



He could go up or down, but they would follow him. If he crashed they would all crash. A worried look creased Steb's forehead.

## FOLLOW THE LEADER

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**Keeping up with Mr. Tracy was a big order, but those four gentlemen of the Fighter Command had no choice. It was either fly with the guy, or land on a mountain**

**A**LL pilots flying P-O's are CAUTIONED not to stunt them, because of LOOSE radio equipment. Any pilot landing with DAMAGED equipment will be held PERSONALLY responsible."

Steb Tracy, civilian pilot with the Ferrying Division of the Army Air Forces, A.T.C., read the notice on the bulletin board of Transition and filed it away in his mind while shifting a wad of gum from one side of his jaw to the other. He shifted about on the hard bench and listened in on the conversation between a fresh-looking stenographer in blue uniform and the perpetually harassed Lieutenant Leslie, just in from a check flight in a B-17.

The girl was saying, "Maybe you know what it's all about, but I don't. It's so utterly childish for combat fliers to resent service pilots. Aren't we supposed to be one big happy family?"

Leslie grinned. "Yeah, we're happy, all right; in my hat. But I guess it's understandable. Combat pilots have to go

through a stiff training routine that keeps them knuckled down every second of their lives. And at the end they get less money than a service pilot, who usually comes out of civilian life and is handed a commission on a silver platter. The combat boys have to break their necks for that commission, so they resent it."

The girl tapped at her teeth with a pencil and frowned. "Well, if that's the way it is, then I don't blame them. It doesn't seem fair."

Leslie's grin deepened and he said, "But, oddly enough, it is fair. The civilians we take in are crack fliers. You take Tracy, here. It would cost the government hundreds of thousands of dollars to give him the experience and knowledge that he has acquired on his own, as a civilian. By signing with us, he is actually the one giving the government a gift on a silver platter. The least the Command can do is to give a man like that a decent salary and a commission. That's the way it works out."

The girl was convinced. "Oh. Then why did those four combat pilots from Portland try to wreck the officers' mess yesterday?"

Leslie shrugged. "They're just full of stuff and vinegar."

The girl broke into a laugh and slanted a look at Steb Tracy. She had been slanting that same look at him for weeks, without results.

An ex-bush flier, ex-mercenary, ex-

barnstormer and ex-test pilot, but always a Texan, Steb had only recently joined the Ferrying Division located at Long Beach, California. His commission as a lieutenant would not be due for a few days, so that he was still able to dress as fancy dictated—more or less. He was forced to wear the customary sun-tan shirt and trousers, but there custom ended. The bow at his collar was a narrow, black string tie, about his waist was a beautifully tooled belt with chased silver inlays and the bottoms of his trousers were tucked into handmade, high-heeled Western boots. No one, including the Army, had yet been able to take Texas out of Steb Tracy.

He got to his feet from one of the two long benches in the ready room of Transition and lazily walked out into the biting California sun. Tall, lean and rangy, he walked with the quiet tread of a cat. His sandy hair was close-cropped.

Steb looked about him and twin lights of pleasure danced in his eyes. He liked the Ferrying Command and everything connected with it.

A loud-speaker blared, "Civilian pilot Steb Tracy report at Operations." The message was repeated and Steb turned on his heel and walked down the alley separating the building of Group Operations from the Pilots' Loft, where a man could buy a soft drink, a sandwich or a full issue of clothes at government prices. He crossed the tar-sticky road to a U-

shaped, tiled-roof building and there received his orders from Operations—delivery of a fighter to a combat squadron in Portland, Oregon.

He picked up his kit, which he had left lying on the lawn under a palm tree, and leisurely strolled to the long counter of Control. Lieutenant Silvers glanced up at him and smiled. "Hi there, cowboy. Where've you been lately?"

"Oh, around: New York, Nashville, Dayton, Seattle, Detroit and a couple of other places."

"Uh-hunh. Then you should know the rules." Silvers scratched his head, squinted at Steb, then walked to the window overlooking the field. He pointed to five P-38s standing on the line, high-speed, single-place fighters, with twin engines and tail booms and tricycle landing gear. He said, "You know the P-38 pretty well, don't you?"

Steb nodded. "I was test pilot on those crates all last year. Got kind of a likin' for 'em."

"Uh-hunh. Major Dunham thinks you've forgotten more about P-38s than any other pilot knows. That's why you're being sent on this hop." He turned about and faced Steb. "Here's the deal. Ferrying pilots are not supposed to fly in bad weather or later than one hour prior to official sunset, unless in an emergency. This is an emergency. Those five crates are part of

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CAN Prentiss M Brown, mild and scholarly, get away with the job that killed off rough-and-tumble Leon Henderson? That is the \$64 question in Washington these days. As Price Administrator, his is the rude hand that must pull tight and tighter on the belt that goes around the country's soft and sensitive midriff. Less food, less gas, less clothes, less comforts, less pleasure, less everything. Not fewer restrictions, but more. Every day and in every way, new and irritating interferences with what Henry Wallace loves to call "the American way of life."

Fortunately, Mr. Brown suffers from no illusions. "Hard and thankless" is his own description of the OPA job. He knows just what he is up against in commanding the civilian population to serve through sacrifice. Having lost a Senate seat for his part in the belated fight to control farm prices, he knows also the power of blocs.

It is also the case that the Michigander does not have to sail an uncharted sea. At hand, for his guidance, is the chart left behind by Leon Henderson, a chart that sets down every rock, reef and shoal, and is particularly explicit in warning where not to go and what not to do. If Mr. Brown is as wise as he looks, he will study every detail of that voyage from auspicious start to disastrous finish.

Now that barrel-chested, bull-voiced Leon Henderson has been cast into the outer darkness, it may not be remembered that he was hailed as an answer to a prayer when he first stepped into the war picture as the Administration's "price stabilizer." No rookie from the Ivy League, scouted by Felix Frankfurter, but a grown man with wide experience in many fields. Better still, one who had come up the hard way—bone-dry behind both ears, and tough with the toughness begotten by poverty and struggle.

Back in the roaring days of the NRA, Henderson had not been afraid to stand toe to toe with General Hugh Johnson, matching Old Iron Pants bellow for bellow. Here at last, so it seemed, was a shaggy, two-fisted guy whom neither the crystal gazers nor the politicians could push around.

Reassuringly enough, he gave proof of courage at the very outset. Although the President, on May 28, 1940, had declared that America must become the "great arsenal of democracy," that year saw automobile production hit an all-time high.

Many leaders were honestly of the opinion that preparedness and a business boom could go hand in hand, and Donald Nelson went out on the limb with this flat statement: "I believe that industry is fully aware of its responsibility, and that competition between retailers in the field of distribution will act as the necessary brake in preventing price increases, making governmental action unnecessary."

"Ostrich-headed," boomed Leon, and followed by demanding the immediate conservation of steel, rubber and copper. Mr. Knudsen, Mr. Stettinius and Mr. Batt, among others, pooh-poohed the possibility of shortages in any of the strategic materials, but not even these authoritative voices could shout Henderson down, and his bellows finally won out.

#### Little David Loses His Sling

More than that, Leon was the first official advocate of price control. Not piecemeal stuff, but an over-all ceiling for everything—wages, salaries, rents, interest rates, agricultural prices and commodity prices, all stabilized as of a set date. And not price control alone, but tied in with a vigorous program of plant conversion, subcontracting, a search for substitutes and alternates, the skeletonization of nonessential industry, and above all, *taxes heavy enough to absorb surplus buying power*. The Baruch plan, of course, but Leon adopted and diaped it.

Unhappily, organized labor went berserk at the suggestion of wage control.

"No compulsion," thundered the A. F. of L.'s William Green, while the C.I.O.'s Phil Murray declared for "an upward adjustment of wage levels to assure the maximum efficiency of war workers." It is at this point that Prentiss Brown should adjust his spectacles and bend close over the (Continued on page 64)

Speculation is high in Washington as to whether the ax will fall on Prentiss M. Brown, new OPA Administrator, for the same reasons it fell on predecessor Leon Henderson. Mr. Brown begins auspiciously by conferring with Secretary of Agriculture Wickard, chief thorn in Leon Henderson's flesh

