

The Sea Wolf

Another Thrilling Detective Story in the Series "CALLING ALL CARS"—Actual Crimes Portraying Radio as the Defender of Law

By Moorehead Green

Broad, awkward fingers painstakingly tapped against the key: "CG 249 reporting—" The faint radio signals sped out across the great green swells of the Gulf Stream, coming at last to the Coast Guard headquarters on the Florida sands.

"Sanderlin reporting, position 35 knots off Point Idlewild—Have just captured speed boat with cargo of contraband liquor, taken two prisoners—Impractical to proceed to Bimini with Federal Agent Webster as ordered—We await..."

"Spat!" Boatswain Sanderlin of the Coast Guard never heard the shot which cut him down. The big man was struck by an unseen bullet in the small of the back, and fell awkwardly forward across the telegraph key, his stiffening body closing the switch in a last incoherent signal.

His report never was to be finished. The bo's'n was proud of that report, too. He had something to tell the brass hats about, something that would make his superior officers back at Fort Lauderdale sit up and take notice. The rum-boat which now rocked easily against the side of the Coast Guard cutter long had been a thorn in the flesh of the entire service.

The V13977 had been nabbed, quite by accident, as she headed home toward the Florida coast with her hold full of Bimini rum. One shot had been fired across her bows by the one-pound gun on the deck of the cutter, and then the two men aboard the rum-boat had shut off their motor and come on deck with their hands in the air.

It all had been as easy as that. Sanderlin had congratulated himself that if an officer had been on board, the capture couldn't have been made with any more deftness. The cutter had nosed alongside the helpless rum-boat, and the two prisoners, small, inoffensive looking persons who seemed scared out of their wits, had been taken aboard. Nobody had bothered to search them, for both captives wore only white duck trousers and loose flannel shirts, and there were no tell-tale bulges in their pockets.

Sanderlin, with two of his five men, had gone aboard the rum-boat and surveyed the sacks of whisky and rum bottles. This time the speed boat had no aliens aboard, preparatory to dumping them upon Uncle Sam's back doorstep. There might or might not be a cache of narcotics somewhere on the rakish craft—most of the rum-runners dealt in "happy dust" because the drugs could be purchased in Bimini from the innocent native dealers, using almost anything for money. According to rumor, even Confederate dollars, tobacco chain store coupons, and the like could be passed freely. Certainly there was a good outlet for paper money of the "homemade" variety, which never had come from government printing presses. Indeed, it was upon an investigation into the passing of some of this counterfeit money that Secret Service agent Robert A. Webster happened to be aboard the cutter.

He was to have been deposited at Bimini to carry on a course of investigation which already had taken him several months, and which had turned up a number of beautiful engravings and wads of money perfect in every detail except that the eyes of Lincoln were a bit crossed in the center engraving. It was at Bimini, thought Webster, that his trail would end.

But Robert A. Webster was wrong. He was wrong about several things. For even if Boatswain Sanderlin, a minor petty officer, had not realized the necessity for searching all prisoners, an experienced operative like the crisp and keen Mr. Webster should have done so. Even such harmless looking fellows as these two who called themselves Alderman and Weech should have been frisked. Webster, of course, was only a semi-passenger aboard, but his training in the Secret Service should have taught him watchfulness.

But Robert Webster was leaning idly against the rail of the cutter, watching the coast guardsmen as they

turned out the cargo of contraband booze from the hold of the captured boat. Near by stood one seaman, Victor Lamby, who was watching the prisoners. The pair stood huddled dispiritedly near the forecabin hatch of the cutter. Nobody had bothered even to tie them up.

It was at that moment that Horace Alderman, a small, hairy man of fifty-odd years who blinked at the world through thick spectacles, underwent a strange transformation. His hands slipped beneath his loose flannel shirt, and came out with a pair of vicious, snub-nosed .38's.

One quick leap took him to the door of the pilot-house, where the commander of the Coast Guard cutter was sending his radio report of the lucky capture. Alder-



Alderman and his wife and six children, seen as he lived the better half of his Jekyll-Hyde existence

man shot from the hip, without warning. The bullet ripped through the body of Boatswain Sanderlin, who went down with a thud which shook the boat.

The meek little prisoner suddenly had been transformed into a raging madman, a killer gone berserk. He gave a roar, and leaped to the rail of the cutter. "Line up, you scum!" he shouted. "I'm in command here now!"

Came a moment when everybody stood paralyzed, from sheer surprise. It was impossible!—as if a prisoner in the police lineup suddenly had whipped out a sub-machine gun and covered the detectives who stared at him.

Besides Webster, only Seaman Lamby stood within sight of Alderman. He was unarmed. But there happened to be a rack of rifles in the cabin. He made a plunge for the door, and a bullet from Alderman's gun flung deck splinters into his face.

Another shot whistled past his ears, and in a frantic effort to get out of range Lamby flung himself head first through the engine-room hatch. He almost made it—but not quite. A third shot from the mad-



James Horace Alderman, photographed in his cell, as he wrote the last of a long series of letters to his wife

dened pirate on the deck struck him in the right side, paralyzing his legs. He fell on a heap of oily waste in the engine-room platform. Desperately he hitched himself with his arms between the two engines, where he had some protection from the frothing madman who leaned through the hatchway above.

Alderman wasted a couple more bullets without finishing the job, and then turned his attention to the deck. He was in command of the Coast Guard cutter now,

backed up by Weech who had been his accomplice in rum-running. The crew of the Coast Guard boat all were aboard the captured vessel. Only Webster, the Secret Service man in plain clothes, stood braced against the cutter's rail.

"What are you doing with this outfit?" demanded Alderman.

Webster was unarmed—and he had just seen what had happened to the bo's'n and to poor Lamby. He swallowed.

"They're friends of mine—I came out for some sea air—" he said.

"You'll get it!" Alderman told him.

He wheeled suddenly and went back into the deck house. He came out with Sanderlin's service pistol, firing it once into the deck—"to see if the thing would shoot," as he bawled at the top of his voice.

One of his own guns was empty, and he hurled it into the sea. The other he offered to Weech, his henchman, but Weech shook his head. "I—I'm no shot," he said.

By this time a little huddled group of Coast Guardsmen had gathered on the deck of the speed-boat. Unarmed, dazed by the sudden loss of their leader, the men shook their heads and fumbled. The impossible had happened. They never had been taught what to do under such circumstances. They weren't sure what had happened. One moment they had been tossing bags of liquor bottles onto the deck, and the next they had heard a sudden fusillade...

They knew pretty well what the situation was when Alderman appeared at the (Continued on Page 30)

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rail of the cutter which he had commandeered single-handed, looking down at them and waving a gun in either fist.

"Stick your hands up and keep 'em up!" Alderman yelled furiously.

There were five guardsmen aboard the rum-runner. Four of them—Tuten, Hollingsworth, Lehman and Caudle—obeyed the order. The fifth, John Robinson, snatched up a wrench from the deck of the speed-boat and hurled it into the face of the man with the gun.

Alderman ducked, and the missile sailed on to smash a port in the cutter's deck house.

He raised his gun, and Robinson turned and dived overboard. A torrent of hot lead followed him as he went beneath the surface, but Robinson was a good swimmer and he knew what would be waiting for him when he came up. He went deep down, fighting his way under the rum-boat, and finally came out on the weather side, where he was out of sight of the man with the gun.

Here Robinson clung by his fingernails to the cracks in the side of the boat, and prayed that no shark would come swinging near by to notice his plight. Yet compared with the little man who stalked the deck of the commandeered Coast Guard cutter, a shark was a mild and friendly beast.

"Come back aboard your hell-ship, you scum!" he ordered the four remaining guardsmen. They had no choice for it, but clambered over the rail. Alderman was giving instructions to Weech, waving his gun . . .

The last to come was Lawrence Tuten, Boatswain's Mate. He managed to dip out of sight for a moment, snatch up a bottle of whisky from the broken cases, and dump its contents into the carburetor of the speed-boat. Afterwards he was never sure just why he had done it, but the idea struck him that it might be a good thing to try to put the rum-boat out of commission. It was a feeble and desperate effort, but its effects were to be far-reaching.

The Guardsmen and the Secret Service man were lined up in the stern sheets of the Coast Guard cutter, while Alderman stalked up and down before them, waving his brace of pistols.

"Go on below and smash the gas lines!" he was roaring at Weech. "I've got two of 'em already, and I'm going to blast the rest of 'em with their own guns and set fire to the tub!"

It was a pretty combination of charges that the rum-runner was laying himself open to—at first he had faced nothing worse than two to five years for violation of liquor laws, but now he had added murder, barratry, piracy, assault, to say nothing of attempted arson. Weech slid down the engine-room hatch of the Coast Guard boat, and found Lamby moaning under the engines.

He kicked the guardsman into consciousness. "Smash the gasoline lines!" he ordered.

Lamby shook his head. "I—I can't move!" he moaned.

Weech didn't know his way around the engine room. He picked up a pipe-wrench and began to beat the wounded man. "Do what I say or I'll smash your skull!"

Lamby weakly tried to pull himself away from the other. His voice came faintly through the open hatch to the little group who waited in the stern sheets under the menacing guns of Alderman.

"I can't do it—not if you kill me!" screamed Lamby. "I can't move!"

Weech could waste no more time on the wounded man. He took the pipe-wrench and smashed blindly at the pipes and valves near him. By sheer luck he struck one of the gasoline lines which run between vacuum tanks and carburetors, and was rewarded by the spurting of gasoline.

"Got it!" he yelled triumphantly, and hoisted himself aloft.

He found Alderman alone on the speed-boat, but still covering the men on the cutter. "I got the engine room full of gasoline," reported Weech.

He was ordered to get Lamby up on deck. "He can't move, Horace. You crippled him. Let him lay . . ."

Alderman didn't like the looks of that. "You take this gun and go down and blow his head off!" he demanded.

Weech shook his head.

"Go on! You're in this as much as I am. Take the gun!"

"I can't hit nothing with a gun," complained Weech. "If you're going to fire the boat that'll take care of

the guy in the engine room."

The captive guardsmen listened to this dialogue helplessly. Webster tried to argue. He pointed out that it was insane to murder eight men over a cargo of liquor.

"That cargo's worth two thousand dollars!" said Alderman savagely. "And there'll be none of you to bear witness against me!"

It was the old doctrine of "dead men tell no tales." The man intended to shoot them down in cold blood, fire the cutter, and then speed away in his own boat. A blackened hulk would sink beneath the surface, and sharks would do the rest. No word of the crew of the CG 249 would ever get back to Fort Lauderdale.

"Hurry it up!" Alderman ordered. "Fire the boat!"

Weech was in the spirit of the thing by this time. He saw at last that they had a really good chance of getting away with it . . . cargo and all. Nothing ever could pin the crime on them, once this cutter went

gas lines and thus had failed to empty the tanks as had been planned.

But one thought flickered in the brain of Victor Lamby. He knew that he was through—knew that there was no hope for him with his shattered spine.

But still duty urged him forward—the same impulse which had made him make a blind and foolhardy rush for the armory when the prisoner suddenly murdered his superior officer. The flame crept toward the gas . . .

Somehow—it is almost beyond human imagination—Coast Guardsman Victor Lamby hitched and fought his way across the oily, gasoline-soaked deck and beat out those menacing tongues of flame with his own hands, with his own body!

Then he passed out, a blackened, charred object—but a hero.

Up above, the madman's plans were nearly perfected. Robinson, the man who had hurled the wrench, had been hauled aboard and lined up with his comrades. Alderman was going to take no chances of a body floating back to shore—he knew that burned bodies sink to stay sunk.

Robert Webster, the mild-mannered and scholarly Secret Service operative, made another plea for the lives of himself and his fellows. "For the love of Heaven let us get into a small boat and pull for shore," he begged.

That gave Alderman a huge laugh. "You slob," he roared back. "I'm going to kill you first. You're one of those snoopers who sneak around trying to get something on good, decent citizens . . ."

Webster realized that his secret was out. "If you're going to fire the boat and run for it, hadn't you better start your own motor and get a safe distance away?" he shouted then.

He made the suggestion in hopes of saving them from the bullets of the madman. The flames beneath their feet would be bad enough, but to burn to death while lying wounded and helpless . . .

Alderman retorted that he wanted no suggestions from the Coast Guard and their like. But all the same, on second thought, he realized that the suggestion was a sane one. When the flames which, as he thought, would soon pour from the hold of the CG 249 were sweeping the cutter, his speed-boat would best be several lengths away.

He sent Weech below to start the motor, still keeping his gun trained on the men who stood in the stern sheets of the larger boat. A long delay came. The motor started, roared, and then died away. Tuten smiled grimly to himself. That whisky which he had dumped into the top of the carburetor had done the job.

Weech didn't know enough about gas engines to try draining the carburetor of the speed-boat. He fussed with the motor interminably. Once again he got it started . . .

Then it died. Alderman was fast losing patience. He turned to stare down into the hold of his own boat, and at that moment Special Agent Webster went into action.

He had stood helpless long enough before the guns of the killer. His pride was at stake. He had watched while two of the Coast Guards had been shot down in cold blood—and now, desperate and blind, he flung himself down to the deck of the rum-boat, and grappled with Alderman.

Hardly a step behind came Lawrence Tuten, followed by the others.

Now the attention of the madman had been distracted for a moment. It was a desperate chance against terrible odds, but they took it.

Webster grabbed Alderman's left hand, in which he was holding a .38. He tried a jiu-jitsu hold, twisting the arm back . . .

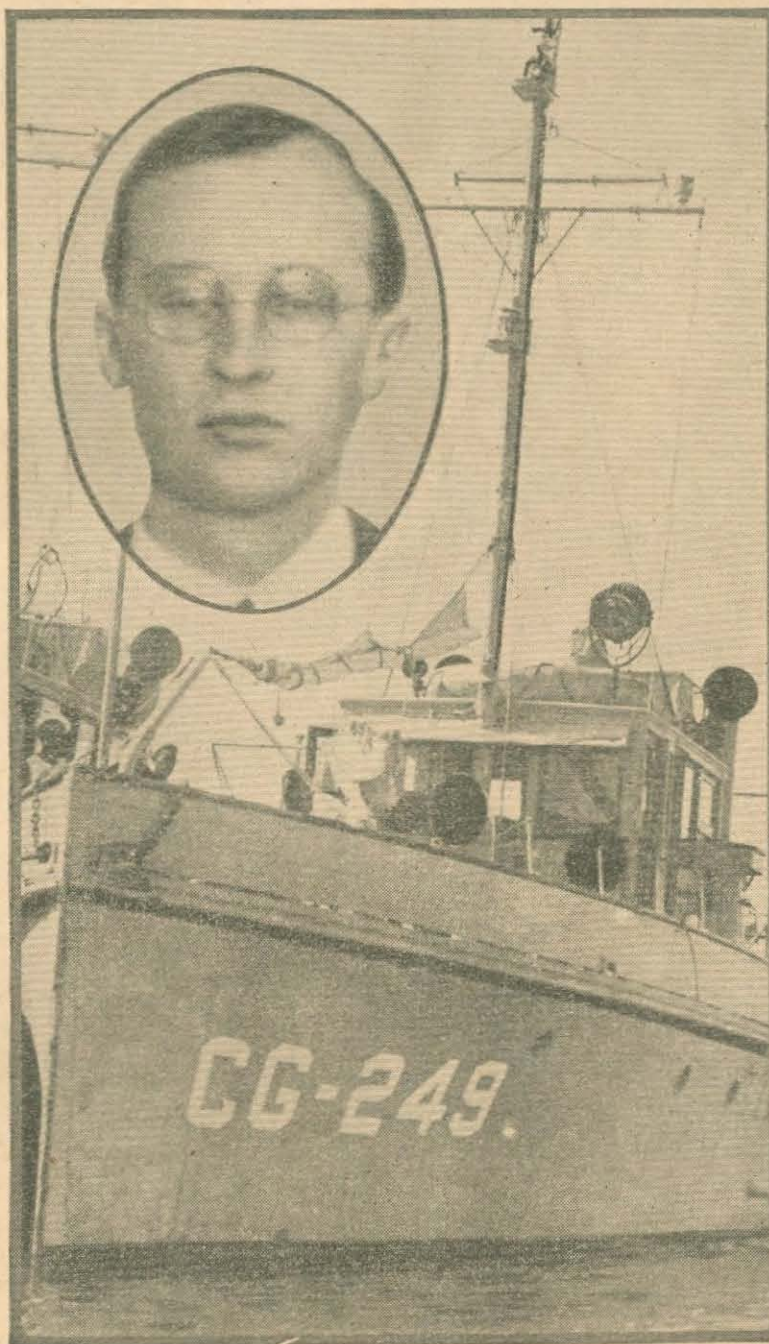
It was a noble try, but the odds were too great. Alderman, the wild and hairy little demon, jerked from his pocket the .45 which he had taken from the holster of his first victim, and pressing the muzzle against Webster's forehead he pulled the trigger.

Boatswain's Mate Tuten by this time had grabbed Alderman's other arm, and they wrestled across the deck. He was flung away by a quick shift on the part of the wiry little man.

Hollingsworth was the third Coast Guardsman to land on the deck of the rum-boat. He dived for the legs of Alderman, who raised his gun and sent a bullet through Hollingsworth's shoulder, flinging him backwards so that he toppled helpless into the water between the two boats, which were drifting apart.

Caudle, another of the Coast Guardsmen, by this time had dived head foremost into the hold of the rum-runner, where he was having a hand-to-hand battle with Weech.

But Alderman, master (Continued on Page 31)



Actual photograph of the Coast Guard Cutter CG 249, captured single-handed by a desperado of the high seas. The insert shows R. H. Webster, member of the United States Secret Service, who with three others paid tribute with their lives to the berserk fury of a criminal at bay

into the fathomless depths of the sea with her cargo of dying men . . .

He lit a match and tossed it down into the engine-room hatch. It flickered . . . and caught suddenly as a bit of oily waste took fire!

Victor Lamby, the man who lay broken and beaten between the two engines of the cutter, was awakened from his death coma by the acrid smell of smoke. There were five gallons or so of gasoline sloshing in the hold—as luck would have it Weech had missed the main

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of the situation still because of the two guns in his hands, stood like a wolf at bay—a sea wolf ready to rend its prey. In spite of the desperate sacrifice of Webster, in spite of Hollingsworth's brave attack, he still held the balance of power.

John Robinson, the fat, good-natured cook of the Coast Guard boat, because of his size was last over the rail of the cutter. Meantime, he had dashed into his own galley and come out with an ice-pick—the handiest weapon.

He hurled it, from the rail of the CG 249—and his aim did not fail. Straight and true the missile went, striking Alderman on the forehead just as he raised his gun to shoot down Tuten.

Alderman staggered, dazed by the force of the blow. He fired, blindly, and the bullet ripped across the waves beyond the boat.

But Robinson really went into action now. His long submersion in the water did not improve his temper. He leaped to the deck of the rum-boat, snatched up his ice-pick, and buried it six times in the chest of the would-be pirate!

Coast Guardsman Lehman in the interim had armed himself with a triangular boat-scraper, which he swung with such hearty good will upon the back of Alderman's skull that the man measured his length upon the deck.

All hands rushed to secure the remaining desperado, who came flying out of the forward hatch of the rum-boat, saw his partner lying helpless on the deck, and promptly dived overboard.

A stiff wind by this time had blown up from the east, and the mooring lines snapped. The two boats drifted apart.

Somehow, anyhow, the remaining guardsmen fished Hollingsworth out of the water where he had been paddling feebly with one arm. They lowered a dinghy which was on the deck of the rum-boat, and so got a line to the drifting cutter. Next they recaptured Weech, who was swimming out to sea.

It might have been better for Bob Weech if he had been able to make his escape and had gone on to take his chances with the Gulf Stream and the sharks. But he was hauled back aboard the Coast Guard cutter and put in irons.

Beside him on the deck lay Alderman, the quiet little man with the thick spectacles and the thick black hair on chest and arms. He, too, had been put in irons, for though wounded he still breathed.

Two prisoners in irons—Webster and Sanderlin stiffening under tarpaulins—Lamby and Hollingsworth dead or dying from their wounds—and the Coast Guard cutter disabled and drifting.

They were far off the regular course between Florida and Bimini now, with a whipping north-easterly gale howling around their ears. The CG 249 was disabled completely from Weech's deft work with the pipe-wrench, and the rum-boat was in almost as bad condition.

Commanding officers dead—half the crew disabled—the men aboard the CG 249 drifted helplessly down toward the Gulf of Mexico.

And then, over the horizon, like an answer to unspoken prayer, came the sharp prow of a ship.

The radio operator back at Fort Lauderdale couldn't understand why Boatswain Sanderlin didn't complete his message and stand by for orders. He spent a few minutes trying to call back to CG 249, and then reported to his superior officer.

"It's not like Sanderlin to be slipshod about a thing like that," the officers decided. They knew the course he had been given, which would take him to Bimini with his official passenger. They knew the drift of the Gulf Stream, and the force of the rising gale.

Finally a captain put his finger on a certain spot on the chart. "Go get 'em," he barked gruffly.

That was how Lieutenant Beckwith Jordan happened to come splashing through the gale, straight as a ruled line to where the helpless Coast Guard cutter drifted with her captive rum-boat.

Horace Alderman's desperate attempt to beat a rap for liquor-smuggling by murdering eight men and burning their vessel, had taken less than three-quarters of an hour. But Boatswain Sanderlin's suddenly cut off radio message had contained enough information to set a course for the rescuers, and now everything was under control again. An officer—a real commissioned officer—walked the deck of the CG 249.

Lieutenant Jordan looked down at the hairy little man who had tried and failed. He knew him as a respectable business man of Tampa, a grandfather, a church member, and a member of the Chamber of Commerce!

"Mr. Alderman," he said, "I'll really enjoy seeing you hung."

But there still remained the law's delays. Public sympathy was raised for Alderman because of his civic standing in the community. He only had acted in self-defense after the Coast Guardsmen fired on his boat, said some. People pointed to his wife, his five children and two grandchildren.

There was a trial, where the Coast Guardsmen swore to the black and horrible truth of that 45 minutes aboard the CG 249. Mute witnesses were Sanderlin, Webster, Lamby and Hollingsworth, the four dead men. Weech saved his life by turning State's Evidence, but he was permitted to spend the rest of it only behind the bars of the Florida state prison.

After a long, drawn out legal battle, Horace Alderman, in spite of the tears and pleas of his wife, his daughters and granddaughters, was sentenced to hang.

Here another snag was struck. The State of Florida refused to hang him, although the Federal government prescribes hanging as the penalty for a capital offense against the government. But Florida had just adopted the electric chair as a means of execution.

"No electric chair for Horace Alderman," said the Coast Guard grimly.

Alderman waited in a cool and airy cell, amusing himself by writing long letters to his family, and by intensively going in for religion. But in spite of his pious frame of mind, he was dragged from his cool and airy cell one dull Florida winter's morning, and taken to Fort Lauderdale.

There at the Coast Guard base, in sight of the windows of the radio room where had been received the oddly cut-off message of Boatswain Sanderlin, Horace Alderman looked upon a gibbet erected in the doorway of an airplane hangar.

He whimpered and wailed and cried upon the God whose creed he had forgotten, to perform a miracle and save him. But the would-be pirate was doomed.

He stepped off into thin air before an audience which included every one of the men he had planned to murder in the midst of the Gulf Stream—and the last things he saw were the stern faces of the buddies of the four men he had slain.

In the radio room at Fort Lauderdale, a young dispatcher tapped his key and sent a message into Nowhere.

"Calling Boatswain Sanderlin," he said. "Reporting mission fulfilled—everything okay."

He broke off suddenly. "I wish Sanderlin could tune in on that message, wherever he is," he said aloud.

Lieutenant Beckwith Jordan pulled a green shade at the window, shutting away the sight of the twitching, hooded thing which dangled from the gallows.

"How do you know he can't?" snapped the Lieutenant.

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