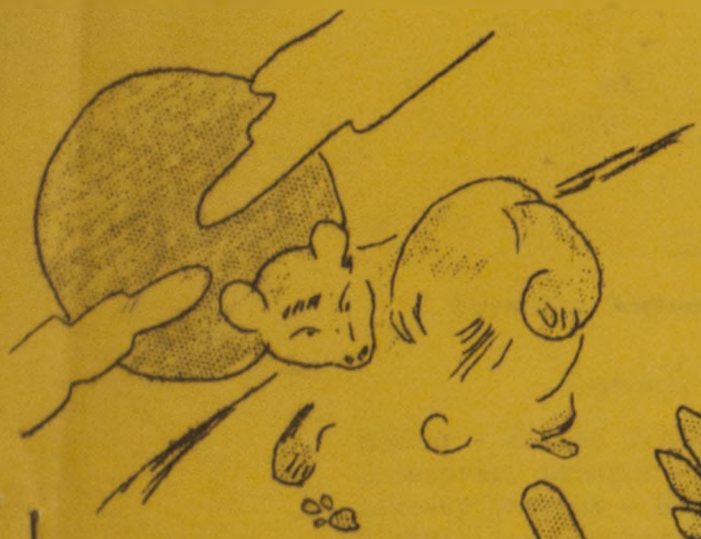
Fall 1944

Cub Tracks, Autumn 1944

Students of the Montana State University (Missoula, Mont.)

Harold G. Merriam



Autumn Quarter

Cub Tracks

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CUB TRACKS

Freshman-~~Sophomore~~ Literary Magazine

English 12a

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OLD MEADOW

The sun was just setting behind the ridge as I turned into the wooded lane. It was evening once again, and the first cooling night winds were beginning to stir. The day had been unusually hot for so late in September, and the lake had slumbered quietly with not a ripple rousing its surface. As now I looked through the trees at the mountains across the lake, I noticed that the haze, which always seems to accompany Indian Summer in the Valley, had disappeared, and that each ridge stood out boldly, its color changing, even as I watched, to a deeper blue, and finally, not blue at all but purple. Just ahead at the end of the path lay the Old Meadow. It climbed away in gentle swells to meet the dark line of pines advancing from the foothills.

My approach was silent, for the forest floor was heavily covered with duff. I thought of the stories I had read of the silent Indian, and for a moment my mind played with the idea of his presence in the meadow.

The quiet of evening lay upon the stretching field, and as I watched in silence and breathed the dry smell of the harvest, I began to remember...

I saw myself just a little girl again, the prideful owner of her first horse. He wasn't really mine, but Daddy rented him for me for the summer. We were pasturing him in the Old Meadow. That was a happy, carefree vacation. Seven children lived in the rambling yellow farmhouse with the peeling paint, and they too owned a collection of horses, ranging from ponies to plow-pullers. Our long rides and our flying races came back into my mind, and I wondered--not about those horses and rides and the fun, but about the people who had gone away in the autumn and never returned. The farmhouse looked old and forgotten then when the laughter was gone.

As my mind continued in this vein of reminiscence, I wandered over to a tall pinetree and seated myself on a flat stone beneath its branches. I had sat here often in the past. How well I remember one particular summer's day in this very spot.

I had just finished the seventh grade at school, and all the bright newness of spring was on the Old Meadow. The impatient chirp of gophers filled the morning air, and I had dropped down on this same flat stone to rest after my hunt, carefully placing my rifle beside me. I wasn't alone that day. I could look back even now and see the tall young boy sitting beside me--there, where the rock forms a natural little cleft. A few minutes later, and I could feel again my first kiss, even to the hot blush and embarassment which attended it. Oddly enough, I didn't like it at all, and I vowed, standing right there in the Old Meadow, never to be kissed again.

The years flew by after that day, as they always seem to do when one is young and growing fast. I often wandered in the field after school let out to forget the turbulent day, or hunted and played there in the summertime; and usually, I was alone. The tall waving grass, the humming insects, and the warm sunshine more than sufficed for any human companionship I did not have.

But finally, there came a day when I walked there with another, and my heated vow to the Old Meadow was broken. My country went to war, and a soldier came home for a few precious hours. I think the magic of the place must have filled him with a kinship almost like my own. His letters always tell me of his longing for the day when we can continue our stroll there, and watch the first stars come out.

The thought of those imaginary stars brought me out of my wishful trance with the realization that stars really were coming out, and that night was settling down. I wanted to linger longer--how strong that want was--but the thought of my unpacked suitcase at home forced me away. It was college for me tomorrow, and I must say good-bye to the Old Meadow.

Strangers live in the farmhouse now, and they have covered its peeling boards with fresh yellow paint. Perhaps I should feel like a stranger there, but I don't. I can't, because, deep down in my heart, I know that it is my meadow. It is mine by right of a thousand walks there, a thousand memories, a thousand smiles, and just as many tears. It holds something of my very life close to its own living soil.

I looked at the full moon just topping the Rockies, listened to the chirping crickets for a moment, and turned back through the wooded lane.

Good-bye then, Old Meadow, until we meet again.

Ruth Anderson, English 25a

THE SNAKY FIVE

We were the toughest, roughest boys on the west side. Anyway, we were pretty tough when all five of us were together. Vandals, hoodlums, rowdies, and other names (not acceptable in an English theme) were usually bestowed upon us by the elders of the neighborhood. The elders of the neighborhood were number one on our enemy list. We were, in fact, the scourge of the west side, the enemy of every apple tree owner, and a headache to every police car that dared to enter our vicinity. Our main weapons were rotten tomatoes, rubber guns, our reputation, and, last but not least, fresh eggs stolen from the corner store.

All five of us had the courage, strength, and recklessness of some Greek warrior of old. Some of our doings will live in the legends of Alder and Spruce streets. For example: I remember the time when we used to hide behind bushes on Spruce street, our favorite stamping grounds, and plaster the East-West bus with soft, red, juicy, slushy tomatoes. How they splattered! This went on till our armaments ceased to grow, and the excitement wore off.

Fire also played an important part in those good old days. Since they were pre-war days, gasoline was easy to purchase. We would gather some quart milk bottles, stolen from someone's back porch, and fill them with gasoline. This liquid was poured across the street at night (the only time we operated) and ignited about fifty yards from an oncoming automobile. This fire really was a sight; the whole street seemed to flare up. The automobile would stop suddenly, screech its brakes, the driver immediately getting out to investigate. One fire would last only about a minute. Its flare, the driver's face, the screeching of the brakes were the real enjoyments of this ruthless act.

Not greasing railroad tracks, breaking windows, hanging dummies from trees, scaring people half to death, knocking down fences, letting air out of car tires, and many mischievous acts we really lived up to our name, The Snaky Five.

Joe Small, English 11a, Section 5

ACTRESS

To pick out a particularly important phase in my life and say it was important enough to change my future would be ridiculous. In fact, most of my "phases" were ridiculous. Take, for instance, the time when I seriously considered myself a second Bernhardt, or at least a reincarnation of the Duse.

I was thirteen at the time I first felt the urge to bring my brilliant talents, of which I was sure I had an abundance, to the attention of a worshiping world. However, the world proved to be a little bit less than worshiping. To tell the truth, I nearly drove my family, my teachers, and my friends insane. I had unearthed from the public library a huge book of quotations from which I proceeded to memorize portions from the works of Shakespeare.

After memorizing odd bits of "Romeo and Juliet," "The Merchant of Venice," and "Midsummer Night's Dream," I considered myself experienced enough to tackle any dramatic problem. To prove this point, I joined the Junior High Dramatic Society and made myself thoroughly obnoxious by appointing myself director, chairman of stagecraft, and head make-up man. The dramatics department at that time was rather half-heartedly attended to by our mathematics teacher, and so I had full authority in most matters.

Needless to say, I rapidly became the most despised young Thespian who ever trod the boards. I soon discarded the leading lady and took her place myself.

Unfortunately, there were none strong-willed enough to oppose me and I ruled with an iron hand.

Everything went along beautifully, to my mind. After all, I was taking care of it and so how could it go wrong? A logical brain, as you can see, was not one of my strong points.

I had planned a huge affair for the opening night, I had commandeered members of my class to act as ushers, ticket-takers, and cashiers. I invited the parents of the pupils of all the Junior High, and I had ordered the members of the cast to have their parents there.

Came the great night; the stage was set; everybody was ready to go on; the parents had turned out in full force; and my lines were the first to be spoken. The curtain rose, I made my entrance, took one look at the audience, and forgot my lines. I literally stood there with my mouth open. The prompter being a mere seventh-grader and not very bright, lost his place in the book. There I stood, there the audience sat, both of us horribly uncomfortable.

The rest of the evening went by in a daze. I was in disgrace. I had committed an error Bernhardt would have frowned upon and the Duse would have scorned. My acting days were over. I was through.

I immediately changed my goal in life. I would become a missionary. Mother would have been well satisfied with that if only I would have memorized quotations from the Bible other than, "Build thou a gallows fifty cubits high." Everytime I quoted it she saw horrible visions for my future.

Violet de Golier, English 11a, Section 1

COMPULSORY MILITARY TRAINING

There are four major purposes for which the United States might need a military force at the end of this war. The four include agression and conquest of other lands, occupying enemy territory, garrisoning our bases in preparedness for another war, and prevention by force of another war. Each of these purposes, if justifiable, will require an armed force of considerable size and efficiency. Our volunteer armies, of course, have always been small in the past, and our lack of foresight and sufficient preparation before war has actually struck us has proved very costly in lives, territory, and money, in this war as well as others. The force required for any of these four purposes, therefore, would have to be raised by conscription--a universal peacetime draft.

As far as most of us can see, the first purpose for a large force, aggression and conquest, can be disposed of without serious consideration. It is not the purpose of most of the American people to extend conquest to any part of this world at any time, and we hope and have some evidence that our leaders have not that motive either.

The second purpose for a large military force is occupation. How large a force will be necessary to occupy Axis countries after their defeat? The job of occupation will not fall to us alone, of course, and those armies now in Europe will certainly be kept there as occupation as long as it is considered necessary. But the advisability of keeping a large occupation force in the conquered countries for any length of time is debatable. Some policing will be necessary and not too objectionable to the people of the defeated nations. But keeping a large body of troops in those countries will give rise to a constant spirit of resistance, and will probably prevent our ever gaining the cooperation of the people or ever being able to "re-educate" them to become peaceful citizens of the world.

There are a great many citizens of the Axis countries, some exiled and some still in the countries, who are respected leaders of their people who have never held sympathy with the present dictatorial governments. They have and will work for the allied cause and they will be followed by the people of the enemy countries when they have lost the leadership of their present governments. If the United Nations try honestly to develop the conquered people to become peaceful and responsible citizens through these leaders of their own nationality instead of trying to control and rule them by force, we might eventually gain their friendship and cooperation.

If the latter solution of occupation is the one to be preferred and the one that we follow, the share of occupation forces that the United States will have to provide will certainly not be so great as to warrant raising them by conscription.

Garrisoning our bases in preparedness for another war is a third purpose that would call for a large military force and peacetime conscription. Because of our slowness in getting started in our preparation for this war and the great amount of time and territory our enemies gained before we could fight back, it is argued that never again should we let ourselves become unprepared for attack from others. To maintain an army large enough to patrol all the outlying garrisons that will be vital to our defense after this war, to maintain the "seven-ocean" navy that Quincy Howe says will be necessary, will certainly require more men than we could ever raise in a volunteer professional military force.

But to ever claim in the first place that forces the size of these will be necessary after the war is mockery of every effort we are making toward creating international law and order. Have we no faith in the results that have come from the conferences of the United Nations or in the Dumbarton Oaks proposals? Is it not the very purpose of these cooperative efforts to make this a world in which all will be secure from aggression and war? Those who propose universal military training in the face of these efforts certainly do not show any confidence in their success. If the realization of permanent peace is so doubtful then, let us quit our timid experiments with half-way political measures and build an international organization which will <u>insure</u> peace, or else never demobilize the military force we now have. Let us be completely prepared for the war which so many believe is coming. Let us either insure peace by building international government or insure our success in war by keeping our present military force. For to pretend on the one hand to have established peace, and on the other hand to coyly propose preparation for war is a contradictory and spineless policy that will certainly lead to disaster.

The fourth purpose for which we might need universal military training is prevention of war by preparedness. To keep yourself bigger and stronger than the next fellow is the logical way to keep him from attacking you. But the United States can't possibly become big enough and carry that policy far enough to make it work. If it were a case of many nations uniting and pooling their resources in preparedness, the overwhelming unbalance of power that would exist between that union and any other power in the world might make the other power chary of attacking the strong union, and if such a plan were carried out, our country's share of the forces would have only to be very small and could be volunteers. But for the United States to try to build a military force large enough to make her secure from attack would only lead to rivalry and armaments racing in other nations who are not willing to see our strength increase above theirs. We have seen armaments racing too many times to believe that other nations will allow us to become strong while they remain weak. We cannot be mobilized in peacetime to the extent of universal conscription without causing that rivalry and racing again. It is hardly a road to peace. And in France we find an excellent example of the fact that peacetime conscription and maintenance of a large army does not make for security and does lead to rivalry that ends in quite the opposite extreme.

Taking, as it is proposed, a year from every boy's life and teaching him war is certainly a doubtful way to peace. Think the effect on peace at the same time spent in training and educating for peace might result in! Men do what they prepare themselves for.

The results of continual military training can be seen in the actions of countries who have practiced it--Germany and Japan. By being pacifistic the United States lost a great deal when war struck, but at least we are compensated by the fact that we have not followed the policy of aggression which other nations who are always "prepared" have. And, in spite of the fact that our system takes longer to get started, we have never lost a war with those nations who have kept constantly mobilized. The results of this war and the last are hardly recommendations for peacetime military conscription and training. Nor is the fact that thousands of immigrants have come to the United States for the prime purpose of escaping military conscription in their native country. This country is fundamentally less militaristic than most others and those who have lived under this and another system have found ours a refuge far to be preferred.

Even with our slow starting systems, American arms have never suffered defeat, but the true glory of this country has never been one of militarism. We cannot continue to make the virtue of the United States peace if we start now, on the verge of a possible permanent peace, to train our youth in waging war.

John Rolfson, English 11a, Section 5

GRATITUDE

They warned me that after anyone had worked in a depot for two weeks there was no hope left for him. I listened with a polite face and an inner certainty that I would be the exception to prove the rule. I could take everything that makes up the nightmarish life of a ticket-agent and still be listed among the same populace of the universe. Ah, yes, I could cope with the Mexican laborers--hadn't I taken high school Spanish? I could understand the Indians--couldn't I count fingers? I could handle drunks and rowdies--wasn't the police station next door? Telephone conversations such as: "How much is a round trip?" "Where to, please?" "Why, back to Missoula, of course!" could be untangled with a bit of patience. Yes, the heap of depot-headaches the drivers loaded into my head that first week on duty could be handled by my brashly competent self. Everything those diligent bus drivers warned me about came to pass, except one--no one died while I was on duty. But they neglected one thing; they didn't tell me that I'd have to deal with gratitude.

One warmly-bright late afternoon in July a little old man came into the blessed quiet that should, but seldom does, reign in a depot between busses. I left the report I was typing to answer his question concerning his baggage. A few minutes after he had gone, I happened to glance over at the baggage counter and see an open wallet lying there. I immediately ran from front door to side door, but failed to see the little old man. When examining the billfold for identification, I discovered that it contained a surprising amount of currency. Until its owner should discover his loss and return, I put the billfold in the safe.

Perhaps an hour later, a worried Danish face presented itself over the side of the counter. I restored the wallet to the little old man and turned to wait on a customer at my window. In the midst of my business, I noticed the little old gentleman step over and put something on my desk. Finishing my ticket transaction, I found that he had laid there three one-dollar bills. I picked them up, and returned them to him, telling him that I couldn't accept them. We argued until the interest of the spectators became so noticeable that I took the three dollars to end the argument.

When I had had time to get over my astonishment and plan, as I sat typing how I would surprise my family with my reward, I looked up to see the little old man across the counter. This time he handed me a five-dollar bill. Embarrassed, I handed the bill back to him, insisting that I could not take it. The money he had already given me was too much.

Again we argued and again we provided entertainment for the people in the waiting-room. His clinching argument was that it was his money to do with as he wished. I took it, in the end, with as much grace as I could muster, but I had made a lopsided bargain with him. He accepted the three dollar bills in exchange for the five.

By the next time he returned, it was getting close to bus time and I was deeply involved with tickets and baggage and telephone calls. When I had time to wait on him, he handed me a package. His Danish accent made it difficult for me to understand him at any time, but now I was so confused that I thought he wanted to parcel-check his box until bus time. When he kept repeating something about a "soft corner," I realized that the package was for me. Because, as the only agent on duty, I was swamped just then, I took the parcel without argument and put it on my desk.

Two hours later, about ten o'clock, I still had not found time to investigate the "soft corner," indeed had almost forgotten about it. As it happened, the last northbound car was late arriving from the East that night and there was a little lull. My benefactor approached the window and wanted to know if I had found the "soft corner." I had to admit that I had not. Picking up the package, I tore the paper off the corner he had indicated to see the green gleam of a bill lying there in a tight little wad. At that moment the car from the East rolled in and I had to resume my duties at once. It wasn't until I had closed the depot for the night that I discovered with horror that the soft corner of the box of stationery had been a twenty dollar bill.

I'd found one thing I was completely helpless before--gratitude.

Mary Belle Lockhart, English 11a, Section 1

LOOKOUTING

One evening when the whole family had gathered in the living-room talking about difficult topics I popped the question that had been running through my mind for a long time. I said, "How would you feel if I accepted a job as lookout this summer?" This query surprised my folks, and they looked at me as if to say, "Are you nuts?" But I was serious, and proceeded to tell them all about my desire. The Forest Service, I said, decided that, because of the man shortage, they would try putting girls out on lookouts. The plan was to send the girls to a three-day guard school to teach them the fundamentals of "lookouting."

The folks talked over my wish for a time and then they gave me their permission to sign up. So one bright spring morning I marched up to the Forest Service offices and signed. Carter, the ranger in the office, took my finger-prints and had me sign a few contracts. Then back to school I went for the rest of the year.

In the early part of June the girl lookouts were sent to guard school at Corum. There we learned how to read a map board and how to tell the differences among the kinds of lightning. We also learned the right way to operate a gas lantern and the correct way to chop wood. One of the days we were taken to one of the Corum lookouts to practice "spotting" and figuring out the positions of our "spots" (fires) on the map board.

At the end of the three days we were sent home to await call from the rangers of the districts to which we were destined.

Then finally the awaited day came, and I was up at the crack of dawn, packed, and ready to go when Mr. Anderson came by for me. I piled into the pickup with the rest of the girls, and we proceeded to the Bigfork Ranger Station, where we were to stay for two weeks before being put on lookouts.

While we were at the ranger station we mowed lawns, washed windows, painted the garage roofs, and cleaned up the grounds. Then on the 20th of June up we went to our posts.

I was stationed on Crane Lookout, located between Swan and Flathead Lakes. Crane isn't on a tower, but is situated on a high rock peek. It is approximately 5000 feet above sea-level, which is considered quite a low point for a lookout. Nevertheless, it is an important lookout because it overlooks all of the eastern and southern ends of the Flathead valley, all of the Swan valley, including Swan lake, and the northern half of Flathead lake.

The packer packed me up on horse-back and hauled me enough water to last a few days. I moved right in and unpacked my things. I took a look at the food situation and found that I had everything from soup to carrots, all in tin cans, of course, and enough eggs, I thought to last a life time.

After settling and making up my bunk, I cooked my supper. How distasteful pork and beans and brown bread and fried eggs were to become to me I didn't realize then, but a month later I was still choking them down for my evening meal. After the dishes were done I took a hike to look over some of the country I had to live in for the next two months. It was really lovely. The trees were so green and fresh and the smell of the woods so fragrant that I acquired what is commonly known as the "fever of the woods."

When I had satisfied my curiosity as to what I was getting myself into I went to bed and wrote a few letters and then to sleep. The wind tore loose and rattled the glass windows and shook the cabin. All during the night animals were on the prowl. Before long, though, I grew accustomed to the noises and the wind, and could sleep soundly.

I awoke with the alarm at 6:00 A.M. and got up, dressed, took my morning observation, hauled my day's water supply, and then started breakfast while waiting for Walt, the Bigfork dispatcher, to call in for the morning check-up.

The checkups were taken three times a day. At seven, at noon, and at six-fifteen. The station ring was four shorts, and when that call was given all the lookouts rang in. After we gave our reports, Walt would tell us all the latest war news and the society news and we would talk for quite awhile.

During the day I took fifteen-minute observations once an hour. In them I looked over every inch of the territory I could see through the high powered field glasses. I took a reading on any signs of smoke. Sometimes it was hard to distinguish a light spot on a mountainside from smoke, and in the early morning, mists rising up from the lakes and trees also fooled me, until I found out that I could tell them apart by their color. Mists, I discovered, are whitish in color, while smokes are a bluish gray. As for the white spots on the mountains, I soon got to learn their positions.

During the day I read, wrote letters, went on short hikes, in which cleaning trails became a pastime (of necessity)--not that I didn't enjoy clearing trail. In the long evenings the lookouts would all get on the phone. We would sing, tell tales, crack jokes, and listen to someone's radio. In my estimation lookout life is "the" life. I enjoyed the summer very much.

There is a lot more to it than just living in a little "4 x 4" house all summer. In the early summer everything was green and cool and as the summer wore on into fall everything turned from green to yellow and brown. It was fun watching the changes in the mountains, too. Their shadows grew longer and their color changed from light blues to purples of different shades. I found out how beautiful nature really is and how much it can add to the fulness of a life.

Shirley Anderson, English 11a, Section A

CHANGE

At seven I was a settled woman. All my long life had been spent in one town and, so far as I was concerned, in one house. Suddenly my world erupted beneath me. My father, a conductor on the Milwaukee Railroad, had been appointed Collector of Customs for Montana and Idaho. His office was to be in Great Falls which meant that the Bartleys, all seven of them--Mom, Pop, Pat, K.C., Bill, Jean, and John--were uprooted from the home soil and shipped off the "City." Great Falls was a metropolis compared to Miles City where we were living. We did not look forward to the new life with any joy, but rather with apprehension. It meant a different school, a different home, a different group of friends. We liked the old ones and had no desire to leave them.

It was terrible to be torn from my friends, both male and female. Of course, I was more interested in the male angle even then. I had four "crushes." One was a sheepherder whose "girl" lived across the street, one a sheep rancher who is now quite a successful artist and cartoonist (my godfather and the author of It Happened in Montana), one a railroad man who cut my hair, and the last another railroad man who played baseball and chewed tobacco. Hector, the sheepherder, was in his twenties. The other three were husbands and fathers. No doubt Pop took me away so I wouldn't break up their homes.

Because I had a "jerky" stomach, the family split up for the journey. Mom, Pop, Pat, my oldest sister, and John, my twin brother, drove while K.C., my sister number two, Bill, my older brother, and I left by train. In those days, it was 1933, trains were easier on squirmy stomachs than automobiles.

One of the most pleasant days of my life was spent on the "Galloping Goose." Being seven and uninhibited I made friends with all the men aboard. Most of the time I was in the smoking car eating cherries, peaches and anything else anybody had to give me. The excitement of the trip made me forget some of my misfortune. But eleven years later I can still remember distinctly one female who was traveling with her two sons that hot September day. Everytime I hopped, skipped, or ran (I never was content to walk) past her, she glared at me coldly. The two little boys, sitting primly in place, were slighly green with envy. They were the cleanest, most immaculate and saddest youngsters I have ever seen.

We arrived. To me the Milwaukee depot resembled Grand Central Station. I have no doubt that my mouth hung open as I gazed up at the clock in the depot tower. I was impressed. Papa, who met us, assured me that I hadn't seen anything yet. The viaduct fascinated me. Miles City has one now; but it is a recent addition. K.C., Pat and Bill had been East to Chicago and Milwaukee. But John and I were filled with awe at the huge and magnificent buildings. The First National Bank--eight stories. The Strain Building--five stories. We couldn't have been more amazed and pleased in New York City itself.

Our new house was big; but we were not particularly interested for our home in Miles City was big, too. It had to be. There were seven of us. What we wanted to see were some people, preferably people under nine years of age. In the house next door lived a family with two girls who were the same ages as my sisters and a boy the same age as Bill. They were the only humans we could see. John and I sat disconsolately before the big bay window in the livingroom and stared at the bleak outside. (Actually it was a lovely day; but it seemed bleak to us.)

Out of the front door of a house across the street popped a person. "It" dashed over the porch, across the lawn and into the vacant lot next door. We sat and stared. Was it a boy with curls or a girl dressed like a boy. We had a long discussion for we had seen girls in overalls before; but never had we seen a girl in "cords," a boy's sweater and a boy's hat. But, then, we had never seen a boy with curls either. Finally we conjured up enough nerve to saunter-nonchalantly-we-hoped-across the street. Together (John and I always supported each other in time of trial) we approached the "thing."

"Hello," said John bravely.

"Hi!" said the creature brusquely.

"My name's John. This is Jean."

"I'm Doris," "it" answered.

We were still puzzled. Was it a boy with a girl's name or a girl with a boy's manner. John gulped and asked, "Are you a boy or a girl?"

Doris was overjoyed. For a good portion of her life--she was six and a half--she had been trying to make people think that she was a boy. Happily she set us right as to her sex and from that moment on we were the fastest of friends. For the most of the fights in the neighborhood Doris, John and I sided together against the rest of the children. We had occasional arguments; but they were always short-lived and we were "pals" again in no time.

We were lucky. We were young and we had Doris to introduce us to all the other "less than nine" youngsters who lived in the block. In a few months' time we had forgotten some of our old friends and had many new ones to replace them. Soon the change we had so feared was a part of the past. It was over and we were again happy.

Jean Bartley, English 12a, Section 1

TELEPHONE

Every door in the hall flies open. Fifteen heads appear in fifteen doors. Ten girls dash for the telephone. One arrives first, flings open the door, yanks off the receiver, takes a deep breath and says, with an amazing amount of sophistication, "North Hall, Third Floor East." There is a breathless hush. Then the girl in the booth pokes her head out of the door and shouts, "Magadaline Peabody." The lucky Magadaline strolls nonchalantly down the hall, gazing piteously at the hapless souls whose dashes were in vain. Sadly and softly the doors are closed. The gloom, however, is short-lived. For next time it just might be...

Jean Bartley, English 12a, Section 1

SOLDIERS RETURN

I suppose certain events in anyone's life can be called episodes. However, in looking back on my life I see it going along smoothly with only the normal things happening in a normal way. Perhaps that is a revealing commentary on the unusualness of the age we live in, that the things which happen to us appear to us to be usual, when we know that this is the most exciting period of history to live in that has ever been the privilege of man to experience. It must be that it is beyond the comprehension of an ordinary individual to correlate his own part to the broad picture of world-shaking events which future historians will paint.

In my own case, I have spent twenty months in the Army of the United States, during this epochal period of our history known as World War No. 2. And yet, in retrospect I have no feeling of having participated in events which have shaken this old earth to its foundations. Reason tells me that it is unusual for a young man in this day and age to be drafted to serve as a soldier, and yet to my generation it will always seem to have been the normal course of events. To have been a Roman Legionnaire and stood in hollow square, is to have shaped the world. To have been a "selectee" is only to have been drafted instead of enlisting. To wield the short sword is to have changed the course of history; to learn about landmines, gas, bazookas, tanks, and how to conduct oneself if captured is merely to have "taken Basic."

The chain of events on which success or failure in military operations can hinge has been amply demonstrated by more able writers than myself. Suffice it for me to say, then, that it is demonstrably true that for want of a nail the country can be lost. And yet I cannot convince myself that the "nails" I furnished have in any way affected the course of events. I know that the effect of all the effort of all the people like myself is resulting in our side winning the war.

If I could trace one thing that I taught a recruit in the heat and dust of the parade ground at Fort Douglas to its conclusion as an act on some battlefield which results in our winning even a small portion of that battle, I would know unalterably that I had had some slight impact on the course of human events. I can imagine it happening. I can imagine it happening to the many thousands like myself to whom it must happen if our efforts to win this war are to be successful. But my imagination is not strong enough, thru this imaginary chain of events, to tie me as an individual into the panorama of history which is unfolding before our eyes.

Since only a relatively small portion of the men in uniform will engage in physical combat with the enemy, I suspect that many will experience the same sense of frustration that I do in attempting to orient themselves historically. Most of us will give up the attempt in time, as our interest is engaged by more pressing and more important problems. I cannot help but think, though, that if more of us could find our proper relation to history, we could more readily find the necessary ways and means to influence that history for our own good and that of all mankind.

Haris E. Hogan, English 11a, Section 1