

IN THE AMERICAN TRADITION

Americans like nothing better than to read about a success story in the Horatio Alger tradition. The rags-to-riches formula is one that always strikes an immediate response in the hearts of all of us -- no matter what our station in life.

So, it is with justifiable pride that we do a little horn tooting on this, the first anniversary of the appearance of *Escapade* on the American magazine scene. A year ago we started with a modest print order of 175,000 copies. Today, over 600,000 copies of the current (October, 1956) issue will find their way to the newsstands of the nation -- a more than three-fold increase in circulation in just 12 months!

Modesty permits us to make no further statistical observation about our remarkable growth, except to say that no magazine in recent publishing history has equalled this record. Naturally we feel elated over this success, but with this emphatic demonstration of public acceptance has come a deeper feeling of responsibility towards our readers. It is a responsibility that charges us with the continuing task of producing a magazine devoted to the principles of entertaining the urbane male (quite a few of our readers are of the gentler sex, too).

With this end in view, therefore, we can promise you that succeeding issues of *Escapade* will offer expanded coverage in the realm of fiction, humor and photographic art. By now the varied tastes of the American *Escapader* have become better known to us, and the magazine will always be edited with that goal in mind. We trust that the growing army of *Escapaders* who visit with us each month will help to make the second year of our existence even greater and more productive than the first.

In this anniversary issue we are proud to present one of the finest short stories we've come across in recent years, "*The Racer*," by talented Ib Melchior, Danish-born son of opera star Lauritz Melchior. Authority on Shakespeare, stage and TV director, author and fluent linguist, Ib Melchior is at home in the world's capitals and a scintillating figure at *sotiers* in New York and Hollywood.

His knowledge of languages (he speaks seven) stood him in excellent stead during his wartime service with the OSS, when he was instrumental in the destruction of the Nazi undercover Werewolf organization. Currently, he is in Hollywood writing for TV, the movies and the stage. If "*The Racer*" doesn't make the anthologies, we're poor guessers.

This issue boasts a real wealth of top quality writing. A case in point is the colorful "*Sol y Sombra*," by Ellsworth Chunn, a finely drawn character study with a bullfight background. *Aficionados* of the sport will find this an authentic and heart-moving story.

And there's much, much more. For lighthearted laughs, try "*When Jazz Was Zut*," by Ted Swanson. This is a hilarious satire on the usual heavy-handed jazz critiques and brings to light for the first time that wonderfully complicated instrument, the hekkophone (double-inverted). For solid information (we assume our readers know what whiskey is), there is "*Aged In The Wood*," an article on the history of that royalty of beverages, Bourbon, by Abraham Stern, with incidental references to other libations.

And if you want the low-down on that Hollywood institution, the Screen Test, turn to Pages 32-33.

Don't get bogged down there, though. There are lots of other choice items in this Anniversary Issue. Including the most fantastic Birthday Cake you've ever seen!



MELCHIOR

escapade

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DAVID ZENTNER, Editor and Publisher

WALTER CHAFFEE, Art Director

JOE KNEFLER, Executive Editor

RAY RICH, Associate Art Director

FRANK CAMPBELL, Associate Editor

BETTY GRIES, Editorial Assistant

LEONARD MARTINEZ, Circulation Director

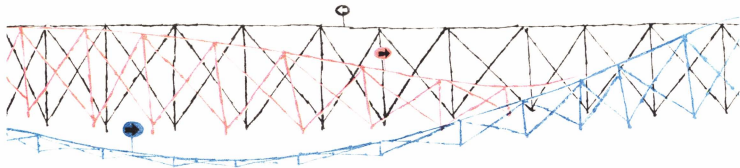


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NATHAN KATZ, National Advertising Representative, 480 Lexington Avenue, New York City, New York.





THE RACER

BY IB MELCHIOR

Willie felt the familiar, intoxicating excitement. His mouth was dry; his heart beat faster; all his senses seemed more aware than ever. It was a few minutes before 0800 hours — his time to start.

This was the day. From all the Long Island Starting Fields the Racers were taking off at 15-minute intervals. The sputter and roar of cars warming up were everywhere. The smell of oil and fuel fumes permeated the air. The hubbub of the great crowd was a steady din. This was the biggest race of the year — New York to Los Angeles — 100,000 bucks to the winner! Willie was determined to better his winning record of last year: 33 hours, 27 minutes, 12 seconds in Time. And although it was becoming increasingly difficult he'd do his damndest to better his Score too!

He took a last walk of inspection around his car. Sleek, low-slung, dark brown, the practically indestructible plastiglass top looking deceptively fragile, like a soap bubble. Not bad for an old-fashioned diesel job. He kicked the solid plastrubber tires in the time

(Continued on next page)



to the crowd, he was a hero; the girl called him "butcher"

THE RACER (continued from page 49)

honored fashion of all drivers. Hank was giving a last minute shine to the needle sharp durasteel horns protruding from the front fenders. Willie's car wasn't nick-named "The Bull" without reason. The front of the car was built like a streamlined bull's head complete with bloodshot, evil looking eyes, iron ring through flaring nostrils—and the horns. Although most of the racing cars were built to look like tigers, or sharks, or eagles, there were a few bulls—but Willie's horns were unequalled.

"Car 79 ready for Start in five minutes," the loudspeaker blared. "Car 79. Willie Connors, driver. Hank Morowski, mechanic. Ready your car for Start in five minutes."

Willie and Hank took their places in "The Bull". At a touch by Willie on the starter the powerful diesel engine began a low purr. They drove slowly to the starting line.

"Last Check!" said Willie.

"Right," came Hank's answer.

"Oil and Fuel?"

"40 hours."

"Cooling Fluid?"

"Sealed."

"No-Sleeps?"

"Check."

"Energene Tabs?"

"Check."

"Thermo Drink?"

"Check."

The Starter held the checkered flag high over his head. The crowds packing the grandstands were on their feet. Hushed. Waiting.

"Here we go!" whispered Willie.

The flag fell. A tremendous cry rose from the crowd. But Willie hardly heard it. Accelerating furiously he pushed his car to its top speed of 190 miles an hour within seconds—shooting like a bullet along the straight-away toward Manhattan. He was elated; exhilarated. He was a Racer. And full of tricks!

Willie shot through the Tunnel directly to Jersey.

"Well?" grumbled Hank. "Can you tell me now?"

"Toledo," said Willie. "Toledo, Ohio. On the Thruway. We should make it in under three hours."

He felt a slight annoyance with Hank. There was no reason for the man to be touchy. He knew a driver didn't tell *anyone* the racing route he'd selected. News like that had a habit of

getting around. It could cost a Racer his Score.

"There's not much chance of anything coming up until after we hit Toledo," Willie said, "but keep your eyes peeled. You never know."

Hank merely grunted.

It was exactly 1048 hours when "The Bull" streaked into the deserted streets of Toledo.

"O.K.—what now?" asked Hank.

"Grand Rapids, Michigan," said Willie laconically.

"Grand Rapids! But that's—that's an easy 300 miles detour!"

"I know."

"Are you crazy? It'll cost us a couple of hours."

"So Grand Rapids is all the way up between the Lakes. So who'll be expecting us up there?"

"Oh! Oh, year, I see," said Hank.

"The *Time* isn't everything, my friend. Whoever said the shortest distance between two points is a straight line? The *Score* counts too. And here's where we pick up our Score!"

The first Tragi-Acc never even knew the Racer had arrived. "The Bull" struck him squarely, threw him up in the air and let him slide off its plastiglass back, leaving a red smear behind and somewhat to the left of Willie—all in a split second...

Near Calvin College an imprudent coed found herself too far from cover when the Racer suddenly came streaking down the campus. Frantically she sprinted for a safety, but she didn't have a chance with a driver like Willie behind the wheel. The razor sharp horn on the right fender sliced through her spine so cleanly that the jar wasn't even felt inside the car.

Leaving town the Racer was in luck again. An elderly woman had left the sanctuary of her stone-walled garden to rescue a straying cat. She was so easy to hit that Willie felt a little cheated.

At 1232 hours they were on the speedway headed for Kansas City.

Hank looked in awe at Willie. "Three!" he murmured dreamily, "a Score of three already. And all of them Kills—for sure. You *really* know how to drive!"

Hank settled back contentedly as if he could already feel his 25,000 dollar cut in his pocket. He began to whistle "The Racers Are Roaring" off key.

Even after his good Score it annoyed

Willie. And for some reason he kept remembering the belatedly pleading look in the old woman's eyes as he struck her. Funny that should stay with him...

He estimated they'd hit Kansas City at around 1815 hours, CST. Hank turned on the radio. Peoria, Illinois, was warning its citizens of the approach of a Racer. All spectators should watch from safety places. Willie grinned. That would be him. Well—he wasn't looking for any Score in Peoria.

Dayton, Ohio told of a Racer having made a Tragic Accident Score in one, and Fort Wayne, Indiana was crowing over the fact that three Racers had passed through without scoring once. From what he heard it seemed to Willie he had a comfortable lead, both in Time and Score.

They were receiving Kansas City now. An oily voiced announcer was filling in the time between Racing Scores with what appeared to be a brief history of Racing.

... and the most popular spectator sports of the latter half of the 20th Century were such mildly exciting pursuits as boxing and wrestling. Of course the spectators enjoyed seeing the combatants trying to maim each other, and there was always the chance of the hoped-for fatal accident.

"Motor Racing, however, gave a much greater opportunity for the Tragic Accidents so exciting to the spectator. One of the most famed old Speedways, Indianapolis, where many drivers and spectators alike ended as bloody Tragi-Accs, is today the nation's racing shrine. Motor racing was already then held all over the world, sometimes with Scores reaching the hundred mark, and long distance races were popular.

"The modern Race makes it possible for the entire population to..."

Willie switched off the radio. Why did they always have to stress the *Score? Time* was important too. The *speed—and the endurance*. That was part of an Ace Racer as well as his scoring ability. He took an Energene Tab. They were entering Kansas City.

The check point officials told Willie that there were three Racers with better Time than he, and one had tied his Score. "The Bull" stayed just long enough in the check point pit for Hank to make a quick engine inspection—then they took off again. It was 1818

Continued on page 60

hours, CST, when they left the city limits behind. They'd been driving over nine hours.

About 50 miles along the Thruway to Denver, just after passing through a little town called Lawrence, Willie suddenly slowed down. Hank who'd been dozing sat up in alarm.

"What's the matter?" he cried, "what's wrong?"

"Nothing's wrong," Willie said irritably. "Relax. You seem to be good at that."

"But why are you slowing down?"

"You heard the check point record. Our Score's already been tied. We've got to better it," Willie answered grimly.

The plastirubber tires screeched on the concrete speedway as Willie turned down an exit leading to a Class II road.

"Why down here?" asked Hank. "You can only go about 80 MPH."

A large lumi-sign appeared on the side of the road ahead —

LONE STAR
11 Miles

it announced.

Willie pointed. "That's why," he said curtly.

In a few minutes Lone Star came into view. It was a small village. Willie was traveling as fast as he could on the secondary road. He plowed through a flock of chickens, hurtled over a little mongrel dog, which crawled yelping towards the safety of a house and the waiting arms of a little girl, and managed to graze the leg of a husky youth who vaulted a high wooden fence — then they were through Lone Star.

Hank activated the little dashboard screen which gave them a rear view.

"That's not going to do much for our Score," he remarked sourly.

"Oh, shut up!" Willie exploded, surprising both himself and Hank.

What was the matter with him? He couldn't be getting tired already. He swallowed a No-Sleep. That'd help.

Hank was just when as they sped through Topeka and took the Thruway to Oklahoma City, but out of the corner of his eyes he was looking speculatively at Willie, hunched over the wheel.

It was getting dusk. Willie switched on his powerful headbeams. They had a faint reddish tint because of the coloring of "The Bull's" eyes. They had just whizzed through a little burg named Perry, when there was a series of sharp cracks. Willie started.

"There they go again!" chortled Hank. "Those dumb hinterland hicks will never learn they can't hurt us with their fly-poppers." He knocked the plastiglass dome affectionately. "Takes atomic pellets to get through this baby."

Of course! He must be on edge to be taken by surprise like that. He'd run into the Anti-Racers before. Just a handful of malcontents. The Racing Commission had already declared them illegal. Still — at every race they took pot shots at the Racers; a sort of pathetic defiance. Why should anyone want to do away with Racing?

They were entering the outskirts of Oklahoma City. Willie killed his headbeams. No need to advertise.

Suddenly Hank grabbed his arm. Wordlessly he pointed. There — garish and gaudy — gleamed the neon sign of a theatre . . .

Willie slowed to a crawl. He pulled over to the curb, and the dark car melted into the shadows. He glanced at the clock. 2203 hours. Perhaps . . .

Down the street a man cautiously stuck his head out from the theatre entrance. Warily he emerged completely, looking up and down the street carefully. He did not see "The Bull." Presently he ventured out into the center of the roadway. He stood still listening for a moment. Then he turned and beckoned towards the theatre. Immediately a small group of people emerged at a run.

Now!

The acceleration slammed the Racers back in their seats. "The Bull" shot forward and bore down on the little knot of petrified people with appalling speed.

This time there was no mistaking the hits. A quick succession of jars had Willie calling upon all his driving skill to keep from losing control. Hank pressed the Clean-Spray button to wash the blood off the front of the dome. He sat with eyes glued to the rear view screen.

"Man, oh man," he murmured. "What a record; What a Score!" He turned to Willie. "Please," he said, "please stop. Let's get out. I know it's against regulations, but I've just gotta see how we did. It won't take long. We can afford a couple of minutes Time now!"

Suddenly Willie felt he had to get out too. This was the biggest Tragi-Acc he'd ever had. He had a vague feeling there was something he wanted to do. He brought the car to a stop. They stepped out.

Within seconds the deserted street was swarming with people. Now the Racers were out of their car they felt safe. And curious. A few of them pressed forward to take a look at Willie. Naturally he was recognized. His photo had been seen in one way or another by everyone.

Willie was gratified by this obvious adulation. He looked about him. There were many people in the street now. But — but they were not all fawning and beaming upon him. Willie frowned. Most of them looked grim — even hostile. Why? What was wrong? Wasn't he one of their greatest Racers? And hadn't he just made a record Score? Given them a Tragi-Acc they wouldn't soon forget? What was the matter with those hicks?

Suddenly the crowd parted. Slowly a young girl walked up to Willie. She was beautiful — even with the terrible anger burning on her face. In her arms she held the still body of a child. She looked straight at Willie with loathing in her eyes. Her voice was low but steady when she said:

"Butcher!"

Someone in the crowd called: "Careful, Muriel!" but she paid no heed. Turning from him she walked on through the crowd, parting for her.

Willie was stunned.

"Come on, let's get out of here," Hank said anxiously.

Willie didn't answer. He was looking back through the crowd to the scene of his Tragi-Acc. Never before had he stopped. Never before had he been this close. He could hear the moaning and sobbing of the Maims over the low murmur of the crowd. It made him uneasy. Back there they worked hurriedly to get the Tragi-Acc off the street. *There were so many of them . . . Butcher? . . .*

All at once he was conscious of Hank pulling at him.

"Let's get roaring! Let's go!"

Quickly he turned and entered the car. Almost at once the street was empty. He turned on his headbeams and started up. Faster — and faster. The street was dead — empty . . .

No! There! Someone! Holding a . . .

It was butcher — no, Muriel. She stood rooted to the spot in the middle of the street holding the child in her arms. In the glaring headlights her face was white, her eyes terrible, burning, dark . . .

Willie did not let up. The car hurtled down upon the lone figure — and passed . . .

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They'd lost 13 minutes. Now they were on their way to El Paso, Texas. The nagging headache Willie'd suffered the whole week of planning before the race had returned. He reached for a No-Sleep, hesitated a second, then took another.

Hank glanced at him, worriedly. "Easy, boy!"

Willie didn't answer.

"That Anti-Racer get under your skin?" Hank suggested. "Don't let it bother you."

"Butcher," she'd said. "Butcher!"

Willie was staring through the plastic glass dome at the racing pool of light from the headbeams. "The Bull" was tearing along the Thruway at almost 180 MPH.

What was that? There — in the light? It was a face — terrible, dark eyes — getting larger — larger — *Muriel!* It was butcher — no, Muriel! No — it was a Racer, — a Racing Car with Muriel's face, shrieking down upon him — closer — closer . . .

He threw his arm in front of his face. Dimly he heard Hank shout "Willie!" He felt the car lurch. Automatically he tightened his grip on the wheel. They had careened close to the shoulder of the speedway. Willie sat up. Ahead of him the road was clear — and empty.

It was still dark when they hit El Paso. The radio told them their Oklahoma Score. Five and eight. Five Kills — eight Maimis! Hank was delighted. They were close to setting a record. He'd already begun to spend his \$25,000.

Willie was uneasy. His headache was worse. His hands were clammy. He kept hearing Muriel's voice saying: "Butcher" — "Butcher." — "Butcher!" . . .

But he was *not* a butcher. He was a Racer! He'd show them. He'd win this race.

El Paso was a disappointment. Not a soul in sight. Phoenix next.

The clock said 0658 hours, MST, when they roared into Phoenix. The streets were clear. Willie had to slow down to take a corner. As he sped into the new street he saw her. She was running to cross the roadway. Hank whooped.

"Go, Willie! Go!"

The girl looked up an instant in terror.

Her face!

It was the old woman with the cat! No! — it was Muriel. Muriel with the big, dark eyes . . .

In the last split second Willie touched the power steering. "The Bull" responded immediately, and shot past the girl as she scampered to safety.

"What the hell is the matter with you?" Hank roared at Willie. "You could've scored! Are you out of your head?"

"We don't need her. We'll win without her. 1 — 1 —"

Yes, why hadn't he scored? It was Muriel. Muriel was back in butcher-in — in Oklahoma City. Damn this headache!

"Maybe so," said Hank angrily. "But I wanna be sure. And what about the bonus for setting a record? Ten thousand apiece. And we're close." He looked slyly at Willie. "Or — maybe you've lost your nerve. Wonder what the Commission will say to that?" "I've got plenty of nerve," Willie snapped.

"Prove it!" said Hank quickly. He pointed to the dashboard map slowly tracing their progress. "There. See that village? With the screwy name? *Wikieup!* Off the Thruway. Let's see you score there!"

Willie said nothing. He hadn't lost his nerve, he knew that. He was the best of the Racers. No one could drive like he could; constant top speed, the stamina it took, the split-second timing, the unerring judgement — "Well?"

"All right," Willie agreed.

They hadn't even reached Wikieup when they spotted the farmer. He didn't have a chance. "The Bull" came charging down upon him. But in the last moment the car veered slightly. One of the horns ripped the man's hip open. In the rear view screen Willie saw him get up and hobble off the road.

"You could've made it a Kill," Hank growled accusingly. "Why didn't you?" "Bad road," Willie said. "The wheel slipped on a stone."

That's what must have happened, he thought. He didn't consciously veer away from the man. He was a good Racer. He couldn't help a bad road.

Needles was left behind at 1045 hours, PST. No one had been out. Hank turned on the radio to a Needles station:

". . . has just left the city going West. No other Racer is reported within twenty minutes of the city. We repeat: A Racer has just left. . ."

Hank clicked it off. "Hear that?" He said excitedly. "Twenty minutes. They don't expect anyone for twenty minutes!" He took hold of Willie's

arm. "Turn around! Here's where we can get ourselves that record Score. Turn around, Willie!"

"We don't need it."

"I do! I want that bonus!"

Willie made no answer.

"Listen to me, you two-bit Racer!" Hank's tone was menacing. "You or nobody else is going to cheat me out of that bonus. You've been acting mighty peculiar. More like a Anti-Racer! Ever since you stopped at that Tragi-Acc back there. Yeah! That girl — that Anti-Racer who called you a — a butcher. Listen! You get that record Score, or I'll report you to the Commission for having snoozed around a Tragi-Acc. You'll never race again!"

"Never race again! Willie's brain was whirling. But he was a Racer. Not a butcher. A Racer. Record Score? Yes — that's what he had to do. Set a record. Be the best damned Racer of them all.

Without a word he turned the car. In minutes they were back at the Needles suburbs. That building, A School House. And there — marching orderly in two rows with their teacher, a class, a whole class of children . . .

"The Bull" came charging down the street. Only a couple of hundred feet now to that Record Score . . .

But what was that — it was . . . they were *Muriel* — they were all Muriel. Terrible, dark eyes. No! — They were children, — the child in Muriel's arms. *They were all the child in Muriel's arms!* Were they already moaning and screaming? Butcher! Butcher! No! He couldn't butcher them — he was a Racer — not a *Butcher*. Not a *butcher!* Deliberately he swung the car to the empty side of the street.

Suddenly he felt Hank's hands upon the wheel. "You — dirty — lousy — Anti-Racer!" the mechanic snarled as he struggled for the wheel.

The car lurched. The two men fought savagely for control. They were only yards from the fleeing children.

With a violent wrench Willie turned the wheel sharply. The car was going 165 miles an hour when it struck the school house and crashed through the wall into the empty building.

The voices came to Willie through thick wads of cotton — and they kept fading in and out.

". . . dead instantaneously. But the Racer is still . . ."

It sounded like the voice of Muriel. Muriel . . .

". . . keeps calling for . . ."

Willie tried to open his eyes. Every thing was milky white. Why was there

so much fog? A face was bending over him. Muriel? No — it was not Muriel. He lost consciousness again.

When he opened his eyes once more he knew he was not alone. He turned his head. A girl was sitting at his bedside. Muriel . . .

It was Muriel.

He tried to sit up.

"It's you! But — but, how . . .?"

The girl put her hand on his arm.

"The radio. They said you kept calling for 'Muriel'. I knew. Never mind that now."

She looked steadily at him. Her eyes were not terrible — not burning — only dark, and puzzled.

"Why did you call for *me*?" she asked earnestly.

Willie struggled to sit up.

"I wanted to tell you," he said, "to tell you, — I — I am not a butcher!"

The girl looked at him for a long moment. Then she leaned down and whispered to him:

"Nor a Racer!"

