

It's News Today **The World Around**

Jean Shepard, 32, a high-minded, patriotic-type disc jockey, may not as yet have reversed the trend toward "creeping meatballism" in this country but he has certainly stopped it in its tracks.

UNTIL A FEW months ago, Jean, an amiable fella who chats and spins records from 1 to 5:30 a. m. over New York's WOR, was not even aware that creeping meatballism existed. Being one of the night people, he never ran into the cemetery plot salesmen, afternoon TV programs, booster clubs and other evidences of daytime decadence.

HOWSOEVER, it came to pass that one day he stayed up long enough to venture into a 5th Ave bookstore by daylight.

HE ASKED the clerk for a copy of William Bolitho's "Twelve Against the Gods." The clerk left his comic magazine long enough to say there never was such a book and never had been such a book. Well, ol' Jean is not adverse to an argument, but he is intelligent enough to know that man is not his best in intellectual discussion until after sunset. So he silently left the store and blinked his way sleepily through the bright sunlight back to his cool, dark pad.

A FEW DAYS later he returned to the store and asked for a copy of a collection of old "Vic and Sade" radio serial scripts. The clerk, determined to put an end to this troublemaker, declared that there never had been such a book and there never would be.

"I GOT MAD," Jean said. I got furious, especially when I later saw the book at a friend's house."

SO ONE night in April, whilst the daytime ralphs contentedly stashed their h'l cube heads on their h'l square pillows, Jean took the problem of creeping meatballism to his listeners and concocted a plot.

SOON, BOOKSTORES reported to publishers that they had received an unusual demand for a remarkable new book entitled "I, Libertine," but they could not find out who published it.

INDEX CARDS for "I, Libertine" turned up in a number of public library catalogues. College students wrote reviews of the book for English classes.

"PEOPLE STARTED claiming they had bought the book and read it," Jean said. "Only we in the night people underground knew these guys were phonies, victims of creeping meatballism."

THE NIGHT PEOPLE adopted the password of "excoisior" and the reply "seltzer bottle" to identify themselves to one another. A student who received a B-plus on a review of "I, Libertine," found his professor had written "excoisior" at the bottom.

JEAN DENIES any malice toward people who work by day and sleep at night.

"WE'RE JUST trying to wake them up," he said. "They're going to let themselves be replaced by electronic brains if they don't watch out."

BALINTINE BOOKS announced this week it will publish a semihistorical novel entitled "I, Libertine" next month, with a first edition of 130,000 copies. One of Jean's fans was writer Theodore Sturgeon. He decided there really should be such a book.

THE BOOK, about a duchess named Elizabeth Chudleigh, a noted playgirl of 18th century England, has as its "hero" a man with distinctly day-person characteristics, Jean said.

"HE IS DEFEATED by the world because of this tragic flaw," he added.

★ ★ ★
Rocket Another threatened victim of creeping meatballism is 17-year-old Jimmy Blackmon of Charlotte, N. C. JIMMY, a bright lad with a scientific bent, has just finished building himself a shiny new, homemade, six-foot rocket. You'd think people would be coming around to congratulate him, shaking his hand and pointing out that here was a young fella who spends his time building a rocket with a liquid oxygen fuel injection system instead of trying out for the varsity on the juvenile delinquency squad.

BUT AS SOON as the word got around about Jimmy's rocket, a lot of people who couldn't build one if they tried wanted to keep him from flying it.

THE CHARLOTTE News called the Civil Aeronautics Administration people in Washington. The CAA went into a huddle and called back:

"WE'VE NEVER run into this before. We've asked our lawyers, and it is the opinion of the CAA that firing this device would be a violation of civil air regulations."

WELL, A COUPLE of people who were on Jimmy's side called the Pentagon. Army ordnance officers, no creeping meatballs, said they would try to arrange a test firing of the rocket at some military launching site.

"GEE," said Jimmy, "I didn't mean to get anybody excited."

★ ★ ★
Demotion When firemen arrived at the statue in the Bull Run battlefield near Centerville, Va., the situation was just as the telephoned plea had described it.

THERE SAT Pvt. Ferlin N. Bowlen, the pride of the New Army, in the lap of Gen. Stonewall Jackson.

HE'D CLIMBED there for a photograph. Firemen had to help him down.

—BOB WELLS