THE POST, FRIDAY, JUNE 17, 1949

THREE ACRES

And Six Dependents

By Phyllis Smith

In March of the year 1937 Norm received a rather chilly little form letter from the War Department telling him to report to Aberdeen Proving Ground at such and such a date. I was simply aghast at the idea and kept saying to Norm, "What would happen if you just didn't show up?" He eyed me in true soldierly disgust and answered me in an Ogden Nash fashion, "I've never seen a court martial, I hope I never see one, but I can tell you anyhow, I'd rather, see than be one." I began to get the impression that he planned to answer the summons so I asked, "How did you ever happen to take R.O.T.C. in college anyway?" "It was simple", he replied, "I merely substituted R.O.T.C. for a course in poetry" and I could tell from the far away look in his eyes that he was wondering if there had been any pretty girls taking the Omar Khayyam special while he was out in the fields tripping in gopher holes learning the basic art of becoming an infantry officer.

5,

Bob was boarding at Seminary that year and when some friends of ours volunteered to take Norma and Wade until school was out, Norm decided to take me to Aberdeen and just close up the house until summer.

We arrived in Aberdeen at dusk on a cold rainy night and spent several hours hunting for a room. We found lodging in a prefabri-cated shack which had obviously been hooked together a few days before we arrived. The rain came in without knocking and settled in pools on the bedroom floor. A baby wailed in the next room so crawled in the clammy bed and shed a few tears myself. The next morning it was still raining and more water had come in unan-nounced so Norm said, "Let's get out of this houseboat and find another place to stay." Talk about famous last words. For the next week we had to go back to the prefab and rest our weary bones. Aberdeen was definitely a boom town and every available room was rented out at fantastic prices. One night we made our way to the Western Union office and prepared to wire the kids that I would be home soon because we couldn't find a place to stay. We wrote the wire and the operator read it back and then remarked that her husband had just left for active duty the day before and that she was planning to rent one room if we would eat out. Norm and I just stood there like a couple of Cigar Store Indians, speechless with delight at the prospect of boarding on dry land for a change. We went back to the houseboat and gathered up our belongings, paid the fab-ulous lodging fee, said, "Bon Voy-age, happy sailing," and quickly departed. We found Phoebe Thompson's house without much effort. Norm remarked to me that it looked well anchored so we were soon established in our new room. Anyone who has ever lived in one room will probably sympathize with us, but it is something you have to experience yourself. Never are days as long as those in which you have absolutely nothing constructive or even destructive to do. I read until my eyes rebelled, knitted all sorts of unwearable objects, and drove around the countryside looking for old historic homes. The only one I ever located was the birthplace of John Wilkes Booth and I realize that any red blooded American would rebel at paying a quarter to go through the traitor's homestead, but being a lowly Canadian and not overly versed in Lincoln lore I proceded to pay the admission and looked over the establishment. You couldn't tell from looking at the old four post bed that it had witnessed the birth of Lincoln's assassin. A moth eaten old lady, one of Wilkes descendents, was living in the house surrounded by photographs of John and the infamous Ford Theatre. No one had been there in over a year so the old lady kept me there explaining that John hadn't really shot Lincoln. I guess she must have been very convincing as Norm and I went to a party on the Post that night and Norm overheard me remark to his superior officer that I didn't think John Wilkes Booth shot Lincoln after all. Norm sud-denly decided that it was time for us to go home but every time after that when I saw General Hatcher he used to grin and ask me who I thought did shoot able Abe. —Phyllis M. Smith



