

Spencer = 8
for 12/12/44 - 12

If you've been reading the newspapers at all ~~x~~ within the last three months, you've no doubt heard of Louie Hlozek; yeah, he's the one they call the ~~&~~ Babtling Bohunk or ~~xxxxxxx~~ maybe you know him as the Charging Czech. I guess there ~~ain't~~ ^{ain't} a soul in the whole darned country who hasn't heard of him since he pulled that one man army stunt against a Jap platoon on Guadalcanal; what he didn't do isn't worth talking about; Sergeant York may have been a ~~pretty good man~~ ^{fair country fighter} in the last world war, but Louie made him look like a piker ~~against the Japs~~ down on Guadalcanal, they say.

The reason I'm talking about Louie is because he's from my ~~old~~ ^{Colorado} home town in ~~Peruvia~~ ^{Peruvia}. I moved out here to ~~xxxxxxxxxxx~~ Los Angeles ~~xxxx~~ about ~~three~~ ^a years ago to work in the aircraft factory, but I knew Louie pretty well; when you live in a town as small as Spencer, you get to know pretty near everybody, but I remember Louie especially because he was ~~xxxxxxx~~ a darned good athlete and a pretty bright kid too. He ~~xxxx~~ was always gentle-like and quiet ~~xx~~ when he was a kid; I ~~xxxx~~ can remember when a bunch of the village toughs ^{led by Ted Stewart} thought Louie ~~was~~ would be easy pickings; it took that kid pretty long to get riled up, but when he did, he just waded in, polished ^{led and} a couple of the toughs off and made the rest run ~~off~~. They found out a thing or too about how gentle Louie really was, just like the Japs down in Guadalcanal did. But Louie made friends with the ~~toughs~~ ^{Ted and his gang} after that, and I doubt if ~~the~~ Japs ~~xxxx~~ feel very friendly toward Louie after their encounter. Well, he just naturally became their leader of that bunch and ~~I~~ did a pretty good job of reforming them.

Everybody knows who Louie Hlozek is now, but how many knew him ~~xxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ three years ago when he was the best back in the tri-county ~~xxxxxx~~ football conference, ~~xxx~~ the best short-stop in the tri-county baseball league, and the ~~xxxxxxx~~ conference low-hurdling champion. He played a pretty good brand of basketball too, but only made second string all league; ~~xxxxxxx~~ not many people knew

about Louie then because he was ~~not~~ only given write-ups in the county ~~newspapers~~ weeklies, but even then a lot of college coaches came around and made him good offers. But Louie had always been set in going to ~~xxxxx~~ Muir College; yeah, I guess you haven't heard of it, but it's a ~~xxx~~ small college near Spencer; hasn't got a ~~very~~ big-name football team, but it ~~xxxxx~~ has a pretty good forestry school and Louie thought he'd like to become a ranger. Jed Stuart, who'd gone through ~~grammar school and high school with x Louie x~~ took an athletic scholarship to one of the larger universities, and this sort of made Louie feel pretty bad because he and Jed had gotten to be pretty ^{close} good buddies. Jed ~~xxxxx~~ was Louie's keystone partner on the ^{Spencer High} baseball team and made second string all-league; ~~xx~~ the ~~xxxxx~~ way these two ~~xxxxx~~ clicked on double plays was about the most beautiful thing ever seen around there, but Jed couldn't ~~xxxxx~~ hit very well, ~~xxxxx~~ otherwise he'd have made first string all-conference. ~~xxxxx~~ Spencer ever had He was about the best end ~~xxxxx~~ too and, in track, he ~~xxxxx~~ pushed Louie to a new record in the low sticks.

But getting back to Louie, he went to college to study, not to be an athletic bum, ^{although} but he found time to go out for track and football. He was the fastest thing in the conference over the lows and just about the best back too, but of course he was ineligible ^{for varsity in 1940} being only a freshman. Well, just about the time ^{after Louie was chosen all-state half back} the 1941 football season was over, the athletic committee composed of a bunch of Latin and Greek profs decided to break down and send Louie off to the I. C. * 4A track meet in the spring; they figured that Louie's times as ~~xxxx~~ a freshman were good enough for the big-time competition. Louie was plenty tickled and wrote to his ~~xxxxx~~ buddy, Jed. Jed was pretty glad too, and wrote back and told Louie that he was going to make Louie eat his dust this time.

Before the year was out, though, we got into the war, and when the

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semester

~~xxxx~~ was over, Louie joined up with the army; he took his training down in ~~xxxxx~~ Texas someplace and was made a sergeant before being shipped off to ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~Australia~~ the Philippines where he ^{got a couple of decorations} ~~was decorated with the order~~ ~~of the purple heart and a couple of other things.~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ ^{Before} the collapse of Corregidor, he was transferred to Australia and then got into the thick of things at Guadalcanal again.

Yup, Louie's quite a lad.

Got a light, mister? thanks; have one yourself?

Well, as I was saying, Louie's quite a lad. He came back to the States the other day and I ran up to San Francisco to see him. ~~xxx~~ He was bigger and brawnier than ever and he'd sort of lost that ~~kiddish~~ boyish look, but he was as unspoiled as ever. He was tickled pink to see me again. He had on a mess of decorations, and I told him he looked like a regular Christmas tree. He sort of blushed, and, ~~xxxx~~ looking over at a newspaper cameraman said, "He made me put 'em on."

I took him out to dinner, naturally, and he came up to my ^{room} after-ward for news from home; I'd been getting the county newspaper and had been writing to friends back there pretty regularly so I told him all I knew. I tried to get him to tell me something about himself, ~~xxx~~ but he didn't open up much.

"Gee, Unk," he said (all the kids in Spencer used to call me Unk), everybody's trying to make me out a hero, but everybody out there's a hero, and there are plenty of them right here, too; only we shouldn't start talking about it until after the war's won."

That's all he'd say so I finally said, ~~xxxxxxx~~ "Kid, you've been through hell and high water since I last saw you: you've had a lot of experiences that plenty of people wouldn't care to go through, experiences that you yourself would hate to have missed although you might not have enjoyed them. ~~xxxxxxx~~ Each one of those medals you've got represents something; if it's not getting too personal, do you mind telling me which one means the most to you because of ^{its} ~~xxx~~ association with something you've done?"

Well, sir, he looked at me for quite a while. Then he said, "Unk, the medal that's meant more to me than anything else is something I got ~~the xfixaxzxxxx~~ last summer in Texas ^{just} before I was shipped across." He ~~fumbledzzinxthexbreastz~~ unbuttoned his tunic and ~~fumbled~~ ^{and} fumbled in the breast pocket of his shirt, ~~xxx~~ pulled out a crumpled envelope. "I've carried it here ^{ever} since I got it," ~~xxxzhandaxzaxztoxxx~~ "This is it," he said, handing the envelope to me.

Wonderingly, I opened the envelope. As I pulled the letter out, ~~x~~ something ~~axzpxaxzxxx~~ fell out onto the ~~xx~~ rug; I picked ~~xx~~ it up absently and read the letter. ~~xxxxxxx~~ As near as I can remember, it said:

"Dear Louie:
~~xxxxxxx~~ I'm sorry as heck, kid, that I couldn't do better: Smith of Pacific U edged me out, but I know darned well that you'd ^{hard} can beat the pants off both of us. You deserve this more than I do so I'm sending it on to you, hoping that ~~xxxxxxx~~ when you look at this, you'll be reminded of
 Your pal,
 Jed"

I opened up my palm and looked ~~x~~ at the thing which had fallen out of the letter. It was a silver medal ~~xxxxzshxxxx~~ with the bas-relief of a figure sailing over a hurdle. I turned it over and read, "~~IQ**~~ 1942 IC4A championship, 220 yard low hurdles, second place."

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