

Borough Hall looks the same. But people can't get used to Fulton Street (right) naked without its El.



HOME TOWNS IN WARTIME

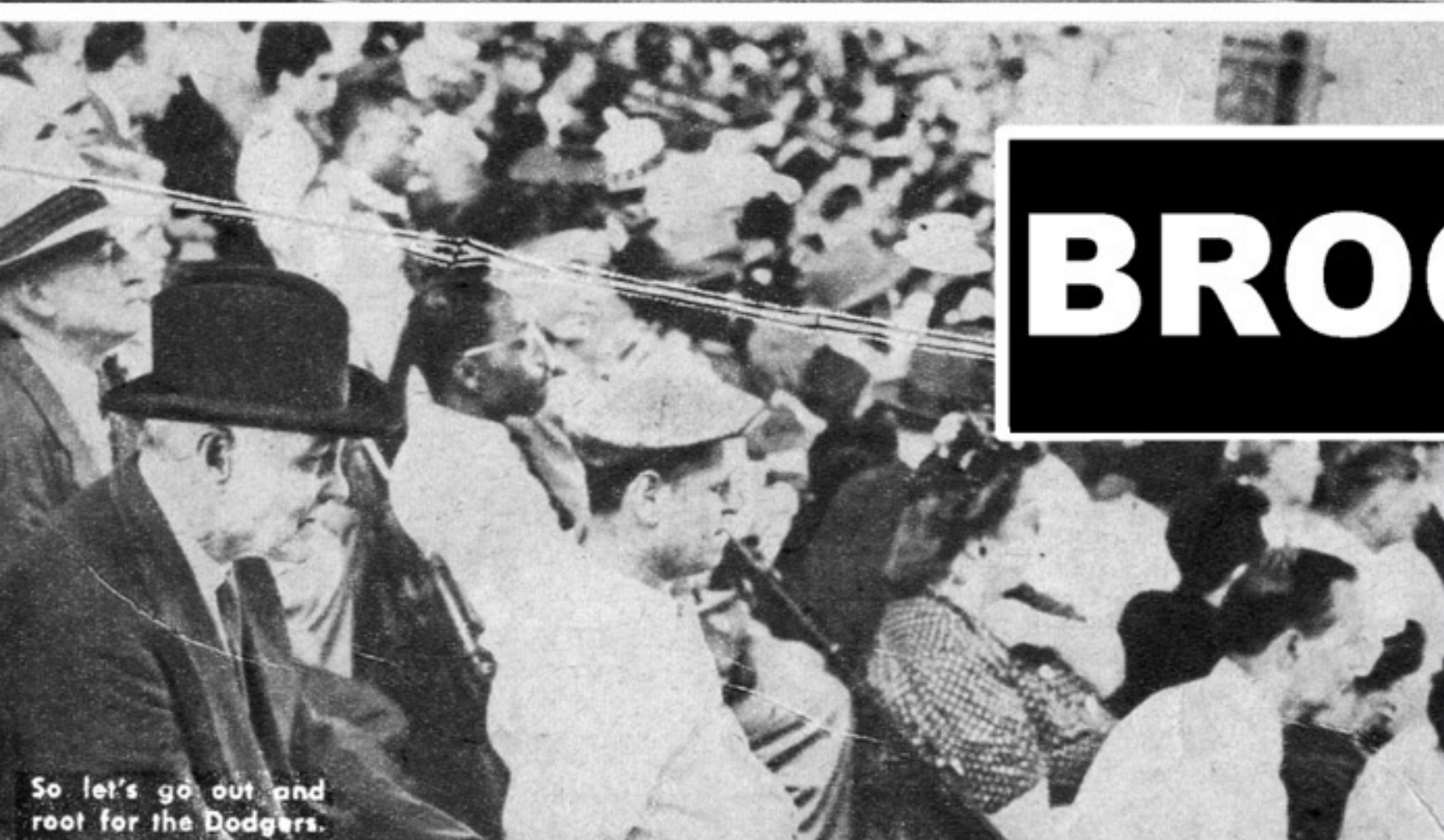
By Cpl. HYMAN GOLDBERG
YANK Staff Writer

BROOKLYN, N. Y.—Not long ago a large number of bitter complaints poured into the New York City Health Department, the Department of Parks, the Department of Sanitation, and several other city bureaus, about a terrible plague that was being visited upon the citizenry. It seems that some kind of vicious beast was attacking people by leaping on them from trees and biting them and goring them with two sets of horns. Strangely, all the complaints came from Brooklyn, and a very small part of Brooklyn at that. What investigators found was that some trees in the Bensonhurst section were infested with a spiny caterpillar that is apt to cause a rash when it comes into contact with human flesh.

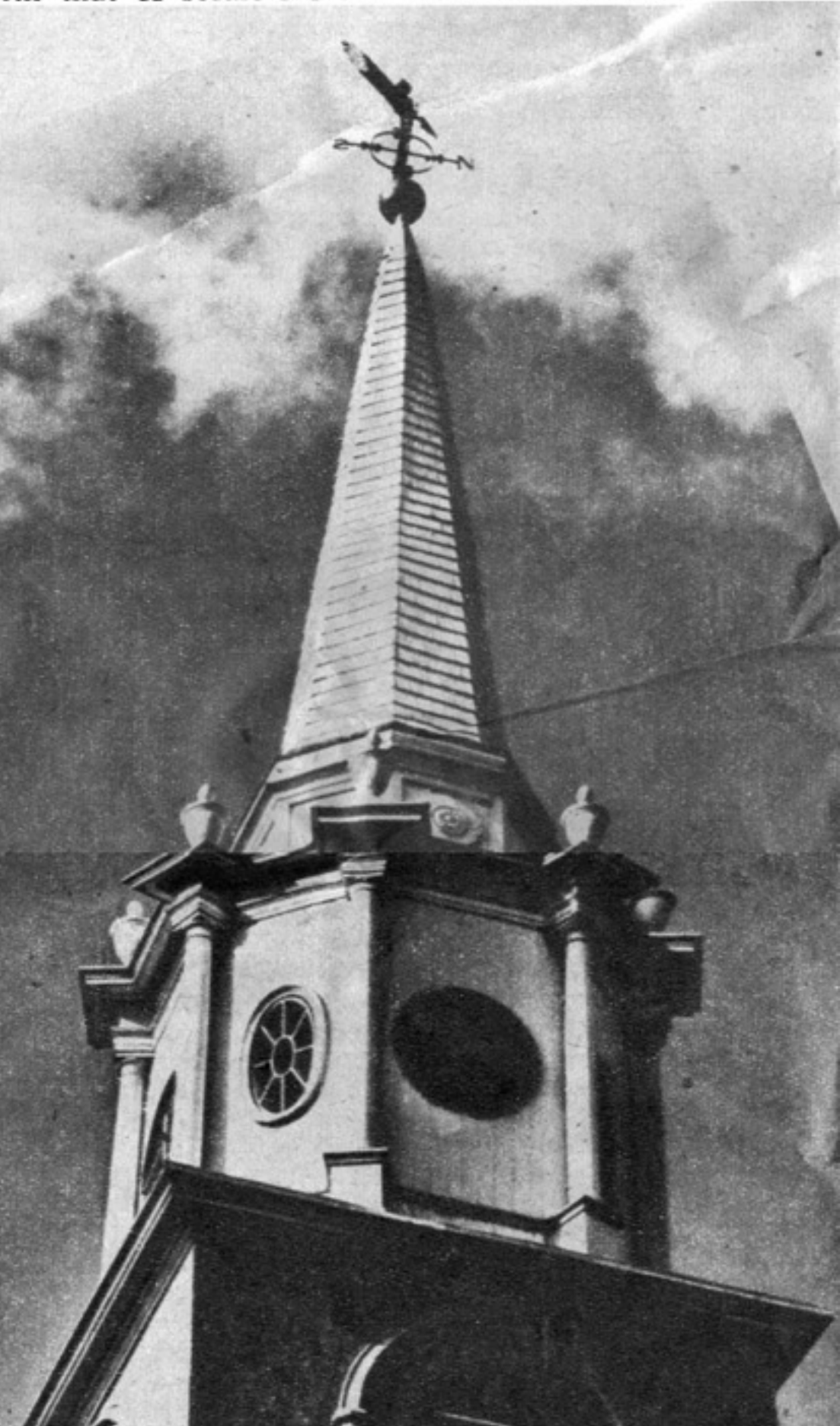
A short time later a subway train prosaically started out from Brooklyn, bound for the West Side of Manhattan, but to the amazement of the motorman and several hundred bewildered passengers, wound up way over on Manhattan's East Side after following a route that still has to be charted or satisfactorily explained.

Brooklynites recently were enraged almost to speechlessness—but not quite—when Noel Coward, a sort of British playwright, unfavorably compared the fortitude of soldiers from Brooklyn with that of soldiers from Texas and Arizona.

And what is the Star without burlesque?



So let's go out and root for the Dodgers.



BROOKLYN, N.Y.

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At Salerno, Mr. Coward said, he had seen Brooklyn soldiers weeping because they had been hospitalized with such trifling disabilities as bullet wounds and broken legs. For once, to the acute embarrassment of Mr. Coward, Brooklyn's indignation was shared not only by the continental U. S. but even by Manhattan.

And, at the close of the baseball season, the Brooklyn Dodgers were 42 games behind.

FROM the foregoing, Brooklynites who have been away from home for a long time can see that the spirit of Brooklyn hasn't changed. Not in any of the essentials. The Brooklyn mood, say students of the subject, would go on despite fire, flood, famine and pestilence. A little global war hasn't even made a dent in it.

The Brooklyn Eagle and other newspapers in the borough over the river from Manhattan are still getting letters from indignant Brooklynites who say it was a great mistake for Brooklyn to have become part of New York City in 1898. Some of them say that Brooklyn will never receive its just recognition until it secedes from New York City or changes its name.

Not long ago, Park Commissioner Robert Moses did a restoration job on Grant's Tomb on Riverside Drive in Manhattan and decided that a statue of the Civil War general on a horse was needed to make the memorial complete. He looked around and found just what he had in mind in Grant Circle, Brooklyn, near the Public Library. He duly asked permission to move the statue to Manhattan. There were screams of rage in the Borough of Homes and Churches, where the forsythia, for some reason or other, is the official flower. "Why the hell," said Brooklyn with one raucous voice, "should we give Manhattan anything? Let them move Grant's Tomb over here." The park commissioner, usually a dauntless man, retired in confusion.

Although the spiritual quality of Brooklyn remains the same, physical changes have nevertheless been made. The city fathers of the borough and its business leaders have great things in store for *apres la guerre*. The entire downtown shopping center is to be reconstructed and made into a flossy Civic Center, with grassy parkways and beautiful public buildings done in the classic Brooklyn style. A start toward this dream has already been made. The Myrtle Avenue El doesn't go over the Brooklyn Bridge to Park Row in Manhattan any more. The entire section of the El leading from the bridge to Myrtle and Jay Street has been torn down. All the steel and iron in the structure went into war production, and Brooklyn is justly proud of this fact. "The Els that were torn down in Manhattan all went to the Japs," says Brooklyn, "but the only El that was torn down in Brooklyn is being

turned into bullets for our boys to shoot at them."

The good citizens of Brooklyn, who have long been enraged because the world thinks that the only industry they have is the Brooklyn Dodgers, are more intense than ever, now that the borough has been making war on the Axis for more than three years. Brooklynites who are making such varied materials for war as surgical sutures and battleships number more than the entire populations of such cities as Topeka, Kans., and New Haven, Conn. In the Navy Yard alone some 68,000 persons were employed at last report.

Here are some other war statistics that the aggressive citizens of Brooklyn throw at you if you give them less than half a chance:

Forty-five percent of the war plants in the borough have been awarded the Army and Navy "E" or the Maritime Service "M."

About half the penicillin produced in the country is made at the Chas. Pfizer & Company plant on Bartlett Street, Brooklyn.

And Borough President John Cashmore, with a chest as proudly inflated as any sweater girl's, points out that more than 280,000 Brooklyn men and women are in the armed forces, and says without any apparent fear of successful contradiction that that's more soldiers and sailors and marines than any of 39 entire states have given to the war.

Most any hour of the day or night there are a lot of uniforms in view, not only on native Brooklynites home on leave but also on a lot of service people passing through on their way to do a job on the Germans. Of course, most of the strangers in service head first for Times Square, but the next thing most Americans want to see when they hit New York for the first time—at least in summer—is Coney Island. And guess where that is.

"THE YILAND" in 1944 had the busiest season in its history, and the way to the ocean from the beach was just as hard to find as ever. There was a big fire at Luna Park, and about one-third of the amusement center was burned out. That didn't close the place down, though. The burned area became one of the big attractions of the place, and the owners announced plans for its reconstruction as a bigger and better Luna Park.

It was never very hard for enterprising young fellows to make new friends at Coney Island and, since Brooklyn decided long ago that nothing is too good for a serviceman, only a dope need be without the companionship of the other sex. The dim-out didn't hurt business at Coney Island. It was really dark there, and what with the benches all along the boardwalk, a fellow and his girl didn't have to get sand in their shoes.

In behalf of their joes who have been called to a higher duty, many Brooklyn girls have gone into war work and some have become junior hostesses at the numerous canteens in the borough—or else, like a group of Flatbush girls who call themselves the GAMS, organized their own canteen. GAMS, these girls earnestly explain, stands for Girls' American Morale Service. Incidentally, it also means girls' legs. And what, they ask with modest pride, are a bigger morale builder?

But if you left a girl behind you when you marched off to Camp Upton and subsequent points east, west, north or south, you can be pretty sure that she's still there waiting for you because there's hardly a marriagable native male left in Brooklyn, and you know what chance a guy from the Bronx has of grabbing her off, because you know what a Brooklyn girl thinks of a guy from the Bronx. She thinks he stinks.

FOR some time now, the strange little men who had answers to all the problems of the world and who came every noon to spout their ideas from the steps of Borough Hall have disappeared. The only meetings held on the steps nowadays have something to do with the war, like War Bond Drive meetings and Blood Donor meetings. (In a stretch of 14 months Brooklynites bought more than a billion dollars' worth of bonds and gave more than a quarter of a million pints of blood.)

The old men still come around to Borough Hall to play checkers on the steps and sit in the sun, and the kibitzers still crowd around them. And Old Bill Pierce still rings the Borough Hall bell every noon, and the "Angelus Club," whose members are the politicians and businessmen in the neighborhood, still rise and stretch during the 40 seconds it takes him to ring the bell 12 times.

Bill Pierce says someone accused him of ringing the bell 16 times one day last March, but he says it's a damn lie. He says he rang it 17 times, and it was on the 17th, for St. Pat, and if anybody didn't like it they could go take a flying leap for themselves. And he says that when the peace comes he'll ring that old bell "till me arm falls off."

Brooklyn for the most part is still a 9-o'clock town, but there's plenty of gayety well after that hour in the downtown section and, of course, at Coney. They're still selling double shots of the few well-known brands of liquor left, and that's still a better buy than drinking them single.

The controversy that raged for a while about whether girls should be served at the bar has quieted down. Most places will serve the young dears at the bar if they're with a guy, but some of the neighborhood bars that stick to the old tradition, like Vogel's at Third Avenue and 68th Street in Bay Ridge, won't serve a woman a drink at the bar even if she has an escort—when she comes in. If a dame wants a shot at Vogel's, she has to come in through the family entrance and sit down at a table like a lady, and she better not be loud about it either or she'll get trun out on her, let us say, ear.

For a long time the only burlesque houses open in New York were in Brooklyn, and all the art lovers in New York City used to make pilgrimages here. But some time ago Mayor LaGuardia looked over and saw what was going on, and he shut the Brooklyn burlesque houses down, too. That added fuel to the argument about secession.

There's a shipyard once more at the foot of Calyer Street, where the *Monitor*, the first of the ironclad ships, was built during the Civil War. That's a change in the Brooklyn you left behind. But don't be too unhappy about how different Brooklyn is—the Gowanus Canal still stinks and

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spite the fire, Luna Park in Coney Island will be opened next year—bigger and better than you ever saw it before.

On Thanksgiving Day the kids still dress up in grown-ups' clothes and beg: "Mister, anything for Thanksgiving, Mister?"

Yes sir! In Brooklyn a man can get the news without it costing him a penny.

