



Did you **MACLEAN**
your teeth to-day?



Yes, I have
a perfect set.

For sparkling white teeth, healthy
gums, a fresh cool mouth, use Macleans.

10^p & 1/6
PER TUBE



BRITISH
TO THE
TEETH

A YUGOSLAV I ONCE KNEW

THIS story is partly fact,
partly fiction. What I mean
is that part of it happened
and part of it didn't, though the
part which didn't happen quite
likely did. You'll see what I mean
later on.

It concerns a Yugoslav I once knew
by the name of Wally Martinovich, who
was a good friend of mine and was a
hell of a fine man all round. There was
no doubt about it that Wally Martinovich
was the big shot in the town where
I live. It was because he had never been
known to take a man down in his life
and also because he ran the best fish
shop and restaurant in the town.

It's a funny thing about the Greeks
and Yugoslavs. They have a genius for
keeping restaurants. Outside their own
country, that is to say. I suppose that
if you ever went to Belgrade or Athens,
not that it's very likely now, you would
find cheap, smelly restaurants occasion-
ally just like you do here, because that
would be only natural, wouldn't it? Well,
Wally Martinovich, as I said, was a
big shot in our town. In ten years he
had built up one of the nicest businesses
I ever saw. Wally didn't do much of the
hard work, of course. He left that to
his wife and his two daughters, who were
big, square girls with red cheeks and
a well-scrubbed look about them. Wally
used to sit behind the counter at the
front and smoke his pipe and pass the
time of day as you went out.

He never seemed to bother about
what went on in the kitchen, but every
now and then I've seen him stalk in
and have a look round, examining the
steaks to see if they had been kept away
from the flies, and if the silver had been
cleaned properly. God help them if the
girls had been slacking on it, for Wally
would fly into a rage and clip them on
the ear or bang their heads together. Per-
haps that was why he served the best
meals in town.

WALLY came out to New Zealand
about 30 years ago. His family were
poor peasants in a village near Zagreb,
where Wally told me the soil was so
poor they had to scrape and scratch to
grow enough food to keep themselves
alive even. He hadn't known anything
about New Zealand except that a cousin
of his had come here and was making
good money digging kauri gum.

So Wally landed up in North Auck-
land, a big, stolid Yugoslav (they called
them Dalmatians then, regardless of
where they came from) without a word
of English beyond Yess pleez and No
tank.

He dug gum for a year or two and
made a little money, and because he
was a smart sort of fellow he picked up
English in no time, though he always
said Yess pleez and No tank. After a
while he was wise enough to see that
the gum was nearly worked out, and the
next thing we knew, Wally was going
round the country in an old car buying
grass seed from the cockies. We laughed

A SHORT STORY

Written for
"The Listener"
by

J. GIFFORD
MALE



at him and said, You'd make more
money digging drains, Wally. But he
smiled and said, Make plenty money —
you watch. And what is more, he did
make money. At the same time as he
bought grass seed he would sell the
cockies gumboots and cheap clothes. He
picked these up at bankrupt sales in
town, and naturally he made a profit
both ways, on the grass seed and on the
gum boots and clothes.

One day he gave a lift to a well-
dressed old chap from the city, who
turned out to be an insurance manager,
and the next week Wally was selling in-
surance. It sounds hard to believe, but
in a year's time Wally was one of that
insurance company's crack salesmen. I
can see now why he was so successful.
First of all he had the Yugoslavs. There
were hundreds of them in North Auck-
land and they stick pretty close to-
gether. And there wasn't a farmer
within a hundred miles who didn't know
Wally and trust him. Like most Yugo-
slavs, the idea of cheating had never
occurred to him. That goes a long way,
especially when you are dealing with
cow-cockies, who are a suspicious lot.
Perhaps I shouldn't say suspicious, but
they have been taken down so many
times that their first reaction when you
try to sell them anything is—This smart
Alec thinks he's dealing with just another
ignorant cow-cocky. He's not going to
take me down.

WALLY got wealthier and wealthier.
Though he was never mean, he
didn't fling his money round, and he
stuck to the same old car until it was
a wonder he was ever allowed to drive
it. All the same, one or two of us knew
he could buy and sell nine out of ten
men in North Auckland.

We told him he was foolish buying a
restaurant, too, but again Wally slapped
us on the back and laughed and said,
you watch. It seemed he couldn't go
wrong. He bought a half interest in a
fishing launch, and got his fish the
cheapest way. And he bought a half
interest in a farm and reared his own
meat and made some money on the side
from cream. He was popular with nearly
everybody in town except a man whom
I won't mention by name, who ran
another restaurant, and we even used

to say to him, some day we'll put you
up for Mayor, Wally. He would have
made a good one, too.

YOU can imagine the surprise I got
when Wally told me he was think-
ing of selling out and going back to
Yugoslavia. It was in November of 1938,
I remember, and we had all noticed
that Wally seemed more worried than
most of us about what was happening
in Europe. He got quieter and quieter,
just sitting behind the counter and
smoking a pipe and frowning over the
paper. He'd sit for hours puzzling out
the cable news, and hardly look up
when we spoke to him.

It is bad business, he said to me one
day. War, war — who wants war? My
family, we lost half our young men
against the Italians. We know what it
means, just like you here.

And then he told me how he had
worked it out that when the war did
come it would not be long before Yugo-
slavia was in it. Czechoslovakia, gone
like that (a snap of the fingers) and
after that, who knows? But he was quite
sure there would be war in the Balkans
once again.

I and my family should be home in
days like this, Wally said with a frown.
At home they are poor, and I have much
money—too much for myself. They are
old and weak, my people, and I am still
strong.

If you take my advice Wally, you'll
stay here, I said. It won't be as bad as
you think, and in any case we're going
to put you up for Mayor next election.

But he shook his head and looked
more puzzled and mournful than I'd ever
seen him.

Then a week after that he told me
he'd decided to sell out. It was no use
arguing with him. He just shrugged
his shoulders and said, I must go home.
A month later he had got his business
cleaned up, and we gave him a farewell
in the Anglican hall. Two days later I
went down to Auckland to see him off
on the boat.

AT 2.30 o'clock on the afternoon of
Monday, April 7, 1941, Wally Mar-
tinovich, on guard at the western ap-
proach to a military aerodrome ten miles
from the village of Krizevc, had come

(Continued on next page)