etiquette? Where's the Golden Rule?
To give such a test—And, Oh, what a fool
Was I to think that I could bluff
And beat around the bush. And all that stuff
He could've asked, but yet he picked these
questions! Small as gnats, thick as fleas,
and hard as nails—It must be some disease
That plagues these college teachers. But the
Problem now is one, two, and three—or let's see
Yipes! Seven and eight and Horrors! Ten!
The clock is ticking, time is turning!
Biting! Scowling! Writing! Squirming!
Guessing! Erasing! TIME IS UP!
Well back to bed
With "should've done," Oh, my head!
That's the last! From here on out
I'll study ahead, be prepared to fight the bout—
But that bed feels so soft and fluffy
I'll close the shades, forget my puffy
Eyes, and

I returned, and saw under
the sun, that the race
is not to the swift, nor
the battle to the strong,
neither yet bread to the
wise, nor yet riches to
men of understanding, nor
yet favour to men of skill;
but time and chance
happeneth to them all.

(Ecclesiastes 9:11)

James B. Shahan

The Schmidt Affair

By ROBERT SZYMCAK

The sun shone brilliantly that morning, making a super effort to penetrate the concrete jungle that was Manhattan's skyline. People scurried about, on their way to work, and early morning shoppers clogged the sidewalks.

In that moving mass of humanity walked a red-faced, stocky man in his fifties, wielding a lunch bucket. His uncapped head was accented by a combination of blond and gray short-cropped hair, which affected a squarish appearance. His shoulders and back were ramrod stiff, it seemed. The man's work shoes were shined to a mirror-like perfection. His neatly pressed green gabardine work

garments bore sharp creases, and even though the weather was warm, he always wore long-sleeved shirts.

Otto Schmidt, janitor in the Pepperidge Building, was on his way to work. In his nineteen years of service there, custodian Schmidt was never late.

As the clock struck 9:00 A.M. Schmidt checked in at the building maintenance room in the basement. Everyone knew the jovial janitor, and found him quite amiable. The standard Schmidt greeting was a hearty "Hullo-Good morning." His marked European accent was rather heavy. Schmidt explained to inquiring friends that

As she turned to walk on, Schmidt gave her a jab in the behind with his mop handle. "Whoops! An accident. . . please forgive me." They both laughed, and Schmidt continued his work. He liked Miss Damien.

Along came Campbell and Grass, and after exchanging greetings with their well-liked janitor, proposed that the three of them take in a Met ball game that evening. The offer delighted Schmidt, a staunch Met supporter.

"Just wait, gentlemen. In fun or two more sessions, the Mets will shock the baseball world with their greatness" sermonized Schmidt, in an almost dictatorial manner. They would see the ball game that evening.

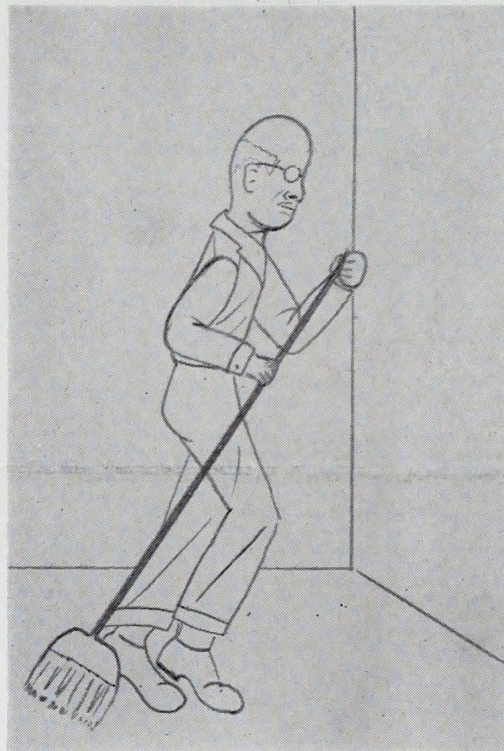
Jim Grass, Harvard; 60, found the friendly janitor almost uncanny. In conversations with Schmidt, Grass told Campbell, the janitor "expressed some very educated and cultured viewpoints." "Why do you think I insist he be invited to the office party at Christmas?" queried Campbell. "That guy is no ass, and frankly his precision belittles that of any Ph.D. I ever knew." In their air-conditioned office, Campbell lit a cigarette and blew the smoke in the direction of the whirring contraption perched on the window sill. "You should have heard what he said about Sandy Koufax the other day" said Grass, smiling.

"Yes, I'm well aware that our boy Otto dispises the best pitcher in baseball, but, what the hell, to each his own." It was quitting time.

As Schmidt left the building, he repeated his loud "good night!" to all. In the rush hour crowd, Schmidt maintained the brisk pace that characterized him. The rosy-cheeked janitor rented a three room apartment several blocks away. "A good place for an old bachelor like me." He did not own a car. "I am not a helpless cripple, I can walk," he would remark.

Later that evening, Grass and Campbell picked Schmidt up on the appointed street corner in a brand-new Imperial. Pepperidge had declined the Met game offer because of a case he was working on. "Probably a case of Jack Daniels" muttered Grass.

Schmidt sat erect in the center of the back seat. His bright blue eyes, set deep in his red face, surveyed the passing sections of New York fleetingly. Tucked neatly under his left arm was a tightly folded bed sheet which sported the words "Let's go, Mets!" emblazoned in deep crimson. As usual, Schmidt would unfurl his banner when the Mets scored, which wasn't as often as Schmidt (Continued on Page 3)



he had emigrated from Austria some time before the war. The secretary of the law firm of Grass, Campbell and Pepperidge the Third Floor of the fifteen story structure thought that Schmidt's accent was "cute." Schmidt thought that the young secretary was cute, and told her so.

Schmidt had a reputation around the Pepperidge Building as the best janitor ever employed there. Pepperidge, member of the law firm and owner of the building had said so himself. A lawyer for thirty years, Pepperidge had seen janitors come and go, but none commanded his admiration as Schmidt did.

Bill Pepperidge's two younger partners took special delight in inviting Schmidt to the firm's annual office Christmas party. "We have the only janitor in New York who doubles as an exec come Christmas," Campbell always chuckled to associates.

Thanks to the diligence of Otto Schmidt, the floors, furniture, and office equipment of the Grass, Campbell, and Pepperidge Law Firm were immaculate.

That morning, as every morning for nineteen years before, Schmidt methodically began his duties for the day. Floor sweeping and waxing was on the agen-

da for that June day, and Schmidt whistled an unfamiliar tune as he carefully sussed the hallway tile. Miss Damien, the secretary, playfully pushed Schmidt from behind, causing the soapy water from the bucket to spill over onto his waxed shoes.

"Oh, I am sorry! Please forgive me, Otto," she pleaded. "Ha! Don't worry, you are forgiven."

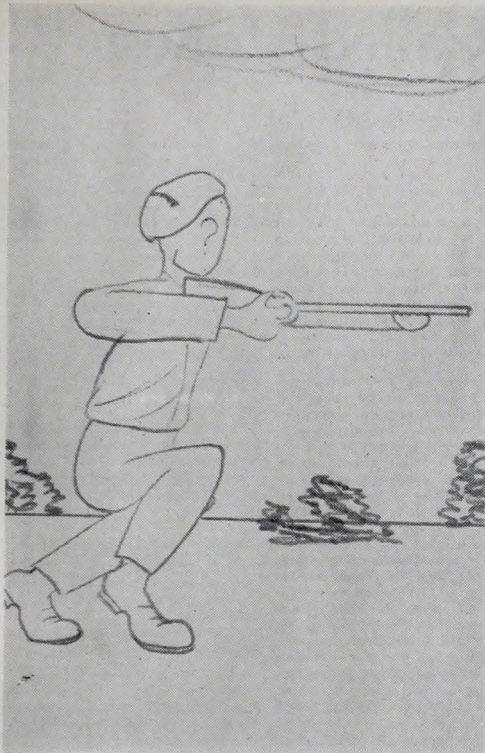
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From My Dorm Window

In front of me lies Nature's inclined earth,
Decorated as a green quilt, sown by threads of snow.
Gray bedposts of trees hand curled designs
Over the bed of slumbering earth.

God, whose hands tucked in the covers
Over the pillow of time and kissed the child of Peace.
While leaving on tiptoe, clocks of birds to tweet the seconds.
In the dusk around the bed passed time and time toward
the dividing of time.

The child is now tossing to and fro in fitful sleep.
Fevered by the disease of man, chilled by the theft
of his cover,
Splashed by the water of greed, revierled by the
trumpet to battle,
For whom God is soon to call.

—James B. Shahan

Many Happy Returns

By DONALD RAY SMITH

The big transport plane cruised to a stop on the Charleston runway and they unloaded the body. Perhaps this was the hardest job of all in this war, bringing the dead men from Viet Nam home to a grieving family. It was sorry work and the men seemed hushed as if in recognition of the sorrow. It was bad enough bringing home any soldier for burial, a coward or some damned fool who got himself killed through carelessness, but tonight, this job was even more unsavory than usual, because the men were unloading a dead hero, and, as they sometimes did, each one as he lifted the coffin, asked the inevitable question, "Why?"

It was a relief to them to slide the casket into the waiting ambulance and thus end their responsibility in this affair. Delivery boys now free to go get roaring drunk at the nearest joint and forget another casualty.

The clock on the bank said 9:45 when the black solemn ambulance glided past on the way to the funeral home on the hill above the town. At this time St. Patrick's Catholic was holding a mass to pray for this dear departed soldier; the Methodist minister had already urged his parishioners to declare this "Pray for Dave Day"; even the small snake handling cult on the outskirts of town, meeting in old Hiram Williams barn, were offering sacrifice in Dave's name, accompanied by singing and shouts of "Praise the Lord." Of course it was natural that the town grieve; this was its first direct contact with the war. Their first native son had been killed and killed gloriously. There was talk of erecting a statue in Dave's honor on the courthouse square, the way they had done for the boys lost in World War II, but the members of the town council pointed out that such expense would widen Main Street and put air-conditioning in the Mayor's office; therefore, it was entirely impractical. But they might try for a nice plaque in front of the post office.

The Jackson Herald came out that day with a front-page headline blaring, "Ripley Hero Victim in Viet War" and in smaller print the story of the native son who could do no wrong. Dave had saved twenty-seven South Vietnamese civilians from death at the hands of the Viet Cong; for this he was hailed a hero, a protector of the people the entire nation was sacrificing to save. He had been on advance patrol with one other American soldier as spotters of Viet Cong, preliminary to contact; the Viet Cong had cleared a tiny pro-American village of all its inhabitants, chained them together and were preparing to begin one of their infamous mass-massacres, when Dave and the other soldier spotted them. Dave left his companion under cover to continue radio contact with the main camp for immediate assistance and moved cautiously to the other side of the camp, and just as the three Viet Cong in charge opened fire. Dave dashed from the undergrowth, threw his body between the Viet Cong and several of the smaller children and blasted the murderers with his M-14. He cut all three of them down before the rest of the guerilla squad got him; one bullet in his leg ripped the flesh from the bone; he whirled, propped on his good knee and fired, killing the lead guerilla, just as another shot pierced his lung and he fell dead at the feet of the children he had saved. The American troops moved in fast, now that the enemy was located; the civilians were freed and the guerillas led away in the chains they had used to hold their prisoners. The dead soldier was carried away on a stretcher; he hadn't stood a chance.

The town was proud; sorry, but proud. The funeral home was packed that night; the curious, the truly interested, those who just wanted some contact with a hero parents who wanted to show their children how a dead soldier looked, family, a few friends; all were represented, even Aunt Katie who came every time someone died,

just to gush torrents of tears and kiss the dear loved one goodbye.

It seemed they all had forgotten the Dave who quit school when he was fifteen, the Dave who stole, wrecked motorcycles and drank hard liquor from the time he was ten years old on up. Dr. Kessell must have forgotten the teenager who was hospitalized with venereal disease; the police chief had "disreclected" the boy he had picked up for peddling moonshine to high-school kids; the probation officer had forgotten the trouble of keeping Dave in line in the months that followed this incident; Karen's parents must have forgotten the boy whose child their daughter had borne when she was fourteen and whom he refused to marry. They had all forgotten many things; in their minds the insolent smirk he wore had changed to a gentle smile; the wild speed demonic driving was mentally curbed to speed limit; and the cursing, drinking devil they had hated three years ago was suddenly a Saint at eighteen.

His parents sat on the front row of folding chairs, dry-eyed, not looking at the body or at each other. Any caring for this child or for their mate had long ago passed from both of them. Dave's father could not help feeling a kind of victory; here, the boy had done one good thing in his life and he wasn't around to enjoy it but his old man would get every benefit he could from the kid's death. Old Man Akers had never forgotten the impudent face turned up to his cursing him, defying him. God, how he had hated that boy, hated his youth, his virility, hated Dave's freedom when he himself was tied to this bitch he had married. But at last he had won; Dave was dead and he was alive; this was victory.

The mother was a washed-out woman, nearing forty but looking fifty-five. She just sat wishing this were over; she had left the supper dishes in the sink and wanted to get home to wash them. She yawned and looked weary with the whole business. Why did the kid have to get killed anyway? Probably did it just to keep her from getting those dishes washed. Oh, hell.

The "nigger" came in then, the only Negro in the whole of pure, white, provincial Jackson county. Nigger George, black, stooped, limping a little, working his way to the front of the room and staring down at the familiar face. "I always say dat a fine boy," he muttered. "Yas sah, he always good ter ol' Gawge and Ah knew he be good ter them poor o-pressed people in Viet Nam. Yassah." He turned, made his "X" on the register and walked out, shaking his head. He had obviously misplaced in his mind Dave's taunting about his color or the time George had chased him off his property with a shotgun. Why did it matter, now that that boy had done gwine ter Heaven anyway?

The judge was pumping old Mr. Akers hand, a hand he would never have touched before; the council men were expressing their sympathies and the worthy father was wiping away an imaginary tear and telling the old judge how hard it was to lose such a fine son whom he loved so much; the mother was yawning again; a few people were beginning to fidget in the back of the room. It was then she walked in, head bowed, feet dragging as if unsure that she should be here, that she, of all people, would be welcome by this dead hero. The little boy with her look- ing about three years old; sturdy, firm, flashing blue eyes, a stubborn chin, oversized feet and a smiling mouth betrayed his parenthood. The girl shuddered as they all stared at her. Dear God, that her son should see his father for the first and last time this way. She reached the casket, and the tears could no longer be held back; she lifted the child to her arms and bent over the casket, her voice lowered to a croon. "David, behold thy son, I hope he can only be as good as you are now." Her dark eyes flashed as she turned to face the curious crowd who watched her every moment. Her contempt seared them, saying more plainly than words how well she realized that she was the only one in the room who cared for this dead person, not as a hero, but as a human being. She again faced the casket, touched the curly blond hair, carressed the hands which were so unnaturally folded on his chest. Her goodbye was silent but forever and she pulled the child close to her as she dashed from the mortuary.

Morning came slowly to Ripley. The Masonic brothers had sat with the body all night, talking about how we shouldn't send our boys to fight those damned Asians anyway and the shift party coming up at Kera House next weekend. Plenty of booze and good jokes and fine people. Talking of people, had anyone heard how wild this Akers boy used to be anyway? And here he was a hero. Takes all kinds to make this world.

The guns boomed over a little corner on Pine Hill; the town listened, a little jealous that the military funeral didn't require their participation. The body was lowered, the Chaplain ended his prayer, the straight-backed, army-uniformed pallbearers turned away from their own places and all was quiet, as Nigger George (Continued on page 4)

The Schmidt Affair

(Continued from Page 2)
wished.

After the ill-fated game which saw Pittsburgh score ten runs against a single Met tally, the Pepperidge Building trio headed for the nearest lounge for refresh-

ment. Schmidt demanded Steinhager, and when told by the bespectacled bartender that there was none, he became furious. Grass and Campbell were amused, thinking Schmidt was joking. The frail little bartender quickly fled the scene after the torrent of abusive words thrown by Schmidt. They had a hearty laugh over the affair later.

Finding the Steinhager at another club, Schmidt was relaxed. The Met defeat faded in his memory. The chunky janitor was attired in a white shirt, blue tie, and new grey trousers. They matched well, Campbell thought.

"In what part of Austria were you born, Otto?" curiously asked Grass.

"Vienna, my friend" came the reply. Then, as if sensing disaster, Schmidt excused himself and went to the Gentleman's Room. Sauntering back minutes later, the precise employee suggested that it was "time to retire for the evening."

Campbell and Grass insisted that they drive Schmidt to his doorway. The janitor protested. "Please, gentlemen, it is quite suitable to let me out at the corner here." Schmidt's vehement persistence overwhelmed the two lawyers, who finally agreed to their employee's suggestion.

"Wonder why he didn't want us to take him to his doorstep, hell, it was no trouble at all," grumbled Campbell.

Grass yawned. "Maybe he lives in a shack."

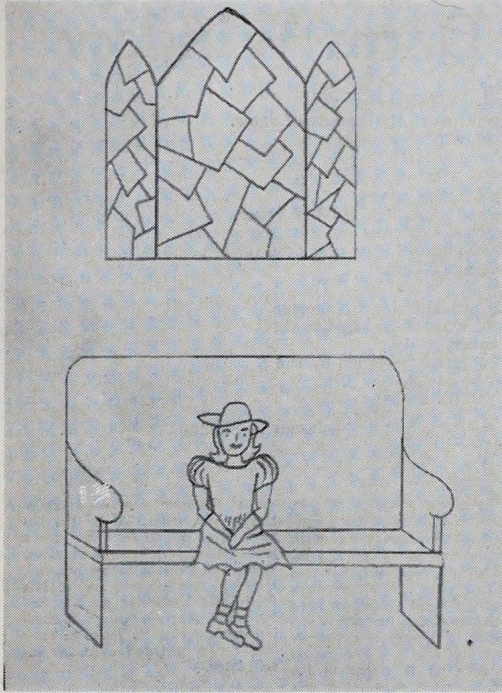
The sleek Imperial sped off into the neon-lit night. On the street corner, Schmidt lit an expensive Havana cigar and inhaled a lungful of smoke. It had been a rather pleasant evening.

In the early morning hours, Grass lay awake in his Louis XIV bed while his wife Judy lay beside sleeping soundly. Curious fellow, that Schmidt. Seems so refined and cultured, and yet is a janitor. But, then again, why can't janitors be refined and cultured, too? Wonder why he chewed out that poor goddamn bartender. Maybe he was serious. Excellent worker, that Schmidt. Wonder if he ever had a wife? He glanced at Judy's small face, partially covered by her pillow. Grass smiled, and closed his eyes.

It rained lightly all morning. Associates Grass, Campbell, and Pepperidge were at their desks on the third floor. Miss Damien was taking dictation in Pepperidge's office. The hugh brown-rimmed clock registered 11:40 A.M. Grass, wearing his corded blue cotten suit, ambled over to the water cooler. Lunch hour was approaching. And then it dawned on him. He had not seen Otto Schmidt all morning. Quickly, Grass glided through the corridor and knocked on the huge glass partition between his office and that of Lawrence Campbell's. The (Continued on page 5)

A Man Called Honest

By PEGGY JAMES



'Good Show, Mommy'

By JANET DRENNAN

Gee, I didn't think the Easter Bunny would bring me such a big basket of candy. I wonder how he knew Mommy and I are visiting Aunt Nelmore and Uncle "Hott" and Patty and Janet. Mommy says that I will have to be good in Sunday School with Aunt Nelmore and Janet. Mommy says that Patty will come to church in her car from Morgantown. I've been to Morgantown. It's a long way off because I always go to sleep in the car. I've got a pretty new dress, it's red with a white pinafore, at least that's what Mommy called it. It's real pretty, Mommy got it for me for Easter. I got new white shoes and a new fuzzy white coat too. Everybody says how nice I look with my blonde hair and blue eyes with my pretty new dress.

Aunt Nelmore says that I can go to church today too. I wonder what church is like. Mommy says I have to be quiet. I wonder if it is anything like Sunday school. I like it, it's fun being with all of those kids. There's the church, it's a big church and the steps in front are real big. I wonder how many steps there are up to the church. I can't count yet, but when I do learn I'll count these steps to see how many there are. Sunday School was fun today. Gee whiz, I never thought the Easter Bunny would leave some candy for us at Sunday School. Wait'll I show Mommy.

There's Janet, she's going to take me up to church. Golly, all of these steps just to get up stairs. So this is church. I wonder why that man is handing papers to people. I didn't get one. Maybe Janet will let me have hers to play with. Music! Oh, there's the woman that's making the music. Here comes Patty, oh boy, now I can have some fun. Okay Janet I'll quiet down. This isn't as much fun as Sunday School. I wonder why everybody is getting up, here come some people in funny looking blue clothes. Everybody is singing. I wish I knew the words. I'm glad Mommy brought me a hat everybody has one on. Oh, look at that baby. Aw he's cute. I wonder who the man is in that long funny black thing. That lady over there has her gloves on. I don't like my gloves but Mommy says that

they make me look like a little lady. Big Deal! That's what Janet says all of the time. This is an awfully long prayer, my prayers are never like this.

Here comes that man again, this time instead of paper he's got a gold plate. Oh, I wish I didn't have to put my money in there. I wish I could have some fun, even Patty won't play with me here. Gee whiz, I wonder what that man in the funny black thing is talking about. He's talked a long long time and I'm getting tired. Well, at least now I get to stand up man am I tired. I can't wait to show Mommy what the Easter Bunny left for me here.

I can't wait to get back to Aunt Nelmore's to play. Maybe Tina will come up and play with me. That man in the black sure was nice, he told me how nice I looked. There's Uncle "Hott" now I can go home and show Mommy my basket.

"Hi Mommy, Look at what the Easter Bunny left for me at Sunday School."

"Oh, how pretty Etta Kay, look how little the basket is, isn't it cute? How did you like church, honey?"

"It was a good show, Mommy, a good show."

'Many Happy Returns'

(Continued from Page 3)
began to cover the coffin.

On the outskirts of the town the D.A.R. president, wide-brimmed hat shading her eyes and stylish dress awry from the activity, was moving the first spadeful of earth to set a signpost proclaiming that a Viet Nam hero, a native son, is here buried. She smiled for the cameraman as he made a picture for the Jackson Herald. The businessmen were draping their storefronts with black; the town council was discussing air-conditioning for the mayor's office; and Mrs. Akers was finishing the dishes she had left the night before. On Pine Hill an old Negro, a young girl and a small blond-haired boy knelt beside the grave of a dead hero.

The intense gray eyes of David Lee Barnes unceasingly glared at the face of his watch, noticing the slow rhythmical movement of the second hand. Then his gaze briefly found the hour hand and minute hand, which were set stubbornly at eight. "God, will eight o'clock never come," he thought for at least the tenth time as he impatiently shifted his one-hundred-fifth frame from one foot to the other. He yawned loudly, then stepped outside of the station door to spit out his wad of tobacco, rubbing the back of his hand over his beautifully shaped lips. "That stuff's as tired as I feel," he thought as he turned to walk briskly back through the pump house to wipe the dust off of the engines again.

David Lee hated this shift from midnight until eight a.m. He hated the silence and darkness outside the pump house and hated the hands on that watch which barely crept. His eyelids drooped heavily from lack of sleep and he ran his fingers wearily through his bark hair, noticing that it was slightly receding and getting thinner every day. "You'd think I was fifty-six rather than twenty-six," he muttered under his breath.

He wondered if anyone had fed his dog as he walked back to the door, taking his dust rag from the hip pocket of his baggy coveralls, and wiping the grease from his hands, noting that the gold wedding band, which had become a part of his left hand, was gone. His thoughts began to wander and he wondered if his dark-haired little girl was walking yet. He wondered which man she was calling, "Daddy," and how much she was being left alone or in the care of innumerable baby-sitters. "Someday, I'm going to find her; someday—" his thoughts were interrupted by the blast of the eight o'clock whistle.

As he gathered up his coat and lunch pail and started down the walk to his car, he was unaware that he was being watched, or rather admired, by Carole Williams, the eighteen-year-old girl across the street. At first, she had watched him occasionally due to curiosity because she had heard a great deal about him none of which had been complimentary. Oh, yes, she had heard the gory details of his marriage that had ended in divorce a few months ago, and she knew of his reputation as a liar and a "sneaking, low-down scoundrel," but this only seemed to intensify her interest in him, and, as she watched him walk swiftly down the walk with all the confidence of the football player that he had been when he had attended college, she noticed the slight droop of his shoulders and wondered what burden he was carrying that caused that appearance of defeat.

She suddenly remembered the day she had talked to him briefly. He had smiled at her and that smile was still imprinted in her mind. His eyes had twinkled and crinkled at the corner, dimples affected his cheeks, and the smile had actually been charming and radiant, displaying perfect, gleaming white teeth; but she sensed that underneath this smile was hurt and bitterness and that underlying the smile was a flood of unshed tears.

As David Lee entered the home that had been such since childhood, he had but one plan in mind—to find a couple of Alka-Seltzers and solitude through sleep. "David Lee," his mother called in a nasal tone, "those Alka-Seltzers are going to kill you. You take at least a bottle a week. Now I want you to stop it; they're not

good for you."

"I wish to God she'd drop the Lee and just call me David. Everyone calls me that—David Lee; makes me feel like a kid," he thought. He made no reply to his mother, but, rather pretended not to hear her. He loved his mother dearly and always aimed to satisfy her whims. She did not like for him to smoke, drink, or stay out later than midnight; therefore, he never did these things at home.

His father had been dead now for eight years, but he could still remember the way in which the fatal cancer had caused the flesh to disintegrate and fall away from the bones of his father's dying body. "Mom cried and cried," he remembered as he turned abruptly and walked to the bedroom, mechanically removing his clothing and sliding his lean, muscular body between the clean, white sheets. He lay his cheek against the cool pillow and forcefully closed his eyes, his long, dark lashes touching the corner of the pillow. This irritated him and he moved his head slightly, and when he did this, the stubble of his day-old beard made a scratching sound against the freshly starched pillow slip. One hand lay in front of his face with the rather small, slender fingers curving over the edge of the bed, and the thumb was protruded so that it gently touched the deep cleft in his chin. His skin was almost the color of aged straw against the whiteness of the cloth, and, although his hands were coated in grease and grime during working hours, the skin around his well-manicured nails was clean and smooth.

He opened his eyes again and a fierce frown knitted his dark, bushy eyebrows together as his

last one I'm getting involved with. . . ." As these thoughts subsided, he forced his eyes closed and began to breathe deeply.

The shrill ringing of the telephone awoke him at two o'clock. "Mom?" he yelled.

No one answered. She must have gone somewhere.

"Hello," he muttered after walking swiftly to the phone.

"Duke?" the voice asked.

"Yeah," he replied, not surprised to hear his nickname used.

"This is Leland. What're ya doin' tonight?"

"Well, I thought I'd try my dog out if Glendon wanted to go hunting awhile tonight. Why?"

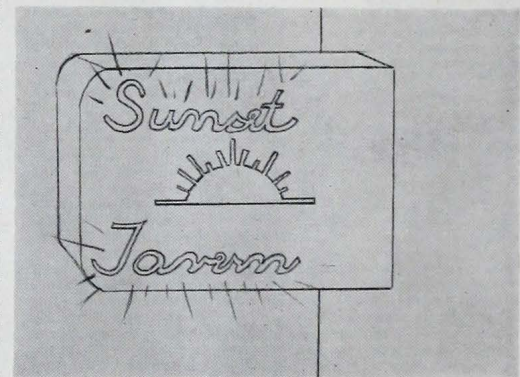
"Oh, I was just thinking about droppin' over to the Sunset awhile; I thought you might wanna join me."

"Well, I might see you over there after while, I don't know," he concluded, thinking of the beers he had shared with Leland. He liked Leland Butler. He was an honest, straightforward guy who had been swell, he thought.

"Yep, Leland's really been good to me," he later told Carole Williams. In the last few weeks Carole had performed every feminine trick she knew to attract David Lee's attention, all to no avail, and when she was finally resigned to hopeless defeat, he had called her, and with no attempt at useless conversation, he simply and frankly asked, "Do you want to go out with me?"

Flushing, but unshamedly, she had replied, "Yes," sensing the danger of being coy or pretentious.

Now, sitting here listening to his obvious praise of Leland Butler, she was fearful of voicing her opinion. "You know he's a deacon



thoughts prevented sleep. He remembered another time his mother had cried—the day he told her he was going to marry Janet.

"David Lee, she's a tramp! She's not good enough for you," she had fairly screeched.

"Well she was right," he thought. "She sure as hell was right, and God, but I did hurt Mom."

His eyes darkened with anger as he remembered Janet, the small, curly blond he had married during his senior year of college. "I married her because I loved her, not because she was having my baby, but because I loved her. I knew she wasn't satisfied with me, and I knew she was seeing that guy that got her pregnant, but, how could any human being leave a little baby alone at night to go to some joint and booze it up? God, Cindy could have died, but Janet didn't think of that. Oh, no; the only time she thought of Cindy was when I got the divorce and she knew I was going to take Cindy away from her. Women just can't be trusted. That's the

in our church, yet I know he has been repeatedly unfaithful to his wife," she ventured.

"Can you prove it?" he asked tersely.

"Well, no," she began lamely.

"Then you'd better keep your mouth shut. The old motto is, 'don't believe anything you hear and only half of what you see,' and my motto is, 'opinion does not convict, and if you make a convicting statement about someone, you'd better have some mighty good proof to back it up with.'"

Embarrassed, she smiled and said, "Alright." After a sermon like that, she knew there was no need to try to convince him that he had a false impression of Leland. Nervously, she looked at her watch.

"Do you want to go home?" he asked.

"Well I'd better go soon. Father probably won't stay out very late and I told him I'd be home (Continued on page 5)

A Man Called Honest

(Continued from page 4)

by ten. It's after ten now and I wouldn't put it past him to come home early just to check on me."

"We'd better go, then," he said, rising to help her with her wrap. "What do you mean 'we'? David Lee, I have to go alone; someone might see us and tell father. I thought you understood that."

"Now, look, I am not letting you go home alone. Personally, I wouldn't care if Glendon did find out about us. You're acting childish and cowardly about this, as though you were ashamed of our relationship, as though you believe, as your father does, that divorce is a grave sin. Now, if it will make you feel any better, I can assure you that none of the guys over at work will tell your father, but actually I wouldn't care if they did. He has to find out sometime you know."

"That's easy for you to say," she thought, but said nothing, as he took her arm and guided her outside. "You don't know what he's like. You wouldn't believe me if I told you he isn't the great friend you think he is. To your face he smiles and treats you like the long-lost prodigal, then behind your back he talks about you like you were dirt," she thought.

He led her through the dark parking lot outside of the little restaurant to his car. He opened the door for her, and, as he walked around to his side of the car, Carole's eyes were fixed on the neon sign flashing from across the street. "Sunset Tavern," it said, and she could hear the laughter and hillbilly music floating from the juke box. Three cars were parked haphazardly in front of the joint. She immediately recognized one of them. It belonged to Leland Butler.

As David Lee closed his door, he placed his key in the ignition switch, but did not turn it on. Still not speaking nor looking at Carole, he lit a cigarette, inhaling deeply and letting the smoke escape with a sigh. She felt his hand reaching for hers in the seat. His fingers closed over hers almost fiercely. She held her breath and looked at him, waiting for him to speak, but he still stared straight ahead. Suddenly he flipped his half-smoked cigarette out the window and turned his face toward her, his eyes twinkling with a hint of amusement, yet his facial expression remained sober. She smiled understandingly as he turned on the ignition.

Sunday morning Carole dressed quickly for church. From the next bedroom she could hear her father snoring. She knew his hum-or would be unbearable this morning because he would be tired from his hunt last night. Still, she prepared his breakfast and woke him. Knowing the answer before she asked, she said, "Are you going to church this morning?"

"No, not this morning. I don't feel like it," he said. "That's what he always says," she thought. "I have never seen him go to church except the time they excluded Jill Rogers. Even when Mother was alive, he would never go with us, but he sure preached us a sermon if we didn't go."

During services, Carole felt someone staring at her. She looked across the aisle to see Leland Butler frowning at her. His eyes quickly averted, and he crossed his legs and folded his huge arms across his protruding stomach.

"After seeing him where I saw him last night it's no wonder his

stomach is protruding," she thought.

Leland was still relatively handsome, despite his thickening features and gray hair. He had a charming smile and young-looking blue eyes, which would widen with interest when he saw an attractive woman.

In the months that followed, Carole lived for those secret meetings with David Lee. She could hardly believe this newly-found happiness, but the last few times they had been together, David Lee had been strangely moody. What Carole feared most finally happened. Her bubble of happiness exploded with his crushing words.

"Carole, I don't think we should see each other any more. I want you to leave me," he said, looking directly into her eyes.

She was stunned speechless for a moment. Finally she asked, "But David Lee, why? If it's because I haven't told my father about us, you know I will eventually."

"No, it isn't that. My God, Carole you're so young. I don't want to hurt you, but I'm going to. I know you love me, and I'm very, very fond of you, Carole, but I don't love you and I never will love you or any other woman, so I'm asking you to leave me."

"David Lee, you can't mean this. We've had a beautiful relationship. Oh, I know we don't always agree on everything, but we've never had any real problems. How can you just walk out and say I mean absolutely nothing to you?"

"Carole, Carole, it's because you do mean something to me that I'm asking you to get out, before it's too late."

"You know I won't leave you. I can't," she cried, tears welling in her eyes.

"Then I'm leaving you," he said with a tone of finality in his voice.

She knew there was no need to argue with him now. He'd made up his mind and nothing she could say would change it. Instantly she grabbed her coat and ran blindly out of the restaurant to the car with tears streaming down her cheeks. By the time David Lee reached her, she had regained her composure, and was sitting rigidly with her face turned away from him staring at the beer joint across the street, sniffing. She noted once more, perhaps for the last time, that same neon sign across the street. She listened and heard the same laughter and hillbilly music that she had heard the first night she was here with David Lee. Leland Butler's car was just pulling out on the main highway. He had someone with him. She turned her head. The sight made her want to cry again.

"Carole," David Lee said softly.

"What," she said miserably without looking at him.

"Can't you understand that I had to do this. I'm too old for you; I've been married and divorced. The odds are against us to begin with and... Carole, look at me."

Reluctantly, she raised her eyes and looked at him.

"I'm only trying to be honest with you," he said.

"Oh, you and your goddamn honesty! Yes, if a person, goes to Heaven for telling the truth, they've already got a place reserved for you," she yelled, then meekly added, "Please take me home."

The next morning when she awoke, she heard her father moving about in the kitchen, so she wearily went to prepare his breakfast.

"Did you go coon-hunting last night, father?" she asked.

"Yeah. Duke was supposed to come up and go with me, but he didn't show up, so I went by myself," he said.

Carole's face flushed, and she turned quickly away, busying her-

I Would Write More Than I Do

I would write more than I do—
If I had a pencil that would write perfect lines
All day without ceasing, all day perfect rhymes.
I'd write stories and poems and letters galore
Of romance and lovers and songs of the world,
If I had a pencil like that.
But erasers on pencils wear out very quickly,
And lead must be sharpened almost every day.
And soon with much trouble and in vain I would grip
Its hardened eraser and broken old tip.
By then I would surely explain with a yen,
"I'd write more than I do, if I had a pen
That would write perfect rhyme all day."

—Robert Newton Cooper



The Schmidt Affair

(Continued from page 3)

young lawyer beckoned with Grass to come in.

"Have you seen Schmidt this morning?"

"Hmm... now that I think of it, I don't guess that I have, why?"

"Why?" croaked Grass. "Because every morning he's here without fail, and today."

"Ah, no doubt he's still in the basement," Campbell broke in. He seemed totally disinterested. Grass shook his head and buzzed Pepperidge on the intercom; "Juke box" Schmidt called it. The silver-haired senior lawyer hadn't seen the janitor either. Grass then asked the secretaries if they had seen the amiable Schmidt that

self at the sink.

"Grace Sturm's body was found down on Willow river last night," he said, not looking at her.

"What?" she asked, shocked.

"Isn't that the girl who worked at the Sunset Tavern up on the hill; that place over across from Bob's restaurant?" she asked, and he nodded his head.

"What happened?" she asked. "Don't know yet. Probably somebody killed her. Butcher knife was stuck clear through her stomach," he said.

"How awful! Who could have done it and why?" she asked.

"Don't know."

A knock sounded at the door. It was Leland Butler.

"Hello, Glendon," he said, sitting down at the table.

"Howdy, Leland. Carole get Leland a cup of coffee," he ordered. "Guess you heard about the Sturm girl. Boy somebody's going to pay for that, but good!" Leland said.

"They got any idea who done it?" asked Glendon.

"No, I told the sheriff this morning that I saw her last night with Duke," Leland said.

"You what?" Carol said whirling to face Leland.

"Yeah, I saw them coming out of Bob's restaurant last night as I was driving by," he said.

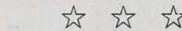
"Are you sure it was David Lee," she whispered.

"Yeah. Well, you know what a reputation Duke has with girls. Didn't surprise me too much. I hear... his voice droned on and on.

She disregarded these last remarks; she was used to them by now. Interrupting him she asked, "What time did you see them?"

"Bout ten-thirty," he answered.

"You liar!" she screamed. "You dirty, filthy, rotten liar!"



day. No one had.

This was the first time in nineteen years that Otto had failed to report for work. Grass thought, as he took the elevator down to the basement. No Schmidt, just as he had expected. He couldn't pinpoint just what motivated his curiosity about Schmidt, and the janitor's mysterious absence only prodded it more.

"So what; a guy doesn't show up for the first time in nineteen years. Maybe he's sick, or just tired. We all took Schmidt's presence for granted, and when he decided to take a day off, you make a helluva big case out of it. Don't worry about it. He'll be here tomorrow," Pepperidge confidentially announced.

Grass nodded his head and shuffled out into his own office. He had some papers to work on.

The next morning, Grass went to the basement before reporting to his own office. No battered silver lunch bucket rested atop the water

"Carole!" Glendon roared. She paid no attention to her father, and her voice shook with rage as she said, "You did not see David Lee with Grace Sturm last night!"

"Carole!" Glendon shouted again. "Hold your tongue! How do you know anything about it anyway?"

Leland's face had drained of its color.

"I know because it was me who was with him last night," she said quietly, then turned and ran from the kitchen to the living room. Frantically she picked up the receiver of the telephone and dialed with shaking fingers. Finally, when the voice answered, she cried, "David Lee, oh, God, we've got to do something! Grace Sturm, the girl that worked as waitress at the Sunset Tavern was killed last night. David Lee, they think you did it!"

"Yes, I know," he said.

"You know? Her voice sounded surprised."

"Yes."

"But how?"

"The sheriff is here now."

"Did you tell him the truth?"

"Yes."

"Tell him I want to talk to him. I want to tell him, too."

"Thanks, Carole. But that won't be necessary. He knows I didn't kill the girl. No one did. She killed herself. She left a note in her room. There were no fingerprints on the knife but hers and she was four months pregnant."

"That's terrible," she said sympathetically. "Well I guess it's all over then, huh?"

"No, Carole, it's only the beginning. Goodbye," he said and she heard the receiver click on the other end.

"Goodbye," she whispered.

heater, as customary. He tried to call Schmidt, but the janitor had no phone.

"Wait another day, if the S.O.B. doesn't show up tomorrow, I'll hire a new maintenance man—as good as Schmidt was, this business of not informing the employer of absence is intolerable." Pepperidge had spoken.

Grass thought of locating Schmidt's flat and investigating, but decided to wait until the next day. Besides, Judy wanted to go shopping after Jim was off. He didn't trust her with the car, since the left fender was neatly crinkled, thanks to the wife.

Everybody has noticed the effect of Schmidt's absence. His big toothy grin and "Hullo" were missed by all. Nobody spoke of the Mets during those two days. The windows were dirty. The floor was neglected and looked as if the Red Army had marched on it.

Grass again searched the basement for the missing janitor, the next morning. No results. Perplexed, he scratched his brown-hatched head, and reported to his office. Miss Damien inquired about "that nice Otto." So had the others.

At ten o'clock coffee break, Pepperidge and Campbell called their younger partner into Pepperidge's Office. The morning New York Times had arrived, and was spread on the senior lawyer's desk like a war map.

"Jim, boy, check this little article in this morning's Times." Grass wondered what had captured Pepperidge's attention since the Wall Street Journal never escaped old Bill's eyes first.

There on the front page, near the bottom, was an item headed by "AGENTS NAB EX-NAZI." Grass' heart throbbed as he read on.

Tel Aviv ISRAEL (AP)
The Israeli News Agency today claims that Israeli agents have netted the infamous Nazi SS Colonel Hans Kirsch, 55, who had successfully evaded the intense manhunt for 21 years.

Sources here report that Kirsch was captured secretly in New York City where he had been hiding. Col. Kirsch personally commanded the SS Unit that liquidated 7,000 Jews near Kiev, in the Ukraine, in the autumn of 1942.

The former German officer, is believed to have escaped capture after the war by posing as a Wehrmacht private. He is believed to have hidden in South American until 1947, at which time he was reported somewhere in the United States.

Kirsch is also remembered as the unwavering Nazi who persecuted Wehrmacht officers on the Russian Front for implication in the attempted assassination of Hitler in 1944.

The Israeli Minister of Justice today stated that (he) has several eye-witnesses to the heinous crime committed by this German monster, and we will use them to testify against Kirsch.

In Bonn, West Germany, a spokesman for the Ministry of Justice claimed to have had a warrant for Kirsch's arrest since 1949. The German ministry did not elaborate on its plans to bring Kirsch to Bonn for trial.

Details of Kirsch's life in the United States are vague at this moment. The Israeli News Agency promises, however, a complete statement on the years in hiding of this Nazi murderer as soon as possible.

Grass dropped the paper, stunned.

"Good Christ! He looked at his two partners, equally astounded. "Could it be? Could it be?" Silence.

Pepperidge turned to the window and looked below at the throbbing mass of humanity that was New York.

"I've got to hire a new janitor. Would you gentlemen care for some coffee?"

A Thing Of Steel

(Continued from Page 1)

sweat and labor lay there. He had had his own business now for some years.

But success of that kind had not been the answer either. Ned had found that out a long time ago, and the realization had sent him to Korea. He rubbed a thumb across the black, silver inlaid surface of the locket and remembered.

"I almost made it that time," Ned spoke aloud and held the locket up to look at it. He did not need to open it to know what lay inside, but he pressed the hidden spring that released the catch and revealed the thin piece of gleaming steel coiled into an especially designed satin-lined groove.

His mind flashed back. He couldn't have been more than twelve or thirteen when he had stood watching his father clean out his tool box in the family garage. The piece of blue metal had caught his eye as his father had tossed it toward the trash can, and Ned had gone after it. It had been about four inches long and no more than a quarter of an inch wide. The extreme thinness and flexibility of it had fascinated him, and it had felt warm in his hands. Now, it was less than half of its original width, and the long-edged edges were razor keen. It had never meant anything really special to Ned until Korea—just one of those lucky pieces that people keep without any real association. It had been only natural boyhood curiosity and experimentation that had led him to sharpen it and wheedle his mother out of the old fashioned silver locket to keep it in. She had not asked why he had wanted it, and he had not volunteered.

Then Janie had decided to make a case of it, he thought. There was no bitterness in the memory, but it had all grown out of one of those casual incidents that stubbornness sometimes builds into issues. She had asked to see inside the locket one night, and he had refused her. That had not been the first time, but the fit that she had thrown that time led to one of their quarrels and maybe, he wondered now, to his decision to go to Korea. But from that time on, he had kept the locket on a chain around his neck and had refused to allow her to open it. She had never seen the piece of metal; in fact, he didn't remember that anyone other than the old Cinnamon on Formosa who had designed and patiently made the present locket case for him had seen it. Aside from the sore point it had become between him and Janie, it had not really mattered one way or another.

Ned looked now at the silver lines on the case. The old Chinese craftsman had said that the strange characters they formed read, in his language, "Each man has his lot of days."

"Well, my number wasn't up that day," Ned spoke again aloud as he recalled being told that the silver locket had deflected a bullet and saved his life. It was then that it and its still intact contents had begun to assume importance in his life. He had taken it as an omen, Ned who had never believed in such things, that he would live to find what he sought, and he had later taken the battered locket to the old Chinese. It was the same silver melted down that had formed the delicate characters in the design and the rim around its edge.

"Yes, I almost had it for a while," Ned relived, for a moment, the weary wait in a lit-

tle village just outside Seoul. He had noticed a little girl; he didn't know just how old she must have been, not more than four or five, surely. She had been standing there apart from everyone else, her bare feet motionless in the dust and her thin arms protruding from her ragged clothing. Something about the abject little figure with the too large eyes had moved him to go to her and place in her hand Hershey bars—"Fummy," he thought, "I even remember what kind it was."—, but he had no sooner turned to walk back to his comrades when a commotion behind him had made him whirl. From where they had come he had had no idea. At least six or seven hungry young boys had swarmed over the child and had wrested the candy bar from her before he could reach her. As they fought among themselves, he had lifted her from the dust. She had cried no tears and had offered no resistance when he had cleaned the blood from her forehead with his own handkerchief. She had not moved from his side on the rough bench, however, when he had finished and had found another candy bar for her. Finally, from somewhere a voice had called, and the little girl had risen to her feet. She had started to move in the direction of the voice when she hesitated. She had turned then and retraced her steps to Ned's knee. For a moment, the two had looked into each other's eyes; then she had reached up and had drawn one tiny hand gently down along his cheek. No smile, just the one fleeting touch and she had gone.

"Oh, my God!" Ned had cried half aloud, and a wave of pain and anger had swept through him and over him so violent that he had become miserably, physically ill.

Later, the memory of that moment had led Ned and his buddies to build a recreation center for themselves through the back door of which they had handed out any food or extras that they could manage to the stream of waifs that came to stand quietly outside. He thought that maybe the officers had known and had turned their eyes away; at any rate, he had been moved out a couple of months later, and the emotion had passed.

From Korea he had come back to the nice, clean, orderly life he had left. He had known that Janie had not been lonely, and it hadn't mattered to him. He had picked up the reins of his business, expanded, taken in a partner, and prospered. He had built a summer house on the lagoons, and Janie had been delighted. Another house, this time on the newly-developing Morgan Street allotment, had made Janie's happiness almost complete. She was back in the social whirl she had adored. Sometimes Ned had envied her simplicity and had wished he could have been so easily satisfied.

Just today he had completed the sale of the house on the lagoons. Janie didn't know about it yet, but the money was already deposited in a trust account for her. Before he had gone to Korea, he had had a will drawn up that would have transferred the bulk of his estate to that same fund in the event that something would have happened to him. It would still suffice, Janie might have to modify her tastes somewhat, but she would still do all right.

The scream of his reel brought Ned upright. He reached for the pole and played the fish for a few minutes until it tired and he could bring it alongside the boat. He lifted a lake pike from the water, momentarily admired its size, and carefully removed the barbed hook from its throat. Then he held it over the side and let it slide out of his hand beneath the waves.

Ned scanned the lake, but there seemed to be no one near enough to tell what he was doing. He rose in the boat, bending his knees to balance against the sway, and



Homecoming

By ROBERT SYMCKAK

The Third Reich had crumbled on its foundations. For twenty-three year old Jan Bartemski, the German surrender on May 7, 1945, meant that he was going home. Home... that word seemed strange to the young Pole. He hadn't seen Warsaw since October, 1940, when shortly following his eighteenth birthday he had been deported to Germany as a laborer.

For five years, Bartemski worked under Nazi guard with 3,000 other deportees from the conquered lands of France, Holland, and Belgium, building roads for the mighty German military machine to rumble across on its way to conquest. He had done everything in his power, Bartemski thought, to slow the pace of his masters' progress.

The sight of American troops liberating the labor camps over-

stripped off his trousers to the swimming trunks he wore beneath. Seated again on the boat seat, he opened the locket and withdrew the piece of steel.

"You'd think I'd at least feel something now," But Ned remained detached, a spectator almost of his own movements. He extended his left arm and slid his gold watch farther along. Carefully, he pressed the point of metal against the big artery in his wrist. He marveled at the ease with which it broke through the tissue and slid in. Quick, brilliant spurts of blood followed its removal, and Ned hesitated just a moment, looking at the smeared metal. He had been going to wash it and return it to its case, but he let it slide into the water. Then he crouched and rolled over the side of the boat, catching its edge and cupping it as he went.

Something crashed against Ned's skull, but he knew it had not been the edge of the boat.

"Damn!" It was only a flash of thought as unconsciousness and water closed over him. "I forgot about that tackle box."

Somewhere there were voices. They faded in and out—unintelligible, almost heard, then there were faces, faces without bodies. Finally, Ned found that, if he opened his eyes, only ever so slightly, through the slits his vision became clearer.

"Boat accident." "Lost a lot of blood." Slowly the words were sorting themselves out. Ned tried to lift his hand to wipe across his eyes but it wouldn't move. Through the slits, he traced the thin tube

whelped the young worker with joy. Soon he would see his beloved, mother, father, and baby sister, whom he hadn't heard from in five years. How mother cried when the hated German soldiers came to take him away...

The journey across Germany by train was marked by anticipation as the Polish border drew near. As the old pre-war locomotive pulled its load of emancipated humans closer to Warsaw, Bartemski silently noted the lack of smiling people as he glanced through the window. Everywhere, there was desolation. Every railway station along the route was bombed out; only charred masses of black wood remained.

Warsaw at last, Bartemski almost jumped off the coach with impatience. Almost immediately, the freed laborer noticed what seemed like hundreds of Russian soldiers near the station. He had heard they were here.

The spring breeze playfully brushed Bartemski's long brown hair as he stood in the street surveying the surrounding city. The Warsaw that eighteen year old Jan was taken away from was no longer here. Everywhere he looked was a bombed-out, shell of a building. The streets were filled with rubble. It was an eerie sensation.

Walking at a brisk pace, Bartemski reached Marszalska Ulica, his own street. The entire first block was leveled completely. He paused and glanced about. God, what happened... where is everybody... no automobiles... no people. He stumbled on a huge chunk of

to a bottle in the air.

"Hell!" Ned thought he had shouted the word that exploded in his mind. He had blundered; he was still alive. He became aware of something cold against his shoulder, and he struggled to think what it could be. Then he knew—the locket.

"Each man has his lot of days." For an instant a flush of hot anger rose in him, but it faded into something else. Ned did not know quite what it was but he was suddenly glad and awed by the force of it.

"His blood pressure is coming up," one of the voices said.

Ned did not resist the needle that slid into his arm. It would put him to sleep, he knew, but he would awaken. He would have time to feel this new sensation. He would really learn how to live.

stone, and continued down what was once one of the most beautiful streets in the capital.

A man in a dark hat and coat approached him. It seemed odd that this individual should be attired in such manner, Bartemski thought, since it was rather warm, "Have you seen or heard anything of the Bartemski family?" inquired the young man. The stranger did not lift his gaze from the rubble-straw ground as he shook his head negatively. Bartemski speeded his pace as the rain slowly pelted down. Among the charred ruins, he recognized the store front of the grocery market the Bartemski family patronized in better days. Hanging loosely from a blackened beam was a partially bullet riddled sign proclaiming "WEISSMANN BROTHERS CO." They were Jews, and Bartemski knew what had happened to the Jews.

The street was such that the rain-soaked man could not recognize at what portion his house was. Finally, he reached a streetcorner on which stood a bent and rusty marker. He knew where he was. Just around the next block was home. He began running, watching carefully not to trip on the bricks lying about. Panting, Bartemski reached "home". His not-so-healthy body began to tremble like the windows in the labor camp when Allied bombs fell too near. There was nothing on the block but the scarred ruins of the cathedral, with its cross defiantly jutting skyward.

What had happened to Mama, Papa, and Maria?

There was a deadly silence all around. Not a soul was in the streets. Nothing stirred but the steady dripping of rain from a spout which no longer serviced a home. The entire boulevard was a field of gray ruins. The rubble was piled as high as the buildings they formerly composed. Tears streaked down the face of Jan Bartemski, mixing with the falling rain. Two rows of street car tracks protruded out from the wet pavement, twisted in a vulgar knot at the end. It was as if all the fury the world had known was released where young Bartemski stood.

The sound of shuffling feet snapped him out of the trance-like state. It was the same coated figure he had spoken to before. As the haggard man passed, without looking up, he shook his head. Bartemski did not see the stranger's motion because he too stared at the torn pavement. He was home.