

CAVALCADE

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NEXT MONTH

The second long feature on life's problems appears in next month's Cavalcade. It is "TEEN-AGE FREEDOM — A THREAT TO MARRIAGE", and it is an article for everybody. It is a must. Why doesn't the International Lawn Tennis Association find an official world champion? This is fully discussed in "LET'S HAVE A WORLD CHAMPION" and it will cause much comment in tennis circles. James Halledge tells the story of Jimmy Malison, the "PLAYBOY OF THE SKIES". Peter Hargraves recounts what happened to Marion Miley, champion golfer, when she defied gunmen. Medical article is about bleeders. "THEY FEAR THE SLIGHTEST SCRATCH" is the title. There is a spy story, adventure stories, general articles and fiction stories, as well as all the usual Cavalcade features.

x marks the

A-BOMB



I'd been sent to get a scoop story from the atom bomb works. But when the secret landed in my lap, I found I could not tell the story to anyone.

YOU'D be surprised if you knew what's going on. I was surprised right into District 17—but that's getting ahead of the story. What story? I'm going to write this one down and tear it up, or maybe burn it, because there isn't a paper or magazine in the country that could get away with printing it. They'd be closed and maybe in jail, or maybe in District—oops! There I go again.

I could begin at the beginning, but when was the beginning? Was it Los Alamos in New Mexico, was it Oak Ridge, was it the first uranium pile under the University of Chicago football stadium, or was it Hiroshima going up like a match-head?

I'll skip 'em all up to, say, V-J Day. Let's make it V-J Day in the New York Daily Bulletin city room. I'm the handsome young man of forty-five arguing with the city editor about an expense account. Suddenly everybody goes crazy, the war is over, justice has triumphed, paper goes sailing around the room.

And I hear Arnheim, the obit writer, murmur gently, "So Allison did it . . ." There is a queer, abstracted look on Arnheim's face, like a man waiting for you to pick up his dinner check.

About a week later, in the middle of an interview with the latest English novelist in on the Clipper, came the click. Percival was say-

ing, "—nor can one deny the semian ingenuity of the Ammed-dican professional classses—" and then the click came.

I was standing threateningly over Arnheim ten minutes later. Arnheim was three sheets and a splnaker in the wind when he broke down and drooled out the story, or as much of it as he knew.

The Allison he'd been babbling about was, of course, the late Hamish McGregor Allison, Ph.D., minor physicist, Columbia man, mourned by his colleagues at his untimely death early in '43. The joke was that Allison wasn't dead. Arnheim had written enough obits and checked enough sources to know a phony when it turned up. Everything was on paper in the Allison business. There were witnesses who couldn't be located but knew all about it. There was a statement by a doctor who just happened to be unavailable. Nobody seemed to know when and where the funeral had been held. A phony.

I had to fight for three hours with the city editor to get assigned to the Manhattan Project story. This was when the generals were finally talked down by the scientists and allowed a few reporters to look at the outside of some of the equipment. I wanted the assignment because of my lead on Allison.

The next day I was on a special train leaving from Penn Station with an MP lieutenant sharing my seat. The three-car special was full of newspaper men and MP lieutenants, except for half of the rear car, which was partitioned off and was supposed to have Enrico Fermi and his escort of two majors and a sharpshooting master sergeant in it.

The windows were painted over and the MP's wouldn't let us gentlemen of the press talk to each other, so it was one of the lousi-

est trips I've ever taken. It lasted fifty-two hours. The train stopped at a siding and we all got out and stretched.

It was a five-hundred acre clearing in a second-growth forest of pine and scrub oak. The strongest, tallest wire fences I've ever seen ringed about three dozen concrete block buildings of assorted sizes and they were reinforced with more MP lieutenants with, alternately, tommy-guns and repeating shot-guns loaded for bear.

We were assigned to one-man cubicles, each with a cot, a desk, and a typewriter, shower stall, and Modern Convenience. We would sleep in there, write our stories in there, and be loaded back onto the train in forty-eight hours. We would be guided through the works in parties of eight. There would be no conversation during the tours, or at mess, or in the cubicles.

Some character in an officer's uniform but without insignia, an OWI or War Censorship boy, I thought, lectured us. MP guards would be stationed in the corridor of our quarters to prevent conversation; ask questions only of the guides; the National Defence Act was still in force; all stories written here would be censored before leaving the place.

"Ever hear of anyone named Hamish McGregor Allison?" I asked an M.P.

"Sure," he said.

"Is he at this installation?"

"I saw you try to talk to him on the chowline."

"The cook?"

"That's right. How'd you know his name?"

"It was just a guess," I said, my head whirling. "Good night." I tried to go to sleep. Of course I had studied photographs of Allison before coming out here, of

course it was the same man.

So help me, they blew a bugle at six a.m.

We piled into the corridor and saw the M.P. guards drawn up in stiff attention, looking scared and white. The character was bawling them to hell and gone out. He stopped short when we appeared.

"You reporters stand out here in the corridor," he ordered. "Your quarters are going to be searched."

I asked him if I could get some clothes.

"No," he said coldly. "You may not." And mine was the first room he and two MP's began to search. The other MP's watched us nervously; just how nervously I didn't realize until every cubicle had been ransacked and we'd been allowed to dress and form outside.

The character addressed us in the chilly voice of a judge sentencing a fiend. "You men," he said, "are in very grave personal danger. One or more of you has stolen—something—from this installation and hidden it. I shall be entirely within my rights if I put you all under confinement, ship you to Washington, and see that you stand trial. The trial, of course, will be by a military commission, and closed to the press and public, and will probably result in every one of you being shot as surely as if you were German spies.

"Actually, I am sure no danger to the country's security was intended, but the Espionage Act, U.S.C. 31 and 32 amended, does not discriminate between malevolent theft and reportorial pilfering. I want the guilty person or persons, or anybody having any information, to step out now."

I stepped out. The character studied me icily and nodded to the rest. "Return to your cubicles,"

he said. "Guards, don't leave them alone."

To me he beckoned simply. As we walked off two of the soldiers followed. The four of us went to the nearest building, and sat down in a bare little office.

"Tell your story," said the man to me.

"Questions first," I said. He seemed to swell and grow bright red, though actually he probably just flushed and sat a little straighter.

"All right," he choked.

"Stop me if I'm wrong," I said. "You maintain constant secrecy in this installation, and this is the first case of disappearance, coincident with the arrival of the reporters. You therefore assume that the reporters, in spite of their guarding, managed the theft. Right?"

"Right," he said grimly.

"Wrong," I said. "The thief is one of your personnel. He's a minor physicist who faked death years ago, presumably on a tip about the Manhattan Project, and worked his way in as a cook. Up to now I've been assuming he was for the project; I see now that he's against it. I don't know if his angle's sabotage or what, but I know the man. He hasn't even changed his name, which was smarter than it seems on first thought."

"Who is it?" the man yelled.

"What's the hurry?" I asked.

He shot to his feet and took me by the lapels. "You—Incredible—Imbecile!" he grated. Then he let go and sat down with a sigh. "No," he said. "You just don't understand the importance of it. Just tell me right now, taking my word that there's reason for speed, who the man is."

"I'm a reporter," I said. "I don't give anything for nothing. What's the hurry?"

"I'll tell you," he said liredly. "You'll be sorry, but I'll tell you." He waved the MP's out. "This place is the bomb depot. Every atomic bomb is delivered here when it's assembled. We get five a month. Even a bush-league physics instructor with the — the part that was stolen—could — Oh, nuts! Tell me *who it was!*"

"One of the cooks," I said. "Hamilton McGregor Allison is his name."

The man tore out of the office without me, waving on the MP's who were waiting outside. He ran for a barracks-like building and I ran behind the three. He yelled for more MP's from the fence patrol, and they streamed after in a ragged wedge.

We charged into the barracks,

neatly labelled "Cook's Quarters". Cooks all around us in various stages of undress were getting off their coats and babbling. The man strode to the twelfth bunk on the left and shook Allison awake.

Two MP's held his arms while another searched him. He found a little, shiny gadget around his neck on a string. It was quickly passed to the man in the officer's uniform who pocketed it at once.

He sat down on Allison's bunk and said weakly, "Guardhouse. Four men in the cell with him. Bring his records to my office."

The MP's left with a silent, burning-eyed Allison. We went back to the bare little office as a dossier arrived by jeep.

We looked over the dossier to-

gether; he seemed to have made up his mind about me—I didn't know then what he had decided on.

He called in two captains and a major who blinked at me and got to work on the dossier, which included a birth certificate—Aberdeen, Scotland, 1900; naturalization papers, Cleveland, Ohio, 1923; marriage licence, Cleveland, 1925; affidavits of restaurant owners in Cleveland, Dayton, and Columbus, 1925, 1927, and 1933. Licence of his own restaurant, "Mac's Hamburger Spot", Columbus, 1935. Death certificate of his wife.

The three officers studied the stuff for ten minutes in total silence. Finally one of the captains said, "Jap."

The major gave him a look and the other captain promptly said, "Kraut. Film-grain, grammar, punctuation, margins, thoroughness—it's Kraut."

"Yes," said the major. "It's Kraut. Who let this through?"

"Lieutenant Gilbert," said one of the captains, looking at the dossier's jacket. "He's been discharged."

"A pity," said the major. His fists clenched as if they were wringing something, and the three left.

"I suppose I should thank you," said the man in the officer's uniform. "Instead—"

An MP knocked and came in. "He's talking, sir," he said. We raced out and piled into the soldier's jeep.

It took us to the guardhouse where Allison was sitting with his head in his hands, babbling and babbling at the floor. He didn't seem to care whether anybody heard or not. He said over and over that he'd failed somebody named Caledonia, then it was the Fatherland he'd failed—

After an hour's babbling we got five minutes worth of sense out of

it. Allison was a Scotch separatist. He was as ready to commit murder for the freedom of Scotland as the Sinn Feiners had been for Ireland. Like the Sinn Feiners in the last war Allison had been approached by German agents in this one. They'd arranged everything — his faked death, his faked record of employment. He was totally unable to see the rights and wrongs of the war. The Germans were, he thought, for Scotland's freedom so he was for the Germans. He was going to blow up London, he was, and he was going to blow up Manchester if the English didn't give Scotland its independence.

The man in the officer's uniform took down some names and addresses and did some long-distance phoning. I was mentioned in one of the calls. Like this:

"What'll we do about the reporter, General?"

"Yes, sir. Seventeen? We could shoot him . . . yes, yes." Click.

It was 10.30 a.m. By 11.30 the reporters had been told to keep their mouths shut and were packed into the train.

By noon I was on the plane that took me to an airfield under three guards. From there I went to my present location, a sandy little island well off the Atlantic coast. They do something or other here with an uranium pile; I don't know just what I'm the timekeeper; I keep time for everybody in District Seventeen except myself, because I haven't got anything but time.

The guards have been informed that I get shot if I try to leave; otherwise I have the run of the place. All I'm living for is the hope that someday the United Nations will get the atomic bomb and I'll get out of District Seventeen. Maybe I won't burn this story. Maybe I'll keep it till then.