

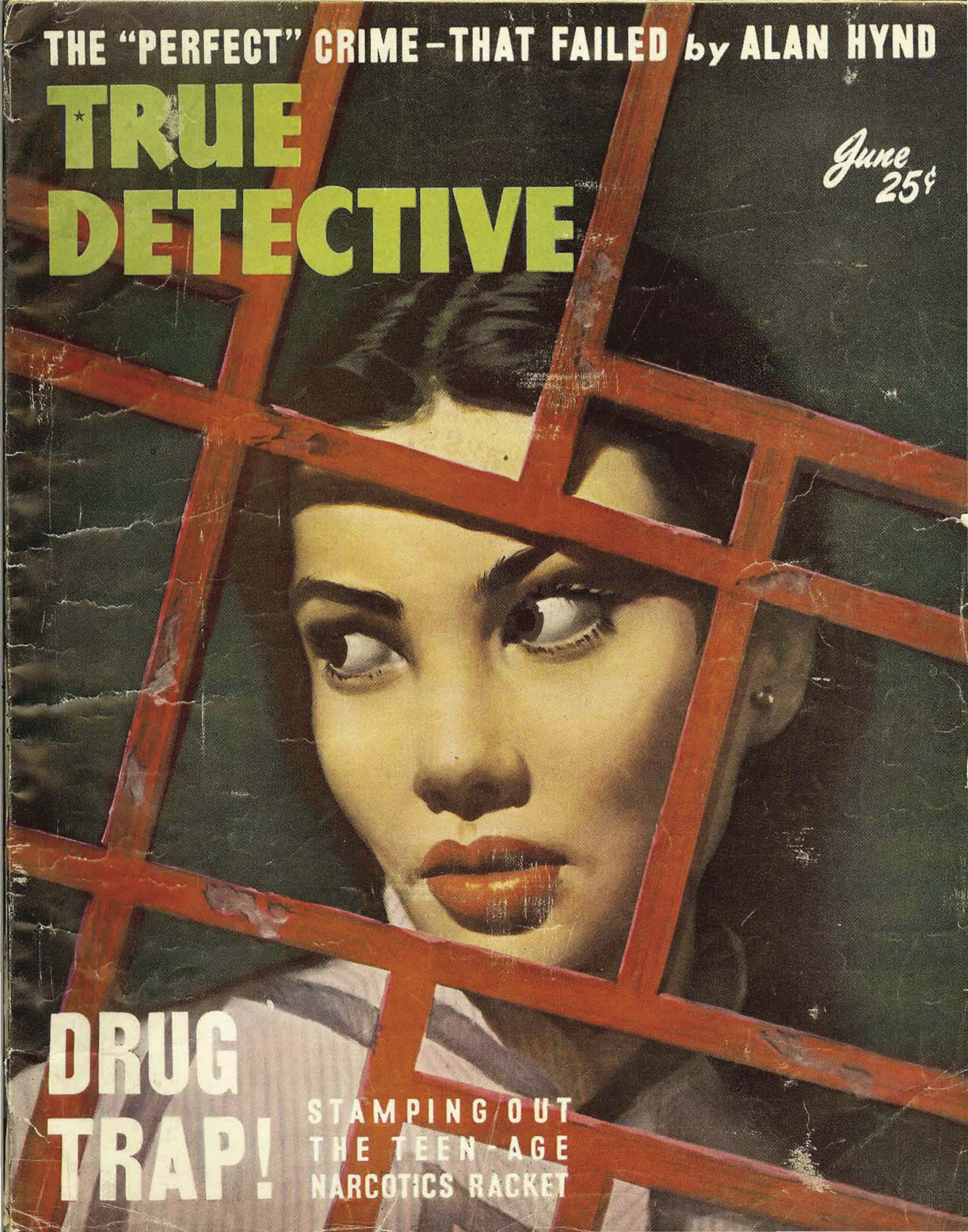
THE "PERFECT" CRIME—THAT FAILED by ALAN HYND

★ TRUE DETECTIVE

June
25¢

**DRUG
TRAP!**

STAMPING OUT
THE TEEN-AGE
NARCOTICS RACKET



TRUE DETECTIVE

The Authentic Magazine of Crime Detection

JUNE 1951

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Bare Dope Ring in City High School; 2 Seized

By RICHARD SNYDER and PETER WHELIHAN
 Detectives who masqueraded for three weeks as hot dog vendors to infiltrate a ring of narcotics peddlers at a high school in the Bronx seized two men...

Teen-Age Dope Drive Turns To Harlem as Cops Seize 8

The drive to rid the city of narcotics to teenagers spread to Harlem...

3 Arrested as Peddlers Of Narcotics to Children

Three Harlem youths said to be narcotics peddlers to children were arrested...

BY FRED J. COOK

Drug Trap!

STAMPING OUT

MRS. SOPHIE KRELS, a bright-eyed chip of a woman, will never forget the day she walked into her son's bedroom and came face-to-face with unsuspected horror. Much as she has always loved the tall, strong boy who has been the pride of her life, there are moments when she is forced to admit to herself that it would have been a stroke of divine mercy if, on that unforgettable day, she had found him dead.

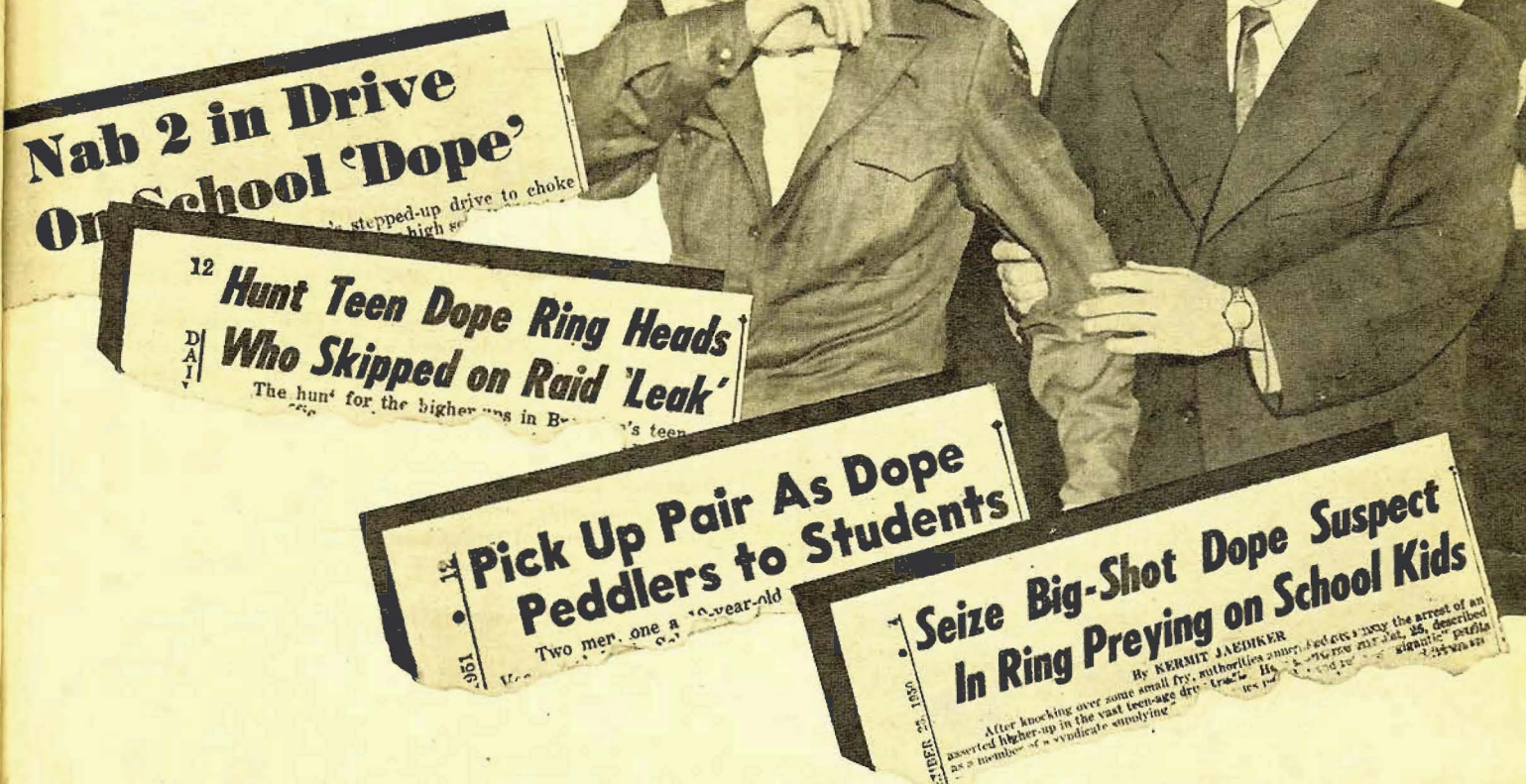
Mrs. Krels lives in an apartment house in the Bronx in uptown New York. The house is not in one of the better residential areas, nor is it in one of the poorer. It is strictly middle-class, and the people who live there are the earnest, family-type who ride the subway to their office jobs each morning and come straight home each night. They are the settled, peaceful kind rarely touched by the stigma of crime.

The Krels' apartment consists of four rooms and a bath. Mrs. Krels, a tiny woman five feet tall and weighing all of 90 pounds, keeps it shining and spotless with the never-ceasing industry of the good home-maker. A widow and a woman who had fought off the ravages of tuberculosis, she had known hardship and suffering, but she had put them both behind her and had made the apartment a calm and comfortable haven for her son, Don, 20, and her little daughter, Judy, 5.

Don had graduated from high school and had a job that

Drug pushers are selling their habit-forming, life-ruining wares even in the play yards and washrooms of our grammar schools, posing a dreadful menace to our entire society

300 sales of heroin were made by youth to his teen-age pals! Undercover work by Detectives Valente, Spinosa and Loretta McDonnell ended his trafficking



THE TEEN-AGE NARCOTICS RACKET

helped to keep the family together. To look at him, you would have said that he was the open-faced, rugged, all-American boy—the kind who is interested in athletics, the corner movie and a date with his favorite girl. He was full of the fun of youth, always making jokes around the house, teasing his mother, kidding and playing with his little sister. You would have said—as Mrs. Krels would have said—that there couldn't be a shadow on his life.

Then Don changed, somehow, and Mrs. Krels began to worry. The change was a gradual, almost imperceptible thing. It was so insidiously slow that you could not be sure just when it started; you could not even be certain, for a time, that you were seeing right and that it was really there. It was only now, some three months later, that you could look back and contrast Don as he was with Don as he had always been. It was only then that you realized with a sense of shock how radically his sunny disposition had altered.

Don joked no more about the house. He was a person withdrawn, as if he nourished some somber secret within himself. The brightness was gone from his face; he was glum, depressed, almost sullen. He had lost weight, too. There was a gauntness about his features, and there were times now when he was violently ill in the mornings.

Mrs. Krels worried, as mothers will. She was harassed by the specter of ulcers, cancer, tuberculosis, but to all

her solicitous questions, Don returned an annoyed, impatient answer.

"Oh, mother, stop fussing over me," he would say. "I'm all right!"

Mrs. Krels knew that he was not all right, but in the face of his emphatic, almost belligerent insistence, there was little she could do. Don was a big boy now.

Then came that fateful spring day on which Mrs. Krels walked into her son's bedroom. Three of his friends were with him, and she had thought that perhaps they would like a bite to eat. She opened the door—and stopped with that first wild clutch of fear at her heart.

Don and his friends were huddled in an intimate, little circle in his room. They were handling a white powder; with it, they were filling some capsules.

"What is that?" Mrs. Krels asked, though her heart already had told her the answer.

Don looked up at her, a queer, startled expression upon his face. Then he glanced at his friends and nodded. The boys stood up, silent, sidling toward the door.

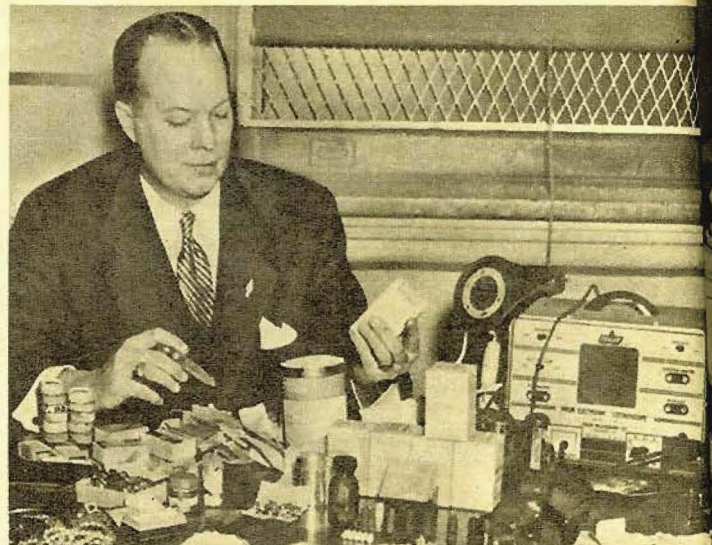
"I'll tell you later, Mother," Don said.

Without a word, like furtive shadows, the other youths slunk from the apartment house. Then Don, his head bowed in his hands, opened his heart to his mother.

"That powder is heroin, Mother," he told her. "I'm a drug addict."



Teen-agers are introduced to the drug habit through marijuana. Here prisoners prepare to burn confiscated crop



Bronx Asst. D. A. Waltmeade (above) has joined federal and local authorities in combating the heinous teen-age racket

experience that is being repeated literally, thousands of times a day in homes from New York to Vancouver. For Mrs. Kreles' tall son, Don, is only one victim in the most diabolical and heartless underworld plot of modern times—a plot in which the deliberate debauchery of teen-agers in families of every class throughout the land has become the steppingstone to bloated riches for some of the most dreaded elements of gangdom.

There was a time when drug addiction was confined to the slums and the debilitated effete. But not today. Now the pushers of narcotics are selling their habit-forming, life-ruining wares even in the play yards and wash rooms of our grammar schools. They are posing a new menace to our entire society.

To give you a brief picture of the conditions with which this article deals and for which Donald Kreles stands as a tragic symbol, here are just a few of the salient features of this new, nationwide disease being deliberately foisted on our society by the underworld:

1. In New York City, addiction has reached such proportions that no one dares to estimate the total number of victims. One high police source vouches for these almost incredible figures and warns that even they may be conservative: there are at least 2,000 drug peddlers who service 30,000 addicts daily. *Half of these users are adolescents.*

2. In 1950, New York's health and medical examiner's offices recorded 58 deaths from narcotics, only one less than from infantile paralysis. *Of the dead, 23 were under 25 years of age.*

3. Addiction has been reflected in draft rejections. Assistant U. S. Attorney Roy M. Cohn recently told a federal judge in New York that, while final figures are not yet available, Selective Service has already noted a steeply mounting curve of rejections resulting from drug addiction.

4. A key agency in the distribution of narcotics throughout the United States is the Mafia, the dreaded Italian, secret, black-hand society whose centers in New York, New Orleans, Tampa, Kansas City and other large cities have been directly linked by federal investigators with the smuggling and distribution of drugs.

5. Everywhere there is evidence of a definite, diabolically

ingenious pattern in which narcotics rings take advantage of youth's flare for adventure, youth's eternal search for thrills. In some cases, distributors even finance secret club rooms, complete with juke boxes and shoddy, oriental-type decorations. In these "pad joints," as they are known, a teen-age fling turns into a lifelong curse. Another method is even more simple and effective. A street pusher will offer a youth a bit of the stuff, promising a kick that will put the lad on top of the world. He offers this little service for free, like any good guy with his pal. As few as three shots sometimes make an addict; then the pusher, having hooked his sucker for life, demands pay for his wares. Often the victim becomes the agent for the pusher who has ruined him, peddling the drug to his own classmates, not just to get money for himself (though this is sometimes a motive), but to assure himself of the minimum of \$15 a day necessary to satisfy his own cravings. This is the system that has brought drug sales and the hand of the underworld right into the school yard.

6. From this whole heinous setup, there are no depths of degradation or of crime to which the youthful addict will not descend. Fagin never held his youthful plunderers of the London slums in such unbreakable chains. Girls from good families become willing prostitutes. Boys loot stores, mug, rob, run numbers—commit any and every crime in the book to get money to satisfy their insatiable hunger for the deadly powder. And remember this: drug addiction knows no limit. It demands ever more and more of the drug for satisfaction and so creates a vicious cycle in which the petty returns of petty crimes soon become woefully inadequate.

7. There are no really adequate facilities for cure. The lack of hospital space is as shocking as the situation itself. There is only one hospital in all the United States devoted to the treatment of addicts—the U. S. Public Health Service Hospital in Lexington, Kentucky. And that has 1,435 patients jammed into space for 1,300, with waiting lists of hundreds more. The adolescent population at the hospital in Lexington has jumped 600 per cent in two years. Overcrowding has resulted in kids being thrown into the company of hardened addicts and hardened criminals—felons convicted of auto and mail thefts, Mann Act violations, forgery and other crimes. This is admitted by



(Above) Customs guards with \$300,000 dope contraband submerged in lubricating oil in tank of ship entering U. S.

Public Health Service officials, and Dr. Victor H. Vogel, medical officer in charge at Lexington, says: "We fight and struggle constantly against perversion."

Donald Krels and his friends are among those who have tried this cure at Lexington. Acting on Mrs. Krels' advice, the group of boys went there, hoping to beat the habit. But they came back, Don's mother says, worse than when they went.

"We know now that was the worst place we could have sent them," she said despairingly. "The kids said the place was fine for the body but terrible for the mind. They were thrown together with every kind of degenerate.

"The old-timers preach a 'you can't beat the rap' theme to the kids. They tell them, 'This will be your future home. We couldn't beat the game, and you won't. Wait and see. You'll be back and forth twenty times.'

"When these kids got out, the first thing they did was run for dope. All they hear in the Kentucky place is dope, dope, dope.

"From the old-timers, they learn new addresses, new pushers. And worse—different ways of injecting the drug into their veins. The old-timers even show them how they can use the point of a nail or a sharp pencil to pierce a vein."

This is the picture of a precariously exposed youthful generation, of which Donald Krels is just one of thousands of unfortunate victims. It is a picture that is not indigenous to New York, but has spread through the cities and vast plains of the Midwest clear to the Pacific Coast.

The Federal Bureau of Narcotics is authority for the statement that teen-age addiction has leaped in startling fashion in Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles and New Orleans as well as in New York. Headlines and stories in the daily press almost every day lend emphasis to that statement.

One story from Chicago told of 32 arrests as federal agents smashed a narcotics ring that had peddled dope to high school and college students on campuses in Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa. Another described a second raid in 19 months on a high school drug ring in New Rochelle, one of those swank sections of suburbia attracting the wealthy from New York. A third story told of 31 arrests in a drug ring raid in Washington. And still an-



Assistant D.A. Hoey and N. Y. Police Commissioner Murphy examine paraphernalia seized in teen-age drug round-up

other told how police in Vancouver, British Columbia broke up a gang of teen-age toughs who had been engaged in a wave of plundering to finance wild narcotics orgies. One 14-year-old girl in the gang was the youngest addict in the history of Canada.

New York, however, is the center of the nefarious traffic that affects the life of a continent. It is into the Port of New York that vast quantities of heroin and cocaine are smuggled from abroad. It is in its teeming streets and in hideaways in its jungle growth of skyscraper and slum that the kingpin wholesalers of the nation establish their headquarters and funnel out their vicious wares through well-controlled hierarchies of lesser chieftains, working down to the lowly street pusher. And so, naturally, it is in New York that the brutal effects of narcotics on young lives can be seen most clearly, and it is there that the biggest manhunt in the history of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics now centers.

Let's take the young lives first. Listen to the reactions of veteran court workers who, in whole decades of experience, have never seen anything like this before. Listen to Dorris Clarke, chief probation officer of the Magistrates Courts of New York.

"The addiction crisis has become a monster," she tells you, thumbing through 52 case histories lying on her desk. "In the 15 years I've been in this office, I encountered only an occasional juvenile drug user until last year. I don't recall a single case in Girls Term from 1936 to 1948. Reefer users started to trickle in (Continued on page 76)

Drug Trap!

(Continued from page 13) early in '49. Now it's heroin. The case histories make you sick. And these are kids we are dealing with."

She leafed through her reports. One dealt with a girl, a hopeless addict at 13. Another with a boy who beat his mother. A third told of clubs of addicts being formed at a Brooklyn school.

"I looked at the arms of some of these children," Miss Clarke said. "And I shuddered."

Another veteran court worker, Florence Kelley, attorney for the Legal Aid Society's criminal branch, said 85 per cent of the youth cases now handled by her bureau deal with addiction. "That's a shockingly high figure," she said, "especially when you consider that these are children from 16 to 19 we are dealing with. We see some pitiful cases unfold. In some instances, the parents are totally unaware of their children's vice until they're hopelessly addicted."

She, too, had case histories to move and shock you. One dealt with a 17-year-old boy, on heroin since 15, who faced sentencing for several stick-ups to which he had been driven by the narcotics craze. In another case, a youthful hold-up gang—four boys and two girls—terrorized candy stores, sticking up the proprietors with a menacing but empty pistol to get funds to replenish their drug supplies.

The examples in the documented case histories of our courts are infinite, but let's take one case and watch what happens when a teen-ager, deliberately corrupted, goes overboard for junk. Let's take the case of Bobby Nixon, a 17-year-old kid from Brooklyn who became a menace to an entire neighborhood.

Bobby Nixon is not his real name, for his case is still in the courts and there are others in his family who must be protected—a sister and a younger brother who have been shocked and shamed enough by the revelation of Bobby's vice.

Let it be said simply, then, that the Nixon family has lived for 11 years in the same walk-up apartment in one of Brooklyn's tougher neighborhoods. They are a sober, industrious family who never caused trouble for anyone and are liked and respected by their neighbors.

"We don't drink, we don't gamble, we don't go to the movies nights," said Bobby's mother, a careworn woman whose hair is turning gray. "We stayed home to bring up our family right."

Bobby is a good-looking kid, with dark, wavy hair, sparkling eyes and a wide, flashing smile that exposes even, gleaming white teeth. He is the kind of handsome, well-mannered youth who is looked upon with favor even by mothers with growing daughters to concern them.

There was just one thing about Bobby, however—something that those of his own generation might regard as a warning sign and that his elders might dismiss with the shrug they reserve for the foibles of youth. There was sometimes a certain wise quirk to Bobby's smile, and in his dress and action, you could find just a trace of the mannerisms of a guy who is hep. This, the adolescents of today will tell you, indicates the kind of a youth who is most apt to seek the extra thrill that comes through the use of dope.

"The guy who is a sharpie, who has to act like a big wheel—he is the kind who seems to go for it first," said one teen-ager who has seen narcotics enslave several of his friends. "A lot of it seems to be tied up with hot jazz, the jitterbug craze. The sharpsters who go for all that

stuff, seeking all the thrills, seem to be the ones who fall for junk the easiest."

And so, though no one in his family or in the neighborhood had the slightest suspicion, Bobby Nixon turned to drugs. His was a familiar pattern.

The pattern runs like this: First comes marijuana. Reefers give a kick, speed up the smoker's sense of time so that his mind races and he seems to be doing things twice as fast and effectively as anyone else. They do not create a habit, but they are a steppingstone to habit. Reefers, with repeated use, lose a lot of their hypnotic effect, and the smoker, missing his customary lift, is ripe for the dope peddler who promises to renew the old thrill. The peddler introduces his prospect to heroin. At first, the white powder is usually snuffed up the nostrils, the novice in its use becoming what the trade knows as a "snorter." Quickly, the ripening addict seeks a swifter, more direct approach to the drug's wallop. He injects it, first into a muscle, then directly into a big vein. Sometimes it takes only two or three weeks to complete the transition from marijuana user to "mainliner"—parlance for the ultimate addict, one who is so gripped by his craze that he cannot wait but jabs a needle directly into a big vein, usually the one at the crook of the elbow.

BOBBY NIXON, just a kid in school, went through all the preliminary stages. By the time he was 17, a student in a Brooklyn night high school, he had become so addicted that he needed a sizeable weekly salary for drugs alone. Bobby was working at a daytime job as a soda jerk in a candy store, where he was paid \$40 a week—a mere pittance for a narcotics user.

Needing an extra source of revenue, Bobby took the next, easy step. He had an older "friend" who kept him in narcotics. This "friend"—here we'll call him Jack Tornelli—was a really big wheel. At 23, he had a closet full of \$100 suits and a little black address book in which he had listed the names of scads of girl friends, each carefully annotated with a cryptic phrase to describe her most intriguing attributes. Ever one to help out a friend, especially when this help helped himself, Jack had no qualms about setting Bobby up in business peddling heroin to the kids of his neighborhood from his strategic position as soda jerk.

It did not take long for word of Bobby's good fortune to filter through the entire Brooklyn area. The candy store quickly became a veritable after-school social club for teen-agers. Every day, the kids would purchase, and sometimes, in paying they would call him by a strange nick-name, Bob Yankee, or they would murmur a magic phrase, "Yankee Doodle," so low that only he could hear.

Whenever this happened, Bobby would dig a hand swiftly under his soda jerk's apron and bring out a tiny capsule hidden in his palm. He would take out an extra \$1.50 for his sideline purchase and pass capsule and change along to his customer.

This extra enterprise of Bobby's took off into the business stratosphere like a reefer boost. The business grew so swiftly that Bobby was soon palming \$4.50 a day in commissions. The big profit from the drug sales, of course, was reaped by his hidden boss, Jack Tornelli, but Bobby was satisfied with the crumbs off the plate. His \$4.50 a day he plowed right back into the trade—to supply himself

with the same deadly capsules that he sold.

Bobby, as a drug peddler, had insured his future as a drug addict, and all was rosy until his clientele became so large it created its own menace. His teenage customers began to loot their homes of everything they could turn into cash. They even stole the house money out of their mothers' pocketbooks to purchase drugs. Parents, investigating such peculiarities, began to discover the hideous truth. They notified police.

The New York City Narcotics Squad promptly assigned some of its ace sleuths to solve the riddle of this corrupted Brooklyn neighborhood. Lt. Bernard Boylan, in charge of the squad, gave the task of tracking down the source of supply in the area to Detectives Jerry Valente, Alfred Spinosa and Miss Loretta McDonnell—the latter a detective with the most unprofessional charm, so good-looking and well-formed she could pass for a junior miss in any bobby-sox crowd.

It did not take the detectives long to learn that the known addicts among the youth of the neighborhood were devoted patrons of the candy store. They decided they'd become regulars there, too.

Each afternoon, about 3 o'clock, when the teen-agers were trooping home from school, Miss McDonnell mingled with the throng and propped herself upon a stool at the counter for her daily refresher, a sundae or a soda. After she had lingered over her dish as long as she could, she would leave and be replaced by Detective Valente or Detective Spinosa. In two weeks of this steady soda fountain diet, Valente ate so many banana splits he gained 10 pounds; Spinosa indulged in so many chocolate sodas he put on five; and Miss McDonnell sampled the varied wares so enthusiastically that she began to feel a woman's concern about her figure.

The three detectives, however, had eaten to good purpose. They had listened to those murmured "Yankee Doodles." They had seen Bobby Nixon's quick gestures under his soda jerk's apron. They had come to know the faces of 30 youthful customers who seldom missed their daily visit to the candy store.

They tailed Bobby, too, and they became convinced that his supply of heroin capsules was coming from his dashing friend, Jack Tornelli. Having witnessed more than 300 drug sales in their two-week surveillance of the soda fountain, they suddenly disclosed their true identity about 5 o'clock one January afternoon, arresting Bobby Nixon with 19 capsules tucked away in his pockets. At Tornelli's home, they found 14 more capsules, and they arrested him for possession of narcotics.

THE ARRESTS shocked Bobby's family and the entire Brooklyn neighborhood. Bobby's hard-working parents had had no idea he was a drug addict, much less a seller; they couldn't believe it; they insisted the police must be mistaken. Bobby's boss threw up his hands in bewilderment. "He's a very nice kid," the boss said of Bobby. "The phone has been ringing all day, people asking about Bobby. I guess everybody is like us. They don't think it could happen. Not to a nice kid like him."

But there was the indisputable evidence of those heroin capsules found in Bobby's pockets; there were those sales the detectives had witnessed. Bobby was put in jail in default of the kind of bail that is imposed on the most desperate felons.

His case is a vivid illustration of the maze that confronts and at times confounds law enforcement officials. Bobby is an example of the widespread, irreparable harm that can be done by even a single small-fry seller. For make no mistake about it: Bobby, the boy who blighted a neighborhood, was just a helpless gnat in a business that boasts voracious hawks. Multiply Bobby a couple of thousand times in New York City alone, and you get some idea of the staggering problem that the present overwhelming flood of narcotics poses for local police and federal officials.

So plentiful are narcotics today that anyone with a few thousand bucks and a convenient lack of scruples can set himself up in a business whose returns are measured in the hundreds of per cent. Tempted by this lure, the ruthless always fill the gaps of the arrested. Narcotics agents have an adage for it: arrest one peddler, they say, and two or three will spring up to take his place.

The major drug in use today is heroin, a derivative of opium that is known simply as H in the trade. An ounce of heroin can be bought in Mediterranean ports for \$30 to \$40; here it is worth \$300. A white powder, it takes up so little room it is a cinch to smuggle. Even a kilogram (about 35 ounces) can be slipped into a man's sock or taped to his body without a telltale bulge; a woman may simply drop it into her bra or tuck it under her girdle. Smuggling such stuff is as simple as first grade addition for seamen who became used, during the war, to smuggling ashore everything except the ship that they were on.

The profits are tremendous. The sailor who settles for a cool 100 per cent is a piker. Once he's brought the pure heroin ashore, the really fantastic financial operation begins. The pure drug is cut by being mixed with milk sugar. This is an inexpensive powder, a dairy by-product, and the usual capsule combination is eight parts milk sugar and one heroin. Each capsule, which sells for \$1 to \$1.50 at today's rates, contains only a grain to a grain and a half of the mixture. And since there are 437 grains in an ounce, and since each ounce of heroin becomes nine diluted, the narcotics bosses in charge of the processing stand to reap about \$4,000 for every \$300 they've invested in the pre-cut drug.

Most of the heroin that is pouring into the American market comes from the opium poppy fields of Iran and Turkey, though a lot, too, is coming from Mexico where it is a simple walk across the border. Obviously, the easiest way to end the menace would be to cut off the flow of drugs at their source. The United Nations has been studying this problem, but so far has had little success in trying to persuade foreign countries to curb production and so put a dent in their own domestic economies.

THERE ARE INDICATIONS that the foreign end of the smuggling is well-organized by an international underworld cartel. The Federal Bureau of Narcotics has repeatedly stated that many prominent deported American gangsters play leading roles in this end of the business. The name most frequently mentioned is that of Charles (Lucky) Luciano, the convicted and deported white slave king of New York who is now living the life of a millionaire in Italy.

Luciano was questioned for hours by Italian police in mid-1949 when an air courier for a New York ring was so inconsiderate as to get himself arrested at Rome's Ciampino Airport. This greedy character was tripped up when he tried

to lug 20 pounds of cocaine, worth about \$500,000 here, past customs inspectors. The courier was convicted and jailed, and police said he belonged to a combine that had smuggled \$25 million worth of cocaine into the United States since the war. The connection between the courier and Luciano, however, was too tenuous for Italian police to trace; and after they had gone through the motions of grilling Lucky, they had to release him.

His name continues to pop up, however, whenever big-time narcotics operations are mentioned. Last year, federal operatives in Newark, New Jersey smashed a drug ring doing a million-dollar yearly business, and an assistant U. S. attorney declared they had uncovered evidence that the ring at one time had sent an emissary to Luciano to swing a big narcotics deal. None of this sniping at his name seems to disturb the ex-New York gangster. He remains safely beyond the reach of American law in sunny South Italy, where his wealth has made him a prominent and even an envied figure.

ANOTHER DREAD NAME that has been linked time and again to the dope traffic is that of the Mafia. The Federal Narcotics Bureau, headed by Commissioner Harry J. Anslinger, several months ago presented the Kefauver Crime Investigating Committee with a detailed chart showing how the Italian secret society funnels drugs through Italian and French ports to the Mafia in New York and Cuba. From Cuba, narcotics are smuggled to the Mafia in Tampa and New Orleans. The New Orleans society supplies the Mafia in Kansas City, and some of the New York branch's business also goes there for redistribution in other cities of the Midwest, including St. Louis.

It is far easier to trace this pattern of distribution than it is to lop off the hydra head of what has been estimated as a one billion, five hundred million dollar worldwide dope traffic. The Federal Narcotics Bureau has less than 200 agents to cover the entire country, and its task is invested with monumental difficulties because the vice with which it deals is such a furtive and secret thing. As we have seen, an addict or a peddler may keep his activities completely hidden for months from those of his family living in the same home with him; but even more important than this, from the legal standpoint, is the fact that the narcotics user is one victim who will never turn upon the man who has helped to ruin him. So irresistible is the force of his compulsion that the drug addict rarely gives evidence against the peddler with whom he deals: he knows, even though he may be temporarily off drugs in what seems like a cure, that the time may come when he will just *have* to have that contact again. Getting the ironclad irrefutable evidence that will stand the test of trial in court is, in these circumstances, a detective task of utmost magnitude.

To help in this work, the Federal Bureau of Narcotics has compiled an elaborate dossier containing the rogues gallery likenesses, the record and all the available information about every suspected narcotics big-shot on both the national and international scale. This information is packed into two large, black-bound volumes and is an invaluable guide to agents hunting some shadowy distributor about whom they often know no more than his descriptive, underworld nickname. Even so, there are times when a hot suspect's name may stay in the secret file in inactive status for months or years before the bureau's detectives can clinch their case against him.

They are a persistent bunch of sleuths,

however, these little-sung-about T-Men of the Narcotics Bureau, and they stick to a case with the same bulldog tenacity the Canadian Mounties have publicized.

Even as this is written, the T-Men are engaged in a manhunt so sensational that they have hit the headlines of the daily press as they seldom do. Capitalizing on months of the most hazardous kind of undercover work, they have launched a series of lightning raids smashing at the very heart of the narcotics racket in New York. It is a drive that is still continuing.

THE FOUNDATION for the raids that stabbed into every underworld stronghold in the nation's largest city and netted 290 small-time peddlers and big wholesalers in the month of January alone was laid in mid-1950. Then, convinced by the increasing wave of teen-age addiction that they had a formidable crisis on their hands, the narcotics bureau executives plotted a many-pronged drive, conceived on a cross-continent scale.

Commissioner Anslinger and Irwin Greenfeld, acting district supervisor of the Federal Narcotics Bureau in New York, designed a complicated and extremely hazardous undercover project, hoping to trace the flow of narcotics back to its source by working toward the hub from the outer rim of small-fry pushers and distributors. A similar attack on a local scale was mapped by the New York City Narcotics Bureau, whose agents frequently merge their activities with those of the federal sleuths.

Even yet, the larger-scale federal investigation must be described to some extent in general terms. One reason is that trials are still pending in many cases, and evidence gathered by federal agents must not be disclosed prematurely. Another reason lies in the extreme hazards of the T-Man's job. Many have lost their lives to knife and gun in the hands of narcotics racketeers, and so, as a measure of self-protection, the bureau guards the identities of its agents whenever it can.

The investigation developed extremely complicated procedures. Three major pieces of detective work, each in itself as hair-raising as a cloak-and-dagger novel, can be spelled out in considerable detail.

First, the Federal Narcotics Bureau sent two of its most clever agents to Texas to begin working their way back through the hierarchy of drug distributors to the heart of the rings in New York. At the same time, the T-Men sent a Negro agent into New York's teeming Harlem, where for six months, taking his life in his hands seven days a week, he hobnobbed with some of the most desperate characters in the narcotics trade. And finally New York City police sent an intrepid, Spanish-speaking Narcotics Squad detective into Brooklyn's tough Bedford-Stuyvesant section, where he flashed a \$1,000 roll as a come-on for the narcotics pushers.

Let's take the long-range, cross-continent project of the T-Men first. Their two agents—even yet their names cannot be revealed—were supplied with an enormous cash pool running high into the thousands of dollars. They went to Texas where they established themselves as narcotics buyers. Soon, through their large purchases, they began to develop contacts in the drug-smuggling and selling racket. They moved on slowly through the Midwest, the contacts they established in one city sending them on to contacts in another.

The information that they gathered was slipped secretly to other T-Men while the two undercover agents, keeping themselves carefully in the dark, worked their way back through drug purchase after

drug purchase toward their goal—the big distributors hidden somewhere behind the skyscraper wall of New York.

Trouble often developed for the narcotics ring long weeks after these two mysterious characters had departed from the Midwestern underworld scene. T-Men and local police pulled off sensational narcotics raids in Detroit and in Chicago, and still the narcotics racketeers had no idea that their downfall had been caused by the snappily dressed, assured H-buyers who bargained for dope in thousand-dollar lots.

Before the end of 1950, the two agents were back at their starting place—New York City. But now they had contacts in the drug rings. They had been handed up the rungs of the ladder, and the lesser wholesalers had pointed the finger at the big shots who could supply dope in the fortune-sized quantities the T-Men were demanding.

The agents were tipped that Frankie Belisi, 28, and his brother, Pasquale, 29, of Manhattan, were big wheels in the racket. Through the smaller fry, one of the agents made contact with Pasquale. Not suspicious of a customer who came so highly recommended, Patsy agreed to meet the agent in one of New York's swankiest mid-town hotels.

He kept the rendezvous, bringing with him 75 ounces of pure heroin, for which he was asking \$15,000. Diluted and marketed, this quantity of the drug would net about \$300,000—a profit that was never reaped on this particular package because it never got beyond the hotel room. As soon as Patsy Belisi handed it over, he was arrested.

Tipped off by the arrest, Frankie Belisi fled. He was the object of a nationwide manhunt by T-Men for several weeks, but in mid-January, he gave up the game and surrendered.

Pasquale was held in prohibitive \$50,000 bail for trial as Mr. Cohn told a U. S. commissioner the activities of the Belisis were, in part, responsible for the rise in draft rejections for addicts which, he said, has become "very high." Mr. Cohn also estimated that Pasquale, whom he described as one of the nation's top wholesalers, had done a \$250,000 annual business in heroin.

The arrests of the Belisis, however, were not the only fruits of the cross-country trek of the two undercover T-Men. They had also obtained a line on an Egyptian seaman, Ahmed Narouk, who was suspected of smuggling vast quantities of heroin into ports all along the eastern seaboard.

Again armed with a certification from underworld contacts with whom they had done profitable business, one of the agents was introduced to Ahmed. The agent flashed such a huge roll that Ahmed passed him on to an even bigger supplier, known as John the Greek. More cagey than Narouk, John the Greek made only vague, guttural hints at some indefinite future commitment and quietly removed himself from the scene.

The Egyptian seaman, however, delivered two whole kilos of pure heroin to his flashy T-Man contact—and promptly found himself in the hands of the law.

WITH AHMED behind bars, the T-Men concentrated on picking up the trail of the missing John the Greek. They had no name for him because the undercover agent who had succeeded in making his acquaintance had been introduced to him only by that underworld tag. This had been especially frustrating because, for months, T-Men had been hearing rumors about some important, mysterious distributor whom they had never been able to

identify except by that gangland nickname. They had hunted in their black-bound "Who's Who" of the narcotics racket, but there was no listing there of any John the Greek.

Now that the elusive John's features were known to one T-Man, however, the bureau searched all the records and evidence obtained through previous arrests. Somewhere in the voluminous mass of detail, agents thought, they might find a clue. At first, it eluded them, but finally they re-examined a memorandum book they had seized in November 1949. The book had been found in a swank home in Queens, just across the East River from Manhattan, where detectives had uncovered a huge cache of drugs that were being held for distribution through an East Side Italian mob.

The memorandum book had had a series of phone numbers listed in code. The agents had worked hard to break the complicated code and finally had succeeded. By this time, the numbers were of little immediate value because most of the characters connected with the narcotics ring, taking their cue from the initial

UNDERCOVER WORK

Patrolman Rex Brown was giving a motorist a reprimand for speeding in Houston, Texas when he happened to look in the back and saw a woman, partly hidden under a coat on the floor of the car. She turned out to be the driver's wife and explained in embarrassed tones: "Officer, I didn't mean any wrong; I was just trying to find out where my husband was going."

—G. Allen

raid, had gone temporarily into hiding. And so the detectives had merely listed and indexed the phone numbers for future reference.

They dragged out this list of numbers now and decided to case various addresses on the theory that John the Greek might have had dealings with the ring they had crippled the previous year and might return to old haunts. The theory and the search paid off. Finally, at an address in lower Manhattan, the undercover T-Man spotted a familiar, portly, fiftyish figure—that of John the Greek.

The agents watched their man until he had made himself comfortably at home in his apartment; then, on the night of January 18th, they went calling on him in a group. It was well they did because, as soon as John the Greek saw the size and sensed the purpose of the delegation, he grabbed up a vicious-looking knife and lunged murderously at the nearest agent. It was a futile gesture. The time was too late for killing, and John the Greek was overwhelmed by numbers. His home was searched, an ounce of pure heroin was found, and John the Greek was indicted and held in \$25,000 bail for trial.

Two days before the seizure of John the Greek climaxed the cross-country, undercover T-Man project, the local investigation by New York City police had paid dividends in the most sweeping narcotics raids in the city's history.

The investigation had been started in late October when Lt. Boylan, after a headquarters conference, had sent a picked squad into the tough Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, where parents of students at Boys High School had complained their children were being turned into dope addicts.

Detectives John Cuttone, Marco DeSerio, Edward Murtagh, Jack Ezagui, Mabel

Leonard and Winifred Hayes were assigned to the hunt by Lt. Boylan. The women detectives, dressing like the kind of girls who would flirt with thrills and addiction, have been instrumental in breaking up many narcotics rings, but this time it was Detective Ezagui who played the stellar role.

Flashily dressed, rolling around the section in a gaudy, expensive car, unfurling a wad that rarely totaled less than \$1,000, he spoke the language of the narcotics pushers so well, appealed to their cupidity so powerfully, that he soon had them bidding against each other for his business.

The other detectives tailed him and tried to protect him every time he went into the area to make contact with some rapacious dope peddler, ever-mindful that a quick-flashing knife in the hands of a suspicious drug racketeer has often been an effective silencer of snoopers.

Describing Detective Ezagui's work, one police official said:

"He soon learned that the Bedford-Stuyvesant area was the focal point of all dope operations in Brooklyn. They came there from Williamsburg, Flatbush and Bushwick because you could buy any amount of junk any time of the day or night.

"Peddlers were brazen, but we had to find the higher-ups. We found that two rings were operating. One had six men, the other four. With approximately 100 pushers working the section, we figured they were serving at least 1,400 addicts weekly.

"Our men donned old clothes and hung around saloons, candy stores and pool-rooms. Detective Ezagui made pals with the mob's leaders. They swarmed around him like bees. Two pushers almost came to blows over his H business. He'd flash the big roll, take 'em riding in his spiffy car and feed 'em at known junkie hang-outs."

FINALLY, the evidence was complete, and on January 16th, the trap was sprung. In the first three days of the drive, 67 arrests were made by city police and federal officials. Even this was only the beginning. Each day for a week brought its own sensation as new raids, new arrests followed in rapid succession.

The most important of these seizures, and a highlight in the twin drive of federal and local officials to wipe out the narcotics racket, resulted directly from the work of the courageous Negro undercover agent the T-Men had sent into Harlem.

The agent—here we'll have to call him John Carter—was a graduate of St. John's University in Brooklyn and of Brooklyn Law School. More important than his college degree was the fact that he was an iron-nerved detective who did not hesitate to play tag with gangland death every day for six months as he circulated through the Harlem and East Harlem areas.

Carter wore a trench coat with a fur collar and a Parisian beret. He smoked outsized cigars that resembled marijuana "bombers," and he talked tough and acted out, as if he were upon the stage, his role of man without a conscience.

Plentifully supplied with money, the indispensable lure of the undercover man in the narcotics racket, he quickly made contacts with the small-fry street pushers, posing as the buyer for a large out-of-state dope ring. In from five to six weeks, he had established himself as a trusted hand in the racket, a man who was willing to pay good prices for large quantities of the stuff. And he had worked his way through the outer fringe

of punks and was edging closer to contacts with the bums who really mattered.

Every time Carter went into Harlem, he was tailed by six other skilled detectives of the Federal Narcotics Bureau. They shadowed him to protect his life, just as city police had shadowed Detective Ezagui. But the T-Men's job was infinitely more difficult because Carter played a humbler role, roaming Harlem on foot and making his contacts with dope peddlers in their cars, not in his own as Detective Ezagui had.

As Carter bought ever larger quantities of drugs, the distributors became more cautious. They would pick him up at some assigned street corner rendezvous, and they would drive him through busy streets to the outskirts of the city before risking delivery. Carter's fellow T-Men used relays of three cars at such times in order to follow him without exciting suspicion, but even so, in the confusion of city traffic, there were occasions when they lost contact with him completely and could only pray that the gangster with whom he was riding did not have a suspicious turn of mind.

One of the veteran federal agents to whom such hazardous investigation is an old story shook his head somberly as he recalled those times when the T-Men lost contact with Carter.

"When you get into a bum's car and don't know where you're going, and know they may suspect you at any moment, you might be going for a ride," he said. "The old heartbeat is there all the time."

It took a half-year of this kind of work, a half-year of day-to-day suspense, before Carter could feel that he was getting close to his goal. In that time, he made innumerable contacts; he made constant purchases and became pals with distributors who were medium-sized big shots. But for a long time the shadowy masterminds behind the racket eluded him.

Early in January, however, Carter made contact with the big operator for whom he had been searching—Pietro Scala, 35, a man of many aliases.

SCALA WAS a dapper, nattily dressed Broadway figure, a free spender in the plushier night spots, and a character who rated a special listing on the FBI's national compilation of thugs to watch out for. Scala had been convicted in 1940 on a conspiracy charge under the federal Harrison Narcotic Act, and he had spent a year in jail. Five years later, he had been sent to prison again on the same charge, this time for a two-year stretch.

These unhappy encounters with the law had made him wily and super-cautious. Federal agents had lost track of him after his second term in prison, and Scala took every precaution to avoid another face-to-face encounter.

He devised what he obviously regarded as an arrest-proof method of operation. He fired top assistants at frequent intervals, just to make certain that no one would follow a trail through them to him. He sold only to clients who were thoroughly screened—and then only after a three-day waiting period after contact and only through leg men who handled the dope but usually had no direct ties themselves to Scala.

Often Scala would pick up a highly recommended, well-heeled customer in his car and drive him around the city for an hour, checking each block of the way to make certain there was no persistent image of a shadowing car in his rear-view mirror. Even then, Scala would let the customer out without actually selling him the narcotics. He would just take the customer's money, and the latter would have to trust Scala to make delivery of

the drugs later through an intermediary.

Carter, always faithful to his role of big buyer for that out-of-state dope ring, passed the scrutiny of hirelings and wormed his way through this intricate protective screen until at last he met and rode and bargained with Scala until he had identified Scala's No. 2 man and frequent deliverer of drugs as Albert Rogin, 32, until he had determined that another big-shot contemporary of Scala—and one of the major sources of supply for heroin and marijuana in the Harlem area—was Howard Botwell, 49, a previously unknown figure to federal agents who had heard of him only by his nickname, "Bots."

When Carter had at last determined all these things, Mr. Greenfeld and the T-Men called on District Attorney Frank S. Hogan, of New York County, who pledged them the police reinforcements needed to pull off a timed, coordinated series of raids that would bag every major suspect.

Carter, whose perfect play-acting in Harlem had set up the entire case, was the man who was also picked to pull the trigger. The signal was to be given at a street rendezvous he had scheduled with Scala for 2 o'clock on the afternoon of January 22nd.

Carter, a punctual man, was waiting at the appointed time. Also waiting were other T-Men and city detectives, who strolled inconspicuously along the street.

The moment arrived when Scala swung his car in toward the curb at the exact spot where Carter was waiting. Scala recognized his big and richly rewarding customer and broke into a beaming smile as he reached across the seat and opened the door for Carter to climb in. The opening door was the opportunity the loitering detectives had been waiting for; they rushed the car from all sides.

Scala reacted swiftly. He kicked the accelerator, jerking the car forward along the street with an agent clinging to the partially opened door. After a few yards, a traffic jam blocked Scala's flight, and he had to brake his car to stop. As he did so, the detectives jerked open both doors and hauled him into the street.

His arrest was the signal that touched off raids and pinches in other parts of the city. Twelve big names in the narcotics racket fell into the hands of the law that day as a result of Carter's six months' work.

An indication of the importance of the arrests came in a formal statement from Mr. Hogan. Botwell, he said, had boasted that his weekly gross income ran between \$5,000 and \$8,000.

Mr. Greenfeld estimated that the raids had cut off the flow of 500 ounces of pure heroin a month throughout the city, and he added:

"We feel that we have hit the New York City illicit narcotic traffic a real body blow."

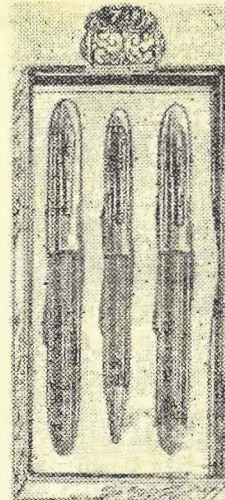
EDITOR'S NOTE:

Mrs. Sophie Krels and her son and daughter, Don and Judy, and Bobby Nixon, as named in this story, are real characters who played the part in the case as set forth herein, but have been given these fictitious names to save them embarrassment.

Since some of the narcotics peddlers and their leaders have not as yet been brought to trial, fictitious names have been substituted for their real ones in the foregoing account. The following are fictitious names, substituted for the real names of the persons involved: Frankie Belisi, Pasquale Belisi, Ahmed Narouk, Pietro Scala, Albert Rogin, Howard Botwell and Jack Tornelli.

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