AS I LIVE AND BREATHE

by
Kenneth Kingery

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To You

If there are ups and downs in your life

The Ninth of October

TWENTY-ONE months of Air Force duty were done at last. Thanks to one cranky officer in Base Supply, it had taken me until supper time to clear Truax Field. Now to go home like a commuter once more—but this time for the last time. Compared with World War II overseas duty, the past two years in Wisconsin had been pretty soft. Was the Korean War really almost over?

For reassurance, I pulled out my separation orders while walking toward the car. Sure enough, they still said, "released from active duty 9 Oct 1952."

The turquoise Pontiac never looked so beautiful. I slid under the wheel, slammed the door, and pressed the starter button. As the engine purred, my spirits rose with the r.p.m. Then abruptly a wave of tiredness swept over me. My temples throbbed. I raised one hand to rub out stabbing pains.

Mercifully, the stabs rubbed away; but a persistent deep-down ache in my seat continued. Too much work lately. Too many last minute responsibilities. But at home with Fran and the kids I'd soon catch up on rest. I eagerly spun the wheel and headed for the Air Base gate.

I could taste the nectar of freedom as the car swung south onto Highway 51 toward Stoughton. To the right, the dome of Wisconsin's capitol loomed on the Madison skyline, and tight-packed city streets fell behind as the smooth blue hardtop rolled along. While I whistled over the scenic hills and curves of southern Wisconsin, my tires seemed to sing "Goin' Home."

Although I had commuted to and from Truax for twenty-one months, on this of all nights I wanted to be with my family for supper. But a stop was promised at Halverson's Supper Club, lying alongside blue and wooded Lake Kegonsa; and sure enough, Pete, Dick and Dale Sperle were inside waiting. The beer was on the bar. The war of words was on. As usual those three hearty Norwegians, fellow Stoughton carpoolers, were so busy arguing they didn't notice my arrival. Gingerly I shook some skip-around aches from my upper legs and approached the bar stool.

Sergeant Pete greeted me with a large wink, without missing a syllable of his argument with Dick: "But it's the first damn war we ever fought that we didn't at least *try* to win!"

While Pete's voice rang out like brass, Dale's always seemed to growl deeply, like a summer peal of thunder half-way across the lake. "C'mon in, Cap'n—what took you so long?" he rumbled amiably. "Don't tell me. That base supply puzzlebutt Lorenzo had your records screwed up and wanted to bill you for a missing steam shovel. Right?"

"Benny the Buck-passer? No. He just tried to stick me with a sixty dollar desk."

Pete guffawed, "It'll be a great day when that ribbon clerk goes back to civilian life. He has a fine mind for that line of work."

"*Colonel* Lorenzo, please!" Dick corrected. "We must show a little respect for the dead. Heads."

We filled our glasses, clanked them together, and toasted our release from the "Winged Infantry." After five minutes perched on a bar stool, listening as top-kick Pete lectured us on political strategy, I started feeling uncomfortable again. Despite the fun, my whole posterior region began to ache. Soon it really hurt. Perspiration broke out on my forehead. Unable to sit still any longer, I took a handkerchief, wiped my face, and stepped down off the stool.

"What's the matter Cap'n?" Sperle asked. "You don't look so good."

"Just tired, Dale. If you guys don't mind, I'll buy one round and head on home. Got to celebrate the big day with wife and kiddies, too."

Moments later I was turning into the familiar gravel driveway between apple trees and the choke cherry with its skirt of shrubs. The white birch trees now wore autumnal saffron leaves, and the sumac across the lawn glowed in shades of fiery red. The rambling home of our dreams looked invitingly warm and cozy. Its fieldstone and white clapboard gave the illusion that it might simply have grown from the landscape under graceful tall elms and taken on a personality of its own. Now the Pontiac coasted up in front of the house. The next two minutes would contain the highest thrills of an ordinary mortal's day.

As the car's tires crunched to a stop, Friskie came hurtling across the lawn. Her wriggling little body, furiously wagging tail announced to the world that she was mine, all mine; and now she jumped against my legs in ecstatic welcome. All black and white and gray speckled, her brown eyebrows registered the sweet pooch unmistakably as a pure-blooded, long-haired all-American.

Then three pint-sized dynamos tumbled out the front door to pile all over me. Curly-haired, lightly-freckled Mark, at nine, was a pretty muscular lunk to toss around. But my two little blue-eyed blondes Jannie and Liz, five and two respectively, felt light as thistles as I hoisted one on each arm. We staggered up the walk a swinging noisy knot, Mark walking backward standing on my feet.

Can a man know a greater reward, feel a deeper warmth than that of his own little children welcoming him home? Their exuberance, their noisy love so spontaneous makes all work worth while. Yes, a man has to feel needed.

Fran waited at the front door. Short, slim, a lovely sight with her light brown hair in gentle curls, she sped my pulse with her widest wide smile. Hers was an outer beauty that attracted, an outer and inner beauty that compelled. I took her in my arms hungrily, held her tightly. Her soft, cool kiss bore the unlikely aroma of a crackly-fresh carrot just pulled from earth. Despite the clamoring small fry,

these few seconds were sacred—were for just the two of us. Our love was always going to be a romance.

"Welcome home, soldier boy," she said. "How does it feel to be a civilian again?"

I squeezed her even tighter, pressed my cheek against hers and found it cool. "Nicer by the minute."

She laughed, tilting her head back. "I've a little surprise ready. The kids have been fed and we're going to put them to bed in a few minutes. Then we'll have a candlelight steak dinner in front of the fireplace, just the two of us."

A short time later the youngsters were quiet and I softly closed the stairway door. A cordwood fire burned brightly in the living room, and on a card table were a crimson tablecloth, plates and silver, and just two candles against the gathering dusk. I smiled to think how golden the moment, as Fran came from the kitchen with dinner.

It was a delicious meal. The girl was lovely, the candlelight romantic, the steak mouth-wateringly juicy. But again the deep pains welled up. I tried to submerge them under the magic of sights and tastes and smells; but restlessness surged through me until I couldn't sit still. Fran noticed, of course, and showed concern. "Over-tired, sweetie? If you're so uncomfortable why don't you just go up to bed early?"

"I—guess I'd better. Fine way to celebrate a big day—I hit the sack and you get stuck with the dishes."

It felt good to move, so upstairs I looked in on Mark. His bed was in a predictable snarl, his covers half off. I covered him up, kissed his forehead, and went to check the girls. Across the hall Jannie and Liz, too, were sleeping soundly. As usual, Jan was so relaxed I could scarcely hear her breathe. But in busy Liz's crib, the blankets were tangled in one corner and Liz was humped up, all uncovered, in the other.

As I tried to settle and cover her, she stirred violently, then cried out in sleepy protest. My thighs had begun to ache, but I just had to lift our baby, bury my face in her platinum hair, and rock her gently in my arms. She responded to only one lullaby—the popular song *Nature Boy*—so I sang it softly . . .

The greatest thing you'll ever learn
Is just to love and be loved in return.

Our own bedroom was quiet, the pillow coolly inviting. Stretching straight out in bed I felt complete comfort at last, and was asleep before Fran left the kitchen.

Last Days Afoot

BRIGHT warm sunshine heralded Friday, and the aches and pains were gone as I scouted one of Stoughton's manufacturing plants for a job in engineering or personnel. Always the optimist, I felt certain of finding something by November, and could use some time to get rest and perspective. As far as careers were concerned, I was at a crossroads.

Walking along Main Street, I reflected: five years of private enterprise, five years altogether of active duty. But in peacetime, the spirit and incentive of military service weren't the same. Red tape was profound. Office politics were vicious. Office empire building was the rule—and so, usually, were transfers to distant bases. A single man ten years earlier, at the time of Pearl Harbor, I had gloried in the overseas adventures of World War II. But now Fran and I owned our own three acres of Wisconsin and wanted only to sink roots. So—no more full-time soldiering.

We had moved from Chicago to Milwaukee to Madison to Stoughton in our six married years, and had found ourselves and the children happiest in the country. So—no going back to G.E. X-ray in Milwaukee, either. Well, next week check those offers in Madison.

Just as I reached for a loaf of bread in the grocery store, my posterior began to throb again and my legs to tingle with those strange shooting pains. But at the meat counter they began to subside and were gone by the time I checked out.

The next stop was a treat. I behave in a hardware store like a chorus girl at Tiffany's: goggle-eyed at the shiny tools, the lovely

little springs and catches, the oh-so-handy nuts and bolts, and all the wondrous electrical gadgets. But today my luck held: a pole pruner and other minor treasures came to a mere $3.47.

Walking felt good; but sitting behind the wheel en route to our hilltop I became restless again. The feeling seemed physical—a deep-down tremor which flashed through my legs and seat, not like a cramped or pulled muscle. It gave me a queer, uneasy feeling. A fleeting headache made me think of polio. Gosh, no. That was a summer disease, and only for infants.

After lunch, Fran urged me to relax for the rest of the day. Eagerly I stretched out on the living room couch, read *Time* and part of a *Post*, and snoozed for the rest of the afternoon. The aches and pains subsided.

"Honey," Fran's gentle voice awakened me late in the afternoon. "Mom and Dad are here. How do you feel?"

"Pretty good, Schatzie," I rubbed the sleep from my eyes. "Let's have some coffee."

Fran's folks, handsome and energetic as ever, greeted me warmly in the breakfast nook, where all three kids were noisily underfoot. Bess and Harry Weber, both approaching sixty, were co-owners of our nine-room home. Their attractive apartment "next door," comprising the original master bedroom, paneled study and large bath, was always on their minds. So now they gaily drove a hundred-ten miles to Stoughton every other weekend.

They were keeping the house in Winnetka, Illinois until Harry Weber retired a few years hence. Meantime they were developing a large garden outside while I finished wiring their new kitchenette inside. More congenial in-laws never lived; nor existed a house more congenially suited to two-family living.

"I see you've got the kitchen sink working, Ken," said Mom Weber, awarding me a firm kiss. "It seems to work fine."

"Disposer wiring and plumbing *all* in?" Dad stuck out his hand with the usual big grin.

"Not even a shock hazard left," I said triumphantly, grabbing with both hands until I had collected Mark, Jan and Liz in a bundle of writhing limbs on my lap, giggling and grunting. "Got a jolt or two from the stainless top 'til I discovered I had the on-off switch wired backwards."

After supper we put the three youngsters to bed and continued talking. Co-ownership still involved discussions about insurance, future plans for the garden, and many other things. But as the mellow evening wore on, throbbing pains came and lashed away at my hips. Damn! Thought I'd rested them away. Now again the strange malady gave me a nervous, uncommonly jittery feeling. Finally, unable to sit still, I had to apologize and head for the sack, early again, my legs tired and weak.

Saturday dawned and I rose from the cool softness of our double bed feeling like a new man. Flexing my legs experimentally, I could detect only a hint of discomfort. Nevertheless, disapproval was written all over Fran's face as we finished our breakfast coffee.

"I just don't think golf is the thing for a guy with leg pains," she said buttering a piece of toast.

Pleading the need for fresh air and exercise, I escaped with Dad Weber to the nearby golf course. The first five holes were easy. Then my feet began to feel heavy as we strode down the sixth fairway. Ever-reliable legs were now so tired at the seventh green I could barely keep moving. Looking ahead to the eighth and ninth, all up and down hill, I thought about quitting after seven and going back to the clubhouse. No, it was too nice a day.

"You don't seem to be hitting the ball right," said Harry Weber as we teed up on the ninth hole. "Too much freedom messing up your swing?"

I wasn't fooling him, I could see. The late-day pains had returned again, earlier and more vicious than ever. My coordination *was* wacky. I felt a prick of fear: this was more serious than mere muscle fatigue. With each stroke the swing of the golf club became less and less accurate. By the time we dragged onto the ninth green my feet were awkward chunks of lead, my entire rear end one violent pain.

By mid-afternoon I was at the doctor's office—and it was locked. I must have looked a little green, for the salesgirl in the drugstore downstairs quickly tried to locate him by telephone, reporting that he'd probably reach the hospital shortly. Standing made me ache all over now, so I thanked her and moved on.

As the fiery jitters drove deeper inside me, I yanked myself over behind the wheel and drove out to Sperle's gas station on the outskirts of town. Now a fellow needed a friend. Dale filled the gas

tank and checked the oil as we talked. He noticed I was mighty uncomfortable. "What's wrong, Cap'n?"

"I don't know, Dale. Maybe something connected with that operation a few weeks back. Had a spinal anaesthetic, you know; and they can really be bastards. Just the last few days my pratt and legs have been aching something fierce every afternoon and evening."

"Got any idea what it is?"

"Well, it's a helluva thought, but this thing isn't like a regular muscle ache—too deep inside. Feels like nerves. I keep wondering if it's a touch of polio."

"Great balls of fire, Cap, leave us not be so morose!" The irrepressible Sperle appeared shocked. "There's no polio in autumn, is there? Only summertime."

Polio. What were the symptoms? Fever—stiff neck—headache—nausea? I had none of these; except the occasional headache. My symptoms were mostly lower down—from seat to feet.

The paralyzing disease could attack adults, I knew. And poliomyelitis got mostly your legs, didn't it? But no. Polio wouldn't happen to a healthy ex-athlete. And even if my legs *were* knocked out for awhile, I could soon get around on canes and keep earning a living. The distracted thoughts went no farther, as I drove on and my mind swung to the problem of finding a job and keeping bread on the table. But for God's sake, I told myself, don't mention that word *polio* to Fran. She did the worrying for both of us.

A long wait in the hospital lobby followed. Now the agonizing rear end pains leapfrogged to the back of my neck, making me hunch forward and squint. I tried standing, pacing the floor, even reclining on the short, hard bench. Nothing would do.

At last the welcome, cheerful face of Rodney Peterson, M.D., appeared through a doorway, and I was beckoned into an examining room. Aware of the sensitivities of doctors, I carefully avoided any self-diagnosis and didn't mention the word "polio." We talked as the personable physician examined me carefully, asking many questions about the recent hemorrhoidectomy.

"I think you may have picked up an infection as a result of that operation," he said finally, dark eyes serious and thoughtful. "It could be spreading to your legs. We'll clobber it with a big shot of penicillin and another of streptomyecin. But I want you to go straight to bed and stay there. Ask Fran to call me in the morning."

All I remember about going home was having to suspend myself by my feet and shoulders while driving.

And now a purple haze descends between real life and conscious memory. The ensuing evening was a study in contrasts. As I twisted and turned in dark spasms of agony, Fran and the kids were in and out brightening the room and my sagging spirits. Doc Peterson's codeine finally let me sleep.

I didn't feel like getting up on Sunday—though the exhilarating leaf smoke seemed to call, "Come on out and breathe the crisp air." My muscles felt limp, unwilling to move. But then I heard Dad Weber putting up storm windows. Doggone, I couldn't lie around while he did all the work. So I got up—to find my legs so wobbly I had to grope against walls to reach the bathroom.

Fran was frightened. She called the doctor and told him I could barely stand. He ordered us to meet him at his office right away.

Now I felt miserable. I ached all over. The entire area around my hips was too painful to touch. My head throbbed, neck muscles felt cramped, and legs nearly capsized going downstairs.

They managed to support me halfway down the flagstone walk, then folded at the knees like paper and I sat on the sunwarmed grass while waiting for Fran to get the car out. Somehow we made it to town.

Concern was written on my wife's young face as we parked in front of Doctor Peterson's office on Main Street. "There's a long flight of stairs," she said anxiously. "You sit tight. I'll come around and help you up."

This was too much. I wrenched myself out before she could come around the car, then refused her help in climbing the soaring stairway. From the bottom, those stairs looked like Pike's Peak. Franny must have suffered agonies as she watched me stubbornly pull myself to the second floor, largely with the strength in my arms. But thanks to the railing, I reached the top and Rod Peterson helped me over to the examining table.

This time, with his keen perception, the physician surely knew what was wrong. After only a few questions he took a rubber-

headed hammer and tapped my left knee. No reflex. He tapped the right knee. No reflex.

". . . *Some Form of Myelitis*"

"KEN, I don't think this is an after-effect of that operation," said Doctor Peterson. Though his mouth smiled, his eyes were grave. "It seems more like some form of myelitis: maybe transverse."

"Okay. What's the treatment, Rod?" I tried to sound nonchalant, tried to keep that haunting word "polio" from my lips in front of Fran.

"You're going to the Stoughton Hospital," he replied. "We'll have to run a few tests over there."

Fran must have suspected the truth by now, for poliomyelitis had been a near-epidemic around Stoughton and Madison in 1952. She looked apprehensive, but remained calm. Now, looping a firm supporting arm about my waist, she helped me down from the examination table.

Gratefully yielding to her good sense, I draped one arm around her strong slim shoulders. With my other hand on the stair-rail we made our way back down the stairs, out the door, and across the sidewalk to the waiting car.

And so, holding tightly to the girl I loved, I took my last steps.

An orderly rolled me into the hospital in a wheelchair. I resented this, I remember. Self-reliance was a strong Kingery tradition. But I knew I couldn't fight doctor's orders. My legs felt as though red-hot wires were wrapped around the bones, and I could move them from side to side only with the greatest effort.

Fran says I was perfectly lucid—even cheerful—while at the Stoughton Hospital. If so, it was for her benefit. I have little memory of the place. A merciful haze had begun to settle around my conscious awareness, and with it some slight relief from fiery pain. I was checked in just before noon on Sunday, back out late that same afternoon. Now a rising fever had begun to black out all memory—of the present and of many days to come.

However, hospital records indicate that a spinal tap was done.

The spinal fluid cellular count,* coupled with at-last recognizable symptoms, spelled P-O-L-I-O to the medics. Nothing was spelled or explained to me.

The forty-bed Stoughton Hospital was not equipped to treat poliomyelitis, so once the diagnosis was established I was quickly transferred. Special treatment centers had been set up at various key points about the state, and one of the best was in nearby Madison, somebody said.

Fran had to leave; I was to be isolated, the doctor said. Could I fight this battle without her? For a terrible moment the hospital was a quicksand of fear, swallowing me with a cold clinical detachment. My family needed me; but I was cut adrift, alone and friendless. My life had no meaning without Fran, without the kids.

"No man is an island," John Donne had written. What did he mean? Tremble, yes, but don't show anyone that you're afraid. Clench fists, grind teeth, wait for the experts to cure the disease—you'll get well and be home again in no time.

Of course. I would never *really* be alone. My family's affection, their everyday need for me, their spirit and confidence would be with me always. Little did they know how much more I needed them—would need them—than they needed me.

Now an ambulance. I learned later that several nurses and aides labored diligently to sterilize my hospital room and bedclothes. I'm thankful they did. And I will endlessly thank God that the virus didn't touch anyone near me—miraculously, not even my most loved ones.

Men and Women in White

UNAWARE that my sense of balance was slipping, I felt sure the ambulance was driving too fast toward Madison. I feared a head-on crash each time we passed a car; yet the drivers paid no heed to my

* Spinal fluid in polio is clear, grossly indistinguishable from normal spinal fluid, necessitating cell counts.

Normal count —	0 to 10 lymphocytes
Polio	— 100 to 250 lymphocytes, fluid clear
Meningitis	— 500 to 20,000, fluid cloudy

pleas to slow down. Even though they wore gauze masks, no one likes to ride with polio.

I could only faintly recall trying to be congenial with some excessively serious doctors and nurses who studied me as the low-slung litter was rolled into a huge stone building. The hospital corridors echoed to the gay yammering of children's voices and someone mentioned that this was the orthopedic section—"mostly youngsters." Looking up, I found myself surrounded by tall ghosts. Garbed as they were in sterile white caps, white masks, and white smocks, people to me were only pairs of eyes.

Through the descending haze one personality made an impression. This pair of eyes was reverently addressed by the others as "Dr. Burke." He asked most of the questions, in brusque, incisive tones. Though he was obviously the chief, a man to be respected, his eyes bothered me. It wasn't the color; it could be the keen expression. Suddenly I knew. The intense, perceptive look reminded me of Dad—and Dad had died one year ago almost to the day.

A last clear recollection was a clutching fear which shrivelled my insides. My own father's death had come unexpectedly; he had been only fifty-nine and—we thought—in the pink of health. But this thing I was up against was slower—not like a sudden heart attack. There was time to fight it. Dad shouldn't have died, but he *had* lived to see his four children grow up, to count six grandchildren. As my litter and I moved on out of the offices with nothing said about a quick cure, I made a decision. Whatever lay ahead, I would live to return to Fran—and to help my own kids grow up.

I was placed in a small isolation room as Sunday ended. At first, Fran was told she could not visit me, and she was nearly frantic with fear and worry. My legs were limp and motionless, I was running a fever, and—embarrassing to me but altogether common in polio cases—my bladder was paralyzed. I had no appetite. Intravenous feeding began immediately upon arrival. Through Monday and Tuesday, however, paralysis extended only from the waist down.

Then, on Tuesday night or Wednesday morning, the paralytic effects crept up rapidly. Trunk and abdominal muscles were affected, and my right arm went weak.

I have no recollection whatever of these details, and can write of them only because they are so clearly, tragically etched in Fran's memory. Only some faint, confused memories of three days in isolation come to mind: children yelling at a beach where I was swimming to someone's rescue using only my arms . . . unmasked nurses who glanced at me from a distance but would not come in . . . cold night, cold legs, calling the night nurse for a blanket and having to wait a long time . . . sleeping on a cold pile of bolts in a garage somewhere . . . worrying about how to explain this to Fran and the kids . . . wondering how I could get away from here —back to them.

My wife knew more.

At first the physician in charge was optimistic. "It may not go above his waist," he told her on Monday. "However, you husband and your entire family must be quarantined. You may return for a visit in two weeks."

She suffered. Two weeks—two years—two eons.

On Wednesday a physician telephoned Franny in Stoughton. With no preliminaries and no words of explanation, he said, "You'd better get up here right away."

Fran virtually fell apart. Fortunately, her folks had stayed in Stoughton to see us through our crisis, and Dad Weber drove her to Madison. She never could have made it by herself.

According to her I was still lucid when she saw me Wednesday afternoon. She tells me she asked about my arms, and that I raised my left hand to look at my watch—showing her that arm was okay. There was an I-V tube taped above my right elbow, though, and it seems I told her I couldn't move that arm or the needle might be yanked out. She was too distracted to notice that it was not strapped to an arm splint. There was no need; my entire right arm was paralyzed.

None of this do I recall. However, a fifth faint recollection of that awful night of Wednesday, October 15, projects fantasy through the dim veil. Just six nights after Fran's and my candlelight dinner, I remember having to gasp for breath. And I remember begging—begging the doctors to put me into an iron lung.

Nurses Report—October '52

Patient: Kingery, Thomas Kenneth, Stoughton
White, Male, Age 33, Captain, A. F.
Admitted: 10/12/52
Diagnosis: Suspected spinal poliomyelitis

Transfer from Stoughton Community Hospital. Upon arrival patient's legs in state of flaccid paralysis. Bladder irregularities also noted. Foley catheter in use. Patient complained of pain in legs, also difficulty moving right arm.

10–13 No appetite. Fluids started intravenously into right arm.

10–14 (5:00 P.M.) Oxygen started; barely able to move right arm.

10–15 Breathing difficulties—using accessory neck muscles. Symptoms: poliomyelitis now invading respiratory control centers of spinal cord. Cannot move right arm; difficulty in swallowing.
(11:50 P.M.) Patient's wife allowed to visit. Patient later apprehensive; asked for tank respirator.

10–16 (2:40 A.M.) Patient placed in tank respirator. Severe difficulty in swallowing—unable to control own oral secretions.
(3:15 A.M.) Bronchoscopy done. Doctor reports lungs clear.
(4:00 P.M.) Tracheotomy performed.

10–17 Does not respond.

10–19 Does not respond.

10–22 Pain and weakness in left arm.

10–25 Responding at intervals. Asked for tomato juice—is able to swallow.

10–28 Confused. Cannot move left arm.

10–30 Poor color.

Dreams of Delirium

THE world I knew went reeling out of focus. Something was drastically wrong. Was I sick? Was I dying? I stood—surely I stood—in front of a large yellow machine. The monster groaned with monotonous hiss-whooshing sounds. A cigarette-vending machine? No, I faced a ceiling. It was a high, plain ceiling, its expanse punctuated only by a brutally institutional lamp.

No, the ceiling wasn't plain—it was a crazy-quilt of reds and blacks, and the lamp was a gigantic polio virus. I must stay down, away from that sinister germ; but must somehow break free of the yellow machine, which now seemed a tank with a strangling grip on my neck.

Live Indians and wild corn flakes poured shrieking and singing from a nearby radio. Someone kept sticking needles into my arm; rubber tubes blew into my nose; rubber tubes sucked moisture from my mouth—which seemed to hang stupidly open. A young doctor cruelly forced my head over backward, then rammed a steel tube into my throat and far down my windpipe.

Doctor? Who needed a doctor?

I had to get away from these hostile people. The engineer in me quickly devised a push-button inside the hideous tank-jail; when pressed, the switch unlocked the tank and I back-somersaulted out to freedom. My captors couldn't understand how I did it, or why I wanted to leave. I had to leave. My family needed me. I had to get home.

Only that made sense, I told myself while running north to catch a south-bound train. But the needle-jabbers and tube-pushers were too smart. Suspecting I wouldn't head for the nearby Madison station, they went galloping north on horseback, tore me from a Pullman car just as the stagecoach started for Chicago, no—Winnetka, no—Stoughton.

new romance. The war, the bills, the workaday world were overshadowed by a love which grew as scarlet flames danced in the fireplace.

We were on the top of the knoll, on top of the world, certain our life together would become even fuller, even more mellow in the years ahead.

Whoosh! A blizzard howls—a freezing gust—and a cool voice shatters my dream.

"Mr. Kingery—Mr. Kingery—you've slept a long time. Pleasant dreams? Here, hold the thermometer under your tongue—I'll be back in five minutes."

The white angel was live. Through a murky dawn I peered back and forth across the blank high ceiling, trying to find where the fire and warmth had gone. A down-deep emptying of gut and spirit tried to tell me where I now lay. In a brutal few seconds, stark truth registered; I had been terribly sick, but had survived.

As I groped for conscious understanding, the faintly alcoholic taste of the thermometer proved a help. This—place—was a hospital. I couldn't move. Suddenly my heart was crushed, aching, by a monstrous premonition: had a life been saved only that a way of life must end?

Nurse's Report—November

Patient: Kingery, T. K.

Diagnosis: Spino-bulbar Poliomyelitis. Paralyzed from neck down. Near-total breathing paralysis—some flicker of diaphragm. Able to swallow, unable to turn head.

11–1 A.M. Color improved. P.M. Comatose. Responding at intervals.

11–2 Responding well—alert.

11–3 Color—good. Fluids taken well.

11–4 Disposition cheerful.

11–5 Off critical list.

Out of the Woods

A BLANK beige ceiling. An ordinary light fixture high up. Bare beige walls. A door over here, big windows over there. This—place—seemed chilly, hopelessly unattractive, smelling of alcohol and ether. A ghostly hissing-whooshing sound gusted monotonously over voices, over occasional clink and clatter.

A rounded yellow cliff before my eyes. What clamped my neck so tightly? Why was I being held down flat on my back? My nose itched. Why couldn't I scratch it? Where was Fran? What was the yellow steel arch looming over me? What was against my chin? There was a nameplate—black and silver. I drew my eyes into focus to read stark words:

EMERSON RESPIRATOR
'Iron Lung'

Dear God! Was I—was I paralyzed? My breathing felt fine—why an iron lung? Couldn't I move a thing? *Could* an athlete really become paralyzed? No. Flatly no. This wasn't happening to me. It was all a bad dream. Polio was infantile. Polio got only your legs. But—iron lungs—were for polio.

Close your eyes. Get your bearings. Give this grotesque joke a few minutes to straighten itself out. Keep thinking about Fran, keep thinking about getting that job. Move your arms, your legs and toes and fingers or they'll stiffen up.

Good Lord above! How could You have let this happen to me? Why not a known criminal? Why not some of that legion of light colonels like Puzzlebut Lorenzo alias Benny the Buck Passer—who sat on their big bottoms, passed the buck, built their bustling office empires, buttered up the Old Man—and advanced on the sweat of captains and corporals? Huh! They probably couldn't take it.

I had a family—I had love to live for. I had lots of endurance—

untiring legs—arms lean and strong as an ape's—tremendous breathing strength. Where was I? Doctors and nurses walking past—a hospital? Why? For how long? I couldn't just lie around here.

How is Fran? Are the kids okay? How will I get a job—keep on earning—pay off the mortgage? Hospital bills?

Look around.

Oh, no. Couldn't I turn my head? Bend my knees? My elbows? I couldn't move a single finger? Suddenly, ridiculously, old friend Craig Benson and I were thirteen, riding our bikes, and he was talking about some elderly invalid lady. "She's old as the hills—too weak to lift a pencil even." I had thought he was kidding. Couldn't lift a *pencil?* Who could ever get that weak? "Invalid"—repulsive word. I would *not* be an invalid.

Iron Lung—unique experience. I know. I'll write a book called *Man in the Iron Lung.* No, couldn't do that; Fred Snite had already done it. He had been in China, too. In fact, hadn't he caught polio there? Nuts! That'd top my story.

There would be no adventures for me. Snite had traveled all over the country in an iron lung; but his family had millions. I was rich only in family and home. Still, I could get hold of a dictaphone and write—write what? Who would transcribe my dictation? How would I pay for such work? Holy Moses—how would I earn. . . ? I've got to get out of here!

Yell for a doctor. This can't be paralysis; more likely a hormone deficiency. Anything but paralysis. How would Mark and Jan and Liz get along without a daddy to hold them—to toss them in the air and catch them?

I closed my eyes and saw my wife's fair image. She held a handkerchief and her eyes were red, her cheeks tear-stained. She needed affection. She was wasting away without love. How could I give the girl I loved my unbounded affection if I couldn't even embrace her?

"Doct . . ." I began in a hoarse voice.

Someone in white is standing beside me. Girl? White cap, white mask, white gown; but those look like Fran's blue eyes. She's touching my forehead—my heart races, fills and warms and floods with currents of emotion. It is Fran!

I felt good enough to laugh, for we were still together. She had no chin or mouth or nose or cheeks, but my life was rekindled under the glistening crinkle of her imploring gaze.

A nurse passed bearing a tray. Then astonishment rose on my Schatzie's arched brows as I said, "Oh, nurse. I'd like to speak to a doctor. I don't believe this is the proper treatment."

The nurse seemed to smile, said I was getting much better, and said a doctor would be around shortly.

Everyone was staring at me so I had to talk. I rolled my eyes toward Fran, but found talking difficult. "Honey—what's that long yellow machine over there?"

"What? Why—it's an iron lung, exactly like the—respirator you're in."

So that was the yellow barrel against my chin. Funny, I had the feverish notion that tank respirators went only from neck to hips. Well, I'd design a short one so I could bend my knees. I'd invent a portable one and a special car and I'd sit up and go to work—but *my* shorty tank would have an angled front to see over, not this world-blocking vertical yellow cliff. And I'd convalesce rapidly and get the hell out of it, anyway.

Piercing eyes, the pastel color of Lake Kegonsa on a hazy afternoon, bored into mine from the other side of the respirator. Eyes of steel and a crisp baritone voice. All manly assurance drained out of me.

"Hi, Ken. You're looking pretty sharp today. I'm Doctor Burke. You wanted to see me?"

"I think—uhh—I feel fine, but I—can't seem to talk very well. This thing is too tight on my throat, and something seems to be hissing down there."

He explained the tracheotomy tube, a little curved silver pipe with a flange tied against my throat. The other end was slipped through an incision into my windpipe, or trachea. He lifted a long worm—a rubber tube dangling from a hose which blew oxygen; then he stuck it back into my neck.

"This thing saved your life when you couldn't swallow, my friend," Steely-eyes continued. "But you're out of the woods now. Oh—talking. Most of the air you breathe goes in and out the silver

tube, and that's below your vocal cords. If you want to speak, just click with your tongue. The nurse will transfer the oxygen supply to your nose and close the opening."

A nurse called out, "Doctor Burke," and he was gone.

Balls of fire! Was I that much of a mess? Was all that attention necessary? A stab of despair knifed through me, shrivelling my tortured mind. This was too much to comprehend. I couldn't take a step, lift a spoon—couldn't even scratch my nose. But Fran was at my side, lending her strength. Would she leave me and take the kids? Not a chance. My girl was loyalty itself, and she was the other half of my life. Without her I was an incomplete being. With her I'd soon get well. Now—somehow—I must make intelligent conversation for her sake.

"Schatzie, how long have I been here?"

"About twenty days. You've been pretty sick." She tilted her head. "But I think you're all better now."

"Is it—is it November?"

"November second."

"I'm lost without my wrist watch. Can't see it over this—tank."

"I'll fix that." A moment later my watch was taped to the respirator front. Not morning after all; it said 2:35. "There," she said. "Can you see it all right?"

"Perfect. Thanks, honey. Have you been here all day?"

Eyes crinkled a smile. "All day every day—where else?"

Dimly I could picture a hospital lobby, a worried young wife waiting and slowly dying inside—pacing the corridor from one report to the next—helpless, frantic, hoping for but dreading the approach of a physician's foot-steps. Fran had already lost one husband—could she take this?

In time I'd learn that only days ago the medics had given me "less than one chance in a hundred." And dimly I sensed that hers had been an ordeal far more hellish than mine; for she had known what was going on. I still didn't know. I had been blessedly unconscious.

Things were still a little hazy, but it was all right now. Fran tilted her head again, so becomingly, as my thoughts raced. Despite the agony she had been through, she was trying with light talk and smiling eyes to fire up my spirits. A surge of devotion drove through me. I wanted to hold her hand, to raise my arms to comfort her. My

arms . . . my arms! They were locked in a steel tank. They were utterly useless. This damned tank stood hard and cold as a divorce between us. Suddenly the world spun around and I squinted to make it stand still. Now wrench—wrench mind away from self before fainting.

"How have you been, Schatzie? And—how are the kids?"

"Wondering if the Air Force sent you flying somewhere," she said, laughing about Mark's newest theory. "They're all well and dying to see you."

"All well—wonderful," I breathed. They hadn't caught the virus. Blessed be! "Honey, I want you to take five bucks from my wallet and go over to Ilg's Florist and get the biggest mess of red roses they've got—for your dresser. You've had . . ."

"But Ilg's is in Winnetka. Don't you mean . . ."

A faceless nurse, a tall pair of chestnut eyes, a broader frame, appeared beside Franny, embraced her cordially, looked at me one glance. "Hi, Captain. You've got some sun tan! Don't overtire yourself with too much talking, now."

Then she fell to talking—yak yak yak—with Fran. I burned with resentment at her ability to walk right up and monopolize my precious single lifeline to the real world. Yak yak yak—maybe it was a relief. I wasn't making much sense. Yet anger, frustration sent my head into another dizzying spin.

Suddenly I went tired—terribly tired, terribly weak. Was I losing my grip on life after the long struggle? Silence. The nurse had gone. "I think—you'd better go now, Honey," I whispered. "Feeling—so sleepy."

Mercifully, she didn't ask questions. Could she spot my incoherence? What deeper thoughts were in her heart at my cold words? Strangely, I was glad she had left. She must not see me black out. I must not impose my problems upon her. Hang on. Relax and rest. Close eyes—close out mocking respirator nameplate—close out hideous I–V feeding bottle and rubber tubing—erase that yellow tank. Get well. Get well and get home.

I reeled through eons of time, then in seconds emerged from a mile-deep coal mine, face lacerated, shoes and clothing torn, but still carrying my pickax—rose into sunlight from a bottomless pit of confusion and haze. Calm again after the storm.

"I understand you're a Methodist from Stoughton, Mr. Kingery," a voice said.

I looked up into one of the pleasantest faces I've ever seen. The minister's eyes, genial behind rimless bifocals, said inaudibly, "C'mon, boy, have faith in yourself."

"Yes, sir," I whispered. "Formerly a Congregationalist. But we adopted Methodism about thirteen months ago."

He must have noticed some sign of discomfort reflected in my face, for he smiled broadly and touched my forehead.

"A tragedy, my son. A physical tragedy—but not necessarily catastrophe. Your face looks strong. Remember, God works in mysterious ways, but we are never without Him. Would a few words of prayer hasten your recovery?"

The minister left quickly, my bitterness left me more slowly. Me strong? In what possible way could God's "mysterious ways" help my bleak life? Why did it have to be. . . .

But the prayer did help. Somehow the noisy hospital room seemed quieter, warmer. Happier moments entered my thoughts—quiet moments gazing at stained glass windows—thunderous moments when the great swells of a pipe organ poured forth rich measures of faith.

". . . His wonders to perform."

What wonders had He performed for me? I had lost my muscles, my confidence and self-reliance, even my bearings, family and home. Everything. Why had He let me play that nine holes of golf? This whole thing was wrong, cruel, unfair, anything but Christian.

Waves of bitterness . . . and endless flux of emotions falling and rising . . . doctors and nurses in and out, asking questions, doing things . . . night and day and night again . . . dreaming and worrying . . . finally a dawn of clear thought when I knew the days at death's door had passed, knew in my own mind I'd recover.

Crisis and confusion were behind. The room was bright and the sounds pleasantly muted. Time to take stock, to think things out. I pondered the missing days, trying to remember. But I could find only one thread of memory which ravelled back to October—a single thread of stubborn determination through the crazy quilt of delirium: my life was dedicated to my family—I must live for them.

Now, soon, I could return home. Paralysis was strictly a temporary loss of muscular prowess; a temporary hand-and-foot dependence on the nursing staff; and a temporary but highly embarassing loss of dignity over being helpless to care for my own needs—at all.

Nurses with tender hands talked about cushions and pads, placed soft things under my knees and ankles, tipped me sideways to cushion my rear, which seemed to be painful again.

Once in China I had been sick—strangely weak with an unidentifiable Oriental fever. All the skin had peeled off my hands and feet, through that earlier ordeal, and I had known the exquisite pain of raw skin, half-protected nerves. Then I could barely walk forty steps, and could make my fingers bleed on a slice of bread. But for the life of me I could not remember—now—having had a nurse over in China. I had relied on myself for my physical needs.

And today? Every move, every scratch, every little personal need required a nurse. Fortunately, there seemed to be many of them. I'd have to adapt, put up with it for the time being. Embarassment must be written out of my vocabulary. But what could I do? What earthly useful thing?

All body motion had ceased, and nowhere did a muscle respond. I couldn't even move a toe. No, wait. I could move my eyes, eyebrows, nose and mouth; but couldn't turn my head. With a lot of thought and effort I could swallow; but had to be careful not to try it while inhaling. Remembering an old trick, I experimented with some facial muscles. Sure enough, I could still wiggle my ears. Maybe I could be cheerful. Certainly the nurses were. Maybe I still had personality and could be good company—if I tried.

The world was clearing up. I started whistling to chase the blues, only to make a shattering discovery. Apparently the trilly way I loved to whistle required more breath control than was left to me. When the iron lung "inhaled" my whistle simply stopped. My ego sank a long notch. Well, it would return as I got better.

But as the swimming confusion ebbed away, an agony of aches and pains returned to sear every nerve and bone in my body. Washcloths felt like sandpaper, my back prickled as though sunburned, my legs ached constantly—without let-up. A hard lumpy mattress hurt my shoulders and heels. Why was I so sensitive? Why couldn't I take it?

The nurses explained that I'd be in pain for some time, since my

body's sensory (feeling) nerves had become *more* sensitive when the motor (muscle controlling) nerve cell centers were "damaged by the polio virus."

Only "damaged," they said.

"Not the muscles?" I asked. "Then why can't I move anything?"

"Your muscles *themselves* haven't been directly affected, but they may atrophy a little—until you, ah—get better and the nerve impulses can *reach* the muscles again."

And I'd learn later that a doctor told Fran, "He may never get out of an iron lung."

The angelic nurses patiently adjusted, readjusted, and re-readjusted my position. During the day they must have moved my arms, legs, and hips every twenty minutes, and almost as often through night after lonely night. My muscles screamed for motion, yet they lay dead. Griping at the nurses would not do, for they smiled and joked as they worked on, doing the same chores over and over. Still it was painful to be touched and painful to hold still. Dear God, how I wanted to move! Suddenly I remembered drugs.

"May I have some aspirin?" I asked a nurse.

"Sorry," she said. "Aspirin is a respiratory depressant, and it wouldn't be good for you."

What did she mean? Wasn't she one of the angels? Dammit, I took aspirin now and then when I felt I needed it. Who did she think she was? Huh! I'd call a doctor! Call—how?

Looking up, asking helplessly, I quickly lost a large chunk of adult confidence. There was nothing wrong with my breathing—in the iron lung, at least. So what matter a "depressant"? Was there no relief from this awful pain?

For several days and nights, I was judged too weak to have my arms and legs exercised by therapists—even gently. Stiff as a plank. No appetite for food. The mere smell of hot meals on trays headed for other patients was nauseating.

A nurse then asked if I'd try some food. I asked, "How about a cup of coffee?" and my self-confidence took another downward plunge at her reply. "Why, Mr. Kingery! Whoever heard of coffee in a hospital? Let me bring you some nice warm milk."

Ugh! Warm milk—trying to treat me like a baby. Didn't hospitals have coffee? Now I was really confused.

Nothing to do. Nothing to do but look around and get acquainted. I'd have to focus my mind on something. Other iron lungs were lined up with mine. Sometimes a large mirror hung from the respirator front over my eyes. People in white gowns and masks and caps appeared on either side of the yellow barrel from time to time, and in the mirror. The thing to do, I decided, was to study people, learn more about them. I had plenty of time and opportunity.

First I discovered burnished brown hair, chestnut eyes and a silly giggle. Nurse Lottie. Sporty type—friendly—apparently a big girl.

"Say, sport," she said. "You've got to start drinking a lot of fluids. How about more tomato juice?"

"More?"

"Don't you remember? Several nights ago? You hadn't even swallowed for a couple of days, but all of a sudden you wanted some tomato juice at two A.M. Slugged it down like an old pro, too."

Salivary juices ran again. "Tomato juice. That does sound good. Could I have some with ice in it?"

* * *

Such was the only picture to emerge from the missing days—the blank after Sunday in the ambulance—and now it came bright and clear. I had awakened with a terrible thirst, and had spoken to a wraith in white sitting nearby. Moments later she had reappeared with a tall glass of blood-red liquid, ice-cold, so tangy it sparkled in my mouth.

Never in my life have I savored a drink as I had that humble glass of canned tomato juice from the hospital kitchen. It was pure nectar.

I hadn't known that she was Lottie, or that she was keeping watch on critical patients in six or eight tank respirators. Nor could I guess she'd later play an important part in my life. Nurse Lottie hadn't even asked me if I could swallow, though my simple request had meant volumes to her. Not only was the patient now able to talk coherently, but he thought he could swallow, and apparently even knew *what* he could swallow.

To that competent nurse, it had been clear that the polio virus had reached its maximum degree of havoc and was receding. Although my swallowing muscles had been temporarily paralyzed, the virus had not gone high enough in my spinal cord to affect speech, vision or heart. All this she had known in a trice. I only knew at the time that I was a mighty thirsty guy.

Now, with Lottie's encouragement, I drank a gallon of tomato juice—drank it as though I believed it my cure. Tried Jello and chewed it down. Tried milk and it went down. But water was just too thin for my swallower to grab, lying flat, anyway. So—getting well fast, food or no. Everyone began commenting, "What a healthy tan for November"—and it was obviously just regained.

Another pair of eyes.

The world's most dazzling brown eyes appeared in the pixie face of a littler nurse. Patty had tiny, gentle hands and a personality both saucy and warm. She talked easily about everything in a tinkly soprano voice, and kidded new life into me. But those eyes! Those huge brown orbs, dancing with questions, perky with youthful fun and energy were really beyond description. Yet they also shone with empathy, with kindness, with the rarest of brotherly . . . if I hadn't already been in love I'd probably have fallen.

"Don't you ever want anything?" she asked. "You're so quiet—never asking for things."

"Too independent. Guess I'd like to be a 'good' patient and not bother people."

She opened the iron lung. "I'm going to turn you, Ken. You've been on your back too long. I'll just prop you on one side and slip a pillow behind your back—there—and another on the same side to bend one knee—there. How's that?"

The lung closed and I gasped with delight at her swift and tender dexterity.

What a tremendous discovery! What a relief after screaming, supine pain! Patty was a true nurse—a selfless angel who seemed to do everything better than anyone else could. Between Patty and me there grew a friendship born of compassion. Between me and Patty there grew a bond of solid affection—a genuine admiring love about half-way between the romantic love writers write of, and the "love" at the end of an everyday letter.

And I hadn't even seen her without a mask.

I Work to Breathe

Two friends made life seem a little more worth living until I made a shocking discovery: *all* my fellow patients—all in iron lungs—were dames! Surprisingly, it was they who did most of the day-long wisecracking. But . . .

"Say, Patty," I said upon missing a familiar pressure around my waist. "Ah-h—I don't believe I've any trousers on." Her laughter tinkled to a gay high note, and so loud for such a little girl!

"I guess the sheet will do for covers," said the little pixie, sobering up enough to remove a thermometer from my mouth. "Besides, I'm going to give you your sponge bath."

This was frightening. Lately the nurses had been "opening" the iron lung several times a day—for baths, changes of position, one darned thing or another. Unlatching the front panel to roll out the bed stopped the powerful action of the big tank respirator. And I had made a horrifying discovery: on my own, I had to *work* to breathe.

Opening the lung was like switching off my life; like dropping a piano to crush my chest. There was no strength to inhale. My voice dropped to a soundless whisper. So I came to dread the approach of a nurse carrying a washpan. It meant that, for a few seconds, I'd have to strain my every fibre for a breath of air. And there was always a helpless terror—wondering whether they'd close the tank in time.

To be a confident adult with the iron lung going, at least in the presence of Lottie and Patty, was one thing; but I was a coward out on my own.

And here was Patty again with a pan of torture water.

"Mr. Kingery," she said cheerily.

"Ken."

"Okay, Ken. I think you're holding out on us. According to your chart you could breathe three minutes on your own on the 25th of October. You've been loafing for over a week."

"Do I have to—" my voice suddenly died as she lifted the

respirator lock handles, glanced at her watch and rolled the bed frame out of the tank.

I was on my own. Competent hands skipped over my prickly body with soap and water. I held my breath.

"Do you want some lotion on your back?" asked the little nurse, her head suddenly appearing over the respirator front.

"Yes, please," I said.

I said! Though I couldn't breathe *much*, there was enough to talk. I felt my heart race at this discovery, then found no more breath in me to hold. I tried to inhale. A faint trace of air entered my hot lungs and escaped without cooling.

Many seconds, countless seconds passed. Would they close the tank in time? The ceiling light fixture began to swim overhead. Relax. The nurses know what they're doing. Trust them.

Finally Patty's eyes reappeared, big and brown as Bambi's and crinkled with a smile, and my bed frame moved. Clunk—the tank was locked tight and huge waves of air passed in and out of my lungs. I lived again. Another crisis had ended, too: the unreasoning fear of falling off that narrow sliding bed.

A bit more sure, I felt like gloating. Perspiration streamed down the sides of my face and into my ears—the honest sweat of accomplishment. I tried to say thanks as Patty bent over me, but the big machine inhaled.

"You just breathed for six minutes on your own power, Mist—Ken—and talked!" said Bambi-eyes, then swished away.

What a weird existence!

"Please, Patty, join me in celebration!" I wanted to say. But the iron lung had merciless control of my breathing. When its great bellows pulled, negative pressure inside the tank made me inhale. When the bellows pushed, positive pressure forced air from my lungs out my mouth. The machine whirred in a steady cycle of inhale—exhale—hiss—whoosh—inhale—and I could speak only on the exhale cycle.

Then I just lay and stewed at being the victim of an artificial respirator. Damn! What had I said to Dale Sperle just a few weeks earlier? "Polio only gets your legs, doesn't it?" The nurses didn't *have* to open the tank just for a lousy bath, did they?

What really bothered me was one word they used. Wean. "We've got to *wean* you out of the respirator." Blasted baby talk! Why didn't they just let us recuperate? We'd get well and get out.

Actually, an iron lung is designed so that fresh linens and even bedpans can be slipped in and out of a side door with only a few seconds' loss of pressure. Though many other hospitals handle critical polio patients in such cautious manner, this medical staff knew better. Here, if a patient were conscious and able to breathe for even a few seconds at a time, his respirator was opened at regular intervals. Thus he was made to keep his own breathing muscles in condition. Diaphragm, intercostal chest muscles, auxiliary breathing muscles in the neck—any muscles that worked. I was beginning to realize that only my neck was left to help me breathe.

The pull-out-to-breathe strategy helped prevent the remaining good muscles from becoming atrophied, and supposedly gave a psychological boost to the patient's confidence. I'll tell you this. Whatever confidence I gained from these fish-out-of-water torture trials came *after* each tank opening. Never before.

Lost in thought, I was startled when Lottie bustled up alongside all excited.

". . . a Doctor Costello, from Philadelphia . . . coming up to see you," she said, reading aloud from a slip of paper. "Some doc you know?"

"Doctor who married my wife's sister, name of Patrick Joseph Costello," I said, wondering what had brought him all the way to Wisconsin.

"Hi, Ken!" Pat's intense black eyes and ruddy cheeks suddenly appeared over a stark mask beside the yellow tank, radiating the same old self-assurance. He studied my face intently, obviously wrestling with a powerful emotion. He and I had galloped and dived through the Atlantic's crashing breakers together not so many months ago, so I had to act myself.

"Hi, buddy! Don't let this yellow monster throw you. I'll be out of it before you can say *Erin go Bragh.*"

The guy was serious through most of our brief visit—not his usual gregarious self at all. Of course, he had seen my chart and talked with the doctors and nurses. The good old man-to-man talk was gone; obviously he knew things about me that shouldn't be repeated.

This appeared to be *Doctor* Pat, not Brother Pat. The brother was worried, but the doctor in him required a physical exam. Nurse Lottie opened the respirator and he briefly examined my arms and legs. He studied my breathing as I labored on my own power for a few minutes.

"There's a flicker of action in your chest," he reported later, his penetrating eyes fixing mine as he leaned against the respirator. "You can get out of this thing (he rapped the steel tank) if you exercise the hell out of that muscle—and your neck muscles. Work them every chance you get and hypertrophy some real breathing strength."

Somehow I resented his telling me I had to strain myself to get well. Any darned fool knew that, after a serious illness, the main thing was to take it easy and get a lot of rest. I kept switching the subject to Fran, the kids, the folks and home.

"The family is fine," he said. "You know, of course, that Bess Weber stayed on in Stoughton the weekend you got sick. Harry has brought up all of her things while he goes on commuting to Chicago. He hopes to sell the Winnetka house soon. They've been a tremendous help—and a lot of moral support to Fran."

"Wonderful of them," I said. "How about the kids? How are they taking it?"

"Well, Liz is too little to understand what's going on, of course. But I'd say Mark and Jannie are—well—mystified that they can't see their daddy. They asked me 'Why can't Daddy come down to the lobby?—why doesn't he come home?' Fran explains and they don't pursue the point. In their young minds daddy is just too sick to have visitors."

"Little do they know how much sicker I feel for *not* seeing them," I ground my teeth. "Maybe they can come in soon. But tell me more about Franny."

In our hour together Pat relaxed enough to smile more easily and to fill me in on things I needed to know. After he walked out the door, with a jaunty wave and a jut of his jaw, I was left to ponder all the things in his report.

During the dark days of crisis Fran had gone through torture far more hellish than mine—for she had seen a proud and independent man rendered utterly useless; and this was the man she loved.

There was the senseless midnight call from a local newsman just to ask for news—rousing her from a troubled sleep when my chances were nearly zero; the curt phone call from a hospital doctor, "You'd better get up here right away," just after she'd been told she couldn't see me for two weeks; and the endless waiting in the hospital lobby—never knowing what the next tidings might bring.

Shockingly, Fran herself had actually suffered all the symptoms of polio—finally diagnosed not as virus-caused, but as sympathetic suffering she couldn't control. Too, baby Liz had come down with an ear infection shortly after my attack. Only now was Doctor Peterson certain the infection *wasn't* polio.

My eyes filled with bitter tears at all my wife had been through, at all the grief I'd caused her. Now she had to lead two lives—one of fragments, tension and austerity at the hospital; one of a lonely widow at home. Suddenly there was no husband to send off to work each morning or to greet again each evening. Now she strove to bridge with love and understanding the twenty-mile gap between her mate and her children. Pat said she was "looking great," all things considered; she smiled easily, kept busy, just seemed a little tense now and then. And she had a few gray hairs.

Her first gray hairs at a mere twenty-nine! But—what matter? I gazed at the snapshot taped up beside my watch. Read the sweetness, the character, the soul-deep magnetism of a vision in blue. She was more beautiful to me now than ever before.

As I lay useless in the iron lung, my entire being sizzled with longing to be with her. Maybe I had been an odd husband. Maybe just over-affectionate. It dawned on me that my feelings went far beyond being just used to, or devoted to, or loyal to my wife; I was crazy about her. How I longed to share our bed together again—to run my fingers through her soft smooth hair—to hold her cool young body tightly in my arms. . . .

"Congratulations, Ken," came a squeaky voice, shattering my reverie. "Hear you made six minutes on your own."

I glanced up into my mirror. There, sticking out from another iron lung—lay the cute little face with the voice. Her dark hair and

bright gypsy features lay in contrast with the pillow, and no mask spoiled her puckish smile. "I'm Marilyn. Toward the window are Irene and Janice. Next to you . . ."

And so on. Pretty girl, perky personality. Looked sixteen but had two kids. We all talked; they were "so proud" of my breathing. Big deal. Well, recuperation had to start somewhere; might as well begin with six minutes. But how long before I could get up and go home? Fran would be coming today, even my mother. At last I could offer good news—accomplishment.

"Lunch time," Lottie announced brightly, landing on a stool with a clanking dinner tray in hand. "Know what? We're going to move you from the ladies' room after lunch."

"Just as I'm getting acquainted!" I tried to conceal a ripple of fear —fear of the new and unknown—with wisecracks. "Dirty trick. Nice company in here."

Her eyes grinned. "There are three more big rooms down the hall," she said, pointing in who knows what direction. "Two-thirty, the last one, contains adult males. There's a professor and a lawyer, and a farmer your age, and a young high school football player."

"Who's in the rooms between here and there?" I asked.

"Boys and girls through the teen ages," she said, then snickered. "This room is supposed to be for adult women."

"Women!" I thought rancidly. "Why don't they treat me like a man?"

A great flurry of activity followed lunch. Linens and towels were changed. Someone talking about "sterile techniques" began swabbing down the outside of my yellow tank with some pink disinfectant. I dozed off thinking about muscles, working, breathing my way out of this cold steel casket.

The breathing apparatus of the human animal, which nearly everyone takes for granted, is an engineering marvel. While complex and vital in function, it is nevertheless simple in operation. You may think of breathing as being entirely automatic. Yet when you want a deep breath, as to shout, you supplement the automatic part of your breathing system with a conscious voluntary effort. You may not even recognize it as such because it has become so natural, so much a part of your life. Some of the voluntary strength comes from

auxiliary muscles in your neck. Your diaphraghm and rib-cage intercostals operate *in*voluntarily.

In my case, nearly all the involuntary muscles were knocked out. Now nearly all breathing required constant, conscious effort. Just a flicker was still alive. Could I develop it? Did I have the guts to work. . . .

"Hi, sweetie," Fran's familiar soft voice jogged my pulse. "We've heard all about your six minutes this morning and I'm—just—." Tears suddenly filled her eyes and she leaned over to rub her cool temple against mine.

"Hi, Ken." Mom smiled down at me from the other side of the yellow tank. Like Fran, her face was masked in white. But there was no mistaking the lively gray-green eyes, the perennial bangs, the shiny brown hair only slightly gray-flecked.

I was speechless with the sudden realization that of all the people I knew, these two women cared most for me—and I was—was paralyzed.

"I told the nurses you were always the endurance man," Mother said, chuckling. "Heavens, you look much too healthy to be in this thing." She rapped the tank.

"You're just in time, ladies," Lottie announced, barging upon the scene again. "We're going to move your boy out of his harem now, into the men's room."

I called goodbye to Marilyn, Irene, Janice and the others; and breathing pressure died as the respirator was unplugged from the wall. Down a long corridor we went, the big tank riding smoothly on its rubber-tired casters. Four or five light-footed nurses literally ran alongside, pushing, pulling, and joking as we went.

Seventy feet down the corridor we turned left. As the other nurses positioned my respirator in Room 230, Lottie checked the pressure settings. "Quick trip, huh, Kingery?" she laughed. "You were turned off less than two minutes!"

Fran peered anxiously down, but she needn't have worried; I felt great after even a brief accomplishment.

"Two young fellows in iron lungs and two older men in regular beds," Mom observed. "Think I'll go around and introduce us to your new roommates."

Fran leaned on the big respirator, squinted a smile with those electric blue eyes. Then her head spun around as a nurse called from the doorway, "Mrs. Kingery, good news! The doctor has taken your husband off the critical list, so you may remove your mask."

My ego tingled with more achievement as we stared at one another in silent understanding. Then the white mask came off. Wow! I had almost forgotten she had a nose and mouth—an adorable nose, a mouth irresistible and big, with bright red lips and white even teeth. Hadn't I heard during college days that girls with big mouths were affectionate types? She bent down and her kiss sent fire straight to my toes. Forgotten were screaming nerves and lifeless limbs. An overpowering scent—the unlikely aroma of a fresh carrot just pulled from moist earth—enveloped my being.

"Mmmm—sweet carrots," I murmured.

She kissed harder, then pulled away and stared, her face alive with excitement. "This—business—hasn't affected your mind at all, has it?" she asked eagerly.

"Not after that. But it sure had me confused for a while."

Her hand went to her heart. "Thank God," she murmured. "If anything had . . ."

At the same instant, our eyes filled with tears. With Fran it was relief, with me pure joy. But I could express myself neither in words nor actions lying flat on my back, sealed hermetically in a big tin can. I couldn't even get a deep enough breath.

She produced a tiny handkerchief, saying "Can't be getting emotional in front of grown men."

Dried up, we discussed the kids, the house, some dry-cleaning at the Truax Field tailor shop, the spare tire I had left at Dale Sperle's for repair, and other things. After the violent release of emotions my world was all roses. Fran was at my side. I was off the critical list. Moving in with the men seemed like a promotion. No more periods of coma, and I was even thinking about eating some good hot food.

Just then the head nurse on the ward joined us, spoke a few words, and a slightly-more-cheerful world collapsed.

"Mrs. Kingery," she addressed Fran. "I'm afraid you'll have to leave; visiting hours are over for today. Now that your husband is better, you'll only be able to see him twice a week."

Relapse and Rescue

THE strange and clinical world crashed down in an avalanche suffocating my spirit. Again I was thoroughly confused. Fran left, looking pale and shaken. Mom seemingly disappeared. The very atmosphere prickled with hostility.

Had I committed a crime in contracting polio? Why else prison visiting rules? I must have sinned. Now imprisonment—well away from acceptable society. Yet a tiny spark of confidence flickered: Fran believed in my innocence, believed my mind was clear. Now I must borrow her strength and talk to the head nurse. These new rules didn't make sense.

A new problem added to the confusion: all masks were removed. How much a nurse can say with her mouth—without talking! I had been conversing only with pairs of eyes. Now mouths betrayed tired sympathy, impatience, eager compassion—as well as upturn for smile, downturn for frown.

"Miss Wanamaker, I don't understand," I said, trying to be businesslike under her steady, quizzical gaze. "Do you mean—because I'm off the critical list I can't see my—wife every day?"

Tired sympathy. "That's right. Our rules in the Orthopedic Section allow visiting only on Wednesday and Sunday afternoons, from two to four P.M."

My stomach turned to cold clay. Human feelings, human needs and desires were against the law here. Suddenly I was no man at all, but a motionless vegetable—petitioning—appealing like one of the bad guys for a decent break. *Not fair!* My conscience roared in silent outrage. But my voice spoke weakly, with a quaver. "When—when she does come—can she bring the kids? I haven't seen them since. . . ."

Downturn for frown. "I'm sorry. The rules allow only your wife and your mother and father. They don't permit any visiting by children."

As the full implications sank in, my morale sank down, down, down. Yes, I must be a criminal. But at least my polio crime hadn't been intentional. Then why such strict rules? Why couldn't I see my

thing I didn't know about. Why? I resolved to find out and was choosing my words as Margie popped out the thermometer and left again.

"Now listen, sergeant," I barked in authoritative tones, and Bill spun around, startled. "I don't want to make this a direct order, but there's something eating you and Fran and I want to know what it is. Out, boy! Out with the secret."

Bill stalled, trying to avoid a straight answer, but caved in finally and blurted out the answer. "It's that damned P.E.B. report!" His eyes were smoky with resentment. "The Board sent a copy of your physical to your wife. It wouldn't have been so bad except for the ending. They didn't have to tack that on. It's only their damn opinion, and it shook up Fran pretty bad."

"Shook her up?" I said angrily. "What was that ending?"

"E.D.A."

"What in all military hell is 'E.D.A.'?"

Bill spoke heavily. "Early Demise Anticipated."

At first I laughed. I laughed to think the Air Force docs could be such duds. Had they no confidence in one of their own breed? With so much to live for, how could I possibly get myself demised—early? Bill chuckled along with me, saying he thought they'd been wrong all the time.

Then I thought about Fran and the laughter stopped. While my stomach twisted in anguished knots, Bill related how my mate had run screaming into the yard completely crushed and hysterical upon reading the report's conclusion. Despite all her moral fiber, her unconquerable spirit, it had been a colossal blow. No wonder the crow's feet and frowns. And despite a dismal prophesy, she was going right ahead with plans to bring me home!

I said, "Thanks for telling me, Bill. Agreed I won't tell Fran about learning the E.D.A. secret. She'll never know until we can both laugh it off. As you say, she probably wants to prove to the Air Force croakers that they made a rotten prognosis *this* time. And thanks for reminding me what she's been through. Sometimes a guy forgets that other people have problems too."

"Listen, chum!" Bill rose from his stool, stuck his jaw out close to mine, and spoke softly. "Your little lady has been through more HELL than you'll ever imagine." He smoothed back his dark hair,

slapped on the blue service cap and started toward the door, adding, "and conscious every minute of the way." At the hallway he turned and shook a finger at me. "And don't you ever forget it!"

* * *

Just two mornings later, nine long months and four long days behind stone walls turned into history. The blank hospital cave had been especially lonely, for roommates Roy and Old Pete had left days earlier. It was mid-morning, hot even for July; but after a cool tub bath I felt fresh and full of vigor.

Now attendants lifted me from rocking bed to low-slung ambulance litter while March of Dimes truckers rolled the bed out to go to Stoughton. In came Patty to start packing my few possessions and to come home with us for a day. In came Fran with the suitcase. Out went her husband at last.

Margie, Jessie, Miss Deane and Miss Wanamaker stood smiling at the ward desk as we approached. Deep inside I felt a wrench of sentimental friendship—of a tremendous but unpayable debt. "Come out to Stoughton to visit, you guys," I said. "Any time at all. No visiting rules at home!"

Rolling into the elevator, we were followed by several nurses and met by a three-man detail of Air Force medics. There were brooding Captain One Long Pan, smiling Sergeant Bill, and a tall nonentity with the rank of Airman Third Class.

Margie with the long eye lashes and soft page-boy stood at the head of my low cart in the elevator peering down. I wasn't much to look at after the long confinement, with darkened hair, whitened skin, and wrapped in blankets like a babe. Institutional food and muscle atrophy had brought my weight down to less than one hundred pounds. Nevertheless, I peered up and winked. Poker-faced as ever, the beautiful brunette winked back.

"Hey," Margie said brightly, "have you collected that farewell kiss from Patty?"

The servicemen nudged one another. Fran laughed and Patty blushed.

"Tomorrow," I said. "But how about you, Smiley?"

Despite my total lack of sex appeal, Margie's long brown hair suddenly cascaded over my face. I counted stars and everyone tittered as she bussed me soundly—upside down!

The convoy swelled to a dozen people, all gabbling cheerful nothings, as we emerged from ethery gloom into sunshine fragrant with the living, growing things of summer. Little things struck me: Fran didn't look at Doctor One Long Pan—her face reflected pure hurrying happiness, his humorless concern. My elbow, inches above the pavement, once grazed Fran's warm bare leg and my head went spinning. A vast blue Cadillac stood at the curb, open-mawed, waiting—and I knew it doubled as a hearse.

Patty and Sergeant Bill strapped a respirator shell to my chest. A trip to Stoughton on my own would have been a breeze; but Old Bassett-face insisted on using the machine. "We don't want the patient to become overtired."

Bill and I exchanged winks. Poor Doc—mustn't let the patient die before he gets home. At the curb a photographer took pictures while a Madison newspaper reporter asked questions. Sensing that they wanted some heroic success "formula" for getting well enough to go home, I offered this: "I've learned you've got to WANT to do a thing, and then you've got to TRY. Wanting alone isn't enough."

Just before we entered the ambulance, the personable Doctor Burke stopped by to wish us luck. "Keep on being an optimist," he said seriously, steely gray eyes fixing mine as a gentle breeze brushed his white hair. "Your lungs are perfectly clear—there was no damage to them whatever. You've got life in both sides of your diaphragm. That'll develop, and that's something. We've got some patients up there with as little diaphragm motion as this concrete pavement," he tapped one foot on the roadway.

Then we were off. As the big blue Cadillac purred softly away from the curb, the figures in white waved, turned, and retreated toward the cold stone building. Miss Deane, Miss Wanamaker, and good pal Jessie were the last in sight. Then the rich green leaves of overhanging trees swallowed all, and the cover was closed on the bleakest chapter of my life.

Time to live again.

Time to take stock of colorful surroundings once accepted as normal. I sat facing backwards in the ambulance, my litter's backrest angled up for an all-round view. Detracting from the view were Patty and Fran, who sat at right angles on a jumpseat, jammed in with Sergeant Bill. The men were invisible; the women could have

been entries in a beauty contest. Both wore gaily-printed summer frocks, both had to squeeze their knees cozily against my side in our narrow confines. Naturally, sober conversation was a thing of monumental difficulty.

Two-toned cars whizzed by as we turned out of downtown Madison and headed for the highway. Making out the names of several business establishments, I was somehow astonished to see that real stores sponsored those umpteen thousand radio commercials.

Now harsh city colors began giving way to soft country greenery. Soon the acrid air of busy streets yielded to the light, heady fragrance of alfalfa and corn fields. Southern Wisconsin's gently rolling countryside was never more gorgeous. Lake Waubesa on our right —a stand of dense timber—Lake Kegonsa on our left. Then the familiar sight of Halverson's Supper Club, scene of a gay farewell toast on my last day of duty. Beautiful, all of it; and yet with flaccid, frozen body, was I really a part of it?

In less than half an hour, the ambulance pilot turned north off country trunk B and climbed a gentle rise to the crest of our wooded knoll. Showing rare consideration, he turned and backed in so I could drink the whole, delicious picture in one swallow through the big back window.

"It's more beautiful than in my wildest dreams," I whispered as Fran studied my face in happy anticipation. "What a time to be short of breath!"

Mom and Dad Weber hurried up from the garden as I was rolled out onto the gravel driveway, but Friskie arrived first. Her plumed tail wagging furiously, our many-colored mutt sidled right up and licked my face, while Fran and Patty hooted. In fact, everybody laughed except Captain One Long Pan—who doubtless thought Friskie's greeting to be grossly unsanitary. I loved it. It touched something way down deep that our sweet mongrel pooch should remember me.

I wanted to lean down as of old and kiss Mom Weber, then to shake hands with Dad. No dice. But this was no time for bitterness about what I could and couldn't do.

Mom did the leaning. "Ken, Ken!" she beamed. "How *wonderful* to have you home!" And Dad rubbed my foot. "Good to see you. How does the old place look?"

"It doesn't look old," I said, trying to control my emotions. "It's the newest thing I've ever seen—and the best."

There was the massive fieldstone chimney with white dormer windows on either side. Above stood my home-made TV antenna mast, still javelin-straight after two severe winters. There were the green shutters and green ivy at the front windows. A yellow rose-bush bloomed beside the door, and a riot of scarlets, blues and pinks dotted the flower bed laid before the front screened porch.

"Just let me look," I pleaded with the hurrying medical corpsmen. The cart stopped rolling. "It's—hard to take it all in at once."

"Wouldn't you like to go around the house?" asked Fran.

Off we went. Effects of the Webers' gardening work showed everywhere. The lilac bushes and apple trees alongside the front driveway were trim and neat but luxuriant. The grass was a brighter emerald than ever before. Color—beauty—a real shock after four drab walls. No wonder I could scarcely speak.

Around back, Lake Kegonsa lay blue and sparkling half a mile north. There was Seamonson's Pond gleaming down in the valley to the east, and we paused beside the apple tree at the kitchen window so I could have a long look at the big sturdy garage, scene of my apprenticeship in do-it-yourself plumbing.

Then inside; and a once-familiar, woody odor filled my nostrils as the cart bumped through the front doorway. After antiseptic hospital air, the scent of woodwork and rugs and fireplaces and woolen clothes was so real, so natural, I wondered how I could ever have forgotten it.

"The same old pink rug in the front hall," I said as our crowd jostled and chatted through the vestibule. "It sure looks warm."

After a brief sideways glance into the cozy living room with its wide colonial fireplace, we rolled straight ahead into the dining room. The corner cupboards, yellow wallpaper, and big window looked just the same. They all shouted "Welcome"—but I experienced a brief pang at the clinical transformation wrought by a few changes. The soft green rug had been replaced by cool-looking linoleum—and Fran's new maple dining table had been banished to the attic; the chill silver steel of a rocking bed had ruled it out.

"Holy smoke!" I exclaimed, studying the odd new piece of furniture looming before the window. "I thought the rocker would be in one corner. The iron monster dominates the entire room!"

Even Captain One Long Pan managed to grunt a small laugh as Bill and his fellow corpsman lifted me gently from the cart to the high-standing bed. I looked up, and was shocked again.

"The ceiling is so close!"

Compared with the cavernous hospital room, our low ceiling—only two feet from my forehead when the bed rocked up—seemed a whole lot more intimate and friendly.

Amid our profuse thanks, the mournful medical officer cast me a mournful look and went his mournful way. I knew the prophetic "E.D.A." was on his mind and said to myself "Good riddance."

"Buy you a beer at the Noncom Club next time you're up Truax way, Ken," Bill called from the front hall. With an exaggerated salute he too was gone, yakking womenfolk following after.

Alone for a moment, I took stock of the situation. There was stimulation beyond my power to tell by this new, almost-lost world. If the P.E. Board thought I had come home to die, they were sadly mistaken. In a moment of unbearable joy I looked through the window and was nearly overwhelmed by nature's verdant colors outside.

With all of this inspiration—just everyday beauty—I had only barely begun to live!

The ambulance drove off and the screen door banged again. Then I found the real reward for homecoming in the faces of my family and of my one-night nurse, for they shone with affection and welcome. "Supreme happiness is the conviction that we are loved," Victor Hugo wrote. With the wonder and the power of that love, I was being offered a colorful—a glorious new life.

"Let's pillow you up on one side," Patty said, and then swiftly did. After spending most of the morning flat on my back, turning gave my aching bones such relief I could have purred. The bed swung gently up and down as Fran and Patty visited with the Webers and I pondered the miracle of two such different ways of living as hospital and home.

The strangeness wore off fast with so many familiar sights, scents and sounds—especially those from the kitchen as Fran went about

preparing lunch. The refrigerator door opened and closed, the bread-knife whirred and clunked through a fresh loaf, and coffee began to percolate on the stove. Association with the old life pulled powerfully. Though the kitchen was behind me, I could virtually see milk and cream in the refrigerator, taste the soft but crusty fresh bread, and smell the coffee before its aroma reached the dining room.

"Almost time for P.M. temps, Cap," Patty sang out, a roguish look on her face. "Want your thermometer?"

"In words of one syllable, Nurse, *Hell no!*"

I was living a totally new yet familiar experience—something like coming home from the dead only half-dead. Unable to move anything but my head and a few fingers, I felt a little out of place and overly stared at. In all the thrill, it was some time before I missed the kids. Of course they'd change things when they all got home, for then Papa would no longer be the constant center of attention. This would just take some getting used to.

Fran's mother went to help her prepare lunch, and Dad Weber returned to the business of pruning some hedges. As soon as the pretty nurse and I were alone, I asked Patty for a cigarette—my first in over nine months.

"Good therapy," she said, gaily obliging. "If it gives you any satisfaction, smoke your silly head off, Captain!"

"Shh! Just man the ash tray, Corporal, and don't let my wife catch me smoking."

"I heard that!" said Fran, coming in from the kitchen wearing a broad smile. "Oh, it looks nice to see you smoking. What does it taste like?"

"Wonderful," I lied. Tobacco smoke tasted hideous, and half the thrill was gone with "no hands." But there were other joys.

After many months of seeing Patty and other nurses in long white uniforms, I had often accused the pixie brunette of having no legs—only skirts, calves, and ankles. It had become a standing joke between us. When she agreed to come home for a day to teach Fran my nursing care, she also threatened to bring along her shortest shorts. I dared her; and now both she and Fran went upstairs to change from dressy frocks to cool shorts.

When they returned the view really took my breath away. Fran is

small, slim, and shapely; but little Bambi-eyes was—if possible—even more so.

"You sure them clothes is legal?" was the most articulate I could get.

Patty's laugh tinkled to a high gay note. "You've just been out of circulation too long, patient. Sure they're legal. Comfortable, too. Do you see?—even us dull old nurses have legs."

The note continued and the first day at home grew into a rip-roaring success. Late in the afternoon my ladies and I enjoyed highballs—a treat long unheard of—and just before supper our adult peace and quiet was shattered as Liz came yipping and prancing through the front door.

In my book age three is the cutest of childhood ages. Anyhow, my favorite screwball didn't let me down as she came into the room, flaxen hair shining like platinum. Fran lifted her up for a big kiss.

"Why can't I ride in the bed with Daddy?" Liz demanded.

"Because there's not enough room," her mother replied.

"Balderdash!" I laughed. "I've been dying to have my kids pile on. Just squeeze her tight up against me."

After an unforgettable supper abounding in savory taste Liz had to go to bed, but came to say her prayers while holding my hand. Her poignant voice reached my very soul.

"Now I lay me down to sleep please help Daddy get well. Our Father who art in heaven . . ."

Later on when Dad Weber brought the TV set from the living room, I rediscovered a miracle: Top-flight entertainment coming to life on an orthicon tube right in our home. Family life, American style, I thought as Dad remarked that the United States had more TV sets than bathtubs. WTMJ-TV beamed in loud and clear from Milwaukee seventy miles away, and I wondered why that grim hospital hadn't installed television for their long-term "chronics." How the endless hours might have sped!

At ten-thirty P.M. Patty demonstrated a professional back-rub while Fran balanced me on one side. Then both lovelies settled me comfortably on my back for the night.

I wanted desperately to be with my wife. Even though I couldn't hold her in my own arms, I wanted her to hold me—to press her full length against me—and to match the passion of my kisses. Was

it asking too much? Can a girl come to a man who cannot come to her?

"You've had a pretty big day, sweetheart," she said, leaning over the rocking bed for a good-night kiss.

The close-up intimacy of the girl I loved in a silken night gown was almost too much to bear. There was a roaring in my temples and my eyes went dizzy with prickling, stabbing heat. Taunting words, spoken by the minister, echoed out of the past to mock my uselessness: "To have and to hold—to have and to hold—to have and to hold . . ."

Desire welled up inside. With every ounce of strength I tried to raise my arms. They lay like logs. I called upon my spiritual strength and *willed* them to rise—to encircle her waist. My fingertips throbbed, wrists felt light. They wanted—they tried—to lift up. Then the dead, cold lifelessness surged over my hopes and a supreme effort of will power had failed. My arms—my arms. They lay like logs.

The magic moment was over, the spell was broken. Every-night conversation resumed.

"Guess so," I said lamely after nine months of longing. "It's been quite a day for you, too."

A hideaway bed, also new to the dining room, rumbled out from behind the hall door. Fran unfolded it, turned down the bedclothes and turned out the lights. The mellow coziness of our double bed had faded into the past. Now I lay in splendid isolation thirty-eight inches above the floor, a motorized teeter-totter humming steadily beneath me as I rocked up and down, up and down, and eventually to sleep—trying to fathom our future life together.

PART II

The Long Nights

He lit a filter-tip cigarette and continued. "You've driven a car? Good. Then I'll use a crude analogy in automotive terms. Getting a message from your brain down the spinal cord to your muscles has become something like driving down a boulevard, ah, messed up by some construction work, let's say. There are many side streets, and you the driver can turn right to feel; but you can't turn left to move because a deep ditch has been dug all along the left side of this boulevard.

"At perhaps a *few* of the side streets, however, the pavement may still be intact and you may turn left—or a polio victim may bend a finger or wiggle a toe. But I must add one more thing, Ken. The virus can more than 'damage.' It can also destroy those anterior horn cells."

"Des-troy?" A chill ran through me as I asked the question. "But —after a year or two, mightn't those ditches fill over—some of them?"

"If we knew the answer to that we'd have the key to life itself," the doctor smiled wistfully and stood up to leave. "Medical science has made tremendous strides in recent years," he said. "But as of now there's no known cure for this form of paralysis."

Despair

THE best doctor around had done what he could. Skilled therapists had tried everything that might have helped renovate my body. Now—no cure—no hope. I was going to be a permanent invalid; permanently unattractive. Never again could I hope to embrace my wife or children. I went home giving not one fat damn whether I lived or died.

Though life was livelier on the Knoll with all three children scrapping and laughing and crashing through the house, I was bitchy to most of my family most of the time. Strange. I had really missed the kids back in Illinois; now I was impatient with them.

The fault wasn't entirely mine, however. The gouging Illinois internist who had prescribed pills during my two illnesses, had sent an outrageous bill—twice the size of Doctor Endleman's. I recalled his inquiring whether we had hospital insurance. Naïvely I had

said, "Sure. Not only that, but a lot of friends contributed. . . ." Well, we had banked the contributions toward the childrens' educations. But pity the poor insurance companies!

Fran had done far more to save my life than the inquisitive internist; but now she was about to compound my own stupidity.

"Please, honey," I pleaded. "Ask the insurance agent to question Doctor Fuerst's bill. We'll lose months of Carol's nursing care if all this dough comes out of our hospitalization account."

"Ken, I really can't argue with a doctor. The only thing to do is approve it."

And she did. And I stewed. And the insurance agent questioned it himself; but gutless wonder that I'd become, I simply yielded to my better—stronger—half. And now a man's spirits could find for themselves how deep the pit of despair. Mad at myself, mad at the world in general and my loved ones in particular, I sank to black and hating depths.

Then one week after returning home there was a curious, terrifying relapse.

Beginning at bedtime one night, I simply couldn't get a deep breath. Though helping with every precious ounce of breathing strength, my hot lungs cried out for more air. Obligingly, after bronchitis and pneumonia, the March of Dimes had furnished us with an iron lung. And although its rhythm didn't allow for a good deep cough, still I thought of the tank respirator as my only safe haven.

"Rocking just isn't enough," I wheezed.

Fran went quickly for help. In the middle of the night she and her mother and father dragged the big yellow Emerson in off the porch, made up the slide-out bed, and inside I went.

For a few minutes the irresistible power of the iron lung gave my own lungs that *aa-hhhhh* feeling of satisfaction—that glorious sensation like bursting above water just in time. But I had expected its first big WHOOSH to "cough" me and blast loose some congestion, as it had on previous emergencies. Nothing happened. Nevertheless, I resolved somehow to unwind my nerves, stop worrying, and let a care-worn wife get back to sleep.

"I'm okay now, Francie. Just turn the pressure up a little and let's get back to bed."

The room darkened. Face to face with death again, I wondered if everyone wouldn't be better off without me. Now I wouldn't get well; but would I just keep getting sick?

Dear God, shouldn't You let me go?

How could I live with myself this way—this useless way? Could my wife stand me much longer? A man *has* to get up and go to work in the morning! This odd stream of logic or illogic went tumbling through my thoughts, finally turning on a macabre note of doubt. I had a choice: living or dying.

Did I want to let go of life? Why? when no one knew what lay beyond? Suddenly the unknown prospect of death chilled and frightened me. In the same instant I knew that life—even a crippled life—could be warm with sunshine, radiant with love. Had I ever really "not cared" whether I lived or died?

Somewhere around two A.M. that night Fran, still fatigued from the nervous strain of our recent hospital session, rose from her bed in the dark.

She stood beside the iron lung in her shapeless cotton flannel pajamas, her fair face lined with concern. I looked at the haggard countenance of my Vision in Blue, her brown hair sleep-tousled and streaked with gray. She placed a nursing-trained hand on my own, and her fingers felt dry and scratchy.

But in those soft blue eyes shone limitless vistas of beauty and wonder and power. Love, too, shown from a worried gaze. Here lay love far deeper than the passion of youth—love that dwarfed mere sex by its gentle giving, its total understanding. Here was the greatest power. Love was the key.

All in a space of seconds I realized how much we two had together. Then my mind awoke to a strangely fundamental discovery: as I breathed I could live; as I lived I could love. Life would always be worth living if there were a special someone to share my life—a mate to share the love I had to give.

She stroked my brow and my spirits shot up. I wouldn't—couldn't give up now. I was stubborn. I would fight. Grit teeth and gather senses. Try to solve the urgent . . .

"I'm going to call Doctor Peterson about you," she frowned. "I don't like the sound of your breathing."

"Guess you'd better. There's air going in and out—no mucus clogs—but my lungs just don't seem to be getting it."

"Anything else I should tell him?"

"Yes," I rasped. "Ask him to bring his knife; we may have to reopen the tracheotomy."

Rod Peterson could see at a glance that I wasn't getting enough oxygen, and I could see at a glance that he was apprehensive. But within minutes my throat was neatly pricked with novacain, and at last his scalpel flicked into my windpipe.

A powerful sense of relief flowed through me as the sweetest, freshest air a man ever tasted swept like a forgotten wave into my lungs. Instantly I knew my lungs were accepting air almost normally—that I could live and breathe again. But for Fran's alertness I might easily have passed out—and passed quietly on. Right then I resolved never again to take either wife or life for granted.

The sky was fading to light gray in the east when the doctor put away his instruments and left. Fran looked beat—and was. Her mother, almost as tired, helped straighten the "dining room"—now cluttered with a hide-away bed, a silver rocking bed and a yellow iron lung—as the patient was settled comfortably and order was restored.

"If I could just muster a little strength," Fran sighed. "I feel utterly worn out."

Bess Weber then lied a little out of loyalty. "Don't worry about yourself, dear," she said. "Just lean on me—I'm a veritable *tower* of strength."

Sometimes fate is no more than a masquerade. And even tragedy, though hidden behind mask and costume, might well change from the worst thing that ever happened to you to the *best* thing—provided you don't let it get the best *of* you. Knock a man down and he'll strain every muscle to rise again. But when he is knocked down a second, third, and fourth time, he begins to develop a realistic attitude about the physical implausibility of standing up again. He doesn't necessarily give up the struggle. But he begins to see the good as well as the bad of being down there on the ground.

Regaining an approximation of health again, I could appreciate that, though it would never be a totally bicker-free arrangement,

having two families under one roof made for a good team. Nurse Carol had integrated beautifully with us, and the team had gained strength. But the vital incentive for merely staying alive would always be the devotion of my mate. I could hope for—but never again reasonably expect—the cherished kind of affection that had flowed like fire between us. I just couldn't. So long as gravity was my master, we'd not be husband with wife, but patient with nurse.

So I tried to paint on a new veneer. I tried to develop a new and cheerful philosophy about all the good things left, only to find it was pretty much a daytime philosophy. Nighttimes, a savage desire for affection would rake through my insides. A man has to be needed, or at least *wanted!*

One evening, in the wheelchair for a haircut, I stayed up to watch a special TV drama and found myself sitting elbow to elbow with Fran. Just as in the old days, yet not the same at all. She watched the show; but at such rare proximity I naturally preferred to watch her.

Legs so pretty in nylons, face so fair with that absorbed expression of half-smile and half-disbelief, I studied her from top to toe whenever she wasn't looking at me. At that time I was disappointed and angry with my mate, yet—dammit!—her every feature was precious to me.

Only from a standpoint like mine, I thought with a stab of loneliness, can a man appreciate a woman—his woman. God did a wondrous thing when he created the female, with her specially soft and curving lines, her special role of creating new life within her. Regardless of her faults, she is mankind's special art form. She deserves to be embraced and caressed and admired and tenderly loved. This, it seemed to me, is man's greatest privilege—the privilege of loving woman.

The dramatic TV show was *Patterns*—a stark study of ethics in the business world. My thoughts traced a triangle of thought from rocking bed to wife to TV set and back to my own still hand beside me, raising a question: in a world shot through with moral disabilities and the decay of decent principles, who is the more seriously disabled, the man trying to live a normal life despite his defects, or the physically normal person who cannot accept him?

The conviction grew that my family didn't need me; the kids

were being raised, decisions being made without my help. How can any man be wanted *or* needed when he can't *do* anything? Medical treatment had failed to bring back any muscular prowess. Now there was nothing to look forward to except reading magazines, watching TV, and watching the children grow up.

I sank again into deep despair—a protracted mood of self-centeredness and plain ornery cussedness. Forgotten was a major lesson of my life: that useful work could make life worth living. Rather than strain, I rocked more, used the chest respirator more often.

Somewhere in a back cranny of my numb mind, then, the philosophy I'd learned from The Boss at GE X-ray returned a word or two at a time. Finally the words fell together: "No man should give in to his troubles. Trouble is just another word for problem; and every problem will yield to human resourcefulness," he'd said. "Regardless how overwhelming, how discouraging it may seem, every problem has a solution—often a variety of solutions."

Right at hand was a new and growing problem within my scope. It needed solving. Something told me if I didn't solve it, nobody would. None of the three kids was any help around the house. All three were getting away with murder, and soft-hearted Fran was cleaning up after them. Building some molehills into mountains, with a personality none too smooth, I nastily asserted myself as I thought a good husband should. I insisted the kids start taking turns doing the dishes—except Liz, who was too little. Her I made set and clear the table.

Jannie and Liz accepted these new duties with only a little fuss. They seemed almost to take pride in being helpful. But Mark threw a fit. Without a father who could be on his feet guiding, demonstrating, setting an example, our eleven-year-old was heading down a surly, self-centered path himself. There were signs of his becoming spoiled. He was ruled by his wants, which were seldom constructive: a slingshot, a B.B. gun, a .22 rifle, a fancier bike, and he yelled for what he wanted until grandma, grandpa or mama gave in to stop the racket.

Trouble was, my only authority was a voice—and a weak one at that. Mark would turn out all right, I felt sure, but he was determined to be a domestic rebel. An eleven- or twelve-year-old is the world's worst conformist—he's got to do exactly what his friends

do. And have—and wear. Were a young chum to tell our son that milk in gallon bottles was poisonous, then gallon bottles of milk were *positively* poisonous.

But let mom or dad try to explain that most of his wants were actually privileges he'd have to merit, watch and let the revolution begin!

Lonely but unyielding, I stuck to my homely philosophy: that privileges are earned through a cooperative attitude, a pleasant disposition, above all through assuming responsibility—for clothing, for smooth bed and tidy room, for regular useful chores, for help around the house and yard whenever it was needed.

"We want you youngsters to learn self-reliance by sharing the work as well as the fun," I repeated over and over. "And to develop your own talents by doing the most you can with what you've got."

Mark had his own problems trying to understand. Here in our town a twelve-year-old boy was given ten dollars a week allowance; another of his friends already owned two motor boats. "And none of *them* have to wash the crummy old dishes!"

Sure. But when those kids grew up to face their own problems, what experience could they draw on? My son was going to learn to earn his way, by golly.

The period of despair was marked by frequent and not altogether peaceful disagreements. Our senior partners thought I was too strict. Possibly I was; Fran was too soft, and I knew that unless we could strike a happy medium, I'd have to compensate. Rich military experience had taught me lifetime lessons in being fair but firm. Was I to throw over my own principles and experience because two families were involved?

There was another implication: that I couldn't possibly "know what goes on," being in bed. I strove to see things objectively; to be the same father horizontally as I'd have been vertically. But I found there are people with what I choose to call "invalid complexes." These unfortunate souls spread a man's handicap all over him like butter on bread. They cluck their tongues and gush how nice that he can be at home with his loved ones. And they can't conceive how his mind—just lying there—can possibly come up with anything worthwhile.

Sometimes the big picture was humorous. Fran's folks had raised

only two girls; mine had raised a girl and *three* boys. I hadn't exactly forgotten the more effective aspects of my own upbringing. And I had digested thoroughly both the taking and giving of orders in five years of adult military service.

One day, after listening to one more galling lecture on the proper way to raise my own children, I gazed out the window and thought about India, China and the problems at Hunchung. The kids knew their dad drew a sharp line at dishonesty, disobedience and disrespect. All right. Our threesome was gleefully taking advantage of every difference in family opinions. It was time to end the bickering and take charge.

Just *watching* the youngsters grow could never be enough. They were mine and I must have a hand in molding them. Had I the courage of my convictions? Well . . . had we veterans fought World War II to grace the land of liberty with a generation of spoiled children? Hell, no!

The very next afternoon I had to send Mark to his room—"for being disobedient *and* for talking back to your mother. Stay there until you're called for supper."

He leaped to his feet, eyes narrow and flashing. With flagrant disrespect he shouted, "You mean just because of that I can't watch *Rawhide*? That's my favorite TV show. That's not fair!" Our number one son stamped out of the room fighting learning with each step and slamming doors as usual.

"Oh, Markie," called his grandmother soothingly, "you can watch TV in our house."

Obviously, she hadn't heard the entire ruckus—only her grandson's missing his "favorite TV show." Nevertheless, in a red-hot fit of anger I laid down a declaration of independence. "That's all! No more advice from anybody on how we raise our children unless we ask for it."

One thing and only one thing saved my disposition from sinking forever in the abysmal swamps of despair, and that thing was reading. Books and magazines offered escape, yes, but also information, education, useful knowledge. More and more experts agreed that the frightening nationwide increase in juvenile delinquency and teen-age crime had its roots in homes average and above, but where discipline and supervision *were below average.* Inevitably,

the more permissive the parents, the more the hoodlumism. Reading —and the word of experts—gave me back a shred of confidence.

Training my children along decent principles was a monstrous problem for a maladjusted mind. But a problem was a thing with a solution—with something to seek and cling to—a hand-hold on the face of a sheer cliff. Without that hold, and another ahead for a second safe grip, whatever spark of usefulness remained would surely have flickered out.

Grip number two took the unlikely form of a tall Norwegian with a gray crew cut. His professional face was gaunt, dignified, with just enough wrinkles around eyes and mouth to unmask a ready, dry humor. His name was Lloyd Skaalen, and he was a dentist.

One of the first Lions Club visitors, Lloyd was also one of the most personable. I knew my teeth needed work, so he looked and did some temporary repair work right in our home. He wasn't satisfied and he said so. "If you want to save your teeth, Ken, you'll have to get off your duff and come into my office where I can drill."

What a charming way to start travelling! I thought, rattled by an inborn dread of dentists and their snarling drills.

"Sure don't want to hire an ambulance just for a trip to the dentist's office, honey," I said that evening. "We're going to have to trade in the Pontiac on a station wagon."

"Give up the last car you—we drove in together?"

"Let's not face that problem until the hardtop's last day," I said.

Wheelchairs, we had found, weren't much good on our hilly lawns and gravel driveway. Too tippy. And special lifts or strong men were required to transfer my long frame from wheelchair to car seat. Simpler to roll in and roll out again, we decided. So I screwed up a flicker of initiative, phoned Stoughton's friendly undertakers to see if they could furnish a solution.

"You know, those low-slung cars with jack-up backrests. You use them in your ambulances," I inquired. In short order we owned a battered but durable vehicle which the kids promptly dubbed "Daddy's racer" after a running-down-the-road visit to the farmyard of our good neighbors, Violet and Lars Moe. We were then ready to travel by wagon without the double-lifting hazard caused by wheelchairs.

Only the beneficence of a great country made a new station wagon possible. Severely disabled war veterans were entitled by U. S. public law to any automobile specifically adapted to his needs. The VA said yes, we were qualified to receive the full fifteen hundred dollar grant. One and one-half G's! Geez!

The drawn-out problem of getting to the dentist—was it the challenge I needed? Was the slow advance, one twig at a time, restoring my confidence?

We picked a Ford, but to poor Fran's embarassment, I haggled like a Hindu with the car dealer, and felt fat and sassy as a blue jay: "Give us two hundred more on the Pontiac and you've got a deal," I said, and we had a new automobile scot free.

The new car was due on one of those rare, balmy summer days that overflowed with sunshine, with the gay twitter of meadow larks, juncoes, and scores of English sparrows. A gentle south breeze brought the bird calls right into my room—invitations to come outside and breathe the rich living air. For the first time in months I felt like snapping into action—doing something. Shortly my racer and I were parked waiting near the huge lavender and white lilac bushes. The fragrant aroma of lilacs! Old Sol's enlivening hot rays! I felt radiantly good and whole and full of life. Why hadn't I—a lifelong sun-baby—come out into this glorious world long ago?

The wagon—sandstone tan with blue trim—was more than a pretty new car. It was my chance for escape, for sampling fearfully the world beyond.

The kids were excited and the moment festive. Then the salesman took the keys to our beloved hardtop and drove out the back driveway. Fran and I had enjoyed many happy times in that sporty little sedan—times we'll never forget. Over countless miles she had ridden close beside me on the sweet-smelling leather seats. I had driven the turquoise Pontiac home joyously on my last day of service. Now it seemed as if some huge and final door had slammed shut between us and the mellow moments of our past.

"There it goes," said Fran, curling her fingers around my hand. We couldn't face one another.

"Mommy! Are you crying?" Mark was stunned.

"Just—saying goodbye to a friend." Fran sniffed, wiping her eyes and going for coffee as I kept my own eyes averted.

The wisdom tooth ached with a steady low throb when we finally rolled in to keep that long-promised dental appointment.

And then I made a remarkable discovery. Always before, the snarl of a dentist's drill descending into my mouth turned me into a yellow-streaked, cowardly mass of jelly. Lloyd drilled and drilled. It hurt; but it bounced back rather than searing into me. I was out on a rich adventure, enjoying sitting up, enjoying rare comradeship. Because of this—because I was out riding freed from the usual four walls—Doc Skaalen's drill didn't hurt a bit.

The first big thing about the dentist's office was the personality of Lloyd Skaalen himself. Second was the tremendous thrill I found just sitting in his operating chair—a normal chair for normal people. Except for having to use the chest respirator while sitting upright, everything seemed like old times. "I'm gonna feel just like stepping down and walking away when you're finished," I said.

"If not a whole lot sooner," the dentist grinned, readying his drill. "And when you do, boy, a year's free dental work is on the house."

Adjustment

ALWAYS the first *good* thing about "getting up" in the morning is getting my face washed—usually a long hour after breakfast. But the *best* thing is being rolled off my back after a long flat night and balanced onto my side for a stimulating back rub. These chores were in the department of Carol Sundby five days a week, and the cheerful little nurse was more than swift and competent; she fairly fizzed over with bright outlook.

"You know," she said one morning. "Lately you seem more—at peace with yourself."

"Guess it's done me good to get out in the workaday world," I said. "Three years a Rip Van Winkle is enough. Boy! I'm so out of touch I find it fascinating to watch a *dentist* work. In *my* mouth!"

Carol finished rubbing the small of my back and went for a couple mugs of coffee. "Still thinking about taking up writing?" she

called from the kitchen. "Why don't you just start? That's all—just start!"

"I'm—not sure I'd know where to start, or how. Used to be an expert on Air National Guard organization, and could have written about it two years ago. But now? I'm an expert on nothing. You have to *know* something to tell somebody else."

Just then Fran entered the dining-rocking room with the morning's mail. She pored intently over a letter with alternate chuckles and smiles, then said, "You want to get to work? Your old fraternity brother Jack McCoy must be reading your mind. He has a new tape recorder and wants to exchange talking letters—says it's time you made use of Craig's recorder. He wants you to brief him on foreign affairs, since you read so much and he's so busy manufacturing lock washers. He'll send the first tape in—oh! He's bringing Ruth and the kids over next weekend. How wonderful! What has to be done to the Ampro, anything?"

"Let's get cuttin' on this, T. K.," Jack said, when they came on Sunday. He was enthusiastic, wearing his most persuasive grin, and pounding on the toes of my left foot as he leaned over the rocking bed footboard.

My mind went blank with the sudden challenge. Instinctively I crawled inside a defensive shell of outward scorn. Me make sense talking to a whirling tape recorder? A machine that ground on and on, listening, waiting, over-hearing my stupid silences, indelibly reproducing each monotonous "uh-h-h" of a blah personality? The very thought was paralyzing.

". . . I'll read newspapers if I can't think of enough to say," he persisted. "Now you gotta quit loafing and answer, hear? I haven't finished the first tape, but you'll get it in the mail. Listen to it, have Fran take notes, then record your message back using the same tape. . . ."

"Well," I hedged, "I'd have to work out some kind of switch I could use with my good left thumb."

"Okay, okay," Jack gestured impatiently. "Get Mark to help. Let me know if I can shop around for switches."

"And our recorder would need a remote control wire. . . ."

Chic little Ruth restored my soul with just the right words. "You were a communications officer during the war, weren't you Ken?"

rounding up the two or three best for full board approval. Lots of touchy politics and personal feelings involved. The whole job took more than a week, fifteen or twenty calls per day."

Paul Bayorgeon scratched his head. Wryly he asked, "And there's more? Something about a Youth Center?"

"A project I dearly love, but it's discouraging at times," I said. "We had a good year in '58 when phoning the high school principal got us the use of their band room for a summer. Oh—the idea of this project is a teen recreation center free of both school and city control—a wholesome facility the kids will govern themselves. Trouble is, operating for and *by* teenagers requires some initiative on their part, since I'm only their advisor."

Fran painted the picture objectively. "We help them organize committees and make plans, but just try to get the committees to do their work!" She shoved Liz's Siamese kitten, Miss Foo, off her lap abruptly and rolled her eyes toward the ceiling. "High school kids have plenty of energy to get up and dance, but they're long gone when it's time to decorate or buy groceries or clean up."

"True," I said, "With all their bubbling enthusiasm, those youngsters are real stimulating to me. But for Fran, much of it is just added work. For her it's straighten the house, get husband ready for meeting, take notes, serve pop during long sessions, keep books and watch bank balances, help make plans, and generally ride herd on the cool cats and kittens. Then she takes minutes at school board meetings. . . ."

"I begin to understand now why you'd like to be independent with the telephone," said Mr. Bayorgeon, catching the capricious Miss Foo in his own lap. "Is the teen center going now?"

"Next summer again, we hope," Fran sighed. "In the band room in '58 we had a crew of eager beavers, and the result was turnouts of two hundred kids a week—for dancing, table games, TV, basketball and ping-pong. There's another eager bunch of upper classmen coming along, and they've had two good ideas already. We're going to change the name to Teen Canteen, and have the use of a building at the Fairgrounds."

"That building," he said, a look of droll humor pulling at his mouth. "The kids lined it up?"

"Practically. It was all their idea."

"You two got the building," he deduced, swinging his gaze from me to Fran, "by calling . . . ?"

"The Mayor," she said.

We discovered Paul Bayorgeon was a "can do" man. In less than a week he reappeared with an engineer from the Milwaukee office. A gray-haired man with a gentle manner and a painstaking approach to his work. Don Goodlad outlined several likely-sounding solutions to the problem. Instead of a motor-operated dial I had envisioned, the ingenious engineer came up with a far simpler buzzer system.

"If the concept works, and we'll *make* it work," said Mr. Goodlad, "all you'll have to do is press your switch, listen to a series of buzzes, and if you want 3–3–3, for example, just let go the switch each time you hear three buzzes."

Only days later Bayorgeon, Goodlad, and local serviceman extraordinary Louie Lacy *all* turned up, and before supper time a near-motionless thumb was spinning the wildest "dial" ever devised by the American Telephone and Telegraph Company. No dial at all, a bunch of little black boxes installed in the basement now converted a bedside buzzer to dial pulses into the Stoughton plant. On bookshelves behind me stood a compact loudspeaker—the earphone. On the bedside stand hung a microphone on an adjustable bracket that could reach me whether I was sitting up, lying down, or balanced sideways.

"Paul, dialing is a breeze!" I said, pressing the two switches. "In fact, this thing buzzes along at about six pulses a second. Hey! Not having to wait for the dial to spin back, I may be the fastest dialer on the Bell Tel network. You people sure are amazing."

The big executive said simply. "Our business is service, Ken. I feel very proud to have been able to help."

The new development, along with civic activity, was anything but distracting to my major course in life: writing to sell. All the ventures seemed, in fact, to stimulate my efforts and to help sharpen a long-dormant mind. Came the day *Flyaway Joe* was finished and mailed to a publisher. That evening Fran and I shared rare martinis —just the two of us. Now to finalize *Can Do* before tackling a half-hour TV play. And it wouldn't be long before local telephones went automatic and I could try my favorite new tool and toy.

On the day of conversion, I first plugged in and thumb-dialed a friend in Madison. Hmmm. No answer. McCanses must be at church. Let's see—Cedar is 2–3. Listening to the rapid buzz, I squeezed off 23–3–0267. Click. A ringing sound. "Hello, Gard residence." And Professor Bob Gard came in loud and clear, without a hitch.

The remarkable speaker phone has become my favorite showpiece as well as my faithful servant, and it goes without saying that Paul Bayorgeon has become more than just an acquaintance. He had even promised to spread the word about push-button dialing to others like me with uncommon needs for uncanny equipment. Most remarkably, for all the imagination, ingenuity, equipment and labor, Paul's employers have never sent a bill.

Although my thanks went in writing to telephone company managers, I never could get the last word on one little lady. My peppy mother, her eyes flashing gray-green, watched in fascination, a loving arm around Fran, as we plugged in the "rig" and I dialed a neighbor with two fingers. She was leaving our home at 809 Pine in Winnetka, with its millions of memories, and moving permanently to southern California. "This kind of thing demonstrates the really human qualities which make a company great as well as big," she said. "And they've given you a bonus, Ken. I've been noticing—you've got so much to do now you don't spend much time feeling sorry for yourself."

"Well, not all the self-pity is gone," I confessed. "I lived too much and remember too well. But I've learned a remarkable thing: you don't need mobility to think or to use the telephone."

Then she topped me again, saying, "Well—you know what Browning wrote: 'A man's reach should exceed his grasp.'"

And gave me more to think about.

No More but So

THERE's an old saying around the Badger State that up here we have only three seasons; June, July and Winter. But brief as they are, Wisconsin summers are luxuriant green—with warm days and crisp cool nights—so beautiful we always hate to see them fade

with the falling of yellow-brown leaves. This year, after a brilliant scarlet October, the first white blanket of snow seemed especially early, especially sad.

A long cold monotonous winter followed. My big window, so inspiring in green-up time, now leaked whispers of blustery arctic gales, and the verdant landscape might have been a massive iceberg. After months of writing training, I hadn't sold a single article. *Flyaway Joe* was still hobbling around the New York marketplace unsold.

During the ensuing wet spring a second draft of *Can Do* approached completion—the first hadn't passed muster with the K. Committee. But draft number two took shape clumsily, with the exasperating speed of an inchworm.

Where *was* that "definite promise" Professor McCanse had mentioned? Could a man really fail so fast in spite of topnotch training? By the time Burritt School let out I was tired of frosty weather, tired of my own routine, tired of a career carefully planted and skillfully nurtured which refused to bear fruit. Not just pooped, either, but discouraged and disillusioned.

"You've been awfully short with the kids lately," said Fran one evening at supper.

"Then keep them out of my hair," I growled.

Her tone was both hurt and indignant. "Ken! How can you talk that way about your own children?"

Night after night we snarled at each other if we spoke at all. Fran managed to ignore me for some time, patiently taking care of my needs in silence. Barbara took all she could, then resigned. With problems of her own, with a mother who needed her at home, she did *not* need added grief from the grouch.

Fortunately, our cheerful and devoted Carol Sundby, R.N., came back to us. Now, I've never met a sweeter nurse than Carol. She was a whiz at physical care and helped tremendously in marking up my manuscripts and in keeping notes.

But the long winter must have taken something out of me. My mood was so consistently foul that even sweet Carol often gave me a pain in the neck. Mark, Jannie and Liz began avoiding the ogre in "Daddy's room." With one exception, that is: Mark reached the glorious driver's-license age of sixteen, and I was boss of the car.

"We just want to see the movie in Stoughton, Dad," he pleaded early one evening. "Just Tom and Phil and I. I'll put some gas in, and we won't go driving around."

"No, sir. You had it last night," I answered too quickly. "And that car is getting old. Do you know how much overall upkeep costs? Gas only accounts for about two cents a mile. But oil and rubber and lube jobs and repair parts run to . . ."

Poor Mark. And poor Jan when she came to spout hopeful plans for her's and Joe's third Stoughton Horse Show. She brimmed over with bright-eyed enthusiasm.

"This is going to be Joe's and my biggest horse show ever, Daddy, and you've *got* to come," the youngster bubbled, jostling the rocking bed in her excitement. "We're really gonna surprise you, I bet."

Lizzie, shadowing her older sister and sucking on an orange popsicle, joined the chorus a full octave higher. "Yeah, Dad! Her and Joe—they been practicing. . . ."

"Oh, Jannie," I cut in scornfully, "why bother? Two years ago, the best you and Joe could do was a third prize in the costume class. Don't you know an old horse hasn't a chance against all those. . . ."

Tears welled in both young faces. Jan stamped away in silence. Liz screamed, "Daddy! Don't you call Joe 'old'!" and ran away upstairs.

Dad Weber had been sitting nearby reading the paper. Now he stared at me in disbelief. Shock and anger crisscrossed his tanned features. Controlling his emotions with a visible effort, he rose, started toward the door, then stopped and glared. "I think you should know," he rumbled, choosing each word with care, "that your daughter has done wonders with that horse. After two years he looks better, and runs faster, than I have ever seen him."

Well, I'd managed to clear the room again with my owly attitude. What was eating me? Never had I been so thoroughly disagreeable —nor so completely lacking in tact *or* ambition. Writing success or no, there was no excuse for being so beastly toward the children I loved. Or for quitting work. Work? Why bother? Whatever creative ability I might once have had must be deader than a dodo bird.

Charlie Schefft was due any day on his monthly visit, and I planned to tell him my troubles before trying to resume writing. Charlie was my ally, friend, and confidant. His visits always pepped

me up. When he did arrive the jovial VA training officer began raving about my latest writing effort—a half-hour TV script.

"Professor Gard and Professor Kamarck *both* say this play of yours is shaping up beautifully," the big man intoned. "Their panegyrics in behalf of your increasing prowess in the field of literature have again confirmed my optimism and warmed my heart. They feel strongly, by the way, that your television scenario will command a decent market price when it is finished."

"Baloney, Charlie!" I exploded. "You and your big talk about my trash ever selling! Isn't this so-called vocational training just a way to keep handicapped people busy—keep their minds occupied?"

The big man reeled back as if I'd socked him on the jaw. His impressive vocabulary wilted. "Wh-what?"

"You heard me. My writing hasn't earned me a nickel. Let's quit kidding each other—is this rehab stuff really on the level?"

Trainer Schefft recovered swiftly. His gray-green eyes narrowed. His ears pointed back. He drew himself up well beyond his normal six feet two inches, hitched his belt up, and spasmodically clenched and unclenched ham-sized fists. Huge biceps rippled and bulged beneath shirt sleeves. His face contorted through shades of red from pink to fuchsia. Purple veins stood out in his neck. He snatched off his bow tie, took a whistling deep breath, and spoke evenly through clenched teeth.

"Listen, Captain Kingery. There is nothing phoney about your training program. The Veterans Administration carries out the laws of the land—nothing else—in trying to rehabilitate its handicapped. Our single motive is self-sufficiency for the veteran. But let's get a few things straight. We don't guarantee results overnight; training takes time. In the final analysis, regardless of the effort *we* put in, it's *your* effort which will make the program fail or succeed. So far . . . you have done well."

I felt like a worm. "Sorry, Charlie, I—should've known better than to question the program. I've just gotten discouraged."

"I know," he said, fiery cheeks fading to normal, muscles in his arms and jaw relaxing. "You can't understand why the publishers haven't bought *Flyaway Joe*."

"Or any of the short stuff I've written," I growled.

Charlie's anger mellowed into compassion as he stood towering

over the rocking bed's footboard. "That's not important after only three years of a four-year training program," he said, his voice deep and soft. "You'll be selling your first article any day now. Uhh—it might please you to know that Chuck Wedemeyer just told me he and his staff consider your writing to have reached a professional caliber. You are no longer an apprentice."

Apprentice, I thought. What an obnoxious word for a forty-year-old man with careers in the Air Force and in industry behind him. Charlie was trying to help my lousy mood, but he was only rationalizing.

"Oh, it's not just the horse story," I said wearily. "Although it *was* supposed to be a cinch to sell. I'm just at a point where I don't know whether or not to keep trying. I've often been dissatisfied with my life. Now I'm dissatisfied with my work."

The giant training officer seemed deeply concerned. "Your work? Why, you've been a straight-A student. . . ."

"Of which I'm proud," I cut in. "But grades don't sell stories. I don't know, Charlie. Sometimes I think I've tackled too much. I had high hopes for the Stoughton Teen Canteen, but it sure didn't get going last summer. There just wasn't enough interest on the part of parents *or* teenagers; and I'm certain that either I've jazzed things up or just haven't done my share.

"And Burritt School has been either hell or low water the whole damned winter. We've had continual trouble with the water pump, the septic tank, and the plumbing. I think I know what's wrong; but I can't get my point across during board meetings. If only I could climb into the pump pit or rearrange some pipes in the basement! You see? I've taken on more than I can handle. I'm not doing justice to the teen canteen *or* to the school board.

"On top of that, after reading the second complete draft of *Can Do* I still don't like it. Years of work, and of devoted teaching by Ralph McCanse, and the stupid book reads like a seed catalogue. In fact, there's no reason for writing it, really. Can do what? There is no big achievement—no real sign of success—no final triumph. I haven't sold a single article; haven't succeeded at a damned thing."

Charlie was silent for a long moment, glancing at the bulletin board beside my window. "I've got to be going," he said finally, apparently thinking out loud. "I see you've tacked up your first pay check. Joint School District #5 . . . $100. Not bad. Fran tells me you were just re-elected director for a brand-new three-year term. And she says you and your teenagers have gotten a park building for this summer. I wonder. Is dollars-and-cents success as important or rewarding as useful service to other people?"

The training officer leaned on the rocking bed's footboard. It creaked. Staring at me intently, he added, "You are learning a worthwhile profession. A wiser man than I once said, 'nothing worth while is ever accomplished in a hurry.' Many—people—believe in you. Please—believe in yourself. Mark my words, my friend. You're in a psychological 'low'. Everything's getting you down. But the only way you can go is up, right?" Charlie's face split into rosy ridges of smile. "And the first piece of writing you sell—the first real accomplishment you'll accept as such—will make you a new man."

After Charlie had gone, my conscience ate like sulphuric acid deep inside. Considering all the VA had done, what a thankless bastard I was. Then Fran, often less than aggressive in finding solutions to problems, tackled the matter of problem father head-on.

"Whether you like it or not, husband," she said firmly, "the whole family is going to root for Jan at the horse show Sunday."

"Aw, Mom!" Mark's belligerent protest spoke for us both. "Do I hafta go to that crummy horse show? Doesn't that dumb Janet know her lumpy old nag hasn't a chance? I wanted to go see the Ferraris and Alfa Romeos at Elkhart Lake, darnit!"

Wonderful companion that he was, Joe simply lacked the classy lines, the snorting youth to compete in a show ring—even a small town show ring. I tried again to explain to number one daughter, this time more tactfully. No dice; there was a race in this year's show that she and Joe were going to win.

"Joe and I have been training, and *not* for the costume class! We'll show you!" she said cooly. "And please stop calling me Janet and 'Jannie'. My name is Jan." The twelve-year-old tossed her head and marched out the door.

Horse show day arrived hot and clear, cool in the shade, the breeze a gentle zephyr from the south. Fran wrestled me into a pair of loafers and summer slacks, then Mark and Dad Weber rolled me

out under a shower of golden sunshine bathing the front lawn.

"Perfect day for car races," Mark said with a plaintive sigh.

"Gompa" Weber sniffed the country air appreciatively. "But I suppose there's *something* good about an afternoon like this," he said, giving his grandson a playful push. "Go get the family Ford, young feller—if it's not beneath your dignity."

I had nothing to say. Friskie wag-tailed over and settled in my shade. From the direction of the shed came an occasional childish shout as Jan and her groom (Liz) readied Hoss Joe for the afternoon's competition. Such disgusting happiness. In the fields cicadas made their strangely peaceful buzzing sounds—unmistakable chorus of summer and the country. I wondered if they enjoyed basking in the sun as much as I usually did.

Fran crossed my left leg over my right in the standard casual position. "Gotta go iron Jan's riding breeches," she said, and hurried back indoors.

Dad Weber sat down on the grass, pulled up a green blade and sucked on it. "You've been 'way down in the dumps lately," he said, little wrinkles of concern forming on his forehead. "Too much work, maybe, every afternoon and evening. 'Spect you could use a day off. Change of pace."

Clippety-clop, here came Jan up hill, leading Joe by his bridle, Fran and Liz following with armloads of tack. My heart skipped into high gear and all was forgotten in a hot rush of pride. The rhythmic hoofbeats crunched to a stop in the gravel drive. Sparkling a glossy tan, our Joe looked like a million bucks, but immense as he towered over little Jan. Dad rose and pushed my racer closer. Curious Joe leaned over to sniff my shoes as usual, his huge brown eyes shrewdly appraising this peculiar human whose soles were always so clean.

Jan wore crimson riding breeches, crimson shirt, black boots, and the usual pony tail. As she and her mother discussed supplies to be brought in the car, old farmer Weber made an all-round inspection of the horse. "I swear, Jan," he said, a ring of surprise in his voice, "you've got Joe looking fit as a colt."

Jan beamed proudly. I said, "Good luck, Puss." For the briefest second she looked skeptical. Then she marched over, planted a firm kiss on my lips, and after two running steps swung herself lightly

onto Joe's back. Anticipation welled within me as she rose up into the saddle. Away went the two pals galloping down the driveway toward town.

Half an hour later the family was encamped at the horse show. Knots of people wandered toward the grandstand. Muscular young cowboys sprinted their stallions across the park in the background. Close at hand screwball Liz vibrated with the excitement of the Barrel Race, while Mark and I shared a box of Cracker Jacks. Gompa? He was loyally sitting in the car listening to a baseball game.

Friends stopped to say hello, bright banners fluttered from the crowded grandstand, horses snorted and stamped and whinnied before us. I was glad to be a part of the excitement. Bouncy-toed Liz began yammering, "Kin I'va hambugger?" Fran donated the necessary quarter, then announced that Jan and Joe would be in the next event.

"Do they have a chance?" I was hopeful.

"Chance?—Jan says they're going to win," said Fran with a small laugh. "Guess we'll just have to wait and see."

The loudspeaker blared: "NEXT EVENT . . . A REAL ENTERTAINMENT ITEM, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN . . . THE EGG RACE."

So that's what it is, I thought to myself. So what *is* it?

Suddenly Dad Weber reappeared. "I've seen these races before," he said, stroking his chin. "They're fun to watch. Also a pretty good test of a smooth horse and a steady-handed rider. Look—this event's a popular one. More than twenty entries."

Just as the contestants galloped into and around the show ring, Fran nudged my arm and nodded toward Mark. The big brother who so often scorned Jan's devotion to horses had risen off his supine teen-age posterior and was standing all the way up on tiptoe. As rolling clouds of dust lifted from inside the show ring, he tried manfully to subdue proud feelings while striving for a clear look at his little sister's easy mastery of reins, stirrups, and charging horseflesh.

"There's the little squirt—hey!—she's number forty-nine again!" Mark feigned an off-hand tone of voice, but he was nearly shouting.

Good omen. Forty-nine—seven sevens. Jan had won her first

ribbon with that number; and she had come into the world on 7/7/47. I watched intently as the horses lined up and the judges handed each rider one raw egg and one spoon. The event was a riot and it went quickly along.

"ALL RIGHT, RIDERS. TROT YOUR HORSES. . . . SLOWLY NOW. . . . OOPS! THERE GOES THE FIRST ONE OVER EASY," the loudspeaker boomed, as laughter rang through the audience.

Each rider held his reins in one hand and balanced an egg on a spoon in the other. Around the ring they went, picking up speed, and one or two more eggs plopped into the dust. I felt a surge of pride to see how effortlessly our "little squirt" rode, how smoothly Joe's rippling muscles carried his mistress. Why, they were beautiful together! Jan's tiny white egg seemed to travel a perfectly horizontal line.

Long seconds passed and suspense began to mount as eggs fell and riders went out. Then Fran's fingers squeezed a hot flame through me and Liz screamed with fearful tension as four or five more eggs hit the ground—the thudding hoofbeats walking, trotting, cantering toward us, the dust rolling up behind.

"THERE GOES TWO MORE SUNNY SIDE UP, FOLKS. . . . ALL RIGHT, RIDERS, WALK YOUR HORSES. . . . NOW CANTER. . . . ONLY THREE CONTESTANTS LEFT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. . . . NUMBERS SEVENTEEN, ONE-OH-SIX AND . . . FORTY-NINE."

I could scarcely hear myself think for the PA system and Liz's shrill voice, but my heart pounded high in my throat. Suddenly 106 lost his egg and drifted to the sidelines. Only Jan and a stout young lad on a little black pony were left, galloping 'round and 'round, intently watching their jiggling eggs.

Abruptly as they pounded past, the crowd roared. Another blinding cloud of dust rose—then we could see the horses wheeling toward distant sidelines. Both eggs must have fallen, split-seconds apart. We'd have to wait for the judge's announcement.

Time stood still. I held my breath and tried to keep breathing. Fran bit her nails. Debonnaire Mark clawed at the fence. Liz, taut-legged on tiptoes, dropped the last of her "hambugger," conscious only of horses and riders and huddling judges. Out in the show

ring, all contestants regrouped to line up for awards presentation. Astride restless steeds the long row of riders appeared calm. Jan in her crimsons seemed quite at peace, swaying in the saddle. I wondered if her heart could be hammering as fast as mine.

"Wish they'd say something," Mark muttered darkly.

"Suspense getting you?" asked Gompa Weber with a snicker, standing up himself.

I forgot all about breathing as the loudspeaker boomed again. "LADIES AND GENTLEMEN . . . THE BLUE RIBBON IN THIS EVENT GOES TO NUMBER . . ."

Franny leaned so far forward she almost fell off her stool, then clutched my knee with her vise-like grip.

"NUMBER . . . FORTY-NINE! JAN KINGERY OF ROUTE ONE . . . ON 'JOE'."

Back at the Ranch Wagon, our little encampment broke out in a frenzy of joy. Jan and Joe had won only a minor event at a small town horse show. But right now in the eyes of her thrilled and foolish family, she had just won the World Series all by herself.

As Jannie rode forward to accept her ribbon, *and* a foot-high trophy, little Liz went into a Cherokee war dance at least two feet off the ground. I whistled shrilly through my teeth. Dad Weber, more dignified, was moist-eyed and wreathed in smiles. Fran gradually let go her death-grip and I gradually began breathing again.

Mark spoke up in his startling deep voice as his mother embraced him. "Ya know what? I'm proud of that dumb little sister of mine!"

Later the family rolled racer and writer back into the station wagon. On a battered foot locker stood the brass and walnut trophy Jan had won. I recalled her solemn prediction, "I'll surprise you"; and Liz's saying she'd practiced. If I could only take back my own sour words of reply. Jan, it seemed, was not so easily discouraged as . . .

"You look like a proud father," Fran stepped inside the car to pull down my up-hunching right shoulder-blade. Impulsively she leaned over and kissed me on the nose—then squarely on target with that cool, garden-fresh taste of raw carrots. "And you look happier than you have in days!" she added, her dazzling smile of red lips and white teeth doing all sorts of delicious things to my male instincts.

"Been thinking about all Jannie—Jan—has accomplished with a

lot of perseverance and old Joe," I said with effort. "He's her handicap and still her pride and joy."

A bright glow of pride filled my spirits. The little shepherd had done it again—done the most she could with what she had—practiced to perfect both her talents and those of Hoss Joe. I must have smiled, thinking of Charlie's words "first real accomplishment" and the way Jan kept beating me to it.

"You feel any better, Groucho?" Fran asked.

"Cured," I said, wondering why I felt so much better. Vicarious pride in Jan's accomplishment? Possibly. But as Mark and Liz and Gompa piled into the front seat, laughing and kidding one another, it began to dawn on me that ours was a full life. Not like the up-and-walking days—probably never again. But with the kids growing, doing things, these *could* be the really fruitful years.

Think of all we had! After all, the real business of life was enjoyment. To Mark, supreme enjoyment would be owning his own car; to Jan, just being with Joe; and to me, well—writing steadily, earning steadily, being busy again. But all work and no play—no more. Today's horse show had been a sheer lark—the perfect change from a dull, discouraging routine.

Right now life brimmed full with fun and pride for Fran and me—with an extra measure of challenge just for me—just as I was. For as I was I'd continue to be—probably for the rest of my precious time on God's green earth. No more but so. No more idle hoping for those good old muscles, but so much opportunity anyway; no more quitting when the going got rough, but so many new things to try. All in a matter of seconds, the vision of life in sum total spread bright and full and good before my eyes.

"There's Jan and Joe," piped Liz from the front seat.

"Cantering home," Fran added as our car drove out of the fair grounds. The blue silk ribbon fluttered proudly from Joe's bridle. Jan waved a blissful salute. "That little clown," I said, trying to keep two hot drops of pride from spilling down my cheeks. "I guess perseverance paid off in blue chips today. Ever see such happy freckles?"

We were turning north off Main Street when suddenly a tiny spot on my lower stomach began to itch. My shirt tickled lightly across a red-hot nerve with the motion of the car, making the itch

all the more intense. Damn! A lousy little itch could conquer me every time! Should I wait it out? Hope it would go away? We bounced over the railroad tracks, coasted past Moe's tobacco field, and it got no better.

This much I knew from experience: an itch would either go away or get worse. Okay. Go, itch.

Pain, pain,
Go away.
Come again
Some . . . stay away!

Oh, no. It was getting worse—*had* to be scratched. Cripes! I positively would not ask Fran to scratch my stomach and spoil our moment of happiness. Somehow I would transcend the damn itch rather than bother my wife as usual. That little bit I could *certainly* accomplish! Agonizing seconds passed. Daggers streaked across my torso while an itch-rent brain tried to generate conversation. Will power where are you? An anguished prayer didn't help. I'd *have* to ask her—yiii—or I'd spiral right out of my . . .

Suddenly the fiery pain eased. Something more important was happening. As we crossed the tracks at Burritt School a reckless, stinging little insect got on the inside of my good left thumb. You who bat bugs instinctively, purely on reflex, might not appreciate my feeling of gross helplessness; 999 times out of a thousand I'd get stung.

But this time—this time I stared at opportunity, squeezed, and knew again the hot, triumphant surge of accomplishment. I killed a mosquito.