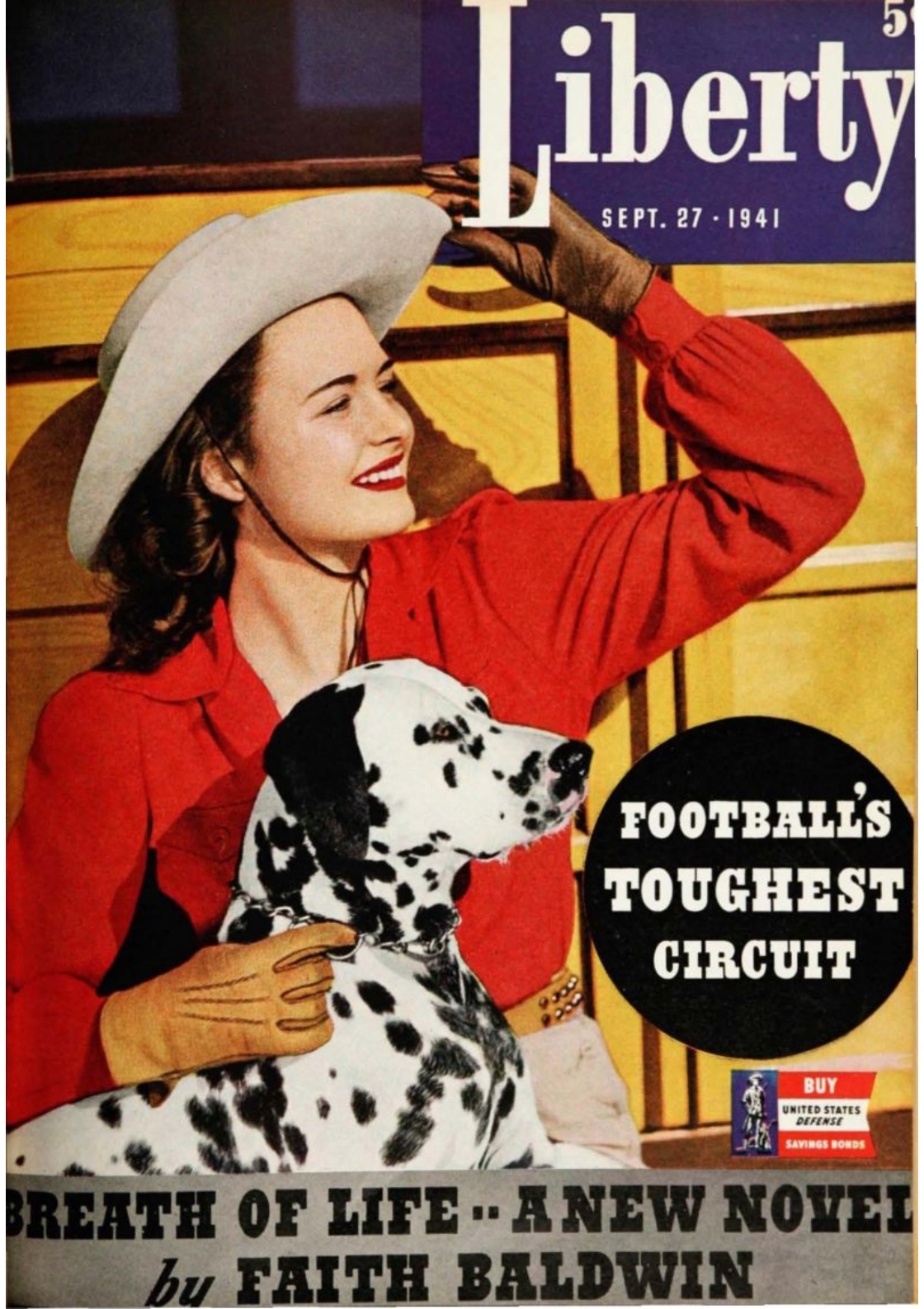


# 5 Liberty

SEPT. 27 · 1941

A woman with dark hair, wearing a white cowboy hat and a bright red long-sleeved shirt, is smiling and looking to her right. She is wearing tan leather gloves and holding a Dalmatian dog. The background is a wooden structure, possibly a balcony or railing.

**FOOTBALL'S  
TOUGHEST  
CIRCUIT**



**BUY**

**UNITED STATES  
DEFENSE**

**SAVINGS BONDS**

**BREATH OF LIFE .. A NEW NOVEL**  
*by* **FAITH BALDWIN**

**\* A Distributed Proofreaders Canada eBook \***

This eBook is made available at no cost and with very few restrictions. These restrictions apply only if (1) you make a change in the eBook (other than alteration for different display devices), or (2) you are making commercial use of the eBook. If either of these conditions applies, please contact a <https://www.fadedpage.com> administrator before proceeding. Thousands more FREE eBooks are available at <https://www.fadedpage.com>.

This work is in the Canadian public domain, but may be under copyright in some countries. If you live outside Canada, check your country's copyright laws. IF THE BOOK IS UNDER COPYRIGHT IN YOUR COUNTRY, DO NOT DOWNLOAD OR REDISTRIBUTE THIS FILE.

*Title:* Ed Takes the Cockeyed Initiative

*Date of first publication:* 1941

*Author:* Walter Rollin Brooks (1886-1958)

*Date first posted:* Feb. 21, 2022

*Date last updated:* Feb. 21, 2022

Faded Page eBook #20220257

This eBook was produced by: zatoichi01, Alex White & the online Distributed Proofreaders Canada team at <https://www.pgdpCanada.net>

# Ed Takes The Cockeyed *Initiative*

BY  
WALTER BROOKS

First published *Liberty*, September 27, 1941.

*Prepare for laughs . . . The talking horse is in again!*

When Mrs. Pope's Aunt Amelia died Mr. Pope didn't feel very bad. How could he?—he'd never even seen her. Of course I don't mean that he felt good about it either. All of Aunt Amelia's money went to her stepson Laurence Hammersley. And although she had left instructions that her famous string of pearls should go to Mrs. Pope there wasn't much for Mr. Pope to feel gay about in that because while they would look nice on Mrs. Pope he knew she would look just as nice in a ten cent store string which didn't have to be insured for \$10,000. So as I say he didn't feel either one way or the other about it and he wore a black necktie and looked solemn for a day or two and that was that.

Of course Mrs. Pope went to the funeral which was in Philadelphia and when she got back to Mount Kisco Mr. Pope asked her about the pearls. O I expect Laurence will send them along soon said Mrs. Pope. But didn't you ask him about them? said Mr. Pope and Mrs. Pope said Why Wilbur at a time like that you can't talk about such things! And Mr. Pope said O.

Well a month went by and nothing was heard from Mr. Hammersley. Mrs. Pope wondered about the pearls some but Mr. Pope didn't say anything because the longer she didn't have them the longer he wouldn't have to pay insurance on them.

And then one day Mr. Pope was walking across Fifty-second Street and he ran into Mr. Hammersley. Why hello Hammersley he said I didn't know you were in town. Mr. Hammersley said a case he was working on had brought him to New York for a few days. Well you must come out to Mount Kisco said Mr. Pope. Carlotta'll want to see you. Mr. Hammersley was kind of evasive but Mr. Pope knew that Mrs. Pope would skin him alive if he let Mr. Hammersley escape so he insisted and finally pinned Mr. Hammersley down to the following evening. And then he said casually I suppose you brought along the famous pearls. The pearls? said Mr. Hammersley. O why no—no I didn't. O said Mr. Pope. Well Carlotta will want to see you just the same I guess. I'll expect you at the office then around four thirty tomorrow.

So Mr. Hammersley came out and they had a nice dinner and Mrs. Pope made a fuss over him and Mr. Pope tried to be entertaining but Mr. Hammersley was about as responsive as a hoptoad and neither of them thought it was a good time to bring up the matter of the pearls. They thought maybe he'd bring it up. But he didn't and so along about midnight Mrs. Pope said Well Laurence I hope you brought Aunt Amelia's pearls along with you.

Eh? said Mr. Hammersley and he looked puzzled and annoyed and then he said Dear me I'm afraid this is all rather awkward. I really wouldn't have come out if I'd realized that you were still under a misapprehension about the pearls. But perhaps it's as well that you brought it up so that we can clear it away.

Mr. Pope had swallowed so many yawns that he was beginning to have indigestion but now he woke up. What misapprehension? he said. Why as you know said Mr. Hammersley

mother's entire estate was left to me. There was nothing in the will Carlotta—you heard it read—which stated or even implied that there were any exceptions. *What?* said Mrs. Pope incredulously. You mean you're keeping them yourself? But good heavens Laurence Aunt Amelia told me repeatedly—I have heard you say so said Mr. Hammersley and I will admit that once or twice she made a more or less vague statement to that effect to me. But after all we can only go by her intentions at the time she made her will.

O come Laurence put in Mr. Pope everybody in Carlotta's family knew she was to have those pearls. I know there was such an impression said Mr. Hammersley coldly but unfortunately it was not founded on fact. As executor of the will I have no choice—but to take something that doesn't belong to you! interrupted Mrs. Pope bitterly. Why Laurence I never heard of such a dishonest thing! Wilbur what are you going to do about it?

Well I don't know Carlotta said Mr. Pope. If Laurence wants to grab them I don't see how we can stop him. I suppose maybe if you can get some witnesses who heard your aunt say the pearls were to go to you—I won't have a family lawsuit interrupted Mrs. Pope and if that's all you can think of—why Wilbur I'm amazed at you! Can't you stick up for me in anything? Well I don't know Carlotta said Mr. Pope again but Mrs. Pope didn't let him finish. No! she said contemptuously. You never do! O if I were a man I'd *make* Laurence hand over those pearls if I had to break every bone in his body! I think you can be thankful said Mr. Hammersley that Wilbur is not the kind of man who would care to attempt anything violent. If you ask me he is being very sensible. Mrs. Pope glared at him a moment and tried to think of something to say but all she could think of was Bah! so she said it and jumped up and left the room. Well said Mr. Pope after a moment perhaps we had better go to bed.

So Mr. Hammersley left in the morning before Mrs. Pope got up and Mr. Pope left with him. Mr. Pope was not very happy about the affair. He couldn't say to himself that he hadn't done anything because that was just what Mrs. Pope was mad at. She made him feel that he'd been pretty weak-kneed. He talked to Ed about it. I guess you know about Ed. He was Mr. Pope's horse. Mr. Pope used to ride him week-ends. When he found the animal could talk it was quite a surprise though a pleasant one for while Ed wasn't exactly cultured he had sense and everybody knows that horse sense is better than any other. I suppose it is what you call common sense. And Lord knows Ed was common.

So Mr. Pope told Ed about the pearls. There were eighty-six of them he said. Graduated. Wouldn't you know it? said Ed. You wouldn't catch that guy traveling around with a lot of common pearls. Pearls from educated oysters I suppose. Well they aren't cultured pearls anyway said Mr. Pope and then he had to explain the difference between cultured and natural pearls and how in both cases it was an irritation in the oyster that produced the pearl. Ed thought that if an oyster handed out a pearl every time it got irritated it might be a good idea to get some oysters and tease them. I wish Cousin Laurence was an oyster he said. You aren't much help Ed said Mr. Pope. There ain't any help for you Wilb said the horse because you want people to think you're polite. Underneath you're just as vulgar as I am. Of the earth earthy—that's us Wilb. But you got a kind of veneer onto you and you're afraid of gettin' it scratched. Now if it was me I'd go down to Philly and sock that guy in the nose and raise such a public howl that he'd rather give you the pearls than have a scandal. Sure maybe you'd get thrown in the can but how do you think he'd like that? Only you won't do it. Mr. Pope said no that was out. Well there you are said Ed.

So a month went by and Mrs. Pope stayed pretty irritated about the pearls and I guess she'd have been more irritated if she hadn't had something else to be irritated about. This

something was a man who had taken the Haight place. His name was Jelks. But Mrs. Pope didn't mind this so much. What she minded was that the Haight place—which was a three-room cottage with a big studio—was shoved right tight up against the Pope place so that if you sat in the Haight garden when the Popes were in their garden you were practically a member of the Pope family circle. And Mr. Jelks was not possessed of those endearing qualities which might make him acceptable as a member. He was a wiry young-old man with a derisive expression which was at once reinforced and made ambiguous by a bad squint. And it was his pleasure to sit in his garden in the cool of the evening and stare at the Popes—now and then laughing quietly to himself.

Mr. Pope maintained that Mr. Jelks was merely smiling gently at his own thoughts. Mrs. Pope said she didn't doubt it and that merely showed what kind of man he was to have that kind of thoughts. And as for staring at you said Mr. Pope nobody but a trained oculist could tell what he was staring at. You could tell quickly enough if you wanted to said Mrs. Pope. Maybe you don't mind that gargoyle sitting there snickering at us but if you had any consideration for me you'd make him stop it. O come Carlotta said Mr. Pope you can't prevent him sitting in his own garden. I admit he's a nuisance but I understand he's only taken the place for two months. We can put up with him that long. Mrs. Pope said she guessed she'd have to if her husband was too big a coward to protect her from insults. But Mr. Pope didn't see what he could do.

Ed had no use for Mr. Jelks either and he had even less for his man Tom. Tom was a big jovial red-faced man and although he cooked and answered the door he called Mr. Jelks Pete which isn't standard practice between servant and employer in Mount Kisco. Ed objected to that and he objected to Tom's drinking beer with Mr. Jelks in the garden evenings which isn't standard practice either. But what made him really mad was the way they made fun of him. I don't make no more pretense to beauty than what you do Wilb he said to Mr. Pope but I ain't going to be laughed at. If I ain't got more class than that Tom I'll go over to the boneyard and give myself up.

---

Mr. Pope had been a little sore himself at the giggles and overheard remarks that had been passed every time he appeared on Ed. But he didn't see what he could do and he certainly didn't want the horse to start anything. Ed's methods were pretty direct. So he tried to rouse sympathy for Mr. Jelks' infirmity—telling Ed what a terrible inferiority complex such an eye must give the poor man and how bad it must make him feel. Yeah? said Ed. Well it ain't anything to the way it makes me feel. The guy's so cockeyed it makes my head ache to look at him. O sure I'm sorry for him. I been thinking how I could help him. Do you think a good bat side the head might jolt that eye back into position? If you want to keep on eating at my expense said Mr. Pope firmly you'll let those two strictly alone.

This threat usually worked with Ed and having bound him over to keep the peace Mr. Pope felt easier. It was bad enough having Mrs. Pope at him to avenge fancied insults without having to worry about what Ed might do. But Ed was behaving pretty well. At least he seemed to be although there were one or two odd things. Mr. Pope noticed that when they started out for a ride now Ed kept his head turned toward the Haight garden and if Mr. Jelks and Tom were there as was usually the case there were no more snickers. Instead the two men stared menacingly at the horse and seemed to be cursing under their breath. Wonder what's the matter with them? said Mr. Pope but Ed said innocently that he couldn't imagine.

Then on weekday evenings when Mr. Pope got back from the city he noticed that Ed usually seemed to be standing close to the hedge that separated the two gardens. Ed had the run of the place and was never tied up so there wasn't anything out of the way about that. But for some reason Mr. Jelks didn't seem to like it and one evening just as Mr. Pope drove into the yard he jumped up suddenly and threw a beer bottle at the horse.

Well of course this was too much and Mr. Pope got out of the car and went over to the hedge. Look here he said angrily you can't do that sort of thing. Ah shut your mouth snarled Mr. Jelks and he turned his back and walked toward the house but Tom grinned and said You mustn't mind Pete. He's kinda touchy about his eye and that horse of yours has spent the last week looking cross-eyed at him. O come said Mr. Pope a horse can't look cross-eyed. Well maybe that animal ain't a horse said Tom. We had our doubts about him. But I'm telling you mister whatever he is he can look as cross-eyed as an old maid in a thunderstorm. And if you taught him that trick—Nonsense said Mr. Pope I hope I have something better to do than teach a horse how to look like your friend.

Tom's grin wasn't so genial and his eyes began to bulge. All right mister he said I'm warning you. He stared at Mr. Pope a minute and then he laughed. Hell he said I guess we're both saying more than we meant to. Pete's a good guy—got a heart of gold. He wants to be neighborly same as you do. Tell you what—you come over and have some beer and I'll get Pete to come out and apologize to your horse. Mr. Pope said no thanks—he merely wanted it to be understood that there was to be no more bottle throwing if Mr. Jelks wished to avoid trouble with the police.

So Ed had sort of drifted off around the corner of the barn and Mr. Pope went after him. As he got to the corner Ed stuck his head around it and said Hey lookit Wilb—who's this? And he crossed his eyes. So that's what you were doing? said Mr. Pope. No wonder he threw the bottle and I wish he'd hit you. You know what I told you—if there was any monkey business you wouldn't eat. Aw Wilb said Ed I couldn't help it. You know how it is when you're with some guy that stammers and pretty soon you begin stammering too? Well it's the same with this guy. When I look at him my eyes just seem to cross of their own accord. Anyway he said there's something funny about those two galoots. What I mean there's lots of funny people in Mount Kisco an' around but there's one thing they don't any of them do—they don't any of 'em wear their city clothes on Sunday. They'll wear things that a monkey would blush to be seen in but you won't ever catch 'em in city clothes. But this Jelks—you get him out on the lawn on Sunday and what's he got on?—city clothes. It ain't natural.

Well of course Mrs. Pope had seen the whole thing from the window and she went right after Mr. Pope. She said O sure he could protect his horse all right but when his wife was insulted what did he do about it?—he did nothing that's what he did and if he cared more for his horse than he did for her—Mr. Pope said Don't be silly Carlotta. I don't think it's silly said Mrs. Pope if you place your horse's welfare before your wife's. Well said Mr. Pope Jelks threw a bottle at Ed. When he throws a bottle at you let me know. I promise I'll do something about it. How like you Wilbur! said Mrs. Pope contemptuously. And then I suppose you'll write him a letter. So the argument went on. Though not as long as usual for it had lasted only three days when something else happened.

---

One evening when Mr. Pope came in Mrs. Pope rushed to meet him. O dear! said Mr. Pope. What now? Connie Winslow called me up today said Mrs. Pope and she said she saw Laurence in New York. She said he was in Tiffany's showing somebody some pearls and so I

called up his hotel and asked him to come out Sunday. I was very nice to him. I said I'd thought over what he'd said and perhaps he was right and he said he was glad I'd seen that it was the only thing he could do and then he told me he'd brought the pearls up to have them restrung. So I said I'd love to see them and wouldn't he bring them out. You don't mean he's actually going to bring them! said Mr. Pope. Of course said Mrs. Pope. He thinks I'm resigned. He hemmed and hawed but when I said that since I wasn't to own the pearls I thought it was the least he could do he gave in.

But I don't see—began Mr. Pope. No said Mrs. Pope I didn't think you would. Laurence will have the pearls with him—the pearls he has practically stolen from me—and yet you don't see. Well Wilbur this is your last chance. I want those pearls and you will have to get them for me.

Well Mr. Pope talked it over with Ed but Ed wasn't very sympathetic. You're trying to stand in with both parties he said. One of these appeasers. Either sock Cousin Laurence and take the necklace away from him or sock your wife and tell her to shut up.

So Mr. Hammersley came out Saturday night. There were a lot of Mrs. Pope's noisy friends around and nothing was said about the pearls until Sunday morning when they were having breakfast on the terrace under the uncertain eye of Mr. Jelks. Laurence said Mrs. Pope suddenly tell me about the pearls—did you have to have them restrung? Fortunately not said Mr. Hammersley. They told me in Tiffany's that it wasn't necessary. He reached in his pocket and drew out a flat case. I want to say Carlotta he went on that I think you're taking this very sensibly. What else was there for me to do? said Mrs. Pope and smiled so sweetly that Mr. Pope felt everything curling up inside him. And just then Ed stuck his head around the corner of the barn and motioned urgently for him to come. Excuse me said Mr. Pope and walked hastily off the terrace without looking at his wife.

---

Look Wilb said Ed I just found out something. That guy Jelks comes from Philly. My gosh said Mr. Pope is that all you got me out here for? Ain't that enough? said Ed. This Cousin Laurence and his pearls come from Philadelphia don't he? And we figured Jelks was maybe a crook didn't we? Yes and I'll tell you something more. He does lip reading. That's why he stares at you. All those remarks your wife thought was cracks was just him translating for Tom. And look—look at that sap Hammersley—holding the pearls right up in plain sight.

Mr. Hammersley was indeed doing just that. And Mr. Jelks certainly was showing a good deal of interest. But Mr. Pope shook his head. You read too many detective stories Ed he said. Just explain to me how Jelks could have known Hammersley would come out here and bring the pearls?

Anybody said Ed in Hammersley's office could have known about the pearls and that your wife claimed them. Mr. Pope objected that Mr. Hammersley didn't know himself that he was going to come to Mount Kisco. Maybe he intended to come all along said Ed. Maybe he hoped to get a quit claim or whatever you call it from your wife and these guys found it out. You got to quit stalling Wilb. You got to act.

Mr. Pope said he didn't see quite what he could do. I ain't told you the worst of what I heard said Ed. Just now when I was up by the hedge Tom says There they are. What are we waiting for? And he went into the house.

O well I suppose you could be right said Mr. Pope. But do you see me calling the police on the evidence of what a horse heard somebody say? And Laurence isn't going to believe me if I tell him. He'll think it's some trick to get possession. Sure said Ed. And Jelks ain't going

to give you time for any smart stuff. All he's got to do is stroll over here in the next fifteen minutes and take the pearls and before you get out of the chair he's tied you into he'll be in Mexico. The pearls don't belong to Carlotta anyway said Mr. Pope. Yeah? said Ed. Well what difference will that make in what she says to you afterward considering she's been after you for a month to suppress Jelks? You got to act Wilb. Like it says in the Times yesterday—you're sittin' around and waiting for these guys to start something is just leaving the initiative to the enemy. You got excuse enough. Go on over and paste him. You used to box in college before you got soft and took to beer and horseback riding. The worst you can get is a busted nose.

Mr. Pope stepped out from behind the barn and looked over the hedge. Mr. Jelks was sitting alone and staring apparently in several directions at once but almost certainly with one eye at least at Mrs. Pope and Mr. Hammersley.

Well Mr. Pope had no intention of acting on Ed's advice but he felt it just possible that there might be something in what the horse suspected and he thought if he went over and talked to Mr. Jelks he might be better able to size up the situation. So he started to push through the hedge. And just behind him Ed said in a loud voice Hey Jelks! and as Mr. Jelks faced about the horse made that unmistakably insulting noise known as the raspberry.

Now a raspberry performed by a horse is in range and vulgarity to a similar human expression as ten to one. It brought Mrs. Pope and Mr. Hammersley to their feet in horrified amazement. And of course it infuriated Mr. Jelks. He leaped to his feet. Hey what's the matter with you? he demanded advancing upon Mr. Pope. Get back off this property.

Mr. Pope realized that apology was futile and denial absurd. But he raised his hand. Please Mr. Jelks he said I assure you that I—And then Ed gave him a sharp nudge and drove him into Mr. Jelks' waiting arms.

For a moment the two men stood in what must have seemed to Mrs. Pope a surprisingly affectionate embrace. A closer view however would have shown that Mr. Jelks was expressing his regard by trying to throttle Mr. Pope and that Mr. Pope was responding with some very effective pokes in the torso. Then Mr. Jelks flung Mr. Pope off and attempted to kick him in the stomach. This act brought to Mr. Pope confirmation of his suspicion that Mr. Jelks was not a gentleman. He leaped wildly backward and fell over a chair and before he could recover Mr. Jelks hit him squarely on the bridge of the nose.

Mr. Pope thought as he fell that this was just what Ed had predicted. The blow had temporarily blinded him and as he bounced to his feet again he could do nothing but swing hopefully at the place where Mr. Jelks ought to be. He took a blow in the ribs and felt his own fist thump on something solid and then his eyes cleared and he saw that he was swinging at the empty air and that Mr. Jelks was lying flat on his back on the lawn.

Well! said Mr. Pope and looked around at Ed. The horse winked at him. Well played Mount Kisco! he whispered. Yeah said Mr. Pope but did I—? Keep your eye on the ball said Ed sharply. For Mr. Jelks had scrambled up and was running toward the house. After him! said Ed.

Mr. Pope was still a little dazed or he would have disregarded Ed and gone back home. But as he hesitated Ed nudged him forward. What's the matter with you? said the horse. You've seized the initiative and now you want to sit down and talk about it and lose it again. You read too many newspapers said Mr. Pope feeling cautiously of his nose but he allowed himself to be herded up to the Jelks front door.

The door was a stout iron-banded construction of oak which led directly from outdoors into the big studio. And as they reached it they heard a bar dropped in place inside. Come out



Jelks you coward and let me finish you off! shouted Ed. Damn it Ed shut up! said Mr. Pope. And come on home before he comes out with a gun. That guy couldn't aim a gun said Ed. Leave it to me. He backed up to the door and glancing over his shoulder to gauge his distance shouted I'm coming in Jelks! and let fly with both hind legs in a tremendous kick. The first impact of the heavy iron shoes sprung the door from the casing—the second drove it completely off its hinges and halfway across the studio and Ed whirled and having assured himself that the shrubbery hid them from Mrs. Pope's sight seized Mr. Pope's collar in his teeth and marched him into the breach.

The apparent determination with which Mr. Pope entered the studio was due entirely to Ed's final shove but it put the finishing touch on Mr. Jelks. Mr. Pope was not the soft-muscled office worker he had supposed. Mr. Pope had bounced up after a knockdown and felled him with a blow so lightning swift that he hadn't even seen it coming. Mr. Pope had then chased him into the house and had easily kicked in a door that would have kept an elephant out. Mr. Pope was not a person to be trifled with. Mr. Jelks sat in a chair with his head in his hands.

Tom too had seen the door kicked in. He had been taking off his coat preparatory to going into action but he was now prudently putting it on again.

Well Pope what do you want now? said Mr. Jelks wearily. Want? said Mr. Pope. He felt pretty good. Maybe Ed was right about this taking the initiative stuff that he got out of the papers. I'll tell you what I want he said. I want you to quit annoying me and my wife. Is that clear? If we were annoying you why didn't you say so instead of coming over and picking a fight? said Mr. Jelks reasonably. At least it sounded reasonable to Mr. Pope but he knew better than to admit it. I'm saying so now he said. Furthermore he said you might as well give up the idea of getting those pearls. I've laid all the information before the police and—Pearls? said Mr. Jelks. What are you talking about? And Tom looked at Mr. Pope and shook his head pityingly.

O don't stall said Mr. Pope. I know you could understand what Mrs. Pope and I were saying by reading our lips and—Brother said Mr. Jelks I can't even understand what you say when you yell in my ear—say nothing of—He broke off as voices came from outside and a state trooper came through the doorway. What's wrong here? said the trooper. Hello Mr. Pope. Your wife sent for me—

Behind the trooper were Mrs. Pope and Mr. Hammersley. They peered fearfully then Mrs. Pope rushed in. O Wilbur! she cried throwing her arms around her husband. O are you all right? But Mr. Pope was in no mood to be cuddled. Everything's under control Harvey he said to the trooper. Just a little disagreement. He went over and looked at the bruise on the side of Mr. Jelks' head. You ought to get something on that he said. I'm sorry I hit you so hard. The trooper also looked at the bruise then curiously at Mr. Pope. You must have a punch like the hind leg of a mule he said admiringly. The hind leg of a mule! said Mr. Pope thoughtfully. But the trooper touched him on the shoulder and motioned him aside. Maybe you'd better go back to your house for a while Mr. Pope he said. This guy may want to make charges and if he does I'll have to take you in. But I might be able to talk him out of it and I can do it better if you aren't here.

Ed was slouching on three legs outside the door. Mr. Pope caught at his halter and fell back to allow his wife and her cousin to go on ahead. Funny thing Ed he murmured that the marks of my knuckles on the side of Jelks' head look as if they had been made by a horseshoe. Yeah that is funny at that said Ed. You might have killed the guy said Mr. Pope. In war said Ed sentimentiously humanitarian principles must be subordinated. The individual human life—My

Lord! interrupted Mr. Pope I wish you'd skip the editorial page just one morning. O. K. said Ed but it's sound sense just the same. Like what I said about initiative. You still got it you know. And now's the time if you want your wife to have that jewelry. It's all in the timing Wilb. A drive on Cousin Laurence now you've cleaned off the Jelks offensive and your prestige is up—

---

O quit teaching me newspaper strategy and go back to your stall said Mr. Pope. You've got me into a nice mess. Go on he said—beat it. Ed grinned and said I go master I go. And what's more he went.

Well they went back on the terrace and sat down and Mrs. Pope fussed over Mr. Pope in a most gratifying way and wanted to put something on his nose which was turning purple and she said O Wilbur—your voice when you shouted at that Jelks man! Why I never supposed you—Skip it said Mr. Pope I've got other matters to see to. They looked at him inquiringly and he got up and stood over Mr. Hammersley and said Laurence don't you think you'd better hand those pearls over to Carlotta now?

Mr. Hammersley looked up and showed his teeth and said My dear Wilbur! I had hoped that it wouldn't be necessary to reopen what can only be for all of us a rather unpleasant subject. Surely I explained—So you did said Mr. Pope and you're pretty sure Carlotta can't get the pearls by due process of law. You wouldn't mind such a lawsuit either. You could make it look like a grab and it wouldn't hurt your standing in Philadelphia. But suppose it comes out in another way. Suppose you've got in a fight with me and been beaten up—not because we wanted the pearls but because we thought you'd done a crooked trick. We acknowledge your legal right to the pearls but we knock the stuffing out of you. And then tell everybody why—hey?

Mrs. Pope put her hand on his arm. Really Wilbur she said hesitantly I don't think this is the way—Shut up said Mr. Pope. Now Laurence?

Mr. Hammersley was quite cool but there was dew on his forehead. As a person who has just made an unprovoked and murderous attack on an innocent neighbor he said I doubt if any statement you might make would carry much weight. Remember Wilbur that I was a witness to that attack and that I shall certainly testify in court as to what I saw. O Wilbur said Mrs. Pope let the pearls go. She put an appealing hand on his arm.

Mr. Pope hesitated. If Jelks made charges and Hammersley's testimony bore him out—But at that moment Mr. Jelks accompanied by the trooper pushed through the hedge and came up on the terrace. The trooper was smiling and Mr. Jelks rushed up and seized Mr. Pope's hand. Brother he said I been to the best specialists in New York these last two months but it took this good right hand to do an operation that none of 'em said was possible. Operation? said Mr. Pope. What's all this? Why he exclaimed your eyes are straight! That's what I'm telling you said Mr. Jelks and he looked straight at Mr. Pope. That sock fixed 'em. He turned to Mrs. Pope. Hell lady he said I'm ashamed of all those smart cracks I and Tom made about your husband and his horse.

If there's ever anything Pete Jelks can do for him—

Wait a minute said Mr. Pope. He turned to Mr. Hammersley. Well Laurence? he said. Do I knock the stuffing out of you or does Carlotta get her pearls? The dew on Mr. Hammersley's forehead was a good deal heavier but again he showed his teeth. And suppose he said that you found yourself incapable of—as you put it—knocking the stuffing out of me? Frankly said Mr. Pope I hadn't thought of that. Because frankly it isn't possible. You saw what happened to Mr.

Jelks. He was cross-eyed and I knocked his eyes straight. It is within the bounds of possibility Laurence that I might knock you cockeyed. Sock him! said Mr. Jelks suddenly. Sock him brother and I'll pay the costs. It's worth it to see that trick done again.

But Mr. Pope did not sock Mr. Hammersley. He reached down suddenly and seized him by the necktie and jerked him out of his chair. Come on he said hand them over. They kind of eyed each other for a minute and then Mr. Hammersley drew the case from his pocket and dropped it on the table. He shook Mr. Pope's hand from his tie and turned away but Mr. Pope called him back. Sit down there said Mr. Pope and write out an acknowledgment that the pearls belong to Carlotta and that you are carrying out her Aunt Amelia's wishes and so on. And when the paper was written Mr. Jelks and the trooper witnessed it. But I wish you'd socked him said Mr. Jelks regretfully.

---

So Mr. Pope left them and went down to the barn.

Look here Ed he said those fellows were no more jewel thieves than I am. They weren't lip reading.

You don't say? said Ed. That's funny now isn't it? Very funny said Mr. Pope. Yeah said Ed I suppose you think I made the whole thing up? Well I tell you Wilbur—I expect I could have misunderstood what I heard 'em say. But honest—Don't perjure yourself said Mr. Pope. But I'll just ask you to look what you got me into. I won't be able to show up at the office for a week.

Ed stamped impatiently. O what you bellyachin' about? he said. Your wife thinks you're a hero don't she? You got her pearls didn't you? My gosh isn't that worth a sock in the nose? Well said Mr. Pope thoughtfully maybe you're right Ed—we'll say no more about it. Just as you say said the horse. Only I was hoping it had taught you a lesson. It's like I said about the initiative. Once you lose it the other side's got you by the whiskers. You must therefore constantly maintain it—by action—by surprise attacks even though they be of little tactical value. One sees evidence in the current situation in the Near East—

Mr. Pope groaned and going to the harness closet brought out a whisky bottle. Look Ed he said if you'll shut up—and keep shut—I'll split this with you. That's the only smart word you've said today said Ed. Pass it over Wilb. This here strategy is dry work.

THE END

[The end of *Ed Takes the Cockeyed Initiative* by Walter Rollin Brooks]