

MURDER AT MOCKING HOUSE

BY WALTER C. BROWN

SYNOPSIS: Although Sergeant Lafferty has proved that the stranger and the policeman found dead in Pierre Dufresne's house were murdered, and did not kill each other as the evidence appeared to prove, he can neither identify the murderer nor show how the murderer escaped from the house without leaving tracks in the snow. Dufresne, although he has an apparently airtight alibi, has aroused Harper's suspicion.

Chapter 23
HARPER'S THEORY

"AFTERWARD, Dufresne's alibi was so confoundingly airtight that it annoyed me," Harper continued. "But how to get around it? I had that idea in mind when I left here right after the discovery of the bodies and dashed back to the Austerlitz—but there he was, dead drunk, and our own men on guard."

He shook his head. "That's a tough nut to crack. I guess we'll have to look elsewhere for the murderer. There are two vital questions we'll have to answer before we can pin it on anybody. The first one is, Who is the dead man? Certainly the man lived somewhere, ate his meals somewhere, bought things, and met people to some degree. You can't live in any city without some personal contacts."

"The second question is, How did the murderer escape from this house without leaving tracks in the snow? Each is a vital question and we've got to supply the answers."

"The newspapers will help us establish his identity," Lafferty protested. "With all the publicity we're getting, something is bound to come out. But the question of the escape through the snow we'll have to solve ourselves. Do you suppose we could possibly be wrong about that? Maybe the murderer hid and didn't leave until later."

Harper stoked in silence. "It's got me guessing, but I'm convinced it was done. That's where the murderer showed his devilish ingenuity, picking his time and arranging the circumstances so that it was nearly impossible that his presence at the scene of the crime should even be suspected. We've been over every inch of the house half a dozen times. No hiding-places for anything larger than a cat has escaped attention. Add to this the presence of the Dufresnes, the Croydens, the servants, and you see how impossible it would be for an outsider to escape notice."

"I can't conceive of one outsider coming into this house to meet and kill another outsider. That wouldn't be reasonable. If you take that line you've got to explain why any one in this household should be moved to cover up the evidence, as this hiding of the gun proves."

"No, every indication points to the murderer as being among those present. There's some trick to that escape and we've got to fathom it. We know from the evidence in hand that there were previous meetings in this room between some one from this house and our man of mystery. The killing was carefully planned, with every detail worked out in advance."

"You think the snowstorm was arranged for by the killer?" Lafferty demanded facetiously.

"I THINK the presence of snow was essential to the whole scheme," Harper replied, seriously. "Assume there was some guilty relationship between the person who met here, say, a blackmailer and his victim. The killer has determined on murder as the only way out. But that murder must be made to look like suicide."

"For the past three days the Weather Bureau has been reporting a blizzard sweeping the Middle West and warning that we were sure to catch the tail of it. The killer saw the big chance. A completely detached and unoccupied house, with snow all around it, and no prints in the snow. That person had forty-eight hours to figure out a way to turn that unmarked snow into an unassailable alibi."

Harper tapped down the ashes in his pipe. "By the way, you haven't said a word about your check-up in the nearby houses. I suppose it was a wash-out?"

Lafferty nodded disgustedly. "I couldn't gather two cents' worth of evidence," he growled.

"Did you cover all the houses?" "Every one in this block, both sides of the street, and the three nearest to the back of this house."

Harper stirred restlessly. "Everything hinges on the get-away. Until we can discover that our story will not be fully credited. What happened here last night is almost as plain to me as though I had been hiding behind the door. The trouble is that the murderer's face is just a blank and almost any one of our eight faces could fill that space."

"You mean you... the actor placed together?" "Just that. Follow this closely and see if it doesn't cover all the known points. The masquerader arrived at the rendezvous ahead of time. The storm is in its early stages and he would not want to leave plain tracks around the place. He went to Dufresne's room, shaved, changed into one of Dufresne's dress suits and put on his disguise."

"Why the disguise?" was Lafferty's terse interruption. "I don't know," Harper admitted. "That is some evidence of mania. I am dealing with physical movements now, not motives. The masquerader made himself comfortable. He got out the liquor decanters, perhaps filled them. lit the hearth fire, and sat back to enjoy a drink and a smoke. With the snow coming down thick and the double curtains drawn, it was safe to light the fire and the candles."

"Why bother with candles?" Lafferty questioned again. "Ah, they explain one of those odd points that are so troublesome. You remember that the electric current was cut off at the switch? Mrs. Whitmore didn't do that. I figure that every time those persons met here at night they threw that switch. Why? Because if the Whitmores, or any one else, came back unexpectedly, they could not make a light. Hence the use of candles."

LAFFERTY approved with a nod of the head. "Then the killer came to the rendezvous. The snow was not yet deep enough to retain the tracks very long. They sat in this room and talked. There was drinking and smoking. At the pre-determined moment a gun was whipped out and bang! the masquerader went out like a candle."

"And now the murderer had to work swiftly, because any interruption would be fatal. The killer needed more light for nothing must be overlooked. The fire was stirred up to increase the visibility in the room. Unknown to the killer, a shower of sparks went dancing up the chimney."

"Now that pistol shot in a closed room must have sounded like a cannon. With the sound still ringing in his—or her ears," Harper amended with a smile, "the thought came—Had any one heard it? The killer stole to a rear window to look toward the garage. All quiet there. He went to the front window. Damnation! A policeman is approaching. The murderer thought the shot had been heard and is momentarily thrown into a panic. What to do? Meantime, Hamill had turned in at the gate."

"The killer's first thought was that the game was up. Talk the offender out of looking around? That meeting would be remembered whenever the body was found."

"Then came the inspiration and Hamill was doomed from that moment. This cold-blooded killer decided to take the bull by the horns. He opened the front door to Hamill and invited him inside. Hamill, no doubt recognizing the killer as one of the rightful household, went in, unprepared and unsuspecting. You remember we wondered why Hamill went directly up the steps to the front door instead of reconnoitering and why he wasn't shot down on the threshold or in the hall?"

"The reason was that the killer instantly grasped the value to his plan of having the policeman die at the proper spot. Had Hamill not known the person who opened the door to him he certainly would have had his gun ready and reports of his superior officers show that he was not the type to be caught flat-footed if there was the least reason to be wary. To my mind his death in this room is the strongest evidence that some person in this house did the job."

"So the stage was set. Dufresne's gun had been used to kill the first man, then the dead man's own gun was used to kill Hamill. The original murder gun was put back in Dufresne's drawer. The gun used to kill Hamill was wiped clean and placed in the masquerader's dead fingers."

"Then the killer dug the .45 bullet from the wainscoting and used the fire-tongs to hold it in the flames, but it wouldn't melt. He went down into the cellar, found the roll of old carpet, and fired one shot from Hamill's gun through it."

"The fact that he thought of the hole under the steps as a good place to hide the batravian bullet shows again extreme familiarity with the house. He carried Hamill's bullet upstairs and dropped it in position." (Copyright, 1934, by Walter C. Brown.)

Tomorrow, Harper suggests the reason for the mystery of the banging door.

CHEVROLET GIVES NOVELIST THRILL

By VERA BROWN

Feature Writer and Novelist Keep the nose down, don't give it much rudder, and you can make nice turns at 80 miles an hour.

And we're not talking about airplanes. We're talking about the new 1934 Chevrolet!

My companions on a trip around General Motors proving ground were Miss Ely Kalep, Estonia's first woman flier, and William Hoult, Chevrolet testing superintendent, who drove first.

Now for those turns at 80 miles an hour. We did them. And they felt much like an airplane in a vertical bank.

Slippery roads and all, we did the speedy course and did not skicken for the turns.

"It's just like flying," insisted the pilot from Estonia. "I'm surprised you people over here, haven't had 'knee actions' before, as you call it. In Europe we've had it for a long time. We had to have something to take the shock of our bad roads. Otherwise, motoring would be impossible in many parts of the continent."

"Now you try it," said Hoult. I looked at the lady from Estonia. She looked at me. Then she took the wheel and away we went—at 80 miles per hour again. She took the curves as easily as Mr. Hoult had done them.

"I don't believe it," I declared. "My turn was next. I, who have always said I'd never ride 80 miles an hour in anything but an airplane. With the 'knee' business, the 80 seems simple. The car holds the road and that away which lighter cars get at high speed was absent."

Besides the special hinging of the front axle, which is not unlike the undercarriage of an airplane, the top is streamlined within an inch of its life.

Miss Kalep was in Petrograd when the revolution started in 1917. She was in Cuba, October 28, when the shooting started there. She was the first woman flier in Estonia, Finland and the surrounding countries.

She was Europe's first woman auto-gyro pilot. And she got a thrill from the new Chevrolet.

Trail, June 9—(Spl.)—Mr. and Mrs. H. P. Swingle and Mrs. M. Bennett spent the week end in Klamath Falls to attend the wedding of Mr. and Mrs. Swingle's daughter, Hollis, which was solemnized at the Presbyterian church June 8.

Mrs. Lial Tucker and Jennie Hutchinson are spending the week in Medford visiting friends and attending the Diamond Jubilee.

Mrs. Florence Watson was home over the week end. She is staying at Mt. Stella, where Mr. Watson is stationed at the lookout station for a few weeks.

Mrs. B. Scott and daughter, Geraldine, were in Medford Monday. Word received here from Mr. and Mrs. Howe and daughter, who are visiting in Michigan, reports they are having a wonderful time but will be glad to get home again. They expect to return about July 1.

A large majority of the people here attended the jubilee parade in Medford Thursday.

Pink Thomason of Central Point and Mr. and Mrs. K. E. Hutchinson and daughter, Shireley, of Klamath Falls, were guests at the S. W. Hutchinson home Sunday.

Mr. and Mrs. King of Long Beach, who have been staying at Sunset auto camp, have gone to Portland for a few days but expect to return to Sunset for a longer stay later.

We are still having rain, which is good for the country in general but hard on the hay.

Prospect

PROSPECT, June 9—(Spl.)—William Jantzer and son, Billy; Mrs. Frank Evans and Mrs. Frank X. Jantzer drove to Grants Pass May 30 and visited Mrs. William Jantzer and infant son in the Grants Pass hospital; also Mrs. Frank Jantzer's father, who is a patient in the same hospital.

Mrs. Frank Johns of Orland, Cal., is caring for the William Jantzer family during Mrs. Jantzer's absence. She is Mrs. Jantzer's mother.

Mr. and Mrs. George Jantzer and family spent May 31 in Grants Pass on business.

Lewis Jantzer, son of Mr. and Mrs. George Jantzer, cut his hand seriously with an axe May 30.

Mrs. Ludo Grieve underwent a major operation in a Medford hospital Monday.

Gus Dismworth, Elbert Glass, Dad Vaughn and Richard Dismworth left Monday with a large bunch of cattle for the range above Union Creek. They returned Thursday.

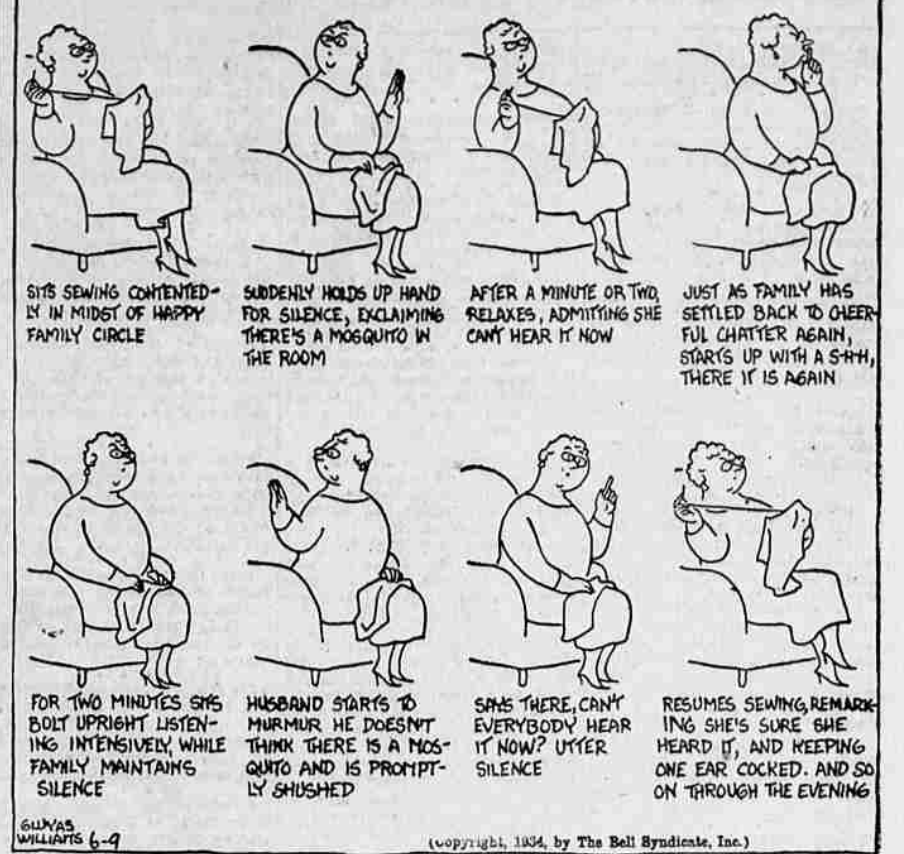
Mr. and Mrs. W. T. Grieve, Mr. and Mrs. Tom Carlson and sons and Mr. and Mrs. Haines' son, Harold, and grandson, Keith, and Mr. and Mrs. Paul Robertson and family were in Medford Thursday attending the jubilee.

Mr. and Mrs. Nelson Nye and family gave a dance Saturday at their home.

Mr. and Mrs. Bob Nichols have moved to Ashland. Bob is in this year's graduating class at the Normal.

THE MOSQUITO LISTENER

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



SITS SEWING CONTENTED IN MIST OF HAPPY FAMILY CIRCLE

SUDDENLY HOLDS UP HAND FOR SILENCE, EXCLAIMING THERE'S A MOSQUITO IN THE ROOM

AFTER A MINUTE OR TWO RELAXES, ADMITTING SHE CAN'T HEAR IT NOW

JUST AS FAMILY HAS SETTLED BACK TO CHEERFUL CHATTER AGAIN, STARTS UP WITH A SHH, THERE IT IS AGAIN

FOR TWO MINUTES SHE BOLT UPRIGHT LISTENING INTENSIVELY WHILE FAMILY MAINTAINS SILENCE

HUSBAND STARTS TO MURMUR HE DOESN'T THINK THERE IS A MOSQUITO AND IS PROMPTLY SHUSHED

SHE THERE, CAN'T EVERYBODY HEAR IT NOW? UYER SILENCE

RESUMES SEWING, REMARKING SHE'S SURE SHE HEARD IT, AND KEEPING ONE EAR COCKED, AND SO ON THROUGH THE EVENING

GLUYAS WILLIAMS 6-9 (Copyright, 1934, by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)



SMATTER POP—POP! GIVE ME SOME BLOTTING PAPER, QUICK!

NOW, WHAT?

FOR OLD TIMER TO SWALLER!

I'M SCARED HE DRANK SOME INK!

AWK!

SKYBOOTH?

SEE!

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TAILSPIN TOMMY—Summing Up Evidence!

THEN IT'S ALL CUT AN DRIED-FOO GUN IS TH GUILTY GUY, TOM?

NOT ANY MORE THAN DOUGLAS, BLOOMGILT, OR BRACE...

AH—SAY! NOT BRACE! HE'S NOT A KILLER!

NO—BUT A DOZEN PEOPLE HEARD HIM SAY TO WILK—'I'LL GET YOU FOR THAT IF IT'S THE LAST THING I DO...'

BY GOLLY—SAY TOM, I JUST HAPPENED TO REMEMBER—YOU KNOW TH' NIGHT WE TRIED TO CATCH TH' GUY THAT BROKE INTO HANGAR THIRTEEN, I RAN INTO SWEAN AN—

AND I BUMPED INTO MARJORIE DECKER—AND SHE HAD A GUN IN HER HAND—

WHAT ABOUT WILK'S GIRL FRIEND—THEY WERE GONNA BE WED—SHE WOULDN'T DO—

WHAT ABOUT THIS MYSTERY GIRL FROM CHICAGO, VIOLA CRISP—SHE WAS THERE, TOO AND—

HAL FORREST



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Cap'n Ike's Triumph!

LOCK IT AN' PUT IT BACK—

AIN'T WE GOIN' TO NIBBLE AROUND A BIT LONGER? HERE, WHAT'S THIS?

OUR NIBBLIN' ENDED, SHIFTY—THAT WAS OLD MAN JEPPARD'S UNDERSEA CAMERA—THAT'S THE DODGE EASY WITH THAT CARPET NOW SO IT'LL BE BACK IN PLACE!

THE YOUNG SWAB TELLS ME IT'S A PITCHER TAKIN' EXPEDITION WHEN HIM AN' JEPPARD CHARTERED THE 'MAGGIE'—BUT JACK SCROGGES KNEW 'T WAS SUNKEN TREASURE, AN' NOW WE KNOW THAT JACK WAS RIGHT!

BUT WHAT WE DIDN'T KNOW 'TILL NOW, MY HEARTY, WAS THE WHY AN' THE WHERE, AN' THE SIZE O' THE TREASURE—THERE'S MILLIONS IN IT FOR US NOW, SHIFTY! GOOD OLD CAP'N IKE WILL SEE TO THAT!

EDWIN ALGER



THE NEBBS—And So To Bed

MY FOOT FEET! IT LOOKS LIKE I' M GOIN' TO WEAR OUT A LOT OF SHOES WHILE THE SEAT OF MY PANTS WILL LAST FOREVER!

A CHAIR IS BEGINNING TO LOOK LIKE A LIFE PRESERVER ON THE SHIP OF TOO-MUCH-BUSINESS—EVERY OLD TIRED BONE IN MY Tired BODY IS ANXIOUSLY WAITING FOR ME TO WHISPER NOW I LAY ME!

I WAS GETTING ALONG BEFORE THIS GUY, SLIDER, LOADED ALL THIS BUSINESS ON ME AND IT SEEMS LIKE ALL THE CUSTOMERS ARE DISSATISFIED—IF THERE'S EVER ONE COMES HERE WITH A KIDLY LOOK IN HIS EYES, MAN OR WOMAN, I' M GOING TO KISS 'EM.

WALTER C. BROWN



BRINGING UP FATHER

LORD DIDFIELD WAS HERE AND, OF COURSE YOU HAD TO BE OUT! YOU NEVER WANT TO MEET NICE PEOPLE! HE HAS SUCH TAKING WAYS—YOU COULD HAVE LEARNED SOMETHING FROM HIM!

WELL, I COULDN'T HELP IT

I KNOW THAT

MRS JIGGS THE CHIEF OF POLICE HAS ARRESTED LORD DIDFIELD AND HE WANTS YOU TO COME DOWN AND IDENTIFY YOUR SILVERWARE

GEORGE McMANUS

Lake Creek

LAKE CREEK, June 8—(Spl.)—The committee worked hard on the float for the agriculture parade Friday at the Diamond Jubilee. A large crowd met at the Orange hall Monday to prepare the decorations.

This community was well represented in the pioneer parade Thursday, also, and a number of horses were taken to Medford, in readiness for that day.

About forty friends and neighbors gathered Thursday evening at the Tomm home to welcome Mr. and Mrs. Harry Tomm, who returned that evening from a short honeymoon trip, spent at Prospect. The evening was spent in playing games and wishing the young couple good luck. Another party, composed of about 30 young people from Sams' Valley,

serenaded Mr. and Mrs. Tomm Monday night and spent a couple of hours in a jolly good time. Refreshments were served.

Mrs. Lucy Vieaux of Helena, Mont. who is visiting her sister, Mrs. J. B. Short, and daughters, Lucille and Dorothy Vieaux, visited Saturday among old friends at Foots creek.

Mrs. Ivan Davies and children of Foots creek are guests of her mother, Mrs. E. R. Jones. Miss Lillian Bates of Portland arrived Sunday to spend the summer with her aunt, Mrs. E. E. Meyer. Mr. and Mrs. Ray Ragdale spent the week-end at Eagle Point.

Call Nut Conference WASHINGTON, June 9—(AP) The farm administration announced today that a public hearing on proposed amendments to the marketing agreement and licenses for packers of walnuts grown in California, Oregon and Washington will be held at Berkeley, Cal., June 18.