

Riders of Buck River

THE STORY SO FAR—Ellen Terry is interested in two men—dashing Jeff Brand, a rustler, and Calhoun Terry, manager of a big ranch, against whom Jeff and Jack Turley are most outspoken. Four rustlers had been killed—

CHAPTER XX

Calhoun Terry took no unnecessary chances with the safety of his passenger. He had brought to town with him three Diamond Reverse B riders. One of these he sent to the corral to hitch a horse to the buckboard. Another one took care of the horses. The third was a lad named Larry Richards.

At a nod from the ranch manager Larry bowlegged along the plaza past Pegleg Jim's pool room, the Crystal Palace, and the Evans store. Through the swing doors of the Red Triangle saloon he passed, drawing up to the bar.

There were half a dozen men in the room. The two upon whom his gaze fastened were Lee Hart and Jack Turley. They were playing a game of seven-up.

Hank, the bartender, said, "What'll you have, Larry?"

Hart glanced up and stiffened. "Important customers patronizing you these days, Hank," he said offensively. "Better get out yore best."

Young Richards was a cool, daring man, with more than a streak of recklessness. He was a close personal friend of his boss.

"If it isn't Lee Hart," he drawled, enthusiasm in his voice. "How's everything with you? Good calf crop this year?"

The rustler started to jump to his feet, but thought better of it.

He said, "I'm not lookin' for trouble."

"That's fine," Larry answered. "Neither am I. You had me scared for a moment, Lee."

Hank polished the top of the bar with a towel. "Now, gents," he pleaded. "Let's not have any difficulty."

"Better tell this young squirt to finish his drink and get out," Turley advised the bartender.

"On account of me having the smallpox?" Larry inquired.

"Men from your outfit are not welcome at Round Top," Hart growled.

Richards recalled his instructions. He was posted here as a guard, with definite orders not to get into a fight. It would be better for him to sing small, but not small enough to encourage these men to jump him.

"I just dropped in for a last-chance drink on my way out of town," he mentioned in a placatory voice. "No offense meant, gents. I didn't know there was a deadline on our riders here."

Larry grinned down into his drink and refrained from further amenities.

The swing doors opened, to let in Slim.

"Dog my cats! Where did you drop from, Slim?"

Larry's expression of pleased surprise did credit to his ability as an actor.

"I been around," Slim said. "On my way back to the range now. How about you keeping me company?"

"I reckon I'll have to do that. Never saw it fail. When a fellow gets a bunch of nice friendly guys someone comes along and drags him away. Well, adios, gents! Been nice to meet you."

The cowboys sauntered out of the Red Triangle, mounted the two horses at the hitch-rack, and cantered up the street. They caught up with the buckboard before it had reached the cattle chutes by the railroad tracks. From the driver's seat Terry slanted an inquiring glance at Larry.

"Everything all right?" he asked. "Fine as silk."

The party ate lunch at the Box 55 restaurant. Terry introduced Powers to Lane Carey and his daughter.

"They don't approve of me or of the ranch," he explained to the Easterner. "But since you are only the owner and not responsible for the way it is run, perhaps you will escape criticism."

Powers had come West to find out all he could about local conditions. "Why don't you approve of the Diamond Reverse B, Mr. Carey?" he asked bluntly.

"I think it is one of the finest ranches in the West," Carey said. "But you don't like the way it is managed."

"I don't think you can find in the territory a young man who can handle stock better than Mr. Terry."

"He's dodging," the foreman said to Ellen, a gleam of laughter in his eyes. "But it won't do him any good. Mr. Powers will keep asking questions till he finds out what he wants to know."

They adjourned to the porch of the house. Carey talked plainly, as soon as he discovered that to do so would not be offensive to this stranger. Powers listened, fired more questions, learned the point of view of the small settler. It was not one with which he agreed, since he had been associated with big business all his life. But he was a man who faced facts.

Ellen sat in silence, taking no part in what was said. Powers turned to her.

INSTALLMENT TEN

"drygulched" from the back. A shot was fired at Terry from behind, presumably by Lee Hart, brother of one of the victims. At secret meeting, the big ranchers plan, over Terry's objections, to bring in a lot of Texas ex-

"What do the women think about this trouble?" he asked.

"They think it is terrible," she said. "What else can they think, Mr. Powers, when they see such awful things going on? Some of them are frightened to death for fear their sons or their husbands may never come back to them alive."

"Because their men are thieves?"

"I suppose they are," Ellen carried on, impulsively. "But what of that? The women aren't to blame. Some of them try to hold back their husbands and their sons, but they can't. If they lose them, it doesn't make them any happier to know that they brought it on themselves. Some of those who once in a while brand a calf not their own are good men in a way—good to their families, kind neighbors, generous to those in need."

"Generous with other people's property," the Philadelphian suggested. "Well, no need thrashing that out. I am going to step out of this feud before we get into it any deeper."

"I don't quite see how," said Carey.

"You and Miss Ellen will have to transfer your disapproval to some other ranch and some other manager. We are going to cut up the Diamond Reverse B into small

tracts and offer them for sale at attractive prices."

Ellen felt a glow of joy beating up into her breast. If the Diamond Reverse B was broken up into smaller units, it was because under present conditions so large a ranch could not be made to pay. The No. 10. By Joe and the other big outfits would have to follow the same course. The bitter feeling in the country would automatically disappear.

"I'm so glad!" she cried.

Her eyes were on Calhoun Terry. She was speaking to him, perhaps asking him to forget the hot anger with which she had turned away from him at their last meeting. He understood her words as an apology.

CHAPTER XXI

As Terry and Powers were leaving, Lane Carey noticed a newspaper sticking out of the Easterner's pocket.

"Is that a Denver paper, Mr. Powers?" he asked.

"The Denver Republican. Like to have a look at it?"

"At the cattle quotations, if you don't mind. I'm shipping next week."

Carey took the paper, but he never got from it the information he was seeking. A front-page story caught and held his eye. The headline was:

RUSTLERS WAR IN WYOMING

The story said that forty Texans had just reached the city and expected to leave within a day or two for some unknown point in the northwest. The Texans, the story stated, were rough-looking customers armed with revolvers and 45-70 Winchester rifles. Most of them had been sheriffs or deputy United States marshals in Texas or Oklahoma. None of them knew exactly where they were going, and there was an air of mystery about their arrival, heightened by the rumors to be heard around the railroad yards. The famous Sunday Brown was in charge of them, a man celebrated as a man-hunter in frontier days when the Indian Territory was a sink into which sifted most of the bad men of the Southwest. It appeared that Brown had been seen talking with Clinton Ellison, secretary of the Wyoming Stock Association, but Ellison in an interview denied any knowledge of the Texans. He had heard a Wild West Show was being organized. As to this, he had no positive information. One of the

peace officers to invade the rustlers' lands and kill them. Terry summons John Q. Powers, chief owner of his ranch, and persuades him to offer the big Diamond Reverse B for sale to small ranchmen by dividing it up.

Texans, who asked not to have his name given, had admitted to the reporter that they were heading for the cattle country to clean up the rustlers who had been stealing so flagrantly.

Carey passed the newspaper to Terry, pointing to the story.

Calhoun read it, not a flicker of expression on his face. It disturbed him even more than it did Carey, since he knew and the Box 55 man could only guess.

"Maybe a reporter's yarn to fill space," he said evenly.

Ellen pumped a question at Terry. "Do you think they are coming to the Buck River country?"

"There's something in the story about a Wild West Show," the foreman evaded.

"That doesn't mean anything," Ellen replied impatiently. "That's just something Mr. Ellison told the reporter. If they are coming here, what do they intend to do? One of the Texans said they were going to clean up the rustlers. Did he mean . . . kill them all?"

"I had a disagreement with Mr. Ellison," replied Terry. "When I told him I was urging Mr. Powers to cut up and sell the ranch. He felt I was deserting the big outfit group. I am no longer in the confidence of the association. Naturally they wouldn't tell me their plans."

"But what do you think?" Ellen insisted. "You must have an opinion."

"I think that if I were a rustler I would be hitting the trail for parts unknown," Calhoun answered, looking directly at her.

She worried about what she had read in the Republican, even after the foreman and Mr. Powers had left for the ranch. When Jeff Brand dropped into the crossroads station she lost no time in telling him the news.

He would not believe the Texans were heading for the Buck River country, and if they came the invaders would find the district too hot for them. The news about the Diamond Reverse B interested him more.

"It's the beginning of the break-up of the big ranches," he told her excitedly. "I'll say for Terry that he is smart. The Diamond Reverse B will get out in time and save its hide. Some of the others are so stubborn that they won't."

"Yes, they are stubborn," she agreed. "I'm glad Mr. Terry has broken with them. I never did believe he had anything to do with the killings."

Brand slanted a quick look at her. "Did he ever give you any hint who he thought the drygulcher was?"

"No. I'm sure he doesn't know, and if he did he wouldn't tell me. We're not friendly."

He frowned down at the ground, drawing a line in the sand with his boot. "I've spent a lot of time milling that over, girl," he said. "It's someone who knows our habits mighty well. He must have known Buck was going to be where he was the morning he shot him. The same goes for Tetlow and Yeager. Not many men would know that. I've been over the list of men in my mind forty times, but none of them seem to fit. Some of them are guys I would trust with my life. I have a specimen of his writing in my pocket now."

"Let me see it," she suggested. "I've seen the writing of lots of people. When they send mail out, you know."

He showed her the slip. Ellen read, "This is what happens to rustlers."

"Yes. I've seen the writing. At least I think so." She looked up at him, the light in her eyes quick. "I'm not sure, but—"

Silently, his gaze on her, Brand waited.

"Did you ever suspect that man Turley?" she asked. "It couldn't be Jack. He's too bitter against the big ranches."

She added, "I believe this is his writing. I'm not sure, but it looks like it."

He put the slip in his pocket, his eyes diamond-hard and bright. "You won't—get into trouble with him," Ellen said, repenting of what she had said.

He changed the subject. "About those warriors in Denver. I don't believe they are looking for us."

"I asked Mr. Terry what he thought," she said. "He looked straight at me, Jeff, and said that if he were a rustler he would light out and keep going."

"He'd like to throw a scare into some of us he thinks are his enemies," Jeff replied derisively. "I don't scare that easy."

"I'm telling you this so that you will let others know about it," Ellen told him. "Some of them may feel different from you about leaving."

Ellen did not know whether she had been wise to warn him. It might only make more trouble. She wished too she had not mentioned Turley.

(TO BE CONTINUED)



"I just dropped in for a last chance drink on my way out of town."

GRASSROOTS

WRIGHT A. PATTERSON

(Released by Western Newspaper Union.)

WE, THE JOHN DOES, ENTITLED TO KNOW

IN LESS THAN 18 months, the congress of the United States, our representatives at Washington, has obligated John Doe, Mrs. John Doe, John Doe Jr., Sally Doe and Baby Doe for \$512 each, the whole Doe family for \$2,560.

All of us John Does, and our families, realize the need being prepared to defend our nation, our institutions, our way of life, our homes, but as those who must pay for that defense, we are entitled to know what it is costing and what we are buying.

Appropriations made by congress for 18 months, up to August 1 of this year, have amounted to \$87,559,885-510. During that 18-month period, congress has obligated each man, woman and child, including the babies, for \$512. Each family of five is obligated for \$2,560. And that is not the end, for additional appropriations of from 6 to 10 billion more will probably be made before the end of December.

We John Does do not object to digging down in our jeans to pay for whatever may be necessary to defend this land we love, but as the fellows who must pay the bills, we feel we have a right to know what we need and to receive an accounting as to what we are actually getting for these sums for which we have been obligated.

Certainly someone must know how many really serviceable planes we had when the agitation started and can give an honest statement of what we have now. We should know how many light, medium and heavy tanks we had when it started and how many we have now. We are entitled to more than a statement of an 800 per cent increase in heavy tanks because that is meaningless when we do not know how many, if any, we started with.

With an army of one and a half million civilian employees, it should be possible to keep books, to take an inventory, to know what we have, what we need and what we are getting. If those who represent us at Washington do not know these things, they are spending our money like drunken sailors and when the opportunity offers a year from now, we should carefully pick as representatives others who can be depended upon to obtain the facts and give them to us fellows who must pay the bills.

It is our money that is being spent so lavishly and we are entitled to know what we are buying, and why.

LIGHTNING RODS

WAY BACK when I was a boy, the wagon of the lightning rod erector was a familiar sight on the country highways. He disappeared with the passing of the last century. It is a safe bet that the farm home or barn ornamented with lightning rods was erected before 1900. It was a profitable racket for a number of years.

GETS IMPORTANT POST

PAUL APFLEBY worked for a couple of years in the print shop of a country newspaper in Missouri. With that experience, he went to Montana and for a few months operated a weekly newspaper there. Then he went to North Dakota and another paper for another few months, and then on to Minnesota. In Des Moines, Iowa, as a member of a debating society, he became acquainted with Vice President Wallace and that acquaintance resulted in his appointment as undersecretary of agriculture. Now Paul Apfley is in England investigating the food needs of the British people for the American government. You might term it "from 'devil' to ambassador."

GOVERNMENT BONDS A GOOD BUY

WHEN I was a small boy in Iowa, old General Weaver of that state, then the leader of the Greenback party, was a frequent visitor at father's home. His demand was for printing press money. In recent years, we have come close to General Weaver's idea. We have sold the banks 27 billion dollars worth of government bonds and the banks have issued the printing press money. More money means more inflation. To prevent an increase in the currency, the government is selling its nontransferable bonds direct to the public. If the public does not buy voluntarily, it is possible that congress may conscript a portion of each person's income as a means of disposing of the bonds. They are a good buy and their purchase by the public will go far toward preventing that greatly-to-be-feared inflation. We have now more currency than is good for us.

MAIN STREET

MORE THAN three-fourths of all the counties in the United States contain no town of more than 10,000 people. A fraction over 50 per cent of the members of the house of representatives come from districts in which there is no town of over 5,000 people. This is an indication of the part rural America has in determining national policies and legislation. People of the towns and farms can, if they wish, dictate what we, as a nation, shall do. Main street has greater influence than Broadway.

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Fringe on Our Flag

There is no significance attached to the yellow fringe on the American flag. According to the war department it may be regarded as "fringe only, and is of no value or significance as a part of the flag."

The use of the fringe has long been a debated question, although the war department sanctions it, and the United States Flag association does not consider the use of the fringe as improper. Nevertheless, the first flag adopted by the Continental congress in 1777 bore no fringe, and many patriotic citizens feel the American flag needs no decoration.

The men in the service themselves have solved the problem of what they want in the way of gifts from the folks back home. First hand information from enlisted men on shipboard, in camps and barracks indicate that tobacco is first choice in the gift line-up. Actual sales figures from service stores show that the favorite cigarette with men in the Army, Navy, Marines and Coast Guard is Camel. Prince Albert Smoking Tobacco is another special favorite. Local dealers feature Camels by the carton and Prince Albert in the pound tins as doubly welcome gifts to the men in the service from the folks back home.—Adv.

Origin of Trouble

Nine times out of ten the trouble with the world, or the people in it, can be traced to you, yourself. Most of my quarrels have been homemade. In an interview, turn the thoughts towards things worth while, and see how soon you will instinctively feel the presence of a good man.—Van Amburgh.

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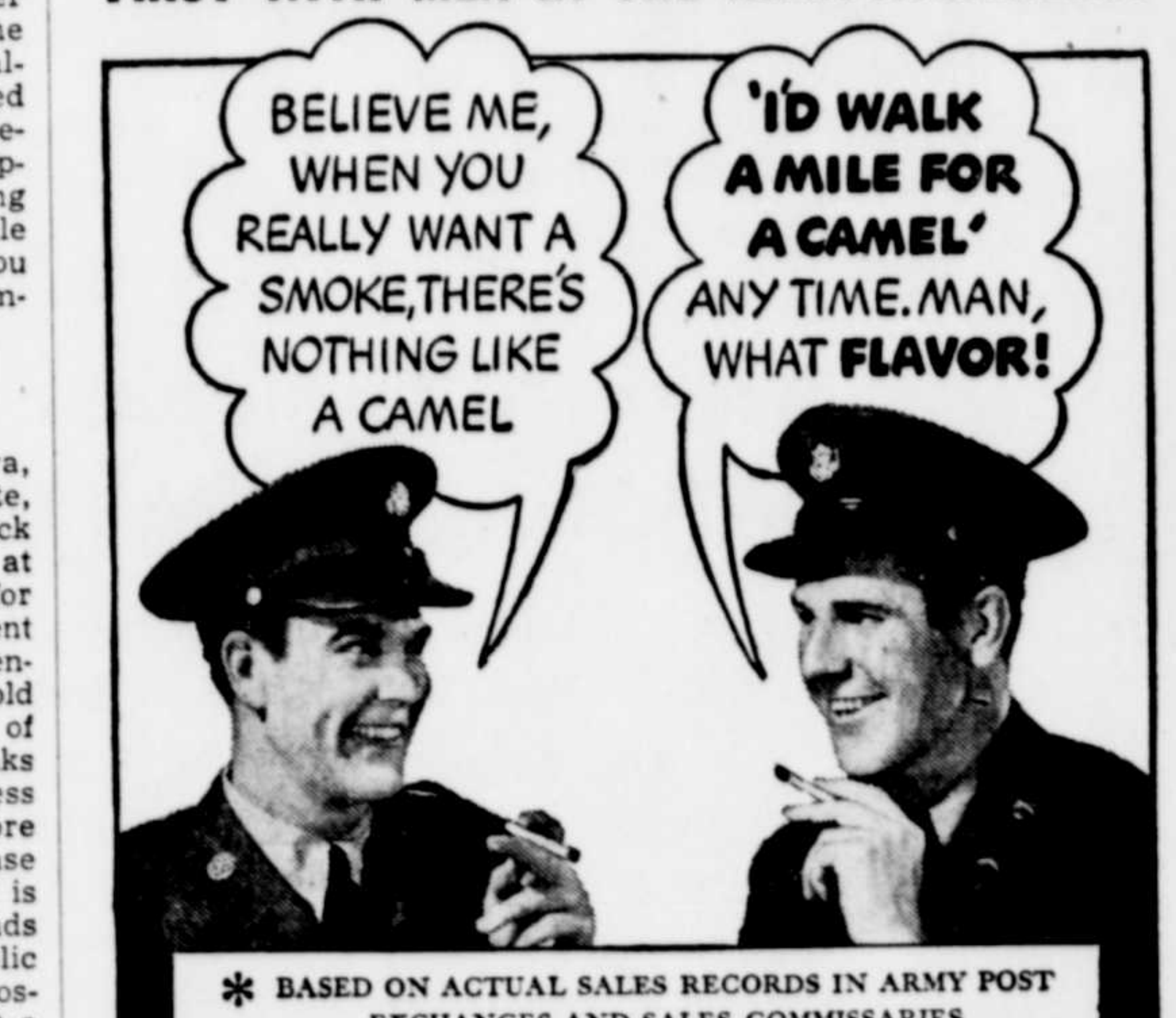
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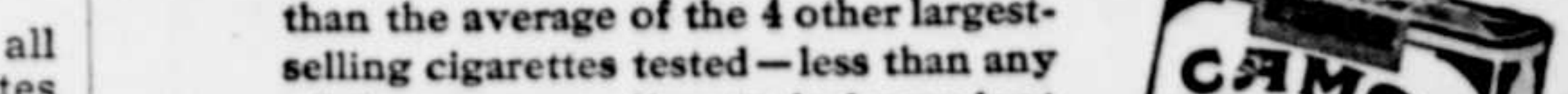


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