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EDITORS NOTE: The following story was written by a former Brookings man, known by many here as "Mike" De Bruin. Mike now lives in California. The story is in keeping with the Thanksgiving spirit, because of what a few people did, Mike refers to Brookings

as "the nicest community I have ever known." The story was printed first in Lion's Weekly stamp news, a stamp collectors paper of national circulation. The article was brought to the attention of the editors of the Pilot by Erskine Miller.

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AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL

Minco de Bruin

How I practically lost my faith in this country, and how it appeared to turn out to the opposite, I shall try to tell.

I was born in Holland, and as a teenager and ever since I have collected stamps. When World War II broke out, I was employed in the Dutch East Indies. The Japanese soon overran the country and I was a prisoner of war, and my stamp collection was given away to a Dutch friend.

After the war I decided to come to the United States and start over again. I realized it would be difficult, without a knowledge of the customs and only a fair knowledge of the language. I arrived in New York and for nearly a year I found employment on various jobs, but none were really satisfactory.

Through an advertisement in a newspaper, I was offered a job on a specialty farm on the Pacific Coast. We Dutch have a reputation for being good farmers, and here I thought I would have a chance to learn the business. I packed my three suitcases and took the bus across country. My destination turned out to be about four miles from a small town. My living quarters were a room on the upper floor of a shed; and I took my meals with a Dutch family working at the same place. After a few months, while unloading a truck a box fell on my leg and fractured my ankle. I learned that farm labors are not covered by state accident insurance; I could not work until my ankle healed; and my money was almost exhausted. I just had to sit in my room and wait.



To help pass the time I thought I would become interested in my stamps again. I wrote to the local paper and inquired if there were any stamp collectors. Yes, I received a letter in a few days, and an invitation to a home. It was a very pleasant evening as we had mutual interests not only in stamps but in world wide travel and other subjects.

My host inquired about my limp and I told him of my accident, and that the next day I expected the doctor would discharge me as cured and I would look for a job. Right away he phoned a friend and made an appointment for an interview for me with a view to employment. I felt much better when I went home that evening.

The next day the doctor told me the bone had not healed and that I would have to wear a cast for two months. The word "desperate" is poor to describe my feelings at that moment; in a strange country, without a job, without friends and family, all alone in a horrible place, bound in bed for two months, and with little money left.

I phoned my friend and told him shortly that I could not come because of the result of the X-ray. His reaction I shall never forget as long as I live — it made me cry inside. All he said was, "Mike, who is taking care of you?" My answer was "Nobody" and I put the telephone on the hook.

"Who cares?", I thought. My employer loaded me in his truck and back we went to my hole. The very same day however I got a visit from him, and he talked me as a father and one who completely understood my feelings and situation. "You must get out of this atmosphere", he said. The next morning here comes my friend and a fraternal brother, and they moved me and my baggage to the local inn.

From that moment everything turned out better and better. The inn was clean and hearty and served good food. Friends began to appear from everywhere. It seemed that the whole of that small community were suddenly my best friends. I was invited to dinner in their homes, to the Rotary Club luncheon, and I even attended a meeting of the High School International Club and told about my experiences in the Dutch East Indies.

So in a short time I regained my self-confidence and faith in the future. My bone did heal; and then on the advice of my friends I moved to San Francisco. I think this is the most wonderful city in the world. I have a good job, with opportunity for the future. This all because my interest in stamps brought me into contact with another collector, and through him I met the nicest community I have ever known. It has shown me real American hospitality and given me back my faith in this wonderful country — America, The Beautiful!

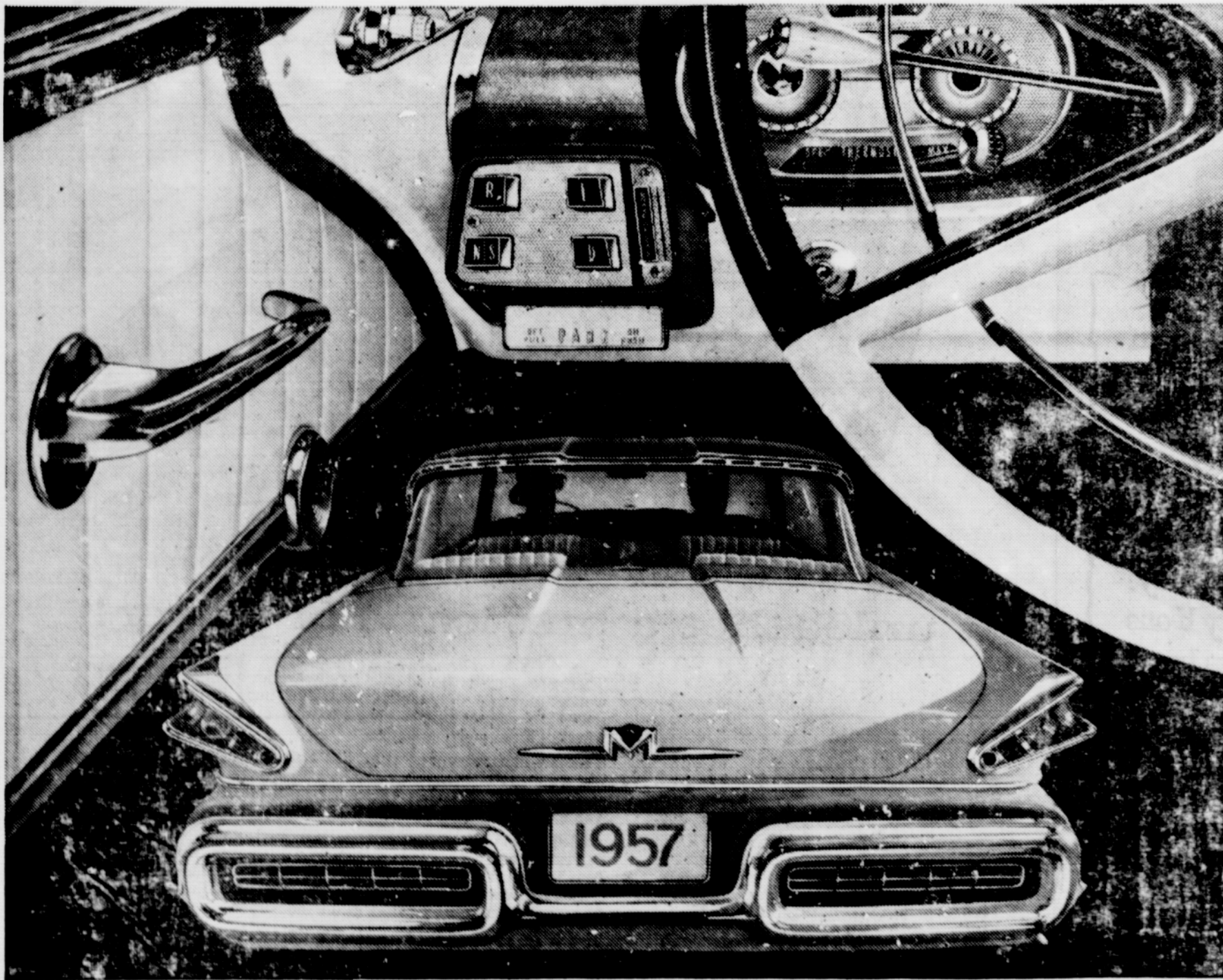
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