

POST 11, SECTOR B

We Americans Learn to be Neighbors



AMERICANS HAVE LEARNED FROM THE BRITISH THAT INCENDIARY BOMBS CALL FOR LOTS OF SAND, SHOVELS AND WET BLANKETS

Two persons practice putting out an incendiary bomb. A handful of wardens meet in an apartment. Four score workers sit tensely in a block warden's meeting in a brightly lit air raid post. Hundreds of faces in a mass rally watch a movie of the bombing of London. Six million Americans register with the Office of Civilian Defense for voluntary work.

We, the Americans, we, the people, have sprung to posts all over the country. We are learning to be neighbors. Janitors talk to professional men; socialites show stenographers how to tie bandages; firemen instruct the man down the street in hose-coupling.

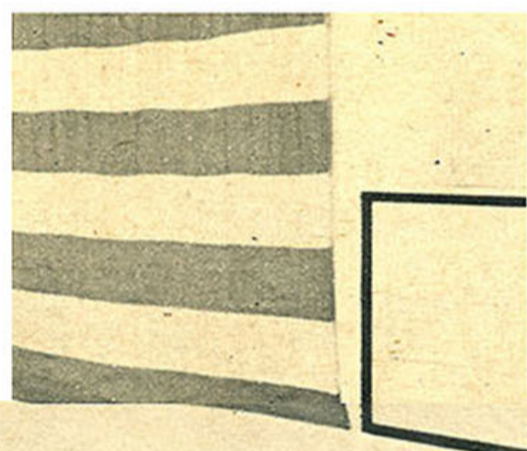
It isn't perfect yet. Not all air raid wardens are expert bomb extinguishers; many workers skip first-aid classes, many wardens are tangled up in red tape—but for the first time since pioneer days, Americans are learning to work together.

Post 11, Sector B, is an example of how the people of one air raid post are learning unity through civilian defense work. Post 11, Sector B, is its official designation. Zone 1, or the 17th police precinct, governs the sector and the sector governs the post, which is air raid headquarters for one city block. But in the real sense the eighty or so wardens in Post 11 govern themselves. If they are lazy, they don't go on practice patrols at night. If their senior warden doesn't check up, a chart of water and gas mains may not be finished in time. Without cooperation from everyone in the block—from fashionable resident to young storekeeper—Post 11, Sector B is a failure. The success of this post is typical of America. It is better equipped than posts in inland cities, better trained than most posts in New York, but it has the same faults, glories, successes, mistakes; the same hard work, the same neighborliness.

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Seven neighbors, seven Americans who hardly knew each other were the beginning of Post 11, Sector B, in Manhattan's first zone of Civilian Defense. Straddling a dining room chair, Senior Post Warden Edward Georges read instructions about bombs, siren signals, organization. A young advertising man, a Government worker, the janitor of the building, two older volunteers and a secretary, Mrs. Georges, were the first to join.



THEY FORM A POST

A vacant store (rental: \$1 a year) became post headquarters for all the wardens in the block—a block of old brick tenements, delicatessens, swanky apartment houses. At a meeting of wardens (above) could be seen the original seven, a Red Cross worker, a driver in the AWVS (far right).

Warden Georges clarified jobs: (1) Learning first aid, blackout techniques, the locations of all families under their jurisdiction. (2) Instructing all residents in the block where to go in case of an air raid, checking pilot lights in gas stoves, practicing. (3) Cooperating with police and fire departments.

ALL THE NEIGHBORS RALLY

So that everyone in the block could hear air-raid instructions, the neighbors met in a mass rally, heard wardens and British officers, saw movies of bombed London. A thousand strangers living in the same block now became a community. They called each other by first names, knew how to turn off gas mains, spent hours typing cards, making block maps. It might be called something new in America—if you didn't remember log-rollings, cabin-raising, corn-huskings, quilting bees, if you didn't remember that American democracy started with just such neighborly work.



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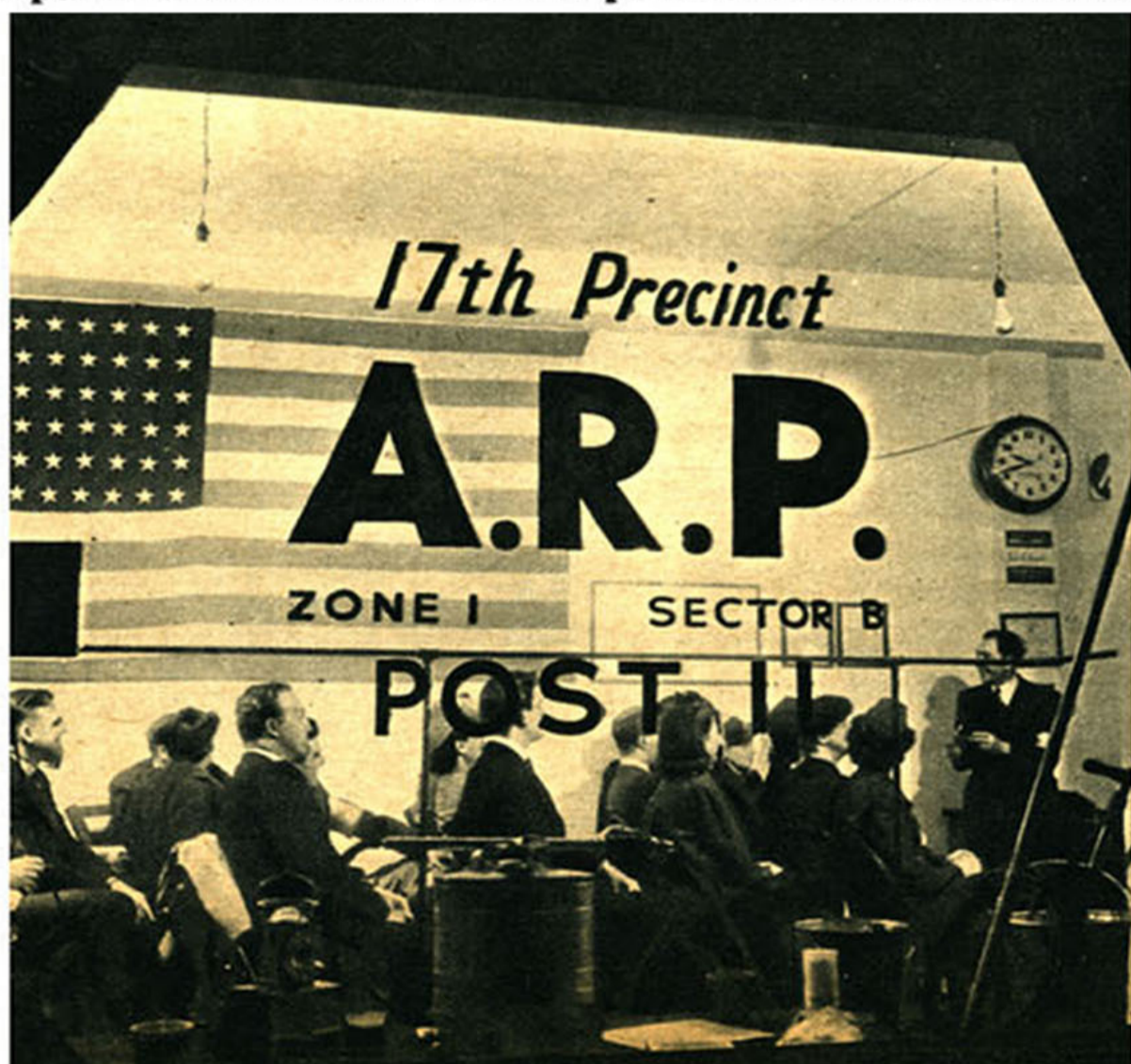
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SYMBOLIC OF A 24-HOUR WATCH, THE A.R.P. HEADQUARTERS FOR THE BLOCK SHONE LIKE A BEACON IN THE BLACK NIGHT.

ALL THE NEIGHBORS RALLY

THE POLICE SUPERVISE the civilian defense organization in New York, and a passerby looking through the window at a post meeting will note "17th Precinct" lettered above a bright red "A.R.P." Fire department and Red Cross keep contact with civilian defense.





THE NEIGHBORHOOD'S CURIOUS YOUNGSTERS look in through the window at stirrup pumps, blackout candles, flashlights, sand-buckets on exhibit in the store. None of this equipment was furnished by the Government.

THE OFFICE ROUTINE in an air raid post is a burdensome chore. Records of 70 or 80 wardens, their occupations, special fields of knowledge (as doctors, engineers, nurses, electricians) must be kept. Behind Mrs. George (below) are bulletin board, posters, and samples of special symbols for different kinds of wardens. Can you recognize nurse, radio, excavation, chemical symbols?



THESE ARE WARDENS



RETIRED ORCHESTRA LEADER, George Siemonn, calls a substitute warden for patrol duty. Wardens, who are unpaid, unhonored, include in their ranks all types from calloused janitors to socialites.



AN OFFICE WORKER in the state welfare department, Miss Lula Jean Elliott, keeps track for the post of the cards that indicate addresses, skills, sex of wardens. This board is a post invention.



MRS L. F. BRYAN is a voluntary worker who also helps at Freedom House and the British Library. The flag behind her, like the office furniture, the typewriters, the lamps, was donated by residents.



A GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE, Miss Mary Howell, talks to an engineer, E. W. Kutill, to find her assignment for the next day. This scene is typical of the democratic functioning of Post 11, Sector B.

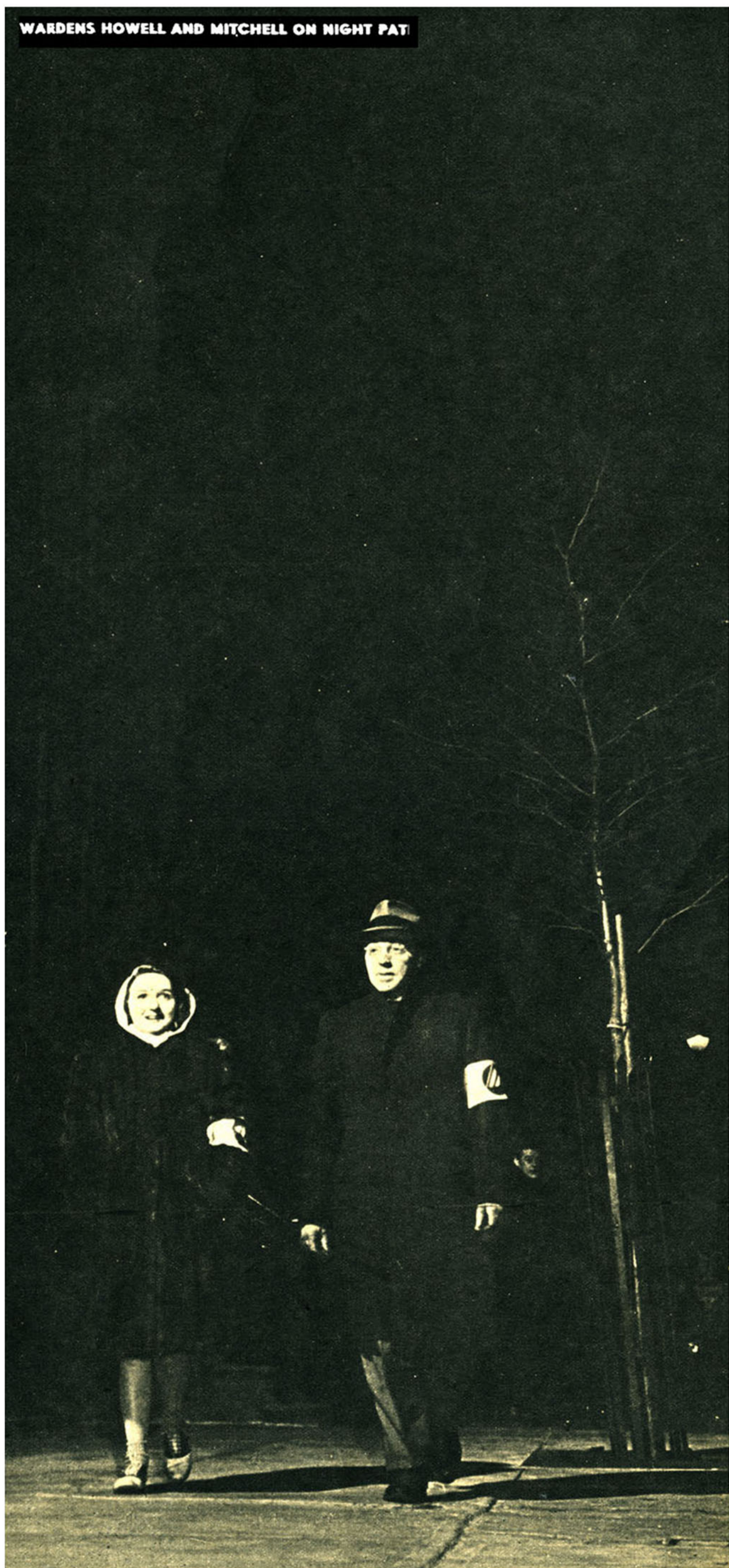


THE AUXILIARY FIREMEN OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD GATHER IN THE FIREHOUSE ON 51ST STREET FOR INSTRUCTION IN HOSE COUPLING IN HOSE COUPLING (NOTE VOLUNTEER POSTER)

IN ONE BUILDING BASEMENT, Superintendent Brockie shows Mrs. Francesco Collura, sculptress and liaison warden, how to turn off the main gas valves. A thorough knowledge of basement plumbing is necessary for the superintendents' liaison wardens, so they made a master plan of valves, switches. Official regulations still are being formulated, so wardens learn to improvise.



WARDENS HOWELL AND MITCHELL ON NIGHT PAT



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