

# SERIAL REPORT



**CHAPTER 13**

**WALTER REED**, 85, star of two 1951 Republic serials, "Flying Disc Man From Mars" and "Government Agents Vs. Phantom Legion", died of natural causes Aug. 20 at his retirement home in Santa Cruz, CA. To this writer Walter had become like a second father. To western and serial aficionados and film festival attendees over the last several years he'd become a well respected man, full of life and ready with a wallet full of new jokes. Born Reed Smith on Bainbridge Island, WA, 2/10/16, the family moved to L.A. when his father became VP of a bond and stock company. Both Walter and his brother (Jack Smith, a popular singer and radio star of the '40s) were interested in showbiz when they were teens causing Walter to go on a mass interview in '29 where he was chosen to play one of the (Cont'd. page 17)

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## SERIAL LEGEND

**Bruce Bennett** (aka Herman Brix), now 95 (born May 19, 1906), has penned his memoirs, **PLEASE DON'T CALL ME TARZAN**, with the help of Mike



Chapman and will break his long standing self imposed seclusion by appearing at the Hollywood Collectors Show at the Beverly Garland Holiday Inn in N. Hollywood Oct. 6-7. Bennett will be there to sell and autograph copies of his book. In SR Ch. 30 (July-Sept. '99) we noted Bennett's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, based on long standing studio publicity which made him a bit younger. As Herman Brix, his first serial was "New Adventures of Tarzan" in '35. Then for Sam Katzman he starred in "Shadow of Chinatown" ('36) and was one of the unbilled heavies in "Blake of Scotland Yard" a year later. His biggest serial

fame came at Republic in "The Lone Ranger", "Hawk of the Wilderness", "Fighting Devil Dogs" and "Daredevils of the Red Circle".





## WALTER REED ON SERIALS

Interview by  
Boyd Magers

**SR:** "Flying Disc Man From Mars" *Reed at his foot-* in particular has *printing hon-* been called *orarium in Santa* "camp" for lack of *Cruz, CA, last July* a better word. *(Photo by Don Kelson)* How did you approach your two serials?

**WR:** I never did anything I thought was beneath me. I never laughed at them. Serials served a purpose; the kids loved them. High camp now, but in 1951 you didn't laugh at them. We did them seriously, which makes them 'cult' now.

**SR:** How hard did you work on those serials?

**WR:** We'd do 60-70 setups in a day. We didn't work *that* hard later on half hour TV shows. We'd do 25 pages of script in a day. In an A film, you'd do two pages a day. They liked me because I could remember dialogue. Even though I did many A films with John Ford and at RKO, I've gotten more publicity from "Disc Man" than any picture I made. One reason Republic wanted me was because I looked a lot like Ralph Byrd...15 feet away you couldn't tell us apart...and they had all these stock shots from his Dick Tracy serials.

**SR:** Your partner in "Disc Man" is Sandy Sanders. Do you recall him?

**WR:** He was a horseman more than an actor with a beautiful Arabian that did tricks. He worked quite a bit for Gene Autry's shows.

**SR:** The Disc Man's two on-earth gangsters were Harry Lauter and Richard Irving.

**WR:** Irving became an executive producer at Universal. He hated to have anybody know he was once an actor. (Laughs) [Irving died in 1990—ed.]

Harry Lauter was an old friend of mine. I did quite a few shows for Autry with Harry. I accompanied him to the Knoxville Film Festival just before he died [in 1990].

**SR:** After the two serials, did Republic want you to do more?  
**WR:** They asked me to do another but I had other things to do, so Harry played the lead. I was afraid I'd get caught doing too many serials. Frankly, I did the serials...and later a lot of TV shows...for eating money.

**SR:** Did you know Gregory Gay and James Craven who were also in "Flying Disc Man"?

**WR:** I can't remember them. Nor Mary Ellen Kay from "Government Agents". Everybody asks me about her. You work so hard in serials that you don't have time to socialize. You hit your marks, do your lines and move on.

**SR:** Who doubled you?

**WR:** Dale Van Sickel. He was the best double I ever had. He was the only All American football player ever to come out of Miami University. He and Tom Steele did things that would have *killed* me!



**SR:** Do you recall any harrowing incidents while making serials?

**WR:** Once I was hanging off a train trestle. I was supposed to pull myself up to see if the train was coming, then drop down. They asked me to do it several times and I said, "This isn't the Olympic Games! Get Dale to do it!" (Laughs) And cars—I must have driven 20 different cars to match stock footage they had. I almost gave (director) Freddie Brannon a heart attack. The first day he said,

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**GOVERNMENT AGENTS vs. PHANTOM LEGION**

Active Series - Star Walter Reed - Joy Rogers - Fred C. Brown - Series by Boyd Magers - Republic Serials - Novel by Don Kelson

"Walker, get in that old car and drive

over there." I said, "I don't drive!" I knew they had all this stock of Ralph Byrd in cars. Freddie almost had a heart attack when he thought I couldn't drive. I was just kidding, of course. Speaking of cars...one time Davy Sharpe was blind driving with some sort of black thing over the car. As the car goes down the hill there's an apple box...a little crate. As the car goes by, I run alongside and jump on the apple box. The car door is left open. As the car passes, the camera pans over to me. After I leave the apple box, I roll over and it looks exactly like I jumped out of the car. The car keeps going as Davy is blind driving it. I did this one day up on Mulholland Drive and the next day I had 68 ticks on my back. It took about a half hour to take them out!

**SR:** You mentioned being good at dialogue. There was a lot of exposition in certain serial scenes.

**WR:** My mother died while we were making "Government Agents". It could have screwed up production for Freddie Brannon because they had a schedule and budget to meet. I had two more days to do. I said, "I'll finish and we'll have my mother's funeral then." Papa Yates came down and thanked me for that. During the

last two days we did nearly all my dialogue scenes in the office for all 12 chapters. I did 40 pages of dialogue in those last two days! That's tough, but I learned how to memorize doing stock back East. I did 186 weeks of stock in New York, Chattanooga and Kenebunkport. Everybody learns lines differently. When you're younger, it's easy. You learn your own way of memorizing lines.

**SR:** Your second serial featured Dick Curtis, John Pickard and Fred Coby.

**WR:** Fred was a lifeguard in Santa Monica before doing the serial and a lifeguard after doing it. Also Pierce Lyden was in the second serial. I never knew him until he came up to me at a film festival in Sonora a couple of years ago and said, "We worked together in a serial." He's a great guy. [Lyden died in 1998.—ed.]

## DAREDEVILS OF THE WEST



The restoration of "Daredevils of the West" proceeds very slowly. Some time ago, Viacom closed down Republic with Paramount absorbing their library, forcing U.S. Television Office (aka Sagebrush Entertainment) to renegotiate their position with a whole new set of attorneys "trying to make points" as Jerry Rosenthal, president of Sagebrush tells SR. As SR readers know, the picture portion of "Daredevils" is intact but sound is missing on many episodes. Rosenthal has the script for all 12 episodes and is ready to "rebuild" the classic Republic



chiffhanger "as quickly as Paramount will let us," therefore it's Paramount who is slowing the process.

### CLIFFHANGER

### POSTER PRICES

Over \$720,000 worth of rare movie posters were auctioned off at Vintage Hollywood Posters IV June 30 and July 1 by Bruce Hershenson. All but 8 of over 700 lots sold to 776 bidders with 38% of the items reaching beyond pre-auction estimates. One sheet, lobbies and inserts ran the gamut from horror to western, film noir to comedy...and over 125 serial items. Here are *some* of the serial items sold. (Prices realized depend on condition of the item, whether rolled, folded or if linen backed.) "Whispering Shadow" ('33) three sheet: \$555; Houdini's "Mystery" ('19) one sheet: \$16,300 (this was the third highest priced item in the auction being topped only by a "Red Dust" one sheet at \$26,999 and a "Lost World" window card for \$23,600); "Perils of Pauline" Ch. 20 ('14) three sheet: \$2,650; "Flash Gordon's Trip To Mars" ('38) entire serial one sheet: \$10,178. Ch. 14 one sheet: \$6,100; "Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe" ('40) entire serial one sheet: \$8,900; "Crimson Ghost" ('46) entire serial one sheet:

\$6,610; "King of the Wild" ('31) Ch. 1 one sheet: \$1,175; "Tarzan the Fearless" ('32) Ch. 1 one sheet: \$4,300; "Red Ryder" ('34) banner: \$2,075; "Gordon of Ghost City" ('33) entire serial one sheet: \$1,469; "New Adventures of Tarzan" ('35) feature one sheet: \$2,980; "Flash Gordon" ('36) Ch. 4 one sheet: \$9,000; "Dark-est Africa" ('36) Ch. 3 one sheet: \$3,400; "Undersea Kingdom" ('36) Ch. 1 one sheet: \$4,850; "Dick Tracy" ('37) Ch. 1 one sheet: \$1,125; "Tim Tyler's Luck" ('37) Ch. 1 one sheet: \$2,125; "Lone Ranger" ('38) Ch. 2 one sheet: \$1,975; "Phantom Creeps" ('39) entire serial one sheet: \$1,725; "Buck Rogers" ('40) entire serial one sheet: \$2,136; "Capt. Marvel" ('41) Ch. 10 one sheet: \$2,014; "Jungle Girl" ('41) Ch. 1 one sheet: \$1,426; "Sea Raiders" ('41) Ch. 3 one sheet: \$93 (the lowest selling serial poster); "Spy Smasher" ('42) Ch. 12 one sheet: \$610; "The Phantom" ('43) Ch. 12 one sheet: \$716; "Batman" ('43) Ch. 1 one sheet: \$2,275; "Masked Marvel" ('43) Ch. 1 one sheet: \$910; "Capt. America" ('44) Ch. 1 one sheet: \$2,551; "Purple Monster Strikes" ('45) entire serial one sheet: \$2,776; "Brick Bradford" ('47) Ch. 10 one sheet: \$482; "Superman" ('48) Ch. 12 one sheet: \$2,192; "Batman and Robin" ('49) Ch. 5 one sheet: \$1,928. Ch. 3 four lobby cards: \$260; "King of the Rocketmen" ('49) entire serial one sheet: \$2,325; "Atom Man Vs. Superman" ('50) Ch. 9 one sheet: \$1,992; "Commando Cody" ('53) Ch. 1 one sheet: \$1,336. For a brief time only, you may order the catalog ("To Be Continued...") for this auction for only \$8 (plus \$4 postage) using the code MCW. If offer no longer valid, price is \$24 ppd., still well worth it! It depicts all of the posters mentioned here, plus all the others sold, in stunning color. Bruce Hershenson, PO Box 874, W. Plains, MO 65775.



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\$26,999 and a "Lost World" window card for \$23,600; "Perils of Pauline" Ch. 20 ('14) three sheet: \$2,650; "Flash Gordon's Trip To Mars" ('38) entire serial one sheet: \$10,178. Ch. 14 one sheet: \$6,100; "Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe" ('40) entire serial one sheet: \$8,900; "Crimson Ghost" ('46) entire serial one sheet:

### SUPERMAN WEEK

It was Superman Week in L.A. with a ceremony and luncheon July 10 to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the "Adventures of Superman" TV series which began filming in L.A. July 10, 1951, with City Hall as the Daily Planet. Noel Neill, who played



Lois Lane on the series, as well as in two Columbia serials, was honored along with Jack Larson (Jimmy Olsen on TV series), Robert Rockwell (Jor-el in "Superman On Earth"), Jeff Corey ("Superman and the Mole Men") and Bette Shayne (widow of Robert Shayne, Inspector Henderson on the series).

### THE DVD SERIAL WATCH

Newly released on DVD: "Dick Tracy" (Marengo) (978) 546-1699 "Jungle Girl" (VCI double disc set). Also features 60 minutes of original trailers, a photo gallery and bios. \$22.49 (800) 331-4077 "Drums of Fu Manchu" (VCI) \$29.99. (800) 331-4077



Mathews underwent successful hip replacement surgery in mid-July.

✦ Anne Gwynne ("Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe"), residing at the Motion Picture Home, hospitalized for irregular heart beat in August.

✦ Dorothy Fay (Ritter) has been at the Motion Picture Home for 12 years following a stroke. I visited with her in August, and although she can't speak, she understood all I said and appreciates all the love serial fans have for her work in "Green Archer" and "White Eagle".



As a follow up to Ken Weiss' column in Ch. 38, pg. 11, here is further proof of the existence, at least in 1930, of the 10 ch. GYB Production, "Voice From the Sky", courtesy Jim Stringham.

### WORTH ANOTHER LOOK

by Ken Weiss



For the most part serials don't tell you very much about conditions in the U.S. during the period they were made. Feature films, on the other hand, tell you a lot. You'll look long and hard at the serials of the '30s to find any sign at all of the Great Depression, and you won't find any.

### MEDICAL UPDATE



✦ Edward ("Jungle Queen") Norris suffered a slight stroke last March.

✦ Vivian (Austin) Coe ("Red Ryder") has had two knee operations and was recently stricken with a colon infection. All this in addition to a recent stroke.

✦ Robert ("Black Arrow") Scott (aka Mark Roberts) tells SR he's gotten an all clear on the leukemia he's been battling.

✦ Carole ("Monster and the Ape")

Every other genre, including cartoons, musicals and westerns, took on the Depression, but not serials. Serials, thankfully, were beyond such realities. (Can you imagine anything more depressing than a Depression-serial?) As pure fantasy, serials existed in their own worlds. That is, except in time of war. The serials of the '20s dealt mostly with robberies (diamonds, gold), phantom menaces, inventors with diabolical inventions, detectives tracking down smugglers and the like, jungle adventures, westerns, and strange foreign cults. The '30s pretty much continued that trend, with the addition of interplanetary science-fiction and serials based on comic strips. World War II changed almost everything. Prior to the War a few of the serials of 1941 sounded a warning theme about national defense that somewhat echoed public sentiment ("The Spider Returns", "Sea Raiders", "Sky Raiders", "King of the Texas Rangers"), although the bad guys are usually working for an unidentifiable foreign government. But by 1942 we were at war, and of the 11 serials released that year, six are out and out war stories ("Spy Smasher", "King of the Mounties", "Captain Midnight", "Don Winslow of the Navy", "Junior G-Men of the Air", "Secret Code"). Of the other five, three are westerns, with no unidentified enemies here. We're clearly at war with Germany

and Japan (although I can't think of any serials with Fascist Italian bad guys), and no doubt about it! The photo below from "King of the Mounties" shows a Japanese about to plunge a dagger into the back of an unsuspecting Native American, an image that resonated after Pearl Harbor. By 1943, seven of the nine serials released were about the War. For serial writers the War must have been a Godsend. A whole new dramatic area opening up, with a real enemy and a vital sense of national urgency. I was one of the kids watching those serials and I must confess, I loved them. Except for very few others ("Adventures of Captain Marvel", "Jungle Girl", "Mysterious Dr. Satan"), War serials became my favorites and were the ones I always selected to see. I'll even admit when the War ended, amidst the torrent of joy and relief, there was a tinge of regret: I knew my beloved serial era was over. (Little did I dream TV would kill it off altogether.) After the War, serials continued to adapt current events in the form of three phenomena: the atomic bomb, flying-saucer sightings (custom made for serials) and the cold war. In 1946, for "Lost City of the Jungle", everyone's after Meteorium atomic ray 245, "the only practical defense against the atomic bomb," while in "Crimson Ghost" they're after the Cyclotrode, "a counter-atomic device." The '50s brought us "Flying Disc Man From Mars", "Radar Men From the Moon", "Zombies of the Stratosphere", and "Lost Planet", before the outer space theme played itself out. Long after these serials died their spirits lived on in the form of, among others, "Star Trek" (first on TV, then in films) and its teleportation beam, "Indiana Jones" and "Star Wars", whose creators have publicly proclaimed their debt to the serials of the '40s and '50s. Not bad for a genre that's been dead for nearly 50 years.



## SHOENBERGER ON SERIALS

by Jim Shoemberger  
When theatre rental fees for "Don Winslow of the Navy" ('41) were added up, Universal knew they had a winner. It wasn't a difficult decision for them to realize movie going serial fans would continue to line up at the box office to pay to see a sequel, "Don Winslow of the Coast Guard" ('43).



Once contract negotiations were finalized with the comic strip's creator, Frank V. Martinek, the same screen writers, Paul Huston and Griffin Jay, who did a great job on the first serial, were assigned once again. Veteran serial scribe George H. Plympton joined the team. This time an extra chapter was added to the script for a total of 13 in contrast to 12 episodes of "Don Winslow of the Navy". Universal wisely recast Don Terry as hero of the title with Walter Sande as Red Pennington, Don's friend and fellow officer, both lead players in the first serial. I was surprised, however, by the change in the casting of the role of our heroes' arch enemy, The Scorpion. In the first

serial the part was played to sinister perfection by character actor Kurt Katch. I remember how surprised I was when the sequel was released and I saw another actor, Nestor Paiva, playing the Scorpion. I did some checking and confirmed Katch's services would have been available during this period. So, why the change in casting? I simply could not figure it out. In my frustration I contacted the film collector known as Mr. Universal, Blackie Seymour, an acknowledged expert on the subject of Universal Studios. I told him why I was puzzled. He said he'd think it over and get back to me, which he did the following day. This is his theory. It makes sense and is logical. In each of the 12 episodes of "Don Winslow of the Navy" the audience sees only the head and shoulders of Katch. I agreed. Then Blackie brought up a key point of information. In real life, Katch was short in height and diminutive in overall appearance. He would hardly be a very menacing opponent to the tall, athletically built Don Terry. Nestor Paiva, however, was an entirely different matter. He was big and husky. He could look and sound mean. Although Paiva did not exude the innate sense of evil that Katch did, you felt he was a worthy adversary for Winslow. But I think the member of the cast that disturbed me the most was actress June Duprez who had been the star of two of my all-time favorite motion pictures: "Four Feathers" ('39) and "Thief of Baghdad" ('40). Her stunning ethereal like beauty was immortalized by the Technicolor cameras. My 10 year old heart was completely lost to her charms as the Princess in "Thief of Baghdad". But life apparently had not always been easy for her. I remember reading a quote from her that she was not even invited to the London premiere of "Thief of Baghdad" because the wife of the film's producer was sooooo



jealous of her. Interestingly, the wife was a well known actress herself, Merle Oberon. Encouraged by the great success of these two Technicolor triumphs, Duprez came to California for a career in Hollywood films. However, she could not find work and her situation became so desperate it was another actor that came to her rescue. Her benefactor was none other than the well known screen personality of Sherlock Holmes, Dr. Watson. And so it was that she became a long time houseguest of her fellow English citizens Mr. and Mrs. Nigel Bruce. Now, in 1943, June is receiving 5<sup>th</sup> billing in a modest budget movie serial. I'm going to offer another guess that has a logical premise. Nigel Bruce was under contract to Universal with his Sherlock Holmes series enjoying popularity with movie audiences. It's my belief Bruce interceded with the studio on Duprez's behalf to get her back in front of the cameras. I don't think for a moment she would have chosen a serial, but at least she was working. Eventually, she returned to leading lady status in such classic films as "None But the Lonely Heart" and Agatha Christie's "And Then There Were None". Currently, she was playing Tasmia, a spy working under direction of the Scorpion. Perhaps in deference to Winslow's new leading lady, actress Elyse Knox, Duprez was given a nondescript wardrobe. The serial's basic plotline was not overly original. It began with a series of deadly submarine attacks in the waters off Seattle, WA. The Scorpion had returned! There was no sitting stationary in a chair, giving commands for this new version. He was all over the place! But he retained

the basic ruthlessness of the character. In the first chapter his submarine has torpedoed a ship and amid the fire and explosions the frightened passengers are trying to get off. The Scorpion's sub has risen to the surface with our villain on the deck watching the tragedy. He calmly gives the order, "Shell the lifeboats. There must be no survivors."

**CHAPTER #6: RAMMING THE SUBMARINE**



(How proud Kurt Katch must have been.) When it's eventually learned of the Scorpion's involvement, Don Winslow and his fellow officer, Red Pennington, are assigned to the Coast Guard to combat their old nemesis. The Scorpion surrounded himself with a selection of malcontents: June Duprez as his associate and spy, German agents and uniformed Japanese soldiers. The serial's diverse personalities provided the writers the opportunity for some sharp dialogue. Several examples:

Based on the newspaper feature entitled "DON WINSLOW OF THE M.P.T." owned and copyrighted by Frank V. Marston

Don Winslow makes reference to information the Japanese badly want: "They would give their eye teeth for that." Red: "You mean their buck teeth."  
 >The Scorpion: "Winslow is going to need all the luck he's got." Duprez as Tasmia: "Funny, I was going to say the same thing—about us."  
 >Scorpion Agent: "The cutter is picking up Winslow and his stooge."  
 (Red Pennington)  
 >Don: "The Scorpion is too smart to put all of his eggs in one basket."  
 Red: "Well, let's scramble what we've got."  
 >Tasmia: (on the failure of another assignment which has been thwarted by Winslow) "It's not my fault." Scorpion: "No, it's my fault for entrusting such an important mission to you."  
 >Comment to Winslow: "See that?"

It's a troop train and it's headed for Japan." Don: "Let's take a look. Sounds like a Jap in the woodpile."  
 >Scorpion: "Winslow! That man has spoiled my appetite for several years!"

>(Unintentional humor?) Winslow: "Order a fast car." (As opposed to a slow one?)

The Scorpion's secret headquarters in this serial was the old "hideout behind the waterfall" trick. I first saw it a year earlier, 1942, in Columbia's "Perils of the Royal Mounted". In fact, Columbia serial screenwriter George H. Plympton liked it so much it was used again in the '56 cliffhanger, "Perils of the Wilderness". It's said imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Obviously this is true, as we find waterfall sequences written into Republic serials "Zorro's Black Whip" ('44) and "Don Daredevil Rides Again" ('51). The serial followed the usual plot and counterplot formula which is almost mandatory due to the length of this type of production. Universal had their usual "spoilsport" chapter titles which virtually give away that episode's cliffhanger ending: "Trapped in a Blazing Sea"; "Crash in the Clouds"; "Bombed On the Ocean Floor" and "Blasted From the Skies" are good examples. Not many surprises here. On the subject of this serial's titles there were no less than 3 episodes with completely misleading titles:

Chapter #6 "Ramming The Submarine". There was indeed a ramming scene, but it was Winslow crashing his plane into a ship, not a sub.  
 Chapter #9 "The Torpedo Strikes". There was no torpedo. Winslow's boat was shelled and blown up.  
 Chapter #13 "Capturing the Scorpion". SPOILER WARNING! Allow me to describe the closing minutes and see if you agree with the title. The Scorpion, in his submarine, is located and bombed. You see the Scorpion,

Tasmia and the crew thrown off balance by the explosion. The next and final scene has Don telling his friends he will never believe the Scorpion is dead until he sees it. Then, Don turns and looks into the camera and, talking directly to the audience, gives a brief but highly patriotic speech. The serial ends on this high note.

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## THOSE GREAT SERIAL LOCATIONS

by Tinsley Varbrough

Some of the most exciting cliffhanger scenes featured caves or mines. Republic's cave set was located in a building adjoining the blacksmith shop set at the east end of the studio's main western street. Ace director Bill Witney mainly remembered the stench on the cave set, which doubled as a cool holding pen for rental horses when not scheduled for filming. Republic's cave set was the most impressive in the business, by far. "The Lone Ranger" ('38), "Zorro's Fighting Legion" ('39), "Adventures of Captain Marvel" ('41) and "Perils of Nyoka" ('42) were just a few of the studio's serials to put its cave set to stunning use. Some titles also effectively mixed scenes shot in the cave with the Lydecker brothers' amazingly realistic miniatures. The raging torrent, for example, in the climax to Ep. 1 of "Jungle Girl" ('41), later reused in "Manhunt of Mystery Island" ('45), or the flames racing after Spy Smasher's handcar at the end of my all-time favorite cliffhanger's first chapter. Republic's cave set had

*Allen Lane watches George J. Lewis and two other Republic cave thugs in "Tiger Woman" ('44).*



no exterior entrance that could be used for filming. But in the studio's later years, a fake cliff set situated east of the Duchess Ranch near the L.A. River included a cave/mine entrance that was put to regular use. The two most famous location ranches provided a number of cave/mine sets as well. Iverson Ranch had several. Two were created by a lean-to shaped rock formation located along a chase road on the lower Iverson. The entrance at one end figured prominently in an episode of "Adventures of Red Ryder" ('40), while the A-shaped opposite entrance was featured in "Zorro's Fighting Legion" and "Nyoka," among other titles. The lower Iverson's gorge, bordered on one side by its familiar, winding stagecoach road, played host for a number of years to a hideout shack and mine entrance seen in "Deadwood Dick" ('40), "Dick Tracy's G-Men" ('39), "Red Ryder" and other serial and western titles. In later years, the Iversons (or a production crew) also molded a cave/mine entrance into a rock formation near the lower Iverson's western street set (now home to a trailer park). That entrance appeared in Kirk Alyn's Republic serials, the Rocketman entries and "Invisible Monster", along with many other chapterplays and westerns (it played evil Jennifer Holt's hideout, for example, in "Hawk of Powder River" '48). Sets on the upper Iverson (north of the freeway today) included a hideout shack with two mine entrances embedded in a nearby cliff.

But I can recall no serial that featured the entrances, though several chapterplays including "King of the Rocketmen" ('49) and "The Vigilante" ('47) and a zillion western features and TVers utilized the shack, while Gene Autry's "Hills of Utah" ('51) used one of the mine entrances. The Corriganville location site was supposed to have hosted several caves and cave sets. But I remember only one used in titles that lensed there. It was a fake entrance situated at the base of a cliff along a chase road that ran from the Corriganville town set to its Robin Hood lake.

Most frequently used in westerns, it also appeared in "Jungle Girl" and "Nyoka." Bronson Canyon in the Hollywood Hills featured undoubtedly the most popular non-studio mine/cave entrances in film. A quarry for gravel used in construction of L.A.'s first street-car system, Bronson made one of its first film appearances in the silent Jack Hoxie chapterplay "Lightning Bryce" ('19), with quarry equipment still clearly in view. One of Bronson's four tunnel entrances served, with a hinged door, as the



*SR's Donna Magers at Murania entrance to Bronson Cave.*

entrance to the underground queendom of Murania in Gene Autry's "Phantom Empire" ('35). The smallest of its four tunnels made, perhaps, its only serial appearance in "Superman" ('48). With or without its tunnels, the canyon appeared in countless other serials including "Lightning Warrior" ('31), "Gordon of Ghost City" ('33), "Mystery Mountain" ('34), "Robinson Crusoe of Clipper Island" ('36), "S.O.S. Coast Guard" ('37) and "Captain Marvel." A number of Universal chapterplays made effective use of cave sets. The



*George Reeves in "Adventures of Sir Galahad" (Ch. 6) watches as John Merton and Don Harvey scheme in the Columbia Cave set.*

underworld cities in the Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers titles were very elaborate, for example, and Ep. 5 of Russell Hayden's "Lost City of the Jungle" ('46) ends with an exciting cave fight above a fiery pit. Columbia typically resorted to crude and simple cave sets that at times bore an uncanny resemblance to hallway sets. But Columbia's "Great Adventures of Wild Bill Hickok" ('38) and "Overland With Kit Carson" ('39), starring Bill Elliott, were filmed in part on location at Kanab, UT. The Kit Carson title especially made effective use of cave-like hanging rocks in Kanab Canyon and neighboring sites. According to press reports, it also included scenes shot in Moqui Caverns north of town, later used in Lex Barker's "Girl in Black Stock-



ings" ('57) as well as various TV episodes. In one episode of the Hickok serial, Elliott's stunt double dived from a cliff into Three Lakes (only a short distance north of Moqui Cave) and appeared to swim into an underwater cave. (Many thanks to Neil Summers in Kanab.)

PS: The French Ranch which I wrote about in SR Ch. 37, pg. 10, where many scenes for "The Vigilante" were placed, has been torn down and replaced by a gaudy mansion. The stable area is still intact but its days are numbered I have no doubt.



## EPISODES

by Tom and Jim Goldrup  
Steve Mitchell reflected on his working in the 1953 Republic serial "Jungle Drums of Africa" in which he played a heavy named Gauss. Steve had acted in a film in Boston and came out to California for a

role in "Pat and Mike".

Although his scene was deleted from this second picture it had brought him west to Holly-

wood. One of his first film parts after arriving was in the '53 serial. Steve mused, "What was Republic noted for? The horse operas. We were doing a western. That's basically what the serial was: The same situations except it took place in the jungle. Phyllis Coates was a great lady. She was one of the big leading ladies in westerns. And Clayton Moore, he *was* the Lone Ranger." Others in the cast included John Cason, Henry Rowland, Roy Glenn and Bill Walker. "I said some line to Roy about dialect," Steve smiled. "Something like you could use jive talk as a native language and nobody

would understand it, and he laughed like hell." When asked if working in the serial was more dangerous or difficult than working in normal features, Steve replied, "Much more relaxed in this respect. I noticed a difference, and I don't mean this negatively to either group, but there was a difference between other actors and western people. They were really friendly, relaxed, enjoyed doing it. A whole difference in the other stuff is that everybody is jockeying for positions. Think for a moment. There were other 'serials' besides those like 'Jungle Drums', only they were individual episodes. If you went over to Autry's Flying-A you did 'Annie Oakley', 'Range Rider' and 'Buffalo Bill Jr.' You went from one show to another, but you knew the crew and everybody was like a family. That was the same thing with the serial and we didn't take ourselves quite as serious. It was really nice. When you finished the job everybody thanked you and you wound up with the same people again, as opposed to doing a feature, that's it. Adios. Good bye, and everybody took off. In fact, that serial really helped me with Autry because everybody at Autry loved people from Republic. They could call up the place and ask if you were any good." Steve mentioned a humorous incident behind the scenes while making the serial. "Henry Rowland and I were on the backlot of Republic and I was 'playing' Superman. They had some of those phony boulders. I picked them up and Rowland and I were playing catch with these things. We were asked, 'What are you crazy guys doing?' I said, 'In case Superman flies over we're going to give him an inferiority complex.'" In conclusion, Steve reiterated, "The serial was really a western except in the western the Indians scalp you and in the serial the cannibals eat you."

## CLIFFHANGER COMMENTARY

by Bruce Deffmen

As a youngster I didn't know much about "Dick Tracy". The local paper we subscribed to didn't run the strip (fortunately it did feature "Tarzan" and "The Lone Ranger") and my only association with the character was the brief (and cheaply made) early TV series which I recall only liking because the leads wore wrist radios which I thought at the time a terribly nifty concept. Still, by the time I actually caught up with him on screen and in the "funnies," the name of Dick Tracy had become bigger than the character itself, a kind of representation of all modern lawmen, particularly federal agents (even though Tracy in the comics was no such thing). I still recall a guy down on our block regularly threatening his three year-old with calling Tracy for help if the kid didn't clean up his act, a threat which always sent the terrified offspring racing off in tears. The likable and earnest actor Ralph Byrd, a familiar face in many B films and other cliffhangers, appeared as Tracy in the TV series, but his main association with the character (an association which nearly obscured all his other work) came from both a series of serials and later feature films, the first produced by Republic, the others turned out a few years later by RKO. His only competition for the part was a guy named Morgan Conway who appeared rather ineffectually in the first two Tracy features and who is largely forgotten—or readily dismissed—by most fans of Chester Gould's creation. The first Dick Tracy serial, aptly named "Dick Tracy" ('37) was a popular success and not surprisingly spawned



several sequels. The first of these, made only a year later, was "Dick Tracy Returns" with a plot culled from the front pages of a nation enthralled by the gangland antics of such notables as Vincent "Mad Dog" Coll, John Dillinger, "Baby Face" Nelson and "Pretty Boy" Floyd. The specific inspiration was the machine gun toting Ma Barker and her psycho sons who Republic screenwriters turned into Pa Stark and his equally obedient brood of homicidal off-



Pa Stark (Charles Middleton) has the drop on Dick Tracy (Ralph Byrd).

spring. Pa is played by the one and only Charles Middleton who, I have to admit from the get go, scared the hell out of me when I first encountered him as Ming the Merciless in the Buster Crabbe Flash Gordon serials. As Pa Stark he is not quite so threatening or diabolical, but with that gaunt face, skeletal frame, deep vibrating delivery of lines and mean mouth he still isn't someone I'd likely be hiring to baby-sit my kids. The non-stop action revolves around Tracy and his cronies Gwen (Lynn Roberts), Junior (Jerry Tucker) and Mike McGurk (Lee Ford) out to avenge the death of novice agent Ron Merton, played by the legendary Dave Sharpe. Running down the Stark gang (in addition to Middleton the group includes John Merton,

Jack Ingram and Ned Glass), the perpetrators of the crime, leads the group from one thrilling cliffhanger to another during the course of 15 thrill-packed episodes (even if two of these are "economy chapters" with extensive footage from earlier episodes). Other than being a bit disappointed with the quality of the particular product I purchased—especially as it displayed glaring cuts and crude splicing in certain of the more violent action sequences, as well as finding it a bit disconcerting to hear musical Lone Ranger cues in certain scenes, I had a lot of fun with this serial. It's a bit on the rickety side, old fashioned compared to some of Republic's later and slicker products, but all and all, it remains a pleasing and nicely paced serial thanks to the always creative team of directors William Witney and John English. It's a look back at a world when the good guys were decent and brave and the bad guys just plain bad.



## SERIAL HEAVIES

Serial watchers trusted Anthony Warde on sight. Under a snap-brim hat, with thin lips, roughly dimpled,



firmly set chin and cold steely eyes, he was the perfect henchman, appearing in 23 serials at Republic, Universal and Columbia and Columbia's "Tim Tyler's Luck" (as Spider Webb's henchman Garry Drake) to 1950's "Radar Patrol Vs. Sky King". 13 years of serial villainy! Born 11/4/08 in Pennsylvania, he was trained as a stage actor. Although he preferred comedy and found it easier to do (unlike many

actors) he did a play, "Blind Alley" where he portrayed a neurotic killer which led to film roles, forever cast as a heavy. Warde called it quits in 1956 (except for a small role in "The Carpetbaggers" in '64) and opened a successful clothing store in Hollywood. In "Flash Gordon's Trip To Mars" in '38 Warde was King Fir of the Forest People. He's well remembered as Killer Kane, arch enemy of Buster Crabbe's "Buck Rogers" in '39. Other important serial roles were in "Masked Marvel" ('43), "Monster and the Ape" ('45), "King of the Forest Rangers" ('46), "Hop Harrigan" ('46), "Black Widow" ('47) and "Dangers of the Canadian Mounted" ('48). Warde told interviewer Greg Jackson in 1974 that he preferred working at Universal because, "...generally speaking, Universal spent more money on their serials. Columbia was the cheapest. But it was a matter of the personalities you worked with at the time. We had fun in those days wherever we were." Having been likened to a new Paul Muni in stage productions, Warde said he only did serials "as a livelihood. I wasn't given the opportunity...the time...to do anything of a serious nature. I always felt self conscious playing a heavy. I'm really a nice guy. (Laughs)" Warde recalls "Masked Marvel" as a horrible experience because the four leading men, hired because of their similar appearance, could not act or remember their lines. Warde also offered up great praise for the stuntmen... "Duke Green was really the mentor. Dale Van Sickle would double for me for obvious reasons, if he was available." Anthony Warde died Jan. 8, 1975, of cancer.

## SERIAL BOO BOOS

In Ch. 1 of "Don Winslow of the Coast Guard", Red (Walter Sande) fires a machine gun—but the fired shells explode in mid air much like anti-aircraft shells.

## COLUMBIA CLIFFHANGER CASTS

Wally West  
?  
Squad Car Cop (Ch. 15)

To throw viewers off track, the silhouette of the Chief Pilot does not resemble who it turns out to be—and the voice used for the Chief Pilot sounds to be that of Jackie Moran rather than the actual culprit. (Cast compiled by Rich Wannan, Boyd Magers, Hal Polk.)



## ASK THE SERIAL CELEBS

You submit the questions to the stars and we'll get the answers.

Q: I am a big fan of Myron Healey. When he made "Panther Girl of the Congo" was he pleased he was the good guy for a change after portraying so many villains? I have always felt the mark of a good actor was the ability to be able to play both the good and the bad on screen. I liked "Panther Girl" because he and Phyllis Coates made it work.

—Stan Zwerling, Bellerose, NY  
Myron Healey: "Actually, Phyllis did all the work. She made it easy as evidenced by the show. Just as the title implies, it's about her. She needed someone to bounce a few lines off, things like that. So they had to put a character in there, I think his name was Larry...and that's all I did. Very few heroic moments...I think I got to save her twice out of 12 chapters. The rest of the time she was always saving me. In fact, that was next to the last serial made (at Republic). Harry Lauter made the last one. There's much more leeway in playing a heavy, you can get more out of



## Character

Actor	Character
William Bakewell	Hop Harrigan
Sumner Getchell	Tank Tinker
Jennifer Holt	Gail Nolan
Robert 'Buzz' Henry	Jackie Nolan
John Merton	Dr. Tobor
Emmett Vogan	J. Westley Arnold
Claire James	Gwen Arnold
Peter Michael	Mark Craven
Ernie Adams	Retner
Harold Brauer	F. Hunter
Anthony Warde	Edwards
Terry Frost	Barry
Charles King	Arlen
Jim Diehl	Carter
Wheeler Oakman	Alex Ballard
Jack Ingram	Lt. Riley
Carol Hughes	Miss Brooks
Jackie Moran	Fraser
Bobby Stone	Gray
?	Board Chairman Smith
?	Board Member Brown
?	Third Board Member
Jack Rockwell	Sheriff (Ch. 4)
Jack Buchanan	Sheriff (Ch. 15)
Bud Geary	Thug (Ch. 9, 13, 14)
?	Gold Shipment Guards (Ch. 2-3)
?	Dean, Ray Truck Thug (Ch. 2, 5-7)
?	Gold Delivery Pilot (Ch. 1)
?	Hoyt, thug (Ch. 8, 9)
?	Two Highway Policemen (Ch. 9)
?	Police Lt. (Ch. 9)
?	Three Warehouse Cops (Ch. 14)



the role. With the existing dialogue, you get more of a chance to pull things out of it...character and personality. Leads, unless they're written for A-pictures, are usually, in serials, written in such a stock way that there's no imagination to speak of and you can't do much with it. It's just bland. But with a heavy, you just play it straight and it's just plain interesting, the fact that you're not a nice guy. (Laughs) I enjoyed that much more than playing a hero. I actually didn't play a hero that often. 'Panther Girl' was fun 'cause we got to board and ride an elephant...and wrestle a crocodile...that sort of thing was exciting, it was fun. The elephant helps you a lot, you just stand there and he holds his trunk up and helps you get up there. Like having an elevator. He gets down on the ground before you climb aboard anyway. It was an exciting thing! How many people get to ride on an elephant? Everything was uncomfortable...they had constant changes of wardrobe for us 'cause we got dumped in so much slush. Then they had to match it up, 'cause you couldn't sit around in a soaking wardrobe, you'd have pneumonia in no time! The greatest thing about 'Panther Girl' was getting a chance to really work and be with Phyllis. She was one hell of a gal! And we had a few guys on the show I'd worked with before—Holly Bane...I knew everybody on it. It was like a kid running out in the yard playing."



## SERIAL CLIPPINGS

Stuntman/actor Sandy Sanders found alive and well living in California. Interviewed in OLD COWBOY PICTURE SHOW (9/01). Besides stunting for Gene Autry and other western stars, Sandy appeared in "Desperadoes of the West", "Flying Disc Man From Mars" and

"Don Daredevil Rides Again". Born May 23, 1919, in Hereford, TX. For a copy, write George Coan, PO Box 66, Camden, SC 29020. Buck Rogers' serial poster cover on MOVIE COLLECTOR'S WORLD #634 (7/30) with three pages inside about the Buster Crabbe classic. Consumer 17 page article/interview on Edward Norris in FILMS OF THE GOLDEN AGE #25 (Summer '01) as Universal drew up a long term contract with Norris before he made "Jungle Queen" but tore it up during the filming when he was blamed for production delays and problems on the set. Seven page "remembrance" of serials by Mario DeMarco in GOOD OLD DAYS SPECIALS (7/01). Four interesting pages on heavyweight champion Jack Dempsey in GOOD OLD DAYS SPECIALS (9/01). Mentions "Daredevil Jack", his 1920 Pathe serial. Strongman Joe Bonomo career article (by Mario DeMarco) in GOOD OLD DAYS SPECIALS (11/1). Bonomo appeared in "Beasts of Paradise" ('23) doubling William Desmond, "Great Circus Mystery" ('25), "Perils of the Wild" ('25), "Heroes of the Wild" ('27), "Golden Stallion" ('27), "Phantom of the West" ('31), "Sign of the Wolf" ('31)...19 in all. X Phyllis Isley/Jennifer Jones ("Dick Tracy's G-Men") was profiled 8/18 on A&E's "Biography". "Drums Of Fu Manchu" — seven pages, 7 photos in CASTLE OF FRANKENSTEIN #31. \$8 ppd. Dennis Drukentis, 348 Jocelyn Pl., Highwood, IL 60040. Charles Middleton as Ming the Merciless, an all new painted cover of the evil emperor, stares out from the cover of FILMFAX #85. 10 page article on Middleton includes interview with his grandson, Burr. Great dollops of serial info—such as why Middleton is not billed in "Jack Armstrong". 31 photos. Same issue sports an article

on Buster Crabbe and his "Capt. Gallant" TVer. It's an excerpt from Karl Whitezel's book, BUSTER CRABBE—A SELF PORTRAIT. \$12 ppd. PO Box 1900, Evanston, IL 60204. Several photos of Sam Edwards (Chuck in "Capt. Midnight") in SPERDVAC's RADIOGRAM newsletter (8/01). A William Witney eight film retrospective was among the highlights of the Seattle (WA) Film Festival June 13-16. Oscar winner Quentin Tarantino shared his thoughts on Witney's career as he's a big admirer of the western/serial director. (Thanks to Peter Hogue.)

## MEETING SERIAL STARS

FRANKIE THOMAS ("Tim Tyler's Luck") set for the Williamsburg, VA, Film Festival Feb. 28-March 2. (757) 482-2490 (See classifieds for more info.) DANNY MORTON, who appeared in four serials—"Mysterious Mr. M", "Raiders of Ghost City", "Royal Mounted Rides Again" and "Scarlet Horseman"—makes his first festival appearance in Memphis next June 13-15. PO Box 111347, Memphis, TN 38111. And here's photos from this past Summer's events:



Row 1: John Hart in West Branch, MI (Photo courtesy John Sharp); Mary Ellen Kay in Tombstone; Tommy Farrell in Charlotte. Row 2: Dick Jones in Tombstone; Peggy Stewart at Golden Boot Awards.



Sam Edwards and Kathryn Adams at Memphis. (Photos by Michael Fitzgerald.)

## CHAPTER 13

(Cont'd. from page 1) Indian children in Richard Dix's "Redskin" filmed in Gallup, NM. Although he did some stand in work for Joel McCrea, whom he'd met at Santa Monica's famous Beach Club, Walter didn't join the Screen Actor's Union until '36 when he appeared in several comedy shorts in NY. Walter then honed his craft working in stock companies. Old friend Joel McCrea saw him again in Kennebunkport and soon Walter received a call from McCrea's agent and was put under contract at RKO where he became Walter Reed, appearing in "Army Surgeon", "Bombardier" and a couple of the Mexican Spitfire series until WWII. During the service, he toured with dozens of other actors in the Army play, "Winged Victory". Returning to RKO after the war, he quickly became a respected character actor. When television came along, Walter was in constant demand. After a major heart attack in the '60s (at age 49), he slowed down and became successful in real estate.

## Friends and Co-Workers

### Remember Walter:

Steve Mitchell (friend and co-star in "Seven Men From Now"); "Walter's best performance in life was as a friend." Mary Ellen Kay (co-star "Government Agents Vs. Phantom Legion"); "He

was a fun man. It just seemed like I was at the desk all the time. They'd change the dialogue just before we were to shoot and I'd have to learn entirely new lines. (Laughs) But it never seemed to bother Walter."

**Myron Healey:** "He determined his way to go. He was a hell of a man! If you can be happy for somebody's passing, I'm proud of him for wanting to go at a certain time and saying this is it, I'm going. He's fantastic. He made his exit at the Golden Boot with dignity which was wonderful. Everybody was proud of him."

**Richard Simmons:** "We were friends for over 50 years. The one thing I regret is that we weren't together more often. His cousin was my first agent. Knowing Walter was really a privilege."

**House Peters Jr.:** "We often seemed to be working on the same picture, but not on the same day. So I never really got to know him until he looked after Harry Lauter one year at the Knoxville Festival. Then at the banquet, Walter got up to speak at the podium and passed out cold (from a potassium deficiency it was later determined—ed.). Standing beside him as the paramedics were taking him to the hospital, he looked up at me and said, 'Did I get the punchline out?' (Laughs) That was typically Walter. At the same festival the next year, he began his time at the banquet with the punchline right where he'd left off a year before. (Laughs)"

**Tommy Farrell ("Winged Victory" co-star):** "He was funny! We'd sit telling stories and we'd go for hours and hours. He was always funny!"

**Dick Jones (worked with Walter on "Buffalo Bill Jr." and other Gene Autry produced shows):** "He made my job in the motion picture and TV industry a pleasure because it was nice knowing him. He was fun to work with and be around. I could sit and talk with him for the longest time

about anything and everything and nothin' at all. I enjoyed his company."

**JACQUELINE WELLS,** who later acted under **JULIE BISHOP,** died on her 87<sup>th</sup> birthday August 30. The actress,



born in Denver, CO, the daughter of a wealthy banker and oilman, was reared in Wichita Falls, TX, and, after her parents divorced, in L.A. where she began her film career as a child in silents including the 1926 10 chapter Pathe serial, "Bar-C Mystery" with Wallace MacDonald and Dorothy Phillips. Then came "Heroes of the West" in '33 for Universal as Diane Duval. "Incidentally," Julie told Michael Fitzgerald for WESTERN CLIPPINGS #44, "It was pronounced Dee-ohn and not Die-Ann. I only kept that name for a day and a half. (Laughs)" She called Noah Beery Jr. and Onslow Stevens "great guys. Onslow was the son of actor Housley Stephenson." She recalls Tom Tyler, her co-star in "Clancy of the Mounted", as "...so handsome, so tall, and his voice—striking. But he was a man and I was a child playing a grown-up, so naturally we never dated or anything like that. I thought the serial was marvelous, incidentally." As for her fourth serial, "Tarzan the Fearless" ('33 Principal), "I became friends with the man, Edgar Rice Burroughs, who wrote the Tarzan novels. Of course, Buster was wonderful, marvelous. I thought him a much better looking man than Johnny Weissmuller. There was no funny business with Buster—he was serious about becoming an actor. I had already known Buster from being under contract at Paramount, so we were old friends when we worked on 'Tarzan the Fearless'."

**THEODORE GOTTlieb,** 94, also known as comedian Brother Theodore, but best known to serial devotees as Carol Forman's father, Hitomu, in Republic's



"Black Widow", died April 5 at Mt. Sinai Hospital in Manhattan. His "stand-up-tragedy" black comedy act was a regular at New York's 13<sup>th</sup> St. Theatre where he performed for two decades until a few years ago. Born to great wealth in Germany (his father published fashion magazines worth \$80 million) on Nov. 11, 1906, he ended up in Dachau during the war only to be released when he signed over the family's great fortune to the Nazis. Einstein, said by some to have been his mother's lover, helped Gottlieb get to the U.S. where he became a janitor at Stanford University—where he managed to defeat 30 professors at chess, simultaneously. He started doing one man shows in San Francisco which led to a stint in Hollywood before his Brother Theodore success in Greenwich Village and on Merv Griffin, Steve Allen and David Letterman's TV talk shows.

Gangster type actor, **BARRY BROOKS,** 90, died August 3, 2000, according to just released SAG records. Seen as George in "G-Men Never Forget" and as Garrett in "Flying Disc Man From Mars".



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**SERIAL REPORT** columnist and **NOSTALGIA WESTERNS** editor/publisher **BARRIE HANFLING,** 56, of New Zealand, died May 31 of cancer. Due to his health, Barrie had ceased publication of **NOSTALGIA WESTERNS** with #77. Begun in '91, Barrie's publication was filled with an obvious devotion to the B-western genre. He had written two columns for SR in the month prior to his death which will appear in future issues. Hanfling was for 20 plus years an information officer and manager at Statistics New Zealand, working with the government setting up businesses.

## SERIAL MAILBAG

I cannot tell you how much I appreciate what you are doing in publishing this marvelous periodical, **SERIAL REPORT**. To be able to read about the serials and serial heroes I loved so much as a child almost 50 years after they stopped making them is a delight beyond description. Thanks again for all these wonderful stories you print.



—Bernard Dowgiello, Alexandria, VA

Does anyone know why the makers of "Superman" ('48) chose to go with animation for the flying scenes, when such a great job was done in "Captain Marvel" some eight years earlier?

—Gerald Saunders, Baie Verte, Newfoundland

*Not exactly "why"—except the limited animation was cheaper. Remember, "Capt. Marvel" was Republic and "Superman" was el-cheapo Sam Katzman at Columbia. Katzman also animated the flying discs in "Bruce Gentry" a year later.*





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