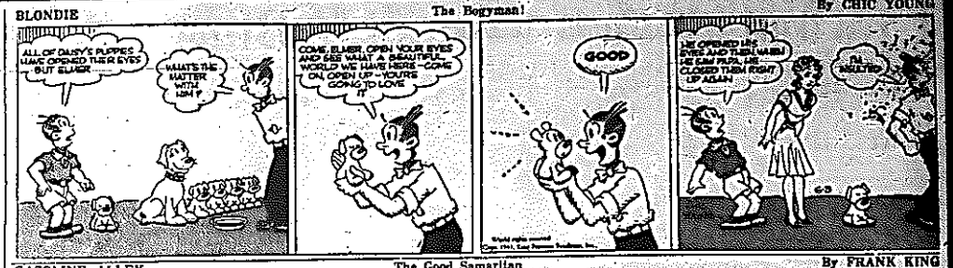
OUR BOARDING HOUSE — With MAJOR HOOPLE

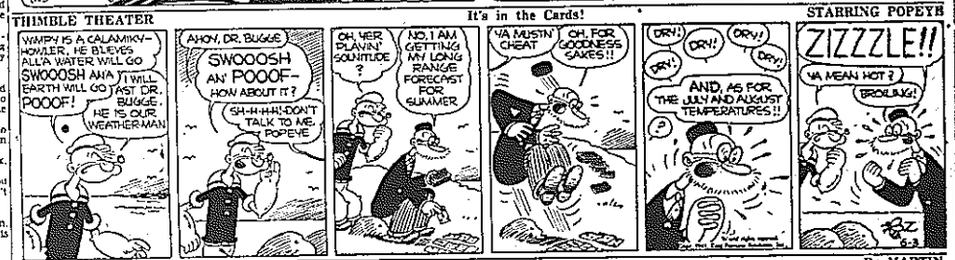
BLONDIE — The Boyman! — By CHIC YOUNG



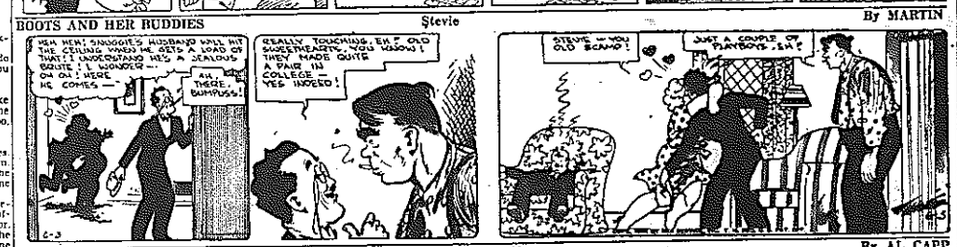
GASOLINE ALLEY — The Good Samaritan — By FRANK KING

RED RYDER — Following the Leader — By FRED HARMAN

THIMBLE THEATER — It's in the Cards! — STARRING POPEYE



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES — Stevie — By MARTIN



LI'L ABNER — Pawns of Fate!! — By AL CAPP

WASH TUBBS — On the Spot — By ROY CRANE

Of The Night — JAN VALTIN

CHAPTER TWO

SAILOR'S WAY

It was springtime in Hamburg. I wanted a ship, a job at sea, and a chance to work myself up to a captain's rank. For weeks I haunted the waterfront, but the great seaport was a sleeping giant.

I would awake hungry, and was still hungry when I went to sleep. Hunger wiped out the lines between adolescents and full-grown men. A sack of flour was worth more than a human life. When a fruit cart of a peasant from Vierlanden was turned over in the street and a middle-aged man tried to shoulder me aside in the scramble for the Winter apples, what else was there to do but to stand up and hit him in the face? I was in my fifteenth year.

A faithful shipping master, Wallert, through his acquaintance with former sailship masters, at last found me a ship. One morning, half drunk as usual and bullying his frightened wife, he thrust a letter into my hands and shouted at me to report to the Shipowners' Association for duty aboard the former Africa liner Lucy Woerman. As if by sudden magic, I was signed on as ordinary seaman and the following day I packed my canvas bag and went aboard.

The ship was bound for South America. She was loaded with crews who were to man and bring home the large fleet of German vessels marooned in the ports of Chile and Peru during the war. Desperately anxious to leave the hunger-ridden Fatherland, thousands schemed and bribed to get on board the Lucy Woerman. Scores of the nearly four hundred who were signed had been among the mutineers of the Imperial navy; scores of others had never been aboard a ship before: once at sea none manifested the slightest intention of bringing German ships back home, or of ever returning to Germany.

The ship was infected with stowaways. Three boatloads of them were returned to shore off Cuxhaven. Before the red rock of Heligoland was abeam, five girls were discovered in the boatswain's locker, and three other young women, who proved to be the wives of former stokekeepers, among the crew. All of them were transferred to homebound fishermen. But many others, found later, remained aboard.

Herman Kruse, an old member of the Spartakus Bund, called a general meeting of his followers aboard the Lucy Woerman and emerged as the head of a newly elected ship Soviet. He formed a ship Tcheka, and by sheer terror subdued all independent marauders in our midst. He brought some order out of the confusion and now he demanded control of the ship. The whipper armed his officers with pistols for the meeting with Kruse's Soviet. By way of retaliation Kruse's strong-arm squads seized all available provisions and began a hunger blockade against the bridge and the engine room. Most of the time the steam was left low, and at times the ship wallowed helplessly without steam at all.

But the officers succeeded, despite all difficulties, in bringing the vessel to Colon. One faction on board planned to scuttle the ship in the Panama Canal, to desert, and to walk through the jungle to Mexico or the United States. Herrmann Kruse and his guerillas, armed with clubs and belaying pins, opposed this. Kruse's plan was to allow the Lucy to pass through the Canal, then to overpower the officers. After that, we were to steam for the Galapagos Islands, establish a Soviet Republic, and ask Moscow for protection, supplies and women.

Opposing factions shrieked their protest. "Kruse wants to be a dictator! Down with Galapagos! We stand right here!" Little did the American authorities at Colon suspect what a mess was passing into the Canal. In defiance of Kruse, "debarkation squads" were hastily formed as we steamed through the Canal. The rush to reach a shore that looked inviting from a little way off was contagious. As a matter of course, I joined one of the squads.

We packed our belongings, put on life preservers, and lined up along the rail for the plunge. The captain shouted from the bridge for us to desist, but he was greeted with laughter. Group after group hoisted their bundles overboard and followed them. The Canal waters were soon dotted with swimming men.

After walking in circles for four or five hours, we struck a lake. We tried to skirt the shore of the lake, but soon ran into swamps. The Amazon River stoker cursed almost without interruption. The shoemaker chattered happily. He told us he had all the tools of his trade in the bundle he carried, and he looked forward to a prosperous existence in some American city. Suddenly our leader halted.

"Look—a railroad," he exclaimed. Ahead of us was a railroad embankment, neat, compact, dry.

Someone said: "Let's stay here and dry out our bundles. When they're dry, they'll be easier to carry." We all agreed.

It was agreed that the men who stood guard on both sides of the tracks should whistle when a train approached. But when a train came from the Atlantic side, the guard did not whistle. Naked, his pants and shirt jammed under his arm, he came running toward us down the tracks. Behind him rumbled the train.

It was too late to save our things. Our leader yelled, "All hands take cover."

We dived into the jungle. The train ran over our belongings. Then it stopped. Men in khaki uniforms jumped from the train, and began to comb the jungle.

We separated. I crawled through broad-leaved bushes, moving on hands and knees, and when I rose I confronted a grinning soldier.

"Come on," he said, grasping my shoulders. "You can't run around here with no clothes on."

He led me to the train. All my companions had been caught. I put on a shirt which had been cut under the armpits by the train, and a pair of trousers which had but one leg. My comrades did not look much better. We were herded into the train and taken to a station. From there we were marched to a police post. The Americans treated us hospitably. They fed us and plied us with cigarettes.

Before nightfall we were all loaded into a motor launch and returned to the Lucy, which was anchored in Panama Bay. The ship weighed anchor and shaped a course down the west coast of South America, calling at Callao and ports to the south. The majority of the men on the Lucy Woerman refused to man the ships for the voyage home. There were strikes, arrests by the Chilean police, jail breaks. Herrmann Kruse became known all along the Nitrate Coast as the "Commissar from Hamburg."

I deserted the ship at Antofagasta. Seven months I lingered on the Chile coast, until, by a stroke of luck, I found a berth on what, I believe, was the finest and largest sailing ship afloat at that time. It was the Magdalene Vinnen, a four-masted barque, which eventually brought me back to Chile.

One of my shipmates had broken a leg off Tierra del Fuego. The captain of our ship refused to have the injured man transferred to a hospital. There was a near mutiny on board in which I had a hand. To avoid arrest by the Chilean harbor police, I deserted at night in the captain's rig and repaired to familiar haunts in Antofagasta. Christmas Eve of 1922 found me celebrating with other stranded sailors on the green lawns of Plaza Colon, dancing with Mrs. Bready, the cheaty female shipping master of Nitrate Coast, who generously had supplied a keg of wine. For a fee of six pounds sterling Mrs. Bready found me a berth aboard an ancient barque, the Obotrita. Captain Dietrich, bound with nitrate around Cape Horn to Hull, England. I paid off in Hull in the early spring of 1923. From there I bought passage to Hamburg.

I came home to study navigation, with the intention of obtaining an officer's ticket. But the minute I set foot on German soil, I found myself sucked into a whirlpool of hate and distress even more fierce than the one I had left. I found that my family, my mother and the three younger children, stripped by the cyclonic inflation, badly needed what little money I had.

I wanted to ship out, to get away, to go back to the far seas. I made the rounds of the British and Scandinavian shipping masters. They had no ship for me. Their offices were besieged by stranded foreign seamen.

"Our nationals come first," they told me. "You'd better go and sign aboard a German ship."

I went down to the riverfront, to the central shipping office of the Shipowners' Association.

I went to one of the barred windows and threw in my papers. The clerk looked at them, shoved them back.

"What do you want?"

"I want to register for a berth," I said.

"On deck?"

"On deck, yes."

"I can't register you."

"Why not?"

"All your discharges show foreign service."

"Want me to starve to death?"

"No; you can apply for a dole."

"To hell with your dole. I want a ship."

"Can't give you a ship. You've sailed on foreigners. You've paid no taxes in Germany. I can't give you a ship, I tell you."

"Listen! I'm a sailor. I'm a German. This is a German shipping office. I'm willing to work. Any ship. Anywhere."

"Aw, get out!"

At this instant a broad-shouldered man with bronzed features, who had stood in the crowd around the windows, shoved me aside.

"Come on, partner," he said to the clerk, "register this fellow. An equal deal for everybody."

"I can't," protested the clerk, "that's against the regulations."

"Damn your regulations. If you don't register this man, he can't even get a dole."

"Who are you anyhow?"

"Never mind that," said the man. "I'm a stoker. And I tell you this man will be registered."

"Getting tough?"

"You bet your teeth."

"Huh, beat it."

The stoker thrust his sun-blackened head close to the bars.

"Listen, Bonze," he growled, "do you know what'll happen if you don't register this comrade?"

"What?"

"I'll get a hundred men to take those benches and smash up the place. Smash your cocoanut, too, for that matter."

"I'll call the police."

"You've called them many times. That won't save this new partition. Remember how we smashed the other one? Touch that telephone and we'll dance with you."

The clerk did not touch the telephone. He went into a private office and returned with the director. Half-stunned, I made my way to the Cathedral of St. Michael. Beside me walked an old mariner. He was serene, as if nothing had happened. "Even if they had registered you," he said, "you'd have waited all of two years for your turn to ship out."

"They killed a man up there," I said.

"That's all right, you'll get used to that . . . Let's have a beer."

(To be Continued)

Says U. S. Banking System Is Ready

MYRTLE BEACH, S. C. — (AP) — America's banking system is organized to do its part in the national emergency, President Ernest Patton told the South Carolina Bankers Association yesterday.

"Banks and depositories are stimulating the public to buy savings bonds and stamps to supplement high taxes in financing the $44,000,000,000 defense program," said Patton, who is first vice-president of the South Carolina National Bank of Greenville. "The national debt may reach $50,000,000,000, a sum greater than the largest income this country has ever seen. However, England now has a debt of twice her annual income."

Combat Team Off To Maneuvers

FORT BRAGG — (AP) — Colonel Frank C. Mahin will lead the 60th Combat Team to Bowling Green, Va., in the Camp Lee area, early tomorrow to participate in maneuvers with the 44th Division from New Jersey.

In the team will be the 60th Infantry Regiment, one battalion of light artillery, one battalion of medium artillery, one platoon of engineers and a contingent from the Ninth Reconnaissance Troop.

Seven hundred vehicles will transport the troops.

In 1937 the army owned 11,600 trucks, of which there were 96 makes and models. By the end of the fiscal year in 1941 that number will have jumped to 185,000 trucks, exclusive of tractors and vehicles requiring a special chassis to meet military needs.