

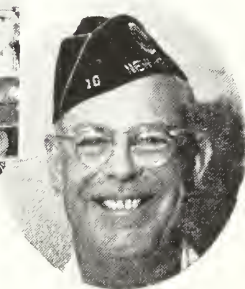
Flying his own plane, he moves fast.

THE MAN FROM LAS CRUCES

Seaborn P. Collins, the Legion's new National Commander, likes to tackle big jobs and lots of them.



Post 10 is housed in a building that the Commander recognized as a very good buy.



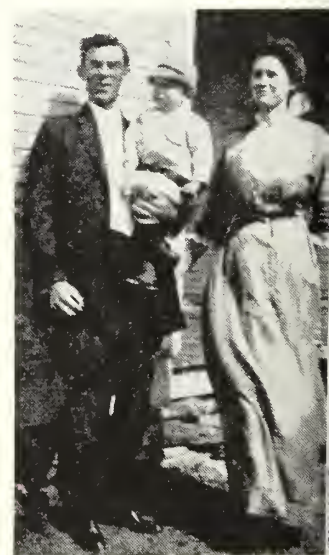
By **JOSEPH C. KEELEY**

western Paul Bunyan, the fabled woodsman who could step over mountains and do other wondrous things. Yet, the more you look into Seaborn Collins' background the better you understand the things his neighbors say about him.

Since the new head of The American Legion is Texas-born, from Maybelle, now a part of Abilene, it is perhaps natural to find that he's a strapping six-feet-three and weighs 210 pounds. And, further fitting the popular conception of a native Texan, he's easy-going and informal, till he gets down to business. Then he is what can best be described as a forceful character or powerful personality. Those who have heard him speak know exactly what we mean.

However, the best way to understand what Las Cruces say about Seaborn Collins is to look at some of the things he has done.

Take the matter of education. It has long been axiomatic that a boy or girl who is able



Taken forty years ago, this picture shows young Seaborn with his parents at the parsonage of his father's church.

THE LEGIONNAIRE standing outside Post 10 at Las Cruces, New Mexico, rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"Of course I only know Seaborn Collins from what I've seen him do here. But I'll tell you this, mister. Unless I miss my guess, it's going to be a bigger and better American Legion a year from now. Down here we know what Seaborn can do, and he can do an awful lot in one year."

That sort of expression was pretty common in our new National Commander's home town. Some of it went even further, portraying Collins in the role of a south-

to work his way through college has what it takes to be a success in life. And that is true. But Seaborn Collins went somewhat further than that. His father, a Presbyterian minister, couldn't afford to put his three children through college, so Seaborn, being the oldest—he's now 42—undertook to give his brother James and his sister Sarah a college education while putting himself through Daniel Baker

BUSINESS LIFE



Two of the hundreds of buildings constructed by Seaborn Collins since he made Las Cruces his home.

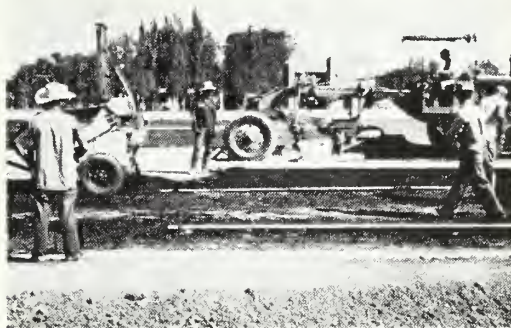
College, at Brownwood, Texas. He did this by running a café.

But that wasn't his first experience at earning a living. When he was in high school he worked at such man-size chores as laying pipe in the oil fields and laboring for the local gas company.

"I was young but big and strong for my age, so I was able to do it," he explained.

Getting his B.S. from Daniel Baker, now incorporated into Howard Payne University, Collins went with a government agency that is now the Farm Security Administration. His job was to handle farm and ranch loans and he set a record for putting money out, by lending \$2,000,000 in one year. But he takes at least as much pride in the fact that he set a record for getting the money back for the government. His ratio of collections to money loaned was also record-breaking.

Three years of this and he got a job purely in the Paul Bunyan tradition. He became manager of the C. C. Slaughter estate, one of the four biggest ranches in Texas, with 118,000 acres spread over several counties. Flying with the Commander over this far-



One thing leading to another, he went into the business of building roads.

reaching domain of oil wells, mesquite, cattle and cotton, he remarked: "I used to

travel this on horseback and I've covered every single acre you see down there."

That would seem to be a full-time job for anyone, but Seaborn did a bit more. He bought a 3900-acre ranch adjoining the Slaughter holdings and ran that while taking care of his employer's 118,000 acres of farm and ranch land. However, to facilitate matters he took up flying. In order to take care of business matters in such scattered points as Dallas, Lubbock and Amarillo he bought a Piper Cub. This was the first of six planes he has owned, the present one being a four-place Navion that gets him around the country at a fast 140 miles an hour.

Indeed, that plane explains why Seaborn Collins was able to put on a whirlwind campaign for the top job in The American Legion. In one period of eleven days, to give just one example, he covered nine Department conven-

tions, from Vermont to Georgia, with a side trip to Tennessee.

Just as his flying helped make him National Commander, it also made him eligible for American Legion membership. World War II was not long under way when, in 1942, Collins became a flight instructor at Fort Sill, and later at Jacksonville, Texas. This was a civilian billet but he donned a uniform as soon as they'd let him, and as Flight Officer drew an assignment ferrying C-47s from Long Beach, California, to Australia. When the war ended he was in the China-Burma-India Theater, flying between Dumdum Airport, Calcutta, and Karachi and New Delhi.

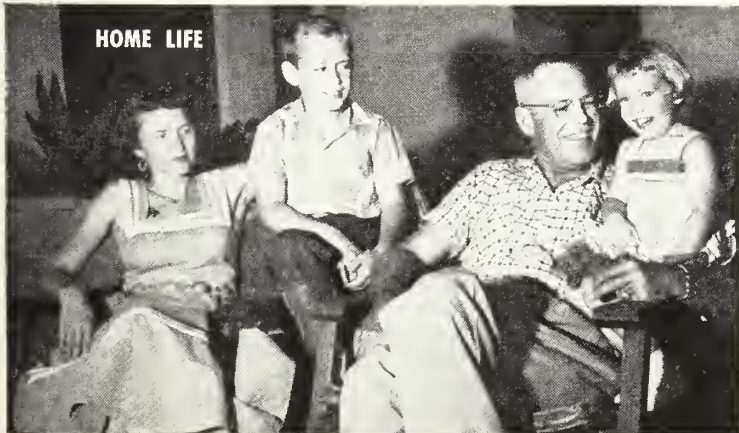
The turning point in Collins' career came because his father-in-law, George R. Quesenberry, of Las Cruces, wanted to go fishing. Known throughout the southwest for his American Legion activities, and former Department Commander of New Mexico, George Quesenberry wanted to get away from his real estate office, and his recently discharged son-in-law seemed to be the

(Continued on page 62)



Houses need lumber, so he opened a lumber yard and a builders supply store.

HOME LIFE



At home. The children are 9-year-old Rex and 3-year-old Kay.



Kay and friend Blackie.



Rex goes for planes.

lect your doctor carefully. 2. Don't desert him if you find him satisfactory. 3. Ask him questions. 4. Follow his prescriptions. 5. Don't cheat him. 6. Don't expect witchcraft. 7. See him while you are healthy. 8. Assist him as a partner. 9. Keep your own health file. 10. Respect his time and work.

Dr. Gumpert has another 10 for doctors: 1. Don't keep your patient waiting. 2. Discuss your fee frankly with him. 3. Explain disease and treatment to him. 4. Let the patient talk. 5. Don't ask the impossible of him. 6. Don't divide your attention. 7. Know his family.

8. Tell him the truth. 9. Relieve his anxiety. 10. Try to like him.

If you suffer from a condition that is chronic, and perhaps the best that can be hoped for is an arrest of its advance, it is doubly important that you have a physician who is not only competent but friendly and encouraging as well. Your choice may make all the difference in the world in your response.

Robert Louis Stevenson, who fought a lifelong battle against tuberculosis in pre-wonder-drug years, felt that he owed his life, his career and his fame to his doctors. He dedicated one of

his books to his physician and to the profession penned this tribute: "There are men and classes of men that stand above the common herd; the soldier, the sailor, and the shepherd not infrequently; the artist rarely; rarer still, the clergyman; the physician almost as a rule. He is the flower . . . of our civilization. Generosity he has, such as is possible to those who practice an art, never to those who drive a trade; discretion tested by a hundred secrets; tact, tried in a thousand embarrassments; and what is more important, Herculean cheerfulness and courage . . ." THE END

THE MAN FROM LAS CRUCES

(Continued from page 19)

answer to the problem of getting help.

Dubious at first, Seaborn decided he liked real estate when soon after starting in at the end of 1945, he sold a farm that netted a \$1500 profit. He was certain he liked the work when, soon afterward, he bought a farm which shortly produced an even greater profit. His father-in-law was equally pleased and they formed a partnership.

However, Collins was not content merely to deal in real estate and insurance. He saw that things were happening around Las Cruces that would change the whole complexion of the community. Not far distant was Alamogordo, where they had done a lot of work on the first atom bomb that was ever fired. Important work was still being done at the Army base there. And at White Sands Proving Ground, just north of Las Cruces, large numbers of scientists and specialists were engaged in top-secret work on guided missiles and rockets.

Those people, and many more who would follow them there, would need housing, so Seaborn Collins started planning accordingly. However, his father-in-law was not as enthusiastic as he was about getting into home building, so they decided to dissolve their partnership. On his own, then, Collins started projecting developments which would take care of the many people who kept coming to his real estate office trying to buy or rent houses which were seldom to be had.

The first houses went up in 1949. As one of his neighbors tells it: "Other builders sat around waiting for the government to declare Las Cruces an emergency defense area so money would be available for them to build. Collins didn't wait. I don't know where he begged or borrowed the money but he went right ahead and put up a lot of houses when houses were desperately needed."

To date he has built about 500 homes in a community that has a population crowding 18,000—almost double what

it was when he started his first housing development. And they're good houses, ranging in price from \$7000 to \$25,000, but mostly in the under-\$10,000 bracket.

All of them are distinctive and well constructed, with central air conditioning and heating units, name brand refrigerators, ranges and other accessories. About 300 more are about to be built.

But if you think that this makes Seaborn Collins just a builder and seller of houses, that isn't quite the story. He puts it this way: "I consider myself essentially a businessman, with several enterprises, all closely related."

A run-down of his enterprises will give you an idea of the way Seaborn Collins operates in putting things together. He has a real estate and insurance office, the Seaborn P. Collins Agency. The home building is done by Southwestern Builders, Inc. Building materials are handled by his Southwestern Lumber & Builders Supply, Inc. To deal in rental property he has the Mesa Investment Co., Inc., and another thriving operation is the Mesilla Valley Construction Co., Inc., which does road-building. As this is written he has another project ready to go—the Mesilla Valley Savings & Loan Association. He is president of all these, but so well organized are they that he is anything but tied down with them—a fact that is obvious when you consider how much time he has given to the Legion.

The secret? One Las Crucean gave this answer: "Seaborn Collins has a faculty of being able to spot things that ought to be done, then figuring out how they can be best done, and then getting the kind of people that can do things right."

Seaborn Collins himself credits the people he has working for him. Only because of them, he says, was it possible for him to take the time to become National Commander.

"Not only has my business not suffered because of the time I have given The American Legion; it has gone ahead. Maybe in my position I'm an exception, but I can't help thinking of

that when I hear a Legionnaire beg off from some minor task by claiming that he's too busy."

Certainly there is no record that Seaborn Collins has ever begged off when called upon by fellow-Legionnaires or anyone else. His father-in-law lost no time in signing him up in Post 10 when he got to Las Cruces, and took him to his first meeting late in 1945. Then he undertook to serve as his unofficial campaign manager. As a result, Collins became the first WW2 Commander of the Post, first WW2 Area D Commander in New Mexico, and the first WW2 Department Commander in New Mexico. He served for four years as chairman of National Security of the Department, four years as vice chairman of the Legislative Committee of the Department, four years as a member of the Finance Committee of the Department, and four years as director of the Department's Boys State. Moving into National, he served one year on the National Housing Committee, three years as vice chairman of the National Military Affairs Committee, and later as chairman of the National Security Commission. He is also a member of Voiture 1346, Forty and Eight.

There's more to Seaborn Collins' American Legion work, though, than the foregoing list of titles would indicate. Soon after he joined Post 10, his fellow Legionnaires realized that here was a man who not only had ideas but was remarkably gifted in the way he could express them. So he was called upon increasingly to represent the Post in Department affairs. And in the natural course of events, he started representing The American Legion to the public and when it was necessary to get something across to government officials or others.

"It got so," said Collins, "that there was something doing once a week or oftener."

All this led inevitably to the National Commandership. One evening he was called upon to make a speech before a

group in Roswell. When he finished his talk he was congratulated by Robert A. Marr, Department Adjutant, and Reed Mulkey, veteran National Executive Committeeman. "You're going to be National Commander someday," said Mulkey. That was more than three years ago. Collins says that was the first time the idea ever entered his mind, but that's another thing about him. Once he makes up his mind to do something he wastes no time getting it done.

Indeed, he has no time to waste. One would think that with a large and expanding business, plus a large volume of American Legion work on the side, he'd forego other activities. But somehow, in addition, he manages to take an active part in such community affairs as the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Red Cross, March of Dimes, Chamber of Commerce, Lions, Blood Bank, and local hospital work.

His connection with these organizations, incidentally, is not just honorary, and some of them call for a great deal of time and effort. Such as his chairmanship of the Fourth Army Advisory Committee, a liaison group between military officials at White Sands and the civilians of Las Cruces and vicinity. He is also a director of the National Association of Home Builders and an elder in the Presbyterian Church.

With all these roots now anchoring him, Seaborn Collins, as befits a man who served for two years as President of the Mesilla Valley Chamber of Commerce, is an ardent Las Crucean. And proving that he practices what he preaches about his attractive and fast-growing community, he has settled his entire family there.

Of course Lelia Jane, his wife, was with him when he first moved and started selling real estate. And today

the Collins family now numbers four, with nine-year-old Rex and three-year-old Kay. But Seaborn Collins, thorough in all things, also persuaded his brother James to move to Las Cruces, and he is now managing the lumber yard and builders supply business. In addition he got his sister, Mrs. Sarah Emerick, to move there, and this helped the town's growth since she has three children.

To complete the Collins exodus from Texas, he persuaded his mother to come on to Las Cruces when his father died in 1950, and settled her in the first of the hundreds of houses he has built. Once a teacher of college Latin and Greek, she occupies herself giving piano lessons to her grandchildren.

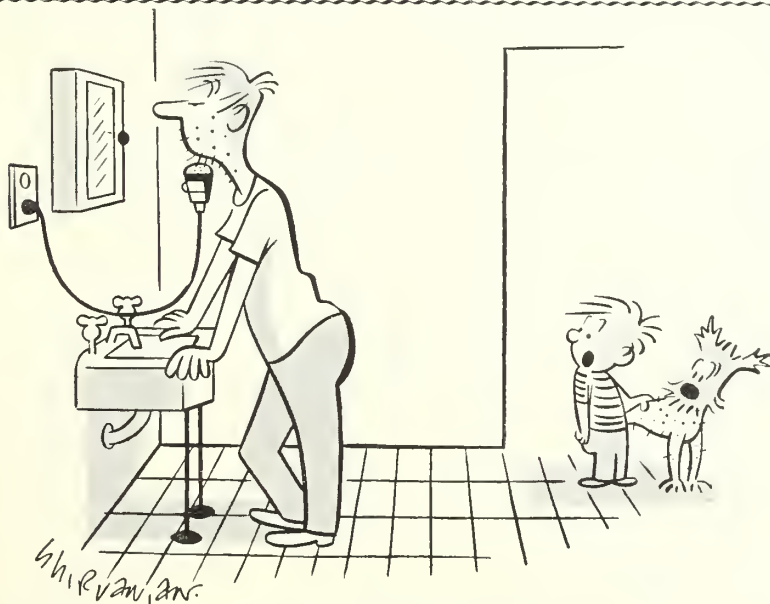
What kind of National Commander will Seaborn Collins make? Possibly there is a clue in a resolution that was adopted by his local Chamber of Commerce when, in 1951, he finished four years as a director of the organization. Part of the resolution follows:

"WHEREAS, Seaborn P. Collins' determined effort, unswerving loyalty, and devotion, has served as an inspiration to all those with whom he came in contact, and

"WHEREAS, the Mesilla Valley and all of its people have gained much from his unselfish contribution of his time and energies toward the continued welfare of the Mesilla Valley to the extent that there has been established in the Mesilla Valley a new horizon for future progress . . ."

As everyone knows, now and then a resolution is adopted which goes a little bit beyond what people actually mean in their hearts. And what's the harm?

In this case, though, you can take it that there is no exaggeration whatsoever. If you don't think so, just talk to a few people from Las Cruces. THE END



"I used it to clip the dog. Why?"

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