

# 11

## A DREAM COMES TRUE

A few weeks after the bell had been laid up for the winter on the shores of Lake Michigan, and we were in full swing back at the MIT grind, I picked up a current issue of the *New Yorker*. Casually paging through it, my fancy was captured by a chance article—the story of an almost fantastic expedition.

The radio star Phillips H. Lord, whom I had heard many times on the air as the nationally loved character Seth Parker, was going to fulfill a boyhood dream. He was planning to sail around the world in an old windjammer with no purpose other than the pursuit of adventure.

I was not surprised to note, among the other colorful plans, that he intended to search for some of the old Spanish galleons with their fabulous fortunes—pirate gold.

My eggs were cold; my mouth was hanging open. The whole world had come to a stop as I read about this—a real expedition that was going to sail in the next few weeks.

What would it be like to actually sail on that ship? The thought was so fantastic that I hardly dared think about it. I had a nine o'clock class—I had almost two more years of college ahead of me before the diploma was mine. How would a fellow go about getting started to apply for a job on an expedition like that? But, again, to hell with it—I had a nine o'clock class in calculus and the sailing was a little rough, about then, in the intricacies of differential equations. And so, I forgot all about it.

Of all the curiosity seekers, helpers, and enthusiasts who were constantly swarming around during the course of our commercial and experimental diving operations as the school years progressed, there appeared

one young man who stood head and shoulders in every way above all of them—Prescott Brown. He was diving with me every week, and it looked very much as if here was a pal who was going to stick through the rigors of this crazy business for a long time.

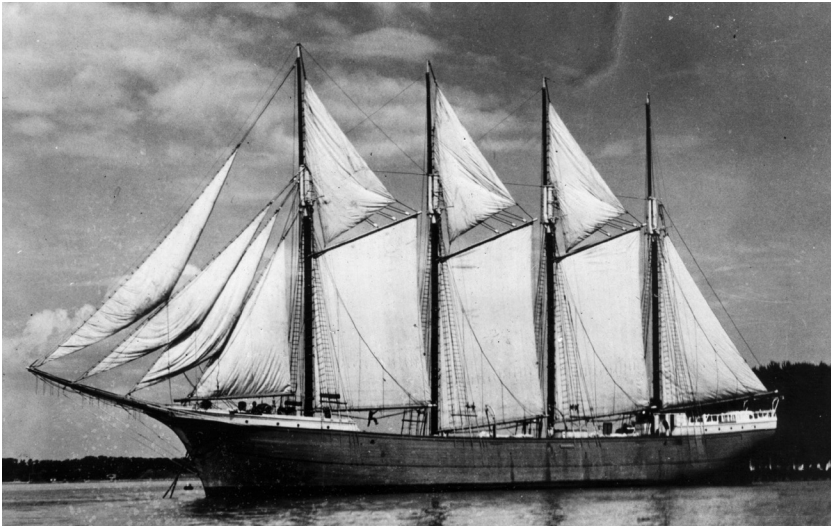
Prescott was definitely the inventive type. Brainchildren of his were everywhere apparent. His car was bristling with gadgets of his own design. He had even made a diving helmet, similar in principle to Jack Browne's but beautifully built from a workmanship standpoint.

We were planning to spend a few days in New York, partly on some diving business matters and partly just to have a good time in the big city. It was now December, and the roads were in the worst possible shape for our two-hundred-and-fifty-mile night drive. But this didn't seem to worry Prescott very much—in fact, he seemed rather delighted at the chance to test his various self-invented gadgets in his car.

Prescott was very thorough, a nice characteristic for diving work. As we prepared to leave Boston, he gave his car a last check, like a locomotive engineer leaving for a long run. Lifting up the hood, I noticed that a light automatically went on like that in a modern refrigerator. The engine itself and the entire interior of the "engine room" were finished in a spotless white glossy enamel and were as clean and inviting as a Sears Roebuck model kitchen. Because of the iced highways, he had slapped his dual wheels on the rear, an attachment of his invention, with chains covering both tires. Operated from the driver's seat was a chute that deposited sand in front of each of the four wheels with a pull of the lever, to cancel the terror of high-speed stops on ice.

All the way down the main route between Boston and New York, I didn't see a car traveling over fifteen miles per hour on the iced highways. However, Prescott's car, more like a high-speed tank than an automobile, whizzed down the icy roads at a speed that made them look by comparison like parked cars.

It started to snow a little as we entered Connecticut, which couldn't make the roads any slipperier but did seriously impede the visibility. We were now in some sort of a city and were completely lost. It was late at night, and anyone who hadn't sense enough to be in bed by that time was at least staying inside. We drove and drove, desperately trying to peer out of the segments of windshield cleaned by the wipers to pick up some trace of human life as a possible source of information.



The schooner *Seth Parker*.

From my window, I noticed the vague silhouette of what appeared to be a ship. I rolled down the window quickly. There, looming up, was the hulk of a huge schooner.

“Holy smokes, look—for God’s sake, hold it!” I yelled, and Prescott brought his begadgeted Ford to the stop that only his car could make on a night like that.

We got out in the blizzard and walked along the dock to which the massive vessel was tied. Her four giant masts and shrouds towered heavenward and disappeared into a ceiling of snow pouring out of the inky black night.

I had never before seen one of those giant windjammers, which today have practically been replaced by the modern steamship. We walked aft, thrilling as we almost brushed against her unpainted weather-beaten planking. To us, this type of ship, more than anything afloat, symbolized the romance of the sea. Soon we were at the stern, and our eyes strained upward trying to catch a glimpse of her name through the flurry of snow. There it was, stretched across her transom—the *Seth Parker*!

Adventure-minded Prescott had read hungrily about the Seth Parker Expedition, too, and here we were, by pure accident, almost brushing the very ship.

Excitedly, we walked forward to go over our previous casual observations more carefully on this famous vessel, which we had thought was