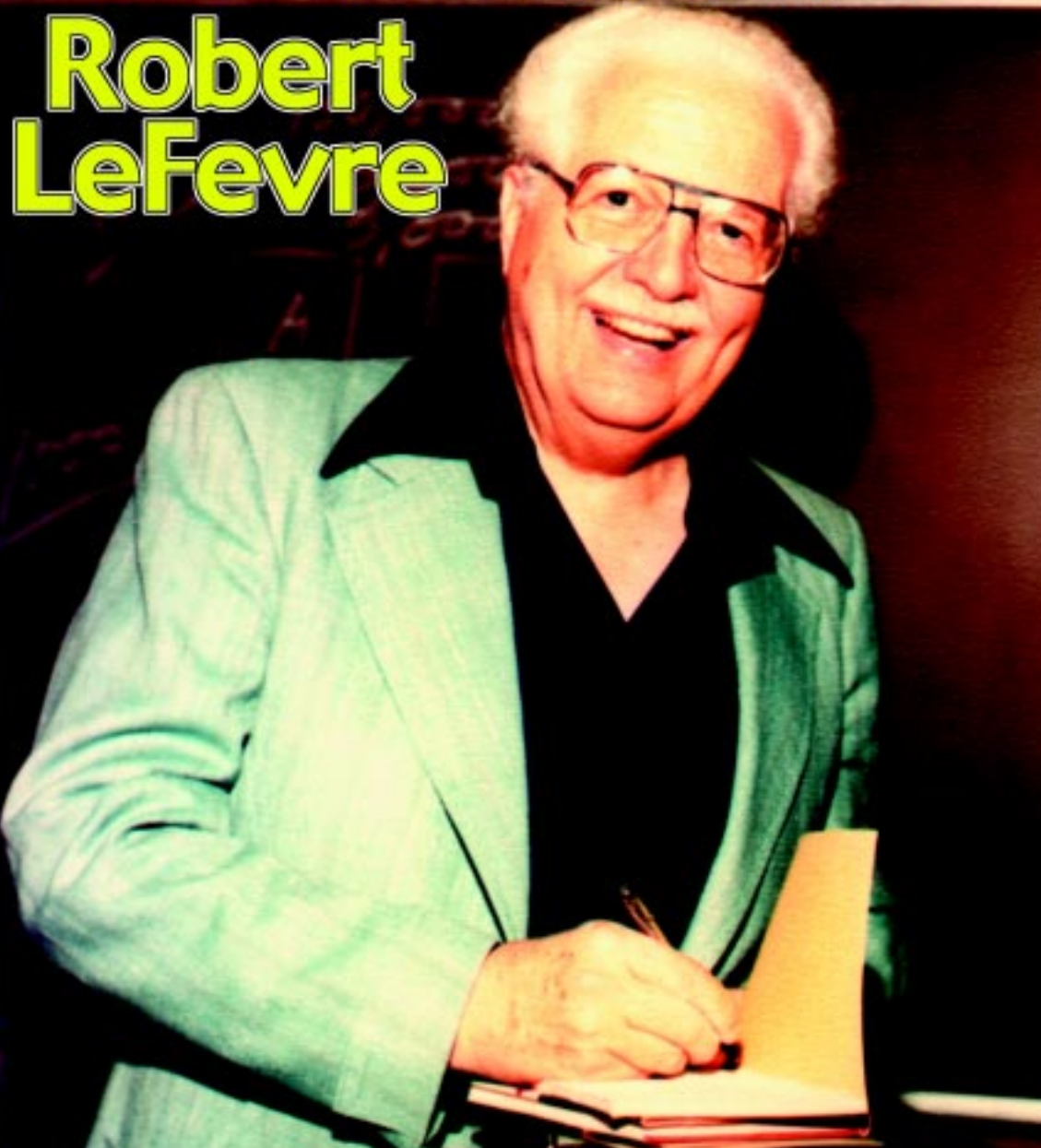


A Way to Be Free

The Autobiography of

Robert

LeFevre

A photograph of Robert LeFevre, an older man with white hair and glasses, wearing a light blue blazer over a dark shirt. He is smiling and sitting at a desk, writing in a notebook with a pen. The background is dark and out of focus.

Volume One
The Making of a Modern
American Revolutionary

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A Way to Be Free

The Autobiography of Robert LeFevre

Volume I
***The Making of a Modern
American Revolutionary***



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A Note from the Publisher

After my first encounter with Bob LeFevre, listening to a speech he gave at the Hunter College Libertarian Conference in New York City, in September, 1972, I braved my first and only ride on the back of a motorcycle, holding on for dear life through mid-Manhattan traffic, to meet him at his hotel room. We immediately hit it off, talking until two a.m., after which I was convinced that I seriously needed to rethink some of my most cherished notions about the nature of justice. Bob was incredibly generous with his time to this first-year college student.

Soon afterwards, we entered into extensive correspondence, resulting in his inviting me out to his and Loy's home in Santa Ana, California, in February, 1973. During that visit, I did a short taped interview with Bob that was published in *New Libertarian Notes*, in June 1973.

Two years later, in May, 1975, I invited Bob to be the keynote speaker at the second CounterCon conference on libertarian economics, which I organized off-season at a summer camp owned by relatives of mine. Three months later I moved to Southern California, and Bob's presence there was undoubtedly one of the attractions.

Bob LeFevre was one of my best friends until the day he left us. This was no exclusive honor since you'd have to work overtime *not* to be one of Bob LeFevre's friends. My aunt Henri, an ideological socialist for her entire life, was charmed by Bob's two presentations at the CounterCon conference, despite Bob's arguing the opposite of just about everything she believed.

I am delighted not only to be able to publish the life of Robert LeFevre, in his own words, for the first time anywhere, but also, to be able to publish in upcoming months, in addition to his classic nonfiction works, previously squirreled-away manuscripts including two novels and a short story collection.

I thank Loy LeFevre for trusting me with the honor of bringing the major life's work of Robert LeFevre to a world sorely in need of both his ideas and his kindness.

I also thank Victor, Veronica, and Vanessa Koman for the arduous

task of OCR scanning in the photocopy of a 2096 page typescript of uneven quality.

Finally, I extend my gratitude to Wendy McElroy, an accomplished author in her own right, for the marvelous feat of editing this massive work to the high standards that Bob LeFevre required during his career as a writer, editor, and publisher. Wendy started with often-hashed text files, from a manuscript which was dictated in large part by Bob LeFevre to his secretary, Ruth Dazey, and Wendy polished this diamond-in-the-rough into a Hope Diamond.

—J. Neil Schulman, June 9, 1999

**To Loy LeFevre,
Ruth Dazey
Edith Shank
and Marji Llewellyn**

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Foreword

by Loy LeFevre

I met Bob LeFevre on March 17, 1943, and he changed my life.

Until that moment, my life was music, singing on the radio, on WFBR and WBAL, Baltimore. I had five vocal scholarships with five different teachers. My last scholarship was with Eugene Martinet, director of the Baltimore Civic Opera.

I first saw Bob across the room, talking on the phone. A voice inside me said, “That is the man you are going to marry!”

The rest of the story is in the book.

Bob changed the life of everyone who met him. He had a devastating smile, honest blue eyes, and a charisma that drew people to him like a magnet. He was the most honest man I ever knew, somewhat like Don Quixote. He saw good in everyone, and nothing but evil in big government. He learned that lesson the hard way.

He never wavered in anything he stood for. “Two evils don’t make a right,” he would say about voting. “The majority is never right, only misguided by the media hype and excitement.”

His quote—“The man who knows what freedom means will find a way to be free.”—was carved on a large wooden plank by Gene Hauske, one of our first students. It was at the school entrance in Douglas County, Colorado.

We opened the school in May, 1957. We held classes for 16 years. People came from all over the country and the world.

I am happy to say that I shared 42 years of Bob’s life. There was never a dull moment.

I hope that you, dear reader, will come to know and understand and, yes, even to admire a man who always stood by the truth.

—Loy LeFevre, June 8, 1999

“The man who knows what freedom means will find a way to be free.”

—Robert LeFevre, October 13, 1911–May 13, 1986

Prologue

I am making some fundamental assumptions upon which my life and my philosophy are based. These are bedrock ideas that I cannot prove, but which evidence supports.

First, I assume that human beings are real. Whatever variations may occur within the genus homo, the root characteristics remain. This means that human nature is also real. It may be complex, but it exists and its various convolutions can be discerned, identified and classified.

Second, I assume that the world on which we human beings exist is real. This real world contains land, water, and atmosphere. Its surface, upon which human beings live, is subject to a relatively wide range of temperatures. Various species other than human beings also live on this world. Whatever is on this world, or in it, is here. What isn't here, isn't here. The world is what it is. And human beings, including human nature, are what they are.

Next, I assume that by studying the nature of human beings and the nature of the world they inhabit, it will be possible to theorize the best possible relationships obtainable. These I will call "ideal." That does not mean they are ideal in any cosmic sense of perfection. It means that, if we deal with the realities before us intelligently and reasonably, then we improve our chances of survival, including the probability of living in relative ease, happiness, comfort, and joy for a maximum of human beings.

I am assuming that, if we persist in believing human beings are what they are not, if we persist in fictionalizing reality—pretending that it is what we want it to be rather than what it is—then we will create distress, unhappiness, failure and misery.

I am, therefore, suggesting a blue print for human behavior that would produce an ideal civilization. (The best obtainable civilization based on reality.) I am not suggesting that human beings will follow the blue print.

Finally, I am assuming that our species homo sapiens "ought to" survive. I do not know this, and I cannot prove this assumption. It is self-serving and can readily be discounted if you are of some other species. In short, I do not offer a cosmology but, rather, a

humanology. Its aim is to perpetuate and elevate man to the highest reality attainable.

What I have in mind is the development of a civilization wherein human well being will be maximized and the horror of war, famine, pestilence, and cruelty will be reduced to the degree possible, or eliminated. I deem it unlikely that any attempt will be made toward this end unless a vision exists, a blue print if you will, of how things might be, given the realities with which we must work.

Chapter I

How can you and I exist in this world, along with millions of other human beings, in such a way that we maximize human well being? Further, how can we accomplish this without inflicting our wills by force upon others, or without suffering injury, privation or death as others impose their wills upon us? Mankind has diverse objectives. We have certain interests in common. We have interests exclusively our own. We even have interests that are in conflict with the interests of others.

How can we resolve this condition in such a way that human well being is maximized? I am using that term advisedly. In view of the nature of man and the nature of this world, I must assert I can conceive of no method, however well thought through or nobly motivated, that will produce success and happiness for everyone. Everyone will not achieve well being. Some will be unjustly treated and abused. Some will doubtless receive more blessings and happiness at the hands of their fellows than they have earned.

Some will die before they should, and others will live on when we can think of no reason for such longevity.

Realistically speaking, some will win and some will lose. Some will deserve their victories or their losses; some will not.

Two major avenues have repeatedly been used to maximize human well being. Both have failed and, in failing, increased the amount of misery and woe human beings have endured.

One avenue and perhaps the most pernicious is the politico-military effort to bring the entire world under a single government. The idea surfaces repeatedly. It has done so since the days of Alexander the Great and possibly even before. Who knows what dreams Hammurabi, Sargon I or Rameses may have had? Alexander, the Roman Caesars, Ghengis Khan, Napoleon, Hitler et al, have tried to remold the world by force. The justification is that if all men could be conquered, then there would be a single world ruler. The United Nations is something of an embryonic and fortunately anemic effort in this direction. The League of Nations was a previous abortive effort.

Given a single world ruler, we would have peace between na-

tions and wars would cease. The unhappy truth is that were a single world ruler to emerge the nature of man and the nature of the world would not change. While wars between nations might cease, internal acts of rebellion, violence and terrorism would continue. To obtain a single world order by force and violence would leave the majority of our species in a state of suppression, frustration and poverty.

Suppression and frustration engender bitterness and an eagerness to retaliate. To maintain even a semblance of order, it would be necessary to rely upon greater and greater suppression and to impose tyranny on the peoples of the earth. Meanwhile, the genetic loss, as well as the loss of natural resources brought about by conquest could conceivably impose a social retrogression that might never be overcome.

The second major effort has been made through religious proselytizing. Hundreds if not thousands of zealots, seeking ever to create universal harmony and understanding, have offered their particular theology as *the true faith*. The justification has been that, once men all agree on a particular series of concepts or beliefs, they will stop imposing on one another. To date, this effort has also fallen short.

Human beings have never yet agreed on anything, nor is it likely that they will. Indeed, everyone in the world does not yet believe that two and two make four, or that the world is round. They have profound differences in opinions, attitudes, ambitions, and ultimate purposes. They have deep seated, emotionally inflammatory theological positions. Tragically, governments and the use of arms have often been invoked in a last ditch effort to spread, solidify or convert people to one opinion.

It is safe to say that the opinions I will express will be rejected as well as accepted and, hence, may indeed become cause for controversy.

The single merit I can claim at this juncture is that I am not seeking to obtain agreement. I am seeking only to outline the reality that exists, not to win support, start a movement, or contrive concurrence. The reason is clear. It can't be done. Additionally I do not know everything. Therefore, I can be wrong. What evil I could impose if I obtain agreement on a point that happened to be in error! I do not intend to be wrong, but the mind and the memory are both

fallible. So, I propose to set down what is so, to the degree I am capable of recognizing it.

While I can be wrong, there is nothing that says I must be. I will try to be a truth teller. And I am quite sure that some of what I say will be true. At least it will be as true as evidence and experience make it seem true to me. That is the best anyone can do.

The nature of man is such that he tends to believe what he *wants* to believe. Whether it is true or not usually provides only a brief hesitation. Men believe on the basis of their likes and dislikes. Unfortunately, much of what we believe to be true may be partially true. Absolute truth or absolute falsehood is rare. A total falsehood is easier to detect than a partial falsehood. Even a total truth is totally true only in context.

In hopes of effective communication, let me offer a few essential definitions and explanations of what I mean by certain words.

1. I use the word 'man' in its generic rather than its genetic sense. It means any and all members of the genus *homo sapiens* whether male or female, young or old, hale or frail.

2. I use the term 'objective' to denote a thing or condition that exists in itself irrespective of man's awareness of its existence. The word applies to animate as well as inanimate objects. It helps to categorize things or conditions which, perhaps cannot be seen or felt, but which, by the use of instruments can be found to have real existence: i.e. radio frequencies, distant stars, etc.

3. I use the term 'subjective' to denote an opinion, a point of view, an idea, or a process of evaluation—none of which can be formed or come into existence without a sense of awareness, i.e. the working of the mind.

4. I use the term 'conjunctive' to denote the *successful* merging of the objective with the subjective. When such a merging occurs, the individual may be said to have acquired *knowledge*.

Many things exist in fact. For a majority of his life, man lives in relation to a single basic rule—the law of cause and effect. He acts in a way that gets what he desires and avoids what he does not desire. If he understands himself, he knows what he wants and also knows what he does not want. If he knows the characteristics and behavior of things in this world, then he can act successfully. Sometimes cause and effect are clearly connected. I see a book. I decide to pick up the book. I reach out my hand, grasp the book and pick it

up. That is simple. Sometimes cause and effect are complicated. I decide I would like many apples. I do not see any apples. I must find some, if I am to have any. I find some in a store. The storekeeper wants money for his apples. To get the apples either I must steal them, thus inflicting a loss on the storekeeper, or I must get the money to buy them. To get the money, I may have to render a service or sell something I own. This may lead to many complicated procedures. But if I steal the apples *that* may lead to many other complicated procedures.

In any of the instances respecting apples, I set in motion a series of causes, one after the other, ultimately leading to my acquisition of many apples. The more the person understands himself and what he wants, the more he understands about apples and how to get them, the more swiftly and certainly he can get what he wants.

Cause and effect mean that man is largely a creature who *reacts* to his environment. But man is more than a reactor. He is also a creature of uncaused cause. He can, and sometimes does, act as a true initiator. He may want something that does not exist. If he understands reality, he may be able to bring it into existence. Every architect, engineer and artist knows this. Man is creative. He can instigate.

But man is limited as a creator. He cannot make something out of nothing. No human being can. The best man can do in his creative capacities is to reformulate something that already exists. It follows again that the more he knows about the objective reality with which he can work, the more successful he can be as a creative person.

Living entails feeling. The way a person *feels* is the way the person *is*. Every person is capable of feeling either pain or pleasure. Today, many of us think of pain as resulting from some physical illness or injury, and pleasure as resulting from some gratification.

I would prefer a larger arena in which to examine human feeling, so I will use the term *satisfaction* in contrast to *dissatisfaction*. A person can experience satisfaction in many ways that the word pleasure does not encompass. For instance, a man may work hard all day, experience no gratification, and yet go to sleep *satisfied*. Similarly, a man may experience dissatisfaction at an auction at which someone tops his highest bid, and he does not obtain a cherished object. In this instance, the suffering is not from illness or

physical injury. The person's wishes have been thwarted, and dissatisfaction results.

The ultimate purpose of my writing is to maximize human satisfactions (not merely to pleasure-seeking) and to minimize human dissatisfactions, (not merely to fight disease and injury.)

No human being can feel anything without using his mind. Whatever we feel, satisfaction or dissatisfaction, we feel it *subjectively*. Usually, the feelings we have are reactions to the world around us—reactions we ourselves engender. Many have found that by using their minds correctly they can control their emotional reactions. They summon emotions they find satisfying. This is not easy, but it has been done, and it can be done to a greater extent than is presently believed. If a person does not wish or believe it possible to control his emotions, he becomes a creature of his emotions and they rule. Many people fear and, so, reject the idea that they can think and feel as they wish. They fear becoming responsible for themselves. This would deprive them of an alibi. ("The devil made me do it.")

Instead of seeing themselves as creatures of free will who are able to think, feel and act as they please, they see themselves as sensitive creatures who are acted upon by everything and everybody else. Thus, they seek happiness by trying to control others in the belief that human well being will be maximized. It is strange that many believe they cannot control themselves, but they can control others.

The important task is to learn the truth. If it is true man can think, feel, and act as he pleases, then it would be best for him to believe in that truth. Yet, because it creates anxiety, people do not want to believe it. Therefore, they believe what they want, whether it is in harmony with reality or not. However, their satisfaction in life will come only when their beliefs are in harmony with reality.

I am going to call man's natural ability to think, feel, and act as he pleases 'liberty'. In this sense, man is born in a state of liberty. Liberty is a natural endowment. The primitive man usually knows that his actions are under his own control. But he is not certain that he can think or feel except as outside forces manipulate him. The barbaric man knows that he can think and act as he pleases, but he does not believe he can learn about his emotions, and does not seek to do so. The barbarian is sure they arise as reactions only.

But the adult man, the mature, civilized person recognizes that he has control of his entire mental area including thinking, feeling, desire, emotion and so on.

Chapter II

I am an ignorant man. Try as I may, I have never overcome my lack of knowledge. I sit at my desk, looking back across the years. There is a considerable span of time behind me that stands at 'parade rest', waiting for the command, "Pass in review."

My hair is thinning and snowy white. My back aches, not so much from the weight of years as from military surgery on a ruptured disc between the fourth and fifth lumbar vertebrae. It is an ever-present ever painful reminder: the fine surgeon who took out 12 of the 13 pieces of cartilage composing the disc was as ignorant of the procedure as I was of military practices when I enlisted in the army. Why did he leave one piece, the largest? He did what any good scientist in a lab might have done. He tried various techniques and methods on different patients. Possibly if one piece remained it would grow back like the tail of certain lizards. Who could tell? That way I might come up with a full-sized rejuvenated disc! This surgical expectation has now been temporarily shelved. Whatever may be true of a lizard's tail apparently did not apply to mine. Thus my periodic agony, which contorts my features and compels reliance upon a cane, resulted from military vivisection. I was the laboratory animal used for the experiment.

I trust this observation does not engender animus toward the medical profession. Doctors are not deities. Like the rest of us, they learn by trial and error. When we do something right the first time, the only apparent lesson learned is how to brag. Failure has always been a more effective instructor than success. Pain teaches, whereas pleasure is a reward.

Indeed I have often thought that the truly fortunate in our society are the handicapped. Those who have been injured, ostracized, maligned, or abused tend to develop high IQ's. Those who seem totally normal fail to awaken concern and sometimes move about virtually unnoticed.

I was born in 1911 in a miserable shack on a dirt farm near Gooding, Idaho. I was abnormal and thus fortunate. Some protoplasmic globule, some stray bit of genetic blue printing in sperm or ovum caused me to be born with a spina bifida. So it is likely that

the difficulty I have had with my spine was not solely the result of my military misadventures.

The Idaho physician who delivered me opined that I would never walk and probably not survive. This dictum was all my mother needed. I became the center of her attention and the object of her considerable devotion. She loved me and made me feel important. I have no doubt that I was kept alive during the first twenty-four months largely by her total commitment to my well being.

Among my earliest recollections are long monologues in which she confided all manner of things to me. Of course, I didn't understand. But there was one phrase that stuck. I was different. She insisted on it again and again. And I *would* walk. She loved me. And love made the difference. The doctor said I would not walk, but she said 'yes.' Of course, I was not like other girls and boys. I would have to learn to take exceptionally good care of myself. Mother wanted me to understand and, slowly, she had her way with my mind. I was "different," but this did not mean others were my superiors. Quite the contrary. I had been marked by whatever powers there were in a very special way. I was "superior"—others merely "ordinary." By the time I was three, I emerged from a bout with pneumonia and began to gain strength. By then, Mother's prejudices, hopes, and beliefs had been indelibly inscribed. Make no mistake about the impact of earliest impressions upon infants. They are profound. Mother was the middle child of a family of three, with an older sister and a younger brother. Her father had been a physician with a semi-lucrative practice in Minneapolis. He died the year I was born.

At the age of 13, Mother had been very ill. Bernarr MacFadden, one of the first health faddists in the country had written to the effect that flesh foods were unhealthful and should not be eaten. Mother, in her illness, decided to stop eating meat. She regained her health after doing so. Obviously that confirmed MacFadden.

Mother decided that if she ever had children they would be raised as vegetarians. She also concluded that alcohol and tobacco were "wrong," and that sex was brutish and should be tolerated only for purposes of having children. All men were "brutes" if they were sexually motivated, with the exception of a few English "gentlemen" of whom she had read. Mother was an Anglophile and, to her, an "English gentleman" was the highest creation in the universe.

These were the ideas and ideals with which she flooded my consciousness.

I was to become the equivalent of an English gentleman. Little Lord Fauntleroy was to be my boyhood model. I would never soil my hands with labor or with conflict. Just how I was to make a living never entered her mind—an unfortunate oversight in view of the poverty that accompanied my life until I learned to do something about it.

In her fantasy, I was a Prince born to the purple who would some day be recognized for all his sterling virtues. Therefore, I was different from other boys and girls and must always conduct myself accordingly. “It takes two to make a quarrel,” Mother frequently said to me. “One can always stop it.”

“The superior man offers the public a model of personal rectitude. The greatest strength,” she told me, “is found in moral principles. It is better to be right than to be president.”

“The task of the gentleman,” she reiterated, “is to protect women. A truly good man lives his life in such a way that he protects those weaker than he is. The moral man does not smoke or drink, and is true to the woman he loves. If his health is important to him, he eats no meat and even refrains from partaking of coffee or tea.”

Mother’s view of men and women was essentially this: A truly good man was the acme of creation. A truly good woman inspired and cared for a man so that he became truly good. Few men or women ever attained this sublime elevation. Most people were “riff-raff.” Hence, if I accepted her views, my congenital defect could be used to good purpose. I would not descend to the mundane by athletic effort, physical prowess, or physical labor. Besides, physical activity of any kind was dangerous. A blow on my back could kill me, she insisted. Therefore, I would hold myself aloof and alone.

Mother was the product of the city, born and bred in Minneapolis. Her parents were both diminutive by today’s standards, although they were larger than Mother. She was slightly less than five feet tall, with clear skin, an oval face and a luxuriant growth of dark brown hair. Her brother stood an inch or two below her crown, and her sister could not have been above four feet six.

Dad, on the other hand, had been born and bred on a farm near Sterling, Illinois. His parents were large and produced giant progeny. Dad, the youngest, was the runt of the litter and stood at six

feet. Each of his four brothers, and even his sister, were taller. More important than height, each of Dad's siblings was husky, big of bone and strong of sinew. Dad was hollow-chested, square faced and frail. Even as a young man, he had a slight stoop and often carried himself like a refugee from a tuberculosis sanitarium. He had a dark, heavy beard that he dutifully scraped away. Yet the top of his head carried a mop of unruly hair that thinned as rapidly as his beard thickened.

Mother had an indifferent education. She attended grade school, off and on, then dropped out permanently. She never graduated from anything. On the other hand, Dad was an intellectual. He attended MacAllister College in St. Paul, Minnesota. He graduated with a Bachelor Degree in science after three years of study. He was a mathematical whiz, able to handle complicated problems without recourse to paper. He knew the names of every plant and animal in any clime. He could speak German fluently, understood Latin, and he served as an assistant professor before he was handed his sheepskin. Dad's first job was teaching. Then he was appointed principal to the high school in Brainerd, Minnesota.

So far as I have been able to reconstruct, Dad's value system went in descending order: money, a good laugh, money, sex, money, showing off, telling yarns, playing games and, then, money. If he held to any principles, he kept the matter dark. He was a pragmatist. If something worked, it was okay.

If there were ever two mismated creatures, they were my Dad and mother. I do not know what impelled her, but the middle daughter of the Minneapolis physician got a job as postmistress in Brainerd, Minnesota. My parents met at the general delivery window. Mother was awed by my father's position as the principal of the city's only high school. She was ever impressed with titles, degrees, and acceptance by the establishment. I suppose Dad was interested in her as he tended to be interested in any woman. She was small and lovely, clear-eyed and innocent.

They dated a few times. I am sure they were both lonely. Mother told me that she felt sorry for Dad. He seemed so brilliant, yet physically in need of nourishment.

It was probably Dad's sense of humor that turned the trick. Mother took the world seriously, Dad, sardonically.

He appeared at the General Delivery window one day and in-

formed Mother that he “had a letter” for her. He handed her a sealed envelope, with her name inscribed.

She took it, her heart fluttering in excitement. No man ever put words on paper to a lady unless he was serious. Of this, she was certain. Perhaps she even confided to others of her acquaintance that the principal of the high school had seen fit to write to her in person. I’m not sure of this, but it would have been like her.

In any case, she treasured the envelope with its secret message until she returned to her rooming house that evening. With Mother’s strict moral sense, she would not have dreamed of taking her employer’s time by reading a personal message at work.

Safely ensconced in her room and with trembling fingers, she tore open the envelope. Inside she found a sheet of paper with the letter “A” inscribed. That was all. After this episode, it was easy for Mother to conclude that Dad needed help. She married him with the intention of weaning him from his ill-conceived sense of humor and remolding him according to her image of what he should be.

They were married and their union was soon blessed by the arrival of my sister, Lauris.

In 1906, married women did not work outside the home. Earning a salary would have been a slap in the face to any man and, certainly, to a professional man.

Those first years must have been difficult. Dad received about \$700 per year as superintendent. During the summers he got part time work as a salesman, often earning as much door-to-door in the three months as he did all year as high school principal.

I suspect that Dad and Mother fought over money. Dad wanted to quit his job as principal and devote himself to selling. They needed the money. Mother would have objected in every possible way. They would manage somehow, she would have admonished him. Dad simply must not give up his professional status and the prestige that went with it. Selling from door-to-door? That was for the riff-raff.

After about three years of turmoil and tensions, Dad learned of a government grant. Federal policy made it possible then for a man to obtain a parcel of land in the far west at no cost. All he had to do was move onto the land and live there for a specified period of time, making certain improvements. If he met the conditions, he obtained a grant deed and the land was his without encumbrances.

Somehow Mother and Dad agreed. Farming was “respectable” even if door-to-door selling wasn’t. And Mother would have been reminded that Dad had been raised on a farm. Certainly he understood farming. Indeed, Dad knew just about everything there was to be known.

So my parents and Lauris moved to Gooding, Idaho where they “took possession” of a tract and began the task of “proving up.”

While Dad may have understood farming, there was something he hadn’t considered. In those days, farm equipment as we know it wasn’t available. Most farming entailed a great deal of hard, physical work using simple tools and a mule. Dad was poorly prepared for the exhausting toil of wresting crops from ground that had never been cultivated. Nor had he considered how little money there would be, and how life in a nearly uninhabited area would affect a young wife, accustomed only to city ways.

To make matters worse for them, I became rather more than a twinkle in Dad’s eye and in due course I made my appearance. My arrival was certainly unplanned and unwanted.

When my malaise was ascertained, I can imagine the general consternation. Mother’s strength of character undoubtedly saved me. I became her unwitting ally in support of her yearning to return to Minneapolis and “decent” medical treatment. The physical prowess that Dad had failed to develop was also instrumental in forcing a decision.

They abandoned the land and all the effort that had gone into it and returned to Minnesota where Dad was immediately re-employed as a door-to-door salesman. It was in Minneapolis that I spent my early formative years.

Chapter III

Mother had done her work well. I was different. The weakness in my lower back was the least of it. There was my diet. I never met another vegetarian until I was a grown man. Also, I had principles. None of my friends were at all sure of the difference between right and wrong. While they verbalized the idea that murder, theft and fornication were “wrong,” in practice the only thing that mattered with most of them was not being caught. On top of that, I had been born in Idaho. Through grade and high school, whenever I was required to list my place of birth, I recall detecting astonishment at the revelation. Apparently, no one else raised in Minnesota had ever been born in Idaho.

Then, thanks to my father, my family name was French. In Minnesota, the Scandinavians, the Poles, the Germans and the British were dominant. There were also Slavonians, Hungarians and Slovaks. But there were very few French.

Children are very susceptible to everything that marks them apart. I probably could have used some adult assurances that, despite these departures from the norm, I was much the same as everyone else. Instead, Mother delighted in assuring me I was different. Ergo, I was uniquely superior except in physical matters, where I must be protected at all costs.

I am sure Mother’s concern for my health after my first very tender years, was exaggerated and unnecessary. In any case, I became fairly well developed and quite muscular. I walked and ran and jumped as well as anyone. But she dinned it into me; physical combat was wrong. If anyone ever wanted to fight with me I was to decline. If the aggressor insisted, I was to flee.

I have no recollection of this event but she delighted in telling friends about it. One day, when I was about five, as the story goes, I burst into the house in tears.

“What happened?” Mother demanded in great alarm.

“Jimmy hurt my feelings.” I blubbered.

“What did he say to you?”

“He didn’t say anything,” I sobbed. “He hit me in the stomach.”

The stomach? What a relief! She laughed and assured me I would

be fine. But she also praised me because I had not retaliated.

The young boys of my acquaintance began to call me "Sissy." I was a "mama's boy." They learned that it was perfectly safe to bully me because I refused to strike back.

Small boys love to fight. It is the manner hallowed by time and custom in which a "pecking order" is established. Instead of fighting, at the first sign of a brandished fist, I dropped to the ground, flat on my back. That would protect my "sore spot" and it almost invariably stopped the conflict.

My reputation as a non-combatant worked its way through the school, and into all grades. One January day, with snow piled high, a youth from the sixth grade, known far and wide as a "toughy" grabbed my arm.

"I'm gonna wash your face with snow!" he snarled.

I was only in the second grade and half the size of my assailant.

"Why bother?" I asked. "You are bigger than I am and can easily do it. Why don't you let me save you the trouble?" So, I bent over, grabbed a handful of snow and polished my own physiognomy.

He regarded me pop-eyed. "Why'd you do that?" he demanded.

"If we were to fight, you would win." I said with a shrug. "I see no point in fighting when I'm sure to lose."

"You're a coward!"

"Sure," I agreed. "But I'm a smart coward."

The statement convulsed him. He roared with laughter. Then he sobered.

"Would you wash your face again if I said I was gonna do it to you?"

I hunched my shoulders. "The snow doesn't hurt me. I probably would."

He grabbed my hand. "You come with me."

He dragged me after him and approached a group of children closer to my age.

"Sissy, here does anything I want him to!" he shouted. "Sis, wash your face in snow or I'll do it to you!"

I grinned and did as commanded.

His audience watched in astonishment.

Somebody asked, "Will Sis do that for anyone?"

The bully paused. There was a crafty look on his face. "Nope," he said. "He only does it for me."

Right, Sis?"

"If you say so," I said. "I figure you could lick anyone here."

The bully drew himself up to his full height.

"You bet I can. Anybody want to try?" He glared at the eager faces. One by one they backed down.

"Now get this," the bully roared. "From here on, Sissy is mine. Nobody's gonna touch him. Anybody try it and I'll polish him off!"

There were nods of comprehension. Again with me in tow, the bully marched off. From that time on, I was treated to a great deal more respect from my peers.

For several days after that, whenever I arrived at school, the bully would meet me, usually with a number of spectators. He would order me to wash my face and I would do so.

I had reduced my tormentors from many to one.

One day he met me without an audience. He gave the customary order, but this time I just smiled at him.

"Look," I said. "You know I'll do it if you really want me to. But the kids don't like it. They say you're a big bully. They say you're a coward. Now, we both know that you're not. But the reason they say it is because you seem to be spending your time lording it over me and I don't give you any problems. They say you're afraid of anyone who likes to fight."

"Who says that?" He demanded.

I shrugged. "Just about everybody. They want you to pick on someone your own size."

He regarded me soberly. "Wash your face!"

"Sure." I did so.

He sat down on the base of a partially constructed snowman.

"You know something, kid," he said. "You're all right."

"Of course I am."

"Are you afraid of me?"

"Not really," I said. "It's just that you're bigger and older and stronger."

"And you're not afraid?"

I said nothing.

"You told me you were a coward."

"I said I was a smart coward."

He chuckled. "I'm beginning to believe that you're smart, at that."

I nodded.

"What if I said I was gonna beat you up?"

"You could do it," I assured him. "I know that. And I wouldn't like it."

"Then why aren't you scared?"

"Look at it this way. You can run faster than I can. You can beat me up anytime you have a mind to. But that is gonna take a lot of your time and energy. Meanwhile, what are you getting out of it? You don't have to prove anything. I've admitted it. Suppose we fight. You get me pinned, sit on top of me and get me to admit that you can whip me. I've already admitted it. Now what do we do?"

After a moment and to my complete surprise he offered me his hand. "Kid," he said, "Why don't you and me be friends?"

I took his hand. "Fine," I said. "I like being friends."

I turned and walked away without looking back.

He caught up to me. "Do you like people calling you Sissy?" he asked.

"Not particularly," I admitted. "But I'm not gonna try to fight the whole school. I'd lose."

"Nobody's gonna call you 'Sissy' anymore."

"Oh?"

"Don't worry, kid. I'm really gonna be your friend."

After that episode things were easier for me at school.

But in my neighborhood, lived another boy who attended a different school. He persisted in calling me Sissy, and his bullying didn't stop there.

Every time he got close to me, he poked or prodded. When I laid flat on the ground to protect my back he kicked me. One day he not only kicked, but walked on me, aimed a foot at my head, which I dodged, and then tried to jump up and down on my stomach, chest and legs, all the while calling me vile names. The more I did to protect myself from him, the more infuriated he became. I rolled and squirmed on the ground, managing to avoid his most serious blows. When it appeared he was going to continue the process until he injured me severely, I managed to get to my feet and took to my heels.

I confronted my mother angrily.

"You've told me never to fight," I panted accusingly. "All right. I haven't been fighting. But Billy, down the street, picks on me all the time."

"What do you do?" she asked, smiling sweetly.

I recited my efforts at avoidance and evasion and, finally, flight.

She patted me on the head. "I'm very proud of you, Robert. Always do as your mother tells you."

"There's something wrong," I insisted. "At school it worked. But it doesn't work with Billy. He really wants to hurt me. I think he likes to hurt people."

She looked startled. "You don't suppose Billy's a sadist do you?"

"What's a sadist?"

"Never mind." She shook her head and frowned. I knew I had her attention and concern.

"Why don't you just stay away from where he lives? Avoid him altogether."

"I'd like to, Mother. But he lies in wait for me. He has it in for me and he wants to hurt me."

He's ambushed me again and again. He calls me a Sissy. I think he wants to kill me."

"Kill you?" Her laugh was a little forced. "That's just your imagination, Robert. I'm sure he doesn't want to do anything of the kind."

"Well, he acts like it."

"What do you think you better do?"

"I think I should kick the shit out of him."

Mother paled and her hands fluttered to her throat and face. "Robert! What a terrible word. Don't you ever use that word again. The idea! Using such a word in front of your mother. Who taught it to you?"

When I started to tell her she shut me off.

"I'm going to have to take this up with your father," she said. "Meanwhile, go to your room and think about how wrong you were to use such a dreadful word."

Later she confronted me.

"I've been thinking about that Billy person."

"Did you talk to Dad?"

"No. He's very busy and hasn't time to think about what happens here at home. You listen very carefully to what I tell you. The next time Billy starts to abuse you, I want you to turn on him and warn him to stop it at once. Tell him...well, warn him that you will retaliate if he persists."

"What if he keeps on?"

"Then I want you to carry the fight to him."

"What does that mean?"

"It means that you are not to wait for him to attack. I want you to jump on him. Pull his hair. Bite him. Knock him down and keep doing it until he agrees to stop bullying you."

I laughed. "Mother, I can't pull his hair and bite him. That's for girls. They fight that way. I have to fight him fair."

"You don't know how to fight."

"Billy's bigger than I am. He won't expect me to fight at all. And what about my back?"

"You'll have to protect yourself, Robert. Don't turn your back on him."

"But you've always said that fighting is wrong. It's bad. Won't I be bad if I hurt him?"

Mother didn't even pause. "Not this time. There's an exception to every rule. You plow into him and give him as good and better than he's given you."

"And you won't be mad at me?"

She smiled sweetly. "I can't fight your battles for you. And I can't accompany you to protect you. Use all your muscles and beat him up good."

"All right, Mother."

I went off down the street and ran into Harvey, another neighborhood youngster. Harvey was pulling a little red wagon of which he was very proud.

"Come with me," I said to Harvey. "You're gonna see something you won't believe."

He looked at me quizzically. Something in my manner must have convinced him. Nodding he trotted along behind trailing the wagon.

Billy was sitting on the front steps of his house beside his older sister. I marched up his walkway, fists clenched. Harvey halted and stared after me.

Billy smirked. "Well, well," he announced to nobody in particular. "Here comes Sissy. Didn't you get enough last time?"

"Come down here into the yard, Billy." I said it quietly, but my heart was pounding. I was bolstered by the knowledge that I was acting under orders.

Billy swaggered down the steps. His sister called. "Cut it out, Billy. Ma doesn't want you to fight all the time."

"Sissy's asking for it," he snarled. "And boy, is he gonna get it!"

He began circling, trying to find the best opening.

With a roar like a trumpeting elephant I charged him, head lowered. He tried to sidestep but I was quicker than he had guessed. I butted him in the belly and we went down with all the wind knocked out. I was astride him, swinging fists at his head, first one side, then the other.

He finally found his breath and bellowed.

"Hey. No fair. You're beating a man when he's down!"

I clipped him on the side of his head. "Don't you ever call me Sissy again!"

Billy squirmed and managed to roll over. Another pair of hands grabbed at my shoulders and pulled me off. His sister had intervened, but I quickly shook loose from her as Billy scrambled to his feet.

"So, you really want a fight!" he shouted. He came for me, his fists swinging.

I had no skill at boxing and every time I aimed a punch at him, he parried successfully. Then he got a blow to my chin that shook me. It was clear to me that he would win that kind of struggle. I dove for him again, got only a partial hold and found myself on the ground. A vicious grin was on Billy's face. He marched up to my prone figure.

"I'm gonna stomp sense into you, Sissy," he snarled.

He raised a foot, aiming it at my face. I caught the foot as it descended and twisted it. Billy gave a yowl of pain and somersaulted over me landing on his head. I had him under me again.

"Don't you call me Sissy anymore," I hissed. Then I gave him a blow to his face.

Again, his sister clawed at my shoulders trying to dislodge me. But I was ready this time and locked my legs around Billy's prone form in a scissor grip. She couldn't pull me away.

"Take that." I said as I blackened an eye. "And that." I tore my knuckles on his teeth and probably loosened a couple of them. His sister started to scream.

"You're hurting my brother, you big bully!"

"Yup," I said. "And I'm gonna keep doing it until he agrees not to call me Sissy anymore!" I gave him another blow, this one over an ear.

"Give up, Billy," his sister screamed. "He's got you! Give up!"

"You're hurting me, Sissy," Billy pleaded.

"I mean to hurt you," I said. "My mother told me it's all right, and I'm gonna hurt you and hurt you until you agree not to call me Sissy."

Tears were coming into Billy's eyes. "All right." He started to cry. "Get up. You win."

I got up and backed off.

Billy surged to his feet and came at me with a rush. Some stroke of beginner's luck came to my help at that moment. I sidestepped and pivoted, my left arm flying. My left fist collided with something solid, probably his jaw. I wasn't synchronized. Billy went to the ground like a felled ox, face down. Again I was on top of him. I grabbed one of his arms and bent it up under his shoulders in a hammerlock.

He screamed. I put a little more pressure on the arm. "You're a bad person," I hissed, teeth clenched. "If you ever call me Sissy again, I'll do this to you." I levered his arm and got another scream. "And then I'll do this." I got my hand on the back of his head and pushed his face into the lawn.

Between screams and sobs all the fight went out of him. He groveled and squirmed under me, pleading. "Don't hurt me no more. Oh, please. Don't do it. I quit. I didn't mean nothin' when I called you 'Sissy'. You beat me."

After repeated assurances, I finally got to my feet.

"I'm gonna call the police," his sister said.

I shrugged. "Your brother is a dirty coward," I said to her. "Go ahead and call the police."

I marched out of their yard with head high and with Harvey, round-eyed and solemn in my wake. We went far enough to be out of sight of Billy's house. Then my body began doing strange things. First the muscles in my legs cramped. I was in agony. I had to stop walking. Suddenly, I experienced a great wave of nausea. I lost my milk and cookies. Every bone in my body ached in a manner I had never before experienced. I sank to the sidewalk and groaned. Finally, with Harvey's help, I got into the little wagon. Harvey pulled me home and by the time we got there, I was a total wreck. I was shaking as if I had the palsy. Mother put me to bed and I cried myself to sleep.

I took no pleasure from the fact that I had beaten Billy, although Billy never called me “Sissy” again. But he was never my friend either. He was clearly afraid of me. Behind my back he circulated stories about me and did every sneaky thing possible to discredit me and to get others to dislike me. To my face, he smirked and was overly my “buddy.”

Chapter IV

How does a person learn? The brain is a marvelous instrument but it has limitations. It functions in certain ways, and does not function except as it was designed. The brain appears to provide the mind with a workshop that includes finite powers for reasoning and infinite powers for rationalizing. Man's intellect hangs by a slender thread somewhere between what is real and what is imagined.

What do I mean when I suggest that the mind's reasoning ability is finite? I mean that man thinks within specific lines and limitations. To reason, we must reason about something. And the something we reason about must have boundaries. The boundaries, when determined, reveal the finite nature of the mind. We can only think from specific and indicated positions having boundaries. Remove the boundaries and positions vanish. The mind boggles and, then, blanks out.

Consider space. You and I cannot think 'space' although we can rationalize the concept and provide a word. What we really think is distance. Space to our minds is a distance between points of reference. Remove all points of reference, then what do we have? I will be told, "The entire universe."

Very well. What do we think of when the phrase "entire universe" is used? Is the universe a gigantic spheroid filled with galaxies, nebulae, suns, planets and possibly a few black holes? What is the shape of the universe? Is it oval? Conic? Square? A rhomboid? Regular or irregular? Whichever shape it takes in the mind, what exists beyond the universe? More space? Where does that space end? It doesn't end, but goes on forever. How far is that? And what exists beyond it?

If you aren't already babbling, you have, at any rate, gone beyond your ability to conceptualize visually. To use reason we must have points of reference. Without points of reference we cannot visualize.

Man is a part of the universe. He exists in it; he is comprised of the same stuff that makes the universe and he cannot get out of the universe, even in his mind. Man is a finite creature and even his mind has finite limitations. Man's relationship to the universe will

always be from the *inside*.

Only an outsider, in so far as the universe is concerned, could have an outside or infinite view.

You and I face the same dilemma if we try to think *time*. What is time? We think of it as an interval between points of reference. Remove the reference points and where are we? Or possibly I should ask, when are we? We cannot conceive of a condition in which time does not exist. We think of it as an endless stream moving from the past into the future through that incredible conjunction in reality called *now*. When did time begin? Will it end? If so, when? And what comes after?

To use reason we must have reference points. To have those references, we invent ways of measuring the passage of time and we devise stipulated words that relate to years, months, weeks, days, hours, minutes and so on.

One can see why theorists have suggested that time is possibly a fourth dimension. My personal view is that those theories are in error. A dimension, by its nature, must relate to space. You and I can move through space, back and forth, up and down and around. But we do not know how to move through time although many of us have, on occasion, wished devoutly that we could.

Time is not a dimension in a spatial context. We do not move through time; time moves through us.

I can understand the ancient Mayans who appear to have worshipped time. It is the single immutable force. We can speed up or slow down our progress through space. But we do not move around through time. Time seems to be in charge of us, and it ticks away through our lives however we may move in space. Reference points concerning time may move about. Time, though passing, appears to be fixed. Without points of reference such as past, present and future, we cannot even think time.

Life falls into the same category as space and time. We learn about life only because we can find or devise points of reference. Without those points we are baffled. What is life? I do not know. I only know that I exist. I surmise that you do, too, but I do not know it in the same way that I know my own existence. I sense my own existence from within myself. You are outside and beyond me. I sense your existence but it is beyond and outside of me. I am a reference point for myself.

Do each of us live once or more than once? Did the *I* who is me have prior existence? I can rationalize the possibility, but I cannot reason about it. I simply don't know. Does that particular unit of awareness that I think of as me have existence after death? I can rationalize, dream, conjecture, but my mind is limited. It is finite. I do not *know*.

Human ignorance is basic, profound, enduring. Human knowledge is shallow, limited by points of reference and subject to correction.

My purpose is to deal with what we know and what is knowable. Conjecture is exciting fiction. But it is fiction. I deal here only with the objective reality of which I am aware. There is much reality of which I am ignorant.

How do you and I, as finite creatures endowed with finite minds, learn? We arrive in this world in a state of universal ignorance. We are sensitive organisms able to feel satisfaction and dissatisfaction. And we are real. Objective. Our existence as individuals is a fact. We are thrust, naked and uninformed into a real world. Many realities could kill us. Many others make it possible for us to survive. At birth none of us knows the difference.

But we do have sensory equipment. We can reach out with all our senses and begin the laborious process of documenting and storing in our minds the nature of reality.

Here's how we learn:

1. We perceive. (All sensory equipment is involved.)
2. We differentiate. We identify. We learn to tell one thing from another.
3. We classify. We begin to categorize. We put things into groups for our convenience in remembering. Some things please us and provide satisfaction. Some things provide dissatisfaction. Some things provide neither although we may observe these, we usually ignore them.
4. We select. The human mind appears to be incapable of functioning without exhibiting preferences of one kind or another. In short, we begin to express our *wants*. We want the things that satisfy us. We also begin to express our *won'ts*. We don't want the things that provide dissatisfaction. So we discriminate. We choose.

In terms of selection no two of us are identical. No two of us, including identical twins are precisely the same. Genetically we

are often very similar. But, even if cloning were established as a means of reproduction so that the genetic pattern of two persons was identical, each of us is deposited in the time-space continuum in a slightly different aspect.

The same can be said of identical atoms. Were identical atoms to have protons and electrons that behaved identically, each atom still exists in its own continuum and retains its own identity.

Individuality appears to be the order of the universe.

5. We associate. We associate the data we have selected. This appears to be an inborn or instinctive characteristic of the mind. It is impossible for us to observe and study reality without applying our findings to our best interests, as we understand them. The more we understand, the more we may revise and rationalize our best interests.

The association of ideas and images from our contact with reality causes us to *generalize*.

Here is the infant lying in his crib. I am assuming a healthy, "normal" infant. To begin with, he knows nothing but he has been observing for several weeks. He learned that there were arms and legs in the crib with him. At first they annoyed him and provided dissatisfaction. To his delight, he discovered they were attached to him and he could move them about at will: he confirmed this by bringing every sensory tool he had to bear upon his inquiry. He *felt* his arms and legs. He *saw* them. He was unable to hear or smell them, but he tasted his toes. When you see something and taste it too, it must be real. The proof of the toe is in the tasting.

Have you ever observed an infant cooing with glee as he thrust a big toe into his mouth? You have probably asked yourself, "Why does he like the taste?"

I profoundly doubt the infant enjoys the taste. He is merely confirming his feelings. His limbs are *real*. They are a part of him. His earlier dissatisfaction gives way to sublime satisfaction. He is the master of his own arms and legs!

He also observes other things. He takes note of his crib, the blankets, the things in the crib. He stares at the ceiling above his head. This may enthrall him for hours, but he usually loses interest. The ceiling doesn't *do* anything. Then there is a voice that comes from his crib. He presently discovers that the voice is his own, and that like his arms and legs he can use it when he wills. And, of course,

he takes note of the adult who comes whenever he uses his voice.

There may be other things that he observes as well. But presently he generalizes. He adds up the total of his observations and it may come out something like this: I exist. I am a creature who has feelings, legs, arms and a voice. I live in a crib equipped with various objects. And there is a person who comes to me when I cry. The generalization is not profound. The infant lives in a world limited by his own sensory observations. He doesn't know how he got where he is and what he is supposed to do about it.

But he is. And the other things he discovers co-exist with him.

What is the function of this instinctive drive to generalize? I am not certain, but it seems to me that it is part and parcel of man's drive to survive. The purpose of all life—human, animal, or vegetable—appears to be to live. Not because a particular life form has reason to live, but simply because the nature of life demands living.

Included in the association process, then, is reaching a conclusion. As the infant adds up the data with which he is familiar, he extracts significance; he finds meaning. There appears to be a reason for this.

The fundamental purpose of the mind appears to relate to discovering predictability. Every human being has a fundamental sense of uneasiness. This is inescapable in a creature with a mind capable of self-identification that finds himself in an objective reality about which he is ignorant. We don't know that worries us. To begin with we exist totally in the "don't know" category.

This helps to account for the infant's fabulous curiosity and his ability to learn.

At the start of his life the infant is totally dependent upon others. Left alone for even a relatively brief period with his wants unattended, and he will die. He doesn't *know* this, of course. Rather his mind seems to have been genetically implanted with a drive to satisfy his curiosity. He wants to know what things are and how they behave. His survival depends on it.

So he uses his mind to find out how the various things of this world will behave *later on*. He must be able to predict. He wants to know how his legs and arms work. Further, he wants to be assured that they will work tomorrow just as they do today.

What human beings seek is orderly process and predictable results. Were we to live in a chaotic world, we would either be driven

mad or perish swiftly.

The infant wants to know that when he flexes certain muscles, his arms, hands and legs will move in a predictable manner. He wants to know that when he calls out, his parent or guardian will come.

The necessity of predictability is demonstrated *later on* by what occurs when unexpected, dramatic and unpredictable events occur. Man is prone to a mental condition we refer to as shock. Shock can be so severe that it can induce amnesia, coma or even death.

This accounts for the tendency of infants to smash, destroy or eat practically anything that comes within their sphere. They are learning. They are acquiring information about predictability.

The mental tools of learning are: (a) memory; (b) comparison; and, (c) repetition. We learn what something is; what its shape and contour feel, smell, taste and sound like. Then we contrast (compare) these characteristics with other things. And we remember. When patterns of behavior develop, we discover that a bottle containing formula is not a banana, not a watch or a puppy. A bottle of formula is a bottle of formula. We predict that a bottle of formula today will be like a bottle of formula tomorrow.

This is the manner in which we learn the nature of things. When we are older, we have an additional tool. We discover we can make mistakes. So when we wish to find out how something works, we test it for ourselves. Then we seek confirmation from others, asking them to test it in the same way. If I operate a switch and a light goes on, that is marvelous. I operate the switch and again and again the light goes on. Now I ask another to operate the switch in the same way. If he obtains the same result and if, after considerable experimentation, the same result occurs no matter who operates the switch, then we have what is called a principle. The light *always* comes on when all the conditions (the context) of switch and light are the same no matter who performs the experiment.

If the light comes on for me but for no one else, then we are not dealing with principle. We are dealing with magic. If all of us, in performing an experiment, get identical results 80 percent of the time, but not the other 20 percent, we have no predictability. We have probability. The degree of probability is measured mathematically. Probability indicates ignorance. It means there are factors that are not sufficiently known, so we can predict with confidence.

All knowledge is contextual. When we have a principle we have absolute predictability in context. When we have probability, we have predictability on a mathematical basis. It is not absolute. Ignorance persists. Beyond principle and probability we have possibility. This means that our ignorance is profound and we do not have the necessary information to predict.

6. We form opinion. We formulate opinions as we gain knowledge of what things are and how they interact. An opinion is a conclusion. Some of our opinions are formed as a result of our personal contact with reality and how it appears to work. Some of our opinions are merely accepted from others who (we suppose) have had contact with reality and have told us about it accurately. We formulate opinions by contact with the objective order and by accepting the opinions others who may have had a broader contact with reality.

We accept the opinions we *like*. They may or may not be correct. It is characteristic of man to learn what satisfies him and to reject what doesn't. When the opinion we accept coincide with reality we have an accurate opinion. When the opinion does not coincide with reality we have an inaccurate opinion.

7. We adopt an attitude. Attitudes emerge after an opinion has been accepted and over an extended period of time. It doesn't matter to us whether the opinion is true or false. What matters is our affection for the opinion.

Attitude means belief. It also means faith. We believe what we wish to believe and we disbelieve what we do not wish to believe. An attitude is actually an opinion to which emotional conviction has been added, whether the emotional conviction is justified.

It is difficult to alter the opinions of others. It is next to impossible to challenge their faith or emotional convictions.

Much of what people believe today is factual. Much is not. If they have developed an emotional attachment to their point of view, entrance into this area is fraught with peril.

8. We take action. Man is an acting creature, not a passive one. Nature does not look after man; he must look after himself. Once an individual has formulated a number of opinions as to the nature of reality and how various units of reality interact, he will take cognitive action. That is, he will predict how things will be in the future. Then he acts to insure the results he wants.

These are the steps to learning. All learning is aimed at taking cognitive action. When our opinions and beliefs coincide with reality, we can initiate causative factors that will lead us to satisfactory results.

Chapter V

Psychologists frequently bemoan the influences parents exert over their children. The sighs of frustration have been wasted upon thin air. The fact is—children will invariably be influenced, if not by their parents, then by others. No such thing as a non-influenced human being can or will exist.

Had psychologists been around when I was a small lad, their lamentations would have moved whole libraries. Thanks to Mother, my attitudes in certain areas had already been formed by the time I first trotted off to public school.

I readily accepted Mother's conviction that I was superior. Accompanying this acceptance was an overpowering reluctance to ask questions. I deemed it a mark of stupidity. Asking revealed a 'lack.' Such a revelation would have destroyed my self-aplomb. I was superior and, therefore, could not ask. Such an attitude doesn't encourage scholarship.

Physically I appeared to be as strong as an ox. However, because of my spinal defect, I had been frightened away from any rough and tumble sports. When I was urged to play games, or even participate in organized exercise, I pretended to a superiority I did not feel. Competitive sports were not for me.

Early in this century, educators had only begun to promote physical education. I was hostile to athletics from the first.

But I did have some interests that moved me toward learning. I was an avid reader long before kindergarten and, thus, I had a smattering of information. Little of it was organized or made sense, and parts of it were wholly in error. But I was eager for more. I loved books.

When I reported to Mother that the teacher was pressuring me to get involved with games and exercise instead of read, Mother made a trip to school and got me excused from physical education. At home she counseled me. If a teacher ever offered information I found hard to accept, I was to ask the "why" of it.

I became so difficult that Mother managed a transfer and I was enrolled at a second school at which a few of my faults were temporarily shelved by her intervention.

My first teachers undoubtedly hated the sight of me. Nothing builds arrogance in a child so rapidly as parental backing against centralized policy.

I vividly recall one of my first confrontations with a teacher.

During a class on hygiene, the teacher asserted that every boy and girl needed a good diet. In explaining this, it was stated that fresh fruit and vegetables, milk and meat were the essentials.

Meat?

I asked why meat had to be eaten. I was informed that without meat in my diet, I would not be able to stay alive.

I asked “why” that was true. The answer: it was true because it was so.

Since I had never eaten meat and was clearly alive, the teacher was badly informed. I debated the matter no further, but set my teacher down as a dunce. I related the episode to Mother who confirmed the intellectual status of my teacher. Finding the teacher deficient in one particular I concluded she was deficient in all.

I had a similar experience in another grade. The class was studying biology. This included the dissecting of a frog, pickled in formaldehyde. In lecturing about the internal organs of frog vs. man, the teacher explained that there is a certain enzyme or gastric secretion that digests meat. If that is true, I challenged, why didn’t these juices digest our own stomachs?

The blank look on her face revealed that she had never thought of such a thing. Her answer was: “because it doesn’t.”

Mentally I fitted her with a dunce cap, too.

I have revealed one obnoxious side of my nature, but there was another. Adults are rarely consistent and it would be surprising if a child were. If a teacher favorably impressed me with a reasonable response to one of my frequently voiced “whys,” from that moment I rarely questioned anything offered. Thus, in the midst of my arrogance I was exceedingly open to suggestion if I liked the teacher. Indeed, in such a case I was a veritable sponge.

I really don’t know which attitude is worse. In combination they do not create an apt pupil.

One of the first things I accepted at face value was an assertion made in the first grade. The teacher said that no matter how bad a government is, it is better than no government. I liked the teacher and bought the package.

At the time, when we had all learned through propaganda that the Germans were “Huns” (which they aren’t) and that the German government under Kaiser Wilhelm II was so bad the U.S. had to eliminate it.

Another statement, equally open to challenge, was this: “My country, may it always be right; but my country, right or wrong.” I swallowed this appeal to blind, unthinking patriotism along with anything else the lady said. The statement still has its devotees.

Still later in a history class, a teacher drew a bell-shaped curve on the blackboard and explained that the historical evidence established that great civilizations arose periodically only to decline and fall at a later time.

I asked her what made the civilization rise. She said the answer was unknown, but it was generally believed it had to do with water. If a country had abundant rainfall or could benefit by irrigation, a great culture could and would arise. Lacking water, nothing of this sort would happen.

So I asked: “Does the civilization decline because of a change in climate or a lack of rainfall?”

She admitted she didn’t know.

I asked why a great civilization had not arisen in the valley of the Amazon River that had abundant rainfall. She didn’t know that either. Then I asked why a great culture had appeared in the Andes Mountains, called the Incan culture that had a terrain that was unfriendly, at an altitude that was forbidding, and where the rivers ran the wrong way. The storm clouds forming from moisture—drawn up from the Pacific—blew across the mountains and emptied over Brazil.

She didn’t know and reminded me that she had not claimed to know the answer. I mentally dusted off another dunce cap for her. I didn’t like her anyway. She was always asking me to memorize the dates of major battles, the names of kings and generals. That seemed to be a rather narrow, provincial approach to the whole human story and I rejected it. I concluded that I didn’t like history, and didn’t like history teachers. From that time on, I tried to bluff my way through history classes.

From what I have said thus far, it would be reasonable to conclude that I found science and mathematics stimulating. I didn’t. By a strange quirk, inspired by the personality of a male fifth grade

teacher, I soured on the exact disciplines. In these subjects, there was no question about what was right and what was wrong. I concluded that mathematics dealt only with memorizing. It would be impossible for me to make a contribution. Two and two always made four. There was no subtle twist I might innovate; no way of dealing with numbers except the way I was instructed.

The trouble was, even though I couldn't prove the teacher wrong, I didn't like him. So the subject frustrated me although I did have a very good memory. When I asked "why" I was bluntly shown why. I couldn't trip him up and he felled my challenges without exception. I simply tuned him out.

There was one area that fascinated me: literature, reading, composition, anything at all relating to the English language and those who had used it skillfully. I read whatever was assigned, and much more besides. Here I absorbed practically anything and everything. I couldn't get enough. Fiction captivated me. Drama inspired. Poetry lifted me. Looking back at my years in school I can truly say that my education in these areas was good. But again it was because I had teachers I happened to like and admire. So I was an ideal student. I managed to skip fourth grade altogether and when I entered the University I was excused from all freshman English since I was judged to have already mastered the art and craft of writing. That wasn't true, but I believed it.

Clearly, a growing youngster has many interests outside of school. My earliest daydreams were about getting married, having a home of my own and a loving wife who would, of course, support me in all ways.

I managed to have a few male friends. But I had a host of girl friends. The girls were interested in their futures and in making a home. I'm told that boys don't think about things of this sort.

You can put it down to Mother's influence if you like, but I was certainly interested and began looking closely at each girl at a tender age in an effort to determine which one I would marry.

If I had been frail, had glasses, or in some other way been visibly handicapped, I'm sure my male peers would have liked me better than they did. In consequence, I would probably have liked more of them.

Most of the boys I knew were poor conversationalists. They were invariably pushing, shoving, shouting, wrestling, and releasing en-

ergy by every physical means available. They didn't want to discuss the future of anything. They were so excited about proving their physical prowess and having fun, that I was a stalk of alien corn—tolerated, but hardly admired.

Whenever the talk turned to girls, the boys would smirk, smile knowingly and indicate they knew what girls were for. When I was asked pointedly by an older boy if I knew what “it was all about,” I naturally said I did. I could never admit to ignorance.

He didn't believe my assurances and proceeded in graphic detail to explain the art of copulation. What he described, while basically factual, was so revolting to me that I dismissed it out of hand.

Mother had told me that when a man and a woman loved each other, children sometimes were entrusted to them.

As she explained it, the process involved the creator and was a most sacred procedure. It was vile if a man sought any intimacies whatever unless having a child was the objective. Naturally, Mother was not at all graphic.

I didn't know what “intimacies” were, but the way they were sniggered at by the boys convinced me I was the victim of a “con” job. I dismissed the smut and sneered at it, as to references to the tooth fairy and Santa Claus.

I had never attended a wedding and, in my youthful mind, a minister of the gospel or some government official would explain “intimacies” at the time of the wedding.

Prior to the ceremony it would be wrong for me to know, to inquire. It would certainly brutish and beastly if I attempted to find out by experience. I would be “intimate” with only one woman, my wife; and then only after I was firmly, legally and sacredly united to her.

Meanwhile, my masculine nature asserted itself in truly interesting ways.

I thought about girls and about making a home, and possibly having children. What I would do to pay the bills didn't occur to me. Economic ideas were foreign. An income would be forthcoming—somehow—and in some automatic manner. I would have a job, of course.

What I would do didn't seem too important.



In the third grade, a young lady had a desk across the aisle and just one place to the rear of mine. Her name was Lavern. She had long blonde ringlets and a round, cherubic face. I was attracted to her. I flushed red whenever she looked at me, and felt myself a tiger if any other boy so much as spoke to her.

I had read Tom Sawyer and knew that when a man loved a woman, the first way he showed it was by offering to carry her books.

One day, after school, I waited for this lovely with pounding heart. When she finally came out I fell in step beside her offering assistance. She accepted and off we went, together.

I had no difficulty in opening a conversation and we strolled along in a state of animated bliss. At least it was blissful for me.

Her house was somewhat out of the way, which from my point of view, was fortuitous as it extended the time we could be together. We took a circuitous route, wandering down to Shingle Creek and following its uncertain course. The creek bank was overgrown with giant willows, sumac and high dank grasses. Thus we were hidden from prying eyes and it was just the two of us, alone and with our futures in our hearts and eyes.

Lavern tripped over an outstretched root and, as a gentleman, I helped her to her feet. Doing so, I had to take her hand and the contact sent currents of joy and exultation tingling through my body and mind.

She said her ankle hurt and so we rested for a bit, greedily consuming time and glorying in the feelings I presumed were mutual. Certainly my heart was singing. That electrifying tingle surely could only mean love.

When I finally reached home, Mother was frantic. I was more than two hours late and she had been phoning around in an effort to locate me. I had never been late before.

I explained that I had met the woman I was going to *marry*.

In a state bordering on shock, Mother questioned me closely. Exactly what had occurred? I said that the young lady and I had walked home by way of the creek so that we could be alone together.

Mother's anxiety mounted. Further questions poured out. Exactly what had the two of us done?

My answers didn't appear satisfactory and the interrogation continued.

Finally, Mother blurted: "You weren't intimate with her, were you?"

I hung my head and silently owned up to it. I had touched her hand and had experienced a thrill.

Further grilling finally established that my "intimacy" was limited to that event.

When Mother had convinced herself that nothing more serious had occurred, she expressed relief. At the same time, she lectured me: boys and girls weren't supposed to hold hands because "that could lead to a great many other things." Even if I was thinking of getting married, which was clearly preposterous at my age, holding hands happened after marriage and not before.

I promised Mother to be more careful in the future. My sister razed me for having a case of "puppy love." That night I dreamed of Lavern. The two of us were riding on the backs of elephants, each of us dressed in exotic East Indian garb.

Dreaming of your enamored along with elephants was a serious matter.

I was so embarrassed by Mother's tirade that I avoided further meetings with Lavern. I worshipped her from afar vowing to live out the allotted time in martyred silence until the day when I could make her mine. If we were ever alone together again, I knew I would be so eager for the same thrill that I would probably touch her hand. After that, who knew what would happen? I recalled the filthy suggestions of various boys. I decided I would, indeed, protect Lavern even from myself. What might have been my first romance, was thus nipped in the bud by Mother's admonitions.

A situation began to develop between Mother and Dad. I've seen a similar situation arise many times since and, indeed, have experienced it myself.

The mores of the time meant that husbands were breadwinners and wives stayed home to raise the children. My parents carried out this custom without question.

Widely divergent points of view developed. Dad's interests lay in increasing the family income. He began to make good commissions as a salesman. Mother's interest lay in getting social recognition for the unusual gifts and abilities of her family.

After they had retired, I frequently lay awake at night hearing my parents arguing. I can only deduce what the conversations were about.

Mother was distressed because, as a salesman, Dad had no standing in the community. Dad was distressed because, despite the fact Mother needed far more money than he provided, she wanted him to put aside a fair income for prestige and possible privation.

An agreement was reached. Dad was adamant about returning to the school board for re-instatement, but he would study at night and, in his spare time, he would become a doctor. Both Mother and Dad believed that a doctor enjoyed prestige *and* made a fabulous income. So Dad signed up for a home study course in the Palmer method of Chiropractics. In due course, he was awarded his mail order diploma.

With the impressive paper duly framed, Dad rented offices and set himself up as a practicing chiropractor. We were already in debt. Now further debt was incurred to equip his office. Patients were slow in coming. All of us experienced some slim years.

It began to dawn on Mother that a Chiropractor, despite his credentials, had little more prestige than a salesman did. Worse, Dad was attracting a clientele consisting principally of women with aching backs. Mother began to emit a green glow of jealousy.

I don't suggest that Dad was circumspect in all his doctor-patient relationships. Living with an attractive woman, who didn't believe in sexual contact unless a child was wanted, must have had him baying at the moon on many a lunar-lit night.

My parents grew apart. Dad would have added it up something like this: "I am in debt up to my ears. My wife wants more and more money from me. The children take more and more. What am I getting out of it?"

Mother would have added it up this way: "Who is this man to whom I am tied? He doesn't love me. He complains every time I need money. I'm sure he is having affairs with other women. How did I ever get myself into this kind of situation?"

We tend to blame our problems on persons other than ourselves. Thus, Dad associated all his debts, his long hours of work, and his meager income with Mother. She was responsible for his problems and provided him with little or nothing in the way of benefit.

Mother associated all her problems with Dad. Her poverty, her worries, her jealousy and the thankless task of presiding over a pair of youngsters all were laid at his feet. His shortcomings created her problems.

How to find a remedy? Again their approaches were at variance. Although Mother was not a churchgoer in any traditional sense, she had a firm hold on moral concepts. She didn't believe a marriage should be dissolved for any but the most extreme causes. After all, they had taken an oath to stand together through thick and thin. Somehow, they must work things out.

To Dad, the marriage wasn't working. What didn't work was no good. Therefore, for the good of both, a divorce was the way out.

They compromised on a separation. Dad plunged into debt all over again and bought a new home in a good subdivision. We had been living in a working class neighborhood and I suspect this was his gesture to Mother's constant search for prestige. If she didn't approve of door-to-door selling, a task to which he joyously returned, at least she'd have a good address.

He promised to send money each month for our support, a promise kept only sporadically. Mother was left, holding title to the new house and handling all the bills.

The separation ended in divorce. From my ninth year, Mother took complete control. She raised my sister and me with little assistance of any kind. She had some skills as an artist and made a small sum of money this way. Also, she rented rooms.

At the age of twelve, I got my first regular job delivering newspapers. Mother managed to get some help from a relative so that my sister could finish high school and, then, go on to college. By the time I finished high school it was clear I would have to handle my own expenses. If I went to college I would have to pay for it myself.

Chapter VI

An event in my final year of grade school was to affect my future profoundly. Naturally, at the time, I didn't know it. All through the first eight grades, I had been deeply interested in girls. I was an avid reader. In an off-hand way, I had decided I would become a naturalist and write books about animals. Ernest Thompson Seton was my hero and I devoured everything he had written and purchased copies of his works with money earned from my paper route.

For reasons unknown to me, one of my teachers in the eighth grade decided I should play the lead in the class play. Mother had seen to it that I had had "elocution" lessons, so I was not backward about reciting, in class or out. I don't think the prior training was the reason I was chosen. Somehow the teacher and I had good rapport. I liked her and trusted her. It is clear that she liked me.

The play was a one-act affair entitled: "The Village Photographer." Presumably it is now gathering dust. I'm sure the dialogue would sound stilted and ludicrous to a modern audience. But this was 1925 and I was fourteen.

The leading character was the photographer who appeared as the curtain rose and remained on stage reading every other line until the end. It was a generous part and I was beautifully coached.

As I look back, I realize I never did understand the part or know why I said what I said or did what I did. I simply learned by rote, memorized all the stage business and did as I was told. I was trying to please my teacher.

To my amazement, the presentation was an overwhelming success. There were endless curtain calls, (even my behavior here had been coached), and my part made me an overnight sensation. For the first time in my life, my peers were jealous of me. And I loved it.

I had always been an outsider, a loner who was tolerated rather than admired. In the few days left before graduation, I was lionized by teachers and students alike. I had only to appear and people crowded around. My prior attitudes had produced an aloofness, a cloak of dignity behind which I retired. My sober air, which caused me to display a kind of quiet disdain, was swept away. People often said I was old for my age. I was solemn and took things seriously.

Suddenly, I was just a boy.

I had given no thought to what I would study in high school. A teacher suggested, "Of course you'll want to study drama and get into the Harlequin Club," so I agreed. I liked plays and had read many, including Shakespeare. The possibility of a stage career now eclipsed my desires to be a naturalist.

Mother was enchanted. Actors had prestige. They even won fame and fortune on occasion. She had never been certain about naturalists. For the first time in my life I decided that people really weren't so bad.

Ingrained habits were not so readily swept aside. My grade school graduation class contained perhaps fifty boys and girls. I enrolled in a freshman class of about eight hundred.

I expected some teacher to emerge and recognize my sterling qualities as an actor and dramatist—a teacher who would coach me to continued rounds of applause.

Nothing of the sort occurred. The competition was overwhelming.

I signed up for drama and for Shakespeare. However, when I wanted to join the Harlequin club, I learned there were dues to be paid. I gave up the idea. Mother had a long talk with me about the family's finances. The few dollars required for dues were beyond my reach. She would not be able to help me in high school. My paper route sustained me but, to commute to high school, I needed a car. I had saved a few hundred dollars but every cent I could earn went to books, gasoline and car payments—and clothing—with a quarter budgeted for lunch every day. By cutting out everything else we could just scrimp by.

Mother helped my sister who enrolled at college. I was on my own and could surely prove my acting and dramatic ability without the luxury of the Harlequin.

I hid behind the facade of dignity and superiority. I had only an occasional triumph in high school and the four years were, in the main, a long and unpleasant sojourn.

I found that my competitors were boys and not girls. So my attitude toward the female of the species was reinforced.

Fortunately, my income from the paper route grew. But the increase was marginal and many things I might have done with more money were simply not for me.

My high school served fairly opulent neighborhoods and it was no big deal to ask students to pay for this or that “frill.” It was a big deal for me. And I was so ashamed of my poverty that I learned to dissemble. I pretended to non-interest when, in fact, I was deeply hurt.

My one source of joy was the 1922 Ford coupe that I bought second-hand. Having a car marked me as “okay”. Also, it made me welcome among the coeds.

Most of the lads, who drove cars, drove their father’s models. Those from wealthy backgrounds tooled around in fine, new models of their own. Mine was a clinker, but it would go. When I had gas.

I began to believe that my Mother was a trifle old fashioned. Being “intimate” with a girl meant sex. She was right about that, of course. No one should have a sexual relationship until after marriage. But “necking” was all right.

Two young ladies who attended high school lived close to my own residence. I looked them over as possible wives. I dated each of them a few times and finally got in some smooching with each.

This was so exciting and gratifying that I could hardly think of anything else. On each occasion, I reluctantly broke off when it appeared that the heat engendered would cause a conflagration.

One of the reasons I continued to believe in Mother’s moral standards was related to what was taught in school. In biology, I learned that sex produced one of two results. The girl became pregnant or the boy got syphilis. Either eventuality clearly established that the male had been guilty of a moral breach. Either result would cause expenses and personal shame.

Despite the thundering eagerness of my adolescence, I stopped short. Truthfully, I would have been too embarrassed to reveal to the girl that I had no knowledge of how to proceed. Sure, I’d heard a lot of talk. But most of it, I still classed as nothing but filth.

I recall a particularly trying experience. I was out collecting fees from my paper route customers—(seventy cents a month daily and Sunday). I stopped at the house of a regular and was admitted by one of my classmates, a boy who lived only a few blocks from home. With him was another and younger boy.

The parents, my clients, were away. I was told that a young lady of mutual acquaintance was baby sitting and was at that moment,

“upstairs, putting the kid to bed.”

After an exchange of banter I turned to go. But my classmate suggested I “hang around.” According to him, the baby-sitter had phoned and invited him over. He and his companion were going to “lay” her as soon as she was available. She’d have no objection if I had a round with her too. She “loved” to take on all the boys.

I was dismayed and shocked. I called them both immoral and indecent. They just laughed. My neighbor, whom I had thought of as a friend, suggested I was probably “queer.” Then he told me in detail how he had taken one of the two girls I had been dating in the back seat of his father’s car. He had the effrontery to suggest that this same girl had been concerned about me because I hadn’t tried to seduce her.

I thought my last necking party with her had been torrid. I told him he was a liar and marched away.

The trouble was deeply inside. I knew he was telling the truth. Some of the girls were apparently as interested in learning first hand as was I.

To believe that girls were interested in sex went against everything Mother had taught me. Men were the aggressors, the beasts, unless they learned to be gentlemen. No decent girl wanted that sort of thing. I was upset for months.

At last in my junior year, my attitudes were rewarded. A young lady named Charlotte became my date.

I treated her the same way I had treated others—with courtesy and detached calm. We didn’t even neck. Never on a first date. She came from a good family and I told her that I didn’t believe in intimacies before marriage.

Her beliefs coincided with mine. She was a devout churchgoer, being a member of a downtown Presbyterian church. And she assured me that she had no intention of getting involved “that way” until after she was married.

I looked at her with suddenly awakened interest. She was entirely sincere.

She was lovely, just tall enough so that I could easily press my lips against her clear, high forehead. She had long auburn hair that she braided and coiled into a tight bun. Later I found it reached to her waist. One of her ambitions was to let it grow until it reached to her ankles.

Her face was oval, unmarred by lines except for little crinkles at the corners of her blue eyes. She had an astonishing array of freckles. Her features were regular, serene and precious.

Her body was slender, just beginning to develop the fulsome curves that can set a man's heart pounding. She had a marvelous disposition, and laughed readily. She loved the out-of-doors, while not seeking to demonstrate athletic skills. On top of this she was smart and a good student.

By the time I dropped her off at her home, near Lake Harriet I was really interested. To my astonishment, I dreamed about her that night.

I began to pal around with Charlotte at school and to go with her on a steady basis. Gradually a sense of ease and purpose came to me. We went together for a full year before I attempted anything more intimate than holding her hand.

Finally, in my senior year in high school, I kissed her. She was entirely willing and we shared a long embrace.

Charlotte was very quiet when I drove her home. When I parked in front of her home and turned off the lights, I raced around to open the door for her, but she continued sitting in the car.

"What is it, Charlotte?" I asked.

"We have to talk," she said. "Don't you think we should?"

"Well, sure." I scooted around and got in behind the wheel again.

I was all concern. "What is it, Hon?"

"I've been thinking."

"Me, too."

"What are you thinking about?"

"Well, I was thinking about how much I care about you."

She was pleased. "I'm glad."

We sat in silence for a bit.

"When do you think we should get married?" she asked.

"Charlotte, you know I want to marry you," I said. "We've talked about it before. But we've got to finish school. I don't think we should get married until we finish our education. Do you? And then I've got to get a job so I can support you."

"Your folks will probably send you to college, but I can't afford that. So, after we both graduate from high school, I'll get a job, as an actor or director. Then I'll start saving up. Maybe in about three or four years, if I'm getting ahead, we can get married."

She smiled wistfully. "But what if we have a baby in the meantime?"

"A baby!" I was thunderstruck.

"Certainly."

We stared at each other.

"Charlotte, we've been very good. We're not going to have a baby."

"How can you be so sure?"

"Well, we haven't done anything to cause a baby."

"Don't you believe that God is the one who decides that?"

"Sure. But people have to cooperate. We haven't..."

"Not until tonight we haven't."

"What do you mean?"

She looked at me and her heart was in her eyes. "We kissed. Tonight for the first time."

"My God," I said softly. "Did you think that a kiss could cause a baby?"

"That's what I've been told," she said. "So I never let any boy kiss me. Not until tonight. And when we kissed I felt very strange and very wonderful. I think it may have happened. Maybe I'm pregnant."

I'm afraid I laughed in relief. "My Lord, Charlotte, that's not so. Kissing doesn't cause babies. And we haven't even come close to doing what we'd have to do if we wanted a child."

"I've heard all that smut," she said. "I don't believe it."

"I don't know what you've heard," I said. "Probably lots of what you've heard isn't so. But part of it is true. We have to get together in a very special way to have a baby. Please believe me. There's no way you could get pregnant from a kiss."

She sighed and reached for my hand. "I believe you," she said. "And in a way I'm glad. I'm glad and sad at the same time."

"How's that?"

"Well, I want to wait just as you do. At the same time, I would really like to have your child. So, maybe I'm a little bit sorry, too."

I put my arms around her and we drew close. "Charlotte, you're a marvel. I wonder if you have any idea how much I care about you."

She nodded with tears in her eyes. "I'm yours," she whispered.

The balance of my senior year was excellent. Now that the important question of whom I would wed had been settled, I could think of other things that had to happen first. I saw Charlotte every

day. We dated whenever I could get the money together.

Also, from that time on we had some fairly heavy petting sessions whenever the occasion offered.

We graduated in the spring of 1929. Her family presented her with a new Ford coupe that put my old model to shame. Then she enrolled at the University of Minnesota.

I found additional work as a clerk, first in a grocery store, then a drug store.

An ad appeared in the newspaper I still delivered. An outfit calling itself "Universal Producing Company"—located in Fairfield, Iowa—wanted to hire young men or women, over 21, who were interested in a career as directors of home talent stage shows. Their offer was curious.

They would train each recruit. To receive training, the applicant had to go to Fairfield and study for two weeks. The training would cost the applicant \$35.00 per week. At the end of the two-week period, if you passed, they hired you and guaranteed \$30 per week or more from that time on.

At this particular time \$30 weekly was a good wage.

If you failed to pass, they refunded your money and sent you home. All you risked were the expenses of the trip.

Universal Producing Company! I was jubilant. With a name like that it must have some connection with Universal Pictures. What a fantastic opportunity.

Mother was uncertain. She couldn't help me with the \$70.00. Besides, I'd be a long way from home. I would have to lie about my age: I was only 17.

She became firm. No.

I did some careful figuring. If I really scrimped, I could get that sum together in five to six weeks. My largest concern was Charlotte. If Charlotte approved I would defy Mother.

I told Charlotte about the job opportunity and she was less than enthusiastic. However, if she wanted me to go if I felt it was the right thing.

I took this as support. I wrote a letter to the Company, saying that I would be "at liberty" (I thought this sounded professional) in five weeks. I stated I was qualified although I doubtless could benefit from training.

I'd have to give up my paper route, which had stood me in good

stead over the years. Visions of the great White Way in New York, or a film career in Hollywood, beckoned like a beautiful Lorelei.

I was accepted for training and reminded that the \$70 had to be paid in advance. I was again reassured that, if I didn't measure up, I'd get the money back. I was told the training was difficult and everyone didn't succeed.

Finally, I boarded the train and set off on the first of a series of strange experiences.

Mother was baffled by my stubborn insistence, and Charlotte saw me off.

Fairfield was a small town and the Universal Producing Company occupied second story accommodations on one of the principle streets. I presented myself to the receptionist, who unceremoniously relieved me of \$70. I got a receipt and was told to come back that evening at seven.

I was not alone. Some thirty-six young people, male and female crowded into a long room and sat at a huge table that nearly filled the place. We stared at each other like ill-advised directors at a board meeting, saying little. We had no idea what was coming.

Presently a man of about thirty-five, decently dressed and clean-shaven, entered. He looked around and said: "This is probably the worst collection of misfits, odd balls, jerks and dumbbells I have ever seen."

"What in hell gave any of you the idea that you could direct a stage play?"

He groaned and made an exit.

The receptionist appeared laden with mimeo material. She walked around behind each of us, muttering under her breath, dropping a copious sheath of written matter at each place.

The man re-appeared. "Start studying," he commanded in a sharp voice. "You're going to have to memorize every word in front of you and you've got just one week to do it." Again he disappeared.

Among the items in front of me was a three-act play, entitled "Corporal Eagan."

There was other material as well. The receptionist came back with more. Still muttering she made a total of four trips about the crowded room, giving each of us a stack of new reading matter each time. When she had served us all, I had a pile, much of it printed on both sides, at least six inches thick! Memorize it all?

I looked about me in confusion. I wasn't the only one confused.

One of my co-enrollees said: "Does anyone know what this is all about?"

We began to compare notes. The thirty-six present had come from various places, one man all the way from New York. All of us had the same information. We were all looking for work. We had all paid our money. The whole affair took on a flavor of unreality.

The man returned. "Has anybody memorized the first page of "Corporal Eagan?" he demanded.

Of course no one had. "Let's get it straight," the man growled. "I'll tell you right now there aren't more than a few of you who could possibly make it. So why don't you save yourselves and us a lot of trouble? Go home! Just step out to the reception desk. Your checks are ready. Full refunds as we promised. Go on, get out of here!"

One man, better dressed than most, said: "You know, I think that's a good idea. I came to get a job, not to be bullied."

He moved his chair.

The man cheered. "Hooray. You're smarter than I thought. Beat it. Go on."

He left, his face crimson.

"Who's next?" Our tormentor demanded.

We all sat like statues.

"Stubborn, eh?" He glowered at us. "My name is Stewart and I'm in charge of this group. And what a group! Very well, if you won't leave without help, maybe I can convince some of you."

With that he began circling the room, stopping behind each person and making derogatory remarks. One young man was a paraplegic. A leg was mix-formed and he moved with a cane. He had a sensitive face and when he had spoken during the lull, he had revealed excellent diction and appeared to have an advanced education.

Stewart stopped behind him and grinned.

"I've got nothing against cripples," he said. "In fact, I rather admire your courage. But what we are going to train you to do is far too strenuous for a man with a cane. Out!"

"I am capable of competing with the best," the lame man asserted. "My infirmity will not offer obstacles."

"Wrong!" Stewart said. "It already has. We can't use you. The re-

ceptionist should have refused your money at the outset. Your check is ready."

"I'd prefer to stay."

Stewart grinned. "What would happen to you if I grabbed you and threw you to the floor right now?"

"You wouldn't do that!"

"Sonny boy," Stewart said, "during this training you're going to have to learn to fall down stairs without getting hurt and then run back up. Think you can handle that?"

"No, sir."

"Right. Out you go."

The cripple made an exit.

Stewart continued his rounds. I was gritting my teeth. I wasn't sure I could take very much more of this.

He stopped behind me. Suddenly he rumbled my hair. "Well, well," he said. "Who have we got here? Pretty boy! Look at his hair!"

He twisted my head around so he could look at my face. "You look like a girl," he said. "How old are you, kid?"

I almost told the truth, but remembering the lie on my application I said, "Twenty-one."

"Yeah? I'll bet. Have you ever shaved?"

"Are you going to teach all of us how to shave?" I asked. "How about the girls?"

There were eight or nine young women in the group, and I got a murmur of approval.

"Well, you've got some spunk, anyhow." He chuckled. "How would you like it if I threw you to the floor?"

"I wouldn't like it."

He moved on to the next. By the time he had finished, the class had been reduced to twenty-eight. I was still hanging in and wondering what kind of a madman I was dealing with.

Just then the door opened and in came another man. Then a third, a fourth, and a fifth. They had similar lines to their faces and were introduced. All were Stewarts—brothers. And by turns they ridiculed, cajoled and insulted.

We sat there and grimly took it.

As suddenly as it had begun, the nastiness stopped. The five brothers looked at each other and nodded pleasantly. Then they all left except for the first Stewart. His whole attitude had changed.

“You are naturally wondering about what you’ve just experienced,” he said. “We’ve found that this is the quickest and most efficient way to let you know the kind of thing that can happen to you when you are staging a play. You will be insulted, abused and cussed out. If you can’t take it, you have no place with this organization. So, we’ve established that those of you left can take it.”

“However, there is still a long way to go. How many of you can do the job? Don’t worry. We’re going to find out.”

The business procedure they taught was simple enough. A front man traveled from town to town lining up various local organizations as a sponsor for a home talent production. When a contract was signed, it was signed between the company and one of these sponsoring organizations. The company owned two plays and had many teams all over the mid-west staging them. Our play would be “Corporal Eagan” and therefore the sponsoring organization would usually be an American Legion Post— The Veterans of Foreign Wars or some other patriotic group.

The financial arrangement was straightforward. The company would supply one person, the director. That director would arrive in town, cast the play with local talent, rehearse it and stage it for a minimum of two nights. If the play went well, it would be held over for a matinee or another evening.

The entire effort would take only two weeks. It would be push, drive, cajole, but get it done and on time.

Out of the gross receipts from the sale of tickets, popcorn or anything else that could be peddled, all bills were paid, including the director’s salary. What was left was split fifty-fifty with the sponsoring organization. The fifty-percent going to the Company was then split again—forty percent going to the director, sixty-percent going to the company.

The Stewarts had a unique system of training. We were trained in what to say and do in every conceivable situation. It was not just a memorizing of words: we walked through the parts. Each of us acted, in turn, as director, sponsor, actor, businessman, and mayor of the town—any and every person who was involved. It was all ad lib. As a sponsor, each of us tried to embarrass the director and, at the same time, we learned what the sponsor really wanted. Each saw and experienced his objectives and learned what to expect. We

learned to think on our feet and to further our objectives against all arguments, pressures and odds.

Meanwhile, we studied the play. Each of us memorized every part. We learned by doing.

Stewart hadn't exaggerated. At one point in the play, the leading character had to fall down a couple of steps. We learned how by doing. I learned how quickly a person could absorb a very great deal of information.

It was incredible, but at the end of the first week everyone had learned everything in the stack we'd been given, except the play. Some had learned parts of the play but no one had yet mastered it.

At the end of the first week, we were shepherded into the large room with the table once more. Stewart announced who was and was not capable of doing the work and, thus, who was staying on for the second week of training.

One by one, members of the class were called out. There had been attrition during the week, but nothing like this. As our numbers dwindled, one man said, "I wonder if any of us will be left."

We must have all been thinking the same thing. Finally there were just seven of us. I was proud to be one of that number. We were the survivors.

I phoned Mother and shared my triumph with her. She was dubious about my future, but happy I had succeeded.

Then I phoned Charlotte. We had made a pact. Each Sunday, at a specified time, no matter what either of us was doing, we would seek a secluded place and think about each other. I had become greatly interested in the idea of mental telepathy. I had tried to "think" messages to her and she to me. It didn't work. So I told Charlotte of my achievement, indicating that it might be some time before I got home because the policy of the company was to send a director from one city to another as rapidly as he could move.

During the next month I staged "Corporal Eagan" twice—once in Wausau, Wisconsin, once in Sauk Center, Minnesota. Both events were successful and I earned handsomely in both cases.

By that time I was homesick. I lost weight from the intensive work, but I also learned a great deal. Why shouldn't I write my own play and handle the whole thing myself? That way, half of the net would be mine rather than 40% of half.

I resigned from Universal, and returned to Minneapolis. The

Stewarts had been tough. But so far as my dealings with them went, they were honest.

My life was shaping up. I had direction and purpose. I knew what I wanted to do. I had a girl who loved me and who was going to school. At last, everything was falling into place. Or so I believed.

Chapter VII

Ah, the emotions we have! How deeply we feel. There are so many drives, compulsions, desires, and wants that move us. Man is an active, rather than a passive creature. Man acts. He may be acted upon, but he does act.

There has been a scholarly debate for years on the question of why man acts. Does man act with reason or does he act instinctively? As in so many of these scholarly harangues, each school of thought offers splendid arguments and either states or implies that anyone who disagrees is “wrong,” “irrational,” or just plain “uninformed.”

Perhaps the matter can be set forth on the basis of how the terms “rational” and “instinctive” are defined. In an effort at clear communication, I will define instinctive behavior as follows: when anyone or anything acts as a result of drives that are implanted genetically, and can act no other way, he acts on the basis of instinct.

In a prior chapter, I showed how a human being learns. He learns through his sensory equipment, directly or indirectly. That is, he learns directly by contact with reality and indirectly by contact with others who communicate their own experiences.

Why does man learn by this process? He can't help it. Genetically, his brain functions in this manner. The manner in which the mind functions, at least at the start of an individual's life, is instinctive. What he thinks is rational. *That* he thinks and the manner in which he thinks is instinctive. It may be possible for him to study the workings of the mind and, finally, to develop new and rational ways of using the mind. But, at the outset, mind function *per se* is genetic, ergo instinctive.

Another example: mentally, man chooses from among the myriad of data available to him, selecting things that please or satisfy and rejecting things that do not. Man cannot help but choose. He has a discriminating, selective intelligence. That type of intelligence is genetic. What he chooses is done rationally; that he chooses is instinctive.

What is the definition of ‘rational’? To rationalize is to reason. When a person acts as the result of a conclusion, an opinion, or a

belief, he is acting rationally.

There is a usage of "rational" that is entirely valid from a literary point of view, but which defies the definition I have used. That usage sets forth the proposition that a wise decision or choice is rational and that an unwise or foolish decision is irrational. I will avoid that usage, not because it is incorrect, but because it will confuse. Foolish decisions are likewise the result of using the mind. Within the definition I prefer, they are the result of a reasoning process, hence, they are rational even if they are flawed.

Differences of meaning can be important barriers to understanding and should cause us to be more careful concerning our definitions. Many a word in English is given double, triple or even quadruple meanings. Meaning is the objective of communication, not words. Words are nothing more than the stipulated sounds or symbols by which we communicate. The word is like the vessel carrying a cargo. It is the cargo that matters. We seek an exchange of meanings not merely an exchange of words.

By defining 'rational' as I have, I will move on and identify man as a rational species. This means that man acts as a result of using his mind. He acts from reasons. His reasons may be good or bad, right or wrong, wise or the utmost folly. But he acts as a result of these reasons, whatever they may be.

Might I not also define man as an instinctive creature? At the outset he acts without thinking because he has not learned to think. And even when he learns, his brain is such that he thinks in certain ways dictated by his genetic makeup. Thus, man has genetic endowments without which he probably could not exist. It appears so from the little we presently know.

An ultimate conclusion causes me to identify man as rational and not instinctive. It relates to the character of the mind as developed by man.

The evidence unearthed by those who discover our past reveals that early man had much less grey matter in his cranium than he presently has. It is accepted that, during these pre-historic times, man was far more instinctive and far less rational than he now is. The evolvement of man has apparently centered upon the enlargement of his forebrain, the cerebrum, coupled with his exercise of fingers and thumb.

The cerebrum is a powerful organ and we do not yet understand

its potential. What appears likely is that in earliest times man was far more a creature of instinct than he is now. I conjecture that, in those days, man did not spend a great deal of time making long range predictions. He reacted to the exigencies of the moment. In such a situation, the cerebellum and a modest cerebrum would have sufficed. When danger threatened, he either fought or ran for safety. When he was hungry, he sought food. If he thirsted, he sought water. The instinctive drives were there and he acted at once and directly upon nature to satisfy those urges. Many mammals are in this stratum today.

Somewhere along the line, man began to ask the question, "but what then?" Man began to *think* ahead, to plan for tomorrow rather than simply managing problems as they arose.

He began to produce food because he anticipated hunger tomorrow. He found better places to live since the danger of today might reappear tomorrow.

Gradually, over millennia, he reasoned more and more. As he did so, his instincts atrophied and the cerebrum grew. Beginning to rely on his own judgment, he discovered that he was dependent upon that judgment. His instincts no longer were reliable.

The instinctive drives are probably still there. But the cerebrum is so powerful that it has provided man with the ability of acting despite the inherited drives.

In classifying the *genus homo* as rational, I am not overlooking his instinctive endowments; rather, I am noting the power of the cerebrum. As an individual, man grows from infancy to adulthood and no longer acts instinctively. The drives are still present, but reason intervenes. His reasons may not be the best, but they are his and he will act upon them.

To be as precise as possible, I classify man's behavior as instinctoid rather than instinctive.

Perhaps an example will help to clarify. Let me take an earlier idea. "Every human being has an instinct for self-preservation." Superficially, this appears to be true. The nature of life itself appears to be the instinctive drive to live. Therefore, why would it be incorrect to say every human has an instinct for self-preservation?

If each of us had an instinct for self-preservation, then, *without exception*, each of us would be compelled by his own genetic makeup to stay alive at any cost. We would do anything necessary to stay

alive.

But this is not true of human behavior. Individuals, thanks to circumstances they apparently cannot control, sometimes commit suicide. Having thought through the context of their own existence, some persons decide it would be better to die than to stay alive. Some persons reach this decision as a result of injury or illness. Some persons reach it as a result of duress from others. A man decides to die rather than to betray a secret. Or he prefers death to the loss of property, a relationship or a principle. This is the rationalizing process. The merit of his conclusion is not under discussion. The *fact* that he can reach a conclusion to live or die, places his continuing survival under the control of his thinking processes, not of his genetic inheritance.

Any species that can make a volitional choice to live or die cannot be said to have an instinct for self-preservation. Man chooses to live. Or he chooses not to. This, then, is a rational species.

Try another example. Man has a genetic drive to mate. It is very strong. The sex urge is a potent force. But some individuals have stifled this drive by the use of their reasoning powers to live solitary and celibate lives. Further, even if they do not turn off the sex drive totally, most of our species is highly selective in this area. Were this not true, the moment an individual came across a member of the opposite sex, he would act on his instincts.

Here we may be looking at the evolvement of our kind. It is conceivable that the early human female, like the female of most species, was fecund only at specified times. At other times, she was not.

Under conditions such as prevail among most mammals, instinct would suffice. Males would only be attracted to females at certain times. Man, as we presently know him, uses reason and is selective. The sex drive is certainly present. But man's mind and his ability to choose, to procrastinate or even to negate are present. This is evidence of the power of the cerebrum, for today's female is almost always attractive to almost all males. Nature no longer runs up the signal that a given female is "available." Our reasoning ability has taken the place of blind instinct.

Perhaps an even better illustration could be found in the drive called hunger. To survive at all, man must consume food. Any given individual can refuse to eat, even though he is surrounded by the

food he likes best. Were he a creature of instinct, he would have to eat. His mind is so powerful, however, that even this basic drive can be set aside and nullified.

I would, therefore, define an instinct as a genetically implanted drive that *cannot* be dominated by reason. Rather, when the drive is present, the individual *must* obey. He has no choice in the matter.

This is why I define man as a rational creature. His reasons dominate. He still has the drives. But he obeys those drives only if and when his reason gives the order. Therefore, man is instinctoid (having drives) but not instinctive (for he can refuse to obey them).

The most civilized among us are usually those adjudged to be most capable of mastering their drives. It seems likely that the ability to master a genetic urge originally was discernable only in the negative. How else could we know that an individual was using reason? We know what another individual's genetic drives are because we have them ourselves. So when we witness a person who says "no" to something almost anyone would "want," we believe he showed character.

Our species appears to be learning slowly that negation *per se* can derive from other factors, including fear. Therefore, we are beginning to recognize that it is not negation that marks a highly developed use of mental powers, but careful selection.

Bear in mind that genetic drives are implanted as a result of nature's commands. The drives were there before we knew how to use reason. Therefore, to some degree, the drives are essential to survival. The use of reason is a mixed blessing for we can and do make mistakes.

But most of us have learned that while it may be necessary to eat, we don't have to gourmandize. While it may be necessary to mate if the race is to survive, we do not have to live in perpetual orgiastic delight. Indeed, our species would not survive today were we to revert to instinctive response alone. The overwhelming demand of our current situation appears to be '*use your head!*'

There appear to be at least four genetic drives, beyond what I have mentioned, with which every human being is endowed. These drives provide the fundamental emotional (feeling) footing on which we act. *How* we act is determined by what we know and how carefully we make choices among available alternatives. *How* we act is determined by the drives with which each of us is genetically

endowed:

1. Preventing loss.
2. Promoting gain.
3. Achieving approval from others.
4. Self-approval.

We could refer to these drives as “wants”, “desires”, “hopes”, “yearnings”...whatever. We all have them.

In all actions and choices, every human being seeks to prevent loss. Loss of what? Loss of anything he values. Since most of us value their lives, most of us can be counted upon to act in favor of our own survival. But not in every case, as I have shown. Circumstances may intrude.

Indeed, if life becomes such a burden that we finally believe our own survival will be too painful for us to bear, then we may reason that loss would result from continued existence. In such a case (and I am not applauding the decision), one might conclude that loss could be prevented by death.

The same applies for every value. If a person values a personal relationship, then he will seek to prevent its loss. If he values money, or a property, or a principle or anything else, he will seek to prevent its loss.

We cannot predict what a given individual will do to prevent loss. This is partly because we do not know what he values most. It is also because we do not know what a given individual will choose to do to prevent the loss. We only know that man, by his basic genetic nature, is a loss avoider.

If circumstances are such that the individual cannot reason to prevent loss, he will then try to minimize the loss.

Every human being has a basic sense of uneasiness. We want to know what is going to happen (to predict), but we cannot be sure. This sense of uneasiness arises from ignorance. There is so much we do not know, so little we do.

As we learn what things are and how they behave, we establish a way of survival—a “life-style” if you prefer—that is calculated to prevent loss of what we most value.

Preventing loss is not enough. Whatever we value, we would like to have more of. Every human being wishes to gain.

No two of us are precisely alike in what we value. Each of us is an individual living in his own space-time continuum. As we watch

the behavior of others, we come to learn what they value and do not value. This is because we observe them eagerly seeking to prevent the loss of what they value while time trying to obtain more of the same thing.

In today's world, there is a temptation to use a dollar sign whenever the term gain is employed. While dollars are a means by which some make gains, the term 'gain' is intended on a much broader scale. Some persons do not value dollars highly. Some do. Some persons value the arts. Some value friendship. Some value travel, books, sports, good food. Whatever the individual values he will seek to increase in his own favor.

I am going to use a term that differs from the dollar sign. Instead of stating that man always acts in terms of \$\$\$, I will state that he acts in terms of +++. I will call +++ 'plus factors.' Thus, every human being always acts in terms of a plus factor (+). By preventing a loss of something he values, he wins a +. If he makes a gain, that too is a +.

I am not saying he always achieves this objective. I am saying he constantly seeks +++. They could be in the form of dollars, but they could be any other form as well.

However we may squirm and cavil at this disclosure, the fact remains—man is egocentric. And he will act in his own best interest as he interprets that interest.

Isn't it possible for individuals to be truly concerned about the well being of others? Of course it is. Being helpful to others can become a primary target from which a given person receives a very high value. Such a person 'gains' when he helps another. Thus, he is bringing satisfaction to himself.

It is sometimes argued that the two drives—loss prevention and gain promotion—are identical. It is true, to be sure, that if a person makes a gain he has prevented a loss. Also, if he prevents a loss that is a gain in itself.

But I have drawn a line between gain and loss because of the human tendency to predict (to anticipate) and, then, to act in terms of that prediction.

Thus it appears that if a person anticipates a loss, there is a probability he will act in a certain way. Conversely, if he anticipates a gain, he will act differently. Again, this is only a probability and I have no mathematical data to provide percentages. I merely note a

tendency.

The evidence available supports the conclusion that in primitive times, or in undeveloped or 'backward' societies, knowledge of reality is minimal and fear of the unknown is high. These societies have little in the way of material or intellectual advantages. But they are so fearful of what they do not know that they tend to huddle together.

Old adages come to mind: "Misery loves company." "There's safety in numbers." And so on. So when fear is the dominant emotion or feeling of significant numbers of persons in a group, they tend to draw close to one another.

On the contrary, when a society has a significant number of optimistic, forward looking persons who predict and anticipate gains, then it tends to act with a great show of independence and individuality. Ignorance is the mother of fear, but confidence is inspired by knowledge.

It appears that when we anticipate loss, we like to share it with others. On the other hand, when we believe a gain is in the offing, we would just as soon manage that gain in our own way.

Some suggest—and I am among them—that America, in the latter half of the 20th century, has turned from optimism, confidence, knowledge, and individual self-reliance. It has become a country filled with fearful, ignorant persons who are loss oriented. And increasingly dependent.

Every human being wishes to win approval to some degree, from at least some of his kind. Certain individuals yearn for recognition from the public at large. Some are content to be admired by a few. But no one is satisfied without favorable recognition from at least some others.

Some find satisfaction by developing skills, achieving office or by some other procedure calculated to bring recognition and approval. Some hope to achieve recognition by developing character. Some, by making themselves visually attractive. All of us are interested in favorable feedback from others.

In short, we want to be loved, admired, and remembered.

On occasion I have argued this point with some who pride themselves on being "rugged individualists." Such persons sometimes tell me they are totally indifferent to what anyone thinks of them.

None the less, they are eager to let others know they have written

a book, or climbed a mountain, or survived in the wilderness without assistance. Upon examination, all those who pride themselves on being rugged individualists tend to adopt precisely the same type of conduct. Upon analysis, rugged individualists apparently wish to be admired by other rugged individualists.

Finally, each of us wishes to approve of his own conduct and to like himself. In a sense, this is probably the most basic of all the genetic emotions. We must have self-esteem, at least to some degree.

Naturally, the best way to be happy with one's self is never to make an error. But man is prone to err. A person who has never made an error would have to be a person who has never tried to achieve anything. This could be an error in itself.

As with all emotions, sound judgment is essential. While it is necessary to feel good about one's self, it is not essential that we erect a shrine to our own image and worship therein. This is one of the most difficult places to establish balance and judgment. We are prone to think well of ourselves.

Further, man's ability to rationalize is virtually without limits. To escape self-condemnation and a sense of guilt, many persons become intellectually dishonest. They know they have made an error but cannot bear the thought of admitting it to themselves. To maintain their own self-esteem they will argue that wrong was right when they did it. They were justified in doing what they did and, therefore, (they plead) they are above reproach.

Actually, man learns by trial and error. Being able to recognize a mistake is one of the first steps toward enlightenment. This is a narrow strait through which each of us must sail. We must avoid the Scylla of guilt and the Charybdis of self-deception.

I have learned that for me, the best medicine to take is to express gratitude that I have learned and, then, to laugh at my frailties. Having learned and laughed, I move on. It is sometimes difficult. But it is best.

To draw even closer to the subject, let me introduce another word—'sacrifice.' Do human beings ever voluntarily sacrifice themselves? If the definitions I have been using are followed, the answer must be, no. In every volitional act taken by any human being, he seeks +++ (plus factors).

But what if a person longs for a particular objective but at the last minute, due to the difficulties of another, he gives up the objective

in favor of helping the other person? Isn't that a sacrifice?

I must insist that it is not. The individual, seeking result A as his highest value of the moment, is persuaded to perform action B because of circumstances that become important to him. He has not sacrificed. He has merely shifted from A to B as his highest value. Man *always* acts in terms of his highest value of the moment as *he sees it*. He re-evaluates his position and his values shift. This is the process of rationalizing.

Is there no such thing as sacrifice? Of course there is. But no human being volitionally sacrifices himself. He may be quite willing to sacrifice another. But he *cannot* function against his own interests as he sees them. He does not act contrary to his own nature.

This is a difficult area to comprehend but it is important. I am speaking of two kinds of behavior and, in the interests of clear communication, it is essential to use different words to designate different concepts.

When a person is free to act as he will, even though his values may shift and he may perform an act quite different from what he had planned, he is still acting to seek his highest plus factors. Therefore, he is not sacrificing himself.

However, a second party may intrude and use force—or a convincing display of the ability to use force coupled by a threat—to cause the first party to act contrary to his intentions. Then, the first party is being sacrificed by the wishes of the second party.

If A decides to give away his money, his blood, his property or even his life, and the decision is made voluntarily without duress, then A is not the victim of sacrifice. He is merely acting in terms of his best interests as he sees them. You and I might have profound convictions that his actions are *not* in his best interests. But you and I are not A. He is A, and you and I are other than A.

Whatever A may do, regardless of our value judgment as to the merit of the act, A is acting as one in control of his own energy. No person ever will use his own energy against himself *as he himself determines his best interests*. Even if x is planning to commit suicide it will be because, according to his values, his death can prevent a loss or make a gain, or both. Therefore, he *voluntarily* decides to die. Whenever a person voluntarily does anything, he sees the act as a plus factor.

When A is required by force or the threat of force to act in some

way, then A is no longer exclusively in charge of his own energies and decision making process. This means that someone other than A has interposed forcefully.

I am going to use the term sacrifice, to identify this compulsive condition. This being the case, then—in the interests of clear communication—I cannot also use the same word to mean a different condition. When I use the word ‘sacrifice,’ it will mean that a second party has intruded by force (not merely by plea, argument, persuasion or promise of reward) or the threat of force. So long as the individual is free of duress or forceful intrusion by a second party, regardless of how he may shift his values around, I will refer to this condition as nothing more than a shift in value judgments.

Even if a person is compelled by another to do something that actually benefits him, when force is used the person is victimized regardless of the result. Imagine, if you please, that a thief breaks into my home. He steals a hundred dollars, invests it in a security of some kind, and then signs the security over to me so that I benefit from all the earnings. Is that sacrifice? Certainly. The sacrifice occurred at the moment that my will was thwarted by force regarding something I wished to do. I had planned on having a party and spending the \$100 on entertainment.

But isn’t the security of more value than the party? Not to me. If I wanted to buy the security I would have done so. I have been deprived of something I wanted. The relative merits of what I want and what another wants for me have nothing to do with the question under consideration. The only factor being considered is this: Who is in charge of my property and me? When I manage my own affairs, make my own decisions without duress—whether I win or lose—I am uncoerced and acting in my own best interests as I interpret them.

But isn’t there a special exception here for children? Don’t parents, or teachers or employers often use force (or forceful threats) to obtain reasonable conduct? Certainly they do, although there are usually superior ways of dealing with children, students or employees. In most cases, however, threats by parents, teachers, or business executives do not comprise sacrifice.

Why not?

Because, in most cases, the child, the student, or the employee is not paying his own way but is acting with the money or property of

another. He is presuming to act as he pleases not only with his own time and energy but also with the property or money of another.

Thus, when the child, the student, or the employee insists on doing as he pleases with the property of another, an entirely reasonable response might be to suggest that the child do as he pleases with his own money or property.

If the student wishes to do as he pleases, then an entirely proper response might be to suggest that he leave the school, or set up his own.

And if the employee no longer wishes to follow the instructions and agreements made with the executive who hired him, then a proper response could be to suggest that he quit his job, find another, or set up his own business.

It is currently popular to bad-mouth anyone in authority. But the truth is that many a child, student, or employee is currently placing his parents, teachers, or employers under duress. Because of confusion on this point, the loss to the authority and the loss of authority is overlooked or denied.

Whenever confusion appears, it is important to examine the words we are using so that the confusion is removed to the degree possible. Therefore, I will identify "free choices" as those actions an individual makes with what belongs to him and without duress, regardless of the actions taken. By definition, each of these actions means that the individual is seeking plus factors.

However, when a second party intrudes and uses force, the second party is seeking plus factors by using the first party as he pleases. This is clearly a sacrificial act and creates a sacrificial victim, regardless of how the action culminates.

If this explanation is glimpsed in its entirety, then we have come a long way in resolving one of the most perplexing problems confronting philosophers for a very long time. For ages, savants have raised the question: is man basically good or basically evil? Each position has its advocates. Each makes compelling arguments.

I am offering the idea that man is neither basically good nor basically evil. I am suggesting, rather, that man by his inherent genetic qualities is basically an opportunist. In our lifetimes, each of us will act on millions of separate decisions. Without a doubt, some of the decisions will be good and some will be otherwise. A given action may be good or it may be evil. The same person can pursue either

line of conduct and most of us follow both trails.

Every human being seeks plus factors for himself in all that he does.

You and I, in examining the behavior of others, will sit in judgment on what they do and what they appear to be. But man's ability to rationalize seems limitless. Even the most cruel sadist, the most depraved murderer or rapist, acts because *in his judgment* plus factors accrue to him when he does so.

And that brings us to grips with the fundamental characteristic of human nature. Man, by his nature, is a profit seeker. Not in a dollar sense, but in a plus factor sense. He may achieve the plus factors he seeks; he may not. But he seeks them. He cannot help it. That is the fundamental, bed rock of humanity which each of us shares.

Is this explanation entirely satisfactory? Probably not. We are so accustomed to think of ourselves as "being forced" by circumstances—the weather, society or whatever—that we like to think of ourselves as martyrs. And human beings usually believe what they find attractive, whether it is true or not. It is always comforting to blame other *things* or *people* for our problems.

Still, wouldn't it be true that if A planned to perform action B and circumstances over which he had no control caused him to re-evaluate and instead perform C, then a kind of sacrifice had occurred? Granted: A made up his own mind and acted as the only controller of his own energy. But circumstances intruded and he was *forced* by those circumstances to re-evaluate. Isn't that a kind of intrusion in itself? And shouldn't it be called a sacrifice?

I will define a sacrificial act as one that is caused by an inter-human relationship and nothing else. Thus, if it rains and my picnic must be cancelled or postponed, nothing is sacrificed even though I must go without something I value highly. However, if people go to the picnic grounds and dump so much refuse there that my picnic must be postponed or cancelled, then we have sacrifice. One group of persons was compelled to alter behavior because of what others did.

Here is another way of explaining it. There is no such thing as a free act or deed. Every time an individual is free to act, he has alternative courses of action, each of which will appear as a +. However, each plus factor (+) is always accompanied by a cost (-), or negative factor. The task of choosing how to act is a matter of weighing gains

against costs, in advance.

Consider the picnic. Anyone planning a picnic knows that weather is a major factor. When a picnic is planned, one of the cost factors the planners must consider is weather. It happens to be a factor they cannot control. So they determine the date of the picnic and cross their fingers, hoping for the best.

In short, weather is a cost that can arise and be prohibitive, and they know it. But they willingly run that risk in order to have the picnic. If they are not willing to run the risk then it becomes impossible to make long range plans to schedule a picnic. So this prohibitive cost is one that the planners *voluntarily* accept. Without accepting it, no picnic planning is possible.

But consider the other situation. Some person or persons deliberately damaged the picnic grounds for whatever reason. This is a cost forced upon the picnickers that they did not willingly incur. In a sense, that is what makes any act sacrificial.

Human beings know that in seeking a + factor, costs will be incurred. But they voluntarily agree to pay those costs or to accept the risks of such costs. A free choice entails the voluntary assumption of costs in an effort to make a gain.

Thus, we define a sacrifice as the forceful imposition of a cost upon someone by someone else. Many people presume that whenever a cost arises, a sacrifice has taken place. A great many people seem to imagine that everything should be “free” or without cost, and they feel themselves badly used when they must pay.

But that is not the nature of this world. Whatever we want to believe, it is important to know what the facts are. Reality says there is no such thing as a free act or deed. And when reality is recognized, then we know a “free choice” is the voluntary assumption of cost, and a “sacrifice” is an imposed cost—the imposition occurring by force or the threat to use it.

Thus, I define sacrifice as an imposition upon a person by another person against the will of the victim whereby he is made to pay a cost he did not agreed to cover. All sacrificial acts entail a victim and a victimizer.

I define free choice as the willing acceptance of cost by an individual who values and re-values, possibly again and again, but finally acts because he accepts whatever costs may arise from the action he is taking.

Chapter VIII

How many of my interests, drives and passions did I inherit? How many did I develop as a result of life's experience? I have no idea.

Mother profoundly influenced me, and I suspect the influence was genetic as well as environmental. For example, Mother was fascinated by many ideas that had not yet been accepted as valid. This was in strange contrast to her devotion to establishment dicta.

Shortly after my birth she wrote to a friend of hers, a certain Fred White, who was expert in astrology. Given the date, time and precise location of my birth, plus a handsome fee, Mr. White consulted the ephemeris. He provided Mother with a voluminous prediction of what my life would contain.

Mother gave me the document when I reached my 21st birthday. I kept it around for awhile, then destroyed it. I now wish I had preserved it. In certain respects, it was almost eerily accurate.

Mother was told when I was six months of age that I would be fond of the company of women. At the age of twelve, I would have an accident by falling (I broke my leg). I would be interested in writing, animals, the occult, and the strange and unusual, but primarily in women.

I would have problems with my stomach and my back, and I would live a long life. In the latter years, I would travel a good deal—and with great speed—back and forth across the country. (The introduction of passenger air travel was many years in the future at the time of my birth. But how I have utilized it!)

Mother always believed. I was invariably skeptical, but enthralled.

During my pre-high school days, I became fascinated with Science Fiction and a subscriber to *Amazing Stories*, every word of which I absorbed like a blotter. I became interested in ESP, spiritualism, and the great questions of what life is about; how we arrived on this planet; what we are doing here; where do we go after death; do we really die?

My head was full of conjecture, visions, and supposing. My boyhood heroes swashbuckled their way through my brain, conducted by Edgar Rice Burroughs, Jules Verne, H. G. Wells and A. Merritt.

A boyhood friend told me the Bible was about as exciting a story

as one could read. Further, I was informed that it contained a lot of salacious reading material. Plenty of begetting. I read it in its entirety with fascination.

Then my sister suggested that the book of Revelations was absolutely true. We were moving toward an Armageddon wherein people like me would meet their doom. I re-read Revelations and scared myself half-silly. This was science fiction coming true with a vengeance!

When this preoccupation with the outré was coupled with my headstrong refusal to inquire in the face of ignorance, you had a loner. Make him a vegetarian, of French antecedents and have him born in Idaho but living in Minnesota, and it is small wonder that eyebrows were arched at some of my statements.

My love for Charlotte got my feet on the ground. After my experience with Universal Producing Company, and upon returning home, Mother urged me to get a “regular” job. She was proud of my success but, taking note of my loss of weight, she wanted me to get a job that would keep me at home. I was too young to be “traipsing” across the country. And while I had done all right with the two productions I had staged, I would be bound to flop sooner or later. What then? I must always look ahead.

There was no denying my loneliness when on the road. I missed Charlotte far more than I did my own home, a point I did not discuss with Mother.

Meanwhile, Mother had sought the assistance of her brother, who had become a successful businessman in Minneapolis. He refused to hire me in his store. He said he had a policy of never hiring relatives. Factually, I don’t think he wanted me around. I was too full of daydreams and too empty of interest as a merchant. But he had a good friend who owned an employment agency, and I have no doubt he used whatever influence he had with this agency to get me a position.

One way or another, it worked. I was hired as a warehouseman by Linde Air Products, a subsidiary of Union Carbide. My job was to load and unload freight from railroad cars, spotted on the siding outside the company’s warehouse.

The job required extensive physical exertion and certainly “dirtied” my hands. Mother was aghast. Perhaps I was attracted to the work partly for that reason. A degree of antagonism had manifested

between Mother and me. I delighted in proving her wrong whenever I could.

At this particular juncture, the work was exactly what I needed. Not only did it pay fairly well and was steady, with regular hours, it built my muscles and improved my health. Also it left my mind free for its visions and fantasies. Further, I was well liked by the firm. I developed a real affection for the other warehousemen with whom I worked, shoulder to shoulder.

Charlotte and I dated every weekend. We made plans. She was doing well as a University freshman in all subjects except English. That was my forte, so I often helped her with her English assignments.

One Saturday night I took her to a movie and, afterwards, we drove out a country lane which we often used to be alone together. We took my car, of course. I insisted. Hers was better, but the male must always cover the expenses. All of them.

We drove in the general direction of Lake Minnetonka. From the main road, we branched off onto a rarely used track. It ended at a point where an artesian well brought water gushing from a pipe that slanted up from the ground. It was January, and snow spread a thick blanket over the landscape, making the naked trees stand out in spite of the moonless dark.

Cattle came to drink from this spring and a small herd was milling around not far from where we parked.

For some time we were lost to the world in a series of passionate kisses and embraces. My car had no heater and a window was broken, but we were so amorous that the windows were steaming. Finally I broke away and we gazed adoringly at each other.

Charlotte broke the silence. "Bob," she said, "Let's go all the way."

I was startled. While my body, my mind, my very soul shouted agreement, I shook my head. "Don't say that, Hon," I pleaded. "You know I want to so much that I'm hurting. But we've made our plans and we should follow them."

"I could get you pregnant. And I'm not making enough money yet to support you. Furthermore, I have only a little saved."

"I've been thinking about our plans," she said. "Sometimes I feel that we've been wrong to make them. I sometimes don't think they're going to come true."

"Not come true?" I frowned. "Whatever could stop them from

coming true? You know I love you and I know you love me. Of course they'll come true."

She shook her head. "I don't think so."

"Why not?"

"I don't know."

"I don't figure that. Do you want them to come true?"

"Of course I do. You know that."

"Well why don't you think they will?"

"It's just a feeling."

"A feeling?"

She shrugged. "Umhummm. Our plans are so wonderful. I don't think they will happen."

"You think they are too good to come true?"

She nodded.

"Charlotte, we've been good. Pardon the emphasis, but we've been *damn* good! You know I'm not much for church, but I do believe in God and in moral principles. We've always done the right thing regardless of temptation. It seems to me that we should have faith that everything will come out as we plan it."

"I know."

"But you still don't believe it?"

Again she nodded.

"Get out of the car," I said.

She looked at me in surprise but immediately obeyed.

I got out on my side and took her hand. "You come with me."

I led her down the slight slope over the treacherous, crunching footing. We stopped at the gate of the fence that kept the cows in pasture.

As I had anticipated, the gate could readily be opened and I swung it wide so we could pass through. The cows, perhaps fifty yards away, looked up with stodgy bovine interest.

With her hand firmly in mine, I led her to the spring.

"There are four great elements in the world," I said to her. "They are earth, fire, air and water."

I pushed both our hands into the icy stream where it emerged at the pipe-end. "I swear to you," I said, "by this sacred element, water, that our plans will come to pass. They will mature and come true in every way. You are my one true love and I am yours. Know this and remember it always."

There were tears in her eyes. We embraced there, standing in slush, with the splattering of the water filling the otherwise silent night.

Quietly we returned to the car, and I started the engine.

On the following day, Charlotte phoned me. She was having difficulty with a theme she would be required to read in class the next day. Could I come over to help her?

We hadn't planned on dating that Sunday, because we had been together the night before and we were trying to save money. But, of course, I agreed.

I drove to her home and, having greeted her parents and younger brother—all of whom were high on my list of fine people—we retired to the den and I read what she had written. Together we bent our heads over her efforts and I offered a few suggestions that were incorporated into the work. Satisfied at last, although admitting anxiety over her coming presentation, she gave me a final kiss. I went home.

Even though it was January, the next day was warm and bright. Shortly after I had eaten lunch out of my customary brown bag, the office manager appeared at the warehouse. His face showed concern.

"There's a phone call for you, Bob."

"For me!" I had instructed everyone I knew never to call me at work. "Who is it? Do you know?"

"It's your mother. It must be an emergency of some kind. She wouldn't tell me what it was about. But she's crying."

Mother crying? I had seen her in tears only rarely. She was adept at concealing emotions. I raced to the phone.

"You must come home at once, Robert," she sobbed. "Something terrible has happened!"

"What is it, Mother?" I shouted. "Tell me! Are you all right?"

"Of course I'm alright." The sobbing continued.

"Why are you crying?"

"I...I...I simply can't tell you. Not on the phone."

"Is it Lauris?"

"No. No. She's fine." There was more sobbing.

"Mother, what in heaven's name? Was there a fire?"

"No. Nothing like that."

"Let's not play guessing games," I roared. "I must know. Tell me

at once!"

For a moment it seemed she would. Then there was a new burst of tears, "Oh, I can't tell you. I simply can't. You must come home at once!"

The manager quickly excused my departure and I bent every speed law on the books getting out to the house, a distance of at least five miles. I've often wondered why I wasn't arrested. I went through the downtown loop district like a guided missile. I have always reasoned that, when there is a good excuse for exceeding the speed limit, a person is not breaking a law. He is merely bending it out of shape.

I took the shortest route, parked on the wrong side of the street, and dashed into the house.

Mother was wringing her hands. I confronted her. Again I demanded the cause of her distress and she moaned and looked into my face, then broke into a new batch of tears.

She was diminutive, and I was now as strong as a young Hercules. I picked her up in my arms, cradling her as if she were a child.

I marched to a rocking chair, sat with her on my lap, and began to make soothing noises. "Come on, Mother," I urged patiently. "You got me home so you could tell me. Sooner or later you are going to tell me. Why not get to it now?"

For a long time, all she could do was moan and say, "Oh, Robert." Then, she would bury her face on my chest. Finally, looking at my face, she blurted: "Charlotte is dead."

I stood so suddenly I nearly dropped her. "Charlotte? Dead?" I shook my head in horror. "Mother, that's not so. It can't be so. Is this supposed to be some kind of joke?"

"Oh, I didn't want to be the one to tell you," she cried. "Now you'll probably hate me. No one likes the person who brings bad news."

I grabbed her by the shoulders and shook her. "Cut that out!" I yelled. "Charlotte is not dead! That's...that's preposterous. My God, I was with her only last evening."

Then fear clutched at my heart. "Was there an accident?"

"No, no accident. She's...she's just dead."

"Whoever gave you that nonsense?" I bellowed.

"Her father... He phoned... He was crying too. He's all broken up. Charlotte just died. She dropped over dead!"

I screamed at the top of my voice. "Stop saying that! It simply isn't true! That's completely absurd!"

"Her father wouldn't lie about a thing like this, Robert. No, I'm sure it's true."

I raced to the phone and dialed. Her father's voice, shaken with tears, answered. "Yes, Bob. It's true." Charlotte is gone. Forever!"

"Who told you that?" I yelled. "Have you seen her? Do you know this from your own observations?"

"No," he said, struggling for calm. "They called from the University. She was called on to read an essay in class. They said she stood up and started to read and then just fell over dead."

"There has to be some mistake," I insisted. "Possibly it's a case of mistaken identity. Universities make mistakes. It couldn't be Charlotte."

"There's no mistake, Bob." He was crying now without shame.

"I'll be right over!"

I glared at Mother. "Somebody is pulling some kind of a grim joke." I said. "Her father doesn't *know* she's dead. Somebody at the University told him. When I get my hands on whoever started this story..."

I rushed from the house. The radiator was steaming. To hell with the radiator. I turned the speed laws into a pretzel in covering the two miles to Charlotte's home.

Amidst a cloud of vapor I parked and dashed up the steps: the entire family was together and doing their best to comfort each other.

"I can't believe this." I shouted. "There's got to be some explanation."

"It's hard to understand," her mother said. "But the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away."

"Have you been to the University?" I demanded. "Tell me exactly what happened."

"Someone called me," Charlotte's mother said. "I called father and got Sonny home from school."

"Who called you?"

"I don't know. Someone from the University hospital."

I turned to her father. "They called me after I got home," he said. "They wanted permission to perform an autopsy."

"An autopsy? What...what did you do?"

"What could I do? I told them to go ahead."

"You gave permission?" My brain reeled. "My God!" My eyes burned into his face. "Did it ever occur to you that maybe Charlotte wasn't dead at all? Maybe she just fainted. Did you go to the hospital?"

"No, No, I didn't. The University wouldn't make a mistake like that, Bob. She's...she's gone."

"Well, I don't believe it!" I shouted. "I'm going over to see for myself."

"Maybe that's what we should have done...." her father began, but I was already out the front door streaking to my overheated car.

I didn't stop for assistance with my radiator. Again I put the car through its paces and sped to the University, located the hospital and stormed inside.

A white-jacketed student or intern was in the hallway, and I accosted him. "Who's in charge of corpses around here?" I shouted. I was wild eyed.

He indicated a doorway on the left. I raced that way. He called after me, "Nobody's allowed in there!" He came after me at a run.

I opened the door and stepped through.

A trio of white-gowned surgeons or other officials stood around a slab that had been pulled from, or was about to be pushed into, a compartment in the wall.

"I'm looking for Charlotte " my voice grated, and then choked up.

One of the white robed figures stepped aside and indicated the prone figure before him. I came up for a good look.

There had been no error. Charlotte's pale face and auburn hair were unmistakable. Except for these, she was covered with a white shroud. The surgeons had performed a post mortem trepanning. A jagged bloody seam crossed her smooth brow just at the hairline.

I froze into immobility. My entire life seemed to seep out of my body, through my feet, and into the floor. From what seemed to be a great distance, the surgeon next to me was speaking.

"We found the problem. It was a brain tumor. Nobody suspected it. It's really a shame. She was a lovely girl."

Somehow, I made my way back to the car.

Chapter IX

I was wild with grief.

For several days, Mother feared alternately for my sanity and my life. I thought seriously of committing suicide. It appeared to be a reasonable thing to do in response to Charlotte's death. Mother employed a young man of my acquaintance, who happened to be out of work, to be my companion day and night. I didn't know he had been hired until I caught Mother handing him money. I had thought he became my close companion out of sympathy. The discovery underlined my sense of abandonment and sorrow. He wasn't really concerned with my survival. He was simply after a buck.

Because of Charlotte's interest in religion and church work, I had attended several Sunday sessions at the Westminster Church in downtown Minneapolis. I had done it to please her. Insensibly, I had adopted much the same moral view she held without getting involved in the mundane ramifications of church oriented procedures or the church sponsored interpretation of Biblical events.

I had accepted an assumption without intellectual challenge: namely, if an individual obeyed the commandments, accomplished good works, minded his own business and was generous with others, God would look after him and everything would turn out in his favor. I certainly was no saint. But, to the best of my ability, I had tried to live in accordance with the precepts of saintliness. I had lied on occasion, been guilty of petty theft, and probably inflicted minor injuries on persons I didn't even know. Further, there was a deep trace of the irreverent in me, probably picked up from Dad.

It seemed to me that God, the father of all mankind and the creator of the Universe, wouldn't be petty. Besides, if I was His creation, He was responsible for my flaws. If He had decided to take my life, that could have made some sense. Not a whole lot, but some.

But why did he take Charlotte? Her mother had said: "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away." The line that followed was: "Blessed be the name of the Lord." Blessed?

If Charlotte had been killed in an accident, I could have hated the party responsible. If she had been ill, or had some indication of the malignancy that would cut her life short, I could have found some

rationale for staying alive. There simply was no explanation or excuse for what had occurred. Charlotte had seemed well and happy to all observers. Further, she was one of the very few people I knew who never had an enemy. If she had ever done an unkind or mean act, I have yet to learn of it. Despite these virtues, she took her sweetness and purity as commonplace. She was intelligent without boasting, humble without self-negation, fun-loving but not at the expense of others.

So I took another look at my life and came within a narrow margin of snuffing it out. Christian belief holds that there is life after death. Then, Charlotte was around somewhere. It would make sense to join her. There was nothing left for me on earth, as I reasoned it. And although I was told that taking one's own life was a terrible sin, it seemed insignificant compared to the taking of Charlotte's life in the manner it had occurred.

Death, with Charlotte, seemed desirable. Living without her would be a hollow, pointless eternity.

In the brief interval before the internment, I went to the funeral parlor every day and closeted myself with what was left of her dear person. I tried to communicate with her in death as I had tried thought projection when I had been traveling for Universal. Slowly, I began to blame her father. If only he had not been so precipitate in granting permission for the autopsy. A gossamer thought flickered into my mind, romantic and idiotic. If only I had been summoned, perhaps by giving her a kiss I could have brought her back.

My hired companion suggested that I pay a call on her family. I couldn't bring myself to do it. Charlotte and I had spent some glorious times there, in her home, planning a bright future. Everything I saw would tear me apart. And further, I was fearful that I might turn on her father and make wild accusations that, in a saner part of my mind, I knew could not be justified.

Then the incongruity of the teachings Charlotte and I had accepted began to soak in. We had been assured that, when death came, the soul of the departed went to a better, far more beautiful life than anyone could hope for in this world. Then why were so many of us grieving? If we really believed the teaching, we should have been throwing parties, rejoicing in Charlotte's promotion.

Such a conclusion meant that all the wailing—and I had been guilty of plenty—was nothing more than self-pity. I was sorry for

myself for having lost Charlotte. Those left behind were bemoaning their loss instead of rejoicing at Charlotte's attainment. There could be no question. If there were a heaven, Charlotte had ascended into it.

Then another thought intruded. The teaching said a person was rewarded according to what he did. Good acts brought favorable reward. Evil acts brought punishment. Charlotte had been filled with good acts. Yet she had been struck down and punished as though she had been wicked.

What if all the teaching was just so much hog wash? Charlotte and I had gone steady for more than two years. During the first year, I was such a disciplinarian that we had done nothing more passionate than holding hands. Even during our final days together, even with her request that we consummate our love, I had said no. We had been good, according to the precepts. Sex without marriage was a sin. And behold the reward!

If the teaching that every act was rewarded according to its character—good for good, evil for evil—was false, then how much more of the teaching was false?

Perhaps death was an end. No one knew. Perhaps Charlotte didn't live in a cleaner, brighter place. Perhaps she simply didn't exist anywhere. In that case, were I to die, I would simply cease to exist, too.

That thought stayed my hand, not the thought of suicide as a sin.

I returned to the warehouse of Linde Air Products and retrieved my meager belongings. The manager urged me to take a leave of absence and, then, come back. My job would be waiting. I would have none of it. While working there my mind had been glorying in the plans Charlotte and I had made. Every stack of goods in the warehouse would remind me of her.

Without pressuring me, Charlotte had often expressed the wish that I would change my mind and take an interest in church work. I had told her, oh, so often, that I didn't really object to the church, it's just that I could accept moral ideas without church affiliation. Working for the Church and consummating our love were the only things Charlotte had ever asked that I had not done. On the chance she still existed somewhere and my action could make her happy, I presented myself to the Director of Religious Education, a splendid man named Herman Sweet. I told him I would like to join the

Westminster congregation.

With characteristic disregard for his feelings, I said: "I don't know whether I believe what is taught here in the church, or whether I don't. I want to join the congregation for one reason only. I think Charlotte would approve."

Normally such an approach would prevent membership. However, many in this powerful body of church devotees had known Charlotte. She had been loved and respected. And if I had been her boy friend, I couldn't possibly be all bad.

After taking the matter "under advisement," he notified me that I was accepted. He believed that, if I "gave myself a chance," I would come to accept the church doctrine. Meanwhile, I would be welcomed as a member.

Once more the hand of my mother was raised in an effort to help me. Learning the name of the Director of Religious Education at Westminster, and finding me emotionally determined not to return to my job, she must have done a bit of behind the scenes maneuvering with Mr. Sweet. Someone did, and I suspect her.

I was called into the church office one day and Mr. Sweet offered me the job of "director" of church dramatic productions. Apparently, he had been impressed with those two plays I had staged for Universal Producing. I was offered a tiny sum of money on a regular basis, a small cubby-hole of an office, and a chance to stage and direct the various dramas which were offered two or three times each year by the young people of the church.

Mr. Sweet told me that the job would also make it possible for me to read books about church doctrine and, thus, hasten my acceptance of the Presbyterian credo.

I accepted the position, mostly because of my memories of Charlotte.

Naturally, this brought me into contact with the young people's organization of the church. I found myself immediately the center of all attention. Charlotte had been most active here. I was seen as a tragic and, therefore, an heroic figure. In Christian circles, at least, there are few psychological plus factors more rewarding than the belief of your peers that you are a martyr. Inwardly I preened my feathers at the warmth of their sympathy.

There was one young lady who accepted my presence with a total disregard for what I had been through. As she saw it, I was just

one more fellow. Her name was Peggy. She had known and liked Charlotte. She accepted Charlotte's passing with fatalistic calm. She accepted me in precisely the same way. What had happened had happened. I was who I was, not because Charlotte had died but simply because a person is what he is.

At first I was annoyed. Couldn't she detect my nobility, my sacrificial status?

She could not. I decided to go out with her to see if a closer look at me would bring forward some of what the others were offering wholesale. It did not.

Gradually I found myself thinking about Peggy a great deal. From irritation emerged appreciation. This young lady was "normal" and I had long ago accepted that I was other than "normal." Whatever normal may be.

I dated Peggy more and more frequently. Without intending it, I found we were going steady. Peggy had long, dark hair, was relatively short of stature and endowed with a sweet soprano voice. She had taken singing lessons and occasionally performed a solo. Her voice was never large, but the tones were pure. She was a very attractive girl and, in most respects, a total contrast to Charlotte.

The major difference related to bodily structure. Whereas Charlotte had been slender, almost boyish, Peggy had curves. Desire arose in me, mounting ever higher. But I wasn't sure I was in love with Peggy, as thoughts of Charlotte invariably intruded.

Mr. Sweet was tremendously impressed with Peggy and overjoyed by the interest I took in her. Mother, meanwhile, was stunned. How could I take an interest in another woman with Charlotte so recently in her grave?

Young people's activities stopped during summer months at the church. So did my income. Rather than going out to find a new job I wrote a play, a murder mystery. Using techniques I had picked up from the Stewart brothers, I booked the show with the American Legion Auxiliary in Anoka, a suburb of Minneapolis, and staged it as a home talent production.

The play was named "Don't Tell." The audience apparently took the title to heart and didn't. Although in the two nights of production I took in enough money to pay all the bills, I obtained for my own services a total of \$15.00 net. That was not a large sum for a full summer of hard, grueling work.

Discouraged I gravitated back to the church and further association with Peggy. I finally made up my mind. If I found that I loved Peggy, I would throw the earlier moral position out the window. I had longed for Charlotte, and fate had slapped my face. This would not happen again.

Peggy and I began harmlessly with a little petting. Neither of us had had any experience beyond “necking.” Without even discussing the matter, one night after a movie date, and with the entire household asleep, Peggy and I became intimate. The experience convinced both of us that we loved each other.

Few events convince a person that he has become an adult quite so thoroughly as sexual involvement. Once a sex act has occurred, both parties imagine they “know it all.” In my own case, and I suspect in the case of many others, I was convinced no one else had ever felt quite the same emotional fulfillment. I was a pioneer. I had invented sex. Certainly I knew more than my parents, Peggy’s parents and the world in general.

Meanwhile, my dramatic efforts at Westminster were not totally appreciated. Whenever I staged a play, I coached the performers into an interpretation of the role of Jesus, which was relatively worldly. I had never been impressed with the idea that Jesus was the only begotten Son of God. And after the shabby way God had treated Charlotte, I was confirmed in my irreverence.

If Jesus had been the actual offspring of the Deity, then why would He say: “These things that I do, shall ye do also. And even greater things than these shall ye do.” No one else could possibly do what He was capable of doing, given His divine origin. He must have been guilty of some kind of put-on. Apparently He was trying to persuade people into a pratt-fall. They couldn’t possibly live up to His example. But He was conning them into attempting it. Why? So He could jeer at them when they bit the dust?

That didn’t square with the image of a gentle, loving, forgiving fellow who really cared about the rest of us.

If Jesus were a man who, despite His human weaknesses, rose to the heights demonstrated by His compassion and concern, then there might be a chance for others to follow in His footsteps. In the latter case, He could be viewed as a great teacher. If He was actually divine, then He was begging a comparison wherein all would fall short. That could only mean an exercise in conceit.

At home, I made no secret of my disdain for the kind of interpretation Mr. Sweet and others at the Church wished me to accept. Mother urged me to quit the job and get one that would earn more money. I told her I wanted to stay on, partly because I felt that my interpretation was needed, partly because I felt that I was fulfilling Charlotte's wishes. Privately, I truly enjoyed my influence with the young people. I most especially enjoyed my relationship with Peggy.

When I finally let Mother know that I was going steady again, she was aghast. She assured me that I couldn't possibly be in love with Peggy if I had truly been in love with Charlotte.

Assured that she couldn't know what was going on in my own mind, I laughed at her and stubbornly persisted. Again she pulled some strings. I know this is true because she told me so later. She contacted Mr. Sweet to see if she could persuade him to let me go. I suspect he told her that, while everyone at the church liked me, I was still immature and my dramatic efforts could be improved with formal study.

One way or another, they persuaded the administration of Hamline University to offer me a scholarship if I would enroll and participate in their drama department as an assistant.

Fortuitously, at this juncture, our little family became the beneficiary in a will left by one of dad's recently departed relatives. Twenty-five hundred dollars had been left to Mother, Lauris and me. After the attorney—a "friend" of the family—took his \$1500, we received about \$1,000 net.

With this in hand, Mother broke the news. I could go on to college. A partial scholarship had been arranged and, with the bonanza from my great Aunt, we could just afford the effort. I could go for one year, at least. And if I got a decent job close to the campus in St. Paul, I could probably put myself through four years and emerge with a degree.

I was not impressed at first. But Mr. Sweet urged the same course of action. When I talked with Peggy about it, she decided she would go to Hamline, too.

In the spring of 1931, I visited the campus for the first time and formally accepted the partial scholarship. I also let various professors and administrators at the school know I was enrolling to further my education, not to obtain a degree.

I was headstrong and demanding. Curiously I had my way. I took

an examination and was excused from all Freshman English. I signed up for a reasonably heavy scholastic load consisting of English Literature, English Composition, Drama, History of Civilization, and Physics. The last two were compulsory and I took them grudgingly. I signed up for the campus newspaper. I also agreed to assist in coaching the school's dramatic efforts in tandem with a fine young woman who had just been hired to head the new drama department.

All of the ensuing summer, Peggy and I dated furiously. We attended a pair of church "retreats" together and, finally, just before the school year began we celebrated by having a picnic on the high banks of the Minnesota River, a mile or so above its confluence with the Mississippi. On this occasion, the precautions I had always taken were disregarded. Never had I been so "at one" with another person.

We talked of marriage, Peg and I, but we postponed the date by mutual consent. We would both finish school first.

When the day came for actual matriculation, the school authorities demanded a physical examination. I could see no reason for such a procedure, but after registering an objection, I shrugged and went along with it.

Male students assembled at the gymnasium where we were instructed to disrobe completely. I was shocked, and disgusted. My person was private and I didn't want to expose it to anyone, let alone to a roomful of men I didn't know. I complied. Inwardly resentful, and clad only with a towel, I lined-up with everyone else.

I had no premonition of what was going to take place. I was standing in the line of nudes, taking great care not to touch the man in front of me while making certain no one touched me from the rear. I sought to hide the scar on my back with my towel, while also preserving my dignity.

The next thing I knew I was lying on my back on a hard bench, naked as a plucked chicken. I had "passed out." A doctor was working over me and a half a dozen concerned male faces peered down at me. No one knew what had occasioned my sudden lapse into unconsciousness, least of all, me. I had been "out" for about ten minutes.

With the exception of this interlude my entrance into renewed study was routine. However, I must have been doing a few things

correctly because I was elected President of the freshman class during the first assembly. I plunged into my busy schedule and managed to retain my sudden popularity.

Shortly thereafter, Peggy took me aside and conveyed some startling news. She was pregnant. She had missed her first period and was experiencing morning sickness. We had to make sure. She visited her doctor having first sworn him to secrecy. Her condition was confirmed.

What should we do? Pregnancy, like murder, will out. It could not be hidden forever.

We would have to get married and the sooner the better. We may have talked about abortion, but it could only have been a brief discussion. Neither of us was prepared for so drastic a remedy.

Once more, just as I was getting my life in order, events went out of my control. There were two major problems. The first, and by far the most serious, was that neither Peggy nor I was of age. We could not be married without parental consent. Secondly, neither of us could continue in school. My scholarship was a restricted grant. It applied only to a single person. I would have to quit anyway in order to support my wife and child.

Peggy said she would have no difficulty with her parents. They would be fully in agreement with an immediate wedding. I expressed confidence that Mother would see it the same way. She had drilled me to understand that a person was responsible for what he did. True, she didn't approve of Peggy, but when confronted with the inevitable, she would certainly favor our union. All the same I hated to tell her. I would have to confess to her that I had been "bad" with Peggy. She had me so high on a pedestal; the information would surely hurt her.

I caved and postponed seeing Mother, but Peggy informed me that she had obtained permission from her parents and it was now up to me. I couldn't delay. Time was precious. People have known how to count down from nine for a very long time.

I had constantly insisted that I didn't believe in sex before marriage. I would stand exposed as the greatest of hypocrites. But if we moved quickly enough, we could claim a premature child.

Well, I had developed my persuasive powers, thanks to my experience with Universal. Perhaps I wouldn't have to tell Mother everything. I would insist that I wanted to get married right away,

never mind the reason. I would simply be willful and headstrong.

So I sought out Mother on what I hoped was an appropriate occasion and began with all the subtlety of a Sherman tank rolling against a detachment of infantry.

"I have decided to get married." I said.

Mother looked at me with scorn. "Have you, indeed?" She didn't think I meant it.

"Yes, Mother. At first I thought I'd wait for a year or so, but I want to get married at once. Right away."

Mother smiled. "Whatever for?"

"Well," I said, "I've been thinking it over. You know that in all the time I went with Charlotte, I...well, I never tried to, you know. We never made love together. You know what I mean."

"Charlotte was a beautiful girl," Mother confirmed wistfully.

"Right. Charlotte was special. How often I wanted to take her in my arms and complete our...our union. You know. But I always remembered what you had told me. A good man doesn't have that kind of relationship until after he's married. So, I never did."

Her smile patted me on the head. "Of course, Robert. I've always been so proud of you."

"Yeah. But look what happened! Charlotte is gone. And now, to tell you the truth, I feel cheated. I wish to God I had done it with her."

Mother paled. "Don't say things like that, my son. Of course you don't mean it. Besides, Charlotte wouldn't have wanted it that way."

"That shows what you know," I snapped. "She actually asked me to but I wouldn't."

"I don't believe it."

"I don't care. It's true."

"What's gotten into you?"

"Well, after what happened to Charlotte, I mean, well, I decided that if I ever felt that way again...you know, like I wanted to...that I would.

"Well, I want to. I want to with Peggy. So I want to get married to Peggy right away."

She sniffed. "With Peggy? That girl! Hummph. You can do better than that."

"I don't think so. I love Peggy. And this time I'm not going to be cheated."

Color drained from Mother's face. "You weren't cheated. And you don't love Peggy."

"Yes, I do."

"You love Charlotte."

"Oh for Gosh sakes. Charlotte's dead. I loved her. Sure. But she's gone. Now I love Peggy."

Color came back, with interest. "You don't any such a thing. Oh, I should have been more insistent about Peggy. I knew she was setting her cap for you. The very idea!"

"Peggy's a fine girl." I insisted. "She comes from a good family and she's...well, she's fine. I'm going to marry her."

"I won't hear of it. Let's stop this conversation at once." A look of apprehension was on Mother's face.

"No. I'm going to marry her. "

She stared at me. Then her expression softened. "Well, Robert, it so happens that you can't. There's a law in this state. You can't marry anyone until you're twenty-one."

"Yes, I can. But I have to have your consent."

She smiled. "That's right. And I certainly will not provide it."

"I want you to."

"Well, I won't. And that's that. What are you thinking of? You've just started back to school. You have your whole life ahead of you. I'm not going to permit you to throw it away."

This wasn't going the way I had planned.

"If you won't," I threatened, "Peggy and I will simply go away and live together. In sin, if that's what it is. I want to fulfill myself with her. And I'm going to do it."

Mother's hands fluttered to her throat. A light of knowledge came to her eyes.

"Oh, Robert," she moaned. "It's too late, isn't it? You, you and that Peggy person have already..."

Her voice trailed off.

I nodded. What could I say? I felt stripped and shamed before her.

Mother's voice was very quiet. "Is Peggy pregnant?"

Again I nodded. I was sick with self-guilt.

Mother squared her shoulders. "Maybe not. Maybe she just thinks she is. You need to have a doctor for her. There are so many things you know nothing about. I think she's just trying..."

"Stop saying things against Peggy. She's fine. And she's pregnant

all right. She's already seen the doctor."

"Oh, dear." Mother wrung her hands. "All right. If that's the way things are, the least she can do is to get an abortion."

"Mother, that's against the law. Besides, it's murder."

"I don't care what it is. You're not going to throw yourself away on that..."

"That will do!" I thundered. "You've had it in for Peggy from the start."

"Yes, I have. And I was right. You're not going to marry her!"

"Okay. Then we'll live in sin."

"You wouldn't do that."

"You just try to stop me."

"Robert, I will not tolerate this defiance. You are still a minor. And while you are you will do as I say. I'm going to call my brother. I'm going to talk to Mr. Sweet. I'm going to call the police. I'll do anything I have to do. But you are not going to be taken in by..."

I drew myself up to my full height and, frankly, I wore a sardonic smile. "So that's the way it is, eh? All my life you've lectured me on being good. All my life you've told me that the man who dances must pay the piper. You've told me that I'm responsible for what I've done."

"Well, I've had the dance. And I'm going to pay the piper. I never expected anything like this from you. Sure, I don't like to begin my married life this way. I can't imagine anyone wanting to. But I'm willing to face the facts and do what is right. And now, from you, the fountain of all wisdom and virtue, I hear you suggesting breaking the law, murdering, anything except doing what you've always told me that a good man must do."

Mother gave a little scream. Her hands went to her mouth and she glared at me, round eyed. "That was dreadful, Robert."

"Well, you asked for it."

"There's got to be a way out." She burst into tears and ran to her room.

For the next week, Mother put every pressure on me she could contrive. Her brother came to talk to me. He was filled with disgust. He offered to buy Peggy off and I gave him a piece of my mind. He offered to pay for an abortion, even suggesting that he could find a doctor to perform the illegal act. I would have none of it.

Mother offered to sell our home so that she and I could travel and

get the whole “sorry mess” out of my mind. We could go to Mexico for a year or so. And then, when we came back, we could settle in some other part of the city. The whole affair would have blown over.

I was called into the Dean’s office at Hamline and told that, if I married, the scholarship would be cancelled. I was in arrears with the balance of my tuition for the first year, in any case.

I reached a compromise with the Dean who agreed that I could finish the first year of study, provided I paid the tuition.

Mother eventually capitulated and formally signed the necessary waivers and a license was issued.

Peggy and I were married in a beautiful ceremony at Westminster. I had wanted a small, private affair but Peggy’s mother wanted all the trimmings.

Meanwhile, my financial affairs were in total disarray. My money was gone and jobs were hard to find. Even skilled labor was going begging. This was the winter of 1931-32, and the great depression was laying a heavy hand across the land.

The baby—a fine, healthy boy—was born in May of 1932. Peggy and I lived first in one place and then in another, pushed by a growing tidal wave of debt.

Equally disastrous was my mental confusion. I was lost in a vast sea of guilt. I no longer knew what was right and what was wrong. I avoided my friends.

Anguish and shame filled my days and haunted my nights. Mother had insisted I was “special.” Now it seemed that my specialty was getting into trouble. I had ruined my life. I had become a bit of human flotsam, adrift on currents outside my control.

Deep inside I was angry. In turns I blamed everyone I knew. It was all Mother’s fault. Or Dad’s. Or the Church. All my problems had been dropped on me by outside forces. All my problems had been imposed by others. In the midst of my shame and confusion, a glowing, suppressed hatred began to burn.

I did my best to bottle up my emotions, feigning a detached and martyred calm.

Then summed up my anger I got it all together. My distress began when God had taken Charlotte. It was all God’s fault. There had been no reason to take Charlotte. If she were still alive everything would have been different. Defiance glowed in my heart like an ember, filled with malice.

Chapter X

Man is a consumer.

It is a part of our genetic inheritance and there is no way to set consumption aside.

Man does not arrive on this planet with a power pack and a life-support system that will function regardless of what the individual does. So long as we are born with physical bodies, we are bound by the demands made by those bodies.

Periodically, a body of thought arises among men, which is hostile to human consumption. Consumption is deemed destructive and unworthy. Indeed, at times the anti-consumption concept flourishes so richly that it appears to formulate a genocide wish. This is a hope that, somehow, man will cease to exist so “nature” can proceed without human interference.

The truth, to the degree we are capable of recognizing it, indicates that man is a creature of nature, like any other creature. He is made up of the same substances that comprise the universe. He is part and parcel of the universe, and he cannot throw off these universal characteristics. He cannot get out of the universe.

The individual has only one fundamental choice to make after birth. The choice is to be or not to be. To live or not to live. If he decides to die, he can simply do nothing and nature will oblige him. If, however, he decides to live, his own physical nature will demand action. He must eat to live. He must imbibe water to live. He will be wakeful and sleepy by turns. He will be filled with eagerness to act and be too weary to act, by turns.

What he eats—how much and when—are matters of ongoing decision. Capacities and preferences will vary almost infinitely. But there is no variation in the fundamental. Eat or die. Drink or die. Be active or die. Go to sleep or die, by turns.

These are the rules of physical life for each individual whether he approves or not. In short, living man is a consumer. We need to spend no time at this juncture concerning the dead. Our business is with the living.

What is meant by consumption?

There is one obvious meaning and another equally important

meaning, but less obvious. Clearly, consumption includes ingestion. Whatever a person eats or drinks ceases to be what it was before and, in a very personal way, becomes a part of that person. This is obvious consumption.

But man is more than just a perambulating appetite. He must and does occupy physical space. If he is to stay alive he cannot be reduced to “no space.” Therefore, man must be able to occupy space (control a certain amount in his own favor), or die.

Man lives in what has been called a “space-time” continuum. No two physical bodies can occupy the same space at the same time and retain their individual identity as they do so. While a man is occupying it, no one else can occupy the same space in the same way.

Anyone who controls space in his own favor at a given moment is the consumer of that space at that moment. Just as you cannot eat the apple I am eating unless you take it from me, so you cannot occupy the space I am in unless you take it from me. Although the apple vanishes inside of me and the space remains outside, consumption occurs in both cases because my control is exclusive and I reject all rivals or competitors.

The space any human being occupies with his physical body is not merely so many cubic feet of empty void. All space in which a human body can survive contains “things” of a physical nature. Man stands on earth. The earth is comprised of many physical things. All of them may be important to him.

A man obtains an automobile. No one presumes that he will “consume” his car by ingesting it. But while he is driving his car, no one else is driving it. He is controlling his car in his own best interests, as he views them. By common consent and long usage, we call him the consumer of a motor vehicle.

The man buys gasoline that his car will “consume.” But it is the driver of the car who actually consumes the gasoline although not in the man’s stomach.

The same type of procedure occurs with the other things within the space that a given individual occupies and controls. The size of the space, the number and variety of the things within the space—all controlled by the person occupying that space—determine the person’s standard of living.

Standards vary as human beings vary. Some eat more than others

do. Some want more than others do. No two of us want precisely the same things, or the same amount of things. No two of us are capable of obtaining exactly the same things at the same time in the same place.

The drive to consume is instinctive. That is to say, it is genetically implanted. Every human being has it. He can refuse to consume, thus ceasing to live. But if he chooses to live, then he must consume. We are born as consumers. We will live as consumers. Consumption and life are inseparable.

At the outset, man presumably inhabited this planet as a forager and hunter. The numbers of humans who could survive depended upon nature's cooperation. If nature, at a given moment was generous, we feasted. If nature was indifferent or destructive, we starved.

But man was endowed with the ability to think. And to remember. The more he experienced, the more he had to remember. The more he could remember, the more he had to think about. Nature's relationship to man did not satisfy him. Man resented and rebelled against the indifference or hostility with which nature regarded him.

Undoubtedly, one of the first and far reaching generalities, which some human beings formulated, related to other human beings. A kind of logical sequence formed in the minds of some humans. Had it been set down, it might have looked something like this:

1. Everything I must have in order to stay alive is scarce and hard to come by.

2. There are many humans, just like me, who are looking for these scarce and valuable things. There isn't enough to go around.

3. If one person manages to control something (a handful of berries, a bird, fish, whatever), then I can't control it.

4. I have no means of survival if I don't control things. It is more important for me to survive than for anyone else to survive.

5. Other human beings are my rivals and consequently my enemies.

6. If I can destroy other human beings, there will be more for me.

I believe such a conclusion would have been inevitable for a reasoning creature in a world of scarcity. I cannot attest to the date of its first emergence. But it must have been formulated sometime, at some place, for it is still with us. Indeed, many today look at life as a jungle. It is kill or be killed; eat or be eaten.

Out of this line of reasoning came suspicion, hostility, crime,

murder, and cannibalism. With certain humans this became, and still remains, the order of survival.

Probably through experience, some human beings learned that murdering every other human being had enormous negative results. We could not mate in solitary grandeur. Many of the chores that had to be performed for individual survival took place more efficiently if more than one person was on hand. Gradually some human beings discovered that a kind of working truce with a few others was superior to the destruction of everything human.

To protect against ever-present danger, one person of a group could stand watch while others slept. A group could combine efforts in foraging and hunting, and get more.

Those outside our particular group might be hostile and under suspicion. But within our own group, we could make and keep the peace. We didn't necessarily *like* each other; but we *needed* each other.

Then came a startling break through. (I leave the time factor to the technicians. Sometime, some place the discovery was made.) We could cooperate with nature and make nature less indifferent to our demands as humans.

We could plant seeds and increase the supply of forage materials. We could domesticate a few animals—dogs, pigs, turkeys, whatever we could find. Then, when the hunt was poor, we could eat what we already had on hand.

The odds in favor of human survival improved.

Then we learned something else. It is called a division of labor. Instead of having everyone in the group cooperate in the hunt, one group could hunt while another group foraged. We began to specialize. Some persons appeared to have a natural aptitude for working with stones. Others were better at planting seeds. Still others encouraged an increase in our flocks. Each group could make the product of its own endeavors available to others in exchange for their products.

The second great human characteristic was formulated. Man became more than a consumer. He became a producer. For the first time, human beings confronted a new problem. Some of us produced a surplus.

From a condition of want, a few moved into a position of affluence, at least compared to what others had. (All concepts of afflu-

ence are comparative). A given individual might have the skills to produce such an abundance of spears that the members of his tribe could not use them all. Or he could raise more turkeys, or build more huts than those he knew could possibly use.

What could be done with this surplus?

He focused on other groups in the same geographic area. What did they have that he could use, in exchange for what he had and they didn't? The concept of exchange was generalized.

Rudimentary ideas of trade emerged. How could it be accomplished? He trusted no one but those in his own group. And while he could make war on those he didn't trust, in an effort to obtain what they had, it became apparent that, in so doing, his group might lose some of its own superior producers.

The evidence available indicates a surprising amount of ingenuity. The first exchanges were apparently conducted in the following fashion: members of group A approached the territory occupied by group B. Once they had been sighted, they threw down their spears and axes, trying to communicate peaceful intentions.

If members of group B responded in kind, then the next step occurred. Individuals in group A placed on the ground those objects they wished to trade. Each person made his own little pile.

Then all the members of group A retreated to a respectful distance and, with gestures, urged group B forward to examine the merchandise.

Members of group B, warily came forward, looked over what was offered and, then, did one of two things. If the merchandise was unwanted, they shook their heads, shrugged, or just wandered away. No takers. If the merchandise offered was desirable, they ran back to home base, picked up something they had in surplus. Hastening back, they laid it on the ground next to the pile of goods they wanted.

When all members of group B had completed their respective piles according to their own best interests, they retreated.

It was the turn of A group. They advanced, examined what was offered in exchange. If the offer was acceptable, they picked up what B had left and walked away, leaving what they had brought. If not, they picked up what they had brought and left B's offering intact.

This time consuming procedure was the beginning of peace between groups. It could get complicated. Sometimes, some items of-

ferred by individuals in group A were desired, but others were not. In this case, more than two piles would be set down on the field of exchange. Things were paired off, moved this way and that, to indicate acceptance or rejection.

After each pairing off, the group making those allocations would retreat to give the other group an opportunity to approve or disapprove.

The fundamental element of exchange emerged in very early times. That element is voluntarism. There are only two ways in which exchanges could be effected. Voluntary exchange which we now call trade, barter, swapping, buying and selling.

Or coercion. This form of exchange includes force or stealth, or both. Taken to its logical conclusion, it meant war.

The discovery that peaceful exchanges outside of one's own group could occur was, perhaps, the first great step toward an ultimate civilization that we have not yet attained. But a beginning was made.

A particular type of relationship was recognized: this is the instructive aspect. Even our primitive forebears knew that control of a given trade item remained with its owner until the control was voluntarily surrendered. They knew that the owner would voluntarily relinquish control only when it appeared in his favor to do so.

Since it is impossible for man to survive without controlling some space and some things in that space, the first ideas about ownership of property came to the surface.

As it works out, there are two kinds of fundamental relationships that concern every living person. There are relationships he can form with others of his own kind. And there are relationships he can form with the things of this earth, which are other than his own kind.

Relationships with one's own kind are either voluntary or coercive. There are several important elements that should be examined. If A wishes a relationship with B, the relationship is voluntary *only* when B agrees. To create a voluntary relationship, all parties must be in agreement. Voluntary relationships are productive, profitable to all and peaceful.

What if A wishes the relationship but B does not? If the relationship is forced upon B, then the relationship is not voluntary and B has become a victim. His wishes have been sacrificed to A's wishes. At best, this creates an uneasy truce. At worst, it leads to conflict.

But what if B *needs* the relationship? A has no obligation to supply the needs of another at the expense of his own interests. Both A and B will always act in terms of their own profit, if they are free to do so. To compel A to associate against his will is to impose a sacrifice.

Each of us is born alone. Even twins arrive one after the other. Thus, while one party may wish a relationship, for it to be voluntary, the other party must concur. Lacking concurrence, each party reverts to what he is—an individual and nothing more. This can never be an imposition on anyone, for it is what nature has ordained as the fundamental of human existence.

The things controlled by a given individual within his space are extensions of his survival and, thus, a part of his life. He cannot survive without them. True, some will control more things than others, for no two of us are alike.

If an individual is compelled to part with something within the space he controls, an injustice occurs. The injustice is not against the thing, but against the controller. I do not injure the car if I steal it from you; I injure you, the owner and controller.

Whether we are dealing with persons, directly or indirectly through the things they control, there are only two known ways to do so. We deal voluntarily or we deal with force—stealth, lies, violence and possibly war. What other methods are there?

In earliest times, the concept of property probably took a long time to emerge. Ownership, as we presently think of it, is an elevated, complex, sophisticated concept. Primitive men probably could not conceptualize. At first, control of a given object was probably obtained by force.

Even in early trading, exchanges were performed by individuals acting within groups. Each person depended on his group's willingness to resort to violence if any of the opposing group claimed control of what he offered the trade was consummated.

If this is correct, then the first concept of ownership wasn't ownership as we now see it. It was physical possession and little more.

If all property is held by those who are strong enough to keep it, then it must follow that the biggest, most ruthless, violence-prone group will have whatever it wants. The rest of us will get what is left.

There is a profound weakness to this method of controlling property. Possession of any item depends upon the strength, wakeful-

ness, and ability of the bully. Assume a 600-pound behemoth of a caveman. He must sleep once in a while. At which point, an agile opponent of far lesser stature and ability could snatch his property, running off with it. Or, several men could band together, each weighing 300-pounds, and beat up the 600-pounder, thereby getting whatever he had.

There is no limit to this procedure. The result is easy to conjecture. No one would ever be safe with what was his. The value of controlling things depends on the ability of the individual to do as he pleases with them until he no longer wishes to control a specific item. If others intrude, he either loses his life, or his life options are reduced.

So it happened that, along with free trade, another idea surfaced. Government. Let there be a permanent group of persons with strength, cunning, wakefulness and ability to stand guard over the properties of all others. In short, let there be a permanent bully, so big that no one will dare attack him. Presumably, he would make the rest of us safe.

While governments were being organized—at first in simple and embryonic form—a third idea came to light. What if, instead of relying on force, a concept could show people the difference between right and wrong? Any bully, even our own, was counter-productive. And dangerous.

What if people could learn that there are only two kinds of relationships—voluntary and coercive ones? Could we not create a system of taboos that spelled out what people *ought* to do and *ought not* to do?

If this could be done, then a person would not only possess a property by virtue of his ability; he would possess a property of *right*. In a delineation of right versus wrong, The concept of morality was formulated.

As I study the human record it appears to me that all three ideas were chronologically related. Government, an ultimate force. Free trade, an ultimate voluntary method. Morality, the difference between what is right and what is wrong.

Chapter XI

Only days after the baby was born, Dad came to my rescue with a job offer. Dad had remarried. He and his new wife, Alethea, were in Des Moines, Iowa. The offer was made by mail. Dad didn't want to come to Minneapolis where he might have to confront Mother.

Dad now had a business of his own called the "Occidental Portrait Company. He had been operating in Iowa and said that business was good, but he wanted to go to California to take up permanent residence. He wanted me to work with him en route and then to stay in California where, he assured me, business conditions would be wonderful.

During one of my summer vacations, while still attending high school, I had obtained a substitute carrier for my paper route and worked for Dad in Indiana. Although I was disenchanted with Dad, and upset that he had a new wife, one I had never seen, I needed a job desperately. Further, I had done well as a salesman with Dad, and I knew he would treat me fairly.

I was only beginning to realize the importance of the relationship people must have with "things" if they are to stay alive. I was in debt, grabbing any odd job I could find. I was angry with God, the whole world, everyone in it and—when I wished to be honest about it—most particularly angry with myself.

I was to work on the front end of the picture business. I would earn a flat fee of \$15.00 per week. But I would earn commissions as well. Dad said I should earn \$40.00 per week, "easy. It wasn't easy, and I didn't earn that much. However, even a sure \$15.00 per week was better than I was doing. By working with Dad, Peggy and I would travel to California where we could make a new life for ourselves. We could settle down in the fabled land of golden promise and opportunity.

Through the mail, I bargained with Dad about transportation. My car was far too old to make the trip, and it needed a great many repairs. I agreed to take the job if he would get me a "new" one, meaning a later model second hand. He sent the money and I bought a '28 Chevy coach.

This is how the Occidental Portrait Company operated. Being on the front end meant I would be a solicitor. I would “canvass” (cover like a tarpaulin) certain designated small towns. Ideal population: somewhere between four and six thousand. Smaller than four thousand didn’t provide a large enough population to work with. Larger than six thousand and the population would probably have a local emporium that would be doing the kind of work Occidental did. There would be a tendency to patronize the local establishment so the competition would be difficult to overcome.

As the front man I would go door to door. This was work I had tried, both with Dad and with other firms in Minneapolis. I disliked the work, but sometimes it was all I could find. Interestingly, I had done well with Dad in Indiana.

I would present myself to the lady of the house, and start in with a technical discussion of the enlarging process. I would become tongue-tied and embarrassed at my apparent ineptitude at an explanation (this was calculated to make the lady sympathetic). Finally, in apparent desperation, I would ask to see a snapshot, a photograph, a tintype, anything around. With that in my hand, I would say, I could explain my objective better.

This procedure worked about ninety percent of the time. Getting my hands on the picture was the objective of the visit, but one had to be devious.

Once the picture was in my hands, I would immediately begin asking about the subject or subjects portrayed. I would evince a deep interest and have something nice to say: “Isn’t the baby cute? Isn’t the little girl a beauty? My, what a handsome man,” etc., etc.

This almost always brought forward tons of information about family, relatives, friends and background. I’d drink in all the information. If it became clear that the photograph I held was prized by its owner, I would continue with it. If not, I would lament: “It’s too bad you don’t have a picture of Cousin Jane, now that she’s moved away. Especially since you were so fond of her.” And more of the same.

If a prized picture was available, the owner would almost always trot it out. I’d hand back “the opener” and keep the more valuable picture.

Now came the pitch: “Occidental Portrait Company is making a survey here in (name of town) with the intention, if business condi-

tions justify it, of opening a studio here. Here's what we are prepared to do.

"We'll take this picture of Cousin Jane and enlarge it into a beautiful ten by eighteen portrait. To accomplish this, we'll have to keep this picture in our possession for about two to three weeks. You see, we have to ship it back to our home office in....." (Usually Chicago but always some major city farther east.)

"When the picture is ready, another representative of our company will personally return your picture. If you like the portrait, the cost to you is 49 cents. In any case, you get your picture back unharmed. Of course, if you don't like the portrait you are under no obligation to accept it or to pay for it. However, we are so sure you'll like it that we are willing to partially pay for this service.

"Many big companies spend thousands of dollars on advertising. Instead of doing that, we want to spend our advertising dollars in a way that will personally benefit the people of (name of town). It costs us more than 49 cents to make the portrait, but think what we'd spend in advertising if we used some other method? So you benefit by this low, low price. You get a beautiful portrait of someone you care about. We benefit by making a friend and, we hope a future customer for Occidental Portrait Company."

The come-on is almost irresistible. The claimed cost of making the portrait was honest. Counting packing and shipping, commissions and expenses, it cost us about \$1.00 per enlargement. The 49-cent tag didn't begin to cover expenses.

Of course, the pitch about wanting to open a studio was hokum. However, it provided a marvelous alibi later when no studio was set up. The follow-up man could always explain that business hadn't been that good and, therefore, we had decided to open elsewhere. This kind of business has often been called a "fly-by-night." The only permanent office is your car. People don't trust anyone living out of a suitcase as a rule.

When the time came for the follow-up man to appear (Dad's job, in this case) the stage had been set for some real money to be made. The snapshot would be returned as promised, If the portrait wasn't wanted, the 49-cent charge was dropped and the matter ended.

However, when the follow-up man showed, the portrait would be handsomely framed. Nothing had been said about the frame. Further, the shape of the portrait was eight-sided, and beveled. If the

portrait were taken out of the frame it wouldn't even lie down flat in a drawer along with other pictures. And it would fit no other frame on earth unless it had been custom made. In a small town in 1932, such framing meant taking the picture to a large city, which was often many miles away.

More than that, by beveling the picture and providing a beveled glass to cover it, a kind of three-dimensional effect occurred which was usually startling and attractive.

The frames were gorgeous. Prices ranged from \$2.98 all the way up to \$9.98. The frames with glass, purchased in large lots, cost about 75 cents each. The more deluxe frames cost only pennies more. The most expensive frame we had cost less than \$1.00.

The follow-up man usually developed sales statistics about like this: in one hundred pictures delivered, one person would take back the photo and pay nothing. About five would buy the portrait, certain they could get a frame for less somewhere else. The other ninety-four would buy a frame. Most of the frames sold went for \$3.98. That was the popular choice.

On top of that, we offered easy credit. Pay whatever you could down and, then, 50 cents a week until the balance was covered. No interest.

There were countless embellishments and a few variations to this general procedure. It was about as certain a door-to-door operation as could be found at that time.

The baby was only six weeks old when Peggy and I set out for Des Moines, to rendezvous with LeFevre senior and his bride. They occupied rented rooms in a neighborhood suffering from neglect, but starting to flourish because of low-priced rentals. Peggy suffered something of a shock when she observed the squalor surrounding my father. I felt much the same.

Dad pulled out a roll of bills as big as a softball, and laughed. Gleelessly, he explained that the secret of success was to take in the money but to buy everything cheap. "Cheap" was the name of Dad's game.

Dad had rented space for us in the same building. We spent a few days in Des Moines, principally to renew my understanding of the job I would have to do. He would be busy in Des Moines for another two or three weeks on the delivery end. Meanwhile, Peg and I could push off and begin getting new orders.

Together, Dad and I drew up the itinerary. We would work two cities in Nebraska—Schuyler and Ogallala—and one in Wyoming—Rawlins. Then, we would stop for a catch-up break in Ogden, Utah. After re-grouping there we would decide on the final leg of the journey.

With our small son in a bassinet, slung above the back seat, Peggy and I set out. Peggy was a nursing mother and breast-fed Robert junior, so we had no worries about stopping to prepare a formula.

Business was not as good as planned or hoped. Peg and I stayed in each town two weeks, stopping in the “cheapest” rooming houses we could find. The baby was very good and gave us few problems other than those that accompany any infant.

The Lincoln Highway, Route 30 (it has since been re-numbered to 80), wasn’t completed. Between Schuyler and Ogallala, we were on dirt roads for some of the distance. Beyond Ogallala, we followed a road grader for miles, eating dust and dirt every foot of the way for the better part of two days before we arrived at Rawlins. Our Chevy wasn’t quite a covered wagon, but we frequently felt it wasn’t much more comfortable over such terrain.

Dad’s mail caught up to us. He advised us to spend a week or so in Evanston, Wyoming, before going on to Ogden. But when we stopped in this community, it was so depressing, and Ogden was such a short distance farther, that we didn’t even unpack. Instead, we went on into Utah, winding through the beautiful city of Salt Lake, laid out by Brigham Young. We finally located an apartment in Ogden.

The plan was to spend four weeks there while Dad worked the follow-up and collected as much money as possible.

Our first meal in Ogden was interesting. We were tired of restaurant food, where salads were unknown, and I was constrained to eat sandwiches or eggs. Often, I had to argue with waitresses or cooks to prepare my eggs in something other than lard or bacon fat. As often as not, the cook would simply re-do the eggs as before, but with less fat. They thought I wouldn’t know the difference. But I could detect even a trace of meat fat because it made me ill. I didn’t overeat, and lack of nourishment kept me hungry.

But at last we had a little apartment with its own kitchen. “Let’s eat in,” Peggy pleaded. “I don’t think I can face another restaurant meal. And you could do with some decent food.”

It was nearly ten o'clock p.m., but before moving into the furnished second floor accommodations, we had noticed an all-night grocery only a few blocks away.

I heartily agreed with Peg's idea, so she prepared a list of desirables and I drove over to the convenience market—a small store on one of the main streets.

I made the purchases and hastened back, throwing myself into an overstuffed chair, famished and tired, to wait for Peggy's culinary skills to run their course.

A scream and a gasp came from the kitchen. I leaped up to learn the cause. Peggy was holding a can of string beans at arm's length. Her complexion was grey-green.

I looked at the can from which she had removed the top. A dead mouse lay curled on top of the beans, its eyes still open.

I slapped the top back in place and returned to the store. The lone attendant was serving two or three late shoppers, so I waited my turn. When he looked my way, I said: "Do you remember me?"

"Sure," he said. "You were just here a few minutes ago."

"That's right," I said. "And this is one of the items I bought." I shoved the can in front of him and whisked off the top. His face turned a pale chartreuse and rivaled Peggy's.

"My God," he hissed under his breath. He grabbed the can from my outstretched hand and hid it under the counter. "Don't let anybody else see that! It'd put me out of business."

"Now, Mister," he said. "I don't know who you are, but we don't do things like this. We're in business to help our customers. I hope you know we didn't can these beans."

I nodded. "Of course."

"Here's what I want you to do," he said. He grabbed a paper sack and whisked it open. "You just go through the store and fill this bag. Take anything you want. No charge. It's on us."

"And I want you to know. I'm going to cancel the business we do with the firm that canned those beans! Holy Jehoshaphat! We don't want stuff like that on our shelves. I don't suppose they did it on purpose," he added lamely, "But we can't take a chance. You go right ahead. We want you as a satisfied customer."

"I'm sure it was just an accident," I agreed.

"Sure, sure, Of course it was an accident. But we don't do business with firms that have accidents like that. My God, did you see

that damn thing? Its eyes were still open.”

I managed a weak smile. “Yeah. The mouse was probably as surprised as you were. As my wife and me.”

“You probably know it full well, sir,” the clerk went on. “You could have put me out of business with that. If the rest of my customers ever heard of it, they’d go someplace else. Go on, now. Help yourself.”

When I got back to the apartment, Peggy decided she wasn’t hungry and my famine went elsewhere to roost.

The inland empire of the Mormons proved to be a bright spot on the economic map. Here, business was what we had hoped. I was able to hire a woman to help with solicitations. We canvassed a number of small towns not too far from Ogden, even doing work in Ogden and Salt Lake City themselves.

Peggy and I were curious about the Mormon faith. A family in an adjoining apartment was Mormons and happily explained the theory. They introduced us to other Mormons. Within a couple of weeks, we had a score or more of friends and felt completely at home.

The Mormon Church was formed in the midst of travail, prejudice and persecution. The Church is both a magnificent and powerful organization. I respected it, and I took care not to attempt any kind of theological discussion. I simply listened to the stories of Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and the Angel Maroni with the golden tablets.

Naturally, I was fascinated by the concept of plural marriage. I was assured that it no longer took place. I was somewhat grieved by this disclosure. I inquired about jealousy. Wouldn’t it be natural for each wife to be fairly hostile to the others?

Not so, I was told, not if the teachings of Joseph Smith were understood. It seemed a shame I wouldn’t be able to visit with a family boasting one male and possibly three or four wives to see for myself. I was laughingly told to give up the idea.

The family is very strong in Mormon land, regardless of the number of wives. And the Latter Day Saints are a hard-working, thrifty, persevering tribe. I liked nearly all the people I met. They were cheerful, taking great interest in their children and working like beavers.

Somewhere along the line, I let out the information that I was something of a theatrical whiz. I had been the director of a dra-

matic production at Westminster and had staged plays on the road, including one I had written.

The inevitable suggestion was made. Since I was in town, perhaps the people could benefit from my expertise. Maybe I could be induced to stage a drama for them. Peg and I were scheduled to stay in town until Dad arrived, and that could be two months or more.

Being accepted at face value was something that hadn't happened since Hamline and I rejoiced. Not only would I be glad to do it; I'd write a play for them so they wouldn't have to worry about paying royalties. Just a one-act affair, but I'd be glad to do it.

A little theater was made immediately available, and I was introduced to the lady who usually handled affairs of this sort. She agreed to work with me and help with the amateur casting.

In the evenings I wrote a one-act play. Inspired by Sheridan, named it "The School for Kissing." I figured that, with the Mormon background, they would have a lot of experience in this area and not be too averse to something a trifle *avant-garde*.

The production went well. The play was staged and, while a few eyebrows were raised, it was generally appreciated. The audience laughed where they were supposed to, and I felt that the applause was more than a polite response.

When Dad and Alethea finally came into town, they were very pleased with the business I had been doing. August was at hand. The correct procedure was for Peg and me to head directly for Los Angeles. Dad would stay about six weeks to take care of deliveries.

I told Dad that, once we got to LA, I planned to join some theatrical troupe or get into the "movies." I didn't want the picture business anymore. He said he understood, and raised no objections. His account with me was settled, even a bit in advance. One early morning, Peggy and I left for LA. If the Far West were anything like the inter-mountain area of Utah, Los Angeles would be all that people had said, and more.

We drove as rapidly as possible, for the sooner we arrived the quicker I could find work. And we needed to have money on hand to pay for an apartment in advance and to carry expenses.

We were not at all prepared for what we found.

Chapter XII

Peggy and I drove southward, through Salt Lake City, Provo and Spanish Fork. We made as close to a beeline as possible to the City of the Angels.

August is cherry time in Utah and the state was beautiful. Throughout the Mormon area, with only an occasional exception, the farms appeared prosperous; the farm houses neat and clean. Vegetable and fruit stands were plentiful, and we stopped once or twice to partake of those exotic beverages.

We spent the night in Cedar City. I think that's where it was, although I cannot be sure. Autos were far less efficient in those days. If a driver could average between thirty to thirty-five miles an hour, he was making time. The road was a two-lane strip of asphalt with occasional detours of a few miles. I know we stayed at a rooming house, and it had taken from early in the morning to well after dark, yet we were still in Utah.

The next day, we made another early start. I had the custom of starting before daylight and driving two or three hours before breakfast. It made the day shorter.

The highway crossed into Arizona, but only for a few miles. We dog-eared the state and found ourselves in Nevada. I had seen many westerns and tended to romanticize the beauty of the desert. Now that I was actually experiencing desert conditions, I didn't find them quite so enchanting.

It was hot. And the vistas stretching as far as the eye could see were barren of anything familiar. The plains of Nebraska and Wyoming, together with the Rocky Mountains, had prepared me—I had thought—but not for the stark and hollow loneliness that settled over us as we drove.

Traffic was non-existent. We were alone at the end of the world. The land contained tortured crags and miles of sand, sagebrush and cactus. The engine overheated and a wisp of steam fluttered from the radiator cap, like an almost invisible pennant.

"Why don't we stop for water?" Peggy asked.

"Don't worry," I said. "We will. But we have to be near some water first."

"We should have eaten before we started," she observed.

"You are so right. But don't worry. We still have some of the stuff left from Ogden, We'll be fine."

Robert junior began to fuss and Peggy said, "Bob, we've got to stop. I have to feed the baby."

"I'm trying to find some shade."

"We have to stop anyway."

"Hang on. I thought we could stop at Mesquite, but there wasn't anything in that town. There'll be another town before long."

"Bob, I've got to stop. A private reason."

"Did you ever see such a barren place?"

"Please, Bob. Stop."

I pulled off the asphalt onto the shoulder, and obeyed. A cloud of steam momentarily hid the view.

"Where'll I go?"

I shrugged. "Anywhere you like."

"Bob, there's nothing to hide behind except those boulders. What if someone came by?"

"You'll have to take your chances," I said. "I don't think I should have stopped. The radiator is nearly dry and, if the cylinders are overheated, they'll freeze in place and we'll be stuck here."

There was a note of desperation in my voice, and Peggy said, "Well, all right," and scooted from the car.

I tried to comfort junior. Now that we weren't moving, the heat engulfed us in a dry oven. Peggy returned. "Let me sit in the back seat. I can nurse the baby and you can keep going."

I took a few moments to bring a small spot of moisture to that arid place and, then, slid behind the seat. My heel hit the starter button again and again. Reluctantly, at last, the motor coughed into life.

After another ten miles, a wide spot in the road signaled a town. There was a filling station, a general store, a sprinkling of frame and adobe houses, a few pepper trees, and one picket fence that was falling all over itself. No restaurant.

I pulled into the station, as the last of the radiator water spumed. A tousle-headed youth filled the tank; he grinned and ordered me to start the engine so he could fill the radiator. It wasn't wise to put 100-degree water into a 400-degree engine unless the water circulated at once.

The starter didn't work. The battery was dead.

The attendant raised the hood, and peered. Then he beckoned and I got out. "Your generator ain't working."

I am not a mechanical genius. "What's wrong?" I asked. "Is it the fan belt?"

He gave me a disparaging glance. "Nope. You see that there metal strap? Well, it holds the generator in place. It's busted. You haven't been charging for a long time." He poked a grimy finger. "See? Broke off clean as a whistle."

Even a novice could recognize the problem. "Well, I'll have to have it fixed. Can you do it?"

He nodded. "Sure can. 'Cept for one thing."

"What's that?"

"We don't have no spare strap. The one you've got has got to be welded."

"Can you do that?"

"Yep. 'Cept for one thing."

"What is it this time?"

He shrugged. "No welding equipment. Fred took the torch home with him. It's the only one in town. He had to fix his tractor."

I looked around the sparsely settled community. "If you'll tell me which house is his, I'll ask him to come over to do the job."

"Sorry, Mister," he said. "Fred don't live in town. He has a ranch out that-a-way." A vague gesture indicated something between Puget Sound and Fairbanks, Alaska.

"How far is his place?"

"Ninety miles."

"When will he come back with the torch?"

"Tomorrow morning first thing, sure. You'll have to spend the night here."

Peggy and I exchanged glances. "We can't do that," I said. "We have a small baby and we've got to get to California fast."

He nodded.

"What'll we do?"

"Well, first off, I'd say you'd better wait for about an hour. Your engine'll be cool enough so I can put in water. After that?" His shrug indicated that we were on our own.

"Where's the nearest town with equipment to handle the problem?" I indicated the direction we were going.

"Barstow."

"That's in California."

"Sure is." It was a full day's drive. Barstow was where we planned to spend the night after crossing the desert.

"How about if we went back? How far would we have to go?"

"One of them towns in Utah."

I slouched at the wheel, then I straightened. "There's got to be something we can do. Is Fred the only person in this part of Nevada who can do metal work?"

The attendant nodded. Then he brightened. "Hey, wait a sec. You said 'metal work'. Heinsohn has a forge. He shoes horses. He can do metal work. Heavy stuff. Does it all the time. Maybe he could make you a new strap. He can't weld, tho."

"Where do I find him?"

"He's bound to be at home. Jest go there."

"Where is that? Not another ninety miles!"

"Nah. He lives close in. Jest stay on the highway for three and a half miles. You'll come to a dirt track off to the right. Take that. You won't see his place from the highway. He's about seven miles back from the road. But you can't miss it, once you make that turn. No place else to go."

"I believe it."

"Heinsohn's a good Joe. I'll bet he'll do it."

"We'll follow your advice," I said. "Thanks very much."

Peg and I got out and wandered around. There was nothing to do or to see. But the exercise did us good. The heat was stifling.

After a lapse of time, the attendant returned to the car and filled the radiator from a sprinkling can. The battery had pulled itself together just enough to get the engine started. With the generator and fan belt on the floor under Peggy's feet, we carefully drove down the highway. We found the dirt track and, after jouncing around over the desert and consuming several pounds of dust apiece, we drove around an outcropping. There before us, at the edge of a great basin, was a clump of trees, a ranch house, a huge red barn, stables, fences, and outbuildings.

I drove to the barn with the radiator in full steam once more.

There seemed to be more people at the Heinsohn ranch than there had been in town. A huge bear of a man, wearing a wool shirt and denims came toward us. A grey-haired woman, two small but ac-

tive children, and three cowboys followed him. The man had a grin and an outstretched hand.

"Howdy, stranger," he said in the best cinematic tradition. "Glad to see yah. Anything we can do to help?"

I explained our predicament. "Can you make a new strap?" I asked.

With what appeared to be a single movement, Heinsohn lifted the hood, and peered under it. I had the feeling that, if the hood had resisted his efforts as it did mine, he'd have lifted the front end of the car.

"You haven't lost the generator, have you?"

"It's in the car."

"Couldn't help with a new generator, but this's no problem. I'll just straighten out a horseshoe, punch a couple of holes for bolts and you'll be rarin' and snortin'."

"If it will just work," I said, "that will do it."

"I'll git on it."

"What will you charge?"

Heinsohn rubbed his chin. "Same as for shoein' a horse. You see...I've got to start the forge and it's cold. So, it'll take a while."

"I'm a little rusty on the rates for shoeing horses, I said.

He laughed. "I'll just bet you are. "Well, it's two dollars per shoe. How does eight dollars sound to you?"

"It sounds real good."

"Whyn't you and the misses go inside and rest a spell." Mrs. Heinsohn and the two children came up, all smiles.

Introductions followed and I decided to risk imposition.

"We haven't eaten yet," I said lamely. "We were planning on stopping at some restaurant, but we didn't see one that was...well, very inviting. I'd be happy to pay," I gave assurance.

Mrs. Heinsohn said, "You young couples certainly take your chances." She turned to Peggy, "You poor dear. I'll bet you're nearly tuckered out, what with all that driving and a small baby to tend. You come right in with me. John'll do a good job, don't you worry."

Compared to the bright sunlight, the house was cool and bountiful in its contrasting gloom. Our hostess prepared a splendid breakfast and for a change we ate well. Eggs, potatoes, home-baked bread, homemade preserves, and bacon for Peggy. It was a feast. Even the coffee was good.

The delay cost us another two hours. But refreshed and in high

spirits, with the generator in place and the radiator again filled with water, we were once more on our way.

Another twenty-five miles and one of the tires went flat. I jacked up the car in the broiling temperature and put on the spare.

The afternoon was drawing to a close as we mounted a rise. The road stretched before us across a vast ocean of rolling sand dunes where nothing whatever grew. Far in the distance, a ridge seemed to divide the world. The road was a hairline mounting the barrier.

"I don't see how people can stand land like this," Peggy said. "Mrs. Heinsohn said she found the desert beautiful."

"I know. I guess you can get used to it. But it sure isn't for me."

"Me, either."

"I think that ridge in the distance is California," I said.

"Really? Does that mean we can stop?"

"No. But it won't be much further. We've got to get to Barstow. There's nothing else between where we are and it. I sure hope we don't get another flat."

I drove as rapidly as I could across that endless waste of billowing dunes, where nothing—not even sagebrush—marred the sterile immensity.

"I'd hate to be out here in a high wind," I observed.

"Why?" Peggy asked.

"I've heard the sand can blow around so fiercely it will take the paint off a car."

"I don't believe it," Peggy responded. "These westerners like to intimidate foreigners."

"You may be right. All the same, I'm glad we're getting across it. I don't think I'd like to make this trip again."

"You don't suppose the rest of California will be like this, do you?"

I said nothing, but I was beginning to wonder the same thing.

The heat of the day began to dissipate, and I turned on the lights as darkness came. We went over the ridge and found ourselves in a second wasteland. Its size was curtailed to our vision by the encroaching night.

I had seen enough to dishearten me. The map had indicated the beginning of the Mojave Desert. The map showed an ending. I couldn't see any. Although there were occasional clumps of sage and a Joshua tree loomed in the dusk now and then, we were in a land that time had overlooked and from whence the gods had de-

parted along with all other living things.

On the map, Barstow stood just inside the California line. A weather-beaten, badly tilted sign caught in the headlight's brief gleam indicated more than ninety miles yet to be covered.

I said nothing. Peggy apparently hadn't noticed the information.

With the departing day, the temperature changed drastically. At first, the cooling breezes were welcome. We opened the windows to drive out what was left of the desert heat. The temperature continued dropping. Soon, we shut the windows. It was downright cold.

The highway developed a characteristic I had never encountered before. In putting in the asphalt, no effort had been made to channel a runoff of water during a rain. The highway builders had simply followed the rise and fall of the dunes with a minimum of grading.

This was fun. It was a roller coaster. I zoomed up a rise and then dropped over the apex and plummeted down the slope, only to rise again in a moment or two.

"Slow down, Bob," Peggy said in a small voice. "This up and down motion is making me ill."

"It's the first fun I've had all day," I said. I didn't want to slacken pace.

"How much farther is it?"

"It's just up ahead, Peg. Don't make me slow down. The engine works better when it's cooler and the tires are safer. We can really make time now."

Robert junior awoke, and began to gurgle and laugh. He loved the motion. Peggy groaned but didn't complain again. Up and down, up and down, faster and faster.

Weaving and bobbing, headlights far in the distance were heading our way.

"Hey," I shouted. "Look! Traffic! Someone else is out in this god-forsaken place."

The approaching car seemed just ahead, but five minutes must have elapsed before it whooshed past.

Under favorable conditions, the Chevy could manage sixty or sixty-five miles per hour. We were approaching maximum. The up and down condition of the road prevented a clear view except for the immediate thirty to forty yards ahead. We'd whip up a rise, the headlights aiming skyward, we'd crest and then the headlights would

illumine the down slope...but nothing beyond.

In the distance a second vehicle began its lengthy approach.

"We must be getting close to Barstow," I said in encouragement. "The traffic is increasing." I glanced at Peggy out of the corner of my eyes. She was clinging to the armrest on the door.

We mounted an incline, topped and headed down. Lying on the asphalt just forty feet ahead was a steer, apparently sleeping off the heat of the day. Bobbing beams of the approaching car gave evidence of immediate passage.

I couldn't stop the Chevy in time! If I hit the steer, the chassis would continue without the wheels! I veered into the opposite lane, whizzed around the recumbent bovine and careened back into my own lane as the approaching vehicle roared by. Peggy screamed.

I was trembling like an aspen, as I took my foot from the gas and let the momentum ebb away. "Sorry," I said. "Much too close for comfort."

"I hope that teaches you a lesson," Peggy said.

I was contrite. Junior crowed in glee.

Finally, in the distance, a glow of light—like a soft mist, visible whenever we topped a rise—became a fixture on the horizon. I pointed it out. "That's Barstow," I said.

At something close to midnight we drove into the neon glare of the main street and stopped at the biggest motel sign. The bed was comfortable and we slept deeply without dreaming.

Chapter XIII

In nature there is no morality. If nature is another word for God, as some proclaim, then God is ruthless. So far as our minds can fathom the unfathomable, nature favors only those who survive.

When men lived in a state of nature, it appears that they, like other living creatures, developed certain innate behaviors to inter-relate with nature. I have been calling the genetic reaction of man—the built-in patterns of desire, the apparent automatic response to a given stimulus—instinct. In a state of nature, man seems to have been largely an instinctive creature.

Largely, but not totally. What factors in the environment caused the human brain to enlarge? What compelled the outer brain of man to become so powerful? Food selection? The choice of mates? Radiation from unknown sources? Mutations? Darwin called it “natural selection,” and he apparently applied the idea in all directions. The development of man’s brain is natural enough. But the reason for it is not known. Does nature have a purpose?

Natural selection occurred with other species, too. But man alone developed a forebrain—an outer-brain if you prefer—so powerful that man no longer reacted to his instincts without first giving thought. And having thought, he sometimes acted other than instinctively.

As man began to use reason, his instincts faded and became less powerful, his mind more powerful. And here is the curious result. By the use of reason, man improved on nature. That is to say, man found he could work with nature and bring into being a kind of world that favored him. Nature favored no one. Man found nature’s ticklish spot and nature laughed in response, rewarding him. When man lived in a state of nature, only a few humans survived. The more man learned and worked with nature—the more he learned to cooperate, first with nature and then with others—the better conditions he created for himself. The better his conditions, the greater his chances for survival.

At the outset, men feared each other. But observation and experience taught them that they could surmount these fears, learn to cooperation, and live better.

Nature provided man with sticks and stones. Man invented the axe, the spear, the hammer, the bow and arrow, and the canoe.

Nature provided animals. Man domesticated, bred, and harnessed them.

Man's instincts didn't give him dominion over this planet; his intelligence did. Nature didn't promote human survival; man's contriving and striving did.

But the growth of man's upper or outer brain is not an unmixed blessing. Creatures that do not reason are instinctively driven to act in a manner that furthers their species. The food on which lemmings thrive is scarce. So the surplus population instinctively hurls itself into the sea, thereby making certain there will be enough food for the remaining members of lemming society.

Man reasons from incomplete information. Inevitably, he reaches decisions and acts upon them. But not everyone who acts improves conditions either for himself or for others. Reason is the best thing we have going for us, but we are not omniscient.

Consider the relationship of man to property. Like other living things, man has an instinctive drive to acquire territory. We cannot survive without occupying space; holding territory on our own behalf is fundamental. Men began to take possession of land for foraging, hunting and other survival activities. At the outset, muscles produced the arrangements.

The biggest bully had his way. The largest and most aggressive tribe won and held the best land.

But, then, human beings devised production, a division of labor, trade, and cooperation. When it came to production, the most valuable man was not the biggest bully, but the most skillful cooperator and producer.

Man may be endowed with instincts as a consumer, but production is a learned skill. By nature, we are eaters and users. But, if we intend to eat well and to have things to use, those things must be produced. This is a conclusion provided by the intellect, not by the instincts.

If we are going to produce, two conditions are vital: a favorable time span in which to work; and, peace. Only when we have unmolested control of territories can we use them to advantage. To produce anything takes time. To produce sophisticated complicated and highly developed tools or other benefits takes a great deal of time.

To produce in abundance, we must also be free to make exchanges. There are only two ways to effect an exchange. Force or voluntarism. Theft or trade. If theft is employed, the time span of production is disrupted. Production shifts from what people want to what warriors must have. In the end, production stalls.

If we are to produce in abundance and to trade with those who wish exchanges, peace must ensue. Peace and trade are the bread and water of civilization. War and theft are the handmaidens of primitive and barbarous survival.

Two monumental ideas emerged as divergent paths to peaceful production. One of the ideas is government. The other, the concept of morality. Although they are antithetical ideas, both came into common use.

The rationale behind government is relatively simple. By organization, man could produce the ultimate bully. This bully would become the enemy of all other groups, but the protector of our own. Difficulties with government must have appeared at an early stage.

Man arrives on this planet as a unique individual. Some willingly cooperate after a relatively brief period of instruction. Others require extensive training. Some never seem to learn. Thus, the enemies of our group could be individuals within the group, and not strangers.

For our bully (government) to be effective, it must not only ward off attacks from without, it must exert ultimate force upon wayward individuals within our group who are slow or unwilling to learn.

The difficulty with the idea of morality must have also quickly surfaced. Morality is based upon understanding.

It requires some simple common point, readily discernable, upon which everyone could agree.

But will everyone agree? Thus far, they have not. Humankind knows so little about itself that it has never yet agreed on anything.

We do not yet have agreement as to the shape of the earth, or that two plus two equals four, or that red cannot be non-red...

Actually, the point where understanding might ultimately coalesce is not too difficult to deduce. What man must have is unmoled, peaceful control of whatever is his, through time. The sanctity of boundaries is needed.

The merger of government with morality must have seemed logi-

cal to our savage and barbarous forebears. Let government be formed, not as a man-devised system, but as a divinely ordained structure. Then the government—acting as a divine interventionist—could decree right and wrong. And if slow or reluctant learners existed, the government could play deity and punish or destroy them. The greatest military and political leaders to whom the human record refers are those who first claimed a “pipeline” to the All-Knowing. The Most-High God (by whichever name or names) had given them the ultimate knowledge and authority here on earth. Having made this proclamation, they proceeded to force allegiance and to distribute destruction and death. Divinity became the test of a given government or a given leader. If he could win, God wanted it that way. If he failed, he was a false prophet.

Occasionally, prophets arose who did not resort to war. Their ministries were usually of short duration. They changed their tunes, and called out the troops, or some other leader resorted to his troops. God was the god of battles.

The same idea holds sway today, although we have cloaked the rationale in sophisticated and scientific verbiage. We should not be surprised or shocked. After all, what else can be expected from barbarians? Or even from post-barbarians?

Despite these results, government appeared to provide benefits. When wars stopped—either because some bully stifled opposition or because he found a circumstance with little likelihood of military challenge—then, the bully began doing some of the things for which man had hoped.

Rules were promulgated and even the greatest dullard obeyed. If not, he was punished. Even before Hammarabi, men set down codes of behavior that applied to the average person. Naturally, those in government had to hold themselves above these rules. If it was a rule that no person could trespass his neighbor’s vineyard, it was, at the same time, a rule that government could. For government had the blessings of the “Most-High.”

Government provided what has been called “legitimacy.” While private persons had taken the territory nature had provided and put it to use, government looked over the holdings and decided when a boundary was “right” or “just.” Then, it stated when the holding was “legal.”

If a particular boundary displeased the men in government, then

it was re-drawn. God (through his appointed emissary, government) wanted everything to be as the local politicians thought best.

It didn't take long for men to learn how to deal with government. If one found out just which itch a given ruler wished to scratch, the private citizen could help him scratch it. He could pay a fee to those in government. Quickly the government legitimized some of the fees.

Now, if anyone wanted anything, he first paid the legitimizing fee. This did not suffice. Man wants something better than what other men can have.

There are always ways of winning favoritism. Men learned how to cozen nature to their advantage. Now they studied the cozening of politicians. Flattery, verbal support, military allegiance, voting..., but, most of all, money or other fiduciary benefits are the common currency. When things go badly, we call the process bribery. When things go well, we call it friendship.

Government, the embodiment of the Most High, would now act in your benefit, (if you are "with-it"). If you are not "with it," the best you can hope for is to be overlooked.

At the outset, the process appeared to be a winner. Those who were favored by government obtained what they had to have—peace and time. Peace and time are so important to human well being that, even when only a few achieved favoritism, conditions in general improved. But they did not improve equally.

Two important factors should be noted. Some improved their ability to produce and trade because of government favors; others managed to produce and trade without that benefit.

The intrusion of the state has not become so universal as to make government assistance mandatory for survival.

Just as it was true that some refrained from violating the boundaries of other persons because of the fear of reprisal, it was also true that some refrained because they were intelligent enough to see more general benefits.

Peace and time. Stability. How beneficial they are! Governments set up to provide or preserve those conditions disrupted the very conditions that made production and trade possible. Men in government, having obtained power over their fellows, began to use it not merely to maintain a stable market place, but to disrupt the market place. They banished the stability if, in the process, their

own power could be enhanced.

Men are not gods. The more power they have, the more they tend to strut as if they were gods. Soon, the only certainty government provided was the surety that, in time, it would make production and trade uncertain.

Naturally, a given producer—seeing the government intrude upon a competitor—hailed that government as good. When the same government turned about to intrude upon him, as all governments did in time, he could not understand why things had changed. They hadn't. The government behaved as it always had.

All governments behave like any other instrument of war and terror. A gun doesn't change its nature. When it is aimed at someone you fear or dislike, you will praise the importance of guns. When the gun is aimed at you, you will call for help against those who use guns.

The magnitude of the problem can be seen in light of the link-up between government and a presumed divinity. When a particular prophet claims to be the voice of the One God, his view of what the rules should prevail will differ from that of the next prophet. Each prophet seeks to bring favors and benefits to his own group, however small or large. The rules promulgated are inevitably helpful to some in the group, while also being helpful to the prophet. At the same time, the rules will injure others, both in and out of that group, when force is used to compel a general acceptance of them.

Such rules distort certain moral ideas, such as: boundaries should not be violated; peace is essential; production and trade are beneficial. The harmony and tranquility required to wrest a living from nature was subverted. No boundary was sacred until God (or government) had approved it. No production was good until God (or government) said it was. Methods of trade and production, items to be traded or produced...all these things were to shift ever more out of private hands into the hands of a presumably, all wise, all-knowing deity called government.

The ultimate result was to enslave mankind under theocracies.

In this sense, government is the religion of mammon. It is the world's first universal church. Early theologies set forth the rules by which individual men could win divine favor or grace (this varied among theologies). In general, the high priests let it be known that reward or punishment would occur in the next life, in what-

ever happens after death.

Live your life as the high priest advised, and your reward would be in heaven. Live it in some other fashion and your punishment would be in hell.

Government became the church pragmatic. On this side of the hereafter-hiding veil, who could be sure of what God would or would not do? Why wait? The fear of future punishment, the hope of future reward was not enough. Governments filled the void. They provided both reward and punishment in the here and now.

While it is relatively easy to see that government is a bully, a thief, and a killer, the most baneful effect of government has always been psychological. Government convinced man that it was an absolute necessity for human survival. "No matter how bad a government may be, it is better than no government." No other church had a more convincing argument.

This idea has taken hold around the world. Almost. No idea has ever been universally accepted, but this one has come close. Yet it is contrary to fact.

Some have argued that enforcement of contract is the thread by which civilized survival hangs. But it is the individual integrity that fulfills a contract and keeps the wheels turning. Upon close examination, no contract can be enforced if the contracting party refuses to comply. True, he can be tortured, jailed, or killed if he refuses. But to fulfill a contract, he must remain alive. In peace and through time, he must provide the fulfillment.

Many human beings do not recognize their own moral position. They believe what government has repeatedly dinned into their brains. Man always act upon their deepest convictions, even if the convictions are in error.

In order to convince the world to worship government, those within its presumably divine channels of rule had to create an image of superiority. Early governments did so by invoking fear and terror. This is not surprising. Early deities were ruthless, vindictive, and cruel.

Governments of this type still exist. They labor to convince their masses that man is naturally evil and must be restrained by force and violence. Thus, force and violence are condemned among the common people, but government is exempted for it must be above the herd, always capable of ultimate actions of force and violence.

As the people in government became more sophisticated, a new line of psychological perversion was adopted. No government dared to abandon its image as a ruthless, all-powerful enforcer. But the hope of reward was recognized as a more viable, more practical motivational factor.

Indeed, men in government had recognized this motivational factor from the beginning. But they tended to reward a few of the most powerful men, while holding all others under a sway of fear and anxiety. Favoritism is the balm with which to cool the sores of oppression and imposed control.

Democratic governments are the prime movers in this particular, for they claim to “care” about the masses. How else can they obtain mass support through balloting? They paraded as favoring (giving favors to) the “little people.” There is no larger bloc of votes available.

If the masses are made dependent upon the state and, at the same time, they are led to believe that the state “cares” about them and will look after them, then the masses become little more than vast herds of domesticated animals, licking the hand that feeds them.

This is not surprising. Modern theologies argued that God is the embodiment of love; it was natural for the ultimate church—government—to seek the same image.

A simple line of propaganda was invoked. Life is always good. No matter what else occurs, the life of the individual is sacred and must be preserved at any and all costs.

This, too, is false. Life is not always good. Death is not always evil. Death is as natural as life. Were the life-is-always-good philosophy to be considered seriously, the only logical procedure would be to procreate to the ultimate degree possible. Every life would have to be saved, no matter what the cost. We would presently have a planet so crowded that human life would self-destruct. Nature will not tolerate such an extreme.

Given this proposition, man’s entire life is tragic, for it must end in evil. The moment you are born, death begins its silent approach. Life is all pervasive, as is death—its handmaiden.

You and I should have no difficulty with the truth.

All we have to do is to accept the fact that we do not know the ultimate value of any human being. Consequently, the single rule that applies to every human is merely this: injure no one. It is not

our business who shall live and who shall die. That is the business of life and of death. You and I should have no illusions here. The business of life is to live. The business of death is to terminate life. These determinations are not ones you and I can morally make.

But men in government make them. This is because men in government presume to a divinity they do not possess. They believe they should decide who is to live and who is to die. No single human being has that much knowledge. Value judgments inevitably contain prejudice. While we have learned to seek out and identify patterns of behavior, such patterns are not sure enough to safely predict individual human action. The fact that a man may have performed a dreadful and heinous act does not mean that his future acts will be of that caliber. The fact that a man has lived a lifetime of virtuous accomplishment does not prevent him from committing a heinous action.

All men are opportunists and will act in terms of their deepest convictions at any given moment. They will search for their own good as they interpret that good.

Now, to convince the masses that people in government were doing good, government took on the task of keeping everyone alive. It demanded that those it helped acknowledge the superiority of the state in all things. Praise the politician, assure him of your vote, get a group who will vote as they are told and, then, let the politician know of a great “need.”

If an agency does not yet exist to provide help, one can be formed. Indeed, this is an almost certain avenue to a successful career.

With this false sense of doing ‘good’ dinned into our ears by the politicians, government began to compete with all actions of charity. It was no longer good enough for you and me to be generous with individuals who needed help. Government usurped our natural tendency to kindness and generosity.

The consequences were predictable. The American taxpayer, for example, was called upon to finance hospitals in India where disease and privation kept life expectancy at a low rate amid a population already overly large.

The people of India rewarded our well-intended efforts with an increased survival rate.

This is a difficult point to grasp. The line separating true charity from modern do-goodism appears to be a hairline.

It seems to me wise for an individual to do all he can to maintain his own survival in peace. When his survival becomes parasitical, and he exists only because others suffer, the question of the merit of that life becomes moot. I am not speaking against charity. It is a mark of generosity and kindness that a person voluntarily assists others to the degree that is both effective and prudent. I have no objection to keeping a dysfunctional person alive when that person wishes to live and there are others who share the view sufficiently to make it possible voluntarily.

But when the preservation of life becomes a fetish, the state takes over. It enslaves mankind through taxation and regulation so that a person who may wish to die is kept alive at all costs. Then, we have become victims of a false and harmful philosophy.

Voluntary assistance to others is a mark of human goodness and concern. Compulsory assistance at the point of a gun falls somewhat short of kindness. Instead it becomes a state-sponsored act of false charity hiding the lust for power of those encouraging the practice.

It seems to me that a person should live with a glad heart. It seems correct, also, that he should die with a heart equally glad. Death is a necessary and useful end. If accepted for what it is, death is no more terrifying than being born.

How long should a person live? There is no fixed number of years but, in general, the longer the better. But this is true only when life depends upon the individual's efforts, or upon the efforts of those near and dear to him, who wish to assist him.

What of the progress being made to extend man's longevity? Excellent.

But isn't it possible that one day we will develop a pill or a process by which the aging tendency cannot only be halted but reversed? What if we find not only the fountain of youth, but also the ability to reverse time and move backward into youth? What then?

I do not think it will happen. Even the universe is aging, and the largest of stars is cooling. But I could be wrong. I don't know all things. However, this much appears sure: if we all revert to our youth and continue to procreate, life very quickly would become unbearable. What most of us want is not our own eternal youth, but the ability to out-live and surpass our fellows. If everyone had eternal youth and continued to multiply our species, we would loathe

and kill each other as a common good.

Think of the monsters that have lived before now. Suppose they were still around and could not die. I am thinking of the monsters in human form.

Be happy with death. At the right time it is as useful and as benevolent as life. It is not our province to bestow death upon others. It is our province to live our own lives, making them as constructive and elevated as possible.

What is truly important is our stature while living, not the indefinite prolongation of life. I do not see life as a constant or universal value. How a person lives creates value, not that he lives. Every rat is alive, too. What makes a human more valuable than a rat is that he refuses to live like one.

Life is not a tragedy, ending in death. Nor is life a comedy because it ends that way. Life and death are twin adventures. When you have been granted the one, the other is always a portion of the grant.

Chapter XIV

An ancient adage runs: “Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise.” I was beginning to learn that late to bed and early to rise can wear a man out.

After spending a short night in Barstow, Peg and I got an early start and drove on. We crossed the remainder of the desert, went through the San Bernardino Mountains, and emerged in the great LA basin. When we arrived in Riverside, I thought we were in LA.

A filling station attendant re-set my lens. I had to continue west for a few more miles. I did so and mistook Pomona for LA. Ontario turned out to be other than LA. So did Arcadia and Pasadena. I kept arriving in LA only to find I wasn’t there yet.

Another filling station attendant explained that Los Angeles was really about forty communities looking for a city. The day was nearly spent before we arrived at a place where one of the locals confessed to being in Los Angeles. He didn’t appear to be happy about it.

The people we met while driving were either in filling stations or cafes, so I always asked where a good place was for permanent residence. I was told nobody lived in Los Angeles, if he could help it. That wasn’t correct, as I found out later. But what does a stranger know?

Los Angeles was in a state of expansion. Nobody knew much about where anything was. Even if they had known last month, growth had altered streets, landmarks, and familiar patterns. So we were greeted with shrugs and “*Quien sabe?*” People were usually quite pleasant about it. They just didn’t know, and it didn’t worry them.

I stopped at every filling station we came to. One attendant suggested that South Gate was a good place for a person of modest income to live. I asked how he knew that. It turned out that he lived there and worked “in town.”

My idea of a big city was being revised minute by minute. I expected a big city to consist of a core of large buildings with surrounding suburbs. In Los Angeles, I found surrounding cities. I was not yet certain there was a core.

Baffled, I said to Peg. “Let’s go to South Gate.”

"We don't know anything about the place," Peggy objected.

"How right you are," I responded. "But we don't know anything about any place else, either. I feel like a babe in the woods. At least we know the name of South Gate."

The distances we had to travel within completely built-up areas astounded me. We went miles and miles in search of South Gate. I reasoned that it must be on the south edge of Los Angeles. Why else would it be called South Gate?

Exhausted and hot, we found it at last and cruised the streets looking for a house or apartment. Signs beckoned us in every direction. After exploring several places, we stopped in front of a court apartment building. It appeared to be new and clean, and about as good as our modest purse could command.

For \$20 per month we obtained a two-bedroom, furnished apartment (electricity, water and gas included).

That seemed about right, although I had hoped for something closer to \$15.

We paid the landlord a month's rent in advance, and took possession.

In view of my interest in the theater and moving picture industry (which I secretly intended to crash), it would have been simple to find a more convenient address. But we were worn out and irritable. At least we could settle down, cheaply.

During the first weeks at our new address, I sought work every day and found nothing. This was, to be candid, partly my own fault. I was so "star-struck" that—while I honestly did seek work—the jobs I found paid poorly and demanded full effort.

Unwilling to take such demanding work for so little money, I managed an alibi even when I landed something.

I was looking for a paycheck that would be large enough to live on, but wouldn't demand much in return. That way I would have several hours each day in which to advance my career as an actor or director. Meanwhile, my resources dwindled.

Dad sent nearly all of the money still due me. He was staying in Ogden where business was pretty good, but he would be out soon. Meanwhile, I steadfastly refused to go out soliciting for him, which he urged me to do since I had nothing else. Day after day, after I had responded to the want ads, I headed for Hollywood. I spent hours in the offices of various agents. I signed up at Central Cast-

ing. I went to the various studio gates, but never got inside.

I thought of myself as the answer to all of Hollywood's problems. Apparently, Hollywood didn't know it had one. No one took the slightest notice. Well, not quite. I finally met a man who got me into a studio where a certain writer had some connections with Hamline University. When he learned I was from Hamline, he wanted to know if I was willing to try out for a small part. He asked what I wanted and, foolishly, I told him I would take anything.

A phone call sent me at dizzying speed to an old theater where a try-out was in progress. The production under consideration was a musical, and I would have to sing and dance in the chorus. I neither hoofed nor warbled.

I was so embarrassed that I pretended to be above a job in a chorus line, and refused to audition. Temperament has always been presumed to be a reasonable alibi. In my case, and in many others as I was to learn, it also covered a large range of ineptitude.

Dad finally arrived, and a last financial settlement was made. Dad was overly generous. He appeared to be honestly concerned with the well being of Junior, and inadvertently concerned with Junior's parents. But these few dollars also evaporated.

Within a day or so of Dad's arrival, good fortune beckoned. A few blocks from our apartment, a large tent had been pitched. A sign—erected in front, and flyers circulated through the neighborhood—revealed that the Hart Players had arrived and offered a full three-act play for the entertainment of all. Admission to the tent theater was 50 cents. Further, the Hart Players were a stock company. They offered a brand new three-act play every week.

This is what I had been hoping for. Baby sitters cost money, so I left Peggy at home and spent 50 cents to see a production by the Hart Players. It was a sit. com.—known as a “tab” show—and entitled “The Flat Tire.”

In my Judgment, the performance was tops. The actors knew what they were doing. The show was paced. It held my interest, and brought laughter and applause where I would have wanted it. In content, the show was a bit of fluff without any particular message or significance. In those days, a drama usually didn't try to have a message. It was entertainment.

After the final curtain, I went backstage and introduced myself to several of the cast, offering congratulations. I asked to meet the

producer or director, and presently shook hands with Harvey Hart—the producer and general manager. I told him I was an actor, temporarily at liberty, but willing to take a job in his company if an opening occurred.

He asked me if I was a professional actor, and I said I was. I justified the exaggeration on the grounds that I had been paid for my efforts with Universal and at the church, even though I had been paid as a director and not as an actor. But as the director at Universal, I had learned how to “mug” the lines and how to stage the business of everyone in the show. Surely that was acting. And I had been the star of my grade school graduating class.

I was taken at face value. Mr. Hart said he would keep my name and address on file. There was no opening at the moment.

My spirits soared as a result of that meeting. Now I would wait. It didn't matter how long it took. Sooner or later, Harvey Hart would keep his word. Meanwhile, I would take any job as a potboiler until the Hart Players called.

Another week or two went by with no result. By chance I was seeking employment at some store near our South Gate apartment—I can't remember what store it was. A young fellow, a stranger, suddenly smiled my way. “Didn't I see you a few weeks ago backstage with the Hart Players?” he asked.

I acknowledged that I had been there, job seeking.

“Do you know what's happened?”

“I haven't the faintest.”

“The Harts got burned out. They used smudge pots to keep their patrons warm in the tent. One of the pots got too hot and set fire to the whole thing.”

My heart sank. “No! Damn. That's a real shame. I liked them. Every one of them.”

The stranger nodded. “I've known Harvey and Vayne for years. Ruby, too. In fact, I've worked for them on and off, doing various things. I'm an electrician. Sometimes I've handled scenery or props for them. Whatever.”

I was crushed but tried to be detached. “I was really hoping I'd get a call from them one day,” I admitted. “You see, I'm an actor.”

“I thought as much.” He gave me his name—Carl something. We shook hands. “Now, I've got some good news for you.”

“Oh?”

"Remember the young fellow they had doing juveniles?"

I nodded. "Yeah. He was really good."

"Well, he's leaving the cast. He got his big break. He tried out for a network radio show and was accepted. You'll be hearing him now on the "Wanna Buy a Duck" show."

"Joe Penner?"

"That's the one."

"Hey, that's great." For him. I was green with envy.

"That means they've got a vacancy. Go see Harvey and remind him that you're available."

"I thought you said they were out of business."

He laughed. "Harvey? Out of business? You don't know Harvey. The whole company is now working at the Alhambra Theater in Alhambra. I don't quite know the arrangement, but they offer a stage show in conjunction with a full-length moving picture. They're packing them in. Get there right away."

"If Harvey wanted me, he'd have phoned. He has my number."

The young fellow laughed. "Jesus Christ, man, don't stand on your pride in times like these. If I were you, I'd bust the speed limits to Alhambra. In the theater, the guy on hand when he's needed gets the job. You oughta know that!"

"Thanks," I said. I wrung his hand. "I'm on my way."

In Alhambra, I went backstage at once. The players were in their dressing rooms (one for males, one for females), preparing for the night's performance. I practically tripped over Harvey as he was making his way behind the booming speakers that carried the sound track for the picture being shown.

"Remember me?" I asked in the semi-darkness.

He peered at me, and then motioned for me to follow. We went to the star's dressing room that Harvey was using as his office.

In the light, he looked me over and, then, smiled.

"Yes, I do remember you," he said. "You're...you're..."

"Bob. Bob LeFevre. I'm an actor. I met you over in South Gate in the tent."

Recognition dawned.

"I learned that you're losing one of your cast. I'd like a chance at his job."

"Of course, Bob. That last name's a mouthful. But I do remember." He paused and looked me over more closely. "So you're an actor."

"Of course I'm an actor."

"Okay, okay. You're an actor. Don't get huffy. Come on with me and let's see what Vayne and Ruby have to say."

I trailed him to the men's dressing room. Harvey introduced me to all four men, who were in various stages of dress and makeup. Vayne Hart played leads.

He was a good looking, solidly built man in his thirties.

Harvey explained my presence and everyone focused on me.

Vayne gave me the once-over.

"It's okay with me, Dad. Whatever you say."

"What do you say?" His father asked.

"Can you read lines?" Vayne asked me.

"Certainly."

"Had any experience?"

"Yes."

"Can you project?"

I wasn't exactly sure of what was meant, but I said, "Of course."

Vayne shrugged. "Okay, Dad. He's in." He turned back to the mirror. "Good luck, kid," he threw my way as he applied some grease.

"Let's go see Vesta and Ruby," Harvey said to me.

We crossed the stage behind the blaring speakers, and Harvey opened the door of the women's dressing room. Two actresses were in partial states of preparedness. Harvey pushed me into the room and stood behind me. One woman, apparently in her fifties, wore a dressing robe and was applying makeup. The other—blond, in her late twenties—sat in bra and panties with a towel over her shoulders. My face must have revealed some shock. At least surprise. Harvey hadn't even knocked.

The older woman was introduced as Vesta, the younger was Ruby. Vesta smiled warmly and said, "Hello. Glad to see we're getting some new talent right away."

Ruby's smile was somewhat arch. "Haven't you ever been back-stage before, kid?" She asked.

"Many times," I said truthfully.

"Have you ever been a pro?" Ruby wanted to know.

"Certainly."

"Just how much experience have you had?"

I could feel the blood rise to my hairline. "I played in 'Corporal Eagen'," I said. "And I did the lead in..." I couldn't remember the

name of my grade school triumph, and began to stammer.

Ruby nodded sagely. "Not much. But, my God, you're good looking enough. You don't look like a kid who is completely familiar with the lady's dressing room."

"You're right about that," I said. "I didn't know that was part of becoming an actor."

Everyone laughed heartily. "We're all one family here," Harvey explained. "Don't mind Ruby. She's...well, a little outspoken at times."

"But I'm an actress," she asserted.

"Sure you are," Harvey said. "I just wanted you to see Bob, before I hired him. What do you think?"

"He's green," Ruby said, and turned her back. "But he'll learn. What he doesn't know, we can teach him. Who knows? Maybe he's another Barrymore."

She tossed those observations off her shoulder.

"No, I'm not," I said. "But I can play any part you give me."

"Well, well, well." Ruby turned my way again. This time her smile was pleasant. "We can use someone who can still blush."

"Come with me," Harvey said.

We returned to his "office."

"Let me explain how we work things. I have a contract with this theater. We made these arrangements because we don't have enough capital to buy another tent. Our juvenile lead is leaving. You haven't met him. He's around someplace, and you will. But this is his final week with us, so we really can use you if you know your onions. This is a stock company. That means we produce a new show every week. So you'll be performing in one play, rehearsing a second, and forgetting a third every day. We also paint and handle all the sets.

"Here's how it works. The theater offers one full-length stage play. That's us. No advance in price.

"Our deal is this. We've run an average of what the box office ordinarily takes in each night we perform. So we know what the average is. The theater gets that intact. All the money above the average is used as follows. First, we cover costs of our production—royalty, scenery, and any special props or costumes. Then, we split what's left. Half of it goes to the theater, half to us. We take the total—whatever it is—and break it down by however many people

we have in the cast. If we have several, as we do in this present show, the money is divided into eight equal shares."

Harvey laughed. "I'm counted as one, even if I don't do anything. Sometimes I do fill in on bit parts. Sometimes I direct.

"So, if there's eight dollars left, each of us gets a dollar. If there's sixty-four dollars, each of us gets eight dollars.

"At the present time, we're showing four nights out of the week. It's share and share alike. You get paid after each performance. In cash.

"There's no guarantee. Since we came here, we've been averaging between twenty-five and thirty dollars a week each in five presentations, four nights—one matinee. Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday twice.

It's a lot of hard work and long hours. Think you can do it?"

"I know I can." I assured him.

"You've got to be a quick study, help with the sets, props or anything else that comes up. We rehearse daily at ten."

I nodded. "I'd love it. Really, Mr. Hart. I want the job."

"Okay." He offered his hand. "You are now a member of the Hart Players."

"Want me to read some lines, or anything?"

"No point in it. You'll either do a good job or we'll drop you. And we'll find out fast. Now, I want you to meet young Parsons. He's the lad who's leaving us for the big time. This week is his last, and we're already rehearsing next week's show. It happens to not have a juvenile role in it. That's why we booked it."

Why don't you scoot out in front and watch tonight's show? You won't need a ticket, just use the door into the audience from the stage and sit down front. Then come over and watch us as we rehearse. You'll pick up a lot just watching. We do things our own way around here." He laughed again. "I don't know if we do it the best way, but it works for us."

I could hardly believe my good fortune. Obviously, I wouldn't be getting rich, but even twenty-five dollars a week was great. I'd be doing what I wanted to do. And who could tell? Maybe I would be so great that a Hollywood scout would see me. And people would line up in droves just to attend a play I was in. In which case, I'd have a lot of money.

My fantasies soared into infinity as I drove home.

When I told Peggy of my good fortune, she looked at me skeptically. "You really did get the job?" she asked.

"Of course." I drew myself up, erect and proud.

"It's kind of a funny arrangement," she said.

"What's funny about it?"

"There's no guarantee," she reminded me.

"Times are tough," I told her. "There aren't any guarantees in most jobs."

She gave me a Mona Lisa smile. "We'll see," she said.

Chapter XV

Harvey Hart had been accurate when he had stated that the Hart Players were all one family. The permanent cast consisted of Vayne Hart, the leading man—Harvey's son by his first wife. The leading lady was Vayne's wife, Ruby Hart. Vesta Radcliff was Harvey's first wife who played character parts. She used the stage name, Vesta Vayne. Hal Radcliff, her second husband, played character roles. Harvey had remarried a lady named Audrey. Audrey Hart was included in the cast, and played ingenue roles.

Thus, five of the eight regular members of the troupe were related by blood or marriage to Harvey, and Harvey was number eight.

In addition to their 'juvenile,' there was an old stager named Cunningham, who only remained a few weeks. A fine actor named George Jones, who did character roles or second business, replaced him. I use the name, Jones, because I cannot recall George's real name, and Jones will do. I learned many things from him.

George had experience on the New York stage and had come west to crack Hollywood. He had taken an apartment with a pair of aspiring actors whom I met, briefly. One was Stu Irwin, the other Clark Gable. Stu, Clark, and George were all trying for pictures. Privately, George and I discussed his roommates, whom he abandoned to take a steady job with the Harts.

We figured Stu would make it, and make it big. He was handsome, smart, a quick study, made friends easily and had some good contacts.

We were right. In time Stu Irwin became a star.

Both George and I figured that George was number two when it came to chances for success. Clark, we conceded, was a real fine guy. However, he ought to go back to driving a cab or truck. His ears were almost at right angles from his head. He didn't appear to be a particularly fast study. We couldn't think of a good reason for anyone to hire him as an actor.

Privately, I accepted George as a better actor than I. He was experienced, fast, and smooth. He conveyed sincerity with a consummate level of grace. I rated the four of us: George first, then myself, then Stu, with Clark a poor also-ran. Human beings tend to believe

what they hope is true.

At the time I joined the company, Wayne and Ruby were living in a rented home in Pasadena with their small son. They provided lodging for Harvey and his second wife, Audrey. All four of them lived in the same house, and shared expenses.

Mr. and Mrs. Radcliff (Vesta Wayne and Hal) lived in a smaller house just down the street. Often all six would have meals together. Thus, the income each shared, gave the Hart family a pretty good financial foundation.

George was a bachelor, and the share he received was satisfactory for one person,

My own position was the most precarious financially, for I was supporting a wife and child, as well as myself. However, I was in the theater. That, alone, was high reward.

I marveled at the Hart domestic scene—apparently a harmonious one—in which Harvey would be dining with his first and second wives, his son by his first wife, his son's wife, and his first wife's second husband. If there were tensions or problems, I never detected them.

I joined the company toward the end of September and spent about five months with the Harts. They were among the happiest times of my life. The work was hard and demanding, and I loved it.

Commuting from South Gate took energy and gas. Harvey lined up the Mission Playhouse, in San Gabriel, a magnificent theater where the famous play, "Ramona," had been staged year after year. The Playhouse had been converted into a moving picture palace, and "Ramona" moved to an outdoor natural theater in Hemet.

Harvey planned three nights in San Gabriel, four in Alhambra. Our incomes would have risen substantially. However, some dispute as to which nights were to be in one place, which in the other cancelled the Alhambra booking. At the same moment, the owner of the Mission Inn, in Riverside—the son of the original builder of the Inn, a man named Miller—asked if we could bring our production to Riverside for two nights each week. He would sponsor our appearance at the Riverside Theater. He felt that a stage play by professionals would be a cultural achievement for Riverside. We could make any deal we wished with the theater. Miller would provide rooms for all of us at the Inn at no charge.

The following routine was established. Monday was a rehearsal

day for the next week's production. It was also a day for painting scenery, gathering props and getting organized. No presentation. On Monday afternoon or evening, we'd load all the flats onto a four-wheeled flatbed trailer. In our respective cars, we would drive to Riverside, spending the night at the Inn.

Tuesday: Ten o'clock rehearsal for next week's show. Set stage for this week's opening night. Presentation that night starting around eight o'clock.

Wednesday: Ten o'clock rehearsal. Two o'clock matinee. Eight o'clock showing. After final curtain, load flats again and head for San Gabriel.

Thursday: Ten o'clock rehearsal. Set stage for Mission Playhouse that evening. Eight o'clock presentation.

Friday: Ten o'clock rehearsal. Choose and cast play for week after next. Evening presentation at eight.

Saturday: Ten o'clock dress rehearsal. Evening show.

Sunday: No rehearsal. 2:00 p.m. matinee. 8:00 p.m. show.

The Hart Players acquired a following. Audiences grew. We began to do well. And I was running myself ragged.

Peggy and I moved to Pasadena. A few blocks from where the Harts resided, we found a small cottage and moved in. The rent was a trifle higher than in Southgate, but the saving in time was significant. Gasoline costs weren't so great as to be a burden. Low test sold for ten cents a gallon. A dollar would buy the better part of a full tank.

The Chevy gave signs of wishing full retirement. The doors were afflicted with dry rot and wanted to fall off the vehicle. The engine usually ran on four or five cylinders, and needed a major overhaul.

I traded the Chevy for a much newer Ford sedan. However, I went into debt to do so. The Chevy had been paid for. I was optimistic. Never had conditions for my future been better. People were beginning to remember my name. A huge picture of me on a sandwich board in front of the Mission Playhouse helped bring in the customers, I was told. I was conceited enough to believe it.

The allure of the footlights, in part, relates to the "live" aspects of stage production. When a moving picture is being made and someone fluffs, there's a re-take. Indeed, there are countless re-takes, while the first take is being taken. Movie making is the production of a finished product.

When the curtain rises for a “legitimate” drama, one must work through the booboos, the gaffes, the blown lines, the missed cues. Your skills as an actor in handling these crises become your daily stock in trade.

I recall one night shortly after I joined the company. I had a mild case of flu, but I had already learned that “the show must go on.” If you had a broken leg and carried your head under an arm, you still made your appearance on cue.

I was a “juvenile heavy.” That means, a “brat.” In this particular play, I was supposed to sink down in a large overstuffed chair, where the audience could see me, and pretend to fall asleep. The stage action took place behind me, and the others in the cast were supposedly not aware of my presence.

Because of the flu bug, I actually went to sleep. I only drowsed for a moment and, upon awakening, heard the hum of voices behind me. Nothing being said made any sense to me. I was totally disoriented. I didn’t know where or who I was. Before my eyes the row of footlights burned in red and amber. Beyond them swam a sea of faces, the audience watching and listening in expectation.

Who were all those people?

Suddenly, I heard my cue. I leaped from my chair, galvanized into action and completely out of character. In that instant, everything came into focus.

To justify my outrageous leap, I grabbed my behind, returned to the chair, probed the upholstery where I’d been sitting and pulled up an imaginary bit of metal, which I threw down in disgust. It brought a laugh.

After the show, I had to explain to the director. I was cautioned against repetition. A laugh wasn’t wanted at that point. At the same time, I was patted on the back for the quick recovery.

Veteran actors were sometimes allowed to originate a piece of business and keep it in, if it went well. That courtesy was denied to me.

Once we were staging a south sea island romance. I was a native, clad in breech cloth and brown dye. To create the illusion of the South Seas, we had tacked long strings of rattan over the doorways. To make an exit or entrance, one had to part the rattan and move through.

Unfortunately, on our opening night, we hadn’t taken the time to

sweep the stage after hanging the rattan and a number of carpet tacks were on the floor. I was barefooted, sneaking into the set with drawn knife, intent on murder. My heel found a carpet tack, point heavenward, and I came down on it with full weight. The pain was exalted. I am proud that I showed no emotion other than what the script called for. I walked through the whole scene with spasms leaping up my calf. No one in the cast suspected a thing, and I'm sure the audience was oblivious.

Probably the most hilarious, out-of-the-script event of my stage career occurred during a matinee in Riverside. I was cast as the assistant villain; George was the arch-heavy. The drama involved a diamond heist that George and I were about to pull off. The scene was a drawing room in a manor house in England, and I wore a cutaway with a tall silk hat. George was similarly attired.

I had made it a rule to eat my meals as far before curtain time as possible. On this particular Wednesday, we had all had a rare treat. Eddie Peabody, King of the Banjo, had arrived at the Mission Inn. I learned that Eddie had once been the juvenile with the Harts and he wanted to renew his friendship. He had built a magnificent home just outside the city, and we were all invited to drive out to see it. His car was a big Packard, large enough to hold the entire cast and, understandably, we were eager for the outing.

In talking with Eddie, I learned that Ted Lewis had also begun his professional career with the Harts. They had been around for years, and many people knew them and loved them.

The jaunt brought us back to the theater with just enough time to grab a bite before show time. All went well until we came to the last act, which was divided into two scenes. Just before the curtain rose on the first, I got an attack of hiccups.

Fortunately, I had no lengthy speeches. George and I had the first scene to ourselves. George had several sides during which he gave me detailed instructions on how I was to get my hands on the "jools." All I had to do was to punctuate his instructions with an occasional, "I see, sir." "Quite right, sir," and "Whatever you say, sir."

We faced each other down stage just above the footlights, and George began his near-monologue. I hiccuped as quietly as possible. My tall silk hat fit only indifferently and, as my head bobbed with the spasm, the hat bobbed in reverse.

Sotto voce, George said, "Cut that out," and went on with his in-

structions. I hiccuped again and said aloud, "Quite right, sir."

George's lips twisted in mirth, but he controlled himself. He went on with his lengthy speech. Again came the spasm and the hat bobbed. He wiped away the out-of-character grin, and continued.

Every time I had a line, my voice behaved. Every time George continued, I hiccuped without mercy. It got worse. In trying desperately to prevent the outburst, I began to have double spasms. Hic, hic; bobble, bobble.

Under his breath, George said, "I'm gonna punch you in the nose." "Whatever you say, sir," I managed.

George turned away to recover his aplomb. He turned back and I hiccuped furiously. The audience began to snicker. George still had lines to cover.

The agonizing few minutes became funnier as we progressed. Mercifully, I was finally able to make my exit.

Ruby met me. "What are you trying to do," she whispered, "Break up the show?"

"I'm (hic) sorry, Ruby. (hic) I can't (hic) help it. I've got the hi... (hic) hiccups."

She started to laugh. "Well, stop. There's still a scene to go"

"Don't you (hic) think I know (hic) it?"

I had no more appearances in that scene, but, of course, in the very last we were all on stage. The jewels would be found in my possession. Again, I was spared, for my lines were short and few.

My fellow actors weren't spared. They tried to ignore me, even though I was the center of all eyes as the actual thief caught with the goods. I doubt if a stage production ever occurred with quite so many actors turning their backs to the audience to hide-wide grins. Meanwhile, the customers had identified my problem. They were in convulsions.

This is called "detrimental empathy." They were laughing at me, rather than following the plot.

Our hero, Vayne, while dressing me down, got to laughing, turned away, walked up to a stage window, interpolated a line "I wonder why the police aren't here yet" (not in the script), and spent an unexplained minute peering out of the window gasping for breath.

After what seemed an eternity, the curtain rang down. The audience was delighted. Much of what is funny to one entails misery to another. I was embarrassed beyond words. I expected to be fired on

the spot. I felt I deserved to be.

Harvey showed up and I told him my story. He took it in stride. "Things sometimes happen, Bob," was all he had to say. "I'm sure you didn't do it on purpose." I wasn't even reprimanded. No wonder people loved the Harts.

Christmas of 1932 arrived. The show went on with sparse attendance. My cut for the evening's work was 13 cents. But a week later came New Year's eve. My share for that evening's work was \$29.00. These were usually the worst and the best nights in the theater. Perhaps that has changed.

Toward the end of February, Peggy began experiencing nausea around breakfast time. A trip to the doctor confirmed our suspicions. She was pregnant again. While we were doing fairly well, according to the times we were in, we rarely had more than twenty dollars in reserve. Without telling her, I opened a bank account in an effort to save a little money. The initial deposit was all the money I managed to put aside. The expenses of the day took the income of the night.

Peggy's face showed mounting anxiety. The only doctor she trusted was in Minneapolis. Whenever I was home she showed her uneasiness. Her face became drawn with lines of worry. Meanwhile, Rob Jr. was beginning to toddle. He gleefully bit and broke anything he could reach.

In March of 1933, President Roosevelt was inaugurated. He had been elected the prior November. I hadn't voted, but I tended to be Republican in outlook. My father had lectured me on ideas of private property and the Republicans seemed to make more sense in that area than Democrats. In view of the plight of the nation, it surprised me that a Democrat would gain power. Actually, I knew nothing about it whatever. The people I worked with shared my ignorance.

The phrase on everyone's lips was, "Maybe Roosevelt will do something." No one knew what. But we were convinced Hoover would "do nothing." Americans tend to be like that, I have found. They want action. They don't like to take the time to think in an effort to discover the correct action. They just feel better when something is going on.

In this regard, Roosevelt was not a disappointment. Within a few days of taking the oath of office, on March 6, 1933, he declared a

national banking crisis and closed every bank in the United States. By executive order and without warning.

Here was a catastrophe, born and bred in government. It is true; there had been a number of bank failures prior to March. Indeed, this outcome had been predictable.

The Federal Reserve Board commanded or, at least, influenced every bank to provide low interest loans for the "little people" wishing to make fortunes in real estate and the stock market. Bankers had responded with loans, believing the Feds would bail them out of their unprecedented expansion of credit.

The Feds had no money to do so. They relied on credit and issuing more credit to redeem earlier credit. The day of reckoning came with the bank closings. Roosevelt declared that a number of banks were insolvent, and the implication was that many of them were dishonest. Most of them had been engaged in nothing worse than obeying Federal policy.

"Experts" went on radio to tell us all that the bank holiday was a "good thing." Roosevelt was "doing something." The result would be the weeding out of the unsafe banks. To show the effectiveness of the whole thing, at the time of the closings, there were about 16,000 banks in the U.S. When the banks reopened, there were still about 16,000. The weeding out process had taken place prior to the closings.

The effect in the theater was drastic. If people have no money but loose change, they'll spend it for food rather than theater admissions. Attendance went to a trickle.

Personally, the bank closings meant I couldn't draw out my meager savings. We put on a couple of performances, with zero to share and share alike. Frankly, I was scared. I understood nothing of what was going on. The whole world seemed to me to have gone crazy.

But circumstances beyond and outside my ability to control were only getting started. On March 10, the Hart Players were ready for opening night with the play "Bringing UP Father." I was cast as "Cecil", the gay suitor of Maggie's daughter.

I was at home. Peggy and I had eaten our evening meal, with Rob Jr. sitting in a high chair, pounding on the tray with his spoon and geysering his food in splendid abandon.

Peggy felt ill and retired to the bathroom for privacy. I turned on the radio. The "March of Time," one of my favorite shows was on

the air.

I lifted junior from his chair. He began to strut around, swaying, recovering, and doing occasionally sudden hands-to-floor exercises.

Abruptly, the radio went dead. There was a monstrous roar as though a pair of freight trains were rumbling through the front yard. The house lurched. Pictures swayed, some dishes fell from shelves, the house moved back and forth like a giant sieve, screening gravel.

I managed to retain my balance, but Rob Junior sat on the floor looking at me with an accusing stare, as if to say: "Why did you do that to me, Daddy?"

Peggy screamed "Earthquake," and came running.

She grabbed the baby and we shot out the front door. People throughout the area were debauching into the street. The earth continued to heave as though it had swallowed something unpalatable, and was retching.

The rumbling died away in the distance.

"My God," I said in a whisper. "I guess that was an earthquake."

Peggy looked at me in disbelief. How could anyone doubt it?

"What'll we do?" Peggy demanded in terror.

"What's to be done?" I countered. "It's over now. We're all right. I guess we lost a couple of plates."

Peggy stood close, and I put an arm around her. She was trembling. "I'm scared to death," she half sobbed.

We stood there a few minutes. Apparently, whatever an earthquake was, it had ended. Finally, we re-entered and began putting things to rights.

In a few-minutes, another rumble sounded and, again, the house swayed, though not with such power as before. The motion quickly subsided.

"I hate California," Peggy blurted. "I want to go back to Minnesota!"

"Ah, come on," I said. "The worst is over. And we're fine. Everything is O.K. now."

"No, it's not. Everything is rotten. We're...we're so poor. And nothing is going right. And I'm going to have a baby. I want to go home."

"Peg, this is our home. Sure, it's scary. I don't blame you for being scared. It's enough to scare anyone. But it's over. We're fine."

Some time passed before Peggy stopped trembling.

The radio came on with the announcer bringing us up to date as

best he knew. The epicenter had been in Long Beach. The damage there was catastrophic. The National Guard had been mobilized. People were ordered to stay away from coastal cities.

"What will you do now?" Peggy wanted to know.

"Do? Why, I'm going over to the theater. It's opening night. I've got a pretty good part, too."

"There's not going to be any show."

I laughed. "Of course, there is. Don't you remember? The show must go on."

She started to cry. "I would think you'd want to stay here to protect your wife and baby."

"How can I protect anyone from an earthquake? The best thing for me to do is to keep my commitments. I'm an actor. I've got a job. I'm one of the lucky ones. The show must go on."

"Then I'm going to the theater with you. And I'm going to bring Robbie."

"No problem. In fact, I think that's a good idea."

With Peggy safely parked in a front row seat, I went backstage. Professionals don't panic. Everyone was present dressing and putting on makeup. The picture was being shown and, curiously, there was a fair audience. Better than for the closing nights of our prior production.

The particular version of "Bringing Up Father" we were staging required my first entrance at the beginning of Act II. Unfortunately, all through Act I, occasional after-shocks kept rumbling through the place. When one occurred, the teasers swayed and the scenery buckled but held together.

The audience was restless, and from time to time, in the midst of a tremor, the electrician would turn up the house lights. Whenever this occurred, the business on stage would "hold," and the audience—reassured by being able to see their surroundings—would settle back in their seats.

Between the first two acts, Wayne went out on the apron and addressed our customers. The Mission Playhouse, he told them, was "earthquake proof." They were safer there than in their own homes. He urged them to relax and enjoy the production. He got a round of applause.

The curtain rose on Act II. On cue, I appeared in the doorway to lip my opening line. At the instant, a major tremor surged. In fas-

cination, I saw a wave coming across the stage. The floorboards rose and then fell as if they had been made of water. It passed under my feet, and I rose and fell with the boards.

The audience had had enough. They leaped up and began hurrying out on the near side of panic. Vayne, already on stage, grabbed center. "Hold it," he shouted. "The building is safe. But apparently this isn't a good night for entertainment. Please stop at the box office and get a rain check. We'll re-open in a day or so and we want you back again."

His voice had a calming effect and, in good order, the theater emptied. Hal Radcliff came over. "Bob," he quipped, "I have never seen an entrance so move an audience."

"They moved the wrong way," I said. "But they sure moved. I didn't know I was that bad."

Chapter XVI

What is property?

Property is anything that, as a result of its own natural characteristics, admits of or tolerates human ownership.

What is human ownership?

Human ownership is a relationship developed by man, which has gradually evolved from the instinctive custom of possession. At its roots, ownership is a moral idea.

Two kinds of relationships are essential to human survival. One is the relationship that develops between one person and another person, or persons. The other kind is the relationship that develops between a person (or persons) and the things of this world, natural or man-made, which are other than persons.

Both relationships are vital to human survival.

Nothing in nature demands any particular way of defining property or of deciding which things are property and which are not. Various peoples in varying places and periods have defined it differently. Despite these variations, they have survived.

Life is persistent. Survival often occurs despite adversity. Certain definitions or attitudes concerning property and its ownership seem to develop that produce conditions favorable to human survival and happiness. Conversely, when divergent or alternate definitions or attitudes prevail—even though survival may continue—conditions for survival and human happiness decline.

Human beings cannot live without property. Each of us occupies space and must dominate it in our own favor to some degree, or perish. It is clear that property, by its nature, is and must be exclusive. If I occupy a particular unit of space or consume a particular item, it is a fact of nature that another cannot, at the same time, occupy the same space or consume the same item.

Ownership consists of several factors. Before any human being will set himself up as an owner, he must value the item he seeks to own. The value relates to his belief in the future disposition of the property as a plus factor to himself.

He looks at a given property as desirable because, as he sees it, if that property were his to command, then he could sell, keep, im-

prove, employ, eat, increase or otherwise use it to his advantage. Time—future time, long or short—is the essence of all property holding. The would-be owner pictures uninterrupted, unmolested ownership through time as he obtains a given property. He may dispose of that property in the future to fulfill his value judgments.

The second factor of ownership is boundary. All property ownership is exclusive, as I have shown. Therefore, all property is limited. Hence, property must have exclusive, discernable boundaries to exist as property. Some properties have boundaries as a result of their own nature. Physical objects provide their own boundaries. Abstract properties, consisting of contracts or agreements, will have agreed upon abstract boundaries. Land will be divided one way or another, with the agreed upon line of demarcation revealing the boundaries.

If something does not have a natural boundary and current technology allows for no boundary upon which people can agree, then it is not property. It cannot be owned. A future technology may make ownership possible. But until an individual can show to others where a given boundary is, and they can recognize that boundary, a would-be owner is wasting his time in attempting ownership.

The final test of ownership is control. The owner of a property must be able to use it to his own ends, whatever the ends may be. If others control what the owner claims as property, then he is either deluded in his ownership or he is beset by thieves.

Summing up, to own property, the owner: must be able to value a thing in time; must establish a boundary for purposes of identification and exclusiveness; and finally, have control.

Something else should be noted. Nothing in nature reveals the identity of the owner of any given property. No magical or mystical lines of force string the space between owner and what is his. I cannot tell by looking at you what you own. Owners and the property they own are invariably vulnerable to marauders.

Possession of a property, on the other hand, is largely visible and readily recognized. Few will challenge the strong man who visibly holds a property in his hand. Few will challenge an even stronger man who visibly imposes his will on others. The biggest bully in the area may possess anything he wants.

Ownership is, therefore, a moral concept. It proclaims that a property belongs to an owner despite his lack of strength, or power.

Indeed, it proclaims that the property belongs to the owner even when he is absent and not physically available to defend it. All civilized life depends upon this moral idea.

In those places enjoying the highest standards of living, nearly everything is owned by someone. In a truly advanced culture, properties proliferate and ownership is widely dispersed. Many, if not most, of the population own many things.

Some relatively advanced cultures denounce private ownership of various kinds of property. They claim that “the people” own certain properties, perhaps most of them. This is a kind of collective ownership.

The difficulty with collective ownership is that ownership, itself, is eroded. Mere possession reasserts itself. The collective becomes the single viable bully. The collective takes what it wishes from individuals, thereby destroying private ownership by force. At the same time, it pretends to make private ownership safe by promising to punish private persons who steal from other private persons. Theft becomes the *modus vivendi* of the collective and, gradually, a culture or population begins to abandon the moral position of ownership. It accepts force as the only method available to prevent the destruction of ownership.

In such cultures—where collective destruction of private ownership is advanced to a constant and general policy—the greatest crime is theft from the collective. This will be called: “A crime against society,” or, “crime against the people.” Thus, the collective is left unchallenged and may steal what it will, calling such theft “common good.” The only forbidden theft is theft not approved by the collective.

In such cultures, the moral force is dissipated. What is right and what is wrong become indistinguishable. Right becomes whatever action the collective approves. Wrong becomes whatever action the collective disapproves. Thus, collective cultures are atavistic—a throwback to pre-historic times. They constitute a reversion to the concept that might makes or, at least, might guarantees what is right.

The true test of ownership relates to control of property. Who controls a given property reveals the identity of the true owner. When a collective—a government or other organization—controls vast amounts of property and suppresses individuals in favor of the

collective, standards of living rarely rise. If the collective de-centralizes and permits private control of property, then standards of living usually begin going up. Although private ownership may still be denied, the effective factor of ownership—control—is again in the hands of individuals. Private ownership, in practice, has been restored even though the fact is publicly denied.

There are several classes of property. First and foremost, is the property of the body and mind. The person defined by that body and mind owns this property. This property is exclusive and personal by nature. Let me call it the property of the self. If you like, it could be looked at as man's basic property. What he is physically and mentally is clearly exclusively owned by him. Call it primary property, basic property, fundamental property...whatever it is called, it exists in the nature of things as they are.

All other properties are extensions of individual man's natural condition of self-ownership.

Property is owned by human beings as an act of individual human will, which is accepted (more or less) by custom and usage.

Consider those items, separate from the individual, which are portable. They can be readily moved about and easily passed from one person to another. Personal property can be classed in two broad groupings, A and B.

Class A property would be portable. But it has the capacity of self-determination, to some degree, in respect to where and when it moves about. Every animate species would fall into class A, including man, himself. Anything animate can be owned, as a kind of personal property.

Class B property would be inanimate. It is portable but incapable of generating through its own self-will, the necessary energy to move about. Inanimate properties also can be owned.

Class A properties include man, but are not limited to man. This category includes anything capable of internal self-generated decision-action sequences. Birds, fish, and animals are included. From the lowly amoeba to the elephant and whale—everything that lives which is capable of changing location voluntarily—would be included.

Other living things are inert so far as moving about is concerned. Trees, shrubs, flowers, grasses, herbs, all fall into this category. They live, but they do not move about. These are not Class A personal

properties.

Class B property is portable, but inanimate. This includes items such as sticks, stones, supplies of food, as well as clothing, books, automobiles, furniture, airplanes, boats and millions of other items, manufactured by man, or directly produced by or found in nature.

The final classification of property cannot readily be moved about. It is inert or stationary by nature. It is called realty or real estate. This includes the land and anything that is part of it: soil, grass, trees, shrubs, and plants of all kinds, as noted above. It also includes manmade items attached to the earth such as paving, sewers, mines, wells, houses, factories, and so forth. Clearly, anything can be moved. But these items are not designed to be moved, and must be classed accordingly.

Summing up:

1. Property of the person owned by himself.
2. Portable property, both animate and inanimate.
3. Inert or stationary property.

When a human being is born into this world, the only property that is his by nature is his brain and body. However, every human being is the heir to these assets at birth. If the infant survives, it is because he has a body and brain. If either is lacking, the infant doesn't become, or remain, a living infant.

Nature sees to it that none of us arrive in this world in a condition of total poverty. Rather, each of us is endowed with his basic allotment of brain and body property.

True, brains and bodies differ as a result of genetic and reproductive variation. They will differ more and more as each individual develops in his environment. Some have more capacity to learn than others do. Some have greater tendencies or interests in one direction rather than in another. But no living human being is ever broke until he is dead. It is only when he loses his basic property—his body and mind—that he has nothing to work with and is truly beat. He is also dead at that moment.

The ownership of a person by himself is a natural phenomenon. What of the extensions of that basic ownership into class A or B categories? Such extensions occur as a result of the survival decisions and actions of the individual. Human survival is more than keeping breath in the body.

The individual who reaches out to acquire something other than his person is seeking satisfactions of one sort or another. This includes the satisfaction of staying alive. Staying alive, per se, does not contain sufficient human motivation to engender reaching out. Survival may be satisfactory for creatures lacking the brainpower, the imagination, and the memory of man. It is not satisfactory for man.

Imagine a human being who automatically received the necessary caloric intake daily, the necessary comforts and conveniences, was totally protected, had to make no effort of his own, but never got out of a box just slightly larger than his own person. It is profoundly probable that the individual would hope for death, and probably try to contrive it.

Survival is not man's highest value. Survival so that other things may be acquired might fill the bill. Man's reason for wanting to live relates to his hopes of achieving other things while he is alive, through time.

It is, of course, manifestly true that if a person doesn't survive, that person cannot experience anything more. Therefore, survival comes first. Survival may be first in this sense, but it is not survival only. It is survival so that...

The nature of man and the nature of reality make it impossible for everyone to have the same kind or amount of property. The attempt of various governments to seize scarce properties, such as land and other resources, and refer to them as collective property owned by "all the people" is nothing but an atavistic political dodge.

Individuals must use property, or the individuals will die. Every owner is vulnerable. Everything that is owned is vulnerable. Whether we are thinking in individual or collective terms, vulnerability is a fact of life. Nature gives us no immunities from its laws.

Since property will never be distributed equally, how is it to be distributed?

So long as our questions deal with capacities, qualities and abilities, we are dealing pragmatically. The moral issue of ownership goes beyond the pragmatic.

Thus, while it is always possible for a man to murder another man, we must ask the question: "Should a murder occur?"

While it is always possible for a man to steal the property of another, we must ask the question: "Should theft take place?"

Clearly, a collective is the best possible device for imposing murder or theft because it is the quintessence of physical force and violence, by its nature. But we must ask: "Should a collective perform actions that we would challenge if done by an individual?"

Questions of ownership go beyond these basics.

It is within human capacity to own a dog, a cat, a horse, a cow, or even another man. Yes, but should one man own another of his own kind?

If it is adjudged morally proper for a man to own a dog, a cat, a cow, or a goldfish, then what says a man ought not own another of his own kind?

Clearly, all of the items listed are class A personal property. All are being owned somewhere right now and all have been owned sometime in the past. If it is morally proper for a man to own a cow, then why is it morally improper for him to own another man? If it is morally wrong for a man to own another man, then why isn't it morally wrong for a man to own a cow?

What about land? If I own a piece of land, another cannot have it. Why should I have it rather than he? If I have less money than you, do you owe me some? If you have a job and I need one, should you give it up so that I can work?

This area demands examination. Indeed, the moral question may be the most important question possible for human beings to raise.

When men lived in a state of nature (as conjecture has it), it is doubtful that a moral issue could arise. Man was guided primarily by his instincts rather than by his reason. Like any other carnivore or omnivore, each human being did his best to stay alive. If, to stay alive, a man had to slay and eat a companion, then that is what he did. If a neighbor had something he needed, then the man took it if he could.

Individual survival was the justification for any and every action. Success meant survival. Failure meant death. Under these conditions, the survival of the most fit seems the only rule.

While the foregoing images are frequently summoned to explain primitive behavior, I am not satisfied that they are altogether accurate images.

Various studies of other mammalia, together with studies of other species, reveal a strikingly different form of behavior than that usually attributed to early man.

A hungry tiger, for example, will normally not attack and kill another tiger. A lion may be starving, but he does not attack his own kind. Conflicts arise within a given species over the question of territory (property) and mating (another kind of property, perhaps?). But hungry animals in search of food rarely conduct a raid against another specimen of their own kind.

When a particular specimen reveals a willingness to attack his kind for food, there appears an instinctive rejection of that specimen by others of that species. An elephant that attacks his own is called (by men) a “rogue,” and is driven off (by his own kind). There are many other examples. There are also exceptions. It is possible that man is such an exception. However, I don’t think so.

Attacking their own kind for food—cannibalism—is guarded against instinctively within most species. I believe this was originally true with man as well.

In a state of nature, human instincts propelled men to act in favor of the survival of their species. They fought among themselves over territory and mates. They probably fought among themselves for the biggest and best portions of the kill. But the kill wasn’t human. In each case, they were driven by that powerful urge to stay alive, tempered by the instinct of guarding against destruction of the species.

Even though men didn’t understand division of labor and wouldn’t have understood the concept of gregariousness had it been explained, instinctively they behaved like herd animals. The survival of one depended to a degree upon the survival of the species.

There is no evidence of the rogue homo surviving without cooperation from at least some of his kind. Even the fictional Tarzan had the great apes to help him.

It seems to me that the human willingness to attack, kill or eat others of his own kind, developed as his brain enlarged. Perhaps the first instinct his more powerful brain counteracted was the subliminal rejection of attacking a comrade for food.

Evidence suggests that at least some of our early progenitors were vegetarians. But as their brains grew they enlarged their diets. And, finally, during some desperate famine, some began to kill and eat each other.

I cannot prove this line of thought, and I wouldn’t attempt it. I merely plead that it is possible. I have sought to focus on the possi-

bility because I think this is a good way to show that the instincts with which creatures such as man and animal are endowed genetically favor the species, and not necessarily the individual. Life, itself, favors the individual; instinct favors the species. Witness, again, the strange behavior of the lemmings...destructive of individuals, but preserving of lemmings per se.

With the passing of time and the improving brainpower of humans, instincts were sublimated. They were pushed aside and virtually nullified. Man is a rational creature in his behavior. He does what he does for reasons that make sense to him.

It appears to me that this development of the brain creates the necessity for moral understanding. Nature is pragmatic and a-moral. Man, an extremely tenacious and cunning species is prone to adopt a philosophy void of morals. In short, each being will reason in his favor. He will compete to win. He will fight to win. And when the chips are down, he will commit murder to win. This is the nature of life. Life lives. Thus, without powerful instinct remaining to provide a checkrein, a balance wheel, man is prone to rationalize in his favor in every crisis situation. He will ignore the consequences of his actions insofar as the species is concerned. The single intellectual position toward which he is driven is this: "I will survive regardless of what I must do to survive. Never mind the consequence to others. Get out of my way."

Man is not intellectually capable of weighing the "value" of each person in crisis. Given a crisis confrontation, each man is prone to value himself above all others including the species, itself.

In sum: a single human being without instinctive checks or a moral position as a guide might well act in favor of his own survival, even if he destroys the world to achieve it. Of course, in so doing, he will destroy himself, but that realization may come too late.

It seems to me we stand at this place today. Our species is flirting with its own dissolution. Our ability to reason and set aside our instincts of species preservation is a mixed blessing. We can and, I think we should, set forth a moral position that is scientifically reasonable. That position, too, is an intellectual one. But we had better come up with an intelligent set of moral guidelines to take the place of instincts.

I believe this can be done. I am less than optimistic about a general consensus in favor of it.

Chapter XVII

The national bank holiday, followed by the Long Beach earthquake, produced a devastating effect in Los Angeles. Business conditions in general had been precarious, although there were still jobs to be had. For several days after the closure of the banks, the only money available was whatever pocket cash was still in circulation.

Personal checks were turned down unless the maker was well known. Along with the ukase shutting the banks was the order that no bank employee could re-enter unless accompanied by an U.S. Marshal. This convinced many that all bankers were crooks.

The larger banks began to re-open after a few days, but some of the smaller and independent banks remained with shuttered windows and bolted doors for several weeks. It seemed there weren't enough marshals to go around.

The Hart Players had experienced an abrupt fall-off of business the day of the executive order. But when the earthquake came four days later, every theater in LA shut down. So did most other businesses. A few re-opened after only a brief hiatus. A great many opened some days later and some never opened again.

One of the characteristics of the Long Beach trembler was the large number of significant after shocks. After shocks are common, but often they are so minor as to escape notice. Not in this case. Indeed, "authorities" went on radio to 'assure' us that the big jolt might have been only the preliminary bout. We waited for the main event.

There is something particularly unnerving about an earthquake. In every other periodic natural disaster, there is a place to hide. Shelters can be found from flood, wind, and fire. Disease can be fought off, wild animals slain. But where is a haven when the land heaves, buckles, cracks, splits, and moves in sudden and unpredictable directions, including up and down? A person can learn to tread water. But we haven't yet learned to tread air.

When a population experiences the kind of terror a major earthquake induces, there is one place that population avoids. The theater. Indeed, not only did audiences stay away from the theater al-

together, but they also stayed out of their homes.

For many nights after the event, people slept outside on their lawns, even if their homes were intact. If they needed anything, they raced inside to grab the item, and fled to the relative safety of the out-of-doors.

Damage had been minor in Pasadena and San Gabriel, but apprehension had been major. Our little family remained indoors as before, but the slightest quiver in the earth found us piling out of blankets ready to skedaddle.

The government offered assistance. It is possible I might have obtained some. The idea never entered my mind. We had experienced no damage. I was not about to go on relief. Further, I was one of the lucky ones. I still had a job. And the show must go on!

I reported to the Mission Playhouse every day, as did the cast. Midway into the second week after the quake, it became apparent that months would pass before an audience of any appreciable size would gather anywhere. The show was not going on.

Harvey suggested an interval of a few months after which we could reassemble. I was living a hand-to-mouth existence and couldn't wait. Rent had to be paid, food purchased. I managed to get my hands on my miniscule reserves, and they were quickly used. My stint in the theater had ended.

Dad had been working with his picture business, and doing badly. The earthquake put the quietus on his enterprise altogether.

One of Dad's brothers lived in Whittier, and by Dad's evaluation was "well-off." Compared to Dad, he was. "Rich" and "poor" are relative terms. Dad convinced his brother, Roy, that in a crisis of this kind, Roy should make his home available to kinfolk who were economic refugees.

Roy was a rancher. He had fifteen acres in citrus crops, mostly lemons, a few oranges, and grapefruit trees. He also had a large house. With kindness and forbearance, Roy invited us to share his home and table until things took an upward turn again.

Dad and Alethea, Peggy, Junior and I moved in. Immediately, Dad and I sought work.

After my experience as a professional actor, I was convinced that Hollywood would lend a more sympathetic ear. Dad had a few reserve funds, some of which he advanced to me so I could buy gas. I drove to Hollywood every day, and haunted agencies and Central

casting.

Many studio projects had been curtailed, but some were still in production. One day I got a break, or, at least, I viewed it as such. I met an agent who seemed to be marginally interested in my background and ability. He told me he would promote me at the major studios if I followed his instructions. I assured him I would. And I'd take any part I could handle.

He told me he needed a good glossy picture so he could have copies made to bring my face and background to the attention of producers. I must get a new picture, and he'd handle everything else.

I offered him a portrait that from the Hart Players. It was a full-face shot. Not good enough, I was told. He wanted a three-quarter profile. My features would be more attractive that way.

Did he know studio that would take the picture he specified? Indeed he did. It was a few doors away on Hollywood Boulevard and the price would be only \$10.00.

I didn't have \$10.00. However, I assured my agent in-view that I could get the money and the picture, and I would report back to him. He urged haste. A major production was going to be filmed in about six weeks. Casting would begin at once.

I raced home, and told Peggy of my good fortune. She wasn't impressed. When Dad came home, I hit him up for the \$10.00. He saw things the way Peggy did. There was no promise of a job—just the assurance that the agent would make an effort.

Dad's view of business was sour, probably because of his own business practices plus the downdraft we were experiencing.

"Bobby, boy," he said. "You don't seem to learn. That man isn't going to find you a job. What he wants is your ten dollars."

"Dad! He isn't asking for the money. He wants the picture. Don't you see? The money goes to a photographic studio."

"If you're that good a prospect, why doesn't he pay for the picture himself?"

"Agents don't do that. They simply work on commission. Dad, I've tried to find an agent ever since I came to Southern California. Now, I have one. Please. Let me have the money. I'll repay it just as soon as I get my first job."

Dad looked at me with his sardonic smile. "If you did a little investigating, I'll bet you'd discover that your 'agent' owns the photo-

graphic studio. That's his come-on to get you to have your picture taken. He probably makes that pitch fifty times a day and sells about seventy-five percent of the hungry actors who drop in.

"Let's see. If he sold about thirty-five of those a day he'd be grossing \$350.00. The overhead of a picture studio isn't much. He'd be doing a gross monthly business of about \$7,000. Say his expenses run him a couple of thousand. \$5,000 per month in the clear! Not bad."

"He's not like that at all."

"Oh, no? Do you know otherwise? I won't let you have any money for that purpose. Bob, I really don't have it. I've got to keep what few dollars I have just to live on."

I approached Uncle Roy and found another unsympathetic ear. My "big chance" if, indeed it was, went by default.

I didn't return to Hollywood. The reason wasn't related to this turndown, but to another event which occurred that night. Two men came to the ranch, prowled around in the dark and found my car.

Then they rang the doorbell and asked me to pay the full balance owing on the vehicle. I had fallen behind in my payments, and neither Dad nor Uncle Roy could or would help. The two strangers simply repossessed the vehicle and drove off with it.

Unless you have experienced something of this kind, you have no idea how it affects your morale. I was crushed. I had lost my mobility to go out and look for work.

The next morning, Dad tossed the LA Times onto my lap and said: "Now you can do what the rest of us do. Look in the want ads. You can ride the inter-urban when you find something. I'll help you with carfare."

The Times invariably had employment opportunities listed. They were mostly door-to-door selling jobs on straight commission, with no guarantee. I responded to several ads and I was turned down. I applied at several Employment Agencies and got no responses whatever.

The atmosphere at Roy's ranch became more and more tense. One day, inadvertently, through a closed door, I overheard a portion of a conversation between Roy and his lovely wife. She was worried about the household expenses. Because of five extra people, they were high. Roy, with remarkable fortitude, explained that his credit was good and he could borrow. I heard her start to cry.

Roy said, "I am not going to throw my brother into the street."

"Well, what about his son?"

"With the baby? We can't do that, either."

Just when things were about as dark as they could be, an ad offered promise. There were two openings at the Times for someone to work in the classified ad department. Applications would be taken the following day starting at 9:00 a.m. Experience was unnecessary.

Needless to say, I was standing in line by eight-thirty. And quite a line it was. One hundred and sixty people showed up for the two openings. I was somewhere in the middle of the line.

If my memory is correct, the man in charge of the selection was named Cunningham. Whatever his name, he was a veteran newspaperman and, when I finally reached his desk, I found a knowledgeable and sympathetic individual. He laughed at my experience in the theater but, to my surprise, was favorably impressed when I revealed that I had had a paper route for years with the *Minneapolis Journal*.

I really wanted this job and put my most persuasive self into high gear. Cunningham chose a total of ten to be trained.

I was one of them. Unlike Universal Producing in Iowa, we would not have to pay for the training. Nor would we be paid for taking it. Out of the ten, two would be hired.

Those two would receive a guarantee of \$10.00 per week. On top of that, we would be paid a commission on every ad we wrote. But we would not work behind a counter as I had imagined. Rather, we would be out in the street, calling on various businesses and trying to persuade them to run want ads.

I made it all the way, and I was hired.

With that event, Uncle Roy made his move. Peggy, the baby, and I would have to leave. Money would be advanced to pay for accommodations for one month. I would have to find suitable housing within streetcar range of the Times. With a forty-dollar guarantee per month, I'd be back on my feet in a short time.

Peggy and I, with Dad as chauffeur, discovered some inexpensive housekeeping rooms on the top floor of a rundown rooming house on Lovelace, just south of Washington Avenue in Los Angeles. The street no longer exists. The Harbor Freeway, with its surging traffic, wiped it off the map.

We moved from the ranch at once. Shortly thereafter, Dad took a

job with the Caswell Coffee Company. A car was required, and I don't know all the particulars. He became a salesman for this concern and began building up a coffee route.

I was not to be turned aside from my theatrical career so easily. I took the job at the Times and worked hard. We needed the money to live. I knew that many an actor who had become a star had spent months, and sometimes years, working at any job he could get until his "break" finally arrived.

So I cast about for ways and means to bring myself to the attention of the "right" people. I decided that if it was difficult to become an actor, it might be easier to be recognized as a director. How better to do this than to produce and direct a stage play on my own?

While at Westminster, I had had some success with a revival of "Our American Cousin"—the play Lincoln watched until the fatal bullet from Booth's pistol cut him down.

I ran an ad (with discount) in the Times to explain my intention and to ask for actors who wished to try out for a stage production. They would not be paid except on a per capita basis and, only then, after the show had opened. They would have to offer their talents on spec.

Business conditions were so bad that I had little difficulty in making up a cast of hopefuls. We rehearsed in our rented rooms on Lovelace during the evenings.

The uncertainties of the period made it possible for me to reserve a small theater on Figueroa, half way between my domicile and the Times. The building was owned by the American Legion and was ordinarily used for meetings. However, it was not in use at this particular time, and the Legion was willing to wait for their rent until after we had opened. I promised they could have a man at the box office selling tickets until the rent was covered.

Peggy was wholly opposed to this project. She complained about it repeatedly. I ought to get the theater out of my mind, she told me. If I concentrated on my job, I'd be a great deal wiser.

She was certainly right on this occasion. Possibly because of overwork or worry, and possibly for other reasons. Again an event out of my control ensued. I was out on the street one day, walking from business to business in search of ads. It was unbearably hot and I wore no hat. I had a spell, similar to the one I had experienced during my physical at Hamline. I passed out. There was foot traffic

at the place I fell, but I was ignored and permitted to lie there. How long I was unconscious I have no way of knowing. Probably passers-by figured I was a drunk. Possibly, I had sunstroke. Who can tell?

When I came to myself, I was dizzy and nauseated. I rode home on the streetcar and was too ill to work the next day.

When I finally did go back, my enthusiasm for the job had waned. I had been writing ads, and averaging between sixteen and twenty dollars per week. Now I went for a week or two with virtually no ads sold. Cunningham called me on the carpet and I resigned.

Peggy was shocked. She couldn't believe that I would do such a thing. I hoped the production, scheduled for July fourth in a burst of patriotism, would cure our financial woes...at least, temporarily. Besides, maybe I'd be noticed. Peggy went along with the decision with skepticism.

When the curtain rang up for the play, we had only a sprinkling of patrons. The Legion got its rent, and we managed to pay the bills. Nothing for me, and nothing for the cast. The play was a bomb. The actors were dreadful. I am gratified that my efforts surely went unnoticed.

A week or so later, I was again pounding the pavements for work. With great seriousness, Peggy came to me with a letter in her hand. It was from her father. She wouldn't let me read it, but I did catch a glimpse of a few words. It wasn't flattering.

Peggy had told her father she wanted to return to Minneapolis to have her baby. He had sent her a check for a hundred dollars, with instructions that it was for her train ride back home. Not one cent of that money was to fall into my hands.

Peggy had made up her mind without discussion. She was going to leave me to my fate. I was too unstable, too star struck, too indolent to look after her properly. I could rejoin her in Minneapolis if, and when, I earned enough money to make the trip. Meanwhile, farewell! Who could blame her?

We went to the Union Station, and I saw her and the baby roll away toward the east.

To conserve the few dollars I had left, I gave up the housekeeping rooms and took a single in the same building.

I was still grimly determined to make my way into the theater. I'd show her. I'd be an actor. Or a director. Perhaps even a writer. But

I'd do it somehow.

An ad in the Times offered an opportunity to try out for a radio variety production. I auditioned and won a spot on the program, reading a few lines in a five-minute skit. No pay, again. Just a chance to be known by the "right" people. I was willing to snatch at anything that came along.

On this occasion, I met a number of fairly talented people, including a young man whom I'll call Harold. He, like myself, was alone in the big city, trying to break into the movies. To save money, he moved into my district.

The radio business was as precarious as other was. At this time, stations were willing to make time available to anyone who would offer to fill the time at no cost to the station. The variety show I participated in had been a deal worked out with the station by a Mr. Bradshaw to let him have a full hour once a week for no money. Bradshaw would provide the talent and sell the ads.

A percentage of his ad "take" would go to the station, and he would keep the balance.

When I learned of this procedure, Harold and I talked it over. I assured Harold that I was a "triple talent"—able to act, direct or write. Could he talk the station into a half-hour weekly that he and I would fill?

He said he could, and he did. I sat down and wrote a few episodes of a science fiction yarn from an idea I had developed in high school. We located a young man who wanted to be a writer, and he took over the writing chores under my supervision.

From talent lists at the station we obtained a cast of characters. Now I directed, and sometimes acted in, a radio serial. Each episode ended as a cliffhanger. Harold tried to get a sponsor, but the effort failed. We aired for several weeks for no money.

By now, I wasn't eating regularly. To harbor my nearly vanished resources, I went to one small meal per day; a peanut butter or cheese sandwich with milk, 25 cents; coffee in the morning—with a donut—10 cents.

One day, a magnificent white touring car, with its top down, pulled up in front of my rooming house on Lovelace. I had never seen a car as exotic as this one. It was gorgeous, and piloted by an uniformed chauffeur. A man sat in royal splendor in the rear seat. I happened to be on the front porch, and I watched the arrival of this

beguiling behemoth, with mouth agape.

The chauffeur came up the steps and asked for me. By name. When I had acknowledged my identity, he informed me that L. Jack Sherry, the famous Hollywood director, wanted to talk with me. That man was lean and handsome, clad in white to match the car. He sported a small moustache, and he didn't look my way.

With respect bordering on awe, I followed the chauffeur. I stood beside that sparkling, gleaming throne with wheels.

L. Jack Sherry took a holder-held cigarette from his lips and gave me the once-over. "So, you're Bob LeFevre," he said.

"Yes, sir," I said, meekly.

"Then, get in," he said with a broad smile. "Let's talk business." I didn't need any urging.

"I take it that you've been trying to get into pictures," he said.

"That's right."

"Give me a bit of your background," he said.

I dressed my slender achievements in princely garb and, omitting mention of "Our American Cousin," laid it on.

"Very good," he said. "Very good, indeed, I heard you the other night on station K. You're pretty good."

"Thank you."

"I'm a talent scout."

My heart flipped and soared. "A talent scout?"

"Correct, I'm getting a company together to conduct a tour across the United States looking for talent. I could use a man like you."

"All across the country?" I was puzzled. "There's a lot of talent right here."

Sherry grinned and shook his head. "Not what's wanted. Not at all. Hollywood is interested in new faces. The ones here are used. Talent has a better chance in Peoria than it has here. I guess you didn't know that."

"Tell me more," I was baffled.

"The moving picture business depends on moving pictures," he said. "I provide them. I furnish screen tests. In an effort to get the best, my company tours the hinterland. We cast and put on a home talent movie in major cities from coast to coast. Those who have what it takes get screen tests that I send to the major studios. Saves the studios the trouble of making them."

A vague memory stirred. Just such a production had been put

together in Minneapolis during my high school years. Some of the people in the Drama Club had been involved. I had been poor and envious.

"How would you like to be in a company doing that kind of work?"

"I'd love it," I said without reservation. "I'm between engagements right now. I'm available."

Sherry appeared not to notice. "As you can see," he continued, "I have money. The reason I have is that I don't spend it. When I put a company together, those in the company provide the money. I need six people. Each one puts up a thousand dollars so that we roll with six. The tour will last a full year. Once we start, you'll draw \$200 per week for the year. Interested?"

I started laughing. "You want me to put up a thousand dollars?" I reached for the door. "Excuse me, Mr. Sherry. You've got the wrong man. I'm broke. I mean broke. I'm on short rations, and my rent is due. Sure, I'd like earning a couple of hundred a week. But if I have to put up anything, you're wasting your time with me. Sorry."

I got the door open, but his manicured hand touched my shoulder.

"Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Don't be so hasty. Maybe we can do business anyway."

"Not if I have to pay for it."

"Okay, Okay. I like a man who doesn't try to bluff. So you're broke. That's no crime. But perhaps you know a few people who could put up the money. You've got some contacts. Possibly some people who say they haven't any money, but if they really wanted to, could get it together. How about that?"

"My friends at the moment..." I began.

"Close the door. Close the door. It won't cost you anything to sit here for a few minutes, will it?"

I shut the door. "I don't know. Maybe you'll send me a bill for pressing my trousers on the seat of your tonneau. As for my contacts, at the moment I have two kinds. Those who are down, and those who are out."

"Not bad," he nodded pleasantly. "I figured you to be quick on the uptake. I need a man like that."

"And I'm available," I reminded him. "But the dollars flow from you to me, not in reverse."

"Okay, okay." He was unruffled. "Bear in mind, I don't need your

money. I could bankroll the whole thing, but it's against my principles, my friend.

"Let me ask you this. Suppose I agreed to put up your share? Your thousand. See. And you line up another five, each with a thousand. I wouldn't ordinarily do that, but in your case..." He shrugged. "I like you. You might talk me into it."

When you are "hooked" on the theater, it is astonishing how you'll leap at almost any bait. I thought of Harold. He was also without funds. But from my conversations with him, he had given me to understand that his folks had money. A light snapped on, and Sherry saw it.

"Ah. Just as I thought. You do know someone."

"I have a friend who is also looking for work," I admitted. "I know he hasn't any money. But perhaps he could raise some. You can be certain that I cannot."

"There's where you're wrong," he said. "If your friend can raise it, it will be because of you. And that means you've raised it."

I frowned. This conversation was getting a bit fast.

"Just so you know a little more about me," he said, "Why don't you call a couple of the big studios and ask them about me. I've got plenty of screen credits. They all know who I am. I directed..." He named several pictures I had not seen, including only one I'd even heard of. "Just check around. I don't promise anything I can't deliver."

"Let me think about it," I said.

"Sure thing. Today is probably a lucky day for both of us." He produced a business card, beautifully embossed in gold leaf. "Talk to your friend and when he's ready, give me a jingle. We'll set up an appointment."

I took his card reverently, and went up to my room, my head spinning.

Later, I told Harold about the offer, if offer it was. I showed him the card and spent most of the time describing the car, a customized Cord, with front wheel drive. I had little hope that Harold would be interested and I didn't urge it.

However, Harold was intrigued. He was sure he could get the money...if the whole procedure was on the up and up.

An appointment was made. One sunny afternoon, the Cord purred up to my rooming house again. L. Jack Sherry, in person, walked

up my front steps, paint peeling from neglect. In my dingy room, he explained to Harold and me how he conducted a talent search.

"The moving picture business is all hype," Sherry said. "Front. Promotion. The world of Wouldn't-It-be-Wonderful-If..."

The six chosen would include a cameraman—who had put up his thousand and was already in tow, we were told. Then, there would be Harold, me, and three others—including one woman. With Sherry, a total of seven."

We would schedule our arrival in the target city at night, so few people would notice we traveled together in one car to save money. Nonetheless, we would stay at the best hotel in town! Front. That was everything.

How could we afford to stay at the best hotel? Sherry would have arranged that by telephone in advance. He would explain to the manager that the great L. Jack Sherry was arriving in town to produce a full-length feature picture. Some of the scenes for the picture would be shot in the hotel. The hotel sign would be displayed once or twice and the name of the establishment would receive mention in the script.

In exchange for this fantastic publicity, Sherry said he always got full service at no cost. If not full service, at least the rooms. No charge. Sometimes meals were included. Business was bad everywhere and there were plenty of vacancies. The hotel manager could get himself some expensive advertising at virtually no cost. Most would fall down the stairs, we were told, to have this privilege.

After our first night in the new town, Sherry and two of us—one sitting in the back, another in uniform driving the car—would slowly tour the downtown streets, getting attention. We would double park in front of the newspaper. Getting the newspaper's support, we were told, was absolutely vital. Indeed, the paper would have been "tipped off" that Sherry's Film Company would be arriving on a given date in a search for talent.

Hopefully, we'd block traffic in front of the newspaper offices. Even better, perhaps some reporter would come out to see what was causing the commotion. Perhaps a policeman would show up. When things were at their most interesting, the man in the back seat with Sherry, who was acting as cameraman, would rise. He would set up the camera and begin cranking out footage of the newspaper, the crowds, and the policeman. Any one of us could do it,

because the camera wouldn't contain film at this juncture. This was more hype. It was virtually guaranteed to get us a good spread in the papers within twenty-four hours.

With preliminary letters (on embossed stationary), or by telephone or wire, Sherry would have already arranged formation of a local committee. The body would be made up of members of the local Chamber of Commerce, some bankers, high school principles, and other leading citizens. This committee would "sponsor" the talent search.

The substance was this: Hollywood needed new faces. There were plenty of truly talented people in (name of town). Ordinarily, they'd never have a chance for fame and fortune. And if they went to Hollywood on their own, they would simply become faces lost in the crowd.

Sherry would produce a home talent picture using only local people, selected mostly from the school, although that was not a pre-requisite. The picture would involve several high-speed chases through town, thus filming some of the most important scenic wonders of (name of town).

To facilitate the picture, Sherry was setting up a casting office. Those interested in having a Hollywood career could come in for interviews.

Once the film had been made, a copy of the print would become the property of the Chamber of Commerce. No charge. It could be shown, and certainly would be shown, by just about every moving picture theater in town. Again, no charge, unless the Chamber took in the money.

As the picture was made, those with the most talent would be brought to the attention of the major studios in Hollywood by sending screen tests to them. Sherry's production just might open the door for a great many people. Not only could they find employment, perhaps some might go on to stardom.

The sponsors paid nothing for the service. Hollywood would benefit. The local talent would benefit. The town would benefit.

Harold and I were enthralled. This sounded like the "real thing."

"Where do you come in?" Harold asked. "Thus far you sound like an altruist. You're just doing it for the good of everyone. I can see why you get free hotel rooms."

Sherry nodded in glee. "That isn't all. You'd be surprised how

many free things we get.

"For example," he went on, "I always carry a wad containing several hundred dollar bills. Say I want to get a pack of cigarettes. I go into a drug store and offer to pay with a hundred-dollar bill. Usually, they don't have the change.

"That's where my staff comes in. We make sure that I'm recognized. One of you might follow me into the store and call out, 'Oh, Mr. Sherry, I'm sorry to interrupt, but there's a fantastic young fellow who wants a part. You've got to come right away.' Any excuse will do."

"Usually, that brings out pop-eyes and, 'Oh, are you the Mr. Sherry, the one from Hollywood?' Then, they often say, 'never mind paying, Mr. Sherry. We can't change that bill anyway.' And they ask for a chance to try out. It works most of the time."

"If it doesn't, and they do make change, I go to the bank and get the change put back into another hundred. I never use small change. Everything is front. Get it?"

Harold and I nodded, with our eyes like 'ohs.'

"Of course, I always wear something showy. You'll all have to dress your parts. And that's where the Cord comes in. Man, is that car front!"

"Good lord," I chuckled. "Everyone in the country is crazy about Hollywood, including us. I can see where they'd be eating out of your hands."

"Fair enough," Harold cut in. "So you don't pay for much. I can see that. Your overhead is way down. You've still got a payroll to meet. And making a picture must cost something. Film isn't free is it? Or do the studios provide it?"

Sherry's face fell. "That's the major cost. And film is expensive. Getting it processed costs a bundle, too. But that's really where we take in the money."

The devil-may-care grin was back in place. "We set up this casting office, see. And the hopefuls flock in. Everyone wants to get into the picture. We have maybe six or eight pretty good parts and two leads. A good size number of extras for our mob scenes. But there will be several hundred applicants even for each member of the mob. Believe me, fellows, there is no shortage of applicants."

We didn't have to be convinced on that point.

"This is where you come in, Bob," Sherry said. "I want you in

charge of the casting office. It's set up like an ordinary store with a counter and a small space for people to wait their turn. The girl we hire will work there.

"You'll be the assistant director. You'll have a nice private office...soundproof.

"You conduct the original interview. Actually, you'll be screening out many. But when you get a 'live one'—and that means anyone who isn't broke—you begin to get interested. You let them know that the real way L. Jack Sherry picks his people is by watching their screen tests. So when you find someone truly eager, you ask him to go out and get a screen test and bring it in. You'll see that L. Jack Sherry auditions it in person.

"This is a key point. Tell them to go out for their test. Sometimes they'll nod and go out. Most of these won't come back. Some will ask if you can recommend a place. At that point you remember: this isn't Hollywood, is it? Where are the motion picture studios in town?

"Obviously, there aren't any. Well, you want to be helpful. You are now impressed with their ability. Maybe, just maybe, the cameraman with us might find the time.

"They'll ask about price. You tell them that the going rate in Hollywood for a screen test runs about \$7.00 per foot. And, any kind of a test is going to run from a hundred and fifty feet up to, maybe five hundred.

"Naturally, they can't afford that.

"So, you say, 'Look, I'm not asking you to take a test, I'm trying to do you a favor. If I can get some time with the cameraman, we'll gladly do it at cost.' That's about \$1.50 per foot. Finished film. It actually costs us 16 cents a foot, raw, and the processing about three cents more. Say 20 cents in all including handling. Per foot. A hundred feet goes by like that." He snapped his fingers.

"In addition, you can tell them that if they do make the test, you will see that a copy of it is sent to a major studio. Don't offer that too soon. That's to help with the sale."

"What do you do?" Harold asked. "Throw the film in the basket?"

"Not on your life," Sherry assured. "If we say we'll send the film to the studios, we do it. What the studios do with it is up to them."

I was beginning to get the picture. To say I was astonished is too mild. I was flabbergasted. This was a scam of such magnitude that it turned my father's picture business into a peanut ante operation.

His had been something of a scam, as well. But this!

We asked about one point: the only places where movies could be made were in the very largest cities.

Sherry advised that these cities were carefully avoided. We went to the largest towns possible but only after making certain that no moving picture studio was presently there doing business.

Sherry's real business was selling and making screen tests. He did it with the most monstrous come-on I'd ever heard of.

Harold and I were full of questions. Was the procedure honest? We were assured it was. Honest and legal. Whatever was promised, he delivered.

A film would be made and delivered as promised. Local talent would play all the parts. Further, he'd do the best possible job in making a presentable picture. Obviously, it would be a turkey, saved from immediate extinction only by the local interest and the local angles.

Finally, I asked this, "What if I find a young lady who actually has talent and is accompanied by her mother, who obviously has money. But they are reluctant to spend anything for a screen test. Got any sure-fire gimmicks?"

Sherry laughed. "You catch on quick. That's what I like. As I told you, I need someone in that front office who is quick on the uptake.

"There's no tried and proven rule. You have to adapt to the situation as you find it. But here's a little ploy we've used.

"You've got a really live one. One who could afford, say 500 feet of testing, but that's still a lot of money. Okay. You've got a button, concealed under your desk. You push it when you need help for a major sale.

"I'm in the back. There's a big area in the rear we set up for the screen tests. When the buzzer sounds, I burst into your office. Frequently, I'll back in, shouting directions behind me."

"No, no, not that! For God's sake, can't you follow directions? I said, 'Magenta, not orange.' Then I'll spin around and see your client, for the first time. I'll do a double take. I'll peer at this gal or guy, you know, with the hands setting the frame of the picture.

"I'll say, 'Who's that, LeFevre?'"

"Naturally, you'll spring to your feet, 'Oh, Mr. Sherry. This is Mrs. Smith and her daughter, Agatha. They were talking about the picture you're making and..."

"I'll shut you up. 'Agatha, huh...not much of a name, but that can be fixed. I think I can use a face like yours. Get me that girl! I want her.'

"Then I'll rush out again. You'll say, 'That was L. Jack Sherry, our director. My goodness, he noticed you. I can't tell you what to do, but if L. Jack Sherry noticed me...well...'

"Works like a charm. Naturally, you'll think of your own variations, but that's the general idea."

"I would imagine they'd be pleading for the privilege," I said.

Sherry snapped his fingers. "You got it."

"How many screen tests do you figure on making in a given location?" Harold asked.

"Enough, my friend. Enough. It averages about three hundred. And I'll tell you something else. Everyone who gets a test gets into the picture. I make that a rule. So, while it's a come-on, I deliver what I promise."

Harold and I talked it over for about ten days, and decided against it. I'm not sure Harold could have raised the money in any case. As for myself, I probably would have succumbed to the bait. But when Harold came up with a final o,' that settled the matter. L. Jack Sherry had to look elsewhere.

Chapter XVIII

Harold treated me to an evening meal and gave me the news. He was leaving. His uncle, who lived in Oregon, had a job for him. He was taking a bus in the morning. I had grown fond of him as we had buffeted cold shoulders and the hot L. Jack Sherry together. This was goodbye.

Actually, Harold and I hadn't known each other long enough, nor deeply enough, to exchange confidences. But when he left, I felt his departure about as deeply as any farewell I can recall.

Probably I was already light-headed from my skimpy diet. It had become difficult for me to concentrate on anything, and I was no longer able to reason with much success. I dropped into a mood of self-pity.

I was behind in my rent again. I counted the last of my money. One dollar and thirteen cents. And I had nothing left that I could pawn. My last conversion had been my suitcase.

I went to the little cafe where I usually started the day. Hot coffee, all I could drink for a nickel. Two doughnuts were another jitney. I talked the waitress into letting me have a piece of stale lemon pie instead. Ordinarily ten cents, but I got it for eight. I told her 13¢ was all I had.

I can't remember whether I dreamed it up, overheard a conversation, or if the waitress mentioned it. Somehow I got the idea that, if I went to the Pasadena Community Playhouse, my luck would change. The Playhouse was an institution teaching the dramatic arts, with a little theater operating in conjunction. A number of persons had obtained Hollywood contracts after an appearance there.

I couldn't bring myself to return to my squalid room. I hated to spend the money, but I broke my last dollar bill and took the rails to Pasadena. The trip cost a quarter.

I wanted to make a good impression at the Playhouse and I was ravenous. Usually, I ate toward the end of the day, but I stopped off on my walk to the Playhouse along Colorado Boulevard to dine on a cheese sandwich and milk. That reduced me to fifty cents. It would cost half of that to return to my room. I stuffed a quarter into the shoe that had the good sole and moved proudly to the waiting room

of the Playhouse. This was my last ditch effort. I would give it everything I had.

I was finally admitted into the presence of the woman in charge. To my chagrin, I learned that the Playhouse was primarily interested in providing a vehicle for enrolled students. At the moment, they would consider none but their own enrollees. My experience and background meant nothing. And if I were to enroll, there was no guarantee I would ever have a part in a play. That depended on many factors, including my proven ability, etc., etc.

No doubt about it, I had come on a wild goose chase.

I was whipped. Gloom descended like a mantle. I retraced my steps in the direction of the inter-urban station, filled with self-pity and self-loathing. I walked past the turn and continued west, unseeing, unknowing, and uncaring.

What a botch I'd made of everything. I probably should have kept my job with the Times. But I hadn't, I should have had a better cast for "Our American Cousin." But I took what I could get. And was that ever a turkey! Maybe I should have tried harder to raise funds for Sherry. Who was I kidding? I couldn't even get funds for myself.

My wife had left me. She would have another baby soon. Perhaps I'd never even see it. Meanwhile, my delightful small son was growing up without his Daddy. A letter from Peggy had emphasized that nobody back in Minneapolis, and most especially her father, intended to send me any money. It was all up to me, now.

Perhaps I should have kept that radio show on the air longer. Impossible. I couldn't even afford the carfare to get to the studio for the broadcast. It was too late anyway.

I missed Peggy. Damn it, she shouldn't have walked out. But how could I be critical? Again, I thought of the Hart Players. That had been a great time. And I certainly wasn't responsible for the earthquake. I couldn't blame myself for that.

Why was I so set on getting into show business? Door-to-door jobs were available and if I really tried, I could probably get one.

Why didn't I admit defeat, and go back to work for Dad? I couldn't even do that. He no longer had a business. He was working for another company. Door-to-door. But he had a car. Mine had been re-possessioned.

Why hadn't I married Charlotte? Oh, yes. I couldn't. She was dead. God, that wasn't my fault, too, was it?

Yeah. There was an invisible hand out there somewhere that was against me. Just as I thought things were going my way—bang! Charlotte was dead. And, then, with the Hart Players—bang, again! Earthquake. How the hell does one fight a malignant fate?

Maybe God was trying to say something to me. Possibly, this was His way of letting me know there was nothing left on earth for me. My time had come. I had enough funds so I could eat once again on the morrow. And then what? In a few days after that I'd be dead, anyway. I was not going to call on Dad! He had his hands full. And he had helped me all he could. Uncle Roy had made it clear I wasn't wanted. Even Harold, my last friend, had gone.

With dragging feet, I found myself on the high bridge crossing the Arroyo Seco. No one wanted me.

Everyone could get along without me. Actually, everyone could get along better without me. Peggy could remarry. Find someone who didn't have his heart in the theater. Some ordinary Joe who would earn a decent living. I was in her way, too. And she didn't want me. She'd made that clear. What she wanted was money. If I couldn't provide it, then to hell with me.

I stopped walking and looked over the metal rail. I remembered suddenly. This was called "suicide" bridge. A number of people had taken the final plunge from this very span. Down below was a park with a two-lane road curving under the bridge. If I jumped from where I was, I could land on turf and with my luck, break a few bones, and survive. If I was going to do it, I should at least plan this much right. Make it quick and final.

Whatever had made me come to Pasadena to the Playhouse? Maybe this was it.

God wanted me to die. Maybe I'd find Charlotte again this way. If I had used an ounce of intelligence, I'd have known there was nothing at the Playhouse for me. Not in my financial condition. The whole damn world was after money. If I had money, I would be fawned on and courted. If not, who cared? I was just taking up space.

My errant thoughts were hard to bring into focus. I walked slowly to a point above the roadway far below. This would be a good place.

A cable stretched at an angle across the line of fall I'd be taking as I descended. I'd have to watch for that or I'd end hitting the cable, sliding down and getting myself battered, bruised but I'd survive.

Maybe I should cross the avenue? Maybe that side wouldn't have

a cable. I turned around, and for the first time noticed another man staring over the far railing. He was about my age, hair disheveled, rigid arms gripping the rail.

Intuitively, I knew: he was planning suicide, too.

I crossed the bridge. I stood a few feet from him. He didn't seem to notice my presence. I looked over the rail. The road came from under the bridge, but there was another cable.

I looked at the stranger, smiled, and said, "Hi!"

He didn't respond.

"I know why you're here." I said. "Me, too."

He gave no sign of listening.

"It'll be messy," I said. "But that's going to be somebody else's problem."

Suddenly, from out of the blue, my sense of humor returned. This was absurd. This character looked funny. To any passerby, I would have appeared equally ridiculous.

"Tell you what," I said affably. "I'll be helpful. Did you see the cable? When you go off, you've got to push yourself way out. You know, like you're doing a running dive into a pond. Otherwise, you could get an awful burn on that wire."

That got attention. He swung my way, eyes blazing, hate searing his face. "Leave me alone! I'm gonna kill myself."

I nodded. "I know. Me, too."

He turned away. "Don't try to stop me!"

"Not me, Mister," I said. "But I can help. See there's some traffic down there. Not much, but some. Trouble is, some of it comes from the south and you can't see it. If you happen to jump just as a car starts under the bridge, you could land on the car. If it has a soft-top, you'd just get broken up a bit and you might hurt the people in the car."

"I'll cross the street and give you the 'all clear.' That way you can be sure of a solid landing."

For a moment, he remained immobile. Then with a roar he rushed me, fists swinging. "God damn you! You're interfering. Everyone's interfering. He aimed a haymaker, and I easily sidestepped.

He halted in his tracks. Suddenly, tears came. "Why can't you leave me alone? Everybody interferes in my life!"

"You got me wrong," I said. "Honest. I'm not interfering. I'm trying to make it easier. You do whatever you want to do. It's just that

I'm sure you don't want to hurt anyone."

"What do I care?"

"I know," I agreed. "It's a hell of a world. Right?"

He sobbed with great gulping noises as though fighting for breath. "You don't know what it's like," he groaned. "I'm broke. Do you know what broke is? I've got six cents. That's all I've got. No job; no nothing!"

I grinned. "Hi, Buddy," I said. "That makes two of us. I came out here to walk the plank myself."

I offered my hand. After a moment's hesitation, he took it. I had my arms around him and hugged him, patting him on the back. I was crying, too. "Let's be friends," I said. "I've got a quarter. Between us, we've got 31 cents. Let's get some coffee and doughnuts and see if two heads are better than one."

It was easier to forget about suicide now that I had someone to talk with. Arm in arm, like life-long buddies, we walked back into Pasadena and stopped at the first cafe we found.

There, we confided to each other. He had gotten a girl into trouble. She was going to have a baby. Her folks had alienated her affections. He felt that his life was ruined. His home was in Iowa. He had come to California, hoping for a job and a new start. He had run out of funds and friends.

Amazing how our experiences dovetailed. We walked out of the cafe and went our separate ways. I never saw him again. But it was amazing how good I felt. I hope things brightened for him.

I dug my remaining quarter from my shoe and returned to my room on Lovelace. Dusk had settled over the city as I came along the walk. At the same instant, a car pulled up and Dad got out.

"Hello, Son," he said cheerfully. "How are things going? You've lost weight."

Usually, I was the height of optimism whenever Dad asked about my affairs. This time I told it the way it was. I was too worn out to bluff any longer.

Dad's face was grave. "You get inside and pick up your clothes," he said. "You're coming with me."

I objected. Dad had helped enough. I ought to make it on my own. Dad didn't let me out of his sight. He came into my room, supervised my packing, and stowed my belongings in the rear seat.

As we drove off, Dad said, "Alethea and I now have our own little

three-room apartment in San Gabriel. You can sleep on the cot. You won't be in the way. We'd love having you around. I think I can work you in as my assistant on the coffee route. But first, you're going to put some flesh back on your bones."

With regular meals, I recovered rapidly. Alethea didn't seem to mind having me around. I accompanied Dad on his rounds after a few days, and Dad allotted several homes to me so I could sell some coffee, too. I made a few sales.

Dad wouldn't hear of me repaying him. Nor would he permit me to pay for room and board. With no overhead except for razor blades, I put money aside.

Alethea always packed lunches for both of us, and we'd eat together in the car out of brown paper bags. For the next month or two, I came closer to my father than at any other time in my life. I began to appreciate his realism, his practical approach to existing fact. He was a man who could land on his feet, no matter what happened.

One noon recess, after we had munched away our sandwiches and de-crumbed our trousers, I said, "Dad, what's happened to the money? Nobody seems to have any. And everything costs so damn much!"

"You didn't take economics at college, did you?" he asked.

"No. Frankly, it sounded pretty highbrow. I wasn't sure I'd understand it."

He nodded. "I didn't take it either and I'm not sure I understand everything about it."

That statement from my father stunned me. I had never before heard him admit to ignorance on any subject in any field.

"If you don't understand it," I said, "I guess no one does. I always think of you as a genius at math."

"I probably am," he admitted. "But math isn't the same as economics."

I frowned. "Anyway, you have plenty of confidence in your ability," I said.

"Why not?" He asked. "It's quite true. When it comes to math there aren't many who can stump me."

"No argument," I admitted.

"Our situation in America," Dad went on, "derives from Roosevelt's policies. He's the first Democrat we've had in years, and I'm not

particularly sympathetic to his ideas.”

“What are his ideas?” I asked. “I don’t understand politics and all that stuff.”

“I think Roosevelt is a Socialist,” Dad said.

“What does that mean?”

“He has the idea that the distribution of wealth in this country is rather lop-sided. So he’s using the government, with its powers, to create money and to tax, in a major effort to re-distribute wealth.”

“Can you put that in words that make sense to me?”

“I’m not sure I can. I’m not sure I understand it myself. But here’s the way it looks to me.

“After World War I, business was good. But many people who didn’t know what they were doing borrowed large sums of money and began speculating in land and in the stock market. They did it with borrowed funds. To borrow, collateral had to be pledged to the banks.

“So long as business continued good, things were fine. During the 1920’s, prices trended upwards in some areas, such as real-estate, stocks and so on. However, in other areas production was increasing. As it increased, prices fell. Prices of food declined. Prices of automobiles went down. Household appliances were made better and cheaper, and lots of little firms started and grew big with customer support.

“The trouble is, most of us want what we want, when we want it. As a matter of fact, that is probably your biggest problem, Bobbie, Boy. You’re going to have to learn better. Keep your feet on the ground even if your head is in the clouds.”

“Right now, Dad. I’m flat out and on the ground in all departments.”

He nodded agreement and continued. “The money we were using was paper, bills, greenbacks. You know. Currency. But all of the currency issued was tied to either gold or silver at a fixed ratio. The government, and many of the banks, issued currency. But they were only able to issue currency based on the actual amount of gold or silver they held in reserve.

“When it came to obtaining credit to buy things, you couldn’t pay for at once. You had to pledge something else that you’d already paid for in order to get the credit.

“In a very real sense, the amount of money and credit in use is

tied either to commodities already produced, which can be converted into collateral, or to the gold and silver held in reserve.

"I can only explain what happened this way: Socialists began belly-aching that capitalism is bad because everyone doesn't get the same amount of money.

"Lots of folks were out of work and many who had jobs were just able to squeeze by. Others, of course, were getting rich. I don't know. Maybe the Socialists had a point. Their big worry had to do with falling prices. Prices were coming down as we learned how to make things cheaper and better. Look at Ford and how he lowered the price of automobiles. And Westinghouse and General Electric, and so on. They made more and better things. They did it more efficiently and were able to sell for less.

"Of course, nothing has ever really been cheap. Even when prices are down, they are too high for lots of folks. Roosevelt seemed to believe that, if prices were higher, more people could have jobs.

"Well, Coolidge and Hoover had the right idea. At least, I think they did. Because everyone was complaining about high prices, they wanted prices to go lower. It works out that the total amount of money circulating in all forms helps to determine prices.

"If there's lots of money circulating, prices go up. If there isn't much money circulating, prices go down since each dollar will buy more."

"I don't understand that," I interrupted.

"This is my problem, too. If prices are low, more people can buy. But if those people aren't working, they can't buy even with low prices."

"Anyway, Coolidge took some money out of circulation and, so, reduced the money supply. So did Hoover. That brought quite a few prices down. Now the dollar would buy more but who had dollars?

"Roosevelt decided to do the reverse. He wanted lots of money in circulation and he wanted higher prices."

"Boy, this is complicated." My head was spinning.

"Roosevelt wanted to reverse the process. He thought then we'd have higher prices, more jobs, and more people could have more. He said he wanted to help the 'little' people."

"What did Roosevelt do?"

"Well, you ought to know. You've been around. First thing he did was to close the banks. But when it came to increasing the supply

of money, he was stymied. He tried to get the ratio changed; that is, he tried to change the amount of gold or silver held in reserve in relation to what the government printed. When Congress wouldn't buy the idea, he convinced them to go off the gold standard. That meant the government could print any amount of currency. So, Roosevelt printed about eight billion right off and dumped it into the market."

"I guess I missed that. None of it fell on me."

"Here's what had been happening. When the money supply was reduced, people who had mortgagee their properties in order to speculate were wiped out. They lost everything they owned. Their incomes had been curtailed as prices fell."

"Yeah." I nodded. "I remember reading about that."

"You also had your car repossessed."

My jaw set with grim lines. "I'll never forget that."

"I hope you don't forget it. And think about this. Those who had been successful earlier—those who put things up for collateral—were wiped out. They were hurt as prices fell, and some banks were wiped out."

I nodded. This was painfully familiar.

"Then Roosevelt put more money into circulation and passed a law preventing foreclosures."

"That was good."

"Was it? People who had advanced cash to others couldn't get their money back. So we had a new wave of bankruptcies."

"But wait. Roosevelt put more money into circulation."

"Right. But as I see it, it didn't go to those people. He gave money to the people who had nothing, the poor. All they did was rush to the store to buy things. That was supposed to help."

"Didn't it?"

"How could it? Production was curtailed. Laws were passed to license and regulate businesses on a large scale. And to pay for all this, taxes went up."

"It's too deep for me."

"Take your time thinking about it, and you can sort it out."

"How is all this going to end?"

"Blessed if I know," Dad said. "But I'll tell you what I think. The laws of nature will win out. You don't change facts by passing legislation. You can't sell something that hasn't been produced. And

whenever someone buys, someone else sells. It's like marriage. It always takes two.

"With government getting into the economy more and more, the government, itself, will grow. And a great many people will be virtually owned and controlled by the government. I think Roosevelt is destroying the country in a misguided effort to change the laws of nature.

"Some people aren't willing to work for what they get. And some haven't any idea how much work is entailed in earning even so much as one dollar. They are going to be helped, by Roosevelt.

"Those with the ability to get things done are going to be taxed, harassed, and discouraged. What they earn will be given to others to spend. In the end, they'll lie down and quit."

"I can see that," I agreed. "But, Dad, aren't there an awful lot of people who really can't figure what to do? Maybe the government ought to look after them."

"The government hasn't anything of its own to do anything with. Everything it has, it takes from those individuals who know how to make or get it. So you have the triumph of the ignorant and the indolent, and the defeat of the deserving. At least, that's the way it looks to me."

"Maybe what we ought to do," I suggested, "is divide the country into two sections. Let those who haven't initiative or skills be looked after. The government can make them work. They can be put to work and made to produce enough for themselves. Maybe not much, but enough. Meanwhile, in the other part of the country, let those who want to make their own way, do as they wish."

"It's an idea," he said. "I don't know if it's a good one or not. Maybe you ought to study it for awhile." He paused, smiling at me with a kindly expression. "If the country were divided—half socialist, half free enterprise—where would you go?"

I laughed. "You got me. Right now I think I'd like to be a Socialist. I need someone to look after me. But, Dad, as soon as I get a grub-stake and my feet under me, I want the other. Why, in the Socialist half, people would simply be slaves. They wouldn't have any worries, but they couldn't do anything on their own, either. What's the point of living, if that's all there is?"

"I guess my idea wouldn't work unless a person could have free access. When you're down and out, Socialism looks good. But when

you're feeling better, you want to be free."

He started the engine. "I want you to begin feeling better. And never again in your life let yourself be so low that you favor Socialism."

In September, a letter came from Peggy, letting me know of the birth of a healthy son. She named him David.

I regained an objective. I would return to Minnesota to be with my wife and family. Little by little, my tiny earnings accumulated. By October, I had saved a total of \$15.00.

In the Sunday Times, an ad appeared that interested me. A man, who owned a new Ford, was driving to Waterloo, Iowa. He would take four passengers to that destination if they could help earn their passage by driving. Additionally, each had to pay \$15.00 to help defray expenses.

I reached him by telephone. I told him I had a total of \$10.00, but I was an excellent driver and I didn't mind doing most of the work. He was leaving the following day. He already had three others. If he got someone with the requisite sum, he'd take that person. If not, he'd take me. Time was important. He had to leave on schedule.

I was quite certain I would be by-passed. To my amazement, Dad's phone rang bright and early Monday. If I still had the \$10.00, I was in.

The man with the car would stop for me on the way out of town.

Waterloo, Iowa, was not my destination. But surely, from that distance, I could reach Minneapolis with ease. Besides, I still had an undisclosed \$5.00.

Quickly, good-byes were said. Alethea packed a big lunch for me. I gave them both confident assurances. I'd get to Minneapolis where my luck would change.

The driver, with three additional persons in the car, appeared on schedule. All my meager possessions had been tied up in an old army blanket with a length of clothesline. The largest item was a heavy winter coat I had brought from Minnesota and had not been able to hock. I would need it in a Minnesota winter, and it was mid-October.

The man with the car was in business for himself. He gave no details. He was short, stocky, middle-aged, and not at all communicative. The other passengers were about my own age, each heading back into the Midwest for reasons of his own. I don't recall a

single name. Indeed, I cannot even remember their faces.

I reiterated my willingness to do most of the driving. We were all informed that this was to be a quick trip. Non-stop. We'd take turns driving and those not driving could sleep. We'd be stopping only for gas and rest rooms. And meals, of course, in conjunction with obtaining gas or personal relief.

Before we reached the California border, darkness had fallen. I was asked to take the first night shift at the wheel. From that time on, I did most of the driving. Whenever the others went into a cafe, I stayed in the car with Alethea's lunch. I was not going to spend any of that \$5.00 for such an inconsequential item as food.

Surely, that journey established a record for cross-continental travel. We roared into Iowa from Nebraska slightly less than forty-eight hours after we had left San Gabriel. By this time, my sandwiches were gone. Alethea had included a small jar of marmalade in my brown bag. When I finally opened it, a thick coating of green mold had formed. I ate it, mold, and all, despite the taste.

We still had miles to go, but I kept my foot on the throttle. We streaked across the state with the Ford behaving splendidly. No one objected to the speed I was making.

We took a slight detour to deposit a passenger.

Another dropped off at a point on our line of march. Bone weary from lack of food and sleep, I swooped into Waterloo at last. I had decided to go to Minneapolis by bus. Hopefully, my \$5.00 would cover the cost. I hadn't bothered to check.

At the bus terminal, I shook hands all around, and thanked the owner for the use of his car. With my pack slung over my back, I stalked into the bus terminal and asked the price of a one-way passage to Minneapolis.

The price was \$4.90. I could do it. When was the next bus? Tough. I had missed the last one by five minutes. The next went at 9:00 the next morning.

I needed a bath. And a shave. And something to eat. And I would have to spend the night in Waterloo.

Under conditions of this sort it isn't too hard to establish priorities. Getting to Minneapolis was the first order of business. All else was secondary. I went to the washroom and got out my winter coat. My bundle, re-tied, was much smaller.

The ticket would leave me with one thin dime as my reserve.

That meant no bath, no shave, no bed, and no food. I knew I was going to be terribly sorry for myself and I might be tempted to spend that money on something other than transportation. I purchased the ticket immediately.

I thought of phoning Peggy to let her know I was coming. But I doubted if her father would accept “charges,” and I was in no mood for a telephone rejection of any kind. I put the idea aside.

I checked my bundle at the baggage counter after showing my ticket. People looked at me strangely. I hadn’t shaved since Monday, and this was Wednesday night. Nor had I washed. My appearance in the washroom mirror would have signaled a call for reinforcements.

The manager of the bus depot tapped me on the shoulder. “I know you have a ticket for tomorrow’s trip to Minneapolis,” he said. “But you can’t stay here. We close up for the night.”

I went out on the street. It was about ten o’clock. Winter comes early in the great northwest, and this was the night when temperatures went down. A bitter wind blew from the north and, in only moments, I was chilled through and through.

This will never do, I said to myself. If I stand in one place, I’ll freeze solid. I must exercise. I began to patrol the streets of the downtown district. There were few pedestrians at this late hour. Those I saw shied away from me as if I were a fleeing partisan from a defeated army. I was tired. The more vigor I put into my steps, the more they lagged. I circled a business block. When I returned to my starting point, I’d cross the street and circle another. On and on I went.

I began to stagger. My mind was playing tricks again. I would not be able to keep walking until nine o’clock the next morning. But if I stopped, I began to shake with cold.

I was passing a hotel. Looking through the large plate-glass window, I took note of the deserted lobby: the quiet, restful lighting, the huge leather furniture. There was only one occupant, the clerk, at the registration desk. He poured over his ledgers.

Emboldened by my plight and the lack of customers, I pushed open the heavy door and walked up to the counter with a firm step.

The clerk drew back, but smiled.

“I want you to know I’m not a vagrant,” I said. “I know I look like a bum. However, I have a bus ticket for Minneapolis.” I produced it

and handed it to the clerk. "I missed the last bus. I've got to wait until nine o'clock tomorrow morning. I have no money and can't pay for a room."

The clerk's expression remained pleasant.

"May I have your permission," I asked, "to sit in one of your chairs for an hour or so? It's bitter cold outside and I think I may freeze to death if I don't find some kind of shelter soon. That's all I want. A chance to sit somewhere to get warm."

The clerk nodded. "Follow me," he said. Without any discussion, he led the way to a room behind a partition that separated a large area in the rear from the lobby. It was unfurnished, but there was an old horsehair chaise standing against the partition. The warmth of the place was creeping up under my coat.

"You look completely beat," the clerk said. "Lie down on that. Don't worry about paying. It's okay. But you'll have to leave before the boss gets here. I'll wake you up in plenty of time, but you must leave right away when I do. Is that a deal?"

"Oh, yes." I murmured. "Thank you. Thank you very much."

"Here's your ticket." It was returned.

I took off my coat and the warmth enveloped me. I sat on the chaise, and pulled the coat over me. The next thing I knew, the clerk was shaking my shoulder.

"The boss'll be here any time, he confided. Wish I could do more. But you'll have to leave now."

"What time is it?" I was on my feet at once. I had fallen asleep while lying down.

"Six o'clock. Sorry I can't let you stay any longer."

I was enormously refreshed, and said so. Thanking my unpaid host again, I strode into the street. Again, I stalked the town, but everything was all right this time. My strength had returned, at least, in part. The cold was severe but my heart was light. At 7:30, the bus depot opened and I was admitted.

Finally, the bus arrived. With me as a passenger on a front seat, we began the drive to the north. How hungry I was! But I stayed in my seat when the bus stopped for meals. I had to keep that dime.

The bus made good time...for a bus. Nothing like the speed I had maintained from the West Coast. The entire day passed with no food.

Finally, about seven-thirty in the evening, with a slight skiff of

snow filling the air, the familiar scenes of Minneapolis appeared. We rolled into the central terminal and I debarked, stiff, sore, and starving.

The streetcar fare to Bryn Mawr, where Peggy lived with her folks was ten cents. But Peggy still didn't know I was coming.

I re-arranged my priorities. Getting to her home was vital. But letting her know I was coming might be more important. What if I happened to arrive and she was out? Perhaps the whole family would be out, and I'd be left on their front stoop for hours.

I changed the dime into two nickels, and used the pay phone.

Peggy answered after a couple of rings. "Hi, I said. "I thought you 'd like to know. I'm here in town."

Peggy didn't seem surprised. "Oh? When will I see you?"

"As soon as I can manage it," I said. "Could your father come down and pick me up? It's only about three miles."

"He's not here," she said. "He's out for the evening."

"Oh." My heart sank.

"Just take the streetcar. It's what we all do."

"I know. Okay. I'll be out as soon as I can."

I couldn't tell her I was absolutely broke. I shouldered my disreputable pack and trudged wearily all the way to her place. En route, I solemnly vowed that I would never let myself get into a situation like this again.

Chapter XIX

It appears to me that a moral imperative now exists. While this moral imperative does not arise out of nature, *per se*, it arises out of the nature of man as he presently exists.

Man, in his present situation, is totally dependent upon property that he must be able to control to some degree, or perish. Additionally, while man is naturally endowed with life—and life itself commands living—man is no longer restrained by genetically implanted instincts that might restrain him from destroying his own kind.

If these posits are correct, then it can only mean that man's continuing survival as a species, as well as his survival as an individual, demands some comprehensive intellectual concept to guide him away from harming himself and others. I see this as the moral imperative.

An immediate difficulty arises; it relates to a nearly universal tendency to view morality as the exclusive domain of the organized church. Even more pernicious is the presumption that morality is the exclusive possession of one particular theology and that all others are doomed to failure, if not damnation.

I must, therefore, seek to establish that there are moral actions and immoral ones, having nothing whatever to do with theological preference or church adherence.

A supplemental difficulty arises; it comes from the almost automatic identification of morality with religion, both in its theory and practice. This is the assumption that—since God supervises human conduct—when footsteps stray from the chosen path, retribution is unavoidable.

Thus, organized religion has fostered the notion of cause and effect within theological interfacing. If a person performs an evil act, then evil will be visited upon him. Nor will one jot be set aside until all is fulfilled. God is a God of both jealousy and vengeance.

This notion equates divine purpose with human values and beliefs. Indeed, human history is drenched with the dark blood shed by those who, presuming to carry out the divine mandate, have acted in the name of the Lord. Presumably, the wishes of God and man synchronize in the wisdom of those most devout.

There is a problem with a divine law that supplies tit for tat automatically within the confine of “Good” versus “Evil.” It is manifestly untrue. While there is a discernable law of cause and effect within the universe, this law works according to things as they are, and not according to things as we wish they were.

Were this not the case, then it would follow in some immutable way that if I imposed an injury amounting to ten units of anguish upon another, then natural or divine law would automatically impose ten units of anguish upon me. Tit for tat. *Quid pro quo*.

If a lion kills and eats a man, the human tendency is to view that act as evil. If lions had a point of view—and who knows except a lion—killing and eating a human would be viewed as entirely right and on the plus side. Not only was the lion fed, but also a dangerous predator was destroyed.

But man and lion are both creations within this universe. Each must eat to survive. Nature favors the successful. As I have said before, there is no morality in natural law. What is, is.

The evidence is overwhelming. Individual men, usually acting as bandits, politicians, or military experts have imposed evil without limit on many others of their kind. Not only did many of these persons escape punishment, but they also seemed to lead prosperous and successful lives. They often attained immortality in legend and folklore because of the horrors they initiated.

Conversely, many have done no major wrong whatever. If they have erred, they have done so through mischance and without evil intent. Yet, they have often suffered from a perverse fate and experienced misfortune, poverty, disease, and painful deaths.

This conspicuous lack of *quid pro quo* has been glossed over by the spiritual community. It claims that “justice” (meaning, apparently, an eye for an eye) will surely be visited upon everyone in the afterlife. Thus, if a man profited unjustly in this life, then in the next he will experience evil of some kind. On the contrary, if he has suffered misery and misfortune in this life, then in the next life he will be bountifully rewarded.

At best, this view must be treated with some measure of skepticism since we have no eye witness accounts from afterlife.

When it is argued that there is a discernable moral law, the immediate objection voiced appears to be based on the lack of *quid pro quo*. That is, if one person willfully injures another, where is

the evidence that the aggressor will be injured in return?

Does evil descend automatically by natural law upon the evil doer? Does good automatically, by natural law, reward those who do good? Does a person reap what he sows?

The evidence says he does not. Then where is moral law?

At this juncture, let me assert that there are many psychological ramifications arising from what we think of as good or evil actions. It is possible that a given individual who believes himself to be evil may, in fact, so anticipate evil as a reaction to his own conduct that assists in bringing evil upon himself. Self-fulfilling prophecies occur.

But there is no natural law of cause and effect that favors human preferences.

As evidence of the existence of a moral law within man's current milieu, I intend to point to a predictable *human* reaction to evil. Since a human being is a *natural* creature, any kind of predictable human re-action is a response to natural law, even though it requires a human being to activate it.

This is a key point. I am not seeking to show that an incursion against an individual's well being will bring a predictable reaction from that individual. Indeed, I am saying that it is *not* predictable.

If A steals \$100 from B, I cannot predict what B will do in reaction. He may shrug and forget it; steal it back; shoot A; cry; tell the public; call the police; or, hand A another \$100. I have no idea what B will do. It is his *emotional* reaction that is predictable, not what he will do as a result of his emotions.

When we seek to identify reaction to any particular action, association, or procedure, there are three levels of human anticipation. We either *know* what will happen and can predict it; or, we *think* we know what *might* happen and we can think in terms of probabilities; or, we have no idea of what will occur and we take a chance.

This is the moral theater. It is the theater of anticipated human reaction to prior actions, associations, or procedures. There are other factors that will be brought forward later, which will further help to identify the moral theater.

When we *know* what will happen in a given case, the following rules apply, making prediction possible:

First, the action must concerns a limited number of factors within a fixed situation. Scientifically, these are the "controls" that are

mandatory in any scientific experiment. All knowledge is contextual and all human anticipation is based on knowledge derived from contextual observations.

What is commonly called the law of gravity offers the simplest example. At the present time, here within my study as I write, were I to grasp a physical object in my hand—say, a pencil—hold it out over the floor and, then, release it, I can predict that the object will drop at once to the floor.

How can I be sure of this result? Because (1) I've done it before, and it works. (2) Others have done the same thing, and it works for them, too. Through repetition, I have learned how this law works. Through repetition, others have learned exactly what I have learned.

What is involved?

There are various ways of explaining the phenomenon. But given the following fixed conditions, the phenomenon has always occurred: First, I have a physical object, heavier than air. Second, I hold that object above the floor. Third, I release it, and the object drops to the floor.

If the pencil behaved differently for others, then we would not be dealing with a law. We would be dealing with magic. In reality, it works for me *and* for others. There is no appreciable variation.

Will this result always occur?

Yes, in context. I might use an object that would be lighter than air. In that case, the object would not drop. It would rise.

Suppose a machine was capable of exerting a force that disrupted the force of gravity. What then? The result would depend upon what the machine was capable of doing. The pencil might fly off in another direction. It might simply stay motionless in space. Possibly the pencil would disintegrate.

Such a machine would alter the context in which the experiment is performed. But, since the context within which I have experimented does not contain that machine, I can predict the outcome.

What if some extra-terrestrial object approaches the earth? What if it disrupts gravity over the entire planet just as I release the pencil? What happens then? That depends on the degree of disruption occasioned by the proximity of another body in space. That, too, would alter the context.

In short, I can predict the behavior of the pencil only in context. Whenever we learn enough about the behavior of things *in context*,

we have learned their nature. When we know their nature, we can predict what they will do, in context.

When we can predict with certainty, we have what is called a principle. A principle exists in the objective order. It is a fact of nature.

Suppose we have some knowledge about the nature of things and some knowledge about their context. But we do not yet know enough about the context or the things themselves to predict. In such a case, we do not obtain a uniform reaction. We perform our experiment, or experiments. By employing mathematics, we discover that a type of reaction ensues for a given per cent of the time. But sometimes, variations intrude no matter what we do.

In such a case, we are still ignorant. We cannot be sure. That doesn't stop our attempts to predict. However, if we are honest, we will not predict absolutely, because we do not yet have the principle in our grasp.

I can think of no easier illustration than weather prediction. Weather predictions are not yet an exact science. Thus, the forecaster deals inevitably with mathematical probabilities that are based on trained observations and experience. But he doesn't *know* what will happen until the context is so heavily weighted in favor of a given result that certainty emerges.

In view of his ignorance, the forecaster will say there is a 20% chance of rain. This means an 80% chance of not raining. But he is not certain. He is certain that it will rain when he sees the drops descending.

Even though we do not *know* for certain, we have learned to have a certain respect for these predictions. We call them *probabilities* rather than principles. The predictions are uncertain, but they're better than nothing.

When our ignorance is profound, we deal with blind chance. We simply do not know. In these cases, we hope for the best and cross our fingers.

The ability to anticipate reactions depends upon understanding of the nature of things and how they react to our actions, associations, or procedures.

What do we know about the nature of man? Not very much, it is true. But we do know some things. We know that every human being is an opportunist, acting in terms of his best interest as he con-

strues it. We also know that he is a sensitive creature, capable of experiencing satisfaction and dissatisfaction. He can experience either pain or pleasure. And these emotions are human reactions to the particular context of the human being.

Furthermore, we know that man's survival is totally dependent upon controlling property in his own best interest. He must be able to control himself and those properties that are extensions of himself to his advantage.

The moral theater is where anticipated human reaction can occur.

One human being can act in his best interest in such a way as to inflict injury upon another. Also, a human being can act in his own best interests in such a way as to inflict no injury on anyone. We can predict that each man will act in his own best interest, as he sees it. What prevents him from acting in his own best interests by inflicting injury on others?

Man is no longer restrained by instinct. Nor is he apt to be impressed by theological arguments of future punishment or reward in a later life.

Currently, man passes through an age in which he is attempting to create a government to protect him and restrain him, to punish and reward him. Most of all, government will see to it that there is little or no delay in returning evil for evil. The principle function of government is retaliation—an effort to upgrade theology from punishment and reward in the after life to punishment and reward in the here and now.

The major difficulty with relying on government is that it fails to produce the promised results. The deserving go unrewarded—evil doers are not punished—and the human species is gradually becoming supine. We are being broken under the heel of the most kindly and well-intentioned political monster ever organized. The malady is worldwide.

Man is now in a position to act in such a way as to jeopardize that survival of the species. Indeed, the long arm of government, *per se*, may be creating just such a hazard for the human species.

Consider this situation: an imperative exists for a re-examination of the critical factors with which we must deal. An effort should be made to find a superior procedure than the one we currently follow. The discovery and recognition of a moral law is founded on this base.

To discover a superior procedure is not too difficult. To win adherence to it is another matter. Certainly, it will not be done universally. Any acceptance that comes from the use of force or depends upon theologically induced apprehension would be out of harmony with the end sought. Ends and means must harmonize.

I have already set forth a proposition: the moral theater will be that place where human reactions can be ascertained in respect to prior actions, associations, or procedures.

When we have no idea what human reactions will be, we can find no certainty. When we have a pretty good idea of what human reactions will be, we have probability. If we can find a predictable, and, therefore, universal response, then we have principle. To have a moral law, we must have a principle. We must have total predictability. That is, we must be certain in advance that a given action, association, or procedure will engender a predictable human emotional response.

The moral theater has additional pre-requisites.

There must be a minimum of two persons for a “theater” or an “arena” to exist. If one person lives on an otherwise uninhabited island, it is impossible for any other human being to react to this inhabitant. Thus, the actions of a single person, who is out of contact totally with others, do not fall into a moral theater. Such a recluse cannot be either moral or immoral. He is merely wise or foolish insofar as his decisions are concerned.

Thus, instincts, which might exist to guide the individual in terms of the survival of the species, are inoperative. The isolated human has shut himself away from any connection with or responsibility to others of his kind. His actions, associations, or procedures will affect only his own survival. Thus, the consequences are a-moral. They are outside morality. A moral theater is and must be a social concept.

Another pre-requisite is liberty. There must be no use of force that influences the decision of the acting individual.

Example: Suppose we have a table upon which is stacked \$10,000 in small bills. A enters the room where the table and the money are located. However, as he enters, B snaps handcuffs on him, and C points a gun at his head. Is A moral because he decides not to steal the money?

There is no way of knowing whether A is moral, immoral, or oth-

erwise. Being physically restrained, it is possible that stealing the money will not even occur to him. We don't know what his intentions are in respect to the money.

However, let A enter the room with the money and table. This time, no one restrains him. Indeed, no one else is in the room. At this juncture, all A knows is that the money is available and that it is not money belonging to him.

Since the money does not belong to him, at least one other human being is involved. That is, the money is the extension of another human being in property. Now we are in a position to judge the morality of A.

If he takes the money, he has performed an immoral act. It is immoral because we can absolutely predict the emotional reaction of the owner of the money. The owner will disapprove of A's action. A has inflicted an injury on the owner.

What the original owner will *do* as a result of this theft cannot be predicted. We don't know. But we can predict his displeasure, his dissatisfaction, his pain, or anguish as an emotional reaction to the theft. The degree of his displeasure is unknown. But the negative emotional reaction is certain.

Quality of life exists within the emotional realm. It is how a person feels that tells us what and how he is. Thus, A has injured the life force of his victim, and no human being has ever approved of his own spoliation by another.

Let me revert to the earlier explanation concerning the pre-requisites of property. For property to exist it must have a discernable boundary, it must be valued by its owner, and it must be susceptible of being control by the owner. A violated the boundary of his victim by taking the money. Stacks of currency are physical objects that provide their own boundaries.

Obviously, if A enters the room containing the money table, and if he is in a position to decide without restraints to take or to refrain from taking what is not his, he is in the moral theater. If he decides not to take the money, then that is a moral decision. A, in that case, would have acted morally.

If he decides to take the money and does so, then that is an immoral act.

The moral law is easier to state in the negative than in the positive. The violation of any property boundary against the will of the

owner is an immoral act. It is the ONLY event that can occur within a moral theater where the emotional reaction is predictable. Further, it is always predictable. The violation of a property boundary injures the owner of that boundary.

In various cultures, different items are classified as property. So we cannot be certain as to whether a given item is property unless or until we are familiar with the culture in which the item is found. But we can be sure of one thing. When a given item *is* classified as property—that is, it is viewed as the personal extension of the owner—the violation of the boundary will engender a predictable negative and undesirable emotion within the owner.

When a person reacts negatively as a result of something he has himself done, we assume the guilt is self-induced. This may, or may not, be dysfunctional. Self-injury is not in the moral theater. It falls into the category of poor judgment. Inflicted injury is in the moral theater.

When a negative emotional reaction is *imposed* upon another in a way that the aggressor could anticipate would cause a negative emotional reaction, then, and then only, do we have a positively immoral action.

This law does not cover all contingencies. Many things other people do *might* invoke negative reactions. This depends upon the mores and ethos of the culture in question. But in the case of the boundary violations of persons against their will, we have a discernable principle. Displeasure is predictable in any and all cases. Hence, such a boundary incursion violates moral predictability in all cultures, and it is always wrong.

Chapter XX

At last, I saw my new son. To my prejudiced eye, he was even more handsome than his brother was. I had wanted and anticipated a girl. But, when I saw David, such ideas evaporated. The baby was wonderful. From the time I first tiptoed into the bedroom to see his cherubic face, soft and flushed in sleep, it seemed to me that Peggy was on the defensive. She seemed expected a reprimand for having given birth to another boy.

Peggy seemed aloof in other ways, as well. Our emotional rapport had ruptured, either because of the hiatus or as part of it. Was it her fault, or was it mine? We both went to work to re-establish the closeness we had known earlier. It was obviously all my fault. I had simply been a failure as a breadwinner.

If Peggy seemed distant, her parents did not. I had expected them to be highly critical, cold, and possibly antagonistic. Neither was. This was extremely important to me. Her father, who had said some unpleasant things, now seemed eager to help me with a “second chance.”

I spent the first day in Minneapolis at the home of my in-laws, falling asleep at odd moments, and eating approximately every two hours. Additionally, I used the phone to locate job openings. I managed to arrange an appointment on the following day with the program director at radio station WRHM.

Meanwhile, Peggy’s father made some contacts on my behalf. He informed me that, if I would accompany him the next day, then he could virtually assure me a job. When I awoke the second morning, I was brimming over with confidence.

My sojourn in the moving picture capitol had taught me some techniques, and I put them to use. In talking to Don Clayton, the program director, I let him know that I had just returned “from Hollywood,” a phrase that had a ring of glamour and magic. Perhaps it was the crucial element in winning me the appointment.

In any case, I was delivered to the Wesley Temple building, home of WRHM, where I would have my interview. The afternoon was reserved for Peggy’s father and his contacts.

Mr. Clayton turned out to be a handsome gentleman, fashionably

dressed, who had a bass voice that would have graced an opera company. He wore a small moustache, smoked Raleigh cigarettes, and quickly let me know that he was better informed about radio announcing than anyone west of the Alleghenies.

I reciprocated by informing him, with what I hoped was self-deprecating modesty, that I had written and produced my own radio serial, a three-act melodrama, as well as having been a professional actor in a stock company in California.

My self-confidence must have provided something of a challenge. Abruptly rising from his place across the desk, Mr. Clayton strode away. He quickly returned with a sheaf of papers. Then, he conducted me into Studio B.

I was seated at a small desk and told to watch for the red light over the door. When it flashed on, I was to start reading the papers and to keep on until I finished, or until I was interrupted, whichever came first.

The papers were laid in front of me. Mr. Clayton disappeared and, before I had a chance to examine the copy, on came the signal.

I had been handed several "commercials," so I began to read into the crystal microphone. This was not particularly difficult for me. I had often read parts on sight and, except for technical words, the material presented little difficulty. When I did come to a word that was not familiar to me, I read it as though I knew what it meant. In the process, I neither stammered nor repeated myself.

After getting through about eight ads, I turned to the final sheet. This one said, "Now talk. Say anything you wish. But keep talking."

I chuckled to myself. This was the booby trap that was supposed to knock me off the bluff, down to reality.

I took a breath and began, "Skillfully baiting my line, by tying a piece of hardtack to the hook, I lowered the thick cord, into the warm green waters of the Sargasso Sea. I thought back on the several unique adventures that had befallen me, and which had taken me to this remote and uncivilized portion of the globe.

"In a matter of only three hours, I had been whisked away from my boyhood neighborhood, by a magic force of which I had no comprehension. I had been placed in the precarious position of having to fish for my survival.

"I was brought back from my reverie by a tug on the line. Rising to the surface of the glassy waters, I beheld a strange fish. It was, of

course, the famous deep-sea sturgeon of which I had heard. The fish stared at me as though seeking to discover my intentions. It was only a few yards from shore, and it seemed like a small whale in size.

“Apparently deciding that I was there for no good purpose, the fish blinked once in my direction. It turned his back on me and, then, began to go. I was pulled from the shore in the twinkling of an eye. I might have perished instantly except that, at that precise moment, a log raft came floating by. I managed to plant my feet on it.

“Finding himself towing a raft, the fish redoubled his efforts. He had started by going. Now he really went.

“In three seconds, I was surging across the Sargasso surf on a raft, doing sixty miles an hour. In three minutes, with speed constantly accelerating, I was somewhere in the center of the Atlantic moving with inconceivable rapidity. In another moment...”

The studio door opened, and Clayton came in. The red light had gone out, but I hadn’t noticed. I was staring at the fish in my mind. That image dissolved and became Clayton’s handsome face.

“Well,” Clayton said, “That didn’t seem to stump you.”

“No.” I admitted. “You didn’t specify what I was to talk about. I know I wasn’t making any sense, but I was ordered to start talking. So I did.”

Clayton nodded. “How would you like a cup of coffee?”

“Great.” The two of us went from the 12th floor back to street level to a booth in the corner drug store.

The interview was brief. Clayton had been truly impressed by my ability to ad lib.

WRHM was a small station and it paid scant wages. I would have to start at \$14.00 per week. And I was green. There was a great deal for me to learn. However, if I wanted a job as announcer, I could begin the first of next week.

Fourteen dollars a week! Not on commissions, but as a regular income. I accepted on the spot. At first, I would work with another announcer, learning the tricks of the trade. Presently, however, I’d be on my own with a full shift. Glory be! I had a job. And it was in my chosen field. Radio is part of the entertainment industry.

I met Peggy’s father at the appointed time after lunch, and he took me to see several of his friends. We ended at Pillsbury Settle-

ment House, where I was interviewed briefly by the man in charge.

I explained to him that I was to work six days weekly full time at WRHM. He asked if I could spare two or three evenings per week?

Clayton had assured me I would either work on the early morning or mid-morning shifts. The evening shifts were reserved for their best and most experienced men. I would be through every day no later than six P.M. Three evenings a week seemed little enough.

Pillsbury Settlement House hired me, too. Indeed, I had been awarded the job before the interview. My in-law Pater had arranged it by telephone. My pay, for anywhere from four to six hours per week, would be \$60.00 per month.

How was I to earn that money? I was to “work” with the young people at the Settlement House, as I had worked with the young people at Westminster Church. They wanted to start a drama club. I could help put on some shows using the local talent. What I did was entirely up to me.

As we drove away, I asked how the Settlement House could afford to pay me so much money for so little work.

No difficulty, I was assured. The funds would be government money. I would be paid by the WPA. The important item was getting the money into my hands, because I “needed” it. What I did to earn it was secondary.

That didn’t sound right to me, but I shrugged it off. I was in no position to tell Peggy’s father I really didn’t want that kind of work. Besides, I wanted to demonstrate a willingness to work. And since it was “government” money, it wasn’t supposed to matter anyway. I would spend the money, and everyone would benefit, wouldn’t they?

It was too deep for me, so I went along with it. I had acquired two jobs on one day, an accomplishment I never repeated. I would actually make more from the few hours at the Settlement House than I would make full time at the radio station.

I kept the job at the Settlement House for five months. There is no question about it—the income helped. We continued to live with her folks as I paid off some of the old debts. Not all of them, unfortunately. Meanwhile, I learned what it meant to be an announcer.

One of the first revelations, as I began my apprenticeship, was the discovery of a certain ambivalence in my character. So long as there was space between me and the people listening, or watching,

I could pose, strut, and pretend with the best. Thus, as an actor on stage, or an announcer or performer on radio, I was quickly accepted as a “pro.” This was a pretense that I somehow dredged up out of my innermost self. Actually, I tended to be shy and silent in any kind of intimate situation. Ironically, my co-workers at WRHM interpreted these widely separated norms in reverse. They thought that I only pretended to be shy and silent, and that my self-aplomb and extroversion were normal.

Clayton never did comprehend my unwillingness to thrust myself forward into a social situation. Indeed, he confided in me that my audition had been the finest he’d ever seen, but my performance as a student announcer was among the worst. This statement was calculated to bring out my latent abilities. Instead, it convinced me I was poor material. I so willingly accepted Clayton’s claim to greatness, that I was putty in his hands. The more putty-like I became, the less confidence I had. And the more eagerly I sought his approval.

Fortunately, I was assigned to the early morning shift. The regular man, under whom I trained, was formerly a radioman aboard a ship. He knew Morse code, understood the technical side of radio as well as the performing side, and he was a tyrant when it came to punctuality. I called him Lew.

He warned me that being in radio placed a man in a unique position, one of public trust. The announcer was on duty until he was relieved by another competent individual. No radioman worth his salt ever deserted his post. The building could burn. The ship could go down. Earthquake, fire, or flood meant nothing. You lived at your post and, if necessary, you died there. You did not desert it.

Further, if you were due to take over at 6:00 A.M., you did not arrive for work at 6:00 A.M. To arrive on time, in radio, meant that you were late. You came in time to learn all that had transpired since your last tour of duty. You read all your copy in advance. You rehearsed it. You prepared your musical log. You knew what you were going to do long in advance of doing it. And then, wild horses couldn’t drag you away, no matter what.

Lew didn’t terrify me as Clayton did. And the idea that I was in a responsible position didn’t worry me in the least. I suppose I had always secretly yearned to be indispensable. Lew believed, and taught me to believe, that the radioman is just that. I flourished and

flowered under his discipline.

I recall a conversation on the subject. "What happens," I asked my mentor, "if, while I'm coming to work, my car breaks down? Is that a valid excuse for being late?"

"Certainly not."

"But, my gosh, you know how cars are. They sometimes break down when you least expect it. A flat tire. A dead battery. A burned out rod. Isn't that a valid excuse?"

"There are no 'valid' excuses."

"Come on, Lew. That's not reasonable. Things sometimes happen! If my car breaks down it's not MY fault. I didn't break it down."

"It's still your fault. It's your car. You should anticipate a possible break down and allow sufficient time, so you could walk if you had to."

I laughed. "Do you do that?"

I received a cold stare. "Of course."

I looked at him with new respect. He was always on duty whenever I arrived prior to six a.m. "When do you leave for work?"

"I go on the air at six. I leave my house at five. It's only a ten-minute drive. If something goes wrong, I can call a cab. If I can't get a cab, by dog trotting, I can still get here on time. You will never find me late for work."

"Is that what you expect me to do?"

He shrugged. "You do what you have to. But remember one thing. There are *no* excuses. Human life could depend upon you in a disaster. A disaster is always possible. Every radio station exists in the public interest. If you can't keep that in mind, you're in the wrong business." Then he smiled.

"There is one excuse, and only one," he said.

"What's that?"

"You're dead."

I resolved at that point to be as reliable and responsible as Lew. Within a few weeks, this decision was put to the test.

I had been given the chore of putting the station on the air at six. Lew now arrived at 8:00 a.m. In those days at WRHM, we had no engineer on-duty at the studio. The engineer at the transmitter slept in the transmitter building. But he had no means of going on the air with voice or record. He activated the transmitter, and it was my duty to phone him on a direct line that was always open. It was my

job to rouse him from slumber if necessary.

Peggy and I were still living with her folks, but we were preparing to move. New Year's eve came, and we went to a party. I climbed into bed at 2:00 a.m. and expected to get only about two and a half-hours of sleep. Apparently, I forgot to turn on the alarm. I overslept.

Peggy jostled me from a sound slumber with a muffled, "I thought you were working today."

I groped for the clock and stared at the glowing figures. Nine minutes to six."

I leapt from the bed, snatched up my clothes, and shoved bare feet into cold shoes. "I'm taking your Dad's car," I hissed. His car would travel.

I ran to his room, got a groggy response as to where his keys were and, still in my pajamas, cropped out of the house with the temperature at seven below zero.

The engine roared into life, and I backed out the drive into a skid. I slammed the throttle to the floor and raced for the studio, my heart beating as wildly as the motor throbbed.

I slammed the car into the curb and plunged into the foyer. The building janitor was waiting at the elevator. He knew he'd have to take me to the 12th floor and he was waiting.

Ninety seconds before air time! With clothes trailing under an arm, hair uncombed, face unwashed and unshaved, I dove for the control room, flipped switches, rang the engineer who assured me he was ready. Then, I returned to studio B for my "talent."

In those days, we opened the day's broadcast with a morning sermonette. The Ministerial Association assigned different reverends to this particular chore. Waiting nervously before the microphone was a pastor I had met at Westminster during my earlier days. He was goggle-eyed at my appearance.

Fortunately, he had written the introduction he wanted me to deliver and I snatched it from him, grinned, then burst into the announce booth with the sweep hand of the clock five seconds from straight up!

At six o'clock on the nose, I punched the mike button, gave the call letters, and introduced the Reverend. I had kept my pledge.

The sermonette lasted for ten minutes. During that time and behind the Reverend's back, I dressed, brushed my hair with my fingers, pulled some emergency records from their jackets, and cued

them.

Never have I had the pleasure of listening to a more vitriolic sermon. The Reverend was greatly disturbed about the growing depravity of the younger generation. It seemed that at every opportunity, young men, in whom he had once reposed great trust, betrayed that trust.

Instead of leading industrious, constructive, sober lives, they spent their nights in houses of ill repute. They were given over to debauchery, lechery...each and every one of the deadly sins.

How he yearned to influence them in the right direction. How he prayed to redeem the wayward and wandering prodigals. He did everything but mention my name.

When he gave a final "Amen," I signed him off and put a transcription on the air. Then I stepped into studio B, at least partially respectable. He sadly arose from the desk, pressed my proffered hand in both of his and, then, said "Bob, I am so glad that I had this opportunity. I hope you were able to hear my message. Before I leave, I wish to give you a small gift." Gently, with hope and despair vying for a place on his countenance, he handed me a copy of the New Testament.

Slowly, and more in spite of Clayton than because of him, I became increasingly proficient as an announcer. I was a "disc jockey" before the term had been coined. There was no television, and radio networks were "big time." WRHM was a small, thousand-watt station, owned, and operated by two brothers named Miller. Both of them were founders of Rosedale Hospital and successful medicos. The radio call letters had been chosen as a promotion for the hospital. The W was assigned to radio stations east of the Mississippi—that was unavoidable. The RHM stood for Rosedale Hospital, Minneapolis.

In Minneapolis, the government had obviously become confused. The major part of Minneapolis was west of the Mississippi, but all its radio outlets carried the W. East of the Mississippi, stations were supposed to be W's, but the big one was KSTP in St. Paul.

Between 1933 and 1936, business conditions were desperate. Some of the station accounts failed to pay their bills. The announcers began to be paid in goods and services, on a direct barter basis. I obtained a \$2.00 cash raise per week. But, then, that was removed in favor of a trade-out. Peggy and I obtained a furnished apartment,

rent-free, in exchange for radio time.

That trade-out improved our financial picture, even though we saw no cash. It was possible to move from her parent's home and to purchase a used car on monthly terms.

Clayton's biggest problem with me was my voice. He was truly expert in voice techniques, and I was a baritone with a "light" voice. Clayton's said I sounded like a "damn kid."

My biggest problem was Clayton, himself. If I thought he was listening, or if I saw him watching, I would fluff, stammer, and make mistakes. When I was nervous, my voice would tighten and rise a few notes, making me sound increasingly juvenile. I anticipated being fired again and again, but apparently my good points were enough to balance things marginally in my favor.

Clayton to the extent that he began assigning me "heavy" speaking, whenever possible. Some programs are all talk. I was assigned to more and more of them. Long commercials, newscasts, talk, talk, talk. He believed that extensive use of my voice would strengthen my vocal chords and, in the process, lower my tones.

One entirely thankless feature was assigned to me every week. It was called the "Veteran Inspector." It was a "public service" program furnished by the government. The Feds had gotten around to licensing all radio stations. Competition for new licenses was keen and getting sharper. Thus, to assure license renewal at the end of each year, each station management had a considerable amount of programming in the "public interest." Interpreted, that meant putting on government propaganda at no charge.

The more of this a station did, the more it won favor with the government brass. The "Veteran Inspector" was one such program.

In assigning me the show, Clayton explained that the "Veteran" I was supposed to portray was a man who was easily fifty years of age. I was to use all my lower register, talk slowly, and with deliberation.

Following Lew's training, I obtained the government copy in advance and went over it so I would be more at ease and, hence, more convincing as a "Veteran."

One day, the copy was late in coming. I was already pulling records to fill the assigned period when a secretary dashed in with the script. There was no time to study it. I grabbed it, and I got in front of a mike, nodding to the alternate announcer that I was ready.

I was introduced. I began to read. The “Inspector” was supposed to be expert in all agricultural areas, and this copy ran as follows:

“The subject of my discourse today reminds me of that old British poem, ‘Now we go gathering nuts in May, nuts in May, nuts in May.’”

Poetry, yet.

I was slightly out of breath and nervous. In my most sepulchral tones I said, “The subject of my discourse today reminds me of that old British poem, now we go methering nuts in gay...”

I hadn’t realized that I had fluffed until I heard a shriek from an adjoining studio. A visiting engineer was staring at me through the glass, laughing like a fool.

With my voice shaking, and still trying for the deep tones, I said, “I beg your pardon. What I had intended saying was: ‘Now we no methering guts in...’”

That was wrong, too. What was the matter with me?

Unnecessarily, I said, “I seem to have trouble with that line.” Then, I tittered like a schoolgirl. I looked up in consternation. Employees from various departments were converging on the announce booth, grins on their faces. Apparently, I had a big audience.

I tried again. “The poem reads as follows: ‘Now we go gathering muts in nay.’”

That was still wrong. I tried again and again. Outside the booth people were holding their sides. I experienced total consternation. What could I do? If only the earth would open to swallow me up! Perhaps this was a bad dream and I’d awaken in a cold sweat.

No such luck. This was real and I was making an utter, complete ass of myself.

Finally, in a falsetto tone, I said: “Skip it!” And went on with the body of the copy. Somehow, I read it all. But as I read, every time I thought of what I had done, my voice would rise a few notches. Then I’d shove it down again, choke, but keep on.

I finished with a complexion that would have made a dish of Harvard beets look pale. For days I was razzed about it. When Clayton showed up, I expected to be summarily fired. He simply gave me a withering look and stomped off. I was not his favorite announcer.

I was not aware of the management decision when it came. Business conditions were so bad, the Millers decided to sell WRHM. The first inkling I had of the change was after it had taken place. A

partnership had been organized among Kingsley Murphy, his co-investors (who owned the Minneapolis Tribune), and the Ritter brothers (who owned the St. Paul Dispatch, Pioneer Press.)

WRHM was converted to a newspaper property. It took the call letters: WTCN (Twin City News). The trade deals stopped, and my dollar income was now the equivalent of prior cash, plus barter benefits.

This wasn't hard to take. Indeed, I was now doing well enough so that Peggy and I decided we would buy a house. Monthly payments on a piece of real estate would approximate the rental amount, and we'd be accumulating equity in an asset as we went along.

We obtained a small cottage near the south beach of Cedar Lake, and went into debt for house, car, furniture, and clothing...all this on top of an earlier indebtedness still to be paid off. My improved financial condition was swallowed up by an overpowering burden of interest and principal.

Chapter XXI

Clayton had always run things, but with the former owners, there was never a bankroll large enough to achieve the level of production superiority Clayton yearned to establish.

The new owners, tyros in broadcasting, listened to the ideas Don Clayton conveyed. Engineers appeared. Now the announcer could concentrate upon his specialty. Meanwhile, professional technicians arranged studio auditions with acoustics in mind, pushed buttons, and began to construct some replacement panels for the age-in-grade equipment we had been using.

A string ensemble became staff musicians. We played fewer recordings, developed live dramas, and live musical shows. Now two or more announcers were always on duty, except in the early morning and late night, when one man was deemed sufficient. With two voices on duty, the man who read commercial copy did not give station identification.

Under Lew's tutelage, I had developed an almost uncanny sense of timing. As we launched some locally produced radio dramas, I envisioned myself as a leading member of the cast. It didn't work that way. I was asked to produce the sound effects because of my timing, and Clayton used me as an actor only when no other voice was available.

Sound effects intrigued me. For some reason, probably the lack of competition in a brand new field, I won a reputation as a sound effects engineer. Indeed, to compete with WTCN, some of the network outlets that had much stronger signals than ours hired me for their sound effects. Clayton insisted that we be paid a "talent" fee whenever a staff man turned in a job in any separate production. I had no reason to complain about my increasing income—even if it all vanished in bills, installment payments, and interest. Actually, my wages were quite small, but I never asked for a raise; they came as I went along.

My big break came when I was removed from the early morning show for a few weeks in order to give another man a shot at it. He organized what he called the "Milkman's Club," and played requests at six o'clock when the sales staff was convinced no one listened.

His program sense was excellent, but his morals suffered. He was discharged in disgrace after a month or so when he was apprehended robbing a filling station in an effort to bolster his income.

I was hastily re-scheduled at six, and told to continue the "Milkman's Club." But, now, there was an engineer on duty named Jim Kelly. I had been in the habit of playing my own recordings. Now, Jim played them for me from his own cubicle, separated from me by a double partition of clear glass. I asked for requests, and Jim filled them.

Indeed, it seemed to me that I had very little to do. My mike was turned on for me and, then, turned off when I finished. I had become a disembodied voice, and one that Clayton didn't like.

I did a bit more thinking about what I was saying. I have a fairly active imagination, and I began to quip with people who phoned in requests. Jim put our conversation on the air. From time to time, he would intrude with his own comments, just audible to me through the glass barrier. I would repeat them if I thought repetition was merited. It usually was. In the mid-1930's, this was all innovative stuff.

Jim was truly funny. His native Irish wit, coupled with my imagination, did the trick. The "Milkman's Club" at six a.m. on a mere thousand watt station, began to achieve ratings. In only a matter of weeks, we held the Twin Cities radio audience right where we wanted them on the dial.

I announced that we were doing nothing more than peddling milk. The milk of human kindness. Someone phoned to ask about our cow. I came up with the appropriate sound effect, including the sound of milk foaming into a bucket.

Did the cow have a name? I decided that Lulubelle was appropriate and she was named on the spot.

I was advised by a listener that, if the cow was going to "stay fresh" (I didn't know what that meant at the time), then she would have to be "serviced."

With utter naivete, I said that either Jim or I were capable of servicing the cow. (I thought that meant cleaning out the barn). The program was "made." Between records, Jim informed me of the facts of farm life. I was embarrassed but what could I do? Whatever was said on the air stayed said.

In a few weeks, Lulubelle was properly "freshened!," and at the

appropriate date, she gave birth to a calf. I explained that we were blessed by having a little bull on the air.

My fan mail was now the largest of any program on WTCN. The sales manager met me one day over coffee.

How could I demonstrate that I really did have listeners at that ungodly hour? He was trying to sell spot announcements, but who wanted to be on the air at six?

I suggested that I ask people who wanted a request to send in a bottle cap. We could show a prospective sponsor just how many caps came in within a test period.

The sales manager expanded on the idea. Why not work out a deal with an amusement park as well? Arrange for a Milkman's Club Day at the park, and every child younger than ten could ride on certain stipulated rides for one bottle top. (This was before the carton became popular and nearly all milk was delivered in sterile quart or pint bottles.) We could donate the tops we collected to an orphanage, get the kiddies taken to the park, and they'd have a wonderful time. Meanwhile, some of our listeners might send in more than one cap and we'd make a better impression with the sponsor.

There was no difficulty finding both an amusement park and an orphanage eager to cooperate. I explained the concept on the air, and the milk bottle tops poured in. We set up one week as a test period and, in those six days, more than 60,000 tops were received.

A promotional picture was taken with me, sitting in a heap of tops, which came up to my armpits.

Shortly after this episode, Clayton and I had an extensive conversation. The nub of it was that, despite my vocal deficiencies, I had really managed to pull a coup. To my amazement, he appeared upset. Apparently, he had let the new management know that I was low man on the totem pole. His parting comment, slightly green in the hue, was that I could probably leave the station now and "write my own ticket" anywhere.

I didn't want to leave. For the next two or three years, I was the station's "success" story. It had its drawbacks.

Despite the fact that this was radio, my face became familiar to many through newspaper publicity.

Everywhere I went people seemed to know me. I was hounded for autographs. Occasionally, we would prepare and put on the air

some outdoor festival or some indoor extravaganza. I was in demand, sometimes merely to “make an appearance.” I recall one such event at the Minneapolis Auditorium—the seating area packed with about 10,000 women. I was asked to come out on the stage just to greet the audience. I did so to the screams and howls of female voices, and great personal embarrassment.

My co-workers found me a disappointment. Anticipating that I’d be a “regular feller,” I was often invited to this or that bar, dance hall, or tavern. If I could get out of going, I would. I didn’t drink, I didn’t smoke, I refused to eat meat, and I believed that marriage was sacred. I never frequented such places on my own and, frankly, I didn’t enjoy myself when there.

In short, I was not a “man about town.” As I worked, I liked to keep a distance between my audiences and me. I was, and still am, a very private person. Phone calls followed me home. Women were sometimes waiting for me before six o’clock at the Wesley Temple building entrance. I had little problem avoiding the early arrivals because I was almost always on duty at five, or shortly thereafter. But, in the evening or afternoon, whenever I got off duty, it was a different matter. I learned how to use the elevator, get off one story above street level, walk into the service area and then go into an adjacent garage without being seen.

It seemed to me that Don Clayton was the only friend I had. He liked me as a person, although he constantly bemoaned my lack of voice, lack of ability, and other real—or fancied—shortcomings.

What was particularly distressing to me was the presumption, on the part of my fellow employees, that I was getting “plenty of pussy.” I despised that kind of behavior, and did not participate even in talk of that character. One young announcer, whose name I will omit, took me to task one day in very angry tones.

“Your trouble, LeFevre,” he said to me, “is that you’re so God damn conventional. You could be living right at the top and, instead, of that you go sneaking home to your wife. If I didn’t know you had kids, I’d think you were a fairy.

“I’ll tell you what’s going to happen to the two of us. When you’re old and gray, you’ll still be going home to your wife and, probably, to your kids and grandkids. I can just picture you, in rocking chair and slippers, with a good income, money in the bank, and everything rosy.

“As for me, when that time comes, I’ll be dead. But in the meanwhile, I will have lived. You’ve never lived. You don’t know what it’s about. I can go almost anywhere in town and tear off a piece. In fact, I’ve got a Jane, living near the studio who is ready for me anytime I have thirty minutes. So when we have a thirty-minute program, the engineers run it for me, I give her a jingle and zip, I’m taken care of.

“You know what? She knows I don’t have a lot of time. So when I get there she’s already on her back with her legs up...”

I walked out of earshot at that point. I did my best to insist I wasn’t the kind of person they imagined. I was hooted at, laughed at, but I endured. And one thing became clear. When management, including Clayton wanted someone reliable, I was chosen. The other men had better voices I was told again and again. Mine was passable, but no more. But if something had to be accomplished for certain, call LeFevre.

Now to everyone’s dismay (except mine), various sponsors began asking for me to be their special “talent” and to announce their programs. I was known as “Happy Bob,” and I got paid extra for these requested stints. But the camaraderie I had first experienced with Lew, and in the early poverty days at WRHM, was gone forever. Lew had gone elsewhere, and I was already “senior” in terms of tenure.

As time passed, while I liked my work, I did not enjoy my co-workers. My job became one of deadly repetition. Apparently, I was attractive to my listeners, but I read and re-read the same old commercials. The balance of the production staff shunned or sneered at me. I was not a part of WTCN “society.” I was an “odd ball.” I didn’t fit in.

This meant I couldn’t get out of the studio rapidly enough when my shift ended.

In the autumn of 1935, the Roosevelt administration launched Social Security. Management informed us all that a small portion of our wages would be deducted from our paychecks each month. This, with typical governmental double talk, actually meant a raise in pay that we wouldn’t see. Management had to match these deductions.

I protested. I was in debt up to my ears. I needed every penny I could get my hands on. I told the station manager and Don Clayton

that I would be very happy to sign a release to guarantee I would take care of my own future. Meanwhile, management would save money since they wouldn't have to match anything in my case.

Clayton thought this to be a matter of bad judgment on my part. The station manager said he would be delighted to comply with my request, but his hands were tied. This wasn't a voluntary deduction. It was "the law."

In trying to bring me into the mainstream, another announcer asked me, "Bob, how much do you have in a savings account, or in annuities?"

I admitted I had nothing. I was trying to pay my bills.

"That's just it," he advised. "Most people are like that. They think they're going to save up something, but they won't. And then one day, it's too late. The government is doing the right thing. It's going to take care of us to see to it that we can live our old ages in comfort. You ought to be glad."

"I'm not the least bit glad," I snapped. "I don't want anyone to look after me. Now or later. I can take care of myself."

The response was a reference to bovine excrement.

So, I was viewed as a snob and a bore. Except when I was on the air.

By 1936, I had reached the ripe old age of twenty-five. One day, I took a real hard look at myself. I was "a success," famous as Happy Bob. I had as good an income as anyone of my age or experience could rightfully expect, and it was certainly above average. I was buying a home. I had a fine wife and two lovely, growing boys. I was also buying a car, furniture, clothing, and food. A garage added to our property, with other improvements as well, and we were still paying for the hospital and medical care connected with the arrival of both sons.

Suddenly, I was appalled. Was this it? Was this all there was to life? On the surface, I had it all. But what did I really have? I existed in grinding routine. Peggy and I were no longer close. I virtually lived at the studio, not because I liked it there, but because split shift and "talent" airings took most of the time, including Saturdays and Sundays. My "success" had come early. As I tried to look into the future, all I could see was repetition of what had gone before. I had nowhere to go, except along a beaten path of endless routine.

I would work hard each day; earn my keep; pay my bills; but as

fast as one bill was retired, we “needed” new things. Everything, including cars, furniture, and clothes wore out.

Was the announcer right when he chided me with being too conventional? Should I really be “living it up,” enjoying it while I could? Drinking, carousing, dining, fornicating...was that it?

Despite Don Clayton’s visible dissatisfaction with my voice, he was mature enough for me to speak with. He was still my idol. A word of praise from him—and it came on occasion—was the one bright sign on an otherwise flat and empty horizon.

At the first opportunity, I asked for an appointment. Seated in his office, I spilled it. I was not happy. I was willing to take the blame, but I was not willing to change my values. I didn’t think it was wrong for a man to be true to his wife, to be Spartan in his diet, and to refrain from booze, beef, and blondes. I ended by suggesting that perhaps I should resign and seek a job elsewhere.

“You’ll never get another one,” Clayton replied.

“Why not?”

“Every station wants good voices.” He looked at me dolefully. “It’s not your fault. I’ll give you that. You’ve tried. You just don’t have the right kind of pipes for this job.”

“Then, why don’t you fire me?” I asked.

“Don’t worry,” he said. “The thought has occurred many times. But you’re earning your way. You’re really good with sound effects. And the Milkman’s Club is a fluke. If you want to stay in radio, you’d better stay here. Most of the people here don’t like you too well. Or, maybe you’ve noticed.”

“I really don’t care about that.”

“Maybe not. But you should. There is such a thing as politics, you know.”

“What is that supposed to mean?”

He stared at me for a very long time. I waited for an answer.

Finally, he arose from his desk, walked around me, and closed the door to his office. Re-seated, he continued to stare at me.

I decided to wait him out, if it took my whole shift.

“I’m beginning to wonder if you’re ready for your initiation.”

“Initiation into what?”

Again, a long pause as he searched my face.

“Do you go to church?” he finally asked.

I smiled. “Sure. Westminster. My wife is interested, and I go to

please her. Not all the time, of course. I'm here most of the time."

"What do you know about theology?"

"Theology? You mean religion?"

"No. I mean theology. What do you know about spiritual realities?"

Quickly, I sketched in my experience at the time of Charlotte's death. "I got pretty interested at that time," I summed up. "But whenever I asked the minister or any of the other presumed authorities at Westminster, I was told that no one understood, and I had to have faith.

"I guess I don't have the necessary faith. I don't go along with the Virgin birth, miracles, you know, that sort of thing. And I don't think that a decent Father, who had all power, would do the kind of things that happened to Charlotte."

"That's the trouble with most organized religions," Don said. "They are content with symbols and forms. Ceremony. Music. And some of that music is gorgeous. It's not bad. It's just not the kind of thing that provides knowledge of spiritual verities."

"Are you suggesting that I go to church more, get active in religion?"

"Not exactly."

Again, there was a long pause.

"Bob, there is such a thing as spiritual truth. Maybe this is what you're really asking for when you ask me if 'this'," he waved an arm, indicating the radio station in its entirety, "is 'all there is to life.' There is more. A great deal more."

I was intrigued. And my face must have showed it.

"Did you ever hear of Theosophy?" Don asked.

An ancient memory stirred. "Yes. I've heard that word before. I don't know anything about it. My grandfather said he was a Theosophist. But I don't know anything about what they believe in."

Don heaved a sigh. "All right. I'll open the door. I hope I'm not doing the wrong thing. I am a student of Theosophy. We have a small group that meets here in town every couple of weeks. We meet in a private home, where a woman who is an advanced student lives. It's not a big group. Sometimes five or six, sometimes a few more. But we really study the truth."

I nodded. "All right. I'll come to a couple of meetings. Is that what you're suggesting?"

"I guess I am. I'm really not sure that you're ready. But if you are, I would like very much to have this mark in my karma."

"Karma!" I had never heard that word that I recalled. "What in hell is that?"

"It's in hell, all right," Don said. "This world that we live in is a kind of hell. Madame Blavatsky and others, who were able to contact a member of the Great Brotherhood, started the Theosophical movement. The teachings of the Masters were written down by Madame Blavatsky, a man named Leadbetter, and others. If you care to come to a few of these meetings, you'll begin learning what it's all about."

Don gave me a warm smile, "I hope you're ready. You may have advanced to the place where you must see the big picture."

He wrote an address and a name on a slip of paper and handed it to me. "Be here at seven on..." and he named a date. "We'll see what we will see."

Chapter XXII

What is justice?

It is a simple thing. Justice consists of receiving voluntarily, from the hand of another who volunteers to supply it, precisely what he agreed to supply. That is all there is.

If I agree to sell a bushel of wheat for \$5.00 and another party agrees to buy it for \$5.00, when I deliver the full bushel of wheat and I receive \$5.00 from the buyer, that is justice.

If I agree to perform chores A and B and another party agrees to pay me \$100 for the performance of A and B, when and I do the chores and he pays me \$100, that is that is justice.

This is *quid pro quo*. It is an agreed upon something for an agreed upon something else, carried out as agreed upon.

The difficulty with justice is that most of us want more than others have agreed to supply. Or, we wish to deliver less than we agreed to deliver, which is the same thing expressed in reverse.

I agree to sell a bushel of wheat to Mr. A for \$5.00. When the wheat is threshed and ready for sale, I discover that Mr. B will pay me \$6.00. So, I violate my first agreement. I tell Mr. A that he is cheating me. I must have \$6.00, or he will not get his wheat. Or, I remove a portion of the wheat and sell him less than the bushel. Or, I adulterate the wheat, making it look like a bushel, and sell it for the agreed upon price. Each deviation from the agreement is unjust.

Possibly, I agree to cut down a tree for Mr. A. I look the tree over, anticipate all the problems with the job I can imagine and inform Mr. A that my price will be \$75.00 for the service. He agrees to pay the price.

I begin to cut it down, but the wood is harder than I anticipated. I break a saw blade. I raise blisters. I had thought to do the job in period of time, x . The job consumes a period of time $x+y$. I insist on receiving \$100.00. Or, I quit in the middle of the job, demanding more money to complete the task.

All of these acts, and thousands more than can be envisioned, are acts of injustice.

If I charge more for my services than others do, but my custom-

ers voluntarily agree to pay me what I charge, that is justice. If they later refuse to pay me because someone else would have done the job for less, that is injustice. It is the violation of the voluntary understanding, not the amount of goods or services in exchange that constitutes injustice.

Getting something for nothing is not injustice, *if* a person volunteers to give it. It becomes injustice if something is taken which was not volunteered.

From the days of Hammurabi or before, the function of government has been to deal with the problem of injustice after it manifests itself. Since governments were organized, this has always been the case, both in regard to foreign and domestic matters.

If a person cares to be strictly honest, he will admit that justice—as governments attempt to provide it—is never justice. Rather, it is a retroactive method of “getting even.”

The true character of a just action is the voluntary nature of each person’s involvement with that action. When a person is forced to accept a third party decision by forceful (governmental) intrusion, the acceptance will either fall short of justice or over-reach it. This will occur by virtue of the nature of man, the nature of justice, and the nature of injustice.

Consider this situation. Mr. A is a poor man. Mr. B has ample in the form of goods, reserves, and ready cash. Mr. B cheats Mr. A out of one dollar. How the cheating occurs is unimportant for purpose of the point at issue. Mr. B steals, extorts, falsifies, or in any other way, manages to short change Mr. A by \$1.00. The matter is taken to court.

Mr. B, having ample funds, views the \$1.00 as too trivial a matter even to go to trial. While a dollar may be important, it is not worth all the hassle, delay, and risk involved in a court procedure. He may be willing to settle out of court by paying \$2.00, or \$5.00, or even \$10.00.

But, if so, it is not because he views such a settlement as “just.” He is paying the sum because a threat hangs over him.

Will Mr. A view a settlement for double his loss, or even ten times his loss, as just? Possibly. But that will probably depend on how the law respecting this form of “cheating” is written.

Suppose Mr. B is a businessman who has given strict instructions to his employees never to cheat anyone? Despite this, one of Mr. B’s

employees cheats Mr. A and pockets the \$1.00. Mr. B did nothing wrong. He took every avenue open to him to convince his employees not to perform a wrongful act, and he did not profit from the wrongdoing. But Mr. B will probably be held at fault. A court will probably punish him. If Mr. B discharges his employee, he may face additional court action (and costs). He may be ordered by the court to reinstate his employee, because the employee “needs” the job.

Put it in reverse. Let us suppose that Mr. A, the poor man, cheats Mr. B of \$1.00. If Mr. B has the courage to take it to court, the court is apt to rule that Mr. B has plenty of money and probably got that \$1.00 by over-charging “the public.” It is nearly predictable that Mr. B will lose the action and receive a public reprimand for being too “tight fisted.” The popular sentiment will run in favor of Mr. A because he is poorer than Mr. B. In consequence, Mr. B will probably not dare take action.

Where is “justice” in each of the foregoing examples?

Go back to the original supposition that the poor man, A, has cheated the richer man, B. the court is called upon to intrude, and it will do so with the best of intentions.

Suppose the court decides Mr. B should return the \$1.00 to Mr. A and pay court costs. Probably, neither A nor B will be satisfied. Mr. B may be willing to return the \$1.00, but, in all probability, he will not feel he cheated anyone. Mr. B was just stupid. Why should he be charged with court costs for someone’s stupidity? He has already lost a couple of thousand dollars due to the loss of time, through intrusion into his many affairs.

To him, paying the court costs appears manifestly unjust in view of the losses he has already experienced over so trivial an amount as \$1.00. Besides, Mr. A was asking for the deal he got.

But Mr. A sees it differently. He believes that Mr. B is powerful and privileged, and he might very well cheat him again. Therefore, the returned \$1.00 seems totally inadequate, even though that is all he lost. He will wish punitive damages as a punishment. As for any of B’s loss of time, he has little or no sympathy. Mr. A’s time is endless and worth virtually nothing. Why should Mr. B be concerned with the value of time?

Although the plaintiff will say he merely wants to “get even,” getting even—in the literal sense—will not satisfy him. “Getting even” in a way that includes court costs and punitive damages against Mr.

B is not equity. Rather, it reverses the field and makes Mr. B the victim, and by a sizeable loss.

But let us suppose that the court, rather than seeking to balance the scales, wishes to make an example of someone. The court can decide that Mr. A, who was cheated, should have used better judgment. The fault is his own and, therefore, Mr. B keeps the \$1.00 and pays only a portion of the court costs. Mr. A will feel outraged. Mr. B won't be happy, either.

On the other hand, suppose the court is out of patience with Mr. B, who has received adverse publicity because of his personality, his domestic affairs, or his political point of view. The court decides to make Mr. B an example for all to see. So, Mr. B is forced to pay A \$100 "actual" damages, \$500 punitive damages, and court costs.

It is predictable that Mr. B will be outraged. It is also predictable that Mr. A won't be happy, either.

The court is confronted with an impossible task. It is seeking to equate human emotions with dollar amounts. Unfortunately, the court is emotional, too, for its judges are just as human as anyone else is.

If the court is sympathetic to the poor, judgments will probably lean in that direction, to the chagrin and injury of those who are less poor. If the court is sympathetic to investors—if it understands the travail, risk, and anguish involved in accumulating capital—judgments will probably lean in that direction, to the chagrin and injury of those who are less wealthy.

In either case, one of the parties will feel outraged. If the court is entirely upright and without prejudice (an imaginary condition), both parties will be affronted.

What is the merit of retroactive justice that has made us struggle with it for something close to four thousand years? Its single merit is the force with which the edict is made compulsory. It will be unfair, but it will be final.

The American court system is so concerned about the appearance of arbitrariness that many avenues of appeal are open, which acts to enrich attorneys. All other parties to the action are reduced to penury. Retroactive justice inevitably makes bad matters worse for somebody, if for not everyone.

The American system is now worse and less equitable than I have indicated. Today, both rich and poor have recourse to court action,

not because of injury, but because so many laws are on the books. If an excuse can be found by virtue of a existing law, which often is prejudicial to one party or the other, a legal action is initiated because “the law” appears to favor the case, even where no case exists. This is justice? It is nothing more than a false religion. “The law” has become the god of the attorneys and of the government. We are engaged in out-paganing our pagan forebears.

But this is not the end. Let us suppose Mr. B has cheated Mr. A (as before). The court, after due deliberation, orders Mr. B to return the \$1.00. There are no other costs whatever.

First, this is impossible. Judges, bailiffs, legal secretaries, attorneys...all must be paid. If those involved directly in the action don't pay the costs, who will? The taxpayers. Thus, the costs to everyone not involved in the action would go up.

In short, by using force and retroactive justice, there is no way to put things back the way they were before an injury took place. Every act of injustice inflicts a *permanent* injury. The victim pays, the beneficiary pays, or everyone pays.

I have been speaking here of cheating. In this case, it would be possible that a dollar taken without consent could be returned to the victim.

Although justice will not be served, it is possible for the wronged party to receive what was wrongfully taken from him. However, in process, time is lost. Sometimes reputations are lost. And, occasionally, the innocent are compelled to pay for cheating they did not perform.

But what happens when an irreversible wrong occurs? Suppose a person is murdered, raped, or kidnapped? How can such a wrong be “put back” as though it hadn't occurred? You know it cannot. All that is possible is vengeance. You could murder and kidnap in return. Thus far, raping in return has not been practiced. But the public will pay increasing taxes for all of the “services” that do provide conventional vengeance.

Suppose a worker is found guilty of cheating and is forced to repay his victim plus costs? He will have less than before, and his family will suffer. Suppose a corporation or company (large or small) is found guilty of cheating and it is forced to make repayment plus costs? The prices of the goods or services provided by that company will rise and the buying public will pay. But let me suppose

that, in a “society,” one hundred-percent of the people agree in advance (voluntarily) to pay whatever costs are entailed in providing retroactive justice. Such a society would consist of fools. They would have agreed to pay any costs imposed by a judicial tribunal that is both capable of and willing to raise costs at any time and in any amount to enrich itself at the expense of “society” in general.

In a decent system, a contract is limited on one end and open at the other, or there is no contract at all. A contract that is open on one end binds one of the parties, but does not bind the other. This means that those bound have made themselves slaves of those parties who are not bound. The result is both predictable and inevitable. Those not bound are free to do as they please with others; and those bound (voluntarily by their own hand) have become the slaves of the others. By no stretch of the imagination can this practice be called “justice.”

This would be true whether those not bound are called “government,” or the “Acme Judicial Company,” or “Justice, Incorporated.” A change of name does not alter fundamental character.

Despite these flaws, which are conspicuous and enduring, this is what we have today in governments. When the flaws are revealed, the ordinary response is to deny the existence of the flaws, because we have been unable to think of anything better.

Governments today are malicious and mendacious. This is because the people who support them insist on conduct that is malicious and mendacious. We will never improve anything in the way of government so long as we insist on the malice and mendacity of retroactive justice.

Let me illustrate the idea I seek to communicate.

Mr. A has a horse in his possession. He is fond of this animal, which has some very distinctive markings. Mr. A “breaks” the horse and rides him frequently, keeping him in a corral at his ranch.

One night, Mr. B sneaks into the corral, slips a halter on the horse, and leads him away. Out of sight and sound of the ranch, he puts a saddle on the animal and rides to a community far removed from the ranch site. There, Mr. B lets it be known that this horse is his property. But he does more.

He goes into business in this far community. Through the years, he acquires a justly earned reputation for fair and generous dealings.

In consequence, his business thrives, for he has many customers who find him reliable. After four years, Mr. B decides to sell his assets and take a tour of the world. He takes passage on an ocean liner, but, tragically, the vessel sinks with all hands. Mr. B is dead.

Before leaving on his trip, he had sold his business, his home, and his horse, giving the each buyer papers by means certifying that the goods have been paid for and they were his to sell. Mr. C bought the horse.

Mr. C rides the animal to his home in another community. However, he is hard pressed for money and sells the horse to pay his bills. Mr. D purchases the animal. He wishes to be assured that his title to the horse is valid. To reassure him, Mr. C finds the paper obtained earlier from Mr. B, now deceased.

Satisfied, Mr. D takes the horse to his ranch.

However, a few days later, Mr. E, a horse fancier, sees the horse. After watching the horse's movements, Mr. E offers a substantial sum to purchase the animal. Mr. D accepts the offer, and provides a bill of sale. Mr. E saddles the horse and rides him back in the direction of the ranch where Mr. A still resides. Mr. A happens to be looking out the window as the stranger, Mr. E, approaches. The markings on the horse are unmistakable. This was the horse taken from his ranch nearly five years earlier. The statute of limitations will not apply. (The five-year limitation will vary from state to state.)

Mr. A, in righteous indignation, rushes from his house, lays a hand on the bridle, and says: "Get off my horse, you horse thief."

How would this obvious conflict between Mr. E and Mr. A be resolved in a system of retroactive justice?

First, Mr. E would be forcefully arrested by virtue of a warrant issued against him when Mr. A filed a complaint. If E can make bail, he will be able to get out temporarily. If not, he will remain in prison until trial. Meanwhile, the horse is impounded. The taxpayers will pay for feeding and caring for the animal.

Mr. E will be faced with the costs of defending himself against the allegation. Unless he has an airtight alibi, Mr. A has the better case and will probably win. Mr. E can probably prove he is not the thief, but he cannot prove the horse is not stolen property. Of course, there is no guarantee.

If A wins, Mr. E has a legal action against Mr. D who sold him the animal. He will bring suit for selling stolen property. He will seek to

recover not only the price of the horse, but also all the intervening costs to which he has been subjected.

Mr. D may win or lose. If he wins, Mr. E, who has done nothing wrong, will be out a great deal of time and money. If D loses, then he will have recourse against Mr. C. Mr. C has done nothing wrong.

Mr. C's recourse is against Mr. B., but Mr. B is dead. The estate was liquidated at the time of Mr. B's departure. Mr. B had performed a wrongful act. He had stolen the horse. But he is out of the way. If Mr. C loses, he, and he alone, will pay for all the damages.

What will have occurred? Mr. A was treated unjustly and wrongfully by Mr. B. Thanks to ideas of retroactive justice, Mr. A has punished Mr. E; Mr. E has punished Mr. D; Mr. D has punished Mr. C, who is made to carry the full burden.

This entire procedure depends upon retroactive justice and the necessary assumption that guilt accompanies the property. The horse is "tainted." The property is not restored to what it was until it is returned to the original victim. The guilt almost resides in the horse, which carries an invisible brand, or marking.

At one time in human history, the attainder of property was commonplace. Various properties were then put on trial. A rooster, who continually disturbed the sleep of a person living near it, could be brought to trial. The rooster could be found guilty, and hanged.

A man once climbed upon the spoke of a wagon wheel. The wagon moved, the wheel turned, and the man broke his leg. A legal action found the wheel "guilty." It was removed from the wagon, and burned.

One man put a knife into the body of a second man. His attorney adroitly established that the assailant was not guilty, it was the knife. The knife was summarily found guilty, and broken.

Retroactive justice—although belief in the guilt or innocence of "things" is denied—nonetheless depends upon this concept. A property once stolen is never again "clean" until it has been returned to the first victim who suffered loss from its theft.

The current drive to make various items contraband (illegal by governmental act) is a carry-over from this view. The tendency to make guns, marijuana, laetrile, and nude pictures illegal arises from the concept that it isn't the people who use them that are wrong, it is the things themselves. Naturally, under such laws, the government holds the owners wrong, not because they have *done* some-

thing wrong, but because they *own* something that is wrong.

Such a view not only lacks justice; it is archaic and moribund.

Lest you imagine this is far-fetched, the status of land in America. If we turn the pages of history back to, say, 1200, none of the land in this country was “owned” by Europeans or their descendants. Whatever concepts of property American Indians may have had, it is clear that they possessed—either individually or collectively—all of the land they used. Europeans possessed none of it.

Beginning in 1492 (according to our histories), Europeans intruded into the Western hemisphere and they began to acquire land. Some was stolen outright by the new arrivals, who claimed they were acting for the governments that had sent them. Columbus, himself, provides a good example.

Some land was purchased in good faith. Some was empty land that, apparently, no one held and, so, it was simply claimed by the first comer.

A movement is now in full voice to return at least some of this land to the Indian tribes still residing in this country. If the land was stolen (and there is no doubt that some of it was), it is argued that such land should be returned to the Indians. The land is “tainted.” It cannot be correctly owned by anyone except the original owner. Only if the “taint” is removed can the land be correctly “owned.”

Generations have come and gone since those early acts of injustice, perpetrated by 15th, 16th, and 17th century politicians upon the aboriginals. The legal “experts” of our day are considering returning land to the Indians.

Ah, which Indians? Before the Europeans arrived, many of the Indian tribes obtained their lands by conquest over other tribes. How far into antiquity are we to go, especially in the absence of suitable or conclusive records?

Most of the persons who own land did not obtain it by stealing from the Indians. The bulk of it was obtained by hard work, thrift, perseverance, and dedication. Enormous sums of money have changed hands, and those who have land today did no wrong to the Indians. But now they are to be punished because it is conceivable that, in a given case, one of their forebears may have wronged some of the forebears of the remaining Indians. But the remaining Indians may have had forebears who injured the forebears of still other Indians.

It's the stolen horse all over again.

Our courts, in an effort to obtain retroactive justice, are meting injustice to those now living.

And no matter what happens here, the taxpayers will pay, including the taxpayers who have recently and could not possibly have ancestors who wronged the ancestors of American Indians.

Our current societies, built around governments, are actually built around the concept of retroactive justice. Vengeance. Punishment. Retribution. I am not seeking to weaken or destroy my prior arguments. Any action that violates a property boundary against the will of the owner is a wrongful, immoral action. I merely point out that efforts to bring justice to what has already transpired are efforts filled with new injustices.

Our society is and has been facing the wrong way.

Governments are pre-occupied with trying to straighten out the vicious and criminal actions that occurred yesterday. Since they rely on violence to achieve these re-alignments, they can only cause new suffering.

Goethe said: "Let the dead past bury its dead." This entire area needs to be reconsidered. It is impossible to put things back the way they were before wrongful actions occurred. As I have already shown, retroactive justice is never just. It merely creates new victims.

Present governments are endlessly engaged in this malicious business. If we are ever to achieve a truly civilized and free society, we must turn around and face the future. We must go beyond malice. Instead of trying to make our past blameless, we should make the future as blameless as possible. Correcting what has already happened cannot be done. But we are in command of what is yet to come. By re-thinking this question, a free society could be achieved.

Chapter XXIII

For some time, I faithfully attended meetings conducted by a branch of the Minneapolis Theosophical Society. I even took Peggy with me on one or two occasions. She got nothing out of it, and I must confess that I received little.

The few in attendance were serious, thoughtful, and gentle people. Madame, who conducted the series of lectures, employed charts and books to make her points.

As I now recall, and with what must be an abbreviated simplification, the following is the gist of the instruction. God, if one chose to use the term, was nothing more than ultimate reality. The central focus of God was the center of the universe. It was referred to as the “Great Central Sun,” or the “Central Sun.” Everything had come from that Sun and, one day, everything would return to it.

All life was related to that Center and to every other living thing. Thus, there were two areas: the divine; and, the mundane. In a sense, the material and the divine were different ways of describing the same things.

Man was the highest form of creation. He was endowed with free will, the ability to choose. This was the only variation to absolute predestination. Because man had free will, he could speed his own progress, or retard it, depending on what he did. The goal of life was to cooperate with one’s ultimate return to the source of all life. The sooner one could complete one’s saga, the better.

Events caused reactions in an absolute law of cause and effect; your thoughts were “things” that also caused reactions. Thus, if a person *thought* beauty and goodness, beauty and goodness became karmic causatives. If one thought ugliness and evil, ugliness and evil became karmic causatives. Not only did you reap the results of what you did, but you also reaped the consequences of your thoughts and desires.

Around every human form was a “karmic body,” comprised of all emotions and thoughts the individual had generated in all lives that had not yet been balanced. If one’s thoughts and actions were on the plus side, plus causation would accrue to the karmic body, bringing about plus reactions. Each individual achieved the ultimate plan

of creation as he paid off his karmic debt, negative or positive. The plan was to achieve a status of zero debt. At that point, he no longer had karma. He was ready to become “one” with the Central Sun.

There was no such thing as death. When “death” intruded, the inner or real self of the person withdrew from his body to re-embody as another infant. This was called re-incarnation.

This ultimate law of karma explained everything. A person’s karmic body remained intact between embodiments. Thus, people were often born who were “old” souls; that is, they had lived many times before and had accumulated much karmic indebtedness. A “young” soul was one with little or no prior debt.

My rejection of conventional faith because of injustice at the hands of the Creator was now explained. There was no such thing as ultimate injustice. Charlotte, in some prior embodiment, had done some dreadful thing. She had acquired a karmic debt that had to be redeemed. When she was suddenly struck down, she had it coming—not by virtue of anything she had done in her current life, but because of something she had done in a prior life-time, possibly several life-times earlier.

If this explanation were accepted, all apparent injustices were resolved on the spot. Each person set into motion causation of various sorts. And, sooner or later, you got back what you had put out.

The principal merit of living a constructive, helpful life was that you got back what you put out. Absolutely. By having an endless number of lives in which one would reap what he had sown, nobody ever got away with a thing. What you yearned for was “Nirvana.” The merger with the *one*. The repayment of all debts, good or bad. Meanwhile, why suffer? In your own self-interest, you learned to sow good seed so you would reap a good harvest.

I was intellectually stimulated by this simple, though far reaching explanation. It was better than “you must have faith.” Somehow, I failed to reach conviction. It sounded plausible, given a divine plan in harmony with human wants. But how could I be sure? Just accept reincarnation? Faith, again?

While I could find no proof that reincarnation was true, I could marshal no conclusive arguments that it wasn’t. At the time, I knew little about the rules of logic. I was unaware of the impossibility of proving a negative. Meanwhile, Theosophists argued the veracity of their position, based on the teachings of the Masters and on the

“evidence” of person who remembered a prior life. Such people spoke in a strange language, recalling events they could not have learned of or known about unless reincarnation were true.

Of particular interest to me was the belief that thoughts were “things.” The scriptures seemed to hold to that view as well. At one point, they stated that if a man thought of committing adultery in his heart, then, in fact, he had committed adultery. Theosophy didn’t say it that way, but it added up to much the same thing. If I had adulterous thoughts about my neighbor’s wife, my neighbor would have adulterous thoughts about my wife.

When I asked if both my neighbor and I would store up karma by those thoughts, I was advised that whomever had the original thought created a karmic debt. The reaction to the original thought cleared that debt. But what of the man reacting? Did the lust felt by the second man result from the lust felt by the first man and, thus, escape the category of debt and karma? Or did the lust of the second man create karmic debt for him? I was told that both men acquired debt in this fashion for each person was supposed to be Master of his own thoughts absolutely. Thus, if the second man tainted his thoughts with lust, he, too, acquired new karma.

I never did figure my way through that one. But it seemed to me that they were saying that a person became responsible not only for his own thoughts, but also for the thoughts of his neighbor. And if that were true...? My mind refused to proceed further.

When I asked Don Clayton about this idea, he suggested I read some of the works of Madame Blavatsky. Obediently, I got a heavy tome from the library, and I tried to read it. She was so far over my head that I gave up.

Meanwhile, my chores at WTCN continued with deadly monotony. My continuing boredom affected my attitude, and that affected my spontaneity on mike.

One day, Clayton called me into his office. After closing the door—a signal that this was to be a personal conversation—he said, “I gather that the teachings of the Masters aren’t making too much of an impression.”

I nodded agreement. “Don, I’ve tried. Honest. And maybe it’s all true. I really don’t know. I’m not repelled, but I’m not attracted, either. Theosophy, to the degree that I understand it, seems hopeless. I’m just stuck. I’m here on this earth whether I want to be or

not. I can't get off. I can't do anything else. I'm bound to the wheel of birth and re-birth. Not only in this lifetime, but also in all others and for eternity."

He raised a new theological point, and we discussed it. He raised another, and we chewed on that for awhile. All the all the time, he watched me closely.

Finally, he took a sheet of paper and drew a rectangle. On top of the rectangle, he drew a curved line shaped like a glass dome, such as those used to cover a precious object of art. "Does that mean anything to you?" he asked.

I shook my head.

"It's just possible," he confided in a low voice, "that you are of a new dispensation."

"What does that mean?"

"Mind you," he said, "I'm not saying there *is* a new dispensation, or that you belong with it. But the report is out and, since I opened the first door, perhaps I should open another."

Was this some new, unfathomable mystery? I simply stared at him.

"Bob," he said at last, "A new pair of messengers have made an appearance. A Mr. and Mrs. Guy Ballard. They tell us they are Messengers from the Masters, who bring a new dispensation."

"I'm not sure about them. Time, alone, will tell. But I can tell you, they are having a profound effect."

"The Masters have always said their teaching is not understandable to the general public. To grasp the reality and the significance of Theosophy, you have to be an "old" soul. Right now, there are millions of new souls coming into embodiment and they can't begin to understand some of the things you have learned. When populations explode, you always know that many of them are very "young" and haven't yet acquired much karma."

"The new dispensation opens these teachings to everyone. That is why I question it. But by their fruits shall ye know them. The Ballards are traveling around the country, drawing huge crowds, and claiming to be Messengers of Saint Germain. It is possible they are bringing in a new dispensation. It is also possible that they are phonies. We'll know in time, of course."

Don had my full attention now.

He pointed to his pencil sketch. "The Ballards say they can assist anyone in redeeming his karmic debt. They are teaching people

how to surround themselves with a barrier of light rays to ward off negative projections from others. These lines indicate that force field. A great deal of what they say makes sense. But a tremendous amount is very advanced stuff that we've been warned against making available to the public at large. Only the most advanced students and adepts have had access to this material until now. The Ballards are putting it out from the public platform."

"Who is Saint Germain?" I asked.

"He is Master of the seventh ray. Theosophy is under the radiation of the Master, Khootumy, Lord of the sixth ray. If the Ballards really are Messengers, then the earth is entering its final dispensation. Want to find out more?"

"I sure do." I was eager.

"Very well. You don't have to accept it, you know. But they've got a couple of books out and you can get them at the library. Why don't you read what they have to say?"

Don wrote the words "Unveiled Mysteries" on the paper with his drawing and shoved it across the desk in my direction. "Ask for that at the library. The author of the book is Godfre Ray King."

"I thought you said, Ballards."

"I did. Godfre Ray King is the pen name taken by Guy Ballard. He says he has been in the retreats of the Masters, and that he is in charge of the new dispensation."

I snatched up the paper. "I'll check it out."

"I'd like your reaction," Don said. "I've read the book and it raises a lot of questions for me. Perhaps it will answer some of yours."

"Thanks, Don."

That night after my shift, I sped to the library.

Wasting no time, I went to the request desk and asked for the book. I had some light acquaintance with the lady at the desk. She looked at me with astonishment. "Are you sure this is the book you want?" She said.

"Sure." I said. "Why? Shouldn't I read it?"

"It's just not the kind of book I can picture you reading."

"I didn't know you pictured me reading anything," I said. "But that's the title. Is it available?"

After a few moments, she returned with a volume bound in imitation green leather, about the size of an ordinary novel. She charged it to my card and pushed it my way. "I hope you like it," she said.

“We’ll soon know.”

I raced home and, as soon as I could manage it, closeted myself in the bedroom. This was necessary with two noisy boys having their usual “good night” skirmishes and riots.

I had long been a devotee of science fiction stories and this book seemed to fall into that category. It was written in the first person. The author, known to me as Guy Ballard, was spending time in northern California near Mount Shasta.

While walking up the mountain, he met a handsome stranger who gave him a drink of some kind of elixir. Thanks to the amazing properties of this fluid, Ballard began having a series of astonishing adventures through which this stranger conducted him. The stranger turned out to be the Master, Saint Germain.

It took me two days to finish the book in my spare time. It was easy to read, although it was not particularly well written. I won’t review it here since it is still available. It isn’t easy to obtain because the Federal Government has banned it from the mails, but no such prohibition existed then.

The personal instructions, put in near the beginning of the story, were most meaningful to me. The writer said that anyone who wished to verify the truth of the book had to take certain steps. If he did the things suggested and thought as specified, then, the author assured his reader, experiences would unfold to convince him that every word of the story was true.

The story was about Ballard and Saint Germain. The latter arriving night after night at Ballard’s hotel, and the two of them—after a stimulus of “divine” quality had been imbibed—would travel in their “finer” bodies over the Americas, including Central and South, and even into Egypt.

At each destination, Saint Germain explained the history of what had transpired in cultures predating any known today.

Saint Germain explained that the average person made little or no attempt to control his thoughts. They “ran around like a little stray dog.” In consequence, the great inner forces that could bring a person happiness, beauty, wealth, and all good things, lay dormant and untapped. But if a person made positive effort and got his mind under his own control, then he could perform what others would assume to be miracles. Actually, Saint Germain explained, there were no miracles. It was just that mankind was as ignorant of

many great natural laws.

Like any good science fiction story, this one captivated the imagination.

Only a few years ago, I had the opportunity of discussing the story briefly with Bob Heinlein, one of America's dominant figures in science fiction. Bob revealed to me that he had read "Unveiled Mysteries" himself. As a result, he had written a short story that used of much of what was in the book. Bob was completely nonplussed that the book had had such an impact on me.

While "Unveiled Mysteries" intrigued me, I was puzzled by the assertion that the whole thing was true, word for word. Instead of dismissing it as a bald-faced lie, as I'm sure many did, I decided to follow the instructions necessary to convince a reader.

At that time, I had no knowledge of psychology, the nature of hypnotism, or the currently accepted view—accepted by at least some—that all hypnosis results from self-hypnosis, or an openness to suggestion.

The instructions in "Unveiled Mysteries" are identical to those I have currently found in modern books on psychology. Except, of course, the entire instruction was offered in transcendental language, in a setting that was "other-worldly."

Fundamentally, the instructions called for meditation. So I began to meditate. In this hectic world, meditation is good therapy. This simple exercise made me feel better. While I had no evidence that the book was true, I was less resentful of the circumstances I found myself in.

I told Peggy about the book and, since she was an omnivorous reader, I suggested she read it before I had to return it to the library.

For several days, I took a few minutes out of each day to meditate as instructed.

Then an event occurred that has no explanation. It is as vivid in my mind today as when it occurred nearly forty-five years ago. I was standing next to the grand piano in studio B. The recordings I had played on my shift were in a stack on top of the piano. I was restoring the discs to their jackets in preparation for filing.

I had been conversing with my relief announcer, but he had returned to the booth to read a commercial. I was momentarily alone in the studio.

Suddenly, I had the feeling of rising within myself to a great height. A voice spoke. The tonality was rich and full, yet I did not hear it with my ears. Two words were spoken. "I Am." That is all. Instantly, the studio was filled with the aroma of fresh roses. And, at the same moment, I heard a series of clicks in my mind. Not one click, but a series. Like the sound made by a small boy as he runs a stick along a picket fence.

With each of those clicks, a question about ultimate reality that had baffled me had an answer. I experienced the sensation of knowledge—ultimate knowing. On the instant, every doubt and fear I had ever known vanished.

"I Am," was the answer.

The relief man returned from his chore, paused, and sniffed. "Hey. That's some perfume. Which one of the women is wearing it?"

I couldn't speak. I shook my head. I was still high, high above. No woman had entered the studio. At least, I had seen no one. Had there been a "presence" there? I felt there had been.

That night, Peggy voiced a suspicion that I'd had a "date" with another woman. Her perfume was on me. I recited my experience. She smelled my hair. It was as though it had been rinsed in attar of roses.

This "elevation" continued for several days. I found my heart singing in exaltation at any and everything in existence. I could feel a great welling forth of love for all. I would look at a stranger, moving along the walk on his own business. He would not be a stranger to me, but one I had known and loved for all time.

I was in a state of exaltation. At the time I attributed this event to "Unveiled Mysteries." The book had said that if I followed instructions, then I would—in my own experience—learn that every word was true. I didn't understand it. But I now accepted the fabulous ideas of the book as fact.

My co-workers at the studio were baffled by my new attitude. I no longer "smarted off" when I was near them. I was too full of love for each of them to be cute.

I told Don what had occurred. "You are blessed," he said. "It is real to you. And I know you are telling the truth." Then he smiled. "I didn't use the term 'I Am' to you. That is the term the Ballards are using. They call it the 'I Am' movement, or the Teachings of the 'I Am.'"

Many years later, in literature I have read on the subject, I have found references to others having a truly “religious” experience. Those who have never had such an experience have no reason to understand it, or to believe it could occur.

I learned in time to keep the experience secret. What caused it? I don’t know. Was it the book? Was it a derivative of my passionate search for answers, which had been brought to focus by early tragedy? Did it arise from my tendency to periodically pass out? Was it my mother’s early influence? My diet? Possibly, a combination of these or other unknown factors. Could it have been a kind of temporary mental illness? Was it the product of my boredom, combined with the pressure of the job? I still don’t know. I can describe what took place as accurately as I know how.

This may be important to some. In another place, I attempted at one time to put this experience into writing. When I did so, I do not believe I made the account accurate in terms of chronology. The account, as set forth above, I believe to be chronologically accurate, as well as correct in other details. I have had a lifetime to think about it.

Human beings believe what they most deeply wish to believe. Our desires form the pattern of our acceptance. Today, those who know me best have often commented on what they view as my skills as a logician. I have been so deeply embarrassed by this youthful lack of logic that I have done my best to conceal the event.

Concealment is impossible. And some of my friends have understandably chided and criticized me mercilessly.

Man acts on the basis of his deepest convictions. There is no doubt that this event influenced my behavior profoundly. What kind of a person would I have been if the foregoing experience had been absent? I am grateful that I am now at an age where, without chagrin, I can say I don’t know.

One of the great advantages achieved with advancing years is the disappearance of embarrassment. This is maturity—the ability to live and think beyond malice.

Chapter XXIV

Unveiled Mysteries had been published by “Saint Germain Press.” The final page in the book contained the address of the publisher and a list of other works from the pen of Godfre Ray King. I ordered everything available and steeped myself in this material. How I rejoiced with every bit of new information.

The “new dispensation” brought by Godfre Ray King, (Guy and Edna Ballard) was built on the Theosophical base. It claimed that the two “Messengers” were working hand-in-hand with Saint Germain, an “Ascended Master.”

The Britannica had some interesting things to say about Saint Germain. There is no question: Saint Germain is an historic figure who left a trail that is still baffling today. He was (apparently) born in 1710 and died (apparently) in 1780. A reliable witness tells of seeing him in Paris in 1789.

He was a Portuguese Jew, and a man of many accomplishments. He spoke nearly all the European languages, including German, English, Italian, French (with a Piedmontese accent), Portuguese, and Spanish. He composed music and played the violin with great skill. His principal claim to fame was that he understood chemistry. He said he had developed an elixir that could prolong life indefinitely. Indeed, he said he had lived for 2000 years. He claimed to be able, chemically, to remove flaws from diamonds and to transmute metals.

A letter from Horace Walpole mentions Germain as being in London in 1743. Grimm affirms that Saint Germain was the man of the “best parts he had ever known.” His knowledge of history was comprehensive.

Walpole says: “He is called an Italian, a Spaniard, a Pole; a somebody that married a great fortune in Mexico and ran away with her jewels to Constantinople; a priest, a fiddler, a vast nobleman.”

In 1748, he became an advisor to Louis XV in the Paris court, and served on secret missions. He appears to have lived in London in 1760, but he was in St. Petersburg in 1762, where he played an important role in the conspiracy that placed Catherine II on the Russian throne.

He was favorably impressed with the American Revolution—I was told later—and he sought to bring about a “United States of Europe” before it emerged in America. He took up residence in Schleswig-Holstein, where he and the Landgrave Charles of Hesse pursued the study of the “secret” sciences. He was known as *der Wundermann* of Europe.

The supporting references listed in the Britannica have been generally agreed upon as works by capable and honest observers. In college, I had learned to accept the written word provided by “authorities” as the final evidence. The Britannica was “the best.”

Since then, I have found that citing authority can be the last haven for scoundrels and the justification for many a specious argument or position.

The fact that Saint Germain had once lived did not prove he was still alive. Nor did it establish that the Ballards were working hand-in-hand with him. But there was enough of the adventurous and the quixotic in the Britannica to pique my curiosity. It furnished something more than an unsupported story I would be required to accept on faith.

According to the Ballards, Saint Germain’s claim to longevity was true. He had been alive at the time of Christ, but had not understood all the secret sciences until his studies with the Landgrave Charles. However, he had known enough to create the elixir. It was then, in 1780 or 1785, that he completed his studies, learned the ultimate mysteries, and obtained immortality exactly as Jesus (and others) had done.

These were the mysteries now being unveiling for the American people. The key to the whole process was “I Am.” “I Am,” they explained, was actually the name of God. For evidence, they cited the Bible. As an example, in confronting the burning bush in the wilderness, Moses was advised that the “I Am” was the name of God. Jesus, in his important statements, did not claim to personally be the Son of God. Rather, he said, “I Am” the Son of God. Other important statements began with “I Am.”

Hindus comprehended the power of this word, but, through the corruption of tongues, they called it by the sound “Ooom.” Eastern Indian devotees frequently intone this sound.

The real meaning of “I Am,” as the Ballards explained it, was that each human being *is* the Son of God. This God is a “presence” physi-

cally located above each person. The awesome power of this presence was available for everyone to use in his daily living. All he had to do was to identify this god properly and the “power of the universe” could be harnessed for “right” use.

By so doing, you could accomplish virtually anything. By calling for “protection,” each individual could surround himself with a force field that was invisible to human sight, but entirely real. To prevent harmful or negative thoughts or feelings being projected into him, he could create a force field, like a block of granite, on which he stood and moved. The atoms of the block moved with him when did.

You could be “in the world” but not “of it.”

What was meant by “right” use of this tremendous energy and power? Ah, here was the point. The “Presence” wanted you to make use of this power. To the degree that you had unfavorable karma, the Presence was thwarted. Theosophists claimed you were bound to this karmic debt through lifetime after lifetime. No longer true under the new dispensation, said the Ballards. The Presence could now be called upon to “consume” this karmic debt so that a person could, in his present lifetime, rid himself of all past accumulations. He could become a creature of cause alone. To do so, he must “clean himself up.”

First, one must be physically clean. Every person must wash himself thoroughly every day. The use of anything that might contaminate the body was strictly forbidden. Tobacco, drugs, alcohol, and even the stimulation of coffee and tea were on the verboten list. Additionally, all flesh foods were proscribed. Meat lowered the vibratory rate of the atomic structure and obscured a person’s spiritual insights.

Next, one must wear clean, bright and attractive colors. Red and black were the colors of anger and death. They were to be avoided at all times. White was the preferred color, because all real and constructive colors are contained therein.

Why was the “new dispensation” offered at this time? America was a very special country. The Masters, including Saint Germain, had played a part by influencing and directing its founders. But, now, America had come under certain baneful influences that had conspired with all the dark forces to undermine and destroy it.

These dark and evil forces were headed by what the Ballards

called “black magicians.” If America could be brought to her knees, then these dark and malignant forces would rule the world.

There was much more, but I am trying to consolidate some of the major concepts.

The Ballards’ position and instruction reached me in three increments and with an impact I had never before imagined. The most profound—the “manifestations” I had experienced in studio B—was the first and the most overwhelming. My tendency to challenge and be skeptical vanished insofar as the “I Am” teachings were concerned.

The second was patriotism. The Ballards proclaimed it from on high. This country had been planned as the land of the free. Saint Germain was the embodiment, the very god of liberty. “I Am” students would be called upon to do all in their power to save their country from destruction. The gnawing teeth of destructive rodents were busily destroying the very foundations on which this country was built.

Not only would the students be called upon to clean up their own persons, but they would also be called upon to proclaim the victory of the “I Am” over the entire nation.

The third increment was the pseudo-scientific basis on which the teachings rested. The Ballards repeatedly asserted that theirs was neither a new religion, nor a new interpretation of the old one. Theirs was a new dispensation that explained the “law of life.”

This was the explanation. Everything in the universe is composed of atoms. There are two things—energy and matter—both of which are simply atoms, each atom whirling about in its own way.

The “Presence” commands atoms. This anyone could demonstrate to his own satisfaction. You decide to raise your arm. You can do so. What are you really doing? You are simply moving a vast array of atoms, each one vibrating as human flesh and bone, through other atoms that are less densely packed, which comprise the light and space through which your arm is raised.

How were you able to raise your arm? Simply because the “I Am” in you *believed* you could. You had no doubts. If doubts became dominant, you would suffer from paralysis and be unable to move your arm. The Presence commanded all things. The first law of the universe was obedience to God. Every atom obeyed that law since it was in “its nature” to do so. It wasn’t a matter of divinity. It was a

matter of fact.

Thus, as you obtained “mastery” over yourself, you banished your doubts and your fears. The more you could conquer yourself in this regard, the more atoms you could command. If you could command the atoms in your own arm, then you could command other atoms not in your own arm.

Equipped with this “knowledge”, and having “cleaned up” and eliminated fear and doubt, you could walk on water, pass through a wall, precipitate whatever you wanted for “right” use, and demonstrate mastery in all respects. You could levitate your body, dissolve the karmic debt, heal the sick, and make yourself immune to any and every threat of danger. In the end, you could merge with your own god Presence, which was physically above you. In this manner, you accomplish what others who had assayed this arduous course had achieved.

The “miracles” of Jesus weren’t miracles. The ignorant see a miracle in anything they fail to comprehend. The individual who *knows*, sees no miracles, but recognizes the workings of laws unknown to most.

My tendency to scoff at the miracles in scripture was laughed at by the Ballards, but with full sympathy. What I was really objecting to, they advised, was not the miracle itself, but the argument that Jesus was a super-natural being. No such being existed, I was informed. Jesus simply understood the laws, and he practiced them. He was supposedly a great teacher. If he was a great teacher, then, surely, he must have had some students able to do what he had done. Otherwise, he must have been a poor teacher. Saint Germain had been just such a student. Several others who had followed Jesus—including Peter, Paul, and John—had also attained the same victory.

The Ballards hit a homerun with that one. I had independently reached that conclusion, but in the negative. Since I knew of none who had “raised” his body into one of pure light, I was convinced it was impossible. The alleged resurrection of Jesus, three days after his crucifixion, was a tale I attributed to man’s superstition and his need to create myths of a fabulous nature.

I was told to reverse my own polarity. What was reported in scriptures, I was told, wasn’t the tale of a miracle. It was simply the way things worked. Further, it would work for me, too, if I applied myself.

Two other factors served to underscore what I took to be “proof” of the Ballards’ teachings. The first was the Ballards’ view of sex. The sex function was for the purpose of procreation. Period. The world was being over-run by “new” souls who could readily be dra-gooned into the dark legions, since they knew no better and had no experience of prior lives. This was part of the conspiracy. Americans were copulating themselves into misery. Instead of striving to create and develop the best, the most worthy, they were increasing low-level sub-achievers in staggering numbers.

They were being influenced to believe that sex was primarily for pleasure. Increased sexual indulgence provided a surplus population that would consume resources and produce grinding poverty and oppression for all.

Suddenly, my mother’s influence over me was vindicated. Abstinence in sexual matters had been one of her deepest convictions. Compared to my co-workers at the studio, I was relatively pure. I had often had powerful urges to indulge myself sexually. But Mother’s influence had, quite frankly, emasculated my performance, except when it came to Peggy. I had leaped the fence with her. The difficulties that act had brought me—Peggy’s unplanned pregnancy—had tied me into a boring stultifying rut. I had virtually traded my freedom for sexual pleasure. Or, so I reasoned. Suddenly, my current rebellion against my situation was understandable. I had brought it on myself. Karma. Cause-effect.

The second factor related to diet. I had never eaten meat. I had never taken a drink. I had tried to smoke at one time, but I didn’t like it, and stopped after a few abortive attempts.

The Spartan discipline I had practiced could only mean that, compared to most who entered the “I Am” teachings, I would be far in advance. They would have to conquer all these habits. I had never developed most of them. Sex would obviously be a problem. How we enjoy rationalizing all that occurs in our own favor.

I wrote again to Saint Germain Press, seeking information. Was it possible to see the Ballards in person? Was there some center in the Twin City area where a person, such as myself, could repair to be kept informed of what was happening among other “I Am” students?

My questions were answered by letter. The Ballards were touring the United States, holding “classes.” They were conducting ses-

sions or seminars in major auditoriums from coast to coast. I was furnished a schedule listing where they would appear during the balance of that year.

As for a center, there was one in Minneapolis. It was under the direction of a man whom I will call Bill Sands. If opportunity opened, they suggested I contact Mr. Sands so I could help in “making the calls” (invoking the “I Am”) to help protect America in her hour of need. As for the Ballard meetings, I could attend any of them at no charge. No admittance fee was ever asked. People could and did make “love gifts,” if they cared to do so. But this was not required. Each person was in charge of his own resources, and he was the only authority on how they should be used.

The information sounded almost too good to be true. I was filled with elation. Suddenly, I had a purpose that was bigger and more important than my job. I could reach out beyond myself and be of use to others.

Of course, I would have to clean up my own act. Not only the sex practice would have to go, but also I must learn to master my own thoughts and feelings. Obviously, I would be of little help to “the Masters” if I hadn’t first learned to control myself.

I was also assured me that, while the Ballards were the only “Accredited Messengers” of Saint Germain, there were several “Assistant Messengers.” One of these “Assistants” to the Masters—selected by the Ballards but approved of by Saint Germain—went by the name “Brother Bill.” (Not to be confused with Bill Sands.) “Brother Bill” would be holding a seminar, or session, in Minneapolis before long. Perhaps I would like to attend his meetings. I could get all the necessary information from Bill at the Minneapolis Reading Room.

Any good organizer will recognize the necessary devices for creating membership or participation in a “movement.” A goal is selected; a bureaucracy is formed. People are honored and recognized for achievement as they advance in the bureaucracy. Everyone is given something to “do.” Excitement and participation spurs competition and rivalry.

Life was no longer stale and lack-luster. I was walking on air. The “magic” power of the “Presence” could be summoned to accomplish any worthy, constructive, or “right” objective. Nothing could be more worthy, constructive, or right than working to deliver America from her enemies. At the same time, a person was

raising his own consciousness until all of living became a symphony of love and high purpose.

My first desire was to bring Peggy into a full awareness of what had happened to me. I insisted she read all the material I had obtained. She did so, but was not noticeably moved. Next, I informed her, that because of my desire to follow the Master's instructions, sex between us would have to stop. We would get twin beds and sleep separately for starters. This wasn't going to be easy, but it was going to be worth the effort.

Meanwhile, "Brother Bill" held his meetings at the old West Hotel on Hennepin Avenue in Minneapolis, and I was in attendance throughout. His presentation consisted largely of a personal testimonial on how he had been a rotter, an alcoholic, and a womanizer. Then he had met the Ballards, and become convinced of the reality of their teachings by testing them for himself.

Now, he explained, he trusted his "Presence" and, so, was able to accomplish just about anything he wished to do. What he wished most was to advance the teachings of the Masters and serve the Ballards, whom he described in the most glowing terms.

Peggy stayed home with the boys during "Brother Bill's" sessions. She wasn't really interested. I wanted desperately to awaken her enthusiasm. She had become active at Westminster ever since her return from California. She was not particularly attracted to anything as extreme and bizarre as the Ballard teachings.

Consulting the schedule, I learned that the Ballards were holding a ten-day "class" at a major auditorium in Detroit. I managed to persuade some of my co-announcers to swap a few shifts with me, and cleared several consecutive days.

Peggy and I drove to Detroit. We sat together through about two days of the session.

The presentation was spectacular. The entire stage was covered with a white ground cloth. There were two microphones—one for Guy and one for Edna Ballard—stage right and stage left, respectively. The draw curtain had been pulled back, and the entire stage was visible during all sessions.

Three ornate chairs were up stage, right, left and center. They were reserved, we were informed, for Guy, Edna, and Saint Germain, who would sometimes occupy the center chair. You can imagine how eagerly I looked forward to seeing this *Wundermann* of Eu-

rope. He who had died in 1780, but he had been reportedly seen 1789. And that report was in the *Britannica*!

The pictures were most impressive. On one side of the stage was a huge painting of Jesus in a splendid gold frame displayed on an easel. A corresponding portrait, on the opposite side, depicted Saint Germain, a handsome man with high forehead, van dyke beard, and luminous, loving eyes.

In the exact center, hanging above the central chair, was a huge portrait in color referred to as “the chart.” This portrayed a human form standing on a block of white light. The human was enveloped in an aura of white radiance that poured down, from a figure high above who was surrounded by a sunburst of all the colors of the rainbow. The upper figure depicted the “I Am” Presence.

The stage was brightly lit. The auditorium lights were on full. The stage floor reflected the radiance, and the whole place shimmered in luminous glory.

There was organ music. Singing. The audience chanted some “I Am” decrees in unison. A man in a spotless white suit came to one of the microphones and made a series of announcements. His name was Jim Rogers. At last he introduced the Ballards.

Applause began as the audience rose to its feet. The sound swept through the auditorium in a thunderous roar. Mr. and Mrs. Ballard—he in an immaculate white tuxedo, she in a flowing pink chiffon—walked briskly from stage and right to their respective microphones. The place reverberated with applause that swelled and rolled upward like a tidal wave.

Mr. Ballard bowed his head in acknowledgement and spread his arms in welcome. Mrs. Ballard duplicated his greeting. The two stood there as the cascading approval continued. It went on and on. I glanced at my watch. I had never heard such a continuing ovation. It lasted fully five minutes before it subsided.

But there was something more than sound. Peggy and I looked at each other. There was a feeling. It was almost tangible. Love, adoration akin to worship filled the huge nave. This was getting to Peggy and I was elated. It was what I had hoped.

As we sank to our seats, Peggy whispered, “I must say, that was impressive.” I nodded mute agreement.

Mr. Ballard was slightly taller than six feet. He had an intelligent face, large nose, piercing blue eyes, and white hair combed pom-

padour. Mrs. Ballard was lovely. Her hair was golden, her face symmetrical and pale, her actions graceful and natural.

The two of them took turns. Mr. Ballard explained the chart, and covered material largely familiar to me from my reading. Then, he retired to his chair and Mrs. Ballard took up the narrative where he left off.

Later in the meeting, Mrs. Ballard said that one of the Masters had arrived. It wasn't Saint Germain, but another. I looked around eagerly. Since no one had come on stage, I thought perhaps that someone was coming down the aisle.

It turned out that those of us in the audience couldn't see this visitor, but both the Ballards could. At least, that was the explanation given. Now, Mr. Ballard, apparently in a trance state (which was denied), began to "read" what the visiting Master wanted him to say.

The material was not as ably worded, nor as well constructed in idea content as the material they had offered independently. The audience sat spellbound for about thirty minutes during this "dictation."

This same pattern was followed in each of the meetings we attended. Sometimes there was a "dictation," but more often there was none. I felt uneasy during those affairs, but learned that the audience felt such a "dictation" was a special treat.

When Peggy and I had to break away, we had a long talk during the drive home. Peggy had been impressed favorably. She said she didn't understand it all. But she could now see why I was so moved and captivated.

As for me, I was simply elevated into a new way of thinking and living. Everything made sense. If I had any further questions concerning physical reality, I found a metaphysical explanation.

I was no longer bored and negative. I began each day in joy, happy to be alive, filled with praise for the beautiful world around me, for the life and love that became a constant part of everything I saw, said, or did.

Shortly after the trip to Detroit, I had an opportunity to visit my mother. She had sold our home in South Minneapolis, and was now earning her way as a practical nurse.

I told her all about the "I Am" teaching. She listened shaking her head. She said it was too extreme for her to comprehend. But her

final remark as I embraced her was, "I must say, Robert, that it has done wonders for you. For that I am grateful. But please be careful. It sounds too good to be true."

I smiled in a superior manner. "Thank you, Mother. And forgive me for saying this. Your remark is rather typical. Most of the people I talk to about the 'I Am' respond identically. 'It's too good to be true.' It seems that nearly everyone believes and has faith in evil. Whatever negative thing anyone says or does is instantly accepted without question.

"But when something good comes along, every doubt is awakened. It's no wonder so many people have so many problems. They believe in their problems. They create them. They hug them and take them to their bosoms.

"Each of us lives in a world of his own making. And I've had a terrible world to live in, a world I made that way. But I can now see my way out of it. And, boy, am I going to get out, and stay out. I hope and pray that one day you will rise above your doubts and fears, too."

Chapter XXV

I became the complete missionary for the “I Am” teachings. I did my best to spread the “good news” that each person had the individualized presence of God immediately at hand. I proselytized among my co-workers, my fans, and my acquaintances. The increasingly frequent looks of resentment and boredom I received, amused me, and spurred me to greater efforts.

The Ballards had offered, both in writing and from the platform, the following prosyllogism. 1. God is never wrong. 2. The Masters, by perfecting themselves, had become one with God and, therefore, were never wrong. 3. The Ballards, by being under the personal direction of Saint Germain, an ascended Master, were never wrong. Even if the unlikely should happen and the Ballards make a mistake, they would be corrected. No errors could or would creep into this work.

This proposition produced infallibility. I had long heard of the supposed infallibility of the Pope, and I had laughed at it. Obviously, a Pope could be wrong, and history had demonstrated that plenty of them had been. But with this new dispensation, America was at the crossroads and no further error could be tolerated. That was why Saint Germain and other Masters were intervening directly. Human frailty and error had to be ruled out.

This is one of the most comforting arguments you can accept. It will, in time, produce either docile obedience in all things, or revolution. Usually it produces both, each in its own time.

But I had something even more comforting. I had “heard” a voice saying, “I Am.” My conversion was complete. All I had to do was the “make my calls to the presence,” and whatever I wished would manifest. If it didn’t, my own karmic accumulation prevented it; or, I still had doubts and fears; or, I must renew my efforts; or, the manifestation was on its way; or, I was being tested; or, whatever. Tautologies prove themselves.

Another important point made by the Ballards seemed to apply to my domestic situation. Mrs. Ballard had explained that, sometimes in a family, one member accepted the teaching, while another rejected it. Should that occur, the correct response was service to “the

light". No person, even a wife or husband, had a right to prevent his spouse from this great opportunity.

Peggy had at last taken an interest, but it was neither lasting nor profound. I let her know that she came second. Even the boys were second. My job at the station was second. Everything else paled beside this new dispensation.

On the other side of the coin, the Ballards preached absolute honesty and forthrightness. You must tell the truth at all times, even if the truth hurt. In conjunction with this insistence, they explained that most things in this world were what they seemed. You dismissed a great deal of what people told you. Instead of listening to what they said, you watched to see what they did. Not only did actions speak more loudly than words, the symbols for actions were the outpicturings of inner truth. If you recognized the symbols, you became acquainted with the facts.

In effect, they suggested that you might correctly shun the advice of a poor man who claimed he knew how to make you rich. If he really knew how, he would be rich. One could shun the obese dietician and the cadaverous looking chef. Success bred success. Failure produced more of itself. Most people failed while advising others how to succeed.

Property and wealth were desirable. They did not produce happiness, but their acquisition demonstrated that a given individual was using the "laws of life" correctly. Instead of being envious at the attainment of others, one should re-double his own efforts and attain it for himself.

They warned against pity and sympathy. If a person received enough of either, he might become emotionally attached to receiving pity and sympathy. This did not mean you should act harshly or with lack of concern.

You should show a stern face toward those who pleaded for sympathy. After all, they had it within themselves to succeed. All they had to do was conquer themselves, through application.

Basically, each person had enough to do in just handling his own misdeeds, both in prior lifetimes and in the present. Your job was self-mastery in all things, not the pouring of sentimental slop over others. Nor could anyone attain mastery for another. This was impossible. Through self mastery, we raised ourselves individually, or we stayed down.

My work at the station prospered. I began earning sums in addition to my regular salary, as a result of special jobs for specific clients who requested me.

I attempted to become active at the “I Am” reading room. Bill Sands was a fine young man, who appeared to be completely sincere. He had few attainments in any worldly sense, but he certainly applied himself. He seemed to be entirely in the confidence of the Ballards.

I found myself envious. I worked to get rid of it, but the feeling grew. I believed I had more to offer than Sands did, and yet, he seemed to have approval from “on high.” My ambition gnawed at the status quo. Meanwhile, the reading room languished. I assured myself I didn’t want to injure Bill, but I did want the work to prosper. With Bill at the focal point, growth would not occur.

I wrote to the Ballards personally, expressing unbounded admiration for their efforts and suggesting that, perhaps, I might start a Reading Room in St. Paul. I believed I could run such a reading room and keep my announcing job at full bore with no difficulty. I requested an audience with them.

To my intense joy, a letter advised me that they would be in Kansas City. If I could arrange my time, they would see me in person.

It was no great challenge to rearrange my shift by making some trade-offs with other men. In due course, I caught a fast train to Kansas City.

At the auditorium where the “Messengers” were in the midst of another ten-day “class,” I was identified by a man on their staff and allowed to go backstage during the final minutes of that evening’s session.

From the wings, I watched them work. They were tremendous in the impression they created. I came as near to adoration of two human beings as I have ever come. From the books, I had learned that these two people had actually been in the sacred retreats of the Masters. They had purified themselves to such a degree that they could make their ascensions “anytime.” I was in awe. The session ended and the Ballards came to meet me. Chairs had been arranged, and we all sat. I wanted to kneel, to express my unworthiness. Instead, I offered my services in establishing a Reading Room in St. Paul. I admitted my envy of Bill Sands. I presumed they would know

about it anyway. But I asserted I didn't want to give him competition. He was having a difficult enough time.

Surely, a brand new outlet in the adjacent Twin City would bolster our combined efforts.

They asked a number of questions, and I remember none of them. They appeared pleased by my responses, and they gave their blessings. They assured me they would not assist financially. Each Reading Room had to support itself. But, if I was willing to make the attempt, then they would approve. During this intimate little meeting, they referred to each other as "Mama" and "Daddy," and I was told I could address them that way, too, if it pleased me. What a privilege! I was being taken in as a "member of the family."

Back in Minneapolis, I walked on air for weeks. I already had a number of converts who kept in touch with me on a more or less regular basis. I was primarily concerned with the logistics of setting up a St. Paul operation, while spending most of my time in Minneapolis at the studio. I wanted a Reading Room that would be outstanding. One that people would enjoy visiting. Sands' place was a couple of rented rooms on the second floor in the Orpheum Theater building—anything but impressive.

A place such as I envisioned would cost a lot. I didn't have that kind of money. I was sensitive of the lack of opulence insofar as my personal converts were concerned. They were working people, and I undoubtedly earned more than any of them.

The teaching was that, when you had any problem, you took it up with the "Presence." Naturally, I did so.

On the St. Paul side of the Mississippi River, a row of mansions stretched southward from Summit Avenue along the high banks. At this point, the river was the dividing line between the two cities and, if one of those mansions could be converted to "I Am" use, the location was about as near to the studios as my little home near the south shore of Cedar Lake in Minneapolis.

Two of the mansions had "for sale" signs on them and were vacant. With the economy as it was, many locations could have been obtained, if one had the money, and few did.

I contacted the agents for both properties. The one nearest the bridge was in the hands of a young attorney, who was truly eager to dispose of the property. Six lots went with the home and the sepa-

rate three-car garage. The place had fifteen rooms, eight bedrooms, and four baths. It also had a solarium, three fireplaces (including one in the basement recreation room), a *porte cochere*, complete laundry and kitchen facilities and a full attic.

The asking price was \$15,000.

Peggy and I went through the property. I showed it to several of my most eager supporters. If we all agreed to live there with each of us paying rent for room and board, then that money would make the payments. The living room was large and could be used as a meeting room. A parlor adjacent to the front door could be used as the Reading Room, where books and periodicals would be available. This was the kind of setting in which the “I Am” work should be offered. Wealth attracts wealth. What a person is inside, manifests outwardly. Blessed are the rich. The poor have some work to do to catch up.

To make any kind of real estate purchase, there must be a down payment of some kind. The attorney said he would accept as little as \$1,500, but he had to have at least that. Then we could pay \$150 per month on the principal and interest at 5 per cent. Collectively, we could make those payments, maintain the property, and provide the food. But how does one find \$1,500 in one lump?

I called the attorney with an offer. I would turn over my present home. With the improvements we had put into it, I claimed a \$1,500 equity. He would find it easier to sell the small property than the large one.

After several false starts, the transaction was finally consummated, and we moved to the prestigious River Drive address in St. Paul. Nine people were involved: two men, three women—all single—plus Peggy, the two boys, and me. Our family took a three-room suite, complete with bath. Each of the others obtained a separate room, and other baths were shared.

Each month I paid \$160 for the use of the suite. One of the men paid \$45.00, because he had the best room. Two of the girls each paid \$35.00. The third paid \$30.00, and the second man paid \$25.00. Out of this monthly total of \$330.00, we paid all the bills and managed satisfactorily. A few dollars trickled in from the Reading Room as well, but only a few.

That early ambition of mine was fulfilled. Peggy did most of the housework, with the “guests” helping. I now rocketed from one job

to another, conducting meetings in the evenings and going on the air as the Milkman, “Happy Bob,” every morning at six.

The Ballards suggested that your attitude should always be one of joyous anticipation. The Masters watched everyone connected with the movement. At any time, a Master might materialize to any one of us, and undoubtedly would do so, whenever a person cleaned himself up enough.

Also, the Ballards specified that there were certain places on earth where “pillars of light” had been established. At those special points, it was easier for the Masters to appear. They listed famous places such as the shrine at Lourdes in France and the Church of Guadeloupe in Mexico.

I began to wonder if studio B contained such a pillar of light. It was in the studio that I had taken my audition. There, I had “heard” the voice. Filled with the most incredible yearnings, I sat there one day and my mind began to think in poetry devoted to the “I Am” teachings. If there is one thing I am not, it is a poet.

For some reason, the thoughts I formulated had a cadence, a meter, and—sometimes—the words actually rhymed. I brought a typewriter to the studio, and began to type these thoughts.

I sat there the better part of four hours. I produced about twenty pages, single-spaced—a kind of dramatic poem, which I called: “Neath the Forest Oak.” No rewriting was necessary. It was virtually flawless.

I offered it to Don, with an apology. I didn’t understand poetry, but somehow I had managed to produce a dramatic poem. Was it any good? To my surprise, he liked it, suggesting it be put on the air with various actors reading the separate parts.

This was done. An artist, who happened to be one of my fans, wrote in following the broadcast, saying she had been quite moved by the production and offering to illustrate the script with watercolors. I mailed her a copy and, in due course, she returned it, beautifully illustrated.

A most interesting event accompanies this particular episode. The leading female role in the drama is called Flor-on-de-lyn. The woman playing the part was a staff employee named Arleth. There was a certain fey quality to her personality and, as we rehearsed (in studio B), she said she could feel a kind of force in that room.

Naturally, I accepted this as evidence that there might be a “pil-

lar” there. But I was slowly learning not to talk about things of this sort.

Studio B was also used for the broadcast. Immediately after we went off the air, the studio clock went wild. The hands jumped from place to place and a high-pitched metallic scream came from it for nearly a minute. Then, it stopped, and resumed normal function. The cast stared at me and shook their heads. Nothing resembling such erratic behavior had ever occurred before in anyone’s memory. I made no effort at an explanation then, and I make none now. I merely recited what occurred.

The event shook me to the roots. The Ballard teaching had it that everything the Masters did was beautiful, right, and transcendent. That scream had been anything but.

Arleth pointed out that the scream had occurred immediately *after* we went off the air. Why? Well, why had it occurred at all? I was mystified. I was, at that time, willing to accept the presence of beings I could not see. But I was continually confronted with the possibility that such beings might not be the all-knowing, all-good creatures we were importuned to believe in. That cry had been like a wounded animal in agony.

One day, a man I had never seen came slouching into the studio. He wore a two-day growth of whiskers and his trousers needed pressing so badly that, when he stood up straight, he still looked as though he was ready to jump.

He accosted each of the employees, in turn, and, when I came out of the announce booth, he was waiting for me.

“What’s your name?” he growled. He was lean, his clothing shabby, and I would have classified him as a hobo, except for his aggressive attitude.

Well, he could be a fan or an ascended Master friend in disguise. Despite the downward swerve of his mouth, I responded pleasantly. “I’m Happy Bob,” I said, smiling. I offered my hand. “And you?”

He gave me his name. “I’m from the union,” he said.

I had very little experience with unions and, apparently, I didn’t react according to his anticipation. I just said, “So?”

He focused on my face as though he had just discovered a worm in his apple.

“How much do you make?” He demanded.

“Enough.” I said.

"I want the exact amount," he snarled. "If you won't tell me I have ways of getting the information."

My inclination was to suggest he go out and come back in again when he felt better. Instead, I told him.

He harrumphed. "Is that all?"

His sneer suggested I was being cheated.

"How long you been with this bucket of bolt?"

"Nearly four years."

"And that's all you get? Look, kid, I 'm with the Teamsters, see. And we 're gonna unionize this joint.

"You oughta be getting at least twice that. Sign up with us, and we'll get it for you. How's that sound?"

I was rattled. "Why, why, I'm satisfied. Well, that is...of course, I'd like more money. Anybody would. But they've treated me pretty well, you know. I'm..."

"You're a jerk," he cut in. "You don't seem to know that the bosses are exploiting you. They are living off the sweat of your brow. You do the work and they get the gravy. Well, we're gonna change all that."

"How do you propose doing that?"

"Everyone here is for it, see. So, we're gonna have a meeting down at Union headquarters. Next Tuesday night.

You come, see."

I stared at him without commitment.

"You come if you know what's good for you," he said.

"Let me suppose," I suggested, "That I don't know what's good for me. What will you do if I don't come?"

He brought his face close to mine. "I mighta known. You're probably nothing but a *petit bourgeoisie*. You don't have the stuff in you to be a boss, but you think one day you'll make it. You're full of shit. You are the fodder that's going to be ground between the giant millstones of the privileged few and the masses.

So, get smart, kid. The Union is on your side. We're for the masses, see. And the masses always win."

My self-assurance was seeping away. "How will you convince the bosses to pay me more than I 'm getting?" I asked.

"We'll pull a strike and make 'em do it, see. That's the only kind of talk they understand. You gotta get tough with 'em."

"That doesn't sound right to me."

"Oh, it don't sound right to you, eh?" he mimicked. "Well, I'll tell you what. We're gonna strike this place. And if they don't pony up, we're gonna put this teakettle off the air. What d'ya think of that?"

"I'm not interested," I said and turned on my heel.

For the balance of the day, this man lurked about, peering into this and that, and generally creating a feeling of anxiety.

The next day, one of my fellow announcers approached me. "I want a dollar," he said.

"Me, too," I agreed.

"Don't be cute," he replied. "We're all going down to Teamsters headquarters for the meeting next Tuesday. You have to pay a dollar to make an application. The Union wants everyone there."

"I don't want to join."

"Come on, Bob. You don't want to be the only holdout. We're all going. The dollar doesn't commit you to anything. It just gives us all an opportunity to hear the Union's side of the story. I think we owe it to ourselves to find out, don't you?"

I asked around. The entire production staff had agreed to go, with only two exceptions. One was a new man I was breaking in named Spencer; the other was me.

I talked with Spencer and his view was the same as mine. However, after several more urgings from various people, we both decided we could spare the dollar. After all, we didn't want to be the only holdouts, with everyone in the place upset and angry with us.

The Teamsters were organized under the American Federation of Labor. The Local involved was #544, a Union, which a few years previously had cordoned off a few blocks in the warehouse district and conducted what amounted to a bloody insurrection. At least two people had been killed.

Spencer researched it, too, and we decided we wanted as little to do with this outfit as possible. But we had agreed to go and, the following Tuesday, I dutifully parked at the curb in front of the warehouse I had been instructed to find.

The district was virtually deserted by eight p.m.—the usual condition in any warehouse district. Street lighting was inadequate; shadows were dark and forbidding. I was filled with misgivings as I opened the door into the "Headquarters" building.

At one time, perhaps, the first floor of the structure had housed some prosperous business with desks, files, and personnel. Now,

the entire first floor was vacant. A single light glowed from the ceiling of a freight elevator at the rear of this vast, empty space.

The wooden floor creaked and my footsteps sounded loud as I tried to appear confident in my stride toward the elevator. A grizzled, bent figure of an old man came into view as I advanced. He was waiting for me, beside the cage. He reeked of alcohol. He leered at me with rheumy eyes.

"Union headquarters?" I ventured.

"Git in."

I stepped into the lift, large enough to carry an automobile. The fellow followed me in, lowered the gate, and pulled the rope that activated the mechanism. The platform lurched and swayed, then inched upward slowly.

I said nothing, and the operator echoed my silence. He stopped at the third floor. The platform was slightly higher than the floor. He cursed under his breath, and pulled the down rope. We stopped a trifle low.

"I can make it," I said.

He grunted and pulled the up rope again. We jerked and swayed and rattled and wheezed through half a dozen tries before the elevator floor and the third floor surface harmonized. Only then did he raise the gate.

Local 544 wasn't wasting money on electricity. The vacant area, seemingly as vast as the first floor hippodrome I had crossed, stretched dim and empty before me. Almost.

At my right was an enclosed office with clear glass above the wainscoting. The office was well lit and that illumination streamed into the dusty-empty vault comprising the balance of the floor space. There were no other lights. A large table had been placed alongside the office and folding chairs had been positioned around the table. Production staff people from WTCN already occupied most of the chairs.

Standing next to the elevator, as I stepped off, was a barrel-chested man with bullet-shaped head and massive arms. He had cauliflower ears, a flattened nose with a mean-looking face—the expression of which matched the contents of the area. Standing next to the table was the truculent individual who had snooped about the studio.

One of our staff had taken note of the vertical two-step the elevator had performed, and he recognized me despite the gloom that

enveloped everything.

"Here's LeFevre now," he said. His tone was sepulchral.

"We're all here, now." Someone else said.

"No. Spencer's coming, isn't he?"

I walked to the table. Somebody indicated a vacant chair, so I sat.

Spencer was the only absentee. The Union rep welcomed me by clearing his throat and spitting on the floor, with his eyes on my face.

"What about Spencer," someone asked me.

"He said he was coming." I provided.

The Union rep said, "He's late. To hell with him."

Hal Lansing, our night man, who had a great voice, said, "No. If Spence said he was coming, he'll be here. Let's just hold it a bit more."

It didn't take a genius to realize there had been two different times set for the meeting. Those who had given evidence of being interested in joining the Union had already held their meeting. Now, the Union rep was waiting for the two "bad" men, anticipating that the force of the majority would either swing us into line or keep us quiet.

A loud gong clanged with such suddenness that I jumped.

The Union man called over to the elevator. "One more trip, Bert."

The elevator creaked its slow way downward, its single glowing bulb dropping out of sight, and I peered around the table trying to make out the faces.

"Anybody want to bring me up to date?" I asked. "What's been decided?"

"Nothing's been decided," Hal said. "In the Union, like in any democracy, the majority rules."

"I see." I didn't add that they had a majority without either Spencer or me being present.

We sat and I fidgeted. The elevator motor whined and groaned, then stopped. Again it started and, after another prolonged lapse of time, its ceiling light came above the floor level. Once more, the operator brought it to the proper position.

Spencer got off, harrumphed, and made his way to the table where he took the only empty chair. The Union rep didn't sit.

For the next thirty minutes, we listened to the glowing advantages of joining the Union. The gist of the message, delivered from

the far end of the table where the Union rep could direct his remarks to Spencer and me, was that the bosses didn't give a hoot about the employees. They were simply rolling in money, and all of us got a mere pittance.

I was sorry Don Clayton wasn't present. It was explained that, since he was a "boss," he wasn't eligible to join.

Under the Union, we would have "The International Brotherhood" with us in all that we wanted to do. We would determine our own wages and benefits. The "bosses" would be forced to comply, or we would stop working. They wouldn't dare hire replacements. We would be paid on the basis of longevity. There would be automatic raises. Everyone would be treated equally. So, we couldn't be fired. The bosses didn't understand the needs of the worker. If a man asked for a raise alone, he might get fired. But with all of us working together, nobody would get fired, and we would have things our own way.

As the harangue ended, everyone stared at me, including Spencer.

"Am I allowed to ask questions?" I inquired.

"Why, of course." The Union rep gave me the only smile in his repertoire.

"You've stated that each of us will get the same pay for the same work," I reminded. "But some of us are worth more, some less. For instance, Hal Lansing has the best voice at the station. Also, he's an old pro in the business. Am I to be paid at the same rate?"

"Naturally," the Union rep said.

"If I were Hal," I said, "I wouldn't like that. I'm the senior man, so by what you say, I'd be making the most money. But my voice can't do the things Hal's can do." I grinned. "I'm not going to object to that, but I would think Hal would."

"LeFevre's right, for once," Hal observed. "But we wouldn't have to do it that way. Not if the majority approved."

"That's the whole point," the Union rep intruded. "Those on the job longest get the most pay. That's the way the Union works. That's the only way that's fair."

"I'm happy," I agreed. "But what about this? We have two continuity men, Barrington and Carlyle. Barrington has been around for quite a while and Carlyle is new. Carlyle was hired because he's an exceptionally gifted writer. I'm not saying a thing against Barrington,

who is entirely capable. But Carlyle has ideas. And, in radio, ideas pay off. By what you're saying, Barrington will be paid more than Carlyle."

"What's wrong with that?" Barrington demanded.

"I can think of plenty," Carlyle said. "How do you measure talent?"

"Are you implying...?" began Barrington.

"Cut it out," someone said.

The Union rep glared at me. "I knew you was a trouble maker the minute I put my lamps on you."

"I'm not making trouble," I said. "You wanted questions, and I have some. I have some more. You've told us all the goodies we're going to get with Union membership. What is it going to cost us?"

"That's the best part," the rep said. "Because you guys have never had a chance before, we're giving you a special deal. There's a \$25.00 initiation fee. But that's a one-time shot. After that, all you pay is \$8.00 per month. And for that, you get to attend Union meetings, the Union picnic, and you get to use our recreation room on the second floor, here, in this building. No charge.

"The Union's gonna get all of you a raise at least four times what you'll have to pay. So, in fact, the Union won't cost you a thing."

"There are ten of us in production," I mused. "That means you'll be taking in \$80.00 per month membership dues just from WTCN. That's nearly \$1,000 per year. Where does that money go?"

"It goes to the Union, dummy."

"But what does the Union do with it?" I insisted. "Do you get a cut? Who else is in on it?"

"It's none of your goddamn business."

"Hold it," Hal cut in. "I can see what LeFevre means. You told us the books were open. I think his question is fair. What do you do with the money?"

The rep was visibly angry. "If I had my way," he snarled at me, "I'd bar you from membership right now. You don't belong with this group."

I heard a footstep. I could tell by the eyes of the others that suddenly shifted to look beyond me that someone had approached me from the rear. I didn't turn around. I was afraid to look. But, in my mind's eye, I could see that big-cheated gorilla standing in back of my chair. I could hear his heavy breathing.

The rep said, "Not yet," and made a motion to someone behind me. Spencer had been watching and looked scared. I found the courage and swung about. The goon was backing away, his eyes fastened on me. I looked at the organizer.

"I won't give you any money," I said, "until I see where it all goes."

The rep's jaw was clenched. "You guys are so goddamn dumb, you don't know your ass from a hole in the ground. We made you a goddamn good offer."

"Let's see the books," Hal said. There was a murmur of approval.

"Oh, you wanna see the books!" The tone was cold with fury. The rep strode into the lighted office, grabbed a ledger, and came back to our table. He flipped it open and, without letting it out of his hands, passed around the table, briefly holding it in front of each of us. The light was poor. All I could see was a column of names, with dollar figures in an adjacent column. I'm really not sure of any of the names and, perhaps I imagined it, but I thought I saw "Moscow" on one line.

"Does any of this money leave the country?" I asked.

"This is an International Union, Smart ass," the rep said, "Of course it does. Our operation is worldwide. This is a revolution. We're gonna overthrow the privileged bosses and the workers are gonna have their day."

Spencer's eyes met mine. I stood, and he was on his feet at the same instant.

"I've seen all I need to," I said. "The rest of you do as you please. I'm not joining the Union."

"That goes for me, too," Spencer said, and the two of us headed for the elevator. The goon blocked our way.

I could hear chairs move back from the table, but I didn't take my eyes from the muscled mountain in front of us.

"Let 'em go," the rep called. "We don't need 'em. They're no damn good, anyhow."

The goon shrugged and slunk off to one side. Spencer and I went down the creaking shaft, and into the street.

"Oh, man," Spencer said, when we were breathing the fresh air outside. "I was scared."

"Me, too," I admitted.

"What're you going to do?" Spencer asked.

"Do? I 'm not going to do anything. Most particularly, I'm not go-

ing to join the Union.”

“My God. Can you believe those others? Do you think they’ll join?”

I shrugged. “We can’t stop them.”

“I don’t see how they’d want to.”

“I noticed they were all standing when we left,” I said. “Maybe they’re having some second thoughts.”

“I sure hope so.”

A few weeks later, a story made the papers to the effect that a government agency wished to examine the books of Local #544 of the AFL Teamsters.

The following night, the warehouse was engulfed in flames and the whole building burned. The Local reported the loss of all its records.

Chapter XXVI

I believed my decision to avoid Union membership was correct. The very idea of using pressure, coercion and, perhaps, open violence against my employer was repugnant. The radio station hadn't come to me asking me to go to work. I had asked for a job, and it had been provided. I had gladly accepted the wages offered.

I found it impossible to become angry with people who had voluntarily agreed to pay me what I had voluntarily agreed to accept. The rep at 544 wanted me to believe that the "bosses" were exploiting me. I didn't feel exploited by the "bosses." Indeed, it seemed to me that if any exploitation was going on, the Union was doing it.

There was something, however, far more important to me, at this juncture, than the Union. The real question was, did Mr. and Mrs. Ballard approve of what I had done? The only important course of action was to do what the Masters wished. That meant pleasing the Ballards, since they were the "Messengers" of the Masters, who were wholly pure and perfect.

I was certain I had interpreted the "I Am" teachings correctly. To be entirely candid, I was so convinced that I was also seeking praise when I wrote a detailed letter to Mr. Ballard, explaining what had taken place.

I yearned for approval and applause from a man I fully respected. Although my own father had helped me many times, and precisely when I needed help most, I had little or no rapport with him. Thanks to Mother, I didn't respect him. "Daddy" Ballard was my ideal.

When a letter in response came from Mr. Ballard, once more I walked on air. In the transcendent language characteristic of the "movement," "Daddy" explained that people who owned property had a right to do what they wished with it. The property was theirs. Further, while property owners were not always wise and some of them were downright foolish, you did not try to correct their shortcomings by force. Instead, if I didn't like my employment, I should resign and seek work elsewhere.

"Daddy" explained that some people were unwilling to do because they feared not finding another job. But this fear, he went on to say, was the work of the "dark forces." "Black Magicians" were

working to convince ordinary men and women that they were incompetent and unable to look after themselves. By this method, it was easy for crafty, godless men to gain followers. And the people, feeling themselves unable to cope, surrendered their freedom and decision making to those they believed to be wiser.

This was, the letter continued, probably a mark of the communist conspiracy that was at work, seeking to undermine and destroy the United States. The particular union was not to blame. Some unions might have fine people in them, and be doing good work. But from the descriptions I had provided, Local #544 sounded like an instrument of evil. I could be proud and happy that I had taken the stand I had.

But to be doubly sure, "Daddy" concluded, I should consult my own "God Presence." If a person did the right thing, the voice of his Presence would sing to him and bring him joy. But if he were in error, then feelings of remorse and disappointment in himself would surface. "Listen to the voice of your Presence, Bobby Boy," he wrote, "and you cannot ever take your footsteps far from the pathway of light."

I managed to "drop" the information to the people at my Reading Room that I had a letter from "Daddy Ballard" and that my decision respecting the Union was correct. Being personally in touch with headquarters added to my prestige, of course.

I continued in my work at WTCN with a light heart, filled with assurance that I had done and was doing what the Masters wished. My joy seemed complete when, one by one, other staffers confirmed my opinion. No one had been impressed enough with the Teamsters to become further involved. The matter appeared closed.

A few weeks later, I was surprised when Carlyle approached me with the subject of Unionism still on his mind. Clearly, we all felt the same way, he said. The Teamsters understood how to help truck drivers. But what did they understand about talent? The idea that a person of great talent should be paid on the basis of time, along with the least talented, made no sense. Fortunately, however, there was another union.

The Newspaper Guild, operating under the recently formed CIO, was in touch with most of the production staff. The Guild understood the problem. Newsmen were talented people. Some could out-produce others, regardless of tenure. My fellow workers, it

seemed, were all of one mind, and they wanted to see what the CIO had to offer. Carlyle wanted a dollar from me as an application fee. There would be another meeting in a few nights, and my co-workers wanted to make certain I was present. This time some things would be said to which I was bound to agree.

I asked Carlyle how he knew that I would agree. He told me what had become evident. Most of the staffers had already attended several meetings. Spencer, my ideological colleague, had resigned his job at WTCN to return to study at the University. I was the only man on the production side who needed a bit of persuasion. It was only “fair” that I be given an opportunity. After all, I wasn’t a “boss.” I was an employee and nothing more.

As I now remember it, I said something like this: “Look, Carlyle, I’m really not interested. On principle. Maybe the CIO is everything you say it is. Possibly it’s good. But I don’t see anything in it for me. The station has always treated me fairly. If I really wanted more money, I’d ask for it. And, I’ll bet I’d get it.

“As it is, I’ve had periodic raises, and I’ve never had to ask for one. I kind of like it that way. If the rest of you favor the Union, you certainly don’t need me. Just go ahead without me.”

As I remember his reaction, it was something like this: “Bob, we want you with us. After all, the newspapers own this station and the bosses don’t object to the Guild. The Guild already has a contract with the owners down at the Trib and also in St. Paul at the Dispatch.

“Frankly, the Guild is doing us a big favor. We’re pretty small potatoes. The only way the Guild will be willing to set up a Chapter for us is if we present a unified front. So we need you. Do you want everyone here to look at you everyday with the realization that, if it hadn’t been for your holding out, they’d all be making a lot more money?

“Let me tell you this is an entirely different ball game. Actually, you did us all a big favor by showing us that the Teamsters weren’t the right kind of Union. I, for one, thank you. Now we want to return that favor.”

I shook my head.

“Carlyle, I’m not going to sit through another one of those jeremiads by that Union organizer. I don’t like that guy. To tell you the truth, he scares me. He’s a revolutionist. I want no part of him or

anything he's connected with."

"That's just it," Carlyle insisted. "I agree with you. That uncouth gentleman was with the Teamsters. The organizer for the CIO is entirely different. You'd like him."

I still refused, and Carlyle promised me an introduction to the Organizer from the Guild. A few days later, he kept his word.

A man came into studio B. He asked to see me. He was well dressed, smiling, and affable, with a warm handshake. We had a brief visit. I learned that he was a practicing attorney, knew a number of people with whom I was acquainted, and refused to put pressure on me in any way. It was a matter of indifference to him whether I signed up with the Guild. He had come to see me because others wanted him to, and he was always pleased to do a favor if he could.

I was non-committal, but when Carlyle and others approached me again, I capitulated. My dollar went its way. I agreed to attend a meeting that would occur at the attorney's office in the Foshay Tower.

This time there were no heroics and no harangue. There were no musclemen about and I was at liberty to ask anything I chose. The only unpleasant note was a black cigar the Organizer smoked, which reeked like a burning garbage dump.

Several staffers from WTCN were present, along with a newsman from the Trib and another Union employee. No voices were raised as my salary was discussed, my talent fees examined, and a business-like statement made that, in the Union, I'd be making a great deal more. The newspapers could well afford to pay more. They were making millions. I ought to be getting a reasonable "share" of what was coming in.

All I could think of in rebuttal was this: the radio station paid wages based on what the station took in, not on what the newspapers took in. Perhaps the newspapers were rolling in dollars. The station wasn't. It was in the black, true. But it had operated in the red for a long time prior.

I summed up by saying that I had come to the meeting with my mind already made up. I had come only as a courtesy to my co-workers. I wanted them to understand I was not interested. Period.

They were disappointed, but there were no threats or efforts to intimidate. I got some dark looks from a couple of the staffers, but

that terminated the incident so far as I was concerned.

Again, life at the station resumed an even keel. No one said anything further about the Union. I devoted myself to learning more and more about the "I Am," and I turned in a reliable, if not an inspired, performance. Based on what I had been told, I assumed that the whole Union issue had been dropped. The Union had wanted unanimity and it had failed to get it. However, no one seemed angry with me. I suppose I should have been curious about that fact. But I was pre-occupied with "I Am" activities.

Several weeks later, the station manager, Swannee Hagman, came into the announce booth. I was surprised to see him. Ordinarily, I had little or no contact with the top brass, taking my instructions directly from Don Clayton.

"When does your shift end today?" Swannee asked.

"6:00 p.m.," I said.

"Who relieves you?"

I checked the schedule and told him.

"I didn't think you'd do this to me." Swannee said, half reproachfully.

I frowned. "Do what? I'm not doing anything to you. What are you talking about?"

"I didn't think you'd go on strike."

"Strike! Who said anything about a strike? There's no strike."

It was Swannee's turn to look astonished. "I understood that the Union membership voted unanimously to go on strike."

"Union membership? What are you talking about? I don't belong to any Union."

"You don't?"

"Of course not. I don't go along with that idea at all."

He shook his head, mystified. "I understood that every member of the production staff, except Clayton, was a member. Clayton isn't eligible."

"Well, you've been misinformed," I said.

"You don't belong?"

"Nope."

"Didn't you make an application?"

I remembered the dollar I had paid. "That's true," I admitted. "I made an application, and paid in one buck. But I only went to one meeting, listened to what was said, and told them I wanted no part

of it. I didn't even know there was a Union."

"Then you didn't vote to approve?"

"Look, Swannee, I've never paid for any initiation, and I haven't paid any dues. I haven't been admitted. I'm not trying to be admitted, and I certainly didn't vote on anything."

"Well, I'll be damned."

I shrugged. "If you say so."

He favored me with a wry grin. "Then, I guess I'm bringing you the news. The Newspaper Guild has signed up everyone but you. They've taken a vote. The strike begins tonight at six p.m., when you go off duty."

"I'll be hornswoggled."

"If you say so. What're you going to do?"

"I'm going to finish my shift, of course."

"What will you do when no one shows up to relieve you?"

I laughed. "That's old hat, Swannee. It happens lots of times that a relief man is late. Naturally, I stay on the air until I'm relieved."

"But what if you aren't relieved at all?"

"Then I stay on the air."

"How long?"

"Swannee, I was trained to understand that holding this mike open is a public trust. I keep it open and on schedule until the station signs off at midnight, or until I'm relieved."

"You came on the air at six this morning. That's a long shift."

"So?"

Swannee's face wreathed in smiles. "I kind of thought you were that kind." He grabbed my hand, and squeezed it. "I don't want the station to go off the air."

"Who does? Don't worry, I'll keep it on."

"There's more to it than just lost revenue."

"I'm smart enough to know that the station can't afford lost revenue."

"Wait a second. Let me tell you the real story. I have an informant, and I've got this from inside. The Union wants to make WTCN a test case."

"As you know, we broadcast by reason of a license granted by the Federal Communications Commission."

I nodded.

"The license is granted as a public trust, like you said. Under this

license we are required to stay on the air during our broadcast day no matter what circumstance comes along. If we go off the air, the FCC can jerk our license. And there are plenty of people who'd like to snatch up that license."

"I know all that," I said.

"Well, here's the way it sits. There are only two legitimate excuses for going off the air. One is a power failure or an "explainable" mechanical failure. And let me tell you, if we do happen to go off the air through power loss or equipment breakdown, I have to write a long letter of explanation to the FCC. The station would be put on probation. We've had a few of those. That's why we now have auxiliary equipment and an extra generator, if public power fails.

"The only other excuse is called an Act of God. But, even here, the FCC demands an explanation And it better be damn good, or we're out of the broadcasting industry.

"Here's what's happening. The Union has decided to put WTCN off the air. So they've come up with some wage demands that we could probably deal with in negotiations. Trouble is...the owner of half our stock, Kingsley Murphy, is out of town. Actually, he's out of the country. He'll be back in two weeks, and we can't sign a contract, or agree to anything, without him.

"But the Union doesn't want to wait even though, by so doing, a strike could probably be avoided. They *want* us off the air.

"They want to find out if, should a strike occur, the FCC will jerk our license. Think of the power the Union would then hold over every radio station in America. All a Union would have to do is threaten, and every station management would fold up instantly."

"I stared at him. This was staggering. And the CIO had seemed so gentle, so persuasive. After a moment I said, "What do you want me to do, Swanee?"

"Well, I sure don't want WTCN off the air."

"Okay, I'll keep it on the air."

"Bob, I'm not going to ask you to do that. The Union can play rough! And they mean business. Things could get dangerous."

"I'm not worried about that," I said. "All I want to do is what's right. I think it would be wrong to put this station off the air. So, I'll keep it on."

Swanee groped for my hand again. There were tears in his eyes.

"Bob, I really think I should ask you not to. But I do thank you, very much."

"To hell with that noise," I said, breaking away." Let me put it to you the way I see it. When I came here to work, the management played fair with me. Every time they said something, they kept their word.

"You told me I would get paid so many dollars for so much work. I turn in the work, and you pay me what you promised. I'm not working for the Union. It's your signature on my check. And every check has been good. None has ever bounced.

"If you tell me to go home, I'll go. If you tell me to stay on the air, I'll stay. You're the boss. What do you want?"

"Well, I sure don't want the station off the air."

"Very well, I'll keep it on the air."

"You're a brave man, Bob. I don't think I'd have the nerve."

I was suddenly angry. "Bravery has nothing to do with it, Swannee. It's what's right that matters. I'm on duty until I'm relieved. And that holds for every shift from here on out. Okay?"

Swannee nodded and, after again pressing my hand, left.

I had a couple of hours left on my shift, so I studied the night schedule, planning my programming.

I phoned Peggy, letting her know that there were some problems at the studio, and I might be late.

At five forty-five, my relief man showed up in studio B. He took up a vigil outside the booth, where he could watch me. The looks he threw my way confirmed his intentions. If a glance could kill, I'd have been parboiled.

Six o'clock came. I signed off that quarter hour and gave the call letters. The mike went off, and I stepped back in courtesy so the relief man could step in. He was still in studio B. He made no move.

I signaled the engineer, who opened the mike again, and I introduced the six o'clock show.

Instantly, the staffer came into the booth. He brushed me aside with anger and contempt, and stood squarely in front of the mike.

"Are you relieving me?" I asked.

He growled something under his breath.

"Are you relieving me?" I repeated.

In a voice half-choked, he said, "I'm here, aren't I?"

"You sure are," I said. "But I don't know your intentions."

He snorted, and stood before the mike shaking in anger.

I left the booth. I took up the position he had held before. He handled the six o'clock show. I waited. If I left, he might leave, too. But he didn't.

Apparently, the Union had some contingency plans. The six-fifteen show was properly introduced.

I drove to St. Paul, the car radio on full. The station continued to run smoothly. Perhaps, as a result of my holdout, there would be no strike after all.

Chapter XXVII

The following day Don Clayton came striding into the booth, a look of exasperation on his face. "You've done it this time," he began.

"What have I done?"

"Everyone is mad as hell."

"Are you mad as hell?" Clayton was no longer my idol. I felt a surprising detachment.

"Of course not. I'm not eligible for Union membership."

I'm sure my face registered astonishment. "You mean that I should have joined the Union? You want me to go out on strike?"

"No. I can't say I favor a strike."

"Then you must be pleased. You see, I'm not going on strike."

"You've betrayed your own class." It was an accusation.

"My class? I don't belong to any class."

"You may not think so, but you're a worker. You're not an executive. Further, you'll never be an executive. Every person with whom you have a natural affiliation thinks of you as a traitor."

The putdown approach had always worked for Don. This time it didn't.

"Through the years, Don, you've told me how bad my voice is. Now you tell me I'll never be an executive. Apparently, I'm no good. I'm not a good announcer. I'm no good as an executive." Somehow, this was easy. I wasn't emotionally involved, and it seemed odd.

"It's funny. You've ridden me hard all these years I've been here. I've always tried to do a good job."

As he started to speak, I raised my hand. "Wait. I've noticed something else, too. If another announcer fluffs his lines, shows up drunk, or is late for work, you make elaborate excuses for him.

"But when you want a tough job done, and done on time, good old LeFevre is called on. I'm sorry, Don. I don't think everyone is mad at me. You're not, really. And I'm pretty sure Swannee isn't. If I'm so bad, why don't you just fire me and have done with it?"

"Are you daring me to fire you?"

"Not really. I want my job. You've made it clear that I couldn't work anywhere else. So, if I'm as bad as you keep saying, for the

good of the station you should let me go.

"You introduced me to the Masters. Theosophy opened the door for me so that I've met, and am now working with, the Ballards. I'm grateful, so let's get down to cases. If I've done something wrong, jump on me. If I haven't, get off my back."

Don dropped into a chair and stared. "Well, I'll be damned. You know how to talk back."

"Of course, I do. I also am eager to do better. Anytime you've come forward with criticism, I've tried to improve. Right now, I think you're full of...well, bull."

He shook his head, and there was no rancor. "I meant what I said, Bob. The production staff is sore."

"So they're sore. They can rub lineament on it."

"You know, they were ready to go on strike last night. You queered it."

"Fine."

"They're not going to forget it."

"Good."

He laughed. "Okay. You win. By damn, I'll give you credit. You've got a hell of a lot of nerve. Every other person here is going to do his best to make you look bad. And they can do it. You know, broadcasting takes a team. The engineers are unionized. They're gonna slip you a mickey, if they can. So will everyone else. You are in for one peck of trouble."

"Don, there isn't a man on this staff I haven't fronted for at one time or another. They haven't bailed me out; I've been bailing them out for years. If they hand me some problems, I've got a couple of pecks of trouble I can hand back. Maybe you ought to warn them."

He got up and slapped me on the back. "Go to it, kid. Don't let on. I'm really on your side. I think you're doing the right thing."

As he walked away, he threw a parting remark over his shoulder. "Watch your step, Bob. They're gunning for you."

"Thanks," I called.

The broadcast day went smoothly. There was only one variation. Every person with whom I worked was grim and tight-lipped. I got hostile stares and taciturnity, but zero in the dirty tricks department.

The following day, Swannee phoned the booth, asking me to come to his office at my first opportunity. I got a long-playing disc on the

air and complied.

He shook my hand warmly again. Swannee was short of stature and bouncy in movement. He wore flashy clothes and was suntanned from close to par golf. His head was balding, and he normally radiated confidence and success. Now, he had circles under his eyes, and appeared drawn and jumpy.

"The strike's on, Bob," he said, as soon as I was seated.

"When?"

"Tonight. They'll finish at midnight. But there'll be no engineers and no production crew on duty tomorrow. I guess we've failed. The station will be off the air."

"Why? I can operate the equipment here. I did it for years before we had duty engineers."

Hope flickered on his face.

"They've made changes in the equipment. Are you sure you can handle it?"

"No problem. As a matter of fact, every now and again an engineer has been late. I'm never late, so we've always hit the air on schedule."

"You can't handle the transmitter. Dejection set in again.

I hadn't considered that. "You're right, Swannee. I don't know the first thing about it. And it's miles from here. I don't know how to turn it on or off. In fact, I've never even seen our tower."

Swannee's shoulders drooped. "Well, we've tried. That's all I can say. And I sure appreciate what you did the other night. But I guess we're done for."

"Are you sure all the engineers are going out?"

"That's my understanding. The IBEW will walk out in sympathy."

"Executives aren't in the Union. Isn't there an engineer who's an exec?"

"Sure. One man, John Shannon. But he can't run the transmitter eighteen hours a day."

"Who says he can't? He can live right there at the transmitter. He doesn't have to do much. He just has to be there. The broadcasting all originates up here."

Swannee's face went from dark to pre-dawn. "He could, couldn't he? John could do it. And he owes me one."

"It's not that tough."

"His wife won't like it." He gnawed his lip.

"My wife isn't going to jump for joy, either."

"Bob, why are you doing this? You know, I really appreciate it."

I shook my head. "Swanee, we've been through all that. I'm satisfied that I'm doing the right thing. I sure don't want this station to be put off the air."

"You know I don't control the payroll, Bob. I can't pay you extra. Why are you willing to do it? What's your angle? It's damn risky!"

"I've told you. It's the right thing to do."

"That's a hell of a reason."

"Can you think of a better one?"

"If only Kingsley were back in town. We're trying to locate him."

"Sure, but don't worry about it."

"How long can you operate? I mean, run everything back there? It might take days."

"We're about to find out."

"I'm still worried. When you start going through the picket lines, there could be some rough stuff."

"I won't go through."

"How'll you manage?"

"I'll pack a bag. I'll sleep on a couch in the hall. I'll live at the studio, and John can live at the transmitter. That way we'll be good for a siege."

"You are something else, my friend."

"If this is all, Swanee, I'd better get going. I've got a lot to do."

The hostile stares of my co-workers, during the balance of my shift, took on new meaning. They were watching me, trying to discover if I knew of the strike. More than that, they were trying to read in my manner whatever resolve I might have. My acting skills hid my intentions. I radiated professional indifference, and gave no sign. Perhaps they guessed. But they were pros, too, and revealed nothing.

At the end of my shift, I was properly relieved and went home on schedule. I tossed a few items into a small bag. I moved the alarm to 4:00, up from 4:30 a.m.

The Wesley Temple Building abutted an all-night garage, so the following morning I drove in to get the car off the street.

The first two broadcast hours were uneventful, except that I had no engineer. When I checked the transmitter on the direct line, the voice of John Shannon reassured me that he knew how to crank up

the equipment.

At eight, the relief man should have appeared, so an extra voice would break the monotony. No one showed. I kept on. The studios were on the 12th floor and, at my first opportunity, I looked out a window. A picket line was in position. As long as I stayed in the building and the pickets stayed out, there could be no confrontation.

Normally, I ate breakfast in the corner drug store while the eight o'clock man spelled me. The drug store was in the same building. Rather than taking a chance, I phoned. The proprietor told me to stay put. The pickets were in an ugly mood. They were planning to beat me up if I showed myself. He brought my breakfast to me on a tray.

At nine o'clock, the balance of the staff normally put in an appearance. This time, only Swannee and one salesman came up to say 'hello' No continuity people, no switchboard operators, no one.

Clayton showed up about ten, took the commercial copy, and other material from me. He personally arranged my log for the ensuing periods. One of the stenos usually had this job.

I took all incoming phone calls, wrote any copy that had to be on paper, ad-libbed a lot, and managed each show as it came along.

Late that afternoon, Swannee came to see me again.

He had heard of a plan to beat me up as I left the studio at midnight. The Union had a pretty good idea that I could and would handle the 18 hours of broadcasting that day. But, then, they'd fix me so I couldn't broadcast the following day. Possibly, I'd never be able to broadcast again.

Swannee was visibly frightened. I laughed at him, and told him to go away. I needed all my concentration to keep ahead of that implacable manager of broadcasting—the big studio clock.

At midnight, I signed off, phoned Shannon and bade him goodnight. Peering through the darkness to the sidewalk below, I saw a very large picket line. I chuckled to myself, switched off all the studio lights, and stretched out on the leather divan in the lobby.

The next day, I repeated the performance. Meals were sent up regularly. The druggist insisted on paying for some of them. He cursed out the pickets. He told me to "take it easy" and "stay on the 12th floor."

During all this time, I followed the Ballard procedure. I made my

“calls” to the Presence, held my emotions in check, and did my job.

By the third day, the listeners appeared to divide between those who phoned to congratulate me and those who threatened and became obscene. I patched the mike to the telephone line so that, if I chose, I could put the caller on broadcast. I had recourse to this procedure several times when callers became abusive. I’d say “hold it,” throw the switch and then say: “You’re on the air. Now, what was it you wanted to say?”

Without exception, the line went dead immediately. The reason was conspicuous. Some of the voices were recognizable. They belonged to some of my “friends” and co-workers.

Peggy phoned to say that she had received a threatening phone call. I advised her to “make her calls,” and pay no attention otherwise. The third night, my friends who lived at the Reading Room showed up in the studio to keep me company. Peggy stayed home with the boys.

The sales staff was enthusiastic about what I was doing. WTCN had lots of listeners now. And although the Union was making threats, no advertisers cancelled, so far as I am aware.

The fourth day was incredibly hot. This was before air conditioning was popular, and I kept the windows open on the 12th floor until the storm clouds began to darken the northwestern sky. More of my fans were taking sides. Some admired, some hated.

One of my Reading Room friends came in to see me and to gave me a hand filing records and transcriptions. Everything was running smoothly.

The light on the direct line to the transmitter began flashing. Shannon’s voice had lost all its light heartedness. Bob, you’ll never guess what’s happening out here.”

“Don’t play games, John. I haven’t time. What is it?”

“They’re going to put a picket line around the transmitter!”

“No kidding.”

“No kidding is right. A truck just pulled up on the county road. There’s about a dozen guys in it. Big bruisers.”

“They can’t come onto private property, John,” I advised. “Don’t let them scare you.”

“That’s easy for you to say. You’re 12 floors above the street, and the police can be called. There’s no one out here but me.”

“Don’t you get it, John? That’s the whole point. They’re only try-

ing to intimidate you. They know nobody is around. Their picket line is for the birds."

"Wait a sec," he shouted the words at me, and hung up.

I tended the turntables. Presently, his phone light flashed again. I grabbed it.

John was breathing hard. "They sent a deputation up to the door under a white flag," he panted. "They told me to pull the switch and take the station off the air. When I said 'no,' they said they'd give me ten minutes. After that, they're going to break in the door and smash the equipment."

"They're bluffing," I said.

"The hell they are. Some of these guys are brutes. They've got clubs and tire irons and crow bars."

"You'll be fine, John." I reassured him. "They don't dare pull off a thing like that. Goodbye. Got to run." I slammed down the receiver, and serviced a spinning disc. The light flashed until I got to it again.

"I'm sorry, Bob. I've got to use my head. This is expensive stuff out here. We can't afford to replace it. I'm going to pull the switch."

"You're not going to do such a thing!" I bellowed. "I'm doing my end up here. You do yours out there. And stop being afraid."

"I'm calling the sheriff!" He roared, and hung up.

What could I do? What had the Ballards always said? The Presence could perform miracles. All one had to do was be sincere and make maximum application. And, of course, be pure in purpose! I made very sincere application during the next several minutes.

John's light again! I snatched up the instrument.

"The damn sheriff says he's too busy doing important things! He's not coming."

"What else did he say?"

"He said to call him back *if* they break in. Hell, Bob, by that time I could be dead!"

"You listen to me, Shannon. All our jobs are on the line. Don't you dare pull that switch!" This time, I broke the connection.

I tended the turntables, my heart beating wildly. Was this extraordinary effort going to be derailed? It certainly looked that way. And I really couldn't blame John. He was right. I was safe. He was on the front line, as I never had been.

Again, the blinking red signal from John. He's done it, I thought. Into the phone and in a subdued voice, I said, "Yes, John?"

His voice was filled with excitement, but the fear had vanished. "My God, Bob. You'll never believe what happened."

"Are we off the air?"

"No. No. We're on. And we're going to stay on, too. I made up my mind. I was going to pull the main switch when the first hand touched the door. But I figured I'd wait until then."

"I could see everything. You know, most of the walls are glass. Those guys went back to the truck. They got a lot more clubs and things and began to march up this way, spreading out, apparently to surround the building."

"They got about half way. And then the rain came! My God, it came down in buckets."

I laughed. "You mean those ugly thugs were afraid of getting wet?"

"It wasn't just the rain! They were nearly at the door. I had my hand on the switch. And just then, we got a bolt of lightning. The tower must have attracted it. It plowed a furrow into the ground almost where they were standing. The thunder was so loud the whole building jumped. We had a momentary outage, maybe a tenth of a second, and then we were back on full."

"But you should have seen those pickets. They threw down their clubs and whatever they had, and raced for the truck. They drove off as if the devil was after them. They've gone, Bob! Every last one of them. Can you believe it?"

"Sure, I can, John. I just knew it would be wrong to go off the air."

"That lightning bolt couldn't have been better timed!"

"Maybe the devil was after them," I said.

"What do you mean?"

"I believe that people doing the right thing have friends who will help them sometimes."

There was silence on the line.

"I've heard some strange things about you, Bob."

"I wouldn't be surprised."

"You didn't have anything to do with it, did you?"

I laughed. "You know better than that. You're a scientist. Now, I was making some calls. You know. Praying. And I knew both of us were doing the right thing. But that's it."

"And that damn sheriff. I'll never vote for him again."

"I guess he wasn't one of your friends," I said. "But you apparently do have some. Thanks for holding the fort."

Another pause. "Bob, I want to thank you for making me keep the station on the air."

"I didn't make you do anything, John. You did what was right and that's all anyone can do."

The next day, a few of my friends were visiting me in the booth when Clelland Card of WCCO came into studio B. He waved at me and came to the door of the booth.

"Hi, Bob." He looked into the engineer's room. "Who's helping you?" he asked.

"No one," I said. "Well, not quite. One of my friends helped me file some records yesterday. Otherwise, I 'm doing it all myself."

"The Union says that scabs are up here helping," Clelland was skeptical.

"If you find any," I said, "get their names. I'm sure the Union will appreciate it."

"One man can't keep a station this complex on the air by himself."

"True enough," I admitted. "John Shannon is at the transmitter."

"I mean, up here."

I shrugged. "I'm alone, except for my personal friends who are neither announcers, writers, or technicians. They're just helping with my morale."

Clelland laughed. "It must be pretty good. You know, you're making a lot of us look unnecessary."

"I don't think so," I said. "I'm sure the quality can be improved. But I'm handling the schedule alone."

After prowling about the station and finding it deserted, he left, puzzled.

On the sixth day, Swannee reappeared, his face wreathed in smiles.

"It's over, Bob. We located Kingsley, and he came back. We've just finished work on a Union contract." My knuckles cracked under the pressure from both his hands.

"You did it. You held the whole Newspaper Guild at bay. Everyone of us is grateful, let me tell you. Kingsley Murphy wanted me to thank you on his behalf."

"Fine," I said. "I don't see a relief man."

"Don't worry. One's on his way. You'll be off duty within the hour."

"That's great," I admitted. "I need a bath."

“How much longer could you have held out?” Swannee asked.

“I have no idea. Except for tension, there’s been nothing unusual. I suspect I could go on for weeks if I had to. It’s not that tough.”

“Like to hear something funny?”

“Sure.”

“When it came to wages, the Union insisted on paying everyone on the basis of longevity. The longer a person had been here, the higher his wage. We jumped at it. You should have seen their faces when we explained that you would have the highest wage as our senior man. The Union has actually bargained for an increase in your pay. And we gave it to them.”

Chapter XXVIII

The days that followed the strike settlement were without joy. I couldn't even receive a courteous "good morning" from a staffer. Aside from icy formal exchanges, I kept to myself. The only communications to which I was a party related to some technical business in some particular broadcast. The climate ranged between chilly and frigid.

Swanee came to see me one day, friendly and open as usual. "Bob," he began, "I'd like to have you go on an extended vacation. It'll give your fellow workers a chance to get over their 'mad.'"

"I can't afford it," I replied.

"With full pay, of course," Swanee reassured me.

"And a bonus on top of that. In fact, Kingsley is offering his own private chalet for you and Mrs. LeFevre. For a couple of weeks...more if you like. That'll give the rest of us a chance to work with the sore-heads."

"I appreciate it, Swanee," I responded. "But I see it differently. This is exactly the time I'm needed here to protect my own interests."

"Hey, wait a minute," he interrupted. "Who do you think is running the station? I 'm going to protect your interests."

"Thanks, Swanee. But you can't. And I don't mean that you wouldn't try. Broadcasting consists of a lot of things that people outside the production staff don't see or know about. I'd lose position with my fans. I'd lose accounts where I'm earning talent money."

"It's a possibility," he conceded, "But we'd make it up to you in other ways. In fact, Kingsley is talking about moving you into an executive position, somehow. How does that sound?"

"It sounds great. I've always hoped for something like that. But this isn't the time for it. If I became an exec right now, I'd be sand-bagged. Every decision I made would be sabotaged. I'd be made to look like an idiot, and don't think they wouldn't do it. I can't afford that, and neither can you.

"As a matter of fact," I continued, "you just might have another strike on your hands. The staff will not follow my lead at this time no matter what."

"You think they're that mad?"

"I know it."

He thought about what I had said. "Well, we want to show you some real appreciation for what you did. We know you're on our side."

I frowned. "You know, Swannee, I don't really comprehend that kind of talk. I'm not on anybody's side in this thing. I kept this station on the air to protect a principle; the right of the owner to make decisions over what is his. I'm on the side of America, not on the worker's side, not on the manager's side."

Swannee shook his head. "Bob, that doesn't make sense."

"Sure it does. I'm with you when you do the right thing. I'm also with the workers when they do the right thing. It seems to me that this whole thing is getting to be nothing but politics. I don't play politics. I don't understand politics. I do know the difference between right and wrong."

"God damn it, Bob. I'm offering you the chance of a lifetime. You've got it made! Kingsley will see to it."

"I know and I appreciate it. What you've said means a lot to me. But I've got to play it my way. Besides, as you know, I have the Reading Room in St. Paul. I can't be spared from there for two weeks, or even two days."

"Thank Mr. Murphy for me, but tell him I've got to stay on duty. Especially now. Maybe sometime later on. But not now."

"You're making a mistake."

"Probably. I've made lots of them. But don't you see? If I take off now and have a splendid vacation, every announcer at this station will believe that I 'sold out.' They'll see me palling around with the big shots. From then on, I'll be their very special target, and I'll never be accepted again. I don't want that to happen. I don't think it would do the station any good, either."

Swannee's face was a riddle. "You know, Bob, what you say makes sense. But I never ran into anyone person who wouldn't jump at a chance to feather his own nest. I'm giving it to you, and you're turning it down."

I smiled brightly. "And I thank you. And I thank Mr. Murphy. But I'm going to do my own feathering. And it will best all around. You'll see."

He nodded. "The hell of it is," he admitted, "I think you may be

right. And that's the funniest goddamn thing I ever said."

Thus, the routine returned and the chilly atmosphere continued. After a few weeks, the venom in every glance became less pronounced. Occasionally, someone would smile or say something casually in my presence. Pressure was slowly easing, and I congratulated myself that my tactics were paying off.

I was alone in the booth one afternoon when the "Lullaby Lady" came in to see me. She was not a staffer, did not belong to the Union, and had remained friendly throughout this ordeal. She had her own show every night and tried to appeal to the small fry with bedtime stories. She was fortyish and blonde, with delicate features and a gentle, motherly voice.

Today, as she came into the booth, she was pale, her face drawn. She stood unsteadily and, then, thrust out her arm to prevent falling. I grabbed her just before she sank to the floor.

Hastily, I opened a folding chair and seated her. "What's the matter?" I demanded. "Don't you feel well? Want me to call a doctor?"

I sat, keeping my eyes at her level. "Oh, Bob," she moaned. Then, she covered her face with her hands.

I was alarmed. I'd never seen anyone in a condition of this sort unless some dreadful tragedy had occurred.

"What is it?" I demanded. "You look as if you've seen a ghost. Let me help you."

Her eyes were hollow pits. She stared into my face as though trying to memorize every feature. "They're going to kill you." It was a flat, quiet statement.

"Kill me!" I snorted in disbelief. "Have you been drinking?"

"No. No. I don't drink. You know that." She seemed to be pushing something away from her—something I couldn't see.

"Well, try to make sense," I said testily. "Nobody's going to kill me."

"Oh, yes, they are." She said it intensely, in a low voice, looking about for eavesdroppers. "I overheard the whole thing."

"Okay, okay," I said with studied tolerance. "Try starting at the beginning. Tell me all about it."

"All right." She seemed to gather all her strength. She looked into the engineer's room. "Can he hear what I say?"

"Not unless he rigs it, or the mike is on." I got up and stared at the big panels behind the engineer. "The jack isn't in position. The booth

is not being monitored. And if the mike goes on, we'll know it. The red light comes on. Now, talk!"

She nodded and swallowed hard. "I was at the restaurant. I go there sometimes to plan my show. I can be alone there, and I don't have an office here in the studio."

I nodded, watching intently.

"It has booths with high backs. I sat in one at the rear so I wouldn't be disturbed. I must have fallen asleep, and nobody knew I was there."

"Go on."

"Well, I woke up hearing voices. Six people had crowded into the booth next to mine. I paid no attention until, suddenly, I heard your name. Then, I listened. I recognized two of the voices."

She choked up. She looked at me pathetically, tears in her eyes. "I know who they are, Bob. They are staff members. Oh, I...I...I didn't know people could be like this."

"You have my undivided attention," I assured her.

"Well, they were planning the whole thing. They've been tailing you for days. They know your every move. And, tomorrow morning. They're going to catch you. They are going to drive you and your car into the Mississippi."

I shook my head in disbelief. "You've got to be mistaken. They were probably talking about some play they are going to produce, or something."

"No!" Her denial was fierce. "I tell you I heard it all."

"Just what did you hear?"

"You set your alarm at 4:30 every morning, don't you?"

I nodded. That was common knowledge.

"They know it because they've been watching your house. They've seen the lights come on, and they've timed it. Oh, they know everything you do!"

I waited for her to continue.

She took a deep breath. "Tomorrow morning there will be six men, all of those in the booth, waiting for you in their car outside your house. When you drive out on your way to work, you always take the river drive on the St. Paul side. You cross the river at the Franklin Street Bridge. They know all about it.

"They will follow. There's one place near the railroad trestle where the road curves out very close to the bluff that drops into the river.

At that point, they plan to overtake you and force your car over the bluff.

"If you stop, they'll get out, break your windows, and drag you from the car. They'll knock you unconscious, put you back behind the wheel, and send you over the bank. The river's deep right there. It will take a couple of days to get your car out. If they find it at all. You...you'll..." She began to cry. "You'll be dead, Bob. They want you dead! Oh, I never heard such vengeful, hateful talk in my life."

She stared at me with tears streaking her make-up. "Oh, Bob. What will you do? What will you do?"

"How come you're telling me all this?"

"Do you think I want them to get away with it? My God. I'll never trust any of those people again! I thought of going to the police. But then I didn't because the police simply wouldn't believe me. That's why I've come to you. Warning you is the least I can do."

There was no question. The Lullaby Lady was telling the truth. And I had thought I was breaking the ice in the studio atmosphere. It was a sham. They had been putting on a better face in order to lull me into a sense of false security.

I pulled out a clean handkerchief and helped with her eyes. "I 'm truly indebted to you," I said.

"If they see me here, they'll probably kill me, too," she said, looking furtively about again.

"I believe you," I said. "You were very brave to come. I think I may owe you my life."

"Will you call the police?" She asked.

"They won't believe me any more than they would you. No. I'll handle it my own way."

"Bob, they mean business. And there are six of them. You can't whip them all."

"I wouldn't even try," I said. "No, now that you've warned me, I'll manage."

"What will you do?"

"First thing I'll do is keep my plans to myself. But my gratitude to you is unbounded."

"You do believe me, don't you?"

"Yes. I believe you."

She stood. Suddenly, she reached out a hand and put strong pressure on my wrist. "Please take care of yourself, Bob. Oh, I couldn't

stand it if anything happened to you.”

“I’m with you,” I assured her. “I don’t think I’d stand it either.”

The Lullaby Lady slipped silently away, without attracting attention. I thought about what she had told me. I made my plans.

By this time, I accepted the concept of a “miracle working” presence of the “I Am.” Strange as it seems in retrospect, my first concern was to enlist the students who lived at the Reading Room. That evening, I told them all about what the Lullaby Lady had said, asking them to make calls for my protection and for the triumph of what was “right.”

Understandably, Peggy was greatly alarmed. She pleaded with me to call the authorities, but I was obdurate. I was relatively certain that I’d receive the same rebuff at the hands of the law enforcement men as Shannon had received at the hands of the sheriff. What proof did I have? Only the word of a woman who could have been distraught or hysterical.

Next, I was confident that I was smart enough and skillful enough to handle them, *if* the six showed up. But most of all, I had unbounded faith in the “I Am.”

Peggy insisted that I let her in on my plans. Actually, I had gone over all the alternatives I could think of. The very best one seemed the simplest.

“I’ll just set the alarm early,” I told her. “According to my informant, they know I wake up at 4:30 a.m. I’ve dodged them before by starting out thirty minutes early. This time, I’ll wake up at 3:30. I’ll simply give them the slip, that’s all. My Presence will protect me.”

Practical or not, that was the extent of my preparation.

The Reading Room operated that evening with no alteration in schedule. A handful showed up for my lecture. The lights were turned off at the regular time, and we all went to bed at our usual times.

When my alarm sounded at 3:30 a.m., I did not turn on the light. Instead, I arose in the dark and tiptoed to the front window to take note of anything unusual. The Mississippi River Drive was always deserted at this time of night.

To the north of our property, an apartment house stood close. On the south was a stretch of unimproved land bearing a second growth of oaks, maples, and elms. No one ever parked in front of that dark and deserted place.

This time was an exception. A big, black sedan was at the curb. From my vantagepoint at a second story window, I could only make out a crowded interior.

The car was full of people and the lights were out.

I muttered something under my breath and was surprised when Peggy whispered, right at my elbow, "I see it. They're there. You mustn't go out. You stay right here, and I'll call the police."

"Peg," I whispered, "Don't turn on any lights. They don't know I'm awake. I'll get dressed in the dark, take a few things with me and sneak out the back door."

"Don't you dare," she said. "You've got to come out the driveway. They'll see you and be right after you."

"I won't come out the driveway."

"There's no alley. There's no other way to go."

"I'll manage somehow. Don't forget the Presence. Have faith!"

"I didn't any more than half believe that story," Peggy said. "But it's true. That car is full of men. They really may try to kill you."

"Sure they will," I said. "But they'll never find me."

Against her misgivings, I pulled on trousers, and grabbed my toilet articles and a change of linen. "This may mean another siege at the station," I said. "So, I'll be prepared."

Showing no lights, I groped my way to the back door and quietly opened it, peering intently into the surrounding trees and shrubs. Everything was quiet and, of course, I could not be seen from the street.

The garage was a separate, three-car affair, with doors that traveled on upper rails and disappeared inside. It was right at the head of the driveway, but placed so that a side, rather than the doors, fronted the street. I was grateful to the architect who had planned it that way.

The stars and a quarter moon provided far too much light. Someone could be hidden in the hedge at the front of the building. I'd be instantly visible when I crossed the open space to the garage. Well, there was no help for that. I darted across the driveway and slid the doors inside as quietly as possible, ready to take some kind of evasive action if it appeared necessary.

All remained still. I got into the sedan and locked the doors. Praying that the engine would start at once, I kicked the starter. Usually I gave it plenty of gas and gunned it into life. Not this time. To my

relief, the engine started quietly.

Now what? If I drove out the driveway and made the usual turn to the north, the black car at the curb would be right behind me. And as Peggy had reminded me, there was no alley.

On the far side of where the alley would have been was an apple orchard. It belonged to a neighbor. Without showing lights I slowly eased the car onto the tarmac and pushed its hood in under the overhanging branches. I trusted I would make no ruts. If I did and my neighbor raised a fuss, then I'd explain why I had trespassed. I hoped he would forgive me.

The terrain was rough and uneven. The sedan jerked, bounced, and twisted as—keeping it in low gear—I threaded my way to the street that paralleled the Mississippi River Drive. I jounced across sidewalk and curbing, making the distance. My brake lights must have showed, but our house and the grove of trees stood between me and any observer in the parked vehicle.

I turned north, flicked on the lights, and then turned onto Marshall, heading downhill to the Lake Street bridge. If I turned onto the River Drive, even though I was a block away, there was always the chance that observers would identify my car and come in pursuit. As it was, even in the middle of the night, cars occasionally crossed the Marshall-Lake Street Bridge. One more would not seem strange.

I drove across the bridge at normal speed, without another moving vehicle putting in an appearance. On the Minneapolis side, I increased speed, used a different set of roads than I had ever used before, and arrived at the station without incident.

Once more, I made use of the all-night parking facilities of the adjoining garage. I woke up the janitor and got a ride to the 12th floor, explaining that I was dodging the Union crew again. The janitor appeared sympathetic.

In the safety of the studio, I had lots of time to get ready. Periodically, I'd go to the windows to take note of anything unusual.

At 5:45 while I was watching, a big sedan came screeching up Grant Avenue and slammed against the curb. Six men, wearing fedoras and heavy coats got out. They began peering into the building, looking up at the lights in the studio windows, and running around.

In the early morning stillness I could hear their voices. They were looking for me and for my car. I recognized two of the voices. I now

knew which of my companions at the station were willing to see me dead! It was an eerie feeling. I would have sworn that they would never have attempted anything of the kind.

At six o'clock I went on the-air as always with a cheery "Milkman's Club" greeting. As quickly as I could, I raced to the window overlooking the building entrance.

The six were knotted about the car. The car radio was on picking up my broadcast! And were they angry! I could hear their curses. One man threw his hat on the sidewalk in disgust.

I leaned out and called: "I'm up here, fellows." I don't think they saw or heard me. They were too furious to see anything but red.

The schedule was followed that day as it always was. There were no other incidents. But I learned something else. Most of the staffers were beginning to thaw after all. Only the two who had participated in the plot returned to their dirty, vicious leers and snappish attitudes. I still have no idea who the other four were.

Now, the most trying period of all began. Peggy was threatened at home. One of the threats entailed kidnapping our sons. She was frightened enough to call the police and, for three months, the children went to and from school with a police escort.

Phone calls came in the middle of the night at the Reading Room. Usually no voice. Just heavy breathing.

Sometimes at the studio someone would get me on the phone, scream obscenities, and then hang up.

I learned what it is to be a target. Before leaving any building, I looked in all directions, trying to take note of anything unusual or threatening. I used different routes to and from home.

One day, as I left the booth and walked through studio B on my way out, two men burst in. Each of them was bigger than me in both height and weight. They grabbed me, one on either side. One of them hissed: "We've got you now, you son-of-a-bitch! We're gonna take you outside and kick the shit out of you!"

They were powerful enough to have done it. Never before had I been physically in danger inside the building. What should I do?

The Ballards had explained that criminals were not brave people. If a person made his "call to the Presence," then followed the direction that "came from the Presence," the criminals could be overcome.

Pressing me from either side, the men managed to lift me off the

floor. They were apparently going to take me outside and carry out their kicking. I did the first thing that came into my head. To this day, I don't know where the idea originated. As they started to man-handle me on the way to the elevator, I found my voice. In a volume so loud I could have been heard at least a block away, I shouted: "*Feather!*" It was the only word in my vocabulary at that instant.

They released me at once and backed off, staring at me as if I'd grown scales.

"Kee-rist, he's flipped out," one man said.

"By God, let's get out of here!" The other one gibbered.

They began frantically pushing the elevator button and, when no cab came, they suddenly broke and ran for the stairs. They threw terrified looks over their shoulders in my direction, and took the long way down. From the 12th floor!

All of these events and more, I recited in lengthy letters to the Ballards. I was certain I had found the magic in the Presence, just as they had said and written. I received back a warm letter of praise. But I received no answer to one of my most frequently asked questions.

Did Saint Germain approve of me? Was he helping me? Was it his intercession on the night of the storm and on other occasions that turned the trick? This particular inquiry was ignored again and again.

I was working my afternoon shift one day when my phone light flashed. The switchboard operator whispered, "Bob, there's a man here from the CIO. He's on his way back to see you. Should I call the police?"

"Certainly not," I said. "I'll handle him."

A man I had never seen before came into studio. He proceeded to the booth. He was not of imposing size, was well dressed, but with no particular outstanding features. He was the kind of man who could readily disappear in a crowd.

I opened the door into the engineer's room and asked: "See the gent out there? Is he a friend of yours?"

The engineer, named "Mac," looked, and shook his head. "Don't know him. No friend of mine that I know of."

I shut that door and stepped from the booth into studio B, closing the booth behind me. I had a fifteen-minute transcription slowly filling the time slot.

"My name is—" the visitor said. He didn't offer his hand.

"I 'm Happy Bob," I replied.

He nodded. "I just came up here to take a good look at you."

"Help yourself," I said. "Looking is free."

"Don't get fresh with me, kid," he said.

My temper flared. I'd had about enough of harassment. "Don't get fresh with me, Tootsie," I said.

We exchanged glares. He was the first to drop his eyes. "I just wanted to see what kind of a guy you were," he said. "And to tell you something. The war's over. We're calling off our dogs. You've won."

"I hope the prize is valuable," I said.

"You are a smart ass, aren't you?" Then he shrugged. "But it's over. So long as you stay here at this job, we won't touch you. You're safe."

"That's it?"

"That's my message to you." He squared his shoulders. "But I'm going to give you a warning. You'd better listen to it. We can't touch you if you stay on at TCN. But if you ever leave here and try to get on the air again, anywhere in the country, we're going to be all over you. Got that?"

"You're being black-listed from coast to coast. You beat us this time. But if you ever raise your head again, we're gonna chop it off!"

He turned on his heel and walked away.

As if by command, the harassment ceased at that point.

No more threatening telephone calls. I could feel far safer as I traveled about. Even my co-workers treated me better, including the two who had planned my demise.

I don't know what happened to my friend, the Lullaby Lady. But if it should be that her eyes happen to see these pages, I hope she will know that I always remember her fondly, and with deepest gratitude.

Chapter XXIX

When a person is filled with religious fervor, the mundane affairs of this world hold little attraction. No one was more skillful at engendering this fervor than Guy W. (Daddy) Ballard.

While it was true that I made my “calls” and had no manifestation of success whatever most of the time, there had been several spectacular developments that I attributed to intervention on my behalf, either from my own Presence or from some Ascended Master.

The difficulty in dealing with matters that depend on faith—however assiduously reliance on faith is denied—is that they are not susceptible of demonstrable proof. The difference between factual cause and effect, and imagined cause and effect, is the difference between scientific method and superstition.

Any reasonable person knows this. But when one is dealing with religious affairs, enormously important variables are woven into the fabric of belief. The failure of cause-effect repetition and demonstration can be explained away by such variables. The religious zealot is not reasonable. He is perfervid.

Thus, if a person “called” to his Presence for assistance and a manifestation seemed to arrive as a result, the apparent cause and effect linkage was marvelous and overwhelming. But when another “call” produced nothing, there were always reasons. They included:

1. My emotional world had not first been calm.
2. Perhaps there had been an intrusion by a “black” magician or some other entity.
3. In the recent past I may have eaten something disapproved by the Masters.
4. I may have had sexual yearnings.
5. Perhaps there was some dirt on my person or clothing, despite my best efforts.
6. Maybe the colors I was wearing interfered with the manifestation.
7. Possibly, I was insincere at some point.
8. Perhaps I merely wanted the manifestation, in which case it would never come. Etc. Etc.

The outlook of a religious zealot is that of a slave, while at the same time containing pride.

It’s a curious mixture. But it is this mixture that produces the attitude necessary for religious devotion. The zealot is made a slave, for he lives and breaths only to do as those superior to him within

the divine hierarchy command him to do. Pride is forbidden and is often cited as a reason for the lack of manifestation. But anyone willing to practice the stringent personal discipline demanded of all sincere acolytes, accepts that he has been “chosen” and is somehow “special.” He is above and beyond most of humanity.

Thus, the fundamental characteristic of thought control is inherent in all advanced or “higher” devotional systems. A person is not only told what to do, but he is also advised on what, how, and when to think. What he says is under the same restraints. The more truly he follows the thought patterns advocated, the more he pleases his ‘Master” and advances up the ladder to the stars of heaven.

The same practices manifest at the higher level of political fervor and devotion. To be sure, both organized politics and organized religion demand a bureaucracy. The bureaucracy is the least costly and most efficient way to advance a willing slave and to demote a backslider.

The human mind is a precocious instrument. Most of us have not begun to comprehend its uses. Indeed, I would argue that the fascination inherent in both religion and politics relates to mental development and training. A feeling of elation must accompany achievement in mental discipline. Most persons have virtually zero discipline when it comes to the mind. Higher education attempts the same development. But the savants in the Academy, with a handful of notable exceptions, are either rooted in some particular narrow field of inquiry or are as erratic and emotionally unmoored as the majority.

But, having attained professorial approval, they are at least one rung up the academic bureaucracy. Thus, they have a position to protect.

As I studied and practiced the teachings of the “I Am,” I was a perfect example. First, I was certain I was “special.” My diet, my birth defect, and my mother’s influences had already pre-conditioned my beliefs. Within the “I Am” hierarchy, I perceived myself as being a long way ahead of most others who joined the movement.

This was a matter of pride. Recognizing my soaring elation at this good fortune, I sought to be a better slave. The “I Am” was infinitely more important to me than my work in radio, my wife and family, or any other “worldly” affair. Money was not important in itself.

One obtained money only to use it in “service” to the “light.”

When a couple who had attached themselves to my Reading Room announced they were planning to drive to the west coast to take in the big “Shrine” class of the Ballards, I was overjoyed to learn that they would, at their expense, take me along. My entire paycheck went into the Reading Room. Without help, I could not have gone. The “Shrine” class was the culmination of a year of effort for the “Messengers.” They reserved the big Shrine auditorium in Los Angeles for seventeen consecutive days and nights. The place seated 6000, and they would always “pack them in.”

I could get time off now whenever I wanted it and, so, I agreed to go. Another member of my tiny flock wanted to attend as well. This was a lovely young lady I will call Lovella. She was one of the singles living with us in St. Paul, and my personal convert.

Peggy was dutiful, loyal to me and to my efforts, but without personal dedication to the “I Am.” I found far greater joy in the company of my two friends and Lovella than I did with my wife, so she and the boys were left behind.

My ambitions had no limits. I wanted to draw as close as possible to the Ballards. It was not the Ballards themselves, but the fact they were the “Accredited Messengers” that drew me. It was common knowledge among all “I Am” students that the Ballards were under the personal direction of Saint Germain. Perhaps, if I were close enough to the Ballards, some of their saintliness would attach to me. If so, then one day I might be able to see Saint Germain, in person, as we were told they did. That was my ambition. I wanted to make myself acceptable in all ways to the Masters. If and when I was ever completely trustworthy, then I might become an “Accredited Messenger,” too.

To further my career within the “I Am,” I developed the idea of bringing the Ballards to Minneapolis for a ten-day class. They had never visited the Twin Cities.

Lovella and I traveled in the back seat of the four-door sedan provided by my benefactors. She was a most attractive lady, and I found myself experiencing all the normal yearnings. Peggy and I had virtually ceased sexual activity. This abstinence undoubtedly served to heighten my urgings. They became so powerful that, during this journey, I confided in Lovella. I let her know that I was having a problem with my longings for her, which were *verboden*.

This would represent a major obstacle to further progress for each of us. I trusted she would help me dispel the longings.

She confessed to similar feelings in my direction. We made our “calls” to purify ourselves so that nothing would take place. Nothing did. But I can assure you that my mind was not altogether under my control. I would come into conscious focus with a start, realizing that I had been thinking some very dangerous and “negative” things. If thinking lustful thoughts is bad, you may be sure I was very bad on this occasion.

The highlight of the trip occurred when I managed to arrange for a meeting with the Ballards backstage at the Shrine. There, I expressed the hope that they would one day come to Minneapolis to give a class.

“Daddy” patted me on the shoulder. He suggested I make my “calls” and, perhaps, “the way would open.” Then he reminded me that, as Messengers, they went only where Saint Germain directed them to go; so the whole question was up to him. I had to be satisfied with that.

Upon returning to the Reading Room and to my radio duties, I embarked on a letter writing campaign to the Ballards. I had met several of the staff and most particularly, Pat Crouse, who was “Daddy’s” secretary. I received encouragement from Pat in my effort to get the Messengers into the Twin Cities. Occasionally, I’d have word directly from Mr. Ballard. His letters were invariably written in the special language of the “I Am,” filled with references to the Masters, the “light,” and to making application to the “Presence.”

Naturally, I enlisted my students at the Reading Room into making more calls to bring the Ballards to the North Star State.

Meanwhile, Bill Sands was having difficulties at his Minneapolis Reading Room. I expressed concern to the Ballards and obtained permission to open a second Reading Room in Minneapolis. This I did, renting space in the Wesley Temple building so it would be handy for me.

Finally, the glad word came. Saint Germain had approved. The Ballards would come to Minneapolis. A letter informed me that the students in the Twin Cities were manifesting love and light, so permission had been given. It was up to me to make all the mundane arrangements.

This was my first confirmation that Saint Germain had taken notice of my efforts. My plans were apparently ripening. Other leaders in the “I Am” movement operated Reading Rooms in various cities, and these leaders were always called upon to make the necessary reservations whenever a class was scheduled.

I booked the old Shubert Theater for the affair and I arranged housing for the Ballards at a luxury apartment hotel. I wanted nothing but the best for these nearly “divine” beings.

How were these facilities to be paid for?

To be candid, I didn’t give it a thought. The various books provided by Saint Germain Press, the magazine articles, the lectures, and dictations held to a consistent theme about money. When you wanted money, you made application to the “Presence.” That’s what the Messengers did, we had all been told. That was what all of us were to do, as well.

At the various classes I had attended, the matter of money was always dealt with in the same way. There were wooden boxes at every door opening into the auditorium. The boxes were emblazoned with the words, “Love Gifts.” There was a slot at the top. Tiny envelopes were either handed to those who came or they were placed on the seats in advance, along with the songbooks.

The announcer for the Ballards, a man I knew and respected, was named Jim Rogers. As part of his preliminary observations before each session, he mentioned the “Love Gift” boxes and the envelopes

He always said the same things. Admission to all Ballard sessions was “free.” There was no fee. A person was welcome whether he gave anything, or not. Of course, expenses that had to be covered. If an attendee wished to be helpful, he could put whatever he wished into the envelope, and then drop it into the “Love Gift” Box. There would be no collections. There would be no urgings. It was a private matter between each person and his “Presence.”

As a matter of policy, I had followed this same procedure at our Reading Rooms. That was why my entire paycheck went to help cover costs. The sums from “Love Gifts” didn’t begin to pay expenses.

Whenever a person contacts a new organization of any kind—secular or lay—a primary suspicion most of us have relates to money. Is this new group in it for the bucks?

The Ballard approach to money was the most discreet I had ever seen. It was one of the factors that attracted me to the movement. The general impression was that the Ballards had all they needed. If you gave them something, then it would be more beneficial to you, as a giver, than to them. I have often felt more pressure and heard more urgings in various Protestant churches regarding money than I ever did with the Messengers of Saint Germain.

The Ballards always acted as if they had tons of money. I never doubted it for a minute. Saint Germain had made it clear; there was plenty of opulence for everyone, and it was inconceivable that there would ever be a lack for the Messengers.

Further, Saint Germain gave his permission for the Ballards to come to the Twin Cities. He must have known in advance just how much money they would bring in through this effort. Why should I concern myself with that? The Ballards had the money, and they would pay. I spared no expense in getting the best for them. The Masters and the Presence would manage the crass and materialistic details of settling up afterward.

Clearly, in my own Reading Rooms, I was on the short end of the receiving line. Obviously, I was doing something wrong. I knew what it was. My thoughts of lust were keeping opulence at arm's length. If I could just conquer these urgings from my "lower" nature, then the wealth of the Indies must pour down to fill my coffers for right use.

The Ballards, of course, had conquered everything of that sort. They had a young son, named Donald, who traveled with them part of the time: proof that, earlier in their marriage, something other than countenance had existed. But Donald was in his teens, and the Ballards were practically ready to ascend.

Several weeks before the Ballards were scheduled to arrive, rumors began to circulate among the students. A serpent had apparently entered the Paradise that surrounded the Ballards and their staff. Jim Rogers was in disgrace. It seems that his lovely wife had grievously erred and she had been "dismissed." There had been two women—Mrs. Rogers and another lady whose name I can no longer recall—who comprised the musical staff. One played the organ and Mrs. Rogers sang solo. The organist, along with Mrs. Rogers, had been banished from Eden.

However, a letter had also arrived from Mr. Ballard, letting me

know that Jim Rogers was true to the light. He had stayed on, even though it meant a breaking up of his marriage. The letter came about the same time as the rumors circulated about Jim being on his way out.

I did my best to counter-act the rumors. But they persisted, and could not be stemmed. Students always dashed off to attend a Ballard class if they possibly could, and they would bring back the “news.” Rumors are invariably rife in any bureaucracy where ambition is furthered by compliance with authority.

When the Ballards did arrive, Jim Rogers was not with them. The class was held on schedule, with another man performing the announcing chore. Jim had a pleasing personality and did a magnificent job of creating expectation and delight. The man drafted as a pinch-hitter was totally unprepared for this kind of work. That he was a sincere and devoted follower of the Ballards was not open to question. But his stage presence was about as smooth as a Rocky Mountain detour.

By this time, I had swapped shifts with so many at the station that I owed nearly everyone. Clayton had been superceded by a new production chief named DeHaven. DeHaven was large in every way, notably fair and balanced, and an excellent chief. He let me know that the time had come to repay the many favors I had sought.

Instead of being in constant attendance at the Minneapolis sessions, I was on duty at the station. I managed to obtain some broadcast time for the Messengers, but I was personally absent for most of the affair.

The Reading Rooms were both closed, of course, so I managed attendance in the evening. And I saw to it that Peggy was present part of the time. I also contrived a meeting with Mr. Ballard, him know that I would be absolutely overjoyed if the job of handling their announcing chore could be placed on my shoulders. His response was what I had expected. Saint Germain did all the hiring. It wasn't up to the Messengers to approve of me.

I pressed my cause. I was advised to be patient and to make my “calls.” I fantasized about the transcendent moment when Saint Germain would appear, clasp me to his bosom, and tell me I was wanted as a member of the Messengers' staff.

By the time the session ran its course, it was clearly a “loser” from a financial standpoint. Mrs. Ballard gently advised me that it

was normal for the local Reading Room to cover all the expenses of a major presentation.

This was utterly out of the question. The suggestion caught me by surprise. I was just keeping my head above water. I told her how overjoyed I would be to pay the bills, but it was my ability. But I had no way of doing so. I was not reprimanded, or even mildly reprovved. The bills were paid, and the Ballards departed.

By now my personal alarm bells were ringing. Something was wrong. The Masters, who knew all things, must have known about Jim Rogers and his wife. The falling from grace must have been known about in advance. But, apparently, someone had goofed and didn't catch it. The error had to be charged, either to Saint Germain, who was infallible, or to the Ballards...ditto.

Had I been my usual skeptical self, I would have begun to back away. Unless... A possible explanation was provided. A "black magician" must have managed a "projection" into the staff. The forces of evil were always making use of devices of this sort to wreck the work of the Messengers. There were also disembodied "entities" that might perform dirty work.

The rationalizations employed to preserve the integrity of religious devotion are almost beyond tabulation. My own rationalization came twisting and turning out of my consciousness. Mr. and Mrs. Rogers had been too weak. They must have let down their guard. I would demonstrate to the Masters that I was made of sterner stuff. The Ballards needed me. I would protect them. I was really super-special.

Indeed, as I now conceived it, the dismissal of Jim Rogers had occurred in response to my own efforts. I would never have been considered for a staff position, except for a vacancy. One had been created, as if by magic. I had been making my "calls" so that I would be needed on staff. These "calls" to the "Presence" had worked after all. And in mysterious ways. Strange that the Ballards or the Master didn't simply explain it that way. It was obvious to me.

Another rumor had been circulated about the Ballards. I had heard it for the first time shortly after starting the St. Paul Reading Room. Bill Sands had told me that, and it was one of the reasons I didn't trust him. According to the report—whispered carefully between one's most trusted friends within the movement—the Ballards would never conduct a class in Chicago

The Ballards were originally from Chicago. Saint Germain Press was located there. It was in that city that their Ministry had begun. But once they had left, they had never returned.

A very successful Reading Room was operated in Chicago by an "Appointed Messenger." There were only three "Appointed Messengers" at the time, and they were all from Chicago. "Brother Bill," whom I had met, an attorney named Paul Stickel, and the lady in charge of the Chicago operations.

According to the rumor, Mr. Ballard, at a much earlier date, had been involved in a land swindle called "Lake of Gold." Apparently one of the victims of the bunko lived in Chicago and he was eagerly awaiting a chance to take legal action against Guy Ballard.

I had categorized this rumor as a "pack of lies" and I didn't believe a word of it. From the platform of the Shubert Theater, Mrs. Ballard referred to Chicago. She said evil forces had been working from Chicago, but these forces "had no power" to injure "the light" that the Ballards carried.

In support of this statement, she reminded everyone that Chicago was now on their itinerary. They were going there directly from Minneapolis. Then, in the first event of its kind I was witness, Mrs. Ballard made calls to "blast" the vicious forces in Chicago. She made a "call," joined in by the attendees. She called to use "blue lightning" (I was reminded of the event at the radio transmitter) and the "blue flame" to annihilate the Black Magicians and disembodied entities. Thus, attacks against the messengers would "cease and desist" at once.

Then, Mrs. Ballard virtually dared the forces of evil to show themselves. Everyone in Chicago, she advised, would see the "triumph" of the light. The forces of darkness would be routed and all would be well.

With ambition clouding my judgment, I reasoned that the best way to assure myself of a position on staff would be to show up in Chicago, and help with the "routing."

I had played the "time off" routine too often to dream of further favors. But I happened to Saturday off. I would have had Sunday, as well, but for "The Funny Paper" show, which was sponsored directly by the newspapers of the station owners. I provided sound effects. I was also the announcer for the American Radio Warblers, who were aired about 1:00 or 1:15 p.m. on the same day.

I studied the road maps. If I could get off on Friday afternoon at 3:00 p.m. and leave at once, I should be able to drive to Chicago, arriving in the morning hours. I could appear at the Chicago Civic Opera House, where the class was booked. I could be in attendance for the full day. Then, after the final session Saturday night, I could drive back to Minneapolis in time for my sponsored “talent” show.

I would have to go two nights without sleep. But what of that? My motives were pure. The “Presence” would guide and protect me.

I voiced the idea at the Reading Room and not only won instant approval, but also obtained three volunteers who wished to go. The two men who stayed with us wanted the trip, as did Lovella. The men could spell me at the wheel. Lovella didn’t drive, but we all loved her company.

The plan worked so well that we arrived in Chicago in the wee hours of Saturday morning. We booked rooms at a hotel and got a few hours sleep. I had packed my white suit, the standard uniform for all males who attended Ballard sessions and were with the “in” crowd. I had planned on changing into the suit at a filling station or in a public restroom, but this proved to be unnecessary, thanks to our early arrival.

Unfortunately, my sleep was interrupted by excitement at the prospect of seeing the Ballards again and so soon. It was also interrupted by several drunken revelers, who dropped a trashcan down the air vent on which my hotel room window opened.

Thus, I was somewhat weary when I reported to the staff at the Civic Opera House, asking to volunteer for any task that might arise. Pat Crouse greeted me warmly, and said I could serve as a guard when “Daddy” appeared in the foyer to autograph books.

“Daddy’s” appearance always stimulated book sales, but it also stimulated the desire within nearly everyone to ask him questions, to touch him, or just to stare. Guards were needed for crowd control so that book buyers could have access, while others could be shepherded into the auditorium, or otherwise kept at a distance.

I had hoped to serve as an announcer, but that was not to be. So I joined other men from the Chicago Reading Room to serve in this more ordinary capacity. Pat confided that I should continue my calls because, as yet, Saint Germain had not chosen the man who was to take Jim Roger’s place on stage.

When Mr. Ballard entered the foyer, his eyes fell on me. He smiled,

called me "Bobby Boy," and touched my arm. I was, at once, the target of envious glances. I preened in this reflected glory.

The quartet from St. Paul attended the sessions, as planned. We all dined together that evening, and I presented myself in the foyer for service as a guard for the final class of the day.

The beautiful lobby was crowded. With a start, I realized that some people were not in a friendly mood. A score or more of men, most of them wearing overcoats and hats, clustered about. Some looked at books; some whispered to each other; all eagerly awaited the arrival of the Messenger. Some carried cameras.

"Who are these guys?" I asked a Reading Room volunteer at a book table. "They don't look like students to me."

"They're from the press," I was told. "I think they want to interview 'Daddy.' You guards have your work cut out."

"They'd better not try anything," I snapped. "Maybe we ought to give them the 'bum's rush' and keep them out of the building." I sought out Pat for advice.

"We can't do that," Pat said. "It's a free country. The Press can't be excluded."

"They are here for no good," I said. "I can feel it."

"We all can," Pat smiled at me. "But don't worry about it. The Masters are in charge. Just do your assigned job and see how things develop."

On schedule, immaculate in his white tuxedo, Mr. Ballard finally strolled in. He became the center of all eyes. He took his place at the small table, where a line formed, comprised of persons carrying books for signatures.

I teetered on the balls of my feet, hands clasped behind my back, waiting for signs of trouble. A nondescript individual came out of the crowd of strangers and bore down on "Daddy."

I moved in front of him. "Get in line," I said peremptorily. "You must have a book if you want Mr. Ballard's signature."

"I don't need a book," he said. He stepped around me. I started to reach for him, but happened to catch Pat's eyes. He shook his head and frowned. I froze in mid-action.

"Are you Guy W. Ballard, also known as Godfre Ray Ring?" the intruder asked of Mr. Ballard.

"I am," Mr. Ballard said, smiling.

"In the name of the people of Illinois, I serve you this summons to

appear in court to answer these charges.”

A folded paper passed from the stranger’s hand to “Daddy,” who smiled, and said “thank you.” He laid down the paper. He continued signing.

On the instant, the representatives of the press crowded forward. Flash bulbs popped. Reporters hurled questions at Mr. Ballard and at other selected individuals.

I looked about eagerly, expecting to see at least one Master materialize. Instead, everything was proceeding as before, except for the newsmen who were creating as much disturbance as possible. Some attendees left, discreetly. Most continued doing what they had been doing, although it was plain that many were in my own frame of mind. They awaited some kind of “divine” intervention. It didn’t come.

I was bewildered and angry. What an opportunity to show these infidels the power of the light!

At the appointed time, everyone streamed into the auditorium, including the reporters.

When Mrs. Ballard was introduced from the platform, she wasted no time. She verbally attacked the Press, charging them with being in league with all the destructive forces. She asked the students to stand and join with her in “calls” against these forces. Several thousand voices echoed her “decrees,” which “blasted” everything that attempted to derail their efforts. She ended by stating flatly that if she had a choice between being a reporter or being dead, she would unhesitatingly prefer the latter.

A few left the auditorium in a state of shock. Most remained and joined her in their release of feeling. The audience vibrated with hostility toward the newsmen.

For the balance of the evening, reporters entered and left as they pleased, using telephones to communicate their stories to waiting editors. When the class finally adjourned, newsboys were on the street outside the Opera House, hawking papers with screaming headlines: “Great ‘I Am’ Sued,” “Ballard Cited for Fraud,” “Lake of Gold Swindle.” And other choice banners.

I bought a copy of every paper I could find. Our little group read the accounts with feelings of consternation, outrage, and amazement. Nothing had been said in any of the accounts that wasn’t literally true. But the manner in which the stories were worded left

no margin for a contrary opinion. The Press had already condemned the Ballards. By innuendo, they were guilty of unspeakable things that hadn't yet been reported.

After changing our clothing at an all-night filling station, we headed for the Twin Cities. I had to be on the air at 9:00 Sunday morning.

Driving westward through Wisconsin, my body and mind were exhausted. I was emotionally drained. Nothing of any particular moment occurred, except for one thing. Lovella sat in the front seat with me. I asked her to watch me closely to make certain I didn't fall asleep. I had done so once already and I didn't want a repetition.

Actually, I did fall asleep. I awoke with a start, somewhat refreshed, with Lovella talking a blue streak. While I slept, I had apparently continued driving the car without mishap. I had made my way through a couple of small towns and taken some curves and turns, without hesitation. I had no recollection of this happening. Lovella confirmed that my eyes had been closed. However, since I was driving the car correctly, she had done nothing more than talk.

Unfortunately, I described this occurrence at a later time, using the transcendent language of the "I Am." I said that my "Higher Mental Body" had taken over and directed everything, while I slumbered. A phrase to that effect found its way into a major smear, launched against me at a future time.

Had I been wiser and better informed, I could have avoided censure. I could have used the language of the psychologists, who spoke of the ego, the super-ego, the id, the sub-conscious, and so on. The mind of man is capable of fantastic achievements. Under stress, the mind will often accomplish things normally viewed as impossible. I had not learned the importance of speaking in ordinary, rather than extraordinary terms.

We still do not understand all the mind's capabilities. Further evidence of this awaited me at the studio, after dropping off my passengers at the Reading Room.

I was so weary that I thought I might fall asleep at the console. To forestall slumber, I rigged a microphone in studio A, put my log and the commercials I was to read on a music stand, and operated my shift in standing posture. "Mac" was the duty engineer, required to manage all equipment. My contribution was my voice.

One particularly long (and boring) commercial was for the Minneapolis and St. Paul House Furnishing Company. It consisted of a page and a half—more than a full minute—of repetitious banalities.

Standing with legs braced, I started reading and fell asleep on my feet. I awoke after only a second or two, but, in that time, I had started to fall to the floor. It was the motion of my body that woke me. As I re-focused, I was still talking. I was saying, “thousands and thousands of dollars.”

There was no phrase in the commercial remotely similar to that. In panic, I stabbed a finger at the copy and, without any interruption, read from that point.

Believe it or not, the bobble was not detected. I threw a hasty glance at Mac. He gave no indication of having heard anything unusual. I expected the telephone lines to light up in protest. That Sunday morning, listeners seemed not to be paying attention. That was one occasion on which I was glad to have a show with no appreciable Nielsen rating.

Chapter XXX

Excitement and strain took their toll. Within a few days of my return from Chicago, I became seriously ill. I went to bed, but my condition worsened. Apparently, I had a virus of some kind that refused to yield to either my “calls” or medical prescription.

Irene Hudson, a mature, single woman of independent means, had recently joined my little flock at the St. Paul Reading Room. She took charge of lectures and other business at both locations.

I became delirious and was totally unaware of my surroundings for about three days. During this time, I had nightmares—the most horrible and terrifying dreams. Finally, the fever broke and I slowly regained my health. I had lost weight; nothing I owned fit.

Illness was viewed as a manifestation of some kind of “projection.” My susceptibility was seen as the result of my effort to help protect the Ballards. I had literally “asked for it,” and I had received what I had asked for. Obsessions convince us that we know everything concerning others. Ignorance about ourselves is overlooked.

I had no more than regained my feet when a letter came from Mr. Ballard. Saint Germain had decided I could be taken on staff, on a “temporary basis,” to perform the announcing duties. I wasn’t to be a staffer. I would be on probation. The letter also wanted detailed information about my financial obligations. Nothing was said as to what I would be paid. Rather, the letter indicated that everything I had to have would be supplied.

As quickly as I could, I sent an affirmative reply. I reasoned that my major obligations were to the Reading Rooms. Irene Hudson, who had done a fine job during my illness, could take over both operations and conduct them skillfully. My other obligations related to my family.

As letters passed between us, it became clear to me that Peggy was completely competent and could manage affairs as well as I could. I didn’t concern myself with her point of view. What she wished, if her wishes included me, could be ignored. The teaching held firmly to the right of the individual to seek “the light” in his own way, undeterred by others, including his spouse. I would have to cover the costs of the children. Aside from that, I was free as the

air. Irene would be a satisfactory replacement in other areas.

Meanwhile, even in the Twin Cities, the papers were full of the courtroom drama unfolding around Guy Ballard in Chicago. He was front-page news as “The Great I Am.”

Some years earlier, long before he had written his first book or become well known, Ballard had served as secretary for a corporation that promoted a real estate and gold mine development, known as “Lake of Gold.”

One of the investors, a woman living in Chicago, had lost a large sum of money. The corporation was long since defunct. However, Ballard’s name, as secretary, was on numerous documents. This investor sued him to recover her money.

The defense was conducted by Paul Stickel—a most satisfactory choice from the standpoint of the “I Am” students, since Paul Stickel was an appointed Messenger. He argued that, as Secretary, Ballard had been an employee of the corporation. He was in no way responsible for plans, programs, developments, or schemes put forward by the President of the corporation.

The plaintiff’s case centered on the argument that a Secretary of a corporation is one of the officers of that corporation. Thus, Ballard was culpable in not disclosing the weaknesses and questionable character of the scheme. As an officer, he was a responsible party.

As the trial progressed and the proceedings were published by the wire services across the country, my attitude was confident, even a trifle smug. The Masters were in charge. This whole thing was a trumped up effort to “get” Mr. Ballard. The plaintiff now believed Ballard had plenty of money and could afford a settlement. Finding the rich guilty had been a popular trend for years. I waited eagerly for the report that would exonerate Ballard, or indicate that the whole case should be thrown out. At this time, I still held to illusions about retroactive justice.

I was stunned when Ballard was found guilty, and a judgment handed down. I knew little about legal matters, but whole proceeding seemed of order. It should have been dropped for no other reason than the “statute of limitations.”

Today, I believe that Ballard was badly served in court. One of the principle points emphasized by the Ballards in all their teachings related to support for the American Constitution, the American legal system, love and respect for the law...and so on. Now, their own

device betrayed them.

If the plaintiff had a case, it seems to me incredible that legal action had been postponed for years until the Ballards turned up in Chicago. An alleged swindle in another state could have been dealt with in federal court. The physical location of the defendant or defendants would have been beside the point. The mere delay in bringing action, taken by itself, was *prima facie* evidence that the plaintiff was trying to use the courts for a rip-off.

But the posture of the Ballards engendered antagonism. If an individual interpreted the words “I Am” in their ordinary connotation, the Ballard effort was filled with conceit, effrontery, and outrageous defiance.

One way or another, the defense lost and the Ballards left Chicago—canceling a session, I believe, either in St. Louis or Detroit. They proceeded to Cleveland to pick up their ruptured schedule.

The publicity had been shattering. The movement had been sweeping the country, picking up converts by the thousands. Now, as a result of the merciless manner in which Ballard was lampooned and humiliated in print, the wave lost its momentum.

I viewed the affair as clear evidence that unwholesome “alien” influences were at work in the government. Despite the ridicule—some of which was now directed at me—I kept my head up and my spirits high. I had gained so much from the teaching, and had seen it work so well for me, that an event of this sort was not to be allowed to throw me off stride.

Thus, when a letter said that the Ballard tour was continuing and, further, that I would be welcome to join in Cleveland, I was elated.

Could I arrange my affairs in time? I could and would. Peggy agreed that I had to follow my own “destiny.” She would accept \$100 per month as support for the children. That would not include the generous payments to the Reading Room that I always made. But The Ballards knew Irene, and they had confidence in her.

I gave notice at WTCN, letting my peers know that I had found a “better job.”

I sold my car, gave away all extra personal possessions, stripped myself of all worldly goods, and bought a one-way rail ticket to Cleveland. My life would now be devoted to God—the “I Am.” My “calls” had been answered. The Masters had accepted me, even if probation was part of the deal.

The Ballards had not demanded that I denude myself but I wanted to be ready to do whatever the Masters wished. From this moment on, I reasoned, I would be as close to the “holy of holies” as anyone alive could be. What a fantastic privilege!

A group of my students saw me off from the St. Paul depot. The night was October 13, 1939. It was my birthday, and what a birthday present I was getting. That my services were seriously needed was clear to me. In September, Adolph Hitler, clearly under the control of black magicians, had invaded Poland. Everyone who loved America and wished to serve the “Light” would now be tested. And I would be where the action was!

I lulled myself to sleep in the lower berth I had reserved, giving “calls” of gratitude for the unique privilege granted to me.

What a magnificent city Cleveland was. The railroad depot was in the sub-basement of one of the major hotels.

Massive buildings fronted a square just a few blocks from the lake. Within the complex of hotel, railroad station, and other establishments were department stores and one of the nation’s truly fine shopping centers. On the far side of the square stood the municipal auditorium, where the classes would be conducted.

My luggage was taken from the baggage crew by the porter, who took it directly to the room reserved for me. Pat Crouse met me, and we had breakfast together. He brought me up to date.

The Cleveland sessions would begin in a few days. Daddy wanted to go shopping with me to help me select a trunk and a white tuxedo. The trunk could be purchased in Cleveland. However, Daddy preferred that I use a rented tux until we got to Washington. There, a tailor, in whom he had confidence, would make me the satin lappelled attire I would wear on the platform.

The Ballard entourage, consisting of the Messengers and staff, totaled about nine. Pat served Daddy as secretary and Mama had a woman serving in the same capacity. Then, each had an assistant and general factotum who took care of whatever chores had to be performed. Daddy’s helper was a man everyone called Grant. That was his last name; I don’t recall ever hearing his first name. Mama’s assistant was a personal maid. A new organist, a young man named Freddie, had joined the group. Also, a new female soloist had taken the place of Mrs. Rogers. A man we called “Van” handled some of the public relations details, and had also served as the substitute

announcer. I brought the staff count to ten.

Each of us, with the exception of Mama, carried all his worldly goods in a trunk, plus a pair of suitcases. Mama had sixteen trunks to carry her various gowns and dresses, and one trunk for her jewelry. Nearly all her “jewels” were glass or paste imitations. In addition, Mama owned a harp. At least once during sessions that lasted for ten days, Mama would play the harp on the platform. As well, there were various crates and boxes that housed the “props” used on stage, books, records, and supplies of all kinds.

The Ballards tipped generously. You may be sure that the arrival of the Messengers and retinue at any city where a major Class was scheduled was an “event.” To make certain of this, four canary yellow Chrysler New Yorker sedans provided transportation. Daddy preferred motoring from place to place. The trunks, and other impediments, were shipped by Railroad Express.

Pat explained all these details, and I reveled in them. This was opulence. Clearly, the Masters had whatever they needed. That was as it should be. The Ballards had “paid their dues” in the commercial world. They, at least, never had to worry about money.

I was mentally putting myself at this illustrious level, as Pat talked. My salary had not been mentioned, but I was so sure everything would be “whatever I needed” that I suppose I anticipated Pat would hand me several hundred dollars, saying I should let him know when I needed more.

Instead, Pat asked me how much money I had. Without hesitation I admitted that I didn’t have much, less than a hundred.

He was pleased I had so much! “Then you won’t be needing anything for some time,” he advised. The system followed was this: Whatever I purchased, food, a magazine, a newspaper, a handkerchief, toothpaste, or a shirt, the item needed a receipt. I would turn in a weekly account. These outlays would be reviewed. If I were wasting money, I would be reprimanded. Otherwise, each expense would be reimbursed. I would have *no* expenses for anything I “needed,” except for the \$100 payment to be sent to Peggy and the boys, and an extra \$25.00 per month. This was \$25.00 worth of waste, as Pat explained it. Since I had close to \$75.00, I shouldn’t need anything in the way of extra outlay for about three months.

“I had no idea it would be anything like that,” I said, feeling an overwhelming sense of dismay.

"Look at it this way, Bob. All the money we have comes from Love Gifts and from the sales of books. That money is all given in service to "the Light." Consider it a sacred trust. You wouldn't take the few dollars that some poor soul contributes as a joyous gift of love and spend it frivolously, would you?"

"Of course not." I could see that. "But by making reports on all this trivial stuff, staff time is taken up unnecessarily. I guess I'm just naturally independent. I'm not used to having someone peering over my shoulder at my expenditures and, then, scolding me, if they happen to disapprove of something I do."

Pat laughed. "You'll get used to it. We all do it, including Mama and Daddy. For instance, how many pair of shorts do you have?"

"Shorts?" I was embarrassed. I didn't talk about my shorts to anyone. "You mean my underwear?"

Pat nodded. "Golly. I don't know. Maybe half a dozen. Maybe a few more. I really don't know."

"How often do you change shorts?"

My face was now aflame. "Every day, I guess. Maybe every other day. I bathe every day and I thought we were to be personally clean in all things."

"You are. But Daddy wears one pair a week. They are nearly as clean when he sends them to the laundry as they were when he puts them on fresh."

I was speechless. It had never occurred to me to make "calls" to regulate my perspiration or body odor. Besides, Daddy was "special."

Pat laughed, enjoying himself. "Don't worry about it, Bob. I'm the staff member charged with checking up. I even check up on Daddy."

"You do?" Wasn't this an invasion of privacy?

"You're here on probation, Bob. Don't forget that. I'm not going to be too tough. We just have to watch every penny. It's the right thing to do."

"Okay. I'll do my best." I had given up a fairly generous paycheck, without learning what my new financial status would be. The fault was mine. And I had even boasted at the station that I was going to be paid so generously I would never lack for a thing.

Watching me closely, Pat continued: "I'm really glad you're with us, Bob. Daddy hasn't been feeling well, lately. He needs all the protection and help we can give him."

Daddy not feeling well? Preposterous. Wasn't he just about ready to make his ascension? He was supposed to be impervious to all "outer" problems. "It must be a projection of some kind," I blurted. "I had something like that, too, after Chicago."

"Undoubtedly," Pat agreed. "And we know about your problem, too."

"Now, let me get on with your other duties. I'll be asking you to help type letters when we are between classes. I know you are a skillful typist. Also, we'll probably need you to drive one of the cars when we travel."

"Pat, I wouldn't know what to say in letters."

"Of course you wouldn't. I write most of the letters myself. I have a loose-leaf notebook filled with the paragraphs we use. I'll simply give you a copy of that notebook to work from. When you type letters you'll have the name and address of the person to whom the letter will be addressed. Then I'll give you a series of numbers. Like—one, twelve, four, seventeen, or six. You'll simply type those paragraphs from the loose-leaf book and prepare for Daddy's signature."

I had never heard of that method of writing letters.

It seemed dreadfully cold and impersonal.

"Don't worry, Bob." Pat went on. "Actually, Daddy tells me what to say in each case. He really composes the letters. This is just an efficient way of handling correspondence. Even when we travel, there is an enormous amount of correspondence carried on."

"Whatever happened in Chicago?" I asked. "I was surprised to hear that the court ruled against Daddy."

Pat shrugged. "It all happened years ago, before Daddy met Saint Germain."

"I know that. Personally, I can't believe that Daddy cheated anyone. But what was the final outcome?"

"They got a judgment against us."

I laughed, feeling relief. Nothing worse than that, eh? Well, you paid it and got out of town."

"We didn't pay it."

"You didn't?" I was learning some astonishing things.

"We don't have that kind of money!"

"But...I mean... There's enough money. Saint Germain always said there was plenty. I would have thought the judgment would

have been paid at once, and the matter settled once and for all.”

“I’m sure Daddy would have paid it, if he’d had it. Instead, Saint Germain told us to get out of town at once. We left in the middle of the night. Otherwise, all our cars and trunks could have been attached and kept in Illinois, until the account was settled. So, we gave them the slip.”

I laughed. I remembered my days with the Hart Players and the conversations among the cast over just such contingencies. Shows were always running close hauled. But everyone knew that. Actors were almost always broke. Or very rich. Nothing was in the middle. It was one of the reasons I had gone into radio, rather than remaining loyal to the stage or continuing toward a screen career.

I had never before thought of what the Ballards were doing as “show business.” While I had recognized their ability to set a stage and to create dramatic effects, the operation had been at such an elevated level in my mind that I had never seen the parallel.

Pat was puzzled by my mirth and my shaking head. He started to say something, but I cut in first. “I know. I’m not to worry about a thing. Don’t you worry about me, Pat. I’m loyal. It’s just that, as a former actor, I know to sit on my own trunk to keep the sheriff from attaching it. You see, in matters of this kind, the sheriff is never empowered to attach anything on the person of a performer. You sit on your suitcase or your trunk, and make sure all your valuables are on your person. The sheriff gets the scenery and props. But that stuff is easily replaced.”

When the class opened in Cleveland, I gave a good performance as an announcer. Every staff member appeared both pleased and surprised. However, the first seeds of doubt were gnawing away in me.

Mr. Ballard was not well. After a day or two, Mama took me aside, both to compliment me and to warn me. “You are staring at Daddy all the time,” she advised. “He doesn’t like it, and I most certainly disapprove.”

“I’m terribly sorry,” I said. “I didn’t know I was doing it.”

“You are splendid on the platform,” she said. “Don’t spoil it when you aren’t.”

“Thank you for telling me, Mama. I’ll watch my manners.”

“It’s more than manners, young man. It is an indication of loss of faith.”

She was right on target. But I couldn't let her know.

I denied any lessening of my whole-hearted support, and had the uneasy feeling that she could see through me.

I hadn't become disloyal. But I was certainly confused.

Daddy just couldn't be suffering from any human ailment.

But he was. On the platform he was impregnable. But he'd come off stage bordering on collapse.

Nothing of an unusual nature occurred during the first few days of the session. Several Masters arrived, as they had during each major session, and Daddy gave "dictations. Apparently, both Mama and Daddy physically "saw" the Masters in attendance, but no one else did.

I don't remember the exact date when it began, but reporters started putting in an appearance. This time, in addition to the local press, AP, UP, and the International News Syndicate (now merged with UP) sent representatives. Time and Life Magazines had men there. A bushy-browed man, of imposing manner and arrogant behavior, showed up. His name was Westbrook Pegler, a famous columnist.

Daddy had always praised Pegler's writing as being pro-American and anti-communistic. It was evident, at once, that Pegler was not on hand to say anything complimentary.

A rule was now put into force. Cameras would not be allowed inside the auditorium. One reporter sneaked his in. When he took his first picture, Grant showed up, took away his camera, and smashed it.

The stories appearing in the local press became increasingly hostile and, at the same time, hilarious.

Phrases with sacred meanings to the students were picked up and lampooned. I remember one such phrase in particular. The Ballards referred to the innermost spark of life, as an "unfed flame." There was a lovely symbolic picture of that flame in some of the literature. One of the reporters referred to Mrs. Ballard as Mr. Ballard's "unfed flame," suggesting that he ought to feed her. I thought that really funny. I was angry with myself because I laughed about it, while I was also angry with the man who wrote it for the "sacrilege."

Prudence would have suggested that the time had come for the Ballards to be less dynamic and positive. The opposite effect was

engendered. Day after day, Mrs. Ballard, in particular, led “calls” against the press. The media was abused from the platform. The Ballards were abused in print and on radio.

The weak-hearted fled, but the stalwarts closed ranks. They moved as one to protect the Ballards, and “the light” they had brought.

Again, I am uncertain as to the precise day, but Daddy announced the presence of a Master. In the ensuing “dictation”—although America was still at peace—the Master dictated the news that a pack of submarines had been sent by Hitler to blow up the Panama Canal. Because of the sincere efforts of the students, we were told, the Masters were able to intervene. By the use of great rays of light, these submarines had all been pinned to the bottom of the ocean. There, they would be held immobile until the war ended and Hitler was destroyed.

At war’s end, the submarines would be brought to the surface and the existence of the Masters proven absolute. This was in the fall of 1939, and Pearl Harbor was two full years into the future.

That bit of information, apparently coming from an “infallible” source, was utter nonsense. I knew it at the time. I was reasonably sure that Hitler had some brains, despite his posturing. He would be doing his best to keep America out of the war, not bringing her in as a foe. He already had enough to handle.

My mind was in turmoil. Such statements could not have been “written in letters of light” by a divine being. If not, then Daddy must have made the whole thing up. But Daddy was a pretty smart piece of work, too. He had more sense than that. Of course, he was ill. Perhaps he was delirious. I recalled my own delirium. It was easy for me to make comparisons with Daddy. He was my idol and my ideal.

The Ballards’ doctrine had painted them into a corner. They boasted that nothing could stop them. Their condemnation of everyone and everything that differed was a far cry from the gentle, lovely ideal they had portrayed in word and action up to then. Even with Daddy ill, they dared not bring in a doctor. If students knew that Daddy was mortal, they would have fled.

Would the Masters have killed the crews of submarines? Wouldn’t real Masters have sought, instead, to bring the crews into the fold? Weren’t Germans human, too?

The emphasis of the Ballard Class had shifted. Instead of a feeling of love and blessings, the operation bristled with militancy and an effort to amass power. Had love for America been elevated to a position of ascendance over love for man?

My position was completely untenable. But I had “burned my bridges” as I crossed over. My job in radio was gone. Thanks to all the publicity, I would not be welcomed back should I try returning. I was convinced of it. Nor could I attempt it without confessing that I had been gulled.

I still had enough money for a train ticket. But I was committed to a course of action that at least supported my children. And I was still eating regularly. Besides, the work itself, until this latest turn of events, had been the most thrilling and satisfying of my life.

My “calls” took on a quality of what can be termed “quiet desperation.” Perhaps the Ballards had been abandoned by the Masters, and their current operation was nothing but a pretense! That was a thought I didn’t dare dwell upon. The Masters were supposed to know everything, including your innermost thoughts. Such thoughts could bring about my dismissal.

I beseeched my “Presence” for direction and for the strength to support the work, while weeding out those factors and ideas that were foreign to it.

On the final Sunday in Cleveland, I witnessed a remarkable event. It was remarkable to me, although Pat told me it had happened many times. A Methodist minister from one of Cleveland’s foremost congregations came backstage and knelt before Mr. Ballard. He offered his church and congregation to the Ballards, and asked for their blessing.

Mama and Daddy, with hands on his head, called down beauty and love for this man, who arose with tears of gratitude in his eyes. Others equally sincere pleaded for the same privilege.

Was I some kind of Judas? I was reminded of Christ on Calvary. What kind of a man was I that I would deny Daddy in his moment of trial and travail? I rooted out these disloyal suspicions. I determined to shut my eyes, and “see” no evil.

New lawsuits were brought against the Ballards. One, by the newsman who had had his camera smashed. Another, by a woman who had been summarily ushered from the auditorium when she started a disturbance.

This time the court took no chances. The sheriff was ordered to impound all properties belonging to the Ballards and their staff. How the Ballards knew of this event so quickly is unknown to me. Saint Germain? Who knows?

In any case, forewarned, Van, Grant, and Pat got our trunks out of the hotel Sunday night. They were on a train to Philadelphia, before the sheriff put in an appearance. He snared all four Chryslers on Monday morning.

Deprived of vehicles, the Ballards flew to Philadelphia, where a very “powerful” group leader named Francis Ickes let them know hotel rooms were waiting for them. Meanwhile, since Philadelphia was our next stop for a class, the staff traveled by train.

Chapter XXXI

The magnificent Ben Franklin Hotel was Ballard headquarters in Philadelphia. I had been impressed with the Hotel Cleveland, but the Ben Franklin was both older and grander, in my judgment. I was beginning to find hotel life attractive. Small wonder, considering the caliber of the hotels the Ballards selected.

Since the “I Am” doctrine contained the idea of re-embodiment (reincarnation) as a pivotal principle, one of the subjects students discussed and speculated about was who they had been in a prior lifetime. The Ballards had put out the information that Guy Ballard had been George Washington during the founding of our nation. It was also well known that Guy and Edna Ballard, in the present lifetime, were “twin rays.” This meant they were divinely destined to be with each other.

However, it seems Edna Ballard had not been Martha Washington, as anyone would normally have presumed. A modest amount of titillation accompanied this somewhat scandalous report. Edna Ballard had been, the students were told, no less a personage than Ben Franklin. It seems that, when re-embodiment occurred, a given individual might be either male or female, depending upon karma.

In school, I had been interested in the biographies of both these historical figures. I thought of Washington as a strong leader, although not always tops as a military man. Washington had a strange tendency to admire the British.

His insistence on either British or Prussian military training might have destroyed American chances in the struggle. Fortunately, his troops disobeyed his commands, hid in the underbrush like savages, and fought the British with guerilla tactics. Guerillas, on familiar terrain, have decided advantages over massed troops, however prettily they parade.

Despite some highly questionable decisions, Washington had a towering determination. His jaw cantilevered over whatever mistakes he may have made, and brought success where logic would have despaired.

If not always honest—his expense account has established something a little less than cherry-tree purity—Washington was, none-

theless, brilliant in many ways. I admired him. When I had read of his romantic dalliances—thanks to revisionist historians, these were beginning to surface at that time—I liked him even more. This was a fellow with hair on his chest, poor teeth, a strong stomach, and a lady-in-waiting somewhere.

I confess to looking at Daddy Ballard, wondering if he still had the strong urges he had had in the 1770's. If so, I could identify with him. I had the same strong urges. And he had done all right. Perhaps I could manage too.

I had little difficulty in accepting that Guy had once been George. There is a portrait of Washington, painted by a renowned contemporary of his, and it actually looked like Ballard. It showed the same shaped nose, facial contour, and posture.

Pat Crouse tipped me off that Edna had been Ben Franklin. It was the reason we stayed at the Ben Franklin Hotel. This was a report I could never completely accept. I didn't dispute it. How can anyone dispute such a claim? What possible evidence could be dredged up in any direction?

I concluded that Mama didn't know much about Franklin, or she would possibly have chosen someone else as her prior. Franklin had a marvelous sense of humor. Mama didn't. Franklin was something of a heller. He loved all the women he could reach in three countries, and had numerous progeny, including at least one illegitimate son. Mama was cold and unsympathetic when it came to sex.

Franklin's mind was probably one of the finest ever produced. He was a literate and consummate "man of all seasons." He was a pioneer when it came to the sciences. Mama fell short in all these particulars.

On the plus side, Mama was a beautiful woman with some skill as a harpist. It seemed to me that she was rather well grounded in Theosophy. Beyond these attributes, I found her lacking. Further, there was a trace of powerful, emotional aggression in her of which Franklin gave small indication. She wanted to "blast." He wanted to explore and understand. He was witty, tactful, adroit, and never put on "airs." She was blunt, direct, and devoted to making a "good appearance."

I held my peace, and marveled at the discrepancies.

But I could not question. The doctrine was a "package." It ex-

plained *everything*. To question a single item meant to lose belief in the whole.

The second evening after our arrival at the Ben Franklin, Pat came to my door. He conveyed a feeling of excitement. "Come to Daddy's room," he said. "Saint Germain wants to talk to all of us."

My jubilation shot through the ceiling. For some time, students had believed that one of the great blessings shared only by the staff was physical contact with Saint Germain.

In Cleveland, dictations had occurred in front of the large audiences. But there had been no private gathering at which, conceivably, Saint Germain might have been physically present.

Apparently, this was now to be remedied. "Are you sure I'm to be there?" I asked Pat. "After all, I'm on probation."

Pat smiled his superior smile. "I'm sure. Daddy asked for you."

I had a strange sense of elation coupled with humility. I rejoiced. I had been found worthy. But I was humble, because I knew my doubts still existed and my mind was not altogether pure.

Daddy was in his dressing robe, obviously ailing. Everyone else was already present, when I walked in. Daddy smiled at me, warmly and sincerely. "Welcome, Bobby Boy. Saint Germain is already here. And he wanted you here, too."

I looked about hastily, expecting to see a magnificent stranger in our midst. I was disappointed. Just Ballards and staff. There was one empty chair and I sat on it.

For the first time, I sat in on what amounted to a "private" dictation. It was the same as the public sessions, with one exception. We were encouraged to ask questions.

After generalities and blessings in the extravagant transcendent language we used, Daddy, speaking as "Saint Germain," got down to cases. The evil projections had come with such force that holding a session in Philadelphia was not deemed wise. A final decision had not yet been made. We should all make application. Meanwhile, Saint Germain would return in a few days to give us his instructions. He wanted, it seemed, to confer with other Masters as to the plan to be followed.

When the dictation ended on a "wait and see" basis, Mama began with a number of questions. Each of received an answer that left her as much in doubt as before.

I became increasingly unimpressed. When a pause ensued, I fi-

nally got the courage. "When am I going to see you, Master?" I blurted. "I mean, physically, in your physical body. You know my innermost thoughts, so I probably shouldn't ask. But I have longed so very..."

"Just keep on, keeping on," Saint Germain interrupted in Daddy's voice. "The time is closer than you realize. My Messenger, Godfre, finds comfort in having you with this sacred group. You will be rendering a great service. You are now a part of this cadre of dedicated helpers."

That was that. I was now a staff member. My feeling of satisfaction was less than total. I had to content myself with confirmation by proxy.

A few days later, I was again summoned to the Ballard suite.

There, I was introduced to the leader of the Philadelphia Reading Room. Francis Ickes was a powerful woman. She wore considerable amounts of makeup, her hair was conspicuously blonde, and she had a body that a linebacker for the Eagles would have been proud to possess. Competency fairly oozed from her.

Francis was urging the Ballards to carry out their seminar, as announced and planned. People had traveled to Philadelphia from all across America, including California. It would be tragic to disappoint such sincere and dedicated people.

Daddy told her we were all waiting for Saint Germain to give the final okay.

"I wonder if you could do me a personal favor," Francis asked of Daddy.

"I certainly will if I can," he responded.

"It's probably my own carelessness," she said. "But I'm missing a purse containing about \$800. The money belongs to the Reading Room. I'm afraid someone may have stolen it. I can't find it anywhere. When Saint Germain comes, would you ask him, please, to tell me where the purse is, or to identify the thief. I simply must get to the bottom of this."

Daddy didn't seem taken aback at all. "I'll be sure to ask him," he told her. "And I'll let you know what he says right away."

I was suddenly fascinated. The "dictations" were so often couched in general terms that I had the feeling nearly anyone could have given them. But this was a question that demanded a specific answer. I made a mental note to ask Saint Germain myself, if Daddy

seemed to forget. I kept that resolution strictly to myself.

But Francis wasn't through. "I hate to bother you," she said. "I know you're not feeling well with all these projections. But would you do this for me, too?"

"Out in the hall are a number of group leaders from various cities around the country. They are terribly concerned about what to report back to their Reading Rooms. Would you permit them to see you, Daddy? Just for a moment or two. It would mean so much to them to see you. I don't like to ask it. But I'd really appreciate it."

Daddy had been seated during this brief visit, but he struggled to his feet. "Of course, Francis." He patted her hand. "It's the very least I can do. Open the door and ask them in."

As she turned to comply, he added, "But make it short, will you please? I'm having trouble getting my body to obey me the way it should."

Francis nodded in sympathy. The staff members present stood to one side, and the door was opened. A small crowd of people, mostly women, crowded into the room. They were all well dressed and beautifully mannered. But, suddenly, something happened to me that I had never experienced before.

My gaze centered on one of the women. It was as though a charge of electricity had leaped from a power line into my chest. The object of my attention was in her late twenties, or early thirties. Her face was round, crowned with a mass of golden hair cut in a pageboy bob. Her shoulders were draped in a lovely fur stole. Her eyes were bright blue, her features regular. She stood about five feet six and, to my eyes, appeared to be the personification of every ideal.

My first thought was: "It's a Lady Master." (The Ballard doctrine held to equal opportunities for men and women.) To my imagination, she and I were the only people in the room. She looked full into my face, and smiled. She said nothing. Nothing was needed. It was as though I had always known her.

The meeting was brief. As the group leaders departed, I continued to stand rigid, as though turned into an Easter Island statue. Pat nudged me. "Come on, Bob, Daddy must get some rest."

"Of course. Of course, Sorry." I groped toward the door. I remembered in time, and turned to say goodbye to Daddy. Then I grabbed Pat's arm.

"Who was that woman?" I demanded.

"The one I saw you staring at?"

Pat rarely missed anything. "Yes. The one with the fur stole. Who is she?"

"Her name is Pearl Diehl. She's in charge of the San Francisco Reading Room."

I nodded dumbly.

"There's something else I'd better tell you."

"What's that?"

"She's married. Her husband is Sidney Diehl. They are a marvelous couple."

"I see. Thanks."

I stumbled off to my room. Pearl Diehl! What a potent, powerful effect she had on me. Was it possible I had known her in another embodiment?

I made up my mind to arrange for a private and personal meeting with the lady as quickly as possible. I had to find out if the electricity worked both ways. Before I could formulate a plan, Grant knocked at my door.

"Throw some stuff in a bag and meet me in the lobby in 20 minutes," he said. We're going back to Cleveland to pick up the cars. "We'll be gone one night."

In the lobby a few minutes later, Freddie, Van, and I joined Grant. Daddy couldn't get along without Pat, so Freddie had been crafted. The four of us could be spared.

As one of this quartet, I was treated to my first airplane ride. The weather between Philadelphia and Cleveland was not great, and the flight occurred at night. I was dreadfully nervous, wondering whether the pilot was qualified. The propeller driven DC-3 emitted motor sounds of varying pitch, each of which convinced me that disaster was imminent. Actually, except for my imagination, the flight was uneventful.

We spent another night at the Cleveland Hotel, and got off to an early start the next day. I was positioned as the number two driver, with Grant assigned to lead the caravan.

One of the hotel employees tipped us off. Newsmen knew we were in town, and they were camped out in the lobby. We by-passed that floor, dropping to the underground garage. Grant growled at me: "I sure as Christ hope you know how to drive. Don't stop for a damn thing, and keep on my tail. Got it?"

I “had” it.

Van said, “The reporters may try to block the exit, Bob. Just keep the car moving. Don’t let Grant scare you.”

“He doesn’t scare me,” I said. “And I can drive.”

“I’d rather play the organ,” Freddie chimed in. He was to be in number three spot, with Van bringing up the rear.

We lined up all four yellow sedans inside the building. Grant checked the engines of each. “Two cars are low on gas,” Grant said. “But we’ll get through town before we stop. Ready, everyone?”

Each of us got behind his respective wheel, and Grant waved an arm from his window. “Let’s go!” he shouted back.

Grant floored the throttle. Almost as one, the rest of us followed. We were doing thirty by the time we shot up the ramp, and swerved into the street. Out of the corner of one eye, I saw a horde of newsmen bearing down at a run. But they were out-classed. It was no contest. Grant could have driven at the Indy-500. And I wasn’t going to let him lord it over me, if I could help it.

The big Chryslers were capable of every demand we made. We drove so closely to one another that no other car could have broken the linkage with undamaged fenders.

I thought of myself as a good driver, but I had much to learn. Grant had a sense of timing, as well as speed. We “made” most of the lights, but if one flashed red while we were crossing an intersection, we all crossed anyway.

Near the outskirts of town, Grant pulled us into a filling station. The cars were serviced. Then, we were off through the Ohio countryside. I was no longer concerned with pursuit, unless it had a siren. And nothing equipped with a siren made an appearance.

Many of the roads were only two-lane affairs. Also, curves were frequent. On these curves, I invariably widened the gap between my car and Grant’s. Then, on the straight-aways, I couldn’t catch up. Finally, Grant signaled for a stop and we all pulled over.

Grant came back to me. “I was afraid you were green,” he said. “Don’t slow down in the curves.”

“I have to,” I said. “Otherwise I’ll pile up in the ditch.”

“Look, Bob. Whenever the staff moves, we have only two speeds. Stop and go. Go means *all the way*.”

“I’m doing my best.”

“Let me explain. When you see a curve ahead, you ease up on the

throttle *before* you hit the curve. Then, as you start into the turn, accelerate. That shifts the center of gravity and keeps the wheels on the road. You've been going into the curves full tilt. Then, you have to use the brake. That pulls the center of gravity away and you could lose control. Try it my way."

I'd never heard of anything like that. "Sure," I said. And I grinned at him. "I'm always happy to learn from anyone who knows more than I do."

He looked more closely, and I thought the hint of a smile appeared. Then he grunted. "We'll see." And again we were off.

Grant's tactics paid off in miles. We roared through Ohio and went into Pennsylvania, often topping ninety miles an hour. There is something exhilarating about motoring when one is driving a fine machine that responds. I had never piloted anything half so powerful. It took me a little while to adjust to this method of acceleration, but I learned. Before long I was clinging to Grant's rear, and Freddie kept the gap between his car and mine to a minimum.

It was a rare pleasure to see the startled looks of bystanders, as we shipped along, in and out of small towns—slowing somewhat for cities, but maintaining headlong speed. Zip, zip, whiz, zip, and four bright yellow vehicles would come and go, like a single streaking arrow.

We stopped for lunch at a restaurant the Ballards often frequented. Grant knew what he wanted, where it was to be obtained, and he got instant service. This was military precision. That is to say, a precision we associate with the military, but that the military rarely evinces.

The four motors roared into Philadelphia, following their leader, and were parked in a garage about a block from the Ben Franklin. I peeled my fingers from the wheel, and made my way to the hotel with the others. I was still thinking of Pearl Diehl.

That night I dreamed about her. It was a wild, exciting, and mystifying dream. The next day, my determination to see her bore fruit. By chance, we ate in a restaurant at the same time. Smiles passed between us.

That was all the encouragement I needed. The Ballards had often said that dreams revealed many things. Pearl was staying at the Ben Franklin Hotel, and I phoned her room. I told her I'd had a strange dream in which she figured prominently, and I wanted to

talk to her about it.

She was eager, and we arranged a rendezvous. We met during a meal. I couldn't keep my eyes from her face. She was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen. Her knowledge of the doctrine was as great as mine, or greater. My heart beat wildly when I so much as looked at her. I could grow dizzy just thinking about her.

Although she denied feeling anything like the "electric current" I had felt when I first saw her, she clearly held me in great respect, and was attracted to me.

I had felt nothing so powerful as the emotions that now engulfed me. Since Charlotte's death, I had not thought my heart could ever beat this way again. Pearl and I agreed to work together as hard as possible in our respective calls for the "protection" of Daddy. There could be nothing wrong with that. There must be some "divine purpose" in our being together at this time. The idea kept surfacing. Could it be that Pearl and I were "twin rays?" The doctrine we followed said that it was possible. In which case, we were "meant" for each other.

Again, Pat summoned me to the Ballard suite for a dictation from Saint Germain. Once more the familiar scene unfolded, the staff sat in a circle. "Daddy," his eyes closed, "read" letters of light.

The Masters had reached a decision concerning Philadelphia. The class must be cancelled. However, instead of halting the tour, we were to proceed at once to Washington, D.C. There, arrangements would be made, so we could hold a session without the intrusion of the press.

In the question and answer period following the dictation, Mama asked what arrangements Saint Germain had in mind. The answer was cryptic. Mama, herself, would come up with the plan. She appeared to have no idea. Once more, heretic thoughts prodded at me. What an artful dodge! Proclaim the unknown, and then pass the buck.

I remembered Francis Ickes. I steeled myself to intrude into what was Daddy's prerogative. Instead, Daddy, himself, asked the question. His own voice, presumably Saint Germain's "letters," responded.

A particular item of furniture in the Ickes' home was described. All the money was still in the purse, where Francis had tucked it away for safekeeping. There was no thief. Francis had hidden it,

and forgotten where.

That answer was neither cryptic nor a generality. I happened to be present the next day when the information was passed along. When I saw her again, Francis told me she had recognized the cabinet from the description given and, sure enough, the missing purse, with all funds intact, was right where she had hidden it.

Meanwhile, when Saint Germain had “gone,” we sat talking about the new arrangement that would take us to Washington. Mama expressed concern that she didn’t know what to do.

“Where do we stay in Washington?” I asked.

“We always go to the Hotel Washington,” Pat said.

The problem had an easy solution, it seemed to me. “Then, why don’t you hold the class in the main ballroom of the Hotel Washington? The hotel staff can help keep it a private meeting, and it won’t be open to the public generally. You can keep the press out of a private meeting.”

Glances passed among the staff.

Mama said, “That sounds like a good idea.”

Daddy nodded agreement.

Pat said, “But it doesn’t really get to the problem. None of us can tell the dedicated student from someone who has arrived with purposes of creating a nuisance. Members of the press would pretend to be students and get in.”

“Why don’t you ask the group leaders in Washington and elsewhere to issue identification cards to one hundred percent students?” I asked. “No admission to the class would be made without an identity card. The leaders know their own students.”

Daddy clapped his knee. “What do you think, Mama?”

“I think it would work. I can’t think of anything better.”

Daddy nodded. “Remember, Bobby Boy, when Saint Germain was welcoming you into the staff? He said you would render a great service. I think this may be just such a service.”

Suddenly I saw myself in a contradictory position. One of the great ideas that had attracted me to the “I Am” was that the classes were without charge, and open to all. No restrictions. The idea was important to me. Now, I had just come up with the contrary position, which had been accepted. It had been called a great service. And *I* had the idea whereas Saint Germain had just said that Mama would provide the plan.

"Mama, please make the arrangements," Daddy said. "I'm tired. I want to rest."

As we were shooed from the Ballard presence, my satisfaction at providing a workable solution was blanketed by a feeling that I had betrayed the teaching. My head was spinning. How could I really get at the truth of all this? So much was good. And real. But there were such glaring errors and contradictions. Does pressure turn us all into fools? I had given direction to the movement, when I was the one who needed direction desperately.

As quickly as I could manage it, I phoned Pearl. We met in a remote location, so that no staff member could observe us. I had a half-formed notion of obtaining direction from her. But when her beauty and calm engulfed me, I found it impossible to utter anything resembling a doubt. Pearl was interested in me in large measure because I was in the hierarchy at a level above hers. She was a group leader, but I was "on staff."

I could not tell her of my waffling emotions toward the work; instead, I poured out my emotions toward her as a person. I told her of the decision to hold the Washington, but not the Philadelphia class.

She was thunderstruck. She had only enough funds, provided by her students, for the Philadelphia class. Then, she would have to return to San Francisco.

The thought of her imminent departure produced an ache in my chest. "You are needed here," I told her. "I think, perhaps, we may be Twin Rays. Possibly, we have been brought together at this time to help protect the work and, most especially, Daddy.

"Mama has told us that great power is generated when Twin Rays work together. Why don't we make calls on behalf of the work every day? Let's do it at a specified time each day."

I remembered my efforts to communicate with Charlotte by ESP—efforts that had always failed. Perhaps it would now be different.

"You must do what you can to attend the Washington session, too," I said. "I'm sure the students in San Francisco, if they knew the size and nature of the emergency, would insist on it."

Pearl promised to telephone her Reading Room to engender calls for greater opulence, so that she could stay on.

Pearl filled my mind every waking hour. She was the most perfect person I had ever met. I was an actor and I knew how to por-

tray a roll. But Pearl was a genuine, totally dedicated “I Am”-er, without pretense or reservation.

My longing for her grew. Of course, it was wrong to covet another man’s wife. I knew that as firmly as I knew of my own existence. But if she and I could be together, in every conceivable way, wouldn’t that make us both stronger and more effective?

My sense of logic kept crying, “tilt.” But my sense of longing flashed green lights.

Chapter XXXII

I had been corresponding regularly with Peggy and Irene Hudson. With Pearl filling my thoughts, I found it impossible to write to either of them. Irene needed neither advice nor direction from me. She was more capable than I was when it came to raising money. I put all concerns about the Reading Rooms aside.

As for Peggy and my two boys, it was as though I had known them in some prior lifetime. I awoke with thoughts of Pearl. Through each day, I thought of her. I went to bed at night, after making calls for her protection. As often as not, I dreamed about her.

I was in love. This was not a romantic dalliance. It was more than a fundamental animal magnetism. Both romance and passion were present. But my feelings for Pearl went far beyond. She was a vision, stepping pure and newborn from the depths of my theology. Like Venus arising from the sea, she was a goddess of beauty and the epitome of love. Blend that with “divine purpose,” and the extent of my captivation can be glimpsed.

Whatever the cost, whatever was involved, I had to have this woman.

With self-disgust, I now understood why Mother had been so opposed to Peggy. Clearly, I had turned to Peggy in defiance of both Mother’s wishes and Charlotte’s death. Peggy just happened to be available. I had never loved her. But I had pretended. And that was pretty low.

Peggy was a fine person and deserved better than I was or ever could be with her. But I was married to her. And Pearl was not only married to Sidney, but everyone who knew them seemed to automatically comment on what a marvelous couple they were.

We tend to believe what we wish to believe. There was no possible justification for this madness, but I had to rationalize, to make some excuse to myself.

An avenue existed. It was treacherous and filled with pitfalls, but I plunged into it without a second thought, even though alarm bells were sounding in my mental apparatus.

Crisis conditions call for extravagant remedy. “Damn the torpedos”—and all that.

The crisis existed within the “I Am” movement, because Daddy was ill. His firm, gentle hand was no longer on the wheel. Instead, Mama was taking over, gaining more and more control. The exhortations from the platform switched from self-correction, internal purity, and hard work, to vilification of the “enemies” of the movement.

What would occur if Daddy were incapacitated altogether? What if, as we had been told, the time had come for him to make his ascension? I could not envision the movement with Mama as its focal point.

My rationalization went as follows: Daddy was beginning to reveal inconsistencies. This could occur to anyone under stress. He might be so ill as to be delirious some of the time. There were his glittering generalities during various dictations. None could object to them, but nothing of consequence was said. Then, there were flagrant statements that were grossly out of character and false on their face, such as the “divine” attack on Nazi submarines. Yet moments of beauty and worth would emerge. And, most especially, there would come specific, detailed instruction, such as the one to Francis Ickes.

Daddy’s “contact” with the world of the Masters appeared like the hot end of a broken copper wire. At times, the ends would mend. The current would surge through. At other times, the ends would break apart. Confusion, misdirection, and error would send sparks across exposed surfaces.

This was how my presence with the staff could be explained. My rise within the Ballard organization had been meteoric. There could be no question but that forces outside myself had arranged my present assignment with the Ballards. Outside forces had frequently intruded into my life—forces over which I had no control. Usually, these forces brought tragedy. But, now, I was headed in a good direction.

I must be attached to the staff for one reason only—to help Daddy. Knowing my weaknesses, the Masters had brought me into contact with the one person who was capable of magnifying my “calls” into powerful, irresistible commands. Pearl. Alone, I would have been too frail, too easily drawn aside.

As I thought about it, my rationalization seemed to prove itself. I was already experiencing grave doubts as to the validity of the move-

ment, even as to the veracity of its leader. Without Pearl's appearance, I might have denounced the whole thing, and packed my bags.

But Pearl was strong. Her inner nature was like tempered steel. Perhaps, in fact, we were Twin Rays. Whether this was so or not, the Masters, with knew that my problems related to sexual desire. They were making use of my weaknesses to create strength. They knew I would desire Pearl. They knew every fiber of my physical body would cry out for her. I would ache in agony until I was fulfilled.

Such energy, generated at the "inner" levels, ought to move mountains. I was a pawn in their hands. They would use me, and they would use Pearl. Together, we could tip the scales and bring ease and comfort to our leader.

The religious consciousness creates the slave mentality. I did not rely on my own intelligence. I looked for help beyond myself. Pearl was the focal point.

The decision to hold the next session in Washington, D.C. created a time frame. In order to obtain the ballroom at the hotel, a change in dates had to occur. Also, to make sure only certified students attended, the word had to go out to the Reading Rooms across the country to issue identification cards.

The hiatus would give Daddy some time to rest. It would also provide time in which I could convey to my thinking to Pearl. I hoped enlist her aid and, possibly, awaken her love. I had already begun the process of convincing her that my rationale was correct.

The Ballards labored to bring affairs of the movement into shape. The legal attack that began in Chicago had disrupted some Reading Rooms. There were some closings. As the newest member of the staff, I was not conversant with these details. Although I was called upon to type a few letters that Pat had written, using the paraphrasing system, most of my time was my own.

At every opportunity, I phoned Pearl and arrange meetings where the two of us would not be recognized. "I Am" students were everywhere, and both of us were well known on sight. Gossip about anything and everything could sweep through the ranks of the faithful with the velocity of steam escaping from a ruptured boiler. To avoid detection, we exercised as much care as possible.

I learned that Pearl's relationship with her husband, because of the "I Am" teaching, was totally Platonic. They wanted no children.

In consequence, they had no physical contact. My relationship with Peggy had reached that stage before I left St. Paul.

Pearl wanted to believe the line of reasoning I offered. Understandably, she was not certain I was right. How fine it would be, she suggested, if Saint Germain would appear in person and give us these instructions. Then, she'd feel certain. I told her I would be delighted, too, if that happened. But until it occurred, or whether or not it did, we ought to make the calls necessary to give Daddy all the help possible. She couldn't object to that. Again and again, seated somewhere in a cafe, or a car, we would silently offer what others called prayers. If isolation opened the way, our calls would be aloud and in unison.

Another chore was assigned to me. It brought me almost as much delight as being with Pearl. I tried to convince myself that I enjoyed it even more, but the effort didn't ring true. I was in love with Pearl. She was at the apex of my priorities.

Daddy loved to motor. As part of his therapy, Mama prescribed that he get out into the countryside to breathe fresh air and visit the historic landmarks of the region. Since my services on staff had the least value, except when a session was being held, I was called upon to act as chauffeur.

Sometimes, Mama came. Most often, she did not. Sometimes, another staff member would accompany us. But, from time to time, Daddy and I drove off by ourselves. These were the best times. The excursions began in Philadelphia. When we moved to Washington, they continued in and around the nation's capital.

I was always on my guard when Mama, or a staff member, was present. Somehow, with Daddy, I could let down my guard. I was comfortable with him. Apparently, he was comfortable with me.

I told him, frankly, that I often had difficulties in believing everything. I said how much I looked forward to the time when Saint Germain, or some other Master, would appear in person, thereby removing my doubts once and for all.

He would nod in understanding and suggest what I already believed. If I could conquer my doubts first, then the Masters would probably appear. It was a catch 22 situation.

One day we had a conversation that went something like this:

"I know this," I said. "Whether the Masters exist or not, you exist. You are real. That much I know. And I'm convinced that my "Pres-

ence” is real. When I’ve had myself under control enough, the “I Am” has performed for me exactly as you said it would.”

“Very good,” he said, giving a chuckle of appreciation.

“And one other thing. If the Masters don’t exist, they ought to.”

“They exist, Bobby, don’t you fret. Indeed they do.”

“I’m sure I am deficient in virtue,” I told him. “That’s the real reason I’m still wavering from time to time. How do I attain to all virtue? What can I do that I haven’t yet done?”

“You already know the answer to that. It’s in the books. Bear in mind that, in the Presence, you already have all virtue. “I Am” doesn’t mean, “I will be,” it means you *are* all virtue now. There is neither time nor space in which the Presence acts. It transcends time and space and simply is.

“Therefore, when you feel you are lacking, that is a false feeling. All virtues exist in you. Now. At once. What you claim what you are, you will become. Physically, you act in time and space. But the Presence acts without time or space. Do you understand that?”

I thought about it and finally said, “Not really. But don’t give up on me. Perhaps that’s a key I need to work with more.”

He nodded and settled himself for greater comfort.

On another occasion, something else was said that became pivotal to my reasoning over the next several years. I don’t recall how the conversation began. We were talking about the dangers existing in America that threatened the very survival of the nation.

Daddy said: “Saint Germain has helped establish this new dispensation because of the many dangers to Americans, both at home and abroad. What is most important, is that enough persons become acquainted with the existence of their “Presence,” so that calls can be made in sufficient number to protect America.”

That is the substance of his remark. I made some comment in agreement, and he responded thusly: “It doesn’t really matter how we achieve it, but we must save this country. It is the one hope humanity has. Always remember that, Bobby Boy. It isn’t so much how we do it that matters, it is that it is done.”

That statement was somewhat at odds with other things that appeared in the writings and teachings. But it was goal-oriented and, coming as it did from my Leader’s own lips, it took on significance. I interpreted it to mean that, when the end sought is important enough, the end justifies the means. Perhaps in minor affairs, this

would not be true. But when a world is at stake, surely, the end is what counts.

Just before we trekked to Washington, Pearl called me in great excitement and jubilation. Her assistant in San Francisco, together with her students, had managed to raise the necessary funds. Pearl managed a room reservation at the Willard Hotel, which was within a block of the Washington. Our secret trysts and rendezvous continued after the move.

Pearl loved to be caressed. By now we were “petting” whenever the opportunity arose. We kissed and hugged each other, and both of us found joy in this contact. Both of us knew the rules. No sex. But hugging and kissing seemed a practical way to display affection without going too far.

At least it seemed to satisfy Pearl. I cannot speak with authority about the feelings of a woman, but I am the single authority with respect to my own feelings. The more I hugged, petted, and caressed her, the more I yearned to consummate our relationship sexually. The more she hugged, petted, and caressed me, the more Pearl appeared fully satisfied.

Somehow, I managed to rationalize a violation of the rules. Man’s ability to provide justification for his actions is, I believe, without limit. Somehow, we seem determined to justify. We are never happy with the mere doing. We have to believe, and sometimes convince others, as well, that what we do is *right*.

My various lines of reasoning were now like fast express trains, hurtling about a rail complex as convoluted and out of synchronization as a broken camshaft.

Follow this, if you care to. I believed that my “calls” needed the added power of Pearl’s “calls.” For a “call” to produce maximum results, a person had to separate his desires from it. The “call” was to be made because it was “right” in itself, and not because something was desired.

I was in love with Pearl. But I could not control my physical desire for her. I ached for her. I experienced actual pain. My groin muscles went out of control, cramped and knotted. I had been without any sexual contact for a year, or more.

Unless you wanted children, sexual contact was wrong. Destructive. Forbidden. Out of wedlock, it could not be condoned. Even in wedlock, it was taboo, with the single exception noted.

But wait. The end justifies the means. The desirable goal, the one that I believed had brought Pearl and me together, was the ability to make such calls. How could I possibly make effective calls when I couldn't get my mind off the desirability of her divine body.

Given the foregoing, surely sexual release was necessary. If Pearl and I could consummate our love, then the importance of such contact would wane.

I made up my mind. Somehow I would achieve this fulfillment. I was mad with passion, and I would not let anything stand in the way.

With my dwindling financial reserve, I rented a car. Often, I used a staff car, but what I planned could not take place where its residual vibrations might be "picked up" by anyone as sensitive as a staff member.

Previously, I had motored with Daddy and others to Great Falls, a magnificent rapids outside the environs of the city. George Washington had performed the original surveys in that area, and Pearl was delighted with the prospect of going there.

Our rendezvous was at night. I knew the way. The site had become a National Monument, and I parked the car in the carefully manicured. Pearl and I strolled hand-in-hand along the banks of the surging river.

Black rocks jutted from the roaring current, sending spray flying, and creating an undercurrent of throbbing power.

My desire mounted higher and higher. Silently, I led Pearl back to the car. We began by kissing and hugging, but as my heart pounded, I began using my hands across forbidden frontiers. Surely, she loved me. Surely, she couldn't object. I finally found the courage to make my first really bold move.

Pearl stiffened. I nearly got my face slapped. "What are you trying to do?" she demanded.

We were not as frank and open in those days as today's youth have become. I stammered and stuttered. Ice formed in Pearl's eyes. "Take me back to my hotel!"

Lamely, I offered my rationale. It was necessary to violate the rule so we could be more effective. So on, and on. I found myself sitting with a glacier. I had intended a homerun, out of the park. I didn't even hit a pop fly. I struck out, one, two, three. No hits, no runs. But one colossal, gigantic error.

For days after this, I was an emotional wreck. My passion continued unabated, but, with all my troops routed, I had to take time to re-group. I re-assembled my forces.

To my complete amazement, Pearl harbored no apparent ill will. She was as eager as ever to be with me, to make our calls, to talk about the work, the danger to America. We conjectured about our prior lives, about the prior lives of others. One of the spin-offs of the doctrine was conjecture about many things we neither understood nor knew about.

Astonishingly, she still loved to pet. If she knew what torture this brought to me, she gave no sign. It seemed to me that she would lead me on, each date with her was a brand new experience. Each time my hopes awoke. But one false move from me, and the winter wind would whistle about my head.

The Washington class convened, employing the strategies I had suggested. The press attempted to crash the party, but our security worked. Daddy appeared on the platform as scheduled, exhausted, weary, stricken with an illness we could not fathom. The only medical assistance he would accept came from Dr. Bressler, an Osteopath, and a Washington group leader.

Daddy was apparently doing all the right things, and still losing ground.

After the evening sessions, Pearl and I would meet. I couldn't afford another car rental, so we walked the streets of this city of lovely buildings and beautiful monuments until the wee hours.

When the ten-day seminar terminated, the word was out. All interim sessions would be cancelled. Daddy and the staff would return to Los Angeles, where the big class scheduled for the Shrine Auditorium would be held. It was felt that, by then, Daddy would be well once more.

Chapter XXXIII

Pearl could not postpone her departure for the West Coast any longer. Duties at the San Francisco Reading Room had to be sorted out after her long visit on the East Coast.

I didn't like to dwell on the separation. When love's young dreams subvert the thinking processes, even a day without your darling is an eternity of unnamed and unthinkable sadness. So many things might happen, and I would know nothing about them. Pearl delayed her trip to the airport until the last minute. I couldn't arrange my schedule, and had to say goodbye to her the night before.

The Ballard plans called for a six-day motor crossing of the continent. That was not break-neck, but it wasn't a lazy schedule either. I had assured Pearl that I would telephone her every night, so we could remain as close as possible. The reason we gave to each other was to make "calls" for Daddy's serious condition. The actual reason was clear enough. Pearl was beginning to return the feeling of love she was receiving from me. Love begets love. If I could not scale the barriers of her chastity, I could achieve emotional equity. She now loved me, too. I knew it, and so did she.

Doctor Bressler, the Washington group leader, turned over his medical practice to a colleague. Daddy trusted him, and Bressler believed some professional should be on hand during the journey, in case of emergency.

The cavalcade was organized with care, as always. Pat would drive Daddy and Doctor Bressler in the lead vehicle. Van would drive Mama, Mama's secretary, and her maid. I would pilot the third vehicle alone. Grant would bring up the rear with Freddie and his soloist as passengers.

Two additional cars were added to the train. Two volunteers—one man and one woman—could be classified as "camp followers." They showed up at every class the Ballards conducted and volunteered their services. Each was financially independent, and each drove an automobile. I will call the man, Brewster, the lady, Lucy. I saw them frequently, and liked them both. But I am not certain of their names. They obtained permission to accompany the four cars.

On a lovely, clear morning, in the crisp hour following an early

breakfast, the six cars pulled away from the hotel. We crossed the bridge into Alexandria and rolled westward through the beautiful Virginia countryside. My thoughts were divided between Pearl and Daddy—to me, the dearest people in the world.

Although we drove rapidly, the winding roads, with single lines of traffic each way, prevented the kind of speed I anticipated. But, perhaps, Pat was driving slowly because of Daddy. I had heard that the reason Grant went so fast was because Daddy loved speed. This time Grant wasn't leading.

We stopped for lunch at one of the timeless wayside inns that dot the eastern states. Daddy was pale, but doing his best to keep us all in good spirits. Daddy said we should reach Nashville by nightfall. Mama said that Knoxville was far enough, because Daddy wasn't up to it. He said, "Nonsense," and patted her hand.

Mama had her way, and we stopped at Knoxville's leading hotel, although the afternoon was still young.

The next morning, when I came down for breakfast, a change of plans had already occurred. The staff was told that Saint Germain had come during the night, warning that an attempt would be made on Daddy's life. The "dark forces" were gathering power to strike a fatal blow.

Because of this, Daddy and Bressler had already enplaned for Los Angeles, where Daddy would receive rest and better care than he could get on a cross-country trek.

Grant planned to take the lead but, again, Mama said no. We would retain the assigned locations in the caravan, with Pat leading. Mama would ride with him, along with her secretary. The maid could ride with me.

With these modest adjustments, the caravan set out. Mama admonished us to keep up our guards and be especially alert.

Nothing unusual occurred to mar the morning. By mid-afternoon, we had crossed the Mississippi, and we were barreling along the highways of Arkansas.

The route through Arkansas had many fine stretches of highway without curves. There were gentle hills over which the pavement looped like a racer dip. From the top of each rise, we could see for long distances ahead, except for those portions of the road hidden by the next rise.

Our pace quickened. Either Pat got an order to accelerate or he

took it upon himself to do so. Before I knew it, I was gripping the wheel with all my strength. I glanced at the needle of the speedometer as it climbed above ninety, and then cracked a hundred, still going up.

I had never driven this fast, and the big engine in front of me still had reserve power. I gloried in the thrill of blurred foliage and hurtling speed, but I became increasingly concerned—especially in view of Mama's warning. Weren't we courting trouble?

Traffic was almost non-existent, and the highway seemed safe enough. When another vehicle did appear in either lane, it was usually going very slowly. We readily looped around those going our way. We went past those heading east like Buck Rogers in a rocket ship. Traffic consisted mostly of farmers' trucks hauling produce, but, once in a while, we came to a wagon pulled by a pair of mules. In 1939 there were probably as many mules as motor cars in Arkansas.

My speedometer read 108! The two vehicles before me were thrusting westward like a pair of comets. Through the rear view mirror, I knew that Grant was hot on my exhaust. The recent additions to our caravan were trailing far back, but we were not obliged to wait for them.

A long stretch—level and straight—appeared ahead. We accelerated. The next rise confronted Pat, and he went up the slope as though prepared for lift-off. As Van topped the rise behind Pat, I heard brakes squeal. I came over the brow of the hill. Van's car was in the opposing lane and swinging back. Directly in front of me was a mule cart that he had dodged. But coming up the hill in the opposite direction was a lumbering vegetable truck of ancient vintage.

In another five seconds, the truck and the mule cart would block the two-lane highway. Pat and Van had made it. Could I?

I pushed the throttle to the floor. The noble engine gave me all it had. I crowded past the mules, with the overheated motor of the truck at my left elbow. I swayed back to the right lane and looked into the rearview mirror, carefully applying brakes. Grant's car had vanished.

As I stared, it crossed my line of sight. It was upside down and backwards! Zooming ten feet off the ground! Behind me I heard, but couldn't see, the crash.

I hit the horn to alert Pat and Van. I swayed, skidded crazily, then

stopped with smoking treads.

Pat and Van independently took action. Pat was jockeying across the road to reverse directions. Van and I, in turns, did the same.

Grant's vehicle was upside down in the ditch. As I pulled off the concrete and parked, Grant worked himself out of the sedan. In a moment, Freddie and Florence climbed free, too. Grant had a swelling on his forehead, but was otherwise unhurt.

Grant told us what had happened to him. He, too, had heard the squealing brakes of Van's car. He was already stamping the floorboards as he came up over the rise. The highway had been completely blocked immediately after my passage. Grant veered right and took the shoulder. Tragically, a culvert he could not see crossed the shoulder at right angles. His front wheels went into it; the car did a back flip, and came down in the ditch. The engine faced east, but motor was still running.

There were no recriminations. The man with the mule team asked if he could be of help. He "figgered them thar two mules" could pull the car back to the highway.

Pat drove eastward about a thousand yards. He parked partly on the concrete, partly off. He would warn other traffic to slow. Van took up a similar position to our west. This was done so quickly, and with such precision, I wondered if it had been rehearsed.

The muleteer, Grant, and I assisted in righting the Chrysler. The mules tugged it to the highway, as proffered. One window was broken. The frame was badly sprung. There were plenty of dents and scratches. But the engine worked, and the car move under its own power. But its forward progress was on a slant, making it appear that the back wheels wanted to sit in the front seat.

We were delayed no more than an hour. Mama took command. Grant could drive the vehicle to Little Rock, perhaps twenty miles ahead. There he was to arrange for its repair. We would spend the night in Little Rock. If the repairs would take only a day or two, then Grant would wait for the vehicle. We would drive to LA. If it would take longer, then Grant could come with us and fly back when the time came.

Our two camp followers had been in no danger. They had fallen behind the lead quartet, and stopped in ample time. Brewster had assisted us in the ditch with the Chrysler. Now, he followed Grant to Little Rock, while the other four cars went ahead to the desig-

nated hotel.

Later, Grant reported bad luck. It was Saturday. No mechanics were available. Apparently, the sedan wasn't worth fixing, because it would never again be reliable.

That night, I conveyed this information to Pearl by telephone. How glad we both were that Daddy had escaped this accident. I said to her, "Don't worry about any of us. It is clear the Masters are protecting us."

But I wasn't sure. If the Masters had known and were all-powerful, couldn't they have prevented the whole thing? Couldn't we had driven a bit more slowly and carefully? But I didn't *know*. And if the "dark forces" hadn't been able to stop us with this accident, what other "projection" might they have engineered?

The next morning, Mama issued stern orders. We were to avoid such break-neck speeds in the future. Also, the line of march was altered. Pat would still drive the lead vehicle. Second in line would be our lady camp follower, Lucy, in her club coupe. I would be third in line. Brewster would follow me in his sedan. Bringing up the rear would be Van. Freddie and Florence would ride with me. Grant would ride with Van.

A somewhat more cautious caravan moved westward the next morning, out of Little Rock. We couldn't have speeded if we had wished. There was considerable traffic. With only two lanes, we drove twenty-five to thirty miles an hour, much of the time bumper-to-bumper. I doubt if we had gone more than twenty miles before another event interrupted the trek.

The opposing line of traffic was as crowded as our own. Suddenly without warning, a vehicle heading east left its lane. It slammed head-on into the left side of the club coupe in front of me, almost pushing it off the highway. The woman in the encroaching vehicle had had a heart attack! She was dead at the scene.

Lucy was knocked unconscious. We lifted her from the car and laid her on a grassy embankment near the highway, where she presently came to. She was uninjured, except for a slight concussion. However, her car was in bad shape.

She elected to go back to Little Rock to take care of repairs, and to re-arrange her plans. There was nothing further for us to do. So our caravan, now reduced to four vehicles, once more headed west.

There were no more traffic mishaps, or other incidents of note. I

phoned Pearl every night; I took care to do so from a public phone, so that her number would not appear on my bill when Pat paid the tab.

Every time I heard Pearl's voice on the phone, it seemed to give me strength and determination. She had a delightful way of laughing and speaking in a squeaky voice whenever she wished to convey optimism. It did wonders for me. I ached because of our physical separation. But we were doing the only thing possible, in view of the circumstances, or so we reasoned.

The Biltmore Hotel, across from Pershing Square in downtown Los Angeles, was the Ballard home during every Shrine class. Our arrival had been anticipated. We were royally made welcome. The Biltmore staff was efficient and considerate, and everything was handled with apparent ease.

I began to understand the Ballard method of operating a little better. The sums Pat turned over to me were only those turned in as expenses, plus the monthly hundred for Peggy and twenty-five for me. I thought the reason for paying me in cash was that the amount involved was too small to handle by check. Now, I learned they had no bank account. Or, if they did, even Pat didn't know about it.

The Ballards built no reserves whatever. They operated with complete trust that whatever sums they needed would be on hand, when they needed them. So far as I knew, they always were. The Ballards made a tremendous splash with the white clothing, the yellow cars, and the expensive rooms we always had at leading hotels. But it was all front. Pat, Grant, and Mama's secretary handled the funds and always were ready to cover a bill, tip a bellman or waitress, or handle an emergency.

Daddy and Mama also had funds, although I never saw Mama spend a dime. I interpreted this policy as being consistent with the teaching. You gave no thought for the morrow. Your own application, with the help of the Masters, would handle everything. You lived today. And you set your own standards.

Pat had confided in me that the Chicago legal action had gone beyond the Ballard's ability to pay. However, "an ascended Master friend" had come forward to provide the thousands needed. So the costs hadn't *really* been beyond the ability of the Ballards, had they?

I was assigned a large room on the tenth floor of the Biltmore,

and other staffers were billeted on the same floor. The Ballards had a suite on the ninth floor. This was policy. Distance was maintained between the staff and the two Messengers.

It made sense. The Ballards wanted to escape the stares of their help. And the help felt they were trusted, because the Ballards weren't watching their every move. Because of this policy, I had managed to be with Pearl in Washington. However, I was being watched far more closely than I believed.

I believed the Masters knew my every thought and action, so I had no secrets from them. I had rationalized myself into believing the Masters had a special task for me that involved Pearl. They were keeping this information from the Ballards, not me. This was how I justified my secret trysts, my furtive phone calls, and so on.

By virtue of the cancellation of other classes, we would be at the Biltmore several weeks before the Shrine class opened. I settled down in my room as a typist. This became my primary occupation during the interim.

I was now so broke; I couldn't even telephone Pearl every night. I couldn't list the charges as an expense, nor could I let them appear on my room bill. I let her know this, during one call. She suggested I reverse charges. That didn't seem right to me. She shouldn't have to raise money to cover my costs. So we agreed on a time when she could call me and, thus, managed vocal contact every few days. Somehow, having her pay for her calls was easier on my conscience than having her pay for mine. By now I was virtually a prisoner. A luxurious room in the Biltmore isn't too shabby a cell, but it seemed like a prison, nonetheless. I could go almost nowhere. I ate in the coffee shop or at a nearby cafeteria, where selections were better for a vegetarian. And the prices were lower.

Pat was almost my only daily contact. Like a jailer, he showed up every morning with my allotment of typing. We'd talk a bit, and he'd bring me up to date on anything that required my being informed. Then, he'd be gone until the next morning, when he'd pick up my work and leave new material to be typed.

Freddie and I went to a movie once or twice. But he was rehearsing at the console of a pipe organ to which he had access. And I was typing. In the evening, when we might have become buddies, I wanted to be near the telephone. So I read, and made my inner calls regularly. I was lonesome a lot. How I longed to be with Pearl!

Daddy appeared to improve slightly. He stayed at his son's home until we had arrived. Then, he re-joined Mama at the Biltmore. The Ballard son, Donald, now about twenty, had married a beautiful girl named Margie. There was considerable gossip about her, because she was not a student. They had a lovely home on Los Feliz, in Hollywood.

The big question in my mind was Daddy's health. Would he be physically able to conduct the class? This one was scheduled to last for 17 days. That would tire anyone, even in good health.

The second biggest question, (possibly the first in my frame of reference) related to Pearl. Would she be coming to LA for the Shrine class?

At first, she told me it was impossible. She had spent so much time away that she was needed in San Francisco. I importuned and pleaded. I needed her. Daddy needed our combined effort. The two of us together could release greater "power" in our calls. Perhaps if she came down for the class, we could see that Daddy's strength returned. She promised to do her best, assuring me that this was her dearest wish.

One morning, Pat brought the message that Mama wanted to see me. There had been no dictations that I was aware of. Mama had never asked to see me before. With a sense of anxiety, I knocked at the door of the Ballard suite and was quickly admitted by the maid.

Mama was seated at her desk. She wore a blue business suit, and looked trim and efficient. Through an open doorway into the adjoining room, I caught a glimpse of Daddy. He was seated in an easy chair and clad in a dressing robe.

Inadvertently, I said, "Daddy." All my attention went to him. Mama looked annoyed, but Daddy said, "Bobby Boy." There was a note of gladness in his voice, and I ignored Mama. I strode quickly to him as he struggled up from his chair. He disregarded my plea that he remain seated.

"It's good to see you again, my son."

"I can't tell you how good it is to see you. We've all missed you terribly."

Daddy nodded. We were standing very close. "You have always been like a son to me," he said quietly. Then, to my surprise, he put his arms around me and we embraced. It was a male embrace of trust and affection.

"Don't ever tell anyone that we had our arms around each other," he said with a twinkle in his eyes. "Gossip would start."

"I suppose so," I said. "And that's a shame."

"Men are not supposed to feel emotion unless it relates to sex," Daddy went on. "But of course we do. One day, perhaps, when conditions are more in harmony with the Ascended Masters, men will be able to display honest affection and appreciation, without filthy insinuations being drawn."

"We're working for that day," I said.

"Of course. Now run along to Mama. She'll be mad at me if I keep you here."

As I returned, Mama spoke to the maid who closed the door behind me, shutting Daddy out.

"Have a chair, Bob." Mama indicated a nearby chair, and I sat at attention.

"How do you like staff work?" she asked.

"I love to work on the platform," I said. "I'm not all that great as a typist. But I'm not complaining. I'd rather be doing letters than just twiddling my thumbs."

She nodded. "I'll have to admit that you are extremely competent on stage," she said. "Far better than I had hoped. In fact, you're the best we've ever had in that department."

"Thank you, Mama."

"How's your wife?"

I was startled. "Peggy? Why...why she's fine. I guess. We don't write very often. She's busy. And a lot has been happening to me." I hoped my smile covered everything.

"How are your boys?"

"My boys?" The conversation was moving in a direction I hadn't anticipated.

"Yes. Your two sons."

"Well, they're fine, too. You know, Mama, Peggy isn't very much of a student. We...well, we're not close."

"I've been thinking about that. It seems to me you should enroll your sons out here in the "I Am" school. We have one, you know, out on Wilshire. Would your wife be willing to come out to work in the school?"

The idea had never occurred to me. "I could ask her," I said, my doubt showing.

"I guess you understand by now that we don't have lots of money. We use every dollar that comes in to advance the work. I think that if you told your wife that she could work out here and have a place to educate the boys, she'd jump at the chance."

"How about tuition?" I asked. "I couldn't afford it on what I'm getting."

"I think we can arrange to have it covered."

"That would be tremendous," I said. "Peggy's been helping at the Reading Room. Can they get along without her?"

Mama smiled. "Irene can manage nicely."

"I'll write to Peggy at once."

"Fine."

Mama watched me intently. "Just how close are you to Pearl Diehl?"

"Pearl Diehl?" My mental processes slipped into neutral and my mind spun. How much did Mama know? Had Saint Germain told her? Was my elaborate cover-up an open book? Had I misinterpreted everything? I'm sure I looked as stupid as I felt.

"Pearl is one of the finest group leaders we have," Mama continued. "And it happens that she is happily married to Sidney. I wouldn't want to see anything happen to that arrangement."

Suddenly, I resented Mama. I had experienced irritation when she had managed to shut Daddy out of our conversation. She was probing into my private affairs. It occurred to me that Mama, herself, might be the weak spot in the movement. Was she protecting Daddy, or was her ambition such that she wanted to take over?

More to fill the sudden lull in conversation than anything else, I said, "I met Pearl in Philadelphia. I like her a great deal. She's an extremely competent woman. I've never met Sidney."

Mama nodded. "There's one thing I want you to keep in mind, Bob. Always. There is only one thing that you ever have in this world. That is your children. They are the most precious things ever trusted to any human being. Be sure you think about them and plan well for their future."

"Yes, Mama."

"That's all." She turned back to her papers on the desk.

"I'll write Peggy at once."

She ignored me. I left the suite with a host of unanswered questions.

When I next talked to Pearl, she had great news. She was going to come for the Shrine class. In view of the continuing crisis confronting Daddy, her students had come through again. She would arrive a day or so before the class began. She was real cute about telling me Sidney wouldn't be coming. He was the assistant manager of a theater, and he couldn't be spared.

Chapter XXXIV

From every state in the Union, students poured into Los Angeles for the Shrine Class. They were easily recognizable on the street, as most of them wore white or bright, cheerful colors with neither dark red nor black in evidence. Even the press, usually hostile, conceded that the “I Am”-ers were well-dressed, well mannered, clean, and prosperous in appearance.

If the ideas they expressed created an impression of strangeness, the students themselves seemed above average in intelligence, looked as though they cared for themselves, and often spoke up with patriotic fervor. Quite a few wore golden “I Am” pins that were small, yet readily identifiable. Many more displayed tiny American flags on lapel or blouse.

These flags were made of a metal alloy and sparkled with red, white, and blue rhinestones.

Mama issued instructions, presumably for my benefit, since other staffers had been through this before. We were not to fraternize with the students. We must keep our distance. By virtue of our proximity to the Ballards, mere conversation with one of us could be used to advance a person in the eyes of his fellow students. And whatever we might say could be twisted and turned into dozens of rumors, theories, and hypothecations.

I knew what it was to live with one eye open for a retreat route. Fame may be wonderful, but it has its price. Your circle of friends is reduced to a few “insiders,” who know what you know and have been where you have been.

I was already almost a recluse, because of my love for Pearl. I learned to have my meals at odd hours and ate alone.

The class would begin on a Friday in mid-December. It would end on the first Sunday following the New Year. It bridged Christmas and New Year’s Eve, both of which were of special significance to those in the movement.

Pearl arrived on Thursday, just before the opening day. By pre-arrangement, she was to stay at the Biltmore, as close as possible to the tenth floor. And—wildest of hopes!—she might obtain an adjoining room.

Since my room had no connecting door, the romantic notion of a two-room interlude was beyond possibility. But with the flights of in respect to a “miracle-working” Presence, perhaps we could “visualize” such a door. Then, we could move from room to room. If one has never nurtured the concept that “with God all things are possible,” it would be difficult to conceive of accepting those wild and erratic notions as tenable.

I had stayed close to my assigned quarters, waiting for Pearl’s phone call that would let me know of her arrival and the location of her room. My phone rang. Her cheerful, chipmunk tones said she was in high spirits. My own spirits soared. And when she gave me her room number, I was ecstatic. She had managed a room next to mine. However, it was not adjoining.

The Biltmore floor plan consisted of a main corridor, running north and south on all floors. Intersecting corridors ran east and west and there were three of them. The design was in the form of a giant H with an extra vertical leg. Thus, there was an eastern, central, and western corridor—each crossing the main.

My room was in the western corridor, first room east of the main corridor. Pearl’s was in the main corridor, last room before the left turn to my room. A service facility of some sort was between our two rooms, which abutted only at their corners.

When I understood the geography of her location, I realized that we could see each other from our respective windows. She gave a squeal of delight. The next moment, we both raised our sashes, which were at right angles to each other. Like a pair of romantic imbeciles, we threw kisses and waved our arms, readily talking in normal tones only a few yards apart.

I yearned to take her in my arms. Our separation had seemed interminable. At last, we had been re-united. Or had we?

We were ten stories above ground and twelve feet apart. Far below was a green rectangle of lawn and shrubbery. We could talk but we couldn’t touch.

Why didn’t I simply go out my door and walk around to hers? Of course, there was the risk of being seen by other members whose rooms were in the same corridor with mine. But there was a more important deterrent.

At the juncture of the west corridor with the main was the desk of a gimlet-eyed concierge. She was the “security” installed on floors

of top-flight hotels, where celebrities frequently stayed.

It was her task to retrieve everyone's keys when we left our rooms; and to return them only to the person known to her as a registered guest and entitled to enter the occupied room. If any person appeared in her line of vision she found out who it was and took note of whatever room that person entered. This became a part of her permanent written report and could be made available to responsible parties on request.

Convinced as I was that Mama was prying into my personal affairs, I didn't dare do anything that might bring Pearl to grief. Mama wouldn't think twice about discharging me. Worse, if she thought that Pearl was emotionally involved, Pearl might be dismissed from her post at the San Francisco Reading Room.

Pearl and I had become a Pyramus and Thisbe. Our wall—three yards of open space. She could tantalize me, just beyond my reach, but fully in view. I can think of no arrangement more frustrating to a lovesick swain.

At first, the thrill of seeing Pearl again, of knowing she was on hand—that she loved me and was working with me for transcendental importance—was gratification I could live with. Those few feet of space! But for that short distance, I would have been ecstatic.

When the first meeting convened at the Shrine Auditorium, Pearl and I had added reason for concern. Daddy did not take his accustomed place on the platform. Mama was there, but she made no mention whatever of her missing husband. Donald was there, performing by rote. So far as I could tell, he was under some type of psychological duress. He was a most unhappy lad.

As the announcer for the program, I asked, and then pleaded with Mama for some kind of statement I could make respecting Daddy. At first, I was required to say nothing whatever. I was to treat his absence as commonplace. After two or three days of this silence, I demurred emphatically. The audiences were becoming increasingly restless. They wanted some kind of explanation, something in the way of assurance.

If Mama felt she could take over without reference to her husband, she was completely out of touch with the "I Am" students. Students were there because of Daddy. They accepted Mama because of him. Mama seemed intent on proving that she could do

anything Daddy could do. She might have believed she could do it better.

Actually, her ability was not being challenged, although she seemed to feel it was. The question was one of love and loyalty.

The "I Am" movement had been built on love and loyalty to Daddy. Perhaps Mama was his "Twin Ray" and, so, entitled to an equal amount of affection. But affection and respect are not subject to seizure. Power can be usurped, but love and loyalty are earned, and then bestowed voluntarily.

By legislation or by pressure, behavior can be modified. But this is equivalent to revising a drama while a cast is rehearsing. The modifications become roles that are played. The change is on the surface and is phony. Denying me the opportunity of comment, Mama tried to soothe the general apprehension herself. During one of her regular presentations, she stated that Daddy didn't feel strong enough as yet, but he would probably join the session later. This did a great deal to restore calm. But there was an undercurrent of doubt and disillusionment.

Reportedly, Daddy had been inside the retreats of the Masters. His body was supposed to be inured to any amount of "outer-world" pressure. The plain fact was, he was sick. According to the doctrine, that fact was a denial of the teaching.

After each day's combined sessions at the auditorium, Pearl and I hastened to our respective windows and talked about the situation. Failing this, we telephoned and talked. We avoided each other at the assemblies. We went to and from the Shrine by separate transportation, and at different times. Publicly, we were circumspect. Privately, we poured out our concerns for Daddy and our longing for each other.

Then, with mutual consent, we terminated our conversations. As best we could, in our separate rooms, we tried to make our "calls" in unison.

I do not remember what day it was, but the class was still young when I began to demur at our continued physical separation. Our "calls" were not in unison. No matter how we tried to harmonize our words and work together, we were simply acting like two separate people in two separate locations. We had to get together physically.

Pearl objected. Her good sense told her that the risks of a frontal

march to her room were greater than the benefits to be derived. She was more cautious—and to be candid—more astute. We must be patient, she argued. The Masters were in charge, and we must have faith in that fact. Our sincere application must be having an effect, even if we had no manifestation.

But I was driven, not only by my genuine concern for Daddy, but also by my physical desire for Pearl. The grapes of Tantalus dangled just beyond my reach each night. It became more than I could endure.

After one such windowsill communication, I lowered the pane in a mental state that must have bordered on the irrational. Perhaps I was mentally unbalanced. I don't know. At this juncture, I should plead insanity. It might be the kindest view I could take concerning my behavior.

My purpose, however, is not to be kind to myself, but to be candid. I am trying to recall, as nearly as I can remember after all these years, just what transpired. Since the experience took place within my mind, it becomes necessary to describe the mental journey I now began.

After shutting out the night air I sat in my chair. I assumed the physical position described to me first in "Unveiled Mysteries."

I sat, bolt upright, forearms resting on my lap, palms upturned. I closed my eyes. I began a regular deep breathing, silently intoning "I Am," "I Am," "I Am." Then, I thought deeply of what those phrases were supposed to mean. The first task of meditation is to still all outer activity. Lower the pulse rate. Dismiss all cares, all concerns. Let the "Presence" take over totally.

It seemed impossible to dismiss my cares. My mind was the oval of a racetrack, with various concepts and concerns circling madly, each for the wreath of ultimate victory.

Had I ever truly concentrated? Had I ever truly and completely followed the "magic" formula?

Probably not. I was so fundamentally self-centered, so ego-oriented. Despite my efforts, and even with the astonishing "results" that had convinced me of the practical nature of this procedure, I had probably fallen short. I had never seen the Masters. I had never levitated. I had never managed ESP under conscious control. I couldn't precipitate. But if I were truly sincere, why didn't all those things occur?

Then my thoughts went to Pearl. How I wanted her!

I dismissed the vision of loveliness that formed.

My real concern, I sought to convince myself, was for Daddy. Not my longing for embraces from my darling. Perhaps his very life depended on my ability to practice what he had preached so convincingly.

What had Daddy told me? The “I Am” transcends both time and space. It does not say, “I will be.” It says, “I Am.” Claim my virtue for it is mine *now*.

“I Am,” “I Am,” that “I Am.”

What else had Daddy said? In times of crises, it is achieving the end that matters, not the methods used. When a world is at stake, then what matters except the saving of that world? Never mind the cost! When a nation is at stake, the nation must be saved! Nothing else matters. The end justifies the means.

“I Am,” “I Am,” “I Am,” that “I Am.”

Daddy’s life might depend upon others who make the “call.” What matters is that the “calls” be made correctly and with total power. Ah, my desires whispered, if you and Pearl could consummate the love between you, then the power arising from calls made at the instant of consummation could move mountains!

Intrusion! My consciousness shrieked at me. Intrusion. Block out all your wants, all your doubts, and fears. Let go and let in the “I Am.”

“I Am,” “I Am,” “I Am,” that “I Am.”

The colors began to form. This had happened before. First a bright, clear blue. Not a mist, but a huge blob of blue, having clearly defined edges. It enlarged, filling my mind. I could “see” it clearly. It grew large enough so that the edges vanished. I was looking at blue, and nothing more.

“I Am,” “I Am,” “I Am,” that “I Am.”

A pair of pink circles faded in, one left, one right. They expanded and a bridge of pink united them, while the background remained a brilliant blue.

Suddenly, a streak of green appeared at the far right and spread across my inner vista. Even as I watched, a diagonal of golden yellow stabbed from upper left to lower right. I beheld a colorscape, each color distinct, yet each blending harmoniously with adjacent tints. Nothing but color. My brain was bathed in it.

I had never gotten this far before in all my calls. Blue and sometimes a bit of pink. But that had always ended it.

"I Am," "I Am," "I Am" that "I Am."

As I watched, the colors shifted, pulsated, and slowly formed into the outlines of a face. "Saint Germain, I whispered.

Saint Germain's picture was on my wall. All staffers equipped their rooms with a chart of the "Presence" and pictures of both Jesus and Saint Germain. I didn't open my eyes, but I could see the picture of Saint Germain on my wall. The face I was watching glowed with shining light.

As though in answer to my whispered greeting, the face smiled. Suddenly, I was looking at the full figure of this Master, standing before me, clad in shimmering robes. I didn't dare open my eyes. If I did, the vision would disappear. Of this, I was sure. And I didn't want it to go away.

This is all in your mind, my reason said. But the vision seemed to speak, and I could hear the words inside my brain. The feeling of love and gratitude I experienced is beyond my power to describe.

The idea that I had placed myself under hypnosis didn't occur to me then. Not until much later was I able to employ enough reason to explain this phenomenon in such terms. I can only say that at this moment, wrought up with frantic and unfulfilled emotion, Saint Germain appeared real enough.

Now, as I watched, and listened, Saint Germain talked to me. He was real! The world I lived in was unreal. He was the true reality. He said what I had hoped he would say!

Pearl had been brought to Los Angeles to help with Daddy. She and I must get together in person. Then our calls would be truly effective!

Would he appear to Pearl, as he had done to me? Negative. He would only appear to me, and only if Pearl and I were physically close. The message he wished to convey must be given to both of us simultaneously.

Was I to go to Pearl's room?

Affirmative.

But how? Was it wise for me to go down the corridor?

Negative.

Would he help me transcend matter so that I could walk through the intervening barriers and thus emerge in her room?

Negative.

How then?

There is always the window.

But we were ten flights above ground. I could not leap a dozen feet to her window.

Did I not know that angels would support me if I slipped? Where was my faith? I could walk to her room outside the building as readily as I could walk the corridors.

My heart was thumping wildly. Of course. It was so obvious. No problem at all. What should I tell Pearl?

He would appear to me in her room and give us instructions.

My desires intruded one more time. Pearl had a deep reluctance to experience sex. The teachings sustained her position. But, in view of the crisis confronting us in the movement, shouldn't she submit and with great joy?

I was told that Pearl would gladly obey any instructions Saint Germain furnished. What more could I ask? Apparently, Saint Germain would overcome her reluctance!

Deep inside my consciousness, I rejoiced. Of course. As an obedient student, Pearl would obey. Saint Germain was with me. He wanted me to get sex out of my mind and the only way to achieve this end was fulfillment. After that, I'd be all right again. As these ideas furtively wormed their way through my mind, it seemed to me that the Master smiled and was content. He vanished, and the colors merged into a lovely shade of violet.

I arose from my chair, murmuring a prayer of gratitude. I opened the window and climbed out, seeking a toehold between the bricks.

About three feet below the window and circling the hotel was an ornamental coping, perhaps four inches in width. Without a thought of danger, I simply got my feet on it, turned the corner, and grasped Pearl's windowsill.

When I tapped on the glass, she drew the blind and stared at me in absolute astonishment. She was in a nightdress, wearing a dressing robe that fell in silken folds. Quickly, she raised the pane and helped guide me over the sill.

"Saint Germain sent me," I said.

"You've seen him?" Her eyes were a pair of full moons rising.

"He was in my room just now."

"Really and truly? He was there? In the physical?"

"Of course." It had been true, hadn't it? I'd never experienced anything remotely resembling what had just transpired.

"What does he want me,—what does he want us to do?"

"He wants us to be together. Physically. He's going to come to us the way he comes to Daddy and Mama. He said he had instructions for the two of us."

Pearl's hands fluttered about her hair, adjusted her robe, and went back to her hair again. "I don't have any makeup on," she apologized. "Do you think I should get dressed? You see...I was all ready for bed. I can make my calls better this way." She giggled, and then, like a small girl caught with jam on her face, said, "I want him to see me at my best."

"Good heavens, Pearl," I admonished. "He's seen you in every possible condition and situation. I think he wants to see us together right away. We ought not keep him waiting."

"No. I guess not." Again she squealed in delight. "What should I do? Will he want me to make notes?"

"I have no idea," I admitted. "He said nothing about that. Why don't you do it, just in case? If he doesn't approve he can ask you to stop."

"What did he look like?" she demanded. "What was he wearing?"

"Like his picture. Exactly. And robes. He was wearing something that shimmered. And the feeling of love I got from him was truly overpowering."

"All right. I'm ready. Should I stand? Or sit? Tell me what to do, Bob. I want to do everything just right."

"Why don't we both sit? Let's put two chairs facing each other? Then we can still ourselves and go into meditation. That's what I was doing when he came."

"Should we put a chair out for him, too?"

"I don't think so."

We rearranged the furniture and sat about three feet apart, facing each other. A chair was placed for Saint Germain, too, just in case."

"You had a lot of nerve coming across from your room that way," Pearl said. "You could easily have fallen."

"Impossible," I said. "Saint Germain said I would be safe."

She giggled ecstatically. "I'm so excited. Just think. The Master is about to appear. In the physical. I can hardly wait."

My eyes were feasting on her lovely form, so beautifully displayed. She seemed warmer and closer to me without makeup. Her flowing garments heightened my yearnings.

"No," I said. "Something is wrong."

"What is it?"

"We are now together for the first time since you've come to LA. I think Saint Germain is counting on our love for each other. I don't think he would disapprove if we were to embrace each other."

"Of course." She leaped up and came into my arms. We kissed. I held her close. Her thin attire was like bare flesh under my hands. Passion soared in me. My muscles hardened and grew tense. I murmured, "I've missed you so terribly."

She danced away and positioned herself in her chair again.

I sat, closed my eyes, and tried to calm my racing heart. A thought came into my mind full bore. "What a crafty bastard you are," it said. "You know this is all going on in your own mind. Saint Germain is just a figment of your overwrought imagination. And now you've got it worked out so that Saint Germain can order her to disrobe and lie down. And she'll do it! Saint Germain will say whatever is in your own mind that you want said! Your love for Pearl has converted you into the world's number one heel."

But another part of my mind rallied. "That's not true," it shouted at me. "The 'I Am' Presence is real. You were sincerely making your calls when those colors came. And, then, the Master. You didn't do it. It was some presence outside yourself!"

I turned my palms upward, placed my feet squarely, and closed my eyes. "Oh, please, dear God, oh, Mighty 'I Am' take over," I importuned. "Let thy will, not my will, be done. Oh, please. I don't want to be a heel. I want to do what is right. I really do!"

There were no colors. I experienced a strange sensation. I seemed to be rising up out of my body. Pearl vanished. The room I was in disappeared. I was floating in space. The air was cool.

"I Am," "I Am," "I Am" that "I Am."

There was no transition. Saint Germain appeared before my closed eyes just as he had appeared in my room.

Again, came that feeling of transcendent love. My passion subsided. I would do whatever he wished. I was his instrument.

How long I was held in that floating condition, I have no idea. I was dimly aware that Saint Germain was saying things, but they

were meaningless to me. I lost all sense of awareness. I was not unconscious, merely floating in a state bordering non-existence.

When I came out of it, I was slumped in my chair and Pearl was standing over me, concern on her face.

“Did you hear what Saint Germain had to say?” she demanded.

I shook my head. “I was aware that he was talking. I don’t remember anything else.” Pearl’s shorthand notebook was in her hands. “Did you take notes? What did he say?”

Pearl reviewed what she had taken down. Whoever or whatever had made use of my voice had confirmed her position, not mine! If my mind had engineered the affair, it had betrayed me. There was no intimation that Pearl and I should consummate our love. On the contrary, we were to remain “pure” in deed, as in thought.

Great changes were coming within the movement and, if the two of us could harmonize ourselves and work together, we could serve a most important function. The gist of the message was in the most general terms. But that was it, as Pearl had set it down.

When I finally stood up, I realized I had been drained of a great deal of energy. I was bone weary. Lust had evaporated.

My trip along the narrow ledge back to my room was anti-climatic. I had little interest in anything but sleep.

Chapter XXXV

The ensuing days of the Shrine class are blurred in my memory. Chronology has disappeared. The effort to contact the so-called “invisible world” and my apparent success had drastically changed my outlook. A habitual “loner” from my toddling days, I was now even more removed from daily reality.

One of the notes Pearl had taken stressed secrecy. Neither Pearl nor I were to let anyone know of my apparent conversion into a channel for direct contact with the Masters. This was a promise I was most happy to keep.

Pearl was as tight-lipped as anyone could wish, but it was easy to see that her view of me had altered. Her affection for me, which certainly had been real enough, was now tinged with awe. It was an attitude I deplored. I had been trying to get close to her—the desire for physical fulfillment nearly swamping whatever reasoning faculties I had.

In her mind, to a degree, I had become a Saint. This was obviously nonsense. I did not feel, look, or act that way. All the same, it now seemed to me that to please the Masters, I must achieve and maintain a level of conduct wholly above and beyond temptation. So, I tried. And I was torn up inside, trying. What I truly wanted was to be normal, ordinary, accepted for what I was. My devotion to the doctrine, together with my passion, had conspired to make me a reluctant medium.

According to the Ballards’ instruction, the term “medium” was never employed. The Ballards disdained Spiritualism and would have nothing to do with it. They argued that mediums made contact with disembodied entities and were, thus, wholly unreliable. On the contrary, as they stated it, they were Messengers from the Ascended Masters. Since the Masters were perfect and knew everything, and disembodied entities were only dead people, the latter wouldn’t have any greater wisdom than living people. And all people were subject to error until they had perfected themselves and gone through the metamorphosis called the ascension.

This part of the doctrine now gave me great difficulty. It was clear to me that some of the “dictations” recently presented by Daddy

contained a certain amount of nonsense. I often thought of the dissertation relating to submarines, as an example. Was my experience piling the ridiculous upon the nonsensical?

I had made an almost super-human effort and I had contacted *something* or *someone*. Or had I? It seemed to me that I had engineered the whole thing. But, on the other hand, the information Pearl had in her notes was different from my own thinking. Had I been in charge of what was said, surely my own thoughts would have come through. They hadn't. Yet, in a way, they had.

I was confused and emotionally strung out. I was in rebellion, yet at the same time, was having my ego stroked.

I have only spotty recall of the daily sessions at the auditorium. I did my job as any professional would. Don Ballard tried to fill in for his missing father. I began to sympathize with him. By being the son of his remarkable parents, Don was branded irrevocably. It seemed that the same mark glowed on my own brow. Naturally, I said nothing to anyone.

What became apparent, even in my bewildering situation, was that the work had come fully under attack. A man named Bryan had written and published a book about Daddy Ballard. Bryan had done some research on Daddy's early life. Mama leaped on it from the platform. She blasted it and its author into several kinds of eternity.

As a young man, Daddy's life had been a number of degrees below what could be viewed as exemplary. At least, this was Bryan's reported finding.

Had Mama ignored the publication, a great many people would have known nothing about it. As it was, her denunciations made Bryan a lot of money.

Students were slipping away. The auditorium was no longer filled to capacity. The press hammered and hammered.

Daddy's loving hand on the tiller was needed. Day by day, rumors multiplied and circulated. Was Daddy going to die? Was he about to make his ascension?

Pearl and I loyally made our calls. We met occasionally late at night. Once in a great while, acting as though the meeting was coincidental, we would show up at the coffee shop and share a meal.

A group of Pearl's followers came to Los Angeles from San Francisco. I was introduced to them in the coffee shop one Sunday morn-

ing before Christmas. One was a lovely, buxom lass named Edith Shank. Another, somewhat older lady, was Sue Wasserman. I also met Ethel Dazey and her daughter, Carol. Ethel had two other daughters, but they were not present. I met several others under Pearl's guidance, but their names escape me. The four ladies I have mentioned were to play major roles in events that were now taking shape.

Pat Crouse, Daddy's secretary, informed me that the senior Ballard had been taken to his son's home again. Pat confided that he ought to go to a hospital. But distrust of the medical profession and of everyone not within the movement this.

On two or three occasions, the Master talked through me, much as I have described. This always happened with Pearl, and as I remember it, always in her room. I have no recollection of how I got to her room after that first visit.

As for any kind of physical satisfaction with Pearl, such was clearly out of the question. Saints don't seek sex. I felt like the classical lover who was bricked into a closet by the jealous husband.

Just before the end of the year, Daddy's earthly journey ended. Mama got the staff together at Don's home and told us that her husband had made his ascension. He would now be known as the Ascended Master, Godfre.

I expected Mama to announce that Pearl and I had been selected to help head up the work. This was what the clandestine "dictations" seemed to intimate. On the contrary, Mama made it clear from the platform that she and she alone, had the ability to remain in contact with the Masters. We had all best toe the line and do as she said.

The movement was disintegrating.

Pearl and I watched it happen and were powerless to do anything whatever. Mercifully, time does not stand still. The agony of that 17-day class finally ended.

The press published Daddy's death certificate to establish that no ascension had occurred. The medical prognosis was cirrhosis of the liver. There was no doubt that Daddy was gone. Whether the departure was upward or in some other direction was again a matter of faith or belief.

By now, Pearl and I were appalled at what Mama was doing from the platform. We were convinced that she was acting arbitrarily

and without guidance from on high. We believed that her ambition for power had taken over.

Pearl left for San Francisco to make a frantic effort to rally the faithful in that city. My position with the staff seemed to function like a fifth wheel. My forte was making introductions from the platform. No new classes were being scheduled. And disgruntled followers, who felt cheated and exploited, had filed some new lawsuits.

Pat advised that Mama was going to make a few transcriptions for the use of our radio audience. A number of stations already carried the "Voice of the 'I Am.'" I would be used as the announcer on these long playing discs. That was something I could do, and I assisted in transcribing several such broadcasts. Aside from that, I typed.

Peggy arrived in town, in response to my urging. Our two sons were enrolled at the "I Am" school, and Peggy found employment at that institution.

By telephone I prevailed on Pearl to come again to LA, so we could work together. Close to the Biltmore was another hotel with more competitive prices. This was the Mayflower, located between the Biltmore and the Public Library. Pearl took up a kind of transient residence there.

I met her on a daily basis. We were both befuddled as to what had occurred. The Master had seemed to prepare us for some special work to prevent the very result we were witnessing among the "faithful." Pearl reported that, while most of her following in San Francisco was holding firm, there had been desertions and even a denunciation or two.

We were ready to do whatever we were asked. But we weren't asked. We got together at the Mayflower, or the Library, or strolled the Library grounds. We professed our love, our willingness, and our frustration.

Once more the "Master" came. The information was positive. We were to co-author a book. Pearl was to handle all the publication details, and I was to do the writing. The book was to be in support of the Ballards. We were to reveal that the Master had come to us, not to provide a rival focal point, but to urge those with wavering spirits to give their loyalty to Mama. This seemed strange to us, in view of Mama's behavior. But we did not question.

I had never written anything for publication. My college writing and my radio efforts were for the stage or broadcast, not for publication. However, I leaped at the chance. At least, a direction had been provided.

With characteristic competence, Pearl immediately made contact with Doug DeVors of the publishing house bearing his name. He specialized in metaphysical and occult titles. He was optimistic about the reception for the book Pearl outlined to him.

However, he was not so optimistic as to put up any money. He argued in favor of an initial imprint of 10,000, in an effort to keep the unit selling cost within easy reach of readers with meager resources. This was satisfactory to Pearl. She agreed to the terms and conditions.

In my mind, an imprint of 1,000 would have made more sense. After all, if things went well, one could always have a second imprint. Pearl chided me for my lack of belief in the Master's wishes, and I backed down. After all, she was agreeing to raise the funds. She was sure she could sell a thousand in San Francisco alone. And there was the rest of the United States to think about.

The quill was in my hand, and I wrote. The management of all other details was in Pearl's hands.

We were now confronted with a new dilemma. Saint Germain had insisted on secrecy. How was Pearl to raise money if she was barred from telling potential donors what the money was for?

I didn't know the answer. Pearl was in charge of that end of the project. She'd have to figure it out for herself.

I didn't know what to write about, save in the most general way. It is one thing to have an idea. It is quite another thing to organize, structure, and plot out the idea so that it wears the flesh and bones of words.

Apparently, Saint Germain didn't know the answer to Pearl's question, either. Silence remained where direction and leadership were needed. This stimulated a whole new wave of doubt in my mind.

What was going on, anyway? What was I doing? Was I really serving as a channel for an intelligence other than my own? Or, was I secretly and furtively posing as a channel when, in fact, the "images" I "saw" were no more than subconscious, self-induced fantasies?

If the first question were to be answered affirmatively, then "Saint

Germain” didn’t know everything. If the second question were to receive the affirmative, then this “alter-ego” of mine was no more than my subliminal desires at best. I couldn’t be expected to reveal anything I didn’t know.

In the latter case, I was a fraud and a charlatan. And that was something I detested with all my heart.

As I added it up, Saint Germain wasn’t divine, at least, not in the sense the doctrine taught. Or, I was conducting a charade.

I didn’t approve of either one of those answers, but I continued to hang on. I reminded myself of other instances in which events seemed to indicate some kind of outside and superhuman intervention.

Meanwhile, Pearl was revealing new dimensions of her character and background. She was in love with San Francisco, and held Los Angeles in poor esteem. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if I could go to San Francisco with her? Sidney, her husband, would be glad to welcome me. He was as dedicated to serving the Master as we were. Her marriage was platonic, anyway. And her relationship with me was the same. How could Sidney object?

If only we could go to San Francisco, I could stay with the Diehls in their penthouse while writing the book. It would be an honor to have me as a houseguest. And to have a book requested by the Masters actually penned in that location!

Then, too, Pearl could show me her “city by the Golden Gate”—a sparkling, scintillating Paradise “beloved” by all. She would have to go back soon, in any case. Her own funds were limited.

She and I put our heads together and planned on pinning Saint Germain down the next time he showed up for any kind of “message.” Whatever he wished to convey, we would “insist” on tangible, specific directions.

The opportunity was soon afforded. In one of these states bordering on a trance, generalities gave way to specific instructions, under Pearl’s questioning. I was to resign my post. Mama would not favor it, but Saint Germain insisted on it. The prohibition against making our experience public was removed, in part. I was to continue, as before, saying nothing to anyone. But the “Master” trusted Pearl in this respect, and she would be at liberty to communicate to those she knew to be “loyal” to the doctrine. Furthermore, I was to go to San Francisco, with Pearl.

In addition, and as a matter of complete surprise to me, Saint Germain wanted us to have special jeweled rings manufactured to order. I was to provide the major design. The rings were to be made in Los Angeles. Pearl and I were to wear them at all times. It was part of the doctrine that jewels of all kinds were foci of light through which the Masters could work. Our rings were to be amethysts, and would help us serve the Master.

When that "trance" had ended, I suggested to Pearl that we delay the purchase of the rings. They would be costly. We ought to harbor our resources for the major effort: namely, the book yet to be written. I would never have made a suggestion involving a major expenditure of this kind. It was completely out of character, in the light of other obligations already taken.

Pearl tossed off my objections with a squeal of delight. She was in charge of all the mundane, financial, and worldly parts of the instruction. I would have to learn to get along on the basis of her decisions and her judgment. Obviously, this was a matter of prime importance to Saint Germain. It must be attended to at once.

Pearl located a firm not far from the Biltmore, which specialized in manufacturing jewelry to order.

I was instructed to come up with the basic design, which Pearl would revise, if necessary. Then, she departed for San Francisco. I was left with the task of resigning from the staff and following her as soon as possible.

January of 1940 had nearly run its course. The end of the month seemed a good date for separation. Fewer than fifteen weeks has passed since my 28th birthday, at which time I had joined the Ballards in Cleveland. What a meteoric four months they had been!

I asked Pat to arrange an appointment for me with Mama. Now that Daddy was gone, Pat was around the hotel only part of the time. He spent the rest with Don and Margie at their home in Hollywood.

When the appointment was confirmed I made my way to Mama's suite, filled with a sense of guilt. I had been highly critical of Mama in my talks with Pearl. In my thoughts, I had been even harsher. Further, despite Mama's specific order that she wanted the San Francisco Reading Room's leader to remain with her husband, I had done all in my power to intrude.

Was it possible that Mama knew about my secret dalliances? Was she somehow privy to the lust I had felt for Pearl, and never satisfied?

I stood in the corridor prior to entering trying to reassure myself that I knew better than to lie. At the same time, it would have been folly to begin the conversation by challenging Mama for the direction in which she had been taking the movement.

Reason said I should find something praiseworthy, as an opening note. If one looks, there is usually a constructive statement that can be truthfully made. Finally, I had it, and the maid responded to my knock.

I opened the conversation by reciting my admiration for the manner in which Mama had conducted the recent Shrine Class without Daddy's participation. That, indeed, had been an outstanding achievement

Mama appeared to be pleased by this praise. Then, I said: "Actually, since the Shrine Class finished, I've been frustrated. No new seminars are scheduled. As for my typing, it's not that good, and anyone can do it."

I got a grip on my courage and said: "I want to resign my position, effective the end of the month. I think I can be more useful to the work away from this focus than by remaining here."

Mama shook her head. "I don't want you to leave Bob," she said. "Right at this time, it is important that we all stand together as one. The enemies of the light are hoping split up of the staff. Enormous evil forces are being driven against all of us. I do hope you are calling for protection. Do you make use of the blue flame in your calls?"

"Of course, I do, Mama. I'm sure we all do. Please accept my resignation." Thinking of the book I was to write, I added: "I am positive that my departure will actually be helpful. You need have no doubts as to my loyalty."

I shivered inwardly, as I professed an on-going devotion. Yet, I was supposed to write in that vein. Regardless of my personal feelings concerning Mama's thirst for power, my actions were aimed at an appearance of on-going support and endorsement.

Mama frowned. Her voice was insistent. "I don't want to accept it. You are needed here. Things won't remain in this disorganized state. Seminars are being planned and will be held later on after, say, another six months or so."

As I stammered, seeking words that would somehow keep my guilt from showing, a flash of light caused Mama to look up. I had a momentary feeling similar to what I experienced before the trance

state. Then, Mama's whole attitude changed abruptly.

She said, "Well, I guess you are to leave. Saint Germain has just appeared to see that I grant your request." She shrugged. "That settles it. Your resignation is accepted."

Back in my room, I could only marvel. Saint Germain had predicted that Mama would not want me to go, but had said he would assist. I hadn't seen any manifestations while with Mama, except for that flash of light. What was I to think now?

I seemed to be hemmed in from every direction. Was all of this some kind of test? Was I being strengthened in some way?

Pearl was being instructed by some force apparently coming through me. The matter of the rings baffled me completely. And the large contract for 10,000 books! Whatever business sense I had, recoiled. We should exercise frugality and caution, yet inner messages swept us into extravagance. And my longing for love, my hunger for fulfillment with the woman of my dreams seemed more distant than ever.

On the other hand, I had experienced the fulfillment of a prediction made by Saint Germain. In my own mind, Mama should have been glad to see the last of me without any urging from anyone. Saint Germain had appeared to her. Apparently, he ordered her to accept my resignation that, privately to me, he had approved.

During my last week at the Biltmore, I shipped my trunk to San Francisco. At Pearl's suggestion, I decided to fly.

In preparation for my departure, I met Peggy at La Brea Park, which was close to the "I Am" school. I got an opportunity to see both boys briefly. Enigmatically, I told Peggy that I was leaving LA on a special assignment for the Masters. What could she say or do? Our marriage, except for the legal tie, was non-existent.

I reminded Peggy that I would be temporarily without employment. But, even if I were late with support payments for the boys, I'd have another job before long. Then, I just turned my back and walked away. I ached inside as I did so.

I said goodbye to each member of the staff separately. I didn't see Mama.

The flight to San Francisco was uneventful, except at the last minute. Because of ground fog, the pilot decided to land in Oakland. This change occurred with some frequency on these flights, and the airline promised to get all those ticketed to San Francisco

by ferryboat.

On that first boat ride on the bay, I had an interesting experience. I walked to the forward deck as we pushed out from shore. Mist shrouded everything and the moisture formed beads that coalesced under the rails, and dripped silently. Deep, belly-felt foghorns sounded at intervals, warning of poor visibility.

It was late in the evening, possibly 11:30 p.m., by the time the voyage began. Only a few passengers were on the vessel. As I looked about at some of my shipmates, I experienced a small shock. Leaning on the rail, looking into the swirling mists was a familiar, bearded figure.

I approached, and stood respectfully a few feet away, staring. Was it really Saint Germain? It looked like him. I had yearned for a true encounter in the physical. Was my wish going to be granted at last? Or was my imagination getting me into difficulties?

The stranger turned and smiled at me. "Hello," he said. "Do I know you?"

It couldn't be the Master. This man had been smoking a pipe. Or, at least, he carried one. But the beard, the eyes, the lean frame, the body stance— they were what I associated with my visions.

"You look familiar to me," I said.

"I'm professor—," he said. "Possibly we've met. You seem familiar to me, too."

My heart returned to its normal rhythm. We chatted. I listened to every word uttered. I don't recall anything he said, specifically. However, he seemed to be a fount of wisdom. Every comment he made could have come from someone "divinely" informed.

Obviously, this man was not Saint Germain. However, from that time, I began looking closely at strangers.

But there was another possibility to any sincere student. Perhaps it really was Saint Germain testing me, but unwilling to reveal himself in a physical body for reasons of his own. So, of course I puzzled over that, too.

I never saw the stranger again and I'm sure he never realized the thrill he gave me.

Once we docked on the San Francisco side of the bay, he went his way. In only a few moments, two women greeted me. One of them was Sue Wasserman, whom I had met in the Biltmore coffee shop in Los Angeles. The second woman was a person of means who

drove a Cadillac.

Sue and her wealthy companion began an elaborately planned escapade to deliver me to the penthouse of Pearl and Sidney Diehl.

Chapter XXXVI

Before leaving Los Angeles, I had stressed with Pearl that I would be in San Francisco *incognito*. I wanted time to work on the book and I didn't want to appear at various "I Am" sessions, or become socially involved. I hoped students and acquaintances wouldn't know where I was. Pearl seemed to agree. I presumed she would tell no one of my arrival, except Sidney. Obviously, he would have to know the identity of his houseguest.

My two lady escorts had been drilled thoroughly. I was not to be seen by anyone. The simple task of driving me from the Embarcadero to the penthouse became a cloak and dagger operation.

Sue positioned herself next to me, her eyes darting from place to place among the deserted piers. The Cadillac lady backed her limousine to a curbing close to where I stood. Bidding me remain in the shadows, the two women reconnoitered the area on foot to make certain no one was lurking nearby. I am sure if anyone had been around, their attention would inevitably have come our way. The elaborate precautions would have won immediate concern. But the handful of ferry passengers had quickly dispersed and we were quite alone.

I was instructed to get into the tonneau, keeping my face averted from anyone who happened to show up. I went along with the game, although it did seem a bit excessive. I scooted across the walkway and hunched down in the commodious rear seat.

The owner drove, and Sue rode shotgun. Instead of taking a direct route, the driver proceeded back and forth, "to throw off any pursuit," I was advised.

As anyone familiar with San Francisco will confirm, crossing Market Street from the Mission district side takes some familiarity with the terrain. A certain amount of twisting and turning is unavoidable. As we drove back and forth, my effort to become oriented in this city was checkmated. In this case, the circling and retracing of the route would have done credit to a Mata Hari.

Once we were on the Nob Hill side of Market, the same process continued. The ten-minute trip must have consumed close to half

an hour. Finally, we pulled to the curb and, as I reached for the door, Sue hissed: "Stay where you are."

Both my escorts debarked and examined all sides of the corner building before which we had stopped. Finally, I was permitted to get out. I was hustled into the foyer, as though snipers were about to open fire from nearby rooftops.

This was all good, clean fun, and I confess I was enjoying myself. The elevator rose to the full extent of its shaft, and the door opened. I had expected to be met by Pearl and her husband. Instead, the small lobby of the penthouse was packed with people.

"Surprise' Surprise" came shouts of joy. In dismay, I was pushed into the crowd. Pearl worked her way through the throng and began the introductions. She advised everyone that I was "Bob, incog," and none was to reveal my presence in San Francisco on pain of her instant displeasure. And worse, the displeasure of Saint Germain.

There must have been close to forty persons in the small penthouse. When I had the opportunity, I remonstrated with Pearl on this strange way of making certain no one knew of my visit. She remonstrated in return, pointing out that Saint Germain had given her full authority to handle all the worldly, material affairs. She further reminded me that he had trusted her in selecting the people to take into her confidence. All of these people, she assured me, were her close, personal friends. They could be trusted absolutely. I accepted the situation.

In any case, I was treated with the greatest respect. No, that is too mild a term. I was treated with awe and veneration. Not only had Pearl told them of my arrival, but they had also been informed that I was on a secret mission under orders from Saint Germain, in person. I had only to step into a room and every face instantly turned toward mine. Silence descended, just in case I might want to speak.

I can only compare my treatment with that accorded to royalty. I was an object, not a person. I was admired, not for myself, but for what I seemed to represent. I was Saint Germain's darling. As such, I was revered. It was a strange feeling. I was happy because of all the recognition and the extravagant praise pouring in my direction. At the same time, I was in panic that I might inadvertently say or do something wrong.

I did stand close, didn't I? Or did I, really? Self-doubt had become a constant companion.

One of the first people to be introduced was Pearl's husband, Sidney. By any kind of standard, it was a strange meeting. Pearl embraced me, gave me a kiss on the lips, then—standing proudly with an arm about me—presented her husband to me. Had I been Sidney, I would have been furious. She had signaled to everyone that she and I stood together; her husband was the outsider.

I was prepared to dislike the man whose name Pearl shared. What I saw was a tall, dark, handsome fellow who wore his clothes well. He gave not the slightest sign of displeasure. His handshake seemed sincere and warm. He had a good mind, a ready wit, a fine sense of humor, and was a winner in anyone's league. There was no way I could dislike him. As a matter of fact, I found myself filled with admiration. Pearl was a prize for whom I had risked everything I was and had. And she was his. Not by the flicker of an eyelash did he reveal the slightest displeasure or loss of face.

Instead, he made me welcome as graciously as anyone, informing me that I was an honored guest. He would assist me in any way he could. I have no idea how he felt, but I do know that his actions were those of a true prince.

"You are a brave man," I said. "You know that Pearl and I will be working together a great deal."

"I know," he nodded without rancor. "And I trust her. She and I are both good students, Bob."

"I believe it," I said. I felt pretty crummy. I had lusted for his wife and it was her virtue, not mine, which had stood the test. Sidney knew Pearl better than I did. She could be trusted. Her purity was my enemy.

Pearl was a master strategist, and her infectious laugh created instant good feelings. The little get-together at the penthouse was an affair filled with happiness, love, trust, and an undercurrent of expectation. Great events were brewing, she informed us all. Pearl and Bob would be at the center of those events.

I was grateful she didn't make public the plan to produce a book. Rather, she was mysterious, as though she had secret information. Like a good mystery writer, she let it be known that each of those present would be informed of these great events at the proper time.

Some might even be involved.

Then, she reported that Saint Germain had been appearing to the two of us. She hadn't seen Saint Germain, herself. Only I had been

privileged. But she assured everyone that she could tell he really was present by the “radiation” that came whenever a “dictation” was given. She knew “it was true.”

This was the area of my greatest uncertainty. I didn’t know what happened during the trance-like condition. In a sense, it was like a fainting spell. Just before it arrived, I would experience a sense of exaltation. I would be lifted up inside. I would feel expansive, wonderful, above and beyond myself. Then I would float, sometimes hearing my own voice, sometimes hearing nothing.

When I came out of it later, I would feel exhausted, let down, and terribly heavy. I didn’t like this part at all. But what alarmed me was my uncertainty as to what caused the whole thing. Was it a force outside myself? It certainly seemed to be. But what kind of a force? Was I in touch with the Masters? Or was this some evil entity holding me in some kind of spell?

The material provided in the “dictations” gave me little assurance. What was “coming through” was of the same genre as Daddy’s. And like those “dictations” of his, they were a mixed bag. Sometimes things would be said of which I had no knowledge and no way of obtaining knowledge. Sometimes, what was said was virtually identical to ideas of my own.

That produced the worst apprehension of all. What if I was engineering this whole thing? Was I crazy? Had some schism split my personality into two people? Was my subconscious now able to take over and, in consequence, deceive me? I had heard of cases like that. It was certainly a possibility.

I didn’t want to deceive anyone, myself. What I needed was time to think—time to study this extraordinary phenomenon that came almost unbidden.

Yes, I had to say, “almost.” I had asked for it. I had pleaded, yearned, importuned, and practically torn myself apart in an effort to reach out beyond my own mind. And something had happened. It was still happening. Why had I done it? Because I was hopelessly, almost demonically, in love. I ached for Pearl, and the ache for her endured.

At the same time, what if the manifestations coming through me were exactly as represented? I believed in the existence of the Masters. I had “seen” beings of light. Astonishing things had happened.

What if I suddenly announced to all these good people that the

whole thing was a sham? I was tempted to do it. But I didn't know it was a sham. I might, in that case, become responsible for turning them away from the most important truth in their lives. I had become the very embodiment of Dilemma.

Hamlet's impressive tight rope act, inspired by the ghost of his father, paled into relative insignificance. What a tight rope I was on And I had put myself there for love of a woman. And because of a sublime faith, it was a hopeless love from the start, but she returned it. We were both rewarded by that love, even as we were condemned by it. And it was an incredible faith. Too marvelous to be either true or false.

When Pearl revealed to her guests that I was a channel for Saint Germain, I wished heartily to sink through the floor. Even more than keeping my writing secret, I wished the "dictations" to remain a private matter. I had hoped for secrecy until banished the bulk of my doubts.

Not only were these eager strangers told, but also the suggestion was made that—if they were "good"—they might be present for just such a "dictation." Petulantly, I said, "Pearl, we don't know that such a thing could happen or is even possible."

Not at all abashed, Pearl smiled and said, "That's not up to you, is it? It's up to Saint Germain. If he decides to do it, then he'll do it whether you wish it or not."

Everyone nodded and chortled in delight. Amid clapping hands and expressions of pleasure, I was put in my place. Whatever I might want had small bearing on the matter. Saint Germain was running the show. Pearl actually knew more of what was said in the "dictations" than I did. She and the Master were in charge. I was a tool they would use.

Shortly after this exchange, the little party broke up. Pearl had done her work well. Those present were agog with excitement. Being entrusted with special secret information gratified them. They were looking forward to even greater developments at some future time. My darling was a wonder in more ways than one.

Sidney and Pearl retired to the one bedroom the penthouse afforded. Preparations had been made for me to sleep on a couch in the diminutive dining room. Sue Wasserman slept on the sofa in the living room and would be on hand in the morning to prepare breakfast for the four of us.

Since I spent several months in this particular location, something should be said about the penthouse itself.

The very word, “penthouse,” summons up an image of luxury and special privilege. This particular penthouse was luxurious in one sense only. The view from any of its many windows was spectacular. It was the only apartment on the roof of the building at the corner of Pine and Powell Streets.

The Powell Street cable cars clanged alongside, as they pulled passengers up the insane slopes of Nob Hill to the Mark Hopkins and Fairmont Hotels, at the top, or repelled them downwards to the turn-table at Market Street.

All newcomers to San Francisco are awed by the steep hills. I was no exception. During the night of my arrival, I had accepted some of the slopes as part of the cat and mouse game we played. I was to learn that this same cat and mouse game goes on constantly as the hills are traversed.

In addition to the view, the penthouse boasted a roof garden. This was a walled-in area reached through French doors in the living room. From there, the splendor of the financial district, the Embarcadero, and almost all of Market Street to Twin Peaks could be seen.

By most standards, the roof garden was small. By San Francisco standards, it was a fair size. Yards are non-existent in most of the city, and an eight-by-ten plot of pure lawn is an event.

Additionally, the penthouse consisted of a small living room, a smaller dining room, a bedroom that was off-limits to me, a single bathroom endowed with turn-of-the-century plumbing, and a kitchenette that became burglar proof if four people sat at table.

The only other asset was a tiny foyer containing the elevator doors and a mirror. The floor space of the entire apartment was only slightly larger than the square footage of my recent room at the Biltmore.

As for the furnishings of the penthouse, they were in a style popular in San Francisco at that time. It was called “Monterey.” The furniture was boxy, inexpensive, painted or stained white, and it was as cheerful as it was uncomfortable.

If the space of the penthouse was small and the furnishings unimpressive, the hearts of the people I met were the reverse. In a long lifetime that has taken me into many communities, I have never

met finer people than those Pearl had gathered around her at the Reading Room. The ones she had chosen to meet me were outstanding.

First was Sidney, in a class by himself. Then came Pearl's 'best friend' (she had so many, it was hard to keep track of them), Sue Gallagher and her husband, both redheaded and completely delightful. Like most of the people I met, the Gallaghers were in their thirties, smart, beautiful, sure of themselves.

Then came "Sonny" Widell and her brother, Fred. Fred was dark, sober, something of a plodder, but a man to count on. "Sonny," on the other hand, was smart as a bee sting, tall, and mannish in appearance and deportment. She was a private secretary to some fortunate executive I never met, and one of the most efficient women I have known.

I've already mentioned Edith Shank. Edy was short and dark, and had a tendency toward being overweight. She was a woman of absolute honesty, professionally a bookkeeper, personally indefatigable and loyal. And she was cute. She was so marvelously endowed with chest that Pearl took me aside and reprimanded me on one occasion for "staring." She was right. I had been in a state of reverie, bordering on awe. I had never seen anything to compare with what Edith had on display.

Then there was Jerry Dorris. Jerry was a bachelor of average height and weight. He owned and operated a ranch near Santa Rosa. He was totally wrapped up on "I Am" activities and doctrine—a man of some means with dependability stamped all over his face.

In a class by herself was an older woman named Blanche Chapell. Blanche was happily married, and her husband participated in our affairs on occasion, whereas Blanche was with us in everything. She was a gifted musician and played both piano and organ. She was also a cook of such magnificent ability that I would have to list her at the apex of all the fine cooks I have known. Additionally, she was sweet, gentle, and wise. Through the entire association with these people, I do not recall Blanche ever showing temper or temperament. She had nothing but good to say of anyone. Even today, she stands out in my mind as one of the finest people I have ever known.

Another older woman who became closely associated was Nora

Laidlaw. At the time we met, she was happily married to a most successful businessman, Hugh. Tragically, her husband died. But this brought her even closer to us. Her son, Tom, was in his twenties. He also became actively involved. Tom was a fine looking, highly intelligent young man.

Another young man, Howard Hammitt, was a unique addition to our little group. Howard was a spastic and, so, unsure of himself in speech and movement. He was also brilliant, as so many physically "handicapped" people are. The love and devotion that he provided were outstanding in every way. Once one became accustomed to his jerky movements and his speech difficulty, those irregularities disappeared. Howard had a marvelous sense of fun, as well, and was good company. It was impossible not to love him.

In the center of everything we did or attempted was a remarkable woman named Ethel Dazey. I had been introduced to her in Los Angeles, where I had also met one of her three daughters, Carol.

Ethel was a commanding figure. She had been a student of the occult for years before she had joined the "I Am" movement. She was well informed, competent, and knowledgeable. She was socially prominent to a degree, as was her good friend, Nora Laidlaw.

Ethel's husband was an official in one of the first groups ever organized in America to oppose communism. He was not impressed by the "I Am" doctrine, but he was impressed by his wife. And the doctrine was anticommunist enough so that it escaped black listing. Ethel's husband worked for an agency that located and identified communists. The resulting "lists" were circulated among persons believed to be loyal to America and to what was called "The American Way of Life." The lists became part of the ammunition later used by the junior senator from Wisconsin, Eugene McCarthy, in his ill-starred and often ferocious "crusade."

Ethel was tall, blonde, and stately. She held a real estate license, understood business practices, and was solidly pro-American.

Carol, the middle daughter, was even blonder than her mother. Slender and graceful, she matured into a truly beautiful woman. She and Tom Laidlaw found a common bond of friendship that developed and remained through the years.

The oldest girl was named Ethel-Clair. She was remarkable for her independence. She didn't agree with the "I Am" doctrine and wasn't a bit reluctant to let others know she thought it was "silly."

She had flaming red hair, an excellent mind, and plenty of ambition. About the time I met her, she became enchanted with a highly placed Egyptian who served on the staff of King Farouk. He was an aristocrat of marvelous heart and obesity, and the two were married.

Shortly thereafter, Farouk was overthrown. The money, power and prestige her husband had commanded in Egypt were stripped away. They fled, just managing to escape, and returned to the United States.

The youngest of the Dazeys was named Ruth. Unlike her sisters, she was a brunette. At the time she was introduced, she was finishing school. Ruth was thin, awkward, and one of the most sensitive people I have ever known. As the youngest of the three, her sisters often called her "the Babe."

Ruth was fond of outdoor activity and was an excellent tennis and badminton player. She loved to swim, hike, and camp out. She was a perfectionist who demanded the absolute best from herself and everyone else. She was quick to lose her temper. Her mind could out-run Man-O-War and her tongue was a scimitar that could weave a pattern of wounds, most of which would bleed inwardly. Then, sensing she had inflicted an injury, Ruth would burst into tears, angry with herself above all. She would absent herself, leaving her adversaries in shambles.

There were others as well. But the experiences that unfolded in San Francisco cast most of those mentioned in major roles.

Chapter XXXVII

Almost any February morning, it is great to be alive in San Francisco. The night would have been chill; fog would have draped itself over much of the city. But with the dawn, the mist burns away quickly, and the sunlight is glorious.

I was given a supply of paper and a portable typewriter; the happy morning was mine. I seated myself at a small table and wrote.

Pearl sallied forth to visit her friends and to raise the funds to convert my prose into hard type. Sometimes, she would read what I had written to make suggestions or criticism. Her comments, in the main, consisted of praise that boosted my ego, although it did little to improve the manuscript.

I offered to discuss fund raising with her, but she turned me down. She was in charge of that. And, as long as she was succeeding, I shouldn't interfere. She would be delighted to listen if Saint Germain had something to say. If I had something to say, it would not be important. My job was to write. Thus, my ego was boosted in one direction and battered down in another.

Additionally, I was to design the rings we were to wear. I made a rough sketch. Pearl thought it splendid.

She recruited a young student of hers named Bob Aguillar, who was talented in drawing. He had painted a remarkable portrait of Saint Germain that he presented to the two of us as a gift. Then, he took my crude outline and made a detailed diagram, in color, setting forth the design the jeweler would follow.

With a good portion of the money raised, and with the ring design ready, Pearl suggested we get back to Los Angeles as quickly as possible. The first three or four chapters were completed. We could turn them over to DeVorss and Company, get the publishing chore under way, and pay a portion of the contract. We could also visit the jeweler.

Efficiency suggested that Pearl make the trip alone, but neither of us wanted it that way. I was a lovesick fool. I couldn't bear the thought of being without her even for a few hours.

When a man's pulse quickens and he becomes giddy with yearning for his adored one, his imagination seems to lose its rudder. I

am not certain that women suffer in a like manner. Perhaps, women are too intelligent. In any case, the moment Pearl was out of my sight, the most improbable and extreme fears would grip me.

What if the elevator she rode broke a cable?

What if she were run over in the crosswalk?

What if a gunman assailed her? What if she met someone who distracted her, insulted her, or brought tears to her lovely eyes?

I had to be near her to protect her from all harm. When Pearl was out raising funds and I was in the penthouse, doing my stint, I had to practice severe mental discipline to keep from worrying about her. If she absented herself for several days and in another city! I couldn't bear the painful thought.

Pearl justified our being together with the thought that Saint Germain would only come when there were two of us. Therefore, we had to be together at all times, to suit his convenience.

Flying back and forth was costly, especially for two. But if we had a car, we could drive and save money. I had no car. Sidney used the Diehl vehicle going to and from work. Pearl arranged to borrow the car, and Sid took a cab.

We absented ourselves from the little group that now made her penthouse a center. We drove to LA, and completed the business arrangements satisfactorily.

It was such a joy being alone with her. We talked, planned, dreamed. I did a great deal of the driving, but Pearl sometimes took the wheel.

These periods when I could be alone with her filled me with my greatest satisfaction. We were constantly expressing our great love for each other. Pearl had no objection whatever to kissing and hugging. Indeed, many times we engaged in what can only be called pretty torrid petting sessions.

She seemed quite willing to let me fondle her so long as only my hands and arms were involved. The more I caressed her, the greater grew my longing for a complete union with her. But on those few occasions I dared that type of overture, her displeasure and instant rejection were my only rewards.

We talked about that. According to the doctrine, when we finally reached a stage of perfection—if a baby were desired—we would face each other, standing apart, perhaps as much as ten feet. The love we felt for each other would manifest in rays of light that would

flow from the head and heart of one to the head and heart of the other. In the space between the two, the baby would materialize.

Pearl agreed she would have no objection to mothering an infant in that manner. We tried it only once. After a moment or two in which nothing happened, we ended by kissing and hugging. We agreed that we were somehow short of the perfection needed.

Back in San Francisco, the writing continued. My prolonged stay at his home began to affect Sidney. He began arriving home later and later and, finally, began staying away all night. When he did show up, there would be a tell tale odor of liquor. Pearl took him to task and contritely he promised to do better."

Looking back, it is hard to believe I could have been so unfeeling toward Sid. Worse, I was as critical of his behavior as Pearl. The idea of taking to booze was unthinkable to any good student.

In retrospect, I understand myself better, although I admit I don't like what I perceive. Those who accepted the doctrine to the degree Pearl and I had (and presumably Sidney) devalued the marriage state to the point that it mattered little.

Married couples were as celibate with each other as with strangers. Sex was permitted only when planning offspring. And few students wanted children. They wanted to prepare themselves for the next world. Very little in this one was of major importance.

Thus, in the triangle in San Francisco, I had all the advantages. Sex played no part; Pearl saw to that. But I was presumed to be under the direction of superior beings. Pearl was part and parcel of it. What did Sidney have to offer in comparison?

To the delight of her students, Pearl had an "open house" on several occasions. Ethel Dazey and two of her daughters—Carol and Ruth—were usually present. Ethel-Claire, the independent one, never came. Also, Edith, Sonny, Jerry, Howard, and one or two others became more or less regulars at these get-togethers.

I was implored repeatedly to try for a dictation with some students present. Against my better judgment, I followed the procedure I had learned. The result was what they wanted. I have no idea what was said. Everyone "ohed" and "ahed," and confirmed that "it" had really happened. I was too worn out to know or care.

Pearl, Blanche, and Sonny all seemed to be highly sensitive. There was a considerable degree of ESP among them. For instance, Pearl might get the impression that Sidney would not be coming home

that evening. On such an occasion, she would make the fact known by requesting one of the other girls to spend the night. She wanted it understood that she and I were not to spend a night alone together in the penthouse. And we never did.

On our trip to LA and on other trips, Pearl and I always had separate rooms. So, by day and in every way possible, we were close together physically, caressing, loving, and caring. At night and much against my overpowering yearning, we were as circumspect and conventional as strangers.

Pearl not only loved the Masters, she also adored San Francisco. We took great joy from our jaunts about town. She was well informed as to the current attractions, as well as the earlier history of what had began a bustling, brawling settlement filled with prospectors, prostitutes, and pioneers.

First with a borrowed car, and then with a second hand Buick we purchased, Pearl offered her services as guide. From the Embarcadero to Sutro Heights and Seal Rocks, from Coit Tower on Telegraph Hill to the Fleishacker Zoo, I saw the city through her eyes. I grew to love it, too. It is to me and to many thousands who visit it, a very special place.

There are a hundred attractions within the city limits, but there are many more within easy driving distance. I saw my first giant Sequoias at Muir Woods in Marin County. We crossed both the Golden Gate Bridge and the Bay Bridge many times.

Often Pearl would organize a weekend outing that included groups of her student friends. We camped out in Yosemite and on the slopes of Tamalpais. We toured the gold country at Sutter's Mill, visited Jack London's and Robert Louis Stevenson's homes in the Valleys of the Moon and Napa. We saw the petrified forest near Calistoga.

A World's Fair was in progress during 1940. Although it was only for a two-year celebration, those who built Treasure Island decided to keep the fair running an added year. We visited the place together, and more than once.

I had never before had as much time at my disposal as now. But even as I reveled in the attention and consideration shown to me, a mounting sense of concern troubled my sleep. I was living at the expense of others. Neither Pearl nor I had any money. The only funds came from her efforts and from the generosity of those few who joined us on these frequent excursions.

Perhaps it was my early conditioning, and part of the male psyche, but I was accustomed to paying the way for others. Having others pay my way didn't sit well.

I rationalized the situation by using my writing as an alibi. Once the book emerged, it would be an instant success. Everyone had assured me of this, including the publisher.

The book was what was needed. The students, who had been told about my writing, agreed. The "I Am" movement under Mama's control was foundering. Reports kept arriving that caused us grave concern. The book would serve as a rallying cry. Every student, or one-time student, would want a copy. Mama would welcome this boost.

With our new second-hand Buick, Pearl and I drove to Los Angeles again with more money for the publisher and more pages for the printer. And to see the rings.

They were ready. And they were magnificent. I had designed the stone so that the exposed surface, rather than being flat, was cut with multiple convex facets. The amethysts took on a soft, nearly liquid appearance. The setting was of 22-carat gold, designed on either side like a pair of wings. These pinions cradled the stone. Topping the loop on either side was a golden torch.

Pearl's ring was so heavy that I marveled she could lift her hand with it on. Mine was not quite as large, but big enough so that I couldn't type while wearing it.

Our plans had come close to fruition. Once the book came from the presses, Pearl and I would start conducting weekend classes. We could finance our own tours by book sales and, in the process, stir laggards back into the fold. We would also attract new converts to the doctrine.

Upon our return to San Francisco, Pearl again demonstrated her ability to organize. She got everyone into a great pitch of enthusiasm and expectation, and I finished the writing. Unfortunately, we didn't have enough money to make the final payment, as agreed to in the publishing contract. But Pearl was equal to this challenge as well.

Again, we went south and Pearl managed to get DeVorss to bind about four hundred books, letting us have them so we could begin earning money. Meanwhile, he'd hold up on the balance of the binding even though the printing had been completed for all 10,000 copies.

At long last, the shipment of books arrived in San Francisco. At the same time, word came that Mama was going to conduct another class—her first since the Shrine session.

Filled with elation, Pearl took a supply of books to the Reading Room. In that first evening, she sold close to a hundred of them. Meanwhile, Ethel decided that an endorsement from Mama would do more good than any other single thing. She—and I believe Carol as well—went to Los Angeles to let Mama know about the book, and to win her support.

When Ethel returned a few days later, she was bitterly disappointed. She told Pearl first, in private. Then, the two of them confronted me. From the platform, Mama had denounced us. Our book was a fraud, she told the students. We were “blasted” into eternity for the temerity of supposing we had ever seen Saint Germain, or pretending to such a thing. Only she could do that.

I hadn’t realized that the denunciation and its parallel attack were possible. Worse, it seemed possible that Mama was correct; everything I had done might be fraudulent. My doubts had continually nagged at me. I became defensive.

I wasn’t sure about these strange trances that exalted and exhausted me. I only knew that I had followed the teaching; I had paid particular attention to what Daddy had told me; and, I had results—what the students felt was identical to what they felt when a “dictation” had been offered by Daddy. I knew I was not trying to deceive, even though I might be terribly mistaken.

Pearl and Ethel clamored for word from Saint Germain directly. Another dictation seemed called for. Again, I placed myself at the disposal of these forces, either within me or outside of me. Another session ensued.

This time, however, I did a little work on myself silently beforehand. In prior trances, if so they can be called and comprehended, I had been relatively disinterested in what was said. It took all I had to reach upward into that mental state of freewheeling, where the words occurred.

True, from time to time, I would be aware of what was being said. I had even asked questions myself, when something was not clear. Most of the time I simply “floated.”

Now I called urgently for complete awareness of what was going on. It seemed to me that I had painted myself into a corner from

which there was no way out at all. I should have been more deeply concerned before. I had been anything but smart. Accepting the concept of love, I had believed that my “friends,” both spiritual and material, would never attack me. How wrong that idea is, I have had to learn again and again throughout my life. I doubt if I have learned it yet.

Those I call “enemies” have rarely wronged me. I am alert to them; I see that they don’t. Nearly every injury I have received has come from someone I trusted, someone I believed would treat me fairly. In the interests of my own preservation, I began to arm myself against “Saint Germain”—against whomever or whatever took hold of my mind. I had been obeying that force and, now, I was in a lot of trouble. Why hadn’t Saint Germain foreseen that Mama would “disown” us? Why didn’t he know she would prevent us from fulfilling a carefully orchestrated program, apparently put together by him?

This is the first “dictation” from which I have fairly comprehensive recollections. As I remember it, the Master began by letting us know that we were not to become hostile to Mrs. Ballard. She was still his Messenger. Our effort had been calculated to awaken her to the abuses of power that had occurred, for which she was responsible.

Next, he instructed Pearl to sever her connections with the San Francisco Reading Room at once. She raised some objections. He grew firm and simply ordered her to obey.

I was rebuked for my continued lack of application respecting my sex urges. It wasn’t stated that way, but I knew what was meant.

The balance of his words praised our efforts. The praise was given in the transcendent language to which we had grown accustomed. We were encouraged to proceed with the classes we were planning. Things would not happen as rapidly as all of us had hoped. We would have to learn great patience. But nothing was quite as bleak as it seemed to be.

That was about it. Pearl immediately went to the Reading Room and resigned. There was a great furor over it, and the biggest shock was to Pearl. These people—and there were hundreds of them—had been her friends. She looked upon them as friends, and also as co-workers in raising funds. She had anticipated making significant book sales there.

She and I were now anathema. The movement, as such, would proceed without us. And yet. And yet we were to conduct classes. And I was still able to reach up and out, within my own mind.

Chapter XXXVIII

A person with reasonable intelligence, given the situation I was in, would have made use of an obvious option. The time had surely come for me to go my own way. Pearl and I had ostensibly been brought together to perform a specific service. We had done as we believed we had been told. And the result was one colossal flop.

Why, not admit it, and pull out? When an investment turns sour—whether it has been made with time, talent, or money—one doesn't throw good time, talent, or money after the sourdough. A person takes his lumps, tightens his belt, and moves on.

I saw the way out as clearly as I could read an exit sign in a theater. But instead of waving goodbye, I dug in. Why? I suppose I was not being entirely reasonable, as other persons would evaluate the term.

Two reasons weighed heavily. First of all, I was truly in love with Pearl. Everything I wanted in life seemed tied to her. I simply lacked the will to walk out of her life.

Secondly, I was curious. What in the world was this strange ability I had? What was the truth? Was I guilty of fraud? Had I (subliminally perhaps) been engaged in some monstrous pretense?

Were the Masters real? What of the "I Am" presence? Was it real? Was there a God? If so, how did God's will reach the minds of poor humans made of clay or, perhaps, of something as transient as the morning dew? Science suggested evolutionary progression. Theology insisted on divine intervention. Were these merely two ways of explaining something that cannot be explained? Or, if explained, cannot be comprehended?

It seemed to me that I had a debt to the people I had helped recruit for the "I Am" movement back in the Twin Cities. Further, I had an obligation to Pearl and her multitude of admirers, in San Francisco and elsewhere.

If I had been engaged in misrepresentation and had led them away from truth, I would have to find the courage to say so. That would be hard. But it would be better than to go through life living a lie.

But if it were true, then to denounce it as false would be as great

a disservice. Many who had been active in the movement were now busily “ratting” out. They were denouncing the Ballards, poking fun at the whole philosophy, and trying to make themselves look good by smearing their earlier stated beliefs.

People who adhere to something that appears popular often do so without comprehending why. They desire acceptance by others. They wish to be praised for being in the vanguard, but all they really seek is an ego massage. They give lip service, but are the first to run for cover when the breath of scandal sighs in their ears.

At this juncture, the attitude of Pearl’s friends in San Francisco was malleable. A statement from me could have a profound effect. Mama had given me an extremely good reason for denouncing her. While it was true that my motives had not been pure insofar as Pearl was concerned, my words and actions with respect to the Ballards had been consistently supportive.

I had associated with the “I Am” and the Ballards because I believed profoundly that the doctrine was absolutely true.

Just prior to my involvement, I had been riding a wave of popularity in radio. I didn’t need recognition. I was struggling to preserve some measure of privacy. I’d “heard” a voice; I’d had astonishing, almost miraculous, things happen. And, since working on staff, I had been a participant and a witness to many inexplicable events. Finally, I’d had “visions.” I had seen things. And I had heard my own voice discoursing on things I knew nothing about, and doing it sensibly.

This was the difficulty. How could I set forth ideas and descriptions of places and things of which I had no knowledge? Didn’t that mean another intelligence was at work? But not everything that “came through” made sense. Some things were so manifestly incorrect and misleading as to be absurd. Then what kind of intelligence was it?

The book I had written, and for which I had to be solely responsible, was an unabashed, unrestrained hosanna of praise for the Ballards. I had admitted no secondary argument, no doubts, and no debate. It was a testimony that, in at least one respect, had to be false. A person didn’t *always* receive results from his application. I had stated that, *if* a person did his homework correctly, he *always* got results. This was the universal panacea offered by faith healers when their particular nostrums failed. The homework must have

been wrong, by definition. I didn't accept that argument myself and, yet, I had used it.

I was in over my head. Others had wanted a voice that attested to the infallible. I had provided a note of certainty that I didn't have, I didn't feel, and I couldn't support. But I wasn't ready to denounce anything. I still glowed with a sense of inner peace and wonder whenever a trance lifted me into that semi-conscious state of detachment from the world. There was so much good in the fundamentals, so much idiocy in the trimmings.

If I had an intellectual obligation, there could be no doubt in respect to finances. I was obligated to support my wife and children, and I had shunted them aside. I was in arrears with my payments, and I didn't have a nickel of my own.

And what of these good people in San Francisco, who had been putting up the money so that Pearl and I could live like visiting royalty? If I were to stay in San Francisco to be with Pearl, I would have to get a job and begin covering my own costs.

To make matters more pressing, Sidney lost his job. He was able to find another one as an apprentice salesman with a small steel company. Being new at the business, he had a lot to learn and his income was meager.

I sat down with Pearl. We talked. I let her know of my own confusion. How she so often interpreted what Saint Germain had said in one way, whereas I saw it differently. I let her know that I sometimes had profound doubts about what was happening.

Pearl immediately wanted to know if I had contrived the "discourses." I denied it, although I admitted that many times some of what had been said sounded very much like me.

She cross-examined me on precisely what did happen during the trance state. I explained it to her as well as I could. I suggested that, if she did the same, I was sure she'd have the same experience. She would see the Master the same way I did. Pearl said she had tried many times, but never saw a thing.

I told her that, if we had followed my judgment, we would have had 1000 books printed instead of 10,000. We could have paid for that number and had money left over. As it was, we had sold about 150, had another 250 in stock, and owed DeVorss several thousand dollars for books that would never sell. She took this as personal criticism and became defensive.

She was furious at my lack of faith. She chastised me for always wanting her body, rather than being content with the “divine love” between us.

We came about as close to a good fight as could be imagined. However, we both saw where our argument was taking us, and backed off. Then, when I said I would get a job to help pay the bills, we came close to another conflict.

I had a job, she insisted. My job was to do what Saint Germain had requested. She and I were to put on some small classes, sell the books, and finance ourselves that way for an even greater effort.

What about the money? Well, if we just made the application and called “The I Am Presence” into action, the money would be forthcoming. From someone, or from somewhere. That was the way she worked. That was the way I must work, too. Besides, she reminded me, she was still in charge of the material and worldly side of our activity.

Pearl won the contest. We decided to drive to Portland, Oregon, to spread the word and raise money. The little San Francisco group of loyal followers financed the effort.

En route to Portland, I asked Pearl to marry me. I would write to Peggy, and let her know that reconciliation was completely out of the question. I was sure Peggy would grant me a divorce. What would Pearl do? She was married, too.

Pearl reasoned that Sidney would never be a problem. She could handle him when the time came. The problem would be Peggy. Peggy would never give me up, as Pearl saw it.

I tried to find out if Pearl would agree to a complete union once we were married. Smiling sweetly, she let me know that if she and I were married, she wouldn’t be able to turn me down. Still, her understanding of the doctrine was that the only justification for sex was the desire for children. Thus, if we were married and wanted a child, she would gladly join with me “all the way.” I interpreted this as agreeable consent.

The Portland session, despite newspaper ads and some exposure on radio, brought out only a handful of the curious. We grossed only enough to buy a dinner. We had to pay other expenses from the sums advanced to us. Apparently, our application to the Presence had been insufficient.

We returned to San Francisco, poorer in dollars, but buoyed up

by Pearl's absolutely magnificent optimism. That was what I lived on, as did the rest of the group at the Penthouse.

Much against Pearl's wishes, I put in an application at all the San Francisco radio stations. By renewing contact with people in this business, I learned that a convention of broadcasters was taking place at the Saint Francis Hotel. On the chance that former associates from Minneapolis would be on hand, and might put in a good word for me, I went to the meeting one afternoon.

On this particular day, they had rented a Geary Street theater and were making a formal presentation of some important statistical data.

To my great delight, one of the first persons I saw in the lobby was my old boss, Swanee, from WTCN. He pumped my hand with enthusiasm. "Gosh, Bob, it's good seeing you," he said.

Then he looked anxiously in all directions. "Hey, come on into the meeting and sit with me. How goes it? How's your new job working out?" He cocked a quizzical eye my way.

"I'm no longer with the Ballards," I said. "Mr. Ballard died, and I resigned my post a few months ago. Actually, I'm looking for work again. I'd like to get an early morning show on some station here in San Francisco."

"Great!" he said. "Wish I could be helpful. But I don't know any of the boys around here well enough to ask a favor. Believe me, Bob, I'll never forget what you did for me...for us, back in Minneapolis."

"Thanks Swanee."

"That Ballard bunch," he said, musing. "Really strange people."

"Not really," I said. "Just devout and dedicated."

"Didn't they get into a lot of trouble?"

I laughed. "And how. But that's all settled now. Anyway, I don't have anything to do with them anymore. I'm on my own."

We exchanged more information. Swanee brought me up to date on personnel shifts at WTCN.

We were sitting in the center section of the theater on the main floor. The presentation of statistical data was about to be offered from the stage.

Suddenly, Swanee grabbed my arm. "Bob, you'll have to beat it. They're going to take a picture of all the attendees. God, I don't dare have my picture taken sitting next to you!"

"What do you mean?"

"Christ, Bob. If any of those guys back at TCN knew that I'd even spoken to you, they'd ride my ass out of town on a rail. For my sake, please, scam out of here!"

"Don't worry," I said. The photographer had his camera on a tripod and was asking everyone to look "pretty."

"I won't be in the picture, Swannee. Trust me." Rather than dashing out of the auditorium, I slid to the floor behind the chair backs of the row in front of us. The picture taking session over, I came back up."

"I wondered if I could use your name as a reference," I asked.

"Certainly, you can. But I wouldn't recommend it." Swannee shifted and looked me. "You see, Bob, anyone wanting a reference would ask the reason for your leaving. I'd have to tell them that you went with that crackpot outfit. I think you'll do better without me."

I said, "Swannee, when is an announcer judged on the merit of the product he promotes? I've read a lot of stuff on your airwaves that I didn't believe for a minute. I just followed copy. Why is what I did with the Ballards so different?"

"The story is that you were more than just an announcer for them. You got to be pretty high in their operation, didn't you?"

"Well, yes. In a sense I did."

"That's it. You can sure see the difference."

"Okay, Swannee."

I left the theater crestfallen. But I couldn't blame Swannee. He had his own future and the future of TCN to worry about. He could hardly afford to get mixed up with a person like me, who was having "visions." For all he knew, I was as crazy as a gooney bird.

Vacancies on announcing staffs at all San Francisco stations were few and far between. Although I didn't look forward to commuting, I decided to make application on the far side of the bay.

At once, I stumbled into a bit of good luck. At station KROW in Oakland, a vacancy existed. I was interviewed, auditioned, and asked to provide references and evidence of my prior experience. Heeding Swannee's warning and his general reluctance to have anything to do with me, I got my scrapbook and offered it.

WTCN, having been owned by two newspapers, had received considerable publicity. I had carefully clipped and pasted up all stories relating to me. I had dozens of items, including photos of myself as "the Milkman." The best of the lot was the photo taken of me

in a heap of milk-bottle tops.

This was “evidence” of a highly acceptable kind, and I managed to avoid anything more than cursory information about my prior job in broadcasting. I also stated that I had left the station to become the special announcer of an account we’d had on the air (unidentified), but, after only a few months, the head of that account had died. Thus, I was looking for another staff job.

I happily fell back on the newspaper information. What I said was true. The “I Am” programs had been on the air by transcription.

As I outlined the kind of program I could put on early in the morning, eagerness appeared on the face of the station manager. I was hired and told to start work the following Monday, about six days away. The pay offered was above average.

Filled with elation, I dashed back to the penthouse with the good news. Pearl was only partly upset. She wanted me to concentrate on metaphysical matters. Money problems were growing acute, however, and my income would surely be helpful.

The next day, I received a telephone call at the penthouse. A man I had known in radio back in the Twin Cities happened to be in town. We’d had only a cursory sort of friendship. He worked for an ad agency and, in consequence, we had never worked together. He was vacationing, he said, and had found out from Swannee that I was in San Francisco. So he had decided to look me up. I’ll call him Julian, but I don’t remember his real name.

My contact with Swannee had been of real help to me, psychologically. It had been my only contact with a familiar face in the ordinary world of the market place since the Twin Cities. Now I was to see a second familiar face. Before seeing Swannee, I hadn’t realized how much I missed normal, day-to-day routine and people.

“I Am” people were different. They lived in their own world, and I had become a focal part of that world.

Julian would be leaving town the next morning, so we made a date to visit Treasure Island together that evening.

I furnished the transportation and we drove across the Bay Bridge to Yerba Buena, the natural island that had served as the base for the World’s Fair.

I suspect that I talked much of the time. I was reveling in subject matter that contained no giant mystery.

Julian said he had been impressed with my efforts as a sound effects engineer. He wanted to know if I'd done anything about my "talent" in that department. Encouraged by his interest, and keeping in mind that he could be an asset commercially, I poured out my good news.

I had been without work, but I was getting back "into harness" the first of next week. I had the morning show for KROW and would be instituting another Milkman's club. He appeared delighted with the news.

Together, we toured some of the exhibits and shared a ride or two on the Midway. We shook hands and parted, and I haven't seen Julian since.

By the time Friday arrived, I was becoming apprehensive. I'd been off the air for some time. The studios of KROW were quite different from those I had known so well in Minneapolis. I needed to familiarize myself with the record library. I ought to have a "dry run" with the turntables and other gear I'd have to use.

When a person is "live" on radio or TV, he'd best have some pretty good idea of what he'll say and do when the time comes. Everything is hyper and, unless one wishes to hyperventilate, he'd best have something more than air in his head.

I took the steps two at a time to the second floor studios, greeted the first man I saw, and explained my purpose. The announcer on duty showed me the stacks. I began to plan for my first six a.m. show.

I was deep in concentrated effort when the station manager walked in. There was a strange look on his face. I could feel the tension.

"God, am I glad to see you," he said, grabbing my arm. "Come into my office right now so we can't be overheard."

Something was wrong. Had he contacted Swannee? Or did he now connect me to the "I Am" and, in consequence, want nothing to do with me?

He didn't even ask me to sit down.

"Why didn't you tell me?" he demanded. "I can't let you go on the air. You're fired!"

"Now, wait a minute," I said. "What's this all about? I haven't fluffed a program, have I? You said I was to start Monday, not today. I just came over to get acquainted."

"I just found out who you are!" The statement was an accusation.

"I'm Bob LeFevre," I said. "If that's what you found out then we can start even."

"But you didn't tell me you were *that* Bob LeFevre."

"Which one is *that*?"

"You're the guy who had the run-in with the Union back in Minneapolis a few years ago. Right?"

I nodded. "I didn't know it was a crime to stand up for your beliefs and remain loyal to your employer."

The manager plopped into the chair behind the desk.

"Yeah." He nodded. "I'm sorry as hell. I've got nothing against you. You're probably a damn good man on the air. Just what we could use. Put I can't take you on."

"I got a telephone call this morning from the Guild. Somehow they found out you were going to start work here, and they've put me on notice. If you so much as open a microphone, they'll have a picket line outside."

"Further, they've told me they'll picket my principal advertisers and anybody who does business with me. Man, oh man, have they got it in for you! They say you're a creep and a weirdo and I wouldn't want you around anyhow. I'm sorry, Bob, but the deal is off. I can't take that kind of stuff."

"I've only recently put this station into the black. My own job is on the line. Kee-rist, why didn't you tell me? We could have avoided this unpleasantness."

"Want me to change my name?" I asked.

He shook his head and grinned sheepishly. "There's just one thing you can do for me. Leave quietly. Go out the way you came and don't even *look* back. I'm sorry. Nothing personal, you understand. Actually, I'm on your side. I don't like the union either. It's just that you're a liability, and one I can't afford. Sorry."

I stared at him for a moment with nothing to say. I could see his side. He was right. The conversation I'd had months before with that CIO rep came back to me.

But how did the Union know I had landed a job? I hadn't yet been on the air.

Julian! Of course. It had never occurred to me that he might have connections with the Union. After all, he was an ad exec and not

eligible for Union membership. And it couldn't have been Swannee. The only person outside of Pearl and the "I Am" people who knew of my job was Julian. He certainly had wasted no time.

I held up my head, and stalked from the manager's office. The CIO had said that if I "ever put my head up again" they'd lop it off. Well, they hadn't yet lopped off my head, but they had surely cut off my job.

As I continued to think about it, I realized that I couldn't even be angry with Julian. Perhaps he had given away the information in chance conversation. Julian had contacts with many announcers, and I was certainly well known to all of them in the Twin Cities. He had probably been an unwitting emissary.

Chapter XXXIX

I needed money—quite a lot of money—and I needed it fast. There are only three ways of getting it. You work for it; you have it given to you; or, you steal it.

I wasn't going to steal it. I was tired of having people dole out a dollar or two every time I needed to pay for something. I had been in this penniless situation before. After my first sojourn in LA with Peggy, I had promised myself never to get into that predicament again. But I had.

I felt a bit like an ex-con. Thanks to the "I Am," my reputation had become tainted. In my single area of expertise, I had been black-balled.

I made application at a number of employment agencies and began reading the help-wanted columns of the morning Examiner. Within a few days, an ad caught my eye that appeared promising.

A firm was interested in hiring a salesman. To qualify for the position, a person had to take training. A few dollars would be paid weekly during training. Then, if one could pass the test, the job would be awarded.

The advertisement went on to say that a person with average ability could make \$150 a week, and most of the employees made \$1000 per month, or better. At this time (1940), \$50 a week was fairly good pay. \$1000 a month was a sum that only a few top executives, artists, or wealthy investors could command—or, so I believed. I had no such grandiose expectations, and presumed the big figure was largely "come-on." But, even if I discounted the claims, I could earn something while training and maybe make a decent income anyway.

The kind of selling wasn't specified, but the firm name was "The Inter-City Company," which told me nothing.

The following day, I called at the address given on Van Ness Avenue. The proprietor was a friendly, very smooth talking gentleman, named Fred Weiss. He was a real estate broker, but he and his firm specialized primarily in what were called "Business Opportunities." These were affectionately dubbed "B.O." by those in the business.

To be employed, I would have to study for and pass two examinations offered by the State government. I would have to earn both a Real Estate Salesman's license and a Business Opportunity Salesman's license.

The law specified that the salesman's licenses must be posted with a broker.

I liked Fred Weiss. When he boasted about how much his people earned, I grinned, and nodded, with disbelief on my face.

"You don't believe it?" he asked.

"It's all right," I assured him. "I don't have to make that much. Naturally, I want to make all I can. You don't have to spread it on so thick."

He laughed. "Very well. As long as you want to make all you can. I can work with someone who doesn't put artificial limits on his own ability."

He summoned his secretary. "Bring me this year's ledger," he commanded.

Despite my protests that proof was unnecessary, he flipped open page after page of accounts. He covered the names at the top of each page. "I don't want you to know which of my people are the most and which the least effective," he said. "That's none of your business. But I want you to see that I'm not lying."

According to what I was shown, he had three men who averaged about \$1,000 a month, one was in the \$500 class, and one earned about \$700. However, he had one who made about \$2500 every thirty days.

"In this business," he went on, "the listing is the important item. Everything is for sale. That is, it's for sale if the price is right. Here's the way we work. Fifty percent of all commissions come to Inter-City. If you list a property and sell it yourself, you get fifty percent. If you list a property and someone else sells it, you get 20 percent for the listing. If you sell another man's listing, you get 30 percent."

"That's easy to understand," I said.

"I'll have you start out, once you have a license, by getting listings. When you get a good listing, I'll run an ad on it. We do a lot of advertising. You get preference on your own listings, but you also get a crack at listings brought in by others. When a potential buyer shows up, salesmen on duty are rotated, and each gets his share."

"How much are the commissions?" I asked.

"We are governed by law," Weiss went on. "In real estate, there's a fixed rate. But we don't sell real estate as a rule. Too much competition. There are hundreds of real estate companies. We're in Business Opportunities. And there's only one other firm in San Francisco that tries to give us direct competition. Quite frankly, we're so far ahead of them that we don't worry about it."

"That still doesn't tell me."

"Well, you'll have to learn all that. But here's the rule. The big point is full disclosure. You become an agent and you work for the seller, as a general rule. Therefore, you must make a full disclosure to the seller. Every listing is taken with a signed contract. We find out what the seller wants for his business. We agree to sell it at that price, or any lower price he is willing to accept. Our commission is put on top."

"What does that mean?"

"After you become familiar with the market, you'll understand it better. But here's an example: let's say you find a restaurant owner who wants \$5,000 for his lease, equipment, and good will. You see, most restaurant people don't own the building they operate in. They lease that. But they own the fixtures, the tables, dishes, stoves, and so on.

He agrees to negotiate a transfer of the lease, and then we sell the equipment and the good will. So you agree to get the seller \$5,000, which is what he wants. But you stipulate that anything and everything *above* \$5,000 comes to you. He must sign just such an agreement. Of course, before the deal is over, you will let him know what your commission is.

"It sounds as though the commission is sort of indefinite."

"It is. You might try to sell that restaurant for, say, \$6500. The buyer finally makes an offer of \$5750. If that appears to be about the best you can do, then you have sold the property. The seller gets what he wants, and you've made \$750."

"Half of which goes to you," I reminded.

"Correct."

"What if the business is worth quite a bit more than \$5,000. Suppose you know positively that it is worth \$10,000. But the seller asks for \$5,000. You don't pocket the other \$5,000 do you?"

Weiss shook his head, and smiled sadly. "You don't ever really *know* anything of the kind. To *you*, the business might appear to be

worth \$10,000. But will a buyer pay that sum? That is something you don't know unless, or until, it occurs. What I'm trying to get across to you is that a business is worth exactly what you can get for it at the time you sell it.

"Sometimes you'll find a business that you will evaluate favorably, and then find no buyers at all. Other times, you'll see what you think is a pile of junk, and yet someone will be glad to buy. It isn't up to you to decide for the buyer. He decides for himself."

"That's all very well," I said. "Actually, it sounds fine. But don't you have an obligation to the buyer so he doesn't lose money?"

"There's no way you can prevent him from losing money, Bob. If the buyer is that kind of person, he can purchase the finest business in the world, at a favorable price, and still lose his shirt. And I've seen buyers turn some pretty decrepit operations into gold mines. You can't be responsible for the buyer. You are only responsible to the party for whom you work. That's the seller."

Weiss leaned back in his chair. "That's the problem people without experience always have. They imagine that business is a fixed condition. They think that because someone else has made it, they can. Or vice versa. It isn't true. Each business is what each buyer makes of it, after he buys it.

"Lots of people think that if a business has netted a thousand a month before they take it over, then they will net a thousand a month after they take it over. It isn't necessarily so.

"But that does bring into focus another factor. We work with the statement that the seller furnishes. And you get that statement with great care. That's right at the time that you take the listing.

"We have a form that you use." He handed me a listing sheet. It was a printed form, with a series of blank spaces to be filled in by hand.

"The seller must tell you how much money he grosses and how much his costs are. And you itemize everything on this sheet. In case of a dispute, this sheet becomes a legal document. You must write down the information, show it to the seller, and get him to sign that it is a true and correct statement. That's what you work with.

"You see, Bob, you don't make any representations to the buyer. You act for the seller and make the representations that the seller authorizes you to make. That and nothing more.

"A really good listing will hold up. That is, in the event of a dispute of any kind, the seller must be able to establish—and, if necessary, in a court of law—that the amount of business he did and the amount of profit he made when he owned the business, coincides with that statement. But that doesn't mean the buyer will do the same. You can almost guarantee that the buyer will either do better or worse than his predecessor.

"Now go back to your question. The seller tells you he wants \$5,000 for his business. Fine. Now suppose you show the place to a prospect, who sees something in that business which the seller didn't recognize. Suppose the seller believes that the best his business can do is \$500 a month net. But the buyer, because of special information, can anticipate a net of \$2,000 per month.

"You ask \$10,000. The buyer jumps at it gladly. His own business knowledge assures him that he can get that money back in five months. To him, it's a tremendous buy. The seller has only a two-year lease. If the seller were to keep it, it would take him 20 months to get \$10,000 out of it.

"Would you argue, in such a case, that the buyer cheated the seller because the business was better than the seller said it was?"

"Heck no."

"Well, if the buyer bought something that was better than the seller thought it was, then what's the difference, in principle, if the seller sees it as something better than the buyer can produce?"

I was baffled.

"This is why the commissions are wide open," Weiss continued. "Business is an unknown. Nobody knows what any business is worth. And no one knows what your services as an agent are worth, either.

"The rule is this. Get a good, clear, accurate statement. Stand on it. Tell the truth. And get as high a commission as the buyer is willing to pay. Both buyer and seller will be happy, and you'll make a good living. Sometimes you'll get squeezed to the pavement. Sometimes you'll make it big. But on average, you'll do all right, and so will every one else."

"I never imagined that business was conducted this way."

"You and nearly everyone else."

"You know, Mr. Weiss, it sounds exciting."

A happy smile appeared. "It is. It's unpredictable. And you deal with a class of people who have money and who can afford to make

investments.

"I remember selling a little business one time where the seller wanted only \$500. Because of the location and demand, I was sure I could get more. In my judgment, the seller had missed a great opportunity.

"I cross-examined him carefully. He wanted out. He was disgusted with the business. He agreed to any commission above \$500, provided he got quick action.

"He got it. The next day—you see, I already had buyer in mind—I sold it for \$2,500. And the new buyer made a fortune. The old one left town. And I had \$2,000 for my efforts. But everyone was happy."

"I've got a lot to learn," I admitted.

Weiss smiled, with dignity and warmth. "We'll do well together." And we shook hands.

I was elated when I told Pearl that I had landed a job. I didn't tell her about how commissions were paid except to say that I had been assured of some pretty big earnings. This was something for which we could all be thankful, if it worked out that way.

The material provided by the state for study purposes was not complex. I memorized it readily enough. Meanwhile, I reported in each morning to the Van Ness office and familiarized myself with procedures and listings.

Weiss took me with him on several of his own deals. He usually involved himself at the time of closing, so nothing would go wrong. And it became clear that his boasts about earnings were accurate enough.

Understandably, he spent no time telling me about all the disappointments possible. It was possible to get a listing, work your tail off, anticipate a fat commission, and find a buyer who squeezed you down to where you were fortunate to receive mileage money from your efforts. The seller, meanwhile, got what he insisted on. Without bringing satisfaction to the seller, one had nothing.

While I was learning the business and taking the state examinations, money affairs at the penthouse deteriorated.

Sidney no longer sent money to support his wife. He didn't have it. He was on commission, too. He was not doing as well as I was, dollar wise, when I finally started earning. At least, that was the report.

The little band of followers that orbited around Pearl had been

keeping us afloat. The penthouse, thanks to its location, had been something of a hub for all of us. If we gave up the penthouse, it appeared likely that the San Francisco people would scatter to the four winds.

None of us wanted that to happen. A few stalwarts, such as the Gallaghers, dropped out. Others came to take their places, including Kathleen Blamey (a cousin of the Dazey girls) and Cleo Manson.

At Inter-City, Weiss assigned me to one particular type of business opportunity—multiple housing. I dealt primarily with hotel, motel, apartment house, rooming house, and guesthouse leasing. The more lucrative area dealt with cafes, bars, liquor stores, and the like. But I had explained that I didn't drink, or smoke. I refrained from such habits because I thought they were morally wrong.

When I got around to explaining that I didn't eat meat as well, I became the target of a great deal of friendly jibing. I was asked if I disapproved of sex, too. When I asserted that the only sex of which I approved was between married couples who planned on having children, I was jeered at as an empty-headed idealist.

One of the salesmen suggested that I would be no good in trying to sell any kind of business. After all, multiple housing entailed beds people would use while copulating. In cafes and bars, people ate and drank things that I disapproved of. And they smoked everywhere—before, during, and after.

Concerned that I might be completely impossible to work with, Weiss asked if my set of standards included straightening out everyone I met. I assured him it did not. Rather, my standards were my own. I had selected them for myself because I thought they were correct. Along with those standards was the conviction that everyone else had to select his own, too. If I was right, I would reap the benefit and others would lose out. If I was wrong, then I would reap no harvest at all, and others would benefit. But standards were private; each person had his own.

This satisfied him. He gave me every assistance in getting started. And I did well.

The particular category in which I seemed most able was with the "guesthouse."

In San Francisco, particularly on Nob Hill and in the Pacific Heights district, there were hundreds of magnificent private mansions, built during more affluent times. Taxes on these marvelous homes had

risen until only the wealthy could afford them as private residences.

Over a period of years, and probably one-by-one, the owners began to take in roomers, or boarders, to help pay the costs. This private practice had gradually been converted into paying businesses. Many of the larger homes were now leased to guesthouse operators for a flat monthly rental of the entire property.

The guesthouse operator would take in boarders, thus distinguishing his operation from either a rooming house or a hotel. Family style meals were served to the guests, and a bed provided, all at a weekly or monthly rental fee. These ranged from about \$60 a month up to \$100 a month.

Some of the more successful operators ran chains of guesthouses. But most of them were single operations managed by a person who leased and occupied a particular home.

Perhaps I had a natural understanding for this type of business. It was precisely what I had done in St. Paul in setting up the "I Am" Reading Room, with the help of paying guests.

It was entirely logical that I would put two and two together. I suggested to Pearl that those of us centering around the penthouse might achieve the same thing. The penthouse was much too small for any kind of commercial operation. But some of the mansions contained anywhere from fifteen to twenty-five rooms. If we could locate a guesthouse, we could buy the lease and create an "I Am" center that would operate on a business basis. Only "I Am" students would be admitted.

These students would have to live somewhere. They would also have to eat somewhere. Why not put ourselves in a position to offer them room and board at a reasonable price? We'd be able to pay the bills. We could conduct small classes in our own living room. And, as we began to save up some money, we could expand on a sound financial footing.

Pearl sounded out the students. A number of them were enthusiastic. Sonny and her brother, Fred, wanted to be part of it. So did Blanche and Edith. Jerry, although he would have to absent himself some of the time to look after his ranch, wanted in. Howard was eager. It sounded like a great idea to him. Ethel declined to come in person, but gave permission to her daughter, Carol, who wanted to be included.

In short, we had a nucleus of potential customers. All we needed

was a suitable address.

I began canvassing for listings that might be suitable. The major difficulty was that, in each and every case, a cash payment of two or three thousand dollars would be essential.

We had no such sums. Pearl, deprived of access to her following at the Reading Room, had little hope of raising the money. Meanwhile, I began getting myself caught up on payments to Peggy. I broached the subject of divorce to her. Pearl had interpreted Peggy's reaction accurately. Peggy didn't want a divorce. She was looking forward to reconciliation.

That gave me more to worry about, and it didn't help financially.

At this juncture, Ethel came through in a big way. She, too, had a real estate license. Although she rarely gave full time to selling, on occasion she would cook up a deal and make a commission.

Ethel had been trying to sell a lovely home in the Pacific Heights area, located on Vallejo Avenue. The owners were an elderly couple, well advanced in years, and financially on Easy Street. They were unwilling to lower their price to those of the prevailing market. Further, their home was filled with treasures they couldn't bring themselves to sell.

Ethel suggested that they lease it, contents and all, to "a group of personal friends, whose integrity was unquestioned and who had a "keen appreciation" of the art housed there.

The man of the house was quite ill. His doctor told him that he had to move to a warmer and less invigorating climate. Ethel's suggestion appeared to be a way for them to act quickly and decisively.

The deal was consummated. I signed the two-year lease for a rental fee of only \$150 per month, for a ten-room furnished house in one of the finest districts in the city.

Pearl and I abandoned the penthouse. Together with those willing students, we all moved under the same roof. We agreed that Pearl and Blanche would do the cooking and general housekeeping. The rest of us would keep our earnings coming in. It seemed a happy and commercially feasible procedure.

Chapter XL

Life at the Vallejo Avenue property was as happy and productive as it possibly could be for a person as eager and confused as I was.

The little band was loving and loyal without exception. The house we shared was far more luxurious than any of us could have imagined for ourselves under other circumstances.

Like most of San Francisco's finer homes, this dwelling emphasized height and view and did not avoid stairs. The street on which the building fronted must have had a thirty-degree angle. Ours was next to the base of the incline. The lowest part consisted of a single car garage—the resting-place for the Buick.

Having parked the car, a half flight of stairs took you to the foyer from the inside. If the front door were used—a huge, ornate affair with iron grill and beveled glass—you emerged in the same foyer nearly a full story above the garage floor.

The entrance hall and one small room, used as a bedroom, comprised the entire level. Cleo was assigned here. The rate charged was the lowest, because the room the smallest and the inconvenience the greatest. Cleo's job didn't pay well, and she was pleased with the accommodations.

From the foyer, you climbed a full flight of carpeted stairs to the second level. The interior was paneled in solid imported mahogany, hand carved. No plywood, and no veneer. This was the real thing.

On the second level were the living room, dining room, and kitchen. Nothing more.

The kitchen was large and equipped with the finest. There was a rear door for tradesmen, which opened to a passageway that elbowed past the house on the up hill side. Adjacent to the kitchen was the dining room; it was square, commodious, and luxuriously appointed with crystal chandelier, refectory table of solid walnut, and matching chairs and sideboard.

A plate rail displayed a set of priceless antique plates and other art objects.

We were somewhat appalled by the darkness of the décor. As good students, we would have liked to paint it with some bright color, such as white. But we had promised not to, so we turned the lights

on full. We enjoyed the warmth and closeness of fellowship provided by the dark walnut texture.

From the north dining room windows, you could look out on a real treasure. It was the garden—a tiny plot of land, possibly a dozen feet square, that fit into the space between the rear of the garage, the side of the dining room, the property-line wall at the rear, and the next door property. The space was crammed with flowers, flowering trees and shrubs. The sun stabbed into it, during a few hours each day, part of the year. But it was there, awash with color. It could be reached from the rear of the building or from the garage.

The main attraction at the second level was the living room. This was a vast hall, thirty-two feet by eighteen, and it contained a fireplace at the south end. Bookcases lined the walls on either side of the fireplace, and they were filled with first editions, rare, and unusual titles.

The living room was furnished in teakwood. Rich oriental rugs floated on the polished oak flooring, like a squadron of loose barges. Ornamental lamps, both floor and table, stood sentry duty over art treasures from various climes. Ornate sconces added a pleasant gleam to the paneled walls.

The room was used for religious services. In addition, when no general function was underway, private conversations could be held in one place, while reading occurred elsewhere, even if a game of chess or cards was underway. Exclusive clubs I have visited didn't surpass the comfort and luxury afforded here.

Back in the hallway, one took the broad stairway to the third level. Here, there were three bedrooms and two baths. The large master bedroom was directly over the dining room and kitchen. It had its own bathroom and dressing room at the north end. It was only slightly smaller than the living room, and Pearl made use of its spacious accommodations. Sometimes one of the other women shared it with her. I am not too clear as to which stayed where. The floor was "off limits" to males. We stopped there only by personal invitation.

There were two bedrooms on the opposite side of the hall just above the living room, and the second bath was between. Sonny, Edith, Blanche, and Carol enjoyed these facilities. I don't remember just how the space was assigned.

Back in the hallway, you climbed to the top of the house, the fourth

level. There were only two small rooms, originally designed as servant's quarters. Jerry and Howard had the larger of the two rooms, and I took the smaller, so I could be alone. There was another bath that we men used.

Thus, nine people occupied the house, which had been planned as a three-bedroom home. We averaged about \$50 per month each—we a little more and Cleo a bit less—which brought in approximately \$450.00. Since the rent was only \$150 and the utility costs were modest, we could afford to eat well and enjoy life.

The bonds that had begun forming at the penthouse were now strengthened. While most of us were away at work each weekday, we were together every evening. We sang, played games, talked about spiritual matters, and occasionally had a discourse. We enjoyed one another's company in a manner I have never seen under other circumstances.

Sidney now lived elsewhere. However, even he showed up on occasion, usually for an especially fine dinner prepared in his honor. I do not believe the man ever bore me any rancor. If he did, he was masterful in concealing it. I liked him and admired him. The triangle seemed to have rounded corners.

Our best times occurred on weekends, when I didn't have to work. Being in business opportunities, rather than in real estate, meant that Sunday duty was not often required. Saturdays were also open, in whole or in part.

On many of these occasions, we'd picnic in Golden Gate Park, in Marin County, or somewhere on the other side of the bay at Mount Diablo, Walnut Creek, or up in the higher country where gold had first been discovered at Sutter's Mill.

In planning future activities, Pearl was as eager to spread the "I Am" gospel as I was. As correspondence between Peggy and I continued, it seemed like a good idea to have Peggy and the boys come to San Francisco. But such an addition was too large for us to handle with our present accommodations. And the strain on my finances would have been considerable if a separate domicile had to be provided.

Both Pearl and I wanted to have access Peggy to convince her that, for the good of the work we performed, a friendly divorce was in order.

One morning, the entire house was abuzz with excitement by the

time I arose. Before I could find out what was in the wind, Ethel arrived in a state of some agitation.

We gathered in the living room, and Ethel spread out the front page of the San Francisco Examiner for us to see. The banner headline screamed that Pearl and I had been indicted by the Federal Government for mail fraud.

The story went on to explain that Mrs. Ballard and those high in the movement had all been cited. The list of those under restraint included all members of the Ballard staff, some of the group leaders in various parts of the country, and even Mrs. Ballard's maid.

"Mail fraud," I exclaimed. "What utter rubbish. Nobody's been mailing anything fraudulently. There must be some mistake. As a matter of fact, we haven't been mailing anything, fraudulent or otherwise."

"Of course, you haven't," Ethel said. "But what about Mrs. Ballard?"

"I have no way of knowing what she's been doing since I left LA. And that was months ago. Why drag Pearl and me into her activities, whatever they may be?"

"What'll we do?" Pearl asked.

The others stood around, staring at me, round-eyed.

Ethel didn't wait for my answer. "First, you'll have to get an attorney," she said. "And then, you'll get this dismissed. There's nothing to it, of course."

She looked at me as though I were a juvenile delinquent. "Bob, dear. You are so naive! I know *you* didn't commit any mail fraud, but are you sure Mama didn't?"

"Well, I can tell you that no mail fraud occurred to my knowledge even when I was on the staff."

"To your knowledge?" Ethel repeated. "How good is that knowledge?"

"Ethel, Mama wasn't that kind of person. Sure, she's overbearing and can be a bit of a tyrant. But I typed some of the letters to help out, when I was there. There was nothing fraudulent about them. Frankly, most of them were phrased in such general terms that they said very little. They were largely in the form of special thanks or blessings, and Daddy was to sign them.

"Besides, assuming that things went on without my knowledge, which I'm sure was true, why drag Pearl and me into it? Pearl has

never been connected directly to staff operations. And I was never allowed to compose any correspondence. I simply copied paragraphs from a notebook Pat Crouse let me use."

There was a moment of tense silence.

"I have an attorney friend I could call on," Ethel said, a speculative look on her face. "I don't think he'll charge anything. I'm sure he'd take your case as a favor to me."

"I don't think there's a case at all," I said. "I'll tell you what this is. The fellow who wrote a book against the "I Am" activity...what's his name? Bryan? He's at the bottom of it. He was encouraging people to sue the Ballards for misrepresentation. It's like what happened back in Chicago, and elsewhere. The dark forces are doing everything in their power to stop the spread of these ideas."

There were nods of comprehension.

"Nonetheless," Ethel said, "This is serious. It's a Federal indictment. That's the government of the United States. You've got to fight."

I reached for Pearl's hand. "Fine," I said. "I think you're right. We'll fight. But how?"

Ethel smiled for the first time. "You children go ahead with your breakfast. I'll scurry around and locate my lawyer friend. I'll ask him what you should do. Then I'll phone, and let you know."

She steamed down the stairs, like a destroyer going to battle. The rest of us ate and read and re-read the Examiner story. How vicious that headline was. Of course, we had committed no mail fraud. But the story didn't say we had; it said we were accused. But what a ghastly blow a front-page banner can be when it's about you, even if you know you are innocent of wrong doing. The mere accusation provides an indelible taint. Reputations can be lost even though the accusation proves false.

Then, I phoned the office to explain that I would be late for work. My call was taken by one of the salesmen who had arrived early.

"So, you're the mail fraud kid!" he said. "How about a cut in your big take?"

"Cut it out," I growled. "This is serious business."

"Yeah, I know."

"Tell Fred Weiss I'll be late for work. I've got to take care of this first. It's all a big mistake."

"You're right about that, Bob," the salesman said. "Somebody made a big mistake."

"Damn it," I swore. "It wasn't me!"

"Sure, sure. But what was it you sold?"

I slammed down the phone. "They believe it!" I groaned. "I'll probably get the axe."

"No you won't," Pearl said. "The Presence and Saint Germain are watching over us. You'll see. Just don't go negative."

Ethel was true to her word. In less than an hour, she phoned. She had talked to her friend. He advised Pearl and I to go to the Federal Building, find the appropriate office, and tell our story. She was certain the matter could be handled very simply.

As quickly as we could, Pearl and I drove to the Federal Building and went into its massive interior, with its ancient fixtures and worn marble flooring. We made our way to the City Attorney's office. We were soon closeted with a young assistant who listened attentively to what we had to say.

He turned out to be sympathetic, not only with an ear but also with an action. He absented himself to make a few telephone calls, while we anxiously waited. He returned in about half an hour, with a smile on his face.

"It's all taken care of," he said.

"What are we supposed to do now?" I asked.

"Nothing. It's all handled. The indictment is being amended and the two of you will be eliminated from the action."

"Don't we have to sign something?" Pearl asked.

"Not a thing." He took a nearby chair. "You see, when the cause of action was agreed upon, the government had no clear idea of who was and who was not responsible. So they set up a dragnet indictment. They brought in every name they could find. It's possible most of the names will be dropped before we actually go to work. We're after Mr. and Mrs. Ballard."

"Mr. Ballard isn't around anymore," I observed.

"That's not what we hear," he said. "According to rumors, he's still around somewhere, lurking in the background. Anyway, the Ballards are obviously the kingpins, and we're out to get them."

Pearl and I exchanged glances. "So far as I know," I said, "They weren't guilty of anything except some fairly far-reaching ideas."

"Your observations have been noted, and they're appreciated. We don't care about their ideas. We're concerned about getting money fraudulently, under false pretenses. Especially through the mails."

Pearl stood. "Come on, Bob. Let's go."

I joined her. "Thanks for your help."

We shook hands, and left the young attorney.

I took Pearl home and then went to work. Weiss was with a client, but I was informed—to no surprise—that he wanted to see me as quickly as possible.

When I finally sat down with him, Weiss said, "Want to tell me all about it?"

I said, "Sure," and ran through the whole story, ending with the quashing of the complaint.

"I thought it was something like that," Weiss mused.

I waited. The next sentence was sure to be the crack of doom.

Weiss opened his book of listings and began turning pages. He looked up finally. "Still here? You can't make any money sitting in my office. What are you waiting for?"

My sigh was like the release of a pressure valve. "I was giving you the opportunity to fire me."

"What for?"

"Well...well, my reputation isn't so good...after all, I mean, that newspaper story..."

"You told me you didn't commit mail fraud."

"That's true."

"I believe you."

What a magnificent assurance those three words contained.

"Thanks boss." My whole world wasn't going to fall apart this time. At least, not yet.

Chapter XLI

From my mother I had received a powerful conviction concerning right as opposed to wrong. From my schooling, I had acquired a smattering of information in a number of areas, few of which came together or added up. From the “I Am,” I had obtained a feeling of confidence and a belief in the ability of the individual to achieve “divine” assistance, provided his moral behavior warranted it. I had also developed an apprehension that demonic forces were at work, seeking to destroy this country.

The Inter-City Company began providing my first lessons in practical economics. Under the friendly and efficient instruction of Fred Weiss, I gained some invaluable information about the real nature of the world and how it worked.

Each of the four top salesmen had a tiny cubicle assigned to him as an “office.” The other salesmen shared a larger open space in the rear, each of them having only a desk. When you advanced to a cubicle, you had that space *and* the desk.

At the time I joined the firm, the top three salesmen were Weaver, Echols, and Roach. Within six weeks, I became the number four man. In time, I was number three. I was never able to reach Weaver who was invariably at the top. Echols and I competed for the number two position, with Echols usually winning.

One day, I was in my cubicle awaiting my turn. The receptionist had instructions to rotate potential buyers among the salespeople, giving each man his allotment.

From within the cubicle, I couldn’t see the front entrance, but I could tell when a customer came in because I could hear the door open and close. Usually, the customer would speak to the receptionist in such a low tone that I couldn’t detect the words. But, then, if it was my turn, my phone would jingle and the receptionist would ask me to come out to meet Mr. Blank.

The prospect and I would meet and discuss his wants briefly over the counter. If he appeared qualified as a buyer, then I would invite him back to my cubicle where we could go over the listings and examine the prepared sellers’ statements in privacy.

On this particular morning, I was fourth in line. Two customers

were already closeted, when the front door opened to admit the third prospect. Even though it was not my turn, I was eager. I strained my ears to learn the particular kind of business that would be assigned to a rival.

I heard sharp heels click on the floor tiles as the potential buyer moved to the desk of the receptionist. Then, in a rich contralto, a feminine voice with French accent said, "I wish to see Monsieur LeFevre."

"What kind of business are you looking for?" The receptionist asked, her voice modulated to match the volume of the customer.

"Mr. LeFevre specializes in multiple housing."

"Is no never mind for you, Madam," the lovely contralto notes said. "I tell it to Monsieur LeFevre. He is the one."

My phone chimed briefly and I responded. "Someone asking for you by name," the receptionist said.

I poked at my memory, trying to recall someone I might have known with the French accent and tonality I had overheard. I drew a blank. When I saw the lady standing on the far side of the counter, my heart thumped with sudden pleasure.

My client was extraordinarily beautiful. She was wrapped in a silver fox fur, had magnificent blond shoulder length hair, and her face was lovely enough to have out-Helened Helen when it came to ship launchings. I had never seen her before, but my first thought was...a movie star.

As I came up to greet her, I noticed something else. Through the large glass windows fronting Van Ness, I could see the car that had brought her. It was a long, black limousine, and a uniformed chauffeur stood at attention beside it. Dollar signs danced in my head as I led the lady to my suddenly squalid cubbyhole. I felt like apologizing for everything I had. My desk was too small, the chairs too chintzy, and my clothes too ordinary. This was a lady accustomed to far better than anything I had to offer.

To my amazement, the lovely creature sighed with visible relief as she vanished from the eyes of the curious upon her entry. She sat in the chair, smiled as though we had known each other for years and broke into a torrent of French.

I got the message. She must have learned of my name from someone and had presumed, because of it, that I spoke French. She felt comfortable with me because of a presumed common origin.

"I am so sorry," I stammered. "I don't speak French. I know only a few words." I shrugged. "Chevrolet, coupe, you know. Words like that."

She looked at me in astonishment. "But, of course. How stupid of me. But the name, she is French, no?"

"The name, he is French, yes," I said. "But he doesn't speak it."

"Is too bad." She regarded me soberly. "You look French."

"My father's side of the family," I admitted. "Mother was English."

She was disappointed. After a moment, she said, "But you are *half* French."

"That is true." I felt miserable. "Maybe the French half of me can be helpful."

She smiled again and I saw the dimples. Her eyes twinkled. "Very well, Monsieur. You will do. I wish to buy a house."

"A house?" Again, my spirits drooped. "I'd love to help you. And I do have a few private homes listed. However, I must tell you right now that you would have a much broader choice if you went to a regular real estate firm. We specialize in businesses at Inter-City. My own specialty is multiple housing."

"Then a house you have is what I want."

I flipped my book of listings to the back where I had information respecting perhaps a score of private dwellings.

"Is there any particular district you had in mind. Pacific Heights? Sea Cliff? Nob or Russian Hill? I have a very nice five bedroom home with a spectacular view in Sea Cliff."

"No, Monsieur. The district, she is here. I wish this district. Close to the Van Ness."

I shook my head slowly. "I can't imagine you being happy with a home in this area. My dear lady, this is a business, not a residential district."

"I am told that you have a house."

"Well, that's true. I do have quite a few houses for you to choose from. But not in a business district."

"You are funning with me." She laughed. "I see it now. You have the funny bone. Is good."

She was baffling. "Yes, I have a sense of humor, but I'm not being funny. At least, I'm not trying to be. I wish you to be truly happy with what you buy and I can't imagine..."

"Then you do not understand. I want a house."

"I know. You've said that. You want a house." Something stirred in the back of my mind.

"I want a *house*."

She said it this time with an intonation that could not be mistaken.

Eyes widened in comprehension, I said, "Oh. You want a *house*."

"Oui, oui, is what I have said from the advent. I want a house for business."

"I see." This beautiful woman was as far removed from my idea of what a madam would look like as the poles are separated.

She looked pleased. "Now we are together. You will get me the house I want."

"I certainly will, if I have it listed. And, I might add, I probably have a listing on just about everything in this area that is for sale.

"What do you want...a rooming house, hotel, apartment house? I have most of them."

"Is a list for...?" and she cited a particular address about four blocks from the Inter-City office.

I checked. The particular address she voiced was unlisted.

"But you said you get me the house I want."

"I have a listing for an apartment house in the same block," I said. "The buildings are much alike along there. I can get you into the one I have with no problem.

"You understand," I continued. "You won't be buying the building. Just the leasehold and furnishings. But this one has a fair statement and the price is only \$4,000."

"Monsieur," she said. "You come with me. I show you what I want."

All conversations at the Inter-City Company ceased as my client and I walked to the front entrance.

I had assured Mr. Weiss that the moral standards of my clients were their business, and not mine. Further, he had lectured me that I was responsible for what I did, not for what either the buyer or seller did. My obligation was to the seller. Or the buyer, if I turned out to be a buyer's agent. My job was to make a good, clean deal, with all facts represented honestly. Beyond that, I had no function.

The chauffeur held the door. I climbed in after the lady, sinking so far back I thought I might end in the trunk. The limo was so long that it might have seemed appropriate to have a set of wheels in the middle, so it could have turned corners by sections.

In moments, the car blocked traffic in front of the designated building. "This is the house I must have, Monsieur."

Two numbers down was the active listing. "I'll do my best," I said. "But do you mind telling me why this one? What is so special about it?"

"In my business," she said, laying a soft hand on my sleeve, "is poor policy for customers to meet other customers. So I need two doors. One for to come in. One for to go out. This one has rear door in back."

"I hope you can excuse my ignorance," I said. "I'm learning a lot."

"You are very nice man," she said. "And half French. Once I operate, I give you discount rates. Alas, you are not all French. Then, I give you free pass forever."

I'm certain I blushed. She laughed merrily, and gave my arm a squeeze.

"Since I don't have this listing," I said, "I'm not sure what the price will be. The owner may not want to sell."

"But this is the one I must have."

"I'll get it for you if it is humanly possible," I said. "I'm only warning that it may be priced much higher than it's worth."

"Is no never mind."

"What do you mean?"

"I must have this house."

"Why this one? Now that I know you need a rear entrance, too, I can find you another if I don't get this. There are plenty of apartment houses in town with exits in the rear."

"You do not see? I have permission for this house, that is why."

"You have permission?"

"But of course. There is law against pleasure. But, I have friend. In the city, no? He gives me permission to operate here. So, this is the house. Price is no never mind."

"Gotcha," I said. I reached for the door. "This may take a while. Should I meet you back at the office?"

"Non. We wait. We drive around. We wait. I give you ride back."

"I'll move as fast as I can," I said. "Thanks."

She clutched my coat as I moved. "Monsieur. Get it. I must have it."

"Yes, indeed."

I stabbed the bell for the manager's apartment and, presently, the door latch buzzed. I made my way up the stairs. The owner turned out to be another French lady. She was doing her weekly ironing, and she kept on with it after I was admitted.

"I want to list the property," I said. I handed over my business card. "I'm with Inter-City Company, and I'm sure I can get a buyer for your leasehold interest."

"I do not wish to sell," she said with finality.

"Why not, if I can get you a good price?"

"Because I just bought it, is why. I have been here less than a month. I do not wish to move again."

"That's certainly understandable," I said. "But if I got you enough money, it would be worth your while."

She paused in her labors and gave me a gimlet eye. "You real estate people are all alike. You care nothing for customers. You are only after a commission. Go someplace else."

I ignored the remark. "Do you mind telling me what you paid for your lease and the furnishings?" I asked.

"Yes, I mind. Is none of your business. It is not for sale."

I looked around. The furnishings were commonplace. There was nothing distinctive about the place. Hundreds were similar.

"How many apartments do you have?" I could have counted the mailboxes, but I hadn't.

She shrugged. "Twelve. It's a small place. But it is enough for one poor old widow woman to take care of."

"You don't make very much money with only twelve units," I commented.

She nodded. "At last, you have said the truth. I don't know if I make anything. But I can stay alive here, anyway. You are trying to put me out. Go away. I don't want to do business." She kept ironing.

"I have a pretty good idea of what places like this are selling for," I said just loud enough for her to hear. "If you paid more than \$4,000, then you paid too much."

She snorted. Then she chuckled. "Thought you'd trap me. Well, I still won't tell you."

"Thanks," I said. "It's plain that you paid less than \$4,000. How would you like to sell it for \$4,000?"

"All right," she said. "I bought it for less than \$4,000. But I won't sell for that much. Besides, I'd have to pay a commission to you. I'd

have nothing...and, I'd be out on the street."

"Would you take \$5,000, net to yourself?"

She stopped ironing and stared at me. "This house is not worth \$5,000, and you know it. No one would pay that much."

"Now that part of it is my business," I said. "Suppose I find someone who falls in love with the place and is willing to pay \$5,000? All of it to you. I'll tack on something above that for my commission. \$5,000 net. What do you say?"

"I say you are a fool. You are wasting my time and yours."

"How about \$6,000 net? My commission on top of that."

"Listen, young man. I paid only \$2,500 for this place when I bought it a month ago. It only nets about \$300 a month. Nobody's going to pay five or six thousand so they can earn \$300 a month and do all the work. You are insane to think it."

"But would you sell for \$6,000?"

She hesitated. I was getting close. She shook her head. "No!"

"Will you move for \$7,500?"

She slammed down her iron. "You are crazy. You should not be out on the street. But, of course, I would sell for \$7,500! All to me? No commission to be paid?"

"That is correct. I will put my commission on above that. Will you sign an exclusive listing with Inter-City Company for \$7,500 clear net to you, and agree that I may have anything above that I can get?"

"Above that?" She unplugged the iron.

"I'll tell you right now what I'm going to ask. I'm going to ask \$8,500, and you get \$7,500. Would you agree to that?"

"You are crazy, but I like you. Okay. I'll go along and be crazy, too. Maybe lightning will strike, eh? Maybe the sky has two moons. If you can get someone to pay \$8,500 for this place, you deserve \$1,000. Cash?"

"All cash."

We shook hands. I drew up the papers and she signed.

The silver fox lady was waiting for me and helped to pull me into the rear seat. I didn't keep her in suspense.

"Got it," I said. "The price is outrageous, as I said it would be. The owner had just moved in and didn't want to move again. But I have her signature that she will accept \$8,500."

"Is good! Is very, very good." Suddenly, I got a kiss on the left

cheek. "You are a good man. Now, what do I owe you?"

"Nothing at all," I said. "My goodness, you're paying about three prices already."

"You got seller to pay commission?"

"Yes, technically, I'm working for her." I shifted uncomfortably. "I've only been in this business a little while and I don't know any other way of doing it. This way, I'm sure of my ground. \$8,500 is the full price, and the seller pays the commission."

The sleek behemoth glided feather-like over the uneven pavements on its way to Inter-City. I couldn't keep my eyes from the beauty beside me.

"Please forgive me this impertinence," I finally blurted. "Why? Why you? You are one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen. Possibly the most beautiful. In fact, I thought you were a movie star. I'm sure you could be. Why are you in...in...in this line of work?"

A merry laugh came in answer. "You expect to hear tale of, how you say, ravagement? You think some men have...I do not know the word...have done some soil to me? Non, Monsieur. Non, non."

"I choose the profession. I like it. The work, she is pleasant. The pay, she is good."

"I change my mind. You *think* you are only part French. Non. You are *French*. You have pass any time. Once I operate. You understand."

Back at the office, the lady wrote a check for the full amount and signed her acceptance. When she had gone, Weiss called me into his office.

"Congratulations, Bob. You've come close to establishing a record. You brought a buyer and a seller together all in one day. Not bad. Not bad at all. Especially since you got the listing after you had the buyer."

"Thanks, boss. I wish all the buyers were as easy to do business with."

"Don't you know what line of business that lady is in?"

I nodded. "She told me."

"Any problem with your conscience?"

"Not really. Well, I guess I had a few bad moments at that."

"Don't you feel a bit tainted?"

"You said that it was none of my business what amount the buyer paid, or kind of business he did, after the property changed hands."

“Well, as a matter of fact,” Weiss said, “you did get yourself tainted. Go wash your face. That lady put her mark on you and I don’t want your other customers to feel slighted.”

Chapter XLII

As I remember, while I resided on Vallejo Street in San Francisco, something else happened to my mind. Precisely when it occurred escapes my recollection.

One night, after I had retired, I had difficulty going to sleep. I lay on my narrow cot in my fourth floor bedroom, tossing first one way and then the other. I tried to sort out the events through which I was passing. As a good “I Am” student I was doing my best to obtain “guidance” from my “I Am” Presence” and from Saint Germain. In ordinary parlance, I was praying for help with the most devout feelings.

Whether the intensity of my plea had been stimulated by some of the excellent books in the private library to which I had retreated repeatedly, or whether it was triggered by the mail fraud charge, I cannot be sure.

Even though the citation had been summarily dropped, the publicity had accomplished irreparable harm. The follow-up story relating to the amended complaint against the Ballards had been relegated to something other than the front-page—the common practice of journalism. When a wrongful act is alleged, it sells many papers. When the allegation is erroneous, it sells few. A front-page banner and columns of type told of the federal suit. Six inches—on an inside page next to an ad for a fall sale—told of the revision.

Certainly, my continuing yearning for Pearl was a driving force, filling me with exaltation and joy in the midst of the most desperate kind of frustration. Also, my concern for Peggy and the boys was dinning at me with growing urgency.

In the midst of calling for help, it was as though a voice spoke to me again. “Why don’t you think for yourself?”

That was a simple enough question. Until I heard it asked just that way, I had been trying to obtain answers to puzzles by intuition. Something *outside myself* was going to help me if I remained calm, obeyed the rules, etc. etc. Now it was as though something outside myself said: “Why don’t you do it yourself and stop asking?”

Whose voice was it? Was that my “Presence?” Or Saint Germain? Or another? I had an horrendous thought. What if it was just my

own common sense coming to my rescue?

In retrospect, I surveyed my behavior since I had become involved with the "I Am." I poked emphatically at what my mind had been doing. The truth was that I hadn't been using it. I had been *reacting* to dogma, reacting to what others told me. Mentally, I had closed up shop. I was trying to be guided by those outside myself, who were presumably beyond error and above reproach. Like a good, humble, obedient servant, I was waiting for direction from outside myself.

Somehow, restless and unsleeping, I was able to get a panoramic view of my past. As a little boy I had been sharp and as smart as could be hoped. My schooling had dulled my mind. I had been so obedient, so subservient to others, so willing to accept outside authority, that I hadn't been thinking on my own.

But it wasn't just my schooling. I had learned so much from others that I tended to elevate their thinking above my own. Whatever others said, I had to believe and consider seriously. Whatever I thought on my own, I questioned. I readily accepted a contrary view, not because it was better, but because I so completely accepted exterior control. As a result, I had obtained popularity. But my mind had gone out to lunch. I wasn't using it. I had traded my common sense and ordinary reasoning powers for the sound of applause and the admiration of crowds.

But I *had* obtained help from outside my mind, hadn't I? From whence came the question I had just been asked? I found myself looking into a series of mirrors retreating into infinity. I couldn't reason it out because I couldn't see the end of it. If I had heard from my "Presence," then was it inside my head or outside, above my head? If the latter, then I must still seek outside help. And that was the kind of help I had received. Wasn't it? Or was it?

I forced my mind out of a tailspin. Let me see. Why not, in an orderly way, list the problems I had and see if, by using reason and logic, I might resolve some of the difficulties. What did I really want to achieve?

Mentally, I tabulated. First, I want to marry Pearl and make her mine. No. I was going at it backwards. My *ultimate* goal was to marry Pearl. In order to achieve that goal, other subordinate goals had to be reached.

First, I would have to divorce Peggy. What would be involved? I

was still lining things up in reverse order.

New first, I would bring Peggy to San Francisco. Between us, Pearl and I could convince her that our work was important enough to warrant a divorce. I had been unable to win any concessions by mail. Certainly, America was in danger. War had been raging in the Far East, and conditions in Europe were volatile and could explode at any time. There had already been a number of prior upheavals. Working to save America would surely be an acceptable argument, if Pearl and I both insisted on it with Peggy.

Wait a minute. If that was the thing to do, then why not simply ask Peggy to come?

Answer. I couldn't afford it. Then, the first objective was more money.

No. More than that. This couldn't be a "one-time," patchwork solution. I must provide a domicile for Peggy and the boys. The boys would go to school. An ongoing supply of dollars would have to be provided. But a place to live was a primary part of that package.

Suddenly, it hit me. I had the means to achieve my primary goal at my fingertips. I had a job that was making money. That was part of the solution. I would keep the job. But more than that, I was the signatory on a lease. The address on Vallejo was, in fact, a guesthouse. I was already in the business. Why not sell the lease and leasehold interests to someone wanting to start a small guesthouse?

I had no furniture or fixtures to sell. All I had was a piece of paper. As for good will, there was none. One always sold the lease, the furniture and fixtures, plus the good will. The good will meant the buyer would inherit a growing business. In this case, when Pearl and I moved all those with us would vacate at once. No good will would remain.

How much is a piece of paper worth?

The answer was easy. It was worth exactly what someone was willing to pay for it, provided full disclosure was made. The buyer needed to know that all he was buying was a piece of paper and the opportunity of using furniture and fixtures owned by others. Without good will, of course.

I laughed out loud. I had thought this through by myself! I hadn't experienced this kind of thrill for a long time. My own brain still worked.

The obstacle we had faced before Ethel had obtained the marvelous lease had been a down payment. There were some magnificent guesthouses available for \$65,000.00, with long leases included. A sale of the Vallejo lease would give us the down payment.

The next morning, I opened the subject. Taking Pearl aside, I said, "I have the answer to part of our problems. We'll get a larger guesthouse. Then we'll have room for Peggy and the boys. We'll invite them to join us here, and see if we can convince her to grant me a divorce."

Pearl was eager and happy. "Did Saint Germain come to you?" she asked.

"No, I figured this one out for myself."

She looked crestfallen. "Then how do we know it will work?"

I was so unaccustomed to using my brain that her question surprised me. I realized instantly that, had I thought about it, I could have anticipated her reaction. It was readily predictable.

"Maybe it was my own Presence," I said, seeking to forestall a debate.

"But you're not sure."

"I'm sure I'm right. Never mind where the information originated."

She shook her head. "I don't understand it. I make my calls as sincerely as anyone does. But you always seem to get the answers."

"Trust me," I said.

"I don't trust the human," she replied.

"And right you are. The human isn't to be trusted. Nonetheless, I know what to do."

"How are we going to buy a larger place than this? And who would take care of it? I'm not going to. And I'm certainly not going to ask Blanche to do it. She has her own husband to look after. She's staying here because she believes in us and in what we're doing."

"If the place is big enough, then we can afford to hire someone to help with the work. And, besides, if Peggy comes, she can help. There's nothing wrong with all of us doing our best to help out. "

"You still haven't said how we're going to afford a bigger place. They cost a lot of money. We have only a little set aside."

"Easy. We'll sell this lease and use the money as a down payment on a larger building."

"You can't sell this lease."

"Why can't I?"

"It isn't worth anything. We didn't pay anything for it."

"Don't be so sure. Remember that I'm in this kind of business at Inter-City. I think I know what I'm doing."

"I'll agree to it if Saint Germain says so. Otherwise, I'm not sure."

"All right. Perhaps he'll come and tell us. Anyhow, I know I'm right."

We left it at that.

At the office I told Mr. Weiss of my plan. I agreed to conduct the sale through his offices, but insisted that the commission be limited to \$200 for his services. He thought it might be difficult to sell; the only item being purchased was the lease. Assuming full disclosure, he confirmed that nothing was either legally or morally at fault.

Everything worked out as I had anticipated. I found two women who wanted to start up as guesthouse operators. They were willing to pay \$2200, the full price I asked. After examination, they loved the place and readily signed up.

Incidentally, Saint Germain did confirm the procedure. Thus, Pearl cooperated. This was a relief to me. I had determined to go ahead anyway. In prior discourses, Saint Germain had opposed some of my ideas as strongly as he favored others. This time he was all mine. That fact, in itself, gave me intellectual problems later on.

Meanwhile, I found what I considered to be one of the finest guesthouses in the city. It sat on the crown of Nob Hill at 1300 Jones Street. Today a high rise, multistoried apartment house sits on the site. In 1940, a magnificent brick mansion of twenty-five rooms occupied the three large lots. Just below the mansion was a formal garden and, below that, a second garden. From this elevation, a view of the financial district and the Embarcadero made it one of the most desirable locations in the city. And with all the land, it was a treasure beyond compare especially when you considered the pocket handkerchief size of most lawns or gardens.

The owner of the guesthouse was a well-known operator, who had other properties as well. Her business had become too large for her. She offered her interests for \$5,000, agreeing to accept \$2,000 as down payment.

The transaction was completed to everyone's satisfaction and our tiny group moved in, taking possession.

Lest anxiety lingers concerning the two inexperienced ladies who purchased the Vallejo Street lease, let me report that they were suc-

cessful. They sold out a year later for \$3,500. Further, since this and a subsequent sale were handled through Inter-City, I learned that the new buyer sold for \$5,000 at a later time. Neither of them sold anything except the same piece of paper, with appropriate extensions and a modest increase in rental.

This discovery ultimately caused me to realize that in pricing the lease as low as I did, I had overlooked its real earning potential. With the magnificent furnishings, the operators were able to charge much higher rates than the average guesthouse. In consequence, they built an exclusive clientele, and the address attained something of prestige.

It took me many years to learn that sound business practices and friendship rarely mix. If Pearl and I had approached the Vallejo property as business people, we could have made good money there. But we would have had no following. Putting our beliefs first, we paid our bills and little more. Actually, our rates to our "I Am" compatriots were lower than average.

In support of the Nob Hill move, a new contingent of "I Am" students—all friends of Pearl's—appeared. They helped us handle the larger costs and benefited by living at 1300 Jones. Not only did we keep the original group intact, but we also were joined by Ruth Dazey, Carol's sister, and (sometimes) by her mother (Ethel).

Additionally, Nora Laidlaw and her adult son, Tom, came aboard. Kathleen Blamey, the cousin of the Dazey girls, joined us. Then came Claire Henderson and her daughter, Petty. An elderly gentleman named Carl Anderson, who was not a student, joined. He paid his own way, played the violin, and served as gardener for the estate. Still another non-student, Jack Drayton, swelled our ranks.

Even after these additions, there was ample room for Peggy and the boys, if she cared to come. It didn't take a great deal of persuasion. Peggy was dissatisfied with the arrangements at the "I Am" school. She wanted to be closer to me, even though she knew that I was in love with Pearl and I wanted a divorce from her.

At full count, some twenty-one of us, including my two boys and Claire's teenage daughter, made up the resident population. Carl and Jack were not "I Am" students, but cooperated fully. They were accepted without discernable reservation. Both of them became vegetarians.

Whenever we planned an outing, which was frequently, it was an

expedition.

The furnishings at 1300 Jones were functional and inexpensive. But the house, itself, was the kind of residence people imagine in their dreams. The lower floor had been finished in solid red mahogany. The upper floors were finished either in walnut or ash. This was a palace.

The living and dining rooms were beamed. Off the dining room was a glassed-in alcove with an unsurpassed view. We took in enough money to pay all costs, including the payments on the balance due the former owner. Indeed, we lived well.

Pearl did her best to persuade Peggy, and I took a turn at it myself. Peggy was pleasant, but persistent. For the time being, she would go along with the arrangement we had put together. She was convinced, however, that it would not last. Sooner or later, I would gladly come back to her.

Meanwhile, the boys and Betty enrolled in the appropriate grades at a school within walking distance down hill.

Finally, I was compelled to accept the fact that Pearl had correctly discerned much earlier. There was no argument I could bring to bear that would change Peggy's mind. She was legally my wife, and she intended to retain that status no matter what.

There was one possibility, and it was slim. Nevada had divorce laws that were far more lenient than California's. A six-week residence in Nevada was apparently the only legal stumbling block. Pearl knew several persons who had obtained Nevada divorces. However, she warned that, in all these cases, the wife had brought legal action, not the husband. It would be doubtful if a judge would grant a divorce to a husband whose wife did not consent. Still, it was the only chance we had. Perhaps if Peggy were in court, she would see things differently. She had given me no grounds for divorce, but I had supplied her with everything she needed. Just maybe, a judge would see that a divorce would be an improvement in the status quo.

We hatched up a scheme, Pearl and I. We would go to Reno and take up residence. This could be done, Pearl advised, by obtaining rooms at a hotel or motel. Thus, we would be able in court to provide rent receipts over a six-week period as proof of residency.

The law didn't require that we actually stay in Nevada all the time. We simply had to be seen there repeatedly, become known to

people, and have the rent receipts to back up our claim.

This was fundamentally dishonest. But it would give me a great deal of time alone with Pearl. That was the most wonderful condition I could imagine. We felt it was worth a try.

It was clear that neither of us could spend any appreciable time in another state. I had to keep earning money. Pearl had to assist in managing 1300 Jones. An assertion that we had, in fact, transferred residence would be untrue on its face.

We motored to Reno, and rented a pair of adjoining rooms in an inexpensive motel on the outskirts of town. I don't recall whether we paid for the whole six-week period in advance, or paid for it as we went along. I suspect the latter.

In any case, we shuttled between San Francisco and Reno as necessity and opportunity offered. We spent the required sum on rents and, finally, brought the matter to court.

Meanwhile, Peggy was served the necessary papers. She refused to cooperate. The judge wasn't impressed.

He disallowed our residency, which was clearly a sham. Besides, Peggy had let it be known that she was opposed. From his point of view, the matter was settled. The case was thrown out.

By this time, the year 1941 was drawing to a close. Pearl and I were driving back to San Francisco. Our carefully laid plans had brought nothing but added frustration. Meanwhile, we had become increasingly alarmed at what was happening in world affairs.

This time, instead of taking the short route through Donner Pass, we took a more circuitous route home. We drove south from Reno, through Carson City and took the lesser-used highway that enters California at the south end of Lake Tahoe.

The Macadam surface on which we drove, turned and twisted as it mounted the High Sierras giving us a glimpse of spectacular scenery. The car radio was on and, suddenly, the musical program to which we listened was interrupted with a news bulletin.

Pearl Harbor had been bombed! We looked at each other in consternation. The very event that the Masters had warned about was occurring. We had made our calls and alerted as many as possible. But the enemies of America were on the high seas and the California coast was vulnerable.

Even Pearl's boundless enthusiasm and good spirits were damp-

ened. We were glum and dreadfully worried when we finally arrived in San Francisco on the night of December 7, 1941.

Once more, events utterly beyond my control were reaching into my life. I was stirred with a great feeling of patriotism, a grim determination to do all I could in every practical way to see that the foes of America gained nothing by this apparently unprovoked attack.

Chapter XLIII

Following the declaration of war on December 8, the B.O. business fell apart. At least, it did for me. I had five deals with deposits in hand and escrows underway. Either buyers or sellers backed off. None of the transactions completed. Anxiety reigned.

One particular deal that collapsed remains vividly in mind. A young Japanese had been making a real success in a number of businesses, including some rooming houses and housekeeping rooms in the Fillmore District. He wished to expand. I had found a small hotel lease that would have been a moneymaker.

I was positive this particular transaction would be completed. Everyone on both sides was favorable; all money was in escrow.

Without warning, the FBI broke into his home in the middle of the night. He, his elderly mother, and all his brothers were whisked out of town. When I tried to find out what had happened, the only information I could obtain was he was suspected of being an “enemy alien.”

The allegation was absurd on its face. He was a native American and a foe of no one. But what did I know about it? Couldn't it be true that all the Japanese were secretly conspiring to create high noon for the land of the rising sun? You could never tell about a Japanese, you know. Look at their slanted eyes! What a bag of trash was bruited about in those days, much of it created by gossip, and all of it officially unchallenged by the government.

This was only one example of what transpired in those hectic times after the declaration of war.

To my astonishment, sellers raised their prices to indefensible high levels. The “rule of thumb” I had followed in evaluating a transaction was simple. For every thousand in the purchase price, there ought to be a return each month of a hundred, net. If the business cost \$10,000, one should expect to earn \$1,000 per month. And so on.

This rule now went by the board. Sellers wanted fortunes. Buyers wanted a great deal for nothing.

When I tried to obtain new listings, sellers priced their leases with no regard for reason or arithmetic. I saw no point in accepting

such listings.

I had no knowledge of inflation and no information about the rules of economics. I had learned that it didn't take a college degree to succeed in business. The primary requirements seemed to be a pleasant disposition, an eagerness to meet the demands of the buyer or seller, and hard work. So, the truth had to be told. But that's usually easier than falsifying. When you fabricate, you have to remember what was said. When you state it as you see it, you only have to remember what the other person says.

I had just turned thirty. I had three areas of supposed expertise. First, I was a religious philosopher with a limited following. I was mixed up about parts of the doctrine and, so, unwilling or unable to expand operations as long as confusion remained.

Second, I was a radioman. But I was *persona non grata* in that area, at least in San Francisco.

Third, I had acquired some knowledge and skill in the listing and selling of business properties. But everything I had learned was now tossed about like dice in a cup. I didn't know enough to throw anything but snake eyes.

I'd had a few outstanding successes. I had done well on stage. The earthquake had knocked that down. I had done well in radio. The "I Am" had blown that. I had been doing well in the B.O. department. And the war kicked that out of the park.

But I had failed miserably when it came to marriage. My first love, Charlotte, had died. My wife, Peggy—steady and loyal in all things—I no longer loved. My all-encompassing passion, Pearl, was beyond my reach—legally, ideologically, and morally.

I puzzled over this for some time. Why, oh, why wouldn't Pearl consent to join with me? Even as I posed the question for the nth time, I knew her answer. She was true to the light. I was second, and not first, in her affections. That fact in itself stayed my hand. I had to approve of her steadfastness, even as I disapproved.

Idly, I speculated on what would happen if Pearl would finally consent and the two of us lived together "in sin." I was willing to defy all the rules, to laugh at misfortune, to dare everything, if only she were mine. Such speculation was sheer fantasy. She would never waver.

And what about Saint Germain? He would have nothing to do with either Pearl or me if we disobeyed. But what about it? Was

there really such a person? Was I a victim of some vicious and negative force outside myself? Was I the victim of my own desires, so that I imagined what didn't really take place? Was I, perhaps, out of my mind? Maybe I was the victim of selfhypnosis

At work, Fred Weiss counseled perseverance and patience. Wars invariably created economic upheaval, he advised, but we'd come out of it. Meanwhile, I'd have to work a little harder and probably have less to show for it for awhile. Then, it would straighten out and all would be well. The advice was sound.

Had I been married to Pearl, and received the domestic reinforcement from the source I adored, I would happily have followed my employer's wisdom.

But I went from place to place, trying to get a listing that made sense in terms of earnings, and I failed. I became hopelessly depressed. Instead of doggedly keeping on with it, I began to fudge. Instead of trying for new listings, I went to see various Hollywood productions.

During the final weeks of 1941, I became conversant with every picture then being shown. And I must admit I would often sit through the picture twice, not because I wanted to see it twice, but because sitting there in the dark I could think about my predicament with no chance of being discovered.

I had written a book. It was a bomb and had been from the beginning. My only solace was that so few had bought it. Hopefully, even those who had it wouldn't read it.

As a student and as an "I Am" leader—even as someone "chosen" by the Master—I had labored with sincerity and devotion to protect my country. Well, that prayerful effort had bombed, too. Saint Germain had said we *were* succeeding in protecting the country. Apparently, the Japanese didn't know it.

About this time, another headline screamed out. A submarine had approached the western coast. It had come near enough to lob about three shells into an oil storage depot near Santa Barbara. None of the storage tanks had been hit, but my anger and fear roared to the surface.

How dare the Japanese do such a thing? Following their success at Pearl Harbor, they were apparently preparing to launch an attack against the American mainland.

Long before Pearl Harbor, the Selective Service Act had been

passed and many young men had been called to the colors. I was beyond draft age.

At last, I completed my evaluation of my personal situation. At the age of thirty, I was already "over the hill." I'd made a failure of my domestic ambitions from start to finish. I had come close to making a failure of everything else. My successes had been transient. My mistakes lived on and I was surrounded by them and their effects. In short, I had a good hard case of feeling sorry for myself.

At least, there was one constructive thing I could do. I could offer what was left of a wasted life to my country. I could volunteer for service in the military. Perhaps I'd get killed. I almost looked forward to that. I had tried to serve my country and the principles on which it had been founded. That's what the "I Am" was about. And that was where part of my heart had always been.

"How can man die better than facing fearful odds, for the ashes of his fathers and the temples of his gods?" Horatius had reasoned thusly in the famous poem bearing his name. Was I too good to make the same effort?

On January 7, 1942, I applied for induction at the Army center in San Francisco.

In the days prior to being called for my physical, I made the necessary arrangements. Peggy and the boys could return to her parents in Minnesota. Pearl could continue to lead the Jones Street group. Ethel would be enlisted to help where help was needed.

I vividly recall the scene that took place when Peggy, head high, boarded the train with Bobbie and Dave. A number of us had taken her to the depot. Pearl was happy to see her go, but Ethel, a keen and honest observer, said to me: "There goes quality."

She was right. Peggy had always been above reproach.

I said goodbye to the Inter-City crew with real regret. Weiss assured me that, after the war, I'd be welcome. Meanwhile, he'd keep my licenses on the wall. My place was with him. I didn't think so, but it was a generous gesture that warmed my heart.

With fatalism I had accepted the ultimate. I would never come back. In my heart, I was already a martyr.

Pearl was amazed and momentarily confused at the decision I had made. But she was a woman of masterful self-discipline. She was a trooper in all things, and she could manage. Further, serving in the army wasn't the end of anything. It could be a beginning.

What an optimist!

On the appointed day, I went to the designated address to take my physical. I found myself in a room with about fifty other men, most of them younger than me. Virtually all of them showed both resentment and hopelessness. They didn't want to be there.

There was one old-timer, face seamed by weather and experience. Taking note of my age, he joined me on an adjacent chair. He offered his hand.

"Signing up for another hitch?" he asked pleasantly. "Me, too. I'm a re-tread."

"I'm enlisting," I said. "First time. Too old for the draft. But I don't like what the Japs are doing."

"Who gives a shit?" he asked. "Once you get used to the army, it ain't a bad life." He studied me. "You don't look like army."

"This is my first experience."

He laughed. "I'll tell you why I'm signing up," he said. "I screwed up with my wife. She's mad as hell at me. That's one of the good things about the army. The army stands between you and the little woman. She can go fuck herself. Once I'm back in, she can't touch me."

"How is that?"

"Hell's fire. The army protects its own. You belong to them. They feed you, and house you, and pay you \$21 a day. Once a month."

My mind was elsewhere.

"I thought the pay was \$21 a month."

"That's what I said." He laughed at the ancient humor, new to me.

"Aren't you concerned about America?"

"Jesus Christ. Don't tell me you actually want to fight? Nobody in his right mind wants to fight. That's why the army's a good place to be.

"In the army, the odds are about twenty-five to one you'll never see combat. It's the safest place in the world, unless you draw an unlucky number."

I was disgusted both by his language and his attitude. "I have a lot to learn," I admitted. What kind of an organization was I getting into? Was this another mistake? I had made a lot of them.

"Stick with me and I'll teach you the ropes," he said, thumping me on the back. "The rules is easy. Stay out of sight. Don't volun-

teer for nothing. Be on hand for chow, reveille, bed check, and payroll."

"Is that what you recommend?"

"Listen. This man's army is okay. Somebody else has all the worry. They make all the decisions. They give you the work. And when you get savvy, you can avoid most of it. But if you get assigned to a detail, just don't be eager. Make it last. See? It's too hard! Get it?"

"I'm not sure I do. "

"Shit, man, you're not that fucking dumb. Don't hand me that crap."

"You're making it sound as though the way to get ahead in the army is to goldbrick."

He roared at that. "You said it, soldier. Goldbrick! And the best goldbricks in this man's army is the officers. They really got it figured."

A man in army uniform entered, and the conversational hum subsided. My companion hissed, "See that guy's sleeve. Three stripes. That means he's a buck sergeant. Let's see if he knows his way around."

"Attention," roared the non-com.

I looked around. My companion leaped to his feet. One-by-one, we straggled into a slouching formation. I aped my voluntary mentor.

"Jesus God," said the Sergeant."Where do they find 'em? " He shook his head. "All right, you cannon fodder. Strip. Get your clothes off."

The re-tread unbuttoned his shirt, but the rest of us did nothing, looking about uncomfortably.

A recruit standing near the sergeant said: "You mean here?"

"Where else? Just leave your stuff on your chair. Nobody'll take it. Then form a line. Christ, isn't there anybody here that understands English? Move it!"

The sergeant spotted my companion, already dropping his pants. He strode up.

"Served before?"

"Yup. This is my third hitch."

"What's your name?"

"Stevens, Sarg. Stevens, Jack," and he recited a long number.

"Good. Stevens, you're in charge of this detail. Get their clothes

off and have them line up, will you? What's your rank?"

Stevens grinned. "Just a buck-ass private, sir."

"Don't 'sir' me. The medics are swamped. I've got to get back to help. Line 'em up at that door, and we'll take 'em as fast as we can. Got it?"

"Right." Stevens came to attention, one hand holding his trousers, the other attempting a salute.

"Cut that out," the sergeant scowled. "You're not back in yet." He stomped out of the room.

Stevens was the first man out of his clothes. Prancing about like a pale, semi-hairless chimp, he encouraged the rest of us to copy his lead. My embarrassment was tempered only by the obvious confusion of everyone else. At Hamline, when a group medical examination had been required, at least we had towels. What a shocking array of torsos, arms, legs, heads and knee joints! And not a rag in sight by means of which to preserve what was left of dignity.

Stevens was enjoying himself. "Line up," he shouted. Didn't you hear the Sarg? Just one line. In front of the door."

Shame-faced and reluctant, eyes on the floor, we did as we were told.

"Close ranks," Stevens yelled. "This room's too fucking small. Don't be afraid of touching somebody. Well, haven't you ever seen a bare ass before?"

I was sandwiched in between two youths, each one as skittish as me.

"No corn holing!" Stevens shouted in glee. "Try to look like soldiers."

"Is this what soldiers look like?" came a timid voice.

"It's a good thing the Japs can't see us," someone said.

"Wrong," came another voice. "One look and they' run for cover."

Stevens took it upon himself to give us our first orientation lecture. "There's three things the army's interested in. Your face, your feet, and your pecker."

We stood in line amid snickers, self-conscious attempts at humor, and a pervasive sense of astonishment.

Finally, the door opened. Someone on the far side ordered the first man through. After perhaps another thirty minutes, my turn came.

To my dismay, all I found was another line. Recruits were being

funneled into three lines from several assembly rooms that conceivably held other batches of naked draftees.

At last I had moved to a place where a trio of doctors were conducting actual examinations. We were weighed, measured, our feet examined, our mouths peered into, our ears looked at, and, somehow, I survived the order to “roll-er back.” I was prodded on my “sore spot,” but pronounced hale and healthy.

The sergeant who had begun my army career suddenly came up to the doctor who was writing down my statistics. “Hey, doc. Come with me. I’ve got a guy over in the next line you’ve got to see. He’s got two penises. You never saw anything like it.”

For awhile I stood there, awkwardly awaiting the advance of medical knowledge. I thought I’d enlarge my own understanding as well. When the doctor returned, I asked: “What did you do with the man who was doubly endowed?”

The doctor looked at me in surprise. My question may have been the only one he had heard that day in the English language. “Oh? Him. He’s 4-F, of course. We can’t have anyone like that in the service.”

“Perhaps he’d make a marvelous fighter,” I suggested.

“Not a chance,” the doctor said. “Poor fellow.” He waved a hand. “You’ve passed.”

Then he said, “I’m not sure either appendage is normal. I’d like to have him under observation for a bit. I think he leaks with one and makes love with the other.” Coarseness was clearly contagious.

At long last, I was allowed to go back to the original assembly room. I was told to come back on the following day, prepared to cut my ties with civilian life. I was given a list of what to bring. It wasn’t much. From tomorrow on, Uncle Sam would provide everything I needed. In his judgment, of course, which is all the government ever needs.

Chapter XLIV

I'd never wasted a moment wondering what life in the Army would be like. I'd never even been curious. I had presumed it to be a world far removed from whatever trails I would follow. Now I was in it, and I had volunteered.

That I was unprepared became clear the afternoon I reported to the recruitment office, with the belongings I was permitted, stored in a single suitcase.

The waiting room was hot, crowded, and lonely. I couldn't identify with any of the young men who sat angry yet eager, resentful of the interruption to their lives, but stirred by the excitement of unknown dangers to come. I was withdrawn, hiding within myself, mute but fascinated. Was this the "real" world?

My world was filled with the search for God, the effort to know right from wrong, to do the bidding of the most high.

In this effort, I had failed, bringing disgrace to myself and sorrow to others. No, that wasn't altogether so. I had been helpful to others. The "I Am" instruction had merit. Its major flaw was the claim of infallibility. My feeling of separateness arose from my unfulfilled relationship with Pearl. I longed to be "normal" in that sense. More. I longed to be divorced from Peggy, and married to Pearl. In that context, I wanted to live out my life as a constructive and helpful person. That was the normality I craved.

But were all these young men I sat with "normal?" Did they have wives, sweethearts, and a sense of belonging to the world and the things in it? I wanted to talk, to listen to someone. I couldn't think of anything to say. So I observed, like a stranger from another world, marveling at the reactions I noted. I wondered if such reactions would ever come naturally to me.

The conversations I tuned into induced more of a sense of shock than a desire to make them my own. The talk was of sports, wild parties, drunken orgies and sexual exploits. I knew nothing about sports, and I saw through the amatory boasting. The revelries that were reported upon with such glee disgusted me. I didn't hear a single sentence containing a worthwhile event, objective, or motive.

Was all this blather simply a way of concealing personal anxiety? Or did these young men really desire a state of intoxication and a perpetual erection? I heard nothing about protecting the country, duty, devotion, love, or beauty. The mental level was a hog wallow. I didn't like it and I certainly didn't belong in it. What had I gotten myself into this time?

I learned that commissioned officers wore shining insignia on their collars or shoulders. Non-coms wore stripes. I obtained a sense of relief when a commissioned officer entered, bringing the raucous and ribald chatter to an end.

A sergeant with him lined us up in two rows. Then, the officer spoke. I found it possible to identify at last. The nation was in peril. We had been called to defend our country. An oath was about to be administered. We had best take it seriously. If any of us had any qualms about it, now was the time to say so. Once we had taken the oath we came under the jurisdiction of the military and were no longer civilians.

Finally, we raised our right hands and were sworn in. This was wartime, and I experienced a sense of pride.

The chore accomplished, the officer had a few more words of wisdom. Obedience to superior officers was the single most important item to remember. Disobedience in wartime was a serious crime. Even in small and apparently insignificant matters, the one rule was to do as you were told, instantly and without question. No excuses and no exceptions.

At last, I thought, things are moving. We'll be issued guns and move at once to some strategic location. Instead, the officer departed. We returned to chairs with cold seats. The afternoon wore away. Conversational gambits drifted into a new quagmire, and I marveled at the waste of time.

The sergeant returned. We were again formed into two lines. This time we were marched with notable imprecision out of the building and loaded into a pair of buses, double-parked for our convenience.

At last, the buses moved. We threaded our way across Market Street and pulled up at the railroad depot. Aha, I thought. We are about to be sent by train to Santa Barbara, which was where the submarine attack might be renewed at any moment.

We were taken from the buses and lined up in an increasingly

familiar double row. Now we waited, standing with our suitcases and boxes, while a discussion ensued between the sergeant and a couple of spic and span lieutenants.

The discussion apparently was prelude to some phoning that the sergeant conducted out of our hearing. We waited, with the lieutenants eyeing us from a distance as though we were some refuse swept up from the gutter and awaiting assignment to the appropriate trash container.

At long last, the sergeant re-appeared, clutching a thick manila envelope and his ever-present clipboard. We were marched—herded would be a more accurate term—across some tracks and away from the passenger waiting room.

We were drawn up on a cement-loading platform and told to stand at ease. Apparently, at the last minute, we had been reclassified as freight. The sergeant explained that a special train was being sent for us. That had an encouraging sound. The wait continued, and the air turned chill as daylight failed.

Presently, a truck came roaring up behind us. A gaggle of non-coms, five or six in all, leaped from the vehicle and distributed box lunches, one to each of us former civilians. The sergeant called us to attention and ordered us not to eat. The boxes were to remain in our individual possession. We would eat when we were ordered to do so. Not before.

The truck departed taking most of the non-coms with it. A pair of corporals remained behind, apparently to back the sergeant. None of us could be trusted out of sight of authority.

As darkness settled, some of the men, grumbling because of hunger. They began to eat what had been provided. Some sat on their luggage, or even stretched out on the unyielding concrete.

The non-coms standing about witnessed this disobedience, but ignored it. With my oath still ringing in my ears, I continued to hold my box lunch as my stomach began to get better acquainted with my spine. It was now cold. I started shivering.

I wasn't certain what would happen, but I conceived it possible that some of those who ate before permission was given could face a firing squad. The captain at recruitment headquarters had been quite specific. No disobedience, even in trivial matters.

The entire West Coast was blacked-out due to fear of an imminent attack. The lights of the station, which would ordinarily have

dispelled some of the gloom, remained dark. I couldn't understand the delay. Had something thrown headquarters into a spin? And where were our guns? Perhaps the Japs had already landed and were creeping even now upon this line of unsuspecting recruits.

There were a few ancient passenger cars standing on various sidings, but no engines could be seen. Some of these vintage coaches appeared to have been stationary long enough to have rusted to the tracks. They weren't going anywhere, surely.

One raw recruit suggested that we climb into the nearest car. At least we could sit down in some comfort, and we'd be warm.

It was a tempting thought, but we'd been ordered to remain on the platform. Most demurred, so we all continued to wait where we were. Anyway, the non-coms were watching.

Talk wilted and languished. Occasionally, someone would let others know of his personal disgust, misery, lack of comfort, and confusion.

I was certain we were desperately needed to defend the country. I finally said: "Why in hell don't they give us some guns so we can defend ourselves?"

This brought a few laughs from those standing near.

The man standing next to me responded that we were in the Army, not the Navy. That made a kind of sense to some, although it made none to me.

Finally, our two neat lieutenants from the passenger depot reappeared. They strutted stiff-legged before us and ordered us to hoard the three nearest coaches. Obviously, we could have been in them all the time and it wouldn't have mattered. Except, of course, we would have been more comfortable. But whoever gave consideration to comfort for a recruit? We clambered aboard and found seats.

We heard an engine chugging slowly down the line. It butted a string of coaches next to ours and, apparently, completed the hitch. Beyond our sight, (it was dark both inside and outside the cars), we heard a yell, and then confused conversation. The engineer had picked up the wrong string. We had to unhitch, pull out, and come back again.

We felt the lurch, as the three occupied coaches became a train. Suddenly, lights came on.

Almost at once a corporal came running down the aisle ordering us to pull the shades down. Black-out regulations. We didn't want

to be bombed, did we? He acted as if it were our fault the blinds were up.

I began to understand life in the Army. Nobody knew much of anything. Everything was over-planned and under-anticipated. Hurry up. And wait.

With slow, determined puffs, the engine trailing us pulled away from the blacked-out city into further blackness.

The rumor began to circulate that we were heading for Monterey. Some old timer had started the rumor. I picked up another piece of ancient wisdom. The old timers often knew more of what was going on than the officers in charge did. They'd been through it all before. The officers usually were chosen because they had had an education. But they usually were as green as the recruits. Those who had the information didn't have the certification.

This is probably why rumors continue to circulate in any army. Many of them are total fabrications. But some aren't. And those that aren't, provide more actual information than that received through channels.

Next came my first disillusionment. Our sergeant came in and in a reasonable voice, said: "Chow time. The rest of you guys who haven't eaten can do it now, if you want to." No one was to be shot for disobeying. I think I was disappointed.

I was ravenous. It was nearly nine o'clock. I opened my box and found a ham sandwich and an apple. Napoleon had said that an army traveled on its stomach. If that were true, we weren't going far. I ate my apple. My seat companion got the sandwich, a rumble from my interior, and a protestation from me that I wasn't hungry.

The sergeant came back, and did something with the lights. Illumination vanished from the car, except for dim lights at either end. "This is taps," he called to us. "If you're smart, you'll get some shuteye."

I was far too excited to sleep. Someone had a flashlight, turned it on, and got a poker game going in the aisle. Except for what conversation the game evoked, the car quieted. I sat jiggling, halting, jerking for an interminable ride.

Finally, our forward motion ceased. My companion risked the sergeant's displeasure by raising the blind. Since the car was blacked-out, it didn't matter. Our little train was at another siding. A few soldiers were milling about in the half gloom of a clear, but

moonless, sky.

We were rousted out, lined up once more, and then marched into an enclosure. Finally, we were halted before a long shed. We entered single file and were issued uniform, sheets, blanket, and mess gear—a great many items, including a large blue duffel bag in which to put them.

Again, we waited until everyone in our contingent was similarly equipped. Then we were marched to another shed that was called a barracks. A gangling youth nearly seven feet tall stood on the doorstep in his stocking feet, rubbing sleep from his eyes.

“Hi,” he said. “I figured you got lost.”

Someone asked, “Who the hell are you?”

He gave his name. “I’ve been in this goddamn barracks for five weeks,” he said. He motioned to his feet. “The Army hasn’t got a pair of shoes to fit me. So, I’m your housemother. Welcome to Monterey.”

Thinking of the unfortunate youth discovered during my physical, I said, “I should think you’d be classified 4-F.”

“Naw,” he said. “That’d make sense. The Army don’t have sense. They keep hoping they’ll find something I can wear.”

The barracks was an unlovely shed lined with cots on both sides of the space. Each cot had a piece of wire fencing called springs, and a thin mattress, folded double.

“Take your pick,” our housemother advised. “This one nearest the door is mine. I keep hoping I’ll break out of this place somehow.”

With crude jokes and flagging energy, each of us made up his bed. It surprised me, but I fell asleep at once.

It seemed that my eyes had been closed only a moment when a great banging of fists on a door panel wrenched me into the new day. Another sergeant was already cussing at us. “Drag your asses out of the sack, you bastards. Formation in the street in ten minutes.”

So my life in the Army began. We dressed, we marched, we ate, we marched, we stopped, we started, we sat and we stood, by the numbers.

We attended lectures. We watched films, most of them featuring gangrenous genitalia. They were accompanied by admonitions that having anything to do with a woman was dangerous to your health

and well being.

We began to envy our housemother. He didn't have to make any formations and was allowed to walk to the mess hall when he wished. It seems there was a regulation that he couldn't stand formation or marches, except in GI shoes.

I managed to find time to write letters to Pearl and Peggy. I also began to appreciate the term "stir-crazy." I had volunteered to fight. Instead, I had been assigned to what amounted to a prison. My principle crime appeared to be patriotism. Still, I could blame no one but myself. Everyone else in my barracks was a draftee.

Next on the agenda were inoculations. By the numbers, we took a Wasserman test and a series of shots. In single file, we marched through the shed called a hospital and were probed for syphilis. One shot was administered to the right arm, and two shots put into the left arm.

By the time we emerged from the hospital, my head was reeling. Two of my barracks buddies passed out cold. Another had to lie down to prevent the same thing from happening.

We were marched to another shed and given an intelligence test—the famous Army Alpha. I had taken a couple of IQ tests earlier. The assumption was that, no matter what your age, the same score would magically appear. It didn't for me. I got a whopping 123, which was well below my earlier ratings. When I tried to protest that the tests had been given under unfavorable conditions, I was told to send my gripe "through channels."

The next day, we were given more forms to fill out.

Army psychologists wanted to discover our respective aptitudes. Since these forms required the tabulation of all prior experience, I carefully omitted anything about the "I Am." I could truthfully state that I had left WTCN to work as an announcer for a single sponsor, following which I had become a BO and real estate salesman. That sounded conventional enough.

I don't know why I did it, but in describing my work at WTCN, I included my efforts as a sound effects engineer. Perhaps it was because so many people seemed impressed with that. I know I was trying to make a favorable impression on the Army brass. Some of the officers I had seen appeared to be worth knowing.

I had taken an oath to obey the Articles of War, so I asked for a copy. Following this, I decided I'd best get a copy of Army regula-

tions, so I would know what a “legal” order consisted of. That turned out to be a book. I wasn’t allowed to keep a copy, but I did manage to go over the pertinent parts.

In combination, the two documents added up to this: I was a soldier. That meant, I was the property of the United States. Any officer could dispose of me, as he deemed advisable according to the exigencies of the moment.

There were certain safeguards. If I were killed as a result of a “wrongful” order, then an enquiry might occur. Possibly, the offending officer would be court-martialed. What marvelous protection against being wrongfully killed! To be rightful, my killing had to be by the numbers. In that case, I might be eligible for commendation, or other award. Posthumously, of course.

And I had thought that owning people had been abolished by the 14th Amendment to the Constitution.

I had been in the Monterey Presidium for about ten days. I had behaved so well that I was awarded a three-hour pass on the upcoming Sunday. I phoned Pearl to let her know of this privilege.

When I flashed the prized slip of paper before the eyes of the bored sentry and walked outside the stockade for the first time, one of the first persons I saw was Pearl.

I don’t think I ever appreciated her more than at that moment. Hers was the first familiar face I had seen since induction. We went for a little ride and managed to find a secluded spot, where we could demonstrate our love by means of those precious caresses, the total physical reward allowed. How wonderful was the touch of her soft lips, how reassuring her hand in mine.

I kept looking at my watch. I was going to give no one any grounds for accusing me of disobedience. Three hours is a very short time. Before the one hundred and eighty minutes elapsed, we were back at the entrance to the Presidio and I walked through the gate with ten minutes to spare.

For the next several days, the same routine continued. I had told no one of my vegetarian diet and, so, never complained about what was served. Often, however, I survived on slim fare.

I was reassured that the Monterey mess was very good. But the manner in which food was served put a number of my compatriots on sick call. Perhaps I fared better than most because I ate sparingly.

It is Army policy to keep soldiers in the dark as to what is being planned for them. It appears to be Army policy to keep any kind of information whatever from leaking to recruits. The rumor mills were busy, as usual, when orders were prepared. The announcement made that we were shipping out.

Where? No one knew. We had been classified, sorted, filed, and indexed. But I was beginning to catch on. You took it as it came—the good, the bad, and the indifferent. You had no voice in the matter anyway.

The next morning, after lining up in the street following chow, and after the customary wait, we were marched to the railroad siding again. We were loaded into another railroad coach.

This time, the journey was to the north. It lasted all day and all night. By that time, rumors had been sorted out. An amount of certainty had crept into the verbiage. Somebody always was a “pal” of the sergeant carrying the orders and he got the low down. The pal would gain prestige by confirming at least one rumor. We were on our way to Spokane, Washington. Confirmation was obtained when we arrived.

Again, the cumbersome, time-consuming, frustrating process took us from our unlovely coach to a less than lovely line of Army trucks. Into these we scrambled on order. By now we were wearing the Government Issue overcoats, and we were glad to have them. It was February and the raw winds came right out of Canada. Some snow was on the ground. Accustomed as I was to Minnesota winter, the snow was sparse. It crunched under foot and was cold enough to cause visions of warm fireplaces and hot cider.

Our destination proved to be a huge, sprawling camp that had been activated recently, known as Geiger Field. I was assigned to a barracks along with an entirely different group of men than I had met at Monterey.

The next day, I learned the fate the Army had in store for me. I had been assigned to the Signal Corps. My radio background had done the trick. I was to become an electrical technician.

I voiced dismay. I explained that I was not qualified as a technician, that announcers read copy into a microphone. I was laughed at. It seems that my commanding officer *knew* I was an “engineer.” I was warned not to goldbrick.

I put as good a face on this piece of news as I could muster. Then,

along with my buddies, I was routed out early in the morning to deal with gas masks and the problem of chemical warfare. I learned that the purpose of army training is to convince the individual that he must do what he is told. He must accept this so completely that his response to a command becomes an unthinking, instinctive reaction. Soldiers were not to think. They were to act. And they were to act when, where, and how they were told. Nothing more. Nothing less.

Next, I was supposed to disassemble and re-assemble a radio set. I made such a botch of it that I was reprimanded. In dealing with technical equipment, my fingers were all thumbs.

I was ordered to master the Morse Code. I got at least some of it into my head. But, when it came to using a telegraphic key, my dots and dashes were indistinguishable. Either that or I was so slow that the Captain figured the war would be over before I had finished sending out a call for help.

This period in the military is called "basic training." I got the basics down, if they had to do with marching, making my bed, serving on KP, and making formations. Anything that had to do with signal communications had to be done by others. I had become the worst misfit in the company.

There was plenty of spare time. Indeed, there were hours and hours of boredom, where putting a polish on his shoes might be all that prevented a soldier from some violent reaction to the repression he felt.

I kept up a flow of letters to the two women in my life. When I reported to Pearl that I might be at Geiger Field for more than a month and I would obtain occasional weekend passes, she turned the Jones Street operation over to Ethel. She flew to Spokane, taking a room at the Davenport Hotel.

On my first weekend pass, I joined her for a moving picture date. Since I was allowed to spend the night off the post, I obtained an adjoining room and once more acted like a civilian. It was marvelous. But the army was doing its work well. I didn't feel like a civilian anymore. The uniform kept me aware of the chasm yawning between all others and me. And the conditioning I had received had already formed new patterns of thought.

Pearl brought back the ideas and ideals of the "I Am." I had been neglecting my calls, but with her urging, I renewed them again.

When it appeared that my stay at Geiger might become protracted, Pearl applied for a job at the field. She was immediately hired as a PFX operator. She was a winner in any league. The Army was glad to get a woman with her skills.

In addition, Pearl moved into a rooming house to save on expenses. Thus, she became my “camp follower” and was always waiting for me, whenever a pass was awarded. Only those who have lived through military training and its peculiar type of isolation can understand the morale factor her presence provided.

One day, a notice appeared on the company bulletin board. The Army was looking for people, especially those with some college education, who wanted to be officers. This seemed like an appropriate time for me to try for a transfer into some other branch of the service. I didn’t belong in the Signal Corps.

The Captain disapproved, but I had learned my Army Regulations. He could not prevent me from applying. I got the forms, filled them out, and submitted them to the Captain to be forwarded. The next day, he handed them back to me with his own handwritten “Disapproved” written large across the face.

To celebrate, I was told to learn how to string wire. The next morning, after formation, I was told to trot behind a truck that was unrolling two spools of heavily insulated cable. My task was to see that both strands came out of the truck in such a way that space remained between the lines after they were on the ground.

I devised the clever notion of trotting directly behind the tailgate, letting my body serve as the device against which the cable whipped and lashed, but separated. All went well for awhile except that I was getting winded.

There had been a new fall of snow, and some of it was quite deep. I lost my footing in a drift, got a couple of logos of wire around me, and almost became a horrible example of how to garrote a trainee.

I was relieved of that duty in disgrace.

The next day, new telephone directories were issued. I was told to see if I could summon the brains to take them to buildings that had telephones.

At last, the Captain believed I had been assigned a task I might manage. He sneered at me as I went out of the orderly room with the assignment. “And you wanted to be an officer.” He shook his head. “For the good of the service, I never recommend anyone for

OCS unless he has an IQ in the 140 range. You are 123.”

Protest would have been useless.

Geiger Field was large, but a private from another company, probably a misfit such as I, was assigned to help. Together, we managed the task with no mishaps.

About ten miles away, Fort George Wright was a long-established Army post. Someone came up with the reasonable idea that the officers at Fort George Wright could also make use of the telephone directories from Geiger Field.

I had done so well with distributing the books, the Captain offered my services to see that Fort George Wright was suitably provided. Probably he wanted me out of his sight.

In any case, at the appointed time, I was given a supply of directories and driven by truck to the nearby post. Methodically, I went from building to building, accomplishing the mission.

The differences between Geiger Field and Fort George Wright were substantial. The former was a sprawling village of temporary buildings, laid out on a plateau without a tree or a shrub to relieve the barren monotone of wind-swept, snow-laden prairie.

Fort Wright, on the other hand, was situated in a deep-walled ravine with splendid trees and shrubs. The buildings were made of brick, most of them two or three stories high. It had been in existence since the Indian wars and intended to remain in existence indefinitely.

At the beginning of the Hitler horror, aviation—as a military weapon—had not yet achieved independent status. While the navy and Marine Corps were permitted to develop a flying arm for their respective services, the Army carried the principle burden. Thus, the nation had an Army Air Corps rather than an Air Force.

The Air Corps was divided into four commands and one of them, the Second, was headquartered at Fort George Wright.

I went from building to building with the directories, actually enjoying the surroundings. The first thaw had arrived and the little stream at the bottom of the coulee was already running, announcing that spring could not be far upstream.

As I neared the end of my task, I entered the headquarters and Headquarters Building (Army jargon to indicate the apex at a post that was, in itself, an apex.) I moved from office to office, handing out my wares.

I went through the open door of an area under the control of a Lt. Col. Cella. His name at the entrance warned all below the rank of Colonel to be first with the salute.

A number of GI's were at various desks, presumably taking care of their chores. Lieutenant Colonel Cella, in person, sat at his. He was a pleasant-faced man, who was far above my station in life. While noting his presence, I did business with his sergeant by asking how many copies of the directory were needed.

I was aware that the Colonel's eyes were on me, but I wasn't sure how to salute, or if I should, in view of the books I was toting. So, I ignored him.

He arose from his desk and came to the rail separating him from those who had not yet been initiated into the mysteries of his high office.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Private LeFevre, Sir." I responded, coming to attention and looking him in the eyes as regulations specified.

He frowned. "Do I know you? I mean, have we met before?"

Old patterns of thought immediately intruded. Was this a Master, or an adept under discipline?

I said, "Not to my knowledge, Sir."

"What are you doing?"

"I'm distributing telephone directories from Geiger Field, Sir."

"I can see that. I mean, where are you assigned? What are your duties?"

"I'm in the Signal Corps, Sir. " I gave the numerical designation.

"Do you like your work?"

This was the highest ranked person I had spoken to since enlisting. How far should I go? Well, what did I have to lose?

"No, Sir. I detest it. I have been classified as a technician." I stared straight ahead, awaiting a lecture on the importance of obedience.

Colonel Cella chuckled. "And I take it you aren't a technician?"

"That is correct. I listed myself as a radio announcer. Someone was apparently spellbound by the word 'radio' and concluded that I belonged in the Signal Corps. Sir."

"You don't belong in the Signal Corps." It was a flat statement.

"I know, Sir."

"How would you like to work for me?"

I gaped. "Me? " I grinned from ear to ear. "I'd love it, Sir."

"I thought so," Colonel Cella nodded. "When you get back to your company commander tell him I want you assigned to me."

"Yes, Sir," I said. "However, I profoundly doubt that my Captain will pay any attention to anything I say."

"Why do you say that?"

"I'm the company misfit and the Captain thinks I am deliberately goofing off. When I applied for Officer Candidate status, he turned me down cold. He assured me I didn't have the brains. Sir."

"Anyone can see with half an eye that you don't belong in the Signal Corps. You're coming over to Fort Wright."

"Yes, Sir."

The Colonel turned to an aide. "Sergeant, get me General— on the phone. I want Private LeFevre assigned to my section, Headquarters, and Headquarters Company."

"Yes, *sir*," the sergeant said, throwing me a happy wink.

I finished the distribution of directories, and then returned to Geiger Field and my company barracks.

As I passed the Orderly room, the sergeant on duty called, "Hey, LeFevre. Front and center."

"Yes, Sir." I stood before his desk.

"I have your orders here." The sergeant wouldn't look me in the eyes. He handed me a manila envelope. "You're being transferred to Fort George Wright. And you're going to get over there fast. Is that clear?"

"Just as fast as I can pack, Sergeant."

"Hell, you don't have to pack. We've got you packed already. Just grab your duffel bag and get out of here."

"I'd like to say goodbye to a couple of buddies," I protested. "And I know I should say something to the Captain, to thank him for approving the transfer."

"The Captain don't want to see you, LeFevre. He didn't approve." I was puzzled. "Then how come..."

"Don't ask, LeFevre. Don't even think about it. Get the hell out of this barracks fast. The Captain don't ever want to see you again."

"I don't understand," I began, but was cut off.

"I don't know how much pull you have, LeFevre, but our Captain has just been reamed by the Commanding General. I guess we all had you figured wrong. Sorry about that. Now, get lost!"

I needed no further urging.

A week later, already installed at Fort Wright, I learned that my former Signal Company had been activated and shipped into the Pacific Theater somewhere. About two years went by before I had further news. Then it was reported to me that the luckless group of men with whom I had taken basic training had been wiped out on a Pacific atoll. Their position had been over-run by the Japanese.

Chapter XLV

While the papers and the radio networks talked of war, spring-time came to Fort George Wright. The snows vanished and the tiny wildflowers muscled their way to warmth and visibility under the giant trees in the ravine. The water, pulsing with ice, splashed merrily. The robins sang and the troop, in dress uniform, went on parade.

It was easy to see why many of the men I rubbed elbows with wanted to make the Army a career. Fort Wright was a Country Club. Everything was easy. Even for a vegetarian, the food was excellent. So much of everything.

I slept in a barrack, with a score of others. But I had a pass every night, if I wanted it, and automatically on weekends with only occasional exceptions.

Pearl and I got together as frequently as I could afford the trip into town. My work during the day was routine, and required little effort.

I had expected to be working close to Colonel Cella, but this did not materialize. I was in his section, and that was all. He, or someone else, must have taken an interest in me, however. After thirty days I received notice that I could wear corporal stripes with a corresponding increase in pay.

At my request, Pearl sewed the black bands on my shirts. By the time she had all of them in place, notice came that I had been promoted to sergeant. Off came the double stripes, and triple stripes were substituted. Again, my pay escalated.

Everything seemed to be coming my way, but I was restless. In my mind, I was in the Army to help fight a war. I had enlisted for patriotic reasons. Creature comforts abounded. Life became pleasant and predictable, but my own sense of urgency respecting the national situation intensified. Fort Wright was too easy.

Reports from the Pacific were less than encouraging. Information coming from the European Theater was equally gloomy. Whenever conversational banter ensued among my co-workers, my own concerns invariably caused me to put a damper on talk of ease, parties, and retirement with pay after twenty years. Didn't they know

a war was being fought? Men were being killed. Here we were in the state of Washington, enjoying life. It wasn't fair!

Heading Colonel Cella's section was a master sergeant of forbidding countenance. His cot was next to mine in the barracks. On more than one occasion, during the night, he would have dreams that would rouse the slumbering population.

He had been a raw recruit in World War I. He had re-enlisted so many times that the service stripes on his lower sleeve extended nearly from elbow to cuff. He had seen action that must have been terrifying. He refused to talk about it. But we all knew what it must have been like. His screams and shouts during some nightmares caused me to leap from my "sack," convinced that the Japs were already pounding up the stairs.

Officers and the men alike respected this man. So, when he came to my desk one day, while I was studying aerial photography and learning to take note of infinitely tiny alterations in the terrain, I didn't question him.

"Colonel Cella wants you to put in for OCS, LeFevre," he said.

"If the Colonel wants it, I'll do it," I said.

The sergeant never smiled. He turned to go.

"I hope he's not displeased with my work," I added.

The sergeant turned back. "The Colonel wants you to put in for OCS," he repeated.

"Consider it done," I said.

"Humph," said the sergeant and departed.

The staff sergeant with whom I was working looked at me in disappointment. He had already decided to make the Army his life's work and hoped to stay on at Fort Wright. "Too bad," he said. "We make a good team, LeFevre. Why don't you ask the Colonel to let you stay here?"

"Not me," I said. "I'm not going to make the Army my career. And the Colonel must have a good reason for moving me along. Perhaps he thinks I'd make a good officer. At least, that's an improvement over the Captain's opinion. My former CO in the Signal Corps thought I had the brains of a four-year old. On loan. He wanted me to give them back..."

"You're making a mistake."

"Probably. I've made lots of them. But there is war going on. I enlisted to fight. The rifles we carried in drills during basic at Gei-

ger were made of wood. Maybe the Army has some real guns somewhere. It would be fun finding out."

I filed the necessary papers, letting Pearl know of what could constitute a major change in our existing living arrangements. I advised Peggy by mail that I was applying again for officer candidate school.

My application was approved, pending a physical exam at Geiger Field. On the appointed day, a staff car drove me to the adjacent encampment.

This was a far more complete physical than I had ever had. What caused the event, I can't say. However, just as at Hamline, I passed out in the middle of the doctor's efforts.

Under any other circumstances, a fainting spell (an epileptic seizure) would have eliminated my application. But what Colonel Cella wanted, Colonel Cella got.

As I regained consciousness on an Army cot in the hospital recovery room, the doctor grinned at me. "You've been drinking too much coffee," he advised. "You have an ectopic heart beat. No problem. You are approved for OCS."

I warned Pearl that, while on duty at OCS, I would have no passes. I would have no opportunity to visit off base. It would be futile for her to come to Miami Beach, where the Army Air Corps produced its ninety-day wonders. It would be impossible for us to be together.

Pearl decided to return to San Francisco, at least for the time being. She stayed in Spokane only long enough to see me, and others selected for officer candidacy, board the train for the trip to Miami.

The three days and two nights that elapsed in transit gave me an opportunity to review my own situation with considerable single-mindedness. The Army was effecting changes in my priorities.

At last I was able to see that my enlistment was more than a patriotic gesture. Like the first re-tread I had met at the time of my enlistment, I was using the Army as a haven of refuge from my wife, whom I did not love, and from Pearl, whom I adored in frustration. One of the reasons I had applied for officer status was because I wanted to get away from Pearl. And I was too weak to tell her so. Or had I been trained to put all women on a pedestal?

The joy of being with Pearl had diminished. And the Army gave

me something I didn't have: the courage to look Pearl in the eye and make a decision of which she didn't approve. What a crutch governmental authority is for those who, like myself, tend to vacillate in the face of feminine persuasion. Could this be one of the reasons for the existence of the Army? Is it the ultimate private and exclusive club that segregates on the basis of sex?

Whatever else the Army did, it didn't pretend to act except for the good of the service. It was an agency of pure force and its dicta were immutable. When it came to the Army, Pearl didn't argue. Her opinions didn't matter. The Army didn't cavil about being aright, or "wrong." The Army said, "Do it!" And you did it. Or else. And, in wartime, that "or else" was too frightening to consider.

What kind of a man was I, anyhow? Had my ideals emasculated me? I was both disappointed and dismayed at the lack of character I had so often shown. My lack of character emerged in my relationship to women. In other matters, I could deliver the goods as well or better than many. I wavered when I wasn't sure of myself.

I wanted to be *right*. I had leaned on the "I Am" doctrine as infallible. It had proved to be both right and wrong.

Somehow, having my actions approved by some woman had been a top priority in my life. First my mother, then Charlotte, then Peggy, and now Pearl.

The various trains pulling me to Miami were far better than the miserable coaches on which I had ridden as an enlisted man. As an officer candidate, I occupied a Pullman and was entitled to stretch out and sleep at night.

My car was occupied both by uniformed military types and by civilians. The camaraderie I had learned to anticipate with others in uniform was missing on this trip. Each of us in uniform kept to himself.

I sat next to the window, peering ahead as the train executed a curve, watching the puffing engine and the line of cars. Small particles of soot worked their way onto the sill and into my lap. Traveling by rail was a grimy business. The jiggling and jerking was as constant as the click of the wheels over Joints in the rails.

I don't recall where the train was when my reverie turned into philosophic thought. Wherever I was, a concept formed in my mind that rang true.

The difficulty with the religious approach I had relied upon was

that no one really knew what “good” was. God was supposed to be “good.” This was why so many people looked at a person askance when he stated a belief in God. Or the Masters. Or anything else that was supposed to be “good.”

No one knew God. It followed that no one knew “good.” Religion had to be a search for ultimate “good,” which none knew. There was no single act that could be guaranteed to be “good,” under any and all conditions.

Wasn’t generosity toward others always good? No, it was not. Those who received generosity might be encouraged to take advantage. Generosity could lead to dependency. Dependency on others might not be good.

What of kindness? Ah, what is meant by kindness? Perhaps, the kindest action one could was to inflict pain by stating a truth. Such a statement would be classified as unkind.

This could only mean that generosity and kindness existed within a temporary time frame. In time, a generous or a kindly act could prove to be a curse.

Wait. Wasn’t love always good? What is meant by love? Is love of evil good? Does love necessarily entail sexual contact? Or is sex necessarily excluded where real love exists? And what of sex that leads to unwanted pregnancy, or disease? Sex is not good, if the results of sex fall short of goodness.

Is money good? When you don’t have it, it surely appears to be. But obviously money can be misused and is capable of engendering great evil.

What of love without sex? Isn’t that always exalted, as Pearl seemed to believe, and as the Masters suggested, except when children were desired? Indiscriminate love could be evil, or lead to evil.

Aren’t having children always good? Anyone reflecting for a moment knows otherwise.

No matter where I went with the idea of good, I came up short. Good is a philosophic uncertainty. And that brought me back to God. The existence of absolute good is in doubt and, therefore, the existence of an absolute god is in doubt—if the two are to be equated.

Then the Masters were not the embodiment of good in any absolute sense.

It followed that any person, such as myself, who proclaimed himself to be seeking the “good”, was going to be viewed with suspi-

cion by others. Perhaps others hadn't examined the question philosophically. Nonetheless, they viewed with skepticism any claim made in that direction.

No wonder so many thoughtful and reasonable people laughed at those who wore religion on their sleeve.

I had experienced that kind of reaction repeatedly. My claim that the Masters were pure and perfect was obviously a false claim. Then, the Ballards had been false, for I was only echoing their sentiments.

But how many people—feeling deeply religious, or possibly having had a true religious experience, as mine—had taken the time to think it through? Probably not too many. My own conclusions shook me to the core.

With a shock, I realized that people do not believe in “the good.” Not really. They hope for good, but they doubt it profoundly. Moreover, there is something they do believe in. Evil.

I thought of books that I had read, of moving pictures I had seen. Any horror the mind of man could conceive was accepted by most as “possible.” Demons, devils, fiends, the vicious, the depraved—these were invariably credible. But where were the stories, the films, and the reports wherein human beings encountered creatures of pure virtue and goodness?

They did exist. I could recall a few, in fantasy and in film. But almost without exception, the one cloaked with the mantle of “good” was a religious figure. Hence, he was outside the normal milieu of human activity.

“Too good to be true” was a stock phrase. If something appeared to be “good,” something was wrong that didn't appear on the surface. Everyone had an angle and everyone had his price. Good was an accident that might occur temporarily, but evil would triumph in the end.

I had steeped myself in the “I Am” for years because of a series of happenings and experiences. I had tried to do “good,” and to be “good.” I was about as far away from being the epitome of good as at the outset. The people who had looked at me with raised eyebrows had been correct.

“I have a new lease on life,” I said to myself. “The Army has provided it. Why don't I just get all this “I Am” stuff out of my head and become normal.”

When the train pulled into the station at Miami, I came out into

the brightest sunshine I had ever known. I had resolved to become a good soldier and a good officer.

There could be no question about Hitler or Tojo. They were evil men. They were evil because of the injury, cruelty, and injustice they had inflicted upon millions. Since they were evil, it would be “good”—under the current conditions and within an immediate time frame—to eliminate them from the face of the earth.

I had a crusade. It happened to be a popular one, but that fact didn’t invalidate it. It would be good to stamp out evil. I would put the past behind me. It was about time.

Chapter XLVI

The next three months spent in the broiling summer sun of Miami Beach, were probably the happiest of my entire Army experience. First, my attitude had changed into what the Army wished. I was dedicated to fighting and winning the war. Second, I appreciated that the Army was training me. I wasn't to be sent like a frightened and immature fledgling against the enemy.

Thirdly, since I had been disinterested in athletics and was physically flabby, the rigorous exercises, and demanding discipline did my body a world of good. Finally, there were a number of things I needed to know. The challenge served as a stimulus to keep my morale at a high level.

The squadrons organized by the Army Air Corps were billeted in small luxury hotels that peppered the beach, like shining coins from a pitch-penny game.

Luxury was lacking in terms of service—there was none—but at least the rooms were carpeted, the walls brightly painted and clean.

My own particular group was lined up by height. I was the second tallest man in the outfit. The one whose eyes peered across my pate turned out to be famous. Hank Greenburg, who had made himself loved and respected as a professional ball player, was my marching companion. He was a superb athlete. On at least two occasions, when I was about to keel over from heat and exertion, he kept me going.

One day, we were doing pushups with the sun pounding down on my back with what seemed to be physical force. So much water oozed from my pores that I felt like a soaking sponge squeezed under a heavy boot. Officers were supposed to be gentlemen, and gentlemen didn't sweat.

My muscles rebelled. I cramped up. Greenburg's cool voice next to me on the saw-grass lawn said, "Sure you can, LeFevre." Somehow I found the strength to finish the 100 demanded.

On another occasion, when we were running, I lost my sense of direction. Greenburg's quick hand and confident tone cleared my head.

He took my arm and pointed the way with, "Stop goldbricking,

LeFevre. Beat you to the line.” He did, of course. But I got there, too.

Often our classrooms were designated areas under palm trees. Sometimes in taverns and bars, filled with the stench of stale cigarettes and alcohol.

Once in a while, those who taught us were pros who knew their business. More often than not, the instructors knew very little.

One man, I suspected of innocence as a teacher, was explaining the mysteries of the Army mess. “There are two types of meat in the Army,” he said. “Tender and less tender.”

I managed to suppress a guffaw. I looked around to see how my classmates were taking that bit of news. The rule was we were to show no emotion. Everything was sober and staid. I could see no untoward sign, but I felt the mirth welling up around me unexpressed.

“As for vegetables,” our leader intoned, “there are three classifications. The onion family, the cabbage family, and all the rest...”

I emitted an audible snort, and the instructor halted. “Which of you candidates is responsible?”

As demanded, I leapt to my feet at rigid attention.

“Do you care to explain, Mister?”

“Yes, sir. The three classifications itemized appear to me less than adequate. There are leafy vegetables, root vegetables, pod vegetables, and small seed vegetables, such as grains. The cabbage family is most notable because of its odor while being cooked. Raw it has no particularly noteworthy smell, but the longer it is cooked the more it reeks.

“As for an onion, sir, properly speaking it isn’t a vegetable, but rather a lily. It is also noteworthy on the basis of aroma. Onions have a distinct, and to many an offensive odor while raw. The more they are cooked, the more the odor is dissipated.

“If you will forgive me, it appears that the Army’s classification has been made by the chemical warfare department.”

With one voice the class roared approval. To my relief, the instructor joined in.

“What makes you such an expert on food?” he demanded.

“I’ve eaten every day of my life,” I admitted.

“Anything wrong with the classification of meat?”

“I’m afraid so, sir. I’m not an expert on meat. But even an ama-

teur is aware that we have red meat, fowl, and fish. As for fish, we have salt water and fresh water varieties. Fowl could certainly be classified as domesticated and wild. As for red meat, not only do we have the three major domesticated animals providing beef, mutton, and pork, but we have game animals and..."

"That will be all, Mister."

"Yes, sir." I sat, still at attention.

The instructor cleared his throat. "The officer candidate is correct," he said. "But so am I. You will disregard his observations, correct though they may be. The Army makes the classifications I have given you. Remember them. When you become mess officers, if and when, the classifications I have given are the ones that will be used. Is that understood?"

My hat was off to that instructor. I had been out of line, but because I had responded reasonably no offense was taken. Meanwhile, the instructor stuck by his presentation. I had misjudged him. A chef he wasn't. But when it came to teaching, he was a pro.

This wasn't always true.

One of our most important classes dealt with Army administration. As officer candidates in the Air Corps, we were being trained as administrative experts. None of us would fly planes, but the paper work had to fly, too.

It wasn't until we had finished our first six weeks that we were admitted into the holy of holies, where we would learn Army administration.

The site for our matriculation into paper work proved to be a cluster of palms on the golf course. We assembled with military precision. The instructor was late. Unheard of.

Finally, he showed. A roly-poly man, soggy with sweat, wearing an unstarched shirt and baggy trousers. Unthinkable. But he wore a Captain's bars.

We waited with notebooks ready, at least giving the appearance of being eager.

"Hi," said our teacher. With instant empathy, we knew that this poor soul was in trouble.

In a rich Southern drawl, he began: "Thar is two types of officers in the air force. The teckle and the tackle."

What was that supposed to mean? I reached into my mental recesses for a translation. He meant technical and tactical, and couldn't

pronounce them understandably.

He didn't explain what he meant, but went on to outline the usage of forms.

For the most part, all I got was gibberish. His accent was foreign to me. The information he sought to impart was foreign to him. In explaining one particular form, a basic sheet to be kept on every enlisted man, he explained where the name was to go, the unit designation, rank, and so on. Then he said, waving the paper in the air, "This yar place is fer his martial status. That is, if'n he's married or not."

Another time, explaining the form used in keeping certain accounts, we were instructed to add up "the figgers in the first colyum and substract 'em from t'other."

Fortunately, the Army had provided us with a rather good manual on the subject. All of us hit the books in an effort to learn what we were supposedly being taught.

At first we were resentful. This was a key course and the man chosen to impart the information was hopelessly inadequate. He knew it, too. And one day he let his feelings out.

"You guys figger I'm a dumb ox. An' yer right if'n it comes to this here ad-min-er-stra-shun stuff. Ah don't know nothin' 'bout it."

But ah'll tell ya what ah do know. Ah kin shoot. Ah kin take any gun apart in th' dark. An' re-assemble it, 'thout no light. An' ah kin take the Army carbeen an' kill a squirrel at forty yards. An ah'll hit 'im in th' eye, th' heart er th' ass-hole, whichever yer perfers."

Our Captain instructor was a victim of the Army philosophy. All administrative officers were interchangeable by the rules accepted at that time.

A showdown came one day. This time the class in administration was to be held indoors in a small cafe the Army had commandeered. We had assembled smartly and in quick time. The instructor rolled himself in before us and went up to a blackboard that had been provided.

He began putting certain words down on the board. As we started copying them into our notebooks as a matter of course, he turned to look at us.

"Don' copy this yar stuff," he advised. "It don' mean nothin. A inspector's comin by an when he sees this he'll figger I been a teachin' yah."

Almost on the instant, a Major and a Lieutenant Colonel strode in, starched and business-like. We leaped to attention as we had been drilled. The Colonel spoke. "Just proceed with your class work as you normally do," he said. "Be seated. Pretend we aren't here."

We sat, our spines rigid. Probably complaints had been filed against our teacher and his future was at stake. One of the sharper members of our squadron leaped to his feet.

"As I was saying, sir," he addressed the instructor, who stood goggle-eyed. "The usage of form *blank*, *blank 81* appears to duplicate some of the information required on form *blank 80 blank*. Is there anyone present who can explain that?"

Two candidates immediately stood beside their chairs. The instructor opened his mouth like a fish about to take the bait, but one of the standing men spoke up quickly.

"If the Captain will permit me, let me respond to the question."

Before the instructor could reveal his own ineptitude, the Colonel spoke. "Splendid. I like to see a class get involved."

Encouraged, the candidate took over.

"Form *blank blank 81* is to remain in the file of the adjutant at all times. Form *blank 80 blank* is available for circulation among relevant officers, at their respective levels of command, for purposes of appraising the performance of a given soldier. Some information must be duplicated."

Even the dullest of us had the message by then. The class, responded in an unrehearsed performance aimed at keeping the instructor out of trouble. For the next fifteen minutes, with all the aplomb of professional actors, the class asked questions of one another, answered, debated, and discussed. It was the liveliest session we ever had.

The Colonel and the Major exchanged occasional glances. I doubt if they had ever seen anything to equal what we did. Meanwhile, our instructor remained silent, which was the end we had sought to achieve.

Finally, the Colonel called a halt. "Obviously, our information was er...not quite adequate to the situation." He shook hands with the instructor. "You are to be congratulated, sir. You are a superb communicant."

The two superior officers strode out of the room. All of us looked at the instructor. Tears were in his eyes.

"Ah won't never fergit you fellers," he said. "You saved my bacon. Ah don' belong teachin' this stuff, but ah aim t' be transferred t' teach a rifle company. Now ah'll git th' transfer fer shore."

I have never witnessed a more superb and spontaneous response to an apparent crisis. This is sometimes the way the Army protects its own. I hope the Captain got his transfer. There is, of course, the possibility that it was denied on the grounds that he was invaluable as a teacher of Army administration.

The halfway point in the Officer Candidate Program proved to be a milestone in my thinking. I wrote to both Peggy and Pearl, giving each my view of the situation as it added up to me.

To Pearl, I explained that, although I was still dedicated to the Masters' teaching (a conviction I was beginning to doubt), I could not do anything about it. What I had wanted was to divorce Peggy, marry her, and then support the two of us. Once Pearl and I were married, I could take steps to advance metaphysical understanding. Meanwhile, I suggested she and Sidney get back together.

With no indication of the war's duration, the only course open to me was to become an effective military man. Therefore, I was putting my own wishes aside and devoting myself to my country.

To Peggy, I wrote that I saw my marriage in a rather different light. Officers did best in the military if their marital situation caused them no problems. My own behavior had been far from exemplary, but Peggy had refused to grant me a divorce, despite my behavior.

I asked Peggy if she could consider coming to live with me again, once I had been promoted to Lieutenant. She had insisted on retaining her marriage; therefore, it seemed likely that she wanted to set up housekeeping with me again.

Pearl's response was positive reinforcement of the "I Am." When it came to Sidney, they would never go back to living together. As for the two of us, our relationship was sacred and enduring. She understood the difficulties caused by my looming military career. But she was certain Saint Germain was allowing me to go ahead with it for some wonderful purpose, as yet undisclosed.

She made it clear that she loved me. My heart ached for her all over again. But I shut her from my thoughts and devoted myself to the task imposed by the Army Air Corps.

Peggy was non-committal. She was not opposed to reuniting with me, but she needed reassurance that I really intended to make the

marriage work. Her own affairs in Minneapolis were not going too well. She had not been able to earn much money, and her father was tired of helping. I had been sending something to her regularly, but Army pay was not generous and there was never enough. The boys were growing and needed so many things. Perhaps if we were together, and I was earning the pay of a Second Lieutenant, everything would work out.

I let the idea of a reunion gestate for a spell as I poured myself into my final six weeks at Miami Beach.

A big item among the officer candidates related to recent celebrities, who were now starting their ninety-day tour of duty.

Clark Gable had arrived. He was studying to be an administrative officer for the Air Corps. I thought he might remember me from those early days, when I had been a struggling actor, and he had been struggling without a job. Now that he was a big star, it might be fun to swap a few yarns.

I found out which hotel his squadron was assigned to and very nearly made a call on him after taps. This was against regulations for him, but I was tempted to bend a few rules.

I finally decided against it. I've been sorry for that decision ever since. As an upper-classman. I might have gotten permission, but as a lower-classman, I'd have put Clark on the spot. Further, there was no reason for him to remember me. We had only a meager acquaintance. Since stardom, he had probably had so many people trying to get close to him that his defenses would have been raised against me. Additionally, I really didn't want to disclose my own adventures since the Hart Players. There was too much embarrassment in telling anyone about my religious experiences and beliefs.

I decided to call on Clark one day when the war was over, a decision made impossible both by my own circumstances and by Clark's untimely death in 1960.

The final days of officer training ground down, with plentiful parades and reviews. A Colonel Luper had taken over training and we began referring to ourselves as "Luper's Troopers." After awhile, we made it "Luper's Super Troopers."

I was lean and bronzed by the sun. I was in good physical and mental condition. Then, to my amazement, Pearl appeared on the scene. She got word to me that she was in town.

I managed a pass one evening just before the final ceremonies,

and we went to a moving picture theater together. I hadn't told her about getting back with Peggy. I was evasive and on the defensive.

I said her arrival was poorly timed, since orders would soon take me elsewhere. Our arrangement at Geiger Field or Fort Wright could not be repeated.

She was always optimistic. Somehow, she believed I might be assigned to some local military group. My attitude puzzled her, but I did nothing to resolve her uncertainty. Her presence opened all the old wounds. It was so easy to desire her. I knew I still loved her, but I also knew I had climbed out of many of my frustrations with her. I didn't want those heartaches any more.

Finally, the big day came. The several thousand men who had trained with me became Second Lieutenants. We emerged in bright new uniforms, tailored to fit, and purchased with a special "uniform allowance" issued by the government. We had one final "pass in review." It was over.

My orders were on hand. I was to report in forty-eight hours to Mitchell Field, Long Island—headquarters of the First Air Force. I was an officer and a gentleman by order of Congress.

I was to entrain that night after dark. At the railroad station in Miami, Pearl appeared once more. She wore a blue chiffon dress—a favorite with me—and looked absolutely adorable as she stood there, the slight breeze ruffling her hair. The stars seemed to hang down close, on invisible strings.

Molding both her hands and looking into those blue eyes, I told her I had decided to go back to Peggy until the war was over. Why not? She was still married to Sidney. Although she had always said that was no problem, it seemed like one to me. Peggy would never give me up. And that was a problem neither of us had been able to resolve.

But what of the Masters? What of our work in metaphysics?

This was no time or place to tell her of my emerging doubts. So I shrugged off the questions. There was only one way I'd work with her as we had worked in the past. We would have to be married. I wasn't going to live in limbo as I had. Not ever again.

Pearl's eyes were round and bright. I had hurt her with this decision, but I permitted the hurt to stand. I assured her of my love, which was true enough.

She wanted to know where I was being sent. We had been cau-

tioned to keep that information secret. I refused to tell her. I said I would write after I arrived to let her know. But that was the end of my commitment. After the war ended, perhaps things would be different. After all, who could tell whether I'd ever come out of the war? Who knew how long it would last?

She refused to kiss me goodbye, and I was just as glad.

The train pulled away into the night. My last glance of her came from the train window. She seemed so alone and so frail, standing there against the fitful gleam of partially blacked-out lamps. Would I ever see her again? At the moment, the question had no answer.

Chapter XLVII

Mitchell Field, named after the famous pilot who foresaw the usefulness of airplanes in warfare, is situated just outside of Hempstead, on Long Island. As the night train sped in that direction, the trip was quite different from my earlier, introspective journeys on behalf of the military.

The men sharing the Pullman were all Luper's Troopers. Most of them came from squadrons other than mine. All had been designated as "Orientation" or "Special Service" officers. And since we had just finished a course of study and calisthenics, we had a host of common experiences to discuss. I found myself paired with a young blond lieutenant named Vern Hanson, who had two assets I admired: quick wit, and a tongue to match.

He had a gift for turning a neat phrase on the spur of the moment. I liked to think I was fairly fast on the uptake myself, but Vern could beat me nearly every time and convulse me in process. We became good friends.

The fourteen of us, we learned upon comparing orders, were going to First Air Force. So we sat up much of the night—conjecturing, stating absurdities, slightly apprehensive, but feeling a sense of reinforcement from not being alone. We had been rewarded with passes, enabling us to have a weekend in New York City before reporting for duty. Anticipation was keen and morale high.

Mitchell Field, like Fort George Wright, was a permanent Army installation. Most of the buildings were staid but enduring red brick that could induct heat and cold with equal facility. My orders were to report to a Major Cassidy. Upon inquiry of the sentry, I learned that the Major had one of the smaller redbrick cubicles as his very own.

One-by-one, the weekend revelers showed up in the Major's office. As we sat waiting, Vern whispered behind his hand, "Look's like we're all here. Shoot the sagacity to us, Cassidy."

On the instant, the Major strode in. He was ruddy of face and hearty of figure. His features provided a topographical outline of Southern Ireland. A general flush indicated a certain familiarity with one of Eire's more popular exports.

The Major offered a general outline of what was going to happen. We were at Mitchell to be assigned to permanent duty. Most of us would be sent to other air bases and fields, as needed. A limited number would be selected to remain at Mitchell Field as assistants to our Major. With visible pride, he let us know that he and he alone, was the Special Services officer for the entire First Air Force.

As Cassidy explained it, the Army was the greatest thing in the world. The air force was the finest achievement of the Army. The Special Services section was the apex of the air force. The chief of that section, only a step or two lower than an arch-angel.

The Major involved us in various quizzes and tests, both written and oral. At the end of our first week, orders were issued. To my delight, I found that Vern and I were both being retained at Mitchell Field. The assignment, I was assured, would be permanent.

Once this was confirmed, I wrote to Pearl as I had promised. Also, I wrote to Peggy. If she and the kiddies could manage to arrive in the big city of Gotham, we'd rent a small house in Hempstead. We would try to pick up where we had left off when I departed St. Paul on my birthday, back in 1939. It seemed incredible. Only three years had elapsed. I had lived a lifetime in those three years.

Peggy agreed, and a date was set for her arrival. As a married officer, I would receive a special housing allowance that we could use to help defray our rent.

Major Cassidy gave us some valuable advice when it came to furnishings. He maintained relations with many civilian groups that worked with the military. Indeed, this was part of the function of every Special Service Officer. So, when Peggy showed, he informed me that the correct procedure was to call on the Salvation Army. They would have used furniture and lots of other second hand materials that we could buy for a song.

I met the train bringing my wife and children to the big city. I did my best to be warm and, at the same time, sincere. It was good to see the boys, who by now were old enough to be into everything. And it was good to see Peggy, too, but she was like a valued friend rather than a wife.

We found a tiny, unfurnished house that would serve. We followed Cassidy's advice and managed to fill it with useful and sturdy appurtenances. They were quite unlovely, decidedly utilitarian, and inexpensive.

I bought a second hand car, with time payments. To all appearances, Peggy and I were back to normal.

There were moments when it seemed that a fire had rekindled, but we had grown further apart than either of us had realized. I'm not sure that Peggy fully appreciated the extent of the chasm that now separated our two lives. I know she tried to make the marriage work, and I can firmly attest that I did too.

The boys were put into school. I found myself leaving the house as early as possible and coming home as late as I could manage. Our relationship was cold. We were so considerate of each other that we remained strangers. The chasm was unbridged.

Major Cassidy took an intrusion of "sinister" forces into America seriously. He called it communism. As the Major saw it, "commies" had infiltrated a great many organizations. He saw the Salvation Army as a fine, all-American organization. He wasn't at all sure about the Red Cross. It seemed to him that the Red Cross was in business, not really to help the soldiers, but to advance their own affairs. While they would loan money to a soldier in dire straits, they wanted it paid back. They expected people to pay their own way *and* to make contributions to them. He wasn't sure of the patriotism and loyalty of the Red Cross.

It happened that the local chapter of the Red Cross had been negotiating with the field commander, Colonel Johnson, about the services they would render the troops at Mitchell. I was called upon to attend a meeting between several officials of the organization and a few officers from Mitchell.

I had taken the Major's prejudices seriously. My attitude regarding the overtures made between military and Red Cross was both hostile and visible. I found an opening in the midst of these discussions to let the Red Cross people know that, if they really wanted to help, then they could stop negotiating. They could start providing a few things for the various day rooms at their own cost. As for coffee and doughnuts, which the Red Cross proposed to make available, if the men had to pay for them, then they could buy the same items at the PX.

I anticipated a pat on the back for my performance. I was dismayed when I learned that Cassidy, now promoted to Lt. Colonel, was displeased. Indeed, Cassidy was blamed for my performance. The next thing I knew, I was summoned to the headquarters build-

ing to confront the base commander in person.

Standing stiffly at attention, as the rules ordained, I took a verbal assault from a florid-faced, cigar-chewing C.O. He let me know that I was not going to be at Mitchell any longer if he could help it. And he could help it!

By week's end, I had my orders. I was to proceed to the Army Air Base at Philadelphia to become Special Services Officer there.

My reunion with Peggy had been of short duration. We decided she should stay on in Hempstead, while I went to Philadelphia to find out the lay of the land there. If things firmed up for me, I could send for her.

My purchase of the second hand car had been premature. I turned it back in, abandoning what little equity I had in the vehicle. Peggy didn't drive and had no use for it.

Meanwhile, Vern had been given some absurd job, the details of which escape me. The job was about as far removed from advancing the war effort as counting the bricks in the Major's little red schoolhouse.

I figured I had reason to be grateful. After all, while Philadelphia wouldn't have the advantages of Mitchell Field, it wasn't as though I had been sent to Siberia.

At least, that was my view before I emerged from the staff car that carried me from the railroad station in Philadelphia to the base. When I did climb out of the car, I was in for a re-appraisal.

In driving south out of town, we had encountered roads so rough that I had been jolted almost into insensibility. I learned that the air base was situated in a swamp—doubtless the place chuckholes were manufactured, and then shipped to appropriate low spots in various highways.

The Army Air Base consisted of a runway, a couple of hangars, and a single squadron of fighter planes. In support, About a dozen "temporary" frame structures had been erected to provide barracks, a mess, and a headquarters building. Between the buildings, there was a bog.

I reported to the commanding officer, only to discover that the base didn't have one. A Pfc took my orders, laughed a bit hysterically, and welcomed me to Shangri La. He admitted to not knowing what he was doing, but added that he was sitting at the right desk. My papers could go in the pile. He hadn't sorted the pile. But he had

been stacking up the papers ever since the base had been activated, less than three months earlier. The stack of papers was impressive.

This was Siberia. I hadn't been aware it was so near at hand.

The next morning, as I was pulling on my shoes, the same Pfc showed up with a verbal request for me to report into the headquarters building to meet a Captain B.

"What's the Captain want?" I asked.

"I think he wants to go home," the Pfc responded. "But, hell, who doesn't?"

"Maybe we can all go together," I suggested. "Is there a chance we can re-negotiate with the Indians about this land. I thought this was the city of brotherly love. "

"The city ain't so bad, Lieutenant. I write myself a pass every night. Then I let myself out. There's no sentry, so I can let myself in whenever I get back."

I grinned. "Sounds charmingly informal," I said.

The Captain—a re-tread about forty-five years of age—shook hands with me, while I stomped the mud off inside the headquarters building.

"I've been looking over the serial numbers of everyone who's checked in," he said. "Everybody has a high number. That means they're all green. The whole place is filled with draftees. But you have a lower number than the others. Have you seen service before?"

I shook my head. "I'm as green as they come," I admitted. "But I got a low number when I enlisted. You see, I'm not a draftee. I volunteered. See," I said, pointing to the side of my head. "The hole goes clear through."

The Captain chuckled. "I'm the ranking officer at this base," he said. "So, I'm assuming command. I need an adjutant. Can you read?"

"I think I can," I said. "But I'm assigned as Special Services."

"You can be that, too. In fact, you can be anything and everything you like, provided you agree to act as my adjutant."

"Fine," I said. "I wouldn't want to disappoint the Colonel who shipped me here after he had an unsatisfactory breakfast. I just finished OCS so maybe I can be helpful. Theoretically, I'm supposed to be interchangeable for anything you need administratively."

The Captain looked pleased.

"That's only the theory," I reminded.

He gestured broadly. "Then get busy. It's all yours."

"First," I said, "it happens to be cold." This was November 1942.

"Then order some fires built," the Captain said. "You're it. Thank God I found you!"

The next several weeks were among the busiest I've ever spent.

I discovered the reason for so many cold stoves on the base: we had no coal. I ordered some, along with a load of wood.

During three months of operation, a finance officer from New York had handled payroll. Nothing was up to date. I worked on pay vouchers, soldiers' records, and took to answering demands from higher echelons. Some of the demands arrived daily with red borders, calling for immediate response to this or that inquiry.

The Pfc who had taken my papers proved helpful, but he was a poor typist. A canvass of all assigned personnel revealed there wasn't a competent typist in the place. I went into town, called at a couple of civilian organizations, and made my way to the Red Cross. I figured Colonel Johnson would be pleased.

To my intense gratitude, the organization swung into action at once. They located a young lady who volunteered her services as a secretary. I sent a staff car into town for her every morning, and had her delivered home every evening. Together we poured over records and forms and the stream of correspondence, which had been all one way. We began to achieve a two-way flow.

The pilots had been performing their training flights. The mess had been operating after a fashion. Aside from those functions, everything else was in shambles.

Gradually, some semblance of order began to emerge. Everyone jumped to obey my orders or suggestions. The Captain signed the stuff I put in front of him. I raced from crisis to crisis, hoping I was doing things according to the book.

I managed a letter to Peggy, and another to Pearl. Aside from those brief contacts, I was buried in mountains of red tape, every strip of which had to be unfurled.

By springtime, the Philadelphia air base was limping along fairly well, although I had yet to achieve a clean desk. At this point, a contingent of higher-ranking personages appeared.

The Captain and I were thanked perfunctorily, and relieved of our duties. I had nothing to do for a day or so, as a few men with experience filled out the rosters. Then my orders came. I was to

report at once to the Army Air Base at Baltimore, Maryland. This was another unit of the First Air Force. The short train ride to my new “permanent” assignment took only part of a day.

Once more I was met and driven to my new quarters, which proved to be remarkably similar to the building I had just vacated at Philadelphia. This time, I reported to a C.O with a complete staff in working order.

This Colonel’s name was McHugo, and he had a pin on his chest indicating proficiency as a balloonist. But this was war, and the Army was taking in everybody available.

Headquarters was a fine, two-story building. Originally constructed for other purposes, it now housed the administrative section for those units of the First Air Force located at Camp Springs, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Dover (Delaware), and Millville (New Jersey). This cluster of bases was called a “wing.”

In contrast to the headquarters building, the rest of the encampment consisted of the long, temporary wooden structures, which were becoming painfully familiar. Each was a hundred feet by twenty feet, one story high, without insulation and heated with the descendent of the earlier pot-bellied stove. It’s only redeeming feature was that the potbelly was gone, but it worked the same way.

The site for the Baltimore base was called Sparrow’s Point. I learned why, from GIs who explained that every bird flying over paused in mid-air to drop a calling card. The climate and general terrain was much the same as I had left behind in Philadelphia. The common complaint was that you could step from your barracks and sink into mud up to your knees, while dust blew in your face at the same time.

There was no suggestion that I might like to become adjutant. Instead, my efforts at Philadelphia were to be rewarded, and I was to be named the Special Services Officer for the entire wing.

Nothing was said about it, but apparently I had passed the test at Philly. Within a week or two, I received a promotion. I was able to exchange my gold bar for a silver bar. A slight improvement in pay went with the upage.

Having been assured that I was “permanently” installed at Baltimore, I suggested to Peggy that she join me.

Just across the street from the encampment, a sub-division of new homes was being put in. They were for sale but, as a gesture in

support of the military, the developer had agreed to rent homes to family men in uniform.

When Peggy and the boys arrived, we rented a two-bedroom cottage within easy walking distance of my own Special Services building. Again, the Salvation Army helped with furnishings. Peggy and I renewed our reunion. The boys were transferred into a school nearby.

I made contact with the Red Cross, as a first order of business, and talked them into supplying a mobile canteen with hot coffee and doughnuts for the troops *at no charge*. I contacted the great Pratt Library, one of the finest in the nation, and wangled a gift of some worn out books for the day room located in my own building. Other civilians came through with gifts of books.

I contacted the USO and made arrangements for some entertainment to be sent out. Then I managed to obtain a second building with a roof higher than most. I converted it into a field type auditorium, so that shows could be presented on a makeshift stage. A chaplain used the same building for Sunday services.

In the midst of these labors, I went, either by train or car, to the other outposts under Colonel McHugo's command.

The adjutant called me in for consultation one day. "It's time to order some new athletic equipment, LeFevre," he said.

"Athletic equipment?" I had seen nothing resembling it. Nor was there an athletic field or an athletic program of any kind.

"Sure," he said. "You're the Special Services Officer. You know how important having equipment is."

I nodded. "Sure, I know. Where is the existing equipment so I can see what needs to be replaced?"

The adjutant opened the door of a closet. Packed inside were baseballs, bats, mitts, basketballs, a soccer ball, nets—everything needed and all brand-new.

"This stuff doesn't need to be replaced," I said. "It needs to be used."

The adjutant grinned. "I said it was time to order."

I didn't quite get the point. The adjutant took pity on me. "This command gets an annual allotment for athletic equipment," he explained. "If we don't make use of it, we'll lose the fund. That would never do. So, take this stuff out of here and get rid of it. Order everything brand new."

"We'll need a field or something," I said. There is no place available..."

"I didn't ask for advice," the adjutant said, with a smile. "This is the Army. You will now order a year's supply and allocate all the funds provided for this purpose."

"Yes, sir." I did as I was told. However, I did keep after the adjutant. When I could reach him, I reminded the Colonel. In due time, a space was provided and softball games began. But that was much later. Meanwhile, the winter dragged on. I rushed from one duty to the next.

I managed to obtain a 16-mm moving picture projector and began offering films in my field theater.

After a couple of months of this type of activity, I finally got the drift. Colonel McHugo took a dim view of Special Services. Morale was a waste of time as he saw it. A number of the ideas I wanted to promote were turned down perfunctorily. But I was a useful guy to have around.

Every time orders came to him to have an officer appointed to some menial task, I was the one designated. So I became war bond officer, insurance officer, library officer, day room funds officer, orientation officer, and whatever else was required. Each new task meant an additional report. I made them all for the Colonel's signature.

My home life was almost non-existent. I was out of town at other bases a good part of the time. And my duties, while insignificant in themselves, required a great deal of time.

The war news was still dismal. There were plenty of times when I shared the Colonel's view respecting the importance of the work I was doing. To the best of my ability, I followed the directives, kept my records clean, kept my accounts in order, and survived.

Chapter XLVIII

Saint Patrick's Day, 1943, from the standpoint of weather, had been a disappointment from the beginning. Dark clouds scudded across the sky. Sudden gusts of cold rain kept the troops indoors to the extent allowed. It wasn't cold enough to freeze, nor warm enough to prevent it. It was just a never-never day that brought inward reflections, a sense of loneliness and futility, and a wish to be someplace—anyplace but where one was.

I had arranged a special entertainment for the men at the Baltimore Base. By telephone, I had booked a troupe of USO performers to come to the theater that evening. After eating supper at home, I came back to the field to be a welcoming committee of one and to manage an emergency, if one arose. One usually did.

The men assigned to my section were constantly being dragooned to perform other, "more essential" duties; the lights would go out; something would stop working; there would be no heat; the wind would blow in a window. There was always a crisis, and the Army is organized so that few people are allowed to make decisions about crises.

Promptly at 7:30, the men began to assemble in the bare, cheerless, field theater. They had been served a special Saint Patrick's Day meal in which the color green had provided the motif. Some were shaking their heads as they arrived. Some were just shaking. It could have been anything—the food or the cold—but the hue of their faces matched the lime sherbet they had been served.

I phoned the USO shortly after seven to make certain the entertainers were on their way. The booking was confirmed, so I expected to hear the sound of a van pulling up outside the theater at any moment. Actually, it should have arrived before 7:30, but the base at Sparrow's Point was a little hard to find. Unless one was a sparrow.

I stood on the platform to warm up the audience. The man assigned to the task of getting the stove red-hot had been called to other duties. No one had troubled to inform me. I found a substitute who had only just managed to get a fire started, so the dreary shed was even more uncomfortable than usual. The hard benches that

provided seating were being made more comfortable by GI ingenuity. The men were sitting on their hands, huddling together—a sea of pathetic faces shading from green to blue, depending on which malady gripped them.

“Warming them up under such circumstances was virtually impossible. I figured I was good for five minutes’ effort, and the five minutes ran out. I tried for ten. There was no welcome sound of newcomers from without, and no welcome sound of appreciation from within.

I asked for local performers to take over. There were no takers. Actually, there was plenty of talent in the audience. When a happier mood prevailed, some spontaneous presentations had often served me well.

In desperation, I asked one of my own men to take charge as best he could. I retreated to my office so I could use the telephone.

The person at the USO assured me the troupe was en route. Indeed, it should have arrived long since. I suggested a substitute group be organized. I was told it was out of the question. I’d have to do with what had been sent. If and when it arrived.

The man I’d left in charge at the theater rushed in to stand in front of the stove, beating his arms to restore circulation. “Lieutenant,” he said, “You’ve got to do something. The men really want some entertainment. They need it. The whole day has been shitty.”

“If that’s intended as the opening statement of a debate,” I said, “I won’t respond. You want entertainment, the men want entertainment, and I want entertainment. We concur. Now, where in hell is the entertainment?”

“You got me,” he said.

“I know it. And you’re not that entertaining.”

The soldier held up his hand. “Hold it a sec. I think I hear something.”

Without waiting for me to confirm, he dashed out. There were muffled sounds outside. I wondered if the audience had decided to come over to the day room. I would be in big trouble if something didn’t happen soon to take the men’s attention off their woes.

The door opened. My assistant ushered into the building one of the most beautiful women I’d ever seen. She wore an emerald green velveteen dress and a big, floppy hat of rose pink. Her face was laughing, her eyes sparkled, and her figure was whistle-sure. An-

other female, dowager type, entered and regarded me with hostility.

"Is this T-100?" the lovely one asked in a vibrant, melodious voice. "God, what a trip, I know we're late. We got here in a Red Cross ambulance. And we got stuck in the mud."

T-100 was the official nomenclature for my building. The T, quite unnecessarily, stood for "temporary."

I was on my feet in a twinkling and took her hand in welcome, as the dowager glowered. "I think the men are still assembled," I said. "You're in the right place. And you are late. That doesn't matter now. You're here."

I turned to my helper. "Scoot over to the theater and tell the fellows that the USO finally got here. Ask them to hold steady a few more minutes."

"Yes, sir, Lieutenant," and he was gone.

The balance of the company came stomping in: a nondescript male introduced as the pianist, a much too handsome vocalist who turned out to be a tenor, and a male accordionist. The beautiful lady introduced herself as Loy Reuling. The older woman was chaperon to protect the virtue of the lovely Miss Reuling.

"Is this it?" I asked.

"This is it," Loy Reuling said.

"You've got your work cut out for you," I admitted. "The men are already restless, and I'd better warn you. I don't think the theater is warm." My disappointment showed. "I thought the troupe would be larger."

"You're lucky to get this much, Lieutenant," Miss Reuling said. "What a miserable place. Do soldiers actually live here?"

"Not really," I said. "They survive here. Most of them are still living at home."

The pianist made his way to the stove, pulling off gloves. "My fingers are like ice," he said. "Maybe I can warm the stiffness out of them for a few minutes."

"Whenever you're ready, I'll take you over and introduce you.

"It's not very much like Aberdeen," Loy observed.

"I've never been there," I said. "But I'm sure you're right. There's nothing on earth quite like this place. Anything resembling it is underground. Deep. "

She laughed merrily. Suddenly, I felt good. This gal knew her stuff.

Nothing would faze her.

"For your performance, take all the time you want," I said. "We don't get much live entertainment. You have the full evening at your disposal."

"We have a thirty-minute program," Loy said.

"Stretch it out," I advised. "Try for an hour, at least. The fellows have been sitting in a temporary building that is worse than this one. Maybe the chill is off it by now but, if so, it's only temporary. They're sitting on temporary benches and you'll work on a temporary stage. The lighting is temporary, too."

I led the group through muddy by-ways, with spurts of cold rain in our faces. Once more on stage, I introduced the company of performers. Then I stood in back of the audience.

The accordionist was competent, although I've heard better. He was applauded with enthusiasm. At least the men weren't sitting on their hands anymore. The tenor evoked a warm reception as well. The dowager sat and dowaged. When Loy walked out on the stage, swirled her skirt, and began to sing, the men sat up as though suddenly transported.

Her voice was a rich, throaty mezzo-soprano that filled the place. Her brought instant reverie and pure delight. What a glorious voice she had. The men leaped to their feet in applause. She sang again and again. Finally, she sang "Danny Boy," as a tribute to the day we celebrated, and tears came to my eyes. Loy was the show. She was gorgeous, both to look at and to hear. I'm sure that little theater never before had heard such sounds of appreciation as the GIs produced. Nor had it ever before been filled with such throbbing tones which reached deep within a man and stirred his heart'

When the performance ended, a number of men, in filing out, shook my hand and thanked me for an evening of real entertainment.

I herded the little group of performers back to T-100 for a final coffee. Taking Loy aside, I said, "You have a marvelous voice. I know that's no surprise to you, but it really is tops. I'd like to have you out again sometime. The men went for you in a big way."

Loy shrugged. "I go where the USO sends me," she said. "Of course, I guess you could ask for me by name. Actually, that would be kind of nice."

I wrote down her phone number, just in case.

She explained that she worked for the B and O Railroad. Her contribution to the war effort was to make her vocal efforts available to the USO. Additionally, she belonged to the "Women's Officers' Club," which provided entertainment for officers.

I had never seen a woman more vibrant, more alive to her fingertips. It was a joy being in her company.

During the next two days, I realized that Loy had made a deeper impression on me than I had anticipated. My thoughts kept reverting to her at odd moments.

But I was a married man, trying to stage a reconciliation. On top of that, Pearl waited in the wings for that time, should it ever come, when she and I could be married. I was in no situation to permit thoughts of still another woman to impose. Besides, I assured myself, Loy was much too young for me. Indeed, it was her very youth and enthusiasm that captivated me. The lady could have any man she crooked her finger at, and she would have no time for anyone whose hair was already turning grey. At best, I would be viewed as a big brother.

So I was completely taken by surprise when my telephone rang and I heard Loy's unmistakable voice.

"What is it, Lieutenant?" she asked. "I'm returning your call."

"Returning my call?" I was almost speechless. I had made no call.

"Yes. I'm at work, but was away from my desk. I have a message to call Lieutenant LeFevre. That's you, isn't it?"

"Of course. But there must be some mistake."

There was an awkward pause.

"I'm sure I have the message right," she said. "I don't understand this."

"I don't either." I was embarrassed and there was no mistaking her tone. She was embarrassed, too. "Actually," I said, "I had been thinking about you. But I didn't call. I'd have tried to reach you at the USO. I certainly wouldn't have phoned you at work." My voice trailed away.

"Well, someone did. I have the message right here."

There was a further pause.

She laughed. "Well, it's mysterious, all right. But since I do have you on the phone let me invite you to a dance. The Women's Officers' Club is giving one this coming Sunday at—, and she named the location. "You'd be welcome if you could come."

"Thanks very much," I said. "I doubt if I can get away." Actually, I didn't like to dance, and I was fearful of any further involvement.

"Well, okay, then." She gave another embarrassed laugh.

"Right. Okay."

I hung up the phone.

Shortly thereafter the telephone rang again. My buddy, Vern Hanson, was calling from Mitchell Field. "How's the War Department's answer to Hitler doing?" was his query. "Has Cassidy got you out painting Red Crosses on all the obstacles in your obstacle course?"

"Not yet," I said. "Our obstacle course is under six feet of mud and the crosses won't stay put. What are you doing, you old buzzard?"

"We've got so many pilots up here at Mitchell," Vern responded, "they're making a real effort to get them reclassified. I was walking past Cassidy's office the other day and I heard a pilot screaming, 'Don't beat me no more massah! I'll be a bombardier!'"

"Are you going to apply for bombardier duty?" I asked. "Sounds as though there's a shortage in that department."

"No. I've got that problem solved. We're going to fly over Berlin and bomb them with excess pilots. Then our pilots can take up German planes and wreck them. It'll hasten the ending of the war."

"Seems reasonable," I said. "Now that we've finished the war, to what do I owe the honor of your call?"

"I'm coming down to Baltimore this coming Sunday," Vern said. "It's a combination deal. For Cassidy. I'm going to tally the number of high morale smiles I find at your base. At the same time, I have a couple of days off. I thought I'd spend them in your vicinity so we could swap yarns."

"Hey, that's great," I enthused. "It'll be good to see you again, you old rascal."

"Can you meet my train?"

"Sure thing. Both Pensy and B&O serve Baltimore. Each line has its own station or stations. Which will you use?"

"I'll come on the B&O," Vern said.

"Then come to the main terminal downtown. It's nearest the base."

"Right."

"What time will you arrive?"

"About eight p.m.? How's that?"

“No problem. I’ll have some kind of transportation. It’ll be good to see you again.”

The next Sunday I was at the B&O terminal about twenty minutes before train time. Vern didn’t show. Other trains were due in shortly, any one of which he might have been on, so I waited around. He didn’t appear on any of them.

I initiated a call to Mitchell Field but the Bachelor Officers’ quarters reported him off the base on pass.

Could I have misunderstood? Had he told me he was coming on the Pency line? I dashed to that terminal just in time to see a train pulling out, but Vern wasn’t in evidence. He would have waited for me had he come in earlier.

I was greatly disappointed. I had managed to borrow a car and much of the evening was still in front of me. I didn’t feel like returning home; there was nothing of interest at the base. Most of the men were out on weekend passes.

Disconsolately, I drove around a bit, and then remembered the dance sponsored by the Women’s Officers’ Club. I might be able to establish a contact for some future entertainment for officers at the base. I recalled the location Loy had named and walked in.

Loy saw me almost at once. She was dancing with another officer, but immediately excused herself and came to me. She explained that she hadn’t expected me to show up. She had a date with another lieutenant.

I confirmed that I hadn’t expected to be there either.

A pal of mine, whom I thought I was to meet at the station, had stood me up. Loy introduced me to the president of the women’s organization, as well as to several other people she thought I might like to know. We danced a few times.

By then, the lieutenant she’d dated had found himself someone else. Loy suggested we go elsewhere. I was not at all opposed to the idea. We walked to a small night cafe called The Chanticleer and sat in a booth.

Embarrassed, I explained to this lovely young girl that I had never before entered a nightclub. She didn’t believe me at first.

When I added that I didn’t drink, the shock was real. This time she believed me. I took a scolding for being so immature. During her girlhood, she said that wine—most of it homemade—was served regularly in her home. She had grown up with it. There was only

one thing for me to do. Have my first drink with her.

Feeling as though I was committing a mortal sin, I asked what she would recommend as my first libation. She suggested a glass of port wine. She ordered a Manhattan for herself.

The port tasted to me like grape juice that had gone bad. I made the best of it, although I didn't care for it. I was unable to finish the wine, and she tossed it down so as not to waste it.

It happened that the dance, The Chanticleer, and Loy's home were all within walking distance of where I had parked my car. We walked to her home on Calvert Street, not far from the Belvedere Hotel.

We sat on her front steps and talked until about two a.m. She told me all about her childhood, her upbringing, and her love for music. She had been a scholarship winner at the Peabody Institute. She could sing opera, folk music, modern—you name it. Her father was dead. She lived with her mother and a younger sister.

Curiously, I found myself confiding in her.

Loy already knew that I was married and had two children. As a matter of common practice, whenever I met any woman I made it a point of conversation to mention my wife and family. This I had done during our coffee break following the Saint Patrick's Day show. Loy said the dowager chaperon had advised her that I was in marital quarantine.

I now learned that I was nine years her senior. I told her of some of my experiences with the "I Am." I also explained that the moral code I followed was a strict one that allowed no sexual contact outside of marriage and none within, unless an infant was wanted.

She stared at me as though I was native to an alien planet. I explained that I had felt myself "under direction" and that I believed I had a major contribution to make with my life. I didn't know what it was, but I was convinced this was so.

It became clear that I wasn't winning many brownie points. When I spoke of my "special contribution," she laughed with disbelief on her face and in her voice.

"I'll tell you one thing," she said. "When and if I ever get married, I'm going to have a normal sex life. I think sex is important. I think your ideas about sex are weird."

I had never before had that kind of reaction. Without exception, until I met Loy, every woman to whom I explained them had applauded my high standards of abstention. Loy thought they were

silly.

When we finally parted, I walked down the hill in the direction of my car, a puzzled man. Loy was not only vivacious and a joy to be with, she was also honest. At least, she was honest about sex. Up to that time no “decent” woman ever admitted any interest in sex. Loy seemed decent, yet eager. I had long suspected that some women might enjoy a sexual experience.

I had never been quite sure whether Peggy was my partner through duty or through desire. I was positive about Pearl. Loy, on the contrary, was desirable, honest, and the very breath of normalcy.

I hadn’t intended it to happen, but I was intrigued.

One of the ever-present results of military service was the re-alignment of your priorities. Without being fully aware of all that was happening to my value system, it seemed only right that I get to know this young lady better. She represented an entirely different stratum of society. There was a very large segment of the population with whom I had neither experience nor information.

Loy had insisted that she was Austrian in her ancestry, although her German antecedents were evident. Put at this particular time, it wasn’t a good idea to be German. We were fighting Germany.

I didn’t blame her. I had often stressed the fact that I was primarily of British ancestry, despite my French name. In my part of the world, the British were accepted and the French were viewed with suspicion.

Truthfully, my curiosity had been piqued. I wanted to know more.

Chapter XLIX

Within the next few months, after my meeting with Loy Reuling, the following took place.

Colonel McHugo, doubtless annoyed by my constant effort to provide more recreation and diversion for enlisted personnel, decided I should visit every satellite base under his command at least once each month. This decision necessitated a considerable amount of travel. The distances between Baltimore, Philadelphia, Dover and Millville were not great, but the latter installations were difficult to reach. Getting to and from them took time. The final base in the McHugo domain was Camp Springs, Maryland, but I had never been sent there. No explanation was offered and I was far too overworked to worry about it.

My time away from Baltimore increased. When I was at the home field, I was literally inundated with reports and programs. All the on-going procedures took care and attention, and more hours in each day than the rotating earth provides.

I spent less and less time with Peggy, more and more on the road and away from home.

During this period, I again determined to forget all about Pearl and Loy. I wasn't being entirely fair with Peggy. Despite having to travel, I really be trying to establish a warm and working relationship.

Making deliberate and conscious effort one evening, I did my best to rekindle the affection and love that had marked my feeling for Peggy after the loss of Charlotte. A strange thing happened, something I had never experienced before. The more passion I sought to summon, the more it drained from me. Finally, I desisted in defeat.

Peggy knew something was happening inside me. "It's over," she said. "That's true, isn't it?"

I nodded. "I don't want it to be this way," I said. "I simply can't help it. It's no good. It isn't going to work."

The statement seemed to crush her. "I know," she said. "I've felt it for some time."

There was no anger, no recrimination, and just a quiet despair. We sat in our living room in our robes, silent, as though we had

become strangers.

“What are you going to do?” she asked.

“This arrangement isn’t fair to you. To me. To the boys. I’ll take my things and move to the B.O.Q. on the field.”

“Perhaps you’d better,” she agreed.

And that was it. Our marriage was at an end and we both knew it. The next day I moved into the officer’s barracks across the street. I arranged to give Peggy all the financial support my salary would provide. Nothing was said about divorce. That field was barren, I was sure.

My stay at the B.O.Q. was brief. Camp Springs, long on the roster as a satellite base, was activated at last.

The Army had condemned three whole towns and finally managed to evict everyone—farmers, homeowners, and businessmen. The terrain, an area perhaps as large as twenty square miles, was going to be converted into a major defensive air base. Enormous runways had been put in. Hangars had been built. Several fighter squadrons were being diverted to take up permanent assignment at that point. From there, they could protect the nation’s capitol along its eastern perimeter, all the way to deep Atlantic waters.

The time had arrived for the housekeeping forces to move into Camp Springs to keep the props turning. As Special Services Officer for the McHugo command, it was my duty to move. With very little notice, the transfer occurred.

For my new headquarters, I was given an abandoned farmhouse. It was at least half a mile away from the cluster of temporary huts being constructed adjacent to the hangars. Another commandeered home, a few hundred yards away, became my new residence. Water and lights were provided. No heat. And no stoves. Fortunately, both old homes had fireplaces.

Loneliness settled over me like a dreary cloud. I buried myself in work, and there was plenty of that. Every Special Service function had to be organized from scratch. In addition, I decided it was time to issue a camp newspaper.

There was an advantage gained with the Camp Springs situation, which had not been mine before. Ample personnel were on hand. Not only was I assigned a whole contingent of men to help with the work, I was assigned two commissioned officers. One, another first lieutenant and junior to me by only a few months, was John

Abernathy. He was a fine officer. The other was a second lieutenant named Frank, whose last name I cannot recall. He, too, was talented and skillful. The Special Services Section began to look and act as if it were going to be around for a while.

I was even given a T.O. (table of organization) and a chance to promote enlisted men who served well. My two best men were respectively, a John Felder, who made staff sergeant and another man, Abe Bowman, who earned three stripes very quickly. Altogether there were fourteen of us, and we went to work with everything we could muster.

The time came again for me to visit New Jersey and Millville. I managed to wangle extra time to make some important contacts in New York City, and then I telephoned Loy.

My train would be going through Baltimore on its way north. Would it be possible for her to accompany me? We'd go to New York, where she had never been. Without hesitation, she agreed to meet my train and accompany me.

She had a particularly rough time of it when she broached the subject to her mother. Understandably, Mrs. Reuling put her foot down. According to Loy, the dictum was: "That man is married. You'll do no such thing. If you attempt it against my will, you don't need to come home again."

Loy proved to be as headstrong as her mother, and she kept the appointment. That two-day jaunt in the big city was an exciting time for Loy and enormously satisfying for me.

I booked adjoining rooms for us at a hotel. I behaved in harmony with the principles I had expressed to Loy during our doorstep conversation. My ability and willingness to act with such restraint surprised Loy. It even surprised me. I wanted so much to be with her. But I wanted nothing to interfere with a relationship in which I viewed myself as an older and more experienced friend. I needed companionship, and I had difficulty in confiding to military types. I had to talk to somebody, and Loy seemed eager to listen.

I told her that I had separated from my wife and the separation was final. I described my earlier affair with Pearl, and how the doctrine of the "I Am" had combined to sunder my marriage. And I recited how I had tried for reconciliation, both in New York and at Sparrow's Point, to no avail.

After returning Loy to Baltimore, I completed my inspection mis-

sion and went back to the base at Camp Springs. A message awaited me.

Pearl had arrived in Washington, D.C. Would I please phone her at my earliest convenience? She was staying at the Willard Hotel.

This wholly unexpected development threw me into turmoil. With a start I experienced a whole new wave of guilt. Was this the hand of Saint Germain, imploring me to have nothing to do with Loy? Was it his way of leading me back into the fold?

I telephoned Pearl, and we made an appointment for that evening. Coming into her presence again, the old emotions and doctrine swept over me with tidal wave totality. I said nothing to her about Loy. Rather, I concentrated on my ruptured marriage, which was at last over.

What of divorce? Would Peggy agree to one? I gave Pearl what I was sure Peggy's answer would have been. "Never." Pearl was more optimistic. If Peggy was at last convinced that reconciliation was impossible, why not?

My view remained negative. Peggy, I was sure, felt more secure as a married woman. Even if her husband was gone for good, she'd never agree to be single. If she had another man to turn to, perhaps a divorce could occur. But I could not imagine Peggy either pursuing some man or willingly returning to single status.

What had brought about Pearl's sudden appearance on the East Coast? Was it so strange, she asked? Didn't I yet know that she loved me? With a Benedict Arnold feeling, I held her in my arms. And she was as always—sweet, adoring and affectionate. Up to a point.

I explained the magnitude and multiplicity of my job. This wasn't Geiger Field where I had very little to do and no skills in doing it. I was the virtual impresario of a hundred chores, supervising other officers both at Camp Springs and elsewhere. There would be very few times we could be together.

Pearl gave no evidence of disappointment. She said she had understood this before deciding to come east. She would get a job and support herself. Then, whenever we could be together, we could try to get instruction from the Masters, and thus carry on the great "I Am" work.

I said nothing to her of my new convictions. I was still uncertain whether I was engaged in self-hypnosis, or was in touch with someone or something outside myself. Whatever this inner or outer en-

tity was, I was certain it was neither wholly good, nor wholly infallible. Which meant, if I carried it to a logical conclusion, that the advice and direction I received from it was neither better nor worse than my own. It was just different” than me, although not altogether so.

Pearl always landed on her feet. In less time than one can imagine, she made application for work at Camp Springs. Again, she was successful, taking a position as a PBX operator.

One of the chores of every Special Services officer was to establish and supervise the Officer’s Club. Thanks to my background and my general antipathy to alcohol, Lt. Abernathy did the real work in this department at Camp Springs.

It was at the Officer’s Club that the various commissioned officers got together, fraternized, and became friends and buddies. My first exposure to wine at Loy’s urging had done more to firm up my background than to weaken its influence. I never showed up at the Officer’s Club, even for parties, unless ordered to do so by McHugo. Thus, I was quickly identified as an odd ball.

When on one or two occasions I put in an appearance under orders, I refused to drink. I stood around, as embarrassed and out of place as Cotton Mather at a nudist rally.

I learned again what I had learned before at WTCN in Minneapolis. If yow behavior varies from the norm most presume that you think you are “too good” to act in concert with your peers. I insist that my own attitude, both in respect to food and drink, was not that I was “better” or “too good.” Rather, I was different. Countless times, I wished I was anything but different. I marveled at what others ate and drank, yet turned in stellar performances. To a degree, I envied them. Meat made me ill. My slight contact with alcohol had repelled me. I thought of myself as inferior rather than superior. Thanks to my isolation in these areas, which provide common bonds, I had developed few of the social graces. Hence, my embarrassment and self-consciousness during ordinary periods of relaxation and social exchange.

With Pearl on hand, the abnormalities of my “I Am” background persisted. I turned more and more to Loy for relief from that influence. Loy was “normal.” She was an integral part and product of the society with which she was familiar. It was such a comfortable position to be in. I envied her outlook—cheerful, optimistic, always

filled with music and excitement.

At the same time, Pearl could hardly be avoided. Nor did I wish to drop her. I wanted very much to explain why I no longer felt as I once had about the "I Am." At the same time, I didn't wish to influence Pearl against those portions of the doctrine, which were in harmony with reality. It was common for most, when discovering a flaw in a doctrine, to throw out the whole thing. There was too much in it that was fine and good. On occasions when Pearl and I were together, I tried to direct the conversation toward the idea that the Masters were neither infallible nor always "good" in any pure sense.

Pearl invariably expressed bafflement at such statements, and I couldn't bring myself to denounce what was still a central pillar of our lives.

Whenever I went out of town, I managed to see Loy. Additionally, on a few occasions, Loy came into Washington, D.C. We would spend hours together in the Capitol City. As an employee of the B&O, she had limitless passes on the train, so weekend trips provided no financial obstacle.

Special Service Officers were now offered an opportunity to take an advanced course of study at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia.

The series of studies lasted two-weeks, and I arranged for Loy to join me in Lexington when the course finished. We could have a long weekend together. She arrived with her younger sister, Lorna, as chaperone. I rented a car. We toured a number of cities in the vicinity of Lexington, saw the Natural Bridge, and spent a happy time together as a trio.

One evening back at Camp Springs, I was phoned by the adjutant and told that I was expected at the Officer's Club. It was a rainy night and I had planned on staying in my room with a good book. A suggestion, from the adjutant was the equivalent of an order from McHugo.

The Officer's Club was in a patch of woods about a mile from my farmhouse abode. I asked about transportation to the Club and was told that a car would come for me soon.

When it came, to my intense surprise, Colonel McHugo and Pearl were together in the rear seat. Pearl and I had tried to keep our relationship from being discovered. We had apparently been successful. McHugo had no idea that the good looking PBX girl was

someone I was close to. Pearl motioned me to say nothing. McHugo had already had too much to drink and his face was flushed. He was making manual passes at Pearl and I believed he ran the risk of getting slapped.

With me in the car, he became slightly more circumspect but he was clearly on “the make.” What really got to me was that Pearl was taking it in stride. She seemed neither surprised nor displeased, and she could manage affairs without help.

I was dropped at the Club. The Colonel and Pearl drove away. I have no idea of their ultimate destination.

I was seething with indignation, mostly because of McHugo, but partly because of Pearl’s willingness to tolerate his advances. I spent a miserable hour at the Club, shaking hands with some new officers, and trying to be a jolly good fellow.

When I brought up the subject later, Pearl told me I had nothing to worry about. She refused to discuss the incident.

With the special course of study under my belt, and to my surprise, I received another promotion. I became a Captain. I’ve often wondered if Pearl had anything to do with the promotion. To this day, I don’t know. I know that McHugo didn’t like me. I also know that my work was excellent.

My sudden improvement in rank brought a new development. The Air Force was required periodically to send replacements to the European theater. Officers of the rank of Captain were put in command of companies to deliver their men to a base in England.

I was advised that Colonel McHugo had decided I was just the officer needed to carry out this duty. I would be on detached service, would organize a company of 200 men, and then escort them, by ship to the ETO.

Since this meant going overseas, I was entitled to three weeks leave. I told Pearl of this new development and she put her cards on the table. If Peggy would give me a divorce, and if she got a divorce from Sidney, was I still interested? My answer was an equivocation. I assured her that nothing had changed, except I had given up hope. There was no way I was ever going to attain a divorce.

She said she could achieve it for me, and I should leave the details in her hands. What was she planning? She merely assured me that Sid would cooperate and she would engineer both divorces. Who could tell what would happen? Perhaps Sidney would marry

Peggy, and then we would be free to marry. I laughed at this statement. It seemed utterly mad and beyond credence.

Before my leave began, I had another inspection tour to complete. As my train paused at the station in Baltimore en route to Philadelphia, Loy, by pre-arrangement, came to the depot. We had a thirty-minute rendezvous. It was the best I could manage on this trip. But I let her know that I was going overseas.

This time, in Philadelphia, I stayed at the Ben Franklin Hotel. This was the same hostelry I had occupied with the Ballards. It was the building in which I had met Pearl in 1939.

I was in a kind of emotional limbo. Pearl had just stimulated my hopes for a divorce. And she was remarkable, a wonder of a woman. Could she bring it off? I had learned never to doubt her ability to achieve whatever she attempted. If she succeeded, would I be obligated to marry her? It would seem so.

There was a small jewelry shop in the lobby of the hotel. I went there looking for a ring. That ring would be a symbol for a new life, if and when I got a divorce. Then I would marry the woman I wanted.

But which woman was that? I wasn't quite sure. My mind and my heart were with Loy; my background and my duty appeared to be with Pearl.

I looked over the jewelry on display. One ring stood out that fascinated me. It was an aquamarine.

However, I had never seen a ring like it. A small hole had been drilled through the center of the oblong stone and a diamond set in that hole. The craftsmanship was most unusual. The ring was stunning.

I thought of Pearl. She would love the ring.

I thought of Loy. She would adore it.

Did Pearl love me? Why else would she have come east?

I added it up. If I married Pearl, I would be devoting myself to the "I Am" doctrine. I would spend the rest of my life in the religious world. If I married Loy, I would live a more normal life in the world of human affairs. What should I do?

There was nothing magic about what happened, I was suddenly overwhelmed with this thought: There is no question whatever. All my life I had been doing what other people wanted me to do. This would continue with Pearl. If I married Loy, I would be acting in terms of my own best interests. It was time I acted in self-interest.

I bought the ring for Loy.

I stopped in Baltimore on my way back to Camp Springs. I explained to Loy that I was going to try to get a divorce. Meanwhile, I wanted her to wear the ring. I had three weeks leave coming and wanted to take her with me to meet my mother. Our marriage was tentative, based on a divorce that I was far from certain of obtaining. But would she come with me?

Loy said yes, and agreed to wear the ring. I purchased a car. This was less expensive than paying two round-trip fares to Minnesota.

Back at Camp Springs, Pearl had already departed. I turned everything over to Abernathy. At last my duties for McHugo were transferred, and I could take leave. Despite the shortage of gasoline and the thin rubber on the second-hand tires of the used Chevy, Loy and I drove back to Minnesota.

Divorced from Dad, she had supported herself as a practical nurse. She had nursed a woman in failing health in Northfield, Minnesota. When her patient finally died, Mother had married the widower, a professor at St. Olaf's College who was one of the finest men I have ever met. The two of them were living in Northfield, and Loy and I called on her there. By letter, I had informed Mother that my marriage to Peggy was at an end. I was planning to marry Loy, if the way opened.

When Mother answered the door to us her first remark to Loy was, "Oh, my! You're so young."

Loy was crushed, but quickly recovered. While Loy and I stayed with mother and her new husband, Dr. Ed Cook, we traveled to Lake Minnetonka for an overnight outing. We rented a canoe and went boating on the lake one evening. The water, the moonlight, and the tranquility stirred us all deeply. Loy began to sing, acappella. Other boats drew near as those glorious notes poured from her throat.

Loy gave an impromptu concert, which resulted in the assembly of a small flotilla, and Mother's heart was won. Aside, she asked what I was going to do about Pearl. She knew of my relationship and had presumed that I would marry Pearl.

I told her I had finally changed my mind about Pearl. Mother had never approved of my marriage to Peggy, but she gave her blessing to a future wedding with Loy, if and when the divorce was granted.

Loy and I raced back to Baltimore. I put the car in her mother's

garage and reported to Bradley Field, Connecticut, where I was to prepare two hundred men for duty overseas.

Chapter L

Bradley Field was a nightmare to me.

First of all, the weather was foul. Autumn rains had arrived with mist and wind. Sodden leaves dropped away, leaving black and forbidding branches. The scenery was bleak. The wind was cold and wet.

There was no friendly face to cheer me on and no familiar voice to hear. Since I was on detached duty, the commanding officer and other personnel were not inclined to take more than a passing interest in my problems. Indeed, when I asked for help, I got shrugs. I was told that what I had to accomplish was up to me.

I had been trained in administration, but not in command functions. There is a profound difference. I had to assume the duties of command for some 200 men who wanted no part of the Army, or anything to do with anyone in command of anything.

This wasn't a group of draftees who were limp and lackluster, giving obedience while they dreamed of returning home. There wasn't a man assigned to my command who wasn't in some kind of trouble. Perhaps half of them were perpetual AWOLs. One man had been in the Army a full eighteen months without ever being paid. The reason? He was away without leave most of the time. His records were virtually non-existent.

I had six hardened criminals, who were taken out of respective guardhouses and brought to me by the MPs. They were released into my custody. One was a suspected murderer. The others had been found guilty of armed robbery, assault, intent to commit murder, mugging, or what have you.

At least a score of others were suspected of similar misdeeds, but had never been convicted. The AWOLs were the pussycats; the rest of the men were downright dangerous.

I explained to the men what they were there for. I assured them that, while we stayed at Bradley, my job was to get their records in shape. As soon as we had a full contingent of 200, we would be activated for a movement overseas. There was a conspicuous display of disinterest in this announcement.

Some of the men had been promoted at one time or another, but

most of them had been reduced in rank. Few stripes existed anywhere.

My top ranking non-coin was a staff sergeant whom I assigned as first sergeant. I had two buck sergeants, three corporals, and one Pfc. The rest were privates.

I was assigned the typical temporary building. In combination with a shed it abutted, it could house the full 200, if and when they all arrived. It was located in a remote area to assist in isolating my men from base personnel.

I was advised that I would be assigned two commissioned officers to serve under me. However, each had been delayed en route, so neither showed until just before we departed. Meanwhile, I had to do most of the work myself, including the typing. The staff sergeant was helpful as a typist, but he did not have the confidence of the men. He demonstrated quickly that he had no authority over anyone, including himself.

Day after day, I tried to get the records into shape. I had to write to various commands, (the men were being dragooned from all over the United States), attempt to get missing documents, and try to get everyone's records organized.

The job was never completed. It would have taken months, and I was given two weeks. Further, every roll call found new AWOLs appearing on the charts. New arrivals slipped off into the woods, never to be seen again, at least by me.

I set up a program of calisthenics and outdoor sports to occupy the time of the men. They ignored the program.

Since I was a transit officer, and not one who would be serving with these violent types, I saw no reason to win their confidence. My job was to get them to Europe with records in shape. I could at least do some good with the records. I wasn't sure I could get any of them to Europe.

Altogether I was assigned 214 men. When time came for us to move, I was able to muster only 182. The rest had either not arrived or they had disappeared into the hinterland.

The first thing I began to learn was that threats were a waste of time. I learned how limited a motivational force a threat can be among those who wielded force as their own ultimate weapon. Unless I was prepared to use ultimate violence myself—and I was restrained both by Army regulation and temperament—I had small

hold on any of them.

The men disregarded my orders and I had to rely on internal enforcement. I reduced my orders to suggestions and, after that, the men and I existed in a kind of armed truce. The base could offer no help.

In the main, I stayed out of their way, locked the door of my room each night, and hoped I'd awaken the next morning. The Army policy now appeared without disguise. These men were impervious to appeals to loyalty, patriotism, or even fundamental self-interest. Their value systems were other than my own. They were misfits.

I could well imagine the process by which I had been chosen to assemble and take them abroad. Some ranking officer had conceived of taking the Army's problem types (including me) into the war zone. And since virtually all of us were "different" one way or another, our loss in combat would hardly be lamented.

Meanwhile, some of the men had already demonstrated a ferocity and viciousness that might make them excellent soldiers in a crisis. The rest of us were peaceful and possibly overly timid. Perhaps physical conflict would scare us into fighting. If not, we weren't of much use anyway. Not to the Army.

When this possibility soaked in, I abandoned all efforts to deal with my command in a military manner. Instead, I began to use common sense. I never asked the men to do anything I wasn't myself doing in terms of my own fundamental survival and self-interest.

The moment I stopped acting like a commanding officer and limited my efforts to my own duties, the armed truce developed. But before it occurred, I had one confrontation with about fifty of the toughest men, who refused point blank to carry out an order.

I consulted the base commander on the advisability of confining my most militant antagonists to the guardhouse until the troop movement began. I was told to forget it. The base had all the problems it could handle. It didn't have enough men to provide the kind of military force needed to compel fifty or more of my men to do as they were told.

Putting and keeping them in the guardhouse would have been impossible. The building would house only four or five. Further, if my men didn't like the building they were in, they were strong and independent enough to kick out the sides, and smash their way clear.

I was advised that if I completed the necessary paper work to confine the men, there would have to be a hearing on each guard-house case. My departure for overseas could be indefinitely delayed. This would be entered on my own permanent records as evidence of inefficiency. It was up to me to cope and to follow my basic directive.

I was told to go to Ordinance and get an automatic gun for my own protection. I decided against it. If the men learned that I carried a weapon, the truce would vanish. Further, I was reasonably certain they would somehow steal the piece. From that moment on, no one on the base would be safe. Especially me.

So, I put the best face on it I could, gave an outward appearance of confidence, and managed to achieve some of the paper work.

Indeed, on one occasion I admitted to the assembled company that I was not going to take reprisals against them, if regulations were followed. Instead, I said that I would treat them as adults. I pointed out that I was under the same amount of duress they were.

This did not create any sort of fellowship, but we got along. I was not respected, but I was tolerated. Some of the men refused to make their beds. I held no inspections, set up no duty rosters, and let them swill in their own juices. They played cards, rolled dice, and lolled about like a gang of cutthroats in a mountain hideaway.

A new order from higher up set the date of departure. In a non-military manner and looking as sloppy as possible, the men herded themselves to the inevitable railroad siding. They boarded the awaiting train. I had anticipated an uprising but got compliance instead.

By night, we rode to Camp Kilmer in New Jersey, where my commissioned assistants finally put in an appearance.

One afternoon, leaving a lieutenant in command, I telephoned Loy. We arranged to meet in Baltimore so we could have one more evening together before I left.

I picked her up at home. We enjoyed a movie and had a wonderful, although poignant evening. When we parted, I wasn't certain I would ever see her again.

I returned to Camp Kilmer about two a.m. Making my way to the Orderly Room, I was halted outside by one of my men. He had a rifle and a bayonet in its scabbard was in his belt.

Fearing the worst, I said, "Where did you get that gun, soldier?"

“Government Issue, Captain,” he said. “They were handed out this afternoon when you left. Lieutenant ordered it.”

“I’d like to go into the Orderly Room,” I said.

“I don’t think you ought to, Captain.”

“Why not?”

“We ain’t got it cleaned up yet.”

“You’re cleaning it up?” This was the first instance I’d heard of these gorillas wanting to clean up anything.

“Just the blood.”

“Blood! What happened?” I moved forward and the soldier let me pass. I opened the door and stepped in.

A tow-headed trooper named Landowski, who had been convicted of armed robbery, was on his hands and knees with a scrub brush. He was working to remove a dark stain from the floorboards. Gouts of blood were on the desk. There were splashes of gore on the rafters and walls.

“What the hell happened?” I demanded.

The man on the floor didn’t stand; he just kept scrubbing. “I tried to get it all cleaned up before you got back,” he admitted. “I had to do it.”

“Stand up and talk to me,” I said. “Tell me about it.”

I noted the private’s right arm was bandaged. He scrambled to his feet.

“Lieutenant made me Orderly for tonight. Sir. Private— wanted a pass and found the pad in the desk, where you put them. None of us was going out on pass, and I wouldn’t sign. He decided to sign his own pass.

“When I grabbed it, he pulled his bayonet and tried to knife me.” The soldier smiled in pride. “I ‘m pretty good with a knife, Captain. He picked the wrong guy. I cut him up pretty good, but he got me in the arm. That’s why the blood is all over the place. It’s my blood. It got on the ceiling when I was waving my arm. He’s in the guard-house. But he’ll be okay. I should have killed the son-of-a-bitch.”

“I’m relieved to know you didn’t.”

“Yeah? well thanks. They treated both of us at the hospital but we’re okay. I’m gonna settle his hash later.”

“He may be planning to do the same to you.”

“Yeah, that’s what I figger.”

“This isn’t Bradley Field, Landowski. There’ll be an inspection of

this room tomorrow by base officers. Carry on.”

“Yes, sir.” He dropped to his knees and went back to work.

I went to the BOQ. Since it was late at night I determined to confront the Lieutenant in the morning. However, I noticed his bunk was empty.

I dropped off to sleep, but was awakened by the sound of whippers. Opening my eyes, I saw the Lieutenant standing beside his bunk and removing his clothes. He was talking to a nurse in muffled tones. She was also disrobing. Women were not allowed in men’s barracks under any conditions.

In a few moments, they crawled into the sack together and I knew by the sounds that the Lieutenant didn’t have a care in the world. Apparently, at least one of my commissioned officers was as indifferent to Army orders as the men.

A couple of nights later, the entire command was activated. We went back to New York City, the port of embarkation. A large ocean liner was at the pier and I made out her name, the “Ile de France.”

Guards were everywhere. Without difficulty, the men were boarded. Their weapons had been removed at my request before the movement began. There had been a slight protest. The belief at Kilmer was that when a company was ready for departure, the men leaving were soldiers. I profoundly doubted it insofar as my own company was concerned.

We sailed in the middle of the night and were out of sight of land when daylight came. I had been assigned to a large stateroom, along with 14 other officers. The space had been intended for two. Three tiers of bunks had been installed, with approximately a foot and a half-vertical clearance between them. Thus, the space for two was expected to handle fifteen.

It was impossible to sit up in bed. If you awoke suddenly and tried to sit up you were immediately in touch with the man above you or with the ceiling, if you were fortunate enough to be on top.

My first day at sea I learned that I was not a particularly good sailor. The motion of the ship wasn’t too bad until I went to my first meal. Then the slow sinking of the horizon through the portholes, followed by the slow re-emergence of the horizon as it crossed my line of vision, got to me. I learned that if I went on deck where the brisk, cold wind blew constantly, I felt fine.

On deck, my staff Sergeant approached me. He had obtained special permission to seek me out.

"Captain," he said. "I've tried to do as you told me. But I'm asking you a favor. Put someone else in as top kick. I can't handle the men."

"What's gone wrong?"

"Nothing. Not yet. But they're planning to kill me."

"Come on, Sergeant. Nobody's going to kill anyone. At least not on ship."

"Oh, yes, they will, too, Sir. They've told me so."

"You've got the wind up, Sergeant. They don't have any weapons. Even if they wanted to, there's no way they can."

"They still have their bayonets."

"I ordered all their weapons collected," I said. "That was done."

"Well, it was and it wasn't," the Sergeant insisted.

"Did you see how many had 'lost' their bayonets? They stole 'em and hid them in their duffel bags. They're going to slit my throat."

"All of them?"

"No. I don't mean that. But the worst ones still have them. And all they need is one. The men don't like me. When I learned that the bayonets were still down there in the hold with them, I tried to collect them. That's when they ganged up on me."

"I don't care if you bust me. In fact, I want you to. Make me a private. I don't want any authority with this gang. Just let me be a dogface, sir. That's the favor. Please bust me."

"You've got it," I said. "First, take me into the hold where the men are bivouacked."

"Bivouacked?" he repeated. "What's that?"

"Let's go, sarg...er, private."

"Yes, sir."

I followed him down the companionways into the bowels of the ship. Finally, in a forward compartment where the pitching of the ship was pronounced, I found my company. They had been furnished hammocks, some of which were still in place. Every eye was on me. I could feel the hostility.

I looked around. Some of the men were surly, and some were sick. I made up my mind at once. "Sergeant— is removed from duty," I said. "I'm reducing him to private." No reaction other than belligerent stares.

"Private Landowski!"

"Here. Sir." The tow-headed erstwhile orderly lounged forward.

"I'm appointing you as Acting First Sergeant," I said to him. "You keep these goons in line. Got it?"

Landowski's face split into a grin. "Yes, sir, Captain, sir."

He turned to the men. "Any of you bastards want to start something, you answer to me. Understand?"

There was a spate of smiles and a few nods. "Sure thing," "Anything you say."

If I had had more knowledge and experience, I'd have made that duty assignment earlier. From that moment on, my command behaved well. I had only to issue an order to Landowski and things got done.

The "Ile de France" had been converted into a troop ship from its prior status as a proud luxury liner. Because it had good engines, it sailed alone. Most of the movement of personnel across the Atlantic was by convoy in what were called Liberty ships.

In the case of the ship I was on, the Navy believed that speed was a better weapon against attack than escorting destroyers. Submarine wolf packs were everywhere, but their below-surface speed made it possible for the "Ile de France" to outrun them.

We changed direction from time to time to throw off pursuit, and made the crossing in six days without sighting anything more hostile than the waves. As a rule, convoys took from two to three weeks. Not infrequently, a ship or two in a convoy would be lost as torpedoes came out of nowhere to blow holes beneath the waterline.

I found that I could handle the tendency to nausea best if I kept busy. I took it on myself to issue a daily ship's bulletin. I cut the stencil myself on a typewriter that kept moving about the desk as the ship swayed. Ship's personnel mimeographed and circulated what I produced.

I hope that it was an effective device to bolster morale. At least it helped me.

I also learned the method that Landowski used to keep everyone docile. From the galley he obtained a huge piece of raw salt-pork. He kept it with him until it turned rancid. Whenever anyone got out of line he would produce this revolting item and gnaw on it. Apparently he had a cast-iron stomach. Between the motion of the ship, the salt pork, and Landowki, everything worked.

The men even policed up their quarters, stowed their hammocks,

and began to act with some degree of military discipline.

I stayed away as much as possible.

I found a couple of officers who enjoyed chess. One man, a Russian, was far better at the game than I was. Seasickness also stayed at bay, I learned, when my mind was busy. I beat the Russian twice and gave up keeping track of his victories over me.

Finally, the heavy swells stopped. We had sailed around the northern end of Ireland and moved southeasterly in the direction of our port of debarkation, which proved to be Liverpool.

We sailed slowly up the estuary in daytime and arrived before dark. Prior to tying up, we prepared for departure, which occurred under cover of night.

The men were moved off ship, formed into companies for marching. My two officers and I lead the way; we moved with several thousand others who had been aboard. Blackout regulations prevailed.

We walked—I cannot call it a march—over rough cobblestone streets, often with such meager light that footing was impossible to discern. Amid stumbling and muttered curses, we made our way from dockside to a railway station.

This was my only view of Liverpool and I learned next to nothing about the place. Some of the local populace greeted us from time to time from the adjacent darkness.

“It’s the Yanks.”

“Welcome to England.”

“Got any gum?” was among the greetings we received, often from feminine voices.

The compartmentalized trains of Great Britain were strange to all of us. Making it less strange, was a contingent of Red Cross ladies with the inevitable coffee and doughnuts, who greeted us at train-side. They plied us with steaming brew and crullers.

At last all were aboard the train. We roared away through the night, arriving at last at the camp where we would be processed. I learned later that we had traversed a great part of the width of the British Island. We arrived at our final destination as a new dawn was breaking.

Once more we were taken from the train. All of us, officers and men, were marched to what was called the decontamination center.

The decontamination structures had been built with Army rules in mind. One entire building was given over to showers. A second building contained wash basins. A third held toilets. Obviously, all personal functions were expected to occur by the numbers.

We were showered with steaming hot water containing a percentage of naphtha, or other petroleum product, calculated to kill any body livestock. Then, in a nearly nude state, we were marched to the building containing basins so we could shave and wash faces and hands. Finally, we were herded into the third building and urged to relive ourselves.

To preserve Army decorum, the men weren't allowed to mingle with the officers during these exercises. A group of officers went first. Then, a group of enlisted men.

Finally—after my first overseas breakfast of powdered eggs that were slightly green in color, burned toast with jelly, and coffee that could have served as petrol for a fighter plane—I was approached by an American officer. He wanted the records of my command. I had them, of course, and surrendered them on order.

I never saw any of my men again. I have no idea what happened to them.

I had completed my duty assignment on time. I was instructed to report to the office of a certain Colonel.

Chapter LI

My duty had been discharged. My company of misfits was no longer my responsibility. I was in England, in the war zone, called ETO (European Theater of Operations). I had enlisted so I could fight for my country. All avenues were open so I could be assigned anywhere I was needed.

My reaction? It surprised me completely. I wanted out. I wanted nothing to do with England, the ETO, the Army, or the war. The romantic notions of personal heroism had vanished like a morning mist. I no longer wanted to be a hero.

I had been apprehensive concerning the men under me, worrying that one of them might assault me. Then I had crossed the Atlantic, and my anxiety about the roving submarine wolf packs intensified. My immediate fear was that somehow, in their understandable desire for more replacements, someone would disregard my orders, and keep me in England.

I reported to the commanding officer at the processing center. When I was asked what I wanted to do, I insisted on the letter of my orders. I was on detached duty. When the duty had ended, I was to return to my original base at Camp Springs, Maryland. That's what the orders read.

This was not the expected reaction. They expended persuasion to get my feet back on the glory road. My 201 file was excellent. I could win rapid promotion. I could have adventure, travel, and serve my country—exactly what I had wanted.

I cannot account for my about-face except to admit that I didn't know my own mind.

The Colonel had no choice, unless he wished to contest the decision and turn it into a federal case. I wasn't all that necessary to the war effort. My original orders and my insistence were victorious.

My new orders took me to London, where I was to await transport back to the United States and McHugo's command in Maryland. I passed the time impatiently, checking every day to learn if passage had been arranged.

My impressions of British life were sketchy at best. You would think that I would put my time to good use. I had always admired

the British, and most particularly the British theater. British actors are among the finest in the world. Had I been of a different temperament, I would have exploited my advantage. Instead, I fretted at the delay and worried that some ranking officer would replace my orders with new ones.

I kept to myself. I did manage tickets to a couple of shows. The British theater continued in spite of everything. But I attended alone, choosing to avoid companionship. I dreamed about Loy and about the good old USA. How marvelous a place it is. I doubt if this country is ever fully appreciated by any native until he is trodding foreign soil.

Well into the third week of my enforced stay in London, the good news came. Space had been found for me on an airplane. It left from Croydon, flew to Glasgow, Scotland, and then—with stops in Northern Ireland and Iceland—it would wing its way across the Atlantic to the States.

My relief was overpowering. I climbed aboard the four-engine transport, grateful that I could avoid the sea-level route. But I wondered how reliable any plane would be on such a long flight.

The trip to Scotland was a short one, but en route, engine trouble caused a day's delay at Glasgow. I spent the time in an officer's club, playing chess. Other passengers and myself were warned not to leave the area. When the plane was repaired, it would leave. If we weren't on it, too bad.

Again on the wing, we crossed to Nut's Corner in Northern Ireland. Here we never left the plane. We sat on the ground for about four hours, but no difficulties with equipment had developed. Soon we were zooming northward through dark and bumpy skies.

We came down to a jolting landing in a blizzard at the airport in Reykjavik, Iceland. One of the engines had conked out during the last few minutes of flight. We were told that we had just barely managed a safe landing. Splendid. My anxiety rose to new heights.

Before the exit door was opened, we were warned to put on our heaviest clothing. I dug out my trench coat and gloves, prepared to meet the worst. The wind was so fierce, I was nearly blown from the descent ladder. The landscape was blotted out. The snow blew horizontally. The ground and the runway were clear, but visibility seemed to be about twelve feet. How the pilot had managed that landing I'll never know. Doubtless, if all engines had been working,

we'd have been ordered to return to Ireland. Again, I thanked my lucky star.

Moving like a line of elephants in a circus parade by keeping an eye or a hand on the man in front, we filed to a Quonset hut. We entered into a crowded, steamy hot atmosphere amid men who lived and worked in Iceland.

For a moment, I had an overwhelming sense of compassion. What had these Americans done to deserve the exile they were experiencing? It only took a few minutes to learn that my random thought was not an original one.

Word came that we were to remain alert, ready for departure. The malfunction was minor and we'd soon be on our way again. Once more I waited. We ate dehydrated potatoes, green powdered eggs and biscuits. The biscuits were not dehydrated, according to report, but I could have used them as missiles if I had been equipped with a slingshot. At least they were good for your teeth. The permanent personnel called them dog biscuits, but that couldn't have been true. No one would have maltreated a pet to that extent.

The welcome word came. We surged out into the dim light of the swirling, blowing arctic gale. We leaned into the wind and were wafted back to the plane. Aboard, the engines roared into life. We taxied down the runway and turned, ready for take-off.

The pilot kept revving the engines one-by-one. About half an hour passed before the plane taxied back to its earlier parking spot. Number three engine was still malfunctioning.

Once more into the wind and to the Quonset hut. Presently the word came. Two hours more and, perhaps, we could take off.

A kindly officer took us by means of tunnels to another Quonset, where bunks had been provided. We were advised to remain dressed, but we could lie down. I suppose I dozed off. If so, the nap was brief. We were again routed out and blown to the airplane.

Once more settled in, the plane taxied down the runway, turned, and the pilot tested the props. Another thirty minutes passed. Again, we taxied back to our familiar parking spot. Again, we fought the tornado winds to find shelter in the Quonset.

We were fed again, I suppose to keep in practice. This time we had a very acceptable blueberry pie. I think it was blueberry. Anyway, I had two pieces.

There weren't enough bunks to go around and, when the regular

crew got off duty, they'd be using the beds we were given. The permanent personnel slept and worked in shifts. The beds hardly had time to cool between occupants.

I had horrific dreams of disaster at sea. Six hours later, we boarded all over again. The second officer walked through the plane informing us that, should we have to ditch at sea, life expectancy in the frigid waters of the North Atlantic was six minutes. Marvelous. Filled with underwhelming confidence, the plane finally roared down the runway and lifted into the teeth of what seemed a hurricane. We were airborne.

Once we climbed above the storm, the ride smoothed out. Only a few hours later, we came down at Goose Bay, Newfoundland, Canada.

We were permitted to debark so long as we stayed near the plane. Without exception, we took advantage of this respite to stretch our cramped limbs and to rejoice that the Atlantic was behind us.

The final leg of the journey took us to New York, where I caught a train for Washington, D.C. This was familiar terrain at last! And how good it looked.

I detrained in the Capitol City and telephoned the adjutant for transportation. When I had left about six to eight weeks earlier, he had been a Captain Hibbard. Now he was Major Hibbard. Things had happened while I had been away.

At base headquarters, I saluted the Major, handed in my orders, and said: "Captain LeFevre, reporting for duty."

"So you came back," was his cryptic observation.

"Of course," I said. "Going to Europe isn't that hazardous."

"We didn't expect you."

"My orders..." I began.

"I know." He nodded. "Everyone else who's had a crack at that assignment has managed to be reassigned in Europe."

"Thanks for the warm welcome," I said.

"I won't kid you, LeFevre. Your arrival is embarrassing."

"Oh? What have I done wrong?"

"You haven't done anything wrong. So far as I know. That's what's embarrassing. The only thing is, Abernathy is now our Special Services Officer. And he's doing a fine job."

"He's a good man," I confirmed.

"That's only part of it. We brought in a junior officer who is now

working under him. There's no place for you in our T.O."

"What do you want me to do?"

Hibbard laughed. "We'll think of something. Meanwhile," he came around his desk and shook hands. "it's good seeing you again. I'll assign you to the B.O.Q. and we'll see what turns up. Meanwhile, you're unassigned."

"In that case, sir, how about a pass? I have friends in Baltimore I'd like to see."

"No problem." He signed a pass. "I'm leaving the time up to you, LeFevre. Fill in that part when you're ready."

"Hey, that's great. Thanks."

I turned to leave, but Hibbard stopped me. "Wait. I nearly forgot. Major Arends wants to see you. He says he has some important information for you, and asked to be put in touch if I heard from you. Better see him at once."

Arends was the Chaplain. "Sure thing, Major." As Special Services Officer, I knew Arends well. We had worked together.

"Arends is now acting as our legal officer," Hibbard went on. "I think there's been some legal development in your affairs."

"Some legal development? " I was blank.

"Go see Arends," Hibbard repeated.

"Right."

My staff car driver headed in the direction of the chapel.

The building was not far from my former offices. I stopped off there to say hello to Abernathy and the various GI's, formerly my own staff.

This time I was warmly greeted by everyone except Abernathy, who showed a bit of apprehension. I sought to reassure him. "Don't worry about a thing, my friend," I said. "I know you have my job. I don't want it back and I'm not asking for it."

"It's okay, LeFevre. It's yours if you want it." His face told how serious a blow that would be.

"I mean it," I said. "I'm not taking the job away from you. You're the man. I'm just passing through. Hibbard is trying to find something else for me and I expect I'll be moving to some other location. Put it out of your mind and be at peace."

Abernathy's face wreathed in smiles. He knew I was being sincere. "Thanks," he said. "You know McHugo'd return it to you, if you asked."

"Maybe he would and maybe he wouldn't. But I'm not asking. Okay?"

We shook hands and parted.

The chapel shone under a coat of white enamel and looked like a picture taken from a New England poster. Arends was in his office. We shook hands and exchanged a few pleasant observations.

"I guess you know I'm now the legal officer," Arends finally said. "Among other things."

I nodded, smiling. "Hibbard told me."

Arends eyed me soberly. "I guess you and the misses weren't hitting it off too well when you joined the Army," he said.

I nodded. "That's an under statement."

"It's difficult for me to say this."

"Let me make it easy on you. Forget your well-known tact. Don't pussyfoot. Lay it out cold."

"While you were gone, your wife divorced you."

"No kidding?" I thought of Pearl. She had been confident that a divorce could be managed. My elation climbed on top and waved a flag in exaltation.

"Didn't you get a notice?" Arends demanded. "I mailed one to you."

"I've been moving too fast. Apparently it missed me."

Arends' face went stony. "Then I can nullify the divorce. The decree won't stand up. You can fight it."

"Fight it! Good Lord, Major. I don't want to fight it. I've wanted a divorce for years."

"Haven't you even seen a copy of her complaint?"

"Not a thing."

"She alleged some pretty serious things."

"But the divorce is valid if I don't contest it?"

"Yes. I'm afraid it is."

"That means I'm a single man?"

"That's right." There was no joy on his face.

"Glory hallelujah!"

"Don't you want to know what she accused you of?"

"Frankly, no. It really doesn't matter. She made some charges that stuck. That's the important thing. Also, may I say that my wi...former wife is fundamentally honest. Actually, she's a very good person. I'd given her grounds for divorce and I suspect she cited them. Maybe

she made it sound worse than it was but, frankly, I wouldn't have contested it if she'd accused me of grand theft."

Arends was non-plussed. "At least let me give you a copy of it."

"I don't want a copy of it. I don't want to be reminded. Let's just say that I admit to giving her grounds. You'd have no way of knowing it, my friend, but you've given me just about the best piece of news it's possible for a man to get."

Arends lowered his face. "This war!" he murmured with venom. "It's destroying the sanctity of marriage."

"Don't blame the war for this one," I said. "We were estranged before the war began. We're simply not compatible. And you can lay it all on me. I've been the heavy in this one."

"I had no idea you'd feel this way."

"Of course. You'd have no idea. I don't go around airing my dirty linen."

I left the Major shaking his head and returned to the waiting staff car. Pearl must have managed to get Peggy to change her mind. Pearl was certainly a miracle worker. But I didn't owe her anything.

Or did I? I hadn't confided my final decision to her because I hadn't believed a divorce was possible. But I wasn't going to marry her. I made that determination at the time I purchased the ring I gave to Loy.

But I hadn't been entirely frank with Loy, either. I had held out the hope to Loy that, somehow, a divorce might take place when I wasn't convinced of it. But it had occurred.

I was promised to two different women. This was no time to waiver. I was going to act in my own best interest. And I would have to act at once.

I put aside the idea of phoning Pearl to let her know I was back in the States. Pearl was persuasive. Just talking to her could re-create my uncertainty. For a change, I knew what I wanted. Not what Saint Germain wanted. If there was a Saint Germain. This was what *I* wanted to do. Assuming the Master's existence, I hoped and trusted he'd be pleased.

I considered the various options I had in other areas. Thanks to Hibbard and McHugo, I had no immediate military duties. And I had a pass that was as lengthy as I wished it to be. Why should I stay at Camp Springs?

My girl was in Baltimore. My car was in Baltimore. My interests

were in Baltimore. Why not take all my things to Baltimore and stay at the Reuling home? Meanwhile, why not get married to Loy at once? Provided she still wanted me.

I had traveled too fast to have heard from her. What if she had changed her mind? I had, of course, written to her. But my last contact with her had been on the night of her visit at Camp Kilmer.

"Calm down, LeFevre," I said to myself. "Take it easy and you'll have less to be sorry for."

I was exhausted from all my travels.

The driver took me to the B.O.Q. and I spent a night there without unpacking my things.

Early the next morning, I obtained transportation and was driven back to the Union Station in Washington. I caught a train for Baltimore, arriving at about seven a.m. With my duffel bag, helmet, gas mask, and toting my carbine, I obtained a taxi and had myself delivered to Loy's front steps.

It must have been about seven-thirty in the morning. It happened to be Palm Sunday. When I rang the bell, Loy came to the door in her pajamas and robe. She was startled out of her wits by the sight of a fully armed and equipped soldier, apparently ready to make an entrance.

She recognized me, and her joy vied with her astonishment at my appearance. She awakened her mother and sister, Lorna, as I dragged all my accoutrements into the house.

"My divorce has come through," I said to Loy. "I want to marry you. Right away. That is, if you still want me."

"Of course I do, silly."

"How soon can you be ready?"

First estimates entailed a month from her point of view.

Except for the formality of getting a license, I was ready for the ceremony that same afternoon. But the law must be satisfied and a three-day wait was mandatory.

Wednesday would be the earliest date legally possible.

"You know how the Army is," I said to her and the family. "At the moment I'm unassigned. But that won't last long. At last I'm single. Also, I have time. I may not have this much consecutive time off again until the war is over. A month is much too long."

Whatever obstacles were raised, I swept them aside. All the details could be handled swiftly if we went to work on it. The wedding

dress, the invitations, the arrangements.

“Where will the ceremony be held?” Loy asked.

“I have an idea,” I said. “Why not have the wedding at Camp Springs? Major Arends is Chaplain and a good friend. I think he’d be delighted to perform the honors.”

We finally agreed to aim for an Easter wedding, one week away.

After an exciting visit, and a night spent under the same roof with Loy, I got out the car. It was none the worse for wear, except for a weak battery.

In keeping with tradition, I agreed not to see Loy again until the ceremony. Instead, I would return to Camp Springs, until the fateful day. Before leaving Baltimore, I obtained the marriage license that authorized the wedding within the city and county.

Chapter LII

It was a surprise, but the realization finally came. I was afraid of Pearl. The woman over-awed me. She had fortitude, determination, and consistency. Based on my habitual and conditioned beliefs concerning sex, she was the most moral woman I had ever known.

I knew that my haste to re-marry had more to do with anxiety about Pearl than it did with uncertainties over what the Army would demand of me next. I wanted to be safely tied to another woman before I faced Pearl. Even a letter from Pearl would convince me that I owed her a debt for severing the knot between Peggy and me. On the other hand, Pearl was presumably still married to Sidney although she could divorce him anytime. Pearl always claimed to be in command of every contingency, and she had me convinced.

But to complete the picture, there was something about Loy that totally captivated. She was so different from Pearl. Pearl was an idealist; Loy was pragmatic. Pearl would demand everything from me; Loy would demand little. Pearl was complicated, complex, difficult. Loy was uncomplicated, direct, and as easy to read as bold-faced type.

Loy's attitude to sex intrigued me most. Loy wasn't immoral. She didn't think that way. To her sex was normal, natural, and desirable. She lived life a day at a time. And her sunny disposition filled our times together with delight. She was younger by nine years. And she was beautiful, with a gorgeous voice.

I was repelled by Pearl's dominance; attracted by Loy's ingenuousness. Even Mother had approved of Loy. Yet, from Mother's Victorian perspective, Loy could have been considered a loose woman, insofar as sex was concerned. Now the die was cast. I had the license and Loy had fixed the date. It was up to me to make the arrangements for the service, obtaining a minister and, if possible, booking the chapel for an Easter ceremony.

I contacted Major Arends, the Chaplain, and fortunately got full cooperation. The Major's chagrin at my divorce was instantly overcome when he learned that I planned to re-marry and, most especially, when he learned I wanted him to preside. The chapel was

made available for a one o'clock ceremony on Easter Sunday.

My next concern was arranging for the best man. My natural choice was Vern Hanson. In a sense, it was because of him that I had contacted Loy at the Women's Club dance, out of which our relationship had blossomed. But Vern had already been shipped on permanent duty to Europe. He had been assigned to a fighter wing and was somewhere overseas, possibly at an APO address he had provided.

I had hoped for a simple splicing, such as could occur before a Justice of the Peace. In that case, the legal requirements could be met without undue preparation. But Loy's request for a wedding in a church was hardly unreasonable, especially when she was willing to act with the alacrity my own situation warranted.

I had only a few friends among the officer personnel at Camp Springs and I went over the brief list, seeking a ring-bearer. I could sense the political advantages if I asked McHugo to stand with me. But McHugo thought I was lacking as a soldier, undoubtedly an accurate assessment on his part. I had always refused to butter him up, although he did have one excellent trait as a commanding officer. He knew his own limitations. He surrounded himself with capable people, who did the work and kept him out of trouble. I'm not including myself in this category. To know one's own limits is the beginning of wisdom. As yet, this was a bit of wisdom I didn't have. Were I to ask McHugo to serve as my best man, my appeal to his vanity would have been blatantly political and totally out of character for me. I wasn't seeking promotion. Besides, I had only been a Captain for a few months and wasn't eligible. In the Army, one advances as one wins support from superiors.

I suspect that McHugo held me in contempt because I refused to drink and party with the other officers. I felt it was morally wrong to play around. McHugo drank, sometimes to excess, and was a womanizer. He probably felt I thought myself superior to him. In a way, if that was what he thought, he would have been correct. I thought he had the morals of an alley tomcat. I respected his position and gave him full support as an officer. Personally, we had nothing in common.

After going over my roster of eligibles, I chose Lieutenant Colonel Brock. He was the field's ranking surgeon in command of the medical detachment and in charge of the base hospital.

Brock was a man I had known since the move to Camp Springs and his own assignment there. He was a scholar, a scientist, and a medical practitioner of some repute. He had such a sweet disposition that I cannot recall a negative thing ever said about him by anyone.

Further, he was only slightly my senior, had been recently married, and I had a real affection for him. This was encouraged because of his own sobriety. He didn't smoke or drink, and appeared immune to opportunities for dalliances.

I asked him to stand with me. He was apparently overjoyed to be of service.

With these arrangements completed, I got my dress uniform into shape, and then telephoned Loy that everything was in order. All we had to do was wait until Sunday. She, her mother and sister, together with her best friend, could arrive at Camp Springs without help from me.

Out of the blue came a letter from Pearl. Its information almost caused me to gasp out loud. Pearl had obtained a divorce from Sidney. That was more or less what I had anticipated. But the big news was that Peggy was married again. She had moved to the West Coast with the boys at Pearl's urging. She had taken a job as housekeeper for Sidney. Sidney was moving up in the company and doing well.

While I had been crossing the Atlantic, not only had Peggy obtained a divorce, but Pearl had also. With those ruptures complete, Peggy and Sidney had married. My former wife was now wedded to the former husband of the woman I had loved to distraction. Pearl anticipated that a ceremony would soon occur between the two of us.

I decided to keep this development to myself until my own nuptials were completed. I was terrified that Pearl might show up to throw all my plans into disarray.

Easter Sunday finally arrived, made to order by the weather department. The day was glorious. The little church was filled with flowers, not by the wedding party, but by the many supporters of Major Arends. After all, it was Easter Sunday. There were lilies, roses and an abundance of spring flowers of all descriptions. We couldn't have afforded such a magnificent display.

The church had been repainted in a soft pink with white trim. It

was so clean and new in appearance, it sparkled.

Loy arrived, wearing a lavender dress, a pink hat, and an orchid that I presented to her through the intermediary of an obliging florist. She was accompanied by her mother and sister, Lorna, together with an aunt and uncle who came to furnish moral support. Loy's bride's maid, a beautiful young lady, was Loy's dearest friend, Peggy Ring.

A GI assigned to Chaplain Arends manipulated the old foot pedal organ. He was the only one present who cried. His tears were profuse enough to satisfy everyone.

Weddings are mostly preparation; the actual ritual is mercifully brief. Loy and I came proudly down the middle and only aisle, arm in arm. Colonel McHugo emerged from his staff car, strode up to the door of the little church, threw one handful of rice in our direction, pivoted and marched back to his staff car which roared away.

For an affair of this kind, my second-hand Chevy would hardly serve. I had rented a limousine for the occasion. Together the bride and groom sped off the base with an appearance of luxury that was utterly out of character with their penurious condition.

Symbolically, I had decided that we would spend our first night together at the Ben Franklin Hotel in Philadelphia. It was the site of my first meeting with Pearl. It was also the place where I had firmly resolved to shut out my old life and turn in an entirely new direction. I had reason to hold that particular hostelry in high regard.

When I had attempted to get a leave of absence for a honeymoon, it had been denied. My earlier, open-ended pass had been terminated swiftly by my own actions. A second one hadn't been forthcoming. Instead, it seemed that I would have some duties to attend to at the base, and a new assignment was pending.

We had to use our time to its fullest. We took the train to Philadelphia and a taxi to the Ben Franklin. At last my fulfillment was at hand.

Once in our room, Loy developed a high fever. She insisted that she felt fine. Her forehead was as hot as a steam radiator, and her face flushed.

Alarmed, I called for the house doctor. He came to our room about ten o'clock in the evening. Her temperature soared between 102 and 103 degrees. But he could find nothing else wrong with her. Shrewdly, he diagnosed her condition as one induced by excitement.

That was our honeymoon. I promised Loy that we'd manage something better at a later date. On Monday morning, April 10, we returned to Baltimore where I escorted her to her mother's home.

In view of the uncertainties surrounding my own upcoming assignment, we decided that she would keep her job at the B&O and continue to live at home.

Entraining for the final leg of my return to camp, I wondered at this strange series of events. Once more I had a sense of guilt. I had stepped into a new marriage. I had done it to serve myself. I had also learned that I wasn't as brave and as eager to serve my country as I had confidently thought. Was I a coward? I didn't think so. But perhaps I was. I was fearful of meeting Pearl. I didn't like to think of the dangers confronting American fighting forces in Europe.

Could all this be a result of Saint Germain and his disappointment in me? It was a possibility.

When I reported for duty on Tuesday morning, I was asked to become liaison officer in dealing with some VIPs who were coming to Camp Springs for some dedication ceremonies. Camp Springs was being recognized as a functional base in America's defense network. It would now become a key to the control and operation of air defense of the entire Eastern Hemisphere of the USA. It is now called Andrews Field.

For the next two or three weeks, serving as liaison, I hustled back and forth between Camp Springs and the Pentagon. I carried papers, met high-ranking brass, and sat in on meetings—all with an increasing sense of frustration. It seemed to me that, with the professional Army people, the war was almost a side issue. What was important was promotion, creating an acceptable image for the Army and—most particularly—a favorable financial footing for the Army Air Corps. Everyone was interested in public relations. Power, Position. And, of course, parties and entertainment.

But who was I to be critical? I'd had an opportunity to volunteer for real service abroad. But I had put my own well being, my domestic concerns, and my safety above all else.

I became acquainted with any number of military and civilian types, each with his respective axe to grind and each one seeking some particularly active grindstone on which to hone a cutting edge. I had lunch one day with another junior officer of my own rank. The table chitchat proved to be revealing.

In the midst of somewhat restrained, but pointedly ambitious conversation, my table companion blurted: "I ran into a fellow the other day, LeFevre, who said he knew all about you."

I was instantly wary and on guard. "Oh? What was his name? " I was thinking of my earlier connection with the "I Am."

The name given in response to my question rang no bells, but the rest of the sentence did. "...he said you were a very spiritual type of person." This was followed by a raucous chortle. "Imagine that! You, LeFevre. He was talking about you and he thought you were 'spiritual.' I told him it must be some other captain by the same name." More chortling. "Imagine you! Spiritual? Humph! You're about as spiritual as a night in bed with Veronica Lake."

"His name isn't familiar to me," I said.

"Just as I thought. I can't imagine anyone thinking of you as spiritual. You're about as materialistic and worldly as anyone I've ever met."

So that was the way I was coming across. At least to this particular officer. I wasn't certain this was good or bad.

A few days after this exchange, I was summoned to Hibbard's office.

"You're being relieved of your liaison duties, LeFevre," Hibbard advised. "The Colonel has a special treat in store for you."

I kept my face expressionless. "Tell me all about it."

"I'm serious. We need a man with higher rank for the job you've got. And there's a new Special Services School opening up at Lexington, Virginia. We've got you assigned there for a two-week course of study."

"Thanks, Hibbard," I said. "It happens I've already taken that course."

"No. Not this one. It's a very advanced course open only to the most highly recommended officers. If you're willing to go, it will be a plus in your 201 file when promotion time comes around. We thought of sending Abernathy, but we can't spare him right now. So, you're elected."

"Do I have any choice in the matter?"

"Not really."

I laughed. "Okay. Then I volunteer."

"I knew you would. I've already had your orders issued."

Once more, I journeyed by train to the lovely campus of Wash-

ington and Lee University in Virginia. Once more Loy was left behind. My married life with Loy was turning into something that resembled my married life with Peggy. The difference was that in this case I didn't approve of the separation.

The special course of study for the "most advanced," Special Services Officers proved to be much like the prior non-special course. There were two exceptions. A certain Major Donovan was on hand. He did his best to convince us that the best way to build morale was to help turn the enlisted personnel into judo experts and instinctive killers.

Special cadres were organized to infiltrate enemy territory and perform acts of terrorism. If an enlisted man became proficient as a terrorist, then his morale would be good. Donovan had personally led such a group behind enemy lines. He had won distinction for his courage and good luck. I didn't find this line of approach compatible with morale building, but at least I had the good sense not to say so out loud.

Another Major, whose name now escapes me, presented the second innovation. But this man made an impression, and a favorable one. He was the first lecturing psychologist I had ever heard.

I had never studied psychology and had read nothing on the subject. In a classroom one day, the Major put on the blackboard, a model of the process by means of which human beings learn. He described the mental tendencies of man exactly as the "I Am" teachings set them forth, but with a difference. His terms were worldly and at least quasi-scientific.

There was no mistaking the similarity, even the identical nature of the substance offered. I stared at the Major. Was he, perhaps, a Master operating incognito? How could he possibly know these things unless he had been taught in some spiritual retreat?

To test us, the Major posed a question. It was a penetrating poser, but I knew the answer, thanks to my background. I raised my hand and gave the answer correctly, using the Major's terms rather than the Ballards'.

My ability to answer halted procedures. The Major now stared at me. He wanted to know how I had figured out the answer. The balance of the officer-students focused on me as well. After a pause, the Major conceded that the question he had asked had never been answered correctly before by anyone who hadn't studied psychol-

ogy. He knew my background, which he had checked. Psychology was not one of my long suits. How come I knew the answer?

I was embarrassed, but rather than admit the truth, I said, lamely, that it seemed logical to me. Actually, I hadn't reasoned it out; I had simply memorized it.

From that moment, I became the intellectual leader of the class—a false position, surely. As a matter of face, two enrollees sat next to me in the ensuing sessions. When asked why they did so, one of them shrugged, and said, "I want to sit next to LeFevre to see what his answers will be. I'm always willing to learn from anyone who knows more about something than I do." I made certain not to open my mouth after that. It would have destroyed the illusion.

This trivial event was enormously meaningful to me. It confirmed some of what I had already concluded. The ridicule and abuse so often heaped upon the followers of the "I Am" often resulted from their use of words, from their insistence on calling things miraculous or divine. If more conventional terms were employed, communication could occur without raising unnecessary barriers.

I finished the course of study along with the rest of the enrollees, and we scattered in response to our respective orders. I returned to Camp Springs to be greeted with new information.

Again, in Hibbard's office, I was given a choice.

Several air bases needed some Special Service Officers. Three openings were available to me. I could return to Mitchell Fields. There was an opening at a field in Michigan. And a berth was available for an assistant Special Services man at the base in Nashville, Tennessee.

Nothing could have induced me to return to Mitchell, given a choice. I had already had my fill of winters in Minnesota and the state of Washington. I had heard that Michigan weather could be just as extreme. Even though the opening would place me in a secondary position, the opportunity at Nashville sounded best. I indicated it as my preference.

Hibbard nodded confirmation and the orders were prepared. I was given a brief leave of absence to get my affairs in shape.

This time, when I returned to Loy in Baltimore, the military requirements apparently dovetailed with my civilian desires. Loy gave up her job at the B&O. We packed our few belongings, stowing them in the car.

At last, like a pair of newlyweds, we set out by highway to begin our lives together in a different part of the US, a place neither of us had been.

Chapter LIII

There were so many things I wanted to tell Loy. I wanted her to know what I had done in the “I Am.” I wanted her to understand everything about Pearl, the Masters, my own confusion, my background in radio—everything.

It was immediately apparent that Loy wanted me to understand her background, too. She had a fantastic knowledge of music and had done her share of performances on platform and radio.

Happily we set out, driving to Nashville, some of the route retracing of the nearly fatal motor trip when one of the Ballard staff cars had flipped into the ditch. Of course, we weren’t driving that far West, but the route we took from Washington southward and to the west was the same one the Ballards had chosen. It proved to be a conversation starter on occasion.

At last Loy and I were together, really getting acquainted. It was late June in 1944. I felt like an eighteen-year-old, instead of feeling the thirty-two years through which I had groped, sometimes with tunnel vision.

This journey, and our prior one to Minnesota to visit my mother, were Loy’s most extensive trips up to that time. She was ecstatic over the scenery. She “ohed” and “ahed” at nearly every turn in the road. The wooded hills, the growing crops, the orchards, the farmhouses—all were exciting, exhilarating, and enchanting. What a joy it always is to be with someone who shows appreciation.

I found one disappointment as the journey lengthened. Loy was not as sympathetic toward my interest in spiritual matters, concepts, and metaphysical abstractions as I had hoped. She looked at this entire area as strange and even weird. She accepted my involvement as unavoidable since it all related to what had been. But she believed I had thrown off all interest in that area, which wasn’t true. She thought it silly.

Something else about me proved to be a disappointment to Loy.

My knowledge and interest in music was superficial compared to hers. I had flattered myself that I knew quite a lot about it. After all, I had been a disc jockey and had announced literally hundreds of programs.

There's a big difference between knowing where to find a particular type of music for a theme song and knowing the lives and times of the great composers. She knew the travails they had experienced and the meanings—if they existed—that were expressed by the music from their brilliant minds.

Loy seemed informed and attracted by all forms of music. Symphony, opera, light classics, popular ballads, jazz, country, western, whatever. Further, she knew the voices and styles of most performers. She could name the tune and the composer of the melody after only a few bars on the radio. In music, she was a whiz kid. I was a "gee-whiz, no kidding" kid.

Music circulated through Loy like her own bloodstream. Indeed, her every movement seemed translated into sound and color. She was like a creature of a world strange to me. She was magic. In these mysterious realms, I was pedestrian.

Despite these profoundly divergent pathways, we loved each other. And a great lesson came home to roost. You didn't have to *change* the loved one. No two persons ever will duplicate each other. Our differences enrich our lives, provided we are tolerant. To love is to understand, to appreciate, but not to revise.

Loy understood this without having to learn it. She was profoundly libertarian without bothering to learn what the word meant. It was a natural trait.

The trip to Nashville from Baltimore isn't particularly lengthy. However, one event came near to altering everything with shattering impact.

We had spent the night in Knoxville. I wanted to arrive at Nashville in time to look for a suitable place to live while it was still daylight. That way I could report at the air base the following day, meet my new commanding officer, and find out about new duties without being concerned about Loy's well being.

So we drove out of Knoxville early in the morning, making good time. There were numerous small towns, each of a few thousand population, through which we sped. Then, just as we reached the outskirts of just such a place, the left front tire blew.

A truck was passing in the opposite direction. By using all the muscles I had, I managed to avoid a sideswipe, but careened across the opposing line of traffic. I fought the wheel, ending on the apron out of harm's way. It had been close. The tire was ruined.

But this was wartime. Everything was rationed. The government, to encourage production of war goods, had clamped restraints on the production of civilian goods. I didn't have a jack. Jacks contained steel, and steel was high-priority stuff. I knew the rubber on the wheels had been thin, but the roads were good and I had taken the chance. I had ration stamps for ample gasoline, Hibbard had seen to that.

But I had no jack. I had no stamps with which to buy a tire (rubber was also rationed), and the spare I carried was so flimsy I would restrict its use to a few miles only, and those at slow speed. But I could do nothing until I removed the ruined tire and replaced it with the spare. Then, perhaps, I could limp back into town and try for a tire.

I surveyed my crippled vehicle in dismay. "Stay in the car, Hon," I said to Loy. "I'll thumb a ride into town, buy a jack, and then return to change the tire."

"Fine," she said. "I'll just listen to the music on the radio."

"Not constantly," I said. "I'm not too sure about the battery. And if it runs down, we'll be here forever

"What am I supposed to do, then?"

"Sit," I said. "And think positive."

She gave me her sweetest smile, and turned on the radio. "I'll just listen a little bit."

I have almost always found that rural populations are friendly. And in those days an Army uniform was almost an "open sesame." I quickly flagged down a produce truck heading into the town we had just left. I was deposited in front of the local hardware store.

Inside the establishment I said to the clerk, "I want to buy a jack."

"What's that?" I was asked.

"You know what a jack is," I said impatiently. "You use it to raise the wheel of a car so you can change a tire."

"Oh, that kind of jack."

"Right."

"We haven't had an auto jack in the store for two years."

"Really?"

"I wouldn't kid you, sir."

"What am I to do? Is there another store?"

A negative head shake. "I can sell you a wire stretcher."

"What would I do with a wire stretcher?"

"Jack up your car."

"I have a feeling my leg is being pulled."

"Let me show you." The clerk, a bright young fellow, led the way to a table on which lay an imposing heap of bright red wire stretchers. Each of them contained at least as much steel as any jack I had every seen.

"It's the same principle, sir. They aren't making jacks anymore. It's against the law. But the government forgot to ration wire stretchers. So you hook this here clip under your bumper and you work the stretcher like this." He demonstrated. "Works the same way."

"How do you keep the arm on which the car rests from sinking into the ground?" I asked.

"Simple. These are modified wire-stretchers. The manufacturer attached an angle iron at the tip of one arm with a rivet. You just flip that around and under the leg, see? Like that. Take my word for it, sir. It works dandy."

I'm not a mechanical superman but even I could see the obvious. I paid cash and started to leave the store.

"Where are you parked?" the clerk asked.

"My tire blew just outside of town, maybe a mile and a half west of here."

"I'll be glad to run you back out."

"Hey, that's wonderful. "

Loy was sitting disconsolately in the Chevy. The radio was off. I climbed out of the battered pick-up the clerk drove. "I hope you didn't use up the battery," I said.

"I only had it on a little," Loy said. "When the music started to fade I shut it off."

"Thanks," I said, mentally crossing my fingers. Laboriously, I placed the spare on the naked rim, after putting the shredded pride of Akron into the trunk.

Behind the wheel, I ground my heel into the starter, giving it all the force I could. The flywheel moaned lethargically, but the motor came to life. My sigh must have been audible. If I kept the motor going, the battery might slowly restore itself.

I backed the car around and returned to town pulling into the nearest filling station. While the engine idled, I got out and approached the proprietor. "I'm in the market for a tire," I said. "New or used. It doesn't matter. I'm on military orders. I have to get to

Nashville today.”

“Got a ration coupon for a tire?” he asked.

I shook my head. “No, but I’m paying cash.”

“Cash doesn’t matter, Captain. I have to have the coupon.”

“I don’t have a coupon. But I must get to Nashville. Want to see my orders?”

“I don’t give a damn about your orders. I’ve had orders given to me. No coupon, no tire.” He threw up his arms in surrender. “That’s the way it is.”

“I’ll pay you extra.”

“You trying to bribe me?”

“Yup. If that’s what it takes.”

“Look, Captain. I wouldn’t care if you were General Eisenhower and I don’t care what your orders say. The government is all over me. I have just so many tires. That’s all I have. If one of my tires is missing, I have to have a coupon for it. If I don’t have a coupon I’ll be fined or sent to jail. Got it?”

“I understand your problem,” I admitted. “I’m trying to get you to understand mine.”

“Go away,” the proprietor said. “I don’t do business with guys like you.” He turned on his heel and left me alone.

I thought a moment, and went after him. “Look,” I said. “I need a battery, too. That’s the reason I’m running the engine on my car. I’m using up valuable fuel because the battery is so weak it could quit any time. I’ll buy both a battery and a tire.”

“Got a coupon for a battery?”

“I’ve got plenty of stamps for gasoline.”

He thought a moment. “No deal. If I came up with more stamps for gas than my sales warrant, but I am missing a battery and a tire, the one won’t offset the other. I’d probably be investigated and get into big trouble.”

“Okay. Okay.” I said. “I don’t want that. I’m a stranger here. I can’t travel with that spare on the left front. You can see for yourself. What do I have to do to get a coupon?”

“I’d suggest you call on the ration board.”

“Okay. I’ll do it. But I’m a stranger in town. Where will I find the ration board?”

He gave me an address and instructions on how to get there. It was only a few blocks distant, off the main street.

"I'll be back in a bit for the tire," I said.

"I'll believe it when I see you," he said.

"Is your ration board tough?" I asked.

He grinned for the first time. "Tough? Let me tell you it's tough. The chairman is a guy none of us like. He's a disgruntled political candidate who got roused out office a while back. He don't like no one. Not no one. Not nobody."

"Sounds mean."

"Mean? I'll say he's mean. He don't know how to hold his mouth to say 'yes.'"

"I'll get the tire coupon," I said. Then as an after thought, "What do you do if someone steals a tire?"

I received a hostile stare. "Tell you what, Captain. You git the hell out of my station. If you do git a coupon, which I doubt you will, buy it from my competitor. You come in here again and I'm going for my shotgun."

I gitted. Loy and I pulled to a stop in front of the ration board office, which was actually an insurance office with a cardboard sign in the window that read "Ration Board."

I turned off the engine. "Sit tight and pray," I said. "This town doesn't seem too friendly."

"What should I pray for?" Loy asked.

"Pray that the damn engine will start if we have to move out fast. I've got to get that tire and it seems a coupon is the one item I need."

I entered the Ration Board, nee insurance office, and approached the single individual standing behind the counter. I turned on what charm I retained.

"I'm Captain LeFevre," I said, offering my hand. "Army Air Corps. I'm en route to Nashville on orders. I blew a tire just outside of town and my spare has no rubber on it. I'm riding on the threads. It's outside if you care to inspect it. I've come to ask for a tire coupon so I can buy a tire."

"There are no tire coupons available. " The statement was made in complete detachment. The matter was closed.

I was prepared for this. I produced my orders and spread them on the counter. "As you can see, sir, I'm en route under military orders. I am moving at the discretion and for the convenience of the government. I have to have a tire." I paused. "It doesn't have to be new. It just has to be better."

"There are no tire coupons available." The individual didn't even glance at my orders.

I began to feel heat rising under my collar. "I don't know what it is going to take," I said, "but if I have to, I'll call the commanding general at First Air Force at Mitchell Field, New York. I must have a coupon and I must get it here."

That last statement, at least, got attention. "I don't care who you call, Captain. Perhaps you didn't know it. There's a war on. Rubber is scarce. We have no coupons for transients. None." He turned away.

"There's a war." I found myself sputtering. "Of course there's a war on. Why in hell do you think I'm here? I'm part of the war. You are interfering with the movement of a member of the military'.

"Why didn't you get a coupon before you set out, Captain? The East Coast has plenty of coupons. We don't have enough to take care of people who live here. The Board has decided not to provide any tires to transients. That's final. Sorry."

"I want to see the chairman of this Ration Board," I demanded. "Are you the chairman?"

"Not me. No, sir. But the decision has been made. It's final."

"No, it's not final. I demand to see the chairman."

"It won't make any difference. Maybe you don't understand it, Captain, but as we see it, an order is an order."

"Where's the chairman?"

"I have no idea

"Does he have a name?"

"Oh, certainly. It's Mr.—. But he's not here."

"When will he be here?"

"I can't say for sure. He always comes in. He ought to be around by noon. Or maybe this afternoon."

"Get him on the phone. I'll talk to him."

"He doesn't have a phone. And don't get the idea you can make trouble for him. He's doing what he has to do to protect the country from people like you."

I was seething. "According to my view," I said, "I'm supposed to be protecting him—and you—from Japanese and Germans. I'm beginning to wonder why. I'm going to have some cooperation out of this office if I have to park here for the duration."

"And I thought you were in such a rush to get to Nashville."

At least he'd heard me when I told him where I was going. I

stamped out and returned to the car.

"What's the matter?" Loy asked. That *blankety-blank* idiot inside won't give me a ration coupon," I said.

"What'll we do?"

"I've asked to see the chairman. Apparently there is one. The filling station man threatened to get a shotgun if I went back there. We've got to get a new tire."

"Could we finish the trip on the spare?" Loy asked.

"I wouldn't attempt it. We had a narrow squeak on the tire that blew. And it was a lot better than the one on the wheel now. We couldn't go twenty miles."

"Then what'll we do?"

"We'll have to wait."

"How long?"

"Until the chairman gets here."

"Maybe we could get something to eat. I'm getting hungry."

"Me, too," I said. "But it would be just our luck to have the chairman arrive when we're not here. We'd end up having to spend the night in this town."

"You mean we have to sit here in the car all the time?"

"No. we could go inside and sit. But we've got to wait and we've got to wait right here. Sorry. But I don't seem to be able to come up with any other procedure."

"I really am getting hungry."

"I know it, Hon." I usually started a long trip quite early, trying to put at least fifty or seventy-five miles behind us before we stopped for breakfast. Neither of us had eaten anything.

Loy reached for the radio knob.

"Please don't," I said. "The battery is so weak it could quit on us any time. Let's go inside."

We abandoned the car and entered the Ration Board office. There were plenty of chairs. We both sat.

The clerk brightened at Loy's appearance. "Can I do something for you?" he asked.

"I'm with him," Loy said, smiling and indicating me.

"Oh." He lost interest.

We sat. Time passed.

The telephone rang from one of the private offices behind the counter and the man left to answer it. I could hear a few words. He

was talking to someone about my request. Presently, he returned to the counter.

"You want to see the chairman?" he asked.

"Yes, I do."

"That was him on the phone. He's coming right over."

"Thank you," I said.

"It won't make any difference," he said. "You'll see."

I nodded. No further point in arguing with him.

More waiting. Finally, the front door opened and an elderly man, face as sour as a prohibitionist's at a beer bust, came in. He immediately went behind the counter and closeted himself with the attendant. Presently he came back to the counter.

"Are you the Captain who wanted to see me?"

I stepped smartly forward. "I am." I produced my orders. "As you can see, Mr. Chairman," I said, "I'm in some difficulty. I blew a front tire just west of town a couple of hours ago. That tire is gone. It can't be fixed. My spare has no rubber on the tread. I simply must have another tire."

The chairman read my orders. Word for word. He took plenty of time and didn't miss a thing. He completed his perusal and handed the orders back. "Frank, go out and check his tires," he said to the clerk.

"Yes, Sir."

Presently, after the inspection, the clerk returned and whispered his findings to the chairman with a couple of sidelong glances in my direction. The chairman nodded. Then he went into one of the offices and closed the door.

More time passed. Loy and I were both fidgeting. By now, we were ravenous.

After what seemed an eternity, the chairman returned to the counter. For the next five minutes, he delivered a bitter tirade against me, the Army in general, politicians, his various foes, the people in town: it was apparently a review of his long and unhappy life.

Then he said, "It's against policy but I've conducted a meeting on the telephone with other board members. The Board has moved and adopted a resolution wherein we will make an exception in your case. I will give you permission to buy one used tire. Not a new one, mind you. A used tire. Here's your coupon."

I couldn't bring myself to say, "thank you." I had to exert enor-

mous self-control to keep from responding in kind. I took the coupon. Loy and I went back to the car.

"Can we eat now?" she asked.

"You bet we can, Sweetheart," I assured her. "And that's first. Then we'll find another filling station and buy one used tire."

I'm happy to report the battery was still working.

In due course, we finished a satisfying meal and located the competing filling station.

My first remark was: "I have a coupon for one used tire."

This proprietor chuckled. "You must be the geezer who was givin' the chairman of our Ration Board a bad time," he said. "News travels fast in small towns. "You should of come to me first. Nobody knows how many used tires I got. I don't count so good, and I keep things in such a mess that the ration bureaucrats can't figger it out. They jest estimate. You coulda had a tire from me anytime. To hell with the coupon."

I paid him to put the newly acquired tire on the rim and on the car. And I noticed that he did accept the ration coupon.

"You done us all a favor, Captain," he told me. "We love it when someone gets old— into a tizzy. He's a mean son-of-a-bitch."

"He's all of that."

"Did you have something on him?"

I shook my head. "I just let him read my orders."

"That probably scared him half to death. He's scared stiff of orders. Except the ones he issues hisself."

Loy and I had spent the entire morning getting the tire. We made the remainder of the journey without further incident.

Late in the day, we found ourselves in Nashville. After purchasing a newspaper and driving around a bit, we located a two-room housekeeping apartment on the second floor of a private home. There weren't many vacancies and it was about the only thing we could locate that seemed to be reasonably adequate.

At last, Loy and I were ready to set up our own little home and begin our life together as husband and wife.

Chapter LIV

No one could wish for a finer military assignment than the one I drew at Nashville.

In choosing to come to Tennessee, I had moved out of the First Air Force. The Nashville Army base was a unit in what was called the Air Transport Command.

My immediate superior was a Captain Owens holding approximately a year's seniority over me. He was good natured and mature, with a quick grasp of problems and an excellent set of emotional brakes. I don't recall ever seeing him angry. He seemed to have learned the trick of expecting very little from those who worked under his direction. Thus, he was pleasantly surprised when they turned in a good job.

I was astonished by the enthusiasm with which members of his staff went to work to demonstrate how effectively they could perform. We vied with one another in a constant effort to make him ever more pleasantly surprised at our respective skills. In short, Captain Owens made it easy for each of us to do his best, nearly impossible to do less, and completely impossible to be angry with him.

If I was fortunate in respect to my immediate superior, I was even more opulently rewarded when it came to the commander of the base, Colonel Evans. Evans was younger than I was. At the same time, he was far more experienced. He was a pilot, already decorated for missions he had flown in Europe. He had the same easy stance as Captain Owens, while possessing a broader and more comprehensive view. Evans had the ability to keep himself intimately acquainted with everything one did. Thus, he kept his hand on the throttle without ever being intrusive. I never felt I was on trial, distrusted, or even being watched. But Evans was so well informed that he could converse knowledgeably about my work almost as though he had personally observed my every move.

Captain Owens began our association by giving me an examination. This is always a most practical beginning.

It nearly always achieves two goals quickly. It provides invaluable information to both examinee and examiner, and it establishes

the authority of the latter. Further, it achieves these objectives in a climate conducive of a warm and friendly relationship. It isn't one hundred percent effective, of course. Nothing is. However, even if goals are not reached in a given case, the odds are so high that it's worth the time and effort anyway.

By this procedure, Owens found out my strong points and the chores in Special Services that I liked to perform best. I was weak in physical education and athletics. Otherwise, I viewed myself as well rounded and equally competent in all areas.

Like the good officer he was, Owens recognized that my forte had to do with lecturing and teaching. I was placed in charge of the Army Orientation Program. I developed a series of lectures in conjunction with the propaganda films put out by the War Department called "Why We Fight."

I tried to learn everything possible about German and Japanese history. My emphasis was on Germany, since the priorities established at the Pentagon called for a European victory followed by concentrated effort in the Pacific. My lectures were scheduled for all levels of command, but they were primarily designed for men going overseas for the first time. They actually became popular. Many times, officers came of their own accord to hear what I had to say.

Of course, my presentations were as biased as the War Department wished. Americans were always brave and noble. Germans were always craven, cruel, and untrustworthy. When facts didn't fit that theme, I interpreted them as being the work of subversives and spies. I was, in a small way, an American Goebbels. To assist in the weaving of my tapestry, I developed some lectures on American patriotism, originating in the Revolutionary War. These lectures often brought howls of delight from my listeners. My place on the platform at Nashville Army Air Base was secure.

But Owens did more. Noting my weaknesses, he sought to encourage my participation in athletic events. He did it so adroitly that I didn't suspect his motives at first. For example, he cozened me into becoming the announcer in the fight ring, and we ran a boxing card for the best fisticuffs experts at the field. I aped the tonality and manner of fight announcers whom I had heard on radio. Thus, he used my strong points to awaken my interest and participation where I was least effective. This is good leadership in the

Army or anywhere else. Use what is strong to strengthen what is weak.

During July, August, and the first part of September 1944, I had about ten weeks of happy and rewarding military service. Summers are hot in Tennessee. The broiling sun was so ferocious that the tar on the streets softened like chewing gum and stuck to the soles of my shoes.

Loy decided to become expert in culinary affairs so that she could fulfill the duties accepted as inescapable for married women. We both recall with amusement her first effort as a cook.

During her girlhood, Loy's mother, Elizabeth, had reasoned that Loy would have a musical career. Her voice surely warranted the conviction. So Loy had escaped all domestic chores at home. She knew nothing about cooking, baking, sewing, or housekeeping in general. But she was game and anxious to please, even if experience was lacking.

The housekeeping rooms we rented had been equipped with a gas stove. The oven was a square metallic box, separate from the stove, which could be put on a burner when something had to be baked. Loy decided to bake her first pie. She chose a lemon meringue.

I arrived home that evening and entered the dining room-sitting room-kitchen, Loy came merrily across the linoleum floor carrying the deep-dish meringue high in the air, balanced on her fingers as she had seen waiters carry trays.

I don't know what it was she tripped on, but trip she did. The pie performed an Immelman loop and landed at my feet upside down. I'm sure it was the loveliest pie I never got to taste. We both scraped it up from the floor with Loy close to tears.

She confided that her mother had done the same thing shortly after she and her father had been married. Apparently, she was maintaining a family tradition. It was apparent that cooking was an art with little relationship to musical mastery. For the time being at least, cooking was a marvelous mystery.

Captain Owens finally confronted me about my continuing lack of enthusiasm for athletics. "Look, Bob," he began one day. "I have to turn in a report about the physical fitness of all my staff. Yours is the only incomplete record. I'm afraid I'm going to be downgraded because of you. Do you want to be responsible for that record in my

201 file?”

“Okay, Chief,” I said. “I don’t want you on my conscience. Whatever is expected of me, I’ll do. You know I don’t go in for all this physical stuff. If I had my way, the war would be fought with ideas. They’re dangerous enough.”

“True, true,” he said. “I guess we’re not ready for that yet. Until we are, I’ve got to get your participation in some kind of athletic program. It’s not so bad. Really.”

“Give me the bad news.”

“You’ve got to get involved with something. Baseball? Football? Some kind of game, I suspect, would be easier for you to stomach.”

“What kind of game? Ah, I have it. How about a chess tournament?”

“Come on, Bob. I’m serious. You don’t want to imperil my position do you? “

He had me there. “No way, Chief. I’m for you. “

“Hell, there are some athletic games that aren’t particularly strenuous. How about tennis?”

“Tennis isn’t strenuous? Who said?”

“Okay, how about badminton?”

“I’ve never played that,” I admitted. “How does it work?”

“Well, it’s like tennis only there isn’t quite as much running to it. Each of the players has a small racket, but instead of a ball being batted over the net, there’s a little ball called a “bird” because it’s equipped with feathers. Hell, you know what a badminton bird is, don’t you?”

“Sure. I’ve never played it is all, Never wanted to.”

“Ever watched?”

“No.”

“Well, you’re about to learn. You’re hereby ordered to play at least three games of badminton per week. You go to the gym and spend two hours a day—Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.”

“That’ll cut into my lecturing. “

“Right. But you’re not that much overworked.”

“True,” I admitted. “I can schedule around it.” I shrugged. “Okay, if I must, I must.”

“Great.” Owens smiled. “I hate to give you a direct order, but you won’t do it otherwise. And, after this, I expect you to give me a report each week, showing at least six hours, two per day, Monday,

Wednesday and Friday. In *active* sports participation. Okay?"

"Okay. I won't like it, but I'll do it."

Owens laughed. "There. That's the worst part and it's already behind us. You'll do it?"

"Sure. If you tell me to, I will."

That very day I began my exertions. My performance was surely lack luster, but I had to admit that I had made a big thing out of a relatively minor event.

The second week of badminton brought me to an increasingly close contest in a doubles game, I reached for a high bird and something snapped in my spine. I crashed to the floor in agony. I couldn't stand up.

I was carried to the locker room, where, by holding onto benches and lockers for support, I finally got changed. When I reported to my office, Owens' face showed a mixture of concern and disbelief. I couldn't stand up without holding onto something solid. My back felt as though someone had cut through the flesh and clamped a vice on the vertebrae.

The next day I was taken to the hospital. X-rays showed nothing wrong. I was put to bed and had a compulsory three-day rest. Then I was pronounced cured. I was able to stand and move about without pain. For several days, I was tense and reluctant to move. The effect finally wore off but no one suggested a return to active athletics.

At the air base, one day in September, Colonel Evans sent for me. Aside from my first meeting with him, this was the only other time I saw him in his office. He was often present at one or another of my lectures and had been ringside during my famous job as a sports announcer from the ring. We had talked informally many times.

Colonel Evans began: "Are you happy here, Captain?"

The question surprised me. "Of course, I am." I frowned. "Is something wrong?"

"Not from my point of view," Evans assured me. "I'm delighted with the job you're doing." He grinned. "True, you're not so hot with athletic activities. But your work in orientation is outstanding."

"Thank you, Colonel."

"Captain Owens has given me a most favorable report on you."

"That's great." I was sincerely pleased.

"If you continue here as you have in the past, a promotion is almost certain."

"That's wonderful!"

Evans was looking at me closely. "You don't have to answer this question if you'd rather not, Bob. But I would like to know if you don't mind. Have you been in contact with your former commander, Colonel McHugo?"

"McHugo. Certainly not. Why would I be in contact with him?"

"He's recommended you, through First Air Force, for duty overseas."

"No. Why would he do that?"

"I was hoping you could tell me."

"Good Lord, Colonel. I don't know. I haven't been in touch with him at all. I like it here. Truly. In fact, I don't think I've ever received better treatment."

Colonel Evans nodded. "This recommendation is rather odd. I've never had anything quite like it. Are you anxious to serve overseas, is that it?"

I grabbed for a possible straw. "If I had had any particular yearning for overseas duty, I'd have told you about it," I said. "But I'm wondering."

I sketched the details of my prior junket abroad and the dilemma my unexpected return to Camp Springs had created. "I'm wondering, sir, if several months ago Colonel McHugo made the recommendation. His letter might have been moving through channels all this time."

Evans nodded. His face expressed real concern. "That's certainly a reasonable explanation. I think I'll accept it. But anyhow, I'm on orders to tell you about the opportunity that will be yours if you accept the assignment."

"As you know, Captain Owens is your superior here. He's going to win a promotion and stay in charge of Special Services. Therefore, even if you're promoted, you'll not be advanced over him."

"I wouldn't expect to be," I said. "That's completely honest. Naturally, I'd like a higher rank. But Captain Owens is one of the best officers I've ever had the pleasure of working with. I'm happy the way things are."

"I'm glad of that." But his face wasn't happy. "Here's the thing. They are looking for a man with exactly your background for a top

position in the ETO." He pawed through some papers and read from the sheet he selected.

"The Officer should have had civilian experience in news reporting or editing, either in newspaper or radio. He must be able to write copy. He should be a specialist in history and particularly military history of the present conflict. Above all, he must be a good communicator, both in writing and with verbal expression."

Evans looked at me. "It sounds as though they're looking for you."

I was so flattered that it didn't occur to me that the specifications could include hundreds of others far better prepared than I.

"What's the job, Colonel? Does the recommendation say?"

"Yes, it does. The War Department has approved the launching of a newspaper for the armed forces in Europe. They are looking for an editor to ramrod the project."

We looked at each other silently. On the instant, my ambitions soared. To be editor! And of a major Army newspaper. Besides, it appeared that I was the very man the Army needed.

Evans read me like a billboard. "You want to go, don't you?"

"I'm afraid so, sir."

"I really can't blame you. It's probably the opportunity of a lifetime. I can't begin to offer you similar opportunities here."

"Gosh," I said. "I really don't like this. In a way, I like it here. Everything is really great. But, you know, Colonel, I did volunteer. I guess I'm one of the people motivated by patriotism. Truthfully, I'm not at all in love with going to the ETO. I've been there. But it seems to me that the Army really wants me this time. I'm not sure I have a right to turn it down."

"Let me assure you on that score," Evans spoke quickly. "It's your choice. And I'd like to keep you."

I shook my head. "Thanks. Thanks very much. What's the procedure?"

"I'll get the adjutant on it. He'll let you know how you're to travel and when. How about a few days' leave first?"

"That would be great."

We shook hands. My life was about to undergo another major shift at least in locale.

I talked it over with Loy. The decision was reached: we would drive back to Baltimore, and she'd live with her mother and sister until I came back. I'd leave the car in her garage in Baltimore. It

was nearly paid for and it would be smart to have transportation available when the war ended.

Loy took the disruption philosophically. It wouldn't be too bad. Her mother would be glad to have her around. The war couldn't last forever.

Captain Owens was planning a leave for himself and for the Lieutenant serving under him as Physical Education Officer. The enlisted men were well enough trained to handle the section with all officers absent.

Thus, it came about that all three of us, in our respective cars, drove up to Cincinnati for a visit with some of Owen's relatives. After a day or two, Loy and I said our good-byes and drove again to Baltimore.

Getting my affairs in shape for a change of location had become second nature by now. Feeling proud at having been sought out by top Army personnel, I finally boarded the train from Baltimore to New York, where the shipment of personnel was being assembled.

This time I stayed in a hotel briefly before reporting to shipside. This troop movement was far more efficiently handled than the one I had commanded earlier that year. Thus, in very short order I found myself aboard the *Mauratania*. This was a ship of British registry, another of the greyhounds of the sea that shuttled back and forth to Europe without benefit of convoy.

Within a very short time I was, again, on the Atlantic. The length of my stay in the ETO would be determined by American military fortunes. At least, I said to myself, I'd have a job that would develop some of my talents. I wanted nothing to do with combat, or commanding a group of men on the battlefield.

Chapter LV

My second voyage across the Atlantic nearly duplicated the first. Conditions aboard ship were far from comfortable on this converted luxury liner. The speed of the crossing made it all endurable.

Once again, the port of debarkation was Liverpool.

On this occasion, my attitude had improved.

Along with thousands of others, I made my way to the inevitable railroad station. This time I was going to London and my expectations were high. I was going to work, and my talents were in demand.

Since I had no men to command, I was in the company of commissioned officers. Like myself, they were traveling under orders that would keep them for various lengths of time in the ETO.

I rather enjoyed the train ride. Compartments seem a sensible way to travel by rail. The British, enjoying little space on their crowded isle, value their privacy as much as I do. A compartment isn't private, but at least a person can think his own thoughts and keep to himself.

A transportation officer met the train and herded commissioned personnel to a desk, amid the clatter and reverberation of the vaulted terminus. There, orders were examined. Directions for proceeding were given. I was told to report to the billeting officer on Baker Street for assignment to quarters.

London was not the same as it had been on my earlier visit. The Germans had developed what was dubbed the "buzz" bomb—the V-1 rocket. Nightly, London came under direct attack and, as I rode by Army trucks to the Baker Street address, evidence of Jerry destruction was everywhere. Some buildings had been reduced to piles of rubble. Others, their walls still standing, stared gauntly into the street from gaping holes where windows had once been.

The wait at billeting offices was long but, finally, my turn came. I happened to luck out. I was assigned to what was called "Bickenhall Mansions." This was an apartment house building, with top-notch facilities, not far from Marlebone Station.

An Amazon with startling blue eyes, flaxen hair, and muscles greeted me at my new "digs." She let me know by look and gesture

that she had no time for foolishness. She was doing her duty. While her words were gracious, they did not comprise a personal overture of any sort.

Three of us were assigned to a three-bedroom apartment, each getting a private room with full service. I marveled at the gleaming bathroom, complete with chrome-finished pipes, which provided hot water heat while also serving as towel racks. British ingenuity was one up on us Americans in this arrangement.

However, the British had lagged behind American technology in some of the other bathroom amenities, I was to learn. It was imprudent to remain seated while flushing the commode, for example. A veritable geyser erupted; sometimes, it formed a waterspout that aimed with unbelievable accuracy at where men are prone to be most sensitive.

I was a trifle taken aback when the Amazon casually asked me if I cared to be knocked up for breakfast with a cup of tea. One of my companions explained that, in Britain, this meant a knock on the door and breakfast (hot tea and biscuits) served in bed.

I accepted the knock up, but without the tea or bed. I preferred coffee. Also, I do not like food served in bed. I learned very quickly that I would be well advised to have the tea. At that time, at least, the British made dreadful coffee, while their tea brewing had reached artistic excellence.

Every morning, I was awakened by this young lady who put the tray with my breakfast on the table, and then absented herself with the same efficiency that marked her every move.

London was run by women. The only British males I ever saw out of uniform were elderly laborers, riding the trams or walking to and from work. And small boys going to their respective schools. I grew to admire the British women with unabashed approval. They were splendid.

Nearly all worked at jobs with a nine or ten-hour day. Then, at night they volunteered for the fire brigades or went to the USO or a service club where they gave more of their time and energy. Able-bodied men were in the service.

Thus, the British welcomed me to their island. The Germans extended their welcome my very first night.

Shortly after dark, which came swiftly, sirens began to wail. All us newcomers crowded into the street to see what was happening.

There we could hear the stuttering of ack-ack guns (anti-aircraft) and see the overhead searchlights weaving an uncertain tapestry.

Suddenly, one searchlight picked up and remained on a long, cigar-shaped object that moved lazily and flew low. I could hear its gasoline driven engine. One of my companions explained. The “buzz” bombs were launched with just enough petrol to get them over London. When the fuel was consumed, the bomb would fall; just where, no one could know. As long as the gasoline engine was operating you were safe. If the engine quit, it was time to seek cover. Gravity would bring the bomb down in a relatively short trajectory.

The anti-aircraft people and the RAF tried to explode the bombs before they reached the outskirts of London. Once over the city, there was little point in it. The V-1s blew in all directions and were usually only a couple of hundred feet up. To shoot them down at that low elevation would have meant strafing sections of the city. Also, the anti-aircraft guns were ineffective and dangerous, so you took your chances with the bombs.

All through that first night, periodic alarms sounded. I was advised that it was futile to seek a bomb shelter, although one was relatively near. Usually the shelters were crowded and the people in them had nowhere to go since their own homes had probably been blown away.

Early the next morning, I made my way to the address on Audley Street to report for duty. The building was a converted private residence occupied by the Special Services brass from the American expeditionary forces. Climbing two steep flights, I came into a waiting room lined with straight-back chairs, most of them occupied.

I ignored the other persons in the chairs. I made my way to the desk behind which a smooth-faced Lieutenant presided. I presented my orders and gave a snappy salute.

The Lieutenant looked at my orders briefly, smiled and said, “Okay, Captain, find a chair. I think there’s one left. You’ll have to wait your turn. It may take awhile before we can find an assignment for you.”

“I don’t think you read my orders completely, Lieutenant. I could feel every eye in the place turn in my direction. “My assignment is already specified.” I pointed to the crucial wording.

The Lieutenant nodded. “I know. You and the rest of the Army all have a special assignment. Just have a chair. We’ll get to you in

time.”

I shrugged, and sought one of the two empty chairs. I surveyed my fellow thumb twirlers. There were fourteen officers in the room, all Captains, some older, some younger than I. They were looking at me with various degrees of amusement on their faces.

The Captain next to me offered his hand. “I’m Blackwell,” he announced. “Got in three days ago. Let’s see. You’re a man with newspaper experience in civilian life.”

I shook my head and gave my name. “No, I’m a radio man. Specialized in news and news commentary.” I didn’t mention sound effects.

“It figures,” Blackwell said. “I used to be with the Detroit Free Press. Been in Special Services for a couple of years and came here out of Third Air Force.

“I went to OCS in ’42,” I said. “Air Transport Command

“And you’re supposed to become editor of the Army newspaper?”

“How’d you know?”

“Me, too.”

“You mean we’re to compete for the job?”

“Not just you and me. Everyone in this room came after that job.”

I looked about with keener interest. Suddenly, I knew there were people in that waiting room whose experiences and abilities far surpassed my own.

“I’ve had some familiarity with unemployment lines,” I said. “During the Depression, for instance. But this is a little silly. I thought I was needed.”

“You and everyone else.”

I nodded. “Well, a man can only do his best.”

“You mean, in trying for the editor’s job?”

“Of course.”

This time I got a short laugh. The job was filled nearly three months ago. They don’t need either you or me any more than they need a battalion of camels. That’s what’s taking the time. The high mucky-mucks are trying to dream up titles and jobs. They’ve got more talent and experience around than they know what to do with.”

“Holy cow.” I was stunned. “I had a damn good job back in the States. “

“Who didn’t?”

“Do you know who got the post?”

Blackwell shook his head. "Not personally. I've never met him. But the rumors are that it's a guy named Goodfriend. When Goodfriend found out what was wanted he took the initiative. He put on GI clothing, disguising himself as an enlisted man.

"He managed to thumb a ride across the channel, and then spent about a month in the fox holes with the troops. He didn't have orders; he just took it on himself.

"After a couple of weeks in combat, he surfaced and asked to be returned here. The guy's already a hero. He's being promoted to Major and he's been decorated."

I stared at Blackwell. "If they're expecting that kind of behavior from me," I said, "they've got another expect coming."

"Put her there, pal," Blackwell said, offering his hand again. "I wouldn't cross this room without an order. I'm no hero."

"Keep on talking," I said. "Wise me up. Where do we eat? I haven't had chow yet today, unless a cup of bad coffee and some flat tasting things called 'biscuits' are to be counted. What's the routine?"

It turned out that mess was served for officer personnel at a nearby hotel, that one was expected to eat before showing up for assignment, and that waiting for the actual assignment would probably take several days of marking time. Meanwhile, all Captains-in-waiting were to spend each day in the room on Audley Street, just in case someone dreamed up a job.

Another and I departed for breakfast in a magnificent hostelry, where the equipment and furnishings were luxurious. The food consisted of greenish-hued scrambled eggs, white toast—and marvel of marvels—a copious supply of peanut butter. The repast was served in the conventional compartmentalized aluminum tray along with cutlery of such poor quality that the slightest pressure bent knives and forks into strange new designs. The coffee was potent and an obvious attempt at creating a substitute for aviation gasoline.

I tried to analyze my feelings. Was I disappointed or angry? The best word I can find is disgusted. I had left my bride and a prize post so I could loll around waiting for someone to think of something for me to do.

Back in the waiting room, I got acquainted with some of the other men. Most shared my feelings. One pointed out the enormous cost to the taxpayers of this ridiculous duplication of effort. I hadn't

thought of my situation in that light. When I did, anger surged to the surface. There were thousands of people in America, making low wages and being taxed up to their ears, so that the salaries of a gaggle of civilian-military types could be housed, fed, transported, and otherwise looked after. Why hadn't the men in charge thought to issue a cancellation of the prior order, once their demands had been met?

One of the interesting factors of this enforced wait turned out to be the officers waiting with me. We came from all branches of the service. There were, perhaps, four Air Force officers, but others came from infantry, ordnance, signal, chemical warfare, and engineering. The most experienced man in the group was a Captain Dayton who had been in the infantry for years. He was the only man I met while overseas who seemed to hate the Air Force.

One day I sat next to him in the waiting room, asking him an occasional question in an effort to bring him out.

He was taciturn and sullen, but finally consented to respond with terse and often bitter comments. The men in the Air Force, he alleged, were "panty-waists" who didn't know what soldiering was all about. Yet they were pampered, overpaid, and got the best of everything. I have met hostility on many occasions and have often managed to jolly someone who is bristling into a chuckle or two. Not this time.

I suggested—and I thought I was fairly gentle with the suggestion—that flying over enemy territory, with other planes trying to gun you down, wasn't altogether a panty-waist proposition. Dayton grudgingly admitted that the pilots had a bit of spunk, even if they weren't soldiers. But then he turned his wrath on me. I was Air Force. I wasn't a soldier. I had never slogged along in rain and mud for sixty miles. I didn't know what it was like to be out in the elements day after day with no decent food and no bed and no chance to bathe for days at a time.

Cutting back to the pilots, he reminded me that—even though they might have it rough while in combat—if they could manage to get back to their field okay, they'd be coddled and petted, fed, and have everything going for them.

I finally decided that Dayton simply had a vile temper, bad indigestion, or had been passed over for promotion. I gave up on him and spent most of my time swapping yarns with Blackwell from

Detroit.

A week went by in this fashion: nightly air raids, daily stints with the waiting room chair, and socializing. Then a decision was reached. Why not organize the talent still without assignment, put them into classes, and bring them up to date with what the Special Services Section was trying to accomplish? Clearly, something had to be done because new Captains kept appearing. I was not the last to report by any means.

There were now close to forty of us, either without assignment or with some penny-ante time-filler chore to perform. A Major Wilson, who had been selected as Education Officer for the ETO, assembled us to hear a talk. I have met other educators in my time, but the enthusiasm of this man for his job bordered on the dedication I had shown for the "I Am." He was fanatical.

As I listened to his argument concerning the importance of education in the Army, he conveyed the impression that the war was a Godsend. Thanks to it, there were literally thousands of persons in the service who could study and earn a high school diploma, or finish work already begun in college. The Major's fear was that the war would finish too quickly for the task he had in mind to be completed. I was to run into this attitude more than once in the higher echelons of the military, but this was my first brush with it.

Major Wilson had divided the educational campaign to be launched by Special Services into two phases. Phase one was to be accomplished while the war was still going on. This consisted largely of promoting various extensions being offered by cooperating universities in the States, in conjunction with the work being done in Wisconsin by The Army Education Service.

The difficulty we were running into, the Major explained, related to textbooks. Hundreds of GI's had signed up for courses at high school or college level, but they were having difficulty in getting the books which were promised. The reason: various freighters, plying their way across the turbulent Atlantic, were filled with people, guns, ammunition, and other war gear. Apparently, the Pentagon didn't recognize the vital requirement of educating the men the Army now had in its control. It seemed to feel that guns and ammunition and replacements came first.

The Major assured us that pressure was being put on Congress to raise the priority level of education, so that some ships could carry

full cargoes of study materials.

Meanwhile, there was phase two to consider. Phase two would be the educational effort to be staged by the Army after hostilities ceased in the ETO. To my astonishment, I learned that the official policy had already been determined. Once the war ended with an allied victory, we were not going to let the men go home. Some would go, of course. But some would be transferred to the Pacific Theater, while others would become a part of a permanent policing force that would remain in Europe.

I wasn't alone in my surprise at this news. However, I was nearly alone in wanting to challenge it. I could understand the necessity respecting the Pacific Theater. But the policy designed to keep hundreds of thousands of men in Europe hit me with negative impact. Why not get out of Europe as fast as possible to let Europeans heal their ruptured lives and put things together? We were welcomed or tolerated because of the war, certainly not because of our charm. The British would be glad to see us leave and I could well believe other nationalities felt the same.

Were conditions reversed, and foreign troops sent to help us fight in America, Americans might be happy to see them arrive, but they would also rejoice when they pulled out.

I made a few somewhat choice remarks to a few of my new acquaintances, indicating my hope to be assigned somewhere other than the Educational branch of Special Services.

After orientation from Major Wilson, several officers were chosen as leaders and ordered to put together some classes. The balance of those waiting pretended to be GI's without much in the way of education, so we were all instructed in certain basic subjects such as English, spelling, penmanship, and reading.

I was appalled at this turn of events. Fortunately, I wasn't chosen as a leader. However, I was assigned to a class headed by a truly brilliant First Lieutenant who had been shining up to Major Wilson. Thus, he had been chosen to teach a group of Captains some of the basics.

I put on a good face, but I suspect my feelings were relatively visible. I simply obeyed instructions and marked time, hoping against hope that something would occur to remove Major Wilson from his position or move me away from him.

Now, instead of waiting for assignment, I went to class. I wrote to

Loy regularly, but my mail hadn't been arriving from home. Perhaps it had the same priority as the missing educational material.

I had always tended to be a "loner," as the saying has it, but I don't recall ever being as truly alone as I was in London during this period. Other officers drank, and I did not. Others picked up girls and played around. I couldn't bring myself to do this. Conversation among my fellow officers dealt with parties, girls, or booze. Here and there, something was said about the educational job we were supposedly doing. Our leader said he felt that the Educational Division of Special Services was "the greatest good on the earth since the ministry of Jesus Christ." I'm afraid I didn't see it that way.

More and more I became appalled at the waste of time, money, and manpower. I wasn't about to volunteer for combat duty, although one or two officers did. In combat, I reasoned, I would be utterly useless. Besides, a person could get hurt under those circumstances.

It became increasingly apparent that some of the officer personnel hoped that the war wouldn't end too quickly. They were becoming important. Some of them were empire builders within the structure of the military. In civilian life, they hadn't achieved success. Now, unless victory came too quickly, they had a real chance to win fame and fortune. My own civilian successes hadn't been outstanding, with the possible exception of my minor rise to fame in radio.

In my imagination, I cloaked my varicolored career in rainbow hues. I wanted to get the war over with. I had already picked up a number of useful ideas that could be used in civilian activities. I yearned for a chance to put them to the test.

Meanwhile, the British did their best to make us comfortable. Their deportment, vis-a-vis the Americans, was exemplary. One of the little quips that circulated had it that a British trooper was complaining one day to an American GI. He said, "The trouble with Americans is they are over-dressed, overpaid, and over here." The GI is said to have responded: "The trouble with the British is that they are underpaid, under-sexed, and under Eisenhower."

The British workday, at least during this period, was longer than most Americans considered decent. We came to work at 8:00 a.m., lunched at noon, and continued working until 4:00 a.m. At this point—and with some level of ceremony—tea was served. This break, adhered to through thick and thin, lasted anywhere from

thirty to forty-five minutes. Then, we stayed on until six, seven, or even later.

British women, some in uniform, some in mufti, made up a part of our overseas cadre. They served in secretarial and minor managerial positions, all without complaint. I began to believe the British brag, "there'll always be an England." I had no opportunity to rub shoulders with the males of the Island on a daily basis. If they were cut from the same bolt of cloth, they would be world-beaters.

Chapter LVI

October arrived in the United Kingdom and still no mail from Loy. I was relatively certain she was writing. Then, why didn't a letter come? During prolonged absences, the imagination takes over. She was young and attractive. She was back at work with people she knew. She would certainly be singing in public and meeting plenty of soldiers, sailors, and marines. I was jealous of the passing time and the men who might be filling that time with her.

I could have put such concerns from my mind if I had been editing a newspaper. Reporting for grammar school instruction with little to contribute and less to learn, wasn't my idea of furthering the war effort or my own. So I fretted and worried about Loy and was frustrated.

The almost nightly air raids did little to aid my serenity. A letter from Vern arrived, forwarded from the States. He was stationed in Petersborough, half a day's train ride from London. I wrote to him, suggesting that he might take a swing into London where we could swap exaggerations while uttering curses upon Hitler, the military and other unsavory entities.

One night I went to the cinema. Long queues led to both ticket windows. I took my position at the end of the line moving toward balcony admissions, which, as I recall, were 2 and 6—two shillings, six pence.

The blackout was in force, as always, and an air raid with buzz bombs was underway. Londoners were no longer fleeing in terror when the sirens began. As one British Tommy expressed it to a friend, "Fer a bomb to get to me 'ome, matey, it'd 'av ter know me address. It's a dinkum street, yer know, and Jerry'd never find it i' th dark. An if 'e should, like as not I'd be aw'y."

The two ticket lines moved at a snail's pace. The theater was packed and admissions were sold only when someone vacated a seat. The picture being exhibited was "The Way of All Flesh," starring Emil Jannings.

I was keeping pace with the line for main floor seating, in which there was a slender young lady with a most attractive profile. I could just make it out in the pervasive gloom. I made some off-hand re-

mark, intended for her benefit. I was regarded with a quick smile and a response in an pronounced accent. I braved a rebuff by asking her to repeat what she had said.

A conversation began in which I had to ask her to repeat about every other sentence. My ear wasn't attuned to the particular lilt that clothed her phrases. Finally, we were chatting in mutual appreciation at having found a focal point of consciousness in a world made up of strangers. I suggested that I get two tickets, and then we could sit together in the balcony.

She approved. Together, we moved from the gray shadows of the street into the blackness of the theater. Our seats were so close to the projection booth that we could hear the rattle of the vintage equipment projecting the violence of flesh meeting flesh on the silver screen far below. The place reeked of smoke from all manner of tobacco. The sound track was filled with static. There seemed to be a surface hum, as though the audience was providing a subsidiary dialogue. I didn't wish to disturb my neighbors by speaking aloud, but I really wanted to visit with my companion.

Whispering, I learned that her name was Marjorie Llewellyn, she came from Wales, and she didn't care much for the picture, either. I asked if she knew of a place where we could share a snack and some conversation.

She admitted to just such knowledge and we left the choking, noise-filled atmosphere, rejoicing in the fresh air of the out-of-doors. We walked—all Londoners are accustomed to walking—to a Lyon's Corner House, a fairly pleasant and reasonably priced restaurant, one of several within the city.

In the subdued lighting within the establishment, I had a better opportunity of examining the lady. To my delight, I found that she was both attractive and intelligent. She was a physical therapist, employed at a hospital. She had rooms on Tottenham Court Road, which she shared with another woman.

She was single. I immediately let her know that I was recently married, but grateful for the companionship made possible by food and conversation. I wanted it understood that I wasn't expecting anything more.

There was a certain fey quality about Marjorie that warmed my heart. I let her know of my interest in metaphysics and philosophy. She was open to discussion and fascinated by certain concepts. She

was at once respectful and stimulating.

After an hour or so, I hailed a taxi—Tottenham Court Road was too distant for a stroll—and delivered her to her address. I obtained her phone numbers (work and residence) and asked if she were willing to be my companion again on some unspecified occasion.

Keeping the taxi, I returned to Bickenhall Mansions with some of my morale restored. Conversation with a sympathetic listener is marvelous therapy.

My birthday is the 13th of October. The day came unheralded. I couldn't bring myself to tell my fellow officers of the great significance of this 24-hour period. I expected to hear from Loy. Certainly she couldn't have forgotten my birthday. I was still juvenile enough to be sentimental about birthdays, particularly my own.

When mail call was over and I had nothing from the States, I began to feel sorry for myself. I decided I would have a date with Marjorie. I called her to make the arrangements. I had waited too long. She had a date and I sank deeper into despondency, with the feeling of having been abandoned.

Going to a moving picture show held no attraction. I didn't have enough money to overcome my loneliness by hosting a party. Besides, a party was usually an opportunity for drinking and boasting about amatory conquests, and I wanted no part of such a gathering.

A policy was in force at this time, urging American officers to stay out of British pubs. Americans had more money than their British cousins and ale, stout, hard liquor and even Guinness were rationed. A few Americans in a pub could so reduce the resources of that public house so that its regular patrons would be in short supply for a week afterwards.

To offset this tragedy, Americans had officially begun to supply certain specified pubs with American whisky and other brews. These pubs became "clubs" for Americans, where they could have their fair share of fluids, since they helped provide them. I hadn't joined, but now I borrowed a membership pass from another officer who wasn't going to use it that evening. If everyone had forgotten I had been born, I would at least try to remind myself I was alive.

The pub was in the general area of Piccadilly Circus and in a direction opposite to the one I must take to return to my digs. I gave no thought to that. Riding the trams was now commonplace for me. I was assured there was good service from Piccadilly to the upper

reaches of Baker Street, where I lived.

So I went to the pub, expecting to find American officers in attendance. With my borrowed membership card I would be allowed to have all the beer I wanted, as much Guineas as I could down, stout or ale up to my gills, but only two drinks of whisky, rye, or gin.

In the pub and to my dismay, I found no other Americans whatever. I had screwed up my courage and had planned on trying desperately to act like an old toper. I managed to swallow a beer, which I didn't like. Loneliness settled over me like a fog.

I decided to try something else and had a shot of rye. That burned my interior from my canines to the crimson grotto. But I got it down. I asked for wine, and hardly tasted it as it pursued the rye.

Perhaps I'd do better with ale. It was like trying to down a second beer with my mouth full of molasses. I needed something stronger and more to my taste. I had an order of Scotch, with the bartender's face showing concern as his countenance expanded and contracted before my bewildered gaze.

My stomach was on fire. The room had become dreadfully warm. I said, in what I fancied was a subdued voice, that it was time I caught the bus. Apparently that announcement rang through the tiny establishment like the crack of doom. I was the center of all eyes. I apologized, belched, and located the door that kept moving off to the left.

Someone laughed and told me I'd have trouble getting transportation. They shut down all surface vehicles, except emergency, at 2:00 a.m. I looked at my watch, but the crystal must have fogged over for it had no hands. Odd. It had always had a pair of hands before that shot of rye.

I went into the street. By great good fortune, I headed in the right direction. The fresh air seemed to clear my head. London was astonishingly quiet. There must be a lull in the air raids. I fancied I strode along at a good pace, but a great deal of time must have elapsed and I crossed an almost endless number of streets before I finally located Baker Street. I had managed Berkley Square. From here on, it would be easy.

Taking a deep breath, I moved toward Bickenhall Mansions. To my dismay, I found that I was about to cross Berkley Square again. Someone had turned London around. I did an about face and got back to Baker Street.

With resolution, I moved up the famous thoroughfare once more. My thoughts were random. I had a sense of panic when the familiar structures around Berkley Square again came into view. What was going on?

With firm resolve, I executed a 180-degree turn and continued walking. I climbed to my front door shortly before dawn. With the coming of the sun, a realization emerged from the dews and dampness of my brain. I must have had too much to drink. I, who had sworn never to touch the stuff, had gotten myself thoroughly polluted. I had a vague feeling of human simpatico. Many people probably drink because they are lonely. It takes their minds off loneliness. Of course it does. It takes the mind off, off, and off, until it is away off.

The next time I had an evening available, I succeeded in lining up a date with Marjorie. She was absolutely “smashing” in a semi-formal gown and we went to a splendid hotel for a dinner dance. Everything was so proper that my back ached from standing so straight.

My work was a bore and I lined up still another date with my Welsh rarity. We were becoming good friends. This time, and just before I left to meet my date, a call came from Vern. He was in London. So the three of us went out together and spent a pleasant hour or two. Then Vern had to get back to his base and I took Marjorie home.

At long last, the mail came through. I received six letters all at once. Loy was happy as always. She was working at a department store and had sold the car. She could see no need for keeping it since none in the Reuling family could drive. She had sold our equity in the car for about \$50.00 because someone had told her that was all it was worth. It was second-hand, but our equity was far larger. I was upset by this news for several days.

I was even more upset with the information that she was dating other soldiers, as she again did her bit for the USO and the Women's Service Club. But why should I be upset? I had been dating Marjorie. I could see Loy's side of it and I was reasonably certain that she had complete respect for her marriage vows. I hoped and trusted that I would be able to maintain the same constancy.

I didn't know it at the time, but I learned later that she wrote cheerfully to help me through difficult times. She was frequently despondent over our separation. Also, her “dates” were dictated by

the expedient of needing an escort and nothing more.

Letters often create only partial awareness and lead to unwarranted conclusions.

At last, the big news respecting my work arrived. Paris had been liberated. In July of 1944 and Allied Armies were slowly, but surely, pushing the Jerries toward Germany. Paris was at last deemed suitable for the Special Service administration personnel. I was called into the office of Major Wilson, where I had my first and only private meeting with him. A job and a job title had been dreamed up for me. I was to be in charge of promoting the Army Education Program, Phase Two. While the war was still on, it would be my task to fully acquaint commanding officers with the remarkably fortuitous decision that the men who had slogged their way from St. Lo to the Rhine were to be benefited by educational services while they remained in Europe.

Orders that activated my “section” had been cut. I would be transferred to Paris so that I could better move into advanced positions, there to “sell” the importance and significance of education. At least I would be excused from the meaningless “classes” in basic English.

The prospect of getting to Paris brightened my outlook exceedingly. Rumor had it that Special Services had managed to commandeer a building in Paris. Some of the enlisted personnel had already left for the French capitol, crossing the channel by water. I would be one of a more favored group—the first from our branch of service to fly to Paris since its liberation.

At Crowley Airport outside London, as I climbed aboard the DC 3, I found myself sitting beside Captain Dayton—the acerbic infantryman who hated all things Air Corps. The minute he recognized me, he opened up with his favorite line of attack. He jeered at all aviation personnel and administrative people in particular. I had firm control of myself, smiled at him occasionally, but kept quiet.

I had never flown in an airplane equipped for parachutists. Bucket seats made of shining aluminum ran up and down both sides of the plane’s interior. If a person were a parachutist, he sat on his equipment. If a person were not, his bottom was in direct and uncushioned contact with a cold, unyielding saucer of metal which carried every vibration of the plane up his spine.

The crossing was uneventful, except I noticed Captain Dayton

was unusually quiet and tense. He not only didn't like the Air Corps, but he also had a native suspicion of airplanes as well. The more I sensed Dayton's unhappiness, the better I felt.

The day was clear and bright in early November. As we came low over LeBourget in preparation for landing, I got a good view of the airfield.

From where I sat, craning around in my seat to peer out, I couldn't see an unobstructed airstrip. Huge bomb craters punctuated the tarmac. Bulldozers, accompanied by a work force with hand tools, were busy every few hundred feet along the landing right of way. As we buzzed the field, many arms waved and gestured for us to go elsewhere.

The pilot circled three times, clearly seeking a path through the obstacles. I shook my head. "We can't land," I said. "Look at that stuff."

Dayton's face was the shade of new putty. He said nothing and his jaw was tense.

The flaps went up, the landing gear went down, and in we came. There was nothing to hang onto. "Brace yourselves," I called out. "The landing may be rough."

The wheels touched down in deep grass beside the tarmac strip. We bounced and swayed at ninety miles an hour. Holding onto a fuselage rib, I kept looking through the port. The wing that blocked some of my view was shaking as though waving to a friend. Beyond it, I noticed a dark line that cut our path at right angles. It must be a ditch put in for drainage. Would we stop before we came to it? We would not.

We had slowed to perhaps thirty miles per hour when the left wheel went into it. The plane lurched and the pilot gunned the left engine. For a moment, we seemed to hang motionless, precariously canted. Then, with the plane reeling, the left wheel came up and the tail slued to the right. We came to rest, right side up, and no damage done.

I sat in my place, breathing hard. Captain Dayton's face was green around the edges. I reached to unbuckle. The door to the flight deck opened and out popped the pilot. He wore the uniform of the RAF, his kepi was set at a rakish angle, which revealed grey red hair. His freckled face couldn't have seen more than seventeen summers.

"Good show, wat?" he laughed. Together with his navigator they

went to the exit door in the tail, lowered the steps and departed.

I felt marvelous. Dayton looked on the verge of losing his cookies. In various stages of reaction, the passengers staggered out into the field. I waited for Dayton. "As you were saying," I said to him, "These Air Force types haven't any nerve. They don't know what it is to face danger."

I shouldn't have done that. For that sally, I received a look so venomous that I needed a shot of anticoagulant. Dayton never forgave me.

An ubiquitous Army truck took the planeload of educators into Paris. I was to be billeted in the Elysee Star Hotel, which was close to the Arch of Triumph at the top of the Champs de Elysee.

This hostelry proved to be a building of about six floors. A Captain Charles Steinberg and I were assigned to a single room, having both a double and a single bed. Steinberg chose the single and I gladly accepted the double. I interpreted his quick decision as a mark of courtesy extended to a fellow officer, clearly his senior. I speedily discovered that Steinberg had a more practiced eye respecting strange beds, and chose the better resting-place. My bed had springs that had become accustomed to navy personnel. I can account for its shape with no other explanation. It sagged like a hammock and was equipped with a blanket-thick mattress. Steinberg's choice was made of better or newer materials.

The room had a private bathroom, for which I was grateful although one of the three fixtures was alien to me. There was a beautiful tub for bathing. There was a fine washbowl. But, in place of the most necessary item, there was something Steinberg called a bidet. Apparently, the amorous French find greater utility in a device to help madam after sex. There was only one john on the entire floor of the hotel. It was down the hall and in a small closet. It was almost always occupied.

Steinberg and I settled in, went to a cafe down the avenue for our meals, and became good friends as well as roommates. Chuck Steinberg played an excellent game of chess and he had a reasonable command of a few French verbs. He was fun. I never learned what he did and I'm sure he never understood what I did. The two of us were gainfully unemployed.

Chapter LVII

Steinberg and I reported to the Shell Building at our earliest convenience. My roommate said he knew where the building was, so we walked there. It was only a few short blocks from our hotel on the Rue de Berri. This would be headquarters for all branches of Special Services in the ETO.

Steinberg was assigned to a section that booked civilian talent. This was probably the most successful portion of the entire Special Services operations, at least overseas. Various moving picture and stage personalities were taken to front line positions to entertain the troops. Few of them spent time in Paris, since anyone in Paris had entertainment enough. The consequences were that Steinberg had little to do and spent his hours playing chess with me or acting as a boulevardier, making time with French ladies whenever he could. If I am to believe Steinberg, this was nearly always possible.

Since I headed a complete section (Promotion for AEP Phase II), I was given an office of my own. A Major, who had become my immediate superior, conducted me to it. I was almost overawed when I first viewed its splendor. I had been assigned the entire top floor of the Shell Building. The space was vast.

In Paris, the majority of all buildings are six stories in height. Or, at least, they were during the 1941-45 period. Today changes are occurring and the skyline has changed dramatically.

The reason for the uniform height, I discovered, was traceable to the Napoleonic Code. When the Little Corsican ruled, he decided that cathedrals and government monuments alone could puncture an otherwise unbroken skyline. The Code allowed no building to exceed five full stories in height. The bureaucrats of that day, therefore, ordained that the roof must begin at the ceiling of the fifth level above ground.

Canny French architects, limited by law, invented the Mansard roof that obeys the law to the letter. The eaves conform. They are placed at ceiling level atop the fifth story.

However, the Code did not specify the slant of roof. Thus, as the builders proceeded, the roofs were constructed nearly perpendicular for another full story with the eave line at floor level.

The French do not like to break the law overtly. They are experts, however, at bending it out of shape. In this, they are identical to any other intelligent people. They make the best of the evils created by the laws while technically conforming.

It was this space, in the Shell Building, which became my domain. The external walls slanted inwards only slightly, with plenty of headroom except immediately adjacent to the outside walls. I never bothered to pace the distance, but I suspect I had approximately 100 feet by 50 feet for my use. That would be 5000 square feet, surely ample for my section.

Only one partition divided the area, creating a second office of perhaps fifteen feet by fifty. That is 750 square feet additional. The Major informed me that I would not have to be lonely in this huge, echoing chamber. I would be assigned a full-time multi-language civilian secretary, plus two enlisted men.

The building's twin elevators served this floor, like all others. There was a stairway, should the elevators fail to function as they did almost every day.

While I was wide-eyed at this evidence of the importance of my section—and, hence, my own importance—the Major took away the glory.

"The reason you're up here, LeFevre," he explained, "is because it's the most dangerous position in the building. The General, in command of Special Services, is on the ground floor. Full Colonels are on two and three. Majors are on four and five." He winked. "I'm on five, just below you.

"If there's an air raid, it's the tops of the buildings that get blown away. Also, the elevators don't work a great deal of the time and the General doesn't like to climb stairs. The importance of the work being done is in reverse order. Those on the top floors are expendable. In this building, the chain of command works from the bottom, up. Got the picture?"

I looked around. There were three desks jutting like mesas above the otherwise vacant, prairie-like floor. I looked into the smaller office and it was totally empty.

"I got the picture," I assured my superior officer. "The three desks are for my secretary and my enlisted men. I won't have time to sit down. I'll be on safari between them."

"Don't be like that, LeFevre. It's not so bad."

"Who said it was bad? It's overwhelming, that's all."

"You'll have a desk in a few days. We came up one short. Where will you want it? I suspect you'd like to put it in the smaller office," the Major suggested.

"Right. No point in letting that space go to waste. But I think I'll take one of the desks out here and let the secretary have the private office."

"That's not in the military tradition, LeFevre. Officers should maintain a discreet distance from their subordinates."

"In my office, sir, all distances are discreet," I said. "Can you tell me which direction is north?"

The Major thought a moment and flung out an arm. "North is there. Why?"

"I just wanted to figure out which side of the room the sun would set in. Orientation, sir. You see what I mean."

He laughed. "Okay, Okay. I would think you'd be pleased."

"Pleased isn't the word," I said. "I'm jubilant."

In a few days, a fourth desk was brought in and put where I had requested. I had the three desks in the big office separated, one in the center, the other two positioned like wide receivers on a scrimmage line.

At first, I anticipated that this enormous area would soon be commandeered for other purposes. That was one of the reasons I had for pushing the desks apart. I wanted to be able to report that I was using all my space. But my expectations proved hollow. No one came to lay claim.

Presently, my help arrived—a Sergeant and a Corporal. They were immediately given titles: Office Manager and Assistant Office Manager. Then came my secretary—a wispy, frail blonde who spoke beautiful English. She was perhaps forty-five years of age and was one of the best-educated persons in the building. Of all things, her name turned out to be Madam Saint Germain. My consternation and confusion at this news can only be imagined.

So my office routine developed. I began by taking my orders—those that had created and activated my section—revising and rewording it into a memorandum. This could be sent to commanders in all echelons, apprising them of the fantastic good fortune that would befall when the war ended. They could tell their troops many would remain in Europe while they obtained an education.

I sent the memo downstairs for approval through channels. It was disapproved, not because it was badly written but because it was premature. In my judgment, my whole section was premature. I was advised not to be overly eager. The top brass would determine when the time was ripe. Meanwhile, I was to wait.

Later, I discovered that my memo was reconsidered, multigraphed, and sent out. But no one bothered to tell me of this triumph. Since my last instructions were to wait, that is what I did.

I would get up early in the pre-dawn hours. I would shave in cold water. There was neither heat nor hot water in the hotel. Enough fuel was finally brought in so that we had hot water once a week, for a bath on Saturday. I tubbed in two inches of water, which coincided with the directive. Steinberg always drew a full tub and luxuriated in it.

Then Steinberg and I would go to the cafe down the street. Just as the pale winter sun began heralding the dawn, he and I would report to the Shell Building.

I would stop for a moment to survey the war map kept in the lobby. Then I would go to my desk on the sixth floor. Here my staff would greet me, warmly and with expectation. My desk contained nothing but my original directive and a copy of my rejected memo. There was nothing in my "In" basket, nothing in my "Out" basket. The two papers were in "Hold."

I would take them out and place them on the left side of my desk. Then I would take the elevator, pick up Steinberg, and perhaps one or two other officers. Together we would go to the Red Cross Club, established for officers in a fine, luxurious hotel. We would play chess, swap yarns, read (if we could read French), and let the morning pass.

At eleven-thirty, we would depart and return to the office, just in case something had happened. Nothing had.

Then we would lunch at the cafe. Returning from lunch, I would ride up the elevator as far as it would go, if it went at all. My "In" basket would be the same as I had left it.

The Sergeant would report that he had dusted the "In" basket. He wanted nothing to stand in the way of a new directive, order, request, supplication, or invitation. I would commend him on his thoroughness.

Then I would take my directive from the left corner of my desk

and put it squarely in the center. Then I would pick up Steinberg. We'd either return to the Club or stroll around on the beautiful French boulevards, entering some of the shops that continued to be open. Rarely did I make a purchase. Most of my pay went either to Peggy or Loy.

Our stroll completed, I would return to the office an hour or so before closing time to see what had transpired. Again, nothing. However, I would move my directive to the right corner of my desk. It was important to make progress.

After waiting around a bit, just in case, I would bid my staff good night. I would put my directive into the "Hold" basket, and leave for another sojourn with personnel at the designated cafe.

One day, I varied this routine. While in London, I had met a fine woman and her daughter. The occasion had arisen because one of my officer acquaintances had a date with the daughter. I went with him to lend an appearance of sobriety (I figured) to the date he had arranged with the daughter, Barbara.

The mother shall remain nameless. Her husband was in service. She was understandably worried both about him and her daughter dating Americans. The two lived in a fine home and were certainly upper class in education, deportment, and surroundings.

This lady was also concerned about a dear friend of hers in Paris. They had been close for some time and had exchanged letters during a part of the German occupation. However, she had heard nothing from her friend in some months. She exacted a promise from me: if I ever got to Paris, I would look up her friend, and then write to her.

The Parisienne I had promised to seek out was named Daisy Pallier. Her husband was a famous artist. He had been taken into custody by the Germans.

The address given me was 2 Rue Aumont Theiville. I obtained a street map of Paris and painfully located it. Happily, it was no more than a mile from Etoile. I set out to walk on a day Steinberg had something to do.

My command of the French language was non-existent and it was impossible for me to ask directions. I could ask, but my ear refused to learn the distinct cadence and rhythm of every French reply.

The large numeral 2 on the building established that I had found my way. I routed out the concierge and inquired as to the where-

abouts of Monsieur or Madam Pallier. I was directed to an apartment on the top floor.

Daisy Pallier, like the rest of Paris, had no heat in her apartment. My heart went out to her when she came to the door. She was about eight months pregnant. She was a brunette, with an attractive face and what would normally have been an alluring figure.

She spoke excellent English and we were able to communicate readily. She informed me that her husband was dead. He had been in the French underground, providing cartoons for an underground newspaper that he had also helped distribute. The Jerries had caught him at it and taken him into custody.

She was convinced that they had killed him. She had been told that he had died in prison. But the cause of his death, she was certain, had been a German bullet. Or worse—German torture.

Her immediate concern was her unborn infant. To survive, she had been selling her husband's paintings. They were valuable, but few could afford to pay what they were worth. Fortunately, he had been prolific so she was not altogether destitute. However, with the severe rationing, she had not much to eat.

Following this visit, I called upon the Mess Sergeant at the cafe where I was served and asked if I could purchase supplies for this woman. I was turned down flat. However, the Sergeant in charge indicated that he had no way of watching me. There was plenty of stuff around. His inventory was in disarray and never checked anyway.

I managed to liberate a few cans of rations, which I delivered to Daisy. Indeed, I put this procedure into my regular schedule and managed to take a few items to Daisy at least once a week. I was, of course, a thief. I justified the actions to my conscience by insisting the cause was noble.

Her time came. I visited Daisy in the hospital and saw her beautiful boy baby. After she returned home, I continued to help out with what little I could do.

Naturally, I wrote to the British lady to bring her up to date. In due course, I found that I was communicating by letter to Daisy on a more or less regular basis. This was a correspondence that continued for many years. Daisy's son grew to young manhood and Daisy remarried, apparently to a man of some means and position.

I was careful in writing to Loy of this adventure. I underscored

the fact that Daisy was in her eighth month of pregnancy when I first met her.

During this period, I became increasingly disenchanted with the military. There was so much waste. There was so much empire building.

I am given to making quips and somewhat caustic remarks, and there is no doubt that others picked up on observations I made. There is also no doubt that some used these sardonic comments to undermine me so as to advance their own personal ambitions.

An instance of this emerged. A Lieutenant I had met in London was, strangely enough, named London. He came into my office one day and explained that he understood I was dissatisfied with my job.

I replied that he had been correctly informed, although I marveled that he knew it. My job was not distasteful; it was non-existent. It seemed to me that I had some ability but it wasn't being used.

"Your background is radio, isn't it?" London inquired.

"It sure is," I confirmed.

"Then you're going to be interested in what I have to say. Let's go get some coffee."

We detoured to the inevitable Red Cross Club. There, London spelled out an event that was occurring. It happened that the brass had gestated the idea of creating an Armed Forces Radio Network. We could get federal financing, he was sure. Then, we could set up our own broadcasting network in territory already controlled by the Allies. We could beam propaganda and other information both to our own troops and into enemy territory.

Such a radio network would be a great morale booster. It would help convince the Americans in combat that we were winning. It might even convince the Jerries they were losing.

I expressed keen interest. Before long I was privileged to meet a Lieutenant Colonel, in charge of the idea, together with an assistant officer he had corralled.

I felt very much at home with this concept until the real reason for this program became clear. It was to provide the officer personnel involved with life time careers. They hoped our efforts to rid France of its invaders would not proceed too rapidly. It would take a bit of time to get the federal funds and to "sell" the idea to susceptible Congressmen.

When I raised a few questions about the advisability of keeping such a program going after the war had ended. I hit a nerve. I was immediately cold-shouldered out of the proposition.

A brief effort was made to sell me on the beauty of permanently spreading American ideas through radio. I not only lost interest, but I also said so.

I was obviously not the man London thought me to be. I was left to pursue my Phase Two functions, if I could find them.

A letter came through from Pearl. She didn't chide me on my marriage. She was friendly and endearing. The letter produced a welter of confusion in my mind and a nagging sense of guilt returned.

One day when I entered my office, workmen were just leaving. My Office Manager explained that a buzzer system had been installed. The French telephone system was somewhat erratic. Although I had a phone on my desk, I rarely used it. The operator and I could not communicate because of my language deficiencies.

Thanks to this new buzzer system, my immediate superior, the Major on the fifth floor, could summon me instantly. He had the same problem I did in using the telephone.

In this manner, I passed my winter of discontent. I became increasingly suspicious of the motivation of the officers I worked with. Why not fight the war and get it over? My career, I could now see, was back in the states. The Army was not the place for me.

We had one air alert. A single German plane flew high above Paris in the clear night sky. No bombs descended, although sirens wailed and searchlights stabbed the night. Steinberg guessed that there was an unwritten understanding among Germans and Americans alike. Paris was too beautiful to be destroyed.

So London underwent the ferocity of the buzz bombs and Paris was spared. Then the beleaguered Nazis devised a new bomb. It was called the V-2 rocket. This one didn't come over low with a limited supply of fuel. It was fired very high from batteries along the coast that was still in German hands. It had an enormously steep trajectory. It rose, then turned and descended at supersonic speeds. There were no alarms or alerts possible. The bomb hit, penetrated, and then blew up. The sound of its explosion was followed by the sound of its arrival. In the immediate area of the explosion, total destruction ensued.

The British, with their enormous calm, quipped that if you heard a V-2 you were quite safe. They professed to “like” the V-2’s better than the “buzz” bombs. I confess I didn’t like either one.

Chapter LVIII

One February morning, my buzzer sounded. I happened to be sitting at my desk, making certain the directive was precisely positioned at my left elbow. The sudden noise made me jump. My two non-coms stared at me in consternation.

"What is it, Captain?" the Office Manager asked.

"Haven't the foggiest," I said. "Maybe the war is over. On second thought, perhaps they've decided to start."

"What are we supposed to do?" asked the Assistant.

"Sit tight," I advised. "I'll check it out. Probably a short circuit."

There was a bare possibility that my services actually were needed. I didn't wait for the elevator. I simply leaped down the stairs, dashed along the corridor, and burst into the office where my superior officer presided. I pulled to attention, saluted with Buster Keaton solemnity, and said:

"Captain LeFevre, reporting as buzzed, sir."

"At ease, LeFevre." The Major's desk was covered with papers. He had a staff of about ten people, all of whom looked busy. I envied him those papers, thinking of my slim claim to Section survival. The Major looked me up and down with critical eye.

"I've got a job for you."

"Yes, *Sir*, Major." I let my body lean forward, stiff from the ankles up. I was a Captain Marvel, about to leap into the fray.

"See that box?" He gestured behind me, and I turned to take note of a wooden crate standing on the floor near the door. It was about twenty inches high by ten inches wide, by thirty inches long. Not a big item, but not small one either. It was unmarked. It might contain almost anything.

"I see it," I confirmed.

"It contains top priority material," my superior officer said. "Also, its contents are secret. That's why we are entrusting it to an officer of your rank. This must be delivered to Colonel Sidelle in London as rapidly as you can get there. In person. You are not to let it out of your sight and no one is to handle it but you. Is that understood?"

"Yes, sir." Could this be possible? I was being entrusted with an errand of some importance.

"Your orders are being cut now. Get back to your digs and prepare for your movement."

"Yes, sir." My eagerness must have shown. "Any particular uniform recommended, Major?"

"Full battle gear. I want you to look like a field officer not like a desk jockey."

"I see, sir." I really didn't. But I knew how to obey orders. "Will I be in command of a detachment?" Something as valuable as the contents of the crate might be the target of enemy theft or sabotage. Perhaps I should have an enlisted man carry it. Officers were gentlemen, by act of Congress, and we weren't supposed to tote things in person. The crate was large enough to require a small amount of muscular exertion.

"No, Captain. That would draw attention to what you are carrying. We want this to appear to be your own personal belongings. You take it alone. Your orders will give you top priority. You can commandeer any vehicles you wish. But get to Colonel Sidelle, and get there fast. You know him. He's now our top man in the London office on Audley Street. He's expecting you."

"Yes, sir. Do I go by air or surface conveyance?"

"That's entirely up to you and weather conditions. Just get there. By first available transport. Is that clear?"

"That is clear, sir."

"Then stop wasting time. Get into your battle dress, carry your carbine, and get back here fast. Your orders will be waiting. We'll turn the box and its contents over to you at that time."

"Yes, sir, Major."

I gave a parting salute and raced back to my office. My staff, including Madam Saint Germain, was eager for an explanation.

"I've been assigned to a special mission," I said. "I can't tell you what it is. Just carry on as always. I'll fill you in on details when I return."

"When will that be?" the Office Manager asked.

"I can't say. Actually, I don't know. Just hold the fort. Meanwhile, you're in charge."

Back at the Elysee Star Hotel in my cheerless, frigid room, I changed into fatigues and helmet. I grabbed my trusty carbine, which I had fired in the states only enough times to qualify as a marksman. I headed back to the Shell Building. I had no ammuni-

tion. Carrying live ammunition is not my idea of a safe way to travel. And who knew? Possibly the crate contained a bomb.

The thought gave me a momentary qualm. A bomb? Utter nonsense. Everyone knew that Special Services was not a combat branch of the Army. But wait. If everyone knew it, then the top brass, with their reputation for guile, might have dragooned just such an officer for a secret combat-related mission. Who would suspect a Special Services officer of having some kind of dangerous mission?

My answer to that was a bit unnerving. Everyone, in view of the fatigues and helmet I was wearing.

The weather was vile. Paris had received several inches of snow, which was trying to melt. But the sky was overcast with low, forbidding clouds. An icy wind brought skiffs of sleet and rain. A few hours at the Red Cross Officer's Club would have been truly welcome. Not for me this time. At last I was doing something to help the war effort.

It took only a few minutes to pick up my orders. I signed for the crate. It was relatively heavy, weighing perhaps thirty pounds, but nothing was loose inside. It was impossible to guess what dark secrets it contained.

I wrestled the box to my shoulder and returned to the lobby of the Shell Building. My orders were imperious. I was granted so much leeway, by command of the General in SS that I could do just about anything I pleased with other people's vehicles.

Clearly, the best and quickest way to get to London was by air. But, in weather like this, who was flying?

In the lobby, I got on the telephone and managed a connection to Le Bourget Field. The Operations Officer told me the bad news. Nothing was flying. The airport was closed tight. Nothing was coming in or going out.

I asked about the weather. Was there a clearing trend?

Negative. As long as the conditions lasted, there would be no flights whatever. And the conditions might last as long as a week.

I was confronted with a dilemma. If I traveled by surface means, it would take a day to drive to a channel port. Figure a second day to get passage on a vessel across the channel. Then, figure at least part of a third day, getting from Calais, or wherever, up to London. Three days gone by. If I could fly, I'd be there in two hours.

The difficulty was this. The surface route, though slow, was certain. In three days, I'd be there. In view of the weather, a three-day

delay would be understandable. But once I left by car, I was committed to that method all the way. What if, on the morrow, the weather cleared? There would be anxious eyes waiting for my arrival within a few hours, but I wouldn't show up for three full days. I would be subject to reprimand for making a bad guess.

On the other hand, if the weather continued foul for four or five days and I spent the time waiting for a plane, I would be subject to reprimand.

I called Le Bourget a second time trying to get the Operations Officer to come up with a more reliable long-range forecast. For my pains, I was rewarded with increased uncertainty. "The sky could clear in a few hours, Captain, or it could be a few days. You figure it out. Your guess is as good as mine."

It has always been my policy to jump in. All the way and headfirst. Indeed, it seems that the greater the uncertainties, the more eager I am to make a complete commitment. I must have some kind of phobia that rejects dilemmas.

At any rate, having thought it over, I ordered a jeep and a driver from the motor pool. He arrived, looking sodden and unhappy under the stinging gusts of sleet. I ordered the driver to take me to Le Bourget.

"Nothing's flying, Captain."

"I know it," I said. "Just take me there anyway."

Grabbing my carbine and with the crate stowed where I could keep a hand on it, away we went. It wasn't just the sleet. There were patches of fog as well. On my instructions, we drove to the Operations Office. I dismissed the vehicle, and wrestling crate and carbine, I entered the welcome heat of the small waiting room.

The Operation's Officer came from his private domain, where he made his calculations and guesses. I identified myself.

"I told you," he reminded, "nothing's flying."

"You also said the weather could break within a few hours. I'm taking that chance. If the sky clears, I want passage on the first flight out of here." I showed him my orders and he whistled.

"Okay, okay. Must be important. But I think you're making a mistake. You could wait at your digs and I could phone you."

"Nope," I said. "I want to be here. It reduces risk. The Air Corps hasn't let me down yet. The weather will change. You'll see."

"It's up to you," he said. "But nothing's open. The cafe's closed."

You may have a long wait.”

“That’s my problem, isn’t it?”

“It sure is.” He went off shaking his head.

I wasn’t alone in the waiting room. A few enlisted men and a couple of officers were clustered near the door exchanging stories, laughing and talking. Suddenly, it hit me.

I stood before the Captain, the highest-ranking man, who looked half my age. He was obviously in charge of the group.

“Did you just land, Captain?”

“Nobody’s flying through this stuff. It’s pea soup. We flew in last night.”

“If it should happen,” I said, “that you are flying to London, I want space in your plane.”

“Nothing’s flying,” he said. “Zero-zero.”

I put the crate on the floor between my legs, whipped out my orders and handed them over. “If nothing’s flying, Captain, what are you and your men doing here in full flight regalia? Did you just land? If you did, how? Why haven’t you dispersed to your respective quarters?”

He stared at me, saying nothing.

“Look,” I said. “I’m not from the I.G.’s office. You’ve seen my orders. You guys wouldn’t be sitting around here unless you were planning on taking off. Something’s going on and I want in on it.”

“Okay,” the Captain looked around. The Operation’s Officer was nowhere in view.

Lowering his voice, he confided, “We flew in last night and managed a landing. We were over Germany where we dropped our load. We had to re-fuel. That’s why we touched down.” He sighed, then smiled. “I’ve got a date with a cute little trick in London tonight and I’m not about to stand her up. You’re right. We’re going. It’s unauthorized.”

I nodded. His intentions were splendidly against regulations.

“We’re putting on a show for the Operation’s Officer. I had the men assemble here. We’re going to begin saying ‘goodbye’ to each other, and then we’ll leave in twos and threes. But we’re not going into Paris. We’re going to the plane. I’ve got a B-17 parked out on the back lot.

“Now if you want to come—you and your damn box—just follow one of the men when he leaves. Don’t say anything to anyone.”

He grinned at me. "We don't have space for you but you can ride in the bomb bay, since it's empty. If we have trouble we can drop you out early."

"Thanks a heap," I said.

The crew put on a good show. They laughed, joked, gave their farewells, and then by ones and twos, left the waiting room. I picked up crate and carbine, and followed the last man out.

Fog had rolled in solidly. I was just able to keep the back of the man ahead of me in sight as I trudged about ten paces behind him. Presently, a B-17 loomed out of the murk and I handed my box, my weapon, and myself up the ladder.

True to the Captain's promise, my cargo was placed in the bomb bay. I was instructed to sit on the box.

It isn't made for passengers and, of course, there were no seat belts.

The crew took their positions at their various gunnery stations. Before long, we were all aboard. The pilot checked with everyone on his intercom and I could hear the replies of the crew.

From my position, I could see very little. By standing, I could look out a port fairly well, but the gloom was so complete I couldn't see the edge of the runway.

What kind of a situation had I put myself into? I began to feel very warm. Fear came to sit on my shoulders and offer advice such as, 'get the hell out of here.' I shut my mind to these suggestions of alarm and tried to give an appearance of total calm. My palms started to sweat. I began to wonder if Captain Dayton had been right about these flying machines. Surely, any minute the Captain would admit that the weather was much too bad for takeoff. No one but a fool would fly in guck like this.

I was mistaken. An enormous amount of courage is engendered by group peril. No one wants to be the first to 'chicken out.' Everyone tries to out bluff the other and the group stays put.

One-by-one, the motors roared into action as the props whirled. Then, we taxied away with me standing at the port. Actually, I felt safer there than with my gear. At least I had something to hang onto. And I couldn't be jettisoned. The plane pivoted, hesitated, and then inched forward overcoming inertia as it gathered speed. I couldn't even see the ends of the wings! I gritted my teeth and held on. The plane lurched upwards and we were free of the ground. I

was comforted slightly by the knowledge there was no chance of a collision in midair. No one else was idiot enough to be here.

The darkness outside was nearly total. Then, after a few moments, we burst clear of the enveloping clouds. There we were, in afternoon sunshine, flying in unobstructed air space. I heaved a sigh of relief.

One of the gunners came over to me. "How's it going?" he asked. "Fine. Any idea where we're going to land?"

He shook his head. "Anywhere he can get down, I suppose. As close to London as possible. Croydon is socked in."

I nodded. Croydon socked in. Splendid. Anyway, the Air Corps had a perfect record. Every plane that had ever taken off had landed sooner or later. Sooner or later, we would come down too; I forced my thoughts away from various technical details concerning the landing.

Finally, I retired to my box and sat on it, nursing my empty carbine. There was nothing to see outside except an endless blanket of clouds over which we traveled at what appeared to be a snail's pace.

After about forty minutes of this, I returned to the port. Presently, the gunner stood beside me again.

"How in hell does anyone know where we are with all this cloud cover?" I asked.

"Don't worry," the GI assured. Our Captain's the best in the business. He knows."

"I'm glad someone does," I said.

The intercom crackled and I was left alone. Then the gunner called to me.

"We're going to start down, Captain. We're over Croydon."

I peered out. The sun was cloaked in mist. It looked like a small lemon lozenge as the ship poked its nose into vapor. Then, directly ahead, the clouds parted. There was a rift, an opening about as big as a city block, with no clouds. I caught a sudden glimpse of dark countryside beneath as the gunner shouted: "Hang on!"

I clung to support beams just in time. The pilot stood the plane on its nose, my helmet clanged against a strut, and the box leaped once. It landed on the carbine. For a moment I dangled with one foot in midair, and then came back to footing as we leveled off. We were under the overcast. The familiar dark green of the British landscape was right below, with a few twinkling lights showing. We had

dived through the clouds in the one clear spot in the cover that must have stretched a thousand miles.

It was only a matter of moments. We circled and landed. I had retrieved my cargo and was sitting on it quietly when the Captain looked into the fuselage.

"I radioed that you were aboard," he called to me. "You'll be getting VIP treatment."

Indeed, he was right. As we taxied toward our assigned parking spot, a British recon, headlights blazing and siren wailing came in full pursuit.

As I came down the ladder, a British non-com stood alongside and offered a stiff open-palm salute. A couple of gunners handed down my precious box and my not so precious gun. In a jiffy, I was bestowed in the rear of the recon with everything intact.

"Where to, Captain?"

I gave the address on Audley Street. The non-com in charge nodded to the driver, and we raced away again with the siren clearing the way before us. I had hardly had time to thank the pilot. We roared all the way into London at full tilt. The distance was considerable, but these men knew the way. And they understood emergency orders. The outcome of the war might have depended on us with complete certainty of outcome. Never have I enjoyed such a prestigious passage. People gawked at me in the early twilight as we darted through traffic, clinging to the left, which invariably caused me certain qualms. The siren and red lights got us immediate attention.

By the time we reached some of the familiar sights, Marble Arch, Hyde Park and Berkley Square, I was congratulating myself. I had been given orders designed to get me to London fast. I had arrived that same day, despite the odds against it, occasioned by the weather. Colonel Sidelle would be pleased.

We pulled up in front of the familiar address. I thanked the driver and the non-com. Then, at full speed, I ran up the stairs with my crate and carbine.

I paused a moment to catch my breath. Then I strode into the waiting room and approached the WAAP, now doing duty as receptionist. I flipped out my orders, motioned to the box, and said, "I got here as quickly as I could. The Colonel is anxious to receive this."

"The Colonel is in a meeting right now, Captain. He can't be dis-

turbed.”

“I think he will want to know about this crate, Miss. I’ve just made an emergency flight from Paris to get it to him. He wants it badly.”

“The Colonel left orders, sir. He is not to be disturbed. Not by you or anyone else.”

“But...but...” I sputtered.

She smiled. “I have my orders, too, Captain. The Colonel will not be able to see you today. If you come back tomorrow, I’m sure I can get you in.”

“Don’t you understand?” I demanded. “This is important!” My voice was rising along with my temper.

“It won’t do you a bit of good to be upset, Captain. Orders are orders. He is not to be disturbed.”

I managed to get hold of myself. “I will follow your instructions,” I finally said. “I don’t think the Colonel is going to be pleased when he learns of the delay you are causing.”

She ignored the sally. “I suggest you see the billeting officer, Captain Carruthers. Then you can spend a good night and come back tomorrow.”

I had been instructed not to let the box out of my sight, so I took it with me.

The billeting office was on Baker Street, several squares away, as the British express it. I carried the box into Carruthers’ office. I knew him quite well and was happy to see that he had been promoted. He had been a Lieutenant when I had last been in London. Now he was completely in charge of billeting.

Carruthers remembered me and got me my old room at Bickenhall Mansions. I walked to it with my box and my gun. I hadn’t eaten since breakfast, but I couldn’t imagine lugging that increasingly heavy object to the assigned eating establishment. And I wasn’t supposed to leave it unattended.

I went to bed without supper, placing the box alongside my bed, so I could reach out during the night and reassure myself that it was still with me.

There was a buzz-bomb raid that night and I woke up listening to those erratic engines of the flying “doodlebugs.” Later, on two or three occasions, I heard the boom-thump of the V-2’s coming in. The explosion first, and then the swooshing sound of their arrival. I slept only fitfully.

The next morning, bright and early, I walked to Audley Street without the carbine. I toiled up the stairs to the waiting room and floored my precious container. Surely, the receptionist would have told the Colonel of my arrival, and I'd be ushered in at once. I had eaten only the rolls and tea provided at my lodgings. Once my duty had been discharged, I promised myself, I'd have a huge breakfast.

"Does the Colonel know of my arrival?" I asked the WAAF.

"Yes, he does, Captain. And he'll see you soon. Just have a chair."

I sat and fidgeted. The minutes turned into hours as I waited. Other people came, waited and then went out. Finally, at about eleven o'clock, the receptionist put down the phone and smiled in my direction.

"The Colonel will see you now, Captain."

Once more I picked up the wooden box. I took it to the Colonel's door, knocked, and was admitted.

Struggling with the box, I got the door opened, slid the box inside, shut the door, and saluted. "Captain LeFevre," I said. "Reporting as ordered. Here is the item I was to deliver."

The Colonel was sitting at his desk. In front of him was a ball of string at least a foot in diameter. Other pieces and bits of twine were looped around his office. Some hung over the knobs of drawers or were laid out in various lengths on his desk or the nearby table. Most of the chairs contained string. The room was full of string.

"Hey, that's great, LeFevre." The Colonel was tying a couple of pieces of string together. "What do you do in this man's Army to keep from going crazy?" he asked brightly. "I save string. I'm making it into one great big ball. I think I'll ship it to my wife after awhile. She's always running short." He added about seven feet of cord to the ball. "What are you doing for lunch?"

I had been waiting for hours while the Colonel tied string? I could hardly believe it. "The box, sir," I said. "I was told it was important."

The Colonel nodded. "It's my radio," he said. "It got shipped to Paris by mistake. I sure am glad to get it back again. I've missed it. Thanks. Let's go eat."

I learned later that on the particular date of my unauthorized flight from Paris only one other plane had sought the splendor of the skies above the cloud cover. That one contained Glen Miller and his band. That flight was never heard from again.

Chapter LIX

My stay in London was brief. Within the week I was back in Paris, having taken only enough time before that flight to visit Marjorie Llewellyn.

Somehow word had reached my superiors—probably belatedly put into my 201 file from my performance at Nashville—that I was a competent speaker. I was called upon to deliver a talk to Special Services personnel. Using the “Why We Fight” series of motion pictures as source material, I presented one of my orientation lectures.

It went over well. I detected a new note of respect among some of my familiars.

After that particular meeting, Steinberg asked me, “How long do you think the war will last?”

“Your guess it as good as mine,” I responded. “Actually, we have the Germans trapped. Except for the Battle of the Bulge, which was a complete fluke, they’ve been on the run for a year.

“My concern,” I admitted, “is with the Allied top command. I don’t think they really want to wind this thing down. The men at the front are going through hell. The men in the rear echelons never had it so good. We’ve got top decisions being made by former grocery clerks and salesmen.”

“Are you sure we’re going to win it?” Steinberg asked.

“Oh, yes,” I said. “No question. My own opinion is that we could have finished it off within six months after Normandy. To tell the truth, I’m beginning to wonder if this whole Special Service operation isn’t a mistake.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Let’s consider morale,” I said. “Want to know what boosts the morale of a man who is really at the front? It’s a victory. Americans aren’t on the battlefield to advance their careers. But Americans behind the battle lines are doing just that.”

“You have something there,” Steinberg agreed. “I’ve noticed that the Jerries don’t try to attack SHAEF (Eisenhower headquarters). And we don’t seem interested in knocking out Hitler’s various hide-outs. We know where they are, but we leave them alone. Maybe it’s an unwritten understanding among military brass. Or maybe they

realize that the whole reason for fighting may be to make the officer cadres look good."

"I wouldn't go that far," I said.

"The hell you wouldn't. You're one of the most outspoken bastards I've over met. Frankly, LeFevre, your mouth gets you into trouble."

"That's where we differ, Steinberg. I'm not here to make a career for myself. I was hoping you weren't."

"I'm not." He thought a bit. "Of course, I'd like to win a promotion, and don't try to kid yourself. So would you."

"True enough," I admitted. "But I'm not willing to win a promotion by brown-nosing a bunch of ambitious nondescripts. It sometimes seems to me that the whole Special Services set up is politically inspired. It provides the career-minded brass with a chance to assure the folks back home that the men are enjoying Army life. They see movies. They get to see stage and screen personalities. They can play games. They can get mail. They can get an education. All the comforts of home."

"That's true."

"Like the trip I just made to London. I wonder what it cost the taxpayers to see that Colonel Sidelle got his radio?"

"You've convinced me, LeFevre."

"About what?"

"We're going to win."

I shook my head. "I don't follow that."

"The side that loses," Steinberg said, "will be the side that runs out of paper first. And the Jerries are running short. Modern war is fought with memoranda."

I laughed. "You may have a point, but don't credit me with that line of thought."

"Do you happen to know General G—?"

"No. I've heard his name. That's all."

"You talk about your trip to London. That's nothing. General G— just sent his private plane back to the states to bring over a load of coal so he can keep his tootsies warm."

"You're kidding."

"The hell I am. And when I say tootsies, I mean tootsies."

I gaped. "I've heard lots of things, pal. I hadn't heard that."

"Now you have. But it all adds up. General G— is one hell of a

good man. But he's old. He can't stand the cold. So, he's in command of his brigade and he operates by remote control. His headquarters is right here in Paris. His men are out there, somewhere." He gestured.

"The War Department wants his talents. His talent, at his age, requires good health. Good health requires heat. Heat takes coal and the Jerries took all the coal with them when they pulled out. Therefore, it follows that getting coal over here from the states was in the best interests of winning.

"That's why we're going to win. America is so rich we're going to win with bucks. And paper. And making the war as pleasant and comfortable as possible."

"Perfectly logical," I said. "If you go for it that way."

"That's why we have Special Services, LeFevre. That's why we have a rotation system. The troops stay in combat for six weeks. That's supposed to be a maximum. Then they're rotated out and new men put in. Those who have seen action are brought back for a bit of R and R."

"Okay, okay. Maybe I'm off base. I sure don't object to R and R for the troops. But you and I get a hell of a lot of it."

"Maybe you don't deserve it, but I do," Steinberg reminded. I nodded agreement. Steinberg had joined Special Services while on rotation. He had actually seen combat, and I capitulated before his greater experience.

"Anyhow," Steinberg went on. "I just want you to know that your talk went over well. You're going to have another chance to do the same thing before some of the big boys."

"How do you know that?"

"I get around, my friend. I get around."

Shortly after this exchange, I was summoned to Colonel (formerly Major) Wilson's office. A number of officers, some unfamiliar to me, were also present.

The Colonel delivered a lecture. It seems we were still having difficulty getting textbooks from America. Somehow, although crates of books had been sent to loading docks in New York, that material was by-passed in favor of "other things."

At this gloomy information I felt like cheering, but I kept my thoughts to myself.

In view of this bottleneck, a new procedure had been worked

out. The Colonel had managed to get the metal plates, from which the books were printed, consigned to Europe. The boxes carrying these plates had been labeled “ammunition.” Because of their weight, no one would suspect.

These plates were somewhere in transit from Wisconsin. Once we had the plates, we could get the books printed in Europe. A supply of paper had been assured from Norway. What we now had to do was to find a suitable press somewhere in the British Isles.

While I was mulling over this bit of information after the Colonel's presentation, I was called to the office of his assistant. I had been chosen to go to England to tour the countryside in an effort to locate a suitable press. Once I found it, I was to take possession of it in the name of the American Government so that the printing of American textbooks could begin in England. Apparently, my mission to Sidelle had tabbed me as an officer who got things done.

I won't dwell on the particulars of this junket. I was wholly out of sympathy with the idea. Back in London, I checked the list of presses large enough to undertake a massive book printing and binding operation. I located three. While there were hundreds of small shops, Colonel Wilson wanted hundreds of thousands of books. The whole project was conceived on a grand scale.

I traveled to each of the three presses and closeted myself with the men in charge. It worked out that British presses had certain peculiarities unique to Great Britain. American-made plates could not be accommodated without massive re-tooling of the presses, or a modification of the plates.

Since I got the same story at every one of the establishments I visited, I concluded that I was being given an honest report. (It didn't occur to me that the publishers might have communicated behind my back, once my mission had been learned.)

My personal feelings were sympathetic to the British view. I was convinced that Wilson was a fanatic and that his efforts were designed to build an educational empire for himself. I was unwilling to be a part of such an empire.

Upon my return to Paris, I reported to Colonel Wilson that the modifications to the press equipment were so extensive that it could not be considered until after the war. The men capable of making such revisions were all serving in some wartime capacity. Re-tooling was impossible without such skilled technicians.

This was a giant setback to Colonel Wilson, and I hoped it would prevent the kind of takeover he had envisioned. To the best of my knowledge, the project was shelved permanently. Certainly, it was halted for the time being.

I discussed this adventure with Steinberg. I don't recall what was said other than this. At one point in the conversation, Steinberg said, "It seems to me, LeFevre, that you set yourself up to thwart the wishes of your superior officer."

I didn't deny it. Instead, I said: "Do you believe in God, Steinberg?"

"Believe in God? What for?"

"Do you think there is a God?"

"How in hell should I know?" He thought a minute. "If there is one, he's on vacation. No decent God would tolerate the kind of agony and destruction that goes on during any war."

"I believe in God," I said.

"So?"

"People call God by different names. But I think there is one. And I'll tell you how I set out my priorities. I serve God first. Or at least I try to. After that, I serve my country. Then, I take care of my family."

"That's all nice and neat, isn't it?"

"It is to me."

"Well I serve myself.

I chuckled. "Anyone can see that."

"Let me tell you, buster, when you're in combat, you better serve yourself."

"There goes one of the myths," I said. "Who was it said: 'There are no atheists in fox holes?'"

Steinberg stared at me. "You're nuts."

I laughed out loud. "Think so? Well, you may be right. One of us is. Possibly both of us."

His tension vanished and he joined in my laugh.

"That's the way I try to conduct myself in everything I do. My first question is: am I engaged in right action? Or is what I am doing wrong? To me, seizing British property, building an educational empire in a foreign land, running up the costs to the people back home needlessly...these things are wrong."

"Didn't you tell me you volunteered for the Army?"

"Yes. I did. I thought it was the right thing to do at the time."

"Now what do you think?" I was being cross-examined.

"I don't think I'd do it again."

"In other words, you may have made a mistake."

"That's true. I've made lots of them."

"How is that possible if you are only trying to do right?"

"I guess I'm just not that smart."

"That's true," he admitted. "So, what has God got to do with it?"

"Does that mean you don't believe in God?"

"You damn betcha. I'm an atheist."

I clamped my mouth shut and just looked at him.

"Every religious nut I've ever met is a phony, LeFevre. I'm beginning to think that's what you are. A phony."

I could think of nothing to say.

I decided then and there to try to put my over-all view of the conflict into some kind of perspective. I wrote a relatively brief treatise that I called "Primer to a New World." Because of restrictions against publishing imposed upon all officers, I took this manuscript through channels and managed to get an official clearance for the document. In so doing, I met a young artist who read what I had to say and offered to provide artwork. I accepted the offer and he furnished a series of sketches. Much later, when I was finally able to get the item into print, his sketches were used. They were probably the best part of it.

Meanwhile, new orders awaited me. I was to accompany a Captain Ryan on an inspection tour, which would take us into eastern France, and then into the south where we would visit Marseilles, Cannes and Nice. The purpose of the trip was to locate resorts, hotels, spas—or what have you, which could be used as rehabilitation centers for men who had been in combat.

Many of the places named were already being used as re-hab centers. But the Army has an interesting policy. The various branches, departments, and sections don't talk to each other. If the Quartermasters had established some centers, it was now time for Special Services to establish some. The duplication of effort is colossal.

In civilian life, Ryan had been a reporter on a major newspaper. He was easy going, intelligent, and had a good Irish sense of humor. Since he was my rank—actually my junior in terms of service—I was a little surprised that he had been chosen as the officer

in charge, with me as assistant. However, I readily accepted the explanation offered. Ryan had covered a big city beat and had inside knowledge of the workings of various hostelrys. Therefore, he was the expert. Also, he had been in France before and knew his way around. My background was not as broad as his.

This made sense to me. I neither questioned it further nor resented it. Ryan was too good a traveling companion anyway to engender a grudge. We got along famously.

The two of us began an extensive tour. We drove east to Metz, recently pried out of German hands. Then we visited Luxembourg briefly. Ryan invariably got in to see top ranking officers. I toured the sights.

We drove along the Meuse River with the mountains on our left. Then, we followed the Moselle River and arrived at Lyons. From there, we went primarily in a southerly direction until we came into Marseilles on the coast of the Mediterranean.

We obtained lodging at what Ryan identified as a former bordello. He could have been right; I suppose he was. It was my first introduction to bathroom fixtures, including the john, which had artwork painted on the *inside*. The particular bathroom that served my floor was a briar patch, filled with blooming roses, all done in a tattoo blue.

We took our meals at a cafe called the Ross Biff. I suppose it had been planned to attract British tourists who are always associated with roast beef. The people of Marseilles were a breed apart. Quite openly, they despised anyone in a uniform who wasn't French. And they let me know it.

From this southern bustling port, we followed the coast into Cannes. This was and is an important resort center. We stayed a day or two. It happened that we were billeted in one of the most magnificent hotels I had ever seen. I was as openly round-eyed at this splendor as any yokel getting his first glimpse of the Taj Mahal. I was so impressed that I prevailed on the manager to take a reservation for Mrs. LeFevre and myself some three years into the future. My thoughts were often with Loy. And as I saw it, the war would finish, I'd be back in the states, I'd return to the real estate business, and make a lot of money fast. I figured I'd have enough for a fine vacation by that time.

That was one plan that didn't come to fruition. I'm happy to say,

however, that I kept the date of that reservation on hand. When it turned out that there was no possibility of such an outing, I wrote and cancelled. At the time, of course, I was trying to predict the unpredictable.

The morning we were to depart from Cannes, I ate breakfast, and then sat on the terrace in front of the hotel, with a marvelous view of the Mediterranean. I was waiting for Ryan. I waited longer than usual. Finally, he came. The sun was bright, but the weather was cool. We both wore our jackets.

Ryan appeared at last and I stood to leave with him.

"Sit down, LeFevre," he said. "Our transportation won't be along for another hour. How about a cup of coffee?"

There was something in his manner that puzzled me. "Sure thing."

We sat at one of the metal tables on the uncomfortable metal chairs, and Ryan got the attention of the attendant. He regarded me soberly.

"You know what?" he began. "I think you're as sane as I am."

"Probably not," I said. "All this luxury is wasted on me right now. But, boy, would I enjoy it under other circumstances. I think you're enjoying this trip more than I am. I think that means you're more sane. As for me, the sooner the war ends, the better I'll like it."

Our coffee came and we sipped the strong brew, looking out at the restless blue.

"As I said before," Ryan repeated. "I think you're perfectly sane. Nobody but a crazy man can really enjoy war."

"Thanks for that," I said. "I guess I get a little teed off at all the empire builders I run into."

"Who doesn't?" he said. "Most of them are phonies."

"Funny you say that," I said. "My roommate back in Paris said he thought I was a phony."

"Why did he say that?"

"Oh, I don't know. We were having some kind of a discussion." I tried to remember. "Oh, yes. I said I believed in God. He said he was an atheist and that anyone who believed in God was a phony."

"I believe in God."

I smiled. "It's none of my business what you believe. But it's nice to know."

"My God, man. I'm Catholic."

I nodded. "I've heard of it. It's some Christian sect, isn't it?"

Ryan laughed. "Well, LeFevre, you're not a bit crazy."

I nodded. "I know. "

"You don't suspect a thing, do you."

"Suspect?" I was suddenly on guard. "Suspect what? What do you mean?"

"I'm not supposed to tell you this, but you're okay. Have you any idea why you were sent with me on this tour of duty?"

"Frankly, no. Maybe the brass just wanted me out of their hair. You'd have done just as well without me. I'm enjoying the ride. That's all."

"I'm going to level with you. Some of your superiors think you've gone loco. Know what I mean? That you've flipped. Done a mental brodey. That you're not tracking."

I nearly came out of my chair. "You're serious, aren't you?"

"Yes. One of my assigned duties was to keep you under observation. The story is that you're...well, loony. You know."

I sighed. I wasn't angry. I was disgusted.

"Okay, Ryan. Shall we call for the men in the white coats?"

"Damn it to hell," Ryan growled. "I think you're a fine officer. And a good fellow. So you don't drink. And you've got a weird diet. It's not as weird as Army rations."

"I've got to turn in a report on you. You don't have to worry about it. You're going to get a top-rating."

"Noted and appreciated," I said. "Thanks."

"Do you have someone back in Paris gunning for you?"

"I can't imagine who," I said. "I haven't hurt anyone. It's probably my big mouth. I have a tendency to speak out of turn."

Ryan gave a wry chuckle. "If I'd been looked at as crazy every time I wrote a story somebody didn't like, I'd have been assigned to Bellevue long ago. Hell, man, having an unconventional diet and a few personal restraints doesn't fit a man to a straitjacket. You're A-1 in my book."

"Got any advice for me?"

"Not a word. Just keep on doing whatever you've been doing."

Needless to say, I thought about that revelation a good deal.

We went on to Nice, where we ran into the one Colonel who, in my mind, became the prototype of all Army empire builders. He had seen combat, wore leather gaiters, carried a riding crop, and

was as natty in uniform as any Broadway Dandy. He changed uniforms about five times a day, strode about looking for dust, and spoke in an imperious tone even if all he wanted was the time of day.

Nice was the end of our assigned tour. We drove back to Marseilles where Ryan, against the advice of the military got us a couple of tickets on the train. As a good reporter, he wanted to ride among the civilians for background information. Trains were used only in emergency by the military. It was either policy or tacitly understood that the American Army would provide its own transpiration.

We still had a few hours before train time. Ryan made a suggestion. "There's a vermouth factory just outside of town that is still operating," he told me. There isn't a drop of vermouth in all of Paris. You can buy it here cheap. Why don't you high tail it out to that plant and pick up as many bottles as you want to carry? They're only about \$2.00 each. In Paris you can probably get \$25 each. You can make a fortune, depending on your ability to carry bottles."

I followed the suggestion. I discovered at the plant that a case of vermouth containing a dozen large bottles would cost about \$25.00 and I laid out the money and was given the crate containing them.

While waiting to board, Ryan joked about my avarice. "I'm surprised you didn't buy a carload, LeFevre. You could make yourself independently rich. You could become the vermouth king of Paris."

"I looked into it," I said. "But I'm not an empire builder. Besides, they said there was no point in trying to ship anything. It would never get there. It would be commandeered somewhere along the line. So, I took all I could carry."

"You better be sure you're going to do all the carrying," Ryan said.

"No problem," I said. "I'm an expert with crates. I flew one into London so a Colonel over there could have his radio. I can carry another into Paris to slake the thirst of the war-weary. Best part is, it's safe with me. I'm not even tempted to sample it."

The train had only two cars and they were jammed with humanity. Ryan and I wedged ourselves aboard and stood the whole distance. This meant standing all night long as the train lurched, stopped, backed, re-started, and did all the normal things trains do.

Part of the time I sat on the crate. Mostly, I stood with it between my legs, wondering how many people in Special Services figured I was going mad. And underneath it all, I wondered if perhaps they

were right. I still had those nagging memories of the “I Am” and the anxiety that I might be engaged in some dreadful misdeed.

Chapter LX

Back in Paris, the story quickly spread. Captain LeFevre had come from the south of France with a full case of vermouth. This was a matter of prime importance.

I was invited to a cocktail party with the precautionary note that I was to bring vermouth. The affair was hosted by the Lieutenant Colonel who headed the section in which Steinberg served. This was a man who had visibly snubbed me on more than one occasion. Before the hour set for the bash, the Colonel was on the phone.

“Just how much vermouth do you have, LeFevre?”

“A dozen bottles. They are either quarts or fifths. I haven’t opened the crate to find out.”

“How much do you want for the whole lot?”

“All dozen?”

“Right.”

“Well, they cost me \$25.00. How about \$50.00 to cover my labor in wrestling the crate one long night on a crowded train?”

“Will fifty be enough?”

“Well, I was thinking...”

The Colonel cut me off. “Stop thinking. Fifty’s fine.”

He didn’t break the connection. “Anything else?” I asked.

“Ryan says you’re a damn good officer.”

“Glad to hear it,” I said. “I like the guy. He speaks English.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Nothing really. I just have a weird sense of humor.” I had wanted to say that most of the people I knew spoke bureaucratize, but I thought better of it in time. The Colonel was one of the worst.

There was a “humph” from the Colonel and the line went dead.

At the party, I turned in the crate and got my fifty dollars. Within minutes, the Colonel was moving around the room with a cocktail glass in his hand. “God, this is good,” he kept saying. “I haven’t had a real Martini since date of departure, U.K.”

As quickly as he tossed one off, he got another.

I was soon hemmed in by fellow officers who praised my wisdom, my discretion, my dedication, and pressed a Martini on me. I sipped it out of courtesy and shuddered. Did these people really

like this stuff? Or was it all a big act?

The Colonel and his Juniors got drunker by the minute. As quickly as I could do so, and with a show of regret and respect, I headed for the door. Steinberg overtook me.

"You've scored, LeFevre," he said. Before I could respond the Colonel was there. He put a heavy arm around my shoulders and squeezed. "This man is due a promotion."

"Thank you, sir."

But the Colonel yelled at someone. "Hold it. That's no way to stir a Martini. You'll bruise those divine essences." He sashayed to correct an enlisted man who had apparently used a heavy hand with a new batch.

Steinberg was surveying me, nodding his head in silence. "God damn it," he said. "You probably will get a promotion."

The remark seemed singed with green. "Come on," I said. "People don't get promoted just for supplying vermouth."

"That's where you're dead wrong." Steinberg swayed on his feet. "I'll tell you something else. You're going to have a lot of the top brass at one of your lectures in a few days. You're the fair-haired boy around here."

"You're drunk," I said. "And you sound resentful."

"Well, I am. I was figuring I'd be getting a promotion before you did."

"You probably will."

"Why is that?" He squinted at me.

"I won't be here long," I said. "I'll be going back to the States."

He looked at me in astonishment. His astonishment was no larger than my own. Such a thought hadn't occurred to me. But I had stated it as a fact.

"How do you know that?" he said.

"I have no idea. I just know, that's all."

"And you think I'm drunk! How many Martinis have you had?"

"Just a sip from one. I put it on the table over there. I'm willing it to you."

Steinberg nodded in owlish dignity. "If I'm drunk, you're the Rajah of Rangoon." He stalked away and I made good my escape.

Why had I said that I would be going back to the States? It was my dearest wish, but I had had no indication of such a happening. All my old fears returned. Of my own volition, I wouldn't have said

such a thing.

Or would I?

Maybe I was a little unbalanced. But as I thought about it, I knew my statement was true. I would be returning to America before long. How did I know? It cannot be explained. It was a certainty with no room for doubt.

I had heard of haunted houses. Was I such a house? Or was it my old metaphysical friend, Saint Germain?

Within a few days I was alerted to my “big chance.” I was asked to prepare and deliver a lecture on the origins and meaning of Fascism.

I made a trip to Cite Universitaire to conduct a bit of research. The effort paid off in a minor way. The fine library had a number of books printed in English, despite the supremacy of French. Best of all, I discovered I could read the language. The pronunciation crippled me, but my recollection of Latin made it possible for me to get the sense out of much that was printed.

Additionally, I got help from a fine young student who was completing his education, probably working on some advanced degree. He had a good knowledge of English, far better than mine of French. He helped with some difficult passages and some comments of his own.

When the hour of my lecture arrived, I found myself in a relatively small room with only a scattering of attendees. But the importance of the occasion was confirmed by rank. There were two one-star generals, one two-star, a sprinkling of colonels, and other lesser creatures.

I began my talk by explaining that the fascist was the symbol adopted by the Roman Senate in ancient times as evidence of supreme authority. It was a kind of mace, carried into a session as it convened, and placed at the disposal of the Procouncil.

From an economic point of view, the fascist concept, originated with Mussolini. But, as it was picked up by Hitler, it was the political practice of having production planned by government and then imposed upon the owners of various businesses.

Unlike the communist approach, as demonstrated by our ally, Russia, the Fascists didn't shoot the property owners and seize the property. Rather, they made the owners of businesses junior partners to government. The government made the meaningful deci-

sions but the owners shared in the profits.

I wasn't too well informed about the practice. I conceded there were various interpretations as to just what fascism, as a belief or "ism," meant. But both Germany and Italy had made it work, accompanied by a profound loss of freedom to the business community and the people.

I noticed a certain amount of tension as I made my observations about Russia, but went merrily on.

It is an unspoken rule in the military that the top ranking man sets the climate. His subordinates pick up his mood. They laugh if he does; they frown if he does. They become outraged or overjoyed according to the subtle cues they pick up from him. I began to detect a lowering of the temperature. General two-star didn't like something I had said.

I was only reciting facts. I didn't think they were controversial. Apparently, I wasn't getting through. I must become more graphic.

"Perhaps it will help to envision the idea I'm attempting to communicate," I said, "if you take a look at the ten-cent piece, the dime, minted in the US."

I dug into my own pocket to find one. "As you will see, the US Mint has used the symbol as representative of the United States. There you will see thirteen faggots, bound together, which symbolizes the strength to be found in the Union. It also symbolizes the concept of all for one and one for all."

The temperature was continuing downward. I plunged ahead. I was certain that if I presented the whole picture, the climate would improve. "You can see the axe-head at one end. That symbolizes the power of life and death. The axe head was bound into the bundle and placed in the lap of the presiding officer to indicate that the rights of the whole nation had been relegated to him, so long as the Senate was in session. He could do as he pleased. That's why the government can give total power to an Army. The Army acts with power coming from the government, put there by the people."

My smile was indecisive. I wanted to tell the truth and by doing so, win approval. General two-star was gnawing his lips.

"Actually," I went on, "this was the idea that inspired many of the early colonies. Franklin possibly stated it best when he said, 'We must all hang together or we will hang separately.'"

Two-star got up and stalked from the room, followed by an aide

and a one-star satellite.

"I suppose," I continued, "it is more or less a common idea among all politicians. Regardless of nationality or other considerations. In this sense, I suppose, one could argue that the politicians in Germany were simply doing what politicians, German or American, always have to do. They create the impression that the people are with them. Naturally, we *know* that Hitler is a dictator and doesn't really care whether they are or not. In America, we *know* that the people approve what their government does.

I had the impression that I had lost credibility. There was further visible evidence I was losing my audience. Four or five other officers began conferring, checking their watches, and then left as a group.

I cut my talk short and finished ahead of schedule. One lieutenant started to clap, looked around, thought better of it, and sat on his hands. I had given a talk like a loaded B-17. I had bombed.

That night in our room, Steinberg shook his head sadly as he regarded me. "Jesus, LeFevre. Did you ever drop the ball! You had it made. You were set for a promotion. You'll never get one now."

I was despondent anyway and didn't need another reprimand. "I know I did. But what the Sam Hill did I do wrong? Everything I said was true."

"I really can't figure you out," Steinberg said. "You're supposed to tell generals what they want to hear. A couple of them are really browned off at you. You compared the government of the US with Hitler."

"What I said was true," I defended. "Besides, I really didn't do that."

"God, you're dumb. That's exactly what you did. Who cares about the truth? All you had to do was tell those bastards what great guys they were and you'd have been set for life."

"The Fascist has been an American symbol. Our dimes still carry the impression."

"Who gives a shit?"

"Well, I do."

"I give up," he said. "I've tried to be helpful, but you're impossible. I'll give you this, though." He looked at me with an expression I took to be disgusted admiration. "You've got guts."

"You never will understand me, Steinberg. Actually, I think I'm

weak in that department. The war scares me. I don't like loud noises. As a matter of fact, I couldn't begin to do what you did." I recalled some of his stories about active combat. "You're the one with raw courage."

He shook his head. "The Infantry life isn't a bad life. There's not that much action. Worst part of it is the food and the lack of bathing facilities. You get to hate the stink. The rest of it is like cops and robbers when you were a kid. Only more exciting. You get keyed up. After that, it's not bad at all."

A night or so after this exchange, I was given a most unusual assignment. I was made officer of the day on duty at the Shell Building. So far as I had known prior to this, I wasn't on any roster requiring duty of that sort.

In the Army you simply obey orders, even when you believe someone has made a mistake. So, in compliance I donned my battle gear, had an Army forty-five automatic turned over to me, and was placed in charge of security at the edifice housing Special Services.

There were sentries. I had to see that the men stayed alert, that relief arrived, and was posted at the appointed times.

It must have been about eleven o'clock. I was sitting at the desk in the ground floor lobby when I heard a step behind me. I turned, expecting to find some enlisted man wanting company.

Instead, there was my old acquaintance, Major (formerly Captain) Dayton. He had a forty-five in one big fist. His face was flushed and he swayed on his feet. He was drunk as a lord.

He leveled the forty-five at my head. "Go for your gun, you lousy bastard," he said. His voice was thick and he had trouble with words. "You and me are gonna shoot it out."

I sat very still. "You're drunk," I said.

"That's no concern of yours," he gabbled.

I raised my hands above my head. Then, keeping my eyes on his face, I slowly stood, making no threatening move.

"Go for your gun!" he hissed. "I'm gonna settle your hash once and for all."

"Not me," I said. "I'm completely at your disposal and I know it. Besides, if I went for my gun you'd shoot me."

His grin was wicked. "That's right."

"So," I continued, "I'm going to turn my back on you. If you shoot me, you'll shoot me in the back. The sentries will come in and find

me that way. If I had a hand on my gun, you'd say I tried to get you and you shot in self-defense. So, I'm not defending myself. And my corpse will prove it."

"You're yellow."

"You said it. I'm a confirmed coward." I slowly turned my back.

"Turn around!" he roared.

"Not me."

"You dirty son-of-a-bitch! I'll get a medal for killing you!"

I said nothing. He kept mouthing obscenities.

Finally, I said, "I'm the officer of the day. In spite of that I'll make you a proposition. I think you're drunk. Let's not debate the point. That's just my opinion. I should make out a report on you. I could have you court martialed. And if you do shoot, you can be sure you will be.

"However, in view of your condition, here's the deal. You put your gun away, turn around and get the hell out of here. I'll not report it. I'll just forget the whole incident. Okay?"

"How do I know you won't report it?"

"You'll just have to take my word."

There was silence. I waited briefly, and then slowly turned my head. The Major had gone. I sank into my chair and shook for an hour. He had scared me about as completely as I had ever known fear.

A few days' later, new orders came through. I had done so well (I was told) on my inspection tour with Ryan (in which I had done nothing whatever), that I was now ordered to move up to the front lines. There were still pockets of German resistance in France and I was to go where the war was being fought.

I was to make certain that the men in the foxholes had the necessary information to take advantage of correspondence courses during their copious free time.

When Steinberg learned of my imminent departure on another tour, he snickered. "Watch yourself, LeFevre. You may have been right. Maybe you are going to be shipped back to the States." The inference was clear.

On the appointed day, and traveling by jeep with a Sergeant as my assigned driver, I headed for Dijon and points beyond. Several companies were my specific objectives. These were companies where the Special Services educational program, phase one, should

have had more men enrolled in correspondence courses. Apparently, the company commanders of these units hadn't taken seriously their men's need for education.

US Army units were scattered all over France. I paused from time to time to learn the precise location of the companies that I sought.

This was my first real brush with terrain in the battle zone, with the exception of London, which was similarly classified. It was a revelation. I saw my first dead Americans. I was served lunch at one stop by German POWs.

I went to where the company was bivouacked in a large building, where one or two platoons were dug in. The Company Commander ordered me to stay out of the immediate battle zone. I gladly complied. The building had been shelled by artillery and bore fresh scars, but the guns were quiet while I was there.

When I tried to talk about education, the commanding officer thought I was out of my mind. Off the record, I agreed with him, but I let him read my orders. Thus, I obtained his sympathy. While I was at it, I let him know that when the war ended, there was some likelihood that some of his men wouldn't be going home. Some would be rotated to the Pacific; others left on police duty in France. I let him know that the Army was thinking of the well being of the men: it was arranging some marvelous treats in the educational field.

He thought about that. Finally, he said, "Who is the lucky bastard who is assigned to letting the men know that they won't go home? I hope it isn't me. I can just get the picture. The news is flashed. The war is over. A strange stillness settles over the field. The men begin climbing out of their foxholes. They are dazed, dirty, and damned.

"At this juncture, some officer from the rear echelons—freshly bathed and in parade dress—will walk up and say, 'Hey, you lucky stiff. You aren't going home. The Army is going to keep you here so you can get an education.'

"Know what? Some of these men think they've had an education. I'll tell you what they're fighting for if you don't know. They're fighting so they can go home.

"You, or some other poor devil, is going to have the job of letting them know of their good fortune. It sure as hell won't be me. One or another of these men may have a round or two left."

Despite this, he was friendly and very cooperative. He promised

to promote the immediate requirement: publicity concerning extension courses available from Wisconsin. He said he'd have the artist in the company draw up some posters right away. When the men came back in a kind of company rotation, they'd learn of this opportunity.

I thanked him. The driver and I returned by jeep to an area removed from actual fighting. As we left the advanced outpost, the big guns opened up again and I was grateful I was getting away.

I stayed the night at a field hospital that had an extra bed. The next day I visited the last of the units for which I was searching. As the Sergeant and I returned to the hospital, hoping to find some kind of accommodations, a message had been relayed by the Captain who had held such a gloomy view on post-war education. He wanted to consult with me further.

This was most unusual. I was anxious to return to Paris, but I didn't want to neglect anyone who had really taken an interest. All of this would go into my report, anyway, and I wanted good marks. I had a pretty fair idea that some of my superiors would be disinclined to grade me as worthy of advancement, no matter what.

The distance to the front was only a few miles. I asked the driver if he could locate our prior stop in the dark. Lights were forbidden, of course, and the jeep would have to run blind.

The Sergeant said not to worry. He'd been over the road twice before. He insisted he knew the way. Besides, it is never totally dark, unless there's a storm. The road would appear like a dim ribbon, and he had excellent eyesight.

I had been ready to order our return journey that night. We wouldn't use more than thirty extra minutes each way taking care of this request. And I was sure that my conference with the Captain would take no time at all.

Analyzing in this way, I ordered a return to Paris, by way of a front line detour. We headed into the battle zone once more. German artillery was at work. I could see occasional flashes as their artillery cut loose. The rumble from enemy batteries sounded like not too-distant thunder.

The Sergeant knew the way. He demonstrated that by immediately locating the road. It happened to be a fairly straight run and he opened the throttle. We whizzed along with the cold air buffeting.

What neither of us realized was that since our last passage the road had come under bombardment. The engineers had recently surfaced it prior to our first use. This time, no such good fortune made things easy.

A bomb crater loomed just in front of us. The Sergeant veered sharply to avoid it, slamming at a good rate of speed into another. I had a momentary impression of the jeep going one way, me going another.

When I came to, the Sergeant was bending over me. I was flat on my back with helmet off.

"Are you okay, Captain?"

I sorted things out and smiled. "Sure thing. I was knocked out, I guess. Where's my helmet? Is the jeep okay?"

"The jeep's fine, Captain. Here, let me help you up."

I started to rise and pain shot through my body. I nearly passed out again. I shut my eyes and moaned, instantly prone.

"What is it?" Even in the gloom I could see the concern on the Sergeant's face.

"My back. Man. That really hurt!"

"Can you move your legs?"

I tried. They didn't seem to understand what was wanted.

"Why don't you just stay there a few minutes? You'll feel better in a Jif. Maybe I can find your helmet."

He went off, and I struggled to get to my feet. It was better when he wasn't looking. I didn't want him to see the agony on my face when I tried to sit up. I managed to roll on my side. That was better. I continued the process, turned until I was face down, and then managed to get myself on hands and knees in a crawl position.

"Found it, Cap," the Sergeant came up with my missing head-gear.

"Thanks." I struggled, trying to stand. It was hopeless. My legs refused to obey. Every time I moved either one of them the pain was intolerable.

"Let me bring the jeep over. You'll be fine."

Presently the jeep stopped just beyond me and, with most of my weight on the Sergeant, I got into the seat.

"Sorry about that, Cap," the Sergeant said. "I didn't see the hole. We must have hit at one hell of a clip. Your helmet was about a hundred yards away. Glad your head wasn't in it."

"Me too." The pain was worse when I chuckled.

What now? "Want to keep on or do we go back?"

"We go back, Sergeant. I'm in no condition for a Conference."

"Yeah, that's what I think. We'll be back at the hospital soon."

The least jostle of the jeep brought shooting pains up my back, into my legs, even into my arms. I managed to lift some of my body weight by gripping the edges of the seat and stiffening my arms. That wasn't too bad, although it was tiring.

As we neared the hospital, I said, "Sergeant, I've been thinking it over. Let's not stop. They've got a lot of guys who have really been hurt. I've had trouble with my back before and this'll get better if I don't move around much. Drive carefully. But let's head for Paris. I'll probably be fine by the time we get there. Just don't go into the ditch. Okay?"

We drove that night and the pain either lessened or I became increasingly numb. The effect was the same. From time to time, I'd let my full weight sink to the seat. That was the worst part. But I'd rest a bit and suffer, then stiffen my arms again.

My driver was a good man. He didn't complain and it was a grueling trip. We stopped a minimum of times, and I waited in the jeep while he got something to eat. My appetite had gone completely.

Because of the relatively slow pace, it took us most of the next day before we entered the outskirts of the Queen of Cities. We pulled up outside the Elysee Star Hotel at dusk and, by good fortune, Steinberg was in our room. The Sergeant brought him down. The two of them helped me upstairs.

I couldn't stand without leaning part of my weight on something else. But I managed to partially disrobe and then got into bed. The pain continued.

Steinberg was skeptical of the whole thing. "What an act!" he said. "But you're overdoing it a bit. I know what happened. You got drunk and don't want any of us to know you fell off the wagon."

"You're right about that," I said. "I really did fall off the wagon. In fact, I was thrown off the wagon."

"No. Wait a minute. I know what your problem is!" Steinberg nodded in a display of pseudo wisdom. "You threw your back out humping all the French gals near the front lines. Boy, do I envy you!"

I glared. That comment didn't seem funny with the pain I was experiencing.

The next morning I was unable to rise. Concern finally came. Steinberg left to get help. A couple of officers came over from the Shell Building to talk to me. I gave a full account.

The next thing I knew, interns were in the room. I was rolled, mid great anguish, to a stretcher and carried to an ambulance.

Presently, I was in a hospital room containing two ether casualties and finally was examined by an American doctor. He would give no statement of what was wrong other than to agree that the injury was serious.

After some type of pain suppressant was administered, I felt fine. I visited with my horizontal roommates until fairly late in the evening. Finally, I fell asleep.

I came out of a deep slumber with a feeling of apprehension. Something was vitally wrong. I reached for the button to summon the nurse and managed to get the light over the door turned on. Something was happening to me. I didn't know what it was. Was I going to have one of those strange spells? Does a person wake up in order to faint?

I prayed that the nurse would get there quickly. I could feel the room start to spin. My head was expanding. I stood at the brink of a deep pit. The nurse appeared at the door. She was far away. Very far.

"Which one of you rang?" she demanded.

I tried to answer, made no sound, and managed to wave my arm. Then I passed out.

When I regained consciousness, I was stripped naked and three men, the doctor, and two interns were working over me. The nurse circled anxiously in the background.

The doctor sighed in relief. "He's with us again."

Everything came into focus, "What is it, doc?"

"Frankly, I don't know. Whatever it is, we aren't equipped to handle it here. "

"What does that mean?"

"We're going to ship you to the states. You'll be going home."

Chapter LXI

As I had anticipated, staying in bed helped considerably. By the time the red tape had unrolled and a plane had space on it for my occupancy, I could move around on my own two legs fairly well. But my back felt strange and I walked gingerly. I was constantly apprehensive that pain would come. I have no words to describe its intensity when it did.

My back was crooked. Looking at myself in a full-length mirror revealed the truth. I was divided into top and bottom halves. My legs came up from the floor to my waist as always. At that point, my torso jogged left about three inches. I looked like a project put together by a committee.

I didn't hurt constantly. Then suddenly, and for no apparent reason, a lightening bolt of agony would shoot through me. If I could lie down, I'd be better again soon.

The plane to which I was assigned had been furnished with vertical stanchions to hold stretchers that were arranged much like bunks aboard a ship. Since I was designated as nonambulatory, I was carried aboard. I protested that I could walk, but stretcher-bearers sweated under my weight instead. In all government service, you avoid using your head. Instead, you go by the book. If the rules say, lie down, you lie down.

Most of the men taking passage at the same time had been wounded, many of them severely. Alongside them I felt like a malingeringer.

This flight left Orly Airport and made a stop at the Canary Islands. Then we lifted off for the major leg of the trip landing in Maine. From there, we flew to New York and finally to Richmond, Virginia.

An ambulance rushed me—ambulances always rush—to McGuire General Hospital where the Army was engaged in dealing with problems such as mine.

After a series of x-rays and a milo-gram, the doctor in charge gave me his finding. I had ruptured a disc between the third and fourth lumbar vertebra. An operation would be necessary.

The disc that had ruptured was a thin piece of cartilage which

nature has inserted as a kind of pad between each pair of vertebrae. Mine was in thirteen pieces.

The man in charge of surgery who specialized in disc problems was a Captain Morgan. He was a pleasant-faced, happy gentleman of about my own age. He talked over the problem with me before the operation took place.

The Army wasn't too certain of just which procedure was best when it came to discs, Captain Morgan explained. There had been a rash of this type of injury and, so, the Army was feeling its way through the spines of its various living properties. Surgery was largely experimental.

In my own case, my disc was shattered into a dozen tiny pieces, plus one large one. Captain Morgan decided that the tiny pieces were causing me the problem. If he left the large one in place, it might restore itself.

Loy arrived in Richmond and I cannot adequately express my joy at seeing her again. We were like sweethearts, getting together after a long separation. So much time had passed, so many things had happened to both of us, that we needed some time to get reacquainted.

The operation was performed without a hitch. I was put into a ward, every occupant of which had already had a disc operation or was awaiting one. Then came the long period of recuperation.

My condition hadn't changed particularly as it turned out. I had to learn to walk all over again and to my dismay discovered that I was still out of alignment. My torso still jogged to the left.

Gradually, I managed to get back into a consistent vertical stance and moved freely, except when I laughed. The interior quaking provided by a good joke would shift my torso into agony.

A Major in an adjoining room, who had had the same operation, went through the same type of recovery. We vied with each other as to which of us could get the other to laugh. I began to wonder what kind of maggots had gnawed at the innards of the Marquis de Sade. If he had had a ruptured disc, his strange source of pleasure could be better comprehended. Misery loves company.

Finally, I was pronounced well enough to be discharged from McGuire. However, I was still officially hospitalized and classified as an "out patient."

This classification meant I could select from a dozen hospital to

look after me until such time as I was completely healed and available for a full discharge from service.

With no difficulty I chose the hospital at Santa Ana, California. This was the closest to San Francisco, the city of my dreams and hopes. When my wishes were solemnized, I was released from Morgan and McGuire.

Meanwhile, Loy and I made plans. One of her dearest wishes was to see California. As it turned out, her mother and sister, Lorna, thought this was a great idea for the whole Reuling family.

My real estate licenses were in full force with Inter-City Company, so I suggested to Loy's mother that she sell her home. With that money, I promised to put her into a small business, possibly a guesthouse or a rooming house. She would become self-supporting. Lorna, a high school graduate, could finish her education, or get a job in California.

It was little short of astonishing how quickly these various plans came to fruition. It is often this way.

Indecision is the great procrastinator. It really isn't hard to get things done. The difficulty is knowing what you want to do.

I bought another used Chevy. The house was sold with little difficulty. With Mama, Lorna, Loy, and the cat, we set out for the West Coast. The day of our departure was July 5, 1945.

Loy had been as far west as Minnesota on that memorable occasion in which she met my mother. Mama and Lorna Reuling (and the cat) had never been west of the Alleghenies. I had christened the cat myself, finding the Reulings referring to their pet as "cat." I thought this somewhat disrespectful of the giant orange Persian, and dubbed it "Sucha."

Motoring from the Atlantic to the Pacific in those days consumed six days and nights. Compared to my passengers, I was a seasoned traveler. I took great pleasure in pointing out the sights, and in selecting the stopover and eating-places.

Sucha traveled well, but we had to see that the poor creature got exercise en route. The animal was larger than a small dog, and was equipped with harness and leash. In one small town in Nebraska, when the cat leaped to the sidewalk, a crowd gathered, including several small children. They had never seen anything quite like Sucha and demanded to know what it was. I immediately joked that it was a "Siberian Tiger." This was accepted with juvenile solemn-

nity. I suspect we could have put up a tent and run a carnival profitably. But we refrained.

When we arrived in the western reaches of Nebraska, I took the route southward toward Estes Park and Denver. This was all new territory to me. So long as the prairies extended, there was nothing of particular interest to take your attention. But the Rockies loomed on the horizon. As we entered the narrow defile climbing upwards toward the Continental Divide, the vistas became spectacular.

The air turned crisp and chill. The three women in the car acquired a rosy glow by keeping the windows open so they could crane their necks into the rushing wind to “oh” and “ah” at each spectacular view.

We spent that night in a gorgeous lodge set beside a blue mountain lake. Even though the month was July, there was a fall of snow and I had some concern that we might be snowed in.

However, we moved out the next morning on schedule, moving southward to Denver, and then westward once more. Everything was clean. Everything was new. The scenery was breathtaking.

“We can stop anywhere here,” Loy said, eyes shining. “California can’t be lovelier than this.”

“It is beautiful,” I agreed. ~ But we are strangers here and I have a job and friends in San Francisco. So, we’ll have to keep going.” Colorado was magnificent, but nothing could surpass the city by the Golden Gate.

On the western side of the Rockies, we looped northward, spending a night in Salt Lake City. Then we continued across the great salt flats of Utah, sped across Nevada, went through Sacramento, and came at last to journey’s end.

I had warned everyone that San Francisco is chilly, most especially in summer. The ladies weren’t quite prepared for the change, despite my warnings. San Francisco is a city that is air conditioned by nature. As the deserts of the interior heat up, the cooler air of the Pacific rushes toward land but is thwarted by the coastal hills and mountains, except in a few places. One of them is the gap created by the channel into San Francisco Bay.

Into that mile wide opening, the breezes are funneled. They become strong winds that keep the bay area temperate when other places are stifling.

In the first hours after our arrival in the city, I showed them the

steep hills, visited the incredible architecture, and pointed out any number of places Pearl had made dear to me prior to the war.

Finally, I stopped at the Maryland Hotel on Geary and we all registered. I chose the Maryland because I had once sold it and felt something of a paternal interest in it. Leaving the ladies to their own pursuits, I drove to the Inter-City Company on Van Ness.

Fred Weiss welcomed me back with open arms. He had made a great deal of money during the war and was still in business, although he was no longer as keen in respect to money as he had been. Those who are hungry try harder. Weiss had been living well.

My job was available any time. Since I had a potential customer in the person of Mama Reuling, I wasted no time. I explained that my new wife and I would be seeking an apartment for ourselves, but I was looking for a guesthouse or the equivalent for Mrs. LeFevre's mother.

Weiss had recently purchased an apartment house building on Washington Street near the Pacific Heights district. A number of guesthouses were available in the same general area.

It took only a few days. Loy and I set up house in Chat apartment, with Mr. Weiss as our landlord. I showed Mama Reuling a number of guesthouses. I finally sold her an establishment on Jackson Street about two blocks from our apartment. Lorna moved in with her to help manage it, preferring to earn her way, rather than to return to school at this juncture.

We were living in the Washington Street apartment when we experienced our first earthquake. There was a slight temblor that shook the furniture a bit, but did no damage. Whatever apprehension she may have had, Loy put it aside after that experience.

The second major event was the ending of the war. San Francisco went mad with joy. To commemorate this great occasion, I purchased a lovely Quan Yin statuette that I found in a Sutter Street shop. It is the finest I've ever seen. I'm happy to say that we still have it.

The third important event was Loy's introduction to "the gang." I had, naturally enough, contacted Ethel Dazey by telephone shortly after our arrival. She organized a kind of reception party so I could introduce Loy and, at the same time, have a reunion with my great friends of the "I Am" days.

The big news coming over the telephone from an excited Ethel

was Pearl's marriage. It seemed that, with Sidney married to Peggy and me married to Loy, Pearl didn't wish to remain a single woman. So she and Jerry Dorris had married. The two of them were living at the Dorris ranch in Santa Rosa.

Jerry had long been in love with Pearl. But, then, most men found her fascinating. Jerry had been a respected member of our little group and, obviously, the most eligible bachelor.

I was both surprised and relieved. Surprised, because I had known nothing of the event. Relieved, because it had occurred. There had been traces of guilt in my thinking. In a sense, I had jilted Pearl. But with her safely remarried, I was off the hook. I hoped that Pearl and I could become good friends.

I caught myself wondering if, perhaps, good friendship between us was what the Master really wanted. Maybe the confusions, disappointments, errors, and heartbreaks that had all arisen through the "I Am" had actually been spawned by the passion I had felt for Pearl. She had been so pure and so above reproach. I was the one who had clung to physical fulfillment as an acceptable and necessary part of our relationship.

Idly, I conjectured about the type of marriage relationship Pearl must be having with Jerry. I rather suspected that theirs was and would remain Platonic.

When Loy and I went to the spacious apartment of the Daze's, a view-from-every-window affair on Russian Hill, I was overjoyed to see so many of my old-time friends. Neither Pearl nor Jerry was present. Of course, Peggy and Sidney weren't there either. They probably hadn't been asked. But nearly all the others with whom I had been close were at hand.

Loy was introduced to the three Dazey daughters, as well as to Ethel. Kendall Dazey, Ethel's second husband, and a man for whom I had great respect, had died during the war. He had been somewhat scornful of the "I Am," but a devout foe of Communism. He and a few business associates had researched the backgrounds of a number of people and listed some who had affiliation with the Communist Party. In those days, the Communist Party was viewed as subversive and the House of UnAmerican Activities Committee was engaged in exposure tactics.

The three Dazey daughters were Ruth, Carol and Ethel-Claire. Ethel-Claire was being courted at the time by an Egyptian high in

the trust of King Farouk and a part of his government. Swarthy of complexion, jolly by nature, corpulent to a fault, he was an arresting figure. But Ethel-Claire had been, like Kendall, unsympathetic to the metaphysics of the “I Am.”

Ethel and the two younger girls—Ruth and Carol—were close friends of mine and also students of metaphysics.

Other guests included Kathleen Blamey (a cousin of the Dazeys), Howard Emmitt, Jr., Edith Shank, Agnes (Sunny) Widell, Nora Laidlaw, and her son, Tom, who was already casting sheep’s eyes in the direction of Carol. There were others, as well.

Loy carried herself well. She confided later that she was nearly overwhelmed. If so, she certainly didn’t show it. She dealt with all persons on her own terms. It didn’t take long for my friends to accept her.

Later that evening, she sang a few songs acapella. The absolutely gorgeous notes that poured from her throat brought more than acceptance. They brought cries of appreciation and approval. Loy was adopted. She knew virtually nothing about metaphysics and, in that particular undoubtedly, she felt separateness. But she had been made welcome and her relationship to me confirmed.

Then, Ethel dropped the bomb. Would I consider trying to contact Saint Germain so that a “dictation” could take place?

I should have been astute enough to anticipate such a request. So much had happened to me. I had gone for four years without even thinking to place myself mentally at the disposal of those strange forces. I was taken aback.

However, I had a marvelous “out.” I wanted no more of those trance states. Heretofore, all the so-called dictations had occurred with Pearl present. Indeed, it was part of the “information” I believed to be true that I could not achieve that state without Pearl’s physical presence nearby.

I was able to remind everyone that, without Pearl, no such event could possibly occur. I refused to make the attempt.

This was apparently a major disappointment. It brought me face to face with a question I had occasionally asked myself. Did these people make me their friend because they liked *me*, or because I was an odd ball, a freak? Was their interest that of a curiosity seeker and their affection wholly related to this phenomenon—not to me as a person?

At that moment, I suspected the latter condition.

The gathering concluded with Ethel assuring everyone that we would have more meetings at a later time. Doubtless Pearl and Jerry could be induced to attend the next assembly.

Back in our apartment, Loy wasn't so sure she had been accepted. Nor was she sure that she liked my friends.

I could appreciate her sense of separateness. The people at the gathering knew a side of my nature that was completely unknown to her. Yet, they had accepted her without difficulty.

This baffled me, but I refused to give it importance. The metaphysics of it suggested that acceptance was invariably a two-way street. One reaped what he sowed. If they had accepted Loy, Loy would, sooner or later, accept them.

When I had enlisted in the military, Ethel had taken charge of the guesthouse. Ethel had assured me that she had managed affairs at the guesthouse as I had requested. She had stayed there long enough to sell the property and pay all the bills. She even had a small balance, which she promised to turn over to me later.

I was enormously pleased and gratified to find myself back in the company of people with whom I had been very close. This stimulated a feeling of happiness and boded well for the future. Pearl was an enigma. She and Jerry could have come to the gathering, but hadn't been there. I wasn't going to allow myself to get close to Pearl again. At the same time, I didn't want her to become an enemy.

Sooner or later, we were bound to meet. What would she say? What would her attitude be?

End Volume One

Autobiography / Libertarianism

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