

PHOTOGRAPH BY IFOR THOMAS
COLLIER'S STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

By J. D. Ratcliff

The Rats Said Yes

For twenty-five years Robert Williams has been taking tiny bits of brain apart and trying to reassemble them. A few months ago he succeeded—and millions of people in the Orient now can be cured of beriberi. Here's how his discovery may affect you

IN TONDO—the slum district of Manila—a young American scientist held a sick baby on his lap. Its face was blue enough to make one think it had been poisoned with cyanide and its mouth emitted spasmic gasps—voiceless crying. Its larynx was paralyzed. Neck veins throbbed and the suckling infant's heart fluttered wildly.

A crazed, helpless mother, crouching on the bamboo floor, looked on with wild-animal eyes. She knew what to expect: her baby would be dead within forty-eight hours. She, like nearly every other woman in Tondo, had seen that happen scores of times when women suffering from the sore-leg disease—beriberi—insisted on having children. The medicine the white doctors brought didn't help.

What the young man did next wasn't cricket. A chemist, not an M. D., he wasn't supposed to give anyone medicine. But he took a chance. Down the gullet of the nearly dead baby he forced a few drops of brown syrup he had made.

With dramatic suddenness disease symptoms began to clear. Color came back into the baby's cheeks and that awful throbbing of the neck veins stopped. Its heart settled into an even, rhythmic beat and the voiceless crying ceased. His syrup appeared to be a medicine that you could administer, then sit back and see it work. Within three hours the baby fell asleep.

When the young chemist got back to the Scientific Bureau that night he was something of a hero. For the first time in history the new dietary substance he had purified had cleared up a case of infantile beriberi.

The happenings of that afternoon launched Robert R. Williams on a research project that kept him busy for twenty-five years; a project that is just now

in process of completion. It is one of the most stirring tales that have ever come out of a laboratory.

Possibly the importance of this to anyone living in Kansas City, Boston or San Francisco may seem remote. Quite rightly it may be said that not more than one American doctor in a thousand has ever seen a case of Oriental beriberi. But they've seen Occidental beriberi. Possibly they diagnosed it as neuritis, or tossed it into that vague catch-all, heart trouble. But they've seen it and its cure must invariably go back to that brown syrup with which Williams dosed the Filipino baby.

Adventures in Science

After he graduated at the University of Chicago in 1908 Williams, a slender, blue-eyed youngster with adventure churning in his blood, went out to the Philippines—health's poorhouse. For a few months he taught school on Negros Island, then he moved over to Manila to a job in the Scientific Bureau.

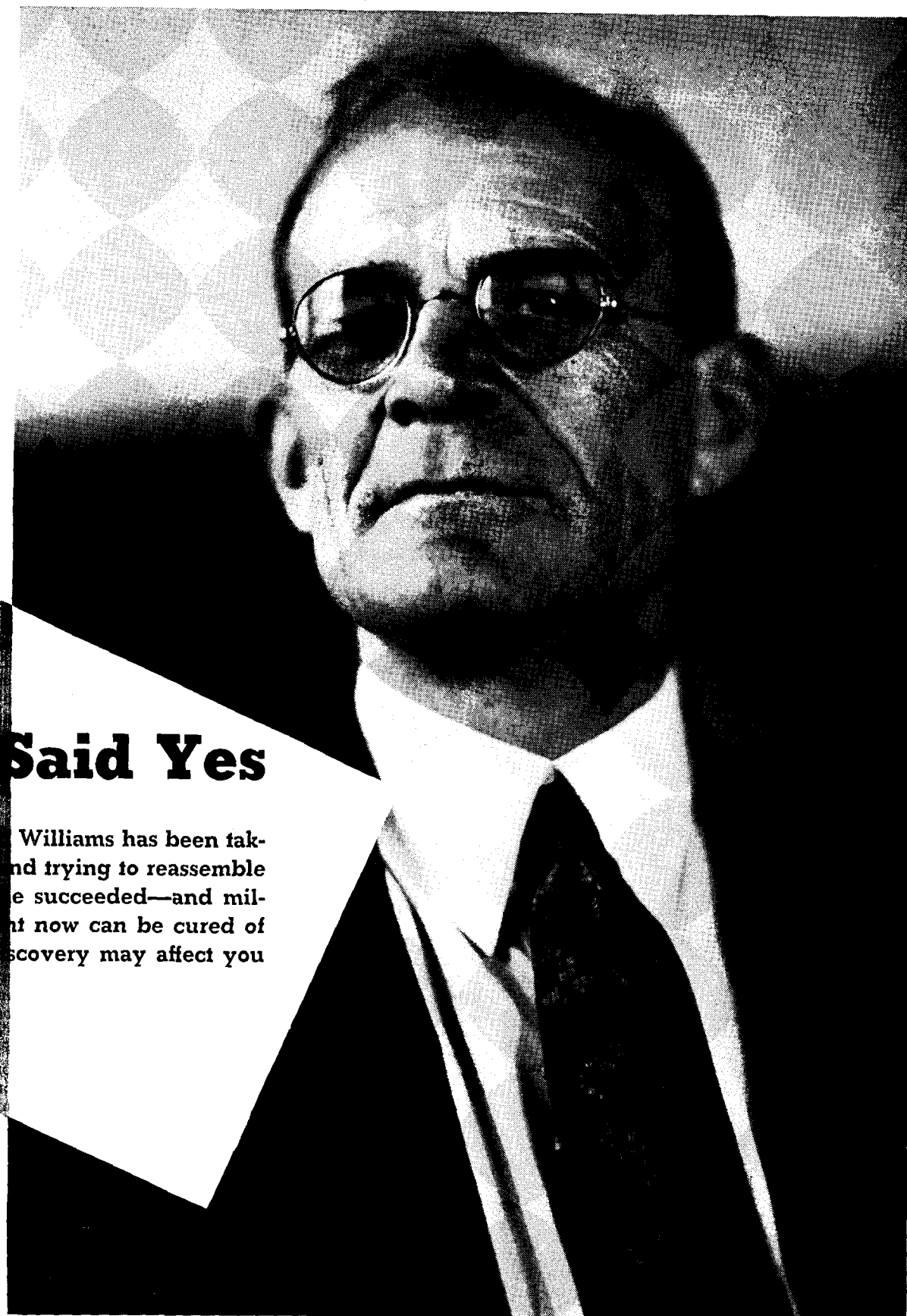
Natives regarded the Bureau, housed in a spotlessly clean white building, with considerable mis-

trust. It was constantly issuing troublesome orders. Its men would seal up wells that had supplied good enough water for generations. And its agents made people wash their hands with "medicina" before they pawed over fruits in the public markets.

As a side line to its fight against bubonic plague, amoebic dysentery and cholera, the Bureau had to make geologic and mine surveys. It analyzed soils and checked scales of Manila merchants just to make sure they didn't mean one pound when they said two pounds. There were other duties—duties too numerous to list.

Used to variety after a few months of this work, Williams wasn't even mildly surprised one day when a young Army captain—Edward Bright Vedder—popped in and started pulling a newspaper wrapping off a quart bottle. Vedder, a doctor on the Army's board of tropical medicine, spilled a little of the bottled stuff on the table. It was, he said, rice bran. Something hidden in that bran—the Lord alone knew what—would prevent and cure beriberi.

In case Williams wasn't familiar with the disease, he could get an idea of its (Continued on page 68)



Robert R. Williams, whose discovery of vitamin B1 offers hope to millions of beriberi sufferers

World Series Hero

By Quentin Reynolds

The unforgettable story of Buck Dolan and Buck Dolan's wife, a couple of big-leaguers who played the game into extra innings, and then some

THE girl reporter was very young and it was obvious that she didn't know very much about baseball. Oh, she knew about Buck Dolan—everyone in New York knew about Buck Dolan. The boss had said to her, "Go and see Anne Dolan. Get a human-interest story out of her. Ask her what it feels like to be the wife of the great hero."

Now the girl reporter was in the apartment near the Polo Grounds where the Dolans lived. She was a bit puzzled. Anne Dolan was sweet and she answered questions readily enough, but she seemed so placid! She seemed to be waiting for something—Buck, the girl reporter guessed.

She should have been very happy today. She should have been wildly excited, the girl reporter thought. Instead she just sat there, knitting. Once she arose and went into the kitchen.

"Buck likes steaks," she said, smiling. "He says that Rogers Hornsby once told him, 'There are base hits in steaks.'"

When she came back from the kitchen the girl reporter said, "I want to know everything about you and Buck. You see, you are big news today."

"I?" Anne Dolan's eyes smiled. "I'm only Buck's wife."

"Oh, but you've helped him so much. He has said that in interviews. I want the whole story of you and Buck. How did he get his nickname 'Buck' for instance? Did he play ball when he was a youngster? Then there is the story of the past four years. No one knows anything about that at all." The girl reporter smiled engagingly. "It must be wonderful to be married to the world's greatest ballplayer."

Anne Dolan looked up and a shadow flitted across her gray eyes. "Must it?" she said.

The girl reporter was puzzled. She sensed that there was a story behind that shadow in Anne Dolan's eyes. And she was right because Anne Dolan said suddenly, "I'll tell you the story. I'll tell you most of it, the important part. You know Buck and I both came from Waterloo, Kansas. You want to know how he got the name of Buck?"

Anne's eyes were soft now as they looked back through the years. She wasn't Anne Dolan then; she was Anne Goodrich and she wore a white starched dress and a blue ribbon in her hair. . . .

"YOUR ma has been looking for you, James." The girl looked pleased in her white starched dress with her straw-colored hair tied up with a blue ribbon. She swung on the gate in front of the frame house with the big porch and she added happily, "You're going to catch it, all right. You're late for dinner. And, James, look at your clothes!"

"Don't call me James." James Dolan was eight going on nine and for some obscure reason of which he himself was

not even conscious he did not like to be called James.

"All right, smarty," the girl called after him as he walked up the steps. "Just wait, smarty. Wait till your ma sees your clothes and how dirty you are."

James walked into the house and the inner glow which had filled him during the past hour faded a little. His mother with arms akimbo stood looking at him sternly.

"Where's Pop?" he said hurriedly. "Mom, I gotta see Pop. I got something important to tell him."

"Look at your trousers." Her frown was ominous. "Look at your hands. And the dirt on your shirt. James, what have you been doing?"

"I want Pop. I have to tell him something, Mom." On the boy's face there was an expression that puzzled Mrs. Dolan. Men had always puzzled Mrs. Dolan. Now take her husband Jim, for instance. A good provider he was, indeed, except he did spend an awful lot of his time at that silly ball park cheering for the Waterloo Blues. He said that often he picked up a fare or two at the ball park. She sniffed. A likely excuse. Still, he did all right. Once it was with a horse and a carriage. Now he had an automobile and it did seem like he was able to carry twice as many people.

YES, men were strange creatures. There was this boy of hers now. There was some relation between him and his father that she couldn't understand. Why, on the hottest day in summer the lad would beg his father to let him help wash the car, but let her try to get him to help with the dishes!

"Where's Pop? Honest, Mom, it's important. I got to tell him."

"What's going on here?" James Dolan, Sr., ruddy-faced from the sun of fifty Kansas summers, tall, clean-shaven, with lines made for laughter at the corners of his eyes, walked in. "Is that pie I smell, Ma?" he asked mildly.

"More likely it's your son," she sniffed. "Look at him."

His son looked at him proudly, eager to impart his secret.

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It was a tiny object. Buck's eyes followed it through the smoke; he took a step toward the right and caught it casually, easily. It was a small gold locket

ILLUSTRATED BY
HARRY MORSE MEYERS

