

The Free Press Short Story

FOLLOWING CONVICTIONS

BY STAN J. DAVIS

THE Judge looked hard at the well-dressed defendant. He looked at Officer Jim Lash of the motorcycle division. There was no alternative here.

He said, "Case dismissed." That was all. The traffic court was quiet for a few seconds before a low, discreet ripple of amusement passed among the spectators.

"Next case." Officer Lash saw the smiles. His lean, wind-burned face coloured. He turned away, strode out of the room. Judge Lonergan watched the tall blue-clad motorcycle policeman, one of the recent additions to that division. He knew that Jim Lash would be facing him time after time. "He'll learn," thought the judge.

Outside of the courtroom a Times reporter fell into step beside the young policeman. He glanced narrowly at Lash.

"Too bad," he said, hurrying to match the other's long strides. "Sort of made a monkey out of you, copper, but you'll learn. You did O.K. up to a certain point. The fella had a good lawyer though."

Jim Lash was boiling inside at himself. His first court appearance had been muffed. The papers would print it. The radio had already flung the case into tens of thousands of homes. The traffic court proceedings were broadcast every morning for one-half hour.

"Any policeman who mistakes a 1936 Oldsmobile for a 1936 Buick ought to be kicked," growled Jim disgustedly.

"Yeah, yeah," agreed the grinning reporter. "They do look alike, though, from the rear." Then Jim was out of the Shelby Tower. He walked two blocks to the police garage. A moment later his motorcycle rolled out into the street. He headed for the Harper Highway district where he was to patrol Harper Highway.

One month in a police uniform and you're tied hand and foot, Jim declared. Barry Acton, friend and roommate. Acton was manager of an oil company's branch office.

Jim continued to pull off his blue shirt. His holster, 38 Colt lay on the table. When Jim turned, his face was more grim than Acton had ever seen it.

"I am not tied! Either hand or feet! The police department, for the most part is straight as a string. Judge Lonergan is four-square. That first case of mine was not fixed. My own stupidity and lack of observation furnished the loophole that won for the lawyer. He jumped at that flaw in my report. No matter what kind of case I had, I looked bad when I had to admit that I hadn't even identified the car correctly."

"Listen, Barry. If I thought that case or any case was fixed, I'd turn in my badge and revolver tomorrow." "All I know is what I read in the paper," Barry continued. "Jim, why don't you come in with my company? There's a well opening right now."

"Because I've always wanted to have police experience, Jim replied thoughtfully. "Down in Ohio my dad started as a patrolman, and when he finished he was police commissioner. That was his life, and I guess it's in the blood. I'm studying to become a traffic expert, Barry, and the best way to get at the practical aspects of the problem is to join the police force. Traffic conditions in our bigger cities are taking a terrific toll in human lives. There are opportunities for men who specialize in traffic problems. Do you think I'm on the wrong track?"

The other was interested. "You've got something there. But to come back to this job, you can continue your study in that direction and still take this job."

"Nope," Jim smiled. "I'm a cop now." Barry Acton was persistent. "All right. So you're a cop. If you go absolutely straight, no favors to anyone including the 'right' people, and you find yourself in trouble or you find that somehow your charges don't stick, will you then come in with me?"

Jim had the shaver sputtering in the bathroom. He stuck his head out of the open doorway. "Uh-huh, I will. If I can't make an honest charge stick in court, I'll quit the force and go in with you, if there's a place. But I'd hate to have that happen. I'm in the work I like, and I want to stay there."

Almost a month had passed since Jim's first appearance in court. He still smarted from it. He had ticked a number of motorists since the charges ranging from failure to halt at a stop street through all of the violations up to reckless driving and leaving the scene of an accident. The latter were serious and necessitated court appearances. The cases had been clearly defined, and Jim's charges had been supported by the court.

For some minutes before he pulled to the side of the pavement, Jim was conscious of a disturbing noise at the rear of his machine. On the grass of the road's shoulder, he swung off to investigate. He was kneeling when the whine of a racing motor jerked his eyes to a curve in the highway. An automobile was approaching at high speed. The driver did not notice Jim. He roared past. It was Barry Acton. Jim's roommate was headed out of the city. Within a few minutes he could be beyond the jurisdiction of the city police. If Jim was to overtake Barry, he would have to hurry. Two courses were open to him at that instant, and he now had a faint inkling of the temptations that beset the men of the law-enforcement agencies.

He leaped onto his motorcycle, the tires screamed and he was on the concrete a blur of motion.

"This may be carrying a bit too far," muttered Jim, crouching low behind his windshield. "But Barry passed a school sign. There might be kids out. I'm here to stop that sort of thing."

Jim's motorcycle gained steadily. Now he could read the license numbers on Barry's car. Then Barry slackened. In confusion would only mean more trouble. He knew that he was caught. The car pulled to a halt and Jim came dashing.

The driver started blankly. A gear cracked across his clean-cut forehead. "What do you figure on doing about this?" Jim got a swell excuse, a district meeting in ten minutes.

Jim's level eyes were fixed and unwavering. He was writing out a ticket. Barry's expression changed. "What's that?"

"A ticket for doing seventy-five miles an hour in the city," Jim replied quietly. "You passed a school sign, Barry, or I might be more lenient. You see."

The words never came. A narrow-colored sedan sped past, going as fast as Barry had been driving. The short blast of a siren came back from the maroon car.

"What's this?" Jim's face set into hard, grim lines. "A game?" "Take it easy, take it easy," urged Barry. "You'll never get her. Pass this one up, Jim. It's dangerous."

"I'll get her whoever she is! Stay here. I'll be back with your ticket." Barry stared at the swiftly diminishing motorcycle. He was genuinely concerned. That's Sara Hastings, the police commissioner's daughter, he thought. Barry shoved into gear and followed.

Sara Hastings saw Jim coming. She saw in her rear-view mirror the square jaw beneath the black goggles, and she knew that this cop was young and determined and angry, evidently a new man on the force.

"I'd better stop she thought a little smile curving her attractive mouth. Her foot pressed the brake pedal. Sara was not nervous. Sara had been stopped before, but nothing more than a stiff warning had been given her. And this time she had a perfectly good reason for driving fast.

Jim pulled in front of the sedan. He swung off the red motorcycle and noted the car's license numbers on his pad. Then he strode to the driver's side, face expressionless.

an additional five dollars in the fine. Not that I care, because it won't be paid!"

"Sorry about that, Miss," returned Jim, apparently without interest. "You should have held it down to seventy-five if you wanted to save that five dollars. Instead of thinking about that angle, you might think about the children who might have been crossing the highway."

Sara's eyes sparkled angrily. "Do you know who I am?" "Yes, Miss," gawped the young officer. "I assume you let loose a blast on the siren to tell me. That's also a violation you know. I've noted it on your ticket." Jim handed her a carbon copy. He shoved the original into his pocket.

"Thank you, Officer Lash. I see that the court date is May eleventh. I understand that you have your troubles in court. I'll see you there on this date."

Jim touched his cap. "Fine," he said dryly. He took his motorcycle in a wide circle and again came up to Barry's car. Sara Hastings watched him with quickening interest, then suddenly frowned and drove off.

"Here's your ticket, Barry." "What's this going to cost me?" "Twenty dollars if you pay it at the violations bureau. If you fight the thing in court, prove that your record is good up to date, the judge may let you off."

"Twenty bucks is a lot of money to me right now." "I hope you'll understand." "O.K., Jim. I'll see you in court." Jim Lash watched his friend pass beyond the city limits.

The following morning, as Jim strode into Allen Station to report, Inspector Tierman motioned him into his office. Tierman was in charge of the precinct.

Without preliminaries the towering inspector said, "Understand you ticked Sara Hastings yesterday. Twenty stiff charge too."

"Nothing more than a deserved inspector," stated Jim flatly. He waited for Tierman, somewhat disturbed. Was Barry's prediction coming true?

The inspector grinned and his eyes were calculating. "I like you, Lash. You're an asset to my station. Commissioner Hastings has been hounding me to stop the speeders. It's right back in his own lap now. We'll see if it bows. That's all, Lash."

Jim left the room with a feeling of vast relief. "Jim and Barry did not mention the speeding incident to one another. I'd almost a week. Then one evening, Barry said, 'I paid the fine today.'"

Jim looked up from his newspaper, surprised. "I thought you intended to appear in court next Tuesday."

"I did, but I've got to be away for some time beginning tomorrow on the eastern coast, and well, I can forget about it now."

"That's tough. The fine, I mean." "Yep. I deserved the lesson though. Don't be sorry for me."

Jim looked closely at his friend. "Listen, pal, if you're broke or even low, let me help you out. Gas and oil for a trip don't grow on trees. Did you get your last expense check yet?"

Barry grinned and slapped Jim's wide shoulder affectionately. "I'll check my finances, Jim, and if I really need any thing, I'll borrow."

"Promise." "Sure." "OK." Barry drummed the table with his finger tips. "That job I mentioned to you is taken. They sent us a man from Chicago yesterday. How do things look on the Hastings case?"

"I haven't heard a word I'll know more after next Tuesday."

The police commissioner leaned forward, waiting for the decision. Judge Lonergan said, "I feel, Miss Hastings, that you should be penalized the maximum fine for this offense, twenty-five dollars."

"Next case." When Jim left the room, a Times reporter fell into step with him. "Right going policeman. I hope you keep your job on Harper. My tot's in that school."

Jim only smiled. He had been more vehement, possibly, than was necessary, but he was not sorry. He felt strongly on the subject of the needless sacrifice of human life on the streets and roads of the nation.

"Lash." It was the police commissioner, and beside him was Sara Hastings.

"I'm proud to have you as one of my men. You opened my eyes, Lash. When the chance comes and it you, record is good, you're going up. Well, good luck, Lash."

"Thank you, commissioner." Sara lingered. "I have a silly favor to ask of you, and you may not."

"I'll help you in any way I can, Miss Hastings," Jim offered, mystified. "What's the matter?"

"Well, our girls' club is having a party tomorrow night, and we're having one of those scavenger hunts. I know that one of the things each of us is to bring back is a policeman, a live policeman. Dad won't agree to go, and he isn't a policeman anyway. Could you?"

"Of course," he laughed and they made the arrangements. That afternoon on Harper Highway, Jim's whistling could sometimes be heard above the put-put-put of his motorcycle.

Jim stepped back. He was finished.

The police commissioner leaned forward, waiting for the decision. Judge Lonergan said, "I feel, Miss Hastings, that you should be penalized the maximum fine for this offense, twenty-five dollars."

"Next case." When Jim left the room, a Times reporter fell into step with him. "Right going policeman. I hope you keep your job on Harper. My tot's in that school."

Jim only smiled. He had been more vehement, possibly, than was necessary, but he was not sorry. He felt strongly on the subject of the needless sacrifice of human life on the streets and roads of the nation.

"Lash." It was the police commissioner, and beside him was Sara Hastings.

"I'm proud to have you as one of my men. You opened my eyes, Lash. When the chance comes and it you, record is good, you're going up. Well, good luck, Lash."

"Thank you, commissioner." Sara lingered. "I have a silly favor to ask of you, and you may not."

"I'll help you in any way I can, Miss Hastings," Jim offered, mystified. "What's the matter?"

"Well, our girls' club is having a party tomorrow night, and we're having one of those scavenger hunts. I know that one of the things each of us is to bring back is a policeman, a live policeman. Dad won't agree to go, and he isn't a policeman anyway. Could you?"

"Of course," he laughed and they made the arrangements. That afternoon on Harper Highway, Jim's whistling could sometimes be heard above the put-put-put of his motorcycle.

Jim stepped back. He was finished.

Exodus of Experts Worries Officials

Scientific and Technical Workers Lured to Lucrative Jobs in U.S.

OTTAWA (CP) The possibility of a mass exodus of Canada's scientific and technical workers to more lucrative posts in the United States and other countries is viewed with concern by officials here.

Frozen in Canada by wartime regulations, these highly skilled experts in various fields of industrial and fundamental research now may consider leaving the Dominion because of the attraction of higher salaries elsewhere.

The National Research Council, in a recent preliminary report on 1945 activities, referred to its continuing efforts to cooperate in the retention in Canada of trained scientific personnel through grants-in-aid of graduate research in universities and allocation of scholarships.

As a result of the war, Canada has acquired new scientific and technical skills and an army of expert workers which, if retained, may have a profound influence on the Dominion's ability to maintain a higher standard of living and compete in international markets. In a competitive world, a constant search for better methods of production and new products to place on the market is required to maintain Canada's economic position, the report stated.

Before the war a considerable proportion of Canadian graduate scientists sought employment elsewhere because salaries were not commensurate with the years of preparation required and far below those paid for similar work in other countries, particularly the United States.

It is the prospect of a resumption of the draining off of Canadian brains that has officials concerned over our future initiative in research, which has become such a vital necessity in the modern world.

WOMAN EDITOR RETIRES

CORNBURG, Ont. (CP) Miss Edith Rogers recently announced her retirement as editor of the Cornburg World after nearly 50 years on the staff of the weekly paper. She started her newspaper career as a correspondent of the World in 1896.

IT'S THE Local Touch THAT REALLY COUNTS. The magnetic power of local news to win and hold people's attention is as fundamental as human nature itself. Local news begins to play its part in a man's life with a one-line notice announcing his birth. Progress in school, participation in sports, graduation, engagement, marriage follows... each likely to figure somehow in local news. They come the upward climb in business, perhaps an entry into politics, almost surely some activity in civic, religious and social affairs... each step productive of news that's of vital interest to self, to family, to friends, and fellow townspeople. So it goes till death itself writes the final story. Only in the Hometown Weekly Newspapers can people satisfy their craving for this kind of news, their unceasing curiosity about what goes on close to home. And only there can they find every day the local buying information they need. Which explains very largely why people read their Hometown Weekly Newspapers so eagerly and thoroughly, and why such weekly newspaper advertising produces such satisfactory return. You can't afford to neglect the buyers who live in the towns, villages and townships of Canada and are so well served by their weekly newspapers. The Acton Free Press is one of those Important Newspapers SERVING THOSE IMPORTANT PARTS OF CANADA THAT LIE OUTSIDE THE CITIES and is a member of the CANADIAN WEEKLY NEWSPAPERS