

Reader's Digest

May
1968

Good-By, Childhood	<i>First Person Award</i>	49
"To Insure Domestic Tranquility"	<i>Dwight D. Eisenhower</i>	53
Hill 488: A Fight to Remember	<i>Drama in Real Life</i>	60
What's Wrong With Auto Insurance - And What Can We Do About It?	<i>Albert Q. Maisel</i>	67
Crumbs From the Cracker Barrel	<i>From the book</i>	72
Youth in Dissent: Rebellion or Renewal?	<i>Roderick MacLeish</i>	75
My Most Unforgettable Character	<i>Sterling Seagrave</i>	81
The Menace of Soviet Seapower	<i>Time</i>	87
Delicate Balance of Successful Marriage	<i>U.S. Lady</i>	93
America's Amazing Volunteers	<i>Sergeant Shriver</i>	97
Six Steps to a Green Thumb	<i>Family Weekly</i>	102
How Our Friends Finance Castro	<i>Carl T. Rowan</i>	107
I Am Joe's Stomach	<i>J. D. Ratcliff</i>	111
Profits of Praise	<i>Christian Herald</i>	117
The Man Who Trapped Bonnie and Clyde	<i>John Reddy</i>	120
We Are Not Alone in Vietnam	<i>Hanson W. Baldwin</i>	125
Can a Scientist Believe in God?	<i>Reilbook</i>	130
How to Spend Dollars With Sense	<i>PTA Magazine</i>	134
The Night the Shadows Whispered	<i>"The Unexpected Universe"</i>	139
Major Surgery for Mini-Patients	<i>Today's Health</i>	141
The Rich, Romantic Rhine	<i>Armchair Travelogue</i>	146
High-Speed Route Around Logjammed Courts	<i>Baltimore Sunday Sun</i>	193
America Is Fighting for Us	<i>London Daily Mail</i>	201
There's No Business Like Zoo Business	<i>Contemporary</i>	209
Boeing 747: The About-to-Be Behemoth	<i>Air Facts</i>	217
Let's Junk Our Obsolete State Constitutions	<i>National Civic Review</i>	223
Saga of the Tree	<i>American Forests</i>	229
Cleveland in Crisis: An Urban-Renewal Tragedy	<i>Earl Selby & Robert S. Strother</i>	237

Book Section

The Nine Lives of Eddie Rickenbacker
"Rickenbacker: An Autobiography" 243

Have You an Amusing Anecdote? 8—Behind the Lines, 11—Press Section, 15—Humor in Uniform, 23—Let's Save a Place to Walk, 25
It Pays to Increase Your Word Power, 35—News From the World of Medicine, 39—Points to Ponder, 43—Toward More Picturesque Speech, 59—Personal Glimpses, 92—Life in These United States, 115
Quotable Quotes, 145—Laughter, the Best Medicine, 205

17th year: Over 28 million copies bought monthly in 17 languages

The Man Who Trapped Bonnie and Clyde

The story of the trigger-happy outlaw pair who terrorized the Mid- and Southwest in the early 1930's and of the Texas-size lawman who finally brought their murderous odyssey to a bloody end

BY JOHN REDDY

ON A FOGGY January morning in 1934, a work detail of prisoners plodded stolidly out of the Eastern Texas State Prison Farm to work in the adjoining fields. Suddenly, ahead of them, a man and woman materialized from the mists and opened fire. A guard crumpled, mortally wounded. Five of the convicts scrambled after the pair through the wet underbrush to a car hidden in a nearby river bottom. There, all seven piled into the car and disappeared in the fog.

The daring prison break was engineered by the notorious Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker to free a friend, Raymond Hamilton. For

over two years, Bonnie and Clyde had been on a spectacular crime spree across the Mid- and Southwest, defying the efforts of the FBI, state and local police and even the National Guard to trap them. The killing of the prison guard brought their murder score to at least 12, most of them law officers, and led to mounting clamor for their capture. It also brought into the hunt a remarkable lawman: retired Texas Ranger Capt. Frank Hamer.

Loner on the Trail. Tough and independent as a longhorn, Hamer stood six-feet-three-inches tall, weighed more than 200 pounds. He had oak-like arms and fists, de-



Capt. Frank Hamer

veloped by work in his father's blacksmith shop. As a youngster, he lived like the Indians he had read about, hunting and riding through the San Saba hill country, cultivating keen powers of sight, smell and hearing, and often staying out for days at a time, sleeping on the ground. When he joined the Rangers at 22, he was a superb horseman, could throw a knife with deadly accuracy, and soon won the reputation of being one of the best shots in Texas. But, despite this skill, he rarely resorted to his gun. His usual means of dealing with unruly customers was to clout them with one swipe of his open palm.

A dedicated officer, he nevertheless was a loner who preferred to track down criminals by himself rather than as part of a team. He retired from the Rangers in 1932. But when the superintendent of the Texas prison system asked 50-year-old Hamer two years later if he would undertake to track down Bonnie and Clyde, he agreed. He was appointed a member of the Texas highway patrol and, on February 10, 1934, embarked on a solitary search.

Hamer had never seen either one of the pair, so he set out to learn as much as he could about them. It became apparent that their trail had been marked by violence almost from the day their paths crossed.

Odyssey of Crime. When they first met in Dallas in 1930, Bonnie was 20, and Clyde 22. Married at 16, Bonnie had been deserted by her husband and was working as a waitress. The son of an illiterate tenant farmer, Clyde had left school in sixth grade and thereafter displayed an allergy to hard work. Not long after their meeting, Clyde was jailed in Waco, confessing to two burglaries and five auto thefts. On a visit to the jail, Bonnie slipped him a revolver that she had concealed in her brassière. Clyde escaped, was recaptured, and served two years in the Texas state prison at Huntsville.

Reunited with Bonnie back in Dallas, Clyde (minus two toes that he had chopped off to escape prison work detail) discovered that 90-

pound Bonnie shared his fondness for firearms, fast cars and excitement. Equally adept with shotgun, pistol or machine gun, he coached her until she could shoot like Annie Oakley. A week after teaming up with her, Clyde and two companions were accused of killing a man in a holdup in Hillsboro. Shortly after, Clyde and Hamilton killed two officers at a dance in Atoka, Okla.

So had begun the bloody odyssey of Bonnie and Clyde that eventually drew Hamer onto their trail. They had embellished the growing aura of legend around them with a flair for self-dramatization. Bonnie wrote doggerel about their lurid exploits. They delighted in photographing each other clowning with guns or smoking big cigars, and sent the snapshots to the newspapers.

Hamer studied these pictures, interviewed people who knew the pair and their habits—how they dressed, what kind of whiskey they drank, their tattoos. He learned of Clyde's ability to drive hundreds of miles in a night, over bumpy country roads, sticking up a bank in Texas one day and a store in Kansas the next. They often joshed amiably with their holdup victims, as if it were all a lark. Bonnie sometimes even kissed them. Yet Hamer never forgot that they were both dead shots who came out with guns blazing at the sight of an officer.

Hamer learned, too, that Clyde seemed to have an uncanny, animal-like sixth sense of impending dan-

ger. Once they were holed up in Joplin, Mo., with Clyde's older brother Buck, recently paroled from prison, his wife Blanche, and W. D. Jones, a 17-year-old punk whom Clyde had known in Dallas. Scouting a holdup job with Jones, Clyde suddenly had one of his premonitions. "It's in the air," he said to W. D. "I can smell it."

Clyde drove back to the hideout and put the car in the garage. Upstairs, Bonnie was writing a bit of doggerel, "The Story of Suicide Sal," while a pot of beans bubbled on the stove. Suddenly, police bullets began shattering the windows. Barrow and Jones fired back from the garage, while Bonnie blasted away from upstairs. "Get to the car!" Clyde screamed. Blanche, terrified, ran away. The others leaped into the car and burst from the garage in a hail of fire, yanking Blanche in with them two blocks away. Two officers lay dead behind them.

Deadly Strike. Despite this almost miraculous ability to shoot their way out of traps, luck was beginning to run out for Bonnie and Clyde. While they were speeding along a Texas road, their car overturned and caught fire. Bonnie was hideously burned. But even this didn't halt their depredations. They held up a dozen more banks, while Bonnie, a gun cradled in her bandaged arms, lay in the back seat of the car; Clyde had to lift her in whenever they set out to stage another stickup. They slipped from crime to crime, from state to state, swapping stolen cars

and switching license plates as they went.

By this time, law officers were swarming over several states in pursuit. In July 1933, Bonnie and Clyde made incredible getaways from police traps near Platte City, Mo., and Dexter, Iowa, but Buck and Blanche were captured—Buck to die from wounds a few days later. Young Jones, his nerves frayed, fled to Texas, where he, too, was captured. Alone now, Bonnie and Clyde lived in their car, parking by back-country roads at night.

Just when their fortunes seemed at their nadir, they executed the Texas prison break. Two of the escapees—Hamilton and Henry Methvin—joined them in a new spree of stickups. Then began the pursuit that would take Frank Hamer thousands of miles through nine states. Like Bonnie and Clyde, Hamer virtually lived in his car, roaming remote rural roads. He first picked up their trail in Texarkana; then, just as he felt he was getting close, on Easter Sunday 1934, they struck again in their deadly fashion.

Parked on a lonely road near Grapevine, Texas, Clyde was napping in the rear seat and Methvin was standing guard when two motorcycle officers pulled up. "It's the law," Bonnie whispered, shaking Clyde awake. "Let's take 'em!" he shouted to Methvin, and the escaped convict opened fire, killing the two instantly. On April 6, near Commerce, Okla., the gang (minus Hamilton, who had defected after a

dispute over the division of loot from a bank holdup) added what was believed to be a 15th victim to their toll.

On a Lonely Road. Then came the break Hamer had been waiting for. He learned that the gang occasionally visited Methvin's father in Louisiana. Hamer also learned that the elder Methvin was frightened of Bonnie and Clyde, and would agree to help trap them in return for leniency for his son.

Henry had told his father that if the gang ever got separated, they were to meet on a lonely stretch of road near Arcadia, La. So, the next time the trio visited Methvin, the father got his son aside and told him of the plan to capture Bonnie and Clyde. Henry agreed to trigger the ambush by slipping away at the first chance.

The chance came the next morning. Bonnie, Clyde and Henry drove to Shreveport, and young Methvin went into a store for supplies. When he didn't reappear, Bonnie and Clyde, assuming that he had been frightened away by something, drove off. They returned to the elder Methvin and told him to be on the lookout for Henry, and to meet them the next day at the Arcadia rendezvous point. Methvin passed the word to Hamer.

That night, Hamer, local sheriff Henderson Jordan and four other armed officers hid themselves under some pine branches at a point where the couple were to meet Methvin. They decided to try to take the two

alive unless Bonnie and Clyde went for their guns.

Dawn broke with no sign of the outlaws. A few cars and logging trucks passed in the morning stillness. The posse, crouched in the dewy pines, was chilled to the bone. Then a truck driven by the elder Methvin rumbled up. Methvin was told to remove a wheel as though he were repairing a flat tire. Shortly after nine o'clock, just as Hamer had begun to wonder if Barrow had once again sensed a trap, a car was heard approaching at high speed. Behind the wheel was Clyde, wearing dark glasses. Bonnie, in a red dress, was beside him. They skidded to a halt.

"Got a flat?" Clyde asked. "Yeah," Methvin said. "Did you find Henry?"

Then the officers moved in. At the command, "Put 'em up! We've got you covered," Clyde tromped on the gas, and he and Bonnie went for their guns. A shattering volley rang out from the posse.

The car—rid-
dled with 107 bullet
holes—rolled down an

embankment. Hamer and the others rushed up, guns leveled, but both Bonnie and Clyde were dead. The car contained an awesome arsenal: three Browning automatic rifles, two sawed-off shotguns, nine Colt automatic pistols, one Colt revolver, 100 machine-gun clips of 20 cartridges each, and over 3000 rounds of other ammunition. A shotgun, seven notches carved in the stock, was between Clyde's knees; Bonnie had a pistol with three notches.

This was the only tangible legacy that remained to Bonnie and Clyde for their dreadful years of bloodshed, terror and flight.

