

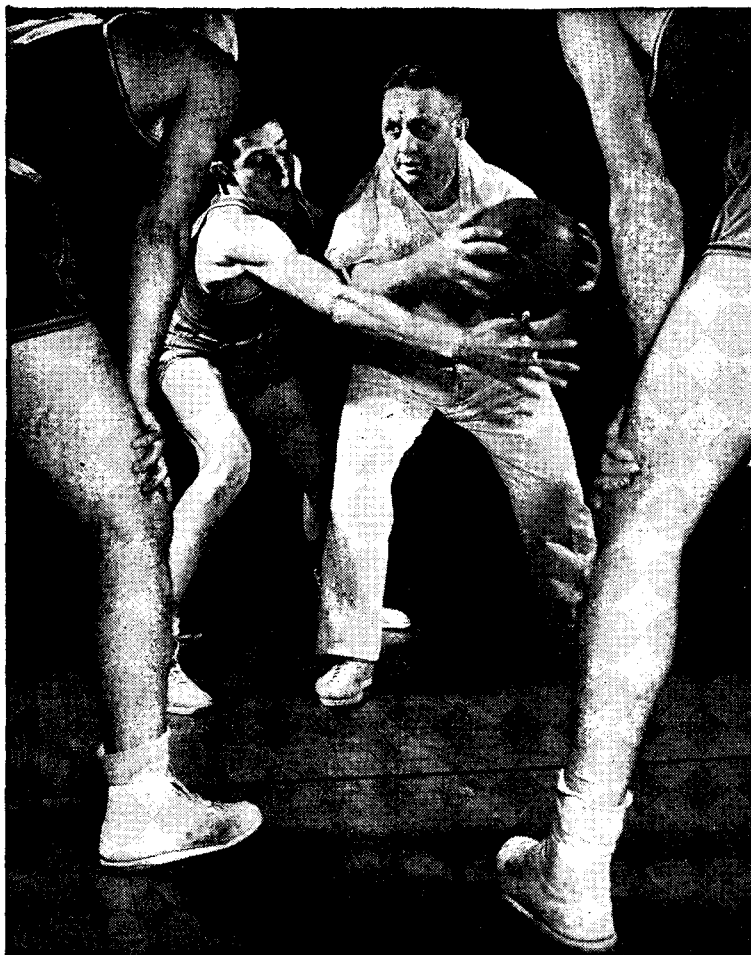
CALAMITY FROM KENTUCKY

BY ROBERT ANDREWS

PHOTOGRAPHS FOR COLLIER'S BY JERRY COOKE-PIX

The life and the times of Edgar A. Diddle, Kentucky's gift to basketball

Mr. Diddle and towel, in repose. Diddle fans can follow Kentucky's games by watching the towel as its owner alternately chews on it, cries into it or tosses it into the rafters



Big-time class marks all Diddle-coached teams. He is working this year with a crop of sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds

MR. EDGAR ALLAN DIDDLE has won a sort of molecular fame by throwing a towel ecstatically into the air when pleased. The fact that Mr. Diddle can throw the towel and escape assault by hostile spectators is an indication that, behind his eccentricity, is achievement. He is coach of the Western Kentucky State Teachers basketball team, and his young men have become nationally famous in the last few years. The result is that Mr. Diddle often reaches the end of an evening in a complete state of debility.

If further proof were needed that basketball is the most democratic of sports, Mr. Diddle has provided it. Not properly subdued by the circumstance that he is teaching a normal-school team, Mr. Diddle has vaunting ambitions. He longs to joust with the high and mighty, and three years ago he had his opportunity in the famous Madison Square Garden tournament in New York City. Not only did his team appear but it toppled City College of New York and Creighton University of Omaha and entered the finals against West Virginia.

"I am ahead two points with forty-three seconds to play and besides I have possession of the ball," says Mr. Diddle, who always speaks in that way about his team, "and then the Fates decide that I have had enough fun for a small-town boy, and a series of awful things happen and I lose by two points."

He shakes his head dolefully at the memory, being a man who wins with the delight of a boy who finds a ten-dollar bill under an old tomato can and loses with all the wry pleasure of one who steps on a rake in the dark.

Hard Work and Athletics

Mr. Diddle was halfback on the famous Centre College team with Bo McMillin, Red Roberts and Red Weaver, but had graduated before Centre startled the world by beating Harvard. In 1920, he was captain of the Centre basketball team. He swept the gymnasium and fired a furnace for his room rent and waited on tables at Mrs. Rice's for his board. During the summers he picked up \$18 a week putting up tents for the White-Myers Chautauqua, the Myers being also a coach at Centre at the time.

"I never saw the shows because as soon as the tent was up we went on to the next town, but I understand that we were a high-class outfit—cultural," says our man.

When the Chautauqua season ended in the fall after he graduated, he found himself in Colorado without a job. "I wasn't just discouraged," reports the famous Diddle. "I was frantic. I was pretty sure I was going to starve."

At that moment, a telegram arrived from Greenville, Kentucky, which read: "Would you accept job as coach of high school and secretary of Community House? Doctor William Smock."

This made a profound impression on our hero because Doctor Smock turned out to be a former young medical student to whom Diddle had once given two seats to a Centre game, refusing to accept payment.

"We were supposed to sell those two tickets and get a little spending money for ourselves, but I would never do it, and now I get this job at Greenville because I am a good fellow and this proves to me that kindness pays. It is a moral lesson."

His Greenville team was supposed to play at the regional tournament at Owensboro, but a storm had swollen the river to such a stage that they couldn't get to

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REMEMBER "TAKE HER DOWN"? . . . how the wounded submarine skipper, Commander Howard W. Gilmore, U. S. N., ordered his men to "Take her down"—leaving him outside the conning tower? His was a stern example to us at home. **BUY MORE WAR BONDS**

Serving human progress through Photography



Dear Mom.

In this picture I am eating what is now a native delicacy around here. It is called Five-flavor Life Savers and we buy it at the Post Exchange. The natives are crazy about it because it saves them the trouble of climbing trees for limes and oranges and things. Love, Tom.



Only 5¢

their destination and asked instead to be allowed to play at the tournament in Bowling Green, where Western Kentucky State is located. This was Fate at work anew, because his team made a good impression and was sailing along toward the finals when one of the other coaches protested the presence of this outsider and began pulling a few wires to have Greenville eliminated. Ed Diddle approached this villain and suggested that they go down to the locker room to discuss the matter.

Once in the room, Diddle locked the door, placed the key on top of a locker and said, "The one that gets out of here alive takes the key and opens the door. Put up your dukes."

Beating His Way to a Job

The resultant clamor was so horrendous that onlookers broke down the door and pulled Mr. Diddle away before mayhem was done. It solidified his reputation and got him the job as coach at Western Kentucky State. That was twenty-two years ago, and there is every indication that Mr. Diddle will leave Bowling Green only when he is lugged out in a box.

He began by coaching both boys' and girls' basketball and boys' track, football and baseball. That lasted till 1927, when Carl Anderson came in to take over football. That left basketball and baseball for Diddle because he also sneaked out on his job with the girls before many years had departed. The track just sort of disappeared by the wayside.

By 1932, he had produced his first K.I.A.C. champion and he finished last season by winning it for the seventh consecutive time, which is said to be a record. During his twenty-two seasons as a coach, he has won 283 regularly scheduled games and lost 93. In tournament play (Kentucky Conference, Southern Intercollegiate Conference, National Collegiate and Madison Square Invitational), he has won 80 games and lost 14. In the last 76 tournament games, his team has won 70 times.

He started the towel-throwing almost immediately, and now it is his trade-mark. In moments of elation he is apt to throw the towel to the rafters or beat the floor with it in wild jubilation. In moments of depression he gnaws on it, mops his brow with it or buries his head in it and cries.

Getting his team into big time has been a hard job, and such schools as the University of Kentucky, Tennessee and Alabama will have none of him. Very rightly, they figure that they have nothing to win and everything to lose. It took years before Kelly Thompson, Western Kentucky publicity man, could convince Ned Irish

that the team was good enough for Madison Square Garden. Kelly wired Irish—the generalissimo of big-time basketball in the East—after each Western Kentucky victory and sent along the clippings by mail next day. That went on for years and almost broke Diddle's heart.

"It was a shame we couldn't get up there when we had Carlisle (Big Boy) Towrey. He was six feet five and weighed 209 and was so fast you couldn't keep an eye on him. He was the greatest college player that ever lived, and all those poor New York people missed him."

There was also Harry Sadler, who made all his baskets by holding the ball high over his head, leaping about four feet in the air and letting go. It was Sadler who cured all big Southern colleges of monkeying with Diddle's boys. Sewanee took them on early one season as a "breather," and Western Kentucky walloped them something like 75-18.

"Sadler opened that game by taking nine shots and making nine baskets," says Mr. Diddle sadly. "I couldn't get him out of there quick enough. We've never been back to Sewanee since."

The game that Diddle best likes to remember is the second struggle with Cumberland College. The first had been played at Cumberland in an old church, with wire netting protecting the sacred premises and making a fine background into which the Western Kentucky boys could be pushed. They came away scratched, mauled and sore. When the return game at Bowling Green neared, Mr. Diddle scouted around for a referee and finally found his man.

"I'll pay you fifteen dollars for the game," said Ed. "I only ask one favor."

"What's that?" asked the referee.

"Don't blow your whistle," said Ed. "Don't blow it even once. Just let the boys play."

The contest is remembered in Kentucky along with the Hatfield-McCoy feuds and the doings in Harlan County.

A Lesson for a Critic

There was another game in which Diddle's boys performed very miserably in the first half and went off to the dressing room with the knowledge that they would get one of Ed's better blisterings, a thing he is never reluctant to furnish. However, they were rather let down when Mr. Diddle failed to appear and they sent one of their number off to see what was detaining the master. What was detaining Ed was a spectator who had made the mistake of reflecting upon the quality of the Western Kentucky play, which Mr. Diddle himself considered below par. So he had gone up into the stands and plastered the offender very prettily.

"I can say they stink, but nobody else can," declared Mr. Diddle stoutly, as he came away dusting his hands.

Mr. Diddle now has almost five hundred of his boys coaching in Kentucky schools, which gives him an edge on recruiting material. He keeps away from big high schools because he feels that such players are burned out in scholastic play and never improve in college. Some of his best recent players, such as Red McCrockland, Tip Downing and Johnny Hackett never played ball in high school.

"If they can shoot and if they have big hands and big feet, I take 'em," says Diddle.

Basketball practice starts with the opening of college in September and soon becomes sort of a religious rite. The team live together all year around in a house on the campus called the Village, where they have their own rules and are governed by their own council. In that setting, strict training rules are kept, with the result that Diddle's boys win half their games by running the opposition ragged in the last five minutes. His teams have been in two Madison Square Garden tournaments, reaching the finals in their first attempt and being eliminated in the first round last season by Fordham, 60-58.

Something to Worry About

"That little bomb went off prematurely," explains Ed ruefully. "We were worrying about meeting St. John's the second night and sort of forgot about Fordham the first night."

Diddle gets on an average of a thousand towels a year, sent him either affectionately or sardonically by basketball enthusiasts. Last year at Murray Teachers, traditional rival in Kentucky, the home-town Murray crowd welcomed Ed by a shower of hundreds of towels that buried him under.

"They weren't kiddin' either," says Ed. "I think they were trying to kill me."

New Yorkers who were close to the Western Kentucky bench at Madison Square Garden in one game will never forget the ecstatic Diddle on one play when Downing stood about in the middle of the court and decided to shoot. Diddle rose with a scream that sounded like a fire-engine siren in torture. He swung his towel and screeched in pain:

"If you ever do that again, I'll kill . . . Did you ever see such a shot!"

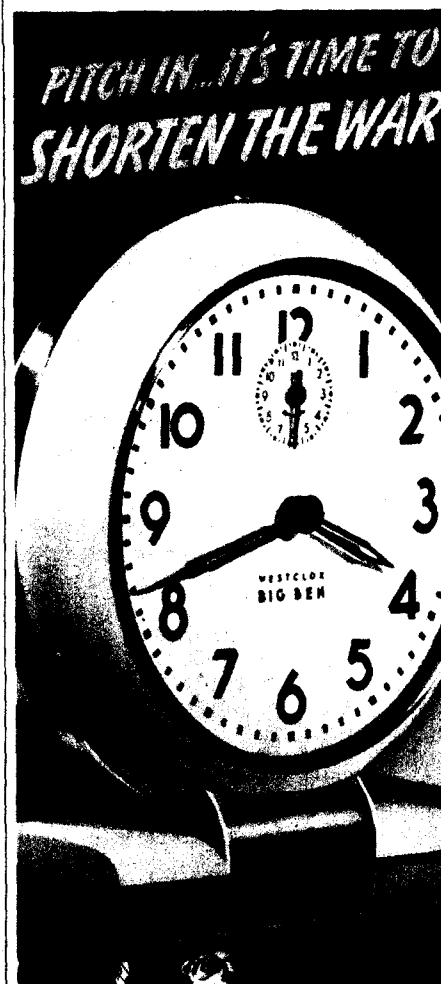
The break in that sentence came as the shot popped through the hoop without touching the rim. Ed's mood ended with throwing the towel a mile in the air, doubling over with joy and yowling: "Who-o-o-ye!"

Mr. Diddle's personality may be on the ebullient side, but his virtues are real. His teams are well coached and they play with big-time class. What he will do this year with a crop of sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds is a matter for history, but it will be a good-looking and hard-fighting outfit even when it loses. Diddle has been given automobiles, watches, traveling bags, wearing apparel and money gifts by the proud citizenry of Bowling Green and if he has a good year this season may even come up with a few ration books from admirers.

A New York writer was pressing Kelly Thompson for an explanation of why Diddle stayed at Bowling Green when he could get better offers elsewhere. To all replies by Thompson, the writer was skeptical. He wanted to know the real reason and wouldn't be satisfied with anything else. Why did Diddle stay there? Why didn't he leave for something better?

"Brother," said Kelly tenderly, "you're looking at things from the wrong angle. If Ed was to leave down there, it wouldn't be a departure; it'd be an abdication. He's czar in those parts."

THE END



Use it up—wear it out—
Make it do—or do without

A patriotic lady
Is Mrs. Thomas Cady
She's as helpful to the war
As she can be

For she patches and she stitches
On her Jimmy's old school britches
Does her bit to hasten
Vic-tor-y

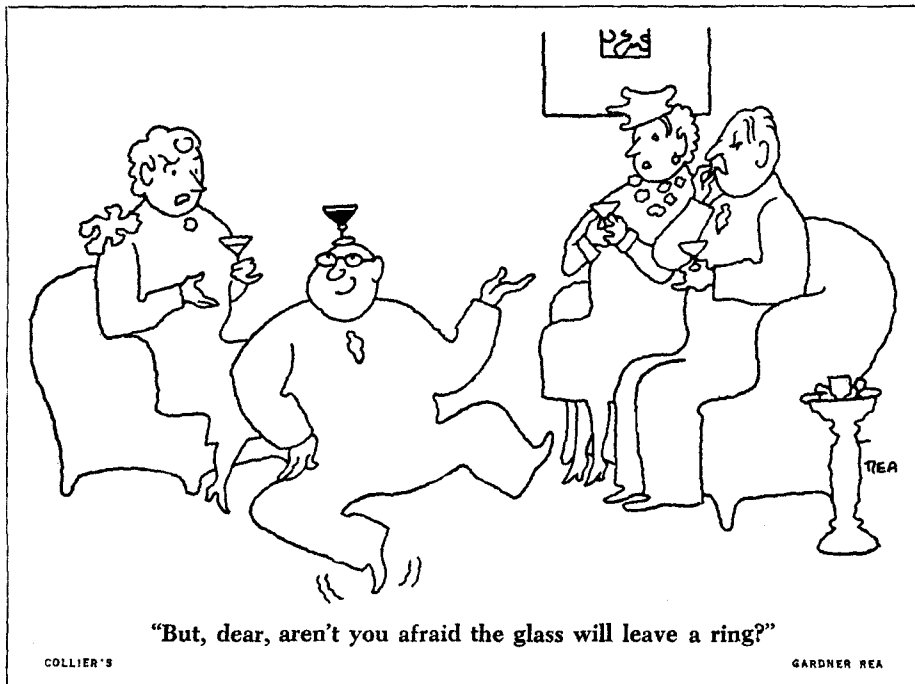
So remember, all you ladies
When it's time for papa's paydays
And you're tempted to buy
Something you don't need . . .

Don't forget that patching britches
Is as important as our blitzes
When it comes to hast'nin'
Vic-tor-y!

—Big Ben



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Hello Darling

BY JAMES
RAMSEY ULLMAN

ILLUSTRATED BY WENDELL KLING

In theatrical legend, the Broadway producer is a heel who breaks aspiring actresses' hearts—here's the low-down on how a heel gets that way

THE escalloped of veal had been excellent. Monte Small opened his gold-crested cigar case and offered a Havana Special Blend to Lou Callan of Premier Pictures.

Callan took one. "Look, Monte—" he began earnestly.

"Dessert or coffee?" Small inquired. "A liqueur?"

His companion shook his head. "Look, Monte," he went on, pulling his chair

closer to the table. "You know darn' well neither Metro nor Warner's is going to top any hundred twenty-five thousand."

Small lighted his cigar and contemplated the thick blue curls of smoke. "I've got no idea at all," he said gently, "what Metro or Warner's or anybody is going to do. All I know is, the picture rights of Forever Yours are going to cost somebody one hundred and fifty grand." He called for the check, signed it and tipped the waiter and headwaiter a dollar each. "Got to get back to the office, Lou," he explained, rising.

Callan stood up reluctantly. "I'll have to talk to the Coast about it, Monte. I'll call you later."

"Sure. Sure, Lou," said Small amiably. "Glad to hear from you any time."

It took him the better part of a half hour

to get out of Sardi's. The tables were filled with acquaintances—fellow producers, theater operators, playwrights, a scattering of solvent actors and press agents—and his progress was interrupted every few feet by greetings and handshakings. When at last he reached the door he favored Renée, the hat-check girl, with a "How're you, honey?" and another dollar. He pretended not to hear a round-eyed girl standing near by whisper to her companion, "There's Monte Small, the producer."

Monte Small, the producer, walked slowly east on Forty-fourth Street and turned up Broadway. There was, it seemed to him, a snap and glitter in the October sunlight that gave a sheen even to the drab prospect of Times Square at midday. His escalloped of veal sat well on his stomach and his new double-breasted pin-stripe did things to his figure that only a two hundred dollar suit can do. A few blocks away a huge electric sign filled half the heavens. The sign said:

MONTE SMALL
presents
LORETTA LYNN
in
FOREVER YOURS
Royal Theater
**** — News

In the four blocks between Sardi's and his office he had to pause perhaps a dozen times to acknowledge the greetings of passers-by. He nodded and waved affably, and a warm, almost purring, sensation of well-being enveloped him. So they said Broadway was tough, did they? A hard, brassy trollop with a pebble for a heart. Some people's Broadway, maybe, but not Monte Small's! It might be crazy, all right, but it was friendly, human, alive. Where else in the world (ruminated Monte Small) could one see such pretty faces, hear such friendly greetings, meet such intelligent, charming people? A hundred and fifty thousand dollars! Whew!

SMALL let himself into his private office. It was a luxurious room with dark, heavy furnishings, paneled with hundreds of signed photographs. He sat down at his desk and rang for Miss Josephs.

"Any calls?" he inquired.

Miss Josephs looked at her pad. She was forty-five and tired looking, and Small had hired her because she was the only woman he had ever met who didn't want to go on the stage. "Mr. Fadiman of Metro. Mr. Wilk of Warners. And Acme Agency about the fight tickets."

"Have they got them?"

"They said four in the third row ring-side."

Small frowned. "I told them first row or nothing. Call them back."

"How about Mr. Fadiman and Mr. Wilk?"

"Don't bother." Small smiled a little. "They'll call again."

Miss Josephs nodded. "And Miss Lynn is here."

Small looked up in surprise. He had not been expecting a visit from the star of Forever Yours. "What's she steamed up about now?" he asked.

"I don't know. She arrived just a moment before you rang."

"Humph. Anyone else?"

"Miss Walters is here, and that young girl about the understudy part. They've both been waiting about an hour."

"Tell Miss Lynn to come in," Small said. Miss Josephs crossed to the door. "And tell those muzzlers over at Acme," he called after her, "that if I don't get first

(Continued on page 48)

"You heard me." Miss Lynn emphasized her words with a sharp rapping of her nails. "Either you give that woman notice before tonight's performance or I give you mine"