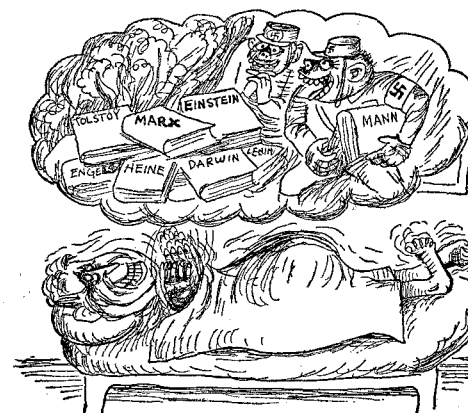
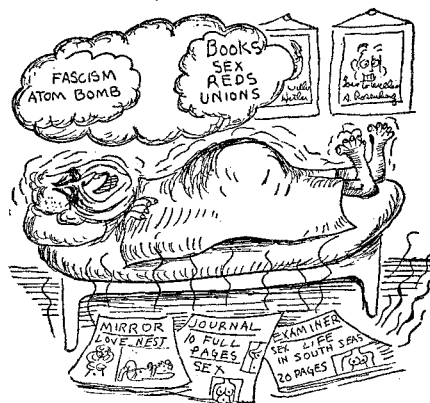
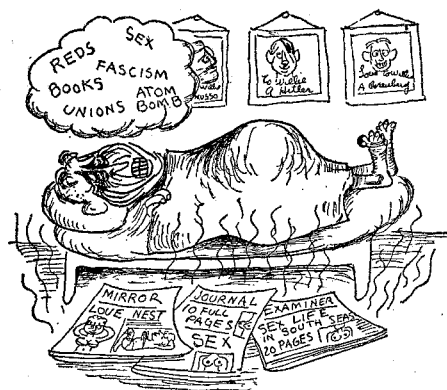


"THE DREAMS AND LIES OF DIRTY WILLIE"



THREE STARS FOR MR. GRUM

"He felt no sensation whatsoever. It was almost as if he had expected this message for a long time. The newspapers would have to be informed."

By MORT BRAUS

Illustrated by Ernie Jaediker.

THE diner was full up and Mr. Grum had to cool his heels fully fifteen minutes before the steward was able to find him a seat. It was next to the train window and Mr. Grum, waiting for his order to arrive, had a good chance to study the Kansas landscape which slid past, flat and mousy under a wintry sky. He chose rather to strike up a conversation with the young beribboned sergeant who sat across from him.

"Say, do you mind telling me what that insignia stands for, sergeant?" Mr. Grum asked.

"Signal Corps," the sergeant said.

"You don't say!" Mr. Grum was visibly impressed. "And that decoration?"

"Tunisian campaign."

"You don't say!" Mr. Grum appeared impressed all over again. "The reason why I'm so interested," the inquisitor hastened to explain, as if curiosity was not good enough reason for his interest, "well, you see, I have sons in the service myself—three of them to be exact!" The father, in urgent proof of this allegation, thrust his lapel pin, which contained three tiny stars, at the soldier. "The youngest is about your age—an aviation cadet. Ought to get his wings any day now. Arthur—he's my oldest—wangled himself a commission in Intelligence. Smartest young lawyer in town and

married to the prettiest girl. And then there's Paul, three years younger than Arthur. . . ." His glance softened to a wistful shine. "They sent him to Truax Field to make a radio maintenance expert out of him. It's hard to think of Paul tinkering with radios. Never showed any mechanical aptitude. More the executive type like myself—and a shrewd merchandiser, too."

Having established this lodge brotherhood, so to speak, Mr. Grum could dine with gusto. Afterwards, he strolled into the club car for a smoke. He noticed Ned Merrill, of Merrill Frocks taking his ease, and joined him. When the amenities, which consisted in each forcing his respective brand of cigar on the other, were done with, Grum asked how the Merrill spring line was shaping up.

Merrill's expressive nostrils quivered. "What line?—with the government cutting our quota of goods to the bone?"

Grum grunted sympathetically. "I know how it is, Ned. Been to Chicago to take a look around the market."

Merrill's lips sucked into a tight smile. "Don't tell me Henry Grum, President of Grum & Sons' Department Store, is doing his own buying!"

The merchant's brow became weighted. "Times have changed, Ned," he said. "You remember my son, Paul? Used to be my right hand

in the business. Well, the Army's got him and there's no one else I can trust. This is a seller's market, you know. Gotta be a pretty shrewd apple to get any merchandise these days."

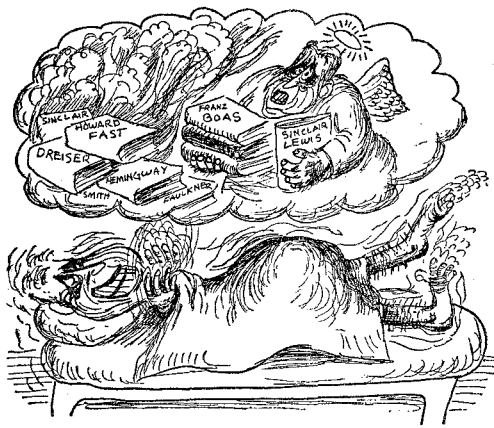
Merrill's eyebrows flew up. "So Paul was inducted! Sorry to hear it."

"And Arthur and Robert, my youngest, too!" Mr. Grum thrust his lapel pin at the Merrill Frock representative.

"Darned if that isn't a shame. All three!" Merrill clucked solemnly. But it did not appear quite the jolt to Merrill that Grum had hoped it would be and he increased the voltage. "And in the same year, Ned! Think of that!"

Merrill's head jockeyed from side to side in sympathy. "You must be awfully lonely without 'em, Mr. Grum," he said.

An ill-timed sigh caused Mr. Grum to cough up tobacco smoke. "I'll say, Ned. . . . When you've watched 'em grow up into manhood. Why, it seems only yesterday they were walking around in short pants." His voice became muffled. "I don't mind telling you, we were mighty low, mighty low for a while, especially the missus. But we've simply got to make the best of it. This is how I feel about it, Ned. . . ." He loosened his vest as if it cramped the lofty thoughts pressing for release. "It's no more than we owe our country. Where else in the world,



Ned, could a man only a generation removed from an immigrant build a pushcart business into a department store, I ask you? Every time I think of the opportunities—not that I haven't made the most of them—well, it almost brings tears to my eyes, darned if it doesn't. . . .” Mr. Grum’s flabby jaws flexed with fanatical determination. “Ned, a man’s got to make some sacrifice to keep all that—even if it is his own sons.”

In the face of this reverent outburst, Merrill could only comment lamely: “That’s exactly my sentiments, Mr. Grum. I just gave my second pint of blood. It isn’t enough, I know.” He inquired if any of Mr. Grum’s sons were overseas.

“No, not yet, Merrill, praise God,” sighed the merchant. “By the way, Ned, how do you like my cigar?”

“Swell flavor, Mr. Grum. I’ll try a box as soon as I get home.”

Grum smiled almost pityingly, it seemed. “Not a chance, Ned. Have them specially imported from Cuba by a friend down there.”

“Too bad. How much they set you back?”

“Twenty dollars, a box of fifty.”

Merrill whistled. “That’s kind of steep, isn’t it?”

“Yes—isn’t it a crime how they take advantage these days!”

ROBERT, the youngest son, was the first to go overseas. It was in early January. Mr. Grum and his wife were vacationing in Palm Beach at the Royal Hotel when the news came.

Mr. Grum had not wanted to take a vacation. As he expressed it to George Williston, his banker and golf partner, the day before entraining for the southland: “How can a man enjoy

a vacation with half the world killing the other half? But I’ve got to think of the missus. With the boys in the service, she gets to brooding all the time. I just have to take her away some place where there are lots of people. It helps her to forget. . . .” He could not help adding in fairness to himself: “And if any one needs a rest, I do . . . Grum & Sons had the biggest Christmas business in years—tripled our forty-two business for the same quarter. Kept me on the go twenty-four hours a day.”

Grum had been surprised to find the resort hotels given over to convalescent soldiers. He was immensely gratified, he remarked to Mr. Murrow, a fellow guest. Mr. Murrow had two sons in the Navy—this gave them common cause. “I think that nothing you do for the boys in the service is good enough,” Mr. Grum avowed. “The thing that worries me, Murrow, is getting all these kids who had nothing to begin with used to all this luxury living. Won’t it spoil them for afterwards? Will they be satisfied to go back to the old ways?”

Mr. Grum received the news about Robert with stoical grace. He told a sympathetic party of guests the day he checked out: “I never kidded myself. I knew they were bound to go overseas sometime. Uncle Sam doesn’t put men in uniform just for parading. It stands to reason you can’t win wars without a hard fight. We’ve just got to be strong and take it. How does my wife feel? Naturally, the missus is upset, but she’ll get over it. . . . At any rate, Bob’s got a forty-eight hour pass before he reports to POE. . . . We’re catching the first train home and show that kid the time of his life.”

Sometimes, Mr. Grum’s cross be-

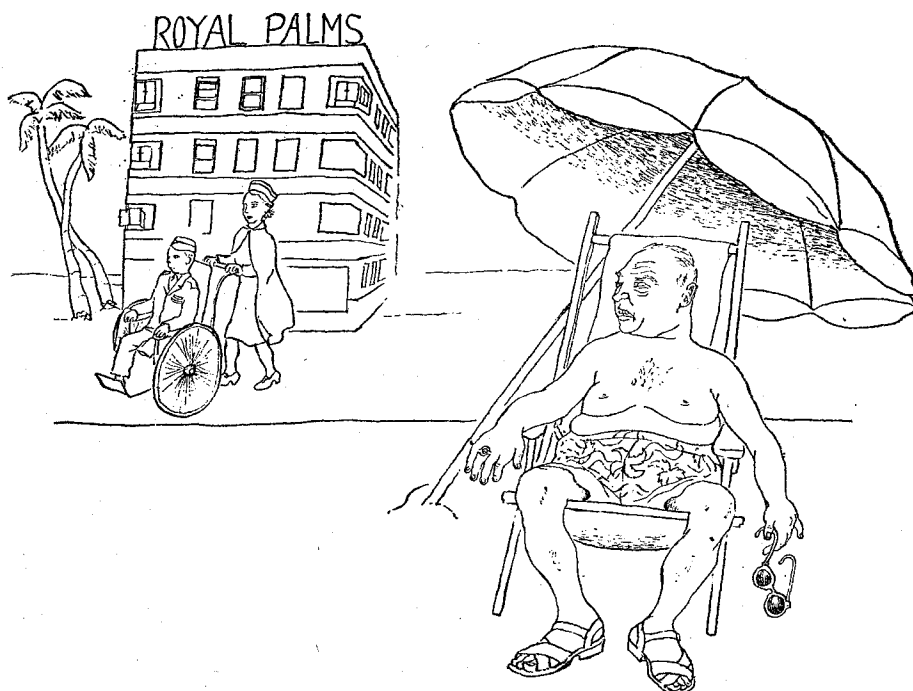
came almost too heavy to bear. Only a week after Robert had come and gone until God knows when, he learned through a faithful employe of a move afoot by the sales personnel to spring a wage-increase coup on him. As he suspected, the plot had been engineered while he was in Florida, recovering from his near-breakdown. Mr. Grum took pride in a reputation for fair dealings but this was a foul blow which, he felt, justified resorting to free-for-all methods. He had the ring-leader, a pale, little salesman in the children’s shoe department, brought before him and then and there offered to make the offender an assistant shoe merchandiser with a hundred-dollar increase to start. The trouble-maker was plainly dumbfounded but he jumped at the chance just the same—Mr. Grum’s study of the man’s dossier was not in vain.

The salesman embarrassed his employer with his display of gratitude.

“Why, you’ve got it coming to you, Saunders,” protested Grum from the height of a convenient paternalism. “Led all sales in your section for the last quarter. . . . Okay, take the rest of the day off and break the good news to the wife. Just one thing, Saunders, before you go—say, you don’t know anything about that bunch of malcontents who’ve been trying to pull off that raise stunt behind my back?”

“Certainly not, Mr. Grum!”

“Thought not, Saunders. You’ve got too much sense. I don’t have to tell you how well I treat my associates. That’s because I’ve always had a family feeling about my employes. Take the farewell party for my son, Robert, for instance—every man and woman in this store was invited and got half the afternoon off. And don’t forget those



Christmas bonuses—I didn't have to hand 'em out. And how about the employes' discount on all articles in the store? That's equal to a ten percent raise alone.

"Don't get me wrong, Saunders, I believe in unions, whole-heartedly. But to pick a time like this with the war going full blast—it amounts to a hold-up! I don't mind telling you I was sick to heart when I heard about it. . . . I put it to you, man to man—what have they got to complain about? Why, man alive—they ought to be glad they got jobs, clean jobs, right here in town, close by their families, free to return every night to their loved ones, free to eat first grade meals, to sleep in warm beds—"

"Sure Mr. Grum—"

"I know millions of boys who'd give anything to be in their shoes—" Mr. Grum wheeled toward the wall space behind his desk. A service flag with three stars had been draped around snapshots of his sons to form a sort of shrine. He waved an arm at the hallowed trio. "They don't have no nice homes and loved ones to come home to every night. They don't get no home cooking. They don't get no fancy salaries! No, sir, they live in foxholes and are lucky to get rations. But do *they* complain? Do *they* listen to agitators? I'll say they don't—too busy fighting a war. . . . Tell me, Saunders, are the people who work in this store any better than my sons?"

"No sir."

"Very well." Mr. Grum coughed in Camille-like exhaustion. "You can go now, Saunders. And if you run into any of those malcontents in the lunch room, you might remind 'em of what I said."

BY MAY all three of Mr. Grum's sons were overseas. Paul revealed that he was at a staging area in England. Robert reached an air base in Italy and had been assigned to a P-38 Fighter Group. Arthur had landed at Henderson Field, Guadalcanal, on a liaison mission.

Mr. Grum was proud, to say the least, of having all *three* of his sons overseas. Of course, there was the other side of the picture. One day during a copy layout conference, Mr. Grum unbosomed himself to Ed Martin, advertising manager of the local daily which kept the town up to date on the moves of the Grum soldiers. "You see," he said, "you can't forget that the nearer they get to the front, the more chance there is of getting hurt. . . . Why, some nights I just lie awake in a cold sweat thinking about it. Ed, I think if I didn't have other things to keep me busy, I'd crack up. I don't let a day go by without writing the boys. That takes priority over everything. Five o'clock on the dot I call in my secretary and dictate an around the clock description of things here at home. I tell 'em only the cheerful things and let me tell you, Ed, it's not so easy to be cheerful with the whole

town depending on Grum & Sons for merchandise—I ask you, Ed, how can we sell folks if we can't get the right goods and the goods we *can* get, they don't like? Like this last job lot right here we're advertising for sale tomorrow—practically have to give it away. Ed, you better oughta write an editorial explaining the goods shortage and tell 'em not to be so fussy."

Merchandising was not Grum's only headache these days—June, 1944. One afternoon a representative of the Department of Internal Revenue dropped in to have a chat with the head of Grum & Sons about the corporation's 1943 return. Mr. Grum was neither surprised nor intimidated by the visit—his attorneys had carefully prepared him for it. The merchant, characteristically, took the bull by the horns.

"First, before you go any further, Mr. Hennessey," Grum assured the slim, studious-looking agent, "whatever Uncle Sam wants is all right with me. He can write his own ticket. He can grab *all* my profits. Look at it like this, Mr. Hennessey: there'd be no percentage to my cheating Uncle Sam because I'd be cheating my own sons." He labored to his feet and swung around to the silk-draped wall shrine. "Because I know as well as you do, Mr. Hennessey that those taxes go to clothe and feed our soldiers and give them the best fighting equipment in the world and naturally I'd like the best for my sons because that means they have a better chance of coming back. . . . Paul was stationed in England. We haven't heard from him in three weeks. You know what that means, Mr. Hennessey, with the Normandy invasion a week old!" To make sure that Mr. Hennessey did know what that meant, he pinned a dread glance on the tax collector. Then he cleared his throat of emotion and forced a smile. "But you didn't come here to listen to my sob story, Mr. Hennessey—all right, now about that one hundred thousand dollars chalked up to capital and expansion—I know what you're going to say. But I planned to double the size of my building way back in 1938. I can show you the plans. Not for myself, Mr. Hennessey. I don't need this business. I made my pile years ago and I'd retire right now if I was only thinking of myself and Mrs. Grum. I planned this expansion for my sons. But the war made building out of the question. So I put the money aside for them. Well, tell me this, Mr. Hennessey, should my three sons be

penalized because of the war? What the hell are we fighting for if the government confiscates everything? Haven't I sacrificed enough?"

EXCEPT for the tax matter, which was ironed out in his favor, the advent of summer was not unpleasant for Mr. Grum. The customary seasonal slack in sales was almost welcome. It permitted him to take a well-deserved rest at the Springs and to give more time to the war. He followed moves on the fronts in a very personal, fearful sense not unlike thrill. He tried to spot his sons therein as if they were horses coming around the far rail, upon which he had placed his bets. D-Day plus 47, Paul crossed the Channel. He was stationed at a recaptured airfield a few miles south of Paris. Robert had flown several fighter escort missions to the Ploesti Oil Fields. Arthur was inactive for the time being—he had returned to Headquarters, New Guinea.

One windy day in September, Mr. Grum had exciting news to report to friends at the Better Business Club Luncheon: Paul had just had a narrow escape from a sniper's bullet. It seems that the airbase where he was stationed had been pretty badly pulverized by Allied bombings prior to recapture. Every last man was put to work to get the runways into shape for planes to land again. It was while Paul was helping to fill in a bomb crater that he was fired upon by the lurking Hun.

"Nicked his helmet—just think," gasped the elated father, "If that bullet had come an inch closer! Well, you know the answer as well as I do. Guess what else—Paul's in Paris now on leave. Gosh, this sure is a crazy war. One day you miss death by inches and the next you're in Paree having the time of your life. . . . And to think of the many times the missus and I'd planned a trip to the Continent but never had a chance. It sure beats all!"

"And here's something I never knew and some of you boys probably never knew either: they've got a Statue of Liberty just like ours in Paris, standing right in the middle of the Seine River. Of course, it's smaller than ours and don't compare in beauty, Paul says. . . . I just can't get over that kid's brush with death—I don't know just how to break it to the missus."

That was nothing compared to Grum's excitement a couple of weeks later. He was notified that Robert had been among those in his squadron

awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Presidential Citation for exceptional valor in the Ploesti Missions. He broke the news with understandable eclat at the executive council of the War Bond Drive he happened to attend that very day.

"To think of that kid of mine, fresh out of college—a hero!" Grum thrilled to all present. "Downing four Nazi planes single-handed! Where do these kids get the nerve from? No, I'm not fishing. . . . He always had a lot of spunk. I remember when he was playing left end for Central High and sprained his ankle. . . ." Mr. Grum recounted the spectacular run.

MR. GRUM had long been in need of a new town car. But he did not think this was the proper time to indulge himself. Besides, there were no new cars to be had, strictly speaking. However, with Robert cited for bravery, no one in town dared look askance. So when by chance, a short time thereafter, his agent got wind of a 1941 limousine that was as good as new—it had lain in dead storage since three months after purchase—he decided to buy. It's true that the price was more exorbitant than had it been offered for sale by a dealer—in fact, it was above ceiling—but Mr. Grum was not one to quibble about price, especially since

it was a legitimate business expense. The executive board of Grum & Sons was certainly entitled to have a dignified car at its disposal.

So in the ordinary course, Grum invited the seller, a Mrs. Henrietta Marvin, to his office to transfer title and pick up her check.

The woman arrived at the busiest time of the morning—he was checking window displays for the fall showing—so that the merchant was doubly annoyed when she asked to have the check certified.

"It's not that your credit isn't perfectly good, Mr. Grum," Mrs. Marvin said, "but I explained to you on the phone I'm leaving for the Coast almost immediately."

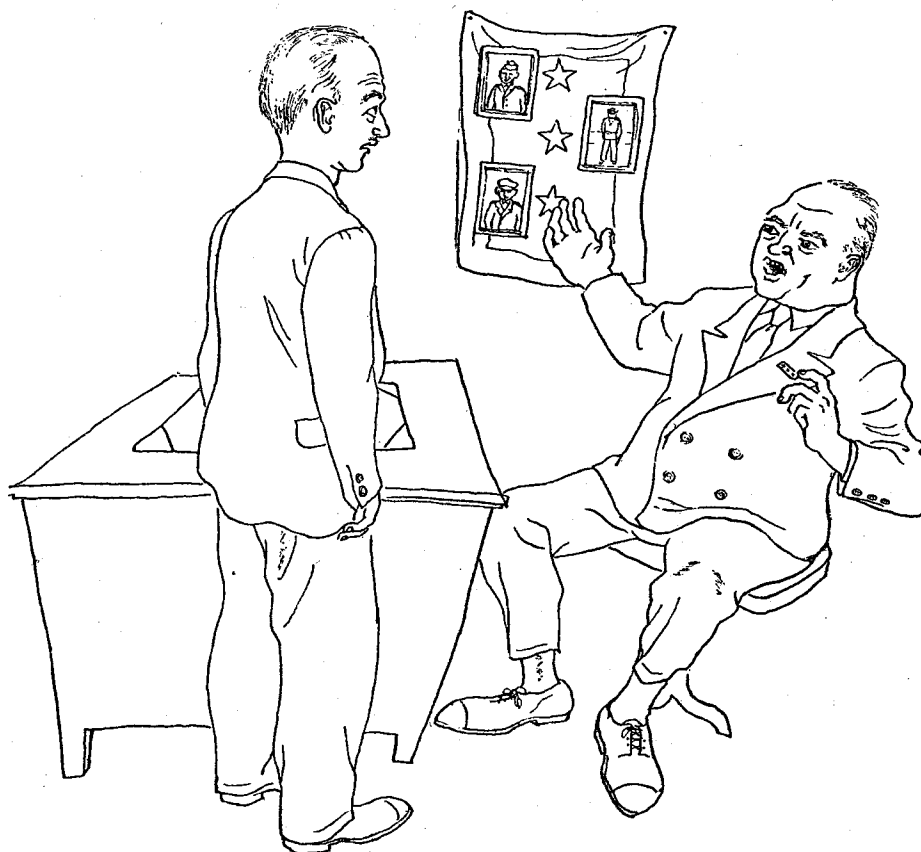
Mr. Grum promptly called in his secretary. While he was instructing her, Mrs. Marvin's gaze roved and she could not help noticing the wall shrine. When the girl had left to go to the bank, she addressed the preoccupied executive: "I hope you don't mind my asking, Mr. Grum, but are those pictures of your sons?"

"Yes, indeed! All three!"

Mrs. Marvin took the liberty of examining the snapshots at closer range.

"You're to be congratulated, Mr. Grum. They're fine-looking soldiers," she commented.

Preoccupied as he was, Grum could



spare a moment to satisfy the visitor's curiosity. Coming up behind her, he explained, somewhat as a guide at a museum describes the treasured exhibits: "The one on the left is Paul. Used to be my right hand in the business. Just missed being killed by inches in the Battle of France. . . . And that's Robert, my youngest. Fresh out of engineering college, only twenty-three years old, and he's flown thirty missions and shot down six enemy planes all by himself! Holds the DSC and the Presidential Citation."

"Oh, that's simply wonderful, Mr. Grum!" She stopped under Arthur's likeness.

"He's my oldest. . . ." Mr. Grum experienced a slight let-down. Arthur had done little to boast of yet. "The mystery man of the family. A month ago he was on Saipan. Last we heard he was in New Guinea. Nobody knows where he'll be next. He's a captain in Intelligence and you know how hush-hush they are," he explained almost defensively. "There's no telling how far that boy'll go when he comes home—smartest lawyer in town!"

Mrs. Marvin returned to her chair. "You must be a very proud father, Mr. Grum—three such brave sons,"

she said. "I wish I could say the same, but the Lord saw fit to bless me with daughters."

"Maybe you're better off, Mrs. Marvin."

"Yes, I suppose you're right. It must be very lonely for you, Mr. Grum."

The merchant responded almost automatically, like an actor picking up an old cue. "Mrs. Marvin," he said, "I'd be a liar if I denied that. At times we've been awfully low, awfully low, worrying and wondering—particularly the missus. . . . But we try to be strong. To remember what we're fighting for. We think of all the opportunities. . . ." He waved symbolically at the sumptuous executive appointments of his master office. "No matter who you are—no one's privileged. You've got to expect sacrifice, if you—" He broke off as his secretary reentered. The girl called Grum's attention to the note clipped to the check she handed him. He read: "Paul's wife is on the phone."

"Excuse me," Mr. Grum smiled to the visitor and raised the receiver to his ear.

"Yes, Laura, what is it?" He listened. "What was that? Repeat that, will you?" He turned his back on Mrs. Marvin and listened again. This time

he heard the message: "A telegram, father. . . . The War Department. . . . Paul was killed . . . in action."

"I'll be right over."

Mr. Grum thoughtfully let the receiver fall into place. He felt no sensation whatsoever. It was almost as if he had been expecting this message for a long time. He would have to notify the boys at the club. Call a meeting of the employees. The newspapers would have to be informed first off. He would need a photograph. He went to the wall, removed Paul's picture and placed it on the desk. It was not the best likeness of Paul but it would have to do. He was suddenly aware that his visitor was looking at him.

"Excuse the interruption, Mrs. Marvin. What were we saying?"

"About opportunities and the need to sacrifice, Mr. Grum."

"That's right." Mr. Grum bit through his cigar but he did not realize it. "That's right . . . we feel—the missus and I—you've got to expect to make some sacrifice. . . . Goddam sonovabitches! What's the sense of having kids!"

Mr. Grum turned Paul's picture face downward and sat there staring. . . .

TALK IN MONROE

By LAWRENCE GELLERT

Mr. Gellert, who recently returned from a trip to Monroe, Ga., in behalf of the Civil Rights Congress, tells what he heard in that locality where two Negro farmhands and their wives were massacred by a lynch mob last month.

POSTMASTER:

No, we don't hang no reward signs here. This is federal property and the killing of those n - - - rs is strictly the business of the State of Georgia.

BIG FARMER:

Whatever you grow got to be thinned out now and then. You raise you better crop that way. N - - - rs is no different.

COURTHOUSE LOAFER:

More'n a hundred bullets hit them n - - - rs. That's the safest way. Who gonna know whose bullet done killed each of the n - - - rs. According to law you can't convict nobody, less'n you know who fire the very bullet did the killin'. And who besides God Almighty hisself gonna know that. Not that they gonna convict nobody. They never do. But no harm in playin' it safe.

STOREKEEPER:

Nobody gonna tell nothing he knows, except maybe a n - - - r. But them crime investigators got 'em middle

Georgia drawl thick enough to plug off any leak there, you bet.

COUNTERMAN:

With January close by and Talmadge on the way back, none of them state investigators gonna turn in nobody. They'd get their fat ass kicked off the Bureau sure as God made little apples.

4 YEAR OLD CHILD:

I can't even say hello to you because my mamma said you never know who you're talking to.

RETIRED BUSINESSMAN:

Just you wait a few days and the whole thing will blow over. I've seen these things happen for fifty years and it always quiets down after a while. I'm surprised there's been so much sand raised as it is.

ADVERTISEMENT IN WALTON TRIBUNE:

We want to see justice done for the citizens of this County. Our prices are just as low as we can possibly make them!

BUS STATION AGENT:

A fancy tricked-up n - - - r asks for ticket to Monroe down in Atlanta. They sell it to him alright but phone me to have the police waiting for him here. Sure enough, when bus hits town one of them suitcase n - - - rs with