

► *This MERCURY MINIATURE presents  
another lusty Yankee Original—*

## MOLLY PITCHER: HARDBOILED HEROINE

BY FAIRFAX DOWNEY

HER war service record is decidedly brief. Bravery matching hers can be cited for pioneer women in Indian fights, female spies in the Civil War, and valiant nurses in other conflicts. Yet the woman called Molly Pitcher, by reason of her gallant deeds at the Battle of Monmouth in 1778, stands forth as the foremost American military heroine. The fact that her deeds are set in the glorious legendry of the American Revolution gives them heightened dramatic value.

Mary Ludwig Hays McCauley — the last two being married names — is how you will find her listed in the indices. Her parents emigrated from the Palatinate, Germany, in 1730, and Molly was born on her father's dairy farm near Trenton, N. J., in 1754. The family was real Pennsylvania "Dutch" and Molly spent most of her life in Penn's Woods. In her early 'teens she became a servant in the household of Dr. William Irvine, a prominent citizen of Carlisle, Pa.

Later artists and commentators pictured Molly as the conventional

heroine: slim, graceful, beautiful. Contemporaries are more realistic. They describe a strapping, lusty wench, short, thick-set, ruddy of complexion, and brusque in manner. Mistress Irvine did not long enjoy the comfort of her serving-maid. A young barber, John Caspar Hays, kept a shop in Carlisle, and Molly, at 16, up and married him.

But she returned into domestic service when her husband enlisted in the First Pennsylvania Regiment of Artillery in December 1775. The young wife must have watched the artillerymen drilling, since she later demonstrated familiarity with loading, laying, firing, and sponging-out a cannon. After a year Hays transferred to the infantry. His new outfit, the Seventh Pennsylvania Regiment of the Continental Line, was stationed near Trenton in the winter of '77-'78, and Molly again left her job and went to her parents' farm. From there she was able to join her husband and become one of the throng of women-about-camp, wedded wives and otherwise, who in the cosier conditions

of warfare in that epoch cooked, nursed the sick, sewed, and generally made the soldiery comfortable.

There is no record that General Washington objected. But in June, Sir Henry Clinton, holding Philadelphia for George III, was suddenly embarrassed by an excess of camp women. Having received orders to march to New York, he attempted to send the bulk of the women and baggage by sea. The women refused to obey. When Sir Henry moved out with a train of 1500 wagons, a large and riotous female contingent followed; they were determined to stick close to troops who, out of sight, might fall into the hands of New York hussies. When Sir Henry ordered them deprived of rations as a punishment, the girls gaily looted the countryside.

The Americans intercepted the slow-moving British near Freehold, Monmouth County, N. J., on June twenty-eighth, a torrid, sizzling day. The attack was led by General Charles Lee who, at his request, superseded Lafayette. The Americans, lean, hard, and ragged from Valley Forge, smashed in the rear of the enemy, soft from good living in Philadelphia and sweltering in their heavy, ornate uniforms. Then, for a reason he never convincingly

explained, Lee ordered a retreat (this day would bring him disgrace and dismissal from the army). On his order the Continentals faltered. British cannon ripped their ranks; tall grenadiers, Hessians, hard-riding dragoons turned on them savagely and drove them back. But regiments under Mad Anthony Wayne, raging and confused by a command they could not understand, gave way only stubbornly, contesting every foot.

Fiercer than the heat of battle, the blazing sun toppled exhausted soldiers as fast as bullets and cannon balls. Men with swollen tongues lay gasping and moaning for water. Many of them looked up to see a striped skirt come fluttering across the field. A flushed face bent over them, a strong hand lifted their heads. Blessed, cool spring water trickled down their parched throats from Molly's pitcher. Fighting began about eleven in the morning and continued well into the afternoon. All through those broiling hours, with flying lead whistling by her, Molly made trips from the spring which is today marked in her honor. Also she tended the wounded, and once, it is said, slung a helpless soldier over a powerful shoulder and carried him out of danger. . . . Molly Hays had won her nickname of Molly Pitcher,

but she had not yet clinched her place in history.

## II

Messages that the battle was being lost summoned Washington to the stricken field. He met and sternly reprimanded Lee in language which established a tradition that he swore "till the leaves shook on the trees." Then he rode forward, rallying fugitives. The hard-pressed American battle line, still retreating, was not yet routed. Cannon flamed until forced to limber up and retire to avoid capture by dragoons.

In the crew of one gun was John Caspar Hays, detailed back to the artillery to replace casualties—probably by his wife's employer, Colonel Irvine, commanding the Seventh Pennsylvania. Under converging British fire, Hays fell wounded. Since there were now not enough gunners and matrosses to serve the gun, it had been ordered withdrawn when Molly appeared.

Such ringing defiance is attributed to Molly as: "This cannon shall not be removed for want of someone to serve it," and "Lie there, my darling, while I revenge ye." More likely she shook a fist at the foe and in good Pennsylvania

Dutch screamed, "*Verdammt Engländer!*" or words to that effect. Whatever she said, she seized a rammer staff, worked the gun like a veteran, and kept it in action.

Washington galloped up in time to turn the tide. His cheering regiments repulsed a charge of the grenadiers. All along the line the redcoats fell back, but the Americans were too weary to follow. Under cover of night, the British embarked for New York. Yet they had been fought to a standstill and had sustained heavy casualties.

It is stated, though never entirely authenticated, that Washington complimented Molly's valor on the field of battle. Certainly the Army took her to its heart and affectionately dubbed her "Sergeant Molly" or "Major Molly." Hays recovered from his wound. Molly bore him a son who in after years was wont to declare that, while not quite certain of it, he believed he had been born in a tent on the battlefield of Monmouth—which would make Molly's exploits even more remarkable. We are under no compulsion to believe this.

When Hays died after the war, his widow married a comrade-in-arms of his, George McCauley. Molly found him worthless, got rid of him, and supported herself by working as a laundrywoman and

nursemaid. In 1822 the State of Pennsylvania relieved her situation somewhat by a grant of \$40 and an annual pension of the same amount. All her life she remained the old soldier. She smoked a pipe, chewed tobacco, and could swear like a trooper. For her son, her grandson, and other audiences she was fond of fighting the war over. Groups of girls would be told: "You should have been with me at the Battle of Monmouth and learned how to load a cannon." And once while watch-

ing militia drilling the veteran Molly remarked with an air of bored superiority: "This is nothing but a flea-bite to what I have seen." She died in 1832 at the age of 78.

Not until long after her death was Molly's fame adequately commemorated. Now a bas-relief on the Monmouth battle monument depicts her in action as a field artillery-maid. By her grave stand a flagstaff and a cannon, testifying how gallantly on occasion a woman mans a gun.



## THE OLD WAY

BY PAUL ENGLE

Now when public murder rules the state  
 With bayonet, and down the bloody street  
 Runs howling the old plague of human hate,  
 I wonder why the earth with inner heat  
 Does not like a bomb explode in burning air  
 Until in anger all her men are hurled  
 Broken beyond that momentary glare  
 To disappear forever from the world.

This will not happen. Earth in its old way  
 Will bear men walking on its foot worn rock.  
 Morning of hopeful light will bring the day  
 To women waking from their heavy bed.  
 By laughter and not looking at the clock  
 We dying will deride the humble dead.

# NOT TIME, BUT RHYTHM

## *A Story*

BY GEORGE W. WILLIS

HE STEPPED through the third door in the improvised bus, holding his gold-washed trumpet unsheathed in his hand, and let himself down gingerly to the unsympathetic leather cushion. He laid the horn in his lap and noted that Red and Johnny had got in beside him, and that Johnny had shut the door and reached through the window and locked it so that they wouldn't fall out. But he had ceased to wonder about Red and Johnny, or any of the others — there were eleven in the band — what they thought, or what they did, or what they wanted, or what they dreamed. He was vaguely aware that Don Robins had leaped in, and had given them a hasty nose-count to be sure that none of them had stopped to take another shot or followed some girl out into one of the few remaining cars around the great cinder block temple.

They, the band, had just finished playing *Moonglow* and *Sweet*

*Music* and the theme *Tea for Two* in a roadhouse on the outskirts of Wadena, Minnesota, and had got in the bus that had been made of a Chevrolet by ripping it in two and putting in two extra seats, doors, and a rack on top for the instruments.

He had selected the third seat because he was an old hand at bus riding, and there was less jolting there between the wheels. He sat on the left side, for he didn't want to be disturbed when Red made the usual plea for Joe to stop at an oil station, or was out of cigarettes, or anything to get the bus to stop for a minute.

Consciously he tried to relax his body. He took off his shoes, pulled down his tie, unbuttoned his shirt. Then he draped his coat on the hanger he had installed at the far corner of the window. Finally he reached down and loosened the sweat-soaked socks from his feet, and put that throbbing flesh of him out of the window. Slumping down on his shoulders, still holding