

THE ARENA:  
A Sports Mystery

Stephen Hardy

# THE ARENA: A SPORTS MYSTERY

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## Dedications

This book is dedicated to Mr. Francis X. Moloney, long-time Assistant Director of the Boston Public Library, and to Jack Grinold, long-time sports information guru at Northeastern University.

Frank Moloney (1910-1979) joined the BPL staff in 1952, two decades after graduating Harvard ('31) magna cum laude in History. He was active in politics and community service. More than anything, however, he was known as THE expert in *Bostoniana*. I met him in June of 1976, when I stumbled across a Boston Public Library catalogue card referencing material from Michael T. McGreevy (aka McGreevey) as part of a *Tradition of Boston Sports* collection. I found Mr. Moloney in his office, and he befriended me, giving advice for the next three years. I helped him retrieve a few dozen boxes containing the personal collection of long-time *Boston Globe* sports columnist Harold Kaese, from Lynn Beach to a BPL storage area. Alas, Mr. Moloney and his wife died tragically in May 1979 after being hit by a car while walking their dog on the Jamaica Way. His *Boston Globe* obituary mentioned his love of Boston sports and his efforts to build an archival collection. Longtime *Globe* sportswriter/editor Jerry Nason noted that Mr. Moloney “wanted this material available so that any young person who wanted to make a career out of sports could use it for a reference center.” Nason might have been talking about me. In fact, I believe I was the first person, young or old, to use the McGreevy images in a book—*How Boston Played: Sport, Recreation and Community, 1865-1915* (1982, reprinted 2005). I think Mr. Moloney would have enjoyed reading my subsequent publications on Boston sports. He would have also enjoyed working with Boston sport historians like Richard Johnson, Bernie Corbett, Joe Bertagna, and Glenn Stoudt.

For five decades, Jack Grinold (1935-2017), was a central figure in sports at Northeastern University and in Boston. Starting with the Huskies in 1962 as Sports Information Director, his roles and titles expanded across sports and culture. He was inducted into the College Sports Information Directors of America Hall of Fame (1994), the Beanpot Hockey Hall of Fame (2012), the Massachusetts Hockey Hall of Fame (2009), and the New England Basketball Hall of Fame (2003). He was also a proprietor of the Boston Athenaeum, a trustee of WGBH-TV, and an officer of the Victorian Society in America's New England Chapter. He was beloved by all those lucky enough to be around him. A 1957 graduate of my alma mater, Bowdoin College, he introduced himself to all Polar Bear teams that played at the Arena. But he became a good friend when I worked at the E.C.A.C. as Asst. to the Commissioner and Hockey Supervisor from 1976-79. Like Frank Moloney, he was a crucial guide when I dug into research on early hockey in Boston and especially in the Boston Arena.

I think Frank and Jack would have enjoyed reading this historical novel. May they rest—and read—in peace!

## Preface

This is a work of fiction. But it is based on years of research into hockey history. Some of the characters are pure fantasy. Some are based on real figures. Others were actual people. In all cases, I have tried to be true to the historical record. In some cases, I have used direct quotations from primary and secondary sources. Most game accounts come straight from *Boston Globe*, *Boston Herald*, or *New York Times* coverage. There was **an actual series between women's teams** from Boston and New York in March 1917, and more in the 1920s. There was **an actual team of black players called the *Panthers***, who played in the late 1920s. My co-author Andy Holman has done important research and writing on these teams. I have simply moved the games ahead in time. See **Note on Sources** in back.

## 1

Nate Towne set the gear in *Park*. He was still learning the ways of the 1912 Model T Touring motor car, which the Arena board of directors purchased in Boston's emerging used auto market. It was useful—on days above freezing and on roads without mud or ice or snow. He took a last, long drag of the Camel cigarette, rubbed the butt into the small can, then flicked it onto St. Botolph St. He opened the door, moved his left foot to the running board, and started to step out from his seat. The sun was just reaching over the Arena's main building, triggering an array of little rainbows off the glass panels that crowned the roof. Then he saw his image in the side mirror. Time for a beard trim.

He took a deep breath to clean his lungs. He smelled the heavy aroma of fried bacon wafting down from Nemo's Diner on the far side of Massachusetts Ave. Another deep breath almost convinced him to have a second breakfast. But not today.

His eyes tracked back up to the banner flapping in the northeast breeze on the pole above the main entry's magnificent Roman arch. The shadow wriggled ghost-like on the street.

He never tired of the Arena's design. As one newspaper review put it, "this is a grand building, and it should have a grand entry." He opened the door. Beyond the rotunda and lobby, the sixty-foot-long foyer continued the arches, held up by pillars along its walls. Halfway down the foyer, his associate was facing the large set of windows that looked onto the ice surface.

"Good morning Mr. Carney," Nate said as he approached. "How did your practice go?"

"We're getting better. Five guys can skate pretty good. Gotta recruit a few more. I'm still learning that rover position. Goalie is shaky. I may have to suit up in those pads." Carney ran his right thumb and forefinger down across his gray moustache and goatee.

"Have you settled on a team name?"

Carney slipped his thumbs inside the top of his overalls. "The Panthers." He pursed his lips and shook his head. "Not my idea."

Nate put his hand on Carney's shoulder. "A proud name for the team and their leader. And the Arena is proud to support you. And the women's team."

Carney smiled. "Trotter published Elsie's story in *The Guardian*. Now to get some real games"

"The *Globe* and the *Herald* have the same story," said Nate.

"We'll see how good we are when we scrimmage tomorrow."

Nate looked through the windows, which faced the length of the stands and ice surface. Nils Johnson was gently coaxing a harnessed horse off the far end into the attached building that housed the boiler room, the ammonia compressors, the brine cooler, and the engine room. A crew of three young men were sweeping and shoveling swaths of snowy chips into large carts for dumping out back.

"Nils and the boys decided the ice needed plane-ing," Carney said. "They're just finishing up."

"There must be a better way." Nate shook his head. "An old auto or tractor with a hitch behind. No horse shit to clean."

A loud ring echoed in the foyer.

Carney hustled to pick up a phone receiver mounted on the wall beside the window. "Boston Arena" he said, then paused to listen. "Let me test back to you." He hung up, waited, picked up,

put a coin in the slot, listened, gave a number to the operator, listened. Then said, “OK. I think we are good to go.”

He held his right hand out toward Nate, his fingers in a tight grip, with his thumb extended up. “We’re good.”

“There you have it, Panther,” Nate said. “We now have a pay phone in the foyer of America’s finest hockey arena. We have the most modern available system for the public to make and receive calls, for a nickel. But out there,” he pointed to the windows, “we have a horse in harness to clear the ice.”

“Funny you say that,” said Carney. “Nils is tinkering with some big metal tanks. Hundred gallon. Two hundred gallon. On a simple frame with wheels. He’s fitting them with trailing pipes that sprinkle hot water. He thinks he could have two guys skate and push the tanks to make new ice between halves.”

“This I have to see.”

Carney smiled. Then he reviewed with Nate the day’s projects of cleaning dressing rooms, checking equipment, sweeping floors, and all the other backend tasks that made the Arena run smoothly.

“What about Donald Skelton?” Nate asked.

“He should be home this morning,” Carney said. “I talked to his brother Raymie a half hour ago.” Carney added more details, then nodded a goodbye and left the foyer down the broad stairway that led to the lower level.

Nate walked back to his office off the small lobby just inside the rotunda. He sat down on his oak swivel chair, placed his old Army canvas haversack on the matching oak desk, then took a slow, deep breath as he ran his finger along the fading letters “U.S.” He pulled out the simple school journal that he used for keeping his thoughts. His sister Elsie gave him the first one after his return from Cuba. “Writing is a way to process your life and everything around you,” she said. He opened a new pack of Camel cigarettes, gently tapped one out, lit it, and smoked as he read a few of the entries. Writing and smoking were twin therapies. He had fifteen journal volumes now, packed in a box at home that reeked of tobacco smoke. Elsie said he might have a good memoir in all that material. Just let your mind go, she advised. Don’t censor anything. He opened a drawer and took out the new *Parker Self-Filler* fountain pen she gave him for Christmas. On the first blank page he wrote:

*Tuesday, 8 February 1916, 8:50 am, office. Blustery and getting colder.*

*Big week for the Arena. B.A.A. vs Arena HC on Wednesday and Harvard vs Yale Saturday.*

*About as good as it gets for American hockey. We will be ready in our operations. But some things are out of our control, and they drop like mortar shells from nowhere.*

*Hockey arenas look alike in many ways. New York, Montreal, Toronto, Boston. They all have a lobby, ticket windows, ice sheet, seating, maybe a concourse. It is the people who distinguish one rink from the other. The players in home or visitor colors: gliding, smacking, and thumping on their dagger-sharp blades of steel. The workers in their gray overalls, sweeping and shoveling piles of slushy chips, tinkering with the compressors. The managers in their frayed wool jackets, negotiating contracts, hawking ice time, parrying the press. The spectators—the fans, cranks, and bugs in all manner of attire—looking for some kind of salvation or redemption in their support, their love, or their hate, for a team or a player. The writers with their nicotine-stained fingers, pressing anyone for a scoop. They all add their mark to the scene and the atmosphere.*

*But a bigger difference lies among the shadowy figures who lurk inside and outside the building, mostly unnoticed, with or without power, often to no good end.*

A knock on his door broke the spell. Nate stubbed out the second cigarette, stood up, then waved at the stocky man who nodded back, his grey Fedora in one hand, his Malacca cane in the other.

"Please have a seat, Mr. Harrington," said Nate. "Or would you prefer the Directors Room?"

"This is fine, Nate." Now in his mid-sixties, Bradford Harrington Sr. looked all the "modern" man. Clean shaven, graying hair slicked with oil, trimmed on the sides and the back. Fine but simple wool suit from E.T. Slattery. Starched collar. Pince Nez spectacles framing his clear blue eyes. Proper dress for one of Boston's most distinguished attorneys and board chairman of the Boston Arena Corporation. Nate gave proper respect to his family's patron across three decades.

Harrington sat and pulled a silver cigarette case from his coat pocket. Then he opened it toward Nate, who pushed the ash tray across the table. "Thank you, but I've already smoked my morning quota and it's not yet 9 o'clock."

Harrington lit up.

"The pay phone is up and running," said Nate.

"Excellent," said Harrington in his deep baritone. "The directors will be pleased. Now perhaps we can get some revenue from all those reporters filing stories. And who knows what other kinds of calls from the lobby." He took another drag, then added, "It's an odd thing, and I know I'm getting old, but I enjoy going to a game to get *away* from the phone."

"Panther did all the negotiating with the phone company," Nate answered. "He's turned the skate shop around so it's making a profit. He's ready for more responsibility."

Harrington nodded. "I know William is very capable. Always has been. He proved that in Cuba. He *will* get more responsibility. But one step at a time, Nate." He rested his left hand on the desk, drew in and blew out a deep drag of smoke. "I saw the story about his team and the women's team in this morning's *Herald*. I'm crossing my fingers."

"He's recruited some very good skaters. They just need ice time to learn the game. Then we can announce an exhibition or two. And next year..."

"One step at a time," Harrington cut in. "For both teams. I expect we'll hear fire alarms about black men playing against white men." He took another long drag and blew it upward. "Boston may proclaim itself a Cradle of Freedom and a leader in the Abolition movement. But that was long ago. Today's Boston is hostile to men of color like Mr. Carney, no matter their levels of patriotism and heroism."

Both men sighed into silence.

Harrington resumed. "Tell me about Donald Skelton."

"He's on his way home. They kept him overnight just as a precaution on the head injuries. The good luck is he has no serious concussion, despite all the stitches."

"Let's get to the bottom of this before the newspapers pick it up. A hockey goaltender beaten because he refused to give up goals." Harrington shook his head.

"It's gamblers for sure," said Nate. "The big question is, how many other players have been approached? I'll start my investigation with Fred Foey. He's more than just a coach to Donald Skelton."

Harrington's lips tightened. "Let's hope Fred is toeing the line with his team. It's technically *our* team. He's running out of chances with me."

Nate put his right hand on the desk. It twitched slightly with a mild tremor.

"When did that start up again?" Harrington asked.

“When I heard about Skelton. I could see his blood, and it made mine boil.” He hesitated. “There is evil in the world Mr. Harrington.”

“And you’ve seen more than your share.”

Nate rubbed his left hand over his right. “And so has Panther.”

“Yes.”

“I’ll get McGuirk involved. And Panther. They both will be here at noon. We’ll see which gamblers are showing an interest in hockey.”

Harrington nodded. “Good. I’ll be back in time for your meeting. McGuirk is the one Boston police detective we can trust not to leak. But let’s be careful. It’s fine to crush evil, but we can’t bring the Arena down along the way.”

Nate rubbed his hand. Then he lit up another Camel.

James Brendan Conroy hopped off the streetcar when it stopped at the corner of Tremont and West Newton, in the heart of the South End. He waited for a break in the traffic of trolleys, wagons, and automobiles, to better negotiate the terrain of slush, mud, and manure that lay between him and the opposite storefront. *Spieler’s Sporting Goods*, the long sign proclaimed in foot-high font, with a narrower addendum: *Boston’s Home to A. G. Spalding & Bros.*

Conroy crossed and gazed through the show windows at the array of equipment. A worker was condensing a display of hockey skates, gloves, pucks, and sticks—now bannered with a 40% OFF! sign—while another opened boxes of baseballs, bats, and gloves. Once inside, Conroy caught a comforting whiff of fresh leather. Beyond the baseball gloves was a long counter, with three tellers working registers and ringing up sales with bells of money. Conroy waited behind a woman buying skates at the register run by Johann “Jock” Spieler himself. His hair had grayed in the years since Conroy saw him last. His brown eyes seemed darker, shrouded deep in sockets webbed with wrinkles. He still had his Kaiser moustache, waxed tightly and neatly at the ends.

Spieler finished the sale then smiled when he saw Conroy. “Good morning, Mr. Conroy. It’s been some time.” Spieler offered his hand across the counter.

“Top of the mornin’ to you, Spieler!” Conroy shook the hand and smiled.

Conroy pointed to the workers changing the window display. “Out with hockey, in with baseball? It’s still February, Spieler.”

“Yah, but baseball is in the air. Bill Carrigan was just in town to settle the Red Sox spring training schedule. Another month and they are in Hot Springs.”

“And perhaps another World Championship this year?”

“Perhaps”

“And more sales for you?”

Spieler said nothing.

“And more gambling profits for Sport Sullivan?”

“The bane of true sport.” Spieler was no longer smiling. “Please let me take this customer,” Spieler said, nodding at the man behind Conroy who held three boxes of Spalding baseballs. Conroy moved aside and Spieler made the sale.

Conroy dragged his fingers backward along the center part of his thinning hair. “I see you’ve joined the *Spalding* empire. This used to be a *Wright and Ditson* town.”

“I always sold Spalding brand goods, Mr. Conroy. And you of all people know that *Wright and Ditson* was long ago gobbled up by Spalding. This is still *Spieler’s*. But the war has squeezed Spalding’s international business. They made me a good offer to push their goods.”



“And I imagine the war has been rough on a business with a German name. And an owner with a curly Kaiser moustache.”

Spieler’s eyes narrowed for a second.

“Conroy, don’t the Irish support the Germans?”

“I’m an American.”

“So am I.”

In silence, Conroy moved aside, and Spieler rang up another sale.

“Why don’t we go back into my office?”

Spieler closed his register and ushered Conroy down a short corridor to his office. He shut the door, then sat down. He picked up the butt of a half-smoked cigar from an ornate glass ashtray, then lit it with a wooden match. “Now, your real business.”

“My God, that thing reeks like an outhouse.”

“Are we discussing sports or good German cigars, for which you have no taste?” Spieler blew a soft ring toward Conroy.

“Why not an American cigar. Or Cuban.” Conroy waved at the smoke ring. “Mr. Munsey is giving me time to develop more stories about the sports business, including a long one about my own life as an athlete. How I was framed. Attacked. Denied due process. Outlawed with no appeal. Like a criminal.”

“And you know I am on your side for the last twenty years. Conroy, we have gone down every rabbit hole to find who left the cash in your locker. Why do you think you will have better luck this time?”

“Money. Munsey’s money might open a few tongues. Sport Sullivan’s among them.”

Spieler slowly twisted his moustache. “And how can a gambler help you clear your name?”

“I don’t rightly know yet.”

“All you will have, Conroy, is another of your attacks on amateurism. If the story is for the *New York Press*, why not focus on New York gamblers?”

“I follow stories wherever they take me.”

“Yah, but they make you shoot at things you once loved. And great companies like the Spalding Brothers, who have done so much to advance the cause of wholesome sports worldwide.”

“And advance their profits.”

Silence.

“I *will* have more to say on amateurism,” said Conroy. “It’s nothing but a movement against democracy. The bloody English started amateurism just after the Reform Acts gave the vote to all males over twenty. No more property or income restrictions. Norway, Finland, Sweden...I could go on. In America, a place like Boston gets an Irish mayor. Immigrants swarm in, workers unionize and strike. It’s all a bit threatening to the old boys. So, they find ways to seal themselves off, at their country clubs and downtown athletic clubs. All of them preaching the gospel of amateurism. And you know what amateurism really is? A way to keep those strong, skilled workers off the tracks and the fields and out of the gyms.”

“You are fixed on old, exclusive clubs, Conroy. But our dear Suffolk Athletic Club is not the Boston Athletic Association. You should know that better than anyone. I’m the man who reinstated you. Have some gratitude.”

Conroy nodded. Spieler continued. “We are both sons of immigrants. I spoke German in my house. You have a similar history. We both advanced ourselves through clean, amateur sports. We *are* the skilled workers. It’s people like us who are the heart of amateurism. I am Der Boss of

the Suffolk A.C. and the New England A.A.U. Me. The son of immigrants. Not some country club fuddy-duddy.”

Silence.

“There is another story here Spieler,” Conroy went on.

Spieler sighed. “And what is that?”

“Tax evasion.”

“Gott im Himmel, Conroy. What are you talking about?”

“The new federal tax on income over \$3000 has spawned a bureaucracy of agents on the lookout for cheats.”

“So let them go after Ty Cobb and the professionals who make so much money.”

“They’re doing that. But far more interesting to uncover so-called amateurs who are getting money and not reporting it. You know that goes on everywhere.”

“Here we go, back to your past.”

“Yes, but we will also stay in the present.”

“Amateur track?”

Conroy shook his head. “Amateur hockey in the Boston Arena.”

“Ahh,” Spieler had a slight smile. “Does that mean the rich *owners* of the Boston Arena, like Mr. Bradford Harrington? Or the Unicorns of the Boston Athletic Association, their Harvard boys, and their Irish manager, George V. Brown? Or does that mean your old nemesis. Nate Towne. Who stole the heart of your Jenny?” Spieler’s smile had broadened.

“And you say I’m always lookin’ for the dirtiest dirt,” Conroy said. “I have no agenda. I’ll follow the story. And the story begins with Mr. Hobey Baker, who comes to town in 10 days with his St. Nick’s team.”

“Hobey Baker? You are incendiary, Conroy. An anarchist. Does your patron know this? Hobey Baker is a god in New York City.”

“Mr. Munsey is fully behind me. He has bigger plans in New York, well beyond the *Press*. He wants bigger stories.”

“How do you know Hobey Baker is a cheat?”

Conroy thought for a moment. “You’re a Spalding man.” He looked around. “Ah, there are your guidebooks.” He walked over and browsed a display before picking up a 4x6 inch booklet. He flashed it at Spieler. The cover had drawings of hockey players in motion, framed by the large block title: *Spalding’s Official Ice Hockey Guide 1916*.

“If you still have a copy of last year’s guide, you will find an article titled ‘Hints to Ice Hockey Players.’ The author—of record anyway—is one Hobart A. H. Baker. There’s a handsome picture as well. Sure to help sell a few thousand guides in stores around North America. Is it not possible that Mr. Hobart Baker got an author’s fee? If so, isn’t that a violation of amateur rules?”

“Why would Baker admit this to you?”

“Not to me. But he will talk to an agent from the Internal Revenue Bureau. And soon”

“Who told you this?”

“I have my sources.”

“Yah Yah,” said Spieler softly as he twirled a moustache end, then blew another smoke ring at Conroy. He paused, then said, “Here’s a better hockey scoop for you. I hear that a goaltender named Skelton was attacked last night. Certainly gamblers.”

“Why?”

“He was supposed to let in more goals. He must have changed his mind.”

“How do you know this?”

Spieler frowned. “Skelton is an amateur. When something happens to an amateur, I get called. I have sources, just like you.”

Nate Towne sat with his right elbow on his office table. He cupped his right hand along his cheek to stop the tremor. The desk was cluttered with papers: rental agreements, league memoranda, payroll forms, and more. The back of his chair rested against the bottom of the large chalkboard that held a month’s worth of the Arena’s rough schedule, each day framed in six-inch boxes. He faced two people who sat in captain’s chairs: his sister Elsie and Boston Police Detective Daniel Patrick McGuirk. In walked Bradford Harrington, apologizing for getting caught in traffic.

“Should we move the meeting, Mr. Harrington?” Nate asked as he stood up.

“No. this is fine. Where is Mr. Carney?”

“A shipment of new equipment came in. He’s getting it ready for sale.”

Harrington nodded.

“Yes sir. Let’s start with McGuirk’s report.”

The detective finished cleaning his glasses, then folded his handkerchief and stuffed it in a side pocket of the old brown herringbone Harris tweed that was something of his signature jacket. “Now I can read,” he said, winking at Elsie, then slipping the wires behind his ears. He quoted from notes that summarized his conversations with Donald Skelton and his brother Raymie, who had little more to add. Someone had called and offered Donald fifty dollars if he “made sure” his team, the Arena Hockey Club, lost their game against the Intercolonial Club. He refused, but he kept the matter to himself. He made twenty saves in earning a shutout, believing that would end the issue. He was surprised to be jumped by two masked men as he walked to his apartment.

“They must have used blackjacks, from the looks of his noggin,” said McGuirk. “They told him to remember this lesson.”

“Has he told anyone else besides his brother, Foey, and us?” Harrington asked.

“He says no,” McGuirk answered. “But in matters like this, I don’t expect a victim to be silent for long. Word will get out. And the press ‘ll pour in like rain through every crack in the old barn roof.”

“I talked to Fred Foey,” Nate added. “He says he’s seen nothing suspicious with his players. No strangers lurking around.”

“How did he sound?” Harrington asked.

Nate looked at Harrington. “Do you mean, did he sound sober? Yes, he did.” Towne paused. “Mr. Harrington, the players respect him as their coach. I don’t think they would if he showed up drunk.”

Harrington shrugged. “He fooled us when he was our publicist.” Then he tapped his index finger gently against the thin bridge of his spectacles. “How many other players have been approached? And how do we investigate without causing a general panic?”

“We’re casting the net,” McGuirk said. “Nate, Panther, and I are working our sources. All low-keyed. Don’t want to spread this story any more than we must.”

“Good. Low key,” said Harrington. “I knew those detective licenses for Nate and William would come in handy. But I didn’t think it would be this soon.”

“Let’s hope we don’t need to use of our gun licenses,” said Nate.

Elsie pulled her hands out of the pockets of her blue wool sweater coat and slapped them on the beige tweed skirt that covered her knees. The men's eyes turned. "May I suggest that we call the newspapers and read them a short release about Skelton. It's going to get out soon, and we have a better chance of *controlling* the story if we *start* it. We mention the threat, but we don't use the word gambler. We just say that Boston Police are investigating. The press will ask McGuirk. When he is ready to say the word 'gamblers' he will."

She looked at McGuirk, who nodded.

"I think Elsie is right," Nate said.

"If I learned one thing in New York," she added, "it's that more witnesses come forward *after* the big story breaks. Maybe this will shake up a player or two" Elsie looked at her brother Nate.

He nodded.

"Can you do this within the hour, Elsie?" Harrington asked. "You're correct. We need to be ahead of this information. For our investors. For the players. And the spectators. This is a big week of games."

"Yes," said Elsie. She hesitated, then added "We're getting responses on the story about supporting the Panthers and the Suffragettes. Some not so good."

"Where did the name Suffragettes come from?" asked Harrington. "I thought their name was Boston Arena Women's Hockey Club. I didn't see any mention of Suffragettes."

"Sorry. That's the nickname coach North gave them."

"Let's please stick to the formal name when we announce the exhibition with the St. Nick's women," Harrington said. "And emphasize no physical contact. Otherwise, we'll get the *National Police Gazette* mocking us."

"Any response to the Panthers?" Nate asked.

"One nasty, crank call with a quick hang up."

"We're committed now," said Nate. "You'd better get to work, sister."

"I'm on it." Elsie said as she stood to leave. "I'll get the Skelton piece done. Then I'll nose around with Nils and his ice crew. Perhaps they've seen a suspicious character or two."

As she rose, Harrington said, "Are those tennis shoes, Elsie? A little early for that season, don't you think?"

Elsie laughed with the men. "I do lots of running around here, Mr. Harrington. And volleying. Sometimes I feel like Eleonora Sears."

"You're prettier," McGuirk said.

"Don't worry. I put heels on at night."

The three men laughed again and stood as Elsie left.

"Your sister is already a major asset to this building," Harrington said. "Good job stealing her from *McClure's Magazine*. And just in time."

"You should thank our mother."

The phone rang. Nate answered. His face turned sour as he listened.

"We heard a similar story, O'Halloran. We're looking into it. Elsie will call you and the other papers when we have something to say." He listened. "Yes, within an hour."

He hung up. The others knew the caller was John O'Halloran, hockey beat writer for the *Boston Herald*.

McGuirk was shaking his head. "How the devil did O'Halloran find out so fast?"

"Elsie's one-hour deadline just got shorter," Harrington said to Nate.

A knock on the open door. It was Carney, his face both ashen and agitated.

"What's wrong, Panther?" Nate asked.

Carney shook his head as his eyes welled up.

“Mrs. Harrington just called the Skate Shop phone. She tried the office but couldn't get through.”

“What happened?” Harrington asked, rising from his chair.

“Mr. Harrington...” Carney had to compose himself. “Your son has been wounded in France. He'll be on a ship in days.”

“How bad?” Harrington asked.

“She doesn't know the details. I'm so sorry.”

Nate came around his desk and put his hand on Harrington's shoulder. “We'll give you some privacy so you can call Mrs. Harrington. We all pray for him.”