SERIAL REPORT

Chapter 58 July/Sept. 2006

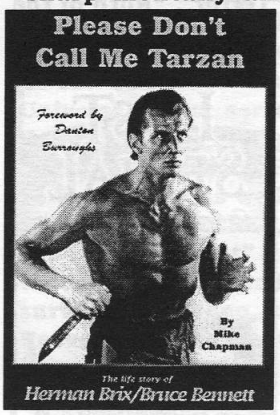
In This Chapter:

Bruce Bennett at 100; "Spider's Web"; SerialFest '06; "Iron Claw" Frankie Thomas Jr.; Cy Feuer Gregory Gay; "Tomorrow People" Serial Literature ...and much more

BRUCE BENNETT/HERMAN BRIX AT 100

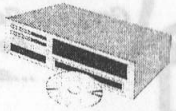
by Mike Chapman

A remarkable life was recognized May 20 in L.A. when the 100th birthday of actor Bruce Bennett was celebrated in his home. Born Herman Brix in Tacoma, WA, May 19, 1906, he developed a tremendous physique by working in lumber camps as a young man and was a star athlete at the University of Washington, becoming a three-year letterman on the Husky football team and winning the NCAA shot-put championship in track and field. Earning a silver medal in the '28 Olympics in Amsterdam in the shot-put, he wound up in Hollywood. Herman Brix made "The New Adventures of Tarzan" in '35, portraying the legendary Apeman as an articulate, intelligent English nobleman. Many Tarzan fans consider him the best of all the 20 actors who have played Tarzan (in over 50 films and 3 TV series). Afraid of being permanently typecast as Tarzan, Brix changed his name to Bruce Bennett and appeared in over 100 films, including such big hits as "Treasure of the Sierra Madre", "Mildred Pierce" and "The Younger Brothers". As Herman Brix, he was one of five rangers in Republic's '38 serial, "The Lone Ranger" and also starred in "Shadow of Chinatown", "Fighting Devil Dogs", "Hawk of the Wilderness" and "Daredevils of the Red Circle". His biography, PLEASE DON'T CALL ME TARZAN, was written by Mike Chapman and published in 2001. It's a beautiful hardbound book that includes 90 photos, many never published before. A few books are still available at $34 ppd. Also still a very few left signed by Bruce Bennett/Herman Brix at $50 each. My wife Bev and I attended the birthday party in Bruce's home, hosted by Bruce's son and daughter, and attended by about 30 extended family members and close friends. A very special day for a very special man. Bruce doesn't get around as good as he used to, but is still very sharp mentally and has a good memory of his Hollywood days. It was an honor to be invited. **Anyone wishing to purchase the Bennett book may call Mike Chapman at (641) 791-3072. Chapman

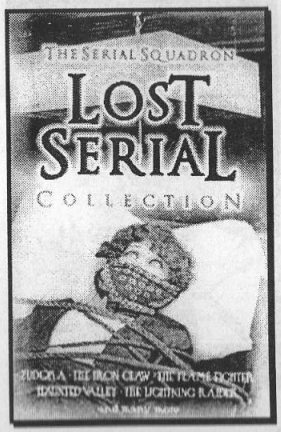


also wrote the recently published biography of Tom Tyler, available for $24 ppd. through SERIAL REPORT, 1312 Stagecoach Rd. SE, Albuquerque, NM 87123 or by calling Chapman.

NEW ON DVD



The Serial Squadron has added "Jungle Princess", a four-chapter condensation of Metro Pictures 1920 "Lost City of the African Jungle", to their available DVDs. Eric Stedman does absolutely excellent restoration work on this "lost" gem in which Madro, a white-man fugitive from justice in Africa, tries to lay claim to a lost jungle princess (wild haired Juanita Hansen) who is befriended by George Chesebro, an American millionaire on a hunting trip. Highly recommended. $9.95 plus $1.50 postage. Also from Serial Squadron is their "Lost Serial Collection" two DVD set at $17.50 ppd. Included are odd chapters, trailers and excerpts from 35 silent serials ("Perils of Pauline", "Iron Claw", "Terror", "Ruth of the Rockies", "Haunted Valley", "Captain Kidd", "Return of the Riddle Rider", "Fast Express", "Whispering Smith Rides", "Scarlet Arrow", "Terrible People", "Masked Rider", "Hazards of Helen", and more.) <www.serialsquadron. com/dvds>, 440 S. State St., G6 (SR), Newtown, PA 18940. Meanwhile, AC Comics has just released on DVD "King of the Rocketmen" and "Dick Tracy Returns" at $24.95@ plus $2.50 postage. Box 521216, Longwood, FL 32752. <www.ac comics.com>

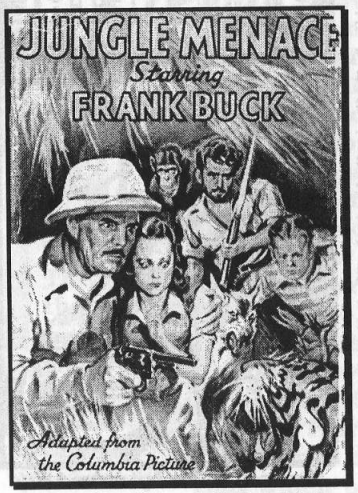


LITERATURE OF THE LOST SERIALS

by Wayne Schutz

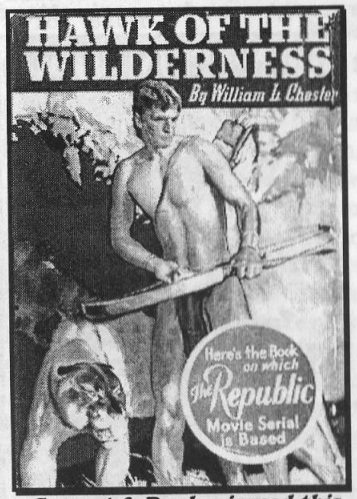
Beginning in the early teens of the last century, motion picture novelizations began to appear on a daily basis and in the Sunday supplements of many of the nation's newspapers. The publication of fiction based on a film's scenario was an event enjoyed in Europe as well as in the U.S. and Canada during this time. Many of these stories were also published between hard covers as "photoplay" novels and usually illustrated with scenes from the movie. These methods of literary cross promotion encouraged the public to see the film treatment at their local nickelodeon, whether it be a feature attraction or a serial. However, as time went by, these novelizations became forgotten and the films which inspired them disappeared due to neglect. Many of these stories remain as the only evidence the actual film was ever produced and released. By viewing these printed pages, we're looking through a lens of the past, reading words written almost 90 years ago. Occasionally, one may find examples of this literary form at rummage sales, library book events, or on eBay. However, locating a coveted film title might prove to be a daunting task. Enter now the digital age...

The advent of the personal computer has spawned many technological advances. One of the least publicized aspects of the Internet is the "e-book", where large bodies of digital text may be viewed online or downloaded to a computer. As a result, many books previously out of print for generations are once again accessible to the reader. The movie serial fan, who was not forgotten in the process, can now embrace this technology. A large number of sources make available this once elusive material to computer users. Through the combined efforts of such websites as <www.gutenberg.org> and <www.manybooks.net> a sizeable quantity of serial novelizations can be downloaded or even printed out as "hard copies". The books listed on Project Gutenberg, the largest site, are works published prior to 1923 which are now out of copyright. Interestingly enough, this situation also covers the first decade of the serials. Looking over the authors on these websites, we see many familiar names such as Zane Grey, Conan Doyle, Jules Verne and Edgar Rice Burroughs. Many of their novels have fallen into public domain and are in good company with earlier classical works, some of which provided inspiration for such serials as "Adventures of Robinson Crusoe" ('22 Universal) and "Swiss Family Robinson" ("Perils of the Wild") ('25 Universal). It should be noted e-books mentioned are available free of charge, the only costs involved are for reams of paper, printer ink cartridges and binding, should the reader elect to do so. The main drawback here is these e-books no longer contain the illustrations which so typified the original editions. The earliest of serial novelizations on the Gutenberg site is "Adventures of Kathlyn" by Harold MacGrath. The 1914 Selig production was the first serial to ever use a defined cliffhanger and the story, published on the installment plan by the CHICAGO TRIBUNE, increased the readership for the paper during late 1913. Following this is "Perils of Pauline" by Charles Goddard. The Pathé serial which spurred regular movie attendance in America, exists only in a 25 reel version (out of an estimated 41 reels) prepared for the French theatrical release in 1917. Pearl White's follow-up serials were "Exploits of Elaine", "New Exploits of Elaine" and "The Romance of Elaine", all released in 1915. The novelizations by Arthur B. Reeve (creator of the Craig Kennedy character) for "Exploits" and "Romance" are available on this site. The "Exploits" serial was so popular that editions from two separate publishers were issued in 1915. The book which inspired Universal's first serial, "The Black Box" ('15) by E. Phillips Oppenheim (pseud. for Anthony Partridge), can be found here as well as Robert W. Chambers' IN SECRET, the source for "The Black Secret" ('19 Pathé). Although "The Master Mystery" ('19) survives on video, the Arthur B. Reeve/John Grey novel, a popular item among Houdini collectors, is also available to the serial fan. In



Novelization of Columbia's first serial, "Jungle Menace".

most cases, these novels originated from the actual serial scenarios, however there is one notable exception to this instance. Eustace Hale Ball, a film writer and director, actually adapted his own book, THE VOICE ON THE WIRE: A NOVEL OF MYSTERY, for Universal's 1917 serial. You'll find the book posted on the Gutenberg site as well. With the exception of "Exploits of Elaine" (a National Film Registry inductee) and those titles noted earlier, all the serials cited above are either lost or no longer exist in their original versions. Fast forward to the sound era for a moment. THE IVORY TRAIL, Talbot Mundy's 1919 novel, has been cited as a source for "Jungle Mystery" ('32 Universal). Considering the attitudes practiced by the studio's story department, we can only speculate on its actual containment in the serial. Talbot Mundy (pseud. for William Lancaster Gribbon) may be credited with the introduction of a unique literary device later used in the main titles of several serials for both the silent and sound eras. In his novel KING OF THE KHYBER RIFLES, published in 1916, Mundy designated King as a main character's surname versus its traditional use as a sovereign's title. There's only one American serial inspired by a poem and that was "Clancy of the Mounted" ('33 Universal). These verses, written by poet Robert W. Service, can be viewed in BALLADS OF A CHEECHAKO on the Gutenberg site. In Kalton C. Lahue's CONTINUED NEXT WEEK: A HISTORY OF THE MOVING PICTURE SERIAL, the author cites a work by William F. Cody as the source for Universal's "In the Days of Buffalo Bill" ('22) and "Fighting With Buffalo Bill" ('26) as well as a sound serial (which survives) "The Indians are Coming" ('30). Ken Weiss also credits the work for "Battling with Buffalo Bill" ('31 Universal) in his book TO BE CONTINUED. The complete title of this literary material is "The Great West That Was, Buffalo Bill's Life Story" and was published in HEARST'S INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE from Aug. '16 through July '17. This manuscript was prepared during the final year of Cody's life and drew heavily from his earlier autobiographies. Due to financial difficulties he was experiencing at this time, Cody may have sold the screen rights to Universal Film Manufacturing Company. Apparently, Universal must have held the exclusive rights to the original title for when the magazine piece was published in book form during 1920, the binding identified it as AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF BUFFALO BILL while the title page credits the work as BUFFALO BILL'S LIFE STORY, AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY. The work, listed here as a serial story property, may be downloaded from Project Gutenberg under the title AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF BUFFALO BILL. In response to the '23 success of Paramount's "Covered Wagon", Hollywood took a second look at the novels of Emerson Hough (pronounced Huff) then produced more films based on his writings. Hough's 1907 book THE WAY OF A MAN, was



Grosset & Dunlap issued this serial edition of "Hawk Of the Wilderness" in conjunction with the Republic serial in '38.

filmed as a '24 serial by Pathé and reprinted with scenes from the chapterplay. You'll find this novel on Gutenberg along with MILLION DOLLAR MYSTERY ('14) by Harold McGrath and THE MYSTERY MIND ('20) by John W. Grey and Arthur B. Reeve. For serial fans who would prefer a printed copy of these novelizations with illustrations intact, the Serial Squadron is preparing to introduce a series of 15 "photo novels" with the original scene stills placed in the book where the actual incidents occur. The first of these will be TREY O' HEARTS by Louis Joseph Vance, creator of the Lone Wolf, followed by THE BLACK BOX and THE MASTER MYSTERY. As the manuscript was being prepared, no selling prices had been announced, so best check their website <www.serial squadron.com> for further details. The digital age has also inaugurated the "print-on-demand" concept. Here the body of the book's text is stored on a computer hard drive and once the title is ordered, it's printed out, then bound between covers to be shipped to the reader. The publisher no longer carries inventories of various titles, printing out only what is purchased. There are several serial related novels available in these new paperback editions for slightly less than purchasing an original copy through a rare book dealer. Many of these books are available at discounted prices through <amazon.com>. Viewing the online catalogue of one print-on-demand firm, Kessinger Publishing <www.kessingerpub.com>, we find the company has available illustrated editions of EXPLOITS OF ELAINE, TREY O'HEARTS and MILLION DOLLAR MYSTERY at prices ranging from $23.28 to $36.95. As this writer has not seen the photo quality of these new editions, no judgement can be made in this respect. In addition to the titles previously mentioned, Kessinger also offers ADVENTURES OF KATHLYN, PERILS OF PAULINE and ROMANCE OF ELAINE without stills for $16.98 to $34.95. There's also material available to the serial fan featuring Tarzan. ERBville Press, <www.erbvillepress.com>, another print-on-demand publisher, offers ADVENTURES OF TARZAN in a complete '21 newspaper novelization by Maude Robinson Toombs as a $24.95 hardcover or a paperback for $10.95. (The actual serial itself exists only in a 10 chapter version edited from 15 episodes, further condensed to 10 reels.) Although "Tarzan the Tiger" is available on video, "Tarzan the Mighty" remains lost. A novelization by Arthur B. Reeve for "Mighty" can be had for $24.95 hardcover, $9.95 paperback. There's yet another collection of print media on these two serials which originally appeared in UNIVERSAL WEEKLY, a studio publication sent to exhibitors and film exchanges. This material from '28/'29 has been collated by Jerry Schneider and is available as TARZAN THE MIGHTY/TARZAN THE TIGER: SERIAL SYNOPSES BY UNIVERSAL PICTURES in paperback for $7.95. These books are issued with attractive covers, usually a movie poster relevant to the title. The sole instance of a serial script being commercially published occurs in Lahue's BOUND AND GAGGED where the first episode of "Pirate's Gold" by Frank Leon Smith was put down in print. Recently, this matter was

resolved with the publication of the complete script to "Tarzan the Fearless" ('33 Principal), available through ERBville in paperback for $19.95, hardcover $29.95. A few years ago, I had the opportunity to examine this script from the Sol Lesser Collection at USC. At the beginning of each episode in the script, a synopsis was provided of the previous chapter to put the actors into perspective as to what action transpired earlier. The copy I viewed had the names and phone numbers of various cast members penciled in on the title page. (Had I been around in '33, I too would have wanted Jacqueline Wells' number!) At one point in the script, the action is lined off and the page physically torn causing me to wonder if that is where the original feature version was to end. Overall, the script reflects an entirely different view of the serial when compared to the available feature version. I checked for a script to Lesser's second serial, "Return of Chandu", however no copy was present in the collection. Publication of serial scripts is yet another avenue to be explored, whether it be in book form or as a download from the Internet. There are several serial-related titles from the silent era not yet available from any source, including the first and one of the earliest photoplay editions, WHAT HAPPENED TO MARY? ('13) by Robert Carlton Brown, MASTER KEY ('14) by John Fleming Wilson, DIAMOND FROM THE SKY ('15) by Roy L. MacCardell, UNDER THE CRESCENT (Universal's six episode 1915 chapterplay authored by Nell Shipman, mother of noted serial screenwriter Barry Shipman), LEATHER-STOCKING by George Arthur Gray for the '24 Pathé serial which was "suggested by J. Fenimore Cooper's LEATHER-STOCKING TALES (the original work is available on Gutenberg), STRINGS OF STEEL by Paul Gulick (although a correspondent has informed me the novel in no way bears resemblance to the studio chapter synopses of the '26 serial), and THE RADIO DETECTIVE ('21), penned by prolific Arthur Benjamin Reeve. A number of newspaper and magazine serializations never saw publication in book form. The list would include BROKEN COIN ('14) by Emerson Hough who adapted the story from Grace Cunard's serial scenario; IRON CLAW ('16) by Canadian writer Arthur Stringer; RADIO KING ('22) by George Bronson Howard and SECRET OF THE SUBMARINE ('16), among a few others. The same situation would also apply to the serial stories that appeared overseas in BOY'S CINEMA as well as those published in various foreign-language periodicals. These writings, as well as silent serial synopses which appeared in exhibitor trade journals, need to be gathered, transcribed and made available as part of a now forgotten form of popular culture. The passage of time is necessary, on occasion, to determine a manuscript's historical significance.

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SERIAL BOO BOOS

In Ch. 5 of "The Vigilantes are Coming", The Eagle (Robert Livingston) gives his cape to Lloyd Ingraham, but in the next scene Livingston is seen riding with the cape on. (Thanx to Jack Ritch.)

CLIFFHANGER COMMENTARY

by Bruce Dettman

In the early '50s when both TV and I were in our infancy and I would perch in front of our flickering Packard Bell to stare at anything, even test patterns, I used to regularly confuse Monte Hall and Warren Hull with each other. They were both dark-haired pitchmen and quiz show hosts and had what must have sounded to me like similar names. This rather mystifies me some 50 years later, particularly when I try to conjure up the idea of Hall, later gaining the most fame as the likable and slightly chunky host of TV's "Let's Make A Deal", playing Mandrake the Magician, the Green Hornet or the Spider, all roles Hull portrayed at the beginning of his film career, but like I said, I was just a kid spending lots of time doing and thinking strange things (I once confused champagne and shampoo and drank a cup of the latter, much to my mother's acute distress and my brother's unbridled merriment). Warren Hull started out in musical comedy, much of it on the stage, later graduating to Hollywood where he made a string of thrillers, dramas and formula B's. In addition, he had a successful career on radio, in particular hosting the show "Strike It Rich" that was later taken to TV where he found work hosting other game shows. In '38 he appeared in Columbia's "The Spider's Web", his first cliffhanger. The character of the Spider, created in '33 by Popular Publications, was designed to provide competition to Street and Smith's immensely popular Shadow which debuted several years earlier. While the Shadow would be first to appear in magazines, it was the Spider who was initially seen up on the big screen. As originally created by R.T.M. Scott and later embellished by Norvel Page (writing as Grant Stockbridge), the Spider is a multifaceted character, a totally obsessed (as opposed to just dedicated) crime fighter constantly at odds with himself over the conflicts in his private life created by his dual identity. Moreover, the Spider of the magazines appeared as a misshapen figure who had assumed the guise of a hunchbacked street corner musician. To add a grotesque note to his look he even included a set of large vampire fangs! Although the character's complex psychological profile was all but excised and other ingredients either toned down or altered by the studio (the Spider's re-styled duds—a webbed cape and mask—for instance), Columbia remained surprisingly loyal to the original concept of the character, certainly more so than when other figures such as the Shadow, Captain America and the Lone Ranger were brought to the screen. Hull is highly acceptable in the lead, solid and dependable as criminologist Richard Wentworth,

properly tough and no-nonsense as the mysterious Spider and convincing (not to mention virtually unrecognizable) as the low-life criminal Blinky McQuade, Wentworth's other alter ego. I find it odd, however, that while Hull disguised his voice as Blinky, he does nothing to alter it when, as the Spider, he makes phone calls to his pal Commissioner Kirk who miraculously never spots the similarity. Aiding Wentworth are plucky and resilient Iris Meredith as

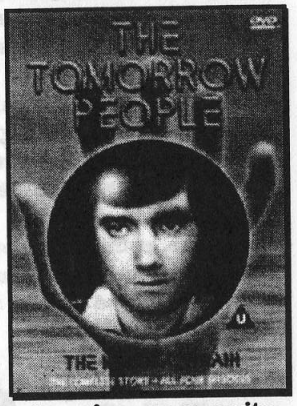
his fiancé Nita Van Horne (this is one of the few instances in cliffhangers where the male/female leads have an actual on-going relationship and their relaxed banter and genuine concern for each other is a nice change from the usual sterile hero-heroine rapport found in serials), Kenne Duncan, pretty unrecognizable himself as the turban-coifed Ram Sing (who comes out with priceless exclamations such as "The dogs! The fiends!") and Richard Fiske as Jackson, a Jack of All Trades for Wentworth. Again—because I know I have mentioned this in earlier columns—the fact this is a Columbia serial, the studio that was home for so long to The Three Stooges, sometimes interferes with my taking the action seriously. Fiske, for instance, was the much put upon slob in one of my favorite Stooges' shorts "Boobs In Arms" and as a consequence whenever I look at him, no matter how serious the predicament facing the actor, I hear him wailing through tears of frustration brought on by Moe, Larry and Curly, "Everything happens to me!" Also in the cast are familiar faces Byron Foulger, a young Marc Lawrence, who later chalked up impressive credits in numerous A-productions, Edmund Cobb, Dick Curtis and Forbes Murray. Unbilled is a youthful looking Nestor Paiva who eventually became a familiar character actor in many films and TV shows. The formula plot has the Spider pitted against the masked (and apparently crippled) Octopus, criminal mastermind intent upon sabotaging the nation's transportation, utilities and communication systems (for some reason the Octopus always meets with his henchmen in a kind of executive board room where the entire group also shows up with Klan-like hoods). Moreover, the Octopus, like so many Columbia mad geniuses, is a cranky, unforgiving sort who has absolutely no patience with his underlings, several of whom learn this the hard way when not completing his missions. As for the requisite action, this is, to use an old and mostly forgotten term, a real corker. If the Lone Ranger needed a silver deposit for his supply of bullets, the Spider surely required a dozen lead mines for his. While fistfights are kept at a minimum, the amount of gunfire is simply staggering with literally dozens of flunkies and henchmen biting the dust in nearly every episode. The Spider, much like Tom Tyler's Captain Marvel, has no qualms about making short work of his adversaries whether facing them head on or while they're in retreat. He's fond of explaining his actions with lines like "The law is handicapped by too many

rules and regulations" and often uses his opponents as human shields when bullets are coming his way. At one point he even attempts to plug a woman—who, admittedly, had just tried to attack him—in the back. Still, despite the breakneck action, screenwriters George Plympton, Robert Kent, Basil Dickey and Martie Ramson can be faulted for the similarity of chapter endings. Too many episodes, as an example, conclude with the Spider being endangered by some variation of electricity. Even more annoying is Columbia's voice over previews of the next installment, which removes much of the fun and anticipation inherent in the cliffhanger experience. It's not that you question *if* the hero is going to live, but it's *how* he survives. Most of the enjoyment of this serial boils down to its frenetic pacing, blazing gunfire and unpunctuated action. Dialog scenes as created by directors Ray Taylor and James Horne can be a bit leaden and drag things down but never enough to seriously mar the fun of what just might be Columbia's best serial.

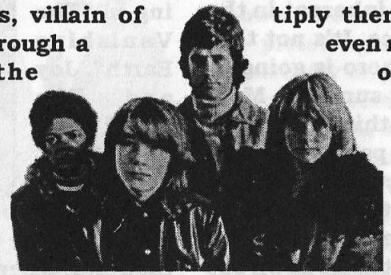
THE OLD ONES AND THE NEW ONES

by Jim Stringham

Sorry! We're the saps. That makes us homo sapiens, as opposed to homo superior, the future of our race. These are the Tomorrow People, stars of several English TV serials, just a few (so far) teenagers gifted with powers of telepathy, teleportation (they call it jaunting) and telekinesis. Handy! Headquarters is in an abandoned subway station also occupied by an amiable, reasoning, biological computer called Tim. Earth is a primitive "No go" planet to the rest of the galaxy. Early stories concerned extra-terrestrial attempts to plunder us. Later, they concentrated on our own, home-grown criminals and madmen. The first serial I've found, copyright '73, is "The Slaves of Jedikiah" in five episodes. Stephen, newest member of the People, is menaced by the Cyclops and a shape changing robot, Jedikiah, a robot who returns in "Medusa Strain" seeking revenge and uneasily allies with Rebowski, a thief from the future. Things get more exciting in "The Vanishing Earth". Joy and The Spidron, new aliens, are enslaving Earthlings to mine magnemite, the substance which holds our world together. When too much is gone, so is the planet. A mystery character appears, and there are some good cliffhangers. The second season opened with some of the regular characters replaced with "The Blue and the Green" being a fascinating story. Young artists of no known background, all over the world, were creating scenes of alien planets, as "Change of Weather on Rexal IV." Somehow, the paintings seemed to turn violent, as after a change in the weather depicted. That violence spread to the people who viewed the pictures. Then, those same painters divided people into groups marked with blue or green badges. It was a random choice, no reason needed, but the violence triggered by the pictures now pitted members of each group into deadly warfare against the others. The battles escalated, spreading across Earth. Then, the Tomorrow People discovered a "new" race,

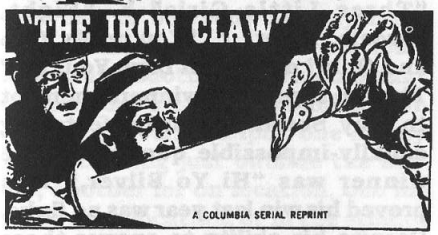


the Denagelee, involved in the chaos. They were beings like cuckoos, whose eggs were planted in creatures resembling the dominant species of a chosen planet. The swarming, which would enable them to fly into space, required the violent energy released by warring humanity. It had happened before, resulting in the fall of the Roman Empire. The gimmick in "A Rift in Time" was considerably less exotic: a simple steam engine. Problem was it existed in a gladiator school in Roman Britain in the first century A.D. A time guardian from an earlier serial communicated with the Tomorrow People after being trapped there. Gaius, villain of the piece, escaped through a time pump after the guardian was rescued. A return to the present found earth, and much of the galaxy, under Roman rule. That one simple device had changed history. "The Doomsday Men" were members of a secret society of professional soldiers who viewed world peace as a threat to their way of life. To prevent passage of the All Power Disarmament Treaty, they seized control of an armed satellite which could destroy our cities. The Tomorrow People traced their activities to Glen College, a military school in Scotland. Finally, they blocked attack by the satellite's missiles with...what else? Bagpipes! Fast forward to 1993. Nickelodeon ran five new serials with different characters and background. Tim was gone, as was telekinesis. The authorities were now aware of the Tomorrow People's existence. An origin story had each of them, although unaware of their powers, teleporting away from crises. Somehow, they were drawn to an ancient alien spacecraft on an uninhabited island. Its equipment still functioned, and it might even be alive. Intelligence agencies were attempting to capture the kids. "Monsoon Man" was more comic than exciting. Seems breakfast cereal magnate Colonel Cobb, of Cobb's Corn Crinkles, needed to master the market by destroying all rivals. He would accomplish this by wiping out the world's grain crops with storms created by an unmanned weather satellite. "The Culex Experiment" was more interesting. Dr. Culex created a super mosquito. They could only be made in limited quantities, *but* the Cornucopia Machine, intended to produce unlimited food, could multiply them into thousands or even millions. The father of one of the Tomorrow People, a general in an intelligence service, was aware of what the kids were, and cooperated in their efforts to fight this and other menaces. "The Living Stones" lifted plot elements from "Quatermass II" and "The Blue and the Green". Meteorites fell to earth, with living beings inside. They could control humans, forcing them to breed thousands more from the seeds they carried. The plants were parasites which would inhabit people, feeding on their energy. A botanist created an audio frequency generator, capable of using sound to speed plant growth. It all wound up with an attempt to cause an immediate mass swarming by magnifying the noise generated by a rock concert! My own favorite is "The Rameses Connection". Christopher Lee starred as Rameses Akara, an immortal pharaoh determined to rule the world again after four thousand years. The Tomorrow People were warned by a vision of a young Egyptian from the past...perhaps one of their own from an earlier age. The



Mahambra Stone was stolen from an English museum. Egyptian obelisks, now located all over the world, were involved. The Rameses Cartouche was both a map and a key to an unlocated tomb, where more keys to the plot were found. The obelisks would draw the light of the eight stars of Amtudi, and focus it on a perfectly fashioned pyramid which now contained the Mahambra stone, releasing a power which would make Akara ruler of all. It began as those eight stars moved into perfect alignment for the first time in thousands of years. I don't know how many more serials appeared from '74 to '93, or after that. A&E has issued the first ones on DVDs as Set 1. I look forward to the serials on Set 2...or Set 3... *(If you Google in "Tomorrow People" you'll come up with a myriad of websites dedicated to the serials. Episode guides, photos, DVD's, fan fiction, etc.—ed.)*

COLUMBIA CLIFFHANGER CASTS



Actor	*Character*
Charles Quigley	Bob Lane
Walter Sande	Jack "Flash" Strong
Joyce Bryant	Patricia Benson
Forrest Taylor	Anton Benson
Alex Callam	Dr. James Benson
Norman Willis	Roy Benson
James Metcalfe	Culver Benson (Ch. 1)
Allen Doone	Simon Leach
Edythe Elliott	Milly Leach
John Beck	Gyves
Charles King	Silk Landon
James Morton	Casey
Hal Price	O'Malley
Cy Shindell	Red
Ted Mapes	Slim
Lew Sargent	Jake
Al Klein	Duke
Dick Alexander	Giant Mute Servant (Ch. 3)
Marin Sais	Anna
Lloyd Ingraham	Managing Editor
Frank LaRue	Inspector Cramer
Jack Perrin	Mine Guard #1 (Ch. 4, 5)
Eddie Polo	Newsman (Ch. 1, 5)
??	Charlie, Mine Guard #2 (Ch. 4, 5)
??	Pedro (Ch. 8, 11, 12)
??	Carmelita (Ch. 8, 11, 12)
??	Nurse (Ch. 12)
Charles McMurphy	Cop (Ch. 15)
??	Cop (Ch. 13)
??	Policeman (Ch. 4)
??	Police—2 at crash (Ch. 4)

(Cast complied by Hal Polk and Boyd Magers.)

Hal Polk found "The Iron Claw" "awful" with director James Horne "outdoing himself with James Morton as officer Casey doing slapstick. I didn't care who the Iron Claw turned out to be." However, I (Boyd Magers) found the serial to be fast-paced outrageous fun, although I'd detected midway who the Claw secretly was by using simple "serial logic".

Cheat Endings!

At the end of Ch. 3 of "Vanishing Legion", during a fight, Harry Carey is knocked over the banister of a stairwell. In Ch. 4 he never falls over at all!

WORTH ANOTHER LOOK

by Ken Weiss

Spent an enjoyable May 18-21 attending the 6th annual Serial Squadron SerialFest in Newtown, PA. This was my second time around and once again the crowd was affable and enthusiastic. Squadron leader Eric Stedman and the Fest staff did an outstanding job organizing the event and keeping it rolling despite some setbacks—like a critical shipment of films that arrived late. Again, 35mm serials were shown in the Newtown Theater, a 100 plus year old venue that seats fewer than 200 people. After dinners, showings continued (via 16mm, TV or video projection) at the Hampton Inn. Episodes from "Federal Operator 99", "Flash Gordon", "Don Daredevil Rides Again", "Captain Marvel", "Green Hornet", "King of the Rocketmen", Son of the Guardsman", and "Jesse James Rides Again", to name just a few of the more than 20 represented. To salute our guest of honor, Adrian Booth, we saw all 15 episodes of "Perils of Nyoka". There were also a few extras; a reel of clips from "Fighting Pilot" ('35) with Richard Talmadge that featured some exciting stunts, including an outstanding one that had him leaping from a car as it careened off a cliff with him tumbling uncontrollably down a steep incline—all in one shot, and an excellent Tim McCoy B-western, "End of the Trail" ('33 Columbia). The annual Trivia Contest, created by Ace (Marc Provost) Drummond, was typically sadistic. Here are 10 of the 25 questions. See how you do. (1) Where were the Texas Rangers ambushed in "The Lone Ranger"? a. Bellows Gap b. Grizzly Gulch c. Grant's Pass d. Iverson Rock (2) In "Dick Tracy's G-Men", on what date was Zarnoff executed? a. Apr 22 b. June 14 c. July 27 d. Oct. 4 (3) In which serial does Wheeler Oakman play Wheeler? a. "Red Barry" b. "Darkest Africa" c. "Hop Harrigan" d. "Adventures of Rex and Rinty" (4) Which sound serial character appeared first? a. Black Widow b. Black Hangman c. Black Commando d. Black Arrow (5) Where were the Texans trying to take their cattle in "Great Adventures of Wild Bill Hickok"? a. Abilene, KS b. Wichita, KS c. Tulsa, OK d. Bellevue, KY (6) In what serial does the villain El Lobo appear? a. "Zorro's Black Whip" b. "Vigilantes Are Coming" c. "Zorro Rides Again" d. "Adventures of Sir Galahad" (7) What is the circulation of the DAILY ITEM in the "Iron Claw"? a. 24,890 b. 365,000 c. 500,000 and still growing d. 727,000. (8) What is Fraulein von Teuffel's alias in "Adventures of Smilin' Jack"? a. Emily Salmon b. Eva Winters c. Phyllis Parker d. Trudy Miller (9) In "Radar Men From the Moon", what did a roast beef sandwich cost at Al's Diner? a. 25¢ b. 40¢ c. 75¢ d. $1. (10) What was the name of the song sung in Chapter 3 of "Adventures of Frank Merriwell"? a. "Three Little Girls" b. "Fight, Fardale, Fight" c. "You're My One and Only" d. "We All Love You, Pa." The top three quiz winners then got to play Serial Jeopardy, featuring equally-impossible questions. The winner was "Hi Yo Silver," who proved his win last year was no fluke. Despite his ability to answer these arcane questions, "Hi Yo" appears to be an intelligent, well-adjusted young man in his upper 20's. Once again I was surprised to discover that attendees were not all senior citizens. In fact, I'd guess more than a third were well under 50. And this time there were even about half a dozen women present—some of whom actually liked serials. The Guest of Honor was Adrian Booth (aka Lorna Gray), whose serial credits include "Perils of Nyoka" (she played Vultura), "Federal Operator 99", "Flying G-Men", "Deadwood Dick", "Captain America" and many more. Booth is in her youthful 80s, still glamorous and very articulate. She seemed genuinely eager to answer questions and share her memories of serial acting and Hollywood in general. She recalled working on a serial meant that for an 8am shoot she had to be at the studio by 4am. "Nobody gets to the studio earlier than the actress and the hairdresser," she said, "except the man who lets you in." In addition to hair, it was "do our makeup, put on the wardrobe, get in the limousine and go out on location and dress in a dressing room. So it's a very, very long day." Because of the fragmentary nature of serial production highlighted by tight budgets that meant no time could be wasted, serial actors had to be ready for anything. "Sometimes we would have a 'four-way call'," Booth said, which meant the next day's dialogue would involve studying several scripts; one if they were shooting just outside the studio, another for on location, one for indoors on location, or in the studio. The lead actors had to learn the various scripts "for all 15 episodes! Invariably the assistant director would call you at three in the morning and say, 'Everything's changed, it's raining. The dialogue is inside.' That would mean we'd have to get up at three o'clock in the morning to study the dialogue." During the filming of the last chapter of "Captain America", when she was placed in the glass case containing the deadly gas, the top lid got stuck and Adrian was trapped inside while around her cast and crew looked distraught. How long did it take to get her out? "Too long." It amused her that in "Federal Operator 99" she and George J. Lewis would do all their dastardly deeds with she in long gloves and he in a pin stripe business suit. After the deeds were done they would go to his apartment (in the serial) where he would sit at a piano and play "Moonlight Sonata". (Her recall of that scene and others was dead-on accurate.) While delightfully candid and informal, she avoided speaking ill of anyone. The only negative note was to admit, "I was not happy at Columbia." The difference between Columbia and Republic? "Night and day." The answers to the questions of why she wasn't happy at Columbia and why she changed her name from Lorna Gray to Adrian Booth will have to wait for the publication of the book she's working on. She's gratified and surprised by the level of interest in serials. As a tribute to the Serial Squadron at one point she said, "Isn't this amazing? After years and years—I can't get over all you people. I mean it. I really mean it." The honor, I can assure this gracious lady, was all ours. Answers to the quiz: 1) c, 2) b, 3) d, 4) c, 5) a, 6) c, 7) b, 8) d, 9) b, 10) a

Guest of Honor Adrian Booth and the gang at SerialFest in Newtown, PA.

Adrian Booth menaces Helen Talbot in "Federal Operator 99" ('45).

Excitable inventor Louis Stern extols his diamond making machine to detective Hayden Stevenson and Stern's daughter, Louise Lorraine.

Inventor's daughter Louise Lorraine is in constant jeopardy for 10 chapters in Universal's "The Diamond Master" (Feb. '29) as criminals try to steal her father's machine and learn the secret of how to make diamonds from dust. Detective Hayden Stevenson comes to her aid. The serial was a remake of Universal's "The Diamond Queen" ('21). Born Louise Escovar October 1, 1901, in San Francisco, CA, Lorraine came to the screen at 19 in her first serial, "Elmo the Fearless" ('20 Universal). She played the femme lead in 11 serials, 154 death-defying chapters from '20 to '30, co-starring with Elmo Lincoln, husband Art Acord (they were married from '25 to '28), Joe Bonomo, Jack Perrin, Lane Chandler and others. Additionally, Louise worked in nearly 60 other features and short subjects up until '32. Her last, and only sound, features were westerns—"Near the Rainbow's End" with Bob Steele and "Beyond the Law" with Robert Frazer. At 31 Lorraine left the screen, ostensibly to devote full time to her second husband, Chester J. Hubbard, and two children. She died February 2, 1981, in New York. Co-star Hayden Stevenson was born July 2, 1877, in Georgetown, KY. the 5' 11" actor gained stage experience in stock companies before landing in films in Chicago in 1910. He came to Hollywood in 1915, eventually appearing in over 100 productions through 1942 (Cecil B. DeMille's "Reap the Wild Wind"). In 1924 he worked with famed boxer Jack Dempsey in 10 of the "Fight and Win" two-reelers at Universal. From '26-'29 Stevenson co-starred as Coach Tom Jones with George J. Lewis and Dorothy Gulliver in dozens of the popular Collegians two-reelers for Universal. Stevenson's first serial was as the star of "Blake of Scotland Yard" for Universal in '27 (remade by Sam Katzman for Victory in '37). Next was "The Diamond Master" in '29. As sound came in, Stevenson's status plummeted to nearly always uncredited roles as chauffeurs, hotel clerks, doctors and other bit parts. He was seen as Carter in Ch. 1 of Mascot's "Lightning Warrior" ('31). Retiring at 65, after "Reap the Wild Wind", he died at 74 in West L.A. on January 31, 1952.

SERIAL CLIPPINGS

Adrian Booth (Lorna Gray) interviewed in GRAND RAPIDS PRESS (5/2) who called her 'Queen of the serial.' ✗✗ "Chandu the Magician" remembered 4/7 for the online SCOOP weekly newsletter. "Spy Smasher" appeared on their 4/26 edition. "Buck Rogers" and "Captain Midnight" on 6/3. Archived at <http://scoop.diamondgalleries.com/> ✗✗ Small bit on serials in COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE #1618 (7/06). ✗✗ "Deadwood Dick" has "far too much (comic) relief and too little tension" writes Hank Davis in BIG REEL (5/06). He finds "Tim Tyler's Luck" in the 6/06 issue "a delightful slice of innocence" with "inspired moments of serial lunacy." "Return of Chandu" is termed a "loopy old melodrama" in the 7/06 ish. The 5/06 BR also features "Robots In the Movies" with various serials highlighted. ✗✗ Noel Neill (who plays a dying elderly woman in "Superman Returns") interviewed (3 pgs.) in COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE #1620 (9/06). ✗✗ LIFE STORY: MOVIE MAGIC COLLECTOR'S EDITION on "Superman Returns" contains only slight references to the Columbia serials. ✗✗

CLASSIFIED ADS

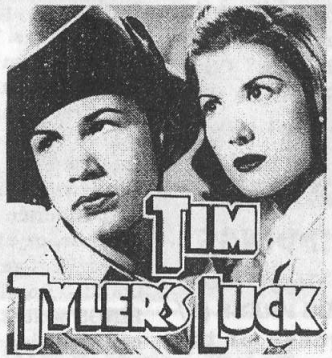
(10¢ a word, Address on cover)

Tom and Jim Goldrup are pleased to announce that a limited number of Volume One of the FEATURE PLAYERS: STORIES BEHIND THE FACES is now in a second edition and ready for purchase. This long-out-of-print volume includes the lives and experiences of 40 performers, most of whom spent a portion of their career in Hollywood appearing in western features or TV shows. This Volume has additional pictures, film credit lists and updates and additional information that was not in the first printing for a number of those stars included. All 40 of the performers included are based on our personal interviews with them, except four by correspondence and four with the widow, brother, or children of the deceased actor. "What sets this apart from all other books," Boyd Magers of WESTERN CLIPPINGS writes, "is the fact these humorous, exciting stories are all based on personal interviews with the stars themselves. Mandatory reading for B-buffs." Those included in Volume One are: Peter Adams, Gregg Barton, Billy Barty, Lyle Bettger, Lane Bradford, Rand Brooks, Robert Brubaker, Olive Carey, Marion Carney, Virginia Christine, Tristram Coffin, Royal Dano, Jack Elam, Leif Erickson, Gene Evans, Fritz Feld, Terry Frost, Peter Hansen, Don Harvey, Myron Healey, George Keymas, Harry Lauter, George J. Lewis, Fred Libby, John Merton, Tom Monroe, Bradley Page, House Peters Jr., John Pickard, Rex Reason, Marshall Reed, Walter Reed, Henry Rowland, Richard Simmons, Mickey Simpson, Arthur Space, Robert Wilke, Morgan Woodward, and Hank Worden. $24.95 plus priority mail in US, $4.05; Canada and Mexico, $7.50; all other countries, $9.50. Please send orders to Tom and Jim Goldrup, PO Box 425, Ben Lomond, CA 95005. Also, Volume Four went into a second printing and is available in a limited supply at the same price. Volumes 2 and 3 are also available in a limited supply. Send SASE for list of those included. Volume 3 is also available on <Amazon.com>, as is our book, GROWING UP ON THE SET, based on interviews with 39 former child actors.

EPISODES

by Tom and Jim Goldrup

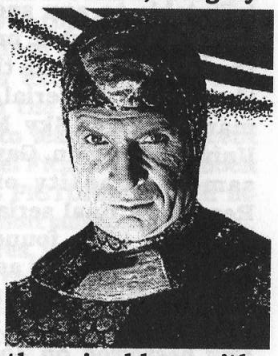
The world lost Tom Corbett and Tim Tyler when our friend Frankie Thomas passed away May 11. Frankie was born April 9, 1921, son of actors Frank and Mona Thomas. Outside of being carried on stage as a child anytime they needed a baby, Frankie's first professional job was by chance. "I was going to the professional children's school in New York," Frankie told us. "This was for kids who worked in the business, where the arrangements were that child performers could get away and do matinees. One day mother picked me up after school on her way to a casting call for a play called 'Carrie Nation'. The director, Blanche Yurka, said to mother, 'Mona, you are much too young for any part in this play.' Then she indicated towards me, standing in the doorway, and continued, 'but I can use the boy.' So I got my first job on Broadway by being at the right place at the right time, a happy combination which has served as the turning point in the careers of many performers. I was about nine and played a newsboy." This play didn't make theatrical history except it *was* the Broadway debut of a young actor named Jimmy Stewart. In those days there were a number of parts for children on the stage, and Frankie went from "Carrie Nation" to "Little 'Ol Boy'", the story of a reform school for juvenile delinquents. Robert Benchley, reviewing plays at that time, wrote "Possum is played by youthful Frankie Thomas, watch him." The next play Frankie did was "Thunder On The Left". "All three of these plays were flops," Frankie noted. Then came the turning point. "I was cast in the title role in 'Wednesday's Child' and everything changed." RKO bought the picture rights, and Frankie came out to Hollywood in '34, recreating the role in the film which was selected as one of the 10 best pictures of the year. This role made Frankie a star and from then on it was Broadway to Hollywood and the reverse. The following year he did "The First Legion" on stage, and then returned to Hollywood to film "Dog of Flanders" ('35) at RKO. At the close of filming "Dog of Flanders", Frankie's name went up in lights for the Broadway production of "Remember the Day". "I had the extreme pleasure of appearing with my father," Frankie told us. Afterwards, the Thomas family moved their headquarters to Hollywood, where Frankie appeared in about 30 films. There was "Boy's Town" ('38), "One Foot in Heaven" ('41), "Always in My Heart" ('42), the Nancy Drew series with Bonita Granville (a number of films based on the popular teen girl's books which turned into quite a hit), "Angels Wash Their Faces" ('39), and the serial "Tim Tyler's Luck" ('37). Speaking of being cast in the role of Tim Tyler, Frankie told us, "I remember when I was up for the job my agent brought over a copy of 'Wednesday's Child' and Henry MacRae (the producer) looked at it and said, 'Well, of course Tim Tyler is much older, but any kid that can act that way. What the hell, he can act,' and he signed me. He had never met me. The picture was a lot of fun. We worked at Universal in an elaborate jungle set on the backlot. They had cliffs that ran up three or four stories, all papier-



mâché. There was a girl who came every day when she had a chance to watch us shoot: Deanna Durbin. She was crazy about the jungle atmosphere." During World War II Frankie served as 3rd Officer in the US Coast Guard in the Atlantic, and afterwards returned to work on Broadway but found things were not all that good after the war. "There wasn't a way of making any money except radio, so I went into radio and that was very good to me. I did at least 1,500 shows before dramatic radio fell prey to TV." "Tom Corbett, Space Cadet" came into being in 1950. "'Corbett' was a little bit like 'Wednesday's Child'," Frankie said. "It was an instant success. From our first show it was all upbeat. By the second week the disk jockeys were picking up our space lingo: 'Go blow your jets,' 'Don't fuse your tubes,' and the byword of the show, 'Spaceman's Luck.' 'Tom' was as close to being an instant hit as you can get. In no time the secondary rights machinery ground into action. We added two half-hour radio shows a week and took on an extra Saturday half-hour on NBC, while our three-a-week ran on ABC. I don't know of any other show that ran on two networks at the same time. On weekends I was flying all over the country making personal appearances for the secondary rights. At the first of these in Philadelphia, there were 10,000 children plus parents in a line that stretched out through the store. We had *more* people in Boston and Detroit. Before we were through, there were over 160 items bearing the name of Tom Corbett. Everybody was happy." When Tom Corbett and the Polaris crew took their last flight into the unknown and the series went off the air after a five year run, Frankie retired from acting. "I decided to call it a day," he said. "I had experienced the best of the stage, motion pictures, radio and television during the best of times." Frankie kept busy writing 10 Sherlock Holmes novels and playing—and teaching—bridge. Tim Tyler/Tom Corbett—Frankie Thomas died on May 11, 2006, and was buried in his Space Cadet uniform next to his parents at Forest Lawn.

SERIAL HEAVIES

Emigrating to the U.S. from Russia in 1919, Gregory Gay's thick accent made him a natural to appear in serials, and features, as a villain. Born Gregory Grigoriovitc Gay October 10, 1900, in Hariarsk, Russia, he apparently arrived here with at least part of his family as a teenager, although his sister Tya Andy Lady (born circa 1903) did not come to the U.S. until October 1936. Gay attended college for two years before entering films in '28. His versatility and talent for accents landed him dozens of roles in major films such as "Dodsworth", "Charlie Chan at the Opera", "British Agent", "Three Musketeers", "Ninotchka" and "Casablanca"—some 46 pictures—before entering the Army in September '42, eventually becoming a warrant officer. Prior to WWII he appeared in his first serial, "The Secret Code" ('42 Columbia), as Nazi agent Felden. His film credits pick up again in late '44 in such titles as "The Purple Heart" and "I Love a Mystery". Gay continued to work steadily, eventually making the serial for which he is best remembered, Republic's "Flying Disc Man From Mars" ('50). Garbed in dark tights and a hood, Gay, as Martian invader



Mota, explained to his Earth contact (James Craven) that Earth is starting to experiment with atomic weaponry so Mars has elected to *help* Earth's progress with the new technology by conquering the planet and bringing it under the benevolent control of Mars. How thoughtful! In "Flying Disc Man" Gay portrays a pompous Mars-is-better-than-Earth attitude, employing yet another of his accents vague enough to not be attributable to any specific nationality. In '53 Republic promoted Gay to the Ruler of Mars in their 12 episode theatrical/TV serial/series, "Commando Cody, Sky Marshal of the Universe". Again, Gay employed the same pomposity of "Disc Man". Republic's final serial, "King of the Carnival" ('55), found Gay in a submerged submarine as expert printer Zorn working as counterfeiter for one of those anonymous foreign powers. Gay bestowed on Zorn an interesting mix of European superiority and whining cowardice constantly lording it over his two henchmen until his plans go awry, then starts complaining how it isn't fair that he's confined to the submarine. About this time, more of his roles tended to be in B-pictures and on TV although a few lesser (often uncredited) roles in A-films turned up. Fittingly, his final role in a 50 year career was in '79's "Meteor" as the Russian Premier. The Flying Disc Man died August 23, 1993, in Studio City, CA. (Thanx in part to research by Evy Patrick.)

ON THE SERIAL BOOKSHELF

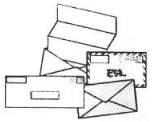
In SR Ch. 57 we inadvertently left off the ordering address for Ken Weiss' excellent A MOVIE LOVER'S SCRAPBOOK (pg. 17). Please order from Ken Weiss, 17 Old Orchard Rd., New Rochelle, NY 10804.

CHAPTER 13

Longtime friends Jan Merlin and Frankie Thomas, co-stars of "Tom Corbett, Space Cadet".
(Photo courtesy Doug Chapin.)

FRANKIE THOMAS, 85, star of Universal's "Tim Tyler's Luck" ('37) serial as well as TV's "Tom Corbett, Space Cadet" in the '50s, died May 11 of respiratory failure at a Sherman Oaks, CA, hospital. His co-star on "Corbett", Jan Merlin, who played wise-cracking Roger Manning, told SR, "Frankie was uniquely a memento of the last century's old Broadway, Hollywood, and serials...and the beginning of the TV age. I first saw him when I was about 12 years old, catching "Tim Tyler's Luck" on Saturdays at the movies. After the war, I ran into him again when we were hired to do the 'Tom Corbett, Space Cadet' series for TV. It was the beginning of a 56 year long friendship. He loved that series and that character role more than anything he'd done before, and wouldn't act again when the five year long run ended. He often stated, 'Nothing could ever be better than playing Tom Corbett.' In a curious way, he was still back in the '50s, always recalling those space episodes and radio scripts, and was happiest re-creating the old radio shows at festivals. He's part of the galaxies now, recasting some Corbett script with actors who've preceded him into the beyond. I hope the clapping of wings doesn't knock them all off the cloudy planets."

CY FEUER, 95, once composer and head of the music department at Republic during the late '30s and early '40s, died May 17 at his home in Manhattan, NY. Born in Brooklyn, Feuer attended New Utrecht High School, then Julliard where he studied music. Before joining Republic in '38 he played trumpet at Radio City Music Hall and other theaters. His tenure at Republic as department head and musical director was, according to late Republic historian Jack Mathis, "the beginning of the true emergence of Republic as a reckoning force in the domain of motion picture music." He was a "top notch administrator and talented arranger who had the uncanny knack of being able to sight-read a new piece of music and determine immediately the appropriateness to its applied visuals." Feuer joined the Army Air Force in mid-1942. In '47 he returned to New York where he became a producer for the Broadway stage for more than 50 years, producing such smashes as "Guys and Dolls", "Can-Can", "Silk Stockings", among others for which he won three Tony Awards. In 2003 he published his memoir, I GOT THE SHOW RIGHT HERE: THE AMAZING TRUE STORY OF HOW AN OBSCURE HORN PLAYER BECAME THE LAST GREAT BROADWAY SHOWMAN. His over 140 musical credits at Republic are two numerous to list, but include work on some 18 serials and 56 B-westerns.



SERIAL MAILBAG

SERIAL REPORT #57 posted the credits to "Son of the Guardsman" with a question mark for the person who played the "innkeeper". Some years back, I was told producer Sam Katzman *himself* took the part when the actor contracted to play the role didn't show up. I seem to remember hearing Katzman is seen in Chapter 1. The person who told this to a group of us at Cinesation was Herb Graff, a film historian extraordinaire who was profiled in the NEW YORKER. I was saddened to learn of the recent death of Michael Fitzgerald. His book on UNIVERSAL PICTURES, which included serials, short subjects, cartoons, as well as features, is a far more useful reference work compared to the more lavishly illustrated Hirschhorn book covering the same studio.

—Wayne Schutz, Cedar Lake, IN

Is this indeed rotund producer Sam Katzman as the Innkeeper (R) with Charlie King in Ch. 1 of Columbia's "Son of the Guardsman" ('46)? Very well could be!

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