

The Washington Merry-Go-Round

DREW PEARSON & ROBERT ALLEN



GENERAL HUGH S. JOHNSON Says:

Sportlight by GRANTLAND RICE

FIFTH COLUMN 'GUNS' IN U. S.
 Attorney General Bob Jackson's plea for a federal law requiring registration of all privately owned firearms had more behind it than he disclosed. Inside fact is that this constitutes one of the most serious problems facing the government in its war against fifth columns.

Following the World war, one armament company alone disposed of 15,000 "Tommy" guns to private purchasers after trying unsuccessfully to sell them to the army. About 10,000 of these deadly weapons are "unaccounted for." How many are in the hands of potential fifth columnists the government, under existing laws, has no way of knowing. Jackson's proposed statute would provide the power to find out.

Another unmentioned factor troubling officials is the tremendous increase in the sale of guns and ammunition in the last two years. Tax collections by the internal revenue bureau give the following figures on this astounding traffic in our "peaceful" country:

Total sale of taxed firearms, rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, to private persons in 1938—\$24,959,048; in 1939—\$36,010,684.

In the past three years these sales reached the amazing total of \$97,403,730—which is almost one-fourth of the army's 1937 appropriation. It is also vastly in excess of average sales for sporting purposes and law enforcement.

Note—The U. S. is far behind other powers in regulating firearms. England, France, Germany, Italy, Japan all have drastic laws on the private possession of weapons. The national firearms act of 1934 imposed a limited regulation on the sale of machine-guns and sawed-off shotguns by requiring manufacturers, dealers and pawnbrokers to register sales and transfers. But the many thousands of these lethal weapons sold before 1934 still are unaccounted for.

BASES IN SOUTH AMERICA

It seems to be, or to have been, a principal part of our defense policy to rely largely on the British navy and the good will of our Good Neighbor league with the Latin Americas in protecting the Monroe Doctrine. The post-World war period of international treaty-breaking, debt-repudiation and double-crossing should have been warning enough that no nation can safely rely on any strength but its own.

Some people now fear that the British navy may not always be there. It may be a good time to question also our reliance on the South and Central American countries.

At the very start, it must be admitted that there has been a good deal of hokum in calling them democracies. In greater or less degree they are military oligarchies.

Some, like Santo Domingo, are dictatorships as bloody and ruthless as anything Hitler ever dreamed. None is a democracy in the Anglo-Saxon sense.

Their legal systems stem from the civil law of Rome and not from the



As Some See It

—By Thomas.

common law. They have never really understood or very much cared about any such institutions as self-government as ours.

In the next place, in spite of all the declarations, treaties and diplomatic palaver, most of them distrust us and in some cases despise us. Mr. Roosevelt has done much to improve this state of affairs but you don't change national sentiment and the thinking of generations by a few visits and a lot of ballyhoo.

To the contrary, several of these countries have much closer ties of blood, education and tradition with European countries than with us. Their language is either Spanish or Portuguese and their immigration has been much more heavily Italian, Spanish or German than French or English.

Finally, their military, naval and air strength and aptitude is almost negligible. All we could expect to gain from our league with them are defensive naval and air bases for our own arms but with that under the present plan, come the obligation and tremendous task of policing and defending a continent full of suspicious or unfriendly, if not outright hostile nations.

This column thoroughly agrees that, for the sake of our own hides, we have to get naval and air bases to prevent enemy lodgments—at least to the bulge of South America. It notes with alarm that we are not getting them.

It doubts whether we are ever going to get them or buy for ourselves anything more than a mare's nest of dangers and trouble if we don't put the pressure on to get them and recognize that we are doing it as an absolute necessity for our own defense and without much, if any, reliance on the loyalty, strength or friendship of any country south of the Rio Grande.

...
UNIVERSAL TRAINING
 As an illustration of snap judgments in the highest places is the President's approval after having read "only the first paragraph" of a New York Times editorial, saying:

"The time has come when, in the interest of self-protection, the American people should at once adopt a national system of universal compulsory military training."
 Later on the editorial said:
 "We believe that it should be so drafted as to provide training not only for young men but for older men as well."

So do I, but in 1918, we had registered for, or actually in military service, 25,348,000 men between the ages of 18 and 45. Since then our population has increased 30 per cent. Presumably we now have at least 33,000,000 in that class.

Setting out to train 33,000,000 men would be absurd and preposterous. Of course, many of these would be exempted by reason of physical disability, or dependency of others, or by reason of industrial necessity. The number is impossible to compute until we know the liberality or strictness of the exemption rules. If we decided to train all the classes that were in 1918 classified as fit and eventually liable to military service, the total would be more than 10,000,000.

Obviously, the writer of that editorial did not mean "universal compulsory military training." It would be destructive, impracticable.

MY OLD Purdue college pal, George Ade, once introduced one of the finest of all slogans. It was called, "Flowers for the living." The dead neither know nor care.

If any living ball player is entitled to flowers at this stage of his career the name is Melvin Thomas Ott of the Giants.

Ott has at least one record that no other ball player carries today, as far as I can locate the vital statistics. Born in Gretna, La., in 1909, this young prodigy suddenly showed up with McGraw's Giants in 1925 at the age of 16. For 16 years there has been no other city marked against his name—only New York.



Mel Ott

Mel came from the Bayou district straight to the big town. He has never played in a minor league. He was a bat boy in size and years when McGraw saw him—and never let him go.

"This kid was a big leaguer the day he was born," McGraw once told me. "He doesn't need any minor league schooling."

When the young spring of 1940 came riding through gales, sleet, snow and weather blown from the Barren Lands, they said Ott was about through. He was only 31 years old, but he had been around a long time. He was starting slowly under killing weather conditions, but he was still out there, hanging around.

When the season opened Mel Ott was still on the job and as time moves on, Mel is still up around the .300 class with the old punch.

Ott's Career

Ott, at his physical peak, is five feet nine inches in height, weighing from 155 to 160 pounds. He was never a Babe Ruth, a Jimmy Foxx, a Hank Greenberg, a Hack Wilson or a Lou Gehrig in physical make-up.

He always had a queer habit of lifting his foot from the ground as he started his swing—his right foot—and then swinging from his left as his right foot promptly settled back to place. It was his own foot action. It wasn't supposed to be "form," but it was the way Ott wanted to play. And it was "form," after all, the "form" of shifting weight. It must be "form."

For in his 15 years with the Giants, up through 1939, Ott had maulled out 369 home runs and 359 doubles. He had lashed out 2,061 hits, and 791 of these blows had been for extended extra bases.

As far back as 1928 Mel plastered 42 home runs. He had hit 25 or more home runs through 10 or 11 years. He had hit over 30 home runs through seven seasons. With the bulk of Ruth, Gehrig, Foxx or Greenberg, Ott would have broken all records.

He is anywhere from 50 to 80 pounds shy in weight while competing with the major league stars. But he won't be far from the 400 home-run mark when 1940 turns in its set of records. He is still something back of Jimmy Foxx and Lou Gehrig, but don't forget that Mel had to spot them more than 50 pounds, which means a lot in long-range hitting.

The Bayou Entry

Mel Ott has never been interested in trying for so-called color. He never pops off. He has never tried to make a headline by some eccentric action. He gets into no brawls with umpires. He has no interest in being a showman.

"I just happen to like baseball," he tells you. "If I'm anything at all, write me down as a ball player."

If Ott isn't a ball player, there are no ball players. Shy, retiring, he ducks the spotlight.

But the main answer is that Mel has batted in more than 1,400 runs from something over 2,000 hits, with a 15-year average, up to this season, of .315.

I don't believe the fan crowd, at large, appreciates Mel Ott. This goes for New York, especially. They take him for granted. They take him for granted because he never breaks training, never folds up on the job, always plays his game to the limit.

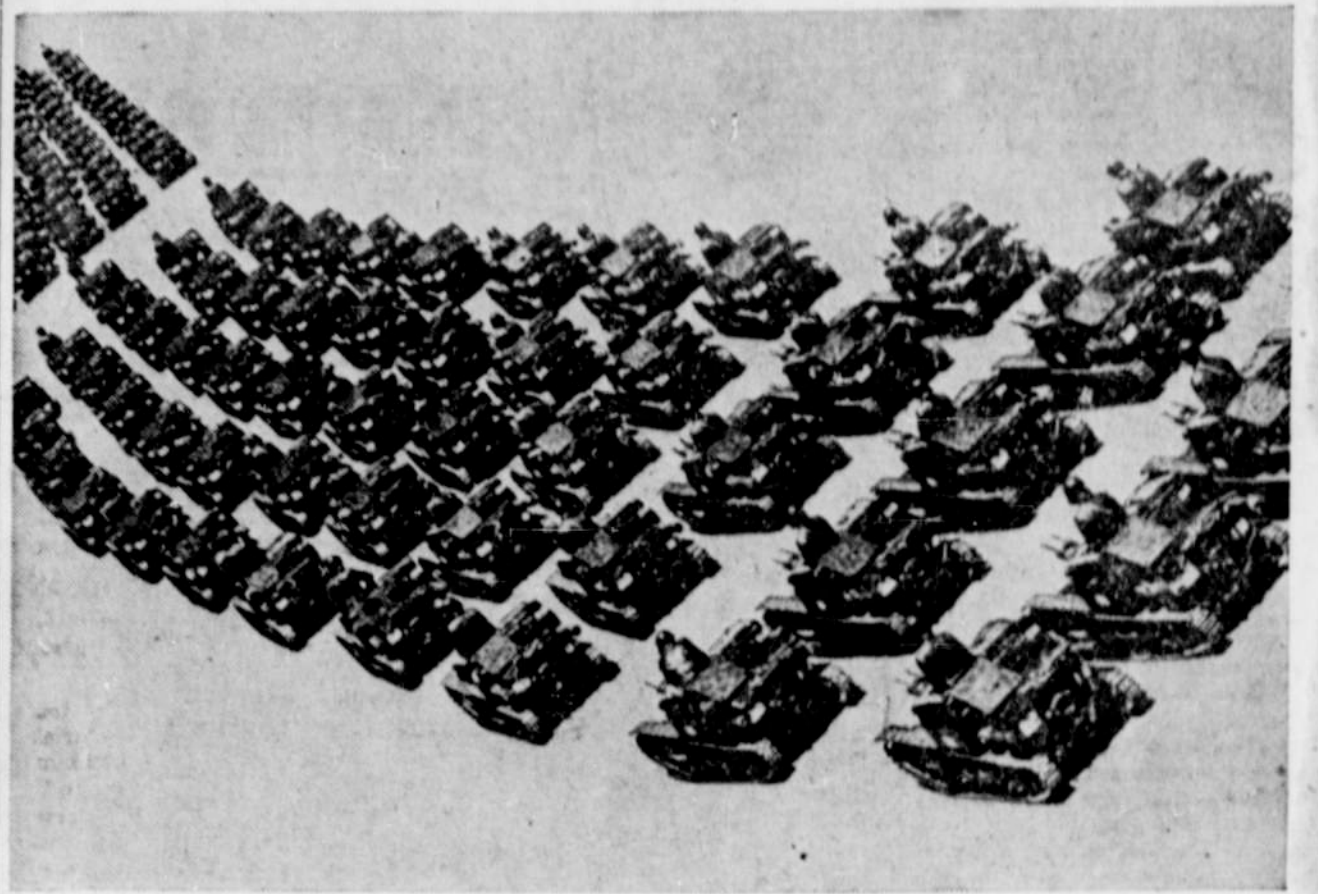
It is always "Good old Mel. He's always there." But not being a nut or a headline seeker, never caring to be a showman, the mob forgets how long "good old Mel" had always been there.

They forget that he has lambasted over 20 home runs a year for 12 consecutive years—that he has passed the 30 home-run mark for seven years. Even big Hank Greenberg has passed the 30-homer mark only five years.

In addition to all this, Mr. Mel Ott is quite an outfielder. He can cover his full share of terrain under fire.

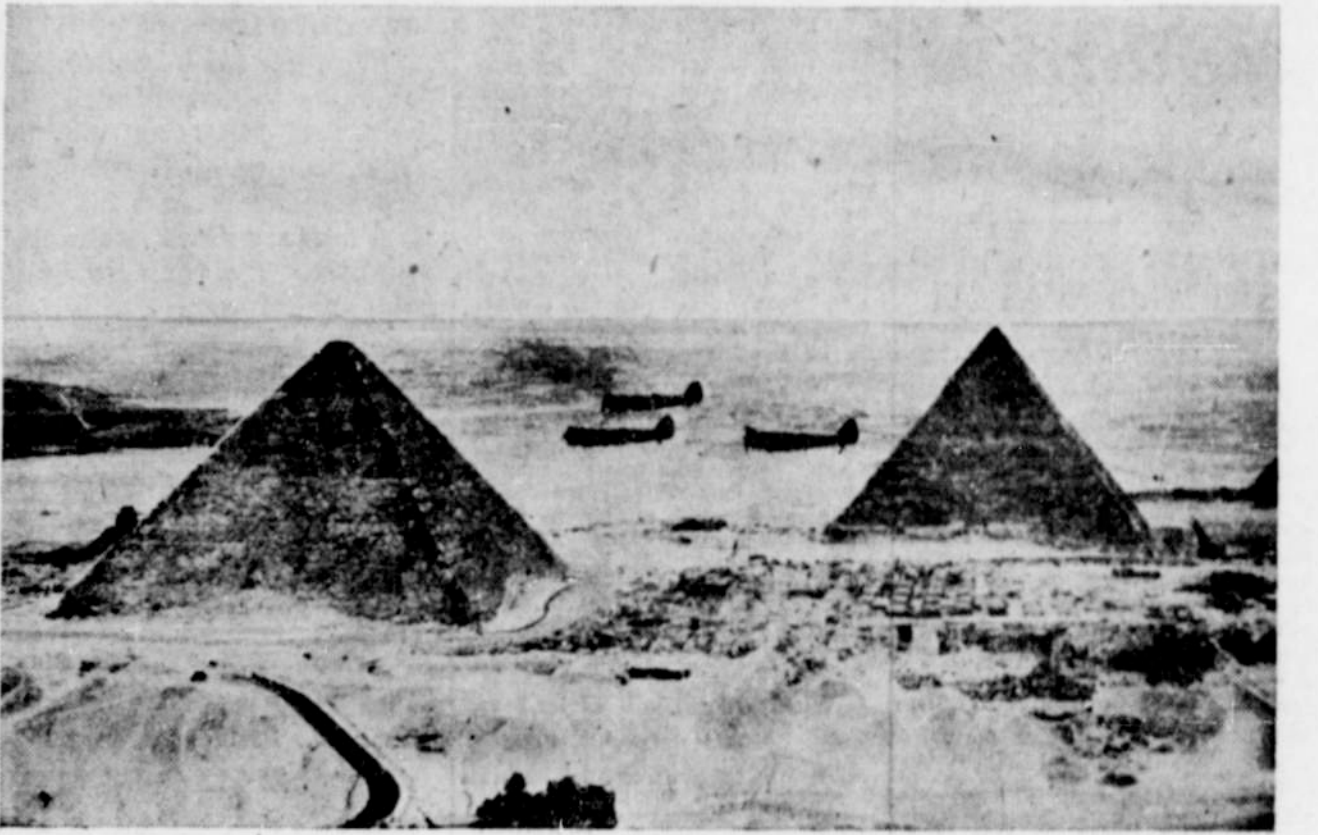
Thirty-one isn't old. Lefty Grove is 40. But Ott is in his sixteenth major league campaign, and through all these years he has given everything he had to give, with nothing like a loafing moment.

The Roman Phalanx of 1940 A. D.



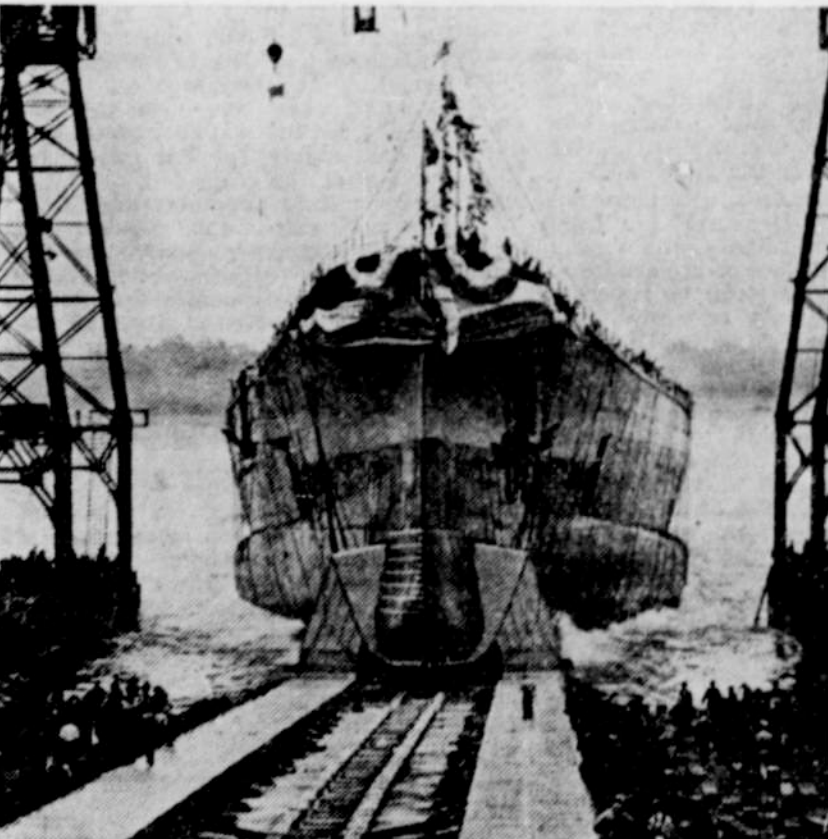
Julius Caesar's "phalanx" of close-packed Roman legions who formed an armored roof with shields covering their advance, is improved upon by the modern "Caesar." Here are today's Roman "phalanx" armored legions that comprise part of Italy's war machine. These tanks are ultra-modern, many being equipped with flame projectors.

Egypt Prepares for Any Eventuality



Past the pyramids, ages old symbols of Egypt and the Pharaohs, roar these British Blenheim bombers, as the British and Egyptian forces prepare for any "eventuality." The feared "eventuality," of course, was the long-expected Italian entry into the great war, with a drive at Egypt from Libya as the first move.

Uncle Sam Gets Bigger Battle Wagon



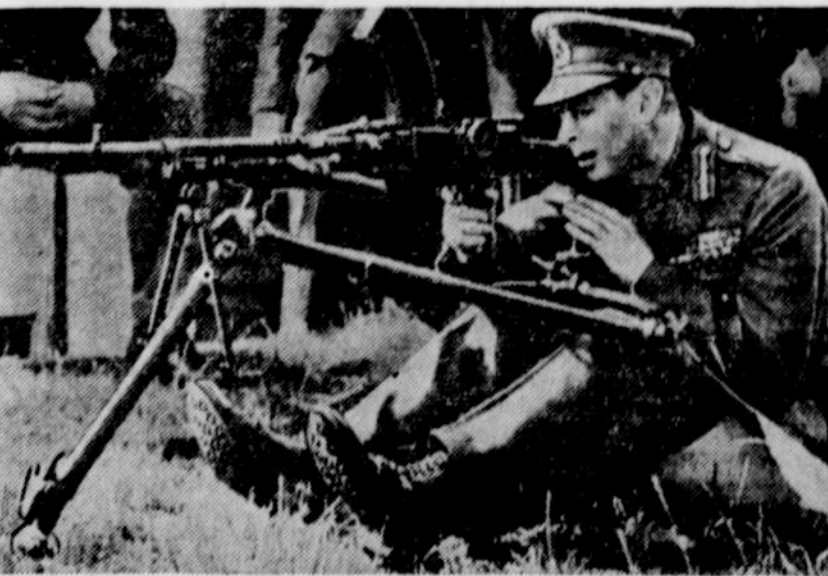
Bedecked with flags and bunting, the U. S. S. Washington, 35,000-ton battleship just completed at the Philadelphia navy yard, is shown sliding down the ways to the Delaware river. The 750-foot ship cost \$80,000,000 and is the biggest warship ever built on this continent. It is the first completed unit of 68 warships under construction.

Banks Half Billion



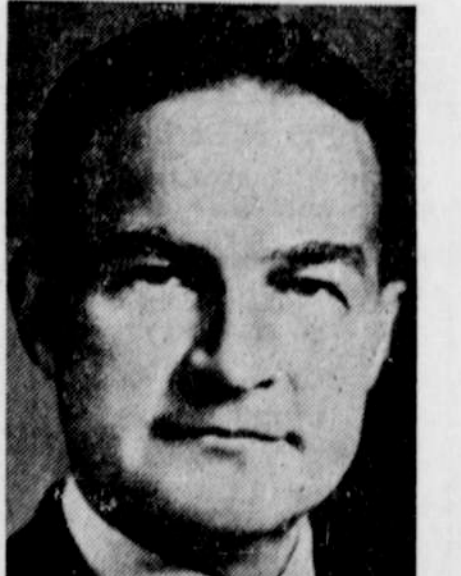
Mrs. Essie Ept, in charge of Ohio's gasoline revenues, has deposited \$540,316,659 to the state's credit since 1926. This great sum was collected in dimes, nickels and pennies. It took a lot of 'em—but Mrs. Ept didn't mind.

King George Quite a 'Shot'



During a recent inspection tour of a gun factory that is operating night and day under war pressure, King George tried out a Bren machine gun. He put 60 bullets in or close to the bulls-eye at 20 yards, and remarked: "I had no idea the gun was so steady." The king has made a number of personal inspections in factories lately.

Steel Chairman



Irving S. Olds, elected chairman of the board of the U. S. Steel corporation, to succeed Edward R. Stettinius Jr., who resigned to serve with national defense commission.

OIL TO ITALY

Italy's entrance into the war has at least one harmful effect upon her ally, Germany. It means the end of U. S. oil shipments to Italian ports for trans-shipment to Germany.

These shipments, especially of lubricating oils, have been heavy since the first month of the war. With Italy at war, however, U. S. ships are barred.

This will stimulate Axis efforts to open up oil resources in the Near East, and Italy is sure to make a drive for the British and French oil fields in Iraq. Or getting through the Suez canal, she will strike at the oil fields of Iran, under control of the Anglo-Iranian company.

Meanwhile British oil shipments from these sources will be diverted from the Mediterranean route, and the result probably will be a heavy increase of U. S. oil shipments to Britain and France.

APPEASING MUSSOLINI

Allied and Roosevelt diplomacy struggled behind the scenes until almost the last minute to keep Mussolini out of war.

It was on a Monday that the Italian dictator shouted his hoarse-voiced proclamation of war. And as late as the preceding Saturday, the French were still dicking with him. At that time they offered him the island of Corsica, birthplace of Napoleon, as well as the important African colony of Tunisia, plus French Somaliland with its Red Sea port of Djibuti.

But Mussolini wanted more.

Real fact probably was that he could not afford to antagonize Hitler by failing to declare war. A Nazi victory looked too certain, in which case Mussolini would have been left facing the triumphant and resentful hordes of Nazi Germany just across the Brenner pass.

Note—A lot of people think Mussolini will face an aggressive Nazi army anyway.

ROOSEVELT'S MOVES

President Roosevelt came to realize that nothing counted with Mussolini except (1) what he was going to get in return for keeping the peace; and (2) whether he was going to be on the winning side.

Accordingly, the last week's announcements from the White House that the United States was selling army and navy planes direct to the allies, plus surplus army equipment, was calculated to have a double effect. One was the actual help it would give the allies. The other was the hope that Mussolini would be influenced by the fact that the United States was talking in deeds, not mere words, and that these deeds might turn an allied victory.

POLITICAL CHAFF

One of Al Landon's hardest jobs is scotching booms for himself. Practically every day, by long distance phone or telegraph, he has to nip the plan of some admirer to start a drive for him.

Following reports that Communist and Nazi agents are working along the Mexican-U. S. border, Senator Josh Lee of Oklahoma proposed construction of a series of forts, each within sight of the next, to shoot any foreign agent seen sneaking into the U. S.