

Serial Story—

## Conscript's Wife

By BETTY WALLACE

YESTERDAY — Martha Marshall had been engaged to Paul Elliott for two years before she met Bill Marshall, Paul's school chum. And she had married Bill a month later. Now, still a bride, she and Bill make a foursome with Paul and Suzanne Decker. Comes registration for draft. Bill is in Class I, since Martha is financially independent and Bill's work is not essential to defense. Then one day, there is a letter for Bill. He has been drafted.

CHAPTER TWO  
SHE SEEMED TO HEAR him saying it again. "I've been drafted." And the room was still swimming around her.

"Honey," Bill pleaded, "Darling, does it look like that? It's nothing. If I have to go, I have to go."

Her husband's face came back into focus. She saw his crisp dark curls, the tightened line of his lips. Her fingers went up, to pat his cheek.

So he had been conscripted, after all. There was nothing they could do to change it. He would go away. For a whole year. His country needed him. The United States of America...

Her thoughts flitted in and out, like little darting birds. Bill would be a soldier. But there was no war. Only a precaution, a defense. Only a year in an Army camp. Duty...

"Lots of men enlist," Bill was saying softly. "Lots of men join the army for a career."

His arms were around her. He kissed her. "I'll only be like—like having a job out of town. Martha. You could come up to camp weekends. I'll be home on leave sometimes."

THEY WALKED out into the street. Peg, so rusty and dilapidated, so contrary, was suddenly dear. "It's a good thing we have Peg," she said. "I can drive up to see you."

"Yes, if the camp's not over 10 miles away. I wonder—where do they send the men from this vicinity?" He added thoughtfully, "funny, how you never give the army a thought. I bet I can't name two forts, off hand. And what I remember from ROTC drill in high school, you could stick in the eye of a needle."

Separation. She looked at him hungrily. She must remember the line of his jaw, the blue of his eyes, the way his hands were big and capable on the wheel. She bit her lip. They had never been separated, not even for a night, since the minister had said the solemn words over them. And now, they'd be apart for a year. A whole year. It stretched before her, barren and endless.

"In case I never told you before," Bill was saying. "I love you, Martha."

"In case I never told you," she whispered, "I love you, Bill Marshall."

He straightened his shoulders. "I'll break the news to them at the store." He was struck by another thought. "I wonder if I'll get the job back—afterward."

"There's a law about it. They have to take you back."

"Yes, if the guy who comes after me doesn't let a lot of deadbeats walk out with diamond rings so there won't be any store to come back to." He stopped. "You know, I always meant to get you a ring, Martha. Better than the one—the one—the one Paul had given me."

"Don't sweet."

"But I should have saved my money. I didn't."

"I've got a ring," she said. "The only one I want."

His hand closed over hers.

At the Air Transport plant, Martha said, "I'll ask for time off. I want to stay with you every minute, until you—leave."

She stumbled as she got out of the car. The blood pounded in her ears. It seemed to her almost as though she was saying farewell to the gay and careless life they had known until now. Saying farewell to the laughter and dancing and the irresponsibility.

The country had given her husband a stern duty to perform; and she, as his wife, had her part in it, too. She'd have to stay home, alone and waiting. She'd have to come to this office every morning. Not as before, simply because it made things easier—but because now there'd be her own living to make.

DUTY, IT WAS a big word. Strangely, an unfamiliar word. Martha Marshall thought, as she walked into the sunny office where she typed specifications for airplanes, that perhaps their generation—hers and Bill's—had heard all too little of duty until now. It had never been a stern taskmaster to be reckoned with. No one had preached its necessities, it had had no part in their lives.

Paul Elliott raked his strong fingers through his hair when she told him Bill had been called. "Nice mess! I thought they'd use some discretion. First crack out of the fishbowl, they hook a married man."

He told her to go right home. "I'll fix everything."

The thought of duty stayed with her. While she helped Bill pull out dresser drawers, sort out underwear, pack his suitcase, she thought, "At least this isn't such a hard duty. I'm not sending him to war. Not yet."

The store had given him a monthly salary. "For the next six months, Martha, they'll send you a check for half salary. Decent, huh?"

"Wonderful of them." They had awakened to duty, too.

It all happened so swiftly. She could hardly believe it when she woke one morning to the sound of Bill's shower running, the sun streaming in the windows, and the voice in her brain saying, "This is the last day. He goes tonight. Tonight."

At breakfast, he said, "I'm actually liking the idea. I was getting fed up at the store. Feels like a mule on a treadmill. Same old customers, buying the same old junk. Asking them, got a job, how much you make, how much can you pay a week?"

Her breath caught. "I didn't know you weren't happy."

"Sure I was happy." He was almost impatient. "But things get

## HOLD EVERYTHING



"That must be the new strategist I heard the general was getting!"

## FUNNY BUSINESS



"Quick! Order some cold remedies!"

## THIS CURIOUS WORLD



ANSWER: Not because of any Federal law, as many people believe, but merely as a sanitary measure.

monotonous after a while." They'd gotten monotonous in New York. That's why he came here, she remembered.

She laughed it off. "The Army won't be monotonous. Not much. Drills and hikes or whatever they call it."

Paul rang their doorbell half an hour before train time. "I should have brought flowers," he said. "But I got this." It was a compact kit, leather with comb and mirror, razor and chromium container for soap, toothpaste, shaving cream.

"Say, that's swell!" Bill grinned.

THE THREE of them piled into the front seat of the old car. Bill slung his suitcase in the back. A dejected Butch, leaping in behind them, sniffed unhappily and asked in low growls what was wrong.

"Look," Paul said, as they turned into the station drive. "The parking lot's jammed." Laughing girls and girls who weren't laughing and men carrying suitcases and older women clutching handkerchiefs were getting out of the other cars.

"I'm not the only one who's getting left behind," Martha said. It was cold comfort.

Inside the station was crowded and noisy. As they pushed their way toward the gate, Paul said, "Reminds me of a scene from a newsreel. Kissing the boys goodby."

Martha's eyes stung, her lips quivered. But she had promised herself she would send Bill away with a smile.

"You'll write to me, Bill? Every day?"

Bill set his suitcase down. "Well, this is it, honey." His arms reached for her, and suddenly she was clinging to him. "Bill. Oh, Bill, darling."

"Don't cry, honey. I'll be thinking of you every minute."

He shook hands with Paul. "Take care of her, boy," he said gruffly.

Martha stood there a girl of stone as Bill mounted the little steps into the train. His face appeared at a window, over someone else's face. She picked up the corners of her lips and smiled. She waved to him.

A voice cried, "All aboard!"

## OUR BOARDING HOUSE



"YES, JAKE, WE HEARD ALL ABOUT IT!"

LIL' ABNER

"COPR. 1941 BY NEA SERVICE, INC. T. M. REG. U. S. PAT. OFF."

## With Major Hoople



"YES, JAKE, WE HEARD ALL ABOUT IT!"

LIL' ABNER

"COPR. 1941 BY NEA SERVICE, INC. T. M. REG. U. S. PAT. OFF."

## OUT OUR WAY



"REDRAWN BY REQUEST J.R. WILLIAMS

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"THE WARRIOR" — By Al Capp

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"NO HARM AT ALL, SON?"

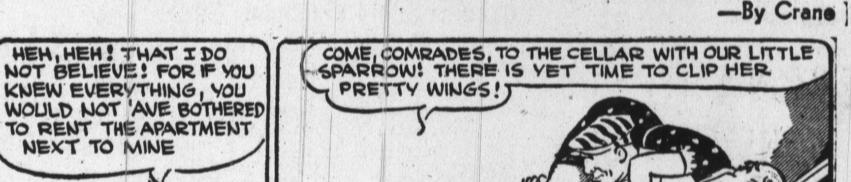
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"RED RYDER" — By Fred Harman



"COPR. 1941 BY NEA SERVICE, INC. T. M. REG. U. S. PAT. OFF."

"WANTCHERLY, EVERY INTELLIGENT FINGERPRINT DEVELOPIN' SET COME WIF THIS BOOK FO WHICH AH SENT AWAY EM SEVEN HUNDRED WRAPPERS OFA HUNDRED DOLLARS. THE HAMMY USES FO PAPPY'S (GULP!) BATHS?"



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"RED RYDER" — By Bushmiller

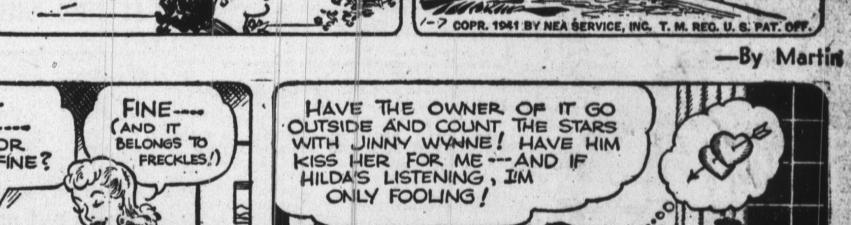


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"COPR. 1941 BY NEA SERVICE, INC. T. M. REG. U. S. PAT. OFF."

"EVERYTHING!" — By Crane



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"HEY, HEY! THAT I DO NOT BELIEVE! FOR IF YOU KNEW EVERYTHING, YOU WOULD NOT HAVE BOthered TO RENT THE APARTMENT NEXT TO MINE!"



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"HEY! HERE'S BOOTS AND ER BROTHER!"



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"HEY! HERE'S BOOTS AND ER BROTHER!"

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"THE IDEA O' THAT TURKEY IS REFRESHIN' AN' INVIGORATIN' ENOUGH FOR ME, PAL! LET'S SKIP THE BATH AN' GET ON TO PLEASANT SUBJECTS FOR INSTANCE—that TURKEY!"

## BOOK CLASS OPENS FOR LOCAL MOTHERS

Twenty-four Indianapolis mothers today returned to school to learn what are the proper and best books to select for their children. The class, to be instructed by the Public Library's Children's Department in the Central Library auditorium for 90 minutes each Tuesday, will last through Feb. 25. The women will hear lectures by Miss Carrie E. Scott, supervisor of children's work in the Public Library.

At the conclusion of the eight weeks course, the class members will return to their own study groups to instruct fellow members.

Class topics are: Aids and principles in the selection of children's books, Jan. 1; books for younger children, nursery rhymes and picture books, Jan. 14; poetry, folklore and fairy tales, Jan. 21; types of stories, Jan. 28; books for older children, reference books for home and school, Feb. 4; myths, legends and adaptations of classics, Feb. 11; standard fiction, Feb. 18, and modern fiction, Feb. 25.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN HERE ALONE? ARE YOU TRYING TO ISOLATE THE ATOM?

I'VE JUST BEEN DOING SOME THINKING!

YOU BETTER JOIN THE PARTY—WE'RE PLAYING FORFEITS, AND I'M THE JUDGE!

WHAT IS IT—FINE OR SUPER-FINE?

FINE—(AND IT BELONGS TO FRECKLES!)

HAVE THE OWNER OF IT GO OUTSIDE AND COUNT THE STARS WITH JINNY WYNNIE! HAVE HIM KISS HER FOR ME—AND IF HILDA'S LISTENING, JIM ONLY FOOLING!

ROBBIE

OF COURSE YOU'LL WANT TO BATHE BEFORE DINNER