

Police Authorities are Requested to Post this Circular for the Information of Police Officers and File a Copy of it for Future Reference.

\$5,000.00 REWARD

The CITY of NEW YORK offers \$5,000 reward to any person or persons furnishing this Department with information resulting in locating Joseph Force Crater



Any information should be forwarded to the Detective Division of the Police Department of the City of New York, 240 Centre Street, Phone Spring 3100.

JOSEPH FORCE CRATER

JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME COURT, STATE OF NEW YORK

DESCRIPTION—Born in the United States—Age, 41 years; height, 6 feet; weight, 185 pounds; mixed grey hair, originally dark brown, thin at top, parted in middle "slicked" down; complexion, medium dark, considerably tanned; brown eyes; false teeth, upper and lower jaw, good physical and mental condition at time of disappearance. Tip of right index finger somewhat mutilated, due to having been recently crushed.

Wore brown sack coat and trousers, narrow green stripe, no vest; either a Panama or soft brown hat worn at rakish angle, size 6 $\frac{5}{8}$, unusual size for his height and weight. Clothes made by Vroom. Affected colored shirts, size 14 collar, probably bow tie. Wore tortoise-shell glasses for reading. Yellow gold Masonic ring, somewhat worn; may be wearing a yellow gold, square-shaped wrist watch with leather strap.

EDWARD P. MULROONEY,
Police Commissioner

Phone Spring 3100.

The Saturday
Evening
POST

FOUNDED IN 1728 BY

Benjamin Franklin

What Happened to Judge Crater?

By JACK ALEXANDER

Thirty years ago a New York judge and "ladies' man" entered a taxi in midtown Manhattan. He hasn't been seen since. A *Post* editor reports on the most notorious missing-person case of our century.

The evening was tropically hot and sticky, as summer evenings in Manhattan can sometimes get, but it didn't seem to oppress the tall, nattily dressed man walking west on 45th Street from Times Square. He moved along briskly, as was his custom, with head and shoulders held high and his feet darting out in rapid and, for a long-legged man, incongruously short steps. He was wearing pearl-gray spats, and his suit was a well-tailored, double-breasted number, brown with thin stripes of green. His hat, a pristine Panama, was cocked at a sporty angle. The most commanding item of his haberdashery was his collar, an old-fashioned detachable choker of starched linen. It was higher than the rampart

Please help!!!
 I'm being held captive on rum
 boat in the Detroit
 River. St. James
 between Grandette & Amherst-
 berg Tell revenue men also
 Commissioner Mulrooney of N.Y.
 Justice Crater

The hunt for the errant judge grew into a national craze. The N. Y. Missing Persons Bureau was flooded with many false leads such as the above—scrawled on the face of a playing card—and the note shown below.

Dear Sir,
 Joe Crater is dead. No
 use looking for him. He was
 buried about Aug. 22nd after being
 in the water for 2 weeks.
 As no identification was
 made, he was buried as an un-
 identified pauper 95 miles from N.Y.
 Sorry I can't tell you where
 it is — but it's true.
 "S" "S"

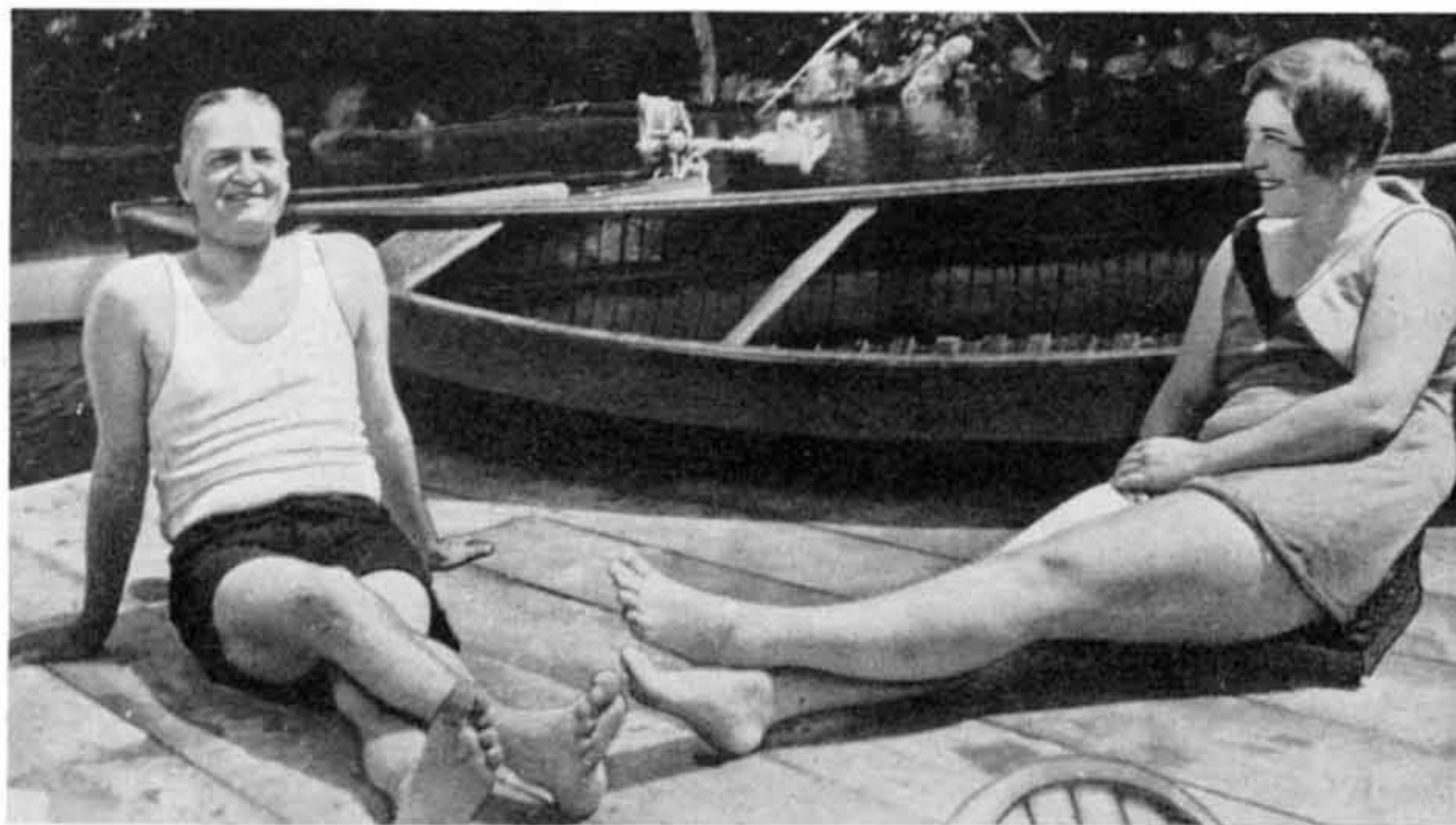


In 1936 prospector "Lucky" Blackiet said that he had seen the judge. But his story was just another bum steer.

model made famous by President Hoover, but, with a knack Mr. Hoover never quite acquired, it was worn with complete self-assurance.

The quick-stepping man was headed for Billy Haas's restaurant, a currently popular chophouse located at 332 West 45th Street, just beyond Eighth Avenue. Whether he knew it or not—and the point has been debated ever since—he was also headed for oblivion.

It was a few minutes before eight as the man crossed Eighth Avenue. The date was August 6, 1930, a Wednesday. The man was a high-ranking Tammany legal light named Joseph Force Crater. He was forty-one years old, and four months earlier he had been appointed to finish the unexpired term of a State Supreme Court justice who had retired. The appointment had been made by Gov. Franklin D. Roosevelt, a man who seemed to be going places himself. Justice Crater had been promised Tammany's support in the forth-



August 3, 1930: Judge Crater and his wife, Stella, at their summer estate in Maine, just three days before he disappeared.

coming November election, when he was to run for a full fourteen-year term.

Crater had it just about made. From boyhood his dominating ambition had been to become a judge, and he had worked wholeheartedly to attain it. A fastidious man, he had not balked at performing the sweatier chores that came his way. He had pride and vanity and, at times, more than a touch of arrogance; but he could subordinate all to play deferential courtier to a politician for whom he might have a secret contempt but whose influence might be useful in advancing his fortunes.

Withal, he was no hack clubhouse lawyer. Rather, he was learned in the law and skilled in interpreting its intricacies. He wrote facile briefs for less-gifted attorneys, and his only courtroom appearances were in the appellate courts. Crater was in his element in arguing an appeal. Clad in cutaway and striped formal trousers—he was a very clothes-happy man—he spoke quietly, logically and as briefly as possible. Up to the time he got the judgeship he had for years been a popular lecturer in the law schools of Fordham and New York universities. To many of his associates it seemed possible that he might eventually land on the Supreme Court of the United States.

At about eight o'clock Crater entered the chophouse, intending to dine quickly and get to the Belasco Theatre by curtain time. The play at the Belasco was *Dancing Partner*, a spicy Hungarian confection whose tryout he had seen in Atlantic City. His theatrical ticket broker had promised to leave a single ticket for him at the box office.

Crater had scarcely checked his hat at the restaurant when he was hailed by a friend, William Klein, who was attorney for the Shubert brothers. Klein was having dinner with a Shubert show girl, named Sally Lou Ritz, and invited Crater to join them.

Crater accepted. He had a deep affection for the theater and he loved to talk show business. The food was good, the conversation was good, and (as Klein was to tell the police later) Crater was in excellent spirits. Before anyone realized it, it was ten minutes after nine. Crater got up to salvage what he could of *Dancing Partner*, and the others decided to leave too.

The trio chatted for a few minutes on the sidewalk. Then Justice Crater hailed a taxicab and got in. Klein and Miss Ritz watched it depart westward—45th being a westbound street—before they turned and walked east toward the Shubert office.

In the thirty years which have elapsed since the friends parted outside the chophouse, hundreds of persons have reported having seen Justice Crater, but not one such claim has been convincingly authenticated. The police were to scan mountains of the trip sheets which the law requires taxi drivers to keep, without finding any record of this particular ride. The driver has never seen fit to come forward. Neither Klein nor Miss Ritz got a clear look at his face; nor could either remember the color of the cab.

The single ticket to *Dancing Partner* was picked up by a man—by Crater, probably, since only a few persons knew it was there—but the box-office clerk couldn't recall what he looked like. Joseph Force Crater, who had been on the bench scarcely long enough to wrinkle his black judicial robe, had disappeared as thoroughly as if he had been swept off the planet with a broom. It was to become a case of a thousand and one clues and a thousand and one disappointments; a case of continuing frustration for the Missing Persons Bureau of the New York Police Department and of gnawing uncertainty for Crater's wife, Stella, and for those connected with him by blood.

His sister, Margaret, believes that he was murdered, possibly by a felon who, as he was being taken to Sing Sing for a long term, shouted that he would "get" Crater when he got out of prison. This incident was related to Margaret by her brother, Joseph, during the earliest days of his career, when he practiced criminal law briefly.

A brother of the judge, Montague Crater, is still cautiously optimistic. For a good many years Montague traveled as a bill collector and claim adjuster, covering the seamier residential sections and the skid rows of towns along both seaboard and in the northern tier of states. In all that time he kept looking for Joe, bearing in mind a good identifying mark—the Greek initials of his college fraternity, Sigma



The police investigation revealed that Crater had been on more than cordial terms with a number of chorus girls, and less glamorous women such as Vivian Gordon (above), a "madam" later killed by gangland assassins.

Chi, tattooed on his left arm. Montague's present job is Juvenile Court probation officer in Snohomish County, Washington. He doesn't travel a great deal now, but when he does he finds himself still looking.

The missing man's father died in 1940, a bewildered and broken man. His mother, Lelia Montague Crater, survived until 1951, convinced to the end that her son still lived. Her last years were spent in Hershey, Pennsylvania, with her daughter, Margaret, whose married name is Mrs. George Henry. Mrs. Henry did not share her mother's belief that Joe would return.

"We would go into the matter every day," Mrs. Henry said a few weeks ago, "and argue the pros and cons by the hour, until we realized that we were repeating ourselves. When she died I was holding her hand, and I remember that when she stopped breathing I said to myself, 'Now at last she knows.'"

If Joe Crater is alive, he is seventy-one years old. He was born in 1889 into an Easton, Pennsylvania, clan of German lineage. The family was ruled by his grandfather, J. F. (Pa) Crater, a produce merchant, who was reputed to be worth \$500,000. In the German feudal tradition he lived close to his warehouse, and his four sons, who worked in the family business had their homes nearby. This compact arrangement enabled Pa Crater to dominate not only his sons' lives but those of their children.

Pa Crater died around the turn of the century, but the harsh regimentation did not end with him. His son Frank continued it in his branch of the clan. Frank's only daughter, Margaret, was submissive, but his three boys rebelled.

Douglass became an adventurer and during the First World War flew as a lieutenant in the Royal Naval Air Force. In 1922 a tire blew out as he was speeding along a highway near Tren-



Crater's friend Simon Rifkind (above with Mrs. Crater) at first withheld the news of the judge's disappearance.



William Klein, friend and fellow lawyer, had dinner with Crater in Manhattan just before the judge vanished.



Crater's brother, Montague, has never given up hope. Whenever he travels he finds himself still looking.

ton, New Jersey, in a Paige sports roadster. The roadster struck several trees and Douglass was killed.

Montague, the youngest of Frank Crater's children, ran away and joined the marines, after being busted out of two prep schools. In his adult years he developed a hunger for academic learning, winning at the age of fifty a degree in sociology from the University of Washington.

Joe Crater, the eldest of the children, was early recognized as an intellectual prodigy and perhaps for this reason escaped some of his father's disciplinary harshness. He was graduated first in his high-school class and won a full scholarship to Lafayette College. In 1910, when he emerged from Lafayette with a bachelor-of-arts degree, his family's finances were in bad shape.

By tutoring and by the grace of student loans, he got his

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What Happened to Judge Crater?

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law degree from Columbia University in 1913. The day Joe passed his state bar examination he met Stella Wheeler, a young woman from Orange County. She had made an unhappy marriage. In 1917 Joe Crater obtained a divorce for her, and a week later married her.

In 1930, when he vanished, the fact that he had actually disappeared was slow in dawning on those who knew him intimately. His wife was the first to sense that something was amiss. The Craters had been spending the summer at Belgrade Lakes, Maine, where they owned a cottage. On the afternoon of August 3, 1930, a Sunday, Crater had received a long-distance telephone call which seemed to perturb him. He decided to leave for New York immediately by train. Crater was not the kind of husband who confides business details to his wife, and she was content to have it that way. All he said in taking his departure was something about having to "straighten those fellows out," a statement that to this day remains completely enigmatic. Crater promised that he would return on the following Saturday, August ninth. That was the last his wife ever saw of him.

When he failed to return on Saturday, or even to explain his tardiness by telephone, Mrs. Crater felt some anxiety. On Sunday she repeatedly rang up their apartment at 40 Fifth Avenue, but got no answer. On Monday she sent their chauffeur to New York in the Crater limousine to make private inquiry of his whereabouts among the judge's friends and associates. The chauffeur reported back in a telegram that while none had seen him since the previous Wednesday, August sixth, they were all confident that there was nothing to worry about, and advised her to sit tight.

She did—for a few days. Then she hired a discreet private detective agency to look for the judge, avoiding any publicity which would endanger his position in public life. The agency's findings differed little from the chauffeur's.

Meanwhile, in the law firm of Wagner, Quillinan, and Rifkind, there was a certain amount of dignified consternation. It grew as the days ticked on. The senior partner was United States Senator Robert Ferdinand Wagner, whose name was destined to appear on the most famous of the New Deal's labor laws—and whose son is now mayor of New York. Crater's continuing absence was a threat to Wagner's political prestige, for the missing judge had been his protégé. From 1920 to 1926, when Wagner himself was a New York supreme court justice, the ingratiating Crater had been his law secretary. And when, on being elected to the Senate in the latter year, Wagner founded his law firm, Crater, though not given a partnership, had an office in the suite for which he paid rent. On a fee basis, he functioned importantly as writer of the firm's briefs and as its appellate lawyer. Crater was a rapid and tireless worker, and his income from these fees, plus fees which he earned on the outside, was somewhere between \$75,000 and \$100,000 a year, all of which he gave up when he became a state supreme court justice.

It was Senator Wagner who had sponsored Crater's interim appointment to the bench and it was he who had obtained the backing of key Democratic district leaders for Crater's bid for a full term at the November fourth election.

When the Crater mystery began, Senator Wagner was enjoying a sentimental visit to his native Nastätten, Germany, and the brunt of deciding what was to be

done was borne chiefly by one of the junior partners, Simon H. Rifkind. The other junior, Francis J. Quillinan, a son-in-law of ex-Gov. Alfred E. Smith, was less familiar with the local ropes, having spent most of his legal career upstate in Troy. Rifkind confided his troubles to a city police detective who, under an informal arrangement, often acted as Senator Wagner's bodyguard. The detective began looking around privately.

Rifkind's main problem, which was to produce the absent judge before August twenty-fifth, when the court reopened after its summer holiday, would have been simplified had Crater been an alcoholic given to periodic binges. Unfortunately for Rifkind, a strict Methodist upbringing had left Crater almost a total abstainer. His favorite tipple was orange juice. He abhorred cigarettes and cigars, and sporadically tried pipe smoking but never succeeded in making it a habit.

The August twenty-fifth deadline came and went, and there was still no sign of Justice Crater. Apparently his fellow judges assumed that he was merely tardy, as they didn't begin asking questions until a week or so later. At this point Rifkind decided that something drastic, possibly a crime of violence, had befallen Crater. On the afternoon of September third, exactly four weeks after Crater had been last seen by friends, Rifkind went to police headquarters and made a full report. In the next morning's newspapers the public learned of the mystery for the first time.

A great investigative flap ensued. Dozens of crack detectives, including those of the Missing Persons Bureau, sniffed along the month-old trail. A grand jury took up the chase, questioning ninety-five witnesses, examining Crater's bank and brokerage accounts and probing into his private life.

The fastidious Crater, it appeared from both police and grand-jury findings, had conducted his private life on two levels. As a husband he had been attentive and affectionate. "Joe was the kind of guy," a friend recently said, "who telephoned his wife three, maybe four times a day. I'm quite sure he really loved her."

The investigation showed that at another level the judge had been on more than cordial terms with a number of

chorus girls, and with some less-glamorous females such as Vivian Gordon, a prominent madam who was to pass out of the picture later, courtesy of gangland assassins. For some years Crater had regularly visited the apartment of a saleswoman for a midtown dress shop, who was a model when they first met. In practical fashion Crater had paid only that portion of the rent which his paramour's income couldn't meet. Crater was no plunger. His stock-market investments were made mostly in five-share lots. He liked to watch the horses run, but rarely wagered more than a few dollars at a time. His sole extravagance was clothes. He had an extensive wardrobe of suits, made by a good tailor, and had three more on order when he vanished.

Crater, the grand jury found, had made two trips that summer from Belgrade Lakes to New York. The first was made toward the end of July. Its highlight was a weekend at an Atlantic City hotel spent with two male cronies and four women. Crater got back to Belgrade Lakes on Saturday, August second, intending to get a long rest, only to receive on Sunday, August third, the long-distance call, mentioned earlier, which abruptly pulled him back to New York.

His actions during the next three days followed no discernible pattern. He was at his Fifth Avenue apartment in the early forenoon of Monday, August fourth, when the maid arrived. He instructed her to return on Thursday and straighten up, but added that after that her services would not be required until August twenty-fifth, when he had to be present for the reopening of court. He was seen lunching alone at a restaurant near the county courthouse. In the late afternoon he saw his physician and got treatment for the tip of his right index finger which had been pinched by a taxicab door during the party in Atlantic City. On Tuesday, August fifth, Crater had dinner in the home of his physician, who was also a friend, and they played cards until about midnight.

On what proved to be the fateful day of Wednesday, August sixth, Crater was in his chambers at the courthouse in the morning diligently pulling folders out of filing cabinets, examining their contents and sorting them in piles on his desk. He had one caller, his friend and former law associate, Simon H. Rifkind. It was a brief call and, as Rifkind was to state later, purely social in nature. After

Rifkind had left, Crater resumed his task with the files.

For a judge supposedly on vacation this was an unusual activity, but even more unusual actions were to come. At about eleven o'clock Crater buzzed for Joseph L. Mara, his confidential attendant who was on duty in the outer office. Crater's secretary, Frederick A. Johnson, was there too. Mara entered the sanctum. Crater handed him two checks made out to "Cash." One was drawn against Crater's account at the Chase National Bank. It was for \$3000. The other, for \$2100, was drawn against his account at the Empire Trust Company.

Crater told Mara to cash the checks for bills of large denominations. Mara came back from the banks with the bills in two envelopes. Without bothering to look inside them, Crater stuffed the envelopes in the inside pocket of his coat. (Crater had been building up his ready-cash position for some time. During late May and early June he had withdrawn \$7000 in large bills from an account in the International Trust Company and had had his broker sell batches of stocks whose total yield, also taken in cash, amounted to \$15,799.86.)

Mara retired to the outer office. Crater buzzed for Johnson and borrowed a briefcase from him. Johnson then retired to the outer office. Crater seemed to be rather secretive about the whole operation. With the door between the sanctum and outer office closed, he crammed papers into the borrowed briefcase and his own, and also filled six gusseted cardboard folders. He buzzed for Mara again and directed him to tie the folders together. Mara was to testify subsequently that he couldn't get a glimpse of the contents because the flaps of the folders were down.

With Mara lending a hand, Crater took the briefcases and folders to his apartment by taxicab. Mara stacked them on a chair in the living room and departed. As he was going out the door Crater thanked him and said, "I'm going up Westchester way for a swim. See you tomorrow." The remark about a swim may have been part of a ruse. Crater, no athlete, didn't care for swimming, though he did like to lounge in swimming attire at the water's edge and talk. What Crater actually did that afternoon has never been determined. The thread of his known life, so soon to be snapped again, this time with finality, picked up that evening when he appeared at the Broadway office of his ticket broker, arranged for the *Dancing Partner* ticket, chatted with the proprietor and then headed for the Billy Haas chophouse—and into the shadows.

One of the first steps taken by the police after being called in belatedly to the case was a painstaking search of the Crater apartment. The briefcases and folders had vanished, and nothing resembling a clue was found. The police were in for a rude shock. After the turn of the year Mrs. Crater, who up to then had stayed in seclusion at Belgrade Lakes, came back to resume life in the city. On January twenty-first, the day after her arrival, she opened a secret drawer of her dresser and was astonished to find four unfamiliar envelopes in it. Three of the envelopes contained, separately: \$6690 in currency; some stock certificates and bonds, and several insurance policies on the judge's life with a combined face value of \$30,000. The fourth contained a confidential memorandum to Mrs. Crater which ended with: "Am very weary. Love, JOE."

Mrs. Crater immediately telephoned the news of her discovery to the district attorney. The district attorney summoned the detectives

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(Continued from Page 44) who had done the searching and wanted to know how the secret drawer had escaped their attention. It hadn't, the detectives explained; they had located it, examined it and closed it, and it hadn't contained any envelopes at that time. The district attorney asked whether it held anything at all. One detective recalled having seen a lady's ornamental fan, and described it in detail. The district attorney checked back with Mrs. Crater. She corroborated the detective's statement in full.

This plainly meant that at some time between September 4, 1930 and January 21, 1931 someone, either the missing judge or a trusted person acting in his behalf, had gained entrance to the apartment, placed the four envelopes in the secret drawer and got away unnoticed. A piece of internal evidence in the confidential memorandum strongly indicated that the deed had been done prior to September tenth. The memorandum was a list of sums purportedly due Crater for personal loans (the biggest was for \$6000) and for counsel fees in such legal proceedings as receiverships and bankruptcies. One entry was: "I loaned — 5,000. His note is enclosed. It is to be paid Sept. 10. Be sure and get in touch with him. He will pay it at once."

The memorandum, maddeningly to the police, was itself undated. It may have been written before Crater's disappearance on August sixth or at some time between then and September ninth. It was scrawled in pencil on three sheets of legal foolscap, obviously when its author was in a highly nervous state. No firm inferences could be drawn from it. However, it did justify a guess that the author had reached an acute personal crisis and probably had been threatened with injury, disgrace or extinction.

For a long time after Crater's disappearance strangers were being mistaken for him all over the United States and in some foreign countries. The newspapers played up the police search, and the New York city fathers put up a \$5000 reward. The desire to find the errant judge grew into a national craze like mah-jongg, and the staff of the Missing Persons Bureau was run ragged chasing down the more promising tips. One detective remarked glumly, "You name the place and the judge has been seen there."

The police department printed up more than 100,000 "Missing" circulars and flooded post offices, police forces and hotels with them. Postmasters in hunting areas were asked to call them to the attention of wilderness guides. Passport officers were asked to watch for suspicious applications. Passenger vessels tacked circulars on their bulletin boards, and this led to one of the Missing Persons Bureau's closest near-misses. The tip came from a Washington, D.C., matron who had just returned from a coastal cruise during which the desk-chair gossipers had spotted an affair between a neatly dressed man of middle age and a young woman who occupied adjoining staterooms. The man, according to the tipster, was the image of Crater as shown by the portrait on a "Missing" circular she had seen in the lounge—the high starched collar (Crater wore his to conceal a scrawny, size-14 neck), the disproportionally small head (Crater weighed 185 pounds and his hat size was 6 $\frac{5}{8}$), the thinning dark hair parted in the middle, slightly flaring nostrils, the wide, sensual mouth, and so on.

The tipster had given the man's name and the number of his stateroom, and Detective Jacob von Weisenstein, to whom the lead was assigned, called at the ship line's offices. The records showed that the man was from a New England

town and had given a business-building address. Von Weisenstein was in the town next forenoon and was elated to note on the lobby directory that the man was a lawyer. Five minutes later he was facing the man across his desk and was about to greet him with "Good morning, judge," when the lawyer stood up and extended his hand. He was Crater's double—except that he was shorter by a head. He readily admitted the shipboard dalliance and, because von Weisenstein looked so dejected over failure of his mission, took him out to lunch to cheer him up.

The relentless search had its humorous aspects. One of these began with the receipt of a letter from Georgia, which stated that a tall man, who looked like Crater and spoke like a Yankee, had for several months been living in a cabin some distance from Atlanta with a poor-white woman who took in washing. Von Weisenstein, arriving in Atlanta by train, rented a car and set out to follow the directions given in the letter. Soon he was in the Appalachian foothills, bumping over rutted roads. He found the cabin in a clearing. Beneath a big shade tree a dumpy muscular woman was bent over a washtub, scrubbing clothes in a stolid, mechanical manner. A big copper kettle boiled over an outdoor fire. Fifty yards away, under another shade tree, a man sat slouched in a rickety easy chair.

His suit was appallingly rumpled, and he was gazing through a rift in the trees at a faraway hill. He barely bothered to glance up as the detective walked toward him. One look at the lounge's face convinced the detective that he had drawn another blank, but his curiosity moved him to stay and ask a few questions. All the lounge would say was that he was from a Jersey suburb of New York, was an accountant by occupation and had always wanted to go off somewhere and dream.

"Haven't you ever wanted to squat and just let your mind wander?" he asked the visitor sharply.

Von Weisenstein replied that he often had, but had never got around to doing it.

"It does take a certain amount of enterprise," the man said. "If you haven't got it, you haven't got it."

The Crater search grew more and more costly, and after two or three years of

frustration the city withdrew its \$5000 reward and the Missing Persons Bureau ran down tips only in the metropolitan area. Tips from farther away were relayed to local cops for investigation. This method is still followed.

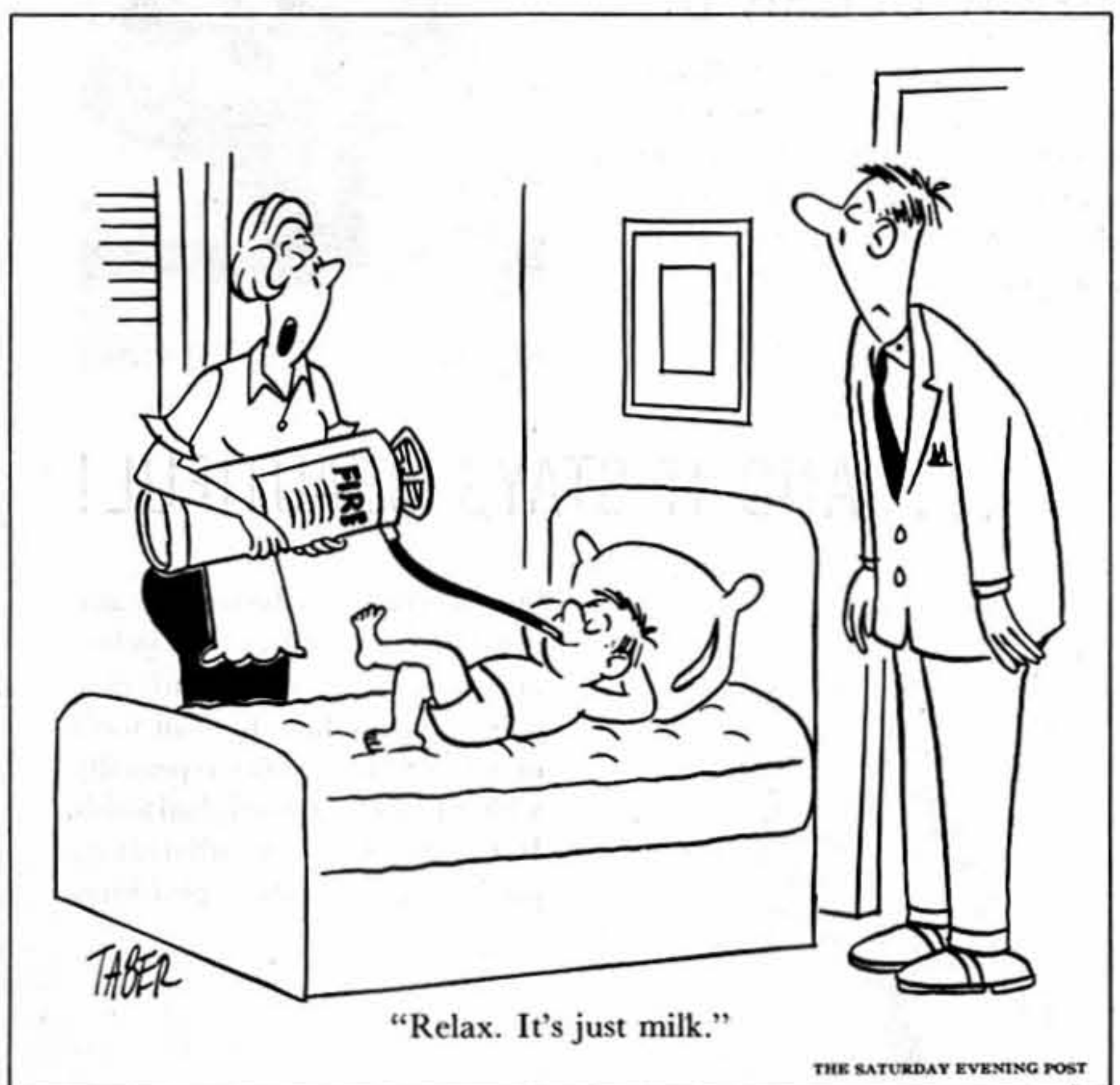
The durable Crater mystery has almost as many buffs as the exploits of the great fictional detective Sherlock Holmes, and they argue long and furiously about what became of him. Was he murdered by a gunman crouched in the dark recesses of the jumbo-sized cab? Or did he commit suicide, or flee to avoid becoming enmeshed in the reform movement already boiling up in what was to be known as the Seabury investigation? Was he taken to a gang hideout, rubbed out, packaged in a barrel of concrete and dumped into a river? Was he killed in resisting an ordinary holdup? Or for refusing to give in to blackmailers? This last theory's most informed proponent is Emil K. Ellis, lawyer for Stella Crater, who in 1938 had the missing judge declared legally dead, paving the way for her marriage to an engineer named Carl Kunz.

Less than a year ago one set of "he-was-murdered" buffs, using a map drawn by a Dutch clairvoyant without leaving Holland, dug up the yard of a Westchester County house where, the seer said, the body was buried. If it was, the digging party couldn't find it.

The inflow of tips today is small, according to Lt. John J. Cronin, the present head of the Missing Persons Bureau; but the Crater enigma still has drawing power. The expression "to pull a Judge Crater," or some variant of it, seems to be understood when used, as it sometimes is, by television and radio comics. And in the cast of the currently popular Broadway musical *Fiorello!* he appears under the slightly altered name of "Judge Carter"—a debut that must gratify the Broadway-loving Crater if he is still alive.

Joe loved the New York of the morally anarchic 1920's, surely one of the craziest decades in history. It was the decade of the easy buck, of the crowded speak-easies and of Prohibition bootleggers and their dolls; the era of gang assassinations, and Jimmy Walker in City Hall. Crater loved it all and he tried to embrace it all, but in the end it consumed him. He entered it a man, and all it left of him was a bloodless puzzle.

THE END



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