Editorial Page of The Birmingham Eccentric

A free, responsible and aggressive Press is democracy's first line of defense

Knocking on Wood

with JOHN H. HARWOOD

IF AMERICA CAN AVOID WAR . . .

IF THE war were to stop tomorrow, I believe America would willingly enter in some sort of an international union for collective security, to prevent in the future the rise of a new crop of dictator-destroyers. On the other hand, if America becomes an active, shooting, all-out partner of Britain, sending expeditionary forces to all parts of the globe, I suspect that the post-war reaction would be exactly the same as in 1919.

Was It Really Popular?

Why so? Well, people are bound to "revolt" if they are dragged into something against their will. Consider the World War. Wilson was narrowly reelected in 1916 on the slogan, "He kept us out of war," implying further pursuit of that policy. However, within a few months, we were full belligerents and American boys were soon on their way, "Over There." The war appeared popular, but Historian Charles A. Beard, for one, doubts that it really was. We had no Gallup institute in those days, but Congressional elections are usually an indicator, and starting in 1916 and in the next race at the polls, the trend against Wilson and his Administration was marked, and in 1920, of course, came the deluge and repudiation of a great President who had tried to be a practical idealist.

Today, every poll which has been taken shows a huge majority against a declaration of war, yet everybody despises Hitler and is willing to go to great lengths to help Britain. The outward manifestations of a war-popularity are so different from those of 1917, yet we stay out; something is holding back the President and Congress.

I believe the Gallup polls and others are the sole reason why we have not declared war against Germany.

For the first time in the history of democracy, the true desire of the people can be determined almost over night. Guesswork has been eliminated.

* * *

Our Share in Reconstruction

If, then, we do go to war with a majority of the people against it, it is only reasonable to assume that at the conclusion of the conflict, there will be a revulsion against war and against Europe and Asia and everything pertaining thereto, exactly the same as in 1919. The isolationists will be adding hard on Congress and any American participation in post-war reconstruction will be doomed.

* * *

The League of Nations

I think that our repudiation of the League of Nations was a mistake. For it might have survived and have done some good had we given it our prestige. One thing is certain: management of post-World-War Europe has certainly been a mess as present events demonstrate so well. The worst has happened; who knows but what a strong League of Nations and a sensible peace might have prevented it?

Thus, I think it is vital for the world's future that this nation—the world's richest—and the only important non-belligerent left, avoid actual shooting as much as it can and then exert its influence for a just and lasting peace. I believe that is our only salvation.

* * *

Are We Selfish?

Proponents of all-out war aid to Britain will scoff at my viewpoint with the observation: "Isn't it pretty selfish of America to let Britain and Russia do all the fighting?"

I know that a good many British and Canadians feel that way already; in the last war, they felt cheated because we did not get into it sooner.

Well, if it is "our war," as some of the interventionists have been shouting, we certainly are a craven bunch. We ought to be in it up to the hilt—men, ships and everything, now.

If, for one, and I believe most of the American people are not at all sold on the idea that America, after 100 years of minding its own business, is suddenly responsible for the peace and well-being of an old continent like Europe. If our security is threatened, to be sure we would be fools not to look after our own interests; but that does not imply that we have a **moral** obligation to see that Europe's bad boys behave themselves. We left our sphere in 1917, helped Britain and France beat the Kaiser, loaned Europe billions more, and did much to help

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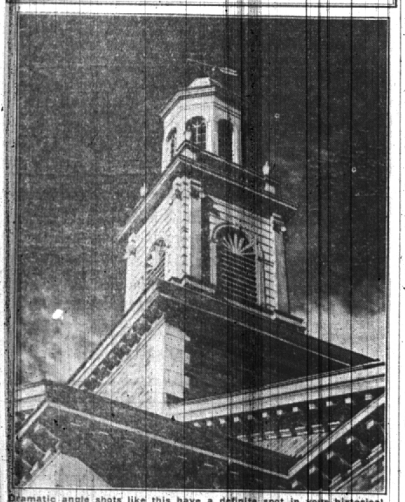
THE ECCENTRIC'S Camera Corner



Dramatic angle shots like this have a definite spot in your historical album. A deep yellow filter recorded the sky in a dark tones, accentuating the white building, and greatly enhanced the texture rendering.

Recording home town history is a fascinating field for the amateur photographer. With your camera you can make a historical picture story of changes in Birmingham scenes, and in time your album will be a treasure chest of people, places, and events. Some of the pictures may seem commonplace now, but they will become as interesting and valuable twenty to thirty years hence as those of the "Gay Nineties" are today.

Do you remember Birmingham thirty years ago. The livery stable, blacksmith shop, and the general store all played a prominent role in everyday life. Now the horse and carriage is an oddity, the blacksmith shop has given way to the garage, and the store that contained everything from mouse traps to coveralls, whose owner was also the postmaster, banker and editor, is relatively rare.

Suppose you had a camera then and recorded all these subjects. You could now picture things as they are today and make up a wonderful album of comparison snapshots that would not only be enjoyed but envied by many.

When planning your picture history, select subjects which, in your judgment, are most typical of your town. Street scenes, residences, downtown buildings, present types of automobiles, trains, airplanes, and many other things contain elements that are modern today, but may be obsolete tomorrow.

ANSEL ADAMS REMINDER

Don't forget the short course of Ansel Adams, noted Los Angeles photographer, who is being brought to Detroit by the Miniature Camera Club of Detroit.

His course, the fee for which is $10, includes a lot of things that will be worth your while. There will be five evening and five day lectures spread over a week, beginning Friday night. There will also be two field trips, one of which will take in Cranbrook. A popular lecture will be given Sunday afternoon at the Arts Institute auditorium at 2:30 p. m., fee, 50 cents. Enrollment may be made by phoning Charles B. Charmatz, Madison 0830.

The War and Its Aftermath

Social changes are not planned. It is impossible to channel men's desires or to blueprint their mode of living. Given a certain economic and political environment, we can foretell the tendency of social movements; the details or even the general outlines are in the field of speculation, perhaps clairvoyance.

For example, a Hitlerized Europe could hardly have been predicted a year before he became Chancellor, although we might have seen in the post-war degradation of the German nation a force leading to some sort of dictatorship.

Again, the most sanguine socialist in America could not have forecast, say in 1928, that their program of social legislation would be championed within a few years by an aristocratic landowner; and not even Roosevelt knew in 1933 that he would be president of a nation demanding government largesse.

* * *

Social changes come about gradually, imperceptibly. "Things happen," and people find adjustment in the new conditions. The new conditions may be unsatisfactory, and more changes become necessary. The cumulative effect of these changes brings about what seems to be a sudden re-orientation of our way of living and thinking.

As with a disease which had its origin in some distant accident, perhaps pre-natal, the present outward symptom is the only sudden thing about it. A depression, which announces itself with a stock market crash, is really a process which began when somebody somewhere found himself unemployable, communicated his condition to other workers who in turn ceased to be producers—until the number of idle workers and the consequent misery burst upon our attention.

When we become aware of the symptoms of a new social order we begin to ask how it came about. But the causes are so complicated, so remote, so hidden in unrecorded incidents that we run to plausibility for an easy answer. Usually, like primitive people who personalized the enigmas of life in gods, we ascribe causation to historical characters.

But the Civil War was not caused by Lincoln, the depression which first attracted attention in 1929 was born long before Hoover, the present world trend toward collectivization cannot be laid at the door of Lenin. The names we associate with social movements as causes actually attach themselves only to results.

* * *

Right now we are gazing into the crystal ball of the future. We find in it names: Hitler, Roosevelt, Churchill. Yet what these persons do or do not do is not of their own planning. They find themselves in a milieu which was prepared for them by economic, social and political developments that originated, perhaps, years before they were born. And the kind of life that will prevail decades hence is in part the result of what is happening now. The social process is continuous.

Do we know, for instance, whether we shall have even the political form of democracy in this country? In England the present ministers have agreed that there shall be no election until three years after the War. This may mean that the present government, with slight changes, will have had a span of life covering more than a decade.

* * *

If we are engaged in the war in 1944 shall we bother to hold an election? If we find a satisfactory way of living without elections, will it not be easy to convince ourselves that all the fuss about democracy is hardly worth while?

In financial publications we read between the lines that industrial leaders are adjusting themselves to the idea of a regulated economy. They are not opposed to the New Deal. They have found a way of living within its framework, and any criticism of it is directed at its management, not at its philosophy. Does this attitude portend collectivism by and for monopolists? Fascism?

After the war there may be an attempt to pick up where we left off. But the huge national debt, the hardships attending the change to a peace economy, the lack of jobs, the disillusionment of a maimed nation may bring about a social upheaval. Will there be a revolution? Communism?

Too many varying forces are at work shaping our future. We cannot predict what direction American civilization will take. All we can say with certainty is this:

It will shape itself by the wills men—little men—find an adjustment. If they find the making of a living easy, and the pursuit of happiness not impossible, it will be that kind of civilization.—(From The Freeman, a monthly critical journal of social and economic affairs).

SOON THE SCHOOLS WILL OPEN, and youngsters will be chased from the freedom they now enjoy to the confinement of the classroom. Thus do we observe that mankind, unless given the discipline of compulsory education, would be less civilized than it now is.

Eccentricities

"Some people cannot read without moving their lips."—Time. Judging by the effect on books, they also use their teeth and feet.

Maybe we could kill two birds with one stone by including Harry Bridges in a bundle for Russia.—Detroit News.

The country never knew how much money it had until the government began spending it.—Indianapolis News.

A lot of people are willing to improve economic conditions if it takes everything other people have.—Manila Bulletin.

Before marriage a man yearns for a woman. After marriage the "Y" is silent.—Battalion.

Fire in the Forest

We are now in the midst of the vacation season. And what has always produced a ghastly fire wage of our timber resources. Fire in the forest is worse than almost any other kind of fire. A house can be rebuilt. A tree cannot. In a few years, roaring flames can destroy timber that nature must spend hundreds of years replacing. And fire in the forest brings with it the most horrible of deaths to deer, rabbits, birds, squirrels and the other creatures of the wild.

Man-made fire in the forests is almost always preventable. It results from man's ignorance, man's carelessness, man's thoughtlessness. All the laws in the world are powerless unless full public support and co-operation is given them. There cannot be a fire warden behind every tree.

One of the prime causes of forest fires is smoking. A family on a holiday drives through the woods, thoughtlessly throwing matches and cigarette butts from the car. Usually they cause no damage. But one time in a hundred, one time in a thousand, fire may fall in dry brush that is almost explosive. Then irreplaceable timber may be destroyed. Never drop burning tobacco or matches anywhere.

Carelessness with camp fires is still another major cause of fire. Here again, the rules of safety are simple. Never leave a fire. Smother the ashes with water and earth. Always build your fire as far as possible from trees and brush, and in a cleared space.

One of America's greatest resources is its tall timber. It is the basis of a great employing industry which is vital to national defense. It is the source of pleasure and recreation for millions. Help to preserve it.

ONE EVENING LAST WEEK we drove to the crossing at Hunter Boulevard and Oakland avenue, waiting for the red light to turn green. Before the change occurred we observed a long line of army trucks speeding southward; when the red changed to green the trucks kept right on coming, at the same time east and west-bound automobiles approached the crossing, the green lights in their favor. Fortunately, none attempted to make the crossing, and the army trucks kept right on coming. Even the green light came on for the army trucks, and remained green until all of them had passed. Why can't our various local traffic officers, in conjunction with army officials handle army truck traffic so that danger on the highway may be minimized?

IT WAS FRANCE'S MARSHAL Philippe Petain, present head of the Vichy government, who said during the first World War, at Verdun: "They shall not pass." This ancient Frenchman, under the bludgeoning of the Nazis, a few days ago told the world that his country "now sides with the Nazis to make over Europe." Those words, thought uttered by the same Britain, no doubt came only from his lips, not from his head and his heart. With a dagger pointed at one's heart, it is easy to die for your deep convictions; this Petain would do, were he alone, we think—but because he heads up the millions of fallen French, he cannot escape the weight of his leadership, so he accepts temporary ignominy so that some day France may rise again.

TWO FORMER DETROIT COUNCILMEN, John F. Hamilton and Harry I. Dingeman, have been sent to Jackson prison for from three to ten years, for accepting bribes in connection with their vote on a certain housing contract. Both men, for all of their prior life, had been respected. Hamilton sold out for $15,000, Dingeman for $5,000. Pretty cheap, don't you think? Poor chaps; now they may ponder well these words: "What profit it a man if he gain the whole world, yet lost his own soul?"

HURRAH FOR CITY COMMISSIONER Harry E. Bissett in his crusade to cut down the tooting of musical horns on automobiles in Birmingham. Most of these horns are blown by young and elevated some youth, we suppose—and can it be possible that their tooting is meeting personal appreciation for the bugle tooting that may be their lot when they enter the army?

YOU HEAR AND READ MUCH about the problem of speeding motorists, and what to do to prevent highway accidents and fatalities. In our opinion—and we believe it is yours, too—the best thing to do is *to enforce* present traffic laws; there are plenty of laws on the books already.

WE SEE WHERE the federal government may require joint income tax returns; we hope that also includes all the "joints" in Macomb county and other lawless areas.

The Birmingham Eccentric

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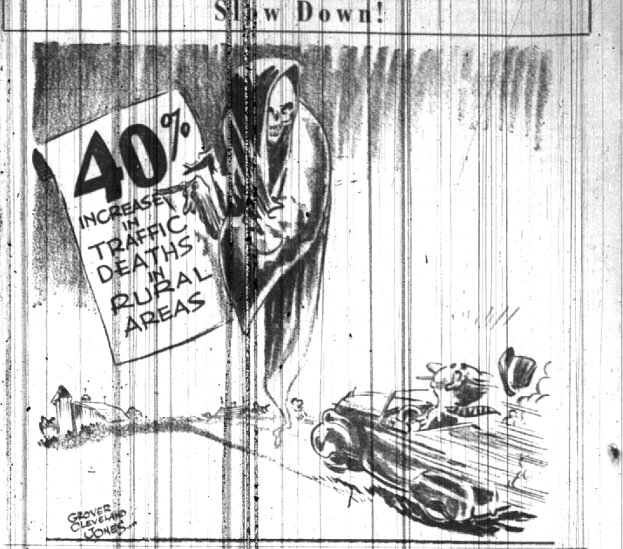
NOTE: The Eccentric desires to publish stories of events which have news value and which are written by persons connected with the editorial staff of the paper. All copy must be compact, legible, and be in good English. The right is reserved to edit, classify, and change the style of any copy submitted as the editorial policy of the paper dictates. Because of a monopoly of space, lengthy letters to the editor must be limited to a few hundred words, and are required to make such superfluous changes in the text as may be necessary. Letters must be signed, but if the writer requests that his name be withheld from publication, his request will be granted if the letter is of such a character that it can be published without injury to the writer. Anonymous letters will receive no attention. Letters from persons in the armed forces of the United States are treated on a special basis, and are required by law of the postal authorities to be opened and inspected before being forwarded to the addressee. Letters from those other than members of the armed forces are required by law of the postal authorities to be sealed and stamped before being forwarded to the addressee. Any erroneous reflection upon any person, firm or organization will be corrected upon its being called to the attention of the publisher. Any such comment appears in the columns of The Eccentric without malice or prejudice.

Slow Down!



People's Column

The Eccentric is pleased to receive letters for publication in this column. All communications must be signed, but signatures will be kept confidential upon request. Letters must be limited to 500 words, and must reach the office not later than noon for publication the following Thursday.

What the Red Cross Program Means

Editor, The Eccentric:

The Oakland County Chapter of the American Red Cross has recently completed a concise memorandum of some of its services and the personnel in charge of same for the information of its directors. Knowing the genuine interest in this area in the Red Cross I am relaying this information to those who may not see this bulletin.

Our Oakland County Chapter has been particularly busy with the following services: (1) First aid, home nursing, home service, water safety—at 19 beaches or pools this summer, and volunteer services which include area activities as: (1) Production of garments, surgical dressings, and knitting in the 24 workrooms of the county, not only for foreign relief, but for our own soldiers and sailors, (2) Canteen, (3) Hospital and recreation, (4) Motor corps. There are other services and subdivisions of services, and many more volunteers will be needed.

I feel that two of the most necessary and practical services in times of peace or national emergency are home nursing and nutrition. These courses and that of first aid may be arranged in communities if contact is made with the Pontiac office, 114 Lawrence Street, or phone Pontiac 2-5303. I hope the day will not be long distant when these courses can be instituted in senior high schools. Hundreds of women in Oakland County have been working faithfully in one or more of the volunteer services of Ashich Mrs. Sheldon Noble is chairman, and there is need for more volunteers with office experience.

Cites Harper's Article

In July's Harper's there is a thorough and national article, "Women in the Home Front" by Dorothy Dunbar Bromley. It is very worth reading. It tells of the efforts made throughout the country to patriotic women with some leisure to offer time and service in this national emergency. Mrs. Bromley emphasizes the need of courses in home nursing and nutrition and first aid, and recommends cooperation with the American Red Cross in one's own chapter. She urges that women concentrate on the problems close at hand, and try to raise the health standards not only for purposes of national defense but for peace time and individual happiness and efficiency. She agrees with Mayor LaGuardia, director of the new Office of Civilian Defense, that there will be many older men and younger men who were deferred to take over the more strenuous civilian defense duties if they are ever necessary.

But I feel that every woman can offer some service at this immediate national emergency and for the building of a better post-war world in these man changing times. We must not diminish our attention to the happiness and health standards in our own family environment; we must extend that concern about health and happiness to our neighbors in our townships and the county. We do not want a recurrence of the flu epidemic of 1918. There are channels of home defense that are practical and necessary. The last channel is the aid we extend, as we have for months, to the relief of the stricken in Europe and Asia.

That quotation from Shakespeare often comes to my mind when I think of the humanity of the Red Cross:

"How far that little candle throws its beam!
So shines a good deed in a naughty world."

GERTRUDE CORSON
(Mrs. H. H.)
Summer Exec. Board
Oakland County Red Cross

Wonder's Who Will Attack U. S.

Editor, The Eccentric:

It seems as if our Washington rubber stamps have gone berserk. Congress has shamefully broken its promise to the Draft Army. Grandma decides wants to ration gasoline for defense. Most raw materials are under priorities. Little business will soon be squeezed out of the picture. Why is all this happening? We are told that it is an amount of national defense. Who's going to attack us? Nobody, at least for quite some time. Hitler has his hands full with Britain. Japan can't conquer China. Our foremost military and naval strategists agree that Germany cannot be successfully attacked. What's all the racket about, then? Brother, that's what we'd all like to know!

THE MOUNG SQUIRT

No War Rally Called in Pontiac

Editor, The Eccentric:

The Pontiac Chapter of the America First Committee will hold a "No War Rally" at the McConnell School, South Paddock Street, Pontiac, Friday night, Aug. 22, at 8:15. The public is welcome. Admission free.

Address will be made by Louis B. Ward, author, lecturer, historian, veteran, and former candidate for United States Senate.

Garland A. Alderman, chairman of the Pontiac Chapter, will also speak.

A special invitation is issued to citizens of Birmingham.

THE COMMITTEE

The Millennium

Flying over the Bay of Naples, an airplane turned to his passenger and said: "Have you heard that phrase, 'See Naples and Die'?"

"Yes," said the passenger.

"Well," said the pilot, "take a good look at the propeller's comes off."

Happenings of Long Ago

50 Years Ago
August 20, 1891

Mattie Baldwin was away visiting in Chicago, Ill., and in her absence work on the new village drinking fountain was lagging.

The Junior League had planned a social entertainment for Tuesday night at the Methodist Episcopal church.

The Improvement Society was to present a beautiful five-act drama, "Under the Laurels," at Library Hall the last part of August.

Mrs. H. S. Leet had returned from a pleasant four-week visit with her daughter at Manistee.

Master Tommy Cobb and Ted Marsh have started to take violin lessons under W. B. Leggett of Detroit.

25 Years Ago
August 18, 1916

Miss Margaret Newman was visiting her grandparents in Toronto.

The marriage of Mrs. Edith McGrey, daughter of Mrs. Martha J. Wood, of South Woodward avenue, and Harry J. McBride, son of Mr. and Mrs. William McBride, of Beaverdam, O., was solemnized Tuesday at 10 o'clock by the Rev. Dr. W. B. Brown, of Detroit. They were attended by Miss Ruth Hamilton, of Lima, O., and Thomas Wood, of Detroit. After the ceremony a wedding luncheon was served in the Statler Hotel in Detroit. The couple left on a trip to Mackinac Island, after which they will live at 160 South Woodward avenue.

Miss Ruth McAlpine was planning to spend a month in New York City.

5 Years Ago
Thursday, August 20

Sarah Bedow Aldrich, 85 years old, died Tuesday morning at her home on 384 Pierce street. She was born in Southfield township and lived there until she moved to Birmingham at the age of 45. She was survived by a brother, Ira Bedow, of Mt. Pleasant, and a niece, Mrs. Edgar Parks, of Birmingham.

Miles W. Robinson had just been appointed principal of the Barnum School and Howard D. Crull given the position of director of instruction and personnel by the board of education.

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