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The Vehicle, October 1959, Vol. 1 no. 4

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Recommended Citation

Pialorsi, Frank; Miller, Robert C.; Parker, Neil O.; Daut, Barbara Wilson; French, Robert Mills; Bromley, Bud; Skeptic, The; McGowan, Rhonda; Brooks, Al; Winkleblack, Gladys C.; Ferree, Kathleen; Browder, Bert; and Carter, A. B., "The Vehicle, October 1959, Vol. 1 no. 4" (1959). *The Vehicle*. 5.

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The Vehicle

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*There Are Two Reasons For Drinking: One Is,
When You Are Thirsty To Cure It; The Other,
When You Are Not Thirsty, To Prevent It . . .
Prevention Is Better Than Cure.*

—Peacock

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ROBERT MILLS FRENCH
Editor

MARY ELLEN MOCKBEE
Assistant Editor

To The Reader

The Vehicle made its debut on the literary scene in April, 1959. At that time the policy of the magazine was stated. Although the editorship has changed hands, the policy shall remain the same. We invite manuscripts of all sorts—short stories, articles, poems, fillers, and cartoons. We shall pass our best judgment on what we receive and publish what we like of it.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We should like to take this opportunity to thank Fred L. Miller for turning over the reins of *The Vehicle* to us. He and his wife, the former Miss Linda Lyons, now reside somewhere in Oregon, and we wish them the best of luck in their new life. Also, thanks to C. E. "Ted" Schumacher for invaluable technical assistance, and Dr. Elmer Brooks for his unselfish effort to help at any time and his rigid adherence to correctness.

Success

By Frank Pialorsi

Eleanor Mangold was in such a state of anticipation that she nearly dropped the four china cups she had just taken from the cabinet.

"Mildred!" she called. "Come here, Mildred. Help me."

"Yes, ma'am," the maid said as she hurriedly entered the dining room.

"Oh, Mildred, I'm so excited. My first big tea for Middleton society. It has to be good. I've waited too many years for this."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Mildred, are you sure all the silver is perfect? Did you get rid of that chipped cup? Oh, yes, move that table over the flaw in the living-room carpet."

"I have attended to all those things, ma'am," replied Eleanor's faithful aide.

Mildred had attended to everything. She was as eager as her employer that the party go well. Everything was perfect. Nothing could prevent Mrs. Mangold's fete from being anything but the mild success it was meant to be. All week there had been cleaning, polishing, ordering. Mrs. Mangold was giving this afternoon's tea to acknowledge her acceptance into Middleton society.

Eleanor paused in her preparations, as she had done countless times during the week, to think how this had all come about. She thought of Harry, her husband—how she had pushed him to the top—the top being an executive position in Middleton's only factory. She thought how, early in their marriage, she had insisted that their name be changed from Meems to Mangold.

"Meems," she had said, "is just not the name for a person to have who intends to get ahead."

Harry had protested with the usual: "Meems was good enough for my father; it's good enough for me." But after a few days of lecture on the frailties of the name *Meems* and a few nights of thwarting Harry's advances, the name was changed.

Eleanor's next move was a change of residence: "Harry, how will we ever get ahead while we are living on East Miller Street? The address leaves people cold. Now if it were something like Park Ridge Road or White Acres . . ." They moved to one of those places which can be best described as "middle of the ladder" homes.

Harry had worked hard. His boss had never really liked him, but he recognized the eager-beaver abilities. Meanwhile, Eleanor worked too. She worked at flattery; she flattered the right people often. She worked at socializing. Before any office party she would quiz Harry as to what his higher-ups' present topics of discussion were and, especially, what to avoid in conversation with them. Eleanor had always thought that it was far better to avoid any chance of disharmony than grope around for something to say. Thus she learned from Harry not to mention Democrats to Mr. Phipps and to avoid theatre or movie talk with Mrs. Fluce, who deemed all theatricals sinful. She learned (from her own experience) not to shrink from old H. R., the company president, when he practiced his unpleasant welcoming of feminine guests by encircling their waists with a grip that was much too firm.

She and Harry had worked as a team to gain peerage with the Phippses, the Fluces, the H. R. Cannedons, and other social leaders of social-minded Middleton. They learned it was in bad taste to buy a new auto every year; every two years was proper. American cars only; foreign cars were considered vulgar. They decorated their home in a provincial style. Anything appearing too close to modern was distasteful to upper Middleton.

Through the years Harry's advancements had not been rapid, but they had been steady. Finally, after six promotions, a new house, and an invitation to Eleanor to join Mrs. Harietta Phipps' Wednesday afternoon garden club of very limited membership, they knew they were *in* at last. This final step to the ladder's top had occurred one month ago. Through all of this Eleanor had insisted that she wanted success not for herself, but for Harry.

The slamming of the front door recalled her to the present. She recognized Harry's step across the black and white tiles of the hall.

"Harry, whatever are you doing home?"

"I'm not feeling well. I'm taking the rest of the day

off," he replied, reaching for the decanter of scotch, which in the old days had been for display and guests only. He drank the whiskey and promptly refilled the glass.

"Well, you can't stay here to drink. I'm expecting my guests shortly. I'd be ruined if they knew my husband were home. It would spoil everything."

"Oh, I had forgotten that this is your day of all days. Well, I won't intrude, my love. I'll just retreat to the upstairs and stay hidden in the back bedroom. I want to rest." He took the bottle of liquor and ascended the stairs.

"After all, Harry," she called up to him, "I'm doing all of this more for your sake than mine."

He disappeared without answering. Eleanor was worried about Harry's drinking. Since his last promotion he had been indulging a little too heavily at home. She had been careful lately to watch him when they were out.

"Oh, well," she thought, "let him get tight at home if he wants to. Who will ever know? Besides, he deserves to let loose a little. Both of us have walked a straight path too long. I think tonight I will talk to him about a vacation. We'll go where we want to go this time, not where his bosses' wives say we ought to go. Yes, that's what is wrong. We need a trip together. Harry has been a dear. He has succeeded just as I knew he would. Of course, he couldn't have done it without me. I mustn't think about it now; my party is what is important; nothing must spoil it now."

The door-bell rang. Mildred came from the kitchen to admit the first of the guests. After a final briefing of Mildred, Eleanor stationed herself at the door to greet her guests as they arrived. She was a perfect hostess. Some of the guests were reluctant to admit it, but the consensus favored the new initiate.

"Nice cups," said one.

"Smart table," said another.

"Hmmp," said a third.

As the party progressed, Eleanor was signaled by her maid. "Yes, Mildred, what is it?"

"Ma'am, it's Mr. Mangold. There is something wrong up there." The maid was beginning to get excited.

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Eleanor calmed her with: "Get back to the guests; I'll attend to him."

"Oh, the fool," she thought as she excused herself and headed towards the stairs. "His drinking a little scotch could ruin my party. And all of this is for him."

Minutes later, she rejoined her guests. Mildred approached her with deep concern.

"Ma'am?"

"It's all right, Mildred. We'll attend to it later."

The afternoon expired. The guests, after discussing flowers, drinking tea, and secretly cementing the agreement that Mrs. Mangold was acceptable, began to leave. One by one they bid their farewells.

"Don't forget garden club," said one.

"Remember, lunch on Tuesday," said another.

"Nice tea," said a third.

After they had all left, Eleanor breathed a sigh of relief. Turning to her maid, she said, "Well, Mildred, I must attend to it now."

The maid grasped the situation. She picked up the telephone, dialed, and handed it to her mistress.

In a scarcely audible voice Eleanor Mangold whispered, "Doctor, you must come right away. It's my husband. He's gone, I'm sure. His heart, you know."

Seaward

By Robert C. Miller, E.I.U.

Slip the ropes from
Each ancient ship
And let the wind
Catch the sail.
Steer grandly
Down the channel
Between the reefs
To the harbor's mouth.
Reap wild winds,
Reap your acres of sea.

High-Precision Speech

By Neil O. Parker, E.I.U.

I can't help it—I grow snarly
When people say "part-tic-you-larly,"
And I confess I don't inure
To hearing folks say "lit-ra-choor";
My sense of fitness is sent stagg'rin'
When anybody calls it "shag-rin";
And I invoke damnation mutely
On those agreeing "absol-yutely."

He's a medal, not a coin,
Whose "going" never stops at "goin'";
He is glass, not terra cotta
Whose "got to" never sounds like "gotta";
He is inimical to love
Who says that "of" is "ahv" not "uv."
He would deserve it if some day
To Mountaintown he found his way
And, getting Nature's sudden call,
Could find no mountain word at all
To tell 'em where he had to go!
By such misfortune men might know
That now and then the rules of speech
Are not dishonored in the breach!

Convalescence

By Barbara Wilson Daut

First Publication Rights Only

This beneath my feet is no longer a dark, shivering void; now it is brilliant, green, and firm. Above, the chromatic pattern of blue gently pushes away the churning, angry grey. I stretch my finger tips to touch, fondle, and now to grasp eagerly the warmth, coolness, brightness. I perceive the varied hues, the crunch and crackle, the sweet, sharp tang of the air that surrounds me. Out of the tormenting, tensing shadows of pain my weary body steps to find life's brilliance.

Has Anyone Seen Vinzetti?

By Robert Mills French

No, Mister, I don't know where you can find Vinzetti. What do you want him for?

Oh, hell, I can show you around just as well as him. Over here we're pouring a pillar. This is good weather for road work; the structures are going up at breakneck speed. Vinzetti's been driving the men hard. I don't know how much more of it they can take.

You want me to tell you about him? You aren't some sort of spy, are you?

O.K., I'll tell you all I know about him. As far as I know no one has ever had a good word for Vinzetti; the kindest thing I ever heard anyone call him was "bastard." The men stop joking with one another when he's around; their faces freeze into blank stares.

Before I go any further, let me tell you about Vinzetti's appearance. He's a short, fat Italian, the type that earns the title "wop." Everything about him is slovenly. Even though he wears expensive clothes, he is still a slob. When he talks it infuriates the listener. In a high-pitched, sarcastic sputtering—that leaves you with an unclean feeling—he swears and curses in a manner that embarrasses even these men.

I never saw him look a man directly in the face; instead, he glances about like a rat looking for a hole.

Sure, I hate him, and so does every man of the crew. Maybe it's the way he drives them, but there's more to it than that. These are hard men, Mister, men capable of a long day under the hot sun, and no little "wop" is going to break them down. He treats them like dogs, and any workman who considers himself a man is soon weeded out. Never content with just firing a man, he makes a spectacle of misery. Have you ever had to tell your wife and kids you're a failure, Mister?

That's right, this is the crew that had the accident last year. I never will forget that day. Charlie, our colored bucket man, got crushed between a piling and that huge bucket over there. He had worked for Vinzetti almost

twenty years, and a more conscientious man never worked on a road. We all loved Charlie, and his color never mattered to us.

I can't tell you what happened, Mister; it was just one of those freaks that will happen once in a lifetime. When I remember watching the life being crushed out of him, it all seems like a bad dream. Fourteen men moved as one to save him, but it was no use. Charlie was dead. Like children, we sat around his broken body and bawled. Mister, I hope I never again see anything as sad as that group of burly men crying.

No, it didn't bother Vinzetti. I swear to God he didn't even flinch. All he said was, "Get that stupid nigger off the job and keep pouring." No thought of the ten children left fatherless, the little bastard was worried about his damn bridge.

It took quite a while for that to wear off, and the men haven't been the same since. Oh, they do the job, but they don't joke much or take much pride in their work. They grope through each structure, with Vinzetti squealing, "Don't stop pouring; keep pouring."

We all know that once the concrete is being poured it can't be stopped, but he doesn't give us credit for having minds of our own.

Just this morning we started a big job, and of course the wop had to be buzzing around annoying the men. The last I saw of him he was raging up to the edge of the form to heckle the finishers.

I'd stop filling the form to look for him, but he'd only give me hell for holding up the job. I can hear him now, "Keep pouring, goddammit, keep pouring."

Well, Mister, that's just what we're doing.

War

Praise on the grave is a hollow reward
For those who died in the strife.
What care the dead the way they died?
What of the wasted life?

—R.M.F.

Ode to My Math Professors

By Bud Bromley, E.I.U.

I wish that I could activate
Cells enough to cerebrate
At something like your wondrous rate!
Theorems you enunciate
And rigorously formulate
And rapidly elaborate.
Examples you enumerate,
While I my notebook inundate
With notes I'll recapitulate.
"Find arc length of this lemniscate."
I hesitate. I speculate.
I mediate. I integrate.
But still it doesn't penetrate.
There's nothing I can innovate,
For when I would originate,
I quickly reach a stalemate.
As yet, I do but imitate.
But still this hope I cultivate
That, given years to incubate,
The truths you this day demonstrate
I'll, teaching, help perpetuate.

Bird of Pray

By The Skeptic

I wonder if there is a God,
And, if so, is he great and kind?
Is life a phase between the sods
Or a hateful, tortured state of mind?

Where is the wondrous spirit of love
Which fools and saints hold as the key?
Where is the mythical, peace-filled dove?
Cruel, cold talons of the hawk I see.

Beauty and grace, with death and hate,
Accompany that bird of blood and despair;
On wings of grace speeds life's evil fate,
Strike to the soul, cut deep and tear.

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Discovery

By Rhonda McGowan

Like great holocausts the huge beast roared across the still barrenness of tundra to the village. First came the sound of them, a whirring roar broken by unearthly shrieks. Then they came into view and all the villagers who stood trembling, waiting, were unnerved by the sight of them.

The women and children fled into the igloos, leaving only the men, who took up their spears and awaited the awesome black monsters. Stopping a short distance from where the frightened men stood, the strange creatures shivered and coughed as from the cold, but did not attack. Then, from the first of the creatures stepped a man.

He was very tall and to those who stood waiting he appeared gigantic. He held no spear, but the very sight of him frightened the smaller men, and they raised their own spears as though to fend him off. Other men emerged from the black objects and stood behind the first. They stared at the armed villagers and surprise and fear appeared on their narrow faces.

At this tense moment a small, brown child ran from one of the igloos in pursuit of a bit of fur that was a new-born puppy. The father of the little one cried out in despair as he saw the tiny child run towards the huge men. Throwing his spear to the ground, he ran after his baby and, overtaking her, swept her into his arms. It was too late to turn back and the villagers stood facing the strangers, waiting.

Fear had left him and only desperate courage remained. The tall leader moved then, amazingly quick for his size. The tiny puppy was caught up in his hand as it vainly tried to flee. It cowered and snarled and awaited its doom.

To the amazement of the desperate man who stood facing him, he cuddled the puppy and held it close. He smiled and held the miniature dog out for the rebellious child to take. The tension was over and soon these strange tall men who had put the natives on the defensive in fear of their lives a short time before were laughing and trying to talk to their new-found friends.

Solace for My Daughter

By Al Brooks

You have troubles at school? Now, my dear, just you listen
And with tears for your Mama your poor eyes will glisten:
School was two miles away, and each morning I walked;
I was kept after school if I giggled or talked;
In a bucket I carried a cold, milkless lunch,
And the boys all walked home in a separate bunch!
In summer we cooled, at recess, in a grove,
And in winter we warmed 'round a pot-bellied stove.
An arithmetic problem required a whole page;
At a mispronounced word, the teacher would rage.
We learned genealogy (if little heredity),
And at ten (but not now) I could spell *assafeddity*.
In short, life at school was so thoroughly harried
I left at the age of fifteen to get married.
But, for *you*, everything is conducive to dome work,
So be Mom's little egghead, and go do your homework!

You've asked me, friend,
So many times
Just why I go to school.
My answer is:
At least *I'll* be
An *educated* fool.

—By Mary Ellen Mockbee

Ownership

Our cars are just alike, so what
Is your sneer upon parade for
Oh, heaven help me, I forgot!—
Yours is paid for!

A Poetic Gem

By Gladys C. Winkleblack

A gem from the poet's pen
As gold from a glory hole,
Hidden from eyes of blind men,
Revealed to the searching soul.

I've Forgotten You

By Kathleen Ferree

I never think of you at all—
Except summer, winter, spring, or fall.
I never notice that you are gone—
Except in a crowd or when I'm alone.
I never wish that you were near—
Except when the sun shines or rain
 clouds appear.
I never miss your gentle embrace—
Except when emptiness seizes your place.

Loading Zone

By Bert Bowder

We are a dozen: which of us
Will first step up into the bus?
The first is always Mrs. Plenty,
Who makes the driver take a twenty,
And while for change he gropes about,
Her nether regions keep us out.

Ode To An English Professor

Wordsworth wrote not to pacify,
Nay, 'twas so I may classify.

Wisdom holds no mystery for I,
For I have learned to classify.

Plato, your doctrine I'll not deny.
Those words of truth I'll classify.

Now life, beauty, nor love have I,
For these I cannot classify.

The philosophy that I hold high:
The End of Life—to classify.

—Anon.

To Be Read To Drivers Doing Eighty

By A. B. Carter, E. I. U.

Let us suppose it could be done another way:
For death is no intelligence that waits at intersections,
At sudden curves, at straightaways inducive of short sleep.
Let us acknowledge that he does not lurk and leap
Strike and reap and laugh, silent in the darkness after
the crash
And the scream and the crackling glass.

Let us not think him unseen,
For he is more than seen, he is foreseen.
Every one of his forty thousand annual visits is accurately
forecast—
How many each weekend we could almost tell
And do name figures for each holiday.

Let us imagine it then like this:
That once we might know not just *how many*, but *whom*;
That to each of them came the notice, bearing his familiar
seal:

*To die this year in traffic accident.
On May 9, therefore, come by automobile at sunset
To a point on the new highway four miles west of town,
Where you . . .*

Suppose it could be done that way—by simple public induction. . .

Would we have it? No. We would no sooner be the selector
Than the selected, if it had to be that way.

We prefer in the dark, blaming blind chance, to select
(For we are indeed the selectors, and death is at our beck)
And go in our vehicles to kill and be killed,
Murderers without the name (or slain by murderers who do
not bear the name)

Only because we know not *who* will die
Or just exactly when
Our crime or end (or both) will come.

Of the notice that forty thousand times this year
Will be written (but not on paper)
And received (but not by mail)
Are you author or addressee?

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But half can tell love's feeling,
Sweet Flowers alone can say
What passion fears revealing.*

—Thomas Moore

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