THE FARM FRONT
by John Russell

Looks like another mess of hash this week, and the first ingredient is something about fires. An insurance man says that only 11 per cent of farm fires are the result of carelessness; which looks somewhat on the small side to us, but who are we to doubt the say-so of an expert? Poor construction of buildings, he claims, caused the balance.

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By that he means bad roofs, chimneys that aren't kept in good repair, stoves or furnaces that overheat, and buildings without lightning rods. Anyway, it mightn't be a bad idea to take a look around the place and see if anything needs fixing. And this might be a good time for me to remind you once again that the amount of fire insurance you carry SHOULD NOT be based on what a building cost you years ago, but on WHAT IT WOULD COST TO REPLACE at today's prices. There's a mighty big difference between the two.

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Of course you know that water pipes that aren't below the frost level in the ground need extra protection in winter; but it's also a good idea to check any vertical piping, that has been packed with sawdust or earth, to make sure that the packing hasn't settled, thus exposing some part of the pipes. And even indoor pipes, which pass through unheated portions of the house or other buildings, may need insulation.

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This latter is particularly necessary with hot water lines, as the insulation not only prevents excessive loss of heat, but will prevent freezing at times when such piping may be idle.

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Dr. J. W. Bailey, a well known veterinarian, has some interesting things to say to all who keep dairy cows. We have long been told, he writes, that a lack of water means less milk from the cows—and with milk being so largely composed of water, it is easy to see why this should be true.

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However, a deficiency of water causes an even more serious loss than that of decreased milk production. The biggest loss of all is sickness caused by indigestion—in fact it is this sickness which brings about the decrease in the milk flow.

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It is only natural that cows should suffer most from lack of water in the winter months. At other seasons they are likely to have greener feeds and to be outdoors where water is more convenient.

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Dr. Bailey tells about a sick cow which he attended in an ultra-modern barn. She was the only ailing animal in a large herd and was really sick. It took the better part of an hour to figure out what was the matter with her, and the answer—when found—was so simple that it made him feel foolish.

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What had happened was that this cow's drinking cup wasn't working and Bailey estimated that the poor beast had been without a drink for at least three days. Replacement of a wornout valve in the drinking cup soon fixed things up.

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Sometimes whole herds will sicken with indigestion during the winter when water pipes freeze, or "automatic" water systems go haywire, or drinking cups get plugged with feed. When cattle are watered outside indigestion on a herd-size basis is likely to go along with a particularly cold spell. Shivering cows won't drink as much as warm ones, even though the water may be steaming and have a smoking heater standing in the tank.

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The situation, naturally, is much worse if the watering place is an unheated freezing tank, or a hole chopped in the ice of a creek or pond. And indigestion on a large scale may even appear in fairly mild weather. That's because cows aren't built like camels, so trouble is common in herds that are only turned out to water once a day.

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So, Bailey says, why not take time off some evening and see if you can figure out some ways of getting more water into your cows this winter? Plenty of good drinking water means better herd health, and that means less expense and more milk.

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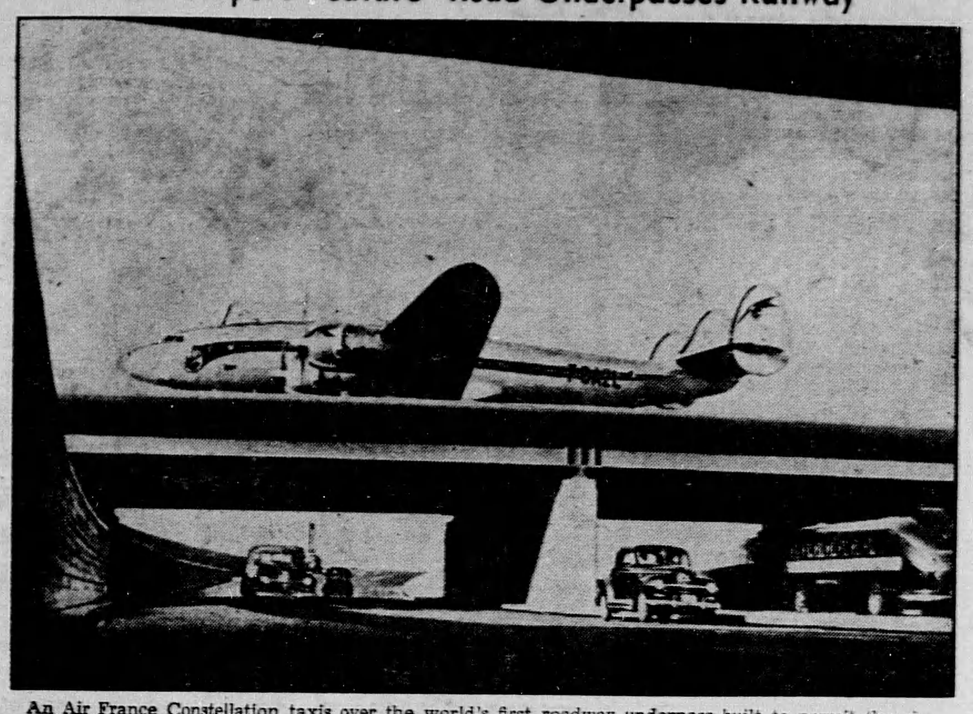
All of which I pass along to you, together with The Compliments of the Season.

New Airport Feature--Road Underpasses Runway



An Air France Constellation taxis over the world's first roadway underpass built to permit the simultaneous movement of aircraft and surface vehicles at New York's International Airport. The underpass, considered a major engineering feat, drops to below sea level at the point pictured above. The roadway, retaining walls and overpass comprise a 92,000-ton "concrete boat" built to withstand pressures from below sea level.

Searching for Orchids

Ever since Jocelyn Brooke was a child he has had a passion for orchids, those strange and subtly beautiful plants. He says that of the sixty species that grow wild in Great Britain, many are very rare indeed and growing rarer owing to the increase of building, and the depredations of holiday makers, hikers and zealous botanists. He pleads that these lovely rarities should be allowed to flourish where they grew and said: "If one must gather them, it is better to cut the stalk, as this is less likely to disturb the root."

Brooke has been an orchid hunter since he was eight; entranced by the spell of these flowers he has sought and found some of the rarest of them. Orchids have a strangely imitative quality; there is the Bee Orchid, which looks like a cluster of living bees clinging to the stems and the Spider and Fly Orchids have this same quality of mimicry. There is a Man Orchid, Frog, lizard and Butterfly Orchids and, rarest of all in Britain, the Military Orchid. He has searched all his life for this, but has not yet found it. He has even written a book called "The Military Orchid," combination of personal anecdote and botanical record which he terms an "autobontanography."

He called orchids the Royal Family of the British Flora and said, "like other kinds of royalty, they are on the decrease; perhaps the plant world in this country is becoming republican." He mentioned that orchids are thought of by the man in the street as symbols of Edwardian opulence or decadence; to him they have a fascination and a quality of uniqueness. "Orchids are not quite like anything else; there is something rare and singular about them, something a little different, something a little queer, something rather self-consciously and defiantly elegant."

Jocelyn Brooke, product of Bedales and Oxford, has been wine and book seller, author and medical orderly in the Army. He joined as a private during the war, remained in the ranks for five years, and has recently re-enlisted for a further term. He concluded his talk on British orchids by saying: "When so many of our public or private symbols are losing their power to sustain us I find it consoling to think that certainly, but I can still return every year to look at the Early Spider on the Dover cliffs, or the Lady Orchid in the woods of the Elham Valley, and feel pretty sure that they will still be there, and that they will still give me the same satisfaction that they did when I was a child in that remote, unbelievable age of thirty years ago."

Poor Hubby

In recent months a perfume maker has been carrying on an unusually ambitious advertising campaign in newspapers of the Mid-West and Far West. The ads smell like the perfume, which is mixed with the ink used for the particular page on which the ad appears.

All went well until one newspaper, by error, got the perfume mixed into all its ink for one issue. The whole paper reeked. Heavily scented husbands hesitated to go home from the office lest their odor be misinterpreted.

Glass-Blowers Art A Delicate One

The glassblower's delicate art is thousands of years old, and is generally thought to have been discovered about the beginning of the Christian era in the Phoenician city of Sidon. Since that time there has been little change in glassblowing methods, although modern tools help simplify the procedure.

In the great days of Venice, glass blowers achieved a high artistic status with their exquisite creations, but today the blowing of glass for most uses has been modified by mechanical means, although the art survives to contribute an essential skill to the field of chemical research. The scientist, and especially the chemist, has become dependent upon glass as one of the chief materials for fabrication of containers in which his studies are made.

From the beginning of science to the end of the last century only the simplest glass apparatus was known; flasks, retorts and tubes were used and their style changed little down the centuries. In the last quarter century, however, more elaborate apparatus and custom-made glassware have been introduced, a development necessitated by the complicated work of today's scientific workers.

In the type of work done for the laboratory, a raw stock of tubular glass, previously blown to this shape as part of the manufacturing process, is held in the flame of a burner, fueled with gas and compressed air or oxygen until the glass reaches the right state of flux, a point between rigidity and liquefaction. From long practice the operator konws by the colour of the glowing piece when it has reached the proper state of plasticity. The glass can then be drawn out many times its own length or blown into any shape desired.

The flame from the torch can be adjusted from a mere pinpoint to a fanlike blaze. Glass first becomes red and then white-hot and in this latter stage is almost impossible to mould; therefore, most of the work is done while glass is red-hot.

As glass is a poor conductor of heat the piece being worked can be handled within an inch or two of the molten portion. Without this happy faculty, the glassblower's efforts to mould the piece would be difficult indeed, as he must turn the entire affair by hand, slowly and continuously to achieve even heating while applying the flame.

Strictly Fresh

Anthropologists have turned up in South Africa another "missing link" in the evolution of man. Ultimately, we expect to hear of the existence of a whole chain of nothing but missing links.

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In England, the top quiz prize on BBC is $8. For that kind of money here, you couldn't even get people to answer the phone!

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One bookstore advertised a volume entitled, "Harry Truman, a Political Biography," with this inflationary sign: "Formerly 19 cents, now three dollars." And for a deflationary note—there's probably a drastic cut in any Dewey literature.

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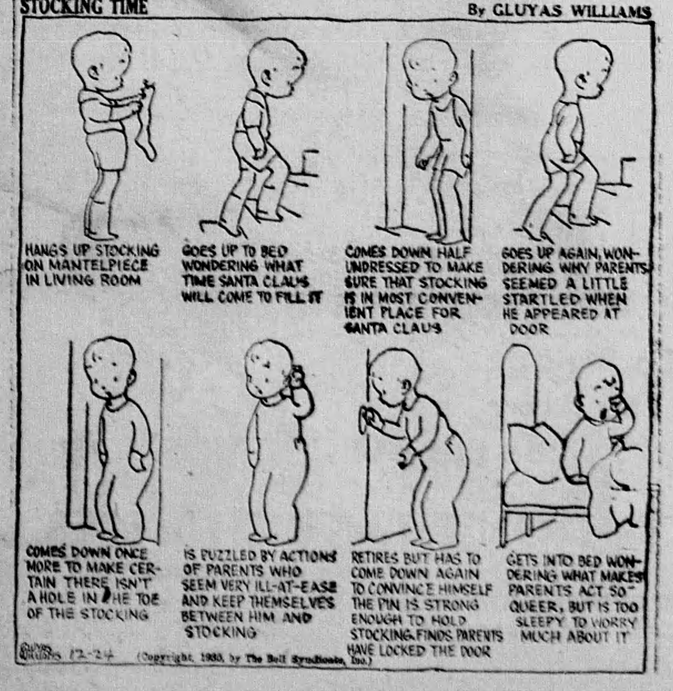
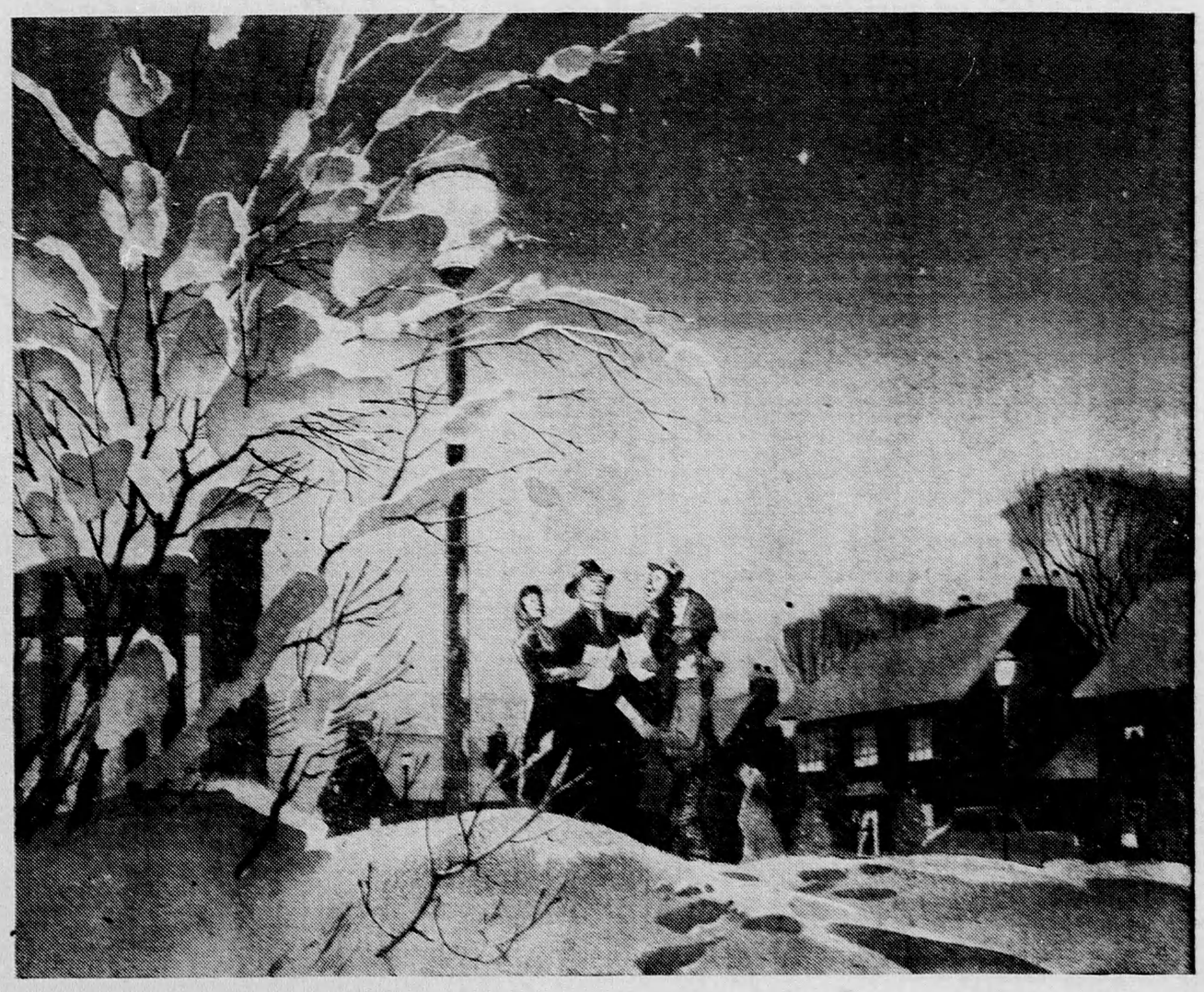
Juliette St. Amour was granted a divorce from Romeo St. Amour in Detroit. That's a new wrinkle in a very old cloth.

Merry Menagerie—By Walt Disney

"I'm leery of blind dates—describe her to me!"

STOCKING TIME — By GLUYAS WILLIAMS





The Other Christmas

Christmas—a time of candle-light flickering on happy faces, a time of carols and good cheer, of brightly-wrapped gifts and tinselled trees.

And deep within us all is still another Christmas, the Christmas guiding our every day—a Christmas born for us of a tolerance and understanding that goes beyond words; born for us so that men may live in harmony, with purpose to their lives and benevolence in their hearts . . . This is the *other* Christmas, the spiritual Christmas.

THE HOUSE OF SEAGRAM