

FLAME TRAIL

BY MARI DE NEVADA

SYNOPSIS: Josh Hastings, owner of the Flying Six, tries to buy Kay Crandon's Lazy Nine after her ranch house and barn burn. He also tries to court Kay, but she distrusts him and is determined to keep her ranch. Ted Gaynor, a puncher she impulsively hired, stirs the outfit to cut its own timber and rebuild without pay. Hastings' cousin, Scrap Johnson, molests Kay, but Ted rescues her and whips Scrap. Later they shoot it out on the divide, wounding each other. Hastings, who hates both men, finds them and murders Scrap, using Ted's gun to frame him. Ted crawls to a shack where a girl takes him in.

Chapter 23

A Moonlight Ride

It was quite dark when Kay clattered up to the Flying Six ranch house. At her whoopee, Babs and Ruth came dashing out. Dismounting, she met them at the foot of the steps, and they all three burst into the living room together, their arms intertwined.

"Well, well, bless me if you don't all look the same age!" Josh Hastings got up and came toward them. Though he addressed the whole trio, his eyes were fixed on Kay, with her bright eyes and flushed cheeks framed in a tousel mop of Auburn curls.

Kay instantly straightened up and smoothed her hair. It was all she could do to repress the angry contempt and scorn she felt for this man, who had tried by such sneaking means to get the best of her, but she realized that for the moment, at least, she must act as though nothing had happened to change her usual attitude toward him.

"Where've you been all day?" Aunt Kate's querulous question broke the awkward moment, and Kay turned to her with relief.

"I was terribly sorry not to get over sooner," she contritely went over and kissed her. "But I was waiting around for Ted Gaynor to come back with his mother and sister."

A curious pause followed these words, and something made Kay glance up keenly at Josh Hastings. His eyes were narrowed, and he was waiting around for Ted Gaynor to come back with his mother and sister.

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Kay felt a cold unreasoning clutch at her spine. With great difficulty, she repressed the involuntary shudder that contracted her muscles.

The memory of that premonition she had had when Ted said goodbye to her flashed over her again, but she sternly ignored it. No matter what Josh Hastings had tried to do to her, she couldn't blame him for Ted's failure to appear! She at least had to be fair enough to admit that.

"I reckon you've made a mistake, taking on that man, and a whole parcel of relatives," Aunt Kate broke through the strained moment. "It'll be a good thing if he doesn't show up at all."

Josh Hastings let out a great gasp. "Trust Aunt Kate to hit the nail on the head!" he exclaimed, with indulgent appreciation. "She's said a mouthful."

"Sure I have!" Aunt Kate agreed complacently, a pleased smile on her lips at the flattery of her host's glance.

"Perhaps I have made a mistake," Kay obeyed a sudden mischievous impulse. "If they weren't coming, you and Babs could come back now and have that cabin."

"Well, seein' you've promised it to them, I reckon you'll have to see it through."

Kay smiled at Aunt Kate's hurried change of tactics, as she saw herself transferred from the comfort of her present quarters to the rigors of the pioneer life in a small cabin.

Unavoidable Escort

HOW about that timberland you were thinking of buying the last time you were here?" Josh Hastings' tone was elaborately careless as he put this question, but his eyes were alert as he studied Kay's expression to try to discover whether Scrap Johnson had told her what his errand to town that day had been.

The fact that Kay had come over to the Flying Six would seem to indicate that she had not discovered his effort to double-cross her, but Josh Hastings was eager to get this point cleared up. If Scrap had told her, he'd have quite a bit of explaining to do, and he had a plausible yarn all ready. But if she knew nothing about it, his best line obviously was to let well enough alone.

"Oh, yes, I was telling you about that," Kay met his glance with wide-eyed innocence. "I bought it up. In fact, one of my punchers was in town attending to it for me that afternoon I was here. Didn't I mention it?"

"No, you didn't," Josh Hastings' efforts to conceal his feelings were less successful than Kay's, and she smiled inwardly at his disgusted tone.

"Well, if you take my advice, you'll sell out while you've got a chance," Aunt Kate put in her word. "Josh Hastings, here, is giv-

ing you the best offer you're likely to get."

"Perhaps," Kay turned to the door to hide the flash of anger she felt against her aunt for being such an easy tool in Josh Hastings' hands. "I'll have to be getting back now."

"I'm going with you," Josh Hastings announced.

"No, you mustn't!" Kay expostulated, angry at herself for not having foreseen this outcome of her visit. "I'd rather go alone! It's moonlight, and I'm not the least bit afraid."

"That's not the point," Josh Hastings reached up for his hat and coat. "I'm doing this for my own pleasure."

Realizing that she was fairly caught, and that to protest any further would be to attach undue importance to the situation, Kay gave in as gracefully as she could. After saying goodnight to Babs and her aunt, the two started off together.

For some time they rode through the moonlight without saying anything. As he had insisted on coming, Kay decided to leave the burden of the conversation to him, and the magic of the night inevitably drew her thoughts to Ted Gaynor.

The long rolling reaches of the mesa stretched out in silver radiance before them, broken only by ghostly clumps of brush, with their weird twisted shadows, lengthening in the moonlight.

If only Ted had come when he had said he would, she would be taking this ride with him instead of Josh Hastings, Kay reflected, with a renewed wave of disappointment.

It's An Ugly Story

AS though reading her thoughts, her companion suddenly broke the long silence, chiming in with what she was thinking with an uncanny insight.

"Your Aunt Kate was right about that Gaynor guy, Kay." His tone was full of a friendly protection. "There are a few things I want to tell you about him, and then I think that you'll agree with her."

"Yes?" Kay waited non-committally for what he had to say, although her eyes held a hostile disbelief of whatever it might be.

"I'm surprised that he'd have the nerve to come to my range where he knew I was," Josh Hastings went on, "but I reckon he won't stay long, even if he does show up—which I doubt."

"Why?"

Josh Hastings hesitated, then spoke with a slow reluctance. "It's an ugly story, but I think you ought to know it, for your own protection. When I had my ranch over in the Clear Water basin, this Gaynor was punching for Old Man Gage of the X Bar L. He was in a way involved in a rustling raid of his boss's cattle, and the shooting of his son."

He paused a moment, then added, "There was a girl mixed up in it, too, but I won't go into that. You may as well give me the whole story, now you've started."

Kay's voice was coldly unconvinced and Josh Hastings flared up at her implied disbelief.

"Just a pretty case of getting the girl in trouble and then deserting her," Josh Hastings shot a sidelong look at Kay to get her reaction to this news, and as he caught the quick look of surprised unbelief, he added, "She committed suicide."

"How do you know that Ted Gaynor was responsible?" Kay demanded hotly. The story was certainly ugly, but she found it impossible to associate it with Ted. He couldn't have been guilty of a thing like that! It sounded much more like the sort of thing Josh Hastings himself would be capable of.

"It was common talk," Hastings answered her indignant question with a more tolerant tone. "I don't wonder you're startled. But now you can see the probable reason for his disappearance. He knew you'd hear his story sooner or later from me, and figured he'd better clear out while the going was good."

For several moments they rode on in silence, then Kay said slowly, "I'm certainly not going to condemn anyone by 'common talk' and rumor. You ought to have something more tangible to go on, before you spread a story like that to ruin a man's reputation."

Josh Hastings gave a short laugh. "I must say your confidence in me isn't too flattering."

"Would you repeat that story to Ted Gaynor's face?" Kay demanded.

"Sure I would! But don't worry—I won't have to," Hastings sneered. "Take my word for it, that talk about showing up again with his mother and sister was all one grand bluff."

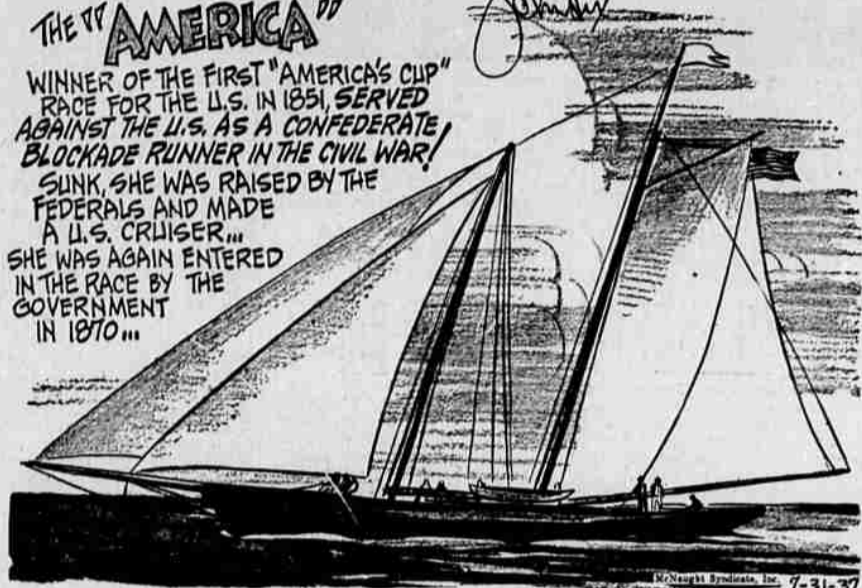
Kay made no answer, but she touched Flicker with her heel, and set a sharper pace for home. She didn't for one minute believe Josh Hastings' story, but she was animated by a sudden imperative desire to get rid of his hateful presence.

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Josh Hastings forces his kisses on Kay, tomorrow.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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The "America" Strange as it seems, the "America's Cup" trophy is not American but English. It was won by the United States the first time it was at stake and has been held by American yachtsmen ever since—a period of 86 years.

Originally known as the "Hundred Guinea cup" because of its value, it was offered as a trophy for an international yacht race by England's Royal Yacht Squadron. An invitation was extended to the United States for the race and the schooner "America" was built to compete in it.

On August 22, 1851, the race took place. The "America" came in a winner by a good margin, sailing the 80-mile course in 10 hours, 34 minutes.

Henceforth the race's trophy was to be known as the "America's Cup" in honor of the yacht that first won it.

Shortly after the race the "America" was sold to an English yachtsman, Lord De Blaquiere, and was raced in England for the next 10 years. The ship's next appearance in America was made under the flag of the Confederate States of America as a blockade runner in southern waters during the Civil War.

She operated with considerable success for a time, then was scuttled. Later the vessel was raised by the federals, commissioned a U. S. cruiser and equipped with four guns.

The "America" made a reappearance in the racing world in 1870 when she was refitted as a yacht by the United States government and entered in the second "America's Cup" race—the only instance in which any government ever took a direct part in a yacht race. The schooner came in fourth with three other American ships taking first, second and third places. The "Cambria," only British ship in the race, came in tenth.

After the 1870 race, the "America" was bought by General Butler for pleasure cruising and an occasional race. Her last run in an "America's Cup" race took place in 1901.

The 86-year-old "America" is still afloat, used as a nautical museum at Annapolis.

Tomorrow: When Were Women Forbidden the Use of Perfume?

Industrial operations, however, demonstrated surprising summer strength as customary seasonal recessions were further postponed in many divisions and more factories reopened after vacation shutdowns. The Pacific coast reported retail gains over a year ago of 10 to 20 per cent.

MOST BUSINESS HOLDS STEADY PACE IN WEEK

NEW YORK, July 31.—(AP)—Most divisions of business held to a steady...

er course this week, although some lines dragged along at a slow pace. Dun & Bradstreet said today in the weekly review.

Retail sales went ahead 3 to 7 per cent from the preceding week but the extension of gains over the 1936 comparable week was shortened in many districts, the agency said.

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TAILSPIN TOMMY—Looks Bad for Tommy!



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—End in Sight?



THE NEBBS—Hope He's Sincere



DUKE AND DUCHESS BAN BATHING DUDS PHOTOS

VENICE, July 31.—(UP)—Italian police, acting on a request of the Duke of Windsor, today chased a French newspaper photographer who tried to take the duchess' picture when she appeared on the beach in a bathing suit.

The duke said that all pictures of himself and the duchess in bathing clothes were forbidden.

Use Med Tribune want ads.

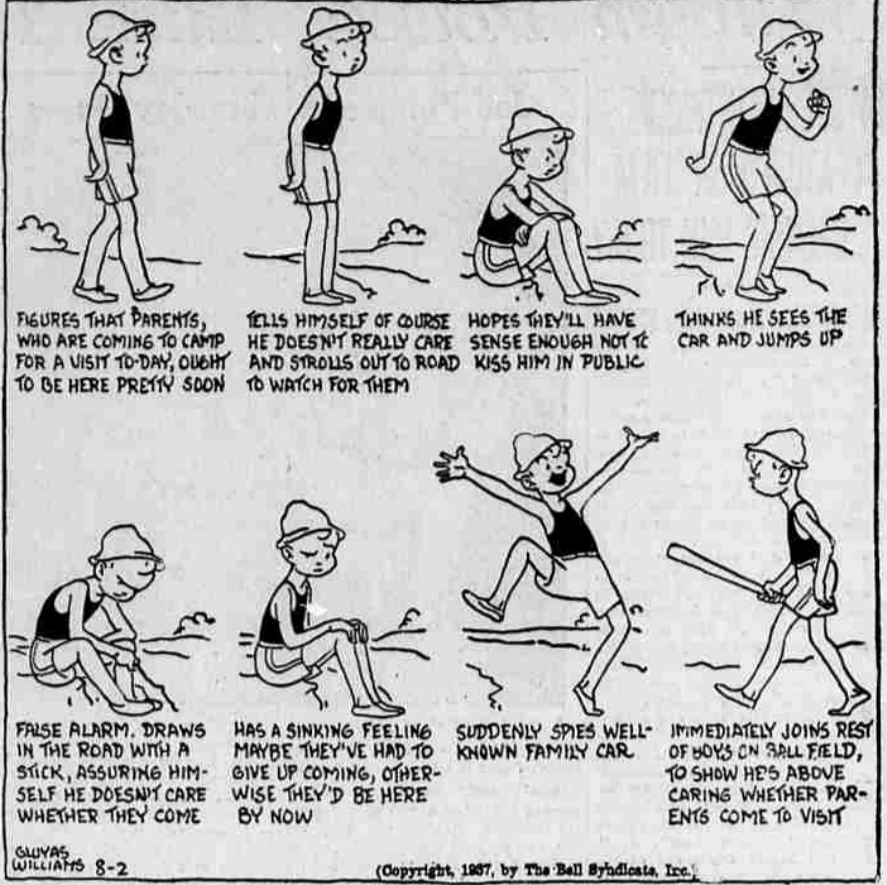
SOLOMON NEEDED IN FAMILY ROW

EUGEN, July 31.—(AP)—Judge Fred Plax, being no Solomon, faced a tough problem in deciding on the custody of Mary Elaine Cotter, eight-month-old daughter of Harold and Edna Cotter, and after a hearing on the matter, deferred his decision pending study of lawyers' briefs on the case.

The father allegedly took the child with him when he left Oakdale, Cal., recently, following a family row. On a warrant issued in the California city on a complaint signed by the mother, Sheriff C. A. Swartz of Lane county arrested the two at Divide early this week.

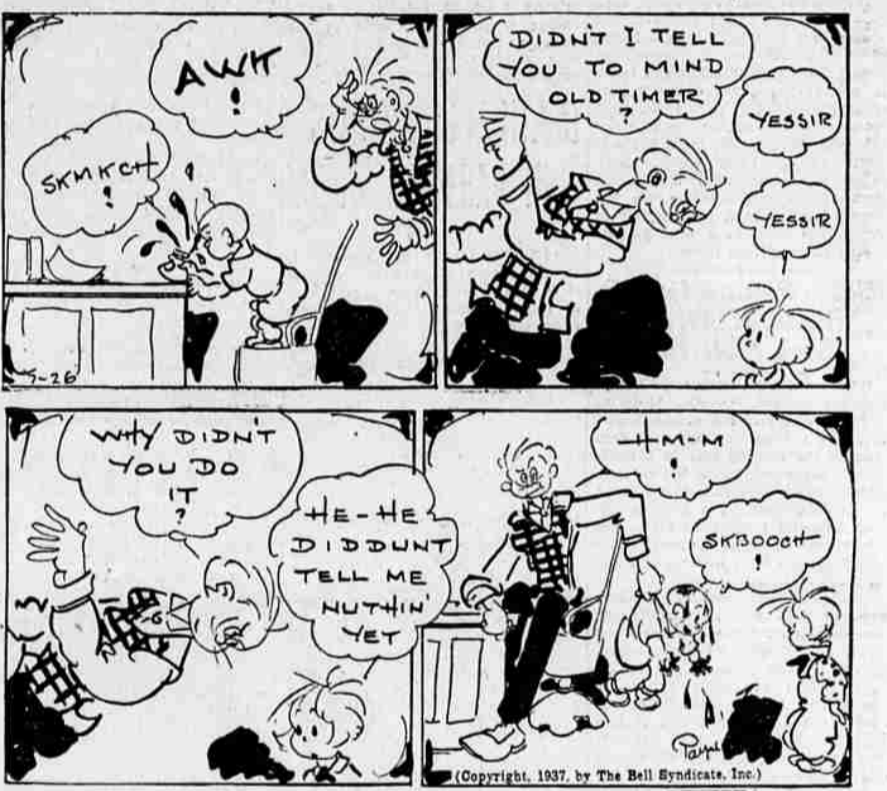
VISIT TO CAMP

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



S'MATTER POF

By C M PAYNE



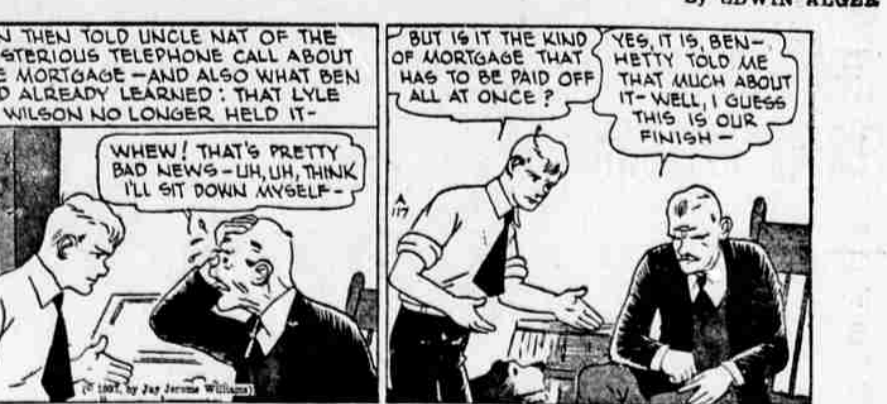
TAILSPIN TOMMY—Looks Bad for Tommy!

By HAL FORREST



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—End in Sight?

By EDWIN ALGER



THE NEBBS—Hope He's Sincere

By SOL HESS

