

SAYS THE RAMBLING REPORTER

Being the Highlights of Fifteen Years' Experience in Gathering the News

"HIP" was a telegraph operator. And a good one. He was on a United Press wire in the office of the Grand Rapids Press, where I was telegraph editor during the war—until the United States went in.

Newspaper telegraph operators have to be fast. The speediest senders, using "bugs," were employed in the New York and Washington offices of the big news bureaus during the war. They were champions, those boys. So when a big story came clicking over the cables from Europe or when one of President Wilson's notes was on the wire from Washington, the lads on the receiving ends of newspaper wires throughout the country had to work like demons to keep up.

All news matter comes over the leased wires in code. Yet the re-

ceiving operators write it on the typewriters just as it later appears in the newspaper. It comes over the wire abbreviated, but is written down in full by the receiving operators. During the war the receivers were not allowed to "break." They simply had to UNDERSTAND the code and write it down correctly.

Not One Bad Error

All through those sizzling days of wires hot with important news I never knew "Hip" to make a serious error. He was as alert as a cat with a mouse and as quick as chain lightning.

He could leave his chair while the wire was clicking fast, roll a cigarette and come back to his instrument and typewriter and catch up.

I asked him one day how he devel-

oped his speed, and this was the way he answered me:

"I'm a kid in Chi. King, about ten years ago and I'm working for the Western Union. One night a fast bird who works on one of the night wire quads is taken sick.

"I asks the chief 'op' to put me on. He looks at me kinda funny and says, 'All right, kid, take a whirl at it.'

"On a quad there is two men working at each end, one sending and one receiving at each station. Messages is traveling in both directions over the wire at the same time. This quad is the fastest in North America. All the night letters between New York and Chi travels dver it.

"The 'ops' arrange it so that they switch jobs at midnight. I starts the shift receiving and am scheduled to send from midnight on.

"The bird on the New York end who is sending to me knows I'm a green kid and he slips a lot of funny code over the wire trying to catch me napping.

A Fast Night

"I'm copying night letters like you never saw. And he is sending faster than he ever sent before, just to kid me along. All of a sudden I gets this one rattling out in Morse faster than you ever heard a clicker rip them off: 'Having a fine trip. Miss You Dreadfully. L. T. Y. A. B.'

"Now operators has their own codes for such expressions as are often used in telegrams.

"For instance the letters 'W. A.' coming over the wire means 'Will Arrive.' And 'M. H. D.' means 'Many Happy Returns of the Day.'

"But 'L. T. Y. A. B.' is a new one. I can almost hear that bird on the other end of the line chuckling.

"Then I takes a long stab at it and writes down the message without breaking for a repeat.

"A couple messages later this New York op says, 'Did you get that L. T. Y. A. B. kid?'

"And I shoots right back, 'Love to you and baby.' Slip me a hard one, Bo.'

Then Hip Sends

"At midnight it comes my turn to send and I figures I'll catch this wise New York dude, if it breaks my sending hand.

"So all through the pile of messages I keeps looking for a chance to hand him a line of code that will make him break for a repeat.

"Pretty soon I hits one that offers the opportunity.

"I shoots it at him like this: 'W. A. Sunday XXL.'

"I then 'bugs' him the signature and starts on the next message.

"Sure enough he breaks. 'Whadaya-mean XXL?' comes over the instrument from this New York guy.

"'Twentieth Century Limited,' I fires back. 'Wake up.'

"That story went the rounds of the big Chicago office and I begins to get a reputation for being a fast kid with the bug and just as fast on the taking end.

"And pretty soon I gets a chance to sit in on a United Press wire at the Chi branch.

"And what I know about code now would fill seven or eight dictionaries."

Somewhere now "Hip" is sending and receiving wireless. He enlisted in the signal corps of the army and got into aeroplane wireless, sending and receiving in planes over the battle lines.

Now he's traveling the seven seas, picking messages out of the ether.

And fast—that boy can make a Morse instrument sound like a continual, uninterrupted noise.

BILLY SUNDAY likes newspaper men and knows how to get space for himself in the newspapers. And newspaper men like Billy, because he manufactures such readable speeches.

I covered a Sunday revival campaign in Grand Rapids once and the following story will demonstrate the ever-ready wit of the famous enemy of his Satanic majesty.

The tabernacle was crowded. In fact it was so crowded that folks standing in the rear were leaning against the wall and windows.

In the midst of Billy's famous sermon on "Booze" the sound of breaking glass filled the great building. Someone had leaned against a window—too hard.

Quick as a flash Billy shouted: "Booze. Booze. Booze. There's booze everywhere. Hear that glass? Somebody busted his bottle."

WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN is noted among newspaper men as knowing more people by face and name than any other man in the United States. The memory of Bryan is astounding. The stories of it are told whenever political writers convene. Some examples of the Nebraskan's memory for people are almost unbelievable.

But I can vouch for this one.

In 1912, with about a dozen other newspaper men I rode with Bryan on a special interurban car from Detroit to Saginaw, Mich. The Commoner was campaigning for Woodrow Wilson. At every city he was introduced to delegations. People came and shook his hand by the hundreds. We newspaper men were introduced to him, asked a few questions, and sat in the front of the car through the rest of the trip.

Four years later I was introduced to Bryan again in Grand Rapids.

"I know you," said Bryan, "you are a newspaper man from Flint."

If I had not heard before of the Commoner's great memory for people I would have suspected him. It did not seem conceivable that a man who had met so many millions of people on his many tours over the country would remember a newspaper man whom he had seen but a few minutes four years before.

However, his recognition of me didn't turn my head. I understand he recognized a Greek bootblack in Washington in 1915 who had shined his shoes in New Orleans in 1898.

Great memory, Bryan's.

W. H. K.

If it is not convenient to leave your classified ad at our office, you can leave it at the nearest Want-Ad station.

IDEAL BOARDING HOUSE

M. C. Junkin has been transferred from San Pedro to the Julian refinery and is making his home here.

An enjoyable picnic in the Burbank foothills was enjoyed Sunday by Mr. and Mrs. Fayley Johnson, Mr. and Mrs. F. W. Johnson, Mrs. Dorwin White, Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Proctor, Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Parker, and Mrs. Clara Johnson.

Floyd Parker was a dinner guest Sunday of Los Angeles friends.

John May is nursing a broken thumb, sustained while at work at the Columbia steel works.

Jack Berry returned from a deep sea fishing trip Wednesday night, with sufficient fish for the ideal dinner Thursday, and their home.

Mr. and Mrs. Lloyd Proctor and daughter Helen leave in a few days for Centralia, Wash., stopping at points of interest on the way.

MANY ENJOY PARTY

Another successful card party was given by Mrs. J. E. and Mrs. E. E. McMasters last Monday night in the Catholic hall. An unusually large crowd was in attendance and a delightful evening was spent. Honors were awarded as follows: First, to H. L. Monks and Miss Rosa Ortman; second, to James Carlin and Mrs. Charles Corn; third, to Charles Vonderahe and Miss Dolores McNeil; door honor to, Mrs. Dietland.

George Hall of San Pedro was entertained Tuesday by Mr. and Mrs. G. H. Bradford of Cabrillo avenue.

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L. MAE TOMKINS
Commander.

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