



CATS ARE CRAZY

By REID L. BUNDY

Rocky Hartland tells me his favorite bop joke goes like this: Two cats had finished a long run show downtown and were going to spend the winter on Catalina. Boarding a steamer in San Pedro after a boisterous "bon voyage" party, the hepsters made their way to the stateroom below where they were to make the trip. After the steamer had cleared the breakwater, one of the cats broke the fire off his cigarette, opened the porthole and said: "Man, what a crazy Bendix this is!"

From Tommy Ayles comes the one about the salty prospector who was nearly dead from thirst crawling across the Mojave desert on his hands and knees feebly calling out "water, gimme some water."

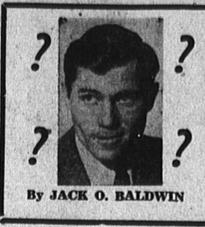
Meeting a cat in a wide-brimmed hat twirling a super-long key chain he repeated his quest for water. "Don't know where the water is," the bopper replied, "but ain't this a crazy beach?"

Our own Agnes Bolter came up with the one about the hep cat and his girl friend snuggled on a bus stop bench in a quiet corner of town when a motorcyclist roared by at an estimated 80 miles an hour. Said the cat: "I thought that guy'd never leave."

Walter Hillier thinks we ought to pass along the one about the two boppers standing on a street corner swinging their key chains when a fire engine screamed by with the sirens splitting the air. "Listen, man, they're playing our song."

From Larry Moeder we heard about the two cats in a hotel room who were high on a couple of sticks of Mary Warner. One of them looked out the window and said he was going to fly over to the cloud nearby and float around for a while. Police investigating his crash to the sidewalk three stories below, made their way to the room and found the remaining hepster in a fit of gloom. "Why d'ja let the guy try to fly to that cloud," the detectives asked. The cat replied: "I thought he could make it."

We always liked the one about the two musicians in peg pants, wide-brimmed hats, and the awful long key chains watching an exotic snake charmer in a sideshow. "That music's real gone," said musician No. 1. "Yeah, but dig that crazy music stand," No. 2 replied.



By JACK O. BALDWIN

I suppose most of us have among our memories a certain Christmas which we remember more than others.

My most unforgettable Christmas was that one of 10 years ago.

The war was a little more than a year old. Our troopship had pulled into the harbor at Noumea in New Caledonia. On board were more than 3000 Marines enroute to the front.

Our commanding officer approached the gangway where I was standing watch as a gig came alongside to take him ashore to pick up orders.

"I am going to Wing Headquarters. I'll be back about midnight," he told me as he stepped over the side, saluted the colors, and started down the gangplank. "Lieutenant," he called.

"Yes sir." "For 'sake pull up that pistol belt. You're not a Texas cowboy."

"Aye, aye, sir," I told him as I hitched up the .45 automatic about my waist.

Heads for Shore As the skipper's gig headed toward shore leaving a widening V of ripples astern, I turned toward the bow of our Dutch motorship. As I looked the ship over I thought to myself: "How SNAFU can a situation be? Here we are aboard an ice breaker and where did they send us? Into the tropics."

"I guess everybody is up on deck tonight, eh, Lieutenant?" asked a Polish crew chief standing a few feet from me.

"Looks like it," I told him as I gazed over the mass of men lying on the canvas-covered hatches and across the deck. It reminded of a human log jam. Feet, heads, and arms were every which direction. Most of the men were stripped to the waist. It was hot. Even the rail on which I was leaning still held the heat of the hot tropic sun which had beat down on it several hours ago.

"Man, oh man!" exclaimed "Polak" the Polish sergeant. "Look at the size of that moon." It was a huge brilliant tropical moon about 15 degrees off the horizon and so bright it cast shadows behind the ships riding at anchor in the bay.

"If I weren't afraid that a shark would take my leg off I could go for a swim," Polak said. "Humph, here I'm talking about a swim and I'll bet it's snowing like mad back in Harborsburg."

"Yeah," I told Polak, "That would be something to write home about. That you'd taken a swim on Christmas Eve."

"The Polak," as we called him, pulled a harmonica from his pocket and began slapping it in the palm of his hand. He put it to his lips and began to play. "Turkey in the Straw," I think was the first tune. Then he played another one—something about "When Douglas MacArthur came to Tulagi there was no USO." Some of the men began singing, adding as Marines are wont to do, a few expressions never found in any dictionary.

"The Polak" finished the tune and again slapped the instrument in the palm of his hand to remove the moisture, put it back to his lips and played "My Gal Sal."

My most unforgettable Christmas was born as the Polak played the tune that carried 3000 Marines as fast as their memories could carry them back home—4000 miles away.

Over the decks and out across the warm tropical waters of a South Seas port went the strains of a song that some men were never to hear again.

To everyone who reads this and to Judy and Freddie in their iron lungs I wish the merriest of Christmases. J. O. B.

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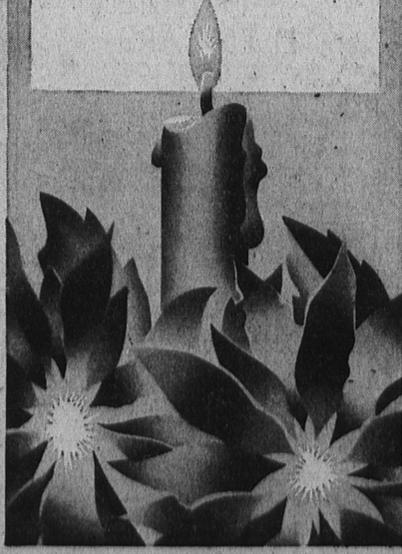
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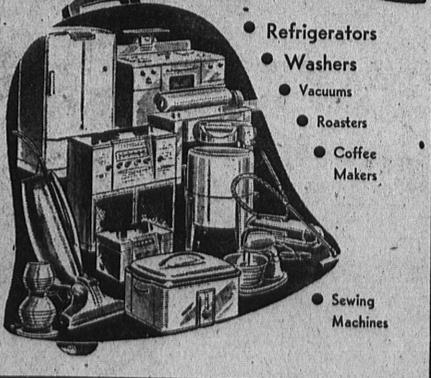
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