MURDER ON THE BLUFF

By Esther Tyler

Chapter 52

How Jude Died

THERE was an awful wait before the Skipper's level, expressionless voice went on.

"I was about 19 and Jack must have have been 23. He'd been away at school, and he'd come home to his father's law office, which he hated, and married a girl his family liked, only to find out that he hated her, too. He was wretched, and I felt sorry for him. I wouldn't listen to Martha's warnings. Neither would Father. He told her to mind her own business.

"The upshot of the whole thing was that I suddenly found myself violently in love. He was a handsome kid.

"In those days you couldn't divorce a person just because you hated the sight of her. Jack had no grounds and his wife refused to divorce him. Sounds silly now, but it didn't then. People had a habit of being pretty consistently horrible to anyone who even mentioned such a word. And she was the sort of person who cared a great deal about what people have to say. I didn't blame her much, but I wasn't that type.

"So Jack and I were gloriously happy for a short time, and then—our kid was born. Make no mistake about it, Mike. You were born because I wanted you. I knew what I was doing. You were a cute little devil, if I do say so myself. I wanted to name you after your father, but no one would hear of it.

"It was in February." There was a smile in the quiet voice. "You have no idea what an uproar you caused. In her way I don't think Martha blamed me, but she had been tearing her hair for months. She had thinned the servants down to the few old faithfuls—among them Higgins. The entire household knew, and the stage was set for a nice, private, Victorian scandal—the one thing above all others that I wanted to avoid.

"We had some lovely scenes. I intended to flaunt my child in the face of all society, and Martha's ravings on the side of convention meant nothing to me. But my father's did. He blamed himself for ruining my life and went on in awful fashion. Jack's wife nearly died of shame. She entered the final count that licked me. She pointed out that I would be playing a filthy trick on the child. That got me. So they all took up the refrain and rubbed it in.

"As a result, old boy, you'll never find another person who will admit that you were born here on Farrington Bluff one February day. Six months later an infant named Michael Farrington II supposedly arrived from the far south where young Norman Farrington and his hypothetical wife had met with a fatal and hypothetical boating accident.

"That ended the chapter—or should have ended it. It ended a lot of things for me, at any rate. They did a good job on me when they set about showing me what I had done to you. Your father and I have never been alone together since you were two weeks old. The risk was too great. I made a little nightmare of my sins to brood over when the nights were long and lonely. Perhaps if I hadn't, this horrible thing would never have happened. But it's too late now."

Then Norman Escaped

SHE smiled wanly. "On the whole it's been worth it—or I thought it had until recently. You're not a bad brat, Mike. I used to flatter myself that you hadn't suffered because of my pigheadedness. You had everything a kid could need. You and your father were good friends. I was a pretty happy old fool. And then—poor Norman escaped.

"I've told you about that, but I didn't tell you all of it. He turned up here at night in the middle of a snowstorm. He was—pitiful. Half-frozen, half-starved and entirely lucid. He wanted protection from the entire world—and above all from 'that place'.

"Martha was frantic. If you've been my fetish, Mike, Norman was hers. I knew from recent alienists' reports that for all his seeming sanity, his condition was in reality worse than ever. But Martha wouldn't believe it. Norman pleaded and wept; Martha begged and stormed. You see, Father had left the money and everything else in my hands and it was up to me. I finally agreed to let him stay for a while, but I intended to send him back and Martha knew it.

"It was then that I realized my mistake. Martha was not merely upset. She was insane—as insane as ever her poor mother and brother were, but in a craftier, deadlier way. Suddenly she began urging me to send for you kids, and when I flatly refused, she threatened to write and tell you the whole story. I was an ass. I see that now, but I didn't then. I would have walked off the bluff to keep you from knowing the truth. I was dumb enough for that. I sent for you.

"On the night you arrived, she sprang her whole amazing trap on me. She told me that she had also invited Jude, whose name I had mentioned in my invitation, more to make it sound natural than for any other reason. She said that Jude was arriving within the hour. Her proposition in a nutshell was that either I promise not to send Norman back or she would arrange a marriage between Blinshop's daughter and Blinshop's son.

"I didn't know about you, Gay Mike is a close-mouthed infant when he wants to be. I did know that Jude was a stunning kid—and that Mike used to be fond of her.

"I was on the verge of doing almost anything when Jude's arrival diverted me. I left her with Martha and went out for a tramp in the rain to try and collect my wits. That was another fatal mistake. It seems that Jack had just told his daughter what I didn't have the courage to tell my son. And Jude, poor kid, proceeded to confide her knowledge to my sister, blowing the whole plan sky-high unless Martha could prevent both Michael and me from talking to Jude If Michael had heard that story, Martha's last hold over me would have been gone. To make matters worse, Higgins, in the dining room, heard it all. If only he could have told me so before he did!

Knew Her Game Was Up

"WELL, anyway, you three walked into a pretty mess when you came here Friday night. Martha knew that her game was up, but I didn't, and her one aim was to keep me from knowing it. She made one bad slip. She didn't know that you talked alone with your sister in the game room. She didn't know that Jude had told you the whole thing. And I knew nothing. I lived centuries Friday night when I realized that you were together. I threw out one desperate line to you, Jimmie, and you must have thought I was crazy.

"Upstairs we had an awful session, but the storm cut it short. You see, I consented to let you come on one condition—that Norman was not to be allowed in the house until after you had left. Late Friday afternoon we fixed him up in the boathouse where there was heat, and he seemed quite comfortable. But in the middle of our row we realized that the storm was whipping up a flood tide and that the boathouse wasn't safe. He had an old skeleton key of Father's, but he might have fallen asleep and would be trapped there.

"I thought of William's summer quarters over the garage. I got into my oilskins and went down the back stairs and out along the porch. You were still in the game room, Mike, and I suppose you saw me through the window. I saw you."

Michael nodded.

"Yes. Well, Norman had left the boathouse and I couldn't find him. I thought that sooner or later he would head for either the house or the garage. I got to the garage just as you were coming out of it. Norman had already tried to escape in one of the cars. I doubted that he would go to the house. As a matter of fact, I mostly told the truth about where I was that night. The poor collie was in a bad way when I got to the stable. I stayed there a long time, and when Norman failed to arrive I started back.

"As luck would have it, I didn't get a chance for a private word with Higgins. He told me his story just before lunch yesterday. It seems that he had kept his eye on Martha's door. As I went down the back stairs, Jude came up the front ones, looking for me. Martha met her in the hall, crying and wringing her hands. She told Jude that I had just rushed out the front door shouting that I was going to throw myself off the bluff. Jude rushed out after me. Martha stood behind her on the porch and shot her with Higgins' revolver before the old man could stop her."

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The Skipper finishes her tragic story, tomorrow.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

For further proof address the author, inclosing a stamped envelope for reply. Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.

Most Expensive Stamp in History.

Until 1765, resistance of the American colonies against British domination was weak and unorganized. Men such as Washington, destined to be leaders in the War for Independence, were loyal in their devotion to the crown. There was little agitation or thought of a break from British rule. The stamp act changed all that.

When news of the act that imposed taxation on the colonies, through a stamp duty, came to America it raised a rumbling growl of protest from the throats of the colonists—a rumble that culminated in the roar of cannon.

Leaders of all the colonies except New Hampshire, Virginia, north Carolina and Georgia hastily banded together in a "Stamp Act Congress." This body drew up an address of protest to the King, petitions to parliament and a declaration of the rights and grievances of the colonies. It demanded the right of taxation by the colonies' own representatives, claimed right of trial by jury and protested the Stamp Act as tending to subvert the rights and liberties of the colonies.

Taken aback by the unexpected resistance to the measure, the British government hastily repealed the act, but it was too late to stem America's growing opposition to crown rule. Matters came to a head when, in 1770, all duties in the colonies were revoked, with the exception of the tax on tea. In leaving a tea tax in effect, Great Britain stuck by its guns against the colonists' chief complaint—"Taxation without representation." The famous "Boston Tea Party" resulted, acts of violence became the order of the day, and the inevitable war came. The fighting of the Revolutionary war cost Great Britain approximately five hundred million dollars. The Stamp Act which precipitated the war was intended to bring in about three hundred thousand dollars annually.

Father of the Atlantic

Priest for the Breton fishing fleet which each year spends eight months off the coasts of Newfoundland and Greenland, Father Yvon has the largest parish in the world. It stretches from the fleet's home port, St. Malo, Brittany, to the Grand Banks. The priest's rectory is his ketch, the "St. Yves."

Tomorrow: Skipper at 16!

Judges Wrong 3 to 13

PHOENIX, Ariz. —(UP)— Arizona judges split thirteen to three on a question of law—13 were wrong and three right. The 13, all superior court justices, sought increased pay under terms of a law enacted by the 12th legislature; three supreme court justices ruled they could not receive pay increases during their terms.

Convention City

PHILADELPHIA (UP) — Philadelphia is fast earning the sobriquet of "the convention city." Frank L. Devine, director of the convention and tourist bureau of the chamber of commerce, said that there are 116 conventions booked for the rest of the year, making a total of 215 for the 12 months.

May Be Renamed

SAN JOSE, Cal.—(UP)—At a prune breakfast given by the California Chiropractors' association the suggestion was made that the prune should be renamed "Petite Pomme Noir d'Amour," or "Little Black Apple of Love." Local growers think that if a change in name is necessary "Pom" would be sufficient.

SUBURBAN HEIGHTS By GLUYAS WILLIAMS

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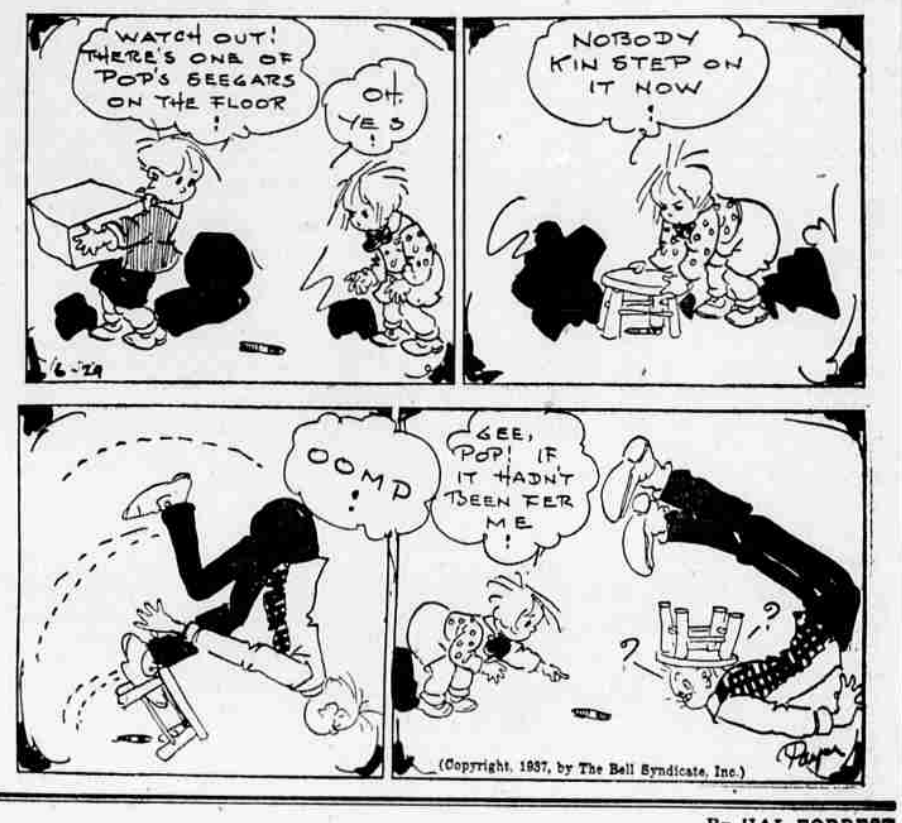
S'MATTER POP By C. M. PAYNE



TAILSPIN TOMMY—If Skeeter Only Knew! By HAL FORREST

BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Brighter Skies By EDWIN ALGER

THE NEBBS—Rivals By SOL HESS

NATION IS URGED TO HELP BEAVER RESUME ITS TOIL

NEW HAVEN, Conn. (UP)—Geo. A. Cromie, New Haven naturalist, suggests the beaver be put back to work again.

Their dams would be useful not only in flood control, but would aid other forms of animal life which heretofore have thrived in the water that has backed up behind those dams.

"The beaver's whole manner of life depended on the dams which they built on small streams," said Cromie. "There have been hundreds of thousands of these skillfully constructed engineering works scattered throughout the United States and Canada. The dams held back the flood waters, high up in the sources of the rivers, during times of heavy rainfall or spring thaw, and dealt them out gradually afterward.

"The beaver's engineering feats aid other animals. Trout thrived in the cool depths of the stored waters. Muskrats fed on grasses and lily roots growing along the edges of dams and built their homes in the shallows. Valuable fur-bearing animals like the mink and otter lived on the fish and small animal life in the dams and their nearby waters."

According to Cromie, beaver once were numerous in Connecticut. Many of the state's upland meadows are sites of old beaver dams, which gradually filled up with swamp growth, fallen leaves and silt. The accumulations resulted in fertile soils which otherwise would have washed down to clog river channels. "Here is a natural method of checking soil erosion."

Beaver can be brought back, Cromie argued. "Canada," he said, "is attempting it in certain regions. The Hudson Bay company has established a sanctuary and breeding area of 7,000 square miles in the James and Hudson Bay districts. The dominion government has placed the care of its beaver in several national parks under a talented Indian, Grey Owl, who has long been identified in writing and practice with efforts for beaver protection."

Ordinary ground will support 25 beaver per acre. And wherever the beaver is found, there will be the muskrat. The pelt of a beaver will bring as much as the pelt of a cow at the present market.

Cromie makes the suggestion that beaver be introduced in state forests and that means be taken to protect them from natural enemies and greedy hunters.

"Besides being of interest to students of nature," he said, "their work toward flood control in such backwood sections would be of a less expensive and probably more durable character than similar construction by the CCC."

Baby Stages "Siege"

CANTON, O. (UP)—Firemen had to climb through a window to capture a two-year old boy who locked himself in the bathroom at the apartment of Samuel Kotsen, turned on the water in the tub and defied all comers. The water was flooding the room when they entered.

Fewer Horses In Sydney

SYDNEY (UP)—Sydney is eliminating horse traffic from its streets at a rapid rate. In greater Sydney, according to a census, there are 10,458 horses, but in the city of Sydney there are only 953 left.