

Beth Carter, WAAC

BY LORETTE COOPER

THIS STORY: Beth Carter, WAAC, and Major Brit Jackson have landed on the tiny canon-flashed island in the Pacific where his unit of the Coast Artillery Barrage Balloon battalion is based. The duty of the Balloon battalion is to protect military operations from enemy air attack. Beth is to assist her commanding officer in tracking down suspected information leaks. The officers' mess is turned over to her for living quarters, since she is the only woman at the post.

COMPANY CHAPTER V

MAJOR JACKSON had then studied her.

"I can't give you much information now, but if you'd care to take a stroll later, I'd like to talk to you. We could walk a few hundred yards to get the kinks out of our leg muscles."

"It's a date," she said, surprising herself with the informality of her tone. She caught herself, and resumed a military manner of speech. "Then, sir, I'll meet you at your office in half an hour."

The half hour was well employed refreshing herself. A last glance in the metal mirror which someone had thoughtfully hung on the wall of her room told her that she still was capable of making herself attractive. Not even a G. I. mirror could hide that.

She reached the meeting place on the minute, and Major Jackson was there.

"Lieutenant Carter, it's time you and I held another truth session. Maybe if we did, it would smooth both our paths and save us a lot of embarrassment later."

"I'm glad you feel that way, sir," Beth said.

"You don't need to say sir like that all the time," Major Jackson expostulated. "I'll treat you courteously and I know you'll treat me the same way."

"I'm a junior officer, Major, and I have every respect for your rank." It sounded so stiff and formal that it amused even Beth, who meant it most seriously.

THE major laughed. "You girls certainly have a great time playing soldier, don't you?" he asked.

Beth's laugh died away. She bit her lower lip—a very lovely lower lip, too—quite hard. She wanted to tell the major off, right then. She wanted to make him eat his words. He saw the look on her face.

"I ought to be ashamed of myself," he said. "Particularly after you turned out to be such a swell fighter on the trip out."

"You only said what a lot of people feel," she replied.

"That's just it. I might as well tell you, not all the officers here are very keen about a WAAC being sent out, particularly to do a staff job."

You're the only woman on the island. I'm the only officer other than yourself, on this island, who knows the full truth as to why you are here. You're a woman, yet for military purposes you're not a woman; you're a fellow officer."

"I didn't know that, Major. I supposed that my position was set out as clearly as that of any other officer in any branch of the Army of the United States. I was taught that that was the beauty of Army Regulations—you always knew just where both you and the other fellow stood."

Beth Jackson laughed. "You've got me. Let's see how well you know regulations. What are you going to do the first time some young junior officer wants to call you Beth? And, by the way, are you going to continue this darned formality all the time with me? You know, out here in the theater of operations, we don't play that way. We leave that for the garrison soldiers—God bless them, and I'm not casting any slurs at them, either. If there's anything more aggravating than being a garrison soldier, it's being a desk soldier, and both of them pray night and day for a chance to go to the field. I know, because I've been all three kinds of a soldier at one time or another."

BETH did not know how to answer.

Finally she said, "I'd find out the ground rules from my commanding officer."

"You're smarter than I gave you credit for being," Jackson said. "Well, the ground rules here are that military courtesy is observed, but not to any ridiculous extreme. We live in a very close area, so we salute when we meet for the first time during the day, and then don't salute any more unless there

is a special reason. We're something like a submarine crew out here. You know, in a submarine discipline is, if anything, stricter than on a surface vessel; yet the unpracticed eye would have a hard time recognizing rank."

He paused. Then he continued. "This lecture sums itself up to this," he said. "Unless it's very official and in front of a lot of people, call me Brit. And I'll call you Beth. You've proved yourself to me, and I hope I can to you."

"Thanks—?" Just as she was about to say "Brit," she heard a woman's voice.

"Why, Brit darling, imagine finding you here."

Brit turned sharply, startled. So did Beth. Coming toward them down the bowered path was a young woman in a gay afternoon dress, in strong contrast to the uniformed population of the island.

(To Be Continued)



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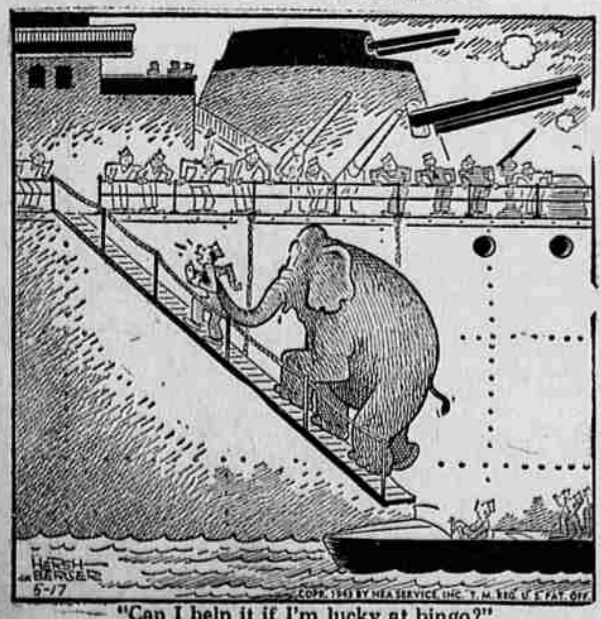
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HOLD EVERYTHING!

"This overtime must be affecting my mind—there's that hal-lucination again!"

FUNNY BUSINESS



"Can I help it if I'm lucky at bingo?"

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THIS CURIOUS WORLD



ORANG-UTANS AND CHIMPANZES CAN BE CLASSIFIED BY FINGERPRINTS, JUST LIKE HUMANS.



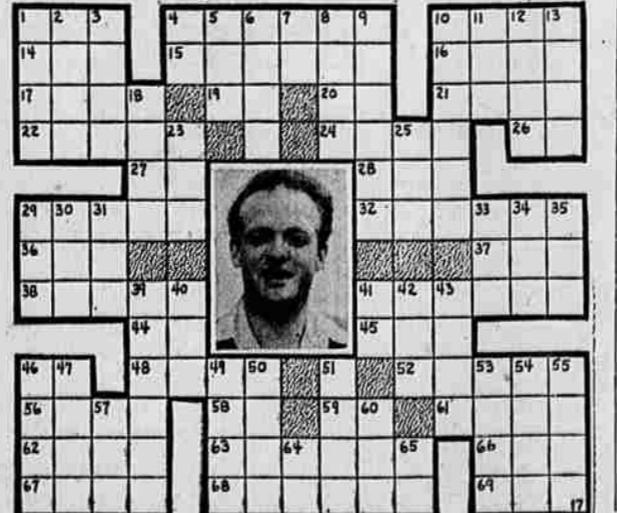
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Red Ryder

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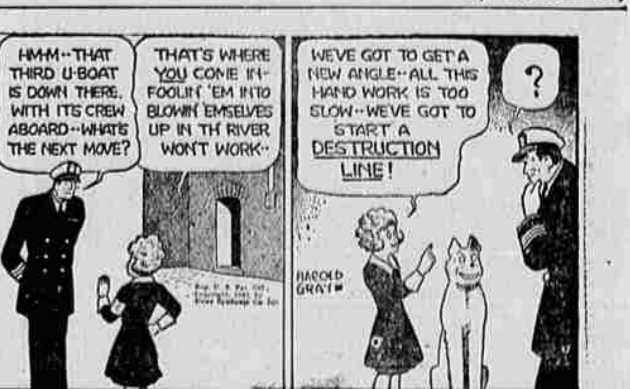


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