

Scout for Ernie Pyle Finds Movie Progressing All Right With Material Rivaling Length of 'Gone With the Wind'

Lee G. Miller, sometimes known as Scripps-Howard's "vice president in charge of Ernie Pyle," reports to Ernie herewith on the progress of the movie that is being based on his dispatches.

DEAR ERNIE—Beg to report, sir, that I am back safe in Washington after risking life, limb and sanity in Hollywood, all for your sake, while you back in a nice foxhole equipped with sound effects and hot and cold running rain.

That is to say, I took you seriously when you urged me to go out and see what was doing on that movie of yours. As soon as the Democrats got through changing v. p.'s in midstream, I flew from Chicago to Los Angeles.

Here is the way it is in Hollywood, Ernest. I sit down with your friend Lester Cowan, the producer, in an office whose walls are chastely decorated with eight large pictures of Ernie Pyle. I tell him certain phases of the script are out of character. Lester

reaches for one of his three phones and summons a writer.

Then Lester has a brain throb and pages another writer, and a third and outlines an idea for a montage—which as near as I can get it means a staccato series of different scenes, in this instance showing soldiers at work and play in North Africa.

Then more brain throbs, writers summoned again, and so on and on, with production men and directors and secretaries popping in and out.

Along about milking-time we adjourn, since a hard evening's work is ahead—mostly inspecting the night clubs, which Hollywood is zealously keeping alive for you guys to come home to.

Next morning the story conferences are resumed, and ideas pop into Lester's head. He wants this put in, and that put in, and we can't leave this out, and that hit is a natural, and so on until, if they put in everything Lester wants, "G. I. Joe" would run longer than "Gone With the

Wind." Yes, they're still going to call it "G. I. Joe," even if you aren't so hot for that title.

Anyway this goes on, morning and afternoon, day after day. The writers—currently Richard Aldington, Guy Endore and Phil Stevenson—are summoned singly or in a body, and dart off again to their cubicles to turn more of Pyle's deathless prose into dialogue.

How it all will end, I don't know. The script is expanding and contracting and shifting too

fast for unhollywoodian eyes to make much out of it. But at a guess, it's going to be all right.

Lester promises to fly to Washington soon with a completed first draft to show the army.

The director hasn't been chosen, but Leslie Fenton may do it, which would be appropriate, as he knows what war is about; he was wounded in the great British commando raid at St. Nazaire. Pyle may be played by Jimmy Gleason, but that's still not certain. Brian Donlevy may play

"Captain Walker," whose death will be a re-enactment of your column on Captain Waskow. But all this is still up in the air. I don't see how they can actually start shooting before October.

Lester is using a lot of stuff that you've written since "Here Is Your War," so I put the bee on him for a bigger slice of the profits for you.

I met Orson Welles, but not Rita Hayworth; Mrs. Bing Crosby and assorted Crosby urchins, but not Bing; Hedda Hopper but not

Hedy Lamarr. I was Ann Miller's first blind date (she said), and that's nice work too.

Hollywood is wonderful, but the best of it is stopping off at Lake Tahoe for a breather on the way back to the salt mines of Washington, where I found that my desk was only knee deep in stuff until the galley proofs of your new book arrived this morning.

Why don't you retire, Ernie, and let me get back to the newspaper business?

L. G. M.

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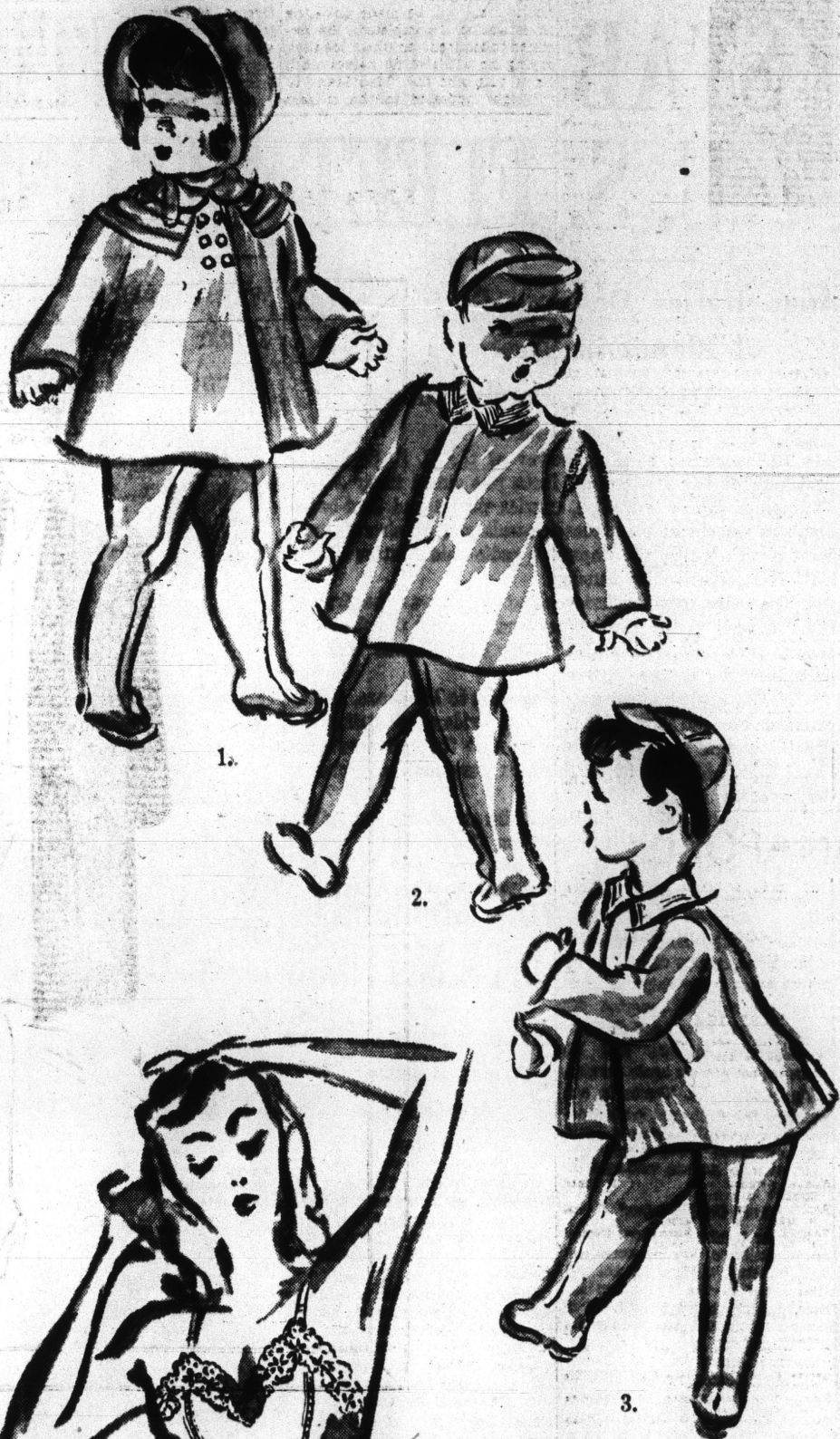
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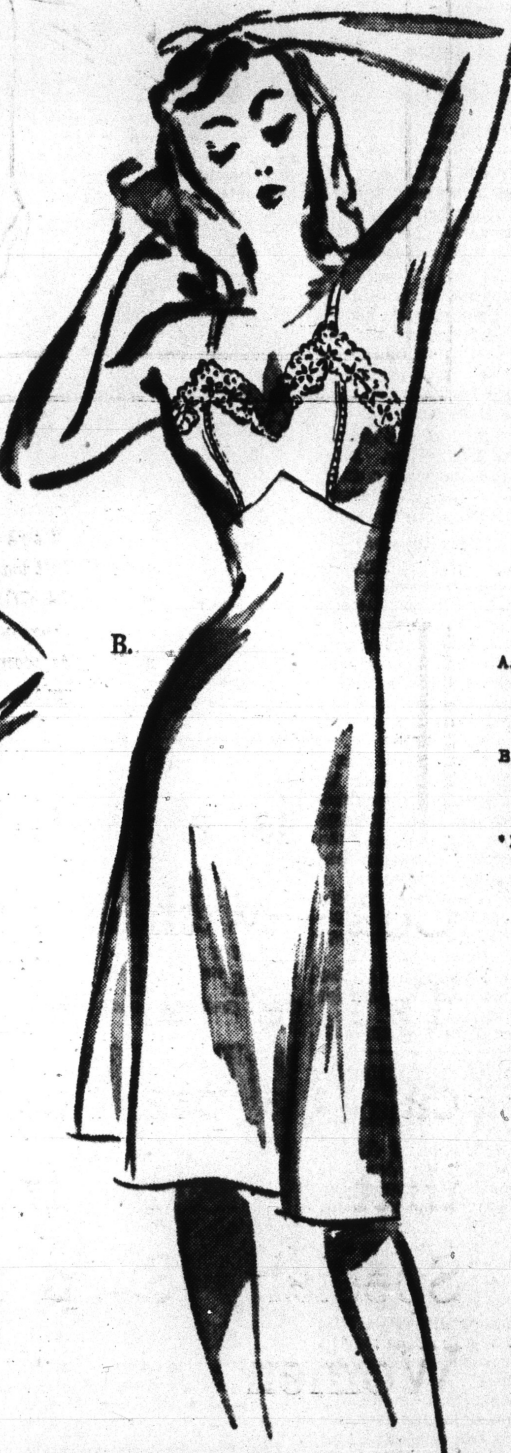
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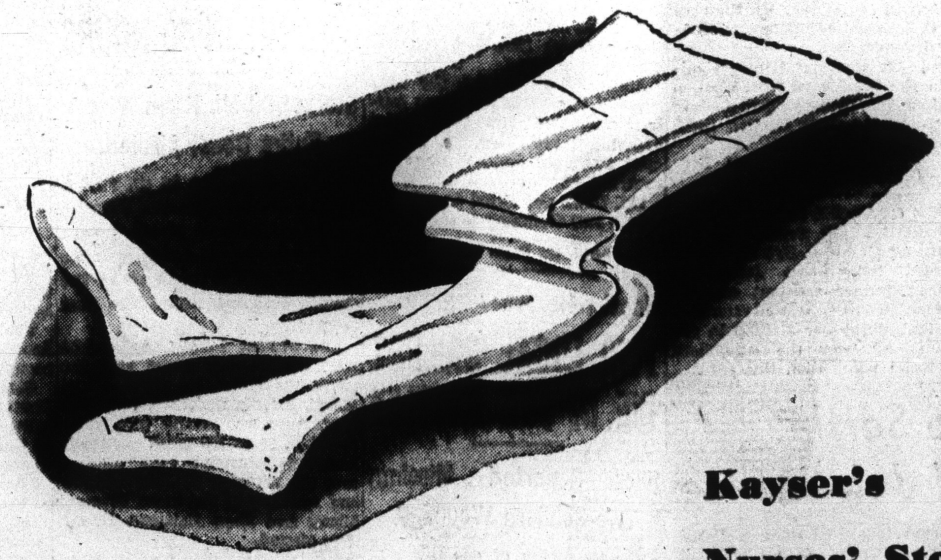
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