



SERIAL REPORT

Chapter 63 Oct./Dec. 2007
In This Final Chapter:

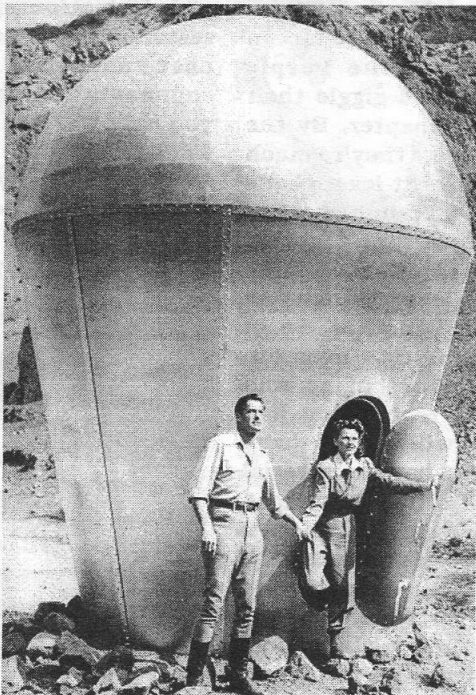
*Carol Forman; John Merton,
"Atom Man Vs. Superman"; "Black
Widow"; "Invisible Monster"; "Don
Daredevil Rides Again"; "Haunted
Island"; Warner Richmond and
much more...*

After 34 issues of SERIAL REPORT—we took over with Ch. 30 (July/Sept. '99)—it's time for us to climb in Brick Bradford's Time Top and move on. We regret it as much as do those of you still reading SR, but due to ever declining subscriptions and rising print/postage costs it is no longer economically feasible to continue, so this will be the final issue of SERIAL

REPORT. If you have remaining issues on your subscription, here are your options.

- 1) Do nothing and your remaining issues will be applied to a new (or existing) subscription to WESTERN CLIPPINGS.
- 2) Call (505) 292-0049 or email vidwest@comcast.net and request a partial refund for remaining issues.
- 3) Call or email request to apply remaining credit monies for a copy of our GENE AUTRY WESTERNS. Special price \$44ppd. (Normally \$49ppd.)

We do have many back issue copies



of SR in case you missed any. See ad this issue. We will be establishing a website this winter <www.westernclippings.com> Watch for it as it will carry some serial related news and columns along with western material. Bruce Dettman's "Cliffhanger Commentary" will be a regular feature along with "Columbia Cliffhanger Casts", Ch. 13

obituary notices, DVD news and more. Thanks for your support for 8½ years.



WORTH ANOTHER LOOK

by Ken Weiss

Well, we're at Chapter 15 and there doesn't seem to be a caped hero rushing to the scene to save the day. Too bad. But let's face it—we serial lovers are a vanishing breed. The culture has passed us by. Serials have been defunct for over 50 years, and not many young people are inclined or able to get into the spirit of '30s,

'40s and '50s chapterplays. All things change, nothing stays the same. Over the decades, through my affiliation with a summer camp, I've tried to introduce serials to youngsters (and, truth be told, there have been a few who seemed to be genuinely interested in serials and who, I hope, are now among the folks purchasing the many DVDs available). Most seven to ten year olds find "Flash Gordon" irresistible. Ten and eleven year olds consider "The Purple Monster" amusing and giggle their way through each chapter. By the time they're teenagers they're much too "old" for serials. At least that's what they think, although most of the action, adventure and horror films they go to see are little more than serials, with one cliffhanging situation following another. So in many ways the tradition lives on. Fortunately, for those of us who enjoy watching the real McCoy, just as Ilsa and Rick will always have Paris, we'll always have our serial tapes and DVDs. VCI has announced that they'll be releasing "Clancy of the Mounted," one of the famously-missing Universals, certainly big news for serial lovers. Which reminds me—in my last column I listed five reasons why we watch serials. I now realize there's a sixth reason, and probably the most significant: their convenience. Unlike a feature film, which should be seen in one sitting, you can watch one or two chapters of a serial and still have time left for a B movie. Since its inception SERIAL REPORT has regularly presented bits of information available from no other source. It's a valuable research tool. While a mass audience for serials may have vanished, there are still people both young and old who find them of interest. Any SR readers who have (relatively) complete sets of SR in its many forms over the decades are

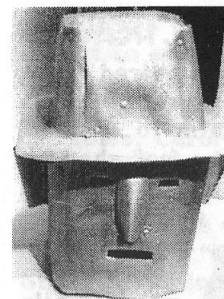
urged to donate or will them to their local library system. Future researchers will thank you. I'll be giving my set to the Library of Performing Arts at Lincoln Center. To keep in touch with the serial world, for those readers with computers, let me recommend the Serial Squadron website <serialsquadron.com> where you'll find lots of information about serials, new restorations of many of them and a chat room that encourages your comments and where any questions you have will be answered by people whose knowledge of serials puts me to shame. Finally, I want to thank Boyd for his heroic efforts in keeping SR alive for the past decade. If it hadn't been for his picking up the torch



many years ago, SR would have ceased to exist. I've enjoyed writing for SR, but for now, to quote a line much used in serials (usually by Charles King), "Let's get outta here."

A NEW FLASH

Sometimes TV should leave classics alone! The new Sci-Fi Channel's "Flash Gordon" series places a 21st Century spin on the Buster Crabbe Universal serials. Flash (nice guy track star Eric Johnson), Dale Arden (ex-girlfriend Gina Holden) and Dr. Zarkov (a grating, frantic Jody Racicot) are ordinary people who find themselves as Earth's last line of defense against the forces of Mongo's 'Ming the Lifeless' (John Ralston). Badly written, badly cast and produced on the cheap, this modern-day update is nothing more than a Flash-in-the-pan, and hopefully will be gone in a flash.



This robot head prop from Gene Autry's "Phantom Empire" is on display at the "Gene Autry and the 20th Century West"

exhibit at the Autry National Center museum in L.A.'s Griffith Park through January 13.

Actor Seth Rogen is slated to write and star as Brit Reid in the upcoming big-screen version of "The Green Hornet". We'll reserve judgement, but Rogen has thus far only appeared in teenage "comedies" such as "Knocked Up" and "The 40 Year Old Virgin". Created by George W. Trendle and Fran Striker in '36 for WXYZ radio, Detroit, Gordon Jones starred as "The Green Hornet" in the '39 13 ch. Universal serial. Warren Hull followed in '40 with 15 episodes of "The Green Hornet Strikes Again". Keye Luke was Kato in both serials. Van Williams and Bruce Lee starred in a color TV series in '66-'67.

Oops! In Ch. 62, pg. 1, a line at the end of Tommy Cook's comments was inadvertently omitted. It should read, "...I'll always be remembered as the first actor to play Little Beaver."

Cheat Endings!

At the conclusion of Ch. 11 of "Mystery of the Riverboat", in a violent storm, Robert Lowery's runaway bus crashes into a high voltage power pole—electrical arcs and flashes devastating the bus. However, in Ch. 12, the bus simply slides into the pole with no electrical reaction whatsoever.



SERIAL HEAVIES

Square-jawed, glint-eyed, huskily-built John Merton is easily remembered as Loki, the number one Dacoit, mindless slave of the evil oriental genius, in



As Gregory Pierce in "Dick Tracy Returns" ('38 Republic); a councilman suspected of being power-mad Don Del Oro in "Zorro's Fighting Legion" ('39 Republic); foreign spy-chief Baroda in "Radar Patrol Vs. Spy King" ('50 Republic); mad scientist Dr. Tymak in "Brick Bradford" ('47 Columbia); evil inventor Dr. Tobor in "Hop Harrigan" ('46 Columbia); gunman Kester in "The Lone Ranger" ('38 Republic); henchman Harris in "Zorro's Black Whip" ('44 Republic), traitorous Gregory Pierce in "Jack Armstrong" ('47 Columbia) and Ulric the invading Saxon King in "Adventures of Sir Galahad" ('49 Columbia). Along with portraying heavies in dozens of B-westerns, Merton filled in with small roles in other serials—"Red Rider" ('34 Universal), "Miracle Rider" ('35 Mascot), "Undersea Kingdom" ('36 Republic), "Fighting Devil Dogs" ('38 Republic), "Daredevils of

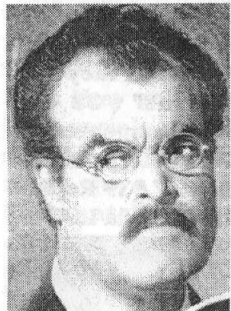
"Drums of Fu Manchu" ('40 Republic). Equally at home at Republic or Columbia, Merton was Champ Stark, meanest of rotten Pa Stark's five sons in "Jack Armstrong".



As Dr. Tymak in "Brick Bradford".

As Dr. Tymak in "Brick Bradford".

the Red Circle" ('39 Republic), "Green Hornet Strikes Again" ('41 Universal), "Sea Raiders" ('41 Universal), "Dick Tracy Vs. Crime Inc." ('41 Republic), "Don Winslow of the Navy" ('42 Universal—non-speaking role), "Adventures of the Flying Cadets" ('43 Universal), "Jungle Queen" ('45 Universal), "Brenda Starr, Reporter" ('45 Columbia), "Master Key" ('45 Universal), "Who's Guilty" ('45 Columbia) and "Son of the Guardsman" ('46 Columbia). Some 27 serials over 15 years! To many, he was an ideal villain as his ramrod-straight bearing and grim expression lent evil authority to his roles. Myrtleland F. LaVarre was born February 18, 1901, in Seattle, WA. Raised on the east coast with three brothers, Myrtleland served in the Navy during WWI, making 13 trips across the Atlantic to France. After the war he landed in New York with the Theatre Guild, soon performing on Broadway and up and down the eastern seaboard with various stock companies. After a few films circa '26-'27 at Paramount's Astoria Pictures on Long Island, he came west with his family to Hollywood. Chosen for a bit in "Cleopatra" ('34), it was Cecil B. DeMille who suggested a name change to John Merton. He worked steadily until the '50s when it became increasingly difficult to find employment in pictures. He drove a truck for a wholesale supply company, then landed work circa '56 in negative cutting as an IATSE technician at MGM. One of the best of the serial heavies, John Merton died of a heart attack September 18, 1959, at his Coldwater Canyon, CA, home.



As Baroda in "Radar Patrol Vs. Spy King".

As Baroda in "Radar Patrol Vs. Spy King".



SERIAL HEAVIES

Raven-haired Carol Forman's main claim to fame is the fact she was one of the first villainesses in sound serials. Villainy was Carol's forté as her sexy, bewitching beauty belied her seductive evil intentions.

Carol (real name Carolyn Sawls) was born June 19, 1918, in Epps, AL, but raised in Livingston, AL. Her father, an attorney, died when she was 9, so Carol was primarily raised by her mother. Wanting to be an actress since childhood, the 5' 6" brown-eyed Carol availed herself of every opportunity to participate in school dramatics. Making arrangements for Carol to board with and study under a singing teacher in Hollywood, Carol's mother allowed her daughter to head west after graduation. She also took drama lessons, eventually performing with a theatrical company. From there she was selected by an RKO talent scout for a small role in Joan Fontaine's "From This Day Forward" ('46). And, from that day forward, through the mid-'50s, Carol worked in film after film, including several westerns with James Warren and Tim Holt while under contract to RKO. In '47 she embodied the role of Sombra, "The Black Widow" for Republic. The part of an evil Asian ruler's daughter out to steal atomic secrets was tailor-made for the beguiling Forman. The following year she was lunar Queen Khana in Columbia's "Brick Bradford". Also in '48 as the evil Spider Lady in Columbia's "Superman", she proved to be an able an-

tagonist for the man of steel as she sought to steal a reducer ray with which she plotted to rule the world. Unable to escape typecasting in bad-girl roles, Carol was the beautiful nationalist Nila, one of the main conspirators in an infamous organization known as Underworld Inc. in Republic's "Federal Agents Vs. Underworld Inc." ('49). With Roy Barcroft at her side, she ruthlessly murders anyone in her way as she seeks the famous Golden Hands of Kurigal. Her adversary was again Kirk Alyn, sans his Superman costume. For Carol's last serial she was once again teamed opposite Kirk Alyn as "Blackhawk" ('52 Columbia). As mysterious and lovely female sabotage chief Laska, Carol is a foreign agent working for an unidentified boss known only as The Leader. After a few more small roles on TV, Carol basically retired from the screen to concentrate on her third marriage, this one to William Dennis, an associate director with Russell Hayden Productions. After Dennis died circa '79, Carol was a guest at the 1984 Memphis Film Festival. Never to be forgotten, this set of evil but vivacious women in five pulse-pounding cliffhangers award Carol screen immortality.



Forman as The Spider Lady gives George Meeker instructions in "Superman".



CLIFFHANGER COMMENTARY

by Bruce Dettman

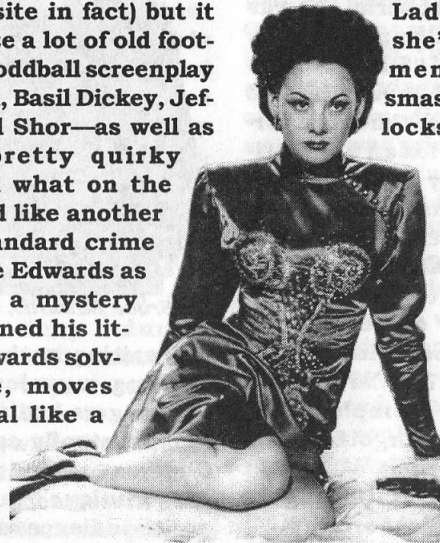
In the waning days of the serial, with the studio system tottering on its last arthritic legs and unwilling to spend much on this dying cinematic genre, and the infant-terrible,



Bruce Edwards, Virginia Lindley.

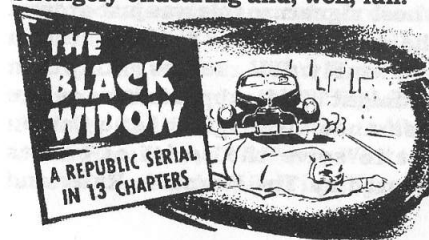
TV, waiting in the wings to flex its growing muscles, the makers of cliffhangers had several options before eventually calling it quits. The first was to come up with something new, a unique character or theme to excite audiences and make them forget the tried and true serial formula. A good example of this would be the creation of the Rocketman character who appeared in various incarnations in four different Republic chapterplays ("King of the Rocketmen", "Radar Men of the Moon", "Zombies of the Stratosphere" and "Commando Cody, Sky Marshal of the Universe"). Another cost-cutting device was to integrate as much pre-existing footage from old serials into new products as possible so fewer scenes, particularly those expensive ones requiring action setups and often costly miniatures and models, would not have to

be newly filmed. The third idea, undoubtedly spearheaded by writers who had pretty much run out of traditional concepts and exhausted most conventional plotlines (well, conventional as far as serials were concerned), was to totally lay aside logic, to try anything that might come to mind...to go for broke, as it were. "Black Widow", produced by Republic in '47, and helmed by the directorial combination of Spencer Bennet and Fred Brannon, did not create any new characters or give audiences an exciting hero to root for (just the opposite in fact) but it certainly did utilize a lot of old footage—thanks to an oddball screenplay by Franklin Adreon, Basil Dickey, Jeffrey Duffy and Sol Shor—as well as introducing a pretty quirky storyline beneath what on the surface just looked like another in the studio's standard crime cliffhangers. Bruce Edwards as hero Steven Colt, a mystery writer who has turned his literary sleuthing towards solving a real crime, moves through this serial like a snail on valium. He exudes absolutely no energy or pizzazz of any sort and reminds me of my junior high school vice-principal Mr. Kranz who should have taught a class on narcolepsy. It's very difficult to watch this somnambulistic character lazily interrogate some bad guy and then, thanks to Tom Steele's stunt work, instantly be transformed into a kinetic barroom brawler with the metabolism of a hummingbird. Just doesn't quite jell. On the other hand, co-star Virginia Lindley (other times billed as Lee) (SR Ch. 62, pg. 19) as reporter Joyce Winters, is spunky with a peppy personality who, in addition, exudes a kind of mild contempt for the literary criminologist



turned shamus (with derision she often refers to him as "Sherlock") but this doesn't seem to bother him. Little does. The bad guys (and a gal) are an improvement and on occasion I almost found myself rooting for them instead. First up is Carol Forman as Sombra. Now, as readers of SR might be aware, I was not much of a fan of Forman's performance in Columbia's "Superman" serial where, in her Barbara Stanwyck "Double Indemnity" blonde wig and evening gown, she appeared pretty ridiculous as the main villainess, the Spider Lady. Here, however, she's a vast improvement. Looking quite smashing with her dark locks and eye-pleasing tight Oriental dress, she projects a commendable sense of contempt and indifference at the plight of all those she attempts to destroy at the request of her father, world-conquering wannabe King Hitomu who she regularly calls upon via a scientific gizmo, a sort of matter transporter. She's one of Republic's better female villains, and as I said, looks quite fetching as well. Her father is portrayed by sometime actor Theodore Gottlieb who had an oddball career in his own right. I saw him interviewed years later under the name Brother Theodore when, as a comedian, he was doing standup work and also professed to having certain occult powers. For awhile he showed up periodically on the David Letterman show. In any case, despite his grandiose plans of taking over the world, provided he lay his hands on a newly developed rocket engine, the

diminutive and rather fierce looking actor has little to do in the serial except appear for a few moments in most every episode seated on a throne wearing what appears to an Arabian Nights costume to bark orders at Sombra. Using a phony mind reading business as a front, the obedient offspring—who sometimes uses spider venom to rid herself of adversaries—attempts, rarely with success, to carry out his various missions and devilish plans with the help of henchman Anthony Warde. Other cast members include the always reliable I. Stanford Jolley, Forrest Taylor, Sam Flint, Ernie Adams, Gene Roth, the beautiful Ramsey Ames and Keith Richards. Like most of the later Republic efforts, this one relies heavily on a great deal of studio stock footage from earlier cliffhangers but that's a given at this point. Anytime you spot the familiar coupe you know you're in for a lot of old shots. Speaking of automobiles, this gang has their's equipped with a nifty little special feature which allows them to change the color of their car by the mere touch of a switch which ejects a spray of paint changing the color of the vehicle. Why the paint does not also cover the windshield and tires is not revealed. Despite the tepid hero who makes one yearn for the likes of Charles Quigley, Kane Richmond, Ralph Byrd and others, there's something mildly entertaining about this serial. It's certainly not up there with the great ones, but its screwy premise and characters, capable cast and willingness to suspend all sense of logic and belief makes it kind of amusing, strangely endearing and, well, fun.



CLASSIFIED ADS

(10¢ a word, Address on cover)

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Tom and Jim Goldrup present their four volumes of FEATURE PLAYERS: STORIES BEHIND THE FACES. Each volume consists of 40 interviews with actors and actresses from the movies, serials and TV shows we all loved. They tell of their entrance into the film business, humorous and exciting experiences that happened before and behind the cameras, and what they have done after their careers were over. Each book also includes motion picture credits and photographs for each of the 40 performers included. Some of those included who performed in serials are Tristram Coffin, Gregg Barton, Harry Lauter, George J. Lewis, Walter Reed, Henry Rowland, Richard Simmons, Terry Frost, Bradley Page, House Peters Jr., Robert Wilke, Don Harvey, John Pickard, Virginia Christine, Myron Healey, Duane Grey, Phyllis Coates, Don Haggerty, John Archer, Lois Hall, Bill Kennedy, John Doucette, Lyle Talbot, Ross Elliott, Pierce Lyden, Richard Emory, Marion Shilling, Tommy Farrell, Steve Mitchell, John Hart, George Wallace, Peggy Stewart, Evelyn Finley, Billy Benedict, John Crawford, Joe Haworth and Sam Edwards. Also included are Lane Bradford, John Merton, Marshall Reed, Keith Richards and Arthur Space, for whom we interviewed the next of kin to the deceased actor (child or sibling). All others are based on personal interviews with the performer. If interested in any of the above volumes, please send check to Tom Goldrup at P.O. Box 425, Ben Lomond, CA 95005 or email tjgoldrup@sasquatch.com for any questions. The price for Volume One and Volume Four is \$24.95 each, and \$20 each for either Volume Two or Three. Priority mail in U.S. \$4.60 per book; Canada and Mexico \$7.50. Elsewhere priority mail is \$9.50.





CLIFFHANGER COMMENTARY

by Bruce Dettman

Invisibility has long fascinated filmgoers harkening back to 1931 when Universal director James Whale opted to follow-up his classic production of "Frankenstein" with a cinematic adaptation of British author H.G. Wells' tremendously popular novel "The Invisible Man" starring then unknown Claude Rains. A series of predictable and unremarkable sequels followed culminating with the "Transparent One" having a not altogether successful run-in with comedians Bud Abbott and Lou Costello. Other non-Universal Invisible Men also showed up through the years from competing film companies including "The Body Disappears" and "The Amazing Transparent Man" up to the recent "Hollow Man" with Kevin Bacon. There were even three separate TV series built around an invisible protagonist. Not



Aline Towne, Richard Webb.

surprising then that the popular gimmick of invisibility would eventually wind up in a cliffhanger as a central theme (invisibility had already been explored briefly in other serials such as "Flash Gordon") in 1950's "The Invisible Monster" produced by Republic and directed by Fred C. Brannon with a script by Ronald Davidson. This character (portrayed by the always slightly creepy Stanley Price), never referenced in the script as "The Invisible Monster", is actually

referred to as *The Phantom Ruler* (or P.R. for short as when his lackeys call him over the car radio—"Calling P.R."). He's a bad guy customer, who has perfected a beam (which when trained on a chemically treated costume makes him look something like a Muslim woman) of his own design that renders him invisible. Problem is the beam in question must be aimed at him via a kind of spotlight (and in fact, the thing is indeed nothing more than a modified studio light) controlled by one of his thuggish accomplices. This rather limits *The Phantom Ruler's* movements. One would think his anonymity was in jeopardy, after all being followed around all the time by a guy in a truck with a huge spotlight is kind of a giveaway, but I guess this was a work in progress. In any case, the Phantom Ruler's intent is to finance the creation of an army of invisible soldiers. To accumulate funds he must commit a lot of local crimes, burglaries, robberies and such, and is aided not only by his

henchmen, Lane Bradford and John Crawford, but by four illegal European immigrants (sans any discernable accents) whose professional skills he requires for his heists and who he is blackmailing into aiding his cause. Richard Webb, whose signature role was just around the corner when he took the lead in the early TV series "Captain Midnight" ('54), appears here as ace insurance investigator Lane Carson out to solve the series of crimes created by *The Phantom Ruler* and



Invisible Monster Stanley Price gives directions to henchies John Crawford and Lane Bradford.

his minions. For most of the serial, however, he hasn't a clue regarding the invisibility factor, thinking these are just routine thefts. Webb's a bit on the stiff and disinterested side—even for a one-dimensional serial hero—and doesn't seem to have a great deal of enthusiasm for the role as he seemed to when he later played *Midnight*, but he's physically acceptable. Backing him up, and I mean this literally as far as lots of the action goes, is pistol-packing Aline Towne as Carol Richards, his assistant even though they get off to a rocky start when he questions her involvement ("Isn't that a rather unusual job for a woman?"). While during the various slugfests, she usually ends up being knocked out, she is more than ready, willing and able to join in when lead is being traded and is often seen backing up Webb with her revolver. Towne was a likable, pretty and capable actress who appeared in numerous Republic serials in the dying days of the cliffhanger. Other members of the cast include stuntmen extraordinaire Dale Van Sickel, Tom Steele and Dave Sharpe as well as John Crawford, George Meeker, Marshall Reed, Ed Parker, Bud Wolfe and (uncredited) John Hamilton, TV's Perry White, as one of the blackmailed immigrants.

"The Invisible Monster", like so many serials produced during the waning days of the serial, is no more formulaic than any other late cliffhanger—relying on lots of stock footage from earlier chapterplays, some of it not matching terribly well—yet there is something tired and particularly arthritic about it. Everyone seems to just be going through the motions knowing the fate

of this sort of entertainment was a foregone conclusion. Fred C. Brannon could be a competent if pedestrian helmsman, but this time around there's little energy or pizzazz coming through. Everything is as predictable as an "I Love Lucy" repeat. It's serviceable at best and downright boring most of the other time. A real *Invisible Monster* might have spruced up things a bit, but I'm afraid *only* a bit.



What an odd one-sheet, playing up henchman John Crawford over hero Webb or even The Invisible Monster.

Cheat Endings!

At the conclusion of Ch. 7 of "Mystery Squadron", the Black Ace's men surround Bob Steele at a mine. The Black Ace proclaims, "This is your finish," and shots ring out. However, in Ch. 8, the shots are ignored, unheard; Bob is simply captured.



CLIFFHANGER COMMENTARY

by Bruce Dettman

When, thanks to Walt Disney acquiring the trademark name Zorro for his own weekly series which would end up being put on the back burner for a couple of years, Republic had to make a decision on whether to simply retire the character—who for so long had been such a staple of their western cliffhangers—or just drop the moniker and reinvent the mythology behind the old costume, it wasn't hard to figure out which route the budget conscious company would take. In truth, the only legitimate Zorro serial the studio had ever produced had been '39's "Zorro's Fighting Legion", with the remainder of their Zorro franchise being devoted to the sons, grandsons, and other relatives of the original character (with one outing, "Zorro's Black Whip", not even mentioning the name or featuring an actual family decedent, employing only the name in the title). What did it really matter then, particularly given the last dying gasps of the cliffhanger in the '50s, if the Zorro trade name was sacrificed so the mask could live again? The result of this decision was "Don Daredevil Rides Again", a 12 chapter western cliffhanger directed by Fred C. Brannon and written by Ronald Davidson, which brought the familiar black duds out of mothballs while

at the same time adding several new wrinkles to this story of a masked avenger in the Wild West. When an old Spanish land grant is determined to be a forgery, a group of ranchers are in danger of losing their property to local political boss Roy Barcroft who has his men attempt—by any means possible—to stake out mineral claims and homesteads on their land. Resisting this is Aline Towne, granddaughter of the original owner of Doyle Ranch and neighbor Robert Einer. Things are looking pretty grim for them until Aline's lawyer, cousin Ken Curtis, shows up from the East and circumvents Barcroft's plans by filing on Aline's behalf for the property. There're still other ranchers in a vulnerable position, however, and Barcroft wastes no time in going after them. In an attempt to curtail his felonious schemes, Ken, at the urging of crusty old foreman Hank Patterson, decides to impersonate Don Daredevil, a character created by his grandfather some 40 years before, a fact which initially makes some of the bad guys and locals wonder if this isn't actually the ghost of the masked rider. Interestingly enough, the Daredevil gear apparently includes the same guns the original masked rider used which, given the date of the historical period of this serial, would indicate six shooters were employed in the 1840s. Don't think so. Oh, well, a minor detail. In truth, this is anything but a remarkable or standout serial. There's a huge amount of old footage, much of it derived from earlier Republic/Zorro outings, the cliffhangers are exactly what one would expect in the limiting confines of a western time frame and setting (numerous plunges off cliffs, fires, explosions in line shacks, etc.) and you can always see what's coming a good mile away. Yet, perhaps because of the memories it somehow stirs of

older and better days of the cliffhanger, the likable cast and yes, that old much put-upon Zorro costume, "Don Daredevil", for those not expecting anything but an entertaining ride, can be diverting and even fun. Ken Curtis (who seems to be wearing an old Allan Lane getup), years before he would assume the role of grizzled old Festus on TV's long-running "Gunsmoke", is a rather slender hero to be tangling with the likes of bad guys Roy Barcroft, Lane Bradford and John Cason, but he somehow pulls it off. He's more of a thinking man's serial hero than most and seems to resort to his Don Daredevil alter ego only as a last resort. Not always the most accurate shot (in fact, until the last episode no one in this serial seems to be able to hit the proverbial broadside of a barn) he also gets himself in trouble not watching where he is going while galloping along, subsequently colliding with a sturdy tree branch which knocks him to the ground and places him at the mercy of one of the villains. However, I did like the scene where he gets wind of the fact the fastest gun in the west (Dale Van Sickle) is looking for him. Instead of trying the impossible and outdrawing the gunman, he tosses his own gun away and instead beats him in a fist fight. Speaking of fighting, although stuntmen such as Tom Steele (also seen briefly as an outlaw as is Dave Sharpe) can clearly be glimpsed at work, the actors seem to be doing much more of the action work than usual. Old pros Bradford, Barcroft and Cason (above right) are always up to their villainous tasks and, aside from a few nameless/faceless cronies who appear just long enough to be sacrificed (therefore not



needing much of a paycheck from Republic), it's these three that Don Daredevil mostly has to contend with. In addition, the cast includes I. Stanford Jolley (as perhaps the most overtly corrupt sheriff of all times), Lee Phelps, Michael Ragan and Guy Teague. Uncredited, Jack Ingram and Bud Osborne show up as bartenders. Again, you'll never find "Don Daredevil Rides Again" on any list of great serials, but it does have its moments, some good performances and its own fans as well. And just as you can't keep a good man down, the mask wasn't finished yet and would return three years later in "Man With the Steel Whip". But that's another story.

Cheat Endings!

At the end of Ch. 2 of "Don Daredevil Rides Again", in full view, Ken (Don Daredevil) Curtis is shot atop a cliff as he begins to mount his horse. He falls over the cliff. In Ch. 3, from his horse we see him grab onto a rope that wasn't there before.

D'ja know:

Actor Cyril Delevanti ("Red Barry", "Smilin' Jack", others) was the father-in-law of Universal serial director/producer Ford Beebe. (Thanks to Hal Polk.)

SILENT THRILLS



Universal's "Haunted Island" ('28) mixed a den of pirates, buried treasure, a mysterious flyer (above with star Jack Daugherty), an alligator pit, a giant gorilla and even some western adventure into a thrill-packed 10 chapter serial we all wish wasn't among the missing. Frank R. Adams' original story, "Pleasure Island", was first filmed by Universal as "The Brass Bullet", an 18 chapter Ben Wilson-produced cliffhanger in 1918 starring Jack Mulhall and Juanita Hansen. For "Haunted Island" Jack Daugherty starred as Jerry Fitzjames, a young man coming to the aid of lovely but beleaguered Rosalind Joy (Helen Foster). The girl has inherited the ill-named Pleasure Island, a haunted atoll complete with buried treasure also desired by an evil uncle (Al Ferguson). The uncle and his henchmen do their level best to separate the girl from her inheritance. In the end, however, Rosalind's birthright is saved not so

much by the chivalrous Jerry but by a mystery hero known only as The Phantom Rider. Born Virgil A. Dougherty in Bowling Green, MO, November 16, 1895, he attended Paris University in France, then entered motion pictures in 1920 after performing several years on the stage. "Haunted Valley" was his first serial in '23 for Pathé. Universal saw his potential and quickly signed Jack to star in seven more serials—"Iron Man" ('24), "Fighting Ranger" ('25), "Scarlet Streak" ('25), "Radio Detective" ('26), "Fire Fighters" ('27), "Trail of the Tiger" ('27) and "Haunted Island" ('28). He also starred in two-reel westerns for Universal in '23-'24 as well as appearing in some non-western features. His Universal days ending as sound neared, Jack co-starred with Jack Perrin in Mascot's silent serial "The Vanishing West" ('28). His starring days over, he appeared (usually uncredited) in 16 talkies through 1938 including Gene

Autry's "Yodelin' Kid From Pine Ridge" ('37) and "Charlie Chan on Broadway". He was now often billed as Jack Dougherty, the correct spelling of his last name. Obviously discouraged over a waning career at 42, he committed suicide by carbon monoxide poisoning on May 16, 1938. He'd previously been married to actresses Virginia Browne Faire and Barbara La Marr. "Haunted Island" was the only serial for leading lady Helen Foster (1906-1982).



SERIAL CLIPPINGS

"The Whispering Shadow" finds Bela Lugosi "never had a part better written for his unique style. This is essentially a silent movie serial that talks." Hank Davis' review in BIG REEL (Sept./Oct. '07). **SCOOPE** online newsletter (8/17) remembered "Commando Cody" and added a few notes of trivia. **Article** on aviation comic strips ("Terry and the Pirates", "Smilin' Jack" etc.) in AIR FORCE MAGAZINE (7/07). Many illustrations. (Thanx to Cash Stanley.)



COLUMBIA CLIFFHANGER CASTS



Actor	Character
Kirk Alyn	Clark Kent/Superman
Noel Neill	Lois Lane
Lyle Talbot	Lex Luthor/Atom Man
Tommy Bond	Jimmy Olsen
Pierre Watkin	Perry White
Jack Ingram	Foster
Don Harvey	Albert
Rusty Wescoatt	Carl

Terry Frost	Baer
Wally West	Dorr
Paul Stader	Killer Lawson (Ch. 1-4)
George Robotham	Earl, Planet TV Cameraman (Ch. 10, 11, 12)
William Fawcett	Mayor (Ch. 7)
Stanley Blystone	Man in Street (Ch. 1)
Fred Kelsey	Police Chief (Ch. 5, 13, 14)
??	#1 (Ch. 1)
??	Policeman #1 (Ch. 1)
??	Policeman #2 (Ch. 1)
Charlie King	Luthor assistant (Ch. 1)
??	Luthor assistant (Ch. 1)
??	Man at Bridge #1 (Ch. 1)
??	Man at Bridge #2 (Ch. 1)
??	Policeman at Fire (Ch. 1)
??	Jeweler (Ch. 1)
??	Policeman w/Jeweler (Ch. 1)
Frank Ellis	Man (Ch. 1)
Tommy Farrell	Rescue Observer #2 (Ch. 2)
??	Rescue Observer #1 (Ch. 2)
Hugh Prosser	Henchman (Ch. 2)
??	Daily Planet Blonde Receptionist (Ch. 2, 4, 8, 15)
??	Car Thug #1 (Ch. 2)
??	Car Thug #2 (Ch. 2)
Frank Ellis	Phony Photographer (Ch. 3)
??	Photographer Thug (Ch. 3)
??	Miss Smith (Ch. 3)
??	Oil Field Worker #1 (Ch. 3)
??	Oil Field Worker #2 (Ch. 3)
John Hart	Car Thug (Ch. 3)
??	Car Thug #2 (Ch. 3)

??	Prof. Stone (Ch. 3, 4)
??	Plutonium Detective (Ch. 5)
??	Train Customer (Ch. 5)
??	Policeman (Ch. 5)
??	Paper Boy (Ch. 5)
??	Lab Asst. (Ch. 6)
??	Taylor (Ch. 6)
??	Harris, Janitor (Ch. 7)
??	Gangster, Cave Guard (Ch. 8)
Rick Vallin	Power Co. Worker #1 (Ch. 9)
??	Power Co. Worker #2 (Ch. 9)
Rick Vallin	Radio Voice Commentator (Ch. 9, 15)
Pierce Lyden	Garland (Ch. 9)
Tommy Farrell	Briggs (Ch. 9)
??	Farmer on Street (Ch. 10)
Wes Hudman	Payroll bandit #1 (Ch. 10)
??	Payroll bandit #2 (Ch. 10)
??	Police Officer (Ch. 10)
Chuck Roberson	Canyon Policeman (Ch. 11, 12, 14)
??	Eddie, TV truck driver (Ch. 11, 12)
Stanley Blystone	Night Watchman interviewee (Ch. 12)
??	Newspaper Boy (Ch. 12)
??	Luthor's Lookout (Ch. 14)
??	Delivery Messenger (Ch. 15)
??	Policeman (Ch. 15)

(Cast compiled by Boyd Magers.)

Producer Sam Katzman had so much success with "Superman" in '48, that he brought the primary cast back for another 15 chapters, actually the better of the two serials due in part

to nastier villainy from Lyle Talbot as Lex Luthor. Also much of Alyn's smug demeanor as Superman in the first serial is gone, replaced by a more heroic attitude. Still present, however, are the cheaply done animated flying sequences which don't hold a candle to Republic's "Adventures of Captain Marvel" or "King of the Rocketmen". Ch. 7 here contains stock footage of Superman's origin from the first serial.

Here are additional Columbia Cliffhanger Cast notes to past issues, and observations from researcher Hal Polk.

SR Ch. 37:

John Fostini	Hurst
Edgar Barrier	Voice of The Recorder

(Note: Cop in Ch. 1 is *not* Rodney Hildebrant.)

SR Ch. 41:

Richard Cramer	Voice of the Octopus
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SR Ch. 45:

Gary Garrett's (Haines) film career seems to have lasted for one year (1947) but he made at least 9 Monogram westerns with Wakely and Brown. I don't know what else he did at Columbia besides "Jack Armstrong". Frank Marlo's career is more extensive than one at first imagines. He was Frank *Marlowe* in "Adventures of Capt. Marvel", "Tiger Woman", "Federal Operator 99" and "Jesse James Rides Again" at Republic, and Frankie *Marlow* in a 1944 Universal B, "Murder in the Blue Room". I think he "disappeared" after '47. His credits are hard to determine because there was *another* Frank Marlowe in bit parts from the '30s to the '50s. This older Marlowe was a mechanic in "Gangbusters" serial at Universal, Dorothy Malone's father in "The Bushwhackers", and the bartender in "Johnny Guitar" among many parts. This is probably why the "Jack Armstrong" Marlo

changed his spelling. Jack Buchanan doubled John Hart, as well as Charles Middleton in Ch. 15. Ken Terrell does a backward flip from a moving truck in Ch. 15.

SR Ch. 51:

Eddie Woods	Lt. Kurtz (not Sigurd Tor as listed)
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Franklyn Farnum	Guard
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SR Ch. 52:

Ted Oliver	Marshall (Ch. 1-11) (Not Davidson Clark as listed)
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Filmcraft reissued many of the Universal serials. In the final chapter of "Don Winslow of the Navy" it appears that the demise of the Scorpion's agents in the submarine scene may have been edited out. Scene shows Winslow placing captured agents (John Litel, John Holland, Lane Chandler) in a holding room. Cut next to Navy ship above sea sending down a torpedo to blow up the (Scorpion) sub. (Navy unaware Winslow and friends are aboard and have captured sub). Next shot Winslow (Don Terry) at door of holding room saying, "Poor devils." It's as if he never moved from the door after placing the agents in the room! This was the same way it was shown years ago on PBS' "Matinee at the Bijou". Did Filmcraft edit for violent content?

SR Ch. 56, pg. 10:

George Eldredge was also Prof. Marsden in Ch. 1 of "The Monster and the Ape" ('45 Columbia). He and Prof. Haines (John Elliott) are murdered by the ape hidden in the back seat of their car.

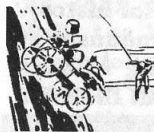
SR Ch. 61, pg. 13:

Ernie Adams' *smallest* serial role has to be as a purple death victim in Ch. 1 of "Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe". A doctor (Ed Mortimer) rushes to a body prone in the street and proclaims him dead. The dead

man is Ernie!

And a question...

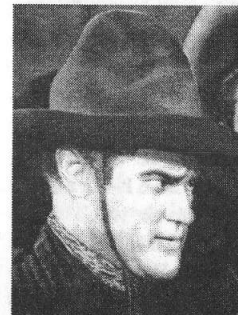
Can anyone give info on a serial that seems made just for television in the early days of TV when serials on TV were a big thing—"Kimbar of the Jungle" starring Steve Reeves in an early role with James Craven, Chester Clute and Virginia Hewitt. Incredibly cheap looking with the "Lion Men" in dime store Halloween costume garb. Only Ch. 1 seems to be available. Were more made or was this just a "pilot"?



EPISODES

by Tom and Jim Goldrup

Warner Richmond's portrayal of the evil Sharkey in "The Lost Jungle" ('34) and of the villainous Rab in "Phantom Empire" ('35) has placed him in the rolls of classic serial villainy. He also appeared in "Fighting Marines" ('35), "Secret of Treasure Island" ('38), "Flash Gordon's Trip to Mars" ('38) and "Oregon Trail" ('39). Born Werner Paul Raetzmann January 11, 1886, possibly in Racine, WI, he was raised on his parents' farm in Culpepper Co., VA. The family consisted of his parents, four brothers and two sisters. His oldest brother, Eweld, remained a farmer while his youngest brother, Paul, went on to become a member of the security force at the White House. Will, one of the middle brothers, was considered one of the youngest horse drivers at the time, later working for Virginia Farms.



The fourth brother, Alfred, was a real cowboy appearing in a number of films for about seven years beginning in 1919. During World War I

there was a lot of animosity toward the Germans, and as the family name was Raetzmann, both Al and Warner had their name changed to Richmond. Being raised in Virginia gave Warner a terrific interest in the South and the Civil War. As a child he was an athlete and also worked on the family farm, learning to ride horses very well as a boy. Warner attended prep school, and afterwards went to West Point, but flunked out. He wasn't too good in math, but it was during this time he developed his feelings for history. In later years he wrote a manuscript for a book he was hoping to have published called **THE MAN IN GREY**



Warner Richmond and Clyde Beatty face off in Mascot's "Lost Jungle" ('34).

that dealt with the Civil War. Unfortunately, it was never completed. An early job Warner held was that of a brakeman on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. Pulling the wrong switch one day he spilled a whole pile of railroad rails right in the yard and was fired. Warner loved attending theatre before he ever became an actor and was very impressed by an old stage actor's performance of Robert E. Lee. It was such a great piece of acting, he decided that was what he wanted to do and obtained work with various stock companies and learned the craft. Under the name Werner Richmond he was cast as Frank Powers

in "The Greatest Thing in Life" at the Fulton Stock Company in Lincoln, NE. He soon changed his name to Warner Richmond, and this is how he's remembered from countless motion picture credits. Warner moved about quite a bit, residing in Kentucky, Virginia and New York, but it was in the latter spot he received most of his theatre work, as well as work in silent movies out of New York in the old Vitagraph Studios. Warner met and married Felice Rose, an actress, whose mother, Mary Standish Rose, started the Vagabond Players in Baltimore, MD. Warner appeared with Dorothy Gish and Owen Moore in 1916's "Betty of

Greystone" directed by Allan Dwan. In those days, film companies in New York had the choice of filming either in Florida or California during the winter. California won due to a greater variety of scenery. Warner's role in the 1921 classic "Tol'able David" with Richard Bartle mess brought him to the attention of both movie makers and film audiences. In those

days actors usually performed their own stunts. One example of this was when Warner starred in '23's "Man from Glengarry" filmed on location in Ottawa, Canada. One of the scenes called for Warner to go out on the logs of a rushing river to rescue the heroine. Agile and always physically fit, he was able to do these sorts of stunts. When the film was released the review stated, "Whether you have read the book or not you'll enjoy this exceptional photoplay. You'll want to see Warner P. Richmond in the title role and the death grapple with the bully of the rival camp. Also the thrilling rescue as he risks his life to

save his sweetheart who's being swept into the rapids." In those days film companies used to go to actual locations because they didn't have sound stages; they didn't need sound. Among Warner's close friends were the Moore brothers, Tom, Matt and Owen. It was Tom who talked Warner into coming out to the west coast to take up permanent residence, staying at the Hollywood Athletic Club until his wife and young son joined him. Warner went right to work in Hollywood for Warner Bros. where he did most of his earlier work. Strangely enough he never went under contract with anybody; preferring to freelance; it gave him more flexibility. He also worked some for RKO, Columbia and MGM. The final silent Warner appeared in was "The Apache" ('29). An accident occurred on the set as Warner was sitting down pretty close to a lamp. Instead of the electrician coming over and unplugging it, he jerked on it, tipping it over. Warner put his arms over his face, but it cut him. It took 21 stitches but he finished the picture with his hands in his pockets because he had bandages on them. Warner and his family purchased a colonial style home in Toluca Lake where Warner engaged in his favorite pastime when he wasn't acting, working in his gardens. With seven different lawns at their house, a Japanese gardener came twice a week, but Warner liked to work in the garden first thing in the morning. Among his neighbors at the time were W. C. Fields, Richard Arlen, Ruby Keeler, Al Jolson and Boris Karloff, at whose house Warner's son and his friends would stick pins in the doorbell, which caused a continuous ring. Warner had been in motion pictures since its infancy, and had reached stardom in silents, but fate brought about a change in his life and career. Three things happened: talk-

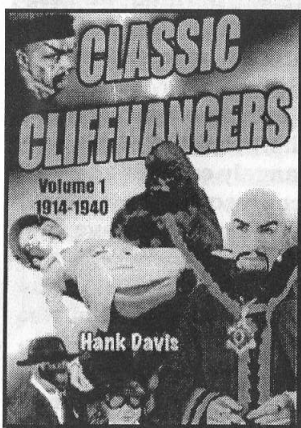
ies came in, screwing up a lot of actors; there was the Equity strike; then the Depression. Warner lost the Toluca Lake home. Work was hard to get during the transition period. With the coming of talkies Warner's career moved into playing character roles, more often than not being cast as the villain, which he enjoyed playing. His first sound movie was a newspaper film, "Big News" ('29) with Carole Lombard. In '30 he appeared in "Men Without Women", directed by John Ford and featuring John Wayne in a small role. "Billy the Kid" with Johnny Mack Brown followed shortly afterwards. The next year found Warner appearing as the abusive father in "Huckleberry Finn". Due to a problem that arose between Warner and director Michael Curtiz, in '32 Warner worked his last film ever for his old studio, Warner Bros., in "Woman From Monte Carlo". In the mid-'30s Warner began working almost exclusively in B-westerns and serials, most often as the heavy. He played a villainous zoo keeper in "The Lost Jungle" with Clyde Beatty in '34. His son told us after the film Beatty invited he and his dad to come to the circus. "My dad and I got to go in and talk to the clowns and watch them put on their makeup. It was really something." Although he was now a supporting player, the public didn't forget him. An 11/5/34 newspaper stated the following: "Warner Richmond is one of the screen's finest character actors as well as one of the best known. Every man, woman and child knows Warner Richmond. Richmond will be seen shortly in 'East River'." In speaking of his father's love of acting, his son told us, "He just lived and breathed acting. He was very interested and did a lot of history work on his parts. He had a lot of enthusiasm for everything he did. He was

a good study. He would read through the script once; then he'd go through and memorize the lines, then I would cue him. He was a very quick study and always knew his lines." While filming Tex Ritter's "Rainbow Over the Range" ('40) in Arizona, Warner suffered a serious accident. His son explained, "The wranglers didn't tighten the cinch tight enough so it slipped and he fell off the horse and hit his head. He stayed in Arizona for a number of months then he finally got a little bit better and came home, but after two and a half years the left side of his face was still paralyzed. He had a friend named Art Laskey, an ex-fighter and contender for the heavyweight title, but after his fighting career became a physical therapist. He told my dad he restored his eyesight partially by just massage. My dad was an avid reader, and while doing so he would sit and pinch his face, and in two and a half years he restored his reflexes except his eye didn't work as well. He didn't do much work after that accident." Bob Tansey, an old time friend of Warner's and a jockey at one time, used to make B-movies. He read western pulp magazines and would get all these different situations together from these pulps, then he'd write the script and would produce and direct them. They used to go on location and make two pictures at once. Tansey was responsible for helping Warner get a little work after his face was paralyzed. Warner spent the last part of his life at the Motion Picture Country Home in Woodland Hills where he passed away at 62 on June 19, 1948, of coronary thrombosis. His son smiled, "My dad and I were great buddies. He was serious, had a good sense of humor and never told off-color stories."



ON THE SERIAL BOOKSHELF

Toss away your tear-sheets of Hank Davis' serial reviews published over the last five years in **BIG REEL**, they're collected and compiled here in **CLASSIC CLIFFHANGERS Vol. 1 (1914-1940)** and the forth-



coming Vol. 2. Davis lovingly looks at 50 serials from '29-'40 (and a couple of silents) in Vol. 1. Be aware, **CLASSIC CLIFFHANGERS**

is not intended to review every serial made between '29 and '40, but to be a sampling of Davis' pick of the litter. But, in so doing, while including classics like "Dick Tracy", "Phantom Empire", "Miracle Rider", "Flash Gordon", "Darkest Africa", "Green Hornet", "Mysterious Dr. Satan" and others, he also includes lesser gems (often readily available anywhere public domain titles) such as "Sign of the Wolf", "Mystery Trooper", "Lost City", etc. Limited to 50 chapterplays between '29-'40, many important Mascot, Universal, Republic and independent serials are not included—"Three Musketeers", "Gordon of Ghost City", "Lost Jungle", "Mystery Mountain", "Red Rider", "New Adventures of Tarzan", "Painted Stallion", "Zorro Rides Again", "Blake of Scotland Yard", "Lone Ranger", "Flash Gordon's Trip to Mars", "Zorro's Fighting Legion" and others. So, view Davis' book as not all inclusive but as an excellent sampler or a feel for the serials of the

'30s. \$25 (plus postage) to Midnight Marquee Press, 9721 Britinay Lane, Baltimore, MD 21234.

Also now in publication is our own **GENE AUTRY WESTERNS**. 456 pages, 296 photos (many quite rare) encompassing all the westerns and TV shows of Gene, including a lengthy chapter on "Phantom Empire". Synopses, release dates, production credits, cast and character credits, songs sung with singer and writer notes, locations used, budget/negative costs, stunt people, cast and background information including comments from many of Gene's co-stars as well as Autry himself. Lots of bonus material on Champion, comic books, Top 10s, music groups, etc. \$49ppd. to Boyd Magers, 1312 Stagecoach Rd SE, Albuquerque, NM 87123. ** Richard Maurice Hurst's **REPUBLIC STUDIOS**, first published in '79, is available again in a \$35 softback edition from Scarecrow Press, 4501 Forbes Blvd., Suite 200, Lanham, MD 20706. (800) 462-6420 <www.scarecrowpress.com> Two additional chapters on serials plus a new introduction and epilogue have been added to the 288 pg. work. ** Coming soon is **CAPIES, CROOKS AND CLIFFHANGERS** by John Petty and Grey Smith with a foreword by Noel Neill. To view a brilliantly illustrated sample go to <<http://movieposters.ha.com/serial>> Available this Fall from Heritage, 3500 Maple Ave., 17th Floor, Dallas, TX 75219. (214) 528-3500

Cheat Endings!

In Ch. 2 of "Phantom of the West", the Phantom knocks Tom Tyler down a fiery stairwell. We see him fall. However, in Ch. 3, Tom quickly grabs the edge of the stairwell, *never* falling.

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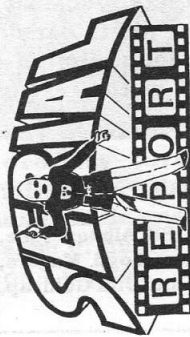


CHAPTER 13

The gracious and gorgeous leading lady of Republic's "Fighting Devil Dogs" ('38) as well as 16 B-westerns, **ELEANOR STEWART**, 94, died July 4 in Poway, CA. She'd suffered in recent years from Alzheimer's. Born in Chicago, IL, February 6, 1913, Eleanor attended Northwestern University. During the difficult Depression years, Eleanor became a well known model before winning a **CHICAGO TIMES** MGM screen test. Ultimately little utilized by the studio for two years, she made her first western with Tex Ritter. She married MGM publicity man Les Petersen to whom she was married for 30 years til his death. She left pictures in the mid-'40s when her daughter Karen was born. In her late 70s, after Petersen died, she re-met a friend of 50 years, Maurice Greiner, and they were married in 1991.

SERIAL BOO BOOS

At the end of Ch. 9 of "Don Winslow of the Navy" a Z40 dive bomber attacks Winslow's plane. The two planes collide and the dive bomber crashes into the ocean killing the pilot. In the written-scroll recap at the beginning of Ch. 10 it states "Don attacks the plane which is piloted by Barsac..." (actor John Holland). However, this is inaccurate, the pilot *was not* Barsac, just an unidentified pilot. Barsac appears with M-22 (John Litel) in a following scene and in the rest of the serial.



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Red X Indicates Renewal Due

FIRST CLASS MAIL

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