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The Mountaineer has metamorphosed. For many years it has made its appearance in mimeographed form only. This issue marks a turning point in its existence. Now, like the butterfly, it appears magnificently in a new format. In spite of its outward transformation, however, its contents maintain the same standard as in previous years. It still aims to serve as an outlet and an impetus for the creative writing of the potential authors of the campus. It tries to reflect honestly and accurately the thoughts, ideas and opinions of the students. Joseph Kinsey Howard has reflected one of its aims in his forward to the Mountaineer. Without restricting themselves too stringently the editorial staff tries to select material which sincerely portrays the locale in which we live—Montana—its problems, its people and its possibilities.

JANE JEFFERS, Editor

I am delighted to have the opportunity to congratulate The Mountaineer upon new format and an expanded editorial concept.

These are days of broadening intellectual frontiers in Montana and the Rocky Mountain west. It is heartening to find widespread recognition on this campus of new responsibilities confronting us. The student writer, if he will prospect the rich field he knows best—the Montana scene—will discover that it is equal in dramatic interest and social significance to any in the world. And he will be participating in a worthwhile movement: his work will help give Montanans a more adequate appreciation of the cultural value of their own region and thus will encourage more satisfactory living and more energetic economic development.

JOSEPH KINSEY HOWARD
The Montana Study
University of Montana

THE STAFF

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Harve leaned against the staircase and inspected the room through worried eyes. It gleamed. The huge brass candlesticks, the knotty pine walls—even the Oriental brass plaque, all hard sparkling angles, gleamed in the candlelight. But Harve's forehead tightened in a knot as if his thoughts were nagging and unpleasant.

He reached absently in the pocket of his sport shirt, hearing subsconsciously the slap of the waves against the shore and the rising and falling of the canyon wind. He brought out a cigarette and nervously twirled it between his fingers. Suddenly he began to hunt, conscientiously, in his trousers pockets for a match. He found one, struck it on the sole of his shoe and took deep, nervous gulps of the smoke. As he fingered the charred end of the match with his thumb it broke in two in his hands. He looked down at the pieces in angry surprise and striding to the fireplace threw the splinters in.

The swinging doors slapped to as he went into the kitchen.

"How about a drink, Helen?" he asked.

She looked up as he came in—a small woman, showing the signs of early pregnancy. Her hands were competently busy arranging tiny semmetrical sandwiches on a blue pottery plate.

"Go ahead, dear," she said. "The bourbon's in the pantry."

She watched him move with slouching grace across the room. He found the bottle and brought it back to the kitchen table.

"How's this?" he asked, abruptly, holding it up.

"Fine," she said, "But remember, I can't drink tonight. Doc said 'no'."

"Oh, God," he groaned. "That's right."

"What's the matter, Harve?" she asked. "You seem tied up in knots tonight. It'll go off all right."

"I know," he said. There was an edge to his voice. "But I wish I hadn't engaged that damned orchestra."

"You shouldn't have, really, Harve," she said. "You know how Mrs. Wilson and some of the others feel about negroes."

"And I feel the same way," he said. "At a party like this—informal—they've got to feel their place and keep it."

"Don't, Harve," Helen said, sharply. "With an attitude like that the whole thing starts off on the wrong foot."

"I just wish I hadn't been so tight that night at the Silver Swan Club and feeling so damned brotherly."

"They'll be all right if you just stop thinking about them," she said.

She picked up the plate and started through the doors into the living room, holding it carefully so that the sandwiches wouldn't slide. "Finish your drink," she added as the doors closed behind her.

His lips tightened with annoyance, but he gulped down the
last of his drink and started mixing another. He heard her mov­
ing about in the next room, adjusting plates on the table to make
room for the new one. Carrying his drink he went into the liv­
ing room and leant against the fireplace, watching her. She
stood back from the table, inspecting it carefully, her head on one
side. His eyes slid up and down her figure. Too short, he
thought, to carry her pregnancy well.

With a sudden girlish movement, made incongruous by her
condition, she turned and faced him. “How d’you think it looks?”
she asked.

“Fine,” he said, absently.

“It does look fine,” she said, after a moment.

She walked with brisk steps to the door of the sunporch and
looked into the blackness there. She turned about to face him,
her figure silhouetted against the darkness of the next room. “Is
that where you want the orchestra?” she asked, pointing. “In
that corner?”

He went over and stood beside her, seeing dimly the bulky,
gleaming mass that was the baby grand.

“I thought so,” he said.

“That’s fine,” she said. “They’ll be out of the way there.”
She turned around and gave the room a quick over-all look. “Ev­
erything’s fine,” she said and looked at her watch. “The orches­
tra should be here soon.”

He followed her into the kitchen and mixed his third drink
while she went to their room to “fresh up.”

There was a knock on the back door and Harve opened it,
the ice tongs still in his hand. Three negroes stood there, wait­
ing.

“Oh,” Harve said. “Come in.”

He stood aside to let them pass. The first was large with an
intensely black and shining face. He carried a trumpet case.
The second was struggling to get a set of drums through the door.
The third was a mulatto woman, tall, slender and attractive.

“Come on,” Harve said, with annoyance, “I’ll show you
where to set up.” He led the way into the living room and on to
the sunporch.

“Pretty dark in here, boss, for me to set up my drums,” one
said.

Harve snapped on a light. “Better get set up pretty soon,”
he said, perfunctorily. “Party starts at nine.”

In the kitchen, Helen was waiting for him.

“Who was it?” she asked.

“The orchestra.”

“Oh,” she said. “I’d better go and see how they’re making
out.”

His voice was irritable. “Don’t go fussing around, Helen.
Let ‘em alone. They’d rather be left alone.”

“I’ll just go see how they’re making out,” she said. “Maybe
they’d like a drink.” She went on into the living room.

Harve compressed his lips and snorted angrily through his
nose. He leaned against the kitchen table and swirled the stuff
in his glass, watching the yellow liquid whirling round and round the ice cubes.

Toward midnight everyone had arrived—everyone they had invited and several they hadn't. They clotted around the improvised bar in the kitchen, drinking their drinks, asking for more, or just staying close by.

The negro bartender, imported from Butte, set them up competently, unhurriedly. His face was cocoa brown and his eyes were quiet and thoughtful.

A short, stocky man in a blue business suit stood alone near the bar, fingerling a near-empty glass and staring tiredly into space. Harve walked over and clapped him on the shoulder.

"Glad to see you here, Mac," he said. "Thought you might not make it back in time. How'd you leave Chicago?"

"Fine," Mac answered shortly. He was observing through narrowed eyes the negro, brown-skinned, leisurely, mixing drinks behind the bar.

Harve followed his gaze, and a look of annoyance crossed his eyes.

"Well, well," he said, "That's fine. Come on into the living room. Bring your drink," he added as Mac moved to set his glass on the bar. Harve propelled him gently through the swinging doors.

Mrs. Wilson glanced up from the olive she was spearing at the bottom of the glass.

"Why, Mac," she said. She held out a browned hand to him. Her hair, done in a feather-bob, was white, an attractive contrast to her tanned face. "How nice to see you," she said. "Do sit down here." She patted the seat beside her and called to her husband across the room. "Oh, Jim," she called. "Come here. Mac is here." He came across the crowded room, a tall man with dark brown eyes, a little glazed now with drink.

He and Mac shook hands. "Nice to see you, boy," he said. "Harve tells me you've been to Chicago? How's the town?"


"I don't know that they're always incited, Mac," Mrs. Wilson said, hastily. "Negroes are so dirty and ignorant. They seem to hate us. Give one an inch and he'll take a mile, I always say."

Suddenly, Mac noticed the three negroes on the dim sun-porch. His head jerked up unconsciously, as though he were involuntarily defending himself, and his eyes took on a belligerent gleam.

At that moment, the orchestra started to play—something slow and blue. They turned in their chairs to watch. The trumpet caught up the tune from the piano twisting it higher and higher, losing it and finding it again. The music was high and sweet
and plaintive. They listened for a while and watched. Each of the three in the orchestra seemed to lose himself in the music he was making. The trumpeter leaned far back, holding his gleaming horn high. His black face shone with perspiration. He dedicated himself to his music.

Helen hurried by with a plate of hors d’oeuvres. “Isn’t the orchestra good?” she asked, casting a pleased look in their direction as Mrs. Wilson helped herself to two of the tiny sandwiches. “That reminds me, I really must get them something to drink. I suppose they’re parched.” She set the plate on the mantle and hastened out to the kitchen. Harve, with angry, long-legged strides, followed her through the swinging doors and caught her arm roughly.

“Listen, Helen,” he said. “Don’t feed those niggers any more liquor. It’d be a helluva mess if they all got drunk on us.”

“Don’t be silly Harve,” Helen said, patting his arm. She leaned forward to talk to the bartender.

“Helen, don’t,” Harve said shortly. His face was flushed with anger and with too many drinks.

“Harve, dear,” Helen said, quietly. “It’s only beer and you can’t expect them to play all night without anything.”

She picked up the tray and three foaming bottles and sidled through the doors. Harve moved up to the bar and leaned on it.

“Mix me a drink,” he said sharply.

He took the glass and went back into the living room. He leaned against the fireplace, and with tense and angry eyes, watched Helen laughing with the mulatto girl as she set down the bottle of foaming beer. The girl, talking to Helen, reached up for the bottle and blindly tipped it over. It rolled off the piano top, spewing beer, and smashed on the hardwood floor, splashing foam right and left. Helen appeared at the door.

“Harve,” she said. “Will you get a couple of napkins? We’ve spilled the beer.”

He set his drink violently on the mantle and strode out to the kitchen. When he returned, he carried a handful of cocktail napkins. He mopped up the beer on the piano top and angrily bent to pick up the pieces of the broken bottle.

“Why can’t you niggers be careful,” he said, furiously. “This finish is expensive.”

“Harve,” Helen said, sharply.

The embarrassed girl bent to help him with the bits of broken glass. Her slender fingers touched his and he involuntarily jerked away, his face livid and outraged.

He straightened up, his face red. “Now for God’s sake, be careful,” he said, wiping the piano top.

“Harve,” Helen said. “Stop acting that way. Anyone might have done it and it didn’t hurt a thing.” She turned angrily and walked away.

Mac, a little drunk, stood by the fireplace, surrounded by a group of men and watched Helen as with averted eyes she scurried across the room and out into the kitchen. He turned to the sunporch, suspiciously. Harve, his mouth tight with disgust, was
wiping the last of the beer from the piano. The girl sat quietly on the piano bench, watching him.

Mac turned to a man near him. "Looks like that mulatto's giving Helen a little trouble," he said in low tones and nodded toward the orchestra.

"What's that?"

"Looks like Helen and Harve are having trouble over that mulatto," he repeated, louder.

"That so?"

They all turned around and looked at the slim mulatto at the piano.

"What happened?" one asked.

"Looks like the gal's making a play for Harve," Mac said.

"Anyway Helen got mad over something. Harve went out to clean up some spilled beer and the yellow gal gave him the eye, looks like. Helen sure gave 'im hell over something and walked away. Looked like she was crying."

"No," one man said, sympathetically.

"Niggers got to learn to keep their place," another said indignantly.

"I'll say."

Their faces reflected their hostility.

Two men crossed the room to join them.

"What's the matter over here? What's happened?"

"Mulatto making a pass at Havre," Mac muttered.

"Have to keep an eye on niggers," one of them growled.

They cast malevolent glances in the direction of the orchestra. Half drunk, each was caught in the tide of the others' emotions.

"Something ought to be done," one began.

Other men joined the group. Mac repeated the story. It was repeated around the room, gaining emotion and inaccuracy.

Men and women converged around the fireplace. The knot grew into a crowd. They jostled one another as they leaned into the group to voice an opinion, or as they elbowled their way to the outer edge to take another look at the "yellow gal." The last couple left the floor and joined the crowd in the hot smoky room. The orchestra played on—something wild and sweet and throbbing. The mob swirled about and converged around someone who was loudly voicing the opinion that something should be done. There were murmurs of agreement. The music became almost indiscernible above the noise of the mob. Their voices rose from an ominous mutter to a threatening roar.

One voice rose from the roar. "They can't get away with it."

"Ought to teach 'em to keep their place—"

"Damn niggers—"

"I'll show 'em."

Mac extricated himself from the midst of the mob. His face was livid with rage and his hands were clenched at his sides. "I'll teach 'em to keep their place," he shouted. The mob as noisily flowed after him to the sunporch.

"Listen, nigger," Mac said, approaching the trumpeter. "Keep
your little yellow gal to yourself, see?" His body was taut as a spring ready for release. His voice was low and almost like a hiss. The negro's eyes widened in surprise and fear, and his mouth dropped open, showing the pink inner surface of his lower lip.

"Keep her to yourself, see?" Mac hissed.
He advanced a step and the frightened trumpeter jumped up in alarm. His chair toppled over backward and the girl at the piano muffled a scream with her hand. Mac caught the unprepared negro squarely in the mouth with his fist. The mob moved in to the fight. There was a confusion of rushing men and women near the door, a loud gasp of horror from the girl at the piano, the dull flash of a blade in the dim light. Mac jumped back in fright and doubled up his leg to protect his stomach. The blade flashed again; Mac uttered a scream of pain and anger.

"He cut me," he moaned. "The dirty son of a bitch cut me." He lay on his back on the floor, moaning and writhing. The negro stood over him, his face sickened and shocked and scared. His huge frame was limp and sagging.

Harve stepped over the writhing body of Mac and grabbed the negro by the arm. He jerked him hard and as the stunned face flew up, Harve smashed it once on the mouth. Helen caught his arm. She was hoarse with shame and anger.

"Harve!" she said. "Don't hit him."
Almost instantly the fighting stopped. The sweating, panting men stood back, shocked and ashamed. The girl in the corner was sobbing. Mac continued to moan and writhe on the floor where Doc was applying a tourniquet to his injured leg.

"Will you leave?" Helen said to the three negroes. Her voice was low and intense as she turned to her guests. "Will you all please leave? All of you."
There were low apologetic murmurs from the crowd as they clogged the door in an effort to escape the atmosphere of disgust and shame.

Harve put his hands against the mantle in the deserted living room and leaned his head between his arms. He was emotionally spent and shaken with nausea.
The monstrosity above the fireplace, cruelty cast in bronze, caught the reflection of candle-light in its sharp angles and held them in multiple existence for a moment. The canyon wind moaned endlessly, dismally around the corners of the cabin.

"Harve," Helen said gently. "Don't. Come to bed."
"There was no reason for it," he said.
"There never is," she said. "Come to bed."
Return of A Hero

PATRICIA CAPLIS

The neon sign above the depot glowed glassily, joining with its brothers of the night-shift in casting upon the world a synthetically bright light. "Odd," he thought, "how gay and sort of welcoming they look at night, and how mocking in the early morning. Careful boy, don't become carried away by the eloquence of your thoughts," he mused. His hand shook with the cold and something else as he fumbled with keys and finally found the one which slipped into the hole. He swung the door open and stepped inside. Here was cold, cold allowed to reign undisputed during the night. "Probably Eva's plan to save fuel." Still he couldn't disapprove although he wished he could. Already the stove, turned up a moment before, was beginning to throw forth a tentative heat.

He wandered about the small lobby of the little wooden building, turning on lights here and there, and striving to get the feel of the place before it was time to open up. Moving toward a bench, half concealed in the dim light, he stumbled over something. He winced as his trick ankle gave that warning which accompanied any infringement of the rules by which, from now on, he must always abide. The something was a small khaki bag, forlorn in its emptiness, probably discarded by its owner for something more swanky in the line of luggage. As he stooped to pick it up, he caught sight of an unfamiliar leg clothed in grey pin stripe. He checked himself quickly realizing the leg was his own. "You can't fool me," he yelled, at the offending member. "You belong to Captain Roberts, ex-eagle of the skies."

"If I had the wings of an angel," he sang wryly as he glanced at the illuminated face of his watch. "We're all in our places with bright shining faces brought to you by the courtesy of Bulova," he improvised. "Captain Roberts," he admonished, "you're forgetting yourself. Today you are a man, taking your place among men of the world. But I shall be queen of the May, Mother," he retorted. "This shadow boxing isn't doing you much good, Roberts. Better snap out of it and leave the dragon slaying to fellows like Beowulf. As a fighter you're through. Concede the title like a good scout and get to work."

He spent a miserable half hour with the combination of the safe, referring frequently to the slip of paper Eva had given him. The dial had an unpleasant habit of slipping blithely past the place at which he had intended it to stop, but at last he emerged triumphant.

Time was sneaking up from behind with a poised dagger, and when at last he had carefully counted out the fifty dollars for his drawer, several muttering customers had gathered outside the door. "Better let the chaps in, Roberts, old boy. You know, mob violence and all that sort of thing," he prompted.

Once inside, the gang looked around disdainfully. "What
happened to the lady who’s usually here? She’s always on time.”

“That lady isn’t my wife,” he thought, remembering Eva’s disdain for promptness.

A face appeared at the ticket window. The face had a mouth which opened loosely to inquire, “What time does the bus get into Kalispell?”

“Bombs Away,” he shouted mentally as he sighted his objective. “If \( a + b \) equals \( c \) squared by \( d \),” he thought, “our position is approximately northeast by south.” He wished Mike were here. Mike was the best navigator that ever computed the position of a place. He wouldn’t be bullied by a little thing like a bus schedule. The man was growing impatient. With one last supreme effort Steve Roberts again dived into the intricate maze of symbols and emerged with the pearl. “About 11:30,” he answered, pleased that he had translated his answer into civilian time.

“Enemy fighter on my tail,” he mused as a banging reached his ears from the side door. “Careful,” he cautioned. “It might be sniper movement.” He caught himself up sharply. “Roberts,” he snapped, “you are the inevitable result of intensified military training. Put away the tin soldiers and model planes and get over there and open that door. Those would like to come into your parlor.” From the faces of the drivers he guessed that this wasn’t a purely social call. What this place needs is a woman’s hand, he told himself. “Ah, Eva,” he murmured, “if only you were here now.” He felt oddly resentful that she had refused to help him out on his first day back on the job. “I’m China without Stillwell and Chennault,” he mourned.

The depot had become a mass of struggling people all wanting to go somewhere and expecting his magic wand to transport them.

“What’s happened to the good old American custom of staying at home?” he thought, wishing he had a soap box from which to deliver a dissertation on the beauties of home. “Captain, this is what they mean when they say they’re holding service men’s jobs for them. True, Eva had to take over the station while you were gone to hold yours; but, government-held or wife-held, the score is the same. Multiply yourself by seven million and get a general idea of the chaos that will reign come peace. Careful, Roberts, here comes the old sense of humor. The Bible wants you to increase and multiply, but not to that extent. Abraham in all his glory didn’t achieve that. You’re a great guy, Captain, but you can’t be father to all of those boys out there.”

“Better quit lolling in the water of self praise and get these people out of here, and then you can enjoy sweet solitude for awhile. I like your conversation, old boy, but we’ll have to forget about this pleasant exchange until I rid myself of this surging crowd.”

A driver came in, called a message, and the crowd was magically dispersed.
"I like that fellow," he concluded. "Wonder if he’d teach me that jargon? Might come in kind of handy."

The bus pulled out, and he was alone. "All present and accounted for, Captain." He began a systematic search of the drawers. In one he found a lipstick, comb, powder and a small vial of perfume. Eva, the eternally feminine, he thought. I wonder how she ever managed this place. In the back of one of the drawers he found a stapler. To it was tied a note in an unmistakable hand. "Steve," it said, "this thing has me completely baffled. How do you fill it?"


Stripped of illusions I can face the world and jeer as it jeers me, yet not devoid of hope nor yet of curiosity to view the world as the world is with clear and microscopic vision; to X-ray mankind’s consciousness coolly with precision;

probing at last into the Force whose harmony controls the spheres; glad to help push the world along its inch each thousand years.  

WALTER KING

The agony of man I can surmise from such slight agony as has been mine, mine but a vestige of the inchoate grief of man the species, grief sans anodyne.

The lingering ache that’s come, unsoothed, unchanging, down from Cro-Magnon days into my own—I know the substance of it, sharp, arhythmic, pulsing my sensate mind, my flesh, my bone.

You unbegotten men within my loins and all the men within your loins to be, will you escape this symbol of the breed, and griefless trail into eternity, embodiments of active joy and bliss tempered and steeled by inner tranquillness, the latent and primordial urge to curse evolved into a unique desire to bless?  

WALTER KING
Helena’s Adopted Heroes

AGNES REGAN

The paper carries another death story today, another name to add to the long list of men from Fort Harrison killed in action in the last two years. People at home will pause and read the brief article with a personal interest—strange, for the name will be unfamiliar to all but a few.

“Sgt. Fred LaCrosse of Ontario, Canada, was killed in action in France, Sept. 15, Arthur Chapman of Kenwood received word today. Sergeant LaCrosse trained at Fort Harrison from July 1942 to March 1943.”

Probably not half a dozen people in town besides Chapman and his family will remember the sergeant. Yet many will stop on the street to point out the notice to a friend or will discuss it at the dinner table.

For the men in the First Special Service Force which was formed in Helena hold a special place, a sort of adopted son relationship, in the town. The force itself has a distinction of originality which makes the people of town claim it as they claim Gary Cooper and Myrna Loy. The force is unique, the only group trained in exactly that way as a combination paratroop and commando division with special practice in demolition and mountain war. It was made up of Canadians and Americans in the same companies under both Canadian and American officers.

Their arrival in Helena two years ago was a surprise to the people in town and to the soldiers themselves. There was no indication that something was to happen until contractors were hiring construction crews and starting to put up rough barracks in the sage-brush fields beyond the Fort Harrison veterans’ hospital. The buildings mushroomed up. At the same time groups of soldiers came in on every train and camped near the fort. Before the town could catch its breath the army had moved in.

Most of the men were amazed to find themselves in Montana, in a town many had never heard of. On the train the grapevine had rumored that they were on their way to Fort Harrison but stories on trains often mean little; even those who listened seriously connected it not with Fort William Henry but with a Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indiana. They didn’t know where they were going or in most cases just why. They had all volunteered for the force but they knew little about it except that it was to be an almost-suicide division.

That was the one thing the men had in common—a desire for quick, dangerous action. Aside from that one factor, they could hardly have been a more assorted group. They came from all parts of this country and Canada—east-side New York, Nebraska farms, French Quebec, Texas, Alberta. They were drawn from every occupation in civilian life and every branch of the army. I remember an ex-rum-runner from the Canadian border, a president of a Baptist Youth organization of Rapid City, an eastern Jew.
who had lived in Palestine for several years, an undertaker from New Mexico.

Even in their common idea of getting into action they had very different motives. Some were kids out for adventure and eager to be in the glamorous sounding paratroops. Others, tired of the regimentation of a headquarters division, wanted the greater liberty that the special force offered. Some were attracted to the outdoor life and the rougher sort of service to be found in the outfit. The Canadians, in general, had a more serious purpose in volunteering. They had been at war much longer than the boys from the United States. Many had returned from Europe, even from Dunkirk, and they wanted to get into a unit where they felt they would see the results of their work. Others were excited in a rather bloodthirsty way by the promise of close-up action and night attacks, or only had their eyes on the higher jump-pay of the paratroops.

At first soldiers were a curiosity. A town that size, quiet from the absence of the younger men and the departure of the shifting population to war centers, needs a diversion. The activity was a novelty and the citizens welcomed it as they would welcome a carnival in a dull summer month. Townspeople rode up and down the streets to gawk at the kilts and berets some of the Canadians wore. The merchants and bartenders greeted the trade as a godsend designed especially by the army general staff to keep business booming. The Red Cross, the USO, the AWVS, the Women's Club—all the organizations which keep Helena matrons busy—found a new recipient for their attentions and reacted to the incentive as they would to a wholesale dose of vitamin pills. Individually people remembered their own sons and friends in army camps and were particularly friendly to the newcomers.

People could not do enough for them. The officers were given the use and prestige of Helena's Montana Club for their officers' club. The enlisted men were as well received. Car owners made a habit of driving the four miles to the fort especially to pick up and taxi a load of G. I. hikers both ways. In the evening and on Sunday afternoons the men had no trouble getting some proud Montanan to show them mountain scenery. Sportslovers took the men hunting and fishing, entered their team in the city ball league, arranged to give them special privileges at the YMCA. Older men fell over each other to buy them drinks and tell them about their sons in the service. The soldiers could easily get invitations to Sunday dinner at the USO, or simply by looking lonely on the street corner until a citizen approached with an offer. They could get dates as easily, in the same way.

The rougher sections of the town, always wide open, flourished with abandon. Because the force was to be a commando unit and the thought of prospects for survival in action might lead to brooding, the men were given an unprecedented amount of liberty. Upper Main woke up about six p. m. and echoed with the din of juke boxes and street fights until the last of the carousers straggled or staggered onto the first morning bus to the fort.
The M. P.'s set up a special office at the police station and kept busy through most of the night.

How the men stood the strain of the night life and the hard work in the day time is hard to understand. The training was very difficult. Through the summer and early fall months the men hiked all day over the mountains around the fort on some of the toughest and longest of all natural obstacle courses. They planned attacks and blew the old bridges and mines in the Scratch Gravel hills. At night they were taken in closed trucks into unfamiliar parts of the Blue Cloud country and left to find their way back singly to the camp miles away. They learned skiing from Norwegian instructors and made long ski trips across the rugged terrain near Blossberg, all during the unusually cold winter.

Most interesting of their training to the observer was the parachute practice. Hundreds of Helena people would drive to the fort early in the morning to watch the men jump. Several planes, spaced at regular intervals, would come in a high circle from the airport over the mountain. By the time the second one looked about above the cliffs, the first would swing over the field toward town and, not from the plane but just behind it, the chutes would appear like tiny, white pop-corn kernels exploding in the air. Then they would float down, six or eight parachutes in a slow graceful shower like the petals falling in a scene from Fantasia. Sometimes a chute would fail to open with the others and the crowd would gasp and stop breathing while the black dot the size of a matchstick shot downward. The little stick, silhouetted against the morning sky, would plunge down past the backdrop of rosy-tinted clouds toward the top of the mountain at the sky line; then it would jerk, and change to a soft billow of white, swinging slightly from side to side. The crowd would relax and a little titter of relief would pass over it; then the faces would turn upward again to watch another handful of white petals drift down from the second plane.

All the training seemed planned for some particular objective, some one sort of country, mountainous, snowcovered land like ours; one type of action, a night attack against a sentry or guard unit; even one operation, the demolition of power houses and dams, and, incidentally, bridges and roads nearby.

Several times before the middle of winter the men seemed ready to leave. Many signs seemed to confirm the rumors of plans for shipping them off—week-end passes in town would be easy to get, but out of town passes impossible; some of the officers would talk too much in the club bar and tell about their orders to be prepared; some of the equipment would be packed and ready in the storage barracks next to the railroad tracks. There would be a tension among the men, an unmistakable excitement that spread to the town itself. Main street would be more riotous and the residential sections quieter; the rougher men would be drunker and louder, the lonely ones more alone.

Then something always seemed to change plans. The equipment would be unpacked, out-of-town passes would be reissued

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and for a while the officers would guard against staying so late talking in the club. The training would be changed in details so that it seemed as if there were a different objective in mind. Rumors told of a leakage of information and, after the last false-alarm preparation, of the discovery of a spy ring. The army never confirmed any of the stories and if there was a basis for them, it kept the details quiet. But the psychological effect of the change of plans was hard on the men. They had been worked up to a point of being ready for combat and the reaction was a definite letdown.

The people in town were conscious of the mixed relief and disappointment and restlessness, and perhaps that was one of the reasons they continued to be so interested in the soldiers. For even when some of the men, as inevitably happens, abused the kindness of the town, the people did not swing against them.

Another reason, perhaps, for the sympathy of the town was the high casualty rate in the training. Particularly in the jumping the injuries were extremely high. At first there were literally hundreds of men with broken legs in both city hospitals, overflow cases from the large fort hospital. The AWVS took over the problem of entertaining the injured but not bedridden, and not only got many people to contribute crutches and canes, cigarettes, cards and games, but also saw that people supplied cars for transportation and pleasure drives.

Almost everyone in town seemed to be interested in and to know some few soldiers well, whether they had any natural reason for meeting them or not. I had as little reason to know them as anyone. I belonged to the crowd of high school girls who shied away from any chance of dates, telling ourselves smugly that "nice girls won't go out with the soldiers," an idea which, incidentally, was not far wrong when applied to the younger girls. Parents of the high school crowd were only too glad to see their daughters feel that way, and did not make any effort to encourage introductions. Yet I knew several of them well and quite a number by sight.

There was Harold, an ex-college football player who took out one of my older sisters. He was big and handsome and dumb and eager to show off the new commando trick he had learned—"hit him across the nose with the side of your hand like that and then gouge his eyes with the other fingers. Ain't that neat?" There was Young Martin— we never used his first name, Jack—who spent a great deal of time at my cousin's home, even when she was away at school. His father and three older brothers were overseas in the Canadian army and he had lied about his age to get in too. When his brother Stan was lost over Europe, my aunt felt real sorrow with him and he adopted their house, so full of interest and sympathy, as home. There was Dennis Sloy who knew the O'Briens. Mr. and Mrs. O'Brien are an elderly couple with no children. How Sloy met them or why he should have chosen to spend so much time there I don't know, but he was at their house every week-end and whenever he had an evening pass.
The older girls had a field day. There was not an unattached girl in town between twenty and the early thirties who did not have a chance to get married. A large proportion of them took advantage of the opportunity and got their man. Almost none of the unmarried officers did not find a wife in Helena and a great many of the enlisted men did as well. The wholesale matrimonial idea worked out well in some cases. It meant a happy marriage for many girls, a last chance for others. Some were less fortunate and there were a great many annulments listed beside the marriage licenses in the vital statistics all winter.

But there were a great many devoted wives, as well as close friends, waiting along the railroad tracks the day in March when the force finally left. There had been the same preliminary rumors that had circulated before, but this time there was no change of plans. The men did not leave from the station; railroad cars were switched to a sidetrack near the fort and loaded there. But the people in town knew and the tracks were lined with people waiting to catch a glimpse of the men as the train went by.

News of the force has come back to Helena. It was the group that attacked Attu in the raid on the already departed Japanese. Afterwards it was in action in Italy. It is the force about which the broadcasts said, “Combined Canadian and American units suffered heavy losses in attacks at Cassino,” And at Anzio. And just before Rome. And now in France. The first special service force has been whittled down by great numbers of casualties.

Letters, too, have come back telling more than the broadcasts, about the men themselves. Many are merely nostalgic notes—“What I wouldn’t give to be back in Montana now! Maybe next year I’ll be trailing my deer with you again up on the pass.” A surprising number are serious plans for return—“If I can buy that little store on the corner next to yours I’ll be able to start right in when I come back.”—“If I can’t get back into action when I get out of this hospital I’m heading right back to Helena.”

By omission the news and letters tell more. There has been no mention of any parachute action. Much of the fighting has been in frontal assaults where commando tactics were useless. The men have not seen skis since they left Helena.

The irony of the fame the force has won is hard on the people who remember the cots full of men injured in the skiing accidents, and the front yards of the hospitals on hot days when the men, wearing walking casts, limped out to escape from the overcrowded rooms. All the long and hard and dangerous training, and all the psychological preparation for specialized action seem to be wasted. The glamour and much of the purpose of the Force has been lost. Fate, in the form of the army high command, moved the men in; moved them out; and put them into action.

But fate didn’t take into consideration the emotions of the people involved. When the army moved out, the feelings of the men and the people of town did not disappear with them. Helena is full of widows and babies who will never see their fathers, paratroopers who died in infantry action in Italy and France.
But the girls knew the force was to be a suicide division. They had been told that each man had about one chance in ten to return. They cannot expect to forget now that they made a choice.

Helena can't forget that it made a choice, too, between easy aloofness to the soldiers and their adoption into the town. It realizes now, that with friendship, goes the obligation of caring when something happens to the friend. Through the contact with the First Special Service Force, it has come, as a whole, to understand the war more uncomfortably but more completely than it could have as an isolated community.

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DISEASED

Enemy
Perverting your stock.
"And who are you?" the leaders mock.

Hate the Jews
They'll ruin us yet.
Don't, can't, won't forget.

Furtive decay
Destroying your weak.
"Too bad, too bad," the careless speak.

Hate the Blacks
They'll ruin us yet.
Don't, can't, won't forget.

Parasite
Feeding on you.
"A social disease," and that's you too.

Hate the Reds
They'll ruin us yet.
Don't, can't, won't forget.

MARJORIE POWELL

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TRAIL MAINTENANCE

Mid-morning—and the cow was wearying and the two coyotes, famished from a night of futile stalking, were about to spring in for the kill when we two hove in sight. Wheeling about, lithe streaks of silvered yellow they raced for safety to the woods close by, leaving the vacuous cow behind to bellow lugubrious warnings to the placid sky.
To us as well, not to approach too near, and when we did, believing we had kept her from an imminent death, she bolted clear into the woods. No doubt the coyotes leaped round to attack. We could not wait to see. Indicative, the cow, it seemed to me.

WALTER KING
"Ruth, don’t leave town. I want to marry you."

"Someday," he finished lamely.

She sighed, shrugged her shoulders and struggled with the handle of the car door. At the curb she paused and smiled wryly at him. He flung open the door on his side of the car and thrust out one leg as if to follow. She paced on up the walk, her shoulders shaking slightly. He hesitated, his foot dangling outside the door frame. In the soft glow of the dash-lights his face was that of a little boy, jaw jutting forward, underlip clenched in. The door of the darkened boardinghouse slammed. Pinpricks of light marked her progress through the halls and up to her third-story room. He edged himself slowly into the street and watched the firefly procession. The harsh glare of the street lamp erased the little-boy illusion, spot-lighting the receding hairline, heavy eyebrows, drooping mouth corners.

He climbed back into the coupe, slumped in the seat, and stared into the blackness of the empty street. Occasionally his mouth writhed in a bitter half-smile, as if he were carrying on an unpleasant conversation.

God in Heaven, damn Ma. Damn her. Not a pretty prayer. Damn her. Why didn’t I follow Ruth? Why didn’t I make her marry me, now? I love her—I guess. Maybe I busted the other nine commandments but I kept the fifth: Honor thy father and thy mother. That’s a bellylaugh. I’ve honored that bitch. That’s what she is, a yelping female dog, growling over me like a bone. I’m a bone she chewed cleen so she don’t want it. But she’s not gonna let anyone else get ahold of me. Her meal ticket. Damn her, God.

You said the sins of the father shall be visited on the sons. I’ve paid for my old man’s misdeeds—through the nose I’ve paid. Pa had the guts to leave her flat. I’ve sweated and done everything the way she wanted that I should. Damn her, God.

He snapped open the glove compartment and jerked out a pipe. A new pipe, the stem unscarred by toothmarks, the bowl smooth and untarnished by ash. He rolled the stem between his palms and continued to glare into the darkness.

Almost defiantly he tamped tobacco into the bowl and struck a match. The flicker of light flashed on the rear vision mirror and for a second he stared into his own eyes. He laughed ironically.

I’m yellow-livered and a damn lap dog, jumping to every jerk of her apron string. I’ve thrown over everything I ever wanted, even a pipe. The old bitch wouldn’t even let me smoke a pipe. And Ruth’s leaving—funny the way she was in such a hurry to get away tonight. Damn Ma, Lord. Damn her.

land? Damn her, God. For thirty-eight years I've done what she told me. I want to marry Ruth. Why were her shoulders shaking? Damn her. You said that the meek shall inherit the earth. You know how meek I've been. Stuck in a stinking hardware store that I finally had to own. I'd like to burn it. Burn it lock, stock and barrel. How about some of this inheriting deal, Lord? Damn her.

The pipe had gone out. He sucked on the stem, his eyebrows lowered and his underlip pushed out like a surly child's. He shrugged his shoulders and dropping the pipe beside him, tugged at a tuft of hair on the top of his head.

I'd settle to be rid of her. Damn her, God. To be free of her. To be free to do what I want. I wanted a trade. I wanted to fix watches. I'd have been good on watches. I wanted some schooling. How about some of this inheriting deal? I don't give a tinker's damn for the whole blasted earth. All I want is Ruth and a trade. Does Ruth love me? Damn her, God.

When I was a boy I understood as a boy, but when I became a man I put away childish things. God, why couldn't I have been a man sooner? Why didn't I wise up while there was still time? Time to go my way. When I saw the old bitch for what she was it was too late. But I love Ruth. I love her so much I don't dare touch her. Was she laughing at me or bawling when she went up the walk? Lord, was she? I wish I knew. But I'm still a boy. A snot-nosed brat. Damn her, God.

Carefully stowing the smoking equipment behind a sheaf of papers, he pushed the pipe into the back of the glove compartment and muttered as he groped on the floor for the tobacco and matches.

They say you'll hand out the rewards in heaven. I'll take my share now. I don't want to wait for heaven. I'll take my cut and burn in hell. Just to be rid of her. Damn Ma, God. Damn her.

He snapped on the ignition. Ruth's light had winked out. A mosquito buzzed around his ear. He slapped at it viciously. Glancing at the darkened house, he stomped on the starter and the car jerked into motion. A light flicked on in the third-story room as he ground the gears to shift at the corner.

A rivulet of rain wriggled from the brim of his hat to the gap where his raincoat collar stood out from his neck. He swore, and, giving the door knob a violent twist, straightened his back, leaving the keys dangling in the lock. "Bradford's Hardware" the dripping sign above his head proclaimed. He muttered another damn, stepped from under the sign, glaring at the heavy black letters, and again bent over the doorknob.

Inside, he glanced wearily at the dusty window display and listlessly sorted a pile of light globes. Shrugging out of the long, black overcoat, he struggled with his rubbers and kicked them viciously toward the potbellied stove.

The door slammed and he frowned at his watch. A girl in a short, red raincoat sashayed to the employees' closet. "You're
ten minutes late, Aggie," he snapped. She fluffed her fuzzy blonde coiffure and glanced sideways at him, batting her dark-ened lashes. "Awfully sorry, Ralph," she cooed and pivoted to brush his arm with hers as she reached for her smock. He sighed and massaged his forehead with one hand, "Not bawling you out, Aggie."

"You needn't tell your ma, do you?" she persisted fluttering her eyelashes. "She'd just give you a good dressing down and knock off 25c from my pay."

"No, Aggie, you'll get your 25c."

Winking at him as a fellow conspirator, she grinned "Smart boy. She'd raise the devil like she always does with you when I'm late. By the way, she was in yesterday afternoon to paw through your stuff and clean up her 'dear boy's desk."

"Get to work, Aggie." His voice snapped; his mouth was tight. "And mind your own business. I'm boss here.' See, I'm boss. Get to work." His voice had risen. He gulped. "I'm boss." His voice was flat and low.

She sauntered to the front counter with a wooden-shod clop and a sassy, triumphant swishing of her above-the-knee-length skirt. Rearranging the heaped-up light globes, she stuck out her tongue at the turned back and snickered.

"I hear Miss Ryan's leaving," she shouted back at him, "how about that?" No reply from the boss. "Gonna miss her?" She giggled. "Everyone thought you two'd go to the J. P.," she per-sisted.

He strode to the front counter with another box of globes. "Wish people'd mind their damn business," he growled. "Gotta think of the consequences. Always the damn consequences. Got ties with too many other damn people." He was almost shouting, and his neck was an angry red.

"Why worry about 'em?" she asked scornfully.

"You can say that but when you've got ties—"

"Only a yellow-backed fool lets them bother him," she countered. He was silent. "I wouldn't want one of you jelly-fishes tied to mama," she taunted him.

"Mind your own business." His neck was red again and his brows came together.

"You don't needa get sore, Ralph," she pouted, "Lord, you're such a bear."

She turned her back, swaying her hips and glancing over her shoulder, her vivid, greasy lipstick forming the pretense of a pout. She brushed his arm meaningfully. He snatched her waist and yanked her to him, violently, covering the lipstick coating with his own lips.

She spun from him in anger. "Who do you think you are? Just wait till I tell Joe about the way you mauled me. He'll fix your can. Who do you think you are? You damned mama's boy."

Surly and angry, he turned and walked to the back. She spit on the floor and thumbed her nose.

He snapped on the light over his desk and scowled at the
orderly piles of paper. Knocking them helter-skelter to the floor, he yanked open each drawer. All were in precise order. He clenched and unclenched one fist. He jammed his hand into a pigeon hole and slowly withdrew it—empty. Squinting into the pigeon-hole, he slowly poked every corner of it with his finger. A tobacco coupon fluttered to the floor; a book of matches tumbled to the desk top.

Sighing he dropped into the swivel chair and gazed at the table top, muttering to himself. His head snapped up and his eyes surveyed the empty table top. He quickly glanced to either side of the desk, walked around it, and went to rummage through the heap of papers. He straightened up slowly.

"Ruth's picture's gone, too. My pipe and Ruth's picture."

He sighed, dropped into the swivel chair, closed his eyes and pressed his fingers hard against his temples.


He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul. Okay, Lord, restore me. I won't need no restoring if you'll just get rid of my work, this damn store, and my load: Ma. Damn Ma, God. I'm tired.

God, I don't know. I'm tired of hating and doubting. Does Ruth want me? I don't know. My peace I give unto you. Give me peace, God. I couldn't sleep last night, hating and doubting. What difference does it make? You don't care, God. Give me peace.

Damn Ma, God. Take my load, God. I want peace. Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Damn Ma. Give me rest. Take Ma, God. Give me rest. Take Ma. Take her away from me. I want Ma to die. Give me peace, God. Please give me peace and rest. If there is a God, take Ma away.

His eyes were clenched shut and he strained at the desk top with both hands. The front door crashed and he slumped suddenly, his eyes dull.

A man, hatless, his unbuttoned coat flopping, rushed to the hack office. Hurry, Bradford. Your Ma's going fast. Heart attack. He turned his head slowly. The man grabbed his arm and shouted, "Man, your ma's dying. Snap out of it. Come on."

The bereaved family sat in a special alcove at one side of the pulpit. As the mourners rustled into the pews the wives studied the family from under their hat brims and the husbands, embarrassed by the whole proceedings, fixed their eyes straight ahead.

The monotonous, dreary before-service dirge paused as the minister entered. The pallbearers sat uncomfortably at attention. The room was hot and heavy with the oppressive sweetness of the flowers banked around the casket. The wives stole occa-
sional glances at the family and one by one turned to peer fur­
tively over their shoulders to tabulate the back pews. Miss Ryan
was not at the funeral.

"Beloved friends," the minister began, "we are gathered to­
day to pay our last respects to a beloved mother and friend." The wives stole glances at the family. Ralph was the chief actor. The wives scrutinized his face.

He absently patted Bud’s wife on the shoulder. His back
was stiff and his eyes were shadowed by deep circles. An ex­
ultant smile twitched at the corner of his mouth. He stared at
the closed coffin, his eyes widened and one fist clenched. He
shuddered slightly, his face ashen and his eyes still wide with
horror. The half-smile triumphed as he stared again at the cof­
fin. He shuddered and his smile disappeared.

God, I’m free. The meek have inherited the earth. I’m free,
Lord. I will sing unto the Lord a new song. I’m drunk with free­
dom. Dearly beloved, we are gathered here in the sight of God
to join this Man and this Woman. I’ll marry Ruth. We’ll raise
one of our kids to be a minister. If we’re not both too old for
that. God, she does love me, doesn’t she? We’re not too old,
are we?

Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Praise the Lord. The old witch is dead—Oh, God, it isn’t my fault, is it? She’s
dead. Did I, God? She was old and had lived a long life. A
good one, God. She’d lived a long life. And it was a good one.
I gave her everything, God. She died of a heart attack. Old
people do die, all the time. I didn’t do it, God. She was old. She
died of a heart attack, didn’t she?

God, I love Ruth. We’ll be happy. I’ll be a good husband.
I can marry Ruth. I’ll sell the store. I’ll sell the store and take
the money to learn about watches. I’ll do something with my
hands. I was meant to do something with my hands. God, I’ll
make Ruth happy. I can make Ruth happy. Can’t I, God? Ruth
really does love me. We’re not too old. We’ll send one kid back
East to study for Your work. We’re not too old for that, are we?
I’ll name a girl for Ma.

He twisted in his chair. The minister was praying. Ralph’s
head was lowered but his eyes searched the room. He slumped
forward in his chair. One hand crept into his coat pocket. A
paper cracked and he absently pulled it out. A yellow memo
sheet covered with a penciled message, “Ralph, I found your
pipe. I’ve told you before, I will not allow your smoking!”

Oh, God, I didn’t do it. She was old. She died of a heart
attack. God, I didn’t do it. I made her happy. I did everything,
God. I couldn’t love her, God. Not after thirty-eight years. I
didn’t do it, did I? I prayed, but a man has a right to happiness.
I prayed, God, but a man has a right to pray. She took every­
thing from me. Doesn’t a man have a right to freedom? Doesn’t
he, God? Doesn’t he?

The prayer had ended and he raised his head. His eyes
were dry and glittering and hard, but as they fell on the coffin
they melted with fear.
When two or three are gathered in Thy name, Thou will grant their request. You said "two or three," God, I wasn't by myself then. You said two. Maybe it was Bud, God. Look at Bud. He looks guilty. He didn't hate Ma, but he didn't have to. Maybe he did hate Ma, deep down inside. Maybe he prayed. You said "two or three," God. Look at Bud, God. He looks guilty enough—his hands are shaking. I wasn't alone. A man's got a right to something. All right, look at Bud's wife. Why's she so broken up? Ma was never nice to her. She was afraid of Ma, God. Ma called her a scheming hussy. She was afraid of Ma. You said "two or three." Look at her, God. I didn't do it. Not by myself. She was old and I was good to her. I kept the fifth commandment. I wasn't alone, God. I didn't kill her, God. I just prayed. You took over, God. It's your fault, not mine. It's all right. Isn't it right, God?

He was shaking. He tensed and untensed his muscles. But he was still shaking. Bud poked him. "For God's sake, Ralph, get ahold of yourself. Think how Ma'd want you to act." His eyes were still on the casket and he nodded. His mouth formed a laugh, but the sound that came out was more of a moan.

I'm not to blame, God. Am I to blame? I'm not to blame. I'll name one for her. Oh, God, I'm not to blame. I didn't do it. Please, God. It's not bad. I'm not wrong, am I? Please, God.

The mourners rose as the bereaved family followed the pallbearers. Ralph was trembling violently. His shoulders drooped, and the tight line of his lips was penciled on his face. The husbands looked straight ahead, lowering their eyes as the family approached. He was trembling noticeably and they turned their eyes from him, one man curling his upper lip slightly. The wife jabbed her spouse with her elbow, but her upper lip, too, lifted slightly. At the doorway he paused for a survey of the room. The penciled line sagged limply at the corners. He glanced once more at the sea of black hats, squared his shoulders and slowly followed the casket.

The ticket-agent lackadaisically pulled out his watch. "No, I haven't seen nobody around. Number two leaves in about twenty-five minutes." Affecting a confidential air he drawled from the side of his mouth, "You wouldn't be looking for a skirt with the school marm in it, would you?" Ralph flushed. Slapping his knee and guffawing, the ticket agent doubled over in exaggerated appreciation of his own wit. His victim fled to the men's room.

Inside the dark little cubbyhole his shoulders slumped and he clenched and unclenched his fists and glared at the paneled door. Unbuttoning his overcoat he stepped to the cracked glass over the basin, squinted at the distorted reflection, stuck out his chin and strode to the door. Ruth was at the ticket window. He fumbled for the door knob and stepped back.

Peering through the crack, he saw the ticket-agent flash his heavy gold watch chain. "Number two's late, Miss Ryan. You've got twenty minutes yet. Waiting for someone?" He winked sly-
ly and smoothed his hand over the shiny blackness of his hair. She turned quickly from the grilled window and paced to her luggage, her back to the door of the men’s room. The ticket agent eyed her speculatively.

Ralph shoved one foot into the crack. The ticket agent glanced at the door of the men’s room and coughed. Ralph eased his foot back into the protective darkness.

She was gazing vacantly at the streaked window and tapping her foot. Rising, she walked a few steps toward the ticket-window. The agent smirked knowingly and she hesitated and turned to pace to the window.

Ralph groped for the door-knob. A little boy banged a door to the rear. She whirled around, her eyes alive. His grip on the door-knob tightened and he stepped closer to the crack. The ticket agent snickered. She disdainfully turned back to the window. The agent coughed, smoothed his hair, and leering at her ankles, surveyed the door of the men’s room and snickered again.

Ralph edged himself halfway out of the men’s room, but shrank back into the protective darkness as the ticket-agent snorted in amusement.

She was still at the window where she brooded in silence for a while and then, shrugging her shoulders, marched to the ticket-window. She spoke in a low, halting voice. The ticket-agent rolled his tongue in his cheek and glanced over her shoulder at the door. Ralph leaned closer to the crack, but the ticket-agent’s answer was as inaudible as her question.

She strode back to the bench, her cheeks flaming and fixed her glance on the schedule board. Ralph studied her profile through the crack. A few minutes later she returned to the window. The train whistled in the distance and the porter approached her bags. As she slowly left the window, the ticket-agent grinned and waved jauntily to her.

Ralph stepped from the men’s room and stood in the center of the waiting-room, hat in his hands as if waiting for some sign. Her back was still to him. He sidled to her and touched her arm. Startled, she jerked away.

"Hello, Ralph," she almost stammered.

"I guess you’re leaving, Ruth. I mean, it looks like it."

He touched her arm again. This time she didn’t jerk away but moved closer to him, her head thrown back and her eyes bright. He bent forward. He paused, suddenly. She turned from him and walked towards the door to the platform. His shoulders hunched as he followed at her heels.

"Still want that cancellation, Miss Ryan?" the ticket-agent sing-songed.

"No, thanks. I won’t be needing it." Her voice had a sharp edge.

Ralph’s shoulders straightened. "Were you thinking of staying, Ruth?" he asked eagerly.

"Yes, for a while I was ..." She faced him. Her eyes sparkled and she smiled.
"I—that is, never mind." He swallowed and studied the floor.

"It was just a silly whim," she faltered. "There's really no reason why I should stay..."

He didn't answer but, clutching his hands behind his back, gulped, and traced a crack with his toe.

"No, there's no reason why I should stay," she finished, dully.

They walked together to the platform. Calling the porter, she walked toward the train.

"Ruth," he called. His voice was urgent.

She stopped and slowly turned her head over her shoulder.

"Yes, Ralph." He half formed a word, paused, shook his head and muttered, "If you're not too busy, drop me a line sometime."

He slouched away from the platform, his fists clenched and his eyebrows drawn together. The corners of his mouth sagged and he made no effort to smile.

God, give me patience. Got to get back to the store. Nothing changes. The meek may inherit the earth but the weak don't. Give me patience. Ma's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give me patience, God.

THOSE WHO WIELD THE PEN

WALT KING'S sardonic comments and incisive mind have kept the editorial board in line for going on three years. Walt, the fellow who met the Boston proletariat in the May Mountaineer of 1942, swings back to poetry in this issue. Verse that even the cynics of the staff admit is good.

MARY ANN LUEBBEN'S clear-cut originality in prose writing appears in the Mountaineer for the first time in a psychological study of a man dominated by his mother to the point of mania. Mandi first made her name on the campus as co-editor of the Kalmin, campus newspaper, and now divides her time between the Mountaineer, the Sentinel, of which she is associate editor, and the Kalmin.

MARJORIE POWELL, Mountaineer business manager, proves that her ear is tuned to words as well as to the jingle of coin. You may not enjoy her poem. Most of us don't like to come face to face with the stark reality of our society. But if you're honest, you'll be forced to admit that Marge has hit the nail on the head.

AGNES REGAN, in her story of Helena's hospitality to the paratroopers, pays a real tribute to the people of her town and state. A disciple of the Joseph Kinsey Howard school of regionalism, this is her second Mountaineer essay of her home town.

PATRICIA CAPLIS, Freshman at Montana State University, writes delicately of The Return of the Hero, giving fresh treatment to a subject which has been presented from every angle in recent months. Pat's work shows unusual finish and understanding. We expect to see more of her work in the next three years.

JANE JEFFERS was too modest to write her own blurb. Blue-eyed Calamity Jane who rides the Mountaineer to the hands of the printer, stepped from behind the typewriter to leave her publicity at the mercy of the editorial staff members. Jeff's race riot penetrates the pettiness of race prejudice to drive home its point. Jane has been a consistent Mountaineer contributor since her freshman year and served as last year's production manager.