



**Older than God, they came back
from Valley Forge,
from Gettysburg,
from Château-Thierry, from Tarawa**

SARRA

PHOTOGRAPH BY VALENTINO SARRA

OLDER THAN GOD

by BERNARD DeVOTO

ONE afternoon in June of 1919 the parents and the younger sister of an ex-soldier met the train that was bringing him home from Yaphank. He came slowly down the Pullman steps—there he was—he had the same number of arms and legs—he had no scars—there were strange symbols on his sleeves and shoulders—and in that heart-pulverizing moment the war was over at last. There followed the tears, the half-syllables, the kissing and hugging and hand-shaking which could not even try to express the inexpressible. The family knew that there were no words for what was in their hearts and yet, all the way across town in the family Ford, they were tensely waiting for him to say something—for this magic to be distilled in speech. But he had nothing to say. He merely sat stiffly, choked with a silence that rapidly grew more frightening to his family. Then at a certain corner he stirred a little. The family's breath caught, they strained forward, and the soldier said—accusingly, beligerently, in the tone of one used to giving orders—"Good God, hasn't Bill Gleeson painted his drugstore yet?"

That is one ex-soldier's memory of homecoming. The words meant nothing but he has come to understand how and why they were discharged in irrational anger at these strangers who sat in the Ford with him, at the foreign town he found himself in, and at all the aliens he had encountered since he had marched up Fifth Avenue with his division in a blizzard of torn paper. The words had no significance at all. Except that somewhere between Apremont and the eastern fringe of the Argonne Forest he had lain for some hours in a shellhole with a recently wounded man and two men long dead, while German artillery fire moved up and down and round about, reaching for him personally. Lying there, he had vividly remembered how the paint was scaling from Bill Gleeson's store front and how often Bill had said he was going to clean it up. While the counter-barrage searched for him he had decided that a decent regard for the opinion of mankind required Bill to keep that promise. But Bill had not kept it—and peace, the home town, America had let that soldier down.

HE has lived to understand also why he was never able to explain that trivial irritation to those whom it shocked. There you were. You understood the shyness of your family, their eagerness to understand you, their pathetic hope of entering into your experience. But they could not understand what was in your heart. That phrase in your notebook "a horse is dripping through the trees": the glare of a gasoline dump burning at noon in Châtel Chéhéry; your mirth when Izzy ripped his leggings off sliding down a slope all wrapped up in twisted barbed wire; the expression on Joe's face when he held out his left arm to you and there was no hand on it; the flicker of distant, inaudible gunfire against the leaves when you were marching back from the lines—a thousand such memories were symbols of intense meaning but you simply could not explain them to anyone who had to have them explained. There was your deepest humiliation, the time when you vomited in front of everyone in pure terror at a moment when there was nothing whatever to be afraid of—they could not understand that. Or your funniest moment. The regiment had been pulled out of the Argonne at last and you were back in what was called a rest area, everything had been attended to, there was a chance to take a bath of a kind, there was a rumor that you could get fresh clothes.

But you found that your automatic pistol was filled solid with mud—probably that last tumble in the dark before you came out on the road—and suddenly that small discovery was too much. You said to Pete, "The hell with it. I'm not going to clean it till I've had a bath. My life is worth more than a pistol to this man's army." And Pete said, "What's the matter, got a bum pistol?" That was certainly no blinding stroke of wit but it doubled you up at the moment and has done so every time you have thought of it for twenty-five years. But if you had repeated that remark to the folks they would have glanced at each other with an odd dismay. So you didn't. You shut up about it. You shut up about the war. They wouldn't understand.

THERE is an old folk superstition, a belief that every man has a ghostly double. That spectre is called a double-ganger and it accompanies him everywhere. And always in an evil, thick-witted way it is trying to get possession of him, make him renounce what he has been and dreamed of being, convert him to some new shape. Not the least ghastly phenomenon of war is the fact that those of us who send our men into it, our sons or husbands or brothers, must sometimes—even as we yearn toward them with full hearts—feel a dread that war may have given the double-ganger control over them. In a way this dread, which we feel to be a betrayal of those we love, is even less tolerable than the fear that they may be killed, for the chance of their death is universal and we are forced to accept it from the moment war breaks out. In the fear of our men's death there is no shame, but the fear that they may be changed sickens and humiliates us. And yet it keeps coming back.

For as civilians we know only the fictions of war, whereas they have undergone the realities. Theirs has been the boredom, the terror, the filth and grime, the mud and snow and heat, the bombs falling, death and destruction in the sea and across the land. They have been trained to slaughter, they have been exposed to slaughter, they have slaughtered. Has all this bent and hardened them in a new shape? Can they resume the habits and tasks of peace, the thinking of civilians, the values by which we hope to live? Will the ex-soldier returning from beastliness be at best an alien speaking no language we can communicate in, or at worst an antagonist to the structure of our lives and of the life that used to be his?

Certainly he will be changed. In an equivalent time he would have been changed if there had been no war and he had got no farther from home than Gleeson's drugstore. He would have grown older, more mature, more knowledgeable—and the army or navy will do just that for him. Strange lands, novel ways of life, alien customs are bound to leave some increment on him. He will be toughened physically.

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*You know only the fictions of war—he
has undergone the realities. Don't ask
him to talk about it when he comes back.
He knows you wouldn't understand*

OLDER THAN GOD

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more resilient, of greater endurance, and very likely with an increased liking for outdoor sports and outdoor living. For at least a while he will be neater and more orderly in little things, with a habit of keeping his belongings "policed," and no doubt an urge to make others do the same. He may have new skills or trades, and it may be that these will give him an entirely new way of making his living.

But what of that strange language and shall I be able to understand him? No, not completely or even adequately in regard to the immediate experience of war, his own private pattern of horror and survival. Love has its own intuition, and you will come to know a great deal without comprehending it. But the rest, and it is the greater part, must be forfeit. The need to have it shared will never leave him but he must satisfy that need among those who have been there. There is the fraternity of those who have been there, even if they fought their battles across the world from his, and only in that fellowship can he speak freely, with the knowledge that his own kind will hear. To you he can say little at best and at best little of what he says will carry its full meaning across the gulf. This is in part his pride, even his grandeur. But also it is in part his shyness, his shamefacedness, his resignation to the incommunicable.

Moreover, for a term you will be strange to him. While he traveled the seven seas, and lay in foxholes, and fought his way through destruction, you took your accustomed path to Gleeson's drugstore, the morning paper, and an absorbed interest in whether the Cubs had won today and whether your neighbor had decided to plant beans. He will find your day by day activity almost incomprehensible. You are enmeshed in the life of peace, which he gave up so long ago that it has become unintelligible,

perhaps absurd. Only by degrees will he find any meaning in it, even the old meanings.

Only by degrees—that is the important thing. Practically all civilians and most soldiers fail to realize that the war is not over when the fighting stops, that the army life is not ended when one is discharged, that one phase of military experience is the transition to civilian status. Usually the civilian entering the army is unhappy, inept, ineffective for a period. There is no escape from a corresponding unhappiness and ineffectiveness in the period of becoming a civilian again. He is likely to be moody, impatient, cantankerous. He may be lethargic. He may spend long hours tinkering with idiotic devices or small personal possessions. He may take to wandering alone at improbable hours or to the most blatant and irritating kind of loafing. Only the most fortunate will escape a time of living at loose ends, perhaps with a conviction of futility, perhaps with a fervent rebelliousness against the harassing routines of life. But even the most fortunate are likely for a while to feel that something vital has been drained from them, some current shut off. Returned soldiers think of themselves not as ex-soldiers but as old soldiers. They have, they feel, grown old. After all wars the veteran of twenty-five, or twenty, has spoken of himself as "older than God."

This period of transition and adaptation is likely to be painful to the soldier and may be extremely distressing to his family but it is unavoidable, it is a part of war. It affects us all, privately and publicly. Both individuals and society tend to grow impatient with it, for the ferment at work in the old soldier are obscure and the civilian cannot hold to his exalted mood. It is all too easy to forget the intoxicating, the ecstatic mood in which we met his train—"for this my

son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." We are prone to be impatient or scornful if he fumbles while trying to pick up the threads of his old life. If we lose that mood, is he to be blamed for seeing that it is lost? Yet this period above all others calls for sympathy, understanding, the deepest realities of family love. It is the time when the tide sets back from death toward life.

Life does assert itself against death and our faith is that peace is right and life wholesome. But we tend to think that peace—and love and tenderness as well—can work their healing much faster than in fact they do. Any of us would feel at least hesitation and doubt, if not sullen resentment, if he found himself suddenly set down in, say, Mongolia, unable to speak the local tongue, ignorant of geography, and quite unable to tell which road to start out on because unable to decide where any road might lead. But the returning soldier finds himself suddenly set down in a country far stranger than Mongolia, his home town in peace. War taught him the language of hell but it is not spoken here; it taught him the geography of hell but this once familiar landscape is far stranger. He does not know where any of the roads lead to and if he did must pause before taking any of them, for first he must determine where he wants to go. While he studies the map, while patiently or resentfully he works out the compass bearings and recovers his lost familiarity with the landscape, he needs love and forbearance. He has earned them.

THAT is the private task of home, family and friends. What of the public task? Well, we must begin by facing the fact that there will be a small percentage of veterans for whom our worst dread will come true. They learned war too well and they will never find in peace so complete a functioning. War will forever be their consummate experience and they will always, as the luckier ones only occasionally, look back with regret and loss on the time when their lives flamed scarlet against the background of death. Some of these will find a use, serving the nation in far places in the bases and stations which we are certainly going to maintain from now on. But some others will never find a use proportionate to the service they rendered in war or to the potentialities they had before war came. These are as truly casualties, a war loss, as the dead or the crippled. In all tenderness and understanding we must accept them as casualties. They suffered in our service, they are entitled to all that we can do for them, but society must be about its business, which is peace.

The basic task lies with those who are whole, sound, and ready and able to resume citizenship—the great majority of soldiers becoming ex-soldiers. The problem is to prevent the cleavage between combatants and civilians from widening and becoming dangerous. There is such a cleavage and why shouldn't there be? While the soldier patrolled his post in hell, we bellyached about short rations of butter, fattened on safe jobs, struck for still better pay, boomed the night clubs, brought bootleggers out of retire-

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ment to run the black markets, and strove desperately to get a better place at the trough. This does not look too pretty, and even the most dedicated civilian service cannot look much better, against the memory of a friend crushed by a tank or seared by a flame-thrower. All wars turn the world upside down and it is the civilian who profits and the combatant who gets the dirty end of the stick. In all wars soldiers have meditated on this stark fact and have resolved to readjust matters when they got home. After all wars they have in some part made that determination good.

They are certainly going to do just that when this war is over. The veterans are going to run this country; they are entitled to, they saved it. (You may be sure, by the way, that they will not let us forget that fact.) They are going to run it in their interest, and that again is right. The necessity, however, is for them to understand soon rather than late that their interest cannot be separated from ours, that the country they are going to run is primarily themselves, that war has the rich irony of making them civilians when it ends. Every conceivable effort will be made, in their own ranks and from outside, to delay that understanding as long as possible. Special interests will try to use their power by deceiving them, or by seducing them, or merely by buying them. Shrewd, hard-minded pressure groups will work hard to unify them—their service and idealism no less than their resentments—in support of every corruption that may suggest a profit. Many of these efforts will succeed for a while or in part. It is our job to make sure that they succeed no further. It is the job of every veteran as well, as he resumes our status.

WE would do well to remember that the soldier's service is beyond payment or reward. It is not as payment or reward that we must do whatever can be done to help him prepare for effective citizenship. There is no doubt of our obligation to the crippled and the handicapped. Nor is there any doubt of our obligation to those who, though they have returned whole, have nevertheless given up years of their lives, forfeited their ambitions and expectations, and poured the substance of their hopes into the common service. Everything must be done that will make more favorable the beginning of their citizenship in peace, whether training or education, whether study or guidance or direction, whether help in money or support while they are finding a place. This must be done promptly and without stint, but we must always remember that it is done for more effective citizenship, that we are not paying them off, that sacrifice cannot be repaid. And the soldier must remember too that he was a soldier in order to be a citizen, that his service was both ordinary and beyond price, that sacrifice cannot be repaid.

War teaches soldiers to be stern with themselves; they will find that such a teaching has its use in peace. War was hard; it is irreparable folly to dream that peace can possibly be soft. It will be at best a campaign in which one dies more slowly, with honor harder to maintain,

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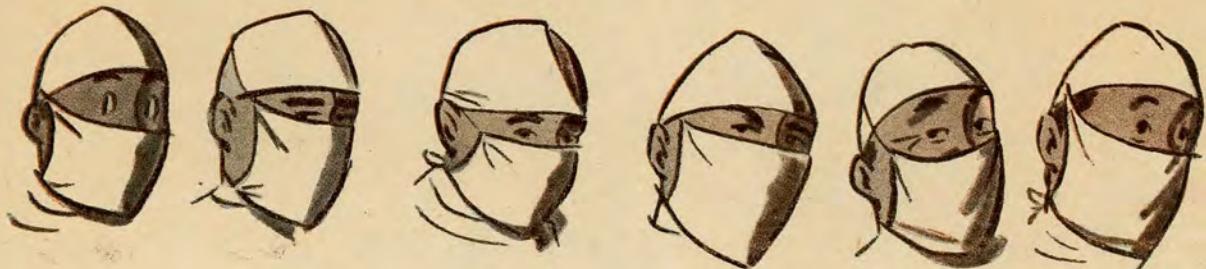
with a less hopeful prospect of self-respect. On every generation of soldiers has fallen the strange necessity of fighting a war in order that they might begin, late and less favorably, the life they had hoped to live. Certainly that is tough luck and certainly nothing whatever can be done about it. They have the knowledge that some of their hopes have been lost, changed, or mocked and their careers changed altogether or forbidden entirely. They have also every soldier's pack of incommunicable memories, satisfactions, self-respect, and knowledge of things done. It may sustain them and it may not, but the time comes to study war no more. In hope or resolution or trepidation, as the dice may happen to fall, they too must be about their business of peace.

In war the prospect of peace is always grave and troubling. He is a puzzling and a puzzled figure, this young man in uniform who thinks of himself as older than God and whose mind rings with such words as Anzio, Tarawa, Attu, the scores of others known to us already, the hundreds about to become known. He always was. It was a bewildering world and a disturbing prospect he confronted a generation ago, when his head rang with such names as Apremont, Château-Thierry, Belleau Wood, Fismes, Béthencourt, and St. Mihiel. Yet that veteran grown long since into a civilian would assert that he did not do too badly against fate and, for proof, need look no farther than his sons who now do so well. The world was just as bewildering and fate as hostile when young men older than God turned homeward from Appomattox, their heads ringing with Five Forks, Chancellorsville, Chickamauga, Gettysburg, the Wilderness, and Stone River. What was left for them in the conquered South or in the North where foreigners had taken all the jobs and profiteers had grown fat and filthy on their comrades' deaths? Nothing except to make their country dominant in the world, as in a single lifetime they proceeded to do. Names like Cowpens, Saratoga, Trenton, Valley Forge, and White Plains rang in the heads of men older than God who turned homeward from Yorktown with their youth spent and society in ruins around them. Life offered them neither hope nor opportunity and there was left to them only to create the United States.

These are the old soldier's predecessors and peers. For them too the outlook was gray, the odds long, the vision delayed. It turned out otherwise and America has always been the creation of old soldiers, of young men older than God. The past is the old soldier's surety that peace will not fail him and he will not fail peace, that the bugle blowing so faintly that only he can hear it is sounding not taps but reveille.



DOCTORS and DOCTORS



SKETCHES BY DICK SARGEANT

by NEWMAN LEVY

WHEN I was a boy doctors wore beards. Just as barbers had striped poles in front of their shops to advertise their trade, and cigar stores had Indians, doctors adorned their faces with whiskers to proclaim their profession to the world. I used to think that the Canons of Medical Ethics required it and that any doctor would be disbarred or unfrocked, or whatever it is they do to doctors, if he dared to prescribe pills with a clean-shaven countenance.

Dr. Feldman wore a beard, of course, and since he was a doctor of the old school that scorned the trim, apologetic Van Dykes that were coming into vogue, he wore frank, unequivocal, bristly whiskers of the sort we associate with General Grant. Dr. Feldman belonged to that vanishing species, the old family doctor. He had escorted my grandparents out of this world and he had ushered me into it. He saw me through the measles and chicken pox, mended a broken ankle that I had acquired by falling off a velocipede, and on one memorable occasion instructed me in the Facts of Life.

I still vividly remember that historic interview. My father had come to the conclusion that I was old enough to know things, and he evidently had been wrestling with the problem for a long time. Sex was a subject that was not easily discussed between parents and children in those days. At any rate he said to me brusquely one morning, "Dr. Feldman wants to see you." I respectfully suggested that there was nothing the matter with me that needed a doctor's attention to which he merely replied, "Stop off at Dr. Feldman's on your way home from school."

The doctor's study seemed as unsterile as his whiskers—a large, faded room, crowded with shabby oak and leather furniture. There was a large chair that resembled an old-fashioned barber's chair, and against the wall a glass case filled with glittering terrifying instruments. I learned later in life that I need not have been so frightened for those

menacing forceps were not intended for me. On the wall were framed diplomas and the customary steel engraving of a doctor seated at the bedside of a sick little girl.

Much of what he told me was old stuff; I had already learned it from the boys at school. But as Dr. Feldman explained it to me in his gentle way the subject was cleansed of all the dirtiness with which it had been surrounded. I have since had some slight experience with child psychology and sex education and it is my belief that Dr. Feldman's approach would satisfy the most exacting modern requirements. The only point upon which the moderns might differ is that they probably would have started my instruction about ten years earlier.

This was father's gracious way of passing the buck. I suppose it marked a distinct advance from his boyhood when The Facts were learned from surreptitious whisperings at school and the furtive reading of forbidden books.

THE old general practitioner treated ailments of the soul as well as of the body and he did a good job. In my youth the question was Who is your doctor? not Who is your neurologist? Yet when I consider the specialization and the sub-divided specialization of medical practice today I am amazed to find that I managed to survive under the solitary ministrations of Dr. Feldman.

My daughter, who is now a normal and healthy young woman, has just completed the first twenty years of her life under the supervision of a battery of doctors large enough to populate the Academy of Medicine. I do not want to give the impression that we are unduly affluent. It is merely that the doctor who treats a sore throat will not look at you if you come to him with a pain in the chest. And the so-called family physician today is pretty much like the fellow

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SURE DWELLINGS

by MARY ELLEN CHASE

WHEN it was proposed in Dorset Village to raise the minister's salary from five hundred to six hundred dollars in recognition of forty years of faithful service, not a few parishioners were frankly and noisily skeptical. Miss Drusilla Means, salary solicitor, led the opposition. She declared the project preposterous.

"Fifty dollars would be unheard-of," she asserted to every pursued and captured listener, "but a hundred's nothin' short o' sacrilege! Haven't I collected in this village for nigh onto twenty years? Don't I know to a cent what each one'll give? If my conscience would allow, couldn't I tell of them that haven't paid their last year's signin', and the one before that? Don't I know if it wa'n't for rusticators, we'd go without the gospel in Dorset? And comin' right now just after Mis' Harriet Norton's left all she had to the Maine Missionary Society instead of to the church! I declare. I don't know what they're thinkin' of!"

But Miss Drusilla and her followers were obliged to give way before the forces of organized labor. The Ladies' Circle proudly reported forty dollars' surplus from the last August sale; the Lookout and Social Committees of the Christian Endeavor Society pledged twenty-five dollars to be raised by socials and ice-cream sales; the Ladies' Social Library heroically promised ten, trusting to an increase in the demand for "shares"; the Odd Fellows, of which organization the Rev. Phineas Holt was an honored member, came forward with a promise of fifteen; finally the Village Improvement Society voted to patch up the old flag and complete the hundred dollars.

But Miss Drusilla intrenched herself behind the bulwark of the future. Hopeful as was the prospect of the first hundred, how about those to come? But Dorset, in the main, refused to be anxious. Tacitly understanding its own village psychology, it knew that, although individuals might decline to sign subscription-sheets, they could be lured indefinitely to ice-cream sales, socials, and red-hash suppers. Moreover, it received reassurance in the added knowledge that the years of the Rev. Phineas Holt were already well beyond threescore and ten. Even if, "by reason of strength," they should become fourscore, the time was

not far off when a younger man would ascend the Dorset pulpit at a minimum salary. The village, therefore, glorying in its triumph, wrote its pastor by the hand of Mrs. Tobias Blodgett, president of the Ladies' Circle, and looked expectantly forward to an exceptionally social year.

The Rev. Phineas Holt, with his wife, Abbie, was working among the perennials in the front yard when young Enos Blodgett brought his mother's letter. The minister, leaning on his garden rake, read it, passed his hand across his eyes, and read it again. Abbie, busy among the larkspur with early witch grass, that infester of New England gardens, did not see his agitation. When she arose to straighten her tired back Phineas had gone. She found him in the study, staring stupidly at the pink oxalis in the window bracket, and fumbling among his pockets for a handkerchief.

While her astonished eyes attempted by several readings to absorb the contents of Mrs. Blodgett's letter, his memory swept the long road of his forty years in Dorset, whence he had come after his course at Bowdoin College and the seminary at Andover to preach the gospel at an annual salary of five hundred dollars, to be supplemented by the parsonage, his firewood, frequent invitations to Sunday dinners, and an occasional donation party. In the earlier years of his ministry there had been "calls" to larger towns, and once a splendid opening in the church at Belfast; but his growing family and the consequent expense of moving had advised his remaining in Dorset, where living was less expensive and social demands few. Later, when they were struggling to help the boys at college, it would have been folly to abandon surety for uncertainty. Finally his heart anchored him to Dorset. In lieu of salary increases, he accepted the appreciation of his congregation, and the respect accorded him by the "summer people" who sojourned on the outskirts of Dorset. For years he had believed himself the most fortunate of men.

ABBIE, as might be expected of a woman whose capacities for "making over" had never been exhausted, had acquired a distinctly utilitarian and pragmatic tinge to her attitude toward life. Her mind, trained in a persistent school,



The bewilderment which swept over him in the train reached its climax in the stir and rumble of the terminal

met himself. Before dinner, he found Abbie's letter, and carried it eagerly to his room.

The letter was brief and to the point.

"The supply will not be here next Sunday," Abbie wrote, "but we can get along, of course, even if the church hasn't been closed a Sunday morning for forty years."

Phineas suddenly felt like one who, following for hours a circuitous footpath, comes finally upon the freedom of open country. Then something seemed to come rushing back to him—a mighty force, banishing embarrassment and vague discomfort. It was his own identity, returning with the blessed knowledge that he was needed in his own place. His host and hostess were astonished at the briskness of his step on the stairs and the light in his eyes when, quite unembarrassed, he greeted them at dinner and explained to them why an earlier return to Dorset was necessary. They demurred at Wednesday—Friday would give ample time; but he reminded them of a sermon to be prepared, adding with a gift of geniality that he, they must remember, was no silver-tongued New York preacher.

Abbie met the Wednesday-evening stage with a surety born of forty years with Phineas, of the ability to read between the lines of his daily letters. As she followed him into the parsonage, she heroically maintained her reserve, fortified by the knowledge that she must play a difficult part before Phineas' questions. In the pantry, whence she had retreated to take up the biscuits, she wiped her eyes surreptitiously with her apron, but stopped when she heard her husband's step in the kitchen. He followed her back and forth as she put supper on the table.

After a tremulous grace, Phineas asked about the "supply."

"It's strange—his backing out," he said. "What was the matter?"

Abbie bent over a teacup to remove

[Continued on Page 78]



"It's quick, ye
not

One of the nicest things
it's so pleasant to use
Doesn't redden or roug
because it's free from
caustics. Fast but safe,
replace bathroom and
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LD TO NEW

pieces shown on pages 42 and 43

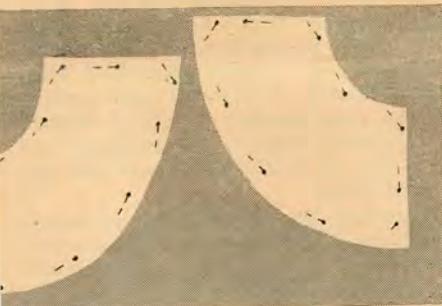
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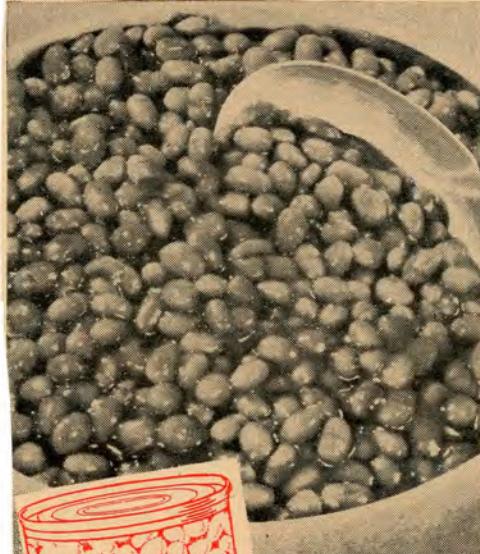
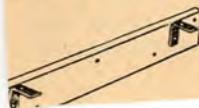
Spread out the pattern over a huge sheet of wrapping paper so that one corner of the paper fits exactly under any quarter section of the oval pattern, using crease lines as guide. Thumbtack or pin securely to paper. Trace around the quarter oval section.

CURVE
LENGTH OF SHIRT

CURVE 1



dress pattern and cut around it.
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So serve it o
again . . . i
Van Camp's
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flavor, goodness, a

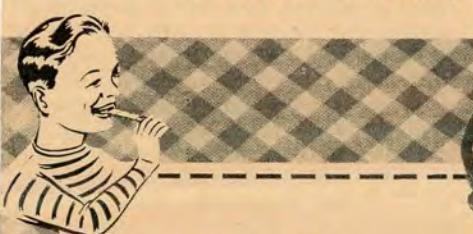
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1. Sift flour with salt and sugar. Add whole wheat flour and mix well.
2. Cut in shortening until mixture resembles coarse meal. Add cheese and mix well.
3. Add water gradually, until dough is moist enough

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