

like me to put my thumb in it?" Once in a while a waiter got up and walked on the tables. And from the kitchen there was a constant bedlam of dishes breaking, pots falling, women screaming, bells and whistles going off, moans, shouts, and thumpings. All during the meal a waiter kept going around the restaurant like a newsboy, yelling, "Here ya are—*News-Bee*, *World-Telegram*, *Daily News*—read Ernie Pyle's column—read all about it!" He was holding high in the air a big roll of toilet paper.

When we started to leave, I could hardly lift my topcoat from the rack, it was so heavy. Waiters came running from everywhere. They felt in the pockets and yelled, "We've caught a thief! We've caught a thief!" And then they started unloading the pockets. They took out enough knives and forks to set up the whole restaurant. They took out salt and pepper shakers, and jars of sugar, and bottles of ketchup—I didn't know my pockets could hold so much—and all the time yelling, "Boy, did he try to make a getaway!" Everybody in the place was howling.

By that time I decided, aw, to hell with it, I might as well get in the spirit of the thing too, so when they had all finished I picked up a handful of knives and forks and put them back in my pocket, and at the counter I took three cigars and two chocolate bars and walked on out the front door.

The place was known as Bud & Luke's. It was run by two brothers, Eugene and Glenn Fowler. They had started it as a side line eleven years before, when they were auto salesmen and not doing very well. At first they were too busy to do a decent job of waiting on people, and had to cover up their poor service with a little kidding. The kidding seemed to take hold, and now it had grown into this colossal buffoonery.

People were always saying to Bud and Luke, "Say, I know a fellow who would be a wow as a waiter." But these wows never seemed to turn out. It worked better just to hire some casual applicant; in a couple of weeks he would get in the swing of the thing and be crazier than anybody.

I asked Bud (or maybe it was Luke) if anybody ever really got sore. He said, yes, once in a while. They would always try to smooth things over, but if the guy didn't warm up, then they would really let him have it. Nobody had ever got sore enough

to fight, however. More people got sore because they came for a ribbing and didn't get it.

They threw a customer into the street only about once a week. These throwouts were generally arranged ahead of time (as mine was, I learned later). I think the funniest one was when a couple of boys from the *News-Bee* called up and arranged to have an out-of-town guest thrown out, and the waiters got mixed up and threw out one of the arrangers.

Those strange men in screaming cars that tear around the Indianapolis Speedway on Memorial Day—how different are they from us common mortals who drive down the road at fifty miles an hour? Off the track, you couldn't tell a race driver from anybody else; some are dapper and keen, and some are plodders—just human beings. But on the track? Well, they have to be different from us. For five hours out there they live in a world we can hardly conceive of. I spent some time among the drivers, asking them schoolboy questions about this other world and getting the answers. Here are some of them:

Can the driver and mechanic hear each other talk during the race? Yes, but not very well. They shout back and forth a little, though not much. They talk mostly by pointing.

Can they hear that dramatic, momentous, mile-long yell of the crowd as the winner comes down the stretch on the last lap? No. The rushing wind and the roaring motor make too much noise, and anyway, by the end of the race they're almost deaf.

Are the boys in the cars conscious of the crowd? Yes. I hadn't supposed they even know the crowd was there, but they see quite a few things. Wilbur Shaw said he could actually see the crowd getting drunk as the day wore away. One year he saw a woman standing on top of a car in the infield. She threw up her hands and fell off backward, drunk as the moon—he saw it all while taking a turn at a hundred miles an hour.

Does the driver ever take his eyes off a straight line right ahead of him? Yes. Once in a while, when the cars aren't bunched, he gawks about a bit just to relax. But in the two-man cars the driver seldom looks behind him.

Does the race ever get monotonous to the driver? Yes. Some-

times they drone along for a hundred miles with the cars well scattered and no change in position, and it is then like monotonous driving anywhere else. Can the driver squirm around in his seat for a new position when he gets tired? Hardly at all. The seats are very narrow. Do they ride on air cushions? Some do, but most of them don't. Some of the cars ride as smoothly as our touring cars. Others ride like log wagons.

Does a driver ever get sore at another one for the way he's driving? Yes. A driver sometimes gets mad at his best friend for blocking him off.

How much does the driver depend on the riding mechanic? A great deal. The mechanic has to watch behind for cars trying to pass; he helps read the pit signals; he watches the outside tires for dangerous wear. And to me one of his most interesting little duties is this: going into every turn, he looks to the left, clear across the turn, to see if there are any pile-ups on the far corner.

How do the drivers feel about the danger of racing? Their attitude toward death is exactly the same as it is among aviators. It's a simple philosophy—it can happen to the other fellow, but never to me. A friend who is close to the game told me that after one of the boys has been killed, the drivers say, "Well, Jim was a swell fellow, but he never should have been allowed to drive," or "Well, Bob was a great driver, but he should have had more sense than to take that old pile of junk out on the track."

If a car really gets into wide and handsome slides, the boys say there isn't anything you can do. You just "take to the cellar and ride it out." Taking to the cellar means ducking way down low, so your head won't stick out.

Do drivers get scared during a race? Well, yes and no. Naturally you couldn't see a car pile up and people get killed without being affected, but the drivers seldom slow down. The hardest part is being flagged down to sixty or eighty miles an hour for several laps because of rain or a wreck. When you drive four hundred miles at real speed you're in a state of nervous tension that will carry you on through nearly anything. But have that spell broken, and the fine tight wire of your senses goes slack. Drivers almost go crazy during the "flagdowns." They want to get going again.

They yell at the race officials as they go by, pleading with them to "let us go."

And then when they do get the green flag and everybody guns it and they go slamming around faster and faster than ever, wild over lost time, their armor of rigid tenseness all shot, their nerves frazzled—right there is the most dangerous part of your five-hundred-mile auto race.

Nearly every car in the race is an individually made job. No car even faintly approaches being a stock car, and the drivers say there isn't any such thing as a speedway car's having a certain make of engine. Maybe it was to start with, but the mechanics and engineers so alter and rebuild these engines that by the time the race starts you couldn't call them anything.

Race cars have no speedometers. At their speed, a speedometer wouldn't be accurate within many miles, and it would be just one more gadget to cause trouble. Most of the cars do have tachometers, which register the engine revolutions per minute.

Each car has two sets of brakes, hydraulic on the foot brake, mechanical on the lever. They all have electric starters. The motor itself is often a better brake—and a more dangerous one—than the brake itself. On some of the high-compression four-cylinder jobs a driver would be committing suicide if he suddenly lifted his foot off the throttle at a hundred forty miles an hour. It would be like slamming on the brakes, and the car would go into a wild skid. Letting up on the throttle is called "backing off." Instead of slowing up for a turn, you back off from it. But because of the danger of your engine's overbraking your car, you must back off slowly and easily.

Taped onto one spoke of the steering wheel is a little push button just like the button on the hotel wall that you use to ring for ice water. This is a cutout for the whole ignition system. In case of a skid, if it looks to the driver like a bad pile-up, he presses this button and the ignition is cut off, so there won't be a fire after the crash. There might not be time to reach down to the dash and turn the switch.

The drivers and mechanics take an awful beating on the rough Indianapolis track. Wilbur Shaw said he happened to look down into the cockpit once on the back stretch, and there were four

legs jiggling and shaking all around the car like jellyfish. It tickled him so he punched his mechanic and made him look.

You're mighty tired at the end of five hundred miles—if you haven't won. There is an old saying around the speedway: "The winner is never tired."

Harold Korb, of Evansville, was the champion soda jerker of the United States, and he didn't take the honor lightly. He was proud and serious about it. It was more as though he had been given a medal by a scientific society in recognition of years of research. And the funny part about it was that Harold Korb wasn't a soda jerker at all, and never had been. He was an ice-cream salesman. But he sure knew how to make a chocolate soda—only I shouldn't say it that way. You never make a soda, or jerk a soda, or mix a soda. What you do is "build" a soda. Korb's great distinction came at Cincinnati, at a convention of sixty-six ice-cream salesmen from all over America. These salesmen have to be better soda jerkers (builders) than the jerkers themselves, because it is part of their job to tell the jerkers how to do it. Well, at this convention, every salesman had to build a soda. The judges didn't sample the sodas; they just watched the building process. And it was such a beautiful sight to watch Harold Korb build a chocolate soda that even before he had finished they told him he was the winner.

His prize number was called the Mellow-Cream Chocolate Soda. Here's how he built it: he put in an ounce and a half of chocolate syrup, then two soda spoons of stiffly whipped cream; he stirred them up very thoroughly and discarded the spoon; he shot a very fine stream of carbonated water into the glass until it was three-quarters of an inch from the top (didn't dare stir it any more); then he plied (yes, plied) two No. 24 dips of ice cream, one gently on top of the other, so it would stick up on top of the soda and the customer would see it and say, "Oh, goody!"

Harold Korb wasn't a smooth-tongued man, but the confectioners must have sensed that he was very honest and very thorough. His years of close attention had been rewarded. At thirty-five he was a white-collar man in the dairy's promotion department, and he owned two homes and had a wife and children.

I laughed and said, "Well, you're really a big shot now, aren't you?" Korb laughed too, but he said, "I've never been anything but a big little shot to Harold Korb." Success had not turned the head of the man who built a better Mellow-Cream Chocolate Soda. And if I was in the soda-fountain business, and Harold Korb told me to stick a corncob in every chocolate soda—boy, I'd stick a corncob in every chocolate soda.

In recent years we had heard a lot about the "good neighbor" policy among nations. But to me, and I suspect to most of us, "good neighbor" had become a mere academic term; city dwellers had almost forgotten what a good neighbor is. But the country people still knew.

My mother had a second stroke and became paralyzed on a Thursday night. By Friday morning the whole countryside knew about it; word travels fast among the neighbors of western Indiana. Help began to roll in instantly. The strongest men in the neighborhood came, without being asked, to help lift my mother in her bed. The women came to help Aunt Mary with the washing and housework. Others came, and others called, to see what they could do. Mrs. Goforth baked two butterscotch pies and sent them over. Lou Webster sent up an angel-food cake and came twice to help us with the work. Hattie Brown cooked a roast, with dressing and everything, and sent it up steaming hot for our Sunday dinner. Cousin Jediah Frist, who would be eighty his next birthday, drove down from town in a sleet storm to see if he could do anything. Nellie Potts brought flowers clear down from Newport.

Mrs. Bird Malone brought a beautiful hyacinth. When my mother had had her first stroke a year earlier, Bird and Mrs. Malone started over to see her. On the way, the car door came open and Mrs. Malone fell out and broke her arm at the shoulder. She was in a cast for three months, and still couldn't close her hand. I told her she was pretty brave to start the same trip over again.

Oll Potter's mother sent a whole basketful of fresh sausage and pork tenderloin, and a peck of apples. When I was a little boy, the Potters were the poorest people in all our neighborhood. They