

My Life is a Dull Thing

By Donald Hough

ILLUSTRATED BY VERNON GRANT



The most remarkable tale of woe in the annals of the gasoline age. Moral: When you lead with your heart, prepare for disaster

AT SEVENTEEN, with eighteen just around the corner, my life so far has been lived under handicaps not shared by the average man.

I have discussed this with Dad. He thinks I am right. He says it is probably because I am different from all other people on the face of the earth.

The worth-while things that happen to other people do not happen to me. What happens to me is always the worst thing possible under the circumstances. I don't know whether it is because I am different, or my environment, or just accident.

When I bought my car, I thought it would be the beginning of a new era in my existence. I was disappointed. It did a lot to lighten my main burden, monotony and disgust with life, while it lasted, but it did not last. My car, I mean. My car is now in the ocean.

Another thing, I am engaged to marry

Geraldine Lott. Yet I do not really love Geraldine, and, in fact, the mention of love leaves me with a tender memory which I will explain later.

The night after I got my new car I took Geraldine out for a ride, to try it out. I stopped in at the filling station where Red Bastion works—he was on night shift—and purchased a gallon of gas and a pint of oil and had Red put some air into my left front tire, which was leaking. Red said the air would not last long. He was right. The tire was flat again by the time I got Geraldine home. I was not engaged to Geraldine at the time. That came later. I had known Geraldine for a great many years, and although she could not be called a No. 1 summer date, with all the people coming down to the beach from Los Angeles, movie stars and all, she was all right to try out the car and the tires.

Geraldine and I finished high school last spring, and I got her graduated practically by main strength. She was uncertain about what was going on, when it came to studies, since she was not suited to the academic life, being too lightheaded and a little too plump, and preferring to sit on the beach and listen to the phonograph. Her nature is inactive.

The next morning I went down to the

filling station for another gallon of gasoline and some more air. Red admired my car. I paid sixty-four dollars for it and Red said it was a bargain. He did not hold out much hope for the tire.

"That Geraldine, she's a mighty pretty girl," Red said. Red is new in our town.

"She's all right," I said, "but not exactly a summer date. I'm waiting for Lorraine to come down from Hollywood. Wait till you see Lorraine. I had Lorraine in mind when I bought the car. It's really for her. She's an actress."

"HOW old is she?" Red said.

I said, "Nineteen. She's not acting in many pictures yet. Last summer she stayed with her aunt and uncle at Abalone Bay. The big white house on the point. The Thomases."

"Did you have a date with her last summer?" Red asked me.

"Not quite," I said. "I talked to her a while. At the Junior Club dance."

"I'll bet she's pretty," Red said.

"Beautiful," I said. "Geraldine is nothing, when you see Lorraine. It's serious with me. Maybe with her, too."

"I see," Red said. Then he said, "Larry, there's no use trying to keep that tire full of air. The way it is, I got a car with wheels the same size as yours. A convertible job. I'm having trouble with

"Hello, Larry," she said. She looked at my car. "How do you like her?" I asked. "You mean this is your car?" she said. "This—wreck?"

my right front tire. What we might do, we might make a deal, so on date nights we would be sure of having four good tires. We could switch the wheels around so you could have four good tires on some nights, and I could have four good tires on the other nights. Nothing to worry about."

It certainly was a deal. We arranged I would have the wheels on Mondays and Wednesdays, and Red on Tuesdays and Thursdays, as a steady proposition. Then we would have alternate Fridays, and a special deal where if one of us would have a successful Friday date calling for a Saturday follow-up commitment, he would have the wheels for Saturday. But it had to be the same girl. For Sundays we would always toss up, no matter what.

The day we made the deal was Monday, my night, and I had the wheels and drove around for a while thinking I might run into Lorraine, but I could not find her. The next night Red drove over

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WHAT TO DO BEFORE THE BOMBERS COME

W. B. COURTNEY, a veteran of our Air Service in World War I, has probably been through a greater variety of air raids than any other war correspondent. He first saw modern bombing of civilians by the Italians in Ethiopia. In Spain he saw the burning of Irun and Fuenterrabia after raids by Franco's bombers. In China, at Canton, Hankow and Changsha he watched clouds of Japanese bombers rain death from the skies—in Canton he witnessed seven raids in one hour; at Hankow he spent a 48-hour

period under constant attack; and he was the first expert observer to report to our Air Corps that the Japanese were both good flyers and accurate bombers. In this war, he went through more than thirty raids in Germany—in Berlin, Dusseldorf and Munich. Here he indicates the many little ways, learned only through experience, over and above the official government rules, by which you can increase your coziness, security and convenience in the event that your city becomes the target of an enemy air raid.



Get white paint or whitewash and outline the edges of inside cellar stairs, outside cellar and house steps, the curbing in front of your house, and any projecting edges of walks.

Equip your house with wooden shutters, if you haven't got them already. Close these shutters immediately when the siren blows. Venetian blinds, let down and closed, are additionally useful, especially against small fragments.

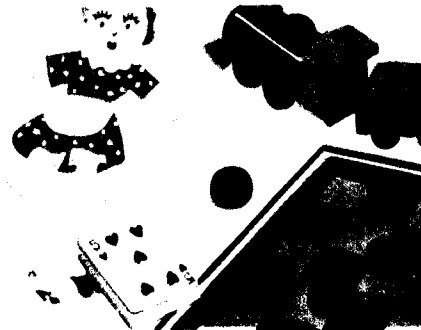
Tip with white paint all switches, handles, or other things you have to reach for in the dark.



do, so that it overlaps the sides of the window about two feet, and filling the form with sand.

Put extra shoring in the part of the cellar you use for a shelter. 4x4's or heavier. Helps keep the house from toppling down on you.

If a large water or gas main enters your house through the cellar, or if you have a large compressed-air water tank, better stay elsewhere; for a bomb hit in the street outside might either asphyxiate or drown you or blow you up. Many people were thus killed in Berlin.



Provide some kind of amusement for your children and your adult family members in whatever you use for a shelter: games, cards. In case of sleeplessness, such amusement is good for the nerves.

If you have young children, put cotton or other plugs in their ears. European experience shows that noise frightens children most during the raids, not flashes.

Leave house doors open during a raid; concussion might cause them to stick and you couldn't get out fast in case of fire or collapse.

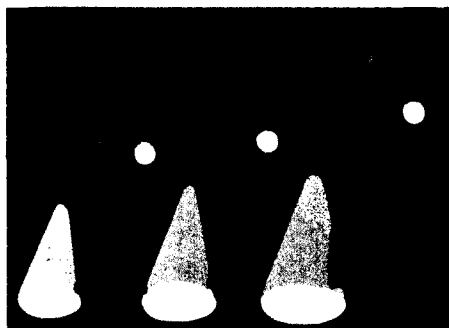


Have at least a small portable radio in your shelter. There may be important official announcements or instructions.

Have a telephone extension to your shelter; and keep there the number of your district's warden, if you have to call for fire or ambulance help.

Bad headaches sometimes result from the confined air of shelters and the racket and nervousness. Keep aspirin in your pocket.

Electric fans will help to keep the air circulating; and in case of gas, help to clear it. Set them on the floor.



Have at least two flashlights for each member of the household: including a spare bulb for each, and spare batteries.

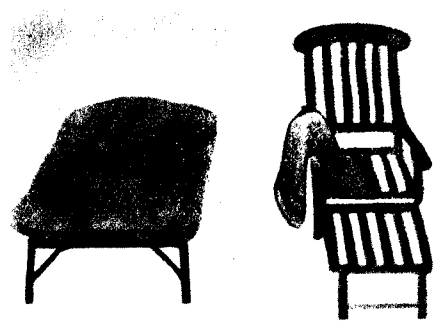
One of the flashlights should be small, pocket size; and always with you.

One of the flashlights should always be on your bedtable. Many accidents in Europe are caused when people trip as they get out of bed to go to windows.

Have a light-blue lens for your outdoor flash: You can "blue" it yourself by smearing glue on the lens and dusting it with ordinary household laundry bluing, or pasting colored tissue on it.

But never use an undimmed flashlight outdoors: it can be seen from the air.

You can make the cellar of your house a quite effective air-raid shelter by building a brick or wood form about one yard thick outside each cellar win-



Put cots in your cellar, if you use that for a shelter; or provide yourself with steamer chairs or cots if you go to an apartment cellar. You get awfully tired standing through a raid that lasts several hours. With a cot you can get sleep; and feel better next day for your work—a necessary factor both in morale and in defense production.



Have a first-aid kit, but not an elaborate one; a stick and a heavy cloth (a muffler will do) for a tourniquet is most important.

Have plenty of vaseline, or other soothing unguents, handy; both upstairs, where you might fight fire, as well as in your shelter.



If you have pets:

Birds, especially canaries, may be taken down into the shelter with you.

Your canary is the best warning there is of the onset of a gas attack. If you see him keel over, put on your mask at once, if you have one. If you haven't a mask, soak your handkerchief in the water bucket, cover your nose and mouth with it, lie on your face close to the electric fan and breathe as slowly and shallowly as you can. This will extend your chances of survival by many precious minutes, while the rescue squads work to get to you.

It's all right to keep your dog with you. In a city apartment shelter you might not be permitted to do so, because some people fear dogs, and some dogs have bad manners. But if



DRAWINGS BY ROLF KLEP