

SOLDIERS OF THE AIR

ANNCR: KOIN presents----Soldiers of the Air!

MUSIC: THEME "SECOND CONNECTICUT REGIMENT" (475) UP AND FADE TO BACKGROUND.

ANNCR: This evening KOIN is pleased to cooperate with the United States Army Recruiting Service in presenting another chapter in the life of Sergeant Bill Harris, soldier of the air.

MUSIC: THEME UP AND OUT.

ANNCR: Sergeant Harris is proud of the enlistment record of the Oregon Recruiting District, but right now, - well, he's stumped. The army wants sixty cooks from Oregon, and up to the present he hasn't enlisted one cook. Sergeant Harris is somewhat discouraged but -- (FADING) well, let's listen----

SOUND: TELEPHONE BELL RINGING INSISTENTLY

BILL: (BRIGHTLY) Army Recruiting Service. Sergeant Harris speaking.

VOICE: (FILTERED BY PHONE) I want to ask about the food the army eats--

BILL: (WHEEDLING) You are interested in army rations?

VOICE: I certainly am!

BILL: Are you by any chance a cook?

VOICE: Cook! I should say not! I'm a wholesale food dealer!

BILL: Sorry! You should write or phone the quartermasters department. They will--

SOUND: CLICKING OF RECEIVER ON HOOK.

BILL: Well! I guess he wasn't interested in cooking--

LAWRENCE: (SLIGHTLY OFF MIKE, FADING IN) I guess not, -- the way he slammed down that receiver. I could hear it clear over here.

BILL: (WITH DEEP CONVICTION AND NO LITTLE SORROW) Sergeant Lawrence, Uncle Sam needs cooks. There must be cooks in Portland, in Oregon, -- cooks with a sense of patriotic duty, (RISING TO HIS OWN BAIT) - cooks who would take a deep pleasure in preparing Ration A.

LAWRENCE: (IN THE MANNER OF HOME ECONOMICS LECTURER) Ration A, comprising fresh vegetables, butter, fruit, meat and other bulky but (SWEETLY) desirable foods--

BILL: Aw, lay off, will you!

LAWRENCE: Sur, sure, but you can't blame me for ribbing you. You've been so proud of the recruiting record we've made here in the Oregon area that it makes me laugh to see you stumped by a little problem like sixteen cowboys of the kettle.

BILL: (INDIGNANTLY) Cowboys of the kettle! That's a fine way to refer to the chefs in Uncle Sam's army!

LAWRENCE: Maybe you'd rather call them Range Riders. Let 'em wear purple goat hair chaps and wide-brimmed sombreros -- Give 'em a Yippec-ki-yay yell and call them the Wolf Pack.

BILL: Pipe down before I forget I'm a soldier. This is serious. Soldiers have got to eat, and eat well--

LAWRENCE: (AS BEFORE) Ration B, similar to Ration A except that it substitutes jelly for butter, hard bread for soft and adds some canned goods.

BILL: If I had a little of the old British Iron ration, at the moment, Sergeant Lawrence, I'd see that you ate it!

LAWRENCE: Not me! Remember what the old army soldiers used to say--"Never eat your Iron ration until you have starved to death"? But wait -- look what's coming down the hall.

BILL: A cook, -- or I don't know the breed. Here -- take the phone and give me that pencil! Uncle Sam is going to have one cook or my name isn't Bill Harris.

LAWRENCE: O.K. I'll take the phone. But look at that guy! From the size of him he's been eating Ration A exclusively. He'll weigh\*(FADING) a hundred and eighty if he weighs a pound.

TED: Howdy.

BILL: How do you do? (INGRATIATINGLY) Something I can do for you?

TED: Yes. I sort of thought maybe I'd like to enlist in the regular army. I hear they need pilots and--

BILL: We need cooks too -

TED: (AS IF HE HADNOT BEEN INTERRUPTED) --pilots and so I thought I'd find out about it.

BILL: Yes, the army does need pilots, but don't you think maybe you're a little heavy for a pilot?

TED: (LAUGHING) Well, I'm not exactly a dwarf, am I? But I can fly a plane once I get it in the air--

BILL: (LAUGHING TOO) Almost anyone can fly a plane once it's off the ground. It's the rising and the landing that require skill.

TED: You're right about that. The first plane I owned I cracked up taking off. I guess I didn't exactly have my mind on what I was doing.

BILL: What did you have your mind on?

TED: (LAUGHING RUEFULLY) Left over meat wrapped in biscuit dough!

BILL: What's that you say?

TED: I said the reason I cracked up my first plane was because I was thinking about using up roast meat scraps by wrapping them in biscuit dough, baking them and serving with cream sauce---

BILL: (SOLEMNLY) Young man. You are a cook.

TED: Sure I'm a cook -- I'm a cook just long enough to earn money to buy another plane. Then I'm a pilot again.

BILL: How many planes have you owned?



TED: Two

BILL: In that case you must have been a cook for quite a spell -- in between planes.

TED: Yeh. I'm thirty-two years old and I've been a professional cook for twelve years. In all that time I've only been able to save enough for two planes, one of them second hand. And I figured that if I could enlist in the regular Army Air Corps I could be a pilot a lot cheaper--

BILL: Wait a minute! What happened to your second plane?

TED: (ENTHUSIASTICALLY) The second one? That plane was a honey. Hummed along like a swallow. I was soaring around one day when I looked down and saw a black field that looked for all the world like a giant griddle. I got to thinking it would be fun to zoom down and slide across that big griddle and zoom right back up and (HESITATING)

BILL: (PROMPTING HIM) And--

TED: (RUEFULLY) The griddle hadn't been greased!

BILL: And so, your plane was wrecked?

TED: It sure was. So, - well, I just went back to cooking again. And now I want to be an army pilot.

BILL: (MEDITATIVELY) Hm-m. Well, let's get the preliminary information. (PAUSE) Name?

TED: Theodore -- Ted -- Christofferson.

BILL: (SLOWLY) Theodore Christofferson. (PAUSE) Married?

TED: (SOBERLY) I was married but my wife died.

BILL: Any dependents?

TED: No. No dependents.

BILL: How's your health? You look good, maybe a little heavy.

TED: That's from eating my own cooking!

BILL: (EARNESTLY) Look, Mr. Christofferson, why don't you stick to cooking? I'll bet you are a good cook and the army needs cooks--

TED: (PROUDLY) You bet I'm a good cook! I can corral more calories in an innocent looking dessert than-- Say -- You ought to see the pies I make. Ever hear of Christy Crust? That's short for Christofferson Crust, well, I invented it.

BILL: Ever hear of Christy Crust? Of course I have. Anyone who listens to the radio can't very well help hearing it. But if you invented Christy Crust you ought to be worth a fortune.

TED: (SADLY) Yeh, the manufacturer sure has made money out of it. But you see, when I got the recipe perfected I was trying to buy my first plane and -- well -- I just sold it for what I could get and bought my plane.

BILL: If you don't mind telling me, just as man to man, why are you so dead set on being a pilot?

TED: (HESITATINGLY) Oh, -- because -- Look, here, Mister ---

BILL: Sergeant Harris --

TED: Sergeant Harris, I'm pretty serious about this national defense business. I'm the kind of a guy that ought to be doing something about it. I'm single, husky, no dependents, but --well, look at me. I'm a whopping big fellow and it looks silly for me to be doing a little job. I ought to be doing something big, -- something important, like piloting a bomber!

BILL: (SYMPATHETICALLY) I can understand a big fellow wanting a big job, but what ever made you think of aviation? What got you interested in flying in the first place?

TED: Well, it may sound funny to you, but it's on account of my name. Did my name make you think of anything special?

BILL: Theodore Christofferson? No-o, nothing special -- but -- (BRIGHTLY) Yes! Christofferson! Silas Christofferson, the aviator!

TED: (PLEASED) Sure, Silas Christofferson, the famous aviator!

BILL: Was he related to you?

TED: No, he wasn't related. But he was a sort of family here on account of our having the same name and so I just naturally got interested in aviation.

BILL: (AS IF TO HIMSELF, BUT PROVOCATIVELY) A great man, Christofferson, a big man.

TED: He wasn't so big --

BILL: I mean big inside, -- so big nothing could turn him away from the thing he knew he could do best.

TED: (PUZZLED) I don't get it. What do you mean?

BILL: I'll have to go back quite a way to explain what I mean -- back to nineteen hundred and eight when Silas Christofferson was working as an automobile mechanic for a man named Bennet. All the balky motors in Fortland managed to find their way to Bennet's shop and early and (FADING) late you could hear Christofferson's hammer ---

SOUND: BALL PEIN HAMMER ON METAL IN AND IRREGULAR, THEN OUT

BENNET: How's she coming, Silas? Think you'll have her running by tonight?

SILAS: (LAUGHING) Tonight? I'll have her running in two minutes! A little more shellac on this gasket -- um -- there.

BENNET: That shellac stuff sure stinks, don't it?

SILAS: Sure does. Here, hold that gasket in place while I screw down these last nuts. There. Thanks. Now then -- get away from that fly-wheel, Mister Bennet, so you won't get oil splashed on you. I'm going to twist her tail --

SOUND: CRANKING OF MOTOR, BACKFIRE, AND OUT

BENNET: (DISGRUNTLED) Well, now what?

SILAS: (UNMOVED) Now what? Now I find out what's wrong. I've been through this motor from end to end and -- oh, there it is! That wire slipped off and shorted. Here, I'LL fasten it to that terminal and then -- Now, let's crank it again --



SOUND: CRANKING SOUND FOLLOWED BY SMOOTH FIRING OF MOTOR

SILAS: (SHOUTING HAPPILY) How's that?

BENNET: Fine! Fine! Now turn it off!

SOUND: CUT MOTOR

BENNET: Sounds pretty, don't it?

SILAS: If you think this sounds pretty, wait till you hear the motor I'm building. (RAPTLY) My motor --sings!

BENNET: What you building a motor for?

SILAS: For an airplane.

BENNET: (ASTONISHE) Airplane? Are you daft, Silas?

SILAS: Nope. There's just one thing I know and know well, and I'm sticking to it, gas engines.

BENNET: (SADLY) And I thought you'd make such a good auto salesman --

SILAS: Salesman?

BENNET: There's a big future in it, Silas.

SILAS: Maybe so, Mr. Bennet. But there's a big future in aviation too, so -- I guess I'll just stick to gas engines. I'll be flying one of these days. Right off the roof of one of these buildings around here.

BENNET: (INCREDULOUSLY) Flying? Off the roof of a building! You're crazy! Twenty years from now you'll be hammering away (FADING) on some motor --

SOUND: BALL PEIN HAMMER ON METAL, UP AND CUT

BILL: It was several years before Christofferson owned his own plane, but by nineteen twelve he had managed to go to San Francisco and get a Curtiss type and flew it. Along about Rose Festival time he decided to make good his old boast to his former employer, Bennet.

TED: Yes, I know. Christofferson declared he really was going to fly off the roof of a building, -- the Multnomah Hotel, wasn't it?

BILL: That's right. He built a run way one hundred and seventy feet long, and with fifty thousand people thronging the streets below, (FADING) warmed up the motor of his plane ---

SOUND: SLOW BUT STEADY PURR OF MOTOR, UP AND FADE TO BACKGROUND

BENNET: (SHOUTING) You're crazy, Silas. Crazy as a loon! For the last time, I ask you, give up this hare-brained idea.

SILAS: (LOUDLY) Nope!

BENNET: You call this machine an airplane? It's a kite! A crazy canvas and bamboo kite! You'll be killed! You'll fall on those innocent people in the street and kill 'em -- Oh, what's the use?

SILAS: (LAUGHING) None!

SOUND: FADE IN MOTOR A LITTLE LOUDER

SILAS: (BRISKLY) Kick those blocks away, boys. Steady that wing.  
(SHARPLY) Get back now! Here I go!

SOUND: MOTOR UP LOUDLY, HOLD, THEN OUT

BILL: Sure enough, away Silas Christofferson went in his canvas and bamboo kite, sailing right off that little run way, over the heads of the crowd --

TED: SILAS Christofferson sure had what it takes --

BILL: (INTERRUPTING) Look, Ted Christofferson, did it ever occur to you that your name sake, Silas, stuck to the thing he was trained for, stuck to aviation? Can you imagine him trying to be a cook?

TED: (LAUGHING) ~~Why should I say that?~~ He was out for bigger things.

BILL: Being an army cook is a big job, Ted. On the large scale manoeuvres the cook's daily budget runs to something like twenty eight thousand dollars ---

TED: That's a lot of money --

BILL: Yes, (SADLY) but probably the job is too big for you.

TED: (PROUDLY) I've fed as high as three thousand at a meal ---

BILL: (DERISIVELY) Small stuff, Ted. The United States Army is serving at least four million, two hundred thousand meals a day -- balanced meals too --



TED: Sure, I know. Ration A, composed of fresh vegetables, butter, fruit, meat and other bulky but desirable foods --

BILL: Hey, wait a second. What is this? How do you know about ration A?

TED: (LAUGHING) I've been reading about that army cooking school at Fort Meade. Like to hear about ration B?

BILL: Well, for heavens ---

TED: Or Ration C, the brand new, stream-lined, lightweight food for reserve -- Or Ration D? You know, I've got an idea about ration D, that oatmeal chocolate bar. I think I know how to increase the calorie content with the addition of a little ---

BILL: (LAUGHING) Ted, you really like cooking, don't you?

TED: (HALF ASHAMED) Yes, I guess I do.

BILL: Then why don't you stop trying to be a cracked-up aviator and stick to being a bang-up cook? Uncle Sam needs chefs, not just cooks? It's a big job, for a big man? Maybe it's too big ---

TED: (DEFENSIVELY) Listen, soldier -- there isn't a job in cooking that's too big for me! Sign me up!

MUSIC: THEME UP AND OUT

ANNCR: And so we leave Sergeant Harris signing up another recruit for the regular United States Army at 323 Main Post Office Building. Next week at this same hour KCIN will present another in this series of Soldiers of the Air. Tonight's program was written by the Oregon Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration and produced by members of the Youth Theatre Guild. The cast included:

Listen again next Monday night at ten fifteen over this station when you will again hear -----

SCUND: TELEPHONE BELL

BILL: Army Recruiting Service. Sergeant Harris speaking.

MUSICA: THEME UP AND OUT