

JUNE 1,  
1940

# Liberty 5¢

A vintage magazine cover featuring a woman in a pink, short-sleeved, ribbed crop top and dark blue shorts with white buttons. She is smiling and looking upwards, holding a tennis racket in her right hand and a tennis ball in her left. The background is a bright blue sky with white clouds. The magazine title 'Liberty' is written in large, red, stylized letters, with '5¢' to its right. The date 'JUNE 1, 1940' is in the top left corner. At the bottom, there is a white banner with black text.

**THE  
SMARTEST MAN  
IN BASEBALL**

**MARRIED A LATIN by GRACE HEGGER LEWIS**

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# *Ed* SHOOTS IT OUT

BY  
WALTER BROOKS

First published *Liberty*, June 1, 1940.

*He's in again—A joyous tale of our talking horse*

When anybody tells you that animals are just stupid and haven't any initiative you tell them about Wilbur Pope's horse. I guess you've heard about him. His name was Ed and he lived with Mr. and Mrs. Pope up in their little country place near Mt. Kisco. That is of course Ed lived in the barn. Mr. Pope had bought him so he could ride Saturdays and Sundays when Mrs. Pope was giving cocktail parties. And he was just as surprised as you or I would have been when he found out that Ed could talk.

Well of course being an advertising account executive Mr. Pope's first thought was of how he could cash in on Ed's gift. But Ed said nothing doing. So Mr. Pope had to give in and afterward he was glad he did. They ambled around Westchester stopping now and then for beer or to talk or take a nap under a tree and it settled down into a nice friendship.

Well one of Mr. Pope's neighbors was Senator Watson Kirby who had a big place on a hill overlooking several reservoirs. Senator Kirby had a noble head and the kind of eloquence that can take two from four and leave six and so he was being spoken of as the next governor. He had a daughter named Wilma who was a large healthy girl fond of the kind of sports that make you sweat. She usually wore breeches and stood with her feet apart when she talked to you. Mr. Pope liked her fine at first and when she dropped in one Sunday when she was out riding he talked to her and showed her Ed and by and by they went for a ride.

Well Miss Kirby was one of the hearty kind who say what they think and in the first half mile she told Mr. Pope what she thought. Were those people all your friends? she said and when Mr. Pope said Why yes didn't you like them? she said Don't they ever do anything week-ends but sit around and drink? What they need is more exercise and less whisky. You could do with a little more exercise yourself she said giving Mr. Pope's figure a critical looking over. Suddenly she startled Mr. Pope by exclaiming But man alive! Why don't you pull up your girth? Why I could get both hands under it. Eh? said Mr. Pope blinking at her and fumbling with his belt. Saddle girth said Miss Kirby. O said Mr. Pope Why Ed don't like it tight. Pooh said Miss Kirby get down and let me show you. You're riding for a bad fall.

So they both dismounted and Miss Kirby put one knee against Ed's side and hauled on the strap until she had it tight enough to suit her. You have to pull 'em tight she said. A horse always swells himself up when you're saddling him. Though strictly speaking she said eying Ed doubtfully I don't think this is a horse at all. Look at the angle of that pastern. And those withers.

Mr. Pope who didn't know what a pastern was and for whom withers were merely something that were better unwrung mumbled faintly.

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When he had left Miss Kirby at her gate Mr. Pope steered Ed homeward. We'll stop at Jake's and have some beer he said. Get off and loosen that girth first said Ed. Do my eyes look

funny Wilb? I can feel 'em bulge and I don't believe I can hold 'em in much longer. So Mr. Pope loosened the girth. So I ain't strictly speaking a horse at all eh? said Ed. Well if you ask me she ain't a girl. She's one of these sadists you hear about. O she's all right said Mr. Pope. Yeah? said Ed. Well you keep away from her Wilb. I don't like the way she looks at you. Hungry. Like you was a lump of sugar.

Well it wasn't long before it began to look as if Ed was right. Miss Kirby dropped in nearly every Sunday and then she and Mr. Pope would take a ride which usually ended at the Kirby place where there were comfortable chairs and mild but cooling drinks. Mr. Pope rather enjoyed it. Miss Kirby's conversation put no strain on the intellect as it was all about horses and skiing and golf and mountain climbing so that it was easy to follow. Also he met the senator and discovered that he was the largest stockholder in Corbetson-Ives which was one of his best accounts.

The riding part wasn't so much fun. It was cross-country and had fences and walls in it. The first time Ed was put at a wall he refused point-blank. Damn it Wilbur he said I can't jump over that thing. It's—well it's illegal. Go on! said Mr. Pope What are you giving me? Well said Ed it's suicide. And that's against the law ain't it? But by coaxing and threatening Mr. Pope finally got him to try it in a low place. After that they did better and as Miss Kirby was usually some distance ahead it was nearly always possible to scramble over or to find a way around. But it was tiring.

By August Miss Kirby was almost a daily caller and nearly all Mr. Pope's spare time was taken up with some form of sport. Not mild sport either. Even croquet at Miss Kirby's hands was a game to be pursued with steamy energy. The least strenuous was shooting at a mark with the .22 automatic rifle that Mr. Pope kept out in the barn to discourage rats.

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But at last Mr. Pope struck. It was on a Sunday. A cross-country ride had been followed by eighteen holes of golf and after lunch at the Popes' they had had six sets of tennis at the Kirbys'. Mr. Pope lay gasping like a hooked trout on the grass. Come on Wilbur said Miss Kirby gaily. Sets are three all. We'll play it off and have a swim. More likely a funeral said Mr. Pope. No Wilma I'm through. I just can't keep it up. Nonsense my dear man! said Miss Kirby. Exercise never hurt anybody. You've sat around too many years lapping up highballs—that's what's the matter with you.

At that moment Senator Kirby came across the lawn. Ah Pope he said with a nod and then to his daughter Well child having a pleasant game? Wilbur wants to quit said Miss Kirby. You're dead right he does Wilbur said. Doesn't she ever get tired sir? She is a true Kirby said the senator. Sound old American stock Mr. Pope that plays as it works—strenuously. The pioneer strain sir that has never learned to cry Hold! Enough! Well you know this isn't a battle senator protested Mr. Kirby. You young fellows are too soft today said Mr. Kirby. Why when I was a young man . . .

On the way home Ed said to Mr. Pope I don't see why you played those extra sets after you said you wouldn't. I had to said Mr. Pope defensively. It's policy for me to stand well with the senator Ed. Corbetson-Ives is one of my best accounts. Anyway he went on I enjoy a certain amount of it. And I like Wilma. She's restful. Sure said Ed when she's sitting still. But just the same you look out for her. Go on—laugh. You wait and see.

Ed was worried about Mr. Pope all right but he was worried about himself too. He wanted the old peaceful days back. There was too much galloping and coming home in a lather and too many stone walls and woodchuck holes in these rides. Also he was uneasy about the

suggestions Miss Kirby kept making that Mr. Pope buy a better horse. Wilbur's so darn easy to influence he said to himself. I guess I'd better take steps.

Well having been brought up in a stable Ed's methods were pretty direct. A couple of days later they were out riding and they came down through a wood lot into a pasture and there right in front of them was a large stern-looking bull. Miss Kirby said Hey Wilbur let's have a bullfight! and urged her horse into a canter right across the bull's bows. The bull put his head down and made a short run toward her and Miss Kirby laughed and circled around him and came across from the other side and the bull did it again. Gosh Ed what'll we do? said Mr. Pope. She'll get into trouble. But to his surprise Ed suddenly took the bit in his teeth and headed at a gallop straight for the bull. Olé shouted Ed. Here comes Wilbur the Matador!

Well of course Miss Kirby thought it was Mr. Pope who had entered into the spirit of things and she turned in the saddle to smile encouragement just as Ed swerved sharply and cannoned into her mount. Looking back as he swept by Mr. Pope saw her topple from the saddle. Stop Ed! he yelled and tried to pull up and then as Ed kept right on going he kicked his feet free and dropped off. He ran back to Miss Kirby but she had kept hold of the rein and was already mounting. Quick! she said Get up behind me! But the bull instead of rushing them gazed for a moment with grandfatherly disapproval then turned aside and picked a mouthful of daisies.

Later Mr. Pope had it out with Ed. At least he tried to. But Ed said he hadn't meant anything. I just slipped he said. And anyway he said I didn't think you'd jump off. I suppose you didn't think Wilma'd fall off either said Mr. Pope. That bull might have killed her. Ed gave a hypocritical leer. Yes he said I should be more careful Wilbur. Dear me I don't know what came over me.

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A couple of nights later the Popes had a party. Miss Kirby and Mr. Pope spent most of the evening at a ping-pong table up in the barn loft. About half past ten they stopped playing but halfway down the stairs Miss Kirby said Don't let's go out with all those people. Can't we sit somewhere quietly? I won't put the light on then said Mr. Pope. They felt their way down and Mr. Pope pulled an old bench out into the barn doorway and they sat down facing out toward the lawn. It was a hot night and most of the party was out on the lawn. We can see them and they can't see us said Miss Kirby. I like that don't you? Gosh! she said suddenly What's that behind us? It's only Ed said Mr. Pope. I don't tie him up. It seems mean to confine him in a stall. Hello Ed he said. Hot tonight isn't it?

Ed didn't say anything. He had a plan. And the first time Miss Kirby turned her head a little away from Mr. Pope he put it into operation. He stuck his head forward and kissed Miss Kirby lingeringly on the cheek.

O Wilbur! cried Miss Kirby. Don't be mushy! Mushy! exclaimed the stupefied Mr. Pope. But before he could say any more she threw her arms around him and embraced him with an athletic fervor that drove the breath out of him. O Wilbur! she said I knew that you cared! And at that moment Ed seized in his teeth the string of the big floodlight that hung over the barn door and pulled.

Shouts of delight hailed the brilliantly spotlighted embrace. The party crowded up around them as they sprang apart. Three to one on Wilbur! said some one. I'll take it said Jed Witherspoon. He hasn't a chance poor chap. Are you doing charades darlings? asked Mrs. Pope sweetly. Why didn't you tell us so we could guess? And then Mr. Pope found the light and turned it off.

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Well Mr. Pope found Miss Kirby as she was getting into her car and she was pretty mad and said he ought to be horsewhipped for putting on the light but he finally persuaded her that he hadn't done it. No she said I guess I know you couldn't have. Not after kissing me like that. And let's be straight about this Wilbur. I've known for a long time that you cared for me. Now why don't you divorce Carlotta and marry me?

But good gosh sputtered Mr. Pope how can I—why I love Carlotta. Nonsense my dear man said Miss Kirby you can't. She's not your type. Besides I know you couldn't have kissed me as you did if you didn't care. Perhaps it did come as a shock to you. But you've got to face the truth Wilbur. You and I were made for each other. And she seized him and kissed him terrifyingly and then drove off.

Don't say it boss—don't say it said Ed as Mr. Pope came into the barn. I can't say it now replied Mr. Pope There are too many people around. But I suppose you know you're looking the auction block right in the eye? I was only acting in your best interests said Ed. When you started hugging and kissing that wench—I started! exclaimed Mr. Pope. Why yes said Ed. Didn't you? I couldn't see very well. I don't know just what did happen said Mr. Pope. But I'm in a sweet mess *now*. And your putting on that light—I did it all for the best said Ed. I thought if Mrs. Pope saw you it would make her jealous and she'd keep the girl away from you. Instead of which—well she thought it was funny. He snickered. Well damn it Wilb it *was* funny. Bah! said Mr. Pope and left the barn.

Mrs. Pope didn't think it was so funny next day when Miss Kirby came to see her and asked her to give Mr. Pope up. She told Mr. Pope about it at dinner. She's crazy! said Mr. Pope bitterly. Well I don't know said Mrs. Pope. She seems quite sane to me. You can't be asking me to believe that she made the whole thing up? Of course she did said Mr. Pope. O no Wilbur Mrs. Pope said. This thing has been going on a long time. If you want to marry her I won't stand in your way. I've never interfered with you as I told her and if you want a divorce—O my heaven said Mr. Pope. I'm going over to see her father.

But the senator greeted him with a depressing cordiality. Ah Pope he said Well my girl tells me you've arranged it all between you. Congratulations my boy. Eh? said Mr. Pope But Mr. Kirby don't you understand—I'm already married. I understand Pope I understand replied the senator. Your agitation does you credit. But divorce is no disgrace nowadays as long as it's accomplished quietly. And I understand your wife will offer no objection—But my dear senator interrupted Mr. Pope I don't want to—I haven't any intention of marrying Wilma.

What's this? demanded the senator and his brow began to build up voltage. If you've been playing fast and loose with my little girl—Then the brow cleared. I think I understand he said. But nowadays an uncontested divorce can have no effect on a young man's prospects. And surely if I in my position am not concerned you hardly need be. He laughed throatily. Tut-tut Mr. Pope he said. I hope you agree that my little girl—*our* little girl—must get what she wants?

Well Mr. Pope stayed a while but he didn't get anywhere so he went home and talked to Ed. That Wilma's a tough baby said Ed. You were right trying to work on her old man but you worked on him the wrong way. Now if he thought your wife might make a scandal—It's perfectly plain Carlotta wouldn't said Mr. Pope. I'm not so sure said Ed. But anyway—Well the guy wants to be governor doesn't he? I think I got an idea. Well said Mr. Pope what is it? I got to think it out said Ed. By the way Wilbur I saw a couple rats last night. Is that rifle of yours loaded? Mr. Pope took the rifle down from its hook. Yes he said. Then he looked

suspiciously at Ed. I hope you're not planning any shooting? he said. Me shoot? said Ed. With hoofs? Don't be silly.

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Mr. Pope alleged pressing business and spent the next three nights in town. The first two evenings Mrs. Pope went out but the third she stayed home and went to bed early. About eleven o'clock Ed got busy. He had stolen a pink felt hat of Mrs. Pope's that she had left in the garden a day or two before and he got that and then he carefully took down the rat rifle from the hook and with these two things held firmly in his mouth he started for the Kirbys'.

He came through the Kirby property from the back and worked up close to the side of the house under cover of the shrubbery. There was a light in Miss Kirby's room but the downstairs rooms were dark. Ed dropped the hat on the lawn and propped the gun against a stone bench and pushed it around until it pointed at the window next the lighted one. He managed to get the safety catch off with his teeth and then he stood still and watched the window which was open although the shade was down. Pretty soon Miss Kirby's shadow moved across it and Ed called in a high falsetto voice Wilma!

Miss Kirby raised the shade and looked out. Who is that? she said. O there you are you husband snatcher you! yelled Ed. Take that! And he leaned down and pushed the rifle trigger with his nose. There was a bang and a crash of glass and Miss Kirby herself let out a very creditable yell. And Ed gave a wild shriek of laughter and then trotted off into the bushes where he hid and watched.

Pretty soon lights flashed on and Miss Kirby and her father and a couple of disheveled servants came tumbling out with flashlights and pokers and walking sticks. Soon one of the servants found the rifle and the hat. Heavens! said Miss Kirby That's Carlotta Pope's hat. That's Wilbur's rat rifle too.

The senator came down and examined the relics. Mrs. Pope's? he said. But child you assured me—He stopped and pulled himself together and then managed a hollow laugh. All right Hicks he said You and Wallace go in. I know all about it. I'd forgotten for the moment. It's just a—a bet. A joke.

When the servants had gone he said to his daughter You heard that shriek. The woman is plainly crazy. Good heaven if I'd had any idea of this—But there must be no scandal. But I must find Wilbur Miss Kirby said and tell him. I think you will not be seeing Wilbur again said the senator. Come in at once. So they went in and Ed went home.

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The next evening Mr. Pope came out. Mrs. Pope acted funny at dinner he thought. But at last she said Queer the Kirbys dashing off on a South American cruise so suddenly wasn't it? The senator called me up to tell me. Said he thought it might set my mind at rest. You mean they've really gone? said Mr. Pope. Mrs. Pope showed him the item in the evening paper. My gosh what a break! he said. Then he looked at her mournfully. Or isn't it a break for you? Mrs. Pope got up and came over and sat on the arm of his chair. Darling she said sometimes I think you're just a little stupid. And she kissed him. When she was through Mr. Pope said dazedly Gosh! Yeah.

Later he went out to see Ed and tell him the news. Well now that's something said Ed. Yeah said Mr. Pope and how is that idea of yours coming? Idea? said Ed. O I gave that up. Nothing to it. Mr. Pope looked at him suspiciously. You act funny Ed he said. And the Kirbys dash off without any explanation—O sure sure said Ed bitterly. If something happens you

blame it on me and if nothing happens you blame that on me too. Gosh I don't know why I don't join the navy.

O. K. Ed said Mr. Pope. My apologies. I've got some new Bourbon in the house. I'll bring you out a bottle.

THE END

[The end of *Ed Shoots it Out* by Walter Rollin Brooks]