

Children at the Crossroads

Ernest L. Reeker

The Christmas Story of Jimmy Blaine

Jimmy Blaine, only 16, "hooking" a ride on a train in a southern state about five years ago, was arrested and thrown into jail. A day or two later he was brought before the judge of the place, promptly convicted, branded a criminal, and sentenced to pay a fine, in default of which he was committed to jail.

There was no investigation of his reputation among his townsmen in Madison county, Nebraska. There was no communication with Madison county officials nor with any member of his family.

Jimmy telephoned a brother living in Kansas, explaining his plight, and begged his brother to send him \$53.00 with which to pay his fine and buy a ticket home. The brother air-

mailed a registered letter containing the money. The sheriff in that southern state received the letter the day after Christmas, but Jimmy never got it. Instead, the letter was sent to Jimmy's invalid mother. Across the face of the envelope was written, "Inspected, returned by request of sheriff, party gone."

A chain gang system existed in that state at that time, and Jimmy was shipped to a prison camp to serve a sentence at hard labor. The story of his treatment on the chain gang is indeed a pitiful one.

Investigation showed that although he was ill, Jimmy received no medical care. He could not eat the camp food. Brutal assaults at the hands of guards when Jimmy was so sick he could hardly stand contributed in a large measure to his untimely death

which occurred in the chain gang camp soon after he had been sent there. Today he rests in an unmarked, unknown grave somewhere in the South.

Was the case of Jimmy Blaine unique? No! Except for the tragic ending, all the circumstances are being repeated every day in this great country of ours. Many a hitchhiker you pass on the public highway is another "Jimmy Blaine," inexperienced, irresponsible, perhaps a little wayward, but in no sense criminal. The results of his adventures may be worse than death itself.

Young Jimmy should never have been imprisoned or sentenced to a chain gang. How many of you readers, young or old, fathers and grandfathers, have not stolen a ride? And yet for this slight offense, Jimmy was thrown into prison and in a few short weeks died a terrifying and agonizing death away from his relatives and friends.

The most condemning thing about it all is the neglect of many would-be courts of justice to provide means for learning the past records and

true characters of "Jimmy Blaine," and their failure to protect and help them.

Here is what happened in a somewhat similar case in Madison county five years ago:

1—There was an investigation by the court.

2—The court communicated with the officials of the boy's home community and his parents.

3—His character was ascertained.

4—He was ordered to make restitution for a small amount of property taken and was placed on probation and given a chance to earn the money, paying it off in installments.

5—He was assisted in getting a job and eventually to reach home.

The results of our efforts were disclosed in a letter received from him about twelve months ago, as follows:

"Dear Judge Reeker: I am still loafing around the country, but in a much safer manner. I completed my flying course last year, and will be a relief pilot for some six to twelve months. Thereafter I hope to become

a chief pilot, and I am looking forward to the time when you will make the trip from Chicago to New York City and return with me by air. Sincerely, Benjamin."

Our method proved to be the better, both for individual justice and for protecting the public.

Ernest L. Reeker

TO BUY UTILITIES

NORTH PLATTE, Dec. 15 (UP)—The city council last night authorized Guy C. Myers, New York promoter to try to purchase North Platte facilities of the Northwestern Public Service company.

If a reasonable price can be arranged the purchase will be made, otherwise the council will study steps toward instituting condemnation proceedings, it was stated. Myers was promised a reasonable commission if the sale is completed.

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PREDICT MUCH BUILDING

The building business schedule for 1940 maintains the more active interest in one- and two-family houses. Home Owners' Catalogs predicts that \$883,000,000 will be spent next year for materials, equipment and labor to be used in building one- and two-family houses throughout the 37 states east of the Rocky mountains. The publication's "educated guess" includes a favorable margin of nine per cent over the expected 1939 final figure of \$905,000,000. It is significant that new homes to be built-to-order for the occupancy of the owners will be more numerous next year.

Readers of the Plattsmouth Journal who are planning to build homes for their own occupancy during 1940 can secure personal copies of Home Owners' Catalogs without charge or any other obligation. The one-volume library of home building information is available to all families whose homes will be built in this area at costs of \$4,000 or more. It will be sent postpaid to those who qualify on application to the publishers, F. W. Dodge Corporation, Kansas City.

CLOSE AG MEETINGS

LINCOLN, Dec. 16 (UP)—Professor John Ise, University of Kansas economist, closed the fifth and last day's session of organized agriculture last night with an address urging closer organization of farmers in order to compete with increasingly organized labor and capital.

He spoke at the final general meeting of representatives of the principle farmers' organizations in the state on the agricultural college campus.

"Farmers are more and more in a market where they sell goods produced under severely competitive conditions. While they buy goods produced under conditions more or less monopolistic," Professor Ise said. He emphasized that the maturing of the nation's economy had stimulated organizations in every branch of business and industry but that relatively scattered and individualistic farmers are at a disadvantage in dealing with such organizations.

FILLING STATION IN JESSE JAMES HOUSE PLANNED

ST. JOSEPH, Mo. (UP)—The house in which Jesse James was shot to death soon may become part of a super-service gasoline station.

For many years the house, located on a hilltop within the city, has been a mecca for tourists. It also has been a subject of public controversy, many townspeople contending that it did the city more harm than good in that its advertising value was doubtful.

Recently, the home was purchased by a development company which intends to move it intact to a new location on a highway east of the city.

Then, they say, the curious can see the exact spot where Bob Ford killed the notorious outlaw, and at the same time get their gasoline tanks filled.

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FREDDY WINS ROUND

HOLLYWOOD, Dec. 16 (UP)—Freddy Bartholemew, who has spent almost as much time in court as in front of the movie cameras since coming to America, was a first-round winner today in a suit to end all suits.

The boy star was granted a temporary injunction enjoining his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Bartholemew and three lawyers from proceeding with pending law suits against him.

"These suits will remain in status quo until a hearing has been held on Freddy's suit which alleges that continued law suits are jeopardizing his film career. Freddy's parents asked \$1,000,000 damages, the payment of \$40,000 they claim is owed them, and \$7,800 for attorney fees.

JOURNAL PHOTO-FLASHES



NORCO, CALIF.—SANTA CLAUS RECEIVES BEAUTY TREATMENT—Old Santa Claus seems to be enjoying the beauty treatment he is receiving from lovely Jean O'Connell (right) and Marjorie Moore, (left) while he was taking a vacation before his annual Christmas rush.



MONTICELLO, GA.—COLD FEET... HOT NOSE!—Timerson, beautiful white and lemon setter, owned by Fred C. Jordan of Atlanta, on point in the middle of Cedar Creek. A covey of quail was shot into as they rose from the bank of the creek just ahead of Timerson.



"MERRY CHRISTMAS! MY LITTLE CHICKADEE"—might well be the Holiday Greeting telegram of W. C. Fields to all of his friends. One of the most prolific users of all kinds of telegrams, Fields pauses while making "My Little Chickadee," his newest production, to send his Holiday Greeting telegrams. It is the popular custom of stars in Hollywood, and people everywhere, to send greetings by giving one message to the telegraph company for delivery to a whole list of friends.



Dark-haired and dark-eyed are Rosa Linda and Lola (left), the two charming girls who compose the internationally famous piano duo with Phil Spitalny's all-girl "Hour of Charm" orchestra, heard every Sunday night on the radio program of the same name. Talented and versatile, the girls play all types of music, show however a definite liking for the classical.



HER FIRST CHRISTMAS TREE—Snapping the lights on and off is great fun, thinks this little fifteen months old miss.



SAN FRANCISCO—TOO MUCH SUNSHINE—The big polar bear at the Zoo shown recently as he searched for a little shade that he could use to advantage, to escape that California sunshine.



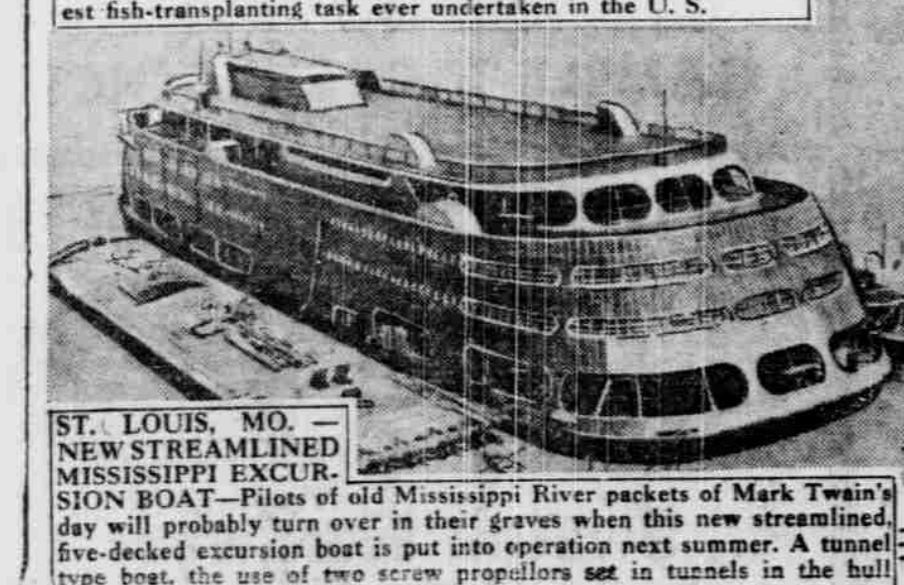
WASHINGTON—SALMON GIVEN "LIFT" TO THEIR SPAWNING GROUNDS—Unloading salmon from a truck into a stream which will carry them away from the turbulent waters around Grand Coulee Dam. Thousands of Columbia River salmon have been transported overland for miles in these specially-constructed air-conditioned trucks to insure successful completion of the largest fish-transplanting task ever undertaken in the U. S.



GETS TOP HONOR—Howard Hughes, millionaire oilman, pilot and movie producer, who has just been announced in Collier's as winner of the famous Collier Trophy, premier award in American aviation, in recognition of his flight around the world in 91 hours and 14 minutes. Trophy, established in 1911, is given annually for "greatest achievement in aviation in America." Also shown is plane in which flight was made.



NEW YORK CITY—(above)—Bathing Suit in Coral Shade—Fit-the-figure lines feature this new bathing suit of Celanese jersey in a coral shade. The hat, of the same material and emphasizing a combination snood and bandanna, goes with the suit.



ST. LOUIS, MO.—NEW STREAMLINED MISSISSIPPI EXCURSION BOAT—Pilots of old Mississippi River packets of Mark Twain's day will probably turn over in their graves when this new streamlined, five-decked excursion boat is put into operation next summer. A tunnel type boat, the use of two screw propellers set in tunnels in the hull eliminates the traditional side wheels.



NEW YORK CITY—Winners of the Metropolitan Opera Radio Audition of the Air in recent years, all sang in a joint appearance in the opera "Manon." Left to right: Maxine Stallman, winner in 1937; Annamary Dickey 1939, and Lucielle Browning 1936.

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