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On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. All I had been doing in the New Deal, which had been so exciting, suddenly seemed unimportant. I wanted to get to where the war was.

I got there faster than I expected.

In one of his boldest international decisions, President Roosevelt set up the Lend-Lease program to help save the U.K. from conquest by the Nazis.

W. Averell Harriman had been sent to London to take charge of the U. S. Lend-Lease mission. One of the most serious challenges he found was how to provide enough food for the British people in the face of mounting submarine losses and the Blitz. He asked that a special team be sent from Washington to work out plans to meet this problem.

This team was headed by Paul Appleby, who was the Assistant Secretary of Agriculture. A distinguished New York banker, William Schubart, was the second member of the team, and a third, younger member was to be chosen to go to London and lead the food and agriculture side of the Lend-Lease program.

The most exciting moment of my life was when Paul Appleby called me into his office and told me that I had been chosen to be that third member.

The thought of going to Europe had been a dream that seemed impossible ever to accomplish. And now to travel to England, where the war was – and on a key mission – was almost too much to comprehend. I had never been farther from Escanaba, Michigan than New York City.

I had a week to get ready for the biggest move of my life.

To learn what my job in London might involve I sought out Charles J. Hitch, the man who had just returned to Washington from doing the job on a temporary basis. Hitch spoke with what to me was the broadest of Oxford accents. I found out later that he had been a Rhodes Scholar and became the first Rhodes Scholar to join the University's faculty as a fellow at The Queens College, Oxford. I wondered if I would return from England to Escanaba with an accent like that. Even Eastern accents were regarded with great suspicion in Escanaba, and a British accent – while rarely heard – was regarded as the height of effete affectation.

A problem in preparing for the trip was deciding on what to take with me. The absolute limit on individual baggage would be forty-five pounds. I didn't know if I would be in England for three months or several years. I agonized about what to bring. I finally got exactly that much weight of the most essential items stuffed into the one suitcase I was allowed.

Then I remembered that I hadn't packed a dinner jacket.

One of the few things I thought I knew about England was that, in war or peace or in the middle of the jungle, they always dressed for dinner. Since I didn't want to go without eating dinner for however long I was going to be in England, I rushed out and got a rather ill-fitting, extraordinarily heavy tuxedo. I threw out the equivalent weight of other things that I had thought were vital.

I was in England for almost five years, and I never did get a chance to wear that damned tuxedo.

I asked people who had been there what small lightweight things I could bring to England that would be particularly appreciated by Britishers. The answer was nylon stockings and spices. I used my last precious few remaining ounces and cubic inches of baggage space to stuff in several pairs of stockings and a couple of dozen small cans of assorted spices.

Contrary to the stories of GIs who made great conquests with nylons, I never did encounter a British female who was the right size for the stockings. As for the spices, the covers came loose during the long and bumpy flight. For months my clothes smelled as if I had been living in an oriental spice bazaar.



Pan Am Flying Boat that took Bob to London

The only way to get to England in a hurry – and without running a gauntlet of submarine attacks – was on the Pan Am Flying Boat, which we boarded in New York one evening.

Our route took us from New York to Trinidad for an overnight stop, from there to a nearby port in Brazil, and then to another port on the easternmost tip of Brazil. There we waited for favorable weather before making the direct crossing to a point on the westernmost tip of Africa. We hopped to another African port, and finally to Lisbon.

Since opportunities to go from Washington to England were so limited, I was designated a diplomatic courier and given a sack, weighing about eighty pounds, of what I was told were highly classified documents to be delivered to the embassy in London.

I lived, ate, and slept with that bloody sack for the whole trip, and by the time we got to Lisbon, it seemed to weigh eight-hundred pounds, not eighty.

I gratefully dumped it at the U.S. Embassy in Lisbon, where it would live in their safe until we got the signal that we were about to leave.

Unfortunately, we got this signal just about every afternoon during the several days we were there. I would therefore go to the embassy, rescue my pouch, and bring it to our hotel to await departure for the airport. Then the flight would be called off for that night and I would be stuck with the sack.

I had read lurid stories about Lisbon being a spy center – which indeed it was. I was convinced that every time I moved around with the diplomatic pouch that I was being followed by desperados bent on stealing top U.S. secrets.

I later learned that my fears were justified. A few weeks after my visit, a professional British courier was knifed in the back and left dead in an alley, his pouch taken from him.

Paul Appleby and I shared a hotel room while we were waiting for the flight. Every night before we went to bed, I would move all the heavy furniture in the room in front of the door and then set assorted noise-making devices on top of it, so I would have warning if someone came to steal the pouch.

Paul found this nightly performance highly amusing.

My reply to his chuckling was, “I feel pretty darned silly moving this furniture and pottery around all right. But I’ll feel a hell of a lot sillier if I wake up in the morning and find that pouch is gone.”

After several days in Lisbon, we flew to Ireland, and finally on to an airport outside of London. The whole trip had taken ten days.

The couple of dozen passengers included Lady Ward, the head of British War Relief, and William Randolph Hearst, Jr. – close friends indeed by the time we finally arrived, bedraggled and somewhat the worse for wear.



In 1968, with other senior United Nations officials, I attended a U.N. conference in Warsaw. Since this was the first occasion of its kind to be held in Poland, the Polish government outdid itself to provide the red-carpet treatment for delegates. We were given luxurious accommodations and a digestion- and sobriety-challenging series of receptions and dinners by the country's top government officials.

In the middle of one of these elegant affairs, I was suddenly struck with a staggering thought.

I was being honored because of my somewhat lofty position with the United Nations. Yet just over a hundred years before, my great-grandfather – and a bit later my grandfather – had left their homes within a few dozen miles of where I was sitting, persecuted and penniless, one jump ahead of a pogrom.

I was overwhelmed by admiration and gratitude for these forefathers who had had the sheer guts to leave behind everything they had ever known and make their way to the frontiers of a new land in America.

The fulfillment of the American dream was manifested in me.

In looking back over a long, interesting, and busy life, it is primarily the humorous incidents that stand out in my notably dim memory. Long after the stresses and strains of family, education,

work, and war have faded, funny stories remain – particularly, somehow, those which involve someone – especially me – falling on their face.

When my three then-small sons were tucked up in their beds of an evening, it was time for Daddy to tell them a story. The question at this warm moment was, invariably, “Do you want a story out of a book or out of my head?”

The answer in chorus was always, “Out your head!”

The following, then, is a hundred humorous anecdotes and jokes out of the head of a firsthand witness to some of the major events that shaped the modern world. Perhaps if future generations understand what made us laugh, they will better understand what we did.



I have a fiendish plot for assuring the close perusal of at least several dozen copies of this collection. I will leave it without an index. Then I will emulate a story I heard about a man who wanted to get even with a lot of people he didn't like.

He bought up a publisher's remainder stock of a particularly long, dull, and indexless memoir in fine print.

Then he sent a copy of the book to each person on his dislike list.

With each book he enclosed an anonymous note saying, “I think the references to you in this book are unjustified and outrageous.”

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So, there I was in London.

It is an adage of the Foreign Service that everyone falls in love with his first overseas post. I certainly did with England – hook, line, and sinker. I loved everything about it. The grimy streets of London. The old buildings. The beautifully green countryside, with footpaths leading from one lovely village to another. The people especially. The theater, the double-decker buses. Everything except the food.

I even came to like the weather. I decided that it was really time that I got myself home again when, some years later, I heard my own voice saying to a newcomer who complained about the fact that it had been raining steadily for several weeks, “Weather? Weather? What’s the matter with the weather? Why, the sun shone only two weeks ago, briefly.” (Londoners see the sun so seldom that one of the “dream projects” for after the war was to use all the anti-aircraft barrage balloons to support some kind of platform in the sky – above the clouds – so Londoners could go up and see a bit of sun from time-to-time.)

Even the nightly air-raid warnings, the thumping of bombs, and the resulting wreckage of the “little Blitz” which was going on when I arrived seemed more exciting than frightening.

One thing that particularly intrigued me was the different timescale in which the British seemed to live, as compared to the American sense that a hundred years was a very long time indeed, with which I had grown up. After all, in Escanaba if I wanted to know the most ancient relevant history, all I had to do was ask my grandfather. London required a real conceptual switch to the British view, where one of the guidebooks said, “New Gate is too modern to be of interest, having been built in the late seventeenth Century.”

I was similarly enchanted by signboards offering 999-year leases on property.

Part of my job as Food Officer of the Lend-Lease mission was to visit British factories which were using ingredients that had been sent under the program. On one occasion of this sort, I went to a very old and very famous British biscuit factory called Huntley and Palmers. In the course of the visit, I met half a dozen different Mr. Palmers of various ages, but no Huntleys. Finally, over tea, I inquired what had become of the Huntleys. There was a kind of embarrassed silence and no response from the assembled Palmers.

Afterward, my guide from the British Ministry of Food scolded me a bit. He said, “You really shouldn’t have mentioned Huntley. The two families had a falling out some time in the 1870s and they never mention each other’s name.”

The devotion of the British to maintaining an established order of things was a characteristic that delighted me. An apocryphal story illustrating this point has to do with the eminent British firm of solicitors called Cranshaw, Cranshaw, Cranshaw, and Cranshaw. The firm’s phone rang late one Friday afternoon. The caller asked, in an agitated voice, “May I speak to Mr. Cranshaw? It’s urgent.”

The man who had answered the phone said, “I’m sorry but Mr. Cranshaw has been dead for many years.”

The caller said, "Oh, in that case, may I speak to Mr. Cranshaw?"

The answer was, "I'm sorry, sir, Mr. Cranshaw retired several years ago."

The caller, with some exasperation said, "Well, then let me speak to Mr. Cranshaw?"

The answerer said, "Unfortunately, Mr. Cranshaw has left for the weekend and won't be back until Tuesday."

The caller in complete exasperation said, "Well, then may I speak to Mr. Cranshaw?"

The answerer said, brightly, "Speaking."

67. Organic Organization

On the professional side, being fresh from the Division of Organization and Management of the Department of Agriculture, I was most interested in the way the British had organized themselves to cope with the many new problems of the war. After a couple of weeks of wandering around in the Ministry of Food and the Ministry of Agriculture, it seemed to me that their organizations were a total mess.

I was used to nice, tidy organization charts with different units in hierarchical order, and each with an assigned function. The British organizations seemed to consist of rather loose-jointed aggregations of people, each "doing his own thing."

I went to my boss, Paul Appleby, and said, "I'd just love to get my hands on these outfits to put them in decent organizational shape."

Paul, as I have said, was one of the real philosophers of public administration. He said, "Just watch them a little longer and then tell me what you think."

I did, and I discovered, to my astonishment, that the British approach seemed to work very well, indeed getting a lot more

done with far fewer people than the corresponding organizations in Washington.

I puzzled over this and discussed it with Paul. His reply has, I think, great validity and importance. He said, "The real difference in organizational approach between the U.K. and the U.S. is the difference between a mechanistic and an organic approach. In Washington, when we want to set up an organization, we act as if we were designing a machine. Somebody sits down and draws boxes in a row, covering every conceivable function of the new organization. Then we set up overhead boxes to coordinate each of the individual boxes underneath and overhead overhead boxes to coordinate the overhead boxes. Then we go out and hire people to fill all the boxes, whether or not there is really anything for those people to do. "In England, they do it more the way natural organisms grow. If there is a job to be done, they find one man of the highest level of general intelligence they can find, and ask him to take on the job. When that man is obviously overworked, the cell divides, and they hire another man to help him. And so on.

"Our approach usually ends up with a lot of people sitting around with nothing to do until they manufacture some work for themselves. The British system always has fewer people than the job really needs, but each one of them gets a great deal more done."

68. American and British Government Meetings

Working relationships were so close that American officials were often invited to attend staff meetings of the British agencies with which they were working. One such meeting provided another insight into the difference between the American and British approaches to public administration.

One of the Britishers had just returned from his first visit to Washington. He was still bemused and confused by the experience. After telling of a number of puzzling things, he said, “For another thing, take the meetings that they have in Washington. Here, if there is a problem that requires action by several different parts of the government, we call a meeting of the people who are in charge of whatever parts need to act. There are never more than four or five people. We get together for an hour or so and decide what to do about the problem, then we do it. And that’s the end of it. “But in Washington, it’s completely different. Every meeting is held in a very large room. There are fifty or sixty people sitting around a huge table. Dozens more sit behind them along the wall. They talk and talk, but the only thing they ever decide is when to hold the next meeting.”

Another Britisher, who had considerable experience in Washington, said, “Old boy, you’ve put your finger on the real difference without even knowing it. You said, ‘Here, the people whose jobs require them to have an interest in the decision come to the meeting.’ In Washington, instead of those with an *interest* in the subject coming to the meeting, everyone who finds the subject *interesting* comes to the meeting.”

69. Translation, Please

One unexpected problem in running the Lend-Lease program was the so called “common language.” My first exposure to this was shortly after I arrived, when I was called in by a senior official of the Ministry of Food, who said, “We don’t want to complain really, and we do appreciate your generosity in lending or leasing or whatever it is you are doing to send us all this food without our paying any money for it. But nevertheless, it doesn’t seem quite right that you should keep giving us short weight.”

I expressed astonishment at the charge and explained that we had very careful controls at the U.S. end to see that exactly what was supposed to be sent was sent and in the right amounts. He said, "I can't understand it. We have weighed quite a few recent shipments and when you say you have sent us a hundred tons of something, it keeps coming out about 90 tons. The first few times this could be a mistake, but I think someone is deliberately cheating somewhere along the line."

After a good deal of back and forth with Washington, both sides came to recognize that to Americans a ton was 2,000 pounds – a short ton – whereas to Britishers, a ton was 2,240 pounds – a long ton.

We had similar, if not quite so serious mix-ups, when the British put in requisitions for "gammon." It took us a while to find out that by this they meant bacon. Complaints that the "bonnets on the lorries were damaged" had to be translated into the fact that there were dents in the hoods of the trucks.

We finally had to have a two-man joint group in Washington who did nothing but read over communications between the two governments and make sure that the two languages were being properly translated.

On the personal side, I looked and looked for a barber shop and couldn't find one anywhere. My hair was reaching a disreputable stage when a British friend explained that what I wanted was a "gentlemen's hairdresser."

Strangely enough, with all the temptations of war-time London, there really wasn't very much going on in the way of sexual monkey-business. At least as far as I knew. (When I later saw films about war-time London, like *The Americanization of Emily* with Julie Andrews, I was disappointed to see what I appeared to have missed.)

Anyhow, the one mild scandal at the embassy in those days was the fact that a distinguished economist, Dr. P., who had been separated from his wife and family in the U.S., was living with a brilliant and attractive young lady economist, Miss D., who was on the embassy staff.

At one large international meeting, the British chairman was going around the room introducing representatives of the different countries present. He said, "And next we have the distinguished American economist, Dr. P. Also representing the United States is Miss D. The committee will understand that Miss D. is Dr. P's vice."

The poor chairman couldn't understand why this routine introduction caused all the Americans in the room practically to roll on the floor with laughter. But the British commonly use the word "vice" in the sense we use it in "Vice President."

One of the things that enchanted me about the U.K. was the wide variety of accents. Not only did each county have its own distinctive way of speaking, but each district of London. (The dawning of some kind of wisdom came to me one day in the middle of an Underground ride when I had been listening to the various accents around me, and it suddenly struck me with great force, that there, none of those people had funny accents. I was the one who did.)

Some of these varied versions of English were difficult indeed for an American ear to understand. My favorite day-off activity in England was to head for the nearest train station and go to one or another of the many lovely and fascinating historical places near London. One time my destination was Oxford. I had learned by this time that hardly any British train ever went directly to wherever you wanted to go, so when I went to the booking office to buy my ticket, I said, "Do I change trains for Oxford?"

The ticket agent said, "You change at Wuffwuff." Since there was a line behind me, I didn't want to stop to discuss the point,

but when I went through the gate where you had to get your ticket punched, I said to the ticket puncher, “I understand I have to change to get to Oxford – where do I change?”

He replied, “You change at Warf-warf.”

Again, there was a line behind me, so I couldn’t get any further clarification. But just as the train was getting ready to leave, I stopped the conductor and said, “Now, I understand I have to change trains to get to Oxford. Could you please tell me exactly where I change?”

He said, “Why, yes, you change at Woolfuff.”

In some desperation, I said, “Can you *spell* that?”

He answered, “Well of course I can spell it!” – and turned around and walked away.



*Food Comes to Britain: American Lend-Lease
Food Arrives in the U.K. (1941)*

70. Short Rations

Despite miracles in increasing their own agricultural production and tremendous efforts by the U.S. to ship in as much food as possible throughout the U-boat blockade, British food supplies were

really tight during the later years of the war. About half a pound of meat a week per person, for example, was all that the ration allowed. (Recollection of things like this make me somewhat less than fully sympathetic when Americans complain bitterly that prices are so high they can't afford more than five or six pounds of meat a week.)

The egg situation was even tighter. We shipped in tens of thousands of tons of powdered dry eggs. These were horrible to eat but did fill a gap in nutritional needs.

The official ration for fresh eggs was one egg per person per week. But there really weren't that many fresh eggs available, so it was a matter of sheer luck whether a person happened to get to the store at the time some eggs appeared.

It was really a tribute to national character and discipline that the British did adhere so carefully to the rigid rationing system. There was, of course, some black-marketing – but amazingly little under the circumstances.

One day I was sitting with a former Oxford don who the Egg Controller for the whole U. K.

Our task was to make a forward projection of egg supplies for the next few months. I put in our estimate of how many tons of dried eggs seemed to be the maximum we could produce and ship. He put in their figures on maximum possible production from the British hen population and possible supplies of fresh eggs from Ireland.

We had been batting these figures, in the millions of eggs, back and forth for an hour or so when the phone rang, and he answered it.

His end of the conversation went like this, "Really, dear? That's wonderful. What a day!"

He turned to me and said in tones of absolute astonishment, "That was my wife. She got an egg!"

71. Winston Churchill's Beef and Beer

The continued worsening of the British food situation and the increasing rate of sinking of food ships by the German U-boat fleet led to my most ambitious effort as U. S. liaison to the British Food and Agriculture Ministries.

It also led to my only direct confrontation with Winston Churchill, and an unforgettable lesson in why it is a good thing to have shrewd politicians like Churchill, rather than technicians in charge of everything.

As things got tighter and tighter on the shipping front, it became less and less possible to see how we could balance out the minimum food needs of the British people with the available supplies of food. The only possible answer seemed to be to somehow get more nutrition out of the soil of the U.K. itself.

I launched a major study, in collaboration with my colleagues in the Ministries of Food and Agriculture, which led to the inescapable technical conclusion that the only possible options to get more food were:

a) Kill off practically the whole beef cattle population of Britain. This would provide an immediate input of more meat and, more important, leave the grain that the beef cattle ate to be put into bread directly for people.

b) To reduce sharply or eliminate the use of grain for producing beer.

The technical validity of these conclusions was indisputable. With some degree of reluctance, the senior officials of the Ministry of Food and the Ministry of Agriculture agreed to join us in presenting them to the Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill, for a final decision.

We decided to do the job right, complete with charts which showed just how important and inarguable our recommendations were.

A top-level meeting was called, in which the two British cabinet ministers concerned, the American Ambassador, John Winant, and the Lend-Lease Mission chief, Averell Harriman, would present these charts and conclusions to Mr. Churchill.

I waited eagerly in the wings to hear the results of this meeting.

Averell got back to the Embassy and reported the Churchillian response as follows – even imitating Churchill’s rolling, rumbling voice. He told us, “The Prime Minister said, ‘The charts are very impressive. Their conclusions are unquestionably important. The answer is No! – the Englishman *lives* on beef and beer.’”

Churchill was absolutely right. Even though the carrying out of these recommendations would have increased the available calorie supply, the blow to British morale that would have resulted from a further reduction in meat rations and not being able to get even a watered-down beer at the pub would have been disastrous. The British people really weren’t able to take much more of a beating at that point in the war.

My respect for the insight of astute politicians has been high ever since.

72. The Chancellor is Dead!

Churchill’s famous withering tongue featured in another incident which was told to me by a British friend.

When Churchill took over as Prime Minister from Neville Chamberlain, for political reasons he had to inherit a certain number of members of the Chamberlain cabinet. Among these was the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir John Simon. Churchill had a very low opinion indeed of Sir John’s abilities and energy.

As the story goes, Churchill’s secretary came rushing into his office one day and said in a shocked tone, “The Chancellor. He’s dead!”

Churchill looked up and barked, “How could they tell?”

73. How the British Finally Rationed Bread

Bread was the one thing that the British managed to avoid putting on rations all through the war. Again, this was a sound political decision. However short other foods might be, nobody would feel the pangs of an empty stomach if there was always enough bread to be had.

After V.E. Day, however, it was clear that there would be a major crisis in the availability of food grains for all of Europe in the winter of 1945–46.

In the planning for D-day, I'd been assigned to the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) to begin the tasks of providing food and rebuilding the economies of Europe. This would later morph into the Marshall Plan. I was commissioned an Ensign in the U.S. Navy Reserve which suited me fine because I wanted to serve.

While still technically in the U. S. Navy, I had been called back to London to be the Food and Agriculture officer of the granddaddy of all of the European economic cooperation organizations, the Emergency Economic Committee for Europe (EECE).

The committee called a conference on the grain crisis. I was asked to draft a speech for Ernest Bevin, who was then the British Foreign Secretary.

I'm sure that this was the first and certainly the last time that an American has ever drafted a speech for a British Foreign Minister.

Searching for a dramatic note on which to launch the conference, I put into the first draft of the speech an announcement that the British would ration bread for the first time in order to make more grain available for the hungry people of Western Europe.

I was certain that this idea would be quickly squelched when the draft was reviewed by Mr. Bevin's staff.

But it somehow survived intact, and Bevin made this dramatic announcement just as I had written it.

The rest of the British government practically had apoplexy when they discovered that they had been committed to rationing bread, after they had managed to avoid all through the war.

Nevertheless, the decision stuck.



Official rations for two people a week in Great Britain (1943)

74. Confounding the Nutritionists

There were many doleful predictions by eminent nutritionists that the heavily restricted British diet during the war would cause all sorts of health problems. Instead, statistics showed that the average Briton had lost 11.2 pounds during the war. (Parenthetically, I demonstrated great empathy with my official job by losing exactly 11.2 pounds myself.)

But, contrary to expectations of the nutritionists, absolutely every index of general health in England went up. The incidence of all sorts of illnesses, from heart disease to cancer to communicable diseases, went down during the period of food restriction.

75. The Great American Rat Expert

At the conference on grain supplies sponsored by the EECE (European Emergency Economic Commission), we had listed an agenda item on controlling loss of grain from rats and other pests. We had signed up the leading British authority to address the assembled delegates on the subject. At the very last minute, we got word that the expert was ill. Since the subject was too important to skip, I was asked to fill in for him, with about ten minutes notice.

I stood up manfully and said whatever I could think of on the subject of rats. I allowed that rats were very bad, that they consumed a lot of grain, that everything possible should be done to control this loss of grain. I also said that there were several well-known ways to get rid of rats, including poison and traps, and that cats were also very good at eliminating rats. I sat down gratefully after the shortest speech of the conference.



Bob, Ned, and their mother (1943)

Several years later, I was in Rome for another conference and an Italian official came up and greeted me warmly. I couldn't recall ever having met the gentleman, but I didn't want to let him know this.

He said, "Oh, it is such a pleasure to see you again. You are the great American rat expert. I want you to know that we followed all of your suggestions and we saved tens of thousands of tons of grain, and the people of Italy will be forever grateful to you."

76. Ice Cream and Cake

After a year or so in England, I had to go back to Washington for conferences.

I flew back through Iceland and Greenland in the bomb bay of an American bomber that was carrying crews back to ferry more bombers to the U.K. This trip was an adventure in itself.

While I was back in the U.S., I made a quick trip to Chicago.

One of my aunts had assembled all our relatives in the Chicago area to greet me. Everyone was fascinated to hear about my various adventures in the U.K. I talked too much altogether, but the thing that I kept coming back to was how shocking it was to see Americans wasting food all over the place while people in the U.K. and elsewhere in Europe were counting every scrap of food. I finally said, with some vigor, "Anyone who eats an ounce of food of any kind that they don't really need is taking it out of the mouth of someone else who really needs it!"

At this point, my aunt called me aside and said, "Oh, dear, what should I do? I had baked a large cake and got ice cream for the crowd, but obviously none of them need it, and I don't dare serve it after what you just said."

77. Decisions from Headquarters

The American diplomatic contingent in London during the war really was an all-star cast. The ambassador was John G. Winant, a former Republican governor of New Hampshire. Averell Harriman, as I have said, was head of the Lend-Lease mission. The third senior American civilian was Winfield Riefler, of Princeton University, who headed the Board of Economic Warfare mission.

Harriman's deputy and successor was Philip D. Reed, who had been President of the General Electric Company and subsequently became Chairman of the Board.

The second level of the American staff included people like Jacob D. Beam, who would go on to become U. S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union; John Moore Allison; Winthrop G. Brown; Samuel D. Berger; and several others who later became top-notch ambassadors in their own right.

I have seen a translation of a clay tablet sent from the governor of an outlying province to one of the pharaohs of ancient Egypt. The burden of the governor's complaint was that he couldn't do his job because it took so long to get decisions from the capital.

Bureaucracies haven't changed much. Some 4,000 years later, the American contingent in London had exactly the same problem in getting timely guidance from Washington.

Something would require action. We would get together and decide what action seemed to be called for. But we couldn't just go ahead and do it. The conventions of governmental operations required that we send a cable to Washington and ask for their concurrence. The trouble was that it usually took Washington so long to respond to those cables that the time when action was needed had often passed by the time we got an answer.

Averell Harriman was not the kind of man to suffer such foolishness gladly. He developed a standard technique under which

our cables to Washington would read, “Here is the situation. Here is what we think should be done about it. Unless we hear to the contrary by such-and-such a date, we will proceed to do what we think makes sense.”

Since Washington almost never got around to replying to our proposals before the date mentioned, we usually got to do what we wanted to do with all the bureaucratic proprieties preserved.



*John Winant, American ambassador to Britain, July 4, 1942
garden party at U.S. Embassy, London*

78. The Absentminded Ambassador

Ambassador Winant was one of the wisest, kindest, and gentlest men I have ever met. He was also one of the most absentminded.

I was sitting in the ambassador's office one day discussing something with Jake Bean, who was his secretary. Unexpectedly, Fred Winant, the Ambassador's brother, who occupied an important position in the U.S. war establishment in the Middle East, came into the office.

Jake said, “Oh, go right in Mr. Winant, I know the ambassador will be glad to see you, and there’s no one with him right now.”

Fred Winant disappeared into the office, and about ten seconds later Ambassador Winant came out of the office and said to Jake in an urgent whisper, “That man in my office – who is he?”

Jake gulped and said, “But Mr. Ambassador, that’s your brother.”

The ambassador said, somewhat impatiently, “Yes, I know he’s my brother, but I have several brothers – which one is this?”

79. Guides for Mr. Stettinius

In addition to the local contingent, the embassy and Lend-Lease mission in London had to cope with a steady stream of distinguished visitors from Washington, who wanted to see what was going on with the Lend-Lease program.

Our most eminent visitor was Edward Reilly Stettinius, Jr., who was then the head of the Lend-Lease program and subsequently became Secretary of State.

One day of his brief visit was set aside for a review of the food side of the Lend-Lease program, and I was to be his American guide.

The British government had designated a senior official of the Ministry of Food to escort Mr. Stettinius. His name was Mr. Postlethwaite.

Just before we left for our tour, a second British escort turned up, this one from the Foreign Office. His name was Mr. Thistlethwaite.

Our party made a rapid tour of docks, warehouses, and feeding centers, where Lend-Lease foods were to be seen.

But I’m not sure how much of all of this Mr. Stettinius ever took in. He was so enchanted with the names of his guides, that he spent the day saying on every possible occasion, “Yes, Mr.

Postlethwaite!” “No, Mr. Thistlethwaite!” “Mr. Thistlethwaite, what do you think of what Mr. Postlethwaite says?”

By the end of the day, both Stettinius and I were reduced to nonsensical giggling. I am sure that our behavior confirmed the opinion of the British civil servants that all Americans were crazy.



Edward Riley Stettinius, Jr.

80. Special Attention

Stettinius was an extraordinarily handsome man. He was in his mid-forties at the time of his visit to London, but he had prematurely white hair, which added to his distinguished appearance.

One evening during his visit, as we were walking along a street near the embassy, we were accosted by one of the numerous ladies

of the evening who frequented the district in the hope of gaining some extra income from the rich visiting Americans.

Stettinius politely declined the invitation.

The young lady said, “Well, maybe later.” And she produced an engraved card with her name, address, and telephone number. At the bottom of the card she handed Stettinius was an extra line saying, “Special attention paid to the requirements of elderly gentlemen.”

I don’t think Mr. Stettinius ever got over being kidded about this appraisal of his situation.



Winston Churchill, Averell Harriman, Joseph Stalin

81. “Have you got that, Bob?”

I firmly believe that Averell Harriman is one of the truly great men of American history. I have often wished that I had the skills of a biographer to tell the story of his life. Son of one of the richest of the nineteenth-century American railroad tycoons, he grew up in baronial luxury. He started out as a champion polo player and playboy-at-large. He put all this behind him to become first a

section hand and later an executive of the Union Pacific Railroad; then a very influential businessman and banker; and then a public servant with an amazing record as a New Deal administrator, head of the Lend-Lease mission, Secretary of Commerce, Ambassador to the U.K. and the Soviet Union, European Director of the Marshall Plan, Governor of New York, and Ambassador-at-large, handling a series of major crises from Iran to Vietnam to the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

The only trouble I ever had with Harriman was hearing what he was saying. During all the time I worked with him, first in London and later in Washington and Paris, he mumbled, and it took acute attention to understand him.

He once called me into his office and started off, “Now, Bob, this is something important. I want it done right away...”

At this point, he leaned down to get a paper from a bottom drawer of his desk, talking all the while – except that I couldn’t hear any of it. His head reappeared just as he said, “That’s it. Get going!”

I didn’t have enough nerve to tell him that I really didn’t have a clue what it was he wanted me to do. So I got his charming British secretary to go back and ask him to tell her what it was.

82. The Order of the Purple Bottom

One of Averell Harriman’s noteworthy achievements was to make his staff meetings not only relevant, but interesting. Most such meetings are unbearably boring, with the major challenge being to stay awake.

The U.S. diplomatic group in London was extraordinarily fortunate in avoiding casualties from the assorted bombs, V-1s, and V-2s that descended on London while we were there. For example, we had an embassy mess – most appropriately named – in a former Lyon’s Coffee Shop. One day it was closed for some repainting or something, and that very day one of the first “buzz-bomb” rockets

landed on it, just at the normal lunch hour. Any other day this would have blown up a fair number of embassy staff, including me. On that day it was empty.

The only real damage the Harriman mission staff suffered occurred when our Captain Devlin received a small bit of shrapnel in his ample rear-end during one daytime air raid. Captain Devlin was an old Merchant Marine captain, with white hair, a trim white mustache, a portly build, and a rolling gait. He looked like a Hollywood casting director's notion of an old sea captain.

Anyhow, the Captain was hit. It was not a serious injury, but definitely painful.

He chose to stand and lean on mantelpieces rather than sitting down for several days thereafter.

At the next staff meeting, Harriman said, "Since we are a civilian organization, we can't award normal medals to our heroes."

He then produced a scroll and a large replica of a somewhat broadened purple heart, and said, "I hereby award to Captain Devlin the order of the Purple Bottom."

I received a similarly slight wound in my *derrière* while volunteering with the 1st American Squadron of the Home Guard for which I neither received nor expected any kind of medal.

83. General C. Discovers Radar

My next-door office neighbor at the embassy was a kindly and non-too-bright U.S. Army Brigadier general. He had served his time in the Cavalry over the years and was nearing retirement age.

For reasons best known to itself, the Army had assigned him to the rather tricky job of allocation officer for military equipment in the Lend-Lease mission in London. This meant that he would collect the list of requirements for military equipment put in not only by the British but also by various Commonwealth forces such

as the Free French. He would make a preliminary determination of what each force could be granted by the Lend-Lease program.

One day I encountered the old general in the hall, and he was looking very pale and shaky.

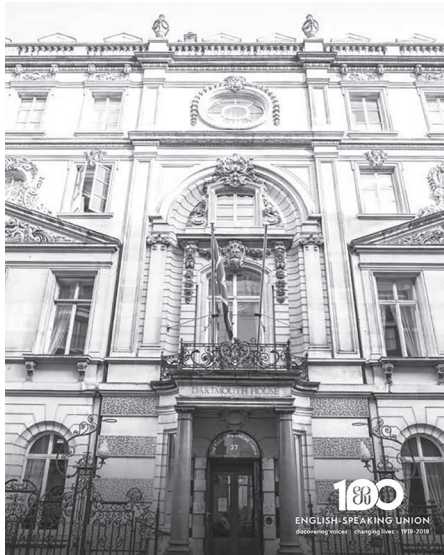
I said, "What's the matter, General, aren't you feeling well?"

He said, "It's what I did yesterday."

I said, "Well, what did you do?"

He said, "I got this list of requirements from the Australian forces and there were several hundred items on the list. Among them was a request for five radar sets. I didn't really know what a radar set was, but I figured it was some kind of a radio set and they could certainly have five of them if they wanted them, so I approved the request.

"Well, today I discovered that radar sets cost five million dollars apiece and there are only twelve of them in the world at the moment. The Australians now have approval to have five of them."



English Speaking Union, London

84. Maiden Ladies with Nieces

My job in London was exciting and I found England fascinating. My social life however – at least at first – was minimal. Sometimes I got quite depressed by the thought that, apart from my office colleagues, there wasn't anybody I knew on a personal basis within several thousand miles.

I discovered that not far from the embassy was a fine organization called The English-Speaking Union. It had a nice clubhouse where moderately edible meals were served. The purpose of the ESU was to strengthen the ties of friendship between Britishers and other English-speaking peoples, especially Americans. During the period, before the arrival of the U.S. Armed Forces in significant numbers, there weren't all that many Americans for them to strengthen ties with. My appearance at the ESU was greeted warmly.

Most of the dedicated British members of the ESU seemed to be rather elderly maiden ladies. I got into quite a whirl of invitations to tea from these old girls.

One interesting phenomenon was that almost all of these nice maiden ladies seemed to have lonely nieces. When they found out that I was indeed an unattached bachelor with the American Embassy, my new lady friends would suggest that I simply must meet their niece.

Unfortunately, the reason these nieces were lonely was only too readily apparent. The ones I encountered were drab as only a drab British female can be drab.

I therefore began to get quite cagey about invitations to meet nieces.

One day, my favorite elderly maiden lady hostess at the ESU hesitantly mentioned that she too had a niece. She said, "She's just come up from the country. She's all alone in London, and

very lonely. It would be a great kindness if you could meet her and perhaps take her to dinner or something.”

With my newfound sophistication about this kind of invitation, I ducked and explained that I was terribly busy.

Somehow I never did find a free evening to meet the niece.

I have been mentally kicking myself ever since, as I discovered sometime later that that particular elderly maiden lady’s niece was named Deborah Kerr.

85. The British Birth Rate

Speaking of females, the rudest remark I ever heard concerning them was made by Eric Wyndham White, my boss in the Emergency Economic Committee for Europe. Eric was a distinguished British civil servant who had spent most of the war years in the British Embassy in Washington. War-time Washington had provided very good hunting indeed for a bachelor with Eric’s eye for a pretty girl.

I came into Eric’s office at the end of one long day at the EECE and found him reading *The Times* (of London) and muttering to himself.

I said, “What are you muttering about, Eric?”

He said, with a sort of Churchillian rumble, “Here is another one of those stories about the declining British birth rate. After seeing these women again, I’m surprised there’s any birth rate at all.”

Eric subsequently became *Sir* Eric and was the long-time director of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, headquartered in Geneva.

Now that I think of it, many of my English friends seemed to have gotten themselves knighted for doing things during and after the war very similar to things I did. I’m not complaining, but all I ever got out of it was a short-term entitlement to have my old

job back in the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Incidentally, Eric later married a beautiful red-headed *American* girl.

86. The GIs Invade England

A few months after I got to England, American GIs started arriving in large numbers. The British did their best to be hospitable, in their reserved way. But the numbers of Americans got to be just too many, particularly in some of the smaller villages where the GIs in the area often outnumbered the local population.

Things were particularly tense with regard to the impact of the American soldiers on the local girls. The Americans had vastly more money to spend than British soldiers or even young civilians. Even more devastating was the GIs' skill in *handing out a line*, which the poor British girls swallowed all the way.

The number of pregnancies and illegitimate births which resulted was not a positive contribution to Anglo-American relations.

I heard one Britisher complaining in a pub, "If there's ever another war, the bloody Americans won't have to send any soldiers, they will just have to send the uniforms."

87. Home on the Range

When the war was over, and the American troops were returning home, the U.S. Embassy had to deal with a large number of delicate situations in which British girls – often highly pregnant ones – had asked for visas to go to the United States on the grounds that they were engaged to an American soldier.

One of the young embassy officers who shared an apartment with me, Bill Ford, had the job of listening to these stories and deciding which ones were genuine fiancées and which of the poor girls involved were simply victims of some GIs line-stringing. One such interview went like this:

British Girl, “Yes, I am engaged to marry this wonderful American soldier. He wants me to come as soon as I can, and we will get married and live on his family’s ranch. It is a great ranch with horses and thousands of cows. Just like in the films!”

Bill Ford, “Where exactly is this ranch?”

British Girl, “Well, it’s in a place called Brooklyn, in New York!”

88. The Education of Angela

In my job at the Lend-Lease mission, my research assistant was a very bright and attractive, but also very naive, British girl named Angela. Like so many other British girls, Angela had just never been exposed to the American habit of *kidding*. I tried from time-to-time to explain to her that she really shouldn’t believe everything that an American told her, because sometimes Americans did indulged in what they regarded as humorous exaggeration, and that this was called *kidding*.

But Angela never quite seemed to understand.

One day I decided I had better make it clear. I turned to Angela and said, “You know, along with a lot of other Americans, I have been wondering what we should do with Britain after the war.”

Angela said in a shocked tone, “What do you mean, what *you* should do with Britain?”

I went on, “Well, there’s been some talk of giving it an opportunity to become the forty-ninth state of America.”

Angela said, “What a notion!”

I said, “Yes, I think you’re right, Britain doesn’t really have the resources and other requirements to be an American state of the United States. But I have an idea – what you do have is a great deal of lovely scenery. Now, when we find a place without many resources but lots of lovely scenery, we make it into a national park. That’s what we could do with Britain after the war – make it a U.S. National Park.”

Angela was about to go through the roof in smoking indignation when she stopped in mid-sentence and said, "That's what you mean by kidding."

And I said, "That's right, Angela, that's what we mean by kidding."

89. Wartime-Diversion

The British generally accepted the almost continual bombing during the war as phlegmatically as they accepted the almost continual miserable weather. I heard a story about an old building in the East End of London that was completely demolished by a bomb during the Blitz. Air-raid rescue groups were digging through the rubble the next day in case there were any survivors, but not really expecting to find any. Finally, they uncovered an old Cockney grandmother who was huddled in a corner of the basement. They tenderly hauled her out and asked, "Are you all right, ma'am?"

The old lady answered, "I'm fine. You know a bit of excitement like this takes a body's mind off the war."

90. Dame Edith Sitwell Misses a Beat

One of my favorite haunts in London was the Churchill Club. This had been formed under the auspices of Winston Churchill as a sort of intellectual version of a Red Cross club. Drinking coffee, eating donuts, and playing poker were the standard diversions at the regular Red Cross clubs. The idea of the Churchill Club was that Americans who were so disposed would be given an opportunity to meet and discuss things with leading British thinkers from all fields. One night the guests were Edith and Sacheverell Sitwell, who, along with their brother Osbert, were among the most eminent of British writers and poets.

About forty mixed British and American military egghead types were gathered in the Churchill Club's main lounge while the Sitwells read their poetry.



Man injured by V-1 'Buzz-Bomb' London

This was during the early days of the V-1 or buzz bombs. A peculiarity of the buzz bombs was that they earned their name by buzzing very loudly in the sky. The only time you really had to worry was when they stopped buzzing somewhere approximately over your head. Then you knew that the bomb had gone into a dive and would be landing somewhere nearby in a few seconds.

Edith Sitwell was reading from her poems when the buzzing of a buzz bomb was heard, getting louder and louder and nearer and nearer. Undaunted by this, she kept reading her poem, simply raising her melodious voice gradually to override the increasing noise of the buzz bomb. Finally, the sound ceased, practically overhead.

During the few seconds of silence, Dame Edith lowered her voice and went right on with the poem.

Just at the critical moment, when we knew it was about to explode, she stopped reading and ducked beneath the lectern.

Similarly, the audience got out of its chairs and ducked under whatever slight shelter was handy.

There was a loud *boom!*

And the building next door collapsed into rubble.

Then, having missed not more than two or three beats of her poem, Dame Edith rose from behind the lectern and finished the reading.

91. No Black Coffee

The British food situation was not only my official concern, but a considerable personal problem. The general shortages of food, combined with the traditional (horrible) British methods of cooking, made decent meals few and far between. I never could figure out how England managed to be so close to France for so many centuries with none of that cooking skill ever managing to leap across the Channel.

One of my biggest problems was trying to get a decent cup of coffee in British restaurants. British coffee is historically unpalatable to American tastes. During the war it was even worse because most of the restaurant coffee was made not from coffee beans but out of something called coffee extract, a syrupy substance that had a vague relationship to what coffee was supposed to taste like. Then, to make the concoction even more gruesome, British custom was to add a good deal of over-boiled milk to their coffee.

If you could manage to get the so-called coffee black, and put in quite a lot of sugar, it was at least somewhat better than the normal hot-milk type. So whenever I went to a restaurant, I would order black coffee.

One time, I did this, and the coffee came loaded with hot milk. I called the waitress over and said, "I'm sorry, I asked for black coffee."

She said, "We don't have any black coffee."

I said, "That's impossible, you have to have black coffee before you can have coffee with milk in it. Just bring me some black coffee."

She said, somewhat warily, "I will call the head waiter."

A distinguished functionary appeared in due course and asked, "What is the trouble, sir?"

I said, "No trouble, I just wanted to get coffee without milk."

And he repeated, "I'm sorry, sir, we don't have any coffee without milk."

I said, "How can that be?"

He gave an answer which left me staggered for some days.

He said, "Well, you see sir, we can't have coffee without milk because of the milk shortage."

I puzzled over this *Alice in Wonderland*-like statement for quite a while and finally asked one of my colleagues in the British Ministry of Food if he could possibly explain it.

He said, "Oh yes, that's absolutely right. You see, the restaurants get so little milk that they have to take the whole day's supply and mix it into the whole day's supply of coffee to be able to serve the kind of coffee that people normally want. The milk supply is so small that it couldn't possibly be divided up into individual portions to go with each cup. The head waiter was correct – it was because of the milk shortage that they didn't have any black coffee."

92. No Iced Tea, Either

Another time while in England, it was an extraordinarily warm and humid day. When I went to a restaurant, I ordered iced tea.

The waiter said, "Tea, sir?"

Me, "No iced tea."

The waiter, "What's that, sir?"

Me, "Tea with ice in it."

Waiter, "I'm sorry we don't serve that, sir."

Me, "Well, you have tea, don't you?"

Waiter, "Of course we have tea."

Me, "Do you have some ice?"

Waiter, "Yes, of course we have ice."

Me, "Well then bring me some tea and some ice, and I will put the ice in the tea, and I will then have iced tea."

Waiter, "I'm sorry, sir, I don't think we could do that. You see, this is an old, established restaurant of good reputation."

93. The Great Dinner

Among the Americans with whom I worked most closely in London was Lloyd Steere, who was the embassy's agriculture attaché. He went on to great distinction in the diplomatic field. Among other unique things about Lloyd was that he was the only man I ever knew who married a colonel: he met and later married a very charming lady who was a junior officer in the Women's Army Corps.

Anyhow, at this stage, Lloyd was maintaining a bachelor establishment in London. He too had been getting more and more depressed with the meals he was able to get, even with his own cook-housekeeper doing her best with what was available. He began to have an almost obsessive dream about having a really good steak for dinner someday. Finally, he went without meat altogether for a couple of weeks, saved up his ration coupons, and then shopped and shopped and finally found a really first-rate tenderloin steak. He brought it home to his cook-housekeeper and said, "This is what we will have for dinner."

All day at the office he dreamed about the great dinner he was going to have. Late in the afternoon, it suddenly occurred to him that the only thing that would be better than great steak would be great steak with fried onions. He called his housekeeper and said, "Could you fry some onions with that dinner?"

She said, “Fried onions? Oh, I don’t think they would go very well with the stew, sir.”

Lloyd said, with a tremble in his voice, “What do you mean, stew?”

That cook said, “Well, I took that nice bit of beef you got and cut it up, and am boiling it with potatoes and carrots and cabbage to make a lovely stew for dinner.”

It took Lloyd weeks to get over this blow.

94. The Assimilated Major General

Late in the war, when American troops were already occupying part of Germany, the military command asked for Lloyd Steere to be detailed to Germany to make a survey of the agricultural situation. Lloyd very much did not want to leave London at that point, so he resisted this assignment in all ways available to a foreign service officer. However, none of the dodges worked. He was simply told to report to Germany as ordered.

He did so, all the while trying to figure a way he could get back to London as quickly as possible. He then recalled that in the course of telling him about the job, the military had mentioned that he would have the assimilated rank of major general. Assimilated rank was something normally given to civilians working in a war zone, so that if they were captured by the enemy, they would be given appropriate treatment as prisoners of war.

Lloyd had the happy thought that as an assimilated major general he ought to be treated just like any other major general.

As soon as he got to Germany, he called the local adjutant general and said, “I want the full list of all the rights and privileges of a major general.”

After some delay, a list came back indicating that a major general was entitled, among other things, to have a private mess,

several servants provided by the military, first-class quarters, a private train and plane.

Having digested the list, Lloyd started calling around demanding each and every one of these privileges. He was happily back in England in about ten days' time.

95. Something Simple

Thanks to the perennially damp British climate, I developed a thoroughly bad case of sinus trouble.

Finally, I asked around the embassy if they knew the name of a doctor who dealt with such things. Somebody mentioned a doctor's name, and I called his office and made an appointment.

The doctor treated me several times and then suggested an operation. He performed the operation, and all went well.

A few weeks after this, I mentioned my operation at a gathering with some of my British friends.

Someone said, "Who is your doctor?"

I mentioned a double-barreled British name I can no longer recall.

My friend said, "Not Sir Humphrey?"

I said that was his name.

My friend asked, "You mean he treated you personally?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "How did you arrange that? Don't you know he's the world's greatest specialist on diseases of the sinus and he hasn't treated a private patient except the King and Winston Churchill for years?"

The next week I was due to go back to the doctor's office for a final checkup. When I got there, I told him that I had just learned of his great reputation and felt a bit embarrassed about having asked him to deal with my straightforward sinus condition. I said,

“I feel a bit as if I’ve asked Michelangelo to paint a barn door.”

The doctor laughed and said, “Well, I have enjoyed this very much. You won’t believe this, but this is the first time in at least fifteen years anyone has ever asked me to do anything simple.”

96. Holy Roman Empire

Among the things I particularly cherished about the British was their ability to laugh at themselves – even over quite serious things. This included their extraordinary lack of preparedness for the war in which they were involved. I remember once seeing a skit in which a pompous old RAF officer was supposedly briefing the first British bombing mission to Germany.

The briefing officer said, “We don’t have any really up-to-date maps available. But you can fly in an easterly direction and about here, where it says on the map ‘Holy Roman Empire,’ you drop your bombs.”

I came to appreciate the special qualities of British jokes more and more. Among other differences from American jokes, they were usually a good deal more subtle, and a good deal longer.

97. British Bureaucracy at Work

One such joke involved a story about an upper-middle-aged Britisher who had been living in the country. When the war came, he felt that he ought to come out and do his bit. He was walking across Berkeley Square one day looking very disconsolate when he ran into an old school friend.

The friend said, “You’re not looking very well, Henry, what is your problem?”

Henry explained that he had been coming up from the country to help with the war effort. He had applied at the Army and they had laughed at him for being too old. He had tried the Navy and

they had laughed at him even harder. The Air Force wouldn't even talk to him. Even the Civil Defense organization had said they needed younger and more agile people.

The friend said, "Why, you mean you're available? My ministry is desperately understaffed. Go to such-and-such an office in the morning and they'll put you right to work."

A week or so later, the two friends again met at Berkeley Square and the country man was still looking unhappy.

His friend asked, "Well, didn't you follow my suggestions?"

Henry said yes, he had done that, and it was true that the ministry had said they needed help, and had given him an office and a desk. The desk had an in-basket and out-basket, and a telephone. The trouble was that nothing ever happened. The telephone never rang. Nothing came into the in-basket, so he had nothing to put in the out-basket, and he couldn't really see how he was helping the war effort.

His civil service friend said, "Nothing comes in the in-basket? Why aren't you on the circulation lists?"

The country man asked, "What are they?"

The civil servant said, "Well, you just call such-and-such's extension and tell them to put you on Circulation A through Q. Then you'll really get involved in the war effort."

Again, a couple weeks went by, and again the two friends met in Berkeley Square. The country man was still looking unhappy. His friend asked, "Now what's the matter?"

The country man said, "Well, they certainly provide a lot of reading material. Every few minutes somebody comes in with a great pile of papers, puts them in the in-basket, and I read them and put them in the out-basket, but I still don't see how I'm contributing anything to the war effort."

His valuable friend said, "You mean you just take the papers from the in-basket, read them, and put them in the out-basket? Don't you minute them?"

The country man said, "Minute them? What does that mean?"

His civil service friend replied, "You're terribly naive about civil service procedure. What you're supposed to do is take each paper that comes into the in-basket and read it, then take another piece of paper and write comments about that paper. The nastier the better! That's called minuting the paper."

This time several weeks intervened, and both friends were rushing across Berkeley Square with bulging briefcases when the old civil servant said, "Well, how are things going, Henry?"

The country man said, "Oh that last tip you gave me that was the answer. I find I have a certain flair for these nasty comments. Ever since I started writing them, people have come rushing into the office, pounding on the desk, and demanding that I go to meetings. The phone is ringing continuously and I'm very busy and I see that I'm really contributing to the war effort now. There's just one thing that worries me. I'm afraid I may have overdone the nasty comments. For the last few days there's been a little man sitting just outside of my office who follows me whenever I go to a meeting and makes notes on everything I say. The only thing I can think of is that he must be from counterintelligence or something."

The old civil servant replied, "Congratulations, Henry, you now have an assistant."

98. Here's to You!

A similar tale about a Britisher returning from his first visit to the United States had him telling his friends at the club about curious American drinking habits.

He said, "It's really unbelievable. They first take a bit of good whiskey and put it in a glass to give you a nice strong drink. Then they add some kind of mixture to make it weaker. Then they put sugar in it to make it sweet. Then they add lemon juice to make

it sour. Finally, they put ice in it to make it cold, and then they shake it up, presumably to make it warm. And finally, they hold the glass out and say, 'Here's to you!' and drink it themselves."

99. The Shaggiest Dog

My favorite British "Shaggy Dog" story takes place in the office of a music hall booking agent. The agent's secretary says, "There's a little man out there with a couple of dogs. I told him that you aren't booking any acts these days, but he says he just won't go away until he sees you."

The agent says, "Get rid of him, Susan. You know things are very bad in the music hall business these days. I'm booking almost no acts and certainly no dog acts. The public is fed up with dog acts."

A few minutes later the secretary comes back and says, "I tried to get rid of him every way I could think of, but he just won't go away."

The booking agent says, "All right, show him in, we'll get rid of him that way."

The man comes in and the agent says, "Well, tell me about your act. My secretary has already told you that we have no place for dog acts these days."

The little man says, "Well, this is a rather unusual dog act. You see, the big dog can type."

The agent says, "What do you mean type?"

The man says, "Just set him down at a typewriter and he'll type you anything you want."

So, the big dog sits at the agent's typewriter and copies a column from *The Times*.

The agent is amazed and says, "Well what does the little dog do?"

The man says, "Oh, he sings opera."

Sure enough, the little dog opens his mouth and out comes a fine baritone rendition of an operatic aria.

The booking agent is astounded and asks his secretary to bring in a contract immediately. He says, "This is the greatest dog act in history!"

The little man says, "Well, before I sign a contract, I think I should tell you there's sort of a trick to it."

The agent says, "Oh, I knew it was too good to be true. What is the trick?"

The little man says, "Well, the part about the big dog being able to type – that's straight. He really can type. But the part about the little dog being able to sing opera is kind of a fake. He can't sing worth a damn. It's the big dog again. He's a ventriloquist."

100. Getting Even

In closing this chapter about my adventures in England, I have to explain how I got even with all the Britishers who, in their very polite way, had gone around correcting my pronunciation over the years I was there. They had carefully explained that one didn't say *Hertfordshire*, they said *Harts*. Also, that the name *Featherstonhaugh* was pronounced *Fanshaw*. Also, that the Ford Motor Company plant was not in *Dagenham*, but in *Dagnam*. And so on and so on until I built up a bit of inferiority complex and a desire for revenge.

My opportunity came when I finally got back to the U.S. in the late spring of 1946. I went home with a British colleague from the Emergency Economic Committee for Europe to attend an international conference in Washington. We separated at the airport and arranged to meet for a drink that evening. When I saw him, I said, "How did things go? Did the embassy fix you up with a place to stay?"

He said, “Oh, yes, they fixed me up very nicely at a hotel near the White House. It’s called the Hayes Adam Hotel.”

I said, “Oh, yes, *Haddams* Hotel.”

I’m sure my British friend had lots of trouble trying to get Washington taxi drivers to take into the *Haddams* hotel for the rest of his stay.