

Dude College

By OREN ARNOLD

YESTERDAY: Andre and Lena almost quarrel when the girl refuses to tell him where she has hidden the stolen bomb sight. Next day, Andre goes to the Bailey ranch, finds rebuilding already under way. He offers to help with furnishings, takes Ronnie to a trading post. He is particularly interested in a large drum, buys it for a friend in Mexico.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT
THAT LONA MONTYOA should deliberately kiss him was both shocking and confusing to Wesley York. In all honesty he had to admit to himself that the kiss was not unpleasant, but that had been squelched in a little flash of shame. He had turned nervously formal again and escorted her back to town. He had felt a strong urge to see Ronnie Bailey again.

But not until next morning, Saturday, could he go back to the Rocking R Ranch. He had no classes this day, so at 9 o'clock he bought three thick T-bone steaks and drove straight from the butcher shop to the ranch homestead. Workmen were busy clearing out burned debris of the house, and Mr. Bailey, supervising them, came forward to greet Wes.

"Good morning, son. Glad to see you. Want you to look over plans for the new house right away."

"Glad to, Mr. Bailey. And say—I brought out some meat. Happens I'm a real good steak barbecue, Mr. Bailey. If you could get Fabian to let me have charge of the noon meal, why I would put some expert touches on these steaks for you and me and Ronnie, sir. We could do it in the outdoors here—wonderful weather right now, isn't it?"

"Perfect! Perfect all around. Only Ronnie isn't home. But don't let that interfere, son. I can eat twice as much as you think anyway. You'd never know I came west with indigestion."

Wes felt let down. He had expected—hoped—to find Ronnie here. But he knew from experience that she seldom "stayed out." She was on the go somewhere, ever and always.

"I'll get Fabian to keep the steaks on ice until noon," Wes said, trudging off.

FOR AN HOUR after that he and Mr. Bailey sat at an outdoor table and checked measurements and details on plans for the new ranch house. No architect had been hired, because Mr. Bailey said he could do his own designing with friends' help, but he had contracted with a local builder who was already on the job.

Wes pointed out myriad details—he had forgotten a place for gun racks; he could use ranch branding irons for an attractive dining-room chandelier; he could make a floor of cement and flagstones that would be both fireproof and patterned better than any rug he might buy; he could make a hat rack of deer and elk horns.

"You're full of ideas, son," Mr. Bailey declared, exultantly. "I hereby hire you as consultant architect. Now you mind—"

"Can't hire out," Wesley grinned in thanks. "The University would fire me, sir. But I intend to build a western home of my own some day so I've given it some thought. And I'm glad to help you. A fire is a good idea."

Mr. Bailey was suddenly serious, intent. He jabbed a pencil at Wes. "Son," he said, in low tone now, "that fire was no accident, either!"

Wesley looked closely at him.

"No, Wesley, I don't know who did it—but—whoever did it had it well planned and well timed. They used that as a cover to steal the new bomb sight from one of the Army planes!"

"No!"

"Yes, Wesley! The fire drew every Army man over here, naturally. Some thief went right in, cut the sight off and took it away. The only hour those ships haven't been guarded since the new sight was put into them. The sight was welded and braided down, too, of course, but that didn't stop the thief."

"And you think—?"

"No, a clue. Of course—strictly on the quiet, now—the Federal agencies are onto it. But we haven't learned a single thing!"

Wesley was astounded.

He stared off into space, frowning, hardly hearing his host give the other details. He was deep in his own thoughts.

Here, shockingly, was yet another mysterious occurrence to add to the long list of unexplained incidents which crowded Wesley's mind of which this the most important of all. Ronnie knew some of those things with him, but he alone knew them all. He wished earnestly for Ronnie now so that he might talk with her. Possibly together they could evolve something. He looked at his watch. Almost noon.

"Mr. Bailey, if I'm not being too inquisitive, could you tell me when I might see Ronnie? Where is she likely to be this afternoon?"

"Why son, she's headed for Mexico, I believe. Flying her plane down. Said they'd have lunch at the dude ranch where Andre is staying and take off from there about 1 p.m."

"Andre?... Andre?" Wes exclaimed the name twice.

"Why yes, but you know him, Wesley. Andre Girardeau. Fine young man. He has business connections down in Guaymas on the west coast of Sonora, and Guaymas is also a resort town, as you may know. He and Ronnie and some other girl named—let me see—Lona? Is there a Lona somebody in the college here?"

"Lona Montoya!" Wes looked straight at his host. "Was she—gone too? Flying with Girardeau and Ronnie? Into—Mexico?"

"Why yes. But—Andre?" Wes exclaims the name twice.

"I've got to go, Mr. Bailey! Excuse me, sir, but—well I've got to hurry! I—I'll explain later. I—"

HE NEVER finished. He had jumped up, half dancing in his excitement, and all at once he just ran to his car and hastened away, leaving an elderly man smiling after him and slowly shaking his head. There is no explaining the impulsive actions of youth, reflected Mr. Bailey; especially of youth when Ronnie was involved. He wondered if this quiet-mannered young professor was interested in Ronnie personally. Would n't mind if he was.

As for Wes, though, he broke all speed records for his old car in driving to town. And he tried to think while speeding. A lot of details needed thinking out.

He braked to a sudden stop at

HOLD EVERYTHING



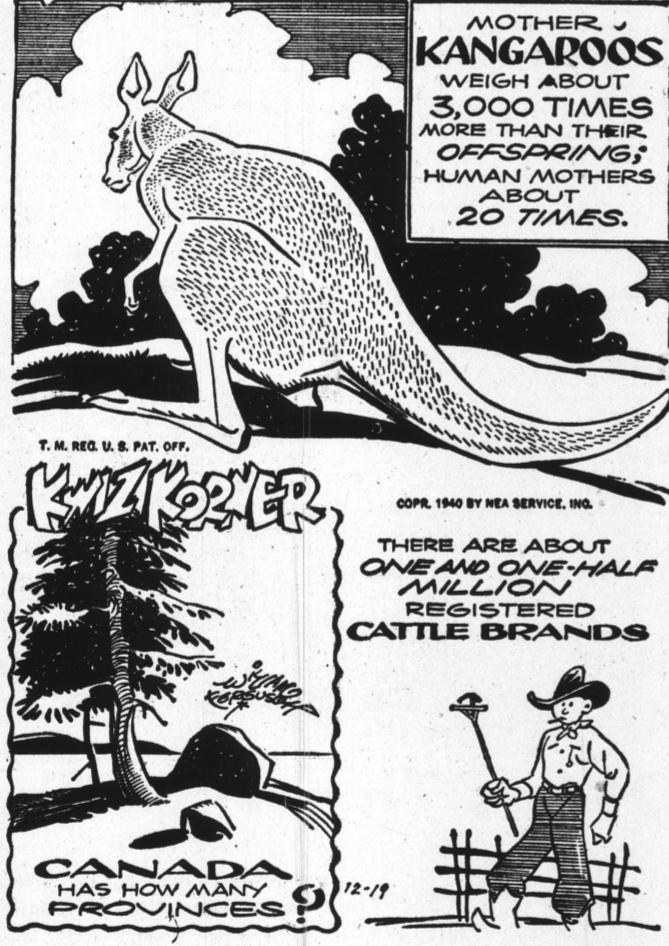
"I don't see why a clean-cut, well-built chap like you wants to enlist in the infantry."

FUNNY BUSINESS



"He doesn't mind the cold—he used to be a janitor in an apartment."

THIS CURIOUS WORLD



ANSWER—Nine. Quebec, Ontario, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, British Columbia, Prince Edward Island, Alberta and Saskatchewan.

RFC Attempt to Supervise Public Power Rates Resisted

Times Special

WASHINGTON, Dec. 19.—An effort by the Reconstruction Finance Corp. to supervise the electric rates charged by a 50-million-dollar public power agency in Texas, through a prospective investment of about \$50,000, is being combated here by the lower Colorado River Authority.

Jesse H. Jones, as Federal RFC Administrator, is boss of the RFC. The River Authority, which operates in central Texas and is comparable to the TVA in Tennessee, has already borrowed about five million dollars from the RFC to buy competing properties of the Texas Power & Light Co. It has since applied for another loan of \$1,674,000 to purchase similar properties of the Central Power & Light Co.

Officials of the River Authority say that while the RFC has agreed to make the \$1,674,000 loan, it is stipulating that as long as any bonds of the Authority are held by the RFC no rates for sale or electrical

energy by the Authority shall be changed without RFC approval.

The River Authority's manager and directors have found this stipulation objectionable. In connection with the earlier loan, they say, the RFC only required that rates be such as to pay operation and maintenance costs, principal and interest on bonds, and other obligations. Within these limits, the River Authority, which is an agency of the State of Texas, has authority to fix its own rates. It wants to retain that right and not relinquish it to the RFC.

TERM EASIER FOR COOK

CLEVELAND, O., Dec. 19 (U.P.).—James Miller, 42, is serving a three-month sentence in county jail instead of in the workhouse, because jailers liked his cooking. The assistant chief jailer prevailed upon Judge Alva R. Corlett to grant the

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