

THE WAY IT IS THIS MORNING IN MOAB, UTAH. OCTOBER 4, 1941

Jim Stiles

MOAB, UTAH.
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4, 1941



Well, it's been raining buckets since yesterday afternoon and with no end in sight. These storms have been a welcome relief after our long, dry and dusty summer, so I'm not going to mention all the mud out there. And I wouldn't even remotely consider complaining about it.

But I will note that when I walked over to the Arroyo to see the flooding, I sank almost to my knees in the goeey stuff and when I tried to extract myself from the quagmire, I accidentally pulled my bare feet right out of my galoshes and ended up abandoning them there, just west of Main Street. I assume by now they've come unglued from the goop, washed into Mill Creek and are headed downstream to the Colorado River and Lake Mead! My barefooted trudge back home was, well, it was quite a sensory experience!

The Arroyo is quite a sight. I'm not sure how many Moabites know the Arroyo's history. Way back in 1855, when the Huntington party arrived here and set up housekeeping, one of their first tasks of course was to get the garden going. They diverted water from Mill Creek for that purpose and were making great progress with their crops. But when things went sour with the Utes and the Mormons hightailed it out of here so fast, they forgot to shut off the irrigation diversion gates. As a result all that water kept being diverted from Mill Creek for the next 30 years! Needless to say, it cut quite a ditch. I guess someday, some enterprising Moabites will fill it in and build something atop it, but for now, it's a reminder of Moab's past and also a warning to how quickly life can change around here---for better or worse.

I drove out to the Arches to see my friend Hank Schmidt. He's the 'custodian; and head honcho at the Monument and in charge of keeping the roads open. However, Hank is feeling a bit frustrated and maybe overwhelmed. He and I sipped coffee this morning watching the floods come down the canyon.

Hank was feeling philosophical and showed me the report he recently sent to Boss Hinckley, the Southwest Monuments Superintendent for the National Park Service. He told Boss, "The rains came, the winds stayed with us and much of the road is now somewhere between Arches and Boulder Dam. I don't like to 'cry' about the road to the Windows, but now and then, after filling the same washout 3 times a day in 6 days, I sort of 'holler' at myself, often producing a fair-sized echo that re-echoes until it dwindles into a sigh."

Ol' Hank is quite the philosopher/poet, I think.

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We both managed to shake off the gloom of all these storms when Hank asked me if I'd heard about Ted Williams (the great Boston Red Sox leftfielder).. Of course I had. I have been a fan of this kid from Beantown since he came to the majors two years ago. How can this skinny young fella, who they call



"The Splendid Splinter," hit the ball so far?

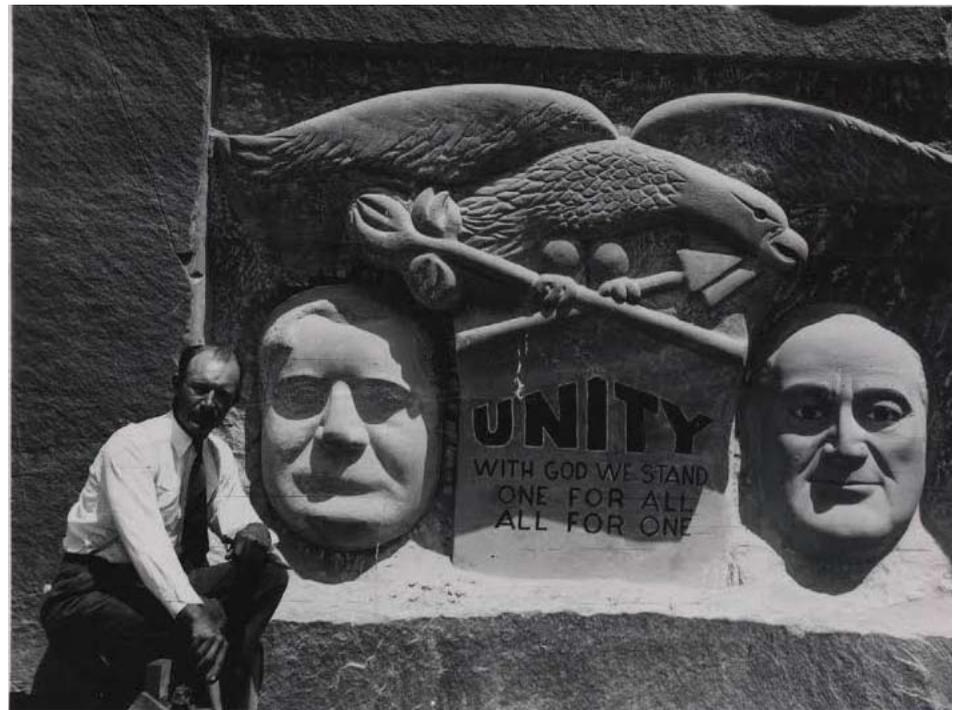
Anyway, as you all know, Ted has been batting above .400 all season--something that hasn't happened in many years--but his average started to slip last week and he was in danger of losing that amazing .400 average. His manager, Joe Cronin, told Ted he could sit out the last two games to preserve his average, but Ted wouldn't think of it. So he went into those last two games and just knocked the cover off the ball...batted 6 for 8, if you can believe it. Wound up the season batting .406.

I wonder how long his record will stand? You gotta love a guy like that. I imagine we'll be having many 'discussions' this winter at the Club 66, as we all debate the relative greatness of Ted and Joe DiMaggio. What a season it has been--Ted bats .400 and Joltin' Joe hits safely in 56 consecutive games. They're BOTH the greatest as far as I'm concerned.

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I wish we'd had Ted and Joe's bats last week to knock some sense into a couple of these government people; last week they did something so thoughtless and rude, it almost defies description.

Last April, I read that sculptor Albert Christensen, the fellow that is blasting a home right out of the rock (about 15 miles south of town) was embarking on a new project. He called it "The Unity Monument" and its purpose was to honor BOTH of the candidates in the recent 1940 presidential election. It's a rare moment, Albert noted, when America is offered such a remarkable choice of decent, honorable men. Both President Roosevelt and his opponent, the Republican Wendell Willkie, possessed all the qualities we could ever hope for in a great leader. Mr. Christensen felt it was a memorable moment in American history and so he sought to honor them, via his art.



Albert and the Unity Monument

Albert built a "working model" on a wall south of his home. It depicted FDR on the left, Willkie on the right, separated only by a bald eagle and bound together by the expression, "United We Stand." Tonya and I drove out to see his 'work-in-progress' last May and were mightily impressed. He told us at the time that his 'big plan' was to sculpt a massive version of the monument on a large sandstone wall about a mile south of his home. He estimated that "more than 100,000 people" could gather in the natural amphitheater below to examine his work. There was even word that a group of Moab citizens, including Mayor D.E. Baldwin, Bish Taylor, publisher of the local paper, Sheriff J.B. Skewes, and LDS bishop W.R. McConkie, wrote to Mr. Willkie and invited him to the dedication ceremonies.

But now it's over. Incredibly some damn fool from Salt Lake City named N.F. Waddell reported that the Unity Monument had been "obliterated." Waddell is a "special agent in charge of the U.S. Division of Investigations," and he claimed that Albert's sculpture was on government property. Mr. Waddell even made some absurd statement that the eagle Albert sculpted was "facing the wrong direction."

Between thunderstorms, I went down to his 'Hole "N" the Rock' home to visit with Albert again, and I have to say I have never seen him so angry and bewildered. It made no sense to him at all that the government would destroy his work of art. He showed me a letter he planned to send to the government and Albert gave me permission to quote

from it. In part, Mr. Christensen stated, "To me, it was one of the greatest expressions (of unity) because it showed no greediness. It showed only each man's desire to win, and Americans are that way. Were they out for revenge after the election? I cannot think so."

Finally, Albert pleaded, "I worked with a God Inspired ambition—quite unfair to my family, barely food enough to hold our bodies together—two minor children my wife and myself—because of a God. And a God Inspired obsession....If I had been in error in my filing, it seems the general land office would have tried to explain where I was in error and perhaps attempt to help me straighten the thing out, but they did not."

I hope his letter does some good and wakes up a few people in Washington, DC, but I have to admit, I am not hopeful. I just wonder how much worse these tensions between the locals and the feds will get before angry emotions boil over and explode?

Speaking of "explosions," while local issues like vandalized rock sculptures and insensitive government employees can make our blood boil, they pale in comparison to the great threat our country (and the world) faces overseas. This awful war in Europe rages on. Who can imagine Nazi swastikas flying over the Eiffel Tower in Paris? How is that possible? And except for those brave young pilots of the Royal Air Force, all could be lost in Britain. Now the Nazis are moving against Moscow; if their armies can survive the bitter Russian winter, we may see most of the world controlled by Germany before next Spring.

We've all read the accounts in August of Mr. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill meeting on a battleship near Newfoundland, to prepare for the future. What will happen next? Three weeks ago, the Germans fired upon one of our ships, the USS Greer, and many Americans are ready to fight. But so many others are not. I was especially struck, and not in a good way, by the recent remarks of Charles Lindbergh.

I have always considered "Lucky Lindy" to be a true American Hero and we were all devastated a few years ago, when the Lindbergh's baby was kidnapped and later found murdered. But his rhetoric these days is scary. Last week he again spoke out against any involvement in the war. On September 11, Lindbergh spoke at a



big 'America First' rally in Des Moines. I jotted down a few of his remarks. He said, "The three most important groups who have been pressing this country toward war are the British, the Jewish and the Roosevelt administration."

But while Lindbergh said he admired the British and Jewish races, he claimed that the Jews' "greatest danger to this country lies in their large ownership and influence in our motion pictures, our press, our radio and our government."

I have a hard time with language like that. I hope more people listen to Mr. Roosevelt than to Mr. Lindbergh.

And yet...how many of our young boys will die if it comes to war? How many innocent children will perish as this conflict grows? Already we know that hundreds of thousands of innocent people have been caught in the crossfire of global war.

Just last week, it was reported that more of our local boys have signed up to fight. Bruce Turnbow, who joined the Navy last spring, was recently home on furlough but returned to San Diego this week to report for duty. He says he will be shipping out soon, for parts unknown.

This week, two more young Moab men were inducted into the Army---Orley Everett Taylor and John Lee Sly. They left on Tuesday for Fort Douglas.

Surely, many more of our boys will feel the call of duty; if it comes to war for America, we can only hope and pray for their safe return.



The USS Greer

For now, however, America is still 'at peace,' and we see the country going about its business. Sometimes though, it does feel a bit unreal. While I was visiting with Hank at Arches, he told me that despite the rains, and the never ending bad news from around the world, the number of tourists coming to the Monument has doubled from last year. He told me that while travel to Arches totaled 2365 for all of 1940, the number of Arches visitors this year had already exceeded 3480, with three more months of the year remaining.

Hank also heard another 'statistic' that was troubling. He says the number of automobile accident fatalities across the country this year is setting records too. Hank thinks the highway deaths and the increased tourism are related. Most Americans seem to be feeling overwhelmed with a sense of, I don't know...impending doom, maybe. War seems so close. So maybe everybody is having one last fling before we all have to face reality and buckle down for the long fight ahead. "Just a theory," Hank says, but it makes sense to me.



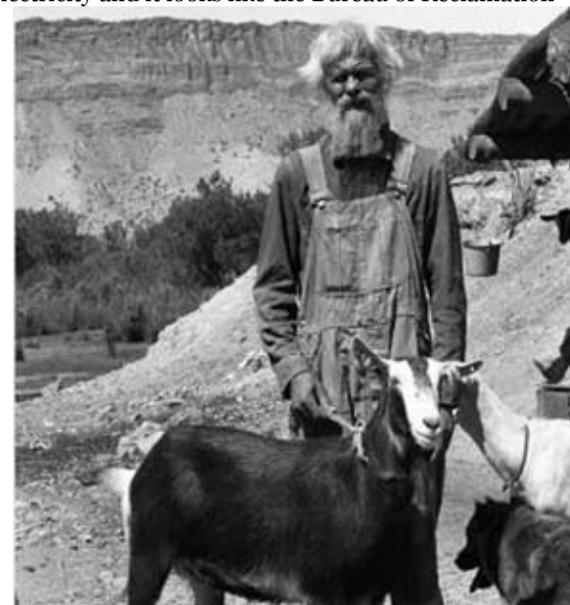
It seems that two girls from Moab are headed to Rio De Janiero soon. Billie Louise and Betty Lou Graham have been chosen along with four other dancers from "Earl Carroll's Vanities of New York City" for an eight week engagement in the Brazilian capital. Isn't that something?

To put an exclamation mark on that comment, I just read another story in the Moab weekly along that line of thinking. It seems that two girls from Moab are headed to Rio De Janiero soon. Billie Louise and Betty Lou Graham have been chosen along with four other dancers from "Earl Carroll's Vanities of New York City" for an eight week engagement in the Brazilian capital. Isn't that something? Their parents, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Graham moved to New York last year to be closer to the girls, but word from their aunt, Elberta Clark, confirms the story. The two Moab girls were chosen for this exciting adventure from more than 300 contestants. After they complete their two month engagement, they are already booked to perform in Los Angeles, California.

With the world in turmoil, we wish them good luck and a safe journey.

If it comes to war, it sounds like our part of the world has plenty of natural resources to keep our country running at full speed. A recent sub-committee hearing led by Senator Joseph O Mahoney (D-WY) revealed that we have abundant natural resources right here in Utah. According to the report, there's enough magnesium in the ground by Thompsons to "supply the world for 3000 years."

Of course, to run a big magnesium mine and processing plant with that kind of capacity, they're going to need a lot of electricity and it looks like the Bureau of Reclamation has found a power dam site upriver from Moab that will suit their needs. All the talk now is about a dam just upriver from Dewey Bridge. They've been drilling test holes and detailed engineering work is underway right now. There's a rumor that a whole string of dams will be built on the Colorado River over the next few years and decades. I'm not sure how our river running friend Norman Nevills is going to feel about this.



Later this afternoon, we're going to take a drive down to the river to see the floods and make sure Jack Holley is okay.

The water was really coming off the cliffs earlier today, and his little cabin is in a rather precarious spot. I saw 'The Goat Man' last week and found him immersed in a stack of newspapers. Locals and travelers alike often stop and talk to Jack and whenever possible, he asks if they have any recent editions.

When I stopped by, Jack was very upset about news that one of our ships, the USS Greer had been fired upon by German U-boats. I was amazed how informed he was when he told me the Greer was "a Wickes-class destroyer in the United States Navy, and the first ship named for Rear Admiral James A. Greer."

I wondered how in the world Jack knew all this nautical information and he reminded me that he'd been a merchant seaman for decades before winding up in the middle of the red rock desert. "A strange place for me to drop anchor, I guess," Jack once mused. Still Jack's heart went out to the sailors and he worried about the crew's safety. Though he sailed around the world three times, Jack said he always feared a "watery grave." And we both worried what the next few months would bring to our country and our world.