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Catfish Wiggins Comes Through

That distinguished Hot Dog King, Henry K. Wiggins, demonstrates conclusively what luck, properly handled, will do

By Jerome Beatty

IT WAS six o'clock on a summer Sunday morning in Engledale, a Long Island suburb of New York City described as "A Community for Gentlefolks" by aloof gentlemen known as realtors, who never asked less than \$50,000 for anything they had for sale and never took less than \$35,000.

In an hour or so the chauffeurs would be out polishing the limousines—most of them entirely paid for—preparatory to taking the men to the golf club and the children to Sunday school.

All was peace along Engledale's tree-lined Boulevards, Avenues, Lanes, Roads. Nothing so common as a "street" was allowed to run through Engledale.

Here and there was a milkman, moving quietly, delivering Grade A milk. In half an hour the paper vendor, his wagon wheels carefully greased, would silently drop on doorsteps the right Sunday newspaper, the one that had no colored comics, and later on, when the men had extracted the financial and sporting sections, the remainder would be delivered to Madame, who breakfasted in bed.

Eagerly, breathlessly, she would turn the pages to see if the names of her dinner guests were used just as she had sent them in and to learn whether the picture of the new officers of the Engledale Women's Civic Club—the one in which Mrs. Handley Hartman Haverstraw proudly exposed both knees—was in the rotogravure section.

THE only sound to be heard was the hum of a yellow French roadster that stole rapidly down Knickerbocker Boulevard. At the wheel was Billy Nash, intercollegiate golf champion, his blue eyes sparkling, his even teeth bared by a broad grin. A dinner suit peeked out from under a light-weight camel's-hair coat. His hands were smeared with grease and mud and he was hoping that he could get home and into bed without waking up the folks.

Calm was Engledale, as far as the eye could see. Not even the policeman, making his rounds on rubber heels, suspected that in the \$76,450 brick mansion up Knickerbocker Boulevard—the place that Billy Nash was leaving behind with a smile—not even the policeman, astute as he was, even guessed that in the Wiggins house the gentlefolks were raising hell.

Henry K. Wiggins, the hot dog king, affectionately known, back in Topeka, as Catfish Wiggins, angrily wiggled his toes inside his slippers. He sat in his library in a huge leather chair. From the folds of his elaborately embroidered dressing gown protruded his fat legs in blue silk pajamas. He was a big man, with huge feet and hands.

In the days of his youth he always won the greased pig contest, for none could clutch a pig so firmly as Catfish Wiggins. He looked like a butcher who had made a lot of money. There was



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nothing curious about that. He was.

"I don't care what ya say, Mama," he was storming, "I don't want—"

"And another thing," Mrs. Wiggins added, "for Heaven's sake stop calling me Mama."

Much that Henry Wiggins was, Matilda Wiggins was not. She was a handsome woman of forty or so—ten years younger than her husband—educated in the ways of the world and in the ways of her husband. When she emerged on Knickerbocker Boulevard she was always well groomed, stylishly dressed and she looked as if she belonged there.

RIGHT now, alas, Mama didn't look like anything you would order for tea at the Ritz. Her face was marked with wrinkle plasters, her hair was tied up in a hood. She had thrown about her a black velvet negligee. She wasn't tall, but as she stood beside her husband she looked to him like the Statue of Liberty undergoing extensive repairs, viewed from the Bedloe's Island landing. There was a certain air about her that even in that make-up recalled, somehow, an image of an express locomotive coming around the bend.

He stopped, frozen by a thought. "Not the Nash?" he said slowly, horrified

"You seem to have made up your mind to ruin everything!"

Henry had made up his mind to no such thing. He had meant only to be a constructive critic.

"Listen, Mama—Mother!"

Mrs. Wiggins still scowled. He laboriously pulled himself to his feet and faced her, determined to have his say.

"Listen, *darling*," his sarcastic grimace added practically nothing to the *entente cordiale*. "You can't tell me that any daughter of mine has any business gettin' home at six o'clock in the mornin'. This is serious stuff."

DOROTHY WIGGINS, as pretty an eighteen-year-old trick as you'd ever hope to take, shoved back the folds of her ermine coat and dropped her hands hopelessly on the hips of her pink evening dress.

"I told you, Daddy," she said petulantly, "it wasn't our fault. The tire blew out."

"A tire, Dorothy, not *the* tire," Mrs. Wiggins corrected. She turned to her husband. "No matter what time she came home there was no earthly excuse for that vulgar exhibition at the front door—yelling at that boy and telling him you'd break his neck."

Henry Wiggins dismissed it with a wave of his hand. "Aw, that's nothin'. I been told that lotsa times when I was a kid. The important thing is—"

"He met Dorothy for the first time tonight and brought her home and you had to—"

"And he's one of the nicest boys in Engleale, too," Dorothy said.

"I don't care," said Henry Wiggins firmly, "if he's the Prince of Wales, he had it comin' to him."

"Well, Henry," said Mrs. Wiggins, ominously, "you did yourself a fine turn. Do you know who he is?"

"How should I know? Who is he, Lindbergh?"

"Billy Nash," Mrs. Wiggins declared, as if that settled everything.

"Billy Nash, who's he?" The name didn't mean anything to him. "Who's he that he's so great?" He stopped frozen by a thought. "Not *the* Nash?" he said slowly, horrified.

"You finally got it, did you?" Mrs. Wiggins said.

"Old man Nash's son?" he asked, hesitating. It couldn't be. It just couldn't.

"You'd better be getting to bed," Mrs. Wiggins advised, and with an air of a new heavyweight champion strutting the aisle to his dressing-room she went clattering up the stairs in her feather-trimmed mules.

DOROTHY put her arms around her father, who stood stunned. It was like circling an old oak tree. Her finger tips just touched in the back.

"We didn't mean to be so late, Daddy," she apologized. "It was just an accident."

"Old man Nash's son?" Henry Wiggins muttered in awe.

"He's such a nice boy," she mourned. "And you told him never to come back."

"Listen, Dot," he grinned, hopefully, "if he's any good he won't pay any attention to me. He'll be back. Many's the old squarehead that bawled me out like that." He chuckled, remembering. "One old guy in Topeka used a shotgun loaded with salt. But I went back—after a while. Kids know how to put it over on old mutts like your pop. He'll be back. Go on to bed now, honey."

He kissed her and as she hurried up stairs he dropped back into the big chair and scratched his bald spot until it hurt.

"Geminny crickets," he lamented. "Old man Nash's son!"

The words he had used were burning in his memory—"You get th' hell outa here or I'll break your damn' neck!"

He groaned. Why couldn't he at least have said, "Please?"

It just shows what comes of losing a buckeye!

Until a month or so before, Henry Wiggins had relished life, smacked his lips over it and said, "Um, it sure is good!" like the freckled-faced kid in the advertisements of Bon Ton Hot Dogs.

To his apartment in New York City came old friends to play poker until all hours in their shirt sleeves, with their suspenders down and the curtains up. At a golf course in New Jersey where most of the important men in the meat-packing industry played, his consistent 102 or 103 was good for at least \$5 a Sunday. Now and then he had to play bridge, but he didn't mind, much, though he had the poker player's antipathy for any gambling game in which you couldn't toss away your hand when the cards were running sour. But they usually came pretty sweet for Henry.

It was the standard existence specified for the family that moves to New York. Henry, in mind and body, still was Catfish Wiggins. A log in the river at Saint Joe is still the same log at New Orleans.

They had been in New York for nearly a year when the ground began to crumble under his feet. Stark tragedy stalked, the evil eye found its mark, grief knocked on the door, dire disaster branded him for her own.

Henry lost his buckeye.

His utter desolation was comparable only to that of a captain who has lost his ship on his first voyage as master, or a bride who has lost her wedding ring, or a Kansas housewife whose chocolate cake has fallen on the day she is to entertain the Methodist Mothers' Club, or an Engleale matron who finds she has not been invited to Mrs. W. B. Nash's tea at the Engleale Country Club.

It was no slouch of a buckeye. It was about the size of a marble and had a swastika carved on it. Henry had carried it for twenty-five years. Eddie Schwartz, a delivery boy in Henry's butcher shop back in Topeka, gave it to him at a time when things were not going so good for Henry—and within two hours the governor's wife came in and opened an account. Luck followed luck. The next day Henry found that he had \$100 more in the bank than his check stub showed.

The potency of the charm thus was indisputable. It took him to Kansas City as division sales manager of a packing company. It carried him to St. Louis into a \$26,000-a-year job. By this time it had proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that it was an abracadabra with a kick like homemade gin, so in spite of his wife's angry protests Henry sent Eddie Schwartz a check for \$300

as a Christmas present. From St. Louis it hocus-pocused him to New York as president of the Bon Ton Meat Products Corporation. And now it was gone.

AS ANY sane person could guess, along with the buckeye went Henry Wiggins' luck. The market broke and his stocks went down. The experts said it was all because of the money shortage, but Henry knew better and looked high and low for the buckeye. Five of the Bon Ton's smaller competitors formed a combination to fight the Hot Dog King. He developed a slice and his putting went bad. He had labor trouble in his plant. Then his private secretary resigned to be married. And just before the lease on his apartment expired he found that, under pressure of his wife and daughter, he had bought a house in Engleale, Long Island, that he was a member of the Engleale Country Club and committed to play golf in a foursome of men who shot around 95 and wouldn't give him any strokes.

Barney Thompson and his wife were

responsible for the Engleale move. The Wigginses had known the Thompsons in St. Louis and Barney and his wife were their guides, counselors, friends, and stop-look-and-listen signs in Engleale.

Barney had positively guaranteed that if the Wigginses moved to Engleale, Henry would meet W. B. Nash.

Two Sundays after the unfortunate incident of Henry's little slip of the tongue, the opportunity arose. It was a hot summer day and the lure of the beach clubs pared down many a foursome. Henry and Barney were set to play a twosome and when they approached the first tee they found W. B. Nash petulantly telling his troubles to the starter.

Mr. Nash was a gray-haired little man who wore long white flannel trousers for golf, because his legs were thin. He was constantly irritated and in a perpetual state of feeling proud because he had his temper in hand.

He boasted of two things—his democracy and his self-control—as a cow-



With a cry like that of a marooned man who has spied a sail, Henry Wiggins dived into the



Illustrated by
James Montgomery
Flagg

grass and came up with a small object clutched in his hand. "My buckeye!" he yelled. "Lady Luck's back home again!"

ard boasts of his courage and as a penniless actor boasts of his prosperity. They were the two qualities he admired most in men and he tried to add them to his stature as girls try to acquire dimples by sticking fingers into their cheeks.

"MAYBE you'd like to join us, if you haven't a game, Mr. Nash," Barney offered in a loud voice.

"Oh, really?" said Mr. Nash softly. "My friends aren't playing today. You don't mind?"

"Meet Mr. Wiggins, President of the Bon Ton Meat Products Corporation, Mr. Nash," said Barney. "Mr. Nash, President of the Lightning Oil Company."

"Oh, how do you do, Mr. Higgins," he murmured. "That's really bully of you. You don't mind a threesome?"

"Wiggins is the name," Henry said genially, as he shook the hand of the man who directed the destinies of America's greatest chain of gasoline stations. "Mighty pleased to meetcha, Mr. Nash."

I've met your boy. He's a fine boy."

Mr. Nash smiled blankly. "Shall we start, Mr. Higgins?" he suggested and turned to take a driver from his bag.

"Louder," Barney muttered to Henry. "He's deaf."

"Gosh almighty!" Henry exclaimed as Mr. Nash went over to tee up, taking it for granted that he should shoot first. "No wonder his vice presidents told me he never saw anybody and had to have everything in writin'."

How could he ever sell a deaf man the plan to build a yellow and white polka dot Bon Ton hot dog stand alongside every yellow and white polka dot Lightning gas station from Maine to California?

Mr. Nash preserved his self-control admirably through a ten, four nines and a couple of eights, but after he had put four balls into the lake on the eighth he threw his driver after the balls.

"Good boy!" Henry yelled. "'At's the stuff! I don't blame ya a bit."

"Really?" Mr. Nash asked, rather grateful for the display of sympathy.

"You bet! I'd a taken my whole bag and jumped in and drowned myself."

That was different. Mr. Nash bristled. "You think I should give up golf?" he said coldly.

Henry tried ineffectually to explain. After they had played several holes in silence, they sat on the twelfth tee, waiting for a foursome to get out of range. Mr. Nash was calmer and decided he must be democratic.

"Did you see Heart of Hearts at the Engledale Theater last night?" he asked.

"I don't like the movies," Henry answered flatly. His mind was on the two-foot putt he had missed on the eleventh green which had put him eight dollars down to Barney. If Henry hadn't lost the buckeye it would have been different.

"Beg pardon, Mr. Higgins?" said Mr. Nash.

Henry Wiggins leaned over and yelled sourly in Mr. Nash's ear, "I hate 'em!" and returned to his dark thoughts.

Mr. Nash was surprised and hurt.

"But Edward Stokes is the star in Heart of Hearts," he explained.

"Never saw him," Henry grunted. And in a louder voice he added: "I never saw a good show yet at that Engledale Theater. It's a bum dump."

A pained look spread over Mr. Nash's countenance.

Barney, sitting beside Henry, jabbed him with an elbow.

"Shut up, you darn fool," Barney whispered out of the side of his mouth, "he's a movie nut. He owns that theater."

Mr. Nash glared at Barney. "Yes," Mr. Nash confirmed, "I own the theater." At times deaf persons hear whispers as clearly as shouts.

Henry finished out the eighteen holes in great mental pain. When they reached the clubhouse Mr. Nash said no, thanks, he wouldn't have a drink and that he was going right home.

Henry wrung his hand.

"Glad to have met ya, Mr. Nash," he beamed, "mighty glad."

Mr. Nash nodded.

"We must get together often," Henry suggested.

"Why must we?" Mr. Nash inquired, and receiving no adequate answer he departed.

"Daddy, do you know some terrible man named Higgins over at the golf club?" Dorothy asked her father at dinner a few days later.

Henry Wiggins gave a start.

"No. Why?"

"I just wondered," she asked.

"Umm," said Henry, and asked for some more fried catfish. It was his favorite delicacy and was shipped to him once a week from Topeka.

Presently he asked, "See that Nash boy lately?"

Dorothy looked up and smiled. "Once or twice," she admitted.

"Didn't I tell ya he'd come back?" he told her. He turned to Mrs. Wiggins. "Didn't I tell ya?"

"Shall we reopen that discussion again?" she inquired. "You'd better hurry or you'll be late to the Fortnightly Club."

THE Fortnightly Club was an important Engledale institution. Its membership list included nearly every man in Engledale and one of its most important members was W. B. Nash, who tried to be an enthusiastic counselor because he believed that rich and important men should not remain aloof from the ordinary folk.

The club met regularly at the Community Center. For this particular meeting Henry had contributed 500 extra-special Bon Ton hot dogs and when he arrived at the Community Center auditorium he was gratified to find that he had been given credit on the printed program.

When the eating began, Henry edged over toward W. B. Nash, who had a circle of admiring \$15,000-a-year men about him.

As a waitress came with a tray of Bon Ton hot dogs in toasted rolls, Henry deftly took one, touched it with mustard and handed it to Mr. Nash.

"Try that, Mr. Nash," he said smiling, "that's the greatest hot dog made. Bon Ton."

Mr. Nash looked up pleasantly, but scowled a bit when he recognized Henry. He accepted the roll and nodded.

He took a bite. "Umm, hmm, eggcellent." He took another bite.

"Mr. Wiggins makes those hot dogs," Barney Thompson yelled, trying to be helpful.

"Umm. Good. Your name is Wiggins, not Higgins?"

"Yeah," laughed Henry.

"I like hot dogs," said Mr. Nash, and accepted (*Continued on page 50*)

Please Pass the

Senator

*who believes a prom-
kept, speaks his mind
exclusively*

There was no misunderstanding the issue with reference to agriculture in the last campaign. Both parties declared that agriculture was fighting for its life against economic inequality and both stood pledged to remedy the injustice. A special session was promised for that purpose. The question is: Shall this pledge be kept?

What the farmer must have, in order that he may be placed upon an economic equality with other industries, is not a loan but a price for his products, a price which will enable him to pay the prices he must pay for the things he buys in a protected market. He is compelled under present circumstances to sell in the open market (if he is producing a commodity of which we have a surplus) and he is denied the right by his government to buy in the open market. If this were not true the farmer might by his own efforts attain economic equality. So long, therefore, as the government denies him the right through its policy of protection to buy in the open market, it should stand ready to adopt any practicable scheme which will relieve him of this inequality. Hamilton saw this injustice and proposed to remedy it by a bounty. Hamilton knew much about economics but very little about economic appetites after one hundred years of protection.

The farmer who produces products of which



The Democrats are in a good position to profit by the disagreement among the Republicans

WATCHING Washington now is a great deal like watching Europe in the days before the Great War. Algeciras came and passed. The German Kaiser rattled his saber on more than one occasion. A great catastrophe seemed to be at hand and was more than once avoided. Finally came the not very important killing of an Austrian archduke at Sarajevo and all Europe was engaged in battle.

Like Europe before 1914, the Republican party is divided, and has been for a decade, into two hostile camps. Nineteen twenty-four came, with the La Follette defection, and passed without casualties. Governor Smith sought the Western farmer vote in 1928, and in vain. Senator Borah rattles his saber. Is this the Republican Great War? Who knows?

Well, at any rate, what is happening in Washington has all the unexpectedness of Sarajevo. President Hoover was elected only a few months ago, in more decisive fashion than anyone has been elected President since the days immediately after the Civil War, for the West, after many manifestations of anger against the Republican East, stayed peacefully Republican. But the honeymoon of the new President is hardly over, and hostility between the Eastern and Western Republicans is bitterer than ever. The political at-

mosphere of Washington is more electric than it has been since the year that preceded the 1912 split in the Republican party that resulted in the defeat of President Taft.

The reason for the present accentuation of party differences is that the Eastern and Western Republicans have at last come to grips over the real issue that divides them, the tariff; and the tariff is the life of the Republican party. At no time in recent years, probably at no time in the past, has the conflict between East and West been made to turn, as it does now, wholly upon the tariff. The West has been saying to the East, "You may have all the protection you want, but give us a means of dumping our surplus crops abroad and selling in the American market at prices comparable to those you enjoy behind the screen of protection."

An Act of War

The long struggle of the agrarian element for a kind of farm relief which would enable it to sell its products at prices well above the prevailing world prices ended a short time ago in the passage by Congress and the signing by President Hoover of a farm relief law which does not profess to deal with farm surpluses, which will perhaps reduce the middleman's share in the price of farm products but leaves that price,

where a surplus exists, to be fixed in the world market.

That is the answer to the plea of the West for a share in the gravy that the East has.

So the farmer, being denied the relief which he thought consistent with high protective duties for the Eastern manufacturer, has begun to attack those duties. This is an act of war. It ought to have been covered by the Kellogg Anti-War Pact. Therefore, as I said before, the situation calls to mind Sarajevo. But I am bound to say that threatening moments in the history of the balance of power between East and West in the Republican party have been safely passed, and maybe this one will be. Maybe Sarajevo is off beyond 1932, which is as far as anyone needs to look ahead in politics.

Let us regard the history of this tariff revision. Late in the national campaign last fall, Governor Smith having declared for the Haugen-McNary bill, Senator Norris of Nebraska, supposed to be a great power among the farmers, bolted the Republican party and took the stump for Governor Smith, who by that time was making triumphal progress through the cities of the East.

It was a scary moment. Panics come easily in political campaigns. It might well be that the Republican Great War was at hand. Candidate Hoover, ad-

vised by Senator Borah, but probably needing little urging, announced that if elected he would call a special session of Congress to pass a farm relief bill and, further to aid agriculture—and certain more or less unprosperous industries—to revise the tariff. When he did call the special session he asked for a limited revision of the tariff, one confined to agriculture and to such industries as had so suffered from insurmountable foreign competition under the existing law as to cause unemployment.

Industry Takes a Hand

The House has passed a tariff revision interpreting Mr. Hoover's words according to its own light and a flood of illumination that a large lobby appearing for Eastern industry was able to throw on them. There is a semi-official hint that President Hoover thinks the House bill is bad and that he will veto the final bill if it resembles the House bill.

At this writing it is not certain what the Senate will do, but there is not much likelihood that it will pass a bill much more acceptable to Mr. Hoover than the House bill is. Even if it did, the necessary compromises in conference between the two houses would result in a bill not very different from the House bill, at least in principle.