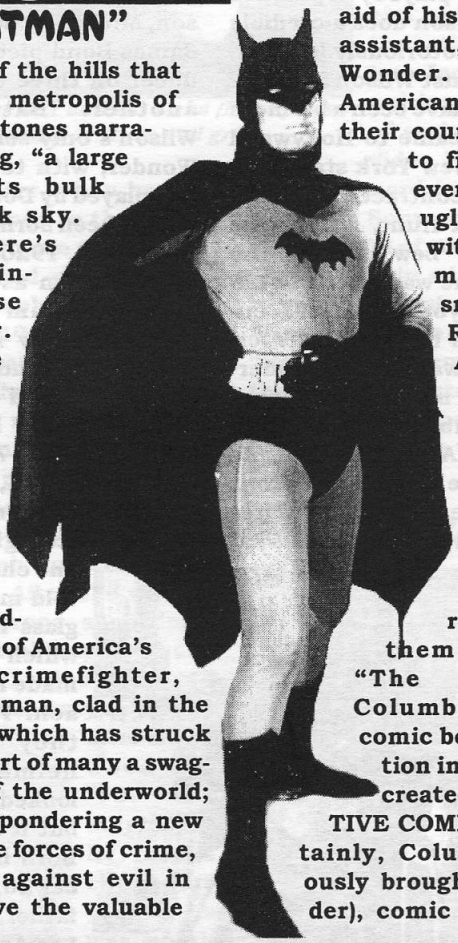
Chapter 52 Jan.-Mar. 2005

In This Chapter:

"The Batman", Linda Stirling
"Manhunt of Mystery Island"
Irving Pichel, Francis Ford
"Hands Up", "Adv. of Tarzan"
"Judex", "Les Vampires"
and much more!

"THE BATMAN"



"High atop one of the hills that ring the teeming metropolis of Gotham City," intones narrator Knox Manning, "a large house rears its bulk against the dark sky. Outwardly, there's nothing to distinguish this house from any other. But deep in the cavernous basement, in a chamber hewn from the living rock of the mountain, is the strange dimly-lighted mysterious secret Bat-Cave, hidden headquarters of America's number-one crimefighter, Batman! Yes, Batman, clad in the somber costume which has struck terror into the heart of many a swaggering denizen of the underworld; who even now is pondering a new assault against the forces of crime, a crushing blow against evil in which he will have the valuable aid of his young two-fisted assistant, Robin, the Boy Wonder. They represent American youth who love their country and are glad to fight for it. Wherever crime raises its ugly head, to strike with the venom of a maddened rattlesnake, Batman and Robin strike also! And in this very hour, when Axis criminals are spreading their evil over the world, even within our own land, Batman and Robin stand ready to fight them to the death!"

"The Batman" was Columbia's first true comic book serial adaptation in 1943, after being created for DC's DETECTIVE COMICS in 1939. Certainly, Columbia had previously brought pulp (The Spider), comic strip (Mandrake,

Terry and the Pirates) and radio (The Shadow, Captain Midnight) heroes to the serial screen, but this was their first of many comic book characters. (Republic had beaten them to the punch with three Fawcett characters—Captain Marvel in '41, Nyoka in '41 and '42 and Spy Smasher in '42.) As the mysterious Batman, and as his alter ego, playboy fop Bruce Wayne, Lewis Wilson does a credible job. Columbia's notoriously low budgets worked against Wilson in a costume that could have been a bit more tailored. Wilson came to Hollywood in '43 from the New York stage as a young Columbia contract player. According to Frank Hunt, a longtime friend of Wilson, "Lew had read the comics. In fact, he was interested in cartooning as a young man. He enjoyed working on the serial but felt the production was greatly underfunded." Wilson made a few other films at Columbia before being drafted into the Army for WWII. He served in Europe and in the front lines at the Battle of the Bulge. After the war, he failed to re-ignite his career and returned to the East Coast for stage work. Eventually, he came back West and was second billed in the low-budget Adrian Weiss produced '52 TV series, "Craig Kennedy, Criminologist" starring Donald Woods. Often reported dead over the years, Wilson actually didn't die until age 80, on August 9, 2000, in San Francisco of an aneurysm. Wilson's son, Michael G. Wilson, co-wrote five James Bond pictures, was exec producer on three and co-producer on another. "Batman" was Lewis Wilson's only serial. Robin, the Boy Wonder, with too much curly hair, was played by Douglas Croft, then 16, having been born Douglas Wheatcroft August 12, 1926, in Seattle, WA. He came to film as a teenager in '41, catching plum roles as a young James Cagney in "Yankee Doodle Dandy" ('42) and a young Gary Cooper in "Pride of the Yankees" ('42). After "Batman" his career went nowhere and by '47 he vanished. Croft died October 24, 1963, in Los Angeles. Canadian born Shirley Patterson played Bruce's girlfriend, Linda. "In one chapter," Shirley once told me, "I had to wear a glass helmet on my head which gave off sparks. It made me sick to my stomach. I don't know what they shot into that helmet...it might have looked effective on screen, but it made me quite ill." Born in Winnipeg December 26, 1922, her druggist father moved his family to Los Angeles when she was three. After winning a Miss California pageant, Max Arno, head of casting at Columbia, signed her to a contract. Shirley made several westerns, at Columbia and later PRC with Eddie Dean, before leaving

Henchmen Karl Hackett and Dr. Daka (Naish) have Shirley Patterson in their evil grips.

to get married. Later, when her son was five, she returned to the screen under the name Shawn Smith. The beautiful actress died of cancer April 4, 1995. J. (for Joseph) Carroll Naish, born January 21, 1900, in New York City, the great-great-great grandson of a Lord Chancellor of Ireland, was an actor of many nationalities, actually coming from Irish heritage. In "Batman", Naish portrays the evil, traitorous Japanese spy Dr. Tito Daka to the hilt. Dropping out of school at 16, Naish enlisted in the Navy during WWI. After the war, he roamed around Europe, acquiring a knowledge of several languages and accents which afforded him well when he came to Broadway in '26 and later Hollywood in '30. He starred as Dr. Daka the same year as he was nominated for an Academy Award as Best Supporting Actor in Bogart's "Sahara" ('43). In "Batman" he isn't just Japanese, he is the stereotyped epitome of "a sinister, shifty-eyed Jap" (as stated in Ch. 1), our sworn enemies at the time the serial was released. Columbia let us know the Japanese were Axis criminals, hurling dozens of racial epithets throughout the action packed 15 chapters. Incidentally, when acquiring this terrific piece of serial history for your video library, *do not* buy the pre-record issued by Columbia, owned by Sony, a Japanese corporation. Fearful of stirring racial offense, Sony severely edited the serial, removing all racist epithets, but, in so doing, changed filmic history. "Batman" deserves to be viewed in the wartime context in which it was made, understanding as we do, this is the way it was then.

Actor	Character
Lewis Wilson	Bruce Wayne (Batman)
Douglas Croft	Dick Grayson (Robin)
J. Carrol Naish	Dr. Tito Daka
Shirley Patterson	Linda Page
William Austin	Alfred the Butler
Charles C. Wilson	Captain Arnold
Gus Glassmire	Martin Warren
Charles Middleton	Ken Colton (Ch. 6-8)
Daka's "League of the New Order" Conspirators	
John Maxwell	Sam Fletcher

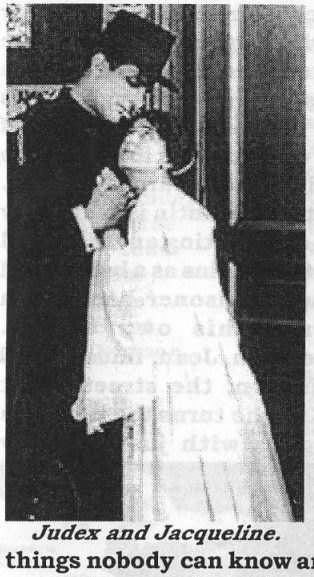
Davidson Clark	Marshall (Ch. 1-11)
Michael Vallon	Preston
Karl Hackett	Wallace
Robert Fiske	Foster (Ch. 1-4)
George Chesebro	Brennan (Ch. 1-5)
Stanley Price	Chauffeur/Henchman (Ch. 1-2)
I. Stanford Jolley	Brett (Ch. 2-5)
Anthony Warde	Stone (Ch. 2-3)
George J. Lewis	Burke Ch. 5-14)
Jack Ingram	Klein (Ch. 5-14)
Tom London	Andrews (Ch. 8-15)
Lynton Brent	Blaine (Ch. 8)
Warren Jackson	Bernie (Ch. 9, 10, 12-14)
Dick Curtis	Croft (Ch. 10-12)
Earle Hodgins	Joe, Sideshow Barker
Bill Hunter	Eberly, Detective (Ch. 1, 15)
??	Car 67 Patrolman (Ch. 1)
??	Collins Thug (Ch. 1)
??	Collins Thug (Ch. 1)
??	Newsboy (Ch. 1)
??	Prison Guard (Ch. 1)
Jerry Frank	Fun House Tunnel Guard
??	Zombie-Ralph (Ch. 1, 4)
Frank Shannon	Zombie-Dr. Hayden (Ch. 1)
Sam Flint	Dr. Borden (Ch. 1)
Charles McMurphy	Irish Cop (Ch. 2)
Bill Lally	Cop 2 (Ch. 2)
??	Blue Parrot Waiter (Ch. 2)
Frank Austin	Hotel Clerk (Ch. 2)
Mauritz Hugo	Linda's Doctor
Lal Chand Mehra	Swami Dhar, Hindu Mystic (Ch. 4)
Jack Roper	Hank, Henchman Driver (Ch. 4)
??	Japanese Radio Operator (Ch. 5)
Allen Jung	Sub Captain Nomu Kuri (Ch. 5-6)
Angel Cruz	Resuscitated Japanese Messenger (Ch. 5)
Jack Gardner	Jim Bramil (Ch. 5-6)
Kenne Duncan	Fred, Aircraft Mechanic (Ch. 5-6)
Heenan Elliott	Aircraft Factory Guard (Ch. 5)
??	Mack, Lockwood Pilot (Ch. 5)
??	Lockwood Pilot 2
??	Captain Whale (Ch. 5)
Ed Peil Sr.	Cop in Colton's Room (Ch. 6)
Charles Miller	Colton's Doctor (Ch. 6)
Terry Frost	Male Nurse (Ch. 7)
Chief Many Treaties	Steve, Trading Post Indian (Ch. 8)
Bert Le Baron	
Merrill McCormick	Thugs at Sphinx Club (Ch. 9)
George Magril	
Tom Steele	
Lester Dorr	Lawson, Enemy Agent on Plane (Ch. 10)
Harry Tenbrook	Sphinx Club Bartender (Ch. 10)
??	Stewardess (Ch. 10)
Charles McAvoy	Mike, Turnkey (Ch. 11-12)
Eddie Kane	Hanson, Bail Bondsman (Ch. 11)
??	Emergency Room Doctor (Ch. 11)
Frank Hilliard	Factory Watchman (Ch. 12)
??	Zombie-Patton (Ch. 13, 15)
??	Zombie-Jones (Ch. 13,15)
Bud Osborne	Zombie-Brown (Ch. 14-15)
Pat O'Malley	Beat Cop (Ch. 15)
Eddie Parker	Lewis Wilson's stunt double

(Cast compiled by Hal Polk and Boyd Magers.)

The classic 1917 12-part French serial "Judex" (Judge in Latin) was shown in its entirety over three Sundays on Turner Classic Movies (TCM) in October. Director Louis Feuillade began his film career as a writer in 1906. The following year he was appointed production chief at Gaumont studios but continued to direct. Considered by many as the father of serials, he wrote and directed over 800 films in a 20 year period. In order to create "Judex", Feuillade hired writer Arthur Bernède. Together, they came up with the character of a mysterious avenger, wearing a slouch hat and a dark cloak—Judex! Judex appears and disappears like a ghost, and seems to have mild hypnotic powers. He is a master of disguise, an excellent fighter, commands the loyalty of an organization composed of circus folks, flies a plane and has a secret lair where he interrogates his prisoners through a television screen—everything Judex writes on the screen on his desk appears on a similar screen on the wall of his victim's cell. Judex's nemesis is Favraux, a corrupt banker who has left a trail of ruin and misery in his wake. Favraux is ably assisted in his criminal schemes by Marie Verdier, aka Diana Monti, his mistress, an evil woman who is adept at disguise. Judex kidnaps Favraux and condemns him to die. It eventually turns out Judex is Jacques de Treméuse, the son of one of Favraux's victims. But in the meantime, Judex has fallen in love with Favraux's daughter, the beautiful, innocent Jacqueline. Ultimately, he commutes Favraux's death sentence to life imprisonment. An online review of "Judex" at <www.dvdtalk.com/dvdsavant/s1238jude.html> tells us, "'Judex' has an array of interesting and clearly distinguished characters. All are given pulpish Charles Dickens-like twists. The evil banker Favraux may be capable of remorse and redemption for his crimes. The noble beauty Jacqueline is a loving mother and recurring target of criminals. She forbids the name Judex be spoken in her presence, even though he has saved her life several times. One of Favraux's victims has a lost son, who turns up in a most surprising way. The detective Cocantin is seemingly incapable of detecting anything and is used by the villains as a babysitter! The wronged prisoner becomes a protector of his own enemy. Jacqueline's son, Jean, finds a loyal ally of his own, the street-smart Licorice Kid who turns the tables on the bad guys with just a saucy

The Licorice Kid and Judex.

attitude. When The Kid hooks up with Cocantin, we know who's really the brains of the outfit. Finally, there's Judex, a fascinating superhero who dons more than one disguise to achieve his ends. He's really the source figure behind Batman, although most of his crimefighting uses methods associated with anarchists and terrorists. He doesn't throw bombs but instead delivers threatening ultimata. The protector of the weak, he stays anonymous while providing Jacqueline with the quaint security of carrier pigeons: 'Release one of these should you ever be in trouble, and I will come to your aid.' Judex operates out of a veritable Bat Cave



Judex and Jacqueline.

beneath a ruin, where he uses high tech gadgets to keep his prisoner from ever seeing his captor. Judex at first appears to have super-human powers, knowing things nobody can know and striking mysteriously without being detected. Like Batman, his origin back-story involves a complicated oath of vengeance to which he has dedicated his entire life, and set himself up as a ultra-legal vigilante. Most every chapter of 'Judex' has an intriguing thriller switcheroo that in 1917 was the height of sophistication. Diana Monti and Moralés try one scheme after another but are foiled by Judex's elegant countermeasures. One charming sequence has the hero recovering a kidnapped damsel with a fantastic pack of hounds that swarm through the villain's defenses. Rather than kill or capture the bad guys, Judex's politely written 'you lose' note is delivered to the failed kidnappers by a poodle walking on its hind legs. Feuillade's 'Judex' also has a heart, placing it in contrast to the more severe weirdnesses of the famous 'Les Vampires'. Jacqueline earns our respect by giving away her millions as reparation for her father's sins. She even separates from her adoring son as part of her self atonement. Little Jean forms a meaningful buddy relationship with The Licorice Kid who finds a new father in Cocantin. Judex's vengeance-obsessed mother relents when she sees how badly future generations need forgiveness for the crimes of their fathers and Judex must find a way to declare his love to a woman sworn to hate him forever. Just about the only character in 'Judex' not forgiven for their sins is Diana Monti, the criminal seductress who instigates most of the mayhem. Her passions are beyond redemption—it's she who orders the story's few killings and becomes its real villain, even after the big-business bad guy is forgiven." If you missed "Judex" on TCM, an excellent 2 disc DVD is available from Flicker Alley for $39.95 <www.flickeralley.com/pages/5> For more photos from "Judex" go to <www.silentsaregolden.com/featurefolder5/judexscenes.html>

The rare 1921 silent serial, "The Adventures of Tarzan" has been superbly restored, as much as possible, and reassembled with existing footage originally released in 15 chapters now in an excellent 10 chapter version. Eric Stedman of The Serial Squadron website has done a painstaking, masterful job of presenting this Edgar Rice Burroughs/Elmo Lincoln serial on a gorgeous two-disc DVD. The action centers on Tarzan's feud with Queen La of Opar and his efforts to keep Clayton, a pretender to Tarzan's rightful title as Lord Greystoke, and his cohort Rokoff, from reaching the jewels of Opar. Directed by Robert F. Hill, "Adventures of Tarzan" was one of the four biggest films of 1921. DVD bonus features include extra scenes Stedman was unable to fit into the reassembled version (much of Ch. 8, 9 is lost), a 1940 radio interview with Edgar Rice Burroughs, and an array of rare lobbies, posters and candid stills. Also added is a 20 minute condensation of 1918's "Tarzan of the Apes" feature, also with Elmo Lincoln. Very well worth $19.95. Order from <www.serialsquadron.com>

Ruth Roland and George Larkin in Chapter 10, "The Sun Message".

A rare 10 minute promotional reel for the 1918 serial "Hands Up" was shown November 21 on AMC as a portion of their "Treasures From the American Film Archives" series. Certainly whetting our appetite to view the entire 15 chapter Ruth Roland serial, unfortunately, it is probably all we will ever get to see of the lost silent serial. Produced by George Fitzmaurice, directed by James W. Horne, with a screenplay by Jack Cunningham, the promotional reel claimed it "the first western serial" and "the most ambitious western production ever filmed" (both debatable topics). Storyline has the remnants of an ancient tribe of Inca Indians believing Ruth is their long lost Princess of Prophecy. Ruth is befriended by George Chesebro, known as the title character Hands Up, and a black-clad Phantom Rider mystery-figure when Ruth is in danger. Incidentally, during the making of the serial, Chesebro entered the Army for service in WWI and was replaced for the remainder of the production by George Larkin as Two-Gun Carter. Astra also made "House of Hate" ('18), "Pearl of the Army" ('16) and "Fatal Ring" ('17), all with Pearl White, as well as "Shielding Shadow" ('16) with Grace Darmond. All were distributed by Pathé.

SERIAL WEBSITES

An interesting and concise history of serials can be found at <www.filmsite.org/serialfilms.html>

CLASSIFIED ADS

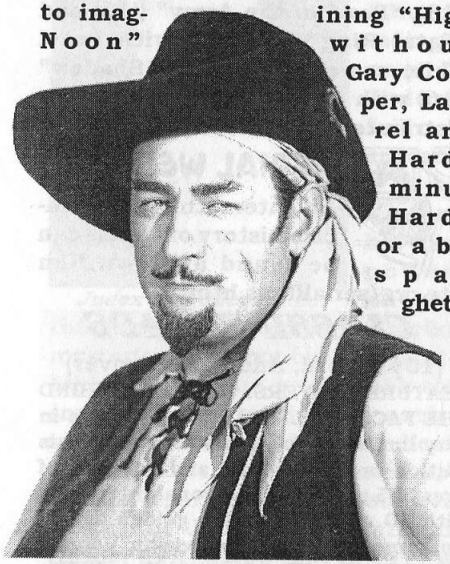
(10¢ a word, Address on cover)

FEATURE PLAYERS: STORIES BEHIND THE FACES VOL. 1 is again available in very limited supply (only 4 copies). This edition is spiral-bound and consists of over 325 pages with personal interviews with 40 actors from the golden age of Hollywood and classic television. Volume II and Volume III are also still available. They can be ordered for $23.85 (includes postage) each from Tom and Jim Goldrup, PO Box 425, Ben Lomond, CA 95005. Our book GROWING UP ON THE SET includes 39 personal interviews with former child actors who talk candidly about their experiences on and off the set, people they worked with (including cowboy stars Gene Autry, John Wayne, Rod Cameron, Randolph Scott, Hoot Gibson, Joel McCrea, William Boyd, James Stewart and others), and what they did after their careers ended. The pros and cons of being a child actor and the effects it had on them later in life are discussed at great length. This book is available through <amazon.com> or McFarland, Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640 for $35 plus $4 shipping. Send SASE to the Goldrups for a list of performers included in these four books. We also have available for sale 7 copies of the book ACTORS ONLY written by Terry Frost in 1977. $18.85 ppd. Composed primarily of talks Frost delivered while he was an instructor at a West Coast drama school.

CLIFFHANGER COMMENTARY

by Bruce Dettman

Trying to imagine Republic's contribution to serial making without the participation of Roy Barcroft is akin to imagining "High Noon" without Gary Cooper, Laurel and Hardy minus Hardy or a big spaghetti



dinner sans a good red wine. Barcroft figured in dozens of the studio's cliffhangers—not to mention appearing in a myriad of westerns and other B-features—and it's impossible to overestimate his influence on these. Every serial he appeared in was better off for his participation and none the worse for it. His most colorful role of villainy was probably the title creature from "The Purple Monster Strikes", but nearly as memorable was the part of Captain Mephisto from Republic's 1945 "Manhunt of Mystery Island", a particular favorite of mine due to its boldly exaggerated premise and Barcroft's bigger than life performance. It took six studio writers, Albert DeMond, Basil Dickey, Jesse Duffy, Alan James, Grant Nelson and Joseph Poland, to come up with the plot, which, in all fairness, lifts a lot of ingredients from "Mysterious Dr. Satan" (including the main Copperhead musical cues and the last chapter switcheroo which I won't give away), but which also delivers a lot of new outrageous wrinkles. The plot follows Linda Stirling as Claire, a young woman searching for the whereabouts of her father (Forrest Taylor), a world famous scientist and inventor of a new power transmitter who has recently disappeared somewhere on an obscure place called Mystery Island. Enlisting the aid of famed criminologist Lance Reardon (Richard Bailey), the two journey to the remote site where they meet four descendents of a long dead pirate by the name of Capt. Mephisto. Amazingly, one of these four, using a device called a Transformation Chair, has devised a way to turn himself into a kind of reincarnated form of the Captain. (Your suspects are Ed Cassidy, Harry Strang, Forbes Murray and Jack Ingram.) In this guise he has kidnapped Claire's father in an attempt to gain the secret of the transmitter and, with the assistance of a gang of henchmen, begins the process of eliminating his descendents with only Reardon to stand in his way. The cliffhangers are lots of fun (even if at one point there is a gigantic cheat as far as Bailey escaping a stabbing) and the work of the Brothers Lydecker shines with a wide array of exploding cars, boats and buildings. Because of the island setting, there's more outdoor shooting than in most serials, with portions of the rocky California coast effectively doubling for the island setting. Richard Bailey as Lance Reardon comes off a bit stiff for my tastes (not to mention dressing like a racetrack tout) and I can never quite buy him as a powerful adversary for Mephisto. There's a certain upper crust attitude inherent in his voice and mannerisms that suggests he'd be better suited chasing a polo ball than crooks. Beautiful and stylish Linda Stirling has one of her less colorful roles here, but still manages to save Bailey's skin so often you almost begin to wonder why she needs him at all. The supporting cast is solid and headed by Kenne Duncan (inexplicably decked out like a weekend yachtsman), Jack Ingram, Forbes Murray, Lane Chandler and, when not doing stunt work, Dale Van Sickel, Tom Steele and Duke Green. The combined directorial talents of Spencer Bennet, Wallace Grissell and the great stuntman Yakima Canutt (who stages some great brawls), keep things so lively and exciting you never really have a chance to question all the silliness—even for a serial—because you're so caught up in all the non-stop action. This might not be considered one of the greatest serials of all time, but for my money it's still a hell of a celluloid ride, one I bet I'll take again one of these days.

Kenne Duncan, Linda Stirling, Roy Barcroft, Richard Bailey.

CLIFFHANGING WITH LINDA STIRLING!

Linda Stirling is considered the last of the great 'Serial Queens,' appearing in six of Republic's best cliffhangers from '44-'46. Modeling led to Republic and the title role in "Tiger Woman". "I was the last person in the world for that part. I'm not an outdoor girl, I couldn't ride...my idea of fun was to go to nightclubs and dance. But I looked sort of like an outdoor girl and Republic needed someone right away for 'Tiger Woman'. The part had been given to Kay Aldridge, but just before it was time for the film to start, she eloped, got married and didn't want to come back. They were desperate and I got the part. Yates had me come out for an interview. There were about 10 people at the interview—turned out half of them were stuntmen because they wanted to know if I could do a running dismount...I didn't even know what it was! (Laughs) Very dutifully, being a good actress, I lied and said, 'Oh yes, I can do that.' And I couldn't do any of the things they were asking if I could do. They asked me to wait outside for a few minutes. Then the director, Spence Bennet, came out and said, 'We'd like to see you next Monday. Wear some old jeans (which I didn't even own) and

we wanna see you riding a horse—do the running mounts...' I went, 'Uh-oh. I just got myself into a real bad situation.' Well, one fellow I'd met had a horse at Ace Hudkins Stable. I called him and said, 'What am I gonna do?' He said, 'Ace has a lot of movie horses...maybe he can give you some pointers.' He called Ace and called me back, 'Go out at 6 in the morning.' Well, I hadn't been up at 6 in the morning in many years...if ever! (Laughs) I staggered out there and told them, 'I have to do a running mount, running dismount...but I have to tell you I've only been on a horse two times in my life. Both times I fell off.' Well, we practiced in the ring Thursday and Friday—by Saturday my legs were going in two different directions, I couldn't walk very well. I had a big hole in the back of my spine where the saddle had rubbed because I didn't know how to ride properly. But, Monday I went out to Republic. I thought, 'I haven't studied all these years and wanted to be an actress for so long—just to muff this because I haven't got the courage to give it a try.' They promised they'd send me the horse I'd been practicing on for four days and the wrangler who knew my problems. When I got there they had me go way down to the end of the western street. I was to come galloping around, come to the Duchess' Ranch, which was a standing set with a little picket fence; I was to come to a running dismount and then jump over the picket fence, go to the door, come back, get back on the horse and gallop off. Well, I got back there—it wasn't the horse or wrangler I'd been practicing with! The A.D. gave me the signal and the wrangler hit the horse so hard that when he came whirling around the corner, my feet fell out of the stirrups. I came galloping down the street, bumping up and down and the horse was headed right for this huge mob of people including 'Papa' Yates...I thought, 'I'm gonna kill 'em all off.' I just closed my eyes and thought, 'Oh, this is horrible.' Well, the horse knew better, he just swirled around in front of the Duchess' Ranch. I didn't do a running dismount. I was sort of hanging around the horse's neck, upside down! I thought, 'I've made a fool of myself. I might as well hang my head and leave.' I got down and was laughing because it was such a completely unlikely situation for me to be in. I started to leave but they stopped me and said, 'Try it one more time.' So I did. This time I stayed in the stirrups, got around, got off and to the picket fence, but at that point I was finished. I couldn't even jump over that foot high fence. (Laughs) I said, 'I surrender.' And I left. But by the time I got home my phone was ringing and my agent said, 'You got the part. They liked your humor and attitude.' They felt I had a lot of guts to try it, so they were gonna take a chance. *Later* I found out they were in a terrible bind. I came closest to matching the doubles of anyone they'd seen. They had costumes all ready and I was the closest to Kay who was originally supposed to play the part. So that's the series of events that led to me standing out there (filming 'Tiger Woman') in that skimpy costume in the coldest winter they'd had in California in many, many years. There was ice on the ground and it was supposed to be the jungle. I was freezing. Our teeth were chattering. When you watch 'Tiger Woman', notice the funny smile on my face. The only way I could keep my lips from trembling was to paste this little smile on...it got stuck. (Laughs)" Obviously, making serials was hard work. "We generally did the serials in a month. There was always pressure because all the shooting had to be done before dark. It wasn't glamorous, believe me! Working hours were long. I was often up at 4am and at the studio by 4:30 for make-up. My hair had to be set and dried each morning so it would exactly match the film already shot. We had to be ready for the first take at 8am sharp, and it generally took about an hour to get to location. We seldom got back to the studio before 8pm. I never seemed to get to bed before 11 or midnight. Then up at 4. I was so tired during a fight sequence aboard a spaceship in 'Purple Monster Strikes', that when I was supposed to be knocked out while a fight went on, I fell asleep. But Republic was like a big family." Linda experienced at least one dangerous 'close call' in her career. "We were on the process stage making 'Manhunt of Mystery Island'. In those days, they'd have the process screen behind us moving and we were standing still. It was supposed to be over this huge gorge, miles down. The cameras were set, it was the take-out for the chapter ending. The evil guy was cutting the ropes. The leading man, Richard Bailey, was beside me. But, as I turned around, it was Tom Steele standing next to me. All of a sudden they said, 'Action,' and Tommy said, 'Stay with me, let me get under you'...all this is being whispered while we are falling about 10 feet to the ground. I'm sure I would have hurt myself if he hadn't protected me. Tommy got up and started to charge the director—Spence Bennet—I thought Tom was gonna get him. He was so mad...he was livid. He said, 'You coulda killed her. She doesn't know how to do this kinda thing.' He was *really* angry. It was a kind of silly thing for them to do, but we got late, hurried. Spence Bennet was busy jumping up and down, which he loved to do when he was upset, and wasn't paying any attention. They just forgot to send the double up." Stuntlady Babe De Freest doubled Linda in practically everything. "In 'Zorro's Black Whip" there was one stunt they didn't want Babe to do, a jump from the top of the barn onto a horse as it was galloping by. They thought it was too difficult. So they told Joe (Yrigoyen) to do it; which he did, and fell off the horse and broke his leg. They put his brother Bill (Yrigoyen) there, he missed and ended up in the tree. Babe said, 'Why don't you let me do it?' They weren't sure, but she did it perfectly. It was a very successful stunt. She was much shorter than I, stockier, but she's incredible as a double. There were times when we

Allan Lane and Linda Stirling in "Tiger Woman".

saw the rushes, we would argue about which one of us it was. Most of the time we couldn't tell. She was amazing." Duncan Renaldo worked with Linda on two of her serials, "Tiger Woman" and "Zorro's Black Whip." "Duncan was a sweetheart and one of the funniest guys I've ever met. Stories all the time. Sometimes he'd be finishing the tag line as we were walking up to shoot the scene. (Laughs) He was irrepressible. He was already part of movie history and knew practically everybody in the business. I really was an eager little actress dying to do it right. Duncan and George J. Lewis were very helpful. They were showing me where the camera was because I had no idea. 'Don't look there...look over here...they won't see your face, they'll see your profile.'" Over the years, much has been said and written about Allan Lane's demeanor. Some say he could be difficult. Linda co-starred with him in "Tiger Woman" and chuckles, "Difficult isn't exactly a fair word. He was very tense, very up tight, very eager and very professional. I think one of his problems was, he wanted to be perfect. But under the conditions we were working, you can't really be perfect. You can always do it better. The only thing you had to watch out for was his moves. Because once the camera started rolling, he wanted to be in front of the camera. And if you were too close to him, you just got bumped, so he could get the whole face—and I'd wind up with only my shoulder or part of my head showing. Time and time again, the director would say, 'Cut! Allan, move over, give her some room.' But he'd keep edging over. My hips would be black and blue. (Laughs)" Linda did two serials with Clayton Moore, "Crimson Ghost" and "Jesse James Rides Again". "Clayton was very professional, very serious when he was working, very relaxed and cool when he wasn't. He didn't clown around a lot when he was getting ready to do a scene. Afterwards OK...and earlier. But when he was working he gave his all, lots of energy, lots of vitality." Perennial heavy, Roy Barcroft was a constant for everyone who worked at Republic. "He loved to act. He really enjoyed it. He probably spent more time at the studio than he did at home. I never could tell if he was serious or if he wasn't. He had this twinkle in his eye and would say things that sounded alright to me, but I had a feeling he meant more than he was saying. But I never could figure out what! He was fun." (Excerpts from WESTERNS WOMEN by Boyd Magers, McFarland '99.)

Cheat Endings!

In Ch. 14 of "Manhunt of Mystery Island", Linda Stirling's airplane is sent into a dive via remote control by Capt. Mephisto and audibly crashes into a mountain. In Ch. 15, the plane barely scrapes treetops on the mountain and there is no audible crash.

SERIAL HEAVIES

Accomplished actor and director Irving Pichel (pronounced Puh-shel) only made one serial, but he left an indelible mark in chapterplay history as Nicholas Zarnoff, the master spy without a country and mystery figure of several nations in Republic's "Dick Tracy's G-Men" ('39). Pichel perfectly embodied the ruthless saboteur who resided in a man-

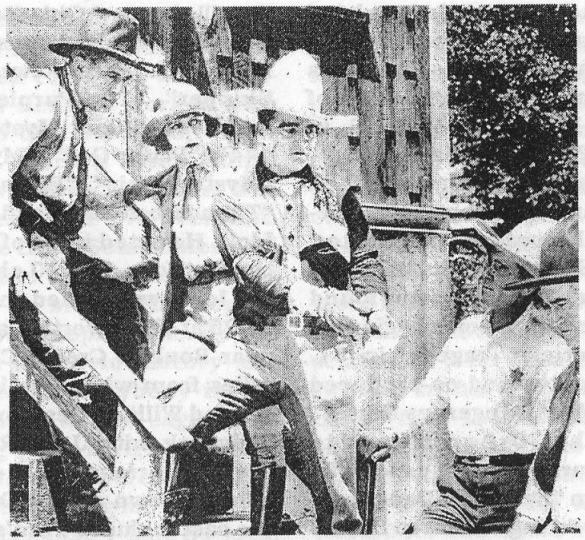
sion where he commanded a global spy ring. In an opening film within a film, Dick Tracy describes Zarnoff as "a rat gnawing at the foundation of democracy." Born June 24, 1891, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, after attending Harvard Pichel drifted through a number of jobs before becoming a Shakespearean stage actor. Coming to Hollywood in '27 as a script clerk at MGM, he soon found his way before the cameras beginning with "An American Tragedy" in '31. In '32 he directed and co-produced RKO's "The Most Dangerous Game". Throughout the '30s he continued to mix acting (turning in an especially sinister role in "Dracula's Daughter" ['36]) with directing—"Before Dawn" ('33), "She" ('35), etc. Following his role as Zarnoff, "the most hated man on earth," Pichel devoted nearly all his efforts to directing and producing, turning in some remarkable work in the noir thriller "They Won't Believe Me" ('47) and the sentimental "Miracle of the Bells" ('48). Among his later directorial work was Mickey Rooney's "Quicksand" ('50), the first space exploration film, "Destination Moon" ('50) (he also narrated off-screen the Woody Woodpecker cartoon used within the film), and Randolph Scott's "Santa Fe" ('51), in which he also played a minor role. As a matter of note, Pichel was the uncredited narrator for John Wayne's "She Wore a Yellow Ribbon" ('49). He died of a heart attack July 13, 1954, in Hollywood.

EPISODES

by Tom and Jim Goldrup

Francis Ford, best known as John Ford's older brother and character actor of such classics as "The Ox Bow Incident", was a director of note himself in his early career. Among his credits, a number of serials of the silent screen—such chapterplays as "Lucille Love—A Girl of Mystery", "Broken Coin", "Adventures of Peg O' the Ring", "The Great Reward", "Fighting Skipper", "The Purple Mask" (also scripted), "Silent Mystery", "Officer 444", "Power God", "Mystery of 13", "Mystery Ship", "Perils of the Wild", "Thunderbolt Jack" and "The Winking Idol". He acted in all of these except the last four. The 10 chapter "Winking Idol" was filmed in the summer of '25 at the Poverty Flat movie town near Boulder Creek, CA, about five miles from where we live. The film starred William Desmond and Eileen Sedgwick with Jack Richardson as the mysterious death-dealing arch villain known as The Owl. Others in the cast included Ford's former partner and co-star Grace Cunard, Helen Broneau, Bert Sutch (assistant director for 9 years to D.W. Griffith), Frank Bacon and Les Sailor. Sailor, a comedian, was a recent newcomer to movies, having come over to films from the vaudeville circuit. He later modified his name and became character actor Syd Saylor. Local newspaper, THE SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL, printed an article titled "Screen Players Arrive At Boulder". A portion of the article reads, "Smiling Bill Desmond, Universal western star, lately here as a member of the board of judges of the California Statewide Beauty Pageant held last month, has returned to this locality. Reports reaching THE SENTINEL indicate the company will be headquartered at Boulder Creek where they'll be engaged in filming scenes for a wild west thriller directed by Francis Ford. The troupe was attracted here through the wonderful scenic film obtained by the Jack Hoxie company that locationed here slightly over a year ago." Another article from the paper revealed "'The Winking Idol' was taken from a story upon which the late Charles Van Loan was working at the time of his death. The

rights to this and several other of his works were purchased by Universal. The present is Ford's second serial since returning to Universal, his first being 'Perils of the Wild', featuring Joe Bonomo, the screen's greatest strong man." And what was the winking idol of the title? Francis Ford answered the question in an interview: "A sacred Indian relic which holds the key to the secret of an ancient Indian mine." The reporter wrote in an article of watching an exciting scene where Desmond jumps from an exploding boxcar. Another exciting scene was witnessed by many spectators according to a July 20th special run in THE SANTA CRUZ SENTINEL. "A good many spectators were present along Boulder Creek last Friday and witnessed a thrilling scene in the making of a movie, a spectacular dive from a high bank into the creek made by Helen Bruneau. William Desmond was in a canoe below, supposedly wounded and unconscious. Beside him was Eileen Sedgwick, attempting to steer the boat with a broken paddle. As it swung into the rapids just above the dam, the girl figure above, clad as an Indian maiden, dove from her pinnacle into space. There was a splash, then she came up, grabbed the canoe as it neared the dam and towed it to shore. It was an act which made the spectators gasp and one which will make a thrilling scene on the silver screen." During their off-time, Bill Desmond and Les Sailor made a personal appearance at the California Theater in Watsonville in connection with the showing of an episode of Desmond's last serial, "The Riddle Rider". The theater was packed. Desmond and others were also able to get away from their work long enough to go to Salinas to take part in a rodeo and were given quite a reception. Jack Richardson and Bert Sutch, who by day were pursuing one another in the picture, spent their nights in a two man chess tournament in the lobby of the Alpine Inn in Boulder Creek. Francis Ford, commenting on the scenic wonder here for his production, stated, "I am converted now to this region. How I failed to discover this beautiful country before, I'll never understand. I'm coming back after this picture is finished and vacation on the spot I just purchased at Felton Acres." Ford's other acting roles in serials he did not direct include: "Haunted Valley", "Chinatown Mystery" (also scripted), "The Indians Are Coming", "Jade Box", "Battling With Buffalo Bill", "Heroes of the West", "Lost Special", "Clancy of the Mounted", "Gordon of Ghost City" and "King of the Mounties".



A bound William Desmond tries to hand his captors a note in Chapter 1 of "The Winking Idol". Eileen Sedgwick is behind Desmond.

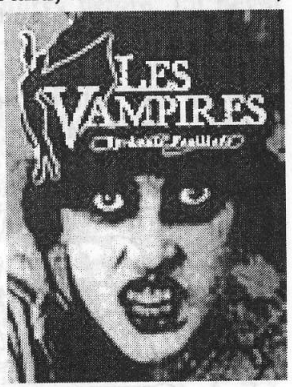
WORTH ANOTHER LOOK

by Ken Weiss

Recently, going through some old SCREEN FACTS, FILMFAX and MOTION PICTURE WORLD magazines, I came across a number of tidbits about serials I thought might be worth passing along. Here they are: Ford Beebe remembered Universal's first part-talking serial, "Ace of Scotland Yard" ('29), as being somewhat of a disaster. Originally planned as a silent, when sound came in it was decided to include sound sequences. The problem was, Universal didn't have adequate sound stages. The few they had were makeshift, and those were reserved for feature productions. Trying to film during the day on non-sound stages proved fruitless: too much noise from crews and craftsmen working on other productions. The "Ace" crew was forced to shoot at night when the studio was quiet. That meant starting right after dinner and working til dawn. The few sound sequences used never justified the great inconvenience. The apparently lost serial is remembered as being "tedious." In Ch. 11 of Republic's " Captain Marvel," a crew man, thinking the scene is over, steps out from behind a rock, realizes his error, and hops back behind the rock as Whitey (Billy Benedict) drives off. The scene was never edited out, and the blunder is still visible in the chapter. For "Lost City of the Jungle" ('46 Universal) Russell Hayden was paid $1,000 a week to play hero Rod Stanton; Jane Adams, a contract player, got a flat $1,500 for her work as the heroine; Keye Luke earned $750 per week. Veteran actor John Miljan received a flat $750 for his work as Gaffron, a henchman of master villain Sir Eric Hazarias, played by Lionel Atwill, who was paid $1,250 per week for four week's work. (I wonder if Atwill, who fell ill during production, then died, worked the full four weeks.) (See pg. 19 for the answer.—ed.) Footage of the serial's plane crash and the avalanche in Ch. 1 was borrowed from '37's "Lost Horizon". The impressive rescue mission in Ch. 1 was lifted from "White Hell of Pitz Palu" ('29), and the cliffhanger endings of Chapters 2, 3 and 4 (a flood, an exploding temple, a lion pit) came from "White Savage" ('43 Universal), which starred Sabu, Jon Hall and Maria Montez. "Jungle Girl" ('41 Republic) ran 31 reels and contained 2,100 separate scenes. Frances Gifford's ground stunts were done by Helen Thurston with her swinging-on-vines and other aerial stunts performed by Dave Sharpe, wearing a wig and short skirt. Gifford, who had been borrowed from Paramount for the serial, was supposed to star in Republic's follow-up, "Perils of Nyoka", but Paramount refused to release her. As we all know, Fox starlet Kay Aldridge got the part. (Dave Sharpe did her stunts, too.) For "Spy Smasher" ('42 Republic), as with many serials, the stuntmen played several roles. Yakima Canutt is an armored car driver in Ch. 9 and Tom Steele is a heavy in Ch. 10's brickyard sequence. Ken Terrell is a storm trooper, a cop and Jerry, the ray-gun man in various chapters.

Dave Sharpe is a sniper in Ch. 11. "The Phantom Creeps" ('39 Universal) uses stock footage from "Frankenstein" and "Son of Frankenstein" (Kenneth Strickfadden's dazzling electrical machines in Dr. Frankenstein's laboratory), "The Invisible Man" and "Invisible Ray." Inside, and activating the serial's dour-faced eight foot robot, was stuntman Bud Wolfe. How did George Wallace ("Radar Men From the Moon" '52 Republic) get started in show business? As a bartender in Hollywood he'd often sing along with the jukebox. One night a man handed him a card and told him to give him a call the next day. The man was Jimmy Fiddler, who asked George if he'd like

to sing at a Jewish benefit. George said he wasn't Jewish. "Who cares?" replied Fiddler, and introduced him to Mickey Katz (clarinet player, Borscht Belt entertainer and father of Joel Gray), who did many City of Hope and B'nai Brith benefits. According to Wallace, "Mickey taught me a couple of songs in Yiddish, and we started doing all the benefit shows. That's how my career started." For "Radar Men...", in which Wallace introduced the character Commando Cody, he did his flying takeoffs utilizing a buried trampoline placed in front of the intended takeoff position. He'd run, "hit the trampoline, go sailing past the camera, and land on mattresses on the ground on the other side." During one fight scene (with bad guy Clayton Moore), Wallace forgot to duck and got socked in the nose. When his nose started to swell, he was taken to a hospital, given a shot of novocaine and had his nose attended to. "I did scenes with the helmet on for the next four or five days, so they wouldn't lose any time because of my swollen nose." (Thanks to: Elaine M. and George Geltzer, assisted by William Everson, Edward Connor, Jan Allen Henderson, Gregory Mank, Bill Feret, Charles Lee Jackson, III, Leonard J. Kohl for much of the above.) Now here, from the January 13, 1917, issue of MOVING PICTURE WORLD, are synopses (by Margaret I. MacDonald) for the last three episodes of a Gaumont serial titled "Les Vampires." (By our standards evidently not a pulse-pounder, but might have contained a bit of science fiction—an electric gun.) Episode 7. "The Master of Thunder": "After the manner of past episodes, 'The Master of Thunder' develops startling situations and introduces ingenious methods of evading the law. It pursues its victims with the usual amount of merciless venom and is altogether absorbing in its intense melodramatic style. In this episode, the 7th, Irma Vep, after the execution of Moreno, is sent away to prison. On her way to prison, the ship on which she is being conveyed is blown to bits by an electric gun, the device of Satanas. Irma Vep, aware of what is to happen, makes preparations that aid her in escaping the fate of the other passengers. Normandin again takes a hand and, with his little son, is instrumental in bringing about the arrest of Satanas. A letter smuggled into the prison to Satanas enables him to cause his



own death by chewing the poisoned paper." Episode 8 "The Poison Man": "The 8th episode deals with an attempt to poison Philippe Guérande (played by Edouard Mathé), his fiancée and their friends at the betrothal dinner. The trick is discovered when the superintendent of the apartment house, who is given a bottle of wine by one of the fake eaterers [no such word in the dictionary—I'd guess it's a typo for "caterers"], dies from the effects of poison. In this way the trick is discovered. In the closing incidents of this episode, Irma Vep has a thrilling escapade in which she pulls Normandin from his hiding place in a wardrobe trunk on the side of an automobile and, by the use of an anesthetic, throws him into a state of unconsciousness, after which he is arrested and taken to jail also through her maneuvering." Episode 9 "The Terrible Wedding": "The ninth and last episode of the serial maintains the interest to the very last. The wedding of Irma Vep and Venenos takes place amid hilarious surroundings. In the midst of the gaiety, however, Guérande and Normandin appear on the scene with a body of policemen. The shooting of the vampires when they attempt to escape and the giving way of a balcony outside a window, hurling its occupants to their death, affords a spectacular sight." Irma Vep?? An episode titled "The Terrible Wedding."?? Oh well. I'd love to see it anyway, just as history.

Ed. Note: "Les Vampires" was apparently one of French director Louis Feuillade's most popular serials. The Vampires were actually a gang of hooded killers. Sexy star Irma Vep played Musidora, the Vampire girl, and Louis Leubas was Satanas. Released as 10 chapters in France, in the U.S. it played as 9 chapters of three reels each under the title, "The Vampires, Arch Criminals of Paris".

THE OLD ONES AND THE NEW ONES

by Jim Stringham

"Captain Hudson is on the Air!"... Really, he's a new "radio" hero on CDs and tapes in an audio serial. Details at <www.captainhudson.com>. The first

story, running about five hours, is "The Lost Mines of Paradise". We are right into the plot as of '46 when Captain Jim Hudson, onetime racing pilot and unofficial aid to the government, now owner of a one plane (the DC-3 Lady Luck) cargo line, takes off one step ahead of the sheriff. His ship, not refueled, disappears over the ocean. Stolen jewels are involved. When newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst sends an investigator to learn what really happened from Hudson's associate, Mac Decker, Mac's story takes us back 10 years to the adventure's beginning. Jim and female mechanic (and sole employee) "Flaps" Lockhart are on their way to California's Mercury Field to pick up an item, which, if delivered unopened, may earn them enough to bail out their troubled company. It isn't that easy. The Mercury owner has disappeared. They locate the case, learn its destination (the Paradise mining camp in Arizona...near Bury Your Dead!) and are off. The case is damaged in a whirlwind. At the bearings given them, a runway seems to appear out of a sandstorm. The mine installation is far from paradise. There, Professor Von Steigletz heads a thoroughly disrepu-

table crew. Hudson takes off with a cash-box containing far less than the promised payment...and it's leaking water. Containing nitroglycerine packed in melting ice, it's rapidly warming to the point of deadly instability. How's that for a cliffhanger? The action continues nonstop. As with most epic adventures, a "White Company" of heroes joins in the quest. Mac signs on as copilot after being dumped at the mine en route to another job, and helping Jim against Von Steigletz' thugs. Sadie Cohen was secretary at Mercury, until her boss disappeared with her back pay. Carl Dutton, FBI agent ("Sometimes I hate this job.") deals himself in. Seems he discovered something terribly wrong at the U.S. Mint, and is now on the trail of stolen currency plates. That trail leads back to the Paradise. There are hints of early Nazi activity in America. Jim had found an item at the mine which proves to be part of a shipment of Greek art supposedly lost when the St. Augustine went down at sea. Dutton believes the plates were also aboard. It all leads to the need for a fast, and secret, flight back to the Paradise. It's an open-end serial. Characters and plot elements are left hanging at the (temporary, I hope) happy ending. There's room for 10 more years of adventure in Mac's story. An excellent production. Writing, acting, music, are of professional quality. Some attempts to recreate old time radio have been disappointing. This time it works. A booklet enclosed in the album gives cast and credits, and breaks the story down into such chapters as "Thunder, Rain and Bullets" and "Dangerous Highway"...48 of them. The producers, Audio Cinema Entertainment, sum it up: "This 'Audio Spectacular' has been painstakingly assembled from thousands of digital sound FX, an original script, a large cast, and a fully orchestrated musical score all to create the most authentic audio production possible. This 'movie-like' audio experience is so rich, the only thing missing is the hot buttered popcorn!" Great; I've got the popcorn. I was just saving it for an adventure like this.

SERIAL CLIPPINGS

Bronson Canyon, filming site of "Phantom Empire", "Lightning Warrior", "Hurricane Express", "Mystery Mountain", "Gordon of Ghost City", "Captain Marvel", "Three Musketeers", the silent "Lightning Bryce" and others, was featured in CLASSIC IMAGES #352 (10/04). 19 then and now photos. ✗ The late Tommy Farrell and Sammy McKim remembered in WRANGLER'S ROOST #121. Same issue remembers for 6 pages "When Western Serials Were King"... "King of the Texas Rangers", "Red Ryder", "Miracle Rider", "Riders of Death Valley", "Overland Mail", etc. Write Colin Momber, 23 Sabrina Way, Stoke Bishop, Bristol, BS9 1ST England. ✗ Johnny (Robin) Duncan talks about his career and Columbia's "Batman and Robin" ('49) for 7 pages in FILMFAX #103 (July-September '04) 18 photos. ✗ Superman through the years in TV GUIDE (9/26) neglected Kirk Alyn's two "Superman" Columbia serials. Photo of Noel Neill with George Reeves makes it sound like she only "succeeded" Phyllis Coates. ✗ Noel Neill, Lois Lane in two Columbia "Superman" serials, as well as the TV series, interviewed by Tom Weaver for STARLOG #328 (11/04) 21 photos, 7 pgs. Noel talks of Sam Katzman, Kirk Alyn, and—Phyllis Coates, the other TV Lois Lane. ✗ "Don Winslow of the Navy" collectibles featured in online SCOOP weekly newsletter (10/9); exploits of "Ace Drummond" covered 10/29 followed by "Captain Midnight" 11/8. Articles are archived at <http://scoop.diamondgalleries.com> ✗

Hank Davis' monthly "Reel Serials" column in BIG REEL featured Mascot's "Lightning Warrior" ('31) in November, Republic's "Haunted Harbor" in December and Columbia's "Brick Bradford" in January. Davis terms the first "primitive" enhanced by Yakima Canutt's action sequences, rates "Haunted Harbor" as "good high energy fun" and deems "Brick Bradford" "an acquired taste." ✗ 10/04 issue of PREMIERE paid tribute to "Star Wars" and noted George Lucas' serial connections. Writer Ed Hulse points out the similarities between Darth Vader and The Lightning in "Fighting Devil Dogs" as well as the printed synopsis crawl at the beginning of "Star Wars" harkening back to Universal's text-title crawl in which the synopsis ascended slowly from the bottom of the screen, gradually receding from view at the top of the screen. Universal used this type of title crawl from '38-'42. (Thanx to Pat Shields.)

CHAPTER 13

Gracious MARION SHILLING, 93, died of natural causes Nov. 6 at Torrance Memorial Medical Center in California. Born December 3, 1910, in Denver, CO, she launched her film career in MGM's "Wise Girls" in '29. In the '30s she began to co-star in B-westerns. Marion co-starred with Buck Jones in "The Red Rider" ('34 Universal) and with Jack Mulhall in "The Clutching Hand" ('36 Stage and Screen). Marion recalled, "Ruth Mix and I became good friends during 'The Clutching Hand'. She was sincere, unaffected, honest. A natural beauty, but unaware of it. She had flawless, creamy skin, long dark hair and her eyes sparkled. Liked by everyone." Also, "I was terrified of horses, but I like animals and with subsequent experience and some riding lessons, I learned to enjoy riding, very much. While on location with 'Red Rider', I got on my horse and went to an isolated place to practice riding. I soon became aware of someone following me. I looked around and there was Buck Jones. When he knew I was aware of him, he burst out laughing. 'That,' he said, 'is the best example I've ever seen of a horse riding a girl!' He then gave me some coaching and eventually I even learned to do a flying mount." After appearing in some 40 films, Marion left the business in '36 at 25 and married a Philadelphia real estate owner.

SERIAL MAILBAG

Jane Adams' statement in SR Ch. 51, pg. 13 about Lionel Atwill's death is not quite correct. Atwill did not die *during* the filming of "Lost City of the Jungle" (Feb. '46)—but was too ill to continue filming and died in April '46. Maybe the producers sensed he would not be able to continue and had him film his death scene in the airplane before he left the set. It would be the last scene he ever filmed. Also in "Secret Code" cast listing in SR Ch. 51, pg. 14, Edward Woods is Lt. Kurtz *not* Sigund Tor. Woods was in Buster Crabbe's "Tarzan the Fearless". Also, please add Franklyn Farnum in the role of Count Von Birn (Ch. 12)—behind a false beard. —Hal Polk, Kearney, NJ

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