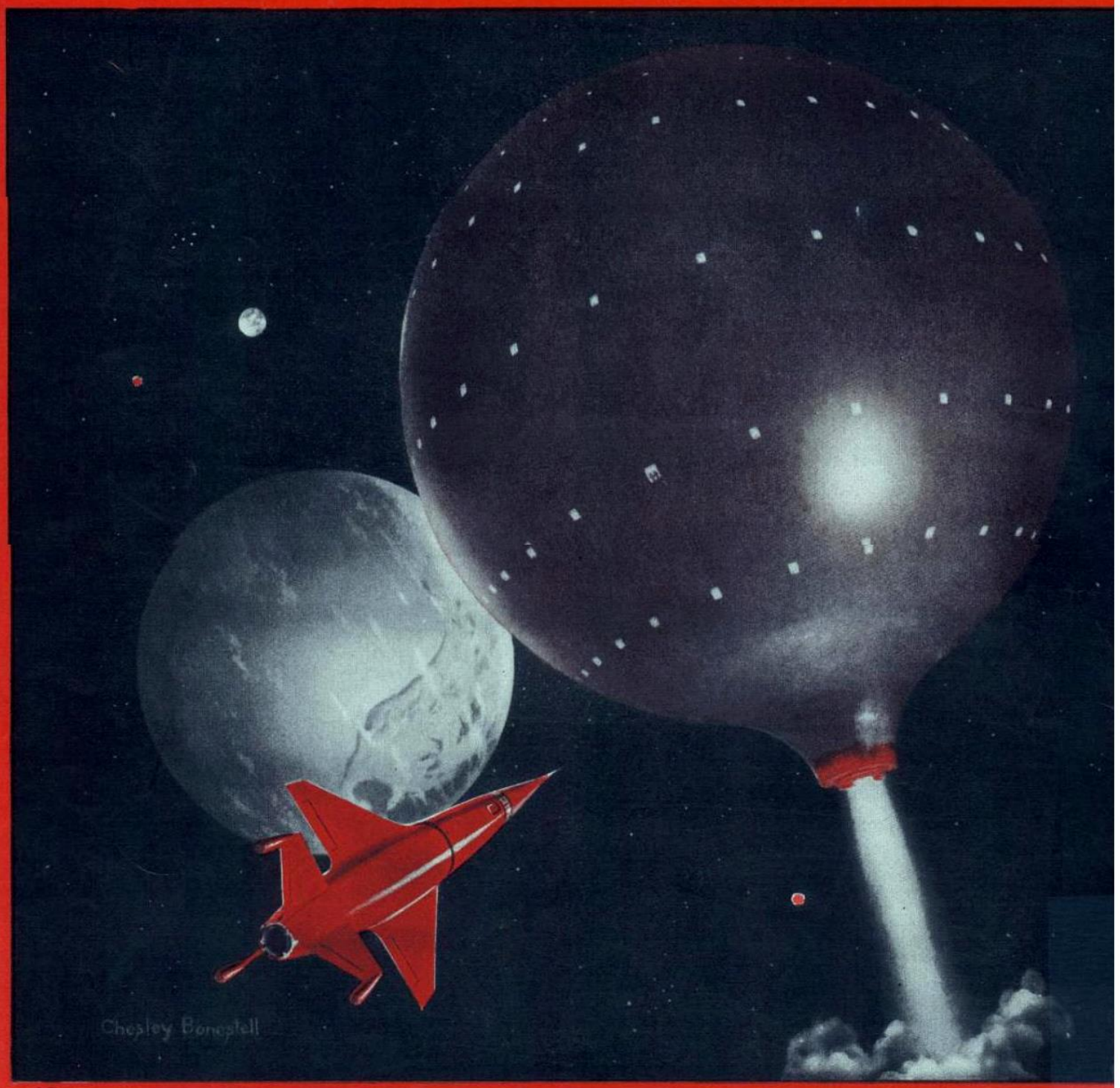
Boys' Life

Satellite Scout

BEGINNING A SERIAL OF OUTER SPACE ADVENTURE

FOR ALL BOYS

AUGUST 1950 25 CENTS A COPY



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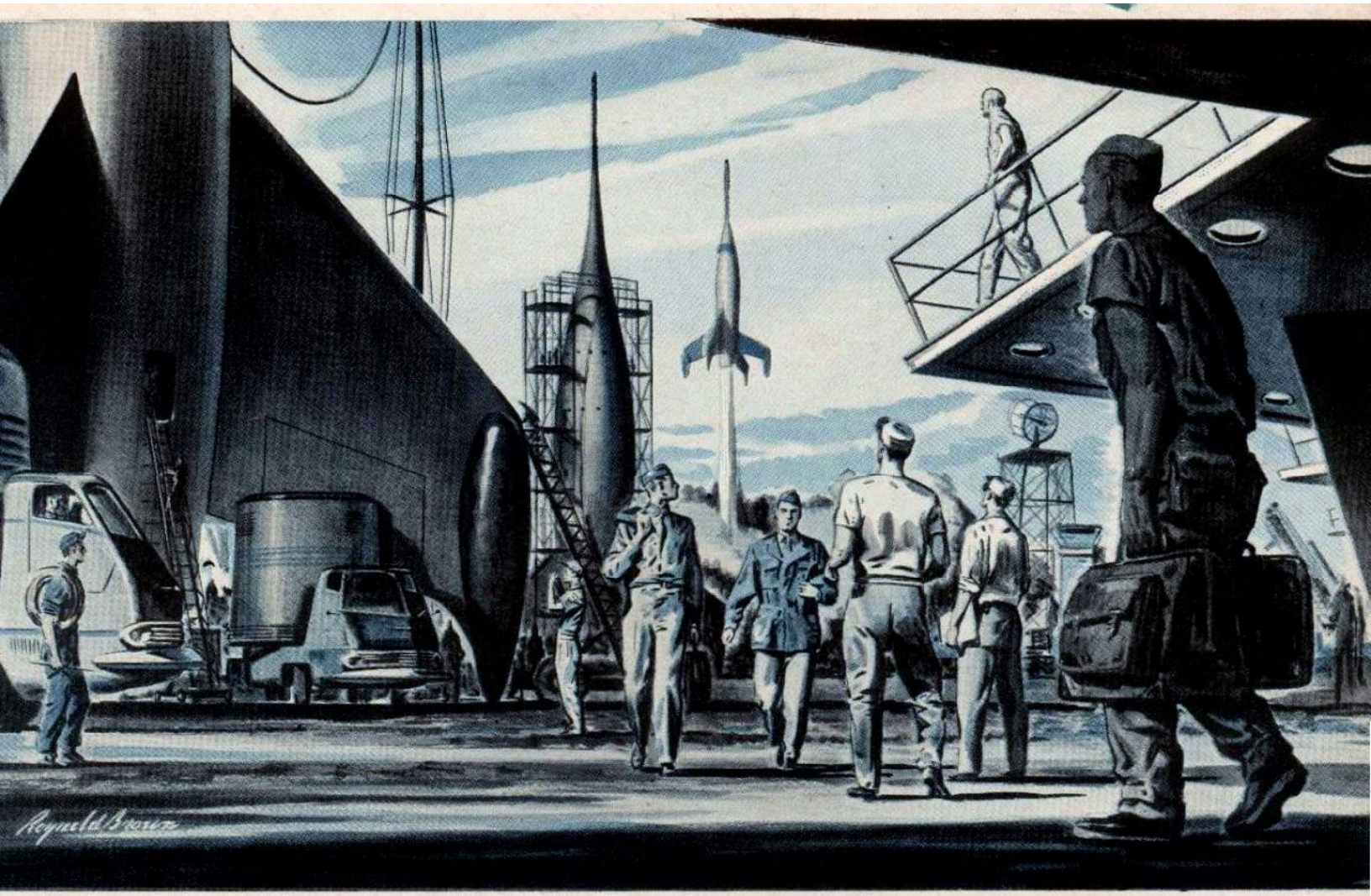

Miles away you could see our ships standing on the field—the *Daedalus* and *Icarus*, off the Earth-Moon run

You're off on a thrilling adventure into space
to the sky colony on one of Jupiter's moons
when you start this exciting four-part serial

Satellite Scout

Part One

By ROBERT A. HEINLEIN

OUR TROOP HAD been up in the High Sierras and weather made us late getting back. I was pilot for the Yucca Patrol's 'copter; the trip left me tired and jumpy. I had listened to the news on the way; the ration had been cut again. The newscaster went on to say that the Spaceship *Mayflower* had been commissioned and the rolls opened for emigrants to Ganymede. Lucky for them, I thought. No short rations.

And a brand new planet.

Dad was sitting in our apartment.

"Eaten yet?" I asked when I came in.

"Hello, Bill. No."

"Right away!" I went into the pantry, grabbed two Syntho-Steaks out of freeze, slapped them in quickthaw, added baked potatoes, then dug out a salad pack.

I poured boiling water over soup cubes and coffee powder, transferred the steaks to the broiler, cycling it at medium rare, and stepped up the quickthaw for the spuds—then back to the freezer for iceskreem cake slices.

The spuds were ready. I checked my ration accounts, and set out pats of butterine. The broiler was ringing; I removed the steaks, and switched on the candles, just as Anne would have done.

"Come and get it!" I yelled, then entered the point scores, and shoved the wrappers in the incinerator. Time, two minutes and twenty seconds—there's nothing hard about cooking.

Dad sniffed the steaks. "Oh, boy! Bill, you'll brankrupt us."

"I'm still plus this quarter," I said, "but I won't be, unless they quit cutting the ration."

Dad stopped eating. "Again?"

"Again. Hear about the *Mayflower?*" I asked.

"What about it?" Dad's voice sounded cautious, which surprised me. Since Anne died—Anne was my mother—George and I have been pretty close.

"Why, they've started picking emigrants."

"So?" That cautious tone again. "What did you do today?"

"Went for a hike. Feel like some cribbage?"

"I'll beat the pants off you."

"You and who else?" I salvaged the garbage, burned the dishes, followed him into the living room.

His mind wasn't on the game. Finally he stopped. "Son—"

"Huh?"

"I've decided to emigrate in the *Mayflower.*" He put his cards down.

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hundredths pounds; I couldn't have added a frog's hair. My room was bare, except for my Scout Uniform.

I picked it up, intending to burn it, then stopped. I had weighed in at one-hundred thirty-one and two-tenths pounds in the clothes I would wear—but I hadn't eaten much lately. I weighed myself again . . . one hundred twenty-nine and eight tenths. I picked up the uniform . . . one hundred thirty-one and five-tenths.

William, I said, no dinner tonight, no breakfast tomorrow. I took the uniform along.

I went down, caught the In-Coast tube, and twenty minutes later I was at the Hotel Lancaster in the Mojave Desert. I went to bed hungry and got hungrier, and wondered why I was going to all this trouble to keep a uniform I'd never use.

I woke up starved but remembered that this was it! Then I was too excited to be hungry. I put my ship suit on over my Scout Uniform, went out to the embarking tubes, found the letter "L," and sat down on my baggage. Dad and his new family weren't around.

Miles away you could see our ships standing on the field—the *Daedalus* and *Icarus*, off the Earth-Moon run, and the old *Bifrost* that was the shuttle to Supra-New-York space station.

I heard my name and there behind me was Dad, with Molly and the brat—Peggy—and Molly's sister, Mrs. van Metre. Everybody shook hands and Mrs. van Metre wept and the brat asked what made my clothes so bunchy?

George was eyeing me, but our names were called and we started through the gate. I was last. My baggage was okay, and then I stepped on the scales. They read one hundred and thirty-one and one-tenth pounds.

"Check!" said the weightmaster, then added, "What have you got on?"

A uniform sleeve had slipped out of the half sleeve of my whip suit.

I didn't answer. "Boy," he said, "no wonder you're sweating. Didn't you know you shouldn't wear anything but the clothes you were listed in?"

Dad came back and asked what the trouble was? I stood there with my ears burning. The weighmaster finally said, "He's inside his limit; we'll allow it. Next!"

I trailed along, feeling foolish. We went down to the slide stripe; a few minutes later we got off in the underground loading room, filed into the elevator, and up into the *Bifrost*. There we split (*To page* 30)

It's not easy, this swimming around in free fall. There I was scrambling in air, frantically grabbing at anything

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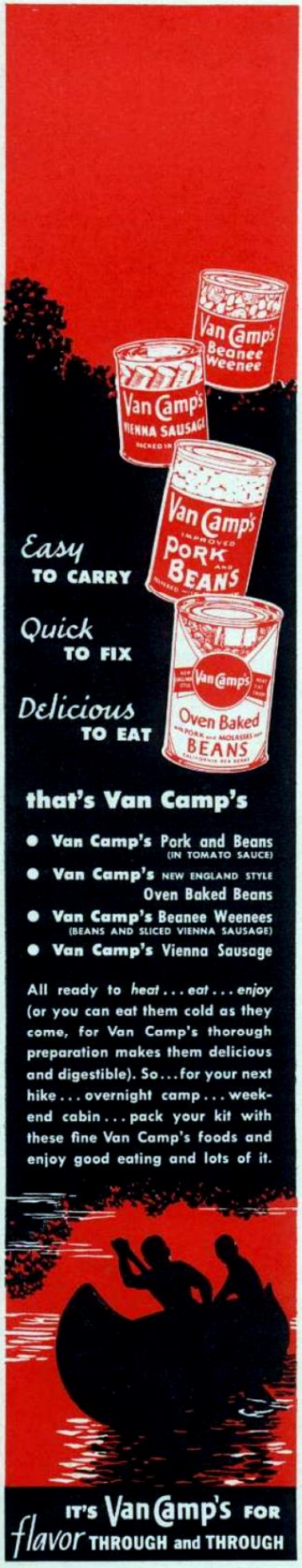

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(*Continued from page 7*)

up; I was assigned to an upper deck. I found my place, couch 14-D, and a stewardess offered me an injection against dropsickness. I said No, thanks I was a licensed pilot. I didn't say it was just for 'copters.

A LOUDSPEAKER said, "All hands! Prepare to blast." The stewardess made us strap down, then she went below. My ears popped and there was a soft sighing. I knew what they were doing: blowing air out and replacing it with helium-oxygen at half-pressure. Then the speaker said, "Minus two minutes!"

And then "Minus one minute!" and another voice started to count:

"Fifty-nine! Fifty-eight! Fifty-seven!"

My heart was pounding. It went on: "—Thirty-two! Thirty-one! *Half!* Twenty-nine!"

It got to be: *"Ten!"*

And, "Nine!

"Eight!

"Seven!

"Six!

"Five!

"Four!

"Three!

"Two—"

I never did hear "fire." My chest hurt. I couldn't lift a finger. I gulped and couldn't breathe.

I wasn't scared; I knew we would take off with high *g*, but I was uncomfortable. The sky turned black and the stars came out with the Sun still streaming through the port.

The noise was unbelievable but it died out quickly. There was nothing to do but lie there and try not to think about the weight.

And then, so suddenly it turned your stomach, you didn't weigh anything.

The first time you fall is no fun.

You get over it. If you didn't you would starve. Old space hands like it—weightlessness, I mean.

I got used to it, but I never liked it.

The *Bifrost* had blasted about three minutes. She was in free orbit better than three hours and we fell the whole time, *straight up* for over twenty thousand miles. Everybody knows things don't fall *up;* everybody knew the world was flat.

We fell *up.*

I was strapped in and didn't float, but I felt weak and dizzy and sick in the stomach. The stewardess floated in, checked herself with a hand, and hovered. "Everybody comfy?" She said cheerfully. Somebody groaned and a baby started to cry. I swallowed my pride and asked for an injection. When it took hold I was almost happy in a miserable way. Some of the hardier souls unstrapped and went to the ports; I decided to try it.

IT'S NOT EASY, this swimming around in free fall. I undid the belts and sat up—then I was scrambling in air, frantically grabbing at anything. I cracked my head against the other deck and saw stars—some of my own.

I managed to grab a safety belt, pulled myself along to a port and got my first look at Earth. There it was, looking like it does in geography books, and yet it was different. Alive.

While I hung there it shrank by half and got rounder and rounder. Columbus was right.

The end of Siberia, North America, and the north half of South America ran across the port from left to right. There were clouds over Canada, whiter than the pole cap. Back of it all were stars, even brighter than they are from Little America.

People started crowding around; I went back to my couch, fastened one belt, and thought. It makes you proud to come from such a big, fancy planet. And now I would never see it again. I felt solemn.

I wanted to see the *Mayflower* from space, but they made us strap down before I could spot it.

Our Captain was some pilot; he gave one long blast, the right time, the right amount, the right direction. Then we went weightless and out the port was the *Mayflower.* There was a soft correction bump and the loudspeaker announced, "Contact! You may unstrap."

After a bit my ears popped and the loudspeaker said, "Prepare to disembark!" We pulled ourselves along to the deck we had come in by, where we went out through a steel drum and into the *Mayflower.* It took an hour to get us sorted out and into our acceleration couches. The passageways were jammed. A traffic jam when everybody is floating and you don't know which end is up is eight times worse than an ordinary one. Instead of stewardesses there were emigrants with armbands reading: SHIP'S AIDE—but they were lost, too By the time I found my assigned bunk room and strapped down loudspeakers were shouting: "Prepare for acceleration! Ten minutes!"

We waited.

Presently the count off started. I thought, William, this will knock the teeth out of your head. I knew we were going to build up to ninety-three miles per second. I was scared.

THE SECONDS TICKED away; a push forced me against the cushions—and that was all. The ceiling was the ceiling again and the floor was underneath, but I didn't feel heavy, I felt fine. A TV screen in the ceiling lighted up and showed a man with four collar stripes; he said, "Captain Harkness, friends. We stay at one gravity for about four hours. Let's have lunch."

He grinned—I guess he knew we groundhogs would be starving as soon as we were back to weight. He went on:

"You may unstrap and sit up, but be careful about one thing:

"This ship is balanced so that our drive thrust passes through our center of gravity—otherwise we would spin and might fetch up in the sun. The ship has a compensator, but we must not overload it—so consult your aide before moving from your present positions."

HE SMILED GRIMLY. "Anyone violating this rule will be strapped down by force—and I will assign punishment later."

There wasn't any aide in our compartment. A big boy by the name of "Noisy" Edwards got tired waiting. Finally he said, "This is ridiculous! I'm for finding out what's the hold up."

Somebody objected, "The Captain said to sit tight."

"What of it? We aren't part of the crew."

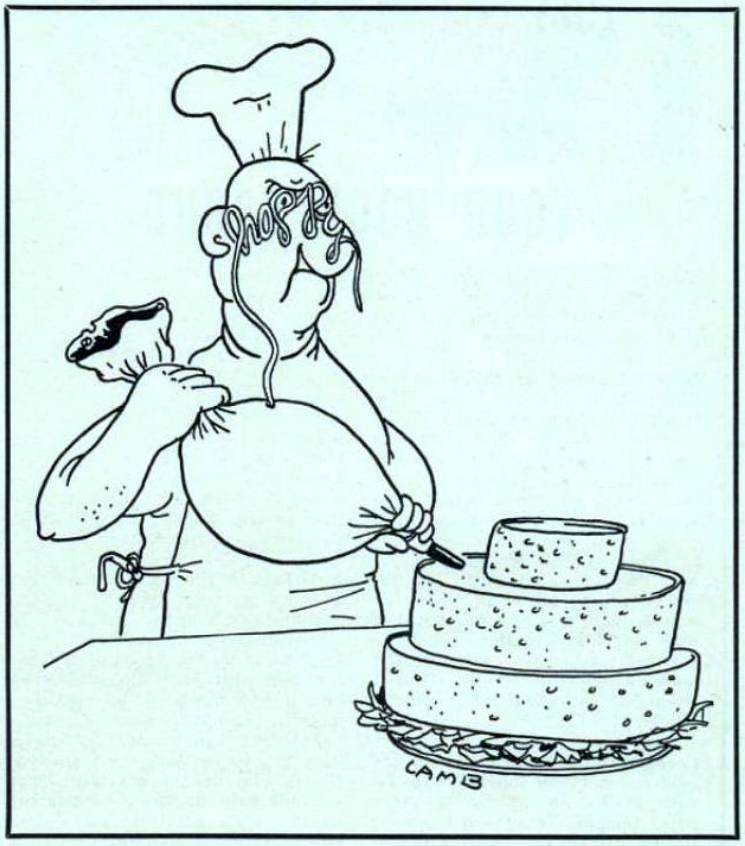
I said the Captain had authority over everybody, but he brushed me off. "Don't be silly. We got a right to be fed. Who's coming along?" Nobody answered: he left by himself.

He hadn't been gone long when an aide showed up carrying box lunches. "Weren't there twenty boys in here?" he asked.

Nobody said anything, so he called the roll. Edwards didn't answer, and the aide left. He came back presently, with Noisy in tow, and strapped him down.

About three hours after lunch they stopped gunning the ship. I had fallen asleep; I woke up with a yell, with my stomach dropping out again. The loudspeaker said, "End of acceleration. Spin will be placed on the ship."

To be continued in
BOYS' LIFE *for September*



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