The Icehouse Murder

By Marshall Graves

"Calling All Cars . . . Calling All Cars . . . Reported Missing: Dorette Zietlow, 2½ years old . . . Disappeared While Playing . . . May Have Been Kidnaped . . ." She Was. And Found Dying. Here Was a Challenge to 6,000 Policemen

Shining tears ran in the furrows of Grandma Witte's cheeks. On that Sabbath evening in April, 1934, she stumbled into the 32nd Chicago precinct police station, with a weeping twelve-year-old girl and two little boys of about four.

"A big boy took away my little grandchild, Dorette!" gasped Grandma Witte to Acting Captain Charles Essig.

"The kids were playing in the alley," said bright little Doris Zietlow, pointing to the two four-year-old lads. "My little brother Kenneth here, and Sonny Juengling. My little sister Dorette was with them. And a big boy came——"

The child broke off her statement to throw loving arms about the sad-faced old lady. Grandma Witte wept silently, with the patient sorrow of the poor and the old.

"Kenneth," said Captain Essig, "you tell us just what happened to Dorette, and how she went away."

"Well, we were playing tag in the alley," piped Kenneth excitedly. "There was Dorette, and Sonny here and me. Well Dorette was 'it,' and she couldn't catch Sonny or me. Well that made her cry. Then a big boy in long pants came walking down the alley. Well he said: 'Stop crying and we'll go get a nickel.' But Dorette said she didn't want to leave Sonny and me. So this fellow said: 'We'll go and find a nickel and then we'll come back and get your brother, and he and I'll go find another nickel!' 'And then he said: 'I'll take your friend out and get a nickel for him too.' So Dorette went along with him. He took her hand and they walked down the alley."

"About how big was this boy?" asked Captain Essig.

"Gee, I dunno. Well he was lots bigger'n Sonny or me."

"About this high?" Captain Essig extended his arm.

"Uh-huh!" Both boys nodded agreement.

"Do you remember what kind of clothes he had on?"

"Sure!" said Kenneth. "He had long pants and a dark coat and a cap. He had a light shirt and a necktie. The necktie was—let's see. Well gee, I can't remember what color the necktie was."

Realizing that it would be impossible to get an accurate description from these youngsters, Essig turned his attention to the grandmother.

Haltingly, frequently choking with emotion, she described the kidnaped child and her clothes. " . . . and white stockings," the old lady quavered. "I just darned them this morning." She bowed her head and could speak no more.

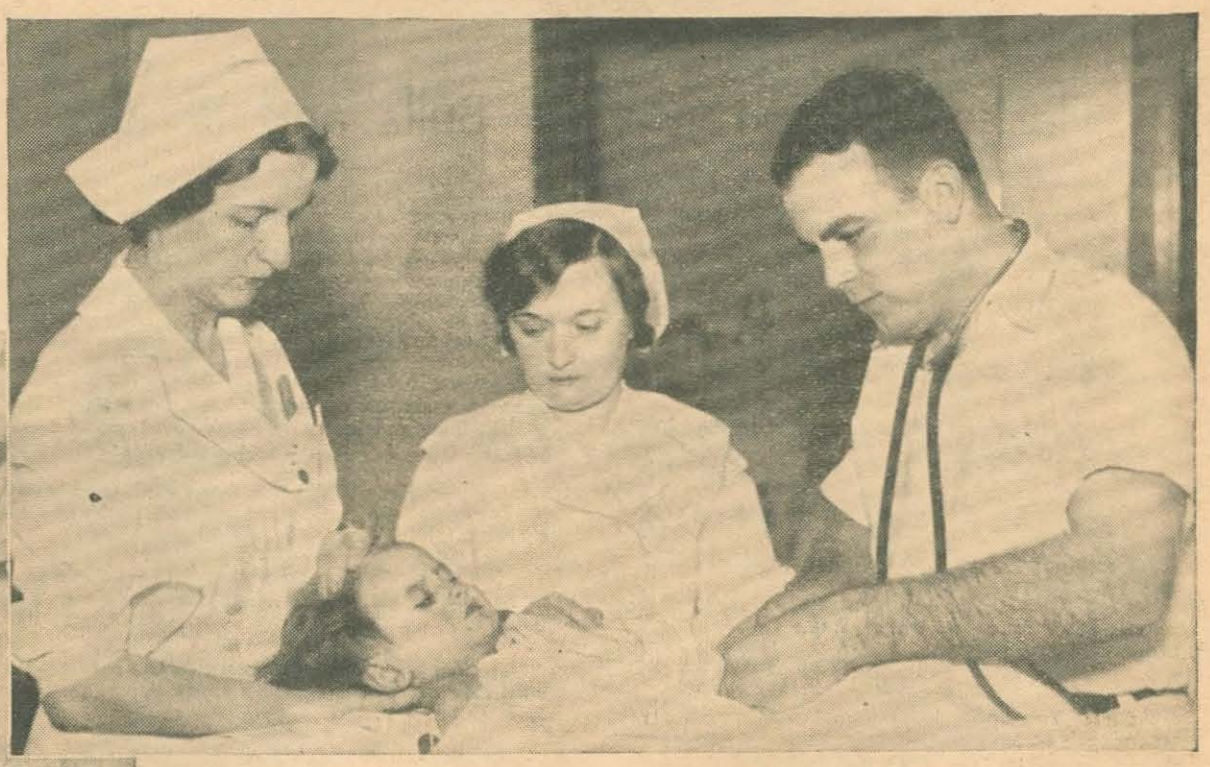
But there was another voice which did not fail; the strong, authoritative voice of the police radio broadcaster who—in just a few moments—was blanketing Chicago with this message:

"All squads attention! Reported missing. Dorrette Zietlow, 2½ years old, weighs about 40 pounds. Dressed in pink tam, pink sweater, white stockings, black skirt, blue waist, black patent-leather shoes, pink bloomers and white slip. Disappeared around 4 o'clock this afternoon while playing in the alley at rear of her home 1942 North Central Park Avenue. May have been kidnaped by moron. If found, notify the 32nd district . . ."

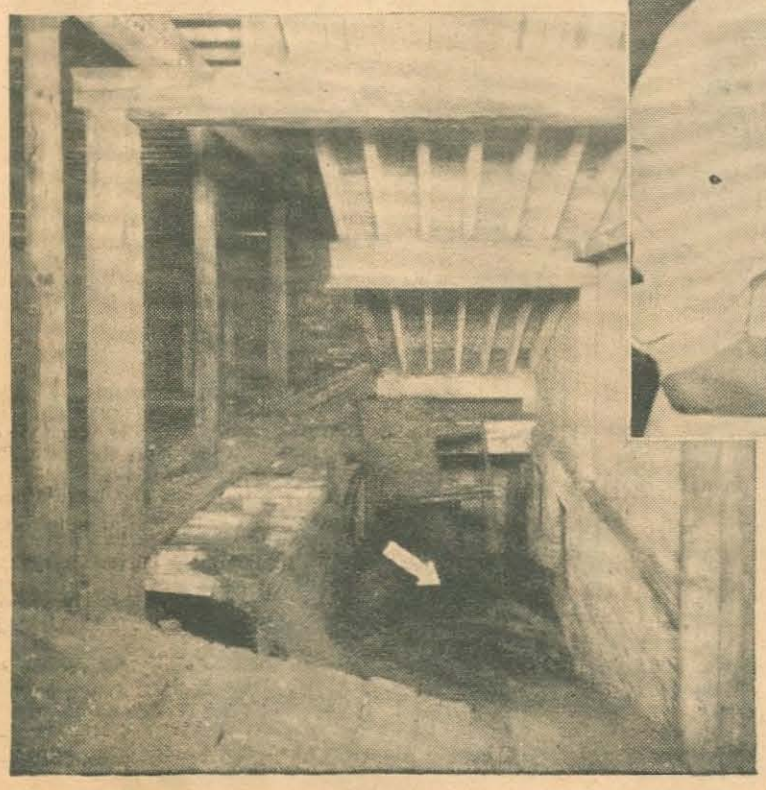
"Trouble, trouble." murmured Grandma Witte, gently. "Nothing but trouble. My son's wife lost her mind. She's in the State Hospital for the Insane. I have taken care of the children since just after Dorette was born. My son can't get steady work. We are on relief, and now we'll never see Dorette again. Trouble . . . why did this happen to us?" And the quiet tears of despair rolled down the old woman's worry-lined face, as she took her two remaining grandchildren home to her dark, shabby basement flat.

One day passed—two, while every radio patrol car, every policeman among Chicago's thousands, proceeded under orders to find *(Continued on Page 29)*

Young George Rogalski, photographed during the days of the Chicago trial that rocked a nation because of the youth of the accused



Dorette Zietlow as she lay in St. Elizabeth's Hospital, Chicago, while every effort known to science was expended to save her life



Interior of the icehouse where Dorette was found. Arrow indicates the spot where she lay prostrate when radio police "cracked the case"

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immediately to her bedside. The old grandmother moaned when she saw the blackened flesh. Pitiful as was the baby's condition, however, already there had been a tremendous improvement. Under the administration of stimulants, the feeble pulse was increasing in strength and frequency. The child had begun to breathe perceptibly.

Grandma Witte prayed.

It seemed that her prayer was to be answered. Medical skill had done its utmost . . . Slowly the child's eyes flickered open . . . Baby Dorette smiled feebly. "Papa . . . gramma," she murmured. The old woman clasped and unclasped her hands.

But the head doctor sighed. Slowly the baby's eyes closed, and she died.

In the office of the hospital, Essig was questioning the two boys, Henry Koda and Walter Ciesielski. As a result of their revelations, another radio flash galvanized Chicago's patrol system:

"Attention all cars . . . attention all cars . . . wanted for kidnaping and murder. Boy, 13 or 14 years old. Height, 5 feet to 5 feet 2 inches. Weight, around 110 pounds. Wearing white shirt, blue corduroy long pants, brown lumberjacket, gray cap and black shoes. Complexion medium. Name unkown. Thought to live in neighborhood around Oakley Avenue and Wilmot Street. If apprehended, notify 32nd district . . . Attention all cars . . . wanted for kidnaping and murder . . ."

Radio Cars Close in

"Dis afternoon," young Henry Koda told Captain Essig, "me and my brother Robert, and Walter here, and two other guys, we was playing near the icehouse. A guy comes along and tells us to *scram*. He was about 14 years old. So we run home, but we see him crawlin' through a hole in the basement.

"So Walter and my brother and me come back, with one of the other guys, about half an hour later. We thought they was gangsters in the building. One of the guys said maybe it had something to do with the missin' baby he'd heard about over the radio at home. Anyway, we got some clubs and went in there . . . and there was the baby."

"This fellow that told you to 'scram'," said Essig. "Do you know him?"

"I dunno what his name is," Walter spoke up, "But I seen him around the neighborhood lots. I think he lives near the corner of Oakley Avenue and Wilmot Street."

Again Essig picked up the hospital telephone, and another radio message went out from police headquarters:

"Attention Car 56 . . . Car 56 . . . Car 56 . . . Upon arrival of relief from detail at 1780 Milwaukee Avenue, proceed to vicinity of Oakley Avenue and Wilmot Street and make enquiries for boy described in preceding message. Attention Car 56 . . ."

In Car 56—which a few minutes before had been detailed to watch the abandoned icehouse—were Officers William Moffett and Edward Culluney. As soon as their relief arrived, they followed their radioed instructions, and set out to comb the Oakley-Wilmot district. It was painstaking, plodding police work—but radio had

Acting Captain of Police Essig, who directed the radio search for little Dorette

lightened the task in two ways: first, by starting the search seconds, not hours, after the clues had been gathered; and second, by arousing the neighborhood in which the two policemen were obliged to search.

Dozens of radio fans had followed the police flashes. As Moffett and Culluney went from door to door, asking if anyone knew a youth in the district who answered to the description broadcast, they found that already this broadcast description had set the neighborhood to thinking.

"Yes," said one housewife, "that might be George Rogalski. He lives around the corner, at 1863 North Oakley Avenue. I thought of him when I heard the police broadcast a little while ago."

So the two officers went to the Rogalski home. There they found George.

A little persistent questioning, and George confessed:

"I just wanted to look at her," he said. He had walked the child for three miles to the vacant structure, then carried her upstairs in his arms.

"I just wanted to look at her, and the building was the only place I could take her. She was pretty. I didn't touch her or anything. I just looked at her. She wasn't scared. She only seemed worried and missed her grandmother and sister. Pretty soon I heard a noise in the building and I got scared and ran away.

"I went to school the next day, and about five o'clock Tuesday afternoon I went back to the building. Some boys were playing around there, and I told them to 'scram.' Then I went upstairs and looked at the little girl. There were some black marks on her. I went home and had supper, and then you came and got me."

Examination of the child disclosed that she had not been harmed by more than exposure and starvation. George merely *had* looked at her, an adolescent curiosity that brought him to trial for murder.

The jury that heard the trial found him guilty. Moved by the boy's youth and the underprivileged character of his home environment, they fixed his punishment at ten years in prison, at least until he had attained his twenty-first birthday. Under Illinois law, so youthful a defendant is sent to the reformatory rather than the penitentiary, and on Sept. 1, George was admitted to Pontiac, closing one of the most sensational cases in Chicago's redbook of crime.

Sensational also was the speed—thanks to radio—with which the case was solved. Due to radio's dual capacity for arousing the community and enlisting public cooperation, and of speeding police organization, the boy responsible for the death of little Dorette was caught long before daylight of the morning following the discovery of the dying child in the icehouse.

In Next Week's Issue of RADIO GUIDE: From Barber Chair to Hot Squat

The Chicago barber who heard his customers talking about a big cash pay-roll, decided to lay aside his shears for a grimmer implement. He made up his mind to trim the paymaster—with an automatic, if necessary. But the trail that led from the barber-shop to the pay-off at the end of Chicago's Navy Pier—one mile out in Lake Michigan—also led from the barber chair to the electric chair. In next week's RADIO GUIDE you will find the story of how radio found this murder-trail—and what the police did about it.

WINNERS OF JINGLE NO. 11

Published in Radio Guide Issue Week Ending Oct. 13th

When Roosevelt speaks on the air,
I'm thrilled quite beyond all compare.
He's a great President,
And to me he has meant

1st Prize $25 — Verne E. Starks, Denver, Colo.
"The end of 'red ink' and 'gray hair.' "

2nd Prize $15 — G. M. McKelvey, Pittsburgh, Pa.
"New faith in the flag we all share."

3rd Prize $10 — Mrs. Gust A. Oberg, Deerwood, Minn.
"A new deal with aces to spare."

$5.00 Prizes:

O. J. Mullen, Philadelphia, Pa.
Samuel . Hembree, Elizabeth, N. J.
Mrs. R. C. Carr, Oklahoma City, Okla.
Mrs. J. R. Shelton, Austin, Tex.
Kenneth B. Webb, Saxton's River, Vt.
Ernest R. Lowe, Waltham, Mass.
Mrs. Harriet E. Olson, Valley City, N. D.
Mrs. R. Douglass Gage, Port Gibson, Miss.
H. R. Shaw, Jackson, Mich.
Mrs. H. Featherstone, Minneapolis, Minn.

What, No Villains?

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points out, the radio sister complains of her teasing brother (and we know this happens in real life) and when the brother rudely retorts with "Shut up! You're always tattling!" (real life again) the mother or some other character could then, or a little later, administer the necessary and salutary correction. The listening children would benefit thereby. It is not inconsistent in real life to have repentance and apology follow the words or acts of a transgressor.

I have written nearly 400 books for boys, girls and children, and more than 7000 daily bedtime stories. I have told hundreds of my stories over the air and they appeared to be liked. In each book or story there has been the element of conflict and a more or less complete villain. I have made it a policy to let the good triumph and the bad meet with defeat and punishment. I am aware that in real life this system too often is reversed.

But I incline that much toward idealism. In the course of a quarter of a century of writing for the young I have found it is the best policy to govern what little influence on youthful character my writings and broadcasts may have had.

In conclusion I would say, let the broadcasts for children by child and adult actors be as nearly realistic as is common with life itself within the bounds of reason. But since it is easily within the powers of writers, broadcasters and the wireless protrayers, let them make all this a medium for little lessons in kindness, thoughtfulness and politeness, and mix with it healthful fun and happiness. My practice, in writing my little daily stories, has been to send the child to bed with a smile. Perhaps this isn't always possible in the continuity of radio sketches but it should be the aim.

Above all, the vivid imaginations of children should not be overlooked. These imaginations should be stimulated gently and fed, but tenderly cared for; they are easy to shock and blight, causing harm that many years will not eradicate.