

REPORT ON REPORTERS

War correspondents have many strange experiences: adventures, scoops, disappointments—and even love!

By **LEONARD LYONS**

Author of daily syndicated column, "The Lyons Den," which won him fame as America's foremost anecdotist

On the summer night when, after the fall of France, the British tried to sink the French fleet at Oran, a high official of the British Ministry of Information entertained two dinner guests at his home. They were Vincent Sheean and H. R. Knickerbocker, the war correspondents. The official revealed the tragic news, but refused to release the story for publication. The brilliant and usually persuasive Sheean pleaded, reasoned, argued, in vain. He then joined his host in drink. But even the consumption of a remarkable supply of vintage stock failed to induce relentment, and the stubborn host still refused to release the story. Sheean decided that it was all to no avail, and went home.

Knickerbocker, who hadn't touched a drink, then took up the cause and the glasses. And eventually the Pulitzer Prize winning correspondent obtained his host's approval of the story. Knick immediately dispatched his exclusive report of the events at Oran. This was the first world news-beat of the war, but it never materialized. For Knick hadn't yet joined Field Publications. He was still writing for Hearst's evening papers, which didn't publish the following afternoon because of the holiday—July 4.

DEPARTMENT OF VITAL STATISTICS

A world news-beat which did materialize was Charles Collingwood's report from North Africa, about the assassination of Darlan. Collingwood is one of the youngest correspondents in the field. He was only 23 when Ed Murrow, in London, decided to hire him for CBS. Murrow felt, however, that the home executives might deem Collingwood too young for such an important post. In the short biography of the new, Washington-born employe which Murrow sent to the home office, he therefore gave Collingwood's age as 27, instead of 23. This biography was published in the Washington, D. C., newspapers, in the same editions which reported the local celebration of the 25th wedding anniversary of Collingwood's parents.

Henry Cassidy, the Associated Press man in Moscow who got an exclusive story when he received a letter from Stalin stating his views on a second front, is an able, astute reporter who knows all the tricks of the trade. Once he and other correspondents, all carrying their own cameras, accompanied one of the world's most famous photographers on a tour of the Russian front. The two other reporters asked the famed photographer for advice on how to set their cameras. The advice was given and carefully obeyed. The wary Cassidy, who realized that a photographer prefers to get exclusive pictures, asked for no advice. He merely stood behind the photographer while the latter was setting a camera, watched the process carefully, and then did it the same way. Cassidy's photos, when developed, were clear ones. The two other reporters had blanks.

LOVE ROAMS THE WAR ZONE

In Moscow at this time was Cyrus L. Sulzberger of the *New York Times*, yearning for a lady who had escaped from Greece and was waiting for him in Ankara. Her name was Marina. They had met in Athens, before the Nazis came, and they fell in love. She refused to leave with him, because Greece still was fighting the invaders and she had work to do. They made their farewells, and Sulzberger went off to his next assignment, Ankara. A few days later the Nazis occupied Athens.

One night, while she listened to the short-

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wave, she heard her name, "Marina." The voice was Sulzberger's. He was broadcasting his dispatches by shortwave, to his home office. And in spelling out the difficult names of foreign places, he was saying "T for Tom," "H for Harry," and always "M for Marina."

Marina smuggled a message to him: "If you receive this, in your next broadcast say 'R for roses.'" Two days later she heard Sulzberger's "M for Marina . . . R for roses."

"If you want me to leave here and join you, say 'B for blossoms,'" was the next message she smuggled to him. Marina heard him saying it, and made her escape. But before Marina could get to Ankara, Sulzberger was off on a new assignment, to Moscow. They were reunited in Syria, where an army chaplain performed the wedding ceremony.

A SAGA OF SINGAPORE

Martin Agronsky, the NBC correspondent, was one of the last persons to leave Singapore. When the British warned all newspapermen to hasten their departure, he cabled New York: "Communications down. Suggest I outget unless you wish permanent loss my services." When he received no reply, he repeated his message. By now the Jap planes, in flights of 80, were bombing Singapore. Agronsky sent a third message to NBC. He sent it from a trench where he was watching the bombs drop around him. He finally rushed for a departing ack-ack ship. On the gangplank he at last was handed NBC's reply: "Stop worrying about eventualities."

In London during a blitz almost as tough was Bob Casey, the *Chicago Daily News-New York Post* correspondent. When the war first began, Casey went to Luxembourg and covered it from a vantagepoint there for awhile. He once had written a book about Luxembourg and was a favorite of the principality. One night Casey tried to phone his London



BOB CASEY reports for the *Chicago Daily News*. In 1936, when his publisher, Frank Knox, was nominated for the vice presidency, Casey frankly told him: "Boss, you ain't got a chance."

office, but couldn't get the call through. He tried his Paris bureau, but the operator could not connect him. "I suppose," Casey sarcastically told the operator, "I can get my home in Chicago sooner than I can get London or Paris." A short time later Casey's Luxembourg phone rang. He lifted the receiver and heard his wife's greeting from Chicago: "Hello, dearie."

Casey is a resourceful, colorful veteran. When the British admiralty was reluctant to give him sea-passage to Egypt, he sent a cable

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Jack Thompson, the MBS correspondent, returned to Manhattan from Africa with a full-grown beard. He couldn't shave it, although he wanted to. "I grew the beard in North Africa, because I couldn't get shaving equipment," Thompson explained. "Of course I'd like to shave it off now. But all the identification pictures on the documents I carry were made while I was in North Africa. And in all those pictures I have a beard."

Richard G. Massock, of the Associated Press Bureau in Rome, used to enjoy tormenting the Fascist guards during his internment in Italy. "All of you must correct your behavior,"



CECIL BROWN made a recording, while in Australia, to be played in acknowledgment of an Overseas Press Club prize. A paragraph criticizing censorship began: "We work 24 hours a day to get the news." Censors cut it down to "We work."

to his Chicago publisher, who had become Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox: "Dear Boss: If they run the rest of the war the way they run the Admiralty, you're backing the wrong horse." Before the cable was received in then-peacetime Washington, Casey had his passage to Egypt.

OF BROWN AND THAT SINKING FEELING

The last thing Cecil Brown thought of doing, when he slipped from the sinking battleship *Repulse* into the waters of the China sea, was to save a \$3 camera-filter he bought in Cairo. When he was pulled from the sea, Brown said: "Something snapped. There goes that filter."

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Richard G. Massock, of the Associated Press

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QUENTIN REYNOLDS will probably soon be as popular as pin-up girls with our navy—though for diametric reasons. In his new book, *The Curtain Rises*, he protests against our navy, unlike all others, getting no liquor.

Bureau in Rome, used to enjoy tormenting the Fascist guards during his internment in Italy. "All of you must correct your behavior," the chief guard told Massock and the rest of the interned correspondents. "You are conducting yourselves in an objectionable manner. You are too carefree. One of you keeps walking across the courtyard smoking his pipe in a swaggering, arrogant way."

"Objectionable . . . carefree . . . swaggering . . . arrogant," repeated pipe-smoker Massock. "As long as you're collecting adjectives, you may now add 'indignant.'"

Massock might well have added "stomach-sick," because a few days earlier he had swallowed an indigestible quantity of small pieces of paper. These pieces once were pages of letters entrusted to him by W. L. White, the newspaperman who later was to write *They Were Expendable*. White, on his way to Germany, had given these letters to Massock for safe-keeping until his return to Rome. But in the meantime Italy had declared war against America. Massock thereupon opened White's papers, and the first was a letter which he immediately tore into small pieces and swallowed. It was a letter of introduction which began: "Dear Winston."

RICH AND POOR ARE ALL AS ONE

John Gunther, author of *Inside Europe*, *Inside Asia*, and *Inside Latin America*, once, in Bombay, was the guest of Aga Khan, who offered him a mango. "They're out of season now, but I have one," said the host, one of the world's richest men. "I'm the only man in the world who has a mango out of season." And from a special refrigerator he brought a mango for the visiting reporter.

Two weeks later Gunther lunched with Gandhi at Juhu Beach. "What has been your most interesting experience in India?" Gandhi asked. Gunther told him of the mango out of season. "And the Aga Khan said he was the only man in the world who could provide one?" asked Gandhi, he of the simple cloth, the spinning-wheel and the goat. "Did he really say that?" He summoned a servant who, within 60 seconds, from Gandhi's special refrigerator, brought John Gunther a mango out of season.

Gunther arrived in Africa three days before the invasion of Sicily. His timing was not by chance, but the result of a careful, thor-

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CONVERSATION OFF ITALIAN COAST

In North Africa Gunther held reunion with two old friends, Quentin Reynolds, of *Collier's*, and Vincent Sheean who, after America's entry into the war, had joined the Air Force and now is a lieutenant colonel. Reynolds, a former sportswriter from Brooklyn, is one of the nation's most popular newsmen.

On the morning of the American invasion of Salerno, Reynolds and Sheean were assigned to the same warship. They peered at the Italian coast which was to be invaded within the hour. Sheean watched the dawn come up over the mainland and said: "There's Salerno. And over there is Paestum. Paestum has the finest ruins in all Europe. From the Temple of Neptune or the Basilica of Cardine Massime, you can see the valley overlooking the funny little road which runs to the right. On the road you can go to Naples by bus, in 72 minutes. And from the left . . ."

"Sheean, are you kidding me?" Reynolds interrupted. "Do you really know so much about this place?"

"I ought to," Vincent Sheean sighed. "My wife and I spent our honeymoon here."



VINCENT SHEEAN, now a Lieut. Colonel in the Air Force, earned the envy of all of his troops—not because of the adventurous life he has led, not because of successful books he has written, but because Betty Grable chose him as the One Man she'd like to blind date.



About the Author

Leonard Lyons' column appears in 56 papers, from the *N. Y. Post* to the *Eritrean Daily News*. Carl Sandburg named him "the only anecdotist of our time." In a game of "Truth or Consequences" at Moss Hart's, noted guests were asked if they'd prefer Lyon's difficult job or jail for six months. All chose jail.

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