

THE ARMY POST MURDERS

By Virginia Hanson

The Characters

Katherine Cornish, myself, visiting Elizabeth on a mid-western Army post.
Elizabeth, Colonel Wright's daughter.
Adam Drew, officer in charge of the investigation.

Yesterday: Adam starts questioning, while I take notes behind a curtain.

Chapter 11

Not Enough To Go On

WHEELER sat down abruptly in a leather chair beside the big table, fumbled in a breast pocket of his dinner jacket and, producing two cigars, one of which Adam curtly declined, proceeded elaborately to light up.

"What's this about your mother saving you from Anne Carewe?" Adam asked with a dangerous glint in his eyes.

Wheeler's preoccupation with his cigar failed to disguise the fatuous look which contorted his sharp features. He leaned back, watching the smoke that rose from his small, effeminate mouth.

"That's a lot of rot," he said airily. "You know how women are. I'm quite able to protect myself from that type of skirt."

Adam half rose from his chair, his knuckles white on the table, but thought better of it.

"Explain that," he said curtly. "There's nothing to explain. She made a pass at me and I let her see I wasn't having any. She's shameless."

Eyes blazing, Adam rose from his chair, leaned across the table and slapped Wheeler deliberately across the mouth.

"I had to listen to your mother's filthy insinuations," he said savagely. "But I'll teach you to keep a clean tongue in your head."

Wheeler turned a sickly white and got to his feet, covering his mouth with his hand.

"I forgot—I forgot she was dead," he said painfully.

There was a long ash on his cigar and he began to hunt for a place to deposit it as if it were a stick of dynamite.

It was obvious that Adam had forgotten all about me. He spoke to Wheeler tersely and with some heat, employing pungent language to describe exactly what was wrong with Wheeler and what to do about it.

Wheeler heard him out with a sufficed countenance in which dumb gratitude struggled with resentment and shame. They parted, if not amicably, at least on terms of better understanding, while I wondered, in a kind of daze, how much of this I was supposed to put in my notes.

I still have those notes—a cryptic tangle of unorthodox pithoosks and jaw-breaking ellisions, incomprehensible to anyone but me; and even I am baffled by passages that look like nothing so much as ancient Sanskrit. They are written in pencil on sheets of cheap stationery, stamped with the regimental insignia, which had been supplied in the reading room for use of the enlisted men.

I don't know why I have kept them. They're a macabre souvenir of a night I don't particularly want to remember but am not likely to forget. No doubt the tabloids would have paid me for them—handsomely. As it was, their headlines were to be strangely top-heavy. Triple murder and suicide at Fort Havens. Homicidal maniac—that was the explanation dished out by Adam, and they had to accept it, for no one else would tell them anything. The united front in time of trouble.

A Question Mark

I KNEW the exact moment Adam remembered my existence. He paused in his caged pacing, stared fearfully at the curtains, turned a rich pink and sat down suddenly behind the big table.

"Miss Cornish?" he called diffidently.

I came out rubbing my eyes. "I'm afraid I dozed off. Did I miss anything after—after Mrs. Wheeler left?"

He scowled at me distrustfully for a moment, began to grin and slipped into helpless mirth.

There seemed to be nothing to say on either side. Adam sobered slowly, found a pack of cigarettes, supplied me and himself and got back to business.

"This is rank slacking," he said, glancing at his wrist watch. "And it's one o'clock. Shaw is holding back the horde at the door. Whom shall I see next?"

I considered.

"You sent the musicians away?" "Yes, after questioning them briefly. The light was against them all during the balloon dance—they

didn't see anything going on among the dancers. It would have been impossible for one of them to do the shooting.

"Who else can be eliminated?" Adam reached for my pencil and notes and began jotting down names.

"The musicians. You and I. The Wheelers, I suppose, can be eliminated"—he spoke regretfully—"and those others I sent home. Doc Moore told me that he was dancing with Mrs. Flower; difficult to see how she could have done the shooting without his knowledge."

"Put a question mark after her name," I suggested. "She's so easy to suspect."

"All right... Barney, of course, couldn't have done it—there were no powder burns. Think of anyone else?"

"Elizabeth was at home," I said vainly.

"I suppose Annie will check that."

I did not answer, and he added her name to the growing list.

"Who's left?" I asked when we had thought for a few minutes. Adam began a new list. "Mrs. Orpington. Charlie Spencer. The Shaws. Captain Flower—and Mrs. Flower question mark."

I shivered. "Not many..." He shoved the notes away from him in sudden disgust.

"Not unless you add the rest of the garrison, the enlisted personnel and any passing strangers who felt like taking a pot shot at the nation's pampered pets. There's not enough to go on. We haven't found the weapon. Everyone in the club was searching for it even before the ambulance arrived—that was while you were gone. Somebody had one, of course, but what became of it? Anyone on an army post has access to firearms; every officer has a service automatic."

'Abominable'

"YOU don't know the caliber?" "I'm waiting to hear from Doc."

I thought he was going to say more than that, but he stopped and I did not press him. A heavy dread was dragging at me. Six names—and one of them Charlie's. "How about questioning you as the type to attract Anne? It's hard for a man to tell what women like. Would his wife be jealous of him?"

"Good idea. I'd like to know why Mrs. Shaw was running Anne down the past week or two. You've seen Shaw, haven't you?"

She nodded her head and drew together her pale eyes. She sailed in regally, wearing a Beaux Arts costume cut on Elizabethan lines that suited her almost cruelly. In looks she was not unlike the pictures you see of the Virgin Queen.

She perched on the edge of a chair, the pointed bodice must have been painfully boned—and indicated that she would grant Adam an audience.

There followed an exhibition of Adam's celebrated charm. He positively hovered over the woman, inserted a durable pillow behind her rigid spine, proffered her cigarettes and, when she refused, considerately doused his own; perched on the table beside her chair and bent on her a gaze of such solicitous sympathy that I looked for the very stars of her bodice to unbind.

"I know how you feel, Mary," he said in a low, regretful voice. "You were Anne's best friend. She was devoted to you. And I know you want to do everything in your power to punish whoever did this—this dreadful thing."

He waited considerably while she turned away and dabbed at eyes which I could see were perfectly dry.

"Abominable," she breathed dramatically. "One can scarcely believe it. A lovable, charming girl like Anne. Who could be so brutal, so—so beastly?"

She paused, as if sensing the inadequacy of the vocabulary advocated by her expensive boarding school. Suddenly she laid her hand in a pleading gesture on his knee.

"Can't you do something, Adam? You must learn the truth!"

"I will learn the truth. For a moment Adam's face hardened with ruthless determination; then he lifted her hand, pressed it with the precisely suitable degree of warmth and gave it back to her. "That's why I want your help," he added more quietly.

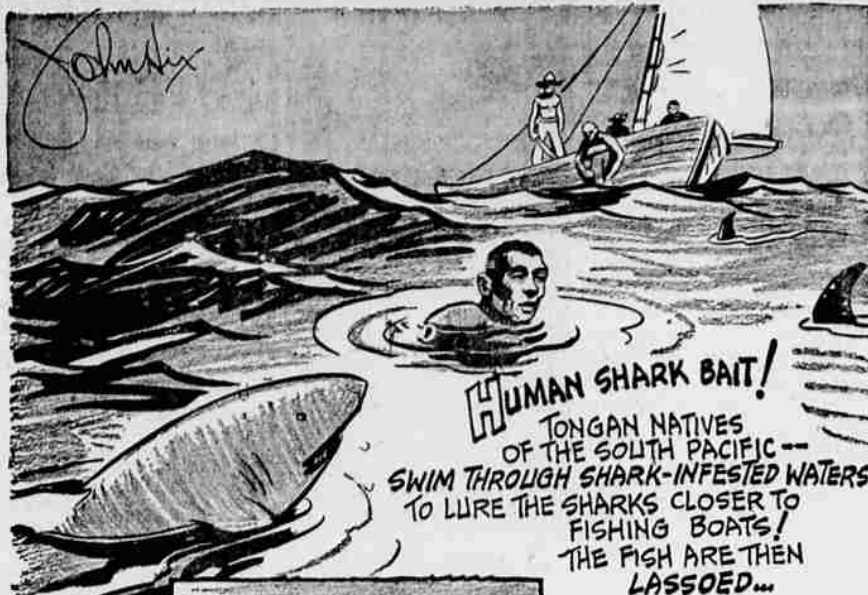
"Anything," she murmured. Adam leaned closer. If there had been any question of his sincerity during the preliminary skirmish, there was none now.

(Copyright, 1938, Virginia Hanson)

Tomorrow: A startling bonch.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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



HUMAN SHARK BAIT!

TONGAN NATIVES OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC—SWIM THROUGH SHARK-INFESTED WATERS TO LURE THE SHARKS CLOSER TO FISHING BOATS! THE FISH ARE THEN LASSED...

SANDRA LEE NEIMAN—age one, of Anaheim, Calif. HAS 9 LIVING GRANDMOTHERS

TINY LOCOMOTIVE MADE BY ADELBERT BOYER, Reading, Pa., CAN BE HIDDEN UNDER A COMMON SAFETY MATCH

TOMATO ROOTS—DEVELOP AN OSMOTIC PRESSURE OF 100 POUNDS PER SQUARE INCH—ENOUGH TO RAISE SAP AS HIGH AS CALIFORNIA'S SEQUOIAS

Living men for bait, coconut shells for lures and lassos for hooks is the strange equipment Tongan natives of the south Pacific use for shark fishing.

The technique—known to natives as "siu'aga"—embodies a mystifying but apparently successful appeal to Hina, shark goddess of Tongan superstition, which attracts fish to the surface. While one member of the exhibition chants the sing-song appeal and offers a tempting tidbit of decayed meat, others rattle coconut

shells, strung on looped sticks, beneath the waves.

Soon sharks appear, but they swim warily in circles some distance away. Either the rattles or the mystic chanting seems to keep the sharks in a semi-hypnotic state, yet they remain beyond an imaginary deadline, indifferent to the native coaxing.

Then one native quietly slips overboard—and swims directly to the sharks! Strange as it seems, instead of attacking the swimmer, the sharks docilely follow him as he swims slowly back to the boat.

There the sharks are attracted by the decayed meat and rise from the water to reach it. When one comes close to the boat, a native quietly slips a rope noose over its head and quickly cinches it tight against the boat's gunwale, where it is clubbed.

This strange procedure is described in detail by Charles Plumb and Charles Stuart Ramsay, famous swimming mailman of "Tin Can Island," in a recent book of that name. The authors accompanied several "siu'aga" expeditions from Tonga to Tabu, one of the Tongan group.

PROSPECT PUPILS TO STAGE SHOWS

PROSPECT, Dec. 12.—(Sp.)—The freshmen and sophomore classes of Prospect high school will present two fast-moving and mirth-filled comedies in the high school gymnasium, at 8 p.m., Wednesday, December 14.

"Orville's Big Date," is the title of the initial offering, which will be followed by "The Home by Midnight." Action in the first named comedy revolves about Orville's management of his three charming sisters. The second play deals with certain family relationship problems which frequently confront high school boys and girls.

Mrs. Frances Pearson, English instructor is director for both productions.

Women Fatally Burned
PORTLAND, Ore., Dec. 12.—(AP)—Flames from an open stove fatally burned Mrs. Viola Turlay, 82, at her home yesterday. Her 67-year-old son, Ben Turlay, beat out the flames, but the aged woman died a short time later.

Killed By Auto
NORTH BEND, Dec. 12.—(AP)—An automobile struck and fatally injured Charles Padrick, 71, oyster bed watchman, on the Coos Bay bridge yesterday. The driver was not held.

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Luck Rides Dual with Skeets!



LEVEL OFF... LEVEL OFF... SKEETS! WE'RE ON TH' WAVES!



DID... DID WE CRASH?



NO! IT WAS ME! I BUSTED TH' WINDOW WITH MY SHOE!



BUSTED TH' WINDOW! WHY?

'CAUSE TH' AIR WAS TOO STUFFY AN' IT SHEELED LIKE... GAS!

BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Too Late, Jason!



DID YOU CALL FOR ME, JONES?

OH, DOC KILEY, READ THIS! IT'S TERRIBLE!

All account books have been brought up to date. Cash on hand is in the safe. All books balance. Ben Webster.



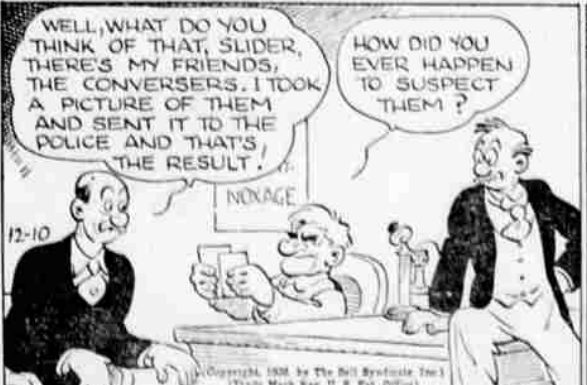
WELL, WHAT DID YOU EXPECT?

OH, DOC, I KIN EXPLAIN EVERYTHING! I WAS ONLY TRYIN' TO DO WHAT I THOUGHT WAS RIGHT!



MEANTIME, NOW MILES FROM THE FARM, TWO BOYS AND A DOG TRUDGED ONWARD INTO THE NIGHT!

THE NEBBS—The Sarcastic Mr. Slider

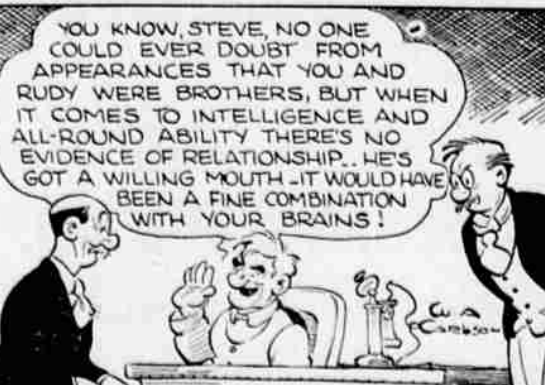


WELL, WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THAT, SLIDER, THERE'S MY FRIENDS, THE CONVERSERS. I TOOK A PICTURE OF THEM AND SENT IT TO THE POLICE AND THAT'S THE RESULT.

HOW DID YOU EVER HAPPEN TO SUSPECT THEM?



WELL, WHEN MY BROTHER GAVE THIS CONFIDENTIAL INTERVIEW TO HELEN YOUNG, I KNEW IT WOULD BRING A LOT OF CROOKS DOWN HERE AND WHEN THE CONVERSERS STARTED TO FAWN OVER ME, I SAID, "OH-OH! WHAT'S THIS?"



YOU KNOW, STEVE, NO ONE COULD EVER DOUBT FROM APPEARANCES THAT YOU AND RUDY WERE BROTHERS, BUT WHEN IT COMES TO INTELLIGENCE AND ALL-ROUND ABILITY THERE'S NO EVIDENCE OF RELATIONSHIP. HE'S GOT A WILLING MOUTH—IT WOULD HAVE BEEN A FINE COMBINATION WITH YOUR BRAINS!

ILL-FATED SHIP GROUNDING AGAIN

SEATTLE, Dec. 12.—(AP)—The ill-fated motorship Patteros, of Seattle, went aground early this morning, for the fourth time within two months, near the Gulf of Fair Weather, 70 miles south of Yakutat, Alaska. A radio message from the cutter Haida to the coast guard headquarters here reported.

The Haida was steaming to the aid of the stricken ship, whose skipper reported he had lost one man overboard and his vessel was slowly breaking up.

An SOS message received in Juneau, Alaska, from the vessel at 1:30 a.m. (P.S.T.) said the crew was preparing to abandon ship.

Less than a month ago, on November 15, the Patteros went aground in Wrangell Narrows, Alaska, and the Haida went to her aid but before the cutter reached her side she worked her way clear.

Weather
Northern California: Fair in north and cloudy in south portion tonight and Tuesday; continued cool; general northerly wind off coast, except fresh southeast winds south of Point Reyes.

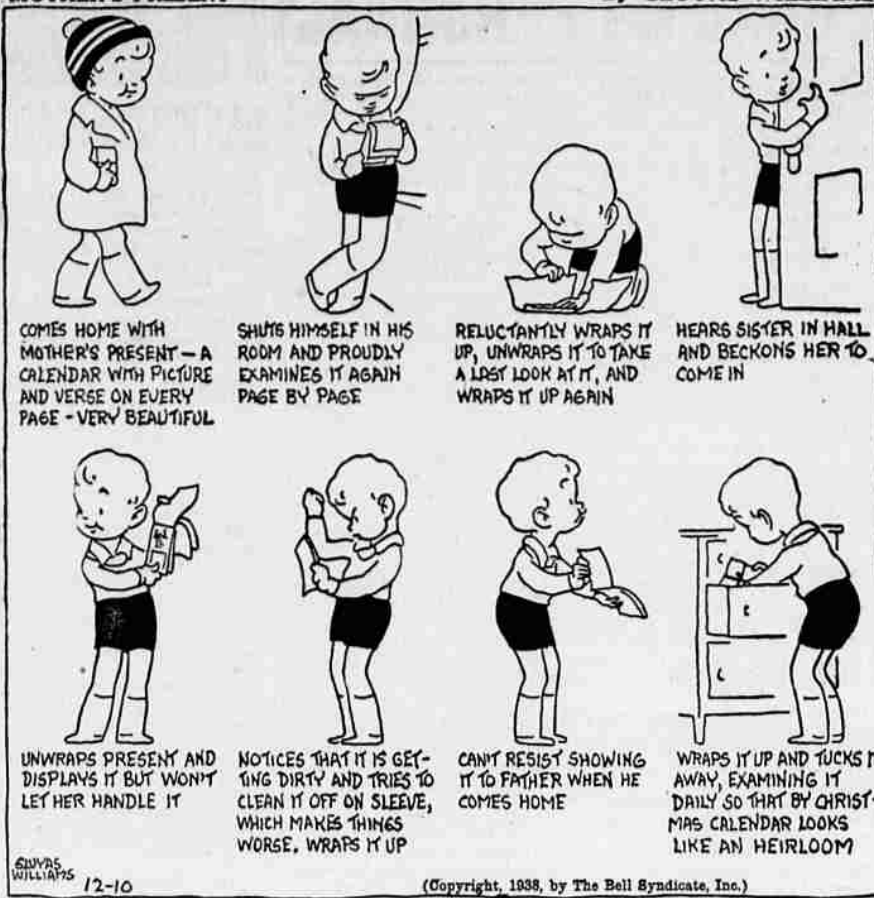
Oregon: fair tonight and Tuesday; continued cold. Moderate north to east wind off the coast.

Find Drivers Body
OREGON CITY, Dec. 12.—(AP)—The body of Paul D. Ehmert, 33, missing since an automobile accident last April, was found yesterday on the bank of the Willamette river near Oak Grove. It was identified through a driver's license and an unmarked watch.

Use Mail Tribune Mail-Ad.

MOTHER'S PRESENT

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



COMES HOME WITH MOTHER'S PRESENT—A CALENDAR WITH PICTURE AND VERSE ON EVERY PAGE—VERY BEAUTIFUL

SHUTS HIMSELF IN HIS ROOM AND PROUDLY EXAMINES IT AGAIN PAGE BY PAGE

RELUCTANTLY WRAPS IT UP, UNWRAPS IT TO TAKE A LAST LOOK AT IT, AND WRAPS IT UP AGAIN

HEARS SISTER IN HALL AND BECKONS HER TO COME IN

UNWRAPS PRESENT AND DISPLAYS IT BUT WON'T LET HER HANDLE IT

NOTICES THAT IT IS GETTING DIRTY AND TRIES TO CLEAN IT OFF ON SLEEVE, WHICH MAKES THINGS WORSE, WRAPS IT UP

CAN'T RESIST SHOWING IT TO FATHER WHEN HE COMES HOME

WRAPS IT UP AND TUCKS IT AWAY, EXAMINING IT DAILY SO THAT BY CHRISTMAS CALENDAR LOOKS LIKE AN HEIRLOOM

S MATTER POE

By C. M. PAYN



FOR I WANT A HOT BISCUIT AN' A PICKLE AN' A HOT DOG AN' A JELLY-CAKE AN' ANOTHER PICKLE

HO, MAW! SOMETHING FOR A STOMACH ACHE WANTED!

NO, NO!

BUT POP SAID—



HUH?

OH-H, HE HASN'T GOT IT YET



?

IT'S THE 'MAKINGS' WE CALLED FOR!

By HAL FORRESTER

By EDWIN ALGER

By SOL HES