

LITERARY PAGE

Those Things I Left

By MORTON REICHART
CHUG - chug - chug - choo-choo

Onward, onward, onward—away, farther and farther away.

Onward to what?
 Why must I leave?
 Everything is closing in now. The wheels speed relentlessly onward.

Chug - chug - - chug - - choo - choo - the mournful choo-choo—

Then the long piercing blasts of the whistle, the smoke curling upward—upward to the sun, and I go onward, onward to what?

And there are those things I left. The things behind me which do not go onward.

Oh why?—Why. Why—why—
 But it will never be the same again

I'll never go back to those things I left—

It will never be the same again. The words kept throbbing, throbbing, throbbing in my heart.

Darkness was my only friend. For in the stillness of the night I could hear the sounds of emotions but in the blackness I could see only the images of my thoughts—

I'm really very tired—funny, I just had a birthday, I should feel good—but I've come so far in so few years—I wonder where all my old friends are—gosh—I feel strange—what's that?—yes, it's mother, "Sonny, hurry, you'll be late for school!"—

And out into the cold of March's first days I'd go. Down hill with my scarf blowing in a crisp breeze.

Soon Judy was there with her pert ways and then Harry and all of our small gang. Oh how we would run when we heard that bell—into our classes and then—another day of our youth and school—

How happily I lived those days. Things were bright, the vigor of youth, of living.

"Morty, Judy, Bobby, Harry"—and down to the mill we'd go. Our hearts were light, our minds were free and clean. The marshes were flooded and a scrambling and a scraping we went until we boasted a barge floating on our own clear waters of Pacifica. We paddled to China for some lucky stones, to Siam for some lucky woods, Egypt gave us clay. Many were the times we fell into the water, many were the colds and scoldings, but the great market place in our yards, and the festivals we had, and the fires we'd light to dry off before the homeward trek with baked potatoes made up for all our sufferings.

But it will never be the same again.

I'll never go back to those things I left.

GLORIOUS days of high-school followed and all those problems we brought to our Mom. And how she would listen and help. Life was so good and our joys so many.

We would laugh and dream and joke and all the time things were changing, changing, changing. Year after year I left behind me memories and with each memory a part of me—my first concert, 1936—that all white and sweet smelling sensation I had when out came my appendix, 1937—and all the time I was changing—1938—

Suddenly, nature revolted dynamically, creating bedlam. She rose to show her might. She tore down the peaceful streets smash-

ing in panes of glass which flew over the pavement, landing with a bitter, resonant—crash! Calm waters were engulfed. They surged onward toward the people. They were cold, fierce, treacherous waters of revenge. The tidal wave grew higher and higher, grew mightier and mightier with its sounds of death. With all the force of an enemy, it swerved down upon the people. Smashing, surging, swirling it went on its way. Storm signals were raised—hurricane had struck peaceful, beautiful New England—Hurricane had struck my home.

With its weird, whistling, hissing sound the winds began to blow. They puffed in homes, they kidnapped the ocean waters, they struck against gigantic oaks, they toppled buildings, they played the game of death with New Englanders. Panic broke loose. Simultaneously, fire engines shrieked, ambulances screeched, the crowds screamed—they screamed because they were able to hold fast to nothing, not even life for that was now the toy of nature.

A glaze into the once irresistible horizon I loved and knew so well revealed smoldering homes, our homes—Judy's, Harry's, Bobby's, and mine, and burning factories, our factories, toppled trees which went down with a mighty flump after many years, trees on which we had out "I love you's" and our names, trees under which we would stand and match chestnuts, flooded streets, the streets we walked on, ran on, sang on, lived on, and now a wake, our friends, relatives—wake.

The skies were dark. Lightning streaked fire across the hidden clouds, thunder shook the stars madly. Rumble, rumble and a crash was the sound it made until the clouds looked down and spit forth their tears.

Our people went with horror. Telephone wires fell—communication was lost. Our homes were gone and our loved ones were—?

Still the hurricane went on her path of destruction. Night fell. The waters had piled up until they had created oceans in the heart of our towns. They carried away the refuge of the attack, the wind began to blow less brutally—the storm was ceasing.

The next day came the shovels, and picks, and the trucks, and the derricks, and the crews of laborers. They steamed, and buzzed, and picked, and scraped, and sawed. Down and up went the derricks, down and up went the derricks, up came our homes which would never stand quietly again. The crews of laborers sweated and shivered and worked and toiled. They cleaned the debris that had changed our coast line. Hurricane had changed our New England—and

It will never be the same again. I'll never go back to those things I left.

IN faith and hope we entrusted our lives, and the sun shone through the darkest clouds. Life began to grow as fast as we took our sleds and coasted down the hills of or town and bathed our skin in the cold, clear snow. Oh yes!—

Then I went to college and what a time—There were the cherished friends I made and the times I had, the travels I went

on, and the things I would plan and dream and pray for—

Many were the lessons we learned from the most unexpected episodes and yet how unpenetrating we were into the true meaning of a great many things. But I—I always thought and wondered, maybe too much. For example there was that industrial celebration they had in March 1941—

"C'mon Mort, there's the bell, and it's a neat day out." O I heard the bell ring; moreover, I heard my friends shouting, "C'mon, c'mon."

But I was thinking, "There's going to be a parade today. The army is going to show their guns and tanks, and nurses, and soldiers, and volunteers will march. If some fellows come, they'll spoil my mood by yelling out, "Woo, look at that blonde, will ya? Hey git the walk on that one." I'll just go alone."

"Hurry up, Mort, will ya? Dammit, you're as slow as my Uncle Pete's sick cow."

I said, "So long, see ya later," to all the fellows, and I ran down the stairs of the school, leaped across the street, and hurried into the shady park. Whoops! I stopped short. "Shucks, what's wrong?" I queried, "hundreds of people pass it every day and say nothing. Why I come by it and use its big feet for a seat or lean against its legs while waiting for a trolley. But right now I have to say, "Hi, there, Mr. Lincoln."

"Yeah, Harry, I tell ya he's sittin on the foot of that statue of Lincoln in the park, and he's talkin' to himself; he's gone nuts, I betcha."

Well, sir, I just thought that Mr. Lincoln in marble has winked at me. I winked back and though the pigeons were playing gleefully around Mr. Lincoln's hands, he said, "Where are you going and what's the excitement about, son?"

My heart began to swell, a twinkle filled my eyes, and I answered whole-heartedly, "Oh, there's going to be a big military parade. (I couldn't be a bit very well, so I added), "Want to come and see it?"

Now that was generous, wasn't it? After all, Lincoln would enjoy seeing the war efforts of our great nation; he would enjoy seeing free negroes marching beside their fellow Americans; he would enjoy seeing a united nation of women, men, children, Jew, Negro, Armenian, Chinese all working side by side, all wearing close to their hearts the symbol of our greatness, and Mr. Lincoln, wouldn't you enjoy seeing millions of people who love you?

I felt as though Lincoln had accepted my invitation and was standing beside me.

"Hi ya, Mort."

"Sh!"

"Hey, what's eatin' on you?"

"Mr. Lincoln is thinking about the fellows who marched in the Civil war and of those who are marching on battle fields today. I'd better whisper somethin' to him."

"I tell ya, Harry, he's nuts!"

"Mr. Lincoln, it's O.K. These fellows are marching out the beats of respect, pride, and happiness."

I knew that would make him feel better.

"Hey, Larry, there's the mayor getting ready to give his address."

"C'mon, Mort, let's move down

Etude for the Artist

Long ductile fingers
 Caressing velvet motion brush,
 Hazy smoke lingers
 Greenwich Village midnight hush.

"An artist must love and be loved . . .
 Poet, mystic, philosopher, scholar . . .
 Expanding atom in the relentless
 Rhythmic surge of life force.
 Symmetry, proportion, balance, purist
 Classicist, stylist, cubist, expressionist
 All in the same stroke of the brush.
 White glaze incandescence pulsing of
 Easel-life. Poignant, hot, humid fusion
 Velvet-breasted night warmly cooling . . .

You young artists paint paint paint
 For the soul and the eye . . . the wet and
 Lidless eye of those more critical
 Than correct . . . understanding eye of
 Hope and achievement. Paint the pregnant
 Woman by fields of rich American wheat . . .
 Grey hulking powerful defense factories
 With clang of steel and lapping glut of
 Seawater on camouflaged bows sleek and
 Deadly. Paint the approaching footsteps
 Two young lovers on a soft summer night
 Please make me hear the man's voice
 Low, vibrant, hushed, casual, confiding . . .
 Paint the low rich welling of the woman's
 Laughter tender and sensual receding into
 Midnight mystery silence . . .

Crimson, black, yellow, green . . .
 Whispering pinks and bruising reds—
 Million-faced nightmares of pigment
 Lifting man's story above the immense
 Prodigious shoulder of escaping time.
 Dream-pale, racy, pungent, glowing . . .
 Mad, fervid, opulent-cool, moist blushes—
 You young artists . . . paint . . . paint . . . paint

Joyful exultant mood
 Easy fluent slippery nights,
 Cultural beauty nude
 Blinking winking Greenwich lights.

—By Ray Dickson.

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nearer to him."

I didn't hear the mayor. No, I heard—

"Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."

As the crowds cheered the mayor, I saw the men and women cheer him. As the bands began to play "America," I saw Lincoln departing from Illinois. As the drums began to toll and a cannon was fired, I saw Lincoln fall with a bullet shot through his body. And from out of the smoke came Vachel Lindsay. Vachel Lindsay came saying—

"He cannot rest until the spirit-dawn shall come;—the shining hope of Europe free:

The league of sober folk, the Worker's
 Earth, bringing long peace to

Cornland,
 Alp and Sea. It breaks his heart

That kings must murder still, that All his hours of travail here for men

Seem yet in vain. And who will bring

White peace that he may sleep upon

His hill again?"

I shouted, "Abraham Lincoln!"
 From the right came, "Yo, there, look at that beautiful skirt over there!"

* * *

THE next day on the way to classes with some of the boys I was asked a question, "Hey, Mort, if you were a great man, where else, besides in the schools, would you teach Americanism and brotherhood?"

"I'd go nowhere, Spike, I wouldn't even stress it too much in school. You see, it's in the hearts of all Americans. Every person standing on American soil knows that nowhere else may he plant healthy roots for a healthy life. Nowhere else may he utter,

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