out where she goes every Thursday at four and stay till five-thirty. It seems that I'm the jealous type. Is this right so far?”

I nodded affirmative and remained silent.

“Here is where you stopped. Mary and I have been eating dinner and we are still at the table. Now to go on. I'd say, ‘Mary, you and I are happy, huh?’”

I was on the alert. “How about that ‘huh’?” I asked instantly — always prompt with constructive criticism.

“I say it often,” he answered calmly.

“But should a college professor use such language?”

His gaze was withering. “I am the hero of the story, ain’t I?”

“Aint’!” I gasped, astounded.

“So what?”

“But a college ——”

“I know. A college professor doesn’t usually say things like that. But I’m different.”

“But I still think ——”

“Don’t give a damn what you think,” he snapped.

That was the last straw. A college professor swearing! I couldn’t imagine it. It left me a little weak. Then anger possessed me and I put bite and sarcasm into my words.

“John Barton,” I said, “I will have no more of this atrocious speaking. Either speak correctly or leave.”

He was thoroughly angry by that time. “I am the hero of this story,” he roared. “Either I say what I want to say or I refuse to bear the hero’s burdens.”

I too, was belligerent. “You speak correctly or not at all,” I demanded.

His face was crimson. “Then not at all!” he shouted, and went out, slamming the door behind him.

“Well, I’ll be damned,” I said to myself. No hero, no story. I went home to bed and let the wind and rain lull me to sleep.

SPIKEY EVANS

MYRON SCARBROUGH

In the afternoons, before most of The Sun’s staff had come to work, the windows of the sports room were tightly shut and the radiator sizzled merrily. The room was hot to a point well beyond mere discomfort, and the copy boy with the two o’clock mail or the occasional match-maker with his notice of a boxing tournament never tarried long in its unwholesome atmosphere.

While the torrid room and its stagnant air drove copy boy and match-maker from its tropic-like confines in short order, it never got the best of Skikey Evans. Skikey was human, and he knew when he was hot and when he was cold, when he had air and when he didn’t. He could open a window when he thought one should be opened, and he could turn a radiator’s valve when he thought the valve ought to be turned. But when he was in this particular room, miserable though it was, he was oblivious of the stagnant air and the sizzling radiator. He was in a world apart from the world of the copy boy or the match-maker or the radiator.

Skikey’s world was the world of sports — sports of the past and of the present and
of the future. In his brain, sweaty bronzed pugilists danced and feinted, helmeted men hugged leather balls to their breasts and hurled their bodies into the clutching grasps of other helmeted men, and athletes in flimsy garments and with spikes on their feet strained their every muscle in races against the unbeatable element, Time. So what did it matter if nary a breeze ventured into the room or if the radiator did burst its side in steaming enthusiasm? — Spikey wouldn’t notice. He was in a different world.

Spikey — known to The Sun’s business office and to his thousands of devoted readers as J. Spiceford Evans, Sports Editor of The Sun — had no regular working hours. So if he were in the office in the afternoon, he was there of his own choice. Spikey always came and went as he pleased, and the Evans pleasure even dictated what he wrote and what he said. He could heap abuse on the managing editor right in his face and get away with it. No one else could. No one else was J. Spiceford Evans.

Spikey had been with The Sun for twenty-two years — he had outlasted four different sets of typewriters and he had seen four different managing editors move in and out of the front office. He was a veritable encyclopedia of sports information (“dope” in Spikey’s world), and he knew intimately many of the figures on the American sporting scene and had a professional acquaintance with all the rest.

But all his twenty-two years, all his knowledge of sports, and all his association with the actors in the theater of sports could not hide one tragic fact. Spikey could not write a good sports story. Good, that is, by modern standards. He had written his first sports story in his own particular style. And despite changing times and changing journalistic ideals, Spikey had never altered that style of writing. The “J. Spiceford Evans, Sports Editor of The Sun,” by-line announced in 1941, as it had in 1919, a story crammed with “bromides” and hackneyed phraseology that everyone else but Spikey had long since discarded. But very little criticism ever came from Spikey’s readers — on the contrary, his “stuff” seemed to have their unstinted admiration. Spikey’s newspaper colleagues could not understand this — they knew his “stuff” was pitiful, that it “smelled to high heaven,” but still the readers — the “Omaha Milkmen” — still read and apparently enjoyed it. Usually, they put off solving the mystery with a shrug of the shoulders. It really didn’t matter — Spikey was just an old-style newspaper man, and he would never be anything else.

Al Cravens and Bob Decker, whose names were just below Spikey’s on the sports room door, often poked a sort of reverent ridicule at the J. Spiceford Evans stories when the “old man” wasn’t around. Ridicule in that they were making jest; reverent in that they realized that a man who knew more sports than both of them together had written those stories.

Al would open the file of the 1923 Suns and read aloud to Bob Spikey’s classic account of the Washington-State football game, the biggest annual sporting event of Portland:

“As 23,000 sun-drenched spectators cheered in the stands and a bright blue sky smiled down from up above, Washington’s husky gladiators ground the State aggregation into the turf of the huge Stratford Stadium here yesterday afternoon.

“A tow-headed athlete of Washington, Jones, rambled 63 yards to hit “pay dirt” for the winners and give the annual grudge battle to the green-suited warriors of Coach Berry.

“The hot weather saw the two teams battle in pools of sweat, just as last year they battled in ponds of mud.
when State's aggregation was triumphant, 35 to 13. The score in yesterday afternoon's battle was 7 to 6 in favor of Washington's mighty gridmen.

After about three paragraphs, Al would break off his reading. Then he and Bob would pick the stories to pieces.

"Sure that wasn't bad stuff back in '23," Al would say, "but get out the 1933 file and read Spikey's write-up of that game, and you'll find an almost identical type of story."

And Bob would read the 1933 story.

"As 38,000 people screamed at the tops of their voices from the stands and a blazing sun poured its rays down on the playing field, the sons of Washington dashed the State gridiron squad to the grass of Stratford Stadium here yesterday afternoon.

"A husky Washington athlete, Smith, from Jonesboro, Pa., waltzed down the sidelines for 39 yards to spell victory for Coach Jones's proteges.

"As the game-ending gun popped, Washington led State, 6 to 0 . . ."

And Bob would quit, too, as if his conscience knew that he was reading the story in ridicule and wouldn't let him go on.


"Wonder why Spikey never has bothered to get the players' and coaches' first names?" Bob would wonder.

And they both would laugh at the phrases which were as much a part of Spikey as his Adam's apple.

"Ground into the turf. "Sun-drenched spectators." Screamed at the tops of their voices," "Pay dirt." Somewhere in the recesses of his brain, Spikey must have had these antiquated shop-worn expressions filed and indexed, ready to be dragged out at an instant's notice.

But, after all, what did it matter if Spikey rarely mentioned a player's first name? What if he did hide the most important fact, the score of the game, way down in the third paragraph? What if he did use over and over again the same words and phrases? He kept his readers, and that is important.

And Spikey had kept his job, too. More than once, a managing editor had thought of dispensing with Spikey's services. In Portland's other newspaper offices and in its college and high school journalism classes, Spikey and The Sun's sports page—that is, the part that J. Spiceford Evans had a typewriter in—were subjected to unmerciful ridicule. And every now and then, some of it would seep into The Sun's front office to make the "M. E." squirm with embarrassment. But never yet had a managing editor of The Sun had the courage to fire J. Spiceford Evans. Once, back in 1938, Erwin Galloway, had dared ask Spikey for his "resignation." Galloway was never the same after Spikey's thunderous roar: "Go to hell, Galloway! You'll be pushin' up poppies before I'm through!" Galloway, indeed, was in his grave less than two years later, and Spikey was still drenching his spectators with sun rays and grinding State's football teams into the turf just as he had done lo, these many years.

At The Times, the sports room boys often spoke of Spikey.

"If Evans knew how to write a sports story that'd really be fit to put in an up-to-date newspaper, what a whale of a sheet The Sun would have!" one of them said.

"He sure knows his sports!" another remarked.

A third added his contribution to the conversation:

"If he was ever sober for a whole day, I've never seen him. Why, he's always pickled! Don't see how he can write at all, with all that brew in him. I guess he can remember all those facts and figures be-
cause it's part of his life, like liquor. Some-
day that old coot'll be in one of his drunks,
and a damned street car'll hit him . . . ."

It was a cold February night in 1941.
The Portland hockey team was playing
Salem in the Coliseum. Spikey never missed
a hockey game; it was his favorite sport.
Too bad he couldn't see as well as he used
to. Alcohol and astigmatism had united
with age to dim his vision. He could hardly
see at all. But somehow he always seemed
to know which team was winning. A sixth
sense probably.

Spikey stumbled out of the cab. A
driving snow beat into his face as he started
unsteadily across the street to the Coliseum.
He never made the opposite curbstone.
He didn't see the street car because of the
snow lashing at his already semi-useless

eyes . . . and he didn't hear it because he
was thinking about the game and wonder-
ing if Portland could beat the mighty
Salem team. The street car "drove him into
the turf."

Al wrote the story for The Sun:
"As 4,000 snow-whipped persons
filed into the Coliseum, The Sun's
veteran sports editor, Evans, was
ground into the icy cement of Parkway
avenue by a street car last night.
"An authority on every branch of
every sport, Evans waltzed into the
hearts of The Sun's many readers with
his thousands of stories for over a score
years.

"Spikey could not see the street
car. He lost the game of life by a
score that no man can ever overcome."

PROFESSOR BLANK

PATRICIA SYLVESTER

He walked into the room, hung his
umbrella on the thermometer (on sunny
days he used the umbrella as a walking
stick) and turned methodically to the
speaking stand. Then it came — laughter!
laughter! The professor filed through his
mind to determine if he "cracked" any of
his jokes at the last meeting of the class.
No, the last meeting was Thursday, second
Thursday of the month. He always pulled
his jokes on Tuesdays. Maybe
it was the
blackboard. Someone had written some-
thing on the blackboard, — something fun-
ny, maybe even about him. He turned to
look at the board, but it was clean, not
an erased gray, but a washed black. He
drew a little black notebook from his upper
left hand vest pocket and wrote on one of
the memos labeled "To Tear Out When
Done": See if we have a new janitor. But
this laughter. It must be stopped. He
filed through his mind again and drew out
a card under H "How to Stop Laughing":

Closing the mouth — think of death or
oysters. No that wasn't it. H "How to Stop
Laughter." Ah, that was it. The direc-
tions: Cough. He coughed. Demand
attention. He tapped his pencil on the
speaking stand. Say: "Mr. Blank will
you please tell me what's so amusing so I
can laugh too. He said, "Mr. Smith
(It was so handy to have a Smith in the class)
will you state the circumstances causing
such hilarity so that I may share in your
amusement."

Mr. Smith was rudely awakened. He
hadn't been laughing, though his snoring
might be taken for a titter. "I'm sorry,
prof, I didn't get chur question. I was
workin' on my thesus."

"Thesis, Mr. Smith—'is.' Very well.
Mr. Jones, you may be able to answer my
question if you can release the young lady's
hand long enough to stand up and reply."

Mr. Jones said he guessed he didn't
know.