The FICTION Corner

ONE MORE JUMP

By ROBERT C. BLACKMON

"I'VE told you it makes no difference to me, Ralph, and I meant it. It really doesn't."

Dusk dimmed the coral gold of Harriet Marne's hair, dimmed the blue of the light dotted buildings rising above the flat roofs upon which she and Ralph Pell stood. It filled with deep shadow the narrow slot of the alley between them, and the noise of the city was a screen about them, isolating them from the rest of the world.

"That's what you think now, but you'd get straight in your thinking in a few weeks, or months, or years. Then it would make a lot of difference." Across the alley, Ralph Pell leaned bronzed arms on the low brick parapet of the other building and shook his head in slow deliberation. Pink neon glow spilling into the alley from the street eight floors down glinted on his brown eves and made odd shadows in his curly brown hair. It changed to an impossible color the tan of his knitted sport shirt. "After that, it would always be there between us. Or rather, it wouldn't be there."

He laughed harshly and reached down to feel, through brown trouser fabric, the device which substituted for the flesh and bone he had left on a field in Normandy when gunfire from the ground met parachutes drifting silently in the darkness. He would never forget that.

"No, Ralph." Harriet's small fist struck the stained brick of the low parapet bordering her own flat roof, as if to drive understanding across the dark drop of the alley between them. "It would never make any difference to me. To me, you would always be—" She groped momentarily for a word that would not sting.

"Normal?" His voice was flat and bitter.

"Please, Ralph." Her voice rose a little.

"Sorry, but I'd never be that, even with two real legs." He laughed shortly. "Service medico says I'm part of a mind, as well as part of a man. Let's don't kid ourselves. Too much is riding on it. It would always be there between us like—well, like this alley is between us now. I'd have as much chance getting over it as I would getting over this alley." He glanced down at the eight-story drop, the sliver of pavement below. "Imagine me doing that. Be your age. Get wise to some facts. The best thing for both of us to do is to forget we ever—Ah!" He made a savage gesture.

"Let's talk about something else." Harriet said that quickly, almost desperately.

"Let's talk about you peeping at me on my roof here this summer. Let's talk about you waiting downstairs to introduce yourself as the peeper. Let's talk about the places we have been together, the things we have done. Let's talk about our meeting up here with the alley between us in the evening. Let's talk about—" Her voice stopped for a moment on an odd, sharp gasp. "Let's talk about the big ape escaping from the city zoo this afternoon. Let's—"

"Ape escaping from the zoo?" Ralph Pell stood, tall and slender in the night. "I haven't heard anything about it. You're sure?"

"You probably missed it." Harriet laughed a little shrilly. "The ape is big and black and ferocious. I—I certainly wouldn't like to meet him up here on my roof alone, with no one here to help me. Goodness! Ooooooooh!" She shivered audibly.

"No chance of that." There was amused tolerance in his grin. "The ape's probably back in his zoo cage and glad to get away from humans. And I didn't peep at you on your roof. I looked. It can't be a crime to look at softness and beauty and sweetness, with so much hardness and ugliness and bitterness in the world. It can't be a crime for a—Ah! Let's talk about the ape!" he finished quickly, harshly.

"Well, I like that." Harriet laughed.

She moved away from the parapet, small and shapely in the night against the neoned sky. "I'm cold. I'll have to get a wrap. Don't go away. I'll be back in a minute." She ran.

Ralph Pell watched her cross the flat roof of the other building to the small shedlike structure that housed the stairway. It was about forty feet away. Then he jammed his hands down into his trouser pockets, swore softly and kicked at gravel on his own flat roof with his good foot, balancing himself on the artificial limb. His eyes were stormy, his lips tight.

Harriet was swell people. That made it tough, but positive. She deserved a whole man. Years, or maybe only months or weeks from now, she'd look back and be glad that things turned out as they had. She'd realize that he was right, and maybe she'd understand why—and—well, everything. It was tough now, but—

HARRIET'S small figure appeared in the doorway of the stairway shed on the other roof. Even as she appeared, a strange black shape came between them, all but blocking her from his view. Then he heard her scream, shrill and clear in the night.

"Ralph!"

The ape!

The impact of the two words drove him forward until his knees struck the edge of the low brick parapet bordering the eight-story drop into the alley between the two buildings.

He heard Harriet scream again.

Shouting for help would be useless. By the time someone heard and understood and reached the other roof. . . . It would take many minutes to run downstairs, cross to the other building and get to the roof. In the meantime. . . .

Sweat came out on his face as he put his good foot up on the edge of the brick parapet and thrust his lean weight up with the other leg. Grunting with effort, he flung himself out over the alley and toward the brick parapet of the other building roof.

For a moment, he was drifting down through the black Normandy night, a huge silk dome above him, bracing himself for the blast from the ground, the numbing shock of bullets striking.

His artificial foot struck the other parapet and slipped off. He fell. There was a quick, breath-taking drop toward the pavement eight floors down, then his outflung arm struck brick. Brown fingers curled over a sharp edge, gripping. Strain came on the arm as he stopped the fall, and his weight all but tore his fingers loose. Small, sharp sounds came from his lips and he got his good leg up, hooked the heel over the edge of the parapet, then levered the rest of him up. He rolled over the parapet top and dropped to the flat gravel roof of the other building, and his heart beat was shaking him.

Even as he struck he was up and running toward Harriet and the black shape.

He came within reach, laced fingers into stiff, course fur and jerked savagely to drag the black shape away from Harriet. The fur yielded with an ease that all but made him fall, and he found himself holding the black-furred pelt of a small animal. There was felt sewn to the underside of the pelt, and he recognized the thing.

"Hey! This is the little black bearskin from your apartment!" He yelled at Harriet Marne standing before him in the darkness, small and quiet. "Hey! You made me jump that—! I might have—!"

"I knew you wouldn't fall—couldn't fall." Harriet Marne started laughing and crying at the same time. "It was just one more jump you had to make—to prove—Oh, Ralph!" Her lifted arms were slim and white in the night.

Ralph Pell dropped the pelt, and there was no further need for words.

"It would never make any difference to me. To me, you would always be—" She groped momentarily for a word that would not sting.

Tricks for Teens

By NANCY PEPPER

THOSE DISC JERKIES

We weren't aware that those recorded radio programs, M. C.'ed by eager young beavers known as "disc jockies," had become so much a part of teen-age life until one of our hi style scouts from Nashville, Tenn., told us it was customary to end up an evening date at the local radio station to watch the platters go 'round and listen to the jockey joke. That piece of news set us out on the trail for more disc jockey info. Tune in to the next transcribed paragraphs, if you're interested.

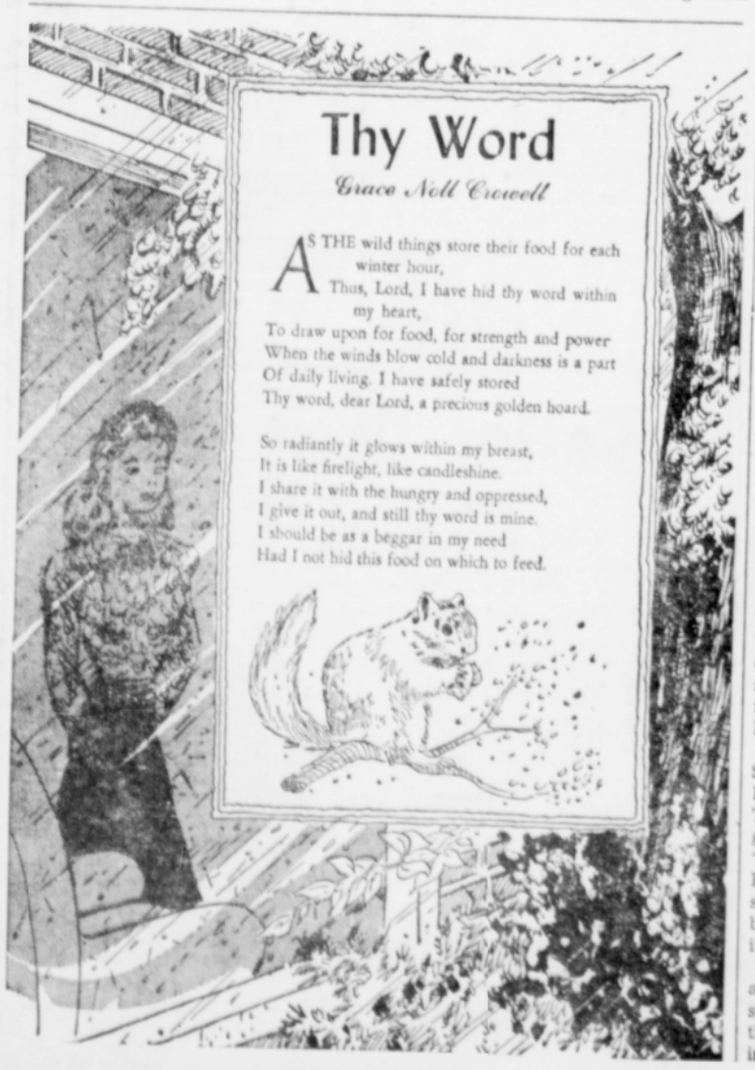
MOTHER'S DAY—Up in Montreal, Canada, Disc Jockey Bob Horne, who conducts a regular after-school clam bake for teen-agers, has established every Thursday as Mother's day. Teen-agers request records to be played for their mothers and the Mother-of-the-Week is picked from their letters and is sent a dozen roses. Wonder if any mother has been honored with Spike Jones' "William Tell Overture."

RHYME TIME—Out Detroit way, a disc jockey known as "Jack the Bell Boy," reads poems submitted to him by ten-agers. He also sends out membership cards and club pins to every teen-ager who wants to join his disc club.

CLOCK WORK—In Dayton, Ohio, teen-agers depend on Bud Baldwin's "Breakfast in Bedlam" to get them to school on time. And in Oklahoma, disc jockey Tom De Vore spins special "Two-Minute Egg" tunes for the benefit of housewives who like to boil their eggs to music.

CELEBRITY SESSIONS—Lucky St. Louis teen-agers who attend Disc Jockey Gil Newsomes' "Teen Thirty" club have actually met such guest stars as Buddy Clark, Nat "King" Cole, Eddy Howard, Frankie Carle, Stan Kenton and, oh, so many others. Also, after the broadcast, there's an hour of dancing right there in the studio.

Well, as one disc jockey said to another disc jockey, "Go fly in a saucer." And that, junior, explains the mystery of those discs you saw in the sky last summer.



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Life in Padang

In Padang island, Sumatra, the children take their mother's name. All property is held by the mother and inherited by daughter. Father has no political, social, property or civil rights.

Yellowstone Ice

Yellowstone lake, in Yellowstone park, freezes to a depth sufficient to yield 180 million tons of ice, or enough to furnish every man, woman and child in the United States with one and one-half tons.

Uses of Pitchblende

Pitchblende long has been used as a source of coloring for pottery. It also yields by-products useful for photography, medicinal purposes, fluorescent glass making, and the making of luminous paint.

Blind As a Bat

Mr. Jones was sitting with his wife behind a palm on a hotel veranda when a young man and girl took a bench nearby. The billing and cooing commenced.

Hidden behind the palm, Mrs. Jones whispered to her husband, "Oh, John, he doesn't know we're here and he's going to propose. Whistle and warn him."

"Why should I?" asked her husband bitterly. "Nobody whistled to warn me."

Making Salads Attractive

Garnishes add to the attractiveness of a salad. Parsley, hard cooked eggs, nut meats, strips of pimento or green peppers, slices of pickles, little radishes, thin slices of lemon or paprika may be used.

First "First Lady"

Abigail Adams was the first lady to occupy the White House in Washington, and the only woman having the honor of being wife of one president and mother of another.

World's Biggest Rat

World's largest rodent is the Capybara rat. It often grows to a length of four feet and sometimes weighs as much as seventy pounds. It is web-footed.

Gathering Evidence

A young policeman was undergoing an examination.

"Now assume," said the examiner, "that you were walking along a scheduled path, and a young woman rushed up to you and reported that a strange man had just embraced and kissed her—what would you do?"

"Well, sir," said the candidate, "I would do several things. But first, with the young lady's assistance, I think I would endeavor to reconstruct the crime."

Radio Aids Weathermen

Radio waves may help weathermen with their forecasting. A New York inventor has been awarded a patent on a process using high frequency radio waves to determine what kind of air masses are overhead and roundabout. By studying signal strength, data is provided on relative humidity, temperature and pressure of intervening air masses.

Longer Lasting Teeth

As a result of advances in human life expectancy, the average child of today will need his teeth 27 years longer than the average child born during the American Revolution, and 17 years longer than the child born in 1900, says Dr. J. T. O'Rourke, Boston dentist. Humans are far outliving the life expectancy of their teeth.

Painful Sight

When a group of women got on the car, every seat was already occupied. The conductor noticed a man who seemed to be asleep, and, fearing that he might miss his stop, he nudged him and said:

"Wake up!"

"I wasn't asleep," the man protested.

"Not asleep? But you had your eyes closed."

"I know. I just hate to look at ladies standing up in a crowded car."