



John Fischer

MEET YOUR NEIGHBORS

WHAT would the founders of our nation think of this map? They came to America to put vast distance between themselves and the prohibitions of the "old world." They sought the protection of isolation in order to start from scratch and create new freedom and opportunities.

Our ancestors came from "foreign" lands: from Scandinavia, Russia, Ireland, Poland, England, The Netherlands, France, Germany, Italy and from many others. For centuries these countries were far away, on the other side of the world.

Now, air transportation cancels physical isolation. American Airlines makes the people of Canada, Mexico and the United States neighbors to the people of Europe, and makes the people of the old world neighbors to us.

Whereas land and water separate the earth's inhabitants, air unites them!

Effectively our planet has been reduced in size from the big, old world in which the Mayflower required 65 days to make its transatlantic journey, to the small, new world in which only hours are required to travel from your home town to Europe.

The pictorial map above shows much more than the national and international routes of American Airlines System, certificated by our government to serve 17 nations. It shows how our world has changed and, as a result, how our concepts of geography and the relationship of people must change. It shows that all people now live upon the one, universal highway of air... all accessible... with no place on earth isolated from the airplane.

Air travel on behalf of governments and for business purposes, and ultimately for pleasure, now is being utilized by people on both sides of the Atlantic. American Airlines System offers daily transatlantic services.

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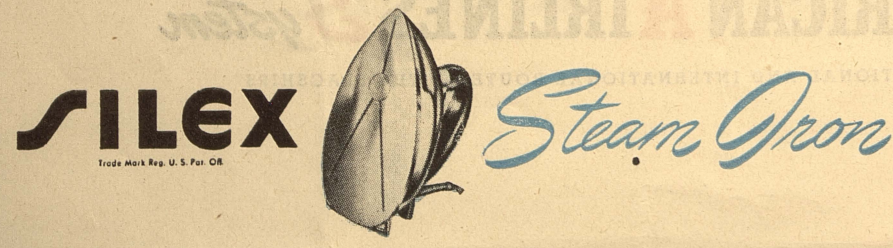
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(Continued from Page 98)

"No. I didn't come the road. Who locked up, and when?"

"I did, a little after six."

"Were you alone?"

Tess nodded.

A wry grin came to Frank's face and went swiftly. He looked at her a silent speculative moment, then said, "I was supposed to tell Rhino something at— No, I've got to prove I was in town at six tonight, Tess. I wasn't."

He paused, and Tess said nothing, watching him, feeling a curious distaste for this.

"I was sent in to tell Rhino some things. If you could write out those things, I'll take your key and put the list on Rhino's desk tonight. Tomorrow he'll ask about it, and you can tell him I came in at six, you wrote the message and left it on his desk."

He paused now, apparently seeing the reluctance in her face. Now he leaned over and said swiftly, earnestly, "It's important, Tess. I can't tell you how, only you've got to believe me."

Tess leaned back slowly in her chair and looked at him with pity in her eyes. She said finally, "You can quit being afraid, Frank. He didn't die."

A startled look came into Frank's face now. He said cautiously, "Who didn't die?"

"Pete Faraday. You didn't kill him. He's hiding in the McGarrity's empty stable. I saw him, but too late to stop you signing over Saber." She leaned forward now and put her hand on his. "Frank," she said passionately, "get that look out of your eyes now! Laugh once more! He's not dead! You've signed away half of Saber because you thought you killed him! Now, stand up and fight back at Rhino! It's over!"

Tess was expecting anything but what she saw now. An expression of black and bitter despair came into Frank's face then, and there was a dead hopelessness in his eyes. He only shook his head.

"Then that's not what you are afraid of?"

Again Frank shook his head in negation. He rose now and walked slowly across the dining room. Halfway across, he paused, as if his mind was made up, and he came back to the table and leaned both hands on it and looked at her and said vehemently, "Tess, don't look at me that way any more! I'm doing what I have to do. Would it do any good if you knew some of it, some of the reasons why I have to do it?" His voice was low, deadly in earnest.

"If you want me to know," Tess said.

"All right. I did a shady job for Rhino, a job that would lose me Carrie if she ever found it out." He paused, and then went on stubbornly, "She's the only kind and decent person I've ever known, and I've treated her badly. I'll do anything—anything to keep from losing her. I've bought Rhino's silence with half of Saber. I'll buy it with all of it if I have to, just so I don't lose her! Now do you understand why I'm afraid?"

"No," Tess said bluntly. She started to rise, but Frank put a hand on her shoulder and pushed her down in the chair. They looked into each other's eyes for ten full seconds, and Tess' gaze did not falter.

"Say it," Frank said slowly.

"All right, you love Carrie. You want to live with her the rest of your life. But can you live with yourself the rest of that kind of life?"

Frank frowned. "What do you mean, Tess? Be plain."

"Where's the end to this blackmail? There isn't any. Are you going to cringe

until you die? Nothing is worth that, Frank. Not even Carrie!"

Frank's glance had never left her face. "If I tell her the truth, I lose her."

"Does she love you?"

"Yes."

"Then you won't lose her. You wouldn't lose me. You wouldn't lose any woman that's really a woman."

There was no belief in his face, she saw, and her heart was suddenly sick. She understood him now, understood his desperation and fear, and she pitied him more than she had ever pitied anybody, but she did not intend to let that pity alter her decision.

She rose wearily, and this time he let her. At the door she said in a voice oddly without emotion, "No, Frank. I won't give you the key. I wouldn't, even if I knew what's behind your wanting it. I won't lie for you, either. If you can't tell her, you're already lost, and nothing will do any good."

It was the clerk's footsteps pausing in the dining-room doorway that finally roused him minutes later. He reached down and picked up his hat and put it on, and then moved unseeing past the clerk through the lobby and outside. He paused here under the veranda beside the abandoned barrel chairs and automatically reached in his shirt pocket for his tobacco sack. It was sodden. He threw it into the gutter and then stared at it, thinking, *It's come. I've fought it up to here, and this is the end of the road.* He moved out to the edge of the boardwalk and stared out into the wet night.

Tess was right in one thing. Where was the end to this blackmail? There wasn't any end to it; he'd attempted the impossible. He might keep it from Carrie for months or for years, but sooner or later she'd find out.

His horse jerked his head impatiently in the rain, and Frank glanced at him. Well, there was his horse, and there was the whole wide world before him. He could ride out quietly tonight and be out of this. Carrie would write him off then. A fiddlefoot, no good.

But he knew he wouldn't ride out. He'd come this far and he would go the rest of the way. She could hate him, but she couldn't say he'd dodged this. He untied his reins, ducked under the tie rail and stepped into the wet saddle. The street was a mire of mud, and his horse splashed noisily as he turned him and headed up the side street, toward Tavister's. In a little while now he would be hearing the words he had been fearing to hear all along. That was as far as he would let himself think ahead.

He turned into the Tavisters' street, a kind of apathy in him. *Suppose Tess is right?* he thought. *Suppose she takes me anyway?* No, there was no use hoping; he'd been doping himself on too much of that lately.

There were lamps lit in the Tavisters' house. He tied his horse and went up the walk and knocked on the door.

Carrie answered. When she saw who it was she exclaimed, "You idiot, Frank! What are you doing out in this flood?"

"Waiting to be asked in."

Carrie pulled him inside and shut the door. She took one look at him and said, "The kitchen for you, son, with that slicker."

In the kitchen he shucked out of his slicker, tossed it into the sink, and then turned to look at Carrie. She was staring at him, and he looked down at his clothes. They were muddy and wet; one leg of his pants was torn from his scuffle with Albie.

Carrie said, "Well, a woman's work is never done on the day of a rain. Come on in and dirty up the parlor."

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She waited until he came up to her, and she kissed him, and then she went on ahead. Frank followed her silently into the parlor. For the first time, it seemed, he was seeing the richness and the quiet elegance of this house. The rug was deep, the furniture black and shined. The overflow of books from the judge's study lined a back wall. Carrie had been sitting in a big chair by the fire, mending. The log in the fireplace softly caved into the ashes now, and the flames stirred brightly.

Carrie went over to her chair and picked up one of the judge's shirts. Frank thought, *This is my last look.* He went over to Carrie and took the mending and laid it in the sewing basket.

He toed a footstool around in front of her chair and sat down facing her. He looked into the fire, and presently Carrie said, "You look tired, son."

He glanced at her and his smile died. Now was the time, but how was he to begin? He plunged, "Carrie, you were pretty proud of me taking in Rhino, weren't you?"

"I think he'll do you good."

"Want to know how I happened to take him in?"

Carrie nodded.

Frank folded his hands between his knees and looked at them and began to talk, "After that last row with Rob, when I left Saber, I got work with Rhino. Know what I did for him?"

"Bought horses, didn't you?"

Frank still looked at his hands. "No. There were four of us—Hugh Nunnally, Pete Faraday and Albie Beecham and myself. Rhino had stolen an Army uniform somewhere. It fits me. It was the uniform of the cavalry, with the tabs of a second lieutenant on it."

He looked up. She was listening, and his glance fell to his hands again. "I wore the uniform. I posed as Lieutenant Harding, from Fort Garland. I was traveling through the country looking for cavalry mounts. You know, don't you, that the Army pays a hundred and twenty-five dollars for any horse that meets its standards?"

"That's good money for a horse, isn't it?" Carrie asked.

"Yes," Frank answered. He looked at her expectantly, waiting for the first sign of protest. There was none; she was listening carefully.

"I would go into a town alone, as Lieutenant Harding, and ask to see horses. The ranchers and the farmers would bring them in for me to see. Hugh Nunnally was always in the crowd that watched me look at horses. But I never bought any. I always rejected every horse showed me, but I had a code word when I rejected them. If I said the word 'sound' when I rejected the horse, Hugh always knew the horse was a good horse, that the Army would take it."

He looked up again. Carrie was watching him intently; she was understanding now.

He went on, "I disappointed a lot of ranchers and farmers. Sometimes they were pretty bitter when I rejected their horses. I was nice about it, but stubborn. I'd move on out of town. Hugh Nunnally would go up to the men who owned the horses I rejected with the code word. He'd admire the horse, and start bargaining for it. He'd offer the standard price for a sound horse. That was forty dollars. Since the ranchers had just lost the chance to sell to the Army for a hundred and twenty-five dollars, they usually accepted Hugh's money."

Now he looked up again. He could see nothing but interest in Carrie's small face. What had he forgotten? He cast back, and he thought he'd said everything, but he went on doggedly, "Albie and Pete Faraday held the horses in one bunch in some safe canyon. When we had a bunch of them we brought them back and Rhino sold them to the Army for a hundred and twenty-five dollars."

Now he waited, watching her face. She said then, "How very, very clever." There was no irony in her tone; she meant it.

He stared at her a long moment, then took a deep breath. "You don't understand," he said patiently. "I was wearing an Army uniform. I was

(Continued on Page 105)

"Thirty-five East?—this is thirty-five West."

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST



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