

Going Down!

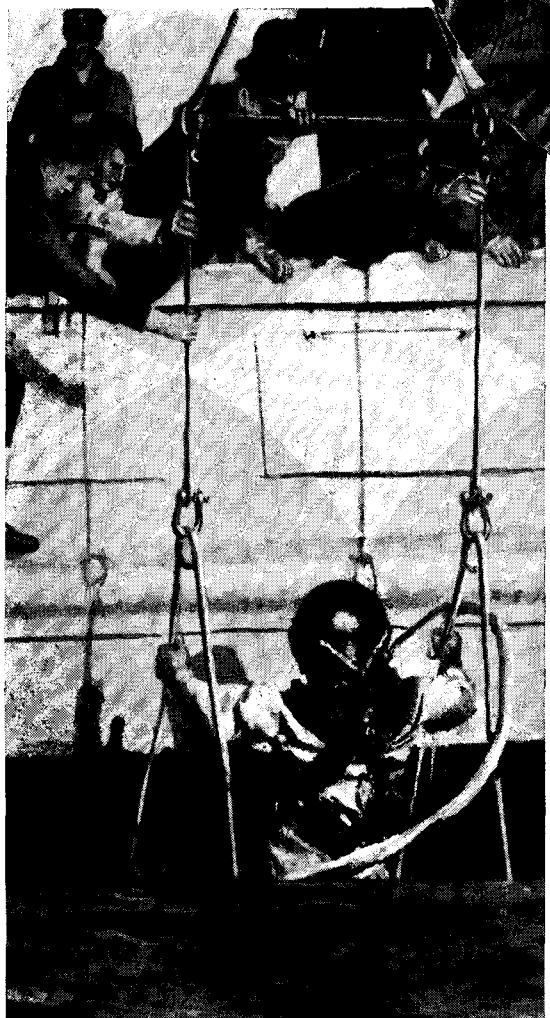
"I AM safer under the sea than my wife is trying to cross a busy street," says William Wickwire, the deep-sea diver who was summoned by the navy when the S-4 sank. This story of his exploits, however, proves his statement to be somewhat inaccurate.

By JOHN B. KENNEDY



Thomas Eadie, the veteran, first down, who hammered out signals in code to the men on the S-4

Wide World



Wide World

Wickwire finds the S-4 has broken loose

U. S. SUBMARINE S-51 lay clotted with barnacles in twenty fathoms of water off Block Island. Deep in sea slime was her grave. Thirty-four men locked in that iron egg had perished when the City of Rome, kicking the ocean from Savannah to Boston, had plowed dead across the semisubmerged craft and rived her amidships. Crane ships had failed to raise her.

For months foul wintry weather had prevented further attempts. Then twenty-eight of the most experienced deep-sea divers in the country assembled for the job. For weeks on end they made perilous descents to the broken hull.

For days the divers succeeded one another in squads of four lowered to both sides of the wreck. They tunneled vainly, striving to belt the hulk with rope and pontoon chains. Something always went wrong.

Each of the six compartments of the submarine was pierced by drills and tapped by hose. Divers, risking their lives at every move, dropped between the sharp jaws of the rip and tore their way with torches into the bowels of the boat. Water was driven out through sliced openings by ceaseless volleys of compressed air, and the openings were sealed. Finally, after days and nights of unremitting labor, the men at guide ropes and ear boxes, who lowered and raised the gnome-like toilers of the sea dripping and slipping on the decks, heard the signal that pontoon chains had been locked about the hull. Up came the S-51 with the ponderous heave, drop and heave again of a sea beast being dragged to captivity, only to drop again.

But finally her jagged maw bit through the surface of the water and bustling tugs prodded and straightened her. Pontoon chains were tightened, and she was hitched for a painfully slow haul to dry dock. On the Falcon's decks divers gathered to gaze at the steel charnel house they had brought to the light of day. It was not a pleasing sight. Ripped and jagged like a huge can, shaggy with barnacles and seaweed, the gray monster of war was a floating chamber of horrors.

Stubbornly she wallowed after the puffing tugboat. A harsh snap of metal and a cry of alarm from the Falcon's crew! The chain of the left rear pontoon had broken. The links grated at each jog of the hulk. The 80-ton iron air tank was loosening. In two minutes it would have slipped from its chain and bedeviled a job that seemed ended.

Curses came from the Falcon. Then the flight of a figure through air. Wickwire, the star deep-sea diver, had demonstrated that he needed neither guide ropes nor air lines to tackle the deep.

He vanished. Then his doused head emerged beside the floundering pontoon. He grappled with its ribs, clambered up its water-washed side, hauled in the slack of the broken chain and fastened it. Later the S-51 went grudgingly on her way to the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

Even in that grim moment cheers arose. This exploit earned for him the Navy Cross for exceptional heroism.

Is it any wonder that when the Submarine S-4 was sent to the bottom of Provincetown Harbor by the destroyer Paulding, the Navy Department sent an S O S over every available air wave for William S. Wickwire? It became known that six living men, trapped in the submarine's torpedo chamber, might be saved if rescue were prompt.

Diving Under False Pretenses

WICKWIRE, who at thirty-four is a recognized master of that trade by which men earn their livelihood where no other men can live, has been fighting the sea for more than ten years. Stockily built, with the rolling gait of the sailor born and bred, his eyes—fittingly ultramarine—are undimmed by stark adventure at the bottom of the world.

"I began diving as a prank," he told me in a dry, quick voice that takes in its stride all manner of technical terms. "I was a gunner's mate at the naval base in New London. I'd been in the navy for about seven years then."

"For a gunner's mate the second five years are the hardest. Then the monotony of the job gets a fellow to thinking that a gunner's mate's life is only interesting when there's something to do besides acting as day nurse to a gun."

"I was fascinated by the work of divers sent to rescue a man caught in an air chamber of a caisson of a bridge. Three divers went down, one after the other, and reported no sign of a man imprisoned anywhere. They were exhausted. The officer in charge was impatient. I was helping at the air lines while the divers worked below, and when the last man returned to the deck there was no other diver to send down."

"Rashly I told the officer that I was a diver. He was new to the station and there wasn't time to check up.

"Nervously, I stepped into lead shoes and a rubber suit with an iron helmet strapped to my neck—like being fettered in the electric chair or decorated with a hangman's noose.

"A diver doesn't just change from sea togs into glorified overalls, as many people think. He wears a cumbersome and complicated mechanism. Always quick to grasp practical mechanics, I had become acquainted with the operations of a diver's rig. I knew the speaking tube and air hose and life line, the strings on which the diver's very life dangles when he's submerged. I knew the location and purpose of the main valves in the helmet: the air control, which regulates pressure of feed for breathing; the exhalation control, which releases the dioxide gas expelled from the diver's lungs, and the motion-control valves operated by pressure of the chin on either side of the face plate, much like a steering wheel.

"Yet this knowledge did not prevent the sensation of being imprisoned when the 35-pound helmet was screwed into place. I took a long breath of fresh air, thinking it might be my last. The face plate—a barred glass panel—was shut, and I was alone.

"Fortunately the depth of this dive was little more than 40 feet. Anything less than 66 feet isn't considered dangerous work. Below that depth water pressure increases so that the total shove is like having hundreds of prods pushed against you all over. The diver must regulate the air in helmet and togs to prevent himself from being crushed or 'molded.' That last is an elegant term to describe the body being sucked up or forced up into the helmet, which has happened to more than one good diver who mismanaged his controls.

"I dropped and kept dropping, it seemed, for hours. Really it took three or four minutes to lower me an inch at a time.

"I sank waist-deep in mud. Signaling to lift, I was hoisted above the mud. In mid-water I circled with the torch and found the caisson, which I thought was buried face down in the mud. I was right, but I spent a long time confirming this hunch—so long that the signal to rise came as a shock. I signaled back that I hadn't really started. The retort was brusque—'Up you come'—and up I went.

"Where'd you get the idea you're a diver, Wickwire?" demanded the young officer in charge. 'This boat's been circling like a Ferris wheel to keep up with you.'

"I had hoped to be heroic. Instead they rushed me off deck with the surprising statement that I had been below only eleven (Continued on page 40)



H. Stein

W. S. Wickwire, star deep-sea diver, hero of two submarine wrecks

The Sooper Speaking

By
EDGAR
WALLACE



Illustrated
by
T. D.
SKIDMORE

Miss Pinder, a very
pretty girl, called at
my lodgings one
night

WHEN people get short on topics of conversation they say to me, "Sooper, you ought to write a book." And I always say, "I got no time." Anyway, superintendents of police don't write books. They know too much. And, besides, I can't spell. Never could. There was a woman down at Wembley who used to throw my uneducation in my face every time I pinched her husband. He *was* educated. Wrote five hands, all different. And there was a lady down in Kent who used to report me regular to the chief commissioner because I didn't say "my lady" to her—wife of a city sheriff or something. Anyway, she never asked me why I didn't write a book. She knew I was low.

In my young days police constables didn't have to do much more than read and write. The only etiquette they were supposed to know was never to give backchat to their superiors or argue with a man who threatened to punch 'em on the nose. But nowadays, when everybody's gone scientific and lots of policemen speak French, a chap like me would have no chance of promotion.

I got where I got on merit, as I was explaining to Mr. Frank Dewsbury one night. I often tell people this, otherwise they wouldn't know, but would be thinking I got my promotion because the chief was sorry for me.

Mr. Dewsbury is a man I respect very highly. Once upon a time I didn't respect him, because he was a stockbroker and wasn't rich. I used to think he drank or abused other good habits, but apparently there was nothing wrong with him. He had a house in Elsmere Gardens, and some nights when I had nothing better to do I used to go in and have a chat with him. That's how I discovered he didn't drink—I'd take four whiskies to his two. So you might say he was almost a teetotaler. He was a tall young man, nearly as tall as me, a good looker, a bit of a boxer, and he was an officer in the Territorials. He had a high respect for me—in fact, he was as intelligent a young man as you could wish to meet.

BUT he wasn't rich. So far as I could discover, there are quite a lot of people on the Stock Exchange who haven't got a million. He was one of them. His uncle was Mr. Elijah Larmer. I was sorry to hear this, because Larmer and I have never been boy friends. He is a man as old as me, but he hasn't worn as well.

Larmer owns most of West Kensington—land and estates to him are what back gardens are to me and you. He lives on the outskirts of my division in a big, dirty-looking house that is so surrounded by shrubs and trees that you can hardly see it from the roadway. Rich? That man could buy the Bank of England and still have enough money left to buy a lunch.

The first time I met him professionally was twelve years ago. He was the kind of man who liked to have a lot of ready money at his hand. I don't say that he distrusted banks, but in the estate agent's business, especially in his early days, most of the deals were done with ready money. He had a big strongroom built in his basement, and he often had as much currency as a hundred thousand pounds in that safe room of his. And naturally, being the mean old fellow, when he had that strongroom made he got the cheapest builder and the cheapest safe maker and used cut-price material.

Mean? He was so mean he used to count the pits in an orange. When they put the new heating into St. Asaph's Church he went twice a day to save his own gas.

As I say, I came into touch with him over this new strongroom of his. It was only a strongroom to a child with a wooden spade. When Harry Pinford went after it with a kit of tools it was the weakest strongroom you could imagine. They cut a hole through the strongest part of it one night and got away with eight thousand pounds.

"What are the police for?" he says to me (I was acting inspector at the

time) when I went to see the job. "Are they ornaments? I pay rates and taxes to be protected. Look at that strongroom! Burgled under the nose of the police!"

I pointed out that it was under his own nose too. I showed him the rotten lock on the kitchen door and the cheap fastenings on the pantry window and the burglar alarm that didn't go off because he'd been too mean to keep the batteries in order. He reported me for impertinence and threatened to have me broken. He got so that he used to think I was responsible. I took Harry about three weeks afterward, but he'd planted the money. Larmer was like a lunatic when he didn't get his eight thousand back. He had a new steel door fitted and new burglar alarms.

"My uncle," said Mr. Dewsbury, "is difficult."

He was being very difficult with young Dewsbury, who was his uncle's broker. Larmer did quite a lot of speculating on the Stock Exchange and made money. And he had quite a number of friends who also did their business through Frank Dewsbury.

Frank was doing well when he met a girl, Miss Margaret Pinder, the daughter

of a man who had once caught old Larmer over a law deal. Larmer didn't know anything about the engagement for a long time. When he did he sent for Frank.

"What's this dam' nonsense about the Pinder girl?" he said. "I'd sooner see you dead than married to the daughter of that old crook Joe Pinder."

"I'm very fond of her," said Frank. "In fact, I'd sooner be dead than not marry her. Be reasonable, Uncle Elijah—Betty is not responsible for her father's actions. Besides, he's dead."

"Naturally he's dead," snarled old Larmer, who had a working arrangement with Providence, "but his daughter's alive! Didn't Joe Pinder play the dirtiest trick on me? Wasn't he a crooked-minded twister? . . ." And so forth and so on.

I HAPPENED to drop in to dinner the night after. There was Frank pretending not to care, and there was Betty, a very pretty, straight-backed girl who wasn't crying over the business but was looking rather serious. There was a sort of aunt there too. She spoke at intervals, saying the things she'd like to do to Mr. Larmer. Most of 'em were strictly illegal.

"He's taking his business away from me, and I suppose his friends will do the same," said Frank. "He's also cutting me out of his will—"

"That doesn't mean a lot," said Betty. "He told you he was only leaving you a thousand pounds—all his money is going to mental hospitals."

"If I had my way with him," said the aunt, who was a God-fearing woman who wore a gold cross around her neck and a copper cross on her waist, "I'd boil him in oil. A man like that doesn't deserve to live."

She was Betty's aunt.

I've naturally got a very soft place for young people. They want all the sympathy that we old chaps can give 'em. They're so darned foolish. I never see a young man that I don't think of him as an oyster who's mislaid his shell. At the same time, I never thought I should lower myself to be sorry for a stockbroker. He was a good soldier—he was in the war at sixteen—and a good amateur theatrical player, and they tell me the way he handled a tennis racket would make Lenglen look like Cousin Jane from the country. But I doubt if he was a good stockbroker. I don't know what kind of brain you've got to have to be a good stockbroker, but he