



Allen Churchill

author of *The Improper Bohemians*

the
year
the world
went

MAD

*The riotous
peak
of the era
of wonderful
nonsense*

the year the world went MAD

Allen Churchill

Illustrated with photographs

1927—peak of the age of wonderful nonsense, era of Prohibition and peepholes, jazz babies and ukuleles, Clara Bow and Ramon Navarro, tabloids and portable victrolas. It's the year the world went mad, the year Allen Churchill describes in a book as effervescent and tantalizing as the era it depicts.

New Year's Day, 1927, dawned mild and mellow, and it is from this point that the author begins his nostalgic portrait of the Year of the Big Shriek. A fascinating run-down of current theatre, motion pictures, actors and actresses, magazines, night clubs, politics, slang, advertisements, newspapers, songs, and writers sets the scene. Al Capone was in Chicago, Coolidge in the White House; Gertrude Lawrence and Victor Moore were starring in *Oh Kay* on Broadway; John Barrymore kissed females 143 times in the silent film *Don Juan*, and New York's mayor James Walker was "as visible in the night spots as in his City Hall office." It was the period of the catchy advertising slogan: "They Laughed When I Sat Down at the Piano"; and "Doo Wacka Doo"; of slang expressions like "You're the nuts" and "Don't

(Continued on back flap)

Jacket design by HERB STOLTZ

*Jacket photo of Charleston dancers
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mad. Crowell [1960]

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*The Year
the World Went*

M A D

ALLEN CHURCHILL

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HE Nineteen Twenties have been called the Era of Wonderful Nonsense, the Golden Age of Nonsense, the Golden Twenties, the Roaring Twenties, the Whoopee Era, the Lawless Decade, the Age of Hoopla, and many other things. "The whole pattern of the Roaring Twenties in America was that of a gigantic playground," according to Abel Green and Joe Laurie, Jr. in *Show Biz*. Of these happy, hoopla years, the biggest and best was 1927. In it the Era of Wonderful Nonsense reached its peak and also its moment of transition. Herbert Asbury, looking back, calls 1927 the "Year of the Big Shriek" and says:

It was a year which produced an amazing crop of big news stories. Scarcely had one stupendous occurrence been emblazoned in journalistic tradition as the greatest story of the age than another appeared in its place, to goad frenzied editors and reporters to new heights of hysteria and hyperbole, while above the din of competition rose the mellow baying of the publicity hound and the raucous bleat of the politician as he knelt in adoration before the glory of the front page and welcomed the heroes returning from the scenes of their exploits.

Follows the story of the Year of the Big Shriek—the Year the World Went Mad . . .

1 Prelude to Madness

T

HE first day of January 1927—the Year the World Went Mad—brought seasonable weather to most areas of the country. In Florida, where the multimillion-dollar boom in local swampland had burst unhappily the year before, the Miami temperature climbed from 48 degrees to a pleasantly warm 71 at noon. In Chicago, the city where the gambling-plus-vice empire of young Al Capone raked in an illegitimate \$105,000,000 a year (“A fine opportunity for smart young guys like myself,” was the way Scarface Al viewed Prohibition), the first day of the year started at 24 degrees and reached 31 at noon. In Los Angeles, where the silent film industry legitimately earned far more money than Al Capone, temperatures rose from 52 degrees to a midday 77, so that anyone drawing weather comparisons between California and Florida—as in those days people did—was forced to award honors to California on this fine New Year’s Day.

In New York City, traditionally the show spot of the nation’s New Year’s Eve revels the night before, temperatures rose at noontime to 39 degrees. To those New Yorkers who had actively celebrated the advent of the New Year this mellow

weather seemed justified. For in New York and other spots along the eastern seaboard, the night before had been a period of downpour. Nonetheless, the usual large crowds had gathered in Times Square to welcome in the New Year. In the *New York Times* of January 1, 1927, police were quoted as giving the accustomed estimate of one hundred thousand celebrants in the Times Square area on New Year's Eve, and the paper headlined:

CITY WELCOMES NEW YEAR
WITH LAVISH CELEBRATION;
GAY PARADERS BRAVE RAIN

Because of the drenching rain, large numbers of those who ventured out in New York City on New Year's Eve did so in private car or taxi. Thus New York, a town which eventually would become a perpetual traffic jam, had enjoyed what was possibly its first grave traffic snarl on this New Year's Eve of 1926-27. Such a profusion of cars, taxis, and limousines jammed Broadway and offshoot streets that traffic came to a complete halt. Some of the cars locked in this prodigious jam were Model T Fords (one of the rich promises of the year 1927 was that during it the Model A Ford would be ceremoniously unveiled). Others were such popular makes as Chrysler (\$1175 for roadster with rumble seat), Buick, Chevrolet, and Packard ("Ask the Man Who Owns One").

The year 1927 arrived in the midst of an era of golden prosperity, with a fine richness of everything, and still other of the cars bore such forgotten names as Willys-Knight, Franklin, Hupmobile, Oakland, Pierce Arrow, Essex, Locomobile, Marmon, Star—and that sportiest of contemporary vehicles, the Kissel roadster with wire wheels. The one thousand extra police on duty for New Year's Eve charged frantically about among these vehicles but, inexperienced in unscrambling such confusion, succeeded only in compounding it further. Then,

as the hands of the clock on the tower of the new (opened six months before) Paramount Theatre touched midnight, the horns of a multitude of cars caught in the rainy traffic jam set up a dreadful cacophony in tribute to the New Year.

"Private parties greeting the New Year"—the *Times* went on—"had been merry and wet." The nation lived under the confining law of Prohibition but this wetness did not stem from rain. Indeed, it is safe to say that on New Year's Eve 1926-27 any citizens of the United States willing and able to afford a celebration already knew an urban or roadside speakeasy in which to celebrate. Or if not this, at least the identity of a bootlegger who would supply liquor (usually gin) of an inferior quality which all at the New Year's Eve party would deem superior.

In New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Washington, and other major cities, hotels reported a record attendance for New Year's Eve. New York night clubs, where a bottle of Prohibition-time champagne (mixed carbonated cider and grain alcohol) might cost one hundred dollars, had been booked solid for weeks in advance despite the fact that Prohibition-time Broadway was a lawless spot with gangsters controlling most places of after-dark pleasure.

The Main Stem's hit play of the moment was a taut melodrama called *Broadway*. Lee Tracy played the lead and his understudy—a young man who never got a chance to go on—was an actor named James Cagney. In *Broadway* no less than two gangland murders took place backstage in a speakeasy-night club called the Paradise. This rang so true to life that the critic Alexander Woollcott hailed *Broadway* in these words: "Of all the plays that shuffled in endless procession along Broadway in this year of grace, the one which most perfectly caught the accent of the city's voice was this play named after the great Midway itself."

New Yorkers able to raise throbbing heads from pillows dur-

ing the course of New Year's Day 1927 learned from newspapers that the city's first baby of the new year had been a girl—where is she now?—born to Mrs. Mary Stein in Lincoln Hospital, the Bronx. Four other children had been born during the night and before New Year's Eve was officially over revelers had turned in sixteen false fire alarms. Those who read the newspapers could also learn that, despite plentiful evidence that New Year's Eve had been the country's wettest of the Prohibition Era, Dry forces were publicly radiating optimism. The past year, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union announced, had seen a tightening in enforcement of the Volstead Law. Only in the South, where moonshiners flourished, had the situation worsened.

Such optimism was so tremendously far from the truth that most readers quickly turned to other news stories. One of these stated that Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon, under whose jurisdiction enforcement of Prohibition fell, had vetoed the idea of inserting poison into wood alcohol so that those truly desperate for a drink would never be tempted to imbibe this substance. Other news stories concerned the pending dispatch of United States Marines to Nicaragua for the protection of American property and investment; the approaching eightieth birthday of Thomas Alva Edison; and the night-riding activities of the hooded Ku Klux Klan in Georgia. President Calvin Coolidge, fondly known to the country as Cautious Cal, broke his usual silence to speak out in favor of World Disarmament, then under debate at The Hague. National stories decried the rise in the divorce rate, stating that the past year had seen the filing of five thousand more divorce suits than ever before in the country's history. Monday, January 3rd, would be the day on which many doughboys of World War I would be entitled to collect a Soldier's Bonus, and a few pundits feared that this would deal a shattering blow to the nation's soaring economy.

This, however, was almost as farfetched as the claims of Prohibition forces. For 1927 came at a prosperous time, with the rich odor of profits filling the air. Plumbers arriving to fix faucets discoursed on how much money they had made on paper during the previous week. Rich men had the disconcerting experience of being driven by chauffeurs who seemed to know everything about the stock market. "Prosperous and with all confidence in the future," was the manner in which the New York Times pictured the national mood on the first day of January 1927. And why not? Under the canny aegis of multimillionaire Treasury Secretary Mellon the United States had just declared itself able to cut taxes by \$387,000,000.

Such splendid prosperity had been the story for almost seven years and newspaper readers in search of unusual news might turn from it to the sport pages to find that Gene Sarazen had won the Miami Open Golf Championship and that Tommy Armour had finished first in a California Open. From the Madison Square Garden office of fight promoter Tex Rickard came the eagerly awaited news that during 1927 the heavyweight champion, James Joseph (Gene) Tunney, would fight the winner of a series of elimination bouts. Tunney had defeated Jack Dempsey in September 1926 and for his next bout was guaranteed \$750,000 to \$1,000,000. Among those who would be taking part in the eliminations for the honor of meeting him would be Dempsey, Jack Sharkey, Paul Berlenbach, Jim Maloney, and Jack Delaney.

For those not addicted to sport, there was news in the entertainment columns. In those happy days, some seventy-five Broadway plays were spread before a public which now, even in holiday time, is lucky to have fifteen. On Saturday, January 1, 1927, a revue called *Gay Paree* was to be seen at the Winter Garden with that celebrated Parisian Charles "Chic" Sale; Gertrude Lawrence and Victor Moore were starring in *Oh Kay!* a musical comedy with music by George Gershwin ("Clap Yo'

Hands," "Do Do Do"); Beatrice Lillie and Charles Winninger displayed themselves in a musical called *Oh, Please*; Ethel Barrymore was starred in Somerset Maugham's *The Constant Wife*; Sacha Guitry and his lovely wife Yvonne Printemps, speaking only French, brought Gallic culture to the United States in *Mozart*; *Queen High* boasted Luella Gear and Charles Ruggles; *Chicago*, a searing drama of a jazz-baby murderer, starred Francine Larrimore; *The Ladder*, a play about reincarnation, played nightly to audiences of only ten or fifteen, since a Texas millionaire-backer, Edgar B. Davis, had a fanatical faith in its message; Joe E. Brown and Ona Munson cavorted through *Twinkle, Twinkle*; at the Republic Theatre on Forty-second Street Anne Nichols' *Abie's Irish Rose* continued its amazing five-year run; Lenore Ulric appeared in *Lulu Belle*, Blanche Yurka was Nubi in *The Squall*, and Mae West was Margie LaMont in *Sex*. Temporarily absent from Broadway was Florenz Ziegfeld, the celebrated showman who had produced a series of gorgeous *Follies* "Glorifying the American Girl." But George White's breezy *Scandals* and Earl Carroll's sumptuous *Vanities* endeavored to make up for the absence of the master.

Despite such seeming robustness, the American entertainment world was in the process of enormous change. Suddenly radio—the kind of entertainment-for-free which showmen always dreaded—had appeared on the scene. People no longer needed to stir from their homes for an evening's entertainment. By turning a series of knobs, it was now possible to bring Jessica Dragonette, Harry Reser's Cliquot Club Eskimos, Harry Horlick's A & P Gypsies, the Happiness Boys, or Uncle Don into a living room. Simultaneously motion pictures were making a new bid for attention. No longer content to be called a stepchild of the legitimate theatre, films were becoming more sophisticated, even using the word *art* to describe some productions. Picture palaces like the Capitol and Paramount in New York featured stage shows which, together with radio,

would sound the death knell of vaudeville. But the most important change in films was in the films themselves. Epics like *Ben-Hur* (Ramon Novarro, Carmel Myers, Francis X. Bushman) and *The Big Parade* (John Gilbert, Renee Adoree, Karl Dane) held as much drama as any Broadway play and were visually far more exciting.

In 1927 the screen was still silent—or nearly so. Background symphonic music had been heard on a sound track of *Don Juan*, a film in which John Barrymore kissed females 143 times by actual press-agent count. The Warner Brothers, attempting to bolster a tottering company with a new gimmick called Vitaphone, had at the *Don Juan* premiere presented “Talking” shorts with such outstanding singers of the day as Marion Talley. John Barrymore was also one of the busiest actors of the era and in January 1927 could be seen on Broadway in *When a Man Loves* with Dolores Costello. *The Big Parade* still played two performances a day at the Astor; Harold Lloyd, next to Charlie Chaplin the most popular comic of the time, was appearing in *Big Brother*; Corinne Griffith starred in *Lady in Ermine* with Francis X. Bushman; and Pola Negri was the star of *Hotel Imperial* at the Paramount, soon to be rivaled by the Roxy at Seventh Avenue and Fiftieth Street.

Other films of the day were D. W. Griffith’s *Sorrows of Satan* with Adolphe Menjou, Lya de Putti, and Carol Dempster; *Beau Geste* with Ronald Colman, enjoying a record run at the Criterion; Marion Davies in *Tillie the Toiler* and *Paradise for Two* with Richard Dix and Betty Bronson. In addition to this, newspapers on January 1st carried announcements of the imminent arrival of *Flesh and the Devil* starring John Gilbert and Greta Garbo. Garbo was billed as the possessor of “the most beautiful face in the world.” *Flesh and the Devil* would introduce the so-called soul kiss to a palpitating movie public. As a result some would call it “Gilbo Garbage” and the film would be assailed by pious groups.

In Hollywood, polls indicated runaway popularity for Clara

Bow as the top box office attraction of the day. Flaming haired, peppy, shingle-bobbed, flat-chested, high-skirted, Clara Bow personified the headstrong flapper of the period. In her latest film, *The Plastic Age*, she had been billed the "Hottest Jazz Baby in Films." In it she did a frenetic Charleston, drank out of a hip flask, and by every action indicated insistence upon the freedoms denied for centuries to her sex. Clara Bow's most successful film had been Elinor Glyn's *It*, which was the word Mrs. Glyn applied to the indefinable sex appeal in the female personality that attracts men. "You either have it, or you don't," the exotic-looking authoress stated coolly when asked to define *It* further. But whatever *It* was, Clara Bow had it. She was the 1927 jazz baby: hungry for thrills, heedless of consequences, promiscuous with kisses and perhaps much else. Restless, self-centered, vain, she was the Flapper of Flaming Youth.

For her work in motion pictures Clara Bow was paid three thousand dollars to four thousand dollars a week. As a result she typified far more than high-voltage flapperdom to her fellow citizens of the United States. In 1927 she was twenty-two years old and over the last four the flapper with the bright red hair had personified, more than anyone else in Hollywood, the phenomenal rags-to-riches rise of so many stars of the silent screen. Miss Bow had been born in the Bay Ridge section of Brooklyn, into a background described as "rotten." Of her barren childhood, she herself recalled, "I never even had a doll." But she had "It"—and, at seventeen, flaming red hair, a lovely round face, and a body to match. Someone sent her photo to a beauty competition run by a movie magazine and soon, by a series of happy chances, the teenage girl found herself playing a tomboy gamine in *Down to the Sea in Ships*. Next came *Rough House Rosie*, *Redhead*, *The Fleet's In*, *Children of Divorce*, *Three Weekends*, *Mantrap*, and *Ladies of the Mob*. By 1927 ecstatic fans were writing Clara Bow

some twenty thousand letters a week. Naturally, the flaming-haired star made the most of such fame and fortune. "I did exactly as I pleased," she has recalled of her days of flapper fame. "I stayed up late. I dressed the way I wanted. I'd whiz down Sunset Boulevard in my open Kissel—flaming red, of course—with seven red chow dogs to match my hair."

Ramon Novarro, the most popular male star of the moment, was far more sedate in his behavior. The mantle of popularity had fallen on Novarro with the shattering death of Rudolph Valentino in August 1926. But Novarro would not remain in this top slot for long. With *Flesh and the Devil*, dashing John Gilbert became the number one movie idol.

Other film stars of 1927 were Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, Antonio Moreno, Colleen Moore, Monte Blue, Reginald Denny, Rod La Rocque, Vilma Banky, Esther Ralston, Lois Wilson, Jack Holt, Bebe Daniels, Leatrice Joy, Lew Cody, Thomas Meighan, Dorothy Mackaill, Louise Brooks, Betty Compson, Lon Chaney, Agnes Ayres, Richard Dix, Ben Lyon, Marie Prevost, William Haines, Anna May Wong, Sally O'Neill, and Wallace Beery, who had just begun to switch from movie villainy to comedy.

Upcoming in the ranks were Gary Cooper, Mary Brian, Buddy Rogers, Nancy Carroll, Gilbert Roland, Richard Arlen, Alice White, and Betty Bronson.

The January issue of *Motion Picture*, a fan magazine that brought cultivated tone to Hollywood, featured an article titled "A Sunday Afternoon with Mrs. Falaise." Translated, this meant an afternoon with Gloria Swanson, for that star of stars had just delighted the industry by returning from Europe married to the Marquis Henri de la Falaise de la Coudray—a marriage which caused her rival Pola Negri to writhe with envy.

The same issue of *Motion Picture* carried a breathless interview with Joan Crawford, one of Hollywood's newest stars. As Lucille Le Sueur, Miss Crawford had (little more than a year

before) been a flapper Charleston dancer at the Club Richman in New York. Practically every girl in the United States envied the high-stepping girl, but in the best fan magazine tradition of the day the fortunate young thing confided to interviewer Doris Denbo that she had found success empty: "Would you think it possible that in the midst of plenty—friends, love, success, everything perhaps a girl could wish for—that I *could* be lonely? But I have never been anything but lonely for real love and affection."

For stay-at-homes on New Year's Day 1927 the entertainment news lay in the new gadget radio. The pioneering day of the crystal set had become the era of twisting dials, gooseneck loudspeaker, and radiotron tube (RCA Radiola, 8 tubes, \$275).

January 1st was to feature still another radio innovation—the nationwide hookup. At three in the afternoon nineteen stations across the land would join to broadcast the Rose Bowl game between Leland Stanford and Alabama. The multitudes listening to this exciting game would hear it broadcast by the silver tonsils of Graham McNamee, the nation's super-broadcaster. The great McNamee seemed able to make everything in his broadcasts infectiously exciting ("*And he did it! Yessir, he did it! It's a touchdown. Boy, I want to tell you, this is one of the finest games . . .*") and as a result he was one of the best known of contemporary Americans.

Radio in 1927 was such a startling innovation that some folk were concerned about the content of broadcasts. Cultural groups objected to the hullabaloo made over such programs as the Rose Bowl game. Consequently, the networks had rather self-consciously scheduled another nationwide broadcast for eight o'clock that night. This would be a performance of the New York Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Dr. Walter Damrosch. With him would be a galaxy of musical luminaries, among them John McCormack, Rosa Ponselle, and Mischa

Elman. In New York, this would be carried on station WEAJ, which with WJZ was the important outlet in the area. In Pittsburgh, it would be heard on station KDKA, over which the first radio broadcast was made on November 2, 1920.

On the afternoon of January 1st—as Alabama came from behind in the last minute of play to tie Stanford 7-7—Governor Alfred E. Smith of New York entered his name in the 1928 Presidential race by declaring in his New York State inaugural address: "I will try to earn the nomination." Radio of the day was so much in its infancy that news broadcasts were all but unknown. Thus the world had to wait until the Sunday newspapers of January 2nd to find that Al Smith's brown derby had floated into the Presidential arena.

In Washington, D.C., President and Mrs. Calvin Coolidge were, to the surprise of no one, described as spending the quietest of holidays. In truth, America of the mid-Twenties was a bit bewildered by its thirtieth President. Dutifully his countrymen tried to find admirable the President's taciturn refusal to chat with newspapermen, White House callers, or diplomats from other nations. At all times Coolidge remained silent—looking down his nose, William Allen White said, as if trying to locate that evil smell which seemed forever to affront him. The same point was made in fewer words by Alice Roosevelt Longworth who said that Coolidge looked as if he had been weaned on a sour pickle. "Whenever Coolidge opens his mouth to speak, a moth flies out," another contemporary said, and a newspaper had just asked Coolidge to write a feature article on "How to Get By on Ten Words a Day."

If Calvin Coolidge preserved his usual silence over the New Year's weekend, a firebrand Representative named Fiorello H. La Guardia provided news from the nation's capital. La Guardia delivered a blast at the country's law enforcement machinery, pointing out that on New Year's Eve there had been almost no raids on Prohibition law violators. He reminded the

country that in many urban localities law enforcement officers were under arrest for conniving with bootleggers (NEW PROHIBITION CHIEF SEEKS HONEST STAFF, a recent headline read) and that any man could easily find a speakeasy in any sizable town in the land. He finally charged that in eleven cities 1,738 people had died over the past year as a result of drinking inferior or poison liquor. Newspapers across the country immediately headlined 1,738 RUM DEATHS CHARGED, for the word *rum* fitted so neatly into story-heads that a visitor from Mars might deduce from the press that the United States was a nation of rum drinkers. Gin was also a neat headline word, but more specific and confining. In private conversations of the time prohibition liquor was always *hooch* or *booze*.

In the course of his statement Representative La Guardia took several swipes at his constituency city of New York. Not a single raid had been staged there during this wettest of wet weekends, yet it was known that at least five thousand speak-easy-night clubs nestled among the bright lights of Broadway, with some twenty-five thousand more in the entire city of New York. La Guardia heaped scorn on the city's playboy mayor, James J. Walker. In the words of Gene Fowler, his future biographer, Mayor Walker wore New York on his lapel like a boutonniere. He was a laughing Mayor, rather than a smiling one, as visible in night spots as in his City Hall office. La Guardia branded Mayor Walker's recent 3 A.M. curfew for night clubs a farce, since many clubs had taken newspaper space to advertise that they would stay open until 8 A.M. despite the edict. In no way did La Guardia reflect the light views of H. L. Mencken, who had just stated, "The business of evading Prohibition and making mock of it has ceased to wear any aspects of crime, and has become a sort of national sport."

On January 1st, those interested in matters other than Pro-

hibition, or the lack of it, could read popular magazines like the *Delineator*, which contained fiction by Sophie Kerr, Arthur Train, John Erskine, and Kathleen Norris. The stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald often appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post*, and the *New Yorker*, now in its third year, carried the by-lines of Ernest Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Ben Hecht.

Advertisements of the era seem—in retrospect—more readable than the serious prose. It was the time of the catchy slogan—"Ivory Soap, It Floats"—"Often a Bridesmaid But Never a Bride"—"There's Something About Them You'll Like" (Herbert Tareytons)—"Even Your Best Friend Won't Tell You" (halitosis: Listerine)—"Be Nonchalant, Light a Murad"—"Lucky Strike, It's Toasted"—"I'd Walk a Mile for a Camel"—"Four Out of Five Have it" (pyorrhea). A full-page advertisement for piano lessons by mail featured perhaps the most memorable of all advertising slogans: "They Laughed When I Sat Down at the Piano—But When I Started to Play!"

It was also the moment of the inferiority complex and ambitious ads set out to exploit the hideous deficiencies latent in everyone. "I Was So Embarrassed," a young wife informs a cringing husband in one full-page spread. "You sat there like a dummy, you didn't say a word all evening." The solution? Buy the *Elbert Hubbard Scrap Book* and commit it to memory. It was also the era of the testimonial, with celebrities insincerely plugging cigarettes, bedsprings, and other commodities. At the same time ordinary folk testified: "For Years I Was Always Tired—Now I Take Fleischmann's Yeast 3 Times a Day."

Lighter aspects of the national culture were to be found in the humor magazines *Life* and *Judge*, as well as in that forgotten pacesetter *College Humor*, which carried jokes, pictures of cuddly flappers, and breezy, sexy fiction. In *College Humor* the stories of Katharine Brush and Lynn and Lois Montross gave Joe College and Betty Coed a pattern of behavior for all

situations. *Life* was edited by Robert Emmet Sherwood, who was also writing plays—his *Road to Rome* would be a hit of 1927.

Life especially featured the John Held drawings which so successfully caught the flavor of the Jazz Age. The flapper of 1927 was angular, thin legged, flat bottomed, and displayed no visible breasts. She was such an odd creature that the John Held caricature bore a great resemblance to the real thing. Her male counterpart, as seen by Held, had a vapid face and wore bell-bottom trousers. He parted his hair in the middle and greased it back on either side in emulation of the lamented Rudolph Valentino. For the John Held male the world had no perfect word like *flapper* for the female. He was called the sheik, the cake-eater, or the jelly bean—the last deriving from the glossy hair of Held drawings. When the 1927 male was referred to as a sheik his female counterpart was often called a sheba.

In *Life*, *Judge*, and *College Humor*, the curious slang of the era could best be found. A good-looking girl was the cat's whiskers, or the cat's meow. She was also, more respectfully, a beaut, or a peach. An ordinary girl was a jane—"Who was that jane I saw you with last night?" To say something clever was to crack wise, or wisecrack. Anything a flapper or jelly bean liked was nifty—or "It's the nuts." "For crying out loud" was the favored expression of incredulity or wonder. Rapture was expressed by "Hot diggity dog." A tough guy was a hardboiled egg, a stupid girl a dumbbell or Dumb Dora. Since the 1926 best seller *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* there had been much talk of sugar daddies and gold diggers. At a wild party a flapper hoisting her skirts above rolled stockings to do a mad Charleston would be egged on by cries of "Get hot!"

One sure way of winning a laugh at a crowded party was suddenly to yell "Don't step on it, it might be Lon Chaney!" In a slightly different sense, Step On It also meant Hurry up,

we're late. An expression of scorn was "So's your old man." Does She or Doesn't She? meant Does She Pet—or Does She Neck? At the end of a happy date a sheba might say to her sheik "Thanks for the buggy ride." If he made an improper suggestion she might say, "Go fly a kite," "Go jump in the lake," or "Go cook a radish." If he made her laugh she'd say, "Ooo, you slaughter me!" An expression of disbelief was "It's the bunk."

Liquor, (bathtub gin or bootleg hooch) was giggle-water or giggle-soup, even in the sophisticated pages of the *New Yorker*. Speakeasies were whoopee-parlors. Making Whoopee meant getting tight, doing the Charleston, or playing a does-she-or-doesn't-she in the rumble seat of a car. Anything strange was goofy, anyone strange a goof. To add emphasis, a flapper might breathe fervently, "I should hope to tell you," or "And *how!*" Finally, a flapper never said Yes or No to anything. It was always "Absolutely" or a long draw out "Pos-i-tive-ly." Or a mixture of both which was "Abso-tive-ly" or "Pos-a-loot-ly."

Young people of the age were conveniently divided into Flaming Youth and the Younger Generation. Neither had the full approval of older folk, but Flaming Youth was regarded with outrage and horror, while the Younger Generation got a patient "we-were-all-young-once" treatment.

To the comparatively sedate members of the Younger Generation, the song writer of the decade was Irving Berlin ("What'll I Do?" "All Alone," "Blue Skies," "Remember," "Always," "The Song Is Ended But the Melody Lingers on). Even so, the overwhelming song hit of 1927 was Walter Donaldson's "My Blue Heaven (Just Molly and me-e-e, and baby makes three-e-e)." Paul Whiteman, Vincent Lopez, Fred Waring, Ben Bernie ("The Old Maestro") and Roger Wolfe Kahn were the popular dance band leaders. Whiteman, after functioning as a jazz catalyst, had turned to dispensing what was called dansapation—silken renditions of such melodies as

“Among My Souvenirs,” “In A Little Spanish Town,” and “Valencia.”

Collegiate, collegiate. Yes! we are collegiate!—so rollicked a contemporary song hit, and Flaming Youth found such whoopee melodies vastly superior to Irving Berlin. It was the day of the ukulele, or uke. No less than rolled stockings and knee-length sheath dresses for shebas, or bell-bottom trousers and hip flasks for shieks, the uke was standard equipment for joy rides and petting parties. On this simplest of instruments, jazz babies strummed accompaniment to the nonsense ditties so dear to the hearts of the Jazz Age. From “Barney Google” (1923) and “Yes, We Have No Bananas” to the sentimental “Bye, Bye, Blackbird” (1926) each silly song had its brief, countrywide life. Still tingling in the ears of 1927 were “When the Red Red Robin Comes Bob-Bob-Bobbin Along”; “It Ain’t Gonna Rain No Mo’”; “Hay, Hay, Farmer Gray (Took another load away)”; “Show Me the Way to Go Home (I’m tired and I want to go to bed)”; “Did You Ever Hear Pete? (Go tweet-tweet-tweet on his piccolo)”; “Who Takes Care of the Caretaker’s Daughter? (When the caretaker’s busy taking care?)”; and the saxophone-player’s song “Doo-wacka-doo (Made a hit with the girls. They had their hair bobbed and gave him the curls).”

Serious songs of the day, such as “Just a Cottage Small By a Waterfall (A place where dreams come true)” and “I’m Sitting on Top of the World (Just rollin’ along and singin’ a song)” were sung over the radio by Jessica Dragonette, Vaughn De Leath, Gene Austin, and the Silvertown Masked Tenor (Joe White). But the Happiness Boys, the Cliquot Club Eskimos, the A & P Gypsies, and others made merry with numbers like “I Miss My Swiss (My Swiss miss misses me)”; “She Lives Over the Wiaduct (Down by the Winegar Woiks)”; “I Faw Down an’ Go Boom”; “When It’s Nighttime in Italy It’s Wednesday Over Here”; “There’s No Hot Water in the

Bronx"; and "Does the Spearmint Lose Its Flavor on the Bedpost Overnight"?

In January 1927 the song hit of the moment and the nonsense song of the second were conveniently the same. This was a bouncy number called "Crazy Words, Crazy Tune." To its simple lyric, topical words could quickly be added and a nation concerned with Eskimo pies, raccoon coats, plus fours, crossword puzzles, hip flasks, back-seat petting, ukuleles, and other innovations found many a snappy couplet to insert in "Crazy Words, Crazy Tune":

Crazy words, crazy tune
I think that I'll go crazy soon
Vo-do-dee-o
Vo-do-dee-o-DO.

Culture was also rampant, and the nifty new Book-of-the-Month Club was considered a sure bet to make the masses book conscious. Non-fiction best seller of 1927 was Will Durant's *The Story of Philosophy*. In fiction John Erskine was attempting to duplicate the success of his trail-blazing *Private Life of Helen of Troy* with a somewhat similar book called *Galahad*. Warwick Deeping, author of *Sorrell and Son*, was represented by *Doomsday*. Also in bookstores (or about to be) were *Tristram*, by Edwin Arlington Robinson; *To the Lighthouse*, by Virginia Woolf; *Marching On*, by James Boyd; *Young Men in Love*, by Michael Arlen; *Revolt in the Desert*, by T. E. Lawrence; and *The Glorious Adventure*, by Richard Halliburton.

But most of all, Americans in 1927 read newspapers. This is hardly surprising: events of the day seemed to rival fiction and add new dimension to fact. From early in the Twenties newspaper readers had been treated to a series of smash sensations. Abetting this was the success of tabloid journalism in New York. The *New York Daily News* began in 1919 and, after

initial floundering, achieved a huge circulation. With one circulation success, the newspaper axiom runs, there is always room for another. William Randolph Hearst's tabloid, the *Daily Mirror*, started in 1922, and attempted to outdo the *News* in sensationalism. The *Mirror* did not fare as well, but this did not deter the redoubtable physical culturist Bernarr Macfadden from conceiving the idea of an evening tabloid—both *News* and *Mirror* were morning papers—which he called the *Evening Graphic*.

In the green-tinted pages of the *Graphic*, American journalism reached cesspool status. In no time New Yorkers were calling the paper the *Porno-Graphic*. By January 1927, the *Graphic's* major distinction was the notoriety of Walter Winchell, ex-vaudeville hooper turned gossip columnist, whose column "Your Broadway and Mine" was adding what has been called keyhole journalism to the newspaper concept.

Though the *New York Times*, the *New York Herald Tribune*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *San Francisco Chronicle* and other newspapers of high reputation would never admit it, they had been influenced by the raw excesses of tabloid journalism. The fact that so many millions eagerly read the tabloids could not be disregarded and concessions were accordingly made. The *New York Times*, printing meaty details of divorce scandals and love-nest slayings, strove to retain dignity by always referring to those involved as Mr., Mrs., or Miss. On the other hand, the tabloids instantly placed everything on a cosy front-name basis. Any girl named Dorothy who got in trouble immediately became Dot. At all times the tabloids' prose bordered on the heartthrob. Tabloid euphemisms were misleading and vaguely salacious. An illegitimate baby was always a love child. Infractions of the Seventh Commandment were illicit love or illicit romance. Couples involved were too friendly, indiscreet, or intimate. A naked girl was never nude in the tabloids. She was undraped, partially attired, or scantily clad, depending on the mood of the city editor.

The excesses of the tabloids were best to be seen in the numerous trials-of-the-century with which the Twenties were studded. On close scrutiny, these may become merely trials of the moment, but lurid newspaper coverage made them seem stupendous events. At the same time, the Twenties were an era of real news. It is safe to say that almost any reporter alive in 1960 would give a lot to have been in his prime in the year 1927. Big stories, classic stories, occurred then as often as war scares today.

The first of the decade's unique thrills came in 1922 when the Reverend Edward Wheeler Hall and a pretty parishioner named Eleanor Mills were discovered dead in a lover's lane outside New Brunswick, New Jersey. A bizarre note was added by torn love letters of the pair scattered over the bodies. The frantic press coverage of the Hall-Mills case brought new dimension to newspaper coverage of an American murder.

As the Whoopee Era built, so did its sensations. Came the Fatty Arbuckle and William Desmond Taylor scandals in Hollywood. A trial of the century arrived in 1924 when two Chicago youths, Richard Loeb and Nathan Leopold, were found guilty of the aptly called thrill murder of Bobby Franks. Sensation merged into sensation as year passed into year. In Chicago, the multimillionaire Stillman family was rent by an ugly divorce, while New York's upper crust reeled from the Leonard Kip Rhineland case. In Dayton, Tennessee, the Scopes trial—the intellectual trial of the century—played itself out as Clarence Darrow and Willam Jennings Bryan battled over the letter of the Bible in a summer of hellish heat. Charlie Chaplin married a sixteen-year-old child bride named Lita Gray, and Al Capone began his rise in Chicago.

In 1926 the sad-eyed Broadway producer Earl Carroll decided to throw an exceptional party on the stage of the theatre where his *Vanities* played. At the peak of the evening's merriment an ordinary-looking bathtub was wheeled center-stage. Waiters filled it to the brim with Prohibition champagne. Then from

the wings strode showgirl Joyce Hawley, wearing a green bathrobe. Reaching the tub, the girl dropped the robe, exposing the fact that she was naked. She daintily stepped into the champagne-filled tub. "Step right up, gentlemen," Carroll called. "The line forms at the right." Men and some women lined up self-consciously for a glass of nude-in-the-bathtub champagne.

Most of New York's top echelon newspapermen and columnists were present at the party, and all had been requested by Carroll not to reveal the story of his nude bather. One newsman present was Philip Payne, an inspired young man who had recently been made editor of the *Daily Mirror*. Payne would later claim that he had spoken to Carroll during the bathtub episode, saying in effect, "Earl, this story is so big, you've just got to let me have it." Carroll always denied this and it may be that, busy with the details of the party, he misunderstood Payne or merely nodded assent to get rid of him. Whatever the reason, Payne believed he had permission. The *Daily Mirror* broke the sensational story and for several editions was the only New York newspaper to carry the news of Earl Carroll's Bathtub Party.

It was a glorious scoop, earning Payne an accolade from William Randolph Hearst. It also sent Earl Carroll to the Federal Penitentiary, since he was hauled into court for serving liquor on his premises. There, for obscure reasons, Carroll chose to deny that the party had ever taken place. On the witness stand Joyce Hawley clinched the case against him by admitting that she had caught cold reposing in the champagne bath. Carroll's plight was considerable, but Philip Payne had problems too. On the one hand his fellow editors reviled him for lack of integrity in breaking the story. On the other, he had earned a powerful pat on the back from William Randolph Hearst. Which was more important? After much soul-searching Payne decided he had most enjoyed the pat on the back.

Now he learned that the *Evening Graphic* had been investi-

gating the still unsolved, still untried Hall-Mills case of 1922. Unable to find grounds for reopening the case, the *Graphic* had dropped its investigations. The euphoric Payne dashed in where the *Graphic* feared to tread. In July 1926 the *Mirror* headlined a story charging that the widow Hall had used money and social prestige to bribe witnesses and otherwise influence the prosecutor's office. HALL-MILLS MURDER MYSTERY BARED, the *Mirror* screeched, and of necessity the other papers followed. Reluctantly, the New Jersey authorities opened the Hall-Mills file, setting a trial date for several months in the future.

While the wheels of justice ground in the Hall-Mills case, newspaper readers found much else of a stimulating nature. In the summer of 1926, Commander Richard Evelyn Byrd flew over the North Pole. Byrd was a handsome, storybook hero who at the age of twelve had gone around the world alone. After that, his life had included graduation from Annapolis and invention of the bubble sextant. On his return from the North Pole flight, Byrd—together with pilot Floyd Bennett—was given one of the resounding keys-to-the-city welcomes for which New York City had become widely famed.

No sooner had Commander Byrd been royally received than Gertrude Ederle succeeded in her second attempt to swim the English Channel. The tabloids immediately dubbed her Trudy and headlined SHE DID IT! On August 27, 1926, New York City went wild over a returning Trudy. Fifty thousand yelling, milling people crowded the Wall Street area as she was greeted by Grover Whalen. She rode in triumph up Broadway while ticker tape, torn paper, and strips of telephone books streamed down from office building windows above. Miss Ederle's official welcome became a mob scene, with mounted policemen charging into the crowds. For the first time it became apparent that the American people—weary perhaps of sensationalism and sordidness—might be searching for something clean and honest to

worship. But in Trudy Ederle, the public had a heroine perhaps too levelheaded and pragmatic. Asked by a female reporter, "Did you do any shopping in Paris?" Trudy looked blank. "Why should I?" she wanted to know.

So rapidly did events move in the Teeming Twenties that as Trudy returned to her home on the West Side of Manhattan she skirted territory being hallowed by a different kind of mob scene. Rudolph Valentino, the Sheik of Sheiks, had just died of peritonitis and the loss of America's number-one movie idol had produced a hysteria of mourning in New York and elsewhere. Some thirty thousand of the morbidly curious had descended on Frank E. Campbell's Memorial Chapel where Valentino lay in state, clad in impeccable evening attire. Plate glass windows in the vicinity were broken, and mounted police charged into the crowds. When finally order was restored one hundred and fifty persons a minute began pushing by Valentino's coffin, and the line of mourners never seemed to dwindle.

As Valentino lay in state, President Eliot of Harvard died, giving editorial writers an opportunity to view with alarm the mighty coverage given Valentino as compared with the small obituaries given the learned educator.

The busy tunesmiths of Tin Pan Alley had quickly produced a song dedicated to Valentino. It was called "There's a New Star in Heaven Tonight." The *Evening Graphic*, inspired by "There's a New Star in Heaven Tonight," photographed two actors in heavenly robes in the act of shaking hands. With the photograph developed, the heads were snipped off and in their place the *Graphic* editors pasted heads of Rudolph Valentino and Enrico Caruso. The picture was photographed again. Thus, in what it dubbed a Composograph, the *Graphic* pictured Rudolph Valentino Entering the Kingdom of Heaven.

Next, Queen Marie of Rumania arrived in the United States on a grand tour. Her Highness proved that she had caught the

spirit of the Twenties by signing with two different newspaper syndicates for her personal observations on the trip. The royal party included almost as many press agents as court aides. Perhaps because of this, the tour was treated with some irreverence by the press. PRINCE NICHOLAS LOSES PANTS, the *News* headlined, detailing a shipboard contretemps involving the Queen's son. HERE COMES THE QUEEN! the *Daily Mirror* trumpeted on the day she arrived.

Queen Marie's first taste of the United States came with a parade through New York streets. Seated beside her in the open back seat of an imposing car was Mayor James J. Walker. His unique place in the city's heart was demonstrated by a window cleaner who peered down at the passing cavalcade and shouted, "Hey, Jimmy, did you lay her yet?" Queen Marie, whose knowledge of English was of a formal variety, waved upward in friendly response.

While the Queen toured the United States—becoming increasingly tangled in press agents and news syndicates—the Hall-Mills trial ran its course in Somerville, New Jersey. During late November and early December some twenty million words of testimony and sob sister description flooded newspapers the country over. Readers panted over the dramatic, hospital bed testimony of Mrs. Jane Gibson, the Pig Woman. They debated whether Willie Stevens could be as crazy as he looked. Art Applegate's bluefish became a national catchword. The end result was acquittal for Mrs. Hall and her brothers. The much-beset family pondered, then decided to file a million-dollar libel suit against the *Daily Mirror* and editor Philip Payne.

This was done on December 28th—and suddenly the nation had reached 1927, the Year the World Went Mad.

2 "What Did Peaches to Browning Say?"

THE big year wasted no time in getting under way. Indeed, those welcoming 1927 did so secure in the awareness that its first sensation would be precisely the kind the public adored in the Era of Wonderful Nonsense. It would be a trial—but fortunately for a country gorged on the deep dramas of the Hall-Mills case there were no corpses involved. Rather its huge appeal lay in a Cinderella aspect: the latent desire in all of us for the appearance of a Sugar Daddy who would miraculously banish all financial cares. To this age-old formula something new had been added. In 1927, the doctrines of Dr. Freud had traversed the Atlantic. Where the world once whispered about Sex, it now clamored to know more—even to the extent of so-called perversions and elderly men who lusted for the bodies of young girls.

At the same time, the United States had become conditioned to the fact that not all girls were chaste or spiritually beautiful. For all its amusing illiteracy *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, the best-selling book of the previous year, had dealt

with the tribulations of a pair of gold diggers who were also kept women. In the lively new slanguage of Walter Winchell, Lorelei Lee and her friend Dorothy were keptives.

The public found the same type of broadminded female in contemporary plays. In *Broadway*, hooper Roy Lane (Lee Tracy) said to one of the chorus girls, "It pays to be good." "Sure," she snapped back, "but not much." Other plays of the time stressed lack of chastity in the female. In *Wise Virgin* a memorable line was: "It's a wise virgin who knows her own boiling point." In *The Barker*, starring Walter Huston, the carnival girl (Claudette Colbert) was graphically described as being in her early twenties, but in experience about 120.

So the country was prepared to relish the greatest sensation of all: the story which when it erupted—as it frequently did—could kick any other story, be it Commander Byrd or Queen Marie, off front pages. In the thrill-happy Era of Wonderful Nonsense, the story of Daddy Browning and his chubby Peaches remains the undisputed champion in the division of sex-sensation and foolishness.

Edward West Browning, a native New Yorker and bigtime real-estate dealer, was a sporty looking gent who bore a close resemblance to the comedian Leon Errol. A dangerous red lit up Mr. Browning's face at all times and his eyes glistened as if he were on the verge of tears. Across his features there often spread a wide, foolish grin. Browning's most attractive feature was the white curly hair which clung tightly to his pink scalp and brought him the distinguished look of an elderly matinee idol. He was well aware of this and always carried a pocket comb which he ran at frequent intervals through the soft, wavy hair. Also he was one of those red-faced men whose collar seems too tight; he kept running the fingers of his left hand around under the collar as if it choked him, but apparently he never thought of buying a larger size. In 1927, the year of his greatest fame, Browning claimed to be fifty-two years old. Even

though his energy remained that of a bounding youth, the whiteness of his much-combed hair, his wattles, and generally depleted appearance made him look at least ten years older.

In true Horatio Alger fashion, Browning had gone to work as a penniless office boy and over long years accumulated a considerable fortune by buying and improving and selling New York real estate. This had put him well into the millionaire class. In addition, Browning boasted a convenient three hundred thousand dollars annually from apartment rentals. In this field, he was truly inspired. His precept for success was: "Always show a client the sunny rooms first."

A man who had reason to be proud of his rise in the world, Browning seemed to crave much wider attention. He wore flowered waistcoats, a rarity in those days. Once he appeared in a suit with twenty pearl buttons sewn on the sleeves. To those he met the sartorially conscious man boasted that he owned a thousand neckties, all gaudy as summer sunsets. Because of his business interests Browning was on friendly terms with men like Mayor Walker and Joseph P. Day, the top auctioneer of the time. Browning's overweening desire to be noticed worried some of these friends and one came up with this tolerant reasoning:

He dearly loves the spotlight and when it is turned in his direction it thrills him to the point where his balance, so evident in business dealings, becomes wholly upset. He must be seen. When he attends dances he always wants to be the master of ceremonies and offer loving cups to the best dancers. He is absolutely harmless, as free from guile as a new-laid egg and as innocent of evil thinking as an unshucked scallop.

Until 1925 the wide world was hardly aware of the beet-faced real estate millionaire. In 1915 Browning had married a suitable bride and after several years the childless couple adopted two five-year-old girls named Dorothy and Gloria. Then Mrs. Browning suddenly put the family on the map. She demanded

a divorce, the circumstances of which were particularly humiliating to a man who had made millions. Mrs. Browning had tumbled head over heels in love with her dentist. “A dentist of all people!” Browning exclaimed. “How can any sensible woman fall in love with a dentist, particularly with the dentist who has done her own work? The idea is preposterous!”

Preposterous or not it was true, though it transpired that Mrs. Browning also had complaints against her husband. “He has always liked young girls,” she charged. “I don’t know why he ever married. He would go with one set of girls until they were older than he fancied, then he would drop them for a younger set. The evidence on which I will base my suit has to do with his penchant for flappers.”

Despite the unusual nature of this charge, the judge granting a divorce awarded each of the Brownings custody of one of the adopted girls. Browning was given Dorothy, who had by now reached the age of ten. Beaming happily at this turn of events, he confessed to reporters another of his endearing traits. He bestowed pet names on those he liked. To him little Dorothy was “Sunshine.” “She calls me Daddy,” he added proudly, and from that moment on Edward West Browning was Daddy to a delighted world.

Like all true champions, Daddy Browning had a few preliminary workouts before becoming Foolishness King of 1927. His first came in 1925 when, free of confining matrimony for just a year, he advertised in the *New York Herald Tribune*:

ADOPTION—Pretty refined girl, about fourteen years old, wanted by aristocratic family of large wealth and highest standing; will be brought up as own child among beautiful surroundings, with every desirable luxury, opportunity, education, travel, kindness, care, love. Address with particulars and photograph.

This advertisement was so unusual that reporters on the tabloids began to do some sleuthing. The trail led to Daddy Browning’s bustling real-estate office at Broadway and Seventy-

second Street. Daddy dropped everything to receive the press jovially. What he really wanted, he declared, was a companion for Dorothy Sunshine who was lonesome in his care. "Baby wants a sister and, of course, it is up to me to find one," the florid-faced man declared, running a frantic finger under his collar. Recalling Mrs. Browning's divorce charges, reporters were unconvinced. But newspapers gave a big play to the story, with the *New York Times* stating that Daddy Browning "wished to open the gates of fairyland to some poor child."

Next day mothers with girl children (and a few with boys!) descended on the Browning office in sufficient numbers to create a menace to traffic. Browning stated that he intended personally to interview all applicants and ecstatic days commenced during which he plumped young girls up and down on his lap, pinched rosy cheeks, received moist kisses, and discussed the fine points of anatomy with dotting mothers. For over two weeks he rapturously examined twelve thousand children. Then he announced to waiting reporters—DADDY'S CHOICE, screamed the tabloids—that he had picked sixteen-year-old Mary Spas (or Spaas), a blond-ringleted Astoria peach who had walked alone across the Queensboro Bridge to apply. Even the *New York Times* waxed poetic about the great good fortune of Mary Spas. Its front-page story said, "The girl's cheeks are red as apples, her eyes are hazel, and her mass of light hair falls in natural curls to her shoulders. It has a golden tint when touched by the sunlight. She seems rather small for her age. She also seems rather shy."

Daddy Browning found numerous other virtues in his youthful protégée. "She plays the piano, sings a little, bakes, sews, and between times dances on her toes," he informed scribbling scribes. As he said this, Mary Spas smiled demurely up at him. It set Daddy off again: "A smile means an awful lot and Mary certainly has a wonderful smile." Inevitably, Mary Spas was christened the Cinderella Girl and like every other female who

ever came in contact with Daddy Browning she felt an immediate urge to go shopping. In the robin's-egg-blue Rolls Royce which was Daddy's pride the two headed for Fifth Avenue where crowds rioted in an effort to follow them into the stores.

Yet for Cinderella it was two minutes to twelve. Anxious to do full justice to a fabulous good-luck story, reporters hurried to Astoria to interview the Spas family and neighbors. Immediately sour notes began to sound. Mary Spas was no sweet sixteen, neighbors declared. She had been employed for some time, among other things working as a movie extra at the nearby Paramount film studios. The most shattering blow of all came when a plumber named Emil Vesalek stepped forward to state that he and Mary Spas were engaged.

Mary may have looked the part, but she was definitely not sixteen. School and business records, in fact, showed her to be a ripe twenty-one. The facts were incontrovertible, but when faced with them Mary only shook flaxen ringlets and proved that girls could be shook-up in the Twenties. "I am sixteen because I want to be sixteen," she declared. She said this at a meeting attended by her lawyers and those of Daddy Browning. As she spoke red-faced Daddy reached for his gray fedora and quickly departed from the room.

This happened in August 1925, and it might be expected that a period of bitterness and disillusion would follow for the energetic oldster. But from the episode of Mary Spas he derived some happy compensations. For one thing, Daddy received a deluge of fan mail during his period of notoriety. He also received reams of newspaper publicity. He bought the most expensive morocco-bound scrapbooks possible and hired a full-time secretary to paste his publicity in the impressive volumes. For the mail he set aside a large room in his office, christening it the Post Office. Here he filed and annotated every letter. The better ones he framed and hung on the wall. Throughout

his career the Post Office remained a delight to him. Every letter that came his way went into it, and in time the number reached two and a half million.

All this, of course, was fine—but not deeply satisfying. There was still an emptiness in his life, and now Daddy Browning displayed the ingenuity of the businessman whose rule of success was "Always show a client the sunny rooms first." To the world he may have seemed a silly eccentric with a red face, tight collar, and foolish grin, but underneath Daddy Browning was the self-made man who had amassed millions. He put his rare business acumen to work on the nagging problem of his empty social life and came up with an idea which, in contemporary slang, was the nuts. He would become a patron of high-school sororities. Discreetly he let it be known that he stood ready to pay off deficits, buy club pins, and subsidize dances at midtown hotels, as long as he himself could attend the dances.

It worked. For Dear Old Dad there now began a period of fun, games, and exactly the right kind of social diversion. Hardly a weekend passed in which he did not caper like a boy under banners proclaiming that the dance was given by this-or-that sorority of such-and-such a high school in Manhattan. Daddy Browning had always been a strenuous ballroom dancer, and the athletic dance called the Charleston held no terrors for him. When the music stopped, the elderly gent skipped from one group of girls to another, leering joyously, chucking chins, pinching cheeks and sometimes a *derrière*. The girls, ranging in age from fourteen to eighteen, were all trying to look like grown-up flappers in tight sheathlike dresses cut off sharply above the knee cap. They wore heavy bobbed hair scalloped across foreheads (the boyish bob had not yet become popular) so that a curl fell roguishly over one eye. The childish sorority sisters all seemed to admire the old fellow who paid the bills, and occasionally a giggling group would accompany

him to a table where a uniformed chauffeur guarded his pile of richly bound scrapbooks. There he proudly displayed the press clippings of the Mary Spas episode.

But it was always back to the dance for the lively oldster. Grabbing some lucky young thing, he frantically hopped around the dance floor. As he did his watery eyes never ceased watching the other girls, making sure he missed nothing. The girls laughed at his naughty jokes, never minded how wildly he danced, and only rarely replied with a slap when he pinched a fetching bottom. Yet with all this there still remained a certain emptiness. There was the great gap of years, and the fact that none of the girls really seemed interested in him as a person.

This unhappy state of affairs lasted until February 1926. Then, at the Hotel McAlpin, the millionaire sponsored a Saturday night dance for the Phi Lambda Tau sorority of Textile High School. Daddy had bestowed the name on this new sorority in the belief that Phi Lambda Tau stood for Pretty Little Things. In other ways he had nurtured its infant growth and he expected the evening to be a special one. It actually became so in the midst of a wild Charleston when his ever-wandering eye saw a large, baby-faced blonde enter the ballroom. In his mind Daddy heard a clap of divine thunder. Abruptly abandoning his partner, he sprinted across the dance floor to greet the new girl. "You look like peaches and cream to me," he told her, grinning his foolish grin. "I'm going to call you Peaches."

Frances Belle Heenan had no right to be present at the Phi Lambda dance. She was not a sorority member, had not been invited, was not wanted. In fact, her unexpected arrival even aroused resentment among Phi Lambda Tau sisters. "Why did you bring that awful Frances Belle?" the others asked the girl with her.

For though pudgy, pettish, and only sweet fifteen, Frances Belle had already proved herself the enviable possessor of the

mysterious something called It. Physically she was a far cry from the ideal Clara Bow type of contemporary flapper. Where Clara Bow was pert and thin as a rail, Peaches Browning was hefty and over-developed. As Damon Runyon saw her: "She is a straw blonde, one of those large, patient blondes who are sometimes very impatient. She has stout legs and small feet. I hesitate to expatiate on so delicate a matter, but her legs are what the boys call piano legs. They say she is fifteen, but she is developed enough to pass anywhere for twenty."

Even so, this may be giving Peaches the worst of it. The baby-faced flapper's habitual expression was one of acute distaste for the world, but she was capable on occasion of breaking into a radiant smile which had all the breathless, moist, inviting quality of the smile of our own Marilyn Monroe. No doubt of it, when Peaches smiled, she was the cat's meow.

Contemporaries also disliked Frances Belle Heenan because the petulant fifteen-year-old so obviously considered herself superior to other girls. She no longer went to Textile High, for where other mothers insisted that their offspring attend classes, Mrs. James Heenan willingly cooperated with her daughter's desire to stay home. Daddy Browning met Peaches Heenan in February. As the result of a stream of plausible notes written by Mrs. Heenan, Peaches had not attended Textile High since early November.

For a time during this period, the buxom child had worked behind the counter at a Thirty-fourth Street department store. But the precocious social life she enjoyed interfered with employment. Peaches went out with grown men who took her to hot spots like the Strand Roof and Cotton Club. After a late night of Charlestoning and sipping bootleg hooch, she found it hard to arrive at work on time. Slowly she tapered off to become, at fifteen, a lady of leisure. Studying her problem dispassionately, it is possible to see that her best chance in life was to marry a millionaire. According to some of her envious

classmates this is exactly what she decided to do after discovering the identity of the elderly sport who stepped up and called her Peaches. "Here's where I get him, he likes blondes," a sorority girl later quoted Peaches as saying. Another heard her say on the first night: "If he doesn't call me, I'll call him."

Peaches need not have worried. Daddy phoned. The Heenan home was in the Washington Heights section of upper Manhattan on the top floor of an apartment house romantically called Iris Gardens. Daddy's blue Rolls Royce was daily parked at the door. To business associates he burred enthusiastically: "With the advent of spring, I have set forth with all the ardor of youth and met Frances Heenan. It is a case of love at first sight and is wholly reciprocated. Our courtship will be a romantic one and promises to be endless."

Peaches also viewed Daddy's attentions as dreams come true. "He showered me with flowers, deluged me with candy and gifts," she later recalled. "My other boy friends were forgotten. I had glances for none save Mr. Browning, my silver-haired knight, his gentle caresses, his quiet dignity, his *savoir faire*."

During the Mary Spas affair Daddy Browning had achieved a chummy rapport with most of the reporters on New York newspapers. Now he summoned the press to impart the information that he had toppled into love with a fifteen-year-old. "I am interested in Miss Heenan very much," he confided. "I know her mother very well. We have talked everything over. Frances is young, however, and it seems best to wait awhile before doing anything as important as announcing an engagement." Asked to describe his charming discovery, he did so like a true sensualist: "She is a lovely girl, five feet, seven inches tall, weighs 145 pounds—with her dress on, of course—has blonde hair, blue eyes, and is very well matured physically."

This made howling headlines, and brought down on Daddy's silver head the wrath of the Society for the Prevention of

Cruelty to Children. This worthy outfit had first drawn a bead on him during the Mary Spas affair. Now it stated: "Relations between this girl and this man must not go unheeded." In response Daddy said, "I have not done anything to be ashamed of. I am not an old man seeking improper friendships with little girls. I'm a young man, and I have devoted myself to business and hard work. I've helped hundreds. Why shouldn't I help little girls?"

If nothing else, the statement exposed Daddy's secret of perpetual youth—he *felt* young, and could see no reason why he should not act like an amorous stripling when he felt like one. But to Frances Heenan his words appeared to constitute a setback. In previous statements Daddy had mentioned courtship. Now, with the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children breathing on his neck, he spoke only of help—and herein may lie the key to a baffling aspect of the saga. For the Daddy-Peaches story, in which dirty linen was scrubbed publicly as never before, contains a touch of mysterious melodrama: a few weeks after she met her elderly admirer someone tossed a vial of acid in Peaches' face as she slept off a hard night in the supper clubs.

Who performed this dastardly act is not known. Eventually Peaches called Daddy the man behind the acid throwing, but reporters covering the pair thought it might have been done by a rejected boy friend, or perhaps by Peaches herself in a dramatic effort to wrench a definite proposal from Daddy. Credence is given this last by the fact that instead of summoning the police or a doctor, the screaming girl phoned Daddy at his office. "I hurried up to their home," Daddy told the press, "and ran up six flights of stairs. When I entered the room Peaches put out her arms to me and cried, *Daddy*. Although her mother is a trained nurse, I was surprised to find that she had done nothing for her daughter. I rushed downstairs without my hat and coat, got some sweet oil and bandages, and

then returned to the injured girl."

In time a doctor arrived and petulant Peaches learned that if she had tossed the acid on herself she had made a horrible miscalculation. The acid turned out to be powerful and to her dying day seared, puffy flesh was unpleasantly visible on her chin, throat, and left arm. To some the scars completely spoiled her hefty good looks. Reporter Morris Markey, covering the couple for the *New Yorker*, met Peaches and found "her eyes were large and gray and utterly flat. She was undeniably fat—but these details of her person were quite overshadowed by the frightful scars on her face."

Painful as the scars were to Peaches, they quite successfully roused the protective instinct in Daddy. On April Fool's Day 1926 he told the ladies and gentlemen of the press that he planned to marry his adolescent dream girl. PEACHES AND DADDY TO WED! yelled the tabloids. In this, the canny oldster showed he had done his legal homework. Had he tried to adopt Peaches as he had Mary Spas, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children might have had a case. But with all parties involved agreeing to a marriage, the forces of law were powerless to do anything except tie the wedding knot. It was Mrs. Heenan who dealt the final blow to the opposition. She dramatically produced her ex-husband. "I have met Mr. Browning and I esteem him," Daddy Heenan declared.

So on April 11, 1926, a scant forty-odd days after the couple met, Frances Belle Heenan stood at Daddy's side at Cold Spring, New York, while a justice of the peace made them man and child-wife. After the ceremony Daddy enthusiastically kissed his flapper wife, then quipped philosophically: "She will grow older and I may grow younger." This was one of the few sane remarks made during the entire Browning story, but sanity did not remain long. A rampaging mob of reporters, photographers, and gawkers trailed the newlyweds to the door of the twenty-room mansion at Cold Spring which Daddy had rented

for a honeymoon. It was noted that Mrs. Heenan went inside, too. It was also mentioned that the roof of the huge house boasted a radio aerial—radios in those days were news.

By now Daddy and Peaches had become foremost examples of what Damon Runyon sardonically called Homo Saps. That is, they would do anything, say anything, agree to anything that would get their words or pictures into the public prints. It must be said, though, that the role was pushed on Daddy and Peaches almost as much as they pushed it. When the newly-weds traveled to New York for the first time after the wedding, Grand Central Station was packed to overflowing with men and women who craned necks to view them, screaming with excitement the while. Mounted police kept the mobs of curious from Peaches as she shopped on Fifth Avenue, her main occupation for the next few months. CROWDS TRAMPLE PEACHES, the tabloids shouted.

Sob sisters, those intrepid newswomen so skilful at wringing the emotion out of stories, dogged the steps of both principals. When, in the early days of the marriage, Peaches turned a ripe sixteen all the sob stops were pulled out. Nor was Daddy left alone. Mothers with girl children continued to visit his office in the hope that he still wished to adopt a companion for Dorothy Sunshine who, like Mrs. Heenan, remained a member of the menage. Browning and Peaches often rendezvoused at the Hotel Plaza at the close of a busy day, and crowds of shrieking women waited for them there nightly.

For a time the Brownings lived at Cold Spring. Then they tired of this rural home, and in so doing exposed another of Daddy's eccentricities. As a real-estate millionaire, he might be expected to own a house. He did not. Daddy and Peaches, together with Mrs. Heenan and Dorothy Sunshine, now began a nomadic hotel-existence. Finally they settled at the Kew Gardens Inn on Long Island, in the Princess Suite. Daddy still

assiduously cultivated the press and with this move obligingly offered a list of the gifts he had given his not-so-blushing bride, together with much that she had purchased with his money. The grand total came to an imposing array of 200 bouquets of flowers, 50 boxes of candy, 20 boxes of fruit, 1 ermine coat, 1 fox-trimmed coat, 1 Russian sable coat, 1 other fur coat, 60 dresses, 15 flower vases, 1 fox neckpiece, 3 ensembles, 175 odd coats, 20 hats, 30 pairs of shoes, 100 photographs of himself and Peaches, 1 dozen frames, 1 ostrich fur, 12 hair ornaments, 8 fancy bags, 2 leather trunks, 1 teddy bear which played music, 100 small souvenirs, a \$2500 ruby and platinum diamond bracelet, and a \$3000 diamond ring.

On the many occasions when the Daddy-Peaches story erupted into headlines, Daddy purchased hundreds of newspapers. Then he sent his office employees into the streets to give them free to passersby. His love of publicity never flagged. One night he appeared at the Kew Gardens Inn with an African honking gander in the back seat of his Rolls Royce. Behind him roared a carload of gentlemen of the press, alerted to a big story. The African honking gander was led upstairs to the Princess Suite where Peaches cast a haughty eye upon it. "It was not housebroken," she revealed later. Shortly the cavalcade wended its way to Long Beach, where Peaches was instructed to pose with the gander. On the beach the swarm of reporters and photographers caused so much turmoil that the gander's owner feared for its sanity. He suddenly pulled the gander away and headed for home. "The bird has been through too much already," he told the reporters who begged him to remain.

At the Kew Gardens Inn it seemed to avid observers of the couple that Peaches was growing weary of Daddy's continuous hoopla. His sexual idiosyncrasies would not be revealed to the world until later, but for the moment anyone who saw him in action could note that the pink-faced Lothario was a determined

practical joker. At times he gave Peaches such feminine surprises as pink teddy bears. More often he brought home rubber eggs, spoons that bent in the middle, drinking glasses with false bottoms. At other times he teased her by leaping out from behind doors shouting, "Woof! Woof!" He had dozens of pairs of expensive pajamas, each of them the cat's whiskers, but preferred dressing up in odd bedroom costumes. It may be indicative of an inner image that the costume most favored was that of a Caliph.

Altogether Peaches' radiant smile became rare indeed at the Kew Gardens Inn. Later she claimed that Daddy's energetic eccentricity had given her nightmares. The breaking point came on the second of October. On that day Peaches led a procession of luggage across the lobby of the Kew Gardens Inn. Everything Daddy had bought her—some thirty thousand dollars worth of clothes and accessories—was in these bags and trunks. Pausing dramatically in the center of the lobby, she stated loudly: "Money isn't everything after all." Then sixteen-year-old Peaches kept going. It was six months after her wedding day and she was leaving Dear Old Dad.

When Daddy returned that night, he gave a look of horror at the denuded Princess Suite. "They've taken everything but the radiators and the varnish on the floor," he wailed. Then he rushed to the telephone to call the newspapers. *HAS CINDERELLA'S LOVE DREAM CRUMBLED?* the *News* asked next morning. When reporters arrived Daddy poured out his side of the story—and now the Browning case really burst open!

"Nothing more sensational or fantastic has ever appeared in newspapers," one commentator has said. Indeed, the Browning case becomes a milestone in American journalism, since the principals not only began telling all, but told many versions of all. Peaches and Browning, both more than ever *Homo Saps*, frantically began signing stories, any stories, in New York's tabloids. The pattern of this was set by Peaches: on leaving

the Kew Gardens Inn with her mountain of luggage the flapper wife did not return to Washington Heights. Instead, she delegated her mother to rent more fashionable quarters in New York while she herself hastened to the New Jersey home of a top-flight ghost writer. With a slight assist from Peaches, he pounded out a lurid feature called "My Honeymoon with Daddy." Peaches later admitted that she had not bothered to read this epic—as soon as possible she grabbed a check for one thousand dollars and hastened back to New York. Indifference to the literary effort she inspired caused her to miss one of the great ghost-written leads of the tabloid era. The story under her by-line began: "I was a bird in a gilded cage, but the cage wasn't so gilded."

Stung to the quick by Peaches' unflattering series, Daddy got his own ghost and concocted a story called "Why I Married Peaches." Yet neither stopped with a series in one paper. Each of New York's three tabloids needed a circulation of 250,000 to prosper. Since there were only 500,000 tabloid readers in the city the papers had to depend on daily shock-sensations. It was an epic struggle which stopped at nothing. One day *Mirror* delivery men hijacked copies of the *Graphic* and hurled them into the East River. The bust-up of Daddy and Peaches was made to order for such ruthless warfare.

In a mad quest for readers the *News*, *Mirror*, and *Graphic* (with no small assist from the *Journal*) all began carrying "true" stories written by Peaches and Daddy. Not unexpectedly, these ghost-written accounts completely contradicted each other. "My marriage to Peaches was in name only," Daddy confessed in one exclusive account. "Yes, I anointed her back with lotions, but her mother was always there. Never has Peaches gone to sleep in my arms or in my bed." But by paying two cents for another tabloid, Daddy's fans could find this contrasting statement: "Peaches talked in her sleep and I was always afraid of what I might hear as I lay beside her."

Needless to say, the *Porno-Graphic* was the most lurid in its coverage of the Brownings. Trotting out its Composograph technique, it pictured Daddy fondling Peaches in a bedroom while Mrs. Heenan cupped an ear at the closed door. This was used to illustrate one of Daddy's stories which blamed Mrs. Heenan for much of his marital discord. "Peaches never had any love for me," this intimate revelation stated. "Nor did her mother. All they ever cared for was my money and the earthly blessings it might bring."

Peaches, on her part, stoutly maintained through her ghost writers that Daddy had never tried to touch her except in an abnormal way. CHARGES RUN PERVERSION GAMUT shrieked this headline. But in another paper Peaches wrote: "I had nightly relations with Daddy, except when ill."

The Browning trial, most nonsensical of the great events of the Era of Wonderful Nonsense, began on January 25, 1927. Thus it became the first of the thrills of the Year the World Went Mad.

It was held in White Plains, New York, since this small city contained the only suitable courthouse near Cold Spring, where the couple had been married. When finally the Brownings faced each other across a courtroom, Peaches was suing for separation and alimony, claiming, among other things, that Daddy's eccentric antics and cries of "Woof! Woof!" had caused mental anguish, shattering her nerves and health. Daddy's public reply was cogent. He reminded the world that on her wedding day his bride had weighed one hundred and forty pounds. When she left him, her weight was one hundred and sixty. All Daddy asked was a legal separation. No more than that.

For five howling days this was the wonder of the world, the true Trial of the Century. A pop-eyed, gasping horde of humanity descended on quiet White Plains. "The show is a

sellout," quipped the *News*, reporting how men, women, and children (the courthouse was conveniently opposite White Plains High School) milled around the snowy courthouse lawn. What would be recalled as a first day of unutterable confusion began when the pressure of the panting mob crashed down one of the courthouse doors. The fortunate few thus able to crowd into the small courtroom quickly grabbed all available seats, barely leaving room for the thirty reporters who covered the case. Others stood three to four deep around the walls, while still more climbed atop radiators and windowsills.

Entering this scene of turmoil, Supreme Court Justice Albert H. S. Seeger noted to his annoyance that women occupied the more dangerous positions atop radiators and windowsills. "I warn you," he admonished, "that if anyone stands there, it is at her own risk." Observing this incredible spectacle, Damon Runyon reported that a cluster of unattended baby carriages stood in the snow outside. Mothers had actually abandoned babies in the madness to get in. "So," he concluded, "we have the great moral spectacle in this generation of a legal hearing involving a gray-haired old wowser and a child wife attracting more attention than the League of Nations."

Scenes outside were wilder than those within. A shoving horde, envious and slightly resentful, hung around through all the daily sessions. Females predominated: "grandmotherly looking old women; stout, housewifely looking dames; and skittish looking janes stood all morning and all afternoon on their two feet," Runyon wrote. Altogether, the atmosphere was that of a salacious carnival. Vendors hawked pictures of the principals, while hastily recruited schoolboys sold copies of the *Graphic* and its exciting Composographs.

Fifteen song parodies based on Daddy and Peaches were available at fifteen cents, as was the sheet music of a song called "Who Picked Peaches Off the Tree?" But the public needed no new song to immortalize the event. "Crazy Words,

Crazy Tune," the song hit of the moment, had a built-in refrain for such events. All over the country sheiks and shebas were strumming ukes and idiotically chanting:

Up at White Plains the other day
 What did Peaches to Browning say?
 Vo-do-de-o
 Vo-do-dee-o-DO.

When the principals appeared for the initial session, it became apparent that Daddy Browning was the favorite. As he descended from the blue Rolls Royce a cheer rose from the eager throng. In the words of the *New York Times*: "Mr. Browning looked pleasantly puzzled at first, then with dawning comprehension that the applause was for him turned and bowed slowly to those who cheered him, a smile of satisfaction spreading over his flushed features." A battery of photographers closed in, wildly snapping the shutters of cameras. "Wait a minute, boys," Daddy requested majestically. He then removed his hat and produced his faithful pocket comb. After using it he posed, smiling his silly grin, his curly locks exposed to the cold winter air.

Peaches' reception was not so friendly. From the assembled gawkers she received only a halfhearted cheer. Reporters claimed to see her lower lip tremble as she sensed the hostility of the crowd—PEACHES SOBS AT DADDY'S OVATION, early editions of the *News* stated. Inside the court sob sisters noted that Peaches wore a sable coat, a baby blue dress, a blue felt cloche hat of the era, a pearl choker and a blue enamel watch. One wrote: "She smiled wanly at a couple of friends in the press seats, crossed her stout legs and tried to compose herself. She had a spray of orchids pinned to her coat, but she was scarcely the picture of the forlorn child-wife . . . It is very difficult to look forlorn in a \$12,000 sable coat."

The eyes of the entire country focused on the circus-like

doings in and around the courthouse at White Plains. No less than the crowds clamoring for admittance, readers of the nation's newspapers followed each day's testimony with lip-licking attention. New York went newspaper-mad. For once there were enough readers for all three tabloids. During the trial the *News* reached 300,000 circulation, the *Graphic* 250,000 and the *Mirror* 200,000. The *New York Times*, still clinging to its dignity by referring to Mr. and Mrs. Browning, gave long columns to events in court. Indeed, this pointed up a strange journalistic incongruity. The tabloids, with jazzy headlines, emphasis on photographs, and sob sisters, promised the more lurid coverage. But true connoisseurs of the case quickly discovered the real spice of it in the thorough coverage of other papers.

What newspaper readers wanted was sexy details of the intimate life of Daddy and Peaches, and these were slow in coming. Peaches herself was the first to sit in the witness chair. She attempted to spare her own feelings—and perhaps those of the public—by detailing only the more subtle tortures to which Daddy had subjected her. She recounted her mental anguish over his practical jokes with rubber eggs and bending spoons. One night, she said, “He brought home a tiny white tablet which he put in the end of his cigar and when he smoked it would form a heavy snowflake and people would be amazed, but it caused me a lot of embarrassment.”

Another matter which brought her excruciating inner agony was the episode of the African honking gander. Peaches gave the details of this after the *Porno-Graphic* had created a Composograph showing Daddy in a suit of gaudy pajamas capering on all fours around the floor of the Princess Suite. Walter Winchell was called in to admire this work of art and approvingly exclaimed, “Woof! Woof!” It was decided to add this to the Composograph, so that in the type of balloon used in comic

strips Daddy would cry, "Woof! Woof!" Thus the *Graphic* began—astoundingly—to satirize its own Composographs.

With the introduction of the African honking gander into the case, the *Graphic's* satire took on a new and almost surrealist dimension. From then on the gander appeared in all Composographs, commenting on the action. In his first appearance, the gander said:

Woof! Woof!
Don't be a goof!

The next Composograph showed Daddy in his favorite caliph costume threatening a cowering Peaches. Off to one side the gander uttered the immortal words:

Honk! Honk!
It's the bonk!

One curious revelation from the witness stand was that both Daddy and Peaches wore size six shoes. Thus they could, and did, slip in and out of each other's bedroom slippers. This led to another celebrated bit of testimony in the trial, for Peaches testified that one morning at four thirty she had been awakened by strange sounds in the boudoir. Reluctantly opening sleepy eyes, she observed Daddy sandpapering a pair of shoe trees. According to her interpretation, he was doing this to waken her. Daddy, in turn, maintained that the shoe trees were too big and he felt like sandpapering them. Peaches testified that despite the irritating noise she was able to go back to sleep and for this Daddy threw a telephone book at her. When she fell asleep once more he held a ringing alarm clock to her ear. Between these acts he continued sandpapering. This odd scene produced a Composograph in which all three characters spoke:

<i>Daddy:</i>	<i>Peaches:</i>	<i>Gander:</i>
Woof! Woof!	Dear! Dear!	Honk! Honk!
I Sharpen	It Grates	The Shoetree
A Hoof!	On My Ear!	Has Shronk!

Those in the courtroom, as well as in the country at large, expected sexual titillation from testimony at White Plains. Instead, the gander and the shoe trees produced gales of howling mirth. Peaches, on the witness stand, did not relish being laughed at. While the courtroom was convulsed, she slumped in the chair. Big tears filled her eyes and slowly rolled down her cheeks. She looked very much like an overgrown girl who had been hurt and was trying not to blubber.

At the same time, she surprised the court with her apparent intelligence. The *New York Times* was vastly impressed: "At moments she showed a bit of ironic humor. Her English was good, as was her choice of words and her ability to define meanings. Only once or twice did she use a crude or slangy expression. She affected a broad *a*, like any Vassar girl. Her voice was not unpleasant. An amazingly mature girl she was at all times. It was a maturity which, together with her cool eyes, gives the lie to the baby blonde curls wandering out from under her blue cloche hat."

Yet with all her maturity, Peaches was still a typical flapper of 1927. She seldom said Yes to questions requiring an affirmative answer. Instead, she gave a long drawn out "Pos-i-tive-ly." For more emphasis, she said, "I hope to tell you!" In her testimony were such gems of contemporary slang as "So's your old man" and "Applesauce!" She referred to Daddy as a goof and to some of his actions as goofy. One of her friends later quoted Peaches as saying of Daddy: "Quit your kidding! You know why I married that old bozo. I married him for his jack."

After the hilarity of early sessions, the Browning trial reached more serious matters when Peaches began to describe a Dear Old Dad who wanted her to take part in what the assembled sob sisters promptly dubbed "passion-mad orgies."

"He made me run up and down in front of him naked, while

he lay in bed," she declared plaintively. PEACHES HONEYMOON HORROR—*News*.

"If I refused, he became very angry and raved," she went on. BROWNING ENRAGED AT BALKED DESIRES—*Mirror*.

"The testimony is as full of beds as a barracks," cracked the *New York World*.

According to Peaches, Daddy had followed Dr. Freud by using all the tricks of the elderly satyr. He had attempted to excite her sexually by displaying French postcards and nude photographs.

Q: When Mr. Browning would bring home these pictures of nude women and semi-nudes in the French magazines did he ask you to look at them?

A: Pos-i-tive-ly.

Q: What did you do?

A: I refused because those things never interested me.

However, Peaches reluctantly admitted that on several occasions she had given in to Daddy's aberrant whims. After relating in a sob-shaken voice how she had run up and down in the nude while Daddy sat gloating on the bed, she was asked:

Q: What else did he make you do?

A: He wanted me to eat breakfast with him without any clothes on.

Q: And did you?

A: (*After a pause*) Yes.

The hottest point in the flaming testimony came when the chubby girl suddenly blurted out: "He tried to make me a pervert on five different occasions." Having said this much, she proceeded to describe the occasions in considerably more detail than anyone expected. Women in court hid red faces, and even Damon Runyon felt ashamed. "Your correspondent's manly cheeks are suffused with blushes as he sits down to write," he commenced his story of the day. Like others present, Runyon

marveled at the continued aplomb of Peaches’ mother: “Mrs. Heenan remains the most unusual parent I have ever clapped these old orbs on. The remarkable thing to me is that she can sit in the courtroom and hear all this junk about her child without having attacks of vertigo.”

Peaches’ lurid testimony should have made Daddy the most hated man in the United States. Somehow it did not—he always contrived to wind up looking ludicrous. Describing one of her husband’s attempts to turn her into a pervert, Peaches testified: “He took a-hold of me by the back of my neck and pushed me to the floor and said *Boo!* in a very loud voice.” The courtroom forgot its embarrassment to hoot with laughter. Few heard Peaches’ woeful peroration: “It frightened me very much.”

With such hilarity sprinkled throughout, it was hard to view Daddy as a man who, in the words of Peaches’ attorney, “Made her by sheer force become partner to his sexual eccentricities.” But if Peaches was unable to present Daddy as a serious menace to her adolescent morals, she did effectively etch a difference in bedroom attitudes. This came when Daddy’s lawyer asked her:

Q: In the seclusion of your bedroom, you were afraid to have your husband look at you naked?

A: I wasn’t exactly afraid. I was just never brought up in that spirit.

When Peaches’ mother mounted the stand she added to the picture of Daddy as a harmless goof by swearing that, among other things, he was a drunkard. She recalled in detail a night when Daddy staggered around the Princess Suite joyously waving a bottle. Daddy’s lawyer then asked:

Q: How big was that bottle? You are a nurse and familiar with ounces, how many ounces did that bottle contain?

A: About two ounces.

Again the courtroom guffawed. Continuing, Mrs. Heenan vowed that she had done her best to hold the marriage together and that as a reward Daddy had called her "Mother." Often she said to him, "Oh, Daddy, why can't you two be happy?" She stated that it was Daddy's wish that she accompany the newlyweds everywhere and continue to live with them. As she said this, courtroom observers recall: "Daddy's countenance took on a wry expression as if he had bitten into a lemon."

Called back to the witness stand, Peaches was faced with a diary she had kept in days before Daddy. "Your Honor," Daddy's lawyer pontificated, "you will find in these diaries, unless I am mistaken, writings which show she was a woman of the world even though young. They are extremely important as bearing on her story that she was an innocent young girl at the time of her marriage and knew nothing of the usual marriage relations."

In the witness chair Peaches flushed and interjected sharply, "I was a good girl when I married."

Soon, however, she was forced into the damaging admission that she had doctored the diary after meeting Dear Old Dad. "Was this done to protect boys who made love to you?" Daddy's attorney demanded, with well-feigned outrage. "Yes," Peaches whispered—but it is not clear from the record whether she meant love in a sophisticated sense, or merely the rumble-seat necking of the day.

When finally it came Daddy Browning's time to mount the witness stand, he did so with an air of extreme eagerness, as if he had waited all his life for this moment. To the delight of those in the courtroom, he turned out to possess the kind of New York accent which says *boïd* for bird and *foïst* for first. His lawyer went straight to the heart of matters:

Q: You are a sane man, aren't you?

A: (Emphatically) Yes.

With this settled, Daddy proceeded to answer all questions in such a torrent of words that almost none of his testimony made sense. On one subject, however, his answer was succinct and heartfelt. Speaking of the extravagance of Peaches and her mother, he said, "They wanted all sorts of things, roadsters, Park Avenue apartments, servants. One wanted two dogs, the other three."

He scored again when his lawyer asked:

Q: Did you have any idea that your wife or mother-in-law was going to leave you?

A: Not my wife.

Q: And your mother-in-law?

A: I—er—ah—er—I was hoping so.

Daddy denied any abnormal acts, picturing himself as a benevolent father-image whose worst offense was a fondness for practical jokes. But as always he talked too much. Asked whether he had made Peaches caper before him in the nude, the florid-faced man answered "Absolutely not! Why, for one thing, the weather was always too cold for that sort of thing."

The courtroom gasped. Everyone knew the Brownings had been married throughout a summer of hellish heat.


When Daddy stepped down from the stand his foolish grin was intact. He ceremoniously shook hands with his battery of attorneys before resuming his seat. A series of minor witnesses followed, as each side attempted to blacken the other. Suddenly Judge Seeger, who had been criticized by the press for not hearing the case in closed session, ended proceedings. He announced that he would require six weeks to render a verdict. Everyone seemed relieved that the trial was over. In five spectacular days the Browning case had shot its wad.

Outside in the snow, the excited throng gave Daddy his usual ovation. He stood happily on the courthouse steps, posing for photographs, bowing, and running the comb through his curly locks. "Three cheers for Daddy," a voice shouted. Three

rousing cheers echoed in the chill air. Peaches' departure was accorded a few isolated shouts and the customary silent hostility, which some attributed to the fact that the girl was always accompanied by her mother. The callous-seeming Mrs. Heenan had, to most, become the villain of the trial. Also Peaches' courtroom attire proved a disappointment. Every day she had worn the same sable coat, blue hat and dress.

Daddy Browning rode in his Rolls Royce back to New York. Peaches took the train after telling reporters that with the \$350-a-week temporary alimony the court had awarded her she planned to take Mama Heenan to Bermuda. In the fond expectation that the \$350-a-week would continue through life she stopped in New York to consult with physicians about an operation that would strip some of the fat from her piano legs.

3 A Night with the Padlock Queen

 *N a small downstairs supper club music blares and patrons happily pelt each other with cardboard snowballs. Thin paper streamers fly from table to table, festooning everyone, and in the smoky upper air brightly colored balloons bump against the ceiling. On the dance floor, now rendered almost negligible by the number of hastily added ringside tables, a near-naked girl entertainer is swinging into the conclusion of a buoyant Charleston. As the act ends, a large, blondine woman with a toothy smile takes the center of the spotlight. Thumping her hands together, she shouts in a clarion voice that hacks through the noise, "Give the little girl a great big hand!" The patrons do so, and the brassy woman's attention wanders. Seeing a new face at the entrance door, her attention focuses on it. "Hello, sucker," her raucous voice bellows. The prosperous-looking man thus hailed allows a beatific smile of pride and pleasure to spread across his countenance . . .*

In Cicero, Illinois—near Chicago—a line of big, black sedans approaches the Hawthorne Hotel moving in slow, stately order,

for all the world like a funeral procession. But when the first car reaches the hotel entrance resemblance ceases. One of the occupants of the car leans out and fires a revolver shot straight into the air. Its purpose is twofold: first, to frighten away innocent bystanders; second, to draw occupants of the hotel to doors and windows. Then from succeeding cars, now moving farther apart, comes a lethal barrage of bullets from sawed-off shotguns. A gunman gets out of a car, drops to one knee and calmly empties his gun back and forth into the lobby of the hotel—as calmly, it has been noted, as another man might spray a hose over his backyard garden. In the hotel restaurant, where he had been stowing away a large breakfast, Scarface Al Capone slides ungracefully to the floor with the sound of the first shot. He lies unmoving under the table until the last of the black sedans is gone, then rises unscathed. The purpose of the bold daylight foray, as he and the world knows, was to rub him out . . .

The gala opening of the new musical comedy *Rio Rita* takes place on the night of February 2, 1927. It is gala indeed, for this is the first production to grace the stage of the new Ziegfeld Theatre at Sixth Avenue and Fifty-fourth Street, in New York City. Ethelind Terry, J. Harold Murray, Gladys Glad, Wheeler & Woolsey are in the cast. Sumptuous settings by Joseph Urban. Especially it is a night of triumph for Florenz Ziegfeld, whose name up to now has been associated largely with the Follies. For his grand new theatre Ziegfeld has broken tradition by presenting the lavish book-musical *Rio Rita*, which the next morning will be called "a sensation" by critic J. Brooks Atkinson of the *New York Times*. Before the curtain goes up, Ziegfeld himself steps to the front of the stage and reads a telegram of congratulation from none other than Calvin Coolidge, President of the United States. At the end of the show, Coolidge's good wishes are amply justified, for a

roaring ovation ends only when a slight figure in immaculate evening clothes leaps up from an aisle seat and, graceful as any song and dance man, makes his way to the stage. This is Jimmy Walker, Night Mayor of the city of New York, adding a memorable moment to a memorable event. Mayor Walker attends all the best opening nights, and in a short, witty speech pays gay tribute to an opening he never would have missed . . .

From the pulpit of the Calvary Church on West Fifty-seventh Street, the Reverend Dr. John Roach Straton brands New York "a feverish, overwrought, Sabbath-desecrating, God-defying, woman-despising, lawbreaking, gluttonous monster without ideals or restraint." Any day he chooses to walk the streets near his church, the clergyman continues, he can see rum-running trucks unloading wet goods at the delivery entrances of night clubs, in open defiance of the national law, and on Sunday, as his parishioners walk to church, they bump into faded revelers from these same night clubs climbing into taxis or staggering along the streets at the tag end of a night of whoopee. Dr. Straton has dreams of emulating Dr. Charles Parkhurst, who in the Nineties closed down the city's brothels. During the next week Dr. Straton dons a disguise and visits a speakeasy where he is without question served a potent drink. Next Sunday he reveals the tawdry episode from his pulpit and reluctant police raid the speakeasy. Owner and waiters are brought into court to face the charge made by Dr. Straton. With them they bring a canny lawyer, who puts only one question to the complaining clergyman. "You say you were served with a Scotch highball," he begins softly. "Now, did you ever in your life touch Scotch whiskey?" "Certainly not," Dr. Straton virtuously declares. The judge regards him with disgust. "Case dismissed," he snaps . . .

It was a Barnum and Bailey world, as goofy as it could be!

And in 1927 a considerable portion of its goofiness was furnished by the raucous, middle-aged person of Mary Louise Cecelia Guinan, known to all as Texas, or just plain Tex. Texas Guinan was the uncrowned, undisputed Queen of Prohibition Night Clubs, the Queen of the Night Club Era, and the Queen of the Padlocks as well. "If Jimmy Walker runs the city by day, Texas Guinan runs it by night," one commentator wrote, quite forgetting that Mayor Walker also functioned better after dark.

The Broadway night clubs over which Texas Guinan presided were the most notable in the land, and were also the premises most often raided by police. Law enforcement officers changed frequently in New York City and seemingly the first official act of a new one was to raid a club run by Texas Guinan. It had reached a point where, if a customer-turned-law-officer suddenly rose in the midst of the revelry to shout, "This is a raid," the Guinan Club orchestra automatically swung into "The Prisoner's Song," a lachrymose song hit of the time. Meanwhile, Tex docilely allowed herself to be led to the nearest precinct station. From then on there would be a padlock on this night club door, but a short distance away another Guinan Club would quickly open, with the irrepressible hostess bawling out a song which ran:

The judge says, "Tex, do you sell booze?"
I said, "Please don't be silly.
I swear to you my cellar's filled
With chocolate and vanilly."

Texas Guinan brought her boisterous talents to the El Fey Club, the Del Fey, the Club Intime, Club Abbey, Texas Guinan's, and a host of others. Each in its turn was raided, but through it all Texas remained cheerful, for at bottom she was a show-biz personality who thrived on publicity. It was this fact which caused her places to be raided so frequently. The closings of the various Guinan spots were token raids to mollify

a perplexed public which could not quite understand how a nationally famous person could so openly flout the law.

To show how she felt about the numerous closings of her clubs, Texas wore a necklace of tastefully small gold padlocks. From her charm bracelet dangled a tiny police whistle. Noise was the unchanging trademark of any Guinan enterprise. During her nights as strident mistress of ceremonies Tex also carried a real live police whistle, bestowed on her during a paddy wagon ride by a sympathetic cop. If things began slowing around her, Tex blew a piercing blast on the police whistle. "Come on, suckers, open up and spend some jack," she would below. Ever willing to oblige Good Ol' Tex, suckers opened wallets wide.

No one ever referred to the Queen of Night Clubs as Mary Louise Cecelia Guinan except (as is traditional) her elderly father, who spent much time around the clubs over which his daughter presided. The name Texas came from movie days since Mary Louise, born in Waco, had been an early cowgirl in flickering films. There she had been known as the female William S. Hart. Photographs of her at this point show a girl with dark hair and a wide friendly smile. She arrived on Broadway at the exact moment when a powerhouse personality was most needed, but in Hollywood the cowgirl had not been so fortunate. The movies of her day were silent, while Tex was loud. What her fate might have been in Talkie days is a matter for interesting conjecture, but when middle age approached, Tex was forced to abandon her career as a stunting cowgirl.

She had a raucous way with a song and, dyeing her dark hair a brassy blond, journeyed east to appear with De Wolf Hopper in a Winter Garden revue. One momentous night she accompanied friends to a supper club speakeasy. "It was dull," she would later tell interviewers, "and someone suggested that I sing. I didn't need much coaxing. I sang all I knew, my whole

damn repertoire. Then I started kidding around. First thing you know, the joint's alive. I feel fine, and everybody else in the place is having a great big wonderful time."

Day or night, night or day, Tex was flamboyant. At forty, she was buxom, yet surprisingly graceful on her feet for a woman of girth. Brassy in manner and resonant in voice, she radiated supreme confidence. She favored picture hats two feet wide, from which dangled ribbons of yellow, blue, purple, and pink. Her big teeth flashed like pearls; her laugh rattled the rafters. The bright blond hair was tightly waved, her mouth a smear of blatant lipstick. She wore colorful, expensive gowns, with roses pinned to a shoulder. On occasion she encased her still-shapely legs in scarlet hose. She was a connoisseur of furs, diamonds and, especially, pearls. Usually two large ropes of pearls fell to her waist. Imbedded in one of her rings was another large pearl. Sometimes she wore rhinestones in the heels of her shoes. But when Texas Guinan smiled, her fine teeth outshone the dazzling jewelry on her.

Attired in her individual fashion, Tex now went on the warpath for a job as hostess—as numerous police blotters would call her—in a speakeasy or expensive supper club. She first struck pay dirt in a spot called the Beaux Arts on Fortieth Street, hardly a throw from the New York Public Library. Here she put her driving personality to work so successfully that business doubled, tripled. One of those impressed by her raucous charm was Nils T. Granlund, a native of Lapland who had reached Broadway by way of Providence, Rhode Island. Granlund was director of publicity for the Loew movie chain, and as a sideline acted as master of ceremonies on the Loew radio station WHN. This latter job was considered so inferior that he billed himself only by initials and to thousands of pioneer radio listeners he was known fondly as N. T. G.

It was the sagacious Granlund who suggested to Tex that

she back up her vivid personality with a small floor show: show girls, dance act, singing trio. In addition to his other occupations, Granlund acted as a beauty scout for Ziegfeld and Earl Carroll. He knew that when the Follies, Vanities and Scandals ended at 11 o'clock Broadway babies were free to work elsewhere. He hired the prettiest to work for Texas Guinan.

N. T. G. performed a second favor when he introduced Tex to a lantern-jawed gangster named Larry Fay. An East Side youth, Fay had been a taxi-driver and taxi-fleet owner before turning more profitably into a rum-runner and all-purpose gangster. Together with several *nouveaux riches* bootleggers he had backed an intimate night club called Les Ambassadeurs, a name none of the racketeer owners was ever able to pronounce. Fay liked to mix with the fine types who patronized night clubs and nursed a desire to have his own place. On meeting Texas Guinan he offered to establish her in a club called the El Fey, on Third Street in Greenwich Village.

El Fey was a tryout. Texas Guinan was made for the bright lights of Broadway; the bright lights made for her. Soon the El Fey moved to Forty-sixth Street. The uptown El Fey Club was small, seating only about eighty customers. The floor show was equally unambitious. "It was nothing but Tex and girls, girls, girls," N. T. G. has recalled. Even so the El Fey caught on, with such Broadway Boswells as Damon Runyon, Walter Winchell, Mark Hellinger, and Louis Sobol spreading the fame of Texas Guinan as the top night club hostess of the era.

In addition to her raucous personality, Tex possessed a gift for imaginative insult. She called male patrons suckers and ordered them to spend money or get the hell out of her sight. They loved it. She thrived on noise and devised wooden kleeterklappers which patrons waved wildly in the air to create more noise. Her swizzle sticks had hard round knobs on one end, so that patrons could use them to whack the table for further racket. She was in her glory as Queen of the Night Clubs—seen

by Lloyd Morris: "Seated in the midst of a nightly bedlam, her pearls and diamonds blazing, her gown glittering with sequins, using a klapper to prod her guests into greater din. She welcomed patrons with a strident, cheerful, 'Hello, Sucker!'—and an amused world . . . delighted in the candid, contemptuous greeting. Her inexhaustible high spirits, her flippancy and daffiness were contagious."

In the El Fey and following clubs, Tex welcomed only suckers whose bankrolls were hefty enough to afford \$35 for a bottle of so-called champagne; \$25 for a fifth of Scotch; \$20 for gin and rye; \$20 for a bottle of alleged wine, and \$2 for a glass of ginger ale, soda, or plain water—if the patron was crass enough to produce a hip flask and demand a setup. Texas and her staff developed a sixth sense in evaluating spenders, and any who failed to resemble big ones were informed that no reservations were available. Further discouragement was offered by a well-publicized Cover Charge, or Couvert as the more elegant places called it. At Texas Guinan's this was often \$25 *per person*, so that a man escorting a girl was immediately \$50 down the hole.

In addition to cover charge and drinks, guests were also expected to shell out copiously for cigars, cigarettes, and what were called favors. Tex employed a girl named Ethel who was known as the most beautiful cigarette girl on Broadway. Dressed demurely in blue satin trousers and crimson sash, Ethel moved among the tables with quiet insistence, selling 15¢ packs of cigarettes for \$1, subtly letting it be known that a tip of \$1 or more was in order. Next would appear the girl who sold favors. Where Ethel was demurely dressed, this girl would be undressed—black silk stockings, tights, and scanty, open blouse. She offered baby dolls and teddy bears at prices from five dollars to fifty dollars, also with appropriate tip. "Buy a baby doll for your cutie pie," she would whisper, bending seductively over a table. Few suckers could resist.

At such prices, a night as host to a few friends at Texas Guinan's could cost from one thousand to three thousand dollars. One who frequently paid tabs of this proportion was Harry Sinclair, the oil millionaire who late in 1927 would go on trial for his part in the infamous Teapot Dome scandal. Another big Broadway spender was the movie star Tom Mix, whose cowboy films reputedly brought him ten thousand dollars a week. The iron-jawed Mix had not always been a knowledgeable playboy. On his first visit to New York, he strutted with jangling spurs into an expensive restaurant and ordered the head waiter to bring him the best grub in the place. After returning to Hollywood, he described this meal to goggle-eyed friends. "I et for three hours and didn't recognize nothin' but a reddish," he concluded.

Most of the spenders who enjoyed paying Texas Guinan prices, as well as the thrill of pressing fifty dollar bills into the hands of high-kicking chorus girls, were night-after-night regulars. Others came a few times, then faded away. To Broadway these were men who, honestly or dishonestly, had suddenly come into money and for a few nights wished to taste the delights of being the kind of mighty spender Texas Guinan called a sucker. The heady sensations of such men have been described by the writer Jack Kofoed, who said, "Free spending is the key to Broadway attention. If you're willing to throw the old dough around, you're king of the shack for as many nights as you peel bills off the roll. When the money is gone you can go find yourself a place in the alley. Nobody cares how much you had. It's what you have that counts, and nobody on Broadway asks where the money came from."

Even Texas Guinan at times felt defensive about the big chunks of money she extracted from contented patrons. Once she complained: "There's a lot of talk about how I take the customers for all they've got. It's not as bad as that, even if there aren't any charity wards in my club. The boys come here

to spend, and I'm not going to disappoint them. When they drink ginger ale in my place they are drinking liquid platinum, and they like it."

Tex was not known as the Queen of the Night Clubs for nothing. A night at her Three Hundred Club—the Guinan Club during the early months of 1927—was one of joy and laughter. Together with an ability to separate the sucker from his dough, Tex also had a flair for showmanship. In addition, she possessed an unexpected streak of zany madness, so that a session at the Three Hundred Club resembled the mad nights at the Jack White Club on Fifty-second Street a decade later. In the department of entertainment Texas Guinan gave her suckers an even break.

On a night—any night—in February 1927, the Three Hundred Club opens its portals at ten-thirty in the evening. Those unwary enough to enter at such an hour find little or nothing going on. Texas herself never arrives until midnight or later. A gal who keeps the festivities rolling until five or six in the morning, she sleeps until six at night and eats breakfast while the rest of the world has dinner. Then she goes to the theatre or takes care of personal business. Around midnight she has a fast lunch of melon and ice cream. After that, work.

Yet anyone arriving early at the Three Hundred Club can examine the expensive premises. The decor is lush and restful, for La Guinan (as Alexander Woollcott persists in calling her) has excellent taste. A low ceiling seems lower because of velvet hung to create a tented effect. The walls are covered with plaited cloth of matching colors. From the ceiling swing Chinese lanterns and the walls are decorated with designs of parrots and other exotic birds. Close to the ceiling colorful balloons float lazily. The place is lighted in a manner to soothe the tired spirit. This lighting has especially won the admiration of author Stephen Graham, who says of it in his book, *New*

York Nights: "There is nothing to try the eyes or irritate one. It is lighted, and yet it is not the light associated with noisy excitement and jazz. You have come here not for a giddy hour, but for hours and hours. That is why the illumination is so carefully toned."

Those who expect Guinan clubs to be the acme of speakeasy glamor find several surprises inside. One is size. The Three Hundred Club, for instance, holds no more than fifty tables around a minute dance floor. As the place fills up extra ringside tables are rushed to the edge of the dance floor so that in time it becomes almost non-existent. Entertainers working Guinan clubs quickly find out that only stand-up performing is possible. One who has already learned this is a lissom acrobatic dancer named Ruby Stevens. In the course of her dance Ruby falls to the floor and writhes artistically. On her first night at Guinan's she did so and found herself inextricably entwined with table legs, customers' feet, and champagne buckets. From that point on she danced upright, but not for long. Having changed her name to Barbara Stanwyck, she is well on the way to becoming a top dramatic actress, the kind who enters Guinan's as a patron.

Until La Guinan arrives, the Three Hundred Club remains sedate and dignified. Four guitarists stroll from table to table plucking out melodies on request. Their speciality is the recently successful "Valencia," but they are equally adept at such dissimilar numbers as "Sleepy Time Gal" and "Yes, Sir, That's My Baby." Also on hand is Ethel the cute cigarette girl. In the early months of 1927 Ethel's beauty has taken on a particular radiance. Up to now her rival for the title of Most Beautiful Cigarette Girl on Broadway has been Mavis of the Club Abbey. A spectacular finale to this rivalry came when the Club Abbey was shot up by gangster patrons. Mavis assisted one of the bleeding gangsters to Polyclinic Hospital, and in the peculiar code of Broadway lost caste by this good Samaritan deed. Ethel

is now securely entrenched as the Most Beautiful Cigarette Girl on the Main Stem.

Midnight comes and goes, and a sense of expectancy fills the Three Hundred Club. Eyes dart to the entrance door. Those in the know confide importantly that Tex must be stopping at her brother Tommy's Club Plantation—or at this point in history was it Texas Tommy's? At Tommy Guinan's four musicians named Jimmy Dorsey, Tommy Dorsey, Joe Venuti, and Jack Teagarden labor nightly in the orchestra. At the Three Hundred Club an orchestra barren of potential jazz greats takes over from the four guitarists and a few couples slip to the tiny floor to dance.

By twelve-thirty the fifty tables are full. Lady Diana Manners, William Beebe, Ann Pennington (the Scandals star with the dimpled knees) and millionaire escort, Bill Fallon (the great mouthpiece), Mae West, Frank Tinney and Imogene Wilson, the latter the most beautiful of all *Follies* girls, Aimee Semple McPherson, the visiting evangelist—these could be the celebrities present tonight. Mayor Walker may appear during the evening, on his arm a cute, dark-haired flapper named Betty Compton, whom he spotted dancing in *Oh, Kay!* and straight-way made his steady companion. The underworld is represented by Owney Madden and Big Bill Dwyer, Prohibition overlords and backers of night clubs. Lesser underworld figures are present with jazz babies from Broadway shows. There are sugar daddies and gold-diggers of the variety immortalized in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, and a sprinkling of older women in the company of young men. One such, called the Dancing Grandmother, is an almost nightly patron at the Three Hundred Club.

At a quarter to one comes a stir at the entrance door and the feeling that a supercharged personality is there. An excited whisper runs through the room, *Texas, Texas!* Everything stops as Tex greets friends at the door and tosses a brisk word of

greeting to the hatcheck girl and maitre d'. Here is royalty entering its domain. One who witnesses her splendid entrance is Stephen Graham: "There she is like a queen, like the sun, like a big firework, like a gorgeous tamer who has just let herself into a large cage of pet tigers. A kiss here, a stroke of the hand there, an uttered *Darling!* there, she goes from table to table closing the company into a unit around her personality."

The fun begins as soon as Tex arrives. She makes her way to the dance floor, which with her appearance becomes the stage. Taking a fragile chair, she perches atop it—a highly difficult position for one of her girth but a feat she manages admirably every night. A waiter appears at her side with a box full of kleeter-klappers: a small piece of wood with two wooden balls attached which, when shaken, produces a hideous din. Tex raises one above her head, shakes it furiously. Next she dips into the box for others and begins tossing them to friends around the room. "Here, Tex, here," grown men beseech, eager to be singled out by her famous attention.

All who get kleeter-klappers shake them, yet over the racket her clarion voice can easily be heard. In her full-throated tones Tex now calls out, "Cohen." A waiter calls back, "Cohen." It's a catchword of the place, by which Tex gives signals. Now it means get things ready, the show is about to begin. Tex climbs down from her chair, moves it to the ringside table whose free-standing party she has decided to favor, and the Three Hundred Club show—Texas Guinan and Her Mob—begins.

The first number is called Cherries. A group of almost naked girls prance out from backstage to group themselves on the tiny dance floor. One carries a basket of fruit. She starts singing a song called "Cherries" and two things immediately become apparent. One is the zany aspect of the Three Hundred Club, for as the girls sing, the waiters begin to yell "Cherries" in time with the music. So, shortly, does the audience, until it is all wild, fetching, and very, very funny.

The other notable matter is the extreme youth of the girls. For, still guided by the indefatigable N. T. G., Tex has changed her Guinan Girls. After first using statesque Follies and Vanities lovelies, Granlund shifted to the talented children herded around Broadway by determined stage mothers. Now the Guinan Girls are not only beautiful but exceedingly young, so that there is a vague sinfulness about such dewy-eyed innocence in a night club. Ruby Keeler, for instance, who does a tap dance at Guinan clubs, was only fourteen when she began. At seventeen, she married Al Jolson (1927 earnings \$350,000) to create one of the great lullabys of Broadway.

Texas Guinan never smokes or drinks and tries hard to rule her youthful chorus kids with an iron hand. She even encourages stage mothers to hang around backstage as chaperones. Where ordinary patrons are concerned, the Queen of the Night Clubs can easily keep her girls in line. But when a mobster takes a shine to one of her kids, even the redoubtable Tex dares not interfere. Prohibition-era hoods were trigger-happy sadists who could not bear to be frustrated over girls, or anything. "It was rough and tough then," N. T. G. has written. "Four of my employers, owners for whom I produced shows, were killed. One of my girls in one of my shows was shot and another was with a gangster when he was bumped off."

Even so, it may not be fair to picture all gangsters as vicious destroyers of night-club virginity. It is said that one of the toughest gang lords set himself up as the Nobody-Touches-Her-Not-Even-Me protector of little Ruby Keeler. And sometimes the Guinan kids of tender years and angelic appearance actually desired the life offered by gangsters. "Where except in New York can you find the pretty, wilful kids who [date] the racketeers?" inquires the writer Jack Kofoed. "Slim thighs and budding breasts and wet, provocative lips . . . The pay is high and the life fancy while it lasts, but I suppose it does get tiresome

to be bawled out by the dance director and go through the same routines night after night."

Singing and kicking bare legs in a dance, the Guinan kids look happy, fresh, and delightfully wet behind the ears. In songs like "Cherries," they fan out among the audience while the girl with the basket of cherries prettily slips one into the mouths of the more important suckers present. A girl behind her ruffles up the man's hair, if he has any. Those who are completely bald get a lipsticky kiss on the shiny dome. In turn, the suckers push fifty dollar bills into tight brassieres and hot little hands.

While this goes on, Tex is providing her own show. She tosses kleeter-klappers and passes out remarks. "Take care of him, kids," she bawls, when a man shouts something at her. The girls converge on him and begin taking off his tie, unbuttoning his vest, slipping off his coat. His watch is handed to Tex who holds it up, making disparaging remarks about size and quality. After emptying his pockets, and keeping the change found there, the girls forge on to another table. They keep it up riotously until Tex suddenly bellows, "Give the little gals a great big hand." The Cherries girls dance off, still trilling their song.

Follows a procession of torch singers, adagio teams, girl and boy dancers. Among the last is a slick-haired jellybean doing a whirlwind Charleston. It is such a spectacular dance that columnist Mark Hellinger has been moved to call it "the weirdest, maddest dance that anyone has ever seen. The customers sit in silence as he fixes his eyes on one spot and whirls. Faster. Faster. It is fascinating—almost uncanny."

The whirling dancer finishes, panting proudly, and Tex shouts, "Give the little guy a great big hand." Next she tells the room that the young dancer, who looks like a callous Valentino, is Georgie Raft. The ambitious Raft works hard these

days, and makes a neat one thousand dollars a week as a result. After doing his dance at the Three Hundred Club, he dashes up the street to Tommy Guinan's Playground, where he does it again. After which he races to the Parody or Silver Slipper and does it there too. Weary but still ambitious, he hastens back to the Three Hundred Club in time for the second show. Such heroic activity, it has been noted, gave him scant time to return the affections of a sixteen-year-old Guinan kid named Hannah Williams, who would become Mrs. Roger Wolfe Kahn, and Mrs. Jack Dempsey, as well as the inspiration for the song "Hard Hearted Hannah, the Vamp of Savannah." At the Three Hundred Club Hannah worships George Raft from afar and, as in a thousand backstage movies, watches adoringly as he dances. "You work too hard, Georgie," she tells him when he finishes, but the preoccupied Raft pays no attention, only rushes off to his next appearance.

After this turn, the Guinan kids reappear. In scanty tights they prance out with baskets of cardboard snowballs with which to pelt the crowd. As they do, a cute girl appears in the spotlight. Pointing first to her eyes, to her breasts, and other interesting features of her anatomy, she begins to sing, "She has this and she has that—" Again, with the refrain, the waiters join in, shouting, "And she knows her onions!" The audience starts singing too—this is the most popular song of the night and it sets Tex off like an explosion. "Encourage her!" she brays. "Encourage the kid, give the little girl a great big hand." The audience does. "She has this and she has that, AND SHE KNOWS HER ONIONS!" patrons howl back. By the time the song ends, everyone is standing, singing lustily, pelting each other with the cardboard snowballs. Once more the girls caper off, and two middle-aged drunks grab a girl as the line passes by. Tex shouts "Cohen" and moves over quickly to restrain them, as do a bouncer and several waiters. For a moment the situation seems

ugly. Then it's over, with Tex turning it into a laugh. "A fight a night or your money back," she yells at the room.

Comes intermission time: end of the first show, long pause before the second. The limpid saxophone begins to moan "Do, do, do, what you've done, done, done before, baby." Couples slip to the postage stamp floor and, holding each other tight, begin to dance. A few Guinan girls slip out to sit at tables with glowering, sharp-suited gangsters. Others join husbands or Joe College boy friends. But most remain backstage with mothers or chaperones, for Tex allows no general fraternizing. She herself seizes the opportunity to munch a chicken sandwich and gulp a glass of milk. Then she remounts the fragile chair in the spotlight. Blowing a piercing blast on the police whistle, she signals that her personal part of the entertainment will begin.

Chiefly this is wisecracking and exchanging lusty badinage with patrons. "Three cheers for Prohibition," she bellows on mounting the chair. Those who wonder why she begins in this startling way are immediately enlightened, for she goes on, "Without Prohibition where the hell would I be?" From one table an experienced sucker shouts back, "Nowhere!" "You're right, sucker," Texas howls, giving her mighty laugh. Texas Guinan's brand of night club humor is entirely lacking in subtlety and a commentator explains it this way: "It's sledgehammer humor. It must go through the heads of well-soaked customers. She must bellow above the confusion of the revelers. This hostess business is a raucous calling . . ."

Some of the sledgehammer humor is chauvinistic. "Who's the greatest flapper in the world?" she asks from the chair top. From parts of the room come suggestions: "Clara Bow"—"Colleen Moore"—"Ann Pennington." Each time the blondined head shakes an emphatic No. Finally she pulls a small American flag from her ample bosom and waves it. "There's the greatest flapper in the world," she shouts exultantly.

Other jokes are topical. "Why does Peaches sit on the beach so much?" she demands of the room. "I don't know," the orchestra leader obligingly shouts back, "Why does Peaches sit on the beach so much?" Tex jubilantly yells, "To keep her tail from Browning."

Champagne corks pop, kleeter-klappers klap, swizzle sticks smack, the police whistle blows its shrill blasts. Joy at the Three Hundred Club is unrefined and unconfined. Every male wants to be singled out for special attention. It makes him a member of the Suckers Club, perhaps the most exclusive in the world of 1927. "Hello, suckers," Texas bawls at newcomers entering. She browbeats those at the tiny tables to buy more drinks. "You're all suckers, so you might as well act like it." Seeing an oldster lost in drunken sleep beside a lush blonde, she grabs a trumpet from the orchestra and sashays over to the table. There she blows a fearful blast into the sleeping man's ear. "Come on, you old goat, rise up and buy," she orders.

Always the emphasis is on Spend, Spend, Spend. In public at least, the road to Texas Guinan's heart is paved with hundred dollar bills. One night the ideal sucker showed up in a Guinan club. A meek-looking little man, he paid the cover charge for the entire house, distributed fifty dollar bills to girls in the show and members of the band. After this, the mild Maecenas bought champagne for every table. Even Tex was impressed by such prodigious largesse. "Say, sucker, who are you anyway?" she demanded. The little man refused to give his name. "Well, you can at least tell us what you do," Tex insisted. "I'm in the dairy-produce business," he answered modestly. Tex flung back her flamboyant head. "He's a big butter-and-egg man," she informed her assembled guests. From the exclusive confines of her club, the phrase Big Butter and Egg Man went out to succeed the word Babbitt in the national vocabulary. In time a play called *The Butter and Egg Man* opened on Broadway.

Again Tex takes a breather. "Doo-Wacka-Doo-Wacka-Doo,"

wails the sax-led orchestra, for dancing. A customer is crass enough to complain to Texas that his check has been padded. "It's one hundred dollars too much," he states. Tex grabs the check angrily for to her a man who gripes over a hundred bucks is beneath contempt. Nevertheless, she scans the check, finds he is correct about the overcharge. "Who's your waiter?" she demands. The waiter is called front and center. "You're fired!" Tex shouts.

It's a dismissal the waiter takes with surprising docility. He disappears into the kitchen while the sucker pays the amended check and fades into the night. Then the waiter reappears. Momentarily, though, the incident takes the starch out of Tex—she sits down at a table and complains. "It happens all the time around here," she says. "That waiter and the cashier are in cahoots, they'd a split that extra hundred. But I can't fire any of 'em. They're all related to Larry Fay or some other gangster."

Depression is fleeting—"My sweets," she once wrote Mark Hellinger, "why will you insist on taking life seriously? Give me plenty of laughs and you can take the rest." Stars from Broadway are coming in now, show folk whose lives permit them to stay up late enough for the second Guinan show of the night. A Vanities showgirl enters on the arm of a new husband. Tex signals the band, which slips into the Wedding March. A waiter scoots out from the kitchen with a large bag of rice which he gives to Tex. She tosses handfuls at the happy pair. The trumpeter moves out from the bandstand and Tex pushes the newlyweds behind him. Guests from the tables leap up to join the procession which snakes in and out around the room, for all the world like a wedding in a nightmare.

Suddenly, it's over. The trumpeter slips back on the bandstand, mutes his instrument and joins with the throbbing saxophone to sob out "Here in my arms it's adorable, It's deplorable that you were never there." Tex returns to the spot-

light, and guests go back to tables. "Let's give the little girls a great big hand," she howls, bringing forth a few Guinan kids from backstage. She wheedles dignified men into playing leap-frog with them on the tiny dance floor. She rumples the hair and unties the ties of prominent men, smacks the backs of dignified dowagers in bluff, cowgirl greeting. The hilarity emboldens one man to pull a Guinan kid to his lap, where he tries to fondle her. Tex gives a sharp look; he's a nobody, not even a butter-and-egg-man. "Cohen—throw him out," she orders the bouncers who materialize. The throwing-out process has two steps. First to the cashier's desk, where the sucker settles his bill. Then the sidewalk.

Tex considers it a personal affront when anyone starts to leave. "Don't go!" she begs an important party. They look uncertain and Tex plunges on, "Stick around, we'll have a show now." The police whistle blasts. It is four-thirty and lights dim for the second show, which begins with the line of baby-faced Guinan kids kicking heels high and nasally chirping "Baby Face, you've got the sweetest little baby face." It soon becomes apparent that the second show is slightly less raucous, more sentimental than the first. Perhaps this is a tribute to what Damon Runyon calls the "tubercular light of dawn," which is close to breaking over the city outside.

Again the girls hop among tables, rumpiling hair and jumping from lap to lap. A man who has been drunkenly dozing wakes up to find a cute, all-but-nude girl on his lap. He paws her roughly. The girl shrieks. Tex, the one-time cowgirl, materializes at the table. This is an important customer, one who can't be heaved out. There is no cry of "Cohen." Tex puts a warning hand on the man's shoulder, disengages the girl with the other. With the girl gone, she kisses the top of the man's bald head. "You're still my sweetheart," she tells him, "but you gotta behave."

In the spotlight, the whirling George Raft does his second

Charleston of the night. After him the girls prance out, "Yes, sir, that's my baby, No, sir, don't mean maybe." The youthful kids still seem fresh and eager, but the waiters are beginning to look waxy and spent. So do the customers, though the lively tune stirs some excitement. The night's gaiety is beginning to wear thin. Even Tex feels it. She's human, and like everyone else sits reverently silent as three of her kids in tight velvet trousers and skimpy blouses come out, take three chairs from ringside and, sitting side by side in a demure line, harmonize softly, lingeringly:

Make my bed and light the light,
I'll be home late tonight.
Bye, Bye, Blackbird.

At the song's end Texas turns to a friend and begins, "I'm so—" She's about to say *tired*, but catches herself in time. The legend of inexhaustible energy is her prime asset. Bravely she smiles the gleaming smile and the brassy voice urges as before, "Give the little girls a great big hand." The fingers that twist her ropes of pearls look ancient and clawlike now, but who cares? Tex is in and out of the spotlight, ever the figure of picturesque vigor, the gigantic voice commanding everyone to have a great big time. She's the Queen of the Night Clubs. It's been another big night without a raid for the Padlock Queen.

Texas Guinan, with her brashness and emphasis on the folding green, typified the Night Club Era to the country. Yet in another club were to be found Clayton, Jackson, and Durante, Broadway's own favorite entertainers. Tex herself, anxious to wind down after a night's work, frequently stopped off to enjoy these three before going home to bed. For such was the madness of the zany trio that the clubs they worked often stayed open until noon the next day.

In the early months of 1927, Clayton, Jackson, and Durante were appearing at the Parody Club. But they had first scored

at the Club Durant, at Fifty-eighth Street and Sixth Avenue. This historic club had largely been promoted by Jimmy Durante, a gentle young man with a huge nose and a sense of fun stemming from the great clowns of Italy. Durante had opened his night club on a financial shoe string—so much so that just before the opening he was unable to afford an outside sign to advertise the joint. Hearing of his plight, a golden-hearted sign painter offered to provide one gratis. The sign emerged Club Durant, and so it remained until Prohibition forces ended its lusty life.

Durante, piano player and slam-bang buffoon, had already joined forces with Eddie Jackson, one of the great coon-shouting singers of all time. The two worked well together, but Durante felt that somehow the act could be improved. A reason for flaws in performance was that the gentle Durante was distracted by the problems of running a combination night club and speakeasy. One night a Broadway gambler and sometime hooper named Lou Clayton entered the Club Durant. He did so as a patron, but in the general hilarity rose and blandly performed an expert soft-shoe dance. Conversing with him later Durante sensed that in Clayton, a Main Stem toughie with an unflinching exterior, lay the ingredient lacking in the Club Durant. Clayton was hard, though in the best show business tradition he occasionally unveiled a sentimental side. He had faced down such gangland celebrities as the psychotic killer Vincent "Mad Dog" Coll. Further, he could strut and dance almost as well as George Raft, while the expressionless dead pan he had cultivated through years as a gambler could be excruciatingly funny in moments of comedy.

Clayton agreed to go to work, and so Broadway's all-time favorite night club act of Clayton, Jackson, and Durante was born. Clayton's first official act was to rule that gangsters check guns at the front door. Clayton then took the guns from the

hatcheck girl and buried them in the ice-bin behind the bar—"frappéd artillery," he called this.

On stage, Clayton, Jackson, and Durante worked by inspiration. Starting with Durante songs like "Jimmy the Well Dressed Man," they roughhoused in all directions. Always the act had two staples—noise and destruction. While Eddie Jackson brayed his songs, Clayton did his fast dead-pan dance and Duante beat the piano. All three then rampaged the room, pulling things to bits. After Clayton, Jackson, and Durante any night club was a shambles.

Once a curvaceous girl with a French accent applied at the Club Durant for a job. "You should hear me seeng," she cooed. Durante thought her accent might be an amusing foil for the wild antics of the three men. He dubbed her *Mademoiselle Fifi* and for three nights she tried to join the fun. It was no go, and the hardboiled Clayton was instructed to fire her. An outraged *Fifi* insisted on seeing Durante, saying to him accusingly, "You nevoir hear me seeng." Soft-hearted Jimmy decided to give her one more chance. "Ladies and gentlemen," he began that night, "at great expense to the management we have imported direct from Paris none other than that great int'national entertainer, *Mam'zelle Fifi*."

Fifi, it transpired, was a coloratura. Stepping forward, she bravely began. But her great gift lay less in vocalizing than in determination. No matter what went on around her, *Fifi* piercingly reached for high notes. Coloraturas, of course, were out of place in the Club Durant and, after a few bars, Durante began to clown. He marched around the room in military style, while the band abandoned *Mademoiselle Fifi* to swing to the "Stars and Stripes Forever."

Fifi continued with her aria—no mean musical feat. "The Americans are coming!" Durante shouted nonsensically, still marching in military time. The quick-witted Clayton took up the cry. "The Americans are coming!" he shouted back. From

some forgotten episode of his youth, Durante dredged up the cry, "Viva La Ponza!" "The Americans are coming—Viva La Ponza," Clayton yelled back. So "The Americans are coming—Viva La Ponza!" became the rallying cry for the nonsense through which Mademoiselle Fifi single-mindedly sang.

I can do without Broadway, but can Broadway do without me? the frenetic Durante demanded in the course of every evening's rumpus. It seemed at first that Broadway could not. Then one night Jimmy noticed a trio of well-dressed men filling a hip flask from a bottle of liquor served them at a table. In those days, Prohibition agents were required to produce in court evidence of the intoxicants purchased on raided premises. The guileless Durante decided that the men were chemists conducting an innocent experiment with prohibition hooch. Then one of them rose importantly. "All right, folks, it's a raid," he announced.

It was the end of the Club Durant, of tenderest memory. The Three Musketeers of Broadway, as Clayton, Jackson and Durante had been dubbed by Sime Silverman of *Variety*, moved on to the Parody Club. This was a cellar room seating some four hundred tight-packed patrons, with only a single street-level window for ventilation. Nonetheless, prices were high and the Clayton, Jackson, and Durante madness grew madder. Mademoiselle Fifi was still in the act, and here was born the sketch, "Wood," during which all kinds of wooden objects, including a full-size privy, were hauled onstage, while the three men horsed noisily about. "I'm in a hotel room," Durante would reminisce insanely, as wood was dumped on his feet, "and there's a knock at the door and a voice says, *This is the house detective, you got a woman in your room?* And I says No, so he t'rows one in." Through this, Jackson would be singing and Clayton performing his expert, expressionless dance. "You know," he'd call to Durante, "my girl's being held for

ransom." "What's the matter with Ransom?" Durante shouted back. "Can't he get his own wimmin?"

In other Broadway night clubs, the sucker also got an even break. Prices were high, but entertainment was good. Joan Crawford was not the only talent to rise from the Club Richman. Helen Kane, the Boop-Oop-a-Doop Girl, was an alumna of the same place. This club featured *Scandals*-star Harry Richman ("Birth of the Blues," "Puttin' On the Ritz," "Singing a Vagabond Song"). With his meaty personality and vehement voice, Richman symbolized the male side of Prohibition Era Broadway, as Helen Morgan and Ruth Etting, the street's treasured girl singers, symbolized the female.

Harry Richman was something of a phrasemaker and once referred to the downstairs Club Richman as "an upholstered sewer." It was a description which could aptly be bestowed upon other Prohibition spots where talent was born. Ginger Rogers (age sixteen) made an initial appearance at the Silver Slipper, as did Ray Bolger. Morton Downey was a youthful singer in night clubs. A comedian named Ben K. Benny worked in Broadway night clubs before deciding that his name sounded too much like that of Ben Bernie, the Old Maestro. Ben K. Benny changed his name to Jack Benny, and by 1927 had risen from night clubs to vaudeville at the Palace. Others stuck faithfully to the night-life circuit. Established entertainers like Ben Bernie, Ukulele Ike Edwards, and Ted Lewis appeared in clubs whose very names sound a Broadway melody: Frivolity, Hotsy Totsy, Fifty-Fifty, La Vie, Cotton Club, Club Rendezvous, Napoleon, Parody Club, Lido, Casa (Vincent) Lopez, Will Oakland's Terrace, Cafe de Paris, and Roger Wolfe Kahn's—the club opened by the bandleader son of millionaire Otto Kahn which was so surpassingly elegant that even Broadway was awed by it.

In all these 'upholstered sewers'—be it Texas Guinan's, the

Club Durant, or Roger Wolfe Kahn's—the spender was king. “How we love to see the big spender come rolling in,” Jimmy Durante once said. “The fella who t'rows his money around. He's the answer to a prayer.” With writer Jack Kofoed, Durante wrote a book called *Night Club* and in it he tried to give the reading public a picture of the big butter-and-egg man in action:

You're sitting at a ringside table. All around are girls . . . pretty girls whose slim legs are lustrous in silk, and whose lips are carmined and eyebrows penciled. Out on the floor a dance team is working, feet moving deftly . . . The band is hot, the sleek heads bob and dip. The man swings his partner high in the air. Everyone applauds.

A man at a ringside table calls the hoofers over and presents them with a \$100 bill. *Gee! There's a big shot!* A sort of thrill goes over the room. Here's a guy who'll spend. There's champagne on his table. The orchestra leader wants to know if he has any tune he'd like to hear. He does. They dig up *In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree* for him . . .

It was Broadway in 1927—the Year the World Went Mad!

4 *The Sash-Weight Murder*

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ELL aware that the future held at least one predictable sensation in the immediate offing, the United States of America simmered contentedly through the six weeks while Judge Seeger pondered his verdict in the case of Peaches and Daddy. And this being the Era of Wonderful Nonsense there would assuredly be more sensations to come—many more!

Another reason for contentment was the so-called Coolidge Prosperity. In the contemporary words of Elmer Davis: "Prosperity still sheds its benignant glow upon us." This ballooning prosperity was largely automatic, or even accidental, for President Calvin Coolidge had reduced the duties of the Presidency by an amazing seventy per cent. Asked by funnyman Will Rogers how he had succeeded in doing this, Coolidge replied, "By avoiding the big problems."

In Senate cloakrooms—no less than at Rotary Club luncheons across the country—arguments over the 1928 political campaign had already begun. Would Calvin Coolidge run again, and if he decided to run was he entitled to do so? Vice-President Calvin Coolidge had become President on the death of Warren

G. Harding in August 1923. He had finished out Harding's term, then run on his own in 1924. Did this constitute two terms, or one? The distinguished Nicholas Murray Butler, president of Columbia University, thought Coolidge could not run again. Others thought he could, but no one had the slightest inkling how Cautious Cal felt. If he failed to run, the names of Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, Vice-President Charles ("Hell and Maria") Dawes, Senator Charles Curtis, and Speaker of the House Nicholas Longworth were strong possibilities.

In the Democratic camp was small optimism. Coolidge Prosperity made 1928 look like a Republican year. Only Governor Alfred E. Smith of New York seemed confident of chances. Strangely enough, the living symbol of Republican Party success did not seem to be President Coolidge. Rather it was icy Andrew Mellon, the multimillionaire Secretary of the Treasury. "If we could only take Mellon away from the Republicans we could win easily," opined Clem Shaver, chairman of the Democratic National Committee.

Occasionally a voice rose to forecast economic peril. "A persistent over-production is the cornerstone of American industry," warned the farseeing Elmer Davis. "It is absorbed by over-consumption on the instalment plan." Few listened. There were some irritants in this best of possible worlds, but to the average person economics was not among them. Prohibition was, however—the Eighteenth Amendment seemed to be heading the nation into a gigantic gang war. One who spoke out on this subject was Senator Tom Heflin of Alabama, a man widely reviled as a racist blabbermouth. Yet on Prohibition the Senator's words rang clear and true. "There are so few real Wet advocates here in the Senate that they could all fit in a taxicab," he orated.

In news columns, the United States could be observed avoiding entanglement in the World Court, just as it had remained

out of the League of Nations. Good relations between France and the United States seemed far more important to Americans than good relations with England. BOBBED HAIR SPLITS BEAUTY SPECIALISTS, a headline read, while the story underneath went into details of the new boyish bob and the shingle cut. Madame Ernestine Schumann-Heink made news by becoming the first woman to lend her name to a cigarette testimonial. "I recommend Lucky Strikes because they are good to my throat," she declared, while American Tobacco Company officials beamed.

On March 1st few troubled to notice a tiny announcement in newspapers saying that a young airmail pilot named Captain Charles Augustus Lindbergh, Jr.—the Associated Press spelled it Lindberg—had filed entry in the New York-Paris flight for a \$25,000 prize offered by Raymond Orteig, owner of the Hotel Brevoort in New York City. The Orteig Prize had stood since 1919 and, though rapid advances in aviation had lately been made, a non-stop flight to Paris was still considered a remote possibility. Nonetheless, the famous Commander Byrd had announced plans for such an attempt this year. So had a wiry, likable barnstormer named Clarence Chamberlin, who would fly a Wright-Bellanca plane. With him as co-pilot might be Bert Acosta, a rakish daredevil, the sort who flew his plane under bridges, looped the loop, and turned corkscrews in the air. From Paris—for the Orteig Prize worked either way—came word that the two French war aces, Nungesser and Coli, were grooming themselves for an early west-east flight. With such stellar figures prominent in the public eye, the filing by an unknown named Lindbergh—or was it Lindberg?—seemed of small moment.

And why should it, with the Roxy Theatre opening on March 12th! Here was one of the real events of the age, an eight million dollar movie house designed for the utmost in lavish comfort and lush elegance. It was the brain-child of Samuel L.

Rothafel, an energetic pioneer who had taken over the Capitol Theatre on Broadway, there to introduce elaborate stage shows and ushers in military uniforms. With the coming of radio, Rothafel began broadcasting from the Capitol, urging the world to call him Roxy. Soon Roxy and His Gang rivaled Dr. S. Parkes Cadman as radio entertainment.

The Capitol had become a true picture palace, but Roxy wanted a cathedral of the motion picture. In 1927 the mighty little man's dream came true. Mounted police held back milling thousands while the Roxy Theatre was unveiled: "A vast, bronzed, Spanish renaissance interior, imposing in its Moorish splendor. Golden brown, pagan-like in its florid adornment." Those at the opening found three Kimball organs playing as the audience found seats. Followed an Invocation, and a Dedication. The Roxy Symphony, led by Erno Rapee, played "The Star Spangled Banner." Mayor Walker made a speech of welcome. Came preliminary tableaux, song solos, more tableaux, symphony music, ballet, and the superbly styled Roxyettes. All this led up to a feature movie presentation, Gloria Swanson in *The Love of Sunya*, one of the cinematic lemons of all time.

As the Roxy opened *Ask Me Another* was supplanting the *Crossword Puzzle Books* as the national game-book sensation. Emil Ludwig's hugely successful *Napoleon* had just been published. *Time*, the weekly newsmagazine—stating pretentiously that "There is no room in *Time* for the second-rate, the inconsequential"—recommended as good reading *Tar* by Sherwood Anderson; *Go She Must*, by David Garnett; *The Plutocrat*, by Booth Tarkington; *Power* by Lion Feuchtwanger; *The Orphan Angel*, by Elinor Wylie; *Tomorrow Morning*, by Anne Parrish; *Palmerston*, by Philip Guedalla; and *Personae*, by Ezra Pound.

Most book readers, however, would bypass this advice, waiting to see what Billy Phelps recommended in Scribner's and his other outlets. Dr. William Lyon Phelps was considered by

many the soundest of critics, a no-literary-nonsense Yale professor who cheerfully liked cheerful books. He was the nation's number one literary guide, though such youngsters as Pulitzer Prize novelist Louis Bromfield (*The Green Bay Tree*, *Possession*, *Early Autumn*) accused Dr. Phelps of being a Rotarian among the literati. A matter of speculation was how Dr. Phelps would greet *Elmer Gantry*, a novel teetering on the verge of publication. Sinclair Lewis, its author, was one of the few prominent Americans alive (another was H. L. Mencken) who didn't seem wholeheartedly satisfied with the country as it was.

On Broadway Robert E. Sherwood's *Road to Rome* had just opened. This was one of the first plays in which historical characters—in this case Hannibal—talked in modern style. Wrote critic Larry Barretto: "The lines are sly, often risqué, and amused a sophisticated audience." Equally ultra was *Her Cardboard Lover* with Jeanne Eagels and Leslie Howard. A superior thriller was *The Spider* by Fulton Oursler and Lowell Brentano, which began stunningly with a murder in the midst of the audience. On the verge of opening were the jazzy musicals *Good News* and *Hit the Deck*, the latter with the rousing "Hallelujah" and the gay-tender "Sometimes I'm Happy."

Out in Hollywood a perky blonde named Phyllis Haver was the toast of the film world. A luscious graduate of Mack Sennett bathing-beauty comedies, Miss Haver had climbed from a lively farce called *The Perfect Flapper* to *The Way of All Flesh*, with the great Emil Jannings. Such versatility caused one critic to say, "She will soon be counted among the most vigorous personalities of the screen."

Also in Hollywood the Warner Brothers' cameras were set to grind on *The Jazz Singer*, film version of a Broadway play which had starred George Jessel. Broadway critics had not liked *The Jazz Singer* and in one of the monumental miscalculations of all time Jessel had decided not to appear in the film. His

role had been given to Al Jolson, the top singing star of the day, and it was reported that in this new film Jolson might sing and (was it possible?) talk.

In such a world, laughter came easy. College boys in raccoon coats raced the roads in battered Model T flivvers, the sides of which were covered with such slogans as Rattle of the Century, Girls Wanted, Stop Me If You've Heard This One, Plus Four Brakes, and Handle With Hooks—Use No Care. High school girls and boys wore bright yellow slickers on which were stenciled contemporary catchwords like "Crazy Cat," "Black Bottom," "Ain't She Sweet?" "Yes, Sir, That's My Baby," "Cat's Whiskers," "So's Your Old Man."

Everywhere, it seemed, the sheiks and shebas of Flaming Youth were petting in the rumble seats of cars or swigging giggle-water from hip flasks. One of the top vaudeville songs of the time pictured an angry Irish mother facing a flapper daughter as she reeled home with gin on her tonsils. "Oh, Bridget O'Flynn," the outraged mother demands, "where have you been?—This is a fine time for you to get in—You went to see the Big Parade, the Big Parade, my eye—You never saw any parade that took so long to go by!" On Broadway the hit song of a musical comedy was called "Was I drunk? Was he handsome? Did my mother give me Hell?" All of which caused Dr. Clovis Chapel, a Southern revivalist, to inform a group of startled Betty Co-eds that "Flappers are Hell-cats with muddy minds. The average seventeen-year-old girl would not greatly object to appearing nude if she had any excuse to do so. Modesty . . . is dead."

From St. Louis came word of Alvin "Shipwreck" Kelly, who was rapidly becoming a telling figure in the Era of Wonderful Nonsense. Shipwreck Kelly was a flagpole sitter, a dauntless fellow who at the drop of a check allowed himself to be hoisted to the top of a flagpole on a building. Usually the building was a hotel, which considered that Shipwreck Kelly's presence at its

apex brought favorable publicity. Kelly strapped a rubber-covered wooden seat, eight inches in diameter, atop the round flagpole ball and remained there—"Etched in magnificent loneliness," the *New Yorker* said—as long as possible. If it rained or snowed he was in a most uncomfortable situation. Once, during a sleet storm, he had been forced to chop ice from his legs and body with a hatchet.

Thirty-three-year-old Shipwreck Kelly billed himself as The Luckiest Fool Alive. He charged fifty cents to those who rose to the hotel roof to observe him at close quarters. "After forty-eight hours of this, you don't mind anything," he would shout down to gawpers. He lived on fluids—milk, coffee, broth—hoisted up to him in a bucket, and as for other matters a story of his life-on-a-pole states discreetly, "excess fluids are poured down a pipe running alongside the flagpole." A Hell's Kitchen boy whose stamina had been sharpened in the navy, Shipwreck often stood up straight on his dizzying perch. He slept from ten to twenty minutes every hour, anchoring himself by thrusting thumbs tightly into holes bored into the wooden seat.

In 1927, Shipwreck Kelly was not only the best-known flagpole sitter (his new St. Louis record was seven days, one hour), but by far the most fortunate. During the previous autumn he had passed several days atop the flagpole of a Dallas hotel. An elevator in the hotel was run by a cute-as-a-button redhead. One day a man stepped into the elevator and asked, "Is that damn fool on the pole still up there?" "He's not a damn fool," the redhead answered, and slapped his face. News of this episode reached Shipwreck on his pole, and he expressed a natural desire to meet the young girl. She was hauled up to him by ropes strapped around her middle and the pair held hands and talked tenderly in mid-air. Shortly after descending, Shipwreck married this eighteen-year-old admirer. In St. Louis, she was in command of the flagpole base, supervising the bucket delivery of food and four packs of cigarettes daily to her spouse. Her

temper remained intact, for to those who asked if she was not upset by marriage to a husband who sat on a pole, she flared back, "He knows what he's doing, so shut up!"

Around the country there were other evidences of madness. C. C. Pyle, a picturesque sports promoter who had made a mint from the professional appearances of football star Red Grange and tennis champion Suzanne Lenglen, announced a \$25,000 prize for a forthcoming transcontinental walking marathon. This would materialize in time and irreverently be called a Bunion Derby. A lesser promoter named Milton Crandall leased the 71st Regiment Armory in New York City for a talking marathon, which local papers dubbed a Noun and Verb Rodeo. In Seattle and Chicago dance marathons had begun to spring up, with dazed young girls passing out from exhaustion in the arms of partners, only to wake up screeching and clawing. "This," said one reporter, "is known as *going squirrely*, and gives everyone lots of laughs."

Into this maddest of mad worlds, the Cadillac Motor Company proudly launched the new La Salle. In Los Angeles, Winifred Westover divorced cowboy star William S. Hart; in Paris, Hadley Richardson Hemingway divorced Ernest Hemingway; and in New York Charlie Chaplin was in the throes of a nervous breakdown because Lita Grey Chaplin, his child bride of two years before, was also suing and claiming that in all Chaplin had earned sixteen million dollars.

In Chicago, further nonsense was compounded when William Hale "Big Bill" Thompson, running for re-election as Mayor, charged that King George V of England was making plans to annex the Windy City. Thompson, under whose stewardship gangland had flourished as never before, urged that all references to England and its rulers be sliced from Chicago school and library books. This was a vital political platform, refreshingly distant from such topics as graft, bootleg killings,

and the profits of Prohibition. Because of it, "Big Bill" Thompson was deemed a shoo-in on election day.

So arrived the dawn of March 21st, when Judge Seeger was to render a verdict in the matter of *Daddy vs. Peaches*—and in many ways it was like a playback of the halcyon days of the trial. The familiar mob scene was enacted outside the White Plains courthouse. As before, Daddy arrived spruce and red-faced in his blue Rolls Royce. Peaches came by train and taxi, sporting a becoming Bermuda tan. It was noted, however, that she had lost no weight.

Inside the court, there was a long delay before Justice Seeger, his black robes swirling, established himself behind the bench. After a sharp glance around the courtroom, he delivered his verdict. It was a straight triumph for Daddy: "The plaintiff may be a man of peculiar character, tastes and ideas, but the fact that he married the defendant, endowed her with his property, lifted her out of poverty, all tend to show his intentions toward her were good . . . The defendant and her mother have falsified, magnified, and exaggerated to such an extent as to render their testimony altogether unbelievable . . . Many of their charges of alleged cruelty are too trivial to warrant the belief that they could have affected the defendant's health or peace of mind."

On the lawn the crowd began to clap as the verdict filtered out. Inside, Daddy's grin grew foolishly wider, while Peaches lowered her baby face into a handkerchief. Mrs. Heenan glared stonily ahead, for the judge's most cutting words were aimed at her. It was a particularly cruel moment for Peaches, since her weekly alimony was ordered ended. Still, her affairs were not hopeless. Returning from Bermuda, she had found several offers from vaudeville impresarios. One was from Milton Crandall, who wished her to appear as an extra-added attraction at his Noun and Verb Rodeo. Crandall offered fifteen hundred dollars a week, so Peaches would not starve. There

was even a good chance that she would still be able to afford the operation on her hefty legs.

After the blubbering girl and her mother had departed the White Plains court for the last time, the crowd of curious melted away with remarkable rapidity. There was a reason for this. Not only had the most nonsensical trial of the Nonsense Era ended, but already the Peaches-Daddy case was being supplanted as public-sensation-number-one. March 21st fell on Monday. On the morning before—Sunday, March 20th—news-papers had carried this headline:

ART EDITOR IS SLAIN IN BED
WIFE TIED; HOME SEARCHED;
MOTIVE MYSTIFIES POLICE

This was the year when one newspaper sensation followed another with bewildering rapidity. Using the sixth sense developed by so much excitement, the 1927 public already seemed to know that the murder of Albert Snyder, art editor of the magazine *Motor Boating*, would be the next thrill of a thrill-packed year. True, in Sunday newspapers Snyder's attractive wife, Ruth, declared that her husband had been killed by a heavily moustached stranger who had broken into their home in Queens Village, Long Island. This indicated only a routine, uninteresting crime. Yet early accounts of the discovery of the forty-five-year-old Snyder's body implied there was more to the case.

Ruth Snyder was a striking thirty-two-year-old blonde whose personality held a glaze of Scandinavian iciness. She had greeted police with ropes dangling from her wrists, stating that the foreign-looking prowler had knocked her unconscious and trussed her up. While telling this harrowing tale, she lessened its impact by indulging in histrionics reminiscent of Theda Bara, Nita Naldi and other silent-screen vamps of the day.

Further, there were no signs of forcible entry nor had anything been stolen from the premises. The jewels which Mrs. Snyder declared had been taken were found clumsily tucked under the mattress of her bed. In the cellar, police found a five-pound window sash weight flecked with red spots that could be blood. The police surgeon examining Mrs. Snyder found no signs of the brutal blow which had supposedly knocked her unconscious.

All in all, the case sounded so phoney, and so big, that Police Commissioner George V. McLaughlin himself hastened to Queens Village. He took charge, and through Sunday Mrs. Snyder told conflicting stories that sent police scurrying over Queens and New York City. Finally she wearied of games. "I'll tell you the truth," she informed McLaughlin. She then accused her lover, a man named Henry Judd Gray, of killing her husband with blows of the sash weight. Mrs. Snyder's somewhat matronly appearance had a granite look because of her formidable jaw. Now, as she displayed her only real emotion, even the resolute jaw seemed to soften. "Poor Judd," she sighed. "I promised him not to tell."

At the Onondaga Hotel in Syracuse, Judd Gray learned the news from Monday morning papers. RUTH BREAKS—NAMES PARAMOUR, tabloids shouted. Yet he looked spruce and confident when detectives from Queens arrived. Gray was thirty-four, a small, kewpie-doll type with curly hair, horn-rimmed spectacles, a deep cleft in his chin, and the look of a surprised rabbit. He politely ordered ice water and drinks, then to the detectives said, "My word, gentlemen, when you know me better you'll see how utterly ridiculous it is for a man like me to be in the clutches of the law. Why, I've never even been given a ticket for speeding." He then offered an elaborate alibi calculated to prove he had not left Syracuse during the weekend.

But Gray's wastebasket had not yet been emptied and in it

the detectives found a railroad ticket stub which showed he had been to New York. Behind the heavy horn rims, Gray's eyes blinked owlishly. It was his turn to sigh. "Thank you, gentlemen," he said. "Yes, I was in Queens on Saturday. I was there, all right—"

RUTH-JUDD BARE ALL, the next tabloid editions shrieked and across the country newspaper readers asked, *Who are Ruth Snyder and Judd Gray? Who was Albert Snyder? How did the lives of the three become so entwined that the end result was murder?*

The Albert Snyders of Queens Village had not been a happily married pair. Ruth Brown Snyder had survived a sickly childhood to endure a lonesome adolescence. At twenty-two she went to work for a New York photographic agency and met Albert Snyder after being instructed to phone *Motor Boating* to ask a question of the art editor. Snyder (born Schneider) was so brusque and irritable over the phone that he later felt impelled to call back with an apology. This time he liked the soft voice of the girl on the other end of the wire. He told her there was a secretarial job open on *Motor Boating* and suggested she apply.

Ruth Brown did, and shortly she and Snyder began dating. He took her to movies, theatres, and night clubs. She liked such luxury far more than she liked him, for Snyder (she always claimed) was an unbending Germanic type. In addition, there was a thirteen years age difference between the two. One night Snyder presented her with a box of chocolates. Inside she discovered a large diamond solitaire. She slipped it on. Snyder then proposed marriage, implying that if she did not accept, the ring must be returned. The girl regarded the ring: "It was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen—I just couldn't give it up." She accepted, and four months after meeting, the two were man and wife.

It quickly turned into the emptiest of marriages. Snyder was



Number One Movie Star of the era was Clara Bow. Born in extreme poverty, the jazz baby redhead was in 1927 making three thousand dollars a week as the hottest movie representative of Flaming Youth. (United Press International)

At the other Hollywood extreme were Greta Garbo and John Gilbert, whose torrid love made the screen sizzle. They introduced the Soul Kiss to an entranced public. Some, not so entranced, called it Gilbo Garbage. (Culver Service)

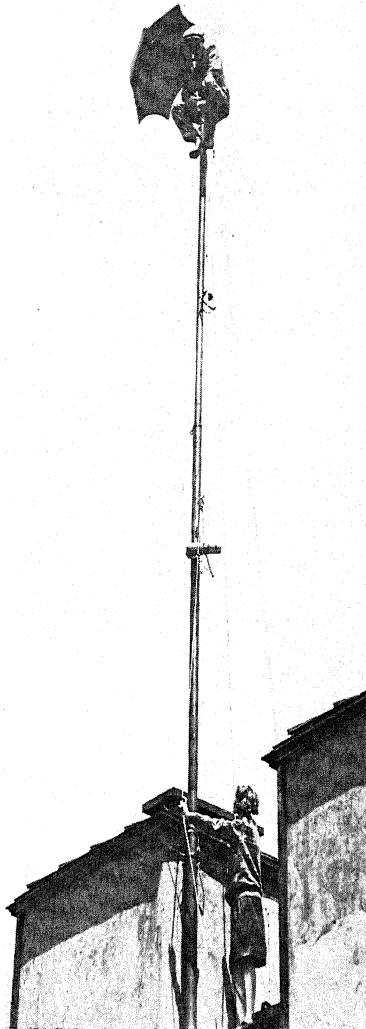




Peaches and Daddy Browning, buxom Cinderella Girl and daffy spouse, represented dreams-come-true to millions. The spicy White Plains trial of their case was the peak moment of the Era of Wonderful Nonsense. (United Press International)

Mary Louise Cecelia Guinan—Tex to you—was the undisputed Queen of Prohibition Night Clubs. A raucous, uninhibited janc, she welcomed male patrons with the shout, “Hello, Sucker.” (Underwood & Underwood)



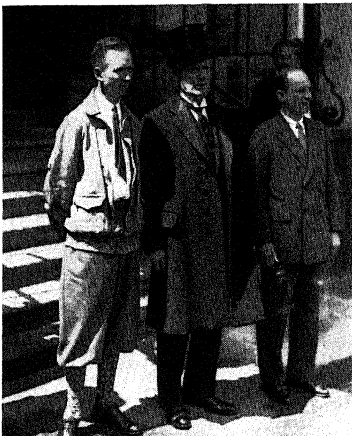
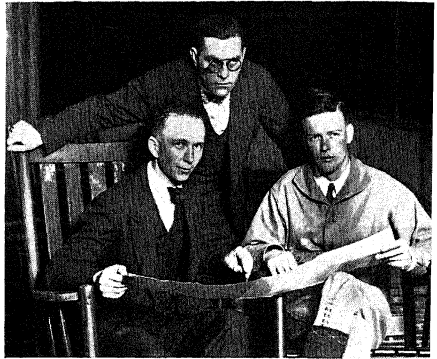


Another immortal of the Year the World Went Mad was Alvin "Shipwreck" Kelly. He sat atop flagpoles for days on end, assisted below by his flapper bride. In rain or snow, Shipwreck was in trouble. (Underwood & Underwood)



Everything changed with the advent of Lindbergh, called by newspapers the Lone Eagle, Lucky Lindy, or the Flying Fool. He cleared the air, supposedly pointed the world toward finer things. (Underwood & Underwood)

Before his May take-off, Lindy studied weather maps with rival flier Clarence Chamberlin and Lieut. George Noville, representing the equally rival Byrd flight. (Underwood & Underwood)



If Paris went mad over Lucky Lindy, Chamberlin and Charles A. Levine received a Teutonic welcome from Germany. Here they pose with the Lord Mayor of Berlin. (Underwood & Underwood)



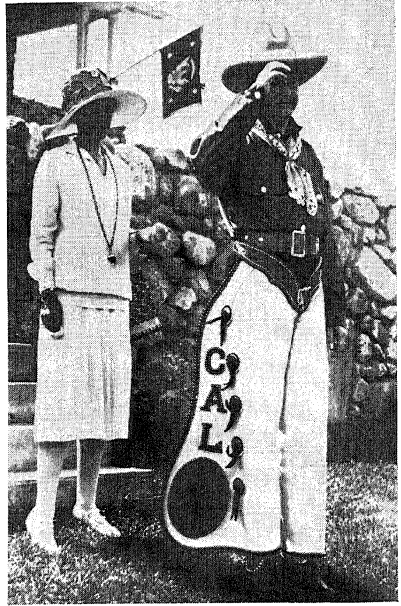
The Lindbergh reception in New York City broke all records for wild excitement and falling ticker tape. A blizzard in June hailed Lindy as he rode up Broadway. It was the Day the City Went Mad. (Underwood & Underwood)

Commander Richard Evelyn Byrd (behind him, Clarence Chamberlin) made the third great trans-Atlantic flight of the summer of the Year the World Went Mad. (Underwood & Underwood)



The combined New York City welcome for the Byrd crew and Chamberlin cost one-third as much as the Lindy reception and generated that much less enthusiasm. (Underwood & Underwood)

Not the least remarkable figure of 1927 was Calvin Coolidge, President of the United States. With world heroes on all sides, he held his own by appearing in outlandish get-ups. (Underwood & Underwood)



Here the President, just after smoking a peace pipe with the Dakota Sioux, stands with Rosebud Robe, prettiest of Indian maidens. (Underwood & Underwood)



1927 was a titanic year in sport, with personalities like Babe Ruth, who crashed his sixtieth home run in the last game of the season. The record still stands supreme—and so does the Babe. (Underwood & Underwood)

Baseball and boxing slugged it out for the limelight and in mid-September boxing won. In Chicago, World's Champion Gene Tunney (left) met Jack Dempsey for the famed Long Count. Fans are still talking about it. (Underwood & Underwood)





No one typified the Halcyon Twenties more than James J. Walker, the playboy Mayor of New York City. In 1927, Hizzoner took Mrs. Walker on the grandest of grand tours of Europe. Berliners greeted him as Jazz J. Walker, and everyone seemed to have a wonderful time. But back on Broadway the Mayor's friends knew his heart belonged to a cute little flapper-actress named Betty Compton. The Mayor's wife knew it too. (Underwood & Underwood)

still in love with a childhood sweetheart, now dead, whose pictures hung around the house. He liked outdoor life, Ruth liked indoor—preferably the kind that required money. After the marriage, Snyder stopped taking her to movies and plays. She found him physically unpleasant, yet the couple had a child named Lorraine who was nine years old in 1927. Snyder had wanted a boy and blamed his wife for bearing a girl. In time, the couple moved to a \$19,500 house in Queens Village. There Ruth Snyder noticeably failed to fit in with the neighbors, who mistook her general moroseness for illusions of superiority. Snyder was interested only in a few male friends in the neighborhood.

In 1925 Mrs. Snyder, then nearing 30, began making frequent daytime trips to New York City. With various women friends she hung around restaurants in the garment district, allowing men to buy her lunch. Eventually she was introduced to an unprepossessing corset salesman named Henry Judd Gray. His marriage was not as actively distasteful as hers, but it had been arranged by his well-to-do family and altogether lacked spark. Gray, too, had a daughter, aged eleven. He was a traveling salesman for the Bien Jolie Corset Company. This kept him on the road nine-tenths of the year, but there is no record that he tasted the fleshly delights which the traveling salesman's life supposedly provides.

As a corset salesman Gray had an easy road to seduction, if he chose to use it. He could offer a free sample of his wares, telling a girl she must try the corset on for size. This required her to disrobe partially, the next step being to undress all the way. With Mrs. Snyder, he unhesitatingly used this stratagem. He took her to the empty Bien Jolie office where she obligingly tried on a corset. Shortly they were indulging in intimate relations which were a revelation to both. At best these two were an unlikely pair of romantics—a large woman with latent powers of domination, the timid soul who had always been a

mother's boy and a sissy. Yet they made wonderful music. From that moment, their one idea was to be together—in bed, if possible. Mrs. Snyder increased the frequency of her trips to New York and the two spent illicit afternoons in rooms at the Waldorf Astoria and the Hotel Imperial. Sometimes she brought little Lorraine along and the child sat dangling legs from a lobby chair while her mother and Judd Gray dallied above. At other times Gray traveled to Queens Village. Then the two tumbled into bed in Lorraine's room.

Mrs. Snyder and her lover were not intellectual giants. A reporter later investigating the Snyder home wrote: "The family library consists of about twenty volumes, stressing the masterpieces of James Oliver Curwood and Elinor Glyn." Gray may have been more sensitive, but no more cultured. The great romance was carried on in baby talk. To Ruth Snyder, Judd Gray was Lover Boy, or Bud. To him, she was Momsie or Momie. Letters to one another were on the same level:

My own Lover Boy—All I keep thinking of is you, you lovable little cuss. I could eat you all up, could I get lit up and put out this blaze that is so much bother to me. Ah, yes, hon, let us get good and plastered—Ain't that a nice word? Beginning to think I'm that way on nothing. Hurry home, darling. I'll be waiting for you. All my love,

Momsie

Hello, Momie—How the dickens are you this bright, beautiful day anyway? Gee, it makes you feel like living again after all that rain yesterday. If we only have a nice day tomorrow. Now we will be all set, as we have had so many miserable Sundays. They are lonesome enough without having rain. This warm weather does not give me a heap of pep, and feel tired when the day is done . . . Well, old dear, I haven't much news, so will get this off and go grab a bite. Take care of yourself. As ever, sincerely,

Bud

Nearly a year elapsed before matters between these two happy lovers began taking a sinister turn. Then, slowly, Mrs.

Snyder became what the tabloids would call a Tiger Lady or Panther Woman. She signalized this change by repeatedly telling Judd Gray of her husband's indifference and cruelty. Often, she declared, he beat her. Gray's reaction to this was as expected. "I'd like to kill the beast," he vowed melodramatically. When he said this Mrs. Snyder propped herself up on an elbow—bed was the place she usually picked for her revelations—and in tones full of meaning asked, "Do you really mean that, Bud?"

Gray immediately said he did not: "Do you realize what it would mean in the eyes of God?" Yet, as if her lover's words had first planted the idea in her mind, Mrs. Snyder began harping on the murder of her husband. Gray was an agreeable moron, but the knowledge of what his Momsie had in mind became more than he could bear. He began to drink, and did so prodigiously. "I bought a pint"—"I bought a fifth"—"I had two or three drinks"—"I had four or five drinks"—"I finished the quart" became the sorry refrain of his eventual confession. While he guzzled Momsie begged, pleaded, argued. "You've got to do it," she insisted.

Mrs. Snyder tricked her husband into taking out an insurance policy which, with double indemnity, amounted to almost one hundred thousand dollars. Despairing of Judd Gray, she began giving her husband poison (in his prune whip), then tried to do away with him by gas and overdoses of sleeping pills. Snyder grew irritated and demanded to know why she had become so damn clumsy around the house. She persuaded Judd Gray to swallow test doses of arsenic in an effort to discover a lethal amount. Gray felt deathly sick after this. Albert Snyder—a tribute to love of the outdoor life—stayed healthy.

Again Mrs. Snyder turned to her paramour: "She asked me if I knew of any other plan and I said absolutely no, I could not help her out and she must see the thing through alone." Mrs. Snyder got her husband's permission to visit friends in

Canada, and for ten days traveled with Gray over his upstate sales territory. Togetherness only increased the pair's desire to be with each other at all times, and Mrs. Snyder stepped up the tempo of her urging. Finally, in mid-February, 1927, a drink-sodden Gray fell in with her plans. On a selling trip he bought a heavy iron sash weight, a bottle of chloroform, a pair of rubber gloves. These he gave to Mrs. Snyder over a lunch table on his return, but because little Lorraine was present nothing could be said about them. "Did you bring the things?" she merely asked. He nodded and handed her the heavy package. She carried it home to Queens.

Across another lunch table on March 7, 1927 Mrs. Snyder informed Gray that the time had come to kill her husband. The unhappy man protested, "I can't—I've never killed anyone in my life, and I'm not going to start now." Judd Gray was at the peak of his drinking power. He repaired to the restaurant men's room and in a few swallows killed an entire pint of bootleg hooch. Back at the table, he was more malleable. He agreed to go to Queens Village that night.

In the course of the afternoon and evening, the corset salesman drank two more fifths of booze. Late in the evening he stumbled aboard a bus for Queens Village. It was dark when he arrived: "I was quite intoxicated. I walked and I walked and I walked fully two hours or two hours and a half. There was no light in the cellar, no light upstairs—then I heard a knock on the kitchen window and I saw Mrs. Snyder motioning me to come in. I went up the back stairs. She was in her nightgown. She kissed me and had a bottle of whiskey in her hand with about half a pint in it."

Mrs. Snyder whispered that she was glad he had finally come—"They could do the job tonight." Gray wasn't up to it. "I can't go through with it, Momsie," he pleaded. "I can't." In a panic he kissed her, then bolted for the Long Island Rail Road station where he caught the train for New York.

Less than two weeks later, on the night of March 19th, Gray was again in Queens Village. This time he had traveled from the Onondaga Hotel in Syracuse. There he had persuaded a Syracuse friend to go to his hotel room the next morning, rumple the bed, make a few identifying phone calls, and hang a Do Not Disturb sign on the doorknob. "I'm playing a joke on someone," Gray had told this credulous pal.

As usual, the little man with the horn rims and cleft chin was drunk. He staggered getting off the bus at Queen Village. Nonetheless, he took a deep swig from a pocket flask before heading toward Momsie's house on 222nd Street. With him he carried a small black sample case, slightly larger than a doctor's bag. With this in hand, he walked up and down before the house. The Snyder home was dark, as Momsie had promised, for the family was making a rare visit to a Saturday night party.

Gray did not enter the house at this point. Instead he returned to the main street of Queens Village, to wander up and down for an hour, pausing from time to time for a conspicuous slug from the flask. It was as if his subconscious forced him to behave in a suspicious manner, in the hope that he might be arrested and prevented from committing a crime. But his unusual actions went unnoticed and at midnight Judd Gray returned to the Snyder home, going to the side door. It was unlocked, as Momsie had said. In the living room he found an unopened pack of cigarettes on a table—the signal he and Momsie had agreed upon. Tonight was the night.

Gray stumbled around the dark house, making his way upstairs to a room next to the Snyder bedroom. Under a pillow his searching hands found the five-pound sash weight he had given Mrs. Snyder in New York. Also a pair of pliers and a four-ounce bottle of whiskey. He drained the hooch at a gulp, then slid to the floor where he sat lifelessly, head in hands.

Fifteen minutes later the corset salesman was ransacking the

house for more booze. Finding a fifth in a bureau drawer, he drank most of it. Then he went back to his sales kit and removed the contents, "laying them out like a valet preparing his master's evening clothes," says the writer Wenzell Brown. Finished, he had two strands of wire, several strips of cotton cloth, a bottle of chloroform, rubber gloves, two colored handkerchiefs, and an Italian-language newspaper. He then picked up the sash weight and hefted it. The weight of it made him topple off balance and he sprawled incongruously to the floor.

At two in the morning he felt the need of another drink. He had started downstairs when the headlights of a car swept across the front windows of the house. The Snyders were back from the party. Gray rushed frantically back upstairs, tripping and sprawling. In the room containing the sash weight he fell into a chair, trying to hold his breath.

First Lorraine Snyder ran into the house and went to her room. Next Momsie came to the door and opened it a crack. "Are you there, Bud, dear?" she asked softly.

"Yes, Momsie."

"You just wait quietly. I'll be back as soon as I can."

Through the walls he heard the heavy footsteps of Albert Snyder mounting the stairs. Snyder went straight to the bathroom, where he showered noisily. There were sounds of Lorraine being put to bed, and of Albert Snyder settling himself in a twin bed in the bedroom. Shortly, loud snores told that he had fallen asleep.

Wearing a slip, Mrs. Snyder crept back to the dark room. "Did you find the sash weight?" she asked. "Yes," Gray whispered back. The two kissed and clung to one another for nearly an hour. At approximately three o'clock, Mrs. Snyder said, "Now." She took Gray by the hand and led him to the bedroom, where a light still burned. This was the first time Gray had seen Albert Snyder, and even now he could not see

him well for the recumbent man had yanked the bedclothes over his head. Gray took the sash weight in both hands. Approaching the bed he lifted it high. Perhaps because the outlines of Snyder's body were blurred, his first crashing blow was a glancing one, bouncing off the sleeping man's shoulder. Snyder emitted a roar of pain and started to rise in the bed. Gray raised the sash weight again, but this time Snyder's hands deflected the force of the blow. Snyder got a hand on Gray's necktie and started to pull. Gray dropped the sash weight and shouted, "Momsie, Momsie, for God's sake, help!"

Mrs. Snyder materialized on the other side of the bed. Grabbing the sash weight, she brought it down full on her husband's skull. It was the blow that kills, and Snyder collapsed. Gray leaped astride him, hands at the dying man's throat. "Where's the wire?" he demanded. Mrs. Snyder gave it to him and he coiled it around Snyder's neck like a noose, tightening it into the flesh with a silver pencil. "Give me a necktie for his feet," he said. He tied the feet together. By that time Gray was himself again. "I need a drink," he muttered.

Downstairs the two calmly sat drinking and conversing. "We've got to make it seem like a robbery," Mrs. Snyder finally remembered, and they began to ransack the house. Mrs. Snyder's jewelry was clumsily stuffed under the mattress of her bed. She gave Gray the seventy dollars that was in Snyder's wallet. Gray changed his bloody shirt for one of Albert Snyder's, and Momsie took off her bloody slip. Shirt and slip were burned in the furnace, while the sash weight was put into a nearby toolbox. Before the box was shut, Gray scattered ashes over the sash weight.

"Why did you do that?" Mrs. Snyder inquired.

"To make it look as if it's been there a long time," Gray answered.

It was now close to six o'clock. Gray had to catch a train for Syracuse at a quarter to nine and was anxious to leave. "You've

got to tie me up, knock me unconscious," Mrs. Snyder reminded him. Judd Gray, who had just leaped astride a dying man to throttle him to death, was aghast at this suggestion. "Oh, I couldn't strike you, Momsie," he protested.

In the end he bound her wrists and ankles and put a loose cheesecloth gag in her mouth. Then he took the Italian newspaper and placed it prominently—a sign of intruders of foreign tinge. Bidding farewell to Momsie, he appeared suddenly to be sickened by all that had happened. "It may be two months, it may be a year, it may be never before I see you again," he said hastily. Then he went. Mrs. Snyder gave him half an hour, then edged herself to Lorraine's door and thumped on it. "Call the neighbors," she cried, when the child woke.

The outside air had seemed to revive Judd Gray. He walked briskly to the nearest bus stop, where he made himself conspicuous by chatting with another man waiting for the bus. Nearby a policeman strolling his beat set up a row of bottles on a fence and proceeded to shoot them down. Gray walked over to congratulate him on his marksmanship.

At Jamaica he decided to ride to Grand Central Station by taxi. He was garrulous in the cab, but when the \$3.50 trip ended he bestowed a five-cent tip. The driver glared at him in outrage; never would he forget the guileless countenance of Henry Judd Gray. On the Syracuse train Gray killed a pint that Momsie had given him and chatted animatedly with conductors. At the Onondaga Hotel he entered the door marked Do Not Disturb and noted with satisfaction that his friend had done a convincing job of rumpling the bed. Removing the ticket stub which told that he had been to New York, he carelessly tossed it in the wastebasket.

Why bother to be careful? Hadn't he and Momsie just committed the perfect crime?

By the time the Syracuse train arrived in New York City,

Judd Gray had given a full confession to the Queens County detectives. He pictured Mrs. Snyder lifting the sash weight to crash it down on her husband's skull. In turn, Mrs. Snyder's confession branded Snyder a monster. She swore that Albert Snyder had threatened to kill her, and that over her frantic objections Gray had murdered the husband to save her life. Despite variations, the two confessions gave a fearful, graphic description of the night of crime. Justice moved swiftly. The murderers were indicted a short three days after the crime had been committed. The trial date was set for April 18th, only a month after the murder night.

In that month the Mississippi River overflowed its banks, creating an area of grim national disaster . . . In the air Bert Acosta and Clarence Chamberlin took off in a Wright Bellanca plane and, with the aid of refueling from other planes, remained aloft fifty-one hours, eleven minutes, and twenty-five seconds, to break the world's flying endurance record. This did not mean that planes could be refueled in mid-air on the projected flights to Paris. But it did prove—aside from stunt aspects—that airplanes manufactured in 1927 were capable of long flights, provided the weather remained good and enough fuel could be carried . . . In Boston two Italian-born men, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, stood before Judge Webster Thayer and heard themselves sentenced to die in the electric chair during the week of July 10th . . .

Such events, however, did little to distract attention from Long Island City. The Snyder-Gray murder was a clumsy one, brutally perpetrated. Damon Runyon called it the "Dumbbell Murder"—"because it was so dumb." Yet as trials of the century went, the case had it. More inches of newspaper space would be devoted to it than to any other trial before or since in America—not excluding the Hauptmann trial in 1935. "The Snyder-Gray case was a pallid one compared to the lurid Browning case, or the Hall-Mills case of the previous year,"

one expert has written. "It was a cheap crime in which cheap people were concerned, and there never was any doubt about their guilt. But there was an abundance of blood and sex, both delightfully revolting."

Or perhaps other emotions were involved. The Queens Village murder was widely hailed as one which could happen anywhere. Alexander Woolcott believed: "Ruth Snyder was so like the woman across the street that many an American husband was haunted by the realization that she also bore an embarrassing resemblance to the woman across the breakfast table." Others saw Mrs. Snyder differently. They cited the fact that on every street in the land there is a woman the other women disapprove of. On her block in Queens Village Mrs. Snyder had played this unenviable role. Now housewives the country over were delighted by the fact that she was getting her comeuppance.

With both partners to the crime on record with long confessions, the chief matter to decide was whether they should be tried together. This was of particular concern to Judd Gray's lawyers, since the meek little man appeared to be the public favorite. A world that wrote twenty thousand letters a week to Clara Bow could not resist writing to Judd Gray who, though he had just committed a dumbbell crime, seemed a pathetic Casper Milquetoast who had operated under the unholy spell of the Tiger Woman.

In Queens County jail Judd Gray received so much mail that two additional cells were needed to hold it. Mrs. Snyder received no letters. Nor did Gray read his, for the timid little murderer seemed to have gone into a cataleptic trance. All day he sat studying the hands folded quietly on his lap. His lawyers tried to get him to make decisions. Never had a woman been sent to the electric chair in Queens County, they told him. Further, while he now seemed to be the public favorite, Mrs. Snyder might snatch this public sympathy were she tried

first. It was best for the two to be tried together, lawyers urged. Gray unblinkingly studied his hands. His lawyers took this as acquiescence and went ahead.

As such problems engrossed the defense, the physical properties of the court were readied for the trial-of-the-century. The courtroom of the Queens County Courthouse in Long Island City was one of the most imposing (though not the most beautiful) in the country. In 1922 Cecil B. De Mille had chosen it as the background for scenes in his epic film *Manslaughter*, starring Leatrice Joy and Thomas Meighan. Even so, the facilities of this courtroom would be strained beyond capacity by the upcoming trial. Over 130 newspaper reporters and special feature writers had already been assigned seats, which left a scant hundred for the crowds clamoring to get in. So an interesting innovation in American trials was conceived. Amplifiers were strung through the courthouse corridors. Witness and lawyers would speak into microphones and their words would blare forth in the corridors outside.

Next a huge Western Union switchboard, built especially for the Hall-Mills trial, was reassembled in a special room. Western Union was proud of its telegraph switchboard and prepared a special brochure on it: "This switchboard is a famous institution. It is . . . the only portable electric switchboard in existence which is capable of handling 20,000 words an hour. It is a gigantic metal box into which 108 wires can be jacked at once, opening direct and instantaneous communication with newspaper offices in every section of the country."

Meanwhile, newspapers themselves beat drums over plans to give the trial saturation coverage. Here, pious superiority would be the theme. Ruth Snyder and Judd Gray were admittedly guilty, and newspapers planned only to illuminate the depth of their guilt. An indication of this came when the *Daily Mirror* printed what has often been cited as a low point in journalism. It was a picture of nine-year-old Lorraine Snyder leaving her

father's funeral, trying to hide her startled face from a photographer's flash. Stated the caption: "The *Daily Mirror* will not print a photograph showing the face of an innocent child, but reproduces this picture as a great moral lesson. Do you think Mrs. Snyder would have loosed her passions if she could have seen this picture before she committed the crime?"

As the trial date approached, newspapers announced that testimony would be covered by such master reporters as Damon Runyon, Edwin C. Hill, and Courtenay Terrett. Also present would be feature writers in quantity never before known. To readers of the twenty-five newspapers of the Scripps-Howard chain, Dr. Will Durant would offer his special philosophic comments on the trial. Other special writers included theatrical producer David Belasco; the film director David Wark Griffith (assisting him, Maureen Watkins, author of the play *Chicago*); the mystery novelist Mary Roberts Rinehart; the celebrated revivalist Aimee Semple McPherson (for the *Graphic*); the Fundamentalist preacher Dr. John Roach Straton; and the playwright Willard Mack, author of *The Moose*. For the *New York Post*, W. E. Woodward, debunker and author of the novel *Bunk*, set the tenor of the occasion by declaring before the trial that testimony in the courtroom would show "Hot love, the throbbing tom-toms of jazz and the tawdry splendor of night clubs—the rhythmic beat of the heart's desire."

By far the most remarkable special writer appointed to cover the event was Peggy Hopkins Joyce, the much-married glamour girl of the Twenties. In all, Miss Joyce married some five or six times, a record surpassed by numerous other members of her sex. Yet she squeezed so much publicity from each that she became a living symbol of the rising divorce rate currently agitating right-thinking people. The much-married Peggy was a perennial news source, though reporters had trouble deciding whether she was an intelligent girl or a Lorelei Lee straight out of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*. There was evidence on both

sides. At a dinner party Miss Joyce had been surveyed through a lorgnette by a haughty dowager who inquired, "Young lady, why do you get married so much?" To this Peggy answered brightly, "I owe it to my pubic."

But on another occasion Miss Joyce was told that many fine people lived on the West Side of Manhattan. Now she turned haughty. "Whom, for n'instance?" she inquired. At the Snyder-Gray trial Miss Joyce did little to clear up the bewilderment about her mental stature. She arrived in an ermine coat and told everyone she was too thrilled for words at being a reporter. Then at the end of the first day she buttonholed a fellow scribe and asked, "Say, what's going on here, anyway?"

Long Island City was a short five-cent subway ride from New York City. It also lay in one of New York's most populous boroughs, with a mammoth housewife population. Where White Plains had been an hour's ride by train, Long Island City was easily accessible and the crowds turning out on the morning of April 25th (the jury had been selected the week before) were correspondingly large. In his book on the case Fred J. Cook writes:

No first night of a Eugene O'Neill play ever drew a fuller house, a more distinguished audience . . . Fashionable society women, one titled English couple [the Marquis of Queensberry and his wife], millionaires, writers, playwrights, physicians and just plain housewives vied for seats on the hard, high-backed benches. Outside, in the corridors, avid hundreds milled. These would not be able to see, but they could hear. Microphones had been set up before the witness stand and bench, and every word of the life-and-death drama, grotesquely magnified, would boom out into the courtroom and into the corridors beyond through two large, horn-shaped amplifiers.

The Snyder-Gray murder is often dismissed as a clumsy crime, with a trial to match. This is not fair. Though details of the case were well known beforehand, the trial was packed

with moments of drama. One of its sessions stands as perhaps the most thrill-charged in American trial history. One reason for tense courtroom drama was the supporting cast. Indeed, if Cecil De Mille himself had appeared to redirect *Manslaughter* he could not have evoked more picturesque acting.

Judge Townsend Scudder, massive and dignified, might have been type-cast by Hollywood. District Attorney Richard S. Newcombe was tall, grayish, balding, and dignified, with a rasping voice that could drip acid. His assistant was Charles W. Froessel, a huge, dynamic man with a booming vocal equipment that thundered contempt at witnesses. Mrs. Snyder retained Edgar F. Hazelton and Dana Wallace, both lights of the Queens County bar and prominent men in the community. Hazelton was a natty dresser who affected a pince-nez on a black cord and white piping on his vest. Wallace, a terrier-like fellow, favored expensive tweeds and astounded reporters by his out-of-court consumption of Bromo-Seltzer.

As if to point up differences from Mrs. Snyder, Judd Gray (or those acting for him) had retained two "average" lawyers. They were Samuel L. Miller and William J. Millard, both skilled at underplaying when the opposition overplayed.

Of this galaxy Hazelton possessed the most striking histrionic gifts. Picturing Judd Gray on the murder night, "He distorted his face, bent over like a hunchback, thrust forth his chin, and stretched his arms out with clawlike fingers extended in a strangler's grip."

As court convened on the first day, Mrs. Snyder and Judd Gray were led in and seated at the defense table, a scant fifteen feet apart. Neither glanced at the other. Mrs. Snyder was dressed entirely in widow's weeds, with a strand of imitation pearls around her neck. In moments of tension her fingers wound this strand tight, and at least once the tightened pearls pinched her skin hard enough to draw a drop of blood. Gray wore a blue double-breasted suit with a white handkerchief

peeking gallantly from the breast pocket. He still seemed in a stupor of hopelessness, capable only of studying the hands folded neatly on his lap.

Some of those who had squeezed into the courtroom had brought opera glasses the better to scrutinize the defendants. They saw that, despite an overstrong chin, the Tiger Woman was an attractive female, much more so than expected. "Put Peggy Joyce's clothes on her and she might be better looking than Peggy," a sob sister wrote realistically. Mrs. Snyder's naturally blond hair was marcelled to perfection. For the most part she sat without a flicker of emotion, causing reporters to marvel at her marble calm. Her skin was clear, eyes a dazzling ice blue. Her childhood had been sickly and unhappy, and no romance entered her life until she encountered Albert Snyder. Despite this, the tabloids had labeled her a jazz baby, a party girl, an unregenerate flapper. Her good looks in the courtroom made all this seem quite possible.

With an all-male jury seated in the box, it became apparent that each defendant planned to blame the other. Mrs. Snyder's lawyer called Judd Gray "a gay deceiver" (this seemed so farfetched that titters ran through the courtroom). "We will prove to you," Hazelton continued undeterred, "that Ruth Snyder is not the demimondaine that Gray would like to paint her, but that she is a real loving wife, a good wife; that it was not her fault that brought about the condition that existed in that home—"

Judd Gray's lawyer addressed the jurors with quiet confidence: "He was dominated by a cold, heartless, calculating master mind and master will. He was a helpless mendicant of a designing, deadly, conscienceless, abnormal woman, a human serpent, a human fiend in the guise of a woman. He became inveigled and drawn into this hopeless chasm, where reason was gone, where mind was gone, where manhood was gone, and where his mind was weakened by lust and passion."

According to Mrs. Snyder's defense, Judd Gray had struck the death blow and compounded his guilt by strangling the dying (or dead) Snyder. Gray—in the story that came to be accepted as the true one—accused her of grabbing up the sash weight as he dropped it, then dealing the death blow. Thus the defense was a house sharply divided, and instead of one trial in the Queens County Courthouse there seemed to be two, with no less than three sets of furiously battling attorneys.

High moments of the trial began immediately, with the appearance in the witness stand of Police Commissioner George V. McLaughlin. New York's top cops in those days usually came from the ranks of business—McLaughlin's successor would be Grover Whalen, the superlatively dressed carnation-wearer who was the city's official greeter as well as the President of Wanamaker's. McLaughlin had been an executive of the Brooklyn Trust Company. A giant of a man, he spoke with the commanding authority of one who expects to be obeyed and believed. In calm, unhurried tones he described the Sunday during which Ruth Snyder had given so many rambling stories before naming Judd Gray. Then he told of interviewing Gray on his return from Syracuse. The Commissioner was not one to omit pungent details. Speaking of Mrs. Snyder, he recalled how she had objected to the fact that her confession said she *killed* her husband. "That word *kill* sounds so cruel that I don't like to use it," she complained. "But didn't you kill him?" she was asked. "Yes," she said, "but I don't like to use that term—I'd rather have it say *got rid of him*." Re-creating Gray's confession, the Commissioner testified that Gray had said Mrs. Snyder picked up the sash weight and belabored her husband. "Those were Gray's words," the Commissioner repeated portentously. "He said, *belabored him*." Silence in the courtroom was utter and absolute.

As witnesses continued, preacher-turned-reporter John Roach Straton wrote: "Literally every one of the Ten Commandments

has been trampled on during this time." His colleague Aimee Semple McPherson called upon God to teach young men to say: "I want a wife like mother—not a Red Hot Cutie." Judd Gray's mother and sister (but never his wife) were in the courtroom, as was Mrs. Snyder's elderly mother. Also present were such stage celebrities as Nora Bayes, Leon Errol, Francine Larrimore, and One-Eyed Connolly, the gate-crashing champion of the era. In the halls outside the courtroom "frustration and excitement built up . . . Crowds shoved and struggled and milled for positions of vantage near the closed and guarded doors. The sound of their contention, a noisy, ominous racket, penetrated even into the taut and expectant sanctum of justice."

Mrs. Snyder and Judd Gray seldom looked at each other. Love had turned to hate after the confessions, and events in the courtroom only deepened it. Few in the spectator seats bothered to notice Gray, still sunk in an empty trance. Mrs. Snyder was far more rewarding, for at intervals she engaged in the vamplike theatrics of the murder morning. When she disagreed with testimony, the glacial woman swung her head like a metronome forming the words *No-No-No* silently with her mouth. At one point Judd Gray's confession was read in court. She reacted violently to his statement that he looked back on her as no more than "A good pal to spend an evening with—I will say, to use the slang, that she played me pretty hard for a while."

At these words Mrs. Snyder turned like a desperate animal to glare at the back of Gray's head: "Her eyelids drew down until only the blue, hard glint of her eyes showed behind them, and her face was contorted into an expression of rage and disgust." For several seconds, she glowered balefully at the unknowing Gray. Then with a vigorous, positive, and loud "No," she swung back to further histrionics while the confession was

read. Several times after this she commented so loudly that her attorneys had to shush her.

Mrs. Snyder's courtroom emoting won few friends. When she mounted the witness stand late in the afternoon of May 2nd, the courtroom was definitely against her. In an effort to present his client as a wronged woman, Hazelton led her through the story of a barren childhood. When Mrs. Snyder stated that as a teenager she had taught a Sunday School class, the crowd laughed. There were giggles when she told what a good mother she had been to Lorraine. "Your Honor, I must object to this twittering behind me," said Hazelton, after Mrs. Snyder had virtuously declared that she neither smoked nor drank. The twittering turned to incredulous gasps when the Panther Woman pictured Judd Gray as a fiend and swore that she lived in terror of him. After she told of tearfully begging Gray not to murder her husband, there was such an outburst that Judge Scudder spoke sternly from the bench: "There must be no moving about, no bobbing up in seats, no comments, no giving way to expressions of sentiment or feeling, and above all no levity."

At the afternoon session of May 3rd, the fashion plate Hazelton nodded to the prosecution table and said, "Your witness." Assistant District Attorney Froessel, he of the large frame and booming voice, approached the black-clad witness like an animal stalking its prey. Up to now Mrs. Snyder had been a composed witness, not visibly affected by the hostile atmosphere of the courtroom. She had painted a portrait of virtue: a blameless childhood, martyrdom as an unloved wife, moments of horror under the influence of the archfiend, Judd Gray. Froessel tore at this. He began by proving her a liar on numerous occasions: "You lied to the neighbors?" "Yes."—"You lied to the policemen?" "Yes."—"You lied to the detectives?" "Yes."—"You lied to Commissioner McLaughlin?" "Yes."—"You lied to the Assistant District Attorney?" "Yes."—"You

lied to your mother?" "Yes."—"You lied to your daughter?" "Yes."—"You lied to everybody that spoke to you or with you?" "Yes." By the end of the afternoon session, Mrs. Snyder had turned into a hedging, faltering, driven witness, giving answers so illogical that she was forced to amend them an instant after they left her mouth.

On Wednesday morning, May 4th, Mrs. Snyder mounted the witness stand to face a Froessel who quickly trapped her in further inconsistencies. Her cheekbones seemed to jut sharply from under her pale skin as she fell back on the time-honored answers of the trapped witness: "I don't know," "I don't recall," "I don't remember." Now Froessel pulled a master stroke. Taking her original, fifty-three-page confession he read it aloud sentence by sentence. At the end of each, he paused to demand, "Is this the truth?" At first Mrs. Snyder's replies were all *Yes*. But with the description of the murder, her answers became a damning series of *No*'s. During this, one reporter wrote: "She bore no resemblance to the calm and resolute witness who had taken the stand to tell her story under the guidance of Hazelton. Her resistance sapped by the progressive involvement in contradictions for which she had no logical explanation, she answered questions almost listlessly. At moments she appeared to say almost anything Froessel wanted her to say. At others she rallied belligerently to deny the truth of statements she had just made."

The haggard Ruth Snyder who stepped down from the witness stand at five minutes after two barely had strength to reach the defense table. There she slumped in the chair and buried her face in a handkerchief. It was an emotion-drenched moment, with more to come. "Lorraine Snyder," the bailiff shouted and the nine-year-old child tripped demurely down the aisle. It was such intense drama that even the judge lost his monumental gravity. He bent down from the bench and spoke to Lorraine in fatherly tones, urging her not to be frightened.

Then the child was led through five minutes of questioning about the night of the crime.

First the excitement of the Tiger Woman cracking on the stand, then the shattering pathos of the woman's daughter in court! Those present felt they could stand no more. When the name "Henry Judd Gray" rang out, a deep sigh seemed to pass over the courtroom. It was a sigh of neither pleasure nor anticipation, but rather an *oh-no* from people whose taut nerves were stretching unbearably.

As Judd Gray rose to his feet those in the courtroom noted something overlooked during the concentration on Ruth Snyder's testimony. For days Gray had sat dejectedly, a broken man. Now the energy that drained from Mrs. Snyder seemed to have reached him. He stood with an almost soldierly erectness—"as if someone had pumped air into him," Damon Runyon wrote. On the witness stand he was alert and confident, his manner that of a man determined to save himself, in the eyes of his Maker at least, by telling the absolute truth. Slowly, methodically, he began. At one point the majestic Judge Scudder tried to prod him along by saying, "You told us that a moment ago." Gray would not be hurried. "Let me tell it my way," he answered primly.

The witness spoke impersonally, as if everything had happened to another man. "It was the autobiography of a murderer who apparently forgot nothing and desired to tell all," the *New York Times* stated. As Gray testified, Mrs. Snyder turned ashen. She sat like stone as he came to the night of the murder: "I put on rubber gloves. I took the sash weight and gave her the chloroform. I gave her a piece of wire. She carried the handkerchief with the cotton waste. The bottle of chloroform was wrapped in the Italian newspaper—I had my glasses off. She took me by the hand. We went out into the hall. The door of her husband's room was practically closed except for a crack. She entered the room and I followed her. I don't know

how many seconds I stood there trying to get my bearings. I struck him on the head, as nearly as I could, one blow. I think I hit him another blow, because with the first blow he raised up in bed and started to holler. I went over on the bed on top of him, and tried to get the bedclothes over his mouth, so as to suppress his cries—”

At this point, an agonized cry tore through the rapt silence of the court. It was Warren Schneider, the murdered man's brother, who began shouting, “Albert! Albert! Make him stop! For God's sake, make him stop!” Bailiffs leaped on Schneider and pulled him from the room.

During this, Judd Gray sat with eyes closed. With quiet restored he continued matter-of-factly: “He was apparently full of fight. He got me by the necktie. I was getting the worst of it because I was being choked. I hollered, *Momsie, Momsie, for God's sake help me!* I had dropped the sash weight. She came over and took the weight and hit him on the head . . .”

Here another scream rent the air. It came from Mrs. Snyder who, with face contorted, leaped forward as if to reach the witness and tear the tongue from his throat. Matrons hauled her back and she threw herself over the defense table sobbing. From the corridor outside came further cries. Warren Schneider had collapsed and his wife was hysterically screaming for help. In the midst of this bedlam Judd Gray slumped forward in the witness chair, his arms dangling lifelessly. He had fainted.

On this note of courtroom chaos, Judge Scudder adjourned court for the day.

Judd Gray's testimony had carried enormous impact. Outside on the courthouse steps playwright William Mack struck a stance and pontificated: “I say to you that if ever human lips uttered the truth, this was the time!” Behind him David Belasco nodded sage agreement. Next morning Gray was again

on the stand, continuing his passionless recital. On cross-examination, the terrier-like Dana Wallace tried desperately to shake him, but it could not be done. Wallace tried to make much of the fact that one of Mrs. Snyder's medical experts contradicted Gray on details of the crime. "I was there, Mr. Wallace, and the doctor was not," Gray replied quietly—that was the end of that. When Gray stepped down, he said aloud, "I have told the truth."

Summations were long and replete with purple passages. A weekend intervened, so that it was not until the late afternoon of May 9 that Judge Scudder completed his charge to the jury. It had been a two-week trial, but the twelve good men deliberated for only one hour and thirty-seven minutes. Ruth Snyder and Judd Gray were led back into court, looking incredibly confident. The foreman of the jury read the verdict everyone else expected: "We find the defendants guilty of murder in the first degree." This meant the electric chair. Mrs. Snyder gasped and dropped into a chair. Gray turned white and also sat. Seemingly both had expected, deep-down, to get away with the Dumbbell Murder.

5 "Plucky Lindy's Lucky Day"

ON THE afternoon of the verdict in the Snyder-Gray trial, the city room of the *Evening Graphic* was in the grip of peculiar tensions. The *Porno-Graphic* had stopped at nothing in its low-down treatment of the case and its readers were waiting breathlessly for the news that crime did not pay. On page one of its first edition of the day the *Graphic* headlined expectantly SNYDER VERDICT NEAR. Then astounding instructions had come from publisher Bernard Macfadden himself. Mr. Macfadden ordered that another story be combined with the Snyder case in later editions. This provoked much city room muttering about front office interference, not to mention amateurs in the newspaper business. For every professional newspaperman knew that a banner headline should stress only a single story.

Nevertheless, the *Graphic* editors bent collective backs and prepared the kind of headline Mr. Macfadden wanted:

FRENCH FLIERS
LAND IN TIME TO
HEAR SNYDER VERDICT

This was an odd headline in more ways than one—and it signaled a transition in the world every bit as abrupt as that on the *Graphic's* front page. The United States had been looking downward, wallowing in the mud of the Snyder-Gray trial. Yet even as the couple were sentenced to die in the Sing Sing electric chair the country was suddenly forced to turn eyes upward. Never again would the world look down so low again, and during the rest of the summer of 1927 it would look very high indeed.

In the early dawn of May 8th, the French fliers Nungesser and Coli had taken off from Paris in an attempt to win the \$25,000 Orteig Prize for a non-stop New York-Paris (or Paris-New York) flight. Like true Frenchmen, the aces had taken off in bravura style. Captain Charles Nungesser had shot down forty-seven German planes in World War I, sustaining so many wounds himself that many parts of his chunky body were patched together with platinum. François Coli, his navigator and copilot, had only one eye as a result of war service. Their plane was a single-engine biplane christened the White Bird, and a large crowd watched as, at five in the morning, it lumbered into the air carrying a heavy load of gasoline. For a time the White Bird had been accompanied by an escort of six other planes, but soon it outdistanced these planes and headed alone toward New York.

As it flew, elation swept Paris. France had been one of the great nations in the world until the end of World War I. It was still great, with Americans feeling a special pull to it because so many doughboys had fought on French soil in 1917-18. But already France could feel itself slipping and with this came a sense of inferiority. *If only French aviators could be the first to span the Atlantic!*—As the White Bird flew on, Paris gave over to a carnival mood. Not since the Armistice in 1918 had there been such celebration. Business and government offices began to close, leaving the populace free to fill the

streets hugging, kissing, and congratulating one another. Tension rose through the day and at night fireworks over the Tuileries kept up the fever pitch.

Next morning the frenzy was far greater, for this was the day on which the fliers could be expected to land. ALL NEW YORK TO GREET FLIERS AT THE BATTERY, read the headline in the *Paris Herald*, while stories in French papers were so optimistic that already the flight seemed to have succeeded. It was anticipated that Nungesser and Coli would take some thirty-six hours to reach New York, but even before this—at five that night—*L’Intransigeant* brought out an Extra saying that the Frenchmen had landed at four-thirty-five Paris time. The details of this story were highly picturesque. They said that, after circling the Statue of Liberty three times, the White Bird had landed in the flower-strewn waters of New York harbor.

France went wild. Crowds around newspaper offices were further inflamed by the posting of a purported interview with a triumphant Nungesser. Paris abandoned itself to a delirium of hero worship. That night the luminous signboard over the Place de l’Opéra added confirmation to the story of the landing, and the joyous frenzy of the crowds rose to new heights.

In New York, the story was far different. Through the afternoon a crowd gathered at the Battery, for the White Bird was equipped to land on water and Nungesser had announced his intention of landing as near the Statue of Liberty as possible. Rumors swept the waiting groups, but these lacked the sublime conviction of those bringing hope to Paris. There was absolutely no activity in the air around the Battery and nothing to watch. An electric feeling of success seemed to be totally absent and most of those who had gathered in the afternoon departed with the coming of night—as the contemporary troubadour Vernon Dalhart would sing in a Tin Pan Alley lament called “Two French Fliers”:

A great crowd was waiting to greet them
In old New York town far away . . .

The eyes of the world were upon them
As they sailed proudly on through the night
And the thought never came for a moment
That this was to be their last flight.

But if nothing else, the attempt of Nungesser and Coli for the first time focused attention on the lanky airmail pilot whose plans to fly the Atlantic nonstop had been announced early in March.

On the day Nungesser and Coli took off, the Associated Press assigned reporters to obtain statements from other aspirants in the Orteig race. At Roosevelt and Curtiss Fields on Long Island, Commander Byrd, Clarence Chamberlin, and Bert Acosta dutifully wished the Frenchmen well. In San Diego, California, a reporter found Captain Charles A. Lindbergh completing tests on his sleek monoplane, the Spirit of St. Louis, so named because financial backing for his flight had come from St. Louis businessmen anxious to make their city world famous. Lindbergh and his single-engine monoplane were particularly close; indeed it almost seemed that pilot and plane were one. Where other Orteig entrants would fly planes conceived by designers like Anthony Fokker and Guiseppe Bellanca, Lindbergh had—after attempting to buy a Bellanca—gone ahead and designed his own. The Spirit of St. Louis was his brain child. In many ways it was an individual craft, so compact that space permitted no radio or safety equipment. In the Spirit of St. Louis the gas tank was right before the pilot's eyes, so that he had to use periscopes sliding to right and left to see straight ahead. At San Diego, Lindbergh had been perfecting himself in the art of flying blind—that is, by instrument only.

The Associated Press reporter found Lindbergh just as the twenty-five-year-old pilot was about to leave for St. Louis, on

the first leg of his flight to Curtiss Field. Lindbergh, too, wished the French fliers well, then squeezed his tall body into the wicker seat of his plane. With a quiet efficiency soon to be famous the world over, he flew by compass straight to St. Louis, setting a new record of fourteen hours and five minutes. After pausing for a day, he went on to New York, establishing another record. Altogether, the flight from San Diego took twenty-one hours and forty-five minutes, a third record.

His plane, glinting gold in the afternoon sun, passed over New York in midafternoon and landed at Curtiss Field shortly after. The Lindbergh Legend, which had begun to build with the record solo flight from San Diego to St. Louis, now received enormous momentum from the reporters who greeted the youthful flier. The *New York Times* rapturously described him as a daring young man who looked more like a boy, and went on to enthuse: “His pink cheeks, dancing eyes, and merry grin seemed to say, *Hello, folks, here I am all ready to go.*”

“Slim” Lindbergh, as he was generally known at this point, did indeed appear the image of the All-American boy, the Eagle Scout grown up. His fresh, young face radiated modesty and boyish confidence, and the general look of cleancut youthfulness was increased by his semi-military outfit of khakis, leather flying jacket, and leather puttees or high woolen socks. In person, he was quiet and spoke only when spoken to, but there was nothing boorish in his silence. He was merely a young man who preferred his own thoughts.

A whiff of such fresh American manhood was much needed at Curtiss Field and nearby Roosevelt Field, for the Orteig sweepstakes had been undergoing a period of unpleasant stress. The careful, science-only preparations of Commander Byrd had been somewhat marred late in April when his tri-motor *America* made a test flight with designer Anthony Fokker at the controls. On landing, the plane turned turtle and landed ignominiously on its back. Floyd Bennett, the regular pilot,

was seriously injured, and Byrd's wrist was broken. Reporters rushing to the scene found Fokker and the high-strung Byrd engaged in an angry shouting match. Byrd's hand dangled grotesquely as he gestured. He was so infuriated that he had not noticed his broken wrist.

When Lindbergh landed at Curtiss Field, Floyd Bennett was still in the hospital, and had pulled out of the transatlantic flight. Byrd, wrist in splints, barely spoke to Fokker, and the *America* was undergoing delicate repairs. Still more emotion had been generated by Byrd's rival in the transatlantic race which, with Lindbergh's arrival, became three-cornered. This stemmed from the *Columbia*, a yellow single-engine plane designed by Guiseppe Bellanca—the plane Lindbergh had tried to purchase for his own flight. The *Columbia's* pilot was thirty-three-year-old Clarence Chamberlin, who as far back as 1902 had displayed a mechanical bent by tinkering the family car in his home town of Denison, Iowa. "We used to fix the car all week, so we could drive it on Sunday," he was fond of recalling. Chamberlin had studied electrical engineering at Iowa State College. In World War I, he had been a flying instructor. He then turned flying barnstormer, acquiring so much skill that fellow pilots stated respectfully, "Clarence could fly a sewing machine if he felt like it."

At all times friendly, easygoing and relaxed, Chamberlin seemed to be the only person able to get along with Charles A. Levine, the financial backer of the *Columbia* flight. The squat, bald Levine was only thirty, but already he was a self-made millionaire several times over. He was informally known as the Millionaire Junkman, and aviators complained that he managed the *Columbia* flight as if buying more junk. Yet Levine had left his junk days far behind. A native of North Adams, Massachusetts, he had graduated to canny purchases of war surplus and later to high-echelon deals in such commodities as steel. In his home borough of Brooklyn, Levine had another

distinction. He was known as the lucky man who married Grace S. Nova, called the Belle of Williamsburg because of the monotonous regularity with which she won local beauty contests.

Wherever Levine went, swirling controversy followed. In April, Chamberlin and Bert Acosta had set a new world's endurance record in the *Columbia*. Since these two men were pilots it was decided that both could not go on a transatlantic flight; a navigator was necessary. Financial-backer Levine refused to pick the man who would fly the *Columbia* on its great trip. "I'm letting the boys guess," he told reporters. "Keeps them up on their toes." The proud Acosta was so infuriated by this that he resigned on the spot, offering his services to Commander Byrd in place of the injured Bennett. Officially, Acosta gave overweight as the reason for his resignation. This excuse was rendered ludicrous when Levine hired Lloyd Bertaud as his navigator. Bertaud weighed 190 pounds.

Next Levine and the *Columbia's* designer, Guiseppe Bellanca, began to express disapproval of each other. Then Lloyd Bertaud joined anti-Levine forces. Bertaud was an impatient type, eager for an early take off. Bellanca, Levine, and Chamberlin were in favor of awaiting fine summer weather. Feelings rose so high that Bertaud accused Levine of acting in bad faith. The bulky navigator angrily charged that the Millionaire Junkman had no intention of permitting the *Columbia* flight; he would wait until someone else succeeded, then call it off. Thus he would gain all the publicity with none of the risk.

An infuriated Levine fired Bertaud, then reluctantly rehired him. Urged on by Bertaud, the *Columbia* group announced a take off on May 10th, and in France a series of beacon flares were put up between Cherbourg and Le Bourget Field in Paris. On the morning of the Nungesser-Coli take off the weather report was bad. Yet one reason the French fliers decided to fly

that day was that the departure of the Columbia on the 10th appeared so definite.

Instead, on the morning of the 10th the controversy between Levine and Bertaud had reached the courts, where Bertaud was suing to buy the plane. Only Chamberlin seemed undisturbed by all this. On the afternoon Lindbergh landed, the older, ever-relaxed pilot ambled over and greeted him in friendly fashion. The two compared planes and prospects. Soon Commander Byrd appeared and in an historic moment the three shook hands and said to one another, *May the best man win*. The thirty-seven-year-old Byrd, ever the Virginia gentleman, offered his rivals the use of his superior runway on Roosevelt Field—an offer both eventually accepted. Then the three went their varying ways: Byrd back to his shipshape headquarters at Roosevelt Field, Chamberlin and Lindbergh to their messy, workman-like hangars at Curtiss.

The shy, boyish Lindbergh instantly became the public favorite among the three contenders. For him the press coined such affectionate names as Slim, Lindy, Lucky Lindy, Plucky Lindy, and the Flying Kid. The tabloids dubbed him the Flyin' Fool, a name Lindbergh resented since there was absolutely nothing foolish about his preparations for this or any flight. On the other hand, he seemed rather to like the more dignified appellation Lone Eagle. All Lindbergh's thoughts were single-mindedly beamed on the coming flight and he did not relish the constant interest of the press. In his book *The Spirit of St. Louis*, published in 1953, he acidly pictures male and female reporters putting such questions as: "Do you carry a rabbit's foot?"—"What's your favorite pie?"—"Have you got a sweet-heart?"—"How do you feel about girls?"

The three planes poised for the transatlantic race of 1927 were equipped with Wright Whirlwind motors. This placed a burden on the public-relations firm run by Harry Bruno and

Richard Blythe, which represented Wright in New York City. On learning that the unsophisticated Lindbergh was winging his way east, Bruno had phoned the Wright company. "What do you want us to do?" he asked. "Protect him from the exploiters and the mob," he was told.

Richard Blythe elected to do this personally, and so became an early discoverer of certain peculiarities in the Lindbergh temperament. Because it was Blythe's job to arrange press interviews, Lindbergh was intensely suspicious of him. Yet Blythe decided it was necessary to remain with the Lone Eagle at all times, even to the extent of bunking with him. On Lucky Lindy's first night on Long Island the two repaired to a double room at the Garden City Hotel. "There," Blythe has said, "we bedded down like two strange wildcats, each in his own hole."

Next day Blythe heard Lindbergh ask a Wright executive, "Who is this fellow Blythe, and who is Bruno?" "They're your buffers," he was told. "You need them." Lindbergh still seemed doubtful, but he permitted Blythe to remain by his side.

From this point of vantage, Blythe found that despite a slim and boyish appearance Lindbergh was a prodigious devourer of food. For breakfast he put away six eggs, plus a steak or chops. At Curtiss Field, he unobtrusively hung up a never-to-be-beaten record for solo consumption of hot dogs.

Lindbergh, Blythe discovered, was a loner and always had been. Once he had written to a friend that his chances of meeting a girl whom he might marry were: "no prospects, past, present, or future." His human contacts had been largely with men in such masculine surroundings as the University of Wisconsin dormitories and air corps barracks. His humor was on a robust, man-to-man level. Blythe discovered this the third morning in the Garden City Hotel. He was sleeping blissfully when at five o'clock he was doused awake by a pitcher of ice-cold water. Above him stood Lindbergh, grinning his celebrated grin. Such a rude awakening meant that Blythe had finally

been accepted as a friend. It did not, however, mean the end of practical jokes. A few mornings later Blythe awoke to find Lindbergh straddling him. He was trying to shave off half Blythe's moustache.

These moments were rare, however; Lindbergh was obsessed by his flight. At Curtiss Field, he revealed an enormous capacity for detail. Also, other pilots were forced to admit, he was a past master at flying, despite his youth. As an airmail pilot, Lindbergh had never hesitated to fly in bad weather that made other fliers remain aground. But though he did not fear the weather, he had great respect for it. He spent much time at the Weather Bureau, familiarizing himself further with charts of the so-called Great Circle Route which led across the Atlantic in an arc from Newfoundland to Ireland. He made blind flying test flights over New York and New Jersey and after one he damaged the Spirit of St. Louis slightly in a swerve to avoid a group of photographers and reporters—an incident which seemed to increase his dislike of the working press. He had other uneasy moments, for he too thought the Columbia ready to take off, though Bertaud and Levine were still at odds. Then suddenly Commander Byrd seemed to forge ahead. Repairs on the big tri-motor Fokker were completed and the America again nosed up to the starting line.

Even so, Lindbergh found time to relax in a way that showed his boyish side. With Blythe he visited Coney Island, where he delightedly rode the shoot-the-shoots and fired at clay pigeons. With Bruno and Blythe he went to the *New York Times* office to sign a contract for ten thousand dollars giving exclusive rights to the story of his flight. The dashing Blythe had a lunch date with a showgirl from Earl Carroll's *Vanities* who was to meet him at the *Times*. As a lark, he suggested that the girl and Lindbergh pose for a picture in the *Times* studio. Bruno hastily extracted a promise from the girl that she would never

publicize her copy of the photo, and to his eternal amazement she never did.

One day Mrs. Evangeline Lindbergh, a Detroit schoolteacher, arrived on Long Island for what might well be a last visit with her flying son. Those who saw Lindbergh in the company of his widowed mother noted the rather matter-of-fact relationship between them. There were no kisses, hugs, or tears. When Mrs. Lindbergh left the Garden City railroad station, she merely patted the tall young man's back. "Good luck, Charles," she said. "And goodbye."

One factor which restrained the three planes was the unhappy fate of Nungesser and Coli. While the nation's eyes focused on Long Island, a great sea and (as far as possible) air search for the two Frenchmen was under way. Occasionally there were rumors that the two had been found in Iceland wastes or were proceeding to the mainland aboard a radio-less vessel. All these stories proved unfounded and in Paris the populace turned ugly after the riotous optimism. American Ambassador Myron C. Herrick told correspondents that any American flier landing in Paris might expect unpleasant incidents. He advised against New York-Paris flight now, directing his words mainly to Clarence Chamberlin who still seemed the outstanding contender.

But Chamberlin and the Columbia were still wrapped in controversy. Bertaud had finally been fired. It was now revealed that the Millionaire Junkman had offered Lindbergh an additional \$25,000 if he, Levine, could go along in the Spirit of St. Louis. "I said it as a joke," Levine told newsmen, when pressed on this, "but if Lindbergh accepts the offer, I'll go." Lindbergh said nothing.

All the principals in the three flights frequently met in neighborly confabulation, and one afternoon Commander Byrd suggested to Levine that he secure the services of Bernt Balchen, a husky, young Norwegian with a notable flying-

navigating record. Balchen refused Levine's offer and shortly thereafter joined Bert Acosta in the Byrd camp.

Every day thousands of curiosity seekers thronged the Long Island flying fields to stare at the planes and fliers. Mainly the crowds were interested in Lindbergh, but there were enough left over so that the stormy petrel Levine had a good-sized audience for any statements he might issue. "We will make this flight," he assured one group around the Columbia. "It has cost me over \$75,000 already, but I am going through with it."

May 12-13-14-15-16-17-18—and still the three planes waited poised and ready. On Thursday, May 19th, weather reports again indicated storms over the Atlantic and the fliers in each camp resigned themselves to wait until the week following. That night Lindbergh and Blythe were to attend the musical comedy *Rio Rita*. If Lindbergh did not enjoy being the object of newspaper attention, he did relish a few of the privileges accompanying fame. After the show he and Blythe planned to visit backstage, where they would be made welcome by the cast. Lindbergh thought it ought to be fun.

Before the show, he and Blythe made plans to join Harry Bruno at the Newspaper Club on West Forty-second Street for dinner. As they drove there it began to rain so hard that the city streets turned dangerously slippery. It seemed to be a bad night everywhere, yet the conscientious Lindbergh suggested that it might be a good idea to phone the Weather Bureau for a routine report on the weekend. Blythe hopped out of the car and called the Weather Bureau from a pay station in an office building. He returned to the car with a face serious. "No dinner and no show tonight, Slim," he said. "You've got your weather."

"Right," Lindbergh laconically replied. "We'll go back to the field and get the ship ready."

Weather over the ocean clearing, a sudden change, the Bureau had told Blythe. Conditions were far from perfect, for a low-pressure area over Newfoundland was receding, while a high pushed in behind. This might lead to a sleet storm, but as an airmail pilot Lindbergh had often flown the mail through sleet and snow. . . . Isn't this the opportunity I've been waiting for? he now asked himself. Isn't it a chance to prove my philosophy of flying the mail? Often a pilot can get through when weather reports are bad . . . If I wait for confirmation of good weather all the way to Europe I may be the last rather than the first to leave.

Then the thought hit him that on Long Island Chamberlin and Byrd must be readying their planes to take advantage of the breaking weather. Why was he dawdling in Manhattan, his mind on musical comedies, when his rivals were rolling their planes toward the runways? *I've let myself be caught off-guard at a critical moment*, he lashed himself. But at Curtiss Field, Guiseppe Bellanca was emotionally persuading Chamberlin that a take off at dawn was impossible because of the uncertain weather. At Roosevelt Field, Commander Byrd, determined to wait for the best weather possible, apparently never even considered a take off. At this moment Byrd was, in fact, guest of honor at a dinner given at the Garden City Hotel by Grover Whalen.

On the far side of Queensboro Bridge, Lindbergh and Blythe stopped for a quick dinner—perhaps the last public meal Lindbergh would take in his lifetime without attracting attention. Then Blythe dashed around the corner to a drug store to buy five ham and chicken sandwiches, only one of which would be eaten on the flight. Blythe also telephoned Bruno at the Newspaper Club to say that a take off in the morning was a probability. Bruno immediately passed the news along in several discreet telephone calls. They were not discreet enough. A re-

porter from the *Daily Mirror* overheard one and alerted editor Philip Payne. By nine o'clock the *Mirror* was out with an edition which proclaimed FLYING FOOL HOPS AT DAWN.

As a result a line of cars started snaking out of Manhattan, carrying the first spectators of a crowd that grew eventually to several thousand and kept an all-night vigil in the rain. Lindbergh was too preoccupied to notice. Low overcast would prevent him from flying the Spirit of St. Louis to Commander Byrd's superior runway at Roosevelt Field, where most of the load of fuel could be added. Some way must be found to haul the trim plane over the rise from one field to the other.

At midnight—it was now Friday, May 20th—Lindbergh went to the Garden City Hotel for what he hoped would be three hours of deep sleep. After posting a friend outside the door as a safeguard against interruption, he dozed off. Suddenly there came a pounding on the door. It was the man he had stationed outside. In a state of near-hysteria, he rushed into the room, sat on the side of the bed. "Slim, what am I going to do when you're gone?" he demanded senselessly.

Lindbergh got rid of him, but there was no further sleep. He lay awake wondering why Chamberlin and Byrd were not preparing to take off. He worried about the weather, about the amount of fuel he needed to carry, about the condition of the runway. *Wind, weather, power, load*—mentally he tried to balance these vital factors in his mind, as he would all through the hours of actual flight. At one-forty he realized sleep was impossible and got up. Before three o'clock he had returned to rainy Curtiss Field. There he was told the weather might be improving, or it might not. No one knew, but the general tenor of reports was *Weather Clearing*. Lindbergh issued the order for the plane to be hauled to Roosevelt Field. The rain continued as, with a crowd plodding behind, the Spirit of St. Louis was ingloriously truck-towed by its tail to Roosevelt

Field. *It’s more like a funeral procession than the beginning of a flight to Paris*, Lucky Lindy thought.

At the top of the Roosevelt runway, the plane was roped off and the laborious business of filling it with a large part of its total load of 451 gallons of gasoline began. Spectators scrambled to the tops of cars to watch. It took time—4 A.M.—5 A.M.—6 A.M.—7 A.M. At seven-forty, Lindbergh donned a bulky one-piece flying suit and eased himself into the cockpit, fitting snugly into the wicker chair. He buckled his safety belt, pulled the goggles over his eyes, and nodded to the men to remove wheel blocks. Easing the throttle, he let the cold engine pound into action. The ground was soft and muddy and Lindbergh no less than everyone else feared an accident with the heavy load of gasoline aboard. At seven-fifty-two the plane began to move forward. “Good luck, kid,” someone shouted.

To Lindbergh at the controls his beloved plane felt more like an overloaded truck than an airplane as it started down the runway. Spectators stopped breathing while the Spirit of St. Louis careened along. It was going slowly, too slowly. An automobile racing beside it hit sixty miles per hour before the Spirit of St. Louis left the ground. The crowd yelled, but too soon. The Spirit of St. Louis flopped back to the runway. To those watching it seemed that the undercarriage must collapse, but the plane continued its lumbering progress. Twice it jumped kangaroo-like off the ground, only to wallow back. At the end of the runway ahead, a steamroller loomed dangerously. Above it stretched a line of high-tension wires. *Balanced on a pin point*, Lindbergh thought, as the plane lifted itself a third time. *5000 pounds suspended from those little wings, 5000 pounds balanced on a blast of air!* This time the sleek little monoplane stayed up, clearing the steamroller and the tension wires by twenty feet.

It was seven-fifty-four when the Spirit of St. Louis pointed its propeller northeast. There was no escort of planes, as there

had been with Nungesser and Coli. The Flying Fool was starting his flight alone—as he planned it.

In his mind's eye, Lindbergh visualized himself landing at Le Bourget airfield in Paris and with difficulty identifying himself as an American flier, just in from New York. Or perhaps no one at the airport would believe him, making it necessary to prowl the streets of a strange city looking for someone who spoke English.

In a pocket of his suit, he carried several letters of introduction, including one to Ambassador Myron Herrick. According to news stories at the time, he also took along a letter of credit for a single return passage on the Cunard Line. But Lucky Lindy never used the letters, or even remotely needed them. The world he left and the brave new world created by his flight were—for him and everyone else—two different places.

As Lindbergh flew, the entire world seemed to change. He himself later said it was like leaving one planet and arriving on another. Eyes that had lifted high for Nungesser and Coli rose to the heavens for him. "Something like a miracle took place," Frederick Lewis Allen writes in *Only Yesterday*. "Romance, chivalry, and self-dedication had been debunked. A disillusioned nation, fed on cheap heroics and scandal and crime, was revolting against the low estimate of human nature it had allowed itself to entertain." Elmer Davis put it more succinctly: "A public which had seemed to find its highest ideal in Babe Ruth, Valentino, and Gertrude Ederle (or, perhaps, in Peaches Browning and Ruth Snyder) suddenly went wild beyond all precedent over this unknown young man."

In news rooms across the country, editorial writers pulled out adjectives that had not been used since the boys came marching home after World War I. "He has exalted the race of men," declared the *Baltimore Sun*. Said the *New York Times*: "The suspense of it, the daring of it, the triumph and glory of

it, these are the stuff that makes immortal news." The *New York Sun*, in a classic editorial called "Lindbergh Flies Alone," said:

Alone?

Is he alone at whose right side rides Courage, with Skill within the cockpit and Faith upon the left? Does solitude surround the brave when Adventure leads the way and Ambition reads the dials? Is there no company with him for whom the air is cleft by Daring and the darkness is made light by Enterprise . . .

Alone? With what other companions would that man fly to whom the choice were given?

While Lindbergh flew, crowds gathered before newspaper offices in every population center in the country, to wait silently and prayerfully for bulletins which could not come for at least twenty-four hours, since the Spirit of St. Louis carried no radio. Families hung pictures of Lindy's countenance, serious or smiling, in front windows of homes. Merchants did the same in stores. A crowd collected before the residence of Mrs. Evangeline Lindbergh in Detroit. Movies interrupted shows to report that no word had come from the Spirit of St. Louis. Feature stories speculated about the Lone Eagle's personality and listed the roster of his nicknames. Much was made of Lindbergh's Scandinavian ancestry, with the *New York Times* shattering its accustomed dignity by offering on page two a dialect poem by James W. Foley which ended:

Ay lak dis man Lindbergh
A dandy fine kid,
Ay lak him, by yingo,
Ay lak vat he did.
Vile dem fellers talkin'
Yust vated and vated,
Dis Lindbergh, he yumps up,
By yingo, and do it.

On this fine May night seventy thousand fight fans had gathered at Yankee Stadium to witness the heavyweight title

elimination bout between Jack Sharkey and Jim Maloney. Before the main event, the iron-lunged announcer Joe Humphreys called for a moment of prayer for the lone flier. The great throng rose to stand bareheaded in hushed, prayerful silence. In a less publicized gesture, a convention of schoolteachers at the Biltmore Hotel did the same thing.

Next morning the suspense was infinitely greater, for today—Saturday, May 21st, Lindy would land, if land he did. All day keyed-up, expectant crowds waited before newspaper offices in small towns and newsstands in large ones. School was out on a Saturday and small boys reaped fortunes selling newspapers to shouts of "Latest on Lucky Lindy."

Edition after edition poured from newspaper presses with such deceptive headlines as *HE'LL DO IT!* based on the expert opinion of the paper's aviation writer. If radio rose notably to the challenge of Lindbergh's flight, no record of the fact has come down to us: this was the last split-second of newspaper-news eminence, for with Lindbergh's return to America radio would for the first time blanket a news event. In New York City, the Roxy Theatre showed enterprise by cleverly synchronizing silent newsreel shots of Lindbergh's departure with a sound track of the actual noise. At each performance, the six thousand packing the Roxy roared to their feet as the plane lifted from the ground with the sound of the take off roaring from loudspeakers at the side of the theatre.

The world was going mad, in Paris as everywhere else. Resentments over the Nungesser-Coli tragedy were forgotten as in late afternoon a crowd began assembling at the east end of Le Bourget. By six o'clock nearly 25,000 people had arrived, necessitating a call for special police and two corps of soldiers with bayonets fixed. Shortly afterwards the crowd was swept by a rumor that Lindbergh had been seen over Cork, in Ireland. The French fervently wanted to believe this, but, after the Nungesser-Coli disappointment, could not. At eight came a

further rumor that the Lone Eagle had been spotted over Plymouth, England. The still-growing crowd became more excited. Between eight and nine, the sun sank and the night turned chilly. Now it was rumored that Lindbergh had reached Cherbourg. The moments ticked off. At ten o’clock disillusion began to set in, aided by a cutting wind. Le Bourget was equipped with beacon and revolving searchlights which were kept off until planes were set to land. At six minutes after ten there came a roar of motor in the sky and the beacons snapped on, making the field and everything on it resemble objects on a silver movie screen. The crowd shouted, but suddenly the lights snapped off. It had been a false alarm—the plane overhead had identified itself and gone on.

Disillusion returned, but not for long. At ten-twenty came the sound of another motor, together with what seemed another false alarm. Field lights snapped brightly on again, off again. Then—*sacré Dieu!*—they flashed back on and with movie-like sharpness a silver plane could be seen settling gently down on the far side of the field, half a mile from the waiting throng. It took a moment for the significance of this to penetrate, then with cries of “*Vive l’américain*” and “*Cette fois, ça va*” (This time, it’s really happened) the crowd surged forward, brushing aside the sharp bayonets of the soldiery like toothpicks. In the cockpit of the slowing plane, a weary Lindbergh saw a mob of humanity rolling across the field toward him—he could not comprehend why. Altogether, it was a supreme moment, the drama of which was captured in the on-the-spot dispatch filed by correspondent Edwin L. James to the *New York Times*—

Lindbergh did it. Twenty minutes after 10 o’clock tonight suddenly and softly there slipped out of the darkness a gray-white airplane as thousands of pairs of eyes strained toward it. At 10:24 the Spirit of St. Louis landed and lines of soldiers, ranks of policemen

and stout steel fences went down before a mad rush as irresistible as the tides of the ocean.

Those first to arrive at the plane had a picture that will live in their minds for the rest of their lives. His cap off, his famous locks falling in disarray around his eyes, Lucky Lindy sat peering out over the rim of the little cockpit of his machine.

"Well, I made it," smiled Lindbergh, as the little white monoplane came to a halt in the middle of the field and the first vanguard reached the plane. Lindbergh made a move to jump out. Twenty hands reached for him and lifted him out as if he were a baby. . . .

Many eye-witness versions of the landing—including two by Lindbergh himself—have come down to us, all differing in some respects. Seemingly, the Lone Eagle's first words were not the "Well, I made it" reported by Edwin James. Rather, he seems to have said, "I am Charles Lindbergh," to the first of the rushing horde to reach the plane. Yet Lindbergh believes that his first words were about the welfare of the Spirit of St. Louis. At the moment he cut his engine, the crowd reached him. He felt the Spirit of St. Louis shudder from the impact. Wood cracked and fabric tore. His brain child desperately needed protection and he called out, "Are there any mechanics here?"

No one answered except to shout his name. "Speaking was impossible," Lindbergh has written. "No words could be heard in the uproar and nobody cared to hear any." He opened the cockpit door and began to slide out. Arms grasped his leg to haul him the rest of the way. Suddenly he was lifted to a prostrate position on top of the crowd, for all the world like an Egyptian deity borne aloft in some ancient funeral procession: "Thousands of voices mingled in a roar. Men were shouting, stumbling. It was like drowning in a human sea. I was afraid that I would be dropped under the feet of those milling, cheering people; and that after sitting in a cockpit-fixed position for close to thirty-four hours, my muscles would be too stiff to struggle up again."

From this uncomfortable spot, Lindbergh was rescued by two fast-thinking French pilots named Detroyat and Delage. With great presence of mind, they grabbed the flying helmet from Lindbergh's head and clapped it on the head of one Harry Wheeler, a tall, boyish-looking buyer of rabbit skins from New York City. Or was the vacationing Wheeler wearing something that looked like a fier's cap—or did the crowds simply mistake him for Lindbergh because he was tall? Again accounts differ. But suddenly the real Lindbergh was forgotten, while the frantic mob hoisted Wheeler off the ground. "Put me down, I'm nobody," he yelled. Meanwhile, Lindbergh was propelled by the two Frenchmen to the outskirts of the crowd. There he stood unnoticed while Delage sprinted off for his tiny Renault car.

In it, the three big men drove to an empty hangar. "Communication was difficult because my ears were still deafened from the flight. I spoke no word of French; my new friends, but little English; and in the background were the noises of the crowd." At the hangar Lindbergh was led to a small room and made comfortable, while Detroyat went outside to reconnoiter. Soon he encountered Major Weiss, one of the military officials of the field. Informed that Lindbergh was sitting in a darkened hangar, the Major was incredulous. "*C'est impossible*," he told Detroyat. Nevertheless he walked to the hangar and instantly recognized the Lone Eagle. Weiss escorted Lindbergh to his office and then set out to find Ambassador Herrick.

An hour later the Ambassador arrived. He invited Lindbergh to stay at the American Embassy. The Lone Eagle accepted, but refused to leave the field until absolutely certain that his plane was safe: "I couldn't put the cracking wood and ripping fabric from my mind . . . I was anxious to find out for myself what repairs would have to be made." Leaving the Ambassador, the four pilots—Major Weiss was now a member of the group—got back into the little car and shot across the field, to dis-

cover that the Spirit of St. Louis had been rolled into a hangar: “It was a great shock to me to see my plane. The sides of the fuselage were full of gaping holes, and some souvenir hunter had pulled a lubrication fitting right off one of the rocker-arm housings on my engine. But in spite of surface appearances, careful inspection showed that no serious damage had been done. A few hours of work would make my plane airworthy again.”

By now Ambassador Herrick had been lost in the confusion, so the Frenchmen decided to drive Lindbergh to the Embassy themselves. Again the large men crowded into the midget car and set off. With a fine sense of the historic-dramatic Weiss, Detroyat, and Delage drove to the Embassy by way of the Place de l’Opéra. There, under the Arc de Triomphe they stopped, allowing Lindbergh to step out for a moment at the tomb of France’s Unknown Soldier, with its ever-burning flame. Then they proceeded to the Embassy.

While this went on, the United States—not to mention England and almost all of the rest of the planet—had erupted into proud, hysterical turmoil. First news of the successful completion of the flight came at 5:30 p.m. New York time, only six minutes after the actual landing. In a scene duplicated in varying degrees across the continent, crowds in Times Square were transported into a frenzy of shouting, backslapping, kissing jubilation. Mayor Walker ordered all city buildings with steam whistles to sound them. Ferryboats and ocean liners did the same. In other large cities whistles and firebells sounded, while in towns and hamlets the populace blew auto horns and rang church bells. In big cities newspapers rushed out extras with such headlines as HE DID IT! HE’S THERE! HE’S IN PARIS! Perhaps for the only time in history, newsdealers grew so excited that they gave papers away. Wall Street was empty

on a Saturday afternoon, but in midtown Manhattan telephone directories were torn to bits and thousands of pieces of waste paper drifted from windows like summer snow.

As if by prearrangement the giant dirigible Los Angeles appeared over Times Square on a trial flight at the height of the celebration. In movie houses across the country, news of the landing was flashed on the screen and audiences abandoned Clara Bow and Tom Mix to rush cheering to the streets. Thousands of people phoned the *New York Times* to make sure the news was correct, and newspaper offices in other cities and towns received corresponding attention.

St. Louis rang to special jubilation, for was not that city financially responsible for Lindy’s flight? On Long Island, Chamberlin and Byrd offered congratulations, with Byrd showing particular intuition by calling Lindbergh a “Super-Hero.”

In Washington, Calvin Coolidge cabled to Lindbergh in Paris and telegraphed to Mrs. Evangeline Lindbergh in Detroit. Shortly after receiving this message, Mrs. Lindbergh received an offer of \$100,000 from a Hollywood producer who wished her to appear in a movie as the typical American mother. In New York the offices of Bruno and Blythe were deluged with offers for Lindbergh from vaudeville agents, book publishers, and procurers of cigarette testimonials. On Tin Pan Alley, two songwriters embraced and pounded each other on the back. Against the advice of hardheaded colleagues, they had written a song called “Plucky Lindy’s Lucky Day.” Soon the troubadour Vernon Dalhart would also have a song celebrating Lindbergh’s epic flight. Called “Lindbergh, the Eagle of the USA,” it ran in part:

Lindbergh, oh what a flying fool was he!
Lindbergh, his name will live in history!
Gambling with Fate and a future unknown. . . .
Take hats off to Plucky Lucky Lindbergh,
The Eagle of the USA.

Major newspapers were caught in a peculiar dilemma. "The landing of Lindbergh would probably have established an American record had he not chosen to come to earth on a Saturday," Herbert Asbury had written. Thus the *New York Times* and other papers were hamstrung by the fact that it was too late to print more of the special supplements which constitute a full Sunday paper. Still, the *Times* was able to get out 25,000 extras of an edition carrying a large headline which began LINDBERGH DOES IT! Below this ran the Edwin L. James story of the landing in Paris, impressively set across two columns. In addition the *Times* was able to announce that Lindbergh's own story—the one for which he received \$10,000 before departure—would start on Monday. It also reported from Washington, New York, and St. Louis that each of these cities had already begun preparations for huge welcome-home celebrations for the Lone Eagle. Stating that New York had earned the right to be called the City of Welcomes by the receptions given Commander Byrd and Trudy Ederle, Mayor Walker promised to provide Lucky Lindy with a full week of unceasing receptions, dinners, and honors. . . .

Still in the grip of thunderous emotion Paris asked, "Where is Lindbergh?" The identity of tall blond Harry Wheeler had at last been established, and now the celebrating thousands had no idea where the true Hero might be. Especially frustrated by this odd state of affairs were the news correspondents. Frantically they rampaged Paris in search of one of the great stories of all time.

According to Lindbergh's own account, he sat waiting in the American Embassy until Ambassador Herrick arrived at three a.m. During this wait the weary young man—he had not slept for sixty-three hours—revived himself slightly by eating a light supper prepared by the Embassy kitchen. When Ambassador Herrick returned, he informed Lindbergh that a crowd of

newspapermen had gathered in the street outside. Lindbergh agreed to see them: “I spent a few minutes answering questions and telling them about my flight.” Then at quarter past four he finally went to bed, wearing a pair of pajamas belonging to the Ambassador’s son, Parmely.

Lindbergh should know the true details of his own story—yet there are some reporters alive who accuse him of simplifying this account, and thus robbing it of considerable drama . . .

The American Embassy was, of course, one of the first places reporters had visited in the wild quest for Lindbergh. They were flatly told he was not there, and, indeed, at that moment he may not have been. But neither was he anywhere else, and to reporter Ralph Barnes of the *Paris Herald* it seemed inevitable that he would ultimately arrive at the Embassy. Barnes returned there and picking up a stone from the street beat on the iron gate until Parmely Herrick appeared to assure him that Lindbergh was not inside—though at this point he may have been. Barnes returned to the *Herald* city room and told his city editor, “I know he’s there. He’s got to be at the Embassy. There’s no other place.”

Once again he went back to the Embassy, where he found other correspondents, reporters, and wire-service men. Again Barnes made an ungodly racket at the gate, and this time Ambassador Herrick emerged. He admitted that Lindbergh was inside but said the flier was asleep. An interview at this time was impossible: “Now, now, boys, I really can’t permit it tonight. Don’t you realize it’s well past three o’clock?” Even so, the good-natured man invited the group inside for coffee.

As they entered, Parmely Herrick stepped up to say that Lindbergh had unexpectedly awakened and would see the press. Herrick and his son found themselves shoved aside in the hectic stampede of reporters who—still according to news accounts—found Lindbergh seated in pajamas on the edge of a bed in the Ambassador’s guest room. He appeared surprised at the throng

of journalists and asked, "Is there a *New York Times* man here?" Carlyle MacDonald of the *Times* was present, and assured the uneasy flier that his story was too important to belong to one paper. Thereupon Lindbergh began to answer questions and in his first reply used his famous *We* to unite himself and his brain-child plane. He told the press he had run into a sleet storm near Newfoundland and almost turned back. Close to Ireland, he had glided down to within fifty feet of a fishing boat and shouted, "Which way is Ireland?" In his book *The Spirit of St. Louis* he revealed that his flight had been a long battle with sleep, but no hint of this appeared in his first interview with the press or in the exclusive articles he wrote for the *Times*. Thus the world maintained an image of Lindbergh alert and ever-vigilant through the long hours in the cockpit of his plane.

Now Paris knew the whereabouts of its Hero. Later Lindbergh vowed that his reception at Le Bourget and the excitement in days following had been the most dangerous part of his trip. For in Paris and elsewhere Lindy loosed the greatest torrent of mass emotion the world has ever known. In New York, newspapers hailed his flight as "The greatest feat of a solitary man in the records of the human race." The *Tucson Citizen* wrote: "One must go back to fictive times of the gods who dwelt on Mount Olympus for a feat that will parallel that of Captain Lindbergh."

In Paris, Lindbergh awakened at noon on Sunday, May 22nd, to find the plaza outside jammed with a mob of worshipers who waved hats and handkerchiefs and shouted for his appearance on a balcony. Up to this moment Lindbergh's knowledge of ceremonial banquets, honors, and florid speeches was nil. Yet as a conquering Hero he now—with an appreciable assist from Ambassador Herrick—began behaving with a sure-footedness as unerring as his aviation skill.

The world would have gone mad over Lindbergh anyway,

but had he not acquitted himself so well afterward the peak of the furore might have come with the landing at Le Bourget. As it was, his general modesty and straightforward speeches were precisely what everyone wanted. Rather than lessening, world frenzy over Lucky Lindy rose higher and higher.

On waking Sunday morning Lindbergh telephoned his mother over the new transatlantic phone put into successful operation only five months before. *His mother*—how the world responded to this act on the part of its boyish Hero! That afternoon Lindbergh was driven through streets lined with roaring crowds for a call on Madame Nungesser, mother of the flier for whom an Atlantic search was still under way. He assumed the weeping woman that hope still remained. Then he visited a hospital for blind and crippled veterans of World War I. Next he called on the President of the French Republic, who pinned the Legion of Honor on the lapel of his blue serge suit.

Sometime during his first day in Paris, Lindbergh presided over the preparation of his first exclusive article to the *New York Times*. It began: “Well, here I am in the hands of American Ambassador Herrick. From what I have seen of it, I am sure I am going to like Paris.”

In this youthful prose, he went on to describe his flight, and such was the Lindbergh-enthusiasm in the United States that the price of the *Times* carrying this story rose to a dollar. Nor was America the sole area of Lindy madness. In Sweden thousands of Lindbergs were preparing to apply for court permission to add an *h* to their names.

Lindbergh made his first speech on Monday at the Aero Club of France. In terse, laconic words that exactly fitted his personality, he told this assemblage of French aviators that the flight undertaken by Nungesser and Coli had been far more risky than his own, and urged those present not to give up hope for the gallant pair.

During the rest of the day he was rushed from official spot

to official spot and given added honors. On Tuesday he was guest of honor at the American Club. On Wednesday the Chamber of Deputies applauded him. General Gouraud pinned another medal on his lapel, saying, "It is not only two continents that you have united, but the hearts of all men everywhere . . ." From poet Maurice Rostand the Hero accepted a poem called "A Lindbergh" which Rostand had emotionally scribbled on the back of an envelope during the tumult of the landing at Le Bourget.

Louis Blériot, first man to fly the English Channel, was a type Lindbergh thoroughly understood, and the Hero became almost eloquent answering a speech of Blériot's. He called Blériot the "Father of World Aviation" and gratefully accepted a piece of the propeller of the famous Channel-crossing plane. He then began another round of official visits which led him to Marshals Foch and Joffre and Aristide Briand.

"Like a ferment of wine, Lindbergh's personality was working hour by hour," writer Fitzhugh Green has said. Paris next gave him an official welcome. With Ambassador Herrick by his side the hatless, waving Lindbergh traveled Paris streets lined by more than half a million people. At the City Hall he received the Gold Medal of the Municipality. In a brief speech he declared that he believed his flight the forerunner of regular commercial air-service between the United States and France. On the following day he went to the Ministry of War for luncheon, and was received by French Senators at Luxembourg Palace. Other receptions and honors followed. That night he sat in a flag-draped box at a gala performance at the Champs Élysées Theatre.

As each tumultuous day became a more tumultuous tomorrow, Lindbergh's advisers adopted the stratagem of announcing plans to be at one end of Paris, when in reality Lindy would be at the other. Thus the Hero was able to steal away from time to time to tinker with the Spirit of St. Louis. One thing

in all this adulation particularly bothered him; the world seemed to think of him as a Hero, forgetting he was primarily an aviator.

Early Thursday morning he was driven to Le Bourget. There he went to an Army hangar and climbed into a French Nieuport 300 h.p. fighter plane. The pilot Detroyat who had rescued him from the welcoming horde got into a sister plane. Lindbergh paid no attention to the instructions French pilots attempted to give him about the unfamiliar plane. Absently muttering *Oui-oui-oui* he adjusted his helmet, revved the motor, flawlessly took off. Behind him, Detroyat followed.

Over Paris the two sleek craft dipped to salute Ambassador Herrick in the American Embassy, flew around the Eiffel Tower at the altitude of the second platform, dipped again at the Arc de Triomphe to honor the Unknown Soldier. For a short time they were out of sight, flying over the Paris suburbs. Then suddenly they were back over the city. Somehow word had got around that Lindbergh was piloting one plane and crowds gathered in streets to watch openmouthed as the Lone Eagle proceeded to show his prowess as a stunt flier. Lindbergh did loop-the-loops, side-drafts, corkscrews, wingovers, head spins, grapevines, and the fluttering leap. Whatever he did, Detroyat tried to do better, and the two put on an air show of a type forgotten in an era when flying has become a joint enterprise rather than an individual one.

At Le Bourget, military authorities stood quaking with fear—not for their plane but for the safety of the Hero. Detroyat was ordered down when the two stunting planes roared over the field. Lindbergh was also signaled down, but he was ever a stubborn young man, especially where aviation was concerned. Alone in the sky, in the words of a newspaper account, “He stupefied watchers by the ease with which he handled the strange plane. The airman showed off a sort of air dance. To the left he went over on one wing, then to the right, and then

on his tail and then on the nose. It seemed as if the airplane hung on wires while Lindbergh did gymnastic tricks."

It was a dazzling display by the man who remains probably the greatest aviator the world has ever known. When finally Lindbergh landed, his face was flushed with pleasure. Field officials rushed to him, ashen and clamorous. Lindbergh thought they were agitated over the safety of the plane and said sharply, "I know what I am doing in the air. Don't forget I've made seven thousand flights in five years. I'm not exactly inexperienced, you know."

This was his only moment of true relaxation in Paris. Next morning he was scheduled to leave for Belgium, where more receptions and honors awaited. Arising at eight he went to Le Bourget for a final three-hour grooming of the Spirit of St. Louis. Then the world-famous *We* were ready and Lindbergh took off over Paris boulevards thronged with people: "Dancing lightheartedly through the air, Ariel has left Paris behind," one paper rhapsodized. In Brussels, the reception committee at the Palace was led by Burgomaster Max, who said, "In your glory there is glory for all men." Close by, King Albert of the Belgians waited and Lindy's next day dispatch to the *New York Times* began: "I have met my first King, and if they are all like him, believe me, I am for Kings."

After a day in Brussels, *We* took off for Croydon Airport, near London. There a clamoring crowd of 150,000 waited—far more than at Le Bourget on the night of the landing. Again the mob was a riot of enthusiasm, the mood of which was reflected by a news account beginning: "Captain Lindbergh swooped out of the skies like a sun god today." For a second time in a week Lindy peered from his cockpit and saw a milling crowd below, but this time he knew why it was there.

He landed cautiously in the center of the field and sat waiting. As he did, an official car with four policemen lying on the mudguards raced toward him. It reached him just ahead of

sprinting members of the mob, which had broken through strong police lines. "Watch out for the plane, watch out for the plane!" Lindbergh called. He then climbed out, a slender boyish figure in a leather flying jacket. Commander Perrin, secretary of the Royal Aero Club, pulled him into the official car, but by now so many people pressed close that it could not move. Men leaned over to pump Lindy's hand and women tried to kiss him. Others begged him to give his famous grin. Police were powerless, and Commander Perrin stood up on the back seat to give the classic British cry, "Be sportsmen! Please be sportsmen! Let the car go through!"

Together with efforts of the police this produced results, but Lindbergh would not quit the area until the Spirit of St. Louis was safely in a hangar. At last, the car began inching toward Aero Club headquarters on the field. Lindbergh was hustled inside, but the mighty throng remained outside chanting, "We want Lindy." Commander Perrin appeared and begged for quiet. The crowd reminded him that morning papers had promised everyone a good look at the Hero. The Commander shrugged and summoned Lindbergh who stepped outside to give a quick wave. It was not enough. "Up on the control tower," the crowd chanted. Lindbergh flashed his boyish grin and started up the wooden ladder of the control tower. As he went, someone handed him a megaphone. From the top he shouted through it: "I just want to tell you this is worse than Paris." Then he waved and started down the ladder. The crowd roared its disappointment—he had been seen by those facing only one side of the tower. "Other side, other side," the mob chanted. Lindbergh climbed back and faced the opposite direction. "I've just said this is a little worse than Le Bourget—or should I say better," he called through the megaphone. Then he climbed down.

It had been Lindbergh's intention to remain abroad for

several weeks—or perhaps months—studying European commercial aviation, which reputedly was far ahead of American. But almost from the moment he landed at Le Bourget pressures were exerted on the Lone Eagle to force him home as quickly as possible. America wanted its Super-Hero, for in the words of Paul Sann, "With seven years of scandal, crime, and the Prohibition Follies under its belt, America was ready for a genuine All-American pin-up . . . It was ready for a collective love affair with someone nice, like a clean-living boy from the Mid-West who wouldn't know a hip-flask from a nightclub doll." This resulted in pressures even stronger than Lindbergh's vaunted stubbornness—and through his public utterances for the remainder of the year would run veiled references to the fact that he had really wished to stay abroad.

Oddly, the person who seemed most intent on bringing the Hero home was President Calvin Coolidge. The cryptic man in the White House appeared to sense the earth-shaking proportions of the world's Lindbergh worship and wished to attach his bleak personality to it. Coolidge was departing on June 13 for a vacation in the Black Hills of South Dakota, and now the ice-blooded Vermonter set lips tight and decreed that Lindbergh return before that day. More, he wanted Lindbergh to arrive in Washington so that he, Coolidge, could dominate America's first huge welcome.

At this Mayor Walker of New York let out a piercing cry of protest: "The President's request that Lindbergh go to Washington first violates all tradition," he stated angrily. It did no good. Calvin Coolidge was frigidly adamant. He announced that a special Distinguished Flying Cross Medal was being designed for the Hero and he himself wished to pin this on the Lone Eagle's chest. When this failed to nail things down Coolidge ordered that the cruiser *Memphis*, flagship of the Atlantic fleet, be dispatched to bring Lindbergh home for a

monster reception on Saturday, June 11th. Coolidge made this a nationwide holiday—Lindbergh Day.

Meantime, in London, Lindbergh was being received at Buckingham Palace by King George V and Queen Mary. This proved a disconcerting meeting for the bashful Hero who had so far impressed everyone with his calmness and modest poise. He was first led into a small sitting room where the King of England waited alone. After the briefest of formal greetings, the King stated that he and the Queen were curious as to how Lindbergh had taken care of necessary bodily functions during the epic flight. Lindbergh was shocked. Then he remembered that he was talking to a king. He collected himself, swallowed hard, and revealed that he had taken medicine to solve one phase of the problem. As for the other, he had worked out a system with a chain and a container at his feet. When nature called, he yanked the chain and the container opened.

Lindbergh ended here, but the interest of the King of England did not. "Yes, yes, young man, go on," he snapped impatiently. Lindbergh gulped and admitted that he had used this contraption twice, once over Newfoundland, and again over the Atlantic.

Next, Lindbergh was escorted to York House where he met the boyish-looking Prince of Wales. Next day, he sat in the Royal box at the Derby. Afterward he told reporters that he had thought the great race dull, but any Britishers alienated by this lack of true sportsmanship were won back by the Hero's frequent references to the 1919 transatlantic flight of the Englishmen Alcock and Brown. This, Lindbergh maintained, had been the first great ocean-spanning flight.

The honors he received in London were as long and arduous as those in Paris, and not until June 2nd did he go to Kinnerly Airdrome for a flight back to France. The celebrated English fog kept him overnight, but he started off at six-twenty a.m. Because of low visibility the Spirit of St. Louis came down at

Lympnel. At eight he was aloft again, setting a course straight for Le Bourget.

On June 4th, he left Paris for Cherbourg, this time with an escort of twenty planes. The *Memphis* waited while Lindbergh supervised the dismantling and crating of the Spirit of St. Louis. *Full Speed Ahead* were the orders given Vice Admiral Burrage and after leaving France the *Memphis* plunged along so fast that once it almost lost its celebrated passenger. The six-day voyage brought the Lone Eagle a much-needed rest and he seemed to find particular solace in standing alone in the prow of the ship. He stood there one day when, in rough weather, the ship hit a mountain of water. Plucky Lindy held lifelines to avoid being swept away. For a time he was completely cut off from the rest of the ship. This was the sort of rugged adventure the intrepid aviator relished and he enthusiastically discussed his emotions under stress with officers of the *Memphis*.

Thus in fitting fashion the Hero returned to his native land, where a new abundance of honors waited. In mid-Atlantic Lindbergh learned that President Coolidge had appointed him a Colonel in the Missouri National Guard. Captain Lindbergh was gone, and with him also went the boyish "Slim" who had planned and so unerringly executed the flight to Paris. In his place stood Colonel Lindbergh, an erect demigod known as "Lindy" to an adoring country. "Our Number One Triple A Hero," the show business paper *Variety* dubbed him.

6 "Here Comes the Boy!"

AS THE *Memphis* sliced through the waves toward the shores of the United States—it took the 75,000-ton cruiser four times as long to cross the Atlantic as Lindbergh had taken to fly it—people in all sections of the country packed up and started by train and auto to Washington for Lindbergh Day. Some of the Lone Eagle's fellow pilots in the airmail service announced plans to attend, as did numerous citizens of Little Falls, Minnesota, the town in which the Lone Eagle had spent his boyhood until his father was elected to the House of Representatives in Washington.

Those in Little Falls unable to travel to Washington were consoled by sight of the Model T Ford with which the mechanically-minded Lindbergh boy had once tinkered. This skeleton had been miraculously discovered in the town dump and hauled to the village green, where mechanics were trying to restore it to life. LINDY'S FIRST PLANE was painted on the side of this automotive wreck and townfolk declared that if it could not be transported to Washington for Lindbergh Day the local post of the American Legion would certainly take it

to Paris for the giant Legion convention scheduled late in the summer.

Many of those unable to make Washington for Lindbergh Day wrote instead. As Lindbergh approached home 500,000 letters addressed to him piled into the Washington post office. Some enclosed return postage to assure an answer, and it is said that eventually this unused postage amounted to \$100,000. Local offices of Western Union and Postal Telegraph staggered under more than 75,000 messages. Most of these were stereotypes, for the enterprising companies had devised Lindbergh Specials—Your Choice of a Telegram to Lindy for 30¢. Of these, Number Two read: "Glad you're back, Colonel. When you're out this way drop in and see us."

While such emotional outpourings spilled from ordinary citizens, the offices of Bruno and Blythe and other representatives of the Flying Fool were trying to cope with business offers for the most famous young man in the world.

Some of these might be called legitimate. Lindy was offered \$1,000,000 to appear in a movie based on his life and flight. Vaudeville interests offered him \$100,000 for twenty-eight weeks of appearances on the two-a-day. The Roxy Theatre promised \$25,000 for a week of personal appearances. Slightly lesser amounts were dangled for books, magazine articles, and cigarette testimonials.

But others were only too typical of the Era of Wonderful Nonsense. Lucky Lindy was guaranteed a million dollars if he would find the girl of his dreams and marry her, giving a film company exclusive rights to films of the marriage. Another group wanted to back him in a rocket-flight to the moon—a feat which seemed silly then, if not now. There were 20,000 assorted gifts already awaiting him and 500 requests from "close" relatives for financial assistance . . . All of which may have been staggering, but the worst was yet to come. On land-

ing, the Lone Eagle found that he could not send his shirts to the laundry, for they were never returned—laundries kept them as souvenirs. This was equally true of his checks. When he paid a bill by check the uncashed paper was retained as a souvenir.

During the first four days of Lindbergh's flight, over 250,000 stories about him had been splashed across American newspapers. This has been estimated as 36,000,000 words—more than the number given to any other event in history. As Lindbergh receptions in Washington, New York, and St. Louis loomed, the press began to demolish even this record. For Lindbergh Day, the *New York Times* announced sixteen extra pages of human-interest stories and photographs, while other newspapers prepared similar splurges.

Once more the dignified *Times* erupted into poetry, placing on page one a poem by Donald Gillies, which extolled Lindbergh:

Age hears, and old dreams waken
Youth hears, and vows anew
Man's common kinship rallies
And joy and pride undo
Misunderstanding's mischief,
Prejudice's wrongs—
God send, at need, the voices
To sing for us such songs.

The airwaves also hummed with songs about Lindbergh. "Plucky Lindy's Lucky Day" (sung by Irving Kaufman) was a national hit, as was Vernon Dalhart's "Lindbergh, Eagle of the USA" ("Lindbergh, oh what a flying fool was he / Lindbergh, his name will live in histore-e-e"). George M. Cohan, of "Over There" fame, came through with a tune for Lindbergh Day called "When Lindy Comes Home." Eddie Dowling and Jimmy Hanley composed a Lindbergh song entitled "Hello, Yankee Doodle." Vaughn de Leath, velvet-throated queen of

the loudspeakers, added new dimensions to her soaring popularity with a Lindbergh ballad called "Like an Angel You Flew Into Everyone's Heart":

The spirit of youth
 Carried you on.
 A mother's prayer
 Did its part.
 And God on His throne
 Guided you 'cross the foam . . .

It was a nation gone mad—but with a curious quality to the madness. Every American seemed to regard the Super-Hero subjectively. Super-Heroes were few and far between—once in a lifetime phenomena, if that—yet everyone appeared to have his own image of precisely how such a rare being should behave. Lindbergh had ceased to be a flesh and blood flier, to become instead a world symbol of decency, a demigod, even a god. Writing of Lindbergh in *The Aspirin Age*, John Lardner says: "His performance was instantly recognized as the climactic stunt of a time of marvelous stunts: of an epoch of noise, hero worship, and a sort of *individualism* which seems to have meant that people were not disposed to look at themselves, and their lives, in general, and therefore ran gaping and thirsty to look at anything done by one man or woman that was special and apart from the life they knew."

America had found a true Hero at last and was determined that he would behave as a Hero, even if he toppled from exhaustion or died of boredom in the process. Lindbergh himself discovered this impersonal—or inhuman—attitude on the part of his countrymen when the *Memphis* steamed up Chesapeake Bay late on the afternoon of June 10th. A convoy of four destroyers, two blimps, and forty airplanes saluted the cruiser. Yet this was done as unobtrusively as possible, for the *Memphis* had crossed the Atlantic with such speed that it

arrived early for Lindbergh Day. But the Hero, who by now must have found cabin quarters confining, was not permitted to leave the ship, even surreptitiously. He must wait until noon tomorrow, with its official reception. It was for this reason that the convoy blew no whistles and the accompanying planes did no stunts over the *Memphis*.

Even so, word gradually seeped through Washington that the *Memphis* was anchored offshore and once again, on the eve of a memorable event in his life, Lindbergh's sleep was rudely shattered. This time a group of schoolchildren—they were not called teenagers in those happy days—climbed into a motorboat and chugged out to the *Memphis*. By ill-luck they stopped directly under Lindy's cabin and began to serenade the craft with loud songs and hoarse shouts. Aboard, Lindbergh was just falling asleep. He stood the noise as long as possible, then stuck his head out the cabin window and tried to persuade the children that they were serenading the wrong ship. Oddly, none of the youngsters seemed to realize that the Hero himself was addressing them, but they did recognize the *Memphis* and answered with derisive shouts and laughter. The boisterous serenade continued, while Lindbergh tossed on his sheets. At last, the children departed, still singing and cheering.

So finally Lindbergh got to sleep. But soon, at six-thirty in the morning, he was wakened by more noise. This was the first stage of the Barnum-like display of Lindbergh Day: a zooming, roaring, stunting cavalcade of Army, Navy, and Marine planes over the *Memphis*. At times the planes flew so low that the ship seemed to vibrate in the water. In his cabin, the hard-sleeping Lindbergh slowly became conscious of the unholy racket. Once more, as in the early hours of May 20th, he realized that further sleep was impossible. Reluctantly he got up and dressed.

Through the rest of the morning various privileged people

were ferried out to the *Memphis*. One was Dick Blythe, who emotionally embraced the young man who had become his close friend. Then Blythe pulled back in astonishment. The Lindbergh before him was neither the Slim he remembered from Curtiss Field nor the modest hero pictured in the receptions abroad. At this moment Charles A. Lindbergh stood proudly attired in the dress uniform of a colonel in the United States National Guard. He looked glossy and erect. The uniform fitted perfectly and he was impressive in it, but a far cry from the homespun hero the nation was prepared to clasp to its heart. Lindbergh, seemingly the man without vanity, was proud as a peacock of the showy uniform. "Not bad for an air-mail pilot," he boasted to Blythe—and Blythe suddenly realized that the Hero planned to wear the dress uniform during the reception.

He took a deep breath and said, "Slim, you can't do it."

Lindbergh stared at him. "What do you mean I can't?" he asked.

Blythe tried to explain: "It'll label you. Up to now you've been young, healthy, good looking and single—a possible future husband for every American girl. You weren't an Army man or a Navy man, but a plain civilian with a job. Nobody could claim you and nobody could be against you. This Army uniform would spoil that image."

"But I always was a captain in the Army Reserve," Lindbergh protested.

"You went to Paris as a civilian. The public remembers you in that old blue suit. You can get another one, but don't wear the uniform."

Lindbergh's stubbornness was roused. "It's orders," he said firmly. "I've got to wear it."

Blythe took a different tack. "But it's such a lousy fit."

Lindbergh looked at him in amazement. "Where doesn't it

fit?" he demanded angrily. He studied himself in the mirror and, reassured, began to argue hotly. Suddenly he relaxed, giving a sheepish grin. "I get you," he said. "You're dead right. Mufti for me."

It was in the familiar rumpled blue suit, clutching a gray felt fedora hat in his hand, that Lindbergh stood on the sunny bridge of the *Memphis* at eleven o'clock as the flagship approached the Potomac. Above, the giant dirigible U.S.S. Los Angeles floated in stately circles, while one hundred Army and Navy pursuit planes darted above and below and around it like sharks baiting a whale. Salutes of naval guns boomed between ships, including the Presidential yacht *Mayflower*. Nautical tunes from bands on other ships bounced gaily over the waves. From the shore the factory whistles, church bells, fire sirens, and automobile horns of Alexandria and Washington could be heard. At the main Navy Yard Dock waited Secretary of the Navy and Mrs. Curtis D. Wilbur, Secretary of War and Mrs. Dwight W. Davis, Postmaster General and Mrs. Harry S. New, and former Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes. Also present was Mrs. Evangeline Lindbergh, who had been an overnight guest of President and Mrs. Coolidge. Some fifty thousand people assembled in the vicinity of the Navy Yard and another hundred thousand lined the streets to the Washington Monument where waited the President and his wife, more cabinet members, and distinguished guests from home and abroad.

As the *Memphis* became visible from the Navy Yard dock, and the tall, boyish figure of Lindbergh could be distinguished on the bridge, a huge gulp of emotion swept over the crowd. Then a resounding organ-like roar burst from the throats of Lindy's admirers. Russell Owen, covering the event for the *New York Times*, saw in this something intangible, spiritual:

What manner of a man could it be that would invoke such enthusiasm? Few had ever seen Lindbergh, although many knew his picture was that of a youth. Would he be in his new uniform of a Colonel in the Reserves?

And then the cruiser drew near, and high up on the bridge, standing in a corner at the outside, could be seen a tall, slim figure, hair blowing in the wind. He wore a plain blue suit and not the uniform of a Colonel in the Missouri National Guard. . . . That was all. Just a lad coming home, rather puzzled that people should make such a fuss over him.

As the *Memphis* drew closer to the dock, the thundering throng got a first sight of the unassuming young man's wave of acknowledgment. This would instantly become famous, and it has been described as "a quick, brief wave of the hand, a wave checked almost immediately as if he feared he was showing himself too eager to acknowledge tribute." Usually Lindbergh's facial expression was reserved and serious, but from time to time he broke into a wide, friendly grin—LINDBERGH SMILES LIKE A BOY AS HONORS ARE HEAPED UPON HIM, one headline would declare. The boyish grin, the deprecating wave, the modest demeanor, the youthful appearance—all these made an irresistible combination.

What was described as the mightiest radio broadcasting machine ever assembled was providing the coverage for Lindbergh Day. Fifty N.B.C. stations were connected in a nationwide radio network and it was believed that practically every one of the nation's six million receiving sets would be in action with at least five persons listening to each. This was a radio audience of thirty million, and in all probability the number was much more.

In the forefront of the crowd at the Navy Yard Dock stood the eager figure of Graham McNamee, the silver-tongued enthusiast who was the outstanding announcer of the day. McNamee had covered every notable event of the past five

years. His glorious voice had radiated excitement as Firpo knocked Jack Dempsey from the ring in 1923. He had lost none of his professional poise when Trudy Ederle thrillingly rode up Broadway in 1926. Yet now the experienced McNamee, no less than others in the welcoming crowd, was reduced to choked-up emotionalism by sight of the Hero. The announcer's splendid vocal equipment faded as he spotted Lindy on the bridge of the *Memphis*. As if through layers of soggy flannel a drained, timbre-less voice reached the country: "Here comes the BOY! . . . He stands quiet, unassuming, a little stoop in his shoulders. . . . He looks very serious and awfully nice. . . . A darn nice boy!"

The *Memphis* was close to the dock—planes darting and swooping overhead—heavy bombers thundering in formation—the Los Angeles unmoving as if suspended by strings—whistles stridently blowing—sirens sounding—guns booming—military bands playing—but loudest of all the background diapason-roar of the seething crowd. As the gangplank shot out, Lindbergh and Vice Admiral Burrage left the bridge, the Admiral on his way to escort Mrs. Lindbergh aboard. Now for a moment the Lone Eagle was entirely alone. He stood amidships facing the bellowing thousands of his countrymen who had come to pay him homage.

It provided an interesting moment, for Lucky Lindy seemed briefly to cease being the Hero. He clapped the gray fedora on his head and those nearby thought that the hat robbed him of his distinctive good looks—in it he resembled a Minnesota youth uncomfortable in city garb. Wearing the unbecoming hat he moved toward the rail, the better to look at the mob below. Gone was the boyish smile, vanished the bashful wave. For an instant Lindbergh looked like a man peering into a giant madhouse, struck with wonder that human beings could behave like those he observed. "He had become accustomed to

crowds abroad," Russell Owen's account would say, "but these were his own people. It seemed to hit him as a blow, and for the first time he apparently realized what a symbol he had become to all America."

The moment ended, for suddenly Lindbergh saw his mother being escorted up the gangplank by Admiral Burrage. He took off the unbecoming hat (it was not seen again that day), walked toward her, and the two embraced (MA'S ARMS ENTWINE BIG SON, *Cincinnati Enquirer*). For a short while the two were closeted in Admiral Burrage's quarters. Outside a reverent hush fell over the crowd: "Many wept, they knew not why," sobbed one story. Then Lindy reappeared and turmoil commenced again as he descended the gangplank.

It was slightly after noon when the parade to the Washington Monument started. Before the open Pierce Arrow bearing Lindy and his mother pranced a detachment of cavalry, with horseshoes clattering bravely on the pavement of Pennsylvania Avenue. Behind him came units of every branch of military service. "Hey, Lindy, stand up in the car," photographers shouted. Lindy smiled slightly and remained seated. Along the path of the parade people clogged the sidewalks or leaned from windows and roofs. Planes zoomed and the dirigible Los Angeles circled.

As Lindy passed by people shouted or wept. Russell Owen saw: "One woman, standing with a small boy at her side, perhaps wishing that when the child grew up he too might be the clean, brave lad which this flier had become, smiled up at Lindy, her lips trembling a little. It was easy to read her thoughts. She held her boy's hand tightly and bent down and spoke to him and pointed upward . . ."

At the dock, Graham McNamee's voice had regained its soaring resonance and the announcer was telling the country: "There goes the boy Lindbergh . . . The cavalymen with drawn sabres make a dashing picture . . . Now I will turn the

microphone over to my colleague, Phil Carlin, at the Washington Monument . . ."

Around the official reviewing stand in the natural amphitheater of the Washington Monument, hillsides were packed and greensward jammed with pulsing humanity. The thousands assembled here were already seeing—as best they could—a rare sight. Saturday, June 11th, had become a day of scorching heat. Nonetheless, President Calvin Coolidge and the remaining members of his Cabinet had mounted the high reviewing stand attired in gleaming top hats and heavy diplomatic swallow-tails.

It seemed to most of those present that on this occasion the sour-faced Chief Executive was determined to out-do James J. Walker, the debonair, song-and-dance Mayor of New York City. Jimmy Walker's glibness and know-how at official receptions were famous across the land. To the amazement of those who watched him, Calvin Coolidge began to carry on with a Walker-like animation. He smiled, shook hands, cracked New England jokes, and laughed a grating chuckle. When Lindbergh arrived, he displayed a truly unaccustomed warmth. Stepping forward, he pumped the Hero's hand. Shortly the President topped this. Introducing Mrs. Evangeline Lindbergh, he himself led the clapping of the multitudes. When the flier's modest mother showed a reluctance to stand up in acknowledgment, Coolidge behaved like a musical-comedy master of ceremonies. By expansive motions he gallantly insisted that she rise and take a bow.

The President also excelled in the length and pith of his speech. In its course, he also coined a phrase—something highly unusual for him. "You have been an Ambassador without portfolio," he informed Lindy, and thus another colorful phrase enriched the language. At the end of his speech, Coolidge pinned the Distinguished Flying Cross on Lindbergh's blue serge suit. Now it was the flier's turn to speak. The slim, blond-

headed figure stepped up to a microphone, which turned his calm voice into a boom, and made one of the terse speeches for which he had become famous abroad.

He said:

On the evening of May 21, I arrived at Le Bourget, France. I was in Paris for one week, in Belgium for a day and was in London and in England for several days. Everywhere I went, at every meeting I attended, I was requested to bring a message home to you. Always the message was the same.

"You have seen," the message was, "the affection of the people of France for the people of America demonstrated to you. When you return to America take back that message to the people of the United States from the people of France and Europe."

I thank you.

This, as well as the blue serge suit, was what America wanted and some unhesitatingly compared this less-than-a-minute effort to Lincoln at Gettysburg. The emotional simplicity of it caught people by the throat. "Just as when Lincoln finished his Gettysburg address his listeners sat stunned at the very brevity of it, so was there a curious silence . . . following Lindbergh's utterance. Then came long applause." Again thousands wept and a radio announcer who followed Graham McNamee at the N.B.C. microphone outdid his predecessor by breaking into audible sobs.

Finally, with a tribute to Mrs. Evangeline Lindbergh, the ceremonies ended. Lindbergh was to ride the rest of the way in the Coolidge car and the President deferentially led him there. Mrs. Lindbergh was escorted by the likable and gracious Mrs. Grace Coolidge, who was described as laughing like a school-girl.

All the way to the White House, police fought to hold back the excited thousands. The Los Angeles still floated impressively overhead and the formations of planes shuttled up and down the line of march. Yet still the loudest noise remained the full-throated cheering of the crowd.

It was after three o'clock before the hot, hungry Hero was permitted a few minutes to himself. During this precious interval he inscribed his emotions for the *New York Times*, to which he had continued to contribute personal dispatches. In this, he first mentioned the fact that he had been forced to return home:

The Washington reception was wonderful. It was dignified, but it certainly made me feel right at home, and I'm genuinely glad to be back.

I said in Europe that I would like to stay a little longer and fly to various countries and study aviation, but now that I have reached home I'm awfully glad I didn't stay longer.

He also expressed dismay at the extreme ardor of his worshipping countrymen: "Everybody seems to want to speak to me and shake my hand. While that is very pleasant and I'd like to be able to oblige them, I am only a human being after all and I'm afraid I would end up in a hospital, suffering from an overdose of kindness."

Lindbergh was anxious to meet with his airmail buddies and perhaps with home folk from Little Falls. But that night he was the guest of President and Mrs. Coolidge at a dinner for members of the Cabinet. Lindbergh was twenty-five years old and at this dinner, as at endless others to follow, he was seated between two middle-aged-or-more ladies, Mrs. Coolidge and Mrs. Postmaster General New. It is reported that he entertained them with details of his flight, but it is doubtful that this one subject lasted through a long state dinner.

After dinner, Lindy was whisked to a banquet of the Minnesota State Society. Crowds lining the street yelled "*There he is!—There he goes!—I see him!—There's Lindy!*" as the dinner-jacketed Colonel shot by behind a screaming-siren police escort. From the Minnesota State banquet, he was rushed to a gathering sponsored by the National Press Club at the huge Washington Auditorium. "I was pretty tired by the

time I got there, but the way people received me made me feel fine again," his *Times* account says.

Next day was Sunday. Lindbergh and his mother attended church with the Coolidges, then were driven past enthusiastic thousands to Arlington National Cemetery, where more thousands watched the Hero place a wreath on the grave of the Unknown Soldier. As Lindbergh climbed back into the car after this ceremony, he discovered still another dimension to his country's adulation. Three schoolgirls bearing autograph books slipped through the protecting police. At the side of the Lindbergh car the girls eagerly extended pens and open books towards the seated Colonel, who pretended not to see them: "He said not a word, but gripped his hands and looked sternly into the vague distance." At first police were prepared to be indulgent with the adolescent autograph-hunters, but observing the Hero's reaction cops hustled the girls off. So far as the record shows, refusal to give autographs became a steadfast Lindbergh policy. Apparently he never did sign one, and it is terrifying to imagine what would have happened if he had begun.

Lindbergh and his mother drove to Georgetown to visit the wounded veterans at Walter Reed Hospital. Followed everywhere by the rolling cheers of the crowd, they went next to the steps of the Capitol where Charles Evans Hughes presided over ceremonies in honor of the 150th anniversary of the American flag.

But with such official ceremonies finally ended, the day really began for the Lone Eagle. He and his mother were driven to where Navy mechanics were reassembling the Spirit of St. Louis. The day before, souvenir hunters had tried to break open the crates containing the immortal plane, and so the job of reassembly was being done on a raft a safe distance out on the Potomac. It was to this raft that Lindbergh was now ferried (his mother remained in the car ashore) and it is said that

when he saw the second half of *We* taking shape Lindbergh's face lighted up with joy. "He has the affection for his plane that a father has for a son," noted a reporter present.

Lindbergh knew that New York City, outraged by Washington's gall in pre-empting the initial official reception, was making plans for the greatest celebration of all time in his honor. Where Lindbergh Day ceremonies in Washington filled only a Saturday-Sunday weekend, New York was arranging a Monday-to-Friday jamboree which would cost \$75,000. School children had been granted a holiday on Monday and most businesses in the city would also be closed. Windows along the Lindbergh parade route were commanding prices as high as a thousand dollars, and it was predicted that New York's hero-worshipping hysteria would break all records.

In view of this, it was deemed unsafe for the Spirit of St. Louis to land at an airfield near the city. Crowds might mob the plane and its occupant. Authorities had decided that Lindbergh should fly from Washington in an amphibian plane, then land in New York Harbor, where a measure of protection was possible. This seemed like an excellent idea to everyone but the Super-Hero. Like a true father who wished his son to share all glory, he doggedly insisted on flying to New York in the Spirit of St. Louis.

For a time Dick Blythe appeared to have persuaded him that an amphibian arrival might be better, but sight of the re-assembled Spirit of St. Louis swung him back. Again Lindbergh changed his mind: tomorrow he would fly his own plane or nothing. A frantic Blythe contacted New York. He was told to tell Lindbergh to land quietly at Mitchel Field, the military counterpart of Roosevelt and Curtiss Fields on Long Island. From there an amphibian would fly him to the Harbor.

As it turned out, however, Lindy did not fly the Spirit of St. Louis. On the morning of Monday, June 13th—while New York gathered forces for its stupendous show—he arose shortly

after dawn. He arrived at the Mayflower Hotel at a quarter to seven and at this unusual hour was tendered an honorary breakfast by the National Aeronautical Association. An hour later he was at Bolling Field, where the reassembled Spirit of St. Louis had been towed after its sojourn on the Potomac raft. Lindbergh examined his beloved plane, then slid his frame into the cockpit. Started, the plane's motor sounded off-key. Ever the perfectionist, Lindbergh got out and examined the engine minutely. He found rust from sea air on one valve. *We could not fly today*, he instantly decided.

As an Army reserve colonel, Lindbergh could command the facilities of the armed services. He commandeered an Army pursuit plane and with an escort of twenty-three others set out for Long Island.

When the air cavalcade passed over Baltimore, Wilmington, and Philadelphia it engaged in maneuvers to salute each city. Below church bells rang, factory whistles pierced the air, auto horns honked, and the populace howled.

At Long Island, Lindbergh settled on Mitchel Field, where he switched without ceremony to a Navy amphibian. Here, indeed, was a new experience for the Lone Eagle. Seldom in his years of flying had he been a passenger in a plane piloted by someone else. It was such an unusual occurrence that he mentioned it in his dispatch to the *Times*.

The amphibian arrived over Manhattan, circled New York Harbor, and Lindbergh saw below one of the amazing sights of all time. The harbor was crammed with seagoing craft—yachts, excursion boats, motorboats, tugs, ferries, fireboats, even dredges—all hung with pennants, festooned with bunting, and jammed to the rails with festive human beings. Dominating all this was the city welcoming tug *Macom*, with gardeniasporting Grover Whalen beaming on its bridge.

And the Harbor was only the beginning! Four of New York's seven million had turned out to welcome Lucky Lindy. The

line of march had been well publicized and every inch of window and sidewalk taken. Crowding the Battery were enthusiastic thousands and Broadway up to City Hall was packed sardine-tight with worshipers. Already the air resounded to cheers, and from the windows of office buildings fell ticker tape, shredded waste paper, and pages of telephone books. Twelve thousand of New York's police had been instructed to leave clubs at home. With bare hands and linked arms they struggled to hold back the welcoming thousands, while mounted cops galloped importantly up and down the line of march. The sky also seemed alive as cavalcades of planes criss-crossed each other, at times blotting out the sun. Among the planes was Commander Byrd's three-engine Fokker. Byrd himself, immaculate in Navy whites, waited among a reception group at the Battery.

Because of the salutes to cities along the way, Lindbergh was nearly two hours behind schedule, but no one cared: the weather was brightly beautiful and the crowd in high good humor. A mighty roar of good will reverberated through the area as the amphibian swooped down to land. Shrill sirens and deep boat-whistles created what one account calls a din beyond description.

As the amphibian stopped a police launch came close. Lindbergh was assisted aboard and rushed to the *Macom*. Top hat in hand Grover Whalen waited at the rail, his official welcome lost in the thunder of whistles and a mighty *swoosh* as fire-boats loosed streams of water high into the air.

Lindbergh was escorted to the *Macom* bridge. There the tall, slightly stooped, unassuming young man regarded the bunting, the pennants, and the people and decided that the entire pageant of reception was astounding. Turning to Whalen, he shouted, "I never expected anything like *this!*" But though he appeared dazed by the first phase of the New York welcome, vestiges of the old practical-joking Slim Lindbergh remained.

When one fireboat hose misfired, dumping a cascade of water full on an innocent vessel, Lindbergh roared with amusement. Such were the wonders of the gala day that so did the people who got wet.

As the *Macom* chugged forward, an unwieldy fleet of accompanying vessels fell into rough line behind. For a brief five minute period during the trip to the Battery, Lindy was led to the cabin for a press interview and one reporter noted that as he answered questions "his fine long fingers plucked at the blue serge suit." The Hero seemed in fine spirits and did not mind silly questions put to him. "Do you expect to be wearied by the New York reception?" one reporter asked. "That's hardly a question I can answer now," he replied in the best of humor.

New York Bay was so cluttered with vessels that a full hour was required to reach the Battery, thus putting the whole program further behind schedule. At the pier, Commander Byrd and other important men greeted the hatless young flier. His mother waited as well, having arrived from Washington by train.

Already a parade of 15,000 marching soldiers, sailors, marines, and municipal officials was starting up Broadway. Lindbergh got into an open car with Grover Whalen beside him. He did not sit down on the seat, but rather on top of it, sitting on the back edge. Whalen sat beside him. Mrs. Lindbergh was seated in the car behind. The cars edged into the parade, and now followed one of the wildest moments in history as a blizzard—snowstorm is too mild a word—of ticker tape drifted from windows overhead, while on the street bellowing crowds strained to break through police lines. "Newsreel and press photographs do scant justice to the spectacle," a later account has said, and this is no exaggeration.

All the way up Broadway to City Hall a chain of police held back the surging mobs who cheered themselves hoarse and

tried to reach the smiling, waving young man perched in the official car. From building windows eighteen hundred tons of ticker tape, torn phone books, and miscellaneous memos floated down. Once Lindy peered up into the blizzard and asked Whalen, "Where does it all come from?" It seems almost too pat to be true, but contemporary sources testify to it: one of the thousands in the throng around Wall Street was a chunky girl who used her considerable strength to force a path to the front of the crowd. There she was shoved back by an irate policeman. Her name was Gertrude Ederle. Less than a year before the crowds had been screaming for sight of her.

It was now close to two o'clock and a throng of nearly 100,000 had been waiting in the vicinity of City Hall since 8 A.M. No one cared—to catch a glimpse of the Hero was enough. ENTHRALLED BY HIS DARING DEED, CITY CHEERS FROM THE DEPTHS OF ITS HEART, read one headline.

Mayor Walker, top-hatted, slick and smiling, waited with a group of city dignitaries. Lindy was led to the reviewing stand on the City Hall steps by Grover Whalen, who presented him to Mayor Walker. The glib Mayor began his speech of welcome with a Walker wisecrack: "Let me tell you, Colonel, that if you have prepared yourself with any letters of introductions to New York City, they are not necessary."

In a more serious vein, the Mayor spoke of the heartbeat of the city's millions and said: "Colonel Lindbergh, New York is yours—I don't give it to you, you won it." He then presented the Hero with the keys to the city in the form of a Medal of Valor and an illuminated scroll of welcome.

Lindbergh accepted both with his abrupt little bow and wide smile. In Washington his speech had been brief, but in New York he opened up and talked at greater length, ending with a second reference to the fact that he had not been allowed to remain in Europe: "By the time . . . [I] had opened a few cables from the United States, I found that I

did not have much to say about how long I would stay over there . . . So I left Europe and the British Isles with . . . regret. . . [But] when I started up the Potomac from the *Memphis* I decided that I was not so sorry. . . After spending about an hour in New York, I know I am not."

With Mayor Walker supplanting Grover Whalen at his side, Lindy stepped back into the official car. Slowly, past mobs occupying every possible inch of the way, the parade wound up Broadway, through Lafayette Street, to Ninth Street and over to Fifth Avenue. All along the procession route people pressed close, horns blew, and paper floated from above. Wiping a page of telephone book from his blue serge shoulder, the Hero said to Mayor Walker, "I guess you'll have to print another edition of the phone book after I'm gone." Walker cocked an eyebrow. "You'd better get us a new street cleaning department, too," he said.

Many who viewed the Hero at Wall Street or City Hall hastened to the subways to entrain for Central Park, there to see him a second time. Thus the crowd at the Central Park Mall was larger than any other: estimates place it at 500,000. Here military bands played and air armadas zoomed. High in the azure sky a skywriter began to spell out HELLO LINDY! It was after four o'clock, for the slow progress of the parade had delayed the reception further. When Lindbergh arrived, salvos of applause and rousing cheers echoed through the Park. The Hero was presented to Governor Smith by Jimmy Walker and the State Medal of Honor was pinned on his chest. Al Smith supplied fitting verbal tributes, and at last the official part of the greatest welcoming reception the world has ever known had reached its end.

Yet there was scant rest for the weary Hero. At the Park Avenue apartment of baseball magnate Harry Frazee, which had been loaned to the Lindberghs for the duration of the New York reception, old friends and new clamored to see him,

as did numerous brash individuals with commercial offers. There were also social engagements. At eight-fifteen that night Lindy and his mother were to be honored at a dinner party at the Roslyn, Long Island, estate of Postal Telegraph multi-millionaire Clarence H. Mackay. This was to be the biggest social shindig on Long Island since the charm-boy Prince of Wales cavorted there in 1924.

The Hero covered the miles to Roslyn behind a police escort, while crowds of worshipers waved from the roadsides. He and his mother seemed to enjoy the dinner, but when a swarm of new guests arrived for dancing there arose a question. Where was Lindbergh? A frantic Clarence Mackay demanded this of Grover Whalen, who began a gradually widening search through baronial halls, out in the grounds, and (finally) to the garages. Here he learned that immediately after dinner, Lindbergh and his mother had got back into the official car and ordered chauffeur and police escort to take them to New York.

When this information was relayed to Clarence Mackay, he looked like a man struck by an invisible uppercut. He rallied himself to peer into the ballroom, where nearly five hundred decked-out socialites were asking, "Where's Lindy?" There was only one thing to do and Mr. Mackay did it. He went to bed.

Having earned himself several hours of sleep by walking out (perhaps inadvertently) on the Mackay party, the Hero found himself further rewarded on waking up the next morning. Through the windows of his Park Avenue apartment he saw driving rain. This would render impossible an eleven o'clock gathering on the Mall in Central Park at which ten thousand schoolchildren were to serenade him with songs. Lindbergh rolled over and went to sleep.

He got up refreshed and transacted personal business—it is likely that here he made known his firm resolve never to cash

in on his flight in a cheap or sensational way. Yet advisers were able to assure the Lone Eagle that he would never starve. The *New York Times*, dazzled by the success of his personally by-lined story, had upped payment from \$10,000 to \$60,000. There was the Orteig prize of \$25,000. A book called *We* would bring in an additional \$200,000. Soon Lindbergh would accept an offer from the Guggenheim Foundation for a series of aviation good-will flights to American cities and countries south of the border. For this he would receive \$2,500 a week. He would also become an adviser to airlines, one of which promptly dubbed itself the Lindbergh Line. In all, Lindbergh would reap from \$300,000 to \$500,000 without resorting to the vulgar commercialization.

But this was yet to come . . . With rain still pelting outside, the Hero's thoughts turned to more personal matters. "The Spirit of St. Louis was calling Lindbergh," a sob sister sobbed—and it was true. That night he was scheduled to be guest of honor at a dinner given by 3,500 captains of finance and industry at the Hotel Commodore. Since the rain prevented engagements until then, why not go in an Army plane to Washington, fly his plane back?

Lindbergh phoned the veteran pilot Casey Jones, enlisting his support. When Jones stopped for Lindbergh in his car, he was accompanied by a most unexpected passenger. This was Nils T. Granlund, the procurer of talent and torsos for Texas Guinan. N. T. G. was, oddly enough, a flying enthusiast. Wedged beside Lindbergh in Casey Jones' car, Granlund urged the Hero to talk. Amazingly, Lindbergh did, cheerfully pouring out details of flight and receptions that he had kept from newsmen.

Back in New York that night, Granlund rushed to a typewriter and pounded out two stories, one for the *New York World* and the other for the *Daily Mirror*. These were so rich in intimate detail that he was allowed to by-line them *By Nils*

Thor Granlund, Director of Publicity, Loew Theaters. So Granlund became one of the few ever to capitalize on Lindbergh in any way.

With Casey Jones and Granlund by his side, Lindbergh sloshed around Curtiss and Roosevelt Fields greeting old friends among Wright mechanics and field personnel. He reminisced about the take off and seemed anxious to find out exactly how it had looked from the field. The weather grew worse and everyone advised the stubborn Colonel against a flight to Washington. Nevertheless, he climbed into Casey Jones' plane and took off. Half an hour later he returned, admitting that flight was impossible. Accompanied by Jones and Granlund, whom he favored with more inimitable material, he drove back to the city.

In New York Lindbergh went from luncheon to luncheon, reception to reception, dinner to dinner. Everywhere crowds jostled, reporters asked questions, horns blew, and bedlam erupted. To one sob sister he expressed a desire to walk around the city alone. Then he grinned—such a thing was plainly impossible. To some he seemed to be wilting from the strain of being on public display nearly every moment of every day. News stories mentioned this. "Please don't say that I am tired or fatigued," Lindbergh lectured reporters gathered in the Frazee apartment. "I am not. I feel fine. I read regularly that I am supposed to be all in. The *only* time I was tired was when I landed in Paris, but I was all right the next day." A few hours later, as a luncheon wound its lengthy course, reporters noted that, no matter what he said, the Lone Eagle looked exhausted.

On the night of Wednesday, June 15th, Lindbergh was finally to see *Rio Rita*—though not as a shy aviator who would enjoy going backstage to meet showgirls. By now, the Hero was quite accustomed to wearing black tie evening attire, and white tie on occasion. To *Rio Rita* he wore a tuxedo. He was late and perhaps for the only time in history an audience at a hit show

refused to sit down until one member of the audience arrived.

At nine-twenty Lindbergh appeared, flanked by Mayor Walker and Grover Whalen. Flash bulbs popped as he posed in the lobby with Florenz Ziegfeld. The orchestra played the "Star Spangled Banner" as he was led to a seat in the third row. Still the audience refused to sit. Crowds from the balcony pushed down the center aisle to peer at the Hero. Ushers begged and pleaded, and finally summoned the police from Lindbergh's motorcycle escort. Only then did *Rio Rita* begin.

Even so, Lindbergh did not see a full performance. At eleven o'clock he was due at the Roxy Theater for a monster benefit for the French fliers Nungesser and Coli. At eleven-thirty Lindbergh and his party ducked out a side door of the Ziegfeld and behind motorcycle escort drove to the Roxy. Nor did Lindy see all of the Nungesser-Coli benefit, for at one-thirty he slipped out a Roxy side door. This time he was driven to Mitchel Field, where he borrowed a helmet and put on a flying suit over his tuxedo. Then he hopped for Washington.

At Bolling Field he carefully examined the Spirit of St. Louis. It was flight-worthy and after a stopover of twenty-eight minutes, he pointed the plane toward New York. At seven-thirty he landed in Mitchel Field, a happy man. *We* were a team again.

Lindbergh reached Park Avenue just in time to change into the trusty blue serge suit for a reception in Brooklyn. This was to be his last full day in New York and a million inhabitants of Brooklyn were prepared to give him a memorable send-off. Crowds numbering 500,000 packed twenty-two miles of Brooklyn streets as the Lindbergh parade went by. Again schools were let out, businesses closed. An additional 200,000 yelling, perspiring people filled Prospect Park during official ceremonies. A fortunate Knights of Columbus had snared the Hero for luncheon. After this, a screeching escort took him to Roosevelt Field for ceremonies honoring his take off.

At the Hotel Brevoort late that afternoon came teatime ceremonies of a particularly pleasant kind. Here Raymond Orteig handed Lindy a check for \$25,000, the promise of which had first made him think of the Paris flight. But again the Hero was far behind schedule. He could not tarry at the Brevoort for reminiscence. There were other ceremonies waiting, among them presentation of a lifetime pass to any major-league baseball game ever played anywhere.

At 8:17 a.m. on Friday, June 17th, Lindy took off in the Spirit of St. Louis for the most sentimental welcome of all: the one in St. Louis. This should have been the Hero's greatest day, but was it? That morning the *New York Times* printed in a box on its front page a letter from the author-historian Hendrik Willem Van Loon:

Cannot someone pluck that tired kid out of his "bus" and take him to a farm and let him sleep for a couple of weeks?

By the merest fortunate chance I was face-to-face with him yesterday. Never have I seen anyone as hopelessly tired, as courageously tired, as that boy whose brain was still doing a duty which the rest of his body could no longer follow up. Another three days of this and the reflected-glory hounds will chase him to his death.

If this sounds like sentimentality, make the most of it. But, meanwhile, give him a bed!

On the nine-hour flight to St. Louis, Lindbergh again circled and dipped wings over major cities. He flew low over airfields to wave at crowds assembled below. Flying had always refreshed him and on arriving at Lambert (St. Louis) Field he appeared fit. A few minutes later he was plainly dead on his feet—"the flier looked completely exhausted," one account says. Sight of old friends from "Slim" days revived him for a moment, but when flash-popping photographers yelled "Smile that old St. Louis smile," he was too groggy to respond.

Yet the reception did not slacken, nor the public show mercy. High on the seat of an official car the weary Hero drove three miles through howling mobs to the presentation of keys to the city. And again this was only the beginning. Ceremonies in St. Louis would continue for days . . . The country had its Hero, the Hero must play his part. The world was cleansing itself through worship of Lucky Lindy. "His effect on the world was orgiastic and orgastic," John Lardner would say. The Super-Hero had his role, the show must go on!

It was a world gone mad, and this was its peak of madness. . . .

7 *The Big Parade in the Air*

T

HE United States seemed to be lost in Lindbergh worship, but there remained a few signs that the Era of Wonderful Nonsense had not departed. As New York went wild over Lucky Lindy, Shipwreck Kelly sat in magnificent isolation atop a fifty-foot flagpole over the Hotel St. Francis in Newark. Under him fluttered a long banner which read **BABY PEGGY AT LOEW'S STATE**—Baby Peggy being the child film star who had supplanted a maturing Jackie Coogan in public affection. Shipwreck Kelly was out to break his record of seven days, one hour, set in St. Louis. Since the June spring-into-summer weather was unusually balmy there appeared a good chance that the dedicated pioneer would succeed. The weather also allowed much latitude to his red-headed flapper wife, again officiating at the bottom of the flagpole. Once more she held court for newspapermen and fifty-cents-a-head gawpers, and grew properly fiery when asked what the hell her husband was trying to accomplish on top of that pole.

In New York City, Texas Guinan, her Three Hundred Club closed by the determined forces of Prohibition, took to the

theater in a brassy revue called *Padlocks of 1927*. With her were the faithful George Raft and a girl singer named Lillian Roth. In the show Tex made her entrance attired in white cowgirl costume, riding a superb white steed. "Hello, suckers," she howled into the auditorium, and the fun (at a much smaller price than in her night clubs) began.

Also in the drama world, Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle, the screen comic whose million-dollar Hollywood career had been ruined by a trial for rape, attempted Broadway in a revival of *Baby Mine*. Critics turned thumbs down on this, and *Baby Mine* ran only twelve performances. Still, it remains notable because one member of the cast was a bouncy juvenile named Humphrey Bogart.

From Hollywood came news that stirred the hearts of millions of moviegoers whose minds may have been in the clouds but whose emotions were still attached to sentimental movies. Vilma Banky and Rod La Rocque, romantic lovers in films, had become romantic lovers in life. When their engagement was announced Samuel Goldwyn, Miss Banky's employer, stated that he would give the pair a Hollywood wedding more sumptuous than any ever shown on the screen.

In the advertising columns of magazines and newspapers, "Quick, Henry, the Flit!" was the slogan-sensation of early summer. "Quick Henry" was also one of the few major advertising campaigns which did not attempt to stir up feelings of human inadequacy. Elbert Hubbard's *Scrap Book*, Dr. Eliot's *Five-Foot Shelf*, and the *Pocket University* pictured young men and women either writhing with social nervousness or holding a roomful of people spellbound. An ad for the *Pocket University* showed a firm-jawed young man at a party: "Ali Baba? I sat forward in my chair. I could tell them all about this romantic, picturesque figure of fiction."

Emily Post's *Book of Etiquette* conjured up the awful results of social solecisms and promised to Tell You Exactly

What To Do, Say, Write or Wear On Every Occasion. Ads for a correspondence course named French At Sight recounted the sad experience of a flapper who thought filet mignon was a kind of fish. It also pictured—in a different ad—the young man whose friends laughed when the waiter Spoke To Him in French. The same lucky fellow was triumphant again on being introduced to a very pretty girl: “*Comment ça va?*” she said with a laugh—and I astounded her with my reply.”

From Fall River, Massachusetts, newspapers relayed the news that Lizzie Borden was dead. Even barring the recent fame of Ruth Snyder, Lizzie Borden was the nation's most famous (suspected) murderess. A generation of children had chanted the jingle, “Lizzie Borden took an axe/ And gave her mother forty whacks.” In 1893, her trial for the murder of her parents had rocked the country almost as much as the case of the Tiger Woman in 1927. After her acquittal—who could imagine a plump New England spinster resorting to murder?—she had lived quietly in the murder-house, showing a strange partiality for theaters and theater-folk, some of whom became her close friends.

From Chicago came strange news. Mayor Big Bill Thompson, resoundingly re-elected on his platform of I-hate-King-George-V, had immediately appointed a committee to supervise the eradication of all references to England from Chicago libraries. The Mayor's sleuths had made an embarrassing discovery. In 1871, as Chicago lay smoldering from the fire which may have been started by Mrs. O'Leary's cow, the city of London—perhaps because of its own Great Fires—had displayed vast sympathy. A city-wide collection had been undertaken in London, with the money gathered dispatched to Chicago as fire-relief. In addition, Londoners had sent seven thousand books to the Chicago Public Library. These had formed the nucleus of the Library's present large collection. Several of the volumes sent from England bore the autograph

of Queen Victoria, the grandmother of Mayor Thompson's arch enemy. . . .

But such nonsense matters were a trifle old-stuff, old-fashioned, out of date. Even Shipwreck Kelly's feat of successfully setting a new record of twelve days, twelve hours, zero minutes, on the St. Francis flagpole rated only small day-by-day paragraphs at the bottom of more important columns. A year before Shipwreck might have been the wonder of the world. Now he, too, seemed a bit out of things.

Hero-worship of Charles A. Lindbergh was not the sole reason for this change. In Lindy the country—even the world—may have found a Super-Hero, but such were the excesses of 1927 that even before Lindy arrived home a cast of subordinate Heroes had started to assemble around him.

First of these came by way of the yellow plane *Columbia*, designed by the highly esteemed Guiseppe Bellanca, owned by the stormy petrel Charles A. Levine, and piloted by the likable Clarence Chamberlin.

On the morning of May 21st, while Lindbergh flew, the *Columbia* camp at Curtiss Field was a melancholy place. The weather had improved, as Lindbergh had hoped, and it was apparent that the *Columbia's* hesitation of the night before had been a dreadful error. Now Chamberlin, in the bow tie, plus fours, and golf socks that were his trademark, stood beside his plane as it waited with tanks loaded on the runway. He was, he told reporters, ready to follow Lindbergh.

But from inside the *Columbia* hangar came sounds of wrathful argument between Bellanca and Levine. Then Bellanca, whose extreme caution of the previous night may have prevented a simultaneous take off with Lindbergh, stormed out. He shook hands with Chamberlin and told the press that he had resigned from the *Columbia* Aircraft Corporation, of which he was president with Levine Chairman of the Board.

"Two such characters as myself and Mr. Levine could not continue," he stated flatly. No sooner had Bellanca departed than the stocky, bald stormy petrel emerged to declare: "Mr. Bellanca's resignation causes us to abandon plans for the New York to Paris flight." The *Columbia* was unceremoniously hauled back into its hangar.

For several days it seemed that Levine meant these strong words. PLANE TO BE IDLE, ran the headline over a story on the misfortunes of the *Columbia*. Yet it is possible to suspect that Lindbergh's feat rather than Bellanca's abrupt departure caused this change of plan. With a perfect flight to Paris just accomplished, why make another? For a week all seemed hopeless around the *Columbia*, and Chamberlin returned to his home in Teterboro, New Jersey. Then one of the group had a brainstorm. The *Columbia* had already set an endurance record by remaining aloft for more than fifty-one hours. It was a two-seater plane, making possible the services of a relief pilot. Also, it could carry more gasoline than the *Spirit of St. Louis*, and supposedly could get ten miles a gallon to Lindbergh's eight. In short, the *Columbia* was equipped to fly farther and keep aloft longer than the *Spirit of St. Louis*. Why not try to surpass Lindbergh's flight by setting a new long-distance flying record?

Again the *Columbia* camp was full of life. Chamberlin, especially, seemed to be his old self. "He is ordinarily a quiet, reserved, silent person," states one contemporary account, "but when he gets near his plane he radiates happiness." On June 2nd—the day Lindbergh attended the English Derby—the *Columbia* made a test flight, after which it was decided to abandon the heavy radio which had been installed in the plane.

Also on a trial flight was Commander Byrd's *America*, with Bert Acosta at the controls. The world took eyes off its Super-Hero long enough to realize that, though the Atlantic had been

spectacularly spanned, the thrills it promised were not over. The Transatlantic Derby that the world expected in May might still come to pass. . . .

But who would sit beside Clarence Chamberlin as co-pilot and navigator of the *Columbia*? When reporters asked, Chamberlin gave a wry grin. For a time there was speculation that his companion and co-pilot might be his wife, Mrs. Wilda (or Wylde) Chamberlin. Blue-eyed and attractive, a Main Street girl no less than her husband was a Main Street boy, Mrs. Chamberlin had been at her husband's side through many flights and often had taken the joy stick to pilot the plane. She had been beside her husband when he made a dramatic forced landing on the cinder yard of a Pennsylvania state penitentiary. She was a tiny woman whose weight would add only slightly to the *Columbia's* overall load, and the fact of her sex made small difference. Already the ambition to be the first woman to fly the Atlantic had sprouted in numerous female minds. But Mrs. Chamberlin feared that the shock of such a flight would have an unfortunate effect on the health of her ailing mother. The world did not know it, but she had decided not to accompany her husband.

Then who would? The question remained unanswered while the *Columbia* made additional test flights. One morning members of the ground crew painted out the words *Bellanca* and *Paris* on the side of the plane, so that the wording read *New York*—.

On the afternoon of Saturday, June 4th, Chamberlin was handed weather reports indicating improving weather over the Atlantic. Turning to his wife, he said, "This looks good enough for me." But where was he headed? To reporters he stated that his intention was to beat Lindbergh's record by flying farther into Europe. One reporter quipped "Destination—Europe" and Chamberlin smiled. He passed around a cable from the president of the American Club in Berlin, stating that all Germany

hoped the Columbia would land at Tempelhof Field in Berlin. "I'll be glad to drop in on him on the way back," Chamberlin remarked drily. This gave rise to rumors that he planned to go as far as Moscow.

BELLANCA PLANE SET TO FLY AT DAWN—BERLIN OR ROME THE GOAL, shouted headlines in the late editions of Saturday, June 4th. Since this was a weekend no alarm clocks would ring the next morning, and many New Yorkers set out for Curtiss Field. In numerous ways this proved to be a duplication of the Lindbergh take off. Again a light rain fell over the field. Chamberlin also tried to sleep at the Garden City Hotel. He could not—when his plane took off he had been without sleep for twenty hours. Attired in the familiar plus fours and bow tie, the wiry, relaxed aviator strolled to the field and walked by the side of his plane as it was towed to Roosevelt Field and—like Lindbergh's—perched atop Commander Byrd's runway. There began the long business of filling the tanks with gasoline.

The Spirit of St. Louis had carried no safety equipment. The Columbia loaded a rubber collapsible raft, Very pistols, and flares. Mrs. Chamberlin packed aboard ten chicken sandwiches on toasted rye, two bottles of chicken soup, a bottle of coffee, and a half-dozen oranges.

Like Lindbergh, Chamberlin had been signed by the *New York Times* to write his experiences, and with him he carried five copies of the June 5th edition of that newspaper, which had been rushed to the field with ink still moist from the presses. One copy was addressed to Mussolini, another to Hindenburg, and a third to President Doumergue of France, so that no matter where he landed Chamberlin would have a special issue for the top man. The other two copies were to be used for purposes of general good will.

In addition to the *New York Times*, the Columbia carried 250 letters which would constitute the first transatlantic aviation air mail. These later caused a furore, for they had been

put aboard solely on the authority of Postmaster Sealy, of Hempstead, Long Island. Postmaster General New had himself promised Commander Byrd that the *America* would carry the first official air mail. When Mr. New learned that he had been bypassed by a local postmaster he was furious and issued a statement which branded as unofficial the mail carried by the *Columbia*. Said Postmaster Sealy: "Gosh, I'm sorry I got into this mix-up. Gosh, I didn't mean any harm. I just felt patriotic and wanted to do a personal favor, that's all."

By six a.m. the *Columbia* was ready. It was weighed for the final time and found to be 5,418 lbs., three hundred more than the *Spirit of St. Louis*. Chamberlin appeared to be in no hurry, and stood beside the plane chatting with friends. Charles A. Levine, strangely unobtrusive on so important an occasion, stepped up to the plane and stowed aboard a batch of navigation charts. The two men spoke quietly for a few moments, after which Levine melted into the crowd. Someone reminded Chamberlin that Lindbergh would return to the United States within the next few days. He took a pencil and wrote on a scrap of paper: "Captain Charles Lindbergh—Sorry not to wait to greet you, but I have the breaks in the weather, so I'm off." He also obliged a *New York Times* reporter with a written testimonial:

*The New York Times is
going across with me
Clarence O. Chamberlin*

While Chamberlin did all this, many eyes fixed on the second seat in the plane. It seemed now that the Iowan planned to fly alone, but if such was the case why had no announcement been made? If the seat were not occupied, it

should be piled high with equipment. As it was, it stood glaringly empty, an open invitation to anyone who wished to become another Hero of the year 1927.

Wright Whirlwind experts, giving the plane a final inspection, decided that ten more gallons of gas could safely be added to the tanks. This was done. "I can fly for forty-five hours or longer," Chamberlin told reporters. "My distance depends on the winds I get. I'm going to fly until the gas gives out." Chamberlin adjusted his flying helmet and climbed into the cockpit while mechanics still fussed with the carburetor heater. John Carisi, head mechanic, started the motor. Then he rushed to the cockpit, where he kissed Chamberlin farewell. "I'm one of those emotional Wops," he explained to the crowd.

Chamberlin let the motor idle, then raced it. The plane shook under the mighty pull of the motor, strained at the chocks. He throttled down again and leaned out the window of the plane. Smiling broadly, he beckoned to someone in the crowd. With this the bald, stubby figure of Charles A. Levine suddenly rushed forward. Running around the plane, Levine quickly sat himself in the seat beside Chamberlin. The Millionaire Junkman was attired in a business suit of dashing vertical stripes and this, together with his lack of stature, brought little resemblance to a Hero. The crowd watched in silent stupefaction, unable to comprehend.

Nor did Levine help. The usually aggressive man hunched down in the co-pilot seat as if anxious to obliterate his presence: "He almost crouched down beside Chamberlin, his face set in tense emotion." Chamberlin reached across Levine's figure to shut the door, gave the signal for the chocks to be pulled. Then the probable cause of Levine's uneasiness became apparent. Like the rest of the crowd, Mrs. Grace Levine, the onetime beauty queen of Brooklyn, had been slow in catching on. All at once she grasped what her husband was doing. In

the time-honored tones of the long-suffering wife, she screamed, "Oh-h-h-h. He's not going! He's not going!" Then she fell backward in a dead faint, landing conveniently in the sturdy arms of a cop.

By this time the Columbia was inching forward. Chamberlin found the tail of the plane heavier than anticipated. He braked and the plane was pulled back to the starting point. Whether he planned to lighten the load in the tail is not known, but he did discover what to expect if he tarried. A man rushed up to the plane and beat on the side. "Mr. Levine! Mr. Levine!" he shouted. "Do you realize what you are doing to your wife?" Chamberlin may have thought any risk better than a public squabble at departure. He started the heavy plane down the runway once more, this time achieving a take-off which news accounts hailed as a work of art.

Now, with Lindy just stepping aboard the cruiser *Memphis* on his way home, the nation had two more Heroes-in-the-making. For Charles A. Levine was in the process of winning the eminent status of history's first transatlantic passenger. Even his outraged wife was prepared to forgive him. Returning red-eyed to the Levine summer home in Rockaway, Long Island, she paused to say, "He's gone and I know he'll make it. I'm proud of him." In this the rest of the world joined her. The *New York Times* hailed Levine as a true hero, adding: "The going of Levine was an answer to those who have called him a poor sportsman. It thrilled the crowd even more than the actual take-off. By a simple act of courage Levine reversed the public opinion which only a few hours before had appeared to be strongly against him."

The yellow monoplane winged on, and the world held its breath for the second time in fifteen days. The Columbia was sighted over Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, at midday and at three minutes after six passed over the jumping-off-spot of Trepassy, Nova Scotia. Next morning it circled the liner *Mauretania*,

340 miles out from Liverpool. This was an amazing sight for the ship's passengers who lined the rails shouting and waving. The Columbia came out of the sky as if out for a joy ride. Chamberlin made a complete circle of the ship, coolly examined her name, then shot off eastward. Three minutes later he was gone. In a state of high excitement the captain of the *Mauretania* flashed this news to Lindbergh on the *Memphis*, which had been sighted by the *Mauretania* only half an hour before.

According to the exclusive dispatches the flying pair would send to the *New York Times* they exchanged many memorable words over the heavy pounding of the Columbia's 220 h.p. motor. Thus, as darkness fell over the Atlantic Levine bellowed into Chamberlin's ear: "My nine-year-old daughter Eloyse is going to bed at home many miles westward. I can almost hear her say her prayers, asking God to get Daddy over there safely and her mother joining her in the prayers and perhaps crying."

Other heartfelt conversations were duly immortalized in the *Times*, but indications are that instead of sentimental chitchat the stormy petrel Levine sparked the first tiff over the Atlantic. Levine later said that he had not been bored for an instant during the flight. At times he took the controls and flew the plane. Yet the Columbia was in mid-Atlantic when the restless man began rooting among the stowed gear and found that Chamberlin had neglected to put aboard the oars for the rubber boat. He began to berate his partner for this oversight. "How could you be so stupid?" he shouted. "What was the use?" Chamberlin answered mildly. "It would be too far to row, anyway."

Levine sat silent following this, but soon his roving attentions were again occupied. He had arrived that morning with cash in his pocket to pay off all field employees of the Columbia Aircraft Corporation. Over the Atlantic he suddenly recalled that this large amount of folding money still reposed in the

pocket of his striped suit. According to Chamberlin, who would make the anecdote a highlight of numerous after-dinner speeches: "We were quite a distance out before he recalled that he had forgotten to pay the money out. When he thought of it, he shouted in consternation, declaring that he certainly would hate to go down into Davy Jones' locker with all that money on him."

Yet such episodes were minor compared to the real misfortunes of the *Columbia*. The plane had only reached New London when Chamberlin realized something was wrong with the earth-induction compass. In many interviews abroad, Lindbergh had paid tribute to the Pioneer compass in the *Spirit of St. Louis*. It had worked flawlessly, he stated, and his flight could not have been accomplished without it. Chamberlin's compass was made by the same company and had worked on innumerable test flights; later it was decided that the tremendous vibration of the *Columbia's* motor had upset its balance. So almost immediately after the take off Chamberlin and Levine were faced with the question of whether to turn back ignominiously. Levine, aware of the dislike the general public held for him, insisted that the flight continue. Chamberlin, weary of days of waiting at Curtiss Field, agreed. Among the miscellaneous gear he had stowed an outmoded fifty dollar magnetic compass, in case of accident. He dug this out and began navigating by it.

With this clumsy instrument, the *Columbia* was frequently lost. Indeed, Chamberlin's apparently nonchalant circling of the *Mauretania* was anything but nonchalant. Rather it was a bit of navigation as odd as Lindbergh's swoop over the fishing boat to shout, "Which way is Ireland?" When Chamberlin sighted the *Mauretania*, he was lost. Passengers aboard noted that he made a special point of ascertaining the name of the ship. There was method in this. Once he knew the ship's name, Chamberlin told Levine to open one of the copies of the *New*

York Times. From this paper, Chamberlin found the date and time of the *Mauretania's* departure from Liverpool. He then estimated where the liner would be at this precise moment. Thus he figured his own location, and set the course of the *Columbia* accordingly.

In the United States newspapers reported that weather over the Atlantic was perfect. This was far from true. Chamberlin encountered storms, heavy clouds, and fog banks. He wasted valuable gas climbing over and around this bad weather, and was driven so far north by winds that he missed Ireland. Where Lindbergh had averaged 107 mph, Chamberlin could make only 100.

On the second night he was flying at twenty thousand feet over the North Sea, with the temperature a frigid eighteen degrees. Here again controversy arose between Chamberlin and his passenger. Chamberlin now wished to land at Tempelhof Field in Berlin, making his flight as neat as Lindbergh's. Levine insisted on flying until every drop of gasoline was gone. Yet argument was rendered futile by the fact that Chamberlin still navigated by the old-fashioned compass, and would be unable to pin-point a destination like Berlin. Passing over Dortmund, he saw the airfield, dropped low, and shouted, "To Berlin? To Berlin?" Men waved frantically in the direction of the capital, but soon the *Columbia* was lost again.

Chamberlin and Levine had been in the air for forty-two and a half tense hours, covering 3,923 miles, when the plane's engine began to sputter from lack of gasoline. It was shortly after midnight, German time. The *Columbia* was far off course, over a town near Eisleben, 110 miles southeast of Berlin. It was a disappointing finale, but at least the *Columbia* had made the longest flight in the history of aviation, surpassing Lindbergh by 295 miles.

Chamberlin, past master at postage-stamp landings, brought the plane down in the middle of a farmer's field. Their

thundering arrival at first attracted only a single farm woman who beheld a strange sight as she approached. Two dirty-looking men—in those days of spitting engines flying was a filthy business—climbed from the plane. One (Chamberlin) was so dizzy that he could barely stand, and lurched around as if drunk. Levine, who had donned a heavy flying suit to protect himself from the cold, was stiff and sore. He began jumping an invisible rope to limber up muscles. Both were deaf from the engine noise, and it seemed to the German woman that they shouted threats at her. She turned and fled.

Soon a crowd from neighborhood farms gathered around the plane and its curious occupants. Remembering that he spoke a little German, Levine succeeded in persuading a native to set out for Eisleben to bring back containers of gasoline in a cart. Soon the man returned with twenty gallons of a fuel called benzol which were funneled into the Columbia. Four hours after landing the plane took off again in the direction of Berlin, where crowds still waited patiently at Tempelhof.

Almost immediately a thick fog descended, and once more Chamberlin was lost. He thought Berlin lay in one direction; Levine insisted on another. Weary at last of arguing, Chamberlin figuratively threw up his hands, solving the difference in informal fashion: "I steered for awhile toward where I thought Berlin was, then Levine took the controls and went his way."

As they circled in this manner, the benzol ran out. By now the Columbia was over Kottbus, seventy miles southwest of Berlin. Again Chamberlin picked a field and landed. This time the ground was soggy and the plane sank low into the mud, ploughing deep furrows with wheels and tail. Suddenly it struck an obstruction, to nose forward, the still-whirling propeller snapping off at the ends. This was a major calamity, yet for the moment a minor one seemed more important. Another farm woman had appeared, but instead of being frightened she was furious at the damage done her precious field. "Bezahlen!

Bezahlen!—Pay! Pay!” she screeched, and according to some accounts waved a menacing pitchfork at the exhausted men.

Soon she was joined by a man, who also shouted threats. But others around the countryside had heard the plane and soon the Mayor of Kottbus appeared. With its propeller damaged, the Columbia could not fly, so Chamberlin and Levine—World Heroes Two and Three—were led to the Kottbus Inn. Townsfolk toasted them in German beer and the burgomaster made a speech in which he declared that the Columbia’s forced landing constituted the most memorable moment in the thousand-year history of Kottbus. Pretty girls in peasant costumes popped up and the two Americans posed for pictures which would appear the world over captioned *The Fliers and the Frauleins*. Then Chamberlin and Levine were allowed to go upstairs for a few hours of solid rest.

A day later—June 7th—the repaired Columbia winged its way to Tempelhof. With an escort of hulking Lufthansa planes, the transatlantic craft looked small indeed. At Tempelhof cries of “Hoch! Hoch!” resounded from 150,000 throats, while Hussars marched and brass bands oom-paahed in all directions. The Columbia landed and the two fliers alighted, bringing stolid Berliners to a high pitch of excitement. Unlike the Lindbergh crowds in Paris and London, however, Berliners did not burst through police lines—German respect for law and order was too deeply ingrained for that. But reporters of all nations made a miniature mob scene around the pair. Chamberlin was asked, “Weren’t you afraid—didn’t you feel like turning back?” The easy going American smiled his quiz-zical grin. “Well,” he said, “you’re so excited during the first half of the trip that you don’t stop to worry. By that time, you realize it’s just as far back as ahead, that it’s too far to swim either way, so you just keep on going.”

In Berlin, the two fliers were widely feted. President von

Hindenburg, Foreign Minister Stresemann, and Dr. Hugo Eckener of dirigible fame paid fulsome tribute. At the Pilsen breweries in Munich a bock beer was named in honor of Chamberlin. From New York came word that the fliers' wives had boarded the first available liner to join the triumphant pair. Chamberlin was pleased by this, but Levine professed to be alarmed over treatment he might expect from the onetime Belle of Williamsburg. "When she sees me she will certainly deliver a knockout blow," he told newsmen.

Up to now, the press of the United States had been content to regard the Millionaire Junkman as a stormy petrel. But with the success of the flight to Berlin, Levine suddenly seemed to warrant more. For at times Charles A. Levine, World Hero Number Three, bore the personality-stamp of the Era of Wonderful Nonsense. Papers back home began to call him the erratic Mr. Levine in an effort to capture the essence of his actions.

Not all the hoopla which began to surround him stemmed from the First Transatlantic Passenger himself. Some was supplied by the President of the United States. For when the Bellanca plane landed in Germany, Calvin Coolidge cabled a message of congratulation. There was something peculiar about these congratulations: they were addressed only to Clarence Chamberlin. This vastly upset the Jewish press and much of the Jewish population. Coolidge was branded an anti-Semite and a Jewish newspaper called *The Day* reminded him:

Two men left New York; two men risked their lives; two men have showed heroism and created a record even greater than Lindbergh's. Two men left; two men arrived, Americans both. But the President of the United States congratulates only one, and by strange coincidence the one whom the President has not found worthy of being mentioned is named Levine . . .

How Levine felt about this slight is not known, for the Presidential cable was one of the few matters on which the

erratic man maintained discreet silence. But if he was displeased by Coolidge, he must have been delighted by Tin Pan Alley. The Street of Songs had disregarded Chamberlin to produce two rousing songs extolling Levine. One was "Levine, You Are the Greatest Hebrew Ace." The other (inevitably) was "Levine and His Flying Machine."

In far-off Berlin, the Millionaire Junkman may or may not have heard of these songs, or known that the *New York Times* had labeled him a bona fide Hero. At any rate, he completely failed to mend his stormy ways. While he and Chamberlin were supposedly filing exclusive dispatches to the *New York Times*, Levine undertook to unburden his true feelings to the Hearst press. "If we had had one-tenth of Lindy's luck, we would have made it," he cabled home. The United States reacted with shock and outrage. Once again Levine was accused of being a poor sport, and the figure of Levine the Hero slowly began to tarnish.

This did nothing to curb Levine's energies. From his eminence as a slightly faded Hero, the stubby little powerhouse announced plans for a two million dollar transatlantic airline which would be fueled by huge floating islands spaced across the ocean. He also met the photogenic German aviatrix Thea Rasche and signed her up for an American barnstorming tour. On June 13th—the day of the tumultuous Lindbergh welcome in New York—Chamberlin and Levine were relaxing in Baden Baden. Here Levine exposed another facet of his character. Few would have credited him with a sense of humor. Yet at Baden Baden he was to play host to a group of German industrialists, all of whom knew him and were familiar with his blunt, dynamic features. Levine set off to meet his friends in an old-fashioned Victoria driven by a coachman in a battered high hat. Midway to the railroad station he bribed the coachman to disappear, leaving behind the high hat. Levine clapped this on his own bald dome, mounted the coachman's seat, and

drove to the station. He sat stiffly at attention while his business associates climbed into the Victoria to be driven back to the hotel in style by Levine himself. No one recognized him as the efficient coachman.

Next, business problems began to bedevil Levine. In past years international deals had brought the Millionaire Junkman into negotiation with steel firms in the Ruhr. In one he had availed himself of the advisory services of Dr. Julius Puppe, a native of Germany. For this, Dr. Puppe had rendered a bill for ten thousand dollars. Levine had sent him five thousand dollars, disregarding all subsequent howls of outrage from the Ruhr. When Levine landed in Berlin, he was handed a fulsome message of congratulation from Dr. Puppe. Shortly, however, Dr. Puppe tried to slap a five thousand dollar writ on the Columbia. Berlin authorities were anxious to have their city appear every bit as hospitable to transatlantic fliers as Paris had been. Police took the server of the writ and bounced him from Tempelhof. Yet the episode made international headlines, and added a twist to the history of aviation.

In time, Mrs. Wilda Chamberlin and Mrs. Grace Levine arrived in Germany, where it was noted that Mrs. Levine greeted her husband affectionately, omitting the knockout blow he had anticipated. Then the fliers announced plans for a good-will tour to such major European cities as Munich, Vienna, Warsaw, Rome, and Paris. Meantime, they showed their wives the sights of Berlin . . .

For the Year of the Big Shriek this was tame stuff indeed, and in the United States people cast about for new thrills. Promise of such immediately came from the West Coast where James D. Dole, the Hawaiian pineapple king, offered \$25,000 for a non-stop flight across the 2,400 miles of Pacific to Hawaii. This would be the longest over-water flight ever attempted. Yet the Dole Pacific Race, as it came to be called, was a thoroughly senseless undertaking. Even as it was announced

two Army Signal Corps lieutenants, Lester J. Maitland and Albert F. Hegenberger, were poised at Oakland airport awaiting the right weather to make the same flight. Further, two civilians named Ernest L. Smith and Emory B. Bronte were only slightly behind the Signal Corps officers in plans for an identical hop. Thus Mr. Dole's rich offer smacked only of publicity for his pineapple products. Nevertheless, fifteen fliers rose up to take part. One entrant was an exceedingly pretty school-teacher-passenger named Mildred Doran.

The Dole Prize, so hastily conceived, brought protests from serious-minded aviation enthusiasts. If Lindbergh had showed aviation at its best, view-with-alarm newspaper editorials stated, the Dole Race exposed the worst. Yet a world hungry for aviation-thrills found the Dole Flight acceptable. Indeed, the urge to make record-breaking flights seemed to be everywhere. In Detroit, Edward F. Schlee and William Brock were quietly planning a flight around the world, involving the fewest number of stops possible. In Florida, an attractive dental assistant and beauty contest winner named Ruth Elder had joined with experienced pilot George Haldeman in purchasing a Stinson-Detroiter plane to be called the American Girl. It was Miss Elder's modest aim to be the first woman to fly the Atlantic.

In Brunswick, Georgia, a frail young music-student-turned-pilot named Paul Redfern had succeeded in persuading local businessmen to subsidize him in a 4,600 mile flight to Rio de Janeiro, his plane to be called the City of Brunswick. In New York City curious ideas of vindication smote tabloid editor Phil Payne, who suffered the dislike of his colleagues because of the fiasco of the Hall-Mills trial and alleged breach of confidence in the Earl Carroll bathtub party. Payne sold his chief, William Randolph Hearst, on the idea of a Hearst-subsidized flight to Rome. Payne signed Lloyd Bertaud and James De Witt Hill as pilot-navigators of a supposedly fool-proof plane named Old Glory. Payne himself intended to go along on this

flight but—like Levine—would not reveal it until the last moment.

Equally determined to fly the Atlantic was a Long Islander named Mrs. Frances Wilson Grayson, who had made one million dollars selling real estate around Forest Hills. As the owner of the Sikorsky amphibian plane Dawn, she was coralling experienced personnel for a flight to Copenhagen. Overseas, the picturesque foreign correspondent H. R. Knickerbocker was circulating among German pilots, attempting to find a pair who would take him on an east-west flight. In England, a lady of wealth and title dominated the flying picture. Princess Lowenstein-Wertheim, first woman to fly the English Channel, had joined forces with the elegant Captain Leslie Hamilton in projecting a flight to the United States. In Ireland, Princess Xenia of Greece announced a hop from Dublin to New York, backed by the fortune of her millionaire husband William B. Leeds. Her plane, named the Princess Xenia, would be flown by two Irish pilots.

In the midst of all this activity, one plane stood poised and ready. This was Commander Byrd's America, which had been waiting since April to start its flight over the Atlantic. Americans of the Twenties had been so often hoodwinked by scientific claims which turned out to be pure ballyhoo that many were inclined to put the Byrd flight on a level with other flights. Aviation men, though, considered it the first truly scientific transatlantic flight. "Lindbergh blazed the trail, and Chamberlin followed. But the flight of the Fokker meant the beginning of the new day in air transport," states a tribute to the America. The handsome, thirty-seven-year-old Byrd was backed by Rodman Wanamaker, who had already spent from \$250,000 to \$300,000 on preparations for the flight. The trimotor Fokker plane had cost \$70,000 to \$80,000, where the

Spirit of St. Louis had cost \$18,000 and the Columbia \$25,000. The America's wingspread was 25 feet wider than the others and the 14,500 pound plane outweighed them by 9,000 pounds. Loaded aboard the America was almost every possible scientific device, including a radio which for the first time would allow an ocean-crossing plane to communicate with the world.

Perhaps the great emphasis on science was responsible for the caution in the Byrd camp. Twice now the Fokker had missed out on adequate flying weather over the Atlantic, and as June progressed there were signs that Commander Byrd was becoming impatient. On June 23rd, he journeyed to New Haven, where Yale gave him an honorary degree. After he returned to Roosevelt Field, the tempo of excitement around the America increased. Byrd hinted that a take off was imminent and announced that the plane's crew would be himself as captain and navigator; Bert Acosta, the swashbuckler with the gleaming Latin smile, number-one pilot; Lieutenant George Noville, a broad-shouldered ex-athlete and Navy hero, radio engineer; and 28-year-old Bernt Balchen, emergency pilot and mechanic.

It is conceivable that Byrd was determined to fly before the month of June ran out. Because on June 28th weather reports were no better, no worse, than on many other days. Yet at ten-thirty that night Byrd stated that he would fly at dawn on June 29th. Once again a light rain fell over the field as the America's tanks were filled with one thousand three hundred gallons of gas, approximately nine hundred more than either the Spirit of St. Louis or the Columbia had carried. At one point a mail truck drew close to the plane to load aboard two hundred and fifty letters for foreign dignitaries. This, of course, was the first *official* airmail.

At four that morning Byrd appeared, upright and aristocratic in the uniform of a Navy aviator. The daredevil Bert Acosta

was already there. Noville and Balchen made last minute checks of equipment. Roast chickens were stored aboard, and Noville listened to last minute instructions about a crash-valve which would dump the plane's huge load of gasoline in less than a minute.

At five-fifteen the four men climbed into the plane, Byrd and Acosta in the pilot-chairs in front, Noville and Balchen among the scientific equipment behind. The *America* now weighed 17,820 pounds, six hundred more than had ever before been lifted into the air. At five-twenty-five the plane started wallowing down the runway, so weighted by its enormous load that many thought it would never rise. But then the clumsy plane began a slow, reluctant lift. Once in the air, the *America* regained dignity and grace. It pointed northeast—as one reporter rhapsodized, “its three motors roaring a song to the morning.”

To the watching world of 1927, each of the three great transatlantic flights seemed to have a personality of its own. Lindbergh's seemed the Super-Flight, brave, daring, confident. Because of the legal controversy swirling around the Columbia and the comic-opera activities of Charles A. Levine, the Chamberlin flight never seemed one-hundred-percent serious. But to the world the Byrd flight became a mixture of irony and courage. The *America* carried every safety device known to aviation. For trouble, there were flares and inflatable rafts. To defeat fatigue there were two pilots. Byrd had waited months for perfect weather. Nothing about the flight had been left to chance. Yet, ironically, it encountered the worst weather of all.

As Byrd and his crew flew over Newfoundland word was flashed that after a twenty-six hour flight through rain and cross-winds the Army fliers Maitland and Hegenberger had landed in Hawaii. At once from the *America* came a gallant message: “Wire our congratulations to Maitland and his crew.

We are keeping a sharp lookout for Nungesser. Think we are getting some scientific data. Byrd." Soon came another radio signal: "Message for good old Floyd Bennett. Tell him we miss him like the dickens."

These were the only cheerful messages Byrd tapped out. From Nova Scotia on, he and his men flew in fog so thick that it was impossible to see wing-tips. Byrd's wireless messages took on a ghastly vividness as murky, foggy night enveloped the plane: "Airplane America at Sea—Via Chatham, Mass.—We have seen neither land nor water since 4 p.m. yesterday, on account of dense fog and low clouds covering an enormous area." Byrd later called the flight "forty-two hours of Hell" and his radio messages contained such phrases as "a great prison of darkness." After the first night turned into the second day the Commander and his men found themselves inhabiting another world—as he later put it in a book:

There were at times some terrible views. We would look hundreds of feet into fog valleys—dark, ominous depths. At times the cloud peaks or the horizon looked exactly like a land of mountains. At other times they took on the appearance of a beautiful lake or river. . . .

As hours passed the America's vaunted scientific instruments began breaking down. Compass wild, radio working intermittently, the big plane flew through a fog world that again turned into ink black night. "Nothing in my North Pole flight, no hard experience, no strain, can equate what we endured in this flight," Byrd later wrote. "There was no way for us to know where we were going. Because of the lowness of the clouds and the pitch darkness we were hopelessly lost."

Byrd's wireless could send messages, but not receive. Thus he remained unaware of the most ironic twist of all. A great storm covered Western Europe that night, and in its exact center lay Paris. At Le Bourget, rain lashed down in a teeming

deluge. Thunder, lightning, winds, fog, and low black overcast combined to make one of the most awful nights in the memories of Parisians. Even so, several thousand persons stood waiting under umbrellas at Le Bourget. For a time Chamberlin and Levine were among those waiting, for the Columbia had landed at Le Bourget that afternoon on the last leg of its goodwill tour. But after midnight most of the crowd drifted away, leaving only journalists and an ambulance which waited ominously at the side of the runway.

Byrd's earth-induction compass was useless. "We are flying by a compass that has gone crazy," he relayed. Yet by a miracle he had located Paris and for some twenty minutes those at Le Bourget could hear the thunder of the Fokker engines above the low clouds. "'Allo, 'Allo," the crowd yelled up into the pelting rain—or was it "Ah, l'eau" that the French shouted? American reporters in the rain were too miserable to care.

Byrd knew he was above Paris. "I am flying around Paris—Am I to the west of Paris?—Give me my position," he begged frantically. This was heard by a transmitter on the Eiffel Tower, but Byrd could not get the answer. He and his men flew on, assailed by driving rain and shut in by fog which reduced visibility to zero. It was a mighty drama, and only later did the world learn of the drama-within-a-drama enacted in the America's cabin. During most of the forty hours of flight swashbuckling Bert Acosta held the controls. Where the other members of the America crew were primarily technicians, accustomed to the patient working out of detail, Acosta thrived on speed and excitement. His feat in blind-flying the America for nearly two days was remarkable, but as the plane criss-crossed Paris the daredevil pilot began to crack. As the scene has been recreated in a biography of Byrd, the Commander suddenly shouted to his chief pilot, "You're off your course, man. You're flying in a circle!" Byrd's flashlight:

stabs a dazzling naked hole through the darkness, and in its unholy glare Acosta turns savagely, his eyes red and bulging—"I'm going back!" his voice rasps brazenly. He whirls back to the controls, the motors burst into a screaming crescendo and the *America* wheels abruptly and spurts back toward the sea.

At such a moment a commander can do only one thing. Byrd grabbed a heavy metal flashlight and stepped behind Acosta. He lifted the flashlight, ready to bring it down in a knockout blow on the pilot's skull. But before he could do this, Acosta collapsed, falling nervelessly into the two feet of leg room between the pilot seats. Calm young Bernt Balchen slipped into his chair and took over the controls.

Balchen was piloting some two hours later—at two-thirty in the morning, Paris time—when murky clouds below suddenly parted for a split second. Through this break could be seen an expanse of what appeared to be sea. Actually it was the English Channel just off *Ver sur Mer*, a quiet fishing village which had last known excitement when a ship of the Spanish Armada foundered there in 1588.

The tanks of the *America* held only enough gas for another half hour of flight. Since the sea below seemed calm, Byrd decided to land in the water. "We landed voluntarily," he said later, "choosing the sea as safer than unknown ground." By this time all crew members were stone deaf, and Byrd scratched out on a piece of paper, "We are going to land." He passed this around, as Noville later said, "like an invitation to a tea party." Balchen read, nodded. He pointed the huge plane downward. Wheels touched water and were instantly shorn from the fuselage. A second later came a mighty crash and the plane went under. Byrd, Balchen, and Noville fought their way out of the fuselage and rose to the surface. For a moment Acosta seemed lost, but almost at once the dashing fellow popped up, revived by the dip and smiling his flashing smile. The men peered around and saw the shore about two hundred

yards away. Noville inflated the rubber raft and in it the four paddled ashore.

"The taste of France for hero worship has not been exhausted," read a dispatch to the *New York Times* a few days later. Byrd and his men had been rushed to a hospital, where all four were found to be suffering varying stages of exhaustion. Acosta had painfully fractured a shoulder and on Byrd's chest was a large contusion. At Ver sur Mer the four were permitted some sleep, but Paris was impatiently awaiting them.

In Paris, the men of the America found Chamberlin and Levine, and it was as a group of six Heroes that the transatlantic fliers were greeted by President Doumergue and other high officials of France.

In Byrd, Paris found a new kind of inspiring Hero. Chiseled, erect, aristocratic in Navy whites, he seemed a man where Lindbergh had been a boy. Byrd was capable of salty speech—"High up in the clouds it was cold as hell," he told one admiring group. Again, "I tell you, it was one hell of a strain." Despite his chiseled features and erect bearing, Byrd possessed a keen sense of humor and much enjoyed listening to yarns spun by the drily humorous Clarence Chamberlin. In public Byrd made speeches and accepted honors with the dash of a Virginia gentleman. Because of his rank and previous accomplishments, the precise French accorded him even higher official honors than were given Lindbergh.

Emphasis on Byrd left the others free to enjoy Paris. Chamberlin and his wife went sightseeing like tourists from Iowa. Balchen discovered a cafe in Montparnasse called the Viking and there the young man of the north established a Hero-hangout. Dashing Bert Acosta soaked up night life at Joe Zelli's. On the night of Commander Byrd's thirty-eighth birthday the group went en masse to the *Folies Bergères*. The new American Heroes seemed to be having a grand time in Paris,

and newspapers lamented that Lindbergh had not been let loose on the town to taste its rare pleasures. "It is not on the record," declared a journalist solemnly, "that Colonel Lindbergh ever really enjoyed himself in Paris, unless doing barrel-rolls and looping-the-loop in a French military plane constitutes enjoyment."

Came a shift in the cast of Hero characters, for Clarence Chamberlin at last became fed up with the antics of his erratic transatlantic partner. An open break between these two became public knowledge when Levine announced plans to fly back across the Atlantic in the *Columbia*. Chamberlin felt this was pushing good luck. He bowed out. Levine announced that his probable pilot would be Fraulein Thea Rasche, and that as an extra added passenger the plane might have a much-publicized American lady known as Mabel Boll, the *Queen of Diamonds*. After this had won suitable headlines, Levine dropped the ladies to hire a French pilot named Maurice Drouhit, who had been planning his own flight. By then Chamberlin and Levine ceased appearing together in public. When queried about this, Chamberlin answered tersely, "Our programs will be separate from now on."

8 Twelve Little Words

Joe College: See that fellow over there? That's Lindbergh.
Dumb Dora: Let's see—when was it he swam the English Channel?

—Judge

Mother: Aren't you ashamed of yourself wearing so little clothing to a party?

Flapper: Goodness no, mother. If I were ashamed of myself I wouldn't wear so little clothing to a party.

—College Humor

He: What happened to your stenographer?

Him: She left—she caught me kissing my wife.

—Judge

Shiek: Has Tom learned to play the saxophone yet?

Sheba: It's hard to tell.

—Life

1st Flapper: The boy I'm going with now thinks of nothing but necking.

2nd Flapper: What can you do with a fellow like that?

1st Flapper: Neck.

—College Humor

Chuck: I thought you promised to save me some of the hooch you had.

Wally: I tried to, but it ate holes through everything and I finally had to drink it.

—College Humor

Bystander: Good heavens, you shot the wrong man.

Chicagoan: What of it?

—Judge

Show Girl: For heaven's sake, stop showing your ignorance.

Chorus Girl: My God, I knew I should have worn a petticoat!

—Judge

Have you some of that gasoline that stops knocking?

Yes.

Then give my wife a glass.

—Literary Digest

With such enormous events transpiring in the air, it would seem impossible for anyone landbound to make banner headlines in 1927. Yet as June became July, and July approached August, this feat was accomplished intermittently by a man who apparently decided that in view of the soaring flights he could make the headlines only by the shrewdest kind of underplaying.

In this he was like a highly experienced actor, aware of every possible trick of his trade. On a stage in the midst of a group of youngsters with looks, adventure-appeal, and a superabundance of It, the seasoned performer would know that only by relying on scene-stealing could he win the attention of the audience. He could stand corner-stage and lingeringly extract a long white handkerchief from a pocket during the leading actor's soliloquy. Or wear different colored socks, to strategically reveal this interesting fact as he sat observing a highly emotional scene acted by others. Or he could be the

old-time buffoon who would don ridiculous attire to stalk wordlessly across the stage—the low comedian who will wear anything, do anything, to pull attention to himself.

The man who, by a combination of all such methods, frequently won headlines in the summer the world went mad had already—like an expert actor—great prestige and a large following. He was Calvin Coolidge, thirtieth President of the United States. Coolidge's superb skill at capturing the spotlight at moments during his somnolent administration has surprised some historians, but it never surprised the few who knew the silent Chief Executive well. The Coolidge horizon was bounded by his sparse Vermont boyhood, and he seemed to regard the Presidency of the United States as tantamount to operating a small store. So long as the shelves were orderly and expenses kept low—that was enough. Thousands of office-holders lost jobs as a result of Cautious Cal's ceaseless economies, but he never considered expanding or introducing new ideas. In a devastating essay called "A Study In Inertia," Irving Stone has written: "Calvin Coolidge believed that the least government was the best government; he aspired to become the *least* President the country had ever had; he attained his desire."

Under Coolidge, the capital city of Washington was as quiet as a New England village. A few stop-and-go traffic lights had just been installed, but this was a sign of rare progress. In 1927 the Coolidge workday averaged a mere four hours. The President was much pleased by this, as was the rest of the country which called his tenure the Era of Coolidge Prosperity. Coolidge firmly believed that by easing the tax burdens of the rich he benefitted all—in other words, the rich as they grew richer would take care of the poor. "The business of America is business," he stated on one famous occasion. Again he said, "brains are wealth and wealth is the chief end of man." His grasp of economics was exposed as he solemnly declared:

“When more and more people are thrown out of work, unemployment results.” Of all this, William Allen White stated: “He was an economic fatalist, with a God-given inertia. He knew nothing and refused to learn.”

In little more than twenty years the tight-lipped Coolidge had made an astounding rise from City Councilman to the Presidency. “He ain’t gabby,” opined the first voters to encounter him. He was not gabby in the White House either. His four-hour work day was largely spent in listening to the reports of subordinates or to receiving distinguished guests. When the man across his desk ceased speaking, the pickle-pussed President merely looked at him. Shortly the visitor rose and left. For the rest of the time he walked about offering his cold-fish handshake to White House tourists, rocked on his Pennsylvania Avenue porch, prowled the White House kitchens in search of excess spending, or threw temper tantrums because Secret Servicemen did not instantly carry out his cryptic orders.

The man who cut the duties of office by seventy percent was also able to nap every afternoon from two to four, his feet neatly crossed atop the Presidential desk. Just about the only thing to be said in favor of Coolidge is that he may have realized subconsciously that he was ill-equipped for such high office. But if he did not grow in mental stature during his tenure, Coolidge gradually became aware that a spotlight of national interest was eternally focused on him.

“Coolidge has been an old man from the age of twelve,” one observer decided. “He is spending his adolescence in the White House.” The adolescent in the joyless man found a new toy in his ability to get publicity. Because of his inertia almost anything Coolidge said or did was news, often with accompanying photographs. But as always Cautious Cal took the limited view. From the White House, he could project almost any image of himself. Characteristically, he chose the most sedate. He watched with a careful eye every detail of his quiet daily life,

noting anything out of the ordinary that happened. Regularly he parceled out these morsels to reporters. It became a major news event when Mrs. Coolidge baked a soufflé that her husband liked.

As Coolidge evaluated his own news potential, the most exciting material he had to offer stemmed from what newspapers called the White House menagerie. The President and his warmhearted wife had two collies named Rob Roy and Princess Prim, together with a raccoon named Rebecca. They also owned five assorted birds. Coolidge watched the antics of this menagerie with an avid eye and instantly reported any cute behavior to the waiting press. Such stories were designed to make Coolidge himself seem simple, friendly, and contented. But the important thing is that they came from Coolidge. He was letting the world see him as he saw himself.

So the country became familiar with the man whose personality was once compared to a block of ice, and in whose veins supposedly ran ice water. In photographs the dour man's head seemed to be topped by black hair. Actually his hair was sandy with a few glints of red. It was the only colorful thing about him. In 1924, the Republican Party had waged its campaign with the slogan Keep Cool with Coolidge, which completely summed up the President's philosophy. As Frederick Lewis Allen has written: "Considering that he was in the White House for five years and seven months, his Presidential record was surprisingly negative. But it was just the sort of record he preferred."

Rob Roy, Princess Prim, and Rebecca Raccoon—the birds had been left behind—were members in top standing of the Presidential vacation special which departed Washington early in June. This was several days after the thundering excitements of Lindbergh Day, and the President and his wife were bound for the Black Hills of South Dakota on a vacation scheduled

to last from June 15th to September 15th. For his 1927 change-of-scene, Coolidge had chosen a territory far different from the rocky hills of his native Vermont. The Black Hills were really mountains, 3,500 feet above sea level, with travel folders enthusiastically hailing the region near the South Dakota-Wyoming border as an American Switzerland. The Summer White House would be in the 125,000-acre Custer Park forest reserve, famed for elk, buffalo, trout, natural caves, bottomless lakes, and (it was promised) cool breezes. High altitudes would help keep away annoying flies and mosquitoes. The White House itself would be a thirty room State Game Lodge, and reporters sent ahead to scout the area wrote: "Past its porch elk, sheep, and deer stroll. Almost at its door is a stream stocked with rainbow trout. One sleeps under blankets."

Coolidge's executive offices would be in the classrooms of a school house in Rapid City, an automobile ride of thirty-two minutes from the State Game Lodge. Nearby lay the fabled town of Deadwood, hallowed by Buffalo Bill, Wild Bill Hickok, Calamity Jane, and other legendary figures of the Northwest. Also close by was Mount Rushmore, where the sculptor Gutzon Borglum was preparing his massive sculptures of the faces of Washington, Lincoln, Jefferson, and Theodore Roosevelt out of the sheer mountainside.

South Dakota had been picked as Presidential vacationland for reasons other than invigorating air and plentiful trout. In legislative and other matters, the Northwest had felt slighted in recent years. Party bosses, eyes on 1928, had pressured Coolidge into traveling to this far region for the summer. When the selection of South Dakota was announced all animosity faded behind a huge eruption of local pride. This became clear as the Presidential special approached Rapid City. The final four hundred miles turned into a giant cheering session, with South Dakotans gathered at whistle stops to express themselves in such cheers as:

South Dakota is the sunshine state
All the people here are feeling great.

South Dakota was not a region noted for literary productivity, yet now—and through the summer—its delighted inhabitants exposed a happy talent for creating jingles. Most of these rhymed the name Cal and as the Presidential Special huffed along school children waved banners which read:

We'll back you, Cal
Like we would a pal.

There was yet another reason for this warmth. It may be hard to believe, but Calvin Coolidge was the President who, up to this point in history, had reached closest contact with the people of his country. Even dynamic, picturesque Teddy Roosevelt had been a remote figure compared to the block-office personality of Coolidge. One reason for this was radio, by which the twangy, impersonal Coolidge voice could be heard in any living room. Almost equally important were the movie newsreels, in days before television the most dramatic method of watching great events and personages. Coolidge had a great partiality for Movietone News and others, perhaps because he could run them off at will, observing himself in action. He showed an almost childish fondness for newsreel cameramen, and this was never more apparent than during the Black Hills sojourn. Because of various delays, the Presidential party did not reach the State Game Lodge until after dark on the night of arrival. Next morning Coolidge personally herded the entire party two hundred yards down the road. Bags were stowed in motor cars as before, and a second arrival at the summer White House was staged in daylight for the benefit of newsreels.

On the placid mind of President Coolidge reposed such international matters as the Second Geneva Naval Conference, which like the first seemed doomed to failure. At home he was slightly unpopular in rural districts because of a steadfast re-

fusal to sign bills bringing farm relief. Just before Coolidge departed for South Dakota, the great rise in stock market prices suddenly halted, for all the world like the gasp which indicates a healthy man is not as robust as he looks. Coolidge and Secretary of the Treasury Mellon took due note of this, with the result that both went to great lengths to proclaim greater faith than ever in the future of America. Immediately stocks jumped twenty-six points. Coolidge and Mellon were enormously pleased with themselves. What they had done, however, was to *boost* prices by exploiting their prestige and the great confidence the public reposed in them. A trusting public which had used up its savings began to borrow on farms, homes, and cars for money to invest in the glorious American bull market.

None of this dawned on Coolidge, who after restaging the daylight arrival at Custer Park promptly repaired to nearby Squaw Creek where he donned rubber hip boots over his business suit and, with a sedate gray fedora on his head, proceeded to fish. This was the day an exhausted Lindbergh flew from New York to St. Louis, and while he did Coolidge caught seven rainbow trout, the largest one and seven-eighths pounds. Returning to the lodge, he proudly held them up for the admiration of Mrs. Coolidge, while the newsreel cameras ground away.

Coolidge did have problems. So little happened around him that even so simple a matter as catching seven rainbow trout could embroil him in nationwide controversy. On the night of the arrival at Custer Park, Rebecca Raccoon had slipped out of her cage and climbed up into the limbs of a tree. For the next half hour the President of the United States stood under the tree, whistling gently to bring her down. Reporters watched hungrily, and this mild scene became a major story enshrined in news columns around the country.

Similarly, when Coolidge carried a tin of wriggling worms on his first day's fishing, this too made news—though of a

more explosive sort. Across the country, members of the Izaak Walton League thought fishing for trout with worms unsportsmanlike. A howl of public protest arose, and the summer White House was inundated with fishing flies, while various publicity-minded individuals offered to rush to Custer Park to instruct the President in their use. To all this Coolidge reacted sourly. "I'll let the fish teach me how to use flies," he grumped.

The clear air of South Dakota wrought no visible change in the Coolidge personality. One of the hardships of office was that so many people wished to lunch or dine with the President of the United States. At such moments Coolidge said nothing to his guests, leaving conversation entirely to the charming Mrs. Coolidge. Yet guests felt impelled to address some remark to the taciturn host. At one Black Hills luncheon a Republican committeewoman turned with great animation to say, "Mr. Coolidge, you must get a great many important dispatches from Washington out here. How do they come—by air mail?"

"Special pouch," Coolidge answered without lifting eyes from food.

It was a moment Mrs. Coolidge had faced many times before and she hopped into the breach. "Oh, yes," she said, "we get a great deal of mail. Even books and magazines if we send for them."

"Not by special pouch," Coolidge snapped.

"Oh, no, I didn't mean they came by special pouch."

"You implied it."

At the Custer Park White House, Coolidge continued his afternoon naps. Mornings he either went to the Rapid City executive offices or fished. A good deal of his time was spent in a rocking chair on the front porch of the Game Lodge. Since the Lodge was in a public forest preserve, any citizen of the United States willing to take a long auto trip might have the privilege of standing a few feet from the nation's Chief Execu-

tive as he sat in his shirt sleeves rocking back and forth. So many seized this priceless opportunity that Rapid City hotels were jammed and neighboring localities began pioneering in the American institution of the overnight tourist home. The fact that crowds had eyes glued on him as he rocked never bothered Calvin Coolidge. Several times during the summer he called the White House valet to the side of the rocking chair. The valet donned a white coat, extracted snipping shears, and trimmed the sandy Presidential hair while hundreds gaped.

Oddly enough, Coolidge was a Yankee Doodle Dandy, born on the Fourth of July. His fifty-fifth birthday fell on July 4, 1927 and suitable ceremonies were arranged by enthusiastic South Dakotans. Yet this and other peaks of Coolidge's Black Hills vacation only served to highlight the canny manner in which the President spread himself in the department of publicity. Between the arrival of the Presidential party and late June, Coolidge was content to fish. He permitted photographers and newsreel cameramen to photograph him holding his fishing catch, but never in the act of fishing. This last he was saving—and with reason! The worm controversy still raged in the American press, focusing sufficient attention on him. Weeks had passed since Coolidge first impaled a worm on his hook, yet now the *New York Times* carried one of the strangest story-heads ever to appear in its august pages:

RADIO BARS ANGLER
DEFENDING COOLIDGE
AS WORM FISHERMAN

Under this, the story begin: "The lowly angle worm is being dragged into national politics by political foes of President Coolidge with a view to causing loss of the anglers' vote if he should be a candidate for re-election—claims Fred B. Shaw, former international fly fishing champion."

Mr. Shaw—reporters called him a rugged character of seventy-three who looked forty-five—had been scheduled to deliver an address *Our President, Our Trout, and Our Fishing Methods* over radio station WABC in New York. Though a vigorous member of the Izaak Walton League, Mr. Shaw could see both sides of any question and was prepared to defend the President: "It is my intention to offer honorable amends to our President for the many slurs and gibes that have been launched against him by anglers since it became known he was using worms as bait for trout." Immediately before this stout defense went on the air, Mr. Shaw was told to make certain deletions in his talk. He refused. Stalking from the radio station, he called a press conference at which he charged that Democrats were conniving to make Coolidge lose the next election. He would, he declared, find another radio outlet for his speech of vindication.

So the worm story raged and Coolidge calmly permitted it to do so. Another running story involved his adoption into the Sioux Indian tribe. Coolidge boasted a drop of Indian blood in his ice-cold veins, and the South Dakota Sioux had decided to christen him Great White Chief, an honor never before accorded an American President. This was even more of an honor because the Sioux had filed suit against the government for seventy thousand dollars, claiming ownership of the land on which the Custer Park game reserve stood. Another delicate shading was provided by the fact that seventeen living members of the Sioux tribe had taken part in the Custer massacre.

Even so, Chief Henry Standing Bear was determined to honor Coolidge. He drew up plans for a solemn tribal ceremony in which Rosebud Robe, most beautiful of living Sioux maidens, would present Coolidge with a war bonnet, the feathers of which would reach the ground; Chief Chauncey Yellow Horse would elucidate the honor bestowed on the President; and, finally, Henry Standing Bear himself would puff the

pipe of peace before holding it out to the Great White Father.

Already theatrical agents were fanning out from major cities to sign Rosebud Robe to a personal appearance contract, and in this and other matters pertaining to the Coolidge ceremony the Sioux showed a sense of publicity almost equal to the President's. What Indian name should be given the Great White Chief? This was a matter of vast import to the Sioux and shortly became important to the rest of the country as well. Every few days Chief Henry Standing Bear leaked a new name to the press. Was Silent Waters the right name for Coolidge, or would Solemn Warrior be better? The Sioux chose and cast aside, faithfully informing the press each time.

For Coolidge's birthday on July 4th, cowboys and cowgirls, Indians and prospectors, school children and parents, local families, tourists, Republican committee members, businessmen, and miscellaneous dignitaries swarmed to Custer Park. Not the least prominent among these was "Aunt Mary" Halley, a pioneer grandmother, considered the best cake and bread baker in the Black Hills. Rhapsodized the *New York Times*: "Her cakes are baked from her own recipes which she carefully guards. They have a richness that tickles the palate but does not disturb the digestion."

Aunt Mary had been delegated to bake the official Coolidge birthday cake and from her huge store of knowledge decided on a sour-cream chocolate cake. At one-fifteen on July 4th, Aunt Mary appeared on the doorstep of the summer White House bearing this offering. Coolidge, in a blue serge suit and stiff straw hat, accepted the gift. "I had a day of days," Aunt Mary confided later. "I suddenly found myself in the center of a group, pleasantly received by President and Mrs. Coolidge."

Aunt Mary's presentation of the cake was the signal for South Dakota's birthday celebration to begin. Multitudes jammed the spacious lawns of the Game Lodge, and straight-way South Dakotans began to prove their new-found genius for

jingles. From one end of the lawn a group of high school boys and girls cheered in unison:

We like Cal
He's Our Pal

From another side of the crowd came a competitive cheer:

We're With You, Cal
With You and Your Gal

Another:

He's Our Pal
Is Cal

And another:

Cal and His Gal
May God Be Their Pal

As the cheering sections vied to outdo each other, a group of Boy Scouts presented Coolidge with a complete cowboy outfit. The President smiled painfully as the beauties of this regalia were indicated to him, especially the fact that down the sides of the wide chaps stippled letters spelled out:

C
A
L

When the cowboy suit had been stowed back in its box Coolidge began offering his lifeless handshake to local officials and Republicans who had traveled from afar to greet him.

The President was an especial favorite of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, for he had never been known to sip an alcoholic beverage, and his views on Prohibition were characteristically negative. "I believe the law should be upheld," was all he had ever said about the God-given right of a man to take a drink. Groups of grateful WCTU ladies now reached for his hand, thanking him fervently for such righteous support.

Temperatures in the Black Hills had been reaching the upper nineties, and members of the Presidential entourage were sure Coolidge wished he had vacationed as usual in the coolness of Vermont. July 4th was another scorching day and after an hour the birthday ceremonies showed signs of sagging. Coolidge may have been unable to detect signs of dangerous overexpansion in the national economy ("There was a volcano boiling under him, but he did not know it," H. L. Mencken would write), but he did know when a celebration in his honor was falling flat. Sizing up the unhappy situation, he disappeared inside the summer White House.

When he came back, the President wore the full cowboy costume presented by the Boy Scouts. He made a curious, incongruous, and thoroughly astonishing sight: "Booted and spurred, with flaming red shirt, a dashing handkerchief of blue around his neck, fancy boots carrying silver spurs upon the heels, chaps around his legs, a belt around his waist, and on his head a ten gallon hat that looked as if it would hold fifteen." Smiling sheepishly, Coolidge walked through the awe-struck crowd until he stood in front of his wife. "How do I look?" he asked her. "Like a real Westerner," she tactfully said.

Coolidge allowed newspaper photographers to take his picture in the cowboy outfit. Then he perched on the wooden fence of a corral and mechanically lifted the ten-gallon hat up and down for the newsreel boys. COOLIDGE AS COWBOY WINS WEST'S HEART, newspapers headlined the next day, thus effectively stealing space from Commander Byrd and his men, who were being feted in Paris.

But the cowboy suit was no one-shot scene-stealing effort with the President. He became deeply attached to it, wearing the ten-gallon hat on all occasions. Far more surprising was the sight that greeted those who visited the President after dinner. One man so honored reported that he "found the President seated in his living room wearing cowboy boots,

chaps, and ten-gallon hat. There he sat late into the night smoking his cigar. He is said to put on these clothes of the West after dinner, using them as other men do a lounging robe."

In addition to his skill at headline-stealing, Coolidge had the most priceless asset of all—an ace up his sleeve. Would he run for the Presidency in 1928, or would he not? To the people of the United States Coolidge seemed, during the halcyon summer of 1927, to be giving a most effective demonstration of a man running hard for re-election. Yet no announcement came from the summer White House. Time was running short, and an increasing procession of Republican bigwigs visited the President in the Rapid City executive offices. Emerging, they stood on the stone steps of the school house to inform the twenty-five reporters assigned to the Black Hills that Coolidge seemed certain to run again. COOLIDGE VISITORS SAY HE IS CANDIDATE, became a familiar headline. Everyone agreed that if Coolidge did run again, he would be splendidly re-elected. With just the slightest of exceptions, Coolidge Prosperity still blanketed the land.

Only Silent Cal kept silent. Following his July 4th birthday celebration, he parceled himself out with customary canniness. Now at last he permitted himself to be photographed while fishing, and captions under the pictures said he was using a red spinner. In New York, angler Fred Shaw had finally delivered his speech over station WGY, summing up: "It is perfectly legitimate for the President to use worm-bait when fishing for trout in the Black Hills, because in some places it is the only bait to use." This, together with the President's use of the spinner, closed the worm controversy.

Coolidge was not dismayed. On July 4th the civilian fliers Smith and Bronte took off from Oakland for Hawaii. Fuel tanks dry, they crashed twenty-five hours later on the leper-colony island of Molokai, southeast of Honolulu. On this day,

Coolidge made equal news by going on a picnic to an old mining camp deep in the Black Hills. It was a steep, uphill climb to the abandoned camp, and horses pulling the picnic wagons puffed hard. Newsmen who raced ahead to be on the spot before the Presidential Party beheld a strange sight: "Up a steep mountain trailed a wagon drawn by two horses adorned with American flags. In the wagon sat Mrs. Coolidge. Behind the wagon, pushing it, was the President. Sweat poured down his face, his coat was off, and his vest had climbed up, announcing the fact that the President wears suspenders."

On this picnic Coolidge outdid himself. Not only did he make news by shoving the wagon. He also donned hip boots and panned for gold like an oldtime prospector. Cameras clicked as he did. Then he fished, again permitting photographers to take pictures, and earning himself the headline:

COOLIDGE PANS GOLD;
POSES FOR PICTURES
AS TROUT FISHERMAN

On July 18th Commander Byrd and his crew, together with Clarence Chamberlin, returned on the *Leviathan*. New York staged another monster welcome, with Lindbergh and Floyd Bennett riding down the Bay to greet the returning heroes. The Byrd welcome cost twenty-six thousand dollars compared to Lindbergh's seventy-five thousand dollars, yet it made headlines and Coolidge temporarily bowed to the inevitable. But soon he was back in the news by attending the Belle Fourche Rodeo wearing the ten-gallon hat. Protests from the Anti-Rodeo League failed to create the stir made by the Izaak Walton League—perhaps to Coolidge's disappointment. Yet, the rodeo had its incident. As he stood surrounded by the reception committee, Coolidge suddenly broke silence to demand, "Where's Badger Clark?" Badger Clark, author of such epics as "The Cowboy's Prayer," was the President's favorite poet. The recep-

tion committee was covered with confusion. Badger Clark had not been included among the distinguished guests.

As July ended, Lindbergh began his cross-country tour to promote aviation, winning headlines by the roaring receptions he received in such cities as Boston. After many false starts, the Sioux Indians finally settled on a name for the Great White Chief. The President would be christened Leading Eagle (Wamblee-Tokaha). Meanwhile, Coolidge let his personality out another notch by permitting photographs in full cowboy regalia astride a horse as he took a canter with a local woodsman named Dakota Clyde Jones.

In one way, Coolidge was a special trial to those around him. He steadfastly kept his watch on Washington time. Thus when he arose at seven in the morning, it was in reality five, Black Hills time. Coolidge was always the first to arrive at his schoolhouse office, and Presidential Secretary Everett Sanders experienced many headaches keeping the Coolidge appointment book straight. By August 2nd, when the President called a press conference, the twenty-five Black Hills correspondents had finally mastered the art of arriving in the Rapid City schoolhouse at the right time.

August 2nd was the fourth anniversary of the death of Warren G. Harding, as well as the dramatic midnight swearing-into-office of Coolidge by his Justice-of-the-Peace father in the family's Vermont homestead. In view of this, reporters expected that the press conference would be no more than a few perfunctory words about the anniversary. None suspected that Coolidge was going to play his tantalizing ace. Nor did anyone notice that Everett Sanders surreptitiously locked the door after the reporters had assembled.

Coolidge stood behind his desk smoking a cigar in a stubby ivory holder. "Is everyone in now?" he inquired in his flat New England twang. Assured the entire press corps were present, he told reporters to form a line and pass in front of him one by

one. To each he handed a small slip of paper on which was typed, "I do not choose to run for President in Nineteen-twenty-eight."

Reading this, the first reporter gasped and plunged for the door. It was locked, and he like the others had to stand waiting until the twenty-fifth man reached Coolidge. This gave reporters time to dwell on the inadequacy of the announcement and one begged, "Mr. President, can't you give us something more than this?" No flicker of satisfaction or amusement showed on the Presidential countenance. Tightening thin lips, he said, "There will be nothing more from this office today." Sanders unlocked the door, and the reporters raced for telephones and telegraph wires. Next morning the country rocked to the headlines:

COOLIDGE DOES NOT CHOOSE TO RUN IN 1928
STARTLES PARTY WITH 12-WORD MESSAGE

So Calvin Coolidge played his ace, providing one of the major news sensations of 1927. I-Do-Not-Choose-to-Run came as a shattering surprise to the country. Coolidge and Coolidge Prosperity seemed to belong together. No one had really thought Coolidge would end his pleasant White House tenure. Said a shocked Senator Hiram Johnson, "I am astounded." After recovering from the initial surprise newspaper editorials looked ahead: "The effect of the Coolidge message is like the breaking of a log jam on a river in the lumber country. As long as the President remained silent, the Presidential timber piled up behind him unable to move. Now it will burst loose with full vigor."

Still unable to assimilate the unwelcome announcement the nation turned to examining the word *choose*. Was it a tight word, or a loose one? Had the President used it in a Chaucerian or Websterian sense? There was, pundits opined, a vast difference.

Across the country collegiate youths lettered I Do Not Choose to Run in 1928 on the sides of their Model T flivvers, but newspapers took the statement with the utmost seriousness. Most believed that *choose* was a loose word which indicated Silent Cal might still be prevailed upon to run. Will Rogers examined the controversy with a humorist's eye and quipped that *choose* was "a foxy word." No one else put it better.

Several days after the Coolidge announcement a large delegation of WCTU ladies from northwestern states descended upon Rapid City. Outside the President's schoolhouse offices, the portly matrons fell to their knees, bowed heads, and offered up silent prayer that God in his infinite wisdom would make Calvin Coolidge change his mind. The ladies remained on their knees a considerable time, and at least twice Coolidge walked to the window of his office to see if they were still there. They were, and without altering his sour expression, the Chief Executive returned to his desk.

Nor would Coolidge say anything further to reporters. In desperation, newsmen made a big event of the arrival at Custer Park of young John Coolidge, the President's college student son, who had been taking summer courses at the University of Vermont. Asked his opinion of the "I-Do-Not-Choose" statement, young John replied, "Father usually says what he means." The passage of time proved him correct. Coolidge did not run in 1928, even though he was reported to have thrown himself on his bed in a tantrum when finally Herbert Hoover was nominated in his place.

The Coolidge decision against running again may well have been influenced by another event of 1927. Both before and after the I-Do-Not-Choose statement, the bones of Coolidge's predecessor in Presidential office were rattling in their resting place. In November 1927 the infamous Teapot Dome scandals

would reach the trial-point, thus bringing final disgrace to the shade of Warren Gamaliel Harding. If, as is possible, Coolidge realized certain of his own inadequacies as President, he may have feared something similar for himself if he held office too long. *Get out while the getting is good*, an inner voice may have counseled.

But far more shocking to a man like Calvin Coolidge and his WCTU cohorts was another scandal which enlivened the summer of 1927. This was publication of a book called *The President's Daughter*, by Nan Britton. Telling the all-too-familiar American tragedy of a very human man, an older, nagging wife, and a beautiful girl thirty years the man's junior, it abounded in such convincing detail that few who read its 440 pages doubted that the true father of the daughter was the late lamented Warren G. Harding. "Truth is patent in its every chapter," opined the journalist-biographer Samuel Hopkins Adams.

In the book were sex scenes too hot for Hollywood. They took place in a tiny White House closet where important visitors stored coats, galoshes and rubbers. As one historian has described the coat-closet assignments of Harding and his twenty-year-old mistress:

The man was handsome and silver-haired. . . . The girl was young, trim and blonde, with wide, intelligent eyes and the fresh look of a college sophomore. In the White House hall outside she had seemed demure, might have been the big man's devoted daughter. . . .

With the closet door shut, the windowless cubby hole was pitch dark—and perhaps better so. For the two who outside had seemed so heartwarmingly handsome and respectable began kissing feverishly, lips pressing against lips. For a few minutes this seemed to suffice, then the man's heavy body bent forward, crushing the girl hard against the wall. In answer to an unspoken signal, the hands of each furiously began exploring the body of the other.

Nineteen twenty-seven was the world's greatest year of sen-

sations—all blazoned in full ballyhoo style on the front pages of newspapers. *The President's Daughter* was just about the only under-the-counter sensation offered by the tumultuous year. The Republican Party tried to prevent publication, yet overnight it became, says Paul Sann in *The Lawless Decade*, "a kind of bootleg best seller. Many stores kept it under the counter as if it were a collection of French postcards between covers. But 50,000 Americans paid \$5 apiece for it that summer and fall."

No one knows whether Calvin Coolidge read *The President's Daughter*, or was briefed on its contents. But he must have been aware of the book's existence and of the sub rosa stir it was creating in the summer of 1927. This and Teapot Dome may have driven him to contemplate the unexpected things that can rise to sully the reputations of those who fail to measure up to high executive office. *Get out while the getting is good!* *The President's Daughter*, under-the-counter best seller of the year, may well have been a factor in Calvin Coolidge's surprising I-Do-Not-Choose-to-Run.

9 *Sacco-Vanzetti*

NO DOUBT Americans living through the splendid summer of 1927 would be surprised to learn that thirty-three years later—in distant 1960—the two most momentous events of the Year of the Big Shriek would be the Lindbergh flight and the execution on August 22nd of the so-called anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti.

By the same token, those peering back at 1927 may be surprised at the tumult of emotion stirred up by the Sacco-Vanzetti case. With the passage of years the impression has grown that Sacco-Vanzetti was considered a minor matter at the time, only to become heavy on the country's conscience in later years. This is not so. True, few Americans in the Teeming Twenties bothered to follow all ramifications of the involved case. It was in and out of newspaper headlines for seven long years, and after its unhappy end the majority of Americans were only too anxious to forget it in favor of the next big sensation. For a time they succeeded. But Sacco-Vanzetti again rose to take its place among the major happenings of 1927.

If nothing else, the bewildering story of Nick Sacco and Bart Vanzetti—to Americanize the first names of the pair, as their adherents quickly did—exposed the cleavage between the American minority who thought for itself and the majority content to let thinking be done for it. Those pondering the trials and subsequent tribulations of the two men usually developed grave doubts about the integrity of the charge on which they were convicted by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Rather than murderers, the two Italian-born men seemed to have been victims of the Red Scare sweeping the United States immediately after World War I.

In that transition period, returning soldiers found that the world might be safe for democracy but it was still rough on the common man. There was unemployment and much discontent. Looking around for convenient scapegoats, a lot of disgruntled citizens decided that radicals among foreign immigrants were responsible. Led by Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer the country began a hysterical campaign against foreign-born Reds. Most hated of these were the anarchists who allegedly planned to throw bombs and upset the government of the United States by violence. Fury was fanned when some anarchists did toss bombs. One blew off the porch of Attorney General Palmer's home in Washington, getting himself killed in the process. Another exploded a bomb in the middle of Wall Street. Anarchists, Mitchell Palmer shouted, were determined to blow up the country.

Yet there were anarchists and—anarchists. A few were bomb-throwers, many more considered themselves philosophical anarchists. These were dreamers rather than doers. In 1920 Bart Vanzetti, aged thirty-three, was such a man. After fifteen years in this country he still peddled fish from a broken-down cart which he pushed around the suburbs of Boston. Vanzetti was a remarkable figure to be doing this. A bravura fellow, he

was tall, with a high, intelligent forehead, hawk nose, piercing eyes, and an enormous drooping moustache. As he peddled, Vanzetti passed out anarchist leaflets advocating a kind of idealistic thought which has been called noble nonsense. Vanzetti was, in fact, opposed to all existing orders. Where Communists advocated more rigid laws, he wanted to abolish law. Vanzetti's noble nonsense was somewhat Tolstoyan: he believed that, were legal restraint removed, people would behave better of their own accord. No government, in his mind, was far superior to government of the people, by the people. He was also a pacifist, in 1917 he had hidden in Mexico rather than be subject to the draft.

No one who knew Vanzetti thought him violent. He was a man of sweeping good will. The anarchist pamphlets he passed out merely urged people to throw off their shackles by attending protest meetings against the existing order. "Freedom of discussion to all—Take the ladies with you," they ended.

Nick Sacco was a mild and unobtrusive shoemaker, a man who spoke only when spoken to. (Vanzetti was likely to grasp every chance to proselytize.) Sacco was a devoted husband and father of two—his son bore the poetic name Dante—who earned a good income in a shoe factory outside Boston. Sacco and Vanzetti were intelligent men (Vanzetti particularly so) but they had been leisurely in adapting themselves to the United States. They had made no application for citizenship. Both still spoke heavily accented English and wrote worse.

Sacco was hard at work at his factory bench on December 24, 1919 (Vanzetti later swore that at the same time he was peddling fish) when a holdup gang attempted a store robbery in Bridgewater, Massachusetts. The gang behaved like thorough professionals, yet in planning the job they had overlooked the fact that the store lay in view of passengers on streetcars which clanged by at intervals. In mid-holdup, the trolley could be

heard heading down upon the scene. The thieves dropped everything to flee in a most unprofessional manner. No money was stolen, no one hurt.

Four months later, on April 15, 1920, a far more serious holdup was staged in South Braintree, Massachusetts. Before the horrified eyes of a gang of Italian ditch diggers, five men in a stolen car accosted and cold-bloodedly killed a paymaster and factory guard. The murderers got away with a payroll of \$15,776.51. None of this money, incidentally, was ever traced to Sacco or Vanzetti. Nor was any real attempt made to track down, or even explain, the other three murderers who might have been in the stolen car.

On May 5th, Sacco and Vanzetti were arrested in an automobile containing Vanzetti's subversive leaflets. Both men had loaded pistols in their pockets, which led police to question them about the robbery in December and the double murder in April. The result was confusion. Sacco and Vanzetti, still clumsy with English, believed the questioning was about the leaflets. "The charge of dual-murder seems utterly fantastic when applied to this unworldly pair," stated novelist Phil Stong, who covered the case as a young reporter. Soon, however, the police had decided that the confusing interrogation added up to guilt: by 1920 reasoning, "Reds" who carried pistols and distributed anarchist leaflets were capable of any crime.

When finally Sacco understood what the questioning was about he sent for his factory timecard proving he had worked all through the day of the December holdup. But as ill-luck would have it, on April 15th, Sacco had gone to the Italian Consulate in Boston. Certain consular officials recalled his visit, but this still left unaccounted the time required to travel to and from Boston. The police became convinced that the gentle little man could have detoured long enough to become one of the five involved in the double murder.

Vanzetti had no real alibi for either December 24th or April 15th. He was a familiar figure in the Italian districts of suburban Boston where his periodic appearances were so frequent as to be taken for granted. To him, December 24th and April 15th were like other days of fish-peddling. This lack of specific alibi allowed District Attorney Katzmann—who had quickly become convinced of the guilt of the foreigners—to perform a deft legal maneuver. He put Vanzetti on trial alone for the bungled Bridgewater holdup. Thirty witnesses rose to say that to the best of their recollection Bart Vanzetti had been selling fish in Plymouth that day. Seated on the bench was the soon-to-be-celebrated figure of fifty-seven-year-old Judge Webster Thayer, a dried-up, narrow-minded jurist who hated Reds even more than did the rabid District Attorney. At the end of the trial Judge Thayer delivered an inflammatory charge to the jury in which he said: “This man, although he may not actually have committed the crime attributed to him, is nevertheless morally culpable, because he is an enemy of our existing institutions . . . the defendant’s ideals are cognate with crime.” Vanzetti was quickly found guilty and sentenced to fifteen to twenty years in prison. District Attorney Katzmann’s plan became apparent. Vanzetti was now a convicted criminal.

The slight sympathy engendered among New Englanders by this biased trial all but disappeared when the burgeoning American Communist Party undertook to beat drums for Sacco and Vanzetti. The Communists even provided a lawyer to handle the defense in the second, or double murder, trial. Here the suspicion arises that the Communists really wished the two men to remain martyrs, for their lawyer hideously bungled the case. Again, Judge Webster Thayer presided and many Bostonians considered this a mistake. “They were fools to put Thayer on that case,” one Back Bay figure said later. “He’s conspicuously bigoted, and what is more he’s maladroit.” Another said: “I have known Judge Thayer all my life. I could

not say that I think [he] is at all times a bad man or that he is a confirmed wicked man. But I say that he is a narrow-minded man; he is a half-educated man; he is an unintelligent man; he is full of prejudice; he is carried away with his fear of Reds. . . .”

The second trial began on May 31, 1921 and again witnesses painted a confusing picture. The prosecution offered sixty-one people who placed Sacco and Vanzetti at the scene of the killings. The defense countered with one hundred and seven who swore the two had been elsewhere. Most damning to the defense was the testimony of the Italian ditch diggers who witnessed the crime. Yet it was noted that most of these men were recent immigrants, terrified at being caught in the toils of a murder trial and only too willing to answer *Si, Si, Si* to prosecution questions. As before, Judge Thayer used his charge to the jury as the excuse for a flag-waving, hate-spewing oration. Frank P. Sibley of the *Boston Globe*, dean of reporters present, later wrote that in all his years of covering courts he had never heard a charge so slanted as Judge Thayer's: "His whole manner, his whole attitude, seemed to be that the jurors were there to convict these two men." Even so, the twelve New England jurors took seven hours to find the pair guilty.

At this point the Sacco-Vanzetti case ceased to be a murder trial. It now began to revolve about the question of justice in an honorable state like Massachusetts. Could this go so far astray as to convict innocent men? If so, must the entire legal system of the United States be doubted? Few alive in those times dared to face this squarely. As one Bostonian put it: "This state has, I believe, the oldest legal code built on English foundations in the United States. It worked very well for more than three hundred years. We can't have fingers pointed at it because of two interlopers who are inimical to our social system and take so little interest in our institutions that they

avoided the draft. More than two men gave up their lives to establish our order and maintain it."

Still, some did begin to doubt Massachusetts justice as in following months "evidence piled on evidence to throw massive doubts on the conviction." One who began to wonder was a patrician New England lawyer named William G. Thompson. Later he explained his increasing preoccupation with Sacco and Vanzetti by saying: "I went into this case as a man of old American tradition to help two poor aliens who had, I thought, been unjustly treated. I have arrived at a humbler attitude. Not since the martyrdoms of the sixteenth century has such a steadfastness of faith, such self-abnegation as that of these two poor Italians been seen on this earth. Nowhere in *my* soul is to be found such strength and faith and gentility as make the man Bartolomeo Vanzetti."

Thompson became attorney for the two men, and started peppering Judge Thayer with appeals. The judge rejected them all summarily, but their preparation and presentation took much time. Simultaneously Judge Thayer's own behavior called new attention to the case. In the eyes of the country, a courtroom presided over by a Boston judge named Webster Thayer seemed sacrosanct. Yet Judge Thayer was not as well entrenched in Boston as his distinguished name implied, and many Bostonians believed that he pursued the case of Sacco and Vanzetti relentlessly in order to ingratiate himself with old-line Bostonians. Declared one cynical reporter: "Thayer is a country-club boy. He thought he'd get in good with the Cabots and the Lowells and the Lodges by sending these Reds over tootsweet. It backfired on him."

Whatever his motives, Judge Thayer talked too much. "Did you see what I did to those anarchist bastards . . . ?" he demanded of locker room cronies. He laced his every day speech with hate-references to "Dagoes," "Wops," and "Italian sons-of-bitches." He gloated that he had "got those damn Reds

good and proper." One person to whom such extravagant statements were repeated was Robert Benchley, Harvard graduate, wit, and drama critic of *Life*. In an affidavit placed before the court, Benchley reported Judge Thayer's indiscreet talk. Through Benchley top echelon American writers like Edna St. Vincent Millay, Dorothy Parker, Heywood Broun, and John Dos Passos rallied to the defense of Sacco and Vanzetti.

Over seven years the unusual case rolled to a climax in the summer of 1927. One of its unusual aspects had come with the involvement of an admitted criminal named Celestino Madeiros. As the confessed murderer of a bank cashier in Wrentham, Madeiros had been sentenced to die along with Sacco and Vanzetti. In Dedham prison, Madeiros got to know the other two and suddenly confessed to the South Braintree murders for which they had been convicted. This might have been true, for when he was arrested Madeiros had on his person \$2,800—approximately one fifth of the \$15,766.51 stolen. Madeiros swore that he was a member of the notorious Morelli Gang, which had staged many holdups in the Boston area. Judge Thayer impatiently brushed this confession aside, saying that a man sentenced to die for one murder might as well confess to two more. But there were aspects of the Madeiros confession which cried out for investigation.

Judge Thayer's last official act in the Sacco-Vanzetti case was to sentence the men (and Madeiros) to death in July 1927. Lawyer William G. Thompson, feeling that he had exhausted his own legal ingenuity in the matter, retired in favor of Attorney Arthur D. Hill. With the death chair looming, Hill decided to concentrate on obtaining either a pardon or a commutation to life-imprisonment from Governor Alvan Tufts Fuller. Bluff, handsome, an automobile dealer in private life, Governor Fuller now found himself caught in the whizzing crossfire of articulate protest and conventional thought. On his

gubernatorial desk lay Sacco-Vanzetti appeals from such world figures as George Bernard Shaw, Romain Rolland, John Galsworthy, and Italian dictator Benito Mussolini. On the other side, even heavyweight champion Gene Tunney had been heard in the clamor. Speaking at an American Legion meeting in Syracuse the ex-Marine had ringingly declared, "Radicalism must be suppressed and the Legion can help in suppressing it!" True, the clean-cut fighter did not mention Sacco and Vanzetti by name, but in the summer of 1927 no one could speak of radicalism without meaning them.

An unhappy Governor Fuller sought to remove himself from this bewildering situation by postponing the execution date to August 10th, then appointing a three-man committee of proper Bostonians to consider the case further. The men he choose for this were eminent: President A. Lawrence Lowell of Harvard; President Samuel Stratton of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; and Robert Grant, retired judge of the Probate Court. Yet seldom—it would seem—has a distinguished commission done its work with so little true interest. Before the Commission, witnesses testified that the foreman of the jury had been heard to say, "They ought to hang, anyway." Other witnesses swore that Sacco had been in Boston at the time of the killings, while several pictured Vanzetti selling fish on the murder date. A linguist charged that key testimony from the Italian had been wrongly translated.

But through all this the only matter which seemed to concern the committee was that a trial had been held in a Massachusetts courtroom: twelve New Englanders had sat in the jury box and a judge named Webster Thayer had been on the bench and at the trial's end, a verdict had been duly rendered. Brushing aside all doubt, the Commission reported to Governor Fuller that it agreed with the 1921 verdict: "Complaint has been made that the defendants were prosecuted and convicted because they were anarchists. As a matter of fact, the issue of

anarchy was brought in by them as an explanation of their suspicious conduct."

The only surprising feature of the Lowell Commission report was a censure of Judge Thayer for his out-of-court conduct:

From all that has come to us, we are forced to conclude that the Judge was indiscreet in conversation with outsiders during the trial. He ought not to have talked about the case off the bench, and doing so was a grave breach of official decorum. But we do not believe that he used some of the expressions attributed to him. . . . Furthermore, we believe that such indiscretion in conversation did not affect his conduct at the trial or the opinions of the jury. . . .

At Dedham Prison, the news was relayed to Sacco and Vanzetti. "It is not every prisoner who has a President of Harvard throw the switch for him," Heywood Broun had written that morning in the *New York World*, but Sacco and Vanzetti did not seem comforted. Sacco, on the thirteenth day of a hunger strike, was barely able to mutter, "I told you so, I told you so." Informed that the execution date of August 10th would stand, Vanzetti wrote out a statement which read: "Governor Alvan T. Fuller is a murderer. . . . He shakes hands with me, makes me believe he was honest intentioned. . . . Now, ignoring all proofs of our innocence, he insults us and murders us." At his side when he wrote was Warden William A. Hendry. Like most people who came in contact with the prisoners Hendry had become deeply devoted to them.

Outside prison walls, protest mounted. Governor Fuller's confusion was further confounded by the fact that most of the protests came from beyond the state. The Massachusetts man in the street held to a near-hysterical belief that the legal processes of the Commonwealth must be upheld. Despite the passage of seven turbulent years, Sacco and Vanzetti were still "Reds," "damn Reds," or "goddam Reds" to most voters in the Bay State. Even the clergy failed to commiserate with the

doomed men. Wrote one Protestant clergyman to Governor Fuller: "You will, I am sure, allow me to express to you my admiration of the way you have done your duty in the Sacco-Vanzetti case. You have been wise, patient, dignified, and courageous—worthy of the best traditions of the Commonwealth."

Not all Bostonians supported the Governor, however. Professor Felix Frankfurter of Harvard University had early called Judge Thayer's conduct of the 1921 trial "contemptible," and nothing had happened in intervening years to change the opinion of this outstanding legal light. Edward Holton James, nephew of the philosopher William James and novelist Henry James, was a sharp thorn in the side of Boston officialdom. Smartly attired, looking every inch the Back Bay aristocrat, James diligently attended rallies for Sacco and Vanzetti. As the day of execution approached he assaulted a cop, shouting, "Down with the police!" In court he refused to plead. "I'll not stand up before murderers, whether they are judges, police officers, or governors," he declared. He was fined seventy-five dollars and permitted to return to the picket lines marching around the State House and similar points of legal importance. Shortly police began arresting other pickets, and among those bagged by the local law were Edna St. Vincent Millay, Dorothy Parker, and John Dos Passos. Each was fined two dollars for disturbing the peace.

The last days of Sacco and Vanzetti mounted to intense drama, with the entire world watching. Shortly before the execution hour on August 10th, Governor Fuller gave the doomed men a twelve-day stay, so that he might consider new petitions flooding his desk. In the minds of some, this was not altogether a generous act. *Time Magazine* called the reprieve a brutal shock to Sacco and Vanzetti: "Society, through its legal machinery in Massachusetts had started to bare the skins of prisoners Sacco, Vanzetti, and Madeiros for the touch of Death. Then, with a reprieve of which the melodrama was a

cheap insult to whatever dignity human life may have, virtually mumbled *Live on for another twelve days longer. Our mind is not quite made up.*"

As the days ticked off, word leaked from the State House that Governor Fuller would do no more. Now only the highest forces in the land could save the two. Attorney Hill decided to try to find a member of the United States Supreme Court who might order a review of the case. Chief Justice William Howard Taft, was vacationing in Canada. Hill reached him by telephone, but the connection was poor and Taft kept shouting, "Telegraph! Telegraph!" Hill did so, and Taft replied that it was impossible for him to act since he was outside the borders of the country. The lawyer next turned to three associate justices who were vacationing in New England. Justice Louis Brandeis, at Chatham, Massachusetts, refused to intervene because his wife had become interested in the case and in so doing had become friendly with Mrs. Sacco. Justice Holmes, at nearby Beverly, Massachusetts, said he felt unauthorized to meddle in a state case. Justice Harlan Fiske Stone, off the Maine coast, echoed Justice Holmes. Hill then rushed to see United States Attorney General Sargent, at Ludlow, Vermont. The Attorney General listened for three hours, then declared he could not act because Department affairs were in the hands of subordinates in Washington.

Hill now appealed to Acting Attorney General Farnum in Washington. Farnum refused to move unless requested to do so by Governor Fuller or the Lowell Commission. Hill frantically appealed again to Justice Holmes, asking for a writ of habeas corpus. The Justice refused. Then Hill began directing petitions to Governor Fuller—six in all. The Governor did not reply. Hill finally telegraphed to President Calvin Coolidge who, after smoking the pipe of peace with the Sioux Indians, was on the verge of departing for Washington by way of Yellowstone Park. Coolidge gave no answer.

On the morning of Monday, August 23rd—a day many consider Massachusetts' day of infamy—Governor Fuller walked briskly into his office in the State House. "It's a beautiful morning, isn't it, boys?" he said to the horde of reporters waiting there. No one agreed. On this beautiful morning Boston was like an occupied city. Boston Common, for the first time in history, was closed to public orators. The full Boston police force, on twenty-four hour duty, roamed mid-city arresting picketers and protesters. Riot squads equipped with automatic rifles, hand grenades, and tear-gas bombs were busy breaking up street corner meetings.

If Boston looked like an occupied city Charlestown Prison, where Massachusetts had its electric chair, resembled a beleaguered fortress. As night fell, search lights, machine guns, and hoses protected the prison walls. No one was allowed to approach closer than a thousand feet. Only relatives of the doomed men were allowed to enter the prison, and on the way to the death cells these unhappy folk were required to pass within sight of the electric chair. Among those who made this grisly walk were Sacco's fourteen-year-old son and Vanzetti's sister Luigia, who had just arrived from Italy.

At the zero hour Sacco and Vanzetti—with Madeiros—met death stoically. A single newspaper reporter representing the Associated Press was allowed in the execution chamber and according to him Sacco shouted *Viva Anarchia!* as he sat down in the death chair. Some who followed the case felt that the reporter, stationed thirty to forty feet from the death chair, heard exactly what he wanted to hear. The words were too pat, and besides the fiery Vanzetti was more likely to cry out *Long Live Anarchy!* than the mild Sacco.

Nor was it like either man to speak his last words in Italian, for both had become accustomed to speaking English in prison surroundings. But it is certain that the articulate Vanzetti did say before entering the death chamber: "I want to tell you that

I am innocent and that I have never committed any crime, but sometimes some sin—I am innocent of all crime, not only this, but all. I am an innocent man. I wish to forgive some people for what they are now doing to me.”

The ghastly event had a suitably ghastly finale. The account by the Associated Press reporter in the death chamber was sufficiently harrowing, but on top of this the *New York Graphic* piled more horror by printing an alleged eyewitness account of the execution by Jack Grey. Grey was a curious reporter for he had once been the nation's top safecracker. The *Graphic* employed him because he was on a first-name basis with most hardened criminals. Though the world knew only one reporter had been permitted in the Sacco-Vanzetti death chamber, the *Graphic* carried the headline SACCO-VANZETTI ROASTED ALIVE above a story by Grey. “Come into the deathhouse with me,” it began. Next Grey described Sacco in the electric chair:

Elliott, the official killer, stood to the right of him with a fiendish grin on his face. . . . He leaped, literally leaped, to the switchboard. . . . The switch went in . . . Sacco's hands . . . doubled into a knot. The veins in his long, thin, white hands began to rise and kept on rising until I thought they would burst and drench all of us with blood. . . . Sacco's neck was swelling to a huge inhuman size. . . . The saliva was literally pouring out of his mouth. . . . Try to compare 1,000 degrees Fahrenheit [the temperature of the death shock] with 100 degrees in the shade when you complain of the heat and you get some idea how cultured and conservative Massachusetts roasts her murderers alive. . . . And how these Bostonians get a dead man out of the chair! . . . Elliott . . . started to put on the electrode and now I observed that Vanzetti was getting nervous. . . . There was a sickening stench of scorched flesh in the abattoir.

With Sacco and Vanzetti dead, a sickening stench also filled the nostrils of many citizens of the United States. Some with eyes glued on Massachusetts had failed to realize what a symbol

the case had become around the world. In Paris news of the execution flared into riots as angry mobs attacked the American Embassy. In Geneva protesting crowds took control of the city, smashing forty thousand dollars worth of plate glass and ruining merchandise in many stores. In Germany, Japan, South America, and other sectors of the globe there was furious indignation. "The world scene," reported *Time*, "was like a balloon full of illuminating gas with leaks which are invisible until ignited. The electricity from Boston ignited demonstrations from Detroit to New South Wales, from Sweden to Mexico."

Anxious to evade feelings of guilt, the United States cast about uneasily for quick distraction. It was instantly provided by aviation. Once more the summer had turned into a period of air-madness. Indeed, with Lindbergh on his triumphant three-month tour of major cities, it had never really been otherwise. Lindy-worship still had the forty-eight states in a tight grip. In big cities, the tumultuous Lindbergh welcomes had all the hysterical adoration of Washington, New York, and St. Louis. The waving, grinning Hero sat in the back of an open car while hundreds of thousands roared.

But if Plucky Lindy retained the old magic, there was something new about transoceanic flights. This was noted by Commander Byrd who said: "On both sides of the Atlantic rose the clamorous tocsin of aerial emprise . . . But about the middle of August the pendulum began to swing back."

Commander Byrd was too much the Virginia gentleman to say so, but it was the Dole Race to Hawaii which ended the grandiose spell, turning the aviation-summer sour. Trail-blazing flights to Hawaii had already been made by Maitland and Hegenberger and, to a slightly lesser extent, by Smith and Bronte. The Dole Prize Race was daredevil stuff, in the words of Commander Byrd "hasty and ill advised." Before the race, three pilots were killed on trial flights. Of fifteen planes

entered, only eight were able to start on August 16th. One could not lift its heavy load off the ground. Two promptly disappeared into the Pacific, and a rescue plane sent out to find them joined the list of fatalities.

The race was won by Art Gobel who after 26 hours stepped smiling from his cockpit and said, "Gee, folks, it's good to be here." Only Gobel and his runner-up Martin Jensen successfully finished the Dole Race. Behind them the 2400-mile stretch of Pacific had claimed the lives of nine men and pretty Mildred Doran.

On August 25th—only two days after the Sacco-Vanzetti execution—a nation in search of distraction shifted eyes to Brunswick, Georgia, where slight, music-minded Paul Redfern started on his flight over uncharted waters and unexplored jungles to Rio de Janeiro. The young pilot took off without a radio, in the face of adverse weather reports. He was spotted three hundred miles east of the Bahamas, where he flew over a steamer to drop a note that said: "Point ship to nearest land, wave flag for each hundred miles." After this Redfern joined the missing, but he has enjoyed a distinction not shared by other aviators lost in 1927. For years his name popped up in the news as explorers in Central American jungles brought back tales of a white man held captive by native warriors. Despite the frequency of such reports, Paul Redfern has never been found.

Now the supreme challenge was a flight from Europe to America. Princess Lowenstein-Wertheim took off for New York from Croydon Airdrome near London in a plane piloted by Captain Leslie Hamilton. Soon the world wished that the Princess had remained content to be the first woman to fly the English Channel. Her plane, the *St. Raphael*, was never seen again.

From Germany two low-winged monoplanes named *Bremen* and *Europa* took off for America. In them as passengers were

Baron Guenther von Huenfeld, who would make the flight successfully a year later, and the American correspondent H. R. Knickerbocker. Over England the planes ran into a fog bank and turned back. "No one could fly in such weather," one pilot said. The Princess Xenia hopped from the tip of Ireland, and in several hours turned back. Charles A. Levine, still in Paris, made front pages by periodically announcing that he and pilot Maurice Drouhit were on the verge of a take off in the tried-and-true Columbia.

Then the plans of the erratic Levine hit a snag, and as a result visitors to Croydon Airport beheld one of the stranger sights of the aviation summer. Suddenly a monoplane of much-described color and contour appeared over the field. "A big plane rocking and careening, dipping and swerving, as it four times circled the field in irregular fashion." Frantic land crews sent appeals to the local hospital, for they saw tragedy in the craft wobbling above them. An ambulance raced to the field, where men stood in tense postures as, with a great bounce, the plane made a lopsided landing.

Out of it stepped none other than Charles A. Levine, who had solo-piloted the Columbia from Paris. To those excitedly clustering around him Levine proudly admitted that he had never flown solo before. He had decided the time had come to do it, he stated. As a result, he had bravely taken off from Le Bourget for London. From Paris came a different story. Pilot Maurice Drouhit charged that Levine had made the flight to escape a subpoena from a French court. "I have had only 2000 francs of my two months' pay of 100,000," Drouhit sputtered. This was bad enough, but Levine had also tried to use the proud Gallic ace as an aerial chauffeur. That morning the Millionaire Junkman had ordered Drouhit to fly him to Deauville for the races. "I am no taxi driver," Drouhit had exploded, thus commencing the events leading to threat of subpoena. "I am not going to chase Mr. Levine to London,"

Drouhit now declared. "If I saw him I would feel like killing him, and the English would put me in jail."

If a Europe-to-America flight was the supreme challenge, one from America to Europe still seemed a possibility to many. Though the Atlantic had been spanned by three great flights in forty-one days, attempts from this side of the water continued. Some of the pilots involved were inexperienced, others flew inadequate planes. None of the planes was equipped with radio, so that when they fell in the Atlantic authorities had no idea where to search. Today the names of men who made these disastrous flights are forgotten—who but their immediate families remembers Captain Terence Tully and Lieutenant James Medcalf?

Yet equipment and experience were no guarantee of success. The *Old Glory*, owned by William Randolph Hearst, boasted the ultimate in scientific equipment and a top navigator-pilot team in James De Witt Hill and Lloyd Bertaud, who for a time had been scheduled to fly with Clarence Chamberlin in the *Columbia*. The *Old Glory's* destination was Rome, and at the last moment Philip Payne, editor of the New York tabloid *Daily Mirror*, had announced plans to go along as the second transatlantic passenger. Payne's statement provoked much drama, for Mr. Hearst was not inclined to risk the life of the editor who single-handedly had opened up the Hall-Mills case and whose indiscretion had sent the orchidaceous Earl Carroll to jail. But Payne considered his Hall-Mills sensation a failure and was stung by the scorn of his colleagues in the Earl Carroll matter.

Altogether, he was in a morose state of mind, but a firm one. Defiance of Mr. Hearst required courage, yet Payne possessed it. He sat in the *Old Glory* on September 5th when it flew from Roosevelt Field to a two mile stretch of smooth beach at Old Orchard, Maine. Next day the *Old Glory* roared toward

Rome with the thunderous support of the Hearst press behind it. The radio signal of the plane was WRHP: William Randolph Hearst's Plane. For a time reports signed WRHP came cheerful and confident from the Old Glory. Suddenly, after fourteen hours, came SOS-WRHP, SOS-WRHP. Five ocean liners swung to race toward the signals. A day later one found wreckage, but no bodies.

Not every late summer flight was a tragedy. In 1926, Detroit businessman Edward S. Evans had joined with journalist-explorer Linton Wells to establish a new round-the-world travel record. In a truly spectacular junket, the two utilized train, boat, auto, and plane to set a world-girdling record of twenty-eight days, fourteen hours and thirty-six seconds. In 1927 another Detroitier named Edward F. Schlee decided that by using only a plane he could beat the Wells-Evans record. He enlisted as his partner William S. (Billy) Brock, a onetime mail pilot, and the two took off on August 27th without fanfare in a Stinson-Detroitier named *Pride of Detroit*. The first stop was Harbor Grace, Newfoundland. Neither Brock nor Schlee was a trained navigator, yet they flew the plane unerringly to Croydon.

Every split second counted with the peerless pair and after a quick nap at Croydon they raced to Munich. The world began to pay attention as, on the third day, they winged from Munich to Belgrade. Reports of bad weather forced a stopover in Belgrade, where reporters rushed to interview them. Schlee declared that the plane really deserved credit for the flight. "*Pride of Detroit* is more faithful than a woman," he testified fondly. Next the plane zoomed toward Stamboul, Turkey, a flight of some five hundred miles. There trouble appeared. Turkish officials refused the permit necessary to continue the flight. "Flying the Atlantic is a cinch compared to flying over Turkey," quipped Billy Brock. Yet Brock and Schlee, who never seemed

to sleep, argued the Turks into providing the permit. They raced on from Constantinople to Bagdad—1075 miles, two days' flying in one.

On the eighth day they landed at Karachi, India. Brushing aside an official reception, they serviced the plane. On to Allahabad, the one-third mark of the journey—and with this landing came the unhappy realization that despite excellent progress they were running behind the Wells-Evans record.

On the eleventh day *Pride of Detroit* reached Calcutta. Again the two flyers ignored an official reception at the American Embassy to work over the plane. Whereupon the reception came to them. Dinner-jacketed diplomats stood around watching the two Americans wield wrenches and wipe spark plugs. On the twelfth day the astonishing adventurers reached Rangoon. On the thirteenth, bad luck again struck. The men who had so skillfully navigated over unknown territory missed Bangkok, the official stop, to land at Hanoi, French Indo-China. On the fourteenth day they overhauled the plane in the morning, then set off for Hong Kong. On the fifteenth day, they calmly landed at Shanghai.

This was the last day of good fortune. Flying toward Tokyo, *Pride of Detroit* ran into a severe thunderstorm and for the first time made a forced landing sixty miles short of Tokyo. Japanese officials forbade the pair to fly a straight course to Tokyo because of war fortifications. On an altered route the plane was buffeted dangerously by a belching volcano and pelted evilly by rain. Again a forced landing, at Omura. Now the two men undertook an agonizing appraisal: they still had not reached the halfway point, yet two-thirds of their time had been used up. Next day a typhoon delayed flight further. On the nineteenth day the plane swooped into Toyko, with both men determined to fly the Pacific in the desperate hope of beating the record.

Unknown to them American public opinion—agitated by

the Dole losses, Paul Redfern, the Old Glory, and others—was attempting to prevent *Pride of Detroit* from making the 2500-mile overwater hop to the tiny Midway Islands. Protests inundating the Department of Aeronautics in Washington urged that land planes be stopped from long overwater flights. Other citizens had cabled Brock and Schlee in Tokyo begging them to abandon the flight. Family pressures were heavily exerted. Among the messages was a cable from Schlee's ten-year-old daughter Rosemary: "Daddy—Please take the next boat home to us."

Official Washington instructed diplomats in Tokyo to discourage the fliers by warning that Army and Navy facilities would not assist during a transpacific hop. This was taken to mean that if *Pride of Detroit* fell into the ocean the Navy would not search for survivors. Yet the dauntless pair might still have kept on had not word come from the Midways that the gasoline needed for a jump to Hawaii had not arrived.

At this, the two threw up their hands. Why risk lives in a jump to a spot where they was no waiting store of gasoline? "We quit because the whole world seemed to be against us," lamented Billy Brock. Sadly Brock and Schlee dismantled *Pride of Detroit* and returned home by slow boat.

A nation with its eyes fixed on the daring peregrinations of Brock and Schlee also had another pair of travelers to observe. Mayor James J. Walker of New York City had embarked on one of the grandest of grand tours of Europe. Insiders around New York's City Hall, together with all Broadway, knew that the dandy little Night Mayor had become infatuated with a dark-haired, bright-eyed dancer named Betty Compton. Walker was forty-six, Betty half his age. Walker's political supporters were concerned—to paraphrase the popular-song-to-come, *They called it madness, but he called it love*. Rumors of the illicit romance had begun to reach an impressionable voting public

and it had been decreed that on his European junket the Mayor must be accompanied by Mrs. Janet Walker, his wife of many years.

The record fails to show exactly how Mrs. Walker felt about this, but her position was not exactly enviable. Mrs. Walker was a small, plump lady, with the smallest female foot in New York City and possibly in the United States. It may be that she hoped to enjoy the trip to Europe in the company of her erring spouse, but it soon became apparent to her (and the world as well) that her presence was only window dressing. New York's gaudy, fast-stepping Jimmy was determined to enjoy himself in his own inimitable way. In vaudeville terms, his European jaunt was to be a single act.

Aboard the *Berengaria*, Mrs. Walker sunned herself while the breezy Mayor cavorted. At the deck-sports competition, he was called upon to award prizes. The first nine winners were pretty girls. Mayor Walker kissed each resoundingly, then danced with them interchangeably through a carefree night. In New York, the Night Mayor seldom rose before noon and he saw no reason to change his habits now. When the ship docked the Mayor of Southampton stepped aboard, wearing an official expression and full diplomatic attire. Jimmy Walker was not yet awake, but shortly he rose to greet his fellow mayor wearing bright yellow pajamas and sipping a matching glass of orange juice.

In London the Mayor unveiled a wardrobe that gave English tailors the shivering shakes. Beau James was a slight man whose song-and-dance flamboyance made it possible for him to wear tight-fitting, pinched-in double-breasted suits. In London, he burst out in wasp-waisted double-breasted jackets of violent hue. With them he affected cream-white flannels and black-and-white sport shoes. The Mayor's sartorial trademark was a hatbrim snapped down jauntily over one eye, and he even contrived to wear a tall silk hat in such debonair fashion. In Lon-

don he first tried a flat straw hat, or skimmer, then changed to a rakish panama. So attired he seemed, in the words of one august journal, "a chipper urchin among the graybeards."

By day Mayor Walker dashed to luncheons, ceremonial handshakings, tours of inspection, and official dinners. He always managed to be late, and missed one important function entirely. At night he investigated London night life, diplomatically calling it superior to New York's. The vintage wines and liquors that caressed his palate especially delighted the Night Mayor; they were so different from the raw stuff imposed by the Eighteenth Amendment. Mayor Walker took full advantage of all opportunities to drink, and responded in flowery terms to the toasts addressed to him.

Next, the Walkers journeyed to Ireland to visit the birthplace of the Mayor's father. Here, for a brief time, the Mayor calmed down. He kissed babies and grandmothers, dined with tenor John McCormack, and made a sentimental speech standing on a chair in the kitchen of his ancestral home in Castlecomer. But with this done, he reverted to normal. He was late for the mail steamer which took the Walkers to England, and in London quickly resumed his all-night hoofing.

Mayor Walker's next stop was Berlin, and either humorously or by mistake Berlin newspapers referred to him as Mayor Jazz J. Walker. If this was intended as insult—Berlin still simmered over the Sacco-Vanzetti execution—the dapper little Mayor did not take it so. He was reported to be delighted with the name, considering it apt for a man who had once written a song called "Will You Love Me In December as You Do In May?" But aside from pleasure at being called Jazz J. Walker, the Mayor did not enjoy Berlin. He was no beer drinker and the night life was too realistic for his cultivated taste.

The Lido, near Venice, to which he traveled with the utmost speed, was far more to his liking. Indeed, he behaved there as if his middle initial might also stand for Jazz. The Mayor,

with his skimpy frame, was never one to be photographed in a bathing suit, but photographers did catch him lolling on the beach in colorful garb. Delighted reporters discovered him staying up until five in the morning dancing. When this news was flashed to the United States, the *New York Times* felt impelled to editorialize: "It is a comfort to New Yorkers to think of their Mayor dressed in a double-breasted gray coat and contrasting trousers as he reclined upon the sunny sands—assimilating the wisdom he has acquired on his Grand Tour. They are proud to realize that his motto has been to improve each shining hour, even if this meant activities far into the night, including a tour of Venetian ballrooms lasting until dawn."

Such carping did nothing to dampen the Mayor's bubbling vitality. In Venice he was guest of honor at a luncheon at the Hotel Royal Danieli. When it ended the Mayor quipped, "Best lunch I've ever drunk." In Rome he cocked an irreverent eye at St. Peter's Basilica and observed, "They must have passed the hat around several times to build all this." He was received by the Pope who, gauging the calibre of his man, interrogated Walker about the health and welfare of the Italian-born prize-fighter Johnny Dundee. On a tour of the Catacombs, the Mayor cracked, "Wish we could find some Catacombs in New York's subsoil. It would save some money when we build subways."

From Rome the Walkers went to Paris, where the Mayor alighted dressed in a chocolate-colored crush hat, matching blue shirt and suit, green and brown tie, beige topcoat, and lavender pocket handkerchief dashed with brown and purple. Again the reception committee had donned severe formal attire, and some members felt insulted by the Walker informality. The quick-witted Mayor noticed this and, sniffing the intoxicating air, asked "How the hell can you be dignified in these surroundings?" A member of the committee inquired about his plans for the Paris stay. "Indefinite," the Mayor grinned. "How

can such a *gamin* be definite?" one committee member whispered to another.

The Walkers repaired to the finest suite in the Hotel Crillon, where twelve servants stood ready to do their bidding. The Mayor immediately hastened out on the town. That night he sat in the front row to watch tawny, American-born Josephine Baker in the *Folies Bergères*. Next day he was guest of honor at a luncheon of the American Club and addressed his remarks to "Fellow refugees from the Eighteenth Amendment."

At the Paris City Hall, he cast a knowing eye over the paintings of lush nudes on the wall of the Mayor's office and said, "If I had an office like this, I'd have a hard time keeping my mind on my work." Next day he was an hour late for an official luncheon. The toastmaster, a man with a luxuriant red beard, undertook to chide him for this. When Mayor Walker rose to his feet he said, "All human sins such as lateness may be condoned, but as for whiskers—that's a man's own business."

Jimmy Walker's champagne-taste stay in Paris topped off a more earthy one by some twenty thousand members of the American Legion, most of whom had brought wives along. This was the tenth anniversary of the arrival of the American Expeditionary Force, and the Legion was determined to make its rendezvous in Paris a resounding event. Some Parisians, alarmed at the thought of so many rugged ex-doughboys, left the city for the duration of the Legion stay. Paris in the Twenties had little use for the average American tourist, who seemed to have too much money and not enough manners.

But the American Legion turned out to be not such a headache. For one thing, the Legionnaires seemed to be swallowed by Paris. Wearing Legion hats instead of tin ones, carrying suitcases instead of Army packs, canes rather than guns, the ten-years-older doughboys came and saw but failed to conquer. "They were in evidence everywhere and in a hilariously happy mood," writes Al Laney, in his book *Paris Herald*, "but at the

same time they were curiously invisible." Singly and in groups, Legionnaires toured old battlefields and haunts, but most of them were unexpectedly quiet about it. Perhaps it was the presence of so many wives; perhaps the passage of years; perhaps the money invested in the long trip. In any event, the Legion seemed to behave better in Paris than at Legion conventions in the United States.

Paris was pleased, and what appeared to be the entire city turned out for the climactic Legion Parade, which among other things introduced drum majorettes to French view. Long before the parade was scheduled to begin Parisians were packed along the line of march. Those who established themselves early saw a curious sight which represented the extremes in American culture. Three days before, the American dancer Isadora Duncan had seated herself in a motorcar in Nice. She failed to notice that the long end of her Italian scarf had become entwined in one of the front wheels. The car started with an unexpected jerk and the scarf around her neck tightened like a noose. Miss Duncan was not a light woman, but she was snapped out of the car by the neck like a feather. She landed violently on the pavement and lay there while one of the rear wheels passed over her body, breaking her back. Within a few minutes she was dead.

So the Paris multitudes lining up for a view of the Legion Parade beheld another procession wending its way along the line of march. It was the funeral procession of Isadora Duncan, en route to Père Lachaise Cemetery. Over the great dancer's coffin lay her famous purple dancing robe. Her brother Raymond in his classical sandals, toga, and long hair followed the casket with bowed head. Isadora Duncan was a highly popular figure in Paris where she was considered to represent the finer qualities in the American spirit. Yet in the tumult and excitement of the Legion visit her funeral had been all but overlooked.

Or so it seemed. The *Paris Herald*, whose reporters scrambled all over Paris in search of human interest stories about the Legion, headlined its account of the funeral FEW ATTEND ISADORA DUNCAN RITES AS COMPATRIOTS PARADE. Under this, a perfunctory story began "It was a sad motley little procession that followed the body of the greatest dancer since the ancient Greeks." But if reporters had followed the funeral procession to its destination they would have found some five thousand of the plain people of Paris gathered to pay last respects as Isadora Duncan was put to rest. Not a word of this appeared in Paris papers the next day; there was too much about the parading Legion.

In the United States, as the American Legion marched and Jimmy Walker wisecracked, 16-year-year Lois Eleanor Delander—where is *she* now?—was crowned Miss America in the Atlantic City Beauty Pageant. . . . The makers of Old Gold cigarettes, launched during the year by a giant advertising campaign, announced that the new smoke had proved a success and that Old Golds were here to stay. . . . On Broadway the play *Burlesque*, with Hal Skelly and Barbara Stanwyck, opened. The story of a no-good burlycue comic and his true-blue Lou (*She was a dame, in love with a guy*), it was called by one critic a stunning, crafty show. In the crafty show, the small part of a piano player was filled by a youth named Oscar Levant.

In the *Pictorial Review* (15¢, circulation 2,400,000, Robert W. Chambers was represented by a serial called the "Sun Hawk"; Dr. Will Durant by the "Breakdown of Marriage"; and rough, tough Jim Tully by "Clara Bow, a Modern Nell Gwyn" (From Brooklyn Slum to Beverly Hills Mansion. A Modern Fairy Story, Sad, Gay, Fascinating). . . . In the upper-echelon literary world there was much agitation over the runaway best seller *Trader Horn*, the autobiography of a seventy-three-year-old tinware salesman in darkest Africa. With a foreword by

John Galsworthy, this purported to be Trader Horn's life "With such of his philosophy as is the gift of age." At Manhattan cocktail parties, where the old Trader had rapidly become a stellar attraction, he showed a monumental capacity for drink but none whatsoever for philosophy. Could the life story of Trader Horn be a fake?

Early in October Mayor Walker returned to his native land. Somewhere in mid-Atlantic, Hizzoner must have realized that his playboy tour of Europe had made a bad impression on New Yorkers, not to mention others in the land. Ship-news reporters climbing aboard ship to interview him found a serious chief executive of the nation's largest city. Gone was the snappy, wisecracking Jazz J. Walker. No gaudy attire covered his trim frame. Instead, he wore a serious expression and a severe blue suit. The hat cocked as always over one eye was an unobtrusive gun-metal gray. Demurely at his side stood plump Mrs. Janet Walker. The Mayor informed reporters that he had enjoyed his vacation—surely the understatement of 1927!—but that the chief virtue of the trip was that it had revitalized him for the rigors of office. He would, he vowed, wade into the problems on his City Hall desk with renewed vigor.

Unhappily, he was given scant time to impress the public with this new personality. For once again aviation seized the headlines. On October 11th—late in the year for a transatlantic flight—George Haldeman and Ruth Elder hopped for Paris in the plane *American Girl*. Miss Elder was the onetime dental assistant and beauty contest winner who had announced in midsummer that she would try to be the first woman to span the Atlantic. Her statement coincided with so many others that little attention had been paid it. Yet unlike her rivals Miss Elder had battled through obstacles to achieve a take off. Hers was unashamedly a commercial flight. As the *American Girl* winged toward Europe her manager-backer sat

in a Manhattan hotel anticipating movie, vaudeville, and testimonial offers. "I've promoted projects in Canada and I've promoted oil wells," he told reporters. "Now I'm promoting the first girl across the Atlantic."

Ruth Elder was indeed a nifty jane to promote. Newspaper readers who had treated her as a human curiosity now looked again and found a stunning girl. If Lindbergh was the All-American Boy, Ruth Elder—in a somewhat more sophisticated way—was the All-American Girl. With her wide smile, she looked exactly like the Pepsodent ads in contemporary magazines. Even the *New York Times* became smitten by her, reporting in warm detail that she was smaller than her photographs made her seem and that she spoke with a soft Alabama drawl. From here on the *Times* unprecedentedly called the All-American girl "Ruth."

Miss Elder had been born in Alabama, migrated to Florida with her family. Aviation-struck, she had taken lessons at a nearby flying field from George Haldeman. Arriving at Roosevelt Field with Haldeman in the American Girl, she increased her allure by setting a new style. The possessor of one of the first boyish bobs in recorded history, she decided to let her hair grow back into a full bob. While this happened she wound a scarf around her head gypsy fashion, and soon girls across the country were doing the same. Miss Elder also wore plus fours and golf socks in the Clarence Chamberlin manner. Altogether, she added up to the image of an attractive, intrepid aviatrix.

Ruth Elder was married. Her husband, Lyle Womack, had departed for Panama on business just before the October 11th take off. He had done so in the belief that he had persuaded his adventure-minded wife not to attempt the flight that year. Others had also objected, and the uproar around Miss Elder's pretty head much resembled the pressures applied to Brock

and Schlee. "Even if she succeeds, what will she have accomplished for the common good?" demanded Katherine B. Davis, an eminent sociologist of the day.

Other women echoed this, and newspapers like the *New York World* editorially suggested that Miss Elder be officially restrained. While seeming to accede, the two fliers went ahead and plotted a course to Europe which would keep the American Girl far south of the Great Circle Route, cold and hazardous in October. The southerly course would be near shipping lanes. Even so, American Girl ran into heavy squalls several hundred miles after the take off and flew straight into the teeth of them for eight terrifying hours. At one point the plane heaved so dangerously that the comely Ruth Elder crept out on the tail to balance it. Other times she relieved Haldeman at the controls. At one danger point Haldeman was forced to dump gasoline to help the plane in its fight against the storm. Next the oil pressure began to fall. "Look for a ship," Haldeman finally ordered. Five hours later Ruth spied the Dutch tanker *Barendrecht*.

Still hoping to reach Europe, she dropped a note: "How far are we from land and which way?" On deck, in large letters, the captain painted: "True south, 40 west, 360 miles, Terceira, Azores." This meant that the American Girl was more than 500 miles from the coast of Portugal. Haldeman brought the plane down into the choppy ocean. He and Ruth climbed out on a wing, from which a lifeboat rescued them. For a moment the American Girl bobbed in the water, then gasoline ran over her steaming engine and caught fire. Came a fearsome explosion. Flames shot up in a pyramid higher than the rescuing ship. In Paris a week later, Miss Elder was sad about the loss of her plane. "It was like watching an old friend drown," she said.

So a woman had yet to span the Atlantic by air, and in Old Orchard, Maine, hope flared anew in the breast of Mrs.

Frances Grayson, the Long Island real-estate dealer who had also announced plans for a transocean hop. After Ruth Elder's take off, Mrs. Grayson—with pilot Wilmer Stultz and navigator Bryce Goldsborough—had flown in her amphibian plane to the Old Orchard runway used by the ill-fated Old Glory. On October 23rd, these three took off on a nonstop flight to Copenhagen.

After five hours, Stultz decided the flight was impossible and turned back. It was a livid Mrs. Grayson who alighted from the plane at Old Orchard. She announced that she had not been consulted about a turn-around and never would have permitted it. "Next time," she stated ominously, "will be different." Residents of Old Orchard recall that the determined woman began carrying a revolver in her handbag. To newspaper reporters and other favored folk she displayed this ugly weapon. "I'd kill them both before I let them trick me again," she promised.

No one took this very seriously. It was now mid-October, and it seemed unlikely that there would be another transatlantic attempt this year. . . .

10 *The Greatest Year in Sport*



IF ALL those enjoying life during the rambunctious summer of 1927—Flaming Youth, the paper-profits rich, the aviation-happy, the pleasure mad, the Shipwreck Kelly gawpers—there was one group to which the season brought extra added thrills. This lucky group comprised the sport fans, for in that field the year hit dizzying heights. “In 1927, the sports world wore seven-league boots,” Grantland Rice has written. Nineteen twenty-seven will almost certainly go down in history as the greatest year in sports, and no fan—the word is a contraction of *fanatic*—who lived through the year or looks back on it will dispute the statement.

At year's end, sports-cartoonist Robert L. Ripley drew a picture called *Breaking the Tape*. It showed a manly figure at the finish line of a foot race. As the runner touches the tape it breaks to form the words *World's Records*. Yet 1927 was epochal not only because of records broken and new one established, though there were plenty of these. Rather, the year's

real thrills lay in the personalities dominating the various sports. In golf there was Robert Tyre "Bobby" Jones, Jr. Twenty-five-year-old Bobby Jones was a golfing amateur. Among professionals, Walter Hagen was the picturesque player to watch and read about. Tennis offered the flamboyant figure of William T. "Big Bill" Tilden.

On the distaff side of tennis stood twenty-one-year-old Helen Wills, she of the poker face, the individual green and white sunshade, and the unswerving confidence. Writers of the year hailed the headstrong determination of twenty-eight-year-old Tommy Hitchcock, the rising star in polo, a game which heretofore had been dominated by men in their mid-forties. Johnny Weissmuller retained his place as the country's leading amateur swimmer by setting new world's records. Eleanor Holm, age thirteen, and Ray Ruddy, fifteen, were the coming stars of the aquatic field.

Each of these was outstanding—a few with special drama. Helen Wills had been out of tennis competition during 1926 recovering from an operation for appendicitis. In her absence Molla Mallory regained the Woman's National Singles championship. At Wimbledon in mid-1927 it was apparent that the enforced rest had aided the game of the cucumber-cool Miss Wills. Her strokes were stronger, her ability to place balls more unerring than before. She quickly trounced Molla Mallory, and in the finals bested Señorita Lili de Alvarez, a contest watched attentively by King Alfonso of Spain. Returning to the United States, the fresh-looking young girl in the sunshade easily re-won the national singles title. Eventually she completed a full year of tournament play with the loss of only one set.

In international competition, America's big setback of the year came with loss of the Davis Cup to France. The year before, Vincent Richards, America's ranking player, had caused a sensation by joining the emotional Suzanne Lenglen in the ranks of tennis professionals. This firmly re-established thirty-

four-year-old Bill Tilden as number one. Teamed with Little Bill Johnston, Francis Hunter, and R. Norris Williams, Big Bill Tilden was unable to defeat the dazzling French team of Lacoste, Cochet, Borotra, and Brugnon. So, for the first time in history, the Davis Cup departed for a country where English was not spoken. The lanky Tilden, teamed with Francis Hunter, was able to win the national doubles, though the canny Lacoste won the singles, as he had in 1926.

Bobby Jones—greatest of golfers—was in 1927 a student at Emory Law School. One of the numerous remarkable things about Jones was that he did not often play in tournaments; three or four a year, whereas the professionals against whom he was matched played golf the year round. Yet Jones always, or almost always, won. He began 1927 in almost-always fashion, going down to defeat before Tommy Armour in the United States Open. He then traveled abroad to defend his British Open title at the historic St. Andrew's course. Newspapers made much of the fact that here Bobby Jones for the first time would be under the immediate scrutiny of the Scots who had invented the game of golf. This may have inspired the young American, for he immediately began outdoing himself. The Scots responded by calling him "Bawby" and dubbing him "the gr-reatest gowfer in the wur-rld." All Scotland itched to see Bawby Jones in action: "Excursion trains stopped to watch him. Clergyman, grandmothers, cripples, policemen, made shift to get a view." At one green Bawby respectfully eyed the forty yards between his ball and the hole. "This is the longest putt I ever had to make," he said quietly. He made it and won the tournament as well. Cheering Scotsmen carried him to the clubhouse on their shoulders. Back home, Bobby Jones calmly won his third U. S. Amateur title.

Golf professionals and other tournament players always heaved a sigh of relief when Bobby Jones decided against enter-

ing a tournament. He did not play in the Western Open, which left Walter Hagen free to trounce Wild Bill Melhorn, Gene Sarazen, Bobbie Cruikshank and others. Hagen, chunky, debonair, and bibulous, was by far the most colorful of all contemporary golf pros. Best dressed, however, was dark-haired Johnny Farrell who this year quietly went about winning such tournaments as the Metropolitan Open, Wheeling Open, Shawnee Open, Eastern Open, Massachusetts Open, Philadelphia Open, Pennsylvania Open, and Chicago Open. Finally the well-dressed pro simultaneously held eight titles—more than any other golfer had ever won at once.

Whiskery, with jockey Linus "Pony" McAtee up, won the 1927 Kentucky Derby. Yale student Sabin Carr set a world's pole-vault record, while DeHart Hubbard set a new broad-jump mark. The Columbia crew won an unexpected victory at the Poughkeepsie Regatta. The thirteen-year-old Zittenfeld twins, Phyllis and Bernice, set a new mark in swimming the Hudson River from Albany to New York. George Young, seventeen, swam from California to Catalina Island.

In another indication of the tumultuous times, the curious sport of six-day bike racing became more popular than ever. After-theater crowds and Broadway celebrities suddenly discovered the rugged competition still dominated by the veteran Iron Man, Reggie McNamara. Instead of going to night clubs and speakeasies, the thrill-hungry jammed Madison Square Garden to watch the six-day riders.

At the other end of the sports spectrum, the aristocratic game of polo was thrown open to the masses. At Meadowbrook, Long Island, for two dollars to five dollars a head, the common man could watch this exciting spectator sport, previously known only to the rich. In 1927, the American team, composed of Devereux Milburn, J. Watson Webb, Malcolm Stevenson, and Tommy Hitchcock (substitute: 21-year-old

Winston Guest), defeated an English team to retain the International Cup for the United States.

All this was a part of sport's noblest year—but only part! For the two sports which reached true heights were baseball and prizefighting: those to which Americans have always responded with the wildest enthusiasm. With singular lavishness 1927 offered not only all-time greats in both these sports, but colorful and contrasting rivals as well.

In baseball the great Babe Ruth was the dominant figure. A huge, friendly overgrown-boy-of-a-man, Ruth had achieved prominence in the national game when baseball reeled from the disgrace of the Black Sox scandal of 1919. Almost single-handedly he had—by the vigor of his personality, his unspoiled honesty, and his ability to clout balls into the bleachers—kept the game alive. In 1921, he had hit fifty-nine home runs to set an all-time record. Before his arrival, the New York Yankees had never won a pennant. After his arrival, they began to.

As a tribute to Ruth's greatness, the mighty new Yankee Stadium was informally called *The House That Ruth Built*. "Babe isn't a man, he's an institution," Moe Berg, the erudite catcher, summed up.

In 1927 the institution—lusty, untutored, uncouth—found himself challenged by a clean-cut rival. Lou Gehrig was big, shy, handsome and a Columbia man. When he first appeared in uniform at Yankee Stadium a player said, "I've just seen another Babe Ruth." It was almost true. Gehrig, a highly competitive player, loved baseball as much as Babe Ruth did. So the national game boasted not only a titanic figure, but a young and colorful challenger-of-titans as well.

The same exciting contrast existed in prizefighting. From 1919 to 1926, Jack Dempsey had been boxing's Olympian. Where Babe Ruth appeared a jovial, harmless man, the Manassa Mauler stood before the public of the Twenties as a

terrifying figure. Indeed, it is hard today to recapture this menacing Dempsey. He was considered the abysmal brute, and it is said that playwright Eugene O'Neill, a fisticuffs fan, used the popular image of Dempsey in creating the name-character in his play *The Hairy Ape*.

"Dempsey was a mixture of two men," Grantland Rice has written. "In the ring he was a killer, with steel fists and iron jaw. Outside he was gentle, courteous, patient, considerate." In the interest of million-dollar-gates, promoter Tex Rickard, aided and abetted by Dempsey's canny manger Jack Kearns, placed only the first Dempsey before a credulous public. The idea of a brutish Dempsey was carefully nurtured by these two astute men.

An early step in the campaign to persuade the public that Dempsey was a menacing brute came when in 1921 the Manassa Mauler was matched with Georges Carpentier, the Orchid Man of France. Dempsey always entered the ring with a three-days' growth of black, stubbly beard and a terrible scowl. Carpentier, on the other hand, was slight, graceful and almost too good-looking. "Michelangelo would have fainted for joy at the beauty of his profile," burred Neysa McMein, the noted magazine-cover artist. Heywood Broun, a sportswriter then, spoke for the male sex when he said, "He has the body of a Greek statue."

At Boyle's Thirty Acres, across the Hudson in New Jersey, Dempsey finished off the Orchid Man in four mild rounds. (In a preliminary James Joseph "Gene" Tunney, billed as the Fighting Marine, defeated Soldier Jones.) Realizing that the Carpentier fight had been a trifle one-sided, Rickard in 1923 matched the champion with a fighter who also looked the brute. This was Luis Angel Firpo, Wild Bull of the Argentine Pampas, and by defeating Firpo in a slug-fest Dempsey appeared to become more the abysmal brute.

For the next three years Dempsey failed to defend his title.

He lived well, married movie star Estelle Taylor, and underwent an operation that brought a new shape to his nose. Then in 1926 Dempsey fought Gene Tunney, as much his opposite as Gehrig was Babe Ruth's. Dempsey was a slugging fighter. Tunney proudly called himself a boxer, practitioner of the manly art of self-defense. Where Dempsey could be scowlingly ferocious, the placid Tunney always seemed clean-cut and gentlemanly.

To many, Tunney was a young man easy to admire but hard to like. He appeared to live entirely by logic, insisting that brains were far superior to brawn. Sports writers found him reluctant to discuss his ring career but eager to talk Shakespeare, for he was a recent convert to culture who read the *Rubáiyát* between sparring sessions in his training camp.

The first Dempsey-Tunney bout was fought in September 1926, through a light rain at the Philadelphia Sesquicentennial Exposition in Philadelphia. At the end of ten rounds, Dempsey was tired and worn, Tunney cool and fresh. The Fighting Marine got the decision, to become heavyweight champion of the world. Still, the canvas had been slippery, the weather wet. Had these conditions blunted Dempsey's panther-like style? No one could say. The happiest man at fight's end was Tex Rickard, for with such questions hanging unanswered a return match between the two men became inevitable. And such was the lush crop of heavyweights available that Rickard could go through the elaborate pretense of a series of highly profitable elimination bouts during 1927, the winner to meet World's Champion Gene Tunney!

The first elimination came in February, with a Jack Delaney-Jim Maloney fight, won by Maloney. Jack Sharkey next beat Mike McTeague, then Maloney. Late in July Jack Dempsey and Jack Sharkey fought at Yankee Stadium, in a brawling bout which also exposed a strange quirk in the temperament of American fight fans. While the elimination bouts ran their

course, Gene Tunney had embarked on the inevitable (in 1927) money-making vaudeville tour. It was noted on tour that Tunney was almost never addressed as Champion or more familiarly as Champ. "Prizefighting is popular because, watching it, people are vicariously purged of their primitive inclinations," one pundit of the day stated. Jack Dempsey had always aroused crowds in this manner—Tunney did not. With his defeat by Tunney, the world had taken another look at Dempsey, and approved what it saw. No longer did he resemble the abysmal brute. He was a brutal fighter, but isn't a prizefighter supposed to be brutal? Outside the ring, people suddenly realized, he lived quietly with Estelle Taylor, whose pet name for him was Ginsburg. So in defeat Jack Dempsey had remained the Champ—the verbal accolade no one ever bestowed on Tunney.

This public switch toward Dempsey was already an established fact by the time the ex-champion entered the ring for the July elimination bout with Jack Sharkey.

The crowd (which included Heroes Chamberlin and Byrd in ringside seats) gave Dempsey a thundering ovation and, in a way, this ovation won him the fight. Lithuanian-born, Boston-bred Jack Sharkey was in top fighting trim. At twenty-five, he was speedy and eager, on the upswing of what looked like a triumphant career. He radiated a cocky confidence—too much perhaps—for the crowd that cheered Dempsey booed him. This annoyed Sharkey, who rushed from his corner to begin a slugging match:

They drove their fists into each other savagely, scarcely bothering to protect themselves. Eighty thousand people, swarming around them in the night, bellowed with joy. They drove each other back and forth around the brightly lighted enclosure, grunting, snuffing for breath, dripping sweat and blood.

Sharkey soon had the thirty-two-year-old Dempsey weary, and the frenzied crowd stood on seats to see the ex-champ

felled by a knockout blow. But now Sharkey did something inexplicable. The booing of the crowd rankled in his heaving chest, and instead of flattening the groggy Dempsey, he suddenly turned to the mob and shouted, "Here's your bum champion. How do you like him?"

Sharkey stood glaring out at the crowd for a moment, then turned back to resume fighting only to discover that the few seconds' respite—or perhaps the words of scorn—had rekindled Dempsey's fury. There was no knockout blow by Jack Sharkey that night. Instead the fighters went after each other with new ferocity. Dempsey was known to feel that his celebrated fighting crouch left his head open to punishment and that battering might harm his eyes. Sharkey was notoriously weak in the solar plexus. Each went for the other's weak spot.

It was Sharkey's tender solar plexus that Dempsey aimed for in the seventh round. His right hand delivered a shattering blow which most ringsiders thought landed on the waistband of Sharkey's trunks. Sharkey grunted, his face contorting with pain. Dropping his arms, he looked appealingly at the referee. Plainly he thought Dempsey's blow a low one to the groin. Yet, Jack Sharkey was a contender for the heavyweight championship of the world: he should have known better than to stand defenselessly in front of the Manassa Mauler. Without waiting, Dempsey sent a thunderbolt left to Sharkey's jaw. Face still twisted with the groin-pain, Sharkey toppled to the canvas, lay motionless through the count.

Was Dempsey's solar-plexus punch foul? World's Champion Gene Tunney, seated coolly at ringside, thought not. The highly respected sportswriters Grantland Rice and Joe Williams thought it was. Fight fans across the country were similarly divided. It was hoped that motion pictures of the fight would show, but at the second in question Dempsey's broad back was to the camera. Sharkey's body bore no telltale bruises and the Boston fighter complicated matters by failing to lodge

an official protest. So Dempsey's hand was held high and promoter Tex Rickard glowed with happiness as he officially informed reporters that Dempsey would fight Gene Tunney in Chicago two months hence. Rickard had even more reason to be happy, for the Sharkey bout had built up a \$1,083,529 gate, which in days before big-bite income taxes was divided as follows:

U.S. Government	\$ 98,502
N.Y. State	49,251
Dempsey	352,000
Sharkey	210,426
Rickard (balance)	373,350

Never in American history has a sporting event been awaited with such feverish anticipation as the Dempsey-Tunney fight of September 22, 1927. Before it the national frenzy rose to such a pitch that the *New York Times* pontificated in an editorial headed THE THRILL HUNTERS: "Whatever place the year 1927 may take in history, no future chronicler of our times can fail to note that people will contribute about \$3,000,000 to see two men fight for something less than forty-five minutes. It will not only be an index of the prosperity of the period, but it will reveal to the historian how much the 20th century American was willing to pay for a thrill."

The bout was to be held at Soldiers Field in Chicago, which the ingenuity of Tex Rickard had stretched rubber-like to a point where 150,000 fans could be accommodated. "This fight will be my life's achievement," Rickard declared, pointing out that the anticipated Soldiers Field throng would fill two Yankee Stadiums, two Yale Bowls, or pack the Polo Grounds to capacity and leave 100,000 waiting outside.

But would all ticket-buyers be able to see the ring? Long before September 22nd vaudeville comedians got loud laughs by wisecracking that the five dollar bleacher seats would be as far off as Milwaukee. Said the humor magazine *Judge*: "Ladeez

and Gentlemen! In this cornah, Mr. Takes-Us Rickard, heavy-weight publicity champ of the woild. And in that cornah, Battling Sucker-Public, the woild's champeen lightwit. CLANG! Takes-Us leads with three-thousand columns of publicity, catching Battling Sucker between the eyes. He follows up with a \$40 blow to the pocketbook. Battling Sucker is out! But he'll come back for more. It's the old circus game. He'll cough up \$20 or \$30 or \$40 for a ticket marked Ringside that's about half a mile from the ring and stand on the back of cardboard seats with thousands of other suckers trying to get a glimpse of two bums dividing up over a million dollars!"

Both Dempsey and Tunney earned tidy sums ahead of time by allowing the public to watch their training sessions at one dollar a head. As many as eight thousand people attended some of these workouts. "My plans are all Dempsey," stated Tunney when reporters asked him his strategy for the great fight. Dempsey, the oldster of 32, seemed heavy in the legs at some training bouts and sportswriters began calling him a hollow shell of his former self. This and other criticism crept under the ex-champ's tough hide, for just before the fight he released an ill-advised Open Letter accusing Tunney of coniving with Philadelphia gambler Boo Boo Hoff to secure a friendly referee in the bout the year before. Tex Rickard summed up public feeling when he said of the surprising letter, "It makes me sick." Such things, however, were meat to the passionless Tunney, who condescendingly replied:

My dear Dempsey—Your open letter to me has been brought to my attention. My reaction is to ignore it and its evident trash completely.

However, I cannot resist saying that I consider it a cheap appeal for public sympathy. Do you think this is sportsmanlike?

Gene Tunney

To which Dempsey snarled back, "I'll murder that big book-worm in less than eight rounds. . . ."

According to newspapers, Dempsey lost favor with many fans because of the open letter. Yet it was not apparent in the numbers of ticket holders who now descended on the city of Chicago. "Even Al Capone seems lost in the crush," wrote Grantland Rice, while another scribe reported it impossible to walk on the sidewalks in the Loop. Thomas Cook & Son had anticipated the future by chartering planes to fly a wealthy few to the fight, but the vast majority came by train. Out from New York rolled the Madison Square Garden Special, the Jim Corbett Special, the Billy Duffy Special, and the Tex Rickard Special. The Twentieth Century Limited stretched three times its normal length. In all, the New York Central ran thirty-five specials, the Baltimore and Ohio the same.

"Governors, Mayors, Senators, and millionaires!" burred press accounts. From Los Angeles came Douglas Fairbanks, Harold Lloyd, John Barrymore, and Charlie Chaplin. The Broadway contingent was led by David Belasco, Florenz Ziegfeld, and Al Jolson. From the ranks of millionaires came Otto Kahn, Bernard Baruch, Charles M. Schwab, and Julius Rosenwald. In New York, those unable to travel to Chicago might see what was advertised as a reasonable facsimile of the real thing. At the 71st Regiment Armory at Park Avenue and Thirty-fourth Street, two fighters would re-enact the Chicago fight as it came over the radio. "See the Dempsey-Tunney Bout Reproduced in the Ring by Expert Boxers," the ads for this event suggested. "As soon as each round is completed in Chicago, the fighters in New York will reproduce the battle here."

On the big morning both Tunney and Dempsey jogged five miles. In the afternoon Dempsey rested while Tunney improved his mind by examining manuscripts in a private library in the suburbs of Chicago. At Soldiers Field an army of 6,800 ushers and special policemen received last minute instructions for handling the unprecedented throng. Eagle-eyed reporters

noted the genteel Tunney influence in the armbands worn by the ushers—they read TUNNEY-DEMPSEY BOXING EXHIBITION. As night fell and the fans were assembling, Soldiers Field turned into a place of surprising beauty, causing one reporter to write: "The veil of darkness over it all; the rippling sea of humanity stretching out as far as the eye could see; the Doric columns of Soldiers Field glowing a soft white along the upper battlements of the arena; and finally the ring itself where two men would fight it out with their fists in a pool of white light—these were the high spots of an unforgettable spectacle."

From a favored spot at ringside, the celebrated larynx of Graham McNamee warmed up, bidding a network of eighty-two stations:

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen of the radio audience—This is a big night. Three million dollars worth of boxing bugs are gathering around a ring at Soldiers Field, Chicago—Burning down on us are 44 1000-watt lamps over the ring—All is darkness in the muttering mass of crowd beyond the light—The "mike" is fixed on the ring floor in front of us—The crowd is thickening in the seats—There's Jim Corbett—Mayor Thompson of Chicago in a cowboy hat—Irvin Cobb—John Ringling—Tex Rickard in a beige fedora—It's like the Roman Coliseum—

—Here comes Jack Dempsey, climbing through the ropes—white trunks, long bathrobe—Here comes Tunney—He's got on blue trunks with red trimmings—Hear the roaring of the crowd. Both men are in the ring now—They're getting the gloves out of a box tied with a pretty blue ribbon—The announcer shouting in the ring—trying to quiet 150,000 people—Robes are off.

Jack Dempsey, fresh-shaven in Philadelphia, entered the ring with his traditional three-day growth of forbidding black beard. In contrast, Tunney looked pink and white. Referee Dave Barry called the two men to him and repeated the rules. He put great emphasis on the fact that in Illinois—and only in Illinois—the fighter still on his feet when a knockdown occurred must retire to a neutral corner. Only after he got there could

the referee began to count. "Do you understand, Champ?" he asked Tunney. It was one of the few times Tunney had been addressed as Champ and the self-possessed young man made a mental note of it. He nodded his head, indicating he was aware of the instructions. "Understand, Jack?" Barry asked the glowering Dempsey. The ex-champion also nodded. "Then may the best man win," Barry said, and the greatest ring spectacle of all time—the Fight of the Ages—was on.

Until the seventh round, the five-years-younger Tunney seemed to be in control. It was gentleman versus brute, as at Philadelphia. Tunney himself has written: "I had been out-boxing Jack all the way. He hadn't hurt me, hadn't hit me with any effect. I wasn't dazed or tired. I was sparring in my best form." As at Philadelphia, Tunney's sparring—his refusal to trade slugging blows—infuriated Dempsey. "C'mon, and fight," he taunted. In the past Tunney had fought vicious slugfests with Harry Greb and others. But as world's heavyweight champion he seemed satisfied to keep jabbing and dancing away, winning his victories on points.

To some sportswriters at ringside, Dempsey resembled the hollow shell of pre-fight stories. But suddenly, in the seventh, the hollowness filled with furious energy. As Graham McNamee pictured the scene to a palpitating radio public:

Gene is stabbing Jack off—oh-o—Jack wandering around Gene—Dempsey drives a hard left under the heart—Jack pounded the back of Tunney's head with four rights—Gene put a terrific right—hardest blow of the fight—Gene beginning to wake up—like a couple of wild animals—Gene's body red—hits Dempsey a terrific right to the body—Jack is groggy—Jack leads hard left—Tunney seems almost wobbling—they have been giving Dempsey smelling salts in his corner—Some of the blows that Dempsey hits make this ring tremble—Tunny is DOWN—down from a barrage—they are counting—six-seven-eight—

What McNamee had described—apparently without know-

ing it—was the Long Count, the most controversial ticked-off seconds in all boxing history. Dempsey, full of splendid energy, had unleashed a left swing that hit Tunney square on the jaw: “With all his accuracy and power, Dempsey hit me flush on the jaw, the button. I was knocked dizzy.” Such were the moments for which the Manassa Mauler crouched in wait. Like a fury he closed in, landing seven crashing blows. Battered by superhuman rights and lefts, Tunney lost consciousness. He slumped against the ropes and slid to a sitting position on the canvas.

By Illinois rules, Dempsey must now retire to a neutral corner while the referee counted. But Dempsey, his vaunted killer instincts fully aroused, stood over his fallen opponent ready to land a punch the moment he got up. Referee Dave Barry, remembering the instructions given both fighters, paused uncertainly for two seconds. Then he rushed to Dempsey, encircled the ex-champion with his arms, and shoved him in the direction of a neutral corner. Dempsey then recalled the Illinois rule. Barry waited until Dempsey reached the corner. He then bent over Tunney to begin *one, two*.

At ringside the official timekeeper had already reached *four*, and it is these priceless seconds over which fight fans have argued endlessly since 1927. According to Tunney’s story, consciousness came back as Dave Barry reached *two*. “What a surprise!” he has written. “I had eight seconds in which to get up. . . . I thought—what now? I’d take the full count, of course. Nobody but a fool fails to do that.”

As Dave Barry tolled *nine*, Tunney got to his feet. Dempsey tore in for the kill. But, says Tunney, “My head was clear. I had trained hard and well, as I always did. I was still in the proverbial pink.” His legs felt light and elastic, and he immediately began the light sparring-and-flicking that drove Dempsey into a rage of frustration. More than this was bothering Dempsey, however. He had knocked his man down for

what, with his great ring savvy, he knew was more than ten seconds. Yet his opponent had been permitted to rise and resume the fight. From here on Dempsey's legs seemed heavy and so no doubt was his heart. . . .

In the last three rounds the fight reverted to its early pattern, with Tunney's skillful jabbing putting him ahead on points. Yet Dempsey's knockdown might still cancel this out. As the gong clanged to signify the end of the tenth and final round, Graham McNamee could only prolong the agony of the radio audience:

Yes, Tunney, I feel sure, retains his championship because at the last moment Dempsey was practically out on his feet. And, ladies and gentlemen, I assure you there were no fouls in this fight. There were no fouls here. There was nothing questionable that I saw—TUNNEY WINS, GENE TUNNEY IS STILL WORLD'S CHAMPION—GENE, GENE!—Here is Tunney come to say something—

Tunney: Hello, everybody! It was a real contest all the way through. I want to say hello to all my friends in Connecticut and elsewhere. Thank you!

McNamee: And now Jack comes out of the ring half beside himself with anger, and we hope he is not going to knock all the typewriters and telegraph operators over. Well, at the last moment—JACK, JACK!—Well, we wanted Jack to say hello, too—He boxed a real good fight. Gene Tunney managed to master him, but by no great margin and there was one time when Tunney might have taken the long road himself back to oblivion.

So the Battle of the Century ended. Ten people died of heart attacks while listening to Graham McNamee's highly charged account of the bout, and next morning the front page of the *New York Times* was topped by a headline worthy of a declaration of war—

GENE TUNNEY KEEPS TITLE BY DECISION AFTER 10 ROUNDS

DEMPSEY INSISTS FOE WAS OUT IN 7TH AND WILL APPEAL

150,000 SEE CHICAGO FIGHT, MILLIONS LISTEN ON RADIO

In trains and cars leaving Chicago, fight fans argued pros and cons of the Long Count. Most of the details of these arguments were provided by newspapers, for events in the spectacular seventh had occurred so fast that few observers were aware of their real significance. Further, most of those at the fight had been so far away from the ring that such subtle nuances were lost.

But with the exception of Dempsey, everybody appeared happy. The Fight of the Ages had been a more-than-a-million gate—actually over two-and-a-half million! Of the \$2,658,000 take Tunney received \$990,000 and those addicted to pinpoint mathematics figured he earned \$7,700 while reclining on the canvas during the Long Count. Dempsey's take-home was \$447,000, making his income from two bouts during the year an approximate \$800,000. This, noted one commentator, was a fee slightly in excess of that paid out to bricklayers and plumbers for a similar period of service. Of his Tunney fight money, Dempsey gave \$75,000 to his manager, Leo Flynn, and lesser amounts to handlers. After a moderate tax bite the rest was his own, and he sensibly considered it sufficient. The Manassa Mauler never fought again. Tunney fought once more, knocking out Tom Heeney in a mild battle in New York. Then the champion who never was called Champ retired to the life of a self-made millionaire.

Sports fans recovering from the hysteria of the Battle of the Century were given no time for catching breath. Simultaneously with the end of the Dempsey-Tunney fight, the game of baseball exploded into stupendous thrills. Nineteen twenty-seven has been called the Yankee Year, the finest that New York team has ever known. With the so-called Murderers Row batting order of Ruth, Gehrig, Bob Meusel, Tony Lazzeri—plus the pitching of Waite Hoyt, Herb Pennock, and George Pipgrass—the Yanks swept through a brilliant season that set an Ameri-

can League record of one hundred and ten games won and forty-four lost. In this mighty year the Yanks won the pennant by a comfortable margin of nineteen games. As if this were not enough, the conquering team won most games in the final, suspenseful innings. Five O'Clock Lightning, their eighth and ninth inning rallies came to be called.

Baseball excitement built from peak to peak through the season. On July 4th the Yankee-Athletics double-header, held at Philadelphia, attracted a smashing 72,641 paying patrons. But it was not the near-flawless Yankee playing that did this. Rather it was Ruth and Gehrig, the Home Run Twins. From the first day of the season these two were locked in a deadly, day-to-day home-run rivalry. First Gehrig was in the lead, then Ruth, making a seesaw between the greatest pair of power hitters the game has ever produced.

In 1927 George Herman "Babe" Ruth was, at 32, a national figure. "He snarled traffic and jammed parks everywhere," Frank Graham has recalled. "His progress was like that of a president or a king." Ruth's bat was half-a-pound heavier than others. He gripped it low for maximum swing, and the crack of it hitting a pitched ball made a clean, almost symphonic, sound. His confident jog trot around the bases, arms close to body, almost mincing along with short, quick, pigeon-toed steps, was imitated by sand-lot ball players across the country. Ruth loved life, and the greatest thing in life was baseball.

But in 1927, as in other years, the great Bambino had headaches. He was, as Red Smith would say later, "unschooled, unpolished, profane, widely uninformed, rowdy, generous, bull-headed, warm and utterly natural, and gloriously himself." This child of nature—brutalized by a saloon-keeper father; tobacco chewer and whiskey drinker at the age of ten; discoverer of baseball at a school for incorrigibles—kept bumping into the sharp edges of alleged civilization. Yet, Red Smith continues: "he was in no sense stupid, though there were many things he

did not know. His mind was a blend of shrewdness and simplicity, quick perception and cheerful innocence. It was, in its special way, a great mind."

Ruth's chief irritations were provided by Miller Huggins, manager of the Yankees. Huggins was a small man with the instincts of a martinet and a limited knowledge of human behavior. He expected George Herman Ruth to give an example of clean living to other members of the team. With Huggins at the Yankee helm, the freewheeling Babe was in constant hot water, receiving five thousand dollar fines and frequent suspensions from play. In addition, the Yankee front office wanted the Sultan of Swat to set an example to the rest of the country. The front office supported Huggins.

Yet Ruth persisted in living life his own way. He liked to drink, though he never got drunk. He liked to gamble, and during a vacation at Havana race tracks lost a neat forty thousand dollars. He also liked good-looking girls, and was keeping close company with one he would soon marry. Ruth could double or triple his baseball salary by vaudeville tours and testimonials. He earned far more money than he ever needed, and spent much of it for \$250 suits and expensive touring cars which he drove with his own happy brand of individualism. "Hey," a New York traffic cop once yelled at him, "this is a one-way street." "I'm only driving one way," Ruth roared back.

1927 was the most Ruthian of years. Early in January newspapers reported that the Bambino had been ordered arrested in California for employing under-age children in his vaudeville act. The Yankee management, juvenile authorities, and even police might take Babe Ruth with dead seriousness, but the public viewed him with indulgence. The charge that Babe Ruth would victimize children was considered preposterous. He loved children and children loved him—the Sultan of Swat was nothing but a big kid himself. In the words of his wife-to-be: "Babe and kids went together. He was bluff and blunt, but he could

reduce the shyest of kids to the status of boon companion in three minutes or less."

When Babe Ruth ran afoul of the law, news stories had a way of making splash headlines, then fading away as the charges remained unproved. Later in 1927 the Babe was charged with attacking a cripple at the corner of Broadway and Seventy-second Street, in New York. A young woman (Ruth's companion, the cripple charged) had accused the lame man of insulting her. Whereupon a huge fellow (Ruth, claimed the cripple) punched him. In court the charges proved groundless but Ruth, who wanted his public to admire him, took the matter gravely. Said a news account: "Of all those in court, none was more serious than Mr. Ruth, who stood before the bench with arms folded, a giant immobile figure."

The Bambino had a special reason for wanting public approval in 1927. Early that year he had signed a three-year contract for \$210,000 or \$70,000 per annum. This was the highest salary ever paid a baseball player, and the fact that a man without education had been put in a higher salary bracket than the President of the United States caused much hue and cry. This, in turn, drove Ruth to vow that he would prove himself worth an annual \$70,000.

The best way to do this was a break his record of fifty-nine home runs, set in 1921. He set out to do so and immediately found himself aided by two factors. One was the new and livelier baseball introduced that year. The other was the presence of Lou Gehrig immediately behind him in the Yankee batting order. With Gehrig in that spot, there was no point in deliberately passing Babe Ruth on balls. So the Babe got more and better pitches in 1927, and the ball was livelier than before.

Even so, he began the season in a manner that was exciting but not great. He and Gehrig slugged it out on an even basis until the late-season date of September 6th. On that day, in the fifth inning of a game in Boston, Gehrig smashed his forty

fifth home run of the year. It placed him ahead of Ruth, who had so far hit only forty-four. This seemed to light a bonfire under the Sultan of Swat. The season had less than a month to run, and he was thirteen home runs behind his 1921 record. However, supermen rise handsomely to the right challenge. In this September 6th game Ruth proceeded to clout no less than three home runs. Said the *Times*: "The reign of a great monarch was being seriously threatened here this afternoon when the king himself rose in his wrath, struck three mighty blows in his own behalf that removed all doubt that for the moment at least the master home run swatter of the age is still George Herman Ruth, called the Babe."

So Ruth had forty-seven homers to Gehrig's forty-five. Next day the monumental man connected twice, bringing his total to forty-nine. By September 17th, he had fifty-two. Gehrig reached forty-seven, to remain there for the rest of the season. Then the country turned to enjoy the Dempsey-Tunney fight. But on the morning after the fight, the sports world discovered that Babe Ruth had clouted number fifty-six. On September 27th, he hit his fifty-seventh, with bases full. "One every game now, until sixty," Ruth grimly promised reporters. On September 29th, he hit two more, tying the 1921 record. Fittingly, number fifty-nine was a tremendous clout, again with bases full. Of it, one sportswriter said: "That, countrymen, was a wallop. It went halfway up the right field bleachers. The crowd fairly rent the air with shrieks and whistles as the bulky monarch jogged majestically around the bases behind the three other Yankees, doffing his cap and shaking hands with Lou Gehrig, who was waiting to take his turn at bat."

Now Ruth must hit a single home run to achieve his goal. Only two games remained. Could he, would he do it? Suspense became unbearable as Ruth did not in the next-to-last game. In the final game of the season the Yanks faced Washington southpaw Tom Zachary at the Yankee Stadium. Came the

eighth inning, the moment of Five O'Clock Lightning. The score was 2-2, with a Yankee on base. It was Ruth's last time at bat: he must do it now or join Casey in Mudville.

The first ball was fast, a called strike. The next came high, a ball. With the third pitched ball, Ruth's massive body coiled like a spring. The great arc of his home-run swing commenced while the crowd sat breathless. Through the ball park rang a clear and beautiful sound—the symphonic ring of the Babe's bat connecting with a well-pitched ball. The fans hardly needed to watch its soaring flight—this was a home run! Bellowing, cheering, pounding each other, seventy thousand people jumped to their feet to give Ruth what must be the most tumultuous ovation ever accorded a ball player.

After such a stunning finale to the regular season, the World Series of 1927 could only be an anticlimax. The Pittsburgh Pirates, having earned the doubtful honor of facing the greatest team the game had ever known, were hardly in a winning frame of mind. The first game was played at Pittsburgh, and in sporting fashion the Pirates permitted the Yankees to take the field first for a practice session. From home dugout the National League champs watched Ruth and Gehrig hit practice home runs that shot out of the ball park. Sportswriters noted that the rugged Pirates seemed to wilt physically.

In play, the series became a World Series of Errors—all by Pittsburgh. Babe Ruth hit two more home runs, while Herb Pennock and George Pipgrass pitched exceptional games. Defeated in three straight games, the Pirates came to life slightly in the fourth. This, however, was largely the result of relaxation induced by resignation to inevitable defeat. Final scores were 5-4, 6-2, 8-1, and 3-2—all in favor of the Yanks.

But to salve any disappointment over the World Series, fans could immediately turn to football. This game, until recently the exclusive property of polite Ivy League colleges, had at-

tained nationwide prominence with rugged teams like Notre Dame, Georgia, and Southern California outstanding. Harold "Red" Grange, most colorful player in the game, had turned professional two years before. In 1927, the outstanding players were Caldwell of Yale, Lane of Dartmouth, Oosterbaan of Michigan, Wilson of West Point, Flanagan of Notre Dame, and Drury of Southern California. Most remarkable record of the year would be made by Alton Marsters, a sophomore triple-threat halfback of Dartmouth who gained 1,934 yards in eight games, nearly 700 more than the mighty Red Grange during his best season in 1924.

Even so, the notable football personality of the year was not a player, but a coach. Since 1918 the Notre Dame teams of Knute Rockne had won sixty-four games, lost six, tied two. For this he had been raised in 1926 from an \$8,500 annual salary to \$10,000. Lately Rockne had branched out into lecturing, writing, and after-dinner speaking. A man who looked like an angry bulldog, and often behaved like one, he has been described as "teacher, fighter, psychologist, orator, scientist, actor, salesman, and diplomat." He also had what is recalled as a rollicking sense of humor. Using these diverse talents, Rockne had become nationally famous for his between-halves pep talks to Notre Dame teams. In these sessions, he rose to histrionic heights. "Win it for the Gipper," Rockne would beg his teams, while tears flowed down his rough cheeks. Notre Dame's all-time top player had been George Gipp who was worshiped by all players after him.

To Rockne and to football fans all over the country the season of 1927 was full of excitement and bruising thrills. At the same time, it was bewildering and inconclusive, for none of the top teams of the day escaped defeat. Yale and Pitt were the leading teams in the East, but Yale lost to Georgia and Pitt was tied by Washington and Jefferson. The almost unbeatable Notre Dame was tied by Minnesota and defeated by

Army. Georgia, after defeating Yale, lost heartbreakingly to Georgia Tech in the final game of the season. Minnesota was tied by Indiana and Notre Dame. Big Ten leader Illinois was tied by Iowa State. On the West Coast, Southern California was tied by Stanford and beaten by Notre Dame. At the Tournament of Roses on New Year's Day, Stanford would play Pitt.

11 End of the Big Shriek

LATE in October, Lindbergh finished his around-the-country aviation-promotion tour, and Charles A. Levine returned by ship from Europe. The gripping aviation summer appeared to be over. With a sigh of regret—or perhaps relief—the American public began to accustom itself to finding only routine news in the papers. Through November news stories revealed that Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, because of his efficient handling of Mississippi Flood Relief, was considered the outstanding candidate for the Republican nomination in 1928. Al Smith was still top man in the Democratic camp. In Washington, oil millionaire Harry Sinclair and former Secretary of the Interior Albert Fall went on trial for their part in the Teapot Dome scandal. Newspapers claimed that a suicide wave among college and high school students was in full swing, but insurance company statistics failed to bear this out. Andrew J. “Bossy” Gillis was elected mayor of Newburyport, Massachusetts. Lita Grey Chaplin collected a \$825,000 divorce settlement from her movie-comedian husband. Of this, \$200,000 was to be devoted to the education of the couple’s two sons. The remainder (\$625,000) was the eighteen-year-old girl’s consolation for devoting two years of her adolescence to a middle-aged spouse.

Mr. and Mrs. Martin Johnson revealed plans for another penetration into Darkest Africa. Earl Carroll was paroled from a Federal penitentiary, having served with good conduct his sentence for perjury in the girl-in-the-champagne party. In Chicago, where gangster killings had become a fearsome commonplace, Al Capone gave a press interview which indicated that he had entrusted himself to the ministrations of a press agent. The purpose of the interview was to announce the gang lord's departure to Florida for the winter, but in the course of it he vigorously denied that his crime empire raked in a munificent seventy-five million dollars a year. In a statement that exposed the press-agent touch he tried to paint himself a friend of humanity. "I've been spending the best years of my life as a public benefactor," he declared virtuously. "But all I get is abuse—the existence of a hunted man. I'm called a killer. . . ."

Behind front page stories were matters cultural. Indeed, the autumn of 1927 had proved an exciting one for culture-hounds. Those who enjoyed books could pick from a dazzling assortment of newly published volumes, among them: *The Woman at Point Sur*, by Robinson Jeffers; *Meanwhile*, by H. G. Wells; *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, by Willa Cather; *Circus Parade*, by Jim Tully; *A Good Woman*, by Louis Bromfield; *Little Sins*, by Katherine Brush; *We*, by Charles Augustus Lindbergh; *Mother India*, by Katherine Mayo; *What CAN a Man Believe?* by Bruce Barton; *Men Without Women*, by Ernest Hemingway; *The Companionate Marriage*, by Judge Ben Lindsey and Wainwright Evans; *The Mad Carews*, by Martha Ostenso; *The Grandmothers*, by Glenway Wescott; *Jalna*, by Mazo de la Roche; *The Human Body*, by Dr. Logan Clendening; *Mosquitoes*, by William Faulkner; and *Carry On, Jeeves*, by P. G. Wodehouse. Harold Bell Wright, perhaps the most popular novelist of the time, was favoring his public with *God and the Groceryman*. ("Full of Wrighteousness," quoth

one critic.) The amazingly prolific E. Phillips Oppenheim was represented by his one hundredth book, a story of high-toned intrigue called *Miss Brown of XYO*.

The Broadway theater offered a harvest almost as rich. The early 1927-28 season brought not only *Burlesque*, but *The Trial of Mary Dugan*, with Ann Harding and Rex Cherryman; *The Letter*, with Katharine Cornell; *The Ziegfeld Follies*, with Eddie Cantor; *Women Go On Forever*, with Mary Boland, Osgood Perkins, James Cagney, and Sam Wren; *Four Walls*, with Muni Weisenfreund, the soon-to-be Paul Muni; the original, non-musical *Porgy*, with Rose McClendon and Frank Wilson; the zestful *Good News*, with its sprightly "Varsity Drag"; and a forgotten item called *High Gear*, with a dewy-eyed ingenue named Shirley Booth. At the Republic Theater on Forty-second Street the seemingly indestructible *Abie's Irish Rose* finally advertised "Last Weeks" after a run of five long years. A few blocks uptown was *Dracula*, with Bela Lugosi ("Ye who have fits, prepare to throw them now"—Alexander Woollcott), ("See it and creep"—John Anderson).

Motion picture quality did not match that of books and plays. Clara Bow was still the country's number-one box office attraction, and her big-eyed charms were on display at New York's Criterion in *Wings*, a spectacular aviation picture, with Richard Arlen and Buddy Rogers. The Hottest Jazz Baby of Them All was also appearing in *Hula*, in which she portrayed an Irish colleen turned Hawaiian grass skirt dancer. Featured with her in this was the stone-faced English actor Clive Brook, also visible in a second concurrent film. This was the first of the gangster pictures, the memorable, mature, and timely *Underworld*, with George Bancroft, Fred Kohler, and Evelyn Brent.

The Big Parade had moved from the Astor to the Capitol in New York, and its run at popular prices was about to start. Around the country *Seventh Heaven* was cleaning up finan-

cially, and impressionable women were advised to take at least four handkerchiefs with them to this superior tear jerker. Moviegoers in search of average films could find them in *The Patent Leather Kid*, with Richard Barthelmess, based on the slang-and-sport stories of H. C. Witwer; William Haines in *Spring Fever*, with Joan Crawford; *Rolled Stockings*, with Louise Brooks and James Hall; Will Rogers in *A Texas Steer*; *An American Beauty*, with Billie Dove, Lloyd Hughes, and Alice White; and Marion Davies in *Quality Street*.

But if movies seemed weak, they were actually in a stronger position than ever. For *The Jazz Singer* had opened at the Warner Theater in New York. Up to this moment a few Warner Brothers films had been accompanied by a symphonic sound track. Also, there had been Vitaphone Shorts featuring singers and monologists. But now, incorporated for the first time in a full-length picture, Al Jolson sang three songs and spoke a snatch of dialog. On the Hollywood sound stage as the first song ended, the great man was so carried away that to the assembled extras he shouted his familiar, "You ain't heard nothin' yet!" These informal, not-in-the-script words were retained on the sound track, and suddenly at the Broadway premiere the singer's electric personality flooded the theatre by means of the new medium. The audience rose to its feet and cheered, and another ovation came at the picture's end.

Motion picture critics of the day seemed strangely obtuse where sound was concerned. Mordaunt Hall of the *New York Times* hardly mentioned the innovation in his next-morning review. Instead, he hailed Jolson as the possessor of "the voice with a tear" and complimented May McAvoy on her performance in a saccharine role. *Time* took an even odder tack, saying that by means of this, his first movie, the fulsome histrionic talents of Broadway's Al Jolson could at last be seen in the hinterlands. A 1928 publication called *Mirrors of the Year*, recalling the milestones of 1927, does not even mention *The*

Jazz Singer. Yet the public quickly discovered the rich attractions of sound. Long lines formed in front of *The Jazz Singer* box office, and in Hollywood the Warner Brothers rousingly congratulated each other on having pioneered a winner.

On Thanksgiving Day of the Year of the Big Shriek, Americans boasted some twenty million cars in which to travel the country's roads—there were no highways then. This had, indeed, become the era of the automobile. "In a position of honor," writes Frederick Lewis Allen in *Only Yesterday*, "rode the automobile manufacturer. His hour of destiny had struck. By this time paved roads and repair shops and filling stations had become so plentiful that the motorist might sally forth for the day without fear of being stuck in a mudhole or stranded without benefit of gasoline . . . Automobiles were now made with such precision . . . that the motorist need hardly know a spark plug by sight . . ."

Of the twenty million cars on American roads almost ten million were the ugly, clumsy, cheap, and altogether endearing (in retrospect) Ford known as the Model T—or, more elegantly, as the Flivver or Tin Lizzie. Over the past decade the Tin Lizzie had come overwhelmingly to symbolize a period when Americans thought of motor cars as a method of getting from one place to another. But with Coolidge prosperity, paved roads, and frequent gas stations, Americans began to conceive of touring in automobiles, as well as impressing neighbors with the opulence of cars.

So began an era in car-making which one editorial writer called the craze for external beauty. Leader in this advance toward automotive design was General Motors, the combine which had risen to challenge the supremacy of Henry Ford. To the buying public General Motors offered no less than seven different makes of car: Chevrolet, Oldsmobile, Pontiac, Oakland, Buick, LaSalle, and Cadillac. Ford, in turn, manufactured

only the redoubtable Model T and the high-priced Lincoln. "If the auto war between Mr. Ford and General Motors Corporation were symbolized by armaments," wrote *Time* at this point, "Mr. Ford would be a cannon and GM a machine gun."

Early in 1927 it became apparent that General Motors, with its wide variety and nifty design, was winning the automotive war. Henry Ford had piled up a fortune of \$347,000,000 from his Model T and customarily paid income taxes in the vicinity of \$2,500,000. A small percentage of this money had been devoted to bringing back the past by restoring wayside inns, subsidizing country fiddlers and—in the teeth of such mad crazes as the Charleston and Black Bottom—attempting to revive square dancing. In short, Mr. Ford appreciated the past and did not relish change. Yet he was also America's most conspicuous self-made man, a primitive mastermind who could not tolerate any competition. In April 1927 Henry Ford's last Model T flivver rolled from his Detroit factory. On May 31st he abruptly closed the factory, except for sections of it that made parts for the ten million Fords still in rattling action. While the Ford Motor Company lost one million dollars a day, Henry Ford and his engineers set out to regain supremacy in the low cost car field by producing a new Ford car.

In several ways, 1927 had been a difficult year for the opinionated genius of the Ford Motor Company. Henry Ford was, in the polite phrase of *Time*, a Hebrew-phobe. His vast empire employed no Jews. His private newspaper, the *Dearborn Independent*, spread such rabid anti-Semitic propaganda as the fake Protocols of Zion. Yet to the American public Ford seemed a paragon among self-made millionaires, and the Jews for a long time dared not fight back. Then in 1927 a Chicago attorney named Aaron Sapiro decided he had been libeled by a *Dearborn Independent* article which began "A band of Jew bankers, lawyers, advertising agencies, produce buyers . . . is on the back of the American farmer." Sapiro sued for one million dol-

lars and in court thoroughly disproved the Ford charges. On the witness stand, Ford revealed himself ignorant of almost all worldly matters except the construction of motor cars. The Sapiro trial ended in a mistrial, and with this Ford was advised by his legal staff to apologize to the Jewish people for everything the *Dearborn Independent* had said about them since 1920, as well as withdraw from circulation a Ford-subsidized book called *The International Jew*.

All this was gall to the proud spirit of Henry Ford. Still, it may have caused him to sink himself with special zeal into the new Ford car—the Model A, it would be called. Through the summer Ford and his associates bent over planning boards, labored in the factory, and finally reached a proving ground obscured from view by a towering wooden fence. In October word came that the first Model A Ford was officially off the assembly line and that Henry Ford's gaunt face had worn a happy smile as he finished a trial drive in it.

Mr. Ford was still losing one million dollars a day. He was determined, therefore, to place the new car before the public in record time. In an announcement which told that the Model A had been constructed at a cost of \$100,000,000 of his own \$347,000,000, Ford revealed that in less than a month 550 of the new models would be ready for display in strategic spots across the country. Meantime, tests on the enclosed proving ground continued. Several times the new model was drastically readjusted. Finally word leaked that the Model A was being tested on roads around Detroit. Newspaper photographers stationed themselves at intersections over the countryside, and one at last succeeded in snapping the new car as it shot by at sixty miles per hour. In a blurred photograph the Model A looked something like a poor man's Lincoln—and that, indeed, is what it turned out to be.

In an extremely opinionated lifetime, Henry Ford had often expressed contempt for advertising. Get a good product, he be-

lieved, and you don't need to advertise. But this was a changing world, and Mr. Ford was forced to use advertising in carrying his new model to the public. Display date for the new car was set at Friday, December 2nd. In the five days before that the Ford Motor Company spent two million dollars to make the biggest advertising splurge the world had known to that moment. Full-page advertisements in some two thousand newspapers across the country announced "THE NEW FORD CAR will sell at a SURPRISINGLY LOW PRICE—the minute you see the picture of the new Ford you will be delighted with its low smart lines and the artistic color combinations. There, you will say, is a truly modern car. . . ."

Those reading the ad to the end—and what American did not?—found that the Model A would be full of innovations. Gone were the three foot-pedals that had been a Model T trademark; instead, Model A boasted a standard gear shift. No one would have to crank the new model, then dash around to the wheel to adjust the spark; Model A had a self-starter like any other car. It also had four-wheel brakes, four cylinders, steel-spoke wheels, windshield wiper, speedometer, and stop-light. The new car could travel fifty-five to sixty-five miles an hour, get twenty to thirty miles to a gallon of gas. Model A would be available in body types from Tudor sedan to snappy roadster. Eager purchasers found a choice of four body colors: Niagara Blue, Arabian Sand, Gray, and Gunmetal Blue.

But the most exciting feature of all was the cost—the full-page ad had been absolutely right in calling this SURPRISINGLY LOW. In characteristically informal manner, Henry Ford had gathered his associates around him one day on the fence-enclosed proving ground. Then he himself had figured that the Model A could be sold at a price almost identical with Model T. A new roadster would cost \$385 as compared to \$360 for the Model T. The Tudor Sedan would be priced at \$495, the exact price of the old. Thus, Ford would still lead the low price field.

The most expensive Model A model was the coupe. This cost \$550. The cheapest Chevrolet model was \$625; Chrysler, \$870; Whippet, \$755; and Star, \$650.

The five-day saturation advertising brought a Ford-conscious public to a state of churning excitement. Never before, wrote a pundit, had newspaper readers been worked up to a point where advertising matter became front-page news. "There has never been more public excitement in Denver except at the time of the famous robbery of the United States Mint," reported the *Denver Post*. A magazine called the *Independent* (not to be confused with the *Dearborn Independent*) stated: "Had the high talents of the late P. T. Barnum, the brothers Ringling, and Tex Rickard been united in one grand effort, it is doubtful whether they could have brought to pass any such spectacle."

Police were needed to regulate the crowds around Ford showrooms in Kansas City, Cincinnati, Norfolk, Omaha, Boston, St. Louis, Richmond, Chicago, Washington, Philadelphia, Jacksonville, Indianapolis, New York, New Orleans, and Atlanta. In London, Englishmen paid sixpence to view the new marvel of the age. The cars had been transported in ungainly crates, to hide the new body contours, then stored away in the depths of showroom buildings like Christmas presents. Dealers were advised to whitewash showroom windows to add to the mystery of the unveiling. Early Friday morning the whitewash was wiped away, and the fun began.

Nervous Ford officials got the first intimation that the new model was a success at a preview unveiling on the night of December 1st. This was held in the Empire Room of the Waldorf-Astoria, in New York City. Ford salesmen in evening attire led important guests from model to model: "Elegant people climbed in, out, and under the new car, and all agreed it was a true quality offering." The venerated Oscar of the Waldorf, one of those who examined the new car most

thoroughly, made the perfect remark for the occasion. "I'm going to sell my two big cars and buy two of these," he said, while Ford representatives beamed. Another reporter followed two Lorelei-Lee gold diggers, swathed in furs and glittering with diamonds. "It's a beaut," one of these connoisseurs of cars told the other.

Even Ford dealers were astounded at the rumpus over the official unveiling on December 2nd. In New York City, nearly a million in all stormed the major Ford display room at 1710 Broadway. Another sixty-five thousand tried to get in a downtown display room on Broad Street. Outside a special showroom on Park Avenue, forty thousand turned up, while thirty thousand milled around an uptown showroom on 125th Street. Learning this, Eastern Sales Manager Gaston Plantiff realized he had made a colossal blunder. He should have hired Madison Square Garden for the unveiling of the new Ford—and, with this realization, he went downtown and rented it as a supplementary showroom. In the auto city of Detroit, 114,000 visited the display at the Ford Highland Park plant. In Newark, eighty-year-old Thomas Alva Edison examined his old friend's product and made another quotable remark: "It's an awful lot for the money," he said. On Wall Street, Ford stock zoomed skyward.

Delivery of the new models was promised for January, but with such unprecedented turmoil, the date was more likely to be April or May. Nevertheless, people frantically waved money and insisted in placing orders. At 1710 Broadway the rate of orders was one thousand a day. One inspired crook—described as a "rascal" by the local press—circulated through the crowds with open order book. He could, he said, promise immediate delivery in return for an on-the-spot twenty-five dollar bonus. His pockets were crammed with greenbacks when police grabbed him.

The new Ford was a huge success, and Americans told them-

selves that resulting sales would benefit the entire auto industry and further swell the national economy. Only editorial writers seemed to take an unhappy view. In the *New York Evening Post* one such dipped his quill pen to write a nostalgic paean to the old Model T:

The old Ford dript oil into our upturned faces as we lay under it on country roads at midnight. The new Ford is shown off like a modiste's mannikin to a generation which has lost the joy of getting its hands dirty. The old Ford ruined ten million pairs of overalls. The new Ford is unveiled in hotel ballrooms by salesmen in dinner jackets.

The new Ford is new; but it isn't a Ford. It has theft-proof coincidental locks, pressure grease-gun lubrication, and five steel-spoke wheels; it is as silky as a *débutante* and as neat as a watch; it will go sixty-five miles an hour and thirty miles on a gallon; it has a gas-tank behind the engine and a switch for all lights on the steering post; it was made with Johannsen precision gages, accurate to the incalculable fraction of an inch, and it wipes its own windshield.

It is a remarkable piece of machinery, but it isn't a Ford, because the Ford was an educational institution as well as a machine. The old Ford, the old, black, rusty, cantankerous, obstinate, sputtering Ford, brought wisdom to many fools and made many wise men go raving, tearing mad. This new lily-of-the-valley isn't going to teach us anything. It looks as if it would run indefinitely without complaint, which is all wrong. It is made for serenity and comfort, which is also all wrong. Where is the gas-tank? Out in front where it can be reached. Where is the timer? Up on top where it can no longer bark your knuckles. Where are the brake-bands? In a ridiculously exposed position where their value as trainers of character and refined language is completely lost.

We are degenerating. We are entering a period of Roman luxury. The new Ford is a garage car. Back to the pioneer days when we threw sand under the fan belt and tightened the horn with a dime!

While Model A was Topic A around the country, Calvin Coolidge orated that the United States prosperity was sound as a dollar. Thus he gave several newspaper cartoonists an

identical idea. They drew a healthy male figure, stripped to the waist, standing in a doctor's office. Attending him was a medical man marked Dr. Coolidge, listening with visible satisfaction to the patient's heartbeat through a stethoscope. "Sound as a dollar," the caption read.

In New York, the great Negro café singer Florence Mills died and was given a bang-up Harlem-to-Broadway funeral. The 1928 edition of Emily Post's *Book of Etiquette* hit the book-stores for Christmas purchase. Also for the Christmas season, colored bed linen went on sale for the first time ever at McCutcheon's, on Fifth Avenue.

On Broadway, Helen Hayes opened in *Coquette*. Another important opening was the musical comedy *Funny Face*, with Fred and Adele Astaire and Victor Moore (not to mention Betty Compton, Mayor Walker's flapper date), as well as a top Gershwin score including the lilting "S'Wonderful." Other recent openings on the Gay White Way were Bernard Shaw's *The Doctor's Dilemma* with Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne; *A Connecticut Yankee*, with a score by two newcomers named Rodgers and Hart (hit songs: "Thou Swell" and "My Heart Stood Still"). Playing "An Unidentified Man" in *The Racket* was Edward G. Robinson. In a tiny part in the cumbersome operetta *Golden Dawn* was Archie Leach, soon to become Cary Grant. Mae West, as yet to find her true art form as the Gay Nineties harlot in *Diamond Lil*, opened in a play of her own devising called *The Wicked Age*. Percy Hammond, drama critic of the *Herald-Tribune*, flatly called her the worst actress in the world. Rumor had it that the doughty Miss West was stalking him with a horsewhip.

In the concert world, Geraldine Farrar gave a Standing Room Only recital at Carnegie Hall. Douglas Fairbanks and Lupe Velez opened in a film called *The Gaucho*. On December 5th, in the midst of the Ford-furore, *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, by Thornton Wilder, was published. Critics praised it,

while booksellers predicted that it would be the gift-book of the year for Christmas.

Yet in the midst of such distractions, 1927 remained the Lindbergh Year. On December 9th it was announced that the Lone Eagle would next take off on a good-will flight to Mexico. He would spend Christmas in Mexico City as the guest of Ambassador and Mrs. Dwight Morrow and their daughter, Anne. Instantly the United States and its neighbor to the south lighted up with fresh excitement. The flight to Mexico was only seven hundred miles shorter than the flight to Paris, over much uncharted territory. This would be another thrill for a thrill-happy world, and in Mexico City, inhabitants began acting like Parisians on the night of May 22nd. Lindbergh would land at Mexico City on December 14th, and that day was ordained a national holiday—the first Mexican holiday ever declared in honor of a gringo American. Correspondents in Mexico reported: "All Mexicans speak of Lindbergh with eyes that sparkle, words that sing."

Nor had the American press changed concerning the nation's number one Hero. Lindbergh took off from a rain-soaked Bolling Field in Washington on December 13th. Describing this, the *New York Times* pulled out all stops to record: "Intent, cool, clear-eyed and clear-headed, under conditions requiring supreme moral and physical courage, America's young viking of the air lifted his gray Spirit of St. Louis from a hummocky, soggy, puddle-bespattered morass with an underhanging fringe of threatening mists just before noon today, pointed its nose southward and was off again on a new, hazardous venture to a foreign land—personifying again in the hearts of his people their unofficial ambassador of good will. And, as always, he flew alone. . . ."

Once again, as Lucky Lindy flew, the world stood rooted. By now everyone expected Lindbergh to land unfailingly on time, wherever he went. But for a brief time on the Mexico City

flight, he was lost. This brought extra drama to a story which on newspaper tickers in American city rooms unfolded this way:

TALLULAH LA

TO MANY U S NEWSPAPERS

AN AIRPLANE BELIEVED TO BE COL LINDBERGH WAS SIGHTED AS IT PASSED OVER TALLULAH BY FRANK HULE A TRAIN DISPATCHER AT ELEVEN TEN CENTRAL TIME TONIGHT

ASSOCIATED PRESS.

HOUSTON TEXAS

TO MANY U. S. NEWSPAPERS

AN AIRPLANE BELIEVED TO BE THAT OF COL LINDBERGH PASSED OVER HOUSTON AT TWO TWENTY OCLOCK THIS MORNING

ASSOCIATED PRESS.

Detroit

New York Times

New York City

Mrs. Evangeline Lodge Lindbergh, the flier's mother, declared that his latest undertaking was a matter that concerned him alone. . . . She then returned to her class (she teaches chemistry in the Cass Technical High School).

Mexico City

To Many U. S. newspapers:

Thousands of Mexicans were at the Valbuena Flying Field at dawn this morning eager to greet Col. Lindbergh. . . . At 8:40 President Calles arrived accompanied by his entire cabinet . . . Ambassador Morrow, seated between President Calles and General Obregon. . . . With reports at 10:30 that Col. Lindbergh was half way between Tampico and Mexico City, the huge crowd (more than 25,000) began to mill around eager to get good positions. Nine Mexican Army airplanes hopped off to meet him. One of the planes doing stunt flying went into a nose dive and crashed several hundred yards in front of the Presidential stand. The pilot was not injured. Federal soldiers constantly arrived. . . . 10,000 men in and around the inclosure. . . . Returning scout planes landed at 11:42 without having sighted Col. Lindbergh. . . .

Silence almost approaching gloom prevailed over the great crowd as the 25th hour passed with Lindbergh's whereabouts unknown. . . . The authorities set fire to dry grass which covers the field to make a smoke signal. . . . Although hoping for the best, both President Calles and Ambassador Morrow were unable to conceal grave emotions. . . .

The Associated Press

In addition to Mexican President Calles and Ambassador Morrow, humorist Will Rogers was among the distinguished guests awaiting Lindbergh. These three nervously paced the center of the airfield, while around them men grew silent and plucked the dead grass on which they sat in the sun and women wrapped their shawls more tightly. In the first hours of the vigil a huge blackboard reporting the Lone Eagle's progress had been toted around the field for all to see. As time passed with no further word, the blackboard disappeared. Suddenly it reappeared, with the chalked-up word that the Spirit of St. Louis had been spotted over nearby Toluca. Almost immediately the speck of the plane itself could be seen. There was a roar and the crowd went into transports of excitement. In the New York city room of the *Herald Tribune* the ticker began to click out more of the story—

Mexico City

New York Herald Tribune
New York City

The intrepid American flyer brought his *Spirit of St. Louis* down on Valbuena Field at 2.39. . . . He had covered more than 2,000 miles in 27 hours, 15 minutes . . . from the crowd delirious shouts of joy . . . motorcycle police rushed toward the spot . . . Lindbergh was lifted upon the shoulders of his new Mexican admirers and placed into an automobile which began a slow trip to the Presidential stand. . . . The American hero seemed tired when he marched up to the President, but he was smiling happily. Speaking through an interpreter, President Calles assured him of Mexico's delight. . . . The greeting not entirely formal. The

President grasped the flyer's hand warmly and threw his arms around the Colonel's shoulder. . . .

Jack Starr-Hunt

MEXICO CITY

PRESIDENT CALVIN COOLIDGE

WASHINGTON D C

IT PLEASES ME PROFOUNDLY TO SEND YOUR EXCELLENCY MY MOST CORDIAL FELICITATIONS AT THIS TIME WHEN COLONEL LINDBERGH HAS ARRIVED AT MEXICO CITY AFTER HIS NOTABLE FLIGHT ACCOMPLISHED WITH GREAT SUCCESS

PLUTARCO ELIAS CALLES
PRESIDENT OF MEXICO

WASHINGTON D C

COLONEL CHARLES A LINDBERGH

MEXICO CITY

THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES ARE PROUD TO APPLAUD THE SUCCESSFUL CULMINATION OF ANOTHER OF YOUR COURAGEOUS VENTURES I WISH TO ADD MY HEARTIEST CONGRATULATIONS TO YOU IN BEING THE FIRST TO FLY WITHOUT A STOP BETWEEN THE CAPITALS OF THE TWO NEIGHBOR REPUBLICS

CALVIN COOLIDGE

Mexico City

New York Times

New York City

President Calles issued a statement tonight. . . . "The latter portion of Col. Lindbergh's flight over territory absolutely unknown to him over zones of a particularly difficult and dangerous nature because of a lack of means of communication and the deviation from his original route . . . put to the proof his great skill for navigating aloft. His marvelous resolution and energy alone prevented him from coming down and maintained him in his firm intention to reach Mexico without a stop."

Detroit

New York Times

New York City

"That's all that matters," said Mrs. Lindbergh, told of her son's

safe landing in Mexico City. "He has always talked of seeing Mexico."

Mexico City

New York Times

New York City

This has been in some ways the most interesting flight I have ever made. . . . I managed to get completely lost in the fog over Mexico . . . something went wrong. I guess it was me. . . . I am sorry that those waiting for me had such a long time under the hot sun but I was just as anxious to come down as they were to have me. . . . After 10 o'clock the moon came up and I think the first sight of the ground after leaving Washington was somewhere in Mississippi. Then I laid a course for the Gulf and hit it fairly close . . . fog for two or three hours . . . it was necessary to come down low over the water sometimes only 200 or 300 feet above the white line of surf . . . it was far from pleasant flying. . . . I recognized Tampico by the oil tanks despite the heavy curtain of fog which lay over it . . . unable to get beneath the fog I went up again and set a compass course for Mexico City. . . . I must have made some bad errors for when I dived down out of the clouds 2½ hours later there was not a sign of Mexico City. I got completely lost. I knew I was in a bad country to play around in. I tried to puzzle it out by the watersheds. . . . But it was not until I saw a sign of the Hotel Toluca that I really managed to get located and then set my course again for Mexico City. . . . I saw the planes of the Mexican Army coming to greet me. . . . Of the reception I can only say that it was equal, in all its sincerity, with that which I received in France and England. . . . Mexico has some splendid pilots. . . . I am grateful to President Calles. . . .

Charles A. Lindbergh

NEWARK N J

COL CHARLES A LINDBERGH

MEXICO CITY

HEARTIEST CONGRATULATIONS I KNEW YOU WOULD MAKE IT

RUTH ELDER

MEXICO CITY

NEW YORK TIMES

NEW YORK CITY

MORROW AND I HAVE RESIGNED AS AMBASSADORS IN MEXICO NOW
THERE IS ONLY ONE

WILL ROGERS

Telephone call from American Embassy in Mexico City to Mrs.
Lindbergh in Detroit:

"We made it mother. I have already been presented with a fine
Mexican sombrero."

A moment later (another voice):

"This is Ambassador Morrow. I congratulate you on your son.
May I extend to you a cordial invitation to spend Christmas in
Mexico City with your son?"

COL CHARLES A LINDBERGH

MEXICO CITY

(FIVE SIMILAR TELEGRAMS)

THE HONOR OF YOUR PRESENCE IS REQUESTED IN NICARAGUA
PANAMA GUATEMALA HONDURAS SALVADOR

THE GOVERNMENTS OF NICARAGUA PANAMA GUATEMALA HON-
DURAS SALVADOR

MEXICO CITY

TO THE GOVERNMENTS OF NICARAGUA PANAMA GUATEMALA HON-
DURAS SALVADOR

I ACCEPT WITH PLEASURE THE HONOR OF YOUR INVITATIONS

CHARLES A LINDBERGH

DETROIT

AMBASSADOR DWIGHT W MORROW

MEXICO CITY

I SHALL BE GLAD TO SPEND CHRISTMAS WITH YOU AND CHARLES
IN MEXICO

EVANGELINE L LINDBERGH

So the thrills of the Year the World Went Mad carried up
to the last moment. Yet all were not happy thrills—some were
sad and shocking. Even as Lindbergh was feted in the first days

of his Mexico City stay, the U.S. destroyer *Paulding* on patrol through rough weather in the Atlantic off Provincetown, Massachusetts, rammed the submarine S-4. The sub, which had come to the surface without signal during a trial run, had thirty-nine crew members and one civilian aboard. When rammed it sank heavily to the ocean floor. Two years before the Navy had gathered a salvage fleet in an attempt to raise the S-51 off Block Island. Now a similar force was hurriedly reassembled under the direction of Commander Edward Ellsberg. Divers going below found that six men remained alive in the submarine's torpedo room. "Is there any hope?" the men asked in tapped-out words. "Yes, there is hope," the diver tapped back.

But was there? The American public, accustomed to the wonders of the past year, could not comprehend why the six could not be saved. A great fleet hovered above the S-4, while rescue sirens wailed balefully. "Please hurry, air getting bad," the men below tapped. Secretary of the Navy Wilbur, arriving in Provincetown, became the target of nationwide frustration. Was the salvage being bungled? newspapers demanded. Had the first airhoses been attached to the wrong vents, as sensational papers charged? Crackpots of all types descended on Provincetown with ideas for raising the sub. One suggested that every craft in the area be attached to the sunken craft, which by main force could be dragged inshore. Days passed and rescue efforts got nowhere. If any section of the sealed-off part was opened, tons of water would rush in. Tapping from the torpedo room dwindled, which meant the six survivors were dying. Commander Ellsberg talked of waiting until summer to raise the S-4. . . .

In Los Angeles a young man named W. Edward Hickman decided he needed fifteen hundred dollars for college tuition. He obtained it by driving to the playground of a junior high school and beckoning to an attractive twelve-year-old named

Marian Parker. "Your father sent me to get you," he told her. The trusting Marian got in beside him. She was a bright-looking child with a sunny disposition, but to Hickman this counted for naught. He cold-bloodedly strangled her, then dismembered the body by clumsily chopping off the legs. He next telephoned the girl's father, saying Marian had been kidnaped but would be returned unharmed on payment of one thousand five hundred dollars.

The two men agreed to rendezvous that night on a dark road. At the appointed moment Marian's father drove up beside Hickman's car. "Is my daughter alive?" he asked. Hickman held up Marian's body wrapped in a blanket. The child appeared to be asleep. "Give me the money, and I'll leave her down the road a little way," Hickman instructed. Parker handed over the money. Hickman drove a short distance, stopped to place Marian's body on the ground. Her father rushed to the child, opened the blanket—and never in his own words could describe what he saw.

The hunt for Hickman fanned up and down the Pacific Coast. Finally, he was captured in Seattle. As his train proceeded southward crowds gathered at every stop. These were not vengeful crowds, but rather curious folk out for a glimpse of a killer. Could it be, moralists asked, that the unending sensations of the year had left the public drained of emotion, completely jaded? It seemed so, as the peculiar reactions of the Hickman crowds were reported. Their apathy seemed to say: we've had everything else this year, now here's a chance to look at a murderer. In Los Angeles, thousands lined the route Hickman took from train to jail. Again there was neither anger nor hostility. Simply a passive, gloating curiosity.

Christmas 1927 came, and with it a final sensation. On December 23rd, Mrs. Frances Grayson's amphibian plane Dawn took off from Roosevelt Field on a twelve hundred mile flight to Harbor Grace, Newfoundland. This was to be the first

leg of the hop to Denmark which the ambitious woman had attempted in late summer. Mrs. Grayson had a different pilot for the new venture, Oskar Omdal, a lieutenant in the Norwegian Navy. Bryce Goldsborough, navigator and radioman, was once more aboard. Fred Kohler, Wright Whirlwind engine expert, was flying as far as Harbor Grace. With Mrs. Grayson went the trusty revolver which she allegedly waved at Old Orchard with the promise to use it on any pilot who dared turn back. Reporters saw her slip this weapon into the depths of her fur-lined flying suit. "Is that your badge of authority?" she was asked. The compact, attractive woman gave a Mona Lisa smile.

Mrs. Grayson's departure was so unexpected that her financial backer in Denmark was unaware of it. The American public, still simmering over the aviation deaths of late summer, was given no time to protest. Mrs. Grayson had consulted Clarence Chamberlin and Bernt Balchen, and presumably both had advised against a flight late in the year. Wilmer Stultz, her pilot of the previous attempt, warned the flight was foolhardy. Yet Mrs. Grayson went. Reminded by reporters that her schedule would have her flying the Atlantic on Christmas Day, she gave an answer which may help explain her determination: "All my life Christmas has been the same. Same friends, same gifts that don't mean anything. Telling people things you don't mean. But this one will be different!" Another clue to her personality may be found in her behavior just before stepping into the cockpit of the Dawn. Lifting her eyes heavenward, she inquired of the universe, "Am I a little nobody—or a great dynamic force?"

Neither the Dawn nor its crew was seen after the pre-Christmas take off, and the disappearance holds several mysteries within its own mystery. One, naturally, is whether Mrs. Grayson used the revolver on her crew, as she threatened to do in the case of another turn-back. Still, it is unlikely that she

would be able to shoot three able-bodied men. One man perhaps, but not three—especially when the three must have been aware that she carried a revolver. More likely she turned it on herself when death became inevitable. Yet the question remains.

Almost equally tantalizing is why no radio messages ever came from the plane. Radio operator Goldsborough, a much-respected expert in his field, had promised to send reports almost from the moment of departure. None came. Later, a radio base at Sable Island, Newfoundland, reported a message which said, "We are in trouble." But this appeared to come from a small emergency set Goldsborough had taken along. On Christmas Day, the dirigible *Los Angeles*, Navy destroyers, and rescue planes covered the area between Maine and Newfoundland, but there were no signs of the plane. Closing its account of the Grayson flight *Time* wrote sententiously: "There are no headstones in the graveyard of the sea." Soon the flight of the *Dawn*, with its four dead, was just another ill-fated attempt of the year 1927.

During Christmas Week, college student John Coolidge delighted reporters by appearing in Washington in a heel-length raccoon coat typical of collegians of the time. With this formidable garment he, like other Joe College types, went hatless. Sheiks and shebas in Washington and elsewhere did the Charleston and Black Bottom, or fox-trotted to such dansapation melodies as "My Heart Stood Still," "Ain't She Sweet? (See her comin' down the street)," "Mary Lou (I love you)," "Blue Skies," "Hallelujah," "Side by Side," and "Diane," the theme song of the tear-jerking *Seventh Heaven*.

It was a good Christmas in bookstores, with *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, highly touted by Dr. William Lyon Phelps, a favored gift. Runner-up in fiction popularity were Willa Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, Rosamond Leh-

mann's *A Dusty Answer*, and Sinclair Lewis' *Elmer Gantry*, the last suitable only for those conditioned to robust reading. In the non-fiction field André Siegfried's *America Comes of Age* had been a Yuletide best seller; in biography André Maurois' *Disraeli*; in travel books Richard Halliburton's *The Glorious Adventure*; in mysteries S. S. Van Dine's *The Canary Murder Case*, with its ineffable Philo Vance.

Of all those prepared to enjoy themselves during the Christmas holidays of 1927 none found richer fare than Broadway first-nighters. No less than thirteen plays opened between Christmas and the New Year. Among them were *Behold the Bridegroom*, by Pulitzer Prize winner George Kelly, with Judith Anderson; *Bless You, Sister*, with Alice Brady and Charles Bickford; *Venus*, by Rachel Crothers, with Cissie Loftus, Patricia Collinge, and Tyrone Power, Sr.; *Celebrity* with Crane Wilbur; *Paradise*, with Lillian Foster, Elizabeth Patterson, and Minnie Dupree; *It Is To Laugh*, by Fannie Hurst, with Edna Hibbard; *L'Aiglon*, with Michael Strange; *Excess Baggage*, with Miriam Hopkins; *Paris Bound*, by Philip Barry, with Madge Kennedy; *The Royal Family*, by Edna Ferber and George S. Kaufman, with Otto Kruger—and last but by no means least *Show Boat*, by Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II, from the book by Edna Ferber. *Show Boat*, the greatest of all American operettas, opened gloriously on December 28th before an audience that mixed the elite of Park Avenue and Broadway. In the cast were Charles Winninger, Edna May Oliver, Jules Bledsoe, Howard Marsh, Helen Morgan, Norma Terris, and Sammy Puck and Eve White.

While most of the nation applied itself to holiday matters, a few deep thinkers undertook to evaluate progress in 1927. With a start, they realized that the world had indeed moved forward. Twelve months before, the country had anticipated the trial of Daddy and Peaches. Now such spicy matter seemed adolescent and outmoded. Somehow the country—in a manner

resembling the product of Henry Ford—had progressed from Model T thinking to Model A.

What brought this change? Partly the natural course of events. But mainly the reason seemed to have been aviation. A country that had been mesmerized by such local sensations as the death of Valentino, the antics of Daddy Browning, and the Queens Village murder had, with the coming of the aviation-summer, raised eyes to encompass the world. Lindbergh, Byrd, and Chamberlin had spanned the Atlantic, Maitland and Hegenberger the Pacific, Brock and Schlee had nearly circled the globe. Altogether the world seemed a smaller place, requiring American minds to grow bigger. Also, the Lindbergh receptions in Paris, London, and Mexico had been as wildly enthusiastic as those in Washington and New York—people were the same the wide world over. America, with leadership in the air, was now a vital part of the world. Aviation had given America's shell of isolation its final crack.

Aviation was still inextricably mixed with the image of Lindbergh. Elmer Davis, evaluating the departing year, saw in the clear-eyed Lone Eagle a signpost pointing upward on a road that led from the Era of Wonderful Nonsense to an Era of Comparative Sanity. Why else, he asked, would the nation go mad over Lindbergh:

What conceivable impulse could have stirred up a nation impatient of exactitude and devoted to ballyhoo to fling itself in an ecstasy of adoration at the feet of a man who is everything that the average American is not? It suggests some dissatisfaction with the way we are going, a feeling that the things we are doing are not the things that ought to be done, or that our way is not the right way to do them; it suggests a pervasive insecurity, a loss of confidence. . . . It is possible that the qualities conspicuously present in Lindbergh are the qualities that the nation at large needs most acutely.

Others saw in science the force that would transport the United States to nobler heights. Only the readers of scientific

magazines knew the full wonders in this field. One new discovery was television. In 1927 the image of Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover had been flashed from Washington to New York. "One of the most spectacular culminations of research during the year," this was called. Dr. Herbert E. Ives of the Bell Laboratories was the pioneer who accomplished it. Viewers today would hardly recognize his effort as television, for as seen on a small receiving set the image looked like a half-tone, two inches high, printed in the pink sheet edition of a daily newspaper.

Yet such wonders as television were in the happy future. Much closer to the national interest was the paradox of Prohibition. The Eighteenth Amendment was the law of the land and by it Americans were supposed never to touch an alcoholic beverage. Yet as New Year's Eve approached newspapers predicted the wettest holiday the nation had ever known. AMERICA TO GREET NEW YEAR WITH REVEL AND DIN, said one account: "When the New Year arrives on the stroke of midnight he will find awaiting him a madder, wetter, merrier welcome than has ever been accorded any of his predecessors."

In New York, night clubs took newspaper space to advertise that despite threats of law enforcement they would remain open until at least eight a.m. New Year's Day. Veiled references to drinks and expensiveness filled these ads. The Café Des Beaux Arts, promising a peppy show and orchestra together with souvenirs, noise, and fun makers, warned that prices were high: a cover charge of seven dollars and fifty cents a person in the Parisian Room; ten dollars in the Grill; and fifteen dollars in the Gold Room.

Another New York night club listed a gala unveiling for New Year's Eve. This was Mae West's Club Deauville, at Park Avenue and Fifty-ninth Street. Here a New Year's Eve Supper was advertised for a cover charge of ten dollars. Together with

this went "A Program of Distinctive and Unique Entertainment Conceived and Directed by the Distinguished Star in Person." At Les Ambassadeurs—the name the gangster owners still could not pronounce—the night's entertainment would be *Lew Leslie's Revue*, with Adelaide Hall. Texas Guinan, having been padlocked out of the Three Hundred Club, would bellow the new year in at the Century Club, on Central Park West. Clayton, Jackson, and Durante were at the Parody Club, en route to the Silver Slipper where the madcap trio found greatest fame.

Theatres, too, asked top prices. *Show Boat*, already the hit of the decade, charged twenty-five dollars a seat for New Year's Eve. Musicals like *Funny Face*, *Hit the Deck*, *Good News*, *A Connecticut Yankee*, and *Manhattan Mary* (with Ed Wynn) got fifteen dollars a seat. Dramatic shows like *Burlesque*, *Broadway*, *The Royal Family*, and *The Trial of Mary Dugan* charged ten dollars. Movie palaces along the Main Stem advertised special Welcome the New Year shows, but retained what were euphemistically called popular prices. Moviegoers could choose among W. C. Fields and Chester Conklin in *Two Flaming Youths*, at the Paramount; William Haines in *West Point*, at the Capitol; Norma Talmadge in *The Dove*, with Gilbert Roland and Noah Beery; John Gilbert and Greta Garbo in *Love*; John Gilbert (again) and Jeanne Eagels in *Man, Woman, and Sin*; and Lon Chaney in *London After Midnight*, with Marceline Day and Conrad Nagel.

For those at home radio offered music and fun for the midnight hours. Over WEAJ from ten o'clock at night until two in the morning a parade of dansapation included B. A. Rolfe from the Hotel Park Central; Cass Hagan, Hotel Roosevelt; Ben Bernie, Palais D'Or; and Vincent Lopez, Casa Lopez. Over WOR came the orchestras of Larry Siry, Fletcher Henderson, Bernhard Levitow, Hale Byers, and Jimmy Carr. At mid-

night WJZ would sedately broadcast services from Trinity Church in downtown Manhattan.

Now only New Year's Eve remained of the Year the World Went Mad. . . .

Exactly how Peaches Browning disported herself at this merry moment is not on the public record. But Peaches, now sweet seventeen, was earning fifteen hundred dollars a week as part of a vaudeville dance act and would in time amass over one hundred thousand dollars which in emulation of Daddy she invested profitably in metropolitan real estate. Daddy Browning, a reformed character, had confined himself this Christmas season to presenting gifts to boy and girl tots under the age of ten. Explaining this, he said wistfully, "I won't have to come in contact with any young ladies or girls. It isn't good for me to have to come in contact with young ladies or girls."

Shipwreck Kelly, also a potent vaudeville attraction, was already in training for the summer of 1928, when he would shatter his twelve-day flagpole-sitting record. In Sing Sing Prison, with less than two weeks to live, Judd Gray immersed himself in the Bible, while Ruth Snyder, her behavior increasingly irrational, dickered with magazine editors to sell a non-existent autobiography. Lindbergh was in Belize, British Honduras, having arrived there by way of Guatemala. Commander Byrd was deep in plans for air-conquest of the South Pole. Charles A. Levine was in Brooklyn with his wife and daughter Eloyse—never again would he achieve newspaper headlines. The likeable Clarence Chamberlin had resumed his career as master-pilot.

In honor of New Year's Eve, Calvin Coolidge had permitted Mrs. Coolidge to arrange for Army buglers to stand on the White House lawn, to play Taps just before midnight and Reveille just after. Crowds gathered to watch this simple ceremony, then lined up to shake the limp hand of the President

of the United States. In this country the Sacco and Vanzetti case seemed to be forgotten, but in Paris a memorial service for the martyred pair generated so much emotion that it turned into trouble. Mayor Jazz J. Walker, immaculate in top hat and tails—and still wearing New York City like a boutonniere—made holiday whoopee with Betty Compton on his arm. Babe Ruth, Jack Dempsey, Gene Tunney, Henry Ford, Ruth Elder—all these greeted the bright New Year according to varying tastes.

The crowds gathering to welcome the New Year at Times Square were a year older—but what a year! Yet each fondly expected 1928 to be bigger and better. The weather was clear and nippy, with no deluge of rain like the year before. Police had accumulated more experience with heavy traffic and no jam of motor cars clogged the streets around Broadway. Slowly at 11:59:50 the illuminated ball atop the Times Tower began its slow descent, and a happy cheer rose from the jampacked throng. Horns and whistles blew. *Off with the old, On with the new!* Nineteen-twenty-seven—the Year the World Went Mad—was gone.

It would never come again!

Bibliography

The author is indebted to Patricia Collinge Smith and James Nichols Smith for generous use of their collection of Lindbergh phonograph records. To the United States Weather Bureau for data concerning the weather on January 1, 1927. To Richard Jablow, for advice. To Professor Edwin Arthur Hill of the College of the City of New York, for assistance. To Mrs. Ad Schulberg and to William Poole, of the Thomas Y. Crowell Company, for encouragement.

In an effort to catch the flavor of the period, the chief sources relied upon were contemporary ones like the *New York Times*, *New York Sun*, *Time*, and *Literary Digest*. However, the following books also yielded source material and quotes:

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step on it, it might be Lon Chaney." Against such a backdrop are discussed the classic news events which succeeded each other during this Hoopla Year.

The first of these was the famous trial of Peaches *vs.* Daddy Browning which labeled the *New York Graphic* the Pornographic for its uninhibited use of Composographs.

"If Jimmy Walker runs the city by day, Texas Guinan runs it by night," wrote a commentator, and in a chapter entitled "A Night with the Padlock Queen" the author pictures raucous Mary Louise Cecelia Guinan in her famous 300 Club.

Following the juicy Snyder-Gray trial, the Roaring Twenties climaxed in the phenomenon that was Lindbergh. Here the author covers the story of Lindbergh's departure and return, and the many other courageous and foolhardy pilots who dared in those early days to follow his path across the sea or to chart their own bold journeys. There were Byrd and Chamberlin, the erratic Levine, and the daring peregrinations of Brock and Schlee.

The violence of the Sacco-Vanzetti case then builds toward the close of this turbulent and unforgettable era, ending with a round-up in the field of sports, calling to mind the appearance of Bobby Jones, "Big Bill" Tilden, Knute Rockne; two great figures emerge in baseball—Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig—and in boxing, Jack Dempsey and Gene Tunney.

As if all this weren't enough, a motion picture called *The Jazz Singer* premiered and set everyone talking.

And so, although 1927 technically ended on New Year's Eve, all the color and flavor of that stupendous year has been unforgettably re-created in *The Year the World Went Mad*.

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