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## THE VACUUM OF THE DEPRESSION

I THOUGHT THAT the depression starting 1929-30 would be short-lived so instead of drawing in our horns and re-trenching, we put on two additional salesmen to sell the unsellable. Things went from worse to worst. The utilities saved us. There was always a dribble of work. Lou and Buck climbed trees with somewhat less than outstanding success. Another of us (not me) climbed a tree in the Main Line District, froze there. We were forced to call the fire department to get him down. Somewhat less vicious than the cats that we rescue all the time he was nevertheless a heavy load.

One of our spectaculars was moving a house for Horse Chase, the giant Pittsburgh University tackle. The proposition involved moving a house from a corner to make room for a gas station that Horse was to manage. It was somewhere in the hard coal regions. The job was completed, Horse sent the bill to the Oil Company. It was rejected quickly and finally. No contract, verbal or written. Horse was as broke as we were, therefore \$3,200 out-of-pocket expense went down the drain.

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Since then all contracts are submitted to I. Jerome Stern (Jerry Stern), our brilliant and hardworking lawyer. I should reverse those adjectives because for me the prime virtue in the world is industry. Once, in one of our numerous boneheads, we went into town to get Jerry to extricate us from another dilemma. He read the agreement in question with growing horror. "What does this mean?" The labored explanation was forthcoming if not forthright. "Then why didn't you say so?" he demanded.

We tried everything in the depression, took any job that would keep our gangs intact, gave our men enough money to get by on, and tried to get by ourselves.

One of our excursions into unfamiliar territory was demolishing of the gate of Woodland Cemetery to make way for University Avenue. We received two bids, Scott Brothers for \$1,200, duPont, \$10,000. We prudently and reluctantly took the low price, all of us wishing for a spectacular blow-up. The zero hour was five o'clock one morning, so I took the kids out. Scott just pulled it over with winch trucks. The friction was so great that actual flames appeared as the stones slid along the pavement. For years we had the large bronze bell at the farm.

There was one job we didn't get. The cesspool of one of my friends filled up. The honey dippers charged way too much money for a man in the depression. He was bewailing his predicament to another wheelbarrow contractor, which was our classification. He was assured everything was in order, as dynamite always blew down. He bored six holes around the cesspool, put a half stick in each and pushed the magneto. The results were terrible. Never were so much stucco and aluminum screens treated as badly. It took the Narberth Fire Department two days, at a very stiff rate, to hose it off. Short cuts are often dangerous and expensive.

Once during the depression one of our men gave an estimate of approximately \$900 for surfacing a driveway near Morris Road and Penllyn Pike. While he was out I received a telephone call to give a revised price, as they were eliminating part of the area around the garage. Eager for work, I hustled up to the prospective job. I was aghast. He had measured the length correctly but forgot to multiply the yards by four. The road was twelve feet wide. The request for a revised estimate had nullified our origi-

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nal bid, so I promptly sent a revised estimate of twenty-eight hundred. Thus was greed and sharp dealing hoist by its own petard. Needless to say, I heard no more from the owner.

More pleasant and amusing was one of our adventures with Caleb Fox. Mr. Fox loved fresh milk so he bought a splendid Jersey cow. His gardener could not milk so he naturally called us. Cows must be milked at twelve hour intervals. For months we attended to this. We sent a man in a pick-up twice a day. The first trip was straight time. Of course, the second trip was after eight hours and was time and one-half. Both trips Saturday were time and half, both on Sunday double time. Even in those days of modest wages, his bill was over \$400.00 a month, which he, a delightful man, paid cheerfully month after month. At that our mark-up had been extremely modest as can be readily calculated; over 120 hours a month for a man and over 100 hours truck time. The cream would have choked me at such a price.

John Price Jones, the famous fund raiser, gave us work for a different reason. We had a genius named Elmer Mead operating a bulldozer. Mr. Jones loved to see him work and picked out all sorts of projects for weekends at his farm near Wycombe so he could watch Elmer. Again, this was overtime and quite pleasing to Elmer, who had a large family to support.

Another ill-starred adventure, though this was later, was installing huge storm sewers in Atlantic City. It involved catchbasins at the foot of three or four streets then drains under the boardwalk and then two enormous pipes (48") into the ocean beyond low tide, ending in an enormous "T" to retard the sand from filling it. The seabound part was on piles. Our loss was spectacular, considerably more than \$25,000. The only mitigating circumstance was that we were able to park our equipment on the beach parallel with the boardwalk at the time of the convention of the American Gas Association. The gas business has increased by leaps and bounds, so evidently gas companies like fearless losers.

A depression job that was a godsend was the brush cutting along the A.T. & T. rights of way for Lloyd House. I hung on to that for dear life. I could not afford to lose that work although, tragically, I lost an opportunity to increase it one year. Mr. House had obtained an additional appropriation of \$4,000. The A. T. &

T. fiscal year closed December 25. I mailed my bills on the 24th. They were received on the 26th which threw them into the next year, which meant a difference of \$8,000, for not only had we failed (bookkeepingly speaking) to spend the \$4,000, but it was a charge against the normal appropriation for the next year.

From that bitter experience we learned a lesson. "Dusty" Simmers of the Bell, for whom we blasted pole holes, would say that the smoke wasn't out of the holes before he had the bill.

We would ride the lines and send in an estimate, for which we received an order. Later, when the cutting gangs went out to do the work, we would find that the State Highway gangs had done some of it. Naturally we deducted that from the bills, much to the surprise of Mr. House.

One of the routes with Mr. House was along the ridge south of the road from Philipsburg, New Jersey, to Washington, New Jersey. Incidentally, it was the first concrete road in the country. Two years I maneuvered over a huge quartz boulder protruding from the ground just enough to shatter the housing on a car. The third year I took a sledge along and beat the bejabbers out of that stone. I mashed it down to ground level. This may not have improved the road appreciably, but it relieved my feelings.

Our Bell Telephone work had been quite large before the Depression. Main Line, Upper Darby, Wilmington, West Chester, Norristown and Ogontz Districts had a great deal of autonomy. I remember once calling on Val Longo at Norristown. Harold Horrocks was chief clerk. The organization was such that all the chief clerks and their staffs handled the work of the district engineer, plant superintendent and construction superintendent. Therefore they knew all three jobs and promotion from chief clerk was quite common. Griff Asplundh, a competitor, and I happened to call on Longo, plant superintendent, at the same time. Of course he called in Harold. Lunchtime approached. Griff invited Val out to lunch and announced laughingly and seriously that he would pay for Longo's lunch, but not mine or Horrocks. I volunteered to pay for Horrocks. At lunch, Griff offered a job to Longo at \$5,000 a year, then turning to me offered \$7,500 a year and I could keep my landscape business. This gave me a chance to cast doubt on his ability to pay and

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to tell Val that evidently Griff thought I was fifty percent more valuable than he.

Such was competition in the Depression. I remember one outfit, seeing us working on a utility and offering, without seeing our prices, to do the work for 15% less. Another fly-by-night firm was pestering Mr. McGinnes to give them work. Finally, and it was finis, they submitted a bid of \$5.00 to remove an enormous tree on which we had bid \$150. Mac took Mr. Mather, czar of the Counties Gas & Electric to see the tree, showed him the \$5.00 bid and they were removed from the bidding list as incompetent.

Meanwhile, Asplundh Tree Expert Company and Henkels & McCoy were committing slow suicide. Our utility tree trimming rate started at \$2.50 a tree. Next year \$1.90 and gradually down to .58. It was our fault, not the utilities who merely accepted our bids. Next year Asplundh bid .54. We refused to meet it as we had lost \$2,000 the year before on straight field expense. The policy of all big companies on routine work is to have at least two contractors, so we both got the work at .64. It gradually climbed from then.

One of our depression bids was for a drive and grading near Wilmington for a fine firm of architects. We found a bug in the specifications that would automatically require an extra of 50%. This, of course, would sour the owner on the architects. There were two other bidders. We gave them a chance to be honest by delaying our call until an hour before opening. The architects were incredulous and went over the plans again. I asked if they had heard from the other bidders. They had not. In about ten minutes the architect called back. We were correct. Please revise our bid to include the extra work and the bids were postponed until four o'clock. The three sealed bids were handed in and the architects retired to a rear office. In a short time the senior partner came back. "Congratulations, Mr. Henkels, you are low by ten dollars." I was not surprised to get the work.

Every construction project had shut down, which meant also that the utilities had no work. In desperation we started to bid Government work.

When we were awarded the North Chicago Veterans' Hospital planting, Anne and I drove out to look over the job. No Penn-

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sylvania or Ohio, Indiana or Illinois Turnpikes. Instead it was Route 30, the Lincoln Highway, a two lane macadam road twisting and turning and trucks going at a crawl through the towns. Possibly the worst place was near Chambersburg, where the road twisted for three miles up the Tuscorora Mountains. You crawled the entire distance behind heavy trucks. Finally we were riding along Sheridan Drive through the northern Chicago suburbs.

A man with a family of children started a race. First, I tried to run away from him but he tore through intersections blowing his horn wildly. This went on for several miles. Finally, I pulled in front of him, jumped out and told him off. He should have more care for his children, etc. With that he pulled out a police badge. He had been chasing me all these miles to warn me. Was I in trouble? We talked a little, me with fear and trepidation in my heart and, voice. He asked me my destination and I told him North Chicago Veterans' Hospital.

He must have thought I was a mental patient on my way to treatment and incarceration and the quicker I got there the better for everyone, so he told me to proceed. Well chastened, I carefully drove off. If I had only taken this as an omen and turned back it would have saved much mental and financial hazard.

I went out to the hotel in nearby Waukegan to arrange the start of work. A man came up to me prominently displaying his Masonic insignia and suggested I sublet to him the work at about twenty-five per cent above my price, saying his brother was a well-known local politician. When I told him it was way above my price, he said he knew it, but that I had made a mistake in pricing it. Later the same day I had a somewhat similar offer from a pin displaying Knight of Columbus, with similar claims to all-powerful influence. I declined both.

I asked for a meeting with the American Legion, and when I said we would man the job entirely locally and from their membership, the enthusiasm was great.

We were able to get thoroughly loyal, energetic and competent men and equipment from this source. Our orders for plants had been placed with Illinois nurseries, chiefly, if I remember, with Onargo, Bryant & Princeton. Meanwhile we dug the holes, put in the fertilizer and did the other preliminary work. It was a dry

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and hot spring day early in May when eight carloads of plants arrived. Some were already in leaf and all must be planted at once.

The work was about 700 trees and 6,500 bushes. Lou McCloskey was sent out to keep Larsen honest but, though with the business a good while, he had very little acquaintance with plant recognition or a large scale planting. When Larsen started to talk in his sleep in the next room, Lou thought he was delirious. He thought this vast contract job would land on him and he was scared green.

The men were willing to work overtime which the law permitted in an emergency, so I went to see Dr. St. Antoine, Director at the Hospital. Dr. St. Antoine showed me the hospital, separated by the railroad. A small part to the east was for mental patients; the much larger area for physical. He said that this division was flexible as the bad physical cases afterwards became mental and that ultimately practically all would be mental.

He gave me a letter declaring an emergency, and ordered the gates opened an hour earlier and closed an hour later for our convenience. The work progressed with much watering and drastic pruning. The job was finished and everybody seemed satisfied and we sent the bill for approximately \$13,000. Imagine our consternation when our check came back with a deduction of \$3,800, a fine of \$5.00 a day for 760 man days of violation of the eight-hour law of 1912. The government people had interviewed every man on our payroll. Some were so incensed that they denied having worked overtime, but the authenticated total was 760 days

My friend, Colonel Millard Brown, gave me an introduction to General Hines, head of the Veterans Bureau. The general called in his chief legal light named Lord, who said I had no redress. Dr. St. Antoine had exceeded his authority and I should not have proceeded with anything less than a letter from the President. There were many interviews in muggy Washington that disheartening summer, all well watered with official crocodile tears. After the fine was assessed finally, and exacted, our pious friend, Lord, concluded sympathetically, "Of course, Mr. Henkels, you must realize there is nothing personal in this."

I replied, "Don't give me that baloney, Mr. Lord, you know very well that every dollar you don't spend is a feather in your

department's cap and a step up in your individual promotion." The summons to a hearing under the criminal phases of the law came two days later. Lord must have spent five or ten of the saved dollars on long distance telephoning.

Later I received a notice from United States Attorney Green in Chicago citing me to come out on a certain date to answer for criminal violation of the eight-hour act. There was no money left even for carfare.

Betty Pitzer, my sister-in-law's old office mate in J. K. Mitchell's office, was at that time secretary to Roy St. Louis, Assistant Solicitor General in Washington and got the introduction. I told him my experiences and he asked if I had paid the fine. All I could answer was that they had deducted the money from my check. I said I had no money, so I would take a pauper's oath, let them arrest me in Philadelphia and provide transportation and legal defense. He told me to write to Mr. Green state that I had talked to him, Mr. St. Louis, and had been instructed by Mr. St. Louis to do nothing until I heard further. Thankfully, I can say it ended just there. I never heard another word. Mr. St. Louis was a prince.

Before I left his office he gave me a thoroughly non-bureaucratic definition of a government contract. "A government contract is like the syphilis. The only time you have any fun with it is when you are getting it."

One of our depression jobs was the planting of the grounds of the Naval Hospital in League Island Park. We did not have the drives, but were awarded the parking lot. McShain was the general contractor to whom we were subcontractors. His superintendent was Jim Carrol, one of the best. Jack Butler, the old Penn center, had the lunch room concession. A big sign was nailed to the employees entrance gate "Laborers 25¢ an hour."

I told our men that it was our principle that we paid a living wage and our minimum was 40¢ an hour. Did our men work! General Johnson was organizing the NRA, later decided unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, which disappointed me. The thirty or forty landscape and road contractors were organizing with Arthur C. Emlen of Harrison Mertz and Emlen as chairman. For those who forget, forty cents an hour was to be minimum

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and those getting forty cents or more were to be raised proportionally. Arthur Emlen asked the Vice Chairman to preside and made a motion, carried unanimously, that Henkels & McCoy had carried out the principles of NRA when it was only a gleam in the eye of the President and should not be bound to raise our men. I have remembered that gracious act.

To return to the Naval Hospital. The specifications provided that we were to spread six inches of clean 3/4 inch dolomitic limestone, roll with a three-wheel roller. Then one half gallon of asphalt was to be spread in two applications, covered lightly with half-inch stone and rolled to a finish. It was like rolling dry seashore sand. The front wheel of the roller having no power just pushed the stone ahead, then jumped over it. At our own expense we provided a tandem roller to roll crosswise and partly smooth out these lumps.

We were preparing to apply the asphalt the next day or two when the inspector, name of Whalen, asked me how we intended to apply it, I told him that for that tiny amount of asphalt we would apply it with a hand distributor, one quarter of a gallon and then overlap with the other quarter, thus fulfilling the rules.

The next morning Mr. Whalen greeted me cheerfully, "I have bad news for you. The application is to total a gallon." I asked him who his boss was and with indignation he told me Commander Kline. I made an appointment with Commander Kline, though before I left for the Navy Yard, I was told, "They will throw the plans and specifications at you. If that doesn't work, then Navy Standards, and that failing, the Officers Manual."

At the Navy Yard, Kline had with him the civilian who was in charge of all Navy Yard roads, a considerable job. First was brought up that we were to furnish dolomitic limestone and perhaps hadn't done so. That was easy as we were buying the stone from Corson's who have nothing but dolomite. Then the quantity of asphalt. I asked him if he ordered a hundred gallons of oil in two containers (a close parallel) how much oil would he expect.

He asked me what kind of job he was getting and I told him the miserable job specified.

Was it not the intent of the Navy to get a good job?

"No, the specifications have been written by someone with

absolutely no knowledge of roads and, poor as I am, I would be glad to pave the quarterdeck of the Admiral free of charge with the same materials." Commander Kline turned to his assistant. "Bill, how much asphalt will we get when Jack is finished?"

"One half gallon," said Bill.

Then the Commander turned to me and said, "O.K., let's talk of something pleasant." It seems he and I had gone to school together.

I can't help a morbid distortion here of one of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "Sonnets from The Portuguese"-

How to lose money, let me count the ways.

Going broke in contracting requires no effort. It is practically a way of life. Frank Henderson tells of another Henkels & McCoy job for the Navy during the Depression that proves this point again, if any proof is needed.

I had a tower foundation to build for the Navy in the Bethlehem Steel Plant at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. We were given a set of drawings, specifications and details. The tower footing showed to be seventeen feet deep with four rising legs to receive the tower at grade level. I proceeded to excavate and shore this seventeen-foot square to the seventeen-foot depth. We graded off and proceeded to start our tower.

A Navy inspector found a note in the General Specifications issued by the Navy on all contracts, that we had to go to undisturbed soil. The area we were in was a slag fill. In fact, the Lehigh River used to be where we were working. He insisted we go deeper. After much deliberation, we started on down. When I reached thirty feet, I drove a rod another six, and still no soil.

All during this period the weather was extremely cold and the sides were freezing behind the shoring, but I didn't realize it. On this afternoon, we had just shut down to try and force this inspector to agree that the intent was as on the plan and details, and not in the general when all of a sudden, there was a bang! A six-by-eight whaler or cross timber had split, then another and another, until the whole lower section began to cave. I ordered the hole backfilled, and within ten minutes we had stopped the trouble but were back up to the seventeen foot level. A warming trend had caused the thawing of the sides and the slag began to shift.

It wasn't long until a lot of brass were at the scene. The sur-

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rounding utilities and structure were undisturbed, but everyone wanted to know why the hell we were down that deep.

After several days of Naval deliberation, we were told to go ahead and build the footing as was shown on the detail. The loss was never recouped.

Landscaping was practically extinct. People were struggling to fill their stomachs. They had no money for aesthetic luxuries. We took over two plant concessions, one at each of the suburban stores of Strawbridge & Clothier, and at Christmas sold (or tried to sell) Christmas plants and trees at the main Strawbridge Store on Market Street. Despite good locations, the best nursery stock, and generous arrangements with the store, we failed. These efforts show how desperate we were for business. Since then I have had profound respect for all retail storekeepers, large and small.

Lou McCloskey, Buck Faust, and I even took to house-to-house selling. “Lady, we’ll trim your tree for \$5.00. If you can get your neighbor to let us trim hers, we’ll do them both for \$4.00 each. If you can get the whole block into it, we’ll do them all for \$3.00 a tree.” Most people who heard our spiel decided to let their trees stay untrimmed until the Depression was over.

I knew what it was like trying to keep Henkels & McCoy going and how we fared around Philadelphia. Some of the others were enduring on the road. George Mobley, then a foreman, was one of them. The rest of this chapter is in his words.

During the dark thirties much of the available work was out of town. I think of it as “the boiled potatoes and gravy” circuit. The gang’s objective was to find room and board as cheaply as possible. Eight dollars per week for room and board was the general rule.

We had a Bell trimming contract in Courtland, New York that called for a six weeks’ stay. The local boarding house was found as usual. It was the fall of the year, October, harvest time for winter cabbage. After a couple of days we realized our landlady was well supplied with big pots and when she cooked cabbage, you ate or were exposed to cabbage until it was consumed. What I remember the most was the lunch surprise of boiled dried lima bean sandwiches and homemade cookies that were just too hard to chew. We had a sailing contest daily at noon time to see who could get the most distance “sailing” our cookies. The work was

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hard but we still found time for fun. The work week was 5 1/2 days. One of the fellows, Lloyd Sagendorph, had a personal car. On weekends if Syracuse had a home game, we made the football game. We had to pass up any Cornell home games—too expensive—\$4.40 and \$5.50. The big drawback of the Syracuse trips were the drawings as to who would have to use the rumble seat—everytime I lost, I lost double—it snowed!!

Much time was spent in Delaware—Georgetown, Dover, Smyrna, Seaford, Harrington, Wilmington—and it was a must to find the cheapest boarding house. We stopped in Dover with a lady at sweet potato time. We had sweet potatoes in every known style, boiled, baked, fried, pie, etc.

Later in Georgetown we roomed with a widow of a telephone man and took our meals across the street at a boarding house. Sunday mornings, however, she insisted we have breakfast with her. The poor gal couldn't help but go into the hole—grapefruit, hot cakes, bacon, eggs, etc., etc. I must admit the best fried oysters I ever ate were prepared by a deaf mute in a 2' x 4' hole in the wall in Georgetown.

Delaware State regulations require all bars to close at 12 o'clock midnight. The hotel in Georgetown would lock up when the bar closed. A fellow could easily get locked out, so rather than ring the night bell, the next best thing was to “shinny up” the pillar supporting the upper porch and get in through the bathroom window. At first this caused much concern. The management knew you were out when they closed. How were you in for breakfast?

The Hawley Inn was home when working in Northeastern Pennsylvania. I spent eight months of one year in the town; if not a tree trimming contract, it was brush cutting. The first stop there was in late November—we were shown rooms on the third floor. In short order it was discovered there was no heat. Then we moved to the second floor and radiators, but still not much heat—one room had running water and toilet; truthfully every morning there was ice in the hopper!

It was below zero every morning, snowed every other day. The work was roughly in a fifty mile radius of Hawley which meant at least an hour traveling to and from the job.

Pete Faye was the truck driver. He had the knack of dress-

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ing under the covers; when he got out of bed, he was dressed except for his shoes.

Pete disappeared one night for an hour. On his return he was all smiles-I've just insulated the truck with cardboard. It broke his heart the next morning when the truck would only go 15 miles per hour and most of the cardboard had to be removed.

The morning we arrived in Pleasant Mount it wasn't at all pleasant, eighteen below and snowing. Frankie Albright's nose had been nipped by frost the year before, so he tied a handkerchief around his face bandit style. His breath frosted onto his eyelashes and in turn the eye lashes froze together.

We all climbed trees in sheepskin coats. Every night for the first few nights there was a parade, just like ducks going to water, from the hotel to the department store across the street to purchase another layer of clothing. It was necessary to raise one's arms to see if you were clothes bound, if not on would go another layer.

The following summer, Frankie Locketto, all two hundred and twenty pounds, was with us. It was the first time Frank had been away from home. When you get a guy like that homesick, you have a problem. The local semi-pro ball team solved it, They were going into the play-offs and needed a catcher-Frank was the man. In fact, he broke up the first game with a home run.

There was a local fair at Lake Ariel. We lingered awhile after work. One of the attractions was to hit the lever with a wooden mallet which propelled a weight up a vertical runway, the object being to ring the bell at the top to win a prize. Sagendorph at perhaps one hundred forty pounds was successful on his first attempt. Frank has yet to be successful. He would crank up and really lay it on, with no success. We could never get across to him that it was how you hit the lever not how hard. He finally left, talking to himself.

My title of foreman was a misnomer. Pace setter would be a better interpretation. The only extra compensation was room and board expense when working away from home. It is hard to understand how it was decided when you should commute or board on any particular job. Of course all travel was on the men's own time. Coatesville, West Grove, Wilmington telephone contract was a must for boarding. However, if it was work for the power

company, you drove back and forth with a ton and half truck without any man cab as of today and in all weather; Your only protection was a tarpaulin and body heat from the fellow next to you. Other times we commuted to Plainfield, New Jersey; Princeton, New Jersey; Allentown, Reading. As one looks back you can't understand the why of it all.

Brush cutting of existing rights-of-way was the most thankless and hardest of work. Some jobs were bid so low it was necessary for one man to cut a strip 10 feet wide, 800 yards long in a ten-hour work day. It was painful to have to fire a man with two hands full of blisters because he was unable to keep up with the rest of the gang. After much hiring and firing you came up with a hard-working gang that was lucky to break even on the contract.

The burning of brush was almost as bad as the cutting. Naturally the concentration of brush was in wooded and hilly areas. The fire hazard was always present; the better solution was to burn at night and benefit from less wind and the dew. It was impossible to notify everyone of our intentions. Of course we were in constant contact with the fire warden. During the earlier hours of the night there were people screaming about being scared to death. If you can, imagine a line of blazing brush piles burning simultaneously, perhaps a half mile long. The sky reflection, especially if there was a cloud cover, could be seen for miles.

One day the fire started to run. One of the Philadelphia boys tried to stomp it out with his feet. In short order he had two "hot feet." He took refuge on a boulder to get his shoes off and all the while yelling for someone to call the fire engines-the nearest road was a mile away.

Another incident that stays with me is the day fire got into the decay of a very large hemlock. We dug, poured on water, waited and watched. Again and again the fire refused to go out. This kept up throughout the afternoon. The gang was sent in at quitting time and a couple of us stood watch until ten o'clock that night before being satisfied that the fire was out. The water supply was the Brodhead creek below Stroudsburg. It was warm weather and everyone had drunk some of the water. The next morning only half of the men showed for work. One by one the other fellows became sick, upset stomach and severe headache.

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My only thought was typhoid fever. Two of the men went to see a doctor who relieved all of us by assuring it was not typhoid.

We hired a fellow who had been the inspector when the right-of-way was being cut. It was Jake's first day and it was hot. A couple of men were "ducking" extra large sumac which is hard to start to burn. Jake complained that we shouldn't "duck" brush. So he was assigned to dispose of it in the proper manner. A check on Jake, about 11:30, found him on a stump, head in his hands, soaking wet from sweat. Asked how he was doing, he replied "I can make it until noontime provided I don't have to move from here." The last of Jake as a brush burner.

A friend of the Henkels family was a buyer for Sears Roebuck, had a week's vacation and decided that a week of brush cutting would be the ideal way to condition himself.

His first and biggest mistake was a pair of oversized rubber hi-top boots. The only possible job that could be offered was to work with the men piling brush which meant much walking. This resulted in the man having two badly blistered feet. The only first aid we were able to offer was to apply adhesive tape over the injured area. Even with this painful condition, he never called it quits. His determination gained the respect of the other fellows and resulted in them kidding with him. One boy told him that the first three days were the hardest, after Wednesday life would be a breeze. However, Saturday morning the brush was overgrown with grapevines, or as the Dutch boys called them "Monkey Wines."

Our friend became entangled in the mess, lost his footing, and had to be rescued. He was so exhausted it was necessary to assist him to the truck-the end of an eventful week for one individual.

## 5

### THE FARM

ANNE AND I bought a half interest in a farm. The idea at the time was that it would be a pleasant vacation spot, good for us and good for the children.

We had kept the children out of school until they were seven. Instead of going to kindergarten they traveled the jobs with me and probably had lunch with three-quarters of the men, who are now the ranking officials of the Philadelphia Electric and other big utilities.

Business was thriving when we sent the boys, John and Paul, to Norwood Academy. It was not thriving in the Depression when we received half scholarships for them at Germantown Academy. After a year or two I told the Academy people we could pay full tuition but that if things further deteriorated, please to reinstate the scholarships. I never had to ask. The boys went on to Haverford, though John first wasted a year at Penn and then went into the Air Force. Paul got in three years at Haverford, from which they both graduated eventually, before the Army grabbed him.

Nancy was fortunate enough to receive a scholarship at

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Overbrook Sacred Heart Academy, for which I had done a few favors. Later the other two girls went to the Sacred Heart which meant, with the stop at Norwood, a trip of 29 miles twice a day. Nancy then won a full scholarship at Manhattanville, where both she and Gretchen graduated.

I seem to have strayed from the pigs, flowers, bee stings, and bootleg liquor at the farm, but let me finish this education story. There have been times when I thought it might finish me. Anne is on the Alumnae Board at Eden Hall and, I am proud to say, on the Board of Trustees of Manhattanville. Paul is on the Alumni Board at Germantown Academy and the Board of Ravenhill Academy and now has been appointed to the Advisory Board for Liberal Arts at Notre Dame. John takes an active interest in Haverford, representing his class on the Alumni Board. Gretchen is well on her way to her doctorate at Stetson University.

A little more about the family. Sue was our second girl, bright as a steel trap, but as my father would say, "No student." She went to New York, got a job and lived at the Barbizon, which I think has more rooms per cubic feet than anything except a tourist class ship. On second thought, I even withdraw that exception. When we demolished the Keystone Telephone System in Philadelphia and vicinity she came back to run the paper work, married one of our star foreman, Walt Tucker, and as of today has twelve gorgeous children.

The children as well as my wife hold academic distinctions to which I do not pretend, but they were not stiff with academic sobriety at the farm (sobriety of any kind was not one of our most difficult problems there) in those days. Like any other children, they were out to enjoy the countryside, and so were Anne and I.

Our greatest charitable interests now are in education, and by some quirk, feminine greatly predominates. I have nothing against that. As I once heard a radio broadcaster, Creighton Stewart, say, "Educate a man, and you educate an individual; educate a woman, and you educate a family."

Male and female, we got all kinds of education at the farm.

The farm was a beautiful, impractical 52 acres on Yost Road, east of Norristown. The largest fields and the westtest were at the top of the hill beyond the creek and the woods. The house

had started as a log cabin chinked with cement. This was a two room job with a large room on the second floor. The cooking and heating were done in one huge fireplace. Later, a much larger five room stone addition had been built. A full length double story porch ran along the big side. Everybody slept on the upper porch and the rooms were used for dressing rooms. We always had at least five extra children for the entire summer.

One night, about 1:00 A.M., I saw the glow indicating a barn fire. A few minutes later, 10 or 11 kids were in the car with me headed for the fire. About 95% seasoned wood, barns go up like tinder. As we approached the locality, the children were all excited. John was impressed with the hopeless solemnity of the fire and shussed the other kids with, "No laughter or cheers. We are on an errand of mercy." This was too much for me. I replied to the effect that I was just showing them a big fire. And, "What," said I, "can a carload of kids do in the way of help or mercy?"

We had a farmer, Ben Palmer, a giant of a man. We would drive up in the spring, as Ben's birthday was "the first Sunday in May." A dead horse would be lying in the meadow, sheep had been killed by dogs, the chickens had coccidiosis or some other calamity. The year we had our bumper crop of potatoes; we had them on the floor of the barn for sorting. The earliest killing frost in history took care of them.

One summer we planted and tended approximately 10,000 gladioli, selling the flowers at .25 a dozen. At the end of the season we dug them up, 300 odd named varieties, all in separate receptacles. Another early frost, (really a blessing in disguise) stopped this terrible chore. However, our horticultural efforts were not entirely in vain. We planted many rare wild flowers through the woods which gave us real pleasure. I often wonder if our patch of ginseng is still there.

We had our own strawberries and learned how to keep the field healthy by plowing under the old plants each year and growing new plants from last year's suckers. We had a splendid variety, almost as good as the wild berries we gathered on the railroad bank. Which reminds me that when we had a business trip to Europe, once we found wild strawberries on the menu. Where? Paris, of course.

## *The Farm*

We had fresh vegetables all summer. Every Sunday we pulled at least 100 ears of corn for ourselves and guests. We had our own veal, pork, lamb and all the pork products: real smoked ham, scrapple, sausage.

One of our neighbors was Stanley Novak, a hard working man with a large family. His temptation, to which he always succumbed, was a combination of Polish wedding and his car. I remember one November he was given six months for drunken driving. In February, I appeared before the court, with a lawyer of course, and asked for his release. They had found a still on his place. I could truthfully tell the court that if they kept him in past the spring planting time, his family would be on the county all that year and until the first crops of the following spring. I was able to say that the still was not his and had only been working two days before it was raided. Judge Knight asked me how I knew that so positively. I said our farmer, Ben Palmer, had just discovered the still a day before the raid and that it never took Ben more than thirty-six hours to discover any still in the neighborhood. Stanley was released.

Sometime later Ben came to me, suggesting that he and Stanley and I go after the Bridgeport garbage contract so that we could go into hog raising. All I was to do was to put up the performance bond.

I propositioned Anne about it.

She said, "I try not to discourage you in any of your ideas, but please consider this very seriously. Some day the Polack will be in jail, Ben will be drunk and you off playing golf, and I don't want to collect the Bridgeport garbage." This ended the matter.

Our boys were always well dressed. The Bryans (Philadelphia Electric President) lived about a half mile from us, and the neighborhood bridle path, a beautiful one, led over our land. We saw Mr. Bryans quite often in addition to doing all the landscaping on their place. Mrs. Bryans was an enthusiastic and able gardener and I had many years pleasure working with her. They had two boys, Harry and Bob, a few years older than John and Paul. Our boys inherited the splendid clothes that the Bryans boys outgrew.

For a very small sum the Bryans sold us their Shetland stallion.

## AN AMERICAN ADVENTURE

This little terror was one of the greatest delights we had. Either pulling the little carriage or under saddle, he had plenty of work with the hordes of children at the farm. He was always showing his teeth, or bucking off the kids but harmed no one. He was so small that the fall was an inconsiderable one. Later we added a saddle horse for the older ones.

Softball games were at least a weekly occurrence. Buck Faust used these games to develop sportsmanship in the boys. After losing a tough game, John, as captain, with tears streaming down his face, had to go to the captain of the visitors, thank him for bringing his team and congratulate him on playing a better game. Buck cannot be thanked too much for this. It was so different from the usual sand lot game. Lloyd Wood pitched for our team and also altered our pigs.

After some of the ball games, the inevitable crap game started. Once in a while a pro slipped in. I vividly remember one such occasion. When I saw what was going on I stopped the game with the pro somewhat a loser. After that, we issued rules. NO G A M B L I N G. We wanted no one to be one cent poorer after a visit to the farm. It seemed to be a relief to everyone. My observation was that those who could least afford it were the losers, probably because they became over-anxious.

We had free beer at the farm parties which sometimes became quite boisterous. At one in particular, fights were erupting all over the place. Jim Gallagher was just a good, pleasant, well built man from Irishtown. He was fighting a slightly larger man, Wickey Harkins, who had fought semi-windups in Madison Square Garden. When I started down to end it, some of our regulars said to let it take its course as Wickey had asked for it, and was getting it. Anne's sister and her husband, Henry Greenwood, drove in, immaculate. It took some time for Anne to get free of her peace-making efforts and when she finally came over to greet them, Henry said, "Mrs. Astor, your garden party is a grand success."

Our cattle started with a Jersey cow, Cherry; then came a Holstein, Blackberry. The new ones were named Dewberry and Strawberry. Currant was the calf due to be butchered. The bull was Raspberry. He was really a steer.

At the farm we tried to show the visitors as varied animal

## *The Farm*

life as possible. Fifteen tame mallards were shot at the farm while I was South on a duck shooting trip where we almost perished of cold while not even seeing a duck. We raised and released pheasants and quail, wood ducks, pigeons, guineas, turkeys, geese, muscovy ducks (which taste like blotting paper), cattle, horses, a pony, pigs, sheep and a goat-chickens, of course, and cats and dogs. I remember buying the goat at 8th & Christian in Philadelphia, putting it in the car and keeping it there while I played eighteen holes of golf at Plymouth Country Club. One of the caddies told the others I had a goat in the car and all of them flocked around to verify it. To this day when I buy fruit and produce in Norristown or pay the turnpike toll, there is usually someone to remind me of it. So does the policeman in Black Horse.

Ben Palmer had a thoroughly successful way of raising tomatoes. They came up from the pig yard and as we were getting our garbage from the best local hotels these plants were ideal. Ben said Campbell spent fortunes in developing the best varieties. We were using plants that would not be on the seed market for years. Sound sense. To dust a field, when I started in the spring I would be compelled to stop eight or ten times to a row. In three weeks I could do ten rows without a pause.

We made wine at the farm, chiefly rhubarb, which is delicious. The arrangement was I should buy the sugar, Ben would make the wine and we would divide 50-50. We made 50 gallons and Ben took his 25. Then we racked off the other 25 and Ben took 12  $\frac{1}{2}$ . We bottled the other 12  $\frac{1}{2}$ . Ben took his half. By that time my share was six gallons. I took two home. Next Sunday, Anne and I went up to the farm and I invited Ben to have a drink. He stutered and told me the wine was all gone. I said perhaps the two gallons in my room were gone but I told him that I had hidden two gallons behind my clothes in the closet. "That is gone too."

About that time we had bought some Belgian alcohol. Vile stuff. It came in five gallon cans from which the gasoline had been almost emptied. Ben loved it. Once Anne was pouring him a drink in an ordinary water glass.

"Say when." She poured and poured-up past half full, then three quarters. She thought Ben had misunderstood her so she said, "That's a fine drink, isn't it, Ben?"

“Yes, Mrs. Henkels, a noble drink but I have had more.”

Just the same, Big Ben was a man of intelligence and tact. I took him for his driver's test which he passed. Then the officer showed him a sign and asked him what it said. Ben was slowly puzzling it out when the official asked him what he would do if he saw the sign on the road. “I would pull over to the side until I could read it.” As I said, Ben passed.

One of the things we discovered is that furniture breeds. We started with a fifty dollar purchase at our first house, a little one on West Penn Street, Germantown. We bought a sideboard and dining room table. Someone had a huge bed, which looked like a Gothic cathedral. The man next door had a hot air heater much better than ours. He was replacing it with hot water so I bought his heater for \$25. Together we lugged it from one cellar to the other, erected it, which was not a complicated job and it worked splendidly. Gradually we filled the house with free furniture. Two or three years later we moved to 446 Church Lane, a house at least three times the size of Penn Street. It gradually filled up, including Venetian blinds taken for a bad debt. We then purchased the farm and furnished it with surplus from 446. We fixed up apartments in the barn for Ben and his family of grown-ups by thinning out the farm house furniture. From someone we received a card, “looking for a kind home for an old piano.” We gave it a home.

A cousin lived with Ben Palmer, a tiny man named Boysie Triplett. The origin of his name is only surmised, but there are pieces of gossip here and there that give some credence to our idea. The family was large and finally blessed with triplets, two girls and a boy. Baptism was postponed and finally forgotten. Our hero was simply called Boy or Boysie, the triplet. Anyhow, he came to us as Boysie Triplett.

He was laboring on a job one day while an extremely efficient and officious engineer was using a transit. Triplett came over to me and said that he had worked with steel tapes, transits, all sorts of precision instruments, but he still maintained that with the eye he could lick the world. He reminded me of Larsen. We raised twenty or thirty turkeys to about two pounds. Then we had a terrible thunderstorm. The terrified turks piled themselves

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into a corner of the pen. All but the outside layer smothered. A storm almost drowned a litter of tiny pigs. We gathered them up, gave them gin through an eye dropper, put them under the kitchen stove and in a couple of hours you couldn't walk in the kitchen for fear of stepping on pigs. Gin was efficacious when chicks were sick. The results were not as happy with our farmer.

At one of the heavyweight fight parties at the farm, after the baseball game with the Norristown Philadelphia Electric, John stepped on a rusty nail while showing the pigpen to some of our guests. Of all places to be sure of tetanus infection, a pigpen is ideal.

Due to the number of cars in the drive, I had to walk him over to the hospital at Norristown for his shot. We can be grateful for a very bright intern at the Sacred Heart Hospital. He tried John for reaction to horse serum. The telltale maple leaf came up on his hand, so they gave him cow serum, and we walked back. No ill effects.

Anne asked the local doctor, a very capable man, Dr. Bert Shearer, what they did before the discovery of the serum. He practically jumped out of his chair at the foolish question, "Why, Mrs. Henkels, they just died of lockjaw."

Our poverty at the farm was real. We canned at least a thousand quarts every year and some of that canning was fish. Buck and I would work all day, drive 135 miles to Oxford, Maryland, fish one tide, drive back in time to go to work the next day.

On a duck hunting trip into Maryland-I lay all day in a snowy blind during a dry northeaster and got not one shot. A cousin of Arthur McGinnes, who was a muskrat trapper, volunteered to ship us muskrat carcasses if we paid the shipping charges. Muskrats were reputed to equal terrapin in flavor. The kids shuddered every time we received a package, but they were free food.

Another time one of our out-of-town supervisors bought a barrel of croakers and offered to share them for half the cost and half the work. We were guaranteed 250 fish. I started scaling while he cleaned. Soon I was way ahead of him, so thinking I had picked the easier task we reversed roles. I caught up and then realized that adversity and experience had developed my speed and skill. He was slightly greedy, so when I told him I thought he had been cheated on the count he exploded. "Not 250?"

“No it seems more like 350.”

We salted them down, probably the vilest fish concoction ever imagined.

The farm was ideal in other ways. We played softball with various Philadelphia Electric and Bell teams, afterwards having freshly pulled corn and beer. The Norristown Philadelphia Electric had a steady date for such a celebration the evening of every heavyweight championship bout. They had a fine loudspeaker.

Ben Palmer was full of country lore. When we were having a dry spell, Ben always had encouraging news. He had seen a ring around the moon or heard the “rainbird.” No rain. When Anne reminded him of his predictions, Ben said, “Mrs. Henkels, all signs fail in times of dry weather.”

Once he called me up. Mr. McCoy was painting the farm house. It really needed painting and I was touched at his labor and thoughtfulness. After a long series of questions and confusing answers, I finally comprehended that it was a PICTURE of the house. We still have it.

I had always been afraid of dogs. Strange dogs always went for me until we had one of our own. I had no fear of bees because I seemed practically immune. They would light on my hands or face and fly off without harming me. An experience at the farm changed all that.

I donned all the protective apparatus I could find when I tried to hive a swarm of bees who became wildly excited by my ministrations. They easily found their way through my netting. Result I had thirty-four stings on my left arm. This was easy to count as they leave their stingers behind, and as I pulled them I counted. I must be fairly immune to bee venom, as some people are killed by a few stings-an occasional individual by one.

After that stinging episode, bees came after me. This is *not* imagination. I would not be aware of a bee until he would make the “bee line” for me. Evidently I gave off some emanation that infuriated them.

Now bees seem to hate me. Dogs no longer do. They smell the friendly presence of my own dog and never touch me. Before, they had divined my unconscious fear and dislike.

Much of my business has always been with people, and their

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reaction to me and mine to them is not too different from that shown by insects and the animals. We are creatures like bees and dogs, although our instincts have been partially atrophied by a veneer of civilization.

When someone tells me, "I dislike that man, but he doesn't know, because I disguised it," I consider that is the bunk. I always assert that instincts will sooner or later come to the surface. It may be easy to learn to like someone, for we all have some virtues, but the liking is not always instinctive, this despite Frank Dilworth's remark to me after an explosion on my part: "No one loses his temper unless he thinks he can afford it." Sometimes the provocation is so great that the compensation need not be much.

Many times Anne left the farm in the morning with me. I came back to the farm but she stayed on working on the books until two A.M., then went home to 446, had a couple of martinis and slept until time for work the next morning.

Another incident. She was going to a party one Saturday afternoon when I was out "riding the lines." Herb Topham was pressed into service to drive her in the White truck. He was reluctant. She thought he was embarrassed in having her in a truck. This was far from the truth. He took back streets because he was afraid his girl would see him.

## 6

### A JOB IS A JOB

LIFE ON THE JOB wasn't really too different from life on the farm. Johnny Mullen was the best tree man I ever saw. When I heard he was out of the Navy after World War I, I told Ging Whalen to bring him around for sure.

Johnny still remembers his first day. He reported for work when the temperature was about 20 above. There was snow and ice on the ground. He was told to stand by until someone backed out an old White truck. The White was in somewhat better condition than the two Model T stakebodies it had succeeded ("rattle trap" would have been profoundly complimentary of "The Bluebird" and "Whistling Bill") but not much. Topham backed it out. Ging Whalen and Johnny got in, and then I joined them.

We were headed for Newtown. A steep hill just outside the town was covered with ice and snow. We began to skid from side to side. Someone – it may have been I – shouted "Jump!" Johnny leaped into a snow bank and Ging and I followed, or else we all got there at once.

At the bottom of the hill we found Topham, the driver, an-

other man who was with us, and the White safe in another snow bank. We finally got into Newtown and began on a lot of scattered jobs for the old Suburban Gas & Electric. By the time darkness fell, Johnny and I were on our hands and knees cutting down a twelve-inch sugar maple.

On the way home Ging Whalen asked Johnny how he liked the job. Johnny, soon to be a foreman and eventually superintendent, told him the truth. He didn't like it at all. "This guy is going to be too tough to work for."

"Well, Henkels worked right along with us, didn't he?"

The charitable could discover some virtue even in me.

George Mobley tried us out in the summer of 1928. Buck Faust, wearing the plus fours of the time, hired him, and he reported for work at Cheltenham and Boyer Streets to a gang of which Joe Green was foreman. Joe was the first Negro foreman in the tree business.

When Mobe finished at Penn State in 1931 there were no jobs to be had. He tried Buck Faust again and this time went to work with Dan Lynam, Pete Faye, Joe Gardiner, and Ed Merkle out on the Main Line Division. The six day week that everyone worked in those days dropped to four, then to three, but never to zero. They did Bell trimming for Diamond State throughout Delaware; electric trimming and right-of-way brush cutting in central and northeast Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, and West Virginia.

Once when Buck and Mobe were riding the lines in Lower Delaware they ran out of both daylight and money. Between them they had less than five dollars. They had planned to get home at night. At George's suggestion they stopped in at the Brick Hotel in Georgetown and borrowed ten dollars from a waitress. They spent the night croaker fishing at Oxford, snatching a nap and breakfast at Captain White's house. They had to scour the countryside for ice but got home with seven lard cans full of evil-smelling fish.

By the Fourth of July, Mobe, Swede Paul, Joe Dugan, and Fred Schmid were back at the Brick Hotel, trimming by day and traipsing after every bird that Fred Schmid, who had been in my Boy Scout troop, knew about.

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The pileated woodpecker had been reported in a cypress swamp outside of Hillsboro. Swede and George planned to go with Fred in search of the pileated. Dugan had a date to drive a girl friend, in the truck, to Selbyville to visit her grandmother.

They all rolled out of bed at 5:30 A.M., the regular getting-up time. The three arrived at the edge of the swamp. Shirt sleeves were rolled down-handkerchiefs, soaked with repellent, tied around their necks. The swamp had been lumbered two or three years before. The slash was very heavy. After prodding through some twenty-five yards, they were surrounded by every mosquito in Sussex County. Swede and George lost any interest they had in any woodpecker. Arrangements were made to pick Fred up at 5 o'clock and the other two headed for a day at Rehoboth. When they returned for Fred they found him sitting at the edge of the road playing with a 15-inch King Snake, which he kept in the room overnight and released the next morning.

The Delaware State Highway Department, with a Mr. Hitchens in charge, had given the telephone company a major problem by planting hundreds of young elm trees under their Georgetown-Lewes four-arm, open wire toll line. After months of effort, permission was given to trim with the thought of training the trees around the wires.

There is no growth behavior to young elms which often results in a gangling specimen. Fred Schmid, Joe Dugan and George Mobley were given the job of satisfying the Diamond State, the client, and pacifying the highway department, namely Mr. Hitchens. We were soon to realize how tedious and trying was the assignment. Consultations were held on what could be done, or why or how; it often resulted in leaving a tree untouched, to be put in reserve for a later work period.

Within the first week I arrived on the job, noted the untouched trees, proceeded to lecture the gang-must have your heart in the job, etc., etc., and at the same time I gave that gangling elm a real shellacking, "That's the way to trim the damn things."

Mr. Hitchens arrived next morning on his daily inspection, stormed from the car with-"Which clodhopper did that?" Good intentions and skill are often unappreciated.

Another day on that job Fred noted what appeared to be a

bald eagle on its nest. After trimming each tree, the binoculars were put into use. By lunch time they all had to satisfy themselves if it really was a bald eagle. However, they found themselves stymied by a creek, but Fred saw when the eagle left the nest.

The boys went to Church the next Sunday at a nearby C.C.C. Camp, that being the closest Mass. They had to find that nest. After much trial and error, they arrived at a chicken farm, with the nest tree 3/4 mile away, on the opposite side of a muskrat marsh. It was fortunate that it was February and the marsh was frozen enough to support their weight. Fred led the way, with a pair of hooks and a half-inch rope. He was inspecting the nest by the time Joe and George found their way to the base of the tree.

On another occasion this gang was moving from Dover to Wilmington. They knew Buck Faust was downstate but there was no concern for him when they parked along the duPont Highway just north of Smyrna. It was nesting time for great horned owls. The nest was at least a mile and one half off the highway and it wasn't easy with bogs and greenbrier, the chief obstacles. On returning to the truck, someone thought of Buck- was he still downstate, or had he gone past the parked truck? It was six months before Buck asked why they were parked and where they had been.

King snakes, bald eagles, and great horned owls all went along with the job in those days. There were other curricular and extra-curricular sports.

I have told of our first brush with the law. It was not the last. When I turned up at the court house in Norristown to sue for payment due us on that driveway, I was a Horatio Alger character, clean but a little ragged for effect on the court and jury. Mr. Gilbert Rodman Fox changed that. He told me I was disrespectful to the court and hustled me home to put on my best duds.

My next experience was with the Delaware River Bridge job. We had sublet the sodding and the result was terrible. The inspectors made complaint after complaint, and finally wrote us a letter telling us to fire the sod firm. We had another firm fix up the bad work and do the unsodded part. The first firm sued. I turned over our correspondence to a delightful young man, who was working for one of the big law firms. The day of the trial I met him at his office, and on the way over to court at City Hall

he asked me about our defense.

I told him that the plaintiff was claiming more than the entire footage, although he had only completed part, and that the sheaf of letters he had with him showed the work unsatisfactory. To my astonishment he informed me we could not bring up the unsatisfactory work as we had not mentioned it in our affidavit of defense. That was a blow, for the Bridge Commission letters were our chief evidence. It didn't make any difference, however, as the judge said he was going to the World Series game and suggested we split our difference down the middle. What could I do? And wretches hang, that judges can go to the World Series.

One thing I got out of that. I always thereafter dealt with one of the heads of a law office and then only if the case was attractive to him.

We had a large landscape and road job at one of those subsidized housing propositions in Abington, Jericho Manor. Week after week they were getting further behind in their board and we were becoming correspondingly desperate.

The shrewdest person in the legal business, to my knowledge, was Frank Loney, Claim Agent of the Philadelphia Electric Company, although he was not a lawyer. I told him my problem. He called in I. Jerome Stern, a Harvard law graduate, and one of the lawyers on retainer with the Philadelphia Electric Company. They planned the campaign. First of all I was to find out where our debtors kept their bank account. Next Jerry was to file an attachment but keep it secret. I was to go to the job every day and ask if the government check had arrived. One day I was greeted with the news that the money was in. I called Loney at once. He called Jerry, who told the sheriff deputy to go to the Bryn Mawr Trust Company after allowing time for the money to be transported from Abington to the bank. We caught them with over \$40,000 in the bank and refused to release it until we were paid.

This was the start of Jerry's invaluable influence on the business. Nothing important goes out without his consent.

When Jerry Stem opened his office with Horace Barba and Jay Eiseman, I met going up in the elevator an old friend, Judge Vincent Carroll. I asked him if he was going to the housewarming as I was. Vince said he was, but probably there would not

be a retainer in the suit. A retainer is one who pays an annual fee for routine law advice and then additional for court appearances and other occasions not possible to foresee. I said I was a retainer, much to the delight of Judge Carroll's associate in the elevator, Judge Kun, who was Jerry's father-in-law.

What Jerry has done for us is beyond recompense. Guide, philosopher and friend. A superb knowledge of the law and painstaking diligence. Nothing is just part done or skimmed over.

Some lawyers think that their brilliant cross examining talent can, without technical assistance, confuse a witness about his own profession. I had such an encounter with Jimmy Rankin, a Delaware County lawyer, bright as a steel trap but with overwhelming confidence in his ability, and not above snooting the judges. It was a right-of-way case where I was an expert for the Philadelphia Electric Company. To Mr. Rankin's questions as to the number of trees involved, I replied, "let's say, a hundred."

"How many were deciduous and how many evergreens?"

"Fifty evergreens," and I was asked to name them, which was done. Then I was asked to name the shade trees. I did. The total was ninety-nine.

That gave him his opportunity. He closed in for the kill. "You didn't mention the persimmon. It must be either a shade tree or an evergreen, which is it?"

This was what I had been working to have him do. "No, Mr. Rankin, it is not an evergreen and due to its peculiar habit of growth it is not a shade tree. I could call it a curiosity."

Then Judge McDade said, "I have seen that tree and Mr. Henkels is right." Finis Mr. Rankin.

I mentioned Judge Carroll. I was in court being sued for some truck rental. We had offered what we thought was a fair settlement, to no avail. On the stand I testified that the lessor had been so miserable that I had decided to do no more business with him. The Judge leafed through his papers and remarked that two months after my virtuous stand I had hired another truck from him. I said I was really in a hole at the time and ended, "I bruise easily but I heal awfully quick"-not a grammatical masterpiece.

When the plaintiff's lawyer was summing up, he orated to

the effect that the cynical defendant had said about his client, "He bruises easy, but heals awful quick."

Judge Carroll interrupted: "Mr. Henkels was referring to himself."

The jury brought in a verdict for half of what we had offered in settlement before suit.

Some years later, Judge Brown, Judge Clothier and I were being given citations by the Military Order of the Purple Heart for some civic actions that escape me at the moment. As Judge Carroll was always an American Legion leader, the presentation was made in his court.

The Judge said he would have no trouble telling the exploits of his fellow jurors, but his old friend, Jack Henkels, presented a problem as Henkels & McCoy seemed to have branched out considerably. Then he asked me the number of grandchildren. It was then about thirty-two (forty-nine now). "You still do landscape work, don't you?"

An affirmative reply.

"I have it now. Jack is a propagator."

My latest encounter was when I was a witness in a real estate assessment case. When I walked to the stand, the Judge recognized me, said he hadn't seen me for a long time and asked if there was any objection to half hour's recess so he and I could have a talk in his private chambers. The answer to that question was easy.

One of our most exciting Depression jobs ended up satisfactorily after an ominous incident. We had Harry Powers and Jim Coan filling a cavity in a magnificent white oak tree on Sumneytown Pike just below William Penn Inn. Coan was an Irishman who kept himself broke in the stock market. One day an interested man stopped. He had the men set up our sign in front of the tree and pose for a picture pointing at the half completed filling.

Subsequently a man came to our front door. The office was still in our back kitchen. Anne answered the bell. "Don't be alarmed, Madam. This is the United States Marshal." He handed her a paper calling for an appearance in court for violating a Davey Tree Expert Company patent in filling that cavity. Davey filled cavities in sections, separated by tar paper. This was to pre-

vent cracking in heavy winds. Parker and Coan were pointing at one of these joints. The evidence was damning. However, the Davey lawyers only wanted us to sign an admission of violation and a firm purpose of amendment. Gladly done.

Along with nearly every other business, the nurseries suffered during the Depression. As I think I said before, Meehan's Nurseries, so much older than Davey and infinitely larger, had first split, then splintered. Henkels & McCoy got Harry Weierbach, one of our first pros, out of that. J. Howes Humphries retired from the Andorra Nurseries, which under his management was the finest nursery I ever saw-over 1,000 acres of the best stock.

Great were the casualties of the Depression and war. Besides Andorra, Outdoor Arts, Wohlert's beautiful nursery, Lane, Dreer and Frorer folded, as did the large and splendid landscape organization of Harrison, Mertz & Emlen. The dynamic outfit was now Perkins-DeWilde at Shiloh, New Jersey. This was an offshoot of the Jackson & Perkins, Newark-New York, famous chiefly for roses.

They had found three hundred fifty or four hundred acres of soil in South Jersey with sufficient clay content to hold a ball, as the expression is, for digging plants with a burlapped ball of earth surrounding the roots. This is not possible with sand. Perkins went to Holland on their seasonal buying expedition and while there made a proposition to Roland DeWilde, owner of a three-acre nursery. He came to Shiloh, looked over the property and suggested that they start with planting thirty acres, until he knew more about the soil and climate. Charley Perkins said, "Three Hundred" and that is what the first year planting was.

This was big league. Nothing over six feet tall was kept. At that size it was pulled out and burnt. I remember I had a sale for fifty American hollies, six to seven feet high. I had seen them at Shiloh, but when I called in the order, was told they had been pulled out the week before. In the shake-up and retrenchment at Andorra, which had been somewhat a holding action while its real estate became prime suburban territory, they had released their sales manager Leroy Dukenfield. Duke did valiant work for us and provided gaiety and entertainment in addition. Turned out he was a full brother of W. C. Fields.

Our first landscape man had been Barney Lynn, retired gar-

dener from a large estate. He lived with us only a few years. Anne told him once that a certain prominent landscape architect had recommended a different method for a job he was doing. "Doctors differ," Barney commented and kept on doing it his way, and his own way was usually good. Barney was good.

Then there was Tony Kneller. I had known him slightly for years. His father had a small nursery of rare plants on Horter Street. His brother was landscape superintendent for the Reading Railway when the stations were beautifully planted and had well kept lawns. We had just landed the job of planting and maintaining the substations of the Philadelphia Electric Company. These are located in many fine residential sections, Chestnut Hill, two in Germantown, West Philadelphia, etc. and were designed by fine architects. Invariably, the lawns and shrubbery are the best in the neighborhood. We needed a competent man to boss this work.

Incidentally, one of the substation supervisors for the Philadelphia Electric was Fairley Gibson. His pride and joy was Wistar Substation, opposite the Germantown Hospital. For a time they had two enormous Norway maples on the lawn flanking the main entrance. It was a source of wonder how we managed to keep grass under those maples. We did it by reseeding every two weeks. To Mr. Gibson, Wistar was like his own estate. We planted the tree varieties he wanted. He had a gazing globe and, strange to say, the neighborhood kids threw no stones. We had a bird bath, for which, Frederick Blessing, foreman at Wistar, cussed us out as he had to keep it clean and full. Noticing the squirrels in the neighborhood, Mr. Gibson wanted a squirrel bath. For a little while I was stumped, but then put in a bird bath with a pedestal about three inches high. The ribbing I took from the heads of the substation department, Russ Pennypacker and Ed Echlottere! I really deserved what I got. One day, though, Russ called me up and said Mr. Blessing had seen a squirrel using it.

Tony Kneller was in business for himself and one of his customers was James H. Gravell, president, owner and founder of the American Chemical Paint Company. They specialized in marine paints, a highly competitive field, but in his laboratory he had Franklin D. Jones, a demon chemist. Frank had come up with a product, Dichlorophen-Oxyacetic Acid, commonly called 2-4-

D. This was a weed killer that hurt only dicotyledons, not affecting any of the grasses.

American Chemical and Frank had over a score of basic patent, making Mr. Gravell a wealthy man. He bought a magnificent river bank property in Torresdale and asked Tony to plant it. Tony came to me and said the project was too big for him and asked if we would do it.

Looking back, it was the great reason why we survived the Depression. At the time we were tremendously grateful. It was a very large job and the cash was on the line every week.

The legends about Mr. Gravell are numerous and all of them complimentary. One of them is the story of the debts. I think what I now repeat is substantially true. It was in the depths of the Depression and no one who was not raising a family or running a business can even dream of how bad that was. All construction work was at a standstill except government projects. The big political contractors would add up all their sub-bids and proceed roughly as follows. They would bid 90% of that total and beat 20% off the sub-bids to make a profit for themselves.

Well, American Chemical Paint had a virtual monopoly on 2-4-D and on marine paints, one of the few businesses which I remember prospered during this dark period.

Mr. Gravell sent for each employee, asked about personal finances and wrote out a check to each one to put him in the black. When Mr. Gravell died he left the business to the employees. If any man ever thought wealth entailed obligations, it was he.

Tony Kneller, a past National Commander of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, came with us after the Gravell job had been completed. It has been a long and pleasant business association and a warm personal friendship.

One day in 1935 Lewis R. Gaty sent for me and asked if we would like to start an electric line gang for the Philadelphia Electric Company. Of course I said yes.

I knew it would be tough, but not how tough. The first expense was for rubber goods, gloves and sleeves for the linemen to wear, hose and hoods to put on the hot wires. That ran about \$1,000 per truck in those days. Then the active tools, many of which ended up in hock shops, where we repurchased them. We

started a seven-man gang in Bristol: foreman, four linemen, groundman or grunt, truck driver. Never was there a more confused start.

Some of the linemen even put the climbing hooks on inside out. In one month we tried three foremen and forty-three linemen. We were frantic and the Philadelphia Electric rather restive. Finally Neal Jett came as foreman and our production troubles were over. Neal knew his business and had a sure eye for incompetents and shirkers.

One of the linemen who proved his worth was Piggy Holliday, then more than seventy years old. One of the marks of a good lineman is position on the pole. Piggy would find out just what his work was, then climb the pole, set his climbers and safety belt, and work until noon without shifting feet or belt.

Most linemen at that time were drifters from the deep South. Georgia, it was said, had two reasons for existence, to keep the earth together and to supply electric linemen. Neal weeded them out and our production leaped. Soon we were able to start another gang, which was run by Hubert Goode, a war veteran, a delightful and competent man on clear days, but Mabel-lock-the-door on rainy days.

I inspected the first job to which he and his green crew were assigned. It was on Markley Street in Norristown, two poles where the lines crossed from one side of the street to the other. The Philadelphia Electric Company had transmission lines, distribution lines and secondaries. The now abandoned trolleys had their transmission lines, supporting wires for the trolley wire in the middle of the street; Ma Bell had a cable. Of course, because of the change in direction, guy wires were required to keep the poles upright under the strain. Quite a job for a new crew. I observed them delightedly for a couple of hours, then stopped down to see Mr. Van Antwerp. I told him it was a big job for a new crew and he offered to give them something easier. I asked him to look at the job with me. When he did he said he was perfectly satisfied with progress and the methods used.

Goode was with us for many years. Just now I recall that both he and Neal had been sharpshooters in the First World War. That meant that they were really good shots, but still not in the class

*A Job Is A Job*

of Sylvester Warren, brother of a friend of mine. He lived in the Ozarks and one tough winter kept his family in meat by killing squirrels with rocks. Let Dizzy Dean beat that.

We gradually built the organization of twenty-two gangs, line gangs, pole hole diggers, dynamite men, when the bottom fell out and all were laid off. This is the great argument for contract gangs. They can be laid off at any time. Mostly we are able to sell them elsewhere, but this time we could only place five or six gangs, at the Bainbridge Naval Training Station, which had bought the old Tome School at Port Deposit, Maryland. What saved us was that we rented our trucks.

Henkels & McCoy has been in the high wire and hot wire business ever since 1935 and in 1938 we were in it for fair, though the 1938 job was foul enough for many of the people affected.

# 7

## AN ILL WIND

EARLY IN THE MORNING of September 22, 1938, Neal Jett came around to our house to tell us that radio reports indicated a hurricane coming in on Connecticut and Rhode Island with strong probabilities that it would travel inland quite a distance before spending itself. At that time we had no lineman on the payroll. We did have, though, the home address of many of our former men. We also had a stockroom full of line tools.

Buck and I set to work calling utilities. The Connecticut Light and Power Company, the Connecticut Power Company, Hartford Electric Company, United Illuminating Company of New Haven and Bridgeport, the Western Massachusetts, all evinced interest to varying degrees, but the storm had not hit. Meanwhile we alerted our crews and asked each man to try to find others.

By afternoon we knew more of the progress of the storm. It came roaring in as predicted. Hurricane winds travel in a counter-clockwise direction around an eye that advances rather slowly. If the winds are a hundred miles an hour around the eye and the

## *An Ill Wind*

eye is advancing 20 miles an hour, the area to the left of the advancing eye have a force of a hundred minus the forward speed of the storm, or eighty miles an hour. The winds to the right of the eye have the forward progress added to their strength, or in my hypothetical case, have a force of a hundred and twenty miles an hour.

Of course those places close to where the eye travels have first the hundred mile an hour winds passing in one direction accompanied by the torrential rains, often blowing down trees. After the eye passes over, the winds then flow in the opposite direction, completing the destruction of the weakened trees and buildings. In the '38 hurricane, the eye of the storm crossed Long Island and headed up the Connecticut Valley, approximately half way between New London and New Haven. That would be about Saybrook.

The eye of the storm was quite noticeable. The sun broke through the clouds, even though there was a sprinkle of rain with cirrus clouds moving in from a westerly direction.

The rainfall from early morning to 2 p.m. was mostly light, with occasional heavy downpours for short periods. From 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., the fall was much more rapid, and with the high wind, walking on the streets was almost impossible. After the storm center passed, the rainfall was very light and it finally ended at 8:10 p.m.

We called Wheatley and Bolich, two men who had furnished us with second-hand line trucks, and I do mean second hand.

By seven o'clock at night, the first few gangs set off for a rendezvous at Danbury, Connecticut. When I started off by car, someone suggested that I drive to Stroudsburg and pick up a lineman. Woolever I think was his name. When I saw him I asked if he knew any other linemen in the neighborhood. One suggested another and I traveled half the night through the Poconos picking up linemen. I arrived at Danbury between three and four a.m. with seven experienced linemen in the car.

Buck meantime had organized our forces and was deploying them according to the requests we had. I was to take one gang to Willimantic on the property of the Connecticut Light & Power. Only one bridge over the Connecticut River was open. The State

Police had explored the route. We were guided over backyards and fields in order to avoid the huge trees that lay over the roads. We arrived in Willimantic about noon and were received like conquering-heroes.

All telephone, electricity, gas and water were out of order, also sewage, as the electric transmission line was broken down in several places. Their chief industry, the Clark Thread Company, was helpless. Their ancient trademark, O.N.T., by the way means Our New Thread.

We put up emergency and temporary poles and wire and brought in the high line. Then to the water works, the telephone company and the gas works.

We put up at the Nathan Hale Hotel. The first day, when we started at noon we put all those utilities and the large factories in operation.

That evening I received a call from Philadelphia that five more line gangs were headed for New London with Lou Jacette as general foreman. The Willimantic crew by this time was under control, with more or less routine duties ahead. It was up to me to go to New London to receive the gangs.

On my way to New London, I passed through Norwich, a municipal electric plant. The Civilian Defense, or its predecessor, had set out to clear the streets of houses, trees, wires, boats and other debris. The force of the storm had been almost unbelievable. Willimantic, about thirty miles inland had been a shambles. More remarkable, stands of white pines sixty miles inland had been killed by the salt spray. That does not mean that all vegetation was killed that far from the sea, but that white pines are particularly susceptible to salt spray damage.

Going through Norwich, I saw the work of the volunteer cleaners-up. One 1200-pair telephone cable had fallen with the pole line. An enthusiast had solved this problem by cutting this cable with a hack saw less than a foot from the junction box. This made it an impossibility to splice it together. A little intelligent supervision would have saved the staggering labor cost of splicing it at a reasonable distance from the junction box and then hooking up to the box. Of course that meant a great delay in giving even temporary service to the people formerly served by the

cable. Multiply this incident by thousands and you can see the problem faced by the utilities.

Hospitals, pumping stations, telephone offices were on the emergency list. To connect them it was necessary to run the primary lines as quickly as possible and, the quickest way was to patch out the primaries with whatever wire was available. This meant splicing in old secondary wire to eke out the gaps in the primaries. Both were of the same gauge in most cases. Later as new wire was delivered, we were able to connect the secondaries and the service runs. This meant that the primaries were patched out with old wire and the less important secondaries had new wire. It was the quick and only way to give service, but meant that once the emergency was over, the whole outside plant would have to be rebuilt.

Anne was back in Philadelphia dispatching the men and one of her standard questions, after asking if they could climb wood poles (always and usually erroneously answered in the affirmative) was, "Can you handle hot stuff?" Some of the applicants knew as little about her question as she did. At that time we were paying top wages of \$1.00 per hour plus room and board in comparison with \$4.21 today. These are rates for working practically steady time. The commercial rate is \$4.95 per hour.

I arrived in New London before the gangs and was cordially welcomed by Allen Colvin, Executive Vice President; Cecil Brown, Chief Engineer; Karl Turner, Division Manager; and Jack Dowling, General Superintendent. My conversation with Mr. Colvin is indicative of the splendid, ethical gentlemen with whom we were doing business. One over-zealous purchasing agent for another company had refused to allow us a mark-up on our overhead and insurance. Mr. Colvin told me they were legitimate and that I could draw what money I wished at any time. To conclude this financial transaction I again proved that I bruise easy but heal quickly. We were so broke that I asked for \$200. This with thirty-five or forty men en route. It shows that we were thoroughly licked. The next day I asked for \$200 more and the day after that for \$2,000.

As it turns out, the Connecticut utilities were in bad shape themselves. As a matter of fact, all utilities had to economize.

## AN AMERICAN ADVENTURE

The A.T.&T. System went into the Depression with approximately 360,000 persons and came out with 240,000.

As Lou Jacette was a second class lineman, which was not known in Philadelphia, something had to be done to get our gangs off on the right foot. We had some really competent linemen, such as Lou Duffy, Hubert Goode, Myles Hood. Jacette was a horse for work, so I suggested to the Company that Lou go ahead and set poles, because he could set poles quickly enough to keep the other four gangs busy on the electrical work.

All the contractors including two Philadelphia Electric gangs and briefly two or three from the Detroit Edison were found rooms and the electric company took over a large restaurant, "The Den," where everyone had his meals. The food was all right, but the linemen complained that salt peter had been put in their meals to induce continency and sweet early repose. This charge was vehemently denied. Neal Jett said no one had to dose his men with salt peter, as after a day's work with him, they were glad to go to a lonely bed.

The Detroit Edison gangs did not last. They arrived about 10 a.m. one day, made extortionate demands and were sent packing in an hour.

Every evening the supervisors would meet at "The Den" to view the day's work and plan for the next day. My knowledge of the work was strictly rudimentary, but there I was, responsible for five gangs.

My life and job were saved by Lavern Witmer, Engineer in charge of the Philadelphia Electric gangs. Every afternoon he would ride my gangs with me, inspecting their accomplishments and laying out the next day's work. Therefore I could make a sensible report at the evening's meeting. The program was rugged, as after the meeting was over, Wit always wanted me to go out on the town. I could not refuse, and as I had to start my gangs at seven in the morning my schedule was full. Later, when Buck arrived, I took Wit's binge one night and Buck the next.

There was little I could do to thank him for this indispensable act of friendship. When the work was over I did make an appointment with Mr. H. B. Bryans, President of the Philadelphia Electric Company and Alexander Wilson, III, manager of the

transmission and distribution department. I praised Wit to the skies, and one of the officials expressed surprise, as he had been “under a cloud” when he left for New London. To which I replied, “Wit must be a broken field runner. He must get past the line of scrimmage before he can show his ability.” It was the best thanks I could render. Wit went back to the Air force where, a flying major, he was killed over Korea.

Starting the gangs was an adventure every day. Those old trucks were strictly junkers. The others were almost as bad. The utilities, pretty broke themselves, didn’t trade in trucks until the last moment. Our morning procedure was to try to start all five trucks. The mornings were brisk and the cranking hard. When we managed to get one started, we successively pulled the others until we had them all running. Some time inevitably was lost in this procedure. Gray hairs accumulated rapidly.

Wheatley really worked. One incident I recall, where he drove to Worcester for another second hand engine and had it back and installed before starting time next day. He had not an endearing personality, but he was a hard worker and skilled mechanic.

One of the jobs that followed the hurricane was rebuilding the electrical system on Fishers Island, about three miles off New London. The Connecticut Power Company, to escape the deadening and cumbersome effects of Federal supervision, had scrupulously avoided any interstate connections. One day they discovered they were in interstate business up to their necks. They supplied electricity to the municipal system of the City of Groton. In turn, Groton had run a submarine cable that supplied Fishers Island with current, although close to Connecticut, Fishers Island was a part of New York State.

Fishers Island was and probably still is a unique place. The houses were generally huge mansions, some owned by the Brown family that had endowed Brown University. All had their private docks. There was one public dock and one hotel. The pheasant hunting was splendid so the hunters swarmed there in the season.

No boats except the company-owned ferry were allowed at the dock. It arrived from New London about 2:30 in the after-

noon and returned about 9: 30 in the morning. This meant that for one day's gunning you had to spend money for the license, two nights at the hotel and in addition \$5.00 each for the pheasants you took home. You also killed three days.

After mature consideration, the Power Company bought two beautiful diesel generators and erected them in a new building. The outside wiring was modernized and the cable to Groton cut loose. It was a pretty expensive procedure.

Meanwhile Buck had seven gangs in Hartford and I had added two in New Haven, fifty miles from New London; Harold Gensler was a sort of clerk of the works at New London. One of our troubles was a big German or Dane named Schmidt or Schmitz. With the finest clothes and equipment in the world, he was the worst lineman and a real pro at getting paid for nothing.

One afternoon Gentz and I were making up the payroll in my room at the Crocker House when Schmidt came in without knocking. Back of him was a man in uniform who had to stoop and turn sideways to enter the door. It turned out he was a naval petty officer. Schmidt, a little high, was demanding money to which he was not entitled. The conversation waxed hot and physical force was threatened. Then the telephone bell rang. The desk said Barney Seiders wanted to see me about his tools, stolen off the truck. He was pretty hot too. I asked them to send him up, figuring that three to two was a better situation than two to two.

If Barney was on the other side, I knew Gentz and I would be exceedingly conciliatory. If he was on our side, we had the best rough and tumble fighter I knew. Barney had been on the State Police until he drank himself out. Then he became a lineman and a real good one when sober, which he was occasionally. Suddenly the petty officer took a punch at Gentz, who had played football at Ursinus and was no pushover. I made a dive for the telephone, with Schmidt swinging at me. Barney jumped Schmidt as I lifted the receiver and yelled for help. The cops were in our room quickly as the hotel knew that my callers were not suave and polished. Vere de Veres. Not to let the incident hang, Barney Seiders got his tools or a satisfactory cash settlement. He and Gentz had pretty well settled our two intruders.

## *An Ill Wind*

After that we kept the door locked.

At one of our evening planning conferences, Jack Dowling said they were bringing our seven crews down from Hartford. He said he understood we had a splendid engineer, Buck Faust, in charge at Hartford. "Was he a graduate electrical engineer?" I had to say no, that his degree was B.D. (Bachelor of Divinity). Whenever Buck and I passed Harry Emerson Fosdick's church in New York, Buck would say that he would be pastor of the huge Riverside Church if he had stayed in the ministry. And he would have been.

One of our men in New London and later in other places was Myles Hood, as competent a lineman as ever lived, who single handed tried to drink Publiker into putting another shift on at their Kinsey Distillery. Night calls from all over the country, none of them collect. Three a.m. the telephone bell would ring: "Jack, this is the Admiral, I'm in Omaha." Yet, he taught my sons, John and Paul, so much when they were in his gang that they now carry cards as journeymen linemen, the highest classification in the union.

While in New London, I received a call from the United Illuminating Company at New Haven asking for two line gangs. They have a beautiful little territory, a miniature Philadelphia Electric Company or Consolidated Edison. It has two cities of approximately 200,000 people each, with strong industries and another, Milford about 40,000, all in a territory of approximately 200 square miles.

I took down from New London two gangs. Lou Duffy was one foreman and I forget who had the other. The two trucks were owned by Dutch Bolich, a solid, stolid burger from Honeybrook, the heart of the Pennsylvania Dutch country. Almost single-handed Duffy turned out enough work for two gangs. We had scraped the bottom of the barrel. Bear in mind, when the hurricane struck, we had no linemen on the payroll. Later Neal Jett was able to train his own young men, recruited from our tree department.

One foggy evening Dutch called me from New Haven. The men had some grievance and would not go to work in the morning unless it was settled. I had seen in New London the short

shift given the Detroit Edison gangs when they became troublesome, so I said I would be down as fast as possible and asked Dutch to have the worst troublemakers sit on his left. Left-handed myself, I have vaguely resented the sheep and the goats, but there it is.

I had 55 miles to drive and Dutch said, "you want to see Jack. He is coming as fast as he can and he is goddam mad." Linemen had been out of work for from six to eight years, and here they were raising hell on their first job. I drew a great sigh of relief when I saw Lou Duffy, on the right side. I said everything I could think of-and waited. That gorgeous Duffy stood up, yawned and said, "I am going to bed, because I get up at 6:30 to go to work." That was the end. The strike was over. Lou climbed 56 poles the next day, a respectable showing for any gang. Why shouldn't I love Lou Duffy?

One of the other linemen we had in New England was a man named Buchanan, who came from the coal regions. Rumor had it that his wife was a lineman, or should I say linewoman, for one of the very small telephone companies. Everyone had seen those telephone lines about six feet off the ground strung on any old crooked "poles" they could find. A woman could handle this construction with a small ladder. I always wanted to have a lady lineman on the payroll but never saw the mysterious Mrs. Buchanan. Perhaps she was a myth.

No lady lineman, but, Paul, after we opened our western operations, almost made up for my disappointment on that score.

One day when he was in Elkhart, he received a telephone call from Jack Schubert in Boise, Idaho. Could we use a good cable splicer? We had work in Ohio and if he was as good as he talked, we could guarantee at least six months' work. This was satisfactory to him and he said he would report with his pick-up truck, ready for work. Paul told him we would have a helper ready. Schubert said he would bring his helper. When the time-sheets came in "H. Schubert and E. Schubert", we discovered his wife was the helper. She wore men's clothes except for a hunting cap which concealed her hair. Her work was highly satisfactory. The utility for whom we were working was pleased and the union was glad to receive her fees.

## *An Ill Wind*

New London was under martial law for weeks. All downtown New London was off limits after dark except for a few people. Buck and I had unlimited passes. One night as we walked down to the waterfront on the deserted streets, Buck threw out his chest and exclaimed, "Here we are on the streets of New London, drunk with power."

The devastation wrought by the 1938 hurricane was frightful. Trees and poles were down everywhere. Roofs were off houses. Roads were washed out by floods. A large government lighthouse tender lay across the railroad tracks in New London. Fishing boats, small pleasure craft, and even coastal freighters littered the shore, most smashed beyond repair. The water was twenty feet high in the lobby of a Providence hotel. Passing through Fall River as I drove to Newport, I saw a steamer that would draw at least twenty feet of water high and dry a hundred feet inland.

It was a major disaster with cities without lights or any electric service, some towns without water, many unapproachable by any of the normal routes. The big wind was an ill wind for New England, but a good wind for us. Henkels & McCoy profited by a catastrophic misfortune, but we helped get utilities back into operation and cities back to something like normal operation. We gave good value for what we got, and I have always been proud of the job we did up there.



*Models pose at Henkels & McCoy's award winning exhibit at the Philadelphia Flower Show (note the framed award certificate in the foreground). H&M took First Place awards in 1937 and for each of the next four years.*

*(Right) A typical Philadelphia rowhouse neighborhood with well trimmed sycamore trees, allowing telephone and electric companies easy access to their lines. Back at "The Farm" H&M employees and managers take a well deserved break with a friendly game of baseball in this 1937 photograph. The Henkels family farm helped feed staff during the dark days of the Great Depression, often with produce raised on the farm and with fish caught in the pond and canned on the premises.*





*There is an old saying that it's an ill wind that doesn't blow somebody some good. Though the New England Hurricane of 1938 cut a swath of widespread destruction in Connecticut and Rhode Island, Jack Henkels and Buck Faust energetically recruited linemen from around the country and offered them to utilities in the storm's path. The ensuing weeks and months of restoration work helped the struggling Henkels & McCoy through the depths of the Great Depression and placed it on a firm financial foothold. This action also established the company as an innovative, responsive contractor and eventually led to greater participation in both Power and Communications work, diversifying our lines of business forever.*

*Photographed in a more relaxed moment, Jack and Anne Henkels enjoying the natural beauty of the great outdoors.*





*The men of Henkels & McCoy were fit for duty, hungry for work and raring to go.*



*A fleet of trucks laden with trees prepares for planting the grounds of the 1939 New York World's Fair. Henkels & McCoy also planted the fairgrounds for the first New York World's Fair in 1924 and the Sesqui-Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1926, which commemorated 150 years of American Independence.*