

The **PENNSY**[®]

SEPTEMBER 1953



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The Pennsy is published monthly by The Pennsylvania Railroad Company for its active and retired employees. Address communications to The Pennsy, Room 1417, Suburban Station Building, Philadelphia 4, Pa.

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THE COVER: Mary C. Lydon, is a reservation clerk at the Pittsburgh Ticket Bureau. She is unmarried and lives with her family. One of her three brothers and her only sister are also PRR employes. She enjoys swimming and dancing and, she adds, she is "crazy" about railroad work.



Subsidy For "Infant" Industries

Many people do not know what the word subsidy means and when they hear a railroader object to taxpayer subsidies to competing businesses like airlines and big-truck corporations they must sometimes think we are talking about some minor headache, in a class with the thoughtlessness of the occasional passenger who puts his dusty shoes up on the seat.

The subsidy problem, however, is no minor headache. It's a major disease that seriously weakens the economic health of the nation's whole transportation system—including that of the railroads and of every man who has invested his savings or his career in them. It also actually harms the health of those industries that receive the subsidies, for in the long run they must stand on their own feet and the artificial support they now receive gives them a false strength.

Let's look for a moment at some rather startling facts. Back in 1930, when they were a genuinely "infant" industry, the airlines handled two tenths of one per cent of the nation's inter-city passenger travel. By 1952, after two decades of using airports supplied and maintained in whole or in part by the general taxpayer, the airlines had multiplied their percentage of the passenger business by ninety and one-half times—up to 18.1%.

Much of this gain has come at the expense of the railroads, which build and maintain their own stations and rights of way and signal and communication services—and so can't afford to reduce fares to a point that would attract more passengers against the present low fares of airline competition. A substantial part of the price of an airline ticket nowadays is paid by the taxpayer; railroads pay every cent of the cost of the service they offer. Railroads also pay whopping taxes, and thus help foot the bill for their competitors' airports and airways—a process that might be described as adding insult to injury.

Then there's the highway-freight situation. Back in 1930 inter-city trucking was also an "infant" industry, doing less than 4% of the business and handling it with trucks of rational size. Nowadays truck-trains of over 100,000 pounds appear on the highways, and the business is in the four-billion-dollar-a-year class—indicating that "infancy" has been pretty thoroughly outgrown. Again, it is the taxpayer that underwrites a good part of this prosperity. By weight, which is the way truck earnings are made, the driver of the ordinary family car pays three times as much to use the highway as the big trucker pays. It's a form of subsidy each of us helps pay in cash every time we pull up to a service station.

Similarly, the taxpayers—and they again include the railroads—help subsidize the inland-waterway freight business by paying for harbors, canals, buoys, signal lights, and so on. Nor has the business, which outgrew its "infancy" when the Erie Canal was built well over a hundred years ago, been doing too badly. In 1930 it was handling 1.8% of the traffic; by 1952 the percentage had tripled to 5.5%.

Only people who don't look too closely at the figures can justify these various subsidies on the basis that "infant industries need and deserve help." Perhaps as facts like the above become better known, such people will add the words, "during infancy, that is."

Meanwhile the taxpayers—including every railroad and every railroader who pays an income tax or a sales or property tax—are helping support some pretty well-muscled rivals that should very well support themselves. Transportation, like a family, can't do a good job for the community while some of the able-bodied members are making Daddy support them. The sooner everyone understands this subsidy evil, the sooner they will vote to start weaning the subsidized industries from the public purse—to the long run benefit of everyone, especially railroaders.

Vice-President—Real Estate and Taxation

Typewriter 'Killer'



This grim, bullet-eyed stranger, who obviously is sitting there plotting murder, is only PRR-man H. Beam Piper, a quiet, friendly guy who commits murder only on paper

Altoona's H. Beam Piper, Watchman-Mystery Writer, Finds Job Helps Plots

On the cluttered desk in H. Beam Piper's study are a miniature cannon that can go off with a big bang, a cigarette lighter made of a hand grenade, and a pistol serving as a paperweight. Hanging on the walls and resting on bookcases are about 80 antique pistols and revolvers and about 50 stilettos, poniards, rapiers, broadswords, and other lethal weapons. But the only way he ever kills anybody is with his typewriter.

Mr. Piper, night watchman at Altoona Works, is a part-time author with a record of 25 published short stories, a murder mystery which the *New York Times* called "an unusually fascinating first novel," and a historical article to which Walt Disney bought the movie rights.

Mr. Piper's success hasn't come without sweat. When he began working for the PRR in 1922 as a laborer, at the age of 18, he already was an author of two years' standing. He was using all his pocket money for postage, regularly sending out stories to the magazines and just as regularly getting them back. It wasn't until 1946, when he had been writing for 26 years, that he made his first sale.

The story, "Time and Time Again", was a fantasy about a man who gets killed in World War III in 1975 and revives to find himself at the age of 13 in the year 1945, with full knowledge of everything

that was to happen until his "death" in 1975. The story was published in *Astounding Science Fiction*, republished in a U. S. anthology, then translated for a German anthology, and finally presented as a radio show over N.B.C.

Things picked up for Mr. Piper thereafter, with stories in such magazines as *Future*, *Amazing Stories*, *Weird Tales* and *Space Science Fiction*, and an article about Colonel John S. Mosby, the Confederate guerrilla leader, which appeared in *True*.

"Why Walt Disney bought the movie rights to that article, I've never figured out," Mr. Piper says. "Will Colonel Mosby be played by Mickey Mouse, and General Phil Sheridan by Donald Duck? It's baffling. However, I was glad to get the check."

Mr. Piper's first mystery novel, published by Alfred A. Knopf last March, was "Murder in the Gunroom", a story of intrigue and violence among firearms collectors. The book gave him a chance to make use of his extensive knowledge of antique weapons, another interest of his that goes back a long way.

"I was 14, and the Fourth of July was coming up," Mr. Piper recalls. "I wanted to make as much noise as I could for my money, and I decided that percussion caps and powder were better than ordinary blanks, so I got the catalogue of a New York gun dealer and bought a .44 caliber Civil War percussion revolver for \$4.85."

This not only made a satisfying noise, but started him reading about old weapons, buying them, trading them. Today,



Mr. Piper lovingly cleans a 450-year-old sword, part of his big weapon collection

his collection ranges from a 450-year-old French sword and a 400-year-old Spanish poniard with a gold-inlaid blade to a small brass cannon once mounted on a pioneer's blockhouse during the Indian fighting days and a 9-millimeter pistol of the type used by German SS troops during World War II.

Mr. Piper, a tall, slim man with sharply chiseled features and a sinister black mustache, could pass for a villain in his own mystery novel. He spends the somber midnight hours patrolling through the Altoona shops, watching out for trespassers and possible fires.

At 7 A.M., he goes home to the third-floor apartment he shares with his aged mother, and gets into pajamas and drinks a glass of black Jamaica rum—"not Porto Rico—I'm very bigoted on the subject of rum," he says.

"Then I light up my pipe with Serene tobacco—been smoking that brand the last thirty years—and either go over what I wrote the previous day or plan out what I'll write that afternoon. I usually go to bed about 8:30 A.M."

"I wake up about 3:30 or 5 P.M., depending on how much sleep I've been doing without the past few days. I have breakfast, which consists of a bottle of 7-Up and a pot of coffee—black, of course. Then I get to the typewriter, and work two to four hours, which gives me time to have dinner and report to work at 11 P.M."

"There are times when I'm going well on the typewriter, running hotter than a two-dollar pistol on the Fourth of July, and I'm a little sad about dropping what I'm doing and going to work. On the other hand, sometimes when I'm going through the deserted shops at night, some plot development that has me stumped will suddenly clear up—the whole thing will light up like an electric sign."

He also gets these flashes of insight occasionally while riding on trains, he says.

"But I'll tell you a funny thing," he adds. "I've never had anything work out for me in an airplane."